

# Groton Daily Independent

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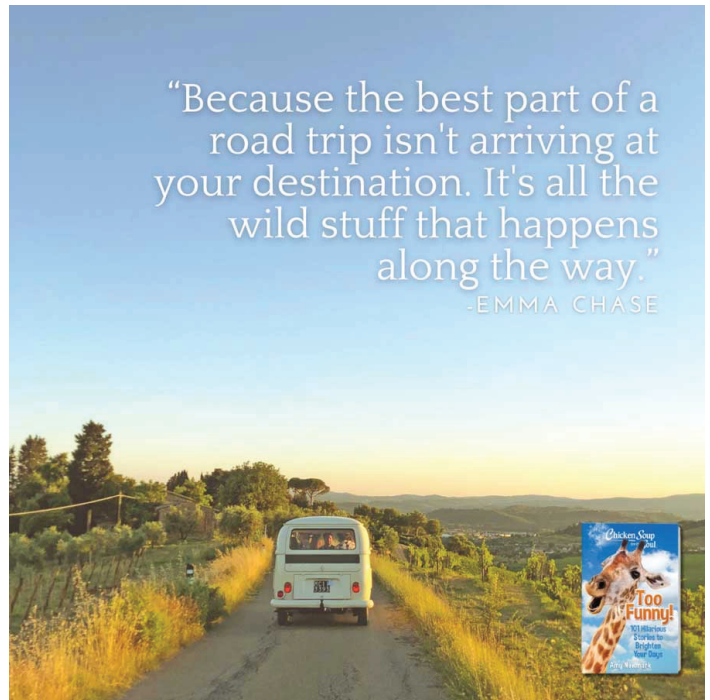
## Friday, March 15

No School - Spring Break  
State BBB Tournament at Rapid City: 1:45 p.m.: Groton Area vs. Sioux Valley  
Senior Menu: Chicken cordon bleu hot dish, vegetable Catalina blend, pears, tapioca pudding, whole wheat bread.

## Saturday, March 16

State BBB Tournament at Rapid City  
Thrift Store open 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 3:45-4:15 p.m.; SEAS Mass, 4:30 p.m.

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



“Because the best part of a road trip isn't arriving at your destination. It's all the wild stuff that happens along the way.”  
-EMMA CHASE

## Sunday, March 17

Groton CM&A: Sunday School at 9:15 a.m., Worship Service at 10:30 a.m.  
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m., SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.  
First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.  
Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion, 9 a.m.; No Sunday school, Choir, 6 p.m.  
St. John's Lutheran worship, 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.; No Sunday school.

**CLOSED:** **Recycling Trailer in Groton**  
The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.  
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# 1440

In partnership with **smartasset**<sup>™</sup>

President Vladimir Putin is expected to claim a fifth presidential term as Russia begins its three-day election today. The vote will include inhabitants of regions of Ukraine occupied by Russia since 2022, a roughly 46,000 square mile area. The election comes a month after the death of jailed opposition leader Alexei Navalny.

SpaceX launched its third and most successful test flight of its Starship rocket system yesterday morning from its Boca Chica, Texas-based facility, reaching orbit for the first time. The uncrewed spacecraft broke up upon reentry into Earth's atmosphere.

A leading voting rights organization filed suit yesterday against a Democratic political consultant accused of using AI-powered robocalls impersonating President Joe Biden in an effort to dampen turnout in the New Hampshire Democratic primary. The suit, led by the League of Women Voters, calls for thousands in fines for each of the five separate plaintiffs.

## Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

NCAA basketball conference tournaments to wrap this weekend with March Madness selection shows slated for Sunday; see projected men's bracket.

Coldplay, Dua Lipa, Shania Twain, and SZA tapped as headliners for UK's Glastonbury Festival (June 26-30); see full lineup of performers.

Meghan, the Duchess of Sussex, returns to Instagram for first time since 2018 to launch new lifestyle brand.

## Science & Technology

Scientists identify brain circuitry and chemistry responsible for translating stress into the sense of fear; findings may lead to treatments for conditions like PTSD.

Three-decade-long study reveals link between teen pregnancy and increased risk of early death; Canadian teen mothers were twice as likely to die before the age of 31.

Undersea cable damage knocks out internet access to a number of countries across Africa; Ivory Coast reported as little as 4% connectivity throughout yesterday.

## Business & Markets

US stock markets close lower (S&P 500 -0.3%, Dow -0.4%, Nasdaq -0.3%) following report showing higher-than-expected inflation (0.6%) in February for wholesale goods.

Former Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin working to form an investor group to buy TikTok from Chinese-based ByteDance.

Morgan Stanley names first head of artificial intelligence; company was previously the first Wall Street firm to implement OpenAI's ChatGPT into financial advisers' workflow.

## Politics & World Affairs

Biden administration sanctions Israeli settlers in the West Bank and outposts for ties to violence against Palestinians. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) calls for Israeli elections to replace Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas appoints adviser as prime minister amid calls for reform.

Trump administration reportedly authorized CIA effort on Chinese social media to drive antigovernment sentiment, according to new report. Manhattan district attorney calls for up to 30-day delay in Trump hush money trial following receipt of 100,000 new documents from investigators.

James Crumbley, father of 2021 Oxford High School shooter in Michigan who killed four students, convicted of involuntary manslaughter; Crumbley had purchased the gun used in the shooting and failed to properly secure it.

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

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## NOTICE OF HEARING FOR SPECIAL MALT BEVERAGE LICENSE

Notice is hereby given according to SDCL 35-2, a Public Hearing on the following Malt Beverage License Application is set for the 26th day of March, 2024, in the Chambers of the Brown County Commissioners, in the Courthouse Annex, Brown County, South Dakota, at which time any interested persons wishing to register complaint on their approval may appear: Boys & Girls Club of Aberdeen Area, Aberdeen, SD – Holum Expo Building, SW ¼ of Sec 1-T123N-R64 Brown County, SD. Special License effective April 12-13, 2024.

ATTEST: Lynn Heupel, Brown County Auditor



## NOTICE SALE OF PROPERTY

Notice is hereby given, that pursuant to Chapter 6-13 SDCL, the following described property will be offered for sale by auction in the Community Room, Brown County Courthouse Annex, Aberdeen, South Dakota on March 27, 2024 at 10:00 A.M. This property has been approved for public sale by the Brown County Commission. All delinquent taxes, penalties and interest are abated and are not the responsibility of the new owner. Brown County make no guarantee of absolute fee simple marketable title to the property. It is recommended that the purchaser of a County Quit Claim Deed pursue a quiet title action in order to acquire marketable title to the property (per SDCL Chapter 43-30, title standards 26-01 and 26-02).

Purchase price of the property along with a \$30.00 recording fee shall be paid in full on the day of the sale and a Quit Claim Deed will be issued to the successful bidder. Property offered for sale is as follows:

LEGAL DESCRIPTION, Description/Address, Minimum Bid  
ABERDEEN CITY:

LT 1 BROWN COUNTY COMMISSIONER'S 6TH SD, (LT10 & N 10' LT 11 BK 10

HAGERTY & LLOYD ADD), LOT – 605 N. ARCH ST., \$10,000.00

STRATFORD CITY:

E ½ of LT 11 & All of LT 12, BK 2, STRATFORD, HOUSE - 381 CAMPBELL AVE., \$1,000.00

LT 1-6 BK1, STRATFORD, HOUSE - 688 5th STREET, STRATFORD, \$3,000.00

GROTON  
HOLMEN OL 1, NW ¼, SEC 9-T121N-R60W, LAND - 14320 408th Ave., Groton, SD 57445, \$8,000.00

Lynn Heupel, Brown County Auditor



## NOTICE TO CHEMICAL DEALERS

Sealed bids will be received in the Chambers of the Brown County Board of Commissioners, Brown County Courthouse Annex at Aberdeen, South Dakota 57401 until 8:45 A.M. on Tuesday, March 26, 2024, at said time and place all bids will be publicly opened, read, and considered for furnishing of chemical for the Brown County Weed and Pest Board for 2024.

Proposal Guaranty: No deposit or bond will be required at time of bid opening.

Contract: Brown County will give notice to the successful bidder that his proposal has been accepted and said bidder shall within ten (10) days thereafter enter into a contract with Brown County in accordance with the bid as accepted. Successful bidder shall furnish proper certificates of insurance as required by Brown County. Contract for the chemicals shall be firm and will be in effect for a period of eight months from April 1 to November 30, 2024.

Sealed envelopes containing bids shall be addressed to Brown County Auditor, 25 Market Street, Ste 1, Aberdeen, South Dakota 57401, and be marked "Chemical Bid for Brown County Weed and Pest Board" and to be opened at 8:45 A.M. on Tuesday, March 26, 2024.

The Brown County Board of Commissioners reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids, and to accept the bid they deem to be in the best interest of Brown County. Brown County is exempt from Federal Excise Tax and State Sales Tax. Specifications are on file and may be obtained at no charge at the office of the Brown County Auditor and the Brown County Weed and Pest Office.

ATTEST: Lynn Heupel, Brown County Auditor

## Groton City Help Wanted

Position available for full-time Public Works Laborer. Formal training and/or experience preferred. Salary negotiable DOE. Benefits include medical insurance, life insurance, and SD State Retirement. Please send application and resume to the City of Groton, PO Box 587, Groton, SD 57445, or email to [city.doug@nvc.net](mailto:city.doug@nvc.net). Applications will be accepted until 5pm on April 16, 2024. Full job description and application may be found at <https://www.grotonsd.gov/o/grotoncity/page/employment-options>.

For more information, please call 605-397-8422. Equal opportunity employer.

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## 2024 SDHSAA State Boys Basketball, Thursday Recap

SDPB Radio | By Nate Wek

Published March 14, 2024 at 10:04 PM CDT

The 2024 SDHSAA state boys basketball tournaments began Thursday from Sioux Falls (AA), Rapid City (A), and Aberdeen (B). Here's a recap from the quarterfinal round, and schedule for Friday.

### Quarterfinal Round

#### Class AA

##### **No. 1 Mitchell 69 No. 8 Sioux Falls Jefferson 61**

Top seeded Mitchell outlasted Sioux Falls Jefferson 69-61 in Thursday's quarterfinal round. As a team, the Kernels shot 46%, compared to the Cavaliers who shot 48%. Free throws being the difference as Mitchell recorded 19-points from the charity stripe. Markus Talley led the Kernels in scoring with 22-points. Colton Smith also recorded 16-points for Mitchell, along with ten rebounds. Sioux Falls Jefferson was led in scoring by Damaris Fields, who scored 16-points in the contest.

##### **No. 5 Sioux Falls Washington 52 No. 4 Sioux Falls Roosevelt 45**

Despite a second half surge, Washington defeated Roosevelt 52-45 on Thursday in the quarterfinals. As a team, the Warriors shot 46% from the field. They were led by Thomas Hoffman, who finished with 17-points and four steals. Lucas Johnson also scored 14-points and grabbed nine rebounds for Washington. Hayden Goff put up 14-points for Roosevelt and Nasar Ismail scored 13-points.

##### **No. 2 Harrisburg 71 No. 7 Watertown 56**

Harrisburg is moving onto the semifinals after a 71-56 win over Watertown. The Tigers were led by Jacoby Mehrman, who finished with 27-points and three steals. Camden Phipps also contributed 20-points for Harrisburg. As a team, the Tigers shot 52% from the field. Dylon Rawdon led Watertown in scoring with 21-points.

##### **No. 3 Brandon Valley 63 No. 6 Huron 48**

On what would be an emotional night, Brandon Valley defeated Huron 63-48 in the quarterfinal round. Prior to the game, they held a moment of silence at the Denny Sanford PREMIER Center to honor long-time Lynx boys basketball coach Brent Deckert, who passed away Wednesday after a battle with cancer. Landon Dulaney led Brandon Valley in scoring with 18-points. As a team, the Lynx shot 44% from the field. CJ Gainey led the scoring for Huron with 15-points in the contest.

#### Class A

##### **No. 1 Sioux Falls Christian 74 No. 8 Vermillion 48**

Sioux Falls Christian steamed past Vermillion 74-48 in impressive fashion in the quarterfinal round. The Chargers 50% from the field and were led by Griffen Goodbary, who finished with 20-points and four blocks. Brant Wassenaar also contributed 14-points and nine rebounds. Vermillion was led by Bryson Skogsberg, who put up 15-points in the game.

##### **No. 5 Dakota Valley 62 No. 4 Pine Ridge 58**

Dakota Valley survived a late game rally to defeat Pine Ridge 62-58 in the quarterfinals. The Panthers shot 42% from the field, but it was their rebounding and second chance points that was the difference down the stretch. Dakota Valley finished +12 in the rebounding differential. Luke Bruns and Jaxson Wingert both finished with 24-points for the Panthers. Pine Ridge was led by Marvin Richard III, who dropped 30-points in the contest.



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## No. 2 Hamlin 46 No. 7 Groton Area 45

Hamlin survived a last second attempt to defeat Groton Area 46-45 in the quarterfinals. This matchup was incredibly even. Groton Area shot 43% from the field, while Hamlin shot 42%. Both teams tied with 13 turnovers and tied in the rebounding category too. Easton Neuendorf scored 17-points for the Chargers, and he recorded five assists too. Tyson Stevenson also scored 10-points for Hamlin. Groton's top scorer was Lane Tietz, who finished with 12. Ryder Johnson also scored 10-points for the Tigers in the loss.

## No. 6 Rapid City Christian 75 No. 3 Sioux Valley 72 (2 OT)

Rapid City Christian upset third seeded Sioux Valley 75-72 in thrilling double overtime fashion on Thursday night from Rapid City. The Cossacks shot 45% in the game, which was better than the Comets, who shot 35%, but Rapid City Christian scored more points off of turnovers and outrebounded. They also shot more efficiently from the charity stripe. Benson Kieffer scored 25-points and Simon Kieffer knocked down 23-points for the Comets. Max Engebretson was the leading scorer for Sioux Valley with 20-points.

## Class B

### No. 1 White River 72 No. 8 Viborg-Hurley 57

White River shot an impressive 55% from the field enroute to a 72-57 win over Viborg-Hurley on Thursday. Jordan Uhlir dropped 21-points for the Tigers. He also recorded four rebounds and a couple steals. Nicolas Marshall also scored 20-points for White River with seven assists. Nick Hanson led Viborg-Hurley in scoring with 17-points.

### No. 5 Howard 53 No. 4 Wessington Springs 38

Howard is moving onto the semifinals after a 53-38 win over Wessington Springs. The Tigers shot 51% from the field, while the Spartans shot 31%. Kolt and Luke Koepsell combined for 37-points for Howard. Parker Graff was the leading scorer for Wessington Springs with 14-points.

### No. 2 De Smet 41 No. 7 Gregory 38

De Smet topped Gregory in thrilling fashion 41-38 on Thursday night to advance to the semifinals. George Jensen knocked down a three off the glass with 1-second to play to give the Bulldogs a three-point win. Jensen scored 14-points in the game for De Smet. He also had six rebounds. Kadyn Fast also scored 14-points for the Bulldogs. Gregory's top scorer was Cruz Klundt, who finished with 13-points in the game.

### No. 3 Castlewood 72 No. 6 Leola/Frederick Area 67

Castlewood outlasted Frederick Area 72-67 on Thursday in Aberdeen to advance to the semifinals. The Warriors were led by Bryon Laue, who finished with 25-points, eleven rebounds, and four blocks. Jamiso Keszler also put up 20-points for Castlewood. Brayd Sumpton led Leola/Frederick with 23-points, six boards, and two steals.

## Friday Schedule

### Class AA

Consolation Semifinals

No. 4 Sioux Falls Roosevelt vs No. 8 Sioux Falls Jefferson – 12 pm CT

No. 6 Huron vs No. 7 Watertown – 1:45 pm CT

Semifinals

No. 1 Mitchell vs No. 5 Sioux Falls Washington – 6 pm CT

No. 2 Harrisburg vs No. 3 Brandon Valley – 7:45 pm CT

### Class A

Consolation Semifinals

No. 4 Pine Ridge vs No. 8 Vermillion – 12 pm MT

No. 7 Groton Area vs No. 3 Sioux Valley – 1:45 pm MT

Semifinals

No. 1 Sioux Falls Christian vs No. 5 Dakota Valley – 6 pm MT

No. 2 Hamlin vs No. 6 Rapid City Christian – 7:45 pm MT

Class B

Consolation Semifinals

No. 4 Wessington Springs vs No. 8 Viborg-Hurley – 12 pm CT

No. 6 Leola/Frederick vs No.7 Gregory – 1:45 pm CT

Semifinals

No. 1 White River vs No. 5 Howard – 6 pm CT

No. 2 De Smet vs No. 3 Castlewood – 7:45 pm CT

## State A Tournament

### Free throw gives Hamlin one point win in opening game

A free throw with 5.5 seconds left in the game lifted Hamlin to a 46-45 win over Groton Area in the first round of the State A Boys Basketball Tournament in Rapid City.

Hamlin started the game with the upper hand, quickly jumping out to an 8-2 lead and led after the first quarter, 11-6. The Chargers powered their way to a 15-point lead at 22-7 early in the second quarter. Coach Brian Dolan said, "We started to find our groove in the second half of the second quarter." The Tigers then started to battle back and by half time, it was 28-20, Hamlin.

Hamlin still kept things on course early in the third quarter with a 10-point lead at 30-20. But then, in less than five minutes, the Tiger defense ripped apart the Chargers and the colorful Groton Area cheering section was on fire. It was 33-26 with Hamlin on top. Logan Ringgenberg found an opening and made a basket. Turnovers were turning into points as Lane Tietz made a basket. Not to be outdone, Ryder Johnson had an assist to score and Keegen Tracy found an easy shot. Tietz sank a three-pointer and the Tigers were on top, 37-33. The third quarter ended, 37-35, Groton Area.

Groton Area opened up a four-point lead early in the fourth quarter at 41-37. Hamlin battled back and tied the game at 43 with 2:35 left and took the lead with 1:37 left, 45-43. Groton Area tied the game at 45, but a foul with 5.5 seconds left put Easton Neuendorf to the free throw line where he made one of two free throws.

Three time-outs were used in the final seconds and the Groton Area attempt to win the game did not materialize.

Lane Tietz led the Tigers with 12 points followed by Ryder Johnson with 10, Jacob Zak eight, Logan Ringgenberg seven and Keegen Tracy and Colby Dunker each had four.

Hamlin was led by Neuendorf with 17 points while Tyson Stevenson had 10, Evan Stormo eight, Zach VanMeeteren six and Jackson Wadsworth five.

Both teams shot 42 percent from the field, both teams had 24 rebounds and both teams had 13 turnovers. Groton Area had one more steal than Hamlin, 7-6. Hamlin had one more assist than Groton Area, 8-7. From the line, Hamlin was 10 of 15 and Groton Area was nine of 13.

- Paul Kosel



**Lane Tietz dribbles the ball in quick fashion as he tries to penetrate the Hamlin defense.**

(Photo by Paul Kosel)



**Ryder Johnson finds an opening to make this basket at the State A Tournament.**

(Photo by Paul Kosel)



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**It got pretty intense under the basket as Logan Ringgberg and Easton Neuendorf go face to face, but that didn't stop Ringgberg from making seven points in the game.** (Photo by Paul Kosel)



**Jacob Zak puts up a left handed shot in the State A Tournament.** (Photo by Paul Kosel)



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**Colby Dunker had some nice moves under the basket in the State A Tournament.** (Photo

by Paul Kosel)



**Taylor Diegel looks for someone to pass off the ball during the State A Tournament.** (Photo

by Paul Kosel)

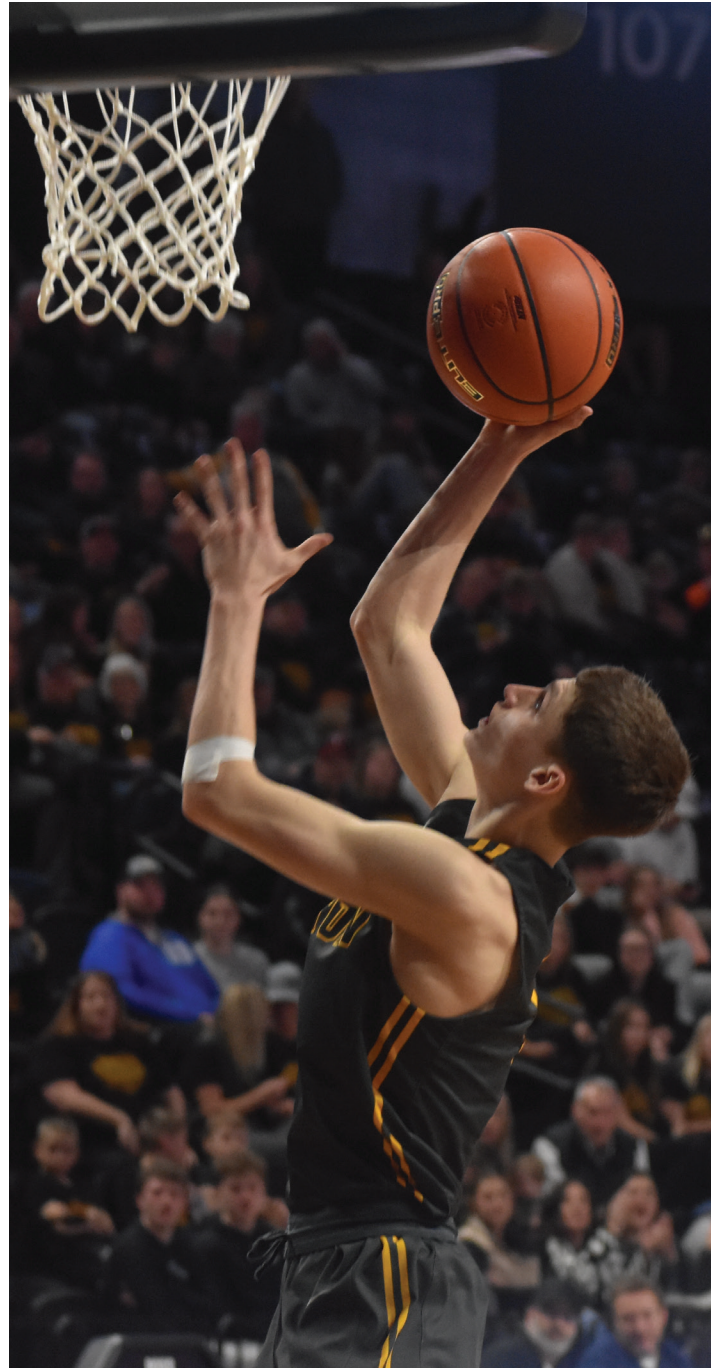


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**Major Dolan makes sure there were cups filled with water for the team at the State A Tournament.** (Photo by Paul Kosel)



**Keegen Tracy gets the easy basket at the State A Tournament.** (Photo by Paul Kosel)



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## Hospitality Room

A hospitality room at the Minneluzaham Senior Center near The Monument was done for the team, fans and parents after the game. It was held Thursday after the game and will also be open today at 11 a.m. and again after the game.

Coach Brian Dolan thanked everyone for making the long drive to Rapid City. "We had the best fan section there," he said. "There was a lot of energy and we will need that again in the next game. We're re-defining our goal - to come home with a trophy. We have a lot to accomplish in the next 48 hours." Dolan also talked about the scouting team. "These boys can run Hamlin's plays better than Hamlin can run them," he said. "They are a great scout team."

