

Groton Daily Independent

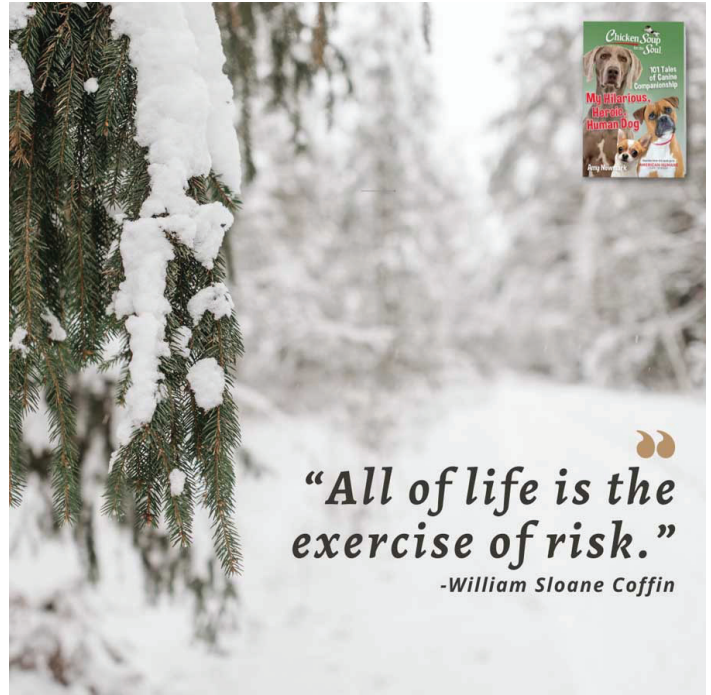
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Saturday, Jan. 20

Girls Basketball hosts Great Plains Lutheran: (C game 1 p.m., JV at 2:15 p.m. with varsity to follow)
Girls and Boys Varsity Wrestling Tournament at Arlington, 10 a.m.
Boys JV Invitational Wrestling at Pierre, 11 a.m.
Thrift Store open 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 3:45-4:15 p.m.; SEAS Mass, 4:30 p.m.

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



“All of life is the exercise of risk.”

-William Sloane Coffin

Sunday, Jan. 21

Groton CM&A: Sunday School at 9:15 a.m., 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 with communion at St. John's at 9 a.m. and at Zion at 11 a.m.; Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion, 9 a.m.; Milestones - 6th grade and sophomores; Annual Meeting with brunch following meeting; Sunday School, 10:15 a.m.

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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Japan Moon Landing

Japan became the fifth nation to reach the moon after its robotic spacecraft, named the Smart Lander for Investigating the Moon, or SLIM, made a soft lunar landing at 10:20 am ET Friday. The Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency joins the US, the Soviet Union, China, and India as the countries to have landed a spacecraft on the lunar surface.

Russian oil depot hit in Ukrainian drone attack.

Four oil tanks with a total capacity of 1.6 million gallons caught fire after munitions from a Ukrainian drone struck the depot in the Russian city of Klintsy, located about 40 miles from Ukraine's border. Russian forces had brought down two other drones over other parts of the region. The Russia-Ukraine war hits two years Feb. 24.

S&P 500 closes at an all-time high Friday.

The S&P 500 rose 1.2% to 4839.81, surpassing both a previous intraday record and closing high from January 2022. The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 1.1% and the Nasdaq Composite rose 1.7%. Optimism around artificial intelligence has helped drive gains in technology stocks, including Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co., Nvidia, and AMD.

Sports Illustrated to lay off most of its staff.

Arena Group, which bought the publishing rights to the 70-year-old sports publication from Authentic Brands Group, said Friday it would be laying off staff that work on the Sports Illustrated brand because it had failed to make a \$3.75M licensing payment to ABG. It is unclear if ABG will allow the Arena Group to renegotiate its licensing deal.

Alec Baldwin charged again with involuntary manslaughter.

A grand jury in New Mexico indicted the actor Friday on one charge of involuntary manslaughter for the 2021 shooting death of cinematographer Halyna Hutchins while on the set of the film "Rust." An involuntary manslaughter conviction in New Mexico carries a sentence of up to 18 months in prison.

March for Life demonstration returns to the US Capitol.

Tens of thousands of people attended the annual March for Life in Washington, DC, Friday. The event is the country's largest pro-life demonstration and is the second one since the US Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade in 2022, returning the issue of abortion to state legislatures.

North Korea claims to test underwater nuclear drone.

North Korean state media said the test of the nuclear-capable underwater weapons system was in response to this week's joint military drills between the US, Japan, and South Korea. The new test of the drone, dubbed "Haeil," or tsunami, was conducted off in the country's eastern waters.

Home sales in 2023 drop to lowest level in 28 years.

Sales of previously owned homes in 2023 dropped 19% year-over-year to 4.09 million, the lowest full-year level since 1995, according to new data from the National Association of Realtors. The median price of a home sold in 2023 was \$389,800 (a record high), while the median price of a home sold in December was \$382,600, a year-over-year increase of 4.4%.

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Shawn Barber, world champion pole vaulter, dies at 29.

Barber died this week from medical complications after being ill for some time. He finished 10th while competing for Canada at the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro and won three NCAA Division I pole vault championships while at the University of Akron.

Humankind(ness)

Today, we're sharing a story from reader John M. in Crystal River, Florida.

"On January 4, I placed an online order with Walmart+ to be delivered the following day. Later, I became concerned about my health after finding my blood pressure reading at 207/101. Instead of seeking medical attention, I choose to take my medication and hope it returns to safe levels by morning. But Friday morning, I was sick. Vomiting, disoriented, dizzy. And my blood pressure still dangerously high. Then, Jacqueline arrived with my Walmart order. When I opened the door and asked her to put the groceries on the counter, she could see that I was not well. Instead of just leaving, she asked if I wanted her to call 911. Concerned that I might be having a stroke, I agreed."

"Jacqueline stayed with me as the 911 operator gave me instructions. She assured me that she would not leave until they arrived. In fact, she stayed right through EMS loading me into the ambulance. After a day in the ER, they diagnosed me with Vertigo, gave me medication, referred me to a neurologist, and sent me home. I was thankful that it wasn't something more serious, but what I am most thankful for is her kindness and compassion. Jacqueline, thanks for the help and for the prayers."

GDILIVE.COM

G Groton Area
Tigers
GT

**Text Paul at
605-397-7460**

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

~~Milbank Girls JV~~
~~Milbank Boys JV~~
Great Plains Lutheran Girls C
~~Great Plains Lutheran Girls JV~~
Northwestern Girls JV
Webster Boys C
Webster Boys JV
Webster Girls JV
Florence/Henry Girls JV
Deuel Girls JV
Vermillion Boys JV
Redfield Boys C Game
Redfield Girls JV Game
Mobridge-Pollock Boys C Game
Mobridge-Pollock Girls C Game
Mobridge-Pollock Boys JV Game
Mobridge-Poolock Girls JV Game
Dakota Valley Boys JV
Dakota Valley Girls JV

Skating Rink has been a busy place

The Groton Skating Rink has been bustling with activity since it opened up.

Skating is for all ages! Grandfather Bruce Babcock skating with grand children Emery Blackwood and Kason Oswald all of Groton.

(Courtesy Photo)



NSU Men's Basketball

Northern State Starters Band Together in OT Victory over Concordia-St. Paul

Aberdeen, S.D. – The Northern State University men's basketball team took advantage of five extra minutes of court time on Friday, defeating Concordia-St. Paul by five in overtime. It was a battle from start to finish with 13 lead changes.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 94, CSP 89

Records: NSU 7-10 (5-6 NSIC), CSP 8-9 (3-8 NSIC)

Attendance: 2777

HOW IT HAPPENED

The Golden Bears led 41-39 at the half and the Wolves sent the contest to overtime with a 37-35 tilt in the second

Northern shot 40.5% from the floor and 28.1% from the 3-point line, while knocking down a game high 25 from the foul line

They tallied 38 points in the paint, 13 points off turnover, and 11 second chance points

For just the fourth time this season the Wolves out-rebounded their opponents 47-41 and added ten assists, nine made 3-pointers, five steals, and three blocks

Four of the starting five scored in double figures led by Josh Dilling with 27, while Jacksen Moni and Michael Nhial recorded double-doubles

Nhial led the team with 12 off the glass and shot a team best 6-of-9 from the floor

Augustin Reede was the key player from the foul line hitting 13-of-14, followed by Moni knocking down 7-of-9

NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

Josh Dilling: 27 points, 8 rebounds, 3 assists

Augustin Reede, 24 points, 92.9 free throw%, 2 rebounds

Jacksen Moni: 21 points, 11 rebounds, 4 assists

Michael Nhial: 15 points, 66.7 field goal%, 12 rebounds

UP NEXT

I Hate Winter continues today, January 20, from Wachs Arena against Minnesota Duluth. Tip-off time is set for 6 p.m. against the Bulldogs. For full game promotions visit nsuwolves.com/promotions.

NSU Women's Basketball

A Team Effort Led the Wolves to Victory Over Golden Bears

Aberdeen, S.D. – The Northern State women's basketball team took down Concordia-St. Paul Friday night, 71-61. The win saw Alayna Benike and Rianna Fillipi notch double figures in points and rebounds.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 71, CSP 61

Records: NSU 13-4 (9-2 NSIC), CSP 11-5 (7-4 NSIC)

Attendance: 2468

HOW IT HAPPENED

Northern State tallied 14 points in the first quarter, 24 in the second, 14 in the third, and 19 in the fourth; out-scoring Concordia-St. Paul by 11 in the second quarter

The Wolves were efficient offensively, shooting 29-of-55 (52.7%) from the floor and six made 3-pointers
NSU notched 44 rebounds, 32 points in the paint, 22 assists, and 13 bench points

Madelyn Bragg was first on the team with 18 points, six rebounds, and six blocks in the win

Alayna Benike tallied her first double-double of the season with 16 points and 11 rebounds, along with five assists

Rianna Fillipi recorded her third double-double of the season with 15 points and 12 rebounds

In addition, Fillipi controlled the floor with seven assists to lead the team

Decontee Smith led the Wolves off the bench with ten points and three rebounds, along with two made 3-pointers

NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

Madelyn Bragg: 18 points, 60.0 FG %, 6 rebounds, 6 blocks

Alayna Benike: 16 points, 11 rebounds, 5 assists, 75.0 FG %, 66.6 3-point %

Rianna Fillipi: 15 points, 12 rebounds, 7 assists, 50.0 FG %

Decontee Smith: 10 points, 3 rebounds, 100.0 3-point %

UP NEXT

Northern State is back in action from Wachs Arena to take on Minnesota Duluth. Tip-off time is set for 4 p.m. on Saturday, January 20th against the Bulldogs. For full game promotions visit nsuwolves.com/promotions.

NSU Fall 2023 President's List and Dean's List

Aberdeen, S.D. – Northern State University is proud to announce the following students earned President's List and Dean's List honors during the fall 2023 semester. The President's List includes full-time students who earned a 4.00 GPA for the semester and the Dean's List includes students who earned a 3.50 to 3.99 GPA for the semester. Congratulations on your great accomplishments!

President's List (4.0 GPA)

Faith Acevedo (Valley Stream, N.Y.)
Stephen Achen (Frederick, S.D.)
Jazmine Ackerman (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Tyler Althoff (Watertown, S.D.)
Alexandria Arndt (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Chandler Ashland (Eau Claire, W.I.)
Whitney Axtell (Mitchell, S.D.)
Brock Baker (Mina, S.D.)
Kamdyn Barrientos (Grand Island, N.E.)
Parker Bauer (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Emma Beavers (Redwood Falls, M.N.)
Michael Benevides (Vacaville, C.A.)
Alayna Benike (Castlewood, S.D.)
Christopher Beusch (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Reagan Bierschenk (Minneota, M.N.)
Audra Bland (Pierre, S.D.)
Avery Blasdel (Omaha, N.E.)
Teagan Block (Prior Lake, M.N.)
Hayden Bohl (Northville, S.D.)
Sara Bokelheide (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Rachelle Bonn (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Graham Borden (Geneva, I.L.)
Zoe Boughton (Inver Grove, M.N.)
Paige Brandt (Pierre, S.D.)
Estella Bullis (Mitchell, S.D.)
Sage Bultje (Brandon, S.D.)
Summer Carlson (Moorhead, M.N.)
Brooke Carlson (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Chloe Carroll (Castlewood, S.D.)
Dante Casanova (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Winifred Chibuko (Ogudu, Nigeria)
Vanessa Christensen (Rosholt, S.D.)
Hailey Clarke (Wessington, S.D.)
Blake Clay (Whittier, C.A.)
Rene Cranford (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Addison Cumbow (Pierre, S.D.)
Taye Cundiff (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Ally Cunningham (Faulkton, S.D.)
Zachary Daggett (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Mckenzee Danielson (Harrisburg, S.D.)
Erin Day (Bartlett, I.L.)

Ellie Diffely (Mandan, N.D.)
Tayla Dobrenski (Brookings, S.D.)
Megan Dockter (Watertown, S.D.)
Della Donovan (Casper, W.Y.)
Owen Douglas (Bennington, N.E.)
Jolie Dugan (Draper, S.D.)
Paw Hser Eh (Huron, S.D.)
Gracie Eisenbraun (Kadoka, S.D.)
Annabelle Ellerbusch (Barnesville, M.N.)
Megan Fastenau (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Tashayla Featherman (Groton, S.D.)
Samantha Ferguson (Bath, S.D.)
Carrie Feser (Groton, S.D.)
Morgan Fiedler (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Rylee Fischer (Edgeley, N.D.)
Mary Fites (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Samantha Fletcher (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Alyssa Fordham (Groton, S.D.)
Bree Ann Friesen (Huron, S.D.)
Bridget Fuhrmann (Roscoe, S.D.)
Samuel Garner (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Hannah Gasperich (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Jazlynn Geditz (Faulkton, S.D.)
Abiah George (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Lauren Geranen (Frederick, S.D.)
Kristi Gilbert (Ellendale, N.D.)
Anabelle Gillen (Mitchell, N.E.)
Cassidy Gough (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Kennedy Gravelle (Wadena, M.N.)
Grant Gubrud (Gary, S.D.)
Evan Halbe (Watertown, S.D.)
Ella Hanson (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Alexis Hanten (Groton, S.D.)
Abby Hartman (Watertown, S.D.)
Samantha Hegge (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Mykell Heidlebaugh (Rugby, N.D.)
Halle Heinz (Ipswich, S.D.)
Joshua Hellwig (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Jenna Helms (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Alayna Henderson (Brookings, S.D.)
Paige Henningsen (Monango, N.D.)
Kayleen Hermans (Aberdeen, S.D.)

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Tucker Hermans (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Jordan Hermansen (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Manaja Hill (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Abigail Himmerich (Watertown, S.D.)
Logan Hinman (Groton, S.D.)
Kasey Hinman (Groton, S.D.)
Mia Hinsz (Bismarck, N.D.)
Ryan Hirschhorn (Harrisburg, S.D.)
McKenzie Hochhalter (Wolsey, S.D.)
Brent Hokeness (Rushmore, M.N.)
Abigail Holmes (Algona, I.A.)
Cole Holmes (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Eli Houdyshell (Pierre, S.D.)
Ruth Hulscher (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Grace Humann (Bismarck, N.D.)
Emmalyn Hunt (Murdo, S.D.)
Ryleigh Huppler (Florence, S.D.)
Abigail Huska (Brandon, S.D.)
John Jacklin (Glendale, A.Z.)
Alli Jackson (Allen, N.E.)
Kayla Jensen (Claremont, S.D.)
Destiny Jensen (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Reese Johnson (Denver, I.A.)
Jalyssa Johnson (Watertown, S.D.)
Isaac Johnson (Aberdeen, S.D.)
McKayla Johnston (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Alison Jones (Lawrence, K.S.)
Ella Kasuske (Milbank, S.D.)
Ashlee Kaup (Hoven, S.D.)
Avery Kautz (Sioux Falls, S.D.)
Jade Kenny (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Alyssa Keough (Claremont, S.D.)
Abigail Ketelhut (Saint Lawrence, S.D.)
Aaron Kiner (Mitchell, S.D.)
Karli Klein (Garrison, N.D.)
Allison Kluver (Watertown, S.D.)
Bryce Knapek (Kimball, M.N.)
Connor Knigge (Rapid City, S.D.)
Maggie Knippling (Huron, S.D.)
Kyra Knudtson (Sioux Falls, S.D.)
Calista Kocmick (Brandon, S.D.)
Ross Kortenbusch (Vining, M.N.)
Delaney Kouf (Huron, S.D.)
Mya Krause (Spicer, M.N.)
Kolby Lacher (Watertown, S.D.)
Eva Larson (Minneapolis, M.N.)
Gunnar Larson (Leeds, N.D.)
Makenna Larson (Chester, S.D.)
Caleb Lazure (Omaha, N.E.)
Regan Leicht (Groton, S.D.)
Triston Leidholdt (Bath, S.D.)
Landon Leidholt (Warner, S.D.)
Rachel LeMair (Prior Lake, M.N.)
Hannah Lemieux (Pierre, S.D.)
Chasity Lewis (Raymond, S.D.)
Gabriel Lindeman (Dell Rapids, S.D.)
Treyson Longstreet (Waverly, M.N.)
Brooke Maier (Hayward, M.N.)
Maria Martens (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Antony Martinez (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Autumn McDonnell (Marshall, M.N.)
Ellen McDonnell (Martin, S.D.)
Abigail Meads (Aitkin, M.N.)
Hope Mehlhoff Schaar (Leola, S.D.)
Abby Meister (Sioux Falls, S.D.)
Margaret Meland (Watertown, S.D.)
Peyton Melius (Faulkton, S.D.)
Prancine Mendoza (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Amelia Mertz (Deer River, M.N.)
Louise Meyer (Rock Rapids, I.A.)
Nevaeh Meyer (Watertown, S.D.)
Natalie Miles (Spearfish, S.D.)
Gabrielle Mischke (Bruce, S.D.)
Hailey Moeller (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Teagan Moes (Watertown, S.D.)
Miranda Myers (Hartford, S.D.)
Grace Nelson (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Noelle Nemmers (Huron, S.D.)
Hope Neugebauer (Armour, S.D.)
Brooke Niederbaumer (Wecota, S.D.)
Courtney Olson (Ellendale, N.D.)
Julia Orr (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Maximillian Otto (Delano, M.N.)
Emily Palmer (Langford, S.D.)
Madison Park (Watertown, S.D.)
Ann Sarah Paul (Ernakulam, India)
Dawson Pfister (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Megan Pickering (Brandon, S.D.)
Skylar Pike (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Marcus Pollard (Sherwood Park, A.B.)
Daria Poor (Watertown, S.D.)
Paris Prissel (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Ashley Ptacek (Ipswich, S.D.)
Holly Randall (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Morgan Rathjen (Huron, S.D.)
Elizabeth Rawlings (Orem, U.T.)
Levi Reis (Ellendale, N.D.)
Brittney Reiter (Brandon, S.D.)

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Meadow Remily (Brentford, S.D.)
Brendon Ries (Dubuque, I.A.)
Mikayla Riesberg (Templeton, I.A.)
Fionualla Rigg (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Jake Robel (Watertown, S.D.)
Damon Roggenbuck (Sioux Falls, S.D.)
Leyton Rohlf (Redfield, S.D.)
Brady Rohrbach (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Alexa Rossman (Mina, S.D.)
Jastyn Rousseau (Eagle Butte, S.D.)
Chloe Rush (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Eh Tha You Say (Groton, S.D.)
Grace Schatz (Sioux Falls, S.D.)
Nathan Schauer (Ashley, N.D.)
Dylan Schimke (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Joselyn Schroeder (Mount Vernon, S.D.)
Randi Schuster (Roslyn, S.D.)
John Schwab (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Kamryn Schwartz (Volga, S.D.)
Casside Seez (Milbank, S.D.)
Kelsey Selden (Prairie du Sac, W.I.)
Josie Shurb (Louisburg, M.N.)
Connor Siemonsma (Humboldt, S.D.)
Elly Smith (Centennial, C.O.)
Hannah Smith (Chelmsford, England)
Hailey Smith (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Drew Smook (North Mankato, M.N.)
Chit Snow (Huron, S.D.)
Reagan Spomer (Bismarck, N.D.)
Adisen Stadem (Dell Rapids, S.D.)
Ryan Stark (Watertown, S.D.)
Blake Stoks (Porter, M.N.)
Miah Stone (Bemidji, M.N.)
Kinze Stradtman (Fairmont, M.N.)
Sierra Sweeney (Porters Lake, N.S.)
Tia Swiontek (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Natalia Szybinska (Poznan, Poland)
Sophie Taylor (Aberdeenshire, Scotland)
Alison Theis (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Turner Thorson (Mina, S.D.)
Miranda Thorson (Mansfield, S.D.)
Lily Tobin (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Samuel Tremelling (Chelmsford, England)
Tatum Waldrop (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Christena Walker (Ellendale, N.D.)
Kayla Waltman (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Rebekah Walz (Hawick, M.N.)
Elizabeth Wanous (Mansfield, S.D.)
Kenna Webb (Timber Lake, S.D.)

Cassandra Webb (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Andrew Wedwick (Viroqua, W.I.)
Kara Weiss (Pierre, S.D.)
Hannah Welch (Letcher, S.D.)
Karly Wellman (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Avery West (Langford, S.D.)
Madelyn Westby (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Jorja Whempner (Wilmot, S.D.)
Colton Wicks (Nunda, S.D.)
Shannon Wiley (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Jesse Williams (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Skylinn Williams (Bath, S.D.)
Allie Windjue (Jamestown, N.D.)
Sheridyn Winter (Sioux Falls, S.D.)
Angelica Winters (Batesland, S.D.)
Carlie Wolf (Alexandria, M.N.)
EmilyJo Wollschlager (Reville, S.D.)
Mia Zagorski (Lakeville, M.N.)
Claire Zbylut (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Kayla Zubke (Warner, S.D.)
Madison Zwinger (Dimock, S.D.)

Dean's List (3.50 – 3.99 GPA)

Jack Adams (Fort Myers, F.L.)
Benjamin Althoff (Watertown, S.D.)
Martha Angulo (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Blake Arnesen (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Jessica Artz (Hoven, S.D.)
Olivia Ashley (Rapid City, S.D.)
Brianna Back (Cottage Grove, W.I.)
Mckenzie Balzer (Bismarck, N.D.)
Caitlynn Barse (Andover, S.D.)
Brenden Baxter (Rochester, M.N.)
Anyela Betancur (West Orange, N.J.)
Trevor Beyers (Roscoe, S.D.)
Greta Beyers (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Brookelyn Beyers (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Simon Bickford (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Hailey Bierman (Ipswich, S.D.)
Paige Bishop (Hillsboro, N.D.)
Elana Bishop (Sioux Falls, S.D.)
Madisen Bjerke (Groton, S.D.)
Trevin Black Bear (Pierre, S.D.)
Ella Blake (Lone Tree, C.O.)
Caitline Blinder (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Kaden Boettcher (Ipswich, S.D.)
Haylee Bohnet (Volga, S.D.)
Hailey Bonn (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Brady Brau (Elkhorn, N.E.)

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Nathan Brecht (Sioux Falls, S.D.)
Emily Breske (Webster, S.D.)
Jordan Brock (Modesto, C.A.)
Jessica Brockhofft (Huron, S.D.)
Kaden Broer (Onawa, I.A.)
Abigail Brooks (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Tevan Bryant (Sioux Falls, S.D.)
Marsha Bultje (Montrose, S.D.)
Jonathan Burkhalter (Prairie City, S.D.)
Dirk Buszkohl (Henry, S.D.)
Treyton Cacek (Ruthven, I.A.)
William Campbell (Brandon, S.D.)
Erica Carda (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Anastasia Cardinal (Winsted, M.N.)
Zachary Carolin (Grand Forks, N.D.)
Faith Carroll (Central City, N.E.)
Ashlyn Casey (Hecla, S.D.)
EmmahLeigh Cass (Sturgis, S.D.)
Alexis Chase (Chatfield, M.N.)
Regina Chase (Java, S.D.)
Michael Chevalier (Sioux Falls, S.D.)
Marisa Christensen (Sioux Falls, S.D.)
Erin Christofferson (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Zechariah Clemens (Northville, S.D.)
Aunna Cloos (Big Stone City, S.D.)
Daniel Coffman (New Berlin, W.I.)
Ella Cozad (Watertown, S.D.)
Reegan Cvancara (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Sophia Dalton (Watertown, S.D.)
Harley Davis (Milbank, S.D.)
Jordan DeMarce (Las Vegas, N.V.)
Megan Denison (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Kenneth Dennis (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Joshua Dilling (Oshkosh, W.I.)
Gabriella Dimatteo (Maple Grove, M.N.)
Amanda Dohman (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Kierra Dragt (Huron, S.D.)
Kayleigh Dueis (Pierre, S.D.)
Ezekiel Duncan (Mellette, S.D.)
Brooke Dunham (Gillette, W.Y.)
Holly Durbin (Fargo, N.D.)
Jacob Ebeling (Sioux Falls, S.D.)
Hsa Law Eh (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Brent Ekanger (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Reece Ermer (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Jenna Evans (Huron, S.D.)
Sara Evenson (Benson, M.N.)
Eden Fanning (Martin, S.D.)
Ashley Fauske (Kaukauna, W.I.)
Kaplan Felberg (Willow Lake, S.D.)
Mason Fey (Ashton, S.D.)
Eden Ford (Omaha, N.E.)
Mary Franssen (Arvada, C.O.)
Braden Freeman (Groton, S.D.)
Nicholas Friedges (Cottage Grove, M.N.)
Mia Fursedonne (Essex, England)
Sophie Gant (Geddes, S.D.)
Cameron Gauger (Mitchell, S.D.)
Alicia Gedge (Valley Springs, S.D.)
Katelyn Geditz (Ipswich, S.D.)
Skyler Geffre (Leola, S.D.)
Ember Geist (Roscoe, S.D.)
Clifford Geyer (San Antonio, T.X.)
Makenna Glanzer (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Madelyn Gonzales (Northglenn, C.O.)
John Grabowska (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Lillian Grebner (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Anizye Grode (Streeter, N.D.)
Brooklyn Gronau (Watertown, S.D.)
Jaron Gross (Hillman, M.N.)
Payton Gross (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Dylan Grundstrom (Rapid City, S.D.)
Luke Gunderson (Buffalo, M.N.)
Therese Haberman (Bottineau, N.D.)
Emma Haeder (Wolsey, S.D.)
Norma Hall (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Brody Hampl (Hastings, M.N.)
Logan Hanson (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Olivia Hanson (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Kaitlynn Harmon (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Austin Harvey (Baltic, S.D.)
Makala Hauge (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Mackenna Heiden (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Elias Heier (Tea, S.D.)
William Heinert (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Trista Henderson (Rolla, N.D.)
Nile Hesson (Mesa, A.Z.)
Benjamin Higgins (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Alyssa Hintz (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Sydney Hofer (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Tate Hoffman (Highmore, S.D.)
Nickolas Hogan (Brookings, S.D.)
Marit Hoyme (Sioux Falls, S.D.)
Htee Hser (Huron, S.D.)
Kwae ka Nyaw Htoo (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Eh Kwa Lar Htoo (Huron, S.D.)
Trey Huber (Conde, S.D.)
Madysen Hudson (Pierre, S.D.)
Jayda Hunstad (Mina, S.D.)
Jessica Huntimer (Colton, S.D.)

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Cole Huss (Gretna, S.D.)
Noah Hutmacher (Oacoma, N.E.)
Dan Istvanovich (Chisago City, S.D.)
Melissa Jacobson (Brandon, M.N.)
Saw Joe (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Paige Johnson (Park Rapids, S.D.)
Kennedy Johnson (Webster, M.N.)
Aspen Johnson (Groton, S.D.)
Laura Johnson (Milbank, S.D.)
Madison Jones (Falls City, S.D.)
Bradley Jung (Warner, N.E.)
Scott Jussila (Elk River, S.D.)
Ayvrie Kaiser (Pierre, M.N.)
Ella Kaufman (Webster, S.D.)
Kendall Kelly (Springfield, S.D.)
Spencer Kelly (Pierre, M.N.)
John Kemner (Tea, S.D.)
Kennadi Kiser (Huron, S.D.)
Tarynn Kleffman (Ipswich, S.D.)
Michelle Knecht (Selby, S.D.)
Kyle Konechne (Hartford, S.D.)
Zachary Kraft (Le Mars, S.D.)
Hannah Kraft (Aberdeen, I.A.)
Colton Kraft (Timber Lake, S.D.)
Kendra Kranz (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Preston Kreber (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Tiffany Kurtz (Tea, S.D.)
Alexis LaFave (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Alyson Lang (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Hans Lapka (Leola, S.D.)
Dakota Larson (Chandler, S.D.)
Alec Larson (Glenwood, A.Z.)
Charles Larson (Rapid City, M.N.)
Walker Larson (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Erin Lemke (Dupree, S.D.)
Melana Lewis (Wahpeton, S.D.)
Tyson Lien (Huron, N.D.)
Hailee Like (Pierre, S.D.)
Brock Longville (Brookings, S.D.)
William Lopes (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Tiffany Lutz (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Christian Malsom (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Seth Martens (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Alexis Martin (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Rickkie Martinmaas (New Underwood, S.D.)
Joel Matehs (Rugby, S.D.)
Mackenzi Matson (Aberdeen, N.D.)
Ella McCormick (Mahtomedi, S.D.)
Maggie McDermott (Brookings, M.N.)
Hannah McLeod (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Kaylee Mehlhaff (Black Hawk, S.D.)
Josie Mehling (Wessington, S.D.)
Jerrit Mehling (Wessington, S.D.)
Corbyn Menz (Delano, M.N.)
Avery Miles (Turton, S.D.)
Jack Miller (Minnetonka, M.N.)
Lauren Mitchener (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Sara Moberg (Champlin, M.N.)
Braydon Mogle (Payson, U.T.)
Craig Moore (Webster, S.D.)
Laura Mount (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Kegan Mountain (Omaha, N.E.)
James Muirhead (Presho, S.D.)
Christian Mundt (Crystal, M.N.)
Hannah Murchie (Jamestown, N.D.)
Avery Murray (Valley City, N.D.)
Shelby Nash (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Kayla Natoli (Winner, S.D.)
Margaret Neeley (Herreid, S.D.)
Mattilyn Nehlich (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Allie Neu (Ortonville, M.N.)
Brady Neys (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Shelby Novotny (Elk River, M.N.)
April Olson (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Nicolas Olson (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Haley Osborne (Boise, I.D.)
Robert Padgett (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Jameson Palmer (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Jeremy Pasara (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Hsi Hsa Paw (Wolsey, S.D.)
Naw Mal Lur Paw (Huron, S.D.)
Bryce Peterson (Bristol, S.D.)
Ian Pharris (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Ava Pickard (Sioux Falls, S.D.)
Brayden Prokop (Watertown, S.D.)
Emily Pulling (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Amanda Pupo (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Faith Ragels (Mitchell, S.D.)
Madeline Ramsey (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Clayton Randall (Herreid, S.D.)
Taylor Reese (Grand Forks, N.D.)
Suzanne Reeve (Piedmont, S.D.)
Ashlyn Reimer (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Easton Rerick (Fargo, N.D.)
Emily Richie (Bristol, S.D.)
Brody Riggs (Mitchell, S.D.)
Mason Riley (Milbank, S.D.)
Andrew Rohrbach (Aberdeen, S.D.)

