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Wednesday, Jan. 24

Senior Menu: Chicken fried steak, mashed potatoes and gravy, oriental blend vegetables, bakes apples, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Egg bake.

School Lunch: Chef salad.

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

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

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

Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 6 p.m. (Service Project)



"The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don't have any."
ALICE WALKER

Thursday, Jan. 25

Senior Menu: Meatloaf, baked potato with sour cream, creamed peas, frosted brownies, fruit, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Pop tarts.

School Lunch: Pasta with meat balls.

Boys Basketball hosts Webster: (Gym: 7th at 4:30 p.m., 8th at 5:30 p.m.; Arena: Boys C at 5 p.m., JV at 6:15 p.m., Varsity to follow)

Friday, Jan. 26

Senior Menu: Potato soup, ham salad on croissant, tomato spoon salad, Mandarin oranges.

School Breakfast: Egg wraps.

School Lunch: Vegetable soup, cheese stick.

Girls Basketball at Webster: (C game at 5 p.m., JV at 6:15 p.m., Varsity to follow)

Groton Daily Independent
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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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An 11-year-old boy with congenital hearing loss is able to hear for the first time thanks to an experimental gene therapy treatment, according to initial results released yesterday.

Nominations for the 96th annual Academy Awards were announced yesterday, led by "Oppenheimer" with 13 nods and "Poor Things" with 11. "Killers of the Flower Moon" (10 nominations) star Lily Gladstone makes history as the first Native American woman to be nominated for best actress, while director Martin Scorsese becomes the most-

nominated living movie director. The box-office hit "Barbie," which grossed \$1.4B globally, received eight nominations.

Over 245,000 Jewish Holocaust survivors are alive today globally, according to a report published yesterday by a group responsible for survivor claims. The report—considered the most comprehensive available—was released ahead of Saturday's International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Adrián Beltré, Joe Mauer, and Todd Helton voted into 2024 class of the National Baseball Hall of Fame. Los Angeles Times to lay off more than 20% of its newsroom staff; development comes four days after its journalists went on strike for first time in the newspaper's 142-year history.

WWE and Netflix agree to 10-year, \$5B deal to stream WWE's flagship "Raw" program on Netflix beginning in 2025. Netflix's film chief Scott Stuber to depart Netflix in March to start his own media company.

Science & Technology

New Alzheimer's study suggests strange visual symptoms may provide an early warning sign of the disease in some cases; linked to posterior cortical atrophy, symptoms present in roughly 10% of cases.

New supramolecular ink allows 3D printing of flat electronic displays and wearable devices using cheap, nontoxic organic materials.

Chemists demonstrate the smallest knot ever made; the 54-atom structure self-assembled during the mixing of two separate liquids via an unidentified process.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close mixed (S&P 500 +0.3%, Dow -0.3%, Nasdaq +0.4%) as investors assess latest batch of earnings reports; S&P 500 notches third straight record close.

Netflix tops revenue estimates and adds 13.1 million subscribers during Q4, bringing total number of paid subscribers to record 260.8 million.

Johnson & Johnson agrees to pay \$700M to settle investigations by more than 40 states over its talcum-based baby powder. French regulators fine Amazon warehouses \$35M for "excessive" employee surveillance.

Politics & World Affairs

Former President Donald Trump wins New Hampshire GOP primary with over 50% of the vote, defeating former South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley; President Joe Biden wins Democratic primary, fueled by write-in campaign.

Turkey approves Sweden for membership into NATO, leaving Hungary as final member needed to approve the addition.

Hamas reportedly rejects two-month cease-fire proposal by Israel in Gaza, calls for full Israeli withdrawal in exchange for the release of about 136 hostages. Twenty-one Israeli troops killed in single attack while demolishing buildings in the southern Gazan city of Khan Younis.

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Basketball Polls

The South Dakota Prep Media basketball polls for the week of Jan. 22 are listed below, ranking the top-five teams in each class, record, total points and previous ranking. First-place votes received are indicated in parentheses.

Boys

Class AA

1. Mitchell (12) 9-1 79 2
 2. Roosevelt (3) 8-2 68 3
 3. Harrisburg (2) 7-2 56 1
 4. O'Gorman 6-4 27 4
 5. Washington 6-3 24 5
- Receiving votes: Huron 1.

Class A

1. SF Christian (17) 9-0 85 1
 2. Hamlin 9-2 66 3
 3. Sioux Valley 11-0 44 4
 4. Dakota Valley 9-1 41 2
 5. Pine Ridge 7-1 17 5
- Receiving votes: Hot Springs 1, St. Thomas More 1.

Class B

1. Viborg-Hurley (7) 7-1 72 4
 2. White River (5) 12-1 59 3
 3. Castlewood (2) 10-1 58 1
 4. De Smet (3) 9-2 43 2
 5. Canistota 8-0 10 RV
- Receiving votes: Leola/Frederick Area 5, Wessington Springs 3, Faith 3, Dell Rapids St. Mary 2.

Girls

Class AA

1. O'Gorman (17) 9-0 85 1
 2. Mitchell 9-0 68 4
 3. Harrisburg 6-3 48 3
 4. Jefferson 9-3 24 2
 5. Brandon Valley 6-3 16 NR
- Receiving votes: Aberdeen Central 5, Washington 5, Pierre 2, Huron 2

Class A

1. Sisseton (15) 10-0 83 1
 2. Wagner 9-1 53 T-2
 3. Tea Area (2) 9-1 52 T-2
 4. Flandreau 9-0 40 4
 5. Red Cloud 11-0 19 5
- Receiving votes: Sioux Falls Christian 6, Florence-Henry 1, Aberdeen Roncalli 1.

Class B

1. Ethan (8) 11-1 76 2
 2. Centerville (7) 9-1 71 1
 3. Lyman (1) 10-0 51 3
 4. Wall 9-2 33 4
 5. Harding County (1) 10-0 12 RV
- Receiving votes: Arlington 11, Faith 1.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Bill banning AI-generated child pornography, adding mandatory minimums passes Senate panel

BY: JOHN HULT - JANUARY 23, 2024 5:38 PM

A bill that would adjust South Dakota law on child pornography includes provisions barring the possession of sexually explicit deep fakes of real children or artificial intelligence-generated children.

Senate Bill 79 passed out of the Senate Judiciary Committee unanimously on Tuesday, supported by its sponsors and by Attorney General Marty Jackley. Jackley started the 2024 legislative session with a bill to ban deep fakes and AI-generated child pornography, but deferred to Sen. David Wheeler, R-Huron, after learning that SB 79 would include those provisions. The main sponsor of Wheeler's bill in the House is Rep. Fred Deutsch, R-Florence.

"Deep fakes" are images or videos that affix the faces of real people to sexually explicit content. The AI-generated pornography barred by the bill involves imagery that mirrors child pornography but is not designed to resemble specific children.

Both types of content are legal under South Dakota law at the moment. Cases involving computer-generated child porn in the state are currently handled by federal prosecutors, because federal law bars such imagery.

Wheeler's bill was amended in the committee to include definitions for computer-generated child pornography, which would allow prosecutors to pursue charges for its possession as they would with real imagery or videos.

That language is just a small part of the bill's provisions, however.

The primary goal of the bill is to differentiate between the possession, distribution and manufacturing of child pornography. Under current law, all three crimes are class four felonies, punishable by up to 10 years in prison.

That's not the right way to attend to those kinds of crimes against children, Wheeler told the committee.

"Those are three separate crimes, and those are three separate ways of victimizing an individual," Wheeler said.

The bill would:

Boost the felony class for the manufacture of child pornography to a class two, punishable by up to 25 years in prison, with a 10-year mandatory minimum.

Boost the felony class for the distribution of child pornography to class three, punishable by up to 15 years in prison, with a mandatory minimum of five years.

Add a mandatory minimum one-year sentence for the possession of child pornography, which would remain a class four felony.

Prevent minors from being charged with child pornography possession for taking naked pictures of themselves.

Prevent people from defending themselves in child porn cases by arguing that the child or parent consented to its production, possession or distribution.

The bill was supported the state's prosecutors and human trafficking advocates. The bill passed out of committee on a unanimous vote, and will now move on to the full Senate.

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 Senate votes to ditch 30-day residency requirement for voter registration

BY: JOHN HULT - JANUARY 23, 2024 4:11 PM

The South Dakota Senate voted Tuesday to repeal a 30-day residency requirement for voter registration that became law last year.

Sen. David Wheeler, R-Huron, carried the secretary of state-supported Senate Bill 17 to the floor. The 30-day requirement passed last year in response to voter registrations by RV owners from other states who purchase a mailbox in South Dakota.

Wheeler told senators the law won't withstand legal scrutiny. He cited several U.S. Supreme Court cases, and pointed to a section of the federal Voting Rights Act specifically prohibiting durational residency requirements.

"We've basically rolled back the statutes to what they were last year," Wheeler said of the language in the new bill. "We don't need to be dealing with lawsuits in the middle of a presidential election year."

South Dakota requires voters to register at least 15 days before an election. The 30-day rule was different, though. It required that voters attest, under penalty of perjury, that they'd lived in South Dakota for at least 30 days in the year leading up to an election.

Minnehaha County Auditor Leah Anderson told South Dakota Searchlight last year that her office lacked the resources to enforce the durational rule. Pennington County Auditor Cindy Mohler, meanwhile, said her office had been sending letters to voters who listed rented mailboxes as their residence to ask for their physical address.

During meetings on electoral rules last summer, Anderson asked the Secretary of State's Office for guidance on the issue.

The office's original version of SB 17 did not address enforcement, though. Instead, it would have required citizens to attest that they'd lived in South Dakota for 30 consecutive days immediately prior to registering.

After hearing the legal concerns about that bill, Wheeler said, the Secretary of State's Office chose to support his amendment, which rewrote the bill to remove the 30-day requirement.

As amended, SB 17 passed 31-2. The bill now goes to a committee of the House of Representatives.

This is the second time in modern history that lawmakers have passed and then had second thoughts about a 30-day residency requirement for voter registration.

Twenty-one years ago, lawmakers passed a similar bill. The next year, on advice from then-Secretary of State Chris Nelson, who described the bill as unenforceable, legislators repealed it.

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.

Panel backs longer waits between clemency requests for prisoners sentenced to life

Amendment would give parole board discretion to set wait times for life without parole cases

BY: JOHN HULT - JANUARY 23, 2024 2:02 PM

In 1984, an intruder broke through the back door of a Winner home and fatally shot Karol Kniffen's brother in his bed.

Kniffen's Korean War-veteran father disarmed the intruder. She began to hit the man with a wooden block at her father's direction.

In the heat of the moment, Kniffen said, after seeing that her 20-year-old brother Bobby Soukup had been murdered, her father looked at the captured intruder and said "don't kill him."

"And I said, 'But Bobby's dead,'" Kniffen recalled.

When a prosecutor asked the family if they wanted the perpetrator, Joseph Fields, to get the death penalty or life without parole, Kniffen's father held firm to mercy.

"It was my dad who said, 'I just lost a son. I couldn't live with myself if I took another life,'" Kniffen said.

Fields took a plea deal to get a sentence of life without parole. But decades later, Fields began to ask for clemency, hoping to see the "without parole" portion of his sentence removed to give him a shot at freedom.

Fields has been denied clemency three times. But under South Dakota law, inmates can reapply for clemency again each year after such a denial.

On Tuesday, Kniffen appeared in Pierre before members of the state Senate Judiciary Committee and helped convince them to support Senate Bill 9. As endorsed by the committee, the bill from Winner Republican Sen. Erin Tobin would require inmates serving life without parole for violent crimes to wait up to four years before requesting clemency again.

Supporters: Each hearing brings new trauma

Rebecca Brindle also testified in favor. Her sister, Mary K. Ross, was stabbed to death in Sioux Falls in a contract killing for which four of the five co-conspirators were given sentences of life without parole.

"This idea that life means life was a small comfort after all the trauma we had suffered to that point," Brindle said. "Little did we know that there was a caveat called clemency."

One of the men behind her sister's murder, Eric Coon, has asked for clemency. He was denied a hearing by the state Board of Pardons and Paroles in 2019, but was granted a clemency hearing in 2022.

The Ross family was there.

"To say I was retraumatized would be a gross understatement," Brindle said.

Kristian Ross was 14 months old when her mother was killed. She'll show up for clemency hearings for all four of the lifers involved in the killing if she has to, four times a year if necessary.

But "people shouldn't have to go through that," Ross said. "Life means life."

The South Dakota Board of Pardons and Paroles has the authority to review clemency applications, but only the governor can grant clemency. Fields and Coon did not earn clemency recommendations from the board.

Gov. Kristi Noem has twice granted clemency to inmates serving life without parole. The first commutation went to Jamee Lynn Corean, whose 2008 life term for kidnapping was commuted to a 20-year sentence in September of 2021. Corean has since been granted parole and completed her parole term. The second went to Mark Milk, who'd been serving life without parole for a 1993 murder. His sentence was commuted from life to 240 years with a February 2023 commutation. He is eligible for parole this spring.

Noem commuted the sentences of three people serving non-life sentences for manslaughter in late 2022, and did so without recommendations from the board. She issued 12 more commutations in December,

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none of which were considered by the board, all for people convicted of ingestion of a controlled substance. There are currently seven commutation recommendations awaiting Noem's review, according to Stacy Cole, a corrections specialist who manages clemency requests for the board.

Opposition: Bill kills hope for inmates

In Pierre, the extended waiting period for clemency for those sentenced to life without parole drew support from victims' families, but also from the South Dakota State's Attorneys Association and the state's top prosecutor.

"Victims need closure, and the system needs to be fixed," said Attorney General Marty Jackley.

Opponents, however, argued that the bill's initial language places too many restrictions on the parole board and takes away the incentive of hope for inmates who might otherwise waste away behind bars without working to improve themselves.

Denny Davis works with inmates through a program called Alternatives to Violence. It's among the programs inmates will talk about having completed when they ask for clemency.

Pushing back the waiting period destroys hope, Davis said.

"Very often, these individuals are listed as their crimes," Davis said. "These are human beings who have done horrible, horrible things. No one can deny that. But can they grow? Can they mature? I see it every day."

Davis also suggested that victims won't find closure until they find a way to forgive.

"If you would put the waiting period out to 10 or 20 years, you still would not have closure if you don't deal with what's going on inside of you," he said.

Parole Board Chair Myron Rau testified that the board is not opposed to the concept of longer waiting periods for clemency requests. Even so, he said, each case and each person asking for mercy ought to be considered individually.

"They shouldn't be in one basket," Rau said. "They're lifers, but their cases are diverse."

He asked that the committee consider an amendment to allow the board to push back the next clemency request "up to" four years, which would preserve the board's discretion by allowing it to set the next clemency application out anywhere from one to four years.

The cases mentioned by the victims' families are ones where the board would likely extend the waiting period, he said.

Committee amends bill

Sen. Helene Duhamel, R-Rapid City, sponsored an amendment that matched Rau's request. She called the victims' testimony moving, but said the board has the expertise to make the call on how long inmates ought to wait to ask for mercy.

"We're giving them the discretion," Duhamel said.

Sen David Wheeler, R-Huron, moved to pass Duhamel's amendment, echoing Duhamel's words about the board members' judgment.

"They have a better understanding of where that person's at in their history, how long they've been there, how much rehabilitation there's been, if any," Wheeler said.

Sen. Tobin called the amendment "unfriendly" and said it would weaken victim protections. The board already has the discretion to turn down a full hearing through a two-person panel, which avoids a full public hearing with testimony from victims' family members.

That doesn't happen often enough, Tobin said.

"There is that discretion currently, and there is still a problem," Tobin said.

The amendment passed over the opposition from two committee members, Sen. Brent Hoffman, R-Hartford, and Sen. Joshua Klumb, R-Mitchell.

Both senators ultimately voted to pass the bill on to the Senate floor – the amended bill passed unanimously – but Hoffman said he was disappointed that the committee ignored Tobin's request to leave the

waiting period at four years.

"This bill really doesn't do anything now," Hoffman said.

Sen. Jim Mehlhaff, R-Pierre, disagreed. The extended time period will be helpful for the board in disputed cases, he said, and offering the possibility of a four-year wait will make a difference.

"I think this bill does move the ball forward, but it gives discretion to the body that is best prepared to make those decisions," Mehlhaff 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.

Trump wins New Hampshire primary

BY: ETHAN DEWITT - JANUARY 23, 2024 8:31 PM

Donald Trump won the New Hampshire Republican primary Tuesday, capping off a primary season that saw numerous Republican heavyweights struggle to dislodge his enduring support. The Associated Press called the race at 8 p.m. Eastern, an hour after most polls in the state had finished. AP also called the Democratic primary for President Joe Biden.

Trump drew on the strength of a dedicated Republican base that preferred to return his presidential style to office than topple him with an alternative. As he had in previous primaries, the former real estate mogul blanketed the state in large-scale rallies, avoiding the retail politics that have long defined the primary. His opponents, particularly Republican Gov. Nikki Haley, invested time in town halls and small venue visits like diners and restaurants.

Around the time of the call by the AP, Haley was trailing Trump by about six percentage points. Haley had received an endorsement from Gov. Chris Sununu, who toured the state attending nearly every event of hers in the weeks ahead of the primary.

In Concord Tuesday night, Haley congratulated Trump on his win, saying he "earned" it. But, she added, "New Hampshire is first in the nation. It is not the last. This race is far from over."

Biden wins Democratic primary with write-in votes

Joe Biden is the winner of the New Hampshire Democratic primary – whether he wants it or not.

After a monthslong attempt by two candidates to topple the president in the Granite State, and Biden's own decision to spurn the primary, Biden rode a wave of write-in votes Tuesday to solidify his earliest – if least official – victory. Biden handily defeated his closest competitors, Minnesota Rep. Dean Phillips and author Marianne Williamson, according to projections from the AP Tuesday night.

The Democratic primary took an unusual twist when Biden declined to file his name on the New Hampshire Democratic ballot in October, citing a dispute between the state and the Democratic National Committee over the presidential nominating order. The DNC had approved a calendar in February that allowed South Carolina to vote first and New Hampshire to vote on the same day as Nevada; after New Hampshire officials rejected the plan, Biden chose not to participate in New Hampshire's race.

Phillips and Williamson had tried to capitalize on Biden's rejection of the primary, spending significant time in the state in the final weeks of the campaign. But New Hampshire-based supporters of Biden had organized a write-in campaign to elect him even without his cooperation, and a wave of surrogates including Maryland Rep. Jamie Raskin, Massachusetts Lt. Gov. Kim Driscoll, and Boston Mayor Michelle Wu fanned out to make the case for writing in Biden.

In the final weeks, the Biden administration also sent a number of cabinet officials to the state, who are prohibited from official campaign activities by the Hatch Act. Those included Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg, Education Secretary Miguel Cardona, and Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack; each of the officials was there on official business not directly related to the Biden re-election effort.

Ethan DeWitt is the New Hampshire Bulletin's education reporter. Previously, he worked as the New Hampshire State House reporter for the Concord Monitor, covering the state, the Legislature, and the New Hampshire presidential primary. A Westmoreland native, Ethan started his career as the politics and health care reporter at the Keene Sentinel.

Biden, Harris vow to restore protections for abortion rights as 2024 campaign launches

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - JANUARY 23, 2024 6:01 PM

President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris moved abortion access to the forefront of their reelection bid Tuesday by making it the centerpiece of their first joint campaign rally of the 2024 election cycle.

"With your voice, with your power, with your vote, we can restore the protections that have been around for over 50 years under Roe v. Wade," Biden said to a crowd at George Mason University in Manassas, Virginia, on the same day voters were going to the polls in the New Hampshire primary.

"Give me a Democratic House of Representatives and give me a bigger Democratic Senate," he said. "And we will pass a new law restoring the protections of Roe v. Wade, and I will sign it immediately."

Biden spoke on the stage of the Hylton Performing Arts Center, surrounded by red-and-blue signs that read "Defend Choice" and "Restore Roe."

Protesters calling for a ceasefire in the war between Israel and Hamas repeatedly interrupted the rally, though Biden-Harris supporters in the audience chanted "four more years" or "let's go Joe" in an attempt to drown out the nearly dozen people who took turns throughout the speech criticizing the president.

One protester shouted, "How many kids have you killed?" and another yelled, "Israel kills two mothers every hour," according to White House pool reports.

Warnings of national abortion ban

Harris, speaking before Biden, said that another Republican administration in the White House would try to implement a nationwide ban on abortions, a new possibility given the Supreme Court's actions in 2022.

"In the 19 months since, in states across our nation, extremists have proposed and passed laws that criminalize doctors and punish women — laws that make no exception even for rape and incest," Harris said.

"And let us all agree, one does not have to abandon their faith or deeply held beliefs to agree the government should not be telling her what to do with her body," Harris added.

Amanda Zurawski, a Texas woman who has filed a lawsuit against the state, told the rally of how after "grueling" fertility treatments she learned when she was 18 weeks pregnant that her cervix had prematurely dilated and her membranes had ruptured.

"We were, with 100% certainty, going to lose our baby girl. We were devastated," Zurawski said. "What I needed at that point was an abortion, so I could safely and with dignity, deliver my daughter. I needed to begin the healing process, both physically and emotionally. But unfortunately, this was post-Roe Texas."

The abortion laws in Texas meant she would have to wait until she was sick enough for her life to be considered endangered before a doctor could provide an abortion. That happened after three days and going into septic shock, Zurawski said.

"What I went through was nothing short of barbaric and it didn't need to happen, but it did because of Donald Trump," Zurawski said. "Over and over again, Donald Trump brags about killing Roe v. Wade. It is unthinkable to me that anyone could cheer on these abortion bans that nearly took my life."

Dobbs decision aftermath

The Supreme Court first recognized a constitutional right to abortion in 1973 during the landmark Roe v. Wade case that has been a fulcrum of American politics ever since.

The nine justices on the high court reaffirmed the right to end a pregnancy during their 1992 decision in Casey v. Planned Parenthood.

But the court, including three justices nominated by Trump, overturned the nationwide right to an abortion in 2022 in the Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization decision, when the conservative justices wrote, "the authority to regulate abortion is returned to the people and their elected representatives."

Conservative state legislatures have moved to implement strict restrictions on abortion access and in

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some cases approved bans in the nearly two years since that ruling, leading to a patchwork of access and confusion among medical professionals.

The same Supreme Court is expected to hear two additional cases on abortion access this year: one regarding pregnancy termination in emergency medical circumstances and another concerning access to a pharmaceutical used in medication abortions and miscarriage care.

Both of those rulings are expected to come out this summer, just months before voters will head to the polls in November to decide control of the White House, House and Senate.

'He intended for them to overturn Roe'

Speaking in front of the crowd in Virginia on Tuesday, Harris noted that Trump "handpicked" the three Supreme Court justices he nominated because he "intended for them to overturn Roe, he intended for them to take your freedoms."

