

# Groton Daily Independent

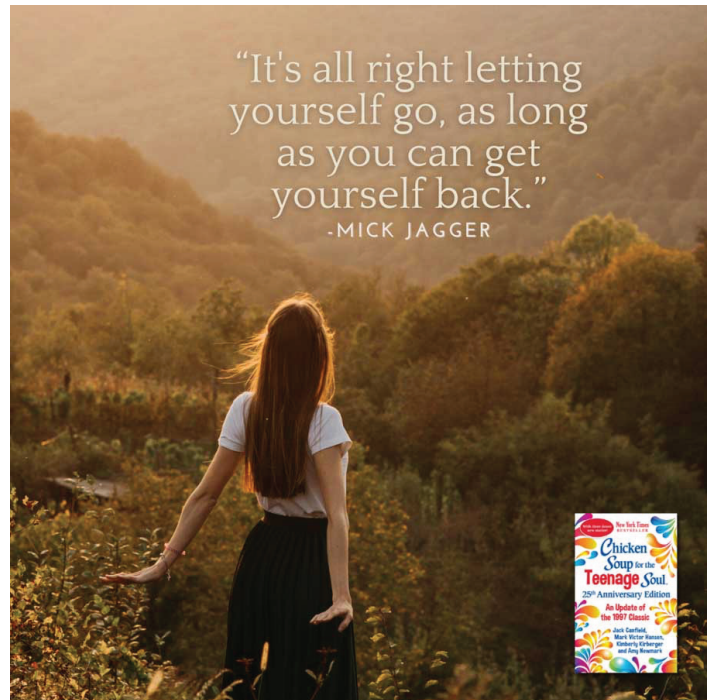
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## Sunday, March 10

Spring ahead for Daylight Savings Time  
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, 9 a.m.; Sunday school, 10:15 a.m.; Choir, 6 p.m.  
St. John's Lutheran worship, 9 a.m.; Zion at 11 a.m.; Sunday school, at 9:45 a.m.  
United Methodist: Worship at Conde, 8:30 a.m., and at Groton, 10:30 a.m.; Coffee hour, 9:30 a.m.; Confirmation Sunday, 9:30 a.m.; Sunday school, 9:30 a.m.

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



## Monday, March 11

School Breakfast: oatmeal.  
School Lunch: Chicken nuggets, mashed potatoes.  
School Board Meeting, 6 p.m., in Columbia  
Pantry Open 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.  
Senior Citizens Meet at the Groton Community Center, 1 p.m.  
Senior Menu: Tater tot hot dish, green beans, grape juice, pineapple tidbits, whole wheat bread.  
Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.  
United Methodist: PEO Meeting (outside group), 7 p.m.

## Tuesday, March 12

School Breakfast: Breakfast sandwich.  
School Lunch: Scalloped potatoes, ham steak.  
Pep Rally, 2:45 p.m., GHS Arena  
Middle School Talent Show, 7 p.m., GHS Gym  
Thrift Store open 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.  
Food Pantry open 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.  
Senior Menu: New England ham dinner, fruit, cookie, dinner roll.  
Emmanuel Lutheran: Council, 6 p.m.  
United Methodist: Bible study, 10 a.m.

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

The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.  
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## Rounds Secures Wins for South Dakota in First of Two FY2024 Appropriations Bills

**Bill Passed This Week Includes Nearly \$150 Million for South Dakota**

WASHINGTON –The United States Senate passed the first of two appropriations bills, which funds six of the twelve areas of government through the end of the fiscal year. The Consolidated Appropriations Act, which passed the Senate 75-22 with the support of U.S. Senator Mike Rounds (R-S.D.), now heads to the President’s desk to be signed into law. Rounds was able to secure \$149.5 million in funding for projects that will go directly to South Dakota.

“From housing to transportation to water services, the Consolidated Appropriations Act includes several big wins for South Dakota,” said Rounds. “After hearing from South Dakotans, we provided input and requests to make certain that this federal funding goes to projects that have the support of local stakeholders, not just Washington bureaucrats. I am pleased to have been able to secure \$149.5 million for these projects that will benefit South Dakotans for years to come.”

The six areas funded in the Consolidated Appropriations Act are Military Construction-Veterans Affairs; Agriculture; Commerce; Energy-Water Development; Transportation, Housing and Urban Development; and Interior. As part of the Military Construction-VA section, the appropriations bill also funded projects that were authorized as part of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), including \$395 million in military construction funding for South Dakota. You can read more about the FY24 NDAA, including a list of projects secured and supported by Rounds, [here](#).

### **ROUNDS SECURED VICTORIES FOR SOUTH DAKOTA:**

- \$3 million for Black Hills Habitat for Humanity to create a Black Hills Housing Development
- \$30 million for the South Dakota Ellsworth Development Authority for the Black Hills Housing Trust
- \$20 million for the Rapid City Airport for Passenger Terminal Expansion
- \$1 million for the South Dakota Department of Transportation (SDDOT) for BIA Route 3
- \$10 million for SDDOT for reconstruction of SD Highway 13
- \$26.7 million for SDDOT for improvements on US Route 385
- \$10.6 million for SDDOT for improvements on SD Highway 37
- \$12 million for the Lewis and Clark Rural Water System
- \$1.2 million for the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Western Water Cooperative Committee
- \$35 million for the Sanford Underground Research Facility

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## 18 qualify for State SDWCA Tournament

The Region 2 South Dakota Wrestling Coaches Association's Tournament was held Saturday in Huron. The top three place winners will advance to the State Tournament to be held next weekend in Rapid City at The Monument. State qualifiers are Ryker Herron (1st), Kase Ronning (2nd), Landry Johnson (3rd), Kroy Khali (1st), Bennett Iverson (3rd), Henry Pharis (1st), Huntley Overacker (1st), Keenan Moody (2nd), Bentley Ehresmann (3rd), Preston Hinkelman (2nd), Parker Zoellner (3rd), Wyatt Hagen (1st), Vdea Stiegelmeier (1st), Elsy Hagen (2nd), Rosalyn Block (1st), Madison Little (1st), Lincoln Krause (3rd), and Layne Johnson (1st).

### **Tots 46: Ryker Herron's place is 1st and has scored 28.0 team points.**

Champ. Round 1 - Ryker Herron (Groton) received a bye () (Bye)  
Quarterfinal - Ryker Herron (Groton) won by fall over Apollo Wilkie (Aberdeen) (Fall 0:18)  
Semifinal - Ryker Herron (Groton) won by fall over Nerat Sandve (Hoven) (Fall 0:28)  
1st Place Match - Ryker Herron (Groton) won by fall over Quintin Brock (Huron) (Fall 2:25)

### **Tots 67: Kase Ronning's place is 2nd and has scored 10.0 team points.**

Champ. Round 1 - Kase Ronning (Groton) received a bye () (Bye)  
Quarterfinal - Kase Ronning (Groton) received a bye () (Bye)  
Semifinal - Kase Ronning (Groton) received a bye () (Bye)  
1st Place Match - Tucker Tobin (Pierre) won by fall over Kase Ronning (Groton) (Fall 3:30)

### **Bantam 50: Landry Johnson's place is 3rd and has scored 19.0 team points.**

Champ. Round 1 - Rayne Werdel (Miller/Highmore) won by fall over Landry Johnson (Groton) (Fall 4:12)  
Cons. Round 1 - Landry Johnson (Groton) received a bye () (Bye)  
Cons. Round 2 - Landry Johnson (Groton) won by fall over Mason Mehlhaff (Pierre) (Fall 4:16)  
Cons. Round 3 - Landry Johnson (Groton) won by fall over Calvin Hepper (Pierre) (Fall 1:12)  
Cons. Semi - Landry Johnson (Groton) won by decision over Tayten Hins (Huron) (Dec 14-8)  
3rd Place Match - Landry Johnson (Groton) won by fall over Nathan Nelson (Sully Buttes) (Fall 0:42)

### **Bantam 57: Roman Bahr's place is 6th and has scored 10.5 team points.**

Champ. Round 1 - Roman Bahr (Groton) won by tech fall over Rook Huber (Miller/Highmore) (TF 16-1)  
Quarterfinal - Milo Gates (Miller/Highmore) won by tech fall over Roman Bahr (Groton) (TF 18-2)  
Cons. Round 2 - Roman Bahr (Groton) won by fall over Kamden Wieseler (Faulkton) (Fall 3:46)  
Cons. Round 3 - Roman Bahr (Groton) won by decision over Daxton Sack (Pierre) (Dec 9-2)  
Cons. Semi - Tilden Carroll (Miller/Highmore) won by fall over Roman Bahr (Groton) (Fall 2:18)  
5th Place Match - Milo Gates (Miller/Highmore) won by fall over Roman Bahr (Groton) (Fall 1:00)

### **Bantam 76: Kroy Khali's place is 1st and has scored 28.0 team points.**

Champ. Round 1 - Kroy Khali (Groton) received a bye () (Bye)  
Quarterfinal - Kroy Khali (Groton) won by fall over Brantley Steen (Ipswich) (Fall 0:41)  
Semifinal - Kroy Khali (Groton) won by fall over Adrian Winter (Miller/Highmore) (Fall 0:31)  
1st Place Match - Kroy Khali (Groton) won by forfeit over Otto Haag (Pierre) (FF)

### **Midgets 53: Bennett Iverson's place is 3rd and has scored 14.0 team points.**

Champ. Round 1 - Bennett Iverson (Groton) received a bye () (Bye)  
Quarterfinal - Bennett Iverson (Groton) received a bye () (Bye)  
Semifinal - Gabriel Shempert (Mobridge) won by decision over Bennett Iverson (Groton) (Dec 8-6)  
Cons. Semi - Bennett Iverson (Groton) won by fall over Jayden Traversie (Timber Lake) (Fall 2:03)  
3rd Place Match - Bennett Iverson (Groton) won by fall over Jax Helm (Mobridge) (Fall 3:58)

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## **Midgets 72: Henry Pharis's place is 1st and has scored 26.0 team points.**

Champ. Round 1 - Henry Pharis (Groton) won by fall over Hudson Rogers (Pierre) (Fall 3:07)  
Quarterfinal - Henry Pharis (Groton) won by major decision over Hendrix Heath (Warner/Northwestern) (Maj 12-0)  
Semifinal - Henry Pharis (Groton) won by decision over Owen Petersek (Lyman County) (Dec 7-0)  
1st Place Match - Henry Pharis (Groton) won by major decision over Landyn Dargatz (Aberdeen) (Maj 11-3)

## **Midgets 77: Micah Krause's.**

Champ. Round 1 - Josh Hegge (Pierre) won by fall over Micah Krause (Groton) (Fall 0:26)  
Cons. Round 1 - Micah Krause (Groton) received a bye () (Bye)  
Cons. Round 2 - Asher Bowman (Faulkton) won by fall over Micah Krause (Groton) (Fall 0:48)

## **Midgets 82: Samuel Flihs's place is 4th and has scored 17.5 team points.**

Champ. Round 1 - Samuel Flihs (Groton) won by tech fall over Layton Johnson (Lyman County) (TF 15-0)  
Quarterfinal - Dallas Stroud (Redfield) won by fall over Samuel Flihs (Groton) (Fall 1:02)  
Cons. Round 2 - Samuel Flihs (Groton) won by fall over Jacob Powell (Aberdeen) (Fall 1:43)  
Cons. Round 3 - Samuel Flihs (Groton) won by fall over Zander Aberle (Warner/Northwestern) (Fall 2:13)  
Cons. Semi - Samuel Flihs (Groton) won by decision over Hudson Boomsma (Doland) (Dec 11-7)  
3rd Place Match - Lane McGaugh (Huron) won by fall over Samuel Flihs (Groton) (Fall 2:26)

## **Midgets 89: Huntley Overacker's place is 1st and has scored 28.0 team points.**

Champ. Round 1 - Huntley Overacker (Groton) received a bye () (Bye)  
Quarterfinal - Huntley Overacker (Groton) won by fall over Saul Swanson (Pierre) (Fall 0:28)  
Semifinal - Huntley Overacker (Groton) won by fall over John Bear Stops (Pierre) (Fall 1:56)  
1st Place Match - Huntley Overacker (Groton) won by fall over Kash Pugh (Miller/Highmore) (Fall 1:59)

## **Midgets 113: Keenan Moody's place is 2nd and has scored 20.0 team points.**

Champ. Round 1 - Keenan Moody (Groton) received a bye () (Bye)  
Quarterfinal - Keenan Moody (Groton) received a bye () (Bye)  
Semifinal - Keenan Moody (Groton) won by fall over Paysen Garrett (Stanley County) (Fall 0:54)  
1st Place Match - Hooper Sazue (Lyman County) won by fall over Keenan Moody (Groton) (Fall 2:28)

## **Novice 77: Bentley Ehresmann's place is 3rd and has scored 20.0 team points.**

Champ. Round 1 - Bentley Ehresmann (Groton) received a bye () (Bye)  
Quarterfinal - Bentley Ehresmann (Groton) won by fall over Samuel Knox (Doland) (Fall 0:39)  
Semifinal - Branch Menning (Pierre) won by fall over Bentley Ehresmann (Groton) (Fall 1:07)  
Cons. Semi - Bentley Ehresmann (Groton) won by fall over Colton Havranek (Pierre) (Fall 0:16)  
3rd Place Match - Bentley Ehresmann (Groton) won by fall over Easton VanDerWerff (Miller/Highmore) (Fall 4:27)

## **Novice 82: Brayson Hubbs's.**

Champ. Round 1 - William Fowler (Pierre) won by fall over Brayson Hubbs (Groton) (Fall 1:13)  
Cons. Round 1 - Brayson Hubbs (Groton) received a bye () (Bye)  
Cons. Round 2 - Cruz Kimlicka (Redfield) won by fall over Brayson Hubbs (Groton) (Fall 0:18)

## **Novice 82: Preston Hinkelman's place is 2nd and has scored 22.0 team points.**

Champ. Round 1 - Preston Hinkelman (Groton) received a bye () (Bye)  
Quarterfinal - Preston Hinkelman (Groton) won by fall over Carter Lane (Aberdeen) (Fall 0:51)  
Semifinal - Preston Hinkelman (Groton) won by fall over Liam Auble (Pierre) (Fall 1:51)  
1st Place Match - Kallan Peterson (Miller/Highmore) won in tie breaker - 1 over Preston Hinkelman (Groton) (TB-1 10-8)



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## **Novice 87: Adam Fliehs's.**

Champ. Round 1 - Kolten Neiderworder (Lyman County) won by decision over Adam Fliehs (Groton) (Dec 7-2)

Cons. Round 1 - Jackson Rowland (Miller/Highmore) won by major decision over Adam Fliehs (Groton) (Maj 9-0)

## **Novice 93: Parker Zoellner's place is 3rd and has scored 20.0 team points.**

Champ. Round 1 - Parker Zoellner (Groton) won by fall over Dalton Nickelson (Stanley County) (Fall 0:00)

Quarterfinal - Parker Zoellner (Groton) won by fall over Colt Warriner (Pierre) (Fall 2:58)

Semifinal - Joe Murphy (Pierre) won by decision over Parker Zoellner (Groton) (Dec 2-0)

Cons. Semi - Parker Zoellner (Groton) won by decision over Porter Kost (Pierre) (Dec 4-0)

3rd Place Match - Parker Zoellner (Groton) won by fall over Kane Kieffer (Lyman County) (Fall 2:39)

## **Novice 138: Hank Fliehs's.**

Champ. Round 1 - Hank Fliehs (Groton) received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal - Soren Brakke (Pierre) won by decision over Hank Fliehs (Groton) (Dec 7-6)

Cons. Round 2 - Hank Fliehs (Groton) received a bye () (Bye)

Cons. Round 3 - Tate Nelson (Aberdeen) won by fall over Hank Fliehs (Groton) (Fall 1:19)

## **Schoolboy 100: Luke Gauer's place is 5th and has scored 7.0 team points.**

Champ. Round 1 - Luke Gauer (Groton) received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal - Noah Scepaniak (Groton) won by major decision over Luke Gauer (Groton) (Maj 9-1)

Cons. Round 2 - Luke Gauer (Groton) received a bye () (Bye)

Cons. Round 3 - Luke Gauer (Groton) received a bye () (Bye)

Cons. Semi - John Boes (Stanley County) won by decision over Luke Gauer (Groton) (Dec 6-4)

5th Place Match - Luke Gauer (Groton) won by fall over Jett Brakke (Pierre) (Fall 3:00)

## **Schoolboy 100: Noah Scepaniak's place is 4th and has scored 13.0 team points.**

Champ. Round 1 - Noah Scepaniak (Groton) received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal - Noah Scepaniak (Groton) won by major decision over Luke Gauer (Groton) (Maj 9-1)

Semifinal - Easton Rausch (Gettysburg) won by fall over Noah Scepaniak (Groton) (Fall 0:27)

Cons. Semi - Noah Scepaniak (Groton) won by decision over Jett Brakke (Pierre) (Dec 6-0)

3rd Place Match - John Boes (Stanley County) won by decision over Noah Scepaniak (Groton) (Dec 8-1)

## **Schoolboy 110: Wyatt Hagen's place is 1st and has scored 22.0 team points.**

Champ. Round 1 - Wyatt Hagen (Groton) received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal - Wyatt Hagen (Groton) received a bye () (Bye)

Semifinal - Wyatt Hagen (Groton) won by decision over Cade Werdel (Miller/Highmore) (Dec 7-4)

1st Place Match - Wyatt Hagen (Groton) won by decision over Bode Minder (Pierre) (Dec 2-0)

## **Girls Tots 67: Veda Stiegelmeier's place is 1st and has scored 22.0 team points.**

Champ. Round 1 - Veda Stiegelmeier (Groton) received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal - Veda Stiegelmeier (Groton) received a bye () (Bye)

Semifinal - Veda Stiegelmeier (Groton) received a bye () (Bye)

1st Place Match - Veda Stiegelmeier (Groton) won by fall over Kylie Gowin (Hoven) (Fall 0:27)

## **Girls Midget 84: Elsy Hagen's place is 2nd and has scored 10.0 team points.**

Champ. Round 1 - Elsy Hagen (Groton) received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal - Elsy Hagen (Groton) received a bye () (Bye)

Semifinal - Elsy Hagen (Groton) received a bye () (Bye)

1st Place Match - Karen Mitchell (Miller/Highmore) won by fall over Elsy Hagen (Groton) (Fall 1:43)

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## Girls Midget 96: Rosalyn Block's place is 1st and has scored 22.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Rosalyn Block (Groton) received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal - Rosalyn Block (Groton) received a bye () (Bye)

Semifinal - Rosalyn Block (Groton) received a bye () (Bye)

1st Place Match - Rosalyn Block (Groton) won by fall over Paisley Volker (Sully Buttes) (Fall 2:11)

## Schoolgirl 112: Madison Little's place is 1st and has scored 20.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Madison Little (Groton) received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal - Madison Little (Groton) received a bye () (Bye)

Semifinal - Madison Little (Groton) received a bye () (Bye)

1st Place Match - Madison Little (Groton) won by decision over Kalley Teason (Miller/Highmore) (Dec 5-2)

## Cadet - 16U 120: Lincoln Krause's place is 3rd and has scored 13.5 team points.

Quarterfinal - Lincoln Krause (Groton) received a bye () (Bye)

Semifinal - Cash Edgar (Faulkton) won by tech fall over Lincoln Krause (Groton) (TF 15-0)

Cons. Semi - Lincoln Krause (Groton) won by tech fall over Bryson LaRosh (Sully Buttes) (TF 15-0)

3rd Place Match - Lincoln Krause (Groton) won by fall over Tucker Baloun (Faulkton) (Fall 2:26)

## Cadet - 16U 175: Layne Johnson's place is 1st and has scored 2.0 team points.

1st Place Match - Layne Johnson (Groton) received a bye () (Bye)

## 158 +/- ACRE LAND AUCTION

### WEST HANSON TWP., BROWN CO., SD

We will offer at Public Auction the following land located from Groton SD, (Intersection of Hwy 12 & Hwy 37)  
8 miles south on Hwy 37 & 3 miles west on 141<sup>st</sup> St. Watch for auction signs on:

**THURSDAY, MARCH 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024 SALE TIME: 11:00 A.M.**

**Auctioneer's Note:** This auction presents the opportunity to purchase 158 +/- acres of productive tillable land located in West Hanson Twp., Brown Co., SD. The farm is free for possession for the 2024 crop year. This auction will be held live on-site w/online bidding available.

This 158 +/- acres of land, according to FSA information, has 156.85 +/- cropland acres and is made up of predominately Class II soils with a Surety AgriData soil productivity index of 76.8. Per FSA information, this farm has a soybean base of 78.6 acres and a PLC yield of 25 bu., and a wheat base of 78.6 acres and a PLC yield of 35 bu. There is approximately 40 +/- acres that are planted to winter wheat and this crop will go to the new buyer(s).

**Legal Description:** SE ¼ of Sec. 28, T-122-N, R-61-W, West Hanson Twp., Brown Co., SD

For additional information, terms, drone video, aerial, soil & plat maps and FSA-156EZ, please visit [www.burlagepeterson.com](http://www.burlagepeterson.com), or contact Auctioneers.

**MAKE PLANS TO ATTEND THIS AUCTION AND COME PREPARED TO BUY!**

**TERMS:** Visit [burlagepeterson.com](http://burlagepeterson.com) for full sale terms. Possession for 2024.

**Gary and Sharon Van Riper Charitable Remainder Annuity Trust – Owners**  
**First Bank & Trust – Trustee**

**BURLAGE PETERSON AUCTIONEERS & REALTORS, LLC**  
Land Brokers – Auctioneers – Realtors – Farm Managers  
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Auctioneers & Realtors, LLC.

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## State Girls Basketball Tournaments

### State A Tournament

#### First Round:

Sisseton 57, Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 47  
Vermillion 41, Mahpiya Luta 37  
Sioux Falls Christian 53, Hanson 42  
Tea Area 52, Flandreau 47

#### Semifinals

##### Championship Bracket

Vermillion 50, Sisseton 47  
Tea Area 48, Sioux Falls Christian 44

##### Consolation Round

Mahpiya Luta 62, Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 41  
Flandreau 65, Hanson 33

#### Finals

Championship: Vermillion 60, Tea Area 54  
Third Place: Sisseton 68, Sioux Falls Christian 52  
Fifth Place: Flandreau 56, Mahpiya Luta 41  
Seventh Place: Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 60, Hanson 49

### State. B Tournament

#### First Round:

Arlington 51, James Valley Christian 41  
Ethan 51, Wall 45  
Lyman 54, Harding County 49  
Centerville 59, Warner 50

#### Semifinals

##### Championship. Bracket

Arlington 44, Ethan 41  
Centerville 52, Lyman 45

##### Consolation Bracket

Wall 62, James Valley Christian 59  
Harding County 62, Warner 57

#### Finals

Championship: Centerville 62, Arlington 44  
Third Place: Ethan 67, Lyman 42  
Fifth Place: Wall 60, Harding County 51  
Seventh Place: James Valley Christian 56, Warner 50

### State AA Tournament

#### First Round

SF O'Gorman 64, RC Stevens 58  
SF Jefferson 45, Pierre 41  
Harrisburg 57, Mitchell 41  
Brandon Valley 58, Spearfish 42

#### Semifinals

##### Championship Bracket

SF O'Gorman 56, SF Jefferson 45  
Brandon Valley 51, Harrisburg 36

##### Consolation Bracket

Pierre 52, RC Stevens 45  
Mitchell 54, Spearfish 43

#### Finals

Championship: SF O'Gorman 55, Brandon Valley 42  
Third Place: SF Jefferson 44, Harrisburg 40  
Fifth Place: Pierre 48, Mitchell 47  
Seventh Place: Spearfish 59, RC Stevens 50



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## Sixth Graders take first in three weekend tournaments



Boys relaxing at the Warner tournament.  
Back row: Gavin Hanten, Trey Tietz, Trayce Schelle, Ryder Schwan  
Front row: Liam Lord, Major Dolan, Asher Zimmerman (Photo by April Abeln)



Coach Tom Tietz talks over the game plan during one of the 6th grade basketball games in Valley City. (Photo by April Abeln)



Axel Abeln wins the tip off at one of the games at Milbank. (Photo by April Abeln)



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**The sixth grade team took first at Warner the first weekend in March and also took first at the Valley City Tournament held the last weekend in February.**

**Back row: Coach Tom Tietz, Eli Heilman, Major Dolan, Trayce Schelle, Ryder Schwan, Coach Ryan Schelle**

**Front row: Hudson Eichler, Trey Tietz, Liam Lord, Asher Zimmerman, Gavin Hanten**

(Photo by April Abeln)



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## Sixth graders take first at Milbank

The Milbank Tournament was held Saturday with Groton Area's sixth graders taking first.  
Back row: Liam Johnson, Trayce Schelle, Axel Abeln, Major Dolar, Liam Lord  
Front row: Coach Brett Schwan, Trey Tietz, Asher Zimmerman, Gavin Hanten, Ryder Schwan, Coach Tom Tietz. (Photo by April Abeln)



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## Groton Show Choir competes at Aberdeen

Groton's Show Choir competed at the Aberdeen Central Center Stage on Saturday. It was the first competition of the year. Sioux Falls Washington took first. Groton Area placed fifth at the event. (Courtesy photo Show Choir Parents)



Show Choir seniors. Camryn Kurtz, Emily Clark (pit band piano), Desiree Yeigh (pit band director), Cadence Feist (pit band saxophone) (Courtesy photo Show Choir Parents)



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## THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

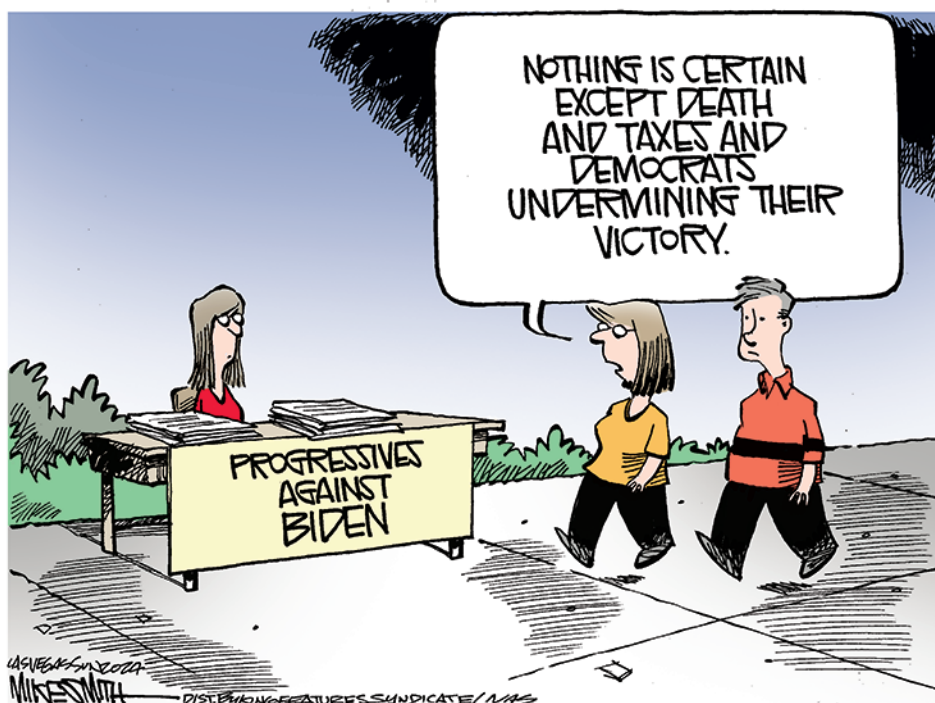
*For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here.*

MATTHEW 12: 40,41



Detail of 16th-century woodblock engraving

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

2. From Genesis 3, who made clothes for Adam and Eve out of skins? *Adam, Eve, The Lord, Serpent*

3. What did Jesus say His followers would never walk in? *Fear, Solitude, Darkness, Shame*

4. Lamentations 3 speaks of the wormwood and the ...? *Fire, Gall, Fence, Fig*

5. Who had a vision of a lion having eagle's wings? *John the Baptist, Peter, Herod, Daniel*

6. From 2 Samuel 20, who killed Amasa? *Joab, Sheba, Abishai, Bichri*

ANSWERS: 1) Old, 2) The Lord, 3) Darkness, 4) Gall, 5) Daniel, 6) Joab

*Comments? More Trivia? Gift ideas? Visit [www.TriviaGuy.com](http://www.TriviaGuy.com).*

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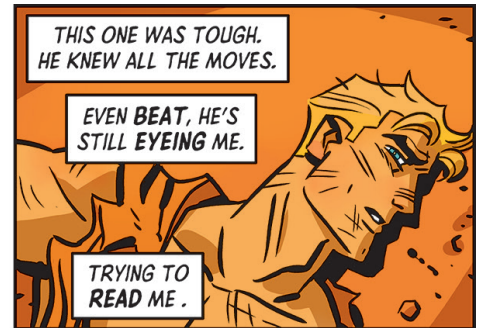
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I'M BOK. I'M A DRAGONMAN. I'VE BEEN ALIVE FOR FORTY-ONE WINTERS.

CONVICT FOR SIX.

RICH MEN PAY THE JAILMASTER TO WATCH ME FIGHT.



THIS ONE WAS TOUGH. HE KNEW ALL THE MOVES.

EVEN BEAT, HE'S STILL EYEING ME.

TRYING TO READ ME.



I BEAT FLASH GORDON IN THE FIGHT PIT. IT WASN'T EASY.

HE COMES TO ME AFTER.

WANTS TO KNOW MY STORY.

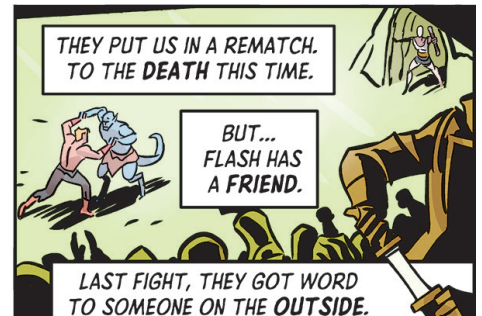


NO MATTER. SAME AS HALF THE CONVICTS IN HERE.

SOME DRAGONMEN ROSE UP AGAINST MING. I WAS ONE OF THEM.

WE LOST.

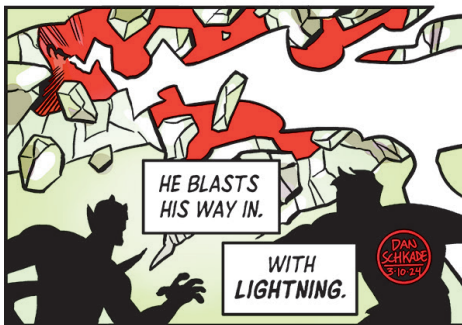
END OF STORY.



THEY PUT US IN A REMATCH. TO THE DEATH THIS TIME.

BUT... FLASH HAS A FRIEND.

LAST FIGHT, THEY GOT WORD TO SOMEONE ON THE OUTSIDE.



HE BLASTS HIS WAY IN.

WITH LIGHTNING.

DAN SCHIKASE 3-10-23



FLASH STOPS. ASKS ME TO COME WITH THEM.

GIVES ME HIS HAND.

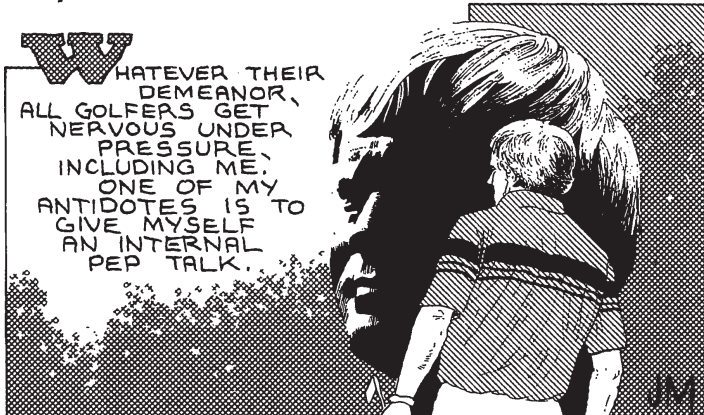


FIRST HAND I'VE SEEN IN SIX YEARS THAT WASN'T A FIST.