**Thanks to Our Groton Community**  
*Your Support Makes the Difference!*

MARTIN TUBBY LUKE BRUNS DAGOTAH BANK ZUNTAFI CENTRAL STEEL LANCE AND JOANN FLIEHS FAMILY JERRY AND BECCA JOHNSON S & S LUMBER JEFF ANDERSEN FARMS TOM PIGORS KOLKER LAW OFFICE PARENT ACTION COMMITTEE [PAC]	MARC SIPPLE FAMILY CRAIG AND TASHA DUNKER FAMILY BASE KAMP LODGE SPANIER TRUCKING THURSTON CATTLE RIX FARMS JAMES VALLEY TELEPHONE H&H FLIEHS AND SUN & SEA TRAVEL CO. LORI'S PHARMACY PIONEER SEED-JOEL BIERMAN STROM FARMS BAHR SPRAY FOAM	GROTON AG AMERICAN LEGION POST 39 GROTON GROTON FIREMEN GROTON CHIROPRACTIC JAMES VALLEY THUNDER DOEDEN INVESTMENT GROUP JEFF FLIEHS FAMILY INDEPENDENT AG VOTE YES FOR THE OPT OUT-GROTON COMMUNITY MEATHOUSE - IN ANDOVER COLLIN / DEB GENERKE FAMILY FARMERS UNION INSURANCE - JOHNSON AGENCY	BEAUTY BREW STROM ARCHITECTURE NANCY LARSEN STEVE AND BETTY DUNKER BARB AND TOM PAEPKE JOAN AND JERRY JOHNSON LARRY AND KATHY HARRY WW RENTALS-COLUMBIA 4L FARMS KIRK'S AUTO DEAN & LORIE RINGGENDERG JAY AND LINDA JOHNSON
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**GROTON TIGERS**

There were a lot of people who donated to make the upgrade to the charter bus and the hospitality room a reality for the State A Tournament. (Photo by Bruce Babcock)



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**Is there anyone left in Groton? Many fans came to Rapid City to cheer on the Groton Area Tigers.** (Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)

**Good Luck Tigers from . . .**  
Allied Climate Professionals  
Avantara  
Bary Keith at Harr Motors  
Basekamp Lodge  
BK Custom Ts & More  
Blocker Construction  
Dacotah Bank  
Farmers Union Coop  
Fliehs Sales & Service  
Full Circle Ag  
Greg Johnson Construction  
Groton Ag Partners  
Groton American Legion  
Groton Chamber

Groton Chiropractic Clinic  
Groton Dairy Queen  
Hanlon Brothers  
Heartland Energy  
James Valley  
Telecommunications  
John Sieh Agency  
Jungle Lanes & Lounge  
Ken's Food Fair  
KR Body Shop  
Krueger Brothers  
Lavish Luxury Salon Suite  
Lori's Pharmacy  
Merry Lone Real Estate  
MJ's Sinclair  
Northeast Chiropractic Clinic

Paetznick-Garness Funeral  
Chapel  
Poet  
Rix Farms/R&M Farms  
S & S Lumber  
Spanier Harvesting  
& Trucking  
Sun & Sea Travel Co.  
by Becah Fliehs  
The Groton Independent  
The Meat House of Andover  
Weber Landscaping  
Weismantel Insurance  
Agency  
Witte Exteriors LLC



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Date: 3/14/2024  
Time: 6:00 pm

Arena: Summit Arena  
City, State: Rapid City, SD

**VISITOR: Groton Area (19-4)**

NO	PLAYER	TOT-FG		3-PT		FT	FTA	REBOUNDS			PF	TP	A	TO	BK	S	MIN	
		P	FG	FGA	FG			FGA	OFF	DEF								TOT
1	Tracy, Keegan	*	2	4	0	1	0	0	1	1	3	4	0	3	0	0	24:38	
4	Johnson, Ryder	*	5	5	0	0	0	0	3	3	2	10	0	2	0	1	32:00	
10	Tietz, Lane	*	4	16	2	8	2	2	0	6	6	4	12	3	2	1	31:46	
22	Zak, Jacob	*	2	9	0	2	4	7	0	6	6	0	8	3	3	0	32:00	
42	Ringgenberg, Logan	*	2	2	0	0	3	4	2	1	3	2	7	0	0	0	18:03	
3	Pauli, Blake		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0:35	
5	Dunker, Colby		2	4	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	4	1	2	0	11:24	
24	Warrington, Logan		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0:00	
25	Diegel, Teylor		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	9:34	
<b>TEAM REBOUNDS</b>									3	0	3			1				
<b>Team Totals</b>			17	40	2	11	9	13	5	19	24	14	45	7	13	1	7	160

Total FG% - 1st: 8/19 0.421 2nd: 9/21 0.429 Game: 0.425 Deadball  
 3-PT FG% - 1st: 1/6 0.167 2nd: 1/5 0.200 Game: 0.182 Rebounds  
 Total FT% - 1st: 3/5 0.600 2nd: 6/8 0.750 Game: 0.692 (2,0)

**HOME: Hamlin (20-3)**

NO	PLAYER	TOT-FG		3-PT		FT	FTA	REBOUNDS			PF	TP	A	TO	BK	S	MIN	
		P	FG	FGA	FG			FGA	OFF	DEF								TOT
3	Neuendorf, Easton	*	6	13	1	2	4	6	0	2	2	4	17	5	6	0	31:14	
10	Stormo, Evan	*	2	5	0	2	4	4	3	5	8	2	8	0	2	0	27:06	
23	Wadsworth, Jackson	*	1	5	1	4	2	2	0	2	2	2	5	1	1	0	30:41	
30	Stevenson, Tyson	*	4	11	2	6	0	3	1	1	2	0	10	2	1	0	32:00	
33	VanMeeteren, Zach	*	3	3	0	0	0	0	2	7	9	3	6	0	1	3	27:04	
24	Noem, Dawson		0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2	0	11:55	
<b>TEAM REBOUNDS</b>									0	0	0			0				
<b>Team Totals</b>			16	38	4	15	10	15	6	18	24	11	46	8	13	3	6	160

Total FG% - 1st: 10/22 0.455 2nd: 6/16 0.375 Game: 0.421 Deadball  
 3-PT FG% - 1st: 3/9 0.333 2nd: 1/6 0.167 Game: 0.267 Rebounds  
 Total FT% - 1st: 5/7 0.714 2nd: 5/8 0.625 Game: 0.667 (2,0)

Technical Fouls: GRO (0)  
: HAM (0)

OFFICIALS :  
ATTENDANCE : 0

SCORE BY PERIODS	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	TOTAL
Groton Area	6	14	17	8	45
Hamlin	11	17	7	11	46

Last FG: Groton Area 4th- 0:39, Hamlin 4th- 1:44  
 Largest lead: Groton Area by 4 3rd- 2:58, Hamlin by 15 2nd- 4:31  
 Score tied: 4 times, Lead changed: 2 times



JOIN OUR ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT TEAM

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Bigger



Members of the area met mid-March to discuss economic development in the Groton SD Community. The last of 3 core team sessions will be held April 18th at 7pm at City Hall. From this core team, 6 members will be chosen to serve on the Groton Development Corporation. Individuals are encouraged to reach out to City Hall at 605-397-8422 if they would like to join this process.

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## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

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### Push for election hand counts spreads despite rejection in Lawrence County

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - MARCH 14, 2024 5:28 PM

An effort to reduce the use of technology in elections is spreading to additional South Dakota counties. Petitions have been filed in two counties and are circulating in at least 21 more of the state's 66 counties to place measures on local ballots. The petitions need signatures from 5% of registered voters in the county.

The petitions vary by county, but if approved by local voters, the most wide-ranging petitions would require paper ballots and hand-counting of votes, prohibit the use of electronic vote tabulation machines, and prohibit electronic voting devices except those needed for disabled voters.

While the Lawrence County Commission on Tuesday denied a petition that was filed last month, the McPherson County Commission had a first reading of an ordinance that aims to protect the county from potential legal costs if a petition that could result in lawsuits passes a public vote.

Some other county commissions have discussed or already decided to proactively switch to hand counting ballots ahead of the June 4 primary election, without being forced by petitioners.

Election officials have said the petitions are driven by unfounded suspicions about voting technology, including a fear that vote tabulating machines can be hacked over the internet. But state law prohibits internet connections for tabulating machines, and county auditors say the devices are not connected.

A push for election reform and hand counting has grown since the 2020 election, after then-President Donald Trump lost and claimed that the election was "stolen" from him. Trump filed more than 60 lawsuits contesting either the election or the way it was administered. None of the cases succeeded, and he's currently under criminal prosecution for allegedly attempting to subvert the election.

#### Lawrence County denies petition based on Supreme Court precedent

The group coordinating the petition drive is a nonprofit, South Dakota Canvassing. Its early petition template included bans on all voting machines. After being alerted that federal and state laws require voting devices for disabled people, the group changed its sample petitions online to exempt those devices.

By then, the original version of the petition had already been turned in to Lawrence County, making it the first county to receive one of the petitions with the necessary number of signatures. The Lawrence County Commission denied the petition at its Tuesday meeting in Deadwood.

State law says the county has to submit the petition's proposed ordinance to a public vote after it's filed with enough valid signatures. But Lawrence County commissioners denied the petition on the grounds that it reaches beyond the commission's jurisdiction, since the county wouldn't have the power to defy federal law, said Sara Frankenstein, a Rapid City-based lawyer specializing in election law.

"Our South Dakota Supreme Court has held that despite the language of that statute, if that initiated petition or initiated ordinance is attempting to accomplish something outside the powers of your county commission, it's proper to reject the petition and not put it on the ballot," Frankenstein said.

To make that right "easily identifiable" in state law, Frankenstein was behind an effort to pass a bill this legislative session that would have expressly authorized local governing boards to deny petitions they consider illegal. The effort failed in the House with a 35-35 vote.

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Nichole Braithwait, the lead petition circulator in Lawrence County, plans to ask a court to order the Lawrence County commissioners to hold an election on the filed petition.

There are at least 21 counties where petitions are circulating in addition to the petitions already turned in to Lawrence and McPherson, according to South Dakota Canvassing. Braithwait said residents from another 12 counties have inquired about circulating similar petitions.

"This is not a fringe group," Braithwait said. "We're not some small group of people who are concerned about these issues."

## **McPherson County proposes ordinance saddling petitioners with legal expenses**

McPherson County, which has its county seat in Leola, received a petition with the same language including a ban on all voting machines days after the Lawrence County petition was filed.

McPherson County commissioners have not considered the petition yet, but are considering an ordinance that would make petition circulators and sponsors pay for all legal fees if the county is sued because of an initiated ordinance's passage. The commission's proposed ordinance had its first reading recently and is scheduled for a vote at the board's April 2 meeting. The citizen petition will be considered at the April 2 meeting or in a special meeting later this month.

The ordinance doesn't stop the petition from being considered by the commissioners, said McPherson County Auditor Lindley Howard.

"I think most people when going to a voting booth think that either the yes or no is OK to vote for," Howard said. "It's not fair to the voters that the 'yes' in this case is a double-edged sword. Vote yes here and you're imposing a possible legal burden on the county — and the taxpayer — right now."

Howard said she thinks petition circulators are acting prematurely, since the state will operate its first post-election audits after the June primary, which will hand count ballots in 5% of voting districts to compare results produced from electronic tabulators. The effort is meant to encourage confidence in electronic tabulators and appease residents seeking hand counting of ballots.

Braithwait, meanwhile, said the ordinance to "push off court costs onto the citizens" is wrong.

"They're sending us on a 'lawfare' scavenger hunt to figure out how to have the courts intervene," Braithwait said. "We're going to fight it and we're going to pay for it."

## **Tripp County discusses hand counting, Fall River and Gregory counties vote in favor**

Fall River County, which has its county seat in Hot Springs, is the first in South Dakota to commit to hand counting ballots in the June 4 primary election. The commission voted unanimously at its Feb. 15 meeting, though Commissioner Deb Russell told South Dakota Searchlight she is confident tabulators are accurate and faster.

"I'm not sure the people we're dealing with believe that anything but a hand count would work," Russell said.

The Gregory County Commission, seated in Burke, voted March 6 to use hand counting for the primary and general elections.

Tripp County, which was the only South Dakota county during the 2022 election to hand count all of its ballots, also discussed hand counting ballots at its last meeting in Winner, though auditor Barb DeSersa argued against it.

DeSersa was awake for 40 hours straight between Election Day and the day after in 2022, with a significant amount of that time supervising volunteers hand-counting ballots. Several races had to be recounted by volunteer counting boards — sometimes three or four times that night.

"I feel pretty good that we won't be," DeSersa said, "but we still have plenty of time to make those decisions."

A hand counting petition is circulating in Tripp County.



## Higher credits for private school scholarships, campus obscenity ban: More bills signed into law

BY: SEARCHLIGHT STAFF - MARCH 14, 2024 2:23 PM

Gov. Kristi Noem has signed numerous bills into law this week, including one that will increase the yearly cap on private school scholarships funded by state tax credits.

The credits are available to insurance companies. For every dollar they contribute to private school scholarships for low-income students, the companies get an equivalent amount of credits to reduce the premium taxes they owe to the state.

At the time of the program's creation in 2016, the tax credit cap was \$2 million, and insurance companies earned 80% in credits for every dollar donated. A 2019 bill made companies eligible for a 100% credit. In 2022, lawmakers raised the credit cap to \$3.5 million. This year's bill raised the cap again, to \$5 million.

Students must meet free and reduced price lunch program requirements to qualify for the scholarships. About 2,500 students are supported by the program, called South Dakota Partners in Education.

The names of the insurance companies and how much they are donating to the scholarship program are treated as confidential tax information by state officials. The private schools are responsible for ensuring students meet the income qualifications.

Following are summaries of some other bills Noem signed this week. The 2024 legislative session ended last week, except for a day on March 25 to consider vetoes. As of Thursday afternoon, Noem had not vetoed any bills.

### **Banning obscene live conduct on campuses**

House Bill 1178 bans "obscene live conduct" at state universities. Opponents viewed it as a veiled attempt to target drag shows. Proponents said they are giving legal teeth to an existing Board of Regents policy.

The bill says the Board of Regents and the public universities it oversees may not authorize the use of any state-owned facility or property to develop, implement, facilitate, host or promote any obscene live conduct, or expend any public money in support of obscene live conduct.

The definition of obscene live conduct, already written into existing state law, is:

any physical human body activity, including singing, speaking, dancing, acting, simulation or pantomiming, where the dominant theme appeals to a prurient interest;

the conduct is patently offensive because it affronts contemporary community standards relating to the description or representation of sexual matters;

and the conduct is without serious literary, artistic, political or scientific value.

Aides becoming teachers

HB 1201 provides \$800,000 to the state's Teacher Apprenticeship Pathway program, which aims to address a statewide teacher shortage by helping para-educators who are already employed by school districts to obtain full teacher certification.

### **Protections against abandoned mines**

Senate Bill 111 increases the state's financial protections against some types of abandoned mines.

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

The new law increases those amounts in phases up to to \$3,850 per acre and \$300,000, respectively, by 2029.

### **Landowner elk licenses**

SB 173 creates extra licenses for South Dakota landowners and their lessees to hunt a female elk every

year on agricultural land in areas known as the Prairie Elk Units. The units include much of the land west of the Missouri River, but not the Black Hills. The bill aims to help ranchers reduce damage in areas where elk trample cornfields, break fences and eat livestock feed, while maintaining a healthy elk population elsewhere.

### **Water and wastewater funding**

SB 53 makes \$89.39 million of remaining federal American Rescue Plan Act funding available for water and wastewater projects across the state, and SB 66 makes \$12.83 million of ARPA funds available for state agencies' own water, wastewater and stormwater projects.

### **Airport terminal money**

SB 144 makes \$10 million in state funds available for grants to support airport terminal infrastructure projects and terminal improvement and expansion.

## **Consumer advocacy group sues Noem over her Texas tooth promo video**

**Lawsuit alleges governor may have violated law requiring disclosure of financial relationship**

**BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - MARCH 14, 2024 1:08 PM**

A consumer advocacy group said it filed a lawsuit Wednesday in Washington, D.C., against South Dakota Governor Kristi Noem for allegedly engaging in misleading advertising practices in her five-minute promotional video for a Texas dental practice.

Noem released the video Monday night on social media. In it, she mentioned a long-ago bicycling accident that knocked out her front teeth and said she needed "an adjustment" ever since.

"Well, hi, I'm Kristi Noem, I'm the governor of South Dakota, and had the opportunity to come to Smile Texas to fix my teeth, which has been absolutely amazing," the video began.

Travelers United's complaint alleges Noem violated the Washington D.C. Consumer Protection Procedures Act by failing to disclose her financial relationship with Smile Texas in the video.

Lauren Wolfe is Travel United's lawyer. She said "we don't have any specific proof" that Noem was paid or received free or discounted services in exchange for the video.

"It seems highly unlikely that there would not be some sort of material connection," Wolfe said.

Travelers United expects proof to come out as the lawsuit progresses, Wolfe added, because "even if she received a discount, she would need to disclose that as well."

The group is asking the court to order Noem's compliance with advertising disclosure requirements on her social media accounts. Furthermore, the group wants Noem to pay damages in an amount to be determined at trial.

Wolfe said the primary goal is "to have Noem write 'ad' at the beginning of the caption on each post. That is our main ask in this case."

"We just want to make the point that there is law on this subject," Wolfe said.

A D.C. court can have jurisdiction over a South Dakotan doing advertising work for a Texas company, according to Wolfe. That's because "if your social media posts are viewable in Washington, D.C., then you're subject to the District's consumer protection laws."

Additionally, she said the Federal Trade Commission, whose rules apply around the nation, "has made it extremely clear that people need to post when something is an ad or an advertisement on social media."

With nearly 500,000 followers on X (formerly Twitter), Travelers United claims Noem is a prominent figure whose social media posts can significantly influence consumer behavior.

Wolfe said her team saw mentions of Noem's "medical tourism ad" in the news after it was posted.

"The need for people to simply disclose when they're making an ad, as it relates to travel, is central to what we work on, so that's why we brought this lawsuit," Wolfe said.

The advocacy group previously sued a California social media influencer for dishonest advertising. That case is ongoing.

Noem's office has not responded to South Dakota Searchlight questions about the lawsuit and its allegations.

## U.S. House Speaker Johnson says IVF should be protected — just not by Congress

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - MARCH 14, 2024 1:19 PM

U.S. House Speaker Mike Johnson said Thursday that it's up to states and not Congress to preserve access to in vitro fertilization, weighing in on a growing national debate and campaign issue.

"It's not my belief that Congress needs to play a role here," the Louisiana Republican said during a press conference at the House GOP retreat in West Virginia. "I think this is being handled by the states."

Republicans, he said, support IVF as a way for people to begin or grow their families, as long as it's handled "ethically."

"And I think the states are handling that well," Johnson said.

IVF access blew up into a nationwide problem for Republicans after the Alabama state Supreme Court ruled in February frozen embryos constitute "children" under state law. Democrats have stressed their support for reproductive rights and fertility treatments in contrast to the Alabama ruling.

The decision halted IVF access in the state until the legislature approved and Gov. Kay Ivey signed legislation this month to provide IVF clinics with civil and criminal immunity. That new law, however, has left numerous questions for clinics in Alabama.

### Democrats attempt to pass legislation

Democrats in the U.S. Senate have tried to pass two bills that would have addressed access to IVF in the weeks since the Alabama state Supreme Court ruling, but Republican senators blocked them each time.

Illinois Democratic Sen. Tammy Duckworth in late February tried to pass her bill to protect IVF access nationwide, but Mississippi Republican Sen. Cindy Hyde-Smith blocked the bill.

Washington state Democratic Sen. Patty Murray sought approval to pass her bill to expand access to IVF for military service members and veterans this week, but Oklahoma Republican Sen. James Lankford opposed her efforts.

Both Democratic senators tried to pass their bill through the unanimous consent process, which allows any senator to block the bill from moving forward. The Senate hasn't yet held a roll call vote on either bill.

Several House GOP lawmakers have introduced resolutions to express the sense of Congress that IVF is a good thing and that Americans should have access to it, though those are not bills and therefore wouldn't actually protect access to the procedure.

Johnson, speaking Thursday during the press conference, said he and the Republican Party support IVF and protecting it, just not with nationwide legislation.

"That's a remarkable thing and it's something we ought to protect and preserve," Johnson said. "And I think our party is certainly committed to that."

## New scorecard rates nation's grid managers on connecting renewables

BY: ROBERT ZULLO - MARCH 14, 2024 10:00 AM

Across the country, electric demand is growing and could explode if green goals like electrifying home heating, industry and transportation come to fruition. At the same time, many states, utilities and businesses have pledged to decarbonize, helping push older coal and gas power plants that have struggled to stay economically competitive into retirement.

Yet in the queues run by the organizations that manage the electric grid in much of the nation, more than two million megawatts of potential new power sources, chiefly solar, wind and batteries, are languishing awaiting interconnection studies.

That dynamic prompted Advanced Energy United, a trade group representing clean energy businesses, to publish a first-of-its-kind scorecard grading how well the seven regional transmission organizations, which coordinate the flow of electricity for roughly two thirds of American electric customers, are doing at getting new projects approved to connect to their grids.

The short answer? Not so great. But some regions have been better than others, according to Caitlin Marquis, managing director at AEU. Both the Electric Reliability Council of Texas and the California Independent System Operator, organizations that manage the grid in most of their respective states, got Bs. The other five organizations got grades of C- or lower.

"Grid managers have moved too slowly to adapt to changing market conditions, allowing the process of connecting new electricity to the transmission grid to become dysfunctional," she said in a statement. "Without urgent improvement, the U.S. grid may struggle to keep up with growing energy demands, threatening our ability to keep the lights on and reach our climate goals."

### Grid operators push back on ratings

In many regions, interconnection – the usually multi-year process to connect new power generators to the transmission system, including studies of any upgrades needed to ensure reliability – has been a well-known problem for years.

Last summer, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission issued new rules intended to help clear the backlogs. And indeed, some grid operators questioned the point of the scorecard, which uses data that in some cases is several years old. They said the problems have long been acknowledged and that they've been working to overhaul their interconnection processes.

"The report is an assessment of conditions and practices that no longer exist," said Jeff Shields, a spokesperson for PJM, the nation's largest grid operator with a service area that includes 65 million people. "PJM and its stakeholders acknowledged those issues over three years ago and reformed our interconnection process." PJM got a D- on the scorecard.

Mary Cate Colapietro, a spokesperson for ISO New England, which got a D+ from AEU, also questioned the merits of the exercise.

"It is not clear what the value of such a report is given that ISO New England and other regional system operators are in the process of developing significant changes to the interconnection process," she said.

Both PJM and MISO, the grid operator for a large swathe of the central U.S., pointed out in their responses that thousands of megawatts' worth of new energy projects have made it through their queues but haven't been built because of financing, siting and supply chain problems.

"This is the challenge we need to confront as an industry rather than looking back on problems that have been largely addressed," Shields said.

