

# Groton Daily Independent

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## 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.

## Thursday, Feb. 1

School Breakfast: French Toast.  
School Lunch: Beef stew with biscuit  
Senior Menu: Spaghetti with meat sauce, corn, garlic toast, chocolate cake, fruit cocktail.  
Basketball Doubleheader at Deuel: Boys C game at 4 p.m. in auxiliary gym; Girls JV at 4 p.m., Boys JV at 5:15 p.m., Girls Varsity at 6:30 p.m., Boys Varsity at 8:00.  
Emmanuel Lutheran: Nigeria Circle, 2 p.m.

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

## Friday, Feb. 2

School Breakfast: Muffins.  
School Lunch Taco Salads.  
Senior Menu: Chicken cordon bleu hot dish, vegetable Catalina blend, pears, tapioca pudding, whole wheat bread.  
Boys Wrestling Varsity Quad at Lyman.  
Boys' Basketball hosts Vermillion: C game at 4 p.m., JV at 5:15 p.m., Varsity at 6:30 p.m.

## Saturday, Feb. 3

Girls Basketball at DAK XII/NEC Clash at Madison.  
Groton Area vs. Elk Point-Jefferson at 12:30 p.m.  
Boys Wrestling at Yankton, 9 a.m.  
Girls Wrestling at Stanley County, 10 a.m.  
Thrift Store open 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 3:45-4:15 p.m.; SEAS Mass, 4:30 p.m.

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

The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.  
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# 1440

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An atmospheric river is set to bring torrential rains and strong winds along the West Coast this week, affecting millions of Americans. The weather system, known as a "Pineapple Express" because it originates near Hawaii, extends 3,000 miles. It is expected to push south from British Columbia, Canada, to Northern California today, reaching Southern California tomorrow before making its way to Arizona into the weekend.

Syphilis cases in the US have risen to the highest level since the 1950s, according to new data on sexually transmitted infections released yesterday from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Chita Rivera, the Broadway star who originated the role of Anita in the 1957 production of "West Side Story," died yesterday of a recent illness in New York. She was 91.

## Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Universal Orlando's Epic Universe theme park to open in 2025, will include Super Nintendo World and themed "Harry Potter" and "How to Train Your Dragon" areas.

Sir Elton John and writing partner Bernie Taupin win the Library of Congress' 2024 Gershwin Prize for Popular Song, an award given annually for impact in popular music.

NFL's conference championship games averaged 56.1 million viewers, an all-time non-Super Bowl high and an 11% increase over last year.

## Science & Technology

Artificial light at night confuses insects' internal navigation senses, with video revealing they attempt to face away from the source; study overturns long-held belief flying insects are attracted to lights.

Pharmaceutical firm Vertex completes successful clinical trials for nonaddictive painkiller to replace opioids like OxyContin and Vicodin; company to seek regulatory approval this summer.

First known instance of transmitted Alzheimer's disease observed; condition in five patients linked to childhood infusions of human growth hormone sourced from tainted cadavers, seeding misfolded proteins which led to Alzheimer's decades later.

## Business & Markets

US stock markets close mixed (S&P 500 -0.1%, Dow +0.4%, Nasdaq -0.8%); Wall Street awaits Fed's interest rate decision today. Alphabet shares slide after reporting weaker Google ad revenue. Microsoft reports rise in quarterly revenue, cites growing demand for cloud services.

UPS to cut 12,000 jobs, reports 7% drop in total shipping volume in Q4. PayPal to lay off 2,000 employees. American Airlines to lay off 656 workers. Judge invalidates Tesla CEO Elon Musk's \$56B pay package.

International Monetary Fund upgrades global growth outlook to 3.1% for 2024. Europe's economy sees zero economic growth from October to December 2023, following 0.1% contraction in previous three months.

## Politics & World Affairs

Hamas reportedly considering proposed three-phase cease-fire in Gaza in exchange for most of the remaining hostages taken in the initial Oct. 7 raid; deal does not include an Israeli withdrawal from the territory.

Former Pakistan President Imran Khan sentenced to 10 years in prison on charges of leaking state secrets; ruling comes ahead of Feb. 8 national elections in the country. French farmer protests spread to Belgium and Spain ahead of Thursday's European Union summit in Brussels.

Former President Donald Trump to remain on Illinois primary ballot after state board votes 8-0, rejects eligibility challenge; opponents argued Trump should be disqualified under the insurrection clause of the 14th Amendment.

Why 1440? The printing press was invented around the year 1440, spreading knowledge to the masses and changing the course of history. More facts: In every day, there are 1,440 minutes. We're here to make each one count.

## Groton school board votes to "opt-out," increase property tax

The Groton Area School District Board voted unanimously Tuesday night in favor of an "opt-out" of current property tax limitations.

The district "is unable to operate under the tax limitation measure currently in statute for the general fund," according to the resolution. The board voted to increase property tax by \$1.25 million per year for 10 years, beginning with 2024 taxes that are payable in calendar year 2025.

Opting out allows the district to impose an excess levy above any current limitations. Tuesday's vote came after six months of discussion of the district's current financial situation, projections for the future and capital projects looming ahead.

The district has been supplementing the general fund by transferring money from the capital outlay fund into the general fund for operational expenses, said Superintendent Joe Schwan. That has come from a 2016 change in how the state distributes funds to school districts.

"At the end of the day what it comes down to is you used to be able to enjoy the revenues that were provided from wind farm money, telecommunications tax money and the pension fund levy, but that is gone," Schwan said. "Those are equalized across the state. And so, how do you fill that?"

The district has already reduced some full-time equivalent positions by not filling them when people left the district, he said. However, about 85 percent of the budget goes toward salaries and benefits, that is where future cuts would likely come from.

There are also pending state legislation that would force the district to put more funding into teacher salaries through the next two years.

The district needs to find a way to "not have to rob from the capital outlay fund to pay for general fund expenses," he said.

Some in the community may think the district wants to raise taxes for construction, said board Vice President Marty Weismantel.

"They're asking what we're building," he said. "It's not for building. It's to keep the doors open. Keep our staff."

While the opt-out specifies \$1.25 million, that doesn't mean the district will take that much each year, said board member Grant Rix.

"We don't need to take the whole amount every year," he said. "If we don't need it, we don't have to take it."

Business Manager Becky Hubsch added that it's hard to predict seven or eight years out. What's nice about the opt-out is district officials evaluate it and only take what is needed.

The increase to the general fund will also take pressure off the capital outlay fund and help build that account back up.

Board members were resigned as they explained to the few people in the audience why action was needed.

"I've spent a lot of time and thought on this because I don't want to raise your taxes," said Board President Deb Gengerke. "I don't want to pay more taxes. I think we can all agree. "However, this is the mechanism that is in place," she continued. "It's a federal mandate to provide a free and public education to every kid in the United States. That got passed down to the states, and our state goes to districts.

"The state of South Dakota sets funds for the general fund. We do not set those funds. We do not set your property tax valuations. We do not control that. I wish they were different. I wish there was another mechanism for revenue, I wish this didn't land so heavily on the few families left in ag, because that number shrinks every day. But that is just not the reality. We've got to play the hand we're dealt."

The board does have choices, Gengerke reminded those in the room.

The board could continue with what it's been doing, transferring funds from the capital outlay fund to the general fund to make up the shortfall, she said. The district would run down the capital outlay fund, though, and would run out of money by July 2028.

"We could hope something new and better comes out of Pierre, but frankly I don't see that happen-

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ing, and I particularly don't see that happening for a district our size and with our property valuations," Gengerke continued. "Hope is not a plan, so we have to have something else."

The district could "kick the can down the road" and not make repairs on things district officials know need repairs, she said.

"I'm not sure that's a sound plan as we know the cost of construction goes up at least seven percent," she said. "I know supplies and labor follow that trend."

The board could also decide to cut positions and programs, Gengerke said.

"I honestly have not heard tons of feedback, so I may be really wrong on this, but I don't think that is what the patrons of this district want," she said. "I think there is a certain level of pride in this district. I think people expect very good things from this district. I think people who own homes in this district benefit from the fact that people want their children to go to school in this district. So I don't really see that as palatable."

After a long pause, board member TJ Harder made a motion to approve a \$1.25 million per-year opt-out for 10 years. Vice President Weismantel seconded the motion.

The decision may be referred to a vote if a petition is signed by at least five percent of the registered voters in the district, according to the resolution. That petition would need to be filed with the district within 20 days of the first publication of the decision.

While that option may be taken, some on the board said they hope the public understands the decision.

"I hope the taxpayers of our school district can look at this opt out as a great opportunity to show their support to our students and staff, and that they want the students of our district to have every opportunity available to them to have the best educational and extra curricular experience they can," said board member Tigh Fliehs.

- Elizabeth Varin





## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### Texas hasn't repaid South Dakota for help at the border

Noem preparing a 'potential South Dakota response' to current border problems, after spending at least \$1.3 million on past assistance

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR AND SETH TUPPER - JANUARY 30, 2024 5:45 PM

Texas has not repaid South Dakota for assistance at the Texas-Mexico border even though similar mutual-aid agreements between South Dakota and other states have typically involved reimbursement, according to legislators and state officials.

That revelation came Tuesday, one day before Governor Kristi Noem was scheduled to address a joint session of the Legislature about what she foreshadowed as a "potential South Dakota response" to problems at the border.

Noem approved South Dakota National Guard troop deployments to the border twice in 2021 and once last year. One of the deployments was federally requested, and the troops were on federal pay status. Noem ordered the others, resulting in costs of at least \$1.3 million that she paid from South Dakota's Emergency and Disaster Fund. Another \$1 million came from a private donor.

Tuesday, the Legislature's budget committee heard testimony at the Capitol in Pierre on a new bill to replenish the Emergency and Disaster Fund.

Rep. Linda Duba, D-Sioux Falls, noted that language in past bills said the fund is to be used for expenses "in South Dakota." Duba asked a Noem administration official why the language in this year's funding bill has been changed to cover emergencies and disasters "impacting this state."

Kristi Turman, of the state Department of Public Safety, said the proposed language would cover requests for assistance from other states through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact, known by the acronym EMAC. The compact is a nationwide mutual aid agreement among states.

"We wanted to make sure our language was encompassing those expenses," Turman said. "We don't think it had in the past."

Turman added, "All of our EMAC missions have been reimbursed by the states that have requested our assistance, except for the state of Texas."

Legislators on the committee did not press Turman further about whether South Dakota's border-related assistance to Texas was provided with or without an expectation of repayment. The committee postponed action on the funding bill.

Afterward, committee member Sen. Ryan Maher, R-Isabel, told South Dakota Searchlight he has not seen the EMAC agreement with Texas but has seen documentation related to it, and the documentation contained no evidence of a reimbursement plan.

"Texas is the only state where we are doing that," Maher said.

South Dakota Searchlight asked the state Department of Public Safety and Noem spokesman Ian Fury several questions about the arrangement with Texas, and also asked for a copy of the agreement. Instead of answering, the department and Fury both directed Searchlight to the state's formal public records request portal. Searchlight made a request for a copy of the agreement, and that request is pending.

Noem has stepped up her rhetoric about the border in recent days and has repeatedly labeled it a "war-zone." She visited the border last year and again on Friday, but her office has not responded to South Dakota Searchlight questions about how she got there, who paid, or the cost.

Last year's deployment of 50 South Dakota National Guard troops cost \$850,000 and was funded by the state's Emergency and Disaster Fund, according to past statements by Noem's office.

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In 2021, Noem accepted a \$1 million donation from Tennessee billionaire Willis Johnson to pay most of the cost for deploying 48 South Dakota National Guard troops to the border. That deployment cost a total of \$1.45 million, according to records obtained by Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington through a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit. The \$1 million donation was routed through South Dakota's Emergency and Disaster Fund, and the fund itself covered the portion of the deployment's cost not covered by the donation.

The border has dominated national politics in recent weeks. The federal Border Patrol made 249,785 arrests for illegal border crossings in December, which was an all-time high since monthly numbers have been released. Meanwhile, Congress has been attempting to negotiate border policy legislation, and the issue has taken center stage in the presidential campaign. Noem is widely considered to be a potential running mate for the leading Republican presidential candidate, former President Donald Trump.

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

*Seth is editor-in-chief of South Dakota Searchlight. He was previously a supervising senior producer for South Dakota Public Broadcasting and a newspaper journalist in Rapid City and Mitchell.*

## Bill would make it easier for Black Hills community to become a city

**Black Hawk's situation is complicated by its proximity to Rapid City and Summerset**

**BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - JANUARY 30, 2024 4:00 PM**

Black Hawk, South Dakota — a 137-year-old community with a population of over 3,000 — isn't actually a city.

The community has its own ZIP code, post office, water company, fire department, cemetery, businesses, churches and an elementary school that's part of the Rapid City Area Schools system.

But it doesn't have a city government, making it one of the largest unincorporated communities in the state.

Rep. Gary Cammack, R-Union Center, introduced a bill intended to make it easier for communities like Black Hawk in "high growth" areas to incorporate.

According to current law, if a community is within 3 miles of an incorporated municipality, residents first have to petition that municipality to become annexed. If that annexation fails, then the community can continue its incorporation process.

Black Hawk is situated on Interstate 90 just outside of Rapid City and immediately adjacent to Summerset, a municipality of just under 3,000 that was incorporated in 2005.

Under current law, Black Hawk has to petition both communities, and it's a struggle to convince community members to even sign the petition, said Katie Sieverding, a lobbyist with Dakota Cable Solutions in Black Hawk. Residents want to be officially recognized by the state, not potentially subjected to being swallowed by a neighboring community.

Cammack's bill would provide an exception to the required annexation requests if the neighboring community has less than 5,000 residents. That would mean Black Hawk would still have to petition Rapid City but not Summerset.

Opponents of the bill, including officials from Summerset and David Reis, executive director of the South Dakota Municipal League, said the bill takes away engagement and communication needed between neighboring jurisdictions.

None of the bill opponents are against Black Hawk incorporating, said Melanie Torno, mayor of Summerset.

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"Amending this law takes away the opportunity for Summerset to be part of this discussion and takes away our voice," Torno said. "In small communities it's important that collaboration and discussion with neighboring communities occur for the possible regionalization of infrastructure and to grow in a responsible manner."

Black Hawk residents tried to become a city in the mid-1970s, but the effort never reached the ballot box. The community tried again in 1987 and in 2005, both passing through the petition process but failing the public vote by narrow margins.

This latest push to become incorporated is not just about local control and how taxes are used, but about identity and protecting the community as its own, Black Hawk resident and landowner Jesse Lewis told lawmakers at the Capitol. Lewis has been working to incorporate Black Hawk since the first effort in the '70s.

According to news coverage in 2005, when both Summerset and Black Hawk were working toward incorporation, residents in both communities worried about the other becoming incorporated first and annexing the other community.

Summerset's expansion plans created by former administrations included pieces of Black Hawk, Mayor Torno told lawmakers Tuesday.

"It's a race to do it first and then that second town is left to do the impossible," Sieverding said.

Lisa Schieffer, city administrator for Summerset, spoke in opposition to the bill but also provided context for incorporation efforts in the area. The former Meade County auditor oversaw incorporation processes for Summerset, Black Hawk, Piedmont and Buffalo Chip in her 28-year career. Summerset and Piedmont were successful, while Buffalo Chip's incorporation was ruled unlawful and void in 2020 by the state Supreme Court.

"What is the solution?" Schieffer testified. "I believe it's already spelled out in law. Two entities coming to the table by way of petition, territories coming before city commission boards to visit about cooperative boundaries to promote good relations."

The bill will head to the House floor next.

*Makenzie Huber is a lifelong South Dakotan whose work has won national and regional awards. She's spent five years as a journalist with experience reporting on workforce, development and business issues within the state.*

## Targeted 'diet weed' ban clears first hurdle in House committee

**Latest attempt to ban hemp-derived, widely available psychoactives passes 11-2**

**BY: JOHN HULT - JANUARY 30, 2024 3:21 PM**

PIERRE — There are at least three shops that sell products made from the legal, hemp-derived cousins of marijuana within a half mile of the state Capitol.

On Tuesday, lawmakers took the first steps toward a ban on what's sold there – and in every corner of the state.

House Bill 1125 would ban most high-inducing "diet weed" products. They're manufactured through the chemical manipulation of naturally occurring compounds that appear in miniscule amounts in hemp plants.

That would include anything containing the following compounds: delta-8 THC, delta-10 THC, THC-O, HHC and THCP. Those products include gummies, vape pen juice and modified, smokable hemp flower.

The bill does not seek to criminalize the possession of those substances, merely their sale or production. Sale or production would be a class 1 misdemeanor, punishable by up to a year in jail, a \$2,000 fine, or both.

Concerns of misuse are directly tied to the "production" piece, according to the bill's sponsor, Rep. Brian Mulder, R-Sioux Falls.

The 2018 federal farm bill legalized hemp containing less than 0.3% tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). Since then, companies have moved to extract, synthesize and chemically alter the kinds of THC present in hemp (but not traditional cannabis) for use in consumer products. Some of the compounds can be more potent than the delta-9 THC present in regular pot.

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"Some of the manufacturers may use potentially unsafe household chemicals to make delta-8 THC-O," Mulder said.

Mulder's bill would bar the sale of products for which the state health lab can prove chemical manipulation by identifying the additional molecule used to create them. Products made with naturally occurring chemicals would remain legal.

"We're trying to thread the needle," he said, to make sure businesses will still be able to sell the products their customers find useful.

## State officials, law officers support ban

Lobbyists for three law enforcement organizations testified in favor of the bill.

"We're trying to catch up to ourselves since this all happened in 2018," said Dick Tieszen, who spoke on behalf of the South Dakota Sheriffs' Association. "Law enforcement is very concerned about it."

Testing to sort natural from synthetic chemicals wouldn't present any difficulty for the state health lab, said Department of Health Secretary Melissa Magstadt.

"It touches exactly those specific products," Magstadt said of the bill.

The department supports the bill, she said, because of the dangers the products present, particularly to children. She noted that the National Poison Control Center has logged overdose deaths related to delta-8-style products, and argued that they only exist for recreational purposes. The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) classifies all categories of THC as substances with no accepted medical use, she said.

"These have zero medical use, and are 100% used for psychoactive effects," Magstadt said.

## Opponent: Net too wide

Caleb Rose argued otherwise.

Rose owns CBD and delta-8 shops in the Black Hills, and said many of his customers use delta products for pain relief and other medical symptoms.

Mulder spoke frequently with Rose, the shop owner said, and he thanked the lawmaker for the engagement. Even so, Rose said the bill as written is more restrictive than it needs to be.

He pointed to a February letter from the DEA suggesting that some delta products qualify as controlled substances. Mulder cited that letter, as well. But the DEA guidance only touched on two forms of manipulated THC. Mulder's bill bars the sale of more varieties than that, Rose said.

"We are on board if we can come in line with the federal government," Rose said. "If we can really thread this needle and identify the compounds that the federal government is actually speaking about, and avoid the naturally produced compounds that are helping people, we will be eternally grateful."

Mulder argued that his bill preserves access to naturally derived products, and that businesses that know the provenance of their products and follow the law needn't be concerned.

"We are trying to work together to find that scenario where we are not harming our good players in this industry," Mulder said.

It's not the first time lawmakers have worked to ban delta-8-style products. Rep. Taylor Rehfeldt, R-Sioux Falls, argued against last year's attempt to do so, and said she worries that the details of a ban and uncertainty about the impact on human health from product to product make it a difficult decision.

"We need to make sure that what people are consuming is what they think it is," Rehfeldt said, without unfairly impacting businesses that are "trying to keep their doors open and play by the rules."

In the end, Rehfeldt voted to pass this year's bill along to the full House of Representatives. She was joined by 10 other committee members on the 11-2 vote. Sioux Falls Democrats Erin Healy and Kameron Nelson voted against it.

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



## Committee passes 'school safety 2.0' bill onto the state Senate

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - JANUARY 30, 2024 11:00 AM

A bill mandating minimum safety standards in public schools — without requiring armed guards — was unanimously approved Tuesday by the Senate Education Committee at the Capitol in Pierre.

The bill is a modified revival of an earlier school safety bill that failed in committee due to concerns about staffing, costs and local control. That bill included a requirement for schools to have either school resource officers supplied by local law enforcement agencies or sentinels, who are trained and armed employees without police credentials.

The "school safety 2.0" bill, as described by prime sponsor Sen. Brent Hoffman, R-Hartford, was "fine tuned" to focus on standardization of public school locked door policies and increasing awareness of the state's anonymous reporting hotline.

The bill would require that a school employee must be present to watch and control an unlocked main entrance of a school when students are present to prevent school shootings or other bad actors. When the doors are locked during regular school hours with children present, the main entrances would have to be monitored either by video or in person.

The bill would also require that school districts publicize the state's school safety tip line on their websites and "in a conspicuous place" in each school building.

Although education lobbyists were widely opposed to the bill — citing insurance concerns and calling the bill an unnecessary, unfunded mandate — it was not enough to dissuade lawmakers on the committee.

Sen. Steve Kolbeck, R-Brandon, compared the standardization bill to fire protection and automated external defibrillator accessibility in schools.

"We haven't lost a child in a school fire since the 1950s. Why? Because it's standardized," Kolbeck said. "... There may be an example of a one room school house where this might be a struggle, but I think it's worth it to figure it out."

Hoffman said that although such a law could "potentially increase perception of liability on schools," he's not aware of a school being found liable for school shootings.

"You're gonna get sued if you don't lock the door and you're gonna get sued if you do lock the door," Kolbeck said before voting to move the bill to the Senate floor.

The bill only affects public schools, Hoffman clarified, because a statute to standardize safety policy for private and tribal schools could be too "complicated for legal reasons." He expects more amendments will be discussed on the Senate floor.

*Makenzie Huber is a lifelong South Dakotan whose work has won national and regional awards. She's spent five years as a journalist with experience reporting on workforce, development and business issues within the state.*

## Free birth certificates, ID cards for homeless people endorsed by House committee

**ID card bill overcomes opposition from state driver's licensing director**

BY: JOHN HULT - JANUARY 30, 2024 10:30 AM

PIERRE — Homeless people would be in line for free South Dakota birth certificates and state ID cards under the terms of two bills that advanced out of a state House committee Tuesday morning.