"He is the architect of this health care crisis and he is not done," Harris said. "And the extremists are not done."

Harris noted that since the Supreme Court overturned the nationwide right to abortion, Democrats and Republicans in several states have placed protections on abortion and reproductive access into their state constitutions by placing the issue directly on the ballot.

"Since Roe was overturned, tens of millions of Americans in red states and blue marched to the polls in defense of fundamental freedoms," she said. "The voice of the people has been heard and it will be heard."

Biden said that Trump was counting on voters to stop caring or vote on issues other than reproductive rights and abortion access during the election. But he called on Americans not to forget the differences between Democrats and Republicans on abortion and other issues.

"I believe 2024 is going to be the most important election we've had since 1860," Biden said, referring to the election of President Abraham Lincoln before the Civil War.

"The reasons are clear. Democracy is on the ballot. Freedom is on the ballot," Biden added. "Like the freedom to choose; the freedom to vote; the freedom to love who you want; the freedom to go to work, go to school, go to your house of worship without fear of being gunned down by a weapon of war."

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

Funding seen as a last hurdle to final U.S. Senate immigration deal

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA - JANUARY 23, 2024 4:48 PM

WASHINGTON — A bipartisan agreement that would make the most substantial changes to immigration policy in 30 years hinges on funding disputes, key senators said Tuesday.

While senators have not finalized the text of the agreement, they are discussing changes to the White House's use of parole authority to grant temporary protections to migrants by allowing them to live and work in the United States without visas. Senators also want to raise the bar for migrants to claim asylum.

Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer of New York said during a Tuesday press conference that senators will get a chance to review the bill text, but did not indicate when he would bring the deal to the floor for a vote. Senate Democrats and Republicans have pushed for a quick deal on immigration policy to free up aid to Ukraine.

There were few specifics on the holdups to an agreement, but funding appeared to be one. "One of the things we have to discuss is the appropriations process because there will be a need for new money, and you know, we're all discussing how much is there," Schumer said. "There's some disagreements. We're trying to come to an agreement."

Senate appropriators are working out "technical details," said Sen. James Lankford of Oklahoma, the lead Republican negotiator working with Arizona independent Kyrsten Sinema and Connecticut Democrat Chris Murphy.

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"We're still cranking through everything," Lankford said.

The top Republican on the Senate Committee on Appropriations, Sen. Susan Collins of Maine, said that appropriators are reviewing the immigration policies in the negotiated deal.

Collins added that there are some details that have not yet been finalized.

"There still is a lot of text that is bracketed on some major issues and where negotiations are still continuing," she said. "This is a real challenge for us to get accurate cost estimates from (the U.S. Department of Homeland Security) and (the Congressional Budget Office) if we don't have the final text."

Collins said she hopes the Senate will vote on the deal this week, "but obviously members are going to want to look at the actual text."

Even if the Senate passes an agreement as part of a global security supplemental package to provide aid to Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan, it's unclear if House Speaker Mike Johnson will bring the legislation for a vote.

Johnson, a Louisiana Republican, has advocated for the inclusion of H.R. 2 – a bill that would codify some hard-line Trump-era immigration policies – the House passed with only Republican votes last year.

Schumer and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell have rejected the inclusion of the House bill, arguing that any agreement on immigration needs to be bipartisan.

Aid critical for Ukraine, senators say

During a Tuesday press conference, McConnell stressed the importance of Congress passing the supplemental global security package.

"The rest of the world is basically at war," the Kentucky Republican said.

He added that it's an "ideal time," to address immigration policy at the Southern border.

"If this were not divided government, we wouldn't have an opportunity to do anything about the border," he said. "In fact, I don't think we'd get 60 votes for any border plan if we had a fully Republican government. This is a unique opportunity where divided government has given us an opportunity to give us an outcome."

For months, Lankford, Sinema and Murphy have worked to strike a deal with the White House to free up more than \$100 billion in supplemental global security aid to Ukraine, Israel, Taiwan and for U.S. border security.

Senate Republicans have hinged their support for the foreign assistance on immigration policy changes at the Southern border.

Murphy said a deal needed to be reached quickly because of the war in Ukraine.

"Ukraine is at a breaking point," Murphy said. "We're not engaged in a theoretical conversation about Ukraine possibly losing the war, they will lose the war very soon if we don't get them aid."

The White House said that it sent its last round of aid to Ukraine, and there are concerns that Ukraine is running out of ammunition as it nears the third year of war with Russia.

"We want to get this done as soon as possible," Schumer said.

Biden backs immigration changes

President Joe Biden last week made one of his strongest public statements to date when he said that he backed "significant policy changes" to asylum law. It was a stark reversal from his campaign promise to protect asylum law and move away from the harsh immigration policies of former President Donald Trump's administration.

As the 2024 presidential election campaign gets underway, immigration has become a central way for Republicans to criticize Biden and Democrats, as well as a central issue for Trump, the front-runner for the GOP presidential nomination.

As an unprecedented number of migrants head to the Southern border to claim asylum, Republican Texas Gov. Greg Abbott has added to the strain in major Democratic-run cities by placing migrants on buses and planes to such cities, often without warning local officials.

Nine Democratic governors on Monday sent a letter to Biden and congressional leaders requesting federal aid and urging changes to immigration law as their states take in an overwhelming number of asylum seekers.

The two major policy issues senators are negotiating are raising the bar for migrants to claim asylum and curbing the administration's use of parole authority, which grants temporary protections to migrants.

The executive branch has used parole since the 1950s, but the Biden administration has invoked that authority more often to manage the large number of migrants at the Southern border, according to data compiled by Syracuse University's Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse, or TRAC, which compiles immigration data.

For example, in fiscal year 2021, about 30,000 migrants were paroled, and in fiscal year 2022, more than 130,000 migrants were paroled, according to TRAC. That number increased in fiscal 2023, when in the first 10 months, more than 301,000 migrants were paroled, according to TRAC.

Recently, Biden has used that authority to grant temporary protections for migrants at the border, as well as more than 140,000 Ukrainians; more than 76,000 Afghans; and 168,000 Cuban, Haitian, Nicaraguan, and Venezuelan nationals.

Senate Republicans have made clear that limiting the White House's use of parole is a "red line" issue and without it, no deal will be made.

U.S. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas has also been part of talks in the Senate as House Republicans are moving forward with a markup of articles of impeachment for Mayorkas next week over immigration policies at the Southern border.

Ashley Murray contributed to this report.

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

Phone surcharge would increase to support 911 under bill advancing in Legislature

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - JANUARY 23, 2024 1:48 PM

PIERRE — A committee of state lawmakers endorsed a bill Tuesday to increase funding for 911 call centers by raising phone customers' monthly surcharge from \$1.25 to \$2 per line.

The House Taxation Committee approved the bill 9-4, sending it to the full House of Representatives.

The increase would be the first since 2012. Troy VanDusen, director of Watertown's regional 911 center, told lawmakers the funding gap between the current surcharge and the costs of running 911 centers "continues to widen, leaving us with the question of how much longer we can sustain our operations."

Under current law, a uniform monthly surcharge of \$1.25 is imposed per cell phone and landline, with a cap of 100 lines per customer account each month.

The surcharge is collected by phone companies, which then gives the revenue to the state, which keeps some to fund its statewide 911 coordination efforts and gives the rest to the counties for their 911 call centers. The state kept about \$2.8 million of the approximately \$12.8 million raised by the surcharge during the 2023 fiscal year.

At \$2 per month, that revenue stream would jump to about \$20 million total.

Prepaid wireless telecommunications services are exempt from the surcharge. They are assessed a separate 2% surcharge on each retail transaction. Bill proponents say that's not being changed, because it's already tethered to inflation.

Multiple law enforcement officials testified for increased funding to ensure the 911 system's efficiency and reliability. The proposed hike to \$2, they argued, is crucial for addressing the rising operational costs and technological upgrades necessary for maintaining a robust emergency response system.

Opponents of the bill expressed concerns about the additional financial burden on consumers and

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businesses, particularly those with multiple lines. A family with five lines would go from paying \$6.25 per month to \$10.

One opponent, Rep. Aaron Aylward, R-Harrisburg, later told South Dakota Searchlight "the issue is an overall county funding problem, and I don't agree with some of these smaller increases here and there with various things."

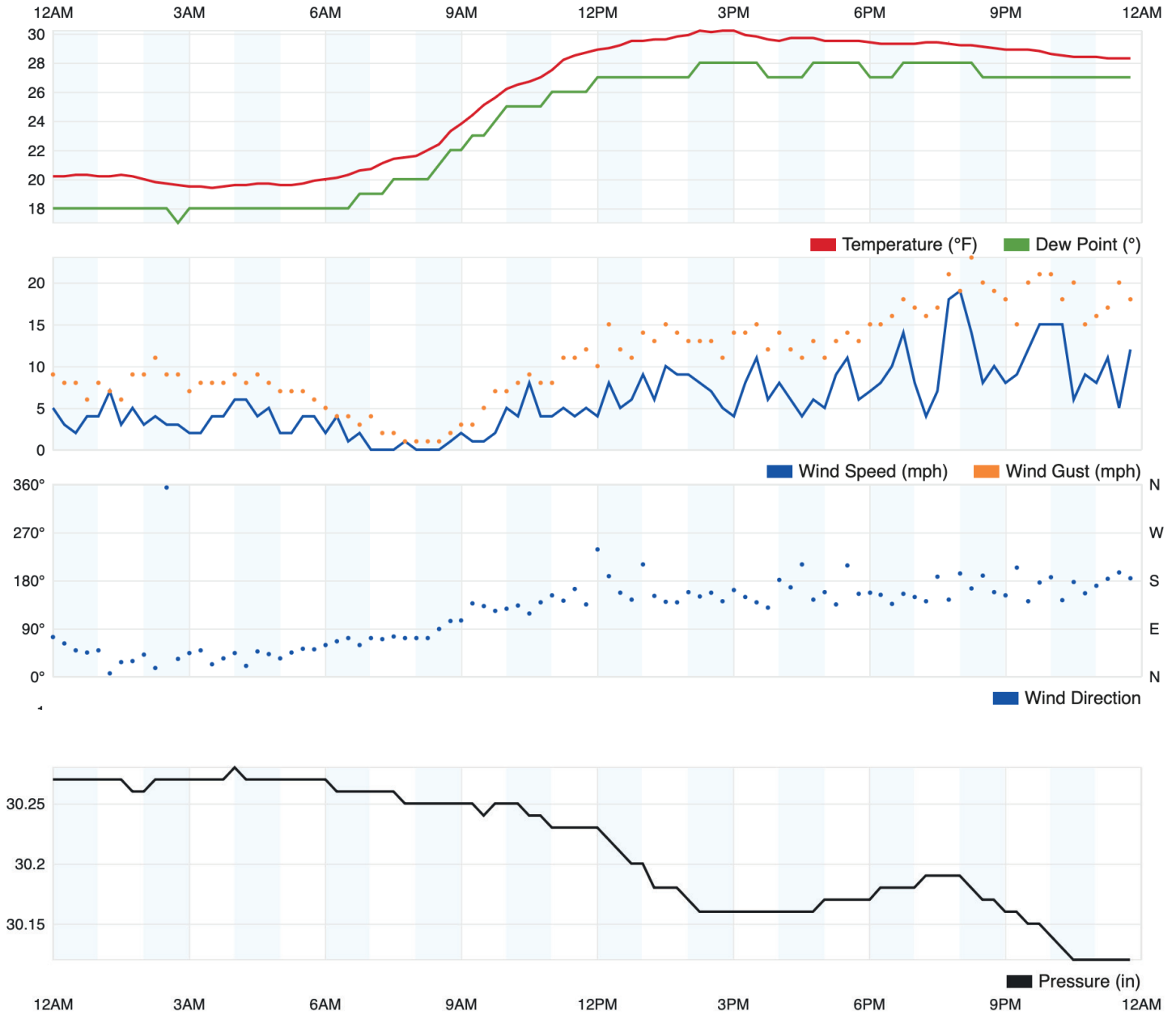
"I agree that we need to fund the counties and I believe the proper way to do that is to start increasing the county funding through appropriations," Aylward said.

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.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue
Jan 24	Jan 25	Jan 26	Jan 27	Jan 28	Jan 29	Jan 30
						
33° F	32° F	34° F	34° F	36° F	41° F	41° F
24° F	25° F	20° F	21° F	24° F	26° F	29° F
S	NNW	SSW	WNW	S	SW	SW
13 MPH	3 MPH	10 MPH	9 MPH	12 MPH	11 MPH	12 MPH

Weather Outlook

Today through Saturday: Highs in the 30s



Morning Fog

(especially through Friday)

Watch for Low Visibility,
along with Slippery Sidewalks and Roadways

Aberdeen, SD
weather.gov/aberdeen



High temperatures through Saturday will be in the 30s. Watch for fog, particularly during the morning hours through at least Friday. This will create low visibility. Slippery untreated sidewalks and roadways will also be possible due to the freezing fog, or more humid air moving across the very cold ground.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 30 °F at 2:21 PM

Low Temp: 19 °F at 3:05 AM

Wind: 24 mph at 8:03 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 9 hours, 28 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 60 in 1981

Record Low: -35 in 1915

Average High: 24

Average Low: 1

Average Precip in Jan.: 0.44

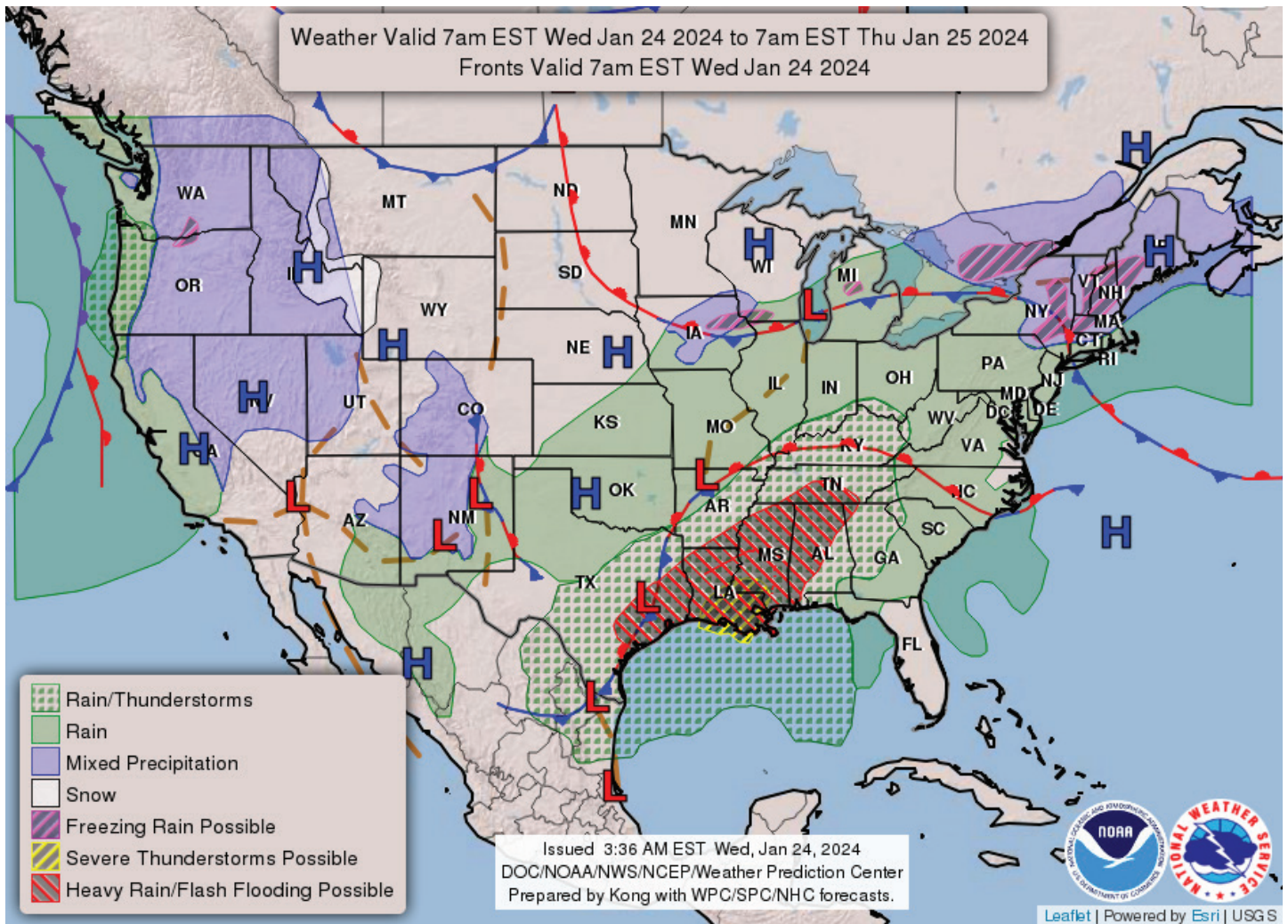
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 0.44

Precip Year to Date: 0.00

Sunset Tonight: 5:28:41 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:59:12 am



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Today in Weather History

January 24, 1972: Snowfall of a dusting to as much as 8 inches accompanied by 30 to 40 mph winds resulted in widespread blowing and drifting snow across much of South Dakota. Many roads were blocked by drifting snow. Visibilities were near zero at times. Many activities were canceled or postponed.

January 24, 1985: Blizzard conditions associated with an Arctic front moved into western Minnesota and northeast South Dakota during the afternoon and continued into the evening. The blizzard brought travel to a standstill. Winds increased to 40 to 60 mph. Many roads were closed due to drifts of snow. Temperatures fell rapidly behind the front with wind chills of 30 to 50 below zero overnight. There were some accidents and stranded motorists. Many vehicles went into the ditch, with many people stranded. The National Guard was called upon to search for stranded motorists. Portions of northeast South Dakota experienced near-blizzard conditions as wind speeds gusted to near 60 mph with dangerous travel conditions.

1916 - The temperature at Browning MT plunged 100 degrees in just 24 hours, from 44 degrees above zero to 56 degrees below zero. It was a record 24 hour temperature drop for the U.S. (Weather Channel) (National Severe Storms Forecast Center)

1935 - Snowstorms hit the northeastern U.S. and the Pacific Northwest producing record 24 hour snowfall totals of 23 inches at Portland ME and 52 inches at Winthrop MA. (David Ludlum)

1940: A record-breaking 19.9 inches of snow fell in Richmond, Virginia, on this day. The storm, which began on the 23rd, produced 21.6 inches of snow for the Richmond area. The headline in the Richmond Times-Dispatch was "Blizzard Sweeps State, Bringing Deep Snow; Public Schools Closed."

1956 - Thirty-eight inches of rain deluged the Kilauea Sugar Plantation of Hawaii in 24 hours, including twelve inches in just one hour. (David Ludlum)

1963 - A great arctic outbreak reached the southern U.S. The cold wave broke many records for duration of cold weather along the Gulf Coast. A reading of 15 degrees below zero at Nashville TN was an all-time record low for that location. (David Ludlum)

1967: A tornado outbreak across the Central U.S. was the furthest north ever recorded in the winter up to that time. Severe weather occurred across a good portion of the southeast and east-central Iowa. Two-inch hail fell at Armstrong, and over two dozen tornadoes were reported. Five miles north of Fort Madison, one fatality occurred from a tornado, along with six injuries. A tornado causing F4 damage killed 3 people and injured 216 in St. Louis County, Missouri. Storms also affected parts of northern and central Illinois. One strong tornado in Mason County killed one person and injured three others. Another tornado moved across the Champaign-Urbana metropolitan area, injuring five people. Other strong tornadoes were reported across Carroll County in Mt. Carroll, where 12 people were injured, and near Gladstone in Henderson County. Funnel clouds were reported across the southwest section of Chicago, IL. Iowa had never recorded a tornado in January before this outbreak. 32 total tornadoes occurred, 14 of them in Iowa. Nine twisters occurred in Missouri, 8 in Illinois, and 1 in Wisconsin.

1982 - Chinook winds plagued the foothills of southeastern Wyoming and northern and central Colorado for the second straight Sunday. The winds gusted to 140 mph at Wondervu CO, located northeast of Denver. Chinook winds a week earlier produced wind gusts to 137 mph. (Storm Data)

1987 - Temperatures in Minnesota plunged far below the zero mark. International Falls MN reported a morning low of 35 degrees below zero, and Warroad MN was the cold spot in the nation with a low of 45 below zero. A storm developing in northeastern Texas produced severe thunderstorms with large hail in Texas, Louisiana and Arkansas. Camden AR reported golf ball size hail. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - A blizzard rapidly developed in the north central U.S. In just one hour weather conditions in eastern North Dakota switched from sunny skies, light winds and temperature readings in the 20s, to rapidly falling temperatures and near zero visibility in snow and blowing snow. High winds in Wyoming, gusting to 72 mph at Gillette, produced snow drifts sixteen feet high. Northwestern Iowa experienced its second blizzard in just 24 hours. High winds in Iowa produced wind chill readings as cold as 65 degrees below zero. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

COUNT ON ME!

General Robert E. Lee had a brilliant officer serving on his staff. He was fiercely faithful and loyal to the general. He was also a man of conviction, courage, and confidence. Every letter or note he wrote to General Lee was signed, "You can count on me!"

Our Lord has many people He can "count," but not many He can "count on." But there is one who stands as an example to all of us: Joshua!

Joshua was careful to obey all of the teachings and instructions that were given by God. As we read the book that bears his name, we find the theme of "obedience" time and time again. This theme of "obedience" is so very prominent because it is an essential aspect of the believer's life. Additionally, it is a significant part of our lives, and one very crucial part of our lives that, with God's help, we can control.

We cannot control the events that God brings into our lives, but we can control the way we respond to them. We cannot control the behavior of others around us, but we certainly can control how we behave when we are in their presence. We cannot control the decisions of our leaders, but we certainly can "pray without ceasing" for them. We cannot control the content of the media, but we can certainly choose different materials to read or programs to watch on television.

