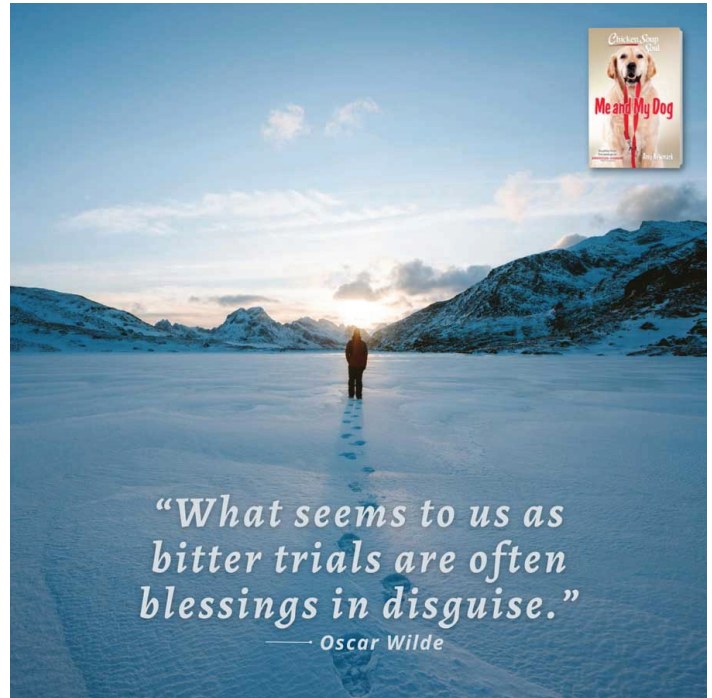


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**Groton Daily Independent**  
**PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445**  
**Paul's Cell/Text: 605-397-7460**



## Wednesday, Feb. 7

Senior Menu: Breaded pork cutlets, creamy noodles, broccoli and cauliflower blend frosted brownie, fruit, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Biscuits.

School Lunch: Taco burgers, tater tots.

Groton Chamber Meeting, Noon at City Hall

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

Emmanuel Lutheran: Sarah Circle, 5 p.m.; Confirmation, 6 p.m.; League, 6:30 p.m.

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

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

## Thursday, Feb. 8

Senior Menu: Ranch chicken breast, sweet potatoes, vegetable capri blend, acini depepi fruit salad, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Breakfast pizza.

School Lunch: Corn dogs, baked beans.

Boys Basketball hosts Redfield: (JH game in Gym at 4 p.m.) C game at 6 p.m., Varsity game at 7:15 p.m. (No JV Game)

**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

In partnership with [smartasset™](#)

A jury yesterday found a Michigan mother guilty of four counts of involuntary manslaughter in connection with her son's 2021 mass shooting at Oxford High School that killed four students and injured seven other people. She faces a maximum penalty of 15 years in prison for each count; her sentencing is scheduled for April 9.

Country music star Toby Keith has died at the age of 62 after a two-year battle with stomach cancer. The artist—who also wrote most of his songs—sold over 40 million records and had 20 No. 1 singles and

nine No. 1 albums throughout his 30-year career.

Four bolts intended to fasten a door plug panel on a Boeing 737 Max 9 were missing before last month's midair Alaska Airlines blowout near Portland, according to a federal report released yesterday. It marks the first official account of the incident, which led to the temporary grounding of over 170 Max 9s and prompted renewed scrutiny of Boeing.

## Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

ESPN, Fox, and Warner Bros. Discovery teaming up on joint sports streaming platform, which will launch later this year and be available on Disney+, Hulu, and Max.

Philadelphia Eagles tapped to play in NFL's first-ever game in Brazil. Americans are estimated to wager \$23.1B on this year's Super Bowl.

Crew member dies following accident on set of Marvel's "Wonder Man" TV series. Gina Carano sues Disney and Lucasfilm over "Mandalorian" firing; the wrongful termination lawsuit is partially funded by X (formerly Twitter).

## Science & Technology

Social media startup Bluesky opens to the public, one year after invite-only launch; backed by Twitter cofounder Jack Dorsey, the network says it has 3 million users.

Engineers develop ultrasensitive technology capable of detecting lead in drinking water at concentrations 1 million times lower than existing tools.

Directed ultrasound waves focused on the brain can reduce pain, new study shows; approach targets the insula, which is believed to be involved in the perception of self-awareness.

## Business & Markets

US stock markets close up (S&P 500 +0.2%, Dow +0.4%, Nasdaq +0.1%) as investors wade through latest earnings reports. Palantir shares up 30% since Monday close following better-than-expected Q4 revenue. Snapshares down 30% in after-hours trading after missing revenue estimates.

WeWork founder and former CEO Adam Neumann seeks to buy back the bankrupt coworking company via his new real-estate startup Flow Global.

Honda recalls 750,000 vehicles in the US to fix defective passenger seat airbag sensor. DocuSign to lay off 6% of workforce, or roughly 400 employees; restructuring expected to cost company between \$28M and \$32M.

## Politics & World Affairs

House votes 216-214 against impeaching Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, with four Republicans joining all Democrats in voting "no". Federal appeals court rules former President Donald Trump can't claim presidential immunity in federal election interference case; delayed trial had been scheduled for March 4.

Former South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley outvoted by "none of these candidates" option in Nevada's GOP primary contest; Trump expected to win the state's Friday caucuses.

Federal officials charge 70 current and former employees of the New York City Housing Authority, alleging wide-ranging scheme to take cash payments in exchange for city contracts.

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## NSU Men's Basketball

### **Northern State Comes Up Short Against Bemidji State**

Bemidji, Minn. – The Northern State University men's basketball team fell to Bemidji State on Tuesday evening, as the Beavers led for a majority of the contest. Four of the Wolves starting five scored in double figures, however the Beavers were efficient shooting over 50.0% from the floor with two 20-plus point scorers.

#### THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 70, BSU 86

Records: NSU 9-14 (7-10 NSIC), BSU 11-12 (7-10 NSIC)

Attendance: 302

#### HOW IT HAPPENED

Northern scored 37 points in the first and 33 points in the second to Bemidji's 45 in the first and 41 in the second

The Wolves shot 44.8% from the floor, 32.0% from the 3-point line, and 90.9% from the foul line

They were out-rebounded 37-26 and tallied nine assists, eight made 3-pointers, three steals, and two blocks

NSU scored 28 points in the paint, nine fastbreak points, eight points off the bench, and six points off offensive rebounds and turnovers

Jackson Moni led the team with 17 points, hitting 6-of-10 from the floor

Andrew Bergan and Josh Dilling led the team off the glass with six rebounds each and added 12 and 11 points respectively

Michael Nhial rounded out the double figure scorers for the Wolves with 13 points

#### NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL LEADERS

Jackson Moni: 17 points, 60.0 field goal%, 5 rebounds

Michael Nhial: 13 points, 3 rebounds

Andrew Bergan: 12 points, 50.0 field goal%, 6 rebounds

Josh Dilling: 11 points, 6 rebounds, 4 assists

#### UP NEXT

Northern State will host Minnesota Crookston at 6 p.m. on Saturday from Wachs Arena. Fans in attendance against the Golden Eagles will receive free rally towels while supplies last. For full game promotions visit [nsuwolves.com/promotions](http://nsuwolves.com/promotions). With five games remaining in the regular season, Northern sits tenth in the NSIC Standings.

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## NSU Women's Basketball

### **Wolves Take Down the Beavers in NSIC Match-Up**

Bemidji, Minn. – A powerful start from the Northern State Women's Basketball team led to a win over Bemidji State, 64-50. An explosive second quarter paved the way for the Wolves, out-scoring the Beavers by 13 points. Morgan Fiedler and Rianna Fillipi notched new career-highs with 19 points and eight steals, respectively.

#### THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 64, BSU 50

Records: NSU 15-7 (12-4 NSIC), BSU 5-16 (2-15 NSIC)

Attendance: 283

#### HOW IT HAPPENED

Northern State racked-up 19 points in the first quarter, 20 in the second, ten in the third, and 15 in the fourth; out-scoring Bemidji State by 13 in the second quarter

They shot 37.7 % from the floor, 23.5 % from the 3-point arc, and 77.8 % from the free throw line

The Wolves tallied 33 rebounds, 34 points in the paint, 16 points off of turnovers, 11 fast break points, 11 assists, and nine second chance points

Morgan Fiedler notched a career-high game with 19 points along with shooting 63.6 % from the floor and 50.0 % from the 3-point arc

Rianna Fillipi and Madelyn Bragg both hit double digits with 18 and 13 points respectively

In addition, Fillipi dished out a new career-high of eight steals along with a team lead of three assists

Alayna Benike grabbed seven rebounds to lead the team along with seven points

#### NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

Morgan Fiedler: 19 points (career-high), 3 rebounds, 63.6 field goal %

Rianna Fillipi: 18 points, 8 steals (career-high), 3 assists, 2 rebounds

Madelyn Bragg: 13 points, 3 rebounds, 3 steals

#### UP NEXT

Northern State returns home to take on Minnesota Crookston to close out the week. Tip-off time is set for 4 p.m. on Saturday, January 10th from Wachs Arena against the Golden Eagles.



## The Life of JoAnn Krueger



JoAnn Krueger, 82 of Aberdeen SD, passed away February 4, 2024, at Mother Joseph Manor, Aberdeen while under hospice care due to health complications stemming from diabetes and other factors.

A Private family Memorial Service will be held. Arrangements are being handled by Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel in Groton SD.

"Netta" JoAnn Wilson was born January 9, 1942, in Miller SD (St. Lawrence, SD), to John A. and Gladys (Howard) Wilson. JoAnn was the youngest of 5 children, and when she was still a baby/toddler her brothers were overseas serving their county during WWII.

JoAnn grew up on a rural farm in Hand County SD, graduating from Miller High School. Although she was known to her nieces and nephews as their "Feisty Aunt JoAnn", with them, she had more of a sibling relationship, due to them all being of similar ages and growing up together.

JoAnn graduated High School in 1960 and graduated from Northern State University (Northern State Teachers College) in 1964 with a B.S. Degree in Education and a Minor in Art. After graduation she taught in a rural country school in

Hand County and later taught various grades and curriculum in Waubay SD until her retirement in 2003.

JoAnn was united in marriage to Richard Krueger, on March 7, 1970, at Fort Sill, OK. JoAnn was a stay-at-home mom, while her husband was serving in Vietnam and up until all her children were school age, at which time she began teaching full time again. She taught for the Waubay School district for 28 years and taught elementary, middle school and HS Art. In 1986, JoAnn was awarded the SD Social Studies Teacher of the Year Award. She was an avid lover of History, but particularly American History and the Civil War.

Richard and JoAnn lived and raised their family in Groton SD for most of their years together. JoAnn especially enjoyed Holidays, going all out on food, and decorating, especially for Christmas. She loved to read, plant summer flowers, vacations often revolved around visiting prominent historical locations. They visited their youngest son Scott and his family at most if not all his various Army duty locations. She enjoyed attending her grandkids events from T-ball games to college functions up until her health began to decline in recent years. JoAnn was very tender-hearted toward animals and loved all the various families fur babies over the years.

After retirement, JoAnn spent many years judging student submissions at the regional level for SD National History Day. JoAnn was also an active member of numerous service groups over the years, most recently (PEO), Eastern Star and United Methodist Women.

JoAnn is preceded in death by her parents, her sister Dorothy (Bill) Nolz, Brothers George (Mary Jean and Mary Jane), Marvin (Edith) and Howard (Lucille) Wilson.

Celebrating her life are her husband Richard, her 3 children, Tracy Roesch (Aberdeen SD); Todd (Lisbon ND); Scott (Deni) (Anchorage AK); 8 Grandchildren, Sean Crawford (Jenna) Fort Leavenworth KS, Chase Roesch (Aberdeen SD), Kaelie Krueger (Fargo, ND), Jordan Roesch (Denver CO), Fiain Uir (Richland WA), Reagan Krueger (Fargo ND), Tori Krueger (Fargo ND), and Cade Krueger (Lincoln NE), Brother-in-Law Doug (Rose) Krueger (Alberta MN), Curtis Krueger (Brownwood TX), Ronald (Jill) Krueger (Groton SD); along with numerous nieces, nephews, and cousins.

Condolences may be sent to Richard Krueger, 918 Arbor Lane #50, Aberdeen, South Dakota, 57401.

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**Team Gladiators - (Garrett Schultz, Jameson Penning)** After qualifiers, the Gladiators finished in 5th. They came in the tournament confident in their new design and it showed! They won their semi-final & quarter final matches and made it to the finals! They missed on winning the tournament with their alliance partners from Valley City, ND, but are excited about the upcoming 2 tournaments for the season. (Courtesy Photo)

## Robotics at Valley City

Each tournament our teams are showing improvement and it's exciting to see! Our latest tournament took our Groton team to Valley City, ND. It allows us to play against teams we normally don't play for the experience. 14 Teams were at this tournament.

Robotics has many facets to it... however we all should be proud of these kids. North Dakota teams don't typically shake hands at the ends of rounds, but Groton Robotics, knowing that's what sportsmanship is all about, stepped up and did it and made this consistent practice a standard after every match. They did this all on their own...

Performance matters.... The character they showed.... priceless.

### Future Tournaments/Events:

February 10th - School of Mines, Rapid City, SD

February 24th - State - Harrisburg, SD

March 7th - Field Trip to 3M



**Team Galaxy - (Illyanna Dallaire and Axel Warrington)** After qualifiers, Galaxy ended in 3rd place out of 14! With 2 team members absent, they fought hard and still managed to make it into the semi-finals, just missing the finals. (Courtesy Photo)



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**Team G-Force (Haden Harder, Connor Kroll & Grant Cleveland)** G-Force ranked 10th after qualifiers. They got to quarterfinals but missed out on going further. They have recently done multiple modifications to their robot to improve its functionality; it will be exciting to see how they do at our future tournaments. (Courtesy Photo)



**Team Gearheads (Evangeline Grant, Kira Clocksene and Logan Clocksene)** The Gearheads ranked 11th at the tournament after qualifiers. They got to quarter finals, but missed out from going forward, actually losing to Team Galaxy as one of the opposing teams they were playing against! (Courtesy Photo)



ROSEHILL  
CHURCH

## Women's Gathering

# IF: 2024

IF2024.COM



12099 Rose Hill Road | February 23, 2024 | 6 - 10 pm  
Langford, South Dakota | February 24, 2024 | 9 am - 4:30 pm



## Flags at Half-Staff Statewide in Honor of Chief Deputy Ken Prorok

PIERRE, S.D. – Today, Governor Kristi Noem ordered that flags be flown at half-staff statewide from sunrise until sunset on Thursday February 8, 2024, in honor of Moody County Sheriff's Office Chief Deputy Ken Prorok, who was killed in the line of duty on February 2.

"We are grateful for the life and service of Chief Deputy Prorok – he is a true hero," said Governor Noem. "My prayers are with Chief Deputy Prorok's family, friends, and the entire community."

Visitation for Chief Deputy Prorok will be from 5:00-8:00pm CT on Wednesday February 7 at the Chester Area High School Gymnasium (101 2nd Ave, Chester, SD, 57016). Funeral services will be held at 1:00pm CT on Thursday February 8 at Dakota Prairie Playhouse (1205 Washing Ave N, Madison, SD, 57042).



## Let Freedom Fly International Airshow to Soar Over Pierre, South Dakota, in a Spectacular Debut Event

Pierre, South Dakota – 2/1/2024 The skies above Pierre Regional Airport are set to come alive with the thunderous roar of engines and breathtaking aerobatic displays as the Let Freedom Fly International Airshow takes center stage on May 25th and 26th, 2024. Organized by a dedicated team of local aviation enthusiasts, this marks the first-ever airshow in Pierre, South Dakota, promising an unforgettable experience for attendees of all ages.

Pierre City Commissioner Jamie Huizenga expressed the community's excitement about the event, stating, "The Let Freedom Fly International Airshow is a momentous occasion for Pierre. This thrilling spectacle not only brings an exhilarating entertainment experience to our residents on Memorial Day weekend, but also highlights the vibrant spirit and patriotism of our community. We anticipate a weekend filled with awe and amazement as the skies above Pierre dazzle our citizens with extraordinary performances."

The preliminary airshow lineup boasts an impressive array of talent, including local favorite Jim Peitz, flying the iconic P51D Mustang "Dakota Kid II" as well as his fan favorite aerobatic F33C Bonanza. Other stellar performers include air race pilot and entertainer Vicky Benzing in a Boeing PT-17 Stearman, Matt Younkin showcasing the beauty and power of his twin-engine Beech 18, and Bill Stein thrashing the sky his Edge 540 aerobatic monoplane. The US Marine Corps will awe and inspire with their MV-22 Osprey demo. Additional military and civilian performers are yet to be announced, promising an exciting program for aviation enthusiasts and families alike.

Jim Peitz, owner of Mustang Aviation in Pierre and renowned airshow performer, is managing the airshow operations. Peitz expressed his enthusiasm, stating, "As a pilot and member of this community, I am honored to be part of the Let Freedom Fly International Airshow. Bringing together such a diverse and talented lineup of performers is a testament to the growing aviation culture in Pierre. This event will undoubtedly create lasting memories for everyone in attendance."

In addition to the thrilling aerial displays, the airshow will feature one of the largest displays of vintage military aircraft ever seen in the region, both on the ground and in the air, providing a unique opportunity for attendees to witness the rich history of aviation.

The Let Freedom Fly International Airshow is made possible through the generous support of the City of Pierre and numerous local businesses. Proceeds from the event will be donated to the Pierre United Way, supporting various local charities and initiatives.

Ticket information for the Let Freedom Fly International Airshow will be posted soon on the official event website: <https://lffairshow.org>. Fans are encouraged to sign up for the show's Flight Crew newsletter on the website to get the first notices of breaking news as more details become available. Fans are also invited to follow and share on Facebook and Instagram at "lffairshow".

## Jerauld County Fatal Accident

What: Car vs. Pedestrian fatal accident

Where: SD Hwy 34, mile marker 303, 10 miles west of Wessington Springs, SD

When: 7:58 a.m., Friday, January 26, 2024

Driver 1: Kindra Lea Wolter, female, 20, from Wessington Springs, SD, no injuries

Vehicle 1: 2016 Ford Fusion

Pedestrian 1: Female, 12, from Wessington Springs, SD, fatal injuries

Jerauld County, S.D.- A 12-year-old Wessington Springs, South Dakota girl passed away this morning resulting from injuries sustained in a January 26 accident.

Preliminary information indicates Kindra Lea Wolter, the driver of a 2016 Ford Fusion was traveling westbound on SD Hwy 34 about 10 miles west of Wessington Springs, SD in heavy fog. An eastbound school bus was stopped in the opposite lane to pick up a student. As Wolter approached, the flashing lights on the bus became more visible and she hit the brakes, sliding on the icy road. At the same time, a 12-year-old student was crossing the street to board the bus and was struck by the Ford Fusion.

She was transported to a nearby hospital with serious, life-threatening injuries and later transferred to a Sioux Falls hospital where she succumbed to her injuries.

The South Dakota Highway Patrol is investigating the accident. All information released so far is only preliminary.

The Highway Patrol is an agency of the South Dakota Department of Public Safety.



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### **Drunken drivers who kill parents could soon face child support obligations**

**BY: JOHN HULT - FEBRUARY 6, 2024 4:05 PM**

Inebriated drivers who kill parents with their vehicles would be on the hook for child support under a bill that cleared the state House of Representatives 67-0 Tuesday afternoon.

House Bill 1195, from Rep. Kadyne Wittman, D-Sioux Falls, is one of several similar bills debated in statehouses across the U.S. in recent years.

Wittman's bill would allow judges to order child support payments in vehicular homicide cases when the victims are parents. A civil court judgment against the same defendant would offset the court-ordered child support costs in a criminal case.

Payments would pause for defendants while they're in prison if they're unable to pay, but the total cost of child support would remain for defendants until paid in full, even after the child turns 18.

The House Judiciary Committee passed the bill unanimously on Friday morning.

The legislation, known as "Bentley's Law," was first passed in Tennessee in 2023. It has been enacted in Texas, Maine and Kentucky, and introduced in more than 20 other states.

Arizona is among the states debating the measure. One Republican state representative from Scottsdale named Alex Kolodin expressed concern that the child support provision could make it more difficult for parents to be paid by insurance companies.

The "doctrine of double recovery" would keep parents who collect insurance payments after a death by vehicular homicide from also collecting child support, Kolodin said. The Arizona bill nonetheless passed through a House of Representatives committee, where its sponsor pledged to amend the bill as needed to address concerns about the potential interplay of insurance awards and criminal sentences.

That particular issue was not part of Tuesday's House floor debate in Pierre. Wittman offered an amendment to the bill on the House floor to clarify that the payments would be classified as "restitution" and not child support.

The bill "sends a powerful message" about drunken driving and the importance of supporting victims, Wittman said.

— *The Arizona Mirror's Leah Britton contributed to this report*

*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.*



## Mandatory life without parole for raping children passes House, moves to Senate

BY: JOHN HULT - FEBRUARY 6, 2024 4:01 PM

The state House of Representatives endorsed a bill that would require sentences of life without parole for people convicted of raping young children.

The version of House Bill 1192 passed Tuesday afternoon was less severe than the original. Rep. Ben Krohmer, R-Mitchell, had aimed to open up death sentences for such offenders, but the House Judiciary Committee amended it before endorsing it 11-0.

The current penalty for the rape of a child younger than 13 is up to life in prison with the possibility of parole and a possible \$50,000 fine. That's a Class C felony, on par with first-degree manslaughter or aggravated kidnapping.

The change in HB 1192's amended form would move first-degree rape into the category of Class B felony, where life without parole is a mandatory sentence. First- and second-degree murder charges fall under that felony class. First-degree murder is Class A, which is the only class where the death penalty is possible.

"This bill seeks to punish and deter one of the most heinous crimes imaginable," Krohmer said on the House floor.

No one else spoke in support of the bill, nor did anyone speak in opposition. It passed 67-0 and now moves to the Senate.

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

## Lawmakers move to take back \$7.5 million from failed SDSU dairy plan

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - FEBRUARY 6, 2024 3:07 PM

PIERRE — A legislative budget committee endorsed a bill Tuesday that would repeal \$7.5 million in state funding for South Dakota State University to construct a new dairy research and training facility.

The lawmakers on the state House Appropriations Committee approved the repeal 7-2.

The original bill, which passed in 2021, was intended to support the development of a state-of-the-art dairy facility at SDSU in Brookings, replacing outdated infrastructure. It required the university to raise matching funds.

SDSU President Barry Dunn told the committee that the university struggled to raise the money. He said SDSU could only raise \$1.3 million.

"I'm very grateful to those who supported the project," Dunn said. He said \$500,000 came from the dairy industry, another \$500,000 from a private individual, and the remainder from numerous others.

Dunn said inflation increased the construction costs and made the original plan financially unfeasible. He said estimates now range from \$28 million for a smaller facility to about \$50 million for the original plan.

"Of course, those numbers dramatically exceed the \$7.5 million authorized by the state," Dunn said.

Dunn outlined a new strategy for the university's dairy program. It involves collaboration with nearby dairies rather than constructing a new on-campus facility. The approach aims to sustain the university's dairy program without the burden of an expensive new building.

Those plans are still pending, but Dunn said he is "very confident" SDSU will make that happen.

Some SDSU dairy students testified against the repeal, emphasizing the importance of an improved on-campus facility for the program's success.

Jacob Schaefer, a senior dairy production major at SDSU, requested the budget committee allow the

university to keep the \$7.5 million and use it to construct a scaled-down facility.

Dunn acknowledged the current on-campus facility is "on the verge of not being able to use," but added that "enrollments have been dropping dramatically" in SDSU's dairy program. He said only 23 students are currently enrolled; therefore, the cost of the new dairy facility could not be justified.

Others argued that a new facility could attract more interest.

Milk production in South Dakota totaled 395 million pounds in December, the most recent month of available data. There were 207,000 milk cows in the state.

The industry has experienced significant consolidation in recent years, trending toward fewer and larger farms. The number of licensed U.S. dairy herds fell by more than half between 2002 and 2019, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

*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.*

## **COMMENTARY**

### **Noem's border aid comes with personal costs for South Dakotans** by DANA HESS

During a rare joint session of the Legislature, Gov. Kristi Noem gave lawmakers an accounting of her recent trip to the "warzone" at the Texas-Mexico border. She was soon caught up in a different kind of accounting amid revelations that South Dakota taxpayers are going to be on the hook for the cost of sending the state's National Guard troops to Texas.

South Dakota's National Guard has been deployed to the Texas border three times. Once at the behest of the federal government, which paid for that trip. Noem has sent troops twice, at a cost of at least \$1.3 million which has been paid through the state's Emergency and Disaster Fund. A Tennessee benefactor also kicked in \$1 million to pay for one of the deployments.

The same week as Noem's speech to the Legislature, Kristi Turman of the Department of Public Safety testified to lawmakers that all states belong to the Emergency Management Assistance Compact, a mutual aid agreement. Turman told legislators that all states that owed South Dakota after requesting aid through EMAC had paid up. All except Texas.

A Texas official told South Dakota Searchlight that the mission of protecting the southern border is so important that states that send aid should not expect to be reimbursed.

At a press conference, Noem disputed the notion that states always pay each other back for aid received through EMAC. She also revealed that she knew all along that South Dakota would have to pick up the tab for sending its National Guard troops to Texas.

For some reason, Noem has chosen the southern border as her mission, a mission that has left South Dakota taxpayers on the hook for more than \$1 million.

Noem's latest trip to Texas comes at a time when Donald Trump has all but sewn up the GOP presidential nomination. That has increased speculation about who he could choose as his running mate. Noem is often listed among the vice presidential hopefuls. Certainly her latest trip to the Texas border and enthusiasm for deploying the South Dakota National Guard will serve to burnish her conservative credentials and keep her on Trump's list of potential running mates.

As Noem declares her backing for Texas, it's easy to wonder who has the backs of National Guard members and their families. Some of them may be thinking about spending some time this winter where it's warm, but a Texas deployment isn't likely their first choice.

Members of the Guard know that deployment is an option when they sign up. Usually the commercials seeking recruits show the National Guard rescuing their friends and neighbors from natural disasters, not stringing razor wire along the Rio Grande.

From the past deployments to Texas, it's apparent that Noem is OK with South Dakota taxpayers footing the bill. However, there's another price that's paid by South Dakotans during these deployments — a human price.

That price is paid by every mother or father who gets the unexpected, 24-seven pleasure of being a single parent during the deployment.

That price is paid by employers who must be patient enough and flexible enough to operate short-handed during the deployment.

That price is paid by every Guard member who misses out on a raise or a promotion during their absence from work during the deployment.

That price is paid by the children of Guard members whose parents miss birthday parties, school activities and sporting events during the deployment.

Gov. Noem has the power to deploy the state's National Guard as she sees fit. She has proven that. If she does it again, let's hope there's some pushback from legislators since it is their constituents who will be footing the bill. Let's also hope that in the future Noem can find some other way to keep her name in the news rather than placing a needless burden on the state's taxpayers and National Guard families.

*Dana Hess spent more than 25 years in South Dakota journalism, editing newspapers in Redfield, Milbank and Pierre. He's retired and lives in Brookings, working occasionally as a freelance writer.*

## SD's Johnson votes yes, but impeachment of Homeland Security secretary fails

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA - FEBRUARY 6, 2024 6:32 PM

WASHINGTON — The U.S. House failed to impeach Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas on Tuesday night, a stunning defeat for the Republican-led push to impeach a Biden administration Cabinet secretary.

All Democrats present and four Republicans voted against the two articles of impeachment. The vote was 214-216.

The GOP lawmakers to vote against impeachment were Reps. Ken Buck of Colorado, Tom McClintock of California, Mike Gallagher of Wisconsin and Blake Moore of Utah.

Moore supported impeachment but switched his vote at the request of Republican leadership, according to Georgia Republican Marjorie Taylor Greene, a leading advocate of impeaching Mayorkas.

Moore's vote against the articles of impeachment allows House leaders to try again next week. Majority Leader Steve Scalise, a Louisiana Republican, missed Tuesday's vote but is expected to return next week.

South Dakota Republican Dusty Johnson voted for impeachment.

After the failed vote, White House spokesman Ian Sams urged House Republicans to drop their impeachment push and join bipartisan talks to address immigration policy.

"Clearly there is bipartisan agreement that this baseless, unconstitutional impeachment stunt should fail," he said in a statement.

"House Republicans ought to realize that extreme political stunts like this are a waste of time, and instead join the President, Secretary Mayorkas, and Republicans and Democrats who want to work together to deliver real solutions that actually strengthen border security."

### GOP drive against Mayorkas

Republicans had for weeks pressed to impeach Mayorkas, saying he violated immigration enforcement laws. Democrats decried the unusual move as politically motivated ahead of the November elections.

"Secretary Mayorkas has explicitly refused to comply with the law," said the chair of the House Homeland Security Committee, Mark Green of Tennessee, who has presided over impeachment efforts. "If your



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refusal to obey the law leads to the death of your fellow citizens, you no longer deserve to keep your job.”

Green has often blamed Mayorkas for the overdose deaths of Americans from fentanyl and other opioids that are smuggled across the southern border.

Republicans charged that Mayorkas has failed to uphold immigration law and has broken public trust.

Democrats argued the Republican criticisms did not reach the constitutional requirement for impeachment, but amounted to gripes over the Biden administration’s policies at the southern border.

The White House said in a statement that the Biden administration opposed the resolution, first introduced by Greene.

“Impeaching Secretary Mayorkas would be an unprecedented and unconstitutional act of political retribution that would do nothing to solve the challenges our Nation faces in securing the border,” the White House said.

## Immigration disagreement roils Congress

The attempted impeachment vote intensified House Republicans’ clash with Democrats and the Biden administration over how to manage the southern border amid an unprecedented amount of migrants. The issue has animated the 2024 presidential election and is core to GOP front-runner Donald Trump’s campaign.

The vote followed Senate Republicans’ decision earlier Tuesday to walk away from a bipartisan immigration deal in the Senate that would overhaul U.S. immigration law and lead to crackdowns on migration. That deal is also tied to the passage of critical aid to Ukraine in its war with Russia.

House Speaker Mike Johnson of Louisiana argued that the immigration deal in the Senate is not harsh enough, and that it would empower the same Cabinet secretary that House Republicans have vowed to impeach.

However, he acknowledged during a Tuesday press conference that not all Republicans would agree to impeach Mayorkas.

“I respect everyone’s views on it,” he said of Republicans who expressed concern over the articles of impeachment.

With the GOP’s razor-thin majority and all Democrats voting not to impeach, Johnson could only afford to lose two Republican votes Tuesday.

## Senate conviction was unlikely

The House vote was on a resolution comprising two articles of impeachment.

The first article of impeachment accused Mayorkas of a “willful and systemic refusal to comply with the law.”

The second article of impeachment accused Mayorkas of a breach of public trust by making false statements during congressional testimony, particularly citing statements by Mayorkas telling lawmakers the border is “secure.”

Had the House voted to impeach, the matter would have gone to the Senate for a trial. A conviction requires a two-thirds vote, which was unlikely in a chamber where Democrats hold a slim majority.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, Democrat of New York, did not give details during a Tuesday press conference on how the Senate would handle a potential impeachment trial.

“Let’s just see what the House first does,” he said.

## Immigration surge

During the House floor debate on the articles of impeachment, Democrats argued that Republicans failed to provide evidence for the high bar of impeachment, and said that GOP lawmakers were appeasing Trump.

House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, Democrat of New York, said that House Republicans had not produced “a shred of evidence” for impeaching Mayorkas.

Maryland Democratic Rep. Jamie Raskin, who was an impeachment manager in the second impeachment of Trump, said that Republicans are going after a Cabinet member who has not committed treason,

bribery or high crimes and misdemeanors.

He said it was ironic that Republicans have been trying to impeach Mayorkas, who has been working for months with the Senate to create a solution to stem the flow of migration at the southern border.

Democrats have also decried Trump's influence on Republicans involved in the immigration debate gripping Capitol Hill, derailing any efforts to reform immigration policy – something Congress hasn't done in nearly 40 years.

"Republicans take their orders from Donald Trump," the top Democrat on the House Homeland Security Committee, Bennie Thompson of Mississippi, said.

He called the efforts to impeach Mayorkas a "sham," and that the articles do not reach the high bar of "high crimes and misdemeanors," which is the standard for impeachment in the Constitution.

"It's a baseless attack on a dedicated public servant," Thompson said.

"Donald Trump does not want a border solution, he wants a border problem to run on," Raskin said.

Green pushed back against Democrats' criticism that there is little evidence for impeachment. He said that his committee has spent a year building evidence that supports the impeachment of Mayorkas.

"The truth is this process has been painstakingly thorough," Green said.

Republicans said that because of the unprecedented number of migrants at the southern border, Mayorkas should be held accountable.

Georgia's Greene, who has rallied for the impeachment of Mayorkas for months, said the secretary is responsible for the "invasion" at the border.

"I argue that breaking our laws is more than just policy differences," she said.

