

Groton Daily Independent

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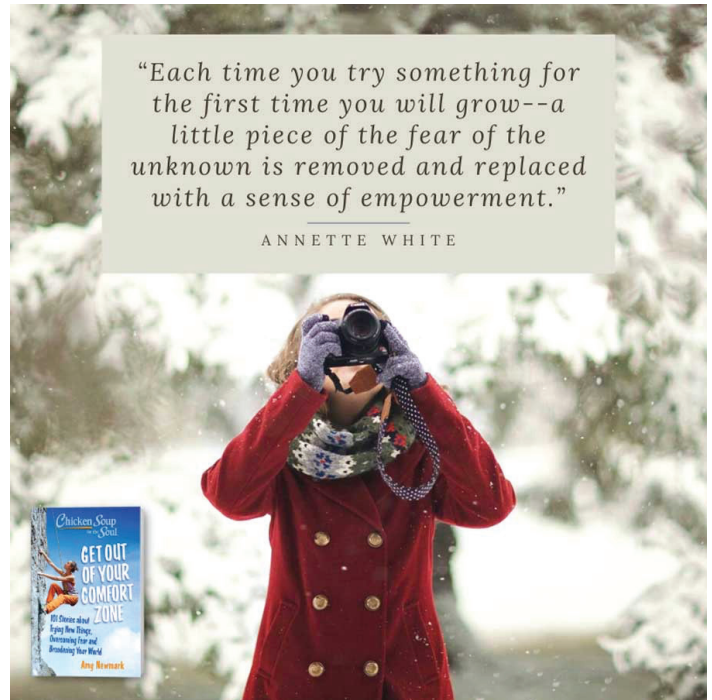
Monday, Jan. 29

Senior Menu: Tater tot hot dish, green beans, grape juice, pineapple tidbits, whole wheat bread.
School Breakfast: Oatmeal.
School Lunch: French bread pizza, peas.
Girls Basketball hosts Florence/Henry: (C game at 5 p.m., JV at 6:15 p.m. followed by Varsity)
Pantry Open 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.

Tuesday, Jan. 30

Senior Menu: New England ham dinner, fruit, cookie, dinner roll.
School Breakfast: Biscuits.
School Lunch: Oriental chicken, rice.
Boys JH Games hosts Aberdeen Roncalli: 7th at 4 p.m., 8th at 5 p.m.
Thrift Store open 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.
Food Pantry open 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.
United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

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



Wednesday, Jan. 31

Senior Menu: Salisbury steak, mashed potatoes and gravy, peas, apricots, whole wheat bread.
School Breakfast: French toast.
School Lunch: Beef stew with biscuits.
United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Confirmation, 6 p.m.
Groton CM&A: Kids' Club, Youth Group and Adult Bible Study begins at 7 pm
United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Confirmation, 6 p.m.
St. John's Lutheran: Confirmation, 3:45 p.m.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 6 p.m.

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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At least three US troops were killed, and at least 25 other US personnel were wounded, after a drone strike hit a remote military post in northeast Jordan yesterday. Officials said the attack, the first in the Middle East to kill American forces since the Israel-Hamas war began in October, was carried out by unspecified Iran-backed militias.

The defending champion Kansas City Chiefs and the San Francisco 49ers will face off in Super Bowl LVIII after both teams won their respective conference championship games yesterday.

Opening statements begin today in a federal trial for the murder of pioneering hip-hop star Jason Mizell, known to fans as Jam Master Jay, who was shot and killed in 2002 at age 37. The case languished for two decades amid stalled investigations and lack of evidence.

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

X (formerly Twitter) blocks searches for Taylor Swift after explicit AI images of Swift went viral on the platform. Joni Mitchell, 80, to make debut Grammys performance at this year's ceremony.

Vince McMahon resigns as executive chairman of WWE's parent company, TKO, amid sexual assault and trafficking allegations from a former employee.

Belarus' Aryna Sabalenka wins back-to-back Australian Open titles; Italy's Jannik Sinner wins his first ever Grand Slam. Dallas Mavericks' Luka Dončić hauls in 73 points, tied for the fourth-highest scoring performance in NBA history.

Science & Technology

European Space Agency to launch satellite-based laser network to measure gravitational waves; experiment to arrive in orbit by 2035.

Scientists demonstrate two-legged robot powered by muscle tissue; device can walk and pivot underwater.

Researchers discover nasal and lymphoid network that plays a critical role in draining cerebrospinal fluid from the brain. Learn more about the multifunctional role the fluid plays in the brain.

Business & Markets

Markets end Friday mixed (S&P 500 -0.1%, Dow +0.2%, Nasdaq -0.4%), with the Dow reaching a new all-time high; all three major indexes have at least doubled since pandemic bottom in March 2020.

Chinese property developer Evergrande faces move by creditors to force it into liquidation; the country's second-largest property developer holds roughly \$240B in assets and has about \$327B in liabilities.

Building materials giant Holcim to spin off North American businesses in move that could value the new company at \$30B. Biden administration to announce billions in subsidies for advanced computer chip makers like Intel and TSMC over the next few weeks, according to reports.

Politics & World Affairs

House Republicans release articles of impeachment against Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas Sunday for allegedly violating immigration laws, floor vote possible this week; first cabinet-level impeachment attempt since the 1870s.

Finland casts ballots in first round of presidential election, with term-limited President Sauli Niinistö set to leave office in March; runoff scheduled for February.

UK health officials warn of potential measles outbreak in England amid declining vaccination rates, report 216 confirmed cases since October.

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NEC Boys' Basketball

Hamlin remains unbeaten in NEC

Hamlin has just three games left as they are on their way to an undefeated record in the Northeast Conference. But they still have to get through Clark/Willow Lake who has one loss, Deuel who has two losses and Britton-Hecla.

Groton Area remains number one in the Region 1A standings.

Boys NEC Standings

	NEC	Overall
Hamlin	7-0	11-3
Groton Area	6-1	9-3
Clark/Willow Lake	4-1	7-6
Deuel	4-2	7-7
Roncalli	4-2	8-5
Milbank	3-3	8-5
Tiospa Zina	2-3	7-5
Webster Area	2-6	5-9
Sisseton	1-4	3-10
Britton-Hecla *	1-5	2-12
Redfield	0-7	1-11

* Class B Team

Hamlin 77, Aberdeen Roncalli 38
 Hamlin 64, Sisseton 31
 Milbank 60, Deuel 48
 Aberdeen Roncalli 59, Britton-Hecla 44
 Groton 66, Webster 30
 Clark-Willow Lake 57, Redfield 27

Jan. 30: Sisseton at Britton-Hecla

Jan. 30: Roncalli at Tiospa Zina

Feb. 1: Webster Area at Redfield

Feb. 1: Groton Area at Deuel

Feb. 2: Milbank at Roncalli

Feb. 2: Clark/Willow Lake at Sisseton

Feb. 6: Milbank at Sisseton (Conference game)

Feb. 8: Deuel at Hamlin

Feb. 8: Redfield at Groton Area

Feb. 8: Britton-Hecla at Clark/Willow Lake

Feb. 9: Sisseton at Tiospa Zina

Feb. 12: Clark/Willow Lake at Roncalli

Feb. 13: Clark/Willow Lake at Tiospa Zina

Feb. 13: Sisseton at Deuel

Feb. 13: Britton-Hecla at Hamlin

Feb. 15: Hamlin at Clark/Willow Lake

Feb. 15: Roncalli at Deuel









Feb. 16: Redfield at Tiospa Zina

Feb. 16: Britton-Hecla at Groton Area

Feb. 16: Milbank at Webster Area

Feb. 23: Tiospa Zina at Milbank

Region 1A Standings

#	Name	Season			Seed Pts
		W	L	PCT	PTS
1	 Groton Area	9	3	.750	43.500
2	 Tiospa Zina	7	5	.583	42.917
3	 Milbank	8	5	.615	41.615
4	 Aberdeen Roncalli	8	5	.615	41.154
5	 Waubay/Summit	8	5	.615	41.154
6	 Webster Area	5	9	.357	39.071
7	 Sisseton	3	10	.231	37.615
8	 Redfield	1	11	.083	34.667

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NEC Girls' Basketball

Hamlin handed first loss

Sisseton remains undefeated in the Northeast Conference after posting a 75-61 win over Hamlin. Hamlin has just one loss while a number of teams have two losses.

Girls NEC Standings

Sisseton	5-0	12-0
Hamlin	6-1	9-5
Deuel	4-2	6-7
Roncalli	5-2	10-2
Milbank	5-2	9-5
Groton Area	3-3	9-4
Clark/Willow Lake	2-4	4-9
Redfield	2-5	5-8
Britton-Hecla *	1-5	5-9
Webster Area	2-6	5-9
Tiospa Zina	0-6	0-12

* Class B Team

Hamlin 52, Aberdeen Roncalli 41
Milbank 49, Deuel 16
Clark-Willow Lake 50, Redfield 37
Sisseton 75, Hamlin 61
Aberdeen Roncalli 60, Britton-Hecla 21
Groton 42, Webster 27

Jan. 29: Roncalli at Tiospa Zina

Jan. 30: Sisseton at Britton-Hecla

Feb. 1

Roncalli at Milbank
Groton Area at Deuel
Sisseton at Clark/Willow Lake

Feb. 2: Redfield at Webster Area

Feb. 6: Milbank at Sisseton

Feb. 8

Tiospa Zina at Sisseton
Britton-Hecla at Clark/Willow Lake
Deuel at Hamlin

Feb. 9: Groton Area at Redfield

Feb. 13

Deuel at Sisseton
Clark/Willow Lake at Tiospa Zina
Britton-Hecla at Hamlin









Feb. 15

Roncalli at Deuel
Webster Area at Milbank
Hamlin at Clark/Willow Lake

Feb 16

Britton-Hecla at Groton Area
Redfield at Tiospa Zina

Girls Region 1A Standings

#	Name	Season			Seed Pts
		W	L	PCT	PTS
1	 Sisseton	12	0	1.000	47.250
2	 Aberdeen Roncalli	10	2	.833	44.417
3	 Groton Area	9	4	.692	42.462
4	 Milbank	9	5	.643	41.571
5	 Waubay/Summit	7	5	.583	40.417
6	 Redfield	5	8	.385	39.077
7	 Webster Area	5	9	.357	38.429
8	 Tiospa Zina	0	12	.000	34.500

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Dak XII/NEC Conference Clash

Girls Event – February 3rd, 2024

SCHEDULE (MAIN GYM)

Time	Seed	NEC Team		Dak XII Team
11:00am	#6 Seeds	Milbank (41.571)	vs.	Dakota Valley (43.214)
12:30pm	#5 Seeds	Groton Area (42.462)	vs.	Elk Point-Jefferson (43.231)
2:00pm	#4 Seeds	Hamlin (43.071)	vs.	Lennox (43.308)
3:30pm	#3 Seeds	Parkston (44.308)	vs.	Tea Area (43.417)
5:00pm	#2 Seeds	Aberdeen Roncalli (44.417)	vs.	Vermillion (44.25)
6:30pm	#1 Seeds	Sisseton (47.250)	vs.	Sioux Falls Christian (45.231)

SCHEDULE (AUXILIARY GYM)

Time	Seed	NEC Team		Dak XII Team
11:45am	#11 Seeds	Tiospa Zina (34.500)	vs.	Madison (37.000)
1:15pm	#10 Seeds	Clark/Willow Lake (38.231)	vs.	Dell Rapids (37.133)
2:45pm	#9 Seeds	Webster Area (38.429)	vs.	West Central (39.417)
4:15pm	#8 Seeds	Redfield (39.077)	vs.	Tri-Valley (40.583)
5:45pm	#7 Seeds	Deuel (39.692)	vs.	Canton (41.455)

- All games played at Madison High School and Middle School Gymnasiums
- Seed points calculated for all games played through Saturday, January 27th, 2024
- Ticket Prices (\$7 adults, \$5 students)
- Games will not start early.

“Why Routine Dental Visits Matter”

Routine visits to the dentist are key to maintaining overall health.

Preventive dental care starts at home. We advise patients to brush twice a day, usually in the morning and before bed, for two minutes followed by flossing. Eating healthy is also crucial to maintaining oral health. Sugary foods and beverages are key factors in tooth decay. Acid is produced when the bacteria in your mouth break down sugar. That acid dissolves the tooth surface leading to tooth decay.

Preventive dental care continues by visiting the dentist regularly, ideally every six months. Those with a high risk of tooth decay, periodontal disease, and bone loss may need to visit more often. This high-risk group includes smokers, diabetics, pregnant women, or individuals with diagnosed periodontal disease. Children should have their first visit to the dentist when the first tooth erupts or by their first birthday, whichever comes first.

Routine dental cleanings and exams allow dental professionals to catch potential tooth-related problems early before they become major issues. For example, if a tooth has a small amount of decay, that tooth may be easily saved with a filling. If the tooth decay or fracture goes undetected for months or years, that decay can continue to break down the tooth which could lead to even bigger problems. Untreated cavities can also lead to infections under the gums. These infections can result in more serious systemic infections in the body. In rare cases, these infections can be fatal.

Routine dental visits can also be key to detecting certain health issues early on like oral & skin cancer and gum disease. Gum disease has connections to heart disease, diabetes, stroke, and high blood pressure. Dental x-rays can also detect problems below the surface of the tooth or gums before they become bigger issues.

Oral issues can develop and progress quickly. It is never too late to begin healthy dental habits. Regular, preventive dental checkups help you avoid the pain, time, and expenses that dental problems can bring with them.

John Bisson, DDS is a dentist and owns Bisson Dental in Brookings, SD. Dr. Bisson is originally from Sturgis, SD but moved to Brookings in 2015 and opened Bisson Dental in 2018. For more information about Bisson Dental head here, <https://www.bisson-dental.com/>. Follow The Prairie Doc® at www.prairiedoc.org and on Facebook featuring On Call with the Prairie Doc® a medical Q&A show providing health information based on science, built on trust, on SDPB and streaming live on Facebook most Thursdays at 7 p.m. central.



By By John Bisson, DDS

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A nice picture of the dancers that have performed at home basketball games. (Photo by Jenn Gustafson)

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Girls Basketball Game

Florence/Henry @ Groton Area

Monday, January 29th, 2024

Game Times/Locations: Main Court in Arena

- 5:00PM → Girls C
- 6:00PM → Girls JV
 - Halftime Entertainment: Sugar Babes and Sweet Sensations Dancers
- **Band Parents Night** - prior to varsity warm-ups, we will recognize our three band seniors and their parents.
- 7:30PM → Girls Varsity
 - Halftime Entertainment: Pep Band

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

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

CONCESSIONS: Will be available

LOCKER ROOM: Florence/Henry will use the far back locker room down the JH Locker Room Hallway.

Team Benches – Groton: South Bench
Florence/Henry: North Bench

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

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

C Game Officials: Justin Hanson, Kristi Zoellner, Shaun Wanner

JV/Varsity Officials: Justin Deutsch, Scott Deutsch, Dave Planteen

Announcer: Mike Imrie

Scoreboard: Kristen Dolan

Official Book: Alexa Schuring

Shot Clock Operator: Kristi Zoellner

National Anthem: Groton HS Pep Band under the direction of Desiree Yeigh

Thank you, Alexa Schuring, Athletic Director

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From left: Cadence Feist, Caelynn Pullan and Colton Pullan strike a pose during their specialty act performance Sunday afternoon. The trio performed to the song "You're Going to Miss This." (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



2023 Silver Skates Queen Anna Fjeldheim hands flowers to newly-crowned 2024 Queen Emma Schinkel during the afternoon performance of the Carnival of Silver Skates.

(Photo by Elizabeth Varin)

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Newly-crowned 2024 Carnival of Silver Skates Queen Emma Schinkel sits in a sled being pulled by queen candidates Cadence Feist, Carly Guthmiller, Hannah Monson, Ashlyn Sperry and Emily Overacker during the afternoon performance. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



Carnival of Silver Skates specialty act performers Avery Crank (right) and Emerlee Jones dance to the song "Adventure" during the afternoon performance. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)

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Specialty act performer Aurora Washenberger skates during the afternoon performance to the song "Ocean Eyes." (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



Teagan Hanten performs to the song "Footloose" during the Sunday afternoon performance. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)

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The ninth grade group strikes an ending pose during their afternoon performance to the song "Bye Bye Bye." The group included Avery Crank, Teagan Hanten, Addison Hoffman, Brenna Imrie, Emerlee Jones, Claire Schuelke and McKenna Tietz. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)

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Cadence Feist, Caelynn Pullan and Colton Pullan hug at the end of their specialty act performance Sunday evening. The trio performed to the song "You're Going to Miss This." (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



Guest skater Abigail Reeves performs to the song "Jungle Cruise Suite" during the afternoon performance. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



Katie Anderson uses two brooms for a finishing touch as volunteers helped to clear the ice after the afternoon performance. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

(Photo by Paul Kosel)

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Coralea Wolter puts a program on the a vehicle for the Carnival of Silver Skates. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



Ron Anderson was the human Zamboni as he helped clear the shavings off the ice after the afternoon performance. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



Coralea Wolter and Carrie Olson also helped to clear the ice. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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Weekly Vikings Recap - Conference Championship Round

By Jack & Duane Kolsrud

Kansas City Chiefs 17 - Baltimore Ravens 10

The Kansas City Chiefs and the Baltimore Ravens kicked off the Conference Championship Round on Sunday with a matchup between two of the most exciting quarterbacks, Patrick Mahomes and Lamar Jackson, against two of the best defenses in the NFL. By the time the game started on Sunday, the Ravens were favored by 4.5 points, making it the most Patrick Mahomes had ever been an underdog in his career. Despite this, the Chiefs came in with confidence and determination to return to their fourth Super Bowl in five years.

That confidence was evident from the start for the Chiefs as their offense scored on its first two drives of the game. What was the key to those drives was the ball control for the Chiefs as they amassed an astonishing 26 total plays over a time of possession of 14:43. In a season where the Chiefs have lacked explosivity, they have found a perfect formula in running the ball with Isaiah Pacheco and having Patrick Mahomes make a play on key third downs. Sunday was no different as Pacheco had 24 rushing attempts and the Chiefs converted eight key third downs in the game.

The story of the game though was the Ravens' drastic mistakes. It would be one thing if the Ravens lost the turnover battle 3-0, but it was the way they did that caused them to lose to the Chiefs. In the third quarter, the Ravens found themselves down 17-7 and needing a boost of momentum. That momentum quickly came on the first play of the drive when Lamar Jackson connected with Zay Flowers on a 54-yard pass. Unfortunately, the momentum quickly evaporated four plays later when Flowers dove for the endzone, only to fumble one yard short of the endzone. Then on the next drive, Lamar Jackson decided to throw into triple coverage in the endzone, which resulted in an easy interception for the Chiefs. From that point on, the game was pretty much over for the Ravens.

In two weeks, the Chiefs will have a chance to be the first team since the 2003 and 2004 New England Patriots to win back-to-back Super Bowls.

San Francisco 49ers - Detroit Lions

Sunday's NFC Championship game was a battle between a team that played in the NFC Championship last year in the San Francisco 49ers and a team that had not played in the NFC Championship since 1991 in the Detroit Lions. For a franchise like the Detroit Lions, big games do not come around often and you would expect a team under their circumstances to have a bit of nerves to start the game. Amazingly, the opposite happened for the Lions as they scored touchdowns on their first two drives of the game and went into halftime with a 24-7 lead.

However, just like the Minnesota Vikings in their recent NFC Championship games, everything went wrong for the Lions in the second half. In a matter of four plays, the Lions saw wide receiver, Josh Reynolds drop two catchable passes, a ball bounce off a Lions cornerback's facemask into the hands of a 49ers' wide receiver for a 45-yard catch, and lastly a Jahmyr Gibbs' fumble. For those four plays to happen to the Lions in the NFC Championship game just goes to show that some NFL teams might be cursed and unfortunately not meant to win the big games.

After the chaos finally came to an end, the game was suddenly tied and the 49ers were rolling. And by the time the Lions got resettled, the 49ers had a 10-point lead and there was just not enough time for a comeback. Sadly for Lions' fans, they will have to wait yet another year to make their first Super Bowl appearance.

Goodbye!

Unfortunately, this will be the last article we (Jack and Duane) write. It has been a pleasure to write about the Vikings and the rest of the NFL over the past few years and we appreciate all the readers that read our work over that time. Thank you and Skol Vikings! (Editor's note: Your favorite weekly Vikings article will continue, with Jordan Wright once again writing the articles. Jack recently graduated and passed the bar, so we hope you all join us in wishing good luck to him in his new career as a lawyer. Skol!)

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Democratic Leadership Column: Wide Range of Legislation

**Rep. Oren Lesmeister (District 28A)
House Minority Leader**

This past week was an emotional roller coaster for the House of Representatives. We discussed a wide range of bills from autonomous vehicles to antisemitism. HB 1076 would create a new definition of antisemitism. Although most everyone agreed to the purpose behind the bill, a lot of us thought that it should have included all marginalized people.

We saw many bills being dropped late this week with the deadline of unlimited bills on Thursday. Now we will really know how many bills there will be this year. We are seeing even more bills targeting social issues. A few have already been defeated, but Republicans just keep bringing them. You can tell it is an election year because it seems that is when more of these types of bills are introduced. However, there has been bipartisan support to defeat these pieces of legislation.

We are about to start our only five-day week, meaning there will be a huge amount of vehicle bills in State Affairs Committees. If the bills have no body to them at the time of their hearing, they will likely be tabled. Some bills we will hear. Rep. Kadyn Wittman introduced a proposal to increase the minimum age for marriage to 18. Rep. Eric Emery is also bringing HB 1160 to address tribal tax agreements. There are also bills to deal with voter registration and residency requirements. This would help some members that have huge mailbox voters in their districts, but I do believe it will not make it through.

The pipeline bills are starting to move into committees along with the landowner rights legislation. These will be some very emotional and hard bills for a lot of members to vote on. We will have to listen to a lot of testimony to help make those decisions. I am not against carbon capture or a carbon pipeline, but still don't believe in broad sweeping eminent domain for private gain. We need to make sure we are not setting precedent here.

Appropriations Committees are starting to wind up their hearings from all the different departments and will soon start the process of developing a budget based on revenue and what the departments are asking for next year.