Brandon Morris, a MISO spokesperson, said more than 50 GW of new generation facilities have been approved by MISO, "but many are not going into service on schedule due to supply chain issues and permitting delays that are beyond MISO's control."

Nonetheless, AEU says the report is an important baseline that will help gauge how well the grid opera-



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tors implement the fixes federal regulators have mandated.

"This report reflects the challenges that project developers and engineers are dealing with not just a few years ago, but right now," Marquis told States Newsroom. "While reforms are being planned, and in some cases implemented, they don't address all the concerns outlined in the report, and they aren't yet fully in effect. One thing the report demonstrates is that even when procedures work on paper, they don't always work so well in practice."

Rob Gramlich, an electric grid expert and president of Grid Strategies, a consulting firm that helped prepare the scorecard, pointed out that the 12 interviews conducted with generation developers and engineering firms are all people who are going through the interconnection process now. The grades were determined by considering six factors, two of which were customer perspectives on timeline and costs. The others are speed and certainty, number of interconnection agreements signed, average costs and cost certainty.

"We would expect all of them to improve somewhat if we did it in a year or two," Gramlich said. "We were just looking at a snapshot today."

## MISO

The Midcontinent Independent System Operator manages a portion of the North American electric grid stretching from Manitoba, Canada, to the Gulf of Mexico. In that territory are all or parts of 15 states and 45 million people.

MISO's interconnection study process is "unreliable and slow," the report says.

"MISO's timeliness challenges have become particularly evident recently, as queue sizes have increased," the scorecard says. "While MISO used to share details with interconnection customers on the reasons for delays, over the past two years these updates have become less dependable."

Brandon Morris, a spokesperson for MISO, said the organization's approach to bringing new power resources into the system "continues to be one of the most efficient in the electric industry" and that its process was highlighted by FERC as a "positive example" for other organizations.

"We have implemented reforms over the past few years to ensure our interconnection process is not an impediment to having the necessary generator resources available when needed," Morris said.

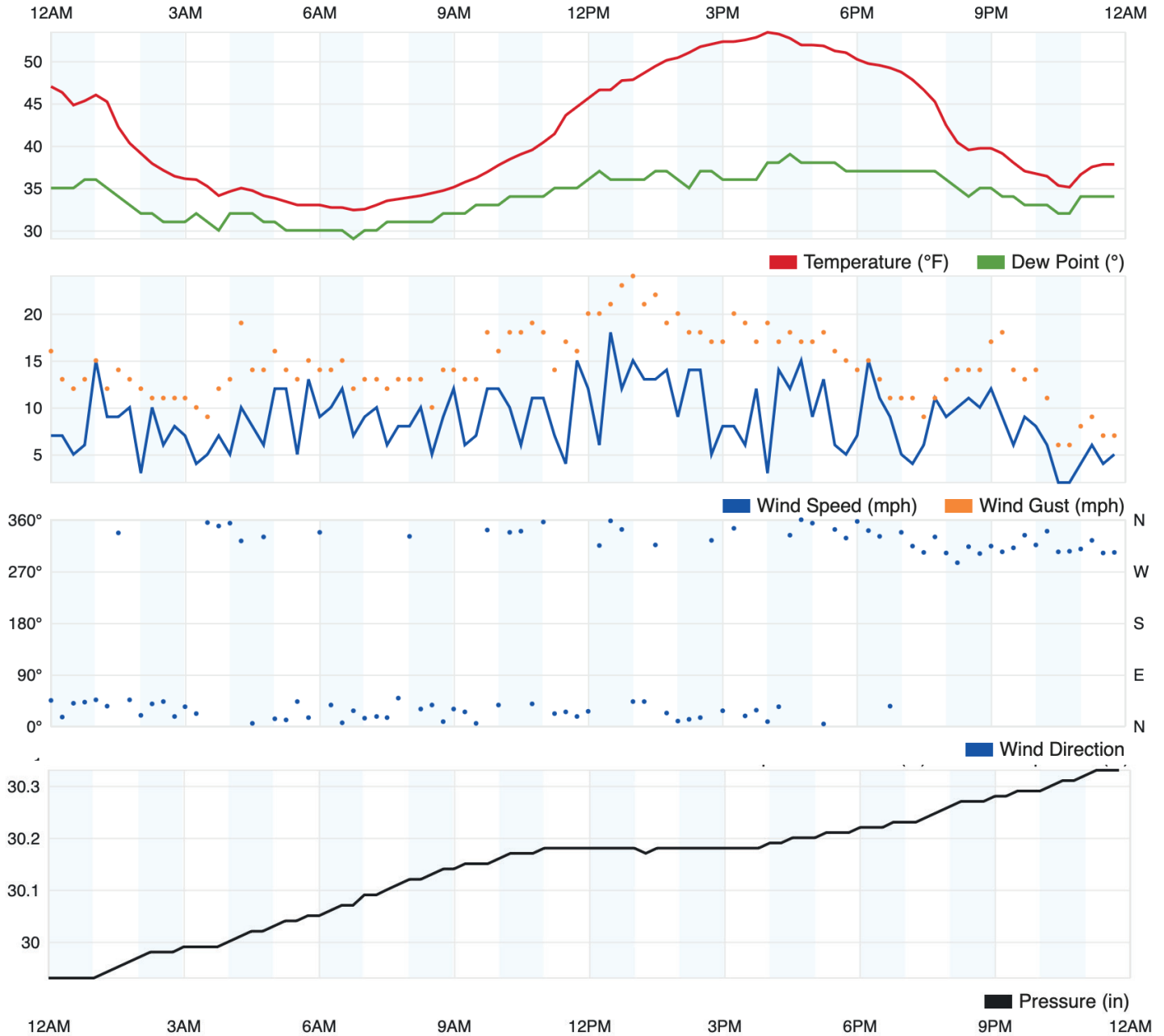
However, developers working with MISO aren't so sure things will get much better, the scorecard says.

"Although MISO's recent study enhancements to limit system impact study duration are intended to reduce queue processing to 373 days, interconnection customers still anticipate that most projects will take three or more years to complete, especially in MISO-West," according to the report.

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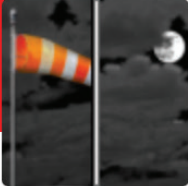



## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Red Flag War...

<b>Today</b>	<b>Tonight</b>	<b>Saturday</b>	<b>Saturday Night</b>	<b>Sunday</b>
				
Mostly Sunny then Sunny and Breezy	Mostly Cloudy and Breezy then Mostly Cloudy	Decreasing Clouds and Breezy	Partly Cloudy and Blustery then Partly Cloudy	Partly Sunny and Breezy
<b>High: 56 °F</b>	<b>Low: 34 °F</b>	<b>High: 46 °F</b>	<b>Low: 22 °F</b>	<b>High: 35 °F</b>



## Dangerous Fire Weather Conditions Today

March 15, 2024  
4:20 AM

Temperatures In The 50s - Winds of 25 to 40 mph - Low Afternoon Humidity

	Temperature Forecast (°F)						Maximum Wind Gust Forecast (mph)						Minimum RH Forecast (%)								
	3/15 Fri			3/16 Sat			3/15 Fri			3/16 Sat			3/15 Fri			3/16 Sat					
	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am
Aberdeen	32	45	56	57	48	45	40	18	29	33	32	28	29	28	59	32	22	20	29	38	62
Britton	33	44	53	54	49	45	38	21	32	39	37	36	33	30	67	41	26	23	28	51	70
Brookings	30	41	50	54	46	45	42	16	21	24	24	26	30	28	72	42	27	25	35	41	48
Chamberlain	33	46	55	59	48	44	43	15	17	21	21	21	25	26	57	33	22	22	37	49	49
Clark	31	39	49	51	45	44	40	18	26	31	29	30	31	30	72	45	29	28	35	39	55
Eagle Butte	29	41	54	56	48	44	38	23	29	32	32	30	32	30	67	30	16	16	26	38	59
Ellendale	32	43	53	55	49	44	38	24	35	40	39	35	35	33	70	39	23	20	27	55	70
Eureka	29	43	53	56	47	44	37	23	33	39	37	33	35	36	67	36	19	18	26	51	70
Gettysburg	29	43	52	54	47	45	40	20	28	31	30	26	30	30	64	36	22	20	29	35	52
Huron	33	44	55	57	48	46	43	16	20	25	24	24	28	30	59	32	23	23	34	38	47
Kennebec	30	43	55	57	48	44	40	15	20	23	24	23	28	28	59	30	21	21	35	47	52
McIntosh	27	43	52	55	47	42	35	28	39	46	44	39	41	38	62	29	15	16	26	57	72
Milbank	35	43	51	54	48	48	42	16	23	29	29	38	32	29	67	42	29	29	36	37	57
Miller	32	43	52	54	47	46	42	17	23	28	26	28	29	29	67	39	25	26	32	35	46
Mobridge	29	44	56	58	47	44	37	21	29	35	32	29	30	30	62	28	17	15	28	49	67
Murdo	29	42	55	57	48	44	40	18	23	26	26	23	26	25	59	28	21	21	35	45	52
Pierre	31	45	56	59	48	45	42	16	21	25	25	21	25	25	59	29	17	17	29	35	46
Redfield	32	43	54	56	47	45	41	17	24	28	26	28	29	29	64	36	24	24	33	36	52
Sisseton	35	43	53	54	49	47	40	18	30	36	36	40	36	35	67	42	29	26	32	45	67
Watertown	32	40	49	51	44	45	40	18	25	29	29	32	31	29	67	43	30	30	38	40	55
Webster	32	40	49	51	45	44	38	21	30	36	36	38	37	33	72	43	29	28	35	41	67
Wheaton	33	43	52	54	48	47	40	17	24	30	31	33	32	31	70	43	28	27	34	45	67

Forecast Temps/Winds/RH today



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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 54 °F at 4:03 PM

Low Temp: 32 °F at 6:45 AM

Wind: 24 mph at 1:00 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 11 hours, 58 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 79 in 2015

Record Low: -29 in 1897

Average High: 41

Average Low: 19

Average Precip in March.: 0.37

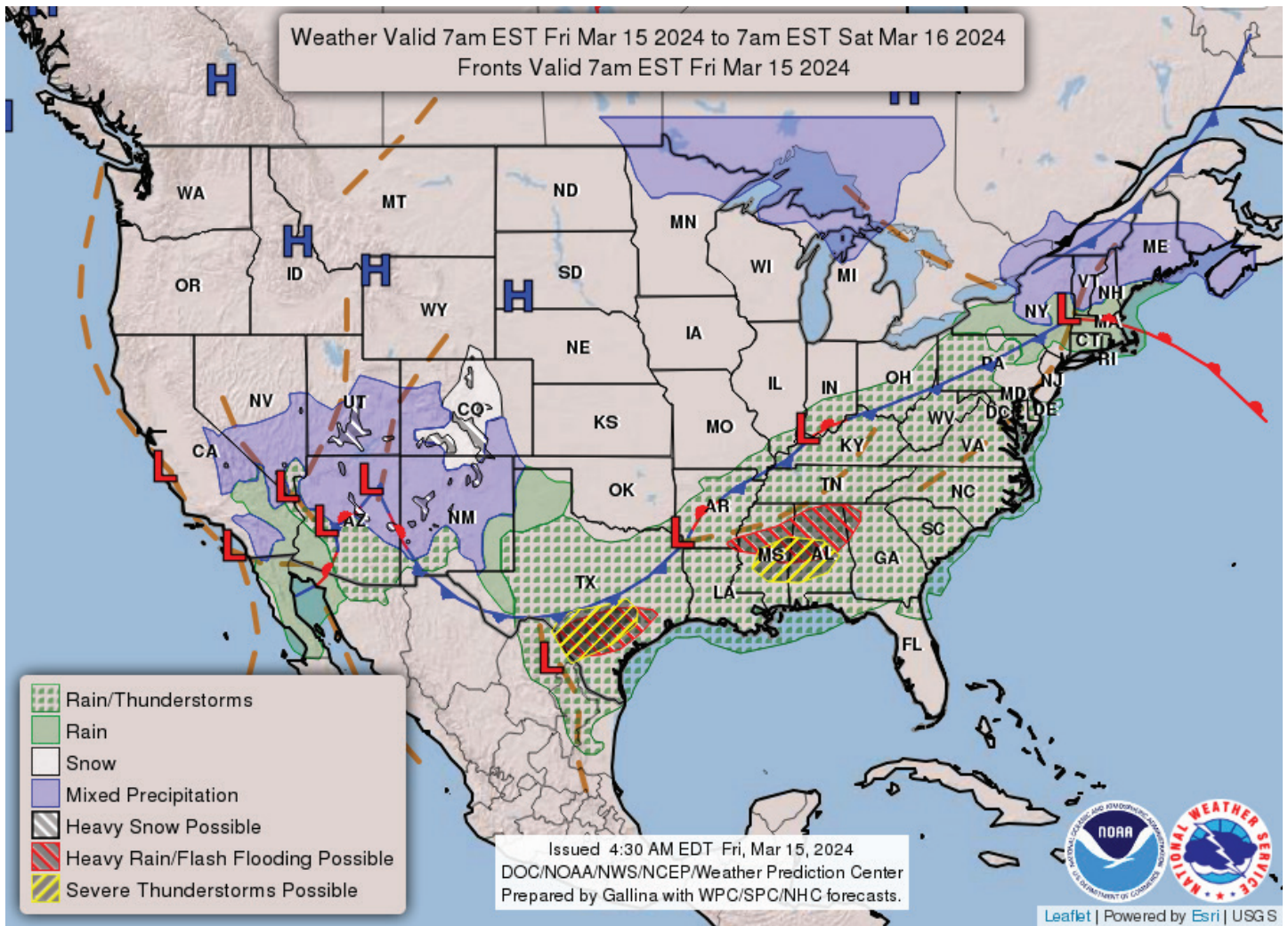
Precip to date in March: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 1.54

Precip Year to Date: 0.07

Sunset Tonight: 7:40:22 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:39:53 am



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## Today in Weather History

March 15, 1941: Beware the Ides of March. The most severe blizzard in modern history strikes North Dakota and Minnesota. The blizzard began on a Saturday night while many are traveling, and thus claims 71 lives. Winds gust to 75 mph at Duluth, Minnesota, and reach 85 mph at Grand Forks, North Dakota. Snow drifts twelve feet high were reported in north-central Minnesota. A cold front traveling 30 mph crosses Minnesota in just seven hours.

March 15, 2010: Snowmelt runoff from an extensive snow cover flooded many creeks, roads, along with thousands of acres of pasture and cropland throughout northeast South Dakota. There were numerous road closures. The flooding lasted through the end of the month and for many locations in April. The counties mainly affected were Brown, Marshall, Day, Spink, and Roberts. Numerous communities were affected, including Aberdeen, Claremont, Waubay, Amherst, Kidder, and the Richmond Lake area. The Claremont, Amherst, and Britton areas were the hardest hit with flooded land and roads. Several farms were surrounded by water, with some people stranded. Between Aberdeen and Britton, sixty percent of the area was underwater. Thousands of acres of cropland will not be planted due to too much water, with estimates that 20 to 25 percent of Brown county cropland would not be planted. Many people in northeast South Dakota have had too much water for many years. The road damage was extensive, and repairs will be in the millions of dollars. Many roads across the area will also have to be raised. Many people had extra-long commutes due to flooded streets, with some people having to move out of their homes. Across Day and Marshall Counties, rising lakes threatened many homes and cabins with sandbagging taking place. Most lakes and rivers across northeast South Dakota were at or near record levels.

1938: A tornado hit McPaul, Iowa, while moving from southeast to northwest. Another tornado raced through Batesville, Illinois, at 60 to 65 mph. Another tornado causing F4 damage killed 10 and injured 12 in St. Clair County, Missouri. This tornado was part of an outbreak that produced four different tornadoes and was responsible for 11 deaths and 42 injuries.

1941 - The most severe blizzard in modern history struck North Dakota and Minnesota. The blizzard hit on a Saturday night while many are traveling, and thus claimed 71 lives. Winds gusted to 75 mph at Duluth MN, and reached 85 mph at Grand Forks ND. Snow drifts twelve feet high were reported in north central Minnesota. A cold front traveling 30 mph crossed Minnesota in just seven hours. (15th-16th) (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1952: On Reunion Island, some 400 miles east of Madagascar 127.56 inches of rain fell in three days in the spring of 1952. This set a world record for the most rainfall in 72 hours. Also, from the 15th to the 16th, 73.62 inches of rain fell in the 24 hours at Cilaos, La Reunion Island in the South Indian Ocean to set a world record.

1987 - A winter storm in the western U.S. produced heavy snow in central Nevada, with 23 inches reported at Austin. High winds raked the desert areas of southern California and southern Arizona. Winds gusted to 59 mph at Douglas AZ. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - More than one hundred hours of continuous snow finally came to an end at Marquette MI, during which time the city was buried under 43 inches of snow. Unseasonably cold weather prevailed in the southeastern U.S., with forty-one cities reporting record low temperatures for the date. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Afternoon and evening thunderstorms produced severe weather from Alabama to the Middle Atlantic Coast. Thunderstorm winds gusted to 80 at Virginia Beach VA. Low pressure in southeastern Ontario produced high winds in the northeastern U.S. Winds gusted to 70 mph at Saint Albans VT. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Low pressure crossing the Upper Mississippi Valley produced high winds from the Northern and Central Plains to the Great Lakes Region and Ohio Valley. Winds gusted to 73 mph at Iowa City IA, and wind gusts reached 79 mph at Waukesha WI. Winds of 75 mph were reported around Rapid City SD, with gusts to 100 mph. Up to a foot of snow was reported in western Iowa, western Minnesota, and extreme eastern North Dakota. Blizzard conditions were reported in northeastern North Dakota and northwestern Minnesota. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2004: Brownsville, Texas, breaks a century-old record for the most significant daily rainfall accumulation for March with 3.23 inches.



Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### "LUCKY LINDY"

Everyone called him "Lucky Lindy" but not those who knew him. When he made his historic flight across the Atlantic Ocean, Charles Lindbergh left absolutely nothing to "luck." During his preparation, he was careful and cautious, thoughtful and thorough. He never "hoped" things would go right. He made sure that everything would be right. Nothing was left to chance. Everything that related to his flight was the result of a deliberate choice.

A few days before his historic solo transatlantic flight, Lindbergh and his copilot, Frank Samuels, completed a hard day's work. They spent endless hours examining every detail of what he would do, why and how he would do it, and the possibilities of something going wrong.

That night they checked into a motel. Shortly after midnight Samuels was awakened and saw Lindbergh at the window. "Why are you sitting there awake when you should be sleeping?" asked Samuels.

"I'm studying the stars," he answered, "and practicing staying awake."

Paying attention to details and leaving nothing to chance is a God-honoring character trait. It is a reflection of our dependence upon God to give insight and foresight, knowledge and wisdom to do everything that will honor Him for His gifts.

Prayer: Help us, Father, to realize that whatever we do as Christians is a reflection of You. May whatever we do in word or deed or thoughts be done to glorify You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father. Colossians 3:17



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: 03.12.24

2 16 31 57 64 24

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$792,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 36 Mins 43 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 03.13.24

23 33 34 41 50 7

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$2,200,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 15 Hrs 51 Mins 43 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 03.14.24

7 24 27 29 43 10

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 6 Mins 43 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 03.13.24

3 18 31 32 33

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$21,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 6 Mins 43 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 03.13.24

2 25 64 65 67 5

TOP PRIZE:

**\$10,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 35 Mins 43 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 03.13.24

21 29 54 59 62 4

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$600,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 35 Mins 43 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### Thursday's Scores

The Associated Press

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL

SDHSAA State Playoffs

Class AA

Quarterfinal

Brandon Valley 63, Huron 48

Harrisburg 71, Watertown 56

Mitchell 69, Sioux Falls Jefferson 61

Sioux Falls Washington 52, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 45

Class A

Quarterfinal

Dakota Valley 62, Pine Ridge 58

Hamlin 46, Groton 45

Rapid City Christian 75, Sioux Valley 72, 2OT

Sioux Falls Christian 74, Vermillion 48

Class B

Quarterfinal

Castlewood 72, Leola-Frederick 67

De Smet 41, Gregory 38

Howard 53, Wessington Springs 38

White River 72, Viborg-Hurley 57

### **Suspected attack by Yemen's Houthi rebels strikes a ship in the Red Sea, though crew reportedly safe**

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — A suspected attack by Yemen's Houthi rebels struck a tanker in the Red Sea early Friday, causing damage to the vessel while the crew was reported unharmed, authorities said.

The attack off the port city of Hodeida comes as part of the rebels' campaign against shipping over Israel's ongoing war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

The British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations center said the ship reported being "struck by a missile."

"The vessel has sustained some damage," the UKMTO added. It described the crew as being "safe" and said the ship was continuing on its way, suggesting the damage wasn't severe.

The private security firm Ambrey also reported Friday's attack and said the tanker with armed guards aboard had a "near miss" on Thursday off the coast of Yemen in the Gulf of Aden. It said the ship had been Israel-affiliated but changed owners in February.

The Houthis did not immediately claim responsibility the attack — it typically takes the rebels hours to acknowledge their assaults. Brig. Gen. Yahya Saree, a Houthi military spokesman, said an "important announcement" would be coming later Friday afternoon from the rebels.

The Houthis have attacked ships since November, saying they want to force Israel to end its offensive in Gaza.

The ships targeted by the Houthis, however, largely have had little or no connection to Israel, the U.S. or other nations involved in the war. The rebels have also fired missiles toward Israel, though they have largely fallen short or been intercepted.

The assaults on shipping have raised the profile of the Houthis, who are members of Islam's minority Shiite Zaydi sect, which ruled Yemen for 1,000 years until 1962.

A report Thursday claimed the Houthis now had a hypersonic missile, potentially increasing that cachet and putting more pressure on Israel after a cease-fire deal failed to take hold in Gaza before the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

Hypersonic missiles also would pose a more serious threat to American and allied warships in the region.

Earlier in March, a Houthi missile struck a commercial ship in the Gulf of Aden, killing three of its crew members and forcing survivors to abandon the vessel. It marked the first fatal attack by the Houthis on shipping.

Other recent Houthi actions include an attack last month on a cargo ship carrying fertilizer, the Rubymar, which later sank after drifting for several days.

## The Latest | Israel denies Palestinian claim its forces killed 20 near Gaza aid distribution center

By The Associated Press undefined

The Palestinian Health Ministry accused Israeli forces of launching an attack near an aid distribution point in war-racked northern Gaza, killing 20 people and wounding 155 others. The Israeli military said those reports "are false," adding it was assessing the violence that occurred late Thursday "with the thoroughness that it deserves."

The international community has been pushing for more aid to enter Gaza, frustrated with the growing humanitarian crisis and with Israel's restrictions that have prevented more aid getting in by land. Australia announced early Friday it would resume funding to the United Nations relief agency for Palestinians and pledged additional money to UNICEF to provide urgent services in Gaza.

An aid ship loaded with some 200 tons of food was nearing the shores of the enclave Friday. A quarter of Gaza's population is starving, the United Nations has warned, and the territory's Health Ministry says more than 31,314 Palestinians have been killed. The ministry doesn't differentiate between civilians and combatants in its count, but says women and children make up two-thirds of the dead.

