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Sunday, March 3

Groton Legion hosting district meeting.
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. (Milestones 7th & 8th graders); choir, 6 p.m.
St. John's Lutheran: Worship with communion: St. John's at 9 a.m., Zion at 11 a.m.; Sunday school, 9:45 a.m.
United Methodist: Worship with communion: Conde at 8:30 a.m., Groton at 10:30 a.m.; Coffee hour, 9:30 a.m.; Sunday school, 10:30 a.m.

Monday, March 4

School Lunch: French bread pizza, corn.
Pantry Open 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Senior Menu: Beef noodle stroganoff, mixed vegetables, fruit cocktail, cookie, whole wheat bread.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.

Tuesday, March 5

School Breakfast: Surfs up waffles.
School Lunch: Oriental chicken, rice.
Boys Basketball SoDak16
Thrift Store open 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.
Food Pantry open 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.
City Council Meeting, 7 p.m.
Senior Menu: Creamed chicken, au grain potatoes, peas and carrots, pineapple/strawberry ambrosia.
St. John's Lutheran: Ladies Aid LWML, 1 p.m.

Groton Daily Independent
PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445
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OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton
The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.
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Football co-op discussion continues as Groton district surveys local football community

The Groton Area School District is continuing discussion about whether to form a football cooperative with the Langford School District.

About 20 parents, players and district officials gathered Friday night at the high school after the boys' basketball Region 1A win.

Superintendent Joe Schwan started the informal meeting by updating the crowd about discussions that have taken place.

The Langford district has been in discussion with different area schools, including Groton, on and off for the past three years, he said. However, they approached the Groton district again earlier in the school year about whether the Tigers would be interested in forming a football co-op. At the Langford district's Feb. 12 meeting, their board voted 6-1 to pursue a co-op with Groton Area.

Groton officials — including Superintendent Schwan; school board members Deb Gengerke, Tigh Fliehs and Marty Weismantel; Athletic Director Alexa Schuring and head football coach Shaun Wanner — have met with the Langford board.

"Now we just have to figure out how we respond," Schwan said.

A survey has been sent out via email to parents of current football players, he said. From early responses, it seems like about 85 percent of those who responded said they would be interested in continuing discussion about forming a cooperative. About 85 percent also said they would not like to move one of Groton's four home games per season to Langford.

Another concern that has been part of discussion with Langford includes whether Langford would be included in the team name, Schwan said.

"We said, 'No. We just can't do that,'" he said. "We have other towns in our district that don't get name recognition. We are Groton Area."

The Langford board has also been concerned about whether they would be able to have their own coach for the team too.

"They would like that, and, frankly, we would insist on it," Schwan said.

Questions from the crowd included how many players Langford is looking to have, whether it would bump Groton Area from class 11B up to 11A and if Langford was looking to co-op on any other athletics or activities.

At a recent Langford meeting, about 10 players said they would travel to Groton for football, though that's a rough estimate, Schwan said. Adding those players wouldn't bring Groton into a different class — "We would shut it down real quick if that would ever happen," Schwan said — and other activities could be discussed, but for now, only a football co-op is in discussion.

While some issues need to be ironed out, some in the crowd were optimistic about a future co-op.

Groton resident Tom Woods recalled in 1989 or 1990 six players from Bristol came to Groton to play. It was a wonderful experience for both the Groton and Bristol players, he said.

"We set the stage with how we want the future to be," he said. "If they feel welcome, ...I think it's an absolute positive for both teams.

"We can set the stage for this to be a wonderful thing," Woods added.

When asked for his opinion, Caden McInerney, junior wide receiver/line backer, said "I like what I hear."

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NSU Wrestling

Three Advance to NCAA National Championships, No. 17 Wolves Finish Top-5

Minot, N.D. – The No. 17 Northern State University wrestling team took fifth as a team from the NCAA Super Region V Tournament and qualified three for the NCAA National Championships. Northern scored 93 team points with one region champion, one runner-up, one third place finisher, and three fifth place finishers. No. 9 Devin Bahr, Chase Bloomquist, and No. 3 Seth Brossard led the team, punching their tickets to Wichita.

HOW IT HAPPENED

Landen Fischer went 3-2 at 125-pounds with a fifth place finish and wins over Lucas Ryan of Minnesota State (MD 9-1), Treyton Ackman of Upper Iowa (SV-1 9-6), and Carlo Arreola of Southwest Minnesota State (Fall 1:09)

No. 10 Jason Henschel Jr. went 1-2 on the day at 133-pounds with a win over Chase Hanson of Southwest Minnesota State (TF 15-0, 1:49)

Braydon Mogle tallied the second fifth place finish at 141-pounds with a 3-2 record and wins over Beau Beavers of Sioux Falls (MD 12-3), Ethan Wonser of Minot State (Dec 7-0), and Kaden DeCoteau of UMary (Dec 7-0)

No. 8 Wyatt Turnquist placed fifth in the 149-pound bracket with a 4-2 record on the day and wins over Gunnar Mogen of MSU Moorhead (TF 15-0, 2:07), Isaiah Mlsna of Minnesota State (MD 11-0), Luke Peterson of Southwest Minnesota State (Fall 7:00), and Kaden Renner of UMary (TF 15-0, 5:17)

No. 9 Bahr finished as the 157-pound runner-up going 3-0 in his wrestled matches with a medical forfeit in the championship; he tallied wins over Kelby Armstrong of Minot State (MD 11-0), Cody Wiene of MSU Moorhead (TF 18-1, 5:46), and Ben Durocher of Parkside (Dec 5-3)

Bloomquist will make is NCAA Championships debut, following a third place showing at 165-pounds with a 5-1 record and wins over Lincoln Fink of Sioux Falls (TF 15-0, 3:16), Ashton Labelle of Southwest Minnesota State (TF 17-2, 6:09), Jacob Reinardy of MSU Moorhead (TF 18-3, 6:50), Kole Marko of Minnesota State (Dec 4-1), and Brady Schuh of Parkside (SV-1 4-1)

No. 3 Brossard kept his streak alive going 3-0 en route to the 174-pound championship with wins over Ashtin Johnson of Sioux Falls (Fall 1:46), Max Bruss of UMary (MD 11-2), and Brody Hemauer of Parkside (Dec 8-3)

Sam Kruger took on the 184-pound bracket and went 1-2 with a win over Adam Sylvester of Southwest Minnesota State (TF 15-0, 1:31)

Treyton Cacek was the final placer for the Wolves, taking sixth in the 197-pound bracket with a 1-3 record and a win over Chase Stegall of Parkside (MD 13-5)

TEAM SCORES

- 1 St. Cloud State 142
- 2 Wisconsin-Parkside 123
- 3 Augustana (SD) 118.5
- 4 UMary 101.5
- 5 Northern State 93
- 6 Upper Iowa 74
- 7 Southwest Minnesota State 39.5
- 8 Minnesota State 31.5
- 9 Minot State (N.D.) 31
- 10 Sioux Falls 14
- 11 Minnesota State Moorhead 3

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FULL NORTHERN STATE RESULTS

125: Landen Fischer (16-15) placed 5th and scored 10.5 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Shane Corrigan (UWP) 28-2 won by major decision over Landen Fischer (NSU) 16-15 (MD 11-3)

Cons. Round 1 - Landen Fischer (NSU) 16-15 received a bye () (Bye)

Cons. Round 2 - Landen Fischer (NSU) 16-15 won by major decision over Lucas Ryan (MSU) 15-17 (MD 9-1)

Cons. Round 3 - Landen Fischer (NSU) 16-15 won in sudden victory - 1 over Treyton Ackman (UIU) 14-13 (SV-1 9-6)

Cons. Semi - Conor Knopick (SCSU) 17-4 won by major decision over Landen Fischer (NSU) 16-15 (MD 15-2)

5th Place Match - Landen Fischer (NSU) 16-15 won by fall over Carlo Arreola (SMSU) 14-12 (Fall 1:09)

133: Jason Henschel (16-7) place is unknown and scored 2.5 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Jason Henschel (NSU) 16-7 won by tech fall over Chase Hanson (SMSU) 4-11 (TF-1.5 1:49 (15-0))

Quarterfinal - Beau Klingensmith (USF) 17-6 won by decision over Jason Henschel (NSU) 16-7 (Dec 10-7)

Cons. Round 2 - Jason Henschel (NSU) 16-7 received a bye () (Bye)

Cons. Round 3 - Matthew Chi (UWP) 32-8 won by decision over Jason Henschel (NSU) 16-7 (Dec 8-5)

141: Braydon Mogle (19-14) placed 5th and scored 8.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Braydon Mogle (NSU) 19-14 received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal - Tate Murty (UIU) 21-7 won by decision over Braydon Mogle (NSU) 19-14 (Dec 7-1)

Cons. Round 2 - Braydon Mogle (NSU) 19-14 won by major decision over Beau Beavers (USF) 8-12 (MD 12-3)

Cons. Round 3 - Braydon Mogle (NSU) 19-14 won by decision over Ethan Wonser (MiSU) 9-9 (Dec 7-0)

Cons. Semi - Alyeus Craig (SCSU) 15-6 won by decision over Braydon Mogle (NSU) 19-14 (Dec 2-0)

5th Place Match - Braydon Mogle (NSU) 19-14 won by decision over Kaden DeCoteau (UMary) 21-18 (Dec 7-0)

149: Wyatt Turnquist (28-6) placed 5th and scored 14.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Wyatt Turnquist (NSU) 28-6 won by tech fall over Gunnar Mogen (MSUM) 13-15 (TF-1.5 2:07 (15-0))

Quarterfinal - Ethen Doty (UIU) 18-11 won by decision over Wyatt Turnquist (NSU) 28-6 (Dec 8-7)

Cons. Round 2 - Wyatt Turnquist (NSU) 28-6 won by major decision over Isaiah Mlsna (MSU) 13-12 (MD 11-0)

Cons. Round 3 - Wyatt Turnquist (NSU) 28-6 won by fall over Luke Peterson (SMSU) 11-11 (Fall 7:00)

Cons. Semi - Jalen Spuhler (UWP) 24-7 won by decision over Wyatt Turnquist (NSU) 28-6 (Dec 7-3)

5th Place Match - Wyatt Turnquist (NSU) 28-6 won by tech fall over Kaden Renner (UMary) 11-14 (TF-1.5 5:17 (15-0))

157: Devin Bahr (17-5) placed 2nd and scored 15.5 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Devin Bahr (NSU) 17-5 won by major decision over Kelby Armstrong (MiSU) 15-8 (MD 11-0)

Quarterfinal - Devin Bahr (NSU) 17-5 won by tech fall over Cody Wiene (MSUM) 17-17 (TF-1.5 5:46 (18-1))

Semifinal - Devin Bahr (NSU) 17-5 won by decision over Ben Durocher (UWP) 18-6 (Dec 5-3)

1st Place Match - Nick Novak (SCSU) 21-0 won by medical forfeit over Devin Bahr (NSU) 17-5 (M. For.)

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165: Chase Bloomquist (19-12) placed 3rd and scored 16.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Chase Bloomquist (NSU) 19-12 won by tech fall over Lincoln Fink (USF) 9-16 (TF-1.5 3:16 (15-0))

Quarterfinal - Tyler Wagener (AU (SD)) 10-7 won by decision over Chase Bloomquist (NSU) 19-12 (Dec 4-3)

Cons. Round 2 - Chase Bloomquist (NSU) 19-12 won by tech fall over Ashton Labelle (SMSU) 9-14 (TF-1.5 6:09 (17-2))

Cons. Round 3 - Chase Bloomquist (NSU) 19-12 won by tech fall over Jacob Reinardy (MSUM) 14-17 (TF-1.5 6:50 (18-3))

Cons. Semi - Chase Bloomquist (NSU) 19-12 won by decision over Kole Marko (MSU) 29-7 (Dec 4-1)

3rd Place Match - Chase Bloomquist (NSU) 19-12 won in sudden victory - 1 over Brady Schuh (UWP) 22-16 (SV-1 4-1)

174: Seth Brossard (12-0) placed 1st and scored 18.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Seth Brossard (NSU) 12-0 received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal - Seth Brossard (NSU) 12-0 won by fall over Ashtin Johnson (USF) 8-15 (Fall 1:46)

Semifinal - Seth Brossard (NSU) 12-0 won by major decision over Max Bruss (UMary) 21-9 (MD 11-2)

1st Place Match - Seth Brossard (NSU) 12-0 won by decision over Brody Hemauer (UWP) 22-9 (Dec 8-3)

184: Sam Kruger (13-11) place is unknown and scored 2.5 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Sam Kruger (NSU) 13-11 won by tech fall over Adam Sylvester (SMSU) 18-11 (TF-1.5 1:31 (15-0))

Quarterfinal - Reece Worachek (UWP) 25-5 won by decision over Sam Kruger (NSU) 13-11 (Dec 4-3)

Cons. Round 2 - Sam Kruger (NSU) 13-11 received a bye () (Bye)

Cons. Round 3 - Colter Bye (UIU) 19-8 won by major decision over Sam Kruger (NSU) 13-11 (MD 11-1)

197: Treyton Cacek (9-12) placed 6th and scored 6.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Treyton Cacek (NSU) 9-12 received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal - Dominic Murphy (SCSU) 18-3 won by decision over Treyton Cacek (NSU) 9-12 (Dec 8-2)

Cons. Round 2 - Treyton Cacek (NSU) 9-12 received a bye () (Bye)

Cons. Round 3 - Treyton Cacek (NSU) 9-12 won by major decision over Chase Stegall (UWP) 21-7 (MD 13-5)

Cons. Semi - Cannon Potts (MiSU) 17-12 won by decision over Treyton Cacek (NSU) 9-12 (Dec 8-5)

5th Place Match - Matt Kaylor (UMary) 27-8 won by decision over Treyton Cacek (NSU) 9-12 (Dec 11-6)

285: Nathan Schauer (15-15) place is unknown and scored 0.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Nathan Schauer (NSU) 15-15 received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal - Luke Tweeton (UMary) 26-7 won by decision over Nathan Schauer (NSU) 15-15 (Dec 5-2)

Cons. Round 2 - Nathan Schauer (NSU) 15-15 received a bye () (Bye)

Cons. Round 3 - Jacob Dykes (SMSU) 14-9 won by fall over Nathan Schauer (NSU) 15-15 (Fall 3:14)

UP NEXT

Bahr, Bloomquist, and Brossard will travel to the NCAA National Championships in Wichita, Kansas. The Championships are set for March 15-16 at Hartman Arena.

Moody County Fatal Crash

What: Single vehicle fatal crash

Where: Interstate 29, mile marker 123, 7 miles south of Brookings, SD

When: 4:09 p.m. Friday, March 1, 2024

Driver 1: Male, 56, fatal injuries

Vehicle 1: 2020 Ford Expedition

Seatbelt Use: No

Moody County, S.D.- A 56-year-old man died Friday afternoon in a single vehicle crash in Moody County.

The name of the person involved has not been released pending notification of family members.

Preliminary crash information indicates the driver of a 2020 Ford Expedition was traveling north on Interstate 29 when for unknown reasons the vehicle left the road entering the center median where it crashed before coming to a stop in the Big Sioux River. Law enforcement and bystanders on-scene pulled the driver from the vehicle to a nearby sand bar, where EMTs declared the driver deceased.

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

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

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2024 SDWCA District 4 Wrestling Tournament Results for Groton

Tots 46: Ryker Herron's place is 1st and has scored 26.0 team points.

Quarterfinal - Ryker Herron (Groton) won by fall over Trey Jungwirth (Redfield) (Fall 0:10)

Semifinal - Ryker Herron (Groton) won by fall over Jacob Dschaak (Huron) (Fall 0:19)

1st Place Match - Ryker Herron (Groton) won by fall over Quintin Brock (Huron) (Fall 1:00)

Tots 57: Vic Fliehs's place is 2nd.

1st Place Match - Kru Peterson (Aberdeen) won by decision over Vic Fliehs (Groton) (Dec 8-6)

Tots 67: Kase Ronning's place is 1st and has scored 9.0 team points.

Round 1 - Kase Ronning (Groton) won by fall over Lincoln Kolb (Aberdeen) (Fall 3:32)

Round 2 - Kase Ronning (Groton) won by fall over Dylan Vinagera (Aberdeen) (Fall 1:06)

Bantam 50: Landry Johnson's place is 5th and has scored 11.0 team points.

Quarterfinal - Landry Johnson (Groton) won by fall over Dallas Jessen (Redfield) (Fall 3:34)

Semifinal - Gavin Rithmiller (Aberdeen) won by tech fall over Landry Johnson (Groton) (TF 16-1)

Cons. Semi - Tayten Hins (Huron) won by fall over Landry Johnson (Groton) (Fall 3:44)

5th Place Match - Landry Johnson (Groton) won by fall over Deacon Braun (Warner/Northwestern) (Fall 0:53)

Bantam 53: Levi Davis's.

Champ. Round 1 - Henry Schaffner (Aberdeen) won by decision over Levi Davis (Groton) (Dec 6-4)

Cons. Round 1 - Levi Davis (Groton) received a bye () (Bye)

Cons. Round 2 - Coyer Stroud (Redfield) won by decision over Levi Davis (Groton) (Dec 13-8)

Bantam 57: Roman Bahr's place is 5th and has scored 13.5 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Cayson Howard (Ipswich) won by fall over Roman Bahr (Groton) (Fall 0:43)

Cons. Round 1 - Roman Bahr (Groton) received a bye () (Bye)

Cons. Round 2 - Roman Bahr (Groton) won by fall over jaxsyn Jankord (Huron) (Fall 0:27)

Cons. Round 3 - Roman Bahr (Groton) won by tech fall over Brodie Waltman (Aberdeen) (TF 16-1)

Cons. Semi - Zeke Edgar (Redfield) won by fall over Roman Bahr (Groton) (Fall 1:06)

5th Place Match - Roman Bahr (Groton) won by fall over Levi Stolpe (Faulkton) (Fall 2:11)

Bantam 76: Kroy Khali's place is 1st and has scored 24.0 team points.

Quarterfinal - Kroy Khali (Groton) received a bye () (Bye)

Semifinal - Kroy Khali (Groton) won by fall over Braysen Uzzle (Redfield) (Fall 0:00)

1st Place Match - Kroy Khali (Groton) won by fall over Oakley Town (Aberdeen) (Fall 0:46)

Midgets 53: Bennett Iverson's place is 1st and has scored 5.0 team points.

Round 1 - Bennett Iverson (Groton) received a bye () (Bye)

Round 2 - Bennett Iverson (Groton) received a bye () (Bye)

Midgets 72: Henry Pharis's place is 1st and has scored 29.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Henry Pharis (Groton) won by fall over Leo Kary (Huron) (Fall 1:21)

Quarterfinal - Henry Pharis (Groton) won by fall over Griffin Lunzman (Aberdeen) (Fall 1:14)

Semifinal - Henry Pharis (Groton) won by fall over Rusty Hanson (Aberdeen) (Fall 0:47)

1st Place Match - Henry Pharis (Groton) won by major decision over Landyn Dargatz (Aberdeen) (Maj 10-1)

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Midgets 77: Micah Krause's place is 6th and has scored 13.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Micah Krause (Groton) won by fall over Jase Reis (Ipswich) (Fall 0:33)
Quarterfinal - Asher Bowman (Faulkton) won by fall over Micah Krause (Groton) (Fall 1:50)
Cons. Round 2 - Micah Krause (Groton) won by fall over Eli Wacholz (Warner/Northwestern) (Fall 0:22)
Cons. Round 3 - Micah Krause (Groton) won by fall over Jack Wesch (Ipswich) (Fall 3:45)
Cons. Semi - Aiden Odland (Redfield) won by fall over Micah Krause (Groton) (Fall 0:38)
5th Place Match - Briggs Uzzle (Redfield) won by fall over Micah Krause (Groton) (Fall 1:05)

Midgets 82: Samuel Flihs's place is 3rd and has scored 16.0 team points.

Quarterfinal - Samuel Flihs (Groton) won by fall over James Honkamp (Huron) (Fall 0:32)
Semifinal - Dallas Stroud (Redfield) won by fall over Samuel Flihs (Groton) (Fall 0:37)
Cons. Semi - Samuel Flihs (Groton) won by fall over Zander Aberle (Warner/Northwestern) (Fall 3:52)
3rd Place Match - Samuel Flihs (Groton) won in sudden victory - 1 over Hudson Boomsma (Doland) (SV-1 10-6)

Midgets 89: Huntley Overacker's place is 1st and has scored 24.0 team points.

Quarterfinal - Huntley Overacker (Groton) received a bye () (Bye)
Semifinal - Huntley Overacker (Groton) won by fall over Zane Levtzow (Redfield) (Fall 0:15)
1st Place Match - Huntley Overacker (Groton) won by fall over Callen Carter (Wolsey/Wessington) (Fall 0:42)

Midgets 113: Keenan Moody's place is 1st and has scored 9.0 team points.

Round 2 - Keenan Moody (Groton) won by fall over Ryder Steen (Ipswich) (Fall 0:17)
Round 3 - Keenan Moody (Groton) won by fall over Jonathan Becker (Warner/Northwestern) (Fall 0:49)

Novice 77: Bentley Ehresmann's place is 1st and has scored 21.5 team points.

Quarterfinal - Bentley Ehresmann (Groton) received a bye () (Bye)
Semifinal - Bentley Ehresmann (Groton) won by tech fall over Graham Reuer (Warner/Northwestern) (TF 17-2)
1st Place Match - Bentley Ehresmann (Groton) won by decision over Chan Dreis (Aberdeen) (Dec 4-3)

Novice 82: Preston Hinkelman's place is 1st and has scored 24.0 team points.

Quarterfinal - Preston Hinkelman (Groton) won by fall over Ryder Long (Warner/Northwestern) (Fall 0:40)
Semifinal - Preston Hinkelman (Groton) won by fall over Coy Stephenson (Faulkton) (Fall 4:11)
1st Place Match - Preston Hinkelman (Groton) won by decision over Cruz Kimlicka (Redfield) (Dec 11-6)

Novice 82: Brayson Hubbs's place is 6th and has scored 6.0 team points.

Quarterfinal - Carter Lane (Aberdeen) won by fall over Brayson Hubbs (Groton) (Fall 1:52)
Cons. Round 1 - Brayson Hubbs (Groton) won by fall over Anderson Braun (Warner/Northwestern) (Fall 0:22)
Cons. Semi - Coy Stephenson (Faulkton) won by fall over Brayson Hubbs (Groton) (Fall 0:23)
5th Place Match - Ryder Long (Warner/Northwestern) won by tech fall over Brayson Hubbs (Groton) (TF 15-0)

Novice 87: Adam Flihs's place is 4th and has scored 11.0 team points.

Quarterfinal - Tilden Edgar (Faulkton) won by fall over Adam Flihs (Groton) (Fall 0:52)
Cons. Round 1 - Adam Flihs (Groton) received a bye () (Bye)
Cons. Semi - Adam Flihs (Groton) won by fall over Jeremyah Heidzig (Aberdeen) (Fall 1:57)
3rd Place Match - Tilden Edgar (Faulkton) won by decision over Adam Flihs (Groton) (Dec 6-0)

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Novice 93: Parker Zoellner's place is 2nd.

1st Place Match - Landon Schaffner (Aberdeen) won by decision over Parker Zoellner (Groton) (Dec 6-3)

Novice 138: Hank Flihs's place is 5th and has scored 7.0 team points.

Quarterfinal - Hank Flihs (Groton) received a bye () (Bye)

Semifinal - Uriah Cardona (Huron) won by fall over Hank Flihs (Groton) (Fall 0:04)

Cons. Semi - Tate Nelson (Aberdeen) won by fall over Hank Flihs (Groton) (Fall 0:38)

5th Place Match - Hank Flihs (Groton) won by fall over Hudson Maack (Aberdeen) (Fall 0:49)

Schoolboy 100: Noah Scepaniak's place is 2nd and has scored 14.0 team points.

Round 1 - Kasen Armstrong (Huron) won by tech fall over Noah Scepaniak (Groton) (TF 16-1)

Round 2 - Noah Scepaniak (Groton) won by fall over Lane Shanley (Warner/Northwestern) (Fall 1:00)

Round 3 - Noah Scepaniak (Groton) won by fall over Luke Gauer (Groton) (Fall 4:25)

Schoolboy 100: Luke Gauer's place is 3rd and has scored 9.0 team points.

Round 1 - Luke Gauer (Groton) won by fall over Lane Shanley (Warner/Northwestern) (Fall 2:50)

Round 2 - Kasen Armstrong (Huron) won by fall over Luke Gauer (Groton) (Fall 1:18)

Round 3 - Noah Scepaniak (Groton) won by fall over Luke Gauer (Groton) (Fall 4:25)

Schoolboy 110: Wyatt Hagen's place is 1st and has scored 4.0 team points.

1st Place Match - Wyatt Hagen (Groton) won by fall over Logan Smith (Faulkton) (Fall 1:25)

Girls Tots 67: Veda Stiegelmeier's place is 1st and has scored 2.0 team points.

1st Place Match - Veda Stiegelmeier (Groton) received a bye () (Bye)

Girls Midget 84: Elsy Hagen's place is 1st and has scored 3.0 team points.

1st Place Match - Elsy Hagen (Groton) won by major decision over Kora Klapperich (Warner/Northwestern) (Maj 10-1)

Girls Midget 96: Rosalyn Block's place is 1st and has scored 4.0 team points.

1st Place Match - Rosalyn Block (Groton) won by fall over Harper Opsahl (Ipswich) (Fall 0:15)

Schoolgirl 112: Madison Little's place is 1st and has scored 2.0 team points.

1st Place Match - Madison Little (Groton) won by decision over Reva McGaugh (Huron) (Dec 7-2)

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THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

*Now acquaint yourself with Him, and be at peace;
thereby good will come to you.*

*Receive, please, instruction from His mouth,
and lay up His words in your heart.*

*If you return to the Almighty, you will be built up;
you will remove iniquity far from your tents.*

JOB 22: 21-23



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1. Is the book of 3 Kings (KJV) in the Old or New Testament or neither?

2. Who said, “I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit”? *Matthew, Mark, John the Baptist, Luke*

3. From Leviticus 14, how long was a “clean” person required to remain outside his tent? *One night, Two nights, Four days, Seven days*

4. What town or city was Saul of Tarsus near when he converted to Christianity? *Damascus, Assos, Corinth, Gaza*

5. Jesus says that you have to do what to see the kingdom of God? *Love one another, Be born again, Do what’s right, Tithe*

6. Which apostle’s mother-in-law is mentioned in the Bible? *Peter, Judas, James, Andrew*

ANSWERS: 1) Neither, 2) John the Baptist, 3) Seven days, 4) Damacus, 5) Be born again, 6) Peter

Sharpen your understanding of scripture with Wilson’s Casey’s latest book, “Test Your Bible Knowledge,” now available in bookstores and online.

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FLASH GORDON

THE WITCH-QUEEN, YOU CALL ME. NEVER JUST QUEEN -- ALWAYS WITCH.

YOU MARK ME AS THIS TREACHEROUS, WICKED THING, SLITHERING OUT OF MY CAVERNS TO ENSLAVE YOUR MEN.

NOT THAT I MIND, OF COURSE. WHILE YOU MAY NEED ME AS AN ALLY... A HOST... A SOFT HAND IN YOURS... NEVER, NEVER FORGET.

I AM EVERYTHING YOU SAY.

SHE STIRS AWAKE-- SHIVERING, SCARED.