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Angela Rowse (Ft Pierre, S.D.)
Austin Russell (Ipswich, S.D.)
Abigail Rux (Hawley, M.N.)
Mitchell Rux (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Samuel Ryan (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Brenden Salfrank (Mina, S.D.)
Jaden Santjer (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Payton Sattler (Roslyn, S.D.)
Isabella Sautner (Hoven, S.D.)
Moo Mu Say (Huron, S.D.)
Elinor Sayers (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Parker Schell (Milbank, S.D.)
Abigail Scheuring (Lidgerwood, N.D.)
Miranda Schmidt (Brookings, S.D.)
Jonah Schmidt (Mitchell, S.D.)
Taylor Schmidt (Rapid City, S.D.)
Brylie Schultz (Wheaton, M.N.)
Avery Schut (Madison, S.D.)
Alexis Schwagel (Corona, S.D.)
Xavier Scott (Mandan, N.D.)
Hailey Sharp (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Bethany Shearer (Lisbon, N.D.)
Morgan Sheldon (Mandan, N.D.)
Trent Shuey (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Cole Simon (Groton, S.D.)
Travis Smith (Inver Grove, M.N.)
Jeremy Sommer (Brandon, S.D.)
Hilary Sonnabend (Brillion, W.I.)
Jessica Splichal (Mitchell, N.E.)
Cory St. Martin (Prior Lake, M.N.)
Elijah Steele (Custer, S.D.)
Isabella Steffel (Brandon, S.D.)
Joshua Steinwandt (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Samuel Stock (Sioux Falls, S.D.)
Mackenzie Stoltenberg (Stratford, S.D.)
Chloe Strom (Moorhead, M.N.)
Benjamin Stucke (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Kaylee Sumner (Florence, S.D.)
Amanda Svensen (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Darius Swanson (Lake City, S.D.)
Alex Tanner (Gettysburg, S.D.)
Julia Taurinkas (Mendota Hts, M.N.)
Renea Taylor (Malott, W.A.)
Gavin Terhark (Brandon, S.D.)
Katelyn Thares (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Emma Thill (Florence, S.D.)
Taylor Thorson (Mina, S.D.)
Delanie Tschakert (Watertown, S.D.)
Jordan Tschumperlin (Barnesville, M.N.)
Cadance Tullis (Groton, S.D.)

Kaydn Turnbow (Berthold, N.D.)
MacKenzie Turner (Belgrade, M.T.)
Ksenia Unser (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Kaisha Van Engen (Melvin, I.A.)
Angela Vetter (Warner, S.D.)
Ayden Viox (Sioux Falls, S.D.)
Brooke Vitters (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Tyler Voorhees (Rapid City, S.D.)
Chloe Voss (Andover, M.N.)
Arin Wagner (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Alexis Wald (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Emily Waldner (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Destiny Wenger (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Jordan West (Thompson, N.D.)
Julia Westrich (Tonganoxie, K.S.)
McKenna Whitfield (Brookings, S.D.)
Captain Whitlock (Honolulu, H.I.)
Laney Widener (Langford, S.D.)
Tessa Wiest (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Dylan Wiggins (Hawarden, I.A.)
Jacob Wild (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Jackson Willis (Mullion Creek, Australia)
Benjamin Wirth (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Brooke Wolf (Sturgis, S.D.)
Gavin Wollman (Mina, S.D.)
Ryann Yamaura (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Joshua Zaccanti (Sugar Grove, I.L.)
Phillip Zens (Aberdeen, S.D.)
Alexandra Zwaschka (Spearfish, S.D.)

Today on GDILIVE.COM Great Plains Lutheran at Groton Area

**1 p.m: C Game sponsored by
Justin and Chelsea Hanson**

**2:15 p.m. JV game sponsored by
Rich and Tami Zimney**

Varsity Game to follow

Bill to change definition of legal newspaper clears first hurdle

By Dana Hess

For the S.D. NewsMedia Association

PIERRE—After fighting off two attempts in the 2023 legislative session to change the definition of a legal newspaper, the South Dakota Newspaper Association has changed its name and its attitude toward free newspapers.

On Friday, the Senate Local Government Committee unanimously endorsed SB75 which makes the changes necessary to the definition of a legal newspaper to allow free publications like The Dakota Scout of Sioux Falls and The Aberdeen Insider to publish public notices.

Speaking in favor of the bill was David Bordewyk, executive director of the South Dakota NewsMedia Association. Formerly the South Dakota Newspaper Association, Bordewyk said SDNA now represents the state's newspapers as well as various digital-first outlets in the state.

"This bill recognizes the change in trends occurring in the news environment nationwide and also in our state," Bordewyk said. "It's a good, proactive step toward keeping pace with those trends."

Bordewyk explained that the bill allows free distribution newspapers to become the official newspaper for local government entities like school boards, county commissions and city councils. The criteria for a free distribution newspaper to publish the minutes of meetings and bid notices is that it must have a print publication of at least 500 copies, at least 200 online subscribers and have its circulation audited annually by a recognized auditing agency.

Free distribution newspapers must also meet the same criteria as subscriber-based newspapers on frequency of publication, percentage of news content, maintaining an office and office hours and publishing an annual statement of publication.

"Senate Bill 75 contains strong safeguards to ensure that public notices are delivered to an intended audience and community served by the newspaper," Bordewyk said.

Last year's attempts to change the definition of a legal newspaper were accompanied by complaints about daily newspapers in Sioux Falls, Aberdeen and Watertown that are owned by Gannett. Corporate decisions have led to those newspapers cutting staff as well as local news content.

Speaking in favor of this year's bill were representatives of The Dakota Scout and The Aberdeen Insider.

Troy McQuillen, publisher of The Aberdeen Insider, said his publication has been contacted by schools, the county and the city about the possibility of placing public notices in his free weekly newspaper.

"We are experiencing a tremendous need in our community for the ability to post legal postings," McQuillen said.

Also testifying in favor of the bill were the South Dakota Municipal League and the South Dakota Association of Towns and Townships.

There was no testimony in opposition to the bill.

Committee member Randy Deibert, R-Spearfish, said he has witnessed a trend in which ownership of local newspapers by large corporations leads to less local news.

"If we can reinvest in local newspapers and local news, I support that," Deibert said.

Committee chairman Tim Reed, R-Brookings, praised the quality of the work of what he called the "newer type of news media. But we had to make sure we were protecting public notices. That's something that newspapers have provided for years."

The bill was endorsed on a 7-0 vote and now goes to the full Senate.

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**BROWN COUNTY
BROWN COUNTY COMMISSION AGENDA
REGULAR MEETING TUESDAY**

January 23, 2024 8:45 A.M.

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

1. Call To Order - Pledge of Allegiance
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Opportunity of Public Comment
4. Public Progress Hearing on Brown County YMCA Youth Development Center Building Addition Project
 - a. Authorize Chairman to sign YMCA Drawdown #3
5. Rachel Kippley – Fair/Fairgrounds/Parks Manager
 - a. Approve & Authorize Chairman to sign Fair Contracts – Confidential
 - b. Discuss Agreement with SD Farmer's Union
6. Discuss Freedom of Information Fees
7. Authorize Chairman to sign Grant for Tuckpointing Project
8. Protect Local Control Resolution
9. Consent Calendar
 - a. Approval of General Meeting Minutes of January 16, 2024
 - b. Claims
 - c. HR Report
 - d. Leases
 - e. Claim Assignments
 - f. Zoning Ordinance – Set Hearing Date/Authorize Advertising
 - g. Abatements
 - h. Authorize Advertising for the 2024 Microsurfacing Project
10. Other Business
11. Executive Session (if requested per SDCL 1-25-2)
12. Adjourn

Brown County Commission Meeting

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

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

You can also dial in using your phone. United States: [+1 \(872\) 240-3311](tel:+18722403311)

Access Code: 601-168-909 #

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

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

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

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

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

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

Groton Daily Independent

Girls Basketball Game

Great Plains Lutheran @ Groton Area

Saturday, January 20th, 2024

Game Times/Locations: Main Court in Arena

- 1:00PM → Girls C
- 2:00PM → Girls JV
- Around 3:15PM → Girls Varsity
 - o *Halftime Entertainment: Sugar Babes and Sweet Sensations Dancers*

Prior to the Girls Varsity game, the National Anthem will be first, with Varsity Introductions/Lineups to follow.

ADMISSION & SPECTATORS: Adults: \$5.00 Students: \$4.00.

CONCESSIONS: Will be available

LOCKER ROOM: Great Plains Lutheran will use the far back locker room down the JH Locker Room Hallway.

**Team Benches – Groton: South Bench
GPL: North Bench**

ATHLETIC TRAINER: There will be an athletic trainer on site. AED is located near the ticket booth.

Livestream: GDlive.com (must pay to watch) or NFHS

C Game Officials: Justin Hanson, Mike Siegler, Logan Huber

JV/Varsity Officials: Justin Deutsch, Scott Deutsch, Wade Veflin

Announcer: Mike Imrie

Scoreboard: Kristen Dolan

Official Book: Alexa Schuring

Shot Clock Operator: Justin Hanson

National Anthem: *Recording*

Thank you, Alexa Schuring, Athletic Director

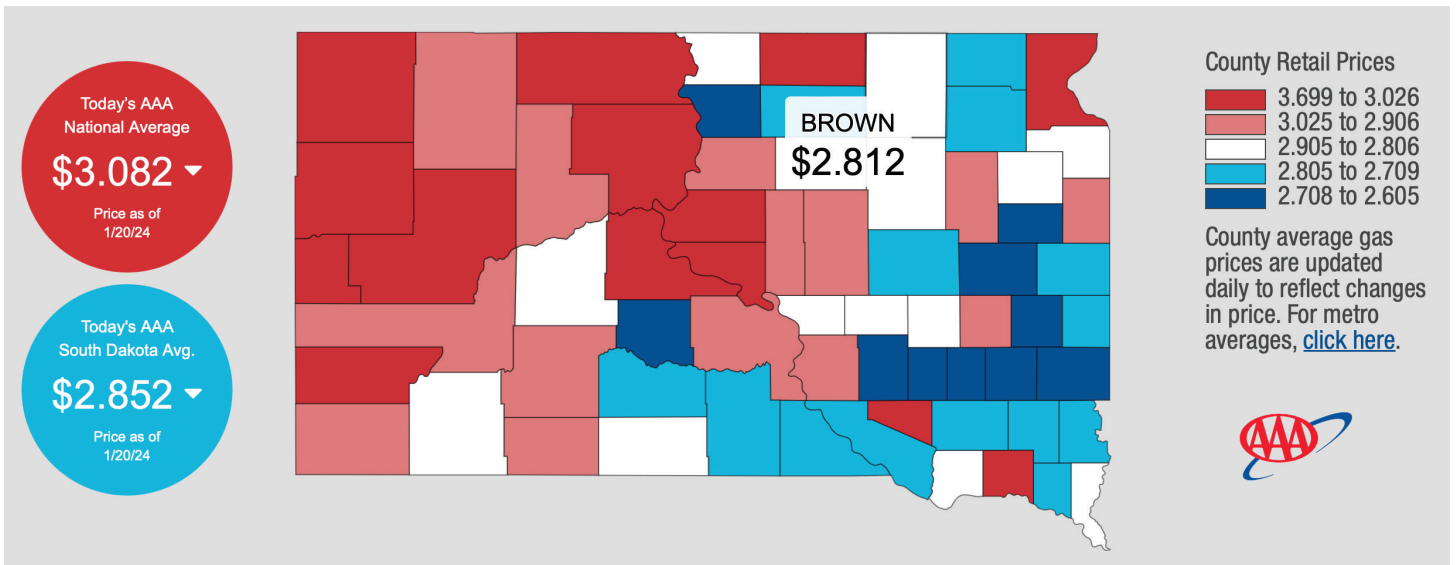
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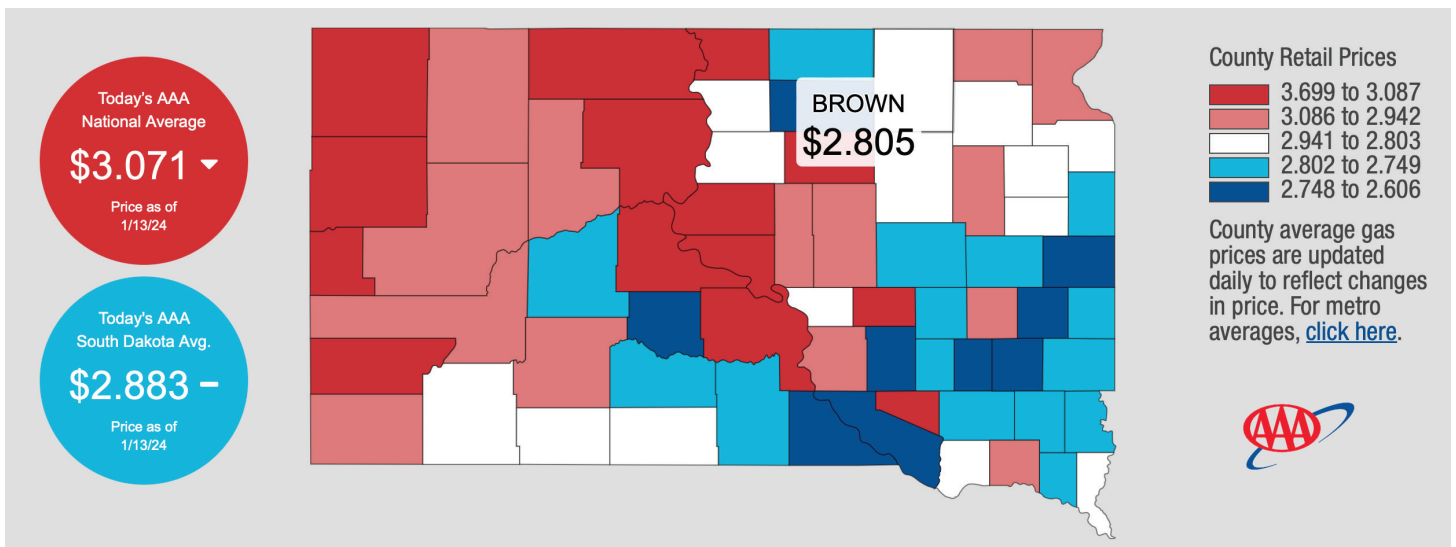
South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Current Avg.	\$2.852	\$3.005	\$3.495	\$3.691
Yesterday Avg.	\$2.869	\$3.007	\$3.506	\$3.714
Week Ago Avg.	\$2.883	\$3.034	\$3.526	\$3.746
Month Ago Avg.	\$2.980	\$3.161	\$3.633	\$3.756
Year Ago Avg.	\$3.314	\$3.459	\$3.949	\$4.322

This Week



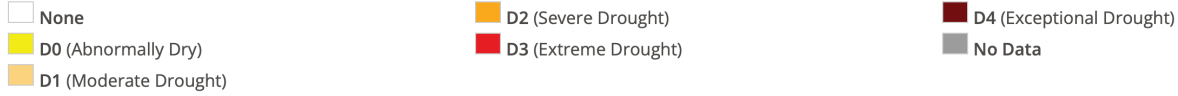
Two Weeks Ago



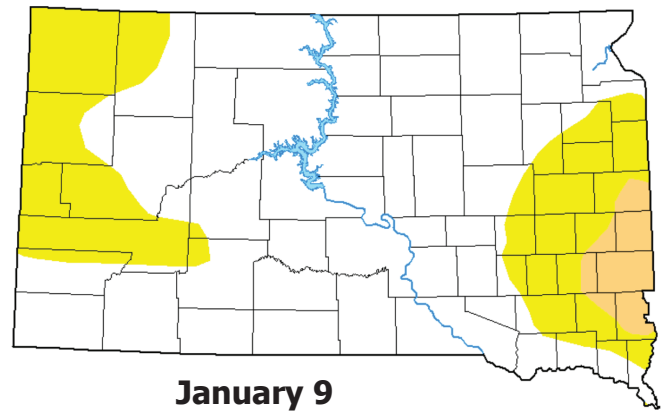
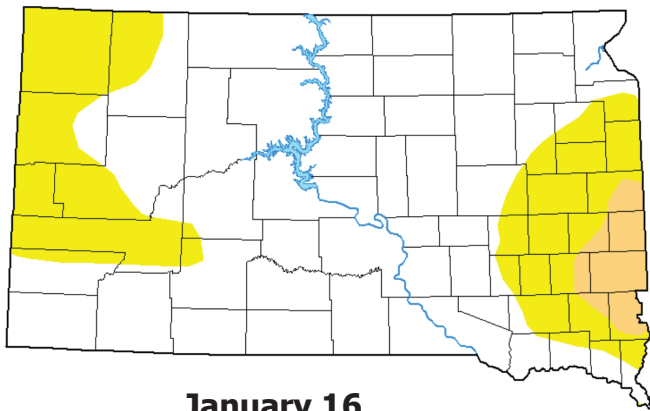
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Drought Classification



Drought Monitor



Storminess in recent weeks and frigid temperatures this week warrant no changes across much of the Central and Northern Plains. However, there are mixed improvements (Colorado Plateau) and degradations (High Plains along the Front Range) warranted this week. Improvements to snowpack and short-term precipitation deficits this week warrant the improvements across the Colorado Plateau. Conversely, the lack of seasonal snow cover has led to degradations across parts of the High Plains along the Front Range, due to topsoils being exposed and drying out.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Amtrak ambition: The lonely quest to break SD's resistance to passenger rail

Madison man says 'short-termism' holds state back

BY: JOHN HULT - FRIDAY JANUARY 19, 2024 5:15 PM

You can't reach Mount Rushmore by passenger rail. Or the Badlands. Or Wall Drug.

Or just about anywhere else in South Dakota. It's one of two states in the contiguous U.S. without Amtrak passenger train service – and the only one to have never had it.

Pennington County Commissioner Lloyd LaCroix would like to see that change. Rail access to West River tourist destinations is one reason LaCroix and his fellow commissioners signed off on a letter to the Federal Railroad Administration last August, urging consideration of a working group to study passenger rail in South Dakota.

"The location of Rapid City, along with not having high-capability rail service, has constrained the economic opportunity of the region. Railroad investments are needed at large to benefit both freight and passenger services," the letter reads.

LaCroix is the second Pennington County commission chair to ink such a letter in recent years. The first came in 2021, the year Amtrak released a conceptual "Connect US" map without a South Dakota stop. Amtrak, a stylized squashing together of "America" and "track," is the brand name for the passenger rail services of the National Railroad Passenger Corporation. Service runs between cities and across state lines in 46 of the Lower 48 states.

The Sturgis city manager and head of the Grant County Economic Development Corporation have also sent letters of support for passenger rail, but LaCroix isn't holding his breath for a South Dakota Amtrak station ribbon cutting.

"We probably won't see it in our lifetime," LaCroix told South Dakota Searchlight.

Passenger rail advocate pushes for consideration

LaCroix isn't alone in his pessimism. Skepticism appears alongside the first mention of passenger rail in the state Department of Transportation's latest state rail plan:

"Outside of the advocacy sphere, there is doubt among other stakeholders as to whether South Dakota has the appropriate population density to justify investments in developing and operating passenger rail service."

If the South Dakota "advocacy sphere" were a globe, Madison's Dan Bilka would be the Atlas beneath it. He's the one who convinced Pennington County commissioners to write the letter of support. He's also behind the Sturgis and Grant County letters.

Bilka is co-founder and leader of All Aboard Northwest, a nonprofit with three board members and what Bilka describes as "hundreds" of "interested parties" who engage rail authorities, state and local leaders and anyone else who'll listen about righting what they view as a historical wrong.

There's a conversation taking place, Bilka said, and South Dakota should be a part of it.

"Congress has directed the Federal Railroad Administration to look at not only former Amtrak long distance routes, but also the potential for new Amtrak long distance routes," Bilka said.

To Bilka, there's never been a better time to reopen the book on a subject many in the state closed years ago – or never opened to begin with.

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The 15-year "Connect US" expansion roadmap from 2021 that omitted South Dakota knocked at least some dust off that book's cover. South Dakota social media circles lit up over the snub, even prompting a snarky tweet from Gov. Kristi Noem decrying the absence of South Dakota, Alaska and Hawaii.

That map of possible futures was not a binding plan, but Amtrak spokesperson Marc Magliari said it did what it was meant to do: start conversations.

Seven months after the map appeared, President Joe Biden signed his massive Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act into law, which set aside billions of dollars for rail projects. It also set aside \$15 million for the Federal Railroad Administration to conduct an Amtrak Daily Long-Distance Service Study to look at routes 750 miles long or longer.

"Connect US wasn't really very formal," Magliari said. "It was a vision of 'here's some ideas,' which we think sparked some of this funding that's come through."

Cash for considering rail

Long-term routes are funded by Amtrak at no cost to states, at least after states pitch in to help build stations. The infrastructure law also set aside money to study expansions to shorter, state-supported Amtrak lines – called the "enhanced network." That network includes routes less than 750 miles, typically sharing tracks with freight rail and relying on freight rail operators to serve as dispatchers.

The infrastructure law offers states 90 cents on the dollar for the setup of new state-supported routes, Magliari said, and "there's never been that kind of federal operating support before."

States that lay out plans for passenger rail and support from municipalities are key factors in future service decisions on the federal side, Bilka said.

Wyoming hopes to soon see its name removed from the list of states without service, announcing a formal pursuit of a line to connect Cheyenne and Denver.

Bilka said it took years of stakeholder engagement to make that happen.

South Dakotans should be willing to be a part of the conversation, too, he said.

"We're the only state in the contiguous 48 states that's never had Amtrak, and not for the lack of need or viability, but due to the choices and forces that predated Amtrak," Bilka said.

SD service ended before Amtrak

Those "choices and forces" were largely animated by one consideration: cash. There's a lot of federal rail money floating around at the moment, but it's nowhere near enough for South Dakota to overcome its five-decade dearth of passenger rail, said Rick Mills, historian and curator of the South Dakota State Railroad Museum.

Mills' museum is a stone's throw from the 1880 Train, a popular steam-powered tourist hauler that runs between Hill City and Keystone and represents the single remaining passenger rail line in South Dakota.

Freight rail can cost as much as a million dollars per mile for new lines, Mills said.

Passenger rail costs far more. North Carolina got a \$1.9 billion grant last month for a passenger line less than 19 miles long. The 171-mile Central Valley segment in California could cost as much as \$35 billion.

Mills' professional career has been built around unabashed, lifelong adoration of all things rail – he wrote a book on state railroad history, after all – and he'd love to see passenger service in his home state.

That doesn't mean he's expecting it. Not at prices like that and an expectation of matching funds from a state with no modern history of passenger rail support.

It's realism, he said, not pessimism.

"Unless things would incredibly change, in some form that I can't even envision, there's no way that South Dakota will ever really be able to have a functional Amtrak system the way it's designed right now," Mills said. "It would take an incredible change of heart, and finances, and everything else."

There are myriad reasons for that, Mills said.

Cost is the main one, but even that barrier is couched in South Dakota history. That it's the only state in the 48 contiguous states to never have Amtrak service is a measure of economics, geography and timing.

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The state's last passenger rail line shut down in 1969, just a few years before Amtrak launched in 1971. That last South Dakota passenger line was a short leg on a route connecting Lincoln, Nebraska, with Billings, Montana. It stopped in Edgemont, in the southwest corner of the state. Rapid City's last passenger train departed in 1960; for Sioux Falls it was 1965. Those were shorter routes. The only transcontinental service through South Dakota ran through Aberdeen, then across the northern part of the state.

"That was never the most popular," Mills said.

Long before the 1970s, Mills said, it had become abundantly clear that passenger rail couldn't sustain itself. It was too expensive, too many people preferred the interstate highway system, airplanes and buses.

That's the reason Amtrak exists. In the beginning, the service's national network leaned in to existing, operational rail lines as a way to subsidize and preserve service. Without a passenger line to glom on to, Amtrak's original map left South Dakota out.

Even so, and even without much hope for future service, Mills and other railroad buffs admire Bilka's organization.

"He comes into my office and starts talking, and he almost has me convinced," Mills said. "He's got the support of all of us."

Wall of skepticism

The hill to climb to get beyond "almost" is more like a mountain in South Dakota.

No members of the state's congressional delegation responded on the record to a request from South Dakota Searchlight for comments on passenger rail service.

The State Department of Transportation, which works with the state rail board on the writing of the state rail plan, would only answer questions over email.

DOT spokesperson Julie Stevenson pointed to a Federal Railroad Administration Midwest Regional Rail Planning Study from 2021 as proof that passenger rail won't work for South Dakota.

The state participated in that study, Stevenson wrote, which was "built on current rail planning efforts" in 12 states, according to the FRA. Two state DOT employees were listed as study participants in the 198-page document. The words "South Dakota" appear 10 times – twice to list the names of those DOT employees, a few times where the document lists the states within the study area, once in a section listing states with bus service, and once on a graphic showing states "generally not engaged in planning service."

Stevenson's email listed reasons passenger rail doesn't make sense for the state: a lack of infrastructure up to passenger rail standards, no freight rail operator willing to partner up for passenger service, public opposition to a noisy service that might disrupt car travel, not enough federal funding, operational cost concerns and a low demand.

"Since SD is a state with low population densities, and there is insufficient demand for passenger rail services," Stevenson wrote. "Therefore, SD is hesitant to invest in a system that might not attract enough ridership to justify the costs."

Low population isn't exclusive to South Dakota, though, and advocates point to other states as proof that the "low demand" argument is flimsy. North Dakota has fewer people, but has Amtrak service on a transcontinental line used by more than 300,000 people in 2022. Wyoming has had passenger service in the past and aims to again. Its population is lower than either of the Dakotas.

When given the opportunity to embrace passenger rail, South Dakota turned away. In 1997, federal seed money was made available for passenger rail in South Dakota, but the state declined to start the process. Instead, it spent the money on other forms of transportation, Stevenson said, because "the state was not desirous of passenger rail."

The state spent approximately \$5.8 million on transit, \$9.5 million for railroads, \$3.8 million for airports and \$11.4 million for road construction projects using the 1997 funds.

Since then, the state has received "special transportation circumstances" grants each year from the federal Department of Transportation due to its lack of passenger rail. The state uses that money for things like track maintenance and upgrades, capacity building for freight rail, bridge rehabilitation and safety

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improvements at rail crossings.

If the state were to opt in to passenger rail, Stevenson wrote, it “would lose its Special Transportation Circumstances (STC) funding.”

Even the state’s Department of Tourism toes the state line on passenger rail.

A request for an interview with a tourism official about its possible value to the state’s visitor industry was met with an email saying that the state DOT would be a better source for information. Katlyn Svendsen, a spokesperson for the state’s “Travel South Dakota” website, also wrote a few sentences that mirrored the DOT’s earlier response, almost to the letter.

“Because of South Dakota’s low population density, there is insufficient demand for passenger rail services across South Dakota,” Svendsen wrote. “Travel South Dakota rarely, if ever, receives inquiries or requests to travel by rail through our state.”

Making the case

None of that has deterred Bilka. South Dakota was not the focus of the Midwest rail study cited by the state, Bilka said, and relying on it instead of conducting an independent study shows how little work has been done to investigate claims of low demand.

He noted that the state rail plan’s references to passenger rail, though expanded from its previous iteration, pointed to studies done without much help from South Dakota.

“All the plans or work referenced in the SD State Rail Plan was work conducted by other entities,” Bilka said. “They did not even include a potential ‘passenger rail vision,’ even though I strongly advocated for them to.”

Bilka also pointed to comments on the possibility of a Sioux Falls connection presented during passenger rail study meetings, and to the Midwest Regional Rail Planning Study’s mention of Sioux Falls as a city that could feasibly sustain service. That study is the one cited by the state as evidence of passenger rail’s impracticality.

As to costs, he said the state uses federal matching funds for other transportation projects. Freight rail, small-market airports in cities like Watertown and highways all require significant taxpayer funds, he said.

“No form of transportation pays for itself,” he said.

He also said that passenger rail’s up-front costs and operational debts are worth it for the public because it can spur economic development. Leaders are too often focused on the wrong costs, he argues.

“Sometimes our elected officials fall into the pitfall of short-termism,” Bilka said. “They see the sticker shock, rather than the slow drip of how much more we’re paying by not having services. And that’s my biggest argument when people scoff, ‘Oh, it’s gonna cost too much to upgrade the rail lines for passenger rail services.’ Like ‘no, we’re losing more money by not having them.’”

He’s used to this kind of call-and-response exercise. Pushing back on what he describes as a lack of vision and a “pennywise but pound-foolish” fear of losing annual grant stipends is part of the job.

It’s not his only role, of course. As an invited guest to Amtrak regional study meetings, he’s talked about unserved rural and tribal lands in South Dakota ripe for passenger rail service and existing rights-of-way that could help connect them.

Do a Google search for his name, and the fourth result is an opinion piece on passenger rail posted by the Rapid City Journal. Just below that search result is a link to a 13-page letter Bilka penned to the South Dakota Rail Authority in 2019, when he served as the South Dakota representative for the Washington, D.C.-based Rail Passengers Association. The letter urged the authority to consider the future with an eye to the experience of the Upper Midwest states connected to Amtrak’s Empire Builder line, which runs through Minnesota, North Dakota and Montana to connect Chicago to Seattle.

That line, with North Dakota stops in Fargo, Grand Forks, Devil’s Lake, Minot, Rugby and Williston, “is worth \$327 million every year to the economies of the states it serves – over five times the cost to operate the train,” Bilka wrote.

In addition to traveling to talk rail during regional meetings and ferreting out local support from any

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South Dakota organization willing to listen, Bilka regularly reaches out to media organizations – including South Dakota Searchlight – to spread the passenger rail message.

Since 2019, he's been quoted in stories from Iowa, South Dakota, Wyoming, Montana and Colorado.

Starting from nothing

Does he ever get sick of answering the same questions?

Not really, he said, even though the persistence of those questions can frustrate him. The repetition helps him fine-tune his answers; the varying forums where he offers them helps him adjust his emphasis for different audiences. He's lost track of the number of times he's responded to what he calls the "bologna" population density argument, but said it's well into the hundreds at this point.

"Overall, if I wasn't doing what I'm doing (as frustrating as it can be at times) no one else would," Bilka said. "I'm not cynical enough to say that areas don't deserve consideration for service if their elected officials fail to honestly look at these opportunities beyond the flawed assumptions someone made decades ago."

Magliari, the Amtrak spokesman, is quite familiar with the work of Bilka's All Aboard Northwest, and said it's the kind of work citizens of a state need to put in if they want to put themselves on a map. Amtrak and the Federal Railroad Administration aren't out to fill in a map with new rail lines for their own sake. They get involved with passenger rail in states that want it.

Drumming up support, attending meetings and calling reporters is the way to convince people that passenger rail is possible, he said.

"He's doing the right things," Magliari said of Bilka's work.

Mills, of the railroad museum, would be happy if the state started small. He suggests a partnership with bus lines that would allow passengers to buy a dual-purpose bus ticket to an Amtrak station in another state, where they could board a train.

There are partnerships like that out there already, including in Wyoming. If the state were to offer some support for that initial step, Mills could see a chance for the state to get some help through the grant funding that will continue to flow from the federal DOT for the next few years.

"That would be at least a way to start the conversation," Mills 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.

State's Open Meetings Commission hasn't met for three years Bill would open membership to deputy state's attorneys in hopes of keeping positions filled

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - JANUARY 19, 2024 3:00 PM

A state commission that hears complaints about transparency in government meetings has not met since December 2020, and the attorney general is taking steps to reactivate the group.

There have been six complaints forwarded to the commission in the meantime, according to the Attorney General's Office. Three were dismissed as not deserving of a hearing, the office said, but another three are awaiting hearings before the commission.

The Open Meetings Commission was established in 2004 to hear complaints about alleged violations of public meeting laws. The commission consists of five state's attorneys appointed by the attorney general. The recent inactivity is partly due to unfilled positions on the commission, according to Attorney General Marty Jackley, who took office in January 2023.

Jackley said he doesn't know why the commission was inactive during the tenure of his predecessor, Jason Ravensborg, who was impeached and removed from office for unrelated reasons. But Jackley said one of the recent challenges occurred when a commission member lost a state's attorney election, and Jackley hired another two members to work in his own office, leaving three vacancies on the commission.

"So, I literally took away the quorum," Jackley explained to lawmakers on Friday.

He announced the appointment of five new commissioners last week.

Jackley is now proposing a bill that would allow deputy state's attorneys to serve on the commission.

"We are trying to make government transparency a larger priority," Jackley told the Senate State Affairs Committee, which endorsed the bill 6-0 on Friday, with three members excused.

One of the complaints awaiting a hearing is against the Bennett County Commission for an allegedly improper executive session. The others are against the Tea City Council for allegedly failing to provide public accommodations for a teleconference meeting, and against the Piedmont Board of Trustees for failing to post a meeting agenda on its website.