Some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, were killed in southern Israel during the Hamas-led incursion on Oct. 7 that sparked the war. Around 250 people were abducted, and Hamas is believed to still be holding about 100 hostages.

Currently:

- A proposed U.S. resolution would back global efforts for an immediate and sustained cease-fire in Gaza.
- Palestinian leader Abbas appoints his longtime adviser as prime minister in the face of calls for reform.
- A suspected attack by Yemen's Houthi rebels strikes a ship in the Red Sea.
- Top Democrat Chuck Schumer calls for new elections in Israel, saying Netanyahu is an obstacle to peace.

— Find more of AP's coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/israel-hamas-war>

Here's the latest:

**SHIP CARRYING 200 TONS OF AID APPROACHES GAZA'S SHORES**

WADI GAZA, Gaza Strip — A ship carrying 200 tons of aid that set off from Cyprus was approaching the shores of Gaza on Friday.

The shipment was intended to inaugurate a sea route from Cyprus to bring more assistance into Gaza to alleviate the humanitarian crisis brought by Israel's offensive in the enclave.

On Friday morning, the boat could be seen far in the distance from the beaches of Wadi Gaza in the middle of the Gaza Strip.

Israel has been under increasing pressure to allow more aid into Gaza after five months of war between Israel and Hamas.

**HAMAS PUTS FORWARD A NEW CEASE-FIRE PROPOSAL**

BEIRUT — A Hamas official said Friday the militant group has put forward a new proposal for a cease-



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fire deal.

International mediators had hoped to broker a six-week cease-fire before the start of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, which began earlier this week. But talks stalled with no agreement in sight.

The mediators had proposed a deal that called for Hamas to free dozens of hostages being held in Gaza; Israel to release Palestinian prisoners it is holding; and a major influx of aid into Gaza. Hamas has said it wants a permanent cease-fire, the return of displaced people and a full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza.

Senior Hamas official Osama Hamdan said Friday that the group put forward a new plan along similar lines as its previous demands. He declined to give details of the plan or explain how it differed from their earlier plans.

**THE UNITED STATES' PROPOSED RESOLUTION WOULD BACK GLOBAL EFFORTS FOR A SUSTAINED CEASE-FIRE IN GAZA**

**UNITED NATIONS** — The United States circulated the final draft of a United Nations Security Council resolution late Thursday that would support international efforts to establish "an immediate and sustained cease-fire" in the Israel-Hamas war as part of a deal to release hostages taken captive during Hamas' surprise attack on southern Israel on Oct. 7.

No time has been set for a vote, and the draft, obtained by The Associated Press, could still be changed.

The U.S. circulated the initial draft on Feb. 19, a day before it vetoed a widely supported Arab-backed resolution demanding an immediate humanitarian cease-fire in the war in the embattled Gaza Strip, saying it would interfere with negotiations on a deal to free the hostages.

The U.S. draft would demand that all parties comply with international law requiring protection of civilians and "civilian objects," which include hospitals, schools and homes. The draft would also express the council's "deep concern about the threat of conflict-induced famine and epidemics presently facing the civilian population in Gaza, as well as the number of undernourished people," and the "catastrophic" levels of hunger.

If the resolution is approved, it would for the first time condemn "the Hamas-led attacks of Oct. 7, 2023, as well as its taking and killing of hostages, murder of civilians, and sexual violence including rape," as well as "its use of civilian infrastructure for military purposes and to hold hostages." It would also demand that Hamas and other armed groups immediately grant humanitarian access to all remaining hostages.

**ISRAEL DENIES GAZA HEALTH MINISTRY'S CLAIM THAT ISRAELI FORCES KILLED 20 NEAR AN AID DISTRIBUTION CENTER**

**DEIR-AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip** — The Palestinian Health Ministry in Gaza accused Israeli forces of launching an attack near an aid distribution point in war-racked northern Gaza, killing 20 people and wounding 155 others. The Israeli military said those reports "are false," adding it was assessing the event "with the thoroughness that it deserves."

The violence occurred late Thursday near the Kuwaiti Roundabout, which has been a point for the distribution of aid in north Gaza over the past weeks. The health ministry said a group waiting there for aid was hit by Israeli shelling.

The United Nations says one-quarter of Gaza's 2.3 million people face starvation, many of them in the isolated north, the largely devastated target of Israel's initial offensive in Gaza.

Bloodshed surrounding an aid convoy on Feb. 29 killed 118 Palestinians in northern Gaza. The Israeli military said some of its forces fired at people in the crowd who were advancing toward them. Witnesses and hospital officials said many of the casualties were from bullet wounds. The Israeli military said many of the casualties were caused by a stampede over the food and people being run over by the aid trucks.

Following the violence, the United States announced plans to build a temporary pier in Gaza to bring in food by sea and joined with other countries to airdrop food into the isolated north.

**AUSTRALIA RESUMES FUNDING FOR UNRWA AND PROMISES MORE AID TO GAZA**

Australia will restore funding to the United Nations relief agency for Palestinians, weeks after the agency lost hundreds of millions of dollars in support following Israeli allegations that some of its Gaza-based staff participated in the Oct. 7 attack.

The Australian government also pledged Friday to increase aid for the besieged enclave, with Foreign Minister Penny Wong expressing horror at the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza.

Australia's move follows Sweden, the European Commission and Canada in reinstating funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees, which had seen its international funding frozen while the allegations were investigated.

Speaking to reporters Friday in Adelaide, Wong also pledged an additional 4 million Australian dollars (\$2.6 million) to UNICEF to provide urgent services in Gaza, and a C17 Globemaster plane will also deliver defense force parachutes to help with the U.S.-led airdropping of humanitarian supplies into the enclave, which the United Nations says is on the brink of famine.

## Baseball superstar Ohtani and his wife arrive in South Korea for Dodgers-Padres MLB opener

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — Shohei Ohtani and his wife arrived in South Korea with his Los Angeles Dodgers teammates on Friday ahead of their season-opening games with the San Diego Padres next week.

Ohtani, wearing a black training suit and a cap backwards, was the first Dodgers player who showed up at the arrival gate of Incheon international airport, west of Seoul. His wife, Mamiko Tanaka, walked several steps behind him.

As a crowd of fans, many wearing Dodgers jerseys, shouted his name and cheering slogans, Ohtani briefly waved his hand and Tanaka smiled, but neither said anything before they took a limousine bus. Fans held placards that read like "GOATANI (Greatest Of All Time is Ohtani) GO" and "Baseball genius Ohtani."

Before departing for South Korea, Ohtani, a two-way Japanese phenomenon, revealed the identity of his wife by posting a photo of him and Tanaka, an ex-professional basketball player, on his Instagram account. Japanese media had already speculated that Ohtani's wife was likely Tanaka.

Tanaka, 27, played for the Fujitsu Red Wave in the Women's Japan Basketball League from 2019-23.

In late February, Ohtani, 29, said in his Instagram post that he was married to "a normal Japanese woman" that he had known for three to four years. But he didn't say exactly who his wife was.

In Ohtani's Instagram post, he was photographed with Tanaka in front of an airplane alongside his teammate Yoshinobu Yamamoto. The Dodgers posted a photo of the Ohtani-Tanaka couple on the team's X (formerly Twitter) account next to one of Mookie Betts and his wife.

The upcoming Dodgers-Padres games will be Ohtani's debut with the Dodgers. In December, Ohtani, who was formerly with the Los Angeles Angels, signed a record \$700 million, 10-year contract to join the Dodgers.

Ohtani underwent surgery on his right elbow last September and will not pitch this season. He will be used as a designated hitter and there is a possibility he could play in the field.

Social media in Japan and South Korea are abuzz with messages talking about Ohtani and his wife.

"So impressed to see how Ohtani opened up about his new bride, Mamiko Tanaka," one X user said in Japanese.

"Ohtani's wife is really beautiful. They are both made for each other," one X user said in Korean. Another Korean message said that "their future kid will be a super athlete."

The Padres arrived earlier Friday. The two-game series in Seoul's Gocheok Sky Dome on March 20-21 will be the first Major League Baseball regular-season games in South Korea.

Meanwhile, airport police said they detained a South Korean man who allegedly hurled an egg near Dodgers manager Dave Roberts at the airport. Police said they were trying to determine the motive for his action, but his family told investigators the man in his mid-20s has a history of mental illness.

## Ohio police confirm 2 dead in fierce storm that damaged homes and businesses in 3 states

WINCHESTER, Ind. (AP) — Police in Ohio confirmed two deaths resulting from a fierce storm system that unleashed suspected twisters and damaged homes and businesses in parts of Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana on Thursday.

Chief Deputy Joe Kopus of the Logan County Sheriff's Office in Bellefontaine, Ohio, confirmed the fatalities in an email to The Associated Press early Friday. He said there likely would be more fatalities discovered, noting there was heavy damage in Lakeview, Midway, Orchard Island and Russells Point.

The Indiana State Police said there are "many significant injuries" after a tornado tore through the community of Winchester.

"There have been many, many significant injuries, but I don't know the number. I don't know where they are. I don't know what those injuries are," Indiana State Police Superintendent Douglas Carter told reporters just before midnight Thursday. "There's a lot that we don't know yet."

Earlier in the night, state police said they were investigating reports of deaths but at the news conference Carter said there were "no known fatalities."

State officials called on Indiana Task Force One to help with search efforts in Winchester, a town of 4,700 people located nearly 70 miles (112 kilometers) northeast of Indianapolis, according to a post by the rescue team on X. The team is one of 28 Department of Homeland Security and Federal Emergency Management Agency-sponsored Urban Search and Rescue teams in the United States.

"I'm shaken; it's overwhelming," Winchester Mayor Bob McCoy said. "I heard what sounded like a train and then I started hearing sirens."

He and his wife were hunkered in a closet during the twister, which hit about 8 p.m.

"I've never heard that sound before; I don't want to hear it again," McCoy said.

The suspected tornado damaged a Walmart store and a Taco Bell in Winchester, Randolph County Sheriff Art Moystner told FOX59/CBS4. Travel throughout the county is restricted to emergency management workers only, he said.

To the west of Winchester, in Delaware County, emergency management officials said initial assessments suggested up to half of the structures in the small town of Selma were damaged by a possible tornado.

"We are relieved to report that only minor injuries have been reported thus far, with one individual transported to the hospital for treatment," the Delaware County Emergency Management Agency said in a news release. About 750 people live in Selma.

At about the same time as the tornado hit Winchester, another suspected twister touched down about 75 miles (120 miles) to the east in Logan County, Ohio. The tornado hit near the southern end of Indian Lake, impacting the villages of Lakeview and Russells Point, county spokesperson Sheri Timmers said.

"As far as we know, we have lots of injuries. We don't know the extent of the injuries," Timmers said. "An RV park was impacted."

Multiple buildings in the Indian Lake area were damaged, but the full extent of the destruction was still being assessed as emergency crews searched the area, Timmers said.

Amber Fagan, president and chief executive of the Indian Lake Area Chamber of Commerce, said Lakeview was "completely demolished," with homes, campgrounds and a laundromat hard-hit by the tornado.

"There's places burning," she said. "There's power lines through people's windows."

A shelter was opened for displaced people.

In Ohio's Huron County, emergency management officials posted on Facebook that there was a "confirmed large and extremely dangerous tornado" near Plymouth, some 75 miles (120 kilometers) northeast of Indian Lake.

Earlier, storms damaged homes and trailers in the Ohio River communities of Hanover and Lamb in Indiana.

The Ohio governor's office said they did not have any information about fatalities in the state.

Jefferson County Sheriff Ben Flint said storms destroyed three or four single-family homes and four or five other structures and demolished several uninhabited campers along the river.



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"We were fortunate that no one was injured," Flint told the AP in a telephone interview.

Sgt. Stephen Wheelers of the Indiana State Police earlier said another suspected tornado struck Jefferson County, damaging several homes and downing trees and power lines.

He posted photos on X showing one home with its roof torn off and another missing roof shingles as well as an image of a baseball-sized hailstone.

Around 2,000 Duke Energy customers in Hanover lost power at one point during the storms, the company reported.

In Kentucky, Trimble County Emergency Management Director Andrew Stark said the storms damaged at least 50 structures, including homes.

"We have a whole bunch of damage," Stark told the Courier Journal of Louisville.

Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear issued a statement saying a tornado touched down along the Indiana state border in Gallatin and Trimble counties and there were reports of a couple of minor injuries. He urged Kentuckians to stay aware of the weather as more storms were expected across the state Thursday evening and overnight.

"It does appear that there is some really significant damage, especially to the town of Milton in Trimble County," Beshear said. "We think there are over 100 structures that are potentially damaged."

The state's emergency operations center was activated to coordinate storm response, Beshear said.

Indiana Gov. Eric Holcomb posted on Facebook Thursday night that the Indiana Department of Homeland Security is monitoring the current weather situation.

"Severe weather has impacted Hoosiers all across the state, and we have emergency response personnel in the impacted areas," he wrote.

The Indiana Department of Homeland Security posted on Facebook that their staff are on scene in Randolph County, home to Winchester, working with locals and that the State Emergency Operations Center has been activated to an enhanced staffing level to respond to the storm.

A Facebook post on the Winchester Community High School page said all the schools in that school district would be closed on Friday. Another post said the high school had electricity and was open for emergency use for people who "need somewhere warm and dry."

Large pieces of hail also was reported in parts of the St. Louis area Thursday afternoon.

There were unconfirmed reports of tornadoes in Jefferson County, Missouri, and Monroe County, Illinois, but no immediate reports of damage.

Severe weather was possible into Thursday night from northeast Texas to Indiana and Ohio, the National Weather Service said on X.

## **Using coercion, Russia has successfully imposed its citizenship in Ukraine's occupied territories**

By LORI HINNANT, VASILISA STEPANENKO, SAMYA KULLAB and HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — He and his parents were among the last in their village to take a Russian passport, but the pressure was becoming unbearable.

By his third beating at the hands of the Russian soldiers occupying Ukraine's Kherson region, Vyacheslav Ryabkov caved. The soldiers broke two of his ribs, but his face was not bruised for his unsmiling passport photo, taken in September 2023.

It wasn't enough.

In December, they caught the welder on his way home from work. Then one slammed his rifle butt down on Ryabkov's face, smashing the bridge of his nose.

"Why don't you fight for us? You already have a Russian passport," they demanded. The beating continued as the 42-year-old fell unconscious.

"Let's finish this off," one soldier said. A friend ran for Ryabok's mother.

Russia has successfully imposed its passports on nearly the entire population of occupied Ukraine by making it impossible to survive without them, coercing hundreds of thousands of people into citizenship

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ahead of elections Vladimir Putin has made certain he will win, an Associated Press investigation has found. But accepting a passport means that men living in occupied territory can be drafted to fight against the same Ukrainian army that is trying to free them.

A Russian passport is needed to prove property ownership and keep access to health care and retirement income. Refusal can result in losing custody of children, jail – or worse. A new Russian law stipulates that anyone in the occupied territories who does not have a Russian passport by July 1 is subject to imprisonment as a “foreign citizen.”

But Russia also offers incentives: a stipend to leave the occupied territory and move to Russia, humanitarian aid, pensions for retirees, and money for parents of newborns – with Russian birth certificates.

Every passport and birth certificate issued makes it harder for Ukraine to reclaim its lost land and children, and each new citizen allows Russia to claim a right – however falsely – to defend its own people against a hostile neighbor.

The AP investigation found that the Russian government has seized at least 1,785 homes and businesses in the Donetsk and Zaporizhzhia regions alone. Ukraine’s Crimean leadership in exile reported on Feb. 25 that of 694 soldiers reported dead in recent fighting for Russia, 525 were likely Ukrainian citizens who had taken Russian passports since the annexation.

AP spoke about the system to impose Russian citizenship in occupied territories to more than a dozen people from the regions, along with the activists helping them to escape and government officials trying to cope with what has become a bureaucratic and psychological nightmare for many.

Ukraine’s human rights ombudsman, Dmytro Lubinets, said “almost 100% ... of the whole population who still live on temporary occupied territories of Ukraine” now have Russian passports.

Under international law dating to 1907, it is forbidden to force people “to swear allegiance to the hostile Power.” But when Ukrainians apply for a Russian passport, they must submit biometric data and cell phone information and swear an oath of loyalty.

“People in occupied territories, these are the first soldiers to fight against Ukraine,” said Kateryna Rashesvska, a lawyer who helped Ukraine bring a war crimes case against Putin before the International Criminal Court. “For them, it’s logical not to waste Russian people, just to use Ukrainians.”

## CHANGING THE LAW

The combination of force and enticement when it comes to Russian passports dates to the annexation of Crimea in 2014. Russian citizenship was automatically given to permanent residents of Crimea and anyone who refused lost rights to jobs, health care and property.

Nine months into the Russian occupation of the peninsula, 1.5 million Russian passports had been issued there, according to statistics issued by the Russian government in 2015. But Ukrainians say it was still possible to function without one for years afterward.

Beginning in May 2022, Russia passed a series of laws to make it easier to obtain passports for Ukrainians, mostly by lifting the usual residency and income requirements. In April 2023 came the punishment: Anyone in the occupied territories who did not accept Russian citizenship would be considered stateless and required to register with Russia’s Internal Affairs Ministry.

Russian officials threatened to withhold access to medical care for those without a Russian passport, and said one was needed to prove property ownership. Hundreds of properties deemed “abandoned” were seized by the Russian government.

“You can see it in the passport stamps: If someone got their passport in August 2022 or earlier, they are most certainly pro-Russian. If a passport was issued after that time – it was most certainly forced,” said Oleksandr Rozum, a lawyer who left the occupied city of Berdyansk and now handles the bureaucratic gray zone for Ukrainians under occupation who ask for his help, including property records, birth and death certificates and divorces.

The situation is different depending on the whims of the Russian officials in charge of a particular area, according to interviews with Ukrainians and a look at the Telegram social media accounts set up by occupation officials.

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In an interview posted recently, Yevgeny Balitsky, the Moscow-installed governor in Zaporizhzhia, said anyone who opposed the occupation was subject to expulsion. "We understood that these people could not be won over and that they would have to be dealt with even more harshly in the future," he said. Balitsky then alluded to making "some extremely harsh decisions that I will not talk about."

Even children are forced to take Russian passports.

A decree signed Jan. 4 by Putin allows for the fast-tracking of citizenship for Ukrainian orphans and those "without parental care," who include children whose parents were detained in the occupied territories. Almost 20,000 Ukrainian children have disappeared into Russia or Russian-held territories, according to the Ukrainian government, where they can be given passports and be adopted as Russian citizens.

"It's about eradication of identity," said Rashevskya, the lawyer involved in the war crimes case.

Natalia Zhyvohliad, a mother of nine from a suburb of Berdyansk, had a good idea of what was in store for her children if she stayed.

Zhyvohliad said about half her town of 3,500 people left soon after for Ukrainian-held lands, some voluntarily and some deported through the frontlines on a 40-kilometer (25-mile) walk. Others welcomed the occupation: Her goddaughter eagerly took Russian citizenship, as did some of her neighbors.

But she said plenty of people were like her – those the Russians derisively call "waiters": People waiting for a Ukrainian liberation. She kept her younger children, who range in age from 7 to 18, home from school and did her best to teach them in Ukrainian. But then someone snitched, and she was forced to send them to the Russian school.

At all hours, she said, soldiers would pound on her door and ask why she didn't have a passport yet. One friend gave in because she needed medicine for a chronic illness. Zhyvohliad held out through the summer, not quite believing the threats to deport her and send her brood to an orphanage in Russia or to dig trenches.

Then last fall, the school headmaster forced her 17-year-old and 18-year-old sons to register for the draft and ordered them to apply for passports in the meantime. Their alternative, the principal said, was to explain themselves to Russia's internal security services.

By the end of 2023, at least 30,000 Crimean men had been conscripted to serve in the Russian military since the peninsula was annexed, according to a UN report. It was clear to Zhyvohliad what her boys risked.

With tears in her eyes and trembling legs, she went to the passport office.

"I kept a Ukrainian flag during the occupation," she said. "How could I apply for this nasty thing?"

She hoped to use it just once — at the last Russian checkpoint before the crossing into Ukrainian-held territory.

When Zhyvohliad reached what is known as the filtration point at Novoazovsk, the Russians separated her and her two oldest boys from the rest of the children. They had to sign an agreement to pass a lie detector. Then Zhyvohliad was pulled aside alone.

For 40 minutes, they went through her phone, took fingerprints and photos and questioned her, but they ultimately let her through. The children were waiting for her on the other side. She misses her home but doesn't regret leaving.

"I waited until the last moment to be liberated," she said. "But this thing with my kids possibly being drafted was the last straw."

## WEAPONIZING HEALTH CARE

Often the life-or-death decision is more immediate.

Russian occupation officials have said the day is coming soon when only those with Russian passports and the all-important national health insurance will be able to access care. For some, it's already here.

The international organization Physicians for Human Rights documented at least 15 cases of people being denied vital medical care in occupied territories between February 2023 and August 2023 because they lacked a Russian passport. Some hospitals even featured a passport desk to speed the process for desperate patients. One hospital in Zaporizhzhia oblast was ordered to close because the medical staff refused to accept Russian citizenship.

Alexander Dudka, the Russian-appointed head of the village of Lazurne in the Kherson region, first

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threatened to withhold humanitarian aid from residents without Russian citizenship. In August, he added medicine to the list of things the "waiters" would no longer have access to.

Residents, he said in the video on the village Telegram channel, "must respect the country that ensures their safety and which is now helping them live."

As of Jan. 1, anyone needing medical care in the occupied region must show proof they have mandatory national health insurance, which in turn is only available to Russian citizens.

Last year, "if you weren't scared or if you weren't coerced there were places where you could still get medical care," said Uliana Poltavets, a PHR researcher. "Now it is impossible."

Dina Urich, who arranges the escapes from occupied territory with the aid group Helping to Leave, said about 400 requests come in each month, but they only have the money and staff for 40 evacuations. Priority goes to those who need urgent medical care, she said. And Russian soldiers at the last checkpoints have started turning back people without the Russian passports.

"You have people constantly dying while waiting for evacuation due to a lack of health care," she said. "People will stay there, people will die, people will experience psychological and physical pressure, that is, some will simply die of torture and persecution, while others will live in constant fear."

## IMPORTING LOYALTY

Along with turning Ukrainians into Russians throughout the occupied territories, the Russian government is bringing in its own people. It is offering rock bottom mortgage rates for anyone from Russia who wants to move there, replacing the Ukrainian doctors, nurses, teachers, police and municipal workers who are now gone.

Half of Zhyvohliad's village left, either at the start of the war when things looked dark for the Kherson region or after being deported across the frontline by occupation officials. The school principal's empty home was taken over by a Russian-appointed replacement.

Artillery and airstrikes damaged thousands of homes in the port city of Mariupol, which was besieged by Russian forces for months before falling under their control. Most of the residents fled into Ukrainian-held territory or deep inside Russia. Russians often take over the property.

Russia also offered "residential certificates" and a 100,000 ruble (\$1,000) stipend to Ukrainians willing to accept citizenship and live in Russia. For many people tired of listening to the daily sounds of battle and afraid of what the future might bring, it looked like a good option.

This again follows Russia's actions after the annexation of Crimea: By populating occupied regions with Russian residents, Russia increasingly cements its hold on territories it has seized by force in what many Ukrainians describe as ethnic cleansing.