However, one choice that every Christian has is whether or not to obey God's Word. The instructions in His Word sets the standard for all believers to follow and represent Him well!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, empower us with Your Holy Spirit to understand and accept Your Word Then enable us to be obedient to it so You will be able to "count on us." In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: As the LORD had commanded his servant Moses, so Moses commanded Joshua. And Joshua did as he was told, carefully obeying all the commands that the LORD had given to Moses. Joshua 11:15



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: 01.23.24

21 28 58 69 70 20

MegaPlier: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$285,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 34 Mins 17 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.22.24

18 22 31 39 50 2

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$2,550,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 49 Mins 18 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.23.24

5 8 11 38 40 1

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 4 Mins 17 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.20.24

6 7 11 27 30

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$27,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 4 Mins 18 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.22.24

17 31 34 54 63 13

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 33 Mins 18 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.22.24

24 25 43 52 63 21

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$145,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 33 Mins 18 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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News from the Associated Press

Tuesday's Scores

The Associated Press

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL

Alcester-Hudson 52, Scotland 19
Andes Central-Dakota Christian 53, Wessington Springs 39
Arlington 51, Florence-Henry 44
Avon 46, Burke 39
Beresford 59, Irene-Wakonda 45
Bon Homme 65, Kimball-White Lake 38
Britton-Hecla 34, Leola-Frederick High School 32
Centerville 63, Tripp-Delmont-Armour 43
Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 51, St Francis 37
Colman-Egan 39, Castlewood 37
Dell Rapids St Mary 54, Deubrook 38
Elkton-Lake Benton 27, Dell Rapids 24
Faulkton 32, Northwestern 28
Flandreau 71, Madison 29
Gayville-Volin High School 58, Menno 43
Great Plains Lutheran 57, Wilmot 39
Gregory 51, Stanley County 41
Hamlin 52, Aberdeen Roncalli 41
Hanson 53, Sanborn Central-Woonsocket 34
Harrisburg 50, Brookings 36
Hill City 51, Sturgis Brown 37
Huron 53, Watertown 45
Marty 59, Santee, Neb. 49
Mobridge-Pollock 53, McLaughlin 35
Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 59, Wagner 45
Parkston 53, Platte-Geddes 34
Pierre 47, Aberdeen Central 37
Rapid City Christian 53, Custer 52
Red Cloud 66, Pine Ridge 23
Redfield 31, Hitchcock-Tulare 30
Sargent County, N.D. 74, Tiospa Zina 39
Sioux Falls Christian 82, Tea 73
Sioux Falls Jefferson 62, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 44
Sioux Falls Washington 56, Sioux Falls Lincoln 26
Sioux Valley 56, DeSmet 42
Sisseton 60, Lennox 49
Spearfish 37, St Thomas More 31
Tri-Valley 54, Canton 36
Warner 52, Langford 26
West Central 51, Parker 23
White River 69, Bennett County 34
Wolsey-Wessington 39, Sunshine Bible Academy 26

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BOYS PREP BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Christian 62, Herreid-Selby 34
Alcester-Hudson 61, Scotland 37
Baltic 78, McCook Central-Montrose 54
Beresford 50, Irene-Wakonda 19
Bon Homme 38, Kimball-White Lake 33
Bridgewater-Emery 74, Freeman Academy-Marion 51
Canistota 57, Chester 41
Castlewood 76, Colman-Egan 30
Dell Rapids 59, Elkton-Lake Benton 40
Faith 64, Potter County 62
Faulkton 70, Northwestern 49
Flandreau 48, Garretson 25
Florence-Henry 66, Arlington 55
Gayville-Volin High School 62, Menno 41
Hamlin 77, Aberdeen Roncalli 38
Harrisburg 69, Brookings 44
Highmore-Harold 57, James Valley Christian 53
Hitchcock-Tulare 60, Redfield 39
Hot Springs 71, Wall 34
Jones County 51, Lyman 42
Leola-Frederick High School 52, Britton-Hecla 20
Lower Brule 76, Flandreau Indian 8
Madison 76, Chamberlain 34
McLaughlin 56, Mobridge-Pollock 31
New England, N.D. 59, Harding County 50
New Underwood 84, Newell 14
Oldham-Ramona-Rutland 64, Sioux Falls Lutheran 62
Parkston 70, Platte-Geddes 54
Pierre 53, Aberdeen Central 51
Sanborn Central-Woonsocket 55, Hanson 49
Sioux Falls Lincoln 68, Sioux Falls Washington 51
Stanley County 62, Sully Buttes 59
Timber Lake 39, Kadoka 37
Tiospa Zina 73, Sargent County, N.D. 44
Todd County 44, Winner 42
Tripp-Delmont-Armour 52, Centerville 45
Wagner 59, Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 52
Watertown 59, Huron 35
Webster 61, Waverly-South Shore 35
Wessington Springs 54, Andes Central-Dakota Christian 25
West Central 70, Parker 34
White River 55, Philip 40
Wolsey-Wessington 56, Sunshine Bible Academy 20
POSTPONEMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS=
Dupree vs. Takini, ppd.

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

Kelly Armstrong, North Dakota's lone congressman, runs for governor

By JACK DURA Associated Press

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — North Dakota's sole U.S. House member announced his candidacy on Tuesday for governor of the sparsely populated state, the day after Gov. Doug Burgum said he won't seek a third term. Republican Rep. Kelly Armstrong is the first to formally announce a campaign in what is expected to be a competitive race among Republicans for the party's nomination. The state GOP will endorse a ticket in April, but candidates can run in the June primary, when voters will decide who advances to the November general election. Republicans have held the governor's office since 1992.

Armstrong, an attorney and former state GOP chairman, was first elected to the House in 2018 after serving six years in the state Senate.

"The short answer is I want to get home and start working — I miss people. I miss my friends. I miss my neighbors. I miss being in North Dakota, I really do," Armstrong said in an interview. "Serving the state in Congress has been an absolute, the greatest privilege of my life, but I really want to come home. I miss my friends in the Legislature. I miss the people who are more interested in solving problems than finding some mediocre social media fame."

North Dakota, population 784,000, is at a crossroads of how to continue to grow and diversify its economy, with workforce challenges and agricultural and energy issues facing the state, Armstrong said. He cited his knowledge of the state and federal government and background in the private sector, including oil and agriculture, helping him "advocate for and advance the things that are important for North Dakota."

North Dakota's governor is elected on a joint ticket with a lieutenant governor, who presides over the state Senate and is first in line to the governor's seat. Armstrong said he hasn't made decision about a running mate, but he will "take a lot of advice from a lot of people about the best way to approach it."

His announcement also opens up the state's sole House seat. Republican former state Rep. Rick Becker and Democrat Trygve Hammer, a military veteran, previously announced runs.

Armstrong won reelection to a third term in 2022 with over 62% of the vote against independent Cara Mund, an attorney and former Miss America. His House assignments include vice chair of the Energy and Commerce Committee.

Burgum, who ended his bid for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination in December, endorsed former President Donald Trump for a second term. Hours after he announced he won't seek a third term, he campaigned for Trump with former Republican presidential rivals in New Hampshire. Trump has praised Burgum, leading to speculation about a possible role for Burgum in a potential second Trump administration; Burgum has called that talk hypothetical.

Republicans control North Dakota's Legislature and hold every statewide office and congressional seat. A Democrat hasn't won a statewide election since 2012.

North Dakota's next governor will take office in mid-December, weeks before the biennial Legislature convenes in January 2025.

New term limits voters passed in 2022 mean no future governors can be elected more than twice, though Burgum could have pursued a third and even fourth term.

North Korea appears to demolish 'reunification arch' as Kim Jong Un turns against ties with South

By KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea appears to have torn down a huge arch in its capital that symbolized reconciliation with South Korea, a week after leader Kim Jong Un dismissed decades of hopes for peaceful reunification with the war-divided peninsula's south, according to satellite photos analyzed by The Associated Press on Wednesday.

South Korea's military also said Wednesday that North Korea fired several cruise missiles into waters off its western coast.

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North Korean leader Kim Jong Un last week described the Pyongyang monument as an “eyesore” and called for its removal while declaring that the North was abandoning long-standing goals of a peaceful unification with South Korea and ordered a rewriting of the North’s constitution to define the South as its most hostile foreign adversary.

Satellite images from Planet Labs PBC appeared to show the destruction of Pyongyang’s Monument to the Three Charters for National Reunification, also called the Arch of Reunification. An image Tuesday clearly showed the arch missing along a roadway.

Clouds and snow cover made it difficult to ascertain when North Korea tore down the monument, but it appeared to be within the last few days. NKNews, a website focused on North Korea, first reported on the satellite images.

The arch was a 30-meter (about 100-foot) tall structure that looked over a highway leading to the city of Kaesong near the border with South Korea.

The cruise missile launches were North Korea’s second known launch event of the year, following a Jan. 14 test-firing of the country’s first solid-fuel intermediate range ballistic missile, which reflected its efforts to advance its lineup of weapons targeting U.S. military bases in Japan and Guam.

South Korea’s Joint Chiefs of Staff said Wednesday that the U.S. and South Korean militaries were analyzing the latest launches. It did not immediately confirm the exact number of missiles fired or their specific flight details.

“Our military has increased surveillance and vigilance and is closely coordinating with the United States while monitoring for further signs and activity from North Korea,” the Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement.

Tensions on the Korean Peninsula have increased in recent months as Kim continues to accelerate his weapons development and issue provocative threats of nuclear conflict with the United States and its Asian allies.

The United States, South Korea and Japan have been expanding their combined military exercises in response to the North’s missiles tests. Kim characterizes these drills as rehearsals for an invasion.

In the latest tit-for-tat, North Korea said last week that it conducted a test of a purported nuclear-capable underwater attack drone in response to a combined naval exercise by the United States, South Korea and Japan, as it blamed its rivals for tensions in the region.

Cruise missiles are among a broad range of weapons North Korea has been testing in recent years as it attempts to build a viable nuclear threat against the United States and its Asian allies.

Since 2021, the North has conducted several flight tests of what it describes as long-range cruise missiles, which it claims can cover ranges of up to 2,000 kilometers (1,242 miles) and are nuclear-capable.

While North Korean cruise missile activities aren’t directly banned under U.N. sanctions, experts say those weapons potentially pose a serious threat to South Korea and Japan, as they are designed to fly like small airplanes and travel along landscape that would make them harder to detect by radar.

There are concerns that North Korea could dial up tensions in a U.S. election year. Experts say the North would aim to increase its bargaining power as it plans for eventual negotiations with whoever wins the November presidential vote.

North Korea also has a long history of ramping up pressure on rival South Korea when it doesn’t get what it wants from Washington.

During the speech at Pyongyang’s rubber-stamp parliament where Kim announced that his country would no longer pursue reconciliation with the South, he accused South Korea of acting as “top-class stooges” of the Americans and repeated a threat that he would use his nukes to annihilate the South if provoked.

Analysts say North Korea could be aiming to diminish South Korea’s voice in the regional nuclear standoff and eventually force direct dealings with Washington as it looks to cement its nuclear status.

Heavy fighting in Gaza's second-largest city leaves hundreds of patients stranded in main hospital

By NAJIB JOBAIN and MELANIE LIDMAN Associated Press

RAFAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israeli forces battled Palestinian militants Wednesday near the main hospital in Gaza's second-largest city of Khan Younis, where medics said hundreds of patients and thousands of displaced people were unable to leave because of the fighting.

Israel has ordered residents to leave a swath of downtown Khan Younis that includes Nasser and two smaller hospitals as it pushes ahead with its 3-month-old offensive against Hamas. The United Nations humanitarian office said the area was home to 88,000 Palestinians and was hosting another 425,000 displaced by fighting elsewhere.

The aid group Doctors Without Borders said its staff was trapped inside Nasser Hospital with some 850 patients and thousands of displaced people because the surrounding roads were inaccessible or too dangerous. Nasser Hospital is one of only two hospitals in southern Gaza that can still treat critically ill patients, the group said. Gaza's Health Ministry also said the hospital had been isolated.

The Israeli military said its forces were battling militants inside Khan Younis after completing their encirclement of the city the day before. It said aircraft were striking targets as part of the operations there and had also targeted suspected militants in central and northern Gaza.

Thousands of people fled south from Khan Younis on Tuesday toward the town of Rafah. The U.N. says some 1.5 million people — around two-thirds of Gaza's population — are crowded into shelters and tent camps in and around Rafah, which is on the border with Egypt.

Even there, Palestinians have found little safety, with Israel regularly carrying out strikes in and around the town. Palestinian witnesses said that in recent days Israeli soldiers and tanks had pushed into parts of Muwasi, a sandy area along the coast that Israel had declared a safe zone, where tens of thousands of people were living in tents without basic services.

In all, some 1.7 million people have been displaced within Gaza, according to the U.N. refugee agency. Most have fled from the north, where Israel's air and ground offensive has reduced entire neighborhoods to shelled-out wastelands, raising the question of whether residents will ever be able to return.

Gaza's Health Ministry says the offensive has killed at least 25,490 people — the majority women and children — and wounded another 63,354. Its count does not differentiate between civilians and combatants. U.N. officials have expressed fears that even more people could die from disease, with at least one-quarter of the population facing starvation.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to press ahead with the offensive until "complete victory" against Hamas, which started the war with its assault across the border on Oct. 7, killing some 1,200 people and abducting another 250.

ISRAELI DIVISIONS OVER WAR AIMS

Netanyahu says Israel is also committed to returning the over 100 hostages that remain in captivity after most of the others were freed in exchange for the release of Palestinian prisoners during a November cease-fire.

But many Israelis, including at least one member of Netanyahu's War Cabinet, say that's impossible without reaching another agreement with Hamas. The militant group says it won't release any more hostages until Israel ends its offensive.

Families of the hostages are also calling for a deal, and have staged increasingly aggressive protests against Israel's leaders, even interrupting a parliamentary committee meeting Monday. Egypt and Qatar were working on a new agreement, but officials say the gap between the two sides is still wide.

In Israel, bitter political divisions that were set aside after the Oct. 7 attack have begun to reemerge, with Netanyahu facing widespread anger and protests over the failure to prevent the attack and the plight of the hostages.

A BUFFER ZONE IN GAZA?

Hamas was still attacking Israeli forces, even in some of the most devastated areas, and firing rockets

into Israel. An attack Monday near the border killed 21 Israeli soldiers, the military's biggest loss of life in a single attack since Oct. 7.

Israeli media said the troops were working to create an informal buffer zone about a kilometer (half a mile) wide along the border to prevent militants from attacking Israeli communities near Gaza. The military said the operation was aimed at providing security for those communities but has declined to say if it plans to carve out an official buffer zone.

The United States, which has provided essential military and diplomatic support for the offensive, has said it is opposed to any attempt by Israel to shrink Gaza's territory.

But President Joe Biden's administration has also urged Israel to scale back military operations and facilitate the delivery of more aid — with limited success. And Netanyahu has outright rejected calls from the U.S. and much of the international community for postwar plans that include the eventual creation of a Palestinian state.

Russia says a transport plane has crashed and that 65 Ukrainian POWs were on board

By The Associated Press undefined

A military transport plane that Russia said was carrying 65 Ukrainian prisoners of war crashed Wednesday morning in a Russian region near Ukraine.

It wasn't immediately clear what caused the crash in the Belgorod region or if anyone survived. The Associated Press could not confirm who was aboard the plane, and the Ukrainians did not immediately comment.

A special military commission was on the way to the crash site, the Russian Defense Ministry said.

Russian state news agency RIA Novosti, citing the ministry, reported that the POWs were being transported to the border region for a prisoner exchange.

Speaking on his morning call with reporters, President Vladimir Putin's spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said he could not comment on the crash as he did not have enough information about it.

The Russian air force has suffered a string of crashes that some observers have attributed to a higher number of flights amid the fighting in Ukraine.

Seven hundred days after the Kremlin's forces rolled into Ukraine, the 1,500-kilometer (930-mile) front line largely static amid icy weather. As both sides seek to replenish their weapons stockpiles, the war recently has focused on long-range strikes.

Earlier, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said a major Russian missile attack on Tuesday had killed 18 people and injured 130.

The barrage, employing more than 40 ballistic, cruise, anti-aircraft and guided missiles hit 130 residential buildings in three Ukrainian cities, "all ordinary houses," Zelenskyy said on X, formerly Twitter.

Russia's onslaught, which included targets in the capital Kyiv and second-largest city Kharkiv, was the heaviest in weeks and lent weight to Zelenskyy's appeals for Western allies to provide more military aid.

"This year, the main priority is to strengthen air defense to protect our cities and towns, as well as defend frontline positions," Zelenskyy said on X late Tuesday.

Analysts say Russia stockpiled missiles to pursue a winter campaign of aerial bombardment, while Ukraine has sought to strike inside Russia with new types of drones.

Russia may have employed decoy missiles in Tuesday's attack in an effort to open up holes in Ukraine's air defenses, a U.S. think tank said.

The Washington-based Institute for the Study of War said Moscow is likely trying to acquire more ballistic missiles from foreign countries, including Iran and North Korea, because they may be more effective in some circumstances.

A further barrage of Russian S-300 missiles struck residential districts of Kharkiv late Tuesday, injuring nine people and damaging residential buildings, regional Gov. Oleh Syniehubov said.

Russia denies its forces strike civilian areas, although there is substantial evidence to the contrary.

Meanwhile, the Russian Defense Ministry said that air defenses shot down four Ukrainian drones over the Oryol region of western Russia early Wednesday.

Oryol Mayor Yuri Parakhin said that several drones were downed over the city. He said there were no casualties, but windows were shattered in several apartment buildings in the city.

Another Ukrainian drone was downed early Wednesday over the Belgorod border region, according to regional Gov. Vyacheslav Gladkov. He said there were no casualties or damage.

Ukraine's allies have promised to keep sending military aid packages, even though their resources are stretched. Help from the United States, by far Ukraine's single biggest provider, has also hit political snags.

The German defense ministry announced Wednesday that it plans to send six SEA KING Mk41 multi-role helicopters from Bundeswehr stocks to Ukraine.

Since the beginning of the war military deliveries from Germany have amounted to around 6 billion euros (\$6.52 billion), including substantial anti-aircraft and air defense systems, the government said.

Biden to speak at United Auto Workers conference as he woos blue-collar vote in battleground states

By TOM KRISHER and FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden will be the keynote speaker Wednesday at a United Auto Workers' political convention as he works to sway blue-collar workers his way in critical auto-making swing states such as Michigan and Wisconsin.

Biden will speak as the union closes out a three-day gathering in Washington to chart its political priorities but leaders kept mum in advance about whether they will use the moment to endorse the Democrat's bid for a second term — or hold out longer to try to increase the UAW's leverage.

It will be Biden's first political event since Tuesday's primary vote in New Hampshire, where former President Donald Trump cemented his hold on core Republican voters with a victory and Biden scored a write-in win.

Biden frequently bills himself as the most labor-friendly leader in American history, and went so far as to turn up on a picket line with union workers at a GM parts warehouse in the Detroit area during a strike last fall.

But as recently as Monday, UAW President Shawn Fain was restrained in his comments, saying as the conference opened, "We have to make our political leaders stand up with us. Support our cause, or you will not get our endorsement."

At this week's conference, support for Biden among union members has varied from enthusiastic to uncertainty about whether to even vote come Election Day.

Caroline Loveless, a Waterloo, Iowa, resident and retired UAW member, said she would enthusiastically vote for Biden, recalling his appearance on a picket line during last fall's strike. She said his appearance should remind union members that Biden is on their side.

"I hope they don't get amnesia," Loveless said, "come Election Day."

William Louis of Groton, Connecticut, another member, said that while he is "fed up with politicians" he will reluctantly vote for Biden, though he said the president had not fully earned members' vote given the current state of the economy.

Louis said Biden would get his vote because Trump, the likely Republican nominee, "was a terrible president."

Leo Carrillo, a member from Kansas City, said Biden's appearance on the picket line showed that "he was there for us," and helped him to decide to vote for Biden in November.

"For me it meant a lot" that a sitting president would show that level of solidarity to autoworkers, Carrillo said. "But there's more work to be done," he said, pointing to the PRO Act — proposed legislation that would make it easier to unionize on a federal level. The legislation advanced to the U.S. Senate but does not have enough support to survive in case of a filibuster.

Biden could run into dissent, however, over his support for Israel in its war on Hamas in Gaza. Some

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younger members of the union were less enthusiastic about the president for that reason.

Johannah King-Slutzky, a Columbia University graduate student and member of the student workers union within the UAW, was one of several attendees who chanted "ceasefire now" during Fain's afternoon speech Monday. The union called for a ceasefire in Gaza in December.

"Right now he's done nothing to earn my vote," King-Slutzky said, because "he has not acted with urgency to stop the genocide in Gaza."

The union has a lengthy process to determine its endorsements that involves the rank-and-file, but it's unclear how far along that is.

Fain, the first UAW president directly elected by members, took office after a huge bribery and embezzlement scandal that ended with two union presidents serving prison time. So he's making sure to follow union procedures on the endorsement and show that members made the decision, even though there's no way the UAW would back Trump, said Brian Rothenberg, a former union spokesman.

The UAW, with roughly 380,000 members, is normally one of the last unions to endorse presidential candidates, Rothenberg said. For example, the union didn't endorse Biden in 2020 until April 21.

In a November interview with The Associated Press, Fain made clear that he personally supports Biden, as he railed against Trump.

Fain pointed to Biden's trip to the GM parts warehouse, which is believed to be the first time a sitting president appeared with union picketers.

About that same time, Trump held a rally at a nonunion auto parts maker near Detroit, which Fain said was odd. Biden's administration also supported the union's bid to persuade Stellantis to reopen a shuttered plant in Belvidere, Illinois, and joined Fain in the city 70 miles (113 kilometers) northwest of Chicago to celebrate its reopening, Fain said.

Trump, Fain said, didn't come to Detroit when the UAW was on strike while he was president in 2019, and he talked about moving auto jobs to southern states where pay is lower.

"Actions speak louder than words," Fain said. "But this process belongs to the membership, and we'll make those decisions when it's time."

Art Wheaton, director of labor studies at Cornell University, said he would be surprised to see the union endorse Biden at this point in the campaign. The UAW, he said, would hold more leverage over legislation and other items if it waits until closer to the election to announce who it's backing.

"There's no big hurry in terms of the UAW and their timeframe," he said.

Rothenberg said a union endorsement is important because polling shows many UAW members are often undecided in the spring before a presidential election.

Internal UAW polling typically shows that in the spring and early summer, 30% of members support the GOP, 30% support Democrats and the remaining 40% swing between parties, he said. By Election Day, members and UAW retirees usually vote 60% Democratic, said Rothenberg, now a public relations consultant in Columbus, Ohio.

The endorsement also could sway nonunion blue-collar white males, who have been voting more for Republicans than in the past, Rothenberg said.

US hits Iraq militia sites and anti-ship missiles in Yemen as fight with Iranian proxies intensifies

By TARA COPP and LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. military struck three facilities in Iraq and two anti-ship missiles in Yemen operated by Iranian-backed militias that have attacked U.S. personnel and ships in the region as the United States tries to keep the Israel-Hamas war from spilling over into a wider conflict.

Both the strikes in Iraq and Yemen late on Tuesday targeted sites that the U.S. has said are involved in the attacks against U.S. forces in Iraq and Syria and were threatening U.S. military and commercial vessels in the Red Sea.

U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said in a statement that the strikes in Iraq were at the direction of

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President Joe Biden and targeted facilities used by the Iranian-backed Kataib Hezbollah militia and other Iran-affiliated groups in Iraq.