Jackley told legislators the three pending complaints will be addressed at the Open Meetings Commission's next meeting, which is not currently scheduled on the state's calendar of meetings.

Jackley's office, in partnership with the South Dakota NewsMedia Association, recently released an updated handout explaining the state's open meeting laws. The guide had not been updated and released since 2017.

Joshua Haiar is a reporter based in Sioux Falls. Born and raised in Mitchell, he joined the Navy as a public affairs specialist after high school and then earned a degree from the University of South Dakota. Prior to joining South Dakota Searchlight, Joshua worked for five years as a multimedia specialist and journalist with South Dakota Public Broadcasting.

Creation of statewide public defense office receives unanimous support in committee

Effort would relieve counties of some costs for defendants who can't afford attorneys

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - JANUARY 19, 2024 12:39 PM

PIERRE — A bill that would fund a statewide public defense office passed through the House State Affairs Committee on a unanimous vote in the Capitol on Friday.

The office, which would assign attorneys to handle appeals along with abuse and neglect cases, would cost the state \$1.4 million annually, paying for one lead public defender, four staff attorneys and two support staffers.

The effort is expected to save counties an overall \$2.1 million and would provide a net savings of \$600,000 to taxpayers. Counties would still pay for public defenders or court-appointed attorneys for other types of criminal cases in which a defendant can't afford a lawyer.

The bill, which is supported by Gov. Kristi Noem, now heads to the House Appropriations Committee.

The request is an outgrowth of the work from a task force that met several times last year to discuss issues of indigent defense. Defendants have a constitutionally protected right to an attorney, which is currently funded at the county level in South Dakota.

When the group first convened, South Dakota was one of two states to saddle counties with the entire financial burden of providing legal representation to those who can't afford to pay lawyers.

South Dakota is now the last state in that category, and it currently ranks 49th in the nation in contributions to indigent defense from a statewide level, said Greg Sattizahn, South Dakota state court administrator.

The issue has become a budget buster for some counties, particularly smaller ones that face high-profile felony trials involving the payment of expert defense witnesses. It's also becoming difficult to find lawyers to take on court appointments in rural areas as the majority of lawyers live in urban areas.

South Dakota Supreme Court Chief Justice Steven Jensen told lawmakers during the annual State of the Judiciary speech last week that six counties in the state do not have any attorneys, while 23 have three or fewer lawyers.

That creates legal deserts where rural areas aren't able to find qualified lawyers to represent defendants.

"You really need to make sure that lawyer is trained and qualified to handle that kind of case. And so, when you have that quality representation, it saves costs as well," Sattizahn told lawmakers, explaining

that competent representation reduces future challenges to the case's outcome.

The criminal justice system is "vastly overpopulated" by low income individuals – many who depend on indigent defense, said Rep. Will Mortenson, R-Fort Pierre, during the bill hearing.

"I think this is a group that we often forget in this Capitol. There aren't very many people running around with a badge for indigent folks, right? They don't hire lobbyists," Mortenson said. "In this case, we have an opportunity to serve those people better, to guarantee their constitutional rights in a more effective way."

Officials hope the state public defender office will eventually come to serve a broader role in the justice system, offering guidance to counties and court-appointed lawyers and eventually offering legal help in cases before they reach the appeals stage.

An indigent defense commission will oversee the office.

The effort was widely supported by lobbyists for the legal profession during testimony. The South Dakota Association of County Commissioners also spoke in support of the bill.

Rep. Roger Chase, R-Huron, was co-chair of a county funding commission last summer, exploring legislative efforts that would alleviate the financial strain on most of South Dakota's counties. Indigent legal defense was the number one priority during the study, though the group had sought a different solution that would cap counties' defense costs and require the state pay the rest of it.

"There's been our priorities and UJS's priorities," Chase said. "This comes together and it just proves that when people sit down in a room and really put good thoughts together, good legislation can come from that."

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 says he's 'ready to act' on 'significant' changes at the border, including asylum

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA - JANUARY 19, 2024 6:03 PM

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden Friday said he backs "significant policy changes" to asylum law, amid ongoing immigration policy negotiations between the White House and Senate tied to passage of a global security package.

"I believe we need significant policy changes at the border, including changes in our asylum system, to ensure that we have the authority we need to control the border," Biden said in remarks to mayors gathered at the White House. "I'm ready to act."

It's a stark contrast with the president's campaign promise to "restore our moral standing in the world and our historic role as a safe haven for refugees and asylum-seekers," as he said in his 2020 acceptance speech at the virtual Democratic National Convention.

But as the 2024 presidential election gets underway and increasing numbers of migrants claim asylum at the Southern border, Biden has taken a harder line approach on immigration, especially to free up aid to Ukraine.

The comments were made during a meeting with hundreds of U.S. mayors, and as cities such as Chicago and New York have requested federal aid to handle migrants that GOP Texas Gov. Greg Abbott has sent to Democratic cities in buses and planes without warning local officials.

Immigration is also a central campaign issue for the front-runner for the GOP presidential nomination, former President Donald Trump, who regularly blasts the "invasion" of the United States by immigrants.

Biden hopes for border deal next week

Biden said that his administration's team, which includes U.S. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, is continuing to negotiate with a group of bipartisan senators to strike a deal on immigration policies. Senate Republicans have demanded immigration in legislation in return for their support for billions in aid to Ukraine, Israel, Taiwan and U.S. border security.

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Progressive and Latino lawmakers this week pushed back against changes to asylum law advocated by Republicans who want to set a higher bar for migrants to claim asylum.

There is no bill text yet for a border security deal, but GOP Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina has said that the lead Republican negotiator, Sen. James Lankford of Oklahoma, has negotiated "meaningful reforms" in immigration policy through expedited removal procedures and changes to asylum law.

A major sticking point for Republicans in those talks is the White House's use of parole, which temporarily grants immigration protection. It's a tool that the Biden administration has used for more than 140,000 Ukrainians; more than 76,000 Afghans; and 168,000 Cuban, Haitian, Nicaraguan, and Venezuelan nationals. The White House has also used parole for migrants at the Southern border.

Biden said that he hopes a deal can be reached with the Senate next week, and said that it's up to House Republicans if "they are ready to act as well."

"They have to choose whether they want to solve a problem or keep weaponizing the issue to score political points against the president," Biden said.

House Republicans are also moving forward with impeachment proceedings into Mayorkas over the Biden administration's immigration policies at the U.S.-Mexico border.

Mayors in D.C.

The president's remarks closed the three-day conference that marked the United States Conference of Mayors' 92nd winter meeting in Washington, D.C. He touted his administration's bipartisan work to help state and local governments improve infrastructure and address climate change.

"Mayors get the job done," he said. "With your help, we're also making the biggest investment in fighting climate change."

Biden pointed to the implementation of the bipartisan infrastructure law and Democrats' climate and policy law known as the Inflation Reduction Act.

He also praised the mayors for helping reduce gun violence by implementing the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act.

"We've got to do a lot more," Biden said, such as passing universal background checks and banning assault weapons.

Members of Congress also joined throughout the conference, including U.S. Reps. Josh Gottheimer, Democrat of New Jersey, and Marc Molinaro, Republican of New York, who made a joint appearance early Friday.

Gottheimer and Molinaro, both members of the bipartisan Problem Solvers Caucus, said that Congress needs to focus on issues that Republicans and Democrats can agree on, such as the bipartisan infrastructure law and bipartisan CHIPS and Science Act. Their comments came during a panel moderated by Columbus, Ohio Mayor Andrew Ginther.

"We gotta put the country first," Gottheimer said, adding that by doing so, "it'll lift everyone up."

Cabinet officials such as Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg participated in interviews led by Reno, Nevada Mayor Hillary Schieve.

Schieve is also president of the Conference of Mayors.

Buttigieg, the former mayor of South Bend, Indiana, told the mayors early Friday that one thing he missed about local government is how "local leadership is just more rooted in reality," and that if there is a hole in the road, people will know whether it gets fixed.

"The truth is never that far away," he said.

Buttigieg said he tries to bring that level of work to the national level through federal investment in roads, trains and transit.

Harris, mayors discuss gun violence

Vice President Kamala Harris also met with mayors, on Thursday, and participated in a conversation about gun violence.

In 2019, there were 414 mass shootings, in 2020 there were 610 mass shootings, in 2021 there were 689 mass shootings, in 2022 there were 646 mass shootings and in 2023 there were 656 mass shootings, according to Gun Violence Archive, which tracks gun violence in the U.S.

This year, there have been 14 mass shootings, according to the Gun Violence Archive.

During the conversation with Kansas City, Missouri Mayor Quinton Lucas, Harris touted the Biden administration's White House Office of Gun Violence Prevention and its work to help states access funds from the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act — the gun safety legislation Congress passed in 2022 following two deadly mass shootings.

Those mass shootings were at an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas where 19 children and two teachers were murdered and in Buffalo, New York, where a white supremacist targeted a Black neighborhood and killed 10 Black people at a grocery store.

"Gun violence is the leading cause of death of children in America," Harris said. "I have met with parents who say a silent prayer every time their child gets on a school bus, or they drop them off at school, that there's nobody running around with an assault weapon, breaking into their school."

Lucas asked Harris what advice she would give mayors trying to tackle the gun violence epidemic.

"The convening power of mayors is extraordinary," she said. "You then as mayors have the power to convene not only the community-based providers, but the folks from city agencies, folks from law enforcement and to create these conversations where, invariably, ideas will come from and plans can be hatched to create greater synergy."

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

Bipartisan deal to expand child tax credit, revive business tax breaks advances in Congress

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY - JANUARY 19, 2024 5:03 PM

WASHINGTON — A plan to temporarily expand the child tax credit and revive tax breaks for businesses received overwhelming bipartisan support in a committee vote Friday, a rare moment of compromise in a divided Congress that's headed into a heated election year.

The tax policymakers of the GOP-led U.S. House Committee on Ways and Means voted 40-3 to send the Tax Relief for American Families and Workers Act, or H.R. 7024, to the House for a full floor vote.

The Biden administration is "encouraged" and "pleased" with the committee's vote, White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said Friday.

The framework, co-led by House Ways and Means Chair Jason Smith of Missouri and Senate Committee on Finance Chair Ron Wyden, an Oregon Democrat, includes both parties' priorities to address child poverty and expired Trump-era tax breaks.

After four-and-a-half hours of debate and several attempts by Democrats to revive, at least in part, more generous pandemic-era child tax credit benefits, the panel placed its near-unanimous stamp of approval on the major tax deal.

After casting her vote, Washington state Democrat Suzan DelBene said the legislation "is an imperfect bill in many ways but that is the reality of divided government."

"It nevertheless includes several provisions that I have long advocated for that would help support workers and families and grow our economy. That is why I voted to advance the package, but there is still more we can do," she said in a statement.

Details on child tax credit changes

The bill, if eventually enacted into law, would increase the child tax credit incrementally for the taxable years 2023 through 2025, and adjust the credit for inflation.

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The amounts would increase from \$1,800 in 2023, to \$1,900 in 2024 and \$2,000 in 2025.

Under current tax law, parents can only receive up to \$1,600 back per child.

The bill also aims to restore tax credits for low-income housing construction.

As for reviving expired business tax incentives, the bill would reinstate full expensing for domestic research and development costs and 100% bonus depreciation for equipment purchases, and speed up the timeframe during which companies can deduct certain costs.

Other incentives include tax relief for victims of qualifying wildfires after 2014, and for those who suffered losses as a result of the February 2023 train derailment in East Palestine, Ohio.

The legislation also aims to establish tax incentives that encourage more business between the U.S. and Taiwan.

Smith said Friday the bill is a product of more than a decade of discussion on how "to reform the tax code in a way that supports workers, families, and small businesses."

"The bill before us today represents bipartisan policies that are proven and effective, common sense fixes to the tax code that will rebuild our communities, support better jobs and wages, and grow our economy. Many members on both sides of this committee are cosponsors of the different policies in this legislation," Smith said in his opening remarks.

Paid for by ending another tax break

The three-year deal is expected to be entirely paid for by cutting off a COVID-19 tax break for businesses who retained employees during the pandemic.

While businesses originally had until April 15, 2025 to claim the tax credit, the new legislation would end the program on Jan. 31 of this year, essentially stopping the flow of claims that have recently gained extra popularity.

Smith said in his remarks that the program "has become overrun with fraud and ballooned in cost six times larger than (Congressional Budget Office's) original estimate."

That change is expected to save the government an estimated \$79 billion, according to an analysis by the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget.

The Business Roundtable, an organization representing American CEOs, has been lobbying for the bill and praised the "strong bipartisan vote" as an "important step toward restoring three pro-growth tax policies essential to America's competitiveness."

Florida's Rep. Vern Buchanan, a business owner, said restoring a business' ability to fully expense as well as loosening interest deductibility rules is "huge."

"I can tell you for small businesses, that deduction makes a big difference and (owners) can hang on (to) a little bit more of what they earn, and use that to expand and grow their business," the Florida Republican said.

Fellow Floridian Greg Steube said he's been "working tirelessly" for tax relief on disaster payments, with a particular focus on Hurricane Ian, which brought massive and expensive damage to the Sunshine State in 2022.

"Today we can move one step closer to providing real relief," said Steube, a Republican.

Warnings and opposition

Although the organization praised the bipartisan, bicameral bill structured to offset its own cost, the nonpartisan Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget warned that the policies "would add significantly to the already massive federal debt" if extended beyond their 2025 expiration dates.

If extended, the child tax credit would cost \$180 billion, and the business tax incentives \$525 billion, through 2033, according to the analysis by the CRFB.

And while most of the panel's minority members supported the legislation, more than a dozen expressed concern during the bill's markup that the child tax credit expansion still does not meet the needs of low-income families.

DelBene's amendment to return the tax credit to full refundability, as it was under temporary COVID-19 changes, was unsuccessful.

Full refundability means the earned income threshold, \$2,500, would drop to \$0, giving access to the poorest families.

DelBene also proposed returning the tax credit payments to monthly installments, as it was during the pandemic, and raising the amount per child to \$3,000, and \$3,600 for each kid under age 6.

The amendment was voted down 18-25, among the amendments of several of her colleagues.

After the pandemic-era temporary increase illustrated significant reductions in child poverty, Democrats have been pushing to expand, and specifically make the credit permanent.

Several Republicans disagreed with DelBene's amendment, wanting instead "to stick to the deal that has been struck," said Rep. Adrian Smith of Nebraska.

"The amendment would chip away at or destroy what has been a hard-won compromise," he said.

Rep. Gwen Moore, a Wisconsin Democrat, said the markup was a "missed opportunity" to make changes to the child tax credit. The panel defeated her amendment to increase the percentage at which the credit is earned, to 40%.

The child tax credit phases in at 15% of a household's income, meaning that lower earners might not achieve the maximum credit amount in one year, depending on wage and hours.

"This is not supposed to be a work program, it's supposed to recognize the expensive cost of raising kids and wanting them to have the proper development, health, and education," Moore said.

Moore was one of three no votes, along with Reps. Lloyd Doggett of Texas and Linda Sanchez of California.

The House returns Jan. 29.

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

Kids are flooded with social media and news.

Some states want to help them question it.

Media literacy classes have attracted bipartisan support, but some critics see a 'woke' agenda.

BY: MATT VASILOGAMBROS - JANUARY 19, 2024 9:21 AM

Young people may be digital natives, but many of them aren't equipped to deal with the increasing onslaught of disinformation and deepfakes appearing in their social media feeds.

A growing number of states think they have an antidote: media literacy education.

The goal of media literacy, sometimes called digital citizenship or information literacy, is to help students think critically about the news that is presented to them. Media-literate students also should be able to separate fact from fiction in political messaging, advertisements, television shows and social media posts.

Perhaps most importantly, supporters say, young people should be able to infer why someone posted an Instagram reel or TikTok video, and to weigh the potential consequences of spreading it around.

Over the past five years, states including California, Delaware, Illinois, New Jersey and Texas have enacted laws that require public school students to learn media literacy during their time in school. Despite outside criticism from some conservative scholars, all passed with bipartisan support.

"As technology changes, society has to change, and a big part of that is education changing," said California Assemblymember Marc Berman, a Democrat who last year sponsored his state's new law.

Berman pointed to the 2021 assault on the U.S. Capitol, fueled by the lie that Donald Trump won the 2020 election, as well as anti-vaccination conspiracy theories and Holocaust denialism as the consequences of a lack of media literacy.

But encouraging media literacy in an increasingly polarized political environment will be a "messy" chal-

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lenge, said Paul Mihailidis, a professor of civic media and journalism at Emerson College in Boston.

"It's not a very apolitical thing," Mihailidis said. "When you teach people how to spot disinformation and how to navigate different online spaces, inevitably that wades into people looking at certain content one way and certain content another way."

California's law calls on the state's top education authorities to include media literacy in curriculums for the four core subjects — English, science, math and social studies — when the state next updates them in the coming years and pays for the work.

Berman acknowledged that California's \$38 billion budget shortfall could complicate efforts to fully fund media literacy programs, while asserting that doing so is "absolutely something that we need."

Young people have grown up with social media, but it is evolving with the spread of misinformation and disinformation — and artificial intelligence has the potential to make it even worse, said Alvin Lee, a junior at Stanford University and executive director of the student advocacy group GENup, which pushed for the California measure.

"It's not just about understanding what is not true or true on social media," said Lee, who is studying political science and wants to work in education policy. "It's about being a literate citizen."

But some Republican lawmakers and conservative thinkers say the media literacy bills coming out of state legislatures are vague and promote "woke" ideologies, pointing to some suggested curriculums that advocate for a more equitable and inclusive society. They worry that some of the measures will undermine parents' ability to instill their values in their children.

"Critical media literacy seeks to undermine what it sees as the dominant institutions of Western capitalist society," John D. Sailer, a senior fellow at the National Association of Scholars, a conservative think tank, wrote in City Journal in 2021. "Changing society is a clear goal."

Bipartisan efforts

Washington state lawmakers are likely to pass bipartisan legislation this year that would send money to schools so they can evaluate and improve existing media literacy courses. The exact amount would be decided later.

Since a law was enacted in 2016, Washington state schools have embedded media literacy across curriculums. If passed, this latest measure would boost that education, said Democratic state Sen. Marko Liias, one of the co-sponsors of the bill, which passed the state Senate last March.

The bill would set up grants for teachers to receive training in media literacy; the state House is set to debate it in the coming months. As in other states, the bill in Washington has enjoyed strong bipartisan support.

"This has been an effort where Democrats and Republicans have come together to say, 'We need to make sure students are better prepared for the future of technology and our information landscape,'" Liias said. "That's been really important for us in the state to keep making progress."

Only four of the state Senate's 20 Republican members voted against the measure. One of the dissenters, state Sen. Jim McCune, said the bill leaves too many unanswered questions.

"It's another mandate on education," McCune told Stateline. "Most people learn media literacy in their life, but the bill is very vague about what they're going to teach. Schools already are failing across the state of Washington."

If students need help recognizing disinformation online, they should ask their parents, McCune added.

But that misses the point of media literacy education, said Erin McNeill, CEO and founder of Media Literacy Now, a Massachusetts-based nonprofit that has pushed state legislatures to boost mandates and funding for the effort.

"Media literacy is about learning the questions to ask; it's never about telling students which is the right source," she said. "They're not gaining any skills that way."

At least 19 states have some media literacy education in their public schools, according to her group. There are active bills in Indiana, Massachusetts, Missouri, New Hampshire and Oklahoma, with both Republican and Democratic sponsors.

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Media literacy education in practice

When Saba Presley's middle school students learn the electromagnetic spectrum in her mixed-grade science class in Albuquerque, New Mexico, she weaves in media literacy lessons.

As the sixth-, seventh- and eighth-grade students at Mountain Mahogany Community School learn different wavelengths, Presley asks them to simultaneously examine persuasion techniques that the news media uses to engage consumers. Then, using mnemonic devices students created to remember the spectrum between gamma and radio waves, they make posters and advertisements to convince their peers that their memory method is the best.

On one poster, for example, a student capitalizes the first letter of different wavelengths: "Gentlefolks, eXcessive Usage of Vegemite Is Majorly Robotic." The poster adds at the bottom, "The best mnemonic device to remember electromagnetic wavelengths, unless you're Australian." The poster also shows a robot spreading vegemite on toast.

The lesson is a hit with students, Presley said.

"If you teach students how these manipulation tactics or persuasion tactics are used in media, and teach them how to use them, then they're going to be able to have their eye out for them," Presley said. "It's not just understanding the information. It's being a skeptic."

Over her six years of teaching science to middle school students, she has noticed their media engagement skyrocket. But, she said, they are becoming "passive consumers," taking in what they see on TikTok or a Google search as truth without thinking about the creator, the intended audience and how the creator might benefit from convincing them.

Presley created her lesson plan after taking a seven-month professional development course provided by a company called Media Savvy Citizens in 2022, which was offered to middle school teachers throughout New Mexico. The course encouraged teachers to integrate media literacy into existing curriculum, instead of it being a stand-alone course.

Presley hesitated, though, when asked whether media literacy education should be mandatory. If New Mexico were to someday require media literacy, teachers should be given in-depth training and resources to integrate those lessons effectively; they're already asked to do so much, she said.

Indeed, a paper published in 2021 by the Rand Corporation found that while media literacy is taught in most schools nationwide, the instruction is uneven and "diverges considerably" among classrooms. Teachers also reported they often lacked instructional resources and training.

Implementation has been scattershot, which can contribute to inequities in what students are taught, especially in high-poverty schools, said Alice Huguet, a policy researcher at the Rand Corporation and one of the paper's authors. Getting legislation on the books is only the beginning; implementation can make or break any policy.

"Even within the same states, we saw that teachers had very different experiences with support for teaching media literacy," Huguet wrote in an email. "While I absolutely think that education should be tailored to context to an extent, leaving an important subject like this completely open to interpretation — or to not being delivered at all — is risky."

In Illinois, every high school student must take media literacy lessons. But they can come in many different forms, said Yonty Friesem, an associate professor of communications at Columbia College Chicago, part of a team of educators that developed the media literacy resources and curriculum for Illinois high schools.

He pointed to examples throughout the state, including one teacher who examines the history of hip-hop music and has students evaluate rap from the 1980s and compare it to what they listen to now. Another teacher asks her science students to look at who wrote an experiment's instructions and evaluate the intended audience.

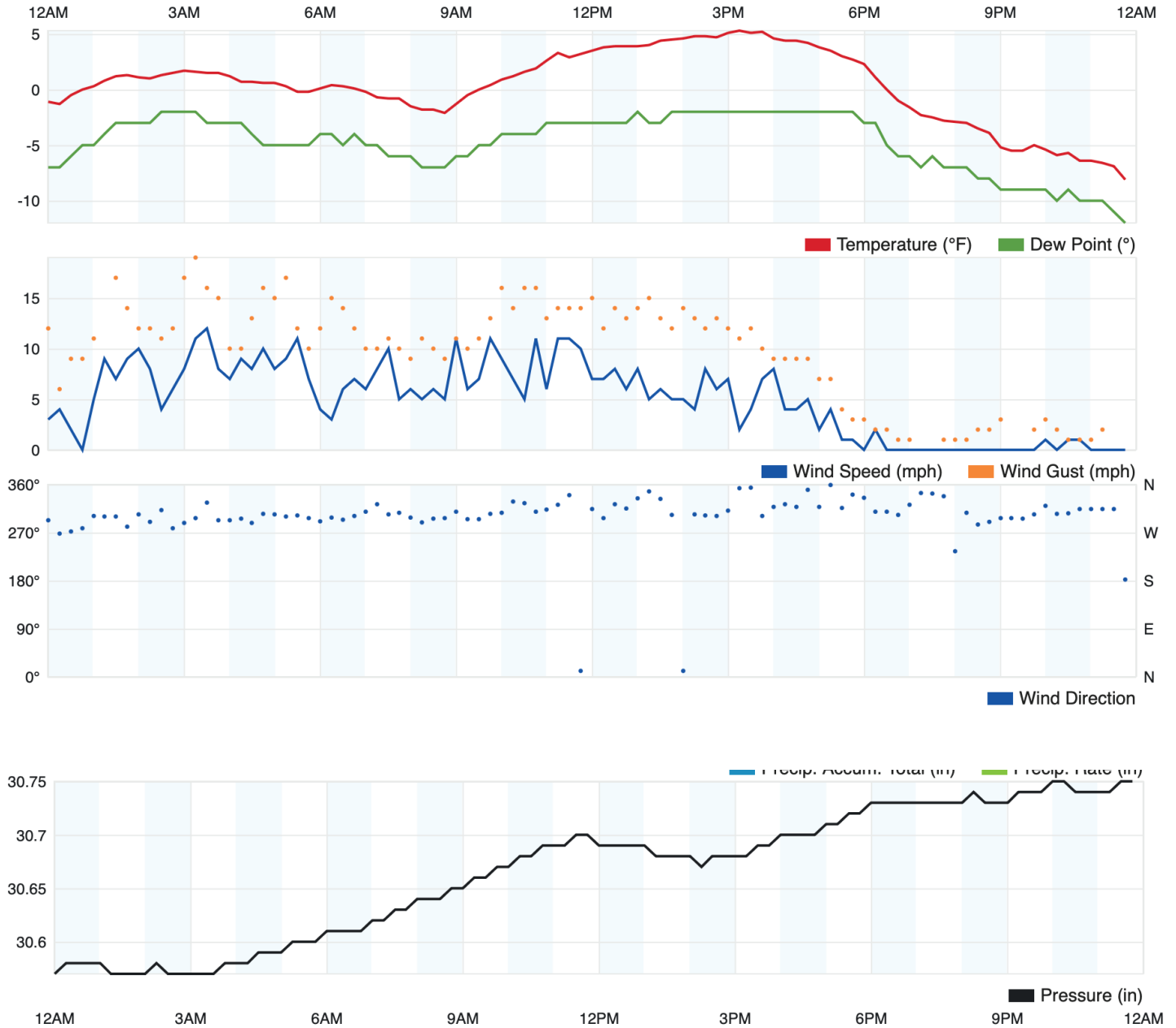
"Since we're using media in every part of our life, it shouldn't be separated," Friesem said. "We need to have those literacy skills across disciplines."

Matt Vasilogambros covers voting rights, gun laws and Western climate policy for Stateline. He lives in San Diego, California.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

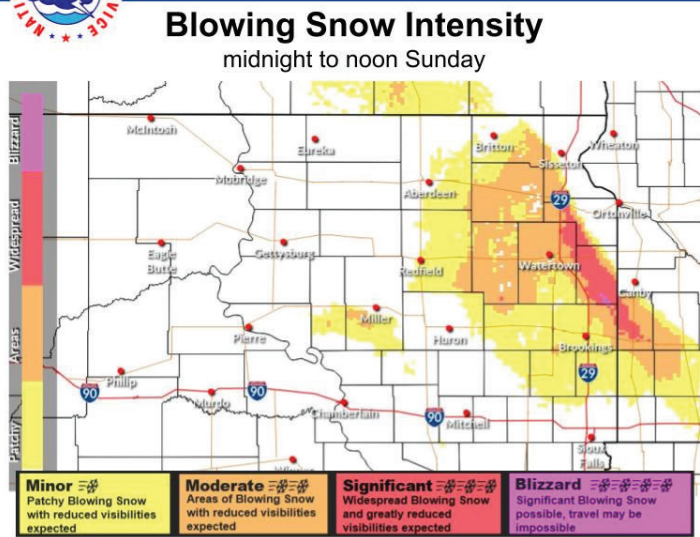


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Sat Jan 20	Sun Jan 21	Mon Jan 22	Tue Jan 23	Wed Jan 24	Thu Jan 25	Fri Jan 26
8°F	22°F	20°F	27°F	32°F	32°F	32°F
1°F	13°F	15°F	20°F	21°F	22°F	21°F
S	S	NNW	NE	S	SSW	S
22 MPH	27 MPH	10 MPH	8 MPH	12 MPH	9 MPH	10 MPH

Strong Winds into Sunday Morning January 20, 2024 4:26 AM



- Winds out of the south **gusting 35 to around 45 mph**
 - Strongest over the eastern slopes of the Prairie Coteau tonight into early Sunday morning (Sisseton, Summit, South Shore, and Clear Lake area)
- Patchy **Blowing Snow** over central South Dakota to expand and intensify over eastern South Dakota tonight into Sunday morning

Maximum Wind Gust Forecast

	1/20 Sat					1/21 Sun						
	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm
Aberdeen	22↑	26↑	30↑	35↑	36↑	36↑	35↑	35↑	32↑	29↑	22↑	14↑
Britton	16↑	26↑	28↑	33↑	37↑	38↑	38↑	37↑	32↑	30↑	24↑	16↑
Brookings	9↑	17↑	20↑	26↑	33↑	37↑	40↑	41↑	41↑	38↑	37↑	32↑
Chamberlain	18↑	28↑	30↑	32↑	33↑	33↑	32↑	31↑	30↑	26↑	18↑	13↑
Clark	18↑	26↑	29↑	36↑	41↑	43↑	44↑	43↑	41↑	39↑	32↑	26↑
Eagle Butte	31↑	36↑	37↑	37↑	32↑	28↑	23↑	16↑	8↑	9↑	9↑	9↑
Ellendale	23↑	30↑	30↑	35↑	36↑	36↑	33↑	31↑	28↑	25↑	18↑	13↑
Eureka	26↑	33↑	36↑	32↑	32↑	30↑	28↑	22↑	18↑	18↑	13↑	10↑
Gettysburg	29↑	36↑	38↑	38↑	38↑	33↑	32↑	29↑	23↑	17↑	13↑	9↑
Huron	18↑	26↑	30↑	35↑	37↑	39↑	40↑	40↑	39↑	37↑	30↑	26↑
Kennebec	24↑	31↑	33↑	36↑	36↑	33↑	31↑	31↑	25↑	21↑	14↑	9↑
McIntosh	36↑	40↑	41↑	35↑	32↑	25↑	18↑	13↑	9↑	8↑	9↑	9↑
Milbank	12↑	18↑	18↑	22↑	26↑	30↑	29↑	28↑	26↑	28↑	24↑	18↑
Miller	22↑	28↑	33↑	36↑	39↑	38↑	39↑	37↑	30↑	29↑	20↑	12↑
Mobridge	28↑	31↑	35↑	32↑	32↑	26↑	23↑	18↑	14↑	10↑	9↑	8↑
Murdo	28↑	36↑	37↑	35↑	35↑	29↑	28↑	24↑	17↑	15↑	12↑	10↑
Pierre	23↑	30↑	33↑	32↑	32↑	25↑	23↑	20↑	16↑	13↑	9↑	8↑
Redfield	21↑	28↑	32↑	37↑	39↑	39↑	37↑	37↑	36↑	31↑	25↑	18↑
Sisseton	14↑	20↑	22↑	29↑	33↑	35↑	31↑	28↑	26↑	26↑	24↑	16↑
Watertown	14↑	21↑	24↑	31↑	36↑	39↑	43↑	43↑	40↑	38↑	33↑	25↑
Webster	17↑	26↑	32↑	38↑	43↑	44↑	44↑	43↑	43↑	39↑	31↑	24↑
Wheaton	14↑	18↑	20↑	25↑	29↑	30↑	28↑	26↑	28↑	28↑	25↑	18↑

Winds to increase today over central South Dakota, causing patchy blowing snow. The wind and blowing snow will expand to eastern South Dakota tonight, with winds gusting out of the south 35 to around 45 mph. The strongest winds will be over the eastern slopes of the Prairie Coteau tonight into early Sunday morning (including the Sisseton, Summit, South Shore, and Clear Lake areas).