House Bill 1098 would allow for a waiver of the \$15 fee attached to a request for a certified copy of a birth certificate. HB 1131 would waive the \$28 fee for a state identification card.

A birth certificate is required for several social services, including photo identification cards. ID cards are required for a host of services and activities, including to apply for an apartment, to cash checks and to access certain health services.

HB 1098's sponsor, Rep. Tyler Tordsen, R-Sioux Falls, told the committee that there may not be as many

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people experiencing homelessness in South Dakota as there might be in more populated states.

Even so, he said, it's a growing problem. Free birth certificates would remove a barrier people might have as they work to improve their situation, Tordsen said.

"This is a low-hanging fruit, and yet meaningful for this population," Tordsen said.

HB 1131 is sponsored by Rep. Kady Wittman, D-Sioux Falls. It would remove another burden that stands in the way of self-improvement, she said. Nonprofits will often pay for the ID cards, but Wittman said relying on nonprofits from community to community isn't the ideal way to ensure access to those cards.

"Relying on nonprofits to cover the cost of IDs for homeless people is impractical and unfair," said Wittman, who formerly worked with homeless populations at the Bishop Dudley Hospitality House in Sioux Falls.

Access to ID cards and birth certificates is an investment, according to Julie Becker, executive director of the St. Francis House shelter in Sioux Falls. People with them can get back on their feet and pay child support, pay their rent, and pay restitution and fines.

"Our guests have paid over \$563,000 back to the state just in one year," Becker said of restitution payments. "How did that start? It started with them getting a birth certificate and ID."

Both bills would allow nonprofits that work with homeless populations to attest to a person's status as homeless through an affidavit. That attestation would allow the person to get the birth certificate or ID card.

A fiscal note for the birth certificate bill says it would cost the state \$16,623 in its first year. Committee Chair Kevin Jensen, R-Canton, described that price as relatively insignificant.

The cost issue for the ID card bill provoked more opposition, though. That bill has no fiscal note. John Broers, director of driver's licensing for South Dakota, said it's not just nonprofits that currently offer to pay the cost of IDs for people in need. The Department of Corrections will pay for IDs, Broers said, as will the Department of Labor and Department of Health.

"We're getting IDs to the folks that need them," Broers said. "You just need to know where to look."

Broers also told the committee that driver's licensing in South Dakota is funded by fees, not the general state budget. He said he was concerned that the bill has no limit on the number of IDs a person can get.

In her rebuttal, Wittman said the available routes for an ID are often too burdensome to help people with serious needs.

For the Department of Labor, she said, "yes, they will help you get your ID, but only after you've met with a job counselor three times in a month."

"That might not sound like a lot to us," she said. "But a month is a long time to be experiencing homelessness."

Rep. Fred Deutsch, R-Florence, moved to amend the bill to allow people to only get one state ID card. Wittman called that a "friendly amendment," as she said "my hope is that these individuals never have to take advantage of this again."

Deutsch would go on to vote for the bill. The opposition was meaningful, he said, but not enough to outweigh the benefits.

"This is the greater good," Deutsch said.

Rep. Erin Healy, D-Sioux Falls, moved to pass the ID card bill along to the House Appropriations Committee to review the fiscal impact. A similar bill failed last year, and Healy said "it was not a lot of money."

"There's a return on investment in this, and it's only \$28 per person," Healy said.

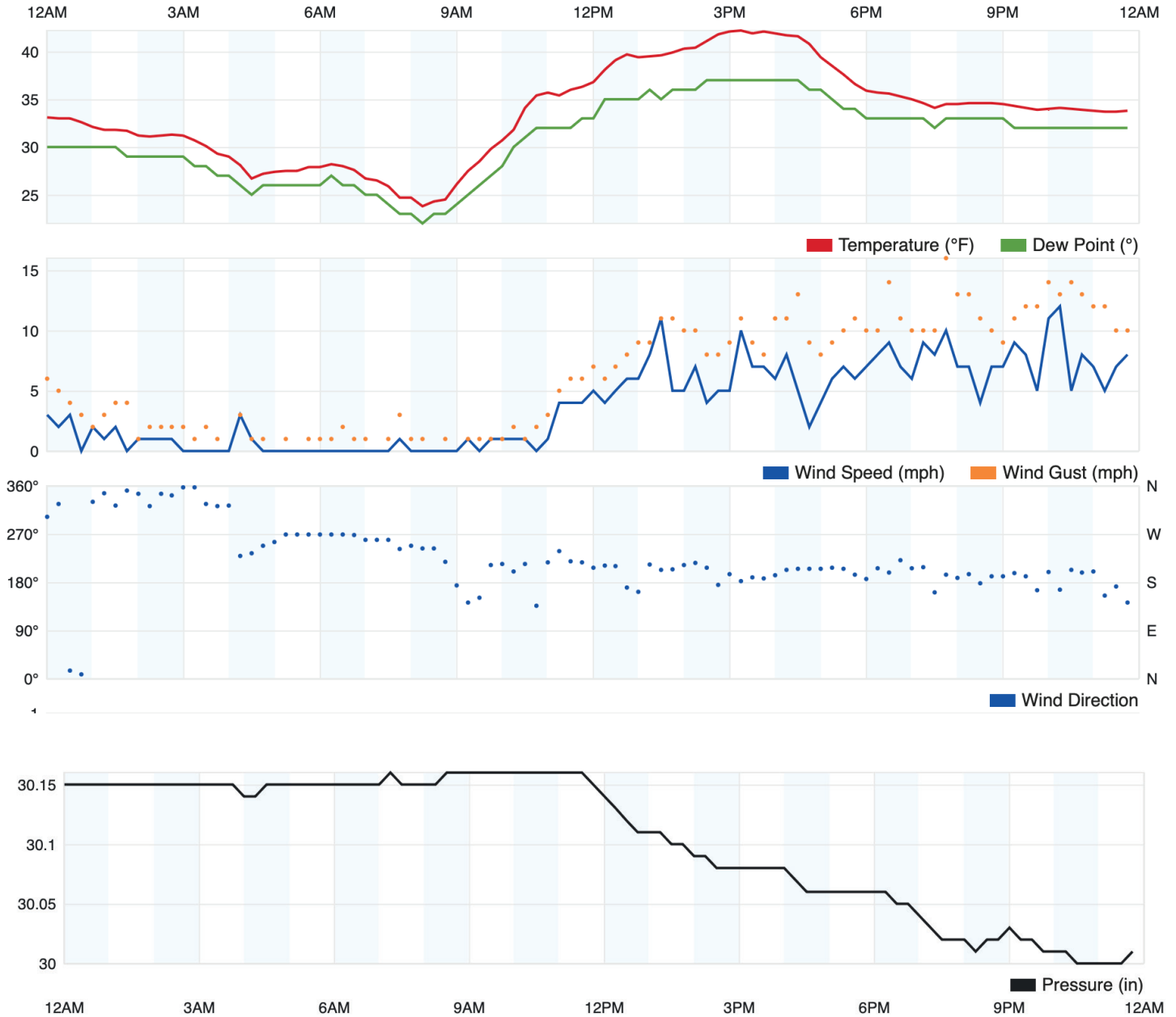
The birth certificate and ID card bills both passed unanimously and will move to House Appropriations.

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

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Wed Jan 31	Thu Feb 1	Fri Feb 2	Sat Feb 3	Sun Feb 4	Mon Feb 5	Tue Feb 6
46°F	39°F	40°F	46°F	45°F	44°F	47°F
26°F	29°F	37°F	37°F	33°F	33°F	34°F
SSW	NNE	ESE	ESE	E	ESE	S
7 MPH	10 MPH	15 MPH	16 MPH	12 MPH	11 MPH	16 MPH
		20%	60%	50%	20%	



## Weather Outlook

January 30, 2024

1:09 PM

Rain for the Weekend

	Maximum Temperature Forecast (°F)					Maximum	Probability of Precipitation Forecast (%)								Maximum				
	1/31 Wed	2/1 Thu	2/2 Fri	2/3 Sat	2/4 Sun		2/2 Fri	2/3 Sat		2/4 Sun		2/5 Mon							
Aberdeen	47	42	40	45	45	47	25	45	55	45	55	60	55	35	25	25	20	15	58
Britton	46	41	40	44	44	46	25	30	45	50	55	45	50	30	20	20	20	15	55
Brookings	50	44	44	47	45	50	5	20	25	35	35	25	25	20	15	15	10	10	35
Chamberlain	50	39	41	46	44	50	5	25	40	50	55	60	50	40	30	20	15	10	59
Clark	45	42	41	45	44	45	30	40	45	50	60	50	50	35	25	20	20	15	58
Eagle Butte	54	41	37	42	41	54	10	40	40	50	70	80	75	60	50	35	25	15	82
Ellendale	50	40	37	42	44	50	20	40	45	35	50	55	50	30	25	20	15	15	53
Eureka	48	41	37	42	43	48	25	45	60	45	60	70	65	45	35	30	25	15	69
Gettysburg	49	41	37	42	42	49	30	55	60	75	75	65	55	40	30	25	15	15	75
Huron	49	42	43	47	46	49	15	25	40	55	50	45	40	30	20	20	15	15	55
Kennebec	51	39	39	44	44	51	5	35	35	55	75	75	60	50	40	30	20	15	73
McIntosh	56	45	40	42	42	56	15	50	35	30	60	80	75	55	50	40	25	20	82
Milbank	54	45	42	46	46	54	10	20	25	25	35	30	30	20	15	15	15	15	37
Miller	48	39	38	43	43	48	30	45	60	60	70	70	65	45	35	30	25	15	70
Mobridge	50	42	40	44	44	50	15	50	50	40	65	75	70	50	40	30	25	15	76
Murdo	54	39	38	43	42	54	5	25	35	60	75	80	65	60	45	35	20	15	79
Pierre	52	42	40	45	44	52	10	35	40	60	75	75	65	55	45	30	20	15	76
Redfield	47	40	40	45	45	47	25	45	60	50	60	60	60	40	30	25	25	15	61
Sisseton	50	43	40	44	44	50	15	20	30	40	45	35	35	20	15	15	15	15	45
Watertown	48	43	41	45	43	48	20	30	30	35	45	40	40	25	20	20	15	15	47
Webster	46	41	39	42	42	46	25	25	40	45	50	45	45	25	20	20	20	15	51
Wheaton	50	44	40	45	46	50	5	15	15	20	25	25	25	15	10	10	10	10	27



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

Warmer than average temperatures continue with highs well into the 40s and 50s for Wednesday and still in the upper 30s to 40s for the rest of the week. A low pressure system will bring chances (25-80%) of rain (not snow!) for the entire area Friday evening through Sunday along with clouds



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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 42 °F at 2:52 PM

Low Temp: 24 °F at 8:11 AM

Wind: 16 mph at 7:44 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 9 hours, 45 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 51 in 1924

Record Low: -32 in 1996

Average High: 25

Average Low: 2

Average Precip in Jan.: 0.55

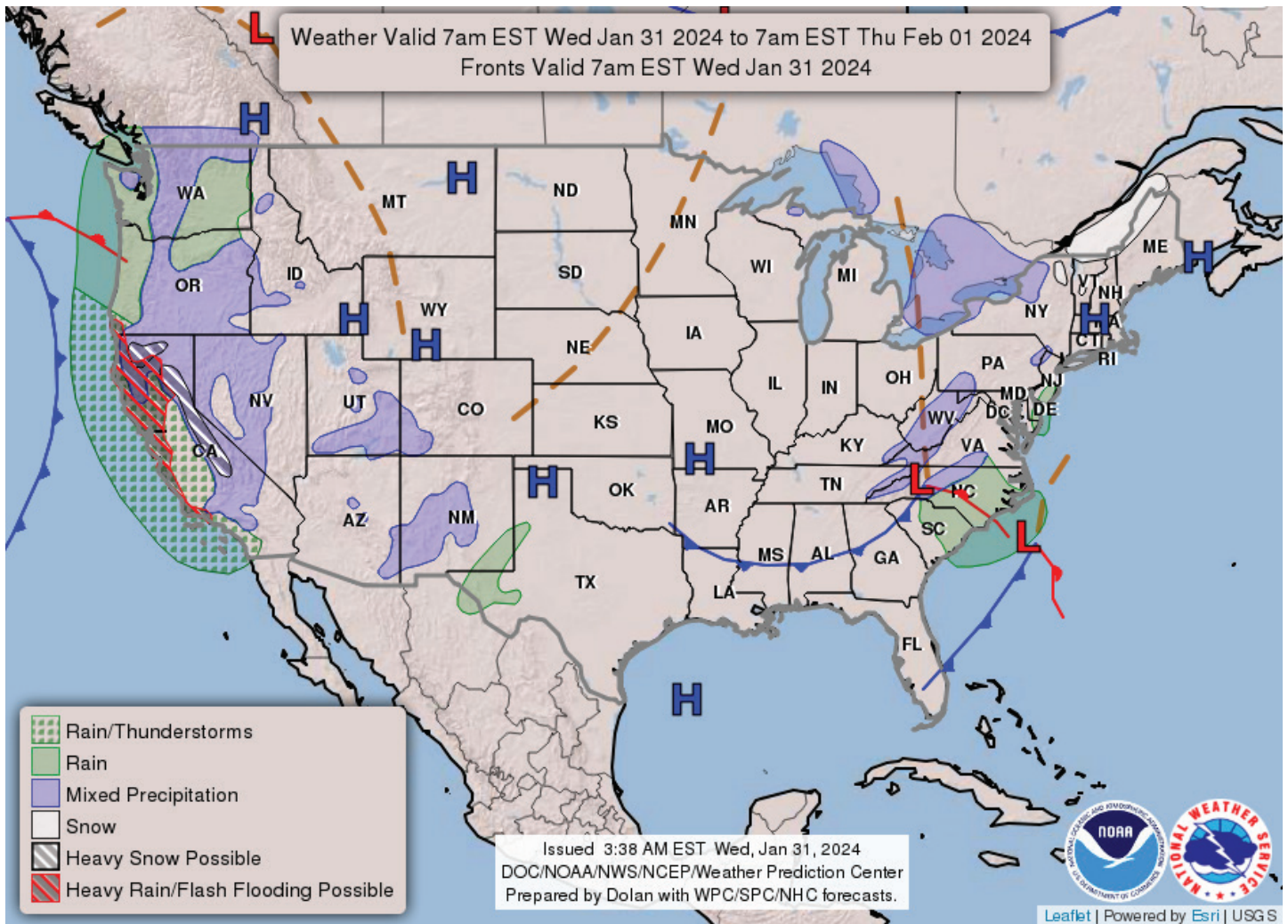
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 0.55

Precip Year to Date: 0.00

Sunset Tonight: 5:38:37 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:51:46 am



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## Today in Weather History

January 31, 1969: Minnesota experienced many winter storms throughout the month of 1969, where several people had died from heart attacks and auto accidents. Many roads were blocked or iced over several times during the month. Considerable snow during January and frequent periods of strong winds resulted in many days of blowing and drifting snow across northeast South Dakota. There were also many days with freezing rain. The most significant icing occurred on the 22nd and the 27th. There were numerous days where the traffic was at a standstill due to blocked roads and closed airports. Many school closings occurred throughout the month, with many activities canceled. Many rural roads went long periods without being opened, resulting in hardships for farmers. Days of blowing snow were the 8th, 19th, 22nd, 23th, 24th, 26th, 27th, and 31st. Days of freezing rain were the 5th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, and the 22nd.

1911: Tamarack, California, was without snow the first eight days of the month, but by the end of January, they had been buried under 390 inches of snow, a record monthly total for the United States. By March 11, 1911, Tamarack had a record snow depth of 451 inches.

1949 - The temperature at San Antonio, TX, plunged to a record low of one degree below zero. Helena MT reached 42 degrees below zero. (David Ludlum)

1950: Seattle, Washington experienced their coldest temperature on record with a reading of zero degrees.

1966 - A blizzard struck the northeastern U.S. When the storm came to an end, twenty inches of snow covered the ground at Washington D.C. (David Ludlum)

1979: A winter storm that started on the previous day and ended on this day spread 2 to 4 inches of rainfall in 24 hours over much of coastal Southern California and two inches of snow in Palm Springs. Snow fell heavily in Palm Springs, and 8 inches fell at Lancaster. All major interstates into Los Angeles were closed. Snow drifts shut down Interstate 10 on both sides of Palm Springs, isolating the city.

1982 - A snowstorm struck Missouri, Illinois and Indiana. Twenty-five inches of snow at Greenville IL, located east of Saint Louis, paralyzed the community. The storm left 4000 motorists stranded for two days. (David Ludlum)

1987 - A storm in the Pacific Northwest produced wind gusts to 85 mph in Oregon, and nearly two inches of rain in twelve hours in the Puget Sound area of Washington State. Ten inches of snow at Stampede Pass WA brought their total snow cover to 84 inches. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thirty-one cities in the central and northeastern U.S. reported new record high temperatures for the date, with many occurring during the early morning hours. Temperatures in western New York State reached the 60s early in the day. Strong northerly winds in the north central U.S. produced wind chill readings as cold as 60 degrees below zero in North Dakota. (National Weather Summary)

1989 - The barometric pressure at Norway, AK, reached 31.85 inches (1078.4 mb) establishing an all-time record for the North American Continent. The temperature at the time of the record was about 46 degrees below zero (The Weather Channel). Severe arctic cold began to invade the north central U.S. The temperature at Great Falls MT plunged 85 degrees in 36 hours. Valentine NE plummeted from a record high of 70 degrees to zero in just nine hours. Northwest winds gusted to 86 mph at Lander WY, and wind chill readings of 80 degrees below zero were reported in Montana. Sixty-four cities in the central U.S. reported record highs for the date as readings reached the 60s in Michigan and the 80s in Kansas. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - High winds in Montana on the 28th, gusting to 77 mph at Judith Gap, were followed by three days of snow. Heavy snow fell over northwest Montana, with up to 24 inches reported in the mountains. An avalanche covered the road near Essex with six feet of snow. Snow and high winds also plagued parts of the southwestern U.S. Winds gusted to 54 mph at Show Low AZ, and Flagstaff AZ was blanketed with eight inches of snow. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)



Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### A PICTURE OF CHRIST

It was the first day in art class, and the professor wanted to challenge his students to do something creative. Standing before them, he suggested that they draw a picture that had meaning and significance. Pausing for a moment, he turned to one student and said, "And what, William, are you going to draw?"

"I believe that I will draw a picture of Christ," he replied.

"But," said the professor, "no one knows what He looks like."

"They will know what He looks like when I'm through," said William.

People may see a representation of Christ on canvas, paper, or cloth, but God expects them to see Christ in us - by the way we live. Scripture clearly explains, time and time again, that the Christian is the one, not an artist, who is to provide a "picture of what Christ looks like."

Those around us who know we are Christians develop their understanding and image of Christ by watching us: what we do, how we live, what we say. They "read" about Christ in how we act and react to the events that come into our lives. They "see" Christ in what we do and how we do things for others. Simply stated, we are responsible for showing those around us His love.

A Christian is to have a "mind" that thinks as Jesus thought, a "heart" that breaks when the ravages of sin are visible, a "hand" that reaches out to those in need, and a "voice" through which He speaks to share His message.