FOR SHE'S JUST DAINTY LITTLE DALE ARDEN...

...AND I AM AZURA.

SHE ACCUSES ME OF FRAMING FLASH FOR SLAYING MING II.

HOW CUTE.

I'D LOVE TO PLAY WITH HER AT LENGTH, BUT IT'S TIME WE ROYALS RETURNED TO OUR LANDS.

Ta-ta, DALE.

TO MY DELIGHT, SHE IS SAVED BY DASHING PRINCE THUN...

...SENT BY THE FINELY AGED DOCTOR ZARKOV. I SCRY FROM AFAR AS THEY PUT TOGETHER TWO LARGE PIECES IN THEIR LITTLE MYSTERY:

DAN SCHKADE 3-3-24

THAT THE DEVICE IN TAHL'S ROOMS WAS A LIGHT MACHINE -- WHICH HE USED TO TURN A KIRAN ASSASSIN INVISIBLE--

--AND THAT MING II WAS NOT THEIR TARGET.

NEXT: GUY L'ECLAIR SE LEVE

Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS

DELIVERING THE CLUBHEAD TO THE BALL FROM INSIDE THE TARGET LINE REQUIRES MOVING THE RIGHT SIDE "UNDER" RATHER THAN "AROUND" ON THE DOWNSWING. SETTING IT CORRECTLY AT ADDRESS PROMOTES THE DESIRED ACTION.

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LETTING YOUR RIGHT ARM BEND EASILY IN TOWARDS YOUR WAIST AT ADDRESS POSITIONS YOUR RIGHT SHOULDER A LITTLE LOWER THAN -- OR "UNDER" -- YOUR LEFT, WHICH IS EXACTLY THE POSITION IT SHOULD OCCUPY AT IMPACT.



Treatment Given for Dry Eyes Fails to Improve Condition

DEAR DR. ROACH: I developed chronic dry eyes after having cataract surgery on both eyes. I consulted an ophthalmologist who specialized in treating dry eyes. She prescribed Restasis, but my condition didn't improve after three months of use. She then switched me to Xiidra and instructed me to use it for two more refills, which lasted for nine months.

At the end of my conversation with the dry eye specialist, she said that she had done everything she could for me. I inquired about the Miebo drug that was recently approved or the LipiFlow procedure. She mumbled something, then said "goodbye" and "good luck." Was she openly admitting her incompetence? — *K.J.W.*

ANSWER: It's hard for me to believe that a dry eye specialist wouldn't know about the new treatments available in their area of expertise, and I can only guess that there was some kind of miscommunication. As a generalist, I have to know at least a little bit about a whole lot of conditions, rather than a specialist who knows a whole lot about just a few conditions.

For most people with dry eyes, starting with artificial tears is usual and effective, but I certainly have had patients use artificial tears many times daily and still have unpleasant symptoms. I also recommend trying to avoid dry areas, especially with high airflow.

Most people with dry eyes have blockages in the meibomian glands, which secrete an oily substance that helps prevent the eye fluid from drying. It also

forces the lacrimal glands to make more tears. (This leads to the paradox of people having red, watery eyes when they really have dry eye disease.) Trying to unblock the meibomian glands with baby shampoo and warm water is another treatment generalists like me often try. But when these therapies aren't working, an ophthalmologist is essential.

An ophthalmologist can do an exam to be sure if the meibomian glands are blocked. Among the treatments they have available are the ones you tried: cyclosporine (Restasis), which works well for a minority of people; lifitegrast (Xiidra), which decreases inflammation; varenicline (Tyrvaya), which increases tear production; and Miebo (perfluorohexyloctane), which works by reducing evaporation.

If the problem really is the blocked glands, doctors can also consider more powerful treatments to unblock them. One of these, LipiFlow, is a heat-based treatment. My colleagues in ophthalmology, to whom I refer, tell me that this is often successful, although the process may need to be repeated — sometimes every six months and sometimes longer. Ophthalmologists can also place plugs to reduce the loss of tears through drainage.

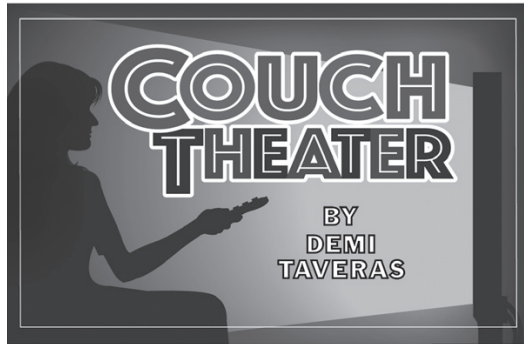
DEAR DR. ROACH: We're told to wash our hands with soap and water for 20 seconds to kill the COVID-19 virus. How long should we wash our hands to kill bacteria and other viruses? — *C.C.*

ANSWER: 20 seconds is the right amount of time for bacteria and viruses. An alternative is an alcohol-based handrub, which is fast and effective. Of course, you should wash your hands before and after eating — and after using the restroom. Bacterial spores cannot be easily killed, but they are effectively washed off with soap and water. In cases where spores are a concern (*Clostridium difficile* is a big one), then handwashing is essential, as alcohol is ineffective.

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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Kate Winslet and Matthias Schoenaerts star in "The Regime." Courtesy of HBO

"Spaceman" (R) -- Based on the 2017 novel "Spaceman of Bohemia," this sci-fi drama stars Adam Sandler as Jakub Prochazka, an astronaut who embarks on an isolating solo journey into space. Six months into his journey, his mental state begins to deteriorate as he misses his life on Earth, and he unexpectedly encounters a large

extraterrestrial spider on his ship that appears to come in peace. The spider, who goes by Hanus, tells Jakub that he's there to assist him with his emotional distress. Even though Jakub is unsure of whether Hanus is imaginary or real, he begins to dig deep into his subconscious to persist through his journey and make it home to his wife. Sandler excels in this dramatic role, while Paul Dano lends his mystifying voice to Hanus. Carey Mulligan co-stars. Out now! (Netflix)

"Ricky Stanicky" (R) -- Dean, Wes and JT are a trio of friends who have hatched the ultimate scheme to get away from boring commitments: a nonexistent friend named Ricky Stanicky, who always seems to need them at the most inopportune times. But when JT misses the birth of his child because he was "taking care of Ricky," people start to become suspicious of whether Ricky actually exists. So, the men come up with another brilliant scheme to hire an X-rated rock-and-roll impersonator named Rod to portray Ricky in front of their partners, family members and friends. What could possibly go wrong? Director Peter Farrelly ("Green Book") takes on this comedy film out March 7, starring Zac Efron, John Cena and William H. Macy. (Amazon Prime Video)

"The Regime" (TV-MA) -- Elena Vernham (Kate Winslet) is the chancellor of an autocracy in a fictionalized version of Europe, and she realizes that her authoritarian regime is starting to crumble around her. At the same time, Elena meets an unstable soldier named Herbert Zubak, who pledges his undying allegiance to her. They become close confidants, and Herbert's ruthlessness begins to rub off on Elena, prompting her to switch up the way she approaches her political duties. Unable to stand even a single word of criticism by her cabinet or her opponents, Elena slowly but surely starts evolving into a dictator. She's ready to see the world burn if it means she gets to obtain more power. The first episode is out now, and the remaining five episodes will be released every Sunday. (Max)

"The Marsh King's Daughter" (R) -- Daisy Ridley (of the "Stars Wars" sequel trilogy) leads this psychological thriller that will leave you hanging on the edge of your seat! Adapted from the bestselling novel by Karen Dionne, this film follows a woman named Helena (Ridley) who receives news that her father, the Marsh King, has escaped from prison. As Helena unpacks what this could mean for her and her own daughter now that her father is on the run, memories from her traumatic childhood spent in captivity resurface. She realizes the only way she can keep herself and her family safe from the Marsh King is if she takes all that he taught her and beats him at his own game. Out on March 5. (Hulu)

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1. Which group released "I Like It"?
2. Who first released "I Heard It Through the Grapevine"?
3. The Royal Teens were best known for which song?
4. Name all the brothers in the Jackson 5.
5. Name the song that contains this lyric: "Ol' Smokey's got them ears on, He's hot on your trail, And he ain't gonna rest 'til you're in jail."

Answers

second hit after "How Do You Do It."

2. Gladys Knight & the Pips, in 1967. It was the Marvin Gaye cover, however, that was first inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame in 2004. The Pips' version was inducted in 2018.

3. "Short Shorts," released in 1958. The song was penned by Bob Gaudio, writer of several of the songs released by the Four Seasons, such as "Sherry." The song was used several times in episodes of "The Simpsons."

4. Michael, Jackie, Jermaine, Marlon and Tito.

5. "East Bound and Down," by Jerry Reed in 1977. The song was the soundtrack for the "Smokey and the Bandit" film. In the film, a couple of good old boys are making a fast multi-state run to bring back 400 cases of beer, one step ahead of the sheriff.

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GRIN and BEAR IT ^{Wagner}



"There would be no energy shortage if we could harness road rage!"

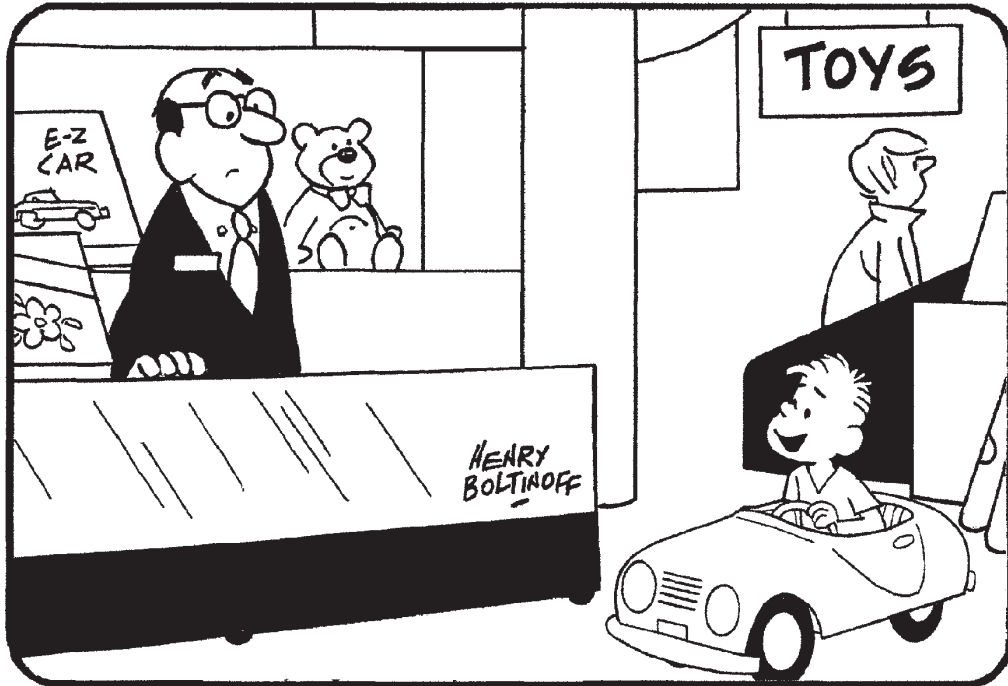
Just Like Cats & Dogs

by Dave T. Phipps

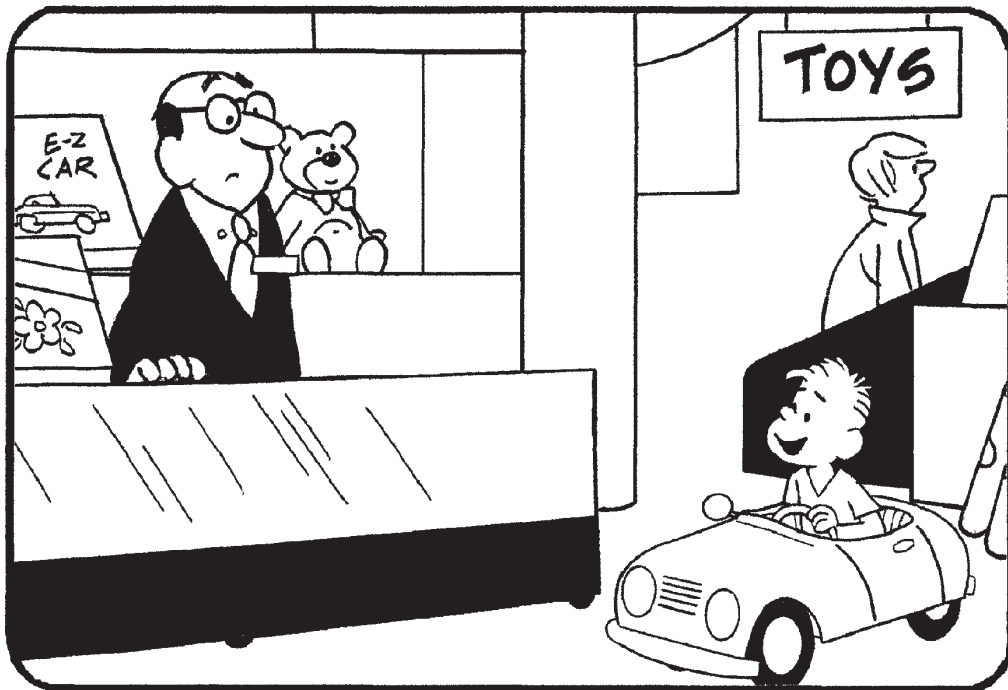


HOCUS-FOCUS

BY
HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



Differences: 1. Car door is different. 2. Rear tire is moved. 3. Side mirror is added to car. 4. Teddy bear is moved. 5. Nametag is moved. 6. License plate is missing.

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by
Jo Ann
Derson

* Use a muffin pan to make cookie cups for ice cream or fruit. Just flip your muffin pan over, and press dough over the upturned wells. It will puff up a little, but once it settles, they make very nice bowls. I do this with pizza dough as well. Prebake for a few minutes to form the bowl, then fill with ingredients and complete baking.

* If you can put a tension rod in the cabinet under your sink, you can use it to hang spray bottles for extra storage. It's amazing how much space clears up, and it's easy to find the bottle you need.

* Got popcorn? For a healthier (and much less expensive) version, go old-school: Put popping corn kernels in a regular brown paper bag, seal the bag, then microwave.

* "Bread tags (the little plastic clips that hold bread bags closed) make great cord organizers when you are using a multiple outlet power strip. Write the kind of device (e.g. TV, Xbox, cable box) on the tag, then clip it to the plug end of the cord. When you need to unplug, it'll be easy to see which is which." -- C.C. in Ohio

* Travel a lot? Make use of those shower caps by pairing up shoes and using the shower cap to hold them together while simultaneously protecting your clothes from the shoe bottoms. Smart!

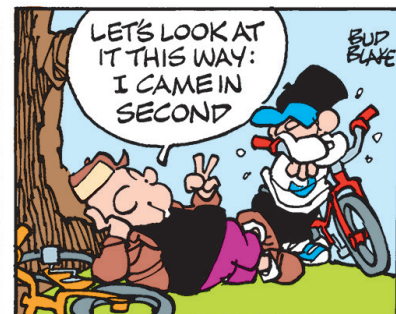
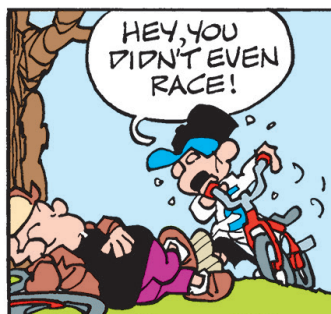
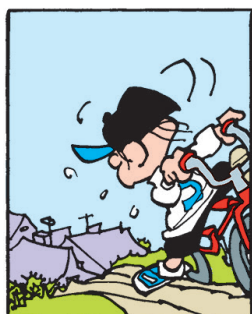
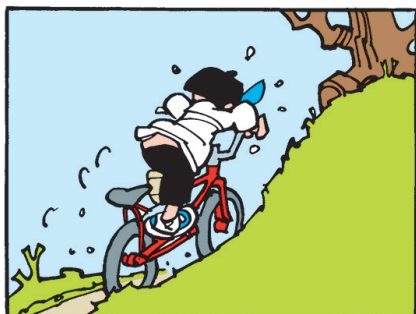
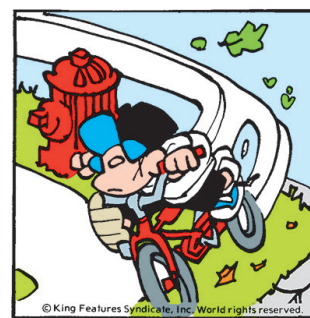
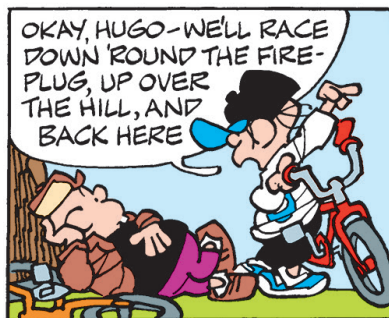
* "I make plenty of cupcakes for my children's various events, but I kept having unreturned cupcake carriers. Those things are expensive! I make my own now, using a box lid. The lids for paper cartons work really well. Cut a cross into the lid top with a razor or carpet knife, and press down. Make it the size of a cupcake. Insert cupcakes and go." -- A.R. in Georgia

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

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 **TIGER**

by **BUD BLAKE**



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King Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Manhandle
- 5 Annex
- 8 Trig function
- 12 Within (Pref.)
- 13 "Ben- —"
- 14 Toledo's lake
- 15 "Sure, of course"
- 17 Bakery buy
- 18 "Yippee!"
- 19 Apple music service
- 21 Pride parade initials
- 24 "Let me think ..."
- 25 Valley in California
- 28 Indy event
- 30 Wall climber
- 33 Rocker Rose

1	2	3	4		5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12					13				14			
15				16					17			
18							19	20				
			21		22	23		24				
25	26	27			28		29			30	31	32
33				34						35		
36				37					38			
		39	40			41		42				
43	44				45			46		47	48	49
50					51	52	53					
54					55				56			
57					58				59			

- 34 Plains grazers
- 35 Formerly known as
- 36 Earth (Pref.)
- 37 Stink
- 38 "It's — real!"
- 39 Texter's "Enough!"
- 41 Bring up
- 43 Tell
- 46 Pink hue
- 50 Lena of "The Reader"
- 51 Sake, e.g.
- 54 Curse
- 55 Greek mountain

- 56 Zilch
- 57 Rosebud, to Kane
- 58 Camp bed
- 59 Flag feature

DOWN

- 1 Calico's call
- 2 "My Way" writer
- 3 Beehive State
- 4 Jesuit university
- 5 Sushi fish
- 6 Press for payment
- 7 Zwei follower

- 8 Blood part
- 9 Ore source
- 10 Aswan's river
- 11 Congers
- 16 Sailing hazard
- 20 Subsequently
- 22 Party cheese
- 23 Stunning gun
- 25 Pester
- 26 Chopper
- 27 Story thread
- 29 Pepsi rival
- 31 Victory sign
- 32 Longing
- 34 Telly watcher
- 38 Cleveland squad

- 40 Like lions
- 42 Expert
- 43 Filches
- 44 Israeli carrier
- 45 Guitarist Clapton
- 47 Funny person
- 48 Visitor to Siam
- 49 Ogler's look
- 52 Altar affirmative
- 53 Jazz lover

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— King Crossword —

Answers

Solution time: 24 mins.

M	A	U	L		A	D	D		S	I	N	E
E	N	T	O		H	U	R		E	R	I	E
O	K	A	Y	F	I	N	E		R	O	L	L
W	A	H	O	O			I	T	U	N	E	S
			L	G	B	T		H	M	M		
N	A	P	A		R	A	C	E		I	V	Y
A	X	L		B	I	S	O	N		N	E	E
G	E	O		R	E	E	K		B	E	E	N
		T	M	I		R	E	A	R			
R	E	L	A	T	E			C	O	R	A	L
O	L	I	N		R	I	C	E	W	I	N	E
B	A	N	E		I	D	A		N	O	N	E
S	L	E	D		C	O	T		S	T	A	R

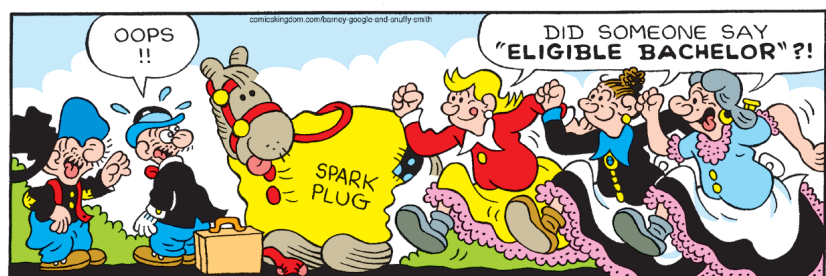
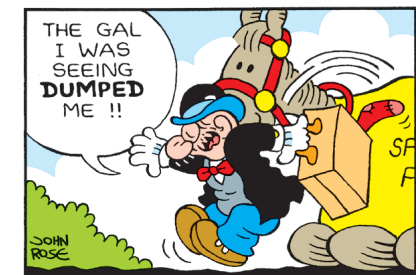
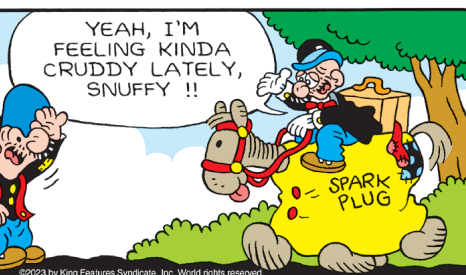
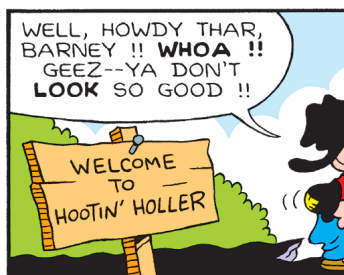
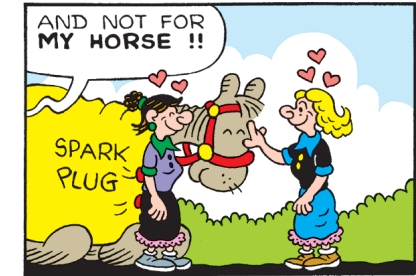
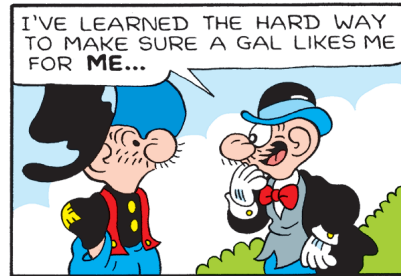
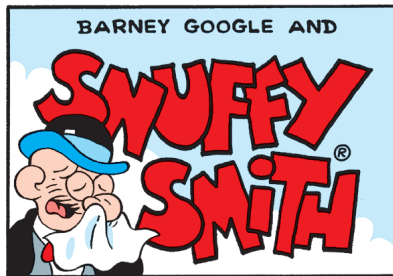
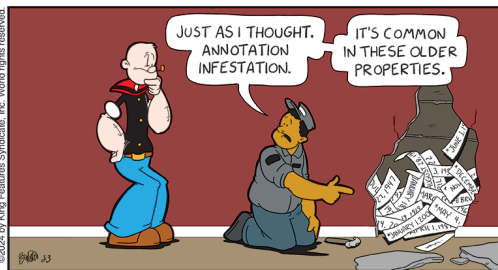
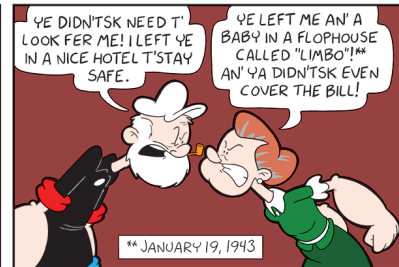
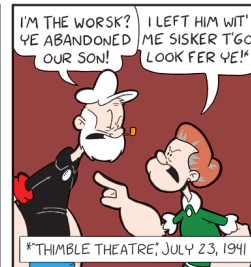
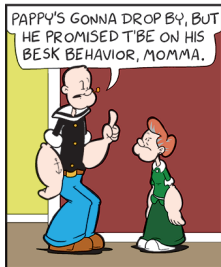
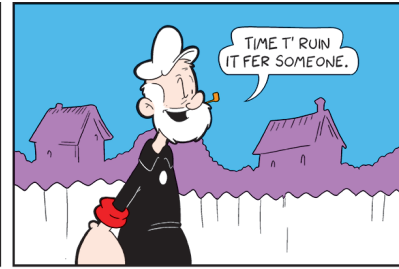
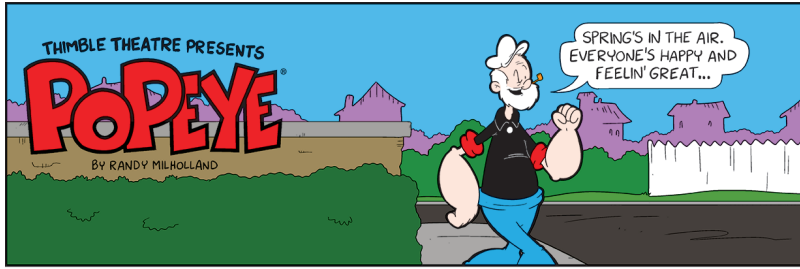
Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas



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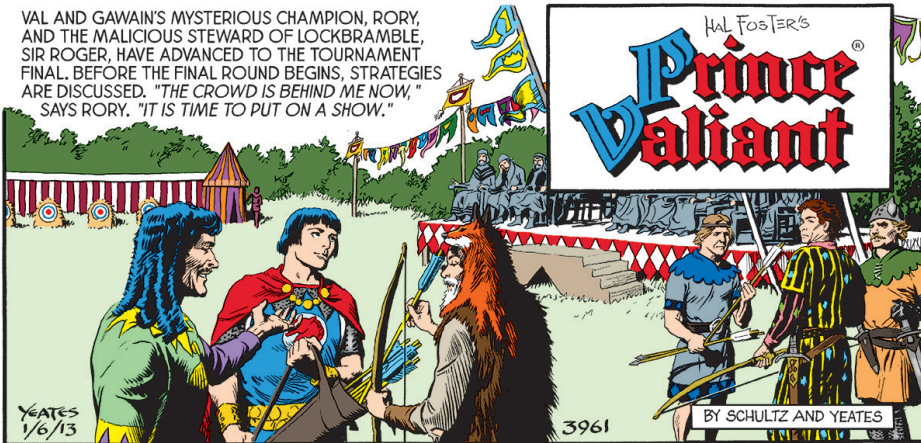
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VAL AND GAWAIN'S MYSTERIOUS CHAMPION, RORY, AND THE MALICIOUS STEWARD OF LOCKBRAMBLE, SIR ROGER, HAVE ADVANCED TO THE TOURNAMENT FINAL. BEFORE THE FINAL ROUND BEGINS, STRATEGIES ARE DISCUSSED. "THE CROWD IS BEHIND ME NOW," SAYS RORY. "IT IS TIME TO PUT ON A SHOW."