"These precision strikes are in direct response to a series of escalatory attacks against U.S. and Coalition personnel in Iraq and Syria by Iranian-sponsored militias," Austin said. Those strikes hit militia facilities in Jurf al-Sakhar, which is south of Baghdad, al-Qaim and another unnamed site in western Iraq, two U.S. officials said.

Iraq's Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani said the strikes "blatantly violate Iraq's sovereignty" and contribute to an "irresponsible escalation," according to a statement from his office. The statement, signed by military spokesman Yahya Rasool, said Iraq considers the strikes "hostile acts" and is taking measures to protect the lives of Iraqis.

The Popular Mobilization Forces, or PMF, a coalition of armed mostly Shiite groups only nominally under Iraqi military authority, said the strike near the Syrian border killed one of its fighters and wounded two, while the strike south of Baghdad caused material damage.

The U.S. Central Command announced it had also struck two anti-ship missiles belonging to the Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels that were being prepared for launch and were aimed at the southern part of the Red Sea.

"U.S. forces identified the missiles in Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen and determined that they presented an imminent threat to merchant vessels and the U.S. Navy ships in the region," Central Command said.

Both fronts — land attacks in Iraq and Syria, and sea attacks originating from Yemen — have seen a significant uptick in launches and counterstrikes over the last few days.

The U.S. strikes on the Kataib Hezbollah sites in Iraq came hours after the U.S. said militiamen fired two one-way attack drones at al-Asad Air Base, injuring U.S. service members and damaging infrastructure. And they followed the militia's most serious attack this year on the air base, when it launched multiple ballistic missiles on Saturday.

U.S. Central Command said it targeted Kataib Hezbollah headquarters, storage, and training locations for rocket, missile, and one-way attack drone capabilities.

In the drone attacks against al-Asad earlier Tuesday, U.S. defenses were able to intercept the first drone but it crashed on base while the second drone hit the base, U.S. officials said. Injuries, including traumatic brain injuries and smoke inhalation, were reported to be minor. The officials spoke on the condition of anonymity to provide details that had not been announced publicly.

The strikes on the Houthi missile launch sites in Yemen followed a joint operation on Monday night where the U.S. and Britain used warship- and submarine-launched Tomahawk missiles and fighter jets to take out Houthi missile storage sites, drones and launchers.

On both fronts, the Iranian-backed militias have employed ballistic missiles to target U.S. bases and ships, which marks an escalation, said Behnam Ben Taleblu, a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies who specializes in Iran.

The militias have typically used drones and rockets to attack. Tehran supplied Shiite militias in Iraq with short-range and close-range ballistic missiles in 2019, Taleblu said, but they had not been used until November's attacks.

During Saturday's larger-scale attack, multiple ballistic missiles and rockets launched by Iranian-backed militias targeted al-Asad, but most were intercepted by air defense systems there, Pentagon spokesperson Sabrina Singh told reporters on Monday. She said other munitions hit the base.

Al-Asad is a large air base in western Iraq where U.S. troops have trained Iraqi security forces and now coordinate operations to counter the militant Islamic State group.

Singh said Saturday's attack was a "barrage" — the first time since Nov. 20 that Iranian proxy forces in Iraq had fired ballistic missiles at U.S. bases there.

A coalition of militias calling itself the Islamic Resistance in Iraq has taken credit for a number of the attacks on U.S. forces. Kataib Hezbollah is one of the groups within that umbrella organization.

Iran has also supplied the Houthis with ballistic missiles, and that group is the first Iranian proxy to fire

medium-range ballistic missiles and anti-ship ballistic missiles, Taleblu said. "With Yemen, think of it as an intensification of the problem."

Saturday's ballistic missile attack on al-Asad injured four U.S. service members, all of whom have returned to duty. One member of the Iraqi security forces was also injured.

Since the Israel-Hamas war began in early October, there have been more than 151 attacks on U.S. facilities in Syria and Iraq. According to the Pentagon, two attacks took place on Monday and included multiple rockets fired at U.S. and coalition troops at Mission Support Site Euphrates in Syria and a single rocket fired at the Rumalyn Landing Zone in Syria. Neither attack resulted in casualties or damage.

The U.S. struck back at the militia groups late last month, ordering a round of retaliatory strikes after three U.S. service members were injured in a drone attack in northern Iraq. Kataib Hezbollah claimed credit for the attack, carried out by a one-way attack drone.

The U.S., in response, hit three sites, destroying facilities and likely killing a number of the militia, the White House said at the time.

Annual count of homeless residents begins in Los Angeles, where tens of thousands live on streets

By CHRISTOPHER WEBER Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Los Angeles County's annual count of homeless residents began Tuesday night — a crucial part of the region's efforts to confront the crisis of tens of thousands of people living on the streets.

Up to 6,000 volunteers with the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority fanned out for the effort's main component, the unsheltered street tally.

The so-called "point-in-time" count will take place over three days and aims to estimate how many people are unhoused and what services they may require, such as mental health or drug addiction treatment.

LA County's undertaking is the largest among similar tallies in major cities nationwide. The tally, which also makes use of demographic surveys and shelter counts, is mandated by the federal government for cities to receive certain kinds of funding.

The count this year comes amid increasing public outrage over the perceived failure — despite costly efforts — to reduce the surging population of people living in cars, tents and makeshift street shelters.

The 2023 effort reported more than 75,500 people were homeless on any given night in LA County, a 9% rise from a year earlier. About 46,200 were within the city of Los Angeles, where public frustration has grown as tents have proliferated on sidewalks and in parks and other locations.

Since 2015, homelessness has increased by 70% in the county and 80% in the city.

Karen Bass, the mayor of Los Angeles, joined city and county officials to kick off the count Tuesday night in the North Hollywood neighborhood of LA's San Fernando Valley.

The count "is an important tool to confront the homelessness crisis," Bass said in a statement. "Homelessness is an emergency, and it will take all of us working together to confront this emergency."

On her first day in office in Dec. 2022, Bass declared a state of emergency on homelessness. One year into her term, the mayor, a Democrat, announced that over 21,000 unhoused people were moved into leased hotels or other temporary shelter during 2023, a 28% increase from the prior year. Dozens of drug-plagued street encampments were cleared, and housing projects are in the pipeline, she said last month.

City Hall, the City Council and the LA County Board of Supervisors have said they intend to work together to tackle the crisis. Progress hasn't always been apparent despite billions spent on programs to curb homelessness.

Homelessness remains hugely visible throughout California with people living in tents and cars and sleeping outdoors on sidewalks and under highway overpasses.

The results of the LA County homeless count are expected to be released in late spring or early summer.

Trump wins New Hampshire primary as rematch with Biden appears increasingly likely

By HOLLY RAMER, JILL COLVIN and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

MANCHESTER, N.H. (AP) — Former President Donald Trump easily won New Hampshire's primary on Tuesday, seizing command of the race for the Republican nomination and making a November rematch against President Joe Biden feel all the more inevitable.

The result was a setback for former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley, who finished second despite investing significant time and financial resources in a state famous for its independent streak. She's the last major challenger after Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis ended his presidential bid over the weekend, allowing her to campaign as the sole alternative to Trump.

Trump's allies ramped up pressure on Haley to leave the race before the polls had closed, but Haley vowed after the results were announced to continue her campaign. Speaking to supporters, she intensified her criticism of the former president, questioning his mental acuity and pitching herself as a unifying candidate who would usher in generational change.

"This race is far from over. There are dozens of states left to go," Haley said, while some in the crowd cried, "It's not over!"

Trump, meanwhile, can now boast of being the first Republican presidential candidate to win open races in Iowa and New Hampshire since both states began leading the election calendar in 1976, a striking sign of how rapidly Republicans have rallied around him to make him their nominee for the third consecutive time.

At his victory party Tuesday night, Trump repeatedly insulted Haley and gave a far angrier speech than after his Iowa victory, when his message was one of Republican unity.

"Let's not have someone take a victory when she had a very bad night," Trump said. He added, "Just a little note to Nikki: She's not going to win."

With easy wins in both early states, Trump is demonstrating an ability to unite the GOP's factions firmly behind him. He's garnered support from the evangelical conservatives who are influential in Iowa and New Hampshire's more moderate voters, strength he hopes to replicate during the general election.

Trump posted especially strong results in the state's most conservative areas, while Haley won more liberal parts. The only areas in which Haley was leading Trump were in Democratic-leaning cities and towns such as Concord, Keene and Portsmouth.

Pat Sheridan, a 63-year-old engineer from Hampton, voted for Trump "because he did a really good job the first time."

"We need a businessman, not bureaucrats," Sheridan said.

About half of GOP primary voters said they are very or somewhat concerned that Trump is too extreme to win the general election, according to AP VoteCast, a survey of the state's electorate. Only about one-third say the same about Haley.

Still, Haley's path to becoming the GOP standard-bearer is narrowing quickly. She won't compete in a contest that awards delegates until South Carolina's Feb. 24 primary, bypassing the Feb. 8 Nevada caucuses that are widely seen as favoring Trump.

As South Carolina's former governor, Haley is hoping a strong showing there could propel her into the March 5 Super Tuesday contests. But in a deeply conservative state where Trump is exceedingly popular, those ambitions may be tough to realize and a home-state loss could prove politically devastating.

"This is just the beginning; we've got the rest of the nation," said Sandy Adams, 66, an independent from Bow who supported Haley. "I think we've got a strong candidate, and the first time we have just two candidates, and that's a great thing."

On the Democratic side, Biden won his party's primary but had to do so via a write-in effort. The Democratic National Committee voted to start its primary next month in South Carolina, but New Hampshire pushed ahead with its own contest. Biden didn't campaign or appear on the ballot but topped a series of little-known challengers.

Trump's early sweep through the Republican primary is remarkable considering he faces 91 criminal charges related to everything from seeking to overturn the 2020 presidential election to mishandling classified documents and arranging payoffs to a porn actress. He left the White House in 2021 in the grim aftermath of an insurrection at the U.S. Capitol led by his supporters who sought to stop the certification of Biden's win. And Trump was the first president to be impeached twice.

Beyond the political vulnerabilities associated with the criminal cases, Trump faces a logistical challenge in balancing trials and campaigning. He has frequently appeared voluntarily at a New York courtroom where a jury is considering whether he should pay additional damages to a columnist who last year won a \$5 million jury award against Trump for sex abuse and defamation. He has turned these appearances into campaign events, holding televised news conferences that give him an opportunity to spread his message to a large audience.

But Trump has turned those vulnerabilities into an advantage among GOP voters. He has argued that the criminal prosecutions reflect a politicized Justice Department, though there's no evidence that officials there were pressured by Biden or anyone else in the White House to file charges.

Trump has also repeatedly told his supporters that he's being prosecuted on their behalf, an argument that appears to have further strengthened his bond with the GOP base.

As Trump begins to pivot his attention to Biden and a general election campaign, the question is whether the former president's framing of the legal cases will persuade voters beyond the GOP base. Trump lost the popular vote in the 2016 and 2020 elections and has faced particular struggles in suburban communities from Georgia to Pennsylvania to Arizona that could prove decisive in the fall campaign.

Trump traveled frequently to New Hampshire in the months leading up to the primary but didn't spend as much time in the state as many of his rivals. Rather than the traditional approach of greeting voters personally or in small groups, Trump has staged large rallies. He has spent much of his time complaining about the past — including the lie that the 2020 election was stolen due to widespread voter fraud.

If he returns to the White House, the former president has promised to enact a hardline immigration agenda that includes stopping migrants from crossing the U.S.-Mexico border and reimposing his first-term travel ban that originally targeted seven Muslim-majority countries. He's also said the rising number of immigrants entering the United States are "poisoning the blood of our country," echoing Adolf Hitler's language.

Biden faces his own challenges. There are widespread concerns about his age at 81 years old. Dissent is also building within his party over Biden's alliance with Israel in its war against Hamas, putting the president's standing at risk in swing states like Michigan. A rally he held in northern Virginia on Tuesday to promote abortion rights — an issue his party sees as critical to success in November — was disrupted repeatedly by protests over U.S. military support for Israel. One person shouted "shame on you!"

But he avoided potential embarrassment in New Hampshire even as rivals like Minnesota Rep. Dean Phillips compared him in advertising to Bigfoot — since both were hard to find.

Durwood Sargent, 79, of Bow, cast a write-in vote for Biden and said he wasn't offended that the president kept his name off the ballot.

"It's not a big deal. They've made a big deal out of it. The president's got a country to run," he said.

Thousands of people are forced out of their homes after 7.1 quake in western China

By KEN MORITSUGU and NG HAN GUAN Associated Press

UCHTURPAN, China (AP) — As aftershocks continued to rock western China on Wednesday, more than 12,000 people were staying in tents and other shelters, lighting bonfires to fend off the freezing weather.

The previous day, a magnitude 7.1 earthquake in a remote part of China's Xinjiang region killed three people and left five injured, while damaging hundreds of buildings.

The quake caused significant damage amid freezing temperatures, but the toll on lives and property was relatively light, owing to the sparse population around the epicenter in Uchturpan county, near the

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border with Kazakhstan.

Footage shown by state broadcaster CCTV on Wednesday showed evacuees eating instant noodles in tents with bonfires providing heat.

Jian Gewa, a 16-year old student in Uchturpan, said he was in the bathroom when the quake began. The entire building shook violently.

"I just thought I had to get myself to safety as quickly as possible," Jian said.

He was evacuated to a school where he was staying in a dorm room with his grandfather, joining about 200 others. Local officials said they planned to check houses' stability before people could return.

The earthquake hit in a sparsely populated area with clusters of towns and villages scattered across an otherwise barren winter landscape. A two lane highway runs from the city of Aksu about 125 kilometers (78 miles) to the area, through frozen brown flatlands on one side and craggy outcroppings on the other. Power lines and an occasional cement factory are virtually the only signs of human presence.

In Kizilsu Kirgiz prefecture, the earthquake caused damage of various degrees to 851 buildings, collapsing 93 structures near the epicenter and killing 910 livestock, according to the prefecture deputy party secretary Wurouziali Haxihaerbayi.

The area is populated mostly by Kyrgyz and Uyghurs, ethnic Turkic minorities who are predominantly Muslim and have been the target of a state campaign of forced assimilation and mass detention. The region is heavily militarized, and state broadcaster CCTV showed paramilitary troops moving in before dawn to clear rubble and set up tents for those displaced.

Two of the three people who died were members of a Kyrgyz sheep herding family who had brought their flock up the mountain and spent the night in their rest hut, said Shi Chao, the Communist Party head of Kulansarlike township.

Rescuers found the family of three, including a 6-year old girl, and brought them down the mountain but only the father survived, Shi said.

The township has been replacing the huts with sturdier structures partially subsidized by the government, he said. The third death happened elsewhere in Akqi county.

The prefecture has deployed more than 2,300 rescuers, and Akqi county evacuated 7,338 residents. In total, 12,426 people have been evacuated.

Rescue crews combed through the rubble while emergency survival gear including coats and tents arrived to help the thousands of people who fled their homes.

"This 7.1 rating is very strong, but the death and injury situation is not severe," Zhang Yongjiu, the head of Xinjiang Earthquake Administration, told a news conference.

The quake's epicenter was in a mountainous area about 3,000 meters (9,800 feet) above sea level, Zhang said.

In the village of Yamansu, about 115 people were staying in a Communist Party meeting hall, their bedding neatly rolled up on Wednesday morning on top of five long rows of metal bed frames. Medical staff were on hand to check on older residents.

A grandmother fed one of her grandchildren on one of the beds, while an older one slurped instant noodles.

Outside, men chatted around a large metal wood-burning cooker with a stove pipe, two wearing chef's toques. Chunks of meat and vegetables in large plastic and metal containers sat on two weathered desks set up on the ground outside.

A light layer of snow covered the frozen ground as temperatures remained well below freezing, although the sunshine brought people outside.

The quake hit shortly after 2 a.m. on Tuesday. By evening, authorities said three people had died and five were injured, two seriously.

State broadcaster CCTV said 1,104 aftershocks, including five that were above magnitude 5.0, were recorded as of 8:00 a.m. Wednesday. The largest registered at magnitude 5.7.

Among the buildings damaged, 47 houses had collapsed, the government of the Xinjiang Uygur Autono-

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mous Region posted on its official Weibo social media account Tuesday.

Officials said most of the houses that collapsed were in remote areas and were built by residents. Newer public housing built by the government did not collapse.

Footage broadcast by CCTV showed staff at Aksu's train station ordering passengers out of the waiting hall in a speedy but not panicked manner.

Associated Press journalists saw some walls cracked or partially collapsed in the empty Aksu country village of Youkakeyamansu, a name transliterated in Mandarin from Uyghur. All residents had been evacuated to a shelter.

The mountainous Uchturpan county is recording temperatures well below freezing, with the China Meteorological Administration forecasting lows reaching negative 18 degrees Celsius (just below zero Fahrenheit) this week.

The county had around 233,000 people in 2022, according to Xinjiang authorities.

The quake downed power lines but electricity was quickly restored, Aksu authorities said. The Urumqi Railroad Bureau resumed services after 7 a.m. following safety checks that confirmed no problems on train lines. The suspension affected 23 trains, the bureau serving the Xinjiang capital said on its official Weibo account.

The U.S. Geological Survey said the area's largest quake in the past century was also magnitude 7.1 and occurred in 1978, about 200 kilometers (124 miles) to the north of Tuesday's epicenter.

Tremors were felt hundreds of kilometers (miles) away.

Tremors also were felt in neighboring Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan and reportedly as far away as New Delhi. Videos posted on the Telegram messaging platform showed people in the Kazakh city of Almaty running downstairs in apartment blocks and standing in the street, some of them wearing shorts in the freezing weather.

In Xinjiang and Kazakhstan, classes were suspended to allow children to recover from the shock.

Earthquakes are common in western China.

A 6.2 magnitude earthquake that struck Gansu province in December killed 151 people and was China's deadliest quake in nine years. An earthquake in Sichuan province in 2008 killed nearly 90,000.

Elsewhere, authorities raised the confirmed death toll to 31 on Tuesday in a landslide in a remote, mountainous part of China's southwestern province of Yunnan, Chinese state media reported.

The disaster struck just before 6 a.m. on Monday in the mountain village of Liangshui. Authorities said Tuesday that a total of 44 people were either missing or had been found dead.

Trump rides to New Hampshire victory on the strength of support from the GOP base, AP VoteCast shows

By JOSH BOAK and LINLEY SANDERS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Former President Donald Trump had rock-solid support from the party faithful in his primary victory Tuesday, with even most backers of rival Nikki Haley acknowledging the GOP belongs to him.

Yet as Trump's hold on securing the party's nomination tightened, AP VoteCast found that some voters express concerns that he is too extreme to compete in the November general election. Some also worry about his legal peril in pending criminal trials.

Haley, a former South Carolina governor and a U.N. ambassador under Trump, bested him among college graduates and moderates, a possible sign that Trump has yet to expand his political base.

The survey found signs that primary voters on the Democratic side rallied around President Joe Biden. He won in New Hampshire with strong support on the economy, but many have concerns about his age — he is 81 — and his handling of the situation in the Middle East.

Only weeks into 2024, voters have already shown an awareness of Trump's strengths and liabilities. But even as the coronavirus, the major challenge during the 2020 election, has faded from public view,

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the cultural and social forces of that Biden-Trump matchup have hardened in ways that are testing the country's sense of itself.

The New Hampshire primaries are unique because undeclared voters -- those not affiliated with either party -- can choose to vote in either party's primary. This draws in voters who are not necessarily party loyalists.

Nearly half of GOP primary voters were not affiliated with a party, compared with about 2 in 10 in the Democratic primary. Among those affiliated with the Republican Party in the state, Trump won handily.

AP VoteCast is a survey of 1,989 New Hampshire voters who took part in the Republican primary and 915 Democratic primary voters. The survey was conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

HOW TRUMP WON IN NEW HAMPSHIRE

New Hampshire's demographics favored Trump.

He won in the small towns and rural communities, where about 6 in 10 primary participants say they live. Most GOP voters in the state lack a college degree; about two-thirds of them voted for Trump. He won about 7 in 10 Republican voters who identified as conservatives.

Trump was backed by Republicans who prioritize immigration and held a slight advantage among those prioritizing the economy, the two top issues among GOP voters in New Hampshire and Iowa, where the former president won the leadoff caucuses last week.

Among those in New Hampshire who named immigration as their top priority, about three-quarters support Trump. New Hampshire's primary voters agreed with Trump on the need to limit immigration and build a wall on the U.S.-Mexico border.

About half of those who said the economy was the top issue backed Trump.

HOW HALEY'S STRENGTHS FELL SHORT

Haley drew her support from groups that could be crucial in November. But those groups were minorities in the GOP electorate.

She beat Trump among primary participants who were not formally affiliated with any party. About half of Haley's supporters graduated from college, just as about half of them identify as moderates.

In many cases, her backers were simply uncomfortable with Trump.

Haley performed well among those who said Trump did something illegal in at least one of the criminal cases against him. And in the 2020 presidential election, about half of Haley's supporters voted for Biden, a Democrat.

Iowa exposed suburban voters as a potential weakness for Trump. While Haley did her best in New Hampshire's suburban communities, she only managed to pull even with Trump in those areas.

POTENTIAL WEAKNESSES FOR TRUMP

Compared with Iowa caucusgoers, New Hampshire Republican primary voters had more doubts about Trump.

In New Hampshire, about half of GOP voters are very or somewhat concerned that Trump is too extreme to win the general election. Only about one-third say the same about Haley.

Regarding Trump's criminal indictments, about 4 in 10 GOP participants in New Hampshire said they believe he has done something illegal related to either his alleged attempt to interfere in the vote count in the 2020 presidential election, his role in what happened at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, or the classified documents found at his Florida home after he left the White House.

REPUBLICAN VOTERS EXPECT TRUMP TO BE GOP NOMINEE

The vast majority of Republican voters in New Hampshire, about 8 in 10, believe Trump will win the nomination, a finding that came after his dominant showing in Iowa.

Only about 2 in 10 say Haley will be the nominee. In a blow to a candidate who has pitched herself as a Trump alternative, more than half of Haley's own supporters think Trump will represent the party on the November ballot.

About 8 in 10 say they decided before Iowa which candidate they would support. After the caucuses, three contenders ended their campaigns: biotech investor Vivek Ramaswamy, former Arkansas Gov. Asa

Hutchinson and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis.

About 6 in 10 GOP voters say they had their minds made up more than a month ago, including about 4 in 10 saying they have known all along.

BIDEN'S DEMOCRATIC COALITION COMES INTO FOCUS

Biden's New Hampshire victory provided key insights into the Democratic coalition.