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Warmer Air moving in Sunday Morning

January 20, 2024
4:31 AM



- **Cold today:**
Highs in the single digits to teens
- **Seasonal temperatures** returning
Sunday & Monday:
Highs mainly in the 20s
- **Above normal temperatures** for the
2nd half of the work week:
Highs in the 30s

High Temperature Forecast

	1/20 Sat	1/21 Sun	1/22 Mon	1/23 Tue	1/24 Wed	1/25 Thu
Aberdeen	8	23	20	27	33	34
Britton	8	21	21	26	33	32
Brookings	1	20	27	28	33	34
Chamberlain	14	30	28	28	36	34
Clark	4	20	23	25	32	32
Eagle Butte	15	28	25	25	35	35
Ellendale	6	21	23	25	33	32
Eureka	10	23	23	25	33	32
Gettysburg	13	28	26	25	33	31
Huron	7	24	25	28	35	34
Kennebec	15	33	28	27	34	33
McIntosh	12	27	25	25	36	34
Milbank	8	21	24	27	35	35
Miller	11	26	23	25	33	32
Mobridge	15	28	26	28	36	34
Murdo	19	34	28	28	34	33
Pierre	19	33	28	29	36	34
Redfield	8	23	23	25	34	32
Sisseton	8	21	22	27	35	34
Watertown	3	20	22	26	32	33
Webster	6	19	21	25	32	32
Wheaton	6	20	25	28	33	34

After highs in the single digits and teens today, they will return to seasonal values Sunday and Monday (mainly in the 20s). Highs will be in the 30s by Wednesday, and remain above normal through the weekend.

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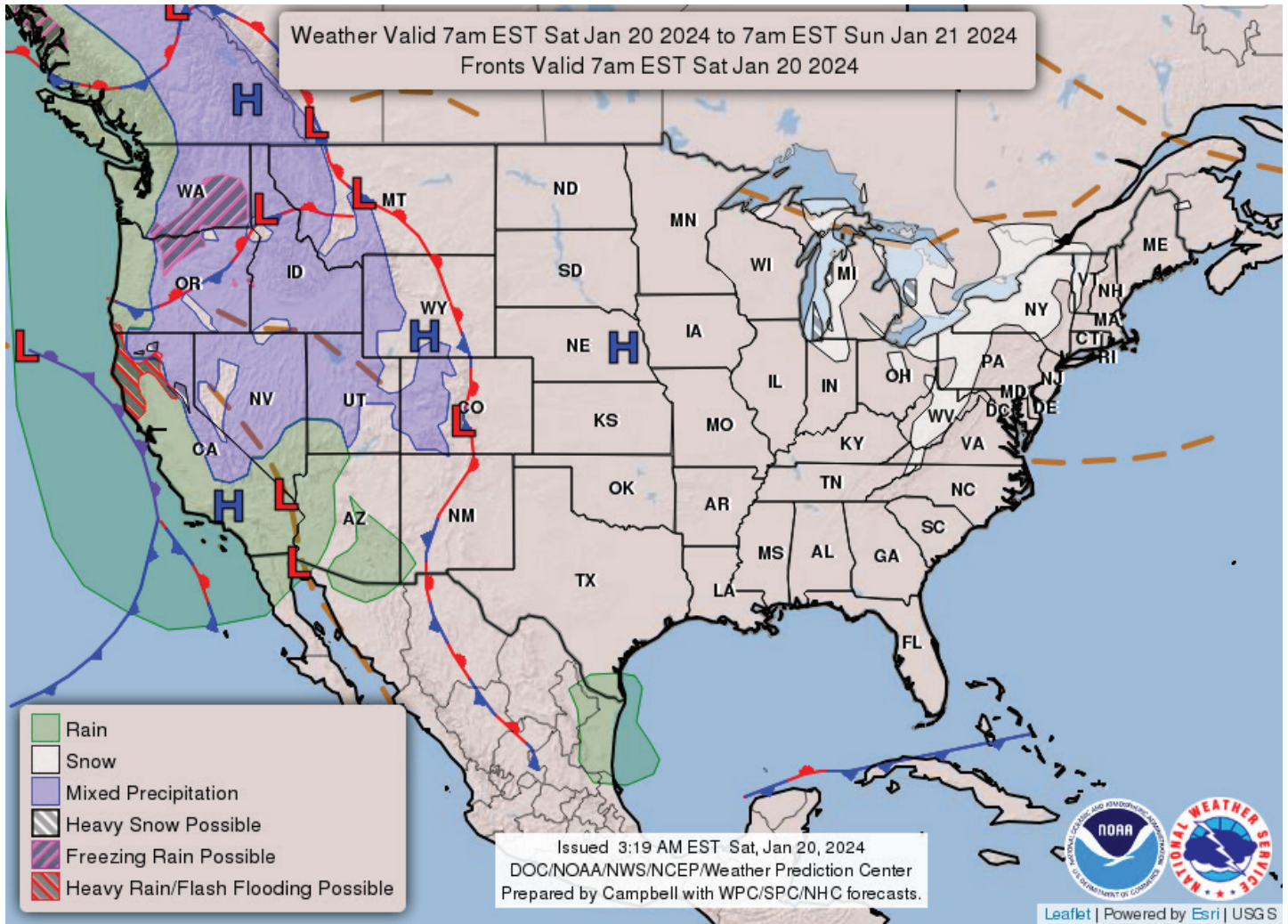
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 5 °F at 3:16 PM
Low Temp: -7 °F at 11:24 PM
Wind: 19 mph at 3:09 AM
Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 9 hours, 19 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 60 in 1944
Record Low: -29 in 1936
Average High: 24
Average Low: 1
Average Precip in Jan.: 0.38
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 0.38
Precip Year to Date: 0.00
Sunset Tonight: 5:23:12 pm
Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:02:41 am



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Today in Weather History

January 20, 1944: A late January warm-up occurred on this date in weather history in 1944. Temperatures rose into the upper 50s to the mid-60s across central and northeast South Dakota and west-central Minnesota. Overnight lows in the 20s and lower 30s were above the normal highs for the year. Record highs were set at Aberdeen, Kennebec, Sisseton, and Watertown. Watertown rose to 56 degrees, Sisseton rose to 58 degrees, Aberdeen rose to 60 degrees, and Kennebec rose to 65 degrees. Also, Mobridge rose to 57 degrees, and Pierre rose to 61 degrees.

1863: The famous "Mud March" begins in the Fredericksburg area of Virginia.

1883: Yuma, Arizona, sets its all-time record low of 22 degrees. The record is tied in 1911 and again in 1937.

1933: Phoenix, Arizona, receives light snow between 7:55 pm and 9:25 pm.

1937: The wettest Inaugural Day of record with 1.77 inches of rain in 24 hours. Temperatures were only in the 30s as Franklin D. Roosevelt was sworn in for his second term.

1943 - Strange vertical antics took place in the Black Hills of South Dakota. While the temperature at Deadwood was a frigid 16 degrees below zero, the town of Lead, just a mile and a half away, but 600 feet higher in elevation, reported a balmy 52 degree reading. (David Ludlum)

1954 - The temperature at Rogers Pass, MT, plunged to 70 degrees below zero to establish a new record for the continental U.S. (David Ludlum)

1978 - A paralyzing "Nor'easter" produced a record 21 inches of snow at Boston, 15 to 20 inches in Rhode Island, and one to two feet of snow in Pennsylvania. Winds along the coast of Connecticut gusted to 70 mph. (David Ludlum)

1987 - Gale force winds lingered along the northern Atlantic coast in the wake of a holiday weekend storm. High winds along the eastern slopes of the Northern Rockies gusted to 67 mph at Livingston MT, and high winds in southern California gusted to 70 mph near San Bernardino. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - A storm in the Upper Midwest produced heavy snow and gale force winds. Up to 27.5 inches of snow was reported along the Lake Superior shoreline of Michigan, with 22 inches at Marquette. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - The temperature in the Washington D.C. area warmed into the lower 50s for the Presidential Inauguration during the late morning hours, before gusty northwest winds ushered in colder air that afternoon. (National Weather Summary)

1990 - While heavy thunderstorm rains drenched the Central Gulf Coast States, with 4.23 inches reported at Centreville AL in 24 hours, unseasonably warm weather continued across Florida. Five cities in Florida reported record high temperatures for the date. Tampa FL equalled their record high for January of 85 degrees. (National Weather Summary)

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

DON'T FORGET WHAT HE LOOKS LIKE!

Little Danny was proud of his newborn brother. Every now and then, he would quietly and carefully approach his crib, look down at him, and smile.

On one occasion, his mother stood watching him from a corner in the nursery while she was folding the baby's clothes. After a few moments, Little Danny said, "Little Brother, before you get too big and forget, please remember what God looked like when you last saw Him in heaven, cause I want you to tell me when you learn to talk."

Little Danny is not the only one who wants to know what God looks like. Hidden in the heart of everyone, everywhere is the same question. It was planted there by God Himself!

John wrote that "No one has ever seen God." If this is true, Little Danny is in serious trouble.

However, John also wrote that "His only Son, Jesus, who is Himself God, is near to the Father's heart, and He has revealed God (which means 'made Him available') to us."

Jesus was, and still is, the complete expression of God in human form. Through His life and teachings, He revealed God to us, so we do, indeed, know what He looked like, acted like, and thought like.

Remember this critical fact, Jesus passed on that "picture" of God to His disciples, and they in turn passed it on to their disciples. So, today, we - as His disciples - have the same responsibility that Jesus had: to reveal God to the world through the way we live. What a great privilege!

Prayer: Lord, You have given us the responsibility to make Your Son known to the world. Empower us with Your Spirit to live God-like lives that represent You well. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: No one has ever seen God. The one and only Son, who is himself God and is at the Father's side - he has revealed him. John 1:18



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: 01.19.24

1 9 16 17 30 17

MegaPlier: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$262,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.17.24

9 14 16 23 40 5

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$2,450,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 6 Mins 58 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.19.24

17 30 33 36 41 8

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 21 Mins 59 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.17.24

3 15 17 24 33

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$24,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 21 Mins 58 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.17.24

14 38 51 53 55 25

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 50 Mins 59 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.17.24

18 22 43 61 65 2

Power Play: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$120,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 50 Mins 58 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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News from the  Associated Press

Friday's Scores

The Associated Press

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL

Canton 74, Beresford 48
Castlewood 54, Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 44
Custer 69, Newell 47
Dakota Valley 55, Tri-Valley 45
Ethan 51, Arlington 41
Faith 64, McIntosh 22
Faulkton 45, Ipswich 31
Flandreau 60, McCook Central-Montrose 18
Freeman 65, Menno 25
Gayville-Volin High School 63, Colome 17
Hanson 58, Canistota 46
Herreid-Selby 61, North Central 30
Hill City 48, Deubrook 30
Hot Springs 50, Lakota Tech 41
Kadoka Area 41, Jones County 21
Lemmon High School 65, Bison 18
Lyman 84, Bennett County 26
Rapid City Central 78, Brookings 67
Red Cloud 63, Spearfish 53
Sioux Falls Christian 66, Madison 26
Sioux Valley 58, Dell Rapids 40
Sturgis Brown 66, Lead-Deadwood 12
Timber Lake 65, Tiospaye Topa 40
Vermillion 74, Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 67
Wagner 57, Centerville 50
Wakpala 58, Little Wound 52
Warner 51, Britton-Hecla 23
Watertown 55, Rapid City Stevens 50
Yankton 31, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 29
Panhandle Conference Tournament=
Semifinal=
Edgemont 41, Morrill, Neb. 34

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Roncalli 67, Northwestern 53
Bennett County 59, Lyman 53
Canton 75, Beresford 42
Castlewood 82, Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 36
Custer 62, Hill City 51
Dakota Valley 86, Tri-Valley 53
Faulkton 48, Ipswich 41
Flandreau 61, McCook Central-Montrose 38
Freeman 77, Menno 33

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Gayville-Volin High School 69, Colome 35
Great Plains Lutheran 58, Sioux Falls Lutheran 27
Harrisburg 56, Sioux Falls Jefferson 41
Jones County 44, Kadoka Area 43, OT
Little Wound 76, Wakpala 62
Milbank 80, Florence-Henry 36
Philip 57, Crazy Horse 37
Rapid City Central 57, Brookings 56
Rapid City Stevens 41, Watertown 37
Red Cloud 56, Spearfish 45
Sioux Falls Christian 83, Madison 45
Sioux Falls O'Gorman 57, Sioux Falls Lincoln High School 47
Sioux Falls Roosevelt 61, Yankton 42
Stanley County 71, Potter County 42
Tripp-Delmont-Armour 62, Mitchell Christian 39
Warner 57, Britton-Hecla 36
Waverly-South Shore 56, Wilmot 38
Webster 67, Sisseton 44
Panhandle Conference Tournament=
Consolation=
Sioux County, Neb. 42, Edgemont 22
POSTPONEMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS=
Hot Springs vs. Oelrichs, ppd. to Feb 19th.
Marty Indian vs. Santee, Neb., ppd.

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

South Dakota bill advances, proposing more legal representation for people who can't pay

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota bill advanced Friday that proposes a statewide commission focused on indigent defense, or legal representation for those without the ability to pay.

Only three of the state's counties — Minnehaha, Pennington and Meade — have a dedicated public defender office, South Dakota Public Broadcasting reported. The remaining 63 counties make indigent defense ends meet, but they do it through an unregulated patchwork of contracted attorneys and court appointments.

According to South Dakota Public Broadcasting, state court administrator Greg Sattizahn testified Friday to the House State Affairs Committee on behalf of state Supreme Court chief justice Steven Jensen.

Sattizahn said the counties spent about \$22 million providing indigent defense in fiscal year 2022, the last complete year of data on this issue.

"We're one of only six states that has no statewide legal entity that coordinates legal defense," Sattizahn said. "How do we provide lawyers so they're available? How do we make sure lawyers that are billing counties are charging appropriate amounts?"

This bill would establish a statewide commission solely dedicated to indigent defense appointed by the governor and Supreme Court. The commission would research how to best manage the need of indigent services against the reality of South Dakota's legal pool.

Many indigent cases are complex, often violent crime cases that require specialized attorneys.

Katie Hruska, general counsel for South Dakota Republican Gov. Kristi Noem, spoke on Noem's behalf.

"The creation of this commission and office will have an ongoing general fund impact and that is included in the governors recommended budget this year," Hruska said. "The Chief Justice and UJS worked closely with the executive after the task force met, and we think this was the best solution."

Only one person testified against the bill -- a Rapid City man -- who described it as "sharia compliancy" and a new tax on South Dakotans, South Dakota Public Broadcasting reported.

The committee unanimously advanced the bill, which is expected to be heard next by the House Appropriations Committee.

13 students reported killed in an elementary school dorm fire in China's Henan province

By HUIZHONG WU Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — A fire broke out in dorms at a boarding school for elementary students in central Henan province, and 13 students died in the blaze, Chinese state media reported Saturday.

All of the dead were third grade students, a teacher told Zonglan news, a state-backed media outlet from Hebei province. One person rescued from the scene was being treated in the hospital, CCTV, China's state broadcaster said.

Police set up a cordon around the school, a Xinhua news report showed, and the dorm where the fire had happened was charred black even on the outside of the building. The school had metal grilles covering the windows, as is common in buildings in China.

The fire started Friday night and was put out just before midnight at Yingcai School in rural Fangcheng district in central Henan. The school's owner was detained, CCTV reported.

State media reported that public records showed the owner of the school is a man called Li Jizhong. The AP could not reach Li.

Local authorities said they were investigating the cause of the fire.

The boarding school caters primarily to students in the elementary grades, though it has an attached kindergarten, according to the school's WeChat page. Many of the boarding students come from rural areas, the Beijing Youth Daily reported.

The facility is in Dushu township and is one of the school's two branches.

Brutally cold weather expected to hit storm-battered South and Northeast US this weekend

By ADRIAN SAINZ Associated Press

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP) — Memphis residents were urged to boil water and New Yorkers have been warned that roads could be covered with dangerous black ice this weekend as brutal cold and inclement weather continue to sweep across parts of the U.S.

Bitterly frigid air spilled into the Midwest from Canada on Friday and several states were under advisories as forecasters warned that wind chills dipping to minus 30 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 34 degrees Celsius) could be common through Sunday morning.

Heavier-than-forecast snow fell in New York City, Baltimore and Washington, D.C., on Friday. Storms have walloped the Pacific Northwest, Midwest, Plains, South and Northeast with low temperatures, heavy snow, ice storms, freezing rain and high winds for the past two weeks.

With a wind chill, temperatures are expected to drop as low as 15 degrees below zero Fahrenheit (minus 26 degrees Celsius) in large portions of Arkansas, Mississippi, Missouri, Tennessee, Kentucky and Kansas, the National Weather Service predicted.

The bracing weekend weather follows a series of storms blamed for at least 55 deaths around the country, many of them involving hypothermia or road accidents.

Tennessee recorded 19 deaths alone. They included a 25-year-old man who was found dead on the floor of a mobile home in Lewisburg after a space heater overturned and turned off, said Bob Johnson, chief deputy for the Marshall County Sheriff's Office.

"There was ice on the walls in there," Johnson said.

Days of cold broke so many water mains in Memphis, Tennessee, that water pressure fell throughout

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the city. On Friday, Memphis Light, Gas & Water urged all of its more than 400,000 residents to boil water for drinking or teeth brushing or use bottled supplies.

It wasn't clear how long the advisory will be in force. While some 50 ruptures were repaired, utility President Doug McGowen warned of new leaks emerging.

A significant drop in blood donations, partly linked to the weather, led Blood Assurance to recommend that more than 70 hospitals in five states halt elective surgeries until Wednesday to allow inventory to be rebuilt by the organization based in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

In West Virginia, advisories and warnings were out Saturday because of continued fierce weather. The weather service said some regions could see up to 4 inches (10 centimeters) of additional snow with winds gusting to 40 mph (64 kph) and wind chill driving down temperatures as low as 20 below zero (minus 29 C).

The West Virginia Legislature left after a brief session Friday because not enough lawmakers could get through snow-covered highways to the Capitol to vote on bills.

In Washington D.C., snow fell softly and the streets around the U.S. Capitol were silent. Schools closed for the second time in a week and the federal government was on a two-hour delay. However, President Joe Biden still welcomed mayors from around the country to the White House for the U.S. Conference of Mayors.

In Buffalo, New York, lake-enhanced snow finally moved out after burying parts of the city and some suburbs in five feet of snow in five days. The Buffalo Bills on Friday renewed a call for snow shovelers, offering \$20 an hour for help digging out Highmark Stadium before Sunday's divisional playoff game against the Kansas City Chiefs.

Michigan City, Indiana, received 17 inches (43 centimeters) of lake-effect snow on Friday. The snow later eased as a low pressure system moved away but the weather service warned that "much colder air wraps in behind it," and urged drivers to watch out for patches of slick and treacherous black ice.

On the West Coast, Oregon Gov. Tina Kotek on Thursday declared a statewide emergency following deadly ice storms. The weather service reported that temperatures Friday were finally above freezing for most areas and ground snow and ice would slowly begin to melt.

More freezing rain was forecast Saturday in the Columbia River Gorge and the area was expected to remain near or below freezing through at least Sunday night. Trees and power lines already coated with ice could topple if they get more, the National Weather Service warned.

"Stay safe out there over the next several days as our region tries to thaw out," the weather service said. "Chunks of falling ice will remain a hazard as well."

Thousands have been without power since last weekend in parts of Oregon's Willamette Valley because of storm damage. Despite work by repair crews, more than 63,000 customers were without electricity in the state as of Friday night, according to the website poweroutage.us.

The National Weather Service said there could be a thaw next week, when the forecast calls for above-average temperatures across almost the whole country.

Grand jury indictment against Alec Baldwin opens two paths for prosecutors

By MORGAN LEE Associated Press

SANTA FE, N.M. (AP) — Alec Baldwin once again is staring down a felony involuntary manslaughter charge after a grand jury indicted the actor in connection with the fatal 2021 shooting of a cinematographer on the set of a Western movie in New Mexico.

The lead actor and a co-producer on "Rust," Baldwin pointed a gun at cinematographer Halyna Hutchins during rehearsal on a movie set outside Santa Fe when the gun went off, killing her and wounding director Joel Souza.

A new analysis of the gun opened the way for prosecutors to reboot the case, after dismissing an involuntary manslaughter charge last year. A new one-page indictment delivered by the grand jury Friday alleges Baldwin caused Hutchins' death — either by negligence or "total disregard or indifference" for safety.

Defense attorneys for Baldwin indicate they'll fight the charge, which carries a potential prison sentence

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of up to 18 months.

Here are some things to know about the case.

Next steps

Baldwin can enter a formal plea with or without a court arraignment, setting in motion preparations for trial.

The indictment provides prosecutors with two alternative standards for the felony involuntary manslaughter charge against Baldwin. One would be based on the negligent use of a firearm.

Baldwin has said he pulled back the gun's hammer, but not the trigger, and the weapon fired. But a recent analysis of the gun used by Baldwin from Lucien and Michael Haag of Forensic Science Services in Arizona concluded that "the trigger had to be pulled or depressed sufficiently to release the fully cocked or retracted hammer of the evidence revolver." Michael Haag testified to the grand jury this week as a witness, according to the new indictment.

An earlier FBI report on the agency's analysis of the gun found that, as is common with firearms of that design, it could go off without pulling the trigger if force was applied to an uncocked hammer — such as by dropping the weapon. The gun eventually broke during testing.

A second alternative for prosecutors is to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that Baldwin caused the death of Hutchins without due caution or "circumspection," also defined as "an act committed with total disregard or indifference for the safety of others."

Baldwin as co-producer

Prosecutors declined to answer questions Friday after spending about a day and a half presenting their case to the grand jury.

Santa Fe-based defense attorney and former prosecutor John Day, who is not connected to the case, believes the indictment gives prosecutors a possible opportunity to address Baldwin's safety obligations as a co-producer.

"We don't know exactly what their theory is," Day said. "It could be that they're including his role as basically CEO of the production ... not having a safe workplace and somebody dies and you're at the top of the pyramid."

The company Rust Movie Productions has paid a \$100,000 fine to state workplace safety regulators following a scathing narrative of safety failures in violation of standard industry protocols, including testimony that production managers took limited or no action to address two misfires on set before the fatal shooting.

Two related trials

Separately, special prosecutors Kari Morrissey and Jason Lewis are preparing for a February trial against "Rust" armorer Hannah Gutierrez-Reed, who has pleaded not guilty to involuntary manslaughter and evidence tampering in the case.

That trial is likely to proceed independently — and could give Baldwin's attorneys insights into prosecution strategies and testimony from key witnesses who are likely to also testify in proceedings against Baldwin.

"His attorneys will certainly be watching the armorer's trial closely," said Los Angeles-based entertainment litigator and defense attorney Kate Mangels, who is not involved in the case. "It could offer a preview of the prosecution's approach and potential witness testimony."

Baldwin's case was assigned to Santa Fe-based state District Court Judge T. Glenn Ellington, a specialist in criminal cases. The Gutierrez-Reed case is overseen by a different judge.

"We look forward to our day in court," said Luke Nikas and Alex Spiro, defense attorneys for Baldwin.

Potential witnesses

Two of the witnesses seen at the courthouse included crew members — one who was present when the fatal shot was fired and another who had walked off the set the day before due to safety concerns.

"Rust" assistant director and safety coordinator David Halls pleaded no contest to unsafe handling of a firearm last March and received a suspended sentence of six months of probation. He agreed to cooperate in the shooting investigation.

New court filings Friday indicate that "Rust" prop master Sarah Zachry has signed an agreement to

cooperate with special prosecutors in return for leniency. Zachry worked closely to secure guns and ammunition on set with Gutierrez-Reed.

Mangels said a grand jury indictment is by no means an assurance that prosecutors will prevail at trial. "Just getting an indictment from a grand jury in no way means the prosecution has a slam dunk case or even a strong case," she said.

Nikki Haley has spent 20 years navigating Republican Party factions. Trump may make that impossible

By BILL BARROW Associated Press

When Nikki Haley was a South Carolina legislator, she backed budgets boosted by federal aid. Running for governor, she criticized a "bailout culture" and dependence on Washington.

She once called the Confederate battle flag a heritage symbol and sidestepped calls to remove it from statehouse grounds. After a racist massacre in Charleston, Haley moved to take it down.

When Donald Trump ran for president in 2016, she opposed him before joining his administration as U.N. ambassador. Now, Haley is running against Trump for the 2024 Republican nomination saying he is an agent of chaos.

For almost 20 years, Haley has worked to navigate Republicans' rightward march, trying to cultivate both the GOP establishment and the firebrand conservative base that gave rise to Trump. She is seen as either a pragmatic unifier or a finger-to-the-wind politician, and as she seeks the Republican nomination, her political pivots have become her opponents' most persistent line of attack.

"Maybe she can be a bit of a chameleon," said former state Rep. Doug Brannon, a fellow Republican. "The governor and I did not get along," he said, "but that doesn't mean that she isn't a brilliant politician."

Shapeshifting is a long-practiced political art. Bill Clinton earned the nickname "Slick Willie" and won two terms in the White House. Trump went from being emphatically supportive of abortion rights to telling voters he alone was responsible for the Supreme Court decision overturning Roe v. Wade, winning over white evangelicals.

In the 2024 campaign, Haley has leaned into her critics. Trump skipping debates has meant she and the former president have not confronted each other face to face but she has forcefully defended herself against his suggestions that she is out of step with today's Republican Party.

"For those reporting that I'm a moderate, I will ask you or anybody, Trump or anybody in Fox (News) suits saying that I'm not a conservative: Name one thing that I wasn't conservative about," she said Friday in New Hampshire.

She offered a litany of measures she signed as governor to lower taxes, boost voter identification requirements and overhaul public employee pensions, among other matters. "The difference is who is deciding who's conservative and who's moderate," she said.

Rob Godfrey, who served in Haley's administration, said she "has never been an angry candidate or angry in governing" but relishes "using the bully pulpit."

"She prides herself on being willing to call out people she thinks are not serving their constituents well," Godfrey said. He insisted his old boss is less concerned about positioning and ideology than achieving the most conservative, "good government" policy outcome possible.

"That approach rubs some people the wrong way," Godfrey said. "It always has."

Haley, 52, was first elected to the South Carolina legislature from a suburban Columbia district 20 years ago. The daughter of Indian immigrants, she defeated a 30-year legislative veteran in the Republican primary. She once told The New York Times that Hillary Clinton, the Democrats' 2016 presidential nominee, had inspired her to run for office.

Haley quickly rose to a leadership post but collided with colleagues over her push for more recorded votes instead of voice votes that spared lawmakers scrutiny. So she soon aimed for the executive branch. She joined a 2010 gubernatorial primary that included the lieutenant governor, attorney general and a sitting congressman. Haley nearly won the nomination outright, with 48.9% of the primary vote. Haley defeated

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U.S. Rep. Gresham Barrett in a runoff 65% to 35%.

Whit Ayres, a national pollster who worked for Barrett, said the campaign previewed Haley's ability to cast a wide net. "Those margins tell you something about her political skills," he said.

In the legislature, Haley voted to take millions of dollars in federal aid during the financial crisis of 2008-09 to keep the American financial system from collapsing and sending the country into a possible depression.

By 2010, though, there was rising anger about the impact that crisis had on Americans who lost their homes or saw their retirement accounts dwindle as Wall Street titans were rarely held responsible. That gave birth to the tea party, which stoked fires of populism that propelled Trump six years later. Gubernatorial candidate Haley railed against bailouts and trumpeted an endorsement from Sarah Palin, the 2008 vice presidential nominee and tea party favorite.

"When Sarah Palin showed up, that was a turning point," Ayres said. "We knew then she was for real."

Haley paired her Palin endorsement with another from the more moderate Mitt Romney as he geared up for his second presidential bid. She later endorsed Romney in the 2012 Republican presidential primary. In 2014, she expanded her first general election margin to win a second term with 56% of the vote.

"She's managed to be all things to all people," said Kay Koonce, a Democratic National Committee member from South Carolina who acknowledged that Haley's success had frustrated her party.

As governor, Haley had disputes with fellow Republicans that often seemed personal. She vetoed spending measures and threatened to campaign against party members in their primaries. Conservative opponents seized on disclosures that she worked during her time as a legislator for a Columbia-area hospital system that had regulatory requests before state government. She faced ethics charges that were dismissed by a committee dominated by House Republicans.

She successfully courted business investment in the state, including some from China. To recruit firms, she backed subsidies some tea party adherents detested. But she reminds Republican primary voters that the deals were always for non-union shops.

She also made a mark on social issues, signing a 2016 measure outlawing abortions at 20 weeks with exceptions. That would not satisfy many in the GOP's national base now. But Haley has argued against a stricter national ban and said the sound conservative position is to leave the issue to state governments.

Haley burnished her conservative persona beyond policy debates. She told her Instagram followers in December 2013 that she got a handgun for Christmas. "I must have been good Santa gave me a Beretta PX4 Storm," she posted.

Godfrey, her longtime ally, said the best example of her approach came after a white supremacist in 2015 killed eight Black worshippers at a Charleston church. Haley had previously said removing the Confederate battle flag from Capitol grounds was not a priority. After the shooting, she quickly convened multiracial, bipartisan conversations that led to the Civil War banner finally being taken down. "She was giving cover" to white conservatives, Godfrey said, and "building consensus."

Koonce countered: "She deserves some of the credit" but that "should not erase what she had said before it took all those people dying to do the right thing."

As Haley's own ambitions broadened beyond South Carolina, she, like so many Republicans, had to figure out how to run against Trump.

In 2016, she delivered the Republican response to President Barack Obama's last State of the Union address. Weighing her party's rightward push, Haley complimented Obama as a barrier breaker and communicator. She urged Republicans to accept shared responsibility for the nation's problems. And she warned conservatives: "During anxious times, it can be tempting to follow the siren call of the angriest voices. We must resist that temptation." She didn't name Trump but soon endorsed Florida Sen. Marco Rubio.

After Trump's November victory, she was at Trump Tower in New York talking to the president-elect about jobs.

Early in her 2024 campaign, Haley stepped lightly around Trump. But on the eve of the first contests, her criticisms have become more direct, on issues like Trump's role in the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol.

"I think what happened on Jan. 6 was a terrible day, and I think President Trump will have to answer for

it," she said on a debate stage Wednesday in Iowa. It was perhaps as far as she has gone in criticizing Trump.

Haley has separately confirmed that she will vote for the Republican nominee; she has not ruled out joining Trump on the ticket as his running mate.

Ayres said Haley's approach is pragmatic, like much of her career. About half the party's voters, Ayres said, voted for Trump twice and would again – but are open to someone else.

"Following Chris Christie's lead would cap her at the small percentage of 'Never Trumpers,'" Ayres added, referring to the former New Jersey governor who hammered Trump before dropping out of the race.

Christie was caught on a hot mic predicting Haley "is going to get smoked" by Trump. On that, even a Democrat sided with Haley.

"Chris Christie is exactly right about Trump," Koonce said. "But I'm sitting there listening to him criticize her again and I'm thinking, 'Well, she's the one who's still on the stage.'"

Election-year politics threaten Senate border deal as Trump and his allies rally opposition

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A politically treacherous dynamic is taking hold as negotiators in Congress work to strike a bipartisan deal on the border and immigration, with vocal opposition from the hard right and former President Donald Trump threatening to topple the carefully negotiated compromise.

Senators are closing in on the details of an agreement on border measures that could unlock Republican support for Ukraine aid and hope to unveil it as soon as next week. But the deal is already wobbling, as House Speaker Mike Johnson faces intense pressure from Trump and his House allies to demand more sweeping concessions from Democrats and the White House.

"I do not think we should do a Border Deal, at all, unless we get EVERYTHING needed to shut down the INVASION of Millions & Millions of people," Trump posted on social media this week.

It's a familiar political dynamic, one that has repeatedly thwarted attempts to reform U.S. immigration law, including in 2013 when House Republicans sought to pin illegal immigration on a Democratic president and in 2018 when Trump helped sink another bipartisan effort. The path for legislation this time around is further clouded by an election year in which Trump has once again made railing against illegal immigration a central focus of his campaign.

Even though the terms of the policy negotiations have shifted significantly in the Republicans' direction, skepticism is running high among conservatives, creating a precarious moment that could determine not only the contours of U.S. immigration and border law for years to come, but the future of Ukraine as it faces dwindling U.S. supplies in its fight against Russia.

President Joe Biden is pressing lawmakers to say yes. During a White House meeting this week with congressional leaders that was meant to underscore how desperately Ukraine needs funding, the president said he was ready for a "big deal on the border."

The president has reason to want an agreement. The historic number of migrants who have come to the U.S. border with Mexico during Biden's term is seen as one of the largest political vulnerabilities in his re-election campaign.

During Iowa's Republican caucuses last week, which Trump won, immigration was a top issue. An AP VoteCast survey found about 9 in 10 caucusgoers backed building a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border, with about 7 in 10 expressing strong support for the idea.