The process is only accelerating. After capturing the town of Advivka last month, Russia swooped in with the passports in a matter of days.

The neighboring Kherson town of Oleshky essentially emptied after the flooding caused by the explosion of the Kakhovka Dam. The housing stipend in Russia looked fabulous by comparison to the shelling and rising waters, said Rima Yaremenko.

She didn't take it, instead making her way through Russia to Latvia and then to Poland. But she believes the Russians took the opportunity to drive the "waiters" from Oleshky.

"Maybe they wanted to empty the city," she said. "They occupied it, maybe they thought it would be theirs forever."

Ryabkov said he was offered the housing stipend when he filled out his passport paperwork but turned it down. He knows plenty of people who accepted though.

By the time the Russian soldiers caught Ryabkov in the street, in December, everyone in his village was either gone or had Russian citizenship. When his mother arrived, he was barely recognizable beneath all the blood and the Russian guns were trained on him. She flung herself over his body.

"Shoot him through me," she dared them.

They couldn't bring themselves to shoot an elderly woman, and she eventually dragged him home. They started preparations to leave the next day.



It took time, but they made it out using the Russian passports. "When I saw our yellow and blue flag, I started to cry," he said. "I wanted to burn the Russian passport, destroy it, trample it."

## **A plan to find new leadership for Haiti is moving forward, Caribbean officials say**

By BERT WILKINSON and PIERRE-RICHARD LUXAMA Associated Press

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) — A plan to create a transitional presidential council is moving forward after a majority of Haitian parties and coalitions submitted the names of those charged with finding new leaders for the country, Caribbean officials said Thursday.

The names were provided to a regional trade bloc known as Caricom that is helping lead the transition. "It is all up now to the Haitians as they are the ones who want a Haitian-led solution," Surinamese Foreign Minister Albert Ramdin told The Associated Press. "It is for them to pick up the ball and run with it, being responsible for their own destiny."

He spoke a day after Haitian politicians and influential figures bickered publicly about the plan and what names to submit, seemingly putting creation of the council at risk.

Caribbean leaders had announced plans to create the council after meeting in Jamaica Monday behind closed doors with officials including U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken. Shortly after the meeting, Prime Minister Ariel Henry pledged to resign once the council is created.

The council will be responsible for choosing an interim prime minister and a council of ministers, as well as help organize general elections, which haven't been held in nearly a decade.

"We hope this is a breakthrough for Haiti," Ramdin said.

He said Caricom officials met Wednesday night for an update on the situation.

The names haven't been made public, although a senior Caribbean official not authorized to speak to the media told the AP that the Dec. 21 Agreement group, which backs the current prime minister, has not submitted a name.

In addition, Jean-Charles Moïse, who leads the Petit Desalin party and has allied with former rebel leader and convicted money launderer Guy Philippe, announced Wednesday that his party would not join the council despite the offer of a voting position.

The others awarded a spot on the council are EDE/RED, a party led by former Prime Minister Claude Joseph; the Montana Accord, a group of civil society leaders, political parties and others; Fanmi Lavalas, the party of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide; the Jan. 30 Collective, which represents parties including that of former President Michel Martelly; and the private sector.

Of the remaining two nonvoting positions, one would go to a representative of Haiti's civil society and the other to its religious sector.

It wasn't immediately clear what would happen to the position rejected by Moïse and his party.

U.N. spokesman Stéphane Dujarric said Thursday that the U.N. special envoy for Haiti, María Isabel Salvador, remains in contact with many key political and civil society representatives and is "encouraging them to act in the best interest of the people of Haiti to resolve this crisis as quickly as possible."

The push to create a council comes as Haiti's capital and other areas become increasingly overrun by powerful gangs that control around 80% of the capital, Port-au-Prince.

On Feb. 29, gunmen launched a series of attacks on key state institutions, including police stations, the main international airport and Haiti's two biggest prisons, where more than 4,000 inmates were freed. Scores of people have died in the attacks, and more than 15,000 people have been left homeless.

The violence has somewhat subsided, although a fire was reported Thursday at the National Penitentiary in downtown Port-au-Prince, one of two prisons attacked more than a week ago. It wasn't immediately clear if anyone was injured or killed in the blaze or how it started.

Dujarric said some of the U.N.'s 267 international staff whose presence in Haiti is not essential are being moved to the neighboring Dominican Republic to work remotely, given "the volatile security situation."

He added that other U.N. staff needed to deal with the ongoing humanitarian crisis will be going to Haiti.

The U.N. political mission announced that an air bridge was being established between Haiti and the Dominican Republic including to bring in some supplies and staff, but Dujarric said it isn't operational yet.

When the attacks began, Prime Minister Henry was in Kenya to try and secure a U.N.-backed deployment of a police force from the East African country. The deployment, however, has been put on hold. Meanwhile, Henry remains in Puerto Rico, unable to return home.

Schools, gas stations and airports remain closed in Port-au-Prince and beyond, although public transportation has resumed, and a growing number of Haitians have been seen on previously empty streets.

## **Proposed US resolution would back global efforts for an immediate and sustained cease-fire in Gaza**

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The United States circulated the final draft of a United Nations Security Council resolution late Thursday that would support international efforts to establish "an immediate and sustained cease-fire" in the Israel-Hamas war as part of a deal to release hostages taken captive during Hamas' surprise attack on southern Israel on Oct. 7.

No time has been set for a vote, and the draft, obtained by The Associated Press, could still be changed.

The U.S. circulated the initial draft on Feb. 19, a day before it vetoed a widely supported Arab-backed resolution demanding an immediate humanitarian cease-fire in the war in the embattled Gaza Strip, saying it would interfere with negotiations on a deal to free the hostages.

It was the third U.S. veto of a Security Council resolution demanding a cease-fire in Gaza, and has put President Joe Biden's administration at odds with much of the world, including many allies.

Diplomatic talks have stalled since efforts failed to produce a cease-fire before the start of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan — an informal deadline that passed without any agreement.

The Israeli military said Wednesday it will go ahead with its planned offensive in the southern city of Rafah — where 1.4 million displaced Palestinians have sought safety — and plans to move civilians toward "humanitarian islands" in the center of the territory.

The U.S. draft put "in blue" late Thursday — meaning it is in a form that can be voted on — is the fifth version of the text and makes some key changes.

The initial draft would have underscored that a temporary cease-fire "as soon as practicable" required the release of all hostages, and called for the lifting of all restrictions on the delivery of humanitarian aid. Both of these actions "would help to create the conditions for a sustainable cessation of hostilities," it said.

The final draft "unequivocally supports international diplomatic efforts to establish an immediate and sustained cease-fire as part of a deal that releases the hostages, and that allows the basis for a more durable peace to alleviate humanitarian suffering" — eliminating the word "temporary."

It also says that "the window of opportunity created by any cease-fire" should be used to intensify diplomatic efforts to create conditions "for a sustainable cessation of hostilities and lasting peace."

The initial draft said Israel's planned major ground offensive into the southern Gaza city of Rafah "should not proceed under current circumstances." That language disappeared in the final draft. Instead, in an introductory paragraph, the council would emphasize its concern that a ground offensive into Rafah "would result in further harm to civilians and their further displacement, potentially into neighboring countries, and would have serious implications for regional peace and security."

The final draft "rejects any forced displacement of the civilian population in Gaza in violation of international law."

Since Oct. 7, more than 31,000 Palestinians have been killed in the Israeli offensive, according to the Gaza Health Ministry, which doesn't distinguish between civilians and combatants but says about two-thirds of the victims were women and children.

The U.S. draft would demand that all parties comply with international law requiring protection of civil-

ians and "civilian objects," which include hospitals, schools and homes. The draft would also express the council's "deep concern about the threat of conflict-induced famine and epidemics presently facing the civilian population in Gaza, as well as the number of undernourished people," and the "catastrophic" levels of hunger.

The council would reiterate its demand for "the full, immediate, safe, sustained and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance at scale directly to the Palestinian civilian population throughout the Gaza Strip." The draft says this should be facilitated by using all available routes, including border crossings.

If the resolution is approved, it would for the first time condemn "the Hamas-led attacks of Oct. 7, 2023, as well as its taking and killing of hostages, murder of civilians, and sexual violence including rape" and condemn "its use of civilian infrastructure for military purposes and to hold hostages." It would also demand that Hamas and other armed groups immediately grant humanitarian access to all remaining hostages.

## Stanford fires men's basketball coach Jerod Haase after 8 seasons

By JOSH DUBOW AP Sports Writer

Stanford has fired men's basketball coach Jerod Haase after he finished his eighth season at the school without a single NCAA Tournament appearance.

Athletic director Bernard Muir announced the decision on Thursday night, shortly after the Cardinal finished a second straight losing season with a 79-62 loss to No. 22 Washington State in the Pac-12 quarterfinals in Las Vegas.

"I have not won here to the level that I expect," Haase said after the game in an emotional news conference. "Just like I hold my team accountable, I'm being held accountable and I have no issue with that."

Stanford went 14-18 for the season and finished in a three-way tie for ninth place in the Pac-12 with an 8-12 mark in conference. The Cardinal won their opening round game in Las Vegas against rival California but came up short against the Cougars.

Haase was a longtime assistant under Roy Williams at both Kansas and North Carolina and was head coach for four years at Alabama-Birmingham before being hired to replace Johnny Dawkins at Stanford in 2016.

Haase posted just two winning seasons on The Farm and had a 126-127 record overall, going 28-37 the past two seasons. Stanford posted a winning record in conference play only once under Haase in 2018 and never even made it as far as the Pac-12 semifinals.

"While the on-court results fell short of our expectations, Coach Haase led our men's basketball program with great integrity and made a deeply positive impact on many Cardinal student-athletes," Muir said in a statement. "As we embark on the search for our next head coach, I wish Jerod and his family all the best in the future."

The Cardinal haven't been to the NCAA Tournament since 2015 under Dawkins with the drought the longest at the school since Mike Montgomery got to the tournament in 1989 for Stanford's first appearance since winning it all in 1942.

Montgomery built a powerhouse, making 10 straight tournament trips from 1995-2004 that included a Final Four appearance in 1998 and a No. 1 ranking in three seasons.

Trent Johnson took over after Montgomery left for the NBA in 2004 and made three tournament trips in four seasons before leaving for LSU in 2008.

The Cardinal have made the tournament just once since then under Dawkins and Haase.

The new coach will have the tough task of taking Stanford into its first campaign in the Atlantic Coast Conference next season with tougher competition and more difficult cross-country travel, as well as dealing with issues facing all of major college sports from the transfer portal and NIL.

"If the program was perfect right now, I'd still be the coach," Haase said. "It's not perfect. There need to be some advancements and improvements. ... It is an inflection point because there's so many big changes, big decisions that are going on right now. I believe Stanford is a place of great ingenuity, creativity and desire to lead. The truth is a lot of these are hard decisions, especially when you value the scholar



athlete, you value the experience, you value development of players. They're not easy conversations and they're not a lot of easy solutions."

## Why are so many voters frustrated by the US economy? It's home prices

By JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Lori Shelton can't fathom ever having the money to buy a home — and that's a major reason why so many voters feel down on the economy ahead of this year's presidential election.

Shelton, 67, drives an Uber to help pay rent in Aurora, Colorado. An advance on her pay covered her apartment's security deposit. But it also cut into her next paycheck, leaving her bank account dangerously low when the rent was due — a cycle that never seems to end.

"I'm always one step behind," said Shelton, her voice choking up. "It's a nightmare, it's a freaking nightmare right now."

The United States is slogging through a housing affordability crisis that was decades in the making. At the root of this problem: America failed to build enough homes for its growing population. The shortage strikes at the heart of the American dream of homeownership — dampening President Joe Biden's assurances that the U.S. economy is strong and underscoring the degree to which Republican Donald Trump, the former president and presumptive GOP nominee for 2024, has largely overlooked the shortage.

The lack of housing has caused a record number of renters to devote an excessive amount of income to housing, according to a Harvard University analysis. Not enough homes are for sale or being built, keeping prices elevated. Average mortgage rates have more than doubled and further worsened affordability.

In fact, the Census Bureau reported that homeownership fell slightly at the end of last year in an otherwise solid economy. If it wasn't for shelter costs, inflation — Biden's most pronounced economic problem — would be running at a healthy and stable 1.8%. Instead, it's hovering around 3.2%.

Administration officials are confident that shelter inflation will soon cool, but the damage across several years is apparent to advocates and economists.

"I've been doing housing work for 30 years — the housing affordability challenge is the worst I've ever seen in my career," said Shaun Donovan, a former secretary of Housing and Urban Development in the Obama years who now leads the nonprofit Enterprise Community Partners.

Donovan noted that this is an increasingly bipartisan challenge that could bring the political parties together. Expensive housing was once the domain of Democratic areas such as New York City and San Francisco. It's now moved into Republican states as places such as Boise, Idaho, grapple with higher prices.

"It is a first-tier issue almost everywhere," he said. "And that is changing the national politics around it in a way that I think is quite different than I've ever seen."

Mark Zandi, chief economist at Moody's Analytics, said that the outcome of the November election could ultimately depend on the path of 30-year mortgage rates.

Rates currently average about 6.74%. If they dropped closer to 6%, the odds of a Biden victory would increase. But rates moving near 8% might enable Trump to prevail, Zandi said.

"Given the current housing affordability crisis, higher rates will make owning a home completely out of reach for nearly all potential first-time homebuyers," he said. "Since homeownership is a key part of the American dream, if it appears unattainable, this will deeply impact voters' sense of the economy."

Biden, a Democrat, acknowledged the pain many are feeling in his State of the Union address earlier this month and in his budget proposal released on Monday.

The president wants to fund the building and preservation of 2 million housing units — a meaningful sum, but not enough to solve the shortage. He also proposed a tax credit worth up to \$10,000 to homebuyers.

"The bottom line is we have to build, build, build," Biden said Monday in a speech to the National League of Cities. "That's how we bring down housing costs for good."

Rapidly climbing home prices were also a festering problem under Trump, who first achieved celebrity

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status as a real estate developer. While president, Trump called for limiting construction in the suburbs. He claimed during the 2020 election that Biden's policies to spur building and affordability would "destroy your neighborhood."

During the 2018 to 2020 years of Trump's presidency, the country's housing shortage surged 52% to 3.8 million units, according to the mortgage company Freddie Mac.

The Associated Press contacted Trump's campaign for his policy plans but did not get a response. The America First Policy Institute, a think tank promoting Trump's vision, said the key is to cut government borrowing to reduce mortgage rates.

"The best way for us to improve access to homeownership for young people is to get interest rates back down, not to provide subsidies that cause housing unaffordability to worsen," said Mike Faulkender, chief economist at the institute.

Lower rates might play well with voters, but most economists say they would at best offer temporary financial relief. Purchase prices would likely adjust upward in response to greater demand from falling rates.

Construction, the more enduring solution, would take years to achieve and require new rules by states and cities. The administration is trying to incentivize zoning changes, but the major choices are outside the White House's control.

"Even as incomes are going up and the economy is doing well and inflation is coming down, people can't buy homes," said Daryl Fairweather, chief economist at the brokerage Redfin. "That's like the biggest problem for Biden because it's not one that he can solve."

The general rule of thumb is that people should pay no more than 30% of their income on rent or a mortgage. A typical household looking to buy a home would have to devote 41% of its income to mortgage payments, according to Redfin.

There are far-reaching economic risks because of this. High housing costs can lead people to cut back spending elsewhere. Advocates said it enables landlords to neglect their properties since there is always a ready tenant.

Evictions can worsen health and educational outcomes for children and exact an even wider cost on society, said Zach Neumann, a Denver-based lawyer who provides more than \$30 million annually in rental assistance through the nonprofit Community Economic Defense Project.

The cumulative costs of evicting poorer renters are "\$20,000 to \$30,000 a year when you include shelter nights and emergency room visits," Neumann said. "It's really overwhelming when you think about the total numbers and these folks are fighting to have a roof over their heads."

While there is bipartisan agreement on the need for more housing, there has yet to be a significant plan that has passed the House and Senate. Biden has proposed housing aid throughout his administration that never materialized.

"Had Congress passed some of the investments that the president has called for since the beginning of the administration, had they done that three years ago, as he was advocating, we'd have affordable units coming online right now," said Daniel Hornung, deputy director of the White House National Economic Council.

But Mark Calabria, who was director of the Federal Housing Finance Agency during the Trump administration, said that many of the federal tools to increase housing such as the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit could further push up demand without adding enough construction.

"My worry would be we've done a number of things that increased demand when the problem is supply," said Calabria, now an adviser with the libertarian Cato Institute.

But for renters such as Lori Shelton in Colorado, the debate about how to add housing supply is cold comfort when she owes rent now. She's previously dealt with the threat of eviction and late fees. She gets some rent money from her son, but she has also relied at times on her church to cover the \$2,399 a month.

"I don't think the majority of us have that savings account," she said. "If you spend that much on your rent and your groceries and your car and your bills, you don't have much for a fallback."

## These Republicans won states that Trump lost in 2020. Their endorsements are lukewarm (or withheld)

By BILL BARROW Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp will back his fellow Republicans' presidential ticket in November. That does not mean he will cheerlead for former President Donald Trump or even endorse him by name.

"I'm going to support the nominee," Kemp told reporters this week after Trump won his state's primary on his way to clinching the GOP nomination.

Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin, once a favorite potential presidential candidate for anti-Trump Republicans, officially endorsed the former president last week. But he did so only after Trump won the Virginia primary on Super Tuesday. And Virginia Lt. Gov. Winsome Earle-Sears, one of the nation's highest-ranking Black Republicans, still won't endorse him.

"Everybody has to make their own decision," she told reporters after Trump's victory. She then cited an Old Testament verse, Hosea 8:4, that reads in part, "They have set up kings, but not by me."

While Trump coasted to his third consecutive Republican nomination, his domination of the party isn't seamless. Some high-profile members of his party, particularly in swing states full of voters skeptical of Trump, are trying to keep their distance while preserving their own futures.

For figures like Kemp and Youngkin who could make their own presidential bids in four years, that means careful positioning intended to satisfy enough Trump backers without alienating voters repelled by the former president. For Trump, it means a rockier road to winning coalitions in battleground states he lost to Biden in 2020 and Kemp and Youngkin won since, proceeding to enact policies popular with the right.

"He's the King Kong of Republican politics," Whit Ayres, who worked for Florida Sen. Marco Rubio's presidential campaign in 2016, said in an interview leading up to Trump officially securing the nomination. But, Ayres said, that's not the same thing as unifying the party and expanding the coalition in a general election.

A Trump campaign spokesman did not respond to an Associated Press inquiry about how the former president plans to build party unity or seek more endorsements ahead of November.

Trump heads into a rematch with President Joe Biden facing a contingent of Republican dissenters, many of whom backed former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley before she dropped out after Super Tuesday. Haley ran above her statewide margins throughout the primary in areas with lots of suburban voters and college graduates, highlighting Trump's enduring weaknesses with those groups.

Haley won 35% of Virginia's primary vote. And nearly 78,000 people in Georgia — about 13% of the total vote — chose her in Tuesday's primary, though early voting was open before she dropped out.

Haley declined to endorse Trump as she suspended her campaign and instead urged him to try "bringing people into your cause, not turning them away."

Trump "has to earn the votes of people who have moved away from the party," said Eric Tanenblatt, a national GOP fundraiser who backed Haley over Trump.

Tanenblatt said he sees "no evidence" so far that Trump or his team are reaching out aggressively to court skeptical Republicans, and he argued that successful Republican elected officials are well-positioned to let 2024 play out on their own terms.

In 2021, a year after Biden won Virginia by double digits, Youngkin maintained Trump's advantage across rural areas and small towns but flipped enough Biden voters in more urban and suburban areas. In Georgia, Trump underperformed in the Atlanta suburbs, helping Biden win statewide by less than 12,000 votes out of 5 million cast. Two years later, Kemp romped to a 7.5-point reelection victory, outperforming Trump's marks across the state.

Kemp, for his part, seems to have settled on how to navigate his party's divided politics: hammer Biden, focus on Georgia and talk about the future.

"It doesn't really matter who our nominee is or would have been — my goal is to make sure we're keeping our legislative majorities," Kemp said this week, making clear that his top electoral priority is his own state.

Like Trump, Kemp has been especially animated about immigration, especially since Laken Riley, a nurs-



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ing student, was killed in Athens, Georgia, prompting authorities to charge a man they say came into the U.S. illegally from Venezuela.

"The president had control of the House and the Senate from 2020 to 2022 and did nothing about the border, and we were complaining just as much then as we are now," Kemp said this week, chiding Biden for using his State of the Union to remind voters that Senate Republicans stymied a border security deal.

But Kemp remains dismissive of Trump's continued lies that his loss was somehow rigged, saying often that Republicans "don't need to be looking in the rearview mirror" or "complaining about the 2020 election." He typically skips naming Trump when offering that advice, too.

The governor and the former president have had an uneasy relationship since Kemp rejected Trump's pressure to help overturn Biden's victory in Georgia — a campaign for which the former president now faces a racketeering indictment in Fulton County.

"We got to give people a reason to vote for us, not just be against the other candidate," Kemp said. Of course, when asked explicitly why he would support Trump after how aggressively the former president skewered him after 2020, Kemp pivoted to the opposition. "Well, I think he'd be better than Joe Biden," Kemp said. "It's as simple as that."

Youngkin was a bit more complimentary. In his endorsement, Youngkin praised Trump's record on taxes, immigration and the economy and said "it's time to unite around strong leadership and policies that grow our great nation, not four more years of President Biden."

Still, that argument came in a written statement issued by Youngkin's political action committee and circulated on social media, not in a live event with voters or where the governor could take questions.

Whether or not Trump wins in November, Republicans who distance themselves from him now may have to placate Trump's most ardent fans in a future presidential primary.

Rose McDonald, an 87-year-old who voted Tuesday for Trump in the northern suburbs of Atlanta, insisted "there were things that happened that we know weren't right with all those mail votes." Federal and state investigations have found no evidence of tampering with mail-in ballots that could have swung the election.

"I'm mostly satisfied with Kemp," she said. "Mostly — I still think he was a chicken in 2020 for not letting Trump challenge the election."

Kemp believes his political organization, even if it stays focused exclusively on legislative races, will prove his value and loyalty to the party.

"My belief is if we do that well as Republicans and tell people what we're for and stay focused on the future, we'll have a great night," Kemp said, "and that'll be all the way up and down the ticket."

## Colorado snow storm knocks out power for thousands even as I-70 reopens

By COLLEEN SLEVIN and THOMAS PEIPERT Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — A major storm dumped heavy snow in Colorado on Thursday — forcing flight cancellations and shutting down a highway that connects Denver to Colorado ski resorts for much of the day, stranding some people in their cars for hours.

The storm comes as other parts of the country face severe weather. Massive chunks of hail pelted parts of Kansas and Missouri on Wednesday night, with storms unleashing possible tornadoes in Kansas. Earlier this month, a blizzard dumped more than 10 feet (3 meters) of snow on a northern California ski resort.

The Colorado storm, which began Wednesday night, delivered the slushy, wet snow typical for March, one of the snowiest months in Denver, and wasn't expected to wind down until Friday morning. The heaviest accumulations were expected in Colorado's Front Range region, where the eastern plains meet the Rocky Mountains and the vast majority of the state's population lives. Most of the snow was falling in the foothills west of Denver.