About half hold a college degree, as education has become a major political dividing line across the country. There was almost universal support among Democratic voters for abortion to be legal in most if not all cases. Three-quarters called discrimination against Black people a major problem.

The polling also suggested that the economy might be evolving into a strength for Biden among his base. High inflation had hurt his approval ratings for most of his presidency, but inflation has eased without disrupting job growth and Democrats are showing newfound support for Biden's agenda. Eight in 10 approved of his economic leadership.

There are limits on what New Hampshire can reveal, as the state is less urban, less suburban and less racially diverse than the rest of the country. Cities, suburbs and non-white voters were crucial elements of Biden's winning 2020 coalition.

Still, not everything Biden does received strong plaudits in New Hampshire. Only about half approve of how he is handling immigration, and only about half approve of his handling of the conflict between the Israelis and Palestinians.

Nearly half say Biden is too old to serve a second term as president.

During his presidency, the Democratic Party has chosen to make South Carolina the first official presidential contest, a choice that relegated Biden to write-in status in New Hampshire. More than half said it is very or somewhat important to them that New Hampshire's presidential primary is the first in the nation.

AP VoteCast is a survey of the American electorate conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research for AP and Fox News. The survey of 1,989 Republican primary voters and 915 Democratic primary voters was conducted for six days, concluding as polls close. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. The survey combines a random sample of registered voters drawn from state voter files and self-identified registered voters selected from nonprobability online panels. The margin of sampling error for voters is estimated to be plus or minus 3.5 percentage points for Republican primary voters and plus or minus 4.6 points for Democratic primary voters.

China formally restores diplomatic relations with Nauru after Pacific island nation cut Taiwan ties

BEIJING (AP) — China and Nauru formally restored diplomatic relations Wednesday after the tiny Pacific island nation cut its ties with Taiwan earlier this month, in a further move by Beijing to isolate Taipei's democratic government.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with Nauru's Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Lionel Aingimea at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in Beijing, and Wang said the resumption of ties "once again demonstrates to the world that adherence to the one-China principle is an irresistible historical trend."

Aingimea said Nauru recognized that Taiwan is part of China, despite the fact that the People's Republic of China has never governed the island and that Taiwan's 23 million people overwhelmingly reject Beijing's claims to sovereignty over them.

"We look forward to the practical cooperation that's going to happen between Nauru and China. The prospect is bright," Aingimea said.

Nauru's announcement on Jan. 15 came just two days after Taiwan elected a new president and left the self-governing republic with only 12 remaining diplomatic allies, although it enjoys strong unofficial relations with the U.S., Japan and most other major nations.

American officials expressed disappointment with the decision. The United States has diplomatic relations with China but also maintains extensive unofficial ties with Taiwan, including selling it fighter jets

and other weaponry for its defense.

Nauru first established diplomatic ties with Taiwan in 1980, then switched to Beijing in 2002, then back to Taiwan in 2005, amid allegations that both sides were paying off or otherwise pressuring Nauruan officials.

China claims Taiwan as its territory and doesn't recognize its government or its right to diplomatic recognition, participation in global bodies such as the United Nations or any official contact with foreign political entities.

"This policy change is a significant first step in moving forward with Nauru's development," Nauru's government said in a news release announcing the severing of relations with Taiwan.

China has been gradually poaching Taiwan's diplomatic allies, partly to punish the ruling Democratic Progressive Party that advocates maintaining the status quo under which Taiwan has its own government, military and de-facto independent status outside of the control of the PRC.

Ten countries have switched ties from Taipei to Beijing since the initial election of DPP President Tsai Ing-wen in 2016.

China says that Taiwan must come under its control at some point and has staged military drills around the island to demonstrate its determination.

At the time of the break with Nauru, Taiwan's Deputy Foreign Minister Tien Chung-kwang accused China of purposefully timing the news to the election of current Vice President Lai Ching-te as the island's new leader. He said China's authoritarian one-party Communist government's intention was to "attack the democracy and freedom that the Taiwanese people are proud of."

Taiwan now has official ties with 11 countries and the Vatican. Seven are in Latin America and the Caribbean, three are in the Pacific islands and one is in Africa.

Nauru's switching of relations has further intensified the focus on Taiwan's remaining allies, most of which are developing nations seen as vulnerable to China's global influence and willingness to offer hefty financial inducements.

Here's what to know about Sweden's bumpy road toward NATO membership

STOCKHOLM (AP) — Sweden's bid to join NATO — held up for almost two years — cleared its next-to-last hurdle when Turkey's parliament gave its go-ahead to let the Nordic country into the alliance.

All existing NATO countries must give their approval before a new member can join the alliance, and Hungary is now the only member that hasn't given Sweden the green light.

Here is a look at Sweden's complicated path toward NATO membership.

WHY DOES SWEDEN WANT TO JOIN NATO?

Sweden has stayed out of military alliances for more than 200 years and long ruled out seeking NATO membership. But after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, it ditched its longstanding policy of nonalignment almost overnight and decided to apply to join the alliance together with neighboring Finland.

Both Sweden and Finland had already developed strong ties with NATO after the end of the Cold War, but public opinion remained firmly against full membership until the war in Ukraine.

Nonalignment was seen as the best way to avoid creating tensions with Russia, their powerful neighbor in the Baltic Sea region. But the Russian aggression caused a dramatic shift in both countries, with polls showing a surge in support for NATO membership.

Political parties in both Finland and Sweden decided they needed the security guarantees that only come with full membership in the U.S.-led alliance.

WHY IS IT TAKING SO LONG?

While Finland became NATO's 31st member in April of last year, Sweden's application has been held up by Turkey and Hungary.

To let Sweden join, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan put forth a series of conditions including a tougher stance toward groups that Turkey regards as threats to its security, such as Kurdish militants and

members of a network it blames for a failed coup in 2016.

Although the Swedish government tried to appease Erdogan by lifting an arms embargo on Turkey and promising to cooperate on fighting terrorism, public demonstrations in Sweden by supporters of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, and by anti-Muslim activists who burned the Quran complicated the situation.

Pressure from the U.S. and other NATO allies on Turkey to remove its objections to Swedish membership appeared to have little effect until Erdogan said at a NATO summit last year that he would send the documents to Parliament for approval. But the issue was held up in Parliament until lawmakers finally held a vote on the issue Tuesday and ratified Sweden's accession protocol by 287 votes to 55.

That leaves Hungary as the last hurdle for Sweden's NATO bid. Hungary initially didn't give any clear reason for its delays and Prime Minister Viktor Orbán long insisted that his country wouldn't be the last to give Sweden its approval. But the tone toward Stockholm hardened last year, with Hungary accusing Swedish politicians of telling "blatant lies" about the condition of Hungary's democracy.

Orbán, who has broken ranks with NATO allies by adopting a Kremlin-friendly stance toward Russia's invasion of Ukraine, said Tuesday that he had invited Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson to Budapest to discuss "future cooperation in the field of security and defence as allies and partners."

Unless an emergency session of Hungary's parliament is called to debate Sweden's NATO bid, its next scheduled assembly is expected on Feb. 26.

WHAT WOULD SWEDEN BRING TO THE ALLIANCE?

The inclusion of Sweden would leave the Baltic Sea surrounded by NATO countries, strengthening the alliance in the strategically important region. The Baltic Sea is Russia's maritime point of access to the city of St. Petersburg and the Kaliningrad enclave.

Sweden's armed forces, though sharply downsized since the Cold War, are widely seen as a potential boost to NATO's collective defense in the region. The Swedes have a modern air force and navy and have committed to increase defense spending to reach NATO's target of 2% of gross domestic product.

Like the Finns, Swedish forces have for years participated in joint exercises with NATO.

HOW HAS RUSSIA REACTED?

Not surprisingly, Moscow reacted negatively to Sweden and Finland's decision to abandon nonalignment and seek NATO membership, and warned of unspecified countermeasures.

Russia said the move adversely affected the security situation in Northern Europe, which it said "had previously been one of the most stable regions in the world."

Finland's security service said in October that the country's relations with Russia had deteriorated significantly and that Moscow now considers its western neighbor as a hostile country.

Both Sweden and Finland have warned of an increased risk of Russian interference and hybrid attacks.

21 Israeli troops are killed in the deadliest attack on the military since the Gaza offensive began

By JOSEF FEDERMAN, SAMY MAGDY and NAJIB JOBAIN Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Palestinian militants carried out the deadliest single attack on Israeli forces in Gaza since the Hamas raid that triggered the war, killing 21 soldiers, the military said Tuesday — a significant setback that could add to mounting calls for a cease-fire.

Hours later, the military announced that ground forces had encircled the southern city of Khan Younis, Gaza's second largest, and thick, black smoke could be seen rising over the city as thousands of Palestinians fled south. Witnesses said Israeli tanks and troops had also moved into Muwasi, a nearby coastal area that the military had previously declared a safe zone for Palestinians.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu mourned the Israeli soldiers, who died when the blast from a rocket-propelled grenade triggered explosives they were laying to blow up buildings. But he vowed to press ahead until "absolute victory," including crushing Hamas and freeing more than 100 Israeli hostages still held by the militants.

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Israelis are increasingly questioning whether it's possible to achieve those war aims.

In the wake of Hamas' Oct. 7 attack, outraged Israelis set aside long-simmering political differences and rallied behind the war. More than 100 days later, divisions are reemerging, and anger is growing over Netanyahu's conduct of the war. Families of the hostages have called for Israel to reach a deal with Hamas, saying time is running out to bring their relatives home alive.

A senior Egyptian official said Israel has proposed a two-month cease-fire in which the hostages would be freed in exchange for the release of Palestinians imprisoned by Israel, and top Hamas leaders in Gaza would be allowed to relocate to other countries.

The official, who was not authorized to brief media and spoke on condition of anonymity, said Hamas rejected the proposal and insists no more hostages will be released until Israel ends its offensive and withdraws from Gaza. Israel's government declined to comment on the talks.

Egypt and Qatar — which have brokered past agreements between Israel and Hamas — were developing a multistage proposal to try to bridge the gaps, the official said.

'ONE OF THE HARDEST DAYS' FOR ISRAEL

Israeli reservists were preparing explosives Monday to demolish two buildings outside central Gaza's Maghazi refugee camp, near the Israeli border, when a militant fired a rocket-propelled grenade at a tank nearby. The blast triggered the explosives, collapsing both two-story buildings onto the soldiers.

Israeli media said the troops were working to create an informal buffer zone, about a kilometer (half a mile) wide along the border to prevent militants from attacking Israeli communities near Gaza. Military spokesperson Daniel Hagari said the mission was to clear buildings to "create the conditions" that would allow the residents of the south to return to their homes.

The United States has said it would oppose any attempt by Israel to shrink Gaza's territory.

Throughout the war, Israeli troops have used controlled detonations to destroy structures that the military says hide Hamas tunnels or have been used by militants as firing positions — one reason for the massive destruction wreaked by the ground offensive. Blasts have destroyed entire city blocks, apartment complexes, government buildings and universities, fueling Palestinians' fears that the territory will be left unlivable.

At least 217 soldiers have been killed since the ground offensive began in late October, including three killed in a separate event Monday, according to the military.

Netanyahu acknowledged on social media that it was "one of the hardest days" of the war but vowed to keep up the offensive.

"We are in the middle of a war that is more than justified. In this war, we are making big achievements, like the encircling of Khan Younis, and there are also very heavy losses," he later said in a video statement.

Israel launched its offensive after Hamas crossed the border Oct. 7, killing over 1,200 people and abducting some 250 others. More than 100 were released in November during a weeklong cease-fire.

The offensive has caused widespread death and destruction, killing at least 25,490 people — the majority women and children — and wounding another 63,354, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. Its count does not differentiate between civilians and combatants. An estimated 85% of Gaza's 2.3 million people have been driven from their homes in a humanitarian crisis that has left one-quarter of the population facing starvation.

TROOPS IN THE 'SAFE ZONE'

With fighting raging in neighboring Khan Younis city, witnesses said that in the past few days Israeli troops and tanks had entered parts of Muwasi. Previously, the military had told Palestinians to take refuge in the tiny rural area on the Mediterranean coast, saying it would be spared military operations.

On Monday, troops stormed Al-Khair Hospital inside the zone and struck the nearby Al-Aqsa University where displaced people were sheltering, according to health officials.

The advance sent families who had fled to the area from fighting elsewhere fleeing once more, said one witness, Aseel al-Muqayed. One main street "had been very crowded with displaced people, you could hardly find a place without a tent. Now the area is almost empty," she said, adding that she had seen tanks now stationed nearby.

The 21-year-old al-Muqayed has already been displaced multiple times since her family evacuated from northern Gaza. They moved repeatedly, fleeing bombardment — her younger brother and a cousin were killed in a strike that hit one of their refuges — and eventually ended up in Khan Younis. She came to Muwasi several days ago, learning there was electricity there to charge her mother's phone, and now was afraid to move.

"For two nights, we have not been able to sleep as the sounds of tanks, gunfire and explosions are very close," she said.

Inside Khan Younis, heavy fighting raged around the two main hospitals. Shelling hit the fourth floor of Al-Amal Hospital, killing one person and wounding 10 others, according to Raed al-Nems, a spokesperson for the Palestine Red Crescent rescue service that runs the facility.

Shelling on Monday also hit a United Nations school that was sheltering displaced people in the city, killing at least six people, according to the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees, known as UNRWA.

Israel's offensive has focused for weeks on Khan Younis and several urban refugee camps in central Gaza, after the military claimed to have largely defeated Hamas in the north.

Israel believes Hamas commanders may be hiding in tunnels beneath Khan Younis, the hometown of the group's top leader in Gaza, Yehya Sinwar, whose location is unknown.

PRESSURE FOR A CEASE-FIRE

The growing death toll and dire humanitarian situation have led to increasing international pressure on Israel to scale back the offensive and agree to a path for the creation of a Palestinian state after the war. The United States, which has provided crucial military aid for the offensive, has joined those calls.

But Netanyahu, whose popularity has plummeted since Oct. 7 and whose governing coalition is beholden to far-right parties, has rebuffed both demands.

Instead, he has said Israel will need to expand operations and eventually take over the Gaza side of the border with Egypt — an area where some 1 million Palestinians are packed into overflowing U.N.-run shelters and sprawling tent camps.

That drew an angry protest from Egypt's government, which rejected Israeli allegations that Hamas smuggles in weapons across the heavily guarded frontier.

Diaa Rashwan, head of Egypt's State Information Service, said Monday that any Israeli move to occupy the border area would "lead to a serious threat" to relations between the two countries, which signed a landmark peace treaty over four decades ago. Egypt is also deeply concerned about any potential influx of Palestinian refugees into its Sinai Peninsula.

16 million people live in neighborhoods Brazil calls 'subnormal.'

It's finally changing the name

By DAVID BILLER and DIANE JEANTET Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — After decades of delay and pressure, Brazil announced Tuesday that it will henceforth use "favelas and urban communities" to categorize thousands of poor, urban neighborhoods, instead of the previous term "subnormal agglomerates" that was widely viewed as stigmatizing.

Starting in the 1990s, the national statistics and geography institute, known by its Portuguese acronym IBGE, began using "subnormal agglomerates" to describe places with irregular occupation and deficient public services.

The umbrella term included not just favelas — most commonly associated with dense, hillside neighborhoods in Rio de Janeiro — but also a slew of other terms employed across Brazil, like grottoes, lowlands, stilted houses and more, where millions reside.

The name change announced in a statement follows a process of reflection that began in the 2000s, and IBGE held more than 20 internal meetings and then several more with a consultation group of outside experts, according to its geography coordinator, Cayo Franco.

The concept of "subnormality" referred to people's living conditions, but "many times it was understood

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as the condition of the people themselves," Franco told The Associated Press in a video call. It was also too vague to represent reality.

Further, "agglomeration" transmitted an image of people piled atop one another, said Theresa Williamson, executive director of a favela advocacy group, Catalytic Communities. Many of these neighborhoods aren't recent; rather, they are consolidated, having been built up over generations with individual or collective investment, and in spite of chronic state negligence in providing sanitation, infrastructure, education and other services.

"When you have a term that's pejorative, labeling such a huge portion of the country, it can only be counterproductive," said Williamson. "You need terms that are more nuanced when you're talking about such large sectors of society, especially that you need to be able to embrace and engage in constructive ways so that you (the government) can improve them, rather than sort of deny them any value."

Rio state lawmaker Renata Souza, who was born and raised in the bayside Mare favela, one of the city's most populous, said her doctorate in communications and culture taught her the importance of words, and she celebrated IBGE's move.

"The word 'subnormal' is something that has always really affected me, because it gives the idea of an aberration, of a non-place," she told the AP on the phone. "Nomenclature is used to consolidate prejudices, discriminations."

Souza volunteered to survey Mare residents for the IBGE's census in 2000.

"Having to work with that word was horrible for me," she said.

In the process of conducting its next census, a decade later, expanding deficient mapping of the historically neglected areas took priority over considering a change to the problematic name, IBGE's Franco said.

"So that was left for later. But I think a moment of institutional and societal maturity has been reached, in which there is sizeable representation of those territories, residents' associations and groups that even conduct research and produce statistics," he said.

He noted the recent creation of a secretariat for peripheries in leftist President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's cities ministry.

According to the institute's preliminary data from the 2022 census that the AP reviewed early last year, the number of people living in neighborhoods at the time called "subnormal agglomerates" jumped 40% since the 2010 census to 16 million people.

Franco said that the institute has identified more such areas with the help of city authorities and civil society groups; their total population will be incorporated into 2022 census data and released in the second half of this year.

The change in name won't affect historic census data and, as before, the IBGE will cease to consider areas "favelas and urban communities" once most residents gain legal title to properties or all essential services are available.

The term "favela" draws its origins from the 19th century, when soldiers and former slaves who had fought in the Canudos War in northeast Brazil occupied a hillside in Rio, the capital at the time, to pressure the government to fulfill its promise to provide housing. The veterans named the informal settlement Favela Hill after a highly resilient flowering plant found in the northeast. Today, the downtown neighborhood is known as Providencia.

Souza, the lawmaker, said the term underscores residents' struggle and resilience.

"It's a plant that grows in the middle of the Brazilian savannah, and survives without water and with very high sun exposure," she said. "It is very important that we take back this word."

"Favela" is used widely in Rio, but not elsewhere in Brazil, so IBGE sought to append another catch-all term for the category. At a meeting last September with civil society groups in the capital, Brasilia, the institute proposed adoption of "favelas and popular settlements" and, following discussions, that was discarded in favor of "favelas and popular territories" or "favelas and urban communities." IBGE ultimately opted for the latter.

"We have had some back and forth, but it was positive. It will be positive for IBGE and for Brazilian so-

ciety that we have made this change," Franco said. "It better represents what we want to map and better represents what people should understand from the data."

Adrian Beltré, Todd Helton and Joe Mauer elected to baseball's Hall of Fame

By RONALD BLUM AP Baseball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Todd Helton thought back to when he was a kid being coached by his father, Jerry, a minor league catcher in the 1960s.

"When I would go 1 for 3 — and it's a bad day when you're young — he'd say 1 for 3 gets you into the Hall of Fame," Helton said.

Helton, Adrián Beltré and Joe Mauer were voted into Cooperstown on Tuesday, feeling elation and relief when they were rewarded with baseball's highest honor.

Beltré was a no-doubt, first-ballot choice after batting .286 with 477 homers, 1,707 RBIs and 3,166 hits for four teams over 21 seasons. The third baseman appeared on 366 of 385 ballots (95.1%) cast by members of the Baseball Writers' Association of America.

Helton made it on the sixth try, voters taking time to warm to statistics inflated by the thin mile-high air of Denver's Coors Field over 17 seasons, all with the Colorado Rockies. The first baseman got 307 votes for 79.7% after falling 11 short last year when Scott Rolen was elected. Helton started at 16.5% support in 2019.

"I was the most superstitious guy in the world," Helton said. "I hadn't been superstitious in 10 years until today."

Mauer (293, 76.1%) joined Johnny Bench and Iván Rodríguez as the only first-ballot picks who primarily were catchers and at 40 became the youngest living Hall of Famer. He got 293 votes (76.1%), four more than the 75% needed, after batting .306 with 143 homers and 906 RBIs in 15 years, all with his hometown Minnesota Twins.

"Goes by way too fast," Mauer said.

Beltré, Mauer and Helton will be inducted on July 21 along with Jim Leyland, elected last month by the contemporary era committee for managers, executives and umpires. There are 273 players among 346 people in the Hall, and just 60 of those players were elected on the first try.

Beltré becomes the fifth Dominican-born Hall of Famer after Juan Marichal, Pedro Martínez, Vladimir Guerrero and David Ortiz.

"I'm proud of the fact that I was able to play for a long time and be able to compete at the highest level," Beltré said. "I'm honored to be in the Hall of Fame. It's something that I never even dreamed of."

Reliever Billy Wagner was five votes short at 284 (73.8%) but up from 68.1% last year. He will appear on the ballot for the 10th and final time in 2025, when Ichiro Suzuki and CC Sabathia are newly eligible.

Gary Sheffield got 246 votes for 63.9% in his final appearance on the BBWAA ballot, up from 55% last year and 11.7% in 2015. He is eligible for consideration by the contemporary baseball player committee, which next meets in December 2025.

Beltré, a four-time All-Star and five-time Gold Glove winner, played for the Los Angeles Dodgers (1998-2004), Seattle (2005-09), Boston (2010) and Texas (2011-18). His 2,759 games at third base are second to Brooks Robinson's 2,870 and his 636 doubles are 11th.

Helton, a five-time All-Star first baseman and the 2000 major league batting champion, hit .345 with 200 homers and 791 RBIs at home and .287 with 142 homers and 547 RBIs on the road.

"Pitchers get hurt — they say you can't throw in thin air. And then hitters get dinked because they play Colorado," Helton said. "I'm not embarrassed or anything about my home and road numbers. Going on the road after hitting in Colorado is hard. The ball breaks more and it's a huge adjustment going through the season."

Mauer was a six-time All-Star, three-time Gold Glove winner and the 2009 AL MVP. An All-Star in six of his first 10 big league seasons and the only catcher to win three batting titles, Mauer moved to first base

for his last five years following a concussion on a foul tip off the bat of the New York Mets' Ike Davis on Aug. 19, 2013, an injury that ended Mauer's season. Concussion symptoms returned on May 11, 2018, when he had whiplash while diving for a foul ball at Anaheim. He tried to play through it for a week but missed 25 games and retired after the season.

He also had three knee operations.

"I feel effects of some of those things like that," he said.

Voters included an average of seven names per ballot, up from 5.86 last year, and 24.4% of the voters checked the maximum 10 candidates, an increase from 13.9%. Just 10 eligible voters failed to return ballots.

Alex Rodriguez and Manny Ramírez again lagged, hurt by suspensions for performance-enhancing drugs. Rodriguez received 34.8% and Ramírez 32.5%.