## **Dems call impeachment 'political theater'**

But House Democrats said the impeachment process was deeply flawed and not really about fixing the immigration system, with some noting that Republicans opposed a bipartisan Senate package with border security funding and immigration policy changes.

"I would say it's a clown show, but that would be a disservice to actual working clowns," Jim McGovern, the top Democrat on the House Rules Committee, said.

He said that impeachment should be done after a "grave constitutional offense," not over a policy dispute.

Democratic Rep. Rob Menendez of New Jersey defended Mayorkas, and said that Mayorkas is "operating within a broken immigration system" that Congress has not fixed.

Rep. Teresa Leger Fernandez, Democrat of New Mexico, called the articles of impeachment "political theater," and said Republicans are not working to fix immigration.

"They just blew up a bipartisan deal in the Senate," she said. "They've refused to provide Secretary Mayorkas the resources and legal changes he needs to reform the immigration system so our border is secure."

GOP Rep. Michael Burgess of Texas said that the deal in the Senate does not address border security.

"Immigration reform can come later after border security is established," he said.

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

## **Bleak future for immigration action after U.S. Senate GOP abandons border security deal**

### **Rounds: 'Disappointing' that Trump criticized the proposal**

**BY: JENNIFER SHUTT AND ARIANA FIGUEROA - FEBRUARY 6, 2024 6:16 PM**

WASHINGTON — U.S. Senate Republicans on Tuesday walked away from the bipartisan border security and immigration deal clinched after months of painstaking negotiations, siding with their House colleagues

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and presidential front-runner Donald Trump.

The decision to block the bill released just two days ago not only leaves laws in place that GOP lawmakers say have led to a "crisis" at the southern border, but drags on the stalemate over whether Congress will approve assistance for Ukraine and Israel, which was rolled into the package.

Republicans said months ago that the only way they'd support additional assistance for the two U.S. allies at war was if Democrats worked with them to "secure" the border.

But that requirement fell by the wayside this week after U.S. House Speaker Mike Johnson, a Louisiana Republican, and dozens of GOP lawmakers expressed opposition to the bill that was negotiated by a bipartisan trio of senators.

Johnson instead pushed a standalone bill that only provided aid to Israel — and it was rejected on a Tuesday night vote. The vote was 250-180, including a yes vote from South Dakota Republican Dusty Johnson, but the measure failed to reach the required two-thirds majority.

Oklahoma Republican Sen. James Lankford, one of the three senators who spent months negotiating the immigration language in the measure released Sunday, said he believes there will be "significant" ramifications if the GOP completely walks away from the deal he helped write.

Lankford also expressed dismay that some of the lawmakers opposing the package don't actually understand how the proposed changes in immigration law would work.

"That's the part that's disappointing to me," Lankford said. "If you're going to disagree with it, disagree with it based on the facts of the bill, not something that's actually factually not true."

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell said Tuesday it's obvious the full package cannot pass Congress and pressed for assistance to Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan to move forward independently.

"There are other parts of this supplemental that are extremely important as well — Ukraine, Israel, Taiwan," McConnell said. "We still, in my view, ought to tackle the rest of it because it's important. Not that the border isn't important, but we can't get an outcome."

The Kentucky Republican declined to comment if Trump was responsible for blocking the package after months of complex talks, saying that the situation has evolved.

"I followed the instructions of my conference, who were insisting that we tackle this in October," McConnell said. "It's actually our side that wanted to tackle the border issue. We started it."

"But as I said earlier, things have changed over the last four months and it's been made perfectly clear by the speaker that he wouldn't take it up even if we sent it to him," McConnell said. "And so I think that's probably why most of our members think we ought to have opposition tomorrow ... and then move on with the rest of the supplemental."

The procedural vote on the package, which requires at least 60 senators to advance toward final passage, is scheduled for Wednesday.

## **Biden blames Trump**

President Joe Biden on Tuesday expressed frustration that Republicans won't support the immigration deal because of current GOP front-runner Trump, who is stoking fears of immigration as a central campaign message.

"Because Donald Trump thinks it's bad for him politically," Biden said. "Look, I understand the former president is desperately trying to stop this bill because he's not interested in solving the border problem, he wants a political issue to run against me on."

Biden warned that if the bill is not sent to his desk to be signed into law, "the American people are going to know why it failed."

"Every day between now and November, the American people are going to know that the only reason the border is not secure is Donald Trump and his MAGA Republican friends," Biden said.

Biden said that getting aid to Ukraine was critical, but declined to say he would support placing the immigration proposals into separate legislation to free up passage of the supplemental.

"We need it all," Biden said.



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Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, a New York Democrat, said he's willing to give GOP senators additional time to read through the bill and prepare amendments to the package.

But Schumer rebuked their decision to block the legislation from moving forward, saying Republicans are unwilling to resist Trump's "bullying, even though they know he's wrong."

Schumer didn't forecast whether he would advance a standalone aid bill for Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan after Wednesday's vote on the full package.

"We are going to vote on the bill tomorrow. The bill that's before us. We're going to move further forward. Stay tuned," Schumer said.

## Major changes in immigration law

The Senate deal brokered a significant overhaul of immigration law, such as raising the bar for migrants to claim asylum, creating a temporary procedure to shut down the border during active times and clarifying the president's authority for humanitarian parole programs, among other changes.

Michigan Democratic Sen. Gary Peters, chairman of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, said Republicans' newfound opposition to the border security and immigration policy changes they wanted in the first place will "absolutely" impact voters' thinking heading toward the November elections.

"This is a significant piece of legislation to deal with border security and Republicans are rejecting it," Peters said. "And that will come back to haunt them."

Turning their backs on the bipartisan compromise, Peters said, will have "big implications in all states, not just border states."

Connecticut Sen. Chris Murphy, whom Democrats tapped to negotiate the immigration deal, said that it was "outrageous" that Republicans were dumping the supplemental package and immigration reforms "because Donald Trump asked them (to)."

"Republicans decided that they would be better off preserving chaos at the border, as an election issue, instead of solving the problem," Murphy said.

"We reached a compromise that would actually fix the problem, and it turns out Republicans don't want to fix the problem, they want to leave the issue of immigration open as a political agenda item to exploit."

South Dakota Republican Sen. Mike Rounds said it was "disappointing" to him and many other GOP senators that Trump criticized the proposal in the way he did.

"There is no such thing as a perfect bill," said Rounds, who said on X on Tuesday night he planned to oppose it.

"With the ability to actually offer amendments, a lot of us had hoped that we would get this to the point where it would be a better bill than what it would be today," Rounds said. "And then we could move forward and hopefully the House might even consider it with some additional amendments on it. And that's what our goal was."

## House votes on bill for standalone Israel aid

While McConnell now wants to see Congress move additional military and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan in the absence of a larger package, House Republican leaders had already put their own proposal on the floor.

Their bill, which was rejected on a 250-180 vote on Tuesday night, proposed \$17.6 billion in aid for Israel as well as other American interests in the Middle East. It didn't include emergency aid for any other countries.

Fourteen Republicans voted against the bill, while 46 Democrats voted for its passage.

House GOP leaders put the bill up for a vote under what's known as suspension of the rules, a maneuver that requires a two-thirds vote for passage. That is why it didn't pass, even though it had a majority of the votes.

The so-called suspension calendar is typically used for broadly bipartisan, noncontroversial bills, like renaming a post office. But House Republicans have increasingly used it to pass more consequential bills.

Legislation brought up under suspension of the rules is not subject to amendment.

House debate on the bill fell largely along partisan lines with Republicans arguing the Israel-only aid bill was the best way to help that country in its ongoing war against Hamas following the Oct. 7 attacks and Democrats saying Congress must strive to help other allies as well.

The Biden administration on Monday issued a veto threat against that bill, saying in a Statement of Administration Policy it "is another cynical political maneuver."

"The security of Israel should be sacred, not a political game," the Biden administration wrote.

"The Administration strongly opposes this ploy which does nothing to secure the border, does nothing to help the people of Ukraine defend themselves against Putin's aggression, fails to support the security of American synagogues, mosques, and vulnerable places of worship, and denies humanitarian assistance to Palestinian civilians, the majority of whom are women and children."

House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries wrote in a "Dear Colleague" letter that Democrats would not support the standalone legislation.

"Unfortunately, the standalone legislation introduced by House Republicans over the weekend, at the eleventh hour without notice or consultation, is not being offered in good faith," he wrote.

"Rather, it is a nakedly obvious and cynical attempt by MAGA extremists to undermine the possibility of a comprehensive, bipartisan funding package that addresses America's national security challenges in the Middle East, Ukraine, the Indo-Pacific region and throughout the world."

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

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

## Trump 'did not engage in insurrection' on Jan. 6, new U.S. House resolution claims

**BY: ASHLEY MURRAY - FEBRUARY 6, 2024 4:19 PM**

WASHINGTON — In a meandering press conference Tuesday that repeated false 2020 election fraud claims, downplayed well-documented violence and name-called journalists, far-right U.S. House members defended former President Donald Trump against any role he may have played in the Jan. 6, 2021 attack on the U.S. Capitol.

Rep. Matt Gaetz of Florida and several co-sponsors convened the briefing to announce a non-binding resolution declaring "former President Donald J. Trump did not engage in insurrection or rebellion against the United States, or give aid or comfort to the enemies thereof."

"We believe Congress has a unique role in making that declaration," Gaetz said during the one-hour event featuring numerous member speeches. A list posted Tuesday by Gaetz showed 65 co-sponsors, among the 219 Republicans in the House.

Gaetz introduced the one-paragraph sense of Congress just two days before the U.S. Supreme Court is scheduled to hear arguments over whether Colorado officials can bar Trump's name from the 2024 ballot because he allegedly violated Sec. 3 of the Constitution's 14th Amendment, referred to as the insurrection clause.

"It's not the job of the states and especially not the job of some bureaucrats in Colorado to make this assessment and interfere with the rights of voters to cast their vote for the candidate of their choice," Gaetz said.

The event included members of leadership like House GOP Conference Chair Elise Stefanik of New York, who said it is "a fact" that Trump didn't engage in an insurrection.

"Rogue far-left Democrat operatives are attempting to use this lie to illegally take President Trump off

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the ballot," she said.

## Colorado Supreme Court ruling

The Colorado State Supreme Court on Dec. 19 overturned a lower court's decision that the former president and current GOP front-runner should be on the ballot, setting the stage for a high-profile battle in the U.S. Supreme Court.

Similar lawsuits to keep Trump off the ballot failed in several other states, including Maine, Alaska, and South Carolina.

The likely 2024 Republican presidential nominee faces 91 criminal charges, including a federal indictment that details Trump's actions leading up to and on Jan. 6, 2021.

Among the alleged actions: orchestrating fake elector schemes in several states and pressuring former Vice President Mike Pence to stop Congress from certifying the 2020 presidential election results.

Rep. Eric Burlison of Missouri said during Tuesday's press conference that protesters flocked to the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6 because they were frustrated "not just at what they saw happening in the election process, but because they were frustrated with you, the media," referring to reporters in the room.

"When I was in the Missouri Capitol (building), we had protesters come in all the time. We would call what happened on that day (Jan. 6), a Wednesday in the Missouri Capitol, OK. We welcome free speech," said Burlison, who was one of many to deliver remarks Tuesday.

Attacks on the news media were a hallmark of Trump's 2016 presidential campaign rallies and have since become a common refrain from the former president and his supporters.

Rep. Diane Harshbarger of Tennessee said Trump and his supporters were "vilified for doing nothing more than exercising their First Amendment rights."

A wealth of video documentation shows protesters at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6 breaking windows, attacking police officers and rummaging through lawmakers' papers and property.

The Department of Justice has arrested more 1,000 Jan. 6 protesters in the past three years; nearly 800 have been sentenced for criminal activity.

Harshbarger said the Justice Department has been "weaponized" and accused journalists of reporting "half-truths or no truths at all."

After citing Christian scripture, Harshbarger said: "So my message to the American people is simple: Armor up and get ready for the spiritual battle ahead, because it's going to be a battle."

## 'A campaign of disinformation'

Criticism swiftly followed the press conference as advocacy organizations said GOP lawmakers lied about what happened on Jan. 6.

"Make no mistake: The violence that took place on January 6, 2021 was an insurrection," read a statement from the Not Above the Law coalition representing 150 organizations.

"Despite attempts by Matt Gaetz and his fellow MAGA extremists to rewrite history through a campaign of disinformation, they cannot erase the fact that this brutal attack left five people dead, over one hundred law enforcement officers injured, and Donald Trump and his allies facing multiple criminal charges for their involvement."

In a Jan. 22 email to fellow House Republicans, Gaetz staff members urged colleagues to sign onto the resolution, calling it a "no-brainer."

"(C)ontroversial only to the most extreme of the far-left – and a statement of fact that every single Republican can be expected to support. If the left has the courage to interfere in our elections and weaponize the judicial system against our brethren, we must have the courage to express what is self-evident," read the email signed by Gaetz's Legislative Counsel John Wilson.

At the time, Gaetz's office said 27 Republicans had co-signed the resolution.

House Speaker Mike Johnson's office did not respond Tuesday afternoon to questions on whether he would bring the resolution to the floor for a vote.



Republican Sen. J.D. Vance of Ohio sponsored a companion resolution in the Senate.

Gaetz told reporters that he had been in communication with Johnson, a Louisiana Republican, and Trump about the effort.

When asked Tuesday why House Republicans would focus on a non-binding resolution rather than other efforts, for example seeking a two-thirds congressional override of the insurrection clause, Gaetz responded "The best is yet to come."

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

## Bill to align school bond votes with primary and general elections passes committee

### Committee stalemates on bill aligning school board elections

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - FEBRUARY 6, 2024 2:05 PM

PIERRE – In an effort to increase voter turnout and engagement, lawmakers on the House Local Government Committee passed a bill that would require bond votes for school districts be held the same day as primary or general elections in South Dakota.

The bill passed with a 9-3 vote and now goes to the House of Representatives.

The committee tied 6-6 several times on votes to reject or approve a similar bill that would align school board elections with primary or general elections, finally deferring the bill until its next meeting when the 13th member of the committee will be present.

Opponents argued that the bills erode local control for school districts.

School districts issue bonds to raise financing, typically for construction projects. The bond bill would decrease a district's flexibility in introducing bond votes in a timely manner or amending and reintroducing them after a failed vote, opponents said.

The other bill would move school board elections to the middle of summer, while contracts are being negotiated, or after the start of the school year, which could make it difficult for new members to adjust to their role, argued Jessica Filler, director of policy and legal services for the Associated School Boards of South Dakota.

"School boards know when the election will be the best fit for them," Filler said.

Prime sponsor Rep. Aaron Aylward, R-Harrisburg, conceded that the switch would erode local control slightly, but said the potential of engaging voters and saving money would be worth it. The Legislative Research Council estimates that aligning bond votes and board elections with primary or general elections would save school districts about \$120,000 every two years.

Most school board elections are held in April and often result in low voter turnout. The Sioux Falls School District, for example, had just over 6% voter turnout in 2023. It reported 5.13% turnout in 2021 and 3.86% in 2019.

The same is true for some bond elections. The Harrisburg School District passed \$90 million in bonds in 2021 and 2022 between two votes, both of which had voter turnout of 5% or less. But Filler countered that two schools saw more than 50% voter turnout last year for bond elections.

Rep. Will Mortenson, R-Fort Pierre, introduced a similar bill in 2022 that would have aligned school district and municipal elections with primary and general elections. The bill passed the House but failed in the Senate.

*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.*

## **Prior sexual assault allegations could become part of rape trials** **Senate panel backs adjustment of evidence rules for criminal cases, rejects for civil cases**

**BY: JOHN HULT - FEBRUARY 6, 2024 11:24 AM**

It would be easier for prosecutors to tell jurors about previous sexual assault allegations in rape trials under the provisions of two bills endorsed by a state Senate panel Tuesday morning.

The bills heard in the Senate Judiciary Committee would amend South Dakota's rules of evidence to allow evidence of prior sexual assaults — including unconvicted sexual assaults — if a judge deems that evidence meaningful for jurors.

Two bills, Senate Bills 97 and 98, would allow such evidence in adult and child sexual assault cases, respectively. The bills came from Sen. Tim Reed, R-Brookings.

The potential evidence in criminal cases could include anything from cases charged but dropped in the past to hearsay accusations from people who heard about prior sexual assaults that were never reported to authorities.

### **Backers: Feds allow 'propensity' evidence**

Supporters pointed to federal rules allowing such evidence, written in the 1990s but never adopted in South Dakota.

Pennington County State's Attorney Lara Roetzel pointed to a defendant convicted in 2014 for the fourth-degree rape of a 15-year-old coworker in her testimony. He was given a suspended imposition of sentence, which clears a conviction from a person's record under a time frame and terms of good behavior set by a judge. In 2018, he was accused of forcibly raping another coworker, but that case wasn't prosecuted, Roetzel said, in part because prosecutors couldn't reference the 2014 crime. Three years later, he was indicted for the rape of an 8-year-old in Lawrence County and on 20 counts of child pornography possession in federal court.

That case shows that a judge ought to be allowed to admit what's known as "propensity" evidence in rape cases, Roetzel said.

"The federal prosecutors are regularly allowed to present this kind of evidence. Our state prosecutors ought to be allowed to use them, as well," she said.

Roetzel argued that sexual assault cases are the only sorts of violent crime trials where the victim's character is regularly called into question.

Roetzel was joined in her support of the bills by representatives from the South Dakota Network Against Family Violence and Sexual Assault and the South Dakota Advocacy Network for Women, as well as other prosecutors and the state Attorney General's Office.

"These are unique cases and this will allow prosecutors the tools they need to prosecute those cases," said Assistant Attorney General Grant Flynn.

The bills would require a 15-day notice to defendants of the intention to tell jurors about prior sexual assaults, and a judge would ultimately decide how much of that evidence would appear before a jury.

"Judges will still do what's known as a balancing test ... it's not going to just come in," Roetzel said.

### **Detractors: Changes tip scales of justice**

Opponents argued that the change would put jurors asked to determine the facts of the case in the position of judging a defendant's character.

"It fundamentally changes the character of a trial from whether a person did what's accused here to whether or not the person is a bad person," said Sen. David Wheeler, R-Huron, a defense lawyer and one of two senators on the committee to oppose both bills.

The issue of hearsay was a key component of opposition testimony from Terra Larson, a lobbyist for the South Dakota Association of Criminal Defense Attorneys.

"You could theoretically have me come in and say, 'Hi, I'm Terra Larson, and I heard from my friend that the defendant raped her,'" Larson said.

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The Supreme Court of South Dakota had the opportunity to adopt the federal rules on the admission of other sexual assaults during a 2015 review of state rules, but did not do so. Nationally, Larson said, there are concerns from many quarters in the legal community about the impact of the federal rules on defendants' fair trial rights.

Prosecutors can already introduce evidence of other bad acts in some circumstances, Larson said. Further simplifying the process of presenting sexual assault allegations upends protections for defendants facing the possible loss of their freedom through a conviction.

Protections against unverified allegations, she said, "form a fundamental part of American jurisprudence."

The committee sided with Reed on SB 97 and SB 98 and voted to send the bills to the Senate floor. Wheeler and Sen. Mike Rohl, R-Aberdeen, voted against them.

## Civil cases spared from evidence rule changes

A third bill presented Tuesday, SB 149, would have allowed prior sexual assault evidence up to but not including hearsay in civil rape cases. Civil cases have a lower standard of proof than "beyond a reasonable doubt," which is the bar for a conviction in a criminal trial.

The committee rejected that bill unanimously. The 6-0 vote came after testimony from an insurance industry lobbyist cited the civil rape trials of former presidents Bill Clinton and Donald Trump and the confirmation hearing of Brett Kavanaugh as proof that allowing unverified accusations would create the dangers of coordinated pile-ons for prominent people.

Civil cases are too loose to open the doors of admissible evidence even wider, said Doug Abraham, representing the American Property Casualty Insurance Association.

"It doesn't take much of an imagination to envision a situation where multiple individuals conspire against, particularly a well heeled individual ... to shift the scales of justice," Abraham said.

Sen. Reed's amendment to make clear that hearsay evidence wouldn't be applicable in civil trials wasn't enough to overcome the committee's concerns.

Sen. Brent Hoffman, R-Hartford, asked Reed about verbiage. All three bills reference previous sexual assaults "committed" by a person.

"One could assume that 'committed' is synonymous with 'conviction,'" Hoffman said.

He asked Flynn if the attorney general's office had taken a position on that, as Hoffman said the two terms are significantly different.

The office had not, Flynn said. Such interpretations would likely come from the courts.

"I agree with you that the language is open to those two interpretations," Flynn said. "As you obviously know, it's up to the court to tell us what the laws say. This body passes laws, the court reads them, interprets them and tells us exactly what they mean."

Flynn said he "would certainly be willing to help the committee" understand the legal definition of "committed" as applied in the federal courts, but that he didn't have a better immediate answer.

Hoffman said he was "troubled" by that, and suggested that he might feel differently about his "yes" votes on SB 97 and SB 98 as a result.

"I'm not voting next week based on a review that the attorney general might do in the future," Hoffman said. "I'm expected to vote now on the language I see before me. It troubles me in view of what I heard on the first two bills."

The committee did not move to reconsider those first two votes, though. Those two bills were sent to the Senate floor with a "do pass" recommendation.

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



## Trump claim of presidential immunity turned down by federal appeals court in D.C.

BY: JACOB FISCHLER AND ASHLEY MURRAY - FEBRUARY 6, 2024 9:38 AM

WASHINGTON — Former President Donald Trump can be prosecuted for charges he schemed to overturn the 2020 election, a three-judge panel of a federal appeals court ruled Tuesday, rejecting Trump's argument he was immune from criminal prosecution for any alleged conduct during his presidential term.

In a unanimous opinion, the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals panel denied Trump's request to throw out the federal charges accusing him of lying to and encouraging supporters who turned violent on Jan. 6, 2021.

Trump and his attorneys argued the case should be dismissed because Trump was acting in his official capacity as president and that allowing a president to be sued would have disastrous consequences.

The court found those arguments were "unsupported by precedent, history or the text and structure of the Constitution."

The stakes of the argument were exceptionally high, they wrote, because of the nature of the charges against Trump, which accuse the former president of attempting to subvert a core principle of U.S. democracy.

"We cannot accept former President Trump's claim that a President has unbounded authority to commit crimes that would neutralize the most fundamental check on executive power — the recognition and implementation of election results," they wrote.

A Trump campaign spokesman said Tuesday the former president will appeal the ruling, possibly further delaying Trump's trial while he continues his campaign as the front-runner for the Republican presidential nomination.

"President Trump respectfully disagrees with the DC Circuit's decision and will appeal it in order to safeguard the Presidency and the Constitution," campaign spokesman Steven Cheung said. He did not specify whether the appeal would be to the U.S. Supreme Court or the full circuit court.

The D.C. Circuit panel set a Monday deadline for a notice of appeal.

The panel comprised judges appointed by presidents of both parties.

Republican former President George H.W. Bush appointed Karen LeCraft Henderson. Florence Y. Pan and J. Michelle Childs were appointed by President Joe Biden, a Democrat who is likely to face Trump in the November presidential election.

### Nixon pardon cited

The judges wrote that former presidents have long been understood to be subject to criminal prosecution. President Gerald Ford pardoned his predecessor, Richard Nixon, which both understood as shielding Nixon from criminal indictment related to Watergate, the judges said.

It is also consistent with the Constitution, they wrote.

"It would be a striking paradox if the President, who alone is vested with the constitutional duty to 'take Care that the Laws be faithfully executed,' were the sole officer capable of defying those laws with impunity," they wrote, quoting the Constitution.

They rejected Trump's argument that allowing prosecutions would open the door to harassment of former presidents by an opposing political party, noting that has not happened to the 44 presidents who held office before Trump.

"We conclude that the interest in criminal accountability, held by both the public and the Executive Branch, outweighs the potential risks of chilling Presidential action and permitting vexatious litigation," they wrote.

And in Trump's case the nature of the accusations — which would constitute "an unprecedented assault on the structure of our government" — provide greater reason to allow criminal charges, the judges wrote.

A four-count indictment last year accused Trump of conspiring to overturn the 2020 presidential election.

The indictment accuses Trump of working with a group of co-conspirators to recruit false slates of electors, lying to the public about non-existent determinative election fraud and encouraging supporters to

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obstruct the election certification in a violent attack on the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

Accepting Trump's immunity argument would give presidents "carte blanche to violate the rights of individual citizens to vote and to have their votes count,"

Trump's total immunity claim would place the president beyond the reach of all three branches of government, they wrote.

"We cannot accept that the office of the Presidency places its former occupants above the law for all time thereafter," they wrote.

Henderson, Pan and Childs previewed their skepticism of the executive immunity claims during early January oral arguments with Trump present in the Washington, D.C. courtroom.

Most notably during the tough questioning, Trump attorney D. John Sauer appeared to defend that presidents could be immune from criminal prosecution, even for ordering assassination of political rivals.

Tuesday's appellate decision does not make any determination about the merits of the underlying federal charges accusing Trump of election interference.

Fred Wertheimer, the president of government accountability group Democracy 21, called the matter "the most important criminal case pending against former President Trump."

## Further appeals

The D.C. Circuit order set a Monday deadline for a notice of appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court. That notice would maintain the freeze on pretrial proceedings that has been on hold since Trump appealed a ruling on his immunity claims in December.

The court is not required to take the appeal, but exercising his appellate options will help Trump extend the case, potentially beyond Election Day. Trump and his legal team have not explicitly said it is part of their strategy to delay the case as long as possible, but have taken opportunities to draw out the proceedings.

Trump could also appeal to the full D.C. Circuit, but the court rarely grants such requests and the panel said Tuesday that simply asking for a rehearing would not delay a trial schedule.

The Supreme Court is also "unlikely" to hear an appeal, according to legal experts Norman L. Eisen, Matthew A. Seligman and Joshua Kolb, who wrote an outline of potential timelines in the case for Just Security, a site devoted to foreign policy, democracy and security analysis, that published Jan. 9.

Trump raised his immunity defense in the trial court, where he faces federal charges related to the 2021 attack on the Capitol, saying he could not be prosecuted for the actions alleged in the indictment because he was acting in his official capacity as president to counteract election fraud and because he'd already been acquitted in an impeachment trial.

U.S. District Judge Tanya S. Chutkan denied those claims, a decision Trump appealed to the D.C. Circuit. On Friday, Chutkan also officially postponed his trial, which had been set to begin March 4.

Hours before the three-judge panel issued its ruling, Trump posted in all capital letters on his online platform, Truth Social, that "IF IMMUNITY IS NOT GRANTED TO A PRESIDENT, EVERY PRESIDENT THAT LEAVES OFFICE WILL BE IMMEDIATELY INDICTED BY THE OPPOSING PARTY."

"WITHOUT COMPLETE IMMUNITY, A PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO PROPERLY FUNCTION!" he wrote.

## Reaction rolls out

Several anti-Trump groups celebrated the ruling Tuesday, while Republicans on Capitol Hill launched a new effort to defend the former president through a House resolution.

The open records watchdog group American Oversight, which filed an amicus brief in the case, released a statement praising that appellate judges had "resoundingly rejected (Trump's) claim that a president can commit crimes with impunity and avoid prosecution unless Congress impeaches and convicts him first."

"We appreciate the Court's careful consideration of our argument that Trump's appeal was premature. By addressing the argument fully, the Court has removed the risk that this issue might be raised for the first time in any subsequent appeals, including to the Supreme Court, causing even more delay. Today's

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important ruling affirms a core principle of our democracy — no one is above the law,” continued the statement from Heather Sawyer, American Oversight’s executive director.

Wertheimer noted Trump has throughout his career employed delay tactics in court proceedings and that “his efforts in this case are part of his oft-used strategy.”

“Trump’s goal is to get this criminal trial postponed until after the 2024 presidential election, at which time, if he wins the election, he can order his new Attorney General to drop the case,” he wrote.

He urged the Supreme Court to quickly dispose of a further appeal.

The Defend Democracy Project, an advocacy group focused on election integrity, said the appeals court ruling “upheld the Constitution and common sense. Trump can and will be tried on criminal charges.”

“A core principle of American democracy is that the law applies equally to everyone, even a president. Anyone who attempts to take away our freedom to choose our own leaders must be held accountable,” read the organization’s statement issued after the ruling.

During a previously planned press conference Tuesday to announce a resolution absolving Trump from any action on Jan. 6, 2021, far-right House Republicans decried any scrutiny of the former president.

Lauren Boebert of Colorado said the several pending criminal cases against Trump amount to a “witch hunt.”

“It’s absolutely unprecedented, and the woke mob, the fake news and the leftist government officials who are engaging in this extortion should be downright ashamed of themselves. All of the bogus cases against President Trump are, plain and simple, election interference (in the 2024 election),” said Boebert, who signed onto the resolution led by Florida Republican Matt Gaetz.

Trump also faces criminal charges in three other cases.

State election interference charges in Georgia make similar accusations as the federal indictment. State charges in New York accuse him of falsifying business records by making unsanctioned hush money payments from campaign accounts. And a federal grand jury in Florida accused him of mishandling classified documents.

None of the cases have reached the trial phase, while Trump continues to build momentum toward a third Republican nomination for president.

