

# Groton Daily Independent

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## Friday, April 5

Senior Menu: Spanish rice with hamburger, green beans, vanilla pudding with mandarin oranges, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Bagel bites.

School Lunch: Hamburgers, fries.

## Saturday, April 6

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.

Dueling Duo at the Legion 6 p.m.

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



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*Strong people stand up for themselves, but stronger people stand up for others.*

-Suzy Kassem

## Sunday, April 7

POPS Concert 2 p.m. and 5 p.m.

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.; Sunday School, 10:15 a.m.; Choir, 6 p.m.

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

NSU Soccer Camp at the Groton soccer field, 2-5 p.m.

**OPEN:** Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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# 1440

In partnership with [smartasset™](#)

Its 1974 release launched King's decadeslong influential literary career in horror and beyond.

Almost 700,000 customers were without power across the Northeast yesterday as a powerful storm system brought high winds and more than 2 feet of snow to some locations in the region. Three people were killed in separate incidents after trees fell on their vehicles.

The women's NCAA Final Four tips off tonight, with No. 1 South Carolina set to take on No. 3 NC State (7 pm ET, ESPN), followed by No. 1 Iowa facing No. 3 Connecticut (9:30 pm ET, ESPN).

Today marks 50 years since Stephen King's debut novel, "Carrie."

## Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Kiss to sell entire music catalog and intellectual property rights to Swedish company Pophouse for over \$300M. Jay-Z's Made in America festival canceled for second straight year.

Christopher Durang, Tony Award-winning playwright and Pulitzer Prize finalist, dies at 75.

Oakland A's will temporarily relocate to Sacramento, California, after this season before final relocation to Las Vegas in 2028.

## Science & Technology

NASA selects three companies to submit designs for moon buggies to be used by astronauts stationed at a lunar base planned as part of the Artemis mission. Most precise measurement of universal expansion to date confirms current theory to within 1%.

Amphibians emit high-pitched screams outside the frequency of human hearing to ward off predators, new study suggests.

Genetic analysis of the sunflower family tree reveals flower symmetry evolved independently in different species of the plants.

## Business & Markets

US stock markets close lower (S&P 500 -1.2%, Dow -1.4%, Nasdaq -1.4%) as Federal Reserve official casts doubt on any interest rate cuts this year; oil prices continue climbing to highest levels since October. US jobs report today expected to show 3.8% unemployment rate in March, down from 3.9% in February.

Alphabet reportedly considering buying marketing software platform HubSpot, with a \$35B market value, in what would be its largest purchase ever. Google reportedly considering launching a paid subscription service for Google searches using AI.

Disney Plus to crack down on password sharing in June, following example from Netflix, with plans to extend to all 150 million subscribers by September.

## Politics & World Affairs

President Joe Biden pushes for Gaza cease-fire during call with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, says US support is contingent on protecting civilians and aid workers. Israel to open new border entrance in northern Gaza to expedite aid delivery. World Central Kitchen calls for independent probe following Israeli strike that killed six aid workers and a translator.

Judge orders US Border Patrol to provide indoor accommodations for thousands of migrant children who've not yet been formally processed; would classify them as "in Border Patrol custody" regardless of processing status.

Nonpartisan group No Labels announces it will not run a third-party candidate in this year's presidential election following rejection from high-profile candidates.

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## State FFA Degrees Awarded

BATH, S.D. – 319 South Dakota FFA members will be recognized for receiving their State FFA Degree at the 96th South Dakota State FFA Convention, Friday April 19th, 2024, at 4:00 pm. Join us in helping them celebrate! You can also watch the convention live at [www.sdaged.org](http://www.sdaged.org), [Newscenter1.tv](http://Newscenter1.tv), and [ConnectCenter1.tv](http://ConnectCenter1.tv) and KAUN TV stations.

The State FFA Degree is the highest degree of membership conferred by the South Dakota FFA Association. The requirements for this degree include:

- Having earned and productively invested at least \$1,000 or worked at least 300 hours in excess of scheduled class time, or a combination thereof, in a Supervised Agricultural Experience program.
- Demonstrated leadership ability by performing ten procedures of Parliamentary Law, giving a six-minute speech on an agriculture or FFA-related topic, and serving as an officer, committee chairperson, or participating member of a chapter committee.
- Have completed at least 25 hours of community service.

As a special project of the SD FFA Foundation, South Dakota FFA members will receive the golden charm of the State Degree and a framed certificate, thanks to the following sponsors: Todd & Barbara Powell; Barry & Jenny Jacobson; The Jacobson Group, LLC; West Central FFA Alumni; Rechelle & Eric Dissing; Dan Streff Family; Sandy Osterday; CharLee Bachman; Kent Buchholz; Noelle & Andrew Swanson; Kevin & Amber Blagg; Steven Zemlicka; Myles & Mercedes Snedeker; Red River Farm Network; Dacotah Diamond Auctions and Equipment; Jeff & Beth Vanderwal; Peterson Livestock; First PREMIER Bank; Lance & Shirley Howe; Wyatt & Zana DeJong; Dani Herring; Stella Nagel; Olson Family; Brad & Trixie Grill; Dawnwind Dairy Goats and Wendy Mortenson Agency.

Those from Groton Area receiving their awards are Cadence Feist, Faith Flihs, Layne Hanson, Jayla Jones, Hannah Monson, Logan Ringgenberg, Emma Schinkel, Ashlyn Sperry, Lexi Osterman and Ava Wienk.

## Groton Prairie Mixed Bowling League Week #20 Results

**Team Standings:** Shihtzus – 15, Coyotes – 15, Chipmunks- 14, Cheetahs – 13, Jackelopes – 10, Foxes – 5

**Men's High Games:** John Sippel – 196, Tony Waage – 188, Brad Larson – 181

**Women's High Games:** Nancy Radke – 189, Vicki Walter – 178, Sue Stanley – 166

**Men's High Series:** John Sippel – 514, Mike Siegler – 508, Tony Waage – 501

**Women's High Series:** Sam Bahr – 455, Sue Stanley – 452, Nancy Radke – 451

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Next Wednesday is our LAST week of regular season league.

Jackelopes and Coyotes will be bowling off this weekend to decide the first-third winner.

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15 N Main St. - Ste. 101  
Downtown Groton

Call/Text Paul: 605-397-7460  
Call/Text Tina: 605-397-7285



Don't listen to the enemy in your mind telling  
you that you can't improve yourself!

## EMPLOYMENT

**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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## Wage Memorial Library receives Stephanie Miller-Davis Library Summer Reading Grant Program

Pierre, S.D.– The Stephanie Miller-Davis Library Summer Reading Grant Program is now in its fifth year of supporting summer reading programs in small rural communities in partnership with the South Dakota Community Foundation (SDCF) and the South Dakota State Library (SDSL). The program to date has distributed nearly \$200,000 to libraries in rural communities across South Dakota.

Stephanie loved books. She started her legacy by donating children's books and bookcases to the school library in her hometown of Murdo, SD. She wanted to provide the children in the community the books she longed to read as a child growing up on the South Dakota prairie.

"My mother would be so excited to see the impact this money is having on so many kid's lives," said Stephanie's daughter Kate Davis. "Access to books was a passion of hers and she would have loved to support the work of so many parents, teachers, librarians, and other community members in towns across South Dakota," added her daughter Anne Franz.

"The South Dakota Community Foundation is proud to partner with the Stephanie Miller-Davis family as they perpetuate their mother's passion and investment in early childhood literacy across South Dakota," said Jeff Veltkamp, SDCF Director of Development. "I think Stephanie would be very proud to see her daughters continuing her investment in children."

SDCF works to support philanthropy in South Dakota by connecting donors with causes they care about and providing expertise in managing charitable funds. SDCF administers over 1,200 funds benefiting thousands of wonderful causes every year. To learn more about charitable opportunities through SDCF, please visit [SDCommunityFoundation.org](https://SDCommunityFoundation.org) or call 800.888.1842.

The South Dakota State Library (SDSL) is a division of the South Dakota Department of Education. The State Library supports local libraries and works to build capacity within the state's public and school libraries, which successfully reached the goal of 100,000 South Dakota children participating in summer reading programs in 2021. The State Library encourages families to visit their local library, get involved in events and activities and keep growing readers. To learn more, please visit <https://library.sd.gov/>.

In 2024, each of the following libraries were awarded \$1,500 to support their summer reading programs:

- Alcester Community Library
- Armour-Carnegie Public Library
- Bison Public Library
- Britton Public Library
- Canton Public Library
- Emil M. Larson Public Library (Clark)
- Evelyn Lang Public Library (Springfield)
- Freeman Public Library
- Grant County Public Library (Milbank)
- Gregory Public Library
- Jackson County Library (Kadoka)
- Langford Public Library
- Lennox Community Library
- M. P. Beebe Memorial Library (Ipswich)
- Parker Public Library
- Parkston Public Library
- Piedmont Valley Library
- Redfield Carnegie Library
- Tripp County Library – Grossenburg Memorial (Winner)
- Viborg Public Library
- Wage Memorial Library (Groton)
- White Lake Community Library
- Wilmot Public Library
- Woonsocket Community Library

## GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT #06-6

### School Board Meeting

April 8, 2024 – 7:00 PM – GHS Conference Room

#### AGENDA:

1. Call to Order with members present. Approve agenda as proposed or amended.

#### POTENTIAL CONFLICTS DISCLOSURE PURSUANT SDCL 23-3

#### CONSENT AGENDA:

1. Approval of minutes of March 11, 2024 school board meeting, March 19, 2024 special school board meeting and March 26, 2024 school board meeting as drafted or amended.
2. Approval of March 2024 District bills for payment.

#### OLD/CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. Open Forum for Public Participation...in accordance with Board Policy & Guidelines.
2. Approval of March 2024 Financial Report, Custodial Accounts, and Investments.
3. Approval of March 2024 School Lunch Report.
4. Approval of March 2024 School Transportation Report.
5. Approve SDHSAA Athletics cooperative with the Langford School District in the sport of football.
6. Administrative Reports: (a) Superintendent's Report; (b) Principal's Reports; (c) Business Manager Report

#### NEW BUSINESS:

1. Approve District Membership Agreement for North Central Special Education Cooperative.
2. Approve Administrative Rule Waiver Application from ARSD 24:43:11:01 to allow High School Credit Before Grade 9 (Algebra I).
3. First reading of recommended changes to MS/HS Student Handbook.
4. Executive session pursuant SDCL 1-25-2(4) for negotiations.

#### ADJOURN

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## Girls Sprint Medley Relay Team take first at Mobridge

The first outdoor track meet was held Thursday at Mobridge where the Groton Area girls took first place in the Sprint Medley Relay event.

Placing second were the boys 3200m relay team, and McKenna Tietz in the 100m hurdles.

Those in third place were the boys 400m relay team, the boys 800m relay team, the boys sprint medley relay team, the girls 400m relay team and the girls 800m relay team.

In fourth place were Talli Wright in the 100m hurdles, McKenna Tietz in the 300m hurdles and Emma Kutter in the shot put.

Fifth place finishers were Emerlee Jones in the 300m hurdles, in the high jump and in the triple jump.

Holden Sippel placed sixth in both the shot put and the discus and Kayla Lehr took sixth in the 400m dash.

In seventh place were Teagan Hanten in the 100m hurdles and Talli Wright in the 300m hurdles and Hanten placed eighth in the triple jump.

### Boys Division

#### 1600 Meters Varsity - Finals

21. Garrett Schultz, 6:21.84

#### 4x100 Relay Varsity - Finals

3. Colby Dunker, Blake Pauli, Lane Tietz, Gage Sippel, 48.36

#### 4x200 Relay Varsity - Finals

3. Gage Sippel, Blake Pauli, Lane Tietz, Colby Dunker, 1:40.95.

#### 4x800 Relay Varsity - Finals

2. Blake Pauli, Jayden Schwan, Garrett Schultz, Gage Sippel, 9:22.16.

#### SMR 1600m Varsity - Finals

3. Colby Dunker, Jayden Schwan, Lane Tietz, Blake Pauli, 4:07.88.

#### Shot Put Varsity - Finals

6. Holden Sippel, 39' 3

19. Ashton Holmes, 29' 9

27. Drew Thurston, 25' 9

#### Discus Varsity - Finals

6. Holden Sippel, 115' 10

23. Ashton Holmes, 69' 11

25. Drew Thurston, 69' 1

### Girls Division

#### 100 Meters Varsity - Finals

13. Elizabeth Fliehs, 15.41

25. Kayla Lehr, 16.08

29. Hannah Sandness, 16.42

#### 400 Meters Varsity - Finals

6. Kayla Lehr, 1:09.39

#### 100m Hurdles Varsity - Finals

2. McKenna Tietz, 19.38

4. Talli Wright, 20.76

7. Teagan Hanten, 22.01

#### 300m Hurdles Varsity - Finals

4. McKenna Tietz, 55.74

5. Emerlee Jones, 56.07

7. Talli Wright, 58.83

#### 4x100 Relay Varsity - Finals

3. Laila Roberts, Rylee Dunker, McKenna Tietz, Faith Traphagen, 55.50.

#### 4x200 Relay Varsity - Finals

3. Laila Roberts, Rylee Dunker, McKenna Tietz, Taryn Traphagen, 1:54.75.

#### SMR 1600m Varsity - Finals

1. Laila Roberts, Rylee Dunker, Taryn Traphagen, Faith Traphagen, 4:38.45.

#### Shot Put Varsity - Finals

4. Emma Kutter, 30' 11

33. Emma Davies, 18' 10

#### Discus Varsity - Finals

15. Emma Kutter, 71' 9

32. Emma Davies, 40' 9

#### High Jump Varsity - Finals

5. Emerlee Jones, 4' 4

#### Long Jump Varsity - Finals

9. Laila Roberts, 13' 11

21. Teagan Hanten, 11' 4

#### Triple Jump Varsity - Finals

5. Emerlee Jones, 28' 8

8. Teagan Hanten, 26' 10.75

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## Fire Weather Watch

**URGENT - FIRE WEATHER MESSAGE**

**National Weather Service Aberdeen SD**

**413 AM CDT Fri Apr 5 2024**

Traverse-Big Stone-Brown-Marshall-Roberts-Day-Spink-Clark-Codington-Grant-Hamlin-Deuel-  
413 AM CDT Fri Apr 5 2024

...FIRE WEATHER WATCH REMAINS IN EFFECT FROM SATURDAY AFTERNOON THROUGH SATURDAY EVENING FOR WIND AND LOW RELATIVE HUMIDITY FOR NORTHEASTERN SOUTH DAKOTA AND WEST CENTRAL MINNESOTA...

\* AFFECTED AREA...In Minnesota, Traverse and Big Stone. In South Dakota, Brown, Marshall, Roberts, Day, Spink, Clark, Codington, Grant, Hamlin and Deuel.

\* WINDS...Southeast 30 to 35 mph with gusts up to 55 mph.

\* RELATIVE HUMIDITY...As low as 30 percent.

\* IMPACTS...Critical fire weather conditions are a concern on Saturday due to the combination of gusty winds and low relative humidity.

PRECAUTIONARY/PREPAREDNESS ACTIONS...

A Fire Weather Watch means that critical fire weather conditions are forecast to occur. Listen for later forecasts and possible Red Flag Warnings.

## Queen of Hearts

The fifth week of the Queen of Hearts drawing was held Thursday night. The jackpot was \$7,345. Ticket sales for the week were \$1485 with 10 percent of that as a consolation prize. Lisa Adler got the consolation prize of \$148.





## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### **Hundreds of opponents convince commission to scale back expansion of out-of-state duck licenses**

**BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - APRIL 4, 2024 6:37 PM**

In response to hundreds of opposition comments, the Game, Fish and Parks Commission curtailed a proposal to expand waterfowl licenses for hunters from other states.

"We're not always going to rubber-stamp everything," said Commission Chair Stephanie Rissler.

The amended proposal, which affects duck and goose hunting, passed the commission on a unanimous vote. It increases the number of nonresident waterfowl licenses by 105, rather than the previously proposed 315. The extra licenses can only be used on private land in some parts of eastern South Dakota, but not in the northeastern corner of the state, where resident hunters have complained of too much competition for a suitable hunting spot.

The move increases the nonresident license allocation from 6,300 to 6,405. Resident licenses are unlimited.

After lawmakers empowered the commission to adjust nonresident license caps in 2014, the authority was not used until last year, when the commission added 100 licenses to be used on private land in two areas of the northeastern corner of the state, and another 200 licenses to be shared among residents and nonresidents in a large area outside the northeast. That resulted in pushback from some resident duck hunters.

The current proposal was altered after hundreds of public comments against it and seven in favor. Multiple members of the public and organizations including the South Dakota Wildlife Federation, Izaak Walton League of America, and the South Dakota Waterfowl Association testified in person against the plan.

"Our public trust resources are not for sale," said Dana Rogers, the South Dakota Wildlife Federation's new executive director.

The proposal for additional nonresident licenses came in response to a long trend of decline in waterfowl hunting. Waterfowl hunter numbers in South Dakota dropped 47% from 32,217 in 2003 to 17,042 in 2022.

One factor in the decline is vanishing habitat and hunting areas, according to a 2017 Game, Fish and Parks survey of waterfowl hunters. Over 70% of respondents reported being "very concerned" about the loss of hunting opportunities due to a loss of wetlands. One of the culprits is "drain tile" – perforated pipes in the soil to drain unwanted water from farm fields.

"Wetlands are being drained left and right," testified Chuck Dieter, professor emeritus of natural resource management at South Dakota State University. He said that has resulted in fewer hunting spots, putting more pressure on the wetlands available.

Eric Paulson of Pierre pointed the commission to Ducks Unlimited data showing a decline in waterfowl population numbers.

"Duck numbers are dropping and hunter numbers are also dropping due to pressure and competition," he wrote. "As the duck numbers drop, the opportunities drop, and hunters get more congested chasing few birds in the same spot."

Additionally, some hunters have said getting licensed and learning the rules of how, what, when and where to shoot ducks is a barrier to entry for people who did not grow up hunting.

Even some nonresidents submitted comments in opposition to making more licenses available for them.

"We have come to SD to enjoy the great hunting," wrote Tim Anderson of Mankato, Minnesota. "However, that has really begun to change over the last 10 years. Increased pressure from residents and NRs

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[nonresidents] has increased the hunting pressure on public lands and gaining permission on private land has become much, much harder.”

Out-of-state duck hunters have been controversial in South Dakota for decades. When World War II veterans returned to South Dakota and found nonresident duck hunters on their favorite hunting spots, they pressured the Legislature to take action.

In 1947, the Legislature banned nonresidents from duck hunting, but the ban was repealed in 1970. Debates ensued, ultimately resulting in a gradual increase in nonresident waterfowl hunting licenses.

In 2014, the Legislature removed legal limits on nonresident licenses and passed control of licensing decisions to the GF&P Commission. That law also prohibits the commission from increasing license numbers by more than 5% of the previous year’s allocation.