I TAKE IT.

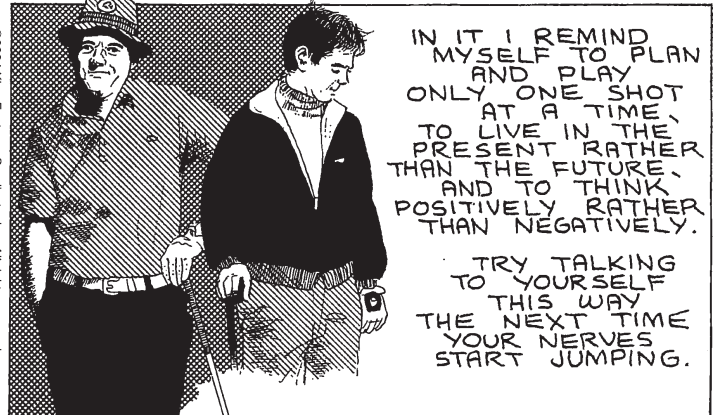
NEXT: SONS OF ROYAL BLOOD

## Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS



WHATEVER THEIR DEMEANOR, ALL GOLFERS GET NERVOUS UNDER PRESSURE, INCLUDING ME. ONE OF MY ANTIDOTES IS TO GIVE MYSELF AN INTERNAL PEP TALK.

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IN IT I REMIND MYSELF TO PLAN AND PLAY ONLY ONE SHOT AT A TIME, TO LIVE IN THE PRESENT RATHER THAN THE FUTURE, AND TO THINK POSITIVELY RATHER THAN NEGATIVELY.

TRY TALKING TO YOURSELF THIS WAY THE NEXT TIME YOUR NERVES START JUMPING.



## Proton-Pump Inhibitors Highly Recommended for Barrett's Esophagus

**DEAR DR. ROACH:** I am a retired male over 65 and a former occasional cigar smoker. I quit 15 years ago after I was diagnosed with Barrett's esophagus. I was also a former drinker and quit seven years ago. I regularly completed all the biopsies as required and took my proton-pump inhibitor (PPI) daily as instructed.

This year, I read an article about PPIs contributing to dementia and neuropathy, which I have. My primary care physician suggested that I switch to over-the-counter H2 blockers as a safer approach. I developed an irregular heart rhythm and soaring blood pressure.

I was then diagnosed with atrial fibrillation (AFib). My stress test and echocardiogram are normal for my age. I am now on some heavy-duty beta blockers, blood thinners and a very expensive rhythm-control drug.

A book I recently read written by two top cardiologists stated that long-term use of PPIs is dangerous and can cause AFib, but a recent article published by the National Institute of Health states the opposite. I also read that an irritated esophagus stimulates the esophagus nerve and triggers AFib. I'm confused now.

Because Barrett's vastly increases my chances for getting a very aggressive cancer, doing nothing is not an option. I have already mod-

ified and continue to modify my diet, but that only goes so far. And as I'm sure you are aware of, a stroke caused by AFib is often life-threatening.

**My complicated question is, which professional approach would you recommend: PPIs or H2 blockers? Is there a third option? — B.B.**

**ANSWER:** There is not a definitive answer on whether PPIs, like omeprazole, increase the risk of AFib. Studies are potentially confounded by the fact that people with AFib sometimes think they have stomach problems and may take a PPI, leading to a false association between the PPI and AFib. As you say, there have also been studies that suggest a decreased risk of AFib in people who use PPIs.

In my mind, the increased risk of adenocarcinoma of the esophagus as a result of untreated stomach acid reflux in a person with Barrett's esophagus is the key in this situation, as Barrett's is a condition where abnormal lining of the esophagus occurs due to years of acid exposure.

I do not believe over-the-counter H2 blockers, like famotidine (Pepcid), are adequate enough to reduce the risk of esophageal cancer, so I advise patients in your situation to use PPIs, despite their known risks.

The data suggesting a risk of dementia are weak. While there might be a small risk, the risk isn't high enough to avoid using a PPI in a person with Barrett's. B12 deficiency is absolutely a risk in people taking long-term PPIs. Low B12 can certainly lead to neuropathy, but both can be prevented and treated by testing for B12 deficiency and by getting supplementation, if needed.

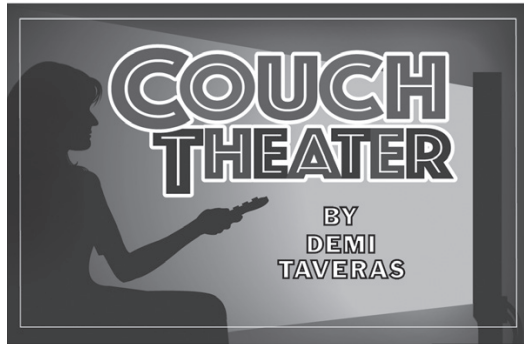
I am very glad to hear you are getting routine endoscopic surveillance and biopsies so that any abnormal growth of the esophagus can be identified and treated promptly.

*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](mailto:ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu).*



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"The Gentlemen" (TV-MA) -- British gangster-film director Guy Ritchie is back in his element, this time directing a spin-off series of his 2019 film "The Gentlemen," starring Matthew McConaughey and Charlie Hunnam. Consisting of eight episodes, the series is led by Theo James ("The White Lotus"), who plays Eddie Halstead. After

the death of his father, Eddie inherits his large estate, but with holes in its roof and a rebellious staff, it's in desperate need of order. Susie Glass (Kaya Scodelario) introduces herself to the new landlord, only to reveal that she partnered with Eddie's father to facilitate her drug-trafficking business and intends to do the same with Eddie. Whether he decides to beat them or join them (or both), Eddie is thrust into the dangerous underbelly of Britain. Out now. (Netflix)

"Taylor Swift: The Eras Tour" (PG-13) -- There's one artist who's taken the world by storm during the past year, with her name plastered everywhere from concert venues to movie theaters to NFL games, and it's none other than Taylor Swift. The 34-year-old superstar partnered with AMC and Cinemark to distribute her latest concert film, bypassing the usual producer-distributor-exhibitor model in the film industry to bring The Eras Tour directly to her devoted fans and movie-theater goers alike. The film premiered on Oct. 13, 2023, and became the highest-grossing concert film of all time. And now, viewers can attend The Eras Tour at home! Check it out on March 15. (Disney+)

"Apples Never Fall" (TV-MA) -- This new mystery drama series based on Liane Moriarty's ("Big Little Lies") novel of the same name kicks off on March 14. Annette Bening portrays Joy Delaney -- wife, mother of four and co-owner of a tennis academy. Joy and her husband, Stan, are ready to enter their retirement stage, but things go awry when an injured woman knocks on their door begging for help. Shortly afterward, Joy disappears without a single trace, leaving her husband and adult children to pick up the pieces. Sam Neill ("Jurassic Park"), Jake Lacy ("The White Lotus") and Alison Brie ("GLOW") co-star in this seven-episode series. (Peacock)

"What Happens Later" (R) -- Meg Ryan ("When Harry Met Sally ...") pulled double duty in her return to the romantic-comedy genre! While Ryan did star in the film, she also directed it, making it her sophomore film after her debut with "Ithaca" (2015). Opposite her character, Willa, is David Duchovny's Bill, who comes across Willa at an airport during their layovers. The two, being ex-lovers, wrestle through bits of small talk until their flights, but a cyclone unexpectedly causes both of their flights to get delayed. The two use this time to catch each other up on their current lives and reminisce on the relationship they had. Overall, it was an endearing effort on Ryan's part to bring some old-school nostalgia to a genre that is sorely missing the direction it needs. Out now! (Paramount+)



**Annette Bening stars in "Apples Never Fall."**

Courtesy of MovieStillsDB



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1. Brasil '66 was the backup band behind which artist?
2. Name the group that released "His Girl."
3. Which Elvis Presley song's melody came from an old Civil War ballad?
4. The second album of which artist was titled "Tapestry"?
5. Name the song that contains this lyric: "To you I'm a toy but I could be the boy you adore, if you'd just let me know."

## Answers

1. Sergio Mendes. The Brazilian musician received a Grammy for Best World Music Album in 1993 and Best Brazilian Contemporary Pop Album in 2010.
2. The Guess Who, in 1967. The song charted in the U.K. and Canada but not in the U.S. There were multiple versions, with the U.K. release having strings added without the band knowing about it.
3. "Love Me Tender," released in 1956. The melody came from the old ballad "Aura Lee," written in 1861. The song has been used in many dozens of films and shows and covered by several artists.
4. Carole King, in 1971. The album won four Grammy awards and included hits such as "I Feel the Earth Move" and "It's Too Late."
5. "Build Me Up Buttercup," by The Foundations in 1968. It was used in insurance commercials as recently as 2021.

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## GRIN *and* BEAR IT <sup>Wagner</sup>



"Our car has been recalled to the factory that's been closed!"

## Just Like Cats & Dogs by Dave T. Phipps



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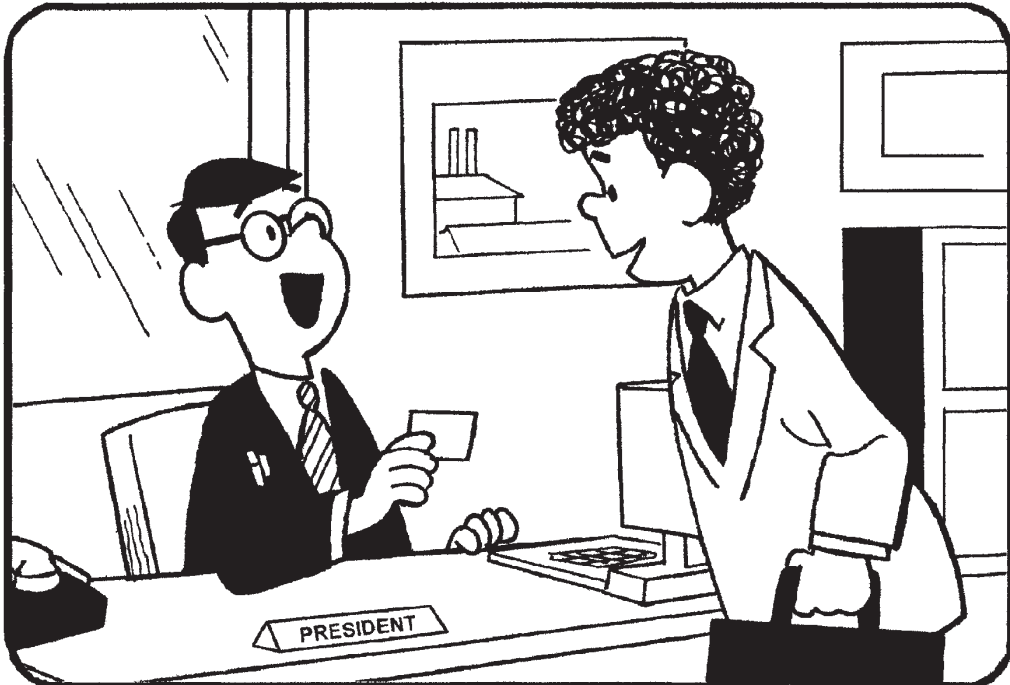
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## HOCUS-FOCUS

BY  
HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



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Differences: 1. Phone is moved. 2. Card is larger. 3. Tie is different. 4. Chair is missing. 5. Hand is missing. 6. Window is not as wide.

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\* "I had to pick up a bunch of BBs that spilled in our garage. It was very aggravating, until I decided to get out my vacuum. I put a very thin sock (didn't have any panty hose) on the end, and tucked it into the hose. I secured it with a zip tie. I was able to suck up most of the BBs, and they went right back in the container." -- E.L. in North Carolina

\* If you make your own broth, you can freeze cubes in easy-to-measure amounts by using your muffin tin. Measure out broth in half cup or cup amounts, then freeze. When done, pop them out into a freezer-safe baggie.

\* Try this trick to increase the volume when listening to music on your phone (without earbuds, that is): Place it in a deep bowl. The bowl amplifies and directs the sound.

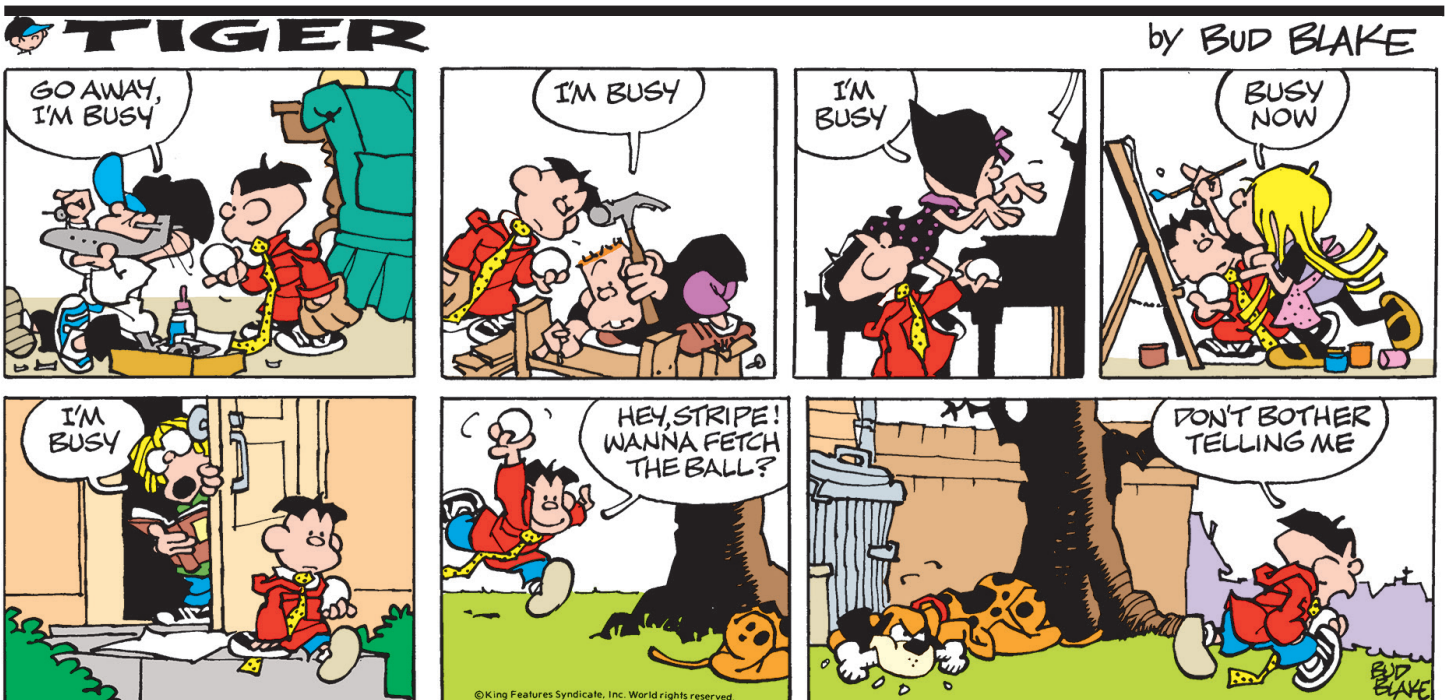
\* Chrome is easily cleaned and shined up with vinegar. Keep a misting bottle in the bathroom to give handles a quick swipe after getting ready in the morning or evening.

\* Ice cream cones with a flat bottom make a great container for cupcakes. Fill cones two-thirds full with batter, bake as directed, and you have cupcake cones! Frost and go!

\* I sew looped tags onto the corner of our family's wash cloths. My husband installed several hooks in the shower, and when we are finished with our wash cloth, we hang it up by the tag after rinsing it out. They do not mildew this way, because they are allowed to dry.

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

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## King Crossword

### ACROSS

- 1 Egg on
- 5 Science room
- 8 Arm bone
- 12 Actress Gilpin
- 13 Hosp. area
- 14 Wedding cake layer
- 15 Bridge position
- 16 Not "agin"
- 17 "Snap out —!"
- 18 Monet or Debussy
- 20 Wards off
- 22 " — Poetica"
- 23 Be sick
- 24 Healthy
- 27 Embeds
- 32 Comic Philips

1	2	3	4		5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12					13				14			
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42	43				44		45			46	47	48
49					50	51			52			
53					54				55			
56					57				58			

- 34 Trio after M
- 35 Fish lover's deli order
- 38 Group of quail
- 39 Transcript no.
- 40 Parched
- 42 Oracle setting
- 45 "Brigadoon" lyricist
- 49 Buffalo's county
- 50 Miss Piggy's pronoun
- 52 French waterway
- 53 — Romeo

- 54 Canine greeting
- 55 Summit
- 56 Ogler's look
- 57 " — -haw!" (cowgirl's cry)
- 58 Monopoly card
- 8 Perfect place
- 9 Game show aid
- 10 Astronaut Armstrong
- 11 Sciences' partner
- 19 AMA member
- 21 Hearing thing
- 24 Drenched
- 25 Ostrich's kin
- 26 Palmist's prediction
- 28 Neither mate
- 29 Hit song by OneRepublic
- 30 Calendar abbr.
- 31 Covert agent
- 36 Seem
- 37 Taunting laugh
- 38 Secondary route
- 41 Concerning
- 42 Bargain
- 43 Perry's creator
- 44 Noncommittal answer
- 46 Pleasing
- 47 Salinger girl
- 48 Marsh plant
- 51 Tram load

### DOWN

- 1 Detail, briefly
- 2 Bell sound
- 3 — Major
- 4 Ceremony
- 5 Not enlarged or reduced
- 6 Tennis feat
- 7 "Ironsides" star



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## — King Crossword —

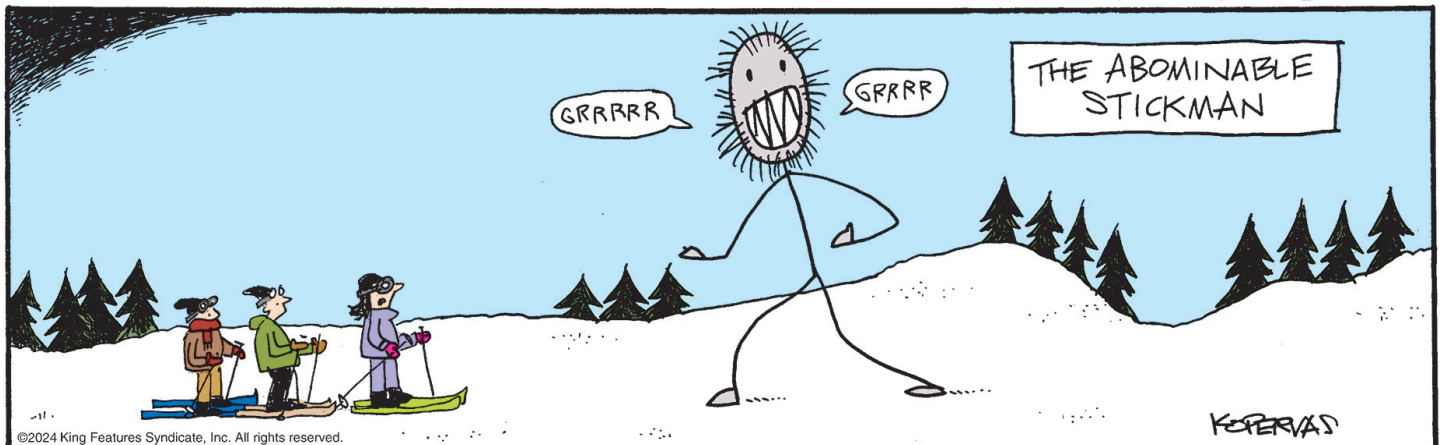
Answers

Solution time: 25 mins.

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

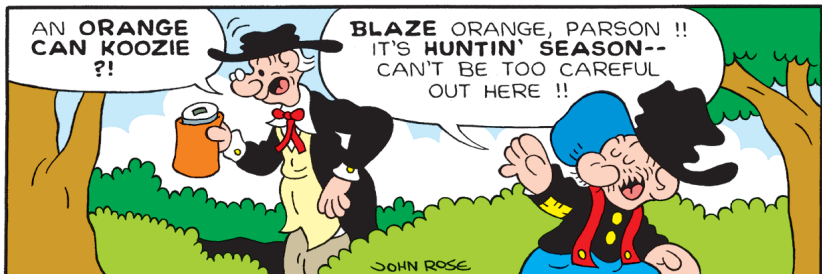
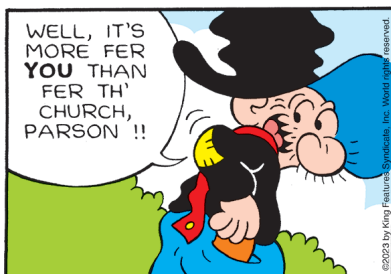
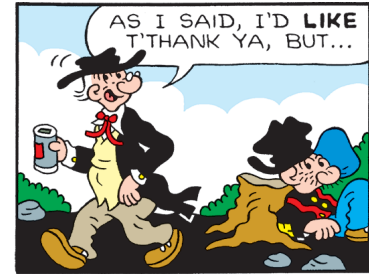
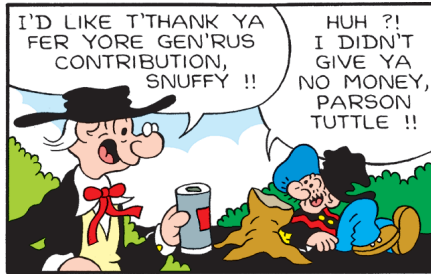
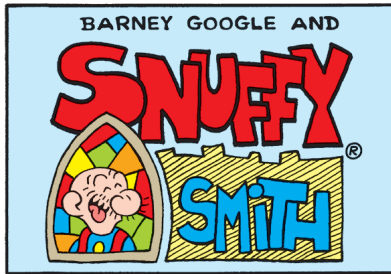
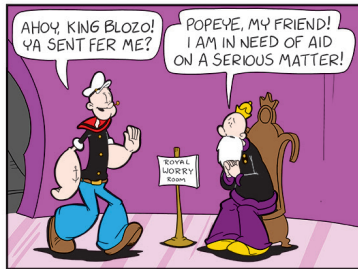
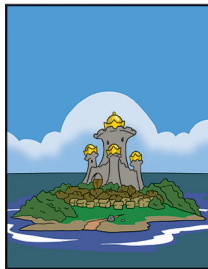
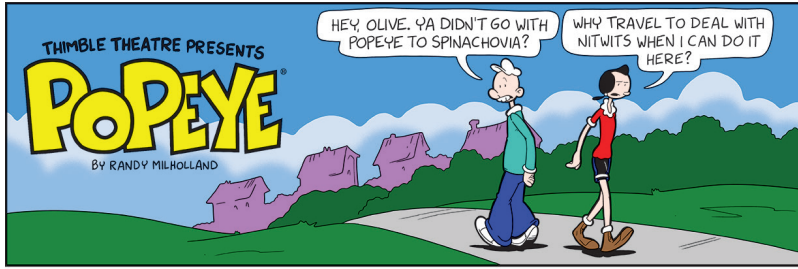
Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas



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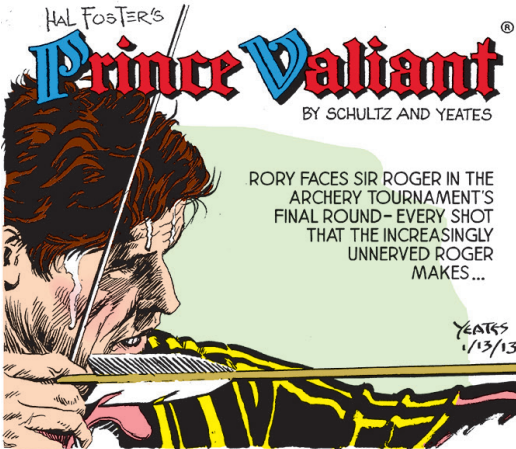
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HAL FOSTER'S  
**Prince Valiant**  
 BY SCHULTZ AND YEATES

RORY FACES SIR ROGER IN THE ARCHERY TOURNAMENT'S FINAL ROUND - EVERY SHOT THAT THE INCREASINGLY UNNERVED ROGER MAKES...

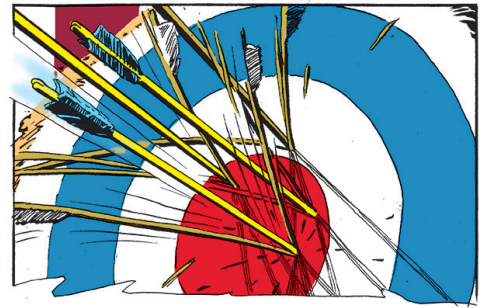
YEATES  
 1/13/13



... IS EASILY BESTED BY VAL AND GAWAIN'S MYSTERIOUS CHAMPION ...



3962



... WITH EACH OF THE RUINOUS STEWARD'S ARROWS SPLIT CLEANLY BY RORY'S! THE CROWD ROARS ENTHUSIASTICALLY AT HER EVERY BRILLIANT SHOT...

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... AND AT LAST ROGER BREAKS! "WHO ARE YOU, STRANGER?" HE CROAKS. "I DEMAND TO KNOW WHO YOU ARE!"

WITH THE CROWD INVESTED IN HER, RORY KNOWS THE TIME IS RIGHT. SHE PAUSES FOR ONE DRAMATIC SECOND AND THEN ...




"I AM RHODA RED HOOD - ONCE IN SERVICE TO LORD GRUNYARD, AND NOW FIGHTING TO FREE LOCKBRAMBLE FROM THIS TYRANT WHO CALLS HIMSELF STEWARD!"

NEXT: Door sportsmanship

## The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



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## SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

### **You Know Better, Right?**

A retiree fell for a scam that drained his account of all his savings. It took a lifetime to save the money and only a minute for it to vanish. All it took was him giving information to a scammer.

The gentleman received an email saying he was owed a refund and asked that he fill in his banking details. He believed that email was from his bank. Within moments of sending the email, his account was emptied. Not only that, but he was then instructed on the phone, by someone he believed was a bank security officer, to hand over his credit cards to a bank courier because those accounts were also compromised.

The scammer quickly went on a spending spree. It's rare, but the criminal was actually caught. While he might get a few years in jail, the victim has been left to try to pick up the pieces of his life, with no hope of getting that money back.

Some basic hints for safety:

If you're uneasy about any portion of a call, HANG UP.

Don't do banking on your phone or computer, even if you know what you're doing with those devices.

If you get a call from someone claiming to be at your bank, hang up. Dial the number of the bank yourself and find out if they were actually looking for you. Especially do not follow their instructions if the "security" people at your bank insist you need to transfer your money into a different account to keep it "safe."

If you're asked to call \*72 followed by a different number, HANG UP. Do not dial \*72. It's a call forwarding option that prisoners, callers to 900 sex line numbers and people in foreign counties use as a way to charge expensive calls to your phone.

Don't panic if you suspect you have a scammer on the line. Just hang up.

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1. Name the NHL team that played from 1976-82 before moving to New Jersey and becoming the Devils. (Hint: It shares a name with an MLB club.)

2. What Pittsburgh Steelers wide receiver caught nine passes for 131 yards and a touchdown to be named MVP of Super Bowl XLIII?

3. Name the Basketball Hall of Famer and member of the 1981 Boston Celtics NBA championship team who was nicknamed "Tiny."

4. What actor used a golf club to smash another driver's windshield in a February 1994 road rage incident?

5. At the 2014 Sochi Winter Games, American Sage Kotsenburg won the first gold medal in what sport making its Olympic debut?

6. In what year did NBA greats Bill Russell and Wilt Chamberlain both have single games with 50-plus rebounds?

7. What youth-oriented gravity-racing event takes place every July in Akron, Ohio?



by Ryan A. Berenz

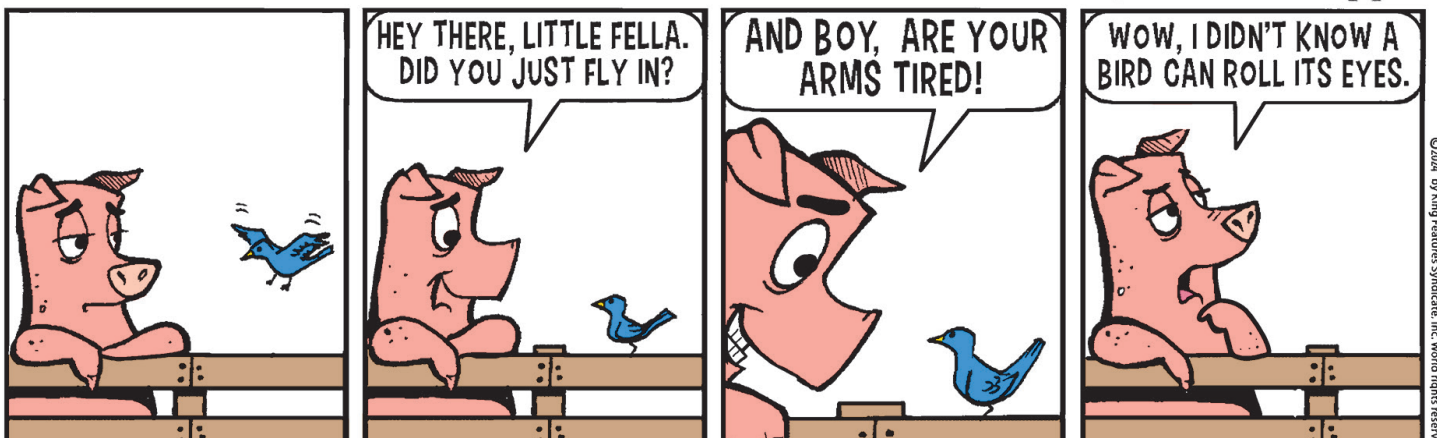
## Answers

1. The Colorado Rockies.
2. Santonio Holmes.
3. Nate Archibald.
4. Jack Nicholson.
5. Men's snowboard slopestyle.
6. 1960 (Russell had 51 on Feb. 5; Chamberlain had 55 on Nov. 24).
7. The All-American Soap Box Derby World Championship.

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## Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps



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## Homemade Treats

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: My new puppy's training is going very well, and he responds very well to rewards of little treats. I worry about feeding him so many processed, store-bought snacks though. What are some natural or homemade alternatives for treats?  
-- Maggie T., Nashua, N.H.

A: Many alternative recipes for homemade doggie treats are available on the internet and at the bookstore, but the healthiest ones share many common features. This means that you can find quite a few good recipes out there, or develop a few of your own.

Common ingredients in dog treats are meat protein (either from fresh meats, broths or strained baby foods), whole-grain flours (like wheat, oats, corn or rice), eggs and powdered supplements (like brewer's yeast or garlic). A variety of flavorings can be added, including peanut butter, sugar or molasses, vanilla, salt, and small amounts of cheese or milk. Dry or instant yeast can be added to biscuit-type recipes, to allow the dough to rise before baking.

A popular training asset is liver treats, which can be made fairly easy and which last about four to five days if stored properly (in an airtight container and refrigerated). Chicken livers, eggs and sweetener are pureed, flour or cornmeal is mixed in (some owners add powdered supplements as well) and the mixture is baked, cooled and sliced into bite-size treats.

Certain foods are never safe for dogs, so don't use any recipe that contains these ingredients: chocolate, onions, raisins/grapes or macadamia nuts. They seem like fairly innocent foods, but can cause serious health problems in dogs.

Baking and testing these snacks out on your puppy can be a lot of fun. Remember, you can also share recipes with other dog owners and perhaps find the perfect treat for your companion.