With the five days to work and most of the bill drafts out now, we will be able to really get some work done this next week

Thank you,
House Minority Leader
Oren Lesmeister

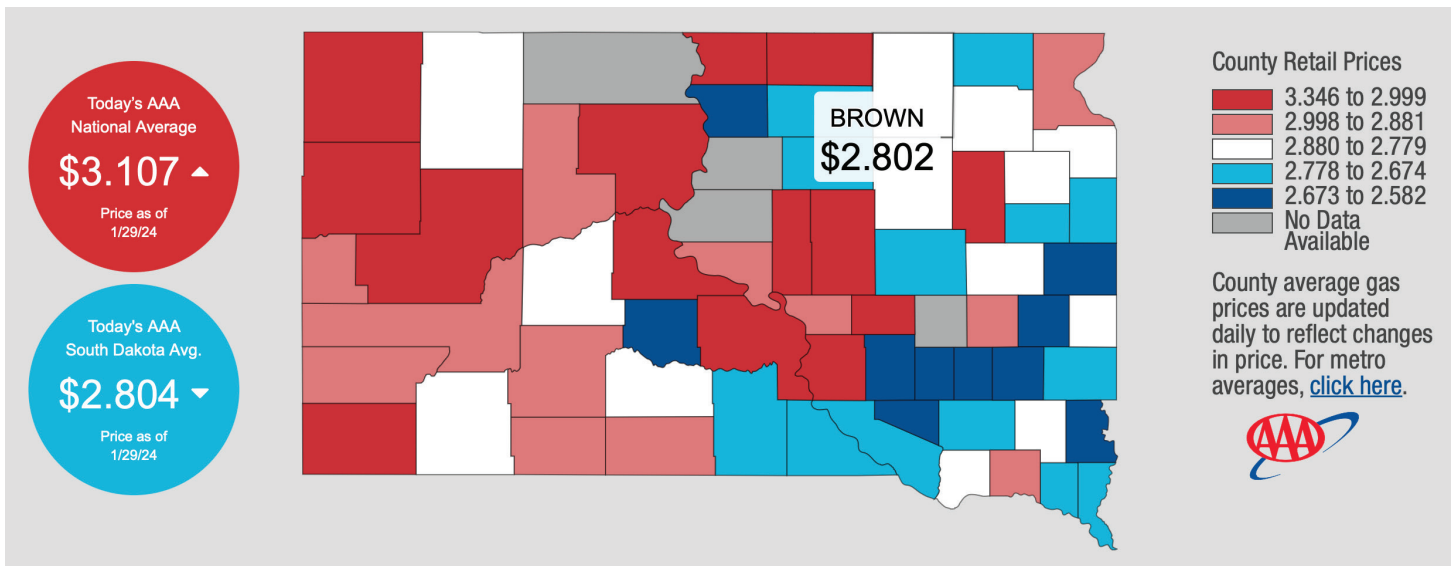
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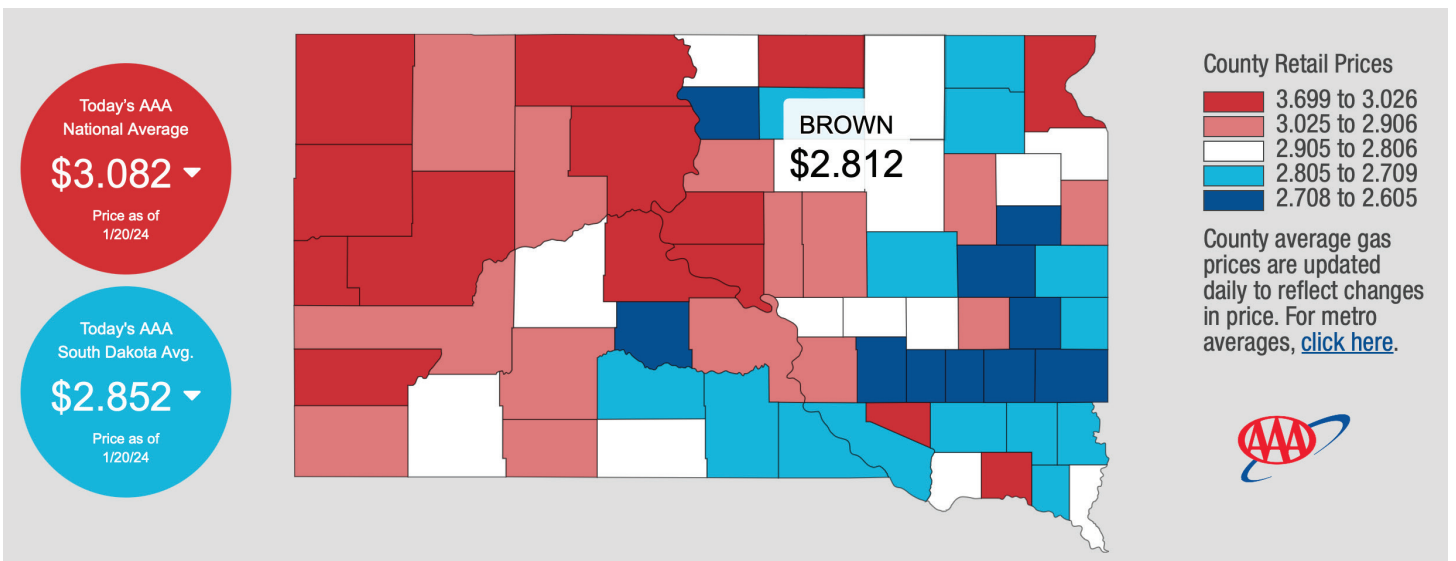
South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Current Avg.	\$2.804	\$3.019	\$3.492	\$3.587
Yesterday Avg.	\$2.821	\$3.001	\$3.479	\$3.583
Week Ago Avg.	\$2.828	\$3.022	\$3.504	\$3.637
Month Ago Avg.	\$2.963	\$3.144	\$3.626	\$3.766
Year Ago Avg.	\$3.435	\$3.596	\$4.038	\$4.437

This Week



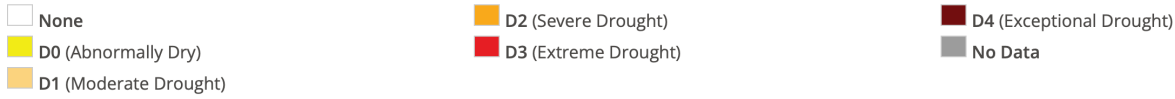
Two Weeks Ago



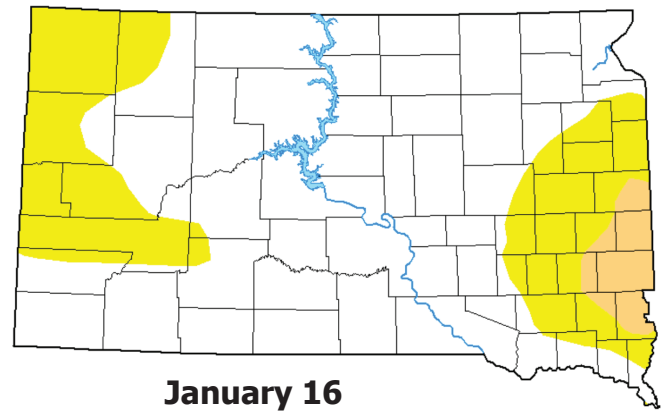
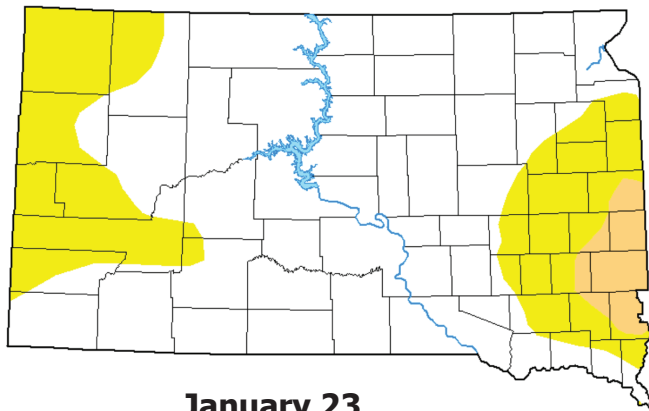
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Drought Classification



Drought Monitor



It was a mostly dry week over much of the region with only eastern Kansas receiving widespread, albeit light, precipitation. Temperatures were below normal for all areas outside the plains of Colorado and Wyoming and northern North Dakota where they were 3-6 degrees above normal. Outside of these areas, temperatures were generally 9-15 degrees below normal for the week. The wetter pattern over the last several months allowed for a reassessment of the data to investigate potential changes in the drought intensity levels. It was noted that even though the last 9-12 months have a stronger signal toward the wet spectrum, there are still long-term issues that go out 24-36 months or more in much of the central Plains. In looking at the data, support for the existing extreme drought in eastern Nebraska was not there, so it was improved to severe drought this week. In Kansas, areas of moderate and severe drought were also improved based on the lagging support for these intensity levels. Degradation took place over portions of northern North Dakota and eastern Wyoming where abnormally dry conditions were expanded based on the short-term dryness in these regions.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Legislative Roundup: Picking up the pace in Pierre

Medicaid work requirements, medical marijuana changes, lithium taxation among bills moving through process

BY: JOHN HULT, MAKENZIE HUBER AND JOSHUA HAIAR - JANUARY 28, 2024 8:00 AM

Lawmakers arrived in Pierre for the 99th session of the South Dakota Legislature earlier this month with an apparent will to challenge assumptions about the sluggish speed of government.

Things are moving more quickly, as columnist Dana Hess points out – and celebrates – in his latest South Dakota Searchlight commentary.

We can look to the legislative package from Attorney General Marty Jackley for a touchpoint on the pace of 2024.

“As of Thursday afternoon,” a Thursday news release from Jackley’s office read, “all five bills in the package have either been approved by one or both chambers. One bill has already passed both chambers and is awaiting the governor’s signature.”

That bill, Senate Bill 24, hikes the maximum price for a drug patch from \$50 to \$70 for those ordered by a court to wear one through the state’s 24/7 sobriety program.

The others criminalize a drug called xylazine, adjust language on removal from the state’s sex offender registry and allow deputy state’s attorneys to serve on the state’s Open Meetings Commission. Jackley also supported a bill from Sen. David Wheeler, R-Huron, that would prohibit the possession of artificial intelligence-generated child pornography. Jackley had a bill to do that in his legislative package, but agreed to defer to Wheeler, whose bill does that but also adds mandatory minimums for child porn offenders.

In all, 27 bills have already passed both legislative chambers and will now head to Gov. Kristi Noem’s desk for her consideration. Lawmakers had introduced a total of 422 bills or resolutions as of Friday afternoon. The Legislature just finished the third week of its nine-week session.

South Dakota Searchlight reports on dozens of bills during the session. Below is a summary of action taken on some of those bills since the last time we wrote about them.

Medicaid work requirements

A resolution that would ask voters to decide if the state can impose work requirements on some Medicaid recipients passed out of a Senate committee on Wednesday and sailed out of the full Senate the next day on a 28-4 vote. It now heads to the House.

Medical marijuana

One of several medical marijuana bills, a House bill to notify medical cannabis users of the threat to gun rights that marijuana use might present, is one Senate vote away from the governor’s desk. A few other medical marijuana bills cleared the Senate on their way to the House. The one that had marijuana advocates most worried didn’t make it, though. The bill to require patients to work only with their primary care doctor, or through a referral from that doctor, to get pot cards didn’t make it out of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Housing infrastructure fix for tribes

House Bill 1041 is a fix to a \$200 million housing infrastructure program approved last year. In its 2023 iteration, the program unintentionally barred tribal governments from participation. HB 1041 opens it up

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to tribes. It has passed both chambers and awaits the governor's signature.

Criminal diversion

Senate Bill 47 would triple the dollars flowing to counties for successfully moving kids through diversion programs that keep them out of the court system. It had some opposition in the the House Judiciary Committee, but still passed 8-3. It's now headed for House Appropriations for a look at its fiscal impact.

State flag

Introduced by Sen. Reynold Nesiba, D-Sioux Falls, last week is legislation that would establish a process to revamp South Dakota's state flag. The bill is scheduled for a hearing in the Senate State Affairs Committee on Monday. The senator told South Dakota Searchlight that he believes a new flag design could raise awareness of South Dakota, boosting tourism and out-of-state workers.

Hunting/fishing residency

Senate Bill 54 would impose stricter criteria for resident hunting and fishing licenses. It passed the Senate and a House committee and now awaits a vote by the entire House of Representatives. The bill says people would lose their resident status if they apply for a resident license, register to vote or become a resident in another state, or if they reside outside of South Dakota for a total of 180 days in a year. Plus, the bill would put into statute that possessing a mailing address in South Dakota, owning property or a business, or being employed in the state is not adequate proof of residency.

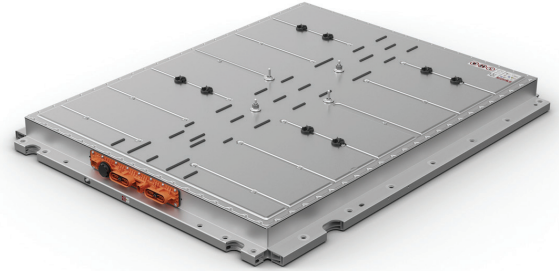
Lithium mining tax

A bill to impose a tax on lithium mining passed the House 57-9 on Monday after clearing a House committee earlier. It now goes to the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee. The bill would classify South Dakota lithium as a precious metal – like gold and silver – and place a 10% tax on company profits from lithium mining. Companies are exploring for lithium in the Black Hills to feed the growing need for lithium-based batteries in electric vehicles and devices.

EARTHTALK ™

Dear EarthTalk: Are solid-state electric vehicle (EV) batteries a solution to some of the issues with the lithium-ion batteries powering our EVs today?

-- Jack Whitcore, Salem, OR



Volkswagen is one of the leaders when it comes to the development of solid state EV batteries.

Solid-state batteries have emerged as a promising technological advancement that could potentially revolutionize the EV industry. As concerns about climate change intensify, there is a growing need to transition away from nonrenewable energy sources, not only in power generation but also in transportation. The widespread adoption of solid-state batteries could play a key role in driving the prevalence of EVs, offering a cleaner and more sustainable alternative to fossil fuel-powered cars.

To understand the significance of solid-state batteries for EVs, one needs to grasp the current challenges with lithium-ion batteries—the main energy storage technology in EVs today. They have many drawbacks: limited energy storage, fire safety concerns, short lifespans and a huge carbon footprint due to the mining of lithium and other heavy metals. These have prompted researchers to explore alternatives.

Solid-state batteries address many issues by replacing the liquid electrolyte in lithium-ion batteries with a solid electrolyte. This cuts the risk of fires, and allows for more storage. And the solid-states have a lower carbon footprint than the lithium-ions and have longer lifespans, so they're a more durable and sustainable EV option. According to the Centre for Process Innovation's Scott Gorman, solid-state batteries use fewer materials, and could reduce climate impacts by 39 percent compared to lithium-ion batteries.

The environmental implications of moving to solid-state EV batteries are significant. As demand for EVs keeps rising, reducing the carbon footprint associated with their production and operation becomes imperative. Solid-state batteries can help by offering a cleaner and more efficient energy storage solution. With nonrenewable energy sources a major contributor to climate change, the adoption of solid-state batteries in EVs aligns with global efforts to mitigate the impact of transportation on the environment.

Moreover, the development of solid-state batteries is driving innovation in the automotive industry. Companies investing in research and development to improve the performance and cost-effectiveness of solid-state batteries are likely to spearhead the next wave of EV technology and lead to more affordable and accessible EVs, making them a viable option for a broader segment of the population.

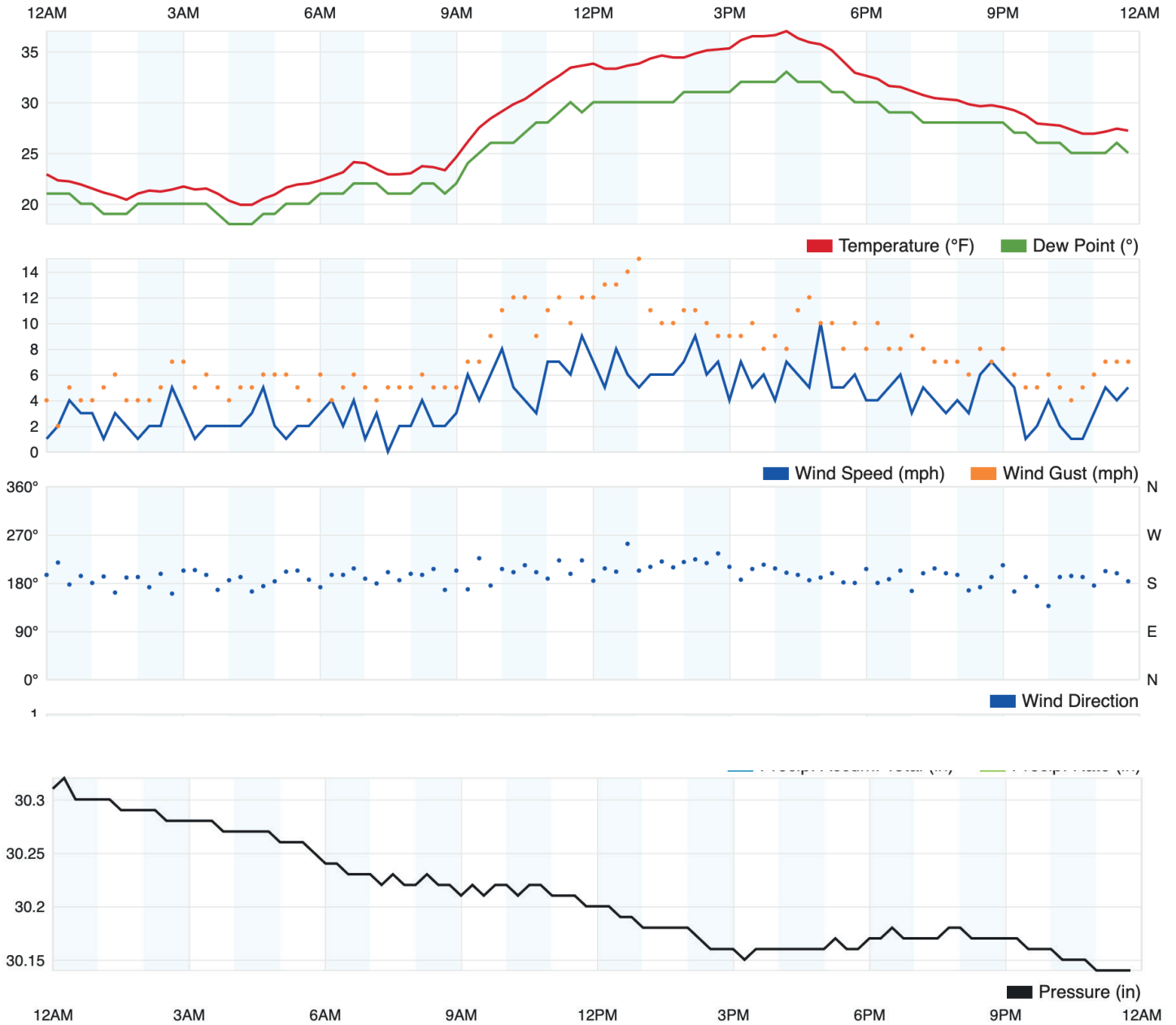
So far, Toyota is leading the race to develop solid-state batteries. Volkswagen, Hyundai, Nissan and Honda are also developing their own solid-state batteries. And several smaller companies—Schaeffler, QuantumScape, SolidEnergy Systems, Solid Power, Sila Nanotechnologies, Albemarle and Ilika, to name a few—are dedicated to developing solid state batteries that can be mass produced inexpensively.

However, challenges remain in scaling up the production of solid-state batteries to meet growing demand for EVs. Manufacturers need to overcome various production costs and scalability issues. Proponents of the technology are pushing for government support to help bolster R&D and commercialization efforts so that someday in the future we can have EVs with the safest, greenest batteries possible.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Jan 29	Jan 30	Jan 31	Feb 1	Feb 2	Feb 3	Feb 4
43°F	38°F	43°F	40°F	40°F	40°F	38°F
24°F	28°F	29°F	29°F	30°F	24°F	27°F
SW	WNW	SSW	ENE	ESE	SE	ESE
13 MPH	9 MPH	7 MPH	11 MPH	12 MPH	13 MPH	10 MPH

The Week Ahead

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Highs: 40 - 55°F	Highs: 35 - 55°F	Highs: 39 - 56°F	Highs: 34 - 46°F	Highs: 33 - 45°F
10-25 mph	5-15 mph	5-15 mph	10-20 mph	10-20 mph

Warmest Temps: Snow Free Areas West River/NE SD-WC MN

January 29, 2024 5:17 AM

Above normal temperatures are expected to continue through this upcoming week. Warmest daytime readings will be felt in those snow free areas such as West River zones, especially in north central SD as well as the northeast corner of SD into west central MN. A couple of cold frontal passages will cool us down at times, today and again on Thursday. Dry conditions look to prevail through the end of the work week.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 37 °F at 4:10 PM

Low Temp: 20 °F at 4:28 AM

Wind: 15 mph at 12:52 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 9 hours, 40 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 58 in 1931

Record Low: -32 in 1951

Average High: 25

Average Low: 2

Average Precip in Jan.: 0.52

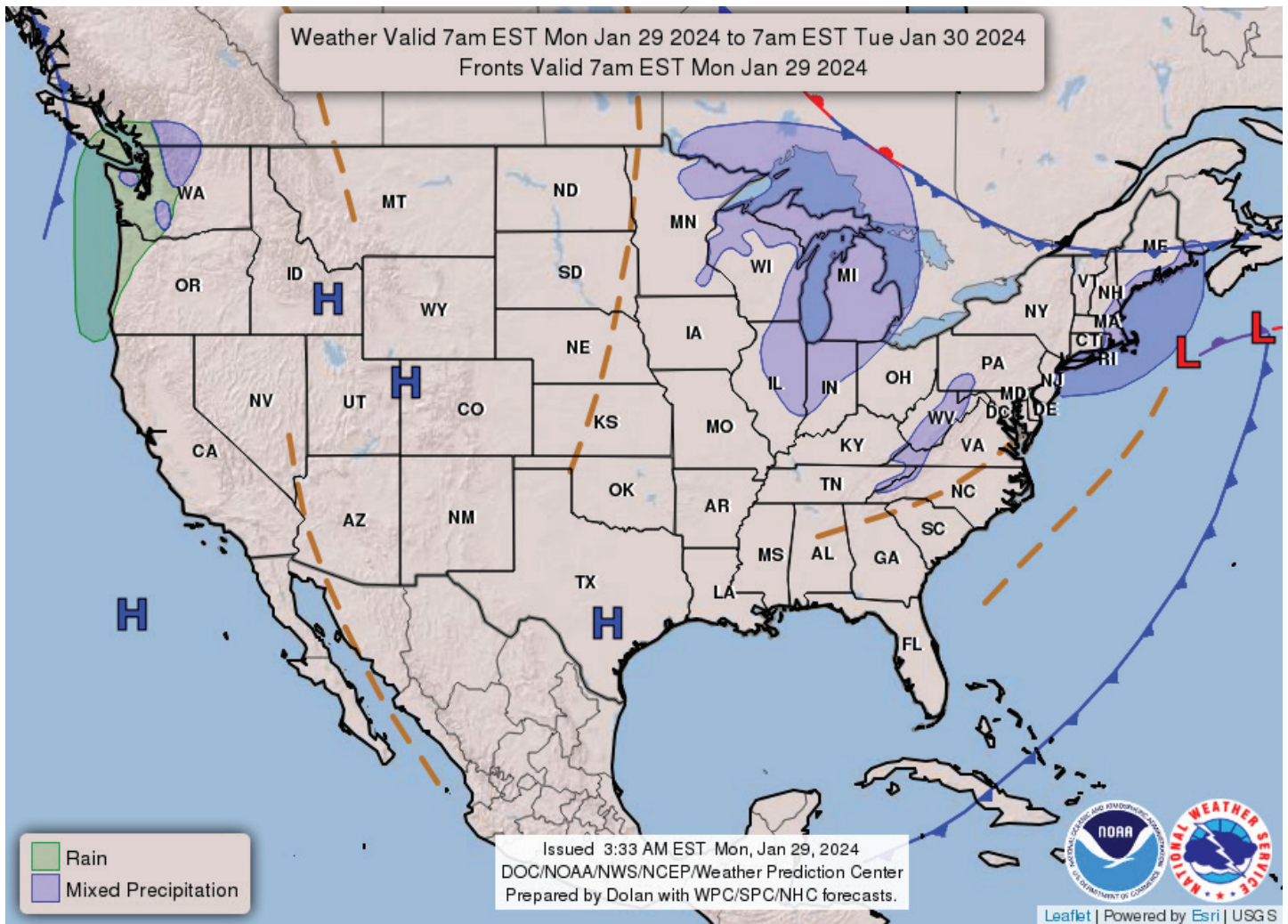
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 0.52

Precip Year to Date: 0.00

Sunset Tonight: 5:35:45 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:54:03 am



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Today in Weather History

January 29, 2008: Arctic air combined with strong northwest winds of 20 to 40 mph to bring extreme wind chills to much of north-central and northeast South Dakota. The extreme wind chills began in the morning hours of January 29th across all of the area. The wind chills improved across north-central South Dakota by the evening and improved across northeast South Dakota during the morning hours of January 30th. The extreme wind chills ranged from 35 to 50 degrees below zero across the area. The extreme cold caused school delays and activity cancellations, along with much discomfort to people and livestock. On Monday, January 28th, the day before the extreme cold, a southerly flow brought very mild temperatures with some record highs set at several locations. Highs were in the 40s to the mid-50s across central and northeast South Dakota. When the Arctic front came through on January 28th, temperatures fell dramatically through the evening and early morning with below zero temperatures by Tuesday morning, January 29th. In fact, most locations across the area had a 40 to 55-degree temperature change from the 28th to the 29th.

