

Groton Daily Independent

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Sunday, Feb. 18

Open Gym: Grades JK-8 2:00-3:30 [Students accompanied by adults] Grades 6-12 3:30-5:00

Groton CM&A: Sunday School at 9:15 a.m., Worship Service at 10:30 a.m.

Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m., SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.

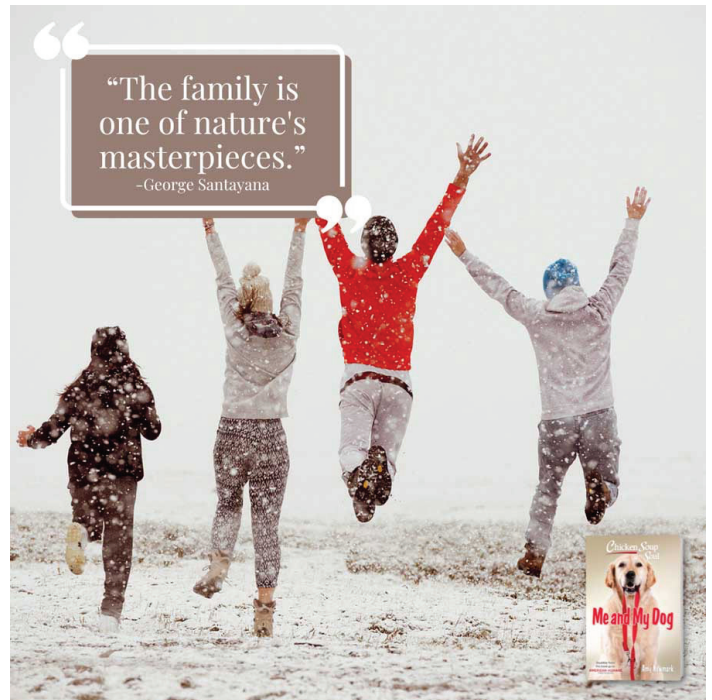
First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion, 9 a.m.; No Sunday School; Choir, 6 p.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Worship with communion at St. John's at 9 a.m. and at Zion at 11 a.m.; Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.

United Methodist: Worship at Conde, 8:30 a.m.; and at Groton, 10:30 a.m.; Coffee hour, 9:30 a.m.; No Sunday School.

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



Monday, Feb. 19

No Senior Meal

No School - President's Day

Senior Citizens Meet at the Groton Community Center, 1 p.m.

Pantry Open 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Christian Literature Circle, 7:30 p.m.

Boys Basketball: Dakota Valley at Groton Area. Junior varsity game at 4:30 p.m. followed by varsity.

Tuesday, Feb. 20

Senior Menu: Ham rotini bake, mixed Monterey blend, peas, honey fruit salad, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Egg omelets.

School Lunch: Hot dots, fries.

Girls Basketball Region 1A

City Council Meeting, 7 p.m.

Thrift Store open 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Food Pantry open 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Quilting, 9 a.m.

United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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Four wrestlers to advance to state

Four Groton Area wrestlers have advanced to the state tournament in Region 1B competition held Saturday in Gettysburg. The state will be held Feb. 22-24 in Sioux Falls.

Wyatt Hagen took fourth place at 106 pounds, Walker Zoellner placed third at 126 pounds, Christian Ehresmann placed second at 144 pounds and Korbin Kucker took first at 157 pounds.

106: Wyatt Hagen (29-16) placed 4th and scored 12.0 team points.

Quarterfinal - Wyatt Hagen (Groton Area) 29-16 won by major decision over Chase Henriksen (Kingsbury County) 32-24 (MD 12-0)

Semifinal - Cade Gaikowski (Clark/Willow Lake) 36-9 won by fall over Wyatt Hagen (Groton Area) 29-16 (Fall 5:10)

Cons. Semi - Wyatt Hagen (Groton Area) 29-16 won by major decision over Logan Smith (Faulkton Area) 21-19 (MD 18-6)

3rd Place Match - Tayten Kurkowski (Webster Area) 28-15 won by decision over Wyatt Hagen (Groton Area) 29-16 (Dec 5-1)

113: Lincoln Krause (23-17) placed 6th and scored 6.0 team points.

Quarterfinal - Nicholas Schlachter (Potter County) 27-7 won by fall over Lincoln Krause (Groton Area) 23-17 (Fall 1:12)

Cons. Round 1 - Lincoln Krause (Groton Area) 23-17 won by fall over Avery Williams (Sully Buttes) 0-14 (Fall 4:21)

Cons. Semi - Sean Roseland (Faulkton Area) 35-16 won by fall over Lincoln Krause (Groton Area) 23-17 (Fall 0:41)

5th Place Match - Caden Singrey (Kingsbury County) 22-13 won by fall over Lincoln Krause (Groton Area) 23-17 (Fall 2:26)

126: Walker Zoellner (32-14) placed 3rd and scored 17.0 team points.

Quarterfinal - Walker Zoellner (Groton Area) 32-14 won by fall over Dubhlainn Vermeulen (Sioux Valley) 13-25 (Fall 0:30)

Semifinal - Conner Zens (Redfield) 33-10 won by major decision over Walker Zoellner (Groton Area) 32-14 (MD 10-0)

Cons. Semi - Walker Zoellner (Groton Area) 32-14 won by major decision over Tyson Hagberg (Deuel/Deubrook Area) 16-22 (MD 11-0)

3rd Place Match - Walker Zoellner (Groton Area) 32-14 won by fall over Dubhlainn Vermeulen (Sioux Valley) 13-25 (Fall 2:13)

144: Christian Ehresmann (35-5) placed 2nd and scored 21.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 35-5 received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal - Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 35-5 won by fall over Donovan Sandven (Kingsbury County) 14-16 (Fall 1:51)

Semifinal - Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 35-5 won by major decision over Bryce Hawkinson (Britton-Hecla) 38-10 (MD 11-3)

1st Place Match - Landon Coyle (Faulkton Area) 36-9 won by decision over Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 35-5 (Dec 5-2)

157: Korbin Kucker (24-7) placed 1st and scored 30.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Korbin Kucker (Groton Area) 24-7 won by fall over Lincoln Reidburn (Clark/Willow Lake) 4-12 (Fall 2:26)

Quarterfinal - Korbin Kucker (Groton Area) 24-7 won by fall over Beau Schilling (Ipswich/Bowdle) 14-19 (Fall 0:52)

Semifinal - Korbin Kucker (Groton Area) 24-7 won by fall over Gage Baumgarn (Webster Area) 31-16 (Fall 4:19)

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1st Place Match - Korbin Kucker (Groton Area) 24-7 won by fall over Charlie Dulany (Warner/Northwestern) 27-7 (Fall 2:38)

165: Easten Ekern (13-25) placed 6th and scored 3.0 team points.

Quarterfinal - Deion Harris (Kingsbury County) 17-24 won by fall over Easten Ekern (Groton Area) 13-25 (Fall 0:53)

Cons. Round 1 - Easten Ekern (Groton Area) 13-25 received a bye () (Bye)

Cons. Semi - Dustin Dirksen (Warner/Northwestern) 29-13 won by fall over Easten Ekern (Groton Area) 13-25 (Fall 0:41)

5th Place Match - Deion Harris (Kingsbury County) 17-24 won by fall over Easten Ekern (Groton Area) 13-25 (Fall 0:28)

175: Ben Hoeft (13-23).

Champ. Round 1 - Marshall Holz (Kingsbury County) 29-18 won by fall over Ben Hoeft (Groton Area) 13-23 (Fall 2:31)

Cons. Round 1 - Ben Hoeft (Groton Area) 13-23 received a bye () (Bye)

Cons. Round 2 - Justin Rorhbach (Ipswich/Bowdle) 24-16 won by fall over Ben Hoeft (Groton Area) 13-23 (Fall 2:31)

190: Drew Thurston (7-14) scored 4.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Drew Thurston (Groton Area) 7-14 won by fall over Kameron Hunnel (Potter County) 3-28 (Fall 3:02)

Quarterfinal - Tristen Baloun (Faulkton Area) 25-9 won by fall over Drew Thurston (Groton Area) 7-14 (Fall 0:50)

Cons. Round 2 - Drew Thurston (Groton Area) 7-14 received a bye () (Bye)

Cons. Round 3 - Riley Popp (Clark/Willow Lake) 17-26 won by fall over Drew Thurston (Groton Area) 7-14 (Fall 2:31)

215: Charlie Frost (15-16) placed 6th and scored 6.0 team points.

Quarterfinal - Kadyne Weisser (Ipswich/Bowdle) 27-14 won by fall over Charlie Frost (Groton Area) 15-16 (Fall 1:27)

Cons. Round 1 - Charlie Frost (Groton Area) 15-16 won by fall over Raymond Klein (Deuel/Deubrook Area) 20-24 (Fall 2:47)

Cons. Semi - Preston Cavalier (Warner/Northwestern) 38-9 won by fall over Charlie Frost (Groton Area) 15-16 (Fall 0:46)

5th Place Match - Matthew Angiolelli (Webster Area) 21-17 won by decision over Charlie Frost (Groton Area) 15-16 (Dec 7-3)

285: Gaviin Englund (30-14) placed 5th and scored 10.0 team points.

Quarterfinal - Owen Vandeweerd (Sioux Valley) 41-5 won by decision over Gaviin Englund (Groton Area) 30-14 (Dec 4-1)

Cons. Round 1 - Gaviin Englund (Groton Area) 30-14 won by fall over Gage Miotke (Webster Area) 11-22 (Fall 1:39)

Cons. Semi - Tucker Hardy (Britton-Hecla) 34-14 won by decision over Gaviin Englund (Groton Area) 30-14 (Dec 10-6)

5th Place Match - Gaviin Englund (Groton Area) 30-14 won by fall over Brayden Satter (Warner/Northwestern) 15-21 (Fall 2:13)

Groton Area boys beat Florence-Henry in all five games

Groton Area boys took all games into the mercy rule with the 30-point difference as the Tigers defeated Florence-Henry in all five games. The games were played Saturday in Henry.

Groton Area reached the 30-point spread in the varsity game with 4:08 left in the third quarter, in the junior varsity game with 1:31 left in the game, the C game with 1:22 left in the third quarter, the eighth grade game with 5:42 left in the third quarter and the seventh grade game with 15 seconds left in the third quarter.

Varsity Game: Groton Area 73, Florence-Henry 50

Three players hit double figures as Groton Area defeated the Falcons in the varsity game, 73-50. The Tigers led at the quarterstops at 23-17, 45-24 and 61-34.

Ryder Johnson had four three-pointers to lead the Tigers with 21 points, seven rebounds, three assists and one steal. Jacob Zak made one three-pointer and finished with 13 points, six rebounds, one assist and one steal. Lane Tietz made one three-pointer to finish with 13 points, four rebounds, two assists and one steal. Keegen Tracy made two three-pointers and finished with eight points, three rebounds, five assists and one steal.

Colby Dunker had six points, one rebounds and two assists. Gage Sippel had four points, two rebounds, one steal and one block. Logan Ringgenberg had two points, one rebound and one assist. Jayden Schwan had two points and one rebound. Karson Zak had two points and one assist. Easton Weber had two points, one rebound and one assist. Blake Pauli had one assist and one steal. Kassen Keough, Logan Warrington and Turner Thompson each had one rebound.

Groton Area made 21 of 30 two-pointers for 70 percent, eight of 24 three-pointers for 33 percent, seven of 13 free throws for 54 percent, had 29 rebounds, nine turnovers, 17 assists, six steals, 13 fouls and one block.

Carson Vavruska led the Falcons with 20 points, James Schroeder had 11 points, Logan Vavruska seven, Ty Bergh six, Jaxon Orthaus three, Tristan Sumner two points and Tate Hartley added one free throw.

Junior Varsity Game: Groton Area 54, Florence-Henry 24

Groton Area led at the quarterstops at 20-7, 31-12 and 41-22 en route to a 54-24 junior varsity win.

Kassen Keough led the Tigers with 14 points, Gage Sippel and Karson Zak each had 11, Turner Thompson six, Logan Warrington five, and Blake Pauli, Jace Johnson and Easton Weber each had two points.

Three-Pointers: Keough - 2, Zak - 1.

Jaxon Orthaus led the Falcons with eight points, Zach Schroeder had six, Tucker Keller five, Carson Kelly three and Masyn Warne two.

Three-Pointers: Keller - 1, Schroeder - 1, Kelly - 1, Orthaus - 2.

C Game: Groton Area 46, Florence-Henry 20



Coach Brian Dolan goes over a game plan with the team during a time-out. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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Groton Area led at the quarterstops at 17-0, 25-5 and 42-11 en route to a 46-20 C game win. Logan Warrington led Groton Area with 16 points, Ethan Kroll 10, Karson Zak six, Jace Johnson and Ryder Schelle each had four, and adding two points apiece were Jayden Schwan, Keegen Harry and T.C. Schuster. Zack Schroeder led the Falcons with eight points.

8th Grade Game: Groton Area 52, Florence-Henry 18

Groton Area led at the quarterstops at 18-0, 36-7 and 48-16 en route to a 52-18 win in the eighth grade game.

Jace Johnson led Groton Area with 17 points, Ethan Kroll had eight, Alex Abeln seven, Jordan Schwan five, Anthony Gilmore, Asher Johnson and Ryder Schelle each had four and T.C. Schuster had three points.

7th Grade Game: Groton Area 50, Florence-Henry 10

The seventh graders won their game, 50-10, leading at the quarterstops at 14-4, 24-6 and 41-10. Anthony Gilmore led Groton Area with 13 points, Zach Fliehs had 11, Jordan Schwan and Asher Johnson each had nine points and Connor Kroll and Wes Morehouse each had four points.

The games were broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM. Varsity game sponsors were Agtegra, Avantara Groton, Bary Keith at Harr Motors, BK Custom Ts & More, Bierman Farm Service, Blocker Construction, Dacotah Bank, Full Circle Ag, Groton Ag Partners, Groton Chamber, Groton Ford, John Sieh Agency, Krueger Brothers, Locke Electric, The MeatHouse of Andover, Rix Farms/R&M Farms and Spanier Harvesting and Trucking. The junior varsity game sponsors was were Craig and Jodi Sterhagen and Tom and Lindsey Tietz. The C game sponsor was S & S Lumber. The junior high games were sponsored by Jesse and Bridgett Scott of Waubay. Paul Kosel and Jeslyn Kosel were on the scene for the games.

DIRECTOR OF NURSING

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REGISTERED NURSE

\$5,000 Sign-On Bonus

LPN - NIGHTS

\$5,000 Sign-On Bonus

CNA

\$3,000 Sign-On Bonus

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Contact Clay at 605-492-3615 or clayb@sundialmanor.com

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(0214.0221)

Finance Officer Wanted

The Town of Andover is seeking a Finance Officer. This is a part time position. Must know word and excel. Resume can be sent to P O Box 35,

Andover, SD 57422, or email to bsmith@nvc.net. A complete job description is available by call 605-265-0236. EOE. (0214.0221)



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NSU Wrestling

No. 18 Wolves Take Four Matches in Dual Loss to Minnesota State

Aberdeen, S.D. – The No. 18 Northern State University wrestling team closed out the regular season at Minnesota State Saturday evening, falling to the Mavericks by six. The Wolves won four weights, including two technical fall victories by Landen Fischer and Seth Brossard.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 17, MSU 23

Records: NSU 8-13 (3-6 NSIC), MSU 7-5 (4-4 NSIC)

HOW IT HAPPENED

Fischer kicked off the evening for the Wolves with a shutout technical fall over Lucas Ryan at 4:12 in the match by a score of 15-0

Jason Henschel Jr. extended the Wolves lead, defeating Chase Beckett in a 7-2 decision

Minnesota State quickly cut the lead to 2-points with a victory by fall at 141 pounds

No. 2 Wyatt Turnquist notched a shutout of his own, defeating Isaiah Mlsna by a score of 13-0

With the Wolves up 12-6, the Mavericks came knocking, raking a technical fall at 157-pounds and a sudden victory at 165-pounds to grab the lead

The lead was back in Northern's hands following a 22-6 technical fall win by Seth Brossard at 174-pounds, defeating Drake Hayward

Brossard however was the final win of the evening for the Wolves as the Mavericks recorded three straight decisions to close out the dual

UP NEXT

Northern enters the post-season in two weeks at the NCAA Super Region V Tournament hosted by Minot State on March 2. Full regional information will be released on nsuwolves.com the week of with live links.

FINAL RESULTS

	Match Summary	MSU	NSU
125	Landen Fischer (NSU) over Lucas Ryan (MSU) (TF 15-0 4:12)	0	5
133	Jason Henschel (NSU) over Chase Beckett (MSU) (Dec 7-2)	0	3
141	Trayton Anderson (MSU) over Teagan Block (NSU) (Fall 1:54)	6	0
149	#2 Wyatt Turnquist (NSU) over Isaiah Mlsna (MSU) (Maj. 13-0)	0	4
157	Caleb Meunier (MSU) over Cael Larson (NSU) (TF 17-2 7:00)	5	0
165	Kole Marko (MSU) over Chase Bloomquist (NSU) (SV-1 4-1)	3	0
174	Seth Brossard (NSU) over Drake Hayward (MSU) (TF 22-6 5:36)	0	5
184	Gavin Christofersen (MSU) over Sam Kruger (NSU) (Dec 8-3)	3	0
197	Shane Gibson (MSU) over Tyson Lien (Dec 10-6)	3	0
285	Tanner Gaffey (MSU) over Nathan Schauer (NSU) (Dec 5-2)	3	0
	Dual Meet Score	23	17

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NSU Men's Basketball

Northern State Drops 2-Point Battle with No. 5 Minnesota State

Aberdeen, S.D. – The Northern State University men's basketball team held strong against No. 5 Minnesota State on Saturday evening, falling to the Mavericks on a final second pull-up jump shot. Through 40 minutes of play, the contest saw nine tie scores and 16 lead changes, with neither team holding a double figure lead at any point.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 83, MSU 85

Records: NSU 10-16 (8-12 NSIC), MSU 24-2 (18-2 NSIC)

Attendance: 2502

HOW IT HAPPENED

The Wolves tallied 48 points in the first and 35 in the second, while the Mavericks recorded 51 in the first and 34 in the second

Northern led the contest shooting 48.3% from the floor and 86.7% from the free throw line

In addition, NSU recorded a game leading 12 made 3-pointers, 16 assists, four steals, and two blocks

MSU won the game at the glass, out-rebounding NSU 41-31 and draining 21 second chance points off 15 offensive boards

Northern added 34 points in the paint, 11 points off turnovers, nine points off the bench, and four second chance points in the game

The Mavericks tallied 20 points off the bench and saw five players in double figures in the win

It was another career high night for an NSU starter, as Josh Dilling led the game with 37 points, knocking down 14-of-18 from the floor and 5-of-8 from beyond the arc

Jackson Moni just missed a double-double with 13 points and nine rebounds, while Michael Nhial rounded out the double figure scorers with 11

NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL LEADERS

Josh Dilling: 37 points, 77.8 field goal%, 8 assists, 3 rebounds

Jackson Moni: 13 points, 50.0 field goal%, 9 rebounds, 6 assists

Michael Nhial: 11 points, 8 rebounds

UP NEXT

Northern will close out the regular season next Friday and Saturday on the road against Augustana and Wayne State. Start times are set for 7:30 p.m. on Friday against the Vikings and 5:30 p.m. on Saturday versus the Wildcats. Northern sits tied for tenth in the league standings with St. Cloud State.

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NSU Women's Basketball

Wolves Take Down No. 14 Minnesota State to Sweep the Weekend

Aberdeen, S.D. – A team effort led the Northern State University women's basketball team to take down No. 14 Minnesota State, 92-87. Four Wolves notched double digits along with Rianna Fillipi recording her sixth double-double of the season.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 92, MSU 87

Records: NSU 19-7 (15-5 NSIC), MSU 21-5 (18-2 NSIC)

Attendance: 2351

HOW IT HAPPENED

Northern State racked up 23 points in the first quarter, 23 in the second, 17 in the third, and 29 in the fourth

The Wolves shot well in the contest shooting 49.2 % from the floor, 27.3 % from the 3-point line, and 80.0 % from the foul line

They tallied 45 rebounds, 36 points in the paint, 29 bench points, 22 points off of turnovers, 21 second chance points and 18 assists

Madelyn Bragg dished out a team lead of 23 points along with nine rebounds and two assists

In addition, Bragg shot 90.0 % from the floor in the win

Rianna Fillipi recorded her sixth double-double of the season with 18 points and a team lead of 11 rebounds

Decontee Smith followed behind with 18 points, seven rebounds, and four assists

Alayna Benike led the Wolves beyond the 3-point arc with three made along with 17 points and four rebounds

NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

Madelyn Bragg: 23 points, 9 rebounds, 2 assists, 90.0 FG %

Rianna Fillipi: 18 points, 11 rebounds, 5 assists

Decontee Smith: 18 points, 7 rebounds, 4 assists

Alayna Benike: 17 points, 4 rebounds

UP NEXT

Northern State hits the road to match-up against Augustana University and Wayne State to end the regular season. Tip-off times are set for 5:30 p.m. on Friday, February 23rd from Sioux Falls against the Vikings and 3:30 p.m. on Saturday, February 24th from Wayne, Neb. against the Wildcats.

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Girls Basketball Region 1A

Class A - Region 1




#1 - Sisseton High School

 1 Sisseton	18-1	2/20 6:00 PM CT
 8 Tiospa Zina	1-19	




#2 - Sisseton High School

 4 Milbank	11-9	2/20 7:30 PM CT
 5 Waubay/Summit	10-10	

#3 - Aberdeen Catholic Schools

 2 Aberdeen Ronc...	17-3	2/20 6:00 PM CT
 7 Redfield	6-14	

#4 - Aberdeen Catholic Schools

 3 Groton Area	13-7	2/20 7:30 PM CT
 6 Webster Area	7-13	

#5 -

#1 WINNER	2/22 TBD
#2 WINNER	

SODAK 16 QUALIFIER



#6 -

#3 WINNER	2/22 TBD
#4 WINNER	

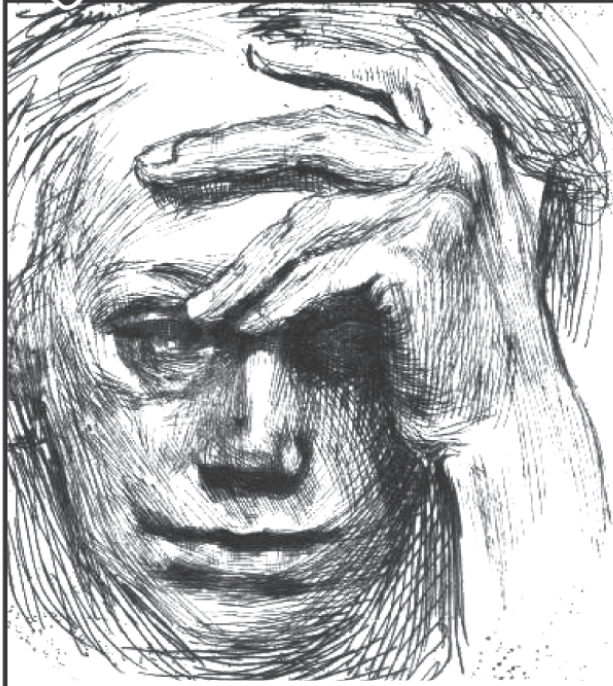
SODAK 16 QUALIFIER

Seed Points Averages (calculated Feb. 16)

#1 Sisseton 46.263 - #2 Aberdeen Roncalli 44.750 - #3 Groton Area 42.850 - #4 Milbank 41.000 - #5 Waubay/Summit 39.700 - #6 Webster Area 38.950 - #7 Redfield 38.250 - #8 Tiospa Zina 34.450



THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE



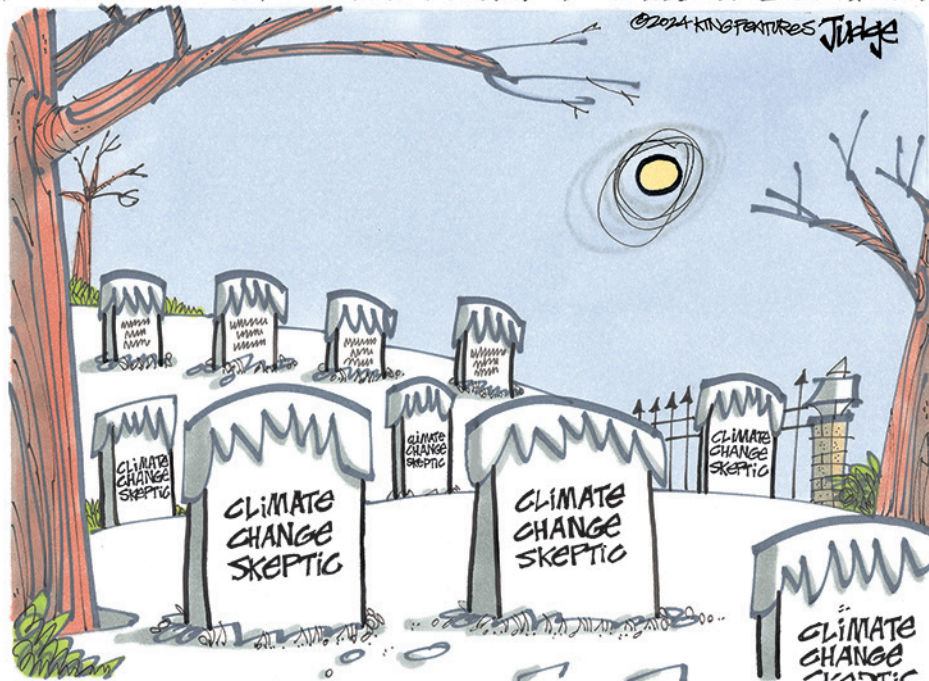
*Take therefore no thought
for the morrow: for the morrow
shall take thought for the things
of itself. Sufficient unto the day
is the evil thereof.*

❧ MATTHEW 6:34 ❧

“Self-Portrait With Hand On Brow” by Kathe Kollwitz (1910)

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DOZENS OF DEATHS ARE LINKED TO WINTER STORMS:





1. Is the book of 1 Peter (KJV) in the Old or New Testament or neither?

2. What was a god of the Philistines that had a man's face and hands, but the body and tail of a fish? *Bullock, Elohim, Dagon, Baal-gad*

3. Who slew a giant that had six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot when he defied Israel? *Sibbechai, Cyrus, Silas, Jonathan*

4. From Proverbs 22, what is a good name better than? *Great riches, Scorn, Its own reward, Lust*

5. What town was home to Jesse's boys? *Gilgal, Jericho, Hebron, Bethlehem*

6. On which day of creation did dry ground appear? *Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth*

ANSWERS: 1) New, 2) Dagon, 3) Jonathan, 4) Great riches, 5) Bethlehem, 6) Third

"Test Your Bible Knowledge," a book with 1,206 multiple-choice questions by columnist Wilson Casey, is available in stores and online.

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SO, BLONDIE HERE, RIGHT? HIS NAME'S

FLASH GORDON

HE'S AN ALIEN. HE'S ONE OF THE BEST FIGHTERS I'VE EVER SEEN.

HE AIN'T TOO UGLY, EITHER.

AND IF I PLAY THIS RIGHT... HE'S MY WAY OUTTA HERE.

I'M BONES MALOCK. I GOT LOCKED UP IN THE BELLOWS -- WHERE I RUN INTO THE EARTHMAN.

SOON AS I SEE HIM, I GET AN IDEA. I SWIPE HIS RADIO PIN TO MAKE HIM GO ALONG WITH IT.

SEE, THERE'S A SECRET VIEW PIT HERE WHERE RICH CREEPS CAN WATCH PRISONERS FIGHT.

IDEA PART ONE: I NEED FLASH TO GET IN THERE.

OOH, BAD LUCK, KID. YOU'VE PULLED THE REIGNING CHAMP-- A DRAGONMAN THEY CALL BOK.

THEY BEAT THE LIGHTS OUTTA EACH OTHER.

IT'S REALLY SOMETHING TO SEE.

AND THE WINNER IS--

BOK.

THE CROWD CHEERS FOR HIM TO SPARE THE KID.

I CAN'T TELL IF BOK'S SAD HE CAN'T KILL HIM OR JUST SAD IT ISN'T HIS CHOICE...

EH, WHO CARES? I'VE SEEN ALL I NEED TO.

TIME FOR PART TWO.

NEXT: THE WALLS HAVE EYES

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Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS

PLAY THE SHOT IN WHICH YOU HAVE THE MOST CONFIDENCE WHEN FACED WITH THE OPTION OF CHIPPING OR PUTTING FROM THE FRINGE OF THE GREEN. MOST OF THE TIME THAT WILL BE PUTTING.

HOWEVER, STUDY THE SITUATION CAREFULLY BEFORE YOU DECIDE.

IF, FOR INSTANCE YOU'RE IN LONG GRASS OR STROKING AGAINST STRONG GRAIN, CHIPPING IS THE HIGHER PERCENTAGE SHOT.

TAKE ALL SUCH FACTORS INTO ACCOUNT IN MAKING YOUR DECISION.

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COVID Vaccines Do Not Increase the Risk of Cancer

DEAR DR. ROACH: I am looking for your opinion regarding the new COVID booster. I am not opposed to vaccinations, as I have had the initial two shots and one booster. About 18 months ago, I was diagnosed with prostate cancer and have since had my prostate removed. My current PSA readings are undetectable, for which I'm grateful. I was also diagnosed with melanoma 12 months ago (along with multiple basal spots). Biopsy results showed that all were successfully removed and were within positive margins, for which I'm also grateful.

I want to get the new COVID booster for obvious reasons, but I'm reading that the boosters are creating cancer recurrence (including prostate cancer and melanoma) in some patients. Clearly, I don't want either to return, but I also don't want to get COVID. Can you help with my dilemma and offer a recommendation? — *T.I.*

ANSWER: I have also heard people making that claim, but it isn't supported by evidence. Both the National Cancer Institute and the American Cancer Society agree that there is no evidence, nor a scientific reason, suggesting that COVID-19 vaccinations increase the risk of cancer growth, whether it was the first one or an additional one. (By the way, if you saw, like I did, the term "turbo cancer," you can safely disregard the claim, since this isn't a real entity. That's fearmongering.)

The COVID vaccine, whether it's an mRNA or a traditional vaccine (like the Novavax), is a very limited exposure of

a critical protein in our immune system to help "teach" the immune system how to recognize a COVID infection. The vaccine provides pretty good protection against infections for a few months and excellent protection against severe infections (including hospitalization and death) for close to a year. Yearly vaccination seems like it might be reasonable, although public health experts have not decided on a long-term COVID vaccination plan.