Those higher elevations had up to 3 feet (1 meter) of snow by Thursday and more than another foot was forecast by Friday morning. Denver itself got up to about 9 inches (23 centimeters) by Thursday. Up to another 10 inches were expected in the Denver area.

A mountain stretch of Interstate 70, the state's main east-west highway, closed as the storm moved in Wednesday night. Trucks, many without the tire chains required to travel the route, got stuck and blocked

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other vehicles from getting through for hours. The big rigs were towed out by the afternoon, said Sgt. Patrick Rice of the Colorado State Patrol.

Some drivers may have been stranded until I-70 reopened, he said, but no injuries were reported. The highway remains closed to trucks through noon Friday and could shut to passenger vehicles too as the storm picks up. Rice urged any drivers setting out to bring food and blankets in case they get trapped.

"We're going to continue to work at this and keep the road open the best we can," said Matt Inzeo, a spokesperson for the Colorado Department of Transportation.

While a boon to Colorado's ski industry, the extreme conditions shut down several ski resorts. The storm also closed numerous schools and government offices Thursday and Denver area schools were closed in advance for Friday.

More than 53,000 customers were without power across Colorado on Thursday primarily in metro Denver and along the Front Range, according to poweroutage.us.

But plenty of people were enjoying the snow, like Melanie Brooks, who was out walking her dogs Thursday morning in Denver.

"I'm kind of sad that I didn't make it up to the mountains because now it's tough to drive there, and I'm missing a powder day," she said.

Since the storm is the rarer kind that brings more snow to the eastern half of the state rather than the mountains, it may not do much to feed the Colorado River, which supplies water to more than 40 million people in the West.

The storm started as rain in the Denver area and turned into snow. The area was expected to get 10 to 20 inches (25 to 50 centimeters) of snow, with up to 2 feet (60 centimeters) in the western suburbs, the weather service said.

Jarmila Schultz, 77, was tackling her sidewalks in shifts as the snow continued to fall.

"I have to get out early because I have to do it like four times because it's going to snow all day," she said, noting she has cleats on her boots to prevent her from falling. "It's water, ice and it's very hard for me to lift."

But she still loves the snow.

"You know, in my time I skied, snow-shoed and did all this and I think Colorado's incredible for those type of things."

Denver deployed 36 residential plows starting at 3 a.m. Thursday with the plan to shave the top few inches of snow off streets, to help clear paths to main streets.

Tyler Barnes, a Miami native who drove a ride-share overnight, was trying snow-shoeing for the first time Thursday morning, and found it was pretty easy.

"It was really what I hoped it would be like," he said. "I feel confident I could walk a long way in these."

Denver International Airport was open Thursday, but about 800 flights were canceled with nearly 200 more delayed, according to Flightaware.com.

The snowstorm comes as other parts of the country face severe weather. Massive chunks of hail pelted parts of Kansas and Missouri on Wednesday night, with storms unleashing possible tornadoes in Kansas.

## Judge rejects bid by Donald Trump to throw out classified documents case on constitutional grounds

By ERIC TUCKER, ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and TERRY SPENCER Associated Press

FORT PIERCE, Fla. (AP) — A federal judge on Thursday rejected one bid by Donald Trump to throw out his classified documents criminal case, and appeared skeptical during hours of arguments of a separate effort to scuttle the prosecution ahead of trial.

U.S. District Judge Aileen Cannon issued a two-page order saying that though the Trump team had raised "various arguments warranting serious consideration," a dismissal of charges was not merited. The case involves boxes of records, some highly classified, that Trump took to his Mar-a-Lago estate when he left the White House.

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Cannon, who was appointed to the bench by the former president, had made clear during more than three-and-a-half hours of arguments that she was reluctant to dismiss one of the four criminal cases against the 2024 presumptive Republican presidential nominee. She said at one point that a dismissal of the indictment would be "difficult to see" and that it would be "quite an extraordinary" step to strike down an Espionage Act statute that underpins the bulk of the felony counts against Trump but that his lawyers contend is unconstitutionally vague.

The ruling from Cannon is a modest win for special counsel Jack Smith's team, which in addition to the classified documents case is pursuing a separate prosecution of Trump on charges that he plotted to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election.

But it left unanswered questions over when the case might proceed to trial and only covered one of the two motions argued in court on Thursday. A separate motion about whether Trump was permitted under the Presidential Records Act to retain the documents after he left the White House remains pending, but the judge also seemed disinclined to throw out the case on those grounds.

"It's difficult to see how this gets you to the dismissal of an indictment," she told a Trump lawyer.

Trump attended Thursday's arguments, listening intently with his hands sometimes clasped in front of him on the defense table as his attorneys pressed Cannon to throw out the case.

The hearing was the second this month in the case in Florida, which has unfolded slowly in the courts since prosecutors first brought charges last June. Cannon heard arguments on March 1 on when to schedule a new trial date — it was initially set for May 20 — but has yet to announce one and gave no indication Thursday on when she might do so. Prosecutors have pressed the judge to set a date for this summer. Trump's lawyers are hoping to put it off until after the election.

After the hearing, Trump on his Truth Social platform took note of the "big crowds" outside the courthouse, which included supporters with flags and signs who honked their car horns in solidarity with the ex-president. He again said the prosecution is a "witch hunt" inspired by President Joe Biden.

Some of Thursday's arguments centered on the 1978 statute known as the Presidential Records Act. The law requires presidential documents to be turned over to the National Archives and Records Administration, though former presidents may retain notes and papers created for purely personal reasons.

His lawyers say the act entitled him to designate as personal property the records he took with him to Mar-a-Lago in Florida and that he was free to do with the documents as he pleased.

"He had original classification authority," said defense lawyer Todd Blanche. "He had the authority to do whatever he thought was appropriate with his records."

Prosecutors countered that those records were clearly presidential, not personal, and included top-secret information and documents related to nuclear programs and the military capabilities of the U.S. and foreign countries. They say the presidential records statute was never meant to permit presidents to retain classified and top-secret documents, like those kept at Mar-a-Lago.

"The documents charged in the indictment are not personal records, period. They are not," Harbach said. "They are nowhere close to it under the definition of the Presidential Records Act."

Trump's lawyers separately challenged as overly vague a statute that makes it a crime to have unauthorized retention of national defense information, a charge that forms the basis of 32 of the 40 felony counts against Trump in the case.

Defense lawyer Emil Bove said ambiguity in the statute permits what he called "selective" enforcement by the Justice Department, leading to Trump being charged but enabling others to avoid prosecution. Bove suggested a recent report by special counsel Robert Hur that criticized President Joe Biden's handling of classified information did not recommend charges proved his point about the lack of clarity.

When a law is unclear, Bove told Cannon, "The court's obligation is to strike the statute and say 'Congress, get it right.'"

Jay Bratt, another prosecutor with Smith's team, disputed that there was anything unclear about the law, and Cannon pointedly noted that striking down a statute would be "quite an extraordinary step."

In her subsequent ruling rejecting the defense request, she cited "still-fluctuating definitions of statutory terms/phrases" along with "disputed factual issues" that could be decided by a jury.



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Trump is accused of intentionally holding onto some of the nation's most sensitive documents at Mar-a-Lago — only returning a fraction of them upon demand by the National Archives. Prosecutors say he urged his lawyer to hide records and to lie to the FBI by saying he no longer was in possession of them and enlisted staff to delete surveillance footage that would show boxes of documents being moved around the property.

Cannon has suggested in the past that she sees Trump's status as a former president as distinguishing him from others who have held onto classified records.

After the Trump team sued the Justice Department in 2022 to get his records back, Cannon appointed a special master to conduct an independent review of the documents taken during the FBI's Mar-a-Lago search. That appointment was later overturned by a federal appeals court.

On Thursday, she wrestled with the unprecedented nature of the case, noted that no former president had ever faced criminal jeopardy for mishandling classified information.

But, Bratt responded, "there was never a situation remotely similar to this one."

Trump is separately charged in a federal case in Washington with conspiring to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election. Trump has argued in both federal cases that presidential immunity protects him from prosecution, though Cannon has not agreed to hear arguments on that claim in the documents case.

The U.S Supreme Court is scheduled to hear arguments on Trump's immunity claim in the election interference case next month.

## **Trump-backed Senate candidate faces GOP worries that he could be linked to adult website profile**

By BRIAN SLODYSKO and AARON KESSLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — For Republicans eager to regain the Senate majority this year, Ohio offers a prime opportunity to pick up a critical seat.

But ahead of Tuesday's primary election, there's mounting anxiety inside the GOP that Bernie Moreno may emerge with the nomination. After vaulting into the top tier of contenders with a coveted endorsement from Donald Trump, Moreno — who has shifted from a public supporter of LGBTQ rights to a hardline opponent — is confronting questions about the existence of a 2008 profile seeking "Men for 1-on-1 sex" on a casual sexual encounters website called Adult Friend Finder.

"Hi, looking for young guys to have fun with while traveling," reads a caption on a photo-less profile under the username "nardo19672," according to an Associated Press review of records made public through a massive and well-publicized data breach of the website. Records also show the profile was last accessed about six hours after it was created.

The AP review confirmed that someone with access to Moreno's email account created the profile, though the AP could not definitively confirm whether it was created by Moreno himself. Questions about the profile have circulated in GOP circles for the past month. On Thursday evening, two days after the AP first asked Moreno's campaign about the account, the candidate's lawyer said a former intern created the account as a prank. The lawyer provided a statement from the intern, Dan Ricci, who said he created the account as "part of a juvenile prank."

"I am thoroughly embarrassed by an aborted prank I pulled on my friend, and former boss, Bernie Moreno, nearly two decades ago," Ricci said. The AP couldn't independently confirm Ricci's statement and he didn't immediately respond to messages left for him on multiple phone numbers listed to him. He donated \$6,599 to Moreno's campaign last year, according to campaign finance records.

Moreno's lawyer, Charles Harder, insisted Moreno "had nothing to do with the AFF account."

Once a premier swing state, Ohio has moved sharply to the right in recent years. Trump easily won the state in 2016 and 2020 and the GOP controls top statewide offices along with both chambers of the legislature. That has raised hopes among Republicans that Democratic Sen. Sherrod Brown won't be able to overcome the headwinds that have largely swept his party out of power in Ohio.

And with Republicans just one seat short of a Senate majority if they also win the presidency, the results

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in Ohio could have major implications for the balance of power in Washington.

The dynamics have raised the stakes for Trump, who sided with Moreno in a crowded field that includes Secretary of State Frank LaRose and state Sen. Matt Dolan. Trump is scheduled to appear alongside Moreno on Saturday at a rally in Dayton, Ohio.

In a statement, Trump spokesman Steven Cheung blamed the media for being “obsessed with anyone who supports the America First movement.”

## GOP frustration

Moreno’s potential vulnerability has sparked frustration among senior Republican operatives and elected officials in Washington and Ohio, according to seven people who are directly familiar with conversations about how to address the matter. The people requested anonymity to avoid running afoul of Trump and his allies. They described concerns surrounding Moreno’s candidacy as so acute that some party officials sought a review of data to determine his potential involvement.

That review, according to a person with direct knowledge of the matter, linked the profile to Moreno’s work email address.

The AP’s independent review reached the same conclusion. The AP obtained data from the Adult Friend Finder leak as well as information that remains publicly accessible on the company’s website. An analysis of those records show the profile was created and authenticated by someone who had access to Moreno’s work email account.

Beyond the work email, the profile lists Moreno’s correct date of birth, while geolocation data indicates that the account was set up for use in a part of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, where property records show Moreno’s parents owned a home at the time. The account’s username — nardo19672 — appears to refer to Moreno’s full first name, Bernardo, as well as the year and month of his birth in February 1967.

“This is a telling example of how this data doesn’t just go away,” said Jake Williams, a prominent cybersecurity researcher and a former National Security Agency offensive hacker who independently confirmed that Moreno’s work email address was included in a copy of the leaked data from Adult Friend Finder.

Harder also provided a statement from Helder Rosa, a former vice president for Bernie Moreno Companies, that said Ricci was an intern in November 2008 and that people in such roles had duties that included checking emails. Rosa has donated \$12,400 to Moreno’s two campaigns for Senate, according to campaign finance records. He didn’t immediately respond to a request for comment.

Moreno, 57, was born in Colombia to a wealthy family before immigrating to Florida as a child and becoming a U.S. citizen at the age of 18, according to a biography on his website. He purchased his first car dealership in 2005 and used his wealth to build an empire that came to include high-end dealerships in multiple states.

## Shifting views

And before Moreno began articulating anti-LGBTQ views during his runs for public office, he made comments that seemed to reflect acceptance of homosexuality.

When Cleveland and Akron won their bid to host the 2014 Gay Games, an Olympics-like international competition featuring LGBTQ athletes, Moreno was an enthusiastic supporter while his auto dealership company was a financial sponsor, according to an opinion article he wrote for the business publication Crain’s Cleveland Business.

“A successful Gay Games would go a long way toward boosting our images as cities that welcome all,” Moreno wrote while issuing a call for northeast Ohio’s philanthropic community to rally behind the event. “They need help to put them on. Hosting a complex multi-venue event requires a network of financial supporters and volunteers. It must be a community effort.”

During a 2016 question and answer session posted to his company’s YouTube page, Moreno noted that his eldest son is gay, while crediting the TV show “Modern Family” with changing perceptions about same-sex marriage.

“We watched these two guys and, we say: ‘You know what? They’re good guys, they’re great people. ... They are not this distorted thing that is out there.’ And I think those are the kinds of ways that you can

break down stereotypes," Moreno said during the event.

When fliers appeared on the campus of Cleveland State University in October 2017 urging gay and transgender students to commit suicide, Moreno, who was then chairman of the school's board of trustees, was the leading signer of a letter condemning the "abhorrent message" as "an attack on our whole campus."

As recently as 2020, his companies were included on a list of Ohio businesses that supported a law banning discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Leaders of Equality Ohio, a leading LGBTQ rights group in the state, said Moreno joined the campaign supporting the legislation after a conversation with the organization's leadership in 2017 during event promoting the bill.

But that all appeared to change when Moreno first ran for Senate in 2021 before bowing out of the race early. He began to distance himself from his past activism, professing to be unfamiliar with the anti-discrimination legislation, the Cleveland Plain Dealer reported at the time.

During his current Senate campaign, Moreno has accused advocates for LGBTQ rights of advancing a "radical" agenda of "indoctrination." He is endorsed by Ohio Value Voters, a group that opposes LGBTQ rights, including same-sex marriage. And his campaign's social media accounts have blasted his opponents, Ohio Secretary of State Frank LaRose and State Sen. Matt Dolan, as supporters of a "radical trans agenda."

A recent TV ad paid for by Buckeye Values, a pro-Moreno super PAC, superimposes a picture of LaRose over a rainbow flag while attacking him as "a champion for trans equality." The ad cites LaRose's past endorsement for a bill — which Moreno's company previously supported — that would have banned discrimination based on gender identity or sexual orientation.

"Can you trust Frank LaRose?" a narrator asks, while also criticizing LaRose for making favorable statements in the past about Equality Ohio, a prominent gay rights group. Moreno supported the same legislation through his companies.

Donald Trump Jr. later posted the ad to X, the social media site formerly known as Twitter, stating "I have no doubt" Ohio voters will elect "the real conservative @berniemoreno over leftwing, pro-trans Frank LaRose."

Moreno's shifting rhetoric on LGBTQ issues "is a real shame," said Maria Bruno, the public policy director for Equality Ohio, which advocates for LGBTQ rights. "Anyone who is going to be compromising their value system just to win an election, they lose a lot of credibility."

## **James Crumbley, who bought gun used by son to kill 4 students, guilty of manslaughter in Michigan**

By ED WHITE Associated Press

PONTIAC, Mich. (AP) — The father of a Michigan school shooter was found guilty of involuntary manslaughter Thursday, a second conviction against the teen's parents who were accused of failing to secure a gun at home and doing nothing to address acute signs of his mental turmoil.

The jury verdict means James Crumbley has joined Jennifer Crumbley as a cause of the killing of four students at Oxford High School in 2021, even without pulling the trigger.

They had separate trials as the first U.S. parents to be charged in a mass school shooting committed by their child. Jennifer Crumbley, 45, was convicted of involuntary manslaughter in February.

The verdicts — one each for the four victims — were read around 7:15 p.m. at the end of a full day of deliberations in Oakland County court.

James Crumbley, 47, who heard the outcome through headphones because of a hearing problem, slowly shook his head from side to side as the jury foreman said "guilty." A sheriff's deputy removed a dress tie from his neck, shackled him at the waist and returned him to jail.

Family of some of the fallen students wept quietly and gripped each other's hands in the second row of the courtroom.

Later at a news conference, county prosecutor Karen McDonald stood next to them and praised their "unwavering courage" through extraordinary tragedy and grief.

"This verdict does not bring back their children, but it does mark a moment of accountability and will



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hopefully be another step to address and end gun violence," McDonald said.

Defense attorney Mariell Lehman said James Crumbley "obviously feels terrible" about what happened at the school. He and his wife each face a possible minimum sentence of as much as 10 years in prison when they return to court April 9.

"While we are disappointed with the verdict, we know that the jury had a very difficult task in front of them," Lehman told The Associated Press.

Prosecutors focused on two key themes at the trial: the parents' response to a morbid drawing on Ethan Crumbley's math assignment a few hours before the shooting, and the teen's access to a Sig Sauer 9 mm handgun purchased by James Crumbley only four days earlier.

Ethan, 15, made a ghastly drawing of a gun and a wounded man on a math assignment and added disturbing phrases, "The thoughts won't stop. Help me. My life is useless."

But James and Jennifer Crumbley declined to take Ethan home following a brief meeting at the school, and staff didn't demand it. A counselor, concerned about suicidal ideations, told them to seek help for the boy within 48 hours.

Ethan had told counselor Shawn Hopkins that he was sad over the death of his dog and grandmother and the loss of a friend who had abruptly moved away. He said the drawing was simply his jottings for a video game and that he wasn't planning to commit violence.

But neither he, nor his parents, told school officials about the gun they had just bought, according to testimony.

Hopkins had hoped Ethan would spend the day with his parents. But when that was ruled out, the counselor felt the teen would probably be safer around others at school.

Ethan pulled the Sig Sauer from his backpack and began shooting later that same day, killing Justin Shilling, 17; Madisyn Baldwin, 17; Hana St. Juliana, 14; and Tate Myre, 16. Six more students and a faculty member were wounded. No one had checked the backpack, though a school administrator had joked about its heaviness.

"James Crumbley is not on trial for what his son did," McDonald told the jury Wednesday. "James Crumbley is on trial for what he did and for what he didn't do."

He "doesn't get a pass because somebody else" actually pulled the trigger, she said.

Hopkins told the jury that James Crumbley showed empathy toward his son during the meeting about the drawing but took no additional action.

When James Crumbley heard about the shooting, he rushed home from his DoorDash job and looked for the gun.

"I think my son took the gun," he said in a frantic 911 call.

Investigators found an empty gun case and empty ammunition box on the parents' bed. A cable that could have locked the gun was still in a package, unopened.

Ethan told a judge when he pleaded guilty to murder and terrorism that the gun was not locked when he stuffed it in his backpack.

Lehman, the defense lawyer, tried to emphasize to jurors that James Crumbley did not consent to any gun access by his son.

"He did not know he had to protect others from his son. ... He had no idea what his son was planning to do," she said.

There was no testimony from experts about Ethan's mental health, and no records were introduced. But the judge allowed the jury to see excerpts from the teen's handwritten journal.

"I have zero help for my mental problems and it's causing me to shoot up the ... school," Ethan wrote. "I want help but my parents don't listen to me so I can't get any help."

Now 17, he is serving a life sentence with no chance for parole.

After Judge Cheryl Matthews lifted a gag order that had prevented lawyers from speaking to reporters, Jennifer Crumbley's attorney, Shannon Smith, declined to comment Thursday night, saying the community needs time to heal.

The father of one victim said after the verdict that more must be done to address gun violence. "Our children are dying on a daily basis in mass murders, and we do very little about it," Steve St. Juliana said. "We complain about Second Amendment rights or we say, 'Well, there's not enough money for mental health issues.' ... We do not want any other parents to go through what we have gone through."

## Prosecutors say they're open to delaying Donald Trump's March 25 hush-money trial for a month

By MICHAEL R. SISAK, JENNIFER PELTZ and JAKE OFFENHARTZ Associated Press  
NEW YORK (AP) — New York prosecutors said Thursday they are open to delaying the start of Donald Trump's hush-money criminal trial by a month "in an abundance of caution" to give the former president's lawyers time to review evidence they only recently obtained from a previous federal investigation into the matter.

The Manhattan district attorney's office said in a court filing that it does not oppose adjourning the trial for 30 days but would fight the defense's push for a longer delay. Judge Juan Manuel Merchan did not immediately rule.

Jury selection is scheduled for March 25. The hush-money case is one of four criminal indictments against Trump, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee.

Trump's legal team said it has received tens of thousands of pages of evidence from the U.S. attorney's office in Manhattan in the last two weeks, including records about former Trump lawyer-turned-prosecution witness Michael Cohen that are "exculpatory and favorable to the defense." Prosecutors said most of the newly turned over material is "largely irrelevant to the subject matter of this case," though some records are pertinent.

Trump's lawyers want a 90-day delay, but they've also asked Merchan to dismiss the case entirely, alleging the last-minute disclosures amounted to prosecutorial misconduct and violated rules governing the sharing of evidence. That process, called discovery, is routine in criminal cases and is intended to help ensure a fair trial.

Prosecutors contend Trump's lawyers caused the problem by waiting until Jan. 18 to subpoena the U.S. attorney's office for the full case file — a mere nine weeks before the scheduled start of jury selection.

District Attorney Alvin Bragg's office said it requested the full file last year, but the U.S. attorney's office only turned over a subset of records. Trump's lawyers received that material last June and had ample time to seek additional evidence from the federal probe, the D.A.'s office said.

Short trial delays because of issues with evidence aren't unusual, but any delay in a case involving Trump would be significant, with trial dates in his other criminal cases up in the air and Election Day less than eight months away.

The defense has also sought to delay the trial until after the Supreme Court rules on Trump's presidential immunity claims, which his lawyers say could apply to some of the allegations and evidence in the hush-money case. The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear oral arguments April 25.

Arlo Devlin-Brown, a former chief of public corruption for the U.S. attorney's office in Manhattan, said prosecutors may be acquiescing to a delay because they recognize the amount of material is substantial and want to stake out a position they think Merchan will find reasonable.

"The Trump team likely views this as quite a positive on two fronts: They're getting a trove of documents, some of which may be useful, and they're getting more time," said Devlin-Brown, who is not involved in the hush-money case.

Since March 4, Trump's lawyers have received more than 100,000 pages of records from the U.S. attorney's office, including a batch of 31,000 pages on Wednesday, according to a court filing. More material is expected to be turned over in the coming days.

The hush-money case centers on allegations that Trump falsified his company's records to hide the true nature of payments to Cohen, who paid porn actor Stormy Daniels \$130,000 during the 2016 presidential campaign to suppress her claims of an extramarital sexual encounter with Trump years earlier.