Prayer: Our Father, You have given us a tremendous responsibility to represent You to others. We admit we are unable to do this unless we allow You to live through us. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: But those who obey God's word truly show how completely they love him. That is how we know we are living in him. Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did. 1 John 2:4-6



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: 01.30.24

3 5 16 58 59 11

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$333,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 29 Mins 17 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.29.24

5 9 15 50 51 1

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$2,700,000**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 44 Mins 16 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.30.24

1 10 23 36 38 2

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 59 Mins 16 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.27.24

3 6 15 22 30

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$33,000**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 59 Mins 16 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.29.24

31 44 45 63 64 16

TOP PRIZE:

**\$10,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 28 Mins 16 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.29.24

39 41 43 49 64 4

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$188,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 28 Mins 16 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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News from the  Associated Press

## Tuesday's Scores

The Associated Press

### **GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL**

Avon 51, Menno 21  
Brandon Valley 44, Marshall, Minn. 41  
Brookings 49, Sioux Falls Washington 39  
Burke 50, Corsica/Stickney 31  
Castlewood 45, DeSmet 33  
Centerville 73, Alcester-Hudson 25  
Chester 66, Parker 46  
Clark-Willow Lake 67, Wilmot 40  
Colman-Egan 38, Bridgewater-Emery 22  
Crow Creek Tribal School 46, Lower Brule 43  
Custer 49, Douglas 36  
Deubrook 45, Madison 35  
Dupree 56, Timber Lake 52  
Elk Point-Jefferson 57, Lennox 54  
Elkton-Lake Benton 41, Deuel 40  
Estelline-Hendricks 39, Waverly-South Shore 13  
Ethan 73, Sanborn Central-Woonsocket 27  
Freeman 81, Scotland 16  
Gayville-Volin High School 44, Tripp-Delmont-Armour 35  
Great Plains Lutheran 40, Webster 28  
Harding County 56, Lemmon High School 43  
Harrisburg 54, Pierre 50  
Herreid-Selby 60, Faith 58  
Highmore-Harold 50, Sunshine Bible Academy 28  
Howard 59, Irene-Wakonda 40  
James Valley Christian 63, Hitchcock-Tulare 44  
Lakota Tech 72, St Francis 18  
Leola-Frederick High School 54, Ipswich 29  
Marty 70, Colome 52  
Mitchell 43, Sioux Falls Jefferson 41  
Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 67, Gregory 27  
North Central 38, Aberdeen Christian 29  
Parkston 66, McCook Central-Montrose 40  
Platte-Geddes 52, Chamberlain 48  
Potter County 58, Redfield 32  
Rapid City Christian 52, St Thomas More 45  
Sioux Falls Christian 60, Canton 30  
Sioux Falls O'Gorman 53, Tea 45  
Sioux Falls Roosevelt 39, Huron 32, OT  
Sisseton 51, Britton-Hecla 37  
Spearfish 75, Lead-Deadwood 9  
Sully Buttes 52, Jones County 32  
Todd County 61, Stanley County 46

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Vermillion 67, Beresford 31  
Viborg-Hurley 52, Canistota 44  
Wagner 60, Hanson 38  
Wakpala 36, Strasburg, N.D. 35  
Warner 55, Faulkton 33  
Watertown 56, Sioux Falls Lincoln 36  
Wessington Springs 59, Iroquois-Lake Preston 49  
West Central 48, Tri-Valley 44  
Winner 61, Miller 15  
Wolsey-Wessington 42, Kimball-White Lake 40, OT  
Class 5A District 3=  
Play-in=  
Belle Fourche 65, Rapid City Central 59  
Bennett County 53, Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 46  
Dell Rapids St Mary 65, Oldham-Ramona-Rutland 55

## BOYS PREP BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Christian 61, North Central 32  
Aberdeen Roncalli 62, Tiospa Zina 53  
Avon 59, Menno 33  
Baltic 58, Garretson 39  
Brandon Valley 78, Marshall, Minn. 54  
Bridgewater-Emery 54, Colman-Egan 49  
Britton-Hecla 65, Sisseton 58, 2OT  
Canistota 48, Viborg-Hurley 47  
Centerville 62, Alcester-Hudson 50  
Chester 66, Parker 35  
Custer 66, Douglas 55  
Dell Rapids 56, Flandreau 35  
Elkton-Lake Benton 55, Deuel 47  
Estelline-Hendricks 50, Waverly-South Shore 46  
Ethan 58, Sanborn Central-Woonsocket 49  
Faulkton 44, Warner 34  
Freeman 58, Scotland 35  
Gregory 85, Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 58  
Highmore-Harrod 62, Sunshine Bible Academy 36  
Howard 73, Irene-Wakonda 35  
James Valley Christian 71, Hitchcock-Tulare 53  
Kadoka 64, Bennett County 37  
Kimball-White Lake 52, Colome 45  
Lennox 75, Elk Point-Jefferson 72  
Lower Brule 56, Crow Creek Tribal School 49  
Mitchell 71, Sioux Falls Jefferson 58  
Mobridge-Pollock 57, Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 54  
Parkston 62, McCook Central-Montrose 47  
Philip 59, New Underwood 48  
Pine Ridge 83, Campbell County, Wyo. 63  
Platte-Geddes 63, Chamberlain 61  
Sioux Falls Christian 89, Canton 73  
Sioux Falls Lincoln 61, Watertown 54

Sioux Falls Lutheran 60, Flandreau Indian 48  
Sioux Falls Roosevelt 56, Huron 52  
Sioux Falls Washington 66, Brookings 46  
Spearfish 69, Lead-Deadwood 42  
St Francis 66, Little Wound 65  
St Thomas More 66, Sturgis Brown 46  
Sully Buttes 54, Jones County 53  
Tripp-Delmont-Armour 62, Gayville-Volin High School 48  
Wagner 50, Hanson 47  
Wakpala 58, Strasburg, N.D. 44  
Wall 80, Belle Fourche 45  
Webster 72, Great Plains Lutheran 63  
Wessington Springs 62, Iroquois-Lake Preston 42  
West Central 47, Tri-Valley 35  
Western Christian, Iowa 69, Tea 48  
Winner 45, Miller 33

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

## Some Republican leaders are pushing back against the conservative Freedom Caucus in statehouses

By DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (AP) — On the first day of Missouri's new legislative session, Senate President Pro Tem Caleb Rowden tried to cajole colleagues into congeniality with a rhetorical question: "Will we focus on principled progress or political pandemonium?"

Progress was intended. But pandemonium ensued.

Within days, a newly formed Freedom Caucus — modeled after one in Washington, D.C. — ground the chamber to a halt with demands that Republican leaders act faster on GOP priorities. Tempers flared. Insults flew. And Rowden penalized prominent Freedom Caucus members by stripping them of their committee chairmanships and prime Capitol parking spots.

In state capitols around the country, Republican legislative leaders are pushing back against a growing network of conservative lawmakers attempting to pull the party further to the right with aggressive tactics aimed not at Democrats but at members of their own party. The infighting has put a spotlight on Republican fissures heading into the November elections, even as former President Donald Trump has been consolidating party support.

The conservative Freedom Caucus gained attention in the fall — when some of its members helped topple U.S. House Speaker Kevin McCarthy — but it's been active in the U.S. House since 2015.

An outgrowth of the group, the State Freedom Caucus Network, launched in 2021 in Georgia. With the recent addition in Missouri, it now counts chapters in 11 states, with designs to keep expanding. Unlike the loose affiliations of like-minded lawmakers that exist in many states, new State Freedom Caucus chapters are founded only by invitation from the national group — and come bankrolled with staff to help screen legislation, craft strategy and generate publicity.

Caucus members portray themselves as the Republican Party's true conservatives, often pressing colleagues into uncomfortable votes on amendments, blocking or slowing debate to make a point and clashing with Republican legislative leaders.

"We're willing to stand up and not be silenced by these guys," said Missouri state Sen. Bill Eigel, a Freedom Caucus member running for governor who has rankled Senate leaders with his lengthy and impassioned rhetoric.

In Missouri, the Freedom Caucus has pushed a measure that would make it harder to amend the state



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constitution with citizen ballot initiatives, such as one backing abortion rights. Eigel and other caucus members stalled the Senate from working for a month while seeking to force the proposal to be brought up for debate.

Elsewhere, Freedom Caucus members have backed restrictions on transgender medical procedures and called for state National Guard troops to be sent to the Texas-Mexico border to help deter migrants.

But it's their tactics, rather than their policies, that have ruffled GOP leaders.

Frustrated by their obstruction, Rowden recently denounced Missouri's Senate Freedom Caucus members as "a small group of swamp creatures" trying to "destroy the institution" while announcing he was stripping some of their parking perks and committee leadership.

Like in Missouri, Idaho's top Republican senator removed certain Freedom Caucus members from committee leadership posts last November and denounced their disparaging rhetoric against other senators.

For a year now in South Carolina, Freedom Caucus members have been excluded from the House Republican caucus — since they refused to go along with party rules that bar them from campaigning against other Republican members.

Meanwhile in Georgia, the Senate Republican caucus booted an outspoken Freedom Caucus member who tried to pressure colleagues into impeaching a Democratic prosecutor for indicting Trump. The Georgia Senate GOP caucus said in a statement last September that Sen. Colton Moore had caused "unnecessary tension and hostility" and put his colleagues "at risk of personal harm" through his public pressure campaign.

Moore remains excluded from the Republican caucus, though the Senate has since launched an investigation into whether Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis misspent state money in her prosecution of Trump and others. Moore said the investigation validates his efforts, which he said probably are "a lot more aggressive" than those used in the past.

In various states, Freedom Caucus members are exposing "that there are a lot of Republicans in state legislators who are enabling bigger government and locking arms with the Democrats to do so," said Andrew Roth, president of the State Freedom Caucus Network. "And when they're finally being called out on it, they react punitively."

Despite such conflicts, Roth said Freedom Caucus members have had a hand in passing anti-abortion legislation in Wyoming, changing Louisiana's congressional primaries and blocking Democratic Arizona Gov. Katie Hobbs' nominee to lead the Department of Health Services, among other things.

But some Freedom Caucus' actions have failed. In Montana, the group's petition to call a January special session on property tax cuts recently fell short of the needed threshold. A chapter in Mississippi folded after most of its members either retired or ran for other offices.

Still, Freedom Caucus chapters remain active in politically divided Pennsylvania, Democratic-led Illinois and Republican-led South Dakota.

In the early weeks of South Carolina's legislative session, group members have been at the center of Republican tensions. Freedom Caucus members accused Republican colleagues of watering down a bill restricting treatments for transgender youths by tabling amendments like one requiring immediate parental notification from teachers when children change gender identities. Other Republicans saw the Freedom Caucus amendments as a bad-faith effort to grab attention and force difficult votes.

In a new twist, the South Carolina Freedom Caucus issued its own response to the Republican governor's State of the State address last week. Republican Rep. Adam Morgan, the chair of the 16-person group, railed against what he called the state's "liberal Republicans." Morgan, who recently announced a bid for Congress, also derided a House GOP caucus rule barring campaigns against fellow Republicans as a "crony loyalty pledge."

Some Republicans, including state Rep. Micah Caskey, have fought back — at least rhetorically. Caskey accused the Freedom Caucus of "political terrorism for their own selfish narrow ambitions."

"They have bamboozled people into believing that their fiery rhetoric and preference for anarchy is conservative," Caskey said. "The reality is that they are an obstruction and an annoyance to achieving conservative policy aims."

## The US hasn't seen syphilis numbers this high since 1950. Other STD rates are down or flat

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The U.S. syphilis epidemic isn't abating, with the rate of infectious cases rising 9% in 2022, according to a new federal government report on sexually transmitted diseases in adults.

But there's some unexpected good news: The rate of new gonorrhea cases fell for the first time in a decade.

It's not clear why infectious cases of syphilis rose 9% while gonorrhea dropped 9%, officials at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said, adding that it's too soon to know whether a new downward trend is emerging for the latter.

They are most focused on syphilis, which is less common than gonorrhea or chlamydia but considered more dangerous. And while it continues to have a disproportionate impact on gay and bisexual men, it is expanding in heterosexual men and women, and increasingly affecting newborns, too, CDC officials said.

Total cases surpassed 207,000 in 2022, a 17% increase and the highest count in the United States since 1950, according to data released Tuesday. The count includes not only the most infectious stages of the disease but also latent cases and cases in which pregnant women passed syphilis on to their babies.

Syphilis is a bacterial disease that can surface as painless genital sores but can ultimately lead to paralysis, hearing loss, dementia and even death if left untreated.

New syphilis infections plummeted in the U.S. starting in the 1940s when antibiotics became widely available and fell to their lowest by 1998.

About 59,000 of the 2022 cases involved the most infectious forms of syphilis. Of those, about a quarter were women and nearly a quarter were heterosexual men.

"I think it's unknowingly being spread in the cisgender heterosexual population because we really aren't testing for it. We really aren't looking for it" in that population, said Dr. Philip Chan, who teaches at Brown University and is chief medical officer of Open Door Health, a health center for gay, lesbian and transgender patients in Providence, Rhode Island.

The report also shows rates of the most infectious types of syphilis rose not just across the country but also across different racial and ethnic groups, with American Indian and Alaska Native people having the highest rate. South Dakota outpaced any other state for the highest rate of infectious syphilis at 84 cases per 100,000 people — more than twice as high as the state with the second-highest rate, New Mexico.

South Dakota's increase was driven by an outbreak in the Native American community, said Dr. Meghan O'Connell, chief public health officer at the Great Plains Tribal Leaders' Health Board based in Rapid City, South Dakota. Nearly all of the cases were in heterosexual people, and O'Connell said that STD testing and treatment was already limited in isolated tribal communities and only got worse during the pandemic.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services last year convened a syphilis task force focused on stopping the spread of the STD, with an emphasis on places with the highest syphilis rates — South Dakota, 12 other states and the District of Columbia.

The report also looked at the more common STDs of chlamydia and gonorrhea.

Chlamydia cases were relatively flat from 2021 to 2022, staying at a rate of about 495 per 100,000, though there were declines noted in men and especially women in their early 20s. For gonorrhea, the most pronounced decline was seen in women in their early 20s as well.

Experts say they're not sure why gonorrhea rates declined. It happened in about 40 states, so whatever explains the decrease appears to have occurred across most of the country. STD testing was disrupted during the COVID-19 pandemic, and officials believe that's the reason the chlamydia rate fell in 2020.

It's possible that testing and diagnoses were still shaking out in 2022, said Dr. Jonathan Mermin, director of the CDC's National Center for HIV, Viral Hepatitis, STD and TB Prevention.

"We are encouraged by the magnitude of the decline," Mermin said, though the gonorrhea rate is still higher now than it was pre-pandemic. "We need to examine what happened, and whether it's going to continue to happen."

## Legislative panel shoots down South Dakota bill to raise the age for marriage to 18

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Sixteen- and 17-year-olds call still wed in South Dakota after a legislative committee shot down an effort to raise the age of marriage to 18.

The House State Affairs Committee on Monday voted 8-5 to reject the bill and let stand the current law, which lets 16- and 17-year-olds marry if they have the consent of a parent or guardian, KELO-TV reported.

"The statistics speak volumes," the prime sponsor, Democratic Rep. Kadyne Wittman, of Sioux Falls, told the committee. Between 2000 and 2020, 838 minors got married in South Dakota, according to the state Office of Vital Records, and 81% were minor girls being wed to adult men, she said.

But Republican Rep. Gary Cammack, of Union Center, said he wed his wife when she was 17 and their marriage has lasted 52 years. He said the state's existing guardrails should be sufficient.

Norman Woods of South Dakota Family Voice Action said it doesn't make sense to raise the age for marriage if the age of consent in South Dakota remains at 16.

"So if you raise the marriage age to eighteen, you as a state would be saying, 'You can hook up, but you can't get married,' and again, we would caution against that," he said.

Wittman said Call For Freedom, an anti-sex-trafficking group, supported the legislation, though she didn't specifically propose it to fight child exploitation and sex trafficking.

"This bill is brought because I was genuinely shocked to discover it is still on our books that 16-year-olds can get married in our state. Trying to eliminate or mitigate sexual exploitation of children is just a benefit to this specific piece of legislation," she said.

Research by Call for Freedom found that nearly 300,000 minors were legally married in the U.S. between 2000 and 2018. A few were as young as 10, but nearly all were age 16 or 17. Most were girls wed to adult men an average of four years older.

According to the Tahirih Justice Center, a nonprofit that works to end child marriages, 10 states ban marriages under age 18 with no exceptions. But more than half the states allow people ages 16 and 17 to marry with parental consent alone. Five states don't set age floors. The group says statutory exceptions for parental consent, which can hide parental coercion, and for pregnancy, which can be evidence of rape, can facilitate forced marriages.

Since 2016, when Virginia became first state to limit marriage to legal adults, 34 states have enacted laws to end or limit child marriage, the center says.

## Iran threatens to 'decisively respond' to any US strikes as Biden weighs response to Jordan attack

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Iran threatened Wednesday to "decisively respond" to any U.S. attack on the Islamic Republic following President Joe Biden's linking of Tehran to the killing of three U.S. soldiers at a military base in Jordan.

The U.S. has signaled it is preparing for retaliatory strikes in the Mideast in the wake of the Sunday drone attack that also injured at least 40 troops at Tower 22, a secretive base in northeastern Jordan that's been crucial to the American presence in neighboring Syria.

However, concerns remain that any additional American strikes could further inflame a region already roiled by Israel's ongoing war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip and the ongoing attacks by Yemen's Houthi rebels on shipping in the Red Sea.

A U.S. Navy destroyer in the waterway shot down an anti-ship cruise missile launched by the Houthis late Tuesday, the latest attack targeting American forces patrolling the key maritime trade route, officials said.

The Iranian warnings first came from Amir Saeid Iravani, Iran's ambassador to the United Nations in New York. He gave a briefing to Iranian journalists late Tuesday, according to the state-run IRNA news agency.

"The Islamic Republic would decisively respond to any attack on the country, its interests and nationals

under any pretexts," IRNA quoted Iravani as saying. He described any possible Iranian retaliation as a "strong response," without elaborating.

The Iranian mission to the U.N. did not respond to requests for comment or elaboration Wednesday on Iravani's remarks.

Iravani also denied that Iran and the U.S. had exchanged any messages over the last few days, either through intermediaries or directly. The pan-Arab satellite channel Al Jazeera, which is based in and funded by Qatar, reported earlier that such communication had taken place. Qatar often serves as an intermediary between Washington and Tehran.

"Such messages have not been exchanged," Iravani said.

But Iran's government has taken note of the U.S. threats of retaliation for the attack on the base in Jordan.

"Sometime, our enemies raise the threat and nowadays we hear some threats in between words by American officials," Revolutionary Guard commander Gen. Hossein Salami, who answers only to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, said at an event Wednesday. "We tell them that you have experienced us and we know each other. We do not leave any threat without an answer."

"We are not after war, but we have no fear of war," he added, according to IRNA.

On Saturday, a general in charge of Iran's air defenses described them as being at their "highest defensive readiness." That raises concerns for commercial aviation traveling through and over Iran as well. After a U.S. drone strike killed a top general in 2020, Iranian air defenses mistakenly shot down a Ukrainian passenger plane, killing all 176 people on board.

Meanwhile, attacks by the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels continue in the Red Sea, most recently targeting a U.S. warship. The missile launched Tuesday night targeted the USS Gravelly, an Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer, the U.S. military's Central Command said in a statement.

"There were no injuries or damage reported," the statement said.

A Houthi military spokesman, Brig. Gen. Yahya Saree, claimed the attack in a statement Wednesday morning, calling it "a victory for the oppression of the Palestinian people and a response to the American-British aggression against our country."

Saree claimed the Houthis fired "several" missiles. something not acknowledged by the U.S. Navy. Houthi claims have been exaggerated in the past, and their missiles sometimes crash on land and fail to reach their targets.

The Houthis claimed without evidence on Monday to have targeted the USS Lewis B. Puller, a floating landing base used by the Navy SEALs and others. The U.S. said there had been no attack.

Since November, the rebels have repeatedly targeted ships in the Red Sea over Israel's offensive against Hamas in Gaza. 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.

## Former Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan gets 14-year prison sentence in third conviction

By MUNIR AHMED Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Former Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan and his wife were sentenced on Wednesday to 14 years in prison each for corruption, his lawyer and prison officials said, a day after another special court convicted Khan of leaking state secrets and gave him a 10-year prison sentence.

The latest conviction and sentencing were Khan's third since 2022, when he was ousted from power, and came ahead of Pakistan's Feb. 8 parliamentary elections. The sentences will be served concurrently.

Khan and his wife were accused in the most recent graft case of retaining and selling state gifts when he was in power. In Pakistan, government leaders are allowed to buy such gifts, but they aren't usually then sold. If they are, individuals must declare the earnings as income. The prosecution said Khan did not correctly disclose his income after selling the gifts he had received from foreign dignitaries and heads of state.

The couple was also fined 787 million rupees (\$2.8 million) each, and the court disqualified Khan for 10



years from holding any public office.

His lawyer, Babar Awan, said the former premier was convicted and sentenced in such a hurry that the judge did not wait for the arrival of his legal team.

He said Khan's basic human and fundamental rights had been violated, and that the latest legal setbacks would be challenged in higher courts.

"It seems the judge was in a hurry to announce the verdict," he said.

Zulfiqar Bukhari, the chief spokesperson for Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party, or PTI, also confirmed the conviction and sentencing.

In a statement, Bukhari said Khan's conviction and sentencing was "another sad day in our judicial system history which is being dismantled."

Khan and his wife, Bushra Bibi, were indicted three weeks ago on graft charges for retaining state gifts including jewelry and watches from Saudi Arabia's government, authorities said. They pleaded not guilty.

Bibi was absent when the judge announced the verdict but later went to the court to avoid being arrested. She will be handed over to prison officials to serve her sentence.

Khan briefly attended Wednesday's hearing but left the courtroom when the judge was about to read the verdict. He said he could not remain there without his lawyer and asked the judge to wait. His request was denied.

Awan, his lawyer, told The Associated Press that the former premier was being sidelined ahead of the vote next week, but noted that his party remains popular. Analysts say Khan enjoys a strong grassroots following.

Awan also said Khan's trial was conducted against international and domestic laws.

Gohar Khan, the head of the PTI, said many people assumed Khan's political career was over after this latest conviction. "No, this is not the case. He is not gone and I appeal to our supporters to vote for the candidates of PTI to ensure that we win the election, and this is the best way to avenge (him)."

Khan was ousted from power in a no-confidence vote in Parliament in April 2022. He is serving time on a corruption conviction and has multiple other legal cases hanging over him.

He remains popular despite his prison sentences and being out of the public eye since last August.

Pakistan has a history of arresting former prime ministers or sidelining them ahead of elections if they are deemed to pose a challenge to the security establishment. More than two-thirds of its civilian rulers have been arrested, convicted or disqualified since the country gained independence from Britain in 1947.

In 2018, three-time premier and Khan's rival Nawaz Sharif was hobbled by legal cases and prison sentences. Khan's party won the polls and formed a coalition government.

This time around, Sharif has a clear path to a fourth term in office after the Supreme Court acquitted him on all charges and scrapped a lifetime ban on politicians with criminal convictions from contesting elections.

Muhammad Ali, an Islamabad-based political analyst, said no former Pakistani premier has been convicted and sentenced in three cases within six months. But Ali said Khan was partly to blame because his legal team kept skipping court hearings as part of a strategy to delay the trial.

## **The UN's top court is set to rule on Ukraine's allegation that Russia bankrolled separatist rebels**

By MIKE CORDER Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — The United Nations' top court plans to rule Wednesday on Ukraine's allegations that Russia bankrolled separatist rebels in the country's east a decade ago and has discriminated against Crimea's multiethnic community since its annexation of the peninsula.

The legally binding final ruling is the first of two expected decisions from the International Court of Justice linked to the decadelong conflict between Russia and Ukraine that exploded into a full-blown war almost two years ago.

The case, filed in 2017, accuses Russia of breaching conventions against discrimination and the financing of terrorism. Ukraine wants the court to order Moscow to pay reparations for attacks and crimes in the

country's east, including the downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17.

Russia-backed rebels shot down the plane on July 17, 2014, killing all 298 passengers and crew. Russia denies involvement. A Dutch domestic court convicted two Russians and a pro-Moscow Ukrainian in November 2022 for their roles in the attack and sentenced them in their absence to life imprisonment. The Netherlands and Ukraine also have sued Russia at the European Court of Human Rights over MH17.

At hearings last year, a lawyer for Ukraine, David Zions, said the pro-Russia forces in eastern Ukraine "attacked civilians as part of a campaign of intimidation and terror. Russian money and weapons fueled this campaign."

Another lawyer for Ukraine, Harold Koh, said that in the Crimean Peninsula, Russia "sought to replace the multiethnic community that had characterized Crimea before Russia's intervention with discriminatory Russian nationalism."

Lawyers for Russia urged the world court to throw out the case, arguing that the actions of pro-Moscow rebels in eastern Ukraine did not amount to terrorism.

The court is expected to rule Friday on Russia's objections to its jurisdiction in another case filed by Ukraine shortly after Russian troops invaded on Feb. 24, 2022. It alleges that Moscow launched its attack based on trumped-up genocide allegations. The court already has issued an interim order for Russia to halt the invasion, which Moscow has flouted.