Send your tips, comments or questions to [ask@pawscorner.com](mailto:ask@pawscorner.com).

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## Strange BUT TRUE

By Lucie Winborne

\* In a process called rice-fish culture, Indonesian farmers introduce fish into their rice fields so the fish droppings will act as fertilizer. In turn, the fish also eat harmful insects and improve oxygen circulation, increasing crop yields by up to 10%.

\* Anuptaphobia is the fear of being single forever.

\* The people who falsely claimed the copyright to the "Happy Birthday to You" song made \$2 million a year for decades, until the song was ruled to be in the public domain.

\* A man who had received the transplanted heart of a suicide victim married the donor's widow and took his own life in the exact same way as the donor did.

\* After two thieves in England broke into a man's house and made off with his laptop, they found child abuse material on the device and took it to the police. The pedophile received a sentence of three years in prison, while the thieves were given 12 months of community service in light of their "good deed."

\* During his presidency, John F. Kennedy refused to take his salary of \$150,000 per year, instead donating the entire amount to charity.

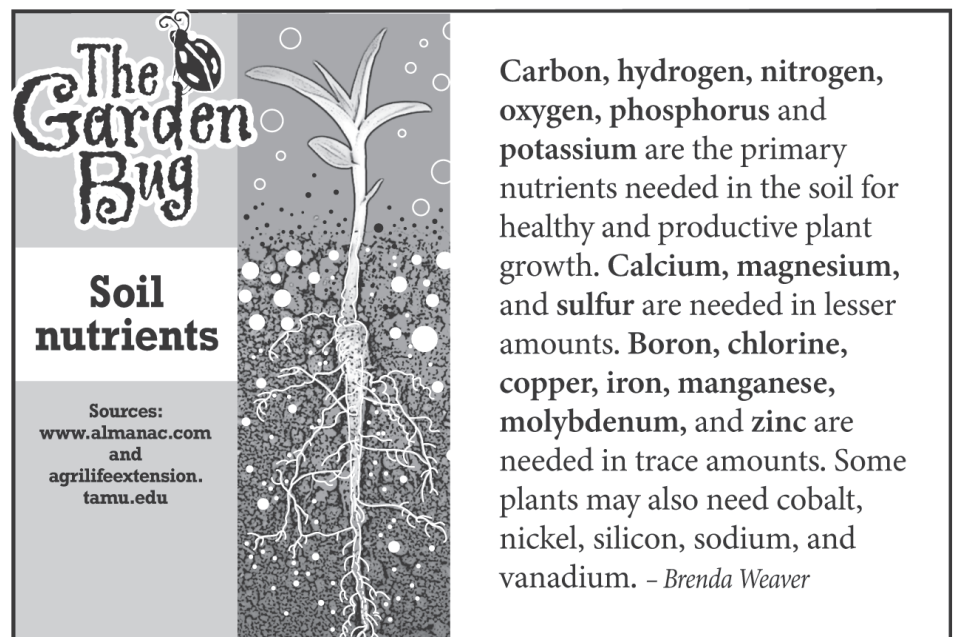
\* Hundreds of people die each year from shoveling snow.

\* Who says cats don't care? After one feline owner survived a series of strokes, he tried to train the animal to dial 911. While he wasn't sure at first that the attempt would pay off, after he fell from his wheelchair following a seizure, police received a silent emergency call from his home and arrived to find him incapacitated and his cat next to the phone.

\* Loneliness poses a greater risk to one's health than obesity.

\*\*\*

Thought for the Day: "He who has a why to live can bear almost any how." -- Friedrich Nietzsche  
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**The Garden Bug**

**Soil nutrients**

Sources:  
[www.almanac.com](http://www.almanac.com)  
and  
[agrillifeextension.tamu.edu](http://agrillifeextension.tamu.edu)

Carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, oxygen, phosphorus and potassium are the primary nutrients needed in the soil for healthy and productive plant growth. Calcium, magnesium, and sulfur are needed in lesser amounts. Boron, chlorine, copper, iron, manganese, molybdenum, and zinc are needed in trace amounts. Some plants may also need cobalt, nickel, silicon, sodium, and vanadium. - Brenda Weaver



by Freddy Groves

## Expanded PACT Act

Expanded benefits for the PACT Act have kicked in years sooner than expected. As of recently, March 5, 2024, veterans who were exposed to toxins can get VA health care without applying for VA disability benefits first.

The PACT Act covers over 20 presumptive illnesses for exposure to Agent Orange and other toxins, as well as the burn pits, radiation, oil well fires, depleted uranium and more. The covered illnesses include emphysema, chronic bronchitis, a dozen types of cancer

and interstitial lung disease.

Deployment wasn't necessary; veterans were exposed to asbestos, firefighting foam, paints, chemicals, pesticides, Camp Lejeune water and more here in the U.S.

If you filed before and were turned down, file again or call. The VA is supposed to go through the files and contact you, but don't wait on that.

If you're already enrolled in VA health care, call your local VA health facility and ask for your initial screening for toxin exposure. Don't wait on this; get a baseline test.

To get more information, call 800-698-2411 (800-MYVA411).

Or go online to [VA.gov/PACT](http://VA.gov/PACT) and scroll through the information. You'll find links to file for VA disability, a supplemental claim and more. Read about military exposures at [www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures).

For all the millions the VA has spent to inform veterans about PACT, there are some they're leaving out: members of the Maine National Guard who trained at the Canadian military support base in Gagetown, New Brunswick, Canada. In 1966 and 1967, the place was saturated with Agents Orange and Purple as a means of testing effectiveness in killing foliage.

In 2005, the Canadian government did site testing of the ground, water and air. They ended up handing out money to Canadians who'd been there.

Gagetown is still used for National Guard training, not only for units from Maine but other states as well. People became ill, of course, from exposure, but they're not eligible for VA health care for exposure to Agent Orange or any of the other "rainbow" of toxin colors at Gagetown.

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## Wishing Well®

2	7	5	6	7	8	2	7	2	8	6	4	7
A	C	P	V	A	A	B	U	U	H	I	T	T
3	4	5	3	5	7	2	4	6	2	8	3	4
A	R	R	T	O	I	N	A	S	D	E	I	N
5	7	5	7	5	4	7	5	8	2	7	5	6
S	O	P	N	E	S	A	R	A	A	D	I	I
8	5	4	8	6	4	2	4	2	3	7	3	6
V	T	F	Y	T	E	N	R	T	D	V	Y	N
5	4	3	2	7	4	3	2	5	2	5	7	5
Y	A	S	W	I	T	U	E	N	A	O	S	W
8	2	6	3	6	4	6	2	8	7	8	6	7
W	L	E	M	W	W	P	T	O	E	R	L	D
6	2	8	4	6	8	6	8	6	4	8	4	8
A	H	K	O	C	L	E	O	S	R	A	K	D

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. TELEVISION: Which TV sitcom featured a father figure named Philip Banks?
2. LANGUAGE: How many letters are in the Greek alphabet?
3. MOVIES: Which movie features the line, "To be honest, when I found out the patriarchy wasn't just about horses, I lost interest"?
4. SCIENCE: How long is an eon?
5. GEOGRAPHY: In which country is most of the Kalahari Desert located?
6. MUSIC: Which singer once was called the Material Girl?
7. FOOD & DRINK: What is injera?
8. ANIMAL KINGDOM: What is a group of cockroaches called?
9. GENERAL KNOWLEDGE: Which large U.S. city is nicknamed Emerald City?
10. GAMES: How many blocks are in a Jenga tower?

### Answers

1. "The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air."
2. 24.
3. "Barbie."
4. 1 billion years.
5. Botswana, Africa.
6. Madonna.
7. Fermented flatbread.
8. An intrusion.
9. Seattle, Washington.
10. 54.

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South Dakota Governor

**Kristi Noem**



**South Dakota:** *Under God, the People Rule*

## Ensuring the Security of God's Chosen People

When I was growing up, my dad would always gather our family together and we would pray for Israel. It was instilled in me from a very young age that the Jews were God's chosen people, that Israel was the Holy Land, and that we should always pray for them.

I brought those fundamental ideals with me when I was in the State Legislature, when I served in Congress, and now as Governor of South Dakota. Supporting the State of Israel and our Jewish community has always been extremely important to me. It's important to support Israel for spiritual, historical, and national security reasons. I am continuing to stand with the Jewish people by signing historic legislation to protect them from antisemitism.

I was shocked and devastated to see the horrific terrorist attacks on the State of Israel on October 7th, 2023. And I have continued to be heartbroken to see radical individuals in the United States of America standing with Hamas – standing with terrorists. Ever since October 7th, we have seen a shocking spike in antisemitic acts of hatred around the world. We have even seen isolated incidents right here in South Dakota.

No one should ever feel concerned for their safety when going to school, when going to work, when they are just trying to live their normal lives. But that is the reality for so many Jewish people across America right now. We see antisemitism on college campuses, among high school students, and even as young as middle and elementary school students. That is unacceptable.

I was very proud to sign HB 1076, a very important bill to combat antisemitism. This bill defines antisemitism and makes it easier to prove when discriminatory conduct is motivated by antisemitism. It is an impactful piece of legislation that will ensure the safety of Jewish people and strengthen South Dakota's anti-discrimination laws.

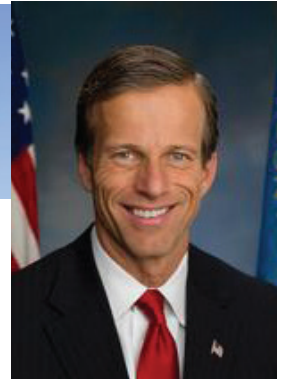
We held a beautiful, moving signing ceremony for this bill in the Rotunda of our State Capitol in Pierre. Many prominent Jewish leaders attended, including Elan Carr, the CEO of the Israeli-American Council for Action, nationally renowned Jewish leader and founder of the Jacobson Society Dan Rosen, Rabbi and Director of the National Jewish Advocacy Center Dr. Mark Goldfeder, Rabbi Mendel Alperowitz of the Chabad Jewish Center of South Dakota, Renie Schreiber on behalf of Yinam Cohen, Consul General of Israel to the Midwest, and Jordan Cope from Stand With Us. A few of our special guests said some words about the impact this legislation will have for the Jewish people. You can view footage of the full bill signing ceremony [here](#).

There are a few other people to thank for their efforts in getting this bill passed and signed into law, including Representative Mike Stevens, Representative Rebecca Reimer, Dan Lederman, and Stephen Rosenthal.

The prime sponsors of this bill, Representative Deutsch and Senator Mehlhaff, put in a lot of hard work with my office and with members of the Jewish community to make sure this is the best bill possible to stop antisemitism and hate. This bill puts the gold standard International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism into state law.

I hope that more states across our great nation will follow this example that we are setting here in South Dakota. It is more important now than ever for our nation's leaders to stand up and fight against antisemitism. We must always work to ensure the security of God's chosen people.

**John Thune**  
U.S. SENATOR - SOUTH DAKOTA



## The President Promises More of the Same

After three years of an inflation crisis, a border crisis, and national security challenges around the world, President Biden's State of the Union address was hardly the course correction our country needs. In fact, the president promised more of the same policies that led to these problems in the first place. Like many Americans, I'm ready to turn the page on the failed policies that have made life more expensive, our country less secure, and our world increasingly unstable.

The inflation crisis the president helped create may be the Biden administration's defining legacy. Today it costs a typical family \$1,000 more per month to maintain the standard of living it enjoyed when President Biden took office. Americans are feeling the pain of higher prices, particularly at the grocery store where prices are up 21 percent in the last three years. The cost of food now takes up a larger share of disposable incomes than it has in more than 30 years. As inflation strains budgets, many Americans are struggling to get ahead, saving less, and taking on more debt. This is the unfortunate reality of life in the Biden economy.

Three years ago, the president also began dismantling the Trump administration's border security policies. On his first day in office, President Biden stopped construction of the border wall, rescinded the declaration of a national emergency at the border, and paused most deportations. What followed is three years of surging illegal immigration, with no sign of stopping. More than 9 million illegal immigrants have crossed the border under this president, and there is no question this surge is smoothing the way for dangerous individuals to enter the country. It's a national security, humanitarian, and logistical crisis of the president's own making.

In the last few years, the world has become increasingly unstable, and the president's policies have proved ill-suited to this reality. His disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan weakened our standing among our allies. The president's policy toward Iran, beginning with his attempt to revive the Iran nuclear deal, failed to deter Iran's malign activity in the Middle East. The Biden administration's hostility to conventional energy production at home has also undermined our energy security. The president's Green New Deal vision is jeopardizing the affordable and reliable energy supply we need now and in the future.

I doubt anyone outside the White House looks at this administration's record in the last three years and sees anything worth repeating. But, in the State of the Union, the president didn't present a new way forward. Instead, we heard much of the same message we've come to expect from the Biden administration.

Reckless tax-and-spending policies, open borders, and weakness on the world stage have come to define the Biden presidency. Many Americans are understandably feeling pessimistic about the state of the country and worried about the future. Unfortunately, the president only made clear in his address that if the American people are looking for relief, they're not going to find it from him.

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



## There's a new Sheriff in town.

### **BIG News**

I welcomed Butte County Sheriff Fred Lamphere as my guest to the State of the Union. He has seen the how the border crisis impacts communities in South Dakota and is an advocate for stronger border security measures. Sheriff Lamphere did an excellent job of sharing his observations about the border crisis, and what needs to be done to secure our nation.

We were both disappointed the President talked more about "shrinkflation" instead of the border. His attempts to shift the blame to companies are not working. Businesses large and small are facing record inflation (18% since January 2021) caused by Biden's reckless spending packages. The cost of just about everything is up, and families are paying \$11,400 more per year to have the same quality of life they had in January 2021.

America is the greatest country in the world, but we have major challenges we have to address. I'm doing all I can in Congress to stop reckless spending and secure our border. Americans deserve it.

### **BIG Update**

The forestry industry in the Black Hills is facing a lot of uncertainty. Last weekend, I was in Spearfish, South Dakota with a couple members of the House Agriculture Committee who know the importance of maintaining healthy forests. During our tour of the Neiman Mill, we heard how hard it is for them to operate when the Black Hills National Forest (BHNF) doesn't hit their harvest targets.

After the tour, the Ag Committee members and I hosted a roundtable with members of the U.S. Forest Service and representatives of the local forestry industry. The timber industry has a significant impact on the Black Hills communities. It employs over 1,000 people and makes a big contribution to the local and state economy. The need to hit these targets is dire to prevent losing this industry in the Black Hills.

### **BIG Idea**

TikTok, as it is configured now, is a national security threat. It is owned by ByteDance, who answers to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Essentially, TikTok takes orders from our greatest foreign adversary. Not only that, but the CCP has influence over the minds of our youth and conversations in the public square. I'm sure you've seen the effects of their influence—more mental health problems and more support for terrorists and bullies like Hamas and Russia.

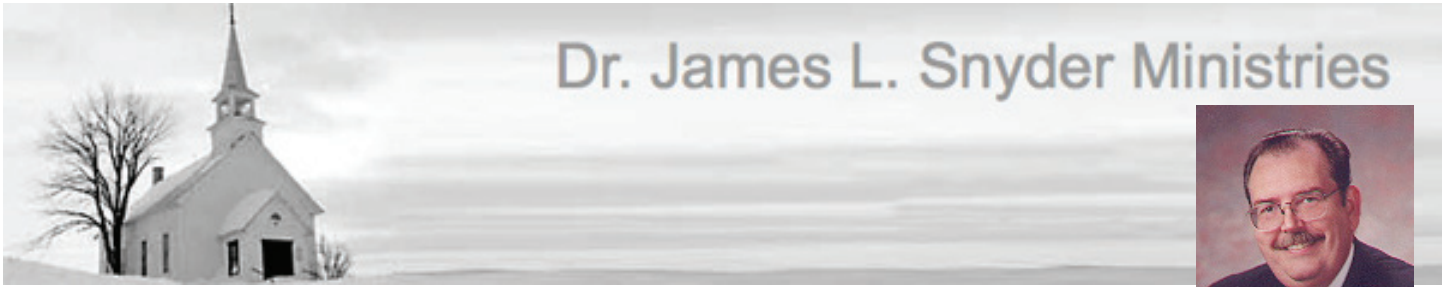
I'm supporting a bill that would require TikTok to divest from ByteDance, or the app will be removed from app stores. TikTok is fighting back against this bill—it's clear they know the risk of losing Americans' personal data. It's not a ban. This bill gives TikTok the choice—continue operating in America or continue to operate under control of a foreign adversary. We can't continue giving the CCP undue influence and access to our data.

The bill passed unanimously out of the House Energy and Commerce Committee recently, and I look forward to voting for it on the House Floor soon.



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Dr. James L. Snyder Ministries



## Why Does Monday Have To Follow Sunday?

The older I get, the more I wake up not knowing what day it is. That is particularly true on Mondays.

My favorite day of the week is Sunday. I enjoy attending church, fellowshiping with other Christians, and, of course, the Sunday worship services. I enjoy Sunday morning and evening like no other time of the week.

Since I became a Christian about 65 years ago, I have only missed a Sunday service when I was sick or had some emergency. Sunday is the most important day of the week for me, and it has been for years. I don't see it changing anytime soon.

As much as I love Sunday, I can't say the same about Monday. Sunday is filled with joy and, rejoicing and delightful fellowship. I get up each Sunday morning with great expectations. Monday is a different story, filled with gloom, doom, and a "What day is it?" mentality.

When I wake up on Monday morning, I often don't remember what day it is. Monday is the kind of day that I can't remember anything that I've done for the week because I haven't done anything for the week yet. I often forget it's the first day of the week. Confusion seems to be my partner.

Tuesday is not so bad because I can somehow remember the day, some of the things I did on Monday, and my plans for the rest of the week. But on Monday, I have to start the week all over again, and who has the energy to do that?

I understand that Saturday is the day we prepare for Sunday. I get that, and I do it every week. There should be some kind of law making Monday a day to recover from Sunday's activities and prepare for the week ahead.

Often, I'll wake up on Monday morning, look at The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage, and say very soberly, "What day is it?"

Usually, she looks at me and says sarcastically, "I don't know; check your calendar."

By Wednesday, I will be in my regular work mode and get up every morning eager to start working on my weekly plans.

I've had a thought along this line. Sometimes, I'm going to sleep all day on Monday, get up Tuesday morning, and see if I remember what day it is. That might help me understand all this nonsense I wallow in every week.

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I need to be very careful along this line. For example, if The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage knew I got up on Monday morning not knowing what my plans were for the day, she may make those plans for me. Believe me; she knows how to plan out every minute of every day.

That's one reason I need a calendar to schedule my plans for the week. It doesn't matter if I finish all those plans or not. It only matters that The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage sees I have scheduled work for myself.

The problem is that on Monday morning, when I get up, I'm not even sure what day it is, and there is a certain danger that The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage may come to my rescue.

After all these years, you would think I would have discovered a better way to plan my days.

The problem is that since my retirement, I have moved my office out of the church and into our home. When my office was in the church, I could get up Monday morning and say, "I gotta get to the church office and get started on my work for the week." I then could figure out what I was going to do for the day and the week ahead of me. That worked for many years.

I must say The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage has taken advantage of this weakness of mine. On a Monday morning, when I get up and shuffle out to the kitchen, she greets me by saying, "What plans do you have for today?"

At that time, I usually mumble and confess that I don't know. Then she says, "That's good because we need to go across town and pick up a few things." Where she got the "we," I don't know.

After hearing this for a few years, I discovered she was talking about a whole day of shopping. Who knew?

Maybe I could plan better for Monday if I didn't get so excited about Sunday. Perhaps I could have some things on my "to-do list" that would occupy me for the whole day. Of course, even if I have such a list on Monday morning when I get up, I sometimes can't even remember my name.

It will be a shocking Monday when I get up very lucid, remember my name, and have a plan for the day all in my head. I don't think The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage would recognize me that day.

In all of my frustration, I was reminded of Philippians 4:6 – "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."

My frustration only brings stress into my life. Each day, I need to discipline myself to give the elements of my life over to God. Only He can sort out my life in a way that glorifies Him. Learning to pray for everything solves my problems.

## EARTHTALK ™

Dear EarthTalk: I hear that there are thousands of damaged and spent wind turbine blades piling up in Texas. Is this waste an issue for the wind industry?

-- Bill Collins, Big Sandy, TX

In the West Texas town of Sweetwater, about 40 miles west of Abilene on Interstate 20, there is a field filled to the brim with unwanted wind turbine blades. The first of these blades were deposited in 2017 and over the years the blades have accumulated to cover over 30 acres of land. Each of the blades is between 100 and 400 feet in length and thousands cover the area. Residents of Sweetwater have protested the industrial landfill saying it is a hazard to residents. They worry about children playing in the garbage, swarms of mosquitoes breeding in the blades and rattlesnakes hiding in crannies of the unwanted blades.

Wind power has grown fast, making it the world's leading renewable energy option behind hydropower. The wind turbine blades are built to withstand the power of the elements for decades, but once they are decommissioned, they generally become waste. By 2050, turbine blades are expected to become nearly 43.4 million tons of trash. While about 90 percent of wind turbines themselves are recyclable, the blades are not. They are made by binding fiberglass together with epoxy resin, so they are difficult and expensive to break down. Because of this most blades end up incinerated or in landfills like that of Sweetwater.

Decommissioned blades are difficult and expensive to transport. Because of their size, they need to be cut up onsite before they can be moved. Most U.S. landfills don't have the space to take wind farm waste. Most of the time blades cannot be crushed either because most crushing equipment isn't big enough.

Some companies have been trying to find solutions to the growing issue of unused turbine blades. Vestas, one of the world's biggest wind turbine manufacturers, has supposedly found a groundbreaking new method to recycle turbine blades. In 2023, the Danish company announced that it had found a way to break the plastic in turbine blades down into virgin-grade materials. This solution would allow blades to be recycled to make new turbines instead of cluttering landfills. While it sounds promising, Vestas has so far divulged little information about how this would work.

Another possible solution would be to grind old blades up and use the material in other manufacturing industries. The drawback is that the blades are huge and difficult to crush, plus the material isn't really worth the hassle of crushing them. Veolia, a resource management company headquartered in France, shreds and blends blade materials to turn them into an ingredient for cement production. According to Veolia, using this technique reduces the pollution produced in cement manufacturing by 27 percent.

Implementing these types of solutions on a larger scale could help drastically reduce the amount of waste created by the wind industry. In the meantime, environmentalists are cheering on the wind industry to create new turbines that are easier to break down and reuse.



**Researchers at the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) are developing a greener wind turbine made out of an easily recycled resin.** Credit: Troy Boro, NREL.





## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### Judge faults Corps for outcome of DAPL protests as trial wraps up third week

**North Dakota rests its case in lawsuit over \$38 million in protest costs**

**BY: MARY STEURER - MARCH 9, 2024 3:00 PM**

A federal judge admonished U.S. Army Corps of Engineers officials for allowing Dakota Access Pipeline protesters to camp on Corps land without a permit, arguing that the agency could have prevented significant costs to North Dakota had it followed its own regulations properly.

"Permits are required for a reason," U.S. District Court Judge Dan Traynor said in a Friday hearing in Bismarck.

The comments came as North Dakota concluded three weeks of witness testimony in a bench trial examining the United States' actions during the 2016 and 2017 protests against the pipeline, commonly referred to as DAPL.

The protests were organized in support of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, which opposed the project over concerns it intruded on tribal land and threatened its water supply.

The state of North Dakota seeks to recoup \$38 million from the United States for costs it claims resulted from the demonstrations. The state says the federal government not only withheld necessary assistance from North Dakota during the protests, but also acted in ways that encouraged protesters.

Immediately after North Dakota rested its case, attorneys for the United States made a motion for a directed judgment — a request for a ruling in favor of the defense on the grounds that the evidence presented by the state is insufficient to continue the trial.

Timothy Jafek, special attorney to the United States, argued Friday that North Dakota has not demonstrated that the Corps was at fault for most of the damages caused by protesters.

Jafek also claimed that during the protests, Corps officials and North Dakota law enforcement both favored allowing campers to remain on Corps land rather than trying to evict them.

North Dakota never asked the Army Corps of Engineers to remove the protesters because the state "knew it was a request they couldn't fulfill," he said.

Traynor denied the motion, arguing that the Corps should have never allowed protesters to remain on its land without a permit — not only because its own regulations appear to require it, but also because Corps officials knew the demonstrations posed a significant risk.

A permit would have given the Corps an opportunity to secure compensation for any damage by protesters, as well as leverage to require demonstrators to comply with safety and sanitation regulations, he said.

"The failure to require a permit is unreasonable under the circumstances," Traynor said.

The largest protest camp was located on Army Corps of Engineers land in Morton County. Thousands were estimated to be living in the camps at the protest's peak.

Early on in the demonstrations, former Standing Rock Chairman Dave Archambault sought a special use permit from the Corps so protesters could demonstrate on Corps property legally, according to witness testimony.

Archambault is not expected to appear as a witness in the trial. He declined a request for comment through an attorney.

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While the Army Corps of Engineers supported the idea of a permit, state officials — including former Gov. Jack Dalrymple — urged the Corps to deny it for fear a permit would prolong the protests.

The Standing Rock Sioux Tribe never completed its application for the permit, Corps witnesses testified in court.

Nonetheless, the Corps allowed protesters to remain on Corps land for several months. The Corps also went on to issue a press release that falsely stated the tribe had successfully obtained a permit.

“The Corps needed to be on the record saying we do support constitutional rights to protest,” Col. John Henderson, who served as commander of the Corps’ Omaha District during the protests, testified Feb. 27.

Federal agencies had an unusual level of involvement with the permit and other decisions related to the pipeline, Lt. Gen. Scott Spellmon, Henderson’s immediate superior during the protests, told the court on Wednesday.

In September 2016, the Department of Justice, Department of the Interior and Department of the Army published a statement asking pipeline company Energy Transfer Partners to voluntarily halt construction of the pipeline for additional regulatory review. The Corps has authority over a segment of the pipeline that crosses under the Missouri River north of the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation.

Henderson and Spellmon both said they were not aware of the statement before its release.

“Normally guidance and direction of this nature, we would have input,” Spellmon, who now serves as the Corps’ chief engineer and commanding general, said in court on Wednesday.

The Department of Army required the Corps to answer a series of additional technical questions about its assessment, which Spellmon said took three to four months.

Spellmon said he wasn’t aware of any other time the department had asked the Army Corps of Engineers to conduct additional analysis of this depth after the Corps had already reached a final decision on an easement.

The pipeline has been operating since June 2017. A judge in 2020 revoked the easement for the pipeline crossing north of Standing Rock, requiring a full environmental impact statement. The Corps is reviewing public comments submitted on the project and is on track to issue a final environmental impact statement this fall, a Corps official said last week during a hearing in Washington, D.C.

The trial is expected to continue for another week.

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## Noem signs Indian Child Welfare Council and other bills into law

**BY: SEARCHLIGHT STAFF - MARCH 9, 2024 7:00 AM**

South Dakota will soon have a council devoted to the welfare of Native American children.

Gov. Kristi Noem signed House Bill 1232 this week, which creates the Indian Child Welfare Advisory Council. It will bring together people from the Department of Social Services, South Dakota’s nine tribes, the Legislature, and the field of child welfare for annual conversations.

The group’s work will include finding solutions to the disproportionate number of Native American children in the foster care system. A South Dakota Searchlight and Argus Leader investigation last year found that Native children accounted for nearly 74% of the foster care system, despite accounting for only 13% of the state’s overall child population.

Following are summaries of some other bills Noem signed into law recently as she continues to consider measures passed by the Legislature. The 2024 legislative session ended Thursday, except for one day on March 25 to consider vetoes. Noem had not vetoed any bills as of Friday afternoon.

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## Prison funding

Senate Bill 50 helps fund the planned construction of a women's prison in Rapid City by appropriating \$2.42 million of remaining federal American Rescue Plan Act funds for water and sewer infrastructure at the site. It also moves \$20.89 million into a fund for construction, to pair with \$60 million set aside last year toward an estimated cost of \$87 million.

"We are saving taxpayer dollars by avoiding future debt and funding this important project now," Noem said in a news release.

The new prison will ease overcrowding at the existing women's facility in Pierre. Noem has a similar bill under consideration that would provide funds for the construction of a men's prison in rural Lincoln County.

## Medical marijuana

SB 10 says if a person obtains certification for a medical marijuana card from a practitioner who's not their primary care provider, that practitioner must notify the patient's primary care provider or referring practitioner.

## Sexual assault allegations

SB 98 establishes the admissibility of suspects' previous sexual assault allegations in prosecutions of child sexual assaults. Lawmakers rejected a similar bill addressing suspects in adult sexual assault cases.

During testimony on the bills, supporters pointed to federal rules allowing such evidence, written in the 1990s but never adopted in South Dakota.

## Guaranteed income ban

SB 115 prevents a county, township or municipality from authorizing a guaranteed basic income program, such as those that have been offered to low-income people in some U.S. cities.

The bill defines a guaranteed income program as "a plan funded or administered by the government under which an individual is provided with regular, unconditional cash payments to be used for any purpose by the individual." The bill says the term does not include unemployment benefits.

## Feral cats

SB 172 allows a person to temporarily take responsibility of a feral cat for the purpose of spaying or neutering the animal.

## Carbon pipeline bills

Following through on a pledge she made immediately after the bills' passage, Noem signed three bills intended to strengthen landowner protections while maintaining a regulatory path forward for a multi-state carbon dioxide pipeline proposed by Summit Carbon Solutions.

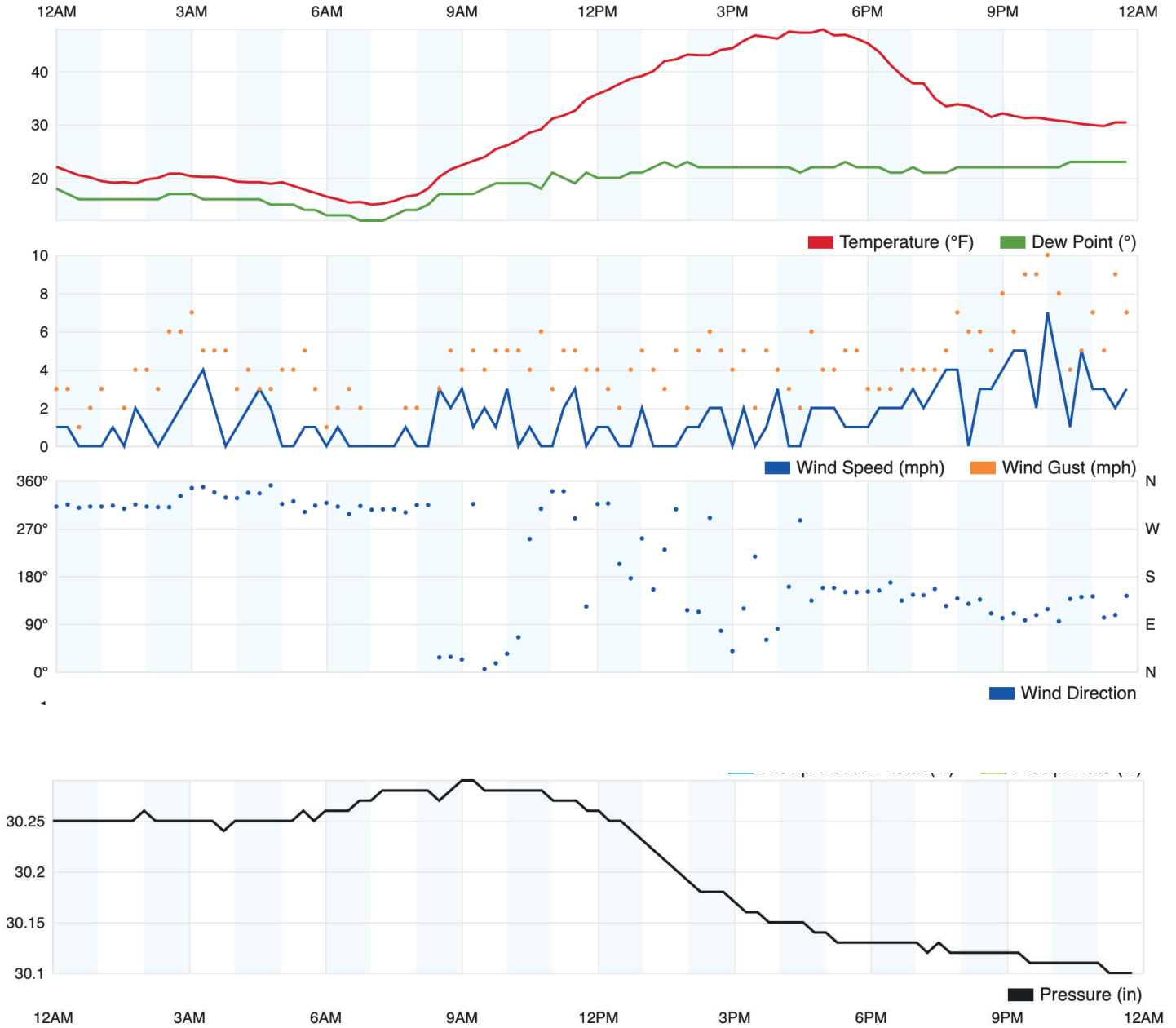
The bills are HB 1185, HB 1186 and SB 201. Among other things, they require pipeline companies to pay landowners \$500 for access to survey land; allow counties to impose a pipeline surcharge of up to \$1 per linear foot, with half of the proceeds going to affected landowners as property tax relief; restrict pipeline easements to five years if a project isn't permitted and to 99 years otherwise; give landowners rights to contest surveys and request survey results; and stipulate that a pipeline permit from the state Public Utilities Commission overrules local pipeline regulations, unless the commission decides to require compliance with local rules.