“Just because you are allowed to up that, does not mean you should do that,” testified Paul Lepisto, with the Izaak Walton League of America.

Dick Werner, the Republican former lawmaker from Herried who sponsored the 2014 bill, spoke in favor of the proposal during the previous commission hearing.

“You are asked to make tough decisions that not everyone agrees with; that is the nature of public service,” he said. “Your task is to make the decision that is in the best interest of South Dakota.”

South Dakota’s next duck season runs from September to January.

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

## State will turn on tablet calls for inmates and raise daily limit from three to five

**Shutdown helped spark unrest that injured officer**

**BY: JOHN HULT - APRIL 4, 2024 5:21 PM**

The state Department of Corrections has decided to expand the number of allowable daily phone calls for inmates when tablet-based calling resumes on Friday after a pause that contributed to unrest at the penitentiary.

A memo posted Thursday to the DOC website says that starting April 5, inmates at its facilities will be allowed to make five calls a day, each with a limit of 20 minutes, from either wall phones or their tablets.

A memo earlier this week suggested that a resumption of tablet-based phone calls would be accompanied by a three-call daily limit – a move met with resistance by inmates and their loved ones.

The updated call limit is the latest turn in a month-long communications saga that has frustrated the families and friends of inmates and served as the spark for at least two nights of unrest and one staff injury at the South Dakota State Penitentiary in Sioux Falls.

Tablet-based communications were suspended indefinitely on March 8 because of an unspecified investigation into tablet-enabled behavior that Gov. Kristi Noem would later describe as “nefarious.”

Until then, inmates and their families and friends had been able to use the contractor-provided tablets to send email-like messages and instant messages for fees. South Dakota has collected at least \$1.25 million in commission for calls, emails and messages over the past three years through a combination of tablet- and landline-based communications.

The DOC acknowledged the shutdown publicly with a notice on its website 12 days later. One week after that, a disturbance at the penitentiary’s East Hall – one of two wings in the oldest parts of the 143-year-old facility – erupted, during which inmates could be heard yelling “we want phones.” Yelling could be heard in East Hall the following night, as well.

A correctional officer was injured on the first night, Gov. Noem said in a recorded interview. No update

on that officer's condition has been released.

A representative for state employees told South Dakota Searchlight that tablets alone cannot explain the unrest. He pointed to inconsistent discipline policies and other changes that may have emboldened prisoners to harm correctional officers.

A DOC officer statement shared with The Dakota Scout pointed to a slowdown in the disciplinary use of the Special Housing Unit – commonly known as “the hole” – as part of the the reason for the disturbance. The same letter accused the DOC of downplaying the severity of the incidents.

On Sunday, DOC staff received a memo saying calls from tablets could resume this week, but that inmates could make three per day from either their tablets or the wall phones at DOC facilities.

An inmate at the Mike Durfee State Prison in Springfield told the Argus Leader that tensions had been rising over the three-call limit, and that he'd heard “guys talking about, you know, retaliating against — I don't want to say it — non-inmates.”

The latest memo from Director of Prisons Amber Pirraglia says tablet-based calling will resume with a five-call daily limit “to promote offender communication with family and loved ones.”

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

## South Dakota does well in regional college cost survey

**BY: SETH TUPPER - APRIL 4, 2024 5:10 PM**

Several years of tuition freezes have helped make South Dakota's public universities the most affordable for undergraduates in the region, according to new data.

“As a result of this past legislative session, we're continuing to save students money,” said Nathan Lukkes, executive director and CEO of the South Dakota Board of Regents.

He made the comments during a board meeting Thursday in Vermillion, reflecting on the legislative session that ended last month. Legislators and Gov. Kristi Noem approved a third consecutive freeze, and they budgeted nearly \$6 million to cover the cost and fund 4% raises for tuition-funded employees.

Thursday's meeting materials included a report from an annual survey. It lists average yearly costs of attendance at public universities in South Dakota and its six neighboring states: North Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska, Wyoming and Montana.

The total, average annual cost for a South Dakota resident at one of the state's own public universities is \$17,213 for undergraduates, which includes tuition, fees, housing and meals. Nonresident undergraduates pay an average of \$20,672, and the average cost for a resident graduate student is \$17,035. The state has the lowest cost among neighboring states in each of those categories.

South Dakota's average total cost for a nonresident graduate student, \$24,379, is the second lowest in the survey.

Lower housing and meal costs helped South Dakota in those rankings. When only tuition and fees are considered, the state slides to fifth in the low-cost rankings for resident undergraduates, second for nonresident undergraduates, fourth for resident graduate students, and second for nonresident graduate students.

The numbers do not reflect any reciprocity agreements or other tuition reduction programs between states, so costs for nonresident students could be lower than stated in the report.

South Dakota's low nonresident rates “reflect the goal of recruiting nonresident students to build the SD workforce,” the report said.

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

## An 1873 law banned the mailing of boxing photos. Could it block abortion pills too?

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - APRIL 4, 2024 4:07 PM

WASHINGTON — An anti-obscenity law enacted in 1873 that hasn't been enforced in decades shot to the forefront of the nation's abortion debate in the past week thanks to two U.S. Supreme Court justices, amid expectations a future Republican president would use the law to order a nationwide ban on medication abortion.

The Comstock Act, which prohibited the mailing of anatomy textbooks and boxing photographs as well as contraceptives, drew fresh attention after Justices Samuel Alito and Clarence Thomas during March 26 oral arguments seemed to suggest the law would block the mailing of mifepristone.

Legal experts and a medical historian interviewed by States Newsroom said enforcing the law would be possible since it's still on the books. But one legal expert noted it may be challenging to prosecute only the sections on abortion while ignoring those that bar sending anything deemed to have an "indecent or immoral use."

The law, they said, also stems from a time when medical understanding and terminology around pregnancy was vastly different than today, though that's unlikely to deter those who see the Comstock Act as a path to curtailing or ending abortion access.

Trying to fend off any possibility, a few Democrats in Congress hope to repeal the statute ahead of another Republican presidency — a difficult task amid divided government.

Sarah Perry, senior legal fellow for the Edwin Meese III Center for Legal and Judicial Studies at the conservative-leaning Heritage Foundation, said a future Republican attorney general could prosecute any manufacturer that ships mifepristone through the U.S. Postal Service — or a private company contracting with USPS.

"The reason we don't see more involvement with Comstock in federal litigation is simply because you have to have a Department of Justice with the political will to actually go out and to enforce it, and to charge people with those types of violations," Perry said.

### Abortion medication suit

Mifepristone is one of two pharmaceuticals used in medication abortions, which are currently FDA-approved for use up to 10 weeks gestation. The two-drug regimen accounts for about 63% of abortions nationwide, according to a report from the Guttmacher Institute.

The pharmaceutical is at the center of a case before the U.S. Supreme Court. Months of litigation began when anti-abortion medical organizations filed a lawsuit in November 2022 asking the federal courts to either severely restrict or end access to the drug.

The Comstock Act bars more than just sending abortion pharmaceuticals and reigniting enforcement of its various provisions could be complicated, according to Mary Ziegler, Martin Luther King Jr. professor of law at UC Davis School of Law.

"If you look at the statute, very few words in it are about abortion. Almost all of it is about stuff having to do with sex," Ziegler said. "So if you're going to revive the Comstock Act, that's part of the Pandora's Box you're opening."

The first line of the law, for example, bans mailing "Every obscene, lewd, lascivious, indecent, filthy or vile article, matter, thing, device, or substance."

One of the lines addressing abortion says the statute bans mailing "Every article or thing designed, adapted, or intended for producing abortion, or for any indecent or immoral use."

Ziegler said she wasn't sure how a court today would interpret what would be "for any indecent or immoral use."

The lawmakers in Congress who voted to approve the Comstock Act, which was enacted less than a decade after the end of the Civil War, weren't especially concerned with "protecting fetal life or rights," Ziegler said.

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"It was really about sex, and abortion came into it the same way contraception did," she said. "And the people who passed the law didn't really distinguish the two."

Anthony Comstock, who advocated for the law, used to call "people who sold contraceptives, abortionists, even though they didn't perform abortions, because to him there really wasn't much of a difference," Ziegler said.

The law's full title is "An Act for the Suppression of Trade in, and Circulation of, Obscene Literature and Articles of Immoral Use."

## Differences in legal interpretations

While the Biden administration has issued a legal opinion saying the Comstock Act doesn't apply when the "sender lacks the intent that the recipient of the drugs will use them unlawfully," a future GOP president and the legal teams within that administration could feel quite differently. Former President Donald Trump has clinched the Republican presidential nomination.

The Biden administration's legal interpretation of the Comstock Act, Perry said, "doesn't really pass the straight face test, particularly the plain reading of the text itself for which 'intent' does not appear."

Perry and Thomas Jipping, a fellow Heritage Foundation senior legal fellow, wrote in a February 2023 report that the Biden Administration's Office of Legal Counsel's opinion "wants Americans to believe that a law enacted as part of the national pro-life legislative movement and championed by an aggressive and uncompromising anti-vice crusader is today, with no change in its language, entirely unenforceable for its intended purpose."

"The OLC wants Americans to ignore what they can read for themselves, that the statute has clear and unqualified language, and that Congress repeatedly demonstrated its intention to keep it that way," the two wrote. "The OLC wants Americans to believe that while enacting the Comstock Act required Congress to act, rendering it inert and unenforceable could be accomplished by Congress failing to act at all."

A Republican-controlled Justice Department could bring charges against the manufacturers of mifepristone unless those companies used entirely private transportation companies, Perry said.

"If they were seeking a private driver to deliver or a private delivery service to deliver, that's legally permissible, but they cannot use the U.S. Postal Service or any common carrier that contracts with the U.S. Postal Service," Perry said.

Some legal experts or judges could interpret the law as having a wider reach, Ziegler said.

"The statute's written to be really broad," she said. "So it's not obvious to me that if you used a private carrier that it would be exempted. Again, if you assume the interpretation of the law that they have, which I don't, but if you do, I don't think it makes a difference if you have a private carrier."

In that case, the law could mean no medication abortion at all as well as enforcement of the Comstock Act's other provisions, Ziegler said.

The law was used in federal prosecution as recently as 2002, but that was for "obscene or lewd materials," not for the mailing of anything having to do with abortions, Perry said.

Enforcement of the abortion sections of the law wasn't allowed after the Supreme Court ruled that abortion was a constitutional right in the 1973 Roe v. Wade case, but that all changed two years ago when the court overturned that opinion, Perry said.

"The law essentially laid dormant for many years because of course in 1971 the birth control prohibition was eliminated and then in 1973 we were given Roe," Perry said.

"So for all intents and purposes, the Supreme Court finding a right to abortion superseded what the Comstock Act actually said, because if there was an unfettered right to abortion, then there could not be congressional restriction on any tool, medication, or implement used to facilitate abortion," said Perry.

The court's ruling in Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization could lead to "renewed interest" in enforcing the Comstock Act, including comments made just last week by the two Supreme Court justices, she said.

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## What the justices said

Thomas and Alito brought up the Comstock Act during a case that will determine whether access to mifepristone stays the way it is now or reverts to what was in place before 2016.

Thomas asked the attorney representing Danco Laboratories LLC, manufacturer of the brand name of mifepristone called Mifeprex, if the Comstock Act applied to the company.

"The government, the solicitor general points out, would not be susceptible to a Comstock Act problem," Thomas said. "But in your case, you would be, so how do you respond to an argument that mailing your product and advertising it, would violate the Comstock Act?"

Thomas said that his "problem" with aspects of the case was that Danco Laboratories is "private, and the statute doesn't have the sort of safe harbor that you're suggesting."

"It is fairly broad and it specifically covers drugs such as yours," Thomas said.

Danco lawyer Jessica Ellsworth responded that she disagreed that was "the correct interpretation of the statute."

"We think that in order to address the correct interpretation, there would need to be a situation in which that issue was actually teed up," Ellsworth said. "I don't believe that this case presents an opportunity for this court to opine on the reach of the statute."

Alito appeared to argue that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration should have considered the Comstock Act before relaxing previous restrictions on use, allowing mifepristone to be prescribed via telehealth and sent to patients through the mail.

"It didn't say anything about it. And this is a prominent provision," Alito said. "It's not some obscure subsection of a complicated obscure law. They knew about it. Everybody in this field knew about it."

## Calls for repeal by Congress

Following the comments by the two justices, U.S. Rep. Cori Bush, D-Mo., immediately called on Congress to repeal the law, a scenario that's unlikely to happen given that Republicans control the U.S. House and Democrats the Senate.

"Enacted in 1873, it is a zombie statute, a dead law that the far-right is trying to reanimate," Bush wrote on social media. "The anti-abortion movement wants to weaponize the Comstock Act as a quick route to a nationwide medication abortion ban. Not on our watch."

Minnesota Democratic Sen. Tina Smith wrote in an op-ed published by The New York Times on April 2 that she would work with her colleagues to repeal the law, saying that neither the Supreme Court nor another Trump administration should be allowed to rely on it to ban access to medication abortion.

"Very few Republicans will admit to wanting to see a total, no-exceptions ban on abortion in all 50 states, but the Comstock Act could allow them to achieve that in effect, if not in so many words," Smith wrote. "Americans deserve better. The Constitution demands better. And common sense dictates that we stop this outrageous backdoor ploy to eliminate abortion access in its tracks."

## Comstock Act origins

Ziegler said that "the Comstock Act passed at a time when the meaning of obscene was up for grabs" and that its namesake, Anthony Comstock, "was really anxious about people's exposure to what he saw as pornography."

Some of the prohibited items under the anti-obscenity law were things people today would still think of as pornography, but Comstock also didn't approve of nudity in medical textbooks or art, literature with "risque humor," or newspaper articles about people who died as the result of illegal abortions.

"He thought all of that was encouraging people to have sex they shouldn't be having, either by being arousing or in the case of abortion or contraception, convincing them that they could have sex without pregnancy," Ziegler said.

At various points in the law's history, Ziegler said, it was used to target people discussing LGBTQ rights and against opponents of the law in a way that basically silenced political speech.

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Even though it hasn't been used in quite some time, Ziegler said, "it's a very real possibility" a future Republican DOJ could seek to enforce the law with respect to abortion access.

"The only caveat, of course, is if that happened, the person being prosecuted would be right back in federal court saying, 'Number one, this is not what the Comstock Act means and number two, the Comstock Act is unconstitutional,'" Ziegler said. "So the U.S. Supreme Court would eventually have to settle those questions."

One question for the justices will have to be what the word abortion meant in the late 19th century.

"If you look at what the law in general said at the time, procuring abortion was only a problem if it was done intentionally, and if it was done with basically criminal intent, which excluded cases where someone's life was at risk or health was at risk," Ziegler said.

## 19th-century terminology

Mary Fissell, inaugural J. Mario Molina professor in the history of medicine at Johns Hopkins University and vice president of the American Association for the History of Medicine, said during the 19th century around the time the law was written the terms abortion and miscarriage were often used interchangeably and typically meant the same thing.

"Both of those terms describe a pregnancy that ended sooner than it should have done and did not result in what we would call a live birth," Fissell said.

People and organizations that wanted to outlaw pregnancy termination often used the term "feticide," as in fetal homicide, to advocate for laws banning or significantly restricting the practice, Fissell said.

"Doctors start calling it criminal abortion, to distinguish it from everyday abortion, which is just fetal loss," she said. "And so it's over time that these terms come to mean, sort of separate things. At that point, they are very much just used interchangeably."

The way women and most doctors understood pregnancy more than 150 years ago was before and after "quickening," the first time a woman felt the fetus move, which is typically sometime in the middle of the second trimester, Fissell said.

"Before quickening, ending a pregnancy was not a big deal. It was not even fully always understood as ending a pregnancy," Fissell said. "I think sometimes that's what a woman knew she was doing. Other times she was getting back a lost menstrual cycle."

In the late 19th century many physicians practiced what's now referred to as humoral medicine, in which they believed the body contained four humors or fluids that needed to be kept in balance in order for a person to stay healthy.

They believed the body contained black bile, yellow bile, blood and phlegm and that those four substances corresponded to being either hot or cold as well as wet or dry.

"Women's bodies were cooler and wetter than men's," Fissell said of medical beliefs around that time. "That's good because, they thought of it as analogous to agriculture, and a seed was planted in the womb. And we all know what happens if you plant a seed somewhere that's too hot and dry. It doesn't go well."

"So it was good that women were cooler and wetter, but it meant they didn't fully process their food in the same way," she added, again referring to beliefs at the time. "And the excess, the leftover, had to be gotten rid of from the body and that was what menstruation was."

Doctors and others at the time often sold products that were designed to help women get a regular period, including herbal combinations. But there are significant differences between how that was thought of around 1873 and now, Fissell said.

"From a long time before that, there had been a blurring between what we call contraception and abortion," Fissell said. "It doesn't make sense to us, but in their worldview, they were more connected in part because the same kind of plant that you might take to get your cycle back, you could also be ending a pregnancy."

"So, you can imagine some of those same preparations that women were advised to take every month, and you won't get pregnant," she added. "We would biochemically analyze it very differently than the way

they were understanding it.”

Fissell said that around the time the Comstock Act was written, women and doctors — not typically male lawmakers — held the knowledge about menstrual cycles and pregnancy. “I think the extent of ignorance cannot be overestimated.”

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

## **Rounds to Interior Department: Bring tribal police training to South Dakota**

**BY: JOHN HULT - APRIL 4, 2024 2:12 PM**

Bureau of Indian Affairs police recruits in South Dakota need a training facility closer to home, South Dakota's junior senator told the Department of Interior this week.

Sen. Mike Rounds urged the department to find a way to train tribal law enforcement in South Dakota in a letter to Brian Newland, assistant director of the department, which oversees the BIA.

Currently, most BIA officers are trained in New Mexico. In a Thursday news release, Rounds said the lack of a closer facility hampers recruitment efforts in the Great Plains, where some tribes have declared states of emergency over spikes in violent crime.

“With no basic federal training options for tribal law enforcement on the Great Plains, prospective officers are opting to work for local agencies or leave the law enforcement field altogether,” Rounds said.

The letter to Newland points out that several tribal communities in South Dakota operate with just a handful of officers to patrol “millions of acres.”

“Criminal entities are taking advantage of these shortages and are distributing higher volumes of illegal drugs, including fentanyl,” the letter says.

The lack of a local training option was a topic of conversation in Wagner on Wednesday, when South Dakota Rep. Dusty Johnson met with leaders of the Yankton Sioux Tribe.

Johnson suggested a partnership between the BIA and South Dakota's Law Enforcement Training Center, located in Pierre.

“I can't imagine anything but good coming from tribal law enforcement training alongside the state's law enforcement,” Johnson said.

State Rep. Rocky Blare, R-Ideal, introduced a resolution during the 2024 state legislative session urging the establishment of a South Dakota training facility for tribal officers. It passed both chambers unanimously.

In his letter, Rounds tells Assistant Secretary Newland that he's “become aware of several suitable, existing training facilities that could address the recruitment and training problem without significant cost.”