1780 - On the coldest morning of a severe winter the mercury dipped to 16 degrees below zero at New York City, and reached 20 degrees below zero at Hartford CT. New York Harbor was frozen for five weeks, allowing a heavy cannon to be taken across the ice to fortify the British on Staten Island. (The Weather Channel)

1921: A small but intense windstorm resulted in the "Great Olympic Blowdown" in the Pacific Northwest. Hurricane-force winds funneled along the mountains downed vast expanses of Douglas fir trees, and the storm destroyed eight billion board feet of timber. Winds at North Head, WA, gusted to 113 mph. On January 31, 1921, the International News Services reported from Aberdeen, Washington, "It is reported that thousands of dollars in damage was done to buildings and storms in Aberdeen and Hoquiam. The wind velocity was estimated at from 125 to 150 miles an hour. Four steel smokestacks reaching almost 200 feet into the air were the first to collapse before the terrific onslaught of the gale. The giant chimneys crashed down on dwellings crushing them like houses of cardboard."

1947: On this date through the 30th, a fierce winter storm buried southern Wisconsin under two feet of snow. Strong northeasterly winds piled drifts up to 10 feet high in the Milwaukee area, shutting down the city for two days.

1983 - A series of Pacific coast storms finally came to an end. The storms, attributed in part to the ocean current, "El Nino," produced ocean swells 15 to 20 feet high which ravaged the beaches of southern California. Much of the damage was to homes of movies stars in the exclusive Malibu Colony. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A strong storm moving out of the Central Rockies spread snow across the north central states, with up to eight inches of snow in Wisconsin, and produced wind gusts to 64 mph at Goodland KS. A thunderstorm produced three inches of snow in forty-five minutes at Owing Mills MD. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Rain and snow were primarily confined to the northwestern U.S. An afternoon reading of 34 degrees at International Falls MN was a record high for the date. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Bitter cold air continued to pour into Alaska. At McGrath, temperature dipped to 63 degrees below zero. Strong winds blowing through the Alaska Range between Fairbanks and Anchorage produced a wind chill reading of 120 degrees below zero at Cantwell. (National Weather Summary)

1990 - Severe thunderstorms in the southeastern U.S. spawned a tornado which destroyed three mobile homes near Blythe GA injuring six persons. A fast moving cold front produced high winds in the western U.S. Winds along the coast of Oregon gusted to 65 mph at Portland, and high winds generated 22 to 26 foot seas which battered the coast. Winds near Reno NV gusted to 78 mph. High winds also buffeted the Central High Plains, with gusts to 94 mph reported at La Mesa CO. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2002 - A major three-day winter storm blasted parts of Kansas and Missouri. A catastrophic ice storm occurred south of the snow area, with two inches of ice and snow accumulating in the Kansas City, Missouri area. Thousands of trees were felled by the storm, blocking roads, felling utility lines, and causing fires. Two "Bicentennial Trees," estimated at being over 200 years old, were badly damaged from this storm. After the 31st, 325,000 people were reported without power in Kansas City alone.

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

NEVER LEFT ALONE

A flight attendant noticed an elderly lady having a difficult time buckling her seat belt. Recognizing her anxiety and obvious fear, the flight attendant went to the captain and explained what she had seen. Graciously, he accompanied the attendant to the lady, and he asked, "May I help you, Ma'am?"

"Oh, yes," she replied. "This is my first flight. I must admit that I am rather frightened. Tell me, Sir, will you bring me back down safely?"

As he fastened her seat belt, he smiled politely and said, "Yes, Ma'am. I've flown hundreds of thousands of miles and never left anyone up there."

In the closing verse of Matthew, Jesus made one final, eternal promise to His disciples: "And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Have no doubt about Me!

What a precious and powerful promise: "I am with you always." But what does it mean? Would his memories be with us? Would his teachings be with us? Would His imprint on history be with us? Of course. But that is only the beginning.

"I am with you" leaves no doubt that after Jesus ascended into heaven, He would be with us through the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. The Holy Spirit, available and active in our lives, is Jesus' presence within us and working through us. Jesus was with His disciples then, and today the Holy Spirit is with us now, always will be, and will never leave us. Ever.

Jesus said, "I am going away, but I will come back to you again!" And He did – through the Holy Spirit. And because of God's power through Christ, He continues to be with us today.

Prayer: Thank You, Father, for the assurance of Your presence in our lives. We are comforted to know that whatever comes into our life, You are there to protect us. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Matthew 28:20



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

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.26.24

14 31 34 50 61 13

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$311,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 6 Mins 23 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.27.24

13 22 46 47 51 4

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$2,650,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 21 Mins 23 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.28.24

4 11 23 25 27 8

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 36 Mins 23 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.27.24

3 6 15 22 30

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$33,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 15 Hrs 36 Mins 23 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.27.24

4 28 34 50 61 16

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 5 Mins 24 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.27.24

7 38 65 66 68 21

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$174,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 5 Mins 24 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the Associated Press

There's a wave of new bills to define antisemitism. In these 3 states, they could become law

By GEOFF MULVIHILL Associated Press

Lawmakers in more than a half-dozen U.S. states are pushing laws to define antisemitism, triggering debates about free speech and bringing complicated world politics into statehouses.

Supporters say it's increasingly important to add a definition that lays out how to determine whether some criticism of Israel also amounts to hatred of Jewish people. In so doing, lawmakers cited the Oct. 7 attacks in which Hamas killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took about 250 hostages back to Gaza, which sparked a war that has killed more than 26,000 Palestinians.

"For anybody that didn't think that anti-Zionism could cross into antisemitism, the rest of the world could see that it had," said Democratic Rep. Esther Panitch, the only Jewish member of Georgia's Legislature and one of the sponsors of a bill that the state Legislature passed last week. Republican Gov. Brian Kemp is expected to sign.

Defined in 2016 by the the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, antisemitism is "a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities."

But Kenneth Stern, the author of IHRA's definition, said using such language in law is problematic.

"There's an increasingly large number of young Jews for whom their Judaism leads to an antizionist position," said Stern, director of the Bard Center for the Study of Hate. "I don't want the state to decide that issue."

Over the past three months, there has been a rise in protests around the country calling for a cease-fire in Gaza and the release of Israeli hostages. A coalition of organizations, including Jewish Voice for Peace and CAIR, issued a joint statement saying that the Georgia bill "falsely equates critiques of Israel and Zionism with discrimination against Jewish people."

Measures using the same definition of antisemitism — but in anti-discrimination laws — have advanced in legislative chambers in Indiana and South Dakota. A report from the Anti-Defamation League last year found major increases in antisemitic incidents in Georgia and Indiana, but not in Georgia, where fewer than 10 a year were recently reported.

Other legislation with the definition is pending in at least five other states this year.

Bill supporters say that more than 30 states have adopted the definition in some way over the years. Before now, the legal definitions — including in New York, the state with the largest Jewish population — came primarily through resolutions or executive orders rather than forceful laws.

In other parts of the country, Iowa incorporated the definition into law in 2022 and Virginia did the same last year, among others.

Lawmakers say their bills are in response to the Oct. 7 attacks, though before that, the problem of antisemitism has been on the rise in the U.S. and globally. Since the Israel-Hamas war erupted, several states have passed resolutions condemning Hamas and voicing support for Israel.

Thousands of entities around the world, including the U.S. State Department, major companies and colleges, have officially recognized the definition, with groups including the American Jewish Committee supporting it.

However the U.S. Congress and American Bar Association have declined to do so. Among those urging lawmakers to vote no are chapters of the ACLU.

"There is fundamental First Amendment harm whenever the state tries to silence pure speech on the basis of its viewpoint," said said Brian Hauss, an ACLU lawyer.

Backers of the laws emphasize that they're not trying to ban speech but rather decipher between actions

that amount to discrimination or hate crimes, which carry different degrees of severity.

"This bill is entirely about conduct — adverse or unequal treatment that's prohibited in state law," said South Dakota state Rep. Fred Deutsch, a Republican whose father was a Holocaust survivor. "This bill doesn't limit a person or organization's freedom of speech or expression." This week the chamber passed a measure by a 53-14 vote.

Lara Freidman, president of Foundation for Middle East Peace, said the laws could elevate charges, such as those against a protester for property destruction to the level of a hate crime if the perpetrator is seen with a Palestinian flag.

Georgia State Rep. Ruwa Romman, a Democrat of Palestinian descent, said that the definition, when adopted by colleges, has stifled students' right to free speech.

"When they attempted to host a Palestinian poet or Palestinian culture night, the administration has preemptively canceled the events for fears of being antisemitic," she said.

Some protesters gathered in the capitol in Indiana this month before the House unanimously advanced a bill incorporating the definition there.

"I don't need to feel like as a student I'm going to be either censored or attacked or harassed," said Yaqoub Saadeh, president of the Middle Eastern Student Association at Indiana University – Purdue University Indianapolis.

How colleges are acting to prevent or stop antisemitism on campus has become a hot-button issue across the country. Last year, fallout from campus presidents' testimony before Congress led to the resignation of presidents at Harvard and the University of Pennsylvania.

Alex Murdaugh tries to prove jury tampering led to his murder conviction

By JEFFREY COLLINS Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — Alex Murdaugh is returning to a South Carolina courtroom, but this time the convicted killer, disbarred attorney and admitted thief won't be fidgeting in the spotlight.

Instead, it's the jurors who found him guilty of the shooting deaths of his wife and son who'll be questioned by a judge. The unusual hearing Monday comes in response to allegations by Murdaugh's attorneys that a clerk of court tampered with the jury that convicted him of murder last year.

Colleton County Clerk Becky Hill also is expected to be grilled by lawyers for Murdaugh, whose fall from his role as an attorney lording over his small county to a sentence of life without parole has been exhaustively covered by true crime shows, podcasts and bloggers.

Jury tampering is the basis for Murdaugh's appeal, but Judge Jean Toal's rulings after a pretrial hearing this month have set a difficult standard for his lawyers to prove.

Toal ruled the defense must prove that potential misconduct including alleged comments by Hill warning jurors not to trust Murdaugh when he testifies directly led jurors to change their minds to guilty.

The defense argued if they prove the jury was tampered with, it shouldn't matter whether a juror openly said their verdict changed, because the influence can be subtle and still keep Murdaugh from getting a fair trial.

"According to the State, if Ms. Hill had the jury room decorated like a grade-school classroom with colorful signs saying 'Murdaugh is guilty' that would not violate Mr. Murdaugh's right to a fair trial ... so long as jurors did not testify that they voted guilty because of the decor," the defense wrote in a brief.

Toal also won't let the defense call the trial judge Clifton Newman as a witness, nor prosecutors or other court workers who might testify that Hill seemed certain of Murdaugh's guilt or tried to influence the case.

The judge also limited what can be asked of Hill. Toal told lawyers they can't question the elected clerk about a criminal investigation announced by state agents into whether she used her office for financial gain, emailed prosecutors with suggestions on how to discredit a defense expert, conspired with her son who is charged with wiretapping county phones, or plagiarized part of her book on the case using a passage from a BBC reporter who accidentally emailed her instead of her boss with a similar address.

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"I'm very, very reluctant to turn this hearing about juror contact into a wholesale exploration about every piece of conduct by the clerk," Toal said.

Hill, in a sworn statement, has denied any jury tampering. .

Murdaugh, 55, is expected at the hearing in a prison jumpsuit. Even if he gets a new murder trial he won't walk out free. He's also serving 27 years after admitting he stole \$12 million from his law firm and from settlements he gained for clients on wrongful death and serious injury lawsuits. Murdaugh promised not to appeal that sentence as part of his plea deal.

But Murdaugh has remained adamant that he did not kill his younger son Paul with a shotgun and his wife Maggie with a rifle since the moment he told deputies he found their bodies at their Colleton County home in 2021. He testified in his own defense.

The jurors, their anonymity protected, will be allowed to enter the Richland County Courthouse through a private entrance. The hearing will be televised, but their faces cannot be shown and they will only be identified by their juror numbers.

If this effort fails, Murdaugh hasn't even started the regular appeals of his sentence, where his lawyers are expected to argue a number of reasons why his murder trial was unfair, including the judge allowing voluminous testimony of his financial crimes. They said this enabled prosecutors to smear Murdaugh with evidence not directly linked to the killings.

China Evergrande has been ordered to liquidate. The real estate giant owes over \$300 billion

By KANIS LEUNG and ZEN SOO Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — A Hong Kong court ordered China Evergrande, the world's most heavily indebted real estate developer, to undergo liquidation following a failed effort to restructure \$300 billion owed to banks and bondholders that fueled fears about China's rising debt burden.

"It would be a situation where the court says enough is enough," Judge Linda Chan said Monday. She said it was appropriate for the court to order Evergrande to wind up its business given a "lack of progress on the part of the company putting forward a viable restructuring proposal" as well as Evergrande's insolvency.

China Evergrande Group is among dozens of Chinese developers that have collapsed since 2020 under official pressure to rein in surging debt the ruling Communist Party views as a threat to China's slowing economic growth.

But the crackdown on excess borrowing tipped the property industry into crisis, dragging on the economy and rattling financial systems in and outside China.

Chinese regulators have said the risks of global shockwaves from Evergrande's failure can be contained. The court documents seen Monday showed Evergrande owes about \$25.4 billion to foreign creditors. Its total assets of about \$240 billion are dwarfed by its total liabilities.

"It is indisputable that the company is grossly insolvent and is unable to pay its debts," the documents say.

About 90% of Evergrande's business is in mainland China. Its chairman, Hui Ka Yan, who is also known as Xu Jiayin, was detained by authorities for suspected "illegal crimes" in late September, further complicating the company's efforts to recover.

It's unclear how the liquidation order will affect China's financial system or Evergrande's operations as it struggles to deliver housing that has been paid for but not yet handed over to families that put their life savings into such investments.

Evergrande's Hong Kong-traded shares plunged nearly 21% early Monday before they were suspended from trading. But Hong Kong's benchmark Hang Seng index was up 0.9% and some property developers saw gains in their share prices.

China's largest real estate developer, Country Garden, initially gained nearly 3% but was flat. Sunac China Holdings rose 2.4%.

The Shanghai Composite index dropped 0.9% while Shenzhen's A-share index fell more than 2%.

The Hong Kong court gave Evergrande a reprieve in December to allow it time to "refine" a new debt

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restructuring plan.

But Chan, the judge, said Evergrande "has not demonstrated that there is any useful purpose for the court to adjourn the petition — there is no restructuring proposal, let alone a viable proposal which has the support of the requisite majorities of the creditors."

In remarks published online, she lambasted the company for putting out only "general ideas" about what it may or may not be able to put forward as a restructuring proposal. The interests of creditors would be better protected if Evergrande is wound up by the court, she said.

Fergus Saurin, a lawyer representing an ad hoc group of creditors, said Monday he was not surprised by the outcome.

"The company has failed to engage with us. There has been a history of last-minute engagement which has gone nowhere," he said.

Saurin said that his team worked in good faith during the negotiations. Evergrande "only has itself to blame for being wound up," he said.

Tiffany Wong, one of two liquidators appointed by the court from global services firm Alvarez & Marsal, said that their priority was to ensure that "as much of the business as possible (is) retained, restructured and remains operational."

"We will pursue a structured approach to preserve and return value to the creditors and other stakeholders," Wong said. That includes considering any viable restructuring proposals, she said.

Evergrande CEO Shawn Siu told Chinese news outlet 21Jingji that the company feels "utmost regret" at the liquidation order.

He emphasized that the order affects only the Hong Kong-listed China Evergrande unit and that the group's domestic and overseas units are independent legal entities. Siu said that Evergrande will strive to continue smooth operations and deliver properties to buyers.

Real estate drove China's economic boom, but developers borrowed heavily as they turned cities into forests of apartment and office towers. That has helped to push total corporate, government and household debt to the equivalent of more than 300% of annual economic output, unusually high for a middle-income country.

Evergrande first defaulted on its financial obligations in 2021, just over a year after Beijing clamped down on lending to property developers to cool a property bubble.

As a former British colony, Hong Kong operates under a legal system that is separate, though increasingly influenced by, communist-ruled China's. In some cases, mainland courts have recognized bankruptcy rulings in Hong Kong but analysts say Evergrande's is something of a test case.

Brock Silvers, managing director at Kaiyuan Capital, said the liquidation order was likely to have more of an immediate impact on foreign investors and their confidence in China's financial markets than on Evergrande's operations in mainland China.

"So onshore, Evergrande tomorrow will look a lot like Evergrande yesterday, there won't be a lot of noticeable difference," he said.

Regulators need to restructure Evergrande and other struggling property developers, but it will be a complex and difficult process, said David Goodman, director of the China Studies Center at the University of Sydney.

"If the government could see simple answers to these problems, it would have reached them two to three years ago," Goodman said.

Inflation has slowed. Now the Federal Reserve faces expectations for rate cuts

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Chair Jerome Powell will enter this week's Federal Reserve meeting in a much more desirable position than he likely ever expected: Inflation is getting close to the Fed's target rate, the economy is still growing at a healthy pace, consumers keep spending and the unemployment rate is

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near a half-century low.

A year ago, most economists had envisioned a much darker outlook. As the Fed raised interest rates at the fastest pace in four decades to fight high inflation, most economists warned of a recession, possibly a painful one, with waves of layoffs and rising unemployment. Even the Fed's own economists had projected that the economy would sink into a recession in 2023.

The unexpectedly rosy picture — one that's sure to be subject to heated debate in the 2024 presidential race — may have left some Fed officials saddled by uncertainty. With their frameworks for assessing the economy upended by the pandemic and its aftermath, it's hard to know whether the economy's healthy conditions can endure.

"It almost feels like what we saw in the second half of last year was too good to be true," said Nathan Sheets, chief global economist at Citi and a former Fed economist. "When things are too good to be true, you want to try to scratch the surface and say, how durable is this?"

Some Fed officials have raised similar questions and expressed caution about their next moves. When they last met in December, the Fed's 19 policymakers who participate in interest-rate decisions said they expected to cut their benchmark rate three times this year. Yet the timing of those rate cuts, which would lead to lower borrowing costs for consumers and businesses, remains uncertain.

Most economists say they expect the first rate cut to occur in May or June, though a cut at the Fed's March meeting is not off the table. The timing of rate cuts will almost certainly be the top issue at the Fed's two-day meeting, which ends Wednesday. The Fed is all but sure to announce after the meeting that it's leaving its key rate unchanged at about 5.4%, where it's stood since July, its highest point in 22 years.

The central bank's consideration of rate cuts will take place against an intensifying presidential campaign as President Joe Biden seeks re-election with the economy a polarizing issue. Rate cuts have the potential to provoke an attack from former President Donald Trump, who nominated Powell to be Fed chair but later publicly criticized him for raising rates during the Trump presidency and demanded that he lower them.

At a news conference last month, Powell said: "We don't think about politics. We think about what's the right thing to do for the economy."

On Wednesday, the Fed's policymakers could signal that they're close to cutting rates by adjusting the language in the statement they issue after each meeting. In December, the statement still suggested that the officials were willing to consider more rate increases. Removing or altering that language in next week's statement would signal that they're shifting to a new approach, focused on rate cuts.

The Fed's aggressive streak of 11 rate hikes, beginning in March 2022, was intended to tame inflation, which peaked in June 2022 — according to the central bank's preferred gauge — at 7.1%. But data released Friday showed that over the past six months, inflation has fallen all the way back to the Fed's 2% annual target level. In the past three months, year-over-year inflation that excludes volatile food and energy costs has dropped to just 1.5%.

Yet Fed officials are expected to wait for at least a few months, to try to build confidence that inflation has been truly beaten, before they start reducing rates.

Christopher Waller, an influential member of the Fed's governing board, sounded a note of caution in a recent speech.

"Inflation of 2% is our goal," he said. "But that goal cannot be achieved for just a moment in time. It must be sustained."

Waller has previously referred to having been "head-faked" on inflation. On more than one occasion, when initial government reports had indicated that inflation was falling, subsequent revisions to the data showed that price increases actually remained high. In his speech, Waller mentioned the government's upcoming revisions of inflation data, to be released on Feb. 9, as a report he will be watching closely.

It's possible that inflation could stay undesirably high, especially if the economy remains strong, which could cause the Fed to leave rates unchanged. Fed officials have said that as long as the economy stays healthy, they can take time before cutting rates.

Average paychecks are still increasing at about 4% to 4.5% annually, and apartment rental prices are

still rising faster than they did before the pandemic. Officials expect rent prices to cool as a slew of new apartment buildings are completed. But that has yet to show up in the official data. And some prices in the service sector, such as for restaurant meals, are still accelerating.

"We would argue we're not out of the woods yet," said Tiffany Wilding, a managing director and economist at PIMCO. "The Fed does not want to be Arthur Burns," she added, referring to the Fed chair from the 1970s who is widely blamed for cutting rates too soon and allowing inflation to become more deeply entrenched in the economy.

At the same time, the Fed is grappling with an equivalent risk in the other direction: That it might keep its key rate too high for too long and potentially trigger a recession. Consumers spent at a healthy pace in the final three months of last year, but they could eventually pull back in the face of higher borrowing costs and prices that are still well above where they were three years ago.

"They run the risk of overstating their welcome at high rates and slowing the economy down in a way that really isn't necessary," said Bill English, a finance professor at the Yale School of Management and a former Fed economist.

Still, the Fed could also accelerate its rate cuts later this year if the economy does weaken, just as it rapidly raised rates after waiting too long to start boosting them in 2022, said Claudia Sahm, founder of Sahm Consulting and a former Fed economist,

"I fully expect them to wait as long as humanly possible to cut rates," she said. "The Fed excels at being behind the curve."

Ex-Philippine leader Duterte assails Marcos, accusing him of plotting to expand his grip on power

By JIM GOMEZ Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — Former Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte is throwing allegations at his successor, Ferdinand Marcos Jr., and even raising the prospect of removing him from office, bringing into the open a long-rumored split between the two.

In an expletive-laden speech late Sunday, the former populist leader alleged that Marcos' legislative allies are plotting to amend the constitution to lift term limits and warned that could lead to him being ousted like his father, the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos. Duterte also accused Marcos of being a drug addict.

Marcos laughed off Duterte's allegations in comments to reporters before flying to Vietnam for a visit. Marcos said he would not dignify the accusations with an answer, but claimed his predecessor is using fentanyl, a powerful opioid.

In 2016, Duterte said he had used fentanyl in the past to ease pain caused by injuries from a motorbike accident. His lawyer, Salvador Panelo, said Monday that Duterte stopped taking fentanyl before he became president in 2016.