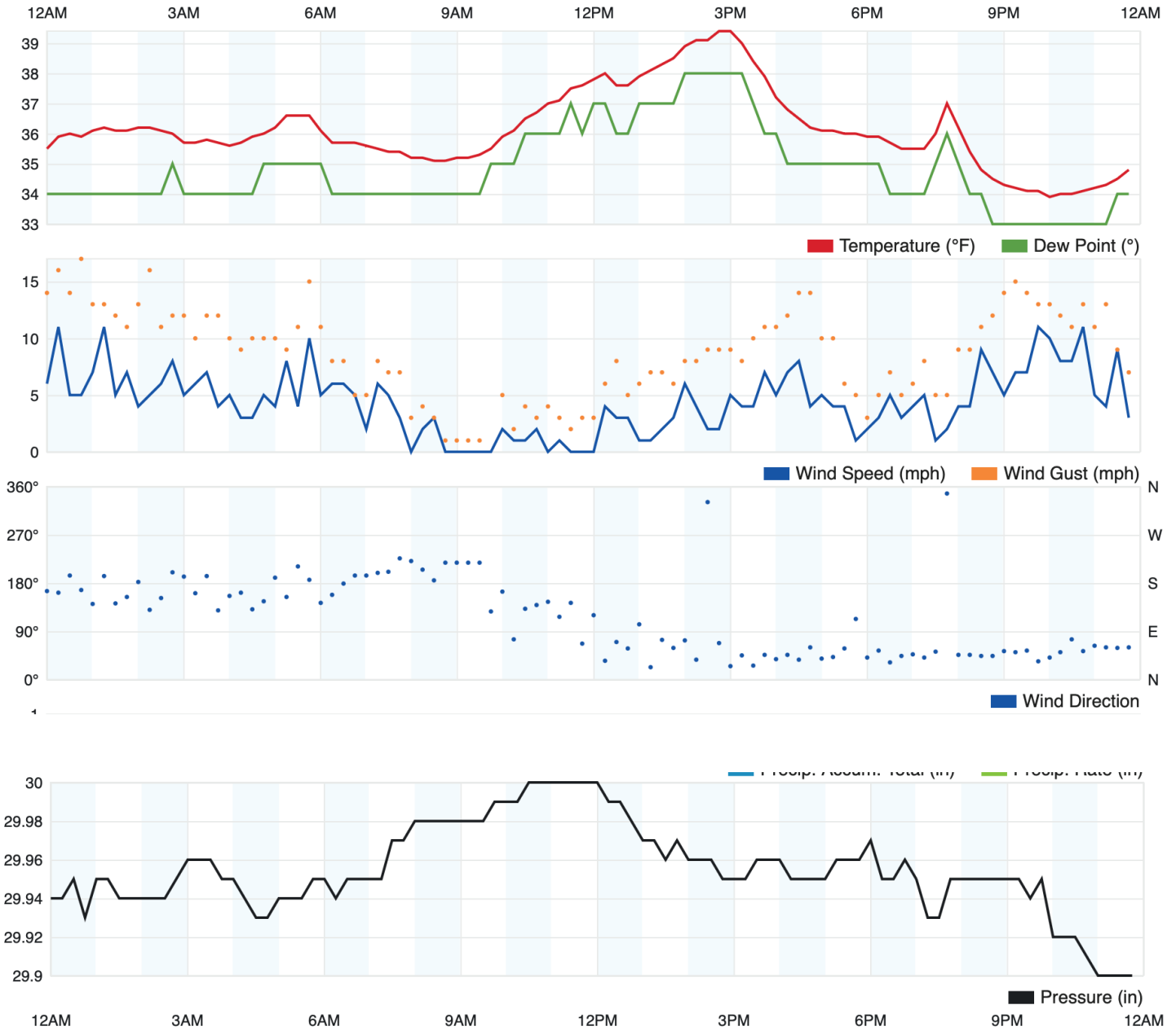
*Jacob covers federal policy as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Based in Oregon, he focuses on Western issues. His coverage areas include climate, energy development, public lands and infrastructure.*



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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Wed Feb 7	Thu Feb 8	Fri Feb 9	Sat Feb 10	Sun Feb 11	Mon Feb 12	Tue Feb 13
53°F	43°F	34°F	32°F	34°F	37°F	35°F
42°F	27°F	25°F	21°F	22°F	23°F	23°F
ESE	WSW	WNW	NNW	NW	SW	WNW
15 MPH	23 MPH	21 MPH	13 MPH	10 MPH	11 MPH	13 MPH
	50%	20%				



## Increasing Winds and Precipitation Chances Moving In

- **Rain** initially as air mass remains mild. Precipitation changing to **snow** from west to east on Thursday.
- Snowfall amounts forecast to be less than 1 inch

	Weather Forecast															
	2/7 Wed			2/8 Thu						2/9 Fri						
	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm
Aberdeen	10%	20%	30%	40%	45%	45%	35%	45%	40%	35%	35%	20%	25%	20%	20%	20%
Britton	10%	20%	35%	40%	45%	50%	55%	40%	45%	45%	45%	30%	30%	20%	20%	25%
Brookings	10%	20%	30%	30%	30%	40%	45%	35%	20%	10%	10%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%
Chamberlain	5%	15%	30%	40%	40%	40%	30%	15%	5%	5%	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Clark	5%	20%	25%	40%	35%	45%	55%	50%	45%	25%	25%	10%	10%	15%	15%	15%
Eagle Butte	25%	25%	20%	30%	30%	35%	35%	35%	35%	20%	20%	15%	15%	18%	20%	20%
Ellendale	10%	20%	30%	35%	45%	45%	45%	45%	40%	40%	40%	25%	25%	20%	20%	25%
Eureka	20%	25%	30%	35%	40%	45%	40%	40%	40%	40%	40%	30%	30%	25%	25%	25%
Gettysburg	15%	25%	30%	40%	40%	40%	35%	30%	20%	20%	20%	10%	10%	20%	20%	15%
Huron	5%	15%	35%	40%	45%	45%	40%	30%	20%	15%	15%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%
Kennebec	5%	20%	30%	35%	35%	40%	40%	40%	15%	10%	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
McIntosh	35%	35%	40%	40%	40%	35%	45%	45%	30%	30%	30%	35%	35%	25%	25%	25%
Milbank	5%	20%	25%	30%	30%	40%	40%	45%	35%	25%	25%	15%	15%	5%	5%	10%
Miller	10%	20%	30%	40%	40%	40%	35%	25%	15%	15%	15%	5%	5%	10%	10%	10%
Mobridge	25%	35%	30%	35%	35%	45%	45%	35%	30%	35%	35%	25%	25%	15%	20%	20%
Murdo	10%	25%	30%	35%	40%	40%	35%	20%	15%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%
Pierre	10%	25%	30%	35%	35%	30%	20%	20%	15%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%
Redfield	10%	20%	30%	40%	40%	40%	40%	25%	25%	25%	25%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%
Sisseton	5%	20%	35%	30%	35%	40%	50%	40%	45%	40%	40%	25%	25%	20%	20%	20%
Watertown	5%	20%	30%	35%	35%	45%	55%	50%	45%	20%	20%	10%	10%	5%	5%	10%
Webster	5%	20%	35%	35%	35%	45%	55%	55%	40%	30%	30%	20%	20%	15%	15%	20%
Wheaton	10%	25%	30%	35%	35%	45%	45%	50%	35%	40%	40%	25%	25%	15%	15%	15%

	Wind Gust Forecast (kt)															
	2/7 Wed			2/8 Thu						2/9 Fri						
	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm
Aberdeen	18	19	26	24	15	14	20	26	26	30	26	23	25	23	26	25
Britton	19	21	29	29	24	15	17	19	27	27	26	24	23	24	27	26
Brookings	31	33	34	34	30	26	20	20	29	26	27	23	24	23	23	24
Chamberlain	23	22	14	11	12	18	25	30	32	29	27	26	24	23	22	24
Clark	29	32	35	35	29	23	19	25	30	30	26	26	27	26	26	26
Eagle Butte	11	9	11	17	22	30	32	37	39	38	34	32	30	30	26	26
Ellendale	19	15	22	20	17	14	18	26	32	30	26	29	29	27	31	27
Eureka	17	14	14	9	11	18	24	31	34	33	30	29	32	31	30	30
Gettysburg	15	9	11	10	16	19	25	30	31	32	30	27	27	28	27	28
Huron	30	31	31	26	22	17	20	27	29	29	26	24	26	22	22	25
Kennebec	20	14	10	11	16	22	29	34	37	33	28	30	27	26	24	27
McIntosh	14	12	10	16	21	26	33	38	42	38	35	35	35	33	31	30
Milbank	22	21	26	27	23	20	15	18	24	26	26	23	23	23	23	25
Miller	20	19	20	15	14	16	25	29	32	31	26	25	26	24	24	26
Mobridge	12	10	8	12	15	20	26	30	33	31	30	28	27	28	24	24
Murdo	15	12	10	11	18	26	31	36	38	37	36	30	29	28	25	26
Pierre	12	9	7	9	15	19	24	29	32	33	30	25	24	22	20	23
Redfield	24	25	29	24	15	15	21	26	29	30	28	24	23	23	23	24
Sisseton	21	21	21	25	21	18	16	19	28	30	30	28	26	26	26	26
Watertown	28	31	35	34	30	26	18	21	30	29	27	25	26	25	25	25
Webster	25	28	36	35	30	23	18	24	30	34	30	29	28	29	30	30
Wheaton	23	24	27	27	25	24	21	17	21	22	25	22	22	22	24	23

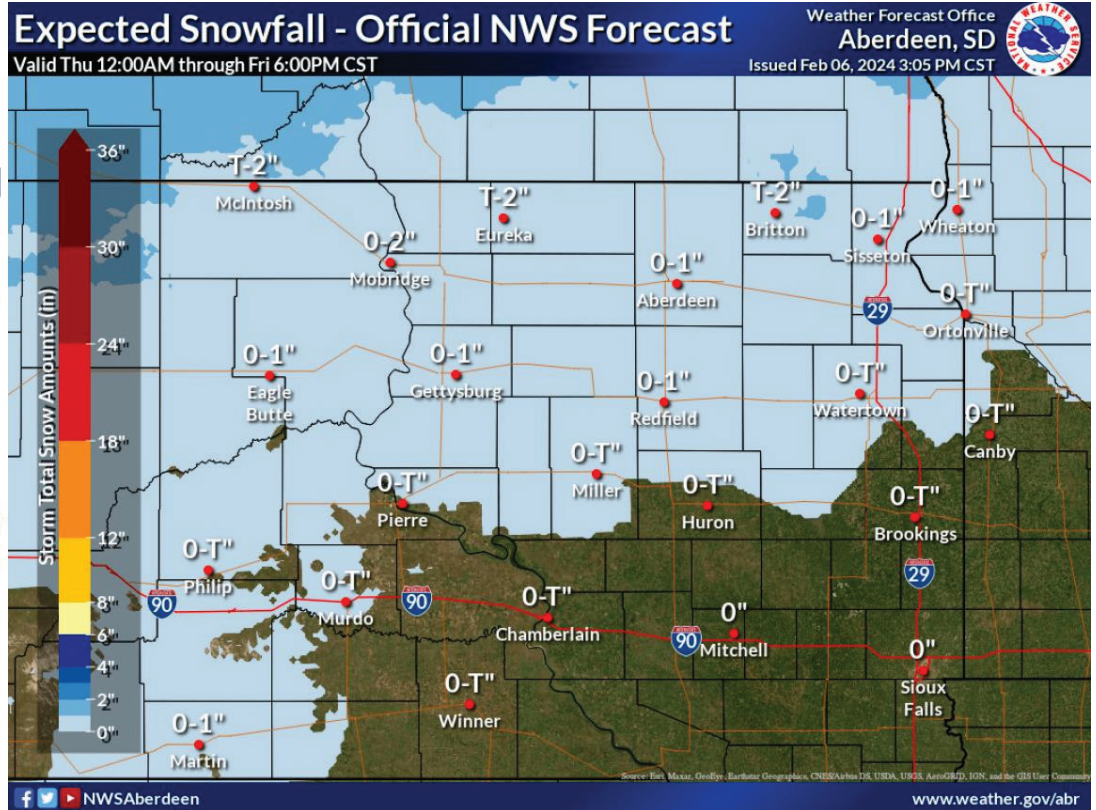
Visit [www.weather.gov/abr](http://www.weather.gov/abr) for a detailed local forecast

February 7, 2024 5:25 AM

An area of low pressure will move northeast across the region later today through Thursday. This system will bring chances for rain showers to the area later today, but more so overnight into Thursday. Colder air moving in behind the low will switch precipitation over to snow during the day Thursday. All this said, precipitation is not expected to be overly widespread or heavy, and snowfall is forecast to be less than 1 inch. Winds will also be on the increase today through Thursday.

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60% chance of **Rain** **Thursday**, changing over to light **Snow** over central SD by early afternoon and eastern SD/west central MN Thursday evening into Friday morning. Light snow continuing into Friday.

**Total snowfall of less than 1" expected** across much of the area, highest over north central SD.

Light Rain Thursday will change over to light Snow over central South Dakota by early afternoon, and eastern South Dakota and west central Minnesota Thursday evening into Friday morning. Light snow will be continuing into Friday. Total snowfall of less than 1" expected across much of the area, highest over north central South Dakota.



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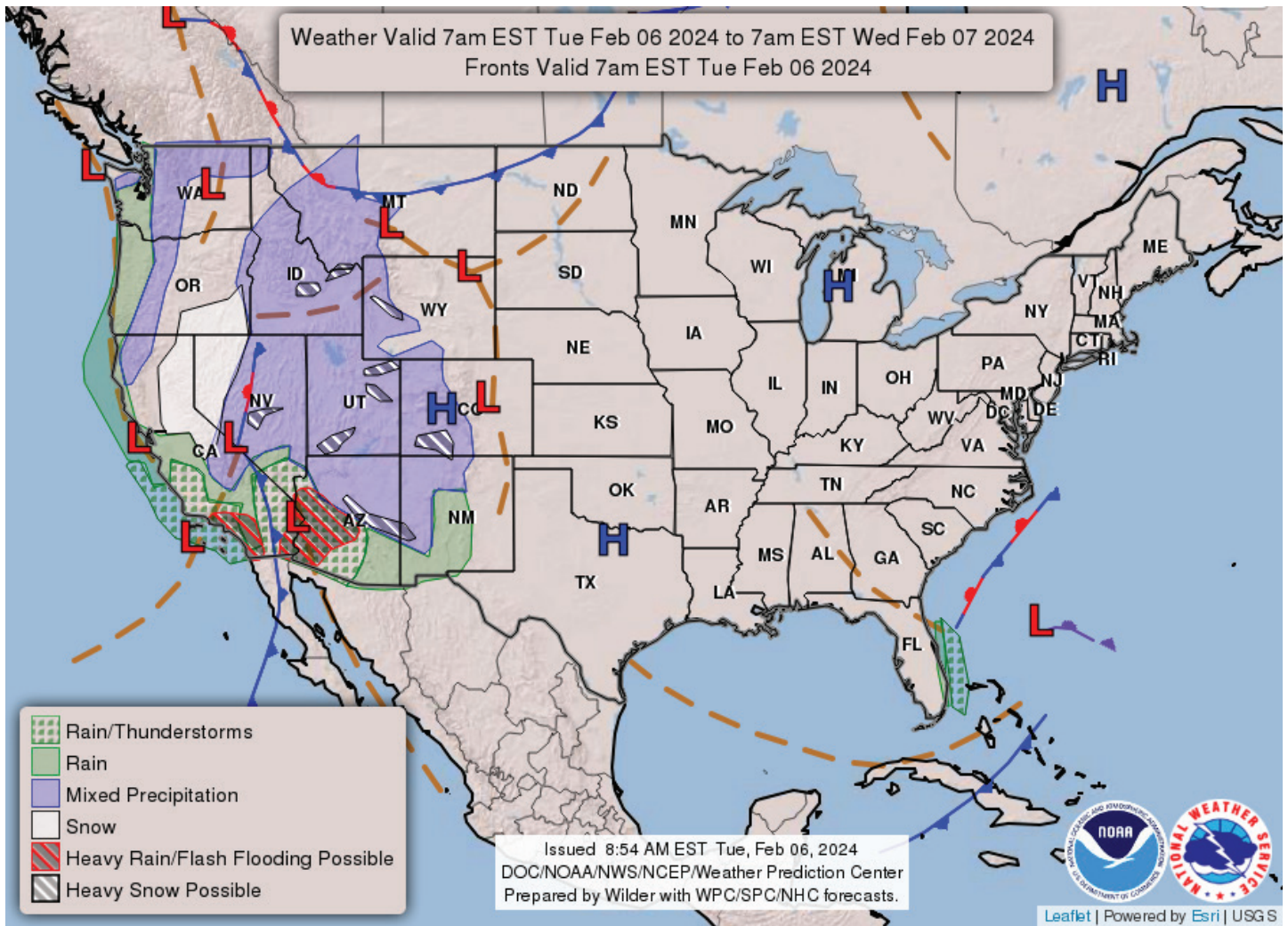
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 40 °F at 2:47 PM**  
**Low Temp: 34 °F at 9:57 PM**  
**Wind: 17 mph at 12:17 AM**  
**Precip: : 0.00**

Day length: 10 hours, 4 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 62 in 1987  
Record Low: -42 in 1895  
Average High: 26  
Average Low: 4  
Average Precip in Feb.: 0.14  
Precip to date in Feb.: 0.00  
Average Precip to date: 0.69  
Precip Year to Date: 0.00  
Sunset Tonight: 5:48:46 pm  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:42:50 am





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## Today in Weather History

February 7, 1994: Snow falling over the area produced heavy accumulations from central into northeast South Dakota with 11 inches at Kennebec and eight inches at Watertown from the 7th through the 9th. Extreme cold accompanied and followed the snow with low temperatures of 52 below zero at Promise and 45 below zero at Aberdeen on the 9th. Snow accumulation caused a roof to cave in on a drugstore at Bristol. A man died of exposure attempting to walk home near Sioux Falls after his car became stuck in a ditch.

February 7, 2001: Heavy snow of 6 to 16 inches fell across central and northeast South Dakota, resulting in school and activities cancellations, closing of some businesses, and challenging if not impossible travel. Several people became stranded and had to be rescued. There were also flight cancellations and delays, along with some vehicle accidents resulting in minor injuries. Some snowfall amounts included 6 inches at Mound City, Mobridge, Eureka, 7 inches at Milbank and 6 SE McIntosh, 8 inches at Aberdeen, Ipswich, Selby, Iona, and Britton, 9 inches at Clark, 1 S Columbia, Isabel, Webster, and 10 inches at Roscoe, Watertown, and 1 W of Summit. Locations with snowfall of a foot included Mission Ridge, Murdo, 4 NW Onida, Castlewood, 23 N Highmore, and Timber Lake. Thirteen inches of snow fell at Canning and Fort Pierre, 14 inches fell at Gettysburg, Eagle Butte, and Pierre with 15 inches at Miller and 16 inches of snow at Clear Lake, Mellette, and Faulkton.

February 7, 2010: A compact but strong area of low pressure moved from Canada and across the Northern Plains from the 7th through the 9th. A prolonged period of moderate to heavy snow developed over far northeast South Dakota and west-central Minnesota, bringing 6 to 8 inches of snow to the area. Some snowfall amounts included 6 inches at Milbank, Wheaton, and Ortonville; 7 inches at Clear Lake, Sisseton, and Artichoke Lake; 8 inches at Summit, Victor, Wilmot, and Browns Valley.

1812: The Hard Shock of the New Madrid Earthquake series strikes the area around the small town of New Madrid, Missouri. A three-mile-long island, Island #32, was completely sunk! The Mississippi River once again ran backward. This major shock marked the beginning of the end of New Madrid's extended ordeal, even though aftershocks would continue to be felt for years, and the fault is still active.

1835: A Great Freeze took place from February 2-9 across southern Georgia, southeastern South Carolina, and northern Florida. During this freeze, the St. Johns River was frozen, "several rods from the shore," and people were able to walk a distance from the shore. Many citruses and other fruit trees were killed to the ground, never to grow again, when temperatures reached as low as 1°F in Charleston and 8°F in Jacksonville. A Florida gentleman told a newspaper that the state "appeared as desolate as if a fire had swept over it" after the severe freeze of that winter season. According to Florida Citrus Mutual, this freeze was so severe that it is considered an impact freeze. This indicates that the freeze annihilates entire groves across the state, killing both mature and young citrus trees while causing a profound economic impact on the citrus industry and prompting growers to replant farther south. This freeze ended attempts to grow citrus in southern Georgia, southeastern South Carolina, and northern Florida.

1892: The temperature falls to 90 degrees below zero in Verkhoyansk, Russia, on this day. The temperature was considered the coldest temperature ever recorded in the Northern Hemisphere. However, this reading was done by a spirit thermometer, which is less accurate than a mercury thermometer. The accepted record was 90 degrees below zero in Oimaykon on February 6, 1933. However, recently published report by the WMO, the coldest temperature in the Northern Hemisphere is -69.6°C (-93.3°F) on December 22nd, 1991 at Klinck Automatic Weather Station (AWS) Greenland.

1904: A small fire in the business district of Baltimore, Maryland becomes wind-whipped into an uncontrollable conflagration that engulfs a large portion of the city by evening.

1933: The USS Ramapo, a 478 ft. Navy oiler was traveling from Manila to San Diego when it encountered the tallest rogue wave ever recorded. The wave measured 112 feet in height was caused by 70 mph winds over a broad fetch of the ocean.

2017: Six tornadoes traveled across southern Louisiana. The strongest tornado, an EF-3, impacted eastern New Orleans.

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Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### WHERE IS GOD?

Sir John Franklin is remembered for being a great Englishman and explorer of the Arctic region of the planet. As he was planning one of his expeditions, he decided that, based on his various journeys, he would revise the map of the world.

Previous to Franklin, others had been marking unknown territories with phrases such as "Here be Dragons," and "Here be Demons."

But, on his revised map, he wrote, "Here be God." Sir Franklin, as a result of his journeys, knew that wherever he was, God would be. Even in the most distant, most lonely, and most inaccessible places, he believed that he would find God.

In Psalm 121, we discover the assurance and hope that wherever we are, God is. He is with us always, protecting us and providing for our every need - day or night. He not only made the mountains and seas, the valleys and deserts, but all that they contain.

We must never forget that the Creator of the universe is the sustainer of the universe. Trusting the One Who "put it all together" enables us to believe that He will not allow "dragons" and "demons" to overcome the one who trusts in His goodness and grace.

Nothing will ever divert or distract God from watching over His children. We can have the utmost confidence that in Him, we are safe and can never escape His untiring, unceasing watch over us.

Prayer: May we join our voices with the Psalmist, Father, and shout, "Keep watch over me, Lord, as You come and go, both now and forever!" How blest we are for Your love. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: The Lord keeps watch over you as you come and go, both now and forever. Psalm 121



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:  
02.06.24

2 10 31 44 57 10

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$394,000,000**

NEXT 2 Days 16 Hrs 2  
DRAW: Mins 55 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:  
02.05.24

1 15 17 24 29 2

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$2,850,000**

NEXT 15 Hrs 17 Mins 55  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
02.06.24

16 32 34 36 47 3

TOP PRIZE:  
**\$7,000/week**

NEXT 15 Hrs 32 Mins 55  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
02.03.24

17 20 26 27 34

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$40,000**

NEXT 15 Hrs 32 Mins 55  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
02.05.24

1 7 35 52 54 20

TOP PRIZE:  
**\$10,000,000**

NEXT 16 Hrs 1 Mins 55  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:  
02.05.24

1 2 27 30 67 9

Power Play: 5x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$228,000,000**

NEXT 16 Hrs 1 Mins 55  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)



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News from the  Associated Press

## Tuesday's Scores

The Associated Press

### **GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL**

Aberdeen Roncalli 60, Miller 48  
Andes Central-Dakota Christian 53, Marty 33  
Bison 53, McIntosh 37  
Bon Homme 41, Burke 34  
Brandon Valley 59, Sioux Falls Washington 43  
Bridgewater-Emery 64, Flandreau Indian 25  
Brookings 48, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 42  
Centerville 70, Canton 45  
Chester 83, Oldham-Ramona-Rutland 55  
Crazy Horse 69, Takini 18  
Edgemont 54, Hulett, Wyo. 24  
Elk Point-Jefferson 59, Ponca, Neb. 22  
Estelline-Hendricks 65, Waubay/Summit 52  
Faulkton 59, Potter County 57  
Flandreau 67, DeSmet 34  
Florence-Henry 45, Castlewood 26  
Garretson 45, Beresford 37  
Gayville-Volin High School 47, Freeman Academy-Marion 19  
Hanson 58, Freeman 44  
Harding County 54, Dupree 16  
Herreid-Selby 54, Wakpala 44  
Hill City 48, Douglas 23  
Hitchcock-Tulare 50, Highmore-Harrold 48  
Ipswich 40, Aberdeen Christian 24  
Iroquois-Lake Preston 61, Wolsey-Wessington 51  
Kimball-White Lake 52, Corsica/Stickney 45  
Lemmon High School 43, Faith 39  
Little Wound 71, Lakota Tech 67  
Mitchell 51, Aberdeen Central 39  
Mobridge-Pollock 54, Timber Lake 15  
Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 75, Dell Rapids 44  
North Central, Neb. 55, Colome 24  
Northwestern 53, Webster 37  
Parker 36, Viborg-Hurley 30  
Parkston 57, Sanborn Central-Woonsocket 51  
Philip 45, Jones County 32  
Pierre 58, Huron 45  
Red Cloud 51, St Thomas More 34  
Sioux Falls Christian 48, Tri-Valley 43  
Sioux Falls Jefferson 54, Watertown 38  
Sioux Falls O'Gorman 60, Sioux Falls Lincoln 18  
Sioux Valley 70, Deuel 26  
Sisseton 63, Milbank 34

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Spearfish 50, Sturgis Brown 33  
Tea 52, Harrisburg 44  
Todd County 61, Bennett County 50  
Tri-State, N.D. 74, Tiospa Zina 68  
Tripp-Delmont-Armour 41, Platte-Geddes 36  
Vermillion 69, Dakota Valley 56  
Wagner 64, Gregory 29  
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Some high school basketball scores provided by Scorestream.com, <https://scorestream.com/>

## Which states could have abortion on the ballot in 2024?

By GEOFF MULVIHILL and KIMBERLEE KRUESI Associated Press

The Florida Supreme Court is hearing arguments Wednesday on whether a ballot measure to enshrine the right to abortion in the state constitution should go before voters in November.

It’s one of several states where abortion might be on the ballot this year.

There has been a major push across the country to put abortion rights questions to voters since the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* and removed the nationwide right to abortion.

Since that 2022 decision, most Republican-controlled states have new abortion restrictions in effect, including 14 that ban it at every stage of pregnancy. Most Democrat-dominated states have laws or executive orders to protect access.

Additionally, voters in seven states — California, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Montana, Ohio and Vermont — have sided with abortion rights supporters on ballot measures.

It’s not clear yet how many states will vote on measures to enshrine abortion access in November. In some, the question is whether amendment supporters can get enough valid signatures. In others, it’s up to the legislature. In Florida, there’s legal wrangling on the details.

WHAT’S SECURELY ON 2024 BALLOTS?

MARYLAND

Maryland voters this year will also be asked whether to enshrine the right for women to end their pregnancies in the state’s constitution in a ballot question put before them by lawmakers last year. The state already protects the right to abortion under state law and Democrats outnumber Republicans 2-1. Abortion is allowed in Maryland until viability.

NEW YORK

New York lawmakers agreed to ask voters to bar discrimination on the basis of pregnancy, pregnancy outcome and reproductive healthcare as part of a broader equal protection amendment. It would also bar discrimination on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin and disability. The language of the constitutional amendment does not mention abortion specifically. Abortion is allowed in New York law until viability.

WHERE ELSE COULD ABORTION BE ON THE BALLOT IN 2024?

ARIZONA

A signature drive is underway to add a constitutional right to abortion in Arizona. Under the measure, the state would not be able to ban abortion until the fetus is viable, with later abortions allowed to protect

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a woman's physical or mental health. Supporters must gather nearly 384,000 valid signatures by July 4. Current law bans abortion after 15 weeks of pregnancy.

## ARKANSAS

Proponents of an amendment to allow abortion in many cases have until July 5 to gather nearly 91,000 valid signatures to get it on the Nov. 5 ballot. The measure would bar laws banning abortion in the first 20 weeks of gestation and allow abortion later in pregnancy in cases of rape, incest, threats to the woman's health or life, or if the fetus would be unlikely to survive birth. Because it allows limits as soon as 20 weeks, the proposal does not have the support of Planned Parenthood Great Plains, which includes Arkansas. The state has a ban on abortion at all stages of pregnancy with narrow exceptions.

## COLORADO

There are dueling efforts on abortion in Colorado. One measure would create a voter-initiated law to ban access throughout pregnancy and the other would amend the state constitution to protect it. The abortion rights amendment would also require Medicaid and private health insurance to cover abortion.

Supporters on each side have until Aug. 5 to submit more than 124,000 signatures to get a measure on the ballot. Amending the constitution in Colorado requires the support of 55% of voters. But the ban could be passed with a simple majority. Abortion is legal at all stages of pregnancy in Colorado.

## FLORIDA

Advocates collected nearly a million signatures to put a state constitutional amendment to legalize abortion until viability on the ballot, surpassing the nearly 892,000 required. State Attorney General Ashley Moody has asked the state Supreme Court to keep the measure off the ballot, saying there are differing views on the meaning of "viability" and that some key terms in the proposed measure are not properly defined.

If the measure goes before voters, 60% of them would have to vote yes for it to take effect.

Abortion is legal in Florida through the first 15 weeks of pregnancy. But a 2023 law would drop that to six weeks — often before women know they're pregnant — if the 15-week ban survives a court challenge.

## MISSOURI

Pushes are underway to get dueling abortion-related ballot measures before Missouri voters in 2024. Abortion rights advocates in Missouri for Constitutional Freedom are pushing for one that would guarantee abortion is legal until viability.

A group of moderate Republicans are taking a different approach and calling for an amendment that would allow abortion up to 12 weeks, and after that only under limited exceptions.

Pregnancy is currently banned at all stages of pregnancy with limited exceptions in Missouri.

## MONTANA

Abortion rights proponents have proposed a constitutional amendment in Montana that would bar the government from denying the right to abortion before viability or when it's necessary to protect the life or health of the pregnant person. But Attorney General Austin Knudsen ruled that the measure is legally insufficient. Advocates are appealing to the state's top court. If the court allows it to move ahead, supporters would need to gather more than 60,000 signatures by June 21 to get it on the ballot. Abortion is currently legal until viability in Montana.

## NEBRASKA

Advocates are trying to collect about 125,000 signatures needed by July 5 to put a constitutional amendment before voters to protect abortion rights until fetal viability. Under a law adopted last year, abortion is banned after 12 weeks, with some exceptions.

## NEVADA

Signatures are being gathered to place an abortion access amendment on Nevada's ballot in November. Under the amendment, abortion access for the first 24 weeks of pregnancy or later to protect the health of the pregnant person, which is already assured under a 1990 law, would be enshrined in the constitution. It requires more than 102,000 valid signatures by June 26 to place the measure on the ballot. Voters would need to approve it in both 2024 and 2026 to change the constitution.

The measure is one of several attempts by Nevada abortion rights groups to get a ballot question before



voters in 2024 or 2026.

## SOUTH DAKOTA

South Dakota advocates are attempting to gather more than 17,500 signatures by May 7 to get a measure on the ballot that loosen restrictions but does not go as far as many abortion rights advocates would like. It would ban any restrictions on abortion in the first trimester of pregnancy, allow restrictions in the second trimester with an exception for the woman's physical health and allow abortion bans in the third trimester. Planned Parenthood is not supporting the measure.

Abortion in the state is now banned at all stages of pregnancy with narrow exceptions.

## WHICH STATES CAN BUT LIKELY WON'T PUT ABORTION ON THE BALLOT?

There are some states where the balance of power or other circumstances make abortion-related measures — most of them seeking bans or limits — unlikely to reach voters in 2024.

## IOWA

To put a constitutional amendment on the ballot, Iowa lawmakers have to approve it in two consecutive sessions. In 2021, both chambers advanced a resolution to find there is no constitutional right to abortion in the state. Republicans control the Legislature and governor's office, but the amendment has not emerged as a priority this year and Gov. Kim Reynolds has said she'll let the issue move through the courts rather than pushing for a vote. Abortion is currently banned 20 weeks into pregnancy. A stricter ban, which would kick in when cardiac activity can be detected, around six weeks, has been adopted but put on hold by a court.

## MAINE

Democrats are calling for a measure to enshrine abortion rights in the state constitution. But they would not have the required two-thirds majority of lawmakers in each legislative chamber to adopt it and send it to voters without the support of several Republican lawmakers. Abortion is already allowed throughout pregnancy.

## PENNSYLVANIA

Pennsylvania has a similar process as Iowa with a similar amendment to find no constitutional right to abortion up for consideration. Lawmakers passed it in 2022. But Democrats have since taken control of the state House, making it unlikely to pass, which is required before it can go to a statewide referendum. Abortion is now legal in Pennsylvania for up to 24 weeks of pregnancy.

## WISCONSIN

The Wisconsin Assembly in January approved calling for a binding statewide referendum for a law to ban abortions after 14 weeks of pregnancy. Even if the state Senate approves, Democratic Gov. Tony Evers has promised to veto it. Abortion is legal within the first 20 weeks of pregnancy.

## **A bill that would allow armed teachers in Nebraska schools prompts emotional testimony**

By MARGERY A. BECK Associated Press

A bill that would allow teachers and other staff in schools to be armed in the hopes of deterring school shootings drew dozens of people and some emotional testimony to the Nebraska Legislature's Education Committee on Tuesday.

State Sen. Tom Brewer's bill is among the latest in GOP-led state legislatures across the country embracing bills expanding gun rights.

The Nebraska bill is made up of three parts. It would give local school boards the ability to allow off-duty law enforcement to carry guns onto school property and create detailed maps of schools' buildings and grounds to give to local law enforcement and first responders to use in the event of a school shooting.

It would also allow for teachers or other school staff to be armed, as long as they undertook gun handling and safety training.

The bill is needed in Nebraska's rural districts, Brewer said, where schools can be many miles away from

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the nearest law enforcement and rarely have access to resource officers that are prevalent in cities like Omaha and Lincoln.

At least 32 states have laws allowing teachers or other school staff to be armed during school hours, according to the Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence. That includes all of Nebraska's neighboring states, including Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, Colorado, Wyoming and South Dakota.

"We are an island that has decided not to protect our children," he said.

Most of those testifying in favor of the bill focused on its school mapping provision. Even opponents of the bill said they supported its school mapping.

But the sanctioning of armed school staff drew some emotional testimony, including from one teacher who was present for a deadly school shooting in Omaha 13 years ago.

Tim Royers, president of the Millard Education Association, told the committee he was in his school's lunchroom overseeing students on Jan. 5, 2011, when someone announced over the school's speakers, "Code Red."

Royers and other teachers scrambled to gather as many students as possible and search for a room in which to hide.

"I will never forget the looks on those students' faces," he said.

Authorities later said that a 17-year-old student — the son of an Omaha police detective — had been suspended from Millard South High School, but he returned that same day with his father's service revolver. He fatally shot the assistant principal and wounded the school's principal before fatally shooting himself.

In the years since, he has never heard any educators express a desire to be armed, Royer said.

"But I've had plenty of them tell me that a provision like this would drive them out of the profession," he said to the committee.

Brewer said those opposing the bill aren't being fair to schools in rural areas that "are unable to fill law enforcement positions, let alone resource officer positions."

Brewer has long been an opponent of laws regulating guns. A bill that he pushed since he was first elected in 2016 to allow Nebraska residents to carry concealed guns without a permit was passed and enacted last year. Similar to other so-called constitutional carry laws in other states, it allows people to carry guns hidden in their clothing or vehicle without having to pay for a government permit or take a gun safety course.

## **South Dakota has apologized and must pay \$300K to transgender advocates**

By JACK DURA Associated Press

South Dakota has apologized and will pay \$300,000 under a settlement with a transgender advocacy group that sued Gov. Kristi Noem and her health secretary last year after the state terminated a contract with it.

Attorneys for the Transformation Project announced the settlement Monday. The nonprofit sued last year after the state canceled the contract for a community health worker in December 2022. The contract included a roughly \$136,000 state-administered federal grant, about \$39,000 of which the group received, according to its attorneys.

The organization alleged the state's decision "was based purely on national politics," citing Noem's statement to conservative media outlet The Daily Signal that the state government shouldn't participate in the group's efforts. The outlet had asked Noem about the group and one of its events.