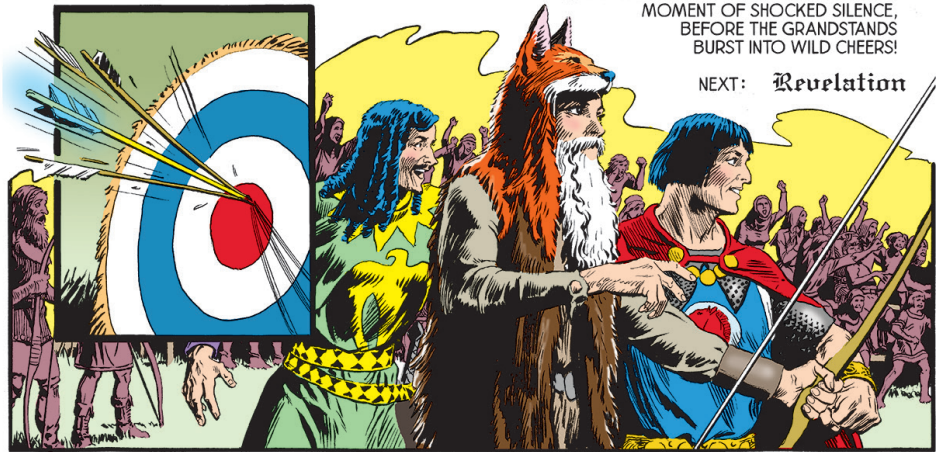


ROGER SHOTS FIRST. HE HAS SEEN THE CROWD TURN FROM HIM AND CHEER HIS OPPONENT. DO THEY NOTICE THAT HIS AIM IS NOT SO STEADY AND EFFORTLESS AS BEFORE?

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ROGER'S SHOT IS FAIR, BUT NOT PERFECT. RORY GLANCES CALMLY AT THE UNNERVED STEWARD...

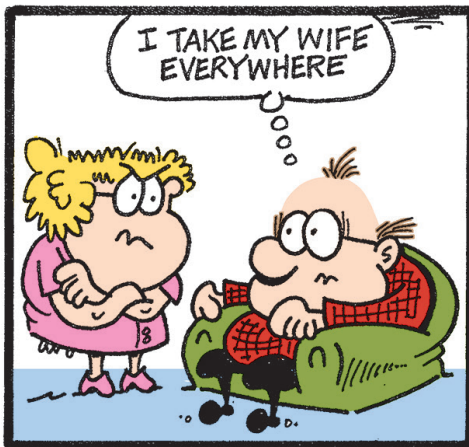


... AND THEN SPLITS HIS ARROW! THERE IS A MOMENT OF SHOCKED SILENCE, BEFORE THE GRANDSTANDS BURST INTO WILD CHEERS!

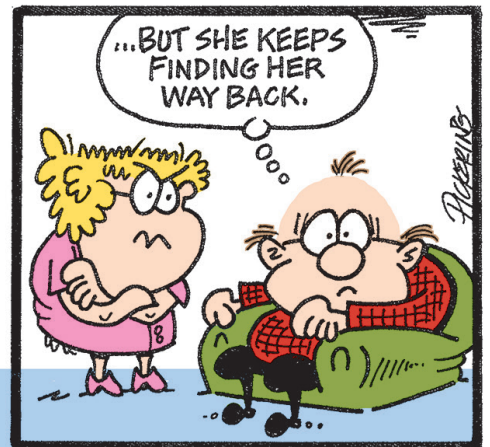
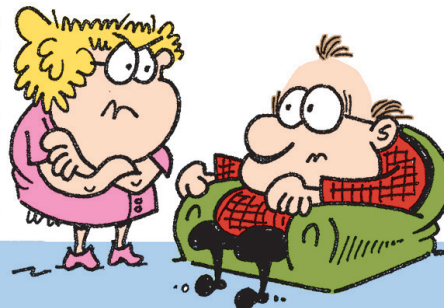
NEXT: *Revelation*

The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



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PICKERING

SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

It's the Little Expenses That Add Up

"But it's only ..." is a phrase I've come to dislike. It always involves money and people who don't understand living on reduced income.

"But it's only twenty dollars a month," said the one who was signing up for the new program at the rec center and trying to convince others to do the same. "But it's only an extra fifty dollars a month," said the one who was purchasing a package of extra TV cable channels and encouraging the rest of us to do the same. "But it's only..." said the one who happily signed up for a year-long membership at a certain big box warehouse, until we stopped her in mid-phrase.

"But it's only" tends to add up when we calculate all the additional expenses that have come as a result of the increase in prices of, well, everything: rent, electricity, food, clothing, car insurance, movie tickets, prescription drugs, telephone service, pet food and veterinary care.

Seniors on limited income do the mental math each and every time they hear that phrase and consider the extra expense. When they add the new number to the previous number, they come to the reality: They will not make it through the month if they add new X to the previous total Y, because the increased total Z doesn't exist.

Here are two ways I've managed to shave some dollars off the amount that goes out each month.

The car insurance company gave me a hefty discount when I inquired about combining auto and homeowners insurance under one umbrella. The savings really added up, even though it meant leaving a company I'd been with for decades that did not offer a seniors discount.

I contacted every company I deal with, and three of them offer seniors discounts, which I'd never suspected.

Sometimes all you have to do is ask.

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1. How many points did basketball star Epiphanny Prince score in Murry Bergtraum High School's 137-32 win over Brandeis High School in 2006?

2. What racehorse won the 1981 Kentucky Derby and Preakness Stakes but finished third in the Belmont Stakes?

3. A 1958 plane crash at Germany's Munich-Riem Airport killed 23 people, including players, staff and supporters of what English football team?

4. The NHL's Adams Division (1974-93) was named in honor of Charles Francis Adams, founder of what NHL franchise?

5. What WNBA franchise, one of the league's original eight teams in 1997, ceased operations in November 2009?

6. Name the American brothers who won gold and bronze medals in figure skating at the 1956 Cortina d'Ampezzo Winter Olympics.

7. First presented in 2002, the Ted Hendricks Award honors the year's top college football player in what position?



by Ryan A. Berenz

Answers

1. 113.

2. Pleasant Colony.

3. Manchester United.

4. The Boston Bruins.

5. The Sacramento Monarchs.

6. Hayes Alan Jenkins (gold) and David Jenkins (bronze).

7. Defensive end.

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Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps





Leveling Up: Walking With Multiple Dogs

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: I walk my neighbors' dogs every day after school. It takes time because I have to walk one dog at a time, then go to the next house, and then the third one. I'd like to make this job a little more efficient by walking all three dogs at the same time. What's the best way to do this? -- Colin R., Smyrna, Georgia

DEAR COLIN: I can see your dilemma! Walking three dogs separately takes at least one hour, probably two, when you add in the time spent accessing each home, leashing up the dogs and unleashing.

It is possible to walk all three dogs at once, but you have to do two important things first: One, get permission from each neighbor to walk the dogs together, and two, make sure the dogs will get along before you commit.

You may be able to only walk two of them together and the third one alone. And if the neighbors don't agree, then you're stuck walking all three separately.

If you do get permission to walk them together, do it on a trial basis. Here are a few tips from professional dog walkers:

- Don't use retractable leashes when walking multiple dogs. You need full control at all times.
- Leashes can easily get tangled; hold two in one hand and one in the other, or buy a 3-way leash coupler to minimize tangles.
- If one or more dogs gets aggressive or bullying, walk them separately to prevent the problem from getting worse.
- Avoid walking them in areas where a lot of other dogs are present. If all three bolt toward another dog, you may not be able to hang on to them.

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

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Strange BUT TRUE

By Lucie Winborne

nels burrowed into hills -- like badgers.

* Jim Carrey was the first actor to have three number one movies in one year.

* The Palais Ideal in France was built entirely of stones that a postman named Ferdinand Cheval picked up on his mail route.

* Honey hunters in Mozambique use special calls to recruit the services of birds known as honeyguides. The birds lead the humans to bees' nests, and in return, they get the leftover beeswax.

* In 1964, a pre-fame 17-year-old David Bowie was interviewed on the BBC program "Tonight" as the founder of The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Long-Haired Men.

* Thomas Edison nicknamed two of his kids Dot and Dash after the Morse code signals.

* Army ants that misinterpret the scent trails left by other ants will sometimes break from the crowd and march in circles. If enough ants join them, they can form massive "death spirals."

* John Quincy Adams was an avid skinny-dipper who included dips in the Potomac River as a regular part of his exercise regimen.

* Crayola came from the words for "oily chalk."

* The U.S. Senate's Rule XIX states that U.S. senators cannot insult their colleagues.

Thought for the Day: "Leaders can let you fail and yet not let you be a failure." -- Stanley McChrystal
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* Andrew Jackson's parrot was kicked out of his funeral for swearing.

* In 1947, The New York Times opined that "the pizza could be as popular a snack as the hamburger if Americans only knew more about it."

* Buzz Aldrin's mother's maiden name was Moon.

* When pirate Richard Worley, captain of the New York's Revenge, captured his second ship, he named it the New York Revenge's Revenge.

* Wisconsin is known as the Badger State because the area's lead miners used to spend winters in tun-

The Garden Bug

Flowers for Easter

Lilies represent hope, love, divinity, purity and gratitude. Daffodils are one of the first signs of spring; they often symbolize romance.

Tulips are another early sign of spring and the rebirth of the season after winter. They often indicate feelings of love.

Daisies are considered cheerful, and are available in white, yellow, pink and purple.

Hyacinths have incredible fragrance and showy, delicate blooms. - Brenda Weaver

Source: www.easternfloral.com



Hyacinths



by Freddy Groves

Put a "Pause" on Your Surgery at the VA

The Department of Veterans Affairs is expanding an initiative designed to hold off rushing a veteran to surgery. The purpose of the Surgical Pause is to give a good going over with veterans destined for surgery to screen them for risk of frailty.

Already taking place at 50 of the VA facilities, the program seeks to identify veterans who would likely experience post-operative complications, loss of independence and even death. The stats are grim: Too many very frail patients die within six months of surgery, even when that surgery is considered low stress.

The test doesn't take long. The Risk Analysis Index (RAI) is a screening that only takes 30 seconds and gives the medical staff an opportunity to weigh the potential risks before they move ahead.

Apparently, the pause in the rush to surgery is working. A recent study of 50,000 patients showed that a three-year mortality rate dropped significantly.

If you're scheduled for surgery at the VA, ask for this Surgical Pause assessment, even if you don't consider yourself to be frail. Ask about potential long-term recovery after surgery. Also to be considered: You might ask whether there is non-surgical treatment for your condition. If surgery is definitely in your future, ask, too, whether a three-six week exercise regimen before surgery would let your body beef up and give you some physical reserves.

To read more about the Surgical Pause, go to marketplace.va.gov/innovations/preoperative-frailty-screening-prehabilitation. When you read down to "Successful adoptions," view the list of innovations each hospital has started. Scroll to the "Surgical Pause" in each one to see if they were successful. There is also an "In-progress adoptions" section for hospitals that are still working on their programs. Know in advance how your hospital rates.

Of course, you need to do what your doctor says. But if you ask good questions (Do I need a Risk Analysis Index?), you'll make a better health advocate for yourself.

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Wishing Well®

3	4	3	7	6	7	4	7	2	7	2	7	8
H	A	A	Y	L	O	W	U	C	R	A	W	E
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4	8	3	8	3	5	3	4	8	4	8	4	4
D	L	O	O	V	E	E	S	V	H	E	I	P

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. GENERAL KNOWLEDGE: Which large U.S. city is nicknamed Rip City?
2. MOVIES: Which movie features the quote, "She doesn't even go here!"
3. GEOGRAPHY: Which national capital city is the northernmost in the world?
4. TELEVISION: Which long-running sitcom features a dad named Phil Dunphy?
5. GAMES: In chess, how many knights does each player have at the beginning?
6. GEOLOGY: What natural phenomenon is associated with igneous rock?
7. LANGUAGE: How many official languages are in the United Nations?
8. MUSIC: David Grohl was a drummer in which band before he became the frontman for the Foo Fighters?
9. ANIMAL KINGDOM: What is a group of alligators called?
10. FOOD & DRINK: What kind of meat is used in Hasenpfeffer, a traditional German stew?

Answers

1. Portland, Oregon.
2. "Mean Girls."
3. Reykjavik, Iceland.
4. "Modern Family."
5. Two.
6. Volcanic eruption.
7. Six.
8. Nirvana.
9. A congregation.
10. Rabbit.

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South Dakota Governor

Kristi Noem



South Dakota: *Under God, the People Rule*

Preserving Our Outdoor Heritage

Almost every memory I have from my childhood is outdoors. I think my parents used to send us kids outside as an attempt to keep us out of trouble. And to this day I am still more comfortable in my jeans and ball cap. As Governor, though, my hours are often filled with other things. But even with all those other things that have to fill up my time, one thing I have always prioritized is hunting.

I come from a family of hunters. Our hunting trips and the lessons that my dad taught me turned me into the woman that I am today. When I had kids of my own, I knew that I was going to raise a family of strong-willed, independent, stubborn hunters, too. When I think about future generations, about my two grandkids (and the third on the way), I don't want anything more than for them to be able to grow up experiencing the outdoors and seeing the world the way I did.

If we want our grandkids to experience the joy of hunting and the outdoors, we need to proactively protect habitat.

In 2019, I started the Second Century Initiative to increase resources to grow our habitat here in South Dakota. This Initiative included the Working Lands Program to provide an alternative to cash flow marginal acres and make ends meet by converting those acres into habitat. And I am very proud that we have enrolled about 10,000 marginal acres in our Working Lands Habitat Program!

With the Second Century Initiative, I also launched my Nest Predator Bounty Program to increase the trapping of predators that kill our precious pheasants. Every year, participants turn in 50,000 tails of predators that would otherwise devastate our pheasant and wildlife population. But what I think it really awesome is that last year 46% of our participants were under the age of 18. I love that more kids are getting involved in trapping, hunting, and fishing!

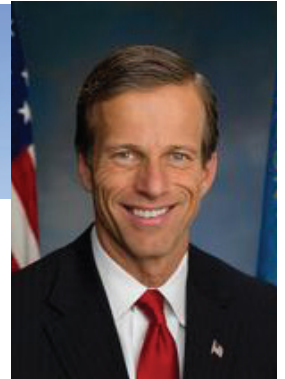
I was honored to kick off Pheasant Fest this year. I am so proud that we are hosting this great event in Sioux Falls. They used to only go to Minneapolis, but because of our passion for pheasant hunting and habitat conservation, as well as our economic development efforts, we now get to host Pheasant Fest right here in South Dakota!

I signed a bill that my Department of Game, Fish and Parks has been working very hard on. This legislation creates a habitat conservation specialty license plate and emblem. We will be unveiling the design later this year – but I can tell you that it will have some beautiful scenery featuring our grasslands and the habitats that are so critical to our wildlife. We will also have several emblems to choose from – a buck, a rooster pheasant, a meadow lark, and a pasque flower. There will be something for everyone! The dollars to purchase these special plates and emblems will then go to benefit habitat.

I grew up as a farmer and a rancher. My family put food on our own table by putting food on tables around the world. And my dad used to always tell me, "Kristi, you have to take care of the land, God isn't making any more of it." That has always motivated me to start these initiatives and prioritize conservation and habitat preservation.

I am very proud that we are ensuring that future generations will get to grow up and experience the outdoor heritage that is so central to our way of life here in South Dakota.

John Thune
U.S. SENATOR - SOUTH DAKOTA



Biden's Actions Jeopardize U.S. Energy Security

Since his very first day in office, President Biden has pursued an agenda that has put American energy security in jeopardy. His actions have discouraged conventional domestic energy production, threatened the stability of our energy supply, and led to higher prices for consumers.

Rather than pursue policies that ensure a reliable and affordable supply of energy, the Biden administration's energy actions seem to be driven by a misguided Green New Deal vision. The latest example of this is President Biden's decision to pause approvals of liquefied natural gas (LNG) export permits. The move, which apparently was made in part to assuage climate activists on TikTok, is a terrible decision with serious implications for American energy.

The export pause is ostensibly for climate-related reasons, but it will do nothing to reduce global emissions. In fact, it runs the risk of increasing emissions by pushing other countries to import natural gas from less environmentally friendly nations or to rely on other forms of energy, like coal. On balance, the move will not benefit the climate or reduce emissions, but it will negatively impact the United States' energy industry and our export partners.

Russia and Iran are all too ready to replace American LNG with their own. Europe struggled to wean itself off Russian energy, and American exports ultimately played a significant role in helping them replace Russian gas after the war in Ukraine began. President Biden's LNG pause is making Europe's energy industry understandably nervous about its implications. While Russia and Iran are working on new export facilities for LNG, the president's action is putting construction of these facilities in the United States in jeopardy.

At a time when we need to be building up the American energy sector, this action risks undermining its strength. Of course, this is just the latest move in President's Biden's long history of hostility toward conventional energy sources like oil and natural gas.

Another example of this Green New Deal agenda is the president's goal of transitioning to electric vehicles on a broad scale in the next decade. The reality is, our supply chains and electric grid are nowhere near where they need to be in order to support such a widespread transition and the resulting surge in electricity demand. In fact, we are already rapidly approaching a situation in which we won't be able to keep up with current electricity demand.

We don't need to look far for examples of the consequences that these policies will bring. I've already mentioned the energy situation in Europe. Closer to home, California has implemented the types of policies that the president envisions for the whole country, and, in the last decade, Californians' utility bills have gone up as much as 127 percent as a result of inadequate energy resources. This is not the energy future we should be striving for.

President Biden's energy policies may please climate activists, but I'm concerned they will leave many more Americans suffering from more expensive and less reliable energy.

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



China Creeps Closer

BIG Update

The surge of migrants coming across the southern border certainly isn't news to many people. But, as the crisis rages on, more and more Chinese nationals are crossing our southern border illegally. In 2023, Customs and Border Patrol reported 37,000 Chinese nationals were encountered while crossing the border illegally. That's 50 times more than in 2021. And many of them are doing so through the help of Douyin, the Chinese version of TikTok. Viral videos share specific details and locations on where and how to cross the border, allowing thousands of unvetted people to enter our country with ease.

Other videos on TikTok solicit viewers in the U.S. to help smuggle drugs and migrants across the border. Sheriffs who work near the border encounter many situations like this and end up in dangerous, high-speed chases, some resulting in injury or death.

TikTok is a bad app, and many agree with me that it is malware from the Chinese Communist Party. It's evident that TikTok and Douyin are only worsening the border security crisis and national security crisis.

BIG News

Do you know the frustration of having debt sent to collections when it isn't your bill to pay? For many Native Americans who receive purchased and referred care through the Indian Health Service, this is all too common. Many patients receive care through the IHS and are referred to a specialist or another care facility that isn't an IHS provider. IHS is required to pay the bills for approved referrals, yet 82% of over 800,000 claims were not reviewed, approved, or paid in accordance with federal law. These unpaid bills may then be sent to the patients. If left unpaid, they can end up in the hands of debt collectors. These patients are forced to decide between paying bills they don't owe or taking a hit to their credit.

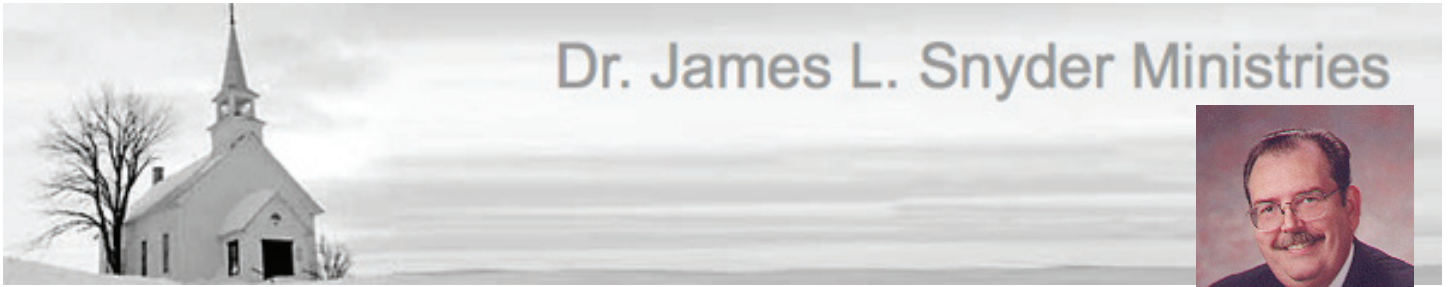
This issue can lead to financial struggles that can be hard to recover from. Today, I introduced two bills to hold IHS accountable for not paying the health care bills they owe to providers and to protect Native Americans' credit from these wrongfully charged bills IHS is liable for. My bills seek to rectify this unfair negligence by the IHS.

BIG Idea

On Monday, I visited the PURIS pea processing facility in Harrold. PURIS handles 8,000 bushels of peas each day and has created 14 good jobs in the community. I got to go behind the scenes of their operation and learned about the anti-competitive behavior China has been using to manipulate the markets. We're asking the International Trade Commission to intervene and hold China accountable.

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Dr. James L. Snyder Ministries



Dancing The Critter/Bug Shuffle

I must confess that I do have a liking for critters of all kinds. I enjoy feeding them out on the back porch, and boy, do they come hungry for their treats.

Two cats born in our garage are still hanging around. They come morning, noon, and night for their treats. In the morning, they like to come and have me scratch their head. I'm not sure what that has to do with anything, but I'm willing to scratch their head if that's what they want.

Unlike me, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage is not very fond of critters of any nature. The only critter she likes is Yours Truly. I guess I'm enough of a critter to satisfy any longings like that. I hope she doesn't try to scratch my head.

When she goes to the door and opens it, the cats run in like they are crazy. As soon as they see that it's her, they turn around and race outside as fast as possible.

For me, it's fun to watch all these critters gather around as though they were friends.

We have about five cats, four raccoons, two possums, and lately, our newest critters are chickens from our neighbor next door.

For some reason, these chickens have found the kitty food on our porch and like coming over and enjoy a snack. I enjoy watching them dance around on the porch, eating the snacks.

Also, the cats are sitting on the rocking chairs on the porch and over these chickens as they come for their daily treats.

If The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage sees these chickens, she immediately opens the door and chases them away. She will often throw water at them to keep them from returning.

Obviously, they're not that frightened of her and return on a regular schedule. To them it's Treats over Fear.

Out on the porch, we also have a bunch of birds, and at times hummingbirds. We have a lot of wasps and bees flying around. Then we have ants galore. Somehow, they found the bowl of kitty food and try to come as often as they can. The biggest obstacle, of course, is The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage.

A few years ago, we had foxes that came in the evening, but I haven't seen them for a while.

And then we have lizards. For some reason, they came to our back porch and moved in. They act like they own the place and do all kinds of lizardly things, much to the chagrin of The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage.

I've heard a rumor about some black bear in our neighborhood. It would be a delight some night to see a black bear coming on our back porch eating some kitty treats. Of course, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage would have an absolute meltdown if that ever happened.

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I'm not sure who would be worse off, the black bear or The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage.

One morning, I was in the bathroom getting ready for the day when I noticed in the shower a little lizard. He climbed halfway up the wall and just stared at me. I think he thought I was the intruder.

I stared back, talked to him a little bit, and told him to be careful of the other person in the house. He just stared at me and blinked his eyes.

I had forgotten that incident, and later in the day, as we were drinking coffee together, I happened to remember it. I looked at my wife and said, "I had a special visitor in the bathroom this morning."

She stared at me and said, "Who was that special visitor?"

I laughed very heartily and said, "That visitor was Henry."

Looking rather strange and confused, she said, "Who is Henry?"

"Ah, my dear, it was a lizard. I just call him Henry because we're friends."

"In your bathroom?" She gasped.

With that, she jumped up and ran to the bathroom looking for Henry. I could hear her frantically calling his name for well over an hour. Finally, it grew silent, and she came out from the bathroom and sat down.

"Well," I said with a smile, "did you meet my friend Henry?"

Scowling at me, she said, "I flushed your friend down the toilet."

I didn't know if I should have a memorial service for Henry or not. I'm pretty sure The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage would not show up at that service.

I'm patiently waiting for the next Henry to show up in my bathroom. Maybe the next time, I won't tell The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage. Or, perhaps I should catch one of those lizards, put it in her bathroom, and see what happens.

It might be a memorial service for me.

With that in mind, I thought of an important Bible verse. "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth" (Genesis 1:26).

From God's perspective, we who have been created in His image and likeness, have a responsibility to care for the animals God has created. He has authorized us to care for them in obedience to His Word.

EARTHTALK ™

Dear EarthTalk: I heard we're running out of so-called "tonewoods" for making acoustic guitars. Are there are alternative materials that eco-minded luthiers can switch to? – B.C., Montgomery, PA

Most guitars out there today are crafted out of some form of spruce, mahogany, maple or cedar. But increased demand and widespread mechanized logging around the world has decimated populations of many of these so-called "tonewoods," leaving luthiers (guitar makers) with little choice but to start considering alternative materials.

Man-made materials are becoming popular as tonewood alternatives. The most pervasive non-wood guitar material out there now is carbon fiber. Enya, Emerald, KLOS and Lava Music are among the companies pioneering the use of carbon fiber as the base material for their guitars. It has many benefits such as durability—it's 10 times stronger than steel—and light weight, but it's hardly sustainable given that it's made from a non-biodegradable petroleum-based polymer that cannot be recycled or melted down.

A better choice for the eco-minded strummer could be Flaxwood, made by breaking the grain structure of natural wood and injection-molding it into shape with an acoustically sensitive binding agent. The resulting composite resists changes in humidity, and provides an eco-friendly alternative to tonewoods.

Another good option is a guitar made out of reclaimed wood. Whether the wood was salvaged from a barn, a table or a deck, it could be the perfectly aged tonewood of your dreams. And you're saving living trees from being cut down to build a new guitar.

Believe it or not, bamboo is also a good substitute for tonewoods. Luna's Woodland Bamboo Grand Auditorium Acoustic-Electric Guitar is a beauty made out of bamboo—and offers many features and great playability for a modest price.

There are also plenty of alternative tonewoods out there that are from less rare trees. Buying a guitar made of Agathis wood helps preserve the rainforests where the trees grow in Southeast Asia. Koa, basswood, khaya and sapele are all good stand-ins for spruce and mahogany without the conservation baggage. Some Martin models now feature wood from fast growing granadillo trees, native to Venezuela. And Fender has swapped out rosewood for more sustainably grown pau ferro on various guitars in its line.

In 2011, Taylor Guitars, a preeminent acoustic guitar maker, bought a controlling interest in Crelicam, an ebony mill located outside of Yaoundé, Cameroon. In the ensuing years, Taylor has worked with Crelicam on the sustainable sourcing of ebony for use by guitar builders and other craftspeople.

As our planet grapples with environmental challenges, guitar makers are on the cutting edge of harmonizing their craft with sustainability. Indeed, the quest for eco-friendly alternatives to traditional tonewoods has struck a chord in the luthier community.



Guitar players now have a lot of sweet sounding and sustainable alternatives to increasingly rare tonewoods.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Legislative Roundup: Tuition freeze expected in budget as session enters final week

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR, MAKENZIE HUBER AND SETH TUPPER - MARCH 2, 2024 7:00 AM

Lawmakers on a budget committee have agreed to another tuition freeze for state universities as South Dakota's legislative session enters its final week and attention turns to the budget.

If the agreement holds, it will be the third consecutive year that tuition has gone unchanged.

The goal is retaining young South Dakotans and supporting workforce development by attracting students from other states, said Sen. Ryan Maher, R-Isabel.

"We can't grow our workforce organically by producing more people in South Dakota, so we're keeping our young people in the state, and by doing these tuition freezes, it's been a great, great benefit to our existing businesses and our people across the state of South Dakota," said Maher, a member of the Joint Appropriations Committee.