As asylum seekers have made their way across the country, often by the busloads to Democratic-leaning cities as part of Texas Gov. Greg Abbott's program, they have strained the resources and political tolerance of areas that will be vital to Biden's re-election chances.

"It's gotten to the point where, in a way, everybody's back is against the wall," said Sen. Michael Bennet, a Colorado Democrat. "I'm not talking about politically, I mean, substantively, these are challenges that the country can't ignore."

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Bennet was joined at the Capitol on Thursday by Denver Mayor Mike Johnston, a Democrat who told reporters that the recent influx of migrants has caused "a humanitarian crisis and a fiscal crisis unlike anything we've seen in the last 25 years."

Democrats in Congress are split on the merits of the Senate package. Progressive and Hispanic lawmakers decry changes that would toughen the process for claiming asylum in the United States. Still, many Democrats say that Johnson's resistance to bipartisan compromise shows that Republicans aren't serious about solving the problems at the border.

"They basically want to make sure that the situation is as chaotic as possible so that they can win elections in November," said Rep. Joaquin Castro, a Texas Democrat. "That is their strategy. It's not a sincere attempt to do something about what's going on at the border."

Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell, meanwhile, has been strongly making the case for the deal. He's told fellow Republicans that the border package, which he insisted be paired with Biden's \$110 billion request for war aid for Ukraine, Israel and other national security priorities, is a rare opportunity to get stronger policies through Congress.

The proposal crafted by the Senate would toughen the asylum process with a goal of cutting the number of migrants who come to the southern border to make an asylum claim.

Negotiators have worked on some policies intended to aid immigrants. The plan could include a pathway to citizenship for Afghans who came during the U.S. withdrawal from their country, along with work permits for migrants who enter the asylum system, according to two people familiar with the talks who were granted anonymity to discuss the private negotiations.

But the package will mostly leave out broad immigration changes, like protections for immigrants who entered the U.S. illegally as children, that have been foundational in previous Senate bills.

"It will be by far the most conservative border security bill in four decades," said Oklahoma Sen. James Lankford, the lead GOP negotiator.

Lankford and other Senate Republicans have urged their House colleagues to remain open-minded. They argue that the changes would actually pave the way for Trump to implement his border agenda if he wins the election. Lankford has also said that the legislation would not dramatically reduce the number of migrants at the border for months — a tacit signal that border security could remain a top issue through the election.

Still, Johnson has argued that a hardline House bill, H.R. 2 which passed the chamber in May without a single Democratic vote, is the solution to America's border woes. It would create a sweeping system intended to bottle up illegal immigration.

Johnson has also made clear that he has been speaking regularly with Trump.

"We're not playing politics with this, we're demanding real, transformative policy change," Johnson said this week.

Even beyond Trump, Johnson is dealing with far-right House members who are furious over his willingness to work with Democrats to pass legislation. Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, a close Trump ally, has threatened to trigger a motion to oust Johnson if he brings a border bill with Ukraine aid to the House floor.

Greene this week said Trump is backing the House conservatives' plan because "it brings back all of his strong border policies." In December, she said that passing bipartisan border legislation would only give Biden an opportunity to tout the legislation on the campaign trail.

"I've been telling everyone that President Trump is the leader of the Republican Party," Greene said. "That decisive victory in Iowa should be the shot across the bow to every single Republican that's elected."

Despite the pressure, Johnson signaled some support for the legislative push after a meeting this week at the White House, calling the talks "productive." But what he does next remains to be seen.

Rep. Jim Himes, D-Conn, left the White House meeting worried that a direct plan of action had not been discussed.

"We've got to figure out how to put the leaders in a position to walk over some broken glass, because whatever deal is passed is going to make a lot of people unhappy," Himes said.

Ohio is poised to become the 2nd state to restrict gender-affirming care for adults

By GEOFF MULVIHILL Associated Press

Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine announced proposals this month that transgender advocates say could block access to gender-affirming care provided by independent clinics and general practitioners, leaving thousands of adults scrambling for treatment and facing health risks.

Ashton Colby, 31, fears the clinic where he gets the testosterone he has taken since age 19 would no longer offer it. The transgender Columbus man believes he could eventually be treated by another provider that would meet the new requirements. But even a few months' wait could leave Colby experiencing a menstrual cycle for the first time in many years.

"My mental health has been stressed," Colby said. "These are feelings related to being transgender that I have not felt in years, but now I'm thrown into feeling devastated about my experience as a transgender person."

DeWine announced the proposed rules amid a whirl of activity that could push Ohio further than most other states in controlling gender-affirming care and make it just the second to set forth restrictions on adult care.

He also signed an executive order to ban gender-affirming surgery for minors but vetoed a bill that would ban all gender-affirming care for minors. One chamber of the state legislature has already overridden it and the other is voting Jan. 24 on whether to do so.

"It is a policy project that attempts to make it so onerous, so restrictive to get care, that people are functionally unable to do so," said Kellan Baker, executive director of the Whitman-Walker Institute, a Washington-based organization focused on the health of LGBTQ+ people.

The policies focused on care for adults come in draft administrative rules released this month by the Ohio Department of Health and the state's Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

They would require psychiatrists, endocrinologists and medical ethicists to have roles in creating facility-wide gender-affirming care plans for patients of all ages. Patients under 21 would have to receive at least six months of mental health counseling before starting gender-affirming medication or surgery. Providers would be barred from referring minors to treatment elsewhere, such as clinics in other states.

When he announced the measures, DeWine said they would ensure safe treatment and make it impossible to operate "fly-by-night" clinics.

The rules are not intended to stop treatment for those already receiving it and are in line with the way specialized care is generally practiced, even if the approach isn't always state-mandated, said DeWine spokesperson Dan Tierney, who noted the administration is open to wording changes to clarify the rules.

Still, advocates say those rules go beyond the standard of care established by organizations including the World Professional Association for Transgender Health, and at any rate there are no sketchy gender clinics in the state.

"It's bad and unnecessary bureaucracy, and we know what they're trying to do — and they're hoping to cut off health care for as many people as possible," said Dara Adkison, board secretary for the advocacy group TransOhio. "It's not subtle."

Mimi Rivard, a nurse practitioner and clinical director at Central Outreach Wellness Center Ohio's Columbus clinic, said clinics already successfully prescribe hormones without the involvement of endocrinologists and there aren't enough of those specialists in the state to do the current work, plus serve an estimated 60,000 Ohioans of transgender experience.

Many transgender patients are wary of other medical settings, which they might see as unfriendly, for more routine needs like hypertension or diabetes, but clinics like hers also treat them for those conditions, she said.

"We have to behave in ways that are consistent with the oaths we've taken as caregivers," Rivard said. "And these guidelines will not allow for this."

Patients who have undergone surgery and stop hormones could be at risk for osteoporosis and extreme fatigue, she said.

Dr. Carl Streed Jr., president of U.S. Professional Association for Transgender Health, who provides gender-affirming care in Boston, noted abortion is the only other realm in which states have weighed in to bar health professionals from providing services allowed by their licenses.

"The rules are draconian. They don't follow any standard of care," Streed said. "It is a veil of this false sense of safety that will effectively lead to a ban."

How the policy would affect transgender patients might depend on where they are treated. The big academic medical centers providing gender-affirming care already employ the required specialists.

Equitas Health, a Columbus-based nonprofit focused on LGBTQ+ health care, strongly opposes the regulations but also says it will fulfill the requirements to continue offering gender-affirming care if the rules are finalized.

Advocates warn the care might not be available via smaller clinics or general practitioners, creating more hurdles to care for lower-income, minority and rural transgender people.

Adkison, who lives in Cleveland, expects their own treatment to continue.

"I'm a white person living in the city near multiple major hospital systems," they said. "I'm definitely not as concerned as many of my friends."

GOP-controlled governments in 22 other states already have passed bans or restrictions on gender-affirming care for minors. So far, though, adoption of policies aimed at adults is rare.

The only other restriction currently in force at the state level is in Florida, where a law took effect last year requiring physicians to oversee any health care related to transitioning, and for those appointments to be in person. Those rules have been onerous for people who have received care from nurse practitioners or used telehealth.

It's not clear when the Ohio rules might take effect, or in what form if they are finalized. The health department is taking public comment until Feb. 5; for the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services proposal, public comment is open only until Jan. 26.

The rules also are subject to review of a legislative committee looking at whether rules exceed the administration's power, something DeWine's proposals do, said Rhea Debussy, spokesperson for Equitas Health.

"He's really done an impressive job in the last two weeks, making a lot of Democrats, a lot of progressives, a lot of conservatives and Republicans across the state of Ohio very mad at him," she said.

The measures were unveiled Jan. 5, the same day DeWine signed an executive order banning gender-affirming surgery for those under 18. Advocates expect the move will have little practical impact because such surgeries are almost never performed on minors.

"It's very cruel," said Erin Upchurch, executive director of Kaleidoscope Youth Center, a Columbus-based organization serving young LGBTQ+ people. "It's vindictive, it's mean and it's unnecessary."

Donald Trump goes from calm to indignant in newly released deposition video of civil fraud lawsuit

By MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Months before Donald Trump's defiant turn as a witness at his New York civil fraud trial, the former president came face-to-face with the state attorney general who is suing him when he sat for a deposition last year at her Manhattan office.

Video made public Friday of the seven-hour, closed-door session last April shows the Republican presidential frontrunner's demeanor going from calm and cool to indignant — at one point ripping Attorney General Letitia James lawsuit against him as a "disgrace" and "a terrible thing."

Sitting with arms folded, an incredulous Trump complained to the state lawyer questioning him that he was being forced to "justify myself to you" after decades of success building a real estate empire that's now threatened by the court case.

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Trump, who contends James' lawsuit is part of a politically motivated "witch hunt" was demonstrative from the outset. The video shows him smirking and pouting his lips as the attorney general, a Democrat, introduced herself and told him that she was "committed to a fair and impartial legal process."

James' office released the video Friday in response to requests from media outlets under New York's Freedom of Information Law. Trump's lawyers previously posted a transcript of his remarks to the trial docket in August.

James' lawsuit accuses Trump, his company and top executives of defrauding banks, insurers and others by inflating his wealth and exaggerating the value of assets on annual financial statements used to secure loans and make deals.

Judge Arthur Engoron, who will decide the case because a jury is not allowed in this type of lawsuit, has said he hopes to have a ruling by the end of January.

Friday's video is a rare chance for the public at large to see Trump as a witness.

Cameras were not permitted in the courtroom when Trump testified on Nov. 6, nor were they allowed for closing arguments in the case on Jan. 11, where Trump defied the judge and gave a six-minute diatribe after his lawyers spoke.

Here are the highlights from Trump's videotaped deposition:

'YOU DON'T HAVE A CASE'

Telling James and her staff, "you don't have a case," Trump insisted the banks she alleges were snookered with lofty valuations suffered no harm, got paid in his deals, and "to this day have no complaints."

"Do you know the banks made a lot of money?" Trump asked, previewing his later trial testimony. "Do you know I don't believe I ever got even a default notice and, even during COVID, the banks were all paid. And yet you're suing on behalf of banks, I guess. It's crazy. The whole case is crazy."

Banks "want to do business with me because I'm rich," Trump told James. "But, you know what, they're petrified to do business because of you."

Trump complained New York authorities "spend all their time investigating me, instead of stopping violent crime in the streets."

He said they'd put his recently jailed ex-finance chief Allen Weisselberg "through hell and back" for dodging taxes on company-paid perks.

At a previous deposition in the case, in August 2022, Trump invoked his Fifth Amendment privilege against self-incrimination and refused to answer questions more than 400 times. He said he did so because he was certain his answers would be used as a basis for criminal charges.

DON'T TAKE MY WORD FOR IT

Trump said he never felt his financial statements "would be taken very seriously," and that people who did business with him were given ample warning not to trust them.

Trump described the statements as "a fairly good compilation of properties" rather than a true representation of their value. Some numbers, he noted, were "guesstimates."

Trump claimed the statements were mainly for his use, though he conceded financial institutions sometimes asked for them. Even then, he insisted it didn't matter legally if they were accurate or not, because they came with a disclaimer.

"I have a clause in there that says, 'Don't believe the statement. Go out and do your own work,'" Trump testified. "You're supposed to pay no credence to what we say whatsoever."

WHAT'S IN A NAME? \$10 BILLION

Trump estimated that his "brand" alone is worth "maybe \$10 billion."

He called it "the most valuable asset I have" and attributed his political success to the ubiquity of his name and persona.

"I became president because of the brand, OK," Trump said. "I became president. I think it's the hottest brand in the world."

'MOST IMPORTANT JOB IN THE WORLD'

After Trump was elected, he put the Trump Organization into a trust overseen by his eldest son, Donald Trump Jr., and longtime finance chief, Weisselberg.

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Trump claimed he did so not because it was required but because he wanted to be a "legitimate president" and avoid the appearance of a conflict of interest.

Plus, Trump said, he was busy solving the world's problems — like preventing North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un from launching a nuclear attack.

"I considered this the most important job in the world, saving millions of lives," Trump testified. "I think you would have nuclear holocaust if I didn't deal with North Korea. I think you would have a nuclear war, if I weren't elected. And I think you might have a nuclear war now, if you want to know the truth."

OBSTRUCTED VIEW

In one of his more animated moments, Trump urged his inquisitors to look right out the window for a view of his 40 Wall Street office tower — just across the street from James' office where he testified.

Asked how the building was doing, financially, Trump gestured toward the building with his thumb and answered: "Good. It's right here. Would you like to see it?"

"I don't think we're allowed to open the windows," state lawyer Kevin Wallace said.

"Open the curtain," Trump suggested, bobbing his head around waiting for someone to oblige.

"No," Wallace said.

"Open the curtain, go ahead," Trump said. "It's right here. I just looked out the window."

"Can't open it?" defense lawyer Clifford Robert asked, after a beat.

"I wouldn't," Wallace said.

'BEAUTIFUL' AND 'INCREDIBLE'

Trump showed off his knack for superlatives, uttering the words "beautiful" and "incredible" 15 times each and "phenomenal" six times as he described his properties.

Trump called his Turnberry, Scotland, golf course "one of the most iconic places in the world," and the renovated villas at his Doral golf resort near Miami "the most beautiful rooms you've ever seen."

Trump described his 213-acre Seven Springs estate north of New York City as "the greatest house in New York State."

His golf courses in Aberdeen, Scotland? "Really incredible." Jupiter, Florida? "An incredible facility." Just outside Los Angeles? "An incredible property ... an unbelievable property ... a phenomenal property that fronts on the ocean."

"I don't want to sell any of them," Trump testified. "But if I ever sold them — if I ever put some of these things up for sale — I would get numbers that were staggering."

He said he could get \$1.5 billion for his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida and maybe \$2.5 billion for Doral.

Trump suggested he could get "a fortune" from the Saudi Arabia-backed LIV golf league for the Turnberry course, a former British Open site.

"There would be people that would do anything to own Doral. There are people that would do anything to own Turnberry or Mar-a-Lago or ... Trump Tower or 40 Wall Street."

Biden and Netanyahu have finally talked, but their visions still clash for ending Israel-Hamas war

By AAMER MADHANI and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu finally spoke Friday after a glaring, nearly four-week gap in direct communication during which fundamental differences have come into focus over a possible pathway to Palestinian statehood once the fighting in Gaza ends.

Biden and his top aides have all but smothered Netanyahu with robust support, even in the face of global condemnation over the mounting civilian death toll and humanitarian suffering in Gaza as the Israelis have carried out military operations in the aftermath of the Oct. 7 attack on Israel.

But the leaders' relationship has increasingly shown signs of strain as Netanyahu has repeatedly rebuffed Biden's calls for Palestinian sovereignty, gumming up what the U.S. president believes is the key to unlocking a durable peace in the Middle East — the oft-cited, elusive two-state solution.

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Neither side shows signs of budging.

Friday's phone call came one day after Netanyahu said that he has told U.S. officials in plain terms that he will not support a Palestinian state as part of any postwar plan. Biden, for his part, in Friday's call reaffirmed his commitment to work toward helping the Palestinians move toward statehood.

"As we're talking about post-conflict Gaza ... you can't do that without also talking about the aspirations of the Palestinian people and what that needs to look like for them," said National Security Council spokesman John Kirby.

The leaders spoke frequently in the first weeks of the war. But the regular cadence of calls between Biden and Netanyahu, who have had a hot-and-cold relationship for over three decades, has slowed considerably. Their 30- to 40-minute call Friday was their first conversation since Dec. 23.

Both sides are hemmed in by domestic political considerations.

The chasm between Biden, a center-left Democrat, and Netanyahu, who leads the most conservative government in Israel's history, has expanded as pressure mounts on the United States to use its considerable leverage to press Israel to wind down a war that has already killed nearly 25,000 Palestinians.

There is also growing impatience with Netanyahu in Israel over the lack of progress in freeing dozens of hostages still held by Islamic militants in Gaza.

"There is certainly a reason to be concerned," says Eytan Gilboa, an expert on U.S.-Israeli relations at Israel's Bar-Ilan University, "The more and more we see political considerations dominating the relationship between Biden and Netanyahu, which is likely to continue because of the upcoming presidential election and the weakness of both leaders, the more we will see them pulling apart."

In their most recent calls, Biden's frustration with Netanyahu has grown more evident, even though the U.S. leader has been careful to reaffirm his support for Israel at each step, according to U.S. officials who requested anonymity to discuss the leaders' private interactions.

Yet, Biden, at least publicly, has not given up on the idea of winning over Netanyahu. Asked by a reporter on Friday if a two-state solution is impossible while Netanyahu is in office, Biden replied, "No, it's not."

Aides insist Biden understands the political box Netanyahu finds himself in with his hard-right coalition and as he deals with ongoing corruption charges that have left the prime minister fighting for his freedom, not just his political future.

Biden, meanwhile, faces American voters in November, in a likely rematch with former President Donald Trump. Netanyahu and Trump forged a close relationship during the Republican's term in office. Biden faces criticism from some on his left who believe he hasn't pushed the Israelis hard enough to demonstrate restraint as it carries out military operations.

Key Democratic lawmakers, including Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren and Connecticut Sen. Chris Murphy, this week warned that Netanyahu's position on statehood could complicate negotiations in the Senate on a spending package that includes military aid for Israel.

Expect Netanyahu to "use every trick that he has to keep his coalition together and avoid elections and play out the clock," said Michael Koplow, chief policy officer at the Israel Policy Forum. "And I'm sure that part of it is a conviction that if he waits until November, he may end up with Donald Trump back in the Oval Office."

In recent weeks, some of the more difficult conversations have been left to Ron Dermer, a top aide to Netanyahu and former Israeli ambassador to the U.S., and Biden's national security adviser, Jake Sullivan. The two top aides talk almost daily — sometimes multiple times during a day, according to a U.S. official and an Israeli official, who were not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Other senior Biden administration officials including Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, as well as senior advisers Brett McGurk and Amos Hochstein, have been at the forefront of the administration's push to engage the Israelis and other Middle East allies as the Biden-Netanyahu dialogue has become less constructive.

Netanyahu, who has opposed calls for a two-state solution throughout his political career, told reporters this week that he flatly told U.S. officials he remains opposed to any postwar plan that includes establish-

ment of a Palestinian state.

The prime minister's latest rejection of Biden's push in that direction came after Blinken this week said at the World Economic Forum in Davos that Israel and its Middle East neighbors had "a profound opportunity" to solve the generational Israel-Palestinian conflict. Asked if he thought Netanyahu was up to making the most of the moment, Blinken demurred.

"Look, these are decisions for Israelis to make," Blinken said. "This is a profound decision for the country as a whole to make: What direction does it want to take? Does it see — can it seize — the opportunity that we believe is there?"

The Biden-Netanyahu relationship has seen no shortage of peaks and valleys over the years. As vice president, Biden privately criticized Netanyahu after the the Israeli leader embarrassed President Barack Obama by approving the construction of 1,600 new apartments in disputed East Jerusalem in the middle of Biden's 2010 visit to Israel.

Netanyahu publicly resisted, before eventually relenting to, Biden's calls on the Israelis to wind down a May 2021 military operation in Gaza. And in late 2019, during a question and answer session with voters on the campaign trail, Biden called Netanyahu an "extreme right" leader.

The path to a two-state solution — one in which Israel would co-exist with an independent Palestinian state — has eluded U.S. presidents and Middle East diplomats for decades.

But as the war grinds on, Biden and his team have pressed the notion that there is a new dynamic in the Middle East in which Israel's Arab and Muslim neighbors stand ready to integrate Israel into the region once the war ends, but only if Israel commits to a pathway to a Palestinian state.

Biden has proposed that a "revitalized" Palestinian Authority, which is based in the West Bank, could run Gaza once combat ends. Netanyahu has roundly rejected the idea of putting the Palestinian Authority, which is beset by corruption, in charge of the territory.

Netanyahu argues that a Palestinian state would become a launchpad for attacks on Israel. So Israel "must have security control over the entire territory west of the Jordan River," Netanyahu said. "That collides with the idea of sovereignty. What can we do?"

White House officials have sought to play down Netanyahu's public rejection of Biden's call for a two-state solution, noting that the prime minister's rhetoric is not new.

They hold out hope Israel could eventually come around to accepting a Palestinian state that comes with strong security guarantees for Israel.

"I don't think Biden has any illusions about Netanyahu," said Daniel Kurtzer, who served as U.S. ambassador to Egypt during the Bill Clinton administration and to Israel under George W. Bush. "But I don't think he's ready to slam the door on him. And that's because he gets the intersection between the policy and the politics."

Tim Scott endorses Donald Trump ahead of New Hampshire Republican primary

By MEG KINNARD, JILL COLVIN and JONATHAN J. COOPER Associated Press

CONCORD, N.H. (AP) — Sen. Tim Scott of South Carolina endorsed Donald Trump Friday ahead of next week's New Hampshire primary, the latest sign the Republican party is rallying around the former president's candidacy after his historic Iowa win.

The decision marks a major blow to Scott's fellow South Carolinian Nikki Haley, the former U.N. ambassador who is banking on a strong showing in New Hampshire to keep her presidential hopes alive.

Scott flew with Trump from Florida to New Hampshire to deliver his effusive endorsement in a rousing call-and-response speech that resembled a vice presidential tryout.

The U.S. needs a president who will close the southern border, unite the country, protect social security and restore order, and one who doesn't see race, Scott said.

"We need a president who sees Americans as one American family, and that's why I came to the very warm state of New Hampshire to endorse the next president of the United States, President Donald

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Trump," Scott said.

Scott did not mention Haley, who as South Carolina governor elevated him from the House to the Senate and made him one of the nation's most prominent Black Republicans.

With four days to go before the first-in-the-nation primary, Trump asked New Hampshire voters to deliver a decisive victory that could end the GOP primary and allow him to fully turn his attention to the November contest against Democratic President Joe Biden.

"We want to win by big numbers," he said, "so everybody has to vote."

Before he spoke, Trump's crowd was warmed up by New York Rep. Elise Stefanik, a rising GOP star whose tough questioning of the presidents of elite universities led two of them to resign after they gave milquetoast responses to antisemitism.

Trump later invited Stefanik for her moment onstage — giving the appearance of vice presidential auditions.

Trump surrogates, many believed to be angling for his vice presidential nod, have fanned out to heap praise on the former president ahead of the New Hampshire primary and last week's Iowa caucuses.

Trump all but ruled out Haley for the role during his rally in Concord. He has been under considerable pressure from the right to make clear he won't pick Haley, including from his eldest son, Donald Trump Jr.

"She is not presidential timber," Trump said of Haley. "Now when I say that, that probably means that she's not gonna be chosen as the vice president."

Scott last May launched his own bid to challenge Trump before shuttering his effort about six months later, having had trouble gaining traction in the polls despite millions invested by high-profile donors.

In his efforts to run a positive campaign, Scott was often overshadowed by other candidates — particularly on the debate stage, where he seemed to disappear as others sparred.

In a sign that the GOP is increasingly coalescing around the front-runner, Trump has been appearing on the campaign trail with several other former rivals who have endorsed him, including North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum and biotech entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy.

Unlike those two, however, who were more reticent to critique Trump as they ran against him, Scott was at times critical of the former president during his own campaign.

In Concord, supporters waited hours in 17-degree weather, snaking through a dark hotel parking lot, to see Trump in person Friday evening.

Among them was Nancy Catano, a 72-year-old part-time schoolteacher who spent three hours in the frigid cold and was thrilled to learn about Scott's planned endorsement.

"Oh awesome. I love him. That's wonderful," she said. "That's going to be wonderful. That's great support for him."

Catano said it was notable that former Trump rivals were now rallying around him as the front-runner. "So they're realizing that we need to unite to win. We have to win," she said.

She said she has zero doubt Trump will be the nominee at this point.

"I think Tuesday is gonna be an exciting day," she said. "He wiped out Iowa and I'm expecting the same here in New Hampshire."

Trump celebrated his decisive victory in Iowa and heaped scorn on his rivals. He called Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis' fall to a distant second place "one of the great self-destructions I think I've ever witnessed." Haley, he said, is "not capable of doing this job."

There has been speculation that Scott could potentially be a running mate option for Trump, should the former president win the GOP nomination. When Scott entered the race in May, Trump welcomed his latest competitor with open arms, wishing him "good luck" with hospitality that some suggested was an acknowledgment that Trump saw an increased number of competitors as beneficial to his own bid.

Scott's endorsement was sought by the remaining major contenders in the Republican primary, particularly ahead of South Carolina's Feb. 24 primary, which has historically been influential in determining the eventual nominee.

DeSantis, who placed just ahead of Haley in Iowa's caucuses this week, has been shifting his campaign resources from Iowa to South Carolina. He planned to stump in the state on Saturday, aiming to continue

his effort to take on Haley — who has been pinning much of her early-states campaign on New Hampshire — directly in her home state.

Haley appointed Scott to the Senate in 2012. On Friday, a spokesperson for her campaign downplayed Scott's impending endorsement of Trump.

"Interesting that Trump's lining up with all the Washington insiders when he claimed he wanted to drain the swamp," Olivia Perez-Cubas said. "But the fellas are gonna do what the fellas are gonna do."

Beth Scaer, 61, of Nashua, said she briefly considered Ramaswamy but quickly decided "he wasn't a serious candidate" and is now backing DeSantis, whom she praised for being pro-life and for protecting children "from the gender cult."

Scott's decision to endorse Trump made no difference to her.

"No one's endorsement would matter to me," Scaer said.

David Josko, 76, of Rollinsford, said he'll probably vote for DeSantis now that former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie has dropped out. He said he would have supported Trump "if he just kept doing his job instead of having to pull a bear's tail," he said, using an expression he said described Trump's provocative behavior.

"It seemed to me like the press was pushing more for Trump because they can make more money off of Trump," Josko said at an Irish pub in Dover where he went to see DeSantis speak. "And so, like, anytime anybody burped, it became big news."

Trump mocks Nikki Haley's first name. It's his latest example of attacking rivals based on race

By BILL BARROW Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Donald Trump used his social media platform Friday to mock Nikki Haley's birth name, the latest example of the former president keying on race and ethnicity to attack people of color, especially his political rivals.

In a post on his Truth Social account, Trump repeatedly referred to Haley, the daughter of immigrants from India, as "Nimbra." Haley, the former South Carolina governor, was born in Bamberg, South Carolina, as Nimarata Nikki Randhawa. She has always gone by her middle name, "Nikki." She took the surname "Haley" upon her marriage in 1996.

Trump, himself the son, grandson and twice the husband of immigrants, called Haley "Nimbra" three times in the post and said she "doesn't have what it takes."

The attack comes four days before the New Hampshire primary, in which Haley is trying to establish herself as the only viable Trump alternative in the Republicans' 2024 nominating contest.

Trump's post was an escalation of recent attacks in which he referenced Haley's given first name — though he's misspelled it "Nimrada" — and falsely asserted she is ineligible for the presidency because her parents were not U.S. citizens when she was born in 1972.

The attacks echo Trump's "birther" rhetoric against President Barack Obama. Trump spent years pushing the conspiracy theory that the nation's first Black president was born in Kenya and not a "natural born" U.S. citizen as required by the Constitution. That effort was part of Trump's rise among Republicans' most culturally conservative base ahead of his 2016 election that surprised much of the U.S. political establishment.

Haley has dismissed Trump's latest attacks as proof that she threatens his bid for a third consecutive nomination.

"I'll let people decide what he means by his attacks," Haley told reporters in New Hampshire on Friday when asked about Trump's false assertions that her heritage disqualifies her from the Oval Office. "What we know is, look, he's clearly insecure if he goes and does these temper tantrums, if he's spending millions of dollars on TV. He's insecure, he knows that something's wrong."

Trump's campaign did not reply to an inquiry about his comments.

Since Monday's Iowa caucuses — which Trump won by 30 points over Ron DeSantis, who placed second — Haley has aimed to portray the rest of the GOP primary battle as a two-way race between Trump and herself despite her narrow third-place finish. Haley's campaign is aiming for a stronger showing in New

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Hampshire, hoping for a springboard into her home state South Carolina, which holds the South's first presidential primary next month.

For his part, Trump bounces between declarations that the nominating fight is already effectively over and blasting Haley as if the two are indeed locked in a tight contest. Trump still criticizes his other remaining rival, DeSantis, but his preferred pejoratives for the Florida governor, "Ron DeSanctimonious" or "Ron DeSanctus," have nothing to do with race or ethnicity. DeSantis is white.

Trump's focus on Haley's name comes as far-right online forums have for months been littered with mentions of her given name alongside racist commentary and false "birther" claims. Haley's name and family background also have become talking points on the left. Some widely circulating social media posts have called her a hypocrite for saying America was "never a racist country" when she likely experienced racism herself.

Pastor Darrell Scott, a Black man who has led a diversity coalition for Trump's previous campaigns, defended the former president's latest attacks as "slings and arrows" that come in election season.

"You have to dissect politics as politics. It's not personal," said Scott. "He's not intending to demean her or degrade her in any way. He's just doing that to garner votes."

Scott said Trump "has a compassionate side that most people don't see" and defended his aggressive approach as a "goose-and-gander situation" for a public figure constantly "under attack for everything."

Tara Setmayer, senior adviser to the Lincoln Project group that opposes Trump from within the conservative movement, agreed that Trump's rhetoric works in a Republican primary. But she said that's a damning reality for the party and does not excuse his behavior.

"These are the rantings of an incredibly, almost pathetically insecure man who has demonstrated over his entire career his racism and bigotry," said Setmayer, who is multiracial and calls herself a former Republican and now a conservative independent. "Why would anyone expect it to be any different now, when an entire political party has enabled this level of morally questionable behavior?"

Amid the fallout Friday, Trump won the endorsement of South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott, the Senate's only Black Republican and formerly a presidential candidate himself. Haley appointed Scott to the Senate in 2012, during her first term as governor.

Trump has a long history of using race, ethnicity and immigrant heritage as a cudgel.

For years, he has referred to Obama as "Barack Hussein Obama," putting an obvious emphasis on the 44th president's middle name. Obama was the son of a white American mother and a Black father from Kenya. He was born in Hawaii, though Trump spent years asserting Obama had manufactured the story and a birth certificate to support it. Trump eventually admitted his claims were false but then, during the 2016 general election, said he did so only to "get on with the campaign."

When David Duke, a former Ku Klux Klan leader, encouraged Republican primary voters to back Trump in 2016, Trump responded in a CNN interview that he knew "nothing about David Duke, I know nothing about white supremacists."

Trump is also among many Republicans who deliberately mispronounce Vice President Kamala Harris's name. Rather than the correct "KA'-ma-la," Trump sometimes says, "Ka-MAH-la." Harris, who is of Indian and Jamaican descent, is the first woman to become vice president and the third non-white person as either president or vice president, following Obama and Charles Curtis, Herbert Hoover's vice president who had Native American ancestry.

Leading up to Trump's 2017 inauguration, civil rights icon John Lewis, then a Black congressman from Georgia, said he would not attend Trump's inauguration because he considered him an illegitimate president. Trump reacted by blasting Lewis's Atlanta-based district as being in "horrible shape and falling apart (not to mention crime infested)." The district includes downtown Atlanta, Coca-Cola's world headquarters, the Georgia Institute of Technology and principal sites of the 1996 Olympic Games, among other attributes.