"This settlement marks a significant milestone in our ongoing commitment to civil rights advocacy," lead attorney Brendan Johnson said. "We commend the resiliency of the LGBTQ community and remain committed to vigorously upholding their rights."

The apology, in a letter dated Jan. 18 and signed by South Dakota Secretary of Health Melissa Magstadt, reads: "On behalf of the State of South Dakota, I apologize that the Transformation Project's contract was terminated and for treating the Transformation Project differently than other organizations awarded Community Health Worker contracts."

"I want to emphasize that all South Dakotans are entitled to equal treatment under the law — regardless of their race, color, national origin, religion, disability, age, or sex. South Dakota is committed to ensuring that no person is excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or subject to discrimination under any program, activity, or service that it provides," she wrote.

Transformation Project Executive Director Susan Williams said she is glad the lawsuit is over and "it feels good to know that we won."

"I would say that we settled with the apology. It would have been nice to have the apology come from our governor," she said.

Magstadt was not health secretary at the time the contract was terminated. Her predecessor announced her retirement days after the state terminated the contract. The Transformation Project had hired a community health worker before the state ended the contract.

The state alleged contract violations in a letter from the deputy secretary noticing the termination. The group said it had complied.

Spokespersons for Noem and the state Department of Health did not immediately respond to email requests for comment on the settlement.

Transformation Project Community Health Worker/Project Coordinator Jack Fonder said in a statement: "I assumed the role of CHW with the intention of providing trans people in our community with the resources they require to succeed in this state, little realizing that doing so would result in my own outing as a trans man for standing up for what is right. We promise to keep up the battle for transgender rights and to make sure they have access to the resources they require."

Fundraising helped continue Fonder's position, Williams said. Fonder helps transgender people find shelter, housing and employment, as well as support with legal paperwork and driving people to appointments, among other needs.

Williams said the organization would apply for future grants from the state, and she hopes similar groups "will feel more confident" to apply, too.

The nonprofit offers help for LGBTQ+ people and their families, such as suicide prevention and guiding people through health care and social services, and educates about gender identity.

South Dakota and other Republican-led states have passed laws in recent years that have raised complaints about discrimination against transgender people, such as restricting school sports participation and banning gender-affirming care for kids.

## South Dakota man charged with murder for allegedly running down chief deputy during police chase

By STEVE KARNOWSKI Associated Press

South Dakota prosecutors charged a Sioux Falls man on Monday with first-degree murder and aggravated eluding in the death of a deputy who was struck while putting out spikes during a police chase.

Joseph Gene Hoek, 40, was ordered held without bail at his first court appearance in the death of Moody County Chief Deputy Ken Prorok, 51, of Wentworth, who died during the pursuit on Friday.

People close to Hoek described him as being on a "downward spiral" marked by drug use and escalating threats of violence, Special Agent Jeffrey Kollars of the South Dakota Division of Criminal Investigation wrote in a court filing dated Sunday.

South Dakota Attorney General Marty Jackley is prosecuting the case himself. He said he still needs to investigate any mitigating factors, then sit down with Prorok's family, and then with the sheriff and his deputies, before deciding whether to seek the death penalty.

"I believe the attorney general should lead from the front and I've always tried to do that," Jackley told The Associated Press. "Especially when it involves a law enforcement officer that gave the ultimate sacrifice."

Hoek's attorney, Manuel De Castro, told AP his initial impression is that Hoek was "overcharged," and that "there are some mental health issues that need to be explored." But he said he's still gathering information.

"I know it's an emotional case for everybody involved. But we'll go from there," he said.

Kollars wrote that Madison police responded Friday afternoon to a call about a man, identified as Hoek, making "homicidal threats" near the business where the caller worked. Police spotted his car and tried to stop him, but Hoek sped off on Highway 34 toward Interstate 29, according to the agent.

The chase reached 115 mph (185 kph). Prorok stopped to deploy stop spikes across Highway 34. But a witness said he saw the approaching car intentionally swerve and strike the chief deputy before it went into the ditch and flipped, the agent wrote. Hoek ran off on foot. The witness followed Hoek, ran him down and detained Hoek until officers arrived, the filing said.

Prorok died at the scene. Hoek was checked at a hospital but was not seriously hurt.

Kollars wrote that he interviewed Hoek after he waived his right to remain silent. The agent wrote that Hoek told him he had gone to the business to collect from the caller, who he said owed him money.

"When Hoek was told that a Deputy Sheriff was killed by his actions and decisions, he responded that he didn't believe me," the agent wrote. But Hoek had claimed that he has problems with anxiety and panic attacks that sometimes affect his memory, the agent said.

Investigators who searched the car found suspected THC vapes, suspected marijuana paraphernalia and "blunts," and containers of cold medicine, the agent wrote. Outside the car they found an apparent bong and an unopened bottle of liquor, he said.

When asked about drugs, Hoek told authorities he suffered from pain and that he had obtained the prescription narcotic pain reliever hydrocodone on some emergency room visits. But he said many doctors denied him the medications he wanted. He said he had used medical marijuana for anxiety "days prior" and had been prescribed the anti-anxiety drug Xanax but couldn't recall the last time he used it.

Hoek also said he had been kicked out of several relatives' homes but did not specify why.

The person who called police told investigators Hoek had been a "family friend" who "started scaring him" and "started acting weird lately," which led the person to obtain no-contact and no-trespass orders last month, the agent wrote.

Hoek's mother told investigators that she believed her son "was suffering from mental health issues and was self-medicating," but was smart enough to fool mental health professionals who evaluated him, so he would get released quickly with no help. She also said he was addicted to dextromethorphan, a cough medicine that is sometimes abused.

One person said Hoek's "downward spiral" escalated after she obtained an order for protection against him last month and that he became "increasingly physically violent," the agent wrote.

## **Azerbaijan's president set to win reelection in a snap vote, riding on a victory in Karabakh**

By AIDA SULTANOVA Associated Press

BAKU, Azerbaijan (AP) — Azerbaijanis are voting Wednesday in a snap election almost certain to give incumbent President Ilham Aliyev another seven-year term, following his government's swift reclaiming of a region formerly controlled by ethnic Armenian separatists.

Aliyev, 62, has been in power for more than 20 years, succeeding his father who was Azerbaijan's Communist boss and then president for a decade when it became independent after the 1991 Soviet collapse. The next presidential vote was set for next year, but Aliyev called an early election shortly after Azerbaijani troops retook the Karabakh region from ethnic Armenian forces who controlled it for three decades.

Analysts suggested Aliyev moved the election forward to capitalize on his burst in popularity following September's blitz in Karabakh. He will be in the limelight in November when Azerbaijan, a country which relies heavily on revenues from fossil fuels, hosts a U.N. climate change conference.

Speaking before the polls opened at 0400 GMT, 52-year-old Baku resident Sevda Mirzoyeva said she will vote for "victorious" Aliyev, who "returned our lands, which were occupied for many years."

Aliyev has declared that he wanted the election to "mark the beginning of a new era," in which Azerbaijan has full control over its territory. On Wednesday, he and his family cast their ballots in Khankendi, a city that was called Stepanakert by Armenians when it housed the headquarters of the self-declared



separatist government.

The region, which had been known internationally as Nagorno-Karabakh, and large swathes of surrounding territory came under full control of ethnic Armenian forces backed by Armenia at the end of a separatist war in 1994.

Azerbaijan regained parts of Karabakh and most of the surrounding territory in 2020 in a six-week war, which ended with a Moscow-brokered truce. In December 2022, Azerbaijan started blockading the road linking the region with Armenia, causing food and fuel shortages, and then launched a September blitz that routed separatist forces in just one day and forced them to lay down arms.

More than 100,000 ethnic Armenians fled the region after the defeat of separatist forces, leaving it nearly deserted.

When he visited the city in November, Aliyev said in a speech at a military parade marking the victory that "we showed the whole world the strength, determination and indomitable spirit of the Azerbaijani people."

In Fuzuli, the Azerbaijani city near Karabakh that was controlled by Armenian forces until 2020, AP reporters witnessed a robust turnout with voters lining up to enter polling stations. The city still lies in ruins after being ravaged under the Armenian occupation, but authorities have built 25 new apartment buildings to house local residents eager to come back.

Raya Feyziyeva, 73, who was forced to leave Fuzuli after its takeover by Armenian forces and the expulsion of its ethnic Azerbaijani population in 1993, said she's grateful to Aliyev for reclaiming her home city.

"We are feeling great because we came back to our native lands after suffering for 30 years," she said. "I'm a happy person because my main desire has been fulfilled and I feel calm knowing that I will be buried in my native land."

Vusal Jumshudov, 30, who fought to reclaim the Fuzuli region in 2020 as a soldier, also said he voted for Aliyev. "I feel proud that we freed our native land under Ilham Aliyev's leadership. I'm proud that we cast ballots on our native land," he said.

In the village of Agali in the Zangilan region, another area near Karabakh that was reclaimed from Armenian forces, turnout was equally strong. Mubariz Farhadov, who is in charge of the local polling station located in a freshly built school, said he was filled with joy to witness a "historic moment" when "elections are held in our native land for the first time in 30 years."

There is no limit on the number of terms Aliyev can serve, and there is no real challenge from six other candidates, some of which have previously publicly praised him.

Aliyev's time in power has been marked by the introduction of increasingly strict laws that curb political debate as well as arrests of opposition figures and independent journalists — including in the run-up to the presidential election.

Azerbaijan's two main opposition parties — Musavat and the People's Front of Azerbaijan — are not taking part in the vote, and some opposition members have alleged that Wednesday's vote might be rigged.

Musavat leader Arif Hajili told The Associated Press that the party would not be participating in the elections because they are not democratic.

"Many journalists and political activists are in jail. There are more than 200 political prisoners. There are serious issues with election law and the election commissions are basically under the authorities' influence," Hajili said.

Ali Karimli, leader of People's Front of Azerbaijan Party, has said that calling for an early election without public debate shows that the authorities are afraid of political competition.

## **Nikki Haley is trounced by the 'none of these candidates' option in Nevada's Republican primary**

By MICHELLE L. PRICE, JONATHAN J. COOPER and GABE STERN Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Nikki Haley was swamped in Nevada's symbolic Republican presidential primary as GOP voters resoundingly picked the "none of these candidates" option on the ballot in a repudiation of

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the former U.N. ambassador who is the last remaining major rival to front-runner Donald Trump.

Trump didn't compete in Tuesday's primary, which doesn't award any delegates needed to win the GOP nomination. The former president is instead focused on caucuses that will be held Thursday and will help him move closer to becoming the Republican standard-bearer.

That leaves the results Tuesday as technically meaningless in the Republican race. But they still amount to an embarrassment for Haley, who has sought to position herself as a candidate who can genuinely compete against Trump. Instead, she became the first presidential candidate from either party to lose a race to "none of these candidates" since that option was introduced in Nevada in 1975.

Haley had said beforehand she was going to "focus on the states that are fair" and did not campaign in the western state in the weeks leading up to the caucuses, spending time instead in her home state, South Carolina, before its Feb. 24 primary. Her campaign wrote off the results with a reference to Nevada's famous casino industry.

"Even Donald Trump knows that when you play penny slots the house wins," spokeswoman Olivia Perez-Cubas said. "We didn't bother to play a game rigged for Trump. We're full steam ahead in South Carolina and beyond."

Trump joked on his social media network, "Watch, she'll soon claim Victory!"

Nevada Gov. Joe Lombardo, a Republican, had announced beforehand that he would vote for "none of these candidates" on Tuesday. Several Republicans interviewed heading to the polls said they intended to do the same.

Washoe County Republican Party Chair Bruce Parks, who pushed for the GOP to hold caucuses, said that he told voters who called his office — and Trump supporters — to participate in the primary by voting for "none of these candidates" over Haley.

"They basically told us they don't care about us," Parks said in an interview after the race was called. "By marking 'none of these candidates,' we respond in kind — we don't care about you either."

Nevada GOP Chairman Michael McDonald, a Trump ally who faces state charges for serving as a so-called "fake elector" on the former president's behalf, said he left it to each county GOP chairman to decide if they wanted to promote "none of these candidates." He said Haley's seeming disrespect of Nevada voters was "reciprocated" with the results.

The Associated Press declared "none of these candidates" the winner at 12:01 a.m. on Wednesday based on initial vote results that showed it with a significant lead over Haley in seven counties across the state, including in the two most populous counties.

There was also a Democratic primary on Tuesday that President Joe Biden easily won against author Marianne Williamson and a handful of less-known challengers. Rep. Dean Phillips of Minnesota was not on the ballot.

Biden issued a statement thanking Nevada voters for their support and, with an eye toward an expected matchup in November, warned that Trump is trying to divide America.

"I want to thank the voters of Nevada for sending me and Kamala Harris to the White House four years ago, and for setting us one step further on that same path again tonight. We must organize, mobilize, and vote. Because one day, when we look back, we'll be able to say, when American democracy was a risk, we saved it — together," Biden said.

Nevada lawmakers added "none of these candidates" as an option in all statewide races as a way post-Watergate for voters to participate but express dissatisfaction with their choices. "None" can't win an elected office but it came in first in primary congressional contests in 1976 and 1978. It also finished ahead of both George Bush and Edward Kennedy in Nevada's 1980 presidential primaries.

The caucuses on Thursday are the only Nevada contest that count toward the GOP's presidential nomination. But they were seen as especially skewed in favor of Trump because of the intense grassroots support they require from candidates and new state party rules that benefitted him further.

Trump is expected to handily win the caucuses, which should deliver him all 26 of the state's delegates. Delegates are party members, activists and elected officials who vote at the national party conventions to formally select the party's nominee.

"If your goal is to win the Republican nomination for president, you go where the delegates are. And it baffles me that Nikki Haley chose not to participate," Trump's senior campaign adviser Chris LaCivita said in an interview before the primary.

Nevada, the third state in the field after Iowa and New Hampshire, was set to hold a state-run primary election instead of party-run caucuses after Democrats controlling the Legislature changed the law to try to boost participation.

Caucuses typically require voters to show up for an in-person meeting at a certain day or time, while elections can offer more flexibility to participate, with polls open for most of the day on Election Day, along with absentee or early voting.

But Nevada Republicans chose to hold party-run caucuses instead, saying they wanted certain rules in place, like a requirement that participants show a government-issued ID.

The caucuses require a candidate to intensely organize supporters around the state in order to be competitive, a feat that Trump, the former president and prohibitive front-runner, was easily positioned to do.

The Nevada GOP also restricted the involvement of super PACs like the one Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis was relying on to boost his now-suspended campaign. And the party barred candidates from appearing both on the primary ballot and in the caucuses.

Former Vice President Mike Pence and South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott also signed up to compete in Nevada's primary instead of the caucuses before ending their presidential campaigns.

Jeff Turner, 65, came to the Reno Town Mall with a ballot checked off for "none of these candidates" while also lamenting the increasingly likely November rematch between Biden and Trump.

"I think it's my duty," Turner said. "I think we all have the right to vote, we ought to vote. And even if it's none of these candidates, it's at least stating where I'm at. And I'm hoping others will see that."

## **Russia attacks targets across Ukraine with missiles and drones as EU's top diplomat visits Kyiv**

By ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia fired cruise and ballistic missiles and Shahed-type drones at six regions across Ukraine on Wednesday morning, authorities reported, killing at least five civilians and injuring almost 40 others, including a pregnant woman.

The attacks hit at least three major cities, including the capital Kyiv, where the European Union's top diplomat, Josep Borrell, was discussing military aid and financial support for Ukraine. He said he started his day in an air raid shelter, calling it part of Ukraine's "daily reality" after almost two years of war.

The West's help is desperately needed by Ukraine, which is struggling with ammunition and personnel shortages. Some long-term foreign funding is also in doubt as the latest effort to clinch a deal on Ukraine aid in the U.S. Senate collapsed Tuesday.

Though the roughly 1,500-kilometer (900-mile) front line has barely budged in recent months, the Kremlin's forces have the upper hand in stocks of missiles and artillery ammunition used for long-range strikes. Russia has repeatedly used missiles to blast civilian targets during the conflict.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said last month that air defense and electronic warfare systems that can stop drones are Kyiv's top priorities.

Ukraine's Armed Forces said they intercepted 44 drones and missiles out of 64 that were launched in the morning attack.

The Russian Defense Ministry said it used long-range precision weapons and drones to aim at Ukrainian factories that manufacture sea drones, coastal defense missile systems, rockets and explosives. It claimed that all targets were hit.

The barrage killed four people in Kyiv, the State Emergency Service said. It was the first bombardment of Kyiv for two weeks.

The attack also killed a man in Mykolaiv, a city in southern Ukraine, where some 20 residential buildings

and public infrastructure were damaged, regional Gov. Vitalii Kim said.

Thirty-five people were injured in Kyiv, according to Mayor Vitalii Klitschko, including a pregnant woman. Apartment buildings caught fire in multiple Kyiv districts, Klitschko said. Two power lines damaged during the attack left some 20,000 households on Kyiv's east bank without power.

It was the first significant power outage in the capital this winter due to Russian air strikes. Last winter, Moscow's forces targeted Kyiv's electricity infrastructure in an apparent attempt to deny residents deny heat, light and running water.

In Kharkiv, in northeastern Ukraine, a 52-year-old woman was slightly injured in an S-300 missile attack, regional Gov. Oleh Syniehubov said.

Missiles also hit as far away as the Lviv region of western Ukraine, where a fire broke out, officials said.

## **Pakistan's election: Who's running, what's the mood and will anything change?**

By RIAZAT BUTT Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Pakistan's 127 million voters get to elect a new parliament on Thursday. The elections are the twelfth in the country's 76-year history, which has been marred by economic crises, military takeovers and martial law, militancy, political upheavals and wars with India.

Forty-four political parties are vying for a share of the 266 seats that are up for grabs in the National Assembly, or the lower house of parliament, with an additional 70 seats reserved for women and minorities.

After the election, the new parliament chooses a prime minister. If no party wins an outright majority, then the one with the biggest share of assembly seats can form a coalition government.

### **WHO IS IN THE RACE?**

Pakistani politics are dominated by men and three parties: the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP).

The top contender is PML-N and on its ballot are two former prime ministers, Nawaz Sharif and his younger brother Shehbaz Sharif.

They ally the PPP, led by Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, a member of a political dynasty, has a power base in the country's south. Though it's unlikely to get enough votes to get him the premiership, he could still be part of a Sharif-led coalition government.

However, it is the absence from the ballot of PTI's founder, cricket legend turned Islamist politician Imran Khan, that's at the forefront of public discourse in Pakistan.

Though it's become the norm for corruption allegations and court cases to dog prime ministers — many of Pakistan's leaders have been arrested, disqualified or ousted from office — the intensity of the legal action against Khan is unprecedented.

Khan is in prison and with four criminal convictions so far, three of them handed down last week, he is barred from running in elections or holding public office. He's been sentenced to three, 10, 14 and seven years, to be served concurrently, and has more than 150 other legal cases pending against him. His party says it's not getting a fair chance to campaign.

Smaller, religious political parties that appeal to a section of the conservative Muslim country have no chance of getting a majority but could still be part of a coalition government. The Pakistani military is not on the ballot but is the real power behind the scenes — it has ruled the nation for half of its history and calls the shots in most government decisions.

### **WHAT ARE THE MAIN ISSUES?**

The next government will have a long to-do list: fixing the economy, improving relations with the neighboring, Taliban-run Afghanistan, repairing crumbling infrastructure and resolving year-round power outages. Last but not least is containing religious and separatist militant groups.

Pakistan has been relying on bailouts to prop up its foreign exchange reserves and avoid default, with the International Monetary Fund and wealthy allies like China and Saudi Arabia financing the country to the tune of billions of dollars. The IMF, which last July approved a much-awaited \$3 billion bailout, has



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warned of sustained high inflation this year, around 24%, and a rise in poverty levels.

Like many others, Pakistanis grapple with a soaring cost of living. They endure gas outages overnight and hourslong electricity blackouts — no government has so far been able to resolve the power crisis.

Ties with Afghanistan and its Taliban rulers nosedived after Pakistan began arresting and deporting foreigners living in the country illegally, including around 1.7 million Afghans. The two neighbors regularly blame each other for cross-border militant attacks and skirmishes often close key crossings.

Pakistan was devastated by floods in the summer of 2022 that killed 1,700 people, at one point submerging a third of the country and causing billions of dollars in damage. According to the U.K.-based Islamic Relief charity, only an estimated 5% of damaged and destroyed homes have been fully rebuilt.

The Pakistani Taliban, or Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, are again waging war to overthrow the government and impose an Islamic caliphate. In southwestern Baluchistan province, where the Pakistani Taliban also have a presence, Baloch separatists have staged a yearslong insurgency seeking independence and a greater share of resources.

On the eve of the election, a pair of powerful bombings at separate election offices in Baluchistan killed at least 26 people and wounded more than two dozen others, authorities said.

## WHAT'S THE MOOD LIKE?

Most Pakistanis are fed up after years of political infighting and no improvements in their living standards. People on the street are quick to tell you they don't believe things will be different after this election.

Khan's disqualification from running has infuriated his supporters, who have pledged to show their loyalty at the ballot box. But the intense legal and security crackdown on Khan and his followers may have worn them down.

Also, there is no guarantee that PTI voters will turn out in sufficient numbers to give the party a win — or that their votes will be fairly counted. The Foreign Ministry says there will be 92 international election observers, including from the European Union and foreign embassies.

Another factor shaping public sentiment is the return last October of former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, who came back to Pakistan after four years in self-imposed exile abroad to avoid serving prison sentences at home.

Within weeks of his return, his convictions were overturned, leaving him free to seek a fourth term in office. Despite the years of controversies, he enjoys immense popularity and seems to have a pretty straight path to the premiership.

The sharp contrast in the treatment of the two front-runners — Sharif, with his speedy and smooth comeback, and Khan, with his seemingly insurmountable legal hurdles — have led many to believe Sharif's win is all but certain.

Rights groups say the election is unlikely to be free or fair. Experts have warned that all the political shenanigans underway since Khan's 2022 ouster have fueled anti-establishment sentiment.

That in turn has fed a growing apathy among voters and threatens a low turnout, which would further undermine the credibility of the election. Amid the discontent and divisions, getting a strong coalition to agree on and work for meaningful changes in Pakistan will be difficult.

## From Uber Eats' 'Friends' reunion to Bud's Clydesdales, here are the buzziest Super Bowl ads so far

By MAE ANDERSON and WYATTE GRANTHAM-PHILIPS AP Business Writers

NEW YORK (AP) — If you watch the Super Bowl for the commercials, you no longer have to wait until the big game to see what advertisers have in store for viewers.

Many companies now release ads ahead of the game in the hope of capitalizing on the buzz that builds as the game approaches. They hope to recoup some of the reported \$7 million that's the going rate for a 30-second spot by capturing pre-game attention.

It's a big challenge to stand out among the 50-plus advertisers that will be vying for the eyes of the

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more than 100 million people expected to tune in this year to CBS (and Paramount+ and Nickelodeon) on Super Bowl Sunday (Feb. 11). Last year's broadcast on Fox was watched by a record 115.1 million viewers, according to Nielsen.

So advertisers pull out all the stops. In the ads released ahead of the game so far, Budweiser focuses on its iconic Clydesdales, Michelob Ultra capitalizes on the iconic star power of soccer legend Lionel Messi, and Uber Eats goes for laughs with an ad where Jennifer Aniston forgets she starred in "Friends" with David Schwimmer. Many more commercials are expected to be released ahead of the game.

Of course, not all advertisers release their ads ahead of the game, so there will be surprises. Big advertisers like Amazon have stayed mum on ad plans so far. And while there have been no indications of such, it remains to be seen whether advertisers will capitalize on this year's Taylor Swift buzz in some way.

Here are some of the buzziest ads that have been released so far:

## BOOKING.COM

Actress Tina Fey has so many choices on the online travel agency booking.com site she has to hire body doubles: an influencer type played by her 30 Rock co-star, Jane Krakowski, to stay at a fancy hotel, a bigfoot handled by another 30 Rock co-star, Jack McBrayer, to stay at a cabin, and even actress Glenn Close, who stays on a farm.

## BUD LIGHT

The Bud Light genie grants wishes — like giving someone '80s metal hair and someone else a giant bicep — to Bud Light drinkers. NFL legend Peyton Manning, rapper Post Malone and more also appear on screen.

## BUDWEISER

Budweiser is bringing back familiar characters to its gameday slot. In the beer brand's nostalgic ad, a snowstorm threatens to derail a delivery to a small-town bar. But a team of Clydesdales and a Labrador retriever team up to help Budweiser make the delivery.

## DORITOS DINAMITA

Two grandmotherly women ("Dina" and "Mita") chase after "Top Gun: Maverick" actor Danny Ramirez, who took the last bag of Doritos Dinamita from a store shelf, leaving actress Jenna Ortega behind.

## DOVE

Dove's ad begins seemingly whimsically showing young girls having mishaps playing sports to the tune of "It's the Hard Knock Life." But the ad cuts starkly to a girl looking self-consciously in the mirror. The message: low body-confidence leads to girls quitting sports, not the mishaps.

## GOOGLE

Google's heartstring-pulling ad follows a blind man as he uses "Guided Frame" — Google's AI-powered accessibility feature for the Pixel camera that uses a combination of audio cues, high-contrast animations and tactile vibrations — to take pictures of the people and places in his life.

## HELLMAN'S

In an ad for Hellman's, Kate McKinnon makes an unusual discovery: her cat can talk. Well, sort of. Her furry friend can say one word, "may-ow" — which skyrockets her to celebrity status and causes a mayonnaise-buying frenzy. The "Mayo Cat" becomes so famous that she even dates (and soon dumps) Pete Davidson.

## MICHELOB ULTRA

Lionel Messi's Super Bowl debut shows off his soccer mastery and apparent loyalty to Michelob Ultra. In the ad, the soccer star also gets an assist from NFL legend Dan Marino and nod from "Ted Lasso's" Jason Sudeikis.

## MTN DEW BAJA BLAST

Aubrey Plaza is always having a blast, whether she is stuck in an elevator or being abducted by aliens — or reuniting with her "Parks and Rec" co-star Nick Offerman while riding dragons.

## M&M'S

Retired Miami Dolphins quarterback Dan Marino, Buffalo Bills' Bruce Smith and wide receiver Terrell

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Owens never got a Super Bowl ring, but M&M's and Scarlett Johansson present the "Almost Champions" ring to the almost winners.

OREO

According to Oreo, the key to making life's biggest decisions is to "twist on it." An ad for the iconic sandwich cookie suggests that even Kris Jenner used the tactic before agreeing to start "Keeping Up With The Kardashians" back in 2007.

PRINGLES

After a gas station clerk points out Chris Pratt looks like the man in the Pringles logo, he goes viral and stars in a movie about "Mr. P."

STARRY

PepsiCo's year-old lemon-lime soda's debut Super Bowl ad features rapper Ice Spice dealing with a breakup by spending time with the Starry lemon and lime spokescharacters — the message: "It's time to see other sodas."

T-MOBILE

Jason Momoa shows off his singing chops in an ad that shows Scrubs duo Zach Braff and Donald Faison singing about T-Mobile home internet to the tune of "Flashdance ... What a Feeling." "Flashdance" star Jennifer Beals pops in to spray Momoa with water and ask him to sing it again — without his shirt.

UBER EATS

When someone tells Jennifer Aniston they didn't know you could order a wide variety of products on Uber Eats, Aniston tells them, "In order to remember something, you've got to forget something else." That prompts a wave of forgetting: David and Victoria Beckham forget Victoria Beckham used to be Posh Spice, and Jennifer Aniston forgets she starred in "Friends" with David Schwimmer.

## Twin bombings at Pakistan political offices kill at least 26 a day before voting begins

By ABDUL SATTAR and MUNIR AHMED Associated Press

QUETTA, Pakistan (AP) — A pair of bombings at the election offices of a political party and an independent candidate in southwest Pakistan killed at least 26 people and wounded more than two dozen others, officials said Wednesday, the day before parliamentary elections are to be held.

The first attack hit the election office of Asfandyar Khan in Pashin, a district in Baluchistan province, said Jan Achakzai, the spokesperson for the provincial government. Officials said at least 15 people were killed in the attack and the wounded are being transported to a nearby hospital. Police said some of them were listed in critical condition.

Later Wednesday, another bombing at the elections office of politician Fazlur Rehman's Jamiat Ulema Islam party in Qilla Saifullah town of Baluchistan killed at least 11 people, Achakzai and local authorities said.

JUI is one of the leading radical Islamist party and is known for backing the Afghan Taliban. JUI's religious schools are spread across the country, especially in the northwest and Baluchistan bordering Afghanistan. Many of Afghanistan's Taliban leaders studied at Islamic seminaries operated by JUI, yet Rehman and his party leaders in recent years have been attacked by the Islamic State group and other militants. Rehman and scores of candidates from his party are contesting the elections from various parts of Pakistan.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attacks, which came a day before Pakistan holds parliamentary elections.

Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul-Haq-Kakar denounced the bombings in Baluchistan, and conveyed his condolences to the families of those who died. He vowed that "every attempt to sabotage the law and order situation will be thwarted."

Kakar said the government is committed to holding elections in a peaceful environment.

Caretaker Interior Minister Gohar Ejaz also denounced the bombings, saying no one would be allowed to sabotage the election process.

The bombings came despite the deployment of tens of thousands of police and paramilitary forces

across Pakistan to ensure peace following a recent surge in militant attacks in the country, especially in Baluchistan.

The outlawed Baluchistan Liberation Army has been behind multiple attacks on security forces, including a Jan. 30 attack on security facilities that killed six people.

In recent years, Pakistan has struggled to rein in surging militancy. Pakistani Taliban and other militant groups also have a strong presence in the Baluchistan province and have targeted civilians in recent years.

The gas-rich province at the border of Afghanistan and Iran has been the scene of a low-level insurgency by Baluch nationalists for more than two decades. Baluch nationalists initially wanted a share of the provincial resources, but later they initiated an insurgency for independence.

Violence ahead of elections and on the day of polling is common in Pakistan. In one of the worst such attacks, Pakistan's two-time former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto was killed in a gun and bomb attack in 2007, just minutes after she addressed an election rally in the garrison city of Rawalpindi. Her son, Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, led the campaign for her Pakistan People's Party until Tuesday night amid tight security.

## Diapers and baby formula are hard to find in Gaza, leaving parents desperate

By WAFAA SHURAFU and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Zainab al-Zein was forced to make a desperate decision: Feed her infant daughter solid foods that her tiny body may not be able to digest or watch her starve because of a lack of baby formula in the besieged Gaza Strip.

Al-Zein chose to give 2 1/2-month-old Linda solids, knowing the choice could lead to health issues.

"I know we are doing something harmful to her, but there is nothing," said al-Zein, feeding her wailing daughter crushed biscuits in the cold tent they now call home. "She cries and cries continuously."

The war between Israel and Gaza's Hamas rulers has sparked a humanitarian catastrophe that has brought shortages of the most basic necessities. Some of the hardest-hit are babies, young children and their parents, with diapers and formula either hard to find or spiking to unaffordable prices, leading parents to resort to inadequate or even unsafe alternatives.

Their plight is further complicated due to sporadic aid deliveries that have been hobbled by Israeli restrictions and the relentless fighting.

Displaced Palestinians are also being squeezed into ever tighter areas of the tiny coastal enclave, prompting outbreaks of illness and disease, to which malnourished children are particularly vulnerable. The U.N. says the population is at imminent risk of famine, with a quarter of people already starving.

For Palestinians enduring increasingly dire conditions, the most basic of acts — such as changing a child's diaper — have become a luxury that can require sacrifice.

"I sold my children's food so I can buy diapers," said Raafat Abu Wardeh, who has two children in diapers.

Aid is not reaching everyone, and shortages of basic goods have caused prices to skyrocket. With Gaza's economy decimated, few Palestinians have regular incomes and most are either depleting their savings or subsisting on handouts.

At makeshift street stalls, older children working as hawkers sell individual diapers for three to five shekels (\$1 to \$1.50) or entire packs for up to 170 shekels (\$46). A pack of diapers before the war cost 12 shekels (\$3.50).

"The prices of diapers are very ridiculous," said Anis al-Zein, who was buying them along a street in central Deir al-Balah and is not related to Zainab. "A child costs you 20 shekels (\$5) a day. Especially in a bad situation like this, all prices are high and there is no income for people. There isn't even aid."

Some parents are using cloth diapers, but those require washing with water, which is also scarce.

Mohammed al-Khatib, the local program manager for the U.K.-based Medical Aid for Palestinians, said some people have been forced to buy smaller diapers and tape them together.

Lack of fresh produce, the proliferation of unregulated food stalls and cold weather has contributed to



the spread of illness, including respiratory infections, skin rashes and diarrhea. "It is winter, and the kids are wet most of the time," al-Khatib said.

The war, triggered by the deadly Oct. 7 Hamas assault on southern Israel, has unleashed unimaginable destruction, with more than 27,000 Palestinians killed and close to 67,000 wounded in Israel's offensive, according to local health officials.