That committee will be busy next week finishing up revisions to the current fiscal year's budget and finalizing the next fiscal year's budget. Legislators, who began this year's session on Jan. 9, will meet Monday through Thursday and then be off until March 25, when they're scheduled to consider vetoes from Gov. Kristi Noem.

The following are status summaries of bills South Dakota Searchlight is monitoring.

Prison money

The House sent several bills to the governor this week for prison construction costs.

Senate Bill 50 would appropriate \$2.42 million of remaining federal American Rescue Plan Act money for water and sewer infrastructure at the site of a soon-to-be constructed women's prison in Rapid City. The bill would also move other money to prepare for construction, which is estimated to cost \$87 million.

The new prison is intended to ease overcrowding at the existing women's prison in Pierre. Senate Bill 170 would appropriate \$5.75 million in state funds for designing, renovating, constructing, furnishing and equipping the expansion of health care services areas at that prison.

Senate Bill 49 would appropriate \$10 million in remaining ARPA funds for water and sewer infrastructure at the proposed site of a future men's prison in rural Lincoln County, to replace the antiquated penitentiary in Sioux Falls. The bill would also move other money in preparation for construction, bringing the total amount set aside for the project to \$567 million, in anticipation of a cost expected to push \$700 million.

Teacher pay

A bill that would establish a statewide minimum teacher salary and tie that and a district's average teacher compensation to legislative increases in state aid passed a Senate committee after being amended on Thursday. The amendment would lower the compensation requirement to half of the annual legislative increases. For example, if the Legislature approved a 4% increase, schools would have to increase their average teacher compensation by at least 2%. The bill will now heads to the Senate floor.

However, the House wholly amended a separate bill hours later to revive the version of the teacher-pay bill that passed the House last week. The chambers will try to work out their differences on the bills next

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week.

Carbon pipeline bills

Some lawmakers are making a final push on a trio of bills they describe as an effort to balance the interests of both opponents and proponents of a carbon dioxide pipeline.

One of the bills, Senate Bill 201, was sent to a conference committee Thursday that will work to reconcile the House and Senate differences, while the other two bills in the package underwent amendments in the Senate Commerce and Energy Committee.

Senate Bill 201 would require the state Public Utilities Commission to overrule county pipeline regulations that are overly burdensome. It would also allow counties to impose a \$1-per-foot surcharge on pipelines. House Bills 1185 and 1186 would implement new protections for landowners during surveying and regulate terms of pipeline easement agreements, respectively.

Abortion video

A bill requiring the executive branch to create a video "and other materials" explaining the state's abortion ban and an exception for the life of the mother passed the Senate on a 31-3 vote Thursday. The bill now heads to the governor's desk for final consideration.

Some providers have had questions regarding legal care in life-or-death situations since the ban was triggered, and some OB-GYNs are hesitant to provide critical care for fear of legal repercussions.

Concealed carry in schools

The House of Representatives voted 62-8 on Tuesday to send a bill to the governor that would allow holders of enhanced permits to carry a concealed pistol on public school premises after obtaining permission from the school principal.

Future Fund oversight

Responding to recent controversies about a fund controlled exclusively by the governor, lawmakers sent a bill through the House of Representatives on a 69-1 vote Wednesday that would require greater oversight of the spending.

The legislation would require the Governor's Office of Economic Development to biannually report to the Legislature the name and amount of grants from the fund, the location of the recipients, the research or economic development purpose being funded, the measures used to determine the economic impact, and the number of jobs created or retained.

Gov. Kristi Noem's uses of the Future Fund last year included \$2.5 million for a Governor's Cup rodeo in Sioux Falls and \$5 million for her Freedom Works Here workforce recruitment campaign, which stars her in a series of advertisements.

The bill now heads back to the Senate for consideration of an amendment.

'Diet weed'

The state House voted 69-1 on Wednesday to ban the widely available, hemp-derived "diet weed" products that induce highs similar to marijuana.

House Bill 1125 targets a wide swath of products. The gummies, vape pens, pre-rolled joints and smokable flowers can be produced using high concentrations of the psychoactive chemicals present in miniscule amounts in industrial hemp, or using synthetically derived versions of those same chemicals.

The bill now goes to the governor.

Banning obscenity on campus

The House concurred in amendments to a bill on Thursday by a 61-7 vote that would ban "obscene live conduct" at state universities. Opponents view it as a veiled attempt to target drag shows. Proponents say

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they are giving legal teeth to an existing Board of Regents policy. The legislation now goes to the governor.

Blaze pink hunters

A bill to add blaze pink as a legally recognized hunter safety color passed the Senate on Monday in a 32-0 vote. It now goes to the governor.

Reclaiming mines

The Senate agreed 30-3 on Tuesday with the House's amendments on a bill that would increase the state's financial protections against some types of abandoned mines.

The legislation focuses on sand, gravel and construction-aggregate mines. Mine operators already have to post a surety, which is cash or a financial instrument the state can seize to clean up a mine if the operator doesn't complete the work. For the types of mines addressed in the bill, that surety is currently \$500 per acre or a statewide "blanket" of \$20,000 — amounts that haven't changed since the 1980s.

If signed by the governor, the legislation would increase those amounts in phases up to to \$3,850 per acre and \$300,000, respectively, by 2029.

911 phone surcharges

On Feb. 14, a bill to increase funding for 911 call centers by raising phone customers' monthly surcharge from \$1.25 to \$2 per line failed to reach the two-thirds majority it needed to pass. However, senators voted on Feb. 15 to have the bill reconsidered at a later date. The bill was amended to include a reporting requirement for 911 call centers' business activities. It was reconsidered Thursday and passed on a 30-4 vote. It now goes back to the House for consideration of the amendment.

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.

SDSU dairy facility

Gov. Noem signed a bill Wednesday repealing \$7.5 million in state funding for South Dakota State University to construct a new dairy research and training facility. The original funding bill, which passed in 2021, was intended to support the project, but the university was unable to raise enough matching donations to construct the facility.

Civics center

The Senate Education Committee voted 5-2 on Thursday to support a plan to create the Dr. Nicholas W. Drummond Center for Civic Engagement at Black Hills State University, to "provide undergraduate students with the foundation to succeed as lifelong citizens and future leaders in political, economic, and civic life." The bill awaits a vote in the Senate.

Landowner elk hunting

A bill that would create extra licenses for South Dakota landowners and their lessees to hunt a female elk every year on agricultural land in areas known as the Prairie Elk Units passed the House on a 57-21 vote. The units include much of the land west of the Missouri River, but not the Black Hills. The bill awaits consideration by the governor.

Statewide child care study

The Senate tabled a bill on Tuesday that would require the Department of Social Services to conduct an in-depth, state-wide study on child care accessibility and costs.

The bill's prime sponsor, Sen. Tim Reed, R-Brookings, told lawmakers that DSS committed to providing the information and research in a report without requiring additional funding from the Legislature. Reed

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intends to use information obtained from the department to inform future legislation.

Creating an Indian Child Advisory Council

A bill that would establish an advisory council to foster conversations and gather data on the overrepresentation of Native American children in the state's foster care system passed the Senate with a 31-1 vote on Monday. The bill awaits action by the governor.

Creating a public defender office

A bill to establish a statewide public defender office unanimously passed the Senate on Wednesday after being amended to add \$3 million in one-time funds to reimburse counties for their current indigent defense costs.

The office would cost \$1.4 million annually and would help alleviate the financial burden counties face in providing legal representation to criminal defendants who can't afford an attorney. Counties would still shoulder much of the burden, with the state office taking on only some types of cases.

The bill now heads back to the House for its consideration of the amendment.

Phonics instruction

A bill allocating \$3 million to the state Department of Education to provide professional development for teachers in phonics-based reading instruction passed the House 62-6 on Monday. The bill is skipping a committee hearing and will be heard next in the Senate.

School election dates

A bill that would align school board election dates with primary and general elections was rejected Wednesday by the Senate State Affairs Committee on an 8-1 vote.

Protecting poll workers, election officials

A bill that would have made it a misdemeanor crime to threaten or intimidate a poll worker or election official with the intent to improperly influence an election failed in the House on Tuesday in a 24-46 vote. The decision was influenced by a claim that such incidents don't happen in South Dakota, yet auditors have said they've been threatened and have worried for their safety.

Habitat plates

Gov. Noem signed HB 1119 on Friday, which will create a specialty license plate South Dakotans can purchase to help fund wildlife habitat conservation. She signed the bill during the opening ceremony for the National Pheasant Fest & Quail Classic in Sioux Falls.

Free IDs, birth certificates for homeless people

Legislation to help homeless people obtain personal documents is headed to the governor. House Bill 1098, which would allow for a waiver of the \$15 fee attached to a request for a certified copy of a birth certificate, passed the Senate 28-5 on Tuesday. HB 1131, which would waive the \$28 fee for a state identification card, passed the Senate 27-6 on the same day.

Child support in fatal drunken driving cases

The House voted 69-1 on Wednesday to send legislation to the governor that would require drunken drivers who kill parents to pay child support for the victims' children.

Fake ballots

Campaign mailers or other election-related materials that reproduce ballots and purport to be "official" would have been illegal if HB 1239 became law. The Senate State Affairs Committee rejected the bill 9-0

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on Wednesday.

Grants for loggers and sawmills

A bill lingered in limbo last week that would use remaining federal American Rescue Plan Act money to issue grants for Black Hills loggers and sawmills negatively impacted by the pandemic. The Senate approved it 33-0 on Wednesday, but only with \$1 in the bill as legislators on the budget committee investigate whether the grants are a qualifying use of the federal funds.

Voter registration deadline

Despite county auditors saying it could result in fewer South Dakotans voting, a legislative committee endorsed a bill Wednesday that would require voters to register 30 days before an election rather than the current 15.

The bill would also add language into law saying "Only a citizen of the United States may vote in a municipal, county, primary, general, school district or any other election in this state." It would replace a 30-day state residency requirement adopted last year — which is now widely viewed as unlikely to withstand a legal challenge — with less stringent language saying a voter must have "fixed a habitation" in the state to which they intend to return.

The bill awaits action by the House.

Medical pot for parolees

The House Judiciary Committee endorsed a bill Wednesday that would require parolees and probationers to get additional sign-offs from a health care practitioner to get a medical cannabis card.

Current law on medical cannabis has no prohibitions on access for people on probation or parole, even as steering clear of drugs and alcohol are often expectations for those serving out a sentence of supervision.

Senate Bill 191 wouldn't bar the issuance of a medical cannabis card for a person on supervised release. It would instead require that the prescribing practitioner certify that the drug is consistent with the patient's care plan for a debilitating medical condition, that it's reasonable based on the practitioner's observations about the patient, and that it's a better option than alternative treatments. Those certifications would need to be delivered in some form to a court services officer or parole officer.

The bill awaits action by the House.

Medical marijuana laws

Several bills that would alter medical marijuana laws are headed to the governor after gaining final legislative passage this week.

Senate Bill 42 includes several changes to existing medical cannabis law, including adjustments to probation policies for dispensaries that run afoul of regulations. The biggest change, however, would require the names of medical cannabis cardholders to be added to the state's prescription drug monitoring program. Currently, anyone prescribed a narcotic is listed in that database, used by providers to check for doctor-shopping by addicts.

Senate Bill 43 would increase the state fee for a dispensary license application from \$5,000 to \$9,000, allow fines of up to \$10,000 for misbehaving dispensaries and allow the Department of Health to terminate a dispensary's license for repeated and serious regulatory violations.

Senate Bill 71 repeals a provision barring law enforcement from inspecting dispensaries, manufacturing facilities, or testing facilities, or from seizing their cannabis.

Meanwhile, Gov. Noem signed SB 11 on Tuesday, which would prohibit a practitioner from referring a patient to a medical cannabis clinic with which the practitioner or an immediate family member has a financial relationship.

Triple juvenile justice aid to counties

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The state would triple the amount paid to counties for keeping kids out of the juvenile justice system under a bill approved Thursday by the House. Senate Bill 47, which is headed to the governor, would push the per-juvenile payment for successful "diversions" from \$250 to \$750.

Stiffer fentanyl sentences

The House voted Monday to send a bill to the governor that would put drug dealers who knowingly sell fentanyl to someone who later dies of an overdose in line for longer sentences.

Social media threats

The House Judiciary Committee voted 7-5 on Monday to reject a bill that would have updated state law on threats of serious bodily harm or death to law enforcement to include threats made electronically.

Landlords and tenants

Two bills that streamline the process of removing tenants from their homes are on their way to the governor after passing the House this week.

Senate Bill 90 would remove the requirement that landlords issue a non-binding three-day "notice to quit" on tenants before starting an eviction proceeding in court.

Senate Bill 89, meanwhile, adjusts the required waiting period on a notice to vacate from 30 to 15 days for "at will" tenants.

Clemency applications

A bill awaiting action by the governor would change how long inmates sentenced to life in prison have to wait between applications for clemency, such as a reduced sentence or parole. The bill says when such inmates are denied a clemency request, they would have to wait four more years before applying again.

Sex assault evidence

A bill that would make it easier for prosecutors to tell jurors about previous sexual assault allegations in child sexual assault cases passed the House on Monday and awaits action by the governor.

Senate Bill 97, which would have allowed such evidence in adult sexual assault cases, failed earlier in the session.

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

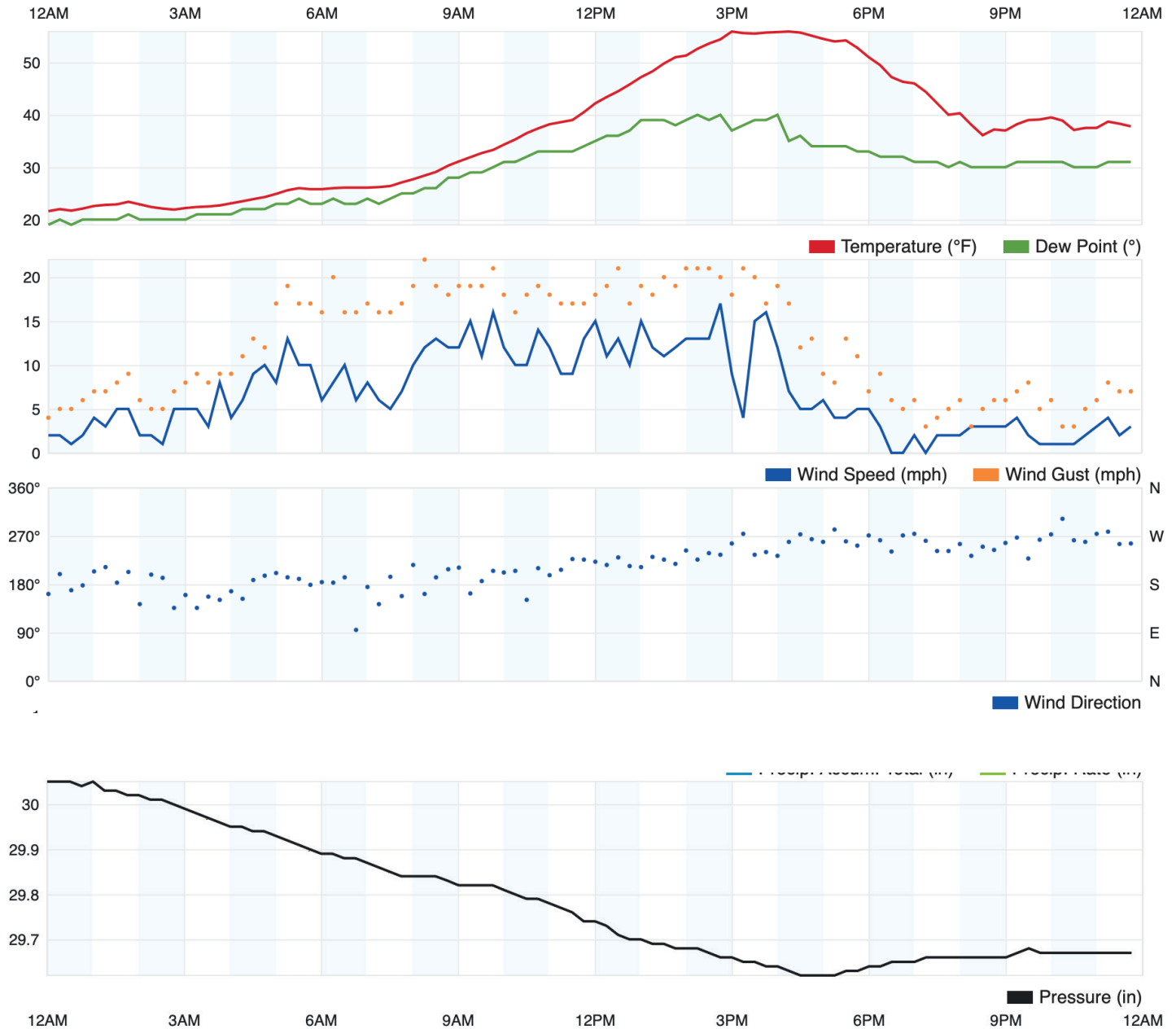
Makenzie Huber is a lifelong South Dakotan whose work has won national and regional awards. She's spent five years as a journalist with experience reporting on workforce, development and business issues within the state.

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

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Wind Advisory

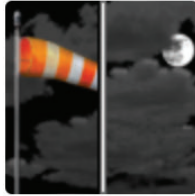
Today



Breezy.
Slight Chance
Rain then
Decreasing
Clouds

High: 51 °F

Tonight



Partly Cloudy
and Breezy
then Mostly
Cloudy

Low: 25 °F

Monday



Mostly Sunny

High: 42 °F

Monday
Night



Partly Cloudy
then Slight
Chance Snow

Low: 20 °F

Tuesday



Mostly Sunny

High: 40 °F

Today



A slight chance of rain between 11am and noon. Cloudy, then gradually becoming mostly sunny, with a high near 52. Windy, with a northeast wind 9 to 14 mph becoming west 20 to 30 mph in the morning. Winds could gust as high as 41 mph. Chance of precipitation is 20%.

Tonight



Partly cloudy, with a low around 25. Breezy, with a west wind 20 to 25 mph decreasing to 8 to 13 mph after midnight. Winds could gust as high as 38 mph.

Monday



Mostly sunny, with a high near 42. West northwest wind 5 to 10 mph becoming light northwest in the afternoon.

Monday Night



A slight chance of snow after midnight. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 21. East northeast wind 6 to 13 mph. Chance of precipitation is 20%.

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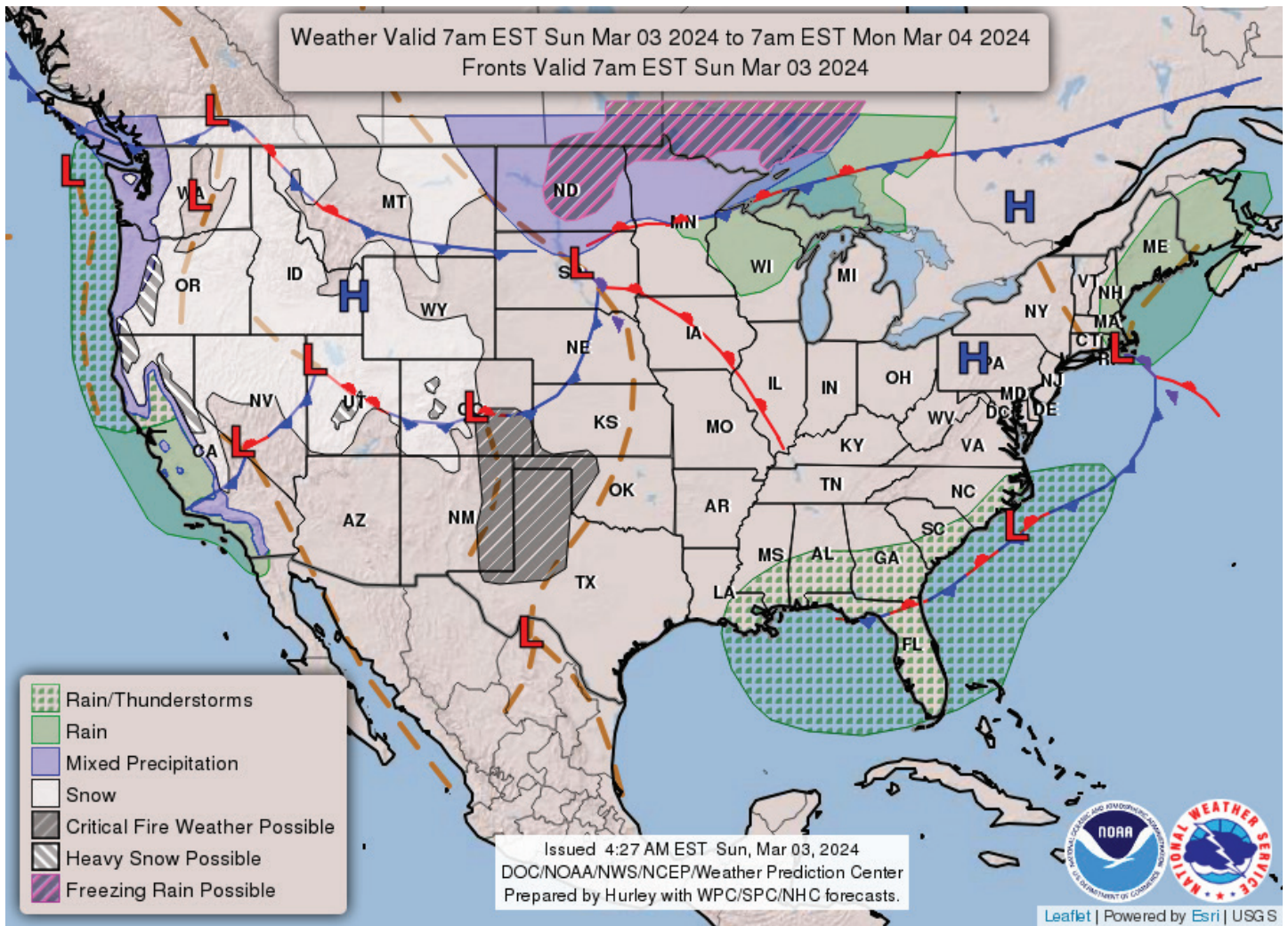
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 47 °F at 3:50 PM
Low Temp: 29 °F at 6:07 AM
Wind: 24 mph at 10:59 AM
Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 11 hours, 20 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 72 in 1905
Record Low: -20 in 2019
Average High: 35
Average Low: 13
Average Precip in March.: 0.07
Precip to date in March: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 1.24
Precip Year to Date: 0.07
Sunset Tonight: 6:24:15 pm
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:02:12 am



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Today in Weather History

March 3, 1994: The melting of a very high snowpack resulted in flooding along the James River and other lowlands and farmland. Widespread problems included damaged roads, washed-out culverts, and flood damage to homes, especially basement flooding.

1896: The temperature in downtown San Francisco, California, fell to 33 degrees, which was the lowest ever for the city in March.

1966: An F5 tornado, which would become known as the "Candlestick Park" tornado, named after a shopping center in south Jackson, was destroyed by the tornado. One of only two documented F5 tornadoes to strike Mississippi in the 20th century. The worst damage occurred in parts of Hinds, Rankin, Scott, and Leake counties, where 57 people were killed and over 500 were injured.

1980 - A coastal storm produced 25 inches of snow at Elizabeth City, NC, and 30 inches at Cape Hatteras NC. At Miami FL the mercury dipped to 32 degrees. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1983 - The last of a series of storms to strike the California coast finally came to an end. Waves fifteen to twenty feet high pounded the coast for two days, and in a four day period up to 18 inches of rain drenched the Los Angeles and Santa Barbara area. On the morning of the first, thunderstorms spawned two tornadoes which moved through the Los Angeles area. (Storm Data)

1987 - A storm brought heavy rain and gale force winds to Washington and Oregon. Quillayute WA received 2.67 inches of rain in 24 hours, and winds gusted to 60 mph at Astoria OR. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - A small but intense low pressure system roared across west central Mississippi at 90 mph early in the morning. A tornado in southern Mississippi picked up an automobile, carried it 150 feet, and tossed it through the brick wall of an unoccupied retirement home. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Wintry weather prevailed from the southern Rockies to the Upper Great Lakes. Neguanee MI received 19 inches of snow, and up to 24 inches of snow blanketed Colorado. Blizzard conditions were reported in Minnesota. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - An upper level weather disturbance produced snow in the Colorado Rockies, with eight inches reported at Winter Park, and a storm moving off the Pacific Ocean began to spread rain and snow across the western U.S. March continued to start off like a lamb elsewhere around the country. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1991: A significant ice storm coated parts of central and northwestern New York State with up to two inches of ice. The damage totaled \$375 million. It was the most costly natural disaster ever in the state up until that time. Nearly half a million people were without power at the height of the storm, and many would not see their power restored until the 16th.

2003 - It was a day of temperature extremes. Miami reached a high temperature of 90 degrees, the earliest observed 90 degree temperature since March 5, 1964. Meanwhile Marquette, MI, dropped to 30 degrees below zero, the lowest temperature ever recorded in the city in March.

2016: A deadly severe weather event affected the Southeastern United States on March 3, 2019. Over 6 hours, 41 tornadoes touched down across portions of Alabama, Georgia, Florida, and South Carolina. The strongest was an EF4 tornado that devastated rural communities from Beauregard, Alabama, through Smiths Station, Alabama, to Talbotton, Georgia, killing 23 people and injuring at least 100 others.

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

LIVING FOR OTHERS

William Booth, the Founder of the Salvation Army, had a deep love for the Lord and the poor of London. In fact, the Salvation Army was founded in the slums of London in a nation that was not very kind to the poor. Booth was even arrested for practicing charity among the poor.

During that era, the needs of the poor were tremendous, and the times were difficult for all. As a result, his work multiplied. He was told that there was a similar need in America and decided to send some "volunteers" from his Army to America to begin the same work here.

On one occasion, the American Salvation Army was having a convention. Although he could not attend, he was asked to send a message to those in attendance. He cabled one word only: "Others!"

There is a great danger when we do not think of or see or hear "Others!" Paul warned about it when he wrote, "Don't be selfish: don't live to make a good impression on others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourself."

It is almost impossible to imagine the impact that we Christians could have on the world if we took Paul's words to heart. Imagine with me, if you can, how different the world would be if we accepted the problems of others as though they were ours, and do something about them.

Prayer: Help me, Father, to accept my responsibility to be moved with compassion and act with compassion to meet their needs. May I work with You to help others. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Philippians 2:3



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: 03.01.24

15 33 37 55 61 24

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$650,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

03.02.24

9 19 35 38 45 3

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$3,720,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

03.02.24

1 4 19 26 37 2

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 5 Mins 54 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

03.02.24

3 10 20 32 35

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$20,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

03.02.24

18 31 36 43 61 10

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

03.02.24

3 18 27 36 53 12

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$460,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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News from the  Associated Press

Saturday's Scores

The Associated Press

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL=

SDHSAA Playoffs=

Class AA SODAK 16=

Semifinal=

Brandon Valley 70, Spearfish 48

Harrisburg 79, Sturgis Brown High School 41

Huron 62, Sioux Falls O'Gorman 51

Mitchell 60, Yankton 46

Sioux Falls Jefferson 63, Rapid City Stevens 59, OT

Sioux Falls Roosevelt 54, Aberdeen Central High School 36

Sioux Falls Washington 52, T F Riggs High School 47

Watertown 31, Sioux Falls Lincoln 28

Ihenacho scores 24, North Dakota knocks off South Dakota 95-66

By The Associated Press undefined

GRAND FORKS, N.D. (AP) — Tyree Ihenacho had 24 points in North Dakota's 95-66 victory against South Dakota on Saturday.