During his presidency, Trump questioned during a meeting with lawmakers why the U.S. would accept immigrants from Haiti and "shithole countries" across Africa instead of countries like Norway. He did not explicitly mention race but the White House followed disclosure of his comments with a statement explaining that Trump supported granting access to the U.S. for "those who can contribute to our society."

He also has said that four congresswomen of color should go back to the "broken and crime infested" countries they came from, ignoring the fact that all of the women are American citizens and three were born in the U.S.

Trump's mother was born Mary Anne MacLeod in Scotland and came to the United States between the two world wars. His paternal grandfather, Frederick Trump, was a Barvarian-born immigrant from Germany in the 1880s. Trump's first wife, Ivana Zelníčková before their marriage, was born in what is now the Czech Republic. His third wife, former first lady Melania Trump, was born Melanija Knavs in what is now Slovenia. That means four of Trump's five children also are children of immigrants.

Haley frames her family's story as proof that the U.S. "is not a racist country." She sometimes highlights her role in taking down the Confederate battle flag from South Carolina statehouse grounds after a racist massacre in her state — though she had sidestepped requests to remove the banner earlier in her term. And Haley has for years navigated Trump's penchant for racist rhetoric.

"I will not stop until we fight a man that chooses not to disavow the KKK," Haley said during the 2016 primary campaign after she had endorsed Florida Sen. Marco Rubio over Trump. "That is not a part of our party; that is not who we want as president."

Women and children are the main victims of the Israel-Hamas war with 16,000 killed, UN says

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Women and children are the main victims in the Israel-Hamas war, with some 16,000 killed and an estimated two mothers losing their lives every hour since Hamas' surprise attack on Israel, the United Nations agency promoting gender equality said Friday.

As a result of the more than 100-day conflict, UN Women added, at least 3,000 women may have become widows and heads of households and at least 10,000 children may have lost their fathers.

In a report released Friday, the agency pointed to gender inequality and the burden on women fleeing the fighting with children and being displaced again and again. Of the territory's 2.3 million population, it said, 1.9 million are displaced and "close to one million are women and girls" seeking shelter and safety.

UN Women's executive director, Sima Bahous, said this is "a cruel inversion" of fighting during the 15 years before the Hamas attack on Oct. 7. Previously, she said, 67% of all civilians killed in Gaza and the West Bank were men and less than 14% were women.

She echoed U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' calls for a humanitarian cease-fire and the immediate release of all hostages taken captive in Israel on Oct. 7.

"However much we mourn the situation of the women and girls of Gaza today, we will mourn further tomorrow without unrestricted humanitarian assistance and an end to the destruction and killing," Bahous said in a statement accompanying the report.

"These women and girls are deprived of safety, medicine, health care, and shelter. They face imminent starvation and famine. Most of all they are deprived of hope and justice," she said.

The health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza says nearly 25,000 Palestinians have been killed in the conflict, 70% of them women and children. The United Nations says more than a half million people in Gaza — a quarter of the population — are starving.

In Israel, around 1,200 people were killed during the Oct. 7 attack by Hamas that sparked the war, and some 250 people were taken hostage by militants. More than 100 hostages are believed to still be held captive in Gaza.

Bahous said UN Women had heard "shocking accounts of unconscionable sexual violence during the attacks" by Hamas, and she echoed U.N. calls for accountability, justice and support for all those affected.

Despite escalating hostilities in Gaza, the agency said women-led and women's rights organizations continue to operate. It found that 83% of women's organizations surveyed in the Gaza Strip are at least partially operational, mainly focusing on the emergency response to the war.

But UN Women said its analysis of funding from last year's flash appeal for Gaza found that just 0.09%

of funding went directly to national or local women's rights organizations.

Bahous said there is a need for much more aid to get to Gaza, especially to women and children, and for an end to the war.

"This is a time for peace," she said. "We owe this to all Israeli and Palestinian women and girls. This is not their conflict. They must no longer pay its price."

121 unmarked graves in a former Black cemetery found at US Air Force base in Florida, officials say

TAMPA, Fla. (AP) — As many as 121 unmarked graves in a former Black cemetery have been discovered at a U.S. Air Force base in Florida, military officials confirmed.

A non-intrusive archaeological survey performed over the past two years at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa identified 58 probable graves and 63 possible graves, base officials said Thursday, WFTS-TV reported. The Tampa Bay History Center notified MacDill officials about the possible Black cemetery in 2019, and the base hosted a memorial service in 2021, dedicating a memorial on-site to those buried there.

"We know obviously there was wrong done in the past, but we're working together with our community members," base spokesperson Lt. Laura Anderson said. "We want to make what was wrong right."

Officials said they plan to expand the search area this year and will continue to work with the community to determine how to best document the site and to pay respect to the people buried there.

Police reports and video released of campus officer kneeling on teen near Las Vegas high school

By KEN RITTER and RIO YAMAT Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — School officials in Las Vegas have released police reports and body camera footage under court order showing a campus officer kneeling on a Black student last year — an incident that drew accusations of police brutality after bystander video of it circulated widely on social media.

In his incident report, Clark County School District police Lt. Jason Elfberg said the teen, whose name is redacted, refused to move away from officers handcuffing another student while investigating a report that a gun had been brandished the previous day and a threat had been made to "shoot up" a Las Vegas school. No weapon was found.

The actions of Elfberg, who is white, pinning the teen beneath his knee next to a patrol vehicle drew public protests, comparisons to the 2020 police killing of George Floyd, calls for Elfberg's firing and an American Civil Liberties Union of Nevada lawsuit that forced school officials to release information.

Elfberg's attorney, Adam Levine, told The Associated Press ahead of the release of the bodycam videos that his client, a 14-year police veteran, was cleared of wrongdoing by the district and remains on the school police force.

A student who said police handcuffed him during the encounter for jaywalking told KVVU-TV at the time that the incident reminded him of the killing of Floyd, a Black man, by a white Minneapolis police officer who kneeled on his neck for nearly 10 minutes.

School officials late Thursday complied with a judge's order to release police body camera footage of the Feb. 9, 2023, incident near the Durango High School campus. The six video clips the district distributed, with faces and parts of some other scenes blurred, total more than two hours.

The Las Vegas-area school district argued that most records of the encounter were confidential because of the age of the people who were detained and denied media requests for them, including one submitted by the AP.

The ACLU on Friday called the district's fight not to release the records "shameful" and expensive for the organization and taxpayers. It characterized officers' accounts that the teenagers were stopped during a gun investigation "an attempt to spin the events and avoid accountability for attacking school children."

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The school district said in a statement the ACLU and its clients rejected an offer to receive redacted video last March. It said school administrators followed Nevada law "to protect the identity and safety of minors and the rights of police officers ... despite the challenges of that day's events near Durango High School."

"This fight is far from over," ACLU Executive Director Athar Haseebullah told reporters Friday. He said the organization has spent \$50,000 on attorneys to obtain the records on behalf of the two students, whose names haven't been made public. They were 14-year-old male freshmen at the school at the time of the confrontation.

The cellphone video of the encounter that went viral began with several district police officers detaining two students. As another student walked by, recording them with his cellphone, Elfberg yelled to him, "You want next, dude?"

The 55-second video showed the student backing away and lowering his phone before Elfberg twisted him to the ground next to a patrol vehicle. Students in the background could be heard yelling to the officer, "You can't have him on the ground like that!"

With the student face-down next to the sidewalk curb, the officer kneeled on his back, gesturing toward other young people in the area and keeping his knee in place until the cellphone video ended about 30 seconds later. At one point, the student could be heard asking his friends to call his mother.

Separately, police body camera video showed the teen being handcuffed by another officer, sitting on the curb with his hands behind his back, and Elfberg later acknowledging that the two landed hard on the sidewalk. He encouraged the teen to be checked for injuries, but the teen declined.

In his report, Elfberg wrote that the incident escalated when he ordered the student to "start walking, at which point he said no."

Elfberg said in his report he grabbed the teen and pushed him against a fence, but "he attempted again to remove himself from my grasp, so I then spun him around and took him down to the ground."

During a news conference, Haseebullah, ACLU attorney Christopher Peterson and NAACP Las Vegas President Quentin Savvoir said it appeared Elfberg was annoyed that the police activity was being recorded.

Haseebullah called Elfberg "a rowdy police officer" who initiated the incident by "jumping out of his vehicle to approach students who looked at him in a way he didn't like." He called for Clark County District Attorney Steve Wolfson to investigate and charge officers with wrongdoing.

"What you see is an officer engaged in misconduct," Haseebullah said.

Wolfson responded that police conduct investigations and collect evidence, not his office, and that he has prosecuted officers from police agencies throughout the county for various crimes. He said he had no filing seeking prosecution in the Durango High School case.

"I'm not afraid to file a charge in an appropriate circumstance, if and when there is sufficient evidence," he said.

Peterson emphasized that observers have a constitutional right to "film, criticize and question officers" and noted that video showed Elfberg threatening to use pepper spray on bystanders who "bravely stood their ground on a public sidewalk facing threats of retaliation."

Later, Elfberg could be heard on his body camera telling a student, "I don't mind if you record, dude. What I mind is everyone inching up on us."

Elfberg's attorney, Levine said the bodycam video "actually shows that Lt. Elfberg defused what could have been a very volatile and dangerous situation for both the officers and the involved students."

"This case highlights the dangers of jumping to a wrong conclusion based upon snippets of video viewed out of context," Levine said in his statement. The attorney also represents the school district's police union.

A 200-person police department covers Clark County schools, the fifth-largest district in the U.S. with more than 315,000 students at more than 350 campuses. District police have the authority to make arrests and issue traffic citations on and off campus.

Rifts emerge among top Israeli officials over how to handle the war against Hamas in Gaza

By JULIA FRANKEL, NAJIB JOBAIN and BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — A member of Israel's War Cabinet cast doubt on the country's strategy for releasing hostages held by Hamas, saying only a cease-fire can free them, as the prime minister rejected the United States' calls to scale back its offensive.

The comments by Gadi Eisenkot, a former army chief, marked the latest sign of disagreement among top Israeli officials over the direction of the war against Hamas, now in its fourth month.

In his first public statements on the course of the war, Eisenkot said that claims the dozens of hostages could be freed by means other than a cease-fire amounted to spreading "illusions" — an implicit criticism of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who heads the five-member War Cabinet and who insists that pursuing the war will win their release.

Eisenkot's statements came as some relatives of hostages have intensified their protests, a sign of mounting frustration over the government's seeming lack of progress toward a deal to release the remaining captives.

Eli Shtivi, whose 28-year-old son Idan has been held in Gaza since he was kidnapped by Hamas militants from the open-air Tribe of Nova music festival on Oct. 7, began a hunger strike Friday night outside Netanyahu's private residence in the coastal town of Caesarea. Shtivi pledged to eat only a quarter of a pita a day — the reported daily meal of the hostages — until the prime minister agrees to meet with him. Dozens of people joined him for what organizers said was an overnight protest.

The day before, rifle-toting Israeli police scuffled with protesters who blocked a major highway in Tel Aviv to call for an immediate deal to release the hostages. Police detained seven protesters overnight, according to Israeli media.

Meanwhile, communications began to gradually return in Gaza after a nearly eight-day blackout, the longest such cutoff since the war began. The phone and internet blackout made it nearly impossible for people in Gaza to communicate with the outside world or within the territory, hampering deliveries of humanitarian aid and rescue efforts amid continued Israeli bombardment.

For the past week, Gaza residents have struggled to get a signal on their phones. Many head to the beach, where some can pick up a non-Palestinian network. With families scattered across the tiny Mediterranean territory, networks are critical to make sure relatives are still alive as Israeli airstrikes crush homes.

"The people behind me came to check on their friends, family and loved ones," said Karam Mezre, referring to others sitting with him on a rock at the beach in central Gaza, scanning their phones.

Even when communications return, "it is intermittent and not stable," said Hamza Al-Barasi, who was displaced from Gaza City.

The blackout has also made it difficult for information to get out of Gaza on the daily death and destruction from Israel's offensive. The assault has pulverized much of the Gaza Strip, home to some 2.3 million people, as Israel vows to crush Hamas after its unprecedented Oct. 7 raid into Israel. In the attack, about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, were killed and 250 others taken hostage. Israel has said more than 130 hostages remain in Gaza, but not all of them are believed to be alive.

Israel's offensive, one of the deadliest and most destructive military campaigns in recent history, has killed nearly 25,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza health authorities, and uprooted more than 80% of the territory's population.

Israel has also cut off all but a trickle of supplies into the besieged territory, including food, water and fuel, causing what U.N. officials say is a humanitarian disaster.

The United States, Israel's closest ally, has provided strong military and political support for the campaign, but has increasingly called on Israel to scale back its assault and take steps toward establishing a Palestinian state after the war — a suggestion Netanyahu has soundly rejected.

Speaking during a nationally televised news conference Thursday, Netanyahu reiterated his longstanding opposition to a two-state solution, saying Israel "must have security control over the entire territory

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west of the Jordan River.”

On Friday, President Joe Biden and Netanyahu spoke by phone after a glaring, almost four-week gap in direct communication amid fundamental differences over their visions for Gaza once the war ends.

Biden, for his part, in Friday’s call reaffirmed his commitment to work toward helping the Palestinians move toward statehood.

Netanyahu and Defense Minister Yoav Gallant have also said the fighting will continue until Hamas is crushed, and argue that only military action can win the hostages’ release.

But commentators have begun to question whether Netanyahu’s objectives are realistic, given the slow pace of the offensive and growing international criticism, including genocide accusations at the United Nations world court, which Israel vehemently denies. Critics accuse Netanyahu of trying to avoid looming investigations of governmental failures, keep his coalition intact and put off elections. Polls show that the popularity of Netanyahu, who is on trial for corruption charges, has plummeted during the war.

Speaking to the investigative program “Uvda” on Israel’s Channel 12 television, Eisenkot said the Israeli hostages “will only return alive if there is a deal, linked to a significant pause in fighting.” He said dramatic rescue operations are unlikely because the hostages are apparently spread out, many of them in underground tunnels.

Claiming hostages can be freed by means other than a deal “is to spread illusions,” said Eisenkot, whose son was killed in December while fighting in Gaza.

Defense Minister Gallant has said troops disabled the Hamas command structure in northern Gaza, from which significant numbers of troops were withdrawn earlier in the week, and that the focus is now on the southern half of the territory.

But Eisenkot also dismissed suggestions that the military has delivered a decisive blow against Hamas. “We haven’t yet reached a strategic achievement, or rather only partially,” Eisenkot said. “We did not bring down Hamas.”

The militant group has continued to fight back across Gaza, even in the most devastated areas, and launched rockets into Israel.

In his interview, Eisenkot also confirmed that a preemptive strike against Lebanon’s Hezbollah militia was called off at the last minute during the early days of the war. He said he was among those arguing against such a strike in an Oct. 11 Cabinet meeting that he said left him hoarse from shouting.

Such an attack would have been a “strategic mistake” and would likely have triggered a regional war, Eisenkot said.

In a thinly veiled criticism of Netanyahu, Eisenkot also said strategic decisions about the war’s direction must be made urgently and that a discussion about an endgame should have started immediately after the war began.

He said he examines every day whether he should remain in the War Cabinet, which also includes Netanyahu, Gallant, former Defense Minister Benny Gantz and Ron Dermer, strategic affairs minister in the Netanyahu government. Eisenkot is a parliament member from the opposition National Unity alliance headed by Gantz.

“I know what my red line is,” Eisenkot said when asked at what point he would quit. “It’s connected to the hostages, that is one of the objectives, but it’s also connected to the way in which we need to run this war.”

The war has rippled across the Middle East, with Iranian-backed groups attacking U.S. and Israeli targets. Fighting between Israel and Hezbollah militants in Lebanon threatens to erupt into all-out war, and Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen continue to target international shipping despite U.S.-led airstrikes.

The United States conducted a sixth strike against Houthi rebels in Yemen on Friday, taking out anti-ship missile launchers that were prepared to fire, according to a U.S. official who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss ongoing military operations. President Joe Biden has acknowledged that bombing the militants has yet to stop their attacks on shipping in the crucial Red Sea corridor.

Microsoft says state-backed Russian hackers accessed emails of senior leadership team members

By FRANK BAJAK AP Technology Writer

BOSTON (AP) — State-backed Russian hackers broke into Microsoft's corporate email system and accessed the accounts of members of the company's leadership team, as well as those of employees on its cybersecurity and legal teams, the company said Friday.

In a blog post, Microsoft said the intrusion began in late November and was discovered on Jan. 12. It said the same highly skilled Russian hacking team behind the SolarWinds breach was responsible.

"A very small percentage" of Microsoft corporate accounts were accessed, the company said, and some emails and attached documents were stolen.

A company spokesperson said Microsoft had no immediate comment on which or how many members of its senior leadership had their email accounts breached. In a regulatory filing Friday, Microsoft said it was able to remove the hackers' access from the compromised accounts on or about Jan. 13.

"We are in the process of notifying employees whose email was accessed," Microsoft said, adding that its investigation indicates the hackers were initially targeting email accounts for information related to their activities.

The Microsoft disclosure comes a month after a new U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission rule took effect that compels publicly traded companies to disclose breaches that could negatively impact their business. It gives them four days to do so unless they obtain a national-security waiver.

In Friday's SEC regulatory filing, Microsoft said that "as of the date of this filing, the incident has not had a material impact" on its operations. It added that it has not, however, "determined whether the incident is reasonably likely to materially impact" its finances.

Microsoft, which is based in Redmond, Washington, said the hackers from Russia's SVR foreign intelligence agency were able to gain access by compromising credentials on a "legacy" test account, suggesting it had outdated code. After gaining a foothold, they used the account's permissions to access the accounts of the senior leadership team and others. The brute-force attack technique used by the hackers is called "password spraying."

The threat actor uses a single common password to try to log into multiple accounts. In an August blog post, Microsoft described how its threat-intelligence team discovered that the same Russian hacking team had used the technique to try to steal credentials from at least 40 different global organizations through Microsoft Teams chats.

"The attack was not the result of a vulnerability in Microsoft products or services," the company said in the blog. "To date, there is no evidence that the threat actor had any access to customer environments, production systems, source code, or AI systems. We will notify customers if any action is required."

Microsoft calls the hacking unit Midnight Blizzard. Prior to revamping its threat-actor nomenclature last year, it called the group Nobelium. The cybersecurity firm Mandiant, owned by Google, calls the group Cozy Bear.

In a 2021 blog post, Microsoft called the SolarWinds hacking campaign "the most sophisticated nation-state attack in history." In addition to U.S. government agencies, including the departments of Justice and Treasury, more than 100 private companies and think tanks were compromised, including software and telecommunications providers.

The main focus of the SVR is intelligence-gathering. It primarily targets governments, diplomats, think tanks and IT service providers in the U.S. and Europe.

2 weeks of winter storms kill dozens and cause cold chaos in parts of the US, but a thaw is coming

By CLAIRE RUSH Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Two weeks of storms that have turned roads into icy death traps, frozen people to death from Oregon to Tennessee and caused power outages that could take weeks to fix continued to sock both coasts with another round of weather chaos on Friday.

The rain, snow, wind and bitterly cold temperatures have been blamed for at least 55 deaths in the U.S. over the past two weeks as a series of storms moved across the country. Schools and roads have closed, and air traffic has been snarled.

There is hope. The forecast for next week calls for above average temperatures across almost the whole country, according to the National Weather Service.

Heavier-than-forecast snow fell in New York City, Baltimore and Washington, D.C., on Friday and Michigan City, Indiana, received 17 inches (43 centimeters) of lake-effect snow. But the biggest problems remained in places hit hard by storms earlier in the week.

On the West Coast, Oregon's governor declared a statewide emergency Thursday night, nearly a week after the start of a crippling ice storm.

Thousands have been without power since last weekend in parts of Oregon's Willamette Valley because of the freezing rain.

"We lost power on Saturday, and we were told yesterday that it would be over two weeks before it's back on," said Jamie Kenworthy, a real estate broker in Jasper in Lane County.

About 90,000 customers remained without electricity Friday afternoon in the state after back-to-back storms, according to poweroutage.us.

Portland Public Schools canceled classes for the fourth straight day amid concerns about icy roads and water damage to buildings, and state offices in the city were also ordered closed.

Ice was also a problem in the South. Snow and freezing rain added another coat of ice in Tennessee on Thursday. More than 9 inches (22.8 centimeters) of snow has fallen around Nashville since Sunday, nearly twice the yearly average.

Authorities blamed at least 17 deaths in Tennessee on the weather. Several were from traffic wrecks. In Washington County, a patient in an ambulance and a person in a pickup were killed in a head-on crash when the truck lost control on a snowy road.

Exposure to cold was deadly, too. A 25-year-old man was found dead in a mobile home in Lewisburg after a space heater fell over and turned off.

"There was ice on the walls in there," Marshall County Chief Deputy Bob Johnson said.

Kentucky reported five deaths from the freezing weather. A statement from Gov. Andy Beshear didn't provide details.

The cold in Washington state was blamed for five deaths. The people — most of them presumed homeless — died from exposure to cold in just four days last week in Seattle as temperatures plummeted to well below freezing, the medical examiner's office said.

Two people died from exposure as far south as Louisiana, where temperatures in part of the state stayed below freezing for more than two days.

The cold broke so many water mains in Memphis that the entire city was placed on a boil water notice because the pressure was so low, Memphis Light, Gas and Water said. Bottled water was being given out in at least two locations Friday.

In Jackson, Mississippi, law enforcement agencies are investigating whether social media rumors about a potential water outage during the cold snap prompted people to fill bathtubs with tap water. The water system in Mississippi's capital experienced a drop in pressure that temporarily made faucets run dry for thousands of customers Wednesday and Thursday, though service was restored by Friday.

A significant drop in blood donations led Chattanooga, Tennessee-based Blood Assurance to recommend that more than 70 hospitals in five states halt elective surgeries until Wednesday to let the organization

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rebuild its inventory. In a news release Thursday, the group cited the weather and several massive blood transfusions in the previous 24 hours in its plea to the hospitals in Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina and Tennessee.

Aaron Robison, 62, has been staying at one of Nashville's warming centers and said the cold wouldn't have bothered him when he was younger. But now with arthritis in his hip and having to rely on two canes, he needed to get out of the cold.

"Thank God for people helping people on the streets. That's a blessing," he said.

On Friday, more bitterly cold air was spilling into the Midwest from Canada. Several states were under an advisory as forecasters warned of wind chills dipping to minus 30 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 34 degrees Celsius) could be common through Sunday morning.

Since extreme cold weather set in last week, more than 60 oil spills and other environmental incidents have been reported in North Dakota's Bakken oil fields. Wind chills as low as minus 70 degrees F (minus 56.6 C) have strained workers and equipment, increasing the likelihood of accidents.

Lake-enhanced snow finally moved out of Buffalo, New York, late Thursday after burying parts of the city and some suburbs in five feet of snow in five days. The Buffalo Bills renewed their call for snow shovelers Friday, offering \$20 an hour for help digging out Highmark Stadium before Sunday's divisional playoff game against the Kansas City Chiefs.

The West Virginia Legislature left after a brief session Friday because not enough lawmakers could get through snow-covered highways to the Capitol to vote on bills.

In Washington, snow fell softly and the streets around the U.S. Capitol were silent. Schools closed again for the second time in a week, and the government was on a two-hour delay. President Joe Biden still planned to host mayors from around the country on Friday, though, and was heading to his Delaware beach home for the weekend.

Ousted Florida Republican chair cleared of rape allegation, but police seek video voyeurism charge

By TERRY SPENCER Associated Press

Police cleared the ousted chair of the Florida Republican Party of rape allegations on Friday, but said they have asked prosecutors to charge him with illegally video recording the sexual encounter he had with a female acquaintance.

The Sarasota Police Department said in a statement that a review of a cellphone video Christian Ziegler made of the Oct. 2 encounter showed that it was "likely consensual," making it impossible to charge him with rape. However, police said the woman told investigators that she never consented to be video recorded and was unaware it had occurred.

Police turned their findings over to the office of Sarasota County State Attorney Ed Brodsky on Friday, recommending that Ziegler be charged video voyeurism. Under Florida law, that is a third-degree felony that is punishable by up to five years in prison.

Brodsky told The Associated Press that his prosecutors will begin an immediate examination of the evidence and recommendation. He said they will also review the decision not to charge Ziegler with rape or sexual assault.

"We want to be thorough," said Brodsky, an elected Republican.

Derek Byrd, Ziegler's attorney, said in a statement that "since day one, we have been confident Mr. Ziegler would be exonerated from these baseless allegations."

"He has been completely honest, forthright, and has been fully cooperative with law enforcement at every stage of this investigation," Byrd said. "While we are disappointed that the Sarasota Police Department 'punted' the decision on the remaining portion of the case to the State Attorney's office, we strongly believe that the State Attorney will not prosecute Mr. Ziegler for any crime."

Ziegler, 40, previously admitted having sex with the woman but insisted it was consensual and blamed political opponents for sensationalizing the matter. Court records show that his wife, Bridget Ziegler, told

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detectives the three had engaged in sex once more than a year ago. Police said Bridget Ziegler backed out of the planned encounter but her husband went to the accuser's apartment alone.

Bridget Ziegler is a prominent conservative who co-founded the Moms for Liberty organization and is also an elected member of the Sarasota County school board. She was also appointed by Gov. Ron DeSantis to the board that now oversees Walt Disney World's land development. DeSantis pushed through legislation last year disbanding a Disney-controlled board after the company opposed his bill that limits sex education in schools.

The Republican Party of Florida ousted Ziegler earlier this month as police investigated the rape accusation against him. The party had suspended Ziegler last month and demanded his resignation, saying he couldn't effectively lead during a critical election year with the allegations swirling around him. DeSantis, U.S. Sens. Marco Rubio and Rick Scott, and other Republican leaders had also called on Ziegler to step down.

It wasn't immediately clear what the conclusion of the rape investigation would mean for Ziegler's future with the state Republican Party. Evan Power, who had been vice chair of the state GOP, has already been chosen to replace Ziegler.

Earlier, Sarasota Police Detective Angela Cox said in search warrant affidavits that investigators were seeking emails, photos, videos, contacts and other information from Ziegler's cellphone and Google account as part of their investigation into the woman's accusation.

The woman told detectives that she and Ziegler have known each other for more than 20 years. She said that on Oct. 2, she agreed to have sex with Ziegler and his wife but backed out after being told that Ziegler's wife "couldn't make it."

The woman said that a while later, she left her apartment to walk her dog and found Ziegler standing in the hallway. She says he pushed her inside and raped her, according to the affidavits. Investigators say the apartment complex's security video shows Ziegler entering the building and leaving.

The woman's sister told Cox that the woman called her and told her she was raped. The woman reported the rape two days later.

In late October, after Ziegler tried to contact the woman, police had her exchange monitored phone and text message conversations with him. According to the affidavits, he insisted they are friends and at one point suggested that they meet in person.

"Hell no, not after what you did to me. Do you understand I am terrified of you?" she wrote to him.

He replied that he had to go.

In a phone call, the woman told Ziegler that he had sexually assaulted her.

"Those are big words, please don't, no I didn't," he replied. "You invited me in."

He offered her "financial help" before becoming suspicious that their calls were being recorded.

In a Nov. 2 interview with detectives with his attorney present, Ziegler said the sex was consensual and that he had recorded it. He said he then deleted the video, but after the accusation he recovered it and uploaded it to Google.

How to stay healthy during cold, flu and COVID-19 season

By CARLA K. JOHNSON AP Medical Writer

Winter is here, inflicting its usual array of symptoms — coughs, nasal congestion, fatigue and fever — and, this year, a new COVID-19 variant is dominating the scoreboard.

COVID-19 is leading hospital admissions among the respiratory viruses, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Last week, 25 U.S. states had high or very high levels for respiratory illnesses with fever, cough and other symptoms. That's down from 37 states the week before, the CDC said.

Since the beginning of October, there have been at least 16 million illnesses, 180,000 hospitalizations, and 11,000 deaths from flu so far this season. The CDC said 47 children have died of flu.

January can be the worst month for these illnesses. With vaccination rates low, what can you do to protect yourself from respiratory viruses, including influenza, COVID-19 and RSV?

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BACK TO BASICS

Hand-washing remains crucial to reducing the spread of viral infections. Take your time at the sink. Twenty seconds is recommended. If you feel silly singing "Happy Birthday" twice while you scrub with soapy water, count to 20. Slowly.

Use hand sanitizer with 60% alcohol when you don't have access to soap and water.

Also, wear a mask in crowded areas. Increase ventilation in your workplace and home.

NOT TOO LATE TO VACCINATE

In the United States, only 17% of those eligible have received the updated COVID-19 vaccine, which provides good protection against the now-dominant JN.1 variant.

It's not too late to roll up your sleeve. While you're at it, make sure you've had your annual flu shot. Those 60 and older may want to get the RSV vaccine, which also is recommended during pregnancy to prevent RSV in infants.

WHEN YOU HAVE CHILDREN AT HOME

Young children seem to pick up every germ going around. Can their parents avoid getting sick?

This time of year, children are indoors in close quarters with other kids, touching the same toys and surfaces, said Jennifer Sonney of University of Washington School of Nursing in Seattle. Some haven't learned to cover their coughs and they simply haven't been exposed to many illnesses, so their immune systems are still developing.

It's important to take care of yourself if you're a parent or caregiver of young children, said Sonney who is immediate past president of the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners.

"We know if you are sleep deprived or dehydrated or experiencing a lot of stress, that can compromise your immune function," Sonney said.

Having young children is very demanding, "so all of this advice needs to be interpreted within the context of reality," she said. "Despite doing everything right, kids are still going to get colds."

A special note if your baby is sick: It's a good idea to have saline drops and a bulb syringe at home. They can be used to clear mucus from tiny nostrils.

"A couple drops of saline into one nostril and suction it and then do the other side," Sonney said. "Doing that before eating and sleep is going to help a lot."

A home kit for children could also include acetaminophen or ibuprofen for fevers, tissues for runny noses and water bottles of sippy cups for staying hydrated.

TEST TO TREAT

If you do get sick, prompt testing can help determine whether you have COVID-19 or influenza. That's important to see if you need one of the medicines that can help prevent severe illness: Paxlovid for COVID-19 and Tamiflu for flu.

If you don't have a test kit at home, look for a test-to-treat site at a pharmacy clinic or health center near your. There is also a free home-based test-to-treat program for adults who are uninsured or rely on government health insurance.

Alabama inmate asks federal appeals court to block first-ever execution by nitrogen gas

By KIM CHANDLER Associated Press

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP) — An attorney for an Alabama inmate set to be the nation's first person ever put to death by nitrogen gas asked a federal appeals court Friday to block the upcoming execution using the "untested methods."

Kenneth Smith, 58, is scheduled to be executed Thursday, when a respirator-type mask will be put on his face to replace his breathing air with pure nitrogen — depriving him of the oxygen needed to stay alive. Three states — Alabama, Oklahoma and Mississippi — have authorized nitrogen hypoxia as an execution method, but no state has previously attempted to use it.

The 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals heard diverging descriptions of the humaneness and potential

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risks of the proposed method in Smith's appeal of a federal judge's Jan. 10 decision to let the execution go forward. The three judges on the panel asked questions about the proposed method, including claims that it could cause Smith to choke to death on his own vomit, but did not indicate when they will rule.

Smith's attorney, Robert Grass, told the judges that the state will "attempt to execute Kenny Smith under unprecedented circumstances," arguing that the plan to deliver the nitrogen gas through a face mask is flawed and could subject Smith to a prolonged and unconstitutionally painful execution.

"This is the first time this will ever be attempted. There is no data on exactly what's going to happen and how this will go forward," Grass said.

Some states are looking for new ways to execute inmates because the drugs used in lethal injections, the most common execution method in the United States, are increasingly difficult to find. If Smith's execution by nitrogen hypoxia is carried out, it will be the first new execution method used in the United States since lethal injection was first used in 1982.

The Alabama attorney general's office urged the court to let the execution proceed.

"Alabama has adopted the most painless and humane method of execution known to man," Alabama Solicitor General Edmund LaCour told the judges.

Courts require inmates challenging their execution method to suggest an alternate available method. During arguments Friday, Circuit Judge Charles Wilson noted that Smith, when fighting past attempts to execute him by lethal injection, had previously suggested nitrogen as an alternative method. At the time the state had not developed a protocol for nitrogen executions and it was unclear when the state would do so.