The Health Ministry in Hamas-run Gaza does not differentiate in its count between civilians and combatants but says two-thirds of those killed were women and children. Israel blames Hamas for the high death toll because the group carries out attacks and militant activities in residential areas.

The Hamas attack killed about 1,200 people in Israel, most of them civilians, and roughly 250 were taken hostage.

The lack of diapers has added to the poor sanitary conditions for the estimated 1.7 million displaced Palestinians, many of whom are crammed into overcrowded shelters.

The United Nations' children's agency UNICEF said this week that most of the newly displaced have only 1-2 liters (50-67 ounces) of water a day to drink, cook and wash. It said chronic diarrhea among children was ticking up.

UNICEF says aid deliveries into Gaza are not meeting the vast needs.

The agency estimates 20,000 infants up to 6 months old need formula, which UNICEF has been delivering along with necessities that have also included diapers and cash.

"This is far from being enough to address the colossal needs of the children in Gaza," said UNICEF spokesperson Ammar Ammar.

The needs of infants are part of a broader threat to all 335,000 children in Gaza under 5 years old, who are at high risk of severe malnutrition and preventable death, UNICEF said.

"For many families in Gaza, the threat of dying from hunger is already real," Ammar said.

The U.N. humanitarian office said Wednesday that recent screenings show that nearly 10% of children under the age of 5 suffer from acute malnutrition, a 12-fold increase from before the war. The rate is even higher in northern Gaza, which has been largely cut off from aid for months.

For Zainab al-Zein, the difficult choice to feed her now-4-month-old baby crushed biscuits and ground rice instead of formula has meant frequent trips to the local hospital, which like Gaza's health care system at large is under deep strain from the war.

Health care providers typically recommend parents wait until their child is 6 months old before feeding them solids. Research has found that babies who are given solid food too early are at higher risk of developing certain chronic diseases.

Rocking in an infant bouncer and swaddled in a blanket, Linda cried ceaselessly as her mother tried to feed her.

"This is known, of course, as unhealthy eating, and we know that it causes her intestinal distress, bloating and colic," said al-Zein. "What can I do?"

## **Blinken to brief Israeli leaders on cease-fire and hostage talks as war in Gaza enters 5th month**

By MATTHEW LEE, WAFAA SHURAFU and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken was set to meet Israeli leaders on Wednesday as Hamas put forward a detailed plan for a new cease-fire and hostage release deal, but both sides remain dug in on thus far elusive goals as the war enters its fifth month.

Hamas laid out a three-phase plan to unfold over 4 1/2 months, responding to a proposal drawn up by the United States, Israel, Qatar and Egypt. All hostages would be released in exchange for hundreds of Palestinians imprisoned by Israel, including senior militants, and an end to the war.

The proposal would effectively leave Hamas in power in Gaza and allow it to rebuild its military capabilities, a scenario that Israeli leaders have adamantly rejected. President Joe Biden said Hamas' demands are "a little over the top" but that negotiations will continue.

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The deadliest round of fighting in the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has killed over 27,000 Palestinians, leveled entire neighborhoods, driven the vast majority of Gaza's population from their homes, and pushed a quarter of the population to starvation.

Iran-backed militant groups across the region have conducted attacks, mostly on U.S. and Israeli targets, in solidarity with the Palestinians, drawing reprisals as the risk of a wider conflict grows.

Israel remains deeply shaken by Hamas' Oct 7 attack, in which militants burst through the country's vaunted defenses and rampaged across southern Israel, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting some 250, around half of whom remain in captivity in Gaza.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says the war will continue until "total victory" over Hamas and the return of all the remaining hostages.

Blinken, who is on his fifth visit to the region since the war broke out, is trying to advance the cease-fire talks while pushing for a larger postwar settlement in which Saudi Arabia would normalize relations with Israel in return for a "clear, credible, time-bound path to the establishment of a Palestinian state."

But the increasingly unpopular Netanyahu is opposed to Palestinian statehood, and his hawkish governing coalition could collapse if he is seen as making too many concessions.

## MISERY DEEPENS IN DEVASTATED GAZA

There is little talk of grand diplomatic bargains in Gaza, where Palestinians yearn for an end to fighting that has upended every aspect of their lives.

"We pray to God that it stops," said Ghazi Abu Issa, who fled his home and sought shelter in the central town of Deir al-Balah. "There is no water, electricity, food or bathrooms." Those living in tents have been drenched by winter rains and flooding. "We have been humiliated," he said.

The Palestinian death toll from four months of war has reached 27,585, according to the Health Ministry in the Hamas-run territory. The ministry does not distinguish between civilians and combatants in its count but says most of the dead have been women and children.

Israel has ordered Palestinians to evacuate areas that make up two-thirds of the tiny coastal territory. Most of the displaced are packed into the southern town of Rafah near the border with Egypt, where many are living in squalid tent camps and overflowing U.N.-run shelters.

Hamas has continued to put up stiff resistance across the territory, and its police force has returned to the streets in places where Israeli troops have pulled back. Hamas is still holding over 130 hostages, but around 30 of them are believed to be dead, with the vast majority killed on Oct. 7.

## HAMAS SPELLS OUT DEMANDS FOR HOSTAGE DEAL

Hamas' response to the cease-fire proposal was published in Lebanon's Al-Akhbar newspaper, which is close to the powerful Hezbollah militant group. A Hamas official and two Egyptian officials confirmed its authenticity, speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to brief media on the sensitive negotiations.

In the first 45-day phase, Hamas would release all remaining women and children, as well as older and sick men, in exchange for Palestinian women, children, older and sick prisoners held by Israel. Israel would release an additional 1,500 prisoners, including 500 specified by Hamas — likely senior militants serving life sentences.

Israel would also withdraw from populated areas, cease aerial operations, allow far more aid to enter and permit Palestinians to return to their homes, including in devastated northern Gaza.

The second phase, to be negotiated during the first, would include the release of all remaining hostages, mostly soldiers, in exchange for more Palestinian prisoners, and Israel would complete its withdrawal from Gaza. In the third phase, the sides would exchange the remains of hostages and prisoners.

## ISRAELIS AGONIZE OVER FATE OF CAPTIVES

Israelis are intensely focused on the plight of the hostages, with family members and the wider public demanding a deal with Hamas, fearful that time is running out. Israeli forces have only rescued one hostage, while Hamas says several were killed in Israeli airstrikes and failed rescue missions.

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

Thousands of Israelis have taken part in weekly protests calling for the release of the hostages and demanding new elections. But Netanyahu is beholden to far-right coalition allies who have threatened to bring down the government if he concedes too much in the negotiations.

That could spell the end of Netanyahu's long political career and expose him to prosecution over long-standing corruption allegations.

But the longer the war continues, the greater risk it spills over into other countries, drawing the U.S. and its allies even deeper into a volatile region.

Israel and Hezbollah have been locked in a low-intensity conflict along the border since the start of the war in Gaza.

Iran-backed groups in Syria and Iraq have launched dozens of attacks against bases housing U.S. troops and killed three American soldiers last week, drawing a wave of retaliatory airstrikes. The U.S. and Britain have also carried out strikes against the Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen in response to their attacks on cargo ships in the Red Sea and disruption of global trade.

The Houthis, who portray their attacks as a blockade of Israel but have targeted ships with no known connection to the country, attacked two more ships early Tuesday.

## **By disclosing his cancer, Charles breaks centuries of royal tradition. But he shares only so much**

By LAURIE KELLMAN Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — In British history, the secrecy of the monarch's health has always reigned supreme. Buckingham Palace's disclosure that King Charles III has been diagnosed with cancer shattered that longstanding tradition.

On the heels of the shock and well-wishing that followed the official statement Monday came the surprise that the palace had announced anything at all. Indeed, the unprecedented missive was sparse on details: Charles, 75, had begun treatment for a cancer it did not name after being diagnosed during a recent corrective procedure for an enlarged prostate. The king is stepping back from public duties but carrying on state business during his treatment, which he'll receive as an outpatient, the palace said.

"The King has cancer," the Times of London declared in a terse banner headline Tuesday. It was unlike any other in British history.

Never complain, never explain, as Charles' late mother, Queen Elizabeth II, was known to say. Charles has withheld details of his illness and treatment, and in that way is carrying on her approach. But in beaming a sliver of light from inside the palace walls and his own life, the king has broken with his mother and royal tradition.

THERE IS A LOT WE STILL DON'T KNOW ABOUT THE HEALTH OF BRITISH ROYALTY

The world still does not know the cause of Elizabeth's death in 2022 at the age of 96. In the final years of her life, the public was told only that the queen was suffering from "mobility issues." Her death certificate listed the cause simply as "old age."

The British public wasn't told that Charles' grandfather, King George VI, had lung cancer before his death in February 1952 at the age of 56, and some historians have claimed that the king himself wasn't told he was terminally ill.

Given that Charles rules in a media-saturated age, "I do think it's incumbent on him to reveal more than he's revealed," said Sally Bedell Smith, author of "Charles: The Passions and Paradoxes of an Improbable Life."

"He was admirably candid in what he said about being treated for an enlarged prostate, and his impulse was to be open and also to encourage men to have the necessary examinations," she added. "But then he reverted to the traditional royal form, which is mystery, secrecy, opacity."

On Tuesday, former royal press secretary Simon Lewis told BBC Radio 4 that Charles' openness about his cancer diagnosis has been his style as a monarch.

"I think 20 years ago we would have got a very abrupt, short statement, and that's about it," he said.

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The palace statement goes as far as possible, "given that the King has had a diagnosis of cancer and, as a lot of people know, processing that is a pretty tough process."

One reason for disclosing his illness, the palace statement said, was "in the hope it may assist public understanding for all those around the world who are affected by cancer." Cancer patient advocates reported glimmers of success on that front, with Cancer Research UK reporting a 42% rise in visits to its cancer information page, according to Dr. Julie Sharp, the group's head of health and patient information.

The jump "reflects that high-profile cancer cases often act as a prompt to encourage people to find out more or think about their own health," she said.

But there was another pragmatic reason: To keep control of the information in the age of lightning-fast social media and misinformation. The palace statement said Charles "has chosen to share his diagnosis to prevent speculation."

## LEADERS TEND TO HOLD INFORMATION ABOUT HEALTH VERY CLOSE

In the annals of power, leaders and their advisers strive to maintain — or at least, not undermine — the perception of being in strong and in control. Because to allow any perception of vulnerability or weakness could spark a fight for the gavel or the crown — or encourage a coup.

The former Soviet Union was famous for neglecting to mention when its leaders are sick or dead — think Leonid Brezhnev, Yuri Andropov and Konstantin Chernenko, secretly sick and soon deceased one after the other in the 1980s. Each event sparked scrambles for succession.

In the United States, there's little to no debate about the public's right to know the health status of their leaders. It's a key feature of the 2024 presidential rumble between President Joe Biden, 81, and former president Donald Trump, 77, with other contenders, such as GOP hopeful Nikki Haley, arguing that they're both too old to preside.

And on Feb. 1, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin — sixth in the presidential line of succession — apologized for keeping secret his cancer diagnosis and surgery. In a rare press conference, he acknowledged missing a key chance to use the experience as a teaching moment for those he leads across the Defense Department and, even more importantly, for Black Americans.

## HOW MUCH DOES THE BRITISH PUBLIC HAVE A RIGHT TO KNOW?

Whether the monarch owes the world more information about his health than other Britons do is a tense subject.

Royals are private citizens but also, in a sense, part of the public trust given that they are subsidized by British taxpayers and play an important — though largely powerless — constitutional role. Unelected, they inherit their wealth under a 1,000-year-old monarchy that Republican activists have long tried to dislodge.

And though some polls show the public is friendly toward Charles, opposition and apathy to the monarchy are both growing. In a recent study by the National Center for Social Research, just 29% of respondents thought the monarchy was "very important" — the lowest level in the center's 40 years of research on the subject. Opposition was highest among the young.

Remaining relevant is part of what makes Charles' legacy and succession so urgent. Maintaining at least the appearance of vitality can be key to leaders' pursuit of and hold on power. The king, the palace was careful to note, would step away from public-facing duties during his treatment but continue to manage other duties of state.

In Charles' case, succession has long been set: Next in line is his son, William, the prince of Wales. But the king's illness makes William's preparation more critical at a time when he's also caring for his wife, Kate, princess of Wales, who is recovering from abdominal surgery.

Charles' news was received with great sympathy in a country in which 3 million people live with cancer, according to Macmillan Cancer Support, a London-based charity. On average, it says, one person is diagnosed with cancer in the UK every 90 seconds. That's about 1,000 new cancer cases detected every day, according to the National Health Service.

That the king has joined those ranks — and, critically for a British monarch, shared that vulnerability with the world — heralded for some a new era of transparency in an era of social media and misinformation.



## **Syria says Israeli airstrikes over Homs have killed and wounded civilians**

By ALBERT AJI and KAREEM CHEHAYEB Associated Press

DAMASCUS, Syria (AP) — Israeli airstrikes over the central city of Homs and nearby areas killed and wounded civilians, the Syrian military said Wednesday.

There was no immediate comment from Israel.

Syrian state news agency SANA quoted an unidentified military official as saying the strikes late Tuesday damaged both private and public property, without giving additional details. The Israeli jets reportedly struck the Syrian city and the countryside from over the Mediterranean Sea near the Lebanese coastal city of Tripoli.

The strikes come as tensions across the Middle East flare with the Israeli-Hamas war and a drone attack on Jan. 28 that killed three U.S. troops and injured dozens more in northeastern Jordan, near the Syrian border.

The pro-government Sham FM radio station said the areas struck included the affluent al-Malaab neighborhood and Hamra Street. It said Israel hit farmland in al-Waer, causing fires but no casualties there.

Britain-based pro-opposition war monitor the Syrian Observatory for Humanitarian Rights said at least six civilians were killed, among them a woman and a child, as well as two militants from the Lebanese Hezbollah group. The casualties were all in a building on Hamra Street that was apparently targeted in one of the strikes, it said. Search efforts were ongoing, the Observatory added.

It said at least nine explosions were heard in Homs and its outskirts, where Hezbollah is reportedly present.

Israel has carried out hundreds of strikes on targets inside government-controlled parts of war-torn Syria in recent years.

Israel rarely acknowledges its actions in Syria, but it has said it targets bases of Iran-allied militant groups such as Hezbollah, which has sent thousands of fighters to support Syrian President Bashar Assad's forces. It has also targeted members of Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard in Syria, including a high-ranking general last December.

## **Adult dancers in Washington state want a strippers' bill of rights. Here's how it could help them.**

By HALLIE GOLDEN Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — For months, Andrea studied for her master's degree in library sciences between dancing naked at clubs in Seattle. But then she was sexually assaulted at work and slapped by a customer — and nobody stepped in to help.

Now, she and hundreds of other strippers in Washington state are fighting for statewide protections that would be the most comprehensive in the U.S., according to advocates.

"We shouldn't be verbally abused for just doing our job and existing," said Andrea, who has seen a DJ at one club harass dancers if they don't tip him enough. She avoids the club if he's there, said the 24-year-old, who would only use her first name. The Associated Press does not identify people who say they have been sexually assaulted.

Known as the "strippers' bill of rights," proposals being considered in the Legislature would require a security guard at each club, keypad codes to enter dressing rooms, training for employees on preventing sexual harassment, and procedures if a customer is violent. It would also require training on how to de-escalate conflict between dancers, employees and customers, and signs stating that dancers are not required to hand over tips.

"It is a legal, licensed business operation in the state of Washington, so the people who work there deserve our attention and our respect and the protections that every other Washington worker gets," said Democratic Rep. Amy Walen, who sponsored the House bill. The Senate is considering a similar bill.

The bills are the culmination of six years of advocacy work by Strippers Are Workers, a dancer-led organization in Washington, in response to wide regulation gaps for strippers at the 11 clubs across the state,

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said Madison Zack-Wu, its campaign manager.

But those regulation gaps extend beyond Washington. And during those six years of work by Strippers Are Workers, only one other state added worker protections for adult entertainers, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. In 2019, Illinois started requiring that adult entertainment establishments, along with other businesses, have a written sexual harassment policy. That same year, Washington added a few initial regulations, including panic buttons and blacklists for customers.

The list by NCSL doesn't include bills focused on age minimums or human trafficking, a criminal industry whose victims are often recruited to work in U.S. strip clubs, according to the National Human Trafficking Hotline. These bills rarely address workplace protections like the ones in Washington, said Landon Jacquinot, an NCSL policy associate.

There have also been efforts at the local level, including a bar in Los Angeles and a strip club in Portland, Oregon, where dancers voted to unionize. And, in a 2014 decision with statewide implications, the Nevada Supreme Court ruled that dancers at one Las Vegas club are employees, and are entitled to minimum wage and other protections.

But Zack-Wu said many strippers don't want to become full-time employees. "This job is all about flexibility and trying to make it your own," she said. The bills in Washington would apply to all strippers, no matter their employment status.

A similar bill in Washington stalled last year after concerns were raised over it allowing alcohol in strip clubs. The bills being considered in both chambers don't include that section and, with more than two dozen sponsors combined, have a better chance of making it to the governor's desk in the Democratic-controlled Legislature.

Most dancers in Washington are independent contractors, and they can be blacklisted if they report abuse or exploitation by managers, said Zack-Wu. Customers pay the dancers, who then have to pay club fees every shift, which could be as much as \$200.

The proposed House measure would cap club fees at \$150 or 30% of the amount they made during their shift — whichever is less — while barring clubs from carrying over unpaid fees from previous shifts.

In late 2022, Eva Bhagwandin had just given a man three lap dances at a club in Seattle only to have his card declined, the 28-year-old said. He became aggressive, yelling that he already paid. The manager didn't step in and there was no security guard, so she and a waitress had to get him and his screaming friends out of the club. She was never paid the \$140 she was owed, but still had to pay \$200 to the club.

Afterward, she learned that another dancer had experienced something similar two days before with the same men.

"The lack of security and training and the lack of support between the management to the dancers, creates this culture where customers know that they can come in and not pay, they can come in and assault dancers, and they can come in and pretty much do whatever they want," she said.

But Zack-Wu said there is concern that adding these protections without also adding revenue from alcohol sales could result in businesses, which have struggled since the pandemic, shutting down.

"We don't want clubs to shut down now or in the future because that will just put everyone out of work and then put them in even riskier or more dire situations," she said.

Republican lawmakers said they support protecting employees in this industry, but it's challenging to know the best way to regulate it.

"We also want to make sure that we're doing this correctly and striking the right balance for, not just the workers, but communities and neighborhoods as well," said House Minority Leader Drew Stokesbary, a Republican.

Andrea, the dancer in Seattle, received her degree in November and wants to work in a library while continuing to dance. But she hopes soon there will be added protections.

"It's not the easiest place for us to be sometimes but, you know, a lot of people persevere because we love the job," she said. "But with all these protections in place, it would really help a lot."

## What's next as Trump tries to stave off his 2020 election trial?

### All eyes are on the Supreme Court

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In Donald Trump's federal 2020 election interference case, all eyes are on the Supreme Court, whose next moves could determine whether the former president stands trial in Washington ahead of the November election.

An appeals court panel on Tuesday unanimously rejected Trump's claims that he is immune from prosecution, with the judges saying they cannot accept the idea that former presidents are "above the law for all time" once they leave the White House.

The ruling forces Trump to move quickly to ask the conservative-majority Supreme Court to intervene in the landmark case accusing Trump of conspiring to overturn his 2020 election loss to President Joe Biden. Otherwise, the case — which has been on hold since December — will be re-started at the trial court level, and special counsel Jack Smith's team has strongly pushed for jurors to hear it this year.

What happens next is of paramount importance to both sides.

Trump's lawyers have tried at every opportunity to delay the proceedings, for obvious reasons: A Trump victory over Democrat Biden in November would make him head of the executive branch and give him the authority to potentially order his new attorney general to dismiss the federal cases against him that he faces, or issue a pardon for himself. The Republican presidential primary front-runner has denied any wrongdoing in the case, and has characterized all the cases against him as politically motivated.

Here's a look at Trump's options and what the Supreme Court might do:

#### WHAT ARE TRUMP'S OPTIONS NOW?

The ruling doesn't immediately send the case back to U.S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan. The appeals court is giving Trump until Feb. 12 to ask the Supreme Court to stay — or put on hold — the decision.

A Trump campaign spokesman said Tuesday that the former president would appeal the ruling "in order to safeguard the Presidency and the Constitution." Trump argues that all the allegations in the indictment were "official acts" taken as president, therefore he can't be prosecuted.

Trump could also potentially ask the full U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit to consider his immunity claims, but the panel said that such a request would not prevent the case from returning to the trial court and resuming in the meantime.

#### WHAT WILL THE SUPREME COURT DO?

It's hard to say. Any untested legal question involving separation of powers and the scope of presidential authority is indisputably a consequential one. But lower court judges — nominated to the bench by presidents from both political parties — have suggested that this particular case is not a close call in rulings that have roundly rejected Trump's immunity arguments.

Five of the nine justices must agree to grant a stay in order to prevent the case from resuming in the trial court. And at least four justices must agree in order for the court to hear arguments in any case.

The justices declined an earlier request from the special counsel's team to get involved in the immunity dispute and to issue an expedited ruling. But they could jump into the fray now and use the case as an opportunity to make a definitive ruling on whether the immunity from lawsuits that former presidents already have for their official actions should be extended into the criminal realm as well.

The Supreme Court is already weighing some other politically charged cases. The justices, for instance, are hearing arguments this week in a legal dispute stemming from the push by Republican and independent voters in Colorado to kick Trump off the state's Republican primary ballot because of his efforts to overturn his 2020 election loss to Biden.

#### WHEN MIGHT THE TRIAL BEGIN?

Judge Chutkan had initially scheduled the case for trial on March 4, but canceled that date last week. A new date wasn't immediately set.

The timing now depends on the Supreme Court and its willingness to take up the case. There's no

timetable for any of that, though the justices are likely to seek the input of Smith's team before deciding whether to keep the legal ruling against the former president on hold.

A decision by the court to refuse Trump's plea for a stay would enable Chutkan to restart the proceedings, and to do so fairly quickly. But if the court grants the Trump team's request to take up the case, all eyes will be on whatever timetable the court establishes in determining the next steps.

If the court grants Trump's request without accelerating the appeals process, Trump would likely have until early May before he even needs to file his full appeal. But the justices could also set much quicker deadlines for reaching a final decision.

The case has been effectively frozen since December by the Trump team's appeal, meaning that if and when it restarts, Chutkan will give both sides an additional opportunity to respond to pending motions and arguments.

#### WHAT ABOUT TRUMP'S OTHER CASES?

The Washington trial being put on hold has opened the door for a separate case in New York, charging Trump in connection with hush money payments to a porn actor, to proceed first on March 25. That case, however, has long been viewed by experts as the least legally perilous of the four indictments Trump faces.

U.S. District Judge Aileen Cannon in Florida has set a May 20 trial date in the other case brought by Smith that accuses Trump of illegally hoarding classified documents at his Florida estate and obstructing FBI efforts to get them back. But Cannon has also pushed back multiple other deadlines and signaled an openness to revisiting the trial date during a pivotal pretrial conference set for March.

No trial date has been set yet in Fulton County, Georgia, where the district attorney's office has charged Trump with trying to subvert that state's 2020 election.

## **Punishing storm finally easing off in Southern California but mudslide threat remains**

By STEFANIE DAZIO and JULIE WATSON Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A storm that parked itself over Southern California for days, unleashing historic downpours that caused hundreds of landslides, was expected to move out of the region after one final drenching Wednesday, but authorities warned of the continued threat of collapsing hillsides.

One of the wettest storms in Southern California history unleashed at least 475 mudslides in the Los Angeles area after dumping more than a foot (30 centimeters) of rain in some areas, including the Hollywood Hills.

The weather began relenting Tuesday and evacuation orders were lifted for homes in flood- and slide-prone areas, including a canyon in Los Angeles County that was scarred by a 2022 fire and left with little or no vegetation left to hold soil in place.

After a heavy cloudburst forecast for Wednesday afternoon or night that could bring another few inches of rain, Southern California was expected to begin drying out Thursday and heading for a sunny weekend.

Yet after back-to-back atmospheric rivers walloped California in less than a week, it wouldn't take much for water, mud and boulders to sluice down fragile hillsides, experts warned.

"The ground is fully saturated and simply cannot hold any more water," even if rains are light, National Weather Service meteorologist Tyler Kranz said.

Fortunately, no deaths had been reported from the slides.

On Tuesday, Dion Peronneau in the LA suburb of Baldwin Hills was trying to get her artwork and books out of her house. Mud knocked her sliding glass doors off their frame and poured into her home of 25 years.

"Eight feet of mud is pressed up against my window that is no longer there," she said. "They put up boards to make sure no more mud can come in."

Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass said the city was looking toward helping people recover from the weather's pounding. Officials will seek federal emergency money to help move homeless people out of shelters and to aid owners of damaged hillside homes where insurance companies wouldn't cover the losses, she said.

But counting the damaged homes might take a while, she warned at a Tuesday evening news conference.



"The hillsides are soaked, some of them are still moving," Bass said. "So hopefully no more homes will be damaged, but it's too early to tell."

Work crews, meanwhile, struggled to deal with the storm's aftermath. Thousands of customers remained without power late Tuesday, after rain flooded electrical vaults and trees brought down on power lines.

Some 400 trees had fallen in the Los Angeles area alone, the city said.

People were being urged to avoid touching the lines for fear of electrocution and to steer clear of roadways at risk of floods and mud. Over the course of the storm, dozens of people in LA alone — including at least 50 stranded motorists — were rescued from fast-moving, swollen creeks, rivers, roads and storm channels, fire officials said.

Yet some business owners were looking on the bright side.

At The Flowerman in Pasadena, florist and owner Lou Quismorio said he hoped customers return with the sun.

"I can't really worry about it," he said. "I've got over 8,500 roses in my cooler right now."

In San Diego, Sabrina Biddle was cleaning up after a few leaks in her dance studio.

"Back to dancing, no more storm," she said.

Stormy weather rolled into Northern California last weekend before moving south and stalling. Throughout the state, seven storm-related deaths had been reported, including four people crushed by toppling trees and someone who was swept up Tuesday in a swollen Tijuana River channel near the border with Mexico, immigration officials said.

The California Highway Patrol said a 69-year-old man died Monday after his truck went down an embankment and filled with water in Yucaipa, about 80 miles (128 kilometers) east of Los Angeles.

All the rain brought one silver lining: Helping to boost the state's often-strapped water supply. At least 6 billion gallons (22.7 billion liters) of storm water in Los Angeles alone were captured for groundwater and local supplies, the mayor's office said. Just two years ago, nearly all of California was plagued by a devastating drought that strained resources and forced water cutbacks.

The latest storms followed a string of atmospheric rivers that pummeled the state last year, leading to at least 20 deaths.

As the latest weather front moved east, it prompted warnings across the state line.

Parts of northern Arizona stretching southeast toward New Mexico were under a winter storm warning through 5 p.m. Wednesday and a wide swath of west-central Arizona, including Phoenix, remained under a flood watch until Thursday morning.

The National Weather Service in Flagstaff said more than a foot (30 centimeters) of snow was possible in the upper elevations around the Grand Canyon by Wednesday evening, 8 to 15 inches (20 to 38 cm) in Flagstaff and up to 18 inches (46 cm) in the mountains east of Phoenix.

## **A record number of Americans can't afford their rent.**

### **Lawmakers are scrambling to help**

By JESSE BEDAYN and MICHAEL CASEY Associated Press/Report for America

DENVER (AP) — Single mom Caitlyn Colbert watched as rent for her two-bedroom apartment doubled, then tripled and then quadrupled over a decade in Denver — from \$750 to \$3,374 last year.

Every month, like millions of Americans, Colbert juggled her costs. Pay rent or swim team fees for one of her three kids. Rent or school supplies. Rent or groceries. Colbert, a social worker who helps people stay financially afloat, would often arrive home to notices giving her 30 days to pay rent and a late fee or face eviction.

"Every month you just gotta budget and then you still fall short," she said, adding what became a monthly refrain: "Well, this month at least we have \$13 left."

Millions of Americans, especially people of color, are facing those same, painful decisions as a record number struggle with unaffordable rent increases, a crisis fueled by rising prices from inflation, a shortage of affordable housing and the end of pandemic relief.

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The latest data from the Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies, released in January, found that a record high 22.4 million renter households — or half of renters nationwide — were spending more than 30% of their income on rent in 2022. The number of affordable units — with rents under \$600 — also dropped to 7.2 million that year, 2.1 million fewer than a decade earlier.

Those factors contributed to a dramatic rise in eviction filings and a record number of people becoming homeless.

"It's one of the worst years we've ever seen," said Whitney Airgood-Obrycki, a senior research associate at the Harvard center, who added that the level of cost-burdened households in 2022 had not been seen since the Great Recession in 2008, when 10 million Americans lost their homes to foreclosure.

After failing to make a significant dent in the problem over the last decade, state and federal lawmakers across the U.S. are making housing a priority in 2024 and throwing the kitchen sink at the issue — including proposals to enact eviction protections, institute zoning reforms, cap annual rent increases and dedicate tens of billions of dollars toward building more housing.

The hardest hit have been renters who made less than \$30,000, and who, after paying rent and utilities, were left with just \$310 a month on average, Airgood-Obrycki said.

"So you can certainly imagine the kinds of tradeoffs that have to happen," she said. "Cost-burden renters are spending less on things like food and health care and retirement. So, there are significant implications for the long-term well-being of these households."

In Denver, Colbert's bathroom roof partly caved in from a leak last year, and the landlord delayed a fix even as rent went up \$200 a month. It was the last straw for Colbert, who moved in to live with family and is purchasing a home through Habitat for Humanity, which gave her a low-interest loan.

"It's so disheartening, paying so much and not even seeing where your rent is going," Colbert said. "It just hits you like, 'This is for nothing.'"

In Auburn, Massachusetts, pervasive rent hikes have already hit the last bastion of affordable housing.

Just off an interstate alongside a pond, residents at the American Mobile Home Park face rent increases upwards of 40%. Many tenants, mostly seniors and others on fixed incomes, haven't signed new leases with those increases. The group Lawyers For Civil Rights has sent a letter to the landlord accusing it of "unconscionable rent increases," and failing to provide critical services like adequate garbage and snow removal.

"How am I going to pay that?" said Amy Case, 49, wondering how she'll balance the \$345 monthly increase with the \$200 she has to spend on medications and the cost of a twice-yearly MRI to monitor her brain tumor.

"I don't know what else to cut back on," said Case, an administrative assistant at a local college, who said she would only have \$300 left over each month for other necessities. "Probably less groceries. I certainly can't cut back on my medications."

Another tenant, 72-year-old Ann Urbanovitch, who works as a cashier at a department store, is facing a similar rent increase.

"I expected it to go up \$100, but \$345. I was shocked," she said. "I have to dip into my retirement savings ... because, you know, times are tough."

The mobile home park owner, Parakeet Communities, did not respond to a request from The Associated Press for comment.

With many families struggling to pay, landlords in Colorado are increasingly turning to evictions, with over 50,000 evictions filed last year, according to data from the Colorado Judicial Branch.

"2023 was the high-water mark for evictions filings in recorded Colorado history," said Zach Neumann, co-CEO of the Community Economic Defense Project, which offers financial and legal assistance to Colorado residents struggling with rent.

Monique Gant, the mother of two boys, stuffed her belongings into boxes in a Denver suburb last week after losing a drawn-out eviction fight, planning to move between long-stay hotel rooms and her RV for now. Gant's hair has thinned from the stress she buries beneath a stoic face for her children.

"My kids, they assume that I am Super Woman," said Gant. But "when I go to take a shower, put some

music on, I cry.”

Already, she said, her 10- and 11-year-old sons have been in fights at school and on the bus, and aren’t engaging with classes as they once did.

About 40% of those facing eviction each year are children — some 2.9 million, according to a study co-authored by Nick Graetz at Princeton University’s Eviction Lab, who said research shows wide-ranging impacts of housing turbulence and eviction on children’s mental health and development.

“We can see that things really fall off for children that experience eviction,” Graetz said.

In Congress, lawmakers are working on a bill that would expand a federal program that awards tax credits to housing developers who agree to set aside units for low-income tenants. Supporters say that could lead to the construction of 200,000 more affordable homes. Some lawmakers are also calling for more rental assistance, including a significant increase in funding for housing vouchers.

“A larger commitment from the federal government is required,” said Chris Herbert, managing director of the Harvard center. “Only then will the nation finally make a meaningful dent in the housing affordability crisis making life so difficult for millions of people.”

At the state level, Colorado lawmakers have proposed a bill to limit the reasons for which a landlord can evict a tenant. Other bills would scrap the filing fee for tenants in an eviction case, and roll back local rules prohibiting homeowners from renting out a separate unit on their property.

“If we don’t act now,” said Colorado Gov. Jared Polis in his state of the state speech last month, largely focused on housing, “we will soon face a spiraling point of no return.”

Other states feel the same urgency.

In Washington state, a bill would require that 10% of new housing around transit hubs be affordable for low-income residents. Another would bar landlords from increasing rent by more than 5% annually during a rental agreement term.