Among other first-time candidates, Chase Utley (28.8%) and David Wright (6.2%) will remain on next year's ballot.

José Bautista, Bartolo Colon, Adrián González, Matt Holliday, Victor Martinez, Brandon Phillips, José Reyes and James Shields all were under 5% and will be dropped.

Biden and Harris paint Trump as freedom's enemy at abortion rally in Virginia

By COLLEEN LONG and CHRIS MEGERIAN Associated Press

MANASSAS, Va. (AP) — President Joe Biden on Tuesday condemned abortion bans that have increasingly endangered the health of pregnant women, forcing them to grow sicker before they can receive medical care, and he laid the blame on Donald Trump, his likely Republican challenger in this year's election.

"He's betting we won't hold him responsible," Biden said to a crowd of hundreds of cheering supporters. "He's betting you're going to stop caring."

"But guess what?" he added. "I'm betting he's wrong. I'm betting you won't forget."

The rally with Vice President Kamala Harris came on the same day as the Republican primary in New Hampshire, where Trump tightened his grip on his party's presidential nomination. Biden won the largely symbolic Democratic primary via a write-in campaign after he refused to appear on the ballot.

The Virginia rally demonstrated how Democrats hope to harness enduring anger over abortion restrictions to blunt his comeback bid.

Roe v. Wade was overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court less than two years ago in the case of Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization, a decision enabled by three conservative justices appointed by Trump.

"The person most responsible for taking away this freedom in America is Donald Trump," Biden said.

The speech was Biden's bluntest yet on abortion and the status of reproductive health, but it was disrupted several times by protests over Israel's war in Gaza. One person shouted "shame on you!"

"This is going to go on for a while; they got this planned," the Democratic president said as the protesters were escorted out one by one.

Biden and Harris were joined by their spouses, first lady Jill Biden and second gentleman Doug Emhoff, at Tuesday's rally. It's the first time the four of them have appeared together since the campaign began, a reflection of the importance that Democrats are putting on abortion this year.

Jill Biden told a story about a friend who became pregnant in high school, years before Roe v. Wade. The friend, she said, needed to get a psychiatric evaluation to be declared mentally unfit before she could get the abortion.

"Secrecy, shame, silence, danger, even death. That's what defined that time for so many women," she said. "And because of Dobbs that's where we're finding ourselves back again, refighting the battles we had fought."

Emhoff told the crowd that the fight for abortion rights needed men as well.

"Reproductive freedom is not a woman's issue," Emhoff said. "It's an everyone's issue."

The four of them spoke in front of a blue banner that spanned the width of the stage and said "Restore

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Roe" in bold letters. The crowd hummed with energy, chanting "four more years" and booing Trump's name, a glimpse of the enthusiasm that has been largely missing from Biden's low-key events since announcing his reelection campaign last April.

Biden was introduced by Amanda Zurawski, a Texas woman whose water broke only halfway through her pregnancy. Because Roe v. Wade had just been overturned, she was unable to get an abortion until she went into septic shock.

"What I went through was nothing short of barbaric. And it didn't need to happen," said Zurawski, who has also testified before Congress and sued Texas along with several other women. "But it did, because of Donald Trump."

Democrats view Virginia as a success story in their fight for abortion rights since Roe v. Wade was overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court. In last year's legislative elections, the party maintained control of the Senate and won a majority in the House. It was a defeat for Republican Gov. Glenn Youngkin, who had proposed new limits on abortion and had been considered a potential presidential candidate.

"The voice of the people has been heard and it will be heard," said Harris, the first woman to serve as vice president.

She also targeted Trump in her speech, describing him as "the architect of this health care crisis" caused by abortion restrictions around the country.

Harris was in Wisconsin on Monday to mark the 51st anniversary of Roe v. Wade, the first stop in a nationwide series of events focused on abortion.

"In America, freedom is not to be given. It is not to be bestowed. It is ours by right," she said. "And that includes the freedom to make decisions about one's own body — not the government telling you what to do."

While Harris and Democrats have embraced abortion as a campaign issue, many Republicans are shying away or calling for a truce, fearful of sparking more backlash from voters.

Nikki Haley, the former South Carolina governor who is running for the Republican presidential nomination, recently made a plea to "find consensus" on the divisive issue.

"As much as I'm pro-life, I don't judge anyone for being pro-choice, and I don't want them to judge me for being pro-life," she said during a primary debate in November.

Trump has taken credit for helping to overturn Roe v. Wade, but he has balked at laws like Florida's ban on abortions after six weeks, which was signed by Gov. Ron DeSantis, who dropped out of the Republican nomination race over the weekend.

"You have to win elections," Trump said during a recent Fox News town hall.

Abortion is also the focus of Biden's new television advertisement featuring Dr. Austin Dennard, an OB-GYN in Texas who had to leave her state to get an abortion when she learned that her baby had a fatal condition called anencephaly.

"In Texas, you are forced to carry that pregnancy, and that is because of Donald Trump overturning Roe v. Wade," Dennard said.

Although Democrats want to restore the federal rights that were established in Roe v. Wade, there's no chance of that with the current makeup of the Supreme Court and Republican control of the House. The White House is pushing against the limits of its ability to ensure access to abortion.

On Monday, it announced the creation of a team dedicated to helping hospitals comply with the federal Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act, which requires hospitals receiving federal money to provide life-saving treatment when a patient is at risk of dying.

The Department of Health and Human Services said it would improve training at hospitals concerning the law and publish new information on how to lodge a complaint against a hospital.

Some advocacy groups have said complaints should be enforced more aggressively. Last week, The Associated Press reported that federal officials did not find any violation of the law when an Oklahoma hospital instructed a 26-year-old woman to wait in a parking lot until her condition worsened to qualify for an abortion of her nonviable pregnancy.

With Oregon facing rampant public drug use, lawmakers backpedal on pioneering decriminalization law

By CLAIRE RUSH Associated Press

SALEM, Ore. (AP) — Democratic lawmakers in Oregon on Tuesday unveiled a sweeping new bill that would undo a key part of the state's first-in-the-nation drug decriminalization law, a recognition that public opinion has soured on the measure amid rampant public drug use during the fentanyl crisis.

The bill would recriminalize the possession of small amounts of drugs as a low-level misdemeanor, enabling police to confiscate them and crack down on their use on sidewalks and in parks, its authors said. It also aims to make it easier to prosecute dealers, to access addiction treatment medication, and to obtain and keep housing without facing discrimination for using that medication.

"It's the compromise path, but also the best policy that we can come up with to make sure that we are continuing to keep communities safe and save lives," state Sen. Kate Lieber, a Portland Democrat, told The Associated Press.

Voters passed the pioneering decriminalization law, Measure 110, with 58% support in 2020. But Democratic legislators who championed it as a way to treat addiction as a public health matter, not a crime, are now contending with one of the nation's largest spikes in overdose deaths, along with intensifying pressure from Republicans and growing calls from a well-funded campaign group to overhaul it.

Researchers say it's too soon to determine whether the law has contributed to the state's deadly overdose surge, and supporters of the measure say the decadeslong approach of arresting people for possessing and using drugs didn't work.

The bill, unveiled by Lieber and other Democrats serving on a recently created committee on addiction, is set to be introduced during the legislative session that starts in February. The Legislature adjourned over the summer, but concern over the state's drug crisis led Democrats to launch the committee in between sessions. Since September, the committee has held multiple hearings and heard testimony from law enforcement and substance use disorder experts on the law's accomplishments and shortcomings.

Measure 110 directed the state's cannabis tax revenue toward drug addiction treatment while decriminalizing "personal use" amounts of illicit drugs. Possession of under a gram of heroin, for example, is only subject to a ticket and a maximum fine of \$100.

Those caught with small amounts can have the citation dismissed by calling a 24-hour hotline to complete an addiction screening within 45 days, but those who don't do a screening are not penalized for failing to pay the fine.

In the year after the law took effect in February 2021, only 1% of people who received citations for possession sought help via the hotline, state auditors found. As of last June, the hotline received an average of 10 calls per month that were related to citations.

Opponents of the law say it hasn't created an incentive to seek treatment, a criticism the new bill seeks to address.

The measure's details have yet to be finalized, but "personal use" possession of illegal drugs would become a misdemeanor punishable by up to 30 days in jail or a \$1,250 fine. The bill would not affect Oregon's legalization of cannabis or psychedelic mushrooms.

Those arrested for small amounts would be referred by police to a peer support specialist to schedule an assessment or intervention. If the person shows up to the meeting, they wouldn't be charged. If they don't, the offense could be referred to the district attorney's office.

If charges are filed, they could avoid jail by agreeing to certain conditions of probation, or by agreeing to have their case diverted to drug court, where judges place people in treatment programs rather than jail.

"We're trying to give people off-ramps while also introducing some accountability into the system," Lieber said.

Republican lawmakers said the bill didn't go far enough. They called for mandatory treatment and "personal use" possession to be a higher-level misdemeanor punishable by up to a year in jail or a \$6,250 fine.

"A low-level class C misdemeanor only provides 30 days in jail as an alternative. This is nowhere near

the amount of time needed to address addiction," state Rep. Kevin Mannix said in a statement.

Advocacy groups that have backed Oregon's decriminalization law opposed the proposal to once again make "personal use" possession a crime.

"You don't need a criminal penalty. You need services, and you need to make sure that you're investing in those services," said Tera Hurst, executive director of the Health Justice Recovery Alliance. "Criminalization is not an effective tool to getting people into treatment, and it does more harm than good."

Regarding drug dealing, the bill would make it easier to prosecute people for selling drugs and create harsher penalties for doing so in parks and near homeless shelters and substance use disorder treatment centers.

The bill also aims to expand access to treatment, particularly medications used to treat opioid addiction. It would allow doctors to prescribe such medication without prior approval or review from insurance companies, and make it easier for pharmacists to refill prescriptions in certain emergency situations.

Additionally, it would expand fair housing standards to protect people prescribed such medication from being discriminated against when trying to maintain or access long-term living facilities, such as permanent supportive housing for people exiting homelessness.

Lawmakers will have just 35 days to pass the bill once the legislative session starts on Feb. 5.

New York man convicted of murdering woman who wound up in his backcountry driveway after wrong turn

By MAYSOON KHAN Associated Press/Report for America

FORT EDWARD, N.Y. (AP) — A man was convicted of second-degree murder Tuesday for fatally shooting a young woman when the SUV she was riding in mistakenly drove into his rural driveway in upstate New York.

After deliberating for less than an hour, a jury found Kevin Monahan, 66, guilty for shooting 20-year-old Kaylin Gillis on a Saturday night last April after she and her friends pulled into his long, curving driveway near the Vermont border while they were trying to find another house. Monahan was also convicted of reckless endangerment and tampering with physical evidence.

Donald Boyajian, an attorney and spokesperson for the Gillis family, said they were thankful for the trial's outcome.

"Obviously it's a just result, but a very sad time for the family," he said. "It doesn't change what is going to be forever, which is the loss of their beautiful daughter."

The murder conviction carries a maximum sentence of 25 years to life, which Washington County District Attorney J. Anthony Jordan said prosecutors would be seeking at Monahan's sentencing, scheduled for March 1.

Gillis was killed days after the shooting of 16-year-old Ralph Yarl in Kansas City. Yarl, who is Black, was wounded by an 84-year-old white man after he went to the wrong door while trying to pick up his younger brothers.

On the night of Gillis' death, the group of friends was traveling in caravan of two cars and a motorcycle looking for another person's house party, when they mistakenly turned into Monahan's driveway in the rural town of Hebron, about 40 miles (65 kilometers) north of Albany. They began leaving once they realized their mistake, but Monahan came out to his porch and fired twice from his shotgun, with the second shot hitting Gillis in the neck as she sat in the front passenger seat of an SUV driven by her boyfriend, authorities said.

During closing arguments earlier Tuesday, the prosecution told jurors Monahan was motivated by irrational rage toward trespassers.

"He acted out of anger. That's the only thing that can be inferred from shooting at people within 90 seconds of being on his property," said Assistant District Attorney Christian Morris. "He grabbed his shotgun and intended to make them leave as fast as possible and he didn't care if they were hurt or killed."

Monahan and his attorney maintained the shooting was an accident involving a defective gun.

Monahan himself took the stand in his own defense, saying he believed the house he shared with his wife was "under siege" by intruders when he saw the vehicles approach. He said he first fired a warning shot to scare the group away.

He said he then tripped over nails sticking up from the porch, lost his balance and the shotgun struck the deck. That, he said, accidentally caused his gun to fire at the Ford Explorer carrying Gillis.

"I didn't mean to shoot the second shot," Monahan testified last week. "The gun went off."

Prosecutors also presented evidence during the trial that Monahan claimed to have been sound asleep when police showed up at his house later that night.

Gillis' father, Andrew Gillis, has described his daughter as someone who loved animals and had dreams of becoming a marine biologist or a veterinarian.

UN chief warns that Israel's rejection of a two-state solution threatens global peace

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The United Nations chief warned Israel on Tuesday that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's rejection of a two-state solution will indefinitely prolong a conflict that is threatening global peace and emboldening extremists everywhere.

In his toughest language yet on the Israeli-Hamas war, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told a ministerial meeting of the U.N. Security Council that "the right of the Palestinian people to build their own fully independent state must be recognized by all, and a refusal to accept the two-state solution by any party must be firmly rejected."

The alternative of a one-state solution "with such a large number of Palestinians inside without any real sense of freedom, rights and dignity ... will be inconceivable," he said.

Guterres also warned that the risks of regional escalation of the conflict "are now becoming a reality," pointing to Lebanon, Yemen, Syria, Iraq and Pakistan. He urged all parties "to step back from the brink and to consider the horrendous costs" of a wider war.

Netanyahu's rejection of a Palestinian state in any postwar scenario opened a wide rift with Israel's closest ally, the United States, which says the war must lead to negotiations for a two-state solution where Israel and the Palestinians can live side-by-side in peace. That goal is supported by countries around the world, as ministers and ambassadors reiterated Tuesday.

Uzra Zeya, the State Department's under secretary for civilian security, democracy and human rights, told the council, "A key component of U.S. diplomacy is to pursue a pathway both to a Palestinian state and normalization and integration between Israel and other regional states."

"The goal is a future where Gaza is never again used as a platform for terror, and a future where Palestinians have a state of their own," she said, reiterating the Biden administration's call on Israel to do more to protect Palestinian civilians.

Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov countered that American diplomacy "oscillates between vetoing resolutions about the ceasefire and at the same time calling for a reduction in the intensity of hostilities in Gaza."

"Without a doubt this serves as carte blanche for the ongoing collective punishment of Palestinians," Lavrov told the council.

Secretary-general Guterres repeated his longstanding call for a humanitarian cease-fire — an appeal with overwhelming global support.

But Israel's U.N. Ambassador Gilad Erdan again rejected a cease-fire, saying Hamas, which carried out a brutal attack on southern Israel on Oct. 7, is committed to attacking again and destroying Israel, and a halt to fighting will only allow the militants "to regroup and rearm."

He urged the Security Council to "eliminate the root" of the conflict, which he said was Iran.

Erdan strongly criticized the presence of Iran's foreign minister at the council meeting, saying the country provides weapons to Hamas, to Hezbollah fighters in Lebanon and Houthi militants in Yemen, "and soon

these acts will be carried out under a nuclear umbrella" and "Iran's terror will reach all of you."

Iran has long denied seeking nuclear weapons and insists its nuclear program is entirely for peaceful purposes. But the U.N. nuclear watchdog has warned that Iran has enough enriched uranium for nuclear bombs if it chose to build them.

Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian didn't mention its nuclear program, but he warned Israel that it would not destroy Hamas, its stated goal.

"The killing of civilians in Gaza and the West Bank cannot continue on to the so-called total destruction of Hamas, because that time will never come," he said. "Stopping the genocide in Gaza is the main key to security in the region."

Riyad al-Maliki, the Palestinian foreign minister, said Israel is carrying out "the most savage bombing campaign" since World War II, which is leading to famine and the massive displacement of civilians. "This is an assault of atrocities," which has destroyed countless innocent lives, he said.

The Health Ministry in Hamas-ruled Gazasays more than 25,000 Palestinians have been killed since the start of the war, which has caused widespread destruction, displaced an estimated 85% of Gaza's 2.3 million people, and left one-quarter facing starvation.

Israel began its military campaign in response to the Oct. 7 attacks in which militants from the enclave killed around 1,200 people in Israel and took about 250 hostages.

Al-Maliki said Israel doesn't see the Palestinians as a people and a "political reality to coexist with, but as a demographic threat to get rid of through death, displacement or subjugation." He said those are the choices Israel has offered Palestinians, calling them tantamount to "genocide, ethnic cleansing or apartheid."

Al-Maliki said there are only two future paths: One starts with Palestinian freedom and leads to Mideast peace and security, and the other denies freedom and "dooms our region to further bloodshed and endless conflict."

France's new foreign minister, Stéphane Séjourné, whose country holds the council presidency this month, presided at the meeting and warned that "a regional conflagration is real."

He said the world should unite and deliver different messages to the warring parties.

Israel must be told that "there must be a Palestinian state" and that violence against Palestinians, including by West Bank settlers, must end, Séjourné said. And the Palestinians must be told that "There can be no ambiguity regarding Israel's right to live in peace and security, and to exercise its right to self-defense against terrorism."

But Turkey's Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said the argument that the war is about providing security for Israel "is far from being convincing." He said supporters of this view never talk about the Palestinians' right to security and self-defense.

Jordan's Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi said the "ideology of hate embraced openly by Israeli ministers is normalizing the mass murder of Palestinians" and urged the council to stop it with a binding resolution.

Israel must be held accountable for war crimes and for blocking a Palestinian state, Safadi said. "The future of the region cannot be taken hostage to the political ambitions and the radical agendas of Israeli extremists. who described the Palestinians as human animals, unworthy of life, who enable settler terrorism against Palestinian people."

Man suspected of killing 8 people in suburban Chicago was related to most of the victims, police say

By KATHLEEN FOODY, SOPHIA TAREEN and KEN MILLER Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — A man suspected of shooting and killing eight people in suburban Chicago this week-end was related to most of the victims, authorities said Tuesday, a day after the 23-year-old fatally shot himself during a confrontation with law enforcement in Texas.

The Illinois authorities provided a clearer timeline of the shootings on Tuesday, saying they believe all eight people killed and a ninth person wounded were shot Sunday and Romeo Nance fled the area by that evening. But they told reporters there is no evidence of a motive yet for the killings.

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"We can't get inside his head," Joliet Police Chief Bill Evans told reporters. "We just don't have any clue as to why he did what he did."

Investigators believe Nance first shot seven people at two relatives' homes in the city of Joliet on Sunday, then fired randomly at two men — one outside an apartment building and another on a residential street, Joliet and Will County officials said Tuesday.

Police said they had not yet determined the victims' exact relationships to Nance.

The Will County coroner on Tuesday identified the victims found at the Joliet homes: 38-year-old Christine Esters, 47-year-old Tamaeka Nance, 35-year-old William Esters II, 31-year-old Joshua Nance and 20-year-old Alexandria Nance. The names of two teenage girls, 14 and 16, were not released.

Authorities previously identified the man killed outside the apartment building as Toyosi Bakare, a 28-year-old man originally from Nigeria who had been living in the U.S. for about three years.

Nance fatally shot himself Monday evening after U.S. Marshals located him near Natalia, Texas, about 30 miles (48 kilometers) southwest of San Antonio and more than 1,000 miles (1,690 kilometers) from Joliet, authorities said. He had no known ties to Texas, Illinois authorities confirmed Tuesday.

Nance's death was announced hours after Illinois authorities used social media and a news conference to share initial details of the killings there.

Medina County, Texas, Sheriff Randy Brown said his office received a call Monday about a person suspected in the Chicago-area killings heading into the county on Interstate 35. Brown said he believes the suspect was trying to reach Mexico.

"It seems like they (criminal suspects) all head to Mexico," which is about 120 miles (193 kilometers) south of Natalia along Interstate 35, Brown said Tuesday.

Officers from multiple agencies confronted Nance, Brown said.

The Texas Rangers are investigating Nance's death and believe he shot himself, said Lt. Jason Reyes, a spokesperson for the Texas Department of Public Safety, of which the Rangers are part.

Reyes said he could not provide any other information about the circumstances of Nance's death or his confrontation with law enforcement officers, saying his agency was only brought in to investigate after the fact. The Rangers routinely investigate deaths involving law enforcement in Texas.

The Illinois shootings represent the fourth mass killing in the U.S. this year, according to a database maintained by The Associated Press and USA Today in a partnership with Northeastern University. The third happened Sunday in another Chicago-area suburb, Tinley Park, where police have charged a man with killing his wife and three adult daughters.

The database defines a mass killing as an attack in which four or more people have died, not including the perpetrator, within a 24-hour period.

The victims were found Sunday and Monday at three separate homes, authorities told reporters at a news conference earlier Monday evening.

Police were first notified of a man found with an apparent gunshot wound Sunday outside of apartments in Will County and pronounced dead at a hospital, later identified as Bakare. Shortly after, they learned of a man shot in the leg outside a home nearby.

Curtis Ellis said he lives next door to the man wounded in that shooting and captured it on a surveillance camera aimed at their street.

The footage shows the driver of a red car speaking briefly to Ellis' neighbor, driving to the end of the block before making a U-turn then stopping and firing nine times. Ellis said he was watching the Detroit Lions play the Tampa Bay Buccaneers in an NFL playoff game when he heard the shots, saw his hurt neighbor outside and called police.

"That could have been me or my wife in the front yard, which is scary," Ellis, 56, said. "You haven't done nothing to anybody, why would somebody just target to shoot you?"

Will County Chief Deputy Dan Jungles said deputies used video surveillance and license plate readers to identify the car of the suspected shooter late Sunday and to set up patrols near his known addresses. By Monday, the car hadn't been seen locally and deputies went to Nance's last known address around

noon, the office said.

Jungles said no one answered at that home, they went to another home connected to Nance and his family across the street and saw blood on the door and bullet holes on the exterior of the house.

Police then forced their way into both addresses and found the bodies of the seven people killed, Jungles said. Authorities believed at one point that a three-year-old boy was missing, but the child was later found with a relative in another city, Evans told reporters Tuesday without providing more detail.

"I've been a policeman 29 years and this is probably the worst crime scene I've ever been associated with," Evans said during a news conference outside the Joliet homes Monday evening.

Less than two hours later, a helicopter had identified Nance's car on I-35 in Texas and law enforcement there surrounded him at a gas station.

Bucks fire coach Adrian Griffin after 43 games despite having one of NBA's top records

By STEVE MEGARGEE AP Sports Writer

MILWAUKEE (AP) — The Milwaukee Bucks fired Adrian Griffin as coach on Tuesday after just 43 games despite having one of the league's top records midway through his first season.