The International Court of Justice in recent weeks also heard a case brought by South Africa accusing Israel of committing genocide in Gaza. Judges issued provisional measures last week calling on Israel to do all it can to prevent death, destruction and any acts of genocide in the conflict.

## House GOP takes party-line vote toward Mayorkas impeachment as border becomes 2024 campaign issue

By LISA MASCARO and REBECCA SANTANA Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Republicans voted along party lines after midnight Wednesday to move toward impeaching Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas for a "willful and systematic" refusal to enforce immigration laws as border security becomes a top 2024 election issue.

The Homeland Security Committee debated all day Tuesday and well into the night before recommending two articles of impeachment against Mayorkas to the full House, a rare charge against a Cabinet official unseen in nearly 150 years, as Republicans make GOP presidential front-runner Donald Trump's hard-line deportation approach to immigration their own.

The committee Republicans voted in favor, while the Democrats unified against, 18-15.

"We cannot allow this man to remain in office any longer," said Chairman Mark Green, R-Tenn.

The impeachment articles charge that Mayorkas "refused to comply with Federal immigration laws" amid a record surge of migrants and that he has "breached the public trust" in his claims to Congress that the U.S.-Mexico border is secure.

The full House could vote on Mayorkas' impeachment as soon as next week. If approved, the charges would go to the Senate for a trial, though senators may first convene a special committee for consideration.

With an unusual personal appeal, Mayorkas — who is deep in Senate talks on a border security package — wrote in a letter to the committee that it should be working with the Biden administration to update the nation's "broken and outdated" immigration laws for the 21st century, an era of record global migration.

"We need a legislative solution and only Congress can provide it," Mayorkas wrote in the pointed letter to the panel's chairman.

Rarely has a Cabinet member faced impeachment's bar of "high crimes and misdemeanors," and Democrats on the panel dismissed the proceedings as a stunt and a sham that could set a chilling precedent for other civil servants snared in policy disputes by lawmakers who disagree with the president's approach.

"This is a terrible day for the committee, the United States, the Constitution and our great country," said Rep. Bennie Thompson of Mississippi, the committee's ranking Democrat.

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Referring to Trump's "Make America Great Again" campaign slogan, Thompson said the "MAGA-led impeachment of Secretary Mayorkas is a baseless sham."

The House's proceedings against Mayorkas have created an oddly split-screen Capitol Hill, as the Senate works deliberately with the secretary on a bipartisan border security package that is now on life support.

The package being negotiated by the senators with Mayorkas could emerge as the most consequential bipartisan immigration proposal in a decade. Or it could collapse in political failure as Republicans, and some Democrats, run from the effort.

Trump, on the campaign trail and in private talks, has tried to squelch the deal. "I'd rather have no bill than a bad bill," Trump said over the weekend in Las Vegas.

President Joe Biden, in his own campaign remarks in South Carolina, said if Congress sends him a bill with emergency authority he'll "shut down the border right now" to get migration under control.

"I've done all I can do," Biden told reporters Tuesday before departing for a campaign-related trip to Florida. "Give me the power" through legislation, which he said is something he's asked "from the very day I got in office."

The Republicans are focused on the secretary's handling of the southern border, which has experienced a increasing number of migrants over the past year, many seeking asylum in the U.S., at a time when drug cartels are using the border with Mexico to traffic people and ship deadly fentanyl into the states.

Rep, Elise Stefanik, R-N.Y., a Trump ally often mentioned as a possible vice presidential pick, called it an "invasion."

Republicans contend that the Biden administration and Mayorkas 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.

House Speaker Mike Johnson said Biden and Mayorkas have "created a catastrophe" on the border, and he criticized the emerging Senate package. The GOP leader said the president is now trying to turn the blame back on Congress for failing to update immigration laws.

The Republicans 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. after military withdrawal from their country.

"It's high time" for impeachment, said Rep. Michael McCaul, R-Texas, the chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, who called Mayorkas the "architect" of the border problems. "He has what's coming to him."

The House impeachment hearings against Mayorkas sprinted ahead in January while the Republicans' separate impeachment inquiry into Biden over the business dealings over his son Hunter Biden dragged.

Democrats argue that Mayorkas is acting under his legal authorities at the department and that the criticisms against him do not rise to the level of impeachment.

House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries of New York called the proceedings a "political stunt" ordered up by Trump and Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Ga., a Trump ally, who pushed the resolution forward.

During the hearing, Rep. Robert Garcia, D-Calif., pointed to Trump's comments echoing Adolf Hitler that immigrants are "poisoning the blood" of the U.S. and to his proposals for militarizing the border as extreme, arguing the impeachment proceedings were "all about trying to get Donald Trump re-elected."

Debate dragged into the night as Democrats tried and failed to amend the resolution.

Mayorkas never testified on his own behalf during the rushed impeachment proceedings — he and the committee couldn't agree on a date — but in his letter he drew on his own background as a child brought to the U.S. by his parents fleeing Cuba and on his career spent prosecuting criminals.

"Your false accusations do not rattle me and do not divert me" from public service, he wrote.

Green, the Republican committee chair, disparaged Mayorkas's letter as an "11th-hour response" to the committee that was "inadequate and unbecoming of a Cabinet secretary."

It's unclear if Republicans will have the support from their ranks to go through with the impeachment vote in the full House, especially with their slim majority and with Democrats expected to vote against it.

Last year, eight House Republicans voted to shelve the impeachment resolution proposed by Greene, though many of them have since signaled being open to it. The committee approved a revised version.

Legal experts, including Jonathan Turley and Alan Dershowitz, have said the criticisms of Mayorkas do not rise to impeachable offenses.

If the House does agree to impeach Mayorkas, the charges would next to go the Senate. In 1876, the House impeached Defense Secretary William Belknap over kickbacks in government contracts, but the Senate acquitted him in a trial.

## Israeli forces dressed as civilian women and medics kill 3 militants in a West Bank hospital

By AREF TUFABA, MELANIE LIDMAN and WAFAA SHURABA Associated Press

JENIN, West Bank (AP) — Israeli forces disguised as civilian women and medics stormed a hospital Tuesday in the occupied West Bank, killing three Palestinian militants in a dramatic raid that underscored how deadly violence has spilled into the territory from the war in Gaza.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, meanwhile, ruled out a military withdrawal from Gaza and the release of thousands of jailed militants — Hamas' main two demands for any cease-fire — casting doubt on the latest efforts to end a war that has destabilized the broader Middle East.

The Palestinian Health Ministry said Israeli forces opened fire inside the Ibn Sina Hospital in the West Bank town of Jenin. A hospital spokesperson said there was no exchange of fire, indicating it was a targeted killing.

Israel's military said the militants were using the hospital as a hideout, without providing evidence. It alleged that one of those targeted had transferred weapons and ammunition to others for a planned attack, purportedly inspired by Hamas' Oct. 7 assault on southern Israel that triggered the war in Gaza.

Security camera footage from the hospital shows about a dozen undercover forces, most of them armed, wearing Muslim headscarves, hospital scrubs or white doctor's coats. One carried a rifle in one arm and a folded wheelchair in the other.

### NETANYAHU REJECTS HAMAS' KEY DEMANDS

Netanyahu, speaking at an event elsewhere in the West Bank, denied reports of a possible cease-fire deal to end the war in Gaza and repeated his vow to keep fighting until "absolute victory" over Hamas.

"We will not end this war without achieving all of our goals," said Netanyahu, who is under mounting pressure from families of the hostages and the wider public to reach a deal. "We will not withdraw the Israeli military from the Gaza Strip and we will not release thousands of terrorists," he said.

On Tuesday, Hamas' top political leader Ismail Haniyeh said the group was studying the latest terms for a deal, but that the priority was the "full withdrawal" of Israeli forces from Gaza and that any agreement should lead to a long-term cease-fire.

He said Hamas' leadership had been invited to Cairo to continue talks. The militant group, which has reached lopsided exchange deals with Israel in the past, is expected to demand the release of thousands of Palestinian prisoners — including high-profile militants — in exchange for the remaining hostages.

Qatar and Egypt, which mediate with Hamas, have held talks with Israel and the United States in recent days. U.S. officials said negotiators had made progress toward a deal, including the phased release of the remaining hostages over a two-month period and the entry of more humanitarian aid into Gaza.

The war in Gaza began when hundreds of Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel, killing about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting about 250 others. Over 100 were released during a weeklong cease-fire in November in exchange for 240 Palestinians imprisoned by Israel.

Israel's offensive has killed more than 26,700 people in Gaza, according to the Health Ministry in the Hamas-run territory. The ministry count does not distinguish between fighters and civilians, but it says about two-thirds of the dead are women and minors.

A strike Tuesday on a residential building in the central town of Deir al-Balah killed 11 people, including four children, according to Associated Press reporters who saw the bodies at a hospital.

The war has leveled vast swaths of the tiny coastal enclave, displaced 85% of its population, and pushed



a quarter of residents to starvation.  
HOSPITALS HAVE BECOME BATTLEFIELDS

## **Israel has come under heavy criticism for its raids on hospitals in Gaza, which have treated tens of thousands of Palestinians wounded in the war and provided critical shelter for displaced people.**

Gaza's health care system, which was already feeble before the war, is on the verge of collapse, buckling under the scores of patients as well as a lack of fuel and medical necessities because of Israeli restrictions and fighting in and near the facilities.

Israel says militants use hospitals as cover. The military says it has found underground tunnels in the vicinity of hospitals and located weapons and vehicles used in the Oct. 7 attack on hospital grounds.

The Palestinian Red Crescent said Israeli forces raided the Al-Amal Hospital on Tuesday in the southern Gaza city of Khan Younis, where about 7,000 displaced people were sheltering.

The rescue service said Israeli tanks lined up outside the hospital were firing live ammunition and smoke grenades at the people inside. Raed al-Nims, a spokesperson for the aid group, said everyone was ordered to evacuate.

The Israeli military said without elaborating that its forces were operating in the area of the hospital but not inside it.

### **WEST BANK CRACKDOWN**

Violence in the West Bank has surged since Oct. 7, with Israel cracking down on suspected militants and killing more than 380 Palestinians, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry. Most were killed in confrontations with Israeli forces during arrest raids or violent protests.

The military said that in Tuesday's hospital raid, forces killed Mohammed Jalamneh, 27, who it said was planning an imminent attack. The two other men killed, brothers Basel and Mohammed Ghazawi, were hiding inside the hospital and were involved in attacks, the military said.

The army statement said Jalamneh was armed with a pistol but made no mention of an exchange of fire. Hamas condemned the killings and identified Jalamneh as one of its fighters. The smaller Islamic Jihad militant group said the Ghazawi brothers were members of its armed wing.

Hospital spokesperson Tawfiq al-Shobaki said there was no exchange of fire, and that Basel Ghazawi had been a patient since October, with partial paralysis.

"What happened is a precedent," he said. "There was never an assassination inside a hospital. There were arrests and assaults, but not an assassination."

Tuesday's raid took place in the West Bank town of Jenin, long a bastion of armed struggle against Israel and the frequent target of Israeli raids, even before the war began.

Israel captured the West Bank, along with the Gaza Strip and east Jerusalem, in the 1967 Mideast war.

Israel withdrew troops and settlers from Gaza in 2005, but imposed a stifling blockade on the territory, along with Egypt, when Hamas came to power in a violent takeover in 2007. It maintains an open-ended occupation of the West Bank, where more than half a million Israelis now live in settlements.

The Palestinians claim these territories as part of their future independent state, hopes for which have increasingly dimmed since the war began.



## Ukraine has improved conditions for its Hungarian minority. It might not be enough for Viktor Orbán

By JUSTIN SPIKE Associated Press

BEREHOVE, Ukraine (AP) — Under the watchful eye of their teacher, a group of students in western Ukraine used a scalpel and forceps to dissect a pig's heart during a weekend biology class. The lesson was taking place in Hungarian: the students, members of a sizable ethnic Hungarian minority, have become a focal point of souring relations between Hungary and Ukraine that threaten to derail key financial support for Kyiv as it fights to defeat Russia's invasion.

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has long alleged that Ukraine's government is infringing upon the rights of those students — and of the roughly 75,000 ethnic Hungarians residing in the Ukrainian region of Zakarpattia — to speak their native language in education and public administration.

His government has blocked crucial European Union funding for Ukraine and threatened to impede the war-ravaged country's efforts toward eventually joining the bloc, bringing diplomatic ties to worrying lows.

The dispute over language is rooted in Ukraine's efforts to bolster its national identity after Russia-backed rebels took control of two regions in the country's east in 2014 and Moscow annexed Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula.

Aimed at combating Russian influence, but ultimately affecting other minority languages, a law was passed in 2017 that made Ukrainian the required language of study past the fifth grade, angering Romanian, Bulgarian and Hungarian minorities.

But in December, Ukraine amended its education and language laws to comply with the EU's membership requirements, and restored many of the language rights demanded by Budapest — prompting a sigh of relief from the region's Hungarian community.

The legislative changes "essentially gave the Hungarian community of Zakarpattia the opportunity to ensure its own existence for another 30 years," said László Zubánics, head of the Hungarian Democratic Alliance of Ukraine, a Hungarian interest group.

Ukraine's government has "gone beyond the nation-building effort that characterized the past years, and now takes into account the interests of not only the majority nation, but also of all minorities and indigenous peoples living on the territory of the country," he added.

The legal changes that restored the rights of national minorities to study in their native languages are viewed by many ethnic Hungarians as a positive step. But Hungary's government has indicated it is not fully satisfied — a potentially explosive sticking point as EU leaders meet on Thursday to try and break Orbán's veto of a 50-billion euro (\$54 billion) aid package earmarked for Kyiv.

"The law adopted at the end of last year in Ukraine undoubtedly deserves respect. It stopped a negative spiral," said Hungarian Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó on Monday, following a bilateral meeting with his Ukrainian counterpart in western Ukraine.

But, he added, "We don't see at all that the issue of national minorities has reached resolution ... We still have a long way to go."

Since Russia's invasion, Orbán, widely considered to be Russian President Vladimir Putin's closest EU ally, has emerged as a consistent opponent of military and financial aid to Kyiv and sanctions against Moscow, often using the Hungarian minority to justify his lukewarm support for Ukraine.

Hungarians in Zakarpattia are largely supportive of Orbán, but also back Kyiv's ambitions to join the EU. Yet Orbán has expressed skepticism, commenting in November that EU admission was "light years away" and signaling that full language rights for Ukraine's Hungarians are a prerequisite for his support.

Zubánics, who endorsed an open letter to Orbán in December urging him to lift his opposition to Ukraine's EU path, said he is optimistic, despite the tension between Budapest and Kyiv.

"In our mentality and culture, we consider ourselves European citizens," he said. "We are aware that this will not happen immediately, as it will be a long, sometimes instructive and sometimes painful process for everyone."

Hungary's government has provided generous financial support for the minority in Ukraine, seeking to

bolster its Hungarian identity and connection to Budapest. It has simplified the procedure for acquiring Hungarian citizenship — something Ukraine, which does not recognize dual citizenship, has opposed.

In Berehove, a small city in Zakarpattia around 3 miles (2 kilometers) from the Hungarian border, Orbán's government helped establish a campus of the Matthias Corvinus Collegium, a conservative private educational institution which boasts 23 locations in Hungary and neighboring countries.

The MCC has received endowments worth more than \$1.5 billion from Hungary's government, and acts as a training center for what Orbán hopes will be the country's future political elite.

As Hungarian students dissected a pig heart at the school's weekend biology class, part of a curriculum designed to supplement lessons in Ukrainian public schools, they asked questions and received answers in Hungarian.

Milán Constantinovits, MCC's deputy director of professional affairs, said that in the multi-ethnic environment of Zakarpattia, "it is very important that the question of identity is well formulated ... Ninety percent of Hungarian students who come here are quite sure that they consider Hungarian as their primary identity."

Still, he said, the MCC strives to instill tolerance and respect between the region's cultures, and offers Ukrainian lessons for Hungarian students that learn it as a second language. Coexistence, he said, had long been a given, before broader conflicts enveloped the region.

"Very often, the ethnic tensions that enter this multi-ethnic space come from outside," he said. "The inhabitants who live side by side, the natives of this area, basically have no problems with each other. Many times this is an artificially generated flaring of tensions."

The meeting on Monday between Szijjártó and Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba — their first since the war began in February 2022 — as well as plans for Orbán to meet with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, suggest a partial thaw.

But Hungary's government has remained firm that despite improving conditions for the Hungarians of Zakarpattia, it is not yet ready to fully support Ukraine. That, Zubánics said, will require greater efforts from both sides.

"Diplomacy is partly high art, but at times it is more like theater than real life," he said. "But regardless of this, we have to move along with specifics now, and I think there is much more in common between the parties than what separates them, but this also requires political will."

## **Trump will meet with the Teamsters in Washington as he tries to cut into Biden's union support**

By JILL COLVIN and TOM KRISHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As he looks past the GOP primary and towards a likely general election rematch against President Joe Biden, Donald Trump will meet with members of the Teamsters Union in Washington Wednesday afternoon as he tries to cut into Biden's support.

The former president will participate in a roundtable with the group's executive board, its president and rank-and-file members as he targets the blue-collar workers who fueled his 2016 victory and who are expected to play a major role in November, particularly in critical Midwestern swing states like Wisconsin and Michigan.

Union voters tend to vote Democratic, with 56% of members and households backing Biden in 2020, according to AP VoteCast. And Biden has already received significant organized labor backing with early endorsements from the AFL-CIO and others. Trump is hoping to cut into that support as he casts himself as pro-worker and tries to exacerbate longstanding divisions between union leaders and rank-and-file members.

On Sunday, he called on members of the United Auto Workers to oust their president, Shawn Fain, after the group endorsed Biden.

"Shawn Fain doesn't understand this or have a clue," Trump wrote on his Truth Social network. "Get rid of this dope & vote for DJT. I will bring the Automobile Industry back to our Country."

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Among the topics planned for discussion Wednesday are the shrinking middle class, workers' wages, antitrust and bankruptcy issues, as well as union rights.

"Our members want to hear from all candidates of all parties about what they plan to do for working people as President," Teamsters president Sean O'Brien said in a statement. "Our union wants every candidate to know that there are 1.3 million Teamsters nationwide whose votes will not be taken for granted. Workers' voices must be heard."

Biden has long billed himself as the most labor-friendly president in history, and went so far as to turn up on a picket line in the Detroit area during a strike last fall. He was also invited for his own session Wednesday. Biden campaign spokesperson Lauren Hitt said Biden "looks forward to meeting with the Teamsters and earning their endorsement," but the timing remained "TBA."

Earlier this month, O'Brien met privately with Trump at his Mar-a-Lago club, where the two discussed issues including right-to-work laws that allow those in unionized workplaces to opt out of paying dues and fees. They also posed for a side-by-side photo, both flashing thumbs-up signs, that Trump posted online.

In an interview with Fox Business after the meeting, O'Brien said it had gone "fine" as he emphasized the importance of open dialogue.

"We put our cards on the table. It was a very matter-of-fact meeting," he said. "He claimed he was, you know, 100%... supportive of unions, but history obviously, you take a look back and there's certain issues that we have with him," he said.

During Trump's presidency, the National Labor Relations Board reversed several key rulings that made it easier for small unions to organize, strengthened the bargaining rights of franchise workers and provided protection against anti-union measures for employees.

The Supreme Court's conservative majority — including three justices that Trump nominated — overturned a decades-old pro-union decision in 2018 involving fees paid by government workers. The justices in 2021 rejected a California regulation giving unions access to farm property so they could organize workers.

While the Teamsters endorsed Biden in 2020 and Hillary Clinton in 2016, O'Brien stressed the union has "a very diverse membership. And our members vote."

Art Wheaton, director of labor studies at Cornell University, said that in the past unions almost automatically endorsed Democratic candidates. But this year, he said, unions like the Teamsters have required candidates to outline their positions and show how they will support rank-and-file workers to earn their backing.

The message to candidates: "If you don't help labor and you don't help my position, you're not going to get my endorsement," Wheaton said.

The Teamsters' meeting with Trump also reflects the reality that a significant portion of the union's membership supports the former president. Wheaton estimates about 30% to 40% of its members voted for Trump in 2020, even though the union endorsed Biden.

"You need to do your due diligence and listen, and let them have the option and ability to say what they want," said Wheaton.

In September, Trump traveled to Michigan while his Republican rivals held a debate and tried to win over autoworkers by lambasting Biden's electric vehicles push in the midst of a strike. During his speech, Trump urged the UAW to endorse him, directly appealing to Fain from the floor of a non-unionized auto parts plant.

Fain instead called Trump a "scab," a derogatory term for workers who cross union picket lines and work during a strike, as he endorsed Biden.

"This November we can stand up and elect someone who stands with us and supports our cause, or we can elect someone who will divide us and fight us every step of the way," he said.

Teamsters members include UPS drivers, film and television workers, freight operators, members of law enforcement and other government workers.

Biden already has the backing of the AFL-CIO, the American Federation of Teachers and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, which rolled out their endorsements together last June. While overall union membership rates nationwide fell to another all-time low in 2023, the country's

largest unions have nonetheless built sprawling get-out-the-vote efforts, which Biden is counting on to help turn out his supporters in pivotal swing states.

The campaign of former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley, Trump's last remaining GOP rival, did not respond to a request for comment about whether she intends to meet with the group.

## **Elon Musk cannot keep Tesla pay package worth more than \$55 billion, judge rules**

By RANDALL CHASE AP Business Writer

DOVER, Del. (AP) — Elon Musk is not entitled to landmark compensation package awarded by Tesla's board of directors that is potentially worth more than \$55 billion, a Delaware judge ruled Tuesday.

The ruling by Chancellor Kathaleen St. Jude McCormick comes more than five years after a shareholder lawsuit targeted Tesla CEO Musk and directors of the company. They were accused of breaching their duties to the maker of electric vehicles and solar panels, resulting in a waste of corporate assets and unjust enrichment for Musk.

The shareholder's lawyers argued that the compensation package should be voided because it was dictated by Musk and was the product of sham negotiations with directors who were not independent of him. They also said it was approved by shareholders who were given misleading and incomplete disclosures in a proxy statement.