In Massachusetts, a bill would invest over \$4 billion toward building and shoring up affordable housing in response to the state’s estimate that more than 200,000 additional homes will be needed by 2030. It would be the largest housing investment in state history.

However, it would come too late for the rent increase Urbanovitch faces to stay in her mobile home.

“My biggest worry,” she said, “is not really having a place to move to. There’s no place to go.”

## **Cough? Sore throat? More schools suggest mildly sick kids attend anyway**

By BIANCA VÁZQUEZ TONESS AP Education Writer

Trenace Dorsey-Hollins’ 5-year-old daughter was sick a lot last year. Dorsey-Hollins followed school guidelines and kept her home when she had a cough or a sore throat — or worse — until she was completely better.

Near the end of the year, the school in Fort Worth, Texas, called her in to talk about why her daughter had missed so much school.

During the pandemic, schools urged parents and children to stay home at any sign of illness. Even though the emergency has ended, she said no one has clarified that those rules have changed.

“It’s extremely confusing,” she said.

“In the past, if the child didn’t have a fever over 100, then it’s okay to send them to school,” said the mother of a 5- and 13-year-old. “But now it’s like if they have a cough or they’re sneezing, you might want to keep them home. Which is it?”

Widely varying guidance on when to keep children home has only added to the confusion, which many see as a factor in the nationwide epidemic of chronic school absences. Some advocates and school systems — and the state of California — are now encouraging kids to come to class even when they have the sniffles or other nuisance illnesses like lice or pinkeye.

Families need to hear they no longer must keep kids home at any sign of illness, said Hedy Chang, the executive director of Attendance Works. The national nonprofit aimed at improving attendance has issued its own guidance, urging parents to send kids to school if they can participate in daily activities.

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"We have to now re-engage kids and families and change their thinking about that," Chang said.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends staying home when there's fever, vomiting or diarrhea, or when students "are not well enough to participate in class."

But many districts go far beyond that, delineating a dizzying array of symptoms they say should rule out attendance. Fort Worth Independent School District, where Dorsey-Hollins' youngest daughter attends kindergarten, advises staying home if a child has a cough, sore throat or rash. A student should be "fever-free" for 24 hours without medication before returning to school, per district guidelines.

Austin Independent School District in Texas lists "eye redness," "undetermined rash" or "open, draining lesions" as reasons to stay home. Kids with lice can't attend class in New York City schools. Maryland's Montgomery County recommends keeping a child home with a stomachache, "pale or flushed face" or "thick yellow discharge from the nose."

Finding the right balance is difficult, and it's understandable that different places would approach it differently, said Claire McCarthy, a pediatrician at Boston Children's Hospital and professor at Harvard Medical School.

"Each school or school district has a different tolerance for illness," said McCarthy.

It all leaves many parents feeling puzzled.

"It's a struggle," said Malika Elwin, a mother of a second grader on New York's Long Island.

She doesn't want to expose other children or burden the teacher with her daughter's runny nose, so she's kept her daughter home longer even though she's feeling better because she still has cold symptoms. "Then I regret that because she just runs around here all day perfectly fine," she said.

For those who test positive for COVID-19, the CDC still calls for staying home and isolating for at least five days. But guidance from states and individual schools varies widely. In some school systems, guidance allows for students who test positive to go to school as long as they are asymptomatic.

Trenace Dorsey-Hollins said it is hard for parents like her to keep track.

"Is it actually OK to sit in school with a cough if you don't have a fever and haven't tested positive for COVID?" she said.

When schools closed during the pandemic, kids fell behind academically — and continued chunks of school absences have made it harder for them to catch up. So some authorities have re-evaluated their tolerance for illness. During the 2021-2022 school year, more than a quarter of students missed at least 10% of the school year, up from 15% before the pandemic.

Missing that much school puts students at risk of not learning to read or graduate. Absent students also lose out on meals, socialization with peers and caring adults, physical exercise, and access to mental health counseling and health care. In other words, missing school has its own health effects.

And when a class sees high levels of chronic absenteeism, it hurts the students who are there because a teacher has to spend time reorienting the students who've been away.

The state of California, where 25% of students last year missed 10% of the school year, took a new approach to sick-day guidance this fall. Instead of only saying when a child should stay home, the guidance describes circumstances when a child might be slightly unwell but can come to school.

Overall, students should stay home when their symptoms "prevent them from participating meaningfully in routine activities." But coming to school with diarrhea is all right as long as a child can make it to the toilet in time. Going to school with mild cold symptoms, sore throat, mild rash or pinkeye are all "OK."

What's more, California doesn't insist on waiting 24 hours after a fever or vomiting before returning to school. Going fever-free or without vomiting overnight is enough.

Boston Public Schools took a similar stance in its online recommendations for parents. "Respiratory infections are common," reads the online guidance. "If the child does not have fever, does not appear to have decreased activity or other symptoms, it is not necessary for the child to stay home."

The shift in guidance could have a disproportionate impact on low-income communities and people of color, said Noha Aboelata, who leads the Roots Community Health Center in Oakland, California. People in those communities might be more likely to live in multigenerational homes, take crowded public transportation or have poor ventilation in their homes, she said. When people are out and about while sick,



vulnerable loved ones could be put at risk.

She had hoped the pandemic's lessons about staying home when contagious and taking care of yourself and your family when sick would outlast the public health emergency. Instead, she said, "it feels like the pendulum is swinging fiercely back in the other direction."

But changing the culture around school absences goes beyond just issuing guidance.

Some schools in San Diego County seem unaware of California's new guidance allowing kids to attend school while mildly sick, said Tracy Schmidt, who oversees attendance for the county Office of Education.

Still, others have adopted it and have begun talking through symptoms with parents who call to report their children are sick, urging them to bring them in and see how it goes. It gives her hope that as more schools and parents learn about this guidance, students will miss less school.

"The most important place for our kids to be is school," she said. "We need to leave behind this mindset that we had to adopt during the pandemic because we were in a public safety emergency."

## **Conflict in the Middle East is affecting a key energy lifeline for Europe. How big is the risk?**

By DAVID McHUGH and MATTHEW DALY Associated Press

FRANKFURT, Germany (AP) — Missiles and drones are flying in the Red Sea, disrupting one of the world's key trade arteries and a chokepoint for energy shipments headed for Europe.

Attacks by Yemen's Houthi rebels over Israel's war with Hamas are posing a new threat to the future of energy supplies to the 27-country European Union, which relies on imported natural gas to power factories, generate electricity and heat homes.

Tankers carrying liquefied natural gas — which is supercooled to travel by ship instead of pipeline — routinely pass through the Red Sea, and several shipments to Italy already have been canceled.

It's causing anxiety, especially as Europe still is grappling with the fallout from an energy crisis after Russia largely cut off natural gas to the continent over the invasion of Ukraine.

Here are key things to know about the threat to Europe's energy supplies from conflict in the Middle East:  
WHAT IS GOING ON WITH RED SEA SHIPPING?

The Iranian-backed Houthis have been firing drones and missiles at ships that pass by territory they control near the narrow Bab al-Mandab Strait at the southern end of the Red Sea.

The Houthis say they are striking Israel-bound ships to support the Hamas militant group in its war with Israel, although other ships have been targeted as well. In response, the U.S. and the U.K. have been attacking Houthi launch sites in Yemen since mid-January.

Security concerns have led shipping and some energy companies to reroute vessels around the southern tip of Africa instead of through the Suez Canal at the northern end of the Red Sea. That is lengthening the journey to Europe from suppliers in the Middle East, like Qatar, by a week or more and raising costs.

Around 70% of LNG shipments from Qatar that were headed for Italy's major terminal on the Adriatic Sea were canceled in January. Last year, Qatar supplied 40% of Italy's LNG.

WHAT IS LNG AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Cooling natural gas to minus 162° C (minus 260° F) changes it into a liquid and reduces its volume by 600 times so it can be stored and shipped aboard specially designed vessels.

Upon arrival, it's reheated into gas and transported by pipeline to distribution companies, industrial consumers and power plants.

Europe relied for decades on gas transported through pipelines from Russia. That came to an abrupt end after Russia invaded Ukraine and cut off most of its supply. LNG became a lifeline, with the German government, for example, hastily lining up floating import terminals on its northern coast.

Last year, 12.9% of Europe's LNG went through the Red Sea from suppliers in the Middle East, mainly Qatar. That means "an extended shut-in of the Red Sea route from the Middle East poses a supply risk to Europe," said Kaushal Ramesh, vice president at Rystad Energy.

WHAT'S THE IMPACT ON SUPPLIES AND PRICES?

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So far, there's been little to no impact on natural gas prices. In fact, spot prices for natural gas have fallen since the Houthi attacks began, from around 45 euros (\$48.38) per megawatt hour before the start of the Israel-Hamas war to 28.37 euros Tuesday.

Europe is getting a break because demand for natural gas is weak amid a sluggish economy. Slow growth in China also has reduced competition. And LNG shipments from the U.S. don't have to go through the Red Sea.

Meanwhile, pipeline gas is still flowing from Norway and Azerbaijan, and Europe is buying some LNG from Russia despite sanctions.

A key factor has been Europe's efforts to fill underground storage with gas ahead of winter: Storage is over 70% full with most of the heating season over.

That means "the price impact will be delayed until Europe's gas storage has been drawn down sufficiently," Rystad's Ramesh said.

Things were different in 2022 when the war in Ukraine began. Russia's cutoff sent gas prices rising sharply, surging inflation to record highs and helping drive a cost-of-living crisis. European governments and companies raced to secure alternatives.

But now, Europe's gas market is "well supplied," said Simone Tagliapietra, an energy analyst at the Bruegel think tank in Brussels. Abundant storage means "a very good buffer" against any interruptions or delays in gas shipments.

## WHAT COULD GO WRONG?

There are fears the Israel-Hamas war could spread to other countries in the region, particularly Iran, and lead to disruption of shipping through the Strait of Hormuz at the end of the Persian Gulf.

That's a key route not just for LNG but for oil, too. So far, Iran and the U.S., Israel's key ally, have indicated they want to avoid a wider war. But the invasion of Ukraine has shown that in the unsettled state of the world, unexpected things can happen.

"There is always a 'but,'" Tagliapietra said. "The risk is an escalation that affects the Strait of Hormuz."

## HOW IMPORTANT IS U.S. GAS TO EUROPE?

U.S. gas exports rose sharply after Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, and the Biden administration has celebrated deliveries to Europe and Asia as a key geopolitical weapon against Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Since then, President Joe Biden has paused approving new proposals for LNG export terminals.

The pause would allow officials to study the impact of LNG projects on climate change, the U.S. economy and national security, Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm said. The action would not affect five terminals that are already approved and under construction, she said.

Industry association Eurogas called Biden's action "alarming" and said U.S. gas imports are "set to play a crucial role for European energy security" in case of possible shortfalls.

Analyst Tagliapietra said, however, that with plenty of new export capacity already approved, Biden's decision would have "no short-term or even medium-term impact on Europe."

U.S. LNG capacity has doubled since exports began in earnest less than a decade ago, and it's set to double again under already-approved projects.

The wisdom of investing more money in fossil fuel infrastructure is also being debated in Europe, which aims to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 55% compared to 1990 levels by 2030.

Europe's gas demand is expected to fall 8% over 2022-2026 as renewable energy like solar and wind power is scaled up.

"Expanding LNG infrastructure in the USA and in the EU is a high economic risk that will very likely end up as stranded assets," said Claudia Kemfert, an economic expert at the German Institute of Economic Research and professor at Leuphana University.

## House vote to impeach Homeland Security Secretary Mayorkas fails, thwarted by Republican defections

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — In a dramatic setback, House Republicans failed Tuesday to impeach Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, forced to shelve a high-profile priority — for now — after a few GOP lawmakers refused to go along with the party's plan.

The stunning roll call fell just a single vote short of impeaching Mayorkas, stalling the Republicans' drive to punish the Biden administration over its handling of the U.S.-Mexico border. With Democrats united against the charges, the Republicans needed almost every vote from their slim majority to approve the articles of impeachment.

A noisy, rowdy scene erupted on the House floor as the vote was tied for several tense minutes, 215-215. Several Republican lawmakers — led by the impeachment's chief sponsor, Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia — surrounded one of the holdouts, Wisconsin Republican Mike Gallagher, who refused to change his vote.

With the tally stuck, Democrats shouted for the gavel to close out the vote.

"Frustrated," said Rep. Mark Green, R-Tenn., the chairman of the Homeland Security Committee, "but we'll see it back again."

House Speaker Mike Johnson's spokesman Raj Shah said they "fully intend" to reconsider the articles of impeachment against Mayorkas "when we have the votes for passage."

But next steps are uncertain. In the end, three Republicans opposed the impeachment, and a fourth Republican switched his vote so the measure could be revisited. The final tally was 214-216.

The outcome was another dismal result for the House Republicans who have repeatedly been unable to use their majority power to accomplish political goals, or even to keep up with the basics of governing.

Johnson, who could afford only a few defections from his ranks, had said earlier he had personally spoken to Gallagher and another GOP holdout, acknowledging the "heavy, heavy" vote as he sought their support.

"It's an extreme measure," said Johnson, R-La. "But extreme times call for extreme measures."

Not since 1876 has a Cabinet secretary faced impeachment charges and it's the first time a sitting secretary is being impeached — 148 years ago, Secretary of War William Belknap resigned just before the vote.

The impeachment charges against Mayorkas come as border security is fast becoming a top political issue in the 2024 election, a particularly potent line of attack being leveled at President Joe Biden by Republicans, led by the party's front-runner for the presidential nomination, Donald Trump.

Record numbers of people have been arriving at the southern border, many fleeing countries around the world, in what Mayorkas calls an era of global migration. Many migrants are claiming asylum and being conditionally released into the U.S., arriving in cities that are under-equipped to provide housing and other aid while they await judicial proceedings which can take years to determine whether they may remain.

The House Democrats united against the two articles of impeachment against Mayorkas, calling the proceedings a sham designed to please Trump, charges that do not rise to the Constitution's bar of treason, bribery or "high crimes and misdemeanors."

"A bunch of garbage," said Rep. Jim McGovern, D-Mass. He called Mayorkas "a good man, a decent man," who is simply trying to do his job.

Even if Republicans are able to impeach Mayorkas, he is not expected to be convicted in a Senate trial since Republican senators have been cool to the effort. The Senate could simply refer the matter to a committee for its own investigation, delaying immediate action.

"This baseless impeachment should never have moved forward," said Mia Ehrenberg, a spokesperson for the Department of Homeland Security.

If House Republicans are "serious about border security, they should abandon these political games," she said.

The impeachment of Mayorkas landed quickly onto the House agenda after Republican efforts to impeach Biden over the business dealings of his son, Hunter Biden, hit a lull, and the investigation into the

Biden family dragged.

The Committee on Homeland Security under Chairman Green had been investigating the secretary for much of the past year, including probing the flow of deadly fentanyl into the U.S. But a resolution from Georgia Rep. Greene pushed it to the fore. The panel swiftly held a pair of hearings in January before announcing the two articles of impeachment against Mayorkas.

Unlike other moments in impeachment history, the afternoon's debate played out to an almost empty chamber, without the fervor or solemnity of past proceedings.

Greene, who was named to be one of the impeachment managers if there is a Senate trial, rose to blame Mayorkas for the "invasion" of migrants coming to the U.S.

Republican Rep. Eli Crane of Arizona said Mayorkas had committed a "dereliction of duty."

Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries said the Mayorkas impeachment vote was a stunt designed by Republicans to sow "chaos and confusion" and appease Trump — rather than to govern.

"No reasonable American can conclude that you're making life better for them by this sham impeachment," Jeffries said.

It was only as the roll call came to a standstill that the chamber burst into an angry, boisterous scene as tempers flared and the vote failed.

The three Republicans opposing impeachment were Gallagher, Rep. Ken Buck of Colorado and Tom McClintock of California. Republican Rep. Blake Moore of Utah was the Republican who switched his vote on procedural grounds.

At one point, Democratic Rep. Al Green of Texas, who had missed votes earlier in the day, arrived from the hospital to cast his vote against the impeachment. Green told NBC News that he had gone to the emergency room and had surgery.

McClintock, in a memo, said the charges "fail to identify an impeachable crime that Mayorkas has committed." He said the articles of impeachment from the committee explain the problems at the border under Biden's watch. But, he said, "they stretch and distort the Constitution."

Tuesday's vote arrived at a politically odd juncture for Mayorkas, who has been negotiating a bipartisan border security package in the Senate, earning high marks from a group of senators involved.

But that legislation, which emerged Sunday as one of the most ambitious immigration overhauls in years, collapsed Tuesday as Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell acknowledged that the deal was dead.. Trump had sharply criticized the bipartisan effort and Speaker Johnson said it was "dead on arrival."

Impeachment, once rare in the U.S., has been used as both a constitutional check on the executive and increasingly as a political weapon.

Experts have argued that Mayorkas has simply been snared in a policy dispute with Republicans who disapprove of the Biden administration's approach to the border situation.

Three former secretaries of the Department of Homeland Security, Michael Chertoff, Janet Napolitano and Jeh Johnson, said in a letter Tuesday that impeaching the Cabinet official over policy disputes would "jeopardize our national security."

Trump as president was twice impeached — first in 2019 on abuse of power over his phone call with the Ukrainian president seeking a favor to dig up dirt on then-rival Biden, and later on the charge of inciting the Jan. 6, 2021 insurrection at the Capitol. He was acquitted on both impeachments in the Senate.

## Prince Harry arrives in London after his father, King Charles III, is diagnosed with cancer

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — King Charles III's cancer was caught early and the monarch will "crack on" with his constitutional duties, Britain's prime minister said Tuesday, as Prince Harry flew in from California for a rare visit with his father.

Royal officials announced Monday that the 75-year-old king has been diagnosed with an undisclosed



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form of cancer and is receiving treatment as an outpatient.

Less than 18 months into the reign that he'd famously waited decades to begin, Charles suspended public engagements but will continue with state business — including weekly meetings with Prime Minister Rishi Sunak — and won't be handing over his constitutional roles as head of state.

On Tuesday afternoon, Harry could be seen arriving at the king's Clarence House residence in a black SUV after an overnight flight.

The two have a troubled relationship, and Harry has seen his father infrequently since the prince quit royal duties in 2020 and moved to Los Angeles with his wife, Meghan, citing what they said was the unbearable intrusions and racist attitudes of the British media.

Harry, 39, has since detailed his rocky relationship with his family and his royal inheritance in TV interviews, a documentary and a memoir, "Spare."

About an hour after Harry arrived, Charles and Queen Camilla were driven from their residence to nearby Buckingham Palace in a royal Bentley. The couple waved to tourists and well-wishers gathered outside the palace gates. They then traveled by helicopter to Sandringham, the monarch's rural residence in eastern England.

Buckingham Palace said the king's cancer was found during Charles' recent hospital treatment for an enlarged prostate but is a "separate issue" and not prostate cancer.

"Thankfully, this has been caught early," Sunak told BBC radio, adding: "We'll crack on with everything."

"Many families around the country listening to this will have been touched by the same thing and they know what it means to everyone," Sunak said. "So we'll just be willing him on and hopefully we get through this as quickly as possible."

The palace said Charles, who has generally enjoyed good health, "remains wholly positive about his treatment and looks forward to returning to full public duty as soon as possible."

Charles became king in September 2022 when his mother, Queen Elizabeth II, died at the age of 96 after 70 years on the throne.

News of the king's diagnosis comes as his daughter-in-law Kate, Princess of Wales, recovers from abdominal surgery that saw her hospitalized for about two weeks.

Kate is taking a break from royal duties as she recovers. Her husband, Prince William, who is heir to the throne, also took time off to help look after her and the couple's three children, but is due to preside over a ceremony at Windsor Castle and a charity dinner on Wednesday.

Charles departed from royal tradition with his openness about his prostate condition. For centuries Britain's royal family remained tight-lipped about health matters.

Disclosing information about his cancer diagnosis — albeit in a limited way — is another break with tradition.

When U.K. monarchs had real power, news of illness was withheld for fear it might weaken their authority. The habit of secrecy lingered after royals became constitutional figureheads.

The British public wasn't told that Charles' grandfather, King George VI, had lung cancer before his death in February 1952 at the age of 56, and some historians have claimed that the king himself wasn't told he was terminally ill.

In the final years of Elizabeth's life, the public was told only that the queen was suffering from "mobility issues" when she began to miss public appearances towards the end of her life. The cause of her death was listed on the death certificate simply as "old age."

When and how much to disclose about illness remains a difficult subject for many public figures. U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin has been criticized for not telling President Joe Biden or other key leaders that he was being treated for prostate cancer, even when he was hospitalized in intensive care in January for post-surgery complications.

Buckingham Palace said that the king "has chosen to share his diagnosis to prevent speculation and in the hope it may assist public understanding for all those around the world who are affected by cancer."

Charles took the throne intending to preside over a slimmer monarchy with fewer senior royals carry-

ing out ceremonial public duties. But with Charles and Kate both temporarily sidelined, Harry self-exiled to California and Prince Andrew largely banished from view because of his association with sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, the royal "firm" risks becoming severely overstretched.

William and Camilla are both expected to take on extra public engagements during the king's treatment.

There are no current plans to call on the "counsellors of state" — senior royals, including the queen and the heir to the throne — to deputize for the monarch on constitutional duties such as signing legislation and receiving ambassadors.

## **Aid package for Israel fails in the House, dealing another setback to GOP leaders**

By KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A bill to provide Israel with more military aid went down to defeat Tuesday in the House, spoiling Speaker Mike Johnson's attempt to separate Israel from other national security priorities, including helping Ukraine defend itself from Russia's military invasion and deterring crossings at the U.S.-Mexico border.

The vote gave individual lawmakers another chance to show voters their support for Israel and could be used on the campaign trail to criticize those who voted against it. But it did little to generate momentum toward passage of a final emergency spending package.

It was also the second setback of the day for House Republican leaders. Just minutes before the vote their drive to impeach Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas fell short due to opposition from three House Republicans.

The House had already gone on the record in support of an Israel aid package. Johnson brought that package up in November on one of his first days as the new House speaker. The vote was in response to Hamas and other militants killing about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking captive some 240 men, women and children in an Oct. 7 attack.

Last year's measure also included budget cuts to the Internal Revenue Service. This time, there were no attempts to offset the new spending, which ended up alienating some of the Republican members concerned about federal deficits. Meanwhile, Democrats largely remained opposed, concerned passage of the bill would leave no way to get Ukraine more aid. The bill did manage to gain more Democratic support than during November's vote but not nearly enough to pass.

Johnson resorted to moving the bill through an expedited process that requires a two-thirds majority for passage. That's because Republicans were unlikely to even muster the simple majority needed to set the terms for the bill's debate. Such a procedural vote is generally a routine matter, but has become problematic for the current Republican majority, which can generally afford to lose only three Republicans on party-line votes. The vote for more Israel aid was 250-180, well short of the two-thirds threshold necessary for passage.

Fourteen Republicans ended up voting against the bill, concerned about the lack of spending cuts to offset the \$17.6 billion price tag. That compares to 204 Republicans who voted for it. On the Democratic side, 46 voted for it and 166 against.

Prior to the vote, the White House issued a statement announcing President Joe Biden's intent to veto the bill if it were to reach his desk. And Democratic leaders in both chambers said the only way forward requires a bipartisan approach.

"The time has come for House Republicans to end the political stunts and come together in support of a comprehensive approach to our national security priorities," Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries and other members of leadership told colleagues before the vote.

The bill called for about \$17.6 billion in military aid for Israel and for the replenishment of U.S. defense systems. About \$4 billion would have gone to replenish Israel's missile defense systems and \$1.2 billion to counter short-range rockets and mortar threats. There's also funding for the procurement of advanced weapons system and to enhance the production of artillery and other munitions.

To ensure the support does not compromise U.S. readiness, it includes \$4.4 billion to replenish U.S. stocks of weapons provided to Israel. There's also \$3.3 billion for current U.S. military operations in the region.

Johnson said before the vote that since the House passed its first Israeli military aid package, the "situation has gotten much more dangerous."

"We need to stand with Israel right now and we cannot wait any longer," Johnson said.

After the vote, he said Democrats were using Israel to force through other priorities that don't enjoy the same degree of consensus.

"Leveraging Israel aid as it fights for survival is wrong," Johnson said.

Democrats said presidential politics played into the route House Republicans took in going ahead solely with aid for Israel.

"Trump doesn't want to support Ukraine, and he also doesn't want a border deal because it hurts him politically. What they get out of it is Donald Trump's approval," said Rep. Adam Smith, the ranking Democratic member of the House Armed Services Committee.

Rep. Lois Frankel of Florida was one of the Democrats who spoke in favor of the bill, saying she feared that "a divided Congress will embolden Israel's adversaries and put our own military in harm's way."

"Israel's security is our security," Frankel said.

Across the Capitol, a similar political debate took shape. Republicans overwhelmingly criticized a carefully negotiated plan unveiled over the weekend that included policies intended to curb illegal crossings with \$60 billion in wartime aid for Ukraine, plus billions for Israel and humanitarian aid for civilians in Gaza.

Republicans said the border security provisions were inadequate while Democrats said Republicans were simply afraid to buck Trump even though they had insisted earlier that border security be included in an aid package for Ukraine. The divide leaves in question whether any emergency spending package will be passed.

"We all know what's going on here: Donald Trump would rather keep the chaos at the border going so he can exploit it on the campaign trail, instead of letting the Senate do the right thing and fix it," said Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y. "He would rather let Ukraine suffer on the battle field instead of being tough on Putin."

## **IRS expects to collect hundreds of billions more in overdue and unpaid taxes thanks to new funding**

By FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The IRS is poised to take in hundreds of billions of dollars more in overdue and unpaid taxes than previously anticipated, according to new analysis released Tuesday by the Treasury Department and the IRS.

Tax revenues are expected to rise by as much as \$561 billion from 2024 to 2034, thanks to stepped-up enforcement made possible with money from the Democrats' Inflation Reduction Act, which became law in August 2022.

The Congressional Budget Office in 2022 estimated that the tens of billions of new IRS funding provided by the IRA would increase revenues by \$180.4 billion from 2022 to 2031. The IRS now says that if IRA funding is restored, renewed and diversified, estimated revenues could reach as much as \$851 billion from 2024 to 2034.

Administration officials are using the report to promote President Joe Biden's economic agenda as he campaigns for reelection — and as the IRS continually faces threats to its funding.

"This analysis demonstrates that President Biden's investment in rebuilding the IRS will reduce the deficit by hundreds of billions of dollars by making the wealthy and big corporations pay the taxes they owe," National Economic Adviser Lael Brainard said in a statement.

"Congressional Republicans' efforts to cut IRS funding show that they prioritize letting the wealthiest Americans and big corporations evade their taxes over cutting the deficit," Brainard said.

The Inflation Reduction Act gave the IRS an \$80 billion infusion of funds. However, House Republicans built a \$1.4 billion reduction to the IRS into the debt ceiling and budget cuts package passed by Congress last summer. A separate agreement took an additional \$20 billion from the IRS over the next two years to divert to other non-defense programs.

Since then, the agency has tried to show how it is spending the money it has left, in hopes of stemming the cuts. New customer service improvements rolled out as the tax season began Jan. 29, and earlier this month the IRS announced that it had recouped half a billion dollars in back taxes from rich tax cheats.

Rep. Jason Smith, the Republican chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, said in a statement that the report "calls for even more IRS funding, uses pie-in-the-sky numbers, all without being straightforward about where the burdens of massive new enforcement efforts will fall." He said increased funding will inevitably result in hundreds of thousands of additional audits for taxpayers making less than \$75,000.

After the IRA was signed into law, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen directed IRS leadership not to increase audit rates on people making less than \$400,000 a year annually.

Ensuring that people actually pay their taxes is one of the tax collection agency's biggest challenges. The audit rate of millionaires fell by more than 70% from 2010 to 2019 and the audit rate on large corporations fell by more than 50%, Treasury's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Tax Analysis Greg Leiserson told reporters. IRA funding "is enabling the IRS to reverse this trend," Leiserson said.

The tax gap — which is the difference between taxes owed and taxes paid — has grown to more than \$600 billion annually, according to the IRS.

## Los Angeles records 475 mudslides during historic storm that has drenched Southern California

By STEFANIE DAZIO and JULIE WATSON Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — One of the wettest storms in Southern California history unleashed at least 475 mudslides in the Los Angeles area after dumping more than half the amount of rainfall the city typically gets in a season in just two days, and officials warned Tuesday that the threat was not over yet.

"Our hillsides are already saturated. So even not-very-heavy rains could still lead to additional mudslides," Mayor Karen Bass said during an evening news conference. "Even when the rain stops, the ground may continue to shift."

Officials expressed relief that the storm hadn't yet killed anyone or caused a major catastrophe in Los Angeles despite its size and intensity, with nearly 400 trees toppling. There were seven deaths reported elsewhere, including several people crushed by fallen trees in Northern California. Someone trying to enter the United States was swept up by a swollen Tijuana River channel and died early Tuesday as the California-Mexico border, according to U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

Though the rain was tapering off, forecasters extended a flood watch through early Wednesday, warning the ground was too filled with water to hold much more after back-to-back atmospheric rivers walloped California in less than a week. Another heavy burst of rain is expected Wednesday evening before the region begins to dry out, said Tyler Kranz, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service.

Bass said the city is now looking toward recovery and will seek federal aid including emergency vouchers for homeless people in shelters. It may see if it can qualify for FEMA money to help people whose homes were damaged in hillside communities where insurance companies won't cover. How many they are could take a while to count.

As of Tuesday, seven buildings had been deemed uninhabitable, officials said. Another 10 buildings were yellow-tagged, meaning residents could go back to get their belongings but could not stay there because of the damage.

"Hopefully no more homes will be damaged, but it's too early to tell," Bass said.

Dion Peronneau was trying to get her artwork and books out of her home, which was smashed into by a mudslide that knocked her sliding glass doors off their frame and came pouring into her home of 25 years.

"Eight feet of mud is pressed up against my window that is no longer there," she said. "They put up



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boards to make sure no more mud can come in.”

Earlier Tuesday the National Weather Service issued a rare tornado warning for San Diego County. The warning was quickly cancelled, however, with forecasters explaining that the storm no longer appeared capable of producing a twister even if it briefly turned some San Diego streets into rivers.

Four people were killed in Northern California after the storm came ashore over the weekend with strong winds that toppled trees. They included a 63-year-old woman who was found dead Tuesday under a large tree in her backyard in Fair Oaks, Sacramento County officials reported.

The California Highway Patrol said a 69-year-old man died Monday after his truck went down an embankment and filled with water in Yucaipa, about 80 miles (128 kilometers) east of Los Angeles. Another accident in nearby Fontana killed a 23-year-old man after the car he was in crashed into a tow truck in the rain, the agency said.

The storm smashed or approached many rain and wind records across the state, with downtown Los Angeles recording its third-wettest two-day stretch since recordkeeping began in the 1870s. Between 6 and 12 inches (15.2 and 30.5 centimeters) of rain fell over the Los Angeles area.

All the water brought one silver lining: helping to boost often-strained water supplies, just two years after nearly all California was plagued by a devastating drought. Marty Adams, general manager of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, said more than 1 billion gallons of rain were captured for groundwater and local supplies.

This latest storms follow a string of atmospheric rivers that pummeled the state last year, leading to at least 20 deaths.

In 2018, a mudslide in Montecito, near Santa Barbara, destroyed 130 homes and killed 23 people, making it one of the deadliest in California history.

Crews rescued people from swift-moving water in various parts of Southern California, including 16 people and five cats in Los Angeles County alone, authorities said. About an hour's drive east in San Bernardino, two homeless people were rescued Monday after spending the night on a small island in the Santa Ana River, and three others were helped after they climbed into a tree above raging floodwaters that submerged their vehicle.

Authorities also reported several spills of raw sewage into the Pacific and closed affected beaches.

Near the Hollywood Hills, dotted with multimillion-dollar homes, floodwaters carried mud, rocks and household objects downhill through Studio City, officials said. Sixteen people were evacuated, and several homes were severely damaged.

The phenomenon known as El Nino is expected to bring additional storms to California this year, caused by the temporary warming of parts of the Pacific that changes weather worldwide.

Many businesses said they will be feeling the effects of a sales downturn long after the storm has gone.

At The Flowerman in Pasadena, florist and owner Lou Quismorio said that this close to Valentine's Day, he would typically have a "pretty crowded store." He hopes customers return with the sun.

"I can't really worry about it," he said. "I've got over 8,500 roses in my cooler right now."

In San Diego, Sabrina Biddle was cleaning up after a few leaks in her dance studio.

"Back to dancing, no more storm," she said.

## **The death toll from Chile's wildfires reaches 131, and more than 300 people are missing**

VIÑA DEL MAR, Chile (AP) — The death toll from wildfires that ravaged central Chile for several days increased to 131 on Tuesday, and more than 300 people were still missing as the blazes appeared to be burning themselves out.