“With the current situation in mind, I respectfully ask you to meet with me to discuss this issue,” Rounds wrote.

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

## **Missing Indigenous people cases remain high as state office tries to make a difference**

**BY: AMELIA SCHAFER, RAPID CITY JOURNAL/ICT - APRIL 4, 2024 9:22 AM**

Indigenous people account for roughly 60% of missing persons cases in South Dakota, which is still an undercount according to the Oglala Sioux Tribe and Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate's tribal victims services departments. The South Dakota Attorney General's Office appointed a Missing and Murdered Indigenous



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Persons coordinator to address the rising number of missing Indigenous people.

Over a year ago, the South Dakota Attorney General's Office announced the creation of an MMIP advisory council, and in November 2022 announced the hiring of an MMIP Coordinator. The advisory council which is now called the stakeholders committee, was created by Attorney General Mark Vargo to work in tandem with the MMIP Coordinator and provide guidance to the current Attorney General, Marty Jackley. Both initiatives aim to address the high number of missing Indigenous people across the state, according to a press release from the Attorney General's Office.

"We've been made aware of the issues here in South Dakota for years now," said Allison Morrisette, Oglala Lakota and the South Dakota MMIP coordinator. "These are things that can't be fixed overnight. The purpose of the [stakeholder's committee] is to work with the community leaders, grassroots organizations and law enforcement to develop ideas that can hopefully be implemented statewide and help long-term with MMIP and the existing victims who need to be brought home to their families."

Morrisette assumed her role as the MMIP coordinator on Nov. 28, 2022, before the formation of the stakeholders committee. Her job is to connect victims' families with resources and support.

Initially, the effort to hire an MMIP coordinator was slow-moving due to the impeachment of Attorney General Jason Ravnsborg and limited available funding from the state. Native Hope, a Chamberlain, South Dakota-based non-profit organization focused on uplifting Native voices and meeting community needs, stepped in with a three-year grant for the position, providing \$85,000 towards Morrisette's position each year.

In her previous role as a diversion case manager with the Pennington County Attorney General's Office, Morrisette assisted participants in accessing mental health, rehabilitation and education resources. It wasn't until she became a mother that she became interested in the MMIP coordinator position. When she applied for the position she was pregnant and said she couldn't help but wonder what would happen if her baby went missing one day.

"I was sitting there at my prior job thinking, 'If my daughter went missing, I would want these laws and ideas to be implemented, and I would want to know how to navigate the system,'" Morrisette said. "Obviously, the first thing you do is contact law enforcement, but what comes after that? I couldn't answer that question. I wasn't entirely sure how the process worked, and I wanted to be able to be more involved and bring awareness to families."

As of April 3, there were 79 missing Indigenous people listed in the South Dakota Missing Persons Clearinghouse and data shared from the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate and Oglala Sioux Tribe's victim services departments showed over 76 murdered Indigenous women missing in South Dakota since 1965. Despite accounting for roughly 10% of the South Dakota population, Indigenous people are consistently reported missing at much higher rates than other racial demographics, as shown by data from the Missing Persons Clearinghouse. There is no official state list of MMIP victims in South Dakota.

"Whether you look at the eastern side or the western side of the state, the rate of missing Indigenous people is so high," Morrisette said. "This issue is very prevalent in South Dakota and there's so many different aspects that go into that [high rate]."

Often, jurisdictional issues pose a major barrier in missing persons cases, according to Morrisette.

Officials from the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate's Victims Advocacy program are working to create new language in the tribal code establishing a community response plan for missing person cases and a memorandum of understanding — or partnership agreement — between tribal law enforcement, nearby sheriff's departments, and local non-tribal law enforcement.

West of the Missouri River, the Oglala Sioux Tribe and Pennington County Sheriff's Department have an MOU to provide services to each other in times of need. Most of the time this means working together on off-reservation missing persons cases.

"When we talk about human trafficking, people are amazed that it's even an issue, especially when we talk about missing and murdered Indigenous people, often it's overlooked," said Tasha His Law, Sisseton Wahpeton Dakota and the executive director of Waciyampi, an MMIP awareness and human trafficking prevention organization. "That's one of our main reasons why we want this in tribal code so we can get

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MOUs for other counties and sheriffs to work with. Once it's a non-Native (missing), they're all for it, there's coverage everywhere. When it comes to Natives, there's nothing."

The Lake Traverse Reservation, home of the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate, has a considerable amount of "checkerboarded" land, meaning reservation land that was once all owned by the nation and is now broken up in parcels by both non-Native and tribal ownership. This makes missing persons cases incredibly complicated. If someone goes missing in Sisseton, the exact location they were last seen determines which law enforcement agency handles the case – whether it's state, local, tribal or federal.

"In one of our missing cases she lived in Sisseton Housing, which is tribal land, but [when] I went to the Sisseton Police Department, the chief of police said, 'That's not my jurisdiction,'" said Stacey Azure, Sisseton Wahpeton Dakota and an SWO victims services case manager and advocate.

Azure told him that the person was last seen in Sisseton to which the officer said that wasn't his jurisdiction. Before that discussion, tribal police had told Azure that the case wasn't in their jurisdiction either.

Of the four missing Sisseton Wahpeton Dakota individuals, Andrew "AJ" Lufkins and Dominic Alberts were last seen in Sisseton. The other two, Avery Bissonette and Berlyn Heminger, do not have a specific last-seen location.

"So long as the victim's family reaches out or the law enforcement agency reaches out, we can try and help navigate those jurisdictional boundaries between tribal, state and federal agencies," Morrisette said. "We don't act on any investigative work, we just work to facilitate the family through this, or help offer resources to law enforcement agencies."

Another element, the stakeholders committee, is made up of regional advocates who meet twice a year. So far the committee has met two times, with a third meeting in the works according to Tony Mangan, communications director for the South Dakota Attorney General.

Lily Mendoza, Cheyenne River Lakota, was appointed to the stakeholders committee because of her work with the Red Ribbon Skirt Society, her non-profit education and awareness group for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and their families. Her group works closely with victims' families.

One thing the committee is working on is reconciling inconsistencies in data about missing Indigenous people in South Dakota, according to Morrisette. While the state's missing person clearinghouse provides a list of currently missing people, it's dependent on law enforcement agencies submitting information. This has created problems in cases like Delema Sits Poor's. She was entered into the clearing house only two weeks ago, 50 years after she went missing, according to Mangan.

"At the state level we need a system for information on MMIP to see where law enforcement is at," Mendoza said. "But it's not about the data, it's about the stories of the women and children. That's what the families want. The families want someone to listen to them. A lot of families feel invisible, especially in urban communities."

In the meantime, the Red Ribbon Skirt Society is launching a talking circle and support group for families.

In the future, Morrisette said she hopes for an expansion of her position. Right now she's the only person working in the MMIP office covering the entire state.

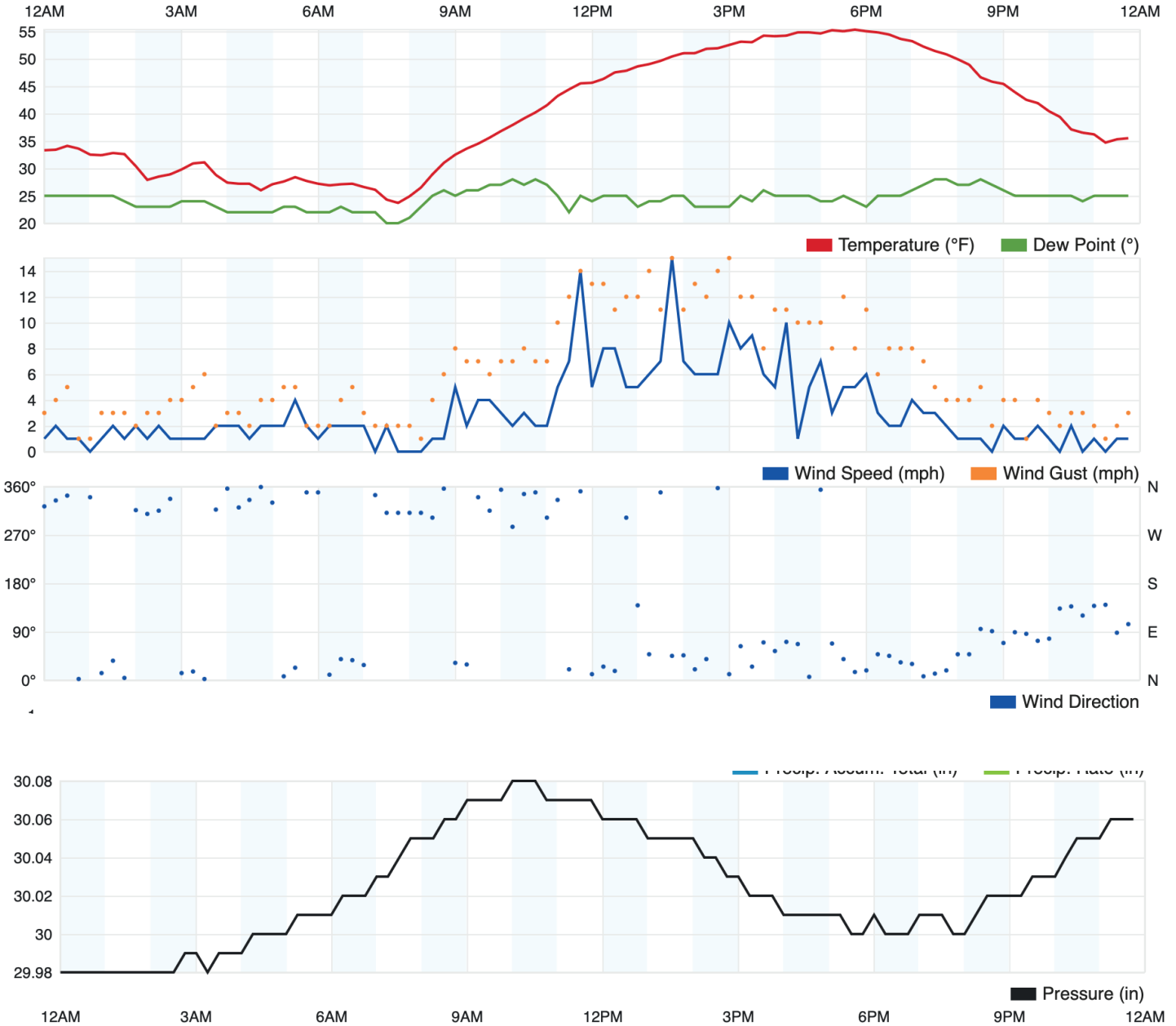
"People will say, 'Oh you've been doing this for over a year now,' and they expect me to be an expert on everything," Morrisette said. "But every day that I come into the office I'm learning something new, whether it's from law enforcement, a grassroots organization, a victim's family, or just someone interested in MMIP. If anyone has any ideas that they want to try and take statewide, feel free to get in touch with me. I'm always open for collaboration."

*Amelia Schafer covers Indigenous communities in the South Dakota area as part of a partnership between the Rapid City Journal and ICT, an independent, nonprofit news enterprise that covers Indigenous peoples.*

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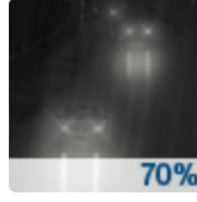

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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| Today   | Tonight   | Saturday  | Saturday Night   | Sunday  |
|---|---|---|--|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Sunny then Sunny and Breezy   | Mostly Cloudy and Breezy  | Sunny and Breezy then Slight Chance Rain and Windy                                | Rain Likely and Windy  | Rain Likely and Breezy  |
| High: 61 °F   | Low: 39 °F  | High: 62 °F   | Low: 37 °F   | High: 46 °F   |



## Windy, High Fire Danger

National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD  
Updated: April 5, 2023 3:35 AM

### Today

- Winds will increase across western and central South Dakota this afternoon
- Gusts in excess of 45 mph are expected
- Very high fire danger!

### Saturday

- Southeast winds gusts of 45+ mph across the entire region
- Very high fire danger until rain moves in Saturday afternoon and evening

### Sunday

- Winds gradually decrease across western South Dakota, but remain windy across northeast SD and west central Minnesota
- On and off light rain through the day Sunday

|             | Wind Gust Forecast (mph) |     |     |      |         |     |     |      |         |     |     |      | Maximum |     |    |    |
|-------------|--------------------------|-----|-----|------|---------|-----|-----|------|---------|-----|-----|------|---------|-----|----|----|
|             | 4/5 Fri                  |     |     |      | 4/6 Sat |     |     |      | 4/7 Sun |     |     |      |         |     |    |    |
|             | 3am                      | 6am | 9am | 12pm | 3pm     | 6pm | 9pm | 12am | 3am     | 6am | 9am | 12pm | 3pm     | 6pm |    |    |
| McIntosh    | 20                       | 24  | 39  | 47   | 49      | 51  | 45  | 48   | 51      | 47  | 46  | 47   | 46      | 44  | 41 | 51 |
| Eagle Butte | 16                       | 20  | 32  | 37   | 41      | 45  | 47  | 47   | 46      | 43  | 41  | 43   | 43      | 44  | 46 | 47 |
| Murdo       | 16                       | 17  | 28  | 35   | 41      | 46  | 47  | 45   | 44      | 41  | 39  | 39   | 40      | 47  | 54 | 54 |
| Mobridge    | 16                       | 17  | 26  | 32   | 38      | 41  | 43  | 44   | 43      | 40  | 40  | 41   | 40      | 40  | 41 | 44 |
| Pierre      | 9                        | 10  | 21  | 30   | 38      | 43  | 43  | 44   | 44      | 41  | 39  | 37   | 37      | 44  | 53 | 53 |
| Gettysburg  | 14                       | 16  | 26  | 32   | 36      | 39  | 40  | 41   | 41      | 41  | 41  | 44   | 43      | 44  | 48 | 48 |
| Kennebec    | 10                       | 10  | 22  | 31   | 36      | 39  | 41  | 43   | 40      | 38  | 39  | 43   | 44      | 46  | 52 | 53 |
| Eureka      | 15                       | 16  | 24  | 31   | 36      | 38  | 37  | 38   | 39      | 39  | 41  | 46   | 46      | 44  | 44 | 46 |
| Chamberlain | 6                        | 12  | 18  | 26   | 30      | 31  | 38  | 40   | 45      | 49  | 48  | 43   | 41      | 44  | 49 | 49 |
| Miller      | 13                       | 13  | 18  | 25   | 31      | 35  | 33  | 35   | 36      | 37  | 39  | 43   | 43      | 44  | 48 | 48 |
| Ellendale   | 5                        | 6   | 13  | 21   | 24      | 26  | 29  | 31   | 31      | 31  | 35  | 40   | 43      | 40  | 41 | 43 |
| Redfield    | 12                       | 10  | 18  | 24   | 29      | 33  | 32  | 35   | 36      | 36  | 38  | 43   | 45      | 47  | 47 | 48 |
| Aberdeen    | 6                        | 8   | 14  | 21   | 26      | 30  | 30  | 31   | 31      | 31  | 35  | 41   | 44      | 43  | 45 | 45 |
| Huron       | 7                        | 13  | 16  | 22   | 25      | 28  | 31  | 36   | 43      | 46  | 49  | 47   | 45      | 47  | 51 | 51 |
| Britton     | 2                        | 7   | 14  | 20   | 24      | 28  | 30  | 31   | 31      | 32  | 37  | 43   | 46      | 49  | 54 | 54 |
| Clark       | 8                        | 12  | 16  | 21   | 24      | 28  | 32  | 36   | 36      | 37  | 41  | 49   | 52      | 52  | 52 | 54 |
| Webster     | 5                        | 9   | 16  | 22   | 26      | 30  | 32  | 35   | 36      | 36  | 40  | 49   | 54      | 55  | 58 | 58 |
| Watertown   | 6                        | 7   | 12  | 17   | 21      | 23  | 26  | 29   | 30      | 30  | 35  | 43   | 47      | 46  | 47 | 47 |
| Sisseton    | 6                        | 6   | 12  | 18   | 23      | 25  | 28  | 29   | 30      | 31  | 36  | 41   | 44      | 43  | 45 | 46 |
| Brookings   | 5                        | 8   | 10  | 16   | 21      | 22  | 24  | 26   | 31      | 36  | 39  | 40   | 43      | 45  | 48 | 53 |
| Milbank     | 2                        | 2   | 9   | 16   | 20      | 21  | 23  | 24   | 24      | 25  | 31  | 39   | 44      | 43  | 45 | 44 |
| Wheaton     | 6                        | 8   | 12  | 16   | 18      | 20  | 24  | 26   | 26      | 28  | 32  | 38   | 40      | 39  | 39 | 39 |

Very strong winds will gradually spread from west to east across South Dakota and into west central Minnesota. It will remain windy through the weekend with peak gusts in excess of 45 mph. Winds will also contribute to very high fire danger across the region. Take precautions to prevent any source of outdoor fire ignition!