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Trump pleaded not guilty last year to 34 felony counts of falsifying business records and has denied having a sexual encounter with Daniels. His lawyers argue the payments to Cohen were legitimate legal expenses and not part of any cover-up.

Trump has repeatedly sought to postpone his criminal trials while he campaigns to retake the White House. "We want delays," Trump told reporters as he headed into a Feb. 15 hearing in New York case. "Obviously I'm running for election. How can you run for election if you're sitting in a courthouse in Manhattan all day long?"

At that hearing, prosecutor Matthew Colangelo complained that Trump was attempting to use his complicated legal calendar "to evade accountability" by seeking delays.

But Manhattan prosecutors' new willingness to bump the trial comes about a week after another document dump prompted them to abandon another high-profile case in the midst of a trial — a fact Trump's lawyers hardly missed.

Three men were abruptly cleared March 6 of an alleged scheme involving the possession of handwritten drafts of lyrics to "Hotel California" and other Eagles classics. The startling turn came after prosecutors and defense lawyers were suddenly given 6,000 pages of material involving band co-founder Don Henley, his lawyers and associates.

It happened after Henley, the prosecution's key witness, apparently decided late in the game to give up his right to keep communications with his attorneys private. He and others had already testified. After defense lawyers said the material belatedly raised questions they could no longer ask him and other witnesses, prosecutors agreed to drop the case.

Trump's lawyers drew a parallel. They wrote that in his case, too, prosecutors "should have recognized that they do not have a complete understanding of their witnesses and that material existed that they needed to collect."

The deluge of evidence in Trump's case pertains to the federal investigation that sent Cohen to prison. After a decade of working for Trump, Cohen broke with him in 2018 and soon pleaded guilty to campaign finance violations related to the hush-money payments, making false statements on a bank loan application, evading taxes related to his investments in the taxi industry and lying to Congress.

Cohen went to prison for about a year before being released to home confinement because of the COVID-19 pandemic. He became an outspoken Trump foe and is poised to be a key prosecution witness against Trump. Trump and his lawyers, meanwhile, contend Cohen is completely untrustworthy.

In their case against Cohen, federal prosecutors said the hush-money payments were made to benefit Trump and occurred with his knowledge — but they stopped short of accusing Trump of directly committing a crime.

The Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel, which provides legal advice and guidance to federal agencies, has maintained that a sitting president cannot be indicted. Federal prosecutors didn't revive their investigation once Trump left the White House.

## **Top Democrat Schumer calls for new elections in Israel, saying Netanyahu is an obstacle to peace**

By MARY CLARE JALONICK and ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer on Thursday called on Israel to hold new elections, saying he believes Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has "lost his way" and is an obstacle to peace in the region amid a growing humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

Schumer, the first Jewish majority leader in the Senate and the highest-ranking Jewish official in the U.S., strongly criticized Netanyahu in a 40-minute speech Thursday morning on the Senate floor. Schumer said the prime minister has put himself in a coalition of far-right extremists and "as a result, he has been too willing to tolerate the civilian toll in Gaza, which is pushing support for Israel worldwide to historic lows."

"Israel cannot survive if it becomes a pariah," Schumer said.

The high-level warning comes as an increasing number of Democrats have pushed back against Israel



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and as President Joe Biden has stepped up public pressure on Netanyahu's government, arguing that he needs to pay more attention to the civilian death toll in Gaza amid the Israeli bombardment. The U.S. this month began airdrops of badly needed humanitarian aid and announced it will establish a temporary pier to get more assistance into Gaza via sea.

Schumer has so far positioned himself as a strong ally of the Israeli government, visiting the country just days after the brutal Oct. 7 attack by Hamas and giving a lengthy speech on the Senate floor in December decrying "brazen and widespread antisemitism the likes of which we haven't seen in generations in this country, if ever."

But he said on the Senate floor Thursday that the "Israeli people are being stifled right now by a governing vision that is stuck in the past."

Schumer says Netanyahu, who has long opposed Palestinian statehood, is one of several obstacles in the way of the two-state solution pushed by the United States. Netanyahu "has lost his way by allowing his political survival to take precedence over the best interests of Israel," Schumer said.

The majority leader is also blaming right-wing Israelis, Hamas and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas. Until they are all removed from the equation, Schumer said, "there will never be peace in Israel and Gaza and the West Bank."

The United States cannot dictate the outcome of an election in Israel, Schumer said, but "a new election is the only way to allow for a healthy and open decision-making process about the future of Israel, at a time when so many Israelis have lost their confidence in the vision and direction of their government."

At the White House, national security spokesman John Kirby declined to weigh in on Schumer's remarks, saying the White House is most focused on getting a temporary cease-fire in place.

"We know Leader Schumer feels strongly about this and we'll certainly let him speak to it and to his comments," Kirby said. "We're going to stay focused on making sure that Israel has what it needs to defend itself while doing everything that they can to avoid civilian casualties."

Israeli ambassador Michael Herzog called the speech "counterproductive to our common goals."

"Israel is a sovereign democracy," Herzog posted on X, formerly known as Twitter. "It is unhelpful, all the more so as Israel is at war against the genocidal terror organization Hamas, to comment on the domestic political scene of a democratic ally."

The speech also drew a swift reprisal from Republicans. Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell said on the Senate floor immediately after Schumer's speech that "Israel deserves an ally that acts like one" and that foreign observers "ought to refrain from weighing in."

The Democratic Party has an anti-Israel problem, McConnell said. "Either we respect their decisions or we disrespect their democracy," he said.

And at a House GOP retreat in West Virginia, House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., called Schumer's speech "inappropriate."

"It's just plain wrong for an American leader to play such a divisive role in Israeli politics while our closest ally in the region is in an existential battle for its very survival," the Republican speaker said.

Netanyahu has long had a cozy relationship with Republicans in the United States, most notably speaking at a joint session of Congress in 2015 at the invitation of GOP lawmakers to try to torpedo former President Barack Obama's nuclear negotiations with Iran. The move infuriated Obama administration officials, who saw it as an end run around Obama's presidential authority and unacceptably deep interference in U.S. politics and foreign policy.

Just this week, Netanyahu was invited to speak to Republican senators at a party retreat. But Herzog took his place due to last minute scheduling issues, according to a person familiar with the closed-door meeting.

It is unclear how Schumer's unusually direct call will be received in Israel, where the next parliamentary elections are scheduled for October 2026. Many Israelis hold Netanyahu responsible for failing to stop the Oct. 7 cross-border raid by Hamas, which killed 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and his popularity appears to have taken a hit as a result.

Protesters in Israel calling for early elections have charged that Netanyahu is making decisions based on keeping his right-wing coalition intact rather than Israel's interests at a time of war. And they say he is endangering Israel's strategic alliance with the United States by rejecting U.S. proposals for a post-war vision for Gaza in order to appease the far-right members of his government.

U.S. priorities in the region have increasingly been hampered by those far-right members of his Cabinet, who share Netanyahu's opposition to Palestinian statehood and other aims that successive U.S. administrations have seen as essential to resolving Palestinian-Israeli conflicts long-term.

In a hot-mic moment while speaking to lawmakers after his State of the Union address, Biden promised a "come to Jesus" moment with Netanyahu.

And Vice President Kamala Harris, Schumer and other lawmakers met last week in Washington with Benny Gantz, a member of Israel's War Cabinet and a far more popular rival of Netanyahu — a visit that drew a rebuke from the Israeli prime minister.

Gantz joined Netanyahu's government in the War Cabinet soon after the Hamas attacks. But he is expected to leave the government once the heaviest fighting subsides, signaling the period of national unity has ended. A return to mass demonstrations could ramp up pressure on Netanyahu's deeply unpopular coalition to hold early elections.

Schumer said that as the highest ranking Jewish elected official in the United States, he feels an obligation to speak out. He said his last name derives from the Hebrew word Shomer, or "guardian."

"I also feel very keenly my responsibility as Shomer Yisroel — a guardian of the People of Israel," he said.

Schumer said that if Israel tightens its control over Gaza and the West Bank and creates a "de facto single state," then there should be no reasonable expectation that Hamas and their allies will lay down arms. It could mean constant war, he said.

"As a democracy, Israel has the right to choose its own leaders, and we should let the chips fall where they may," Schumer said. "But the important thing is that Israelis are given a choice."

## **Russia says Ukraine has fired more missiles at a border region on the eve of election favoring Putin**

By EMMA BURROWS Associated Press

Ukraine fired at least eight missiles at Russia's Belgorod border region, killing two people and wounding 12, local officials said Thursday, as Kyiv's forces apparently kept up efforts to rattle the Kremlin on the eve of Russia's presidential election that is taking place amid a ruthless crackdown on dissent.

Also, Ukrainian forces attempted cross-border raids that were repelled in Belgorod and the Kursk region, according to local authorities. The Russian Defense Ministry claimed its troops killed 195 Ukrainian soldiers and destroyed five tanks and four armored infantry vehicles, two days after saying it killed 234 Ukrainian troops in another border assault.

It is not possible to independently verify the Russian claims. Cross-border attacks in the area have occurred sporadically since the war began and have been the subject of claims and counterclaims, as well as disinformation and propaganda.

The Ukrainian assaults on Russian territory in recent days, including long-range drone attacks and alleged incursions by Ukraine-based Russian proxies, have come as Russian President Vladimir Putin heads for near-certain reelection.

Putin has sought to persuade Russians to keep him in power against a backdrop of what he says are foreign threats to the country and as the Ukraine war stretches into its third year.

In a video released Thursday, Putin called on Russians to go to the polls, calling participation in the election a "manifestation of patriotic feeling."

Claiming that "the only source of power in our country is the people," Putin told Russians, "you must not only cast your vote, but firmly declare your will and aspirations, your personal involvement in the further development of Russia."

"Elections are a step into the future," Putin said.

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Since coming to power almost 25 years ago, Putin has eliminated nearly all independent media and opposition voices in Russia, particularly after the 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine that initially went badly wrong.

Analysts say the Kremlin is worried about low turnout during the three days of voting and needs Russians to participate to give legitimacy to Putin, who is almost certain to win another six-year term.

Sam Greene, with the Center for European Policy Analysis in Washington, called Russia's election "a sham." "The Kremlin controls who's on the ballot. The Kremlin controls how they can campaign," Greene told The Associated Press. "To say nothing of being able to control every aspect of the voting and the vote counting process."

Russia's exiled opposition are calling on Russians to protest against the election by gathering at polling stations at noon on Sunday in a signal that they don't support Putin. The event has been dubbed "Noon against Putin" and is being supported by Yulia Navalnaya, the wife of Alexei Navalny, Russia's most prominent opposition leader who died in a remote Arctic penal colony last month.

Despite Russia's early difficulties in the war, when its assault on Kyiv failed and Western countries came to Ukraine's aid by sending weapons and training troops, the Kremlin's forces now have battlefield initiative, military analysts say.

That is largely because Western aid has petered out due to European shortages and is now being held up in the United States by political differences.

The Institute for the Study of War, a Washington-based think tank, said Russian forces "have the theater-wide initiative and will be able to determine the time, location, and scale of offensive operations" on the battlefield for the moment.

The International Institute for Strategic Studies said Russia's assault is gaining momentum and the coming months are "critical to the direction of conflict."

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg on Thursday warned that delays in deliveries to Ukraine are costing lives.

"The Ukrainians are not running out of courage, they are running out of ammunition," Stoltenberg told reporters in Brussels.

While Ukraine wrestles with increasingly meager battlefield resources, Russia has significantly expanded its own weapons production and is getting ammunition from Iran and North Korea.

That bodes badly for Ukraine once Putin has likely cemented his grip on power, the think tank said in a report Wednesday.

"Over the spring and summer, Russia is likely to mount a series of major attacks designed to inflict Ukrainian casualties, push defenders westward and expand its control of occupied territories," the International Institute for Strategic Studies said.

For now, it said, "the land war looks bloody and favors Moscow."

## **As threats to Black cemeteries persist, a movement to preserve their sacred heritage gains strength**

By GIOVANNA DELL'ORTO and DARREN SANDS Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — Neglect, abandonment and destruction have been the fate of thousands of segregated cemeteries across the country where African Americans — from former slaves to prominent politicians and business owners -- were buried over many decades.

In the past few years, growing awareness and the discovery of graves underneath parking lots, schools and even an Air Force base have spurred preservation efforts among state and local governments as well as community members who want to rebuild ancestral links that are spiritually crucial.

In Washington, D.C., members of a historically Black sorority recruited an expert who helped find the 1919 burial site of one of the sorority's founders, hidden from view in an overgrown, badly neglected section of Woodlawn Cemetery.

In Miami, Jessie Wooden bought a historically segregated Black cemetery also suffering from neglect.



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He and his brother, Frank – who works as caretaker – have a powerful motive for trying to restore the cemetery: it houses the gravesite of their mother, Vivian, who died when Jessie was an infant.

“When we got here it looked like a jungle,” Frank Wooden said. “Some people had to jump the fence to get in to see their loved one.”

When sites of sacred cultural memory are desecrated, it adds additional trauma to the indignity of being segregated even in death, said Brent Leggs. He is executive director of the African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund and senior vice president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Those groups have played major roles in bringing awareness to the threats to cemetery preservation, such as vandalism, abandonment, ownership disputes and development. The groups provide technical expertise, as well as legal and preservation advocacy.

“There’s growing awareness among the public that cemeteries are not these haunted, scary places, but they are parks to be experienced as sites of reflection and commemoration,” Leggs said.

At Lincoln Memorial Park Cemetery in Miami’s Brownsville neighborhood, community members now stop by to say thanks and bring cold water to workers who are weeding, cleaning and repainting crypts, some dating to the late 19th century.

After Jessie Wooden serendipitously met an aunt when he was in his late 40s and learned about his mother’s resting place, he tried to visit but found the vast graveyard overgrown, snake-infested and surrounded by debris.

Now, when he comes to work, he walks past the crypts and spreading banyan trees to pray at his mother’s grave.

“All my life I didn’t know her. All I knew that mom was gone,” Wooden said. “For me to be able to come where she’s resting at and be able to just to say a little prayer and talk to her, oh, that means so much to me.”

Marvin Dunn, emeritus professor at Florida International University and historian of race relations in Florida, remembers childhood visits to his great-grandmother’s grave for yearly spring clean-ups, when he helped out marking the site with Coke bottles.

“It was the ritual,” Dunn said. “My grandmother, especially, would not have allowed that grave not to be cleaned once a year.”

Dunn’s great-grandmother’s burial grounds belonged to a church, and those cemeteries have been more likely to survive, he said. But where entire communities were uprooted, privately owned cemeteries on newly valuable land were often sold to developers with little to no objection – leading to hundreds of thousands of Black graves that might never be found again.

“Where we bury our dead remains a part of our history, a part of our lives, a part of our souls,” Dunn said. “Not knowing where your ancestors are at, you can’t have that connection ... And that’s a tragic loss.”

In 2022, Congress passed the African-American Burial Grounds Preservation Act as a program within the National Park Service; efforts are ongoing to ensure funding. Last year, Florida passed a bill to fund restoration of historic Black cemeteries. Dunn says the state should also help families gain access to privately owned graveyards.

“Dignity is the biggest thing,” said Antoinette Jackson, a University of South Florida professor. She leads the African American Burial Ground & Remembering Project in the Tampa area, where Black cemeteries were discovered in recent years under a corporation’s parking lot and a school’s campus.

Elsewhere in Tampa, an estimated 800 graves of Black people remain from the Zion Cemetery, founded in 1901 as the city’s first burial ground for Blacks. The Tampa Housing Authority is redeveloping a housing complex built atop some of the graves, said Leroy Moore, the authority’s chief operating officer.

Use of ground-penetrating radar confirmed the graves’ location, leading to closure of five buildings over the burial ground, relocation of 32 families and efforts to preserve the area and create a genealogy research center.

“You’ve got to know your history,” Moore said.

In Miami, the Wooden brothers are trying to restore those family and community ties one crumbling gravesite at a time.

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"People can be proud, you know, where their loved ones are buried at. And they can be ... proud to come and visit again," Jessie Wooden said as Frank painstakingly brushed dirt off a nearby crypt. "We're open, we're visiting, we're burying, I mean, we're getting things done."

In Washington, in the summer of 2018, members of the Delta Sigma Theta sorority were trying to get things done – namely to locate the final resting place of one of its 22 founding members, Edna Brown Coleman.

The tragic circumstances of Brown Coleman's death in September 1919 had been uniquely woven into the sorority's legacy. According to its lore, Edna Brown held some of the first meetings in her living room before graduating from Howard University at the top of her class.

She met and fell in love with Frank Coleman, a founder of the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, and became pregnant, but died while giving birth, along with the baby. They were buried together.

Since then, the Colemans' story has lived on. A marriage between members of the two organizations is dubbed a "Coleman Love" story. But the whereabouts of Edna's burial site remained a mystery.

To find it, the sorority tapped Marjorie Kinard, resident historian of Washington, D.C.'s alumni chapter of Delta Sigma Theta who first pledged as a student at historically Black Livingstone College in the 1960s.

"When I hung up the phone, I got right on it," she said.

Filled with wonder and excitement at her new assignment, Kinard quickly confirmed that Brown Coleman was buried at Woodlawn Cemetery, a 22.5-acre cemetery in Washington.

Opened in 1895, Woodlawn contains about 36,000 burial sites, many of them prominent Black Americans, such as Blanche K. Bruce, a U.S. Senator from Mississippi from 1875 to 1881, and playwright and educator Mary Powell Burrill.

But once volunteers opened the gates for a small contingent of sorority members to find their forebear, Kinard's awe turned to dread. The grass was overgrown, with shrubbery and weeds that hadn't been cut in months, or even years. Some tombstones were strewn about haphazardly.

Desecration is an unfortunate reality, such as in the case of Moses Macedonia African Cemetery in Bethesda, Maryland. Advocates of the Bethesda African Cemetery Coalition are mired in a legal battle to keep a developer from selling the land on which the cemetery once stood. The case is being weighed in the Maryland Supreme Court.

In the town of Roslyn, New York, on Long Island, a librarian named Carol Clarke recently found the site where members of the Salem African Methodist Episcopal Church had been reinterred after a wealthy family purchased a plot of land to build a chicken coop in 1899.

At Woodlawn, hidden beneath the shrubbery overgrown over Brown Coleman's tombstone was the revelation that the sorority founder's full name was Mary Edna Brown Coleman.

Soon it was discovered that two founders of the Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority -- Sarah Meriwether Nutter and Marjorie Arizona Hill – were also interred at Woodlawn. Kinard reached out to another sorority leader, and together they began Woodlawn Collaborative Project, an initiative designed to ensure that the grounds are never again neglected.

"We were just happy that the cemetery was alive and well," Kinard said.

## Middle East conflicts revive clash between the president and Congress over war powers

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A major deadline under the half-century-old War Powers Resolution came this week for President Joe Biden to obtain Congress' approval to keep waging his military campaign against Yemen's Houthis, in line with its sole authority under the U.S. Constitution to declare war and otherwise authorize military force.

Came, and went, in public silence — even from Senate Democrats frustrated by the Biden administration's blowing past some of the checkpoints that would give Congress more of a say in the United States' deepening military engagement in the Middle East conflicts.

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The Biden administration contends that nothing in the War Powers Resolution, or other deadlines, directives and laws, requires it to change its military support for Israel's five-month-old war in Gaza, or two months of U.S. military strikes on the Houthis, or to submit to greater congressional oversight or control.

That's left some frustrated Senate Democrats calibrating how far to go in confronting a president of their own party over his military authority.

Democrats are wary of undercutting Biden as he faces a difficult reelection campaign. Their ability to act is limited by their control of only one chamber, the Senate, where some Democrats — and many Republicans — back Biden's military actions in the Middle East.

While Biden's approach gives him more leeway in how he conducts U.S. military engagement since Hamas' Oct. 7 attacks, it risks making any crisis deeper if things go badly wrong.

James A. Siebens, leader of the Defense Strategy and Planning project at the Stimson Center in Washington, called it a "latent constitutional crisis."

The Middle East conflicts have revived what's been a long-running clash between presidents, who are the commanders in chief, and Congress, which holds the authority to stop and start wars, or lesser uses of military force, and controls their funding.

U.S. and British warships, planes and drones opened attacks on Houthi targets in Yemen on Jan. 11. Hundreds of U.S. strikes have followed. The U.S. strikes are aimed at knocking back what has been a surge of attacks by the Iran-backed Houthis, a clan-based movement that has seized control of much of northern Yemen, on international shipping in the Red Sea since the Israel-Hamas war began.

Biden formally notified Congress the next day. The administration took pains to frame the U.S. military campaign as defensive actions and not as "hostilities" that fall under the War Powers Resolution.

The resolution gives presidents 60 days after notifying Congress they've sent U.S. forces into armed conflict either to obtain its approval to keep fighting, or to pull out U.S. troops. That deadline was Tuesday.

The White House continues to insist that the military actions are to defend U.S. forces and do not fall under the resolution's 60-day provision.

Congress pushed through the War Powers Resolution over presidential veto in 1973, moving forcefully to reclaim its authority over U.S. wars abroad as President Richard Nixon expanded the Vietnam War.

Since then, presidents have often argued that U.S. involvement in conflicts doesn't amount to "hostilities" or otherwise fall under the resolution. If lawmakers disapprove, their options include pressuring the executive branch to seek an authorization of military force, trying to get Congress at large to formally order the president to withdraw, withholding funding or stepping up congressional oversight.

For Yemen, Democratic Sen. Chris Murphy is looking at introducing legislation within weeks that would authorize the U.S. campaign against the Houthis under set limits on the time, geographical range and scope. The plan has not been previously reported.

Murphy and other Democrats in Congress have expressed concern about the effectiveness of the U.S. attacks on the Houthis, the risk of further regional escalation and the lack of clarity on the administration's end game. They've asked why the administration sees it as the U.S. military's mission to protect a global shipping route.

"This is 'hostilities.' There's no congressional authorization for them," Sen. Tim Kaine, a Virginia Democrat, told a Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee hearing on obtaining congressional authorization for the U.S. strikes on the Houthis. "And it's not even close."

Asked this week what happens now that the 60 days are up, Kaine said it would be premature for Congress to consider authorizing the U.S. action against the Houthis without understanding the strategy.

Idaho Sen. James Risch, the top Republican on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, had no such doubts.

"I believe that the president has all the power that he needs under the Constitution to do what he's doing in Yemen," Risch said this week.

But it's Gaza, and the soaring death toll among Palestinian civilians, that has stirred the most protests from Congress. The Israel-Hamas war also has a far higher profile in U.S. domestic politics. While many Americans are dead-set against any cut in military support to Israel, a growing number of Democrats



have begun withholding votes from Biden in state presidential primaries to demand more U.S. action for Gaza's trapped people.

Some in Congress were frustrated early in the war that the administration bypassed congressional review to rush additional military aid to Israel, by declaring a national security emergency.

A presidential order negotiated with Senate Democrats requires Israel to certify in writing by March 25 that it will abide by international law when using U.S. weapons in Gaza and will not impede humanitarian aid to Palestinian civilians — or face a possible cut in U.S. military aid.

The United Nations has said Israeli restrictions are keeping many aid trucks from getting into Gaza. The U.S. this month began air drops and work on a sea route to get more food and other vital goods into the territory.