People with cancer are particularly recommended to get vaccinated, since both cancer and its treatments may affect the immune system and make infections more serious. However, chemotherapy may affect the body's ability to successfully react to the vaccine, so your oncologist can help you decide the optimal time to get the vaccine if you are undergoing chemo.

DEAR DR. ROACH: You recently wrote about varicoceles and said that they are more common on the left side of the body. Why is that? — *A.M.*

ANSWER: A varicocele is a dilated vein in the spermatic cord that can sometimes cause symptoms of fullness or discomfort in the scrotum. A varicocele forms just like any other varicose vein — increased pressure causes damage to the vein or the valves within the vein that are supposed to stop the backward flow of blood.

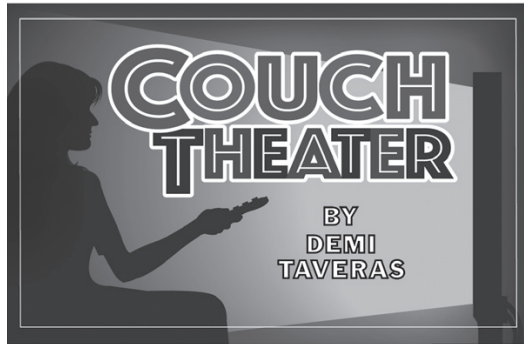
On the left side, the spermatic vein empties into the renal vein, but does so at a sharp angle that can allow for higher pressure and backward flow of blood. By contrast, the right spermatic vein empties into the inferior vena cava, which is large and has lower pressure.

In fact, when a man has a varicocele only on the right side, it raises concern for a tumor that can compress the inferior vena cava. However, the risk is still quite small — 2.7% of right-sided varicoceles compared to 1.6% of left-sided varicoceles.

Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual questions, but will incorporate them in the column whenever possible. Readers may email questions to ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu.

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"Ferrari" (R) -- From director Michael Mann ("Collateral"), this biopic follows Enzo Ferrari, owner of the car manufacturer Ferrari, during the summer of 1957 as the racing division of his company prepares for the Mille Miglia race. Portrayed by Adam Driver ("House of Gucci"), Enzo is in a state of chaos due to his company facing

extreme financial losses and his deteriorating relationship with his wife, Laura (Penelope Cruz). On top of this, kept hidden away from his wife in the countryside of Modena, Italy, is Enzo's son, Piero, with mistress Lina (Shailene Woodley), who longs to be a true family. But even with the pressure rising from all aspects of his life, Enzo is determined to keep his company out of hot water and pull off the win at the Mille Miglia. Out now to rent. (Amazon Prime Video)

"The Greatest Night in Pop" (PG-13) -- This documentary film casts a spotlight on a magical evening in 1985 when some of the most famous musicians in the world at the time were brought together to record a memorable pop anthem called "We Are the World." With incredible insider footage of the night, viewers feel like flies on the wall watching legends like Lionel Richie, Michael Jackson, Cyndi Lauper and Bob Dylan attempt to find their footing amid an elite group of their peers. The footage is interspersed with new interviews featuring some of the musicians as they recount the long hours they put in that night and how beautifully the song came together in the end. Out now! (Netflix)

"Tracker" (TV-14) -- Justin Hartley ("This Is Us") leads this new CBS action-drama series based on the novel "The Never Game" by Jeffery Deaver. Hartley plays -- cue the burliest name you can think of -- Colter Shaw, a "lone-wolf survivalist" with excellent tracking skills. Colter travels around the country to help citizens and law enforcement solve the mind-boggling mysteries and tragedies that have affected their town. In the first episode, Colter heads to Klamath Falls, Oregon, to dig deeper into the disappearance of a 14-year-old boy. Hartley also serves as an executive producer for the series, so here's hoping this network show will be gripping enough to pull in viewers and get picked up for another season. The first two episodes are out now, with subsequent episodes premiering every Sunday. (Paramount+)

"Constellation" (TV-MA) -- This psychological-thriller series centers on Jo (Noomi Rapace), an astronaut who barely survives a mission gone wrong in space. Upon returning to Earth, Jo starts to notice some eerie differences in her life back home, like a piano suddenly placed in her living room even though she doesn't play. She also experiences intense hallucinations, and as time goes on, her relationship with her daughter becomes estranged. Despite getting therapy and speaking with other astronauts about her situation, Jo inches closer to the brink of madness and is left to wonder if this terrifying phenomenon will ever cease. The first two episodes premiere on Feb. 21. (Apple TV+)



Justin Hartley stars in "Tracker."

Courtesy of CBS

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1. What was The Byrds' first chart topper?
2. Whose version of "A Groovy Kind of Love" was used in a film?
3. Name the singer/actor who played Moondoggie in the 1959 "Gidget" film.
4. The Moody Blues had a chart topper with which of their songs?
5. Name the song that contains this lyric: "Look at the way we gotta hide what we're doing, Cause what would they say if they ever knew?"

Answers

1. "Mr. Tambourine Man," in 1965. It was written and first released by Bob Dylan. The original had four verses. Several others have covered the song over the years, including Stevie Wonder.
2. Phil Collins, in the 1988 film "Buster" about a London criminal. Collins also starred as Buster, who joins a gang that robs a Royal Mail train.
3. James Darren. The film producers initially thought they would have him lip-sync the film's songs but then discovered that he really could sing.
4. "Go Now!" in 1965.
5. "I Think We're Alone Now," by Tommy James and the Shondells, in 1966. The song was originally written as a slow ballad, but the group preferred the faster tempo when they recorded it.

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GRIN and BEAR IT *Wagner*



"You've had your foot in your mouth again, haven't you, Senator?"

Just Like Cats & Dogs

by Dave T. Phipps



HOCUS-FOCUS

BY
HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



Differences: 1. Flower picture is reversed. 2. Clock is larger. 3. Nose is different. 4. Pillow is different. 5. Curtain is wider. 6. Drawer is missing.

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* When putting in new plants, you can tear strips of tin foil, then use toothpicks or small stakes to pin them to the ground in your new garden. It will keep the cats out, and can even discourage birds.

* To remove the fat from your pot roast or other slow-cooked meat dish, make then refrigerate. The fat will float to the top of the juices and coagulate. Remove this layer of fat and then reheat.

* "My kids are long past wagon size, but their wagon isn't done hauling yet. I put it to good use in the garden. I can park it in the shed stocked with all the things I might need. It's very handy." -- A.A. in Florida

* "When starting out a new exercise class, be sure to give it a full month before you decide whether you like it

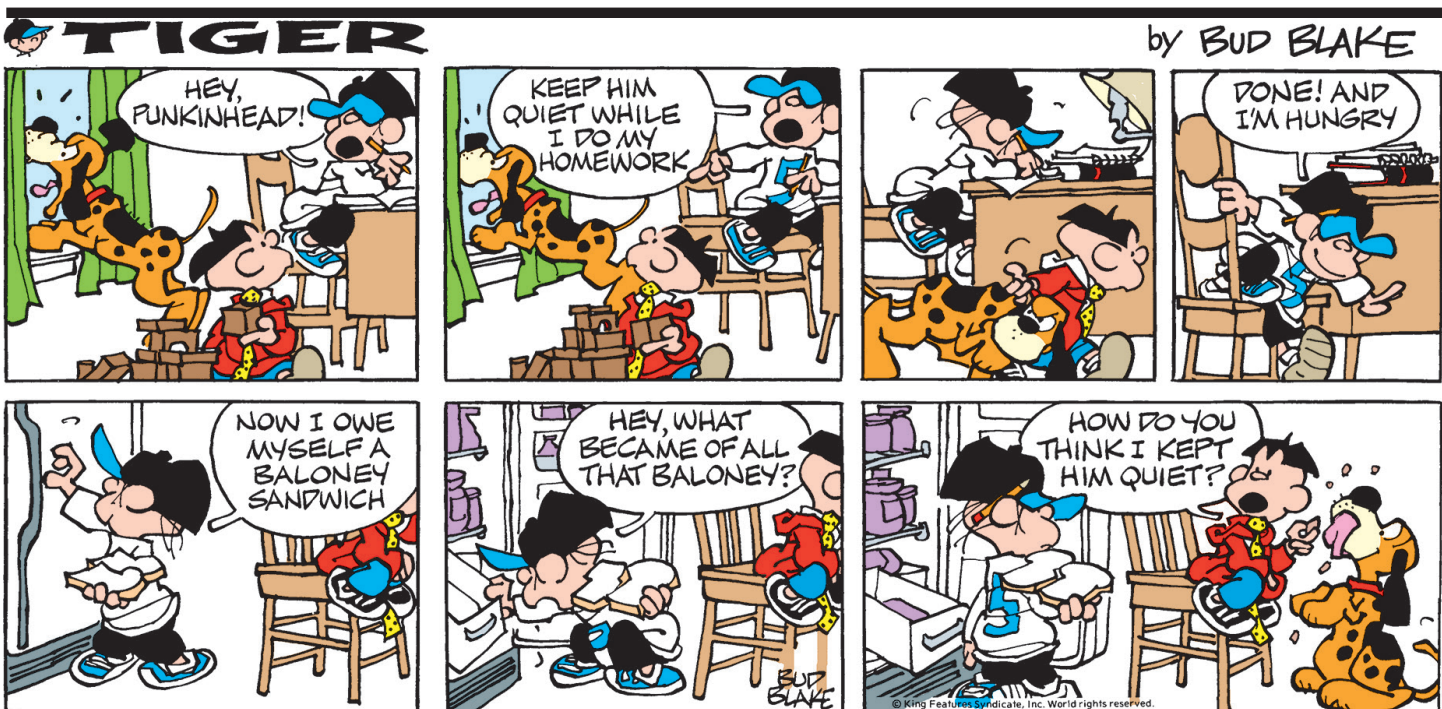
or not. Especially classes that are harder, since you might be very sore and think that means you don't care for the class." -- L.M. in Virginia

* "Dedicate a photo album to class photos. It will be easy to see the changes your little ones have gone through over the years. It's especially nice when you include the individual portraits for each year and make the album for just one child. It makes a special gift, too." -- J.K. in Pennsylvania

* To sharpen a pair of worn scissors, try cutting through a piece of aluminum foil that is doubled or tripled over. Be sure to clean and dry scissors you use in the kitchen.

Send your tips to Now Here's a Tip, 628 Virginia Drive, Orlando, FL 32803.

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King Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Pep
- 4 "Get Here" singer Adams
- 9 Opposite of "post-"
- 12 Equal (Pref.)
- 13 Jeremy of "Entourage"
- 14 Corn serving
- 15 Prepaid convenience for cell users
- 17 Texter's "Enough!"
- 18 Common verb
- 19 Spiritualist
- 21 Oliver Twist, for one
- 24 Cabinet dept. head

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45	46						47					
48				49		50				51	52	53
54				55						56		
57				58						59		

- 25 "Norma —"
- 26 Snake's warning
- 28 Mexican snacks
- 31 Actor Richard
- 33 UFO crew
- 35 Commanded
- 36 Enticed
- 38 Rep.'s rival
- 40 "Diamonds" singer
- 41 Goatee's spot
- 43 "O Pioneers!" author
- 45 Long recliner
- 47 Magic, on scoreboards
- 48 "A spider!"
- 49 Cell user's practical joke
- 54 Conk out
- 55 Dodge
- 56 Classic car
- 57 Hosp. areas
- 58 Opposite of most
- 59 Watch chain
- 7 Semesters
- 8 "Still ..."
- 9 Fund for minor expenses
- 10 Malek of "Bohemian Rhapsody"
- 11 Guitarist Clapton
- 16 "Unh-unh"
- 20 Wound cover
- 21 Pitcher Hershiser
- 22 Pasta sauce brand
- 23 Fruity baked goods
- 27 Norm (Abbr.)
- 29 Garfield's pal
- 30 Blacken
- 32 Classic soda brand
- 34 Extra helpings
- 37 Put to rest
- 39 Grocery store
- 42 Audacity
- 44 Patient's need, briefly
- 45 Give up
- 46 Estate recipient
- 50 Bond rating
- 51 Canine cry
- 52 Zodiac feline
- 53 Arced tennis shot

DOWN

- 1 Red-carpet type
- 2 "Kinda" suffix
- 3 Cow's greeting
- 4 Verdi works
- 5 Permit
- 6 Hollywood's

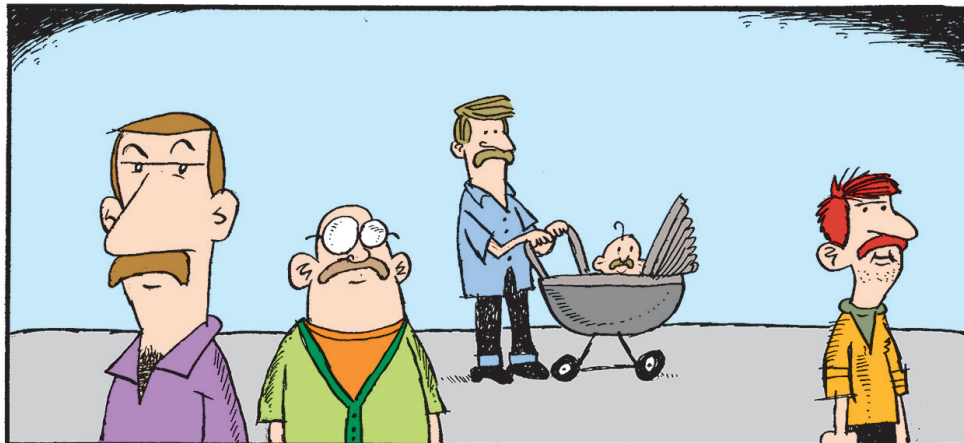
— King Crossword —

Answers

Solution time: 22 mins.

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Out on a Limb



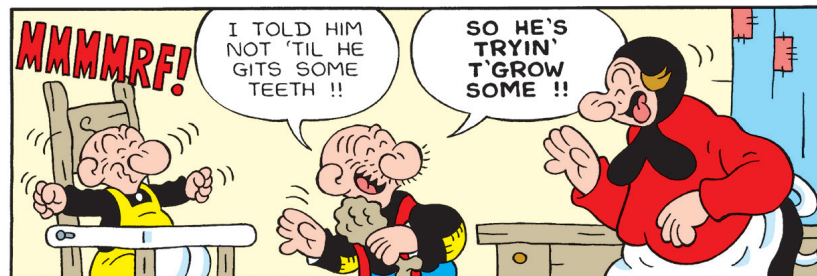
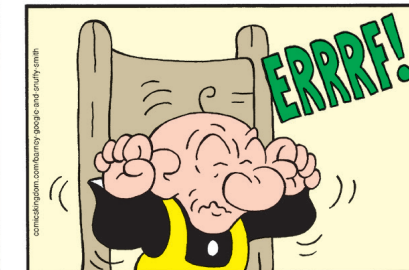
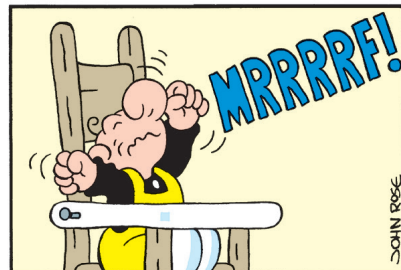
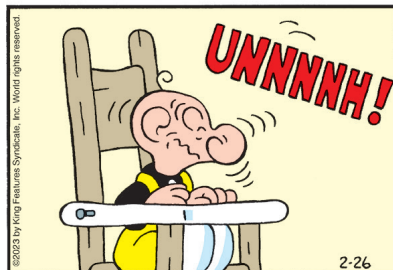
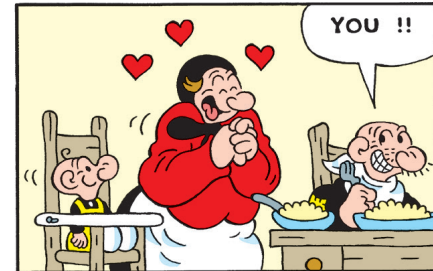
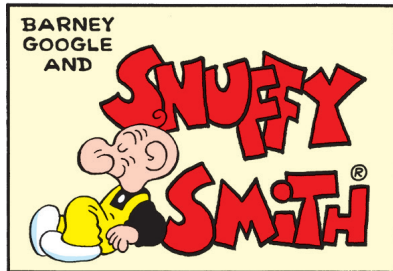
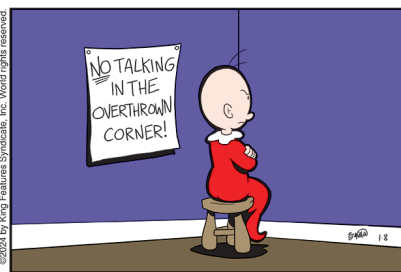
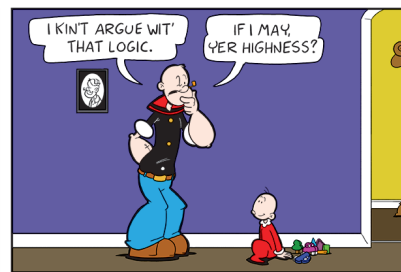
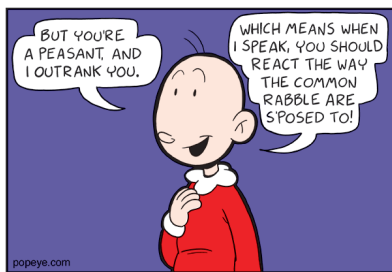
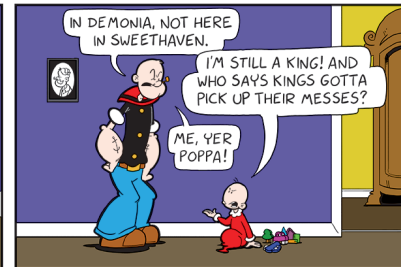
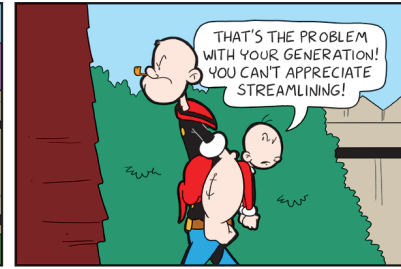
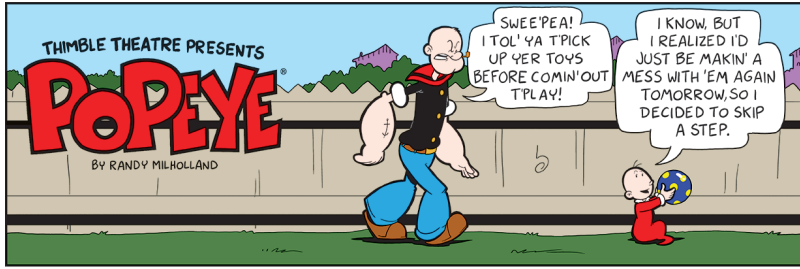
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by Gary Kopervas



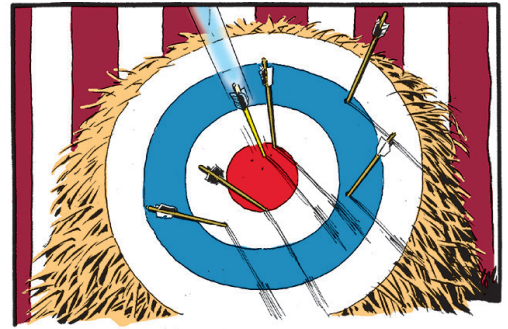
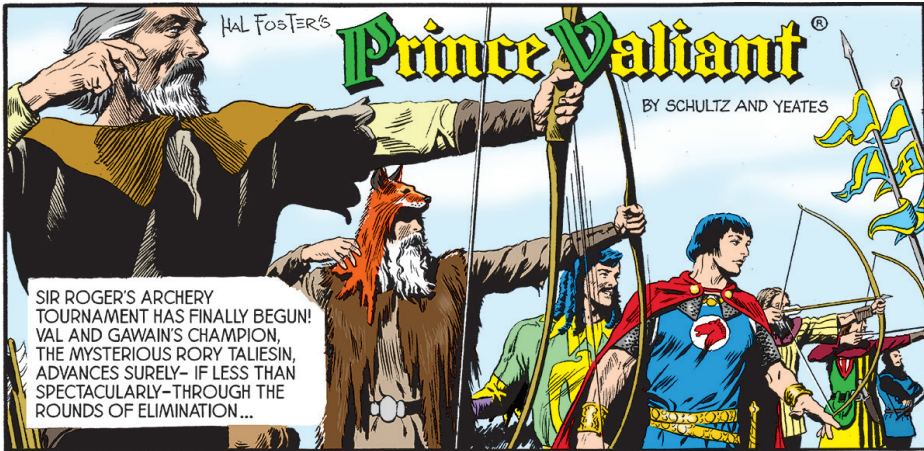
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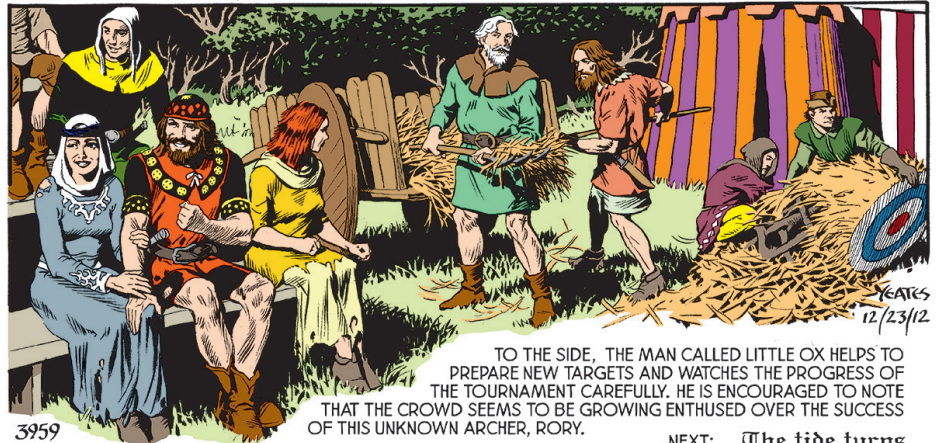


... ALWAYS PLACING A SLIGHTLY BETTER SHOT THAN THOSE OF HER MATCH MATES. A CASUAL OBSERVER WOULD SAY THAT LUCK WAS ON THE FRAIL-LOOKING ARCHER'S SIDE, BUT ALL TRANSPIRES AS RORY HAD DESCRIBED TO VAL AND GAWAIN.



MEANWHILE, TO NO ONE'S SURPRISE, SIR ROGER MOVES UP THE RANKS. THE GOVERNOR IS AN EXCELLENT BOWMAN, BUT INTIMIDATION AND SOME QUESTIONABLE JUDGMENTS AID HIS CAUSE AS WELL.

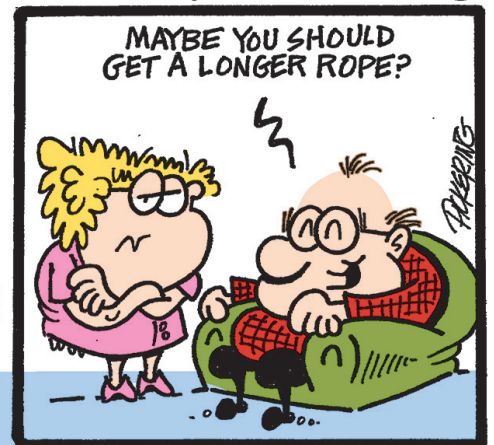
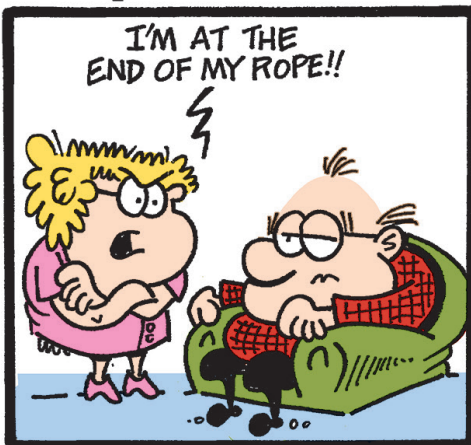
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NEXT: The tide turns

The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

Don't Reach for the Vitamins and Supplements

Oh, it was so tempting, I have to admit. When a neighbor strolled by on her afternoon walk, we got to talking about how she stays in shape, and she rattled off a list of vitamins and supplements that she takes. She swears by them, and she appears to be in excellent condition ... although being 20 years younger might have something to do with it.

Still, I was tempted to try some of those supplements she recommended.

But a little voice told me to check first before I loaded up my cart at the big box store. It's a good thing I did.

I learned that too much calcium can affect the absorption of several medications, and St. John's wort can change how over 70% of prescription drugs work, sometimes in dangerous ways. I also learned that one of the supplements advertised on TV is made with grapefruit, which I cannot have.

This is a time to be cautious. Do not add any supplements to your diet without running it by your doctor. Even giving a list of potential supplements to the nurse practitioner can be a good start if she also asks the doctor. If you're thinking about taking vitamin D or Omega-3, ask about increasing your intake of seafood instead. If you wonder about magnesium for bone health, ask whether you need it or if you should eat more bananas.

Read the labels on your food. Cereal, for example, is already fortified with several vitamins.

Remember that the vitamin and supplement industry is not regulated. Many are made overseas, and our FDA has no say in what's actually in each one.

Do your own online research. Checking drug interaction websites can help. The one I liked best is www.drugs.com (click "Interaction Checker").

Read what the National Institutes of Health has to say about dietary supplements for seniors at www.nia.nih.gov/health/vitamins-and-supplements/dietary-supplements-older-adults

Search their database of 178,111 supplements at dsld.od.nih.gov.

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1. What action did TV talk show host Johnny Carson mimic after every monologue?

2. In September 2022, U.S. figure skater Ilia Malinin became the first to land what jump in competition?

3. Billed as "The War of the Worlds," a 1976 fight in Tokyo featured Japanese pro wrestler Antonio Inoki vs. what American boxer?

4. What UMass Minutemen defensive standout was drafted No. 2 overall by the Toronto Raptors in the 1996 NBA Draft?

5. If you have tickets to see the Strathclyde Sirens vs. the Loughborough Lightning or the Adelaide Thunderbirds vs. the Melbourne Vixens, what sport are you watching?

6. Name the linebacker who played 219 regular-season NFL games from 1998-2012 but never appeared in the playoffs.

7. What sport did the duo of Randy Stoklos and Sinjin Smith dominate through the 1980s and '90s?



by Ryan A. Berenz

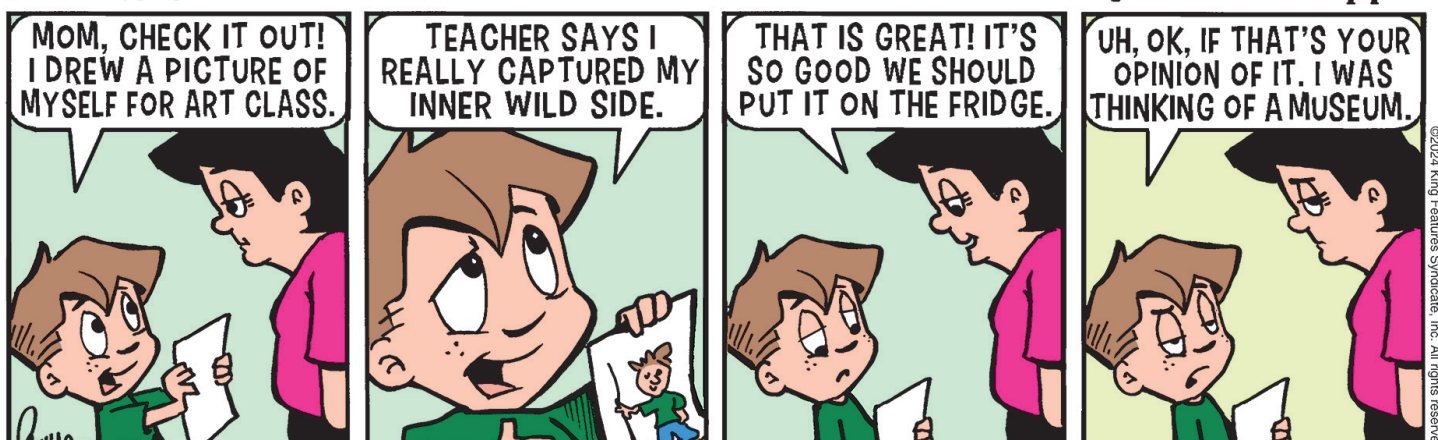
Answers

1. A golf swing.
2. A quadruple Axel.
3. Muhammad Ali.
4. Marcus Camby.
5. Netball.
6. Takeo Spikes.
7. Beach volleyball.

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Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps





When Dog Walking Is a Tug of War

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: My dog Trey is a 3-year-old mixed breed, mostly Lab, who pulls at his leash every time we go out for a walk. I don't want to use a choke collar, because it seems painful and counterproductive to punish him every time he tries to pull ahead. How can I get Trey to walk next to me and not tug all the time? -- Bill in New Orleans

DEAR BILL: Dogs love being outside and exploring. That's a big reason why Trey is tugging at his leash -- he wants to run and explore everything in the world. But that's not possible in the city. And for the sake of your leash-holding arm, getting Trey to relax is a big deal.

You're probably saying, "Oh, this is where Sam tells us to reinforce basic obedience training." And you're right. It's important for Trey to follow your commands, especially if he pulls the leash out of your hand. But that's just one element to leash training a dog.

When you pull on the leash to slow Trey down, he will automatically pull in the opposite direction. This is a reflex action. The more you pull, the more they dig in.

So instead, try a misdirection-reward strategy. Give the command "heel" and have Trey walk calmly beside you, with the leash slack. Whenever he gets ahead of you (before the tug of war starts), stop and change direction. He'll turn to go in the direction you're heading, and when he does, give him lots of praise and maybe (at first) a little treat. Do this every time he tries to move ahead of you.

If Trey tends to pull really hard, change from a collar and leash to a chest harness. This prevents injury and can make it easier to control him.

Send your tips, comments or questions to ask@pawscorner.com.

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Strange BUT TRUE

By Lucie Winborne

* On their urban forest data site, the city of Melbourne in Australia assigned email addresses to each of the city's trees so it would be easier to catch and rehabilitate damaged ones. Instead, the trees received love letters.

* Wild female chimpanzees, much like humans, experience menopause.

* Giant lily pads in the Amazon River can grow up to 6 feet in diameter and even support up to 100 pounds without breaking.

* A man in the U.K. who became paralyzed after a cycling accident spent four years raising 22,000 pounds for an innovative treatment that might enable him to walk again. However, when he heard of a disabled boy who also needed surgery, that had better odds of success, he donated the entire amount to the child instead.

* On the moon, it would be possible for humans to walk on water.