Defense attorneys countered that the pay plan was fairly negotiated by a compensation committee whose members were independent, contained performance milestones so lofty that they were ridiculed by some Wall Street investors, and blessed by a shareholder vote that was not even required under Delaware law. They also argued that Musk was not a controlling shareholder because he owned less than one-third of the company at the time.

An attorney for Musk and other Tesla defendants did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment.

But Musk reacted to the ruling on X, the social media platform formerly known as Twitter that he owns, by offering business advice. "Never incorporate your company in the state of Delaware," he said. He later added, "I recommend incorporating in Nevada or Texas if you prefer shareholders to decide matters."

Musk, who as of Tuesday topped Forbes' list of the world's richest people, had earlier this month challenged Tesla's board to come up with a new compensation plan for him that would give him a 25% stake in the company. On an earnings call last week, Musk, who currently holds 13%, explained that with a 25% stake, he can't control the company, yet he would have strong influence.

In trial testimony in November 2022, Musk denied that he dictated terms of the compensation package or attended any meetings at which the plan was discussed by the board, its compensation committee, or a working group that helped develop it.

McCormick determined, however, that because Musk was a controlling shareholder with a potential conflict of interest, the pay package must be subject to a more rigorous standard.

"The process leading to the approval of Musk's compensation plan was deeply flawed," McCormick wrote in the colorfully written 200-page decision. "Musk had extensive ties with the persons tasked with negotiating on Tesla's behalf."

McCormick specifically cited Musk's long business and personal relationships with compensation committee chairman Ira Ehrenpreis and fellow committee member Antonio Gracias. She also noted that the working group working on the pay package included general counsel Todd Maron who was Musk's former divorce attorney.

"In fact, Maron was a primary go-between Musk and the committee, and it is unclear on whose side Maron viewed himself," the judge wrote. "Yet many of the documents cited by the defendants as proof of a fair process were drafted by Maron."

McCormick concluded that the only suitable remedy was for Musk's compensation package to be rescinded. "In the final analysis, Musk launched a self-driving process, recalibrating the speed and direction



along the way as he saw fit," she wrote. "The process arrived at an unfair price. And through this litigation, the plaintiff requests a recall."

Greg Varallo, a lead attorney for the shareholder plaintiff, praised McCormick's decision to reverse the "absurdly outsized" Musk pay package.

"The fact that they lost this in Delaware court, it's a jaw dropper," said Wedbush Securities analyst Dan Ives. "It's unprecedented, a ruling like this. I think going in investors thought it was just typical legal noise and nothing was going to come out about it. The fact that they went head to head with Tesla and Musk and the board and voided this, it's a huge legal decision."

During his trial testimony, Musk downplayed the notion that his friendships with certain Tesla board members, including sometimes vacationing together, meant that they were likely to do his bidding.

The plan called for Musk to reap billions if Tesla, which is based in Austin, Texas, hit certain market capitalization and operational milestones. For each incidence of simultaneously meeting a market cap milestone and an operational milestone, Musk, who owned about 22% of Tesla when the plan was approved, would get stock equal to 1% of outstanding shares at the time of the grant. His interest in the company would grow to about 28% if the company's market capitalization grew by \$600 billion.

Each milestone included growing Tesla's market capitalization by \$50 billion and meeting aggressive revenue and pretax profit growth targets. Musk stood to receive the full benefit of the pay plan, \$55.8 billion, only by leading Tesla to a market capitalization of \$650 billion and unprecedented revenues and earnings within a decade.

Tesla has achieved all twelve market capitalization milestones and eleven operational milestones, providing Musk nearly \$28 billion in stock option gains, according to a January post-trial brief filed by the plaintiff's attorneys. The stock option grants are subject to a five-year holding period, however.

Defense attorney Evan Chesler argued at trial that the compensation package was a "high-risk, high-reward" deal that benefitted not just Musk, but Tesla shareholders. After the plan was implemented, the value of the company climbed from \$53 billion to more than \$800 billion, having briefly hit \$1 trillion.

Chesler also said Tesla made sure that the \$55 billion compensation figure was included in the proxy statement because the company wanted shareholders to know that "this was a heart-stopping number that Mr. Musk could earn."

## **Federal Reserve is likely to show little urgency to cut interest rates despite market's anticipation**

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Federal Reserve will likely move closer Wednesday to cutting its key interest rate after nearly two years of hikes that were intended to fight the worst inflation in decades. Yet it may not provide much of a hint about when — or how fast — it will do so.

Though Fed officials are expected to cut rates within the next few months, they'll likely signal Wednesday that they expect to wait until they're confident that inflation, which has tumbled from its peak, is reliably moving to their 2% target. The central bank's benchmark rate influences the cost of most consumer and business loans, and companies, investors and individuals have been eager for the central bank to ease the cost of borrowing.

The Fed is assessing the economy at a time when the intensifying presidential race is pivoting in no small part on voters' perceptions of President Joe Biden's economic stewardship. Republicans in Congress have tried to tie Biden to the high inflation that gripped the nation beginning in 2021. But the most recent surveys indicate rising confidence in the economy.

Most Fed watchers think the central bank's first rate reduction will occur in May or June. Late last year, Wall Street investors had bet that a rate cut in March was a near-certainty. But cautionary comments by a number of Fed officials have dispelled most expectations for a cut that soon.

Collectively, the policymakers likely feel little urgency to start cutting rates, a point that Chair Jerome Powell may stress in a news conference Wednesday. The economy remains healthy and doesn't appear

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to need the stimulative benefits of a rate cut, which can spur more borrowing and spending and could even re-ignite inflation.

In addition, the stock market is near a record high, and the yield on the influential 10-year Treasury note, at just above 4%, is well below its peak of nearly 5% last fall. Average long-term mortgage rates, which typically track the 10-year yield, have dropped from nearly 8% to about 6.7%.

"The Fed's probably thinking they're not really in any rush, there's no need to really rush into cutting rates," said Subadra Rajappa, head of U.S. rates strategy at Société Générale, a French bank. "That's why the markets started to question the March rate cut."

The economy expanded faster than expected in the final three months of the year, the government said last week. Its report showed that growth reached a surprisingly strong 3.3% annual rate, far higher than expected, after a 4.9% pace of expansion in the July-September quarter.

Consumers powered much of last quarter's growth, with Americans opening their wallets for holiday shopping and spending freely on such major purchases as cars, appliances and furniture. That spending is benefiting companies like General Motors, which reported Tuesday that its revenue grew 10% last year and that it made \$10 billion in profit despite a six-week strike by the United Auto Workers union.

Public sentiment has also improved. Consumer confidence rose in January for a third straight month, according to the Conference Board, a business research group, to the highest level in two years. Growth has been robust even as inflation has sunk ever closer to the Fed's 2% target.

Measured over the past six months, in fact, inflation excluding volatile food and energy costs has slowed to a 1.9% annual rate, according to the Fed's preferred inflation measure. Compared with a year earlier, overall prices rose 2.6% in December.

A year ago, many analysts were predicting that widespread layoffs and sharply higher unemployment would be needed to cool the economy and curb inflation. Yet solid hiring has persisted. The unemployment rate, at 3.7%, isn't far above a half-century low.

Yet some cracks have begun to appear in the job market and, if they worsen, could spur the Fed to cut rates more quickly. For several months, for example, most of the job growth has occurred in just a few sectors — health care, government and hotels, restaurants and entertainment. Any weakening in those areas of the economy could threaten hiring and the overall expansion.

And a report Tuesday showed that the number of workers who quit in December reached its lowest level in three years. That suggested that fewer Americans are being recruited for new, higher-paying jobs or are willing to search for and take new positions. Though quits remain at a level consistent with a solid job market, they have fallen about one-third from their peak in mid-2022.

Still, the U.S. economy is outpacing its counterparts overseas. During the October-December quarter, the 20 countries that share the euro currency barely avoided a recession, posting essentially no growth. Still, as in the United States, unemployment is very low in the euro area, and inflation has slowed to a 2.9% annual rate. Though the European Central Bank could cut rates as soon as April, many economists think that might not happen until June.

## Déjà vu? Electoral bans, arrests, attacks, threats again part of Venezuelan presidential race

By REGINA GARCIA CANO Associated Press  
CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — Déjà vu? Feels like it.

Assassination plots, arrest warrants for journalists and human rights defenders, attacks against adversaries — from the belittling kind to the judicial type — and other associated government actions have marked the start of 2024 for Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and his allies. Add international condemnation and economic sanctions, and the reality of a presidential election year in the South American country becomes clear.

And, once again, the question is: How democratic will the election be?

Venezuelans were promised a presidential election in the second half of 2024 after Maduro and the fac-

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tion of the opposition backed by the United States government reached an agreement in October. The opposing sides also agreed to recognize and respect a party's right to choose a candidate freely; take steps that would reverse government decisions blocking politicians from running for office; and invite international electoral observers.

The government over the past three months has shown it is willing to test the limits of the agreement, discrediting the opposition's presidential primary, arresting numerous perceived or actual adversaries, and repeatedly characterizing members of the opposition as hate-spewing criminals.

But the biggest test came Friday, when Venezuela's highest court – aligned with Maduro's government – blocked the presidential candidacy of María Corina Machado by upholding an administrative decision that bans her on running for office for 15 years.

"I don't think we have any evidence that Maduro plans to allow a competitive election so far," said Geoff Ramsey, senior analyst on Venezuela at the Atlantic Council think tank. "What we are seeing is the government making clear that they don't plan on going anywhere any time soon."

The ban has not sidelined Machado so far. The former lawmaker on Monday told supporters and reporters that Venezuela will have a presidential election in 2024 in which she "will defeat Nicolás Maduro." A date for the vote has not been set.

But Jorge Rodríguez, Maduro's chief negotiator and the leader of the country's National Assembly, quickly dismissed the challenge.

"How can a human being who is one of 30 million Venezuelans going to say... that 'Without me, there will be no elections,'" Rodríguez said. "That matter has been settled."

That's also how the government saw similar disputes in the leadup to the last presidential election, which resulted in Maduro's re-election.

At the time, Maduro and the opposition had also agreed to work on electoral conditions. But the talks ended in February 2018 after the government was not willing to commit to free and fair conditions and its opponents refused to recognize a parallel congress devised by the ruling party after it lost the majority of the National Assembly during the 2015 election.

Shortly after, the government scheduled the election for May 20, and major parties chose to boycott the contest as prominent leaders were barred from office or forced into exile after authorities opened judicial proceedings against them following a deadly protest movement seeking the president's removal.

That election is widely considered a sham by the international community. It further alienated Maduro and drew economic sanctions against his government.

Less than three months after his re-election, Maduro tied opposition leaders to what the government described as an assassination attempt against the president in which drones armed with explosives detonated when he was delivering a speech to hundreds of soldiers broadcast live on television.

Years went by until Maduro and the U.S.-backed faction of the opposition, known as the Unitary Platform, appeared to have finally had a breakthrough, reaching a deal in October to work toward leveling the playing field for the 2024 election. Such was the progress that the U.S. granted Maduro some of his much-sought sanctions relief, and the opposition's negotiating bloc held its primary election days later.

Machado, the clear frontrunner for months, unsurprisingly won the contest. But the participation of more than 2.4 million voters stunned opposition adversaries and allies, who had expected roughly about a million people to cast ballots due to organizational challenges and government obstacles.

Machado's victory, with more than 90% of the vote, came despite the government announcing a 15-year ban on her running for office in June. She was able to participate in the primary because the effort was organized by a commission independent of Venezuela's electoral body, the National Electoral Council.

Machado in December filed a claim with Venezuela's Supreme Tribunal of Justice arguing the ban was null and void and seeking an injunction to protect her political rights. The court on Friday upheld the ban, which alleges fraud and tax violations and accuses her of seeking the economic sanctions the U.S. imposed on Venezuela last decade.

Ramsey said the opposition should come up with alternatives to Machado as Chavismo — the political movement started by Maduro's mentor and predecessor, the late Hugo Chávez — will never allow her to run.

"If Chavismo were to imagine its sworn enemy, they would picture the face of María Corina," he said. "She represents everything that Chavismo opposes. She represents the political and economic elite that governed the country for years before Chávez."

Like the court, National Electoral Council is also stacked with Chavistas. The head of the electoral council is now Elvis Amoroso, who signed Machado's administrative ban last year when he was the country's comptroller.

Ruling-party loyalists also include Attorney General Tarek William Saab, who after the primary election opened criminal investigations against some of its organizers and later issued arrest warrants for three of Machado's campaign staffers. In addition, a longtime collaborator of Machado, Roberto Abdul, with whom she co-founded a pro-democracy group more than two decades ago, was detained after the primary.

A high-profile prisoner swap between the U.S. and Venezuela led to Abdul's release and allowed the three staffers to leave the foreign embassy where they sought refuge. But three other staffers were detained last week in connection to what Saab, Maduro and Rodríguez have described as failed assassination attempts against the president.

The U.S. responded to Friday's court ruling by revoking the relief it granted in October to Venezuela's state-owned mining company, Compañía General de Minería de Venezuela, C.A, known as Minerven. It also gave Maduro until April to meet conditions of the electoral agreement to avoid losing additional relief.

The moves by the Biden administration drew the rage of Rodríguez and prompted the government to warn the Biden administration that it will stop accepting deportation flights Feb. 13, the deadline for U.S. mining companies to wind down operations tied to Minerven.

"You have until April," they say. Save yourselves the lapse, shitty Yankees!" Rodríguez said during a speech before the National Assembly. Under the agreement with the opposition, he added, the decision of the Supreme Tribunal of Justice "must be respected."

## **Utah is the latest state to ban diversity, equity and inclusion efforts on campus and in government**

By MEAD GRUVER Associated Press

Utah's governor signed a bill into law Tuesday that makes the state the latest to prohibit diversity training, hiring and inclusion programs at universities and in state government.

The measure signed by Spencer Cox, a Republican who previously said he supported the idea, had cleared the state House and Senate by wide, party-line majorities.

Headed into the final year of his first term, Cox has shifted to the right on "diversity, equity and inclusion." After vetoing a ban on transgender students playing in girls sports in 2022, Cox signed a bill in 2023 regulating discussion of race and religion in public schools to ban, for example, teaching that anybody can be racist merely because of their race.

He also signed a separate law Tuesday requiring people to use bathrooms and locker rooms in public schools and government-owned buildings that match the sex they were assigned at birth.

Cox previously called requiring employees to sign statements in support of workplace and campus diversity, equity and inclusion, or DEI, "awful, bordering on evil."

"We've been concerned about some DEI programs and policies, particularly with hiring practices, and this bill offers a balanced solution," Cox said in a statement Tuesday night.

The new law will bar universities and government from having offices dedicated to promoting diversity. They also can't require employees to submit statements of commitment to DEI.

"It ensures academic freedom on university campuses where all voices will be heard," Republican Keith Grover, the bill's sponsor in the state Senate, said shortly before the body made a final 23-6 vote in favor last Thursday.

The chamber's Democrats all voted no, citing statistics showing minority enrollment at colleges and universities trailing far behind that of white students.



Already this year, Republican lawmakers in at least 17 states have proposed some three dozen bills to restrict or require public disclosure of DEI initiatives, according to an Associated Press analysis using the bill-tracking software Plural.

The measures have a heavy focus on higher education, but Republicans are also sponsoring ones that would limit DEI in K-12 schools, state government, state contracting and pension investments. Some would bar financial institutions from discriminating against people who refuse to participate in DEI programs.

Meanwhile, Democrats in nine states have filed at least 20 bills to require or promote DEI initiatives. They include measures to reverse Florida's recent ban on DEI in higher education and measures to require considerations in the K-12 school curriculum. Others apply to ferry workers in Washington state and a proposed offshore wind energy institute in New Jersey.

Republican-led Florida and Texas were first to enact broad-based laws banning DEI efforts in higher education last year. Other states including Iowa and Oklahoma have implemented similar measures.

## **David Rubenstein has a deal to buy the Baltimore Orioles for \$1.725 billion, AP source says**

By NOAH TRISTER AP Baseball Writer

Carlyle Group Inc. co-founder David Rubenstein has reached an agreement to buy the Baltimore Orioles for \$1.725 billion, according to a person with knowledge of the deal.

The person spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity Tuesday night because the agreement had not been announced. Rubenstein, a Baltimore native, would take over as the team's controlling owner, and he's assembled an investment team that includes Ares co-founder Michael Arougheti.

The Angelos family has been in control of the Orioles since 1993, when Peter Angelos purchased the team for \$173 million. Angelos' son John is the team's current chairman. The team recently reached a deal on a new lease extension at Camden Yards. Maryland officials approved that long-term agreement after months of negotiations.

The deal extended the lease for 30 years, with an option to end it after 15 if the team does not receive approval from state officials for development plans next to the ballpark.

Prior to forming Carlyle in 1987, Rubenstein practiced law in Washington. From 1977-81, he was a deputy assistant for domestic policy to President Jimmy Carter. After graduating from Duke in 1970, he attended University of Chicago Law School.

The sale agreement, which requires approval from major league owners, was first reported by Puck.

The Orioles are coming off a 101-win season and their first AL East title since 2014. With young stars like Adley Rutschman and Gunnar Henderson — and another top prospect on the way in Jackson Holliday — the future looks as bright as it has in a while for a team that hasn't won a World Series since 1983.

One sore spot with fans is the club's payroll, which has remained low, and it's been another quiet off-season for the team so far. If the new ownership group is able to keep Baltimore's young core together, the Orioles could have a lengthy window of contention.

When Peter Angelos first took control of the Orioles, they had recently started playing at Camden Yards, the downtown venue that revolutionized the way baseball parks were built. The Orioles spent aggressively, at least for a little while, and won the division in 1997 with future Hall of Famers Cal Ripken, Roberto Alomar, Mike Mussina and Harold Baines.

After that, Baltimore didn't make the postseason again until 2012, when the Orioles began a renaissance under manager Buck Showalter. They eventually had to rebuild again, losing at least 108 games in 2018, 2019 and 2021 — a streak interrupted only by the pandemic-shortened 2020 season.

Even as the team posted the best record in the American League last year, there were ominous signs, such as a New York Times piece in which Angelos was quoted as saying: "When people talk about giving this player \$200 million, that player \$150 million, we would be so financially underwater that you'd have to raise the prices massively."

A sale must be approved in a vote of at least 75% by the 30 major league teams. The sales approval process typically lasts several months.

## El Salvador VP acknowledges mistakes in war on gangs but says country is 'not a police state'

By MEGAN JANETSKY Associated Press

SAN SALVADOR (AP) — El Salvador's government "made mistakes" in its war against the country's gangs, but has never undermined the country's democracy to consolidate power, according to the man likely to be reelected vice president.

Félix Ulloa, temporarily on leave as El Salvador's vice president while he runs for reelection alongside Nayib Bukele, defended his government's controversial crackdown in an interview with The Associated Press on Tuesday, days before a presidential election they are expected to win easily. Such policies, he said, will continue until El Salvador's gangs are defeated.

Ulloa acknowledged that in their administration's mass detention of citizens the government imprisoned thousands of people who had not committed any crime, something he said they are correcting, but justified the harsh actions as being widely popular and completely "legal."

Since declaring a state of emergency in March 2022 following a surge in gang violence, the government has detained 76,000 people — more than 1% of the population in the small Central American nation. The declaration, which suspended some fundamental rights like access to a lawyer and being told why you're being arrested, has been renewed by congress every month since.

"There is no perfect work by humans ... Look at the big picture," Ulloa said. "Understand what this country is doing when we have defended people and the human rights of millions of Salvadorans whose rights were being violated by criminal structures."

Around 7,000 people arrested under the state of emergency have since been released from prisons where authorities have been accused of torture, as well committing systematic and mass human rights abuses.

Ulloa said that in some cases officials may have asked security forces to meet quotas of detentions — arresting a predetermined number of people — but that it was "not an order from executives, nor a government policy."

Human rights groups say more than 150 people have died in custody since the beginning of the crackdown.

Reporting by the Associated Press has documented that detainees pass through mass hearings of as many as 300 defendants at a time. They rarely have access to lawyers. The vast majority of those arrested under the emergency declaration remain in prison without having been tried.

"There is no police state," Ulloa said. "Not a single right has been suspended in El Salvador. No public liberty has ever been suspended because of the state of emergency," he said before noting a couple rights that had been suspended but clarifying that they didn't affect the "honorable" Salvadorans.

Ulloa said the state of emergency would continue to be extended until the government decides it is no longer needed.

"When we declare the country free of gangs, of criminals, of criminal structures, there will be no reason to have a state of emergency," he said.

Following the crackdown, rates of violence have fallen sharply, with homicide rates dipping to some of the lowest in the Americas, and the government continues to enjoy sky-high rates of approval.

Ulloa firmly denied accusations by the United States government that their administration had negotiated with gangs before the surge in violence and the state of emergency that followed.

He also denied that their administration carried out any attacks on the press, despite journalists, activists, union leaders and opposition politicians saying they were routinely harassed, spied on and even detained by the government. He accused critics of their administration of working with the country's opposition parties, and people claiming their rights have been violated under the crackdown of being "connected with the gangs."

Ulloa rejected accusations by constitutional scholars, experts and political opposition that the government has undermined the country's democracy by concentrating power in the executive branch.

One such move took place in 2021 when the newly-elected congress — where Bukele's allies have a

majority — replaced the justices of the Supreme Court's constitutional chamber with sympathetic judges. The government also pushed through electoral reforms that watchdogs say favored his own party, particularly in congressional and local elections.

Ulloa has maintained that seeking re-election is completely legal, adding that he and Bukele have taken leave before seeking a second term.

"There is nothing that we have done that does not have a legal foundation," Ulloa said.

Lawyers and analysts argue that at least six articles of the constitution prohibit presidential reelection in El Salvador. But a 2021 resolution by the same court purged by Bukele's allies enabled the leader to run and ordered the electoral authorities to comply with the resolution.

Ulloa would not directly answer a question by the AP about whether he and Bukele would seek a third term. He echoed Bukele in saying the current constitution prohibits it, but left open the possibility if the country's constitution changes. Ulloa proposed more than 200 changes to the constitution in 2021.

"If the constitution is changed, (Bukele) wants to do it and the constitution enables that, I suppose he would be able to do so," Ulloa said, adding that the current constitution allows for first and second term. "A third (term) is not allowed under the current constitution. I'm not saying it is not possible if it changes."