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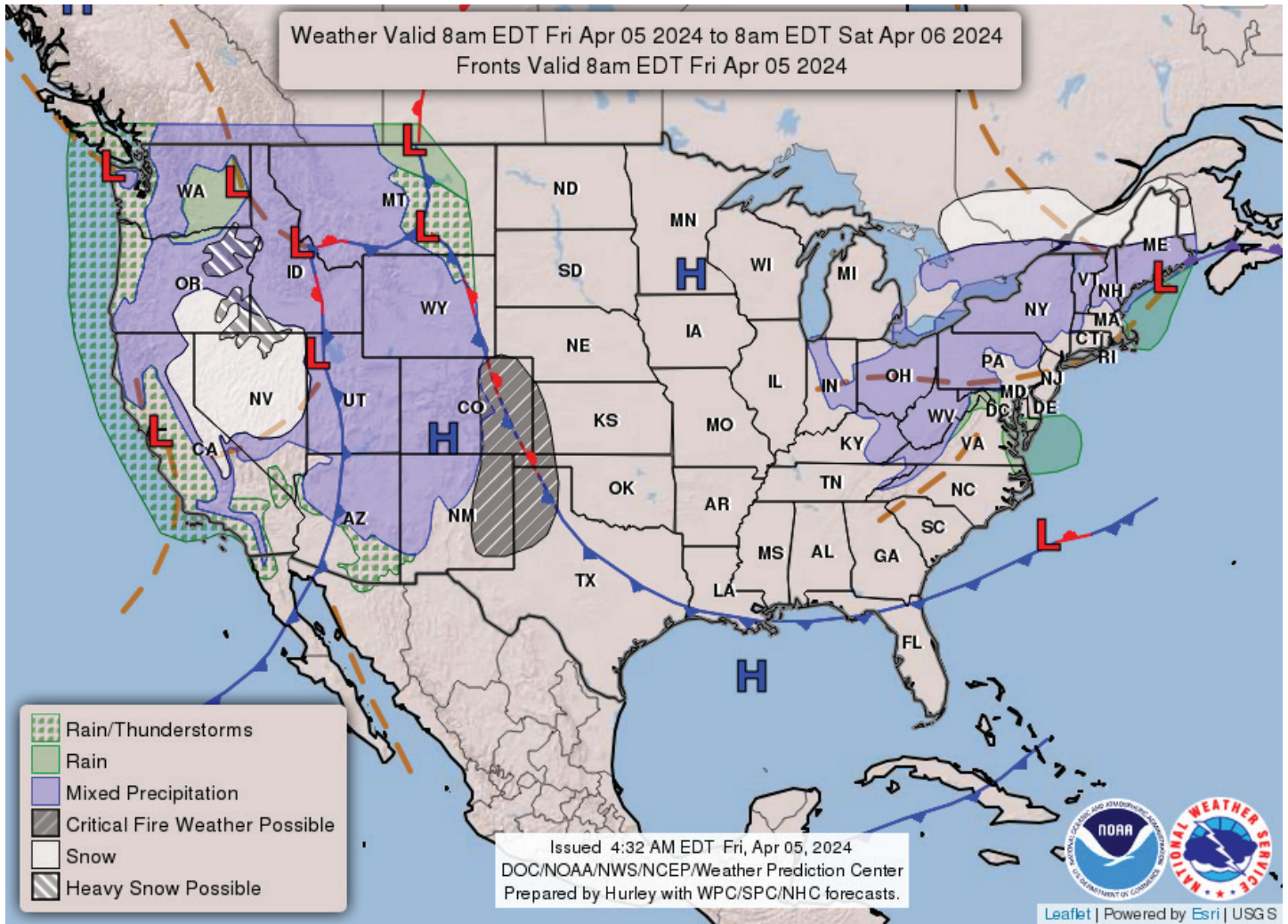
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 56 °F at 5:23 PM**  
**Low Temp: 23 °F at 7:37 AM**  
**Wind: 15 mph at 1:46 PM**  
**Precip: : 0.00**

Day length: 13 hours, 05 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 86 in 1991  
Record Low: 6 in 2007  
Average High: 53  
Average Low: 28  
Average Precip in April.: 0.21  
Precip to date in April: 0.00  
Average Precip to date: 2.27  
Precip Year to Date: 0.85  
Sunset Tonight: 8:07:42 pm  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:00:10 am



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## Today in Weather History

April 5, 2000: High winds of 35 to 50 mph gusting to around 70 mph blew across central and north central South Dakota from the late morning to the late afternoon hours. As a result, several trees and many tree branches were downed, many structures, roofs, billboards, and road signs were damaged, a few mobile homes were overturned, and some power outages occurred. Not only did the high winds make driving challenging, but at some locations, they stirred up dirt causing visibilities to drop to near zero at times. Some detours and traffic collisions resulted due to the low visibility in blowing dirt. Airborne objects broke some windows across the area. One house had all of the windows on the front porch blown out. Also, a few semi tractor-trailers were tipped over by the high winds. Wind gusts included 60 mph at Pierre, 63 mph at Kennebec, 64 mph at Mobridge, 65 mph at Pollock, and 71 mph at McLaughlin. The high winds and extremely dry conditions combined with downed and arcing electrical lines, out of control burns, and smoldering embers from previous fires resulted in several grassfires across central and north central South Dakota. Several thousand acres of grassland, hundreds of hay bales and haystacks, along with some trees and fences were burned. Also, the smoke from some of these fires created low visibilities and difficult driving conditions on some roads.

1815: The Tambora Volcano in Java began erupting on this day. A few days later on the 10, Tambora produced the largest eruption known on the planet in the last 10,000 years. Ash from the volcano would circle the globe, blocking sunlight and leading to the unusually cold summer in 1816. On 6/6/1816, snow would fall as far south of Connecticut with some places in New England picking up 10 inches. On July 4th, 1816, the temperature at Savannah GA plunged to 46 degrees. Eastern North America and Europe had freezing nighttime temperatures in August.

1936: Approximately 454 people were killed in the second-deadliest tornado outbreak ever in U.S. More than 12 twisters struck Arkansas to South Carolina. An estimated F5 tornado cut a path 400 yards wide through the residential section of Tupelo, Mississippi. At least 216 people were killed, and 700 were injured. The tornado had a 15-mile long path and did \$3 million in damage. One of the survivors in Tupelo was a baby of an economically strapped family who had an infant they'd recently named Elvis Aaron Presley. Gainesville, Georgia had at least 203 fatalities and 934 injuries from an estimated F4 tornado that occurred early the following morning.

1945 - The temperature at Eagles Nest, NM, plunged to 45 degrees below zero to establish an April record for the United States. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1955 - The Northern Rockies and the Northern High Plains were in the midst of a four day storm which produced 52 inches of snow at Lead, located in the Black Hills of western South Dakota. (David Ludlum)

1972 - A tornado, 500 yards wide at times, touched down at a marina on the Oregon side of the Columbia River, and then tore through Vancouver WA killing six persons, injuring 300 others, and causing more than five million dollars damage. It was the deadliest tornado of the year, and the worst of record for Washington. (The Weather Channel)

1982 - An unprecedented April blizzard began in the northeastern U.S. One to two feet of snow fell across Massachusetts and Connecticut, and up to 26 inches was reported in Maine. New York City received a foot of snow. Winds reached 70 to 80 mph during the storm, and the storm also produced numerous thunderstorms, which contributed to the heavy snow. (Storm Data)

1987 - A storm produced unprecedented April snows in the central Appalachians. Mount Mitchell NC received 35 inches of snow, and up to 60 inches (six feet) of snow was reported in the mountains along the border of North Carolina and Tennessee. The total of 25 inches at Charleston WV easily surpassed their previous record for the entire month of April of 5.9 inches. The 20.6 inch total at Akron OH established an all-time record for that location. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Thirty-nine cities across the eastern half of the country reported record high temperatures for the date, including Saint Louis MO with a reading of 91 degrees. Laredo TX was the hot spot in the nation with an afternoon high of 100 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Unseasonably hot weather prevailed in the southwestern U.S. Afternoon highs of 100 degrees at Santa Maria CA and 105 degrees in Downtown Los Angeles established records for the month of April. (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - Afternoon and evening thunderstorms developing along a cold front produced severe weather in southern Oklahoma, southern Arkansas, and north central and northeastern Texas. Thunderstorms spawned a dozen tornadoes in Texas, including one at Fort Worth which caused a million dollars damage. There were nearly one hundred reports of large hail and damaging winds. Thunderstorms in Texas produced hail three and a half inches in diameter west of Fort Worth, and produced wind gusts to 80 mph at Cross Plains. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### BLESSINGS AND BURDENS

His daughter, Amy, was born disabled and could not get from one place to another without a walker or crutches. His wife, May, suddenly became ill and was bedridden. It had been a difficult day at work with more problems than solutions.

He decided, however, that he would brighten the day of his leading lady and purchased her a lovely bouquet of flowers. Upon entering his home, he briefly showed the flowers to Amy and said, "I want to take these upstairs to Mom to cheer her up."

"Oh," cried Amy, "please let me do that."

"But you can't, dear," he said. "It's not possible for you to get them to Mom with your crutches."

"I know," she said, "but if you carry me, I'll carry the flowers." And he did.

How like our Lord! From time to time we all are crippled with concerns and cares and the obstacles of life overwhelm us. Then, God appears at just the right moment, and places His loving arms underneath us and lifts us to new heights with His strength. And in spite of the difficulties in our lives, we can take a bouquet of blessings to others as we share the goodness of His love and grace to those who need His encouragement.

Prayer: Father, may we never be so focused on our own pains and problems that we fail to bring a word or deed of kindness to others in need. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: But let all who put their trust in You be glad. Let them sing with joy forever. You make a covering for them, that all who love Your name may be glad in You. Psalm 5:2-12



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:  
04.02.24

10 50 56 60 66 19

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$67,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 26 Mins 39 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:  
04.03.24

11 16 20 27 47 4

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$2,650,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 15 Hrs 41 Mins 40 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
04.04.24

5 24 26 27 43 1

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 56 Mins 40 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
04.03.24

1 12 13 16 34

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$45,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 15 Hrs 56 Mins 40 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
04.03.24

10 44 53 60 63 13

TOP PRIZE:

**\$10,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 25 Mins 40 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:  
04.03.24

11 38 41 62 65 15

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$1,230,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 25 Mins 40 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

## News from the Associated Press

### **Beloved giraffe of South Dakota zoo euthanized after foot injury**

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A beloved giraffe at a zoo in South Dakota has died.

On Thursday, the Great Plains Zoo and Butterfly House & Aquarium in Sioux Falls announced the death of Chioke, an 18-year-old reticulated giraffe. He died March 28.

"Following a severe fracture in his front left foot, Animal Care and Veterinary leaders made the difficult, but responsible, decision to humanely euthanize him," the zoo said in a news release.

Chioke, born in Busch Gardens in Tampa, Florida, came to the zoo in 2007. He grew to nearly 15 feet tall and sired three offspring, who went on to other zoos. The Great Plains Zoo remembered him for his playfulness.

He had recurring hoof and foot issues in his later years, including two fractures to the tip of his toe bone and resulting arthritis, the zoo said. He suffered a more serious fracture in March.

The zoo consulted nationwide for a treatment plan and used several methods, including drugs, rest and laser therapy, but ultimately decided to euthanize Chioke "due to quality-of-life concerns" after his team had ruled out immobilizing him for surgery or an orthopedic device, and X-rays showed the fracture had worsened.

Zoo staff visited the giraffe to say goodbye, feeding him apple biscuits, a favorite of his.

"We remember Chioke as a gentle, curious, mischievous giraffe who was always up for feedings and interacting with his keepers and guests," the zoo said. "Chioke' means 'gift from God,' and he certainly was."

### **Iran's Revolutionary Guard head vows payback for apparent Israeli strike that killed top generals**

By AMIR VAHDAT Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Iran's commander of the powerful Revolutionary Guard General Hossein Salami said Friday "no threat will go unanswered" in retaliation for the airstrike widely attributed to Israel that destroyed the Iranian Consulate in Syria's capital and killed seven of the guard's members, including two top generals.

This came after thousands marched chanting "death to Israel" and "death to America" during the slain officers' funeral procession in the capital.

The marches in the capital, Tehran, along with protests in other Iranian cities, took place at a time of heightened concerns about possible retribution by Iran for Monday's strike that killed 12 people, including four Syrian citizens and a member of the Lebanese militant Hezbollah group, according to officials.

The protesters in the capital headed to Tehran University where Salami gave his speech before the weekly Friday prayers.

"We warn you, no enemy act against our holy system will go unanswered," he said speaking on a podium showing a big placard with the Arabic phrase "Flood of the Free" emblazoned on it.

"The collapse of (the Zionist regime) is very possible and close with God's grace," Salami said, adding that the U.S. has become "wildly hated by the world, especially in Muslim-dominated countries" for supporting Israel.

He said that Israel's current survival depended on U.S. support.

Salami also said that "resistance groups in Gaza are surrounded by Israel.. and weapons can't be sent to them," referring to the Israel-Hamas war that broke out on Oct.7.

He claimed that "messages sent from inside Gaza show that they have no problem to continue enduring (the war)."

The public funeral coincided with Iran's annual rally Quds Day, or Jerusalem Day, a traditional show of support for the Palestinians that has been held on the last Friday of the holy month of Ramadan since

the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Iranian leaders have reiterated promises of revenge. On Wednesday Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi said the attack "will not remain without answer."

By attacking an Iranian diplomatic station, Israel's apparent escalation has raised fears that the devastating six-month war against Hamas could spill over into the entire Mideast region and beyond.

Israel faces increasing isolation as international criticism mounts over its killing of six foreign aid workers this week who were trying to deliver desperately needed food in Gaza.

Iran does not recognize Israel and views it as its archenemy. It also supports militant groups, Hamas and Hezbollah.

Clashes between Israel and Hezbollah along the Israeli-Lebanese border have increased since the war in Gaza began nearly six months ago.

## Israel dismisses 2 officers over deadly drone strikes on aid workers in Gaza

By JULIA FRANKEL Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — The Israeli military said Friday that it has dismissed two officers and reprimanded three others for their roles in drone strikes in Gaza that killed seven aid workers on a food-delivery mission, saying they had mishandled critical information and violated the army's rules of engagement.

The findings of a retired general's investigation into the Monday killings marked an embarrassing admission by Israel, which faces growing accusations from key allies, including the U.S., of not doing enough to protect Gaza's civilians from its war with Hamas.

The findings are likely to renew skepticism over the Israeli military's decision-making. Palestinians, aid groups and human rights organizations have repeatedly accused Israeli forces of firing recklessly at civilians throughout the conflict — a charge Israel denies.

"It's a tragedy," the military's spokesman, Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, told reporters. "It's a serious event that we are responsible for and it shouldn't have happened and we will make sure that it won't happen again."

With pressure mounting on Israel to hold itself accountable, Hagari and other officials late Thursday shared with reporters the results of the military's uncommonly speedy and detailed investigation.

It was unclear whether the punishments and the apology would calm an international outcry over the deaths of the World Central Kitchen workers or reassure international aid groups that it was safe to resume operations in Gaza, where nearly a third of the population is on the brink of starvation.

According to what spokespeople said were the Israeli army's rules, targets must be visually identified as threats for multiple reasons before they can be hit. But the investigation determined that a colonel had authorized the series of deadly drone strikes on the convoy based on one major's observation — from grainy drone-camera footage — that someone in the convoy was armed. That observation turned out to be untrue, military officials said.

The army said the colonel and the major were dismissed, while three other officers were reprimanded. It said the results of its investigation were turned over to the military's advocate general, who will decide whether the officers or anyone else involved in the killings should receive further punishment or be prosecuted.

The killings were condemned by Israel's closest allies and renewed criticism of Israel's conduct in the nearly 6-month-old war with Hamas.

The aid workers were three British citizens, a Polish citizen, an Australian and a Canadian American dual citizen, all of whom worked for World Central Kitchen, the international charity founded by celebrity chef José Andrés. Their Palestinian driver also was killed.

The investigation found two major areas of wrongdoing.

It faulted officers for failing to read messages alerting troops that cars, not aid trucks, would carry workers from the charity away from the warehouse where aid was distributed. As a result, the cars that were targeted were misidentified as transporting militants.

The army also faulted a major who identified the strike target and a colonel who approved the strike for acting with insufficient information.

The army said the order was given after one of the passengers inside a car was identified as a gunman. It said troops became suspicious because a gunman had been seen on the roof of one of the delivery trucks on the way to the warehouse. The army showed reporters footage of the gunman firing his weapon while riding atop one of the trucks.

After the aid was dropped off at a warehouse, an officer believed he had spotted a gunman in one of the cars. The passenger, it turned out, was not carrying a weapon — the military said it's possible he was just carrying a bag.

The army said it initially hit one car. As people scrambled away into a second car, it hit that vehicle as well. It did the same thing when survivors scrambled into a third car. Army officials claimed that drone operators could not see that the cars were marked with the words "World Central Kitchen" because it was nighttime.

The army could not say exactly where the communication about the convoy's plans had broken down.

The army declined to answer questions about whether similar violations of rules of engagement have taken place during the war — in which Palestinians, aid workers and international rights groups have repeatedly accused the army of recklessly striking civilians.

The investigation was headed by Yoav Har-Even, a retired general.

The seven who were killed were distributing food that had been brought into Gaza through a newly established maritime corridor. World Central Kitchen said it had coordinated its movements with the military, and that the vehicles were marked with the organization's logo.

"It was a direct attack on clearly marked vehicles whose movements were known by" the Israeli military, Andrés said on Wednesday.

More than 220 humanitarian workers have been killed in the conflict, according to the U.N.

"Let's be very clear. This is tragic, but it is not an anomaly," Scott Paul, of the humanitarian group Oxfam, said Thursday in a briefing with other relief organizations before the results of Israel's investigation were released. "The killing of aid workers in Gaza has been systemic."

## **Blinken says Israeli offers to increase flow of aid to Gaza are welcome but may not be sufficient**

By MATTHEW LEE Associated Press

LEUVEN, Belgium (AP) — U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Friday that the measures the Israeli government has announced to expand the flow of aid into Gaza are welcome but may not be enough to meet the Biden administration's demands for dramatic improvements in humanitarian conditions in the territory.

Blinken said that opening more border crossings, if fully implemented, has the potential to surge assistance to Palestinians caught in the fighting between Israel and Hamas. However, the U.S. also wants to see tangible steps to bolster the protection of civilians and aid workers, he said.

In addition, he called for an "independent, thorough and fully publicized investigation" into the recent killings of aid workers. Seven employees of the charity World Central Kitchen, including six international volunteers, were killed in multiple Israeli airstrikes on their convoy in Gaza late Monday.

The incident sparked international outrage and put Israel on the defensive about its conduct in its six-month-old war against Hamas, particularly the high number of civilian deaths in Gaza.

"We welcome that steps that have been announced by Israel," Blinken said. "These are positive developments but the real test is results and that's what we're looking to see in the coming days and the coming weeks."

At the same time, he said the U.S. wanted to see a "better system for de-confliction and coordination" so that aid can be safely delivered and distributed inside Gaza.

"All of these things are critical and that really needs to be measured by results," Blinken told reporters

in the town of Leuven, outside Brussels, where he was meeting with U.S. and European trade and commerce officials.

Israel's military has promised to conduct a speedy investigation into the killing of the aid workers. In initial comments, the Israeli army chief said earlier this week that the strikes were a result of misidentification, but did not elaborate.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office announced early Friday that Israel would act to improve conditions, including reopening a key border crossing into northern Gaza, just hours after President Joe Biden told him in a Thursday phone call that future U.S. support for the war in Gaza depends on Israel taking more action to protect civilians and aid workers.

Netanyahu's office said the Erez crossing between Israel and Gaza, which was partially destroyed in Hamas' Oct. 7 attack on southern Israel, would temporarily reopen. It also said Israel would allow its Ashdod port, 22 miles (37 kilometers) north of Gaza, to be used to process aid shipments bound for the territory and allow increased Jordanian aid shipments through another land crossing. The announcement did not elaborate on quantities or types of items to be let in.

Biden also told Netanyahu that reaching an "immediate cease-fire" in exchange for the estimated 100 hostages that are still being held in Gaza was "essential" and urged Israel to reach such an accord "without delay," the White House said.

Israel declared war on Hamas in response to the Oct. 7 attack, in which the militants killed about 1,200 people in Israel and took about 250 hostages.

Israel's blistering air and ground offensive has killed more than 33,000 Palestinians in Gaza, about two-thirds of them women and children, according to the Health Ministry in Gaza, an enclave that in parts remains under Hamas control.

The offensive has displaced more than 80% of Gaza's population of 2.3 million people and pushed hundreds of thousands to the brink of starvation.