* Eric Money is the only NBA player to officially score for both teams in the same game.

* A group calling themselves Sieged Security hacked into the Idaho National Laboratory with a most extraordinary ransom demand -- not cash, but for the lab to research the creation of feline-human hybrids!

* In the small Japanese town of Kamikatsu, residents are required to sort their solid waste into 45 different recycling categories.

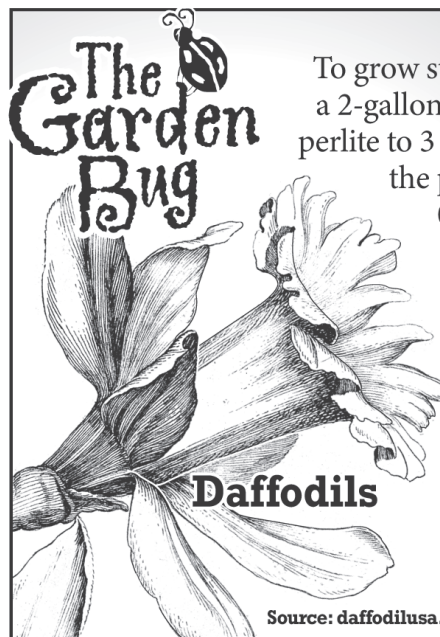
* "Yield the crow a pudding" is an old slang term for death.

* Morton's toe is when your second toe is longer than your big toe. It's widespread in art, with the Statue of Liberty being one of the more famous examples.

* Jenga blocks have subtle differences in dimensions to make their construction less stable. Each brick is a different size and weight, so no two games will be alike.

Thought for the Day: "Great things are done by a series of small things brought together." -- Vincent van Gogh

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To grow standard-size daffodils in a pot, select a 2-gallon size pot. For the soil mix, use 1 part perlite to 3 parts sterilized soil. In the bottom of the pot, over a little soil, place a pinch of 0-10-10 fertilizer (do not let the bulb come in contact with the fertilizer), then fill pot to within an inch of the rim. Try to place 3 or 4 bulbs about 1/3 of the way from the top of the pot. Water every day for the first week; after this, water when the soil appears dry. After blooming, add a pinch of 5-10-10 fertilizer to the pot. This helps build the bulb for next year's bloom. - Brenda Weaver

Source: daffodilusa.org



by Freddy Groves

Stand Downs Are Starting for 2024

The Stand Downs for 2024 are gearing up, with slightly warmer weather now upon us. They'll run from now until the end of October in various places around the country.

Stand Downs, started in 1988, are one-, two- or three-day events meant to provide services to homeless veterans or those who are at risk of becoming homeless. The services provided can vary, depending on the location and the length of the event, but in most cases, veterans can get help with housing,

mental health counseling, treatment for substance abuse, health care and screenings, help with VA claims, dental care, tax help and more.

You'll likely find food, showers, clothing, haircuts and information about support for caregivers, suicide prevention and legal advice. Sometimes the events are held right on the grounds of a VA medical center or a fairground, city park or other community space.

The list of events for 2024 (www.va.gov/homeless/events.asp) is being added to all the time. So if you don't see an event near you, check back. Or search online, putting in "Stand Downs 2024" and the name of your state for events that haven't made it to the main listing yet.

But no matter what the event includes or where it's located, it will be run mostly by veterans with help from volunteers. How about you? Are you in a position to step up and assist at a Stand Down? You might be running a van to pick up veterans without transportation. Or you might be preparing food in a tent on the site. If you're a legal professional, you might be looking over a document a veteran has received from a landlord. Whatever role you take at a Stand Down, it will be valuable and worthwhile -- and appreciated.

If you are part of a company or service group and want to host an event, start with the Stand Down POC (point of contact) at the closest VA medical center, or ask for the homeless coordinator.

And thank you.

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Wishing Well®

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L	O	Y	A	S	A	L	F	L	S	S	E	R

HERE IS A PLEASANT LITTLE GAME that will give you a message every day. It's a numerical puzzle designed to spell out your fortune. Count the letters in your first name. If the number of letters is 6 or more, subtract 4. If the number is less than 6, add 3. The result is your key number. Start at the upper left-hand corner and check one of your key numbers, left to right. Then read the message the letters under the checked figures give you.

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1. GEOGRAPHY: What is the capital of Canada?
2. ANIMAL KINGDOM: What was the first animal to be cloned?
3. LITERATURE: In the children's book series "The Bobbsey Twins," what are the names of the two sets of twins?
4. CHEMISTRY: What is the symbol for the chemical element platinum?
5. MUSIC: What is the title of Elvis Presley's first commercial single?
6. GENERAL KNOWLEDGE: What is the first U.S. national park?
7. MEDICAL: What is a common name for xerosis?
8. FOOD & DRINK: What is a sommelier?
9. U.S. PRESIDENTS: Who was the first president to visit all 50 states?
10. HISTORY: What were the principal powers of the Axis in WWII?

Answers

1. Ottawa.
2. A sheep.
3. Nan, Bert, Flossie and Freddie.
4. Pt.
5. "That's All Right."
6. Yellowstone National Park.
7. Dry skin.
8. Wine expert.
9. Richard Nixon.
10. Nazi Germany, Italy and Japan.

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South Dakota Governor

Kristi Noem



South Dakota: *Under God, the People Rule*

The Freedom to Work

In South Dakota, we respect the Freedom to Work. That is what America was built on. We each have the Freedom to get up every morning and to provide for ourselves and our families. That's the American Dream. South Dakotans continuously remind the rest of the country the value of hard work and the dignity it brings.

There are few professions where hard work, dedication, and passion are as significant as law enforcement. South Dakota is already the Freest state in America – I'm determined to make it the safest, too. The best way to do that is by putting more law enforcement officers on our streets. The goal of our newest Freedom Works Here ad is to recruit more law enforcement officers to South Dakota. You can view "33 in a 65" here.

I always say that South Dakotans are some of the hardest working people I know. We still understand the value of hard work. And my goal as Governor has never been to create a government that does everything for people, but to create a government that empowers our people to do things for themselves.

When the pandemic hit and many states closed down, South Dakotans kept working. While other states were experiencing record high unemployment levels, we broke the national record for the lowest state unemployment less than a year ago.

We are creating opportunities for people to get into the career of their dreams. And we're just getting started.

I knew that if we could just tell our story, Freedom-loving Americans from across the country would want to be a part of what we're doing here. I knew that we needed to celebrate our success – then take the opportunity to capitalize and build on it. I knew that we had to show all of America that Freedom Works Here.

We are continuing the Freedom Works Here workforce recruitment campaign. This campaign is still less than a year old, and we've received thousands of applicants interested in moving to our state just through the program, not counting those who independently made the move. Thousands have already moved here!

After our first round of ads, I had businesses asking me how they could help us keep the campaign going. It quickly became clear that these ads were working, and that we needed to do more. So we did some research into some of the most-needed professions in South Dakota. The results were professions like electricians, plumbers, welders, and even accountants, so we've targeted ads towards those professions.

These ads are so successful because they tell South Dakota's story.

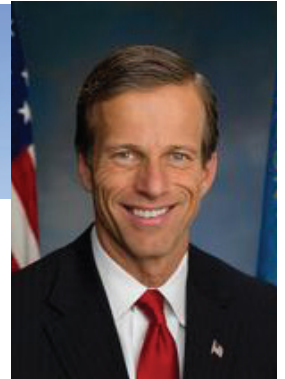
Our state licensing boards are reporting huge increases of out-of-state applicants seeking licenses in South Dakota – including a 78% increase in plumbers, a 44% increase in electricians, and a 43% increase in accountants. Our labor force has grown by more than 10,000 people in just the last year. Our license recognition bill combined with the microphone of Freedom Works Here is a powerful tandem to fill these much-needed jobs.

That is a story that many people across this country have never heard before.

Folks are moving here in record numbers to become a part of our winning way of life. Californians and New Yorkers have never seen a state like ours – one that trusts our people, and one that embraces and promotes liberty and Freedom.

Freedom Works Here is indisputably the most impactful workforce campaign in South Dakota's history.

John Thune
U.S. SENATOR - SOUTH DAKOTA



Lessons in Leadership From Our Greatest Presidents

South Dakota is second to none when it comes to celebrating America's presidents. The iconic Mount Rushmore memorializes four of them in larger-than-life granite. As many times as I've seen it, Mount Rushmore never gets old, and it still inspires me, as I'm sure it inspires the millions of visitors who come to the Black Hills to see the monument each year. Down the road in Rapid City, statues of our presidents line the streets of downtown. So when Presidents Day comes around each year, South Dakotans know the people who have held that office.

Presidents Day is a chance to celebrate all of our presidents, and in particular during this month we honor two of our greatest leaders, George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, whose birthdays are in February.

Our first president, George Washington, was a soldier, farmer, and statesman. When the American Revolution came, he was named commander in chief of the Continental Army. The ragtag army he led faced long odds against British forces. But Washington's leadership earned him the dedication of his men, and they ultimately won the war.

When the revolution ended, Washington was a national hero. But rather than bask in his fame or take power for himself, Washington resigned his military commission and went home to his Virginia farm. But he would leave home once again when his country called on him to serve, first at the Constitutional Convention and then as the nation's first president. His presidency set the tone for the office and set the United States on a solid footing as a new nation.

As Washington's legacy is the nation's founding, Abraham Lincoln's is its preservation. Born in a Kentucky log cabin and largely self-taught, Lincoln came of age in a tumultuous time in American history. He was a young lawyer and legislator as the national debate over slavery was intensifying, and it would become the defining issue of his public life.

A one-term congressman and twice-failed Senate candidate, Lincoln was a long-shot candidate for the presidency when he ran in 1860. But he won his party's nomination and the White House. After his election, 11 southern states seceded and, within weeks of his inauguration, the Civil War began. The war consumed his presidency, but Lincoln's steady leadership shepherded the country through some of its darkest days. He issued the Emancipation Proclamation, pushed Congress to pass the 13th Amendment outlawing slavery, and, in his second inaugural address just weeks before the war's end, he urged reconciliation. He was tragically assassinated just days after the war ended, but he had already left an indelible mark on our nation's history.

Neither Washington nor Lincoln were perfect men, but when their country needed them, they stepped up to serve. In our defining moments, America has been fortunate to have leaders like Washington and Lincoln.



CONGRESSMAN
DUSTY JOHNSON
Representing **SOUTH DAKOTA** at large



Rep. Dusty Johnson's The Big Three: Safety and Security

BIG News

This week, I voted to impeach Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas. His willful and systemic refusal to follow the laws set by Congress to secure the southern border has created a national security and safety crisis in communities across America, including South Dakota. We have not seen a domestic crisis of this magnitude from a department's making before. America is less safe because of the drugs and increased crime from illegal immigrants coming across the border. Congress had to act. I hope the Democrat-controlled Senate takes the impeachment seriously and the Administration takes notice and takes steps to secure the border.

BIG Idea

I met with Community Healthcare Association of the Dakotas and Horizon Health Care to talk about federal funding for health centers that support underserved populations, the 340B drug pricing program, and the importance of telehealth. They awarded me the Distinguished Community Health Center Advocate award for my actions in Congress to support Community Health Centers.

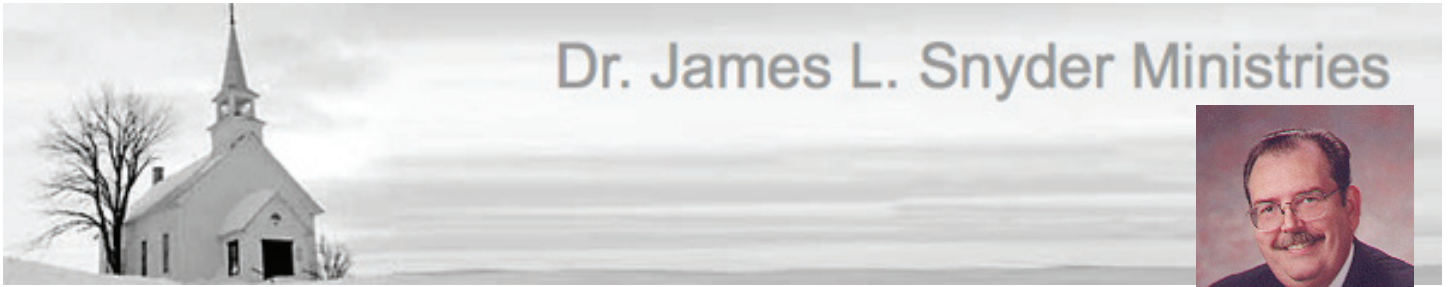
BIG Update

Recently, the Biden Administration proposed a ban on new permits for new domestic liquified natural gas (LNG) exports. This is another decision the President made in an effort to advance his climate agenda, but the decision fails to recognize American-made energy is actually cleaner than energy from countries like Russia and Iran. Prohibiting new exports will force our allies to rely on dirtier energy from these adversarial countries, bolstering the economies of enemies instead of ours. Increasing exports could add as much as \$73 billion to the U.S. economy and support 453,000 jobs by 2040, but with Biden's ban, we lose all of that growth opportunity.

This week, I supported the Unlocking Our Domestic LNG Potential Act when it passed the House so we can continue to grow our LNG exports, ensuring America and our allies can remain energy secure.

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I Sure Miss My Old Typewriter



I was going through my office the other day looking for something, and then I saw it for the first time in many years. It was my old typewriter.

Most people today have no idea what the typewriter is. I remember, however, my very first typewriter. I was so excited to get it and begin writing with it. I wrote a bunch of poems on that typewriter, and I sure wish I had copies of those poems.

Up until I got my typewriter, I was writing everything by hand, which can get very tiring after a while. There were typewriters in my school, and I went to a class to learn how to use a typewriter. However, I had no typewriter at home.

That Christmas, my parents surprised me with my very own typewriter. I was so excited about it, and I spent a lot of time typing nonsense. I used that typewriter for many years, and it was quite a companion with me.

Then I decided to upgrade to an electric typewriter. That was a significant upgrade for me. An afterthought: I wished I would've kept that first typewriter. When I got the electric typewriter, I could type faster than I was ever able to type before. I could not keep enough paper in the typewriter while typing.

Using those typewriters, you put in one sheet at a time, but since I knew nothing better, it was a wonderful thing. I went through a lot of paper.

In those old typewriters, what you typed was exactly what you got. If you mistyped a word, it was mistyped. I cannot remember how many times I yanked the paper out of the typewriter, put in a new piece and started typing all over again.

The thing so exciting was if I wanted several copies of what I was typing, I could use carbon paper between each page. What I typed on the first page was typed on the second and third pages. That sure was exciting because now I had copies of what I was typing.

The problem was, when I made a typo on the first page, it went all the way through to the last page. You could not fool those carbon copies. What was on one was precisely on the other.

I was thinking about that the other day and was wondering how I used up a forest of trees just learning to type.

That typewriter was a friend of mine, and we worked like a well-oiled machine. The thing about that typewriter, it never tried to correct me. It always went along with what I said and wrote — and never talked back to me. I was actually in charge.

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I could always tell where my typewriter was because it was where I put it, and it never moved. To move that typewriter would have been a big job, and so it always remained on my desk in my room exactly where I put it. I could not take it traveling with me; I had to use it where it was.

At the time, I thought I had no better friend than that old typewriter of mine. To look at it now, I kinda smile as I remember how things have changed.

I was writing my first book, typing each page, when I learned about this new thingamajig called a computer. Well, I was not going to get anything modern. I was going to do things the old way. After all, Ernest Hemingway did all his typing on a typewriter.

The more I learned about these computers, the more interested I became. According to the people I was talking to, I could increase my output 100 times faster. I initially did not believe that.

Finally, halfway through that first book, I decided to switch over to a computer. Those first computers had no hard drive, so you had to put a floppy disk in to run any program that you might be using. You also had to save what you were writing to a floppy disk.

I set that new computer up in my office and started fiddling around with it to try to understand how it worked. Much to my surprise, the more I fiddled, the more I liked the music I was hearing.

I did not have to use paper until the manuscript was completed and I could print it out on a printer. If I made a typo, I could correct it right there on the screen, no problem.

Getting adjusted to it was difficult for me. I remember the first chapter I did and worked very hard to complete, but I forgot to save it on a disk and lost that whole chapter. I was a little provoked because my old typewriter would never have done that!

Through the years, I have regularly upgraded my computers to the point where I do not have to do much typing anymore. I can dictate into my computer and see words appear on the screen.

Looking at that old typewriter, I thought of what Solomon once said. "The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 1:9).

Maybe the way I do certain things today has changed, but the message is always the same. Techniques change, but words never will.

EARTHTALK ™

Dear EarthTalk: What are the climate benefits of switching over to a four-day workweek?

-- P. Proby, Denver, CO

Nearly 200 companies across the globe have completed six-month trials of a four-day workweek with promising results. Juliet Schor, an economist and sociologist at Boston College, is leading the trials with the nonprofit group Four Day Week Global. Schor says, "Stress, burnout, mental health, physical health...job satisfaction... all of those are going in the right directions." While the four-day workweek seems to improve employee lives, the results of the trial also suggest that the shorter workweek has climate benefits as well.

The four-day workweek benefits the environment by lessening the environmental impacts of commuting, reducing energy consumption and cutting greenhouse gas emissions. In 2021, the transportation sector was the leading contributor of greenhouse gas emissions in the U.S., accounting for around 28 percent of total emissions nationwide. By committing to a four-day workweek every employee could reduce their commute by 20 percent. Furthermore, during a six-month trials, workers spent less time commuting by car and more time biking and walking.

Another major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions is lighting, heating, cooling and generally powering up office buildings. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that commercial and residential buildings account for nearly 13 percent of total greenhouse gas emissions in the U.S. Keeping offices closed (or partially powered down) for an extra day per week could yield significant emissions reductions. Schor found that just a 10 percent reduction in work hours is linked to a 8.6 percent fall in carbon footprint.

Along with climate benefits, the four-day workweek provides employees with their own perks. During a 2022 trial in the U.K., of 70 firms, 56 said they planned to keep a four-day workweek in place after the trial ended. The most commonly cited benefits of the trial were increased productivity and significant financial savings for employees. Employees saved money on both transportation and childcare during the trial. The UK trial also found that during the four-day workweek daily production rose by 22 percent. This statistic exemplifies the main goal of four-day workweek which is the idea of improving efficiency by avoiding overworking employees. Rethinking the culture around work and the desire to constantly produce could not only benefit employees, but could yield reductions in carbon pollution.

The idea of the four-day workweek sounds great, but is it really viable? The fact is, most companies have been able to implement the four-day workweek without seeing a decline in productivity. A case study in New Zealand focused on Perpetual Guardian, an estate management company that started using the four-day workweek in 2018. The results were beyond expectations. Employees maintained their work output by eliminating unproductivity during work hours and working more efficiently. Additionally, all 240 employees experienced a 24 percent improvement in work-life balancing, while maintaining their high productivity levels. The employee perks, combined with the climate benefits, make the four-day workweek an increasingly strong option for businesses.



The four-day workweek benefits the environment by lessening the environmental impacts of commuting, reducing energy consumption and cutting greenhouse gas emissions.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Legislative Roundup: Budget taking shape as teacher pay, abortion, foreign-owned land bills advance

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - FEBRUARY 17, 2024 10:42 AM

The week of Valentine's Day, in this humble reporter's opinion, is the best week of the legislative session. It's not just because lawmakers exchange candy with cute, punny messages on them, or have desks covered in bouquets of flowers from well-wishing spouses, or dress up in pale pink ties and blouses. It's not even because Thursday was Mitchell Day at the Capitol (with the best commemorative popcorn balls South Dakota has to offer, I'm sure).

No, it's because it's revenue week: the "Super Bowl for appropriators" as Sioux Falls Republican Rep. Tony Venhuizen described it.

Revenue week is when the suspense climaxes, when dozens of bill sponsors waiting for the latest fiscal projections hold their breath, and lawmakers sitting on the state budget committee haggle and debate and predict the future of South Dakota's economy – all depending on a few key factors (personal income, housing and inflation, for example).

For those who appreciate the art of budgeting and financial forecasting, I recommend you reserve your seat for next year's Super Bowl event. And grab some of those Corn Palace popcorn balls beforehand.

This year's committee-adopted revenue projection for the remainder of fiscal year 2024, which ends on June 30, is \$41 million higher than Gov. Kristi Noem recommended in her December budget address.

"That means there's \$41 million of one-time money that is not spoken for in the governor's budget that we can now consider how to allocate over the next three weeks," Venhuizen said during the weekly Republican leadership press conference.

Several bills will be vying for that extra one-time cash.

On top of that, the committee adopted a fiscal year 2025 ongoing revenue estimate that's \$21 million more than Noem's recommended budget. That ongoing revenue could go toward items such as a slightly-higher-than-recommended funding increase for schools, health care providers and state employees, or a tuition freeze for public universities.

Now the budgeting begins in earnest.

While Republican leaders in the House and Senate say their No. 1 priority for one-time spending is allocating funding to build new prisons (aligning with Noem's top priority), they plan to use the newfound money beyond the executive branch's wish list.

Rank-and-file Republican priorities on that one-time, not-governor-budgeted list?

Millions in funding for local governments to bolster their cybersecurity, especially their email security. They've been seeking funding for years and missed out on federal funding that Noem's administration turned down. Some Republicans also want new funding to jumpstart a second cohort in the Department of Education's Teacher Apprenticeship Pathway program, which helps teaching aides become certified teachers.

The "Super Bowl" might be over, but there's plenty more to come in the last 13 days of the 99th legislative session. Because if revenue week is the Legislature's Super Bowl, Wednesday's Crossover Day — the deadline for bills to pass their house of origin — signals the final stretch of its Boston Marathon.

Following are summaries of the status of some bills we're following.

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Teacher pay

The House will soon debate a bill that would require school districts to pay a minimum teacher salary and match the rate of average teacher compensation increases to legislative increases in state aid. Gov. Noem has recommended a 4% increase in state aid this year.

While there wasn't any opposition to the bill during a committee hearing this week, education lobbyists and school districts worry about the impact the bill would have on schools with declining enrollment. The bill passed out of the House Education Committee 11-2.

Abortion bills

A resolution declaring opposition to a potential November ballot question that would reinstate abortion rights passed the House and Senate chambers this week with overwhelming support. Unlike other bills, it doesn't need the governor's approval since it's a resolution.

Still up for consideration is a bill that would require the Department of Health, with input from medical professionals and the attorney general, to create a video and "other materials" describing when providers can legally intervene in a pregnancy to protect the mother's life (the only exception in the state's abortion ban is for protection of the life of the mother). Providers have been at odds regarding legal care in life-or-death situations since the ban was put in place, and some OB-GYNs are hesitant to provide critical care for fear of legal repercussions.

That bill passed the House 63-6 and now heads to the Senate State Affairs Committee.

Making it easier for communities to become cities

A bill making it easier for some communities to become incorporated cities passed the Senate on Monday and headed to the governor's desk. The bill, which was motivated by the community of Black Hawk, would retain a requirement for Black Hawk to petition Rapid City for annexation before trying to become a city in its own right, but would remove a requirement for Black Hawk to additionally petition the city of Summerset.

School election dates

A bill that would have required school district bond votes be held the same day as primary or general elections in South Dakota failed in the House on a 28-42 vote. A similar bill that would align school board elections with primary and general elections (which passed out of the House Local Government on a 7-6 vote) did pass the House on a 40-29 vote and is headed to the Senate State Affairs Committee.

Lithium mining tax

A bill to impose a tax on lithium mining failed in the Senate. Companies are exploring for lithium in the Black Hills to feed the growing need for lithium-based batteries in electric vehicles and devices.

911 surcharge

A bill to increase funding for 911 call centers by raising phone customers' monthly surcharge from \$1.25 to \$2 per line failed narrowly in the Senate but will be reconsidered next week. In 2023, the existing surcharge generated about \$12.47 million in revenue. With the proposed increase and assuming no change in the number of service lines, the projected revenue is approximately \$19.95 million. The surcharge has not been increased since 2012.

Hunt in pink

The House of Representatives approved a bill in a 68-1 vote on Valentine's Day that would add blaze pink as a legally recognized hunter safety color. The bill now heads to a Senate committee for consideration.

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Foreign ag land

A bill that would ban ownership of agricultural land in South Dakota by people, companies and governments from six countries, including China, passed the House of Representatives in a 61-6 vote and now heads to a Senate committee. An existing state law, which dates to 1979, prohibits foreign people and governments from owning more than 160 acres of agricultural land in South Dakota. That law is being amended to bar six countries outright, and to close an apparent loophole allowing foreign “shell companies” to purchase land.

Civic engagement

A bill requiring the creation of a civic engagement center at Black Hills State University in Spearfish passed a legislative budget committee in an 8-0 vote. The center would be named in honor of the late Dr. Nicholas W. Drummond, who was a BHSU political science professor. The legislation says the center’s purpose would be to prepare students for active and informed participation in political and civic life.

Prison inmate legal defense

A bill that would require the state to pick up the legal defense fees for inmates accused of committing crimes behind prison walls passed through the House Appropriations Committee on a 7-0 vote. Currently, the state pays the detectives who investigate prison crimes and the prosecutors who take such cases to court, but counties are left holding the bill for the accused inmate’s defense lawyers. Supporters call it a step toward fairness that can help counties like Bon Homme — which has a small population and property tax base but a lot of potential liability thanks to Mike Durfee State Prison — avoid hefty legal bills. House Bill 1039 now moves to the full House.

Marijuana proposals

The House Health and Human Services Committee advanced a proposal this week that would require providers who write medical marijuana prescriptions to tell their patient’s primary care doctor about it. The committee added an amendment, though. If the bill becomes law in its current form, a specialist treating a patient for one of the debilitating medical conditions that make them eligible for a medical pot card wouldn’t need to give a head’s up to any other doctor. Next up: the full House of Representatives.

That’s one of several pot bills on the 2024 docket. One of them, a bill to add a notice about the potential loss of federal firearms rights to medical marijuana applications, was signed by Gov. Noem on Feb. 13. The next day, she signed a bill to let employers fire or discipline medical pot users with safety sensitive jobs. The day after that, a House committee advanced two other weed bills on 10-2 votes. One would put the names of medical pot users into the state’s Prescription Drug Monitoring Program database, created about a decade ago to track patients who doctor-shop for prescription pain meds like Oxycodone. The other would allow fines of up to \$10,000 against misbehaving medical marijuana dispensaries, and to terminate the licenses of repeat offenders. Both now head to the full House for consideration.

Help for the homeless

A bill that would offer free birth certificates for those without homes cleared the House Appropriations Committee on a unanimous vote, as did a proposal to waive fees for state identification cards for the same population. Birth certificates are needed to get state ID cards, which are often needed to apply for housing, jobs and a host of other services that help people move from homeless to housed. The appropriations vote sends it to the full House for consideration.

Fake ballots

Campaign mailers or other election-related materials that reproduce ballots and purport to be “official” would be illegal if HB1239 becomes law. After a Feb. 13 vote in the House of Representatives, it’s one step closer — although some in the Senate, whose State Affairs Committee will now take up the issue, are skeptical on First Amendment grounds.

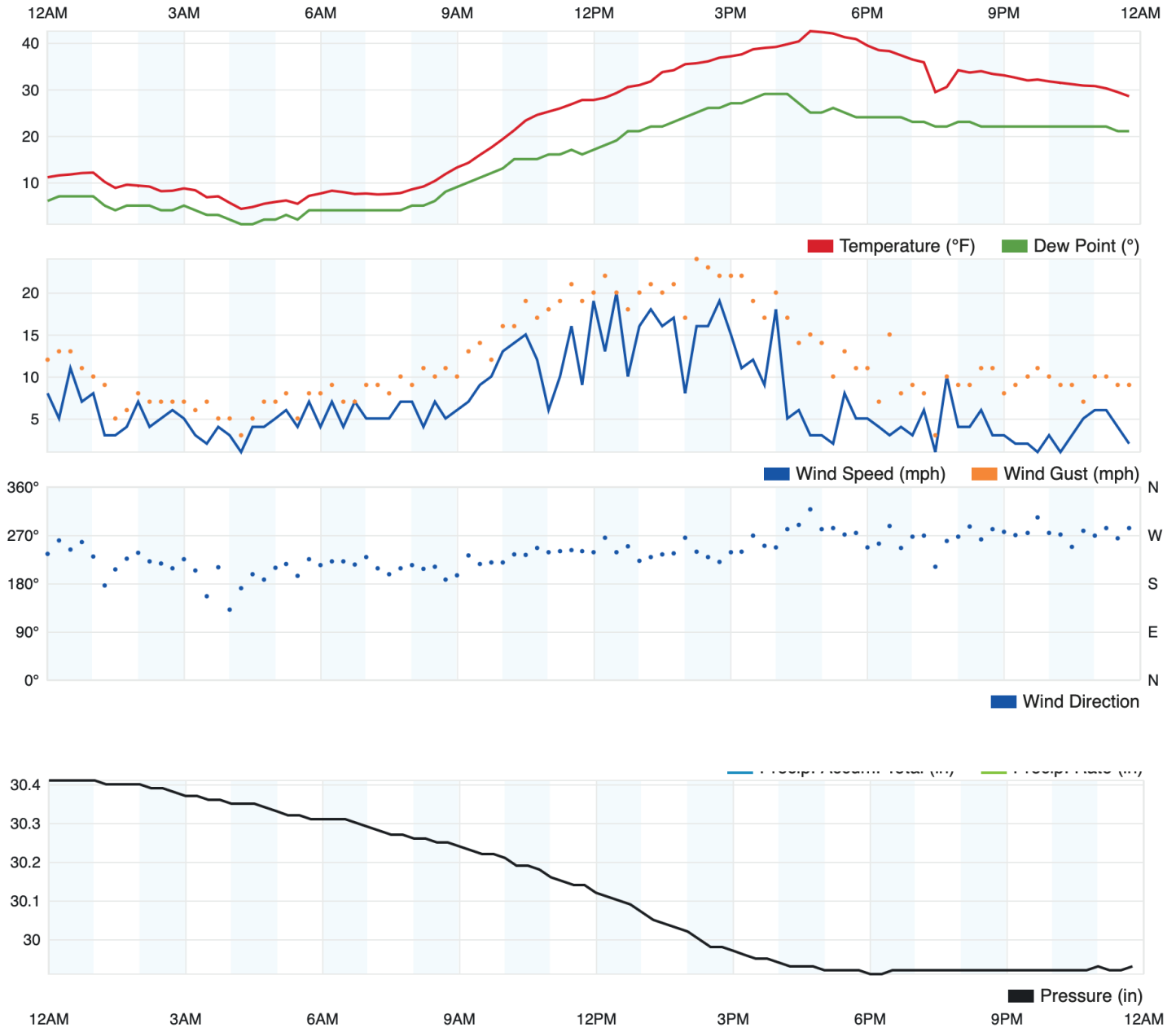
— Reporters John Hult and Joshua Haiar contributed to this story.