## Where the sides stand on securing a cease-fire in Gaza and freeing the hostages

By JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

U.S. and Mideast mediators appeared optimistic in recent days that they were closing in on a deal for a two-month cease-fire in Gaza and the release of over 100 hostages held by Hamas.

But on Tuesday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu rejected the militant group's two main demands — that Israel withdraw its forces from Gaza and release thousands of Palestinian prisoners — indicating that the gap between the two sides remains wide.

The war began with Hamas' Oct. 7 assault into Israel, in which militants killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducted around 250. Nearly half the hostages were released during a weeklong November cease-fire in exchange for 240 Palestinian prisoners.

Israel's offensive has killed over 26,700 Palestinians, according to the Health Ministry in Hamas-ruled Gaza, whose count does not separate civilians from combatants. Some 85% of Gaza's population of 2.3 million have fled their homes and the U.N. says a quarter of the population is starving.

It has also sent ripples across the region, with Iran-backed groups in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Yemen attacking Israeli and U.S. targets in support of the Palestinians, drawing reprisals in a spiraling tit-for-tat that could set off a regional conflagration.

Here's a look at where each of the parties stand on ending the conflict.

### ISRAEL'S NETANYAHU SEEKS 'TOTAL VICTORY'

Netanyahu has repeatedly vowed to continue the war until Israel destroys Hamas' military and governing capacity and returns all the hostages, two increasingly elusive goals that many Israelis fear are mutually exclusive.

Speaking at a religious pre-military academy in the occupied West Bank on Tuesday, he said "we will not withdraw the Israeli military from the Gaza Strip and we will not release thousands of terrorists."

That would seem to rule out any agreement with Hamas, but it could also be posturing aimed at strengthening Israel's hand in the ongoing indirect talks.

Netanyahu is under mounting pressure from families of the hostages and the wider public to reach a deal with Hamas to bring the captives home. Many Israelis fear time is running out.

At the same time, his governing coalition — dominated by ultranationalist hard-liners who oppose a deal — could fall apart if he is perceived as being too soft on Hamas.

Israel's military has only successfully rescued one hostage, and Hamas says several have been killed in airstrikes or during failed rescue operations. In December, Israeli forces mistakenly killed three hostages who had escaped and were waving a white flag.

## HAMAS WANTS THE WAR TO END

Hamas has refused to release more hostages until Israel ends its offensive and withdraws from Gaza. It wants a broader agreement that would include a long-term truce and reconstruction.

The group's top political leader, Ismail Haniyeh, said Tuesday that its priority is the "full withdrawal" of Israeli forces from Gaza. He said any agreement should also lead to reconstruction, the lifting of an Israeli-Egyptian blockade on the territory, and the release of "all our heroic prisoners."

Hamas is widely believed to be holding the hostages in heavily guarded tunnels deep underground, using them as human shields for its top leaders and bargaining chips for the release of thousands of Palestinian prisoners. These include high-profile militants involved in attacks that killed Israeli civilians.

If Hamas releases the hostages without ending the war, it would leave itself exposed to an even greater Israeli onslaught once any cease-fire expires. Failing to secure a major prisoner exchange would expose it to intense criticism from Palestinians after the unprecedented death and destruction in the tiny coastal enclave prompted by its Oct. 7 attack.

On the other hand, if Hamas secures a long-term cease-fire, the withdrawal of Israeli forces and the release of thousands of prisoners, it would be seen as the war's victor, at least by its own supporters.

## MEDIATORS SEEK MIDDLE GROUND

The United States, which has provided crucial military aid for the offensive, largely supports Israel's goals in the war. It wants all hostages released and assurances that Hamas can never again carry out an attack like the one on Oct. 7.

But the Biden administration also has a strong interest in winding down a war that has caused regional instability and divided Democratic voters in an election year.

Arab countries, including key mediators Egypt and Qatar, have been calling for a cease-fire since the earliest days of the war, fearing broader instability.

The U.S. and Arab mediators appear to be seeking a middle ground in which hostages would be released in stages over a two-month period in exchange for Palestinian prisoners, more desperately needed humanitarian aid would be allowed into Gaza, and Israeli forces would partially withdraw.

A two-month respite could buy time for negotiating a larger agreement to address the decades-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

U.S. and Arab diplomats have spoken of a potential grand bargain in which Saudi Arabia would recognize Israel and join other Arab countries and the Western-backed Palestinian Authority in helping to rebuild and govern Gaza, in return for a credible path to the creation of a Palestinian state alongside Israel.

But Netanyahu, whose government is opposed to Palestinian statehood, and Hamas, which refuses to recognize Israel, have ruled that out as well.

## Elon Musk says the first human has received an implant from Neuralink, but other details are scant

By WYATTE GRANTHAM-PHILIPS and LAURA UNGAR undefined

NEW YORK (AP) — According to Elon Musk, the first human received an implant from his computer-brain interface company Neuralink over the weekend.

In a Monday post on X, the platform formerly known as Twitter, Musk said that the patient received the implant the day prior and was "recovering well." He added that "initial results show promising neuron spike detection."

The billionaire, who co-founded Neuralink, did not provide additional details about the patient. When Neuralink announced in September that it would begin recruiting people, the company said it was searching for individuals with quadriplegia due to cervical spinal cord injury or amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, commonly known as ALS or Lou Gehrig's Disease.

Neuralink is one of many groups working on linking the nervous system to computers, efforts aimed at helping treat brain disorders, overcoming brain injuries and other applications. There are more than 40 brain computer interface trials underway, according to clinicaltrials.gov.



Neuralink reposted Musk's Monday post on X, but did not publish any additional statements acknowledging the human implant. The company did not immediately respond to The Associated Press' requests for comment Tuesday.

Neuralink previously announced that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration had approved its "investigational device exemption," which generally allows a sponsor to begin a clinical study "in patients who fit the inclusion criteria," the FDA said Tuesday. The agency pointed out that it can't confirm or disclose information about a particular study.

Neuralink's device is about the size of a large coin and is designed to be implanted in the skull, with ultra-thin wires going directly into the brain. In its September announcement, Neuralink said the wires would be surgically placed in a region of the brain that controls movement intention. The initial goal of the so-called brain computer interface is to give people the ability to control a computer cursor or keyboard using their thoughts alone.

In a separate Monday post on X, Musk said that the first Neuralink product is called "Telepathy" — which, he said, will enable users to control their phones or computers "just by thinking." He added that initial users would be those who have lost use of their limbs.

It's unclear how well this device or similar interfaces will ultimately work, or how safe they might be. Clinical trials are designed to collect data on safety and effectiveness.

Laura Cabrera, who researches brain science at Pennsylvania State University, said that even though Neuralink uses an innovative procedure — robotic surgery — to get the device in the brain, no one has implanted it before in humans and much remains unknown.

Brain surgery is "not a trivial thing," she said, pointing to significant potential risks such as brain hemorrhage or seizures. "And so I think we have to be mindful that even though they're using a novel way to implant the device, we just don't know if it's truly going to be a ... safer approach for human patients."

She pointed out that Neuralink's competitors plan to use their devices for medical applications only, but Musk has been outspoken about going beyond medicine. For example, Cabrera said, Musk has talked about implants for the masses that will allow people to record everything that happens to them and access the information when they want — which may raise red flags for some.

"We know that he has very bold claims," she said. "People not really assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the technology is something that I worry about."

## Could Ohio be the next state to use nitrogen gas in executions? A new method would end a 5-year halt

By JULIE CARR SMYTH Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — Ohio's Republican attorney general put his weight behind a legislative effort Tuesday to bring nitrogen gas executions to the state, joining what could be a national movement in pro-death penalty states to expand capital punishment on the heels of Alabama's first use of the method last week.

Three states — Alabama, Mississippi and Oklahoma — have already authorized nitrogen hypoxia as an execution method, and many more are looking for new ways to execute people because the drugs used in lethal injections have become difficult to find.

Attorney General Dave Yost said adding nitrogen gas as an execution alternative in Ohio could end an unofficial death penalty moratorium that Republican Gov. Mike DeWine declared in 2020. The governor said at the time that lethal injection was "no longer an option" for Ohio because of difficulties finding drugs and repercussions the state could face from drugmakers if one of their pharmaceuticals was used in an execution. The state's last execution was in 2018.

"Saying that the law of Ohio should be thwarted because pharmaceutical companies don't want to sell the chemicals is an abdication of the sovereignty of the state of Ohio, which still has this law on the books," Yost said.

He was joined at a Tuesday news conference by Republican state Reps. Brian Stewart and Phil Plummer,

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who introduced a bill Tuesday to add the new method. Alabama used it for the first time Thursday, when convicted murderer Kenneth Eugene Smith, 58, was put to death with nitrogen gas administered through a face mask to deprive him of oxygen.

The execution took about 22 minutes from the time between the opening and closing of curtains to the viewing room. Smith seemed to remain conscious for several minutes. For at least two minutes, he appeared to shake and writhe on the gurney, sometimes pulling against the restraints.

State officials in Alabama said the process was humane and effective, while critics called it cruel and experimental.

The Ohio bill would give condemned inmates a choice between lethal injection and nitrogen gas but would require their executions to go forward with nitrogen gas if lethal injection drugs are not available, Stewart said. Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt on Tuesday endorsed the idea of using nitrogen gas only in cases when lethal injection is unavailable.

Yost said nitrogen gas is abundant and would be easy for the state to procure from the private sector. At least one private company, industrial gas distributor Airgas, has announced its opposition to supplying nitrogen for executions.

Yost, a former prosecutor and potential 2026 gubernatorial contender, said he is not concerned that the method has been used only once and that Smith appeared to struggle for several minutes as he died.

"It's important to recognize that Europe is already using this for assisted suicide," he said.

While a 3-D printed pod that employs nitrogen gas, the Sarco capsule, has been privately used for that purpose in Switzerland, the device has not been approved for use by any Swiss agencies. The European Union and the United Nations' human rights office expressed regret over the Alabama execution on Friday.

Plummer, a former county sheriff, said lengthy delays are defeating part of the purpose of Ohio's death penalty law: "We need some closure for the victims in cases like these ones."

Stewart criticized DeWine for delaying so many executions over pharmaceutical companies' unwillingness to see their products used to put people to death. He noted that Florida and the federal government have continued administering lethal injections while Ohio's unofficial pause has been in place.

Yost noted that the federal government had a stockpile of drugs, putting it in a potentially different position than Ohio.

Ohio's last execution was on July 18, 2018, when Robert Van Hook was put to death by lethal injection for killing a man he met in a Cincinnati bar in 1985. His was the 56th execution since 1999.

Amid the unofficial moratorium, bipartisan groups of lawmakers have repeatedly pushed bills to eliminate the state's death penalty, including one this session.

Ohio Senate Democratic Leader Nickie Antonio, who backs abolishing the death penalty, said she was appalled at the proposal. She called nitrogen gas "so unconscionable that veterinarians reject its use to euthanize animals."

"There is no humane form of execution in 2024," she said in a statement. "It is unfortunate that anyone would rush to the nearest camera to plead for the introduction of experimental methods to resume the barbaric practice."

DeWine — who helped write the state's current law, enacted in 1981 — has stopped short of supporting a death penalty repeal. But, he has increasingly questioned the law's value because of the long delays that elapse between crime and punishment.

The governor told The Associated Press during a year-end interview last month that he was not prepared to announce whether he would support an outright repeal.

"I did make it clear a few years ago that we could not carry out executions in the state of Ohio under the current law," he said. "There's been really no movement in the state Legislature to come up with a different way of execution." He said that would have been "the logical thing," if support were there for continuing the practice.

DeWine's spokesman, Dan Tierney, said the governor typically does not comment on pending legislation. Tierney noted that no death penalty-related legislation, whether for or against, has moved in recent years.

Ohio has 118 men and one woman on death row, according to the most recent state report.

## How to strike back after deadly drone attack? US has many options, but must weigh consequences

By LOLITA C. BALDOR and TARA COPP Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden has made it clear the U.S. will strike back after a deadly drone attack killed three service members and wounded more than 40 at a small base in Jordan over the weekend. What isn't yet clear is who will be hit, where, and how hard.

Biden has a wide array of options, but the U.S. must walk a fine line: A weak response will do little to deter further attacks by Iran-backed militia groups, while a major assault risks expanding the turmoil in the Middle East and drawing America into a wider conflict.

On Tuesday, Biden bluntly said "yes" when asked if he'd decided how to respond to the attack. But he provided no details, and added that the U.S. wants to avoid triggering a broader Middle East war. "That's not what I'm looking for," he said.

Still, the three service members are the first to be killed in militia strikes since the start of Israel's war on Hamas in Gaza. And their deaths have triggered demands for a strong American response.

Target options range from inside Iran, including on the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' Quds Force, to Iranian ships at sea and Tehran-backed militia groups and key militant leaders in Iraq and Syria. National Security Council spokesman John Kirby raised the possibility that the U.S. will take a "tiered approach" with several actions over a period of time.

Here's a look at some options.

### DIRECT STRIKE ON IRAN

Officials across the administration have said the U.S. believes Iran bears responsibility for arming, funding and supporting the militias that have been waging an escalating campaign of drone, missile and rocket strikes on American forces in Iraq, Syria and now Jordan.

"I do hold them responsible in a sense because they're supplying the weapons to the people who did it," Biden said Tuesday.

Striking inside Iran — including on the Revolutionary Guard's Quds Force — would send a strong, direct message to Tehran.

Some argue that such a move is needed, because U.S. strikes on Iran-backed militias in recent months have not deterred them. But it also would be the riskiest move, due to worries it would inflame the militias and enrage Tehran.

Attacking Iranian assets or leaders outside the country may be more palatable. The U.S. did that in 2020, when it killed Quds Force leader Gen. Qassem Soleimani, with a drone strike in Iraq, in response to attacks on U.S. bases there and an assault on the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad.

Iran responded, launching a barrage of ballistic missiles at al-Asad air base in Iraq, injuring dozens of U.S. forces, with most suffering traumatic brain injuries.

Former Israeli intelligence official and Middle East analyst Avi Melamed said Iran has billions of dollars in military investment projects in Syria and by striking those the U.S. could punish Tehran without the escalation threat of a direct strike on Iran. One example, he said, is a large compound near Boukamal that is used for ballistic missile storage. The U.S. has previously struck facilities there in response to militia attacks.

"There is no shortage of military targets (in Syria) that the American administration can target and cause significant damage to the Iranian regime," Melamed said.

### HIT MILITIA GROUPS AGAIN

The most likely move would be to hit Iran-backed militias in Iraq and Syria again. As of Tuesday, those groups had launched 166 attacks on U.S. military installations since Oct. 18, including 67 in Iraq, 98 in Syria and now one in Jordan, according to a U.S. military official.

On Tuesday, one of the major Iran-backed militia groups, Kataib Hezbollah, announced in a statement "the suspension of military and security operations against the occupation forces" in Iraq, referring to U.S. troops. The group, which U.S. officials consider a top suspect in the Jordan attack, said the suspension

was to "prevent embarrassment to the Iraqi government."

In response, Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder, the Pentagon press secretary, said "actions speak louder than words."

The attacks on U.S. forces have put the Iraqi government in an awkward position. Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani was brought to power by Iranian-allied factions but he has also worked to maintain a good relationship with the U.S.

The U.S. has struck back at the militias just a handful of times since Oct. 27. On that day, U.S. fighter jets struck two weapons and ammunition storage sites in eastern Syria near Boukamal that were used by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and Iranian-backed groups. On Nov. 8, fighter jets dropped bombs on an IRGC weapons storage facility near Maysulun in Deir el-Zour. On Nov. 12, U.S. airstrikes targeted a training facility and a safe house in the Bulbul district of Mayadin. On Dec. 26, the U.S. launched strikes on three locations in Iraq used by Kataib Hezbollah and affiliated groups, and on Jan. 23, the U.S. struck three sites in Iraq, again targeting Kataib Hezbollah

## CONGRESSIONAL PRESSURE

Across Capitol Hill, lawmakers are demanding retaliation.

Hawkish Congress members said Biden should directly target Tehran for the deadly attack on the base in Jordan. Sen. Lindsay Graham, R-S.C., said hitting Iranian proxies hasn't deterred them and he called on the Biden administration "to strike targets of significance inside Iran, not only as reprisal for the killing of our forces, but as deterrence against future aggression."

Others said the U.S. should hit the IRGC and the Quds Force, which are spread around the region.

Most, however, leaned toward restraint, saying the administration should take a strategic and thoughtful approach to avoid escalating tensions and dragging the U.S. into another war in an election year.

"Direct confrontation with Iran will certainly lead to the deaths of more U.S. service members and could easily expand into a regional conflict," said Rep. Sara Jacobs, D-Calif., in a statement.

## HOW BIG, HOW SOON?

The White House description of a "tiered approach" could suggest the response will be more than military. And it also may reflect concerns that members of the militia groups are reportedly going into hiding, which could make it more difficult for the U.S. to locate and strike senior commanders or key locations. As a result, the U.S. may need to stagger its response over days in order to better locate and refine targets.

Others argue that anything short of a major response will make the U.S. look weak.

"When they hear proportionality, reasonable, moderate, 'we don't want a regional war,' that sounds so good in Davos, but our adversaries hear that as weakness and a green light for aggression," said Bradley Bowman, a senior director at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies.

## ECONOMIC SANCTIONS

A non-military option is always economic sanctions — a punishment used routinely by the Biden administration and its predecessors.

Sen. Jim Risch, the top Republican on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said the administration "must adopt an Iran policy focused on imposing meaningful economic and military costs on the regime."

The U.S. could beef up sanctions aimed at cutting off the flow of funds to Iran and its proxies, particularly in Iraq. The administration has already slapped sanctions on some of the Iraqi militias — notably Kataib Hezbollah — as well as on businesses believed to be funneling dollars to the militias or to Iran.

## **NYPD officers will have to record race of people they question under new police transparency law**

By ANTHONY IZAGUIRRE and PHILIP MARCELO Associated Press

New York City police officers will be required to record the apparent race, gender and ages of most people they stop for questioning under a law passed Tuesday by the City Council, which overrode a veto by Mayor Eric Adams.

The issue was thrust into the national spotlight in recent days when NYPD officers pulled over a Black council member without giving him a reason.



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The law gives police reform advocates a major win in requiring the nation's largest police department and its 36,000 officers to document all investigative encounters in a city that once had officers routinely stop and frisk huge numbers of men for weapons — a strategy that took a heavy toll on communities of color.

Since 2001, NYPD officers have been required to document instances in which they have asked someone "accusatory" questions as part of an investigation, detain or search someone or arrest them.

But the new law requires officers to document basic information in low-level encounters, where police ask for information from people who aren't necessarily suspected of a crime. Officers also will have to report the circumstances that led to stopping a particular person. The data would be made public on the police department's website.

City Council Member Kevin Riley, a Bronx Democrat who is Black, was among the council members who conveyed how many New Yorkers of color dread interacting with police on the street as he voted in favor of the measure.

"When we see those red and blue lights, our hearts drop into our stomachs," he said.

New York City Public Advocate Jumaane Williams, who sponsored the bill, said that reporting the encounters could be done in less than a minute on an officer's smartphone through the system already in place.

"This is not about preventing police work," Williams said. "This is police work."

The mayor, a Democrat and former police captain, on Tuesday argued that in police work, minutes and seconds could be the difference between life and death.

"These bills will make New Yorkers less safe on the streets, while police officers are forced to fill out additional paperwork rather than focus on helping New Yorkers and strengthening community bonds," he said in a statement after the vote, in which the council cleared the bar of two-thirds support needed to override the veto with 42 in favor and 9 against.

The department's largest police officers' union, in a statement after the vote, warned that the council would have to answer to constituents for "rising 911 response times and diminished police presence" in city neighborhoods.

"New York City police officers will comply with the new law and do the job the way the City Council wants it done," said Patrick Hendry, president of the Police Benevolent Association. "Despite the increased workload and the NYPD's critically low staffing levels, we will continue to protect our communities to the best of our ability."

Council Speaker Adrienne Adams, a Democrat who is not related to the mayor, said police and other opponents were exaggerating how much of a burden the new requirements would be. The law doesn't require officers to document casual conversations, such as providing directions, which are explicitly exempt under the requirements, she stressed.

"There should not be resistance to telling people who is being stopped in this city and why," she said.

Republicans, by far the minority on the council, suggested the bill only served to further racial divisions in the city.

"Please don't make this a racial issue. It isn't," Council Member Vickie Paladino, a Queens Republican who is white, said after a number of her council peers spoke strongly in favor of the bill, with some even speaking in Spanish, Portuguese, Mandarin and Haitian Creole.

"We didn't make this a race thing. This is a race thing," responded Riley as he related his own experience of being detained by police simply for hunting for a parking spot in Manhattan while fresh out of college.

Others noted that this coming Sunday marks the 25th anniversary of when a young, unarmed Black immigrant named Amadou Diallo was shot dozens of times by NYPD officers in the Bronx.

In 2013, a federal judge ruled that the NYPD violated the civil rights of Black and Hispanic residents with its stop-and-frisk tactic. Since then, the department has reported a large decline in such encounters, though an ACLU report found people of color were still the targets of the vast majority of stop-and-frisks in 2022.

Tuesday's vote came after Adams and the NYPD launched a last-ditch effort to peel off some supporters from the measure by hosting police ride-alongs for council members.

But the Friday event was overshadowed that same evening when an officer pulled over Council Member

Yusef Salaam, an exonerated member of the "Central Park Five" who with four other Black and Latino men were falsely accused and convicted of raping a white jogger in Central Park in 1989. Their convictions were eventually overturned through DNA evidence.

In the very brief encounter, an officer asked Salaam to roll down his windows and identified himself. Salaam told the officer he was on the City Council and asked why he was pulled over, according to audio of the encounter published by The New York Times.

The officer told Salaam, "Oh, OK. Have a good one" before walking away, body camera footage showed. The NYPD later released a statement that said Salaam was pulled over for driving with dark window tints beyond the legal limit.

Though such a stop would not be covered by the transparency law — police already have to record information when they pull a driver over — Salaam argued that it showed the need for greater police transparency.