The fires in Valparaiso are said to be Chile's deadliest disaster since an earthquake in 2010. Officials have suggested that some could have been intentionally set.

President Gabriel Boric during a visit to the region announced that furniture used for the 2023 Pan American Games will be donated to victims. He said the government also will forgive the water bills for

9,200 affected homes.

The fires began Friday on the mountainous eastern edge of Viña del Mar, a beach resort known for a festival that attracts the best in Latin music. Two other towns, Quilpé and Villa Alemana, also were hit hard as the fires spread quickly in dry weather and strong winds.

The Viña del Mar Festival canceled its opening gala as a sign of mourning. Many participating singers including Alejandro Sanz, Pablo Alborán and Maná sent messages of solidarity and announced donations.

Chile's Forensic Medical Service has said many bodies recovered from the fires were in bad condition and difficult to identify, but forensic workers would take samples of genetic material from people reporting missing relatives.

"My parents' and my sisters' house burned, and my neighbors — the people who knew me when I was little — died," said Gabriel Leiva, 46, going through debris in Viña del Mar. He said his neighbors were "family that is not of blood but of the heart."

The United Nations in a statement offered its condolences and announced assistance. Meanwhile, Boric, in a tweet, thanked U.S. President Joe Biden for "his important support" following the disaster.

## King Charles III's cancer diagnosis lays bare pressures at Buckingham Palace

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — King Charles III's cancer diagnosis heaps more pressure on the British monarchy, which is still evolving after the 70-year reign of the late Queen Elizabeth II.

When he succeeded his mother 17 months ago, Charles' task was to demonstrate that the 1,000-year-old institution remains relevant in a modern nation whose citizens come from all corners of the globe. Now the king, who turned 75 in November, will have to lead that effort while undergoing cancer treatment.

Buckingham Palace announced Monday that Charles had been diagnosed with an undisclosed form of cancer. The king plans to continue fulfilling his state duties, such as reviewing government papers and meeting with the prime minister, but he will step back from public appearances.

While royal experts say the diagnosis is unlikely to destabilize the House of Windsor, significant pressures remain.

Here is a look at the major challenges facing the royal family.

### AGING MONARCH

Charles waited almost 74 years — longer than any previous heir — to become king. Now, at an age when most of his contemporaries are well into retirement, Charles has had less than two years to put his stamp on the monarchy.

Although the duties of a constitutional monarch are largely ceremonial, the royal whirl can be exhausting. Besides the occasional procession in full royal regalia, there are meetings with political leaders, dedication ceremonies and events honoring the accomplishments of British citizens. That added up to 161 days of royal engagements during Charles's first year on the throne.

The pressures on an aging monarch aren't unique to Charles. Denmark's Queen Margrethe became the first Danish monarch to abdicate in nearly 900 years last month when she handed over the throne to her son, Frederik. Margrethe, 83, had always maintained she wouldn't quit.

But Britain isn't Denmark. Queen Elizabeth II stuck by a commitment to devote her life to service before she died on the throne at the age of 96. Charles made a similar commitment during his coronation.

"I don't think he will go anywhere anytime soon," said Joe Little, managing editor of Majesty Magazine. "I still think that abdication is not a word that is bandied about at Buckingham Palace. I mean, who knows what the coming years will bring, but with the best will in the world, Charles III will reign as his mother did, and until the moment of his death."

### A SHRINKING WORKFORCE

Charles' illness comes at an awkward time as he cuts costs, in part by reducing the number of "working royals."

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Not only is Charles stepping away from public duties, his daughter-in-law, Kate, the Princess of Wales, isn't expected to resume her royal tasks until April after recent abdominal surgery.

With two of the most visible family members out sick, it will be more challenging for the family to keep up. Hundreds of charities look to their connections to the royals to keep interest in their work at a high level.

Who will cut the ribbons, open the swimming pools, shake the hands of civic leaders at institutions across the land if not the Windsors?

"They are resilient. Lord knows the royal family's been through a lot of things over the years ... and they've bounced back. But the underlying fact is ... he is 75. The queen is 76," said Sally Bedell Smith, author of "Prince Charles: The Passions and Paradoxes of an Improbable Life."

"It's a reminder that they are vulnerable in ways that people haven't particularly liked to think."

HARRY & MEGHAN

Charles' relationship with his younger son was strained even before Harry and the Duchess of Sussex moved closer to the former Meghan Markle's home in California and left royal duties in 2020.

Charles told Harry the news about his cancer, and his son traveled to the U.K. soon after it was announced.

But with his book "Spare" and his Netflix series, Harry has been a shadow over the early years of the monarch's reign. Can illness offer an opportunity for reconciliation?

"That can only be a good sign," Little said of Harry's visit. "What will come of that remains to be seen. It's unlikely that we will be told anything officially by the palace. So, again, a lot of conjecture will come into play. But we think the king and his younger son haven't seen each other since the coronation back in May."

"So, it'll be a welcome meeting from both sides."

THE MONARCHY'S RELEVANCE

Charles reigns over a country that looks much different from the one his mother inherited in 1952.

Over the past seven decades, the U.K. has become a multi-cultural nation where school children speak more than 300 languages and less than half the population identifies as Christian.

Against this backdrop, Charles has tried to demonstrate the continuing relevance of the monarchy by reaching out to faith leaders, ethnic minorities and each of the four nations that make up the United Kingdom.

Supporters argue this is what makes the monarchy so important. The crown is a unifying force, a symbol of stability in a rapidly changing world and a reminder of the common history and traditions that unite a nation of 67 million people.

But others see a hereditary monarch as anachronistic, a vestige of Britain's feudal past that can't possibly represent the people of today. During Charles' coronation, republican campaigners staged protests calling for the monarchy to be replaced by an elected head of state.

"The monarchy serves at the pleasure of the people. And the people need to believe that the monarchy is in tune with what's going on in the world," Smith said. "And, and I think that's a kind of constant challenge."

LEGACY OF EMPIRE

While the monarchy is a symbol of Britain's history, that can be a two-edged sword.

The crown is also a reminder of the British Empire's dominance of Indigenous people around the world and its role in the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

Charles faces pressure to address these issues, including from Prince Harry, who has called on the royal family to confront its unconscious racism, and Caribbean nations seeking reparations for slavery.

The king responded to these calls by opening the royal archives to scholars researching the monarchy's links to the slave trade.

He also addressed the misdeeds of Britain's colonial history during a state visit to Kenya in October.

"The wrongdoings of the past are a cause of the greatest sorrow and the deepest regret," Charles said during that visit. "There were abhorrent and unjustifiable acts of violence committed against Kenyans as they waged ... a painful struggle for independence and sovereignty — and for that, there can be no excuse."

"In coming back to Kenya, it matters greatly to me that I should deepen my own understanding of these wrongs, and that I meet some of those whose lives and communities were so grievously affected."

## Israel arrests Palestinian-American woman in the West Bank. Her relatives don't know where she is

By JULIA FRANKEL Associated Press

RAMALLAH, West Bank (AP) — Israeli forces have arrested a 46-year-old Palestinian-American woman after breaking into her home and pulling her from her bed in the occupied West Bank, her family said Tuesday, saying they had no idea where she was nearly two days after she was detained.

News of the arrest came just ahead of Secretary of State Antony Blinken's arrival in Israel on a diplomatic mission aimed at forging a cease-fire in Israel's war in the Gaza Strip. Samaher Esmail's congressman in her home state of Louisiana vowed "to get to the bottom" of her arrest, while the State Department said it was looking into the matter.

Relatives said that Israeli soldiers burst into the woman's house while she was sleeping in the early hours of Monday and pulled her out of bed in the West Bank town of Silwad. A video of the incident posted to Twitter by her son showed soldiers surrounding her and herding her into an armored vehicle.

"They broke into her house and pulled her out, took her out of her bed," said her brother, 35-year-old Mubarak Esmail, who lives in the U.S. "They didn't even let her put on her hijab," or traditional headcovering. He said his sister lived alone and probably did not even hear the soldiers because she takes medication for her uterine cancer that makes her drowsy.

The Israeli military said she had been arrested for "incitement on social media" and taken away for questioning.

Esmail is from Gretna, Louisiana, the same hometown of a Palestinian American teenager who was recently killed by Israeli fire in a nearby village. The death of 17-year-old Tawfic Abdel Jabbar drew an expression of concern from the White House and an uncommonly quick pledge to investigate from the Israeli police. No findings from that investigation have yet been released.

Esmail's family said she often traveled back and forth between West Bank and the U.S., where she managed a family-owned grocery store in Gretna and worked as a tutor at a nearby high school. The family is in touch with U.S. Embassy officials but said they know nothing about her current whereabouts.

Rep. Troy A. Carter, Democrat of Louisiana, said he was "deeply concerned" by the arrest.

"I am in contact with the American Embassy and the State Department to get to the bottom of why she is being held and will continue to gather facts about this ongoing situation. I am praying for her safety," he said.

A U.S. government spokesperson said the State Department was aware of reports that a U.S. citizen had been detained and was "seeking additional information" about the incident but had no further comment.

Late Tuesday, Blinken arrived in Israel, where he is expected to press ahead with efforts to at least pause Israel's offensive in Gaza and curb violence in the West Bank.

Since the Gaza war erupted on Oct. 7, Israel also has held the territory under a tight-grip, staging often-deadly raids into cities and villages and arresting dozens of Palestinians, in some cases accused of posting inciting material on social media.

## Border security and Ukraine aid collapses despite Biden's plea for Congress to 'show some spine'

By STEPHEN GROVES, MARY CLARE JALONICK and AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A Senate deal on border enforcement measures and Ukraine aid suffered a swift and total collapse Tuesday as Republicans withdrew support despite President Joe Biden urging Congress to "show some spine" and stand up to Donald Trump.

Just minutes after the Democratic president's remarks at the White House, Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell emerged from a GOP luncheon at the Capitol and acknowledged that the deal was dead.

"It looks to me and to most of our members that we have no real chance here to make a law," the Kentucky Republican told reporters.



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The split-screen moments in Washington represented a rapid turn of events that showed McConnell's slipping control of his GOP conference, Trump's growing influence, and Biden's ability only to look on as a cornerstone of his foreign policy — halting Russian President Vladimir Putin's advance into Europe — crumbled in Congress.

Out of funds, the Pentagon is sending no more arms shipments to Kyiv just as the war — entering its third year — reaches a critical juncture. Ukraine is struggling with ammunition and personnel shortages while Russia is on the offensive, mounting relentless attacks.

"Every week, every month that passes without new aid to Ukraine means fewer artillery shells, fewer air defense systems, fewer tools for Ukraine to defend itself against this Russian onslaught," Biden said. "Just what Putin wants."

Biden had engaged for months with Senate leaders on a carefully negotiated plan to pair policies intended to curb illegal crossings at the U.S.-Mexico border with \$60 billion in wartime aid for Ukraine. The bill was intended to exhibit American strength around the world and would have also sent tens of billions of dollars more for Israel, other U.S. allies in Asia, the U.S. immigration system and humanitarian aid for civilians in Gaza and Ukraine.

But after Republicans rejected the compromise, the president and Senate leaders are now stranded with no clear way to advance aid for Ukraine through Congress. They have run into a wall of opposition from conservatives — led by Trump — who reject the border proposal as insufficient and criticize Ukraine funding as wasteful.

Biden laid blame for the bill's demise squarely on Trump — his likely Republican opponent in the November presidential election.

"For the last 24 hours he's done nothing, I'm told, but reach out to Republicans in the House and the Senate and threaten them and try to intimidate them to vote against this proposal," Biden said. "It looks like they're caving. Frankly, they owe it to the American people to show some spine and do what they know to be right."

Democrats in the Capitol vented frustration at their colleagues as it became clear that the deal was done.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer cast Tuesday as a "gloomy day here in the United States Senate" during a floor speech in which he scolded Republicans for backing away from the deal. He still dared them to vote against border security — an issue they have long championed.

"After months of good faith negotiations, after months of giving Republicans many of the things they asked for, Leader McConnell and the Republican conference are ready to kill the national security supplemental package even with border provisions they so fervently demand," Schumer said.

Senators are still floundering for a way to get Ukraine funding through the Republican-controlled House. And after the border compromise collapsed Tuesday, some suggested jettisoning that portion from the package and advancing the aid for U.S. allies on their own.

But that idea also faces resistance in the Republican-controlled House, where House Speaker Mike Johnson is under pressure from hardline conservatives not to bring any Ukraine funding up for a vote.

When asked about wartime aid for Ukraine and Israel Tuesday, he told reporters, "We have to deal with these measures and these issues independently and separately."

House Republicans on Tuesday night failed to pass a separate \$17.6 billion package of military aid for Israel. Hardline conservatives opposed the bill because the funding would not be offset by budget cuts in other areas. Democrats were also mostly opposed because it undermined the push for a comprehensive package that would include Ukraine and other allies in Asia.

The lack of a national security deal will loom large over Biden's Friday meeting with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz. Biden plans to underscore to Scholz that he remains committed to providing Ukraine the funding it needs to continue to repel the nearly two-year-old Russian invasion.

McConnell said in an earlier floor speech that it was essential to assert American strength in Europe, the Middle East and Asia, yet also blamed Biden for not responding sooner to threats from rival powers.

"Either we confront challenges we face with clear strategy and firm resolve or we lose," McConnell said.

But he reacted with frustration when he was later asked by reporters whether he misread his colleague's

demands for border policy. "I followed the instructions of my conference, who were insisting that we tackle this in October," he said. "I mean, it's actually our side that wanted to tackle the border issue. We started it."

After Trump excoriated the compromise, however, the longtime Republican leader has not been able to convince his conference to support the proposal. Within hours of the bill's release Sunday, Johnson said he would not support it, and even GOP senators who had been supportive of the border policies under discussion came out against the bill on Tuesday.

"The politics of this were a big factor," said Sen. John Cornyn, a Texas Republican. "When the speaker said basically the Senate bill is dead on arrival. And then President Trump weighs in and discourages Republicans from voting for it."

In light of their refusal to support the bill, some congressional Republicans have shifted to blaming Biden, suggesting that he already has the authority to halt the flow of migrants at the U.S.-Mexico border, a vast oversimplification of the matter.

The Trump campaign said in a statement that "America does not need a 'border' bill that does nothing to deter illegal immigration. We need a President who will use his executive authority to shut the border down."

The border proposal represented one of the most conservative and comprehensive proposals in decades to emerge from a bipartisan negotiation in Congress. It would seek to tamp down the historic number of illegal border crossings by making the asylum process tougher and faster. Presidential administrations would also be given authority to deny migrants from claiming asylum at the border if the number of migrants claiming asylum becomes unmanageable for authorities.

Biden called the proposal "the most fair, humane reforms in our immigration system in a long time, and the toughest set of reforms to secure the border ever."

But Republicans have largely heeded the wishes of Trump to reject the bill because it would show that Biden could act to address problems at the border, which is seen as one of his largest vulnerabilities in his reelection campaign.

"Americans will turn to the upcoming election to end the border crisis," said Sen. John Barrasso of Wyoming in a statement.

But Biden too suggested he would make the Republican rejection of border policies a campaign issue, saying, "I'll be taking this issue to the country and the voters are going to know that."

## **As cancer treatment advances, patients and doctors push back against drugs' harsh side effects**

By CARLA K. JOHNSON AP Medical Writer

For cancer patients, the harsh side effects of powerful drugs have long been the trade-off for living longer. Now, patients and doctors are questioning whether all that suffering is necessary.

They've ignited a movement to radically change how new cancer drugs are tested, with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration urging drugmakers to do a better job at finding the lowest effective dose, even if it takes more time.

Advances in treatment mean millions of people are surviving for years with incurable cancers. Jill Feldman, 54, of Deerfield, Illinois, has lived 15 years with lung cancer, thanks to that progress. Her parents both died of lung cancer months after their diagnoses.

But her cancer drug causes joint pain, fatigue and mouth sores that make eating and drinking painful. "If you drink something that's too hot, you really burn your mouth. That's how my mouth feels 24/7," Feldman said.

She has lowered the dose with her doctor's blessing but she wants drugmakers to study lower doses early in the research process.

"No one should have to endure avoidable harmful effects of treatment," she said.

Unlike in other diseases, cancer drug development has focused on finding what's called the "maximum tolerated dose."

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To speed testing of chemotherapy drugs, researchers ramp up the dosage in a few people in early studies to determine the highest possible dose patients can tolerate. That "more is better" philosophy works for chemotherapy, but not necessarily for newer cancer drugs — like the one Feldman takes — which are more targeted and work differently.

Chemotherapy is like a battering ram where aggressive strikes are a good strategy. But newer cancer drugs are more like having a front door key. They target a mutation that drives cancer cell growth, for example, or rev up the body's immune system to join the fight.

"You might only need a low dose to turn off that cancer driver," said Dr. Lillian Siu, who leads cancer drug development at the Princess Margaret Cancer Center in Toronto. "If you can get the same bang for your buck, why go higher?"

Through a program called Project Optimus, the FDA is pushing drugmakers to include more patients in early dose-finding trials to get better data on when lower doses can work. A key motivation for the project was "the growing calls from patients and advocates that cancer drugs be more tolerable," said FDA spokesperson Chanapa Tantibanchachai in an email.

Many of the new cancer drugs were developed using the old strategy. That leads to problems when patients skip doses or stop taking the drugs because of side effects. Some dose recommendations have been officially lowered after the drugs were approved. Other dose-lowering happens one patient at a time. Nearly half of patients in late-stage trials of 28 targeted therapy drugs needed to have their doses lowered, according to one study.

"We were pushing the dose as high as we could go," said Dr. Patricia LoRusso, who leads drug discovery at Yale Cancer Center. "You get side effects and then you have to stop the drug to recover from the side effects and the tumor can grow."

There's also huge patient-to-patient variation. The amount of a pill that reaches the bloodstream can vary because of liver and kidney function and other differences. But that means lowering the dose for everyone risks underdosing some patients, LoRusso said.

"The challenge is: Where is the sweet spot?" LoRusso said.

Dr. Julie Gralow, chief medical officer of the American Society of Clinical Oncology, is planning a 500-patient study to test lower doses of two drugs for breast cancer that has spread.

The study will compare two strategies: Starting treatment at the full dose then lowering the dose for side effects versus starting with a lower dose and increasing dosage if the patient does well.

Much of the questioning of high doses has come from metastatic breast cancer patients, including the Patient Centered Dosing Initiative, which has done influential surveys of patients and cancer doctors.

"We will be on treatment for the rest of our lives," said Lesley Kailani Glenn, 58, of Central Point, Oregon. "We want to try to live the best that we can, knowing that treatment is never-ever going to stop."

During the 11 years she's lived with the disease, she has summited Mount Whitney in California, hiked the Cinque Terra in Italy and started a nonprofit.

When Glenn learned how cancer drug research favors high doses, she started working with her doctor. She has taken drugs at lower doses and even lower when she can't live with the side effects. Diarrhea is her deal-breaker: She wants to be able to walk her dog or shop for groceries without worrying about a bathroom emergency.

"The last thing we want to do is have our quality of life stolen from us," Glenn said.

Through Project Optimus, the FDA is encouraging drug developers to conduct more head-to-head dosing comparisons. That could slow down the process, said Dr. Alice Shaw, who leads early cancer drug development at Novartis.

"That will require more patients and then, as you can imagine, also will require more time to identify, enroll and treat those patients," said Shaw said. Adding six months to a year to the process, Shaw said, needs to be balanced against the urgent need for new cancer drugs.

But getting the dose right early will in the long run lead to more effective drugs, said Dr. Timothy Yap, a drug developer at MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston. "If the patients are not taking the drug, then it's not going to work."

## **Honda is recalling more than 750,000 vehicles to fix faulty passenger seat air bag sensor**

DETROIT (AP) — Honda is recalling more than three quarters of a million vehicles in the U.S. because a faulty sensor may cause the front passenger air bags to inflate when they're not supposed to in a crash.

The recall covers certain Honda Pilot, Accord, Civic sedan, HR-V and Odyssey models from the 2020 through 2022 model years, as well as the 2020 Fit and Civic Coupe. Also included are the 2021 and 2022 Civic hatchback, the 2021 Civic Type R and Insight, and the 2020 and 2021 CR-V, CR-V Hybrid, Passport, Ridgeline and Accord Hybrid.

Affected models from the Acura luxury brand include the 2020 and 2022 MDX, the 2020 through 2022 RDX and the 2020 and 2021 TLX.

Documents posted Tuesday by the U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration say that the front passenger seat weight sensor may crack and short circuit, and fail to turn off the air bag as intended. The sensors are required to disable the air bags if children or small adults are in the seats. If that doesn't happen, it increases the risk of injury.

Dealers will replace the seat sensors at no cost to owners. Owners will be notified starting March 18.

Honda says in documents that it has 3,834 warranty claims but no reports of injuries or deaths from the problem between June 30, 2020 and Jan. 19 of this year.

## **NTSB says bolts on Boeing jetliner were missing before a panel blew out in midflight last month**

By DAVID KOENIG AP Airlines Writer

Bolts that helped secure a panel to the frame of a Boeing 737 Max 9 were missing before the panel blew off the Alaska Airlines plane last month, according to accident investigators.

The National Transportation Safety Board said Tuesday a preliminary report on the Jan. 5 incident that the lack of certain damage on the plane indicates that all four bolts were missing before the plane took off from Portland, Oregon.

Without the bolts, nothing prevented the panel from sliding upward and detaching from "stop pads" that secured it to the airframe.

The Alaska Airlines pilots were forced to make a harrowing emergency landing with a hole in the side of the plane, but no serious injuries were reported.

The NTSB report included a photo from Boeing, which worked on the panel called a door plug, that showed that three of the four bolts that prevent the panel from moving upward are missing. The location of a fourth bolt is obscured by insulation.

The preliminary report said the plane arrived at Boeing's factory near Seattle with five damaged rivets near the door plug, which had been installed by supplier Spirit AeroSystems. A Spirit crew replaced the rivets, which required removing the four bolts and opening the plug.

The report did not say who removed the bolts. It said that a text message between Boeing employees who finished working on the plane after the rivet job included the photo showing the plug with missing bolts.

Sen. Tammy Duckworth, D-Ill., was upset at Boeing's lack of documentation about who did what and when the bolts went missing.

"They didn't write any of this down," she said in an interview. "It is very much Boeing's responsibility, absolutely, but I'm concerned that we may have multiple points of failure here."

The NTSB did not declare a probable cause for the accident — that will come at the end of an investigation that could last a year or longer.

"Whatever final conclusions are reached, Boeing is accountable for what happened," CEO David Calhoun said in a statement. "An event like this must not happen on an airplane that leaves our factory. We simply



must do better for our customers and their passengers.”

Investigators said they were still trying to determine who authorized the Boeing crew to open and reinstall the door plug.

Safety experts have said the accident could have been catastrophic if the Alaska jet had reached cruising altitude. The decompression in the cabin after the blowout would have been far stronger, and passengers and flight attendants might have been walking around instead of being belted into their seats.

When Alaska and United Airlines began inspecting their other Max 9s, they reported finding loose hardware including loose bolts in some of the door plugs. Boeing said none of the other Alaska and United Max 9s have been discovered to be missing the critical bolts.

The incident has added to questions about manufacturing quality at Boeing that started with the deadly crashes of two Max 8 jets in 2018 and 2019, killing 346 people. In 2021, Boeing reached a settlement with the Justice Department to avoid criminal prosecution on a charge of conspiring to defraud government regulators by failing to accurately describe a flight-control system that was implicated in the crashes.

The Federal Aviation Administration is investigating whether Boeing and its suppliers followed proper safety procedures in manufacturing parts for the Max. The FAA has barred Boeing from speeding up production of 737s until the agency is satisfied about quality issues.

FAA Administrator Michael Whitaker said Tuesday that his agency is about halfway through a six-week audit of manufacturing processes at Boeing and Spirit, its key supplier on the Max. He said the agency is confronted with two questions: What’s wrong with the Max 9? And, “what’s going on with the production at Boeing?”

Spirit, which Boeing spun off as a separate company nearly 20 years ago, said in a statement that it is reviewing the NTSB preliminary report and is working with Boeing and regulators “on continuous improvement in our processes and meeting the highest standards of safety, quality and reliability.”

The plug that broke off Alaska flight 1282 is used to seal holes left for extra emergency doors. Alaska and United don’t have enough seats on their Max 9s to trigger a requirement for the extra exits, so they tell Boeing to install plugs instead because they are lighter and cheaper than doors.

Alaska Airlines has estimated the grounding of its 65 Max 9s will cost the Seattle-based carrier \$150 million, and it expects to be compensated by Boeing. United said the grounding would cause it to lose money in the first quarter and plan for a future without new, larger Max jets that have not yet been approved by the FAA.

## **Opinion piece about Detroit suburb is ‘racist and Islamophobic,’ Democrats say**

By JOEY CAPPELLETTI Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — An op-ed piece that dubbed a Detroit suburb “America’s jihad capital” is being condemned by two Democratic state lawmakers, who described it as “racist and Islamophobic” in a resolution presented Tuesday.

Introduced by state Rep. Alabas Farhat and House Floor Leader Abraham Aiyash, the measure calls on The Wall Street Journal to retract the piece, which was published Friday, and issue a public apology to the City of Dearborn. Officials said they increased police presence in the city after the op-ed appeared.

“It was a pathetic excuse for an editorial piece,” said Farhat, who represents Dearborn. “It fanned the flames of hatred and division in our country during a time when hate crimes are on the rise. It makes it so that it’s normal to question how patriotic your neighbor is.”

The resolution was referred to committee in the state House, which is split evenly between Democratic and Republican representatives, with 54 members each. Farhat blamed Republicans for the resolution not being voted on, and said that only two Democrats signed on because of the rush to turn it in on time. He added that “there’s broad support in our caucus” for the resolution.

The Israel-Hamas war has heightened tensions in Dearborn, which has a large Arab American population, some of which has called for a cease-fire and protested the Biden administration’s response to the war.

President Joe Biden's visit to the state last week was met with protests and chants of, "Hey Biden, what do you say? We won't vote on Election Day."

More than 27,000 Palestinians, mostly women and minors, have been killed in Gaza since the war began following Hamas' attack on Israel on Oct. 7, according to the Health Ministry in the Hamas-ruled territory. Hamas killed more than 1,200 people and kidnapped about 250 more, mostly civilians, in the October attack.

State and city governments across the nation have approved pro-Israel and pro-Palestinian resolutions that have no legal authority but reflect the pressure on local officials to speak up on the conflict.

The opinion piece exacerbated anger and concerns within the community. Dearborn Mayor Abdullah Hammoud tweeted that city police increased security at places of worship after the op-ed column "led to an alarming increase in bigoted and Islamophobic rhetoric online" targeting the city.

Dearborn High School was put on a temporary soft lockdown on Tuesday after a shell casing was found inside the building, according to police. The lockdown was lifted Tuesday afternoon and police said on social media that there were no threats to the school or community.

The op-ed's author is Steven Stalinsky, executive director of the Middle East Media Research Institute, a Washington-based think tank founded by Israeli analysts.

Stalinsky pushed back on the criticism Tuesday in a phone call with The Associated Press, and stood by his piece.

"It's a political stunt," he said of the resolution.

"I don't think any of the leaders read the full article. They used a couple sentences from the beginning but don't get into the facts that I cite lower down. Everyone is attacking the headline and no one is reading the full article," Stalinsky said.

Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer told reporters Monday that the article was "cruel and ignorant." Biden said on the social media platform X that "blaming a group of people based on the words of a small few is wrong," while also referencing Dearborn.

The Wall Street Journal did not respond Tuesday to an email seeking comment.

Michigan lawmakers have struggled to come to a consensus on how to react to the Israel-Hamas war and its effects in Dearborn, which also has a large Jewish population.

In October, a pro-Israel resolution in the state House that was introduced with bipartisan support was never passed because of objections from several Democrats. Aiyash, the Democratic floor leader in the chamber, strongly opposed the resolution at the time, saying, "If we're going to condemn terror, we must condemn the terror and the violence that the Palestinian people have endured for decades."

## **Jury finds Jennifer Crumbley, the Michigan school shooter's mother, guilty of manslaughter**

By ED WHITE and COREY WILLIAMS Associated Press

PONTIAC, Mich. (AP) — A Michigan jury convicted a school shooter's mother of involuntary manslaughter Tuesday in the killings of four students in 2021, making her the first parent in the U.S. to be held responsible for a child carrying out a mass school attack.

Prosecutors say Jennifer Crumbley had a duty under state law to prevent her son, who was 15 at the time, from harming others. She was accused of failing to secure a gun and ammunition at home and failing to get help to support Ethan Crumbley's mental health.

The four guilty verdicts — one for each student slain at Oxford High School — were returned after roughly 11 hours of deliberations.

Jennifer Crumbley, 45, looked down and shook her head slightly as each juror was polled after the verdicts were read.

On her way out of the courtroom, prosecutor Karen McDonald hugged relatives of victims Justin Shilling and Madisyn Baldwin.

"Thank you," a man whispered to her.

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Jennifer and James Crumbley were the first parents in the U.S. to be charged in a mass school shooting committed by their child. James Crumbley faces trial in March.

"The cries have been heard, and I feel this verdict is gonna echo throughout every household in the country," Justin's father, Craig Shilling, said outside the courtroom.

"I feel it's necessary, and I'm happy with the verdict. It's still a sad situation to be in. It's gotta stop. It's an accountability, and this is what we've been asking for for a long time now," Shilling said.

A gag order by the judge prevented McDonald and defense attorney Shannon Smith from speaking to reporters.

On the morning of Nov. 30, 2021, school staff members were concerned about a violent drawing of a gun, bullet and wounded man, accompanied by desperate phrases, on Ethan Crumbley's math assignment. His parents were called to the school for a meeting, but they didn't take the boy home.

A few hours later, Ethan Crumbley pulled a handgun from his backpack and shot 10 students and a teacher. No one had checked the backpack.

The gun was the Sig Sauer 9 mm his father had purchased with him just four days earlier. Jennifer Crumbley had taken her son to a shooting range that same weekend.

Outside the courthouse, the jury forewoman, who declined to give her name, said jurors were influenced by evidence that Jennifer Crumbley was the last adult to possess the gun. That "really hammered it home," she told reporters.

Indeed, the jury saw images of Jennifer Crumbley leaving the shooting range with the gun in a box.

"You saw your son shoot the last practice round before the (school) shooting on Nov. 30. You saw how he stood. ... He knew how to use the gun," assistant prosecutor Marc Keast said while cross-examining the mother last week.

"Yes, he did," Jennifer Crumbley replied.

In her closing argument Friday, McDonald said she filed the unprecedented charges because of the "unique, egregious" facts leading up to the massacre. School officials insisted they would not have agreed to keep Ethan Crumbley on campus that day if the parents had shared information about the new gun, which the boy on social media called his "beauty."

The words with the disturbing drawing said: "The thoughts won't stop. Help me. The world is dead. My life is useless."

"He literally drew a picture of what he was going to do," McDonald said. "It says, 'Help me.'"

Besides 17-year-old Justin Shilling and 17-year old Madisyn Baldwin, Hana St. Juliana, 14, and Tate Myre, 16, were also killed. Seven people were wounded.

Ethan Crumbley, now 17, pleaded guilty to murder and terrorism and is serving a life sentence.

Jennifer Crumbley told jurors that it was her husband's job to keep track of the gun. She also said she saw no signs of mental distress in her son.

"We would talk. We did a lot of things together," she testified. "I trusted him, and I felt I had an open door. He could come to me about anything."

In a journal found by police, Ethan Crumbley wrote that his parents wouldn't listen to his pleas for help.

"I have zero help for my mental problems and it's causing me to shoot up the ... school," he wrote.

Prosecutors introduced evidence that Ethan Crumbley texted his mother in spring 2021 about "demons" throwing bowls and other hallucinations. But she told the jury that it was "just Ethan messing around."

"I have asked myself if I would have done anything differently. I wouldn't have. I wish he would have killed us instead," she testified.

The jury of six men and six women included people who own guns or grew up with them in their home.

Jennifer Crumbley will get credit for roughly 2 1/2 years in the county jail when she returns to court for sentencing on April 9. The judge will set the minimum prison sentence, based on scoring guidelines and other factors.

It will be up to the Michigan parole board to determine how long she actually stays in prison. The maximum term for involuntary manslaughter is 15 years.

Prosecutors have not said if they will ask for consecutive sentences on the four convictions, which could mean a maximum of 60 years if Judge Cheryl Matthews agrees.

## Senate Democrats push to require that Biden consult Congress on weapons sales to Israel

By FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senate Democrats are pushing to prevent the Biden administration from bypassing Congress when approving weapons sales to Israel as the Jewish state continues its war against Hamas under increasing scrutiny.

Democratic Sen. Tim Kaine of Virginia will be introducing an amendment Tuesday that if passed would strike language in the \$118 billion national security supplemental allowing for the administration to expedite funding for any future arms sales to Israel without first notifying Congress.

The larger border legislation is increasingly at risk of dying in the Senate amid bipartisan opposition, making it unlikely that the Israel provision will see a vote. Yet the push from Kaine and the majority of the Senate Democratic caucus is the latest example of the growing critique from those in President Joe Biden's party regarding his handling of the bloody, ongoing war between Israel and Hamas and America's increasing role in it.