Ihenacho also contributed eight assists for the Fightin' Hawks (18-13, 10-6 Summit League). Treysen Eaglestaff scored 19 points, shooting 7 for 14, including 3 for 8 from beyond the arc. Tsoetne Tsartsidze shot 6 for 10, including 2 for 5 from beyond the arc to finish with 14 points, while adding seven rebounds.

The Coyotes (12-19, 5-11) were led by Lahat Thioune, who posted 15 points. South Dakota also got 14 points from Kaleb Stewart. In addition, Bostyn Holt finished with 13 points.

The Associated Press created this story using technology provided by Data Skrive and data from Sportradar.

South Dakota State earns 78-61 win against North Dakota State

By The Associated Press undefined

FARGO, N.D. (AP) — Zeke Mayo's 19 points helped South Dakota State defeat North Dakota State 78-61 on Saturday.

Mayo also added five rebounds for the Jackrabbits (19-12, 12-4 Summit League). Luke Appel scored 14 points while finishing 7 of 10 from the floor, and added six rebounds. Charlie Easley shot 6 for 11, including 1 for 4 from beyond the arc to finish with 13 points, while adding three steals.

Jacari White led the way for the Bison (15-16, 8-8) with 16 points. Boden Skunberg added 12 points for North Dakota State. In addition, Noah Feddersen finished with 11 points.

Shehbaz Sharif is Pakistan's new premier. Imran Khan's allies in parliament protest, allege rigging

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Lawmakers in Pakistan's National Assembly elected Sunday Shehbaz Sharif as the country's new prime minister for the second time as allies of imprisoned former premier Imran Khan in parliament shouted in protest against his appointment, alleging rigging in last month's election.

Speaker Ayaz Sadiq said Sharif secured 201 votes, defeating Omar Ayub of the Sunni Ittehad Council

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who got 92 votes. The winner only needs 169 votes to get majority.

Ayub enjoyed the backing of Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party, or PTI, whose candidates could not get enough seats to form a government on their own. The PTI refused to hold talks with its rivals to form a coalition.

Following days of negotiations, Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League party and his supporters formed an alliance after the Feb. 8 election whose results were announced after an unusual delay because of a nationwide mobile phone outage. Authorities said the cutting of communications was necessary to avoid militant attacks on candidates and security forces.

However, the delay drew criticism from Khan's party, which insists the vote was rigged to stop it from getting a majority. The party claims it has evidence that its victory "was stolen during the vote count," a charge the Election Commission denies.

Sharif, in his acceptance speech in parliament Sunday, said: "We were subjected to political victimization in the past but never took any revenge." Without naming Imran Khan, he said the previous ruler jailed many political rivals, including himself and his ally Asif Ali Zardari.

He also accused Khan's supporters of attacking the military installations after his ouster in 2022, adding that now the parliament and the courts will decide whether those involved in attacking the military installations deserved a pardon.

Holding portraits of Khan, his allies stood in front of Sharif when he began his speech, shouting "vote thief" and "shame." Sharif denounced their actions, saying they were causing chaos in parliament. He also said they should present their evidence of vote rigging to the relevant authorities.

Sharif then addressed the opposition saying, "I am offering you reconciliation. Let us sit together to work for the betterment of Pakistan." But he was greeted with more protests and shouts.

The premier also spoke of repairing ties with the United States. Relations between the two countries have been strained after Khan accused the U.S., Sharif and Pakistani military of conspiring to keep him out of office, following his ouster.

Sharif also said his biggest challenge was the economic situation for Pakistan has been relying on foreign loans to run the economy. His government faces multiple issues, including how to respond to a surge in militant attacks, fix the ailing economy, improve relations with the neighboring, Taliban-run Afghanistan, repair crumbling infrastructure, and resolve year-round power outages. It must also maintain political stability as Khan's party has vowed to continue protests against the alleged vote-rigging.

Khan, who is currently serving prison terms in multiple cases and has been barred from seeking or holding office, wrote last week a letter to the International Monetary Fund, urging it to link any talks with Islamabad to an audit of February's election. Khan's move comes days before the IMF releases a key installment of a bailout loan to Pakistan.

Pakistan has been relying on bailouts to prop up its foreign exchange reserves and avoid default, with the IMF and wealthy allies like China and Saudi Arabia financing the country to the tune of billions of dollars. Under his previous term as prime minister, Sharif — who replaced Khan after his ouster in a no-confidence vote in parliament in April 2022 — had to struggle for months to get \$3 billion bailout from the IMF.

Sharif has said he will seek a new IMF bailout after the end of March when the current one expires.

South Korean doctors hold massive anti-government rally over medical school recruitment plan

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — Thousands of senior doctors rallied in the South Korean capital, Seoul, on Sunday to express their support for junior doctors who have been on strike for nearly two weeks over a government plan to sharply increase the number of medical school admissions.

The rally came as the government said it would begin to take steps Monday to suspend the doctors' licenses of nearly 9,000 medical interns and residents for defying government orders to end their walkouts, which have disrupted hospital operations.

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"The government's absurd medical policy has triggered immense resistance by trainee doctors and medical students, and we doctors have become one," Park Sung-min, a senior member of the Korea Medical Association, said in a speech at the rally. "I'm asking the government: Please, stop the threats and suppression now."

Protesters chanted slogans, sang and held placards criticizing the government's plan. There were no reports of violence.

As of Thursday night, 8,945 of the country's 13,000 medical interns and residents were confirmed to have left their worksites, according to the Health Ministry. The government had said they would face minimum three-month license suspensions and indictments by prosecutors if they didn't return by Feb. 29.

The striking doctors are a fraction of South Korea's 140,000 doctors. But they account for 30-40% of the total doctors at some major hospitals, where they assist senior doctors during surgeries and other treatments while training. Their walkouts have subsequently caused numerous cancellations of surgeries and medical treatments at the hospitals.

Senior doctors have staged a series of rallies backing the young doctors but haven't joined the walkouts. If they also launch strikes, observers say that would be a major blow to South Korea's medical service. Prime Minister Han Duck-soo on Sunday urged senior doctors to persuade the striking junior doctors to return to work.

Police said they were investigating five ranking Korea Medical Association officials accused of inciting and abetting the junior doctors' walkouts. Seoul police chief Cho Ji-ho told reporters Sunday that police had raided KMA offices as part of the investigation.

The government wants to increase South Korea's medical school enrollment quota by 2,000 starting next year, from the current 3,058, to better deal with the country's rapidly aging population. Officials say South Korea's doctor-to-population ratio is one of the lowest among developed countries.

But many doctors have vehemently protested the plan, saying medical schools can't handle such a sharp increase in the number of students. They say the recruitment plan also does not address a chronic shortage of doctors in essential but low-paying specialties like pediatrics and emergency departments. Doctors say adding too many new doctors would also increase public medical expenses since greater competition would lead to excess treatments.

Without concrete plans on how to educate the newly added students, "the quality of medical education will plunge endlessly, resulting in a unsafe, low-quality medical service and eventually a collapse of the medical service of the Republic of Korea," Lee Jeong-geun, acting leader of the Korea Medical Association, said at the rally.

The protests by doctors haven't won public support, with a survey showing a majority of South Koreans support the government plan. Some critics say doctors — one of the best-paid professions in South Korea — simply worry about receiving a lower income due to the rising number of doctors.

In Hawaii, coral is the foundation of life. What happened to it after the Lahaina wildfire?

By AUDREY McAVOY Associated Press

Abraham "Snake" Ah Hee rides waves when the surf's up and dives for octopus and shells when the water is calm. The lifelong Lahaina, Hawaii, resident spends so much time in the ocean that his wife jokes he needs to wet his gills.

But these days Ah Hee is worried the water fronting his Maui hometown may not be safe after the deadliest U.S. wildfire in a century scorched more than 2,000 buildings in August and left behind piles of toxic debris. He is concerned runoff could carry contaminants into the ocean where they could get into the coral, seaweed and food chain.

"Now with all these things happening, you don't know if the fish is good to eat," Ah Hee said.

Scientists say there has never been another instance of a large urban fire burning next to a coral reef anywhere in the world and they are using the Maui wildfire as a chance to study how chemicals and metals

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from burned plastics, lead paint and lithium-ion batteries might affect delicate reef ecosystems.

The research, which is already underway in the waters off Maui, could ultimately help inform residents, tourists and coastal tropical communities worldwide as climate change increases the likelihood of extreme weather events of the kind that fueled the wildfire.

A bill before the state House would provide long-term funding for water quality monitoring in hopes of providing answers for residents whose lives are closely tied to the ocean.

For now, state officials are urging the public to limit their exposure to the ocean and seafood until scientists understand what might be making its way through the food chain.

"I know a lot of people keep asking, 'Is the water safe? Can we go out? Is it safe to fish and eat the fish?'" said Russell Sparks, Maui aquatic biologist at the state Department of Land and Natural Resources. "We just want to reinforce the message that we know it's frustrating, but if people can be patient. We've never encountered anything like this."

Coral reefs are sometimes called the "rainforests of the sea" because they are so crucial for healthy oceans. They are made up of stony corals, which are hard skeletons formed by thousands of individual living coral polyps that symbiotically host algae. Fish, crabs and other species find refuge in their midst. Scientists say one-fourth the ocean's fish depend on healthy coral reefs, which also protect shoreline communities from powerful waves during storms.

One of Hawaii's oldest stories, the centuries-old chant called The Kumulipo, reflects the central role of coral in the island chain. It says a coral polyp was the first living being to emerge from the darkness of creation. Starfish, worms, sea cucumber and other species followed. Humans came last.

"So the first form of life is a coral polyp. That is your foundation. The foundation of life is a coral," said Eklou Lindsey, a Lahaina community advocate who has long pushed to restore coral reefs, fishing and traditions in his hometown.

Lahaina's coral reefs had challenges even before the fire, including overfishing, abuse from kayak and stand-up paddleboard tours, warm ocean temperatures and sediment flows from fallow fields and construction sites, Lindsey said.

Much of the coral offshore of the burn zone was already degraded prior to August, Sparks said, but there were some patches of nice reef, like in an area north of Lahaina Harbor towards Mala Wharf.

Sea Maui, a whale watching and snorkeling tour company, frequently took snorkelers to the Mala Wharf reef in the past, where they would often see turtles and sometimes monk seals. Now, the company's boats avoid the reef due to concerns about runoff and out respect for the town, said Phil LeBlanc, partner and chief operating officer.

"We're not into disaster tourism," said LeBlanc, who instead sends tours south to Olowalu or north to Honolua Bay.

University of Hawaii at Manoa researchers obtained a \$200,000 grant from the National Science Foundation to test the water soon after the fire.

In October, they placed 20 sensors off West Maui that measure temperature, salinity, oxygen, turbidity and chlorophyll every five minutes. They have six sensors measuring where water is flowing for clues on where contaminants might travel and accumulate, said Andrea Kealoha, a Manoa professor and Maui native who is leading the research project.

The Hui O Ka Wai Ola citizen science group collects additional samples, including after heavy rain events.

Researchers are taking tissue fragments from fish, seaweed and coral for signs of heavy metals and contaminants from burned wood, metal and plastics.

Their grant covers work through August. So far they don't have enough data to draw conclusions but aim to release some results within a month.

Kealoha suspects scientists may detect contaminants accumulating in plants and animals over the next two to five years. Degraded reefs and lower water quality could emerge over the same time frame and she is pressing for a long-term monitoring plan that could be supported with state funds, she said.

The wildfire's effects may also stretch beyond Maui, because scientists believe currents carry water from

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Lahaina waters to nearby Lanai and Molokai.

"Fish that you collect to eat off of a reef on Molokai may very well have compounds that washed into the water from rainfall in Lahaina and got transported to ocean currents across the channel and onto the reefs of neighboring islands," said Eric Conklin, the Nature Conservancy's director of marine science for Hawaii and Palmyra.

Authorities have been trying to limit harmful runoff. The U.S. Army of Corps of Engineers is removing rubble and ash. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency applied a soil stabilizer to prevent ash and dust from dispersing. Maui County officials placed protective barriers alongside storm drains and coastal roads to block debris.

Lindsey, the community advocate, lost his house in the blaze. Immediately after the fire, he was more focused on where he would live and the well-being of his family than the reef. But he also observed that the environment shapes his spiritual, mental and physical health.

He recalled how seeing turtles, seals and hundreds of crab marks on the beach fronting the remnants of his house prompted him to go surfing two months after the fire. January's heavy rains, and unknowns about runoff, have kept him out of the water since. But he still believes in nature's capacity to heal.

"When you see resources return like I did, it just fills your heart," Lindsey said. "Wow, we really messed this place up and would we leave it alone, nature will fix itself."

What to watch for as China's major political meeting of the year gets underway

By KEN MORITSUGU Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — One burning issue dominates as the 2024 session of China's legislature gets underway this week: the economy.

The National People's Congress annual meeting, which opens Tuesday, is being closely watched for any signals on what the ruling Communist Party might do to reenergize an economy that is sagging under the weight of expanded government controls and the bursting of a real-estate bubble.

That is not to say that other issues won't come up. Proposals to raise the retirement age are expected to be a hot topic, the state-owned Global Times newspaper said last week. And China watchers will parse the annual defense budget and the possible introduction of a new foreign minister.

But the economy is what is on most people's minds in a country that may be at a major turning point after four decades of growth that propelled China into a position of economic and geopolitical power. For many Chinese, the failure of the post-COVID economy to rally strongly last year is shaking a long-held confidence in the future.

A CEREMONIAL ROLE

The National People's Congress is largely ceremonial in that it doesn't have any real power to decide on legislation. The deputies do vote, but it's become a unanimous or near-unanimous formalizing of decisions that have been made by Communist Party leaders behind closed doors.

The congress can be a forum to propose and discuss ideas. The nearly 3,000 deputies are chosen to represent various groups, from government officials and party members to farmers and migrant workers. But Albert Wu, an expert on governance in China, believes that role has been eroded by the centralization of power under Chinese leader Xi Jinping.

"Everyone knows the signal is the top," said Wu, an associate professor at the National University of Singapore and a former journalist in China. "Once the top says something, I say something. Once the top keeps silent, I also keep silent."

Nonetheless, the reports and speeches during the congress can give indications of the future direction of government policy. And while they tend to be in line with previous announcements, major new initiatives have been revealed at the meeting, such as the 2020 decision to enact a national security law for Hong Kong following major anti-government protests in 2019.

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A TARGET FOR GROWTH

The first thing the legislature will do on Tuesday is receive a lengthy "work report" from Premier Li Qiang that will review the past year and include the government's economic growth target for this year.

Many analysts expect something similar to last year's target of "around 5%," which they say would affirm market expectations for a moderate step up in economic stimulus and measures to boost consumer and investor confidence.

Many current forecasts for China's GDP growth are below 5%, but setting a lower target would signal less support for the economy and could dampen confidence, said Jeremy Zook, the China lead analyst at Fitch Ratings, which is forecasting 4.6% growth this year.

Conversely, a higher target of about 5.5% would indicate more aggressive stimulus, said Neil Thomas, a Chinese politics fellow at the Asia Society Policy Institute.

There will be positive messages for private companies and foreign investors, Thomas said, but he doesn't expect a fundamental change to Xi's overall strategy of strengthening the party's control over the economy.

"Political signals ahead of the National People's Congress suggest that Xi is relatively unperturbed by China's recent market troubles and is sticking to his guns on economic policy," he said.

A NEW FOREIGN MINISTER, MAYBE

China's government ministers typically hold their posts for five years, but Qin Gang was dismissed as foreign minister last year after only a few months on the job. To this day, the government has not said what happened to him and why.

His predecessor, Wang Yi, has been brought back as foreign minister while simultaneously holding the more senior position of the Communist Party's top official on foreign affairs.

The presumption has been that Wang's appointment was temporary until a permanent replacement could be named. Analysts say that could happen during the National People's Congress, but there's no guarantee it will.

"Wang Yi enjoys Xi's trust and currently dominates diplomatic policymaking below the Xi level, so it would not be a shock if Wang remained foreign minister for a while longer," Thomas said.

The person who has gotten the most attention as a possible successor is Liu Jianchao, a Communist Party official who is a former Foreign Ministry spokesperson and ambassador to the Philippines and Indonesia. He has made several overseas trips in recent months including to Africa, Europe, Australia and the U.S., increasing speculation that he is the leading candidate.

Other names that have been floated include Ma Zhaoxu, the executive vice foreign minister. Wu said it likely depends on whom Xi and Wang trust.

"I don't know how Wang Yi thinks about it," he said. "If Wang Yi likes somebody like Liu Jianchao or likes somebody like Ma Zhaoxu. And also Xi Jinping. So it's more about personal relations."

Organized crime attacks on local candidates raise fears Mexico may face its bloodiest elections ever

By FABIOLA SÁNCHEZ Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — As Mexico prepares for the largest elections in its history, organized crime is once again preying on local candidates across swaths of the country where cartels dominate, raising concerns among experts that these could be Mexico's bloodiest elections ever.

Julián López, coordinator for the Citizen Movement party in the southern state of Guerrero, experienced it first hand when rifle-toting gunmen abducted him and two colleagues while they were driving on Feb. 7. The 43-year-old López was beaten, stripped of his possessions, made to kneel near a remote garbage dump and ultimately abandoned in the middle of the night.

Two mayoral hopefuls in the town of Maravatio in neighboring Michoacan state were not so fortunate. They were killed by gunmen within hours of each other Monday. One was from the governing Morena party of President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, the other from the conservative National Action Party. A third mayoral hopeful from that town was abducted and found dead in November.

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On Feb. 10, a man running for Congress for the Morena party in the sprawling Mexico City suburb of Ecatepec was fatally shot in the street alongside his brother. He had allegedly received threats from a local union.

A month earlier, on Jan. 5, the local leader of the Institutional Revolutionary Party and candidate for mayor of Suchiate, Chiapas, was killed. The same day, in the northwestern state of Colima, a mayoral candidate of the Citizen Movement party in Armeria was shot by gunmen while in his vehicle.

López, the candidate in Guerrero, has refused to travel in armored vehicles with armed security since his abduction.

"How will it look to see a leader moving around the state of Guerrero with armed officials and in armored cars?" he asked. "I don't think that's the way to get closer to the people or promote citizen participation."

Thousands of local candidates find themselves in a similar quandary ahead of the June 2 elections, which will occur in all 32 jurisdictions, with more than 20,000 positions up for grabs, making it Mexico's largest election, according to the National Electoral Institute.

While federal authorities offer security details to national candidates, those running for local offices – the ones that drug cartels really want to control – are completely exposed and acutely aware of the optics of running from within a security bubble.

The group Data Civica had tallied 30 attacks on political hopefuls and party officials from September – when most started pre-campaign activities – through Feb. 10. Its spokesperson, Itxaro Arteta, said they were "worried" after recording eight attacks on pre-candidates in January, more than double what they had seen before in that month since 2018.

Political scientist Manuel Pérez Aguirre coordinates the College of Mexico's Violence and Peace Seminar's research into electoral violence. Their investigation around the killings of 32 local candidates in the 2021 elections found that the lethal electoral violence is "predominantly local, because 85% of the victims were running for municipal posts."

"Local power is extremely important to organized crime," Pérez Aguirre said. "That's why they look to establish control at the municipal level."

Those local candidates have become more vulnerable under the security regime of the current president. López Obrador created the quasi-military National Guard, disbanded the federal police and what remains of local police forces can put up little resistance to heavily armed cartels.

"Local power has really been abandoned and municipal police haven't really been strengthened," Pérez Aguirre said.

López Obrador was dismissive of the concerns of growing electoral violence earlier this week following the killings in Maravatio. "The same tendency of declining crimes is going to continue, above all homicides," he said.

He said the federal government would protect candidates for president, governor and Congress, and he asked state and local governments to provide security for those running for local posts.

Guillermo Valencia, president of the Institutional Revolutionary Party in Michoacan said Saturday, "Four candidates have already resigned on me and I'm struggling to find candidates in other (races)," he said. The party's candidate for Congress in the port of Lazaro Cardenas already asked for protection, he said.

In Maravatio where the three potential candidates from other parties were already killed, Valencia said he's trying to pact with two other opposition parties to present a common candidate.

"In Michoacan and Mexico democracy is threatened," he said.

Political risk firm Integralia Consultores published a report in February noting that some parts of the country faced higher risk of organized crime interfering in elections because of an accumulation of illegal markets, conflict among armed groups and weak rule of law.

Cartels have diversified beyond the drug trade. They extort protection payments from all sizes of businesses and even local government. They exert their will not only through political assassinations but also by financing the campaigns of candidates who will allow them to operate or even putting up their own candidates, according to Integralia's report.

Marko Cortés, national president of the National Action Party, demanded more federal security for those participating in the elections as he condemned the killing of his party's candidate in Maravatio this week.

"It can't be that they're killing candidates from different parties," he said. "No one is protecting them, there are no risk maps, there are no protocols or security mechanisms and the indifference of those governing now continues."

Because of the violence, at least two candidates from his party have dropped out of the June election race. He declined to say where out of concern for their safety.

But López, who survived his abduction, refused to back down.

"We absolutely cannot surrender, we can't give up," he said. "Those of us who believe things can get better have to continue working."

Vice President Kamala Harris to join in marking anniversary of Bloody Sunday on Alabama bridge

Associated Press undefined

SELMA, Ala. (AP) — Vice President Kamala Harris is expected to be among those marking the 59th anniversary of Bloody Sunday, the day Alabama law officers attacked Civil Rights demonstrators on the iconic Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama.

The demonstrators were beaten by officers as they tried to march across Alabama on March 7, 1965, in support of voting rights. A march across the bridge, which is a highlight of the commemoration in Selma every year, is planned for Sunday afternoon.

Sunday's march is among dozens of events during the annual Selma Bridge Crossing Jubilee, which began Thursday and culminates Sunday. The events commemorate Bloody Sunday and the signing of the Voting Rights Act.

"During her speech, the Vice President will honor the legacy of the civil rights movement, address the ongoing work to achieve justice for all, and encourage Americans to continue the fight for fundamental freedoms that are under attack throughout the country," the White House said in announcing her visit.

Harris joined the march in 2022, calling the site hallowed ground and giving a speech calling on Congress to defend democracy by protecting people's right to vote. On that anniversary, Harris spoke of marchers whose "peaceful protest was met with crushing violence."

"They were kneeling when the state troopers charged," she said then. "They were praying when the billy clubs struck."

Images of the violence at the bridge stunned Americans, which helped galvanize support for passing the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The law struck down barriers prohibiting Black people from voting.

U.S. Rep. James Clyburn, a Democrat of South Carolina who is leading a pilgrimage to Selma, said he is seeking to "remind people that we are celebrating an event that started this country on a better road toward a more perfect union," but the right to vote is still not guaranteed.

Clyburn sees Selma as the nexus of the 1960s movement for voting rights, at a time when there currently are efforts to scale back those rights.

"The Voting Rights Act of 1965 became a reality in August of 1965 because of what happened on March 7th of 1965," Clyburn said.

"We are at an inflection point in this country," he added. "And hopefully this year's march will allow people to take stock of where we are."

Clyburn said he hopes the weekend in Alabama would bring energy and unity to the civil rights movement, as well as benefit the city of Selma.

"We need to do something to develop the waterfront, we need to do something that bring the industry back to Selma," Clyburn said. "We got to do something to make up for them having lost that military installation down there that provided all the jobs. All that goes away, there's nothing to keep young people engaged in developing their communities."

U.S. Attorney General Merrick B. Garland also is expected to attend the event in Selma.

A ship earlier hit by Yemen's Houthi rebels sinks in the Red Sea, the first vessel lost in conflict

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — A ship attacked by Yemen's Houthi rebels has sunk in the Red Sea after days of taking on water, officials said Saturday, the first vessel to be fully destroyed as part of their campaign over Israel's war against Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

The sinking of the Rubymar, which carried a cargo of fertilizer and previously leaked fuel, could cause ecological damage to the Red Sea and its coral reefs.

Persistent Houthi attacks have already disrupted traffic in the crucial waterway for cargo and energy shipments moving from Asia and the Middle East to Europe. Already, many ships have turned away from the route.

The sinking could see further detours and higher insurance rates put on vessels plying the waterway — potentially driving up global inflation and affecting aid shipments to the region.

The Belize-flagged Rubymar had been drifting northward after being struck by a Houthi anti-ship ballistic missile on Feb. 18 in the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, a crucial waterway linking the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.

Yemen's internationally recognized government, as well as a regional military official, confirmed the ship sank. The official spoke on condition of anonymity as no authorization was given to speak to journalists about the incident.

The British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations center, which watches over Mideast waterways, separately acknowledged the Rubymar's sinking Saturday afternoon.

The U.S. military's Central Command said early Sunday the Rubymar sank at 2:15 a.m. local time Saturday. It released an image of the vessel on its side as it was sinking.

"The approximately 21,000 metric tons of ammonium phosphate sulfate fertilizer that the vessel was carrying presents an environmental risk in the Red Sea," it said in a statement. "As the ship sinks it also presents a subsurface impact risk to other ships transiting the busy shipping lanes of the waterway."

The Rubymar's Beirut-based manager did not respond to a request for comment.

Yemen's exiled government, which has been backed by a Saudi-led coalition since 2015, said the Rubymar sank as stormy weather took hold over the Red Sea. The vessel had been abandoned for 12 days after the attack, though plans had been made to try and tow the ship to a safe port.

The Iran-backed Houthis had falsely claimed the ship sank almost instantly after the initial attack. Late Saturday, a Houthi leader tried to blame British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak over the Rubymar.

"You have an opportunity to salvage the ship M/V Rubymar by guaranteeing ... that the relief trucks agreed upon at that time would enter Gaza," Mohammed al-Houthi wrote in an online message.

Ahmed Awad Bin Mubarak, the prime minister of Yemen's internationally recognized government, called the ship's sinking "an unprecedented environmental disaster."

"It's a new disaster for our country and our people," he wrote on X, formerly Twitter. "Every day, we pay for the Houthi militia's adventures, which were not stopped at plunging Yemen into the coup disaster and war."

Greenpeace also raised concerns about the ship sinking.

"Without immediate action, this situation could escalate into a major environmental crisis," said Julien Jreissati, program director at Greenpeace MENA.

"As well as any further leaks of fuel oil from the engines, the sinking of the vessel could further breach the hull, allowing water to contact with the thousands of tons of fertilizer, which could then be released into the Red Sea and disrupt the balance of the marine ecosystems, triggering cascading effects throughout the food web."

The Houthis have held Yemen's capital, Sanaa, since 2014, expelling the government. The rebels have fought a Saudi-led coalition since 2015 in a stalemated war.

Satellite pictures analyzed by The Associated Press from Planet Labs PBC showed smaller boats alongside

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the Rubymar on Wednesday. It wasn't immediately clear whose vessels those were. The images showed the Rubymar's stern sinking into the Red Sea but still afloat, mirroring earlier video taken of the vessel.

The private security firm Ambrey separately reported Friday about a mysterious incident involving the Rubymar.

"A number of Yemenis were reportedly harmed during a security incident which took place" on Friday, Ambrey said. It did not elaborate on what that incident involved and no party involved in Yemen's yearslong war claimed any new attack on the vessel.