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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Sunny

High: 57 °F

Tonight



Mostly Clear

Low: 26 °F

Monday



Mostly Sunny

High: 67 °F

Monday  
Night



Partly Cloudy

Low: 32 °F

Tuesday



Sunny

High: 60 °F

<b>Today</b>	Sunny, with a high near 57. South wind 9 to 17 mph, with gusts as high as 26 mph.
<b>Tonight</b>	Mostly clear, with a low around 26. South wind 6 to 9 mph.
<b>Monday</b>	Mostly sunny, with a high near 67. South wind 6 to 10 mph.
<b>Monday Night</b>	Partly cloudy, with a low around 32. North wind 8 to 10 mph.
<b>Tuesday</b>	Sunny, with a high near 60. North northwest wind 3 to 6 mph.
<b>Tuesday Night</b>	Mostly cloudy, with a low around 34. East wind 6 to 8 mph.
<b>Wednesday</b>	A slight chance of rain. Mostly cloudy, with a high near 55. East northeast wind 8 to 13 mph. Chance of precipitation is 20%.
<b>Wednesday Night</b>	A chance of rain. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 33. Northeast wind 13 to 15 mph, with gusts as high as 23 mph. Chance of precipitation is 30%.
<b>Thursday</b>	A slight chance of rain before 1pm. Partly sunny, with a high near 49. North wind around 17 mph, with gusts as high as 25 mph. Chance of precipitation is 20%.
<b>Thursday Night</b>	Partly cloudy, with a low around 28.
<b>Friday</b>	A slight chance of rain. Partly sunny, with a high near 51. Breezy. Chance of precipitation is 20%.
<b>Friday Night</b>	Partly cloudy, with a low around 29.
<b>Saturday</b>	Partly sunny, with a high near 43. Breezy.

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 48 °F at 4:26 PM

Low Temp: 15 °F at 7:02 AM

Wind: 11 mph at 9:51 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 11 hours, 42 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 65 in 1913

Record Low: -24 in 1948

Average High: 38

Average Low: 17

Average Precip in March.: 0.24

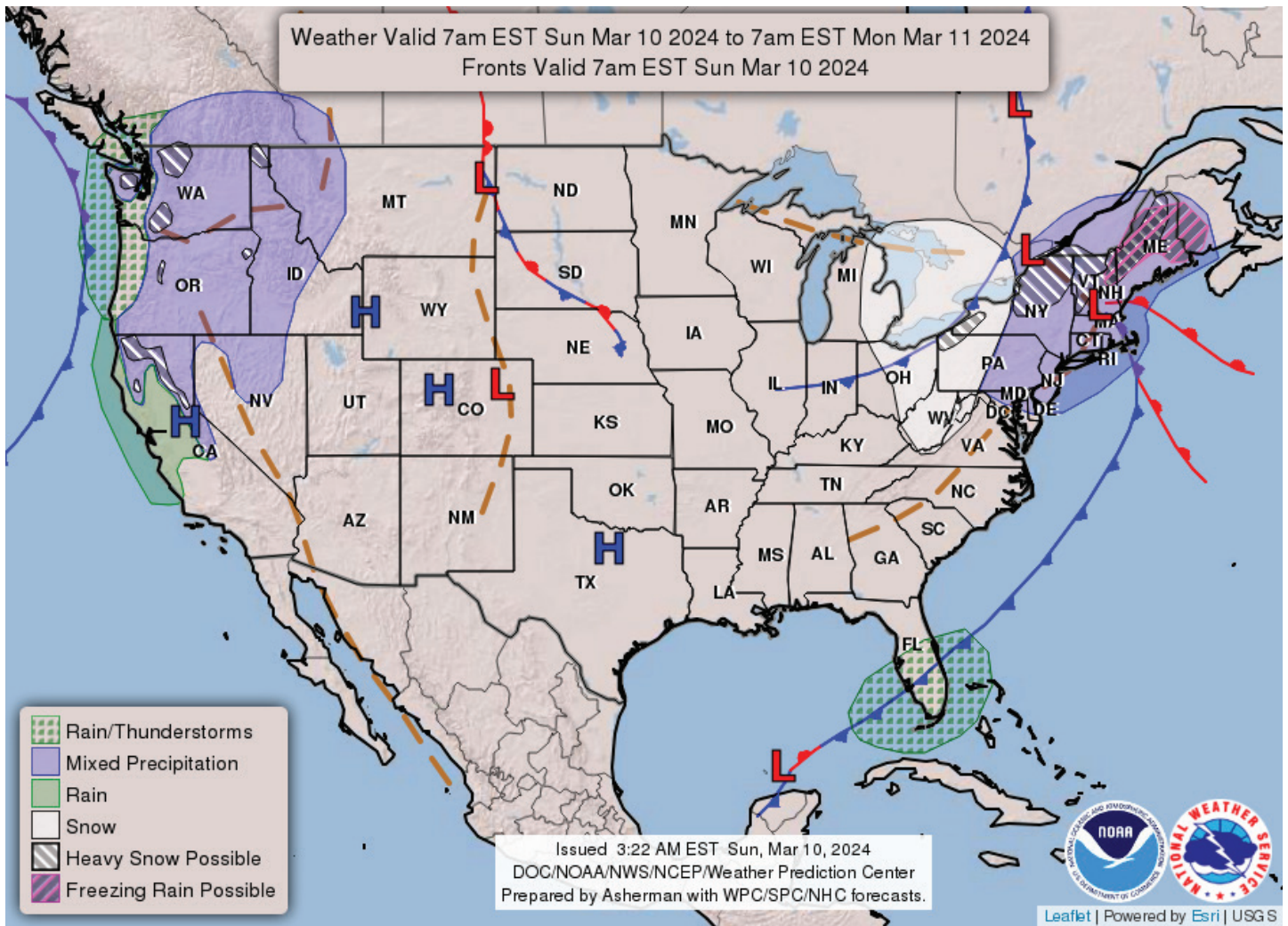
Precip to date in March: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 1.41

Precip Year to Date: 0.07

Sunset Tonight: 7:33:43 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:49:18 am





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## Today in Weather History

March 10, 2005: High winds of 35 to 45 mph with gusts of near 70 mph occurred across central and northeast South Dakota from early morning to early evening. The high winds overturned a semi-truck near Mound City; knocked a large branch down onto a pickup truck in Selby; blew a glass door of a store in Clark off; tore a sign down in Aberdeen, and ripped the roof off a mobile home in South Shore.

March 10, 2009: A low-pressure system tracked across the panhandle of Oklahoma into the Great Lakes region produced moderate to heavy snow across northeast South Dakota from the morning to the evening of the 10th. Strong north-to-northwest winds gusting to 45 mph resulted in blizzard conditions. Travel became difficult, if not impossible, across northeast South Dakota. Interstate 29 between Watertown and the North Dakota border was closed for several hours. Several minor accidents occurred, along with some injuries. Snowfall amounts included; 3 inches near Milbank; 4 inches near Columbia, Summit, and Sisseton; 5 inches at Waubay and Wilmot; 6 inches 10 miles northeast of Sisseton, Britton, and Roy Lake; 7 inches in Webster and Westport.

Bitter cold air filtered in behind the low-pressure system bringing record cold to the area. On the 11th, Aberdeen and Sisseton broke their record low highs for the date, with afternoon highs only reaching zero. The record at Aberdeen had been in place since 1896. Sisseton also set a record low of 14 degrees below zero on March 12.

1884: John Park Finley issued the first experimental tornado prediction. Finley studied the atmospheric parameters that were present during previous tornadoes. Many of these same criteria are still used by operational forecasters today. But the use of tornado forecasts would be banned just a few years later and remain forbidden until 1952.

1912 - The barometric pressure reached 29.26 inches at Los Angeles, CA, and 29.46 inches at San Diego CA, setting all-time records for those two locations. (David Ludlum)

1922 - Dodge City, KS, reported a record 24 hour total of 17.5 inches of snow. (The Weather Channel)

1986: Severe thunderstorms and tornadoes hit Indiana, Kentucky, and Ohio. A total of 19 tornadoes occurred. Three of the tornadoes in Indiana reached F3 intensity. A densely populated subdivision of Southeast Lexington, Kentucky, was heavily damaged by a tornado. Twenty people were injured, and 900 homes were destroyed or demolished. A very strong thunderstorm downburst hit the Cincinnati area. At the Greater Cincinnati Airport, windows were blown out of the control tower, injuring the six controllers on duty. At Newport, Kentucky, 120 houses were destroyed by winds estimated from 100 to 140 mph.

1987 - Strong northwesterly winds ushered arctic air into the eastern U.S. Gales lashed the middle and northern Atlantic coast. Winds gusted to 50 mph at Manteo NC and Cape Hatteras NC. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - A winter storm produced snow and high winds in the Central Rocky Mountain Region. Snowfall totals in Utah ranged up to 42 inches at Alta, with 36 inches reported at the Brian Head Ski Resort in 24 hours. Winds gusted to 72 mph at La Junta CO and Artesia NM. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thirty-four cities in the central and southwestern U.S. reported new record high temperatures for the date. The high of 85 degrees at Hanksville UT was a record for March, and Pueblo CO equalled their March record of 86 degrees. Hill City KS warmed from a morning low of 30 degrees to an afternoon high of 89 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - Thunderstorms developing along a warm front produced severe weather from southeast Iowa to central Indiana and north central Kentucky. Thunderstorms produced wind gusts to 65 mph at Fort Knox KY, and hail two inches in diameter west of Lebanon IN. Evening thunderstorms over central Oklahoma deluged Guthrie with 4.5 inches of rain. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2010 - As many as four people are injured, one is killed and homes were damaged in Center Hill and Pearson, AR, by an EF2 tornado.

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Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### IRREVERSIBLE CALL

The legendary Babe Ruth was known for stating his opinion - whether anyone wanted it or not. On one occasion, there was an umpire who displeased "The Babe," and he violently disagreed with one of his calls.

Shouted Ruth, "There are 40,000 people in the stands who know that pitch was a ball!"

"Maybe so," said Umpire Pinelli, "but mine is the only one that counts."

Not quite. There is an Ultimate Judge - God. Scripture declares that "As surely as I live, says the Lord, every knee will bend to me, and every tongue will confess and give praise to God. Yes, each of you will give a personal account to God."

Paul clearly states that there is a Righteous Judge before whom we play "the game of life." He knows each of us by name, and everything there is to know about us. He is infallible and impartial and cannot be bought or bribed.

Unfortunately, many Christians adopt or adapt their standards of conduct on what others in society are doing. This reflects a weak faith and a disregard for the teachings of the Word of God.

Since we will all give an account to the Lord for every thought we think and all the deeds we do, we must look to Him for His guidance and His Word for directions.

Prayer: Father, we often live life as if what we do does not matter. Awaken us to the reality that we will stand before You one day to be judged for everything we do. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: For the Scriptures say, "As surely as I live," says the Lord, "every knee will bend to me, and every tongue will declare allegiance to God." Romans 14:11

Scripture For Today: Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you. 1 Peter 5:7



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:  
03.08.24

19 20 22 47 58 1

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$735,000,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:  
03.09.24

3 27 33 37 52 9

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$2,100,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
03.09.24

12 19 22 42 46 17

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 52 Mins 54  
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
03.09.24

11 13 15 19 24

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$20,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
03.09.24

41 43 49 55 67 20

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

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:  
03.09.24

30 36 49 52 63 16

Power Play: 5x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$532,000,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

## News from the Associated Press

### Appel scores 18, South Dakota State beats Oral Roberts in Summit League Tournament 79-63

By The Associated Press undefined

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Luke Appel had 18 points in No. 1 seed South Dakota State's 79-63 victory against Oral Roberts on Saturday night in the Summit League Tournament.

South Dakota State plays the winner between fifth-seeded St. Thomas and No. 4 seed North Dakota State in the semifinals on Monday.

Appel shot 5 of 6 from the field and 7 for 8 from the free-throw line for the Jackrabbits (20-12). William Kyle III scored 16 points while finishing 7 of 12 from the floor and added nine rebounds. Zeke Mayo had 15 points and went 6 of 13 from the field (1 for 5 from 3-point range).

The Golden Eagles (12-19) were led by Issac McBride, who recorded 20 points. Kareem Thompson added 15 points, seven rebounds, four assists and two steals for No. 8 seed Oral Roberts. Jailen Bedford also recorded 15 points. The loss was the Golden Eagles' seventh in a row.

South Dakota State took the lead with 7:52 remaining in the first half and did not relinquish it. The score was 38-21 at halftime, with Mayo racking up 13 points. South Dakota State pulled away with a 7-0 run in the second half to extend a six-point lead to 13 points. They were outscored by Oral Roberts in the second half by a one-point margin, but still wound up on top, as Appel led the way with a team-high 15 second-half points.

The SDSU women overcame an aggressive defensive effort by upset-minded Omaha Saturday afternoon to win 66-53 in the quarterfinals of the Summit League Tournament in Sioux Falls. SDSU will play in the semi-finals on Monday afternoon. #GoJacks

### The Netherlands is opening a Holocaust museum. The Israeli president's presence is causing concern

AMSTERDAM (AP) — The Netherlands's National Holocaust Museum is opening on Sunday in a ceremony presided over by the Dutch king as well as Israeli President Isaac Herzog, whose presence is prompting protest because of Israel's deadly offensive against Palestinians in Gaza.

The museum in Amsterdam tells the stories of some of the 102,000 Jews who were deported from the Netherlands and murdered in Nazi camps, as well as the history of their structural persecution under German World War II occupation before the deportations began.

Three-quarters of Dutch Jews were among the 6 million Jews murdered by the Nazis, the largest proportion of any country in Europe.

Dutch King Willem-Alexander and Herzog will visit a synagogue and open the museum against a backdrop of Israel's devastating attacks on Gaza that followed the deadly incursions by Hamas in southern Israel on Oct. 7. Both pro-Palestinian and pro-Israeli protests are planned outside the events.

Herzog was among Israeli leaders cited in an order issued in January by the top United Nations court for Israel to do all it can to prevent death, destruction and any acts of genocide in Gaza. He accused the International Court of Justice of misrepresenting his comments in the ruling. Israel strongly rejected allegations leveled by South Africa in the court case that the military campaign in Gaza breaches the Genocide Convention.

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

A pro-Palestinian Dutch organization, The Rights Forum, called Herzog's presence "a slap in the face of

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the Palestinians who can only helplessly watch how Israel murders their loved ones and destroys their land.”

In a statement issued ahead of Sunday’s opening, the Jewish Cultural Quarter that runs the museum said it is “profoundly concerned by the war and the consequences this conflict has had, first and foremost for the citizens of Israel, Gaza and the West Bank.”

It said that it is “all the more troubling that the National Holocaust Museum is opening while war continues to rage. It makes our mission all the more urgent.”

The museum is housed in a former teacher training college that was used as a covert escape route to help some 600 Jewish children to escape from the clutches of the Nazis.

Exhibits include a prominent photo of a boy walking past bodies in Bergen-Belsen after the liberation of the concentration camp, and mementos of lives lost: a doll, an orange dress made from parachute material and a collection of 10 buttons excavated from the grounds of the Sobibor camp.

The walls of one room are covered with the texts of hundreds of laws discriminating against Jews enacted by the German occupiers of the Netherlands, to show how the Nazi regime, assisted by Dutch civil servants, dehumanized Jews ahead of operations to round them up.

## **Polls open in Portugal’s general election with mainstream moderates trying to keep populists at bay**

By BARRY HATTON Associated Press

LISBON, Portugal (AP) — Polls have officially opened Sunday in Portugal’s general election with mainstream moderates trying to keep a populist party at bay.

The election, with 10.8 million registered voters, is set against a backdrop of corruption and economic hardship that have eroded faith in moderate mainstream parties and could push a significant number of voters into the arms of a radical right populist party.

A slew of recent corruption scandals has tarnished the two parties that have alternated in power for decades — the center-left Socialist Party and the center-right Social Democratic Party, which is running with two small allies in a coalition it calls Democratic Alliance. Those traditional parties are still expected to collect most of the votes.

Public frustration with politics-as-usual had already been percolating before the outcries over graft. Low wages and a high cost of living — worsened last year by surges in inflation and interest rates — coupled with a housing crisis and failings in public health care contributed to the disgruntlement.

That discontent has been further stirred up by Chega (Enough), a populist party that potentially could gain the most from the current public mood.

Chega is widely expected to be the third most-voted party in a political shift to the right that has already been seen elsewhere in Europe. Spain and France have witnessed similar trends in recent years.

Chega could even end up in the role of kingmaker if a bigger party needs the support of smaller rivals to form a government.

Voting began at 8 a.m. (0800 GMT) and most ballot results were expected within hours of polling stations closing at 8 p.m. (2000 GMT).

Portuguese President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, largely a figurehead but whose formal consent is needed for a party to take power, urged people to vote because uncertain times in world affairs threatened the country’s wellbeing. In the last election in 2022, turnout was 51%.

In a televised address to the nation on Saturday night, Rebelo de Sousa said the unpredictable outcome of elections later this year for the European Parliament and in the United States, as well as the war in Ukraine and conflicts in the Middle East, could bring more economic difficulties.

He said that “it is at grievous times like this that voting becomes more important.”

The election is taking place because Socialist leader António Costa resigned in November after eight years as prime minister amid a corruption investigation involving his chief of staff. Costa hasn’t been accused of any crime.

The Social Democrats, too, were embarrassed just before the campaign by a graft scandal that brought



the resignation of two prominent party officials.

Meanwhile, voters have expressed alarm at Portugal's living standards as financial pressures mount.

An influx of foreign real estate investors and tourists seeking short-term rentals brought a spike in house prices, especially in big cities such as the capital Lisbon where many locals are being priced out of the market.

The economy feels stuck in a low gear. The Portuguese, who have long been among Western Europe's lowest earners, received an average monthly wage before tax last year of around 1,500 euros (\$1,640) — barely enough to rent a one-bedroom flat in Lisbon. Close to 3 million Portuguese workers earn less than 1,000 euros (\$1,093) a month.

The number of people without an assigned family doctor, meantime, rose to 1.7 million last year, the highest number ever and up from 1.4 million in 2022.

The 46-year-old Socialist leader Pedro Nuno Santos, his party's candidate for prime minister, is promising change with what he vaguely calls "a fresh boost." But he hasn't broken with senior party members who served in previous governments.

Social Democrat leader Luis Montenegro, 51, who would likely become prime minister if the Democratic Alliance wins, says he'll draft non-party-affiliated figures — people he calls "doers" — into his government.

Chega party leader Andre Ventura has cannily plugged into the dissatisfaction and has built a following among young people on social media. Just five years old, Chega collected its first seat in Portugal's 230-seat Parliament in 2019. That jumped to 12 seats in 2022, and polls suggest it could more than double that number this time.

Ventura says he is prepared to drop some of his party's most controversial proposals — such as chemical castration for some sex offenders and the introduction of life prison sentences — if that opens the door to his inclusion in a possible governing alliance with other right-of-center parties.

His insistence on national sovereignty instead of closer European Union integration and his plan to grant police the right to strike are other issues that could thwart his ambitions to enter a government coalition.

Ventura has had a colorful career. He has gone from a practicing lawyer and university professor specializing in tax law to a boisterous TV soccer pundit, an author of low-brow books and a bombastic orator on the campaign trail.

## **A US ship with equipment for building a pier is on its way to Gaza, part of a plan to ramp up aid**

By WAFAA SHURAFI and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — A U.S. Army vessel carrying equipment for building a temporary pier in Gaza was on its way to the Mediterranean on Sunday, three days after U.S. President Joe Biden announced plans to ramp up aid deliveries by sea to the besieged enclave where hundreds of thousands of Palestinians have been going hungry.

The opening of the sea corridor, along with airdrops by the U.S., Jordan and others, showed increasing alarm over Gaza's humanitarian crisis and a new willingness to bypass Israeli control over land shipments.

Israel said it welcomed the sea deliveries and would inspect Gaza-bound cargo before it leaves a staging area in nearby Cyprus. The daily number of aid trucks entering Gaza by land over the past five months has been far below the 500 that entered before the war because of Israeli restrictions and security issues.

Meanwhile, Biden stepped up his public criticism of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Biden said he believes Netanyahu is "hurting Israel more than helping Israel" in how he is approaching its war against Hamas in Gaza, now in its sixth month.

Speaking Saturday to MSNBC's Jonathan Capehart, the president expressed support for Israel's right to pursue Hamas after the militants' Oct. 7 attack on southern Israel, but said that Netanyahu "must pay more attention to the innocent lives being lost as a consequence of the actions taken." He added that "you cannot have 30,000 more Palestinians dead."

In Gaza, Palestinian casualties continued to rise.

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The Civil Defense Department said at least nine Palestinians, including children, were killed in an Israeli airstrike on a house in Gaza City late Saturday.

Footage shared by the civil defense showed first responders pulling out the dead and injured trapped in the collapsed house. One rescuer was seen holding a dead infant, before placing the limp body on a sofa amid the wreckage.

Elsewhere, the bodies of 13 people, including women and children, were taken to the main hospital in the central town of Deir al-Balah on Sunday, according to an Associated Press journalist. Relatives said the 13 were killed by Israeli artillery fire toward a large tent camp for displaced Palestinians in the coastal area east of the southern city of Khan Younis.

Israel rarely comments on specific incidents during the war. It has held that Hamas is responsible for civilian casualties because the militant group operates from within civilian areas.

The Health Ministry in Gaza said Saturday that at least 30,960 Palestinians have been killed since the war began. It doesn't differentiate between civilians and combatants in its count but says women and children make up two-thirds of the dead. The ministry is part of the Hamas-run government, and its figures from previous wars have largely matched those of the U.N. and independent experts.

Meanwhile, U.S. efforts got under way to set up the temporary pier in Gaza for the sea deliveries. U.S. Central Command said a first U.S. Army vessel, the General Frank S. Besson, left a base in Virginia on Saturday and was on its way to the Eastern Mediterranean with equipment for pier construction.

United States officials said it will likely be weeks before the pier is operational.

The sea corridor is backed by the EU together with the United States, the United Arab Emirates and other countries. The European Commission has said that U.N. agencies and the Red Cross will also play a role.

A ship belonging to Spain's Open Arms aid group was expected to make a pilot voyage to test the corridor as early as this weekend. The ship has been waiting at Cyprus's port of Larnaca.

Open Arms founder Oscar Camps has said the ship, which is pulling a barge with 200 tons of rice and flour, would take two to three days to arrive at an undisclosed location.

A member of the charity World Central Kitchen, which is also involved in the test run, said in a post on X that once the barge reaches Gaza, the aid would be off-loaded by a crane, be placed on trucks and driven to northern Gaza, which has been largely cut off from aid shipments.

Senior aid officials have warned that air and sea deliveries can't make up for a shortage of supply routes on land.

The new push for getting more aid in came on the eve of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, which follows a lunar calendar and could start as early as Sunday evening, depending on the sighting of a crescent moon.

Israel declared war on Oct. 7 after Hamas militants attacked southern Israel, killing about 1,200 people, mostly civilians and taking 250 hostages. Israel's blistering air and ground offensive has devastated large parts of Gaza, displaced about 80% of the population of 2.3 million and set off a worsening humanitarian crisis.

The U.S. and regional mediators Egypt and Qatar had hoped to have a six-week cease-fire in place by the start of Ramadan, but talks appeared to be stalled, with Hamas holding out for assurances that a temporary truce will lead to an end of hostilities.

Mediators had hoped to alleviate some of the immediate crisis with the temporary cease-fire, which would have seen Hamas release some of the Israeli hostages it's holding, Israel release some Palestinian prisoners and aid groups be given access for a major influx of assistance into Gaza.

## **Saudi oil giant Aramco announces \$121 billion profit last year, down from 2022 record**

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Saudi oil giant Aramco on Sunday reported it made \$121 billion in profit last year, down from its 2022 record due to lower energy prices.

The results still marked the company's second highest ever result, Aramco said, as members of the OPEC+ alliance continue to cut their production to try to boost global energy prices. However, lower results also squeeze the kingdom as it embarks on a massive development project under its assertive crown prince to wean itself off oil revenues.

Aramco had reported a \$161 billion profit in 2022, likely the largest ever reported by a publicly traded company.

"The decrease mainly reflects the impact of lower crude oil prices and lower volumes sold, and weakening refining and chemicals margins," the company said in its filing to the Tadawul stock market.

Despite being lower this year, Aramco boosted the dividends due to its stock holders to over \$31 billion in the fourth quarter, according to filings.

The energy giant had planned a conference call Monday to discuss its results.

Aramco reported overall revenue of \$440 billion last year, down from \$535 billion in 2022.

"Our resilience and agility contributed to healthy cash flows and high levels of profitability, despite a backdrop of economic headwinds," said Aramco CEO Amin H. Nasser in a statement.

Aramco, formally known as the Saudi Arabian Oil Co., put its output at 12.8 million barrels of oil a day. The company has been ordered by the Saudi government to keep its production there despite earlier plans to increase output.

Saudi Arabia, a leader in the OPEC cartel, has allied with Russia and others outside of the group to try to keep production down to boost global oil prices. Benchmark Brent crude traded under \$82 a barrel on Sunday.

Aramco has a market value of \$2 trillion, making it the world's fourth most valuable firm, behind Apple, Microsoft and NVIDIA respectively. Aramco stock traded slightly up on the Tadawul at \$8.64 a share Sunday.

Saudi Arabia's vast oil resources, located close to the surface of its desert expanse, make it one of the world's least expensive places to produce crude. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman hopes to use the oil wealth to pivot the kingdom off oil sales, such as with his planned \$500 billion futuristic desert city, called Neom, and other projects.

Meanwhile, activists criticized the profits amid global concerns about the burning of fossil fuels accelerating climate change.

On Thursday, Prince Mohammed transferred another 8% of Aramco shares to the country's prominent sovereign wealth fund, worth over \$160 billion. The vast majority of the company remains held by the Al Saud royal family, with a sliver traded on the Tadawul stock market.

## **These Barbies partied with Chanel the night before the Oscars**

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

BEVERLY HILLS, Calif. (AP) — The night before the Oscars isn't a time to rest in Hollywood. For quite a few nominees, including "Barbie" star Margot Robbie, it meant a stop at the historic Beverly Hills Hotel for the 15th annual Chanel and Charles Finch pre-Oscar dinner.

Robbie was in very good company, with other Oscar nominees including best supporting actress front-runner Da'Vine Joy Randolph, as well as America Ferrera, Sandra Hüller, Justine Triet, Cord Jefferson, Jonathan Glazer and Celine Song, who all are expected at the Dolby Theatre on Sunday evening.

They packed into the picturesque patio of the storied Polo Lounge for cocktails before the private dinner on a clear, chilly night in Beverly Hills. Robert De Niro was among the earliest arrivals, but within no time the space was full of stars.



Kristen Stewart and her fiancé Dylan Meyer chatted with Daniel Kaluuya near a well-placed heat lamp, while Chloë Sevigny surveyed the room a few feet away. Elsewhere Judd Apatow and Leslie Mann found an elusive seat to sip their drinks, though Apatow leapt to his feet when JR came around to say hello.

Triet and her "Anatomy of a Fall" star Hüller stayed close together, John Mulaney and Olivia Munn conversed with David O. Russell, while Adrien Brody and Patrick Dempsey chatted in another corner and Netflix CEO Ted Sarandos made the rounds.

Others in the crowd included Usher (a self-proclaimed "Oppenheimer" fan who also was wearing chaps), Ava DuVernay, Michael Keaton, Molly Sims, Maya Rudolph, Tessa Thompson, James Marsden, Kerry Washington, Rebecca Hall and Dominic Sessa

The event started somewhat humbly. Finch said 30 years ago he started hosting it because his friends "didn't have anywhere to go the night before the Oscars." It evolved to be one of the hottest tickets in town and 15 years ago Chanel joined in as a partner, bringing in even more star power with brand ambassadors like Stewart, Robbie, Lily-Rose Depp and Phoebe Tonkin.

"I'm terrified of giving dinners," Finch said. "I seem like I'm really social, and I do it, but actually, it makes me really nervous."

Robbie, Oscar-nominated as a producer on "Barbie," was in good spirits before the big day. In addition to her red carpet looks, she utilized Chanel in the film too, with clothes, accessories and bags for her "stereotypical Barbie."

"It just kind of serviced the moment and the story so it never felt forced or out of place. It felt very Barbie," Robbie said. "We got to also recreate some looks I love, one worn by Claudia Schiffer, who's just a great reference for Barbie in general. It was really fun."

She also said she's looking forward to cheering on Billie Eilish and Ryan Gosling, who are both performing nominated original songs live on the show Sunday, which begins an hour earlier than usual at 7 p.m. EDT.

"I'm so excited," Robbie said. "I think it's going to be amazing."

## **At least 19 dead and 7 missing as landslide and flash floods hit Indonesia's Sumatra island**

PADANG, Indonesia (AP) — Torrential rains have triggered flash floods and a landslide on Indonesia's Sumatra island, killing at least 19 people and leaving seven others missing, officials said Sunday.

Tons of mud, rocks and uprooted trees rolled down a mountain late Friday, reaching a river that burst its banks and tore through mountainside villages in Pesisir Selatan district of West Sumatra province, said Doni Yusrizal, who heads the local disaster management agency.

Rescuers by Saturday pulled out seven bodies in the worst-hit village of Koto XI Tarusan, and recovered three others in two neighboring villages, Yusrizal said.

Rescuers retrieved six bodies in Pesisir Selatan and three more in the neighboring district of Padang Pariaman, bringing the death toll to 19, the National Disaster Management Agency said on Sunday.

The agency in a statement said at least two villagers were injured by the flash flood and rescuers are searching for seven people who are reportedly still missing.

It said more than 80,000 people had fled to temporary government shelters after the flood and landslide buried 14 houses, while 20,000 houses were flooded up to the roof in nine districts and cities in West Sumatra province.

"Relief efforts for the dead and missing were hampered by power outages, blocked roads covered in thick mud and debris," Yusrizal said.