"Congress and the American people deserve full transparency about military assistance to all nations," Kaine said in a statement to The Associated Press. "No president of any party should bypass Congress on issues of war, peace, and diplomacy."

The amendment, which has the backing from the chairmen of the Senate Foreign Relations, Armed Services and Intelligence committees, comes after Biden went around lawmakers twice in December to send more than \$250 million of weaponry to Israel. Bypassing Congress with emergency determinations for arms sales is an unusual step that has in past administrations been met with resistance from lawmakers who normally have a period of at least 15 to 30 days to weigh in on proposed weapons transfers and, in some cases, block them.

The State Department sought to counter potential criticism of the sales on human rights grounds by saying it was in constant touch with Israel to emphasize the importance of minimizing civilian casualties, which have soared to more than 25,000 since Israel began its response to the Hamas attacks in Israel on Oct. 7.

The Biden administration has also justified the recent sales by citing emergency determinations. It is a rare but not unprecedented move the State Department makes when it sees an urgent need for weapons to be delivered without waiting for lawmakers' approval.

But Kaine and a growing number of Democrats are calling for the administration to adhere to a more deliberative process as escalations in the Middle East continue with more involvement by U.S. troops in the region.

"That's why I'm introducing a commonsense amendment, backed by dozens of my Senate colleagues, to ensure that we maintain full congressional oversight for U.S. aid to Israel, just as we do for every other nation we support," he said. "The same standard should apply to every country receiving U.S. military assistance."

## Qatar gets 'positive' response from Hamas on cease-fire plan as group reiterates its broader demands

By MATTHEW LEE, WAFAA SHURAFU and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

DOHA, Qatar (AP) — Hamas' response to the latest plan for a cease-fire in Gaza and the release of hostages was "generally positive," key mediator Qatar said Tuesday, as the militant group reiterated its demand for an end to the war, something Israel has thus far ruled out.

Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani announced the response during a



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news conference with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who said he would brief Israeli leaders on it Wednesday when he meets with them.

Blinken, who met with Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman the day before, said the Saudis still have a "strong interest" in normalizing relations with Israel but require an end to the war and a "clear, credible, time-bound path to the establishment of a Palestinian state."

Qatar, which has long mediated with Hamas, has been working with the U.S. and Egypt to broker a cease-fire that would involve a halt in fighting for several weeks and the release of the over 100 hostages still held by Hamas after its Oct. 7 cross-border raid that ignited the war.

Hamas said in a statement that it responded in a "positive spirit" to the latest proposal. But the militant group said it still seeks "a comprehensive and complete" cease-fire to end "the aggression against our people." Hamas is also expected to demand the release of a large number of Palestinian prisoners, including high-profile militants, in exchange for the hostages.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has ruled out both demands, saying Israel is committed to continuing its offensive until "total victory" over Hamas and to returning all the hostages. He has also dismissed U.S. calls for the creation of a Palestinian state.

When asked by reporters, President Joe Biden said Hamas' response "seems to be a little over the top" but that negotiations would go on.

A U.S. official said Blinken was told the Hamas response was delivered to Qatar just an hour before his meeting with the prime minister. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the behind-the-scenes negotiations.

Blinken acknowledged "there's still a lot of work to be done." But he said he still believed an agreement on the hostages was possible and that a pathway to more lasting peace and security in the region was "coming ever more sharply into focus."

"We know the immense benefits that would come for everyone concerned with Israel's further integration into the region, starting with the benefits for Israel," Blinken said. "That's something that Israelis will have to decide for themselves."

"All of this requires difficult, hard decisions, made all the more challenging given the focus on the conflict in Gaza," Blinken said.

Netanyahu's office said the Hamas response had been delivered to Israel's Mossad spy agency and was being "thoroughly evaluated."

## WAR GRINDS ON IN GAZA

The Palestinian death toll from nearly four months of war has reached 27,585, according to the Health Ministry in the Hamas-run territory. The ministry does not distinguish between civilians and combatants in its count but says most of the dead have been women and children.

The war has leveled vast swaths of the tiny enclave and pushed a quarter of residents to starvation.

Hamas and other militants killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, in the Oct. 7 attack and abducted around 250. More than 100 captives, mostly women and children, were released during a weeklong cease-fire in November in exchange for the release of 240 Palestinians imprisoned by Israel.

The Israeli military said Tuesday it was battling militants in areas across the Gaza Strip, including the southern city of Khan Younis. It said troops killed dozens of militants over the past day, without providing evidence.

An Israeli airstrike in the city hit an apartment building, killing two parents and four of their five children, according to the children's grandfather.

Mahmoud al-Khatib said his 41-year-old son, Tariq, was sleeping along with his family when an Israeli warplane bombed their apartment in the middle of the night. The Israeli military rarely comments on individual strikes but blames Hamas for civilians deaths because it fights in residential areas.

## HUMANITARIAN CRISIS PERSISTS

U.N. humanitarian monitors said Tuesday that Israel's evacuation orders in the Gaza Strip now cover two-thirds of the territory, or 246 square kilometers (95 square miles). The affected area was home to

1.78 million Palestinians, or 77% of Gaza's population, before the war.

The U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, or OCHA, said in its daily report that the newly displaced have only about 1.5 to 2 liters (50 to 67 ounces) of water per day to drink, cook and wash. It also reported a significant increase in chronic diarrhea among children.

Parents of babies face a particularly difficult challenge because of the high cost or lack of diapers, baby formula and milk.

Zainab Al-Zein, who is sheltering in the central town of Deir al-Balah, said she had to feed her 2.5-month-old daughter solid food, such as biscuits and ground rice, well ahead of the typical 6-month mark because milk and formula were not available.

"This is known, of course, as unhealthy eating, and we know that it causes her intestinal distress, bloating and colic," al-Zein said. "As you can see, 24 hours like this, she cries and cries continuously."

## Trump is not immune from prosecution in his 2020 election interference case, US appeals court says

By ERIC TUCKER and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal appeals panel ruled Tuesday that Donald Trump can face trial on charges that he plotted to overturn the results of the 2020 election, sharply rejecting the former president's claims that he is immune from prosecution while setting the stage for additional challenges that could further delay the case.

The ruling is significant not only for its stark repudiation of Trump's novel immunity claims but also because it breathes life back into a landmark prosecution that had been effectively frozen for weeks as the court considered the appeal. Yet the one-month gap between when the court heard arguments and issued its ruling has already created uncertainty about the timing of a trial in a calendar-jammed election year, with the judge overseeing the case last week canceling the initial March 4 date.

Trump's team vowed to appeal, which could postpone the case by weeks or months — particularly if the Supreme Court agrees to take it up. The appeals panel, which included two appointees by President Joe Biden and one Republican-appointed judge, gave Trump a week to ask the Supreme Court to get involved.

The eventual trial date carries enormous political ramifications, with special counsel Jack Smith's team hoping to prosecute Trump this year and the Republican front-runner seeking to delay it until after the November election. If Trump were to defeat Biden, he could presumably try to use his position as head of the executive branch to order a new attorney general to dismiss the federal cases he faces or potentially could seek a pardon for himself.

Tuesday's unanimous ruling is the second time since December that judges have held that Trump can be prosecuted for actions undertaken while in the White House and in the run-up to Jan. 6, 2021, when a mob of his supporters stormed the U.S. Capitol.

The opinion, which had been expected given the skepticism with which the panel greeted the Trump team's arguments, was unsparing in its repudiation of Trump's novel claim that former presidents enjoy absolute immunity for actions that fall within their official job duties.

"For the purpose of this criminal case, former President Trump has become citizen Trump, with all of the defenses of any other criminal defendant," the court wrote. "But any executive immunity that may have protected him while he served as President no longer protects him against this prosecution."

The judges said the public interest in criminal accountability "outweighs the potential risks of chilling Presidential action," turning aside the claim that a president has "unbounded authority to commit crimes" that would prevent the recognition of election results or violate the rights of citizens to vote.

"We cannot accept that the office of the Presidency places its former occupants above the law for all time thereafter," the judges wrote.

A Trump spokesman said Tuesday that Trump would appeal the ruling "in order to safeguard the Presidency and the Constitution." And in a post on Truth Social after the ruling was issued, Trump insisted that

a president "must have Full Immunity in order to properly function and do what has to be done for the good of our Country."

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit took center stage in the immunity dispute after the Supreme Court in December said it was at least temporarily staying out, rejecting a request from Smith's team to take up the matter quickly and issue a speedy ruling. But the high court could yet decide to act on a Trump appeal.

There is no timetable for the Supreme Court to act, but the justices are likely to seek Smith's input before deciding whether to keep the legal rulings against the former president in place. If the court declines to consider the appeal, U.S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan would be able to restart the trial proceedings.

If on the other hand the Supreme Court accedes to Trump's request, any timetable it establishes would determine how much longer the trial might be delayed. If the court grants Trump's request without speeding up the appeals process, Trump would likely have until early May before he would need to file his full appeal. But the justices could set much quicker deadlines for reaching a final decision.

The Supreme Court has previously held that presidents are immune from civil liability for official acts, and Trump's lawyers have for months argued that that protection should be extended to criminal prosecution as well.

They said the actions Trump was accused of in his failed bid to cling to power after he lost the 2020 election, including badgering his vice president to refuse to certify the results of the election, all fell within the "outer perimeters" of a president's official acts.

But Smith's team has said that no such immunity exists in the U.S. Constitution or in prior cases and that, in any event, Trump's actions weren't part of his official duties.

Chutkan, who is presiding over the case, rejected Trump's arguments in a December opinion that said the office of the president "does not confer a lifelong 'get-out-of-jail-free' pass."

Trump's lawyers then turned to the D.C. appeals court, but Smith asked the Supreme Court to weigh in first, in hopes of securing a fast and definitive ruling and preserving the March 4 trial date. The high court declined the request, leaving the matter with the appeals court.

The case was argued before Judges Florence Pan and J. Michelle Childs, appointees of Biden, a Democrat, and Karen LeCraft Henderson, who was named to the bench by President George H.W. Bush, a Republican.

The judges made clear their skepticism of Trump's claims during arguments last month, when they peppered his lawyer with questions and posed a series of extreme hypotheticals to test his legal theory of immunity — including whether a president who directed Navy commandos to assassinate a political rival could be prosecuted.

Trump's lawyer, D. John Sauer, answered yes — but only if a president had first been impeached and convicted by Congress. That view was in keeping with the team's position that the Constitution did not permit the prosecution of ex-presidents who had been impeached but then acquitted, like Trump.

The case in Washington is one of four prosecutions Trump faces as he seeks to reclaim the White House. He faces federal charges in Florida that he illegally retained classified documents at his Mar-a-Lago estate, a case that was also brought by Smith and is set for trial in May.

He's also charged in state court in Georgia with scheming to subvert that state's 2020 election and in New York in connection with hush money payments made to porn actor Stormy Daniels. He has denied any wrongdoing.

## Two years after deadly tornadoes, some Mayfield families are still waiting for housing

By MELINA WALLING Associated Press

MAYFIELD, Ky. (AP) — Ashley Prince and her family have been chasing "normal" for years now.

Two years ago, the tornado that whipped through Mayfield peeled the roof off their rental property "like a band-aid." She and her fiance Dylan watched from inside as the mile-wide storm knocked over the wa-

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ter tower behind their house, sucker-punching her in a rush of rapids. The ordeal left her with a severely injured leg.

What came next was a monthslong journey to put their lives back together. That meant about a year spent with Ashley's parents, then a year in temporary housing, where they currently live.

It's the kind of story that disaster experts say will only become more common as climate change multiplies and intensifies instances of extreme weather. Academics point to a relief system in the United States that is relatively well-equipped to get aid out in the immediate aftermath of disasters, but is not designed for the long-term or the worsening conditions wrought by global warming. Stacked on top of that crisis is another intractable problem: the dire lack of affordable housing across the country.

That landscape makes people like the Princes — low-income renters — among the least prepared for the climate future that is to come. Using flooding as a case study, research from MIT has shown that disasters lead to increases in rental prices for renters with low incomes and to increases in evictions.

"People are not prepared to think about a potential disaster when they're living in a precarious situation on a day-to-day basis," said Smitha Rao, an assistant professor at Ohio State University who worked on the front lines of disaster relief before studying it.

After a disaster, families typically have a few options to rebuild, said Michelle Meyer, an associate professor and director of a hazard reduction and recovery research institute at Texas A&M University. If they have homeowners' or rental insurance, they can file a claim with the company. Then there are sources of financial assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which just last month changed its application process with the intention of making their grants more accessible.

At the same time, families can apply for loans from the U.S. Small Business Administration, but applicants must meet eligibility requirements and pay the loan back. In addition, local community organizations often provide meals, clothes and other assistance, sometimes for weeks or months after the disaster.

But once those programs start to wane, by the one- or two-year mark, many families are still nowhere near recovered. Volunteers and local organizations fill the gaps with extended temporary housing and new permanent housing. But they, too, face challenges, as volunteers are spread thin.

In Mayfield, some programs have made progress on a few dozen homes, which families have started moving into. But the tornado destroyed hundreds of houses, hitting rentals hardest.

Helping families regain their independence is part of the mission of Camp Graves, the nonprofit providing temporary housing where the Princes now live.

But people in vulnerable populations are especially at risk of losing out on those opportunities. All of the seven families currently on the wait list for Camp Graves are Hispanic, Black, multiracial or include a single parent, office manager Cassy Basham said. In addition, residents with existing medical conditions or disabilities say they have faced additional challenges finding accessible housing.

Experts say the intersections of affordable housing and climate change can be felt everywhere. Menonite volunteers working on housing in Mayfield saw that firsthand, describing previous experiences in hurricane-prone areas of the South, where they repaired leaky roofs that were covered with tarps in some cases for as long as two years.

In the meantime in Mayfield, though, temporary housing is a safe haven for many. On a snowy day this January, Ashley sat at the kitchen table with her kids, helping them with assignments. It's the kind of moment they hope to have more when they become homeowners. The Princes are currently waiting to find out if they will get approved for a permanent house being built by The Fuller Center for Housing, a nonprofit that helps build and repair homes for people who need them, at little or no cost to the families.

In the meantime, though, the Princes find joy in the little things. A taller artificial tree for this Christmas. A separate bedroom for the kids and a new coffee pot. And time together.

That, after all, is the normal that matters the most.



## Two years after deadly tornadoes, some Mayfield families are still waiting for housing

By MELINA WALLING Associated Press

MAYFIELD, Ky. (AP) — Ashley Prince and her family have been chasing “normal” for years now.

Two years ago, the tornado that whipped through Mayfield peeled the roof off their rental property “like a Band-Aid.” She and her fiance Dylan watched from inside, huddled beneath mattresses, as the mile-wide storm popped out their plexiglass windows, pulled the laundry room off the hallway and knocked over the water tower behind their house, sucker-punching her in a rush of rapids. The ordeal left her with a severely injured leg.

What came next was a monthslong journey to put their lives back together. That meant about a year spent with Ashley’s parents, then a year in temporary housing after the tornado left them with little besides a still-working cellphone, a picture of the kids that had been hanging in the living room and the Bible Ashley was baptized with.

It’s the kind of story that disaster experts say will only become more common as climate change multiplies and intensifies instances of extreme weather. Academics point to a relief system in the United States that is relatively well-equipped to get aid out in the immediate aftermath of disasters, but is not designed for the long-term or the worsening conditions wrought by global warming. Stacked on top of that crisis is another intractable problem: the dire lack of affordable housing across the country.

That landscape makes people like the Princes — low-income renters — among the least prepared for the climate future that is to come. Using flooding as a case study, research from MIT has shown that disasters lead to increases in rental prices for renters with low incomes and to increases in evictions.

“People are not prepared to think about a potential disaster when they’re living in a precarious situation on a day-to-day basis,” said Smitha Rao, an assistant professor at Ohio State University who worked on the front lines of disaster relief before studying it.

After a disaster, families typically have a few options to rebuild, said Michelle Meyer, an associate professor at Texas A&M University and director of a hazard reduction and recovery research institute there. If they have homeowners’ or rental insurance, they can file a claim with the company. Then there are sources of financial assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which just last month changed its application process with the intention of making their grants more accessible. Meyer thinks that move will be good for vulnerable populations, but that it somewhat maintains FEMA’s limited involvement in long-term rebuilding.

At the same time, families can apply for loans from the U.S. Small Business Administration, but applicants must meet eligibility requirements and pay the loan back. In addition, local community organizations often provide meals, clothes, temporary shelter, household supplies and other assistance, sometimes for weeks or months after the disaster. Those programs are bolstered by charitable donations that come in alongside news coverage that documents the damage.

But all those programs start to wane after a few months, and by the one- or two-year mark, many families are still nowhere near recovered. “As a public, if it’s not our community affected, we want to give money the day after,” Meyer said. That can leave nonprofits operating on a shoestring budget when the work actually begins.

Volunteers and local organizations fill the gaps with extended temporary housing and new permanent housing to replace what’s been lost. But they, too, face challenges. Last year the U.S. census found that formal volunteer participation had dropped 7 percentage points between 2019 and 2021, the largest decrease the survey had on record. “The volunteers are spread thin,” Meyer said. “These communities have to kind of wait for volunteers to show up.”

In Mayfield, programs like The Hope Initiative, The Fuller Center for Housing, Samaritan’s Purse and others have made progress on a few dozen homes, which families have started moving into at low or no cost. But the tornado destroyed hundreds of homes, hitting neighborhoods with mostly rentals the hardest. That means temporary housing is all the more important while they wait. “Especially for children,

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getting back to stable housing is the most important factor to getting them back into recovery mode and improving post-disaster," Meyer said.

Housing was a struggle for the Princes even before the storm. Ashley says they were evicted twice without cause before moving into the home they nearly died in. It wasn't known around town as the best area, Ashley said, but she could walk everywhere. Her grandmother had rented that house for 13 years before they moved in, so it was familiar. There was a big shade tree where the kids could run around. Everybody on that street knew everybody else.

"That's kind of how Mayfield is," Ashley said. "We're a very tight-knit community."

That's how the Princes survived: friends and family sheltered them and got Ashley the medical care she needed for the leg she injured in the storm. But it wasn't an easy road. When they moved in with Ashley's parents, they did so along with other family members and at one point 15 people were living in a two-bedroom house.

Helping families regain their independence is part of the mission of Camp Graves, where the Princes now live. It's a nonprofit helping provide temporary housing to those displaced by the tornado as well as to others in need. The sizes of the homes there vary based on family size; some live in trailers, others in container homes or in easily-assembled tiny homes with pine walls and tin roofs. Residents pay for utilities but not rent, giving them a chance to save up.

Cassy Basham, the office manager for Camp Graves, says she does everything she can to make people feel supported in spite of the challenges they have faced. Her title does little to showcase the many hats she wears, from helping families with paperwork to connecting local community advocates with resources.

But people in vulnerable populations are especially at risk of losing out on those opportunities. All of the seven families currently on the wait list for Camp Graves are Hispanic, Black, multiracial or include a single parent, Basham said, highlighting the difficulties in getting resources to those who are already at a disadvantage. It can be harder to connect with someone who doesn't speak much English, for example, or with someone who's worried about their citizenship status.

In addition, people with existing medical conditions or disabilities face greater challenges after disasters. Cayla and James Callan moved into Camp Graves a year and two months after the tornado hit, after several weeks of living with family members. For a while, they lived in a trailer, and then later in a tiny home that they say had a black mold problem. James was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 2017. After the tornado, they weren't just searching for affordable housing but also for wheelchair accessible housing that could accommodate James' mobility issues.

Cayla said that it was a relief to move into Camp Graves. But their story isn't over, and she emphasized the fact that recovery doesn't end quickly. "I still feel lost about a lot of it," she said of what they went through. They're waiting to hear whether they get approved for permanent housing.

Basham says that Camp Graves plans to continue operating well into the future to help with all kinds of temporary housing needs. After flooding hit rental housing again the summer of 2023, more families moved in. Others in the later wave of residents didn't lose their house to the tornado but rather to eviction or other life circumstances as landlords and local businesses reshuffled properties.

"We found out real quick Mayfield was not prepared," Basham said. "So if you have the opportunity to create a long-term recovery group or disaster preparedness group, whatever you want to call it in your community, you need to do that."

Experts say the intersections of affordable housing and climate change can be felt everywhere. In Hawaii, some housing was decimated in the wake of wildfires. Mennonite volunteers working on housing in Mayfield described previous experiences in hurricane-prone areas of the South, where they worked to repair leaky roofs that were covered with tarps in some cases for as long as two years.

In the meantime in Mayfield, though, temporary housing is a safe haven for many. On a snowy day in January, with school canceled due to the weather, Ashley sat at the kitchen table with her kids to help them with their assignments, piles of worksheets strewn across the checked tablecloth. Her older son, Hunter, enthusiastically raced through math problems — his favorite subject, he said. His younger brother Waylon

sat across from him in a polar bear hat, labeling illustrated mugs of hot chocolate with the numbers from one to 20. When Waylon drew one of the numbers backward, Ashley gently corrected him.

It's the kind of everyday moment they hope to have more of when they become homeowners — a goal they now believe is in reach. The Princes are currently waiting to find out if they will get approved for a permanent house being built by The Fuller Center for Housing, a nonprofit that helps build and repair homes for people who need them, at little or no cost to the families.

In the meantime, though, the Princes find joy in the little things. A taller artificial tree for this, the second post-tornado Christmas they've been able to celebrate. A separate bedroom for the kids and a new coffee pot. And time together.

That, after all, is the normal that matters the most.

## **The Super Bowl is expected to smash betting records. Nearly 68M US adults plan to wager**

By WAYNE PARRY Associated Press

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. (AP) — Nearly 68 million American adults — about 1 in 4 — plan to bet on this year's Super Bowl, setting a record by a wide margin, according to the gambling industry's national trade association.

Figures released Tuesday by the American Gaming Association include bets placed with legal outlets, as well as with illegal bookies and online operations in other countries.

The volume of betting participation is projected to be 35% higher than last year, which was the previous record.

Bettors plan to wager an estimated \$23.1 billion on this year's Super Bowl, up from \$16 billion last year, the group predicted.

Of that, about \$1.5 billion is projected to be bet with legal outlets, the group said, citing consensus estimates from various sources. That is in the same ballpark as the \$1.25 billion in legal bets projected by Irvine, California-based research firm Eilers & Krejcik Gaming.

Sports betting is legal in 38 states plus Washington, D.C.

"There's a good chance that every Super Bowl for the next ten or so years will be the most bet Super Bowl thanks to the underlying growth of regulated sports betting in the U.S.," said gambling analyst Chris Grove, a partner at Eilers & Krejcik Gaming.

Sunday's game will feature the defending Super Bowl champion Kansas City Chiefs against the San Francisco 49ers in a rare rematch from four years ago.

The 49ers are favored by 2.5 points, meaning they would have to win the game by 3 or more points for bets on them to be winners. Conversely, if the Chiefs win, or if they lose by no more than 2 points, bets on Kansas City would win. Those odds are from FanDuel Sportsbook, the official odds provider for The Associated Press.

The romance between Chiefs star tight end Travis Kelce and pop superstar Taylor Swift might be helping drive interest in this Super Bowl. About 73% of adults say they plan to watch the game this year, about 10% higher than in recent previous years.

"I think the 'Taylor Swift effect' will be more obviously felt in terms of the total number of people watching and betting on the game than it will be in the total dollars bet on the game," Grove said. "But there's little doubt that sportsbooks will be seeing Swifties sign up that otherwise would not have given sports betting a second thought."

Likewise, Cait DeBaun, a vice president with the American Gaming Association, said Swift could be one of several reasons for increased betting on this year's Super Bowl, along with "the compelling matchup," the game being held in Las Vegas, the nation's betting capital, and the growing availability of legal sports betting in the U.S.

The largest group in the survey — 42.7 million adults — plans to place a wager online (legally or illegally),

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at a retail sportsbook or with an illegal bookie, an increase of 41% from last year.

About 36.5 million adults plan to bet casually with friends, or as part of a pool or squares contest, up 32% from last year.

Bettors are nearly split on the outcome of the game, with 47% planning to bet on the Kansas City Chiefs and 44% planning to bet on the San Francisco 49ers, according to the association's survey conducted Jan. 30 through Feb. 1 of a national sample of 2,204 adults. The survey has a margin of error of plus or minus 2 percentage points.

Groups that treat or seek to prevent compulsive gambling are always concerned as the Super Bowl approaches, let alone one with the anticipated betting activity this year's game is likely to have. The Council on Compulsive Gambling of NJ urges bettors to set limits on their wagering, only bet what you can afford to lose and never chase gambling losses with additional bets.

That is particularly important with the widespread availability of in-game bets, the group said.

"The capacity to wager throughout the game allows gamblers to take as many risks as there are plays, and with every setback comes the temptation to try to recoup one's losses with yet another bet," it said in a statement.

Help for those with a gambling problem is available by calling 800-GAMBLER.

Eilers & Krejci forecasts that nearly 13% of money bet with legal sportsbooks will come from Nevada, where the game will be played. That is followed by New York (12.4%), New Jersey (9.6%); Pennsylvania (7.4%), Illinois (7.3%); Ohio (7%) and Arizona (5.6%). Other states are projected to account for 3.6% or less individually.

About 10% to 15% of legal bets will be made live after the game already has begun, the company predicted.

Brian Becker, senior vice president of Tipico Sportsbook, is among many gambling industry executives who predict a record-breaking betting level on this year's Super Bowl.

"The game-watching experience has become more immersive than ever before," he said. "As we approach Super Bowl Sunday, we also expect the festivities in Las Vegas to have a ripple effect across the country and entice more fans to place bets than in years past with the microscope of media and advertising on Vegas culture."

## Jesuits in US bolster outreach initiative aimed at encouraging LGBTQ+ Catholics

By DAVID CRARY AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Even as Catholic dogma continues to repudiate same-sex marriage and gender transition, one of the most prominent religious orders in the United States — the Jesuits — is strengthening a unique outreach program for LGBTQ+ Catholics.

The initiative — fittingly called Outreach — was founded two years ago by the Rev. James Martin, a Jesuit who is one of the country's most prominent advocates for greater LGBTQ+ inclusion in the Catholic Church.

Outreach, a ministry of the Jesuit magazine America, sponsored conferences in New York City in 2022 and 2023, and last year launched a multifaceted website with news, essays and information about Catholic LGBTQ+ resources and events.

On Tuesday, there was another milestone for Outreach — the appointment of journalist and author Michael O'Loughlin as its first executive director.

O'Loughlin, a former staff writer at online newspaper Crux, has been the national correspondent at America. He is the author of a book recounting the varied ways that Catholics in the U.S. responded to the AIDS crisis of the 1980s and '90s — "Hidden Mercy: AIDS, Catholics, and the Untold Stories of Compassion in the Face of Fear."

O'Loughlin told The Associated Press he's excited by his new job, viewing it as a chance to expand the range of Outreach's programs and the national scope of its community.



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"It's an opportunity to highlight the ways LGBT people can be Catholic and active in parishes, ministries and charities," he said. "There's a lot of fear about to being too public about it. ... I want them to realize they're not alone."

O'Loughlin says his current outlook evolved as he traveled to scores of places around the U.S. to promote his book, talking to groups of LGBTQ+ Catholics, and their families and friends, about how to make the church more welcoming to them.

Those conversations made O'Loughlin increasingly comfortable publicly identifying as a gay Catholic after years of wondering whether he should remain in the church. Its doctrine still condemns any sexual relations between gay or lesbian partners as "intrinsically disordered."

The latest expansion of Outreach occurs amid a time of division within the global Catholic Church as it grapples with LGBTQ+ issues.

Pope Francis, a Jesuit who has met with Martin and sent letters of support to Outreach, has made clear he favors a more welcoming approach to LGBTQ+ people. At his direction, the Vatican recently gave priests greater leeway to bless same-sex couples and asserted that transgender people, in some circumstances, can be baptized.

However, there has been some resistance to the pope's approach. Many conservative bishops in Africa, Europe and elsewhere said they would not implement the new policy regarding blessings. In the U.S., some bishops have issued directives effectively ordering diocesan personnel not to recognize transgender people's gender identity.

Amid those conflicting developments, Martin and other Jesuit leaders are proud of Outreach's accomplishments and optimistic about its future.

"There seems to be deep hunger for the kind of ministry that we're doing, not only among LGBTQ Catholics, but also their families and friends," Martin said by email from Ireland, where he was meeting last week with the the country's Catholic bishops.

"Pope Francis has been very encouraging, allowing himself to be interviewed by Outreach and sending personal greetings to our conference last year," Martin added. "Perhaps the most surprising support has been from several bishops who have written for our website, as well as some top-notch Catholic theologians who see the need for serious theological reflection on LGBTQ topics."

Martin will remain engaged in Outreach's oversight, holding the title of founder.

The Rev. Brian Paulson, president of the Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States, evoked both Jesus and the pope when asked why his order had embraced the mission of Outreach.

"Pope Francis has repeatedly called leaders in the Catholic church to emulate the way Jesus spent his ministry on the peripheries, accompanying those who had experienced exclusion," Paulson said email. "I think the work of Outreach is a response to this invitation."

Paulson also said he was impressed by Martin's "grace and patience" in responding to the often harsh criticism directed at him by some conservative Catholics.

There was ample evidence of Outreach's stature at its conference last June at a branch of Fordham University in New York City. The event was preceded by a handwritten letter of support sent to Martin by Pope Francis, extending "prayers and good wishes" to the participants.

"It's a special grace for LGBTQ Catholics to know that the pope is praying for them," Martin said.

Another welcoming letter came from Cardinal Timothy Dolan, the archbishop of New York.

"It is the sacred duty of the Church and Her ministers to reach out to those on the periphery," he wrote to the conference attendees.

The keynote speakers included Fordham's president, Tania Tetlow, and the closing Mass was celebrated by Archbishop John Wester of Santa Fe, New Mexico.

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## Today in History: February 7, The Beatles arrive for first US tour

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, Feb. 7, the 38th day of 2024. There are 328 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Feb. 7, 1962, President John F. Kennedy imposed a full trade embargo on Cuba.

On this date:

In 1857, a French court acquitted author Gustave Flaubert of obscenity for his serialized novel "Madame Bovary."

In 1943, the government abruptly announced that wartime rationing of shoes made of leather would go into effect in two days, limiting consumers to buying three pairs per person per year. (Rationing was lifted in October 1945.)

In 1948, Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower resigned as U.S. Army chief of staff; he was succeeded by Gen. Omar Bradley.

In 1964, the Beatles arrived to screaming fans at New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport to begin their first American tour.

In 1971, women in Switzerland gained the right to vote through a national referendum, 12 years after a previous attempt failed.

In 1984, space shuttle Challenger astronauts Bruce McCandless II and Robert L. Stewart went on the first untethered spacewalk, which lasted nearly six hours.

In 1985, U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration agent Enrique "Kiki" Camarena was kidnapped in Guadalajara, Mexico, by drug traffickers who tortured and murdered him.

In 1991, Jean-Bertrand Aristide (zhahn behr-TRAHN' ahr-ihs-TEED') was inaugurated as the first democratically elected president of Haiti (he was overthrown by the military the following September).

In 1999, Jordan's King Hussein died of cancer at age 63; he was succeeded by his eldest son, Abdullah (ab-DUH'-luh).

In 2009, a miles-wide section of ice in Lake Erie broke away from the Ohio shoreline, trapping about 135 fishermen, some for as long as four hours before they could be rescued (one man fell into the water and later died of an apparent heart attack).

In 2014, the Sochi Olympics opened with a celebration of Russia's past greatness and hopes for future glory.

In 2018, biotech billionaire Dr. Patrick Soon-Shiong struck a \$500 million deal to buy the Los Angeles Times, the San Diego Union-Tribune and other publications.

In 2020, two days after his acquittal in his first Senate impeachment trial, President Donald Trump took retribution against two officials who had delivered damaging testimony; he ousted Lt. Col. Alexander Vindman, a national security aide, and Gordon Sondland, his ambassador to the European Union.

In 2021, after moving south to a new team and conference, Tom Brady led the Tampa Bay Buccaneers to a 31-9 Super Bowl victory over the Kansas City Chiefs on the Buccaneers' home field.

Today's birthdays: Author Gay Talese is 92. Sen. John Hickenlooper, D-Colo., is 72. Comedy writer Robert Smigel is 64. Actor James Spader is 64. Country singer Garth Brooks is 62. Rock musician David Bryan (Bon Jovi) is 62. Actor-comedian Eddie Izzard is 62. Actor-comedian Chris Rock is 59. Actor Jason Gedrick is 57. Actor Essence Atkins is 51. Rock singer-musician Wes Borland is 49. Rock musician Tom Blankenship (My Morning Jacket) is 46. Actor Ashton Kutcher is 46. Actor Tina Majorino is 39. Actor Deborah Ann Woll is 39. Former NBA player Isaiah Thomas is 35. NHL center Steven Stamkos is 34.