## The Latest | Israel says it will reopen border crossing with hard-hit northern Gaza

By The Associated Press undefined

Israel says it's taking steps to increase the flow of humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip, including reopening a key border crossing into northern Gaza.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office announced the plans Friday, hours after President Joe Biden told him that future U.S. support for the war in Gaza depends on Israel taking more action to protect civilians and aid workers. The announcement did not elaborate on quantities or types of items to be let in.

Still, despite their differences, the Biden administration has continued to provide Israel crucial military aid and diplomatic support for Israel's six-month war against Hamas. Israel faces growing international isolation after its forces killed seven aid workers helping deliver food in Gaza.

The Palestinian death toll has passed 33,000, with another 75,600 people wounded, Gaza's Health Ministry said. The ministry doesn't differentiate between civilians and combatants in its tally, but says women and children make up two-thirds of the dead.

The United Nations says much of the population in northern Gaza is on the brink of starvation. The top United Nations court has concluded there is a "plausible risk of genocide" in Gaza — a charge Israel strongly denies — and the U.N. Security Council has issued a legally binding demand for a cease-fire.

The war began Oct. 7, when Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking around 250 people hostage.

Currently:

- After six months of war, Israel's isolation grows with no end in sight
- UN Human Rights Council calls for halt to weapons shipments to Israel
- Israeli strike on building in October killed 106 in apparent war crime, rights group says
- Biden tells Netanyahu future US support for war depends on new steps to protect civilians

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

Here's the latest:

## UN HUMAN RIGHTS BODY CALLS FOR HALT TO WEAPONS SHIPMENTS TO ISRAEL

GENEVA — The U.N.'s top human rights body has called on countries to stop selling or shipping weapons to Israel in a resolution that aims to help prevent rights violations against Palestinians during Israel's blistering military campaign in Gaza.

The 47-member-country Human Rights Council voted 28-6 in favor of the resolution on Friday, with 13 abstentions.

The sweeping measure, which takes aim at an array of Israeli actions such as impeding access to water and limiting shipments of humanitarian aid into Palestinian areas, also calls on U.N.-backed independent investigators to report on shipments of weapons, munitions and "dual use" items — for both civilian and military purposes — that could be used by Israel against Palestinians. It is not binding.

Western countries were divided, with the U.S., Germany and others opposing the resolution, several abstaining and some European countries voting in favor.

Israel — at times joined by the United States — has regularly and roundly criticized the council for an alleged anti-Israel bias. The council has approved far more resolutions against Israel for its actions toward Palestinians over the years than against any other country.

## BLINKEN WELCOMES STEPS TO GET MORE AID INTO GAZA, BUT SAYS THEY MAY NOT BE ENOUGH

LEUVEN, Belgium — U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken says the measures the Israeli government has announced to expand the flow of aid into Gaza are welcome but may not be enough to meet the Biden administration's demands for dramatic improvements in humanitarian conditions in the territory.

Blinken said Friday that, if fully implemented, the opening of more border crossings could surge aid to Palestinians caught in the fighting between Israel and Hamas.

"We welcome that steps that have been announced by Israel," Blinken said. "These are positive developments but the real test is results, and that's what we're looking to see in the coming days and the coming weeks."

At the same time, he said the U.S. wanted to see a "better system for de-confliction and coordination" so that aid can be safely delivered and distributed inside Gaza. "All of these things are critical and that really needs to be measured by results," Blinken told reporters in the town of Leuven, outside Brussels, where he was meeting with U.S. and European trade and commerce officials.

He also called for an "independent, thorough and fully publicized investigation" into the Israeli strikes that killed seven aid workers.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office announced earlier Friday that Israel would act to improve conditions, including reopening a key border crossing into northern Gaza, just hours after President Joe Biden told him in a Thursday phone call that future U.S. support for the war in Gaza depends on Israel taking more action to protect civilians and aid workers.

## IRANIANS MOURN GUARD MEMBERS KILLED AT CONSULATE

TEHRAN, Iran — Thousands of Iranians have held a funeral for Revolutionary Guard members killed by an airstrike at Iran's consulate in Syria this week.

People at the funeral ceremony held Friday in Tehran protested the airstrike widely blamed on Israel that killed 12 people, including two elite Iranian generals.

Late Thursday, Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei performed the Islamic funeral prayer for seven Revolutionary Guard members.

The funeral took place on Quds Day, a pro-Palestine event that uses the Arabic name for Jerusalem, that is held on the last Friday of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

State TV showed people at the funeral waving Iranian and Palestinian flags and some chanting "death to America" and "death to Israel." Similar rallies took place in other Iranian cities and towns.

## ISRAELI POLICE DETAIN 8 PALESTINIAN WORSHIPPERS AT AL-AQSA

JERUSALEM — Israel police said they detained eight Palestinian worshippers for allegedly chanting in-

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flammatory slogans at Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa compound as thousands gathered at Islam's third holiest site for dawn prayers marking the last Friday of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

The incident marks the first flare-up between Israeli forces and worshippers at the compound during this Ramadan, as the Hamas-Israel war rages on in Gaza.

The Islamic militant group Hamas, meanwhile, issued a call to Muslims around the world to participate in a "Friday of Rage for Palestine."

Police said the eight had chanted in support of what it called "terrorist organizations," an apparent reference to Hamas. The eight were taken away for questioning.

Israeli broadcaster Channel 13 TV said some of the worshippers were chanting in support of the Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades, the Hamas military wing.

Both Channel 13 TV and the Qatari network Al-Jazeera said Israeli forces also fired tear gas at worshippers.

Ramadan has passed mostly peacefully in Jerusalem despite the Gaza war in which more than 33,000 Palestinians have been killed, according to local health officials.

Israel declared war on Oct. 7 when Hamas militants invaded southern Israel and killed over 1, 200 people and took about 250 hostages.

The Al Aqsa Mosque compound has long been a deeply contested religious space. It's on the Temple Mount, the most sacred site in Judaism where biblical Jewish temples once stood.

**ISRAEL SAYS IT'S TAKING STEPS TO ALLOW MORE AID INTO GAZA, AFTER REBUKE FROM U.S.**

**JERUSALEM** — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office says his Security Cabinet has approved steps to increase the flow of humanitarian aid into Gaza, including the reopening of a key crossing into hard-hit northern Gaza that was destroyed in the Oct. 7 Hamas attack.

A statement early Friday said the Erez crossing would be temporarily reopened for the first time since the Hamas attack. It also said Israel would allow its port in Ashdod to process aid shipments bound for Gaza, and to increase Jordanian aid shipments through another land crossing.

"This increased aid will prevent a humanitarian crisis and is necessary to ensure the continuation of the fighting and to achieve the goals of the war," Netanyahu's office said.

The announcement did not elaborate on quantities or types of items to be let in.

The decision came after President Joe Biden called on Israel, in a phone conversation with Netanyahu, to take steps "to address civilian harm, humanitarian suffering and the safety of aid workers."

The United Nations says much of the population in northern Gaza is on the brink of starvation.

The heavily fortified Erez crossing for years was the only passenger terminal for people to move in and out of the territory.

**U.N. SECURITY COUNCIL TO MEET ABOUT ATTACKS ON AID WORKERS IN GAZA**

**UNITED NATIONS** — The U.N. Security Council will hold an emergency meeting about attacks on humanitarian workers in Gaza and the risk of famine in the territory.

The meeting for Friday was requested by Algeria, the Arab representative on the council, joined by Guyana, Slovenia and Switzerland. Israeli airstrikes earlier this week killed seven aid workers from the charity World Central Kitchen, which has demanded an independent investigation.

A U.N. aid convoy is scheduled to head out Thursday night after the U.N. paused night operations for 48 hours, said U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric. He told reporters the convoy "will hopefully make it to the north."

"Because of what happened to World Central Kitchen, we had to pause ... and regroup and reassess all sorts of factors," he said.

On the health front, Dujarric said, the World Health Organization reached two hospitals in Gaza City — Al Sahaba and Al Ahil — and delivered supplies and carried out assessments.

But he said Israel has still not given WHO permission to visit Shifa Hospital, and has not provided a reason. Israel's military recently ended its second raid on the facility.

The WHO team spoke with patients who were able to leave Shifa afterward. "They described dire conditions during the siege, with no food, water or medicine available," Dujarric said. "One patient said that doctors there resorted to putting salt and vinegar on people's wounds in place of antiseptics, which are

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non-existent.”

**U.S. MILITARY SAYS PLAN TO BUILD PIER FOR GAZA AID IS STILL ON SCHEDULE**

WASHINGTON — The U.S. military is on schedule to build a pier off the Gaza coast to expand humanitarian aid deliveries, the Defense Department said Thursday, even as other agencies have pulled back after Israel killed several aid workers.

The pier will be on line by the end of the month or early May, said Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder, the Pentagon press secretary.

“Everything is on track, on schedule at this point,” Ryder said. He said Israel has agreed to provide security on the shore as aid is transferred and distributed, but details are still being worked out.

On Thursday, several of the Army boats carrying soldiers and equipment for the pier construction were docked in the Canary Islands for fuel and maintenance and are expected to continue on into the Mediterranean Sea. And a ship operated by the Military Sealift Command, the USNS Benavidez is in the Mediterranean Sea, near Crete, carrying some of the larger equipment for the project.

## **Yellen calls for level playing field for US workers and firms during China visit**

By FATIMA HUSSEIN and KEN MORITSUGU Associated Press

GUANGZHOU, China (AP) — U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen called on China on Friday to address manufacturing overcapacity that she said risks causing global economic dislocation, and to create a level playing field for American companies and workers.

Starting a five-day visit in one of China’s major industrial and export hubs, she raised what the U.S. considers to be unfair Chinese trade practices in talks with senior Chinese officials.

“The United States seeks a healthy economic relationship with China that benefits both sides,” she said ahead of a meeting with Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng in the southern city of Guangzhou. “But a healthy relationship must provide a level playing field for firms and workers in both countries.”

Earlier, she said at an event hosted by the American Chamber of Commerce in China that there are “Chinese practices that are tilting the playing field away from American workers and firms.”

He didn’t get into specifics in his remarks before the media but said that both sides “need to properly respond to key concerns of the other side.”

High on Yellen’s list is the overcapacity issue. Chinese government subsidies and other policy support have encouraged solar panel and EV makers in China to invest in factories, building far more production capacity than the domestic market can absorb.

The massive scale of production has driven down costs and ignited price wars for green technologies, a boon for consumers and efforts to reduce global dependence on fossil fuels. But Western governments fear that that capacity will flood their markets with low-priced exports, threatening American and European jobs.

Yellen, the first Cabinet-level official to visit China since President Joe Biden met Chinese leader Xi Jinping last November, told the vice premier and the governor of Guangdong province in separate meetings that it is important for the U.S. and China to have open and direct communication on areas of disagreement.

“This includes the issue of China’s industrial overcapacity, which the United States and other countries are concerned can cause global spillovers,” she said during her meeting with the governor.

Guangzhou is the provincial capital of Guangdong, a Chinese manufacturing and export hub that is home to telecom giant Huawei and BYD, China’s largest EV maker. Huawei has been hit hard by U.S. restrictions on semiconductor exports to China and is at the vanguard of Chinese efforts to become self-sufficient and a leader in technology.

Yellen, who will also visit Beijing on her trip, met with both U.S. and European and Japanese business representatives before her meeting with He.

“I’ve heard from many American business executives that operating in China can be challenging,” she said at the American Chamber event in an auditorium at a marbled convention center in the Baiyun District of Guangzhou.

Citing a recent survey by the Chamber that found that a third of American firms in China say they have



experienced unfair treatment compared with local competitors, Yellen said the U.S. has seen China “pursue unfair economic practices, including imposing barriers to access for foreign firms and taking coercive actions against American companies.”

“I strongly believe that this doesn’t only hurt these American firms: Ending these unfair practices would benefit China by improving the business climate here. I intend to raise these issues in meetings this week,” she said in her speech.

China has pushed back against the overcapacity concerns expressed by both the U.S. and Europe.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said earlier this week that the growth in Chinese EV and solar exports is conducive to green development globally and the result of the international division of labor and market demand.

He accused the U.S. of interfering with free trade by restricting technology exports to China.

“As for who is doing non-market manipulation, the fact is for everyone to see,” he said. “The U.S. has not stopped taking measures to contain China’s trade and technology. This is not ‘de-risking,’ rather, it is creating risks.”

Yellen said at the American Chamber event that “excess capacity is a concern that many countries share — from a range of advanced and developing countries and is not something that’s new.”

“This is not anti-China policy,” she said. “It’s an effort for us to mitigate the risks from the inevitable global economic dislocation that will result if China doesn’t adjust its policies.”

Scott Paul, president of the Alliance for American Manufacturing — an alliance of businesses and the U.S. Steelworkers union — told The Associated Press ahead of Yellen’s trip that there are low expectations about the Chinese government’s response.

“One thing that Yellen hopefully can and should say is that the U.S. is prepared to use all the tools that we have available through policy to ensure that China’s industrial overcapacity doesn’t negatively harm our economic and national security interests,” he said.

The Alliance released a report in February that says the introduction of inexpensive Chinese autos to the American market “could end up being an extinction-level event for the U.S. auto sector.” The U.S. auto sector accounts for 3% of America’s GDP, according to the report.

Yellen told reporters Wednesday during an Alaska refueling stop en route to Asia that the U.S. “won’t rule out” tariffs to respond to China’s heavily subsidized manufacturing of green energy products.

## **New mass graves in Rwanda reveal cracks in reconciliation efforts, 30 years after the genocide**

By RODNEY MUHUMUZA and IGNATIUS SSUUNA Associated Press

HUYE, Rwanda (AP) — The diggers’ hoes scrape the brown soil, looking for — and often finding — human bone fragments. The women then wipe the bone pieces with their hands as others watch in solemn silence.

The digging goes on, a scene that’s become all too familiar in a verdant area of rural southern Rwanda, where the discovery in October of human remains at the site of a house under construction triggered another search for new mass graves believed to hold victims of the 1994 genocide against Rwanda’s Tutsi.

In the months since, Rwandan authorities say the remains of at least 1,000 people have been found in this farming community in the district of Huye, a surprisingly high number after three decades of government efforts to give genocide victims dignified burials.

As Rwanda prepares to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the genocide next week, continuing discoveries of mass graves are a stark reminder not only of the country’s determination to reconcile with its grim past but also of the challenges it faces in aiming for lasting peace.

Speaking to The Associated Press, the head of a prominent genocide survivors’ group and several other Rwandans said the discoveries underscore that more needs to be done for true reconciliation.

Rwanda has made it a criminal offense to withhold information about a previously unknown mass grave. For years perpetrators of the 1994 genocide, including those who served prison terms and were later released, have been urged to speak up and say what they know.

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Yet the mass graves are still mostly found by accident, leading to new arrests and traumatizing survivors all over again.

The October discovery led to the arrest of Jean Baptiste Hishamunda, 87, and four of his relatives.

After the remains of six people were discovered under his home, diggers started going through his entire property, finding dozens and then hundreds more remains as their search extended to other sites in Huye.

An estimated 800,000 Tutsi were killed by extremist Hutu in massacres that lasted over 100 days in 1994. Some moderate Hutu who tried to protect members of the Tutsi minority also were targeted.

The genocide was ignited on April 6 when a plane carrying President Juvénal Habyarimana, a member of the majority Hutu, was shot down in the capital Kigali. The Tutsi were blamed for downing the plane and killing the president. Enraged, gangs of Hutu extremists began killing Tutsi, backed by the army and police.

The government of President Paul Kagame, whose rebel group stopped the genocide and whose party has ruled the East African country since 1994, has tried to bridge ethnic divisions.

The government imposed a tough penal code to punish genocide and outlaw the ideology behind it, and Kagame has fostered a culture of obedience among the country's 14 million people. Rwandan ID cards no longer identify a person by ethnicity and lessons about the genocide are part of the curriculum in schools.

Hundreds of community projects, backed by the government or civic groups, focus on uniting Rwandans and, every April, the nation joins hands in somber commemorations of the genocide anniversary.

Today, serious crimes fueled by ethnic hatred are rare in this small country where Hutu, Tutsi and Twa live side by side — but signs persist of what authorities say is a genocidal ideology, citing concealing information about undiscovered mass graves as an example.

Then there are incidents of villagers asking mass-grave investigators if they are searching for valuable minerals or dumping dog carcasses at memorial sites, according to Naphtal Ahishakiye, executive secretary of Ibuka, the genocide survivors' group based in Kigali.

"It's like saying, 'What we lost during the genocide are dogs,'" Ahishakiye said.

There are still those who resist coming forward to say what they witnessed, he said. "We still need to improve, to teach, to approach people, up to (when) they become able to tell us what happened."

As more mass graves are discovered, Tutsi survivors "start to doubt" the good intentions of their Hutu neighbors, he said. Their pleas for information about relatives lost in the killings go unanswered.

In the village of Ngoma, where shacks roofed with corrugated sheets dot lush farmland, diggers come across decaying shoes and pieces of torn clothing among skulls and bones. The survivors are traumatized all over again.

"I have tried very hard to forget," said Beata Mujawayeze, her voice catching as she recalled the killing of her 12-year-old sister at a roadblock on April 25, 1994.

The girl pleaded for her life with militiamen, going down on her knees in front of a gang leader whom she addressed as "my father." She was hacked with a machete.

"She was a lovely girl," Mujawayeze said of her sister as she watched the digging at a mass grave site on a recent afternoon in her Tutsi-dominated neighborhood. "One day, hopefully, we will get to know where she was buried."

Augustine Nsengiyumva, another survivor in Ngoma, said the new mass grave discoveries have left him disappointed in his Hutu neighbors, whom he had grown to trust.

"Imagine sleeping on top of genocide victims," he said, referring to cases where human remains are found under people's homes. "These are things I really don't understand."

Young people are less troubled by the past. Some Rwandans see this as a chance for reconciliation in a country where every other citizen is under the age of 30.

In the semi-rural area of Gahanga, just outside of Kigali, farmer Patrick Hakizimana says he sees a ray of hope in his children that someday Rwanda will have ethnic harmony.

A Hutu and an army corporal during the genocide, Hakizimana was imprisoned from 1996 to 2007 for his alleged role in the killings. He said he has learnt his lesson and is now trying to win the respect of others in his neighborhood.

"There are people who still have hatred against Tutsi," he said. "The genocide was prepared for a long time."

It will take a long time for people to leave that hatred behind, he said.

## Rescue teams in Taiwan searching for family feared trapped in rockslide following earthquake

By JOHNSON LAI and CHRISTOPHER BODEEN Associated Press

HUALIEN, Taiwan (AP) — Rescue teams are searching for a family of five feared trapped in a rockslide following Taiwan's biggest earthquake in 25 years, which has left at least 12 dead.

Two bodies have been found in the Taroko National Park, a tourist attraction famous for its rugged, mountainous terrain in Hualien County about 150 kilometers (90 miles) from Taipei. At least four other victims were found in the park. Authorities have yet to verify the identities of the latest victims.

The family, surnamed You, had gone on a hike after visiting ancestral sites for the traditional grave-sweeping observances.