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.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu
				
37 °F 19 °F	38 °F 18 °F	42 °F 25 °F	50 °F 23 °F	43 °F



Mild & Dry Today

February 18, 2024

2:01 AM

Just a low chance for a sprinkle Monday

Today

Clear. Light & Variable Winds
Highs: 32-44°

Tonight

Increasing Clouds. Light &
Variable Winds
Lows: 17-20°

Monday

P. Cloudy to M. Cloudy. Winds
Becoming Northwest (10-30mph)
Highs: 34-44°



Plenty of sunshine and mild temperatures are expected today. No real cool downs in the next several days either, just some clouds and an isolated sprinkle or two for Monday.

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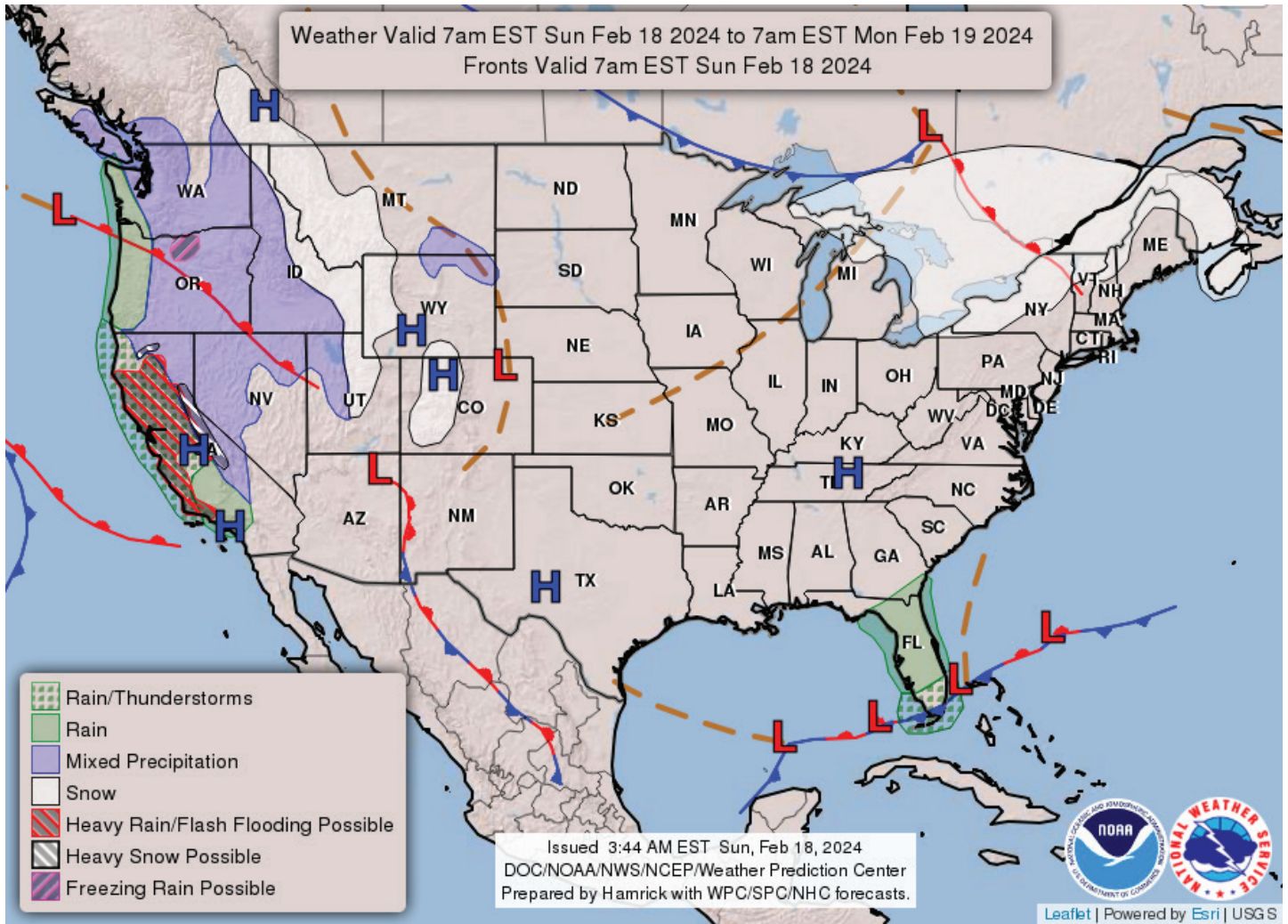
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 43 °F at 4:49 PM
Low Temp: 4 °F at 4:19 AM
Wind: 24 mph at 2:10 PM
Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 10 hours, 36 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 67 in 1913
Record Low: -32 in 1903
Average High: 29
Average Low: 7
Average Precip in Feb.: 0.37
Precip to date in Feb.: 0.07
Average Precip to date: 0.92
Precip Year to Date: 0.07
Sunset Tonight: 6:04:39 pm
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:26:20 am



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Today in Weather History

February 18th, 1962: It started raining during the afternoon of the 18th, and by evening temperatures dropped below freezing resulting in a glaze up to three-quarters of an inch on trees and power lines. Many utility lines were downed by the ice or by falling trees and branches. Temperatures continued to drop during the night, changing the rain to snow by the 19th. Strong winds accompanied this snow causing local blizzard conditions.

1899 - While much of the central and eastern U.S. was recovering from the most severe cold wave of modern history, the temperature at San Francisco soared to 80 degrees to establish a record for month of February. (David Ludlum)

1959 - Some of the higher elevations of California were in the midst of a five day storm which produced 189 inches of snow, a single storm record for North America. (13th-19th) (David Ludlum)

1965: A massive avalanche kills 26 men at the Granduc Copper Mine in British Columbia on this day.

1987 - A small but intense low pressure system combined with northerly upslope winds to produce eight inches of snow in five hours at Meeteetse WY, located southeast of Cody. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thunderstorms soaked the Central Gulf Coast Region with heavy rain. Totals in southern Louisiana ranged up to 8.50 inches near the town of Ridge, with 6.55 inches at Plaquemine. Thunderstorms in northern Florida drenched Apalachicola with 5.41 inches of rain in 24 hours, and produced wind gusts to 75 mph at Mayo. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Low pressure off the coast of North Carolina brought freezing rain and heavy snow to Virginia and the Carolinas. Snowfall totals in Virginia ranged up to 18 inches at Franklin. Freezing rain reached a thickness of two inches around Charlotte NC. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - An intense but slow moving Pacific storm worked its way across Utah over a two day period. The storm blanketed the valleys with 4 to 12 inches of snow, and produced up to 42 inches of snow in the mountains. Heavy snow also fell across northern Arizona. Williams received 22 inches of snow, and 12 inches was reported along the south rim of the Grand Canyon. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1992: A thunderstorm spawned a powerful F4 tornado for so far north for the time of the year in southern Van Wert County in Ohio. The tornado touched down just west of US Route 127 and traveled northeastward for about 3 miles. One house was completely leveled, and nine others experienced severe damage. Six people were injured.

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

AT LEAST ONE MORE THING

The elderly deacon was encouraging a young, yet very successful, entrepreneur to pray and surrender his life to the Lord. Arrogantly he said, "There's no need for me to pray. I have everything I can imagine. I am young, handsome, and rich. What else is there?"

"Well," replied the man graciously, "there's at least one more thing you may want to consider. You may want to consider asking God for humility."

It is fascinating to recall the fact that God created the universe out of nothing, and that unless we are willing to become nothing, the Lord will be unable to make anything significant out of us. Pride is a destructive force in so many lives. It limits our potential.

When we come to believe that we deserve what we have and become self-centered and self-serving, we are developing an attitude of self-dependence and not God-dependence. We forget the fact that whatever we have we have by the grace of God, and that our abilities to accomplish anything and everything come from Him. When this happens, we tend to become greedy and forget our responsibility to honor God with everything that we have.

The cure for being self-centered and self-serving is humility. Humility shows that we are submissive and dependent on God and that we approach Him in meekness and respect. David said that the "Lord leads the humble in what is right." God can only lead the humble.

Prayer: Father, we need Your leadership in our lives. Without Your guidance and direction, we may achieve much, but we will miss the greater things You have for us. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: And he gives grace generously. As the Scriptures say, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." James 4:6



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

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 02.16.24

19 23 39 42 67 18

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$493,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 02.17.24

6 8 10 14 33 5

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$3,100,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 02.17.24

21 31 36 37 44 7

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 42 Mins 46 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 02.17.24

10 20 27 29 35

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$55,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 02.17.24

14 47 49 61 66 18

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 02.17.24

6 28 59 62 69 21

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$330,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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News from the Associated Press

Saturday's Scores

The Associated Press

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL

Brandon Valley 68, Douglas 34
Mitchell 52, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 35
Spearfish 61, Harrisburg 52
POSTPONEMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS=
Oelrichs vs. Bison, ccd.

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Roncalli 69, Ipswich 42
Alcester-Hudson 66, Burke 55
Andes Central-Dakota Christian 54, Gayville-Volin High School 32
Brandon Valley 52, Douglas 38
Centerville 50, Corsica/Stickney 35
Chester 57, Freeman 55
Colome 64, Scotland 56
Dakota Valley 85, Lakota Tech 47
Dell Rapids St Mary 67, Elkton-Lake Benton 44
Freeman Academy-Marion 64, Avon 57
Groton 73, Florence-Henry 50
Harrisburg 77, Spearfish 52
Highmore-Harrold 47, Warner 46
Hot Springs 55, Custer 40
James Valley Christian 51, Sully Buttes 19
Luverne, Minn. 69, Little Wound 29
McLaughlin 56, North Central 33
Mitchell 75, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 53
Northwestern 71, Timber Lake 63
St Thomas More 65, Hill City 54
Tiospa Zina 50, Waubay/Summit 41
Tripp-Delmont-Armour 54, Marty 49
Waverly-South Shore 56, Hitchcock-Tulare 35
West Central 61, McCook Central-Montrose 46
Wilmot 50, Herreid-Selby 48
Wolsey-Wessington 58, Lower Brule 19
NDSCS Bonanza=
Tri-State, N.D. 66, Sisseton 64
POSTPONEMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS=
Oelrichs vs. Bison, ccd.

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

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South Dakota State defeats Omaha 85-77 in OT

By The Associated Press undefined

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Charlie Easley had 24 points in South Dakota State's 85-77 overtime win against Omaha on Saturday night.

Easley added 10 rebounds for the Jackrabbits (15-12, 8-4 Summit League). Zeke Mayo added 22 points while shooting 6 for 16 (0 for 6 from 3-point range) and 10 of 11 from the free throw line, and they also had 10 rebounds and five assists. William Kyle III was 7 of 10 shooting and 4 of 5 from the free throw line to finish with 18 points.

Frankie Fidler led the way for the Mavericks (13-15, 6-7) with 26 points, 11 rebounds and three steals. Jaeden Marshall added 20 points and three steals for Omaha. JJ White also had 14 points and two steals. Both teams play Thursday. South Dakota State hosts Denver and Omaha hosts Oral Roberts.

Anthony's 20 lead St. Thomas over South Dakota 83-80

By The Associated Press undefined

SAINT PAUL, Minn. (AP) — Raheem Anthony had 20 points in St. Thomas' 83-80 win against South Dakota on Saturday night.

Anthony's two free throws with 11 seconds left gave St. Thomas an 83-78 lead.

Anthony added eight assists for the Tommies (17-10, 7-5 Summit League). Drake Dobbs scored 18 points, shooting 5 for 9 (1 for 3 from 3-point range) and 7 of 7 from the free-throw line. Parker Bjorklund shot 7 for 13, including 3 for 6 from beyond the arc to finish with 17 points, while adding 11 rebounds and three steals.

Bostyn Holt led the Coyotes (10-17, 3-9) in scoring, finishing with 23 points and six assists. Kaleb Stewart added 16 points and four assists for South Dakota. Lahat Thioune also had 10 points and seven rebounds. St. Thomas outscored South Dakota 45-32 in the second half.

Israel strikes across Gaza as US says it will block another cease-fire resolution at UN

By WAFSA SHURAF, SAMY MAGDY and TIA GOLDENBERG Associated Press

RAFAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israeli strikes across Gaza killed at least 18 people overnight and into Sunday, according to medics and witnesses, as the United States said it would veto another draft U.N. cease-fire resolution.

The U.S., Israel's top ally, instead hopes to broker a cease-fire agreement and hostage release between Israel and Hamas, and envisions a wider resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has pushed back, calling Hamas' demands "delusional" and rejecting U.S. and international calls for a pathway to Palestinian statehood.

Netanyahu has vowed to continue the offensive until "total victory" over Hamas and to expand it to Gaza's southernmost town of Rafah, where more than half the enclave's population of 2.3 million Palestinians has sought refuge from fighting elsewhere.

The head of the World Health Organization, meanwhile, said Nasser Hospital, the main medical center serving southern Gaza, "is not functional anymore" after Israeli forces raided the facility in the southern city of Khan Younis last week.

An airstrike in Rafah overnight killed six people, including a woman and three children, and another strike killed five men in Khan Younis, the main target of the offensive over the past two months. Associated Press journalists saw the bodies arrive at a hospital in Rafah.

In Gaza City, which was isolated, largely evacuated and suffered widespread destruction in the initial weeks of the war, an airstrike flattened a family home, killing seven people, including three women, according to Sayed al-Afifi, a relative of the deceased.

The Israeli military rarely comments on individual strikes and blames civilian casualties on Hamas because

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the militants operate in dense residential areas.

UN SAYS RAIDED HOSPITAL NO LONGER FUNCTIONING

Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the head of the U.N. health agency, said a WHO team was not allowed to enter Nasser Hospital on Friday or Saturday "to assess the conditions of the patients and critical medical needs, despite reaching the hospital compound to deliver fuel alongside partners."

In a post on X, formerly Twitter, he said there are still about 200 patients in the hospital, including 20 who need urgent referrals to other hospitals.

Israel says it has arrested 70 suspected militants, including 20 who it says participated in Hamas' Oct. 7 attack on Israel, without providing evidence. The military says it is looking for the remains of hostages inside the facility and does not target doctors or patients.

The war erupted after Hamas burst through Israel's defenses and attacked communities across southern Israel on Oct. 7, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking around 250 hostage. Militants still hold around 130 hostages, a fourth of whom are believed to be dead, after most of the others were released during a weeklong cease-fire in November.

The war has killed at least 28,985 Palestinians, mostly women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between civilians and combatants in its records. The toll includes 127 bodies brought to hospitals in the past 24 hours, it said Sunday. Around 80% of Gaza's population have been driven from their homes and a quarter face starvation.

David Satterfield, the U.S. Middle East envoy for humanitarian issues, said Friday that Israeli strikes on Hamas-run police guarding aid convoys had caused them to halt the escorts, making it "virtually impossible" to deliver desperately-needed aid because of the threat of criminal gangs. He also said Israel has not presented specific evidence for its claims that Hamas is diverting U.N. aid.

US OPPOSES ANOTHER CEASE-FIRE RESOLUTION

Algeria, the Arab representative on the U.N. Security Council, has circulated a draft resolution demanding an immediate humanitarian cease-fire and unhindered humanitarian access, as well as rejecting the forced displacement of Palestinian civilians.

U.S. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield said in a statement late Saturday that the draft resolution runs counter to Washington's own efforts to end the fighting and "will not be adopted."

"It is critical that other parties give this process the best odds of succeeding, rather than push measures that put it — and the opportunity for an enduring resolution of hostilities — in jeopardy," she said.

The U.S. has used its veto on similar previous resolutions with wide international support, and President Joe Biden has bypassed Congress to rush arms to Israel while urging it to take greater measures to spare civilians and facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid.

The U.S., Qatar and Egypt have spent weeks trying to broker a cease-fire and hostage release, but there's a wide gap between Israel and Hamas' demands and Qatar said Saturday that the talks "have not been progressing as expected."

Hamas has said it will not release all of the remaining hostages without Israel ending the war and withdrawing from Gaza. It is also demanding the release of hundreds of Palestinians imprisoned by Israel, including top militants.

Netanyahu has publicly rejected both demands and any scenario in which Hamas would be able to rebuild its military and governing capabilities. He said he sent a delegation to cease-fire talks in Cairo last week at Biden's request but doesn't see the point in sending them again.

In an interview with Israel's Kan public broadcaster on Saturday, Netanyahu's national security adviser said that military pressure and sticking to a strict line in the negotiations could lead Hamas to drop its "absurd demands that nobody could accept."

Tzachi Hanegbi said the U.S. supports Israel's campaign to destroy Hamas' capabilities and has not pressured Israel to end the war or withdraw troops from Gaza.

Netanyahu has pushed back against international concern about a planned Israeli ground offensive in Rafah, saying residents will be evacuated to safer areas. Where they will go in largely devastated Gaza

is not clear.

The Israeli leader is also opposed to Palestinian statehood, which the U.S. says is a key element in its broader vision for normalization of relations between Israel and regional heavyweight Saudi Arabia, as well as Arab investment in Gaza's postwar reconstruction and governance.

Thai ex-Prime Minister Thaksin gets free on parole, but can he restore his old political luster?

By JINTAMAS SAKSORNCHAI Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — Thailand's former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, the Southeast Asian nation's most controversial politician for more than two decades, was released on parole early Sunday from a Bangkok hospital where he spent six months serving time for corruption-related offenses.

The telecoms billionaire was toppled in a 2006 coup but voluntarily returned from self-exile to Thailand in August last year and reported to prison to begin serving an eight-year sentence. Critics charged that the 74-year-old Thaksin's early release reeked of a deal that short-circuited justice for political reasons.

Current Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin, a leading member of the ruling Thaksin-backed Pheu Thai party, expressed congratulations to his predecessor.

Thaksin was seen wearing a neck brace, a sling on his right arm and a surgical mask inside one of the cars in a convoy that left the Police General Hospital just before sunrise. He was accompanied by his two daughters on his way to his residence in western Bangkok.

"Thaksin is still believed to wield huge influence, and will still maneuver for sure, he will conduct the music behind the scenes," Thitinan Pongsudhirak, a political science professor at Bangkok's Chulalongkorn University, said. "But Pheu Thai has less power than they used to and we'll have to see how he does it."

After his return from exile, Thaksin was moved almost immediately to the hospital on grounds of ill health and about a week later, King Maha Vajiralongkorn reduced his sentence to a single year.

The former leader had won unprecedented electoral support but also influential enemies among Thailand's traditional royalist ruling class during his time in office in 2001-2006.

He was accused of corruption and abuse of power as well as disrespect for the monarchy when the military removed him from power in 2006. Thailand's conservative elite, including the army, regarded his popularity and brash populist politics as a threat to the royal institution, which they see as a linchpin of Thai society.

Even after his ouster, Thaksin's supporters and opponents had continued their struggle for power with violent street fighting, election battles, confrontations in the courts and another coup in 2014 that ousted a government that had been formed by Thaksin's sister.

Last year's elections brought change when the progressive Move Forward party unexpectedly finished first, the first time since 2001 that a Thaksin-backed party failed to top the polls. Move Forward's proposals for reforms to the monarchy and the military resonated with large numbers of younger voters, weary of the army-backed governments that had held power since a 2014 coup.

Move Forward was stymied when the military-appointed Senate refused to approve its candidate for prime minister, paving the way for Pheu Thai to form a coalition government including parties linked with the military. Pheu Thai also softened its longstanding anti-military line and reform proposals it promised during the election campaign.

Critics charged the deal included a soft landing for Thaksin upon his return last year.

"In one sense, Thaksin going home to his family is an end to a personal and political journey that began with the 2006 coup when Thailand's most popular prime minister was ousted," Kevin Hewison, a professor emeritus at the University of North Carolina and a veteran Thai studies scholar, told The Associated Press.

He said the deal to bring him home and allow his Pheu Thai Party to lead a coalition government with military-backed parties "shows how the progressive politics of Thailand's younger generation and the electorally successful Move Forward Party have left Thaksin and Pheu Thai behind."

Move Forward, which now leads the parliamentary opposition, issued a statement Sunday reflecting

widespread suspicion that Thaksin had received a sweetheart deal because of the political influence he can still wield. The circumstances raised questions over whether he benefited from double standards in the justice system, it said.

At the same time it acknowledged that Thaksin's ouster was unfair and undemocratic. Thaksin has insisted that his prosecution in the courts was politically motivated.

Thaksin will still have to report to parole officers every month for the remainder of his sentence and will have a travel restriction, but he is not required to wear an ankle monitor due to his age and health conditions, officials have said.

He is not yet clear of all legal challenges. Thai officials said earlier this month that they have reopened an investigation into allegations of defaming the monarchy made against Thaksin almost nine years ago. If the Office of the Attorney General decides to indict him, Thaksin could be detained again.

His youngest daughter Paetongtarn Shinawatra, who recently became Pheu Thai party chief, on Sunday afternoon posted a photo on her Instagram account of Thaksin sitting in shorts by a swimming pool, still wearing a neck brace and a sling on his arm.

"After not breathing air and seeing the sun on the outside for 180 days, and not being back to this house for 17 years ... Dad came to sit outside like this. He sat there for quite some time. #finallyhome" she wrote, adding a heart emoji at the end.

Over 400 detained in Russia as country mourns the death of Alexei Navalny, Putin's fiercest foe

By DASHA LITVINOVA Associated Press

Over 400 people were detained in Russia while paying tribute to opposition leader Alexei Navalny, who died at a remote Arctic penal colony, a prominent rights group reported.

The sudden death of Navalny, 47, was a crushing blow to many Russians, who had pinned their hopes for the future on President Vladimir Putin's fiercest foe. Navalny remained vocal in his unrelenting criticism of the Kremlin even after surviving a nerve agent poisoning and receiving multiple prison terms.

The news reverberated across the globe, and hundreds of people in dozens of Russian cities streamed to ad-hoc memorials and monuments to victims of political repressions with flowers and candles on Friday and Saturday to pay a tribute to the politician. In over a dozen cities, police detained 401 people by Saturday night, according to the OVD-Info rights group that tracks political arrests and provides legal aid.

More than 200 arrests were made in St. Petersburg, Russia's second largest city, the group said. Among those detained there was Grigory Mikhnov-Voitenko, a priest of the Apostolic Orthodox Church — a religious group independent of the Russian Orthodox Church — who announced plans on social media to hold a memorial service for Navalny and was arrested on Saturday morning outside his home. He was charged with organizing a rally and placed in a holding cell in a police precinct, but was later hospitalised with a stroke, OVD-Info reported.

Courts in St. Petersburg have ordered 42 of those detained on Friday to serve from one to six days in jail, while nine others were fined, court officials said late on Saturday. In Moscow, at least six people were ordered to serve 15 days in jail, according to OVD-Info. One person was also jailed in the southern city of Krasnodar and two more in the city of Bryansk, the group said.

The news of Navalny's death came a month before a presidential election in Russia that is widely expected to give President Vladimir Putin another six years in power. Questions about the cause of death lingered on Sunday, and it remained unclear when the authorities would release his body to his family.

Navalny's team said Saturday that the politician was "murdered" and accused the authorities of deliberately stalling the release of the body, with Navalny's mother and lawyers getting contradicting information from various institutions where they went in their quest to retrieve the body. "They're driving us around in circles and covering their tracks," Navalny's spokeswoman, Kira Yarmysh, said on Saturday.

"Everything there is covered with cameras in the colony. Every step he took was filmed from all angles

all these years. Each employee has a video recorder. In two days, there has been not a single video leaked or published. There is no room for uncertainty here," Navalny's closest ally and strategist Leonid Volkov said Sunday.

A note handed to Navalny's mother stated that he died at 2:17 p.m. Friday, according to Yarmysh. Prison officials told his mother when she arrived at the penal colony Saturday that her son had perished from "sudden death syndrome," Ivan Zhdanov, the director of Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation, wrote on X, formerly known as Twitter.

Russia's Federal Penitentiary Service reported that Navalny felt sick after a walk Friday and became unconscious at the penal colony in the town of Kharp, in the Yamalo-Nenets region about 1,900 kilometers (1,200 miles) northeast of Moscow. An ambulance arrived, but he couldn't be revived, the service said, adding that the cause of death is still "being established."

Navalny had been jailed since January 2021, when he returned to Moscow after recuperating in Germany from nerve agent poisoning he blamed on the Kremlin. He has received three prison terms since his arrest, on a number of charges he has rejected as politically motivated.

After the last verdict that handed him a 19-year term, Navalny said he understood he was "serving a life sentence, which is measured by the length of my life or the length of life of this regime."

Hours after Navalny's death was reported, his wife, Yulia Navalnaya, made a dramatic appearance at the Munich Security Conference.

She said she was unsure if she could believe the news from official Russian sources, "but if this is true, I want Putin and everyone around Putin, Putin's friends, his government to know that they will bear responsibility for what they did to our country, to my family and to my husband."

China's coast guard to ramp up patrols near Taiwan's Kinmen archipelago after two fishermen die

By HUIZHONG WU Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — China is stepping up patrols in the waters off the coast of Taiwan's Kinmen archipelago, days after two of its fishermen drowned while being chased by the Taiwanese coast guard, which accused the boat of trespassing.

The Chinese coast guard's Fujian division will regularly monitor the waters off the southern coast of the city of Xiamen — a few kilometers from Kinmen — to strengthen maritime law enforcement, said the coast guard's spokesman, Gan Yu, in a statement Sunday.

Fishermen from Taiwan and China regularly sail that stretch of water which has seen a rise in tensions as the number of Chinese vessels — including sand dredgers and fishing boats — have notably increased in the area.

Kinmen residents have complained of both the noise and sound pollution from the vessels, as well as losses to their livelihood in fishing.

The fishermen's deaths are unusual despite the level of Chinese activity in the waters near Kinmen, which is closer to China than it is to Taiwan's main island. China claims all of self-ruled Taiwan as part of its territory.

On Wednesday, Taiwan's Coast Guard said two of four Chinese fishermen died after their boat capsized. It said their boat was fishing about one nautical mile away from Kinmen archipelago which Taiwan has claimed as a restricted area. The other two survivors remain in Taiwan's custody.

China has issued a furious condemnation and blamed Taiwan's ruling Democratic Progressive Party for the fishermen's deaths. It also said that there was no such thing as "restricted" waters.

Taiwan said an investigation was underway and that its Mainland Affairs Council said they were communicating with Chinese authorities.

China's Taiwan Affairs Office vowed on Sunday further measures, without clarifying further detail.

"The Mainland reserves the right to take further action, and all the consequences will be borne by Taiwan," said Zhu Fenglian, spokesperson for the Taiwan Affairs Office.

Taiwan split from China during the 1949 civil war, but Beijing continues to regard the island of 23 million with its high-tech economy as Chinese territory and has been ramping up its threat to achieve that by military force if necessary.

Solemn monument to Japanese American WWII detainees lists more than 125,000 names

By AKIRA OLIVIA KUMAMOTO Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Samantha Sumiko Pinedo and her grandparents file into a dimly lit enclosure at the Japanese American National Museum and approach a massive book splayed open to reveal columns of names. Pinedo is hoping the list includes her great-grandparents, who were detained in Japanese American incarceration camps during World War II.

“For a lot of people, it feels like so long ago because it was World War II. But I grew up with my Bumpa (great-grandpa), who was in the internment camps,” Pinedo says.

A docent at the museum in Los Angeles gently flips to the middle of the book — called the Ireichō — and locates Kaneo Sakatani near the center of a page. This was Pinedo’s great-grandfather, and his family can now honor him.

On Feb. 19, 1942, following the attack by Imperial Japan on Pearl Harbor and the United States’ entry to WWII, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 authorizing the incarceration of people of Japanese ancestry who were considered potentially dangerous.

From the extreme heat of the Gila River center in Arizona, to the biting winters of Heart Mountain in Wyoming, Japanese Americans were forced into hastily built barracks, with no insulation or privacy, and surrounded by barbed wire. They shared bathrooms and mess halls, and families of up to eight were squeezed into 20-by-25 foot (6-by-7.5 meter) rooms. Armed U.S. soldiers in guard towers ensured nobody tried to flee.

Approximately two-thirds of the detainees were American citizens.

When the 75 holding facilities on U.S. soil closed in 1946, the government published Final Accountability Rosters listing the name, sex, date of birth and marital status of the Japanese Americans held at the 10 largest facilities. There was no clear consensus of who or how many had been detained nationwide.

Duncan Ryūken Williams, the director of the Shinso Ito Center for Japanese Religions and Culture at the University of Southern California, knew those rosters were incomplete and riddled with errors, so he and a team of researchers took on the mammoth task of identifying all the detainees and honoring them with a three-part monument called “Irei: National Monument for the WWII Japanese American Incarceration.”

“We wanted to repair that moment in American history by thinking of the fact that this is a group of people, Japanese Americans, that was targeted by the government. As long as you had one drop of Japanese blood in you, the government told you you didn’t belong,” Williams said.

The Irei project was inspired by stone Buddhist monuments called Ireitōs that were built by detainees at camps in Manzanar, California, and Amache, Colorado, to memorialize and console the spirits of internees who died.

The first part of the Irei monument is the Ireichō, the sacred book listing 125,284 verified names of Japanese American detainees.

“We felt like we needed to bring dignity and personhood and individuality back to all these people,” Williams said. “The best way we thought we could do that was to give them their names back.”

The second element, the Ireizō, is a website set to launch on Monday, the Day of Remembrance, which visitors can use to search for additional information about detainees. Ireihi is the final part: A collection of light installations at incarceration sites and the Japanese American National Museum.

Williams and his team spent more than three years reaching out to camp survivors and their relatives, correcting misspelled names and data errors and filling in the gaps. They analyzed records in the National Archives of detainee transfers, as well as Enemy Alien identification cards and directories created by detainees.

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"We feel fairly confident that we're at least 99% accurate with that list," Williams said.

The team recorded every name in order of age, from the oldest person who entered the camps to the last baby born there.

Williams, who is a Buddhist priest, invited leaders from different faiths, Native American tribes and social justice groups to attend a ceremony introducing the Ireichō to the museum.

Crowds of people gathered in the Little Tokyo neighborhood to watch camp survivors and descendants of detainees file into the museum, one by one, holding wooden pillars, called sobata, bearing the names of each of the camps. At the end of the procession, the massive, weighty book of names was carried inside by multiple faith leaders. Williams read Buddhist scripture and led chants to honor the detainees.

Those sobata now line the walls of the serene enclosure where the Ireichō will remain until Dec. 1. Each bears the name — in English and Japanese — of the camp it represents. Suspended from each post is a jar containing soil from the named site.

Visitors are encouraged to look for their loved ones in the Ireichō and leave a mark under their names using a Japanese stamp called a hanko.