A satellite image taken Friday from Maxar Technologies showed new blast damage on the Rubymar not previously seen, with no other vessels around it. Additional satellite images taken Saturday by Planet Labs PBC of the area the Rubymar had been in recent days no longer showed the vessel.

Since November, the rebels have repeatedly targeted ships in the Red Sea and surrounding waters over the Israel-Hamas war. Those vessels have included at least one with cargo bound for Iran, the Houthis' main benefactor, and an aid ship later bound for Houthi-controlled territory.

Despite over a month of U.S.-led airstrikes, Houthi rebels have remained capable of launching significant attacks. That includes the attack on the Rubymar and the downing of an American drone worth tens of millions of dollars. The Houthis insist their attacks will continue until Israel stops its combat operations in the Gaza Strip, which have enraged the wider Arab world and seen the Houthis gain international recognition.

The attacks have also disrupted aid shipments to both Yemen and Sudan, which is gripped by its own monthslong war. In recent days, the International Rescue Committee said it suspended its aid shipments to Port Sudan through the Red Sea over long delays and drastically increased costs.

However, there has been a slowdown in attacks in recent days. The reason for that remains unclear. Between four to eight U.S. and allied warships now patrol the Red Sea on any given day, said Maj. Pete Nguyen, a Defense Department spokesperson.

On Saturday, the Italian Defense Ministry said one of its vessels, the destroyer Caio Duilio, shot down a suspected Houthi drone in self-defense that appeared to be flying toward it.

"The terrorist attacks by the Houthis are a serious violation of international law and an attack on the safety of maritime traffic, on which our economy depends," the ministry said.

Police in Haiti struggle against gangs storming prison in latest surge of violence

By EVENS SANON Associated Press

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) — Police in Haiti urgently appealed for help Saturday night as they struggled to hold back gangs trying to storm the country's main prison in a major escalation of violence sweeping the troubled Caribbean nation.

"They need help," a union representing Haitian police said in a message posted on social media bearing an "SOS" emoji repeated eight times. "Let's mobilize the army and the police to prevent the bandits from breaking into the prison."

A police officer told The Associated Press that the gangs had overwhelmed security forces but were not yet in control of the prison, where several gang leaders were being held. The officer spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media.

The armed clashes follow a string of violent protests that have been building for some time but turned deadlier in recent days as Prime Minister Ariel Henry went to Kenya to salvage a proposed security mission in Haiti to be led by that East African country and backed by the United Nations.

Henry took over as prime minister following the 2021 assassination of President Jovenel Moise and has repeatedly postponed plans to hold parliamentary and presidential elections, which haven't taken place in almost a decade.

As part of coordinated attacks by gangs, four police officers were killed Thursday in the capital when gunmen opened fire on targets including Haiti's international airport. Gang members also seized control of two police stations, prompting civilians to flee in fear and forcing businesses and schools to close.

The penitentiary targeted by gangs is notorious for its extremely crowded and unhygienic conditions. Among its high-profile inmates are several gang leaders and 18 former Colombian soldiers accused in Moïse's killing.

As a result of the violence at the airport, the U.S. Embassy in Port-au-Prince said it was temporarily halting all official travel to Haiti.

Haiti's National Police has roughly 9,000 officers to provide security for more than 11 million people, according to the U.N. The officers are routinely overwhelmed and outgunned by powerful gangs, which are estimated to control up to 80% of Port-au-Prince.

Jimmy Chérizier, a former elite police officer known as Barbecue who now runs a gang federation, claimed responsibility for the surge in attacks. He said the goal was to capture Haiti's police chief and government ministers and prevent Henry's return.

The prime minister, a neurosurgeon, has shrugged off calls for his resignation and didn't comment when asked if he felt it was safe to return home.

He signed reciprocal agreements Friday with Kenyan President William Ruto to try and salvage the plan to deploy Kenyan police to Haiti. Kenya's High Court had ruled in January that the proposed deployment was unconstitutional, in part because the original deal lacked reciprocal agreements between the two countries.

The violence has complicated efforts to stabilize Haiti and pave the way for elections. Caribbean leaders said Wednesday that Henry had agreed to schedule a vote by mid-2025 — a far-off date likely to further enrage Henry's opponents.

A massive blizzard howls in the Sierra Nevada. High winds and heavy snow close roads and ski resorts

By BROOKE HESS and KEN RITTER Associated Press

TRUCKEE, Calif. (AP) — A powerful blizzard that a meteorologist termed "as bad as it gets" howled in the Sierra Nevada mountains, closing a long stretch of Interstate 80 in Northern California, forcing ski resorts to shut down, and leaving thousands of homes without power.

More than 10 feet (3 meters) of snow was expected at higher elevations, National Weather Service meteorologist William Churchill said Saturday, creating a "life-threatening concern" for residents near Lake Tahoe and blocking travel on the key east-west freeway.

"It's a blizzard," said Dubravka Tomasin, a resident of Truckee, California, for more than a decade. "It's pretty harrowing."

Kyle Frankland, a veteran snow-plow driver, said several parts of his rig broke as he cleared wet snow underneath piles of powder.

"I've been in Truckee 44 years. This is a pretty good storm," Frankland said. "It's not record-breaking by any means, but it's a good storm."

Churchill said snow totals by late Sunday would range from 5 to 12 feet (1.5 to 3.6 meters), with the highest accumulations at elevations above 5,000 feet (1,500 meters). Lower elevations were inundated with heavy rain.

He called the storm an "extreme blizzard for the Sierra Nevada, in particular, as well as other portions of Nevada and even extending into Utah and portions of western Colorado." But he said he didn't expect records to be broken.

"It's certainly just about as bad as it gets in terms of the snow totals and the winds," Churchill said. "It doesn't get much worse than that."

A second, weaker storm was forecast to bring an additional 1 to 2 feet of snow in the region between Monday and Wednesday next week, according to the National Weather Service office in Sacramento.

Near Lake Tahoe, Thomas Petkanas, a bartender at Alibi Ale Works in Incline Village, Nevada, said about 3 feet (1 meter) of snow had fallen by midday Saturday. He said patrons shook off snow as they arrived at the brewpub and restaurant.

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"It's snowing pretty hard out there, really windy, and power is out to about half the town," Petkanas said by telephone. "We're one of the few spots open today."

Adele Attix said her husband spent the morning clearing their driveway while she worried about whether she would be able to open her consignment clothing store in Truckee. She said Saturdays are usually the busiest day of the week.

"I'd say more than anything, just knowing if we're going to open or not has probably caused the most amount of stress," Attix said. "I figured I'd come down here and check out the shop."

Earlier, the weather service warned that blowing snow was creating "extremely dangerous to impossible" driving conditions, with wind gusts in the high mountains at more than 100 mph (160 kph).

Avalanche danger was "high to extreme" in backcountry areas through Sunday evening throughout the central Sierra and greater Lake Tahoe area, the weather service said.

California authorities on Friday shut down 100 miles (160 kilometers) of I-80, the main route between Reno and Sacramento, because of "spin outs, high winds, and low visibility." There was no estimate when the freeway would reopen from the California-Nevada border west of Reno to near Emigrant Gap, California.

Travel was treacherous east of the Sierra, where CalTrans also cited "multiple spin outs and collisions" and "whiteout conditions," as it closed 90 miles (145 kilometers) of U.S. 395 from near Bishop in the Owens Valley to Bridgeport, north of Mono Lake.

Pacific Gas & Electric reported about 7,468 California homes and businesses without power at 5:56 p.m. NV Energy reported power outages for about 1,500 customers in parts of northern Nevada, including Incline Village and Reno.

In southern Nevada the weather service issued a warning Saturday for high winds gusting to 70 mph (145 kph). NV Energy reported almost 29,000 customers without power in and around Las Vegas on Saturday, but by that evening the number had been reduced to about 16,000.

A tornado Friday afternoon in Madera County, California, damaged an elementary school, said Andy Bollenbacher, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Hanford.

Some ski resorts shut down Friday and were digging out Saturday with an eye toward reopening Sunday.

Palisades Tahoe, the largest resort on the north end of Tahoe and site of the 1960 Winter Olympics, closed all chairlifts Saturday because of snow, wind and low visibility.

Other areas closed Saturday included Sugar Bowl, Boreal and Sierra. Heavenly Mountain Resort planned to open late with limited operations.

The storm began barreling into the region Thursday. A blizzard warning through Sunday morning covers a 300-mile (480-kilometer) stretch of the mountains.

Some ski lovers raced up to the mountains ahead of the storm.

Daniel Lavelly, an avid skier who works at a Reno-area home/construction supply store, was not one of them. He said Friday that he wouldn't have considered making the hour-drive to ski on his season pass at a Tahoe resort because of the gale-force winds.

But most of his customers Friday seemed to think the storm wouldn't be as bad as predicted, he said.

"I had one person ask me for a shovel," Lavelly said. "Nobody asked me about a snowblower, which we sold out the last storm about two weeks ago."

Meteorologists predicted as much as 10 feet (3 meters) of snow was possible in the mountains around Lake Tahoe by the weekend, with 3 to 6 feet (0.9 to 1.8 meters) in the communities on the lake's shores and more than a foot (30 centimeters) possible in the valleys on the Sierra's eastern front, including Reno.

Yosemite National Park closed Friday. Officials said it would remain closed through at least noon Sunday.

Trump escalates his immigration rhetoric with baseless claim about Biden trying to overthrow the US

By BILL BARROW and JILL COLVIN Associated Press
GREENSBORO, North Carolina (AP) — Former President Donald Trump on Saturday further escalated his immigration rhetoric and baselessly accused President Joe Biden of waging a "conspiracy to overthrow the

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United States of America" as he campaigned ahead of Super Tuesday's primaries.

Trump has a long history of trying to turn attack lines back on his rivals in an attempt to diminish their impact. Biden has cast Trump as a threat to democracy, pointing to the former president's efforts to overturn the results of the 2020 election. Those efforts culminated in the attack on the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, as his supporters tried to halt the peaceful transition of power.

Trump, who has responded by calling Biden "the real threat to democracy" and alleged without proof that Biden is responsible for the indictments he faces, turned to Biden's border policies on Saturday, charging that "every day Joe Biden is giving aid and comfort to foreign enemies of the United States."

"Biden's conduct on our border is by any definition a conspiracy to overthrow the United States of America," he went on to say in Greensboro, North Carolina. "Biden and his accomplices want to collapse the American system, nullify the will of the actual American voters and establish a new base of power that gives them control for generations."

Similar arguments have long been made by people who allege Democrats are promoting illegal immigration to weaken the power of white voters — part of a racist conspiracy, once confined to the far right, claiming there is an intentional push by the U.S. liberal establishment to systematically diminish the influence of white people.

Trump leaned into the theory again at his rally later in Virginia, saying of the migrants: "They're trying to sign them up to get them to vote in the next election."

"Once again Trump is projecting in an attempt to distract the American people from the fact he killed the fairest and toughest border security bill in decades because he believed it would help his campaign. Sad," Biden campaign spokesman Ammar Moussa said in a statement.

Trump's campaign stops came three days before Super Tuesday, with elections in 16 states, including North Carolina and Virginia, where thousands of enthusiastic supporters gathered for an evening rally in downtown Richmond. The primaries will be the largest day of voting of the year ahead of November's general election, which is shaping up as a likely rematch of 2020 between Trump and Biden.

Nikki Haley, Trump's last major rival, also campaigned in North Carolina. Speaking to reporters after her event in Raleigh, about 80 miles away, the former U.N. ambassador demurred on her plans after Super Tuesday.

"We're going to keep going and we're going to keep pushing," she said, arguing a majority of Americans don't want either Biden or Trump as the nation's leader.

Much of Trump's speech in North Carolina focused on the slew of criminal charges he faces. While the former president has successfully harnessed his legal woes into a powerful rallying cry in the primaries, it is unclear how his message of grievance will resonate with the more moderate voters who will likely decide the general election.

"I stand before you today not only as your past and hopefully future president, but as a proud political dissident and a public enemy of a rogue regime," Trump said, railing against what he called an "anti-Democratic machine."

At both rallies, Trump played a recording of "Justice for All," the version of the Star-Spangled Banner that he collaborated on with a group of defendants jailed over their alleged roles in the January 2021 insurrection, whom he refers to as "hostages."

As he focuses on the general election, Trump has painted an apocalyptic vision of the country under Biden, particularly on the topic of immigration, which was the animating issue of his 2016 campaign and which he has once again seized on as the U.S. has experienced a record influx of migrants at the border.

Trump and Biden both visited the U.S.-Mexico border on Thursday to highlight their contrasting approaches to the issue.

On Saturday, Trump conjured images of Biden turning "public schools into migrant camps" and "the USA into a crime-ridden, disease-ridden dumping ground, which is what they're doing." He also spoke at length about the murder of Laken Riley, a 22-year-old nursing student whose alleged killer is a Venezuelan man who entered the U.S. illegally and was allowed to stay to pursue his immigration case.

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Studies have found native-born U.S. residents are more likely to have been arrested for violent crimes than people in the country illegally, but Trump has seized on several high-profile incidents, including a recent video of a group of migrants brawling with police in Times Square.

"Not one more innocent American life should be lost to migrant crime," Trump said.

Trump, who repeatedly attacks Biden's intelligence and mental acuity, has been sensitive to questions of his own sharpness after he's mixed up Haley with Nancy Pelosi and Biden with former President Barack Obama at past rallies.

Trump has lately sought to inoculate any questions by insisting he interchanges the names intentionally.

"I do that because you know that makes a point. Do we understand that, right? Because a lot of people say he's running the country. I don't personally think so," Trump said early into his appearance in Virginia.

But more than an hour in to his free-flowing remarks, he seemed to mix up Obama and Biden again, when he said "Putin, you know, has so little respect for Obama that he's starting to throw around the 'nuclear' word."

Beyond their importance on Super Tuesday, North Carolina and Virginia are both states the Trump campaign is focused on for November.

Trump won North Carolina twice but watched his margin of victory shrink. Biden's reelection campaign already has staff on the ground hoping to flip the state for the first time since 2008.

Virginia, meanwhile, had once been a swing state but for years has trended blue and Trump lost there twice. But a Trump campaign senior adviser told reporters Saturday that he believes "we could make Virginia competitive."

In North Carolina, a festive atmosphere surrounded the Greensboro Coliseum Complex ahead of Trump's rally. Supporters stood in a line that snaked through a web of metal barricades and extended hundreds of yards from the arena. License plates from North Carolina, Virginia and Tennessee filled the parking lot, where Trump flags flew alongside U.S. and Confederate flags on many vehicles.

"We just love Trump," said, Mary Welborn, who lives in nearby Thomasville and expressed that she was frustrated by the criminal prosecutions and civil judgments against the former president. "The way he's being treated is insane. No other president has been treated this way," she said.

In Richmond, supporters started lining up Saturday morning for an evening rally at a downtown convention center. The entry lines stretched several blocks by mid-afternoon.

Ken Ballos, a retired police officer from nearby Hanover County who said he voted for Trump in 2016 and 2020, said he was eager at the prospect of a Trump-Biden rematch.

"Trump would eat him up," Ballos said.

US military aircraft airdrop thousands of meals into Gaza in emergency humanitarian aid operation

By TARA COPP and SEUNG MIN KIM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. military C-130 cargo planes dropped food in pallets over Gaza on Saturday in the opening stage of an emergency humanitarian assistance authorized by President Joe Biden after more than 100 Palestinians who had surged to pull goods off an aid convoy were killed during a chaotic encounter with Israeli troops.

Three planes from Air Forces Central dropped 66 bundles containing about 38,000 meals into Gaza at 8:30 a.m. EST (3:30 p.m. local). The bundles were dropped in southwest Gaza, on the beach along the territory's Mediterranean coast. The airdrop was coordinated with the Royal Jordanian Air Force, which said it had two food airdrops Saturday in northern Gaza and has conducted several rounds in recent months.

"The amount of aid flowing to Gaza is not nearly enough and we will continue to pull out every stop we can to get more aid in," President Joe Biden said Saturday in a post on the social media site X, formerly known as Twitter.

U.S. Central Command said on X that "the combined operation included U.S. Air Force and RCAF C-130

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aircraft and respective Army Soldiers specialized in aerial delivery of supplies, built bundles and ensured the safe drop of food aid.”

The U.S. airdrop is expected to be the first of many.

Three Biden administration officials said the planes dropped the military Meals Ready to Eat (MREs) — shelf-stable meals that contain a day’s worth of calories in each sealed package — in locations that were thought would provide civilians with the greatest level of safety to access aid. Afterward, the U.S. monitored the sites and was able to see civilians approach and distribute food among themselves, according to the officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to provide additional details that had not been made public.

Biden on Friday announced the U.S. would begin air dropping food to starving Gazans after at least 115 Palestinians were killed and hundreds more wounded in the Thursday attack as they scrambled for aid, the Health Ministry in Hamas-ruled Gaza said.

Hundreds of people had rushed about 30 trucks bringing a predawn delivery of aid to the north. Palestinians said nearby Israeli troops shot into the crowds. Israel said they fired warning shots toward the crowd and insisted many of the dead were trampled.

White House national security spokesperson John Kirby said Friday that the airdrops were being planned to deliver emergency humanitarian assistance in a safe way to people on the ground. The United States believes the airdrops will help address the dire situation in Gaza, but they are no replacement for trucks, which can transport far more aid more effectively, though Thursday’s events also showed the risks with ground transport.

Kirby said the airdrops have an advantage over trucks because planes can move aid to a particular location very quickly. But in terms of volume, the airdrops will be “a supplement to, not a replacement for moving things in by ground.”

The C-130 is widely used to deliver aid to remote places because of its ability to land in austere environments.

A C-130 can airlift as much as 42,000 pounds of cargo and its crews know how to rig the cargo, which sometimes can include even vehicles, onto massive pallets that can be safely dropped out of the back of the aircraft.

Air Force loadmasters secure the bundles onto pallets with netting that is rigged for release in the back of a C-130, and then crews release it with a parachute when the aircraft reaches the intended delivery zone.

The Air Force’s C-130 has been used in years past to air drop humanitarian into Afghanistan, Iraq, Haiti and other locations and the airframe is used in an annual multi-national “Operation Christmas Drop” that air drops pallets of toys, supplies, nonperishable food and fishing supplies to remote locations in the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of Palau.

Since the war began on Oct. 7, Israel has barred entry of food, water, medicine and other supplies, except for a trickle of aid entering the south from Egypt at the Rafah crossing and Israel’s Kerem Shalom crossing.

The United Nations says one-quarter of Gaza’s 2.3 million people face starvation. Aid officials have said that airdrops are not an efficient means of distributing aid and are a measure of last resort.

Alaska’s Iditarod dogs get neon visibility harnesses after 5 were fatally hit while training

By MARK THIESSEN Associated Press

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP) — The Iditarod, the annual sled dog race celebrating Alaska’s official state sport, got underway Saturday with a new focus on safety after five dogs died and eight were injured in collisions with snowmobiles while training on shared, multi-use trails.

For the first time, mushers who line up for the competitive start Sunday will have the chance to snag light-up, neon harnesses or necklaces for their dogs before they begin the dayslong race that takes the dog-and-human sled teams about 1,000 miles (1,600 kilometers) over Alaska’s unforgiving terrain. The original plan was to hand them out Saturday at the race’s ceremonial start in Anchorage, but organizers

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did not receive approval from competition officials.

The 38 mushers will trace a course across two mountain ranges, the frozen Yukon River and along the ice-covered Bering Sea. In about 10 days, they will come off the ice and onto Main Street in the old Gold Rush town of Nome for the last push to the finish line.

Mushers always have contended with Alaska's deep winter darkness and whiteout conditions. But the recent dog deaths even while training have put a focus on making the four-legged athletes easier to see at all times. Mushers typically wear a bright headlamp for visibility, but that doesn't protect lead dogs running about 60 feet (18 meters) in front of the sled.

"I can't make snowmachiners act responsibly, it's just not going to happen," said Dutch Johnson, manager of the August Foundation kennel, which finds homes for retired racing sled dogs. "But I can help make dogs more visible."

Two dogs were killed and seven injured in November on a team belonging to five-time Iditarod champion Dallas Seavey on a remote Alaska highway used as a training trail in the winter. It has recently become more popular with snowmobilers, bikers and other users, making it more dangerous for dogs.

Seavey said in a social media post that the snowmobile was heading in the opposite direction at about 65 mph (105 kph) when it slammed into the lead dogs on the team. The snowmobile driver was later cited for negligent driving.

In December, musher Mike Parker was running dogs for veteran Iditarod competitor Jim Lanier on the Denali Highway when a snowmobile driven by a professional rider struck the dog team. Three dogs died and another was injured. The driver, Erik Johnson, was testing snowmobiles for his employer, Minnesota-based manufacturer Polaris, and both were cited for reckless driving.

Julie St. Louis, the co-founder and director for the August Foundation, is close to the Lanier family and knew the dogs involved. When brainstorming with Johnson, they decided to use the nonprofit foundation to help outfit the dogs with harnesses and necklaces.

"It was one way we could step up and do something that was still within our mission, because we're all about keeping the dogs safe," she said.

The August Foundation has since secured an \$8,500 grant from the Polaris Foundation and raised another \$2,500 to buy 400 light-up harnesses, which were handed out to mushers at sled dog races in Fairbanks and Bethel earlier this winter.

The harnesses burn with bright neon-like colors that help illuminate the dogs in the darkness of the Alaska winter and pierce the clouds of snow sometimes kicked up by snowmachines, what Alaskans call snowmobiles.

They are now accepting donations to outfit as many dog teams as possible. Providing each team with four harnesses or lighted necklaces and one illuminated vest for the musher costs \$120. A separate effort, called Light Up the Lead Dogs, is raising money to buy lighted collars for dogs.

In each of the accidents, Johnson said the snowmobile that hit the dogs was riding behind another snowmobile, which obscured visibility by kicking up snow.

"What I've witnessed with these harnesses is they make a halo effect in that dust," Johnson said. "So they do give you some warning of where the lead dogs are."

Jeri Rodriguez, the vice president of the Anchorage Snowmobile Club, said the multiuser trails are getting busier and all users need to do all they can to be seen.

Johnson will hand out the lighted harnesses Sunday at the competitive start in Willow, about 75 miles (120 kilometers) north of Anchorage. Saturday's event was a fan-friendly affair, where mushers took auction winners riding in their sleds over about 11 miles (18 kilometers) of city streets and trails.

The dog deaths are the latest pressure point for the Iditarod, which began in 1973 and has taken hits in recent years from the pandemic, climate change, the loss of sponsors and the retirement of several big-name mushing champions with few to take their place.

The ranks of mushers participating this year dwindled even more last month as accusations of violence against women by two top mushers embroiled the Iditarod. Both were initially disqualified officially for violating the race's conduct rules. One was reinstated later but wound up scratching because he had

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leased his dogs to other mushers and could not reassemble his team in time.

Three former champions remain in the race: 2019 champion Pete Kaiser, defending winner Ryan Redington and Seavey, who is looking for a record-breaking sixth championship.

Trump wins caucuses in Missouri and Idaho and sweeps Michigan GOP convention

By SUMMER BALLENTINE and JONATHAN J. COOPER Associated Press

COLUMBIA, Mo. (AP) — Former President Donald Trump continued his march toward the GOP nomination on Saturday, winning caucuses in Idaho and Missouri and sweeping the delegate haul at a party convention in Michigan.

Trump earned every delegate at stake on Saturday, bringing his count to 244 compared to 24 for former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley. A candidate needs to secure 1,215 delegates to clinch the Republican nomination.

The next event on the Republican calendar is Sunday in the District of Columbia. Two days later is Super Tuesday, when 16 states will hold primaries on what will be the largest day of voting of the year outside of the November election. Trump is on track to lock up the nomination days later.

The steep odds facing Haley were on display in Columbia, Missouri, where Republicans gathered at a church to caucus.

Seth Christensen stood on stage and called on them to vote for Haley. He wasn't well received.

Another caucusgoer shouted out from the audience: "Are you a Republican?"

An organizer quieted the crowd and Christensen finished his speech. Haley went on to win just 37 of the 263 Republicans in attendance in Boone County.

Here's a look at Saturday's contests:

MICHIGAN

Michigan Republicans at their convention in Grand Rapids began allocating 39 of the state's 55 GOP presidential delegates. Trump won all 39 delegates allocated.

But a significant portion of the party's grassroots force was skipping the gathering because of the lingering effects of a monthslong dispute over the party's leadership.

Trump handily won Michigan's primary this past Tuesday with 68% of the vote compared with Haley's 27%.

Michigan Republicans were forced to split their delegate allocation into two parts after Democrats, who control the state government, moved Michigan into the early primary states, violating the national Republican Party's rules.

MISSOURI

Voters lined up outside a church in Columbia, home to the University of Missouri, before the doors opened for the caucuses. Once they got inside, they heard appeals from supporters of the candidates.

"Every 100 days, we're spending \$1 trillion, with money going all over the world. Illegals are running across the border," Tom Mendenall, an elector for Trump in 2016 and 2020, said to the crowd. He later added: "You know where Donald Trump stands on a lot of these issues."

Christensen, a 31-year-old from Columbia who came to the caucus with his wife and three children age 7, 5, and 2, then urged Republicans to go in a new direction.

"I don't need to hear about Mr. Trump's dalliances with people of unsavory character, nor do my children," Christensen said to the room. "And if we put that man in the office, that's what we're going to hear about all the time. And I'm through with it."

Supporters quickly moved to one side of the room or the other, depending on whether they favored Trump or Haley. There was little discussion between caucusgoers after they chose a side.

This year was the first test of the new system, which is almost entirely run by volunteers on the Republican side.

The caucuses were organized after GOP Gov. Mike Parson signed a 2022 law that, among other things, canceled the planned March 12 presidential primary.

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Lawmakers failed to reinstate the primary despite calls to do so by both state Republican and Democratic party leaders. Democrats will hold a party-run primary on March 23.

Trump prevailed twice under Missouri's old presidential primary system.

IDAHO

Last year, Idaho lawmakers passed cost-cutting legislation that was intended to move all the state's primaries to the same date in May. But the bill inadvertently eliminated the presidential primaries entirely.

The Republican-led Legislature considered holding a special session to reinstate the presidential primaries but failed to agree on a proposal in time, leaving both parties with presidential caucuses as the only option.

"I think there's been a lot of confusion because most people don't realize that our Legislature actually voted in a flawed bill," said Jessie Bryant, who volunteered at a caucus site near downtown Boise. "So the caucus is really just the best-case scenario to actually get an opportunity to vote for a presidential candidate and nominate them for the GOP."

One of those voters was John Graves, a fire protection engineer from Boise. He said the caucus was fast and easy, not much different from Idaho's usual Republican primary. He anticipated the win would go to Trump.

"It's a very conservative state, so I would think that Trump will probably carry it quite easily," Graves said. "And I like that."

The Democratic caucuses aren't until May 23.

The last GOP caucuses in Idaho were in 2012, when about 40,000 of the state's nearly 200,000 registered Republican voters showed up to select their preferred candidate.

In a rural California region, a plan takes shape to provide shade from dangerous heat

By DORANY PINEDA Associated Press

MECCA, Calif. (AP) — When Limba Contreras moved to the desert community of Oasis, California, about 50 years ago, her family relied on a water cooler to keep temperatures inside their home comfortable. Other times, they sprayed each other with a hose outside.

But when the heat topped 100 degrees Fahrenheit (about 38 Celsius), the cooler was futile, and the hose was a temporary reprieve.