"This was a difficult decision to make during the season," Bucks general manager Jon Horst said in a statement announcing the move. "We are working immediately toward hiring our next head coach. We thank Coach Griffin for his hard work and contributions to the team."

Joe Prunty, who had been an assistant coach on Griffin's staff, will serve as the Bucks' interim head coach. Horst will speak at a news conference Wednesday, before the Bucks' home game with the Cleveland Cavaliers.

Milwaukee is 30-13 to tie the Minnesota Timberwolves for the league's second-best record entering Tuesday. The Bucks are 3 1/2 games behind the Boston Celtics in the Eastern Conference.

But the dip in Milwaukee's defensive performance had raised concerns about the Bucks' viability as a championship contender even after they had acquired seven-time all-NBA guard Damian Lillard before the season to team up with two-time MVP Giannis Antetokounmpo.

The Bucks rank 22nd in the NBA in defensive rating — down from fourth a year earlier — despite having two of the NBA's top defenders in Antetokounmpo and 7-footer Brook Lopez. Antetokounmpo was named the NBA's defensive player of the year in 2020, while Lopez finished second in last season's balloting.

Milwaukee had given Griffin his first head coaching job last summer after firing Mike Budenholzer, who led the Bucks in 2021 to their first title in half a century. The Bucks had posted the most combined regular-season and playoff wins of any team during Budenholzer's tenure and had the league's best regular-season record in three of his five seasons on the job.

Budenholzer's firing came after the top-seeded Bucks were stunned 4-1 by the Miami Heat in the first round of last season's playoffs.

Griffin, 49, had spent 16 seasons as an NBA assistant, including the last five with the Toronto Raptors. That followed a nine-year NBA playing career.

Taking over a squad with two members of the NBA's 75th anniversary team in Antetokounmpo and Lillard put Griffin under a major spotlight at the beginning of his head coaching career. An early warning sign regarding Griffin's tenure came before the season with the abrupt departure of assistant coach Terry Stotts.

Stotts had more than 1,000 games of head coaching experience, which figured to benefit Griffin as he began his own head coaching career. Stotts had called accepting the assignment a "no-brainer," but he left the staff less than a week before the season opener.

A pastor and a small Ohio city tussle over the legality of his 24/7 homeless ministry

By PATRICK ORSAGOS and MARK SCOLFORO Associated Press

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COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — A Christian church in Ohio filed a federal lawsuit this week after its pastor was charged with violating city ordinances when he opened up the sanctuary around the clock for homeless people and others to find shelter.

Police this month filed 18 criminal charges against Dad's Place church Pastor Chris Avell over allegations the rented church building — located next to a separate homeless shelter along Main Street in Bryan, a city of about 8,600 in northwestern Ohio — was violating the zoning ordinance, lacked proper kitchen and laundry facilities, and had unsafe exits and inadequate ventilation.

An attorney for Avell and the church, Jeremy Dys, said he thinks city leaders don't want the ministry in the middle of town, describing it as a "not in my backyard" issue and accusing officials of inventing problems.

"Nothing satisfies the city," Dys said Monday, hours after the lawsuit was filed. "And worse — they go on a smear campaign of innuendo and half-truths."

During an initial meeting with the federal judge and lawyers for Bryan on Tuesday morning, both sides agreed to maintain the status quo, Dys said. As a result, he said, the church will remain open to those who seek its religious services until at least March 4, when the judge will consider its request for an injunction against the city.

Avell, who pleaded not guilty in municipal court Jan. 11, said his church wants to welcome anyone, regardless of the time of day.

"I truly believe that everyone who walks through the door of Dad's Place walks out a better citizen," Avell said in an interview Tuesday, adding that closing down the around-the-clock ministry "would lose what is actually a beacon of light downtown."

The defendants are the city, Bryan Mayor Carrie Schlade and other Bryan officials.

"We absolutely deny any allegation that the city has treated any religious institution inappropriately," said Bryan city attorney Marc Fishel, noting that Schlade supported the church opening in the building four years ago. "The city has been and continues to be interested in any business, any church, any entity complying with local and state law."

The church's lawsuit said its leaders decided in March to remain open at all hours as a temporary, emergency shelter "for people to go who have nowhere else to go and no one to care for them." Eight people stay there on a typical night, they say, and a few more when weather is bad.

"It was city police officers who would bring people by," Avell said. "The local hospital would call and bring people by. Other homeless shelters would call and bring people by."

The church's policy has been to let anyone stay overnight and doesn't ask them to leave "unless there is a biblically valid reason for doing so or if someone at the property poses a danger to himself or others," according to the complaint. Held from 11 p.m. to 8 a.m., the church's "Rest and Refresh in the Lord" ministry includes Johnny Cash's reading of the Bible piped in under dim lights, and anyone is allowed to come or go.

Two volunteers stay there and keep an eye on things, Avell said: "One is kind of a peacemaker and one is kind of a security guard."

The city said in a news release that police calls to investigate inappropriate activity at the church began to increase in May, giving as examples criminal mischief, trespassing, theft and disturbing the peace.

Bryan's planning and zoning administrator gave the church 10 days to stop housing people, saying it was in a zone that does not permit residential use on the first floor. After an inspection about two weeks later, charges against Avell for code violations were sought by the local police in early December.

Since then, the lawsuit claims, "the city has repeatedly attempted to harass and intimidate the church," while the church has tried to address the city's complaints by making changes that include installation of a new stove hood and a decision to shut down laundry facilities.

The charges were unexpected, Avell said.

"It was humiliating. I didn't anticipate it in any way," he said.

Dys said that the church is not permitting criminal activity to take place and that the police calls there have been made to sound more serious than they actually were, or to seem related to church activity when they were not.

"The city is creating problems in order to gin up opposition to this church existing in the town square," Dys said.

The church wants a federal judge to protect what it says are violations of constitutional rights to free exercise of religion and protections against government hostility to religion.

"No history or tradition justifies the city's intrusion into the church's inner sanctum to dictate which rooms may be used for religious purposes, how the church may go about accomplishing its religious mission, or at what hours of the day religious activities are permitted," the lawsuit said.

The church wants a federal judge to issue a restraining order or an injunction to keep the city and top officials from "enforcing or applying the city's ordinances to burden the plaintiff's religious exercise." It also seeks damages and attorneys' fees.

Greta Gerwig snubbed for best director and other Oscar nominations surprises

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

Cue all the "did 'Barbie' direct itself" snark. But Greta Gerwig not being among the five best director nominees for this year's Oscars is one of the biggest shocks in recent memory. Here are some other major "snubs" and "surprises" from Oscar nomination morning.

GRETA GERWIG SHUT OUT FOR DIRECTOR

If we knew anything going into Oscar nominations morning, it was that Gerwig was obviously going to be nominated for directing "Barbie." It was that rarest of things, a critically praised original blockbuster (about a woman to boot) that became the highest earner of the year by a wide margin and was a legitimate cultural phenomenon. Gerwig was previously nominated for best director for "Lady Bird," and missing out for "Little Women" was even a snub. Unfortunately many will likely point to Justine Triet ("Anatomy of a Fall") for taking Gerwig's spot, but let's not pit two great female directors against one another. If it's any consolation to Gerwig, last year's blockbuster directors were also shut out of this category — neither James Cameron ("Avatar: The Way of Water") nor Joseph Kosinski ("Top Gun: Maverick") made it in.

ACADEMY CONTINUES TO DISAPPOINT WITH BLACK WOMEN

Even with her years of service to the academy, Ava DuVernay could see the writing on the wall: "Origin" was completely overlooked by her fellow members, most upsettingly for Aunjanue Ellis-Taylor's leading performance as Isabel Wilkerson. It's not a secret that the Oscars have a bad track record with Black female directors — remember last year how Gina Prince-Bythewood's "The Woman King" was also shut out? DuVernay's "Selma" remains the only best picture nominee directed by a Black woman. And Halle Berry will for another year continue to be the only Black woman to ever win best actress, as "The Color Purple's" Fantasia Barrino also missed out on a nomination.

CHARLES MELTON MISSES THE CUT

Someone tell Charles Melton's mom to get a comforting batch of her kimchi going ASAP. The "May December" actor was not nominated for his heartbreaking performance as the unknowing victim of an older woman's grooming. The surprise inclusion in this category was Sterling K. Brown for "American Fiction." "May December" did not do well at all, getting only one nomination for screenwriter Samy Burch.

AMERICA FERRERA IN, MARGOT ROBBIE OUT

"Barbie's" chaos didn't stop with Gerwig's exclusion from best director. Margot Robbie was not among the lead actress nominees Tuesday morning but her co-star America Ferrera, of that now-famous monologue, made it into supporting. Robbie did snag one nomination for the film, as producer in the best picture category.

DIANE WARREN GETS ANOTHER SHOT; DUA LIPA IS 'BARBIE' CASUALTY

It's not the Oscars without a Diane Warren nomination. The songwriter got her 15th nomination, this time for "The Fire Inside" from "Flamin' Hot." Though she has now received an honorary Oscar, Warren has not yet won a competitive statuette. This is not likely to be her year either, up against two "Barbie" juggernauts:

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"I'm Just Ken" and "What Was I Made For." Oscar rules state that only two original songs from a single film can be nominated, meaning Dua Lipa's "Dance the Night Away" was the unlucky "Barbie" exclusion.

FAREWELL 'FALLEN LEAVES' AND THE 'TASTE OF THINGS'

The international feature category always has some heartbreakers but this year stung a little more: Aki Kaurismäki's acclaimed deadpan romantic comedy "Fallen Leaves" looked like it could have been a shoo-in for the Oscars, but it got zero nominations Tuesday. It's in good company with France's selection "The Taste of Things," which was also shut out. Many thought it wild that France selected that film over "Anatomy of a Fall," which was rewarded with four nominations in other categories including director and picture.

'PAST LIVES' NEARLY DISAPPEARS

In one version of nominations morning, "Past Lives" could have been among the top six nominees but Celine Song's graceful romance came out with only two, for screenplay and best picture. Besides Song missing out for her direction, the biggest snub is for Greta Lee's gorgeous, soulful lead performance.

GAME OVER FOR SUPER MARIO BROS.

Oh no, Mario! "The Super Mario Bros." movie, the second highest-grossing film of the year was completely shut out from nominations including animation. We knew going into the morning that Bowser's ballad to Princess Peach had not made the shortlist for original song, but it is pretty surprising that it wasn't at least among the best animated movies. Perhaps the unexpected element of chaos here was Neon's "Robot Dreams," a Cannes acquisition that has not yet been released in the U.S.

SHORTS ARE A LITTLE LESS STARRY

The Almodóvar/Anderson duel in the short film category just became a draw. Pedro Almodóvar was not nominated for his Pedro Pascal and Ethan Hawke led film "Strange Way of Life," making the category a little less starry. Wes Anderson, who has never won an Oscar, did make it in however for his Roald Dahl short "The Wonderful Story of Henry Sugar." This makes eight nominations for Anderson over the years.

'SALTBURN' GOES DOWN THE DRAIN

Listen, we didn't really think that Emerald Fennell's "Saltburn" would make a big splash nominations morning, but it had been trending that way based on its popularity on Prime Video over the holidays. Time to blast Sophie Ellis-Bextor's "Murder on the Dance Floor." Clothing optional.

Turkey's parliament approves Sweden's NATO membership, lifting a key hurdle

By SUZAN FRASER Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) — Turkish legislators on Tuesday endorsed Sweden's membership in NATO, lifting a major hurdle on the previously nonaligned country's entry into the military alliance.

Lawmakers ratified Sweden's accession protocol 287 to 55, with ruling party members saying the Nordic country's tougher stance on Kurdish militants was key to winning approval. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan also previously has linked the ratification to Turkey's desire to buy fighter jets from the U.S.

The ratification comes into effect after its publication in the Official Gazette, which was expected to be swift.

Hungary then becomes the only NATO ally not to have ratified Sweden's accession.

"Today we are one step closer to becoming a full member of NATO," Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson wrote on X, the platform formerly known as Twitter. In Washington, U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan welcomed the news, saying having Sweden in the alliance will make it "safer and stronger."

NATO-member Turkey had been delaying Sweden's membership for more than a year, accusing the country of being too lenient toward groups that Ankara regards as security threats. It sought concessions from Stockholm, including moves to counter militants.

Turkey also had been angered by a series of demonstrations by supporters of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, in Sweden as well as Quran-burning protests that roiled Muslim countries.

Sweden in the past was a "center in Europe" for the PKK, Fuat Oktay, a senior legislator in Erdogan's

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governing party and the head of the foreign affairs committee, told parliament.

But since then, Sweden has amended its anti-terrorism laws, curbed the PKK's financial activities, convicted a terrorism suspect and extradited another, and lifted restrictions on arms sales to Turkey, Oktay said.

"PKK-affiliated circles no longer find a comfortable room for maneuver in Sweden as they did in the past," Oktay said, explaining why the ruling party was now supporting Stockholm's bid.

Sweden pledged deeper cooperation with Turkey on counterterrorism, as well as support for Turkey's ambition to revive its EU membership bid.

Last month, parliament's foreign affairs committee gave its consent to Sweden's bid in the first stage of the legislative process, after Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan sent its accession protocol to lawmakers for approval.

Turkey's main opposition party also supported Sweden's membership in the alliance but a center-right party and the country's pro-Kurdish party were among parties that opposed it.

"Sweden's steps concerning its extradition of wanted criminals or the fight against terrorism have remained limited and insufficient," Musavat Dervisoglu, a legislator from the Good Party told parliament.

Erdogan has linked ratification of Sweden's NATO membership to the U.S. Congress' approval of a Turkish request to purchase 40 new F-16 fighter jets and kits to modernize Turkey's existing fleet. He has also urged Canada and other NATO allies to lift arms embargoes on Turkey.

Koray Aydin, another Good Party legislator, had urged parliament to hold out on ratifying Sweden's accession until the F-16 sales and the modernization kits were approved in Washington, saying Turkey would lose an important bargaining chip.

U.S. President Joe Biden's administration never formally tied the sale of the F-16s to Turkey's ratification of Sweden's NATO membership. However, numerous influential members of Congress had said they would not support the sale unless and until Turkey signed off on Sweden's accession to the alliance.

U.S. administration officials say they expect relatively quick action on the F-16 sale after the ratification.

Sullivan, the U.S. national security advisor, said after Tuesday's vote that Sweden's accession to the alliance has been a priority for Biden.

"Sweden is a strong, capable defense partner. Sweden joining NATO is in the national security interests of the United States, and will make the Alliance safer and stronger," he said.

Sweden and Finland abandoned their traditional positions of military nonalignment to seek protection under NATO's security umbrella, following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Finland joined the alliance in April, becoming NATO's 31st member, after Turkey's parliament ratified the Nordic country's bid.

Hungary has also stalled Sweden's bid, alleging that Swedish politicians have told "blatant lies" about the condition of Hungary's democracy. Hungary has said it would not be the last to approve accession, although it was not clear when the Hungarian parliament intends to hold a vote.

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán announced Tuesday that he sent a letter to his Swedish counterpart, Ulf Kristersson, inviting him to Budapest to discuss Sweden's entry into NATO.

NATO requires the unanimous approval of all existing members to expand, and Turkey and Hungary were the only countries that have been holding out, frustrating other NATO allies who had been pressing for Sweden and Finland's swift accession.

Charles Osgood, CBS host on TV and radio and network's poet-in-residence, dies at age 91

By MARK KENNEDY AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Charles Osgood, a five-time Emmy Award-winning journalist who anchored "CBS Sunday Morning" for more than two decades, hosted the long-running radio program "The Osgood File" and was referred to as CBS News' poet-in-residence, has died. He was 91.

CBS reported that Osgood died Tuesday at his home in Saddle River, New Jersey, and that the cause was dementia, according to his family.

Osgood was an erudite, warm broadcaster with a flair for music who could write essays and light verse

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as well as report hard news. He worked radio and television with equal facility, and signed off by telling listeners: "I'll see you on the radio."

"To say there's no one like Charles Osgood is an understatement," Rand Morrison, executive producer of "Sunday Morning," said in a statement. "He embodied the heart and soul of 'Sunday Morning.' ... At the piano, Charlie put our lives to music. Truly, he was one of a kind — in every sense."

"CBS News Sunday Morning" will honor Osgood with a special broadcast on Sunday.

Osgood took over "Sunday Morning" after the beloved Charles Kuralt retired in 1994. Osgood seemingly had an impossible act to follow, but with his folksy erudition and his slightly bookish, bow-tied style, he immediately clicked with viewers who continued to embrace the program as an unhurried TV magazine.

Osgood, who graduated from Fordham University in 1954, started as a classic music DJ in Washington, D.C., served in the Army and returned to help start WHCT in Hartford, Connecticut. In 1963, he got an on-air position at ABC Radio in New York.

In 1967, he took a job as reporter on the CBS-owned New York news radio station NewsRadio 88. Then, one fateful weekend, he was summoned to fill in at the anchor desk for the TV network's Saturday newscast. In 1971, he joined the CBS network and launched what would be known as "The Osgood File."

In 1990, he was inducted into the radio division of the National Association of Broadcaster's Hall of Fame. In 2008, he was awarded the National Association of Broadcasters Distinguished Service Award. He won four Emmy Awards, and earned a fifth lifetime achievement honor in 2017.

Jane Pauley succeeded Osgood as host of "Sunday Morning," becoming only the third host of the program.

When he retired in 2016 after 45 years of journalism, Osgood did so in a very Osgood fashion.

"For years now, people — even friends and family — have been asking me why I continue doing this, considering my age," the then-83-year-old Osgood said in brief concluding remarks. "It's just that it's been such a joy doing it! It's been a great run, but after nearly 50 years at CBS ... the time has come."

And then he sang a few wistful bars from a favorite folk song: "So long, it's been good to know you. I've got to be driftin' along."

Rifts within Israel resurface as war in Gaza drags on. Some want elections now

By TIA GOLDENBERG Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Ever since Israel was attacked on Oct. 7, a main Israeli highway has been flanked by billboards preaching national unity and a ubiquitous wartime slogan: "Together we will win."

But lately those billboards have been replaced with a starkly different message: a call for immediate elections.

The mood of the Israeli public is shifting after more than 100 days of war in Gaza — and the catalyst is a rift over the polarizing leadership of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Israelis stunned by the brutal Hamas attack initially put aside their differences and rallied behind the war effort. Now old divisions that could alter the course of the war are reemerging.

As the death toll among Israeli soldiers keeps rising, and with dozens of hostages still in Gaza and Hamas still standing, more Israelis are vocally pushing back against Netanyahu and his government. The public is also increasingly divided over whether the military can simultaneously achieve Netanyahu's stated goals of destroying Hamas and freeing all the hostages.

"The Israeli public is rediscovering its political tribalism," said Nadav Eyal, a commentator for the Yediot Achronot newspaper. "It inherently limits the decision-making process when you don't enjoy the public's trust."

Netanyahu, the country's longest-serving leader, still heads a coalition that is clinging to power despite the criticism. But opponents say he lacks a clear vision for how to get Israel out of Gaza. They believe political and personal motivations are clouding his decision-making.

The prime minister's opponents say he is beholden to ultranationalist supporters in Parliament, many of

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whom have called for the expulsion of Palestinians from Gaza or for Israel to resettle the area. And they point to corruption charges hanging over him as evidence that it is in his self-interest to drag out the war.

Netanyahu says he has the country's best interests in mind and that he will answer tough questions about Oct. 7 — when more than 1,200 were killed and some 250 were taken hostage — after the war ends.

The blistering war has already killed more than 25,000 people in Gaza, most of them women and children, and it has sparked a humanitarian catastrophe because of widespread destruction and displacement, and limited supplies of food, water and medicines. International criticism has prompted a trial at the U.N. world court over claims that Israel is committing genocide against Palestinians in Gaza, a charge it vehemently denies.

Netanyahu, who has so far sidestepped accountability for Israel's military and intelligence failures on Oct. 7, vowed once again on Tuesday to continue fighting "until absolute victory," even after 24 soldiers were killed the previous day, the deadliest since the war began. He says fierce military pressure is what led to the first hostage release deal in late November and is key to bringing about another.

However, several hostages have died or been killed in captivity, including three mistakenly shot by Israeli troops. The families of hostages in Gaza say time is running out and that another cease-fire deal is needed urgently.

"When the prime minister says 'absolute victory,' 'war until 2025,' he knows that if that's the case the hostages will die and return in coffins," said Eyal Ben Reuven, a reserve Israeli general. "A long war in enemy territory is not a good thing."

While military experts say Israel has made gains in Gaza, these can be harder to grasp for a public still reeling from Hamas' attack. What the public sees most clearly are mounting soldier casualties, rockets being launched into Israel — although fewer than at the start of the war — and dozens of hostages still held in Gaza.

The internal criticism gained a prominent voice last week.

Gadi Eisenkot, a member of the influential War Cabinet and a former military chief whose son and nephew were killed in the war, told the prominent Israeli news show "Uvda" that only a negotiated deal could free the remaining hostages.

That was a direct challenge to Netanyahu's claim that sustained military force is the best way. Eisenkot also called for elections to be held soon to restore the public's trust.

Before the war, Netanyahu presided over a period of political turmoil that included five elections in less than four years. Each one was a referendum on Netanyahu's fitness to serve while on trial for corruption.

The nation became even more fractured last year when Netanyahu and his religious-nationalist government launched a judicial overhaul plan that sparked unprecedented protests. Opponents said the plan, if enacted, would be a fatal blow to the country's democratic fundamentals; scores of military reservists vowed not to serve, leading top defense officials to warn that Israel's security was at risk.

Netanyahu's critics say Hamas' attack and Israel's failure to foresee or promptly contain it was a direct result of the divisions sowed by Netanyahu and his government. Polls show his coalition would not be reelected if elections were held today.

For the growing chorus of voices who oppose the government, patience is wearing thin.

A protest calling for elections last week drew thousands in Tel Aviv, the biggest anti-government rally since the war began.

A group of 170 former commanders and other senior defense officials signed a letter earlier this month calling for elections now. Some of the same commanders were outspoken opponents of Netanyahu's overhaul, an indication of how the divisions over the war have in many ways settled along the same fault lines as the disagreements over the legal changes.

A recent poll of Jewish voters by the Israel Democracy Institute found that just 10% of respondents from Israel's left wing believe Israel has had large success toward toppling Hamas. The number among the pro-Netanyahu right wing was 35%. The poll interviewed 756 people and had a margin of error of 3.6 percentage points.

Those who oppose elections say they would tear open the old divisions.

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"The very discussion of elections will stop the military momentum, present every strategic decision as a political ploy and put the legitimacy of the fighting in question," Ethan Orkibi, a professor at Ariel University in the occupied West Bank, wrote in the conservative newspaper Israel Hayom.