"I think it's the fentanyl," Marcos said. "Fentanyl is the strongest pain killer that you can buy. ... After five, six years, it has to affect him, that's why I think this is what has happened."

Members of the House of Representatives have been talking about amending the constitution, and Duterte claimed without offering any evidence that lawmakers who support Marcos, including House Speaker Martin Romualdez, are bribing local officials to amend the 1987 constitution to remove term limits so they can extend their grip on power.

Romualdez, who is the current president's cousin, has denied that claim, saying he wants the constitution amended only to remove restrictions on foreign investment.

Marcos has said he is open to altering economic provisions of the constitution but opposes changing a provision that restricts foreign ownership of land and other critical industries like the media. Philippine presidents can serve only a single six-year term.

Opponents of opening the constitution to changes include the Senate. It issued a statement last week warning its checks-and-balance role could be undermined if the House of Representatives proceeded with plans to pursue amendments in a joint session rather than by separate voting in the 24-member Senate

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and the 316-strong House.

The Commission on Elections said Monday it was indefinitely suspending all activities related to the effort to change the constitution, which requires the signed consent of about 8 million registered voters nationwide. The decision temporarily derailed moves to revise the charter.

The 1987 constitution, which is laden with safeguards to prevent dictatorships, came into force a year after Marcos' strongman father was ousted by an army-backed "people power" uprising amid allegations of plunder and human rights atrocities during his rule.

The speech put credence into months of rumors about a political split with his successor even though Duterte's daughter Sara is Marcos' vice president following their landslide election victory in 2022.

In recent weeks, Duterte's supporters have been angered by reports of an unannounced visit by International Criminal Court investigators last month who are probing widespread killings during an anti-drug crackdown Duterte launched as president. The reported visit has not been confirmed.

Duterte, who became notorious for the harsh crackdown that left thousands of mostly poor suspects dead, claimed in his speech without offering any evidence that Marcos was once on a law enforcement list of suspected drug users.

"You, the military, you know this, we have a president who's a drug addict," Duterte said to cheers from a few thousand supporters in his southern home region of Davao city.

The Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency said Monday that Marcos was never on such a list, contrary to Duterte's claim.

In 2021 when he was a presidential aspirant, Marcos' spokesperson showed two reports from a private hospital and the national police laboratory that said Marcos had tested negative for cocaine and methamphetamine.

The two men also have differences over foreign policy.

While Duterte nurtured cozy ties with Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian leader Vladimir Putin while in office, Marcos has been seen as veering toward Washington over his country's territorial disputes with China in the South China Sea. Early last year, Marcos allowed an expansion of the U.S. military presence in the Philippines under a 2014 defense pact.

Marcos succeeded Duterte in mid-2022 after campaigning on a promise to work for an economic turnaround after the coronavirus pandemic and bring unity in a country long saddled by crushing poverty and deeply entrenched political divisions.

Marcos led his own rally Sunday at a seaside park in Manila, which police said drew about 400,000 people after nightfall.

The rally was called to launch what Marcos says is a campaign for a "new Philippines" by reforming corrupt and inefficient governance and boosting public services. During the gathering, the president stayed nonconfrontational in the face of the escalating criticisms from Duterte's camp.

"The 'new Philippines' is not just a slogan," Marcos told cheering supporters. "To those whose overheated imagination has been poisoned by toxic politics, the 'new Philippines' is no Trojan horse, it conceals no agenda."

Addressing government officials and employees, Marcos called for an end to sluggish services to the public. "Distress calls must be responded to without delay. In whatever government office, red tape must be replaced with a red carpet," he said to applause.

Pakistan and Iran agree to work together to improve security after tit-for-tat airstrikes

By MUNIR AHMED Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Pakistan and Iran on Monday agreed to work together to improve security cooperation in the wake of deadly airstrikes by Tehran and Islamabad earlier this month that killed at least 11 people, marking a significant escalation in fraught relations between the neighbors.

The development came after the top Iranian diplomat, Hossein Amirabdollahian, held talks in Islamabad

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with his Pakistani counterpart, Jalil Abbas Jilani. The Iranian foreign minister also met with Pakistan's caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul-Haq-Kakar.

Iran-Pakistan ties were dramatically imperiled on Jan. 17, when Iran launched airstrikes in Pakistan's restive southwestern Baluchistan province, targeting what Tehran said were hideouts of the anti-Iran Sunni militant group Jaish al-Adl, or the Army of Justice. Pakistan said two children were killed and three others were wounded.

Angered over the strikes, Pakistan recalled its ambassadors from Tehran and launched airstrikes against alleged militant hideouts inside Iran, in the Sistan and Baluchestan province, killing at least nine people. Islamabad said it was targeting Baluch militant groups with separatist goals.

At a joint news conference later Monday, Amirabdollahian and Jilani said they would work through existing channels in their leadership, diplomatic and military levels to cooperate with each other.

Jilani said the two countries were able to bring the "situation back to normal in the shortest possible time" after the airstrikes because both sides had agreed to resume dialogue to resolve all issues.

"Terrorism poses a common challenge to our countries," Jilani said and stressed that "respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity remains the immutable and foundational principle of this cooperation" between the neighbors.

He announced regular future meetings at top ministerial levels and also between liaison officers.

Iran and Pakistan "strongly respect sovereignty and territorial integrity of each other," Amirabdollahian. "We will tell all terrorists that we will not ... provide them with any opportunity to endanger our common security."

Amirabdollahian said Pakistan and Iran will also set up free trade economic zones near the border regions to enhance their bilateral trade.

Iran and nuclear-armed Pakistan have long regarded each other with suspicion over militant attacks on their sides of the border. Experts say the tit-for-tat strikes this month were at least partially prompted by internal political pressures though they also raised the threat of violence spreading across the Middle East, already unsettled by Israel's war with Hamas in Gaza.

During his visit, Amirabdollahian was also expecting to brief his hosts about an incident Saturday in which unknown gunmen shot and killed at least four Pakistani laborers and wounded three others in Iran's Sistan and Baluchestan province. Pakistan has condemned the killings, describing the attack as "horrifying and despicable".

Relatives of the slain Pakistanis rallied on Sunday, demanding that the bodies of their loved ones be brought home. Pakistan said arrangements were being made for that with Iran's help and that the three wounded workers were being treated at an Iranian hospital.

Yemen's Houthi rebels say they attacked US warship without evidence; American official rejects claim

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Yemen's Houthi rebels said they attacked a U.S. Navy mobile base at sea Monday without offering evidence, something immediately rejected by an American defense official.

Houthi military spokesperson Brig. Gen. Yahya Saree claimed the group fired a missile at the USS Lewis B. Puller in the Gulf of Aden. The Puller, which serves as a floating landing base, had been earlier stationed in the Arabian Sea as part of American efforts to curtail Houthi attacks on commercial shipping through the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.

Houthi attacks will continue "until the aggression is stopped, and the siege is lifted on the people of Palestine in the Gaza Strip," Saree said in the statement.

A U.S. defense official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss intelligence matters, said there had been no reported attack on the Puller. However, the Houthis have previously launched missiles that did not reach their intended target, instead crashing onto the land or sea.

The Puller served as a mobile base for the U.S. Navy SEALs who conducted a Jan. 11 operation seizing

Iranian-made ballistic missile and cruise missile components believed to be bound for Yemen. Two SEALs went missing in the operation and are presumed to have died.

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

The Houthis hit a commercial vessel with a missile on Friday, sparking a fire that burned for hours.

Dying thief who stole 'Wizard of Oz' ruby slippers from Minnesota museum will likely avoid prison

By STEVE KARNOWSKI Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — A dying thief who confessed to stealing a pair of ruby slippers that Judy Garland wore in "The Wizard of Oz" because he wanted to pull off "one last score" is expected to stay out of prison after he's sentenced Monday.

Terry Jon Martin, 76, stole the slippers in 2005 from the Judy Garland Museum in the late actor's hometown of Grand Rapids, Minnesota. He gave into temptation after an old mob associate told him the shoes had to be adorned with real jewels to justify their \$1 million insured value, his attorney revealed in a memo to the federal court ahead of his sentencing in Duluth.

The FBI recovered the shoes in 2018 when someone else tried to claim a reward. Martin wasn't charged with stealing them until last year.

He pleaded guilty in October to theft of a major artwork, admitting to using a hammer to smash the glass of the museum door and display case to take the slippers. But his motivation remained mostly a mystery until defense attorney Dane DeKrey revealed it this month.

Martin, who lives near Grand Rapids, said at the October hearing that he hoped to remove what he thought were real rubies from the shoes and sell them. But a person who deals in stolen goods, known as a fence, informed him the rubies were glass, Martin said. So he got rid of the slippers.

DeKrey wrote in his memo that Martin's unidentified former mob associate persuaded him to steal the slippers as "one last score," even though Martin had seemed to have "finally put his demons to rest" after finishing his last prison term nearly 10 years ago.

"At first, Terry declined the invitation to participate in the heist. But old habits die hard, and the thought of a 'final score' kept him up at night," DeKrey wrote. "After much contemplation, Terry had a criminal relapse and decided to participate in the theft."

Both sides are recommending that Chief U.S. District Judge Patrick Schiltz sentence Martin to time served because he is housebound in hospice care and is expected to die within six months. He requires constant oxygen therapy for chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder and was in a wheelchair when he pleaded guilty.

Federal sentencing guidelines would normally recommend a sentence of about 4 1/2 years to 6 years, though someone with Martin's criminal history could get an even longer term. But his health "is simply too fragile," prosecutors wrote in a court filing. Another prosecution filing said both sides agreed he should be ordered to pay \$23,500 in restitution to the museum, even though he apparently does not have the money.

According to DeKrey, Martin had no idea about the cultural significance of the ruby slippers and had never seen "The Wizard of Oz." Instead, DeKrey said, the "old Terry" with a lifelong history involving burglary and receiving stolen property beat out the "new Terry" who had become "a contributing member of society" after his 1996 release from prison.

After the fence told Martin the rubies were fake, DeKrey wrote, he gave the slippers to his old mob associate and told him he never wanted to see them again. The attorney said Martin never heard from the man again. Martin has refused to identify anyone else who was involved in the theft, and nobody else has ever been charged in the case.

The FBI never disclosed exactly how it tracked down the slippers. The bureau said a man approached the insurer in 2017 and claimed he could help recover them but demanded more than the \$200,000 reward

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being offered. The slippers were recovered during an FBI sting in Minneapolis the next year.

Federal prosecutors have put the slippers' market value at about \$3.5 million.

In the classic 1939 musical, Garland's character, Dorothy, had to click the heels of her ruby slippers three times and repeat, "There's no place like home," to return to Kansas from Oz. She wore several pairs during filming, but only four authentic pairs are known to remain.

Hollywood memorabilia collector Michael Shaw had loaned one pair to the museum when Martin stole them. The other three are held by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, the Smithsonian Museum of American History and a private collector.

Garland was born Frances Gumm in 1922. She lived in Grand Rapids, about 200 miles (320 kilometers) north of Minneapolis, until she was 4, when her family moved to Los Angeles. She died in 1969.

The Judy Garland Museum, located in the house where she lived, says it has the world's largest collection of Garland and Wizard of Oz memorabilia.

The UK says it will ban disposable vapes and curb candy-flavored e-cigarettes aimed at kids

LONDON (AP) — The British government says it will ban the sale of disposable vapes and limit their cornucopia of flavors in an effort to prevent children becoming addicted to nicotine. It also plans to stick to a contentious proposal to ban today's young people from ever buying cigarettes.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is due to announce details of the plan on Monday.

It is currently illegal to sell vapes or tobacco to children under 18 in the U.K., but officials say that youth vaping has tripled in the past three years, and that cheap, colorful disposable vapes are a "key driver."

As well as banning disposable vapes, the government says it will "restrict flavors which are specifically marketed at children" and ensure that manufacturers put vapes in "less visually appealing packaging."

"As any parent or teacher knows, one of the most worrying trends at the moment is the rise in vaping among children, and so we must act before it becomes endemic," Sunak said.

"The long-term impacts of vaping are unknown and the nicotine within them can be highly addictive, so while vaping can be a useful tool to help smokers quit, marketing vapes to children is not acceptable."

Sunak's government also said it will push on with a plan announced last year to gradually raise the minimum age to buy cigarettes, so that no one born after Jan. 1, 2009 can ever legally buy them.

The idea has been welcomed by health experts, but outraged some members of the Conservative Party who view it as excessive state intervention. The plan was modeled on a proposal in New Zealand that was scrapped late last year after a change of government in that country.

The number of people in the U.K. who smoke has declined by two-thirds since the 1970s, but some 6.4 million people, or about 13% of the population, still smoke, according to official figures.

Biden says US 'shall respond' after drone strike by Iran-backed group kills 3 US troops in Jordan

By ZEKE MILLER and LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — President Joe Biden said Sunday that the U.S. "shall respond" after three American troops were killed and dozens more were injured in an overnight drone strike in northeast Jordan near the Syrian border. Biden blamed Iran-backed militias for the first U.S. fatalities after months of strikes by such groups against American forces across the Middle East since the start of the Israel-Hamas war.

Biden, who was traveling in South Carolina, asked for a moment of silence during an appearance at a Baptist church's banquet hall.

"We had a tough day last night in the Middle East. We lost three brave souls in an attack on one of our bases," he said. After the moment of silence, Biden added, "and we shall respond."

With an increasing risk of military escalation in the region, U.S. officials were working to conclusively identify the precise group responsible for the attack, but they have assessed that one of several Iranian-

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backed groups was behind it.

Biden said in a written statement that the United States "will hold all those responsible to account at a time and in a manner (of) our choosing." Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said "we will take all necessary actions to defend the United States, our troops, and our interests."

Iran-backed fighters in east Syria began evacuating their posts, fearing U.S. airstrikes, according to Omar Abu Layla, a Europe-based activist who heads the Deir Ezzor 24 media outlet. He told The Associated Press that the areas are the strongholds of Mayadeen and Boukamal.

U.S. Central Command said at least 34 troops were injured by the one-way attack drone, with eight flown out of Jordan for follow-up care. It described the eight as being in stable condition.

The large drone struck a logistics support base in Jordan known as Tower 22. It is along the Syrian border and is used largely by troops involved in the advise-and-assist mission for Jordanian forces.

Central Command said approximately 350 U.S. Army and Air Force personnel were deployed to the base. The three who were killed and most of the wounded were Army soldiers, according to several U.S. officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity to give details not yet made public.

The small installation, which Jordan does not publicly disclose, includes U.S. engineering, aviation, logistics and security troops. Austin said the troops were deployed there "to work for the lasting defeat of ISIS." Three officials said the drone struck near the troops' sleeping quarters, which they said explained the high casualty count.

The U.S. military base at al-Tanf in Syria is just 20 kilometers (12 miles) north of Tower 22. The Jordanian installation provides a critical logistical hub for U.S. forces in Syria, including those at al-Tanf, which is near where the borders of Iraq, Syria and Jordan intersect.

In a statement on Jordan's state-run Petra news agency, the country "condemned the terrorist attack" that targeted the U.S. troops. That report described the drone strike as targeting "an outpost on the border with Syria" and said it did not wound any Jordanian troops.

"Jordan will continue to counter terrorism and the smuggling of drugs and weapons across the Syrian border into Jordan, and will confront with firmness and determination anyone who attempts to attack the security of the kingdom," the statement attributed to Muhannad Mubaidin, a government spokesman, said.

U.S. troops long have used Jordan, a kingdom bordering Iraq, Israel, the Palestinian territory of the West Bank, Saudi Arabia and Syria, as a basing point. Some 3,000 American troops typically are stationed across Jordan.

Since the war in Gaza began Oct. 7, Iranian-backed militias have struck American military installations in Iraq more than 60 times and in Syria more than 90 times, with a mix of drones, rockets, mortars and ballistic missiles. The attack Sunday was the first targeting American troops in Jordan during the Israel-Hamas war and the first to result in the loss of American lives. Scores of U.S. personnel have been wounded, including some with traumatic brain injuries, during the attacks.

The militias have said that their strikes are in retaliation for Washington's support for Israel in the war in Gaza and that they aim to push U.S. forces out of the region.

On Monday, Iran's foreign ministry dismissed the U.S. accusation that Tehran was behind the drone strike," according to the official IRNA news agency. It quoted ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani as saying that the "Islamic Republic of Iran has no role in decisions by resistance groups on how they support the Palestinian nation or defend their people."

Iran, Kanaani said, is closely watching developments in the region and stressed that the "responsibility for the consequences of provocative accusations against Iran will be on those who raise the baseless allegations."

The U.S. in recent months has struck targets in Iraq, Syria and Yemen to respond to attacks on American forces in the region and to deter Iran-backed Houthi rebels from continuing to threaten commercial shipping in the Red Sea.

"I am confident the Biden Administration will respond in a deliberate and proportional manner," said Sen. Jack Reed, D-R.I., who heads the Senate Armed Services Committee.

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Republicans in Congress said the administration's approach had failed to deter America's adversaries in the region.

"We need a major reset of our Middle East policy to protect our national security interests," said Republican Rep. Michael McCaul of Texas, chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. Sen. Lindsay Graham, R-S.C., went further, urging the administration "to strike targets of significance inside Iran, not only as reprisal for the killing of our forces, but as deterrence against future aggression. The only thing the Iranian regime understands is force."

Biden, who was in Columbia, South Carolina, on Sunday, was briefed in the morning by Austin, national security adviser Jake Sullivan, and principal deputy national security adviser Jon Finer, White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said. In the afternoon, he met virtually with Vice President Kamala Harris and his national security team for an update.

The president, in the written statement, called it a "despicable and wholly unjust attack" and said the service members were "risking their own safety for the safety of their fellow Americans, and our allies and partners with whom we stand in the fight against terrorism. It is a fight we will not cease."

Syria is still in the midst of a civil war and long has been a launch pad for Iranian-backed forces there, including the Lebanese militia Hezbollah. Iraq has multiple Iranian-backed Shiite militias operating there as well.

Jordan, a staunch Western ally and a crucial power in Jerusalem for its oversight of holy sites there, is suspected of launching airstrikes in Syria to disrupt drug smugglers, including one that killed nine people earlier this month.

An umbrella group for Iran-backed factions known as the Islamic Resistance in Iraq earlier claimed launching explosive drone attacks targeting three areas in Syria, as well as one inside of "occupied Palestine." The group has claimed responsibility for dozens of attacks against bases housing U.S. troops in Iraq and Syria since the Israel-Hamas war began.

Three officials with Iran-backed militias in Iraq, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the matter with journalists, said the drone attack against the base in Jordan was launched by one of the Iraqi groups. No faction has yet officially claimed responsibility.

Officials said the U.S. military is not tracking any other attacks on its forces Sunday in the region.

Taking away Trump's business empire would stand alone under New York fraud law

By BERNARD CONDON Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Within days, Donald Trump could potentially have his sprawling real estate business empire ordered "dissolved" for repeated misrepresentations on financial statements to lenders, adding him to a short list of scam marketers, con artists and others who have been hit with the ultimate punishment for violating New York's powerful anti-fraud law.

An Associated Press analysis of nearly 70 years of civil cases under the law showed that such a penalty has only been imposed a dozen previous times, and Trump's case stands apart in a significant way: It's the only big business found that was threatened with a shutdown without a showing of obvious victims and major losses.

Lawyers for the state in Trump's monthslong civil trial have argued that the principles of fair play in business alone are enough to justify a harsh penalty, but even they aren't calling for the prospect of liquidation of his businesses and properties raised by a judge. And some legal experts worry that if the judge goes out of his way to punish the former president with that worst-case scenario, it could make it easier for courts to wipe out companies in the future.

"This is a basically a death penalty for a business," said Columbia University law professor Eric Talley. "Is he getting his just desserts because of the fraud, or because people don't like him?"

AP's review of nearly 150 reported cases since New York's "repeated fraud" statute was passed in 1956 showed that nearly every previous time a company was taken away, victims and losses were key factors.

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Customers had lost money or bought defective products or never received services ordered, leaving them cheated and angry.

What's more, businesses were taken over almost always as a last resort to stop a fraud in progress and protect potential victims. They included a phony psychologist who sold dubious treatments, a fake lawyer who sold false claims he could get students into law school, and businessmen who marketed financial advice but instead swindled people out of their home deeds.

In Trump's case, his company stopped sending exaggerated financial figures about his net worth to Deutsche Bank and others at least two years ago, but a court-appointed monitor noted that was only after he was sued and that other financial documents continued to contain errors and misrepresentations.

And though the bank offered Trump lower interest rates because he had agreed to personally guarantee the loans with his own money, it's not clear how much better the rates were because of the inflated figures. The bank never complained, and it's unclear how much it lost, if anything. Bank officials called to testify couldn't say for sure if Trump's personal statement of worth had any impact on the rates.

"This sets a horrible precedent," said Adam Leitman Bailey, a New York real estate lawyer who once successfully sued a Trump condo building for misrepresenting sales to lure buyers.

Added University of Michigan law professor William Thomas, "Who suffered here? We haven't seen a long list of victims."

'DISSOLUTION' OF AN EMPIRE?

Trump, the Republican presidential frontrunner, has focused his ire at potentially losing his business at both the Democratic New York attorney general who brought the case and the judge presiding over it.

In an order last September that's currently under appeal, State Supreme Court Judge Arthur Engoron said Trump had indeed committed fraud and should have the state certificates needed to run many of his New York companies revoked. He said Trump should then be stripped of control over those companies, which are the official owners of his Fifth Avenue headquarters and other marquee properties, and have them turned over to a receiver who will manage the "dissolution" of them.

What the judge left unclear is what he meant by "dissolution," whether that referred to the liquidation of entities that control properties or the properties themselves. Asked specifically in court whether Trump's buildings would be literally sold off as in a bankruptcy, Engoron said he would clarify at a later date.

In a worst case, as interpreted by legal experts, Engoron could decide dissolution means stripping the real estate mogul of not only of his New York holdings such as Trump Tower and his 40 Wall Street skyscraper, but his Mar-a-Lago club in Florida, a Chicago hotel and condo building, and several golf clubs, including ones in Miami, Los Angeles and Scotland.

For her part, New York Attorney General Letitia James has asked that Trump be banned from doing business in New York and pay \$370 million, what she estimates is saved interest and other "ill-gotten gains." But she never asked for a property sale and may not even want one. Said one of her lawyers, Kevin Wallace, in his closing argument, "I don't think we are looking for anything that would cause the liquidation of business."

Engoron said that by Jan. 31 he will issue a ruling that is expected to decide on the cash penalty and business ban and clarify his "dissolution" order.

A HISTORY OF PUNISHMENTS

Notably, New York's anti-fraud statute, known as Executive Law 63(12), is clear that a finding of fraud does not require intent to deceive or that anyone actually gets duped or loses money. The attorney general must only show "repeated fraudulent or illegal acts."

But the AP analysis, based on a search of reported 63(12) cases in legal databases LexisNexis and Westlaw, found that victims and losses were factors when it came to deciding whether to take over a business.

A breast cancer nonprofit was shut down a dozen years ago, for instance, for using nearly all its \$9 million in donations to pay for director salaries, perks and other expenses, instead of funding free mammograms, research and help for survivors.

A private equity firm faking big investment success was closed down after stealing millions of dollars

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from thousands of investors.

A mental health facility was shuttered for looting \$4 million from public funds while neglecting patients. There may be more dissolved companies than AP found. Legal experts caution that some 63(12) cases never show up in legal databases because they were settled, dropped or otherwise not reported.