The council on Tuesday also overrode Adams' veto of a bill that would restrict the use of solitary confinement in the city's jails.

The law places a four-hour limit on isolating inmates who pose an immediate risk of violence to others or themselves in "de-escalation" units. Only those involved in violent incidents could be placed in longer-term restrictive housing, and they would need to be allowed out of their cells for 14 hours each day and get access to the same programming available to other inmates.

In his letter vetoing that bill, Adams argued the restrictions would put inmates and corrections officers alike at risk. He also cited concerns raised by a federal monitor appointed to evaluate operations at the city's jails.

## **Chita Rivera, revered and pioneering Tony-winning dancer and singer, dies at 91**

By MARK KENNEDY AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Chita Rivera, the dynamic dancer, singer and actor who garnered 10 Tony nominations, winning twice, in a long Broadway career that forged a path for Latina artists and shrugged off a near-fatal car accident, died Tuesday. She was 91.

Rivera's death was announced by her daughter, Lisa Mordente, who said she died in New York after a brief illness.

Rivera first gained wide notice in 1957 as Anita in the original production of "West Side Story" and was still dancing on Broadway with her trademark energy a half-century later in 2015's "The Visit."

"I wouldn't know what to do if I wasn't moving or telling a story to you or singing a song," she told The Associated Press then. "That's the spirit of my life, and I'm really so lucky to be able to do what I love, even at this time in my life."

In August 2009, Rivera was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest honor the U.S. can give a civilian. Rivera put her hand over her heart and said she shook her head in wonderment as President Barack Obama presented the medal. In 2013, she was the marshal at the Puerto Rican Day Parade in New York City.

"She was a true Broadway legend," playwright Paul Rudnick said on X, formerly Twitter. "She always delivered and audiences adored her. The moment she stepped onstage, the world became more exciting and glorious."

Rivera rose from chorus girl to star, collaborating along the way with many of Broadway's greatest talents, including Jerome Robbins, Leonard Bernstein, Bob Fosse, Gower Champion, Michael Kidd, Harold Prince, Jack Cole, Peter Gennaro and John Kander and Fred Ebb.

She rebounded from a car accident in 1988 that crushed her right leg and became an indefatigable star on the road. She was on Broadway in a raucous production of "The Mystery of Edwin Drood" in 2012 and the chilly "The Visit" in 2014, earning another best actress Tony nomination.

"She can't rehearse except for full-out," said playwright Terrence McNally in 2005. "She can't perform

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except for full-out, no matter what the size of the house. She's going to be there 101% for that audience."

She won Tonys for "The Rink" in 1984 and "Kiss of the Spider Woman" in 1993. When accepting a Tony Award for Lifetime Achievement in 2018, she said "I wouldn't trade my life in the theater for anything, because theater is life."

She was nominated for the award seven other times, for "Bye Bye Birdie," which opened in 1960; "Chicago," 1975; "Bring Back Birdie," 1981; "Merlin," 1983; "Jerry's Girls," 1985; "Nine," 2003; and "Chita Rivera: The Dancer's Life," 2005.

"I don't think we have enough original musicals," she told The Associated Press in 2012. "I know I'm being old fashioned, but the theater is the place where music, lyrics, words, scenery and stories come together. And I've been blessed enough to have done several shows when they really did. They take you places and they're daring. That's what we need."

Her albums include 16 tracks pulled from her original cast recordings and put out as part of Sony's Legends of Broadway series and two solo CDs — "And Now I Sing" for a tiny record label in the 1960s and "And Now I Swing" in 2009 for Yellow Sound Label.

"I looked up to you and always will admire you as a talent and mostly as a person!" wrote Kristin Chenoweth on X. "A kick butt woman you were. All the rest of us just wanna be you."

In the 1993 musical "Kiss of the Spider Woman," Rivera played the title role, a glamorous movie star at the center of the fantasy life of an inmate in a South American prison. The story, from a novel by Manuel Puig, had already been made into an Oscar-winning 1985 movie.

In his review, then-Associated Press drama critic Michael Kuchwara wrote that Rivera "is more than a musical theater star. She's a force of nature — which is exactly what is needed for the role of the Spider Woman. With her Louise Brooks haircut, brassy voice and lithe dancer's body, Rivera dominates the stage whenever she appears."

In 1975, she originated the role of Velma Kelly (to Gwen Verdon's Roxie Hart) in the original Broadway production of "Chicago." Rivera had a small role in the 2002 film version, while Catherine Zeta-Jones won the best supporting actress Oscar as Velma — just as Rita Moreno had picked up an Oscar for her portrayal of Anita in "West Side Story."

The songwriters for "Chicago," Kander and Ebb, also wrote Rivera's first Tony-winning performance, for "The Rink." In winning the Tony for best actress in a musical, Rivera topped the show's top star, Liza Minnelli, who also had been nominated. The two played a mother and daughter who struggle to rebuild their relationship after a long estrangement; the setting is an old-fashioned roller rink that has seen better days.

"Spider Woman" had been her first Broadway show since 1986, when she suffered a broken leg in the traffic accident while she was appearing in "Jerry's Girls," a Broadway tribute to the songs of Jerry Herman.

At the Tony awards a few weeks later, she flashed her cast and belted out "Put on a Happy Face" from the musical "Bye, Bye, Birdie."

It took months of physical therapy to bring back her dancing skills. She told The Associated Press: "It never entered my mind that I wouldn't dance again. Never. I can't explain to you why. It's hard work getting back but that's what I'm doing."

"My spirit is still there."

Lin-Manuel Miranda, the Broadway songwriter and performer, featured Rivera in a scene in his 2021 film adaptation of "Tick, Tick... Boom," and in a statement said having her included "remains one of the all-time joys of my life."

Dolores Conchita Figueroa del Rivero was born Jan. 23, 1933, in Washington, D.C. Her Puerto Rican father, Pedro del Rivero, was a musician who played in the United States Navy Band, who died when she was 7. Her mother was of Scottish and Italian descent.

She took dance classes and then entered the prestigious School of American Ballet in New York. Her first theater gig, at age 17, was in the touring company of "Call Me Madam." That led to chorus stints in such shows as "Guys and Dolls" and "Can-Can."

In her 2023 memoir, "Chita: A Memoir," another woman steals scene after scene: her self-proclaimed alter ego, Dolores. Unapologetic and fiery, Dolores was the unfiltered version of Chita and served as motivation

in times of self-doubt. In one chapter, Rivera writes that she doesn't read reviews "or Dolores just might invest in a dozen voodoo dolls."

"I consist of — and I think we all do — I consist of two people: Dolores and Conchita," Rivera said in an interview with the AP that year. "Conchita, she's the one that has been taking all the glory, you know. She's been doing all the shows, but Dolores is the one that's pushed her into it. And she's been keeping me on track, so I listen to Dolores. I listen to her. She's growing in my head now as we speak."

Among other early appearances on the New York stage were roles in "The Shoestring Revue," 1955; a 1955 musical version of "Seventh Heaven" starring Ricardo Montalban; and "Mr. Wonderful," a 1956 show starring Sammy Davis Jr.

"I can't believe that I've been given the gift to look back and relive my life," she told The Associated Press shortly before "The Dancer's Life" opened on Broadway in late 2005. "It's about how anybody can do it — if you really believe it, you have the good fortune, you do all the right things and you really work hard."

Rivera, who had a relationship with the now-deceased Davis, married fellow "West Side Story" performer Tony Mordente in 1957. The marriage ended in divorce. Their daughter, Lisa Mordente, also became a performer who occasionally appeared on Broadway, garnering a Tony nomination in 1982 for "Marlowe."

Among those honoring Rivera on social media were actor Jason Alexander, who said "she set the bar in every way," and actor and dancer Debbie Allen, who wrote: "I will miss touching you, but I will forever hear your laughter and hold that baton of power you tossed my way."

## Trump stays on Illinois' ballot as the election board says it lacks power to remove him over Jan. 6

By SOPHIA TAREEN and NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Illinois' election board on Tuesday kept former President Donald Trump on the state's primary ballot, a week before the U.S. Supreme Court hears arguments on whether his role in the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol disqualifies him from the presidency.

The board's unanimous ruling comes after its hearing officer, a retired judge and Republican, found that a "preponderance of the evidence" shows Trump is ineligible to run for president because he violated a constitutional ban on those who "engaged in insurrection" from holding office. But the hearing officer recommended the board let the courts make the ultimate decision.

The eight-member board, composed of four Democrats and four Republicans, agreed with a recommendation from its lawyer to let Trump — the front-runner in the Republican primary — remain on the ballot by determining it didn't have the authority to determine whether he violated the U.S. Constitution.

Board member Catherine McCrory prefaced her vote with a statement: "I want it to be clear that this Republican believes that there was an insurrection on Jan. 6. There's no doubt in my mind that he manipulated, instigated, aided and abetted an insurrection on Jan. 6."

But McCrory said she agreed the board doesn't have jurisdiction to enforce that conclusion.

Trump's attorney urged the board not to get involved, contending the former president never engaged in insurrection but that wasn't something it could determine.

"We would recommend and urge the board to not wade into this," attorney Adam Merrill said.

Trump cheered the decision in a post on his social media network, Truth Social: "The VOTE was 8-0 in favor of keeping your favorite President (ME!), on the Ballot," he wrote.

An attorney for the voters who objected to Trump's presence on the ballot said they would appeal to Cook County circuit court.

"What's happened here is an avoidance of a hot potato issue," attorney Matthew Piers told reporters after the hearing. "I get the desire to do it, but the law doesn't allow you to duck."

The issue will likely be decided at a higher court, with the U.S. Supreme Court scheduled next week to hear arguments in Trump's appeal of a Colorado ruling declaring him ineligible for the presidency in that state.



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The nation's highest court has never ruled on a case involving Section 3 of the 14th Amendment, which was adopted in 1868 to prevent former Confederates from returning to office after the Civil War but has rarely been used since then. Some legal scholars say the clause applies to Trump for his role in trying to overturn the 2020 presidential election and encouraging his backers to storm the U.S. Capitol after he lost to Democrat Joe Biden.

Dozens of cases have been filed around the country seeking to bar Trump from the presidency under Section 3. The Colorado case is the only one that succeeded in court. Most other courts and election officials have ducked the issue on similar grounds to Illinois, contending they don't have jurisdiction to rule on the obscure constitutional issue.

Maine's Democratic secretary of state also ruled that Trump violated the 14th Amendment and is no longer eligible for the White House, but her ruling is on hold until the Supreme Court issues a decision.

Trump's critics argue he's disqualified by the plain language of Section 3, which forbids those who swore an oath to "support" the Constitution, then "engaged in insurrection" against it from holding office. They contend the former president is ineligible just as if he didn't meet the constitutional threshold of being at least 35 years old.

But Trump's attorneys have argued that the provision is vague and unclear and that Jan. 6 doesn't meet the legal definition of an insurrection. Even if it did, they argue that Trump was simply exercising his First Amendment rights and isn't liable for what occurred, and that the ban on holding office shouldn't apply to presidents.

Though Trump has blamed Biden for the lawsuits because several have been filed by liberal nonprofit groups, there is no evidence the president was involved. On Tuesday, before the Illinois ruling, Biden said he didn't have a problem with Trump being on presidential ballots. Biden made the comment in response to a reporter's question before flying to Florida for campaign fundraising.

Section 3 was heavily used immediately after the Civil War, but after Congress granted an amnesty to most former Confederates in 1872 it fell into disuse. Legal scholars can only find one example of it being deployed in the 20th century — against a socialist who was not seated in Congress because he objected to U.S. involvement in World War I. It has been used a handful of times since the Jan. 6 attack.

The Illinois board members ducked the issue by concluding that, under state law, all they can do is assess whether the basic paperwork candidates fill out is true. The only way to remove Trump would be by concluding he made a false statement when he swore under oath in that paperwork that he was eligible for the office he sought.

Board member Jack Vrett, a Republican, warned that would create a dangerous precedent, given the dozens of election boards in the state that follow the main one's lead.

"If we allowed them to say, 'Don't just look at the papers, look at the underlying allegations,' that would open a floodgate," Vrett said. "Every possible school board candidate would seek to challenge the qualification" of their rival "based on some alleged criminal conduct."

## Justice Department investigating Democratic Rep. Cori Bush over alleged misuse of campaign funds

By FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Justice Department is investigating whether Democratic Rep. Cori Bush of Missouri misused campaign funds for her personal security, the progressive lawmaker confirmed in a statement Tuesday.

Bush, a second-term lawmaker, denied any wrongdoing and said she is "fully cooperating" with federal prosecutors.

"As a rank-and-file member of Congress I am not entitled to personal protection by the House, and instead have used campaign funds as permissible to retain security services," Bush said. "I have not used any federal tax dollars for personal security services."

Her statement came a day after the Justice Department subpoenaed the office of the House Sergeant at Arms for related documents. The Justice Department declined to comment.

Since being elected to the House in 2021, Bush, a Black woman with activist roots, has been the target of right-wing attacks. As a result, she has spent a substantial amount of money on private security while she's on Capitol Hill and back home in her district in St. Louis.

Federal prosecutors have been asking questions about Bush's security expenses, the threats she received and her decision to pay her now-husband Cortney Merritts with campaign funds to provide security, a person familiar with the investigation told The Associated Press. The questions have been similar to those asked by congressional investigators conducting an ethics inquiry, the person said. The person was not authorized to publicly discuss details of the investigation and spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity.

The issue of how Bush has been funding her security is currently under investigation by the Federal Election Commission and the House Committee on Ethics. The FEC has stated that it is not technically against the rules for a member of Congress to use campaign funds for private security as there has been a striking increase of violent threats against lawmakers in recent years. The Office of Congressional Ethics unanimously determined in October to clear Bush of any wrongdoing in their investigation.

"I look forward to this same outcome from all pending investigations," Bush said Tuesday.

"I'm going to make sure I have security because I know I have had attempts on my life and I have too much work to do," the former Black Lives Matter activist told CBS News in August 2021. "So, if I end up spending \$200,000, if I spend ... 10 more dollars on it, you know what? I get to be here to do the work.

A spokesperson for Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries said that Bush is entitled to the presumption of innocence as the investigation moves forward.

"It is our expectation that the investigation will follow the facts, apply the law and be conducted in a professional manner," Christie Stephenson said.

Punchbowl News first reported the news about the investigation into Bush.

## Wisconsin's Democratic governor vetoes Republican map as another redistricting court fight looms

By SCOTT BAUER Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — Wisconsin Democratic Gov. Tony Evers on Tuesday vetoed a redistricting proposal that the Republican-controlled Legislature passed last week in a last-ditch effort to avert the drawing of legislative boundaries by the state Supreme Court.

The veto came a day after five of Wisconsin's Republican members of Congress, along with the GOP-controlled Legislature, asked the newest liberal member of the state Supreme Court not to hear a lawsuit that seeks to redraw congressional district maps ahead of the November election.

The political stakes in both cases are huge for both sides in the presidential battleground state, where Republicans have had a firm grip on the Legislature since 2011 even as Democrats have won statewide elections, including for governor in 2018 and 2022.

Evers had promised to veto the GOP legislative-district proposal, which largely mirrored maps he had proposed, but with changes that would reduce the number of GOP incumbents in the state Senate and Assembly who would have to face one another in November.

Evers said he vetoed the maps because they are "more of the same."

"Republicans passed maps to help make sure Republican-gerrymandered incumbents get to keep their seats," he said in a statement. "Folks, that's just more gerrymandering."

Republicans don't have enough votes in the Legislature to override the veto.

Republican Assembly Speaker Robin Vos accused Evers of trusting the Wisconsin Supreme Court "to give him even more partisan, gerrymandered maps for Democrats." And Republican Senate Majority Leader Devin LeMahieu said in a statement that Evers is confident the court "will trample the constitutional authority of the legislature."

The liberal-controlled state Supreme Court last month tossed the current Republican-drawn legislative

maps as unconstitutional. The court said it would draw new maps unless the Legislature and Evers agreed to ones first.

They could not agree.

The Legislature raced to pass maps ahead of Thursday's deadline for consultants hired by the Wisconsin Supreme Court to submit their recommendations for new boundary lines. They were reviewing six maps submitted separately by Evers, Republicans, Democrats and others. They could recommend one of those maps, or their own. It will then be up to the liberal-controlled court to order the maps.

The legislative machinations in Wisconsin come as litigation continues in more than dozen states over U.S. House and state legislative districts that were enacted after the 2020 census. National Democrats last week asked the Wisconsin Supreme Court to take up a challenge to the state's congressional districts, but the court has yet to decide whether to take the case.

That lawsuit argues that decision last month ordering new state legislative maps opens the door to the latest challenge focused on congressional lines.

Republicans asked in that legislative-district case for Justice Janet Protasiewicz to recuse herself, based on comments she made during her campaign calling the maps "rigged" and "unfair." She refused to step aside and was part of the 4-3 majority in December that ordered new maps.

Now Republicans are making similar arguments in calling for her to not hear the congressional redistricting challenge. In a motion filed Monday, they argued that her comments critical of the Republican maps require her to step aside in order to avoid a due process violation of the U.S. Constitution. They also cite the nearly \$10 million her campaign received from the Wisconsin Democratic Party.

"A justice cannot decide a case she has prejudged or when her participation otherwise creates a serious risk of actual bias," Republicans argued in the motion. "Justice Protasiewicz's public campaign statements establish a constitutionally intolerable risk that she has prejudged the merits of this case."

Protasiewicz rejected similar arguments in the state legislative map redistricting case, saying in October that the law did not require her to step down from that case.

"Recusal decisions are controlled by the law," Protasiewicz wrote then. "They are not a matter of personal preference. If precedent requires it, I must recuse. But if precedent does not warrant recusal, my oath binds me to participate."

Those seeking her recusal in the congressional redistricting case are the GOP-controlled Wisconsin Legislature and Republican U.S. Reps. Scott Fitzgerald, Glenn Grothman, Mike Gallagher, Bryan Steil and Tom Tiffany.

The only Republican not involved in the lawsuit is U.S. Rep. Derrick Van Orden, who represents western Wisconsin's 3rd Congressional District. His is one of only two congressional districts in Wisconsin seen as competitive.

The current congressional maps in Wisconsin were drawn by Evers and approved by the state Supreme Court. The U.S. Supreme Court in March 2022 declined to block them from taking effect.

The Wisconsin Supreme Court is under an extremely tight deadline to consider the challenge. State elections officials have said that new maps must be in place by March 15 in order for candidates and elections officials to adequately prepare for the Aug. 13 primary. Candidates can start circulating nomination papers on April 15.

The lawsuit argues that there is time for the court to accept map submissions and select one to be in place for the November election.

## **Russian figure skaters set to get Olympic bronze ahead of Canada despite Valieva's disqualification**

By GRAHAM DUNBAR AP Sports Writer

GENEVA (AP) — Despite the disqualification of Kamila Valieva in a doping case, the Russian figure skating team still stands to finish on the podium and get bronze medals from the 2022 Beijing Olympics behind

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the United States and Japan.

The Americans moved into the gold medal position in the team event and Japan has been upgraded to silver from bronze. The demoted Russians drop into third place, one point ahead of Canada even after being stripped of the points the then-15-year-old Valieva earned on the ice.

The International Skating Union published an amended standings from the Beijing competition on Tuesday that removed Valieva's maximum 10 points from each of her two events but did not add an extra point to the other teams below her.

The proposal by the ISU is likely to provoke fresh legal action at the Court of Arbitration for Sport, which on Monday disqualified Valieva from the 2022 Olympics and other events, and banned her for four years until December 2025.

Russian Olympic officials said Tuesday they will appeal to regain the Olympic title, arguing that ISU rules mean sanctions against Valieva "cannot be the basis for reviewing the results of the team event."

A second challenge at CAS could come from fourth-place Canada because the rest of the field did not have their points increased by the ISU following Valieva's disqualification.

"Skate Canada strongly disagrees with the ISU's position on this matter and will consider all options to appeal this decision," the country's figure skating body said in a statement Tuesday.

The final decision on awarding medals is for the International Olympic Committee, which the head of the United States Olympic and Paralympic body said Tuesday is "as eager as we are" to get the gold medals to the American skaters.

"There is no scenario at this point in which Team USA is not the gold medal winners," USOPC chief executive Sarah Hirshland told reporters on a call, "so we are focused on getting the gold medals awarded."

Skating's world body is responsible for amending the Olympic event result and said Tuesday it had consulted with the IOC.

"The ISU is in close contact with the International Olympic Committee and the relevant ISU member federations in regard to the implementation of this decision," the governing body said Tuesday.

The unprecedented turmoil of canceling the medal ceremony at the Olympics has tested the rules of figure skating's team event, which debuted at the 2014 Sochi Games. The Russians and Canadians traded gold and silver at the first two editions.

In the newly updated Beijing result, Canada still gets eight points out of 10 from the women's short program and free skate sections, where its skater was Madeline Schizas. Japan still gets nine points each for originally finishing second to Valieva — Wakaba Higuchi in the short program and Kaori Sakamoto in the free skate.

Canada's overall point total remained at 53 while the Russians' tally dropped from 74 to 54 — enough for the bronze medals for everyone on the team except the disqualified Valieva.

Skate Canada praised the ruling to disqualify Valieva, which it said "underscores the significance of stringent anti-doping measures and the need for continuous vigilance in protecting the integrity of figure skating and all sports."

A Canadian appeal to CAS in Lausanne, Switzerland, could extend the case for about another year.

The team event medal ceremony did not take place in Beijing because details of Valieva's positive test for a banned heart medicine emerged only hours after she skated in the Russian team's win.

One option for getting the medals would be at the Summer Games in Paris that open July 26, U.S. ice dancer Madison Chock said Tuesday.

"That would be the dream scenario ... stand atop a podium at an Olympic event and be there with our families," Chock said. Asked if that moment could be shared with the Russians, Chock said: "I just want to be standing up there with all nine of us on the top spot of the podium, hand over the heart, singing the national anthem."

Valieva tested positive for trimetazidine in a sample taken on Dec. 25, 2021, at the Russian national championships. Testing at a World Anti-Doping Agency-approved laboratory in Stockholm, Sweden, was delayed by staffing shortages during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The unusual circumstances, and Valieva's status as a minor, persuaded a separate CAS panel in Beijing



to let her continue skating in the individual women's event. Under extreme scrutiny, she finished fourth in an error-filled skate.