But public anger, often embodied by the families of those killed or abducted on Oct. 7, is growing.

At a recent protest outside the Knesset, or parliament, one man who said his brother was killed in the Hamas attack was caught on video being dragged away by police as he yelled: "I won't despair until this whole government gets the hell out of here." He wore a black T-shirt bearing the word "Elections!" in yellow.

The mother of a soldier who was taken hostage and then died in unclear circumstances while in captivity has waged a public battle against the government. She inscribed on his tombstone that her son was "kidnapped, abandoned and sacrificed in Gaza by the government of failure."

The families of hostages have also stepped up their campaigns to free their loved ones. They have held protests outside Netanyahu's private residence, barged in on a parliamentary committee session and blocked a highway in recent days.

"Right now, the most urgent thing — and there is nothing more urgent — is to return the hostages alive," said Gil Dickmann, whose cousin is being held in Gaza.

Yaacov Godo blames the government and Netanyahu for the death of his son, Tom, who was killed in his home in front of his family during Hamas' attack. He has camped outside of the Knesset since early November in protest.

"It'll take time, but I believe the day is not far off where we will topple the government," said Godo.

WWE's 'Raw' is moving to Netflix next year in a major streaming deal worth more than \$5 billion

By MICHELLE CHAPMAN AP Business Writer

WWE's weekly television show "Raw" will move to Netflix next year as part of a major streaming deal worth more than \$5 billion.

TKO Group Holdings Inc., which houses WWE and UFC, said in a regulatory filing on Tuesday that the agreement is for 10 years, with Netflix having an option to extend the deal for an additional 10 years. There's also an opt out available to Netflix after the initial five years.

"Raw," which debuted in 1993, has produced 1,600 episodes to date and features wrestlers such as Cody Rhodes, Becky Lynch, Seth Rollins and Rhea Ripley. The three-hour program currently airs on USA Network and its media rights were considered a hot commodity over the past several months, particularly after the WWE return of CM Punk in November, with many speculating it could land at any number of networks or streaming platforms.

"We are excited to have WWE Raw, with its huge and passionate multigenerational fan base, on Netflix," Chief Content Officer Bela Bajaria said in a prepared statement.

WWE said Tuesday that "Raw" will air on Netflix starting in January 2025. This will impact viewers in the U.S., Canada, the U.K., Latin America and other territories. WWE said that it will also impact additional countries and regions over time.

"This deal is transformative," Mark Shapiro, TKO president and COO, said in a prepared statement. "It marries the can't-miss WWE product with Netflix's extraordinary global reach and locks in significant and predictable economics for many years. Our partnership fundamentally alters and strengthens the media landscape, dramatically expands the reach of WWE, and brings weekly live appointment viewing to Netflix."

WWE also said that its documentaries, original series and forthcoming projects will be available on Netflix internationally starting in 2025.

The move of "Raw" to Netflix follows the announcement in September by World Wrestling Entertainment Inc. that "Friday Night Smackdown," would be moving from Fox to USA Network in 2024 under a new five-year domestic media rights partnership with NBCUniversal. As part of the agreement, WWE will also produce four prime-time specials per year that will air on NBC, starting in the 2024/2025 season. This will be the first time that WWE will air on the network in prime time.

Speaking on CNBC, TKO CEO Ariel Emanuel said that he didn't believe there's a move away from traditional television networks or cable networks, but that streaming platforms were becoming another option, as seen through its "Raw" deal with Netflix.

"This is the streaming play. For us, it's the next step," he said.

WWE also announced Tuesday that it reached a deal with Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson that will give the star the rights to his nickname. Johnson will also join the board of TKO Group.

Shares of TKO Group jumped more than 19% in early trading.

Suspect in killing of 8 people in suburban Chicago has fatally shot himself in Texas, police say

By KATHLEEN FOODY and TODD RICHMOND Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — A man suspected of shooting and killing eight people in suburban Chicago fatally shot himself after a confrontation with law enforcement officials in Texas, police said.

Police in Joliet, Illinois, said on Facebook that at about 8:30 p.m. Monday 23-year-old Romeo Nance was located by U.S. Marshals near Natalia, Texas, about 30 miles (48 kilometers) southwest of San Antonio, and that Nance shot himself after a confrontation.

The Medina County Sheriff's Office in Texas said on Facebook that the agency received a call about a person suspected in the Chicago-area killings heading into the county on Interstate 35. A standoff then occurred between Nance and police from multiple agencies at a gas station, where Nance shot himself, the sheriff's office said.

Nance is suspected of fatally shooting eight people at three locations in the Chicago suburbs, sparking a search that left neighbors on edge earlier Monday as police warned he was still on the loose and should be considered "armed and dangerous."

Police in Will County in Illinois and Joliet previously said they did not know of a motive for the killings, but said Nance knew the victims. The FBI's fugitive task force had been assisting local police in the search for the suspect, Joliet Police Chief William Evans said.

The victims were found Sunday and Monday at three separate residences, authorities told reporters at a news conference earlier Monday evening.

One of the people killed was found with an apparent gunshot wound Sunday outside of apartments in Will County and pronounced dead at a hospital. He was identified by the Will County Sheriff's Office as a 28-year-old man originally from Nigeria who had been living in the U.S. for about three years.

Seven others were found Monday at two homes on the same block in Joliet, located about about 6 miles (9.6 kilometers) northwest of the scene police discovered first.

Authorities said they also believe Nance was connected to another shooting in Joliet that wounded a man on Sunday but would not discuss their evidence.

"I've been a policeman 29 years and this is probably the worst crime scene I've ever been associated with," Evans said during a news conference outside the Joliet homes Monday evening.

Will County Chief Deputy Dan Jungles said during the Monday news conference that deputies had been staking out one of the houses since Sunday evening in case Nance, the suspect in the first fatal shooting they discovered, returned to them. Nance's last known address was one of the homes, police said.

When no one showed, deputies finally went to the door of one of the houses. No one answered so they crossed the street to the other house, which they knew was linked to the first house and found the first bodies. Five bodies were found in one house and two bodies were found in the other.

Jungles said he didn't have any indication yet of how long the people in the houses had been dead. He said that autopsies were pending.

Evans said the victims found Monday in the houses were family members. Asked if the victims were members of the suspect's family, Jungles said he couldn't comment except to say that the suspect knew them.

Teresa Smart lives about a block away from where seven of the victims were found and had said she

was worried she and her family wouldn't be able to sleep Monday night.

"This is way too close to home," she said, adding that police cars had been blocking streets throughout the neighborhood.

"I keep looking out the window and double checking my doors," she said. "It's super scary."

Joliet Police said in a Facebook post earlier on Monday afternoon that they were investigating "multiple" people found dead and shared Nance's photo and images of a vehicle. Authorities identified the vehicle as a red Toyota Camry.

Earlier Monday, the Will County Sheriff's Office shared images of the same car via Facebook and said it had been seen at the scenes of two separate shootings Sunday afternoon.

Joel Embiid scores 70 and Karl-Anthony Towns scores 62. It was a night like few others in the NBA

By TIM REYNOLDS AP Basketball Writer

Joel Embiid scored 70 in Philadelphia. Karl-Anthony Towns had 62 in Minnesota. The elite big men paired up to do something the NBA hadn't seen on the same day in more than 45 years.

So, mark it down: Jan. 22, 2024, was a day unlike almost any other in NBA history.

On the 18th anniversary of Kobe Bryant's 81-point game for the Los Angeles Lakers — the second-best scoring game in NBA history — Embiid and Towns put on a pair of dazzling, historic scoring shows of their own with a pair of career-high, franchise-record efforts.

"From the time I started playing, Kobe was my guy," Embiid said. "He's the reason why I started playing basketball. It's funny, on the same night, he got 81 and that was my favorite player."

Embiid's 70 points set the 76ers record in Philadelphia's 133-123 win over San Antonio. Towns scored 62 points — two more than his previous career best and Wolves record — but it wasn't enough in Minnesota's 128-125 loss to Charlotte.

Add it all up, and Monday was the fourth day in NBA history when two players scored at least 60 points. The others were April 9, 1978, (David Thompson had 73 for Denver, George Gervin had 63 for San Antonio as they duelled on the season's final day for the scoring title), Jan. 17, 1962, (Jerry West scored 63 for the Lakers, Wilt Chamberlain scored 62 for the Philadelphia Warriors) and Dec. 8, 1961 (Chamberlain had 78 for the Warriors and Elgin Baylor had 63 for the Lakers in a triple-overtime game against each other).

"These boys tonight going CRAZY!!" NBA career scoring leader LeBron James posted on X, the platform formerly known as Twitter.

Added Phoenix star Kevin Durant, who had 43 in the Suns' 115-113 win Monday over Chicago: "I mean, the skill level in this league is insane and actually the coaching and the schemes on offense is insane. You're seeing so many different sets being run for bigs to get 3s. Coaches are being way more creative to put their best players in great positions to get those numbers."

Victor Wembanyama — the 7-foot-3 Spurs rookie — had 33 points for San Antonio, and even he was no match for Philly's big man, reigning NBA MVP and two-time defending scoring champion. Embiid had 34 at halftime, and when he scored five quick points early in the third quarter, 76ers coach Nick Nurse began taking notice.

"I was like, 'Geez, that's a lot with a whole half to go. ... This'll probably be a big number tonight,'" Nurse said.

A real, real, real big number. Embiid's 70-point night tied the 12th-biggest scoring effort in NBA history, and broke Chamberlain's 76ers team record of 68 points.

"To be in the same conversation, that's pretty cool," Embiid said.

Chamberlain was playing for the Philadelphia Warriors when he set the NBA record with 100 points.

"He's a fantastic player," Spurs coach Gregg Popovich said of Embiid. "Obviously, in the running for MVP. That's for sure. But everybody already knew that."

Embiid became the ninth different player with a 70-point game: Chamberlain did it six times, and everyone else on the list — Baylor, Thompson, David Robinson, Bryant, Devin Booker, Donovan Mitchell,

Damian Lillard and now Embiid — has done it once.

Embiid got to enjoy his big night since it came in a win. Towns — who had 44 points at halftime — didn't have that luxury, with the Wolves falling.

"We've got to find a way to win," said Towns, adding that he didn't see any silver lining even after scoring 62. "It's about winning the game."

It was only the second time since 1993 that a player scored at least 62 points in a loss; Booker had 70 in a Phoenix loss at Boston in 2017. That said, Towns also had a game unlike any other in NBA history — the first player ever with 10 2-pointers, 10 3-pointers and 10 free throws in a game.

"What is it, 15 of us in here?" said Wolves guard Anthony Edwards, who acknowledged postgame that he stopped looking for his shot with hopes that Towns would score even more. "Fourteen of us wanted to see him get 80. ... Congratulations to Big KAT, a one-of-a-kind performance."

Lillard had at least nine of each type of basket on three occasions. James Harden had nine 1s, 2s and 3s on two occasions. Towns is the first with a triple-double of basket types; he was 11 for 20 on 2-pointers, 10 for 15 on 3-pointers and 10 for 14 on free throws.

Embiid was a mere 1-for-2 on 3-pointers Monday.

"I was actually surprised he didn't beat me," Embiid said of Towns. "I heard he had like 45 at halftime. ... He obviously did it in a different way. I had one 3 and he had 10 of them. That's amazing."

Durant — who stands 6-foot-10 but isn't a true big who plays down low like Embiid and Towns often do — raved about what he's seeing.

"This is the peak of basketball in my opinion," Durant said. "We've got bigs in the league getting 70 and 60, making nine or 10 3s, shooting pullup jump shots. It's insane what we've got going on."

Business owners thought they would never reopen after Maine's deadliest shooting. Then support grew

By NICK PERRY Associated Press

LEWISTON, Maine (AP) — Immediately after Maine's deadliest mass shooting, the owners of the bowling alley and the bar in Lewiston where the gunman killed a total of 18 people were certain their doors were closed for good.

Yet as time passed, they came to the same conclusion: They had to reopen.

In interviews with The Associated Press, Just-In-Time Recreation co-owner Samantha Juray and Schemengees Bar & Grille co-owner Kathy Lebel spoke about their businesses, the Oct. 25 shooting, and how their thinking shifted after support began to build from their families, the Lewiston community, and from across the country.

Their journeys offer hope. Not only for the owners, but also their employees and patrons, as a community reeling from the violence looks to regain the sense of camaraderie and fun that always attracted people to the venues.

FROM A LOVE OF POOL TO A CRUSHED HEART

Kathy Lebel loved to play pool. But she couldn't fit a full table in her house and spent way too much money at local pool halls.

Then one night in bed, her husband, David, mentioned that one of her haunts, Schemengees, was up for sale. Lebel immediately sat up and said they should buy it.

"He looks at me and says, 'We're not going to buy that,'" Lebel says. "I'm like, 'Are you kidding me? I'm going to buy it. I don't know what it takes, but I want that pool hall.'"

Lebel got her way. After buying it 25 years ago, she relocated the business and expanded it to become Schemengees Bar & Grille.

She also ignored the advice to change the name — a nickname of the previous owner — amused that people struggled to pronounce or spell it correctly.

After her husband was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease 12 years ago, Lebel became increasingly responsible for the bar's day-to-day management. She also had her own health crisis, surviving inflam-

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matory breast cancer.

Lebel came to rely most on Joe Walker, whom she jokingly called her work husband. Together, they opened a second restaurant in Lewiston just as COVID-19 hit but managed to survive the downturn.

"He's my biggest cheerleader," Lebel says. "And he don't give up."

On Oct. 25, Lebel took a rare night off to celebrate her husband's birthday. At the bar, Walker was sitting down near the cornhole board when gunman Robert Card walked in.

Lebel's phone lit up. She read as far as "mass shooting."

"I just stood up, and I said, 'Joe's dead,'" Lebel says. "Because I always knew how Joe was."

According to witnesses, Walker tried to stop the shooter but was killed.

Hours later, Lebel posted a message on Facebook: "My heart is crushed."

Lebel told herself: "I'm done. I quit. It's over." She didn't even want to leave her house.

Eventually, though, she read some of the messages that were pouring in. They included questions about her plans from Lewiston's deaf community, four of whom were killed at the bar while playing a cornhole tournament. She realized how much they wanted to return. Some of her relatives implored her not to let it end like this.

"I finally decided that I have to reopen," Lebel says.

It will need to be at a new location to help erase the memory of that night, she said. She doesn't know how long it will take.

But one thing is for sure: She's keeping the name.

A FRESH LOOK FOR A NEW BEGINNING

Justin and Samantha Juray are further along with their plans to reopen Just-In-Time Recreation, the first place that Card opened fire. They have been ripping up floors, repainting, and putting in new seating.

"We're just trying to change it a bit so that when people come in, it's not a complete reminder of prior," Samantha Juray says. "Or of the event."

Juray says that at first, Justin was "dead set" against reopening.

"Within a week after, we knew that we had to reopen," Juray says. "Because the community kept asking us, and we knew that everybody kind of needed it."

They got support from the Bowling Proprietors' Association of America, which waived its annual fees, provided equipment upgrades and sent employees Christmas gift cards.

"We're like Americana. A lot of small towns, we're the place where everybody goes to hang out," said Frank DeSocio, the association's executive director.

Other businesses where mass shootings have occurred have taken various approaches afterward. In Aurora, Colorado, a movie theater where 12 people were killed in 2012 later reopened under a new name. The city of Orlando, Florida, last year agreed to buy the Pulse nightclub site to create a memorial to the 49 people killed there in 2016.

The Jurays hope to reopen in March or April. They also plan to keep the name. When they bought the bowling alley nearly three years ago, the owner was days away from shutting it down. Hence Just-In-Time, which also fit with Justin's name.

"It was a place — or it is a place — where people get to come together, and spend time with friends and family, or create friends and family," says Samantha Juray. "It's a safe place."

Two of their employees died in the shooting. The other 17 are all coming back, she says.

BULLETS WON'T KEEP TOM GIBERTI AWAY

One of those returning employees is 69-year-old Tom Giberti, who has worked at the bowling alley for 20 years and is credited with saving at least four children that night.

Giberti recalls that he had just grabbed a screwdriver and was working near the back of the bowling alley when he heard the shots, which he initially thought were bowling balls thudding into the back of the lanes. He saw the panic on people's faces and the flashes from a gun muzzle.

"I ran up to the kids and I got behind them," Giberti says. "And I and got them back through the door, and as I turned to go through the door is when he shot me."

One bullet remains wedged behind his left knee. A second blew clean through the side of his right leg,

somehow missing bones and arteries. Giberti says he also took shrapnel in both legs, as bowling balls and machinery exploded around him.

Despite having surgery, and then treatment for a subsequent infection, Giberti looked spritely as he walked around greeting friends at a concert in Lewiston this month that was organized by local musician Ken Goodman to raise money for the two businesses.

How is Giberti even walking?

"It's amazing. I can't tell you why," he says. "I've seen what it did to the machinery. I've seen what it did to others. I don't know. My legs should have been blown right off. Either one of them."

Giberti says it took him a few visits before he could bring himself to go back to the area where he was shot. Now, he can't wait for the reopening.

"I'm really excited for it," Giberti says. "It's going to be huge for the community."

US Open winner Gauff to play Australian Open titleholder Sabalenka in semifinals

By SIMON CAMBERS Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — Coco Gauff hopes she's got her "bad" match out of the way at the Australian Open before meeting defending champion Aryna Sabalenka in the semifinals.

It'll be a rematch of the U.S. Open final, which the 19-year-old Gauff won in three sets for her first major title.

Gauff is on a 12-match winning roll at the majors after rallying from 5-1 down in the first set to beat Marta Kostyuk 7-6 (6), 6-7 (3), 6-2 in a quarterfinal that lasted more than three hours.

Sabalenka is on a 12-match streak at Melbourne Park after her 6-2, 6-3 win over No. 9-seeded Barbora Krejckova in the first match of the night session that didn't start until after 9 p.m.

"I love it. I love it," Sabalenka said of the showdown with Gauff. "After U.S. Open, I really wanted that revenge, and, I mean, that's a great match."

Gauff's long three-setter had a knock-on effect that made for a long night at Melbourne Park. It took Novak Djokovic 3 3/4 hours to hold off Taylor Fritz 7-6 (3), 4-6, 6-2, 6-3 and reach the Australian Open semifinals for the 11th time.

Sabalenka's match started at 9:09 p.m. and the last men's match, No. 4 Jannik Sinner against No. 5 Andrey Rublev, didn't start until 10:42 p.m.

After winning her first major here last year, Sabalenka reached the semifinals at the French Open and Wimbledon before her run to the final in New York, finishing the year ranked No. 2.

In five rounds so far, she has dropped just 16 games and been on court for a total of 5 1/4 hours.

"I played great tennis," Sabalenka said after beating Krejckova, the 2021 French Open champion. "I hope I can keep playing that way, or even better."

Gauff hadn't dropped a set until she faced No. 37-ranked Kostyuk, who ripped 39 winners but also made 56 unforced errors in a relentlessly attacking game.

"Today was definitely a C game," Gauff said. "Didn't play my best tennis but really proud that I was able to get through. Hopefully got the bad match out of the way and I can play even better."

Gauff had 51 unforced errors, nine double-faults and had just 17 winners in a match containing 16 service breaks.

Her forehand was particularly vulnerable and Kostyuk took full advantage, racing to 5-1 only to show her own fragility with two double-faults to hand back one of the breaks.

Gauff recovered to save a set point at 5-3 before leveling at 5-5. Kostyuk had another set point in the tiebreaker but couldn't convert.

The mistakes continued to flow, and though she led 5-3 in the second set, Gauff could not close it out. She was two points from victory at 6-5, 40-40, but Kostyuk held and took the tiebreak 7-3 to level.

The Ukrainian player said she was pleased to have made the quarterfinals at a Grand Slam tournament for the first time.

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"Very proud of myself," she said. "I won for myself today and it's the most important thing. It's just the beginning of the season. Looking forward for what's ahead."

Today in History: January 24, Apple begins selling the Macintosh

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, Jan. 24, the 24th day of 2024. There are 342 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Jan. 24, 1984, Apple Computer began selling its first Macintosh model, which boasted a built-in 9-inch monochrome display, a clock rate of 8 megahertz and 128k of RAM.

On this date:

In 1848, James W. Marshall discovered a gold nugget at Sutter's Mill in northern California, a discovery that led to the gold rush of '49.

In 1943, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill concluded a wartime conference in Casablanca, Morocco.

In 1945, Associated Press war correspondent Joseph Morton was among a group of captives executed by the Germans at the Mauthausen-Gusen concentration camp in Austria.

In 1965, Winston Churchill died in London at age 90.

In 1978, a nuclear-powered Soviet satellite, Cosmos 954, plunged through Earth's atmosphere and disintegrated, scattering radioactive debris over parts of northern Canada.

In 1985, the space shuttle Discovery was launched from Cape Canaveral on the first secret, all-military shuttle mission.

In 1989, confessed serial killer Theodore Bundy was executed in Florida's electric chair.

In 2003, former Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Ridge was sworn as the first secretary of the new Department of Homeland Security.

In 2011, a suicide bomber attacked Moscow's busiest airport, killing 37 people; Chechen separatists claimed responsibility.

In 2013, President Barack Obama's Defense Secretary Leon Panetta announced the lifting of a ban on women serving in combat.

In 2018, former sports doctor Larry Nassar, who had admitted molesting some of the nation's top gymnasts for years under the guise of medical treatment, was sentenced to 40 to 175 years in prison.

In 2023, the sci-fi indie hit "Everything Everywhere All at Once" led Oscar nominations with 11. (It would go on to win seven, including best picture.)

Today's birthdays: Cajun musician Doug Kershaw is 88. Singer-songwriter Ray Stevens is 85. Singer-songwriter Neil Diamond is 83. Singer Aaron Neville is 83. Actor Michael Ontkean is 78. Actor Daniel Auteuil is 74. Country singer-songwriter Becky Hobbs is 74. Comedian Yakov Smirnoff is 73. Former South Korean President Moon Jae-in is 70. Actor William Allen Young is 70. Bandleader-musician Jools Holland is 66. Actor Nastassja Kinski is 63. R&B singer Theo Peoples is 63. Country musician Keech Rainwater (Lonestar) is 61. Comedian Phil LaMarr is 57. Olympic gold medal gymnast Mary Lou Retton is 56. R&B singer Sleepy Brown (Society of Soul) is 54. Actor Matthew Lillard is 54. Actor Merrilee McCommas is 53. Blues/rock singer Beth Hart is 52. Actor Ed Helms is 50. Actor Mark Hildreth is 46. Actor Christina Moses is 46. Actor Tatyana Ali is 45. Actor Carrie Coon is 43. Actor Daveed Diggs is 42. Actor Justin Baldoni is 40. Actor Mischa Barton is 38.