Still, the only case the AP found of a business dissolved under the anti-fraud law without citing actual victims or losses was a relatively small company closed in 1972 for writing term papers for college students. In that case, the attorney general said the victim was "the integrity of the educational process."

This is not Trump's first run-in with New York's anti-fraud law. His nonprofit Trump Foundation agreed to shut down in 2018 over allegations he misused funds for political and business interests. And his Trump University was sued under the law in 2013 for allegedly misleading thousands of students with false promises of success but it had closed before it could be shuttered by the courts. Trump eventually settled this and related cases for \$25 million.

Decades of 63(12) legal history also showed many cases where defendants socked customers with big losses and still got to keep running their businesses.

A judge in 2001 declined to appoint a receiver to take over a porn site despite millions of dollars of illegal credit card charges to hundreds of customers who thought they were getting "free tours." In fact, the owners tried to cover up their tricks and shifted money overseas. Still, the judge said appointing a receiver was an "extraordinary remedy" that should be used sparingly and that a preliminary injunction was good enough. Years later, prosecutors in a separate criminal case said the Gambino mob family was running the business and put several operators in prison.

An auto lender that allegedly charged hidden, usurious interest rates got to stay in business last year if it paid a fine and didn't commit fraud in the future.

And a judge refused a request to shut down a river rafting company in 2011 after a customer drowned and the attorney general showed it was repeatedly using unlicensed guides or none at all. Instead, he ordered only that the owner post a \$50,000 bond and clean up his act. The company is still being run, under a different name, by the same family today.

TRUMP'S CASE

Trump's case involved 11 years of financial statements with values based on disputed and sometimes outright false descriptions of properties used as collateral should his loans go bust.

Among them: Trump exaggerated the size of his Manhattan penthouse apartment by three times. He listed unfinished buildings as if they were complete, and apartments under rent-control as if they were free of such rules. He showed restricted funds as if they were liquid cash. And he portrayed Mar-a-Lago as if it could be converted to a residence even though that is prohibited in its deed.

In making her case against Trump, Letitia James called to the stand a lending expert who estimated that Deutsche Bank gave up \$168 million in extra interest on its Trump loans, basing his calculations as if Trump never offered a personal guarantee.

But Trump did offer a guarantee, even if his estimate of his personal wealth was exaggerated. In fact, the bank made its own estimates of Trump's personal wealth, at times lopping billions from Trump's figures, and still decided to lend to him.

And testimony from Deutsche officials responsible for the loans suggested that deciding the right rate at which to lend, even absent Trump's personal guarantee, isn't so simple.

The Deutsche unit making the Trump business loans wasn't the typical lending unit, but its private wealth division. That group often lends to rich clients not only to earn interest but to help its chances of winning the lucrative business of managing their vast personal investments and getting them to buy other bank services — something that testimony showed Deutsche was clearly hoping to do with the ex-president.

Trump has repeatedly said in impromptu rants at his trial that the case is a meritless, political "witch hunt" because he is richer than the statements sent to banks suggest, and lenders didn't care about those figures anyway because they always did their own analysis, always got paid back in full and continued to lend to him.

"What's happened here, sir, is a fraud on me. I am an innocent man," Trump said in a six-minute statement in court earlier this month before the judge cut him off.

A POTENTIAL COMPROMISE

To be sure, the attorney general's office has argued that there are larger issues than victim losses at play in Trump's case.

When big loans are issued with an inaccurate picture of risk, said state lawyer Kevin Wallace, it damages the public and business community, "distorts the market" and "prices out honest borrowers."

Plus, Wallace suggested, letting such lies to banks slide if those banks don't take legal action on their own would amount to saying, "if you are rich enough, you are going to be allowed to do it."

Or as New York lawyer and Fordham University adjunct professor Jerry H. Goldfeder put it, "Just because no one is complaining doesn't mean there hasn't been a fraud."

In a footnote in a 94-page summary document filed earlier this month, Letitia James suggested a compromise decision for Engoron: Appoint an independent monitor to oversee Trump's operations for five years, after which the court could decide whether to revoke his business certificates and possibly put him out of business.

University of Michigan's Thomas says he thinks Engoron may pull back from his shutdown order, but he is still concerned.

"Those who want to see Donald Trump suffer by any means necessary," he said, "risk ignoring the very commitment to a rule of law that they accuse him of flouting."

North Korea says leader Kim supervised tests of cruise missiles designed to be fired from submarines

By KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un supervised test-firings of new cruise missiles designed to be launched from submarines and also reviewed efforts to build a nuclear-powered submarine while reiterating his goal of building a nuclear-armed navy to counter what he portrays as growing external threats, state media said Monday.

The report came a day after South Korea's military said it detected North Korea firing multiple cruise missiles over waters near the eastern port of Sinpo, where the North has a major shipyard developing submarines. It was the latest in a streak of weapons demonstrations by North Korea amid increasing tensions with the United States, South Korea and Japan.

North Korea's official newspaper Rodong Sinmun published photos of what appeared to be at least two missiles fired separately. Both created grayish-white clouds as they broke the water surface and soared into the air at an angle of around 45 degrees, which possibly suggests they were fired from torpedo launch tubes.

State media said the missiles were Pulhwasal-3-31, a new type of weapon first tested last week in land-based launches from North Korea's western coast.

The reports implied that two missiles were fired during the test. KCNA said the missiles flew more than two hours before accurately striking an island target, but it did not specify the vessel used for the launches. North Korea in past years has fired missiles both from developmental, missile-firing submarines and underwater test platforms built on barges.

Lee Sung Joon, spokesperson of South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the South Korean and U.S. militaries were analyzing the launches, including the possibility that the North exaggerated the flight times.

In recent years, North Korea has tested a variety of missiles designed to be fired from submarines as it pursues the ability to conduct nuclear strikes from underwater. In theory, such capacity would bolster its deterrent by ensuring a survivable capability to retaliate after absorbing a nuclear attack on land.

Missile-firing submarines would also add a maritime threat to the North's growing collection of solid-fuel weapons fired from land vehicles that are designed to overwhelm missile defenses of South Korea, Japan and the United States.

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Still, it would take considerable time, resources and technological improvements for the heavily sanctioned nation to build a fleet of at least several submarines that could travel quietly and execute attacks reliably, analysts say.

The North's official Korean Central News Agency said Kim expressed satisfaction after the missiles accurately hit their sea targets during Sunday's test.

He then issued unspecified important tasks for "realizing the nuclear weaponization of the navy and expanding the sphere of operation," which he described as crucial goals considering the "prevailing situation and future threats," the report said. KCNA said Kim was also briefed on efforts to develop a nuclear-propelled submarine and other advanced naval vessels.

Kim issued similar comments about a nuclear-armed navy in September while attending the launching ceremony of what the North described as a new submarine capable of firing tactical nuclear weapons from underwater. He said then that the country was pursuing a nuclear-propelled submarine and that it plans to remodel existing submarines and surface vessels so they can handle nuclear weapons.

Nuclear-propelled submarines can quietly travel long distances and approach enemy shores to deliver strikes, which would bolster Kim's declared aim of building a nuclear arsenal that could viably threaten the U.S. mainland. But experts say such vessels are likely unfeasible for the North without external assistance in the near-term.

North Korea has an estimated 70 to 90 diesel-powered submarines in one of the world's largest submarine fleets. But they are mostly aging vessels capable of launching only torpedoes and mines.

South Korea's military said the submarine unveiled by North Korea in September, the "Hero Kim Kun Ok," didn't look ready for operational duty and suggested the North was exaggerating its capabilities.

The submarine appeared to have at least 10 launch tubes possibly designed for missiles. The South's Joint Chiefs of Staff said that the North would have needed to increase the size of the bridge and other parts of the original vessel to accommodate missile launch systems, but that the appearance of the vessel suggested it could "not be operated normally."

Tensions on the Korean Peninsula have increased in recent months as Kim accelerates his weapons development and issues provocative threats of nuclear conflict with the U.S. and its Asian allies.

The U.S., South Korea and Japan in response have been expanding their combined military exercises, which Kim condemns as invasion rehearsals, and sharpening their deterrence strategies built around nuclear-capable U.S. assets.

The recent cruise missile launches followed a Jan. 14 test firing of North Korea's first solid-fuel intermediate-range ballistic missile, which reflected Kim's efforts to expand his arsenal of weapons designed to overwhelm missile defenses in South Korea and Japan and remote U.S. targets in the Pacific, including Guam.

Republican legislatures in some states are trying to keep abortion off the ballot

By CHRISTINE FERNANDO Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Legislative efforts in Missouri and Mississippi are attempting to prevent voters from having a say over abortion rights, building on anti-abortion strategies seen in other states, including last year in Ohio.

Democrats and abortion rights advocates say the efforts are evidence that Republican lawmakers and abortion opponents are trying to undercut democratic processes meant to give voters a direct role in forming state laws.

"They're scared of the people and their voices, so their response is to prevent their voices from being heard," said Laurie Bertram Roberts, executive director of Mississippi Reproductive Freedom Fund. "There's nothing democratic about that, and it's the same blueprint we've seen in Ohio and all these other states, again and again."

Since the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the constitutional right to abortion in 2022, voters in seven

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states have either protected abortion rights or defeated attempts to curtail them in statewide votes. Democrats have pledged to make the issue a central campaign topic this year for races up and down the ballot.

A proposal passed Wednesday by the Mississippi House would ban residents from placing abortion initiatives on the statewide ballot. Mississippi has among the toughest abortion restrictions in the country, with the procedure banned except to save the life of the woman or in cases of rape or incest.

In response to the bill, Democratic Rep. Cheikh Taylor said direct democracy "shouldn't include terms and conditions."

"Don't let anyone tell you this is just about abortion," Taylor said. "This is about a Republican Party who thinks they know what's best for you better than you know what's best for you. This is about control. So much for liberty and limited government."

The resolution is an attempt to revive a ballot initiative process in Mississippi, which has been without one since 2021 when the state Supreme Court ruled that the process was invalid because it required people to gather signatures from the state's five previous U.S. House districts. Mississippi dropped to four districts after the 2000 census, but the initiative language was never updated.

Republican Rep. Fred Shanks said House Republicans would not have approved the resolution, which will soon head to the Senate, without the abortion exemption. Some House Republicans said voters should not be allowed to vote on changing abortion laws because Mississippi originated the legal case that overturned *Roe v. Wade*.

"It took 50 years ... to overturn *Roe v. Wade*," said Mississippi House Speaker Jason White, a Republican. "We weren't going to let it just be thrown out the window by folks coming in from out of state, spending 50 million bucks and running an initiative through."

But Mississippi Democrats and abortion access organizations panned the exemption as limiting the voice of the people.

"This is an extremely undemocratic way to harm access to reproductive health care," said Sofia Tomov, operations coordinator with Access Reproductive Care Southeast, a member of the Mississippi Abortion Access Coalition. "It's infringing on people's ability to participate in the democratic process."

In Missouri, one of several states where an abortion rights initiative could go before voters in the fall, a plan supported by anti-abortion groups would require initiatives to win a majority vote in five of the state's eight congressional districts, in addition to a simple statewide majority.

The proposal comes days after a Missouri abortion-rights campaign launched its ballot measure effort aiming to enshrine abortion rights into the state constitution. Missouri abortion rights groups also have criticized Republican Secretary of State Jay Ashcroft, saying he is attempting to impede the initiative by manipulating the measure's ballot summary. A Missouri appeals court recently found the summaries were politically partisan and misleading.

When asked during a recent committee hearing if the GOP proposal was an attempt to get rid of direct democracy, Republican state Rep. Ed Lewis said "I think that our founding fathers were about as fearful of direct democracy as we should be. That's why they created a republic."

Sam Lee, lobbyist for Campaign Life Missouri, testified on Tuesday for the need for provisions like this that make sure "the rights of the minority aren't trampled on."

"The concern of our founders, and the concern of many people throughout the decades and years, is to avoid having a tyranny of the majority," he said.

Democratic Senate Minority Leader John Rizzo said controlling who can vote and on what subjects has been "the highest priority of the Republican Party for the last 20 years."

"This is how democracies die," he said in an interview. "We are watching it in real time. This is the scariest moment that I've seen in my lifetime."

Democratic Rep. Joe Adams criticized the plan in part by alleging that the state's congressional and legislative districts are gerrymandered to favor Republicans. That would make it nearly impossible for an abortion measure to be approved under the proposed legislation.

Attempts to keep abortion measures off the ballot in Missouri and Mississippi follow a similar blueprint

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in other states to target the ballot initiative process, a form of direct democracy available to voters in only about half the states.

Florida's Republican attorney general has asked the state Supreme Court to keep a proposed abortion rights amendment off the ballot as an abortion-rights coalition this month reached the necessary number of signatures to qualify it for the 2024 ballot.

In Nevada, a judge on Tuesday approved an abortion-rights ballot measure petition as eligible for signature-gathering, striking down a legal challenge by anti-abortion groups attempting to prevent the question from going before voters.

Ohio abortion rights advocates have said last year's statewide vote to enshrine abortion rights in the state constitution was as much about abortion as it was a referendum on democracy itself. They said Republicans tried to obstruct the democratic process before the vote and attempted to ignore the will of voters after the amendment passed.

Ohio Republicans called a special election in August attempting to raise the threshold for passing future constitutional amendments from a simple majority to 60%. That effort was defeated at the polls and was widely seen as aiming to undermine the abortion amendment.

After Ohio voters approved the abortion protections last year, Republican lawmakers pledged to block the amendment from reversing the state's restrictions. Some proposed preventing Ohio courts from interpreting any cases related to the amendment.

"It wasn't just about abortion," Deirdre Schifeling, chief political and advocacy officer of the ACLU, said last fall after the Ohio amendment passed. "It's about, 'Will the majority be heard?'"

Brock Purdy, 49ers rally from 17 points down, beat Lions 34-31 to advance to Super Bowl

By JOSH DUBOW AP Pro Football Writer

SANTA CLARA, Calif. (AP) — Brock Purdy and the San Francisco 49ers were on the brink, needing a spark to overcome a big deficit and avoid a third straight loss in the conference title game.

Brandon Aiyuk delivered with an improbable catch that helped save San Francisco's season.

Purdy's 51-yard pass that deflected off a defender's facemask into Aiyuk's hands helped the Niners rally from 17 points down at halftime to beat the Detroit Lions 34-31 on Sunday and reach the Super Bowl.

The 49ers (14-5) scored 17 points in an eight-minute span of the third quarter to tie the NFC championship game and then pulled away in the fourth quarter to earn a rematch against Kansas City after losing to the Chiefs in the Super Bowl four years ago.

"No one was rah-rah," Purdy said. "No one was freaking out. It's football. There's a lot of experienced guys on this team, veteran guys who have been in crazy situations. We were just like, 'We have to do our job.'"

San Francisco mounted the fourth comeback ever from 17 points down or more in a conference title game thanks to some big plays by Purdy and bad mistakes from the Lions (14-6), including two failed fourth downs in field-goal range. Detroit fell short of reaching the first Super Bowl in franchise history.

"We're not going out like this," coach Kyle Shanahan said of the mindset at halftime. "Guys didn't want today to be the last day. We put ourselves in a hole. They played like it in the second half and we were able to get the ball to bounce the right way and we made up for what we did in the first half."

After being questioned about whether he could lead a comeback, Purdy has now done it twice in as many weeks. He engineered a game-winning drive in the fourth quarter to beat Green Bay last week and then had an even bigger comeback against the Lions.

He finished with 267 yards passing and a touchdown, along with 48 yards rushing thanks to a pair of 21-yard scrambles. Now the last pick of the 2022 draft will be starting in the Super Bowl against Patrick Mahomes and the Chiefs.

"All he's done since he's been here is play at an elite level," running back Christian McCaffrey said. "Everything starts with him. We're lucky he's our quarterback. He takes a lot of heat for absolutely no reason."

McCaffrey had two TD runs and little-used backup Elijah Mitchell scored on a 3-yard run to make it 34-24

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with 3:02 to play as the Niners got over the conference title game hump after losing the past two seasons.

"There's been unfinished business for a while, man. Our team was set out for this for a long time," Shanahan said. "It's been a long year to get to this point, and we got it done today. It was hard at the beginning, but the character we have in our team, the type of guys we have, we can't wait to get to Vegas, man."

The Niners blew a 10-point lead in the fourth quarter of the NFC championship game against the Los Angeles Rams two years ago and then were forced to play much of last year's title game loss at Philadelphia without a functioning quarterback after Purdy injured his elbow on the opening drive and fourth-stringer Josh Johnson left with a concussion early in the third quarter.

But San Francisco managed to make the long journey back to this stage and now is in position to deliver the franchise its record-tying sixth Super Bowl title and first since the 1994 season.

A magical season for the Lions ended in heartbreak. Detroit remains the only team to play every season of the Super Bowl era without reaching the ultimate game. This looked like it could be the year to end that drought when Detroit won back-to-back playoff games after winning just one in the previous 56 seasons.

But the Lions couldn't finish the job despite holding a 24-7 halftime lead.

"When you lose that way, it's hard," coach Dan Campbell said. "You feel like you get your heart ripped out. But I'm proud of that group and I'll go anywhere with that group."

San Francisco settled for a field goal on the opening drive of the second half before the game completely flipped in a four-minute span.

Campbell opted to go for it on fourth-and-2 from the San Francisco 28, but Josh Reynolds couldn't hold onto a pass from Jared Goff, leading to a turnover on downs.

The Lions then seemed to have a potential interception when Purdy's deep pass bit Kindle Vildor in the face mask, but the ball popped up and was caught for a spectacular 51-yard gain by Aiyuk.

"When I saw him catch that, I was like that's insane," Purdy said.

Purdy found Aiyuk three plays later for a 6-yard score.

"Before the game, a ladybug landed on my shoe. And you all know what that means," Aiyuk said. "That's all I can say. Other than that, I don't know."

Jahmyr Gibbs then fumbled on the next play from scrimmage, setting up a 1-yard run by McCaffrey to tie the game at 24.

It only got worse from there for the Lions with Reynolds dropping another pass on third down, leading to a punt that Detroit had a chance to down at the 1 but botched.

Purdy then drove the Niners to a 33-yard field goal by Jake Moody and their first lead of the game.

"Momentum certainly changed pretty quickly," Goff said. "They scored, we didn't convert the fourth down, they scored again, we turned the ball over. That little sequence right there makes it tough."

Campbell bypassed a chance at a game-tying field goal on fourth-and-3 from the Niners 30 midway through the fourth quarter. Goff threw an incomplete pass and the Niners drove to the insurance touchdown.

Goff added a TD pass to Jameson Williams with 56 seconds to play, but the 49ers recovered the onside kick to seal the win. Goff finished 25 for 41 for 273 yards and a touchdown.

San Francisco's heralded front seven had no answer in the first half for Detroit's offensive line, which repeatedly opened up big holes, giving the backs several yards even before first contact.

The Lions ran for 148 yards in the first half, getting TD runs from Williams, David Montgomery and Gibbs.

Michael Badgley added a late field goal to give Detroit a 24-7 lead at the half, tied for the second-biggest scoring output for a road team in the first half of a conference title game since the NFL-AFL merger.

Patrick Mahomes, Travis Kelce are headed back to the Super Bowl after Chiefs shut down Ravens 17-10

By NOAH TRISTER AP Sports Writer

BALTIMORE (AP) — The first quarter was vintage Patrick Mahomes, picking apart the Baltimore defense with quick passes, with Travis Kelce on the other end of several of them.

Then the Kansas City defense — now elite after some shaky seasons in the past — took over.

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Finally, when Mahomes needed one more completion to send the Chiefs back to the Super Bowl, he went deep to Marquez Valdes-Scantling, whose struggles this season were emblematic of the team's maligned receiving group.

Complete for 32 yards. Ballgame.

"The Chiefs are still the Chiefs," Kelce said emphatically.

After all the moments this season when they looked disjointed and vulnerable, the Chiefs are headed back to the Super Bowl for the fourth time in five years.

Mahomes and Kelce were at their magnificent best in the first half, and Kansas City's defense delivered another masterpiece against Lamar Jackson and the Ravens, leading the Chiefs to a 17-10 victory in the AFC championship game Sunday.

Kelce caught 11 passes for 116 yards and a touchdown, and now the big question at next month's Super Bowl in Las Vegas is whether his girlfriend, Taylor Swift, will be able to make it there in the middle of her tour. The pop star was on hand again Sunday, and it was a milestone day for the 34-year-old Kelce, who surpassed Jerry Rice's career record for postseason receptions.

Kansas City (14-6) will face San Francisco on Feb. 11, and a victory would make the Chiefs the first team to win it all in back-to-back seasons since the New England Patriots 19 years ago.

Swift's presence has turned the Chiefs into even more of a glamour team than they already were, but it's been more of a blue-collar performance on the field this season. Aside from Kelce, Mahomes' playmakers haven't been as threatening as in years past.

Only once this season has Kansas City scored more than 31 points, and a home loss on Christmas to the Las Vegas Raiders — on the same day Baltimore made a statement with a win at San Francisco — seemed to indicate that the Chiefs' days atop the AFC were numbered.

Not so fast.

Playing on the road in the playoffs for the first time with Mahomes, the Chiefs beat Buffalo and Baltimore in back-to-back weeks to win the conference.

"I've never doubted, no," coach Andy Reid said. "That's not how we roll."

The Chiefs led 17-7 at halftime, and Justin Tucker's 43-yard field goal with 2:34 to play was the only scoring of the second half. Baltimore kicked deep after that, and on third-and-9, Mahomes connected with Valdes-Scantling, who held on and knew exactly what that catch meant.

"We're going to the Super Bowl," he said. "That was it. I knew we needed one first down to get us to the goal, and they trusted me to go get one."

Mahomes went 30 of 39 for 241 yards and a touchdown.

Jackson could win his second MVP after leading Baltimore to the league's best record and point differential during the regular season, but the Ravens allowed touchdowns on the first two Kansas City possessions and appeared a bit panicky at times after that.

Baltimore (14-5) made undisciplined mistakes all game, while Kansas City looked the part of the team making its sixth straight appearance in the conference title game.

With the Ravens down by 10 in the third quarter, rookie Zay Flowers caught a 54-yard pass to the Kansas City 10 — then was flagged for taunting after the play. Moments later, he fumbled near the goal line and the Ravens ended up with no points.

That was one of several frustrating moments for Baltimore fans, whose city was hosting an AFC championship game for the first time since January 1971, when the Colts beat the Oakland Raiders.

Jackson went 20 of 37 for 272 yards and a touchdown, but Baltimore never really exploited its perceived advantage on the ground. Jackson raced under one of his own tipped passes in the first half for a 13-yard reception, but he also turned the ball over twice, including a forced pass into heavy coverage that was picked off in the end zone with 6:45 left in the game.

Once it was clear defensive coordinator Steve Spagnuolo had the upper hand against the Baltimore offense, Mahomes was happy to manage the game and avoid doing anything too risky.

"Spags, it seems like when the games get bigger, when the challenges get higher, he performs even

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better," Mahomes said.

Jackson fell to 2-4 as a starter in the postseason despite having been the top seed in the AFC twice. He made a few sensational individual plays, but the Ravens had trouble moving the ball otherwise.

"That guy was the main guy I was playing for, honestly," Ravens linebacker Patrick Queen said. "So much stuff he gets that he doesn't deserve. This was his opportunity to be able to write some of that stuff off and move on to the next thing. That's why it hurts, because you want to see people like that, teammates that you love and care about, get what they're supposed to get."

Mahomes, meanwhile, completed his first 11 pass attempts, and although the Ravens largely shut Kansas City down after that, the damage was done on a rainy day in Baltimore.