The first people to stamp it were some of the last surviving camp detainees.

So far, 40,000 visitors have made their mark. For Williams, that interaction is essential.

"To honor each person by placing a stamp in the book means that you are changing the monument every day," Williams said.

Sharon Matsuura, who visited the Ireichō to commemorate her parents and husband who were incarcerated in Camp Amache, says the monument has an important role to play in raising awareness, especially for young people who may not know about this harsh chapter in America's story.

"It was a very shameful part of history that the young men and women were good enough to fight and die for the country, but they had to live in terrible conditions and camps," Matsuura says. "We want people to realize these things happened."

Many survivors remain silent about what they endured, not wanting to relive it, Matsuura says.

Pinedo watches as her grandmother, Bernice Yoshi Pinedo, carefully stamps a blue dot beneath her father's name. The family stands back in silence, taking in the moment, yellow light casting shadows from the jars of soil on the walls.

Kaneo Sakatani was only 14 when he was detained in Tule Lake, in far northern California.

"It's sad," Bernice says. "But I feel very proud that my parents' names were in there."

A year after Jimmy Carter's entered hospice care, advocates hope his endurance drives awareness

By BILL BARROW Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Since Jimmy Carter entered hospice care at his home in south Georgia one year ago, the former U.S. president has celebrated his 99th birthday, enjoyed tributes to his legacy and lost his wife of 77 years.

Rosalynn Carter, who died in November, about six months after the Carter family disclosed her dementia diagnosis, lived only a few days under hospice supervision, with her frail husband at her bedside.

Experts on end-of-life care say the Carters' different paths show the range of an oft-misunderstood service. Those advocates commend the Carter family for demonstrating the realities of aging, dementia and death. They express hope that the attention spurs more Americans to seek out services intended to help patients and families in the latter stages of life.

"It's been massive to have the Carters be so public," said Angela Novas, chief medical officer for the Hospice Foundation of America, based in Washington. "It has shed hospice in a new light, and it's raised questions" for people to learn more.

The Carter family released a statement ahead of Sunday, the one-year anniversary of their announcement that the 39th president would forgo future hospital stays and enter end-of-life care at home in Plains.

"President Carter continues to be at home with his family," the statement said. "The family is pleased

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that his decision last year to enter hospice care has sparked so many family discussions across the country on an important subject.”

To be clear, the family has not confirmed whether Jimmy Carter remains in hospice care or has been discharged, as sometimes happens when even a frail patient’s health stabilizes.

Here is a look at hospice and the Carters’ circumstances:

HOSPICE SERVES EVERYONE, EVEN THE RICH AND POWERFUL

Mollie Gurian is vice president of Leading Age, a national network of more than 5,000 nonprofit elder-care agencies. She described hospice as “holistic care ... for someone who is trying to live the end of their life as fully as possible” but no longer seeks a cure for a terminal condition.

Hospice offers multiple practitioners for each patient: nurses, physicians and social-service professionals like chaplains and secular grief counselors. Home hospice features in-home visits but not round-the-clock or even full-shift care.

Initial eligibility requires a physician’s certification of a terminal condition, with the expectation that a person will not live longer than six months; there are also disease-specific parameters.

For-profit businesses or nonprofit agencies typically provide the care and employ the providers. Medicare pays those agencies a per-day rate for each patient. There are four levels of care and daily rates. The concept was developed after World War II and has been part of the Medicare program since the early 1980s. Private insurance plans also typically cover hospice.

In 2021, 1.7 million Medicare beneficiaries enrolled in hospice at a taxpayer cost of \$23.1 billion, according to the federal Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC). Almost half of Medicare patients who died that year did so under hospice care.

HOSPICE IS MORE THAN THE ‘MORPHINE MYTH’

Hospice can elicit images of “someone doped up and bedridden,” but it is not “just providing enough morphine to make it through the end,” Gurian said.

Indeed, patients give up curative treatments and many medicines. Cancer patients no longer receive radiation or chemotherapy. Those with late-stage Alzheimer’s, Parkinson’s or another degenerative neurological disease typically ditch cholesterol and blood-pressure medication — and eventually drugs that regulate their acute condition.

But Novas and Gurian said treatment is case-by-case. Some agencies might allow someone with end-stage kidney disease to get dialysis or take regulatory medication. They simply have to absorb the cost, because Medicare almost certainly does not pay separately for those treatments.

Further, hospice does not necessarily mean forgoing treatments for certain complications that threaten comfort: antibiotics for a urinary tract infection or infected bed sores, for example. That said, patients or families may forgo such treatments, especially in cases of end-stage neurological disease.

Chip Carter, one of Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter’s four children, confirmed to The Washington Post that his mother was suffering from a severe urinary tract infection at the time of her hospice admission and death. In those cases, Novas explained, patients are administered pain management drugs.

JIMMY CARTER’S ENDURANCE IS NOT UNUSUAL

In 2021, the average stay of hospice patients who died was 92 days, MedPAC calculated. The median was 17 days — about two weeks longer than the time between when the Carters’ announced the former first lady had entered hospice and when she died.

About 10% of enrollees who die in hospice care stayed more than 264 days. Extended cases drive a majority of costs. In 2021, \$13.6 billion of the overall \$23 billion paid was for stays exceeding 180 days before death. Of that, \$5 billion was for stays longer than a year.

Patients are sometimes discharged from hospice if their condition stabilizes, especially if they have reached the six-month mark in the program. In 2021, 17.2% of the patients were discharged. The MedPAC report to Congress noted that for-profit agencies have higher average length of stays than nonprofits and added that living patients’ discharge rates raise questions about admission standards.

Novas offered explanations. She said hospice has seen an uptick in patients with dementia, conditions

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in which “a patient can wax and wane for months or even years.” Another factor — one she said could explain Jimmy Carter’s endurance — is sheer grit.

“We cannot measure the human spirit,” she said. With many conditions, “somebody who wants to be here is going to stick around for a while.”

ADVOCATES WANT CHANGES AND EXPANSION

Medicare does not include a long-term care insurance provision, something that Leading Age and other advocates argue the U.S. needs, especially as the Baby Boomer generation ages.

That kind of care, she said, would help patients and families absorb significant burdens of care that hospitals do not provide and that hospice does not cover — or at least should not cover. A long-term care benefit, for example, could become a more common route of insured care in some dementia cases.

Legislation has been introduced in Congress in recent sessions to create a long-term care plan under Medicare. But it is politically difficult, if not impossible, because it calls for an increase in payroll taxes to finance a new benefit.

Separately, Gurian said Leading Age would like Congress to increase hospice payments structures so more agencies might admit patients and still cover certain treatments they now typically forgo. For example, she said some cancer patients could ratchet down cancer treatments as part of pain management rather than give up treatment altogether and advance more rapidly to heavy drugs like morphine that eliminate quality of life.

JIMMY CARTER STILL OFFERING LESSONS

Gurian said the U.S. health care system and American society too often see just two choices for someone with a grave diagnosis: “fighting” or “giving up.”

“Hospice is not giving up,” she said, even if it means “accepting our mortality.”

Novas said Jimmy Carter has proven those distinctions with his public announcements and, in November, his determination to attend Rosalynn Carter’s funeral, physically diminished, reclined in a wheelchair, his legs covered in a blanket.

“That was such an important moment,” Novas said, for the world to “see what 99 looks like,” even for a former president. “He still has lessons for us. I think, on some level, he must be aware of what he’s doing. ... Hospice is just a partner in that journey. But it’s his journey.”

Top UN court to hold hearings on legality of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian-claimed lands

By MIKE CORDER and JULIA FRANKEL Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — The United Nations’ highest court opens historic hearings Monday into the legality of Israel’s 57-year occupation of lands sought for a Palestinian state, plunging the 15 international judges back into the heart of the decades-long Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Six days of hearings are scheduled at the International Court of Justice, during which an unprecedented number of countries will participate, as Israel continues its devastating assault on Gaza.

Though the case occurs against the backdrop of the Israel-Hamas war, it focuses instead on Israel’s open-ended occupation of the West Bank, Gaza and east Jerusalem.

Palestinian representatives, who speak first on Monday, will argue that the Israeli occupation is illegal because it has violated three key tenets of international law, the Palestinian legal team told reporters Wednesday.

They say that Israel has violated the prohibition on territorial conquest by annexing large swaths of occupied land, has violated the Palestinians’ right to self-determination, and has imposed a system of racial discrimination and apartheid.

“We want to hear new words from the court,” said Omar Awadallah, the head of the U.N. organizations department in the Palestinian Foreign Ministry.

“They’ve had to consider the word genocide in the South Africa case,” he said, referring to a separate case before the court. “Now we want them to consider apartheid.”

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Awadallah said an advisory opinion from the court "will give us many tools, using peaceful international law methods and tools, to confront the illegalities of the occupation."

The court will likely take months to rule. But experts say the decision, though not legally binding, could profoundly impact international jurisprudence, international aid to Israel and public opinion.

"The case will put before the court a litany of accusations and allegations and grievances which are probably going to be uncomfortable and embarrassing for Israel, given the war and the already very polarized international environment," said Yuval Shany, a law professor at Hebrew University and senior fellow at the Israel Democracy Institute.

Israel is not scheduled to speak during the hearings, but could submit a written statement. Shany said Israel will likely justify the ongoing occupation on security grounds, especially in the absence of a peace deal.

It is likely to point to the Oct. 7 attack in which Hamas-led militants from Gaza killed 1,200 people across southern Israel and dragged 250 hostages back to the territory.

"There is this narrative that territories from which Israel withdraws, like Gaza, can potentially transform into very serious security risks," Shany said. "If anything, Oct. 7 underscored the traditional Israeli security rationale to justify unending occupation."

But Palestinians and leading rights groups say the occupation goes far beyond defensive measures. They say it has morphed into an apartheid system, bolstered by settlement building on occupied lands, that gives Palestinians second-class status and is designed to maintain Jewish hegemony from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. Israel rejects any accusation of apartheid.

The case arrives at the court after the U.N. General Assembly voted by a wide margin in December 2022 to ask the world court for a non-binding advisory opinion on one of the world's longest-running and thorniest disputes. The request was promoted by the Palestinians and opposed vehemently by Israel. Fifty countries abstained from voting.

In a written statement before the vote, Israel's U.N. Ambassador Gilad Erdan called the measure "outrageous," the U.N. "morally bankrupt and politicized" and any potential decision from the court "completely illegitimate."

After the Palestinians present their arguments, 51 countries and three organizations — the League of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and the African Union will address the panel of judges in the wood-paneled Great Hall of Justice.

Israel captured the West Bank, east Jerusalem and Gaza Strip in the 1967 Mideast war. The Palestinians seek all three areas for an independent state. Israel considers the West Bank to be disputed territory, whose future should be decided in negotiations.

It has built 146 settlements, according to watchdog group Peace Now, home to more than 500,000 Jewish settlers. The West Bank settler population has grown by more than 15% in the last five years according to a pro-settler group.

Israel also has annexed east Jerusalem and considers the entire city to be its capital. An additional 200,000 Israelis live in settlements built in east Jerusalem that Israel considers to be neighborhoods of its capital. Palestinian residents of the city face systematic discrimination, making it difficult for them to build new homes or expand existing ones.

The international community overwhelmingly considers the settlements to be illegal. Israel's annexation of east Jerusalem, home to the city's most sensitive holy sites, is not internationally recognized.

It's not the first time the court has been asked to give an advisory opinion on Israeli policies or to declare an occupation illegal.

In 2004, the court said that a separation barrier Israel built through east Jerusalem and parts of the West Bank was "contrary to international law." It also called on Israel to immediately halt construction. Israel has ignored the ruling.

In a 1971 case the Palestinian legal team is likely to draw from, the court issued an advisory opinion finding that the South African occupation of Namibia was illegal, and said that South Africa had to imme-

diately withdraw from the country.

Also, late last month, the court ordered Israel to do all it can to prevent death, destruction and any acts of genocide in its campaign in Gaza. South Africa filed the case accusing Israel of genocide, a charge that Israel denied.

South African representatives are scheduled to speak Tuesday. The country's governing party, the African National Congress, has long compared Israel's policies in Gaza and the West Bank to the apartheid regime of white minority rule in South Africa, which restricted most Black people to "homelands" before ending in 1994.

Houston megachurch to have service of 'healing and restoration' a week after deadly shooting

By JUAN A. LOZANO Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — A Houston megachurch was set to have a special service on Sunday, a week after a woman opened fire in one of its hallways before being gunned down by security officers.

Lakewood Church, run by celebrity pastor Joel Osteen, has not had services since the Feb. 11 shooting that sent worshippers scrambling for safety.

Police say Genesse Moreno, 36, entered the church between Sunday services with her 7-year-old son and began firing. Moreno did not reach the main sanctuary and was killed after exchanging gunfire with two off-duty officers. Two people were wounded in the shooting, including Moreno's son, who was shot in the head and remained hospitalized.

Questions about the shooting remain unanswered, including Moreno's motive and details about how she obtained the AR-style rifle she used.

Moreno's former mother-in-law, Walli Carranza, told The Associated Press that Moreno had long struggled with mental illness. Carranza said she believed systemic failures, as well as lax gun laws, ultimately led to the shooting.

In a video message posted Wednesday on social media, Osteen said the special 11 a.m. CST service on Sunday was being held to celebrate a "time of healing and restoration."

"It's been a difficult week, something we never dreamed we would have to deal with. But we look back now and we see the faithfulness of God and how he protected and watched over us," Osteen said.

The shooting should not prevent people from gathering together, Osteen said.

"There are forces that would like for us to shrink back and live in fear, afraid of what might happen at the school or the grocery store, at work, or even at church. But we are not people of fear. We are people of faith. God has us in the palm of his hand, and this is not the time to shrink back," Osteen said.

Police have not said what prompted Moreno to go to Lakewood Church and begin shooting.

Church spokesman Don Iloff said Wednesday records show Moreno "sporadically" attended services at Lakewood for a couple of years, but there were no records of her being at the church after 2022.

Carranza said she tried to alert authorities and others about Moreno's mental health struggles, and Carranza's attorney in 2020 and 2021 sent emails to Lakewood Church asking for assistance with intervening in Moreno's struggles.

Church officials had not found records of the emails but they were still looking, Iloff said.

Texas lacks a so-called "red flag" law, which generally allows law enforcement or family members to ask a judge to order the seizure or surrender of guns from someone who is deemed dangerous, often because of mental health concerns or threats of violence.

Moreno used both male and female aliases, but investigators found through interviews and past police reports that Moreno identified as female, according to Houston Police Commander Chris Hassig.

Osteen, 60, preaches to about 45,000 people a week at the church located in a former basketball arena and he is known to millions more through his televised sermons. Lakewood is the third-largest megachurch in the U.S., according to the Hartford Institute for Religion Research.

California is forging ahead with food waste recycling. But is it too much, too fast?

By AMY TAXIN Associated Press

CHULA VISTA, Calif. (AP) — Two years after California launched an effort to keep organic waste out of landfills, the state is so far behind on getting food recycling programs up and running that it's widely accepted next year's ambitious waste-reduction targets won't be met.

Over time, food scraps and other organic materials like yard waste emit methane, a gas more potent and damaging in the short-term than carbon emissions from fossil fuels. California's goal is to keep that waste from piling up in landfills, instead turning it into compost or biogas.

Everything from banana peels and used coffee grounds to yard waste and soiled paper products like pizza boxes counts as organic waste. Households and businesses are now supposed to sort that material into a different bin.

But it has been hard to change people's behavior in such a short period of time and cities were delayed setting up contracts to haul organic waste due to the pandemic. In Southern California, the nation's largest facility to convert food waste into biogas has filed for bankruptcy because it's not getting enough of the organic material.

"We're way behind on implementation," said Coby Skye, the recently retired deputy director for environmental services at Los Angeles County Public Works. "In America, for better or worse, we want convenience, and it's very difficult to spend a lot of time and effort educating people about separation."

Meanwhile, some communities that ramped up collection now have more compost than they know what to do with, a sign that more challenges are yet to come as the nation's most populous state plows ahead with its recycling plans.

Only a handful of states mandate organics recycling, and none are running a program as large as California's, which seeks to slash by 75% the amount of organic waste it sends to landfills by 2025 from 2014 levels.

Reaching that goal within a year would be a stretch, experts said.

About three-quarters of communities are currently collecting organic waste from homes, said Rachel Machi Wagoner, CalRecycle's director. While some places are lagging, her aim isn't to punish them but to help them get started, adding that every bit helps the state move towards its goal of reducing emissions.

"My goal is about figuring out where the challenges are and getting us as quickly as possible to success," she said.

"I don't know when we will reach our 75% goal, but we will reach it," she added.

CalRecycle hasn't tallied data yet on how much organic waste was diverted from landfills in 2023. Jurisdictions reported diverting 11.2 million tons (10.1 million metric tons) of organics at the end of 2022, up from 9.9 million tons (8.9 million metric tons) the prior year, Wagoner said.

Some challenges include getting residents on board with sorting their trash into a third bin and knowing what goes where. Others concern what to do with the nutrient-rich compost once it's been created from collected grass clippings, tree branches and food scraps.

At Otay Landfill near the Mexican border, workers pick through heaps of branches and leaves to pull out plastic bits before the material is placed under tarps. The site processes 200 tons (181 metric tons) of organic waste daily and hopes to double that amount as more cities ramp up collection, said Gabe Gonzales, the landfill's operations manager.

Once the compost is made, California's law requires cities to use much of it. But many say they don't have enough space to lay it all out.

Chula Vista, a San Diego County city of 275,000 people, is supposed to use 14,000 tons (12,700 metric tons) of compost a year but uses a few thousand at best, said Manuel Medrano, the city's environmental services manager. Some is doled out in free compost giveaways for residents, while heaps of the material are stored in a fenced area of a local park.

"To transport it is really expensive, to spread it is really expensive," Medrano said. "We're nowhere near

meeting that requirement.”

Communities with more open space might fare better. Cody Cain, head of marketing and sales for compost-maker Agromin, said his company has developed a plan to link cities struggling to meet these requirements with farmers who need the material for their soil.

“We basically are matchmakers. Call us the ‘Tinder’ of compost, and we’ll bring the farmer together with the city,” Cain said.

Food waste also can be converted into biogas to fuel vehicles or industrial operations. But a massive facility built three years ago in the Southern California city of Rialto now finds itself facing bankruptcy after Los Angeles was slow to ramp up collection, leaving the plant with insufficient waste, said Yaniv Scherson, chief operating officer for Anaergia Inc.

“It’s because the cities didn’t enforce on time the market is struggling,” he said. “If it doesn’t get feedstock this year, there is a chance it shuts down completely.”

LA Sanitation & Environment, which handles trash and recycling for the city of nearly 4 million people, had no immediate comment.

Heidi Sanborn, founding director of the environmental National Stewardship Action Council, said she supports the state’s law but wants more done to keep plastics out of compost and to develop alternative energy solutions. Some of California’s challenges stem from the fact the state is trying to build a system on a scale the country hasn’t seen, she said.

“We’re trying to fix incredibly tough problems. We’re not going to find the perfect solution out of the gate,” she said.

But, Sanborn added, “we’re on our way.”

Here’s a look inside Donald Trump’s \$355 million civil fraud verdict as an appeals fight looms

By MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — On the witness stand last year, Donald Trump proclaimed: “I have a lot of cash.”

After Friday’s eye-popping penalty in his New York civil fraud trial, he’s going to need it — and maybe more.

A judge ordered the former president to fork over \$355 million of his fortune, plus interest, finding he lied for years about his wealth on financial statements he used to secure loans and make deals as he built the real estate empire that vaulted him to fame and the presidency.

“The frauds found here leap off the page and shock the conscience,” Judge Arthur Engoron wrote in a 92-page decision that spares Trump’s company from closure, but forces it into years of court supervision, among other sanctions.

The ruling, after a 2½-month trial in New York Attorney General Letitia James’ lawsuit cuts to the core of Trump’s image as a wealthy, shrewd real estate mogul turned political force.

The financial penalty — staggering even for a businessman who’s seen casinos, an airline and other ventures fail — adds to Trump’s mounting legal debts and could put the Republican presidential front-runner in a serious cash crunch as he campaigns to retake the White House.

Trump, who’s also dealing with four criminal cases, decried Friday’s ruling as “election interference” and has vowed to appeal.

Here’s a look at the case, the penalties and what’s next for Trump.

WHAT DID THE JUDGE DECIDE?

Engoron ruled that Trump engaged in a yearslong conspiracy with top executives at his company, the Trump Organization, to deceive banks and insurers about the size of his wealth and the true value of such properties as Trump Tower in Manhattan and his Mar-a-Lago club in Florida.

Engoron, who ruled before the trial that Trump and his co-defendants committed fraud with his financial statements, found Trump liable on five of the six remaining claims in James’ lawsuit: falsifying business

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records, issuing false financial statements, conspiracy to commit insurance fraud and conspiracy to falsify business records.

Two former longtime Trump Organization executives, Allen Weisselberg and Jeffrey McConney, were also found liable for insurance fraud.

Engoron decided the case because state law doesn't allow for juries in this type of lawsuit, which sought what's known as "equitable relief" and has different rules than other cases with big-money penalties. Also, he noted, neither side asked for a jury.

WAIT, HOW MUCH DOES TRUMP OWE?

Trump could ultimately end up owing a half-billion dollars or more as a result of Friday's verdict.

In addition to the \$355 million penalty — payback of what the judge deemed "ill-gotten gains" from his spurious financial statements — Trump is required to pay interest on that amount.

At an annual rate of 9%, as prescribed by New York law, that adds up fast.

James' office calculates that, to date, Trump owes an additional \$98.6 million in interest, bringing his total penalty to \$453.5 million. The interest will keep accruing until Trump pays.

In his ruling, Engoron ruled that the interest Trump owes on about half of the total penalty amount, pertaining to loan savings, can be calculated from the start of the investigation in 2019. Some interest on the remaining amount, which pertains to more recent transactions, can be calculated starting in May 2022 or June 2023.

In all, Engoron imposed \$363.9 million in penalties on Trump and his co-defendants, including his sons Eric and Donald Trump Jr., or about \$464 million with interest, according to James' office.

Trump maintains that he is worth several billion dollars and testified last year that he had about \$400 million in cash, in addition to properties and other investments.

WHY DOES TRUMP OWE SO MUCH?

Engoron found that Trump's phony wealth claims were critical to his success, affording him lower loan interest rates and allowing him to build projects he wouldn't have otherwise been able to finish. The judge determined that those savings and windfall profits were "ill-gotten gains" and ordered him and his co-defendants to cough them up to the state, with interest.

Trump, both individually and as the owner of various corporate entities, must pay:

— \$168 million, plus interest, in savings on loans he obtained using his inflated financial statements for a golf resort near Miami, a Chicago hotel and condominium tower, a Washington, D.C. hotel and a Manhattan office building. Trump obtained three of the loans through Deutsche Bank's private wealth management unit, which offered lower interest rates than its commercial real estate division, and used his financial statements to show the bank he was wealthy and a good credit risk.

— \$126.8 million, plus interest, in profit from selling the Trump International Hotel in Washington in May 2022 to a company that now operates it as a Waldorf Astoria. Trump used \$170 million of the \$375 million to pay off a loan on the property. Other proceeds went to his children.

— \$60 million, plus interest, from selling the rights to manage a New York City golf course in June 2023. Engoron noted in his ruling that the buyer, Bally's Corporation, stands to pay Trump an additional \$115 million if it obtains a casino license for the property. However, he did not say if he would require Trump to give up that money, too.

Trump's sons, Eric and Donald Jr., must each pay a little over \$4 million, plus interest, to the state for their shares of the Washington hotel sales. Weisselberg, the former Trump Organization finance chief, was ordered to pay \$1 million — half of the \$2 million severance he's receiving.

WHAT DO TRUMP AND HIS LAWYERS SAY?

Trump called the decision "weaponization against a political opponent" and complained that he was being penalized for "having built a perfect company, great cash, great buildings, great everything."

"President Trump will of course appeal and remains confident the Appellate Division will ultimately correct the innumerable and catastrophic errors made by a trial court untethered to the law or to reality," Trump lawyer Christopher Kise said.

Trump and his lawyers have said that outside accountants that helped prepare his financial statements

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should've flagged any discrepancies and that the documents came with disclaimers that shielded him from liability. They say Trump never told anyone to inflate the value of assets and that, if there were discrepancies, no one was harmed.

"There were no victims because the banks made a lot of money," Trump said Friday, echoing his trial testimony in November.

Trump testified that regardless of what his financial statements said, banks did their own due diligence and would've qualified him for the loans anyway. He said there's no evidence that the terms or pricing would have been any different.

HOW WILL TRUMP'S APPEAL UNFOLD?

Trump isn't able to appeal the decision just yet because the clerk's office at Engoron's courthouse still has to file paperwork to make it official.

Once that happens, Trump can file an appeal with New York's Appellate Division, a mid-level appeals court just above Engoron's trial court in the state's judicial hierarchy. His lawyers are almost certain to ask for an immediate stay — a legal term for an order halting enforcement of Engoron's decision while the appeals process plays out.

Under state law, Trump will receive an automatic stay if he puts up money, assets or an appeal bond covering the amount he owes. The appeals process typically takes months, if not a year or more. If Trump is unsuccessful at the Appellate Division, he can ask the state's highest court, the Court of Appeals, to consider taking his case.

Any appeal is likely to focus on Engoron, whom Trump's lawyers have accused of "tangible and overwhelming" bias, as well as objections to the legal mechanics involved in James' lawsuit. Trump contends the law she sued him under is a consumer-protection statute that's normally used to rein in businesses that rip off customers.

Trump's lawyers have already gone to the Appellate Division at least 10 times to challenge Engoron's prior rulings, including during the trial in an unsuccessful bid to reverse a gag order and \$15,000 in fines for violations after Trump made a disparaging and false social media post about a key court staffer.

Trump's lawyers have long argued that some of the allegations are barred by the statute of limitations, contending that Engoron failed to comply with an Appellate Division ruling last year that he narrow the scope of the trial to weed out outdated allegations.

WHAT ELSE DID THE DECISION SAY?

Engoron set strict limitations on the Trump Organization's ability to do business, but took the "corporate death penalty" off the table, rescinding his earlier decision to strip Trump of his companies.

The judge placed the company under an independent monitor's continued supervision for at least three years, ordered the hiring of an independent compliance director and forced a shakeup in its leadership. He wrote that without the restrictions, Trump and his co-defendants were "likely to continue their fraudulent ways."

The judge imposed a two-year ban on Trump's sons, Eric and Donald Trump Jr., from serving as a director or officer of a New York company, effectively booting them from their roles managing the Trump Organization's day-to-day operations.

Trump, who owns the company but no longer has an official leadership position, was given a three-year ban. Engoron also banned him and his companies for three years from getting loans from banks registered in New York, widely regarded as the financial capital of the world.

Weisselberg and another longtime company executive, ex-controller Jeffrey McConney, were barred from ever holding a corporate finance or leadership role in the state.

Engoron wrote that taking away Trump's companies was no longer necessary because it will be under a "two-tiered oversight" with the independent monitor, retired federal judge Barbara Jones, and the compliance director keeping an eye on potentially fraudulent activities.

HOW DID THIS CASE COME ABOUT?

James, a Democrat, sued Trump in 2022 under a decades-old New York law that gives her broad power to investigate allegations of persistent fraud in business dealings.

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James started investigating Trump's financial statements in 2019 after his former personal lawyer and fixer, Michael Cohen, provided Congress with copies of some of the documents and testified that his former boss had a history of exaggerating the value of his assets.

Cohen served federal prison time for violating campaign finance laws in connection with an alleged hush-money scheme that is the subject of Trump's New York criminal case. Cohen also pleaded guilty to lying to Congress, a charge Trump and his lawyers say undermines his credibility.

James's lawsuit accused Trump and his co-defendants of routinely puffing up his financial statements — a yearly snapshot of his holdings — to create the illusion that he and his properties were far more valuable than they actually were.

Trump used the statements to banks and others he did business with, and even handed them over to financial magazines like Forbes to justify his place among the world's billionaires.

WHAT WERE SOME THINGS TRUMP WAS ACCUSED OF?

Among other tricks, Trump and his co-defendants were accused of overvaluing his Trump Tower penthouse in Manhattan for years based on figures wrongly listing it as three times its actual size, 10,996 square feet (1,022 square meters).

They were also accused of valuing his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida at more than \$612 million based on the idea that the property could be developed for residential use, when he had signed an agreement surrendering rights to develop it for any uses but a club.

Trump "was aware of having deeded away the right to use Mar-a-Lago as anything other than a social club, and notwithstanding, continued to value it as if it could be used as a single family residence," Engoron wrote in his decision.

"He was aware that the Triplex apartment in which he, a real estate mogul and self-identified expert, resided for decades was not 30,000 square feet, but actually 10,996 square feet," the judge said.

At trial, Trump insisted that he believed Mar-a-Lago is currently worth between \$1 billion and \$1.5 billion.

That would make it worth "more than the most expensive private residence listed in the country by approximately 400%," Engoron wrote.

HOW DID THE JUDGE ASSESS TRUMP AND OTHER KEY WITNESSES?

Trump's defiant, rambling turn as a trial witness led Engoron to warn: "This is not a political rally." How did the judge really feel about Trump's 3½ hours under oath?

"Overall, Donald Trump rarely responded to the questions asked, and he frequently interjected long, irrelevant speeches on issues far beyond the scope of the trial," Engoron wrote in his decision. "His refusal to answer the questions directly, or in some cases, at all, severely compromised his credibility."

Assessing other key witnesses, Engoron wrote that Weisselberg "was intentionally evasive, with large gaps of 'I don't remember,'" and that Cohen proved truthful despite "palpable" animosity between him and Trump, some "seeming contradictions" in his testimony and the cloud of his guilty plea.

The judge wrote that Weisselberg's severance agreement, signed before he went to jail for 100 days in an unrelated tax fraud case "renders his testimony highly unreliable" because it bars him from voluntarily cooperating with law enforcement.

"The Trump Organization keeps Weisselberg on a short leash, and it shows," Engoron wrote.

Prosecutors are weighing a potential perjury charge against Weisselberg over his testimony at the civil fraud trial, but Engoron did not mention that in his ruling.

The judge said that while Cohen had an "incentive to lie" after falling out with Trump, he found the ex-lawyer's testimony credible based on his relaxed manner, the general plausibility of his statements, and, "most importantly, the way his testimony was corroborated by other trial evidence."

"A less-forgiving factfinder might have concluded differently, might not have believed a single word of a convicted perjurer," Engoron wrote. "This factfinder does not believe that pleading guilty to perjury means that you can never tell the truth. Michael Cohen told the truth."