"We suffered because of the heat and because we didn't have any other resource," said Contreras, a retired elementary school librarian.

Contreras and her family now have air conditioning, but she worries about the lack of shade in playgrounds and fields in the few parks they have.

"In the midst of extreme heat, the children can't play because there's no shade," said Contreras on Saturday in the Eastern Coachella Valley, where elected officials, community leaders and others gathered at a park for the inauguration of a shade equity master plan.

The Eastern Coachella Valley, an important agricultural area in Southern California, is a hot and arid place, with summer temperatures frequently rising above 100 degrees Fahrenheit. Residents in this rural desert in Riverside County are mostly Latinos, Spanish speakers and low-income, and many live in mobile homes without air conditioning and work in fields under the sizzling sun.

But trees, green spaces and buildings that could offer refuge from the sun are sparse, and that can increase dangerous heat stress on the body.

From 2013 to 2023, heat was a contributing or underlying cause of 143 deaths in the Coachella Valley, according to the Riverside County Sheriff's Office. They had no statistics for Eastern Coachella Valley, the area where this shade equity plan is in play. Across the United States, heat was a factor in nearly 1,960 deaths in 2023.

Every year, heat kills more people than floods, hurricanes and tornadoes combined, and experts warn that extreme heat will become more intense, frequent and lethal with climate change.

Studies have shown that shade can reduce heat stress on the human body between 25% and 35%

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throughout the day. Shaded areas can be 20 to 45 degrees Fahrenheit cooler than surfaces without it, according to an estimate by the EPA.

Many cities across the U.S. — including New York, Miami and Austin — have adopted climate action and resilience plans that use trees as a defense against the broiling stone and asphalt that raise temperatures in urban areas. But fewer have taken the idea to less developed regions.

“Heat is often talked about through the lens of cities, and that’s an important issue. But what was sort of being left off the table was how heat is affecting rural communities,” said V. Kelly Turner, assistant professor of urban planning and geography at the University of California, Los Angeles.

The Eastern Coachella Valley plan aims to address this issue by recommending ways and places to create more shade via policy changes, smart building choices and input from community members. The plan would cover the unincorporated communities of Mecca, Thermal, Oasis and North Shore, near the Salton Sea, California’s largest lake, and not far from the desert resort city of Palm Springs.

“This area has been neglected for a long time, and it’s unfortunate,” said Victor Manuel Perez, the Riverside County district supervisor who represents the communities. “You have hard-working people here that deserve better.”

Bringing more trees and shade structures to parks, schools and other areas will “ultimately ensure that youth and their families have somewhere where they can get out of the heat because we are talking about 115 degrees” in July and August, he said. “It’s pretty bad.”

The shade master plan is the latest effort in the U.S. to increase climate resilience in Latino and other marginalized communities, which are disproportionately exposed to extreme heat in part because they have fewer resources like air conditioning and access to green spaces.

Mariela Loera, regional policy manager for the nonprofit Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability, said that low-income and communities of color are “easy to ignore,” and are often excluded from decision-making. That means they often lack basic amenities.

In the Eastern Coachella Valley, where Loera works, dilapidated homes are common, and other poor infrastructure adds to the heat burden for residents.

“It’s not just that it’s hot. It’s like it’s hot, and then there’s nowhere to go,” she said. “So having any kind of shade structure anywhere is helpful.”

The project is being financed by a \$644,411 grant from the Governor’s Office of Planning and Research in California, and is a collaboration between the Kounkuey Design Initiative, the Oasis Leadership Committee, the UCLA Luskin Center for Innovation and the Riverside University Health System.

But the grand vision for the initiative won’t come without hurdles. It’s not always clear who has the authority to implement projects in unincorporated communities, and when the plan is finished, it will take more money to execute it.

It will be one of several shade plans in the world. Phoenix has one. So do Tel Aviv in Israel and Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates.

Turner, whose work focuses on cities adapting to hotter conditions, said she wanted to get involved in the project because she had never seen a shade master plan for a rural area.

People who work outdoors, such as farmworkers — who are overwhelmingly Latino — and those working in construction are vulnerable to heat. About 40 workers die annually because of it, but the government says the number is likely higher because of the lack of reporting.

Elidio Hernández Gómez, 59, was one of them. In 2023, the farmworker and father of two collapsed and died on an August day when temperatures in Fresno, California, peaked at around 100 degrees.

As part of the project, members of the Oasis Leadership Committee, composed of community residents, are paid to take a virtual class about heat with Turner and master’s degree students in urban and regional planning at UCLA. On a recent Wednesday night, the class broke up into subgroups focused on spaces where residents experience heat: agriculture; transit; mobile homes and emergency shelters; and schools and parks.

Some committee members said they need robust shade in parks and public areas. They described trees that had collapsed after heavy rain and wind.

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Silvestre Caixba Villaseca, through a translator, talked about inadequate and poor shade structures in fields.

When temperatures exceed the 100s, the low, plastic rolling structures absorb heat and don't cool, he said, and workers often seek shade in their cars or under trees.

At the end of the day, many fieldworkers return to a hot home with no air conditioning.

"None of us go to a place to cool off after work," he said.

But Villaseca also worries about his children, particularly his 6-year-old son.

On Saturday, under a cloud-dotted blue sky and before a dust storm rolled in, he spoke of the lack of shade at Silvestre Jr.'s elementary school. Every day after class, he lines up with his classmates outside waiting to be picked up.

"They are out in the direct sun," he said. "They don't have any shade in the form of trees or structures ... it can be dangerous."

Despite the heat, Contreras, the Oasis resident and retired librarian, finds the desert beautiful. The mountains. The sunsets. The endless palms and orchards.

"It looks really pretty here. But the people here need help and need to protect themselves from the sun, the heat," she said. "We can't change the weather. But we can change how we live. We can protect ourselves."

US says Israel has agreed to the framework for a Gaza cease-fire. Hamas must now decide

By WAFAA SHURAFI and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

RAFAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israel has essentially endorsed a framework of a proposed Gaza cease-fire and hostage release deal, and it is now up to Hamas to agree to it, a senior U.S. administration official said Saturday, a day before talks to reach an agreement were to resume in Egypt.

International mediators have been working for weeks to broker a deal to pause the fighting before the Muslim holy month of Ramadan begins around March 10. A deal would likely allow aid to reach hundreds of thousands of desperate Palestinians in northern Gaza who aid officials worry are under threat of famine.

The Israelis "have more or less accepted" the proposal, which includes the six-week cease-fire as well as the release by Hamas of hostages considered vulnerable, which includes the sick, the wounded, the elderly and women, said the official.

"Right now, the ball is in the court of Hamas and we are continuing to push this as hard as we possibly can," the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity under ground rules set by the White House to brief reporters.

Officials from Israel and from Hamas did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

A senior Egyptian official said mediators Egypt and Qatar are expected to receive a response from Hamas during the Cairo talks scheduled to start Sunday. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not publicly authorized to discuss the talks.

There is increasing criticism over the hundreds of thousands struggling to survive in northern Gaza, which has borne the brunt of the conflict that began when the Hamas militant group attacked southern Israel on Oct. 7, killing 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and seizing around 250 hostages.

U.S. military planes began the first airdrops of thousands of meals into Gaza, and the militaries of Jordan and Egypt said they also conducted airdrops. Aid groups say airdrops should be only a last resort and instead urge the opening of other crossings into Gaza and the removal of obstacles at the few that are open.

The European Union's diplomatic service said many of the hundreds of Palestinians killed or wounded in the chaos surrounding an aid convoy on Thursday were hit by Israeli army fire and urged an international investigation. It said responsibility for the crisis lay with "restrictions imposed by the Israeli army and obstructions by violent extremist(s) to the supply of humanitarian aid."

Gaza's Health Ministry raised the death toll from Thursday's violence to 118 after two more bodies were

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recovered Saturday. It said the wounded remained at 760.

Israel's chief military spokesperson, Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, said Israel organized Thursday's convoy, "and claims that we attacked the convoy intentionally and that we harmed people intentionally are baseless."

Residents in northern Gaza say they are searching rubble and garbage for anything to feed their children, who barely eat one meal a day. Many families have begun mixing animal and bird food with grain to bake bread.

At least 10 children have starved to death, according to hospital records in Gaza, the World Health Organization said.

Gaza's Health Ministry said the Palestinian death toll from the war has climbed to 30,320. The ministry doesn't differentiate between civilians and combatants in its figures, but says women and children make up around two-thirds of those killed.

In the southernmost city of Rafah, where more than half of Gaza's people now seek refuge, an Israeli airstrike struck tents outside the Emirati hospital, killing 11 people and wounding about 50, including health workers, the Health Ministry said. Israel's military said it was targeting Islamic Jihad militants.

Israel's air, sea and ground offensive has reduced much of densely populated northern Gaza to rubble. The military told Palestinians to move south, but as many as 300,000 people are believed to have remained.

Roughly one in six children under 2 in the north suffer from acute malnutrition and wasting, "the worst level of child malnutrition anywhere in the world," Carl Skau, deputy executive director of the World Food Program, said this week. "If nothing changes, a famine is imminent in northern Gaza."

People have overwhelmed trucks and grabbed what they can, Skau said, forcing the WFP to suspend deliveries to the north.

In the violence Thursday, people rushed about 30 trucks bringing a predawn delivery to the north. Palestinians said nearby Israeli troops shot into the crowds. Israel said they fired warning shots toward the crowd and insisted many of the dead were trampled. Doctors at hospitals in Gaza and a U.N. team that visited a hospital said large numbers of the wounded had been shot.

Ahmed Abdel Karim, being treated for gunshot wounds in his feet, said he had spent two days waiting for aid trucks to arrive.

"Everyone attacked and advanced on these trucks. Because of the large number, I could not get flour," he said.

Radwan Abdel-Hai, a father of four young children, heard a rumor late Wednesday that an aid convoy was on its way. He and five others took a donkey cart and found a "sea of people" waiting.

"Tanks started firing at us," he said. "As I ran back, I heard tank shells and gunfire. I heard people screaming. I saw people falling to the ground, some motionless." Many were shot in the back, he said.

Soad Abu Hussein, a widow and mother of five, said more than 5,000 people — mostly women and children — living with her in a school at the Jabaliya refugee camp have not received aid for more than four weeks. A group of people went to the shore to fish, but three were killed and two were wounded by gunfire from Israeli ships, she said.

The Israeli military did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Mansour Hamed, a 32-year-old former aid worker living with more than 50 relatives in a Gaza City house, said some are eating tree leaves and animal food. It has become normal to find a child emerging from the rubble with a rotten piece of bread, he said.

Acknowledging the extreme need for food, U.S. President Joe Biden said the U.S. would look for other ways of delivery "including possibly a marine corridor."

Also Saturday, Israel said three soldiers were killed and 14 injured Friday when they inadvertently triggered explosives in a booby-trapped building outside Khan Younis in southern Gaza.

Oregon may revive penalties for drug possession. What will the change do?

By ANDREW DeMILLO Associated Press

Oregon is poised to step back from its first-in-the-nation drug decriminalization law with a new measure approved by the state Senate that would reinstate criminal penalties for possessing small amounts of some drugs.

The law, which took effect in 2021, decriminalized possession and personal use of all drugs, including small amounts of heroin, methamphetamine, LSD, oxycodone and others.

Supporters of revising the statute say it's needed to address the state's overdose crisis, while opponents say it reverts to an approach that hasn't been beneficial and could violate civil rights.

Here's a look at how it could change the way drug possession is handled by law enforcement and prosecutors in the state:

WHICH DRUGS WILL BE ILLEGAL TO POSSESS, AND WHICH WILL NOT?

If signed by Gov. Tina Kotek, who has indicated she is open to doing so, the measure approved Friday would restore penalties for possessing illicit drugs including cocaine, fentanyl, heroin and methamphetamine.

Possession of marijuana, which has been legalized for medical and recreational use in the state, would not be affected.

The measure also would not criminalize the controlled use of psilocybin mushrooms, which voters approved in 2020 for therapeutic use.

HOW WILL POSSESSION BE PENALIZED?

The legislation would implement jail sentences of up to six months for possessing small amounts, and police could also confiscate drugs and stop their use in parks and on sidewalks.

The measure encourages law enforcement agencies and prosecutors to refer someone arrested or cited for possession to treatment programs instead of jail. The measure also allows for people convicted of possession to have their record expunged later.

WHY DID LEGISLATORS MOVE TO CHANGE THE LAW NOW?

Oregon is experiencing one of the largest spikes in drug overdose deaths, and a 2023 audit report said the state has the second-highest rate of substance use disorder in the nation while also ranking 50th for treatment access.

That has prompted criticism and pressure by Republicans to change the decriminalization law. A well-funded ballot campaign to further weaken the statute is underway.

Researchers say it's too soon to determine whether the decriminalization measure contributed to the increase in overdoses.

WHAT ARE CRITICS OF THE CHANGE SAYING?

Opponents of recriminalization say it reverts to a failed, decades-old approach of arresting people for possessing and using even small amounts of drugs.

They worry that it will disproportionately impact people affected by drug addiction and focuses too much on punitive measures rather than treatment. Critics have also said it will further burden public defenders' caseloads.

"This legislation exacerbates the challenges faced by those grappling with addiction, particularly impacting Black and brown Oregonians and those experiencing homelessness," Gloria Ochoa-Sandoval, policy director of Unite Oregon, said in a statement released by a coalition of groups opposed to the measure.

Firefighters face difficult weather conditions as they battle the largest wildfire in Texas history

By SEAN MURPHY, JIM VERTUNO and KEN MILLER Associated Press

STINNETT, Texas (AP) — Firefighters in Texas faced rising temperatures, whipped-up winds and dry air Saturday in their battle to keep the largest wildfire in state history from turning more of the Panhandle

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into a parched wasteland.

Firefighters were focused on containing the fire along its northern and eastern perimeter, where aggressive gusts from the southwest threatened to spread the flames and consume more acreage, according to Jason Nedlo, a spokesperson with the team of firefighters battling the Smokehouse Creek Fire that began Monday and has claimed at least two lives.

"The main goal is to continue using dozers and fire engines to contain and patrol the fire," Nedlo said. "We're also focused on not losing any more structures, no more loss of life."

The massive fire has left a charred landscape of scorched prairie, dead cattle and destroyed as many as 500 structures, including burned-out homes, in the Texas Panhandle. It has merged with another fire and crossed the state line into Oklahoma, burning more than 1,700 square miles (4,400 square kilometers) and was 15% contained, the Texas A&M Forest Service said Saturday.

The National Weather Service issued a red flag warning for the entire Panhandle through midnight Sunday after rain and snow on Thursday allowed firefighters to contain a portion of the fire.

Signs warning travelers of the critical fire danger are in place along Interstate 40 leading into Amarillo.

Winds gusts of up to 45 miles per hour (72 kilometers per hour) are expected Saturday with humidity below 10% and a high temperature of 75 degrees F (24 degrees C).

"New fires could also potentially start ... the relative humidities are very low, the wind gusts are high and so it doesn't take much, all there needs to be is a spark" to ignite another fire, said meteorologist William Churchill with the National Weather Prediction Center.

Nedlo said because of the ongoing weather conditions, it is not possible yet to predict when the flames will be fully contained and brought under control.

"We'll know more after the weekend ... we're just not willing to speculate," Nedlo said.

The cause of the fire remains under investigation, although strong winds, dry grass and unseasonably warm weather fed the flames.

"Everybody needs to understand that we face enormous potential fire dangers as we head into this weekend," Republican Gov. Greg Abbott said Friday after touring the area. "No one can let down their guard. Everyone must remain very vigilant."

Two women were confirmed killed by the fires this week. But with flames still menacing a wide area, authorities haven't yet thoroughly searched for victims or tallied homes and other structures damaged or destroyed.

Two firefighters were injured battling the flames in Oklahoma. One suffered a heat-related injury and the other was injured when the brush pumper he was riding in struck a tanker truck as the two were heading to fight the fire near Gage.

Both firefighters are expected to recover.

Texas Agriculture Commissioner Sid Miller said individual ranchers could suffer devastating losses due to the fires, but predicted the overall impact on the Texas cattle industry and consumer beef prices would be minimal.

The number of dead cattle was not known, but Miller and local ranchers estimate the total will be in the thousands.

Oil spill, fertilizer leak from sinking of cargo ship highlight risks to Red Sea from Houthi attacks

By JOSHUA GOODMAN Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — A vibrant fishing industry, some of the world's largest coral reefs, desalination plants supplying millions with drinking water. They're all at risk from large amounts of fertilizer and oil spilled into the Red Sea by the sinking of a cargo ship attacked by Yemen's Houthi rebels.

Officials on Saturday said the M/V Rubymar, a Belize-flagged vessel reportedly carrying 22,000 metric tons of toxic fertilizer, sunk after taking on water in the Feb. 18 attack.

Even before plunging to the ocean's depths, the vessel had been leaking heavy fuel that triggered an

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18-mile (30 km) oil slick through the waterway, which is critical for cargo and energy shipments heading to Europe.

Since November, the Houthi rebels have repeatedly targeted ships in the Red Sea over Israel's offensive in Gaza. They have frequently targeted vessels with tenuous or no clear links to Israel.

U.S. Central Command, which oversees the Middle East, has warned in recent days of an "environmental disaster" in the making. That has less to do with the size of the vessel's hazardous cargo than the unique natural features and usage of the Red Sea, said Ian Ralby, founder of maritime security firm I.R. Consilium.

Aggravating concerns over the Rubymar's sinking is the Red Sea's unique circular water patterns, which operate essentially as a giant lagoon, with water moving northward, toward the Suez Canal in Egypt, during winter and outward to the Gulf of Aden in summer.

"What spills in the Red Sea, stays in the Red Sea," said Ralby. "There are many ways it can be harmed."

Saudi Arabia for decades has been building the world's largest network of desalination plants, with entire cities like Jeddah relying on the facilities for almost all of their drinking water. Oil can clog intake systems and inflict costly damage on saltwater conversion.

The Red Sea is also a vital source of seafood, especially in Yemen, where fishing was the second largest export after oil before the current civil war between the Houthis and Yemen's Sunni government.

Ralby has been studying the Red Sea's vulnerabilities in relation to what could've been a far worse maritime tragedy: the FSO Safer, a decrepit oil tanker that had been moored for years off the coast of Yemen with more than 1 million barrels of crude until its cargo was successfully transferred to another vessel last year.

While the amount of oil the Rubymar leaked is unknown, Ralby estimates it couldn't have exceeded 7,000 barrels. While that's a mere fraction of the Safer's load, it's significantly more oil than was spilled by a Japanese-owed vessel, the Wakashio, that wrecked near Mauritius in 2020, causing millions of dollars in damages and harming the livelihood of thousands of fishermen.

Harder to grasp is the risk from the 22,000 metric tons of fertilizer that port authorities in Djibouti, adjacent to where the Rubymar sank, said the ship was transporting at the time of the attack. If the Rubymar remains intact underwater, the impact will be a slow trickle instead of a massive release, said Ralby.

Fertilizer fuels the proliferation of algae blooms like the ones seen every year in the Texas Gulf Coast as a result of far larger nutrient runoff from farms, urban lawns and industrial waste. The result is the loss of oxygen, asphyxiation of marine life and the creation of so-called "dead zones."

At risk in the Red Sea are some of the world's most colorful and extensive coral reefs. Several are major tourist draws and increasingly a subject of great scientific research owing to their apparent resilience to warming seawater temperatures that have destroyed reefs elsewhere in the ocean.

However manageable the fallout from the Rubymar's sinking, Ralby worries that it could be a forerunner of even worse to come. He said most of the container ships pulled out from the Red Sea shipping lanes since the Houthis began targeting ships in the area over the Israel-Hamas war. What remains, he said, are poorly maintained vessels, oil tankers and bulk carriers that pose far greater environmental risks.

"With fewer and fewer container ships to target, the odds of another spill with massive environmental impact has increased enormously," said Ralby.

How clean is the dirt on Hunter Biden? A key Republican source is charged with lying to the FBI

By BRIAN SLODYSKO, ERIC TUCKER and ANTHONY McCARTNEY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Alexander Smirnov was cast by Republicans as one of the FBI's most trusted informants, offering a "highly credible" account of brazen public corruption by Joe Biden that formed a pillar of the House impeachment investigation of the Democratic president.

Then, last month, the script changed dramatically.

Smirnov, 43, finds himself charged with lying to the FBI, accused of fabricating a tale of bribery and espionage involving then-Vice President Biden and the Ukrainian energy company Burisma, and he has told officials he has Russian intelligence contacts.

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It's muddied the GOP inquiry plenty.

Interviews and a review of public records by The Associated Press suggest this was not likely Smirnov's first turn in what the government says is a cycle as a fabulist.

They offer a portrait of a businessman who operated a string of murky shell companies, ran with others who have been accused of fraud, and boasted of his own ties to the FBI. The episode highlights not only the perils of the Republicans' reliance on unverified information in their quest to confront Biden but also the risks inherent in the FBI's use of sometimes-unreliable informants who may have ulterior motives.

"How come in all of the universe nobody in America figured out for years that this guy is a fraud and a liar? How did this (expletive) make its way to Congress?" said Yossi Attia, a Los Angeles businessman who has interacted with Smirnov and once ran a penny stock company in which Smirnov held a substantial stake.

Republicans leading the impeachment inquiry have dismissed the fabrication allegations against Smirnov as irrelevant to their investigation and are raising doubts about the FBI's credibility. The FBI, for its part, has never publicly called the informant's information verified or complete.

"The trust level that I have with the FBI is zero," Rep. James Comer, R-Ky., said in a Fox News interview this past week.

Smirnov's lawyers did not address questions about their client's past business dealings.

"Mr. Smirnoff is charged with making a false statement to federal officials. All of these inquiries into his prior business dealings only deflect from the important question of the accuracy of his prosecution," attorneys David Z. Chesnoff and Richard A. Schonfeld said in a statement.

A MURKY PAST

Little is known publicly about Smirnov other than allegations in the government's case, court records, corporate financial disclosures and business filings.

A dual Israeli and U.S. citizen, Smirnov moved to the United States in 2006, traveling in Los Angeles' Eastern European expatriate circles for more than a decade while providing information to the FBI. It wasn't immediately clear what investigations Smirnov may have contributed to, though he worked with an FBI handler based in Seattle and the indictment suggests he provided reporting related to "ROC" — a likely reference to Russian organized crime.

A short biography included in a corporate financial document from 2011 describes Smirnov as a veteran businessman "fluent in Russian, English, Hebrew and Arabic" who once was president of a "private mineral and logistic operation, with assets in Russia."

Even as Smirnov was being paid as a government informant, he participated in duplicitous business schemes, according to court records and interviews.

One example is his investment in an obscure penny-stock company called Eco-Trade Corp.

Such companies can yield a handsome return on a minimal investment. They are lightly regulated and often subject to financial scams and market manipulation.

In 2010, Smirnov purchased a stake in Eco-Trade valued at roughly \$3 million as the company was on the verge of launching an advertising blitz that dramatically inflated its value. A crash three years later saddled investors with losses.

Eco-Trade had existed on paper for years under a variety of names and purported business aims, with control of the company changing hands repeatedly until it landed with some associates of Smirnov, according to interviews, court records and Securities and Exchange Commission filings. It was sued multiple times for securities fraud, leading to at least one settlement.

The company's fortunes began to rise in 2010 after William Lieberman, who was later convicted in a separate penny stock fraud scheme, became president. Smirnov was appointed chairman of the company's board, but ultimately declined to take the position, SEC filings show.

Soon the company was issuing news releases promoting new financial commitments, ongoing negotiations for oil and gas rights and the prospect of riches to be made in the Bakken oil fields of Montana.

The stock caught fire online and share prices soared to more than 70 cents, even as analysts warned about the company's dodgy past. The Financial Industry Regulatory Authority suspended trading of shares

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for several weeks in the spring of 2013. Then the stock's price plummeted and the company went dormant.

It's unclear from SEC filings how much Smirnov may have made. He has not been not accused by authorities of wrongdoing in connection with that company.

Court records indicate it wasn't his only stock scheme.

SIX-FIGURE INVESTMENT, FAKE STOCK

In 2016, Tigran Sarkisyan and Hripsime Khachtryan sued Smirnov, claiming he pitched them on a company called Grand Pacaraima Gold Corp. It was only after paying him \$100,000 that the two discovered the stock certificates Smirnov provided were fake, according to the complaint. When they approached him about it, Smirnov told them he was working with authorities on a fraud investigation that did not involve them and he "continued to make excuses and lie" about their investment, the complaint said.

The suit was dismissed in 2018 when Sarkisyan and Khachtryan failed to show up for a court date because they were incarcerated. The two been sentenced to prison for racketeering weeks earlier in a far-reaching case against dozens of defendants that included allegations of fraud, money laundering and murder-for-hire, court records show.

Another acquaintance, Dmitry Fomichev, sued Smirnov in 2013, claiming Smirnov failed to repay a \$500,000 loan. Court records state Smirnov boasted of his connections with the FBI and said he could help Fomichev "resolve certain matters then being investigated by several agencies of the federal government" in exchange for the loan.

Several months later, Fomichev was indicted on tax and immigration charges and sentenced to probation. A Los Angeles judge ruled in Fomichev's favor in the civil case, though, issuing a nearly \$600,000 judgement against Smirnov.

Business disclosures reveal Smirnov also served as president of a company called GV Global Communications, which was founded by Avady and Galina Vaynter, a penny-stock power couple who have often found themselves at the center of litigation with investors and former business partners.

In one case settled last year, according to records, the Vaynters accepted a \$250,000 judgment against them after the disappearance of 619,000 share certificates for a company they controlled, which were owed to one of their investors. The Vaynters accused a business partner of stealing the certificates from their home, though their daughter filed a police report in 2016 that stated the shares were inside a pink briefcase that was lost near a Los Angeles community college, court records show.

In an interview, Galina Vaynter acknowledged Smirnov had a role in GV Global Partners, but insisted it was only on paper and lasted for a month at most. She adamantly denied any wrongdoing in connection with past business dealings.

"All of the allegations are not true," Vaynter said, adding, "I can state right now in front of God and any authorities — anybody — and prove myself. No one can point any finger on us."

Court documents filed in Smirnov's current criminal case read like a spy novel, portraying him as a jet-setting global traveler who took meetings with mysterious foreign figures and stashed \$6 million across numerous accounts.

Prosecutors also have emphasized Smirnov's preoccupation with keeping his accumulated wealth out of his own name, noting how he would withdraw large sums and use it to purchase cashier's checks to give to his longtime girlfriend. After moving to Las Vegas in 2022, he gave her money to purchase a \$1 million condo just off Elvis Presley Boulevard that is owned under her name, records show.

Smirnov told his FBI handler in 2017 that the Biden family name surfaced during a business call he had with a representative for Burisma, where Biden's son Hunter served on the company's board.

But after Donald Trump and his allies, including Rudy Giuliani, acting as a Trump lawyer, began to peddle unsupported corruption claims involving the Bidens and Ukraine before the 2020 presidential election, Smirnov's story grew more elaborate.

'I'LL TRY TO PROVE IT FOR YOU BRO'

"It's all over the news in Russia and Ukraine" Smirnov texted his handler in May 2020. In another text at the time, he said, "I'll try to prove it for you bro."

He later said a Burisma official told him during the waning days of the Obama administration that Joe

and Hunter Biden had each accepted \$5 million bribes in exchange for a promise to alter U.S. policy in Burisma's favor. Smirnov claimed recordings existed of a Burisma official being "forced" to pay.