There was some chippy behavior before the game, which included Ravens defensive back Arthur Maulet and a group of Kansas City players having to be separated.

Then the Chiefs forced a three-and-out on the game's first drive and went 86 yards for the opening touchdown. Kelce caught a 13-yard pass from Mahomes over the middle on fourth-and-2. Then the star tight end beat All-Pro safety Kyle Hamilton for a 19-yard touchdown to make it 7-0.

Jackson answered in his own spectacular way. He broke free for a 21-yard run when Baltimore went for it on fourth-and-1 from its 34. Then the star quarterback ducked out of a near-sack by Leo Chenal, retreated a bit farther back and threw a 30-yard scoring strike to Flowers, who celebrated with teammates by doing the "swag surf" dance that Swift and Chiefs fans did at a recent game.

Kansas City was unbothered. Mahomes drove his team 75 yards in 9:02 — with the help of an acrobatic diving catch by Kelce on one third-down toss — and Isiah Pacheco capped the 16-play march with a 2-yard touchdown run.

The Chiefs actually missed chances to extend their lead. A sack by Charles Omenihu forced a fumble by Jackson that gave Kansas City the ball at the Baltimore 33. But Kelce was marked just short on a third-down catch, and Pacheco was stopped on the ensuing fourth down at the 13.

After a couple of personal fouls on Baltimore helped Kansas City cross midfield late in the half, the Chiefs were flagged for back-to-back holding calls, the second of which wiped out a 33-yard screen pass to Rashee Rice that would have been a touchdown.

A 9-yard pass to Kelce put Kansas City in position for Harrison Butker's 52-yard field goal that made it 17-7.

FAMILY AFFAIR

The Harbaugh brothers came up short in their attempt to sweep the college and pro championships after Jim Harbaugh coached Michigan to a national title. Jim, who then left the Wolverines to become coach of the Los Angeles Chargers, was at the game Sunday.

John Harbaugh said he was still proud of Baltimore's season.

"I feel like it was a team that had a lot of challenges. I don't think it was a team that was too highly touted coming into the season by the pundits and the prognosticators and all that, and I think they proved a lot of people wrong, all year," he said. "The quarterback made a statement all year."

INJURIES

Omenihu left with a knee injury, and star defensive tackle Chris Jones was shaken up in the fourth quarter for the Chiefs.

UP NEXT

Chiefs: The Chiefs have not played the 49ers this season. This will be a rematch of the Super Bowl four years ago, which Kansas City won 31-20.

Ravens: Baltimore knows it can win a lot of games with Jackson and his talented supporting cast, but getting past the Chiefs seems like an especially daunting task if they couldn't do it this season.

The Super Bowl is set: Mahomes and the Chiefs will face Purdy and the 49ers

By ROB MAADDI AP Pro Football Writer

Patrick Mahomes, Travis Kelce and the Kansas City Chiefs are heading to Las Vegas with a chance for a rare repeat while facing the San Francisco 49ers in a Super Bowl rematch from four years ago.

The Chiefs beat Lamar Jackson and the No. 1-seeded Baltimore Ravens 17-10 in the AFC championship game Sunday to advance to the Super Bowl for the fourth time in five years. A few hours later, Brock Purdy rallied the No. 1-seeded 49ers to a 34-31 victory over the Detroit Lions in the NFC title game.

The Chiefs (14-6) are aiming to become the first back-to-back champions since Tom Brady and the New England Patriots did it following the 2003-04 seasons.

Purdy — who was still two years away from being the last pick of the 2022 NFL draft the last time the teams played in the Super Bowl — will try to lead the 49ers (14-5) to a record-tying sixth title in their eighth appearance.

The teams meet at Allegiant Stadium on Feb. 12. The 49ers opened as 2 1/2-point favorites, according to FanDuel Sportsbook.

Mahomes and the Chiefs overcame a 20-10 fourth-quarter deficit and beat the 49ers 31-20 to give coach Andy Reid his first Super Bowl victory on Feb. 2, 2020. Brady and the Tampa Bay Buccaneers spoiled Kansas City's repeat bid the following year.

The Chiefs will become just the third team to play in four Super Bowls over a five-year span. Only the Pittsburgh Steelers in the 1970s, the Dallas Cowboys in the 1990s and the Patriots in the 2000s and 2010s won three Super Bowls in a five-year span.

Mahomes rallied the Chiefs for a 38-35 comeback win over the Philadelphia Eagles in the Super Bowl last year. They beat Miami 26-7 in the wild-card round and defeated the Bills 27-24 in Buffalo last week in Mahomes' first career playoff game on the road besides Super Bowls.

The 49ers were dominated by the Eagles in the NFC title game last year in a game that saw Purdy suffer a significant elbow injury that required surgery. He returned for the season opener and helped them earn a first-round bye. Purdy led a 24-21 comeback win over Green Bay last week and brought the Niners back from a 17-point deficit against the Lions.

Only New England and Pittsburgh have more Super Bowl wins than the San Francisco, which last won it following the 1994 season.

Reid will lead a team in the Super Bowl for the fifth time, moving into a tie with Tom Landry for third most behind Bill Belichick's nine and Don Shula's six. Reid coached the Eagles when the Patriots beat them to repeat 19 years ago.

Niners coach Kyle Shanahan returns to the Super Bowl after losing to Reid in his first crack at it. Shanahan was Atlanta's offensive coordinator when the Falcons blew a 28-3 lead against Brady and the Patriots in Super Bowl 51.

Mahomes, a two-time NFL and Super Bowl MVP, will start in his fourth Super Bowl, tied with Joe Montana, Terry Bradshaw, Peyton Manning, Roger Staubach and Jim Kelly for third-most behind Brady's 10 and John Elway's five.

The biggest question is whether Taylor Swift will make it to Las Vegas to watch her boyfriend in the Super Bowl on Feb. 11. Swift, who celebrated with Kelce on the field after the victory over the Ravens, is scheduled to perform in Japan just 24 hours before kickoff.

Bullfighting resumes in Mexico City before a full crowd while activists protest outside

By FABIOLA SÁNCHEZ Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — With protesters outside a full arena, bullfights resumed in Mexico City on Sunday after the country's highest court temporarily revoked a local ruling that sided with animal rights defenders and suspended the events for more than a year and a half.

The resumption of bullfights in the Plaza México, the largest bullfighting arena in the world, raised expectations of fans in the face of a lengthy legal battle between enthusiasts and opponents, who argue the practice violates animal welfare and affects people's rights to a healthy environment.

Bullfighting is still allowed in much of Mexico. In the capital, the legal fight for its future is full of twists and turns.

The first bullfighter to enter the ring was the renowned Mexican matador Joselito Adame, with thousands of people cheering the return of "fiesta brava," as bullfighting is also known in Spanish. "Long live freedom," some shouted as the first bull entered an arena jammed with spectators.

In all, six bulls were fought Sunday, and all were killed.

Outside, hours before the formal beginning, about 300 people gathered in front of Plaza México to protest against bullfights. Some activists yelled "Murderers!" and "The plaza is going to fall!" while others played drums or stood with signs reading "Bullfighting is sadism."

Police with shields stood by. The protest was mainly peaceful, although there were some moments of tension when some activists threw plastic bottles and stones.

"Why the bullfights were allowed to return when there is so much evidence of all the damage they do to a living being, such as the bull," questioned activist Guillermo Sánchez, who was holding up a sign that read "Sadism disguised as culture, sport and tradition."

Alfredo Barraza, another protester, said allowing bullfighting is a "setback in the fight for animal rights." Barraza, who had his face covered with a paper mask in the shape of a bull, said he hopes Mexico City will at some point "be free of violent spectacles."

Inside the Plaza, the mood was festive, with people eating, drinking and taking photos.

"I'm very excited," said Aldo Palacios, who brought his two children and other relatives to the arena, not only to see the inaugural bullfight, but also to celebrate his 42nd birthday.

In May 2022, a local court ordered an end to bullfighting activities at Plaza México in response to an injunction presented by the civil organization Justicia Justa, which defends human rights. But the activities were set to resume Sunday because the nation's Supreme Court of Justice in December revoked the suspension while the merits of the case are discussed and a decision is reached on whether bullfights affect animal welfare.

Another civil organization filed an appeal Friday on animal welfare grounds in a last-ditch effort to prevent the activity from resuming. A ruling was not expected before Sunday's event.

Animal rights groups have been gaining ground in Mexico in recent years while bullfighting followers have suffered several setbacks. In some states such as Sinaloa, Guerrero, Coahuila, Quintana Roo and the western city of Guadalajara, judicial measures now limit the activity.

Ranchers, businessmen and fans maintain that the ban on bullfights affects their rights and puts at risk several thousand jobs linked to the activity, which they say generates about \$400 million a year in Mexico. The National Association of Fighting Bull Breeders in Mexico estimates that bullfighting is responsible for 80,000 direct jobs and 146,000 indirect jobs.

The association has hosted events and workshops in recent years to promote bullfights and find new, younger fans.

Illinois election officials to weigh recommendation to remove Trump's name from March primary ballot

The Associated Press undefined

CHICAGO (AP) — Former President Donald Trump should be removed from Illinois' primary ballot, but the decision should be left to the courts, a retired judge recommended Sunday to the state's election board, arguing that it was clear Trump engaged in insurrection in the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol.

The Illinois State Board of Elections is expected to consider the recommendation Tuesday. Attorneys for Trump and citizens seeking to keep the Republican former president off the ballot presented their arguments Friday before the hearing officer, Clark Erickson. The retired longtime Kankakee County judge is a Republican.

The Illinois effort to keep Trump off the March ballot is similar to those filed in several other states. The U.S. Supreme Court is set to hear arguments next month in an historic Colorado Supreme Court ruling to remove Trump from that state's ballot. The case presents the high court with its first look at a provision of the 14th Amendment barring some people who "engaged in insurrection" from holding public office.

Erickson's 21-page recommendation concluded that a "preponderance of the evidence" presented proves that Trump engaged in insurrection.

But he said the election board can't engage in the "significant and sophisticated constitutional analysis" required to remove Trump's name before the March 19 primary.

"All in all, attempting to resolve a constitutional issue within the expedited schedule of an election board hearing is somewhat akin to scheduling a two-minute round between heavyweight boxers in a telephone booth," he wrote.

Still, Erickson noted that even if the board disagrees with his reasoning, Trump's name should be removed from the Illinois primary ballot.

The election board is split evenly between four Democrats and four Republicans.

Free Speech for People, which is leading the Illinois ballot effort, praised the recommendation from the Republican retired judge as "significant" but argued that Illinois law allows the board to make the ballot decision.

"We expect that the board and ultimately Illinois courts will uphold Judge Erickson's thoughtful analysis of why Trump is disqualified from office, but — with the greatest respect — correct him on why Illinois law authorizes that ruling," Ron Fein, legal director for the group, wrote in a Sunday statement.

Trump's campaign did not immediately return a message left Sunday.

Israel notes 'significant gaps' after cease-fire talks with US, Qatar, Egypt but says constructive

By NAJIB JOBAIN, WAFAA SHURAFa and MELANIE LIDMAN Associated Press

RAFAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israel said "significant gaps" remain after cease-fire talks Sunday with the United States, Qatar and Egypt but called them constructive and said they would continue in the week ahead, a tentative sign of progress on a potential agreement that could see Israel pause military operations against Hamas in exchange for the release of remaining hostages.

The U.S. announced its first military deaths in the region since the war began and blamed Iran-backed militants for the drone strike in Jordan that killed three American service members amid concerns about a wider conflict.

The statement from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office on the cease-fire talks did not say what the "significant gaps" were. There was no immediate statement from the other parties.

The war has killed more than 26,000 Palestinians, according to local health officials, destroyed vast swaths of Gaza and displaced nearly 85% of the territory's people. Israel says its air and ground offensive has killed more than 9,000 militants, without providing evidence. The Oct. 7 Hamas attack in southern Israel killed about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and militants took about 250 hostages.

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With Gaza's 2.3 million people in a deepening humanitarian crisis, the United Nations secretary-general called on the United States and others to resume funding the main agency providing aid to the besieged territory, after Israel accused a dozen employees of taking part in the Hamas attack that ignited the war.

Communications Director Juliette Touma warned that the agency for Palestinian refugees, known as UNRWA, would be forced to stop its support in Gaza by the end of February.

CEASE-FIRE TALKS TO CONTINUE

Sunday's intelligence meeting included CIA Director Bill Burns, the head of Israel's Mossad intelligence agency, David Barnea, Qatari Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, and Egyptian intelligence chief Abbas Kamel.

Ahead of the meeting, two senior Biden administration officials said U.S. negotiators were making progress on a potential agreement that would play out over two phases, with the remaining women, elderly and wounded hostages to be released in a first 30-day phase. It also would call for Israel to allow more humanitarian aid into Gaza. The officials requested anonymity to discuss the ongoing negotiations.

More than 100 hostages, mainly women and children, were released in November in exchange for a weeklong cease-fire and the release of 240 Palestinians imprisoned by Israel.

Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, speaking to troops, said that "these days we are conducting a negotiation process for the release of hostages" but vowed that as long as hostages remain in Gaza, "we will intensify the (military) pressure and continue our efforts — it's already happening now."

At least 17 Palestinians were killed in two Israeli airstrikes that hit apartment buildings in central Gaza, according to an Associated Press journalist who saw the bodies at a local hospital. One hit a building in Zawaida, killing 13 people, and the other an apartment block in the Nuseirat refugee camp, killing four.

Also Sunday, 10 Palestinians were killed in a strike that hit a residential building in the Shati refugee camp in Gaza City, said Dr. Moataz Harara, a physician at Shifa Hospital, where the dead were taken.

Israel's military said troops were engaging in close combat with Hamas in neighborhoods of the southern city of Khan Younis, Gaza's second-largest.

US DEATHS HIGHLIGHT REGIONAL TENSIONS

The three deaths announced by Biden were the first U.S. fatalities in months of strikes against American forces across the Middle East by Iranian-backed militias amid the war in Gaza. U.S. Central Command said 25 service members were injured.

U.S. officials were working to conclusively identify the group responsible for the attack, but assessed that one of several Iranian-backed groups was responsible. Jordanian state television quoted a government spokesperson as contending the attack happened across the border in Syria. U.S. officials insisted it took place in Jordan, which U.S. troops have long used as a basing point.

The U.S. in recent months has struck targets in Iraq, Syria and Yemen to respond to attacks on American forces and to deter Iranian-backed Houthi rebels from continuing to threaten commercial shipping in the Red Sea.

The war in Gaza has sparked concerns about a regional conflict. The United States, Israel's closest ally, has increasingly called for restraint in Gaza and for more humanitarian aid to be allowed into the territory while supporting the offensive.

A GAZA LIFELINE AT RISK OF 'COLLAPSE'

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said "the abhorrent alleged acts" of staff members accused in the Oct. 7 attack "must have consequences," but added the agency should not be penalized by the withholding of funding, and "the dire needs of the desperate populations they serve must be met."

The United States, the agency's largest donor, cut funding over the weekend, followed by eight other countries including Britain and Germany. Together, they provided nearly 60% of UNRWA's budget in 2022.

Guterres said that of the 12 employees accused, nine were immediately terminated, one was confirmed dead and two were still being identified. He said they would be held accountable, including through criminal prosecution.

UNRWA provides basic services for Palestinian families who fled or were driven out of what is now Is-

rael during the 1948 war surrounding the country's creation. The refugees and their descendants are the majority of Gaza's population.

Since the war began, most of the territory's 2.3 million people depend on the agency's programs for "sheer survival," including food and shelter, UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini said.

A quarter of Gaza's population is facing starvation as fighting and Israeli restrictions hinder the delivery of aid, which has been well below the daily average of 500 trucks before the war

In the past week, hostages' family members and supporters have blocked aid trucks from entering at the Kerem Shalom crossing. Dozens again blocked the entry on Sunday, chanting "No aid will cross until the last hostages return."

The military later declared the area around the crossing a closed military zone, which would prohibit protests there.

With Gaza's future being debated, thousands, including far-right lawmakers in Netanyahu's coalition and senior Cabinet ministers, gathered in Jerusalem to call for renewing Jewish settlement in Gaza. Settlements there were evacuated in 2005, ending a 38-year-occupation, during a unilateral withdrawal of troops that bitterly divided Israel.

Crowds chanted "death to terrorists" as far-right National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir took the stage and declared it was "time to encourage immigration" of Palestinians from Gaza.

The international community, including the U.S., has said it will oppose any attempts to expel Palestinians from Gaza. It also overwhelmingly considers settlements on occupied territory illegal.

Netanyahu has said such views do not reflect official policy and he has no plans to resettle Gaza, but he has released few details of a postwar vision for the territory.

2 masked men kill a person in attack on Catholic church in Istanbul. Officials detain 2 ISIS members

By MEHMET GUZEL Associated Press

ISTANBUL (AP) — Two masked assailants attacked a Roman Catholic church in Istanbul during a Sunday Mass, killing one person, Turkish officials said.

The armed assailants attacked the Santa Maria Church in the Sariyer district at 11:40 a.m., Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya said in a statement on the X platform. He didn't specify what kind of weapons were used or whether anyone was wounded.

Turkish authorities didn't formally identify the victim, but local media said the person killed had the initials C.T. and was 52 years old.

Hours later, Yerlikaya announced that two men he described as members of the Islamic State extremist movement had been arrested as the suspected attackers. One of the suspects is from Tajikistan and the other from Russia, he said at a news conference just after midnight.

Yerlikaya said police had raided 30 locations and detained a total of 47 people as part of the investigation into the attack.

"We will never tolerate those who try to disrupt the peace of our country — terrorists, their collaborators, both national and international criminal groups, and those who aim at our unity and solidarity," Yerlikaya said.

A short video circulating on social media apparently shows the moment of the attack, with two masked men entering the church and opening fire, with all service-goers hitting the floor. The two men then flee.

Turkish authorities instituted a media ban on coverage of the attack.

Sukru Genc, mayor of the Sariyer district where the attack took place, told the newspaper Birgun that the gunmen fled when their weapon jammed after having fired two rounds. Genc said that among the attendees was Polish Consul General Witold Lesniak and his family, who were all unharmed in the attack.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan called Lesniak and Santa Maria's priest, Rev. Anton Bulai, to offer his condolences. Istanbul Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu offered his condolences and support for religious minorities in the city, which like Turkey as a whole is primarily Muslim.

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"There are no minorities in this city or this country. We are all actual citizens," he told reporters.

Pope Francis noted the attack in remarks to the public at St. Peter's Square in Vatican City on Sunday.

"I express my closeness to the community of (the church) in Istanbul, which during the Mass suffered an armed attack with one dead and some wounded," the pontiff said.

The church is run by an Italian order of Franciscan friars. Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani said his ministry was following the situation along with the Italian Embassy in Turkey's capital, Ankara, and the consulate in Istanbul.

"I express my condolence and firm condemnation for the vile attack on Santa Maria Church," Tajani tweeted. He added that "I am certain that the Turkish authorities will arrest those responsible."

Ex-Prime Minister Alexander Stubb wins first round of Finland's presidential vote to set up a runoff

By JARI TANNER Associated Press

HELSINKI (AP) — Former Prime Minister Alexander Stubb won the first round of Finland's presidential election Sunday and will face runner-up ex-Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto in a runoff next month.

The vote largely centered on the Nordic nation's new role as a NATO front-line country with Russia, and the security situation in Europe, particularly Russia's assault on Ukraine.

With all the votes counted, Stubb led the first round with 27.2% of the votes, while Haavisto, Finland's top diplomat in 2019-2023, took second place with 25.8%. Parliamentary Speaker Jussi Halla-aho came in third with 19%, followed by Bank of Finland governor Olli Rehn with 15.3%.

The first-round election result will be officially confirmed Tuesday. The result will push the race into a runoff on Feb. 11 between Stubb and Haavisto, because none of the candidates received more than half of the votes.

"Getting such a result together with the team is heartwarming. I am grateful and humbled by it," Stubb told his supporters in an election party at a Helsinki restaurant, adding that he wasn't planning major changes in his campaign for the second round of voting.

Stubb, 55, and Haavisto, 65, were the main contenders in the election. About 4.5 million eligible voters picked a successor out of nine candidates to replace hugely popular President Sauli Niinistö, whose second six-year term expires in March. He wasn't eligible for reelection.

Initial voter turnout was 74.9%.

Stubb represents the conservative National Coalition Party and headed the Finnish government in 2014-2015 and earlier held other key Cabinet posts, while veteran politician Haavisto, an ex-U.N. diplomat and Green League member, is running for the post for the third time as an independent candidate.

Unlike in most European countries, the president of Finland holds executive power in formulating foreign and security policy, particularly when dealing with countries outside the European Union like the United States, Russia and China.

The president also acts as the supreme commander of the Finnish military, a particularly important duty in Europe's current security environment.

The main themes of the election were foreign and security policy issues like Finland's recent membership in NATO, future policies toward Russia, enhancing security cooperation with the United States and the need to continue helping Ukraine with both military and humanitarian assistance.

Finland's new head of state will start a six-year term in March in a markedly different geopolitical and security situation in Europe than did incumbent Niinistö after the 2018 election.

Abandoning decades of military nonalignment in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Finland became NATO's 31st member in April, much to the annoyance of President Vladimir Putin of Russia, which has a 1,340-kilometer (832-mile) border with the Nordic nation.

NATO membership, which has made Finland the Western military alliance's front-line country toward Russia, and the war raging in Ukraine a mere 1,000 kilometers (600 miles) away from Finland's border have boosted the president's status as a security policy leader.

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As a rule, the president represents Finland at NATO summits.

As foreign minister, Haavisto signed Finland's historic accession treaty to NATO last year and played a key role in the membership process along with Niinistö and former Prime Minister Sanna Marin.

Finland's western neighbor Sweden is set to join NATO in the near future as the final holdout, Hungary, is expected to ratify Stockholm's bid by the end of February.

Biden praises Black churches and says the world would be a different place without their example

By ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — President Joe Biden on Sunday extolled the existence of Black churches, saying the world would be a different place if they were not around to show people the "power of faith" during dark times.

The Democratic president spoke at St. John Baptist Church on the final day of a two-day visit to South Carolina designed to rally Black voters before the party's primary on Feb. 3.

Biden visited a predominantly Black barbershop and spoke at a state Democratic Party dinner after he flew in on Saturday. He capped the visit Sunday by addressing worshippers at separate churches.

The president is trying to spread the message that he's loyal to South Carolina, which saved his campaign in 2020, and that he's determined to win back Black voters here and elsewhere who were central to putting him in office but are less enthused about him this time around.

A practicing Roman Catholic who attends Mass every Sunday, Biden praised Black churches in his appearance before the Baptist congregation, saying the churches teach the "power of faith."

He asked the worshippers to imagine "what would have happened if there had been no Black church" to turn to in times of darkness.

"Well, you give us a mountaintop, you give us a promised land, you give us a dream and a faith that we shall overcome, can overcome," he said, echoing words once spoken by the late Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

"And you push us toward a more perfect union, you really do, to bend the arc of the moral universe toward justice together, and what a gift to the nation and the world you've been.

"Your prayers mean everything," Biden said.

After he spoke, Biden issued a written statement on the deaths of three U.S. service members and the injuries to many others in a drone strike in northeast Jordan near the Syrian border. He attributed the attack to Iran-backed militia groups.

Later Sunday, the president briefly addressed the drone strike and asked for a moment of silence when he appeared at the banquet hall of Brookland Baptist Church. Biden has a long-standing relationship with Pastor Charles Jackson. Jackson's wife, Robin, is first lady Jill Biden's prayer partner.