Heavy rains cause frequent landslides and flash floods in Indonesia, where millions of people live in mountainous areas or near floodplains.

## Mass kidnappings of Nigerian students leave parents in shock and despair

By CHINEDU ASADU Associated Press

KURIGA, Nigeria (AP) — Rashidat Hamza is in despair. All but one of her six children are among the nearly 300 students abducted from their school in Nigeria's conflict-battered northwest.

More than two days after her children — ages 7 to 18 — went to school in remote Kuriga town only to be herded away by a band of gunmen, she was still in shock Saturday.

"We have never seen this kind of thing where our children were abducted from their school," she told an Associated Press team that arrived in the Kaduna State town to report on Thursday's attack. "We don't know what to do, but we believe in God."

The kidnapping in Kuriga was only one of three mass kidnappings in northern Nigeria since late last week, a reminder of the security crisis plaguing Africa's most populous country. A group of gunmen abducted 15 children from a school in another northwestern state, Sokoto, before dawn Saturday, and a few days earlier 200 people were kidnapped in northeastern Borno State.

It was in Borno's Chibok town a decade ago that school kidnappings in Nigeria burst into the headlines with the 2014 abduction of more than 200 schoolgirls by Islamic extremists, shocking the world.

No group claimed responsibility for any of the recent abductions. But Islamic extremists waging an insurgency in the northeast are suspected of carrying out the kidnapping in Borno. Locals blame the school kidnappings on herders who are in conflict with the settled communities.

Among the students abducted Thursday were at least 100 children aged 12 or younger. They were just settling into their classrooms at the government primary and secondary school when gunmen "came in dozens, riding on bikes and shooting sporadically," said Nura Ahmad, a teacher.

The school sits by the road just at the entrance of Kuriga town, which is tucked in the middle of forests and savannah.

"They surrounded the school and blocked all passages ... and roads" to prevent help from coming before marching the children away in an operation that lasted less than five minutes, Ahmad said.

Fourteen-year-old Abdullahi Usman braved gunshots in making his escape from the captors.

"Those who refused to move fast were either forced on the motorcycles or threatened by gunshots fired into the air," Abdullahi said.

"The bandits were shouting: Go! Go! Go!" he said.

By the next day, Nigerian police and soldiers headed into the forests in search of the kids but combing the wooded expanses of northwestern Nigeria could take weeks, observers have said.

"Since this happened, my brain has been scattering," said Shehu Lawal, the father of a 13-year-old boy who is among those abducted.

"My child didn't even eat breakfast before leaving. Even his mother fainted. ... We were worried, thinking she would die," Lawal said.

Some villagers like Lawan Yaro, whose five grandchildren are among the abducted, say their hopes are already fading into fear.

People are used to the region's insecurity, "but it has never been in this manner," he said.

"We are crying, looking for help from the government and God, but it is the gunmen that will decide to bring the children back," Yaro said.

"God will help us," he said.

Since the 2014 abduction in Chibok of 276 schoolgirls, which sparked the global #BringBackOurGirls social media campaign, at least 1,400 Nigerian students have been seized from their schools in similar circumstances. Some are still in captivity including nearly 100 of the Chibok girls.

But schools are not the only targets.

Thousands of people have been abducted across Nigeria in the last year alone, according to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project. The crisis has even hit homes in the capital of Abuja, where President Bola Tinubu took office after being elected last year following a campaign in which he promised to resolve kidnappings.

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A major factor that conflict analysts say has fueled the abductions is how easy it is to smuggle in arms over Nigeria's poorly policed borders. More than half of its 1,500-kilometer (932-mile) border with Niger, for instance, stretches across the northwest. Though mostly savannah, the region also has vast forests that are ungoverned and unoccupied, providing havens for organized gangs and their kidnap victims.

In 2022, Nigerian lawmakers passed a bill to bar ransom payments, but Nigeria's kidnappers are known for brutality, prodding many families to scramble to pay a ransom.

Fatigued by the 14-year Islamic insurgency in Nigeria's northeast, the military continues to conduct air raids and special military operations in the region. But the armed gangs continue to grow in numbers and often work with the extremists who are seeking to expand their operations beyond the northeast.

The armed gangs are "adapting their strategies and further entrenching themselves in the northwest through extortion," said James Barnett, a researcher specializing in West Africa at the U.S.-based Hudson Institute.

"Their mentality is that they should be allowed free rein to do what they please in the northwest and that if the state challenges them, directly or indirectly, they will have to respond and show their strength," Barnett said.

More than a dozen checkpoints and military trucks now dot the 55-mile (89 kilometers) road that runs from Kuriga town to the city of Kaduna. But the soldiers are likely to soon be deployed elsewhere, whenever a new security incident requires that troops provide a presence.

People in Kuriga can only hope that the schoolchildren return unhurt and that the security they feel now with the military trucks around endures.

"We hope for help from the government so that they will arrest the attackers," said Hamza, the mother fearful for her five kidnapped children. "The gunmen don't allow us to farm, they don't allow us to have peace outside ... we don't have security — no soldier, no police."

## States have hodgepodge of cumbersome rules for enforcing sunshine laws

By JOSH KELETY undefined

PHOENIX (AP) — A nationwide review of procedures by The Associated Press and CNHI News revealed a patchwork of complicated systems for resolving open government disputes that often put the burden of enforcing transparency laws on private citizens.

The review, timed to Sunshine Week, found that fewer than a third of states have offices that can resolve residents' complaints by forcing agencies to turn over documents or comply with open meetings requirements.

In most states, the only meaningful option for residents to resolve complaints about agencies wrongfully withholding public records is to file costly lawsuits.

Here is a state-by-state breakdown of the mechanisms for resolving open government disputes across the U.S.

### ALABAMA

In Alabama, the only avenue for resolving complaints about alleged violations of state public records or open meetings law is to file a lawsuit. The Alabama attorney general generally does not play a significant role in enforcing state open government laws.

### ALASKA

Alaska residents' only option for formally resolving complaints about alleged violations of state public records or open meetings law is to sue. If an open government dispute involves a state agency, residents can file a complaint with the Alaska State Ombudsman, which can investigate. The ombudsman can make recommendations and publish its findings, but it has no authority to enforce compliance.

### ARIZONA

Generally, Arizona residents must go to court to resolve open government disputes. The Arizona Ombudsman-Citizens' Aide does receive complaints about public records and meeting access, and the agency



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can answer questions, mediate between complainants and agencies, and formally investigate complaints. But it does not have authority to force agency compliance. Residents can ask the attorney general or their county attorney to file a lawsuit to enforce open meetings laws, but these offices can't file lawsuits to enforce public records law. Residents must pursue private litigation to resolve records disputes.

## ARKANSAS

Arkansas has no state entity that adjudicates complaints about alleged open meetings or open records law violations. A resident who has a complaint can either ask a local prosecutor to pursue charges at their discretion or file a lawsuit in state court.

## CALIFORNIA

Generally, the only avenue for members of the public to resolve open government disputes in California is to sue. There is no ombudsman or equivalent office that adjudicates open government disputes. The attorney general and local prosecutors do have some authority to go to court over alleged open meetings violations.

## COLORADO

Colorado has no independent office that adjudicates complaints about alleged public records and open meeting law violations, and the attorney general typically does not play a role. The only option for residents is to file a lawsuit.

## CONNECTICUT

The Connecticut Freedom of Information Commission receives and adjudicates complaints about alleged violations of state open meetings and open records law. The commission can determine if open records laws were violated and issue orders requiring that an agency release records. It can also impose penalties on agencies, including fines and mandatory training sessions on open government law.

## DELAWARE

Residents can petition the Delaware attorney general to assess whether a violation of open meeting or open records laws has occurred or is slated to occur. The attorney general's office can issue a written opinion on the matter. If a public body does not comply with the opinion, residents can file a lawsuit themselves or ask the attorney general to sue on their behalf.

## DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Members of the public can appeal denied records requests involving an executive branch agency to the D.C. mayor's office, or sue in court. For records disputes concerning the district's legislative branch, the only option is to sue in court. Complaints regarding open meetings can only be handled by the Office of Open Government, which can investigate, issue advisory opinions, and potentially file suit.

## FLORIDA

Generally, there are two ways to resolve disputes over alleged public records non-compliance in Florida. The first is mediation between the complainant and the agency overseen by the Florida Attorney General's Office, but the mediation is voluntary. The second route is to sue. Members of the public can sue to resolve open meetings disputes, and local prosecutors can enforce the law.

## GEORGIA

Generally, Georgians must pursue legal action to resolve open government disputes. Residents can file certain open meetings or public records complaints to the Georgia attorney general's voluntary Open Government Mediation Program, which involves the office reviewing the complaint and contacting the involved agency.

## HAWAII

People can file open meetings and open records complaints with the Hawaii Office of Information Practices. In addition to providing training, advice and general information, the office can issue enforceable opinions in such disputes, which can be appealed in court. Individuals can also file lawsuits to resolve open government disputes.

## IDAHO

There is no entity in Idaho that adjudicates residents' complaints about open records issues. Generally,

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residents' only recourse is to sue. The Idaho attorney general does have the authority to file lawsuits against agencies that have violated open meetings law and have not resolved the issue when informed of the violation.

## ILLINOIS

The Public Access Counselor, which is part of the Illinois Office of the Attorney General, can issue binding or non-binding opinions in response to complaints regarding open meetings and public records disputes. The counselor can also provide mediation. Additionally, members of the public can sue in court.

## INDIANA

Residents can submit complaints about alleged violations of public records or open meetings law to the Indiana Public Access Counselor. While the counselor has the authority to issue advisory opinions in these disputes, the counselor cannot force agencies to comply. Residents must sue to enforce them.

## IOWA

The Iowa Public Information Board receives and investigates complaints from residents about alleged violations of open meetings and public records law. It can provide advice, resolve disputes through informal mediation, or issue orders that require compliance with sunshine laws. Alternatively, members of the public can sue in court.

## KANSAS

Residents can sue in court or submit complaints about alleged open meetings and open records law violations to the Kansas attorney general. The office can investigate the allegations and potentially issue a consent order or a finding of violation.

## KENTUCKY

Residents can either file a lawsuit or they can ask the Kentucky attorney general to review disputes over open meetings and public records issues. The office can issue binding opinions in such cases, though a public body can appeal the opinions in court.

## LOUISIANA

Generally, the only recourse for resolving open meetings and public records disputes in Louisiana is to sue in court. The Louisiana Office of the Attorney General can receive complaints about alleged violations of state open meeting law, but the office does not handle complaints about public records issues.

## MAINE

Generally, the public's only recourse in open government disputes in Maine is to sue in court. The Public Access Ombudsman, which is part of the Maine Office of the Attorney General, can answer inquiries from the public about open meetings and public records law, as well as mediate between residents and public bodies in open government disputes. But the ombudsman can't independently enforce open government law.

## MARYLAND

Members of the public can file complaints about public records disputes with the Maryland Public Access Ombudsman. The ombudsman can attempt to resolve the issues through mediation, but it does not have enforcement authority. Disputes that are not settled through mediation are forwarded to the State Public Information Act Compliance Board, which can issue orders, though these decisions can be appealed in court. Residents can submit complaints about open meetings disputes to the Open Meetings Compliance Board, which can issue advisory opinions. Residents can also sue directly in court to resolve open government disputes.

## MASSACHUSETTS

Oversight of Massachusetts open meetings and public records laws are shared by the secretary of state's office and the attorney general's office. Complaints about alleged violations of open meetings law are handled by the attorney general's office, which can sue on a resident's behalf in court. In the secretary of state's office, the Supervisor of Public Records can decide whether a record is public and issue orders relating to whether it should be released, though the attorney general and the courts are the ultimate enforcer in such cases.

## MICHIGAN

In Michigan, the only recourse for members of the public to resolve open meetings disputes is to sue.

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In public record disputes, individuals can either go directly to court or appeal to the agency that denied their records request.

## MINNESOTA

The Data Practices Office at the Minnesota Department of Administration can answer questions related to public records and open meetings law, but it does not have enforcement authority. The Commissioner of Administration can issue advisory opinions on such matters. Members of the public can also submit public records complaints to the Office of Administrative Hearings if they can pay a \$1,000 filing fee. The office can issue rulings in these disputes, which can be appealed in court. Otherwise, members of the public can sue to resolve open government disputes.

## MISSISSIPPI

Residents may file complaints about alleged violations of open meetings and public records law with the Mississippi Ethics Commission, which can issue rulings in the disputes. These rulings can be appealed or enforced in court. Otherwise, residents can file a lawsuit.

## MISSOURI

Members of the public can either sue over open meetings and public records issues or submit complaints to the Missouri Attorney General. The office reviews the complaints and can resolve open government disputes in a number of ways, including issuing warning letters, requiring training, or filing a lawsuit against a government entity.

## MONTANA

In Montana, residents' only recourse for adjudicating public meetings and public records disputes is to file a lawsuit. There is no state ombudsman or similar entity for adjudicating open government disputes.

## NEBRASKA

Generally, members of the public can either sue in court in open government disputes or contact the Nebraska Attorney General's Office. Members of the public can file petitions or complaints concerning open government issues with the office, which in turn can issue disposition letters. If the office finds that records were improperly withheld, the requester can sue or request that the office file suit.

## NEVADA

Generally, enforcement of Nevada open government laws is handled in court. The state attorney general does not enforce public records law but does accept requests to investigate alleged violations. The office can publish opinions detailing violations and can require a public board or agency to publicly acknowledge that finding. The attorney general or members of the public can sue in state court alleging open meeting violations.

## NEW HAMPSHIRE

Residents can either sue to resolve open meetings or open records disputes or file a complaint with the one-person New Hampshire Office of the Right to Know Ombudsman. The ombudsman can make rulings on open government complaints, which can be appealed in court.

## NEW JERSEY

The Government Records Council in New Jersey accepts complaints about alleged violations of state public records law and can resolve disputes through mediation or by ordering agencies to take actions. The council's decisions can be enforced or appealed in court. Residents can also go straight to court to sue over open records and open meetings disputes.

## NEW MEXICO

Formal enforcement of open government laws in New Mexico is handled in court. Members of the public can sue over public records disputes and request opinions from local prosecutors or the New Mexico Department of Justice. In open meetings disputes, they can also file complaints with the Department of Justice or their local prosecutor – authorities who may file lawsuits in egregious cases. Alternatively, residents can file lawsuits regarding alleged open meetings law violations.

## NEW YORK

Members of the public can contact the Committee on Open Government for advice or advisory opinions



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regarding public records and open meeting disputes. But the committee has no authority to enforce compliance with open government laws, and residents must pursue civil litigation to resolve disputes.

## NORTH CAROLINA

The North Carolina attorney general's open government unit does provide guidance on open government laws, but it does not evaluate complaints or settle public records or open meetings disputes. Residents' only avenue for formally resolving such issues is to sue.

## NORTH DAKOTA

North Dakota's attorney general can review alleged violations of state public records or open meetings law submitted by members of the public and issue opinions. If a public entity does not comply with the opinion, residents can file suit. The office also has the authority to refer public officials who have violated open government laws in more than one opinion to local prosecutors for criminal prosecution.

## OHIO

Residents can inquire with the Public Records Unit in the Ohio Attorney General's Office for guidance on navigating open meetings and open records law. But enforcement of open government laws is handled by the courts.

## OKLAHOMA

In Oklahoma, disputes over open meetings and open records issues are typically handled in the court through civil litigation. The Oklahoma attorney general does have a public access counselor, who can mediate between members of the public and government agencies in public records and open meetings disputes. But the counselor does not issue enforceable opinions or rulings.

## OREGON

Residents can file petitions about public records disputes involving most state agencies with the Oregon Department of Justice. The department can then issue decisions, but it does not have the authority to initiate lawsuits in these cases. If either the agency or the requester disagree with these decisions, they can go to court. Requesters can also seek advisory opinions from local prosecutors in disputes involving local agencies. Additionally, they can contact the Office of the Public Records Advocate, which can compel state agencies in the executive branch to participate in mediation over records disputes, but cannot force agencies to comply. The Oregon Government Ethics Commission receives complaints concerning public meetings and can impose sanctions on governing officials. In both open meetings and public records disputes, residents can also take their case directly to court.

## PENNSYLVANIA

Members of the public can appeal denied records requests to the Pennsylvania Office of Open Records. The office levies "final determinations" by which the parties abide; however, these decisions can be appealed in court. There is no administrative agency that oversees complaints about open meetings disputes, meaning lawsuits must be filed to resolve potential violations.

## RHODE ISLAND

Members of the public can sue in court or file complaints with the Rhode Island attorney general regarding alleged violations of public records and open meetings laws. The office can resolve disputes with findings or potentially file lawsuits to enforce the statutes.

## SOUTH CAROLINA

The South Carolina attorney general does not enforce open government laws or handle complaints about alleged violations. Residents must sue in open government disputes.

## SOUTH DAKOTA

Complaints regarding open meetings issues can be brought to the South Dakota Open Meetings Commission. The commission can make determinations regarding alleged violations of state open meetings law and issue public reprimands, but it can't enforce compliance. A state's attorney could prosecute open meetings violations. Residents can file public records-related complaints with the Office of Hearing Examiners, who can review disputes and issue decisions. These decisions can be appealed by either party in court. Residents can also file lawsuits to resolve open meetings and open records disputes.

## TENNESSEE

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Generally, complaints about alleged open meetings or open records law violations are handled by the courts, and residents must file a lawsuit to resolve such disputes. Residents can also contact the Open Records Counsel at the Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury, which can answer questions about public records and open meetings law and issue informal advisory opinions.

## TEXAS

The Office of the Attorney General plays a central role in resolving public records disputes in Texas. Agencies must appeal to the office before denying a records request, and the office issues decisions in these cases. It also receives complaints regarding excessive fees for records, which can be resolved with financial penalties. Residents can also file suit over public records disputes. For alleged violations of open meetings law, residents can file complaints with their local prosecutor or pursue private litigation.

## UTAH

Members of the public can appeal denied or delayed records to the State Records Committee, which can issue orders in disputes. The committee's orders can be appealed in court, and residents can also sue over records disputes without going to the committee first. The Utah Attorney General's Office does receive complaints about open meetings disputes, which can be resolved through training or admonishment, though the office has never brought a judicial action to enforce the open meetings law. The Utah Government Records Ombudsman can also provide information and guidance to individuals seeking records or trying to appeal denied records requests. Members of the public can also go straight to court in open meetings disputes.

## VERMONT

Vermont does not have an entity that adjudicates complaints about public records or open meetings issues. Members of the public can resolve such disputes by suing in court.

## VIRGINIA

In Virginia, residents' only option for definitively resolving complaints about alleged violations of open meetings or open records law is to pursue legal action. Residents can also seek advice and opinions from the Virginia Freedom of Information Advisory Council. But the courts are the final arbiter in open government disputes.

## WASHINGTON

Open meetings and public records law disputes in Washington are typically resolved in court. There is an open government ombuds in the Washington Attorney General's Office, but the ombuds does not enforce open government laws and instead provides education and answers questions.

## WEST VIRGINIA

In West Virginia, residents' only recourse for resolving complaints about alleged violations of open meetings and open records law is to file a lawsuit.

## WISCONSIN

Open government disputes in Wisconsin are resolved in court. Members of the public, in addition to the Wisconsin Department of Justice and district attorneys, can settle complaints about public records and open meetings issues by suing. The Department of Justice's Office of Open Government receives complaints, requests for enforcement, and inquiries about open government laws.

## WYOMING

Generally, open meetings and public records disputes in Wyoming are resolved in court. Members of the public can file complaints about alleged violations of public records law with the Public Records Ombudsman in the Wyoming governor's office. The ombudsman can mediate between residents and public bodies, but it has no authority to enforce compliance.

## 80 years after D-Day, a World War II veteran is getting married near beaches where US troops landed

By TERRY SPENCER Associated Press

BOCA RATON, Fla. (AP) — Harold Terens and his fiancée Jeanne Swerlin kissed and held hands like high school sweethearts as they discussed their upcoming wedding in France, a country the World War II veteran first visited as a 20-year-old U.S. Army Air Forces corporal shortly after D-Day.

Terens, a gregarious and energetic 100-year-old, will be honored in June by the French as part of the 80th anniversary celebration of their country's liberation from the Nazis. Then he plans to marry the sprightly 96-year-old Swerlin in a town near the beaches where U.S. troops landed.

"I love this girl — she is quite special," said Terens, who has been dating Swerlin since 2021. To demonstrate their fondness for dancing, they had Siri play "Uptown Funk" by Mark Ronson and Bruno Mars and then jumped, twisted and gyrated like teens at homecoming.

"He's an amazing guy, amazing," Swerlin said. "He loves me so much and he says it."

"And my god, he's the greatest kisser," she said.

The couple, who are each widowed, grew up in New York City: her in Brooklyn, him in the Bronx. They laugh at how differently they experienced World War II. She was in high school and dated soldiers who gave her war souvenirs like dog tags, knives and even a gun, trying to impress.

Terens enlisted in 1942 and shipped to Great Britain the following year, attached to a four-pilot P-47 Thunderbolt fighter squadron as their radio repair technician. Terens said his original pilots all died in the war.

"I loved all those guys. Young men. The average age was 26," he said.

On D-Day — June 6, 1944 — Terens helped repair planes returning from France so they could rejoin the battle. He said half his company's pilots died that day.

Terens went to France 12 days later, helping transport freshly captured Germans and just-freed American POWs back to England. To him, the Germans seemed happy because they would survive the war. The Americans, however, had been brutalized by their Nazi captors over months and even years.

"They were in a stupor," he said.

He then went on a secret mission — even he didn't know his destination. His planes hopscotched North Africa before eventually landing in Tehran. There, he survived a robbery that left him naked in the desert and fearing death until an American military police patrol happened by.

He learned the details of his covert mission when he was deposited at a Soviet airfield in Ukraine. As part of a new strategy, American bombers would fly from Britain to attack Axis targets in Eastern Europe. They didn't have enough fuel to return so they would fly to the USSR. Terens' job was to get the crews fed and the injured treated before they flew their refueled planes home.

Terens soon contracted dysentery, which almost killed him. In another close call, a British barkeep refused to serve him past the mandatory closing time despite his pleadings for just one more drink. Moments after he was kicked out, a German rocket destroyed the pub.

Following the Nazi surrender in May 1945, Terens again helped transport freed Allied prisoners to England before he shipped back to the U.S. a month later.

He married his wife Thelma in 1948 and they had two daughters and a son. He became a U.S. vice president for a British conglomerate. They moved from New York to Florida in 2006 after Thelma retired as a French teacher; she died in 2018 after 70 years of marriage. He has eight grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren.

Swerlin married at 21 and was a full-time mom to two girls and a boy before being widowed in her 40s. Her second husband died after 18 years of marriage. She then lived with Sol Katz for 25 years before his death in 2019. She has seven grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

It was Katz's daughter, Joanne Schosheim, who introduced her to Terens in 2021.

She met Terens when her children attended camp with his grandchildren years ago and remained friends. She and a friend thought the two might hit it off, so invited them to lunch.



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"She gave my dad such joy," Schosheim said of Swerlin. "I didn't want her to be lonely."

But after Thelma's death, Terens wasn't interested in other women and barely noticed Swerlin.

"I didn't even look at her. I didn't even talk to her," he said.

"I looked at him. He looked at me," Swerlin said, but "it was like nothing."

Even so, Terens' buddy Stanley Eisenberg took them to dinner the next night. Eisenberg wanted to see who his friend had dismissed.

It was love at second sight.

"I had never seen him lit up like that," Eisenberg said.

Terens couldn't talk or eat, and that's not like him.

"I said, 'You're in love,'" Eisenberg said. "He said, 'I don't know. I've never had these feelings before.'"

After that date, Swerlin said, Terens "didn't give me a chance" to turn him down. At 94, she also was in love.

"He was introducing me to the whole world, 'I want you to meet my girl, my sweetheart,' and I didn't even know him more than two days," she said, laughing. "Being in love is not just for the young. We get butterflies just like everybody else."

Terens proposed a few months ago, kneeling to give Swerlin a ring.

"She got hysterical" with delight, he said.

"I thought I'd have to help him up, but he's so macho," she said.

The couple and their families will head to Paris in late May, where Terens and a handful of surviving World War II veterans will be honored. Of the 16 million American WWII veterans, only 120,000 remain, the government says.

It will be Terens' fourth D-Day celebration in France. He received a medal from President Emmanuel Macron five years ago.

The families then will travel to the town of Carentan-les-Marais, where the couple plan to be married June 8 by Mayor Jean-Pierre Lhonneur in a chapel built in the 1600s. Lhonneur said because of the American sacrifice on D-Day, more U.S. flags fly in the area than French.

"Normandy is the 51st state," he said.

Lhonneur explained legally he is only allowed to marry town residents, but he thinks the local prosecutor will let him make an exception.

"It will be a pleasure for us," the mayor said.

## Why you should stop texting your kids at school

By JOCELYN GECKER AP Education Writer

Virginia high school teacher Joe Clement keeps track of the text messages parents have sent students sitting in his economics and government classes:

— "What did you get on your test?"

— "Did you get the field trip form signed?"

— "Do you want chicken or hamburgers for dinner tonight?"

Clement has a plea for parents: Stop texting your kids at school.

Parents are distressingly aware of the distractions and the mental health issues associated with smartphones and social media. But teachers say parents might not realize how much those struggles play out at school.

One culprit? Mom and Dad themselves, whose stream-of-consciousness questions add to a climate of constant interruption and distraction from learning. Even when schools regulate or ban cellphones, it's hard for teachers to enforce it. And the constant buzzes on watches and phones are occupying critical brain space regardless of whether kids are sneaking a peek.

A few changes in parents' behavior can help make phones less distracting at school. Here's what teachers and experts recommend.

TRY IT: STOP TEXTING YOUR KID AT SCHOOL

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Many parents stay in touch with their child by texting, but school is a place for focusing on learning and developing independence. Teachers say you can still reach your child if you have a change in plans or a family emergency: Just contact the front office.

If the message is not urgent, it can probably wait.

Think of it this way: "If you came to school and said, 'Can you pull my child out of calculus so I can tell them something not important?' we would say no," central Virginia school counselor Erin Rettig said.

Teachers emphasized: They are not saying parents are to blame for school cellphone battles, just that parents can do more to help. Tell your kids, for example, not to text home unless it is urgent. And if they do, ignore it.

"When your children are texting you stuff that can wait — like, 'Can I go to Brett's house five days from now?' — don't respond," said Sabine Polak, one of three mothers who co-founded the Phone-Free Schools Movement. "You have to stop engaging. That's just feeding the problem."

## CUT THE CORD FROM 8 TO 3

Many parents got used to being in constant contact during the COVID-19 pandemic, when kids were home doing online school. They have kept that communication going as life has otherwise returned to normal.

"We call it the digital umbilical cord. Parents can't let go. And they need to," Clement said.

Parents might not expect their kids to respond immediately to texts (though many do). But when students pull out their phones to reply, it opens the door to other social media distractions.

## ANXIETY VIA TEXT MESSAGE

At parent workshops, Rettig, the school counselor in Virginia, tells parents they are contributing to children's anxiety by sending messages, tracking their whereabouts and checking grades daily, which doesn't give kids space to be independent at school.

Some teachers say they get emails from parents right after returning graded exams, before the class is over, because kids feel the need (or are told) to report grades immediately to parents.

Dr. Libby Milkovich, a developmental and behavioral pediatrician at Children's Mercy Kansas City, says she asks parents to consider what kids miss out on by having parents at arms' reach during school hours.

"By texting back and forth with a parent, a child is unable to practice either self-calming or problem-solving skills," Milkovich said. "It's easy to text, but if I don't have a phone, I have to go ask the teacher or I have to figure it out on my own."

Some kids who oppose school cellphone bans say it's helpful to reach out to parents when they're feeling anxious or worried at school. For children with serious anxiety who are accustomed to texting parents for reassurance, Milkovich suggests phasing in limits so the child can gradually practice having more independence. She urges parents to ask themselves: Why does my child need constant access to a phone?

"Often parents say, 'I want to be able to reach my child at any time,' which has nothing to do with the child's outcome. It's because of the parents' anxiety," she said.

## TAKE AWAY THAT OLD PHONE

Beth Black, a high school English teacher in the San Francisco Bay Area, tells parents to consider confiscating their child's old phones.

Her school requires students to put phones in a special cellphone holder when they enter classrooms. But she has seen students stash their old, inactive phone there, and hold onto the phone that works.

Like many teachers, she says phones aren't the only problem. There's also the earbud issue.

"Forty percent of my students have at least one earbud in when they walk into class," Black said. "The kids will set their phone in the holder to music and they'll listen to music in class in one earbud."

## TURN OFF NOTIFICATIONS

Parents' reigning in their texts will only go so far. So work with your kids to turn off some or all of their attention-stealing notifications.

To prove just how distracting smartphones are, Clement ran an in-class experiment where he asked students to take their phones off silent and switch on notifications for two minutes.

"It sounded like an old-time video arcade — bizzing, buzzing, dinging and ringing for two solid minutes," he said.

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Many studies have found students check their phones frequently during class. A study last year from Common Sense Media found teens get bombarded with as many as 237 notifications a day. About 25% of them pop up during the school day, mostly from friends on social media.

"Every time our focus is interrupted, it takes a lot of brain power and energy to get back on task," said Emily Cherkin, a Seattle-based teacher-turned-consultant who specializes in screen-time management.

Teachers say the best school cellphone policy is one that physically removes the phone from the child. Otherwise, it's hard to compete.

"When the phone vibrates in their pocket, now their focus is on their pocket. And they're wondering, 'How do I get it out to the table? How do I check it?'" said Randy Freiman, a high school chemistry teacher in upstate New York. "You ask them a question and they haven't heard a word you've said. Their brain is elsewhere."

## **Why is Haiti so chaotic? Leaders used street gangs to gain power. Then the gangs got stronger**

By MICHAEL WEISSENSTEIN Associated Press

Haiti's prime minister was last seen in Puerto Rico, negotiating his return to a homeland gripped by violence and controlled by heavily armed gangsters. With his fate in the air and the situation in Haiti deteriorating by the day, the world has been left to wonder whether the country will fully descend into anarchy or whether some semblance of order will be restored.

What is going on in Haiti?

It's easy to blame this latest spasm of violence in the West's first free Black republic on longstanding poverty, the legacy of colonialism, widespread deforestation, and European and U.S. interference.

However, a series of experts told The Associated Press that the most important immediate cause is more recent: Haitian rulers' increasing dependence on street gangs.

Haiti hasn't had a standing army or a well-funded and robust national police force for decades.

United Nations and American interventions have come and gone. Without a solid tradition of honest political institutions, Haitian leaders have been using armed civilians as tools for exercising power.

Now, the state has grown fatally weak and gangs are stepping in to take its place.

Gang leaders, surreally, hold news conferences. And many see them as future stakeholders in negotiations over the country's future.

How did Haiti get here?

A 1990s embargo was imposed after the military overthrew President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. The embargo and the international isolation devastated the country's small middle class, said Michael Deibert, author of "Notes From the Last Testament: The Struggle for Haiti," and "Haiti Will Not Perish: A Recent History."

After a U.S.-backed U.N. force pushed out the coup's leaders in 1994, a World Bank-sponsored structural adjustment led to the importation of rice from the U.S. and devastated rural agricultural society, Deibert said.

Boys without work flooded into Port-au-Prince and joined gangs. Politicians started using them as a cheap armed wing. Aristide, a priest-turned-politician, gained notoriety for using gangsters.

In December 2001, police official Guy Philippe attacked the National Palace in an attempted coup and Aristide called on the gangsters to rise from the slums, Deibert said.

"It wasn't the police defending their government's Palais National," remembered Deibert, who was there. "It was thousands of armed civilians."

"Now, you have these different politicians that have been collaborating with these gangs for years, and ... it blew up in their face," he continued.

How did weak foreign intervention hurt Haiti?