Wednesday's 7.4-magnitude quake sent boulders and mud tumbling down mountainsides, blocking roads and smashing cars, and injured more than 1,000 people.

In the county seat of Hualien, crews were working to demolish the five-story Tien Wang Hsing building, which was left leaning at a severe angle, one of scores of buildings damaged around the island. Residents wearing motorcycle and construction helmets recovered legal documents and other documents before large cement-penetrating drills and backhoes began bringing down the building.

A high school teacher was killed in the building when she returned to her apartment to find her cat just as an aftershock struck, bringing down more debris.

Others were still stuck in areas cut off by road blockages, including one Canadian and two persons with joint Australian and Singapore citizenship, according to emergency services. Authorities were using cell phone signals to ascertain their positions.

Hualien will face a major challenge to rebuild and bring back tourism, said county head Hsu Chen-Wei.

"After such a strong quake, rebuilding and reconstruction will be an extremely heavy burden, especially for those who still need to make their monthly mortgage payments. That's why people's paths to rebuilding their lives will rely on help from charitable donations," Hsu told reporters.

The small number of casualties and rapid response has been attributed to tightened construction safety standards and the replacement of older buildings with modern structures built to resist earthquakes. Emergency services have upgraded their equipment and training, assisted by civic groups such as the Red Cross and the Buddhist Tzu Chi charitable foundation that have provided meals and set up shelters in school gymnasiums and other public spaces for those left homeless.

The powerful quake struck during the morning rush hour, sending schoolchildren rushing outdoors and families fleeing their apartments through the windows. The ground floors of some buildings collapsed, leaving them leaning at precarious angles. Though the island is regularly rattled by earthquakes and generally well prepared, authorities did not send out the usual alerts because they were expecting a smaller temblor.

Hualien was last struck by a deadly quake in 2018 which killed 17 people and brought down a historic hotel. Taiwan's worst recent earthquake struck on Sept. 21, 1999, a magnitude 7.7 temblor that caused 2,400 deaths, injured around 100,000 and destroyed thousands of buildings.

## Russia renews big attacks on Ukrainian power grid using better intelligence and new tactics

By SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

When the Russian barrage hit the Ukrainian power plant, a worker named Taras was manning the control panel — a crucial task that required him to stay as the air-raid siren blared and his colleagues ran for safety.

After the deafening explosions came a cloud of smoke, then darkness. Fires blazed, and shrapnel pierced

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the roof of the huge complex, causing debris to rain down on workers. Following protocols, Taras shut down the coal-fired plant, his heart racing.

In the March 22 attack, Russia unleashed more than 60 exploding drones and 90 missiles across Ukraine — the worst assault on the country's energy infrastructure since the full-scale invasion began in early 2022.

The fusillade reflected Russia's renewed focus on striking Ukrainian energy facilities. The volume and accuracy of recent attacks have alarmed the country's defenders, who say Kremlin forces now have better intelligence and fresh tactics in their campaign to annihilate Ukraine's electrical grid and bring its economy to a halt. Moscow has also apparently learned how to exploit gaps in Ukrainian air defenses.

With more assaults inevitable, officials are scrambling for ways to better defend the country's energy assets.

The March 22 attack — which left 1.9 million people without power, according to analysts — was among the most intense in Russia's springtime air campaign targeting civilian infrastructure.

DTEK, Ukraine's largest private energy company, lost 80% of its power generation capacity in attacks on March 22 and 29, the company said. Plants were destroyed across the country. Russia targeted transmission networks as well.

The bombardment blacked out large parts of Ukraine — a level of darkness not seen since the first days of the full-scale invasion. The strikes also tested Ukraine's ability to make quick repairs.

The Associated Press was given access to two DTEK power plants damaged in the March 22 attack on the condition that the names and locations of the facilities and the full names of workers not be mentioned due to security concerns. The AP was not permitted to provide technical details of damage, including the number of missiles that struck each plant or whether the plant could still function.

After previous assaults, power station workers were able to restore service fairly quickly. But that became harder after March 22 because of continuing strikes that prevent rebuilding.

The Kharkiv region, which borders Russia and was the hardest hit, is still enduring power outages weeks later. On Thursday, drones struck the region's Zmiivska power plant, plunging 350,000 people into the dark.

"They are trying to take us back to the 17th century," said Serhii, a manager in one of the power plants that was attacked.

Maksym Timchenko, the CEO of DTEK, inspected the grounds of one of the two power stations. Gazing up at the titanic complex, his eyes rested on a gaping hole in the building's scorched facade.

Inside, workers collected debris in wheelbarrows, their faces blackened by floating dust. Cranes removed giant shards of twisted metal and blocks of fallen concrete. In the dark bowels of the plant's interior, where an intricate network of large pipes connect to industrial boilers, the steel roof was so pockmarked with shrapnel it resembled a starry night sky.

"I've never seen in my life this level of destruction in a power station, and unfortunately it happened to us," Timchenko said.

He estimates that the company can restore half of the damaged units in two to three months. It's a Sisyphean task: Workers must repair damage over and over again.

This particular plant was targeted late last year, and one unit was destroyed. Timchenko said DTEK planned to repair it by the end of this year.

"But now the same level of destruction has happened to several power units," he said, bringing the plant and the company's strategic plans back to square one.

During the agonizing wait for more strikes, Ukrainian officials are discussing how to better protect power generators. One solution may be decentralizing them by creating a network of small facilities that are harder to hit than large plants.

The timing of the attacks perplexed many observers.

Russia usually reserves large-scale attacks on energy infrastructure for the peak winter months, when demand for heat is highest. A spring campaign suggests Russia was behind schedule in unleashing new tactics, said Oleksandr Kharchenko, director of the Kyiv-based Energy Industry Research Center.

"I am absolutely sure that they wanted to do this one month before," he said.

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Russia, as expected, targeted energy infrastructure in the last three months of last year, when temperatures dropped below freezing. But the high-voltage grid was prepared to sustain the attacks, and damaged sites were quickly repaired. In December, Russia accepted that the old tactics were not working.

As the winter months went by, Russia began concocting a new scheme.

"They did a huge intelligence job," Kharchenko said, pointing to the precise nature of the attacks and the damage done. The Russian military seemed to "know everything about the current status of many energy infrastructure objects," including their defenses.

Once the targets were chosen, Russia swarmed them with missiles at an unprecedented scale. If before they launched three drones and two missiles per target, now they send six missiles and up to 15 drones, he said.

Air-defense systems could not stop everything. "It was too much," he said.

Before the March 22 attacks, workers operated under the assumption that air defenses would take down 70% of air attacks. The strikes that got through often fell on the periphery of the plant, said Serhii, a plant manager.

"But now the circle is smaller and smaller, reaching our power units and control rooms," Serhii said.

The result is dire. According to Kharchenko's figures, Ukraine lost up to 15 percent of its power generation. That means, for now, it cannot cover the demand expected during the peak summer months of July and August.

In the aftermath of the attack on his power station, Taras was traumatized more by the scale of the destruction than the explosions that caused it.

"I wasn't scared at first, but we got scared when we saw the consequences," he said.

On the night of March 22, an injured worker was brought into the control room as fires blazed across the complex.

"With one hand, we conducted the shutdown, with the other we bandaged his injured leg," he said. They left the plant using flashlights to navigate through pitch darkness.

"If the skies were protected, I would feel calmer," he said. "Power infrastructure is something everything depends on. If there's no power, nothing works: Plants don't work. People are left without internet. You won't even know when the missiles are flying at you."

## **April nor'easter with heavy, wet snow pounds Northeast, knocks out power to hundreds of thousands**

By DAVE COLLINS Associated Press

A major spring storm brought heavy snow, rain and high winds to the Northeast, downing trees and power lines and leaving nearly 700,000 homes and businesses without power at one point. A woman was killed by a falling tree in a New York City suburb and a second woman died in a New Hampshire fire caused by the weather.

Two feet (61 centimeters) of snow was expected in parts of northern New England by Thursday evening, with wind gusts of 50 to 60 mph (80 to 97 kph) in coastal areas and inland, according to the National Weather Service. Moderate to heavy snow was forecast to continue in the evening and into Friday in areas of higher terrain.

Maine and New Hampshire bore the brunt of the power outages, with about 310,000 and 125,000, respectively, as of Thursday night, according to poweroutage.us. Local officials said the heavy, wet snow was to blame for bringing down trees and power lines.

Residents living in areas where power outages are continuing should make sure to check on neighbors, especially those who may be vulnerable, said Robert Buxton, New Hampshire Homeland Security and Emergency Management director.

"This was pretty much a classic nor'easter," said Stephen Baron, a meteorologist for the weather service in Gray, Maine. "This is definitely a high-end storm for April. It's not crazy for us to get snow in April, but not usually getting double-digit amounts."

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The weather service said it was the biggest April nor'easter to hit the region since 2020.

"Still reporting snow and wind here at the office, with 17.4 inches (44.2 centimeters) of snow for the event thus far here in Gray," the service posted in the evening on X, formerly known as Twitter.

Over a foot (30 centimeters) of snow fell in Wolfeboro, New Hampshire, where some residents who lost power checked in at the Wolfeboro Inn, general manager Shawn Black said.

"This is a lot of heavy, wet snow," he said. "And the wind is out of the northeast, so it's really not nice in a sense of temperature-wise, especially when the speed gets up to gusts of 55 mph. While I was out on the snowblower I could really feel my forehead just go numb."

Jane Phillips, who was cross-country skiing in her neighborhood in Portland, Maine, was relishing the weather.

"It's special to get snow in April and to be able to get out and enjoy it," Phillips said. "It's fun being a Mainer."

Heavy snow made travel treacherous in northern New England and New York, and numerous vehicle crashes were reported.

One temporarily shut down Interstate 95 northbound near Lewiston, Maine, on Thursday morning. In Windham, Maine, near Portland, a vehicle lost control and struck a police cruiser, but no one was injured.

The storm brought mostly heavy rain to southern parts of the Northeast, as well as high winds.

Late Wednesday afternoon, a tree fell on a vehicle and killed a woman in the hamlet of Armonk in New York's Westchester County, police said.

In New Hampshire, Derry Fire Chief Shawn Haggart said a woman died and a young woman was hospitalized after a morning house fire Thursday that was sparked by an explosion.

Haggart said the state Fire Marshal's Office concluded that a tree fell on the house near external propane tanks at a time when strong winds were knocking down branches and power lines.

Dozens of flights in the region were canceled or delayed, and many schools and government offices were closed in northern areas.

"We recommend that you stay off the roads if you can, but if you must travel during the storm, be sure to give plow trucks, utility crews and emergency first responders plenty of room as they work to keep us safe," Maine Gov. Janet Mills said.

Utilities in northern New England said they were prepared for the storm but power restoration could still be lengthy.

"Our crews are responding to widespread tree damage across our service area brought on by today's long-duration Nor'easter," Central Maine Power said on its website, adding that most of the damage was due to "more than a foot of heavy, wet snow and strong winds."

The utility said more than 450 power line crews and 250 tree crews were assessing the damage and were prepared for a multi-day restoration effort.

Whipping winds and driving rain battered Boston, where staffers at the New England Aquarium did a sweep of the roof to make sure nothing could blow into the sea lion habitat, which is partially exposed. The storm caught some visitors off guard.

"I just saw the wind and the rain and I just bought this little poncho to protect myself," said Claire Sausol, who grew up in France and was visiting the city Wednesday. "I wasn't prepared with the warm clothes. It's worse than the north of France!"

Elsewhere, cleanup work continued in several states wracked by tornadoes and other severe weather blamed for at least three deaths this week. Tornadoes touched down in Oklahoma, Kentucky, Tennessee, West Virginia and Georgia.

Killed were a homeless woman in Tulsa, Oklahoma, who was sheltering inside a drainage pipe during heavy rains; a woman in the Philadelphia suburb of Collegeville whose car was hit by a falling tree; and a person involved in a car accident in Kentucky.

In West Virginia, the National Weather Service on Thursday confirmed that two tornadoes with maximum winds of 130 mph (209 kph) and another with maximum winds of 110 mph (177 kph) hit in the southern

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part of the state Tuesday, damaging homes and businesses and snapping and uprooting trees. The weather service also issued a warning for major flooding through Sunday in some communities along the Ohio River. About 20,000 homes and businesses in the state remained without power as of Thursday night.

## **Total solar eclipse forecast: Will your city have clear skies Monday?**

By ADITHI RAMAKRISHNAN AP Science Writer

DALLAS (AP) — Some who hope to witness Monday's total solar eclipse may see the sun obscured by clouds instead of by the moon.

There's still plenty of time for forecasts to change, but meteorologists predict that eclipse day storms could blanket parts of the path, which stretches from Mexico and Texas through Maine and parts of Canada.

If clouds don't get in the way, viewers in the path wearing eclipse glasses will see the moon begin to slowly cover the sun until it is completely blocked, a period of darkness called "totality" during which temperatures drop and the sun's corona will be visible.

What's the forecast along the eclipse's path?

Clouds are expected in much of the eclipse's path Monday thanks to storms that are moving across the central U.S.

National Weather Service meteorologist Marc Chenard says the northeast U.S. currently has the best chance of clear skies, along with parts of Arkansas, Missouri and Illinois.

Canada, too, may have only light cloud cover that won't significantly impact the view. Higher, thinner clouds should still allow eclipse goers to glimpse the sun, while lower, thicker clouds could obscure the spectacle entirely.

Parts of Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York and Texas are questionable. Northeast Texas, Chenard says, "could kind of go either way at this point." Mexico may also have low to mid-level cloud cover.

Thushari Jayasekara, a physics professor at Southern Illinois University, saw the 2017 eclipse from Carbondale, Illinois, where it was partially hidden by clouds. From her vantage point at the university's Saluki Stadium, the spectacle disappeared right as the final bit of the sun was extinguished by the moon. The crowd fell silent.

"It was dark, but we were not able to see the sun," she said. The clouds parted again during totality, allowing those in Carbondale to catch a glimpse of the full effect.

How accurate is the eclipse weather forecast?

"The uncertainty is still pretty high," Chenard said. The storms moving across the country make it difficult for meteorologists to predict exactly where and when clouds will arrive.

Weather conditions in the northeast U.S. have looked promising so far, but the timing and speed of Monday's storms may influence what cloud cover looks like for the rest of the country.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Weather Prediction Center will update the eclipse forecast daily until Monday.

How can I see the solar eclipse if it's cloudy or rained out?

Eclipse viewers can still watch the total solar eclipse online.

NASA will stream telescope views of the sun and on NASA TV starting at 1 p.m. EDT. Associated Press journalists will also bring live coverage of the eclipse from across the path, starting at 10 a.m. EDT with views from Mazatlán, Mexico, and other locations.

The Exploratorium museum, Time and Date and Slooh will also broadcast eclipse day views.

## **After six months of war, Israel's isolation grows with no end in sight**

By JOSEF FEDERMAN Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — When Israel declared war against Hamas last October, it stood unified at home and enjoyed broad backing from around the world following an unprecedented attack by the Islamic militant group.

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Six months later, Israel finds itself in a far different place: bogged down in Gaza, divided domestically, isolated internationally and increasingly at odds with its closest ally. The risk of a broader regional war remains real.

Despite Israel's fierce military onslaught, Hamas is still standing, if significantly weakened. The offensive has pushed Gaza into a humanitarian crisis, displacing more than 80% of the population and leaving over 1 million people on the brink of starvation. Yet Israel hasn't presented a postwar vision acceptable to its partners, and cease-fire talks remain at a standstill.

Here are six takeaways from the first six months of war.

## BATTLEFIELD STALEMATE

Israel declared war in response to Hamas' Oct. 7 cross-border attack, in which the militant group killed 1,200 people, most of them civilians, and kidnapped about 250 others.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu set two objectives: destroying Hamas and bringing home the hostages. Despite his repeated pledges to achieve "total victory," his goals remain elusive.

After steadily conquering most of Gaza in a bruising offensive, Israeli ground troops are in a holding pattern marked by small tactical operations and uncertainty over whether the army will march into the southern Gaza city of Rafah, Hamas' last significant stronghold.

Netanyahu has repeatedly vowed to invade Rafah, but he faces broad international opposition, including from the United States, because of the hundreds of thousands of displaced Palestinians sheltering there. Netanyahu claims to have a plan to evacuate the civilians, but it isn't clear whether it is ready or would satisfy the Americans.

Even if Israel does invade Rafah, there is no guarantee of long-term success. Although Hamas appears to have suffered heavy losses, its forces have managed to regroup in areas abandoned by Israel.

At the same time, Israel hasn't been able to halt the daily attacks it faces on its northern front from the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah. In contrast to Hamas, Hezbollah's much larger arsenal remains intact, leaving the fate of tens of thousands of uprooted civilians on both sides of the border up in the air. The tensions have threatened to drag in Hezbollah's sponsor, Iran, especially after an airstrike widely attributed to Israel killed two Iranian generals in neighboring Syria this week.

## GROWING ISOLATION

Israel enjoyed broad international support following the Oct. 7 massacre, which was the deadliest attack against Jews since the Holocaust. However, that goodwill has been replaced by impatience and outrage as conditions in Gaza worsen.

More than 33,000 Palestinians have been killed in the war, around two-thirds of them women and children, according to Palestinian health officials whose death toll doesn't distinguish between civilians and fighters. International aid officials say roughly one-third of Gaza's population is dealing with catastrophic hunger.

Initial expressions of solidarity from Israel's allies have given way to calls for a halt to the fighting. Meanwhile, the U.N. world court, looking into genocide allegations against Israel, has ordered Israel to do more to protect Gaza's civilians.

This isolation appeared to peak on March 25, when the U.N. Security Council, over Israeli objections, passed a resolution demanding an immediate cease-fire. The U.S. infuriated Israel by allowing the resolution to pass.

Things have only worsened for Israel since then, especially following its killing of seven aid workers in what it says was an errant airstrike. Six of the victims were volunteers from countries allied with Israel, antagonizing them and outraging U.S. President Joe Biden. The alleged Israeli airstrike on an Iran's embassy in Syria and Netanyahu's efforts to shutter the Arab satellite channel Al Jazeera have further alienated allies.

## ISRAEL IS DIVIDED

After a period of broad unity early in the war, Israel has returned to its divided self — with its polarizing leader at the center of the storm.

Weekly protests against the government have grown and attract thousands. They are rooted in longstanding grievances against Netanyahu — from his political alliances with far-right and ultra-Orthodox parties to his open-ended corruption trial. However, they have drawn new strength from his failure to bring home



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the hostages. Roughly half of the hostages were released during a weeklong cease-fire in November. But Israel says 134 remain in captivity.

Israel has already declared more than 30 hostages dead — and there are widespread fears that the true number is higher and will continue to rise the longer they are held.

The plight of the hostages and the anguished cries of their families have resonated deeply with the Israeli public. Some hostage families were among the tens of thousands of people who took to the streets this week calling on the government to resign. It was the largest anti-government demonstration since the war began.