Earlier this month, Biden delivered one of his first campaign speeches of the year at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, where in 2015 nine Black parishioners were shot to death by the white stranger they had invited to join their Bible study.

Court stormings come in waves after Caitlin Clark incident. Expert says stiffer penalties are needed

By ERIC OLSON AP Sports Writer

Images of students pouring out of the stands at the final buzzer to celebrate with players on the home team following a big win have long been part of college basketball. Usually, no one gets hurt.

But court storming and the safety risks associated with it have received more scrutiny in the week since Iowa star Caitlin Clark collided with an Ohio State fan after the Buckeyes' upset of the Hawkeyes in Columbus.

There have been at least six more instances since the Clark incident and ESPN analyst Jay Bilas on Saturday called for an end to the tradition. Bilas said during the "College Gameday" show that fans should

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never be allowed on the court, and his comments went viral.

"I know it will keep happening and accept it," Bilas wrote in a text message to The Associated Press. "But it seems inevitable that something negative will happen, and we'll act surprised when it was foreseeable."

A Tulane fan was seen on video making contact with a Memphis player during a court storming in New Orleans hours after the Clark incident on Jan. 21. The Southeastern Conference levied a \$100,000 fine against South Carolina after fans rushed onto the court following an upset of Kentucky on Tuesday. Fans also stormed the court at Oregon State on Thursday and at Iowa State, Richmond and Wyoming on Saturday.

Schools are at risk of being fined by their conferences if the storming occurs before the visiting team and game officials have exited safely. Bilas and other observers call the penalties window dressing and say individuals who participate should face consequences, legal or otherwise.

Gil Fried, a business professor at the University of West Florida, provides training in crowd management and for more than 30 years has served as an expert witness in court cases involving injuries sustained at sports and entertainment venues.

Fried said ringing the court with security personnel or putting up barricades would be counterproductive because that would jeopardize people in the stands who get caught in the crush of fans pushing forward.

The best solution, he said, would be for schools to have a clearly stated policy that fans are not allowed on the court and that those who disobey could have their tickets taken away or be banned from the arena.

The challenge would be identifying and rounding up violators. Fried suggested arenas could be equipped with facial recognition technology, which is commonly used in soccer stadiums in Europe and Latin America to prevent hooliganism.

State and privacy laws in the United States could present obstacles to using the technology, and no U.S. colleges have shown interest in it for that purpose, said Micah Willbrand, chief product officer and vice president of enterprise identity for NEC, which creates facial recognition systems for soccer stadiums outside the U.S.

The court storming at Iowa State's Hilton Coliseum following Saturday's 79-75 win over No. 7 Kansas was the first in eight seasons. Security personnel in orange vests went onto the court at the final buzzer to separate the players' handshake line from fans. The Jayhawks, like all visiting teams, then exited on the side of their bench to avoid having to go through fans on the court.

Also, gates installed in front of the ISU student section funneled students in one direction instead of there being a mass flow, slowing down the rush.

Minnesota coach Ben Johnson said nothing good comes from fans mixing with opposing players.

"It takes one kid to mouth something or say something that could start something," Johnson said. "So the physical part of getting hit is one thing, but in the back of my mind it's also (that) emotions are heightened."

The SEC this year beefed up its fines for court and field storming to \$100,000 for a first offense, \$250,000 for a second and \$500,000 for a third.

SEC spokesman Herb Vincent said there is no fine if the visiting team and game officials have made a safe exit before fans reach the playing surface.

SEC fines are paid to the visiting school if the storming occurred in a conference game. For nonconference games, the money is deposited into the league's postgraduate scholarship fund. The suggestion is that it stings more for the offending school to fork over money to a conference rival.

Bilas said it's apparent fines have had little impact, noting that South Carolina President Emeritus Harris Pastides posted on social media that he was among the fans who rushed the court after the Gamecocks' win over Kentucky.

Bilas said schools use pictures of court storms to promote their programs and in recruiting and noted ESPN and other media companies feature videos of celebrating fans on the court on highlight shows.

"The fact that it is banned and SEC school officials accept and encourage it is a contradiction," Bilas texted to the AP. "I love the passion and enthusiasm, but fans now believe it is their right. It's not. At an NFL or NBA game, they'd be arrested."

Israel's president says the UN world court misrepresented his comments in its genocide ruling

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel's president on Sunday accused the U.N. world court of misrepresenting his words in a ruling that ordered Israel to take steps to protect Palestinians and prevent a genocide in the Gaza Strip.

The court's ruling on Friday cited a series of statements made by Israeli leaders as evidence of incitement and dehumanizing language against Palestinians. They included comments by President Isaac Herzog made just days after the Oct. 7 Hamas cross-border attack that triggered Israel's war against the Islamic militant group.

Hamas militants killed around 1,200 people in that attack and took about 250 others hostage. The Israeli offensive has left more than 26,000 Palestinians dead, displaced more than 80% of Gaza's inhabitants and led to a humanitarian crisis in the territory.

Talking about Gaza's Palestinians at an Oct. 12 news conference, Herzog said that "an entire nation" was responsible for the massacre, the report by the International Court of Justice noted.

But Herzog said that it ignored other comments in the same news conference in which he said "there is no excuse" for killing innocent civilians, and that Israel would respect international laws of war.

"I was disgusted by the way they twisted my words, using very, very partial and fragmented quotes, with the intention of supporting an unfounded legal contention," Herzog said Sunday.

In its ruling, the court stopped short of ordering an end to the Israeli military offensive. But it ordered Israel to do all it can to prevent death, destruction and any acts of genocide in Gaza and issued a series of orders to Israel that include an end to incitement and submitting a progress report to the court within one month.

Science sleuths are using technology to find fakery and plagiarism in published research

By CARLA K. JOHNSON AP Medical Writer

Allegations of research fakery at a leading cancer center have turned a spotlight on scientific integrity and the amateur sleuths uncovering image manipulation in published research.

Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, a Harvard Medical School affiliate, announced Jan. 22 it's requesting retractions and corrections of scientific papers after a British blogger flagged problems in early January.

The blogger, 32-year-old Sholto David, of Pontypridd, Wales, is a scientist-sleuth who detects cut-and-paste image manipulation in published scientific papers.

He's not the only hobbyist poking through pixels. Other champions of scientific integrity are keeping researchers and science journals on their toes. They use special software, oversize computer monitors and their eagle eyes to find flipped, duplicated and stretched images, along with potential plagiarism.

A look at the situation at Dana-Farber and the sleuths hunting sloppy errors and outright fabrications:
WHAT HAPPENED AT DANA-FARBER?

In a Jan. 2 blog post, Sholto David presented suspicious images from more than 30 published papers by four Dana-Farber scientists, including CEO Laurie Glimcher and COO William Hahn.

Many images appeared to have duplicated segments that would make the scientists' results look stronger. The papers under scrutiny involve lab research on the workings of cells. One involved samples from bone marrow from human volunteers.

The blog post included problems spotted by David and others previously exposed by sleuths on PubPeer, a site that allows anonymous comments on scientific papers.

Student journalists at The Harvard Crimson covered the story on Jan. 12, followed by reports in other news media. Sharpening the attention was the recent plagiarism investigation involving former Harvard president Claudine Gay, who resigned early this year.

HOW DID DANA-FARBER RESPOND?

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Dana-Farber said it already had been looking into some of the problems before the blog post. By Jan. 22, the institution said it was in the process of requesting six retractions of published research and that another 31 papers warranted corrections.

Retractions are serious. When a journal retracts an article that usually means the research is so severely flawed that the findings are no longer reliable.

Dr. Barrett Rollins, research integrity officer at Dana-Farber, said in a statement: "Following the usual practice at Dana-Farber to review any potential data error and make corrections when warranted, the institution and its scientists already have taken prompt and decisive action in 97 percent of the cases that had been flagged by blogger Sholto David."

WHO ARE THE SLEUTHS?

California microbiologist Elisabeth Bik, 57, has been sleuthing for a decade. Based on her work, scientific journals have retracted 1,133 articles, corrected 1,017 others and printed 153 expressions of concern, according to a spreadsheet where she tracks what happens after she reports problems.

She has found doctored images of bacteria, cell cultures and western blots, a lab technique for detecting proteins.

"Science should be about finding the truth," Bik told The Associated Press. She published an analysis in the American Society for Microbiology in 2016: Of more than 20,000 peer-reviewed papers, nearly 4% had image problems, about half where the manipulation seemed intentional.

Bik's work brings donations from Patreon subscribers of about \$2,300 per month and occasional honoraria from speaking engagements. David told AP his Patreon income recently picked up to \$216 per month.

Technology has made it easier to root out image manipulation and plagiarism, said Ivan Oransky, who teaches medical journalism at New York University and co-founded the Retraction Watch blog. The sleuths download scientific papers and use software tools to help find problems.

Others doing the investigative work remain anonymous and post their findings under pseudonyms. Together, they have "changed the equation" in scientific publication, Oransky said.

"They want science to be and do better," Oransky said. "And they are frustrated by how uninterested most people in academia — and certainly in publishing — are in correcting the record." They're also concerned about the erosion of public trust in science.

WHAT MOTIVATES MISCONDUCT?

Bik said some mistakes could be sloppy errors where images were mislabeled or "somebody just grabbed the wrong photo."

But some images are obviously altered with sections duplicated or rotated or flipped. Scientists building their careers or seeking tenure face pressure to get published. Some may intentionally falsify data, knowing that the process of peer review — when a journal sends a manuscript to experts for comments — is unlikely to catch fakery.

"At the end of the day, the motivation is to get published," Oransky said. "When the images don't match the story you're trying to tell, you beautify them."

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Scientific journals investigate errors brought to their attention but usually keep their processes confidential until they take action with a retraction or correction.

Some journals told the AP they are aware of the concerns raised by David's blog post and were looking into the matter.

See the moment climate activists throw soup at the 'Mona Lisa' in Paris

By SYLVIE CORBET Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Two climate activists hurled soup Sunday at the glass protecting the "Mona Lisa" at the Louvre Museum in Paris and shouted slogans advocating for a sustainable food system.

In a video posted on social media, two women with the words "FOOD RIPOSTE" written on their T-shirts could be seen passing under a security barrier to get closer to the painting and throwing soup at the glass

protecting Leonardo da Vinci's masterpiece.

"What's the most important thing?" they shouted. "Art, or right to a healthy and sustainable food?"

"Our farming system is sick. Our farmers are dying at work," they added.

The Louvre employees could then be seen putting black panels in front of the Mona Lisa and asking visitors to evacuate the room.

Paris police said that two people were arrested following the incident.

On its website, the Food Riposte group said the French government is breaking its climate commitments and called for the equivalent of the country's state-sponsored health care system to be put in place to give people better access to healthy food while providing farmers a decent income.

Angry French farmers have been using their tractors for days to set up road blockades and slow traffic across France to seek better remuneration for their produce, less red tape and protection against cheap imports. They also dumped stinky agricultural waste at the gates of government offices.

House GOP releases impeachment articles in bid to oust Homeland Security's Mayorkas over the border

By REBECCA SANTANA Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Republicans on Sunday released two articles of impeachment against Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas as they vowed to swiftly push forward with election-year efforts to oust him over what they call his failure to manage the U.S.-Mexico border. The rare step against a Cabinet member drew outrage from Democrats and the agency as a politically motivated stunt lacking the constitutional basis to remove Mayorkas from office.

Republicans contend Mayorkas is guilty of "high crimes and misdemeanors" that amount to a "willful and systemic refusal to comply with the law" on immigration and a "breach of the public trust." Impeachment, they say, is "Congress's only viable option."

"Alejandro N. Mayorkas willfully and systemically refused to comply with the immigration laws, failed to control the border to the detriment of national security, compromised public safety, and violated the rule of law and separation of powers in the Constitution, to the manifest injury of the people of the United States," the impeachment resolution says.

Only once in American history has a Cabinet secretary been impeached: William Belknap, President Ulysses Grant's war secretary, in 1876, over kickbacks in government contracts. Going after an official for a policy dispute, in this instance over the claim that Mayorkas is not upholding immigration laws, is unprecedented.

Ever since taking control of the House in 2023, Republicans have pushed to impeach Mayorkas. Sunday's announcement comes as their other impeachment drive — to impeach Democratic President Joe Biden in relation to his son Hunter's business dealings — has struggled to advance.

But Republicans have moved with rapid speed against Mayorkas after a series of hearings in recent weeks. It all comes at a time when border security and immigration are key issues in the 2024 campaign and as Donald Trump, the front-runner for the Republican presidential nomination, is promising to launch the "largest deportation operation" in U.S. history if he returns to the White House.

The Republican-controlled House Homeland Security Committee is set to vote Tuesday on the articles of impeachment, aiming to send them to the full House for consideration. Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., has said the House will move forward as soon as possible with a vote after that.

Passage requires only a House majority. The Senate would hold a trial, and a two-thirds vote is required for conviction, an exceedingly unlikely outcome in the Democratic-run Senate.

The GOP push also comes at a curious time for Mayorkas.

Even as the House is taking steps to try remove him from office, Mayorkas has been engaged in arduous negotiations with senators seeking to reach a bipartisan deal on border policy. He has won praise from senators for his engagement in the process.

Democrats have lambasted the impeachment proceedings, calling them a waste of time when lawmakers

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should be working together to solve the problems. They also say Republicans are part of the problems at the border, with Republicans attacking Mayorkas even as they have failed to give his department the tools it needs to manage the situation.

"They don't want to fix the problem; they want to campaign on it. That's why they have undermined efforts to achieve bipartisan solutions and ignored the facts, legal scholars and experts, and even the Constitution itself in their quest to baselessly impeach Secretary Mayorkas," the department said in a statement Sunday.

Mississippi Rep. Bennie Thompson, the top Democrat on the House committee, said the GOP resolution did not have "a shred of evidence of high crimes or misdemeanors -- the Constitutional standard for impeachment."

The two articles mark the culmination of a roughly yearlong examination by Republicans of the secretary's handling of the border and what they describe as a crisis of the administration's own making. Republicans contend that the administration and Mayorkas specifically either got rid of policies in place under Trump that had controlled migration or enacted policies of their own that encouraged migrants from around the world to come to the U.S. illegally via the southern border. They also accused Mayorkas of lying to Congress, pointing to comments about the border being secure or about vetting of Afghans airlifted to the U.S.

They cite growing numbers of migrants who have at times overwhelmed the capacity of Customs and Border Protection authorities to care and process them. Arrests for illegal crossings topped 2 million in each of the U.S. government's past two budget years. In December, arrests for illegal border crossings from Mexico reached an all-time high since figures have been released. The backlog of people in immigration court has grown by 1 million over the past budget year.

In the articles, Republicans argue that Mayorkas is deliberately violating immigration laws passed by Congress, such as those requiring detention of migrants, and that through his policies, a crisis has arisen at the border. They accuse him of releasing migrants without effective ways to make sure they show up for court or are removed from the country. They cited an Immigration and Customs Enforcement memo written by Mayorkas that sets priorities for whom the agency should target for enforcement proceedings as proof that he is letting people stay in the country who don't have the right to do so.

They also attacked the administration's use of the humanitarian parole authority, which allows the DHS secretary to admit certain migrants into the country. Republicans said the Biden administration has essentially created a mass parole program that bypasses Congress. They cited cities such as New York that have struggled with high numbers of migrants, taxing housing and education systems, as proof of the financial costs immigration is taking.

Democrats, as well as Mayorkas, have argued that it's not the administration's policies that are causing people to attempt to migrate to America but that the movement is part of a global mass migration of people fleeing wars, economic instability and political repression. They have argued that Mayorkas is doing the best he can to manage border security but with a system that hasn't been updated in decades and is chronically underfunded.

The department on Sunday cited high numbers of people being removed from the country, especially over roughly the last six months and its efforts to tackle fentanyl smuggling as proof that DHS is not shirking its border duties. And, they said, no administration has been able to detain every person who crosses the border illegally, citing space capacities. Instead, they focus on those who pose security threats.

"A standard requiring 100% detention would mean that Congress should have impeached every DHS Secretary since the Department was founded," the agency said in the statement.

It was almost 150 years ago when the House voted unanimously to impeach Belknap on five articles of impeachment that he had criminally disregarded his Cabinet duties and used his office for private gain. Belknap had resigned earlier that same day, March 2, 1876. After a trial in the Senate, a majority of senators vote to convict him but they didn't have enough votes to hit the the necessary two-thirds majority and Belknap was acquitted.

Republicans see an opportunity with Black voters, prompting mobilization in Biden campaign

By MATT BROWN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Donald Trump isn't known for fostering deep connections with the Black community. From his earliest days as a New York real estate developer, Trump has faced accusations of racist business practices. He spent years spreading the lie that Barack Obama, America's first Black president, was ineligible to hold office. When he was president, Trump derided "shithole countries" in Africa and said four congresswomen of color should go back to the "broken and crime-infested" countries they came from, ignoring the fact that all of the women are American citizens and three were born in the U.S.

But as he seeks the presidency for a third time, Trump is aiming to win over an unlikely constituency: Black voters.

"Have you seen our poll numbers with African Americans and with Hispanic Americans? But I'm not that surprised because I see it, I feel it," Trump declared during a rally in Atkinson, New Hampshire, days before the state's primary. "We did great in 2016, we did much better in 2020 but there is much more enthusiasm now."

There's little evidence that Trump is making significant inroads with Black voters, who polls show remain overwhelmingly supportive of President Joe Biden. But even minor changes in voting patterns in critical states could shift the race in unexpected ways.

For Biden, the biggest risk isn't a dramatic move among Black voters toward Trump. It's that such voters — frustrated by a range of issues, including the lack of progress emerging from the 2020 racial justice movement — simply don't show up at all. In some of the most narrowly divided states that could decide next year's election, including Georgia, Pennsylvania and Michigan, even minor shifts in turnout could sway the results.

Nationally, only 50% of Black adults said they approve of Biden in a December AP-NORC poll, down from 86% in July 2021. That shift represents a larger drop than among adults overall and white adults in particular. At the same time, however, only 25% of Black adults said they have a favorable view of Trump.

Trump's campaign advisers insist they're aiming to jump on such shifts to spur a political realignment that would upend the Democratic Party's decades-long advantage with Black voters.

"We are creating a massive problem for the Democratic Party's base that ... could be altering for a generation," said Chris LaCivita, a senior adviser on the Trump campaign. "That's just an opportunity that we would be remiss if we didn't exploit."

Cornell Belcher, a Democratic pollster, noted that Obama faced similar challenges with young voters and voters of color during his 2012 reelection campaign, when many in the Democrats' base were frustrated by his perceived slow pace of progress on key goals.

"I'm not surprised that Joe Biden right now starts off underperforming among young voters and voters of color. I'd be surprised if he didn't. But that's what campaigns are for," Belcher said. "I'm not panicked that he is down 15 points from where he should be with these voters. Because I've seen this play before. I've seen it with Barack Obama."

Trump is hardly moderating his rhetoric on race as he quickly becomes the GOP's dominant presidential front-runner. Just this month, he mocked Republican rival Nikki Haley's birth name, repeatedly referred to the American-born daughter of immigrants from India as "Nimbura." The episode had strong overtones of his earlier efforts to rely on racist tropes to question Obama's citizenship and eligibility to serve as president.

Trump often highlights endorsements from Black celebrities, including the rappers Kanye West and Lil Wayne, as evidence of his appeal to the Black community. He recently touted the endorsement of a Black Rhode Island racial justice advocate as an endorsement from Black Lives Matter, a move the Black Lives Matter Grassroots organization denounced.

But as he prepares for a rematch against Biden, Trump is stepping up his efforts to present a more diverse group of supporters than during his years in the White House, when he presided over a nearly all white Cabinet. When he won the New Hampshire primary this week, Sen. Tim Scott, the chamber's only

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Black Republican, stood prominently behind him. Scott, who once challenged Trump for the GOP nomination, has emerged as one of his most prominent surrogates and speaks often about his record on race.

As Trump closes in on the Republican nomination, his vice presidential pick could be a key opportunity to try to expand his appeal beyond the party's overwhelmingly white base. Scott is among those who are frequently mentioned as a potential running mate for Trump.

Biden and his fellow Democrats aren't ceding Black voters to Trump. The president kicked off his reelection bid earlier this month at Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina, where in 2015 nine Black parishioners were shot to death by the white stranger they had invited to join their Bible study.

During his visit, Biden denounced the "poison" of white supremacy in America and noted some of the accomplishments of his administration, including the appointment of Ketanji Brown Jackson as the first Black woman to serve as a U.S. Supreme Court justice. Biden has also spoken of improving economic conditions for people of color and upended his party's election calendar to put South Carolina at the start — instead of predominantly white Iowa and New Hampshire — to recognize the diversity of the Democratic Party.

Jaime Harrison, the chair of the Democratic National Committee, accused Republicans of promoting "fairy tales about their plan to win over Black voters."

"Back here on Earth, the reality is this: Their leader, Donald Trump, pals around with white supremacists, is fighting to overturn Obamacare and throw millions of Black families off their insurance, and celebrated when his right-wing Supreme Court justices voted to block President Biden from delivering massive student debt relief to Black families," Harrison said.

Both parties are fine-tuning efforts to win over Black voters. Since 2013, the Republican National Committee has established outreach centers focused on minority areas; there are currently 38 such outposts in 19 states catering to various communities. The GOP plans to add two more outreach centers in 2024.

And in contrast to past Democratic efforts, the Biden campaign has opted for an early engagement strategy with core constituencies like Black voters. The campaign rolled out large investments in African American media and other outreach in key swing states.

Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris, said DNC chair Harrison, "won't rest until we earn every vote because the stakes are that high."

What is UNRWA, the main aid provider in Gaza that Israel accuses of militant links?

By JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

Israel's allegations that 12 employees of a United Nations agency were involved in Hamas' Oct. 7 attack have led several Western countries to cut off funding and reignited debate over Gaza's biggest humanitarian aid provider.

The U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees, known as UNRWA, employs thousands of staffers and provides vital aid and services to millions of people across the Middle East. In Gaza, it has been the main supplier of food, water and shelter to civilians during the Israel-Hamas war.

Israel has long railed against the agency, accusing it of tolerating or even collaborating with Hamas and of perpetuating the 75-year-old Palestinian refugee crisis. The Israeli government has accused Hamas and other militant groups of siphoning off aid and using U.N. facilities for military purposes.

UNRWA denies those allegations and says it took swift action against the employees accused of taking part in the attack. The United States and eight other Western nations that together provided more than half of UNRWA's budget in 2022 nevertheless suspended their funding to the agency.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres says 2 million Palestinians in Gaza, or 87% of the population, rely on UNRWA services that would be scaled back as soon as February if the money is not restored.

WHAT IS UNRWA AND WHY WAS IT CREATED?

The U.N. Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East was established to provide aid to the estimated 700,000 Palestinians who fled or were driven out of what is now Israel during the

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1948 war surrounding the country's creation.

The Palestinians say the refugees and their descendants, who now number nearly 6 million across the Middle East, have the right to return to their homes.

Israel has refused, because if the right of return were to be fully implemented it would result in a Palestinian majority inside its borders. The fate of the refugees and their descendants was among the thorniest issues in the peace process, which ground to a halt in 2009.

UNRWA operates schools, health clinics, infrastructure projects and aid programs in refugee camps that now resemble dense urban neighborhoods in Gaza, the Israeli-occupied West Bank, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. It has 13,000 employees in Gaza alone, the vast majority of them Palestinians.

In Gaza, where some 85% of territory's 2.3 million people have fled their homes, over 1 million are sheltering in UNRWA schools and other facilities.

WHAT DO ISRAEL AND OTHER CRITICS SAY ABOUT UNRWA?