Many of the gangs retreated in the face of MINUSTAH, a U.N. force established in 2004.

Rene Preval, the only democratically elected president to win and complete two terms in a country notorious for political upheaval, took a hard line on the gangs, giving them the choice to "disarm or be killed,"

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said Robert Fatton, professor of government and foreign affairs at the University of Virginia.

After his presidency, subsequent leaders were at best easy on the gangs and at worst tied to them, he said.

Fatton said every key actor in Haitian society had their gangs, noting that the current situation isn't unique, but that it has deteriorated at a faster pace.

"For the last the three years, the gangs started to gain autonomy. And now they are a power unto themselves," he said, likening them to a "mini-Mafia state."

"The autonomy of the gangs has reached a critical point. It is why they are capable now of imposing certain conditions on the government itself," Fatton said.

"Those who created the gangs created a monster. And now the monster may not be totally in charge, but it has the capacity to block any kind of solution," he said.

How does gang money hurt Haiti?

The gangs, along with many Haitian politicians and business people, earn money from an illicit brew of "taxes" gleaned through extortion, kidnappings, and drugs and weapons smuggling, Fatton said.

"There are all kinds criminal networks in the area," he said.

After Preval, gangs, politicians and business people extracted every dollar they could, said Francois Pierre-Louis, a professor of political science at Queens College at The City University of New York.

"It was open house for gangs, drugs, the country, basically ... became a narco-trafficking state," he said. "Basically, the gangs got empowered, and not only they got empowered, they had state protection, politicians protecting them."

## 'Oppenheimer' set to overpower at the Oscars Sunday night

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Hi, "Oppenheimer."

When Hollywood gathers for the 96th Academy Awards on Sunday, the blockbuster biopic is widely expected to overpower all competition — including its release-date companion, "Barbie" — at an election-year Oscars that could turn into a coronation for Christopher Nolan.

The Oscars, kicking off on ABC at 7 p.m. EDT Sunday, are springing forward an hour earlier than usual due to daylight saving time. But aside from the time shift, this year's show is going for many tried-and-true Academy Awards traditions. Jimmy Kimmel is back as host. Past winners are flocking back as presenters. And a big studio epic is poised for a major awards haul.

Still, much is circling around this year's show. Demonstrators are expected to protest the Israel-Hamas war near the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles. Police have beefed up their already extensive presence. The war in Ukraine will be on some attendees' minds, particularly those of the journalist filmmakers behind the documentary favorite, "20 Days in Mariupol." And with the presidential election in full swing, politics could be an unavoidable topic despite an awards season that's played out largely in a vacuum.

Hollywood also has plenty of its own storm clouds to concern itself with.

The 2023 movie year was defined by a prolonged strike over the future of an industry that's reckoning with the onset of streaming, artificial intelligence and shifting moviegoer tastes that have tested even the most bankable brands. The academy, while also widely nominating films like "Killers of the Flower Moon" and "Poor Things," embraced both "Oppenheimer," the lead nominee with 13 nods, and Greta Gerwig's "Barbie," the year's biggest hit with more than \$1.4 billion in ticket sales and eight nominations.

HOW TO WATCH

Ahead of the broadcast on ABC, a red carpet preshow will begin at 6:30 p.m. EDT. E! will kick off its red-carpet coverage at 4 p.m. EDT and arrivals are being streamed on YouTube by The Associated Press.

The show will be available to stream via ABC.com and the ABC app with a cable subscription. You can also watch through services including Hulu Live TV, YouTubeTV, AT&T TV and FuboTV.

WHAT'S IN STORE FOR THE TELECAST

Five past winners in each acting category will together announce winners for the first time since 2009. Among the many announced presenters are: Zendaya, Al Pacino, Jennifer Lawrence, Michelle Yeoh, Steven



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Spielberg, Dwayne Johnson, Matthew McConaughey, Lupita Nyong'o, Mahershala Ali, Nicolas Cage and Bad Bunny.

All of the best original song nominees will be performed, including the most likely winner, "What Was I Made For" from "Barbie," to be performed by Billie Eilish and Finneas O'Connell. The others are: "I'm Just Ken," with Ryan Gosling and Mark Ronson; "The Fire Inside," from "Flamin' Hot," to be performed by Becky G; Jon Batiste's "It Never Went Away" from "American Symphony"; and "Wahzhazhe (A Song for My People)," from "Killers of the Flower Moon," to be performed by Scott George and the Osage Singers.

WHO ARE THE FAVORITES?

"Oppenheimer" comes in having won at the producers, directors and actors guilds, making it the clear front-runner for best picture. The film is widely expected to win in a number of other categories, too. Nolan is tipped to win his first best director Oscar, while Robert Downey Jr. (best supporting actor) and Cillian Murphy (best actor) are also predicted to win their first Academy Award. Paul Giamatti ("The Holdovers") could challenge Murphy.

With the forecasted "Oppenheimer" romp, the night's biggest drama is in the best actress category. Emma Stone ("Poor Things") and Lily Gladstone ("Killers of the Flower Moon") are nearly even-odds to win. While an Oscar for Stone, who won for her performance "La La Land," would be her second statuette, a win for Gladstone would make Academy Awards history. No Native American has ever won a competitive Oscar.

While "Barbie" bested (and helped lift) "Oppenheimer" at the box office, it appears likely it will take a back seat to Nolan's film at the Oscars. Gerwig was notably overlooked for best director, sparking an outcry that some, even Hillary Clinton, said mimicked the patriarchy parodied in the film.

In supporting actress, Da'Vine Joy Randolph has been a lock all season for her performance in Alexander Payne's "The Holdovers."

WHAT ELSE TO LOOK FOR

Composer John Williams, 92, is expected to attend the ceremony where he's nominated for the 49th time for best score, for "Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny." Meanwhile Godzilla is going to the Oscars for the first time, with "Godzilla Minus One" notching a nomination for best visual effects.

Also for the first time, two non-English language films are up for best picture: the German-language Auschwitz drama "The Zone of Interest" and the French courtroom drama "Anatomy of a Fall." "The Zone of Interest" is the heavy favorite to win best international film.

Historically, having big movies in the mix for the Oscars' top awards has been good for broadcast ratings. The Academy Awards' largest audience ever came when James Cameron's "Titanic" swept the 1998 Oscars.

Last year's ceremony, where a very different best-picture contender in "Everything Everywhere All at Once" triumphed, was watched by 18.7 million people, up 12% from the year prior. ABC and the academy are hoping to continue the upward trend after a nadir in 2021, when 9.85 million watched a pandemic-diminished telecast relocated to Los Angeles' Union Station.

## Ethiopia's Tigray region is now peaceful, but extreme hunger afflicts its children

By AMIR AMAN KIYARO Associated Press

NEBAR HADNET, Ethiopia (AP) — The cruel realities of war and drought seem to have merged for Tinseu Hiluf, a widow living in the arid depths of Ethiopia's Tigray region who is raising four children left behind by her sister's recent death in childbirth.

A two-year war between federal troops and regional forces killed one of her own sons, the rest of whom are already adults. And now, a lack of food stemming from the region's drought has left the youngest of the children she is raising malnourished.

She tries to forage seeds among the scarce greenery of the desert's yellow, rocky landscape. But she recently resorted to traveling to the nearby Finarwa health center in southeastern Tigray to try to keep the 1-year-old baby alive.

"When hungry, we eat anything from the desert," she said. "Otherwise, nothing."

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She joined several other mothers seeking help at the center in the remote administrative area of Nebar Hadnet. A mother of five complained that she had no breastmilk for her eight-month-old baby. Another with 1-year-old twins said she needed sachets of baby food to keep "my babies alive."

Tigray is now peaceful but war's effects linger, compounded by drought and a level of aid mismanagement that caused the U.N. and the U.S. to temporarily suspend deliveries last year.

Once-lush fields lie barren. Mothers, faces etched with worry, watch helplessly as their children weaken from malnutrition. Nearly 400 people died of starvation in Tigray and the neighboring Amhara region in the six months leading to January, the national ombudsman revealed in January, a rare admission of hunger-related deaths by a federal government.

Most of those deaths were recorded in Tigray, home to 5.5 million people.

Until the signing of a peace agreement in November 2022, the region was the scene of a deadly war between federal troops and forces loyal to the region's now-ousted ruling party. But months after the end of the conflict, the U.N. and the U.S. halted food aid for Tigray because of a massive scheme by Ethiopian officials to steal humanitarian grain.

An inadequate growing season followed.

Persistent insecurity meant only 49% of Tigray's farmland was planted during the main planting season last year, according to an assessment by U.N. agencies, NGOs and the regional authorities, and seen by the AP. Crop production in these areas was only 37% of the expected total because of drought. In some areas the proportion was as low as 2%, that assessment said.

The poor harvest prompted Tigray's authorities to warn of an "unfolding famine" that could match the famine of 1984-5, which killed hundreds of thousands of people across northern Ethiopia, unless the aid response was scaled up. Food deliveries to Tigray in the second half of last year, but only a small fraction of needy people in Tigray are receiving food aid, humanitarian workers say.

Finarwa, a farming community of about 13,000 people, is among the worst-hit places.

The town's health center still has war-damaged equipment and some of its rooms appear abandoned. Tadesse Mehari, the officer in charge of the clinic, said the lack of food at homes in the community has forced children to flee and beg in nearby towns.

"Nothing here to eat. So, for the sake of getting food and to save their lives, they are displaced anywhere, far from here," he said. "So, in this area, a lot of people are suffering. They are starved. They are dying due to the absence of food."

Some local leaders, feeling helpless, have been turning their own people away

Hayale Gebrekedian, a Nebar Hadnet district leader for five years, listened to the pleas of villagers who streamed into his office one recent afternoon. A widow named Serawit Wolde with 10 children was in tears as she recounted that five of them were falling ill from hunger.

"Please, any help," she told Hayale.

Hayale told the woman he had nothing to give. "There simply isn't any (food)," he said.

Hayale later told the AP, "This place used to be a source of hope, even for those displaced by the war. We had enough for everyone, but now we can't even feed ourselves."

"The war took everything," he said. There's nothing left."

Havale said access to water was an additional challenge. Of the 25 wells that once sustained the community and its animals, only five remained functional. People now trek for over an hour and a half to access water, he said.

The region's drought has meant that some areas that usually get about 60 days of rain during the rainy season have seen only a few.

Some farmers aren't giving up.

Haile Gebre Kirstos, 70, continued to plough his parched land and plant sorghum in a village in Messebo, although rain fell "only two days during the last rainy season," he said.

Once lush and teeming with livestock, the land is now a barren expanse, yet he remained hopeful even after the failure of the previous harvest.

Although the ploughing usually doesn't begin until the rainy season in May or June, this year he started the work early, driven by extreme need. He spoke of farmers who have sold their oxen and farming tools to feed their families.

For him, the memory of the 1980s famine is haunting. "It affected the entire region then," he said. "Now, in some districts, it's either as bad as the 1980s, or even worse."

## West Virginia lawmakers OK bill drawing back one of the country's strictest child vaccination laws

By LEAH WILLINGHAM Associated Press

CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) — West Virginia's GOP-controlled state Legislature voted Saturday to allow some students who don't attend traditional public schools to be exempt from state vaccination requirements that have long been held up as among the most strict in the country.

The bill was approved despite the objections of Republican Senate Health and Human Resources Chair Mike Maroney, a trained doctor, who called the bill "an embarrassment" and said he believed lawmakers were harming the state.

"I took an oath to do no harm. There's zero chance I can vote for this bill," Maroney said before the bill passed the Senate 18-12. The House already approved a version of the bill in February and swiftly approved the Senate bill on Saturday, the last day of the state's 60-day legislative session.

"It's a bad bill for West Virginia, it's a step backward. There's no question, no question there will be negative effects," Maroney said. He added, "It's an embarrassment for me to be a part of it, it should be an embarrassment to everybody."

West Virginia, with some of the lowest life expectancy rates in the U.S. and a quarter of all children living in poverty, is one of only two states, along with California, that don't permit nonmedical exemptions to vaccinations as a condition for school entry.

Mississippi had the same policy until July, when a judge allowed people to start citing religious beliefs to seek exemptions from state-mandated vaccinations that children must receive before attending day care or school.

The new proposed vaccine law in West Virginia, which now heads to the desk of Republican Gov. Jim Justice, allows virtual public school students to be exempt and for private and parochial schools to institute their own policies either exempting students or not.

All students participating in West Virginia school activities that result in competition, including but not limited to sports, still need to be vaccinated.

The bill stipulates parents can't sue private schools and school owners, administrators, boards and staffers for deciding whether to allow exemptions or not, as long as the school provides families with a notice for parents to sign acknowledging the policy annually and upon enrollment.

"I personally do not urge passage, but your health committee urged passage of this bill," Maroney said before introducing the bill in the Senate.

The bill's original intent, as introduced in the state House of Delegates, was to eliminate vaccine requirements for students in public virtual schools. It was expanded in a House committee to allow private schools to set their own vaccination standards, unless a student participates in sanctioned athletics.

The bill also created a religious exemption for any child whose parents or guardians present a letter stating the child cannot be vaccinated for religious reasons. That was taken out in the Senate.

During the Senate Health Committee meeting earlier this week, West Virginia University School of Medicine Professor Dr. Alvin Moss argued for the bill, saying the state's current compulsory vaccination policy is medically unethical because it doesn't allow informed consent.

The number of parents who don't want their children to receive vaccinations is growing, Moss said.

In 2017, the anti-vaccine requirement group West Virginians for Health Freedom had 300 families included in his members. That number has grown to at least 3,000 members in 2024, Moss said.

Former West Virginia Republican Delegate Chanda Adkins, a group member, said during the meeting that

religious families who don't want to vaccinate their children deserve to be able to live their convictions. Former West Virginia Medical Association Dr. Lisa Costello disagreed, saying West Virginia's current vaccine policy is the "gold standard" across the nation.

"West Virginia is seen as a national leader when it comes to our routine, child immunizations," she said, later adding, "Measles does not care if you go to private school or public school. Measles does not differentiate depending on where you go to school."

West Virginia law requires children to receive vaccines for chickenpox, hepatitis-b, measles, meningitis, mumps, diphtheria, polio, rubella, tetanus and whooping cough, unless they receive a medical exemption. West Virginia does not require COVID-19 vaccinations.

## **Trump blasts Biden over Laken Riley's death after Biden says he regrets using term 'illegal'**

By JOSH BOAK, MICHELLE PRICE and JILL COLVIN Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — President Joe Biden said Saturday that he regretted using the term "illegal" during his State of the Union address to describe the suspected killer of Laken Riley, as his all-but-certain 2024 GOP rival, Donald Trump, blasted the Democrat's immigration policies and blamed them for her death at a rally attended by the Georgia nursing student's family and friends.

Biden expressed remorse after facing frustration from some in his party for the use of the term to describe people who arrived or are living in the U.S. illegally.

"I shouldn't have used illegal, it's undocumented," he said in an interview with MSNBC's Jonathan Capehart taped in Atlanta, where the president was meeting with small business owners and holding a campaign rally.

Trump, campaigning in Rome, Georgia, at the same time, blasted Biden for the comments.

"Joe Biden went on television and apologized for calling Laken's murderer an illegal," he said to loud jeers and boos. "Biden should be apologizing for apologizing to this killer."

The back-and-forth underscored how Riley's murder has become a flashpoint in the 2024 campaign and a rallying cry for Republicans who have seized on frustrations over the Biden administration's handling of the U.S.-Mexico border amid a record surge of migrants entering the country. An immigrant from Venezuela who entered the U.S. illegally has been arrested and charged with her murder.

Trump was joined at his rally by Riley's parents, her sister and friends and met with them before he took the stage. They were welcomed with a standing ovation and large signs handed out by the campaign that featured Riley's photograph and the words "SAY HER NAME!" "REMEMBER OUR ANGELS," they read on the back.

"We share your grief," Trump told them in his remarks.

Trump, in a lengthy speech that lasted nearly two hours, hammered Biden on the border and for mispronouncing Riley's name during his State of the Union address this past week.

"What Joe Biden has done on our border is a crime against humanity and the people of this nation for which he will never be forgiven," Trump charged, alleging that Riley "would be alive today if Joe Biden had not willfully and maliciously eviscerated the borders of the United States and set loose thousands and thousands of dangerous criminals into our country."

Trump, who had made immigration a centerpiece of his campaign, has repeatedly vowed to mount the largest deportation in the nation's history if he wins.

He contrasted his rhetoric with Biden's — "I say he was an illegal alien. He was an illegal immigrant. He was an illegal migrant" — and accused Biden, who has long been seen as an empathetic leader, of having "no remorse. He's got no regret, he's got no empathy, no compassion, and worst of all, he has no intention of stopping the deadly invasion that stole precious Laken's beautiful American life," Trump said.

Biden earlier this year bucked activists within his party by agreeing to make changes to U.S. immigration law that would have limited some migration. The deal that emerged would have overhauled the asylum system to provide faster and tougher enforcement, as well as given presidents new powers to immediately expel migrants if authorities become overwhelmed. It also would have added \$20 billion in funding,



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a huge influx of cash.

The changes became part of a short-lived bipartisan compromise that was quickly killed by Republican lawmakers after Trump made his opposition known.

After the deal's collapse, Biden has been considering taking executive action to try to curtail migration, but he's expressed frustration that his lawyers have yet to devise options that they believe can pass muster with federal courts. Biden, instead, has insisted that Congress take up the measure again, trying to flip the script on Republicans and arguing they are more interested in being able to talk about the issue in an election year than taking action to fix it.

Among those who attended the rally was Republican Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, who represents Rome in Congress and yelled at Biden during Thursday's State of the Union to "Say her name!"

The phrase was popularized by civil rights activist Kimberlé Crenshaw in 2015 following the death of Sandra Bland, a 28-year-old Black woman who was found dead in a Texas jail cell a few days after she was arrested during a traffic stop.

Crenshaw and others began using the phrase to draw attention to cases in which Black women are subject to police brutality. In 2020, the hashtag #SayHerName helped put more public scrutiny on the shooting death of Breonna Taylor, a 26-year-old Black woman in Louisville, Kentucky, who was shot and killed in her home during a botched police raid.

The term "illegal" was once common but is far less so today, particularly among Democrats who more fully embraced immigrant rights' issues during Trump's presidency.

Biden used the term Thursday night during an exchange in which the president pressed Republicans in his address to pass the bipartisan border security deal. Greene, a stalwart Trump ally, then shouted at the president to say Riley's name, adding she was killed "by an illegal."

"By an illegal, that's right," Biden responded immediately, before appearing to ask how many people are being killed by "legals."

He added, "To her parents, I say: My heart goes out to you. Having lost children myself, I understand."

Speaking to Capehart, Biden said, "Look, when I spoke about the difference between Trump and me, one of the things I talked about in the border was his, the way he talks about vermin, the way he talks about these people polluting the blood. I talked about what I'm not going to do. What I won't do. I'm not going to treat any, any, any of these people with disrespect. Look, they built the country."

Trump campaign senior adviser Chris LaCivita slammed Biden for apologizing for his language and not to Riley's family.

"He should be apologizing to the family as opposed to apologizing for the word that he used which is an accurate description," he told reporters before Trump took the stage, blasting the response as "tone deaf" and highlighting the candidates' "two very distinct differences in approach on the border invasion."

Biden's expression of regret marked a shift from a day earlier, when Biden had hesitated when asked by reporters if he regretted using the term, saying, "well I probably," before pausing and saying "I don't" and appearing to start saying the word "regret."

## Gangs attack police stations in Haiti as Caribbean leaders call an emergency meeting Monday

By EVENS SANON Associated Press

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) — Police and palace guards worked Saturday to retake some streets in Haiti's capital after gangs launched massive attacks on at least three police stations.

Guards from the National Palace accompanied by an armored truck tried to set up a security perimeter around one of the three downtown stations after police fought off an attack by gangs late Friday.

Sporadic gunfire continued Saturday, and one woman writhed in pain on the sidewalk in downtown Port-au-Prince with a gunshot wound after a stray bullet hit her in the leg.

The unrelenting gang attacks have paralyzed the country for more than a week and left it with dwindling supplies of basic goods. Haitian officials extended a state of emergency and nightly curfew on Thursday

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as gangs continued to attack key state institutions.

Caribbean leaders issued a call late Friday for an emergency meeting Monday in Jamaica on what they called Haiti's "dire" situation. They have invited the United States, France, Canada, the U.N. and Brazil to the meeting.

Members of the Caricom regional trade bloc have been trying for months to get political actors in Haiti to agree to form an umbrella transitional unity government.

But average Haitians, many of whom have been forced from their homes by the bloody street fighting, can't wait. The problem for police in securing government buildings is that many Haitians have streamed into them, seeking refuge.

"We are the ones who pay taxes, and we need to have shelter," said one woman, who did not give her name for safety reasons.

Another Port-au-Prince resident, who also did not give his name, described the massive attacks Friday.

"They (the gangs) came with big guns. We have no guns and we cannot defend ourselves. All of us, the children are suffering," said the man.

So far, efforts to broker a solution have been unsuccessful. Caricom, the 15-nation Caribbean bloc, said in a statement late Friday that "the situation on the ground remains dire."

The Caricom statement said that while regional leaders remain deeply engaged in trying to bring opposition parties and civil society groups together to form a unity government, "the stakeholders are not yet where they need to be."

"We are acutely aware of the urgent need for consensus to be reached," according to the statement. "We have impressed on the respective parties that time is not on their side in agreeing to the way forward. From our reports, the situation on the ground remains dire and is of serious concern to us."

"It is vital that this engagement be at as high a level as possible to send a clear message of unity between Caricom and the international community as we work together to provide the critical support to the Haitian people at this time of crisis for them," said the statement.

In February, embattled Haitian Prime Minister Ariel Henry agreed to hold general elections by mid-2025, and the international community has tried to find some foreign armed force willing to fight gang violence there.

Caricom has also pushed Henry to announce a power-sharing, consensus government in the meantime, but the prime minister has yet to do so even as Haitian opposition parties and civil society groups are demanding his resignation.

Henry, a neurosurgeon, was appointed as prime minister after the July 2021 assassination of President Jovenel Moise.

It was unclear whether Henry would be in Jamaica. The prime minister had traveled to Kenya to push for the U.N.-backed deployment of a police force from the East African country to fight gangs in Haiti. A Kenyan court, however, ruled in January that such a deployment would be unconstitutional.

Henry, who is facing calls to resign or form a transitional council, remains unable to return home. He arrived in Puerto Rico on Tuesday after he was unable to land in the Dominican Republic, which borders Haiti. The Dominican government said he lacked a required flight plan as they closed their country's airspace with Haiti.

On Saturday, the office of Dominican President Luis Abinader issued a statement saying that "Henry is not welcome in the Dominican Republic for safety reasons." The Dominican Republic, which shares the island of Hispaniola with Haiti, has closed its land border.

"Given the current situation, the presence of the Haitian prime minister in the Dominican Republic is not considered appropriate," according to the statement, adding "this decision reflects the firm position of the Dominican government to safeguard its national security and stability."

The statement described the security situation in Haiti as "totally unsustainable" and said it "poses a direct threat to the safety and stability of the Dominican Republic."

The statement predicted "the situation could deteriorate even further if a peacekeeping force is not implemented urgently to restore order."

## **The US is springing forward to daylight saving. For Navajo and Hopi tribes, it's a time of confusion**

By TERRY TANG Associated Press

TUBA CITY, Ariz. (AP) — Melissa Blackhair is not eager to spring forward Sunday.

"I'm dreading it. I just don't want to see how much we have to adjust," Blackhair said while sitting in her home office in Tuba City on the Navajo Nation, the only area in Arizona that follows daylight saving time. With her husband working during the week in Phoenix, their clocks will vary.

"Everything in our house is set to daylight saving time. It just kind of is an inconvenience because I am having to remember which car is on daylight and which is on standard time," she said. "My husband will not change our time in our apartment (in Phoenix)."

Those who live on the Arizona portion of the Navajo Nation — the largest Native American reservation in the U.S. — endure mind-bending calculations every March through November.

The Navajo Nation, which also stretches into Utah and New Mexico, will reset clocks for one hour later despite being situated between two territories that remain on standard time: the rest of Arizona and the neighboring Hopi reservation.

It's made for an especially unique situation with the Hopi reservation, which is landlocked within the Navajo Nation and goes by standard time year-round. A stretch of U.S. 160 in Tuba City is the de facto border between the two reservations and two time zones.

Reva Hoover, longtime manager of the Bashas' supermarket along U.S. 160 on the Navajo side, says Sunday will inevitably be chaotic. Despite posting reminders in the locker room, employees who live on both reservations likely will arrive late.

Tourists might not be aware. Guests staying at the Moenkopi Legacy Inn & Suites on the Hopi side across the street who come into the grocery store at what they think is 8:30 p.m. would have only 30 minutes to shop before it closes, Hoover said.

"In reality, it probably would be a lot easier for everybody if we all stayed on the same time. But I take it as being unique," Hoover said. "Where else can you say that? 'Oh they're on a different time across the street.'"

Deannethea Long, the hotel's general manager, agrees it makes for an interesting talking point with guests. The hotel, which is on standard time, does little things like have one wall clock per time zone in the lobby.

"We have in-room notices to know when stores close, understanding your time zones. We explain it at the front desk, too. It can get very confusing," Long said.

Kimberly Humetewa lives on the Hopi side in Moenkopi, but her children attend school and other events on the Navajo side. The time change is hard on them, she said. They have to get up earlier, and she has to stop and calculate the time for almost everything.

Most of the essentials — the post office, the grocery store, Tuba City's only hospital — are on the other side of the highway, where everything will be on daylight saving time.

"Since everything's on this side, everybody changes the time unlike us on the Hopi reservation," Humetewa said. "It's a little tough but sometimes we just manage to deal with it."

The time change permeates Blackhair's work and home life. The graphic artist often advises clients to specify on announcements or invitations which time zone the event is recognizing. She also has to make sure she's not late for medical appointments in Flagstaff, Arizona, which isn't on either tribe's reservation.

One time, she miscalculated when to leave for her son's football game on the Hopi reservation and arrived when it was over. Her mother-in-law's home is a half-mile but one time zone away. So, for the months that Blackhair is on daylight saving, her family doesn't visit her long on school nights.

"Once we start looking at people's clocks, we just kind of think 'OK, it's 7 o'clock but it's really 8 o'clock at our house in the evening,'" Blackhair said, adding that the family doesn't go onto the Hopi side on school nights during daylight saving.

The time warp also has fed into lingering feelings of anti-socialness from when Navajo and Hopi shut

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down during the coronavirus pandemic. If an organizer of an event doesn't make clear in what time zone it's happening, Blackhair would rather not go.

"Ever since the pandemic, we've kind of stuck to ourselves," Blackhair said. "It's a lot easier to just stay home."

Arizona lawmakers passed legislation in 1968 cementing standard time after the federal government attempted to make daylight saving time the norm nationwide. Arizona tried daylight saving the previous year. Residents living in sweltering summer heat complained about having to wait through an extra hour of sunlight. Arizona and Hawaii do not change clocks.

In contrast, the Navajo Tribal Council — now the Navajo Nation Council — issued a resolution in March of that year proclaiming the reservation would follow the U.S. government's lead. The original resolution notes this would avoid confusion even in areas in other states. Also, another hour of daylight during summer "will be of great benefit to the Navajo people."

Adding another layer to the alternating time zones is a pocket in the southern end of the Hopi reservation that is Navajo Nation. Traveling more than 160 miles (258 kilometers) from northern Arizona through Tuba City, and back-and-forth from Hopi to Navajo, residents and tourists could cross time zones several times.

The configuration of the reservations is due, in part, to what was a decadeslong land dispute between the tribes. At one point, the federal government imposed a construction ban lasting 50 years on land both tribes had claimed as their own.

The proximity of Navajo and Hopi makes it hard for the two tribes to avoid association. Still, there is a constant feeling of David and Goliath between them. While Navajo is the largest Native American reservation in the U.S. — bigger than 10 U.S. states — Hopi is small with villages that are the oldest, continually inhabited among all 574 federally recognized tribes.

Like grocery stores, one tribe can offer basic utilities to members of the other.

Hopi Telecommunications has 1,200 internet and phone customers, including 200 to 300 Navajos. It can be frustrating for Navajo customers on daylight saving to wait longer to report an outage because the provider isn't open yet, said Carroll Onsaie, president and general manager.

For the next several months, business meetings always come down to "Hopi time" or "Navajo time." But he is taking it in stride.

"An hour difference is not too much of an inconvenience," Onsaie said.

He has Hopi friends, however who work on the Navajo Nation and aren't too keen on the situation. For part of the year, it's almost like they are being forced to practice daylight saving time anyway.

Residents like Blackhair would support the Navajo Nation doing away with daylight saving time. She says she heard rumblings about that possibility a few years ago and was disappointed nothing materialized.

"We really don't feel like it accomplishes anything having to move forward an hour," Blackhair said. "It's like moving from landline phone lines to mobile cellular phones. That advancement had to happen. We're living in an age now moving from daylight saving time just has to happen."

## **Biden, Trump issue dire warnings of the other, as rematch comes into view in Georgia**

By JOSH BOAK and MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump warned of dire consequences for the country if the other wins another term in the White House as the pair held dueling rallies in Georgia Saturday fresh off strong wins in Super Tuesday contests that positioned them for an all-but-certain rematch this November.

The state was a pivotal 2020 battleground — so close four years ago that Trump finds himself indicted here for his push to "find 11,780 votes" and overturn Biden's victory — and both parties are preparing for another closely contested race in the state this year.

Biden opened his speech at a rally in Atlanta noting that Trump was across the state with Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, the firebrand lawmaker who has gone from the fringes of her party to the fore. "It can tell



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you a lot about a person who he keeps company with," Biden said to applause. Biden noted that Trump had hosted Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán — who has rolled back democracy in his country — at his Florida club the day before.

"When he says he wants to be a dictator, I believe him," Biden said of Trump. "Our freedoms are literally on the ballot this November."

Biden hosted the rally at Pullman Yards, a 27-acre arts and entertainment venue in Atlanta that was formerly an industrial site to receive the endorsement of Collective PAC, Latino Victory Fund and AAPI Victory Fund, a trio of political groups representing, respectively, Black, Latino, and Asian Americans and Pacific Island voters. The groups were announcing a \$30 million commitment to mobilize voters on Biden's behalf.

Trump, meanwhile, hammered Biden on the border and blamed him for the death of 22-year old Georgia nursing student Laken Riley last month. An immigrant from Venezuela who entered the U.S. illegally has been arrested and charged with her murder. He hosted Riley's family at his rally in Rome, Greene's hometown.

"What Joe Biden has done on our border is a crime against humanity and the people of this nation for which he will never be forgiven," Trump said, promising the largest deportation in history. "What a tremendous shame," he said.

Ahead of his rally, Biden expressed regret for using the term "illegal" to during his State of the Union address to describe Riley's suspected killer, drawing more criticism from Trump's team.

Trump, who took the stage at the same moment Biden was still speaking at another part of the state, skewered the president for the apology and said, "Are we going crazy?"

"I say he was an illegal alien. He was an illegal immigrant. He was an illegal migrant. And he shouldn't have been in our country and he never would have been under the Trump policy," he said to loud cheers.

Trump also highlighted the very things Biden knocked him for, saying that he "had dinner last night with a great gentleman from Hungary, Viktor Orbán" and praised Greene for yelling at Biden during his State of the Union about Riley, calling her "very brave."

Trump's rally opened with a message asking attendees to rise to support the hundreds of people serving jail time for their roles in the Jan. 6 Capitol insurrection, when thousands of pro-Trump supporters tried to overturn the 2020 presidential election by halting the counting of Electoral College votes.

The intensity of the rhetoric presaged a grueling eight months of campaigning ahead in the state.

"We're a true battleground state now," said U.S. Rep. Nikema Williams, an Atlanta Democrat who doubles as state party chairwoman.