## NETANYAHU ISN'T GOING ANYWHERE

Netanyahu's popularity has plummeted since the outbreak of the war, with many holding him responsible for the intelligence and security failures that allowed the Oct. 7 attack to occur. Yet he has rebuffed calls to resign or launch investigations into what went wrong.

Netanyahu faces no immediate threat to his rule. For now, his coalition partners, also facing likely losses at the polls, remain firmly behind him.

Ironically, the biggest immediate threat to Netanyahu is only peripherally related to the war. Israel's Supreme Court has ordered a halt to a long-standing controversial system of exempting ultra-Orthodox men from compulsory military service.

With over 600 soldiers killed since Oct. 7, Netanyahu will have a tough time continuing this system. But if he tries to force religious men into military service, he could lose the support of his ultra-Orthodox partners and be forced into early elections.

"Netanyahu is incapable of either feeling shame or taking responsibility," wrote Anshel Pfeffer, a Haaretz columnist and author of a Netanyahu biography. "He has no intention of ever resigning on his own accord."

## HAMAS ISN'T GOING ANYWHERE

The Israeli offensive has caused mass destruction across Gaza and inflicted heavy losses on Hamas. Israel claims to have killed some 13,000 Hamas fighters and dismantled the group's military capabilities across most of Gaza.

Yet even if these claims are true, Hamas is still intact in Rafah, and its fighters have regrouped in areas where Israel previously declared victory. Although there have been small shows of public discontent with Hamas in Gaza, there have been no public signs of broad opposition to the group.

Khalil Sayegh, a Palestinian analyst, said Hamas keeps reappearing and Israel hasn't allowed any alternative to emerge.

"When you're fighting a guerrilla war, I think the ultimate success or failure is whether you're able to survive," he said. "So if Hamas survives as a governing body, then this will be a success."

Michael Milshtein, a former high-ranking Israeli military intelligence officer who is now an expert in Palestinian studies at Tel Aviv University, says Israel faces two unappealing choices: Accept a hostage and cease-fire deal that acknowledges Hamas has survived, or step up the military campaign and conquer Gaza in hopes that Hamas will eventually be destroyed.

He said expectations that the Israeli military's current approach can destroy Hamas or force it to surrender is "wishful thinking."

## NO POSTWAR POLICY

There is no consensus for the future of Gaza.

Netanyahu has presented a vague vision that calls for open-ended Israeli control of the territory, with local Palestinian partners in Gaza administering day-to-day affairs. Israel hopes for reconstruction to be funded by the international community, including wealthy Arab Gulf states.

These plans, though, clash with visions promoted by the U.S., other international partners and the Palestinians.

The U.S. has called for a return of the internationally recognized Palestinian Authority, which Hamas ousted from Gaza in 2007, and for renewed efforts to establish an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza. The PA, based in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, recently appointed a new prime minister to address American calls for reform.

Netanyahu opposes Palestinian statehood or any role for the PA. Meanwhile, there is little appetite among donor nations to contribute to reconstruction without a political consensus. The United Arab Emirates, for instance, says it will not fund reconstruction without a viable two-state approach.

Ofer Shelah, a former lawmaker who is now a senior researcher at Israel's Institute for National Security Studies, said the battlefield successes are "almost meaningless" without a diplomatic vision.

"The real threat to Hamas will not be Israeli tanks or warplanes. It's an alternative to running life in postwar Gaza," he said.

## South Korea election issues: Green onions, striking doctors, an alleged sexist jab at a candidate

By HYUNG-JIN KIM and KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — Soaring prices for green onions and apples. Striking doctors. A politician's allegedly sexist jab at a female candidate. These are among the issues animating voters in South Korea this year.

As South Koreans prepare to vote for a new 300-member parliament next week, many are choosing their livelihoods and other domestic topics as their most important election issues, staying away from traditionally popular agendas like North Korean nuclear threats and the U.S. security commitment.

"I feel drawn to someone who talks about things that can be truly helpful to our neighborhoods," said Kim Yun-ah, a 45-year-old Seoul officer worker. "I often don't know when North Korea test-fired missiles."

Experts say up to about 30% or 40% of South Korea's 44 million voters are politically neutral and that who they end up supporting will likely determine the results of the April 10 elections.

A look at the upcoming South Korean elections and the issues affecting voters' sentiments.

### MODERATES

South Korea's conservative-liberal divide is so stark that many voters likely have already determined who they'll vote for according to their party affiliation, rather than by looking at the policies of the candidates in their districts.

But the extreme polarization has led to an expansion of moderates who are fed up with partisan strife and who focus more on livelihoods issues such as prices, jobs and taxes, according to Choi Jin, director of the Seoul-based Institute of Presidential Leadership.

Choi estimated that roughly 30% of South Korea's are conservatives, another 30% liberals and the remaining 40% moderates. Other experts put the proportion of moderates at 30%.

"In a nutshell, even if conservatives and liberals intensely bicker over political issues, that won't influence election results much," Choi said. "The fate of an election is rather determined by the moderates who silently monitor livelihood issues and decide who to vote for."

Some observers say liberal opposition parties could retain their majority status, making conservative President Yoon Suk Yeol — whose single five-year term ends in 2027 — an early lame duck. But others note many moderates are still undecided, so it's too early to predict who would win.

Regardless of the electoral outcome, Yoon's major foreign policy agendas would remain unchanged, such as boosting security cooperation with the U.S. and Japan and taking a tough line on North Korea's nuclear program, experts say.

### GREEN ONIONS

Yoon got more than he bargained for when he visited a Seoul grocery mall last month to promote government efforts to tame food prices but ended up inviting criticism by talking about the prices of green onions.

Looking at a bundle of green onions with a price tag of 875 won (\$0.65) — a temporary discount price offered thanks to a government subsidy — Yoon said that "I've been to lots of markets, and I would say 875 won is a reasonable price."

Meanwhile, the average retail prices of green onions has hovered around 3,000 to 4,000 won (\$2.2 to 2.9) in past weeks, reaching some of the highest levels in recent years.

Yoon's throw-away comment has created a mini-crisis for his ruling People Power Party as candidates

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from the main liberal opposition Democratic Party have brought green onions to election rallies and accused Yoon of underestimating food prices and being out of touch of the reality.

It's not just green onions. The prices of agricultural products during March increased by more than 20% from the same month last year. The prices of apples increased by nearly 90%, marking the largest one-year-jump since 1980.

Kim Tae-hyung, a 55-year-old moderate liberal, said he's almost decided to vote for a liberal opposition candidate running in his constituency because he believes the Yoon government hasn't done well on economy issues.

But he said Yoon doesn't deserve criticism over his green onion remarks. "Even if he doesn't know the price of green onions, I don't think it matters much as I also didn't know about it," Kim said.

## STRIKING DOCTORS

The weekslong strikes by thousands of doctors is another headache for Yoon's party.

The doctors, all medical interns and residents, are protesting against Yoon's push to increase the yearly medical school admission cap by two thirds to create more doctors. They say universities can't handle such a steep increase in students and that would undermine the country's future medical services, though critics say they simply worry about lower income in the wake of the supply of more doctors.

South Korea has one of the world's fastest-aging populations and its doctors-to-population ratio is among the lowest in the developed world. But efforts to add seats at medical schools is a politically risky project that past governments had already failed to achieve because of similar vehement protests by incumbent doctors and medical students.

Yoon initially enjoyed a rising approval rating over his recruitment plan, but now faces growing calls for a compromise as the doctors' strikes have caused numerous cancelled surgeries at hospitals and other inconveniences for patients.

"We absolutely need to raise the medical school quota. But the government is pushing for its increase in a too steep, abrupt manner that has surprised everyone," said Lee Chul-seung, a liberal Seoul citizen in his mid-50s.

## TOXIC RHETORIC

Fueled by contempt for the other side, the rival parties have spewed highly offensive, abusive language against each other.

When Lee Jae-myung, the Democratic Party chairman, criticized senior ruling party candidate Na Kyung-won over her alleged pro-Japanese views, he called her "nabe," a combination of parts of the names of Na and late Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

Ruling party leader Han Dong-hoon quickly called Lee's comments "extreme misogyny." Nabe in Japanese means pot, whose Korean translation is "naembi" that can be used as a derogatory slang term to refer to a woman with many sex partners. Last month, supporters of Na's liberal rival candidate reportedly spread on social media a poster with a message saying "naembi tastes best when it's trampled on."

Han labelled Lee's past comments as "trash," drawing rebukes from Lee's party spokesperson who described "Han's mouth" "as "trash bin."

Also roiling the South Korean election race is former liberal justice minister Cho Kuk, whose newly launched small party is forecast by surveys to win 10-15 seats. Cho was once a rising political star during the government of Yoon's liberal predecessor, Moon Jae-in, until he faced a slew of scandals that hurt his reformist image and sharply split the nation.

Han called Cho "a shameless petty criminal." Cho said Han, Yoon and Yoon's wife and first lady Kim Keon Hee "representative people of a criminal group."

## Former Trump officials are among the most vocal opponents of returning him to the White House

By MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Former Defense Secretary Mark Esper has called him a “threat to democracy.” Former national security adviser John Bolton has declared him “unfit to be president.” And former Vice President Mike Pence has declined to endorse him, citing “profound differences.”

As Donald Trump seeks the presidency for a third time, he is being vigorously opposed by a vocal contingent of former officials who are stridently warning against his return to power and offering dire predictions for the country and the rule of law if his campaign succeeds.

It’s a striking chorus of detractors, one without precedent in the modern era, coming from those who witnessed first-hand his conduct in office and the turmoil that followed.

Sarah Matthews, a former Trump aide who testified before the House Jan. 6 committee and is among those warning about the threat he poses, said it’s “mind-boggling” how many members of his senior staff have denounced him.

“These are folks who saw him up close and personal and saw his leadership style,” Matthews said.

“The American people should listen to what these folks are saying because it should be alarming that the people that Trump hired to work for him a first term are saying that he’s unfit to serve for a second term.”

Yet the critics remain a distinct minority. Republican lawmakers and officials across the party have endorsed Trump’s bid — some begrudgingly, others with fervor and enthusiasm. Many aides and Cabinet officials who served under Trump are onboard for another term, something Trump’s campaign is quick to highlight.

“The majority of the people who served in President Trump’s cabinet and in his administration, like the majority of Americans, have overwhelmingly endorsed his candidacy to beat Crooked Joe Biden and take back the White House,” said Trump campaign spokesman Steven Cheung.

Still, the Biden campaign has trumpeted the criticism of former Trump officials in statements and social media posts, hoping to convince at least some Republican voters — including those who backed other candidates during the GOP primary — that they cannot support his candidacy.

“Those who worked with Donald Trump at the most senior levels of his administration believe he is too dangerous, too selfish and too extreme to ever lead our country again — we agree,” said Biden campaign spokesman Ammar Moussa.

In many ways, the schism among former Trump officials is an extension of his time in the White House. Friction was constant as Trump’s demands ran into resistance from some officials and aides who refused requests that they found misguided, unrealistic and, at times, flatly illegal. Firings were frequent. Many quit.

Staff upheaval was particularly intense in the chaotic weeks after the 2020 election as Trump worked to overturn his election loss to Biden. Trump summoned supporters to Washington on Jan. 6, 2021, as his falsehoods about a stolen election became the rallying cry for supporters who violently breached the U.S. Capitol. Many people serving in the administration quit in protest, including Matthews.

Trump’s attempt to remain in office included a bitter pressure campaign against Pence, who as vice president was tasked with presiding over the count of the Electoral College ballots on Jan. 6. Trump was adamant that Pence should prevent Biden from becoming president, something he had no power to do. Pence had to flee the Senate chamber on Jan. 6 as rioters stormed the building to chants of “Hang Mike Pence!”

Pence recently said he “cannot in good conscience” endorse Trump because of Jan. 6 and other issues, despite being proud of what they achieved together.

And Pence is not alone.

Esper, who was fired by Trump days after the 2020 election, clashed with the then-president over several issues, including Trump’s push to deploy military troops to respond to civil unrest after the killing of George Floyd by police in 2020.

In a recent interview with HBO’s “Real Time With Bill Maher,” Esper repeated a warning that Trump is

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"a threat to democracy" and added, "I think there's a lot to be concerned about."

"There's no way I'll vote for Trump, but every day that Trump does something crazy, the door to voting for Biden opens a little bit more, and that's where I'm at," Esper said.

Among Trump's most vocal critics are former aides who worked closely with him in the White House, particularly a trio who gained prominence testifying about the Jan. 6 attack and Trump's push to overturn the election.

The group includes Matthews, former Trump White House communications director Alyssa Farah Griffin and Cassidy Hutchinson, a former top aide to Trump chief of staff Mark Meadows. They have given a series of interviews in recent months opposing their former boss.

"Fundamentally, a second Trump term could mean the end of American democracy as we know it, and I don't say that lightly," Griffin told ABC in December.

John Kelly, Trump's former chief of staff, had his own long falling-out with Trump. Kelly, in a lengthy October statement to CNN, described Trump as "a person who admires autocrats and murderous dictators" and "has nothing but contempt for our democratic institutions, our Constitution, and the rule of law."

Olivia Troye, a former Pence adviser who left the White House in 2020, and former press secretary Stephanie Grisham, who resigned Jan. 6, are both outspoken critics who said they didn't vote for Trump in 2020.

Even Bill Barr, Trump's former attorney general who has not ruled out voting for him again, has referred to Trump as "a consummate narcissist" who "constantly engages in reckless conduct that puts his political followers at risk and the conservative and Republican agenda at risk."

Still, the ranks of former Trump officials opposing his bid are greatly outnumbered by those who are supportive.

Linda McMahon, who headed the Small Business Administration under Trump, is co-chairing a major fundraiser for the former president on Saturday in Florida, along with former Trump Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross.

McMahon is also chair of the board of The America First Policy Institute, which is packed with supportive former Trump officials and has been described as an "administration in waiting" for a second Trump term.

The institute is headed by Brooke Rollins, Trump's former domestic policy chief, and counts Pence's national security adviser and retired Lt. Gen. Keith Kellogg among its chairs, along with former Energy Secretary Rick Perry, Trump's U.S. trade representative Robert Lighthizer, and former National Economic Council director Larry Kudlow.

Former acting Attorney General Matthew Whitaker has campaigned for Trump, as has former Housing Secretary Ben Carson, who called him "a friend of America."

Trump's also got the backing of former acting Director of National Intelligence Richard Grenell, former Interior Secretary and Montana Rep. Ryan Zinke, and Russell Vought, who ran Trump's Office of Management and Budget.

Vought said in a post on X that Trump is "the only person I trust to take a wrecking ball to the Deep State."

Trump supporters are also quick to dismiss critics in the party.

Carmen McVane, who attended Trump's rally Tuesday in Green Bay, Wisconsin, said those who speak negatively against Trump or refuse to endorse are RINOs, or Republicans In Name Only, and will only help Biden and Democrats.

"There's a lot of RINOs who don't do what they're supposed to do," McVane said. "It's time for everyone to back who we have and go full force ahead."

## Americans think a president's power should be checked, AP-NORC poll finds — unless their side wins

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI and LINLEY SANDERS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Like many Americans, Richard Bidon says he'd like to see the U.S. government "go back to its original design" — a system of checks and balances developed nearly 240 years ago to prevent any branch, especially the presidency, from becoming too powerful.

But that's mainly when Republicans are in power.

Bidon, an 84-year-old Democrat who lives near Los Angeles, said if President Joe Biden is reelected, he doesn't want him to have to get the approval of a possibly Republican-controlled Congress to enact policies to slow climate change. He wants presidents to have the power to change policy unilaterally — as long as they're from the right party.

"When a Democrat's in, I support" a strong presidency, Bidon said. "When Republicans are in, I don't support it that much. It's sort of a wishy-washy thing."

A new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Opinion Research finds that Bidon's view is common. Though Americans say don't want a president to have too much power, that view shifts if the candidate of their party wins the presidency. It's a view held by members of both parties, though it's especially common among Republicans.

Overall, only about 2 in 10 Americans say it would be "a good thing" for the next president to be able to change policy without waiting on Congress or the courts. But nearly 6 in 10 Republicans say it would be good for a future President Donald Trump to take unilateral action, while about 4 in 10 Democrats say the same if Biden is reelected.

The sentiment comes amid escalating polarization and is a sign of the public's willingness to push the boundaries of the political framework that has kept the U.S. a stable democracy for more than two centuries. In the poll, only 9% of Americans say the nation's system of checks and balances is working extremely or very well. It also follows promises by Trump to "act as a dictator" on day one of a new administration to secure the border and expand oil and gas drilling.

Bob Connor, a former carpenter now on disability in Versailles, Missouri, wants that type of decisive action on the border. He's given up hope on Congress taking action.

"From what I've seen, the Republicans are trying to get some stuff done, the Democrats are trying to get some other stuff done — they're not mixing in the middle," said Connor, 56. "We're not getting anywhere."

He blames the influx of migrants on Biden unilaterally revoking some of Trump's own unilateral border security policies when he took office.

"I'm not a Trump fanatic, but what he's saying has to get done is right," Connor said.

Joe Titus, a 69-year-old Democrat from Austin, Texas, believes Republicans have destroyed Congress' ability to act in its traditional legislative role and says Biden will have to step into the gap.

"There's this so-called 'majority' in Congress, and they're a bunch of whack-jobs," Titus, a retired Air Force mechanic, said of the GOP-controlled House of Representatives. "It's not the way this thing was set up."

The current Congress is setting dubious records as the least productive one in the country's history, with fewer than three dozen bills sent to Biden's desk last year. At Trump's urging, House Republicans have stalled aid to Ukraine and a bipartisan immigration bill.

Titus said that in general he opposes expanded presidential power but would support Biden funding more immigration judges and sending additional aid to Ukraine on his own.

"There's certain things that it seems to me the public wants and the other party is blocking," Titus said.

The presidency has steadily gained power in recent years as congressional deadlocks have become more common. Increasingly, the nation's chief executive is moving to resolve issues through administrative policy or executive orders. The U.S. Supreme Court is poised to rule later this year on a case that could significantly weaken the ability of federal agencies — and thus a presidential administration — to issue regulations.

Meanwhile, conservatives are planning a takeover of the federal bureaucracy should they win the White

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House in November, a move that could increase the administration's ability to make sweeping policy changes on its own.

The AP-NORC poll found that voters' views of which institutions have too much power were colored by their own partisanship. Only 16% of Democrats, whose party currently controls the White House, say the presidency has too much power while nearly half of Republicans believe it does. In contrast, about 6 in 10 Democrats say the U.S. Supreme Court, with its 6-3 conservative majority, has too much power.

With Congress evenly divided between the two parties — the GOP has a narrow House majority, Democrats a narrow Senate one — Americans have similar views on its power regardless of party. About 4 in 10 from both major parties say it has too much power.

"I think Congress had too much power when the presidency and Congress were both ruled by Democrats, but now that Republicans are in the majority there's an equal balance," said John V. Mohr, a 62-year-old housecleaner in Wilmington, North Carolina.