Valieva's lawyers argued her positive test was because of contamination from medication they claimed her grandfather took. She also was taking two oxygen-boosting medications not banned in sports.

There was skepticism Valieva was a victim of an institutional culture in Russian sports of doping and lack of duty of care to young athletes. She had competed in Beijing under the team acronym "ROC" — the third straight Olympics the country's athletes could not be called "Russia" because of ongoing fallout from the state-backed doping program at the 2014 Sochi Games at home.

In Russia on Tuesday, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Valieva and her five teammates from two years ago were still considered winners.

"Upon their return from China we honored these athletes as Olympic champions," Peskov said. "We are convinced that they will always remain Olympic champions to us, whatever decisions may be taken in that regard, even unfair ones."

The IOC executive board will next meet from March 19-21 in Lausanne, at the same time Canada hosts the figure skating world championships in Montreal.

The Olympic leadership is currently in South Korea for the Youth Winter Games and could address the skating medal issue there.

Valieva also lost the European title she won in January 2022, the ISU said. That title now goes to teammate Anna Shcherbakova, the Olympic champion two years ago.

## **Biden says he's decided on response to killing of 3 US troops, plans to attend dignified transfer**

By AAMER MADHANI and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden on Tuesday indicated he had decided how to respond after the killing of three American service members Sunday in a drone attack in Jordan that his administration has pinned on Iran-backed militia groups, saying he does not want to expand the war in the Middle East but demurring on specifics.

U.S. officials said they are still determining which of several Iran-backed groups was responsible for the first killing of American troops in a wave of attacks against U.S. forces in the region since the Oct. 7 Hamas assault on Israel. Biden plans to attend the dignified transfer to mark the fallen troops' return to American soil on Friday and answered in the affirmative when asked by reporters if he'd decided on a response, as he indicated he was aiming to prevent further escalation.

"I don't think we need a wider war in the Middle East," Biden said at the White House before departing for a fundraising trip to Florida. "That's not what I'm looking for."

It was not immediately clear whether Biden meant he had decided on a specific retaliatory plan. A U.S. official told The Associated Press that the Pentagon is still assessing options to respond to the attack in Jordan.

National Security Council spokesman John Kirby told reporters traveling with Biden aboard Air Force One that he would not preview the U.S. response, but indicated it would come in phases.

"It's very possible that what you'll see is a tiered approach here, not just a single action, but potentially multiple actions over a period of time," he said.

Meanwhile, the Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Kataib Hezbollah, one of several groups eyed by U.S. officials, announced Tuesday in a statement "the suspension of military and security operations against the occupation forces in order to prevent embarrassment to the Iraqi government."

The attacks on U.S. forces by Iraqi militias over the past four months have placed the government of Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani in an awkward position. Sudani was brought to power by Iranian-allied factions but has also attempted to stay in Washington's good graces and has condemned the attacks on U.S. forces serving in Iraq as part of an international commission to fight the Islamic State. Iraqi and U.S. officials on Saturday opened talks aimed at winding down the commission's presence.

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Kirby said that Biden spoke with the soldiers' families Tuesday morning and extended his condolences, pledging full assistance to the families as they grieve.

In separate calls with the families, Biden also gauged their feelings about his attendance at Friday's dignified transfer of the fallen service members' remains at Dover Air Force Base in Delaware on Friday, and "all of them supported his presence there," Kirby said.

"He was grateful for their time. He expressed to them how proud we all are of their service," Kirby said of Biden's calls with the families. "How we mourn and feel sorrow over their loss."

Kirby added: "The president will be going to the dignified transfer on Friday."

The solemn ceremony marks the return of fallen service members to American soil as they journey to their final resting place, with silent honor guards carrying flag-draped transfer cases holding the remains from transport aircraft to military vehicles.

The Pentagon identified those killed in the attack as Sgt. William Jerome Rivers, 46, of Carrollton, Georgia; Spc. Kennedy Ladon Sanders, 24, of Waycross, Georgia; and Spc. Breonna Alexsondria Moffett, 23, of Savannah, Georgia. The Army Reserve announced on Tuesday that it had posthumously promoted Sanders and Moffett to the rank of sergeant.

There have been a total of 166 attacks on U.S. military installations since Oct. 18, including 67 in Iraq, 98 in Syria and now one in Jordan, a U.S. military official said. On Tuesday, Al-Asad Air Base in Western Iraq was targeted again by a single rocket, but there was no damage and no injuries in that attack, a U.S. military official said. The three soldiers killed in the Jordan strike were the first U.S. military fatalities in the Middle East since the war between Israel and Hamas broke out. One contractor has also died as the result of a heart attack after a strike on Al-Asad in December.

In 2021, Biden attended the dignified transfer of the remains of 13 troops killed in a suicide attack during the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Separately, Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany said it expected to receive 3 U.S. service members who were injured in the drone attack, including one listed in critical, but stable, condition. The Pentagon has said at least 40 troops were injured alongside the three killed in action.

## France's government announces new measures to calm farmers' protests, as barricades squeeze Paris

By SYLVIE CORBET and OLEG CETINIC Associated Press

JOSSIGNY, France (AP) — France's new prime minister showered promises of help on angry farmers Tuesday, from emergency cash aid to controls on imported food, in hopes that cools a protest movement that has seen tractors shut down highways across France and inspired similar actions around Europe.

Farmers seeking better pay, fewer constraints and lower costs are camped out on hay-strewn highways and encircling Paris, posing the biggest challenge to Prime Minister Gabriel Attal since his appointment less than a month ago. He sought to assuage their concerns in a sweeping policy speech Tuesday at the National Assembly.

"We need to listen to the farmers, who are working and are worried about their future and their livelihood," Attal said.

"The goal is clear: guaranteeing fair competition, especially so that regulations that are being applied to (French) farmers are also respected by foreign products," he said. Protection against cheap imports is one of the protesters' main demands.

Attal promised emergency aid to struggling wine producers and quick payments of EU subsidies to others. He also said food retailers who don't comply with a law meant to ensure a fair share of revenues for farmers will be fined, starting immediately.

After several days of escalating protests, French farmers spent the night at barricades Monday to Tuesday, to press their case that growing and rearing food has become too difficult and not sufficiently lucrative.

Protesters rejected pro-agriculture measures that Attal announced last week as insufficient. They have threatened to move in on the capital, host of the Summer Olympics in six months, if their demands aren't

met. Protesters came prepared for an extended battle, with tents and reserves of food and water.

The government announced a deployment of 15,000 police officers, mostly in the Paris region, to stop any effort by the protesters to enter the capital. Officers and armored vehicles also were stationed at the Parisian hub for fresh food supplies, the Rungis market.

Farmers who slept on a highway near the Disneyland theme park east of Paris were skeptical that the government would do enough to help. They grilled sausages, set up a television to watch the prime minister's speech and hung an effigy of a dying farmer from a bridge.

Stéphane Chopin, an organic Charolais beef farmer from near Château-Thierry, northeast of Paris, described the cost and bureaucratic burden of trying to maintain organic methods while competing with food from other countries with lower labor and living costs.

"We have been trying make an effort for local produce, for the environment, for 20 years. We are trying, we are trying ... now we say stop," he said.

In neighboring Belgium, a delegation from the Belgian Young Farmers association is blocking the main highway between Paris and Brussels just outside the Belgian capital for a third day in a row. Like their fellow farmers from across the European Union, they demand less bureaucracy and more money for their produce.

Farmers in Spain are also demonstrating. In Italy, farmers gathered for the third day Tuesday with their tractors at a highway exit near Rome to protest increased production costs, higher taxation and lower incomes, and cuts to diesel benefits.

The movement in France is another manifestation of a global food crisis worsened by Russia's nearly two-year full-scale war in Ukraine, a major food producer.

French farmers assert that higher prices for fertilizer, energy and other inputs for growing crops and feeding livestock have eaten into their incomes.

Protesters also argue that France's massively subsidized farming sector is over-regulated and hurt by food imports from countries where agricultural producers face lower costs and fewer constraints.

French President Emmanuel Macron will meet on Thursday in Brussels with the European Commission chief to discuss the farming crisis.

But Macron defended the EU farm policy overall as the only way to keep European agriculture alive in a globalized economy.

"Without a common agricultural policy (in the EU), our farmers wouldn't have revenue. Many of them would not be able to survive," Macron said Tuesday during a trip to Sweden.

## Space shuttle Endeavour hoisted for display in launch configuration at Los Angeles science museum

By JOHN ANTCHAK Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — NASA's retired space shuttle Endeavour was carefully hoisted late Monday and attached to a huge external fuel tank and its two solid rocket boosters at a Los Angeles museum where it will be uniquely displayed as if it is about to blast off.

A massive crane delicately moved the orbiter, which is 122 feet (37 meters) long and has a 78-foot (24-meter) wingspan, into the partially built Samuel Oschin Air and Space Center at the California Science Center in Exposition Park.

Crews then attached Endeavour, covered in a protective wrapping, to the tank in a process that lasted into the predawn hours Tuesday. The building will be completed around Endeavour before the display opens to the public.

"This is a huge morning for us now," said Jeffrey N. Rudolph, president and CEO of the science center, who estimated it will take up to two years to finish the project.

"The scale of it is something that really amazes people," he said. "Everyone who sees it, even those who've seen the shuttle before, they say wow."

The 20-story-tall display stands atop an 1,800-ton (1,633-metric ton) concrete slab supported by six so-

called base isolators to protect Endeavour from earthquakes.

All parts of the vertical launch configuration are authentic components of the shuttle system, including the rust-colored external tank, which was flight-qualified.

"It's incredible," said Larry Clark, a veteran NASA contractor who spent nearly his whole career as a shuttle engineer and is a consultant to the science center's project.

"It brings back a lot of memories for me," he said. "You know, I saw every space shuttle on the launch pad that ever flew as I worked on the launch pad, and to stand here and see it again like this is kind of melancholy."

Clark described the work completed early Tuesday as a "soft mate." The attachments will be further tightened Wednesday.

Endeavour flew 25 missions between 1992 and 2011, when NASA's shuttle program ended.

The shuttle was flown to Los Angeles International Airport in 2012 atop a NASA Boeing 747 and then created a spectacle as it was inched through tight city streets to Exposition Park. The external tank arrived by barge and made a similar trip across the city.

The shuttle was initially displayed horizontally in a temporary exhibit hall. A groundbreaking ceremony for the Air and Space Center was held in 2022 on the 11th anniversary of Endeavour's final return from space.

The process of assembling the shuttle system in vertical configuration was dubbed "Go for Stack," an informal term for putting together rocket components for launch.

It began in July with precise installation of the bottom segments of the side boosters, known as aft skirts, for the first time outside of a NASA facility. In use, the boosters would be attached to the external tank to help the shuttle's main engines lift off.

The 116-foot-long (35.3-meter-long) rocket motors were trucked to Los Angeles from the Mojave Desert in October and installed the following month.

In addition to completing the building, about 100 other aircraft and spacecraft will be installed along with numerous interpretive exhibits, Rudolph said. About \$360 million of the \$400 million cost has been raised.

In all, NASA operated five shuttles in space. Shuttle Challenger was lost and its crew of seven died in a launch accident Jan. 28, 1986. Columbia broke apart during reentry on Feb. 1, 2003, killing all seven on board. Retired shuttles Atlantis and Discovery and the test ship Enterprise, which did not go to space, are on display across the country.

Atlantis is at Kennedy Space Center, Florida, where it is displayed as if in orbit with its payload doors open and robotic arm extended. Discovery rests on its landing gear at the National Air and Space Museum's Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center in Chantilly, Virginia.

Enterprise, which was released from a carrier aircraft for approach and landing tests, is displayed at the Intrepid Museum in New York.

## Enemy drone that killed US troops in Jordan was mistaken for a US drone, preliminary report suggests

By LOLITA C. BALDOR, AMER MADHANI and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. forces may have mistaken an enemy drone for an American one and let it pass unchallenged into a desert base in Jordan where it killed three U.S. troops and wounded dozens more, officials said Monday.

Details of the Sunday attack emerged as President Joe Biden faced a difficult balancing act, blaming Iran and looking to strike back in a forceful way without causing any further escalation of the Gaza conflict.

As the enemy drone was flying in at a low altitude, a U.S. drone was returning to the small installation known as Tower 22, according to a preliminary report cited by two officials, who were not authorized to comment and insisted on anonymity,

As a result, there was no effort to shoot down the enemy drone that hit the outpost. One of the trailers where troops sleep sustained the brunt of the strike, while surrounding trailers got limited damage from the blast and flying debris. While there are no large air defense systems at Tower 22, the base does have



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counter-drone systems, such as Coyote drone interceptors.

Aside from the soldiers killed, the Pentagon said more than 40 troops were wounded in the attack, most with cuts, bruises, brain injuries and similar wounds. Eight were medically evacuated, including three who were going to Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany. The other five, who suffered "minor traumatic brain injuries," were expected to return to duty.

Asked if the failure to shoot down the enemy drone was "human error," Pentagon spokeswoman Sabrina Singh responded that the U.S. Central Command was still assessing the matter.

The Pentagon identified those killed in the attack as Sgt. William Jerome Rivers, 46, of Carrollton, Georgia; Spc. Kennedy Ladon Sanders, 24, of Waycross, Georgia; and Spc. Breonna Alexsondria Moffett, 23, of Savannah, Georgia.

The three U.S. Army Reserve soldiers were assigned to the 718th Engineer Company, 926th Engineer Battalion, 926th Engineer Brigade in Fort Moore, Georgia.

The explanation for how the enemy drone evaded U.S. air defenses came as the White House said Monday it's not looking for war with Iran even as Biden vows retaliatory action. The Democratic administration believes Tehran was behind the strike.

Biden met with national security advisers in the White House Situation Room to discuss the latest developments and potential retaliation.

"There's no easy answer here," said National Security Council spokesman John Kirby. "And that's why the president is meeting with his national security team weighing the options before him."

The brazen attack, which the Biden administration blames on Iranian-based proxies, adds another layer of complexity to an already tense Mideast situation as the Biden administration tries to keep the Israel-Hamas war from expanding into a broader regional conflict.

"The president and I will not tolerate attacks on U.S. forces, and we will take all necessary actions to defend the U.S. and our troops," Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said as he met at the Pentagon with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg.

The drone attack was one of dozens on U.S. troops in the Middle East since Hamas launched attacks on Israel on Oct. 7, igniting the war in Gaza. But it's the first in which American service members have been killed.

Biden promised on Sunday to "hold all those responsible to account at a time and in a manner (of) our choosing" but said the U.S. wasn't seeking to get into another conflict in the Middle East.

Kirby also made clear that American patience has worn thin after more than two months of attacks by Iranian proxies on U.S. troops in Iraq, Syria and Jordan and on U.S. Navy and commercial vessels in the Red Sea. The proxy groups — including Yemen's Houthi rebels and Iraq based Kataeb Hezbollah — say the attacks are in response to Israel's ongoing military operations in Gaza.

"We are not looking for a war with Iran," Kirby told reporters. "That said, this was a very serious attack. It had lethal consequences. We will respond, and we respond appropriately."

Iran on Monday denied it was behind the Jordan strike.

"These claims are made with specific political goals to reverse the realities of the region," Iran's state-run IRNA news agency quoted foreign ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani as saying. Iran regularly denies involvement in attacks linked back to it through the militias it arms across the wider Mideast.

Kirby said that U.S. officials are still working through determining which militant group was behind the attack. He noted that Iran has longed equipped and trained the militias.

Republicans have laid blame on Biden for doing too little to deter Iranian militias, which have carried out approximately 165 attacks on U.S. troops in the region since the start of the war.

Republican presidential front-runner Donald Trump on Sunday called the attack "yet another horrific and tragic consequence of Joe Biden's weakness and surrender."

The attack hit a U.S. military desert outpost in the far reaches of northeastern Jordan known as Tower 22. The installation sits near the demilitarized zone on the border between Jordan and Syria along a sandy, bulldozed berm marking the DMZ's southern edge. The Iraqi border is only 10 kilometers (6 miles) away.

The base began as a Jordanian outpost watching the border, then saw an increased U.S. presence af-

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ter American forces entered Syria in late 2015. The small installation includes U.S. engineering, aviation, logistics and security troops, with about 350 U.S. Army and Air Force personnel deployed.

Iraq's government condemned the drone strike. Spokesman Bassem al-Awadi said in a statement that Iraq was "monitoring with a great concern the alarming security developments in the region" and called for "an end to the cycle of violence." The statement said that Iraq is ready to participate in diplomatic efforts to prevent further escalation.

An umbrella group for Iran-backed factions known as the Islamic Resistance in Iraq has claimed dozens of attacks against bases housing U.S. troops in Iraq and Syria since the Israel-Hamas war began. On Sunday, the group claimed three drone attacks against sites in Syria, including near the border with Jordan, and one inside of "occupied Palestine" but so far hasn't claimed the attack in Jordan.

John Bolton, who served as national security adviser to Trump, said Iran hasn't paid a price for the havoc that its proxies have unleashed in the region. He suggested the Biden administration could send a strong message to Tehran with strikes on Iranian vessels in the Red Sea, Iranian air defenses along the Iraqi border, and bases that have been used to train and supply militant groups for years.

"So until Iran bears a cost, you're not going to reestablish deterrence, you're not going to put the beligerence on a downward slope."

The attack came as U.S. officials were seeing signs of progress in negotiations to broker a deal between Israel and Hamas to release the more than 100 remaining hostages being held in Gaza in exchange for an extended pause in fighting. While contours of a deal under consideration would not end the war, Americans believed that it could lay the groundwork for a durable resolution to the conflict.

Qatar's prime minister said Monday that senior U.S. and Mideast mediators had achieved a framework proposal to present to Hamas for freeing hostages and pausing fighting in Gaza.

Prime Minister Mohammed al-Thani's comments at the Atlantic Council in Washington came after talks Sunday in Paris among U.S., Israeli, Qatari and Egyptian officials seeking a new round of hostage releases and a cease-fire in Gaza.

## Today in History: January 31

### US enters space age with launch of first satellite

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, Jan. 31, the 31st day of 2024. There are 335 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Jan. 31, 1958, the United States entered the Space Age with its first successful launch of a satellite, Explorer 1, from Cape Canaveral.

On this date:

In 1797, composer Franz Schubert was born in Vienna.

In 1863, during the Civil War, the First South Carolina Volunteers, an all-Black Union regiment composed of many escaped slaves, was mustered into federal service at Beaufort, South Carolina.

In 1865, the U.S. House of Representatives joined the Senate in passing the 13th Amendment to the United States Constitution abolishing slavery, sending it to states for ratification. (The amendment was adopted in December 1865.)

In 1919, baseball Hall-of-Famer Jackie Robinson was born in Cairo, Georgia.

In 1945, Pvt. Eddie Slovik, 24, became the first U.S. soldier since the Civil War to be executed for desertion as he was shot by an American firing squad in France.

In 1961, NASA launched Ham the Chimp aboard a Mercury-Redstone rocket from Cape Canaveral; Ham was recovered safely from the Atlantic Ocean following his 16 1/2-minute suborbital flight.

In 1971, astronauts Alan Shepard, Edgar Mitchell and Stuart Roosa blasted off aboard Apollo 14 on a mission to the moon.

In 2000, an Alaska Airlines MD-83 jet crashed into the Pacific Ocean off Port Hueneme (wy-NEE'-mee),

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California, killing all 88 people aboard.

In 2001, a Scottish court sitting in the Netherlands convicted one Libyan and acquitted a second, in the 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland. Abdel Basset Ali al-Megrahi was given a life sentence, but was released after eight years on compassionate grounds by Scotland's government. He died in 2012.

In 2012, Facebook announced plans to go public with a stock offering.

In 2013, Caleb Moore, 25, an innovative freestyle snowmobile rider who'd been hurt in a crash at the Winter X Games in Colorado, died at a hospital in Grand Junction.

In 2015, Bobbi Kristina Brown, the daughter of the late singer Whitney Houston, was found unresponsive in a bathtub at her Georgia townhome and was taken to an Atlanta-area hospital. (She died six months later.)

In 2016, Novak Djokovic maintained his perfect streak in six Australian Open finals with a 6-1, 7-5, 7-6 (3) victory over Andy Murray.

In 2017, President Donald Trump nominated Neil Gorsuch, a fast-rising conservative judge, to the U.S. Supreme Court. (Gorsuch would be confirmed in April 2017 by a 54-45 vote.)

In 2018, much of the world was treated to a rare triple lunar treat - a total lunar eclipse combined with a particularly close full moon that was also the second full moon of the month.

In 2020, the United States declared a public health emergency over the new coronavirus, and President Donald Trump signed an order to temporarily bar entry to foreign nationals, other than immediate family of U.S. citizens, who had traveled in China within the preceding 14 days.

In 2023, a New Mexico district attorney filed involuntary manslaughter charges against actor Alec Baldwin and a weapons specialist in the fatal shooting of a cinematographer on the set of the Western movie "Rust." (Prosecutors later dropped the charges, but on Jan. 19, 2024, Baldwin was indicted by a grand jury on a charge of involuntary manslaughter. )

Today's birthdays: Composer Philip Glass is 87. Princess Beatrix of the Netherlands, the former queen regent, is 86. Former U.S. Rep. Dick Gephardt, D-Mo., is 83. Blues singer-musician Charlie Musselwhite is 80. Actor Glynn Turman is 77. Baseball Hall of Famer Nolan Ryan is 77. Actor Jonathan Banks is 77. Singer-musician Harry Wayne Casey (KC and the Sunshine Band) is 72. Rock singer John Lydon is 67. Actor Kelly Lynch is 65. Actor Anthony LaPaglia is 65. Singer-musician Lloyd Cole is 63. Rock musician Al Jaworski (Jesus Jones) is 58. Actor Minnie Driver is 54. Actor Portia de Rossi is 51. Actor-comedian Bobby Moynihan is 47. Actor Kerry Washington is 47. Bluegrass singer-musician Becky Buller is 45. Singer Justin Timberlake is 43. Actor Tyler Ritter is 39. Country singer Tyler Hubbard (Florida Georgia Line) is 37. Folk-rock singer-musician Marcus Mumford (Mumford and Sons) is 37. Actor Joel Courtney is 28.