Trump, while repeating his lies about the 2020 election on Saturday, declared, "With your vote, we are going to win the state of Georgia in an epic landslide."

Once a Republican stronghold, Georgia is now so competitive that neither party can agree on how to describe today's divide. A "52-48 state," said Republican Gov. Brian Kemp, whose party controls state government. "We're not blue, we're not red," Williams countered, but "periwinkle," a claim she supports with Biden's 2020 win and the two Democratic senators, Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff, Georgia sent to Washington.

There is agreement, at least, that Biden and Trump each have a path to victory — and plenty of obstacles along the way.

"Biden's numbers are in the tank for a lot of good reasons, and we can certainly talk about that. And so, it makes it where Trump absolutely can win the race," Kemp said at a recent forum sponsored by Punchbowl News. "I also think he could lose the race. I think it's going to be a lot tougher than people realize."

Biden's margin was about a quarter of a percentage point in 2020. Warnock won his 2022 Senate runoff by 3 points. Kemp was elected in 2018 by 1.5 percentage points but expanded his 2022 reelection margin to 7.5 points, a blowout in a battleground state.

In each of those elections, Democrats held wide advantages in the core of metro Atlanta, where Biden will be Saturday. Democrats also performed well in Columbus and Savannah and a handful of rural, majority-Black counties. But Republicans dominated in other rural areas, small towns and the smallest cities — like Rome.

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At Trump's rally, at a city in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains, more than 3,000 people packed inside an event center Saturday to hear the former president speak. His campaign handed out signs featuring the image of Laken Riley.

Candace Duvall, from Hampton, Georgia, wearing a white "Trump 2024," T-shirt, a gold purse that said "Trump" and a pair of earrings that said "Never surrender" on one earring and Trump's mugshot on the other, declared that her candidate is "going to save this country."

She faulted Biden for fumbling the pronunciation of Riley's name during his State of the Union speech Thursday.

"That happened right here in Georgia. That hits home for us. We know why that happened. We know why," she said, adding that there were too many migrants coming into the country.

Duvall said she thinks Trump is winning over voters who didn't like him before "because they see the difference now" with Biden.

"If somebody gives you sirloin and then they take it away and give you a hamburger, you're going to want sirloin again," she said.

But the same State of the Union address being criticized by Republicans has also been a source of momentum for Biden, who openly challenged Trump's commitment to democracy, U.S. allies, the middle class and the reproductive rights of women.

Supporters saw his spirited performance as cooling worries about the 81 year-old's age. Biden laid into the 77-year-old Trump for having the "oldest of ideas" as the former president has promised that a return to the White House would bring retribution to his opponents.

## **Biden: Netanyahu 'hurting Israel' by not preventing more civilian deaths in Gaza**

By ZEKE MILLER AP White House Correspondent

WILMINGTON, Del. (AP) — President Joe Biden said Saturday that he believes Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is "hurting Israel more than helping Israel" in how he is approaching its war against Hamas in Gaza.

The U.S. leader expressed support for Israel's right to pursue Hamas after the Oct. 7 attack, but said of Netanyahu that "he must pay more attention to the innocent lives being lost as a consequence of the actions taken." Biden has for months warned that Israel risks losing international support over mounting civilian casualties in Gaza, and the latest remarks in an interview with MSNBC's Jonathan Capehart pointed to the increasingly strained relationship between the two leaders.

Biden said of the death toll in Gaza, "it's contrary to what Israel stands for. And I think it's a big mistake."

Biden said a potential Israeli invasion of the Gaza city of Rafah, where more than 1.3 million Palestinians are sheltering, is "a red line" for him, but said he would not cut off weapons like the Iron Dome missile interceptors which protect the Israeli civilian populace from rocket attacks in the region.

"It is a red line," he said, when asked about Rafah, "but I'm never going to leave Israel. The defense of Israel is still critical, so there's no red line I'm going to cut off all weapons so they don't have the Iron Dome to protect them."

Biden said he was willing to make his case directly to the Israeli Knesset, its parliament, including by making another trip to the country. He traveled to Israel weeks after the Oct. 7. attack. He declined to elaborate on how or whether such a trip might materialize.

The U.S. leader had hoped to secure a temporary ceasefire before Ramadan begins next week, though that appears increasingly unlikely as Hamas has balked at a deal pushed by the U.S. and its allies that would have seen fighting pause for about six weeks, the release of additional hostages held by Hamas and Palestinian prisoners held by Israel, and a surge in humanitarian aid into Gaza.

Israel remains committed to continuing its invasion and annihilating Hamas, which killed about 1,200 people in Israel and took about 250 hostages on Oct. 7. The militant group freed dozens of hostages during a November truce, but it refuses to release more without guarantees of a complete end of hostilities.

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Meanwhile, more than 30,000 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza according to the Hamas-run health ministry, with the majority being women and children, and hundreds of thousands going hungry.

Biden noted CIA Director Bill Burns is in the region currently trying to resurrect the deal.

Biden's comments came after he was captured on a hot mic following Thursday night's State of the Union address telling Sen. Michael Bennet, D-Colo. that he and the Israeli leader will need to have a "come to Jesus meeting."

In the exchange, Bennet congratulated Biden on his speech and urged the president to keep pressing Netanyahu on growing humanitarian concerns in Gaza. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg were also part of the brief conversation.

Biden then responds using Netanyahu's nickname, saying, "I told him, Bibi, and don't repeat this, but you and I are going to have a 'come to Jesus' meeting."

An aide to the president standing nearby then speaks quietly into the president's ear, appearing to alert Biden that microphones remained on as he worked the room.

"I'm on a hot mic here," Biden says after being alerted. "Good. That's good."

## Another top donor says it will resume funding the UN agency for Palestinians as Gaza hunger grows

By MENELAOS HADJICOSTIS Associated Press

NICOSIA, Cyprus (AP) — Another top donor to the U.N. agency aiding Palestinians said Saturday that it would resume funding, weeks after more than a dozen countries halted hundreds of millions of dollars of support in response to Israeli allegations against the organization.

Sweden's reversal came as a ship bearing tons of humanitarian aid was preparing to leave Cyprus for Gaza after international donors launched a sea corridor to supply the besieged territory facing widespread hunger after five months of war.

Cyprus President Nikos Christodoulides told reporters late Saturday that the ship would depart "within the next 24 hours." World Central Kitchen founder José Andrés told The Associated Press that all necessary permits, including from Israel, had been secured, and circumstances delaying departure were primarily weather-related.

Sweden's funding decision followed similar ones by the European Union and Canada as the U.N. agency known as UNRWA warns that it could collapse and leave Gaza's already desperate population of more than 2 million people with even less medical and other assistance.

"The humanitarian situation in Gaza is devastating and the needs are acute," Swedish development minister Johan Forssell said, adding that UNRWA had agreed to increased transparency and stricter controls. Sweden will give UNRWA half of the \$38 million funding it promised for this year, with more to come.

Israel had accused 12 of UNRWA's thousands of employees of participating in the Oct. 7 Hamas attacks on Israel that killed 1,200 people and took about 250 others hostage. Countries including the United States quickly suspended funding to UNRWA worth about \$450 million, almost half its budget for the year. The U.N. has launched investigations, and UNRWA has been agreeing to outside audits to win back donor support.

On the eve of Ramadan, hungry Gaza residents scrambled for packages of food supplies dropped by U.S. and Jordanian military planes — a method of delivery that humanitarian groups call deeply inadequate compared to ground deliveries. But the daily number of aid trucks entering Gaza since the war has been far below the 500 that entered before Oct. 7 because of Israeli restrictions and security issues.

People dashed through devastated Gaza City neighborhoods as the parachuting aid descended. "I have orphans, I want to feed them!" one woman cried.

"The issue of aid is brutal and no one accepts it," said another resident, Momen Mahra, claiming that most airdropped aid falls into the sea. "We want better methods."

The U.S. military said that its planes airdropped more than 41,000 "meal equivalents" and 23,000 bottles of water into northern Gaza, the hardest part of the enclave to access.

The Health Ministry in Gaza said that two more people, including a 2-month-old infant, had died as a

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result of malnutrition, raising the total dying from hunger in the war to 25. Ministry spokesperson Ashraf al-Qidra said the toll included only people brought to hospitals.

Overall, the ministry said at least 30,878 Palestinians have been killed since the war began. It doesn't differentiate between civilians and combatants in its tallies but says women and children make up two-thirds of the dead. The ministry is part of the Hamas-run government, and its figures from previous wars have largely matched those of the U.N. and independent experts.

The opening of the sea delivery corridor, along with the airdrops, showed increasing frustration with Gaza's humanitarian crisis and a new willingness to work around Israeli restrictions. The sea corridor is backed by the EU together with the United States, the United Arab Emirates and other involved countries. The European Commission has said that U.N. agencies and the Red Cross will also play a role.

President Joe Biden said Saturday that he believes Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is "hurting Israel more than helping Israel" in how he is approaching its war against Hamas in Gaza. Speaking to MSNBC's Jonathan Capehart, the U.S. leader expressed support for Israel's right to pursue Hamas after the Oct. 7 attack, but said of Netanyahu "he must pay more attention to the innocent lives being lost as a consequence of the actions taken."

The ship belonging to Spain's Open Arms aid group was expected to make a pilot voyage to test the corridor as early as this weekend. The ship has been waiting at Cyprus's port of Larnaca. Israel has said it welcomed the maritime corridor but cautioned that it would need security checks.

Open Arms founder Oscar Camps has said the ship pulling a barge with 200 tons of rice and flour would take two to three days to arrive at an undisclosed location where World Central Kitchen was constructing a pier to receive it.

Biden separately has announced a plan to build a temporary pier in Gaza to help deliver aid, underscoring how the U.S. has to go around Israel, its main Middle East ally and the top recipient of U.S. military aid. Israel accuses Hamas of commandeering some aid deliveries.

United States officials said it will likely be weeks before the pier is operational. The executive director of the U.S. arm of medical charity Doctors Without Borders, Avril Benoit, in a statement criticized the U.S. plan as a "glaring distraction from the real problem: Israel's indiscriminate and disproportionate military campaign and punishing siege."

Sigrid Kaag, the U.N. senior humanitarian and reconstruction coordinator for Gaza, has said air and sea deliveries can't make up for a shortage of supply routes on land.

Meanwhile, efforts to reach a cease-fire before Ramadan appeared stalled. Hamas said Thursday that its delegation had left Cairo until next week.

International mediators had hoped to alleviate some of the immediate crisis with a six-week cease-fire, which would have seen Hamas release some of the Israeli hostages it's holding, Israel release some Palestinian prisoners and aid groups be given access for a major influx of assistance into Gaza.

Palestinian militants are believed to be holding around 100 hostages and the remains of 30 others captured during the Oct. 7 attack. Several dozen hostages were freed in a weeklong November truce.

In Lebanon, state media said five people were killed and at least nine injured by an Israeli airstrike on a house in the town of Khirbet Selm in the country's south.

Near-daily clashes have been happening in the Lebanon-Israel border area between the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah and Israeli forces in the past five months.

Israeli strikes have killed about 300 people there, most of them fighters with Hezbollah and allied groups, but also including about 40 civilians. On the Israeli side, at least nine soldiers and 10 civilians have been killed.



## DOJ opens criminal investigation into the Alaska Airlines 737 plane blowout, report says

By GENE JOHNSON Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — The Department of Justice has launched a criminal investigation into the Boeing jetliner blowout that left a gaping hole on an Alaska Airlines plane this January, the Wall Street Journal reported on Saturday.

Citing documents and people familiar with the matter, the newspaper said investigators have contacted some passengers and crew — including pilots and flight attendants — who were on the Jan. 5th flight.

The Boeing plane used by Alaska Airlines suffered the blowout seven minutes after takeoff from Portland, Oregon, forcing the pilots to make an emergency landing. Boeing has been under increased scrutiny since the incident, when a panel that plugged a space left for an extra emergency door blew off a Max 9 jet. There were no serious injuries.

"In an event like this, it's normal for the DOJ to be conducting an investigation," Alaska Airlines said in a prepared statement. "We are fully cooperating and do not believe we are a target of the investigation." Boeing declined to comment. DOJ did not immediately reply to a request for comment.

The Journal reported that the investigation would assist the Department's review of whether Boeing complied with a previous settlement that resolved a federal investigation into the safety of its 737 Max aircraft following two deadly crashes in 2018 and 2019.

In 2021, Boeing had agreed to pay \$2.5 billion, including a \$244 million fine, to settle an investigation into the crashes of flights operated by Lion Air and Ethiopian Airlines. The company also blamed two employees for deceiving regulators about flaws in the flight-control system.

Boeing has acknowledged in a letter to Congress that it cannot find records for work done on the door panel of the Alaska Airlines plane.

"We have looked extensively and have not found any such documentation," Ziad Ojakli, Boeing executive vice president and chief government lobbyist, wrote to Sen. Maria Cantwell on Friday.

The company said its "working hypothesis" was that the records about the panel's removal and reinstallation on the 737 MAX final assembly line in Renton, Washington, were never created, even though Boeing's systems required it.

The letter, reported earlier by The Seattle Times, followed a contentious Senate committee hearing Wednesday in which Boeing and the National Transportation Safety Board argued over whether the company had cooperated with investigators.

The safety board's chair, Jennifer Homendy, testified that for two months Boeing repeatedly refused to identify employees who work on door panels on Boeing 737s and failed to provide documentation about a repair job that included removing and reinstalling the door panel.

"It's absurd that two months later we don't have that," Homendy said. "Without that information, that raises concerns about quality assurance, quality management, safety management systems" at Boeing.

Cantwell, a Democrat from Washington, demanded a response from Boeing within 48 hours.

Shortly after the Senate hearing, Boeing said it had given the NTSB the names of all employees who work on 737 doors — and had previously shared some of them with investigators.

In the letter, Boeing said it had already made clear to the safety board that it couldn't find the documentation. Until the hearing, it said, "Boeing was not aware of any complaints or concerns about a lack of collaboration."

In a preliminary report last month, the NTSB said four bolts that help keep the door plug in place were missing after the panel was removed so workers could repair nearby damaged rivets last September. The rivet repairs were done by contractors working for Boeing supplier Spirit AeroSystems, but the NTSB still does not know who removed and replaced the door panel, Homendy said Wednesday.

The Federal Aviation Administration recently gave Boeing 90 days to say how it will respond to quality-control issues raised by the agency and a panel of industry and government experts. The panel found problems in Boeing's safety culture despite improvements made after two Max 8 jets crashed in 2018 and 2019, killing 346 people.

## Rupert Murdoch, 92, plans to marry for 5th time

By The Associated Press undefined

Media magnate Rupert Murdoch, who turns 93 next week, has been married four times — and is engaged again, his representative said Saturday.

He plans to marry Elena Zhukova, 67, a Russian-born retired scientist he met last year.

Her ex-husband Alexander Zhukov is a billionaire energy investor and Russian politician. Their daughter Dasha was previously married to Russian billionaire Roman Abramovich, who used to own the Premier League football club Chelsea.

Last fall Murdoch stepped down as leader of both Fox News' parent company and his News Corp. media holdings — and his son, Lachlan, took his place in a media empire that spans continents and helped to shape modern American politics.

In 1952, Murdoch inherited a newspaper in his native Australia from his father. Over decades, he built a news and entertainment enterprise that became dominant in the United States and Britain, including ownership of such historic newspapers as The Times of London and The Wall Street Journal.

Fox News Channel, the 24-hour network founded in 1996, has profoundly influenced television, becoming a trusted news source among many conservative U.S. audiences and politicians.

It has also had very public struggles. Last year, it paid \$787 million to settle a defamation lawsuit related to its coverage of false claims about the 2020 presidential election results.

A few months earlier, Fox had ousted prime-time host Tucker Carlson, the network's most popular TV personality, whose political theories and fiery commentaries made him an influential force in GOP politics.

In addition to Fox News, Rupert Murdoch started the Fox broadcast network, the first to successfully challenge the Big Three of ABC, CBS and NBC, with shows like "The Simpsons." He has also controlled the New York Post, another popular conservative outlet.

Murdoch has been married four times and shares six children with three of his wives. Murdoch's family were said to be the model for the HBO drama "Succession." The family's wealth is estimated by Forbes to be about \$19 billion.

Murdoch's latest marriage, to model and actor Jerry Hall, ended in divorce after six years in 2022. They had no children together.

Previously, he was married to Patricia Booker, an Australian, with whom he had Prudence, and then to Scottish-born journalist Anna Torv, with whom he had Lachlan, James and Elisabeth. These four Murdoch children have the same stake in the family trust and an equal say in what happens to the trust's voting stock upon Murdoch's death. He later married Chinese-born Wendi Deng, whom he divorced in 2013 after having two daughters, Grace and Chloe.

Last spring he was engaged to Ann Lesley Smith for about two weeks.

## Report and letter signed by 'Opie' attract auction interest ahead of Oscars

By NICK PERRY Associated Press

MEREDITH, N.H. (AP) — Interest in the late scientist J. Robert Oppenheimer has extended beyond the Oscars this weekend to a historic signed report and letter.

RR Auction in Boston is taking bids on the rare 1945 report, as well as a letter signed by "Opie" that describes the nuclear bomb as a "weapon for aggressors." By Saturday, bids for the report had topped \$35,000 while the letter was closing in on \$5,000. The auction ends Wednesday.

The movie "Oppenheimer" is a favorite to win best picture and other accolades at the Academy Awards on Sunday after winning many other awards in the runup. Directed and produced by Christopher Nolan, the film is the most successful biopic in history, after raking in nearly \$1 billion at the box office.

The report details the development of the bomb and is signed by Oppenheimer and 23 other scientists and administrators involved in the Manhattan Project, including Enrico Fermi, Ernest Lawrence, James Chadwick and Harold Urey.

RR Auction said the report of about 200 pages was written prior to the testing of the first bomb at the

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Trinity Site in New Mexico and was released to news media days after the 1945 attacks on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Called the "Smyth Report" after author Henry Smyth, the full title is "Atomic Bombs: A General Account of the Development of Methods of Using Atomic Energy for Military Purposes Under the Auspices of the United States Government, 1940-1945."

Also up for auction is a one-page typed letter signed by "Opie" to Stephen White of Look magazine in 1952. Oppenheimer is commenting on a draft article that White sent him, which details Russia's growing stockpile of nuclear weapons.

Oppenheimer tells White he should "print it" and refers him to a previous written quote in which he says the methods of delivery and strategy for the bomb may differ if it is ever used again.

"But it is a weapon for aggressors, and the elements of surprise and of terror are as intrinsic to it as are the fissionable nuclei," Oppenheimer writes.

## Female representation remains low in US statehouses, particularly Democrats in the South

By LEAH WILLINGHAM and KIMBERLEE KRUESI Associated Press

CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) — Democrat Kayla Young and Republican Patricia Rucker frequently clash on abortion rights and just about everything else in West Virginia's Legislature, but they agree on one thing: Too few of their colleagues are women, and it's hurting the state.

"There are exceptions to every single rule, but I think in general, men do kind of see this as their field," said Rucker, part of the GOP's Senate supermajority that passed one of the nation's strictest abortion bans while Young — the lone Democratic woman elected to the House — opposed it.

Nearly 130 years since the first three women were elected to state legislative offices in the U.S., women remain massively underrepresented in state legislatures.

In 10 states, women make up less than 25% of their state legislatures, according to Rutgers' Center for American Women in Politics. West Virginia is at the very bottom of that list, having just 16 women in its 134-member Legislature, or just under 12%. That's compared with Nevada, where women occupy just over 60% of state legislative seats. Similar low numbers can be found in the nearby southern states of Mississippi, South Carolina, Tennessee and Louisiana.

"It's absolutely wild to know that more than 50 percent of the population of West Virginia are women, and sometimes I'm the only woman that's on a committee, period," said Young, currently the only woman on the House Artificial Intelligence Committee and was one of just two on the House Judiciary Committee when it greenlighted the state's near total abortion ban.

The numbers of women filling legislative seats across the U.S. have remained low despite women registering and voting at higher rates than men in every presidential election since 1980 — and across virtually every demographic, including race, education level and socioeconomic status.

For the last three decades, voters have demonstrated a willingness to cast ballots for women. But they didn't have the opportunity to do so because women weren't running, said Jennifer Lawless, chair of the politics department at the University of Virginia.

"The gender gap in political ambition is just as large now as it was then," said Lawless, adding that women are much less likely to get recruited to run for office or think they're qualified to run in what they perceive as a hostile political environment.

And those running in southern, conservative states — still mostly Democratic women, data show — aren't winning as those states continue to overwhelmingly elect Republicans.

In 2022, 39 women ran as their party's nominee for state legislative seats in West Virginia, and 26 were Democrats. Only two of the Democratic candidates won, compared to 11 out of 13 of the Republicans.

Debbie Walsh, director of Rutgers' Center for American Women in Politics, said there's more money, infrastructure and support for recruiting and running Democratic female candidates. The Republican Party

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often shies away from talking about what is labeled or dismissed as “identity politics,” she said.

“It’s a belief in a kind of meritocracy and, ‘the best candidate will rise. And if it’s a woman, great.’ They don’t say, ‘We don’t want women, but if it’s a man, that’s fine, too,’” she said. “There’s no sort of value in and of itself seen in the diversity.”

Larissa Martinez, founder and president of Women’s Public Leadership Network, one of only a few right-leaning U.S. organizations solely supporting female candidates, said identity politics within the GOP is a big hurdle to her work. Part of her organization’s slogan is, “we are pro-women without being anti-man.”

In 2020, small-town public school teacher Amy Grady pulled off a huge political upset when she defeated then-Senate President Mitch Carmichael in West Virginia’s Republican primary, following back-to-back years of strikes in which school employees packed into the state Capitol.

Carmichael took in more than \$127,000 in contributions compared to Grady’s self-funded war chest of just over \$2,000. Still, Grady won by fewer than 1,000 votes.

“It’s just you’re told constantly, ‘You can’t, you can’t, you can’t do it,’” said Grady, who has now risen through the ranks to become chair of the Senate Education Committee. “And it’s just like, why give it a shot?”

Tennessee state Sen. Charlane Oliver says she didn’t have many resources when she first raised her hand to run for political office. She had to rely on grassroots activism and organizing to win her 2022 election.

Yet securing the seat was just part of the battle. Oliver, a 41-year-old Black Democratic woman, is frequently tasked with providing the only outside perspective inside for the Republican supermajority Legislature.

“They don’t have any incentive to listen to me, but I view my seat as disruption and give you a perspective that you may not have heard before,” she said.

Many male-dominant statehouses have enacted strict abortion bans in GOP-controlled states since the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* in 2022. For many female lawmakers, this trend has meant sharing deeply personal stories surrounding abortion and childbirth.

In South Carolina, the abortion debate resulted in an unlikely coalition of women banding together to filibuster a near-total abortion ban. The five female senators — three Republicans, two Democrats and one independent — quickly became known as the “sister senators” as they took turns describing pregnancy complications, the dangers surrounding limited access to contraceptives and the reproductive system.

Their actions were met with praise from national leaders, but at home, the consequences have been swift. The Republican women received censures and promises of primary challenges in this year’s elections.

Women also have championed gun policy, education, health care, and housing proposals.

Recently, some states have allowed candidates to make childcare an allowable expense for campaign finance purposes. Young was the sponsor of her state’s law — one of her priorities her first session in the Capitol in the minority party.

During Young’s first term in office, she relied on a family member who would care for her two young children while he was at the state Capitol. But she was left without a solution last year when that caregiver passed away unexpectedly days before the session. Her husband, who works in television production, had to stay home and didn’t work for two months, meaning the family lost out on his income.

Young’s bill won the vote of Rucker, the first Hispanic woman elected to the West Virginia Senate. She too has had to juggle the challenges of being a working mom. She left her job as a teacher to homeschool her five children, and the family relied on her husband’s salary as a pediatric nurse to make ends meet.

“I ran for office because I feel like having that voice is actually really important — someone who lives paycheck to paycheck,” said Rucker, a first-generation U.S. citizen who made the difficult decision to pull her kids. “I’m not here because of a title, I’m not here because of a position, I’m here to do my job, and I want to do the best I can.”



## A family run workshop keeps the legacy of the Mexican fireworks alive despite the danger

By FERNANDA PESCE and ALEXIS TRIBOULARD Associated Press

TULTEPEC, Mexico (AP) — Every year, in the first week of March, hundreds of giant papier-mâché bulls stuffed with fireworks are erected in the front yards of the Mexican town of Tultepec.

Thousands of restless fingers carefully cut, pasted and painted the colorful patterns that brought the “toritos” to life on Friday, during an annual celebration when the bull-shaped figures were set alight.

Thousands of people gathered to dance and dodge amid the bulls as roman candles and bottle rockets showered them with sparks, and spinners nipped at their legs. Many wore heavy cotton clothes soaked in water to protect themselves against burns.

Unlike past occasions, the nighttime lighting of the bulls didn’t take place in the streets of Tultepec, but rather in an open field nearby.

The crowd packed into the field saw a mix of moments, with some running from angry fire-spitting bulls, like a pyrotechnic version of the running of the bulls festival in Pamplona, Spain.

Then, it turned into a kind of mass rave where people, mostly young men, danced, jumping up and down to the odd beat of fireworks going off and chanting “Fire! Fire! Fire!” under a rain of sparks and smoke.

The celebration, now its 35th year, pays homage and thanks the patron saint of the poor and sick, St. John of God, who the fireworks’ producers — a mainstay of the town’s economy — view as a protective figure.

But the festivities are also a way for the town of Tultepec, just north of Mexico City, to keep their craft alive and draw people to the town after a massive, devastating explosion at the workshops in 2018 killed 25 people and wounded twice that number.

One of the best-known workshops is the family-run business, Los Chavitos, which has been producing cardboard figures for fireworks for 15 years. Their figures range from very small bulls to giant ones, to figures of saints and imaginary animals known as alebrijes.

Every year, the workshop produces hundreds of smaller “bulls,” with roman candles for horns that are carried on someone’s shoulders through the streets of countless small towns in Mexico, sending kids skittering in delight. The shop also produces “Judas” figures of villains and politicians that are traditionally burned during Easter Week in Mexico.

But the big, standing bulls of Tultepec mark the high point of the year. Tultepec was one of the first places that began to produce gunpowder in Mexico during the colonial period, because of the town’s abundant supply of saltpeter, a key ingredient. Today, the town is affectionally known as “the capital of pyrotechnics.”

Francisco Cortes Urbán, 51, has been a fireworks artisan as long as he can remember. He learned the craft at the age of 12 and has passed his knowledge to his sons.

Cortes moved about frantically this week, taking calls, giving instructions and carrying small toritos from one corner of the workshop to the other. Clients were waiting for him to deliver.

In the background, a giant bull with colorful pre-Hispanic decorations shined under the sun, where a group of young artisans were busy with the final touches. Once the bull was finished, they had to secure a base on top of it, to hold approximately 1,000 fireworks that exploded when they were lit during the festival.

Every March 8, about 300 monumental papier-mâché bulls are hauled into the streets of Tultepec, as an offering to accompany the figure of St. John in an iconic procession. Smaller bulls also participate, splashing the sky with colorful explosions.

Of course, there were concerns about the safety of it all, but locals were too attached to the beauty of the tradition to worry too much.

“Every kind of work has a risk. This also has its risk,” said Cortes. “But we are passionate about it, and it has become our life.”

## Gunmen kidnap 15 children in yet another school abduction in northern Nigeria

By CHINEDU ASADU Associated Press

ABUJA, Nigeria (AP) — Armed men broke into a boarding school in northwestern Nigeria early Saturday and seized 15 children as they slept, police told The Associated Press, about 48 hours after nearly 300 students were taken hostage in the conflict-hit region.

School abductions are common in Nigeria's northern region, especially since the 2014 kidnapping of more than 200 schoolgirls by Islamic extremists in Borno state's Chibok village shocked the world. Armed gangs have since targeted schools for kidnap ransoms, resulting in at least 1,400 abducted since then.

The gunmen in the latest attack invaded the Gidan Bakuso village of the Gada council area in Sokoto state at about 1 a.m. local time, police said. They headed to the Islamic school where they seized the children from their hostel before security forces could arrive, Sokoto police spokesman Ahmad Rufa'i told the AP.

One woman was also abducted from the village, Rufa'i said, adding that a police tactical squad was deployed to search for the students.

The inaccessible roads in the area, however, challenged the rescue operation, he said, adding: "It is a remote village (and) vehicles cannot go there; they (the police squad) had to use motorcycles to the village."

Saturday's attack was the third mass kidnapping in northern Nigeria since late last week, when more than 200 people, mostly women and children, were abducted by suspected extremists in Borno state. On Thursday, 287 students were also taken hostage from a government primary and secondary school in Kaduna state.

The attacks highlight once again a security crisis that has plagued Africa's most populous country. Kidnappings for ransoms have become lucrative across Nigeria's northern region, where dozens of armed gangs operate.

No group claimed responsibility for any of the abductions. While Islamic extremists who are waging an insurgency in northeastern Nigeria are suspected of carrying out the kidnapping in Borno state, locals blamed the school kidnappings on herders who had been in conflict with their host communities before taking up arms.

Nigeria's Vice President Kashim Shettima, meanwhile, met with authorities and some parents of the abducted students in Kaduna state on Saturday and assured them of efforts by security forces to find the children and rescue them.

## Pope Francis: Ukraine should have the courage of the 'white flag,' negotiate end of war with Russia

ROME (AP) — Pope Francis said in an interview that Ukraine, facing a possible defeat, should have the courage to negotiate an end to the war with Russia and not be ashamed to sit at the same table to carry out peace talks.

The pope made his appeal during an interview recorded last month with Swiss broadcaster RSI, which was partially released on Saturday.

"I think that the strongest one is the one who looks at the situation, thinks about the people and has the courage of the white flag, and negotiates," Francis said, adding that talks should take place with the help of international powers.

Ukraine remains firm on not engaging directly with Russia on peace talks, and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has said multiple times the initiative in peace negotiations must belong to the country which has been invaded.

Russia is gaining momentum on the battlefield in the war now in its third year and Ukraine is running low on ammunition. Meanwhile, some of Ukraine's allies in the West are delicately raising the prospect of sending troops.

Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni said Saturday that Francis picked up the "white flag" term that had been

used by the interviewer. He issued a statement of clarification after the pope's "white flag" comments sparked criticism that he was siding with Russia in the conflict.

Throughout the war, Francis has tried to maintain the Vatican's traditional diplomatic neutrality, but that has often been accompanied by apparent sympathy with the Russian rationale for invading Ukraine, such as when he noted that NATO was "barking at Russia's door" with its eastward expansion.

Francis said in the RSI interview that "the word negotiate is a courageous word."

"When you see that you are defeated, that things are not going well, you have to have the courage to negotiate," he said. "Negotiations are never a surrender."

The pope also reminded people that some countries have offered to act as mediators in the conflict.

"Today, for example, in the war in Ukraine, there are many who want to mediate," he said. "Turkey has offered itself for this. And others. Do not be ashamed to negotiate before things get worse."

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan — whose NATO-member country has sought to balance its close relations with both Ukraine and Russia — has offered during a visit Friday from Zelenskyy to host a peace summit between the two countries.

## **Irish prime minister concedes defeat in a vote over constitutional amendments about family and women**

By MICHAEL KEALY and BRIAN MELLEY Associated Press

DUBLIN (AP) — Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar conceded defeat Saturday as two constitutional amendments he supported that would have broadened the definition of family and removed language about a woman's role in the home were headed toward rejection.

Varadkar, who pushed the vote to enshrine gender equality in the constitution by removing "very old-fashioned language" and tried to recognize the realities of modern family life, said that voters had delivered "two wallops" to the government.

"Clearly we got it wrong," he said. "While the old adage is that success has many fathers and failure is an orphan, I think when you lose by this kind of margin, there are a lot of people who got this wrong and I am certainly one of them."