Trump rails against New York fraud ruling as he faces fines that could exceed half-a-billion dollars

By THOMAS BEAUMONT and JILL COLVIN Associated Press

WATERFORD TOWNSHIP, Mich. (AP) — Former President Donald Trump railed against the judge who slapped him with a \$355 million fine in his New York civil fraud trial and went after the long list of prosecutors with cases against him as he campaigned in Michigan Saturday night while facing penalties that, with interest, could exceed half-a-billion dollars.

Trump was making his pitch in a state that is expected to be critical in November as he pivots toward a likely general election rematch against President Joe Biden. While Biden narrowly beat Trump here in 2020, the president is facing deep skepticism in the state, especially from Arab-American voters angry over his support for Israel in the Israel-Hamas war as the Palestinian death toll has climbed.

Trump, meanwhile, has been working to appeal to the blue-collar and union voters who were critical to his victory in 2016. On Saturday, he again made his pitch to auto workers, railing against electric vehicle mandates that he argues will ultimately lead to lost jobs and touted tariffs he put in place.

"We have to let them know a freight train is coming in November," Trump told more than 2,000 supporters gathered in a freezing plane hangar in Waterford Township, in the suburbs of Detroit.

But Trump was again most focused on his grievances, opening with a 15-minute screed about the criminal and civil cases against him.

On Friday, a judge in New York ordered Trump to pay \$355 million after concluding he had lied about his wealth for years, scheming to dupe banks, insurers and others by inflating his wealth on financial statements. Trump has vowed to appeal.

That penalty came days after Trump was ordered to pay \$83.3 million to the writer E. Jean Carroll for damaging her reputation after she accused him of sexual assault.

With interest payments, Trump's legal debts might now exceed a half-billion dollars — an amount it is unclear whether or not Trump can afford to pay.

Trump cast Friday's decision as "a lawless and unconstitutional atrocity that sets fire to our laws like no one has ever seen in this country before."

He called the judge in the case, Arthur Engoron, "crooked," and New York Attorney General Letitia James, who brought the case, a "lunatic." He called special counsel Jack Smith, who brought two federal indictments against him an "animal," while mocking the pronunciation of Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis' name.

Trump has succeeded in the GOP primary by casting the charges — which include state and federal criminal indictments across four separate jurisdictions — as part of a coordinated effort by Biden and other Democrats to damage his electoral prospects. He has also repeatedly cast them as an attack on his supporters.

"These repulsive abuses of power are not just an attack on me, they're really an attack on you and all Americans," Trump said Saturday. "We're all in this mess together!"

But it's unclear whether those appeals will work in a general election, particularly among suburban voters in key swing-state metro areas in places like Oakland County, where Trump was speaking Saturday.

An affluent Detroit suburb and the state's second-largest county, Oakland County was once a GOP stronghold, but has trended more Democratic in recent elections, in part due to women voters. Trump lost the county to Hillary Clinton in 2016 and Biden in 2020, both times by eight percentage points.

While Michigan will hold its primary next after South Carolina, only 16 out of 55 Republican presidential delegates will be determined by the Feb. 27 vote.

The remaining 39 will be distributed by precinct delegates at a Michigan GOP state convention on March 2.

Trump's visit came as the state's GOP has been in turmoil, amid competing claims on the chairmanship and financial crisis.

Trump waded carefully into the chaos by offering a shoutout to the newly elected state GOP Chairman Pete Hoekstra, a former longtime U.S. House member and Trump loyalist who served as Trump's ambas-

sador to the Netherlands.

Hoekstra was elected after then-Chair Kristina Karamo was ousted after racking up hundreds of thousands in debt.

"A great congressman, and a great ambassador," Trump said.

A lone man in the crowd still loyal to Karamo, who has said she won't cede the position, booed and called Hoekstra a RINO. The term is intended as an insult and an acronym for Republican In Name Only.

ECU baseball player appears in game with prosthetic leg after boating accident

GREENVILLE, N.C. (AP) — East Carolina sophomore Parker Byrd appeared in Friday's season-opening win against Rider with a prosthetic leg after having part of his right leg amputated following a 2022 boating accident.

The school said he is the first NCAA Division I athlete to play in a game with a prosthetic leg. Athletics spokesman Malcolm Gray said the Byrd family researched for any other examples. NCAA spokesman Greg Johnson said the organization doesn't track that type of record.

Byrd, an in-state product from Laurinburg, walked to the plate in the eighth inning to a loud ovation from the home crowd. He took a first-pitch strike then drew four straight balls to reach base. The Pirates then had freshman Jason Janesko come on as a pinch runner.

"Chill bumps, man," Byrd said in his postgame interview with reporters. "It's absolutely phenomenal."

Pirates coach Cliff Godwin told WCTI-TV based in New Bern that it was "one of the proudest moments I have ever had as a coach."

"He's going to get some more," Godwin said. "But he's worked his tail off. It was super-emotional.

"The umpire behind home plate told me when I was making a change, he said he's been umpiring for 17, 18 years and it's the coolest moment he's ever been a part of. So he said he was tearing up back there, as I was, when he was running off the field."

Russia takes control of a city in eastern Ukraine after Ukrainian troops withdraw

By ILLIA NOVIKOV and BARRY HATTON Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia said its forces took complete control Saturday of a city in eastern Ukraine that was the focus of intense combat for months, a development that Moscow could use to boost morale as the second anniversary of its full-scale invasion of Ukraine approaches with the war largely at a stalemate.

The Russian Defense Ministry's announcement came the same day Ukraine's military chief said he was withdrawing troops from the city of Avdiivka, where the outnumbered defenders had battled a Russian assault for four months.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu told the Kremlin that Russian forces were working to clear final pockets of resistance at the Avdiivka Coke and Chemical Plant, officials said in a statement. Videos on social media Saturday appeared to show soldiers raising the Russian flag over one of the plant's buildings.

Russian President Vladimir Putin sent a personal message of congratulating to his troops in the city, state news agency Tass reported. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov described Avdiivka's capture as an "important victory."

Along with the invasion's upcoming anniversary on Feb. 24, Russia also is preparing for a March presidential election that is all but guaranteed to give Putin another six-year term. The Kremlin has cracked down heavily on dissent during the war, and the death Friday of imprisoned opposition leader Alexei Navalny has silenced the voice of Putin's most formidable foe.

Ukraine is back on the defensive against Russia in the nearly 2-year-old war, hindered by low ammunition supplies and a shortage of personnel. Speaking at the Munich Security Conference on Saturday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy warned his country's allies that an "artificial deficit" of arms for Ukraine

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risked giving Russia breathing space and allowing "Putin to adapt to the current intensity of the war."

"Our actions are limited only by ... our strength," Zelenskyy said, pointing to the situation in Avdiivka after the commander of Ukraine's armed forces said he was withdrawing troops from the city to prevent their encirclement and to save soldiers' lives.

President Joe Biden said he told Zelenskyy in their Saturday phone call that he remains confident Congress will ultimately approve additional funding for Ukraine. But asked if he was confident more U.S. funding would come through before Ukraine loses more territory, Biden acknowledged, "I'm not."

"Look Ukrainians have fought so bravely," Biden said "There is so much on the line. The idea now when they are running out of ammunition that we're going to walk away. I find it absurd."

White House National Security Council spokesperson Adrienne Watson called the withdrawal "the cost of Congressional inaction."

In a short statement posted on Facebook, Col. Gen. Oleksandr Syrskyi said the Ukrainian troops were moving to "more favorable lines."

"Our soldiers performed their military duty with dignity, did everything possible to destroy the best Russian military units, inflicted significant losses on the enemy in terms of manpower and equipment.

"We are taking measures to stabilize the situation and maintain our positions," the statement read.

The withdrawal was Syrskyi's first major test since his appointment this month as Ukraine's new army chief.

In his previous position as commander of Ukraine's ground forces, he faced criticism for holding on to the city of Bakhmut for nine months, a siege that became the war's longest and bloodiest battle and cost Ukraine dearly, but also served to sap Russia's forces.

In recent days, reports emerged that Ukrainian troops in Avdiivka faced a deteriorating situation.

Rodion Kudriashov, deputy commander of the 3rd Assault Brigade, said Friday that Ukrainian troops were still holding out against the onslaught of about 15,000 Russian soldiers, but he expected the situation would "soon become critical."

"The enemy is trying to penetrate our defense and in some places to bypass our positions," he told The Associated Press.

The 3rd Brigade said on its social media account Friday that its soldiers were at the huge Avdiivka Coke Plant. Russian warplanes have been dropping about 60 bombs a day, relentlessly shelling the area and launching assaults with armor and infantry, the brigade said.

A video showed dense black smoke over the factory, said to be caused by burning fuel oil reservoirs. The post said: "Poisonous smog spreads all over the plant."

Russian media reported the Kremlin's forces were making extensive use of plane-launched glide bombs, which fly at a shallower angle, to batter Ukrainian positions.

Heavily fortified with a web of tunnels and concrete fortifications, Avdiivka lies in the northern suburbs of Donetsk, a city in a region of the same name that Russian forces partially occupy. Capturing Avdiivka could be a timely boost for Moscow and serve as a possible springboard for Russia to drive deeper into the region.

Fewer than 1,000 people remain in the city, according to the Donetsk regional governor, Vadym Filashkin. The city, with a prewar population of about 31,000, is today a bombed-out shell of what it once was.

Aerial footage of Avdiivka obtained by The Associated Press in December showed an apocalyptic scene and hinted at Russia's staggering losses, with the bodies of about 150 soldiers — most wearing Russian uniforms — lying scattered along tree lines where they sought cover.

However, the Institute for the Study of War, a Washington think tank, said Thursday that taking Avdiivka would be more of a symbolic win for the Kremlin and would not bring significant changes to the 1,500-kilometer (930-mile) front line that has barely budged in recent months.

"The potential Russian capture of Avdiivka would not be operationally significant and would likely only offer the Kremlin immediate informational and political victories," the institute said in an assessment.

"Russian forces would be highly unlikely to make rapid operationally significant advances from Avdiivka if

they captured the settlement, and the potential Russian capture of Avdiivka at most would set conditions for further limited tactical gains," it added.

Toyota takes high hopes into Daytona 500 but weather may affect 'The Great American Race'

By JENNA FRYER AP Auto Racing Writer

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. (AP) — Denny Hamlin leaned into the window of Christopher Bell's winning Toyota to congratulate his Joe Gibbs Racing teammate on beating him in a Daytona 500 qualifying race.

Hamlin then gave Bell detailed directions to victory lane.

"Been to victory lane at Daytona a time or three," Hamlin wrote on social media. "Had to show (Bell) the way."

After a dismal showing in time trials for Sunday's season-opening Daytona 500, the Toyota camp roared back and swept the two 150-mile qualifying races Thursday night that set the field for "The Great American Race." The wins by Tyler Reddick of 23XI Racing — the team co-owned by Hamlin and Michael Jordan — and Bell marked the first sweep of the Daytona qualifying races for Toyota since 2014.

Adding in Hamlin's victory in the exhibition Clash at the Coliseum earlier this month, Toyota heads into the Daytona 500 a perfect 3 for 3 on the season in its new Camry XSE. With all nine Toyota drivers qualified for Sunday's field, the automaker is hoping to remain undefeated in 2024.

The nine entries are the most Toyota has had in the Daytona 500 since 2011.

Paul Doleshal, group manager of motorsports at Toyota North America, said the automaker was "disturbed" when no Toyota driver cracked the top 20 in time trials. Erik Jones had the fastest lap for the OEM at 22nd, and seven-time NASCAR champion Jimmie Johnson, the Legacy Motor Club co-owner and Jones' teammate, was 35th and forced to race his way into the 40-car field.

"I think we were a little bit disturbed — probably a strong word — but just surprised about the lack of qualifying speed," Doleshal said a day after the Toyota sweep. "But then felt that the car would race well, and that proved out, so we're encouraged with that."

Said Reddick: "This new Toyota Camry is truly a beast. It was a lot of fun to drive."

Hamlin, who is Toyota's only Daytona 500 winner with three previous victories, will be going for a fourth and initially was listed as the race favorite by FanDuel Sportsbook. The odds Friday had tilted slightly toward both Joey Logano, who will start from the pole for Team Penske in a new Ford Dark Horse Mustang, and Kyle Busch, who crashed in the qualifying race and will start 34th in a Chevrolet for Richard Childress Racing.

Logano will try to continue a hot streak for team owner Roger Penske. The run started last May when Penske won a record-extending 19th Indianapolis 500 with driver Josef Newgarden. He won the Cup championship in November with Ryan Blaney, won the Rolex 24 at Daytona sports car race last month for the first time since 1969, and now has his first driver on the pole for the Daytona 500.

"There's not a cooler race team that you can work for when it comes to motorsports in general. There's not another motorsports team in America that's decorated as much as Team Penske and what Roger Penske has done, whether it's in NASCAR, sports cars, IndyCar, you name it, the guy's been involved in all of it," Logano said. "One thing that's in common with all of it is he wins. That's where I want to be because of that reason, right? The guy wins, he does it right, he's professional. There's no corners ever cut."

"Roger Penske has never gotten a Daytona 500 pole. Not very often that you can actually do something for the first time for 'The Captain.'"

The last driver to win the Daytona 500 from the pole was Dale Jarrett in 2000.

Weather is expected to play a role in Sunday's race, with rain expected to hit Daytona on Saturday. The forecast is so poor that NASCAR on Friday decided to run the ARCA race scheduled for Saturday after Friday night's Truck Series race.

The final practice session ahead of the Daytona 500 was canceled Saturday morning because of rain at the track. NASCAR also moved Saturday's scheduled Xfinity Series race to 11 a.m. Monday.

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There's less chance of the Daytona 500 being prematurely altered from its scheduled Sunday afternoon start time, even though NASCAR moved up the Clash by a full a day earlier this month because of heavy rain in Los Angeles. Unless the weather conditions are dangerous, NASCAR is most likely expected to wait it out as long as possible Sunday before deciding if the race needs to be postponed until Monday.

Ricky Stenhouse Jr. is the defending race winner for JTG-Daugherty Racing, and his victory extended a streak of three consecutive upset winners. Austin Cindric won for Penske as a rookie in 2022 and Michael McDowell of tiny Front Row Motorsports won in 2021.

McDowell was second-fastest in time trials and will start alongside fellow Ford driver Logano on the front row when the green flag drops. There's great anticipation to see how both Ford and Toyota perform in new cars designed for this season, while Chevrolet remains a mystery.

It's been 10 years since Hendrick Motorsports won its last Daytona 500 — in 2014 with Dale Earnhardt Jr. — and team owner Rick Hendrick wants the streak to end as the team launches its 40th anniversary season.

Hendrick driver Kyle Larson is 0 for 10 in the race — he joins Kyle Busch, Martin Truex Jr. and Brad Keselowski as former Cup champions stuck in double-digit Daytona 500 skids — but showed both speed and an ability to push others to the front in his qualifying race.

Jeff Gordon, now the vice chairman of Hendrick Motorsports, believes Larson has a solid chance at breaking through for the win. It's a big season for Larson, who will attempt to become the fifth driver in history to race in both the Indy 500 and NASCAR's Coca-Cola 600 on the same day, and a Daytona 500 win would certainly set the tone.

"It's tougher than it's ever been. It's critical decision-making. Split-second decision-making can change whether you win the race or finish 10th or 15th," Gordon said. "We're not asking our drivers to do anything different other than go back through the races, analyze what they did good and bad, and just try to put yourself in those positions.

"You've got to get yourself in position, be patient, and if you're in the top five with five laps to go, you make the move you think can win you the race and hope it works out."

Trump avoids 'corporate death penalty' in civil fraud case, but his business will still get slammed

By BERNARD CONDON Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Donald Trump won't face the corporate death penalty after all.

A New York judge on Friday spared the ex-president that worst case punishment as he ruled in a civil case alleging Trump fraudulently misrepresented financial figures to get cheaper loans and other benefits.

Still, Trump got slammed hard, facing big cash penalties, outside supervision of his companies and restrictions on his borrowing.

In a pretrial ruling last year, the same judge threatened to shut down much of the Republican presidential front-runner's business by calling for the "dissolution" of corporate entities that hold many of his marquee properties. That raised the specter of possible fire sales of Trump Tower, a Wall Street skyscraper and other properties.

But New York Supreme Court Judge Arthur Engoron called off the dissolution.

Instead, he said the court would appoint two monitors to oversee the Trump Organization to make sure it doesn't continue to submit false figures.

"It's a complete reversal," said real estate lawyer Adam Leitman Bailey. "There's a big difference between having to sell your assets and a monitor who gets to look over your shoulders."

In his ruling, Engoron banned Trump from serving as an officer or director in any New York corporation for three years, prohibited him from taking out loans with New York banks and said his company and other defendants have to pay hundreds of millions of dollars in fines.

Here is how the decision is likely to impact his business:

CASH DRAIN

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This is possibly the worst hit from the ruling.

Trump and his businesses were told they would have to pay \$355 million for "ill gotten gains." Trump's sons, Eric and Donald Trump Jr., who help run the business, were ordered to pay \$4 million each. Trump's former chief financial officer was ordered to pay \$1 million, for a total judgment of \$364 million.

"I don't think there is any way Trump can continue to operate his business as usual," said Syracuse University law professor Gregory Germain. "It's a lot of money."

The penalties will slam Trump's finances at a moment he is facing other steep legal bills stemming from several criminal cases. Trump separately was hit with \$88 million in judgments in sexual abuse and defamation lawsuits brought by writer E. Jean Carroll.

It gets worse.

Trump is also required to pay interest from the dates when he received benefits from his alleged fraud. That so-called pre-judgement interest adds another \$100 million to Trump's bills, according to New York's attorney general.

But don't expect him to dig into his pocket anytime soon.

Trump lawyers have said they will appeal. That means he won't have to hand over the whole amount yet, though he will have to post a bond or escrow, which could tie up cash while waiting for the appeal.

In any case, Trump already has enough in cash to pay much of that penalty, assuming he is telling the truth about his finances. In a deposition in the fraud case, he said he had more than \$400 million in cash.

NO TRUMP PROPERTY FIRE SALE

The judge's summary ruling in September was vague in exactly what he meant by a "dissolution" of Trump businesses. But several legal experts told The Associated Press that in the worse case it could have led to a sale of not only of his New York properties, but his Mar-a-Lago club in Florida, a Chicago hotel and condo building, and several golf clubs, including ones in Miami, Los Angeles and Scotland.

One of Trump's lawyers, Christopher Kise, called that potential outcome a "corporate death penalty."

Not even the New York attorney general, who filed the lawsuit against Trump, had asked for a "dissolution."

An Associated Press investigation confirmed how unusual such a punishment would have been if carried out: Trump's case would have been the only big business in nearly 70 years of similar cases shut down without a showing of obvious victims who suffered major financial losses. The main alleged victim of the real estate mogul's fraud, Deutsche Bank, had itself not complained it had suffered any losses.

But Engoron on Friday backed down, saying monitors were good enough, basically handing New York Attorney General Letitia James most of what she had sought: bans, monitors and a massive penalty.

THREE-YEAR BAN

The ban on Trump serving as an officer or director for a New York corporation suggests a big shakeup at the Trump Organization, but the real impact isn't clear.

Trump may be removed from the corner office, but as an owner of the business his right to appoint someone to act on his behalf has not been revoked.

"It's not that he can't have influence at these enterprises," said University of Michigan law professor William Thomas. "He just can't hold any actually appointed positions."

Thomas added, however, much depends on how the monitor will handle Trump's attempt to run his company by proxy.

"He might want to walk in the office and tell them what to do, but there will be pushback," he said. "It could limit the avenues through which he can exert control."

Two obvious candidates to help Trump maintain control, his two adult sons, are already off-limits. The judge's ruling barred Donald Jr. and Eric from being officers of New York companies for two years.

BUSINESS LOANS

Trump is also banned from getting loans from New York-chartered banks, a potentially devastating blow given so many major lenders are based in the city.

Luckily for Trump, he has cut his debt by hundreds of millions in recent years and so won't need to re-finance as much. He also has pushed out the maturity of many loans still on the books by several years.

The impact on funding for future businesses could be crushing, though. Without access to banks, he

may be forced to use cash to finance new ventures, something that real estate moguls are loath to do and that won't be easy given his cash payments.

Still, only banks appear banned in the ruling, leaving Trump free to borrow from fast-growing alternative financiers, the private equity and hedge funds that make up the so-called shadow banking world.

"I could imagine a load of private equity funds with very little prospects sitting on a bunch of dry powder saying, 'Hey, we'll lend you \$300 million,'" Columbia law school professor Eric Talley said, adding, "I can imagine the Saudis lending him \$300 million."

Kremlin foe Alexei Navalny's team confirms his death and says his mother is searching for his body

By EMMA BURROWS Associated Press

Alexei Navalny's spokesperson confirmed Saturday that the Russian opposition leader had died at a remote Arctic penal colony, saying he was "murdered," but it was unclear where his body was as his family and friends searched for answers.

Navalny's death at age 47 has deprived the Russian opposition of its most well-known and inspiring politician less than a month before an election that will give President Vladimir Putin another six years in power.

Although neither the imprisoned anti-corruption crusader nor other Kremlin critics were in a position to challenge Putin for the presidency, the loss of Navalny was a crushing blow to Russians who had pinned their future hopes on Putin's seemingly indefatigable foe. It also prompted questions about what killed him. Russian officials told the politician's team Saturday that the cause of Navalny's death had not yet been established and that the results of a new investigation would be released next week, said Navalny spokesperson Kira Yarmysh. Navalny's mother was told that the body would not be released until those investigations were complete, she said. The decision has prompted speculation that the Russian authorities may be keen to hold on to the body in an attempt to cover up potential foul play. "They're driving us around in circles and covering their tracks," Yarmysh said.

A note handed to Navalny's mother stated that he died at 2:17 p.m. Friday, according to Yarmysh. Prison officials told his mother when she arrived at the penal colony Saturday that her son had perished from "sudden death syndrome," Ivan Zhdanov, the director of Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation, wrote on X, formerly known as Twitter.

A prison colony employee said the body was taken to the nearby city of Salekhard as part of a post-mortem investigation, Yarmysh said. When Navalny's mother and one of the late politician's lawyers visited the morgue in Salekhard, it was closed, Navalny's team wrote on its Telegram channel. But the lawyer called the morgue and was told the body was not there, his team said.

Another of Navalny's lawyers went to Salekhard's Investigative Committee and was told that the cause of Navalny's death had not yet been established and that new investigations were being done with the results to be released next week, Yarmysh said. Russia's Investigative Committee informed Navalny's team that the body would not be handed over to his relatives until those investigations were complete, she said.

"It's obvious that they are lying and doing everything they can to avoid handing over the body," Yarmysh wrote on X, adding that his team demanded that Navalny's body "be handed over to his family immediately."

Russia's Federal Penitentiary Service reported that Navalny felt sick after a walk Friday and fell unconscious at the penal colony in the town of Kharp, in the Yamalo-Nenets region about 1,900 kilometers (1,200 miles) northeast of Moscow. An ambulance arrived, but he couldn't be revived, the service said, adding that the cause of death is still "being established."

Maria Pevchikh, head of the board of Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation, said the opposition leader would "live on forever in millions of hearts."

"Navalny was murdered. We still don't know how we'll keep on living, but together, we'll think of something," she wrote on X.

Meanwhile, arrests continued Saturday as Russians came to lay flowers in memory of Navalny at memorials to the victims of Soviet-era purges. OVD-Info, a group that monitors political repression in Russia,

said Saturday that more than 273 people had been detained at memorial events since Navalny's death.

Memorial items laid Friday were removed overnight, but people continued trickling in with flowers on Saturday. In Moscow, a large group of people chanted "shame" as police dragged a screaming woman from the crowd, video shared on social media showed.

More than 10 people were detained at a memorial in St. Petersburg, including a priest who came to conduct a service for Navalny there.

In other cities across the country, police cordoned off some of the memorials and officers were taking pictures of those who came and writing down their personal data in a clear intimidation attempt.

"After the murder of Alexei Navalny, it's absurd to perceive Putin as the supposedly legitimate head of the Russian state," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said at the Munich Security Conference in Germany Saturday. "He is a thug who maintains power through corruption and violence."

U.K. Foreign Secretary David Cameron said Saturday that Britain "will be taking action" against the Russians responsible for Navalny's death.

Speaking to broadcasters in Munich, Cameron said "there should be consequences" for "appalling human rights outrages like this." He said Britain would "look at whether there are individual people that are responsible and whether there are individual measures and actions we can take." Cameron did not say whether the response would consist of financial sanctions or other measures.

U.S. President Joe Biden said on Friday that Washington doesn't know exactly what happened, "but there is no doubt that the death of Navalny was a consequence of something Putin and his thugs did."

The Kremlin bristled Friday at the outpouring of anger from world leaders, with Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, calling the statements — issued before medics have released the cause of Navalny's death — "unacceptable" and "outrageous."

Navalny had been jailed since January 2021, when he returned to Moscow after recuperating in Germany from nerve agent poisoning he blamed on the Kremlin. He was later convicted three times, saying each case was politically motivated, and received a sentence of 19 years for extremism.

After the last verdict, Navalny said he understood he was "serving a life sentence, which is measured by the length of my life or the length of life of this regime."

Nigel Gould-Davies, a former British ambassador to Belarus and senior fellow for Russia & Eurasia at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London, said the loss of Navalny shows that "the sentence in Russia now for opposition is not merely imprisonment, but death."

Hours after Navalny's death was reported, his wife, Yulia Navalnaya, made a dramatic appearance at the Munich conference.

She said she was unsure if she could believe the news from official Russian sources, "but if this is true, I want Putin and everyone around Putin, Putin's friends, his government to know that they will bear responsibility for what they did to our country, to my family and to my husband."

Army Reserve soldiers, close friends killed in drone attack, mourned at funerals in Georgia

WAYCROSS, Ga. (AP) — Two young citizen-soldiers who became close friends after enlisting in the Army Reserve were remembered at funerals in southeast Georgia on Saturday, nearly three weeks after they died in a drone attack while deployed to the Middle East.

A service for 24-year-old Sgt. Kennedy Sanders was held in the packed 1,200-seat auditorium of Ware County Middle School in Waycross.

Fellow soldiers recalled Sanders' courage, her loving personality, and her willingness to volunteer for tasks few wanted to do, including learning to operate earth-moving equipment to help build roads and shelters, the Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported.

"Behind her smile was a fierce determination," Col. Jeffrey Dulgarian said during the service, adding that she "tackled her responsibility with vigor and skill."

Sanders' former basketball coach, Mandy Lingenfelter, remembered Sanders as a point guard for Ware

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County High's Lady Gators.

"It was hard for me to yell at her," Lingenfelter said, "because she was always smiling. ... She had pure joy. She put Jesus first, others second and herself last."

A similar welcome marked the final homecoming for Sgt. Breonna Moffett, 23, in Savannah. Moffett's funeral at a Baptist church was scheduled for the same time Saturday as Sanders' service 100 miles (161 kilometers) away. Moffett's family requested that media not be present.

The soldiers were among three members of their Army Reserve unit who died Jan. 28 in a drone strike on a U.S. base in Jordan near the Syrian border. Also killed was Staff Sgt. William Jerome Rivers, 46, who was buried Tuesday following a church service in Carrollton.

The military awarded all three soldiers promotions in rank after their deaths. They were assigned to the 926th Engineer Battalion, 926th Engineer Brigade, based at Fort Moore in west Georgia.

According to the Army Reserve, Moffett and Sanders both enlisted in 2019 as construction engineers who use bulldozers and other heavy equipment to clear roads and construction sites.

By the time they deployed to the Middle East last year, the two had become close friends. Moffett's mother, Francine Moffett, said that whenever the family would call her daughter, they typically would hear from Sanders too.

When she wasn't serving in uniform, Moffett worked in Savannah for United Cerebral Palsy of Georgia, helping teach cooking and other skills to people with disabilities. She joined the Army Reserve after graduating from Windsor Forest High School, where she had been a drum major and JROTC cadet. She was killed just days after her 23rd birthday.

Sanders came from Waycross on the edge of the Okefenokee Swamp and worked at a local pharmacy. The former high school athlete helped coach children's basketball and soccer teams in her spare time. Her mother, Oneida Oliver-Sanders, said the last time they spoke, her daughter talked of wanting to buy a motorcycle when she came home.

The deaths of the three Georgia reservists were the first U.S. fatalities blamed on Iran-backed militia groups after months of intensified attacks on American forces in the region since the Israel-Hamas war began in October.

More than 40 troops were also injured in the drone attack at Tower 22, a secretive U.S. military desert outpost that enables U.S. forces to infiltrate and quietly leave Syria.

Mediator says talks on Gaza not 'progressing as expected' after momentum in recent weeks

By WAFAA SHURAFU and BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

RAFAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Talks on a potential cease-fire deal in Gaza "have not been progressing as expected" in the past few days after good progress in recent weeks, key mediator Qatar said Saturday, as Israel's prime minister accused the Hamas militant group of not changing its "delusional" demands.

Speaking during the Munich Security Conference, Qatar's prime minister, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, noted difficulties in the "humanitarian part" of the negotiations.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who is under pressure to bring home remaining hostages taken in the Oct. 7 Hamas attack, said he sent a delegation to cease-fire talks in Cairo earlier in the week at U.S. President Joe Biden's request but doesn't see the point in sending them again.

Hamas wants a permanent cease-fire in Gaza and the release of Palestinians held by Israel.

Netanyahu also pushed back against international concern about a planned Israeli ground offensive in Rafah, a city on southern Gaza's border with Egypt. He said "total victory" against Hamas requires the offensive, once people living there evacuate to safe areas. Where they will go in largely devastated Gaza is not clear.

New airstrikes in central Gaza on Saturday killed more than 40 people, including children, and wounded at least 50, according to Associated Press journalists and hospital officials. Israel's military said it carried out strikes there against Hamas.

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Five people were killed in an Israeli airstrike that targeted a house outside Khan Younis in the south, according to health officials, and another five people, including three children, were killed in an airstrike on a building north of Rafah. Dr. Marwan al-Hams, director of Abu Yousef al-Najjar Hospital, said other bodies were being pulled from the rubble.

Israel's air and ground offensive was triggered by the Oct. 7 attack that killed some 1,200 people in Israel and took 250 others hostage.

The Gaza Health Ministry on Saturday raised the overall death toll in Gaza to 28,858, saying the bodies of 83 people killed in Israeli bombardments were brought to hospitals in the past 24 hours. The count does not differentiate between combatants and civilians, but the ministry says two-thirds of those killed are women and children.

The war also has caused widespread destruction, displaced some 80% of Gaza's population and sparked a humanitarian crisis in the Hamas-run enclave.

EGYPT CONCERNED ABOUT SPILLOVER

More than half of Gaza's 2.3 million people are packed into Rafah, which Israel portrays as the last significant stronghold of Hamas fighters.