Some in Congress are pushing the administration to cut the military aid now, under existing federal law requiring countries that get U.S. military support to use it in compliance with international law, including by allowing humanitarian access to civilians in conflicts.

A group of Senate Democrats and independent Sen. Bernie Sanders wrote Biden this week that it was already plain that Israel was obstructing humanitarian aid to Gaza. They urged him to cut military aid immediately, absent a turnaround by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government, under existing laws on U.S. foreign assistance.

"I'm still flabbergasted" that the administration hasn't acted, Maryland Democrat Chris Van Hollen, one of the senators pushing hardest on the point, said.

## **Survivors of Mediterranean rescue say about 60 people died on the trip from Libya, aid group reports**

By COLLEEN BARRY Associated Press

MILAN (AP) — Survivors rescued from a deflating rubber dinghy in the central Mediterranean Sea have reported that some 60 people who departed Libya with them more than a week ago perished during the journey, the humanitarian rescue group SOS Mediterranee said Thursday.

The European charity's ship Ocean Viking spotted the dinghy with 25 people on board Wednesday. Two were unconscious, and were evacuated to the Sicilian island of Lampedusa, some 60 miles to the north, by an Italian Coast Guard helicopter for treatment. The other 23 were in serious condition, exhausted, dehydrated and with burns from fuel on board the boat.

SOS Mediterranee spokesman Francesco Creazzo said that the survivors were all male, 12 of them minors with two of those not yet teenagers. They were from Senegal, Mali and The Gambia.

Creazzo said the survivors were traumatized and unable to give full accounts of what had transpired during the voyage, adding that the number of missing and presumed dead was unlikely to ever be verified. Humanitarian organizations often rely on accounts of survivors when pulling together the numbers of dead and missing at sea, presumed to have died.

The U.N. International Organization for Migration says 227 people have died along the perilous central Mediterranean route this year through March 11, not counting the new reported missing and presumed dead. That's out of a total 279 deaths in the Mediterranean since Jan. 1. A total of 19,562 people arrived in Italy using that route in the period.

The survivors said the boat departed Zawiya, Libya with about 85 people on board, including some women and at least one small child. The motor broke sometime after departure, and they had been adrift for more than a week.

"These people saw many of the dear ones die," one of the rescuers, identified only as Massimo, said in a video distributed by SOS Mediterranee. "We have taken care of them. They were suffering from hypothermia, and burns from gasoline and sea water."

The Ocean Viking later Wednesday night rescued another 113 people adrift in international waters off Libya in a wooden boat, including six women and two children, after being alerted by authorities. Before the Ocean Viking's arrival, a civilian sailing vessel that was the first to arrive distributed life vests to the

people.

Ocean Viking has been directed by Italian authorities to the port of Ancona, in the central Marche region, Creazzo said.

Humanitarian groups have warned that the far-right-led Italian government's policy of assigning ports further north keeps their rescue ships out of waters where they can be saving lives. The government has typically ordered the ships to port after each rescue, punishing groups that conduct other rescues by blocking ships in port for 20 days at a time. The Ocean Viking has been subject to three such blocks over three months, the most recently from Feb. 8 until a judge lifted the block 10 days later.

## **Duty, Honor, Outrage: Change to West Point's mission statement sparks controversy**

WEST POINT, N.Y. (AP) — "Duty, Honor, Country" has been the motto of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point since 1898. That motto isn't changing, but a decision to take those words out of the school's lesser-known mission statement is still generating outrage.

Officials at the 222-year-old military academy 60 miles (96 kilometers) north of New York City recently reworked the one-sentence mission statement, which is updated periodically, usually with little fanfare.

The school's "Duty, Honor, Country," motto first made its way into that mission statement in 1998.

The new version declares that the academy's mission is "To build, educate, train, and inspire the Corps of Cadets to be commissioned leaders of character committed to the Army Values and ready for a lifetime of service to the Army and Nation."

"As we have done nine times in the past century, we have updated our mission statement to now include the Army Values," academy spokesperson Col. Terence Kelley said Thursday. Those values — spelled out in other documents — are loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity and personal courage, he said.

Still, some people saw the change in wording as nefarious.

"West Point is going woke. We're watching the slow death of our country," conservative radio host Jeff Kuhner complained in a post on the social media platform X.

Rachel Campos-Duffy, co-host of the Fox network's "Fox & Friends Weekend," wrote on the platform that West Point has gone "full globalist" and is "Purposely tanking recruitment of young Americans patriots to make room for the illegal mercenaries."

West Point Superintendent Lt. Gen. Steve Gilland said in a statement that "Duty, Honor, Country is foundational to the United States Military Academy's culture and will always remain our motto."

"It defines who we are as an institution and as graduates of West Point," he said. "These three hallowed words are the hallmark of the cadet experience and bind the Long Gray Line together across our great history."

Kelley said the motto is carved in granite over the entrance to buildings, adorns cadets' uniforms and is used as a greeting by plebes, as West Point freshmen are called, to upper-class cadets.

The mission statement is less ubiquitous, he said, though plebes are required to memorize it and it appears in the cadet handbook "Bugle Notes."

## **Supreme Court Justices Barrett and Sotomayor, ideological opposites, unite to promote civility**

By MARK SHERMAN and LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — With the Supreme Court's approval hovering near record lows, two justices have teamed up to promote the art of disagreeing without being nasty about it.

In joint appearances less than three weeks apart, Justices Amy Coney Barrett and Sonia Sotomayor, ideological opposites, said the need for civil debate has never been greater than it is in these polarized

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times. And they said the Supreme Court, where voices don't get raised in anger, can be a model for the rest of the country.

"I don't think any of us has a 'my way or the highway' attitude," said Barrett, who is promoting compromise from a position of strength as part of the high court's super-majority of conservative justices. She spoke Tuesday at a conference of civics educators in Washington.

Sotomayor, speaking at a meeting of the nation's governors in late February, said the justices' pens can be sharp but also deft in writing opinions. "There are so many, many things that you can do to bring the temperature down and to have you functioning together as a group to getting something done that has a benefit in the law," she said.

Oddly enough, Barrett used strikingly similar language to criticize Sotomayor and the other two liberal justices less than two weeks ago.

The nine justices unanimously rejected state efforts to kick Republican former President Donald Trump off 2024 ballots over his efforts to undo his election loss to Democrat Joe Biden four years ago. But the three liberals criticized the court for going too far.

"We cannot join an opinion that decides momentous and difficult issues unnecessarily, and we, therefore, concur only in the judgment," Justices Ketanji Brown Jackson, Elena Kagan and Sotomayor wrote in a joint opinion.

Barrett basically agreed with them. But she didn't like the tone.

"In my judgment, this is not the time to amplify disagreement with stridency. The Court has settled a politically charged issue in the volatile season of a Presidential election," Barrett wrote. "Particularly in this circumstance, writings on the Court should turn the national temperature down, not up."

Barrett is rarely in dissent on a court that, relatively soon after she joined, overturned abortion rights, curbed Biden administration environmental efforts, broadened religious rights, expanded gun rights and ended affirmative action in college admissions.

At 52, Barrett is the youngest member of the court. She was appointed by Trump, joining the court a little more than a month after the death of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Barrett's election year confirmation by a Republican-controlled Senate infuriated Democrats. Barrett was Trump's third high-court appointee. Four years earlier, Senate Republicans blocked President Barack Obama's Supreme Court nomination of Merrick Garland, now President Biden's attorney general, explaining that the vacancy should await the outcome of the 2016 election, eventually won by Trump.

Sotomayor, 69, has been on the court since 2009, appointed by Obama. She has written tough dissents from the decisions on affirmative action and abortion, jointly with the other liberal justices in the latter. During arguments in the abortion case, Sotomayor bitterly criticized her conservative colleagues. "Will this institution survive the stench that this creates in the public perception that the Constitution and its reading are just political acts? I don't see how it is possible," she said nearly seven months before the court overturned Roe.

Confidence in the court fell to its lowest level in 50 years following the abortion decision in June 2022, and polling done just before the court began its new term in October found little change.

The justices' appearances hark back to the traveling road show conservative Antonin Scalia and liberal Stephen Breyer put on 15 or so years ago. But Breyer and Scalia cheerfully debated their different approaches to the law. Barrett and Sotomayor acknowledge they see things differently but instead focus on their determination to disagree civilly. Sotomayor serves on the governing board of iCivics, an education nonprofit started by former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor.

"We do not interrupt one another, and we never raise voices," Barrett said at the civics conference, describing the justices' private meetings at which they talk about the cases they've just heard.

Justices speaking publicly about the court's collegiality is nothing new. But something unusual happened after the abortion decision. Some justices engaged in a public back-and-forth over the court's legitimacy, the very topic Sotomayor raised in the courtroom.

Kagan began the exchange by saying that the court risks losing its legitimacy if it is perceived as political. She returned to the theme last summer at a Portland, Oregon, appearance in which she emphasized "the



importance of courts looking like they're doing law, rather than willy-nilly imposing their own preferences as the composition of the court changes."

Kagan's comments followed a term in which the conservatives were united in the affirmative action decision and in scrapping Biden's \$400 billion plan to cancel or reduce federal student debt loans and issuing a major ruling that impacts gay rights.

But there were other major cases in which conservative and liberal justices joined to reject aggressive legal arguments from the right, including on Native American rights, immigration and elections.

The court that was partially remade by Trump will undoubtedly remain an issue this election year. Major decisions await on abortion, guns, the power of federal regulators and whether Trump can be prosecuted on charges he interfered with the 2020 election.

Most of those rulings will come down in June, as the justices race to finish their work and feelings sometimes get rubbed raw, even without any shouting.

## Here's why you might see a lot of records on the track and in the pools at the Paris Olympics

By LUCA BRUNO and ANDREW DAMPF Associated Press

ALBA, Italy (AP) — The purple pieces of vulcanized rubber track being produced at a factory in northern Italy will be run on by the world's fastest athletes at the Paris Olympics. They have been made with one clear goal.

Records.

After three world records and 12 Olympic marks were set on the track in Tokyo three years ago, expect more records to fall at the Stade de France.

That's why Mondo, the company that has provided the track at every Summer Games since Montreal in 1976, went back to the drawing board after Tokyo.

With the help of athlete feedback and extensive testing, new generation granules that are more elastic and cohesive are being used to produce the upper layer of rubber for the Paris track.

Multiple algorithms were explored before finding a more optimal shape and dimension for the air cells inside the track, which have been designed to minimize energy loss and enhance performance.

In other words, the innovations are meant to enable Olympians to run faster, jump higher and leap further. Kind of like the Olympic motto: "Faster, higher, stronger — together."

"The athletes will find this track to be more reactive and better suited for their competition," Maurizio Stroppiana, vice president of Mondo's sport division, said during a press tour at the company's factory in Alba, near Turin.

Produced in portions over two days this week and then rolled up for transport to France, the track will be installed at the Stade de France next week, weather permitting.

It will mark the third time that Mondo has installed a new track at the Stade de France, which hosted the athletics world championships in 2003.

"It's laid on the asphalt base and it's glued in place," Stroppiana said. "It's a fairly quick process. We're going to work 24 hours and overnight because of the limited time available and the weather."

Another novelty for Paris is the color of the track, which will be purple for the first time at an Olympics.

"The color was a courageous decision of the local organizing committee," Stroppiana said. "We have never done this color before. It's a light mauve and darker violet. It sort of recalls the landscape of France."

### REUSABLE POOLS

A three-hour drive across the country is the headquarters of another Italian company and supplier for big-time Olympic sports, Myrtha Pools.

Including training facilities, Myrtha is making 24 pools for swimming, diving, water polo and artistic swimming in Paris.

It's the sixth Olympics that Myrtha will be providing pools for.

For the swimming races at La Defense Arena, Myrtha is installing two temporary pools inside the rugby

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stadium — one for competition and one for warmups and training.

Stainless steel modules being produced at the Myrtha factory in Castiglione delle Stiviere near Verona will be transported to France and bolted together to form the pool walls and floors.

“(Building temporary pools) is a big advantage because this allows us to reinstall the pools after the event,” Myrtha CEO Roberto Colletto said.

For example, the pools used at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021 — when six world records were set in swimming — were reused for the world championships in Fukuoka last year and reinstalled again at local schools in Japan.

Beyond the pool walls and floors, water treatment has added significance for Olympic pools.

“Transparency of water is very important because of the underwater (TV) cameras, especially now with the high definition, they need extreme transparency,” Colletto said.

“In order to achieve this we have developed a specific filtration and water treatment system. And we also have a variable speed bump system that will accelerate or reduce the speed of the water, depending on the competition mode or non-competition mode.”

There’s also a new system designed to reduce the effects of chlorine in the water and the air that will be implemented for Paris.

So how much water does it take to fill an Olympic pool? Depending on the depth of the pools, which can range from two to three meters for swimming, between 2.5 and 4 million liters of water are needed.

“So there’s a lot of water,” Colletto said, “that needs to be poured into these pools.”

## Storm carrying massive ‘gorilla hail’ hits parts of Kansas and Missouri

By JIM SALTER Associated Press

ST. LOUIS (AP) — Massive chunks of hail pelted parts of Kansas and Missouri on Wednesday night, bringing traffic to a standstill along Interstate 70, as storms unleashed possible tornadoes and meteorologists urged residents to stay indoors.

There were three unconfirmed reports of tornadoes in Wabaunsee and Shawnee counties with reports of damaged structures, but no reports of injuries or homes damaged, according to meteorologist Matt Wolters with the National Weather Service’s Topeka office. Survey teams plan to head out Thursday to evaluate the damage, he said.

There were reports of 4-inch (10-centimeter) hail, nearly softball-size, in the town of Wabaunsee and 3-inch (7.6-centimeter) hail in Geary County near Junction City and Fort Riley, Wolters said.

Descriptions of the hail ranged from the size of golf balls and apples, to softballs and baseballs.

Alex Sosnowski, senior meteorologist at AccuWeather, previously said the predicted hail was deemed “gorilla hail” because it had the potential to be so big.

“Gorilla hail” is a term coined by Reed Timmer, a storm chaser who calls himself an extreme meteorologist, Sosnowski said. In this case, the term might fit: Some hail from north-central Kansas into north-central Missouri could be as big as a baseball.

“When you get up to tennis ball, baseball-sized or God forbid softball-sized, that can do a tremendous amount of damage, and if you get hit in the head, that could be fatal,” Sosnowski said.

Traffic came to a standstill for a time on part of Interstate 70 because of the falling hail, the National Weather Service said on X. Images of large hail chunks and at least one cracked windshield were shown on KSHB-TV.

Late Wednesday, forecasters issued tornado warnings in the areas around Topeka and to the north, while severe thunderstorm warnings were issued northeast of Kansas City in Missouri.

“If you are in this warning, get away from windows and shelter inside now!!!” the National Weather Service posted on X, formerly known as Twitter. The weather service said the storm had previously produced “softball-sized hail,” or 3.5-inch (8.9-centimeter) chunks.

The weather service also issued a severe thunderstorm watch for parts of Illinois, Iowa, Missouri and Kansas through Thursday morning, after which forecasters said the storm will move to the east.

While the hail threat lessens Thursday, meteorologists said heavy rain and high winds were still possible from northeastern Texas through central Missouri.

The biggest threat on Friday is for torrential rain — perhaps up to 4 inches (10 centimeters) in some spots — in a line from central Louisiana up through central Arkansas, Sosnowski said.

Other parts of the country also were seeing severe weather. A major snowstorm hit Colorado starting Wednesday night, closing numerous schools and government offices and shutting down sections of highways leading to the Denver area. That storm wasn't expected to wind down until Friday.

## To Ohtani's surgeon, a 103 mph fastball was a red flag, but his \$700M deal shows trust in TJ surgery

By JAY COHEN AP Baseball Writer

CHICAGO (AP) — There is no one like Shohei Ohtani in the major leagues. Just last year, the two-way star took the mound and reached 103.5 mph during spring training with the Los Angeles Angels.

It was an incredible display by Ohtani after Tommy John surgery. For the surgeon who performed the 2018 procedure, who heard about the impressive session through the Angels' staff, it was a bit alarming.

"Everybody was ecstatic," said Dr. Neal ElAttrache, the head team physician for the Dodgers. "I was maybe the only one concerned because a jump in velocity, especially after a Tommy John operation, over the course of two to three years to that magnitude is exponentially more strain and stress on the ligament."

ElAttrache's concern proved prophetic, and he operated on Ohtani's elbow again in September — this one an enhanced version of Tommy John surgery. With the 50th anniversary of the first Tommy John procedure approaching in September, ElAttrache and Ohtani are at the center of what might be the operation's most compelling case study.

The Dodgers are betting on a successful conclusion, too. They handed a record \$700 million contract to the 29-year-old Ohtani in free agency in December.

"Fifty years after the first Tommy John and 34 years after I learned how to do the operation, now a guy's having his second operation and he's not only expected to come back to (his) previous level of performance, it just so happens that he's being paid to be the best player in the history of baseball," ElAttrache said during a telephone interview with The Associated Press, "if you consider that \$700 million contract."

"And for him to stay back, because that's a long-term contract, guaranteed money," he continued. "It's remarkable the confidence that the baseball world has in this procedure at this point. And, I think, rightly so."

Following his first Tommy John procedure, Ohtani returned to the mound in July 2020. The two-time AL MVP went 34-17 with a 2.97 ERA in 76 starts for the Angels over four seasons before he got hurt again Aug. 23 against Cincinnati.

Ohtani has dodged questions about his second elbow surgery. He said at his introductory press conference with the Dodgers in December that this operation was "completely different from my first time, so I don't know what you want to call it. You could probably talk to my doctor about that."

ElAttrache described Ohtani's second operation as a hybrid procedure involving an internal brace — adding braided suture to repair the torn ligament — as well as the insertion of the tendon like what is done in a traditional Tommy John surgery.

The hybrid approach, combining the ligament replacement originated by Dr. Frank Jobe with the artificial internal brace developed by Dr. Jeffrey R. Dugas, was developed by Texas Rangers team physician Dr. Keith Meister.

"He and I are both doing the same thing, same philosophy, in adding braided suture to repair and enhance the existing torn ligament as well as putting in the new graft," ElAttrache said. "So you're getting all the benefits of an augmented what's called internal brace, where you're putting suture in to brace the elbow. I like to put that suture in the native tissue because then I know it's perfectly anatomic and it'll tighten at exactly the right time."

Ohtani is the biggest name on a short list of big league pitchers who have had the hybrid procedure. One of them is Tyler Glasnow, a 6-foot-8 right-hander who signed a \$136.5 million, five-year contract with



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the Dodgers after he was acquired in a trade.

Ohtani will be limited to hitting duties during his first season with the Dodgers, but his road back to a big league mound could include a major moment on the anniversary of the first Tommy John procedure.

"It just so happens that, if he goes along with the throwing program as we have it scheduled, he'll be throwing his first simulated game the last week of September," ElAttrache told the AP. "Tommy John's operation 50 years ago was September 25th, 1974. So Ohtani will be throwing his first sim game 50 years almost to the date of the first Tommy John, which is pretty wild."

## Today in History: March 15, Julius Caesar is assassinated

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, March 15, the 75th day of 2024. There are 291 days left in the year.

Today's highlight in history:

On March 15, 44 B.C., Roman dictator Julius Caesar was assassinated by a group of nobles that included Brutus and Cassius.

On this date:

In 1493, Italian explorer Christopher Columbus arrived back in the Spanish harbor of Palos de la Frontera, two months after concluding his first voyage to the Western Hemisphere.

In 1820, Maine became the 23rd state.

In 1917, Czar Nicholas II abdicated in favor of his brother, Grand Duke Mikhail Alexandrovich, who declined the crown, marking the end of imperial rule in Russia.

In 1919, members of the American Expeditionary Force from World War I convened in Paris for a three-day meeting to found the American Legion.

In 1944, during World War II, Allied bombers again raided German-held Monte Cassino.

In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson, addressing a joint session of Congress, called for new legislation to guarantee every American's right to vote; the result was passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

In 1972, "The Godfather," Francis Ford Coppola's epic gangster movie based on the Mario Puzo novel and starring Marlon Brando and Al Pacino, premiered in New York.

In 1977, the situation comedy "Three's Company," starring John Ritter, Joyce DeWitt and Suzanne Somers, premiered on ABC-TV.

In 2005, former WorldCom chief Bernard Ebbers was convicted in New York of engineering the largest corporate fraud in U.S. history. (He was later sentenced to 25 years in prison.)

In 2011, the Syrian civil war had its beginnings with Arab Spring protests across the region that turned into an armed insurgency and eventually became a full-blown conflict.

In 2012, convicted former Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich (blah-GOY'-uh-vich) walked into a federal prison in Colorado, where the 55-year-old Democrat began serving a 14-year sentence for corruption. (He was released in February 2020 after President Donald Trump commuted his sentence.)

In 2018, a pedestrian bridge that was under construction collapsed onto a busy Miami highway, crushing vehicles beneath massive slabs of concrete and steel; six people died and 10 were injured.

In 2019, a gunman killed 51 people at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, streaming the massacre live on Facebook. (Brenton Tarrant, an Australian white supremacist, was sentenced to life in prison without parole after pleading guilty to 51 counts of murder and other charges.)

In 2020, the Federal Reserve took massive emergency action to help the economy withstand the coronavirus by slashing its benchmark interest rate to near zero and saying it would buy \$700 billion in treasury and mortgage bonds. After initially trying to keep schools open, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio said the nation's largest public school system would close in hopes of curbing the spread of the virus.

In 2021, actor Yaphet Kotto, whose films included "Midnight Run," the James Bond movie "Live and Let Die" and "Alien," died in the Philippines at 81.

In 2022, Russia stepped up its bombardment of the Ukrainian capital Kyiv, while an estimated 20,000

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civilians fled the desperately encircled port city of Mariupol by way of a humanitarian corridor.

In 2023, the American Kennel Club announced that the French bulldog had become the most popular breed in the U.S., overtaking the Labrador retriever, which had been on top for more than three decades.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Judd Hirsch is 89. Jazz musician Charles Lloyd is 86. Rock musician Phil Lesh is 84. Singer Mike Love (The Beach Boys) is 83. Rock singer-musician Sly Stone is 81. Rock singer-musician Howard Scott (War; Lowrider Band) is 78. Rock singer Ry Cooder is 77. Actor Frances Conroy is 71. Actor Craig Wasson is 70. Rock singer Dee Snider (Twisted Sister) is 69. Actor Joaquim de Almeida is 67. Actor Park Overall is 67. Movie director Renny Harlin is 65. Model Fabio is 63. Singer Sananda Maitreya is 62. Rock singer Bret Michaels (Poison) is 61. R&B singer Rockwell is 60. Actor Chris Bruno is 58. Actor Kim Raver is 57. Rock singer Mark McGrath (Sugar Ray) is 56. Rock musician Mark Hoppus is 52. Country singer-musician Matt Thomas (Parmalee) is 50. Actor Eva Longoria is 49. Rapper-musician will.i.am (Black Eyed Peas) is 49. Rock DJ Joseph Hahn (Linkin Park) is 47. Rapper Young Buck is 43. Actor Sean Biggerstaff is 41. Actor Kellan Lutz is 39. Actor Caitlin Wachs is 35.