Grass said they are challenging the state's plan to use a mask to deliver the nitrogen because there is a risk of oxygen leaking in, possibly subjecting Smith to a prolonged execution and leaving him in a vegetative state instead of killing him. He argued that there is also a possibility that Smith could choke to death on his own vomit.

The state maintained those scenarios are unlikely to happen. Wilson asked if the execution would be stopped if Smith vomited into the mask, and LaCour said the state would not halt the execution if the nitrogen gas had begun flowing.

"If he vomits during the execution with the mask on, you're telling me that the state will not stop the execution, they will permit him to choke on his vomit?" Wilson asked.

LaCour responded that there is not a "substantial risk" of Smith vomiting. Smith will not feel pain, LaCour argued, because the nitrogen would render him unconscious "almost instantaneous."

Smith was one of two men convicted of the 1988 murder-for-hire of a preacher's wife. Prosecutors said Smith and the other man were each paid \$1,000 to kill Elizabeth Sennett on behalf of her husband, who was deeply in debt and wanted to collect insurance. John Forrest Parker, the other man convicted in the case, was executed by lethal injection in 2010. Sennett's husband killed himself when the murder investigation focused on him as a suspect, according to court documents.

Alabama attempted to execute Smith by lethal injection in 2022 but the state called off the execution before the lethal drugs were administered because authorities were unable to connect the two required intravenous lines to Smith's veins. Smith was strapped to the gurney for nearly four hours during that execution attempt, his lawyers said.

Smith's attorney also argued that Alabama is violating his due process rights by scheduling his execution ahead of other inmates who requested nitrogen as their preferred execution method and while he has ongoing appeals.

Smith has argued in a separate case that after surviving one execution attempt it would violate the federal ban on cruel and unusual punishment for the state to make a second attempt to execute him. On Friday, Smith asked the U.S. Supreme Court to stay the execution to consider that question.

2023 was slowest year for US home sales in nearly 30 years as high mortgage rates frustrated buyers

By ALEX VEIGA AP Business Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Sales of previously occupied U.S. homes sank in 2023 to a nearly 30-year low, as sharply higher mortgage rates, rising prices and a persistently low level of homes on the market combined to push homeownership out of reach for many Americans.

The National Association of Realtors said Friday that existing U.S. home sales totaled 4.09 million last year, an 18.7% decline from 2022. That is the weakest year for home sales since 1995 and the biggest annual decline since 2007, the start of the housing slump of the late 2000s.

The median national home price for all of last year edged up just under 1% to record high \$389,800, the NAR said.

Last year's home sales slump echoes the nearly 18% annual decline in 2022, when mortgage rates began rising, eventually more than doubling by the end of the year. That trend continued in 2023, driving the average rate on a 30-year mortgage by late October to 7.79%, the highest level since late 2000.

The sharply higher home loan borrowing costs limited home hunters' buying power on top of years of soaring prices. A dearth of homes for sale also kept many would-be homebuyers and sellers on the sidelines.

Still, a pullback in mortgage rates since late last year, and forecasts calling for a further rate declines this year, is fueling hopes that home sales will begin to bounce back from their dismal showing in 2023.

"The latest month's sales look to be the bottom before inevitably turning higher in the new year," said Lawrence Yun, the NAR's chief economist. "Mortgage rates are meaningfully lower compared to just two months ago, and more inventory is expected to appear on the market in upcoming months."

Mortgage rates have been mostly easing since November, echoing a pullback in the 10-year Treasury yield, which lenders use as a guide to pricing loans. The yield has largely come down on hopes that inflation has cooled enough for the Federal Reserve to shift to cutting interest rates this year.

The average rate on a 30-year home loan was 6.6% this week, according to mortgage buyer Freddie Mac. If rates continue to ease, as many economists expect, that should help boost demand heading into the spring homebuying season, which traditionally begins in late February.

Still, the average rate remains sharply higher than just two years ago, when it was 3.56%. That large gap between rates now and then has helped limit the number of previously occupied homes on the market by discouraging homeowners who locked in rock-bottom rates from selling.

"Prospective homebuyers have been shut out of the market by a lack of inventory," said Lisa Sturtevant, chief economist at Bright MLS. "If there had been more listings on the market in 2023, we would have had more home sales."

At the end of December, there were just 1 million homes on the market, the NAR said. While that's a 4.2% increase from a year earlier, the number of available homes remains well below the monthly historical average of about 2.25 million.

The available inventory at the end of last month amounts to a 3.2-month supply, going by the current sales pace. That's down 3.5% from the previous month, but up from 2.9% from December 2022. In a more balanced market between buyers and sellers, there is a 4- to 6-month supply.

That means homebuyers are likely to face intense competition for the relatively few homes on the market, which should keep pushing up prices.

"There will still be a demand-supply imbalance in the housing market well into 2024," Sturtevant said.

Despite easing mortgage rates, home sales in December declined after rising the previous month. Existing home sales fell 1% from November to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 3.78 million, the slowest sales pace since August 2010, the NAR said.

Sales fell 6.2% from a year earlier. Last month's sales pace is short of the roughly 3.83 million that economists were expecting, according to FactSet.

Home prices rose for the sixth straight month in December. The national median home sales price rose 4.4% from a year earlier to \$382,600, the NAR said.

Homebuyers continued to face a competitive market due to the shortage of homes for sale. Homes sold last month typically within just 29 days after hitting the market, and 56% of properties that sold in December were on the market for less than a month, the NAR said.

First-time homebuyers who don't have any home equity to put toward their down payment continued to have a tough time getting into the housing market. They accounted for just 29% of all homes sold last month, down from 31% in November and December 2022. They've accounted for 40% of sales historically. "Renters, potential first-time buyers (are) really struggling to get into the market," Yun said.

Sports Illustrated employees left in limbo as publisher faces money troubles

By JOE REEDY and DAVID BAUDER AP Sports Writer

The jobs of people who produce Sports Illustrated were in limbo Friday after the company that paid to maintain the iconic brand's print and digital products told staff that its license was revoked.

In an email to employees Friday morning, the Arena Group, which operates Sports Illustrated and related properties, said that because of the revocation, "we will be laying off staff that work on the SI brand."

Authentic Brands Group owns the Sports Illustrated brand and had been licensing it to Arena. Authentic later said in a statement it intends to keep Sports Illustrated going. The company is negotiating with Arena and other publishing entities to determine who will do that, according to a person with knowledge of the talks who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the person was not authorized to speak publicly about them.

Until those negotiations are resolved, it's unclear which journalists would actually do the work of making Sports Illustrated. It was not clear how many jobs were affected.

Sports Illustrated's employee union said in a statement that the layoffs initially announced by Arena would be a significant number and possibly all, of the NewsGuild workers represented.

"We have fought together as a union to maintain the standard of this storied publication that we love, and to make sure our workers are treated fairly for the value they bring to this company. It is a fight we will continue," Mitch Goldich, NFL editor and unit chair, said in a statement.

The guild's statement also called for Authentic to "ensure the continued publication of SI and allow it to serve our audience in the way it has for nearly 70 years."

Authentic said it would do so, and that "we are confident that going forward the brand will continue to evolve and grow in a way that serves sports news readers, sports fans and consumers. We are committed to ensuring that the traditional ad-supported Sports Illustrated media pillar has best in class stewardship to preserve the complete integrity of the brand's legacy."

In a statement on Friday, the Arena Group said it was negotiating with Authentic about the license, "with plans to sustain our commitment to delivering quality content throughout the ongoing discussions."

Arena admitted that it had failed to make a quarterly payment of \$3.75 million and Authentic had put it on notice that it intended to end the licensing agreement. As a result, Arena announced Thursday it would make a "significant reduction" in its workforce of more than 100 people.

The Arena Group acquired publishing rights from Authentic in 2019 for at least 10 years. The group's stewardship of Sports Illustrated has had many hurdles since then. In December, it fired chief executive officer Ross Levinsohn when the magazine's alleged use of AI-generated stories drew public backlash.

Sports Illustrated has had a rough six years. It was acquired by Meredith Publishing in 2018 as part of the purchase of Time Inc., which started the magazine in 1954.

Less than a year later, Meredith sold the magazine's intellectual property to Authentic for \$110 million. Authentic owns the intellectual property of many brands and stars, including Marilyn Monroe, Elvis Presley, Muhammad Ali and Reebok.

Once a weekly publication, Sports Illustrated was reduced to biweekly publishing in 2018 and became a monthly in 2020.

Stock market today: Wall Street hits record high following a 2-year round trip scarred by inflation

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Wall Street returned to record heights Friday to cap a punishing, two-year round trip dogged by high inflation and worries about a recession that seemed inevitable but hasn't arrived.

The S&P 500, which is the centerpiece of many 401(k) accounts and the main measure that professional investors use to gauge Wall Street's health, rallied 1.2% to 4,839.81. It erased the last of its losses since setting its prior record of 4,796.56 at the start of 2022. During that time, it dropped as much as 25% as inflation soared to levels unseen since Thelonious Monk and Ingrid Bergman were still alive in 1981.

Even more than high inflation itself, Wall Street's fear was focused on the medicine the Federal Reserve traditionally uses to treat it. That's high interest rates, which press the brakes on the economy by making borrowing more expensive and hurting prices for stocks and other investments. And the Fed rapidly hiked its main interest rate from virtually zero to its highest level since 2001, in a range between 5.25% and 5.50%.

Historically, the Fed has helped induce recessions through such increases to interest rates. Coming into last year, the widespread expectation on Wall Street was that it would happen again.

But this time was different, or at least it has been so far. The economy is still growing, the unemployment rate remains remarkably low and optimism is on the upswing among U.S. households.

"I don't think this cycle is normal at all," said Niladri "Neel" Mukherjee, chief investment officer of TIAA's Wealth Management team. "It's unique, and the pandemic introduced that element of uniqueness."

After shooting higher as snarled supply chains caused shortages because of COVID-19 shutdowns, inflation has been cooling since its peak two summers ago. It's eased so much that Wall Street's biggest question now is when the Federal Reserve will begin moving interest rates lower.

Such cuts to rates can act like steroids for financial markets, while releasing pressure that's built up on the economy and the financial system.

Treasury yields have already relaxed significantly on expectations for rate cuts, and that helped the stock market's rally accelerate sharply in November. The yield on the 10-year Treasury slipped Friday to 4.13%, and it's down sharply from the 5% that it reached in October, which was its highest level since 2007.

Of course, some critics say Wall Street has gotten ahead of itself, again, in predicting how soon the Federal Reserve may begin cutting interest rates.

"The market is addicted to rate cuts," said Rich Weiss, chief investment officer of multi-asset strategies at American Century Investments. "They just can't get enough of it and are myopically focused on it."

Repeatedly since the Fed began this rate-hiking campaign early in 2022, traders have been quick to forecast an approaching easing of rates, only to be disappointed as high inflation proved to be more stubborn than expected. If that happens again, the big moves higher for stocks and lower for bond yields may need to revert.

This time around, though, the Fed itself has hinted that rate cuts are coming, though some officials have indicated they may begin later than the market is hoping for. Traders are betting on a nearly coin flip's chance that the Fed will start cutting in March, according to data from CME Group.

"The truth is likely somewhere between what the Fed is saying and what the market is expecting," said Brian Jacobsen, chief economist at Annex Wealth Management. "That will continue to cause dips and rips" for financial markets "until the two reconcile with each other."

Some encouraging data came Friday after a preliminary report from the University of Michigan suggested the mood among U.S. consumers is roaring higher. It said sentiment jumped to its highest level since July 2021. That's important because spending by consumers is the main driver of the economy.

Perhaps more importantly for the Fed, expectations for upcoming inflation among households also seem to be anchored. A big worry has been that such expectations could take off and trigger a vicious cycle that keeps inflation high.

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Friday's lift for Wall Street came with a big boost from technology stocks, something that's become typical in its run higher.

Several chip companies rose for a second straight day after heavyweight chipmaker Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. delivered a better forecast for revenue this year than analysts expected. Broadcom rose 5.9%, and Texas Instruments climbed 4%.

All told, the S&P 500 rose 58.87 points to its record. The Dow Jones Industrial Average set its own record a month earlier, and it gained 395.19, or 1.1%, Friday to 37,863.80. The Nasdaq composite jumped 255.32, or 1.7%, to 15,310.97.

Last year, a select few Big Tech companies were responsible for the wide majority of the S&P 500's gains. Seven of them accounted for 62% of the index's total return, according to S&P Dow Jones Indices.

Many of those stocks — Microsoft, Apple, Alphabet, Nvidia, Amazon, Meta Platforms and Tesla — rode a furor in the market around technology related to artificial intelligence. The hope is AI will lead to a boom in profits, both for companies using it and for companies providing the hardware for it.

Investors may have wished they had stayed in just those stocks, which got the nickname of "the Magnificent 7." But some of them remain below their record highs, such as Tesla. It's still down 48% from its all-time high set in November 2021.

Friday's return of the S&P 500 to a record serves as another example that investors who stay patient and spread their investments across the U.S. stock market end up making back all their losses. Sometimes it can take a long time, like the lost decade of 2000 through 2009 when the S&P 500 tumbled through the dot-com bubble bust and the global financial crisis. But the market has historically made investors whole again, given enough time.

Including dividends, investors with S&P 500 index funds already returned to break-even a month ago.

Of course, risks still remain for investors. Besides uncertainty about when the Fed will begin cutting interest rates, it's also still not a sure thing that the economy will avoid a recession.

Hikes to interest rates take a notoriously long time to make their way fully through the system, and they can cause things to break in unexpected places within the financial system.

In snowy DC, the March for Life rallies against abortion with an eye toward the November elections

By ASHRAF KHALIL and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Thousands of opponents of abortion rights rallied under falling snow on Friday at the annual March for Life, as speakers urged the impassioned crowd to capitalize on the movement's major victory in the Supreme Court and keep fighting until abortion is eliminated.

Months before a presidential election that could be heavily influenced by abortion politics, anti-abortion activists packed the National Mall carrying signs with messages such as "Life is precious" and "I am the pro-life generation." After listening to speeches, the crowd, braving frigid temperatures, marched past the U.S. Capitol and Supreme Court. One group planted in front of Court, beating a drum and chanting: "Everyone you know was once an embryo."

Friday's March for Life is the second such event in the nation's capital since the June 2022 Supreme Court ruling that ended the federal protection for abortion rights enshrined in Roe v. Wade. Last year's march was triumphant, with organizers relishing a state-by-state fight in legislatures around the country.

Speakers praised the Dobbs decision that overturned Roe v. Wade but said it was more important now than ever to keep up the pressure on lawmakers to advance abortion restrictions.

"Roe is done, but we still live in a culture that knows not how to care for life," said Benjamin Watson, a former NFL player who is now an anti-abortion advocate. "Roe is done, but the factors that drive women to seek abortions are ever apparent and ever increasing. Roe is done, but abortion is still legal and thriving in too much of America."

Friday's event appeared smaller than in past years as ice and snow complicated travel plans. But the

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crowd was fired up as speakers, which included members of Congress and Michigan University Football Coach Jim Harbaugh, urged participants to keep fighting until abortion becomes “unthinkable.”

“Let’s be encouraged, let’s press on and hope that we can join together and make this great difference,” House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La. “We can stand with every woman for every child, and we can truly build a culture that cherishes and protects life.”

The snow fell heavily throughout the speeches as young people built snowmen and had snowball fights behind the stage. Near the Capitol, the crowd celebrated as a group on a balcony of the Cannon House Office building cheered on the march.

“I almost didn’t come when I saw the forecast, but this is just incredible,” said Stephanie Simpson, a 42-year-old grocery store employee from Cleveland, who has attended the last four marches.

Roberto Reyes, a Mexican native and Carmelite friar, said: “All these people are going to remember this year’s march for the rest of their lives!”

Members of the crowd described overturning Roe v. Wade as a victory, but said the anti-abortion fight rages on.

“The key message this year is that our work is not done,” said Bishop Michael Burbidge, chair of the committee for pro-life activities for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The movement has seen mixed results. The ruling in Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization reverted abortion lawmaking back to the states, and 14 states are now enforcing bans on abortion throughout pregnancy. Two more have such bans on hold because of court rulings. And another two have bans that take effect when cardiac activity can be detected, about six weeks into pregnancy — often before women know they’re pregnant.

But abortion restrictions have also lost at the ballot box in Ohio, Kansas and Kentucky. And total bans have produced high-profile causes for abortion rights supporters to rally around. Kate Cox, a Texas mother of two, sought an abortion after learning the baby she was carrying had a fatal genetic condition. Her request for an exemption from Texas’ ban, one of the country’s strictest, was denied by the state Supreme Court, and she left Texas to seek an abortion elsewhere.

Movement organizers now expect abortion rights to be a major Democratic rallying cry in President Joe Biden’s reelection campaign.

“The pro-abortion forces, that’s one of the major things they’re going to run on,” said Susan Swift, president of Pro-Life Legal and a veteran anti-abortion activist. “That’s one of the only things that seems to animate their base.”

Biden campaign officials openly state that they plan to make Biden synonymous with the fight to preserve abortion rights.

Vice President Kamala Harris has led the charge on the issue for the White House. She will hold the first event in Wisconsin on Monday, which would have been the 51st anniversary of Roe v. Wade, the lawsuit that led to the landmark 1973 U.S. Supreme Court decision establishing a constitutional right to abortion.

Grand jury indicts Alec Baldwin in fatal shooting of cinematographer on movie set in New Mexico

By MORGAN LEE Associated Press

SANTA FE, N.M. (AP) — A grand jury indicted Alec Baldwin on Friday on an involuntary manslaughter charge in a 2021 fatal shooting during a rehearsal on a movie set in New Mexico, reviving a dormant case against the actor.

Special prosecutors brought the case before a grand jury in Santa Fe this week, months after receiving a new analysis of the gun that was used. They declined to answer questions after spending about a day and a half presenting their case to the grand jury.

Defense attorneys for Baldwin indicated they’ll fight the charge.

“We look forward to our day in court,” said Luke Nikas and Alex Spiro, defense attorneys for Baldwin, in an email.

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While the proceeding is shrouded in secrecy, two of the witnesses seen at the courthouse included crew members — one who was present when the fatal shot was fired and another who had walked off the set the day before due to safety concerns.

Baldwin, the lead actor and a co-producer on the Western movie "Rust," was pointing a gun at cinematographer Halyna Hutchins during a rehearsal on a movie set outside Santa Fe in October 2021 when the gun went off, killing her and wounding director Joel Souza.

Baldwin has said he pulled back the hammer, but not the trigger, and the gun fired.

The charge has again put Baldwin in legal trouble and created the possibility of prison time for an actor who has been a TV and movie mainstay for nearly 40 years, with roles in the early blockbuster "The Hunt for Red October," Martin Scorsese's "The Departed" and the sitcom "30 Rock."

The indictment provides prosecutors with two alternative standards for pursuing an involuntary manslaughter charge against Baldwin in the death of Hutchins. One would be based on negligent use of a firearm, and the other alleges felony misconduct "with the total disregard or indifference for the safety of others."

Judges recently agreed to put on hold several civil lawsuits seeking compensation from Baldwin and producers of "Rust" after prosecutors said they would present their case to a grand jury. Plaintiffs in those suits include members of the film crew.

Los Angeles-based attorney Gloria Allred, who is representing the slain cinematographer's parents and younger sister in a civil case, said Friday that her clients have been seeking the truth about what happened the day Hutchins was killed and will be looking forward to Baldwin's trial.

Neema Rahmani, a former federal prosecutor and president of the West Coast Trial Lawyers firm in Los Angeles, pointed to previous missteps by prosecutors, saying they will need to do more than present ballistics evidence to make a case that Baldwin had a broader responsibility and legal duty when it came to handling the gun on the set.

Special prosecutors dismissed an involuntary manslaughter charge against Baldwin in April, saying they were informed the gun might have been modified before the shooting and malfunctioned. They later pivoted and began weighing whether to refile a charge against Baldwin after receiving a new analysis of the gun.

The analysis from experts in ballistics and forensic testing relied on replacement parts to reassemble the gun fired by Baldwin, after parts of the pistol were broken during testing by the FBI. The report examined the gun and markings it left on a spent cartridge to conclude that the trigger had to have been pulled or depressed.

The analysis led by Lucien Haag of Forensic Science Services in Arizona stated that although Baldwin repeatedly denied pulling the trigger, "given the tests, findings and observations reported here, the trigger had to be pulled or depressed sufficiently to release the fully cocked or retracted hammer of the evidence revolver."

The weapons supervisor on the movie set, Hannah Gutierrez-Reed, has pleaded not guilty to involuntary manslaughter and evidence tampering in the case. Her trial is scheduled to begin in February.

"Rust" assistant director and safety coordinator David Halls pleaded no contest to unsafe handling of a firearm last March and received a suspended sentence of six months of probation. He agreed to cooperate in the investigation of the shooting.

An earlier FBI report on the agency's analysis of the gun found that, as is common with firearms of that design, it could go off without pulling the trigger if force was applied to an uncocked hammer, such as by dropping the weapon.

The only way the testers could get it to fire was by striking the gun with a mallet while the hammer was down and resting on the cartridge, or by pulling the trigger while it was fully cocked. The gun eventually broke during testing.

The 2021 shooting resulted in a series of civil lawsuits, including wrongful death claims filed by members of Hutchins' family, centered on accusations that the defendants were lax with safety standards. Baldwin and other defendants have disputed those allegations.

The Rust Movie Productions company has paid a \$100,000 fine to state workplace safety regulators

after a scathing narrative of failures in violation of standard industry protocols, including testimony that production managers took limited or no action to address two misfires on set before the fatal shooting.

The filming of "Rust" resumed last year in Montana, under an agreement with the cinematographer's widower, Matthew Hutchins, that made him an executive producer.

Lions finally giving fans, including Eminem, chance to cheer for a winner after decades of futility

By LARRY LAGE AP Sports Writer

DETROIT (AP) — Eminem stood alongside Pro Football Hall of Famers Barry Sanders and Calvin Johnson before the Detroit Lions hosted a playoff game for the first time in three decades, soaking up an electric atmosphere at Ford Field.

"The energy in the building was amazing," Johnson said in a telephone interview, taking a break from snowboarding in Utah. "You could feel it. I wish we could've had that kind of experience."

He's not alone.

Detroit was an NFL powerhouse a long time ago, winning three league titles from 1952 to 1957 in the pre-Super Bowl era, but the franchise had only one postseason win since.

Until last Sunday's victory.

The Lions beat the Matt Stafford-led Los Angeles Rams 24-23 in a wild-card game that whipped the crowd into so much of a frenzy that the decibels were almost as loud as a jet engine.

Detroit's party might get kicked up a notch.

The Lions are hosting Tampa Bay on Sunday, playing a second home playoff game in one postseason for the first time in team history.

Singer Bob Seger, actor Jeff Daniels, actor, writer and producer Keegan-Michael Key — all from Michigan — are expected to attend the divisional game along with NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell and one of the team's biggest fans: Eminem.

The rapper has expressed himself and shared his fandom recently on Instagram, saying his New Year's resolution was for the Lions to win the Super Bowl and asking Stafford for a favor.

"Can you just let us have this one?" Eminem asked in a post last week.

Now, Eminem is playfully asking coach Dan Campbell to put him in the game.

"I'm going to be there that night," Eminem said. "I will suit up, and I will score us the winning touchdown in the third quarter."

If Detroit, which is favored by almost a touchdown by FanDuel Sportsbook, beats the Buccaneers it will move a step closer to potentially reaching the Super Bowl for the first time.

While there are scores of long-suffering fans in the Motor City, it has also attracted some new ones and engaged with them in the digital age.

Sweta Patel, who was born in India and lives in suburban Detroit, didn't know what a first down was about a decade ago. The 41-year-old Patel has developed her knowledge of the game and affinity for the organization thanks to some interactions on social media and in person as a season-ticket holder.

When she posted on social media about having knee surgery, Lions players wished her a speedy recovery. When Patel shared that she had a miscarriage in 2021, she heard from Campbell himself shortly after he was hired.

"He's just a man of the people," she said. "His voice was almost cracking in that video, and it just really brought some comfort to me."

Mike McCord and millions more in Michigan have waited a long time for their favorite team to bring them joy.

The 68-year-old McCord was a toddler when his late father, Darris, a Pro Bowl defensive lineman, helped Detroit beat Cleveland at Briggs Stadium, which was later known as Tiger Stadium, for the NFL title in 1957.

McCord began attending games six-plus decades ago and his family has had season-tickets for more than a half-century, passing the passion for the Honolulu Blue and Silver down to his 36-year-old daughter, Riley.

"It's been a long 50 years," he said. "We've been through thick and thin — mostly thin."

The Lions hit rock bottom in 2008, becoming the NFL's first 0-16 team, during the worst nine-season stretch in the league since World War II. During a particularly putrid stretch of futility, football historians had to go back to the Dayton Triangles during the 1920s to find a team that lost so often.

When coach Matt Patricia was fired during the 2020 season, Mike McCord was ready to give up his tickets on the 40-yard line in the 22nd row behind Detroit's bench.

McCord's daughter, hoping to seal the deal to renew the family's four tickets, had a custom coffee cup made with the words "One More Year" under the team's logo.

"We didn't know what that next season was going to look like," Riley McCord said. "So, I got that cup."

Team owner Sheila Ford Hamp began to turn the team around three years ago when she finally landed a winning combination in the front office and on the sideline, hiring general manager Brad Holmes and Campbell.

The Lions built momentum by closing the last season with eight wins over the last 10 games and lived up to unusually high expectations in 2023, tying a franchise record with 12 wins in the regular season and earning a division title for the first time in three decades.

"Detroit's a great sports town," McCord said. "We've seen the Tigers win it. We've seen the Pistons win it. We've seen the Red Wings win it. We've seen a lot of good things, but never from our Lions.

"We hope this is the year to finally relieve that pain, and I think they could do it. That's the good thing. We're still in it, and we could go all the way."

Lawyer hired to prosecute Trump in Georgia is thrust into the spotlight over affair claims

By KATE BRUMBACK and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER undefined

ATLANTA (AP) — Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis hired attorney Nathan Wade to lead the Georgia prosecution of Donald Trump and 18 others over efforts to overturn the 2020 election. Now, allegations of a romantic relationship between Willis and Wade are raising questions about his past work and qualifications and threaten to taint one of four criminal cases against the former president.

She has defended her hiring of Wade — who has little prosecutorial experience — and has not directly denied a romantic relationship. The claim surfaced last week in a motion filed by a defense attorney representing a former Trump campaign staffer, who did not provide concrete proof. The lawyer is seeking to get the indictment tossed and to remove Willis and Wade from the case.

The district attorney's relative silence for over a week has allowed Trump and other critics to exploit the claims as the former president vies to win back the White House. But while it's created a political storm, the legal implications are less clear.

"It's certainly a huge political problem, it is certainly scandalous and salacious, if true," said Anthony Michael Kreis, a Georgia State University law professor who is following the case. But he questioned whether it affects prosecutors' ability to handle the case professionally.

"Where is the line between an ethical lapse or a political misjudgment and something that kind of taints this office?" he asked.

Outside of any effect on this case, Willis, an elected Democrat, is up for reelection this year, and this could become a campaign issue depending on how she ultimately responds.

The motion filed last week by lawyer Ashleigh Merchant, who represents former Trump campaign staffer and onetime White House aide Michael Roman, alleges that Willis paid Wade large sums and benefitted personally when he, in turn, used his earnings to take her to Napa Valley, Florida and the Caribbean. Wade has been paid more than \$650,000 at a rate of \$250 an hour since his hiring, according to records Merchant cited.

Wade did not respond to an email seeking comment.

The judge has scheduled a Feb. 15 hearing on the matter and ordered prosecutors to file a response by Feb. 2.

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Merchant has not provided proof of a romantic relationship. She wrote that filings in Wade's pending divorce are sealed. She also cited "sources close" to the two without elaborating. She is now seeking to unseal Wade's divorce case. The Associated Press and other news organizations have also filed to unseal the case.

Wade's wife has subpoenaed Willis for a deposition in the divorce case. In a filing Thursday seeking to quash that subpoena, a lawyer for Willis accused Joycelyn Wade of trying to obstruct and interfere with the criminal election interference case.

In a response filed Friday, a lawyer for Joycelyn Wade wrote that Nathan Wade has taken trips to San Francisco and Napa Valley, Florida, Belize, Panama and Australia, as well as taking Caribbean cruises since filing for divorce and that Willis "was an intended travel partner for at least some of these trips as indicated by flights he purchased for her to accompany him."

The filing includes credit card statements that show Wade — after he had been hired as special prosecutor — purchased plane tickets in October 2022 for him and Willis to travel to Miami and bought tickets in April to San Francisco in their names.

Joycelyn Wade's filing says she is seeking to question Willis about "her romantic affair" with Nathan Wade, saying there "appears to be no reasonable explanation for their travels apart from a romantic relationship."

Willis spokesperson Jeff DiSantis declined to comment Friday on Joycelyn Wade's filing.

Willis vigorously defended Wade's credentials at a church service on Sunday and suggested the questioning of his hiring was rooted in racism. She has three special prosecutors working on the election case — a white woman, a white man and a Black man — "they only attacked one," she said, referring to Wade.

The other special prosecutors are John Floyd, a nationally recognized expert on anti-racketeering laws, and Anna Cross, who worked for two decades as a prosecutor and handled numerous high-profile cases.

Willis cited Wade's 10 years as a municipal court judge and more than 20 years in private practice. But Wade's prosecutorial experience is thin. He worked for the Cobb County solicitor general's office, which handles misdemeanor cases, for less than a year in the late 1990s, a county spokesperson said.

In a December 2010 letter, then-Attorney General Thurbert Baker designated Wade a special assistant attorney general. Baker left office the next month. A spokesperson for the attorney general's office said they "have not found any information to confirm that Mr. Wade has served as a Special Assistant Attorney General."

It's not the first time Wade's qualifications have been challenged.

After his firm was tapped in 2020 by then-Cobb County Sheriff Neil Warren to review operations at the local jail, a TV news station sued the sheriff, alleging the investigation was a sham designed to prevent the release of records about inmate deaths. The lawsuit said Wade had "no apparent experience, qualifications, or training in conducting jailhouse investigations."

Months into the investigation, Wade told the TV station's lawyer that he had no notes or other written documentation of his work, saying he had only "what's going on in my mind about it."

Records obtained by the AP through an open records request indicate that Wade billed the sheriff's office \$44,000 for 80 hours of work, or \$550 an hour, in November and December 2020. The sheriff's office said it had no report or other documents produced from that investigation.

Wade was also very involved with the special grand jury investigation that preceded Trump's indictment. That panel's foreperson told the AP that Wade generally led those proceedings, describing him as "very much a prosecutor." Since Trump and the others were indicted, Wade has been a near-constant presence in the courtroom during hearings. But it's generally other prosecutors who argue motions, cross-examine witnesses or write briefs.

The Trump team — including outside Georgia — is following the fracas. Defense lawyers in the federal classified documents case have demanded any records related to 2022 meetings between Wade and White House staff. Records show Wade billed for what he described as "travel to Athens; conf with White House Counsel" in May 2022. There's another charge for "Interview with DC/White House."

A review of visitor logs at the White House did not turn up any meeting with Wade. There was a conference call in May 2022 between Willis' team and the White House counsel's office to ask whether investiga-

tors could interview former White House officials, or whether they would be bound by federal rules that prohibit unauthorized disclosures of official information, according to a person familiar with the call who spoke to the AP on the condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to speak publicly about it. But it wasn't immediately clear whether Wade was on that call.

It's not surprising that Trump has seized on the Willis and Wade allegations.

Trump took a similar tack during the FBI's investigation into Russian election interference amid revelations that the lead agent in that probe had had an extramarital relationship with a lawyer for the bureau. The two had traded anti-Trump texts, including messages calling him an "idiot" and "loathsome human" and describing the prospect of a Trump victory in 2016 as "terrifying."

Trump used the texts to try to undermine the investigation and to paint the FBI as politically biased against him. The agent, Peter Strzok, was later fired, though a subsequent Justice Department inspector general report did not find evidence that investigative steps during the Russia probe had been taken for partisan or political reasons.