Biden has urged Israel not to carry out an operation there without a "credible" plan to protect civilians and to instead focus on a cease-fire. Egypt has said an operation could threaten diplomatic relations.

Israel has said it has no plans to force Palestinians into Egypt. New satellite photos, however, indicate that Egypt is preparing for that scenario. The images show Egypt building a wall and leveling land near its border with Gaza.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry, who also spoke at the Munich Security Conference, said "it is not our intention to provide any safe areas or facilities, but ... we will provide the support to the innocent civilians, if that was to take place."

President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi affirmed during a call with France's leader that Egypt categorically rejected "the displacement of Palestinians to Egypt in any way, shape or form," according to el-Sisi's office.

Two senior Egyptian officials said Egypt is building additional defensive lines in an existing buffer zone that extends 5 kilometers (3 miles) from the border. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss details with the media.

The buffer zone, built as part of Egypt's battle against an Islamic State group insurgency, was meant to prevent weapons smuggling to and from Gaza.

ANOTHER CHALLENGE TO AID

Israel has not presented specific evidence for its claim that Hamas is diverting U.N. aid, and its targeted killings of Gaza police commanders guarding truck convoys have made it "virtually impossible" to distribute the goods safely, a top U.S. envoy said in rare public criticism of Israel.

David Satterfield, the Biden administration's special Middle East envoy for humanitarian issues, said criminal gangs are increasingly targeting the convoys following the departure of police escorts after Israeli strikes.

"We are working with the Israeli government, the Israeli military in seeing what solutions can be found here because everyone wants to see the assistance continue," Satterfield told the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace on Friday. A solution "is going to require some form of security escorts to return."

Satterfield said Israeli officials have not presented "specific evidence of diversion or theft" of U.N. assistance, but that the militants have their own interests in using "other channels of assistance ... to shape where and to whom assistance goes."

Israel has alleged repeatedly that Hamas is diverting aid, including fuel, after it enters Gaza, a claim denied by U.N. aid agencies. Last week, an Israeli airstrike on a car killed three senior police commanders in Rafah. Two officers were killed in another strike.

Satterfield also addressed challenges for the main U.N. agency aiding Palestinians in Gaza, whose director accused Israel in remarks published Saturday of trying to "destroy" the organization and warned that its operations will halt in April without more support.

ISRAELI TROOPS ENTER A HOSPITAL

In recent weeks, Israel's military has focused on Khan Younis, Gaza's second-largest city and a Hamas stronghold.

The army said Saturday that it had arrested 100 suspected Hamas militants at the city's Nasser Hospital. Israel's defense minister has said at least 20 of those detained were involved in the Oct. 7 attack.

The Health Ministry said troops turned the hospital into "military barracks" and detained a large number of medical staff. Israel says it does not target patients or doctors, but staff say the facility is struggling under heavy fire.

Nour Abou Jameh was among the thousands sheltering at Nasser Hospital who were forced to leave in the past week. "Shooting and shelling was coming from all directions," Jameh said. "When we left at night, bodies were in the streets, and even tanks moved on them and crushed them."

The head of the UN's lead agency helping Palestinians accuses Israel of seeking to destroy it

By CARA ANNA Associated Press

The head of the main United Nations agency supporting people in Gaza alleged that Israel is intent on "destroying" the organization along with the idea that Palestinians are refugees and have a right to return home one day.

Philippe Lazzarini accused Israel in an interview with the Swiss newspaper Tages-Anzeiger of having a "long-term political goal" of eliminating the U.N. aid agency he leads, which is known by the acronym UNRWA. It was created more than 70 years ago to assist Palestinians who fled or were forced from their homes during the 1948 Mideast war over Israel's creation.

"At the moment, we are dealing with an expanded, concentrated Israeli campaign, which is aimed at destroying UNRWA," Lazzarini said in the interview published Saturday. His remarks provided his most sweeping pushback yet against Israeli accusations that the agency ignored alleged attempts by Hamas to infiltrate its Gaza operation.

Lazzarini, who has served as UNRWA's commissioner-general since 2020, said Israel apparently believes that "if the aid agency is abolished, the status of the Palestinian refugees will be resolved once and for all — and with it the right of return."

The fate of Palestinian refugees and their descendants was a key point of dispute between Israelis and Palestinians in previous failed peace talks more than a decade ago. Israel rejects Palestinian demands to allow descendants of refugees to return to what is now Israel, arguing it would dilute Israel's Jewish majority.

The U.N. agency had no further comment beyond the published remarks.

In response to Lazzarini's claims, Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Lior Haiat said "the problem is not the campaign. The problem is Hamas infiltrating UNRWA's activity in the Gaza Strip."

Israel has alleged that 12 of UNRWA's thousands of staff members participated in the Oct. 7 Hamas attack that sparked the war in Gaza. The United States, the agency's largest donor, has suspended funding to it and is looking at alternatives to UNRWA.

Without that money from the U.S. and other key backers who also suspended their support — totaling \$438 million, or more than half this year's expected funding — Lazzarini said UNRWA will have to halt operations in April.

Congress has made clear that U.S. funding for the agency will stop for good, the U.S. special envoy for Middle East humanitarian issues, David Satterfield, told an event hosted by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace on Friday.

"It's not a suspension. It is prohibition on providing further funding," Satterfield said.

At the same time, the U.S. wants UNRWA's critical functions of aid delivery and support to Palestinians to continue.

"We are working aggressively as possible with the U.N. family, with U.N. agencies, to see how these key functions can be sustained, as we look to the months ahead," Satterfield said.

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It is not clear how UNRWA's central role in sheltering and supporting hundreds of thousands of Gaza's 2.3 million people would be shifted to organizations with a far smaller presence inside the besieged territory. About 80% of Gaza's people have been displaced, and medical, food and other aid allowed into the territory is far below what came in before the war.

"Nobody else can do what UNRWA is doing," European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said last week.

When UNRWA was created, it was meant to provide health care, education and welfare services to about 700,000 Palestinians. Today, it provides such services to about 6 million Palestinian refugees and their descendants in the West Bank, Gaza, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon.

All of those areas will be affected when UNRWA halts operations, Lazzarini said.

In his interview, he said Israel's government has applied pressure in multiple ways in what he called its attempt to destroy the agency.

"The Israeli parliament, for example, has introduced a bill to ban the UNRWA headquarters from Jerusalem," Lazzarini told the Swiss newspaper. "They no longer want to exempt UNRWA from VAT (value-added tax) in the future. Israeli authorities have ordered contractors at the port in Ashdod to stop handling certain food deliveries for UNRWA. And all these demands come from the government."

Israel also wants his resignation, Lazzarini said — a demand that he said no other government has made during the agency's current crisis.

Israel has long accused UNRWA of collaborating with Hamas or turning a blind eye to the militant group's activities. Throughout the war, it has released images of tunnels built next to UNRWA facilities.

UNRWA denies collaborating with Hamas. It has dismissed the employees accused in the Oct. 7 attacks and launched investigations. The agency says 158 of its employees, out of a Gaza staff of 13,000, have been killed in the war.

On Friday, Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant released new allegations against UNRWA, saying Israeli intelligence had "significant indications" that more than 30 additional agency workers joined the Oct. 7 attack.

He alleged that nearly 1,500 workers, or 12% of the agency's work force, were members of Hamas or the Islamic Jihad militant group, and that more than 230 were in the groups' armed wings.

"UNRWA has lost legitimacy and can no longer function as a U.N. body," Gallant said. He said he ordered Israeli authorities to begin working with organizations that could replace UNRWA.

The U.N. agency did not comment on Gallant's latest accusations but has said it regularly provides the names of its workers to Israel and takes action against anyone found to be violating U.N. neutrality rules.

Saving democracy is central to Biden's campaign messaging. Will it resonate with swing state voters?

By GARY FIELDS Associated Press

BETHLEHEM, Pa. (AP) — Just blocks from the shuttered Bethlehem Steel plant, the Hispanic Center Lehigh Valley was bustling on a recent day with scores of older people eating lunch. Downstairs, out of sight, a constant stream of visitors was shopping in its massive food pantry.

Over the past seven months, the number visitors to the pantry has risen by more than a third. The center's executive director, Raymond Santiago, sees that as a stark sign of something he has felt over the past couple years: Many in the area's Latino community are struggling to meet their basic needs.

Northampton County, which includes Bethlehem, is a traditional bellwether for Pennsylvania, one of the most important presidential swing states, and Latinos are a key part of the coalition that President Joe Biden is trying to rebuild as he embarks on his campaign for a second term. In doing so, the Democrat might have challenges selling a crucial part of his reelection strategy.

One of the messages he has delivered in previous visits to Pennsylvania is that former President Donald Trump, the front-runner for the GOP nomination, is a danger to American democracy. Biden is hoping that message energizes the same voters who turned out four years ago, when Northampton County narrowly

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flipped to him after supporting Trump by a thin margin in 2016.

Based on his interactions with visitors to the Hispanic center, Santiago isn't so sure. It's the price of groceries and lack of affordable housing that dominate conversations there.

"I think so many people are already immune to that messaging, it won't land as cleanly this election as it did in 2020," he said. "If he keeps pushing that message, it might turn voters away."

Biden chose a location near Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, with its deep symbolism for the country's struggle for freedom, for his initial campaign event for 2024, portraying Trump as a grave threat to America and describing the general election as "all about" whether democracy can survive. It was a message similar to one he gave before the 2022 midterm elections at Independence Hall in Philadelphia, where the nation's founding documents were created. Biden warned that Trump and his followers threatened "the very foundation of our republic."

Biden has continued the theme during the early primary season, telling supporters winning a second term is essential for maintaining the country's democratic traditions.

Over the course of several days, The Associated Press interviewed a cross section of voters in Northampton County to ask whether Biden's messaging around the fate of democracy was resonating. These voters represented parts of the very coalition Biden will need to win Pennsylvania again — Black voters, Latinos, independents and moderates from both parties.

Their overarching response: The president's warning that a second Trump presidency will shred constitutional norms and destroy democratic institutions is not one that, alone, will motivate them and get them out to vote.

Like people across much of the rest of the country, most of those interviewed would prefer avoiding a rematch of the 2020 contest, and several suggested they would seriously consider a serious third-party candidate with a strong message and a chance of winning.

Evelyn Fermin, 74, who regularly visits the Lehigh Hispanic center, has lived in the county for two years after spending most of her life in New Jersey. Her opinion about Trump has been set since Jan. 6, 2021, when the former president's supporters stormed the U.S. Capitol in a violent bid to stop Congress from certifying Biden's win. But she doesn't think reminders of that day will be sufficient to persuade voters in November.

For the daughter of parents who immigrated from the Dominican Republic, her concerns are border security and spending abroad.

"Rather than sending it out to foreign countries, I think we should use it for our people," she said.

As a divorced mother who supported her son as he worked his way through school to become a lawyer, she also doesn't support Biden's attempt to waive student loan debt: "If I was able to do it, I feel that they should."

Curt Balch, 44, worked in the health care industry and is now a stay-at-home dad. He was weathering a two-hour school delay with his 5-year-old daughter in his home in Hellertown, in a more rural part of the county. He registered Republican so he could vote in primaries, but describes himself as more libertarian.

Balch said the messaging by both sides is "pretty toxic" when they warn that the other is "a threat or a danger to the fundamentals of the country moving forward."

He supported Trump in the past two elections but is open to considering other candidates this year, especially if he thinks there is an appealing third-party or independent candidate. Balch believes the dire warnings about a potential second Trump term are overblown. Balch notes that even during the COVID-19 pandemic, Trump let states decide for themselves how to handle it.

"I understand the rhetoric, 'Oh, he's going to be a fascist dictator,'" Balch said. "I don't think it's a message that's getting people to the polls. I don't think people are legitimately thinking that they need to be afraid of Donald Trump."

Christian Miller was a lifelong Democrat but became an independent in 2022 out of frustration with political gridlock and a sense that as he got older, he was growing more conservative.

He said he might one day consider switching to the Republican Party, but not as long as Trump is leading it. That's not out of any worry that Trump would become a dictator if he wins a second term.

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"I don't know that I fear it as much as it's being made out to be in the media from either side," said Miller, a 53-year-old bank executive who lives in Nazareth. "I feel that the institutions are safe and are strong enough to withstand the challenges."

Miller cited the dozens of failed court challenges seeking to overturn the 2020 presidential results by Trump and his allies as an example of the institutions holding firm.

Surveys indicate concern about the state of democracy, but it's not clear how that will translate in November's election. A Biden campaign spokesperson said the democracy message is central to the campaign but it is not the only one the campaign will use to reach voters. Protecting abortion rights and fighting for higher wages will be among the issues essential to the president's pitch.

Northampton County, especially Bethlehem, has been slowly emerging from the economic shock that followed the collapse of the local steel industry. The plant produced the steel that built the Golden Gate Bridge during the Great Depression and a decade later, during World War II, became the country's largest shipbuilder.

The blast furnaces, which fell silent nearly 30 years ago, are still visible for miles as they sit alongside the Lehigh River. But Bethlehem has been enjoying a revival in recent years as it has evolved into a hub for health care and technology companies. New shops, an art center, museum, performing arts stage and a casino, among other developments, have added vibrancy to a picturesque city dotted with historical structures dating to the 18th century.

Northampton also is a historical bellwether. As the county has gone in the presidential election, so has the state, said Christopher Borick, a political science professor and director of the Institute of Public Opinion at Muhlenberg University in Allentown. The last time they split was 1948, when the county voted for Democrat Harry Truman but the state went for Republican Thomas Dewey.

"It's about as great a benchmark county as you'll ever find," Borick said.

Biden narrowly carried the county in 2020, four years after Trump had narrowly prevailed in his victory over Democrat Hillary Clinton.

Anna Kodama, 69, is the type of voter who traditionally has swung back and forth between the parties.

She grew up in a Republican household in Ohio but switched parties during college. She recalls voting across party lines frequently since she moved to the Lehigh Valley in 1977 — until 2016 when Trump was making his first run for the presidency and she voted a straight ticket for Democrats.

The people Kodama encounters are not listening to Biden's messages about a dark future under Trump. Instead, she would like him to speak more about what he is doing to improve the economy and forge stronger ties with Europe. She paid attention to a Biden visit earlier this year to a nearby town, Emmaus, where he stopped at local stores to discuss the importance of supporting small businesses.

She said Biden seems to connect better with people when he promotes a positive message, rather than a negative one that she believes will not motivate people in the fall.

"That's where I find it compelling — look what we can do together," said the artist and former teacher who was sipping coffee at Café the Lodge in Bethlehem. "That message resonates with me and with people I know."

For Esther Lee, the 90-year-old president of the local NAACP, the threat-to-democracy message is not generating much concern among the people she contacts. She already plans to vote, but not because she is fearful of another Trump presidency.

"We already know who he is," she said.

Getting Black voters engaged is going to take more from Biden, she believes, because so far his campaign messages have not resonated. She questions whether the Black community in Northampton County is the target audience: "I'm not seeing evidence of it," she said.

Lee said the issue she hears about most in her circle is homelessness: "It's No. 1," she said, adding that the resources don't seem to be sufficient to address the local problem. The companion to that, she said, is affordable housing.

"With Biden's campaign, they need to reach down further," with the messaging, she said.

At the Lehigh center, Guillermo Lopez Jr., 69, recalls his deep ties to the area and the many members

of his extended family who worked at Bethlehem Steel. He worked at the plant for 27 years, following a father who worked there for 36.

He is now on the center's board of directors and a local leader in the Latino community. A Democrat who said he leans independent, he plans to vote for Biden in part because of how he thought Trump's rhetoric, beginning with his campaign announcement in 2015, made targets of Latinos and other minorities.

"It just speaks to me that there's so much misguided hatred toward people like me," he said.

But Lopez thinks messages of fear and Trump imperiling American democracy are essentially meaningless for many of the county's working class voters. Their concern, he said, is finding steady work with good pay.

"I actually think that harms the vote," he said of the democracy warnings. The average person who "just puts their nose to the grindstone and goes to work, I don't think that motivates them. I think it scares them and freezes them."

Lefty Driesell, folksy, fiery coach who put Maryland on college basketball's map, dies at 92

By DAVID GINSBURG AP Sports Writer

COLLEGE PARK, Md. (AP) — Lefty Driesell, the Hall of Fame coach whose folksy drawl belied a fiery on-court demeanor that put Maryland on the college basketball map and enabled him to rebuild several struggling programs, died Saturday. He was 92.

Driesell died at his home in Virginia Beach, Virginia, his family said.

Maryland planned to honor Driesell with a moment of silence before its game against No. 14 Illinois later Saturday. The university said the team would wear throwback uniforms from the 1970s previously worn on Jan. 21, when the Terrapins honored Driesell with an "Ode to Lefty."

Driesell finished with 786 victories over parts of five decades and was the first coach to win more than 100 games at four NCAA Division I schools. He started at Davidson in 1960 before bringing Maryland into national prominence from 1969-86, a stay that ended with the cocaine-induced death of All-American Len Bias.

Driesell then won five regular-season conference titles over nine seasons at James Madison and finished with a successful run at Georgia State from 1997 to 2003.

"His contributions to the game go way beyond wins and losses, and he won a lot," former Duke coach Mike Krzyzewski said after Driesell finally made the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in 2018. "It's an honor he's deserved for a long time."

Driesell launched the college basketball tradition known as Midnight Madness on Oct. 15, 1971. At three minutes after midnight on the first day of practice as sanctioned by the NCAA, Driesell had his players take a mandatory mile run on the track inside the Maryland football stadium.

The lighting was provided by the headlights of a few cars parked at one end of the stadium. The motivation came from Driesell's prodding and the estimated 800 students who gathered to watch the unpublicized event.

"I've done a lot of crazy things to get attention, but that wasn't one of them," Driesell said years later. "I was just trying to get an early jump on practice. I had no idea what it was going to lead to."

Driesell also helped knock down racial barriers in the college game. He made George Raveling the first Black coach in the Atlantic Coast Conference by hiring him as an assistant in 1969. Driesell's effort to recruit Charlie Scott to play at Davidson helped make the future NBA star become the first African American scholarship athlete to attend North Carolina.

Scott initially committed to Davidson before choosing UNC but acknowledged that Driesell paved the way.

"I think if there had never been a Lefty Driesell, there would never have been a Charlie Scott attending North Carolina," said Scott, who joined the Hall of Fame in 2018 with Driesell. "My commitment to go to Davidson really opened up all the other schools in the recruiting process."

Race played no factor in Driesell's effort to recruit the best players.

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"He did so many great things in marketing the game and opened up so many doors for many African Americans players and coaches like myself," said Len Elmore, who played for Driesell at Maryland from 1971-74. "Lefty was a trailblazer and an innovator."

Walking onto the court at Maryland to the tune of "Hail to the Chief," Driesell would thrust both arms in the air — two fingers extended on each hand with the V for victory sign — amid a standing ovation. On the sideline, he would often stomp his foot to show his displeasure with a call, and if things got really intense he would peel off his sports jacket, toss it to the floor and trample it.

Yet, Driesell rarely raised his voice off the court and had a knack for charming the parents of potential recruits with an assuring, homespun style that smacked of his Southern roots.

"He had a big personality, was an excellent recruiter and he helped put Maryland basketball on the map," said Brad Davis, a guard at Maryland from 1974-77 before heading to the NBA.

Driesell was inducted into the College Basketball Hall of Fame in 2007, but his entry into the Naismith shrine proved more elusive. He was a finalist four times before receiving the necessary 75% vote three months after his 86th birthday. The long snub, many speculated, came because Driesell was forced to resign at Maryland in 1986 after Bias overdosed on cocaine in a campus dorm after being drafted by the Boston Celtics.

Maryland had to pay Driesell for the rest of his 10-year contract because it could find no wrongdoing on his part. But his departure meant Driesell never got to fulfill the declaration he made upon taking over in College Park — he would make Maryland the "UCLA of the East."

Under Driesell, the Terrapins didn't enjoy the success John Wooden had at UCLA. Maryland failed to reach the Final Four during his 17-year stay, but the Terps won or shared five ACC regular-season titles and captured the league tournament in 1984 — on Driesell's fifth trip to the final.

Looking back on his "UCLA of the East" boast, Driesell quipped: "I was kind of drunk or something when I said it. But we were pretty good and we wound up pretty good. We had a lot of great players."

Before Driesell arrived at Maryland, the team was an ACC doormat and had trouble drawing fans to old Cole Field House. After going 13-13 in Driesell's first season, the Terps announced their resurgence on Jan. 9, 1971, with a 31-30 overtime upset of No. 2 South Carolina at home. There was no shot clock then, so Driesell ordered his players to slow the game to a crawl against a team that had defeated Maryland 96-70 just three weeks earlier.

One of Driesell's best teams never made it to the postseason. In the 1974 ACC championship game, the fourth-ranked Terrapins lost in overtime to No. 1 North Carolina State 103-100 during a time when only the conference champion advanced to the NCAA Tournament.

A week later, a Maryland team featuring future NBA starters Tom McMillen, John Lucas and Elmore turned down a bid to the NIT, which it had won two years earlier. N.C. State went on to win the 1974 NCAA title, ending UCLA's seven-year streak as national champions.

"Lefty's team that year," Krzyzewski said, "was probably as good as 20 national champions."

Born on Christmas Day in 1931, Charles Grice Driesell grew up in Norfolk, Virginia. He was a star basketball player for Granby High in Norfolk before attending Duke.

After working at the Ford Motor Co., Driesell took a job as a junior varsity football and basketball coach at Granby in 1954 after convincing his wife, Joyce, that he could withstand the pay cut by also selling encyclopedias. He eventually was promoted to head coach of the varsity team before moving to Newport News High, where he won 57 straight games.

In 1960, he took a job at Davidson, which was coming off an 11th consecutive losing season. He went 9-14 in his debut, one of only two times over an entire season in which he would finish with a losing record as a college coach.

Driesell won three Southern Conference tournaments and five regular-season championships at Davidson over nine years and went 176-65 before being hired at Maryland. He won 348 games with the Terrapins, a long-lasting school record that was finally broken in 2006 by Gary Williams.

Williams won the NCAA title in 2002. When he got home, a note from Driesell was waiting for him. It

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read: "Gary, YOU have made Maryland the UCLA of the East. Congratulations."

After leaving Maryland, Driesell was hired in 1988 by James Madison, a small Virginia school that finished 10-18 in 1987. He went 16-14 in his first year, 20-11 in his second season and led the Dukes to four straight NIT appearances before going to the NCAA Tournament in 1994.

Driesell compiled a 159-111 record at James Madison and enjoyed continued success at Georgia State. The Panthers were 29-5 in 2000-01 and upset Wisconsin in the opening round of the NCAA Tournament. Two years later, he retired in the early stages of his 41st season with a career record of 786-394. At the time, he ranked fourth in NCAA Division I wins, behind only Dean Smith, Adolph Rupp and Bob Knight.

Finally, at age 71, the man affectionately known by many as the Ol' Left-hander had enough.

"I'm just tired and I've got this bad cold and I'm just going to retire," Driesell said. "I'm looking forward to not having a job. I can get up when I want to and do what I want to."

Driesell is survived by four children. While at Duke, Driesell eloped with Joyce and got married in December 1952. She died in 2021.

The couple's only son, Chuck, played for the Terrapins under his father from 1981-85 and became an assistant to his father at James Madison. He was hired as the coach at The Citadel in 2010 and was fired after five losing seasons.

While helping his father at James Madison, Chuck Driesell learned the rigors of coaching.

"Dad gave me a lot of responsibility, and we worked hard," he said. "As a son and as a player, I'm not sure I understood how hard he worked. I figured it out pretty quickly."

African leaders condemn Israel's offensive in Gaza

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia (AP) — Leaders at an African Union summit in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa on Saturday condemned Israel's offensive in Gaza and called for its immediate end.

Moussa Faki, the chair of the African Union Commission, said Israel's offensive was the "most flagrant" violation of international humanitarian law and accused Israel of having "exterminated" Gaza's inhabitants.

Faki spoke alongside Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh, who also addressed the summit.

"Rest assured we strongly condemn these attacks that are unprecedented in the history of mankind," Faki said to applause from delegates. "We want to reassure you of our solidarity with the people of Palestine."

Azali Assoumani, president of the Comoros and the outgoing chairperson of the African Union, praised the case brought by South Africa against Israel at the International Court of Justice while condemning "the genocide Israel is committing in Palestine under our nose."

"The international community cannot close its eyes to the atrocities that are committed, that have not only created chaos in Palestine but also have disastrous consequences in the rest of the world," Assoumani said.

A quarter of Gaza's residents are starving because of the war, which began with Hamas' assault into Israel on Oct. 7, in which militants killed about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducted around 250.

Israel strongly denies committing genocide in Gaza and says it does all it can to spare civilians and is only targeting Hamas militants. It says Hamas' tactic of embedding in civilian areas makes it difficult to avoid civilian casualties.

During last year's AU summit, an Israeli delegate was unceremoniously removed from the plenary hall amid a row over the country's observer status at the continental body.

Concern over conflicts and the resurgence of coups across the African continent also underscored the opening of this year's summit. Faki cited tensions over Senegal's postponed election and violence in eastern Congo, Sudan, the Sahel, and Libya. He called for a revival of "the spirit of African solidarity and Pan-Africanism" to overcome the many challenges facing the continent of 1.3 billion people.

Embattled Orbán addresses Hungary in first appearance since country's president quit in a scandal

By JUSTIN SPIKE Associated Press

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BUDAPEST, Hungary (AP) — Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán sought to contain the political fallout of a presidential pardon scandal during an annual state of the nation address on Saturday, his first public appearance since Hungary's president, his ally, resigned a week ago.

The nationalist Orbán is under intense pressure from multiple angles as his obstructionist conduct on the international stage has spurred growing frustration among his European Union and NATO allies.

Meanwhile, widespread public outrage has gripped Hungary over a pardon the president issued to a convict in a child sexual abuse case.

In his speech, which marked the 25th anniversary of his first address to the nation during his freshman term as prime minister in 1999, Orbán immediately addressed the resignation last week of President Katalin Novák. He said that 2024 "could not have begun any worse" and that her resignation was a "nightmare" for the country.

International news organizations, including The Associated Press, and Hungary's independent media outlets were not permitted to attend the speech.

Orbán sought to mitigate outcry over the scandal that has shaken his nationalist Fidesz party in recent weeks, saying that Novák had made a responsible decision in stepping down.

Novák's resignation was "correct, but a big loss for Hungary," he said. "What happened is what needed to happen in this situation. Good people also make bad decisions."

Fissures have opened within Fidesz after it was revealed that Novák, a close Orbán ally, issued a presidential pardon to a man imprisoned for covering up a string of child sexual abuse by the director of a state-run orphanage.

The revelations have led to three resignations within Orbán's inner circle — including former Justice Minister Judit Varga, who countersigned the pardon — and led to public outrage that culminated in tens of thousands of protesters gathering in Budapest on Friday to demand change.

Outside Hungary, Orbán has faced isolation over his obstruction of key decisions by his international allies. The long-serving leader has laid roadblocks to EU funding for cash-strapped Ukraine, and Hungary remains the only holdout among NATO's 31 members that has still not approved Sweden's entry into the military alliance.

A bipartisan delegation of U.S. lawmakers is set to visit Budapest on Sunday for a "mission focused on strategic issues confronting NATO and Hungary," underscoring the growing impatience among Hungary's allies after 18 months of delays in ratifying Sweden's bid to join the alliance.

But on Saturday, Orbán indicated that a vote on the matter could happen when Hungary's legislature reconvenes on Feb. 26.

"It's good news that our dispute with Sweden is nearing a conclusion," he said. "We are moving towards ratifying Sweden's accession to NATO at the beginning of the spring session of Parliament."

As elections for the European Parliament approach this summer, Orbán has sought to unify the continent's right-wing forces that reject liberal democracy, immigration and LGBTQ+ rights.

"Never before has there been such a gap between the policy of Brussels and the interests and will of the people of Europe. There needs to be a change in Brussels," he said. "This change does not happen by itself, you have to force it. Europe must take back Brussels."

Orbán, a proponent of what he calls "illiberal democracy," has openly endorsed Donald Trump in his likely run for the White House in November, and has suggested that Russia's war in Ukraine would not have started with Trump as president.

"We can't get involved in another country's elections, but we would really like President Donald Trump to return to the presidency and make peace here in the eastern half of Europe," he said on Saturday.

As he referenced Hungary's approaching rotating presidency of the European Council, set to begin in July, Orbán borrowed from one of Trump's popular slogans to describe his plans for the role. "Make Europe great again!" he said. "MAGA there, MEGA here."

A Black author takes a new look at Georgia's white founder and his failed attempt to ban slavery

By RUSS BYNUM Associated Press

SAVANNAH, Ga. (AP) — Michael Thurmond thought he was reading familiar history at the burial place of Georgia's colonial founder. Then a single sentence on a marble plaque extolling the accomplishments of James Edward Oglethorpe left him stunned speechless.

Within a lengthy tribute to the Englishman who died in 1785, the inscription read: "He was the friend of the Oppressed Negro."

Oglethorpe led the expedition that established Georgia as the last of Britain's 13 American colonies in February 1733. Thurmond, a history aficionado and the only Black member of a Georgia delegation visiting the founder's tomb outside London, knew Oglethorpe had tried unsuccessfully to keep slaves out of the colony. Historians widely agreed he was concerned for the safety and self-sufficiency of white settlers rather than the suffering of enslaved Africans.

Could Georgia's white founding father possibly have been an ally to Black people in an era when the British Empire was forcing thousands into bondage?

"It was stunning," Thurmond recalled. "Initially, I was consumed by disbelief. I didn't believe it was true."

Thurmond would grapple with questions raised by that visit for the next 27 years, compelled to take a closer look at Oglethorpe. Now he has written a provocatively titled book: "James Oglethorpe, Father Of Georgia — A Founder's Journey From Slave Trader to Abolitionist."

Published this month by the University of Georgia Press, Thurmond's book makes a case that Oglethorpe evolved to revile slavery and, unlike most white Europeans of his time, saw the humanity in enslaved Africans. And while Oglethorpe's efforts to prohibit slavery in Georgia ultimately failed, Thurmond argues he left a lasting — and largely uncredited — legacy by influencing early English abolitionists.

"He is shining a spotlight on the part of Oglethorpe's life that most people have kind of thought was just periphery," said Stan Deaton, senior historian for the Georgia Historical Society. "I think he's thought deeply about this. And let's be honest, there have not been many African-Americans who have written about colonial Georgia and particularly about Oglethorpe."