Opponents argued that the amendments were poorly worded, and voters said they were confused with the choices that some feared would lead to unintended consequences.

The referendum was viewed as part of Ireland's evolution from a conservative, overwhelmingly Roman Catholic country in which divorce and abortion were illegal, to an increasingly diverse and socially liberal society. The proportion of residents who are Catholic fell from 94.9% in 1961 to 69% in 2022, according to the Central Statistics Office.

The social transformation has been reflected in a series of changes to the Irish Constitution, which dates from 1937, though the country wasn't formally known as the Republic of Ireland until 1949. Irish voters legalized divorce in a 1995 referendum, backed same-sex marriage in a 2015 vote and repealed a ban on abortions in 2018.

The first question dealt with a part of the constitution that pledges to protect the family as the primary unit of society. Voters were asked to remove a reference to marriage as the basis "on which the family is founded" and replace it with a clause that said families can be founded "on marriage or on other durable relationships." If passed, it would have been the constitution's 39th amendment.

A proposed 40th amendment would have removed a reference that a woman's place in the home offered a common good that couldn't be provided by the state, and delete a statement that said mothers shouldn't be obligated to work out of economic necessity if it would neglect their duties at home. It would have added a clause saying the state will strive to support "the provision of care by members of a family to one another."

Siobhán Mullally, a law professor and director of the Irish Center for Human Rights at the University of Galway, said that it was patronizing for Varadkar to schedule the vote on International Women's Day thinking people would use the occasion to strike the language about women in the home. The so-called

care amendment wasn't that simple.

While voters support removing the outdated notion of a woman's place in the home, they also wanted new language recognizing state support of family care provided by those who aren't kin, she said. Some disability rights and social justice advocates opposed the measure because it was too restrictive in that regard.

"It was a hugely missed opportunity," Mullally said. "Most people certainly want that sexist language removed from the constitution. There's been calls for that for years and it's taken so long to have a referendum on it. But they proposed replacing it with this very limited, weak provision on care."

Varadkar said that his camp hadn't convinced people of the need for the vote — never mind issues over how the questions were worded. Supporters of the amendment and opponents said the government had failed to explain why change was necessary or mount a robust campaign.

"The government misjudged the mood of the electorate and put before them proposals which they didn't explain and proposals which could have serious consequences," Sen. Michael McDowell, an independent who opposed both measures, told Irish broadcaster RTE.

Labour Party Leader Ivana Bacik told RTE that she supported the measures, despite concerns over their wording, but said the government had run a lackluster campaign.

The debate was less charged than the arguments over abortion and gay marriage. Ireland's main political parties all supported the changes, including centrist government coalition partners Fianna Fail and Fine Gael and the biggest opposition party, Sinn Fein.

One political party that called for "no" votes was Aontú, a traditionalist group that split from Sinn Fein over the larger party's backing for legal abortion. Aontú leader Peadar Tóibín said that the government's wording was so vague that it will lead to legal wrangles and most people "do not know what the meaning of a durable relationship is."

Opinion polls had suggested support for the "yes" side on both votes, but many voters on Friday said they found the issue too confusing or complex to change the constitution.

"It was too rushed," said Una Uí Dhuinn, a nurse in Dublin. "We didn't get enough time to think about it and read up on it. So I felt, to be on the safe side, 'no, no' — no change."

Caoimhe Doyle, a doctoral student, said that she voted yes to changing the definition of family, but no to the care amendment because "I don't think it was explained very well."

"There's a worry there that they're removing the burden on the state to take care of families," she said.

## **A surge of illegal homemade machine guns has helped fuel gun violence in the US**

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Eleven-year-old Domonic Davis was not far from his mom's Cincinnati home when a hail of gunfire sprayed out from a passing car. Nearly two dozen rounds hurtled through the night at a group of children in the blink of an eye.

Four other children and a woman were hurt in the November shooting that killed Domonic, who had just made his school basketball team.

"What happened? How does this happen to an 11-year-old? He was only a few doors down," his father, Issac Davis, said.

The shooting remains under investigation. But federal investigators believe the 22 shots could be fired off with lightning speed because the weapon had been illegally converted to fire like a machine gun.

Communities around the U.S. have seen shootings carried out with weapons converted to fully automatic in recent years, fueled by a staggering increase in small pieces of metal or plastic made with a 3D printer or ordered online. Laws against machine guns date back to the bloody violence of Prohibition-era gangsters. But the proliferation of devices known by nicknames such as Glock switches, auto sears and chips has allowed people to transform legal semi-automatic weapons into even more dangerous guns, helping fuel gun violence, police and federal authorities said.



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"Police officers are facing down fully automatic weapon fire in amounts that haven't existed in this country since the days of Al Capone and the Tommy gun," said Steve Dettelbach, director of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, or ATF. "It's a huge problem."

The agency reported a 570% increase in the number of conversion devices collected by police departments between 2017 and 2021, the most recent data available.

Guns with conversion devices have been used in several mass shootings, including one that left four dead at a Sweet Sixteen party in Alabama last year and another that left six people dead at a bar district in Sacramento, California, in 2022. In Houston, police officer William Jeffrey died in 2021 after being shot with a converted gun while serving a warrant. In cities such as Indianapolis, police have seized them every week.

The devices that can convert legal semi-automatic weapons can be made on a 3D printer in about 35 minutes or ordered from overseas online for less than \$30. They're also quick to install.

Once in place, they modify the gun's machinery. Instead of firing one round each time the shooter squeezes the trigger, a semi-automatic weapon with a conversion device starts firing as soon as the trigger goes down and doesn't stop until the shooter lets go or the weapon runs out of ammunition.

"You're seeing them a lot in stunning numbers, particularly in street violence," said David Pucino, deputy chief counsel at Giffords Law Center.

In a demonstration by ATF agents, the firing of a semi-automatic outfitted with a conversion device was nearly indistinguishable from an automatic weapon. Conversion devices with differing designs can fit a range of different guns, enabling guns to fire at a rate of 800 or more bullets per minute, according to the ATF.

"It takes two or three seconds to put in some of these devices into a firearm to make that firearm into a machine gun instantly," Dettelbach said.

Between 2012 and 2016, police departments in the U.S. found 814 conversion devices and sent them to the ATF. That number grew to more than 5,400 between 2017 and 2021, according to the agency's most recent data.

They took hold in Minneapolis in 2021, and helped fuel record-breaking gun violence that year, said police Chief Brian O'Hara. Along with spraying out bullets at a dizzying speed, switches make a gun much more difficult for the shooter to control, so more people can be hit by accident.

"The thing is shaking as it's firing, so we wind up getting multiple victims, people hit in extremities during the same shooting incident, because the person cannot control the weapon," O'Hara said.

The city has seen a decline in their use since the September 2022 arrest of a man charged with selling switches that he had ordered from Russia and Taiwan or made himself, O'Hara said. But "it's still a very, very real problem," he said. "This is having a really deep impact on families, on neighborhoods and communities."

While the devices are considered illegal machine guns under federal law, many states don't have their own specific laws against them. In Indiana, police were finding them so often — multiple times a week in the state's capital — that the state changed the law to ensure it included switches.

"We have to update the laws regarding machine guns to deal with the problems of today," Indianapolis police Chief Chris Bailey said.

Only 15 states have their own laws against the possession, sale or manufacture of automatic-fire weapons, according to Giffords. Indiana was one of many states that have regulations with exceptions. Five states have no state-level machine-gun regulations at all.

But long before any prosecution, police have to find the conversion devices. Often about the size of a quarter, they can easily go unnoticed by the untrained eye after being installed, said Dettelbach.

He recalled visiting a Texas police department after the ATF hosted a training on conversion devices. Afterwards, the chief searched the weapons in the evidence room and found several with previously undetected conversion devices.

"These items don't always look as dangerous as they are," he said. "If you see some of them, they're pieces of plastic and metal, and sometimes it's even hard to recognize them when they're actually on or in the firearm because they blend in."

They're also increasingly a fixture online, in social media and rap lyrics, Davis said. "Everyone is talking about switches," he said. "It's a scary trend."

Davis struggles to talk about the loss of his son. Domonic would often come with his dad on Fridays to get a haircut at the barber shop where Issac Davis works. The shooting also fell on a Friday, making the end of the week an especially tough time.

Davis hopes to start a foundation called For Every Eleven to fight gun violence and honor his son's memory.

"I still want to keep his name going," he said. "He deserved to be still relevant. So I have to keep going. No matter how much grief I grieve him in private."

## Insurer delays and denials hamper patients seeking at-home breathing machines

By TOM MURPHY AP Health Writer

Lou Gehrig's disease took away Grace Armant's ability to speak, but the 84-year-old still has plenty to say about her insurance.

UnitedHealthcare has rejected several requests from her doctors for coverage of a machine Armant needs to breathe as she deals with the fatal illness.

"They are no good," Armant said, typing slowly into a device that speaks for her. "I can't do without the machine."

Doctors around the country say UnitedHealthcare and other insurers have made it harder to get coverage for certain home ventilators that patients like Armant need as their lungs fail. They say patients often must struggle first with less effective — and cheaper — devices before some insurers will pay. In other cases, insurers balk at paying for a second machine needed when patients transfer from their bed to a wheelchair.

Temple University doctoral student Jaggar DeMarco waited more than three years to get his.

"Breathing is not a luxury," he said. "It's really the bare minimum, and that's what we're asking for."

Some physicians believe insurers are making it harder on patients because more of the devices are being prescribed. Spending by the federal government's Medicare program on the ventilators jumped from about \$3 million to nearly \$269 million between 2009 and 2017, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General.

Insurers say they do cover the machines, but that coverage can depend on several factors.

These "noninvasive" ventilators help patients breathe around the clock by forcing air into the lungs, often through a mask. They are called noninvasive because they don't require trachea surgery to open the airway, like ones used in hospitals.

The machines have battery backups so they can keep working when the power goes out. They also are more powerful than other devices meant to be used mainly at night for conditions like sleep apnea. At around \$1,200 a month, they can be three times as expensive as those devices.

These ventilators can help prolong the life of someone with Lou Gehrig's disease, also known as amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, doctors say.

But insurance rejections have picked up for those patients and people dealing with advanced cases of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, said Chuck Coolidge, chief strategy officer for VieMed, which provides respiratory equipment for patients in 46 states.

That includes both initial approvals and reauthorizations, he said.

"In early 2023, it was almost like a switch flipped," he said.

UnitedHealthcare spokeswoman Heather Soule said her company covers the machines and re-evaluates requests if it gets new information. Coverage can depend on the patient's condition, terms of their health plan or guidelines from the federal government's Medicare program.

Those guidelines give insurers room to reject many ventilator requests, even those for seriously ill patients, said Dr. John Hansen-Flaschen, a pulmonary medicine expert with the University of Pennsylvania.

Government-funded Medicare Advantage plans run by UnitedHealthcare now deny nearly all initial re-

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quests for the ventilators, said Dr. Cathy Lomen-Hoerth, a neurologist with the University of California San Francisco.

In West Virginia, Dale Harper says it took several months and a personal plea before UnitedHealthcare would cover a ventilator for his 25-year-old son, Jacob, who has a rare and aggressive form of ALS.

After appeals from Jacob's doctor failed, Harper called a number on his insurance card and asked for a supervisor.

"I said, 'I can feed him, I can help him go to the bathroom, I can move him from one place to the other,'" the Winfield, West Virginia, resident recalled. "The only thing I cannot do is breathe for him ... and he can't breathe."

Harper said ventilator coverage was approved within an hour of that call early last year.

Doctors caring for Armant, who lives outside New Orleans, say they usually get decent ventilator coverage.

"No one thought there would be a problem," said Deidre Devier, an LSU Health experimental psychologist who specializes in cognitive disorders.

They first sought coverage in May, 2022, and Devier said Armant has only had it for around three months near the end of that year. She said a medical device company has been providing Armant's ventilator for free while her case was appealed. But those appeals have ended.

Armant's daughter said she's considering starting hospice care, which would allow for ventilator coverage but prevent her mom from seeing her regular doctors. She's also looking online for a refurbished machine.

"She doesn't have \$20,000" to buy the machine, Terrellyn Armant said.

Representatives of both patients with UnitedHealthcare coverage gave the insurer written permission to discuss their cases, but Soule declined to comment on the record.

Coverage complications aren't limited to UnitedHealthcare. DeMarco, the Temple student, said Aetna denied a request for a second breathing machine, and then several appeals. Eventually, his father's employer essentially overruled the insurer and allowed coverage.

Doctors recommend a second ventilator for people who use wheelchairs during the day. That avoids mistakes in adjusting the machine's settings when moving someone from their bed.

"I'm constantly angry that my life and what I can do with (it) is sometimes determined by insurance companies and bureaucracy," said the 30-year-old DeMarco, who has chronic respiratory failure.

An Aetna representative said the company could not comment on individual cases. But he added that Aetna does cover second ventilators in certain circumstances. Aetna's policy bulletin says they are medically necessary for people who need an additional ventilator for their wheelchair during the day.

Ventilator coverage problems started picking up after technology improvements made the devices easier to use, according to Dr. Lisa Wolfe, a professor at Northwestern's Feinberg School of Medicine. That led to a rise in use for patients with conditions that are not immediately life-threatening.

She said she thinks insurers are reacting to that expanded use.

ALS patients without ventilator access have limited options. They can use a device that's covered but doesn't work as well. They may get ventilator coverage by entering hospice care or having a tracheostomy.

They also might wind up bouncing in and out of hospitals, said Hansen-Flaschen, the Penn physician.

"Or they die prematurely, and it's a wretched death because they can't breathe," he said.

## **Biden signs a package of spending bills passed by Congress just hours before a shutdown deadline**

By KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden on Saturday signed a \$460 billion package of spending bills approved by the Senate in time to avoid a shutdown of many key federal agencies. The legislation's success gets lawmakers about halfway home in wrapping up their appropriations work for the 2024 budget year.

The measure contains six annual spending bills and had already passed the House. In signing it into law, Biden thanked leaders and negotiators from both parties in both chambers for their work, which the White House said will mean that agencies "may continue their normal operations."

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Meanwhile, lawmakers are negotiating a second package of six bills, including defense, in an effort to have all federal agencies fully funded by a March 22 deadline.

"To folks who worry that divided government means nothing ever gets done, this bipartisan package says otherwise," Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said after lawmakers passed the measure Friday night just hours before a deadline.

He said the bill's passage would allow for the hiring of more air traffic controllers and rail safety inspectors, give federal firefighters a raise and boost support for homeless veterans, among other things.

The Senate passed the bill by a vote of 75-22. Lawmakers sought votes on several amendments and wanted to have their say on the bill and other priorities during debate on the floor. It had been unclear midday if senators would be able to avert a short shutdown, though eventual passage was never really in doubt.

"I would urge my colleagues to stop playing with fire here," said Sen. Susan Collins, the top-ranking Republican member of the Senate Appropriations Committee. "It would be irresponsible for us not to clear these bills and do the fundamental job that we have of funding government. What is more important?"

The votes came more than five months into the current budget year after congressional leaders relied on a series of stopgap bills to keep federal agencies funded for a few more weeks or months at a time while they struggled to reach agreement on full-year spending.

In the end, total discretionary spending set by Congress is expected to come in at about \$1.66 trillion for the full budget year ending Sept. 30.

Republicans were able to keep non-defense spending relatively flat compared with the previous year. Supporters say that's progress in an era when annual federal deficits exceeding \$1 trillion have become the norm. But many Republican lawmakers were seeking much steeper cuts and more policy victories.

The House Freedom Caucus, which contains dozens of the GOP's most conservative members, urged Republicans to vote against the first spending package and the second one still being negotiated.

Democrats staved off most of the policy riders that Republicans sought to include in the package. For example, they beat back an effort to block new rules that expand access to the abortion pill mifepristone. They were also able to fully fund a nutrition program for low-income women, infants and children, providing about \$7 billion for what is known as the WIC program. That's a \$1 billion increase from the previous year.

Republicans were able to achieve some policy wins, however. One provision will prevent the sale of oil in the Strategic Petroleum Reserve to China. Another policy mandate prohibits the Justice Department from investigating parents who exercise free speech at local school board meetings.

Another provision strengthens gun rights for certain veterans, though opponents of the move said it could make it easier for those with very serious mental health conditions like dementia to obtain a firearm.

"This isn't the package I would have written on my own," said Sen. Patty Murray, the Democratic chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee. "But I am proud that we have protected absolutely vital funding that the American people rely on in their daily lives."

Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., said one problem he sees with the bill is that there was too much compromise, and that led to too much spending.

"A lot of people don't understand this," he said. "They think there is no cooperation in Washington and the opposite is true. There is compromise every day on every spending bill."

"It's compromise between big-government Democrats and big-government Republicans," he added.

Still, with a divided Congress and a Democratic-led White House, any bill that doesn't have buy-in from members of both political parties stands no chance of passage.

The bill also includes more than 6,600 projects requested by individual lawmakers with a price tag of about \$12.7 billion. The projects attracted criticism from some Republican members, though members from both parties broadly participated in requesting them on behalf of their states and congressional districts. Paul called the spending "sort of the grease that eases in billions and trillions of other dollars, because you get people to buy into the total package by giving them a little bit of pork for their town, a little bit of pork for their donors."

But an effort by Sen. Rick Scott, R-Fla, to strip out the projects mustered only 32 votes with 64 against.



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Murray said Scott's effort would overrule "all the hard work, all the input we asked everyone to provide us about projects that would help their constituents."

Even though lawmakers find themselves passing spending bills five months into the budget year, Republicans are framing the process as improved nonetheless because they broke the cycle of passing all the spending bills in one massive package that lawmakers have little time to study before being asked to vote on it or risk a government shutdown. Still, others said that breaking up funding into two chunks of legislation was hardly a breakthrough.

The first package covers the departments of Justice, Veterans Affairs, Agriculture, Interior and Transportation, among others.

## NHL trade deadline winners include Golden Knights, Panthers, Hurricanes and Kyle Okposo

By LARRY LAGE AP Hockey Writer

NHL teams combined to make 23 trades on Friday, dealing a total of 33 players and more than 20 draft picks, before the league's deadline, with some teams and players seeming to win — and some seeming to lose.

The defending Stanley Cup champion Vegas Golden Knights, three-time defending Metropolitan Division champion Carolina Hurricanes and league-leading Florida Panthers appear to have made the most of the opportunity.

"Some of the teams at the top were very aggressive — and it looks like a real arms race," Detroit Red Wings general manager Steve Yzerman said.

The San Jose Sharks, Red Wings and Pittsburgh Penguins, meanwhile, chose a different and questionable approach at the potentially pivotal point of the season.

Players, too, fell on one side or the other when they were traded to a contending team or ended up stuck with a struggling squad.

Here's a look at how some fared upon further review of the NHL trade deadline.

### GOLDEN KNIGHTS

Shooting to win a second straight Cup in their seventh season, Vegas put more chips on the table with a series of trades.

"We wanted to help our team," general manager Kelly McCrimmon said. "Our recent play hasn't been good enough."

The Golden Knights acquired two-time All-Star center Tomas Hertl from the Sharks in perhaps the biggest deal on Friday. Earlier in the week, they acquired point-producing defenseman Noah Hanifin from Calgary and 29-year-old forward Anthony Mantha, who has 20 goals this season for the third time in his career, in a deal with Washington.

McCrimmon said he anticipates Hertl, who is recovering from knee surgery, to be available in the regular season to help with the franchise's push for playoff positioning.

### HURRICANES

Shooting to go from good to great in the playoffs, Carolina boosted its chances to score and contend by acquiring two players who have hoisted the Cup.

The Hurricanes added center Jake Guentzel, who is averaging more than a point per game, from the Penguins on the eve of the deadline. They followed that bold move by adding even more depth at center, getting Evgeny Kuznetsov in a trade with Washington.

### PANTHERS

Florida flourished in the days and hours leading up to the deadline, helping the franchise keep up with the Hurricanes.

The Panthers added more help up front with scoring winger Vladimir Tarasenko from Ottawa and forward depth and leadership with Sabres captain Kyle Okposo.

### OKPOSO

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The 35-year-old forward can be deemed a winner, getting away from the Sabres, whose postseason drought dates to 2011, and landing with one of the Stanley Cup favorites — along with Edmonton — according to FanDuel Sportsbook.

## SHARKS

Unless team doctors don't think Hertl can bounce back from his knee surgery, San Jose may regret giving up a player possibly in his prime that was under contract through the 2029-30 season.

The Sharks, who are at the bottom of the league-wide standings with Chicago, did get top prospect David Edstrom and a 2025 first-round pick in exchange for Hertl. There's a good chance Edstrom or the prospect chosen, though, won't be as good as Hertl.

## RED WINGS

Yzerman's cautious approach has finally started to show some promising results, putting the once-proud franchise in a position to be in the playoffs for the first time since 2016.

The Hockey Hall of Fame player, who built Tampa Bay into a Stanley Cup winner, was arguably too passive at the deadline.

While he chose to stand pat, Yzerman did say that what some of the top teams chose to do was interesting.

"For everybody following the league — fans, media, all of us in it — it's going to be a very exciting right down the wire, all the way through the Stanley Cup Final, just to see how this all plays out," he said.

## PENGUINS

Sensing a second straight season without a postseason appearance, Pittsburgh pulled the plug and was a seller at the deadline even though the Sidney Crosby-led team is potentially in the hunt for a wild-card spot.

The Penguins dealt Guentzel, their ninth all-time leading goal scorer, for forward Michael Bunting and some prospects to Carolina and veteran defenseman Chad Ruhwedel to the New York Rangers for a fourth-round pick in 2027.

## PACIORETTY

Max Pacioretty, a 35-year-old winger, could have chased a Cup and possibly added to his value as a free agent, but the Capitals were unable to deal him, and he will play out the season with a team that will have to make a surprisingly strong finish just to make the playoffs.

## On eve of Ramadan, Jerusalem's Old City offers little festivity as Gaza war rages

By JACK JEFFERY Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — On the eve of the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, Jerusalem's Old City bears few of its usual hallmarks of festivity.

Nearly half of the grotto-shaped gift shops are sealed behind metal shutters. The narrow streets that run toward Al-Aqsa Mosque, Islam's third-holiest site, are eerily empty. Absent are the fairy lights and shining lanterns that would usually dangle above hurried worshippers.

Ramadan preparations in Jerusalem, the spiritual heart of the decades-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict, have been subdued because of the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza, now in its sixth month. With more than 30,000 Palestinians killed in Gaza and hundreds of thousands going hungry, there's little room for expressions of joy.

"This will be the black Ramadan," Abu Mousam Haddad said in front of his coffee stand near Damascus Gate, one of the Old City's main entrances.

But over the next few days, attention is likely to shift from Gaza to Al-Aqsa, which has been a frequent flashpoint for quickly escalating Israeli-Palestinian violence in the past.

Hamas, which portrayed its Oct. 7 attack on southern Israel as a battle for Muslim rights at Al-Aqsa, seeks such an eruption now in the hopes of engaging Israeli forces on new fronts and improving its leverage in Gaza cease-fire talks.

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The militants have urged Palestinians across Israel and the occupied West Bank to stream to the mosque during Ramadan to challenge anticipated Israeli restrictions on worship and movement.

Although such restrictions often triggered past clashes, it's not clear if Palestinians will risk confrontations in the current climate in which Israeli forces are clamping down hard on any perceived threats.

"There is great fear among people about what Ramadan will look like this year and how the Israeli police will behave regarding the entry and exit ... into the city," said Imad Mona, who owns a bookshop outside the Old City.

Israel has limited access to Al-Aqsa to varying degrees over the years, including by barring young men, citing security concerns. The Israeli government has provided few details ahead of this year's Ramadan, which could start as early as Sunday evening. But it has said some Palestinians from the West Bank will be allowed to pray at Al-Aqsa

In the past, Israeli forces raiding the sacred compound have clashed with stone-throwing Palestinians who barricaded themselves inside, at times to protest Israeli access restrictions. Such clashes have triggered escalations, including Hamas rocket fire, which set off a brief Israel-Hamas war in 2021.

The compound has long been a deeply contested religious space, as it stands on the Temple Mount, which Jews consider their most sacred site. It lies in east Jerusalem, a section of the city Israel occupied during the 1967 Mideast war and later annexed. Palestinians want to make it the capital of their own future state.

The United States and other international mediators had pushed for a Gaza cease-fire to coincide with the start of Ramadan. However, there has been no breakthrough.

Israel remains committed to continuing its invasion and annihilating Hamas, which killed about 1,200 people in Israel and took about 250 hostages on Oct. 7. The militant group freed dozens of hostages during a November truce, but it refuses to release more without guarantees of a complete end of hostilities.

Most Old City shop owners declined to share their views about the coming Ramadan. Scores of Palestinians have been detained by Israel over social media posts about the war in Gaza since it started.

Some who would speak said that more Israeli police have been deployed in the Old City since October. Young Palestinian men are regularly barred from entering the Al-Aqsa compound for noon prayers on Fridays since the war started, according to the store owners. This has fueled speculation about other possible restrictions. The Israeli police did not respond to requests for comment.

According to Israeli media, the country's firebrand national security minister, Itamar Ben Gvir, has been pushing to keep out all West Bank Palestinians, as well as young men who are among the more than 2 million Palestinian citizens of Israel. His spokesperson did not respond to a request for comment.

The Israeli military body in charge of Palestinian affairs in the West Bank, known as COGAT, said Friday that some Muslims from the West Bank would be allowed in from the territory for Ramadan prayers, but it didn't elaborate. Last year, hundreds of thousands were able to enter, most of them women, children and elderly men.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has also been vague, saying only that similar numbers of people as last year would be allowed for prayers at Al-Aqsa during the first week of Ramadan. He said this will be evaluated on a weekly basis throughout the month. No further details were made public.

Under an informal arrangement since 1967, the compound is administered by a Jordanian-based Muslim religious body known as the Waqf. Jews are allowed to visit the compound, but not to pray there. The agreement has broken down in recent years as large groups of Jews, including hard-line religious nationalists, have regularly visited. Some among them have attempted to pray at the site.

In the days leading up to Ramadan, West Bank Palestinians have been unsure whether they would be able to attend prayers.

In general, Palestinians in the territory need a permit to enter east Jerusalem, which Israel considers part of its united capital, though its annexation is not recognized by most of the international community. Since Oct. 7, Israel has forbidden Palestinians from entering Jerusalem or any part of Israel.

"It is the dream of every Palestinian, Muslim and Arab to pray in Al-Aqsa Mosque" during Ramadan, said Akram al Baghdadi, a Ramallah resident who has extended family scattered across the West Bank and Gaza.

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The holy month also threatens to heighten divisions within Israel's unruly cabinet, with ministers already split over how to conduct the Gaza war.

In a post on X, Ben Gvir denounced Netanyahu's decision to allow Palestinians access to Al-Aqsa for Ramadan prayers. He wrote that " Hamas celebrations on the Temple Mount " do not equate to " a complete victory, " a reference to Netanyahu's wartime battle cry.

Ben Gvir, who has visited the Al-Aqsa compound several times, is also a vocal opponent of any cease-fire arrangement with Hamas. He has repeatedly called for the removal of Palestinians from Gaza and the establishment of Israeli settlements — ideas that most Cabinet members oppose.

Months of conflict and tension have also brought economic hardship, with a lack of tourists and Palestinians shopping in the Old City.

" It's not just my shop that is affected, but all the traders here, too, " said Jihad Abu Salih, a sweets and pastry merchant from the city. " It's sad. "

## Today in History: March 10

### James Earl Ray pleads guilty to shooting Martin Luther King Jr.

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Sunday, March 10, the 70th day of 2024. There are 296 days left in the year. Daylight saving time returns at 2 a.m. local time.

Today's highlight in history:

On March 10, 1969, James Earl Ray pleaded guilty in Memphis, Tennessee, to assassinating civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. (Ray later repudiated that plea, maintaining his innocence until his death.)

On this date:

In 1496, Christopher Columbus concluded his second visit to the Western Hemisphere as he left Hispaniola for Spain.

In 1785, Thomas Jefferson was appointed America's minister to France, succeeding Benjamin Franklin.

In 1864, President Abraham Lincoln assigned Ulysses S. Grant, who had just received his commission as lieutenant-general, to the command of the Armies of the United States.

In 1876, Alexander Graham Bell's assistant, Thomas Watson, heard Bell say over his experimental telephone: " Mr. Watson — come here — I want to see you " from the next room of Bell's Boston laboratory.

In 1906, about 1,100 miners in northern France were killed by a coal-dust explosion.

In 1913, former slave, abolitionist and Underground Railroad " conductor " Harriet Tubman died in Auburn, New York; she was in her 90s.

In 1965, Neil Simon's play " The Odd Couple, " starring Walter Matthau and Art Carney, opened on Broadway.

In 1985, Konstantin U. Chernenko, who was the Soviet Union's leader for 13 months, died at age 73; he was succeeded by Mikhail Gorbachev.

In 1988, pop singer Andy Gibb died in Oxford, England, at age 30 of heart inflammation.

In 2015, breaking her silence in the face of a growing controversy over her use of a private email address and server, Hillary Rodham Clinton conceded that she should have used government email as secretary of state but insisted she had not violated any federal laws or Obama administration rules.

In 2019, a Boeing 737 Max 8 operated by Ethiopian Airlines crashed shortly after taking off from the capital, Addis Ababa, killing all 157 people on board.

In 2021, the House gave final congressional approval to a landmark \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief bill against the opposition of Republicans, while the Senate confirmed Merrick Garland to be U.S. attorney general with a strong bipartisan vote.

In 2022, civilians trapped inside the Ukrainian port city of Mariupol desperately scrounged for food and fuel as Russian forces kept up their bombardment amid international condemnation over an airstrike a day earlier that killed three people at a maternity hospital.



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In 2023, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation seized the assets of Silicon Valley Bank, leaving many Silicon Valley workers and companies potentially locked out of their money in the second-largest bank failure in history, behind only the failure of Washington Mutual in 2008.

Today's birthdays: Bluegrass/country singer-musician Norman Blake is 86. Actor Chuck Norris is 84. Playwright David Rabe is 84. Singer Dean Torrence (Jan and Dean) is 84. Actor Katharine Houghton (Film: "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?") is 82. Actor Richard Gant is 80. Rock musician Tom Scholz (Boston) is 77. Former Canadian Prime Minister Kim Campbell is 77. TV personality/businesswoman Barbara Corcoran (TV: "Shark Tank") is 75. Actor Aloma Wright is 74. Blues musician Ronnie Earl (Ronnie Earl and the Broadcasters) is 71. Alt-country/rock musician Gary Louris is 69. Actor Shannon Tweed is 67. Pop/jazz singer Jeanie Bryson is 66. Actor Sharon Stone is 66. Rock musician Gail Greenwood is 64. Magician Lance Burton is 64. Actor Jasmine Guy is 62. Rock musician Jeff Ament (Pearl Jam) is 61. Music producer Rick Rubin is 61. Britain's Prince Edward is 60. Rock singer Edie Brickell is 58. Actor Stephen Mailer is 58. Actor Philip Anthony-Rodriguez is 56. Actor Paget Brewster is 55. Actor Jon Hamm is 53. Rapper-producer Timbaland is 52. Actor Cristián (kris-tee-AHN') de la Fuente is 50. Rock musician Jerry Horton (Papa Roach) is 49. Actor Jeff Branson is 47. Singer Robin Thicke is 47. Actor Bree Turner is 47. Olympic gold medal gymnast Shannon Miller is 47. Contemporary Christian singer Michael Barnes (Red) is 45. Actor Edi Gathegi is 45. Actor Thomas Middleditch is 42. Country singer Carrie Underwood is 41. Actor Olivia Wilde is 40. R&B singer Emeli Sandé (EH'-mihl-ee SAN'-day) is 37. Country singer Rachel Reinert is 35. Country musician Jared Hampton (LANCO) is 33. Actor Emily Osment is 32.