Israel accuses UNRWA of turning a blind eye as Hamas, which has ruled Gaza since 2007, siphons off aid intended for civilians and fights from in and around U.N. facilities, several of which have been struck during the war. It also has exposed Hamas tunnels running next to or under UNRWA facilities and accuses the agency of teaching hatred of Israel in its schools.

UNRWA denies those allegations. It says it has no links to Hamas or to any other militant groups, and that it thoroughly investigates any allegations of wrongdoing and holds staff accountable. It says it shares lists of all of its staff with Israel and other host countries.

The 12 employees are said to have participated in the surprise Oct. 7 attack in which Hamas fighters from Gaza overran Israel's extensive border defenses. Other militants joined in the subsequent rampage through nearby communities, which left 1,200 people dead, mostly civilians. Around 250 others, including children, were captured and dragged into Gaza.

U.N. chief Guterres said nine of the accused UNRWA employees were immediately terminated, one was confirmed dead and the other two still need to be identified. He said all would be held accountable, including through criminal prosecution.

Neither the details of the allegations nor the evidence supporting them has been made public.

UNRWA has condemned the Oct. 7 attack and called for all the hostages to be freed. Earlier this month, before the latest allegations, UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini announced an external review of the agency to determine which accusations are "true or untrue" and "what is politically motivated."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said the agency should be shut down. But his government has continued to allow UNRWA to operate in the West Bank and Gaza, where it provides basic services that might otherwise be the responsibility of Israel as the occupying power. No other entity would be able to quickly fill the void if UNRWA ceased operations.

WHAT DO THE FUNDING CUTS MEAN FOR GAZA?

The United States, which was the first country to suspend funding, is the biggest donor to UNRWA, providing it with \$340 million in 2022. The United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Finland have also suspended aid.

The nine countries together provided nearly 60% of UNRWA's budget in 2022. It was not immediately clear when or how the suspension of aid would affect the agency's day-to-day operations. Norway and Ireland said they would continue funding UNRWA, while other donors have not yet made a decision.

The war has plunged Gaza into a severe humanitarian crisis. One in four Palestinians in the territory faces starvation, according to U.N. officials, who say aid operations are hampered by the fighting and Israeli restrictions.

"Our humanitarian operation, on which 2 million people depend as a lifeline in Gaza, is collapsing," Lazzarini posted on X, formerly known as Twitter.

He expressed shock that countries would suspend aid "based on alleged behavior of a few individuals and as the war continues, needs are deepening & famine looms."

The war has killed more than 26,000 Palestinians, most women and children, and wounded more than 64,400 others, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. It does not differentiate between civilians and combat-

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ants in its toll but says most of those killed were women and children.

The death toll includes more than 150 UNWRA employees, the most aid workers the U.N. has lost in a single conflict.

A quiet weekend at the box office, with 'The Beekeeper' on top and some Oscar boosts

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

Movie theaters and audiences settled for seconds this weekend. With no new wide releases on the schedule, a mob of holdovers sustained the North American box office, which was led by "The Beekeeper" in its third week of release.

Amazon MGM Studios' Jason Statham actioner earned \$7.4 million to take the No. 1 spot, according to studio estimates Sunday. It was down only 14% from the previous weekend and brings its running domestic total to \$42.3 million. Globally, it has crossed \$100 million.

Paramount's "Mean Girls" musical, which is also in its third weekend, was close behind, with \$7.3 million. The movie has now earned \$60.8 million in North America.

In third place, Warner Bros.' "Wonka" added \$5.9 million in its seventh weekend as the Timothée Chalamet-led musical inches closer to \$200 million domestic. It's currently at \$195.2 million in North America and \$552 million globally.

Rounding out the top five were Universal and Illumination's "Migration," with \$5.1 million, which pushed it over the \$100 million mark domestically, and Sony's romantic comedy "Anyone But You," with \$4.8 million, bringing its total to \$71.2 million.

"Overall, it's a very slow weekend in terms of sheer box office but a fantastic weekend to be a moviegoer," said Paul Dergarabedian, the senior media analyst for Comscore. "The strikes created a lot of headwind, but the disruption to the release calendar is creating opportunities and potential. It's an ever-changing ecosystem."

Those that benefited included the Hindi-language action film "Fighter," which debuted in sixth place with \$3.7 million, "Godzilla Minus One," which was re-released in black and white for a week and cracked the top 10, and several awards contenders.

This was the first moviegoing weekend following Oscar nominations. While many top contenders are already available to watch in the home, including "Oppenheimer," "Barbie," "Killers of the Flower Moon" and "The Holdovers," several films still in theaters got sizable boosts from the buzz. Amazon and MGM's "American Fiction," nominated for five awards, including best picture and best actor for Jeffrey Wright, got a 65% bump in its seventh week, with \$2.9 million in ticket sales.

Searchlight's "Poor Things," nominated for 11 Oscars, including best picture, best director and best actress for Emma Stone, got a 43% boost from last weekend with an estimated \$3 million. The Yorgos Lanthimos film has now earned \$51.1 million globally.

"To have high-quality Oscar contenders rise above the noise is really important," Dergarabedian said. "Because it's a quiet weekend, these films were really able to make their mark in the top 10."

A24's "The Zone of Interest," which had five nominations, including best picture and best director for Jonathan Glazer, expanded to 317 screens, where it earned \$1.1 million. The studio said most audiences in top markets were under 35.

Universal had leading Oscar nominee "Oppenheimer" in 1,262 theaters, where it earned an additional million dollars this weekend. Focus Features also added 1,140 screens for its big Oscar contender, Alexander Payne's "The Holdovers," which is also streaming on Peacock. It added an estimated \$520,000, bringing its running total to \$19.3 million. "The Holdovers" also earned \$3.3 million internationally for a \$31.2 million global total.

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at U.S. and Canadian theaters, according to Comscore. Final domestic figures will be released Monday.

1. "The Beekeeper," \$7.4 million.

2. "Mean Girls," \$7.3 million.
3. "Wonka," \$5.9 million.
4. "Migration," \$5.1 million.
5. "Anyone But You," \$4.8 million.
6. "Fighter," \$3.7 million.
7. "Poor Things," \$3 million.
8. "American Fiction," \$2.9 million.
9. "Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom," \$2.8 million.
10. "Godzilla Minus One," \$2.6 million.

Sinner rallies from 2 sets down to beat Medvedev in Australia and clinch his first Grand Slam title

By JOHN PYE AP Sports Writer

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — Jannik Sinner lined up a forehand, drilled it down the line and dropped to the court on his back, giving himself some moments to process how he'd managed to come back from two sets down to win his first Grand Slam title.

The 22-year-old Sinner found a way to turn defense into attack in his first major final and take the Australian Open title from Daniil Medvedev 3-6, 3-6, 6-4, 6-4, 6-3 on Sunday.

"I like to dance in the pressure storm," he said of his seemingly serene approach to the most tense moments. "I like it, because that's where most of the time I bring out my best tennis."

It was his third straight win over a top 5 player after his quarterfinal victory over Andrey Rublev and his semifinal upset that ended No. 1-ranked Novak Djokovic's long domination of the tournament. Only Djokovic and Roger Federer have done that previously in a major played on hard courts.

So he's in great company.

Sinner is the first Italian to win the Australian Open and the youngest winner in a men's final here since Djokovic won his first Grand Slam title in 2008.

With Carlos Alcaraz winning Wimbledon last year and Sinner winning the season-opening major, a generation shift is arriving.

"I still have to process it, because ... beating Novak in the semis and then today Daniil in the final, they are tough players to beat," Sinner said. "It's a great moment for me and my team. But in the other way, we also know that we have to improve if we want to have another chance to hold a big trophy again."

Sinner's success has lit a tennis fuse in Italy, where his run to the ATP Finals championship match and leading role in the Davis Cup title win in November captured the country's attention. The night time final in Australia made for pre-lunch viewing in Italy.

For 2021 U.S. Open champion Medvedev, the loss was his fifth in six major finals. The third-seeded Medvedev set a record with his fourth five-set match of the tournament and time on court at a major in the Open era, his 24 hours and 17 minutes surpassing Carlos Alcaraz's 23:40 at the 2022 U.S. Open.

He's also the first in the Open era to lose two Grand Slam finals in five sets after taking a 2-0 lead.

Medvedev lost back-to-back Australian Open finals — to Djokovic in 2021 and to Rafael Nadal after holding a two-set lead the following year.

Sinner only dropped one set through six rounds — in a third-set tiebreaker against 10-time Australian Open champion Djokovic — until he lost two straight to Medvedev.

It wasn't until a break in the sixth game of the fifth set that he really had a full grip on his first Grand Slam title.

In two of Medvedev's five-set matches — a second-round win over Emil Ruusuvuori that finished at almost 4 in the morning, and a 4-hour, 18-minute semifinal win over No. 6 Alexander Zverev — he had to come back from two sets down. Nobody had done that on the way to an Australian Open final since Pete Sampras in 1995.

Against Sinner, he started like man who wanted to win points quickly.

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Standing closer to the baseline to receive serve and going to the net more regularly than usual, he broke in the third game and took the first set in 36 minutes.

He had two more service breaks in the fourth and sixth games of the second set but was broken himself at 5-1 trying to serve it out. He was successful next try.

The third set went with serve until the 10th game, when Medvedev was a point from leveling at 5-5 until three forehand errors gave Sinner the set, and the momentum.

He won the fourth set, again with a service break in the 10th game, recovering immediately to win three points after mis-hitting a forehand so far out that it shocked the Rod Laver Arena crowd.

And so the tournament equaled a Grand Slam Open era record set at the 1983 U.S. Open with a 35th match going to five sets.

In the sixth game of the fifth set, Sinner had triple breakpoint against a fatiguing Medvedev. He missed with his first chance but converted with his next, a forehand winner, for a 4-2 lead. From there, he didn't give Medvedev another chance.

Medvedev had faced either Djokovic or Rafael Nadal in all five of his previous major finals. He beat Djokovic to win the 2021 U.S. Open title but lost all the others.

The 27-year-old Russian has been saying through the tournament that he has more stamina than he used to, and is mentally stronger in the tough five-setters. He certainly showed incredible endurance but came up just short — again.

Medvedev won his first six career meetings with Sinner, but has now lost four in a row — including three finals.

"I want to congratulate Jannik ... you showed it again why you deserve it," Medvedev said. "Probably that's not your last Grand Slam, but I hope I can try to get the next one if you play in the final."

Medvedev also sent a message to his family and supporters.

"Unfortunately I couldn't make it today, but I'm going to try to make it work next time for you," he said. "It always hurts to lose in the final, but probably being in the final is better than losing before."

Most Americans feel they pay too much in taxes, AP-NORC poll finds

By CORA LEWIS and LINLEY SANDERS Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A majority of taxpayers feel they pay too much in taxes, with many saying that they receive a poor value in return, according to a new poll from the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy and The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

Two-thirds of U.S. taxpayers say they spend "too much" on federal income taxes, as tax season begins. About 7 in 10 say the same about local property taxes, while roughly 6 in 10 feel that way about state sales tax. Generally speaking, Republicans are more likely than Democrats to view taxes as unfair, to say they are paying too much in taxes, and to see taxes as a poor value.

The poll found that few U.S. adults have a high level of confidence that the institutions that ultimately use their tax dollars — whether the federal government or local school districts — spend those taxes in the best interest of "people like them." But people tend to trust governing bodies closer to home with their tax dollars slightly more: 16% are extremely or very confident in their local school district, compared to 6% for the federal government.

Adults who are 60 and older are more likely than younger adults to perceive taxes, generally, as fair.

Chris Berry, a professor at the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy who was involved in the creation of the poll, said that, overall, public opinion about taxes and trust in government has declined. He sees the poll results as partly reflecting increased political polarization but says the public has long typically trusted local government more than the federal government.

"One of the things you'll hear said is, 'There's no Democratic or Republican way to collect the trash or pave the streets,'" he said. "We tend to think of local government as less partisan."

Among those who pay federal income taxes, half say they would prefer having fewer government services if it meant reducing their bill. One-third would keep their taxes the same in exchange for the same services, and 16% would opt to increase taxes for more services.

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Danny Velasquez, 39, a business manager and Democrat in Boston who answered the poll, said he trusts local government to spend his tax dollars better than the federal government.

Asked how he would prefer his federal tax dollars be spent, Velasquez said the government "spends too much on war-making" and that he'd prefer "national healthcare and investment in education."

Only about 1 in 4 taxpayers say they get a good value from paying either federal income tax, state sales tax or local property tax. About 1 in 3 in each case say it's a poor value, and roughly 4 in 10 say the value is neither good nor bad.

According to the poll, most U.S. adults say they find either federal income tax or local property tax "unfair," and about half say the same about state income tax, sales tax, and the federal Social Security tax.

Loretta Mwangi, 60, a Democrat who lives in Baltimore, sees taxes as fair and said she doesn't have strong criticisms of how the government allocates tax dollars. Mwangi, who suffers from chronic pain after years of working in warehouses and as a security guard, currently lives on disability benefits.

"They're going by how much you're making and taking a percentage based on that," she said. "There could be more support for education and for the homeless — there are a lot of people under the bridges still."

Relatively few U.S. adults say they understand how the amount they owe is calculated. Only about 2 in 10 U.S. adults say they understand "extremely" or "very well" how amounts are determined for their local property tax. About one-quarter say they grasp the calculations for federal income tax. About 3 in 10 say they comprehend how state sales tax is calculated.

Yoany Mesa, 40, a computer engineer and Republican in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, said he doesn't view the tax system as "equitable or transparent."

He and his wife, Grettel, 34, an auditor for a dental insurance company, said they perceive the federal tax code as full of loopholes, especially for the wealthy.

"There are a lot of things you hear people with money are able to claim — an inside club. I think if certain people have dependents, they should be able to get credits," Grettel Mesa said. During the pandemic, the couple had received expanded child tax credits, for example, they said, but that policy ended in 2022.

Mesa said she had also previously trusted her local government more to spend their tax dollars, but that their area has recently been experiencing frequent flooding and sewage overflow, which makes her question that budgeting.

"There's a lot of infrastructure spending that seems to be going by the wayside," she said. "The money was supposed to go towards fixing the sewage systems — so where is that money going?"

Biden is trying to balance Gaza protests and free speech rights as demonstrators disrupt his events

By COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

MANASSAS, Va. (AP) — It was President Joe Biden's first big campaign rally of the year, a chance to spotlight the issue of protecting abortion rights. Instead, at least a dozen times during Biden's 22-minute speech, demonstrators scattered throughout the audience rose to shout out demands for a cease-fire in Gaza.

His speech in Virginia this past week became a fits-and-starts affair. Over and over, the protesters interjected and were drowned out by audience members shouting chants of "four more years!" and "Joe! Joe! Joe!"

"They feel deeply," Biden said of the demonstrators, who were pulled from the room by security personnel.

The Democratic president is increasingly contending with protests inside and outside his events from progressives upset about his administration's support for Israel in its offensive in Gaza. More than 26,000 Palestinians, mostly women and minors, have been killed in Gaza since Hamas attacked Israel on Oct. 7, according to the Health Ministry in the Hamas-ruled territory.

The protests lay bare the tensions Biden is facing within his own party as he struggles with the fallout from his handling of the war while honoring the First Amendment rights of his critics to speak out. Biden's ability to navigate those crosscurrents will be critical to his reelection effort as he tries to energize Demo-

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crats this fall, especially young people who are particularly concerned about the war's effects.

Demonstrators disrupted Biden's speech at Mother Emanuel AME Church in South Carolina earlier this month as the president spoke out against racism, and they turned up at a United Auto Workers gathering this past week in Washington where Biden accepted the powerful union's endorsement, and at a political event in Columbia, South Carolina on Saturday.

"For most people, you get very few chances in this life to confront the president of the United States," said Niki Thomas, a 29-year-old UAW member who yelled for a cease-fire and was dragged from the room during Biden's speech to the union. "There was no way that we weren't going to take that opportunity to speak up for ourselves, for our members, to get a chance to let the president know how we feel."

Protesting is an American tradition, and it's hardly a surprise that a president would see demonstrations on an issue such as the Israel-Hamas conflict. Biden aides and allies say the loud few do not represent the majority who back his policies.

"Is it helpful? No. It's not helpful to the president's ability to mobilize and coalesce his base," Democratic strategist Cornell Belcher said of the protests. "But is it fatal at this point? I don't think it's fatal. They have to navigate it."

As part of that navigation, he said, Biden needs to show voters what he's doing to end the conflict and contrast that with what Republican presidential front-runner Donald Trump has said: that the war should be allowed to "play out." The former president also has called for U.S. borders to be sealed from Palestinian refugees.

Biden and his aides have said they do not want to see any civilians die in Hamas-ruled Gaza, and Biden helped broker a temporary cease-fire that saw critical aid reach the territory and the release of some hostages held by the militants.

During a visit to Tel Aviv, Biden warned the Israelis not to be "consumed by rage." But Biden has also said he believes Israel has the right to defend itself and he has asked Congress for billions to help Israel in its war effort.

"The president is concerned, as I said at the very outset, with the 100-plus hostages," White House national security spokesman John Kirby said. "He's not looking at the clock and the electoral calendar."

Democratic voters in New Hampshire's primary on Tuesday were roughly split on how Biden has handled the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, according to AP VoteCast. Just 4 in 10 of those who disapproved of how Biden has managed the conflict voted for him. But among those who approve of Biden's leadership in the Middle East, nearly 8 in 10 voted for him.

How the president handles his vocal detractors is important, too. Those who disrupt his events are typically removed by security or event staff. If someone is considered a threat or becomes violent, they may face arrest. No one has been arrested so far.

Biden campaign communications director Michael Tyler said Biden's response to demonstrators shows he's "a president who understands and respects Americans' fundamental First Amendment rights to peacefully protest."

"Joe Biden is approaching the situation in the Middle East, not through the lens of politics, but as the commander in chief of this country who was prioritizing American national security and global security," Tyler said. He said Biden was doing so "with the empathy and the decency that complex situations demand."

It's a stark contrast, he said, to how Trump handles dissent.

During the 2016 campaign, Trump's rallies occasionally devolved into violence, with demonstrators kicked or punched as they were escorted out, and Trump calling the disrupters "disgusting" and troublemakers."

This year, Trump has faced isolated protests at recent campaign events in Iowa and New Hampshire by demonstrators on climate change and other policies.

When he was interrupted at a rally in Indianola, Iowa, shortly before the state's Republican caucuses on Jan. 15, Trump taunted from the stage as a protester was quickly removed: "Go home to mommy. Your mommy is waiting. Go home to mommy."

At a rally in Rochester, New Hampshire, Trump dismissed protesters as "misguided people."

The next night, when a protester interrupted his rally in Manchester, New Hampshire, Trump directed

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from the stage: "You can throw him out."

Biden has tried to acknowledge and empathize with the concerns of his protesters and move on with his speeches.

During Biden's remarks at Mother Emanuel, where nine Black parishioners were shot to death in a 2015 racist attack, he put up his hand to calm the angry crowd as protesters were removed.

One demonstrator shouted: "If you really care about the lives lost here, then you should honor the lives lost and call for a cease-fire in Palestine!"

Biden responded: "I understand their passion. And I've been quietly working -- I've been quietly working with the Israeli government to get them to reduce and significantly get out of Gaza."

One audience member yelled from the pews: "You're an understanding person. You're an understanding person."

Today in History: January 29

Ty Cobb and Babe Ruth become first baseball Hall of Fame inductees

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Monday, Jan. 29, the 29th day of 2024. There are 337 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Jan. 29, 1936, the first inductees of baseball's Hall of Fame, including Ty Cobb and Babe Ruth, were named in Cooperstown, New York.

On this date:

In 1820, King George III died at Windsor Castle at age 81; he was succeeded by his son, who became King George IV.

In 1919, the ratification of the 18th Amendment to the Constitution, establishing the prohibition of alcohol, was certified by Acting Secretary of State Frank L. Polk.

In 1929, The Seeing Eye, a New Jersey-based school which trains guide dogs to assist the blind, was incorporated by Dorothy Harrison Eustis and Morris Frank.

In 1963, poet Robert Frost died in Boston at age 88.

In 1964, Stanley Kubrick's nuclear war satire "Dr. Strangelove Or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb" premiered in New York, Toronto and London.

In 1979, President Jimmy Carter formally welcomed Chinese Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping (dung shah-oh-ping) to the White House, following the establishment of diplomatic relations.

In 1984, President Ronald Reagan announced in a nationally broadcast message that he and Vice President George H.W. Bush would seek reelection in the fall.

In 1995, the San Francisco 49ers became the first team in NFL history to win five Super Bowl titles, beating the San Diego Chargers, 49-26, in Super Bowl XXIX.

In 1998, a bomb rocked an abortion clinic in Birmingham, Alabama, killing security guard Robert Sanderson and critically injuring nurse Emily Lyons. (The bomber, Eric Rudolph, was captured in May 2003 and is serving a life sentence.)

In 2002, in his first State of the Union address, President George W. Bush said terrorists were still threatening America — and he warned of "an axis of evil" consisting of North Korea, Iran and Iraq.

In 2007, Kentucky Derby winner Barbaro was euthanized because of medical complications eight months after his gruesome breakdown at the Preakness Stakes.

In 2013, the Justice Department ended its criminal probe of the Deepwater Horizon disaster and Gulf of Mexico oil spill, with a U.S. judge agreeing to let London-based oil giant BP PLC plead guilty to manslaughter charges for the deaths of 11 rig workers and pay a record \$4 billion in penalties.

In 2017, six people were killed in a shooting at a Quebec City mosque during evening prayers. (Alexandre Bissonnette, who was arrested nearby, pleaded guilty to murder and attempted murder charges and was sentenced to life in prison.)

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In 2018, the Cleveland Indians announced that they would remove the Chief Wahoo logo from their uniforms in the coming baseball season, after decades of protests and complaints that the grinning, red-faced caricature was racist. (The Indians changed their name to the Guardians starting in the 2022 season).

In 2022, actor Howard Hesseman, who played a radio DJ on the sitcom "WKRP in Cincinnati" and a teacher on "Head of the Class," died in Los Angeles at 81.

Today's birthdays: Feminist author Germaine Greer is 85. Actor Katharine Ross is 84. Feminist author Robin Morgan is 83. Actor Tom Selleck is 79. R&B singer Bettye LaVette is 78. Actor Marc Singer is 76. Actor Ann Jillian is 74. Rock musician Louie Perez (Los Lobos) is 71. R&B singer Charlie Wilson is 71. Talk show host Oprah Winfrey is 70. Actor Terry Kinney is 70. Country singer Irlene Mandrell is 68. Actor Diane Delano is 67. Actor Judy Norton (TV: "The Waltons") is 66. Rock musician Johnny Spampinato is 65. Olympic gold-medal diver Greg Louganis is 64. Rock musician David Baynton-Power (James) is 63. Rock musician Eddie Jackson (Queensryche) is 63. Actor Nicholas Turturro is 62. Rock singer-musician Roddy Frame (Aztec Camera) is 60. Actor-director Edward Burns is 56. Actor Sam Trammell is 55. Actor Heather Graham is 54. Former House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., is 54. Actor Sharif Atkins is 49. Actor Sara Gilbert is 49. Actor Kelly Packard is 49. Actor Justin Hartley is 47. Actor Sam Jaeger is 47. Writer and TV personality Jedediah Bila is 45. Actor Andrew Keegan is 45. Actor Jason James Richter is 44. Blues musician Jonny Lang is 43. Pop-rock singer Adam Lambert (TV: "American Idol") is 42. Country singer Eric Paslay is 41.