Though this is Thurmond's third book about Georgia history, he's no academic. The son of a sharecropper and great-grandson of a Georgia slave, Thurmond became an attorney and has served for decades in state and local government. His 1998 election as state labor commissioner made Thurmond the first Black candidate to win statewide office in Georgia without first being appointed. He is now the elected CEO of DeKalb County, which includes portions of Atlanta.

His book traces Oglethorpe's origins as a wealthy Englishman who held a seat in Parliament and served as deputy governor of the slave-trading Royal African Company before departing for America. Thurmond argues that seeing the cruelty of slavery firsthand changed Oglethorpe, who returned to England and shared his views with activists who would become Britain's first abolitionists.

"What I tried to do is to follow the arc of his life, his evolution and development, and to weigh all of his achievements, failures and shortcomings," Thurmond said. "Once you do that, you find that he had a uniquely important life. He helped breathe life into the movement that ultimately destroyed slavery."

In its early years, Georgia stood alone as Britain's only American colony in which slavery was illegal. The ban came as the population of enslaved Africans in colonial America was nearing 150,000. Black captives were being sold in New York and Boston, and they already outnumbered white settlers in South Carolina.

Historians have widely agreed Oglethorpe and his fellow Georgia trustees didn't ban slavery because it was cruel to Black people. They saw slaves as a security risk with Georgia on the doorstep of Spanish Florida, which sought to free and enlist escaped slaves to help fight the British. They also feared slave labor would instill laziness among Georgia's settlers, who were expected to tend their own modest farms.

It didn't last. The slave ban was widely ignored when Oglethorpe left Georgia for good in 1743, and its enforcement dwindled in his absence. By the time American colonists declared independence in 1776, slavery had been legal in Georgia for 25 years. When the Civil War began nearly a century later, Georgia's

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enslaved population topped 462,000, more than any U.S. state except Virginia.

"At best, you could say Oglethorpe was naive," said Gerald Horne, a professor of history and African-American studies at the University of Houston and author of the book "The Counter-Revolution of 1776." "Almost inevitably, like kudzu in the summer, slavery started spreading in Georgia."

Like other historians, Horne is highly skeptical of Oglethorpe being a forefather of the abolitionist movement. He says the Georgia colony ultimately protected slavery in its sister colonies by serving as a "white equivalent of the Berlin Wall" between South Carolina and Spanish Florida.

Oglethorpe used slave labor to help build homes, streets and public squares in Savannah, the colony's first city. Escaped slaves captured in Oglethorpe's Georgia were returned to slaveholders. Some colonists angered by the slave ban made unproven accusations that Oglethorpe had a South Carolina plantation worked by slaves.

Thurmond's book openly embraces such evidence that Oglethorpe's history with slavery was at times contradictory and unflattering. That makes his case for Oglethorpe's evolution even stronger, said James F. Brooks, a University of Georgia history professor who wrote the book's foreward.

"He has engaged with the historiography in a way that is clearly the equivalent of a professional historian," Brooks said. "This is good stuff. He's read everything and thought about it. I don't see any weakness in it."

Thurmond's evidence includes a letter Oglethorpe wrote in 1739 that argues opening Georgia to slavery would "occasion the misery of thousands in Africa." Thurmond describes how Oglethorpe assisted to two formerly enslaved Black men — Ayuba Suleiman Diallo and Olaudah Equiano — whose travels to England helped stir anti-slavery sentiments among white Europeans.

Oglethorpe befriended white activists who became key figures in England's abolitionist movement. In a 1776 letter to Granville Sharp, an attorney who fought to help former slaves retain their freedom, Oglethorpe proclaimed "Africa had produced a race of heroes" in its kings and military leaders. He also spent time with the author Hannah More, whose writings called for the abolition of slavery.

In 1787, two years after Oglethorpe's death, Sharp and More were among the founders of the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade. Thurmond argues Oglethorpe deserves credit as an inspiration to the budding movement.

"He founded slave-free Georgia in 1733 and, 100 years later, England abolishes slavery," followed by the U.S. in 1865, Thurmond said. "He was a man far beyond his time."

What to know about the situation in the Middle East this week

By BALINT SZLANKO Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — As Israel-Hamas cease-fire talks flounder, Israel is vowing to press ahead with its offensive in the southern Gaza Strip despite warnings from the U.S. to work harder to protect civilians. Violence spiked across the volatile Israel-Lebanon border. This is what happened in the Middle East this week.

ISRAEL TO KEEP UP OFFENSIVE

Israel's defence minister said Friday that the country's military was pushing ahead with its planned offensive into Rafah, one of the last population centers in the Gaza Strip that its ground forces have so far mainly stayed out of. He has not said when the offensive will begin but says Israel's military will prepare a plan first to evacuate the estimated 1.4 million Palestinian civilians who are crammed into the city on the Egyptian border.

There have been growing expressions of concern around the world and repeated warnings by the United States that Israel must come up with a credible evacuation plan. In Rafah, the situation is increasingly desperate. People lack adequate food, water, electricity and medical care, and they are under regular Israeli bombardment. Israel says it targets Hamas fighters and holds the militants responsible for civilian casualties because they operate from civilian areas.

Over the past few days, Israel's military has raided Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis, the main hospital in the southern Gaza Strip, saying it had evidence that Israeli hostages had been held there. It found no hostages but said it arrested 100 militants, 20 of which it claimed had been involved in the attacks that

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started the war. A surgeon at the hospital said one patient had been killed in the raid.

Israel launched its war in response to a cross-border Hamas attack on Oct. 7 in which militants killed some 1,200 people in Israel and took 250 hostages. The offensive has killed nearly 29,000 Palestinians, according to health authorities in the Hamas-run enclave, caused widespread destruction, displaced some 80% of the population and sparked a humanitarian crisis.

EGYPT WORRIES ABOUT SPILLOVER, CEASE-FIRE TALKS STALL

The upcoming offensive on Rafah has also sparked warnings by neighboring Egypt. It worried that the fighting would push Palestinian civilians into its territory, and threatened to suspend its peace treaty with Israel. But it has also fortified a buffer zone on the border with another wall. The zone runs five kilometers (three miles) deep from the border, and is meant to stop any potential breaches, Egyptian officials say.

At the same time, cease-fire talks, moderated by the U.S., Qatar and Egypt, appear to be going nowhere. Hamas says it will not release its remaining Israeli captives, numbering about 100, until Israel withdraws from Gaza and releases a large number of Palestinian prisoners, including top militants. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called this "delusional" and said Israel would continue to fight Hamas until its destruction. He also said international recognition of a Palestinian state would amount to rewarding terrorism — just as France said it might go ahead and do just that.

FIGHTING WITH HEZBOLLAH HEATS UP

Across the tense Israeli-Lebanese border, fighting also heated up this week. Rocket fire from Lebanon killed an Israeli soldier on Wednesday. In response, an Israeli drone strike killed a Hezbollah commander and two other operatives in Lebanon. The next day, Israeli airstrikes killed 10 Lebanese civilians, prompting Hezbollah to fire a salvo of rockets into northern Israel and threaten to expand the conflict.

Hezbollah is a major political party and militia in Lebanon with a sizeable rocket and infantry force. It fought Israel to a standstill in a previous war in 2006. It receives backing from Iran, which relies on it to pressure Israel, its archenemy. They have been engaged in low-intensity fighting since the start of the Gaza war. Both sides say they don't want another war but there are constant fears that things could slip out of control.

One Tech Tip: Ready to go beyond Google? Here's how to use new generative AI search sites

By KELVIN CHAN AP Business Writer

LONDON (AP) — It's not just you. A lot of people think Google searches are getting worse. And the rise of generative AI chatbots is giving people new and different ways to look up information.

While Google has been the one-stop shop for decades — after all, we commonly call searches "googling" — its longtime dominance has attracted a flood of sponsored or spammy links and junk content fueled by "search engine optimization" techniques. That pushes down genuinely useful results.

A recent study by German researchers suggests the quality of results from Google, Bing and DuckDuckGo is indeed declining. Google says its results are of significantly better quality than its rivals, citing measurements by third parties.

Now, chatbots powered by generative artificial intelligence, including from Google itself, are poised to shake up how search works. But they have their own issues: Because the tech is so new, there are concerns about AI chatbots' accuracy and reliability.

If you want to try the AI way, here's a how-to:

WHERE DO I FIND AI SEARCH TOOLS?

Google users don't have to look far. The company last year launched its own AI chatbot assistant, known as Bard, but recently retired that name and replaced it with a similar service, Gemini.

Bard users are now redirected to the Gemini site, which can be accessed directly on desktop or mobile browsers.

The Gemini app also launched in the U.S. this month and is rolling out in Japanese, Korean and English globally — except in Britain, Switzerland and Europe — according to an update notice, which hints that

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more countries and languages will be “coming soon.”

Google also has been testing out a new search offering, dubbed “Search Generative Experience” that replaces links with an AI-generated snapshot of key info. But it’s limited to U.S. users signing up through its experimental Labs site.

Microsoft’s Bing search engine has provided generative AI searches powered by OpenAI’s ChatGPT technology for about a year, first under the name Bing Chat, now rebranded as Copilot.

On the Bing search home page, click the Chat or Copilot button underneath the search window and you’ll get a conversational interface where you type your question. There’s also a Copilot app.

A slew of startup AI search sites have emerged, but they aren’t as easy to find. A standard Google search isn’t that helpful, but searches on Copilot and Bard turned up a number of names, including Perplexity, HuggingChat, You.com, Komo, Andi, Phind, Exa and AskAI.

DO I HAVE TO SIGN UP OR PAY FOR THEM?

Most of these services have free versions. They typically limit how many queries you can make but offer premium levels that provide smarter AI and more features.

Gemini users, for example, can pay \$20 for the advanced version, which comes with access to its “most capable” model, Ultra 1.0.

Gemini users need to be signed in to their Google accounts and be at least 13 years old — 18 in Europe or Canada. Copilot users don’t have to sign in to a Microsoft account and can access the service through Bing search or Copilot home pages.

Startup sites are largely free to use and don’t require setting up an account. Many also have premium levels.

HOW DO I DO AN AI SEARCH?

Rather than typing in a string of keywords, AI queries should be conversational — for example, “Is Taylor Swift the most successful female musician?” or “Where are some good places to travel in Europe this summer?”

Perplexity advises using “everyday, natural language.” Phind says it’s best to ask “full and detailed questions” that start with, say, “what is” or “how to.”

If you’re not satisfied with an answer, some sites let you ask follow up questions to zero in on the information needed. Some give suggested or related questions.

Microsoft’s Copilot lets you choose three different chat styles: creative, balanced or precise.

WHAT ARE THE RESULTS LIKE?

Unlike Google search results that throw up a list of links, including sponsored ones, AI chatbots spit out a readable summary of the information, sometimes with a few key links as footnotes. The answers will vary — sometimes widely — depending on the site.

They can shine when you’re searching for an obscure factoid, such as, say, a detail about a European Union policy.

Answers from Phind.com were among the most readable and consistently were provided in a narrative form. But the site has mysteriously gone offline at some points.

Testing a simple query — what’s the average temperature in London for the second half of February? — produced a similar range of results on most sites: 7-9 degrees Celsius (45-48 Fahrenheit).

Andi strangely provided current weather conditions for New York, though it used the correct city during another try later.

Another search — the names and tenures of the CEOs of British luxury car maker Aston Martin — is the kind of info available online but needs some work to piece together.

Most sites came up with names from the past decade or two. AskAI provided a list dating to 1947, along with its top three “authoritative sources,” but without links.

WHAT ARE THE DOWNSIDES?

While chatbots may sound authoritative because they produce answers that seem like they’re written by a confident human, they’re not always correct. AI chatbots have been known for providing deceptively convincing responses, dubbed “hallucinations.” HuggingChat warns, “Generated content may be inaccurate

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or false" and Gemini says it could "display inaccurate info, including about people."

These AI systems scan vast pools of information culled from the web, known as large language models, and then use algorithms to come up with coherent answers, but not all reveal how they arrived at their responses.

Some AI chatbots disclose the models that their algorithms have been trained on. Others provide few or no details. The best advice is to try more than one and compare the results, and always double-check sources.

For example, at one point Komo insisted Canada's population in 1991 was about 1 million people and stood by this wrong number even after I followed up to ask if it was sure. It cited a Wikipedia page, which revealed the figure came from a table for the country's indigenous population. It found the correct number when I tried again later.

What does it mean to claim the US is a Christian nation, and what does the Constitution say?

By PETER SMITH Associated Press

Many Americans believe the United States was founded as a Christian nation, and the idea is energizing some conservative and Republican activists. But the concept means different things to different people, and historians say that while the issue is complex, the founding documents prioritize religious freedom and do not create a Christian nation.

Does the U.S. Constitution establish Christianity as an official religion?

No.

What does the Constitution say about religion?

"(N)o religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States." (Article VI)

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." (First Amendment)

If it says "Congress," does the First Amendment apply to the states?

It does now. Early in the republic, some states officially sponsored particular churches, such as the Congregational Church in Connecticut and Massachusetts. Within a few decades, all had removed such support. The post-Civil War 14th Amendment guaranteed all U.S. citizens "equal protection of the laws" and said states couldn't impede on their "privileges or immunities" without due process. In the 20th century, the Supreme Court applied that to a number of First Amendment cases involving religion, saying states couldn't forbid public proselytizing, reimburse funding for religious education or sponsor prayer in public schools.

What does it mean to say America is a Christian nation?

It depends on whom you ask. Some believe God worked to bring European Christians to America in the 1600s and secure their independence in the 1700s. Some take the Puritan settlers at their word that they were forming a covenant with God, similar to the Bible's description of ancient Israel, and see America as still subject to divine blessings or punishments depending on how faithful it is. Still others contend that some or all the American founders were Christian, or that the founding documents were based on Christianity.

That's a lot to unpack. Let's start at the top. What about the colonies?

Several had Christian language in their founding documents, such as Massachusetts, with established churches lasting decades after independence. Others, such as Rhode Island, offered broader religious freedom. It's also arguable whether the colonies' actions lived up to their words, given their histories of religious intolerance and their beginnings of centuries-long African slavery and wars on Native Americans.

What about the founders?

The leaders of the American Revolution and the new republic held a mix of beliefs — some Christian, some Unitarian, some deistic or otherwise theistic. Some key founders, like Benjamin Franklin, admired Jesus as a moral teacher but would fail a test of Christian orthodoxy. Many believed strongly in religious freedom, even as they also believed that religion was essential to maintain a virtuous citizenry.

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Were the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution based on Christianity and the Ten Commandments?

References to the Creator and Nature's God in the Declaration reflect a general theism that could be acceptable to Christians, Unitarians, deists and others. Both documents reflect Enlightenment ideas of natural rights and accountable government. Some also see these documents as influenced, or at least compatible, with Protestant emphasis on such ideas as human sin, requiring checks and balances. In fact, believers in a Christian America were some of the strongest opponents of ratifying the Constitution because of its omission of God references.

Were most early Americans Christian?

Many were and many weren't. Early church membership was actually quite low, but revivals known as the First and Second Great Awakenings, before and after the Revolution, won a lot of converts. Many scholars see religious freedom as enabling multiple churches to grow and thrive.

Were Catholics considered Christian?

Not by many early Americans. Some state constitutions barred them from office.

How did that change?

Gradually, but by the time of the Cold War, many saw Catholics, Protestants and Jews as God-believing American patriots, allied in the face-off with the atheistic, communist Soviet Union.

Was it only conservatives citing the idea of a Christian nation?

No. Many proponents of the early 20th century social gospel saw their efforts to help the needy as part of building a Christian society. During World War II, President Franklin D. Roosevelt prayed on national radio for God's blessing "in our united crusade ... over the unholy forces of our enemy."

The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. wrote that civil rights protesters stood for "the most sacred values in our Judeo-Christian heritage."

What do progressive Christians say today?

"Christian nationalism has traditionally employed images that advocate an idealized view of the nation's identity and mission, while deliberately ignoring those persons who have been excluded, exploited, and persecuted," said a 2021 statement from the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, an umbrella group that includes multiple progressive denominations.

What do Americans believe about this?

Six in 10 U.S. adults said the founders originally intended America to be a Christian nation, according to a 2022 Pew Research Center survey. Forty-five percent said the U.S. should be a Christian nation, but only a third thought it was one currently.

Among white evangelical Protestants, 81% said the founders intended a Christian nation, and the same number said that the U.S. should be one — but only 23% thought it currently was one, according to Pew.

In a 2021 Pew report, 15% of U.S. adults surveyed said the federal government should declare the U.S. a Christian nation, while 18% said the U.S. Constitution was inspired by God.

One-third of U.S. adults surveyed in 2023 said God intended America to be a promised land for European Christians to set an example to the world, according to a Public Religion Research Institute/Brookings survey. Those who embraced this view were also more likely to dismiss the impact of anti-Black discrimination and more likely to say true patriots may need to act violently to save the country, the survey said.

Christian-nation idea fuels US conservative causes, but historians say it misreads founders' intent

By PETER SMITH Associated Press

The U.S. Constitution doesn't mention Christianity or any specific religion. The Declaration of Independence famously proclaims that people's rights come from a "Creator" and "Nature's God" — but doesn't specify who that is.

Yet large numbers of Americans believe the founders intended the U.S. to be a Christian nation, and many believe it should be one.

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Such views are especially strong among Republicans and their white evangelical base. Already such views are being voiced by supporters of Donald Trump amid his bid to recapture the presidency.

The idea of a Christian America means different things to different people. Pollsters have found a wide circle of Americans who hold general God-and-country sentiments.

But within that is a smaller, hardcore group who also check other boxes in surveys — such as that the U.S. Constitution was inspired by God and that the federal government should declare the U.S. a Christian nation, advocate Christian values or stop enforcing the separation of church and state.

For those embracing that package of beliefs, it's more likely they'll have unfavorable views toward immigrants, dismiss or downplay the impact of anti-Black discrimination and believe Trump was a good or great president, according to a 2021 Pew Research Center survey.

This latter group reflects a movement widely called Christian nationalism, which fuses American and Christian values, symbols and identity and seeks to privilege Christianity in public life.

The idea of Christian nationhood fills Americans' need for an origin story, a belief that "we've come here for something special, and that we're here for God's work," said Eric McDaniel, an associate professor of government at the University of Texas.

It creates a sense of "national innocence," so adherents resist confronting uglier parts of U.S. history, he said.

The belief connects to other beliefs past and present, from the Manifest Destiny doctrine that justified continental conquest to Trump's America First and Make America Great Again slogans, said McDaniel, a co-author of "The Everyday Crusade: Christian Nationalism in American Politics."

Trump has echoed some of these ideas, vowing to bar immigrants who "don't like our religion."

Many conservatives and Republicans embrace the idea of Christian national origins, even as many reject the "Christian nationalist" label.

Republican House Speaker Mike Johnson has proclaimed that America is and was founded as a Christian nation and that Thomas Jefferson was "divinely inspired" in his writing of the Declaration of Independence, according to a 2015 sermon that drew wider attention with his recent election as speaker.

WallBuilders, an organization Johnson credits for its "profound influence" on him, has spread materials claiming that "revisionist" historians have downplayed America's Christian origins, but the group has been widely criticized for historically dubious claims.

A lawsuit on its behalf is challenging the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority's refusal to run its bus ads touting the purported beliefs of founders.

Vocal supporters of Trump have described current politics as spiritual warfare for the destiny of a country that former Trump aide Steve Bannon described as the "New Jerusalem" and conservative activist Charlie Kirk said was founded by "courageous Bible believing Christians."

Recent Texas, Oklahoma and Kentucky Republican Party platforms proclaim the country was founded on "Judeo-Christian" principles.

The Rev. Robert Jeffress, pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas, said he doesn't identify as a Christian nationalist, but does believe America was founded as a Christian nation.

"I'm not claiming that all of our founders were Christians," he said in an interview. "Some were deists, some were atheists, but the majority were Christians. I'm also not saying that non-Christians shouldn't have the same rights as Christians in our country."

But he said "there's a case to be made that the Judeo-Christian faith was the foundation for our laws and many of our principles." He cited founder John Jay — the first Supreme Court chief justice — asserting it was Americans' duty "in our Christian nation, to select and prefer Christians for their rulers."

Jeffress said he doesn't believe America is privileged by God but, as with any nation, "God will continue to bless America to the extent that we follow him."

Anthea Butler, chair of religious studies at the University of Pennsylvania, said history precludes any idea of a Christian nation.

"It doesn't mean that Christians weren't a part of the founding of this nation," said Butler, a historian of African American and American religion. "What it does mean is that if you believe that America is a Christian

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nation and you happen to subscribe to Christian nationalism as a part of that, you're buying into a myth."

That America-as-a-Christian-nation idea is "a trope of exclusion," she said, centering American history on white Anglo-Saxon Protestants as "the ones that are willing and should be running the country both then and now."

That justifies viewing others as "heathens," including the enslaved Blacks and the Native Americans whose land was being taken.

Those arguing for a Christian America are generally not historians and not really talking about history — they're talking politics, said John Fea, author of the 2011 book "Was America Founded as a Christian Nation?"

"They appeal to a false view of the founding, or at least a partial view of the founding, to advance political agendas of the present," said Fea, a history professor at Messiah University, a Christian university in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania. "These agendas are built on a very weak historical foundation."

The belief in America's Christian origins is mainstream.

Six in 10 U.S. adults said the founders intended America to be a Christian nation, according to a 2022 Pew Research Center survey. About 45% said the U.S. should be a Christian nation. Four in five white evangelical Protestants agreed with each assertion.

By some measures, Democratic President Joe Biden might be seen in that category, citing the importance of his Catholic faith and calling for God's blessings on America and its troops — but also invoking shared values "whether you're Christian, whether you're Jewish, Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, or any other faith, or no faith at all."

One-third of U.S. adults surveyed in 2023 said God intended America to be a promised land for European Christians to set an example to the world, according to a Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI)/Brookings report.

Such surveys have found a smaller, more ardent group of believers in Christian nationhood. In another survey, PRRI identified about 10% of Americans as the most committed adherents.

The Constitution prohibits any religious test for office, and its First Amendment bars congressional establishment of any religion, along with guaranteeing free exercise of religion.

Defenders of Christian nationhood can point out that several of the 13 original states funded Protestant churches at their origins, though within a few decades all had followed Virginia's example in halting the practice. They can point to Christian rhetoric by some founders, such as John Jay, Patrick Henry and Samuel Adams.

But several key founders would never pass a test of orthodoxy. Thomas Jefferson, John Adams and Benjamin Franklin viewed Jesus as a great teacher but not as God.

"Could you find stuff where John Adams talks about religion being the foundation of the republic, like George Washington said in his farewell address?" asked Fea. "Are there states where Christianity was privileged? Yes, you can find all those things. You can also find things to show the Constitution wants to keep religion and government separate."

Some secular activists today advocate for an opposite view — that U.S. founders sought to banish religion from public life. Fea said that also goes too far: "When you're dealing with the 18th century, nuance and complexity is essential," he said.

Stars, royalty and a 'Poppenheimer' showdown. Here's what to expect at Britain's BAFTA film awards

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Prepare for Poppenheimer.

"Poor Things" and "Oppenheimer" are the leading contenders for the British Academy Film Awards, which will be handed out Sunday in front of an audience of filmmakers, movie stars and the heir to the British throne.

Yorgos Lanthimos' gothic fantasia is up for 11 trophies, while Christopher Nolan's atom-bomb epic has

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13 nominations for the British prizes, known as BAFTAs. That's the same number "Oppenheimer" has for the Oscars, where it is also the frontrunner.

The ceremony at London's Royal Festival Hall will be a glitzy, British-accented appetizer for Hollywood's Academy Awards, closely watched for hints about who might win at the Oscars on March 10.

Nominees including Bradley Cooper, Carey Mulligan, Emily Blunt, Robert Downey Jr., Rosamund Pike, Ryan Gosling and Ayo Edebiri are expected on the red carpet beside the River Thames, along with presenters such as Andrew Scott, Cate Blanchett, Chiwetel Ejiofor and Idris Elba.

Guest of honor will be Prince William, in his role as president of the British Academy of Film and Television Arts. He'll be without his wife Kate, who is recovering after abdominal surgery last month.

The show will be hosted, with a dash of self-deprecating humor, by "Doctor Who" star David Tennant. "People keep telling me I should be terribly nervous," Tennant said about the notoriously pitfall-plagued role of awards show host. "But it's not like I'm up for the award. I just get to hand them out."

Historical epic "Killers of the Flower Moon" and Holocaust drama "The Zone of Interest" have nine nominations each for the prizes, officially called the EE BAFTA Film Awards.

French courtroom drama "Anatomy of a Fall," boarding school comedy "The Holdovers" and Leonard Bernstein biopic "Maestro" each have seven, while grief-flecked love story "All of Us Strangers" is nominated in six categories and class-war dramedy "Saltburn" in five.

"Barbie," one half of 2023's "Barbenheimer" box office juggernaut, also has five nominations, but missed out on nods for best picture and best director. Many see the omission of "Barbie" director Greta Gerwig — for both BAFTAs and Oscars — as a major snub.

Britain's film academy introduced changes to increase the awards' diversity in 2020, when no women were nominated as best director for the seventh year running and all 20 nominees in the lead and supporting performer categories were white. But there is only one woman among the six best-director nominees: Justine Triet for "Anatomy of a Fall." Emerald Fennell for "Saltburn" and Celine Song for "Past Lives" also failed to make the list.

The best film race pits "Oppenheimer" against "Poor Things," "Killers of the Flower Moon," "Anatomy of a Fall" and "The Holdovers."

"Poor Things" is also on the 10-strong list for the separate category of best British film, an eclectic slate that includes class-war dramedy "Saltburn," imperial epic "Napoleon," south London romcom "Rye Lane" and chocolatier origin story "Wonka," among others.

A woman of color could take the best actress BAFTA for the first time, with Fantasia Barrino for "The Color Purple" and Vivian Oparah for "Rye Lane" nominated alongside Sandra Hüller for "Anatomy of a Fall," Mulligan for "Maestro," Margot Robbie for "Barbie" and Emma Stone for "Poor Things."

No British performers are nominated in the best-actor category, but Ireland is represented by Cillian Murphy for "Oppenheimer" and Barry Keoghan for "Saltburn." They're up against Cooper for "Maestro," Colman Domingo for "Rustin," Paul Giamatti for "The Holdovers" and Teo Yoo for "Past Lives."

Harrowing Ukraine war documentary "20 Days in Mariupol," produced by The Associated Press and PBS "Frontline," is nominated for best documentary and best film not in the English language.

The ceremony is set to include musical performances by "Ted Lasso" star Hannah Waddingham and Sophie Ellis-Bextor, the latter singing her 2001 hit "Murder on the Dancefloor," which shot back up the charts after featuring in "Saltburn."

Samantha Morton will receive the academy's highest honor, the BAFTA Fellowship, and film curator June Givanni, founder of the June Givanni PanAfrican Cinema Archive, will be honored for outstanding British contribution to cinema.

Sunday's ceremony will be broadcast on BBC One in the U.K. from 1900GMT, and on streaming service BritBox in the U.S., Canada, Australia and South Africa.

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Today in History: February 18, Dale Earnhardt dies at Daytona 500

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Sunday, Feb. 18, the 49th day of 2024. There are 317 days left in the year.

On Feb. 18, 2001, auto racing star Dale Earnhardt Sr. died in a crash at the Daytona 500; he was 49.

On this date:

In 1564, Michelangelo died in Rome.

In 1885, Mark Twain's "Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" was published in the U.S. for the first time (after being published in Britain and Canada).

In 1970, the "Chicago Seven" defendants were found not guilty of conspiring to incite riots at the 1968 Democratic national convention; five were convicted of violating the Anti-Riot Act of 1968 (those convictions were later reversed).

In 1983, 13 people were shot to death at a gambling club in Seattle's Chinatown in what became known as the Wah Mee Massacre. (Two men were convicted of the killings and were sentenced to life in prison; a third was found guilty of robbery and assault.)

In 1984, Italy and the Vatican signed an accord under which Roman Catholicism ceased to be the state religion of Italy.

In 1988, Anthony M. Kennedy was sworn in as an associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court.

In 1994, at the Winter Olympic Games in Norway, U.S. speedskater Dan Jansen finally won a gold medal, breaking the world record in the 1,000 meters.

In 2001, veteran FBI agent Robert Philip Hanssen was arrested, accused of spying for Russia. (Hanssen later pleaded guilty to espionage and attempted espionage and was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole.)

In 2003, an arson attack involving two South Korean subway trains in the city of Daegu claimed 198 lives. (The arsonist was sentenced to life in prison, where he died in 2004.)

In 2012, a star-studded funeral service was held for pop singer Whitney Houston at New Hope Baptist Church in Newark, New Jersey, a week after her death at age 48.

In 2017, Norma McCorvey, whose legal challenge under the pseudonym "Jane Roe" led to the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark decision that legalized abortion but who later became an outspoken opponent of the procedure, died in Katy, Texas, at age 69.

In 2018, "Black Panther," the Marvel superhero film from the Walt Disney Co., blew past expectations to take in \$192 million during its debut weekend in U.S. and Canadian theaters.

In 2020, President Donald Trump commuted the 14-year prison sentence of former Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich for political corruption; Blagojevich left prison hours later and returned home to Chicago. (Trump also issued pardons or clemency to former New York City police commissioner Bernie Kerik, financier Michael Milken and a long list of others.)

In 2023, former President Jimmy Carter entered home hospice care. The charity created by the 98-year-old former president said that after a series of short hospital stays, Carter "decided to spend his remaining time at home with his family and receive hospice care instead of additional medical intervention." (Carter remains alive a year later).

Today's birthdays: Today's Birthdays: Singer Yoko Ono is 91. Singer-songwriter Bobby Hart is 85. Singer Irma Thomas is 83. Singer Herman Santiago (Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers) is 83. Actor Jess Walton is 78. Singer Dennis DeYoung is 77. Actor Sinead Cusack is 76. Actor Cybill Shepherd is 74. Singer Randy Crawford is 72. Actor John Travolta is 70. Actor John Pankow is 69. Game show host Vanna White is 67. Actor Jayne Atkinson is 65. Actor Greta Scacchi (SKAH'-kee) is 64. Actor Matt Dillon is 60. Rock musician Tommy Scott (Space) is 60. Rapper Dr. Dre is 59. Actor Molly Ringwald is 56. Actor Sarah Brown is 49. Country musician Trevor Rosen (Old Dominion) is 49. Actor Ike Barinholtz is 47. Actor Kristoffer Polaha is 47. Singer-musician Sean Watkins (Nickel Creek) is 47. Rock-singer musician Regina Spektor is 44. Opera singer Isabel Leonard is 42. Roots rock musician Zac Cockrell (Alabama Shakes) is 36. Actor Shane Lyons is 36. Actor Sarah Sutherland is 36. Actor Maiara Walsh is 36.