Investigators determined that Smirnov had not, in fact, spoken with a Burisma official until after Trump was president and that their conversation was about a cryptocurrency venture Smirnov and an associate were promoting.

During a September 2023 conversation with investigators, Smirnov claimed the Russians likely had recordings of Hunter Biden because a hotel in Ukraine's capital where he had stayed was "wired" and under their control — information he said was passed along to him by four high-level Russian officials.

But Hunter Biden has never traveled to Ukraine, according to the indictment against Smirnov.

Congressional Republicans repeatedly promoted the credibility of the information provided by Smirnov, whose identity they say was unknown to them. Even after Smirnov was charged, lawmakers said they were simply relying on what they claim they were told by the FBI. Comer, chairman of the House Oversight and Accountability Committee, recently asserted that FBI Director Christopher Wray had said Smirnov was "one of the most trusted and highest paid" informants in the bureau.

The FBI, however, communicated a different message in correspondence with Congress over the past year, repeatedly cautioning lawmakers that information from the source should not be treated as authenticated. In a letter to Comer last spring, the FBI congressional affairs chief wrote that "information from confidential human sources is unverified and, by definition, incomplete."

That didn't stop Republicans from running with it in their Biden investigation.

Members of Comer's committee were permitted to view a redacted copy of an FBI form summarizing Smirnov's account, a concession in the face of a Republican threat to hold Wray in contempt. A full version was later released by Sen. Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa.

During a hearing with Wray in December, three months after the FBI said Smirnov had been reinterviewed, Grassley attested to the witness's purported credibility, citing characterizations by law enforcement of the informant's long-standing relationship with the bureau. But the FBI director did not endorse any of the senator's characterizations or discuss the ongoing investigation.

Steve Laycock, a former FBI executive assistant director of the bureau's intelligence branch who oversaw management of its confidential human source program, said informants can be vital for investigations because they offer "placement and access" that agents might not otherwise have on their own.

But, he said, it is imperative on an informant's handler to ask probing questions of an informant and to vet information through other sources.

"We're in a society now of disinformation and misinformation. You've really got to be watching and on the watch when information comes in and validating and verifying it," he said.

Navalny's mother brings flowers to his grave a day after thousands attended his funeral in Moscow

By ELISE MORTON Associated Press

Lyudmila Navalnaya and Alla Abrosimova, the mother and mother-in-law of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny, were among mourners who brought flowers to his grave in Moscow on Saturday, a day after thousands turned his funeral into one of the largest recent displays of dissent.

Police kept a heavy presence at the cemetery but the situation was calm, Russian independent TV channel Dozhd (Rain) reported.

"The police let those wishing to bid farewell to the politician pass through and do not rush anyone," the outlet wrote on the Telegram messaging app, quoting one of its readers on the scene.

Dozhd also reported that "spontaneous memorials" to Navalny had been destroyed in several Russian cities. Flowers were removed in cities including St. Petersburg and Voronezh, it said.

Under a heavy police watch, thousands bid farewell Friday to Navalny after his still-unexplained death two weeks ago in an Arctic penal colony. The crowds who thronged to honor Navalny outside a church and cemetery in a snowy southeastern suburb of the capital chanted slogans for him and against Russian

President Vladimir Putin and the war in Ukraine.

Police did not act against them, but at least 106 people were detained at events across Russia in Navalny's memory, said OVD-Info, a rights group that tracks political arrests. It said most were stopped while trying to lay flowers at monuments dedicated to victims of Soviet repression.

Navalny was buried after a short Russian Orthodox ceremony, with vast crowds waiting outside the church and then streaming to the fresh grave with flowers.

Navalny's widow, Yulia, was not seen at the funeral. She has vowed to continue his work, lovingly thanking him for "26 years of absolute happiness."

The funeral followed a battle with authorities over the release of his body. His team said several Moscow churches refused to hold the funeral for the man who crusaded against official corruption and organized massive protests. Many Western leaders blamed the death on the Russian leader, an accusation the Kremlin angrily rejected.

Hard-liners are leading in vote count in Iran's parliamentary election after record-low turnout

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iran's hard-liners are leading in an initial vote count in the capital Tehran, state media reported Sunday, following a record-low turnout in a parliamentary election.

State-run IRNA news agency and state TV said 1,960 from 5,000 ballots in Tehran had been counted so far, based on an Interior Ministry report updated hourly.

Officials have not yet released turnout figures from Saturday's election. However, IRNA said it was 41%, based on unofficial reports.

In the last parliamentary election in 2019, only 42% of eligible voters cast a ballot in what was considered to be the lowest turnout since the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Hard-liners have controlled the parliament for the past two decades — with chants of "Death to America" often heard while in session.

Under Iranian law, the parliament has a variety of roles, including overseeing the executive branch and voting on treaties. In practice, absolute power in Iran rests with its supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Friday's election was the first since the bloody crackdown on the 2022 nationwide protests that followed the death of Mahsa Amini in police custody.

Amini, 22, died on Sept. 16, 2022, after her arrest by Iran's morality police for allegedly violating the country's strict headscarf law forcing women to cover their hair and entire bodies.

The protests quickly escalated into calls to overthrow Iran's clerical rulers. In the severe clampdown that followed, over 500 people were killed and nearly 20,000 arrested, according to human rights activists in Iran.

No twerking. No drinking. No smoking. But it's still a party at this Christian nightclub

By LUIS ANDRES HENAO and JESSIE WARDARSKI Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — The young crowd at a Nashville nightclub was ready to dance under the strobe lights to a throbbing mix of hip-hop, rap and Latin beats. But first they gathered to pray and praise God.

The rules were announced on the dance floor by a mic-carrying emcee to more than 200 clubgoers blanketed by thick smoke machine fog: "Rule No. 1: No twerking. Second rule: No drinking. And a third rule: No smoking." The last unspoken rule seemed obvious by then: No secular music — the playlist would be all Christian.

Welcome to The Cove.

The pop-up, 18-and-up Christian nightclub was launched last year by seven Black Christian men in their 20s — among them an Ivy League-educated financial analyst, musicians and social media experts — who sought to build a thriving community and a welcoming space for young Christians outside houses of worship. The launch comes at a post-pandemic time of dwindling church attendance, especially among Black

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Protestants that surveys say is unmatched by any other major religious group.

"We ourselves experienced a pain point of not being able to find community outside of our church, not knowing what to do to have fun without feeling bad for doing stuff that's conflicting to our values," said Eric Diggs, The Cove's 24-year-old CEO.

"There wasn't a space to cultivate that. So, we created it ourselves out of that pain point — the loneliness, the anxiety, depression, COVID, and the long quarantine.

PROVING THAT CHRISTIANS CAN BE COOL — NOT CORNY

Before their first monthly party in November, they set an ambitious goal: get 1,000 followers on social media. "We ended up getting more than 10,000 followers before our first event, which was insane," said Eric's brother, Jordan Diggs, 22, who manages the club's social media presence.

"Christians get a rep for being corny. And we want to show that Christians can be normal, can be cool. And they can have fun."

A second equally popular event was timed to ring in the New Year. A third was held in February.

For weeks, on its Instagram account — under hashtags like #jesuschrist #nightclubs — club organizers asked people to be ready to dance the worship night away and look their best: "When you pull up, we expect to see you in your Holiest Drip."

At the mid-February event, many in the racially and ethnically diverse crowd wore a rainbow of vivid colors — fluorescent turquoise, electric orange, neon pink — in their Nike, Adidas and New Balance sneakers. Or hoodies with images of Jesus and varsity jackets with Scripture from the Bible.

"What surprised me the most is the diversity, honestly," said Aaron Dews, one of the club founders. "With us being seven Black guys, just seeing the expansion of the type of people that we can bring in, and the unification around one idea has been incredibly encouraging."

Food trucks in the parking lot awaited hungry clubbers. Inside, Benji Shuler sold vintage clothes with religious messages that hung from racks. A white T-shirt with the iconic Pepsi logo read: "Jesus: The Choice of a New Generation," echoing the soda company's tagline from decades ago.

In lieu of alcohol, vendors sold sports drinks, bottled water and soda. Organizers cheerfully set up early. They hung Christmas-style lights from ceilings, sang a cappella and rehearsed their best choreographed moves.

CLUB BECOMES A DESTINATION FOR CHRISTIANS NEAR AND FAR

Before he impressed everyone with his dance moves, Garrett Bland, 20, listened on his phone to "Deliver Me," by gospel singer Donald Lawrence. "It's about letting the Lord into your life," he said, wearing a gold medallion around his neck inscribed with the Lord's Prayer and a beige hoodie that read: "God first."

He admired what The Cove's founders are trying to do, saying, "they want to create a space for believers who want to come to the faith and have fun."

Wearing a blue hoodie embroidered in white with "young sons of God," Eric Diggs asked organizers and volunteers to join him in prayer. "Dear God, thank you for this night," he said. "Amen!" the group said in unison before the huddled like a basketball team before a game — and yelled: "The Cove!"

Nia Gant, 18, attended the club for the first time. She moved from Grand Rapids, Michigan, four months ago and said she had been praying to make like-minded friends. "I think joy and religion can go together," said Gant, who wore nose piercings, Air Jordans and ripped jeans. "God," she said, "is joy."

Soon after, a line of people who had bought tickets in advance snaked outside to enter the nightclub. At the door, security officers in bullet-proof vests frisked clubgoers. Inside, they chatted, laughed and greeted each other with high fives.

Word quickly spread around that a couple had traveled 9,000-plus miles from their home in Brisbane, Australia, to the Christian club in the Tennessee capital known as Music City. It was true: Haynza Posala, 23, and his wife, Kim Posala, 24, heard about The Cove through a faith-and-culture podcast co-hosted by Darin Starks, one of the club's founders.

"We thought, this is cool — it's God glorifying," Haynza Posala said.

"It's surreal," said Kim Posala, looking around as people in trucker hats, berets and baseball caps streamed

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into the club and were handed bracelets of different colors. "It's community and that's what church is about."

Mic in hand, Carlton Batts Jr., a musician who is one of the founders and who was the designated DJ and emcee, asked people on the dance floor questions, dividing them into groups: "If you like prefer listening to music, come over here," he said pointing to one side. "If you prefer podcasts, over here."

"In church people can be really cliquy," Batts said. "So here, we give them prompts, so when we start the DJ set people are really comfortable dancing."

The crowd went wild when the DJ played "Alacazam," by rapper Caleb Gordon, who has grown popular for his faith-inspired songs, especially Christian hip-hop. They gasped and cheered when 21-year-old Dillan Runions, a former competition dancer, performed a back flip on the dance floor.

DANCE PARTY BLENDS INTO AN EMOTIONAL WORSHIP SERVICE

Eventually, it turned into a revival of sorts: Some wept or knelt with eyes shut in prayer. Whispering, someone in a small group asked God "to keep away negative suicidal thoughts."

Many belted out a gospel song that everyone seemed to know by heart: "A God like you" by choir director, rapper and songwriter Kirk Franklin.

The feedback has been mostly positive. Club founders have also faced criticism on TikTok from some who say that dancing and worship don't go together — or even see it as a sin. Jordan Diggs says he embraces the attention, good or bad — "just the words Christian and nightclub is going to start a lot of conversation."

Other generations are noticing. At some point, Shem Rivera, 26, a worship leader and a founder walked up to 18-year-old Noah Moon on the dance floor, and asked him how he had heard about The Cove.

"My mom told me about it — she sent me a video on Instagram," said Moon, who had just moved from Kansas to Nashville the day before. "That's fire!" Rivera responded smiling.

At the end, they all silently prayed. "It sounds oxymoronic — a Christian dance club," said Nicholas Oldham, who manages the club's business. He was initially skeptical and even wondered if it was sacrilegious.

"Fun is the lure; it's bait," he said, adding that what happens on the dance floor is so much more than that.

"What it says for old fogies like me, is that the young are hungry for the word of God," said Oldham, who is in his 40s. "The church isn't the building, and these young people are catching up to that."

Where will you be for the April 8 total solar eclipse? There's still time to grab a spot

By STEPHANIE NANO Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Where will you be watching the April 8 total solar eclipse? There are just a few weeks left to pick your spot to see the skies darken along a strip of North America, whether by land, sea or air.

For those who live inside the 115-mile-wide (185-kilometer-wide) path of total darkness, it may be a matter of just stepping outside and donning special eclipse glasses to watch the spectacle unfold. For the millions outside the path, or those who just want to improve their chances of clear skies, it could mean hitting the road with a game plan.

The eclipse reaches Mexico's Pacific coast in the morning, cuts diagonally across the U.S. from Texas to Maine and exits in eastern Canada by late afternoon. Most of the rest of the continent will see a partial eclipse.

WHERE TO WATCH THE TOTAL SOLAR ECLIPSE

The weather will be key, and spring weather along the path can be dicey. Mexico and Texas offer the best odds of sunny skies, said retired Canadian meteorologist Jay Anderson.

"There's no guarantee of sunshine anywhere — just better chances," he said.

Anderson studies satellite data for the previous 20 years to calculate how often a location has cloudy weather on any eclipse day. Besides Mexico and Texas, he said there are other promising spots on the path of totality, particularly along the Great Lakes.

The advice: If you're flexible, start paying attention to local weather about 10 days out, and make your plans on the three-day forecast. Die-hard eclipse chasers often line up more than one location and make last-minute decisions based on the best forecast, he said.

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HOW TO PREPARE LIKE AN ECLIPSE CHASER

One veteran eclipse chaser recommends picking a location and make it a vacation so that the eclipse is “the cherry on top” and not the only highlight — just in case things don’t work out.

Tom Schultz will be traveling from his retirement home in Costa Rica to watch the eclipse from his mother-in-law’s house in Rochester, New York, along with other relatives.

“If we get rained out, we’ll get this great family reunion,” said Schultz.

Veteran Anne Marie Adkins could drive across town in San Antonio to see the total eclipse, but opted to join an astronomer-led tour to Mazatlán, Mexico, betting on clear skies there. She’s been thwarted by clouds on other trips. For the 2017 U.S. eclipse, she went to Nebraska and had to scramble that day to find better skies.

“It’s a gamble. You never know what you are going to get,” said Adkins.

Post-eclipse traffic is a particular worry, especially in more rural areas like the Texas Hill Country. Patricia Moore, of the Bandera visitors center, said last year’s “ring of fire” eclipse provided a dress rehearsal for police and other first responders. Tiny Bandera — the “Cowboy Capital of the World” — expects crowds from nearby weekend music festivals.

“After the eclipse will be a challenge,” she said.

WHERE ARE THE ECLIPSE WATCH PARTIES?

With the eclipse falling on a Monday, cities and towns along the path have lined up a weekend full of activities and watch parties to attract visitors. There are a multitude of music festivals and gatherings planned at museums, parks, wineries and other businesses hoping to capitalize on the buzz.

Niagara Falls has a slate of events for days and is expecting July Fourth-sized crowds for the eclipse, said Sara Harvey, spokeswoman for Destination Niagara USA.

There are multiple vantage points to watch the show from Niagara Falls State Park, and the famous Maid of the Mist tourist boats may be running, weather permitting, she said. Even if it’s cloudy, visitors will get “a beautiful view of the falls,” Harvey said.

In Waco, Texas, festivities will culminate on eclipse day with science-themed activities outside Baylor’s McClane stadium, along what’s called Touchdown Alley.

It may be too late to snag a cabin on a cruise ship positioned off the Mexico coast for the eclipse, but there are other watery options including a ride on the paddle-wheeler Victorian Princess on Lake Erie from Erie, Pennsylvania.

If the sky beckons, Southwest and Delta have identified flights that will fly along or near the eclipse path. A special Delta flight from Austin to Detroit quickly sold out, prompting the airline to add another from Dallas.

Looking for an different kind of place to watch the sun, moon and Earth align? The Indianapolis Motor Speedway will host NASA astronauts and other guests. Cedar Point amusement park on Lake Erie in Sandusky, Ohio, is opening for the day. And the Little Rock Zoo in Arkansas is throwing a tailgate fundraising party and inviting visitors to watch the zoo’s residents react to the midday darkness.

You can also spend the day visiting the planets. In northern Maine, a scale model of the solar system is displayed along nearly 100 miles (160 kilometers) of U.S. Route 1. Retired geology professor Kevin McCartney expects to unveil a new 23-foot-tall (7-meters-tall) roadside sun at the University of Maine at Presque Isle on eclipse day. “You won’t be able to miss it,” he said.

Anderson, the weather expert, said it’s well worth the travel to see the “special magical moment” of a total eclipse: “It’s the Taylor Swift of natural events.”

Ukraine’s troops are rationing ammunition. Yet House Republicans plan to take weeks to mull more aid

By STEPHEN GROVES and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Ukrainian drones fly without ammunition. Russian artillery unleash deadly volleys from safe positions beyond the range of Kyiv’s troops. Shortages of ammo and supplies are resulting in

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lost ground to Moscow, U.S. congressional leaders warn, yet the Republican-controlled House has shown little hurry to resupply Ukraine with military aid.

Across Washington, officials are viewing the drop-off in ammunition shipments with increasing alarm. It's now been over two months since the U.S. — which since World War II has fashioned itself as the "Arsenal of Democracy" — last sent military supplies to Ukraine.

But House Speaker Mike Johnson appears determined to chart his own course away from a \$95 billion foreign aid package passed by the Senate — a decision that could stall the package for weeks to come after an already arduous months-long wait in Congress.

With U.S. military shipments cut off, Ukrainian troops withdrew from the eastern city of Avdiivka last month, where outnumbered defenders had withheld a Russian assault for four months. Delays in military support from the West are complicating the task for Kyiv's military tacticians, forcing troops to ration ammunition and ultimately costing the lives of Ukrainian soldiers.

"If Ukraine gets the aid they will win. If they don't get the aid they will lose — with dire consequences to the United States," said Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, who visited Ukraine last week.

Defense officials are discussing options, which include possibly tapping existing stockpiles even before Congress approves funding to replenish them, according to Sen. Jack Reed, the chair of the Senate Armed Services Committee. And at a White House meeting this week, President Joe Biden, the two top Democrats in Congress and Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell all took turns intensely urging Johnson to take up a Senate-passed package that would provide \$60 billion worth of assistance for Kyiv.

So far, the Republican speaker has refused.

The Louisiana Republican — just four months into the powerful job as speaker, second in the line to the presidency — is under intense pressure from all sides. The leaders of 23 European parliaments have signed an open letter urging him to pass the aid. And within his own House ranks, senior Republicans are growing restive at the inaction, even as other far-right members have threatened to try to remove him from leadership if he advances the aid for Kyiv.

"The House is actively considering options on a path forward, but our first responsibility is to fund the government and our primary, overriding responsibility — and it has been for the last three years — has been to secure the border," Johnson said at a news conference.

Johnson responded to the pressure on Ukraine by saying the House had only received the funding legislation in mid-February after the Senate took four months to negotiate, including enforcement policies at the U.S.-Mexico border. The deal on border security swiftly collapsed after Republicans, including Johnson, criticized the proposal as insufficient. Yet Johnson and other House Republicans are once again hoping to secure some policy wins on border security.

When Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy visited Congress late last year, he told Johnson that the military aid would last into February. But as Congress entered March, Johnson so far has allowed House members to craft their own proposals and revealed little on his plans for the package.

"We're beyond the time frame that this should have taken, this analysis and careful consideration by the House should have been completed before the end of the year or very shortly after the new year," said Rep. French Hill, an Arkansas Republican.

Hill and several other senior Republicans are pressing Johnson to act by crafting a new national security package in the House. That bill, which is being drafted by Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Michael McCaul and key appropriators, is expected to come in less than the \$95 billion Senate package but include many similar provisions — including money that Ukraine, Israel and Indo-Pacific allies could use to purchase U.S. military equipment, as well as some humanitarian assistance.

It may also include a version of the Rebuilding Economic Prosperity and Opportunity for Ukrainians, or REPO Act, which would allow the U.S. to tap frozen Russian central bank assets to compensate Ukraine for damages from the invasion, Hill said. He said it would save taxpayer dollars in the long run and help gain Republican votes in the House.

"This is more a matter of finding out the way to move forward," said seasoned Rep. Tom Cole, R-Okla.,

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the chairman of the Rules committee. "But a substantial majority of both houses of Congress wants to help Ukraine. You had 70 over there," he said about the robust Senate support, "and the vote here will be well north of 300."

Rep. Annie Kuster of New Hampshire, who leads a caucus of centrist Democrats called New Dems, said many in her party are ready to help Johnson pass a military aid package if he brings it to the floor. But she said the bill already passed by the Senate would have the broadest support.

"We're at a critical moment right now, and I encourage Speaker Johnson to work with us," Kuster said. "He has such a slim majority."

Meanwhile, any decision by the Pentagon to send Ukraine weapons before Congress approves funding is fraught with risk. Since there is no money to replenish the equipment and weapons sent, the military would be depleting its stockpiles and potentially risking harm to unit readiness for war.

In addition, there are worries that action from the Pentagon could dissuade Congress from moving quickly on the funding bill.

Reed said it would make more sense for Congress to pass the supplemental package, because then the Pentagon "could immediately order the equipment they're drawing down. We run the risk without that of drawing down the equipment and not being able to replace it or being confident of replacement."

But he added, "There might be circumstances where the president would decide to ship equipment like ATACMS, even though it would be a difficult judgment."

The U.S. has sent medium-range ATACMS (Army Tactical Missile Systems) as well as HIMARS (High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems). But there has been pressure for the U.S. to send longer-range ATACMS. The U.S. has resisted out of concerns Moscow would consider them escalatory, since they could reach deeper into Russia and Russian-held territory.

Ukrainian leaders, however, could use the longer-range missiles to disrupt Russian supply lines — a capability that is seen as essential as Russian President Vladimir Putin looks to surge more troops this spring.

Ukraine also has made it clear that its forces also need additional artillery, including 155 mm howitzer rounds, as well as air defense ammunition.

Ukrainian officials have expressed confidence they can withstand a Russian offensive for several more months, said Shelby Magid, deputy director of the Eurasia Center at the Atlantic Council, which advocates for American cooperation with Europe. Yet she added that the Pentagon's consideration of using draw-down authority sent a somber message that officials view the conflict as having direct implications for U.S. national security.

Some are warning that if Congress fails to provide the aid, U.S. troops will next be called on to help defend NATO allies.

Schumer said that during his trip to Ukraine, "One leading American said to me if we don't get the aid, Russian tanks could be at the Polish border by December."

Israeli strikes kill 7 Hezbollah members in south Lebanon

By MOHAMMED ZAATARI Associated Press

SIDON, Lebanon (AP) — An Israeli drone strike hit a car in south Lebanon Saturday morning, killing three Hezbollah members, state media and officials said.

Another four Hezbollah members were killed in a strike on a house in the town of Ramia overnight, said a Lebanese security official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to journalists.

The state-run National News Agency said the latest strike on Saturday hit a car in the Naqoura area along Lebanon's southern coast.

The Israeli military said in a statement that it had "struck a vehicle in southern Lebanon, in which a number of terrorists who launched rockets into Israeli territory were driving." It said the militants operated under the Imam Hossein Division, which is affiliated with Iran and operates under Hezbollah.

Hezbollah announced the deaths of seven of its fighters Saturday, but as usual did not specify when

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and where they were killed.

The Lebanese militant group has been trading fire with Israeli forces along the Lebanon-Israel border near-daily since the beginning of Israel's war against Hamas, a Hezbollah ally, in Gaza. The fighting has killed more than 200 Hezbollah fighters and at least 37 civilian in Lebanon and at least nine soldiers and nine civilians in Israel.

Hezbollah has said it will not halt its fire until there is a cease-fire in Gaza but would observe a truce if one is reached.

Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant has vowed to step up attacks on Hezbollah even if a cease-fire is reached with Hamas in the Gaza Strip, until the Lebanese militant group withdraws from the border area.

Today in History: March 3 Rodney King beaten by Los Angeles police

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Sunday, March 3, the 63rd day of 2024. There are 303 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 3, 1991, motorist Rodney King was severely beaten by Los Angeles police officers in a scene captured on amateur video.

On this date:

In 1791, Congress passed a measure taxing distilled spirits; it was the first internal revenue act in U.S. history.

In 1845, Florida became the 27th state.

In 1849, the U.S. Department of the Interior was established.

In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln signed a measure creating the National Academy of Sciences.

In 1931, "The Star-Spangled Banner" became the national anthem of the United States as President Herbert Hoover signed a congressional resolution.

In 1943, in London's East End, 173 people died in a crush of bodies at the Bethnal Green tube station, which was being used as a wartime air raid shelter.

In 1945, the Allies fully secured the Philippine capital of Manila from Japanese forces during World War II.

In 1960, Lucille Ball filed for divorce from her husband, Desi Arnaz, a day after they had finished filming the last episode of "The Lucille Ball-Desi Arnaz Show."

In 1966, death claimed actors William Frawley at age 79 and Alice Pearce at age 48 in Hollywood.

In 1969, Apollo 9 blasted off from Cape Kennedy on a mission to test the lunar module.

In 1974, a Turkish Airlines DC-10 crashed shortly after takeoff from Orly Airport in Paris, killing all 346 people on board.

In 1991, 25 people were killed when a United Airlines Boeing 737-200 crashed while approaching the Colorado Springs airport.

In 2013, Vice President Joe Biden led civil rights leaders and national political figures in a ceremonial crossing of a Selma, Alabama, bridge where voting rights marchers were beaten by law enforcement officers in 1965.

In 2017, the Nintendo Switch, a hybrid game machine that works as both a console at home and a portable tablet on the go, made its debut.

In 2018, Roger Bannister, the British athlete who, while a medical student, became the first person to run a mile in under 4 minutes, died in Oxford, England at the age of 88.

In 2020, in a surprise move, the Federal Reserve cut its benchmark interest rate by a half-point, its largest cut in more than a decade, to support the economy in the face of the spreading coronavirus.

In 2022, OxyContin maker Purdue Pharma reached a nationwide settlement over its role in the opioid crisis, with the Sackler family members who own the company boosting their cash contribution to as much as \$6 billion in a deal intended to staunch a flood of lawsuits.

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Today's birthdays: Singer-musician Mike Pender (The Searchers) is 83. Movie producer-director George Miller is 79. Actor Hattie Winston is 79. Singer Jennifer Warnes is 77. Actor-director Tim Kazurinsky is 74. Singer-musician Robyn Hitchcock is 71. Actor Robert Gossett is 70. Rock musician John Lilley is 70. Actor Miranda Richardson is 66. Radio personality Ira Glass is 65. Actor Mary Page Keller is 63. Olympic track and field gold medalist Jackie Joyner-Kersey is 62. Former NFL player and College Football Hall of Famer Herschel Walker is 62. Actor Laura Harring is 60. Contemporary Christian musician Duncan Phillips (Newsboys) is 60. Rapper-actor Tone Loc is 58. Actor Julie Bowen is 54. Country singer Brett Warren (The Warren Brothers) is 53. Actor David Faustino is 50. Gospel singer Jason Crabb is 47. Singer Ronan Keating (Boyzone) is 47. Rapper Lil' Flip is 43. Actor Jessica Biel is 42. Rock musician Joe "Blower" Garvey (Hinder) is 40. Musician Brett Hite (Frenship) is 38. Pop singer Camila Cabello is 27. Actor Thomas Barbusca (TV: "The Mick") is 21. Actor Reyllynn Caster is 21.