Robert James, who was previously district attorney in DeKalb County, Georgia, said if Wade and Willis are romantically involved, it's an optics problem, but he doesn't see anything inherently improper about a relationship. Even if Wade spends money on Willis, that's likely not an issue unless there's evidence of some sort of conspiracy to profit, he said.

"I have no belief, unless something different than what I've heard comes out, that Fani Willis is going to be disqualified from this case," James said.

Private US lander destroyed during reentry after failed mission to moon, company says

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — A U.S. company's failed moonshot ended with a fiery plunge over the South Pacific, officials confirmed Friday.

Astrobotic Technology said contact and then tracking was lost as its lunar lander reentered Earth's atmosphere Thursday, 10 days after launching from Florida. It received confirmation Friday from U.S. Space Command that the spacecraft broke apart during its final moments, CEO John Thornton said.

A fuel leak shortly after liftoff had nixed any chance of a moon touchdown.

"What a wild adventure we were just on," Thornton said. "Certainly not the outcome we were hoping for and certainly challenging right up front."

After consulting with NASA and other government experts, Astrobotic took steps to destroy its crippled lander in order to protect other spacecraft. Flight controllers at the company's Pittsburgh headquarters briefly fired the engines, getting the lander in the right location for reentry despite little fuel.

Thornton said an investigation board will be convened to determine what went wrong. Engineers suspect a stuck valve in the propellant system caused a tank to rupture.

"We were coming from the highest high of the perfect launch and came down to a lowest low" when the tank burst a few hours after liftoff, he told reporters.

The 6-foot-tall (1.9-meter-tall) lander, named after the Peregrine falcon, made it all the way out to the moon's orbit, more than 240,000 miles (390,000 kilometers) away, before doing a U-turn and hurtling back toward Earth.

It was the first U.S. lunar lander in more than a half-century. The next one is set to blast off next month, built and operated by Houston's Intuitive Machines. NASA paid millions of dollars to the two companies to fly its experiments to the moon, part of an effort to commercialize lunar deliveries ahead of astronauts' arrival.

Right before Friday's U.S. news conference, a lunar lander from Japan touched down on the moon, but it was unable to generate crucial solar power. The U.S., Russia, China and India have successfully landed spacecraft on the moon and only the U.S. has landed astronauts.

Astrobotic's lander carried a variety of experiments — including five from NASA — as well as ashes and

DNA from 70 space enthusiasts, including "Star Trek" creator Gene Roddenberry. Flight controllers were able to turn on some experiments and collect data,

The company is already is working on an even bigger lunar lander that will carry NASA's Viper rover to the moon in a year.

Prince Harry drops libel case against Daily Mail after damaging pretrial ruling

By BRIAN MELLEY Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Prince Harry dropped his libel lawsuit Friday against the publisher of the Daily Mail tabloid following a punishing ruling in which a judge suggested he might lose at trial.

Lawyers for the Duke of Sussex notified the High Court in London that he would not continue the suit against Associated Newspapers Ltd., one of several cases he had pending in his high-profile battle with the British press.

No reason was given, but it came the day he was due to hand over documents in the case and after a punishing ruling last month in which a judge ordered Harry to pay the publisher nearly 50,000 pounds (more than \$60,000) in legal fees after he failed to achieve victory without going to trial.

The action will leave him on the hook to pay the publisher's legal fees, which the Daily Mail reported to be 250,000 pounds (\$316,000). A spokesperson for the duke said it was premature to speculate about costs.

Harry, 39, the estranged younger son of King Charles III, has broken ranks with the royal family in his willingness to go to court and it has become the main forum in his efforts to hold the news media accountable for hounding him throughout his life.

Associated Newspapers is one of three tabloid publishers he has sued over claims they used unlawful means, such as deception, phone hacking or hiring private investigators, to try to dig up dirt on him. That case against Associated and another against the publisher of The Sun are headed for trial.

In the sole case that has gone to trial, Harry scored a big victory last month against the publishers of the Daily Mirror when a judge ruled that phone hacking was "widespread and habitual" at Mirror Group Newspapers, and executives at the papers covered it up. He was awarded 140,000 pounds (\$177,000).

The libel case involved a Mail on Sunday article that said Harry tried to hide his efforts to retain publicly funded protection in the United Kingdom after walking away from his role as a working member of the royal family.

Harry's lawyers claimed the article attacked his honesty and integrity by purporting to reveal that court documents "contradicted public statements he had previously made about his willingness to pay for police protection for himself and his family" while in the U.K. He said the article would undermine his charity work.

The publisher argued the article expressed an honest opinion and caused no serious harm to his reputation.

In March, Harry sought summary judgment — to win the case without going to trial — and tried to knock out the Mail's defense but a judge didn't buy it.

Justice Matthew Nicklin ruled on Dec. 8 that the publisher was more likely to prevail in its defense showing that statements issued on Harry's behalf were misleading and that the February 2022 article reflected an "honest opinion" and wasn't libelous.

"The defendant may well submit that this was a masterclass in the art of 'spinning,'" Nicklin wrote, in refusing to strike the honest opinion defense.

Harry also has a lawsuit pending against the government's decision to protect him on a case-by-case basis when he visits Britain. He claims that hostility toward him and his wife on social media and relentless hounding by the news media threaten their safety. He cited media intrusion for his decision to leave life as a senior royal and move to the United States

Harry's spokesperson said his focus remains on that case and his family's safety.

Jack Burke Jr., Hall of Famer who was the oldest living Masters champion, has died at age 100

By DOUG FERGUSON AP Golf Writer

Jack Burke Jr. loved to play golf as much as he enjoyed teaching it.

In a golfing life that spanned just over a century, he delivered the largest comeback in Masters history, built the fabled Champions Golf Club in Houston and left everyone he met with homespun wisdom on golf and life.

"Leisure time is dangerous. You might wind up inside a bottle of bourbon," Burke once said about retirement. "You were put on this earth to produce, so get with it."

Burke, who was the oldest living Masters champion, died Friday morning in Houston. He was 100, just 10 days short of his next birthday.

"I went to see him last Friday and he did what he did best, giving me golf lessons and life lessons," PGA champion Hal Sutton said. "He lived a productive life. This is a celebration of his life more than anything."

Sutton said Burke's wife, Robin, sent him a text message about his passing.

Burke was a Marine during World War II. His induction into the World Golf Hall of Fame in 2000 was as much about his influence on golf as the two majors he won in 1956. And he was renowned for his sharp wit that never left him.

"Why did golf give us 34 rules when God only gave us 10 commandments?" he said over dinner at his home in Houston in 2020.

Burke won the Masters and the PGA Championship in 1956 when he was the PGA player of the year. He was best known for staging the greatest comeback in Masters history when he overcame an eight-shot deficit in the final round to beat Ken Venturi.

In conditions so blustery only two players broke par, Burke posted a 1-under 71 for a one-shot victory over Venturi, who shot 80. Burke recalled a key putt on the 17th hole when the wind was so strong it had blown sand out of the bunker.

"The wind grabbed that thing and kept blowing it down the hill, until it plunked dead in the middle of the hole. It was a miracle, the best break of my career. You better believe wind affects putts," he said. "A golf ball weighs 1.62 ounces. Can a 20-mile-per-hour wind affect that ball as it rolls? You tell me."

Later that year, Burke defeated Ted Kroll, 3 and 2, to win the PGA Championship.

Those were among his 16 victories on the PGA Tour, including four straight in early 1952, three of them by six shots or more. He was on five straight Ryder Cup teams and won seven of his eight matches. The lone loss was in 1957 when Burke was a playing captain and Great Britain won for the first time since World War II.

Burke's last PGA Tour victory was in 1963, but his career was far from over. He was as much a teacher as a player, and a Texan through and through. He joined with another Masters champion, Jimmy Demaret, to found Champions Golf Club for only serious golfers.

Burke once had a policy that members had to have a handicap of 15 or better to join.

"I don't care how much money someone has, what race, sex or religion they are, none of that stuff," he once said. "All I want are people who have invested a lot of hours in the game. ... It doesn't make a lot of sense filling a yacht club with people who can't sail a boat."

Champions went on to host the Ryder Cup, the U.S. Open, the Ryder Cup, the U.S. Women's Open and the Tour Championship. Tiger Woods won at Champions in 1999 — he shared a locker with Burke at Augusta National.

Born in Fort Worth, he grew up in Houston while his father, Jack Burke, was the head pro at River Oaks Country Club. His father died when Burke was serving in the Marines during World War II, where he taught combat skills at Miramar near San Diego.

"They asked me to help with teaching martial arts because, as a golfer, I'm familiar with timing and balance — and both are very important," Burke told the USGA in 2017. "I had been instructing golf all my life because my dad taught me how to teach. So teaching these other things was not a problem."

When the war ended, Burke became a teaching pro in New Jersey and then got a job as an assistant

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under Claude Harmon at Winged Foot. That led to a club pro job at Metropolis Country Club in New York. For all he achieved inside the ropes, Burke is equally known for his teaching skills. He could be funny and harsh, always getting his point across, all for the love of the game.

"When a primitive hunter threw a spear at his prey, you better believe he followed through and finished with his weight on his left foot," Burke once said. "Reverse pivots in the jungle could be fatal. That saber-toothed tiger would eat you. Any throwing motion requires a weight shift to the left. Stone Age man realized that. Millions of years later, poor golfers do not."

Burke was perturbed when a member at Champions asked him for a quick look at his swing. Burke offered a suggestion and as he walked away, the member said, "Thanks for the tip."

"I don't give tips," Burke wrote in his book. "This isn't Churchill Downs. It took me 60 years to acquire the knowledge necessary to offer that man a suggestion. Just because the advice comprised one sentence doesn't mean it didn't include a lot of thought."

His book was titled, "It's Only a Game," and was published in 2006, two years after he served as an assistant captain at the Ryder Cup in 2004 at Oakland Hills, where Europe recorded its biggest victory. Burke cited the high-priced tuxedos they wore to the gala as an example of how riches in golf had softened the players. He also mentioned how much players seemed to enjoy their time playing table tennis and video games.

"I closed my eyes and imagined Ben Hogan sitting at the car racing game, his hat turned backwards, giggling and shouting to Arnold Palmer, who was waiting his turn," Burke wrote.

Burke was part of the original PGA Hall of Fame in Pinehurst and was among PGA champions not ushered into the new World Golf Hall of Fame when it opened in 1998 in Florida. But he was the first one selected through the Veteran's Category in 2000.

Burke was among eight inducted that evening and as he stood at the podium on a typical emotional ceremony, he quipped, "With all these tears, I might be standing in casual water."

His second wife, Robin, was the Curtis Cup captain in 2016 and helped Burke run Champions. The club hosted the U.S. Women's Open in December 2020. Burke was 97 and still engaging, a twinkle in those blue eyes, irreverent as always.

"The USGA has never owned a golf course," he said that week at his home. "But they come to your course and tell you how to run it."

AP Decision Notes: What to expect in the New Hampshire primaries

By ROBERT YOON Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The race for the Republican and Democratic presidential nominations will converge in New Hampshire on Tuesday in the first primary election of the season — though on the Democratic side, the contest may count only for bragging rights.

The Republican primary will test former President Donald Trump's front-runner status in a state he carried by a comfortable margin in the 2016 primary but has a considerably more moderate electorate than the one that delivered him a big win in the Iowa caucuses.

It will also be a test for former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley, who wants to establish herself as the main alternative to Trump. Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who edged Haley for second place in Iowa, is now focusing his efforts on South Carolina, after two scheduled New Hampshire debates were canceled.

Trump has had a consistent lead in the polls, with Haley, a former South Carolina governor, appearing to be in the strongest position among his rivals.

In the Democratic primary, President Joe Biden won't appear on the ballot, since the contest violates the national party rules he pushed for, but supporters have mounted a write-in campaign on his behalf. The Biden campaign has not endorsed the write-in effort. Among the Democratic candidates whose names will appear on the ballot are U.S. Rep. Dean Phillips of Minnesota and 2020 candidate Marianne Williamson.

Here's a look at what to expect on Tuesday:

PRIMARY NIGHT

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The New Hampshire presidential primaries will be held on Tuesday. The last polls in the state close at 8 p.m. ET, although polls in most of the state close at 7 p.m. ET and some close at 7:30 p.m. ET. In tiny Dixville Notch, which has only a handful of residents, polls open at midnight ET and close a few minutes later once all voters have cast a ballot.

WHAT'S ON THE BALLOT

The Associated Press will provide coverage for both the Democratic and the Republican presidential primaries. The Republican primary ballot will list the names of 24 candidates, including DeSantis, Haley and Trump. The ballot also includes the names of candidates who have dropped out, such as Chris Christie, Asa Hutchinson, Vivek Ramaswamy and others. The Democratic ballot will list the names of 21 candidates, including Phillips and Williamson. Biden will not be listed on the ballot.

WHO GETS TO VOTE

Registered party members may vote only in their party's primary. In other words, registered Democrats may vote only in the Democratic primary, and registered Republicans may vote only in the Republican primary. Independent or unaffiliated voters may vote in either primary. New voters may register on primary day at a polling site, but the deadline to change party affiliation for voters who are already registered was in October. Seventeen-year-olds who will turn 18 by the November general election may vote in the primary.

DELEGATE ALLOCATION RULES

For Republicans, statewide primary results will be used to determine how many of New Hampshire's 22 Republican National Convention delegates each candidate has won. Delegates are allocated to candidates in proportion to their share of the statewide vote, although a candidate must receive at least 10% of the vote to qualify for delegates. Any unallocated delegates are awarded to the statewide winner. Unlike some other states, New Hampshire Republican delegates are not allocated by congressional district.

For Democrats, no delegates will be allocated based on the results of the primary, according to the Democratic National Committee, which governs the nomination process.

DECISION NOTES

Trump won a competitive New Hampshire primary in 2016 with 35% of the vote, more than double the showing of his nearest competitor, then-Ohio Gov. John Kasich. He did best in the state's heavily Republican areas, outperforming Kasich by a nearly 4-1 ratio. Trump fared less well in the state's heavily Democratic areas, although he still finished slightly ahead of Kasich in those parts of the state.

In Iowa, Haley performed best in the state's more Democratic-friendly areas, but she finished with more votes than the former president in only one county. To be competitive against Trump in New Hampshire, she'll surely need to beat Trump outright in the state's Democratic strongholds. If Trump posts big margins in these areas, including in Concord and Portsmouth, he's likely on his way to a decisive win statewide.

Many New Hampshire towns report all or nearly all of their votes at once. The Associated Press will analyze those early returns and compare them with past election results, which may help determine whether early returns are providing a clear indication of the winner.

The Democratic race is complicated by the Biden write-in factor. The AP will report vote results for the 21 candidates listed on the ballot, as well as for "Unprocessed write-in," and once those ballots are sorted and tallied by name, for "Joe Biden write-in" or "Other write-in."

The AP will analyze results from towns as they begin to report candidate-specific write-in totals to determine whether the Biden write-in effort has prevailed. The New Hampshire secretary of state has expressed optimism about local elections officials' ability to tabulate and report write-in votes, but any delay in determining Biden's share will slow how quickly the AP is able to declare a winner.

The AP will declare winners in both primaries, as well as a second-place determination in the Republican contest. The AP does not make projections and will declare a winner only when it's determined there is no scenario that would allow the trailing candidates to close the gap. If a race has not been called, the AP will continue to cover any newsworthy developments, such as concessions or declarations of victory. In doing so, the AP will make clear that it has not yet declared a winner and explain why.

There is no automatic recount in New Hampshire presidential primaries, but any candidate who receives at least 9% of votes cast may request a recount for a fee. The fee is refunded if the person who requested

it is declared the winner.

WHAT DO TURNOUT AND ADVANCE VOTE LOOK LIKE?

As of Dec. 28, 2023, there were about 873,000 registered voters in New Hampshire. Registered Republicans make up 31% of voters, compared with 30% for Democrats. Independents or unaffiliated voters comprise 39% of all voters.

In recent Democratic presidential primaries in New Hampshire, turnout was 43% of eligible voters — those who are registered as Democrats or who are unaffiliated — in 2020 and 41% in 2016. On the Republican side, turnout was 23% of eligible voters in 2020, when Trump was running for reelection, and 44% in 2016, when Trump first ran.

Pre-Election Day voting does not make up a sizable share of the total vote in New Hampshire elections, as it's limited to voters who cannot cast a ballot in person on Election Day. In the 2020 primaries, ballots cast before Election Day made up only 7% of Democratic primary votes and 4% of Republican primary votes.

HOW LONG DOES VOTE-COUNTING USUALLY TAKE?

In the 2020 New Hampshire primary, the AP first reported results at 12:13 a.m. ET for the Democratic race and 12:14 a.m. ET for the Republican race, to reflect the state's small handful of votes cast at midnight on primary morning. The primary night results were first reported at 7:32 p.m. ET for Republicans and 7:34 p.m. ET for Democrats.

Primary night tabulation ended at 1:12 a.m. ET for the Democratic contest with 93% of total votes counted and at 1:14 a.m. ET for Republicans with 92% of votes counted.

The Manchester and Concord areas tend to report results faster than the rest of the state. Vote reporting in the northern half of New Hampshire tends to trail that of other parts of the state.

Angst over LGBTQ+ stories led to another canceled show. But in a Wyoming town, a play was salvaged

By MEAD GRUVER Associated Press

WHEATLAND, Wyo. (AP) — Oliver Baez spent two months rehearsing a scene for a school play in which his character confronts another student about bullying a gay student who takes his own life.

After much preparation, the 12-year-old's small scene turned into a big problem among school officials in Wheatland, Wyoming. At the last minute they canceled the anti-bullying play, saying it did not conform to school values and leaving the young cast without a stage.

"It was awful," Baez said. "For the school to cancel it, it's like saying that 'LGBTQ should not be included in a society.' Which is really awful and cruel."

Twenty-five years after a watershed moment for the gay rights movement — the murder of Matthew Shepard, a 21-year-old student in a university town not far from Wheatland — the canceled performances of "The Bullying Collection" show how far the LGBTQ+ community still has to go to gain acceptance in Wyoming and elsewhere.

Wyoming is one of just two states without a hate crimes law; South Carolina is the other. Libraries around the country are facing community pressure to pull children's books with LGBTQ+ stories, drag shows have been banned in some places and a University of Wyoming sorority was sued for admitting a transgender woman.

Meanwhile, Wyoming lawmakers are preparing to consider a bill this session that would strictly define gender as one's biological sex at birth, restricting the lives of trans and nonbinary residents.

Located on the eastern Wyoming plains, Wheatland is a small farming and ranching community with about 3,500 residents. There are few restaurants, no department stores — not even a local Walmart — and few performance venues besides Wheatland High School.

A local theater group, the Platte County Players, has permission to perform there and salvaged the rights to the play and sponsored the performance a month later at the high school, as originally planned.

The students performed last week before a small gathering of people who braved icy roads and subzero temperatures to see the delayed show. But if they still grow up to have bad feelings about the whole thing,

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they would have fair reason.

Community apathy, combined with snowy weather and extreme cold, made for a sparsely attended performance. Only about 50 people showed up, including half a dozen LGBTQ+ advocates and allies from Cheyenne, 70 miles (110 kilometers) away.

Parents were thrilled to see the play ultimately performed after weeks of practice and then delay. It was sad the principal couldn't stand up for what was right and got misguided by "old mindsets," Oliver's mom, Cassie Baez, said in an email.

In a changing world, such limited mindsets are harmful for children after they grow up and venture away from small-town life, Cassie Baez added.

"As a kid who has been bullied, Oliver knew this was important. So he was sad and even mad that the school still wasn't backing him on a very important topic," Cassie Baez wrote.

The principal had the backing of school district leadership, however.

"The board supports the administration," school board chairperson Lu Lay said in an emailed statement, citing zero "negative" comments from the public on the cancellation decision.

To the district's superintendent, John Weigel, the play seemed more appropriate for high schoolers than middle schoolers. He said he hadn't seen the play himself but heard from the principal that it confused some kids and some middle school teachers supported cancellation.

The play featured 10-minute skits about bullying, including politicians and parents belittling one another and a teen being teased for carrying tampons at school. It also touched on a wide range of topics, including the risk of suicide for LGBTQ+ youths and students describing what it's like to experience a school shooting.

For school administrators, a scene in which a student eulogizes another student who killed himself was especially problematic. Baez walked onto the stage from the audience to chastise the girl for not mentioning the boy was gay and how she had participated in bullying him.

"In my view, a play is supposed to be entertaining, that's why I go," Weigel said. "It seems to me this is more of a kind of, stir up some social issues, maybe, instead of kind of like being more entertaining."

When he canceled the show, Principal Robert Daniel worsened the sting by giving each cast member a \$5 gift card to a Maverik convenience store, along with an apology letter saying they had done a "great job." Daniel did not return phone messages seeking comment.

One student tore up the letter and gave the card back. Another, Erica Biggs, 14, who played the role of the main bully opposite Baez, described the principal's gesture as demeaning after all of their hard work.

"We all kind of took it like they were trying to bribe us to feel better and not be mad about the play. But it didn't really help," Biggs said.

Among attendees at the performance Jan. 12 was Sara Burlingame, director of the LGBTQ+ advocacy group Wyoming Equality, who drove from Cheyenne to show support.

"They're doing exactly what we hope all students would, which is take very seriously how bullying affects their peers," Burlingame said. "The irony is the people who are supposed to be their exemplars become their bullies."

This isn't the first time kids in Wheatland have dealt with this. Just last spring, a high school performance of "Mean Girls" was canceled and the same local theater group stepped in to help produce the show to a full house.

A decade earlier, the school board voted 4-3 to take down banners that read "No Place for Hate" in schools, because the Gay and Lesbian Fund of Colorado was among the sponsors of the campaign.

"Here we go again," said Jeran Artery, a former Wyoming Equality director who grew up in the town. "If there's anything in Wheatland that has any kind of resemblance to any kind of association with the LGBTQ movement, it's like, 'This must come down immediately. Our kids must not see this.'"

More than three decades ago at the high school, Artery practiced for the play "The Lion In Winter," which was canceled over the existence of one gay character.

"Just because there was a reference to homosexuality, there was an uproar in town, letters to the editor and things. And the drama director said, 'This is not worth the hassle, I'm just going to cancel the play,'" Artery recalled.

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Yet some parents said they still weren't sure why "The Bullying Collection" was canceled because school officials never explained the decision.

"I read it all through," said Melissa Rukavina, whose two daughters were in the play. "Unless you're super closed-minded, I don't see why you would do that."

Drama coach Stephanie Bradley, who also attended the high school, challenged the decision.

"I was told that promoting the LGBTQ community is not in line with values of the school," she said.

"Most people in this part of Wyoming don't come out early," Bradley said of LGBTQ+ teens on the state's rural plains. "They wait until they can escape, where they'll be safe. I just want it to be a safe place for everybody." _____

This story includes discussion of suicide. If you or someone you know needs help, please call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 988.

US forces strike Houthi sites in Yemen as Biden says allied action hasn't yet stopped ship attacks

By ZEKE MILLER, AAMER MADHANI and TARA COPP Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. forces on Thursday conducted a fifth strike against Iranian-backed Houthi rebel military sites in Yemen as President Joe Biden acknowledged that the American and British bombardment had yet to stop the militants' attacks on vessels in the Red Sea that have disrupted global shipping.

The latest strikes destroyed two Houthi anti-ship missiles that "were aimed into the southern Red Sea and prepared to launch," U.S. Central Command said in a statement posted to X, formerly known as Twitter. They were conducted by Navy F/A-18 fighter aircraft, the Pentagon said.

Biden said the U.S. would continue the strikes, even though so far they have not stopped the Houthis from continuing to harass commercial and military vessels.

"When you say working, are they stopping the Houthis, no. Are they going to continue, yes," Biden said in an exchange with reporters before departing the White House for a domestic policy speech in North Carolina.

Hours after Biden spoke, Houthi Brig. Gen. Yahya Saree said in a prerecorded statement that its forces had carried out another missile attack against the Marshall Islands-flagged, U.S.-owned cargo ship Chem Ranger. Saree said the attack took place in the Gulf of Aden, the waters just south of Yemen.

That attack did not affect the ship, U.S. Central Command said in a statement late Thursday.

"The crew observed the missiles impact the water near the ship," there were no reported injuries or damage and the ship continued on its way, Central Command said.

The continued harassment of the ships has driven the U.S. and international partners to take extraordinary steps to defend them through a joint mission named Operation Prosperity Guardian, in which the consortium is trying to create a protective umbrella for the vessels by intercepting any missiles or drones that target them. It has also led the U.S. and British militaries to take measures to knock out missile sites, radars and air defense systems to try to tamp down the Houthis' ability to attack.

On Wednesday the U.S. military fired another wave of ship- and submarine-launch missile strikes against 14 Houthi-controlled sites. That same day, the administration put the Houthis back on its list of specially designated global terrorists. The sanctions that come with the formal designation are meant to sever violent extremist groups from their sources of financing, while also allowing vital humanitarian aid to continue flowing to impoverished Yemenis.

"These strikes will continue for as long as they need to continue," National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said Thursday, adding, "I'm not going to telegraph punches one way or another."

Despite sanctions and military strikes, including a large-scale operation carried out Friday by U.S. and British warships and warplanes that hit more than 60 targets across Yemen, the Houthis keep harassing commercial and military ships. The U.S. has strongly warned Iran to cease providing weapons to the Houthis.

"We never said the Houthis would immediately stop," the Pentagon's deputy press secretary, Sabrina

Singh, said at a briefing, when asked why the strikes have not seemed to stop the Houthis. Since the joint U.S. and British operation got underway last Friday, hitting 28 locations and struck more than 60 targets in that initial round, the Houthis' attacks have been "lower scale," Singh said.

For months, the Houthis have claimed attacks on ships in the Red Sea that they say are either linked to Israel or heading to Israeli ports. They say their attacks aim to end the Israeli air-and-ground offensive in the Gaza Strip that was triggered by the Palestinian militant group Hamas' Oct. 7 attack in southern Israel. But the links to the ships targeted in the rebel assaults have grown more tenuous as the attacks continue.

The attacks have also raised questions as to whether the conflict between Israel and Hamas has already expanded into a wider regional war.

"We don't seek war, we don't think we are at war. We don't want to see a regional war," Singh said.

A baby lived because an Oregon teen couldn't stand by after she saw 3 people get electrocuted

By CLAIRE RUSH and GENE JOHNSON Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Majiah Washington noticed a flash outside her home this week in Portland, where a dangerous storm had coated the city with ice. Opening her blinds, she saw a red SUV with a downed power line on it and a couple who had been putting their baby in the car.

The woman screamed to her boyfriend to get the baby to safety, and he grabbed the child and began to scramble up the driveway on concrete so slick it was almost impossible to walk. But before he made it halfway, he slid backward and his foot touched the live wire — "a little fire, then smoke," Washington said.

The mother, six months pregnant, tried to reach the baby, but she too slipped and was electrocuted. So was her 15-year-old brother, when he came out to help.

Washington, 18, was on the phone with a dispatcher when she saw the baby, lying on top of his father, move his head — the 9-month-old was alive. Having just seen three people shocked to death, she decided to try to save the boy.

She kept a low crouch to avoid sliding into the wire as she approached, she said at a news conference Thursday, a day after the deaths. As she grabbed the baby she touched the father's body, but she wasn't shocked, she said.

"I was concerned about the baby," said Washington, who recognized the woman as her neighbor's daughter. "Nobody was with the baby."

Portland Fire and Rescue spokesman Rick Graves praised Washington for her heroism but confessed he didn't understand how she and the baby weren't also electrocuted. The baby was examined at a hospital and is fine, authorities have said.

"We do have fortunately with us a toddler that is going to be able to thrive and do what they possibly can as they move forward," Graves said. "And they are here, in part, because of the heroic acts of a member of our community."

The snow, freezing rain, ice and frigid temperatures that hammered the Pacific Northwest in the past week have now been blamed for at least 10 deaths in Oregon, from hypothermia and falling trees or utility poles, along with five from hypothermia in the Seattle area.

Oregon's governor declared a statewide emergency Thursday night after requests for aid from multiple counties "as they enter the sixth day of severe impacts" from the weather.

The ice weighs down trees and power lines making them prone to snap, especially in strong winds. That appears to be what caused the electrocution deaths: A large branch broke from a tree, landed on utility wires and pushed one onto the vehicle.

Washington's neighbor, Ronald Briggs, declined to speak with The Associated Press beyond confirming that his 21-year-old daughter and 15-year-old son had been killed.

But he told Portland television station KGW that his daughter had come over to use the internet after hers went out. He and his wife had just gotten in their own car to run an errand when they heard the

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boom and saw the SUV apparently on fire.

He watched as the couple slid to their deaths — and then told his 15-year-old son, Ta’Ron Briggs, a high school sophomore, to keep his distance, to no avail.

“I told him, ‘Don’t go down there — try to get away from them.’ And he slid, and he touched the water, and he, and he died too,” Briggs said. “I have six kids. I lost two of them in one day.”

“It just hurt,” he said. “Being a good father cannot solve this right now.”

Today in History: January 20

Franklin Roosevelt inaugurated on new, earlier date

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Saturday, Jan. 20, the 20th day of 2024. There are 346 days left in the year.

Today’s Highlight in History:

In 1937, President Franklin D. Roosevelt became the first chief executive to be inaugurated on Jan. 20 instead of March 4.

In 1801, Secretary of State John Marshall was nominated by President John Adams to be chief justice of the United States.

In 1841, the island of Hong Kong was ceded by China to Great Britain. (It returned to Chinese control in July 1997.)

In 1936, Britain’s King George V died after his physician injected the mortally ill monarch with morphine and cocaine to hasten his death; the king was succeeded by his eldest son, Edward VIII, who abdicated the throne 11 months later to marry American divorcee Wallis Simpson.

In 1961, John F. Kennedy was inaugurated as the 35th President of the United States.

In 1964, Capitol Records released the album “Meet the Beatles!”

In 1981, Iran released 52 Americans it had held hostage for 444 days, minutes after the presidency had passed from Jimmy Carter to Ronald Reagan.

In 1986, the United States observed the first federal holiday in honor of slain civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr.

In 2009, Barack Obama was sworn in as the nation’s 44th, as well as first African American, president.

In 2011, federal authorities orchestrated one of the biggest Mafia takedowns in FBI history, charging 127 suspected mobsters and associates in the Northeast with murders, extortion and other crimes spanning decades.

In 2017, Donald Trump was sworn in as the 45th president of the United States, pledging emphatically to empower America’s “forgotten men and women.” Protesters registered their rage against the new president in a chaotic confrontation with police just blocks from the inaugural parade.

In 2020, Chinese government experts confirmed human-to-human transmission of the new coronavirus, saying two people caught the virus from family members and that some health workers had tested positive.

In 2022, Meat Loaf, the rock superstar known for his “Bat Out of Hell” album and for such theatrical, dark-hearted anthems as “Paradise By the Dashboard Light” and “Two Out of Three Ain’t Bad,” died at age 74.

Today’s birthdays: Former astronaut Buzz Aldrin is 94. Olympic gold medal figure skater Carol Heiss is 84. Singer Eric Stewart is 79. Movie director David Lynch is 78. Country-rock musician George Grantham (Poco) is 77. Israeli activist Natan Sharansky is 76. Actor Daniel Benzali is 74. Rock musician Paul Stanley (KISS) is 72. Rock musician Ian Hill (Judas Priest) is 72. Comedian Bill Maher (MAR) is 68. Actor Lorenzo Lamas is 66. Actor James Denton is 61. Rock musician Greg K. (The Offspring) is 59. Country singer John Michael Montgomery is 59. Sophie, Duchess of Edinburgh, is 59. Actor Rainn Wilson is 58. Actor Stacey Dash is 57. TV personality Melissa Rivers is 56. Actor Reno Wilson is 55. Singer Edwin McCain is 54. Actor Skeet Ulrich is 54. Rap musician Questlove (The Roots) is 53. Former United Nations Ambassador Nikki Haley is 52. Rock musician Rob Bourdon (Linkin Park) is 45. Singer-songwriter Bonnie McKee is 40. Country singer Brantley Gilbert is 39. Rock singer Kevin Parker (Tame Impala) is 38. Actor Evan Peters is 37.