In contrast, he complained that Biden is "sitting there writing executive orders left and right," including his proclamation marking Transgender Day of Visibility, which fell on Easter Sunday this year.

The abstract idea of a president with nearly unchecked power remains unpopular.

Steven Otney, a retired trucker in Rock Hill, South Carolina, said major policies should be approved by Congress and gain approval from the courts. But he also said it depends on the topic. He wants to see prompt action on certain issues by the next president if he's Trump.

"Some things need to be done immediately, like that border wall being finished," said Otney, a Republican. He said it's just common sense.

"If Trump got in there and said 'I want to bomb Iran,' no, that's crazy," Otney said. "Within reason, not stupid stuff either way. Something to help the American people, not hurt us."

## US jobs report for March is likely to point to slower but still-solid hiring

By PAUL WISEMAN AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The American economy is thought to have added 200,000 jobs in March — a more-than-respectable increase though one that would mark a slowdown from February's vigorous gain of 275,000 and last year's monthly average increase of 251,000.

A modest downshift in hiring could reassure the Federal Reserve that the economy isn't running too hot, especially if wage growth, a key driver of inflation, also slowed last month. The Fed's policymakers are tracking the state of the economy, the job market and inflation to determine when to begin cutting interest rates from their multi-decade highs — a move eagerly awaited by Wall Street traders, homebuyers and people in need of cars, household appliances and other major purchases that are typically financed.

The economy is sure to weigh on Americans' minds as the November presidential vote nears and they assess President Joe Biden's re-election bid. Many people still feel squeezed by the inflation surge that erupted in the spring of 2021. Though the inflation rate has tumbled from its peak over the past year and a half, average prices are still about 18% higher than where they were in February 2021 — a fact for which Biden could pay a political price.

When the Labor Department releases the March jobs report Friday, it's expected to show that the unemployment rate dipped from 3.9% to 3.8%, according to forecasters surveyed by the data firm FactSet. If so, it would be the 26th straight month in which the jobless rate has remained below 4%, the longest such streak since the 1960s.

The U.S. job market has proved remarkably durable since the Fed started raising rates two years ago to try to tame inflation, which by mid-2022 was running at a four-decade high. The central bank's rate hikes — 11 of them from March 2022 through July 2023 — helped slow inflation. Consumer prices were up 3.2% in February from a year earlier, far below a year-over-year peak of 9.1% in June 2022.

The much higher borrowing costs for households and businesses that resulted from the Fed's rate hikes were widely expected to trigger a recession and cause a painful rise in unemployment. Yet to the surprise of just about everyone, the economy has kept growing steadily and employers have kept hiring. Layoffs

remain low.

Economists have been searching for an explanation for the economy's resilience in the face of higher rates. Some believe that a rise in productivity — the amount of output that workers produce per hour — allowed companies to hire, raise pay and post bigger profits without having to raise prices. In addition, an influx of immigrants into the job market is believed to have addressed labor shortages and eased upward pressure on wage growth, allowing the economy to keep growing as inflation cooled.

Still, a few potential blemishes in the jobs picture have begun to emerge. For one thing, the government last month revised January's job gain down by a substantial 124,000, although even with that revision, employers still added a healthy 229,000 jobs that month.

Economists also suspect that hiring in January and February was inflated by a technical factor: Retailers, warehouses and transportation companies had hired fewer workers than usual near the end of 2023 for the holiday shopping season. So they laid off fewer people at the start of 2024, thereby throwing off the government's seasonal adjustments. The March hiring figures should shed light on how resilient the job market really is, said Diane Swonk, chief economist at the consulting and tax firm KPMG.

Though most industries added jobs in February, more than 70% of the hiring was in just three sectors: Health care and private education; leisure and hospitality; and government. Nancy Vanden Houten, lead U.S. economist at Oxford Economics, said she thinks the concentration in hiring likely continued in March, with those three industries accounting for perhaps 75% of added jobs.

Also giving forecasters pause is a divergence between two separate Labor Department measures of the job market's health. The main jobs number — the one that's expected to come in at 200,000 for March — comes from a survey of 119,000 businesses and government agencies. This is called the establishment survey.

The jobless rate and other measures of employment are calculated from a separate survey of 60,000 households. This survey has looked weaker: It shows that the number of employed Americans has actually dropped by 898,000 since November. By contrast, the establishment survey showed 794,000 added jobs over the same period.

Economists generally favor the establishment survey because it derives from a much larger sample size and is less volatile. Though the numbers from the two surveys usually converge over time, the recent disparity between them has been unusually large and persistent. Some economists say they think the household survey isn't accurately capturing the surge in foreign-born workers and is therefore undercounting employment across the country.

In the meantime, the Fed has signaled that it expects to cut rates three times this year. But it is awaiting more inflation data to gain further confidence that annual price increases are heading toward its 2% target.

Forecasters estimate that average hourly earnings rose 4.1% from March 2023, down from a 4.3% year-over-year gain in February. If so, that would be the smallest such increase since June 2021. But it would still exceed the 3.5% annual wage increase that many economists see as consistent with 2% inflation.

Economists Michael Gapen, Stephen Juneau and Shruti Mishra at Bank of America said they think a March slowdown in hiring "should reduce fears" that inflation will re-accelerate and give the Fed the confidence to cut rates this year.

"It should re-anchor expectations for a cooling labor market," they wrote, "but not one that is showing significant signs of weakness."

## **Caitlin Clark and Paige Bueckers have been in each other's orbit for years. The Final Four beckons**

By WILL GRAVES AP National Writer

CLEVELAND (AP) — Their memories are blurry.

Of AAU tournaments and Team USA practices. Of gold medals and deep 3s. Of the girl with the brown ponytail with the unlimited range who always seemed to know what was coming next and the blonde who never got rattled with the ball in her hands, by opponents or the sea of eyes constantly transfixed on her.



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Yet ask Iowa's Caitlin Clark and UConn's Paige Bueckers their earliest impression of the other and you get generalities, light on details if heavy on respect.

Maybe because those years shadowing each other on the travel circuit across the Midwest or teaming up for the occasional international competition seem so long ago. Maybe because in some ways — in the most meaningful of ways — they are.

The NCAA Tournament that Clark grew up watching in Iowa and Bueckers took in from the outskirts of Minneapolis doesn't exist anymore. Back then, the inequalities between the men's and women's versions of March Madness were massive, from facilities to swag to TV ratings, even the branding.

It's not that way anymore.

Not with Clark and Iowa selling out everywhere they go. Not with Bueckers finally healthy after spending the better part of two years recovering from knee injuries that left her fearful the generational skills that made her the first freshman to win the AP Player of the Year award would never return.

Only they have. Just in time for the two players who have helped propel interest in the women's tournament to an all-time high to take center stage.

When Clark and the top-seeded Hawkeyes face Bueckers and third-seeded UConn on Friday night in the Final Four, they'll do it not in some anonymous gym with nothing but parents, scouts and college coaches watching.

They will play in front of a packed arena with millions watching on television and millions more keeping track on social media, an ever-growing group that includes LeBron James and Steph Curry and Luka Doncic and aspiring ballers from all over.

It's not that women's basketball hasn't had stars before. It has. Just never quite as many as this who play quite like this.

And while Iowa coach Lisa Bluder made it a point on Thursday to say she didn't want the national semifinal to be pitted as "Caitlin vs. Paige," everyone else involved seems to be OK with the arrangement because of what it means for not just their respective teams, but the women's game in general.

"It's a star-driven society that we live in," UConn coach Geno Auriemma said. "It's a celebrity-driven, star-driven, influencer-driven world that's been created."

One in which both Clark and Bueckers are comfortable traveling, perhaps because it's the only world they've ever known.

**BIRD VS. MAGIC 2.0? YES AND NO**

The parallels to the rivalry between Magic Johnson and Larry Bird that began when Johnson and Michigan State faced Bird and Indiana State in the 1979 NCAA championship are obvious.

"All of a sudden those two particular players came on and it just lit everything up, and it just took off from there," Auriemma said. "So it needs some stars. It needs people that have the right personality, the right game. And we have that now."

Thing is, Bueckers and Clark don't view themselves as rivals. Not in a traditional sense. If anything, they believe they're simply riding the crest of a wave that's been building for years, long before they reached a first-name-only level of fame.

Ask Clark why interest in women's basketball has spiked and she doesn't point to her record-setting career or her "did she really shoot that" range or even her team's success but simple exposure.

To Clark, the women's game has always been great. It's just taken a while, a long while, for the world to catch up.

"It's the platforms that (we're able to have now) that should have been there for a really long time," Clark said. "We've had some amazing talents come through our game, over the last 10, 20 years."

Talents that haven't quite connected in the way that Clark and Bueckers have connected. The easing of rules surrounding name, image and likeness compensation has allowed them to market themselves and their game in ways once unimaginable.

**FOLLOWING LEGENDS**

It's a history not lost on either of them. They understand and embrace the responsibility of being a role

model, knowing they were once on the other end, looking up to the likes of college and WNBA stars Maya Moore and Lindsay Whalen.

"They were everything that I wanted to be like," Bueckers said. "And they won."

A trait that has followed Bueckers seemingly from the first time she picked up a ball. It's telling that when asked about Bueckers' game, Clark didn't talk about her impeccable court vision or precise midrange jumper but what the scoreboard says after nearly every game in which she plays.

"She's always been dominant," Clark said. "Every team that she's ever been on, she's led them to great success. It's just what she does. She's a winner."

That hasn't changed, though the dynamics around the way Clark and Bueckers are perceived have flipped over the last three years.

## ROLE REVERSAL

It was Bueckers, not Clark, who was the top recruit in the Class of 2020. It was Bueckers, not Clark, who was recruited by the Huskies, though Auriemma did point out this week "if Caitlin really wanted to come to UConn, she would have called me." It was Bueckers, not Clark, who won that first meeting in 2021 and became the "media darling," as Bueckers put it Friday.

Clark is in that position now. Setting the NCAA Division I scoring record and playing with a fearlessness that is equal parts thrilling and accessible will do that.

Security people had to clear a path deep inside Rocket Mortgage Fieldhouse on Friday to make sure she could make it from one media opportunity to the next. When UConn and Bueckers came through an hour later, the throng was half the size.

Even for a player who says on the court she can see things before they happen, it's been a lot. The 22-year-old Clark welcomes the attention because she understands it has brought new people to her sport. Yet she's not here to be The Star, as much as people want to thrust that moniker on her.

Three years ago, it was Bueckers. The last two years, it's been her. Next spring it might be Bueckers during her redshirt senior season. Bueckers is leaning toward this year's blockbuster freshman class, a group that includes USC's JuJu Watkins or Notre Dame's Hannah Hidalgo. A decade from now, it might be some young woman who didn't pick up a ball until she watched Clark hoist it from deep and Bueckers weave through traffic in the lane.

In that way, Clark doesn't see herself or Bueckers as the end result of something, but simply the latest links in a chain growing ever stronger with each passing season.

"It doesn't need to be one end-all, be-all (star) just like I think there doesn't need to be one end-all, be-all team," Clark said. "The young talent, it's only going to get better."

## Federal report finds 68,000 guns were illegally trafficked through unlicensed dealers over 5 years

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — More than 68,000 illegally trafficked firearms in the U.S. came through unlicensed dealers who aren't required to perform background checks over a five-year period, according to new data released Thursday by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco Firearms and Explosives.

That represents 54% of the illegally trafficked firearms in the U.S. between 2017 and 2021, Justice Department officials said. The guns were used in 368 shooting cases, which are harder to investigate because unlicensed dealers aren't required to keep records of their sales that could allow federal agents to trace the weapon back to the original buyer, said ATF Director Steve Dettelbach.

The report ordered by Attorney General Merrick Garland is the first in-depth analysis of firearm trafficking investigations in more than 20 years. It examined more than 9,700 closed ATF firearm trafficking investigations that began between 2017 and 2021. Firearms trafficking is when guns are purposely moved into the illegal market for a criminal purpose or possession.

The second-highest share of firearm-trafficking cases investigated by ATF was straw purchases, when someone buys a gun for a person who can't get it legally themselves.

The report also shows that the recipients of trafficked firearms were people who had previously been convicted of a felony in almost 60 percent of the cases in which investigators were able to identify the background of the recipient. Furthermore, trafficked firearms were used to commit additional crimes in almost 25 percent of the cases, Dettelbach said. That includes more than 260 murders and more than 220 attempted murders, according to the report.

"The data shows, therefore, that those who illegally traffic firearms whether its out of a trunk, at a gun show or online are responsible for real violence in this nation," Dettelbach said. "In short, you can't illegally help to arm violent people and not be responsible for the violence that follows," he said.

The report found the average number of guns trafficked per case was 16. People who got them through unlicensed dealers bought 20 weapons on average, compared to 11 guns for straw buyers, according to the report.

The Biden administration has separately proposed a rule that would require thousands more gun sellers to get licensed and run background checks. The Justice Department says it's aimed at sellers who are in the business of firearm sales, but the proposal quickly drew protest from gun-rights groups who contend it could ensnare regular people who sometimes sell their own guns.

The rule, which has not yet been finalized, is estimated to affect 24,500 to 328,000 sellers. During the five years documented in the report, 3,400 unlicensed dealers were investigated by the ATF.

## **No Labels won't run a third-party campaign after trying to recruit a centrist presidential candidate**

By STEVE PEOPLES and JONATHAN J. COOPER AP National Political Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The No Labels group said Thursday it will not field a presidential candidate in November after strategists for the bipartisan organization failed to attract a high-profile centrist willing to seize on the widespread dissatisfaction with President Joe Biden and Donald Trump.

"No Labels has always said we would only offer our ballot line to a ticket if we could identify candidates with a credible path to winning the White House," Nancy Jacobson, the group's CEO, said in a statement sent out to allies. "No such candidates emerged, so the responsible course of action is for us to stand down."

The unexpected announcement further cements the general election matchup between the two unpopular major party candidates, Biden and Trump, leaving anti-vaccine activist Robert F. Kennedy Jr. as the only prominent outsider still seeking the presidency. Kennedy says he has collected enough signatures to qualify for the fall ballot in five states.

No Labels' decision, which comes just days after the death of founding chairman Joe Lieberman, caps months of discussions during which the group raised tens of millions of dollars from a donor list it has kept secret. It was cheered by relieved Democrats who have long feared that a No Labels' ticket would fracture Biden's coalition and help Trump, the presumptive Republican nominee.

The Wall Street Journal first reported No Labels' decision.

"Millions of Americans are relieved that No Labels finally decided to do the right thing to keep Donald Trump out of the White House," said MoveOn executive director Rahna Epting, a No Labels critic. "Now, it's time for Robert Kennedy Jr. to see the writing on the wall that no third party has a path forward to winning the presidency. We must come together to defeat the biggest threat to our democracy and country: Donald Trump."

Stefanie Spear, a spokesperson for Kennedy, said No Labels' struggles were "testimony to the stranglehold of the corrupt two-party duopoly on American democracy."

Kennedy announced earlier in the day that he had collected enough signatures to qualify for the general election in five states, including swing states Nevada and North Carolina. A super PAC backing his campaign, American Values 2024, says it has collected signatures for Kennedy in several other states, including battlegrounds Arizona and Georgia. Democrats are challenging the validity of signatures collected by the group, which is not legally allowed to coordinate with Kennedy.

No Labels said it had qualified for the ballot in 21 states, but ultimately, the centrist group could not

persuade a top-tier moderate from either party to embrace its movement.

No Labels delegates voted overwhelmingly in March to launch the process of creating a bipartisan presidential and vice presidential ticket. But by then, No Labels had been rejected, publicly and privately, by many Democratic or Republican candidates.

Former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley, who suspended her campaign for the GOP presidential nomination last month, had said she would not consider running on the No Labels ticket. Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., ruled out running and former Gov. Larry Hogan, R-Md., decided to run for the U.S. Senate.

Last month, former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, a Republican candidate for president in 2024, said he wouldn't run under the No Label banner, either.

The group had been weighing the nomination of a "unity ticket," with a presidential candidate from one major party and a vice presidential candidate from the other, to appeal to voters unhappy with Biden and Trump.

"We are deeply relieved that everyone rejected their offer, forcing them to stand down," said Matt Bennett of the centrist group Third Way, which had been fighting No Labels' 2024 ambitions. "While the threat of third-party spoilers remains, this uniquely damaging attack on President Biden and Democrats from the center has at last ended."

Biden supporters had worried No Labels would pull votes away from the president in battleground states and had been critical of how the group would not disclose its donors or much about its decision-making. No Labels never named all of its delegates and most of its deliberations took place in secret.

Dan DuPraw, a 33-year-old sales worker in Philadelphia who would have been a delegate to a No Labels convention, said the decision was disappointing but prudent. He trusts the No Labels leadership to make the right call.

"I understand why they made the decision, and I think it's the right thing to do in this moment," DuPraw said. "But I'm so disappointed that we get Trump and Biden again. I think it's such a horrible thing for our country."

DuPraw said he will now decide between Biden and Kennedy.

"I'm excited that there are other options than the two main parties," he said.

## **Biden tells Israel's Netanyahu future US support for war depends on new steps to protect civilians**

By AAMER MADHANI and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden issued a stark warning to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Thursday that future U.S. support for Israel's Gaza war depends on the swift implementation of new steps to protect civilians and aid workers.

Biden and Netanyahu's roughly 30-minute call just days after Israeli airstrikes killed seven food aid workers in Gaza added a new layer of complication to the leaders' increasingly strained relationship. Biden's message marks a sharp change in his administration's steadfast support for Israel's war efforts, with the U.S. leader for the first time threatening to rethink his backing if Israel doesn't change its tactics and allow much more humanitarian aid into Gaza.

The White House would not specify what could change about U.S. policy, but it could include altering military sales to Israel and America's diplomatic backup on the world stage.

Netanyahu's office said early Friday that his Security Cabinet has approved a series of "immediate steps" to increase the flow of humanitarian aid into Gaza, including the reopening of a key crossing that was destroyed in the Oct. 7 Hamas attack.

Administration officials had said before that announcement that the U.S. would assess whether the Israeli moves go far enough.

Biden "made clear the need for Israel to announce and implement a series of specific, concrete, and measurable steps to address civilian harm, humanitarian suffering, and the safety of aid workers," the White House said in a statement following the leaders' call. "He made clear that U.S. policy with respect

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to Gaza will be determined by our assessment of Israel's immediate action on these steps."

Biden also told Netanyahu that reaching an "immediate cease-fire" in exchange for the estimated 100 hostages that are still being held in Gaza was "essential" and urged Israel to reach such an accord "without delay," according to the White House. Administration officials described the conversation as "direct" and "honest."

Netanyahu's office said the Erez crossing, which for years served as the only passenger terminal for people to move in and out of Gaza, would be temporarily reopened. It also said Israel would allow its Ashdod port to be used to process aid shipments bound for Gaza and allow increased Jordanian aid shipments through another land crossing. The announcement did not elaborate on quantities or types of items to be let in.

White House National Security Council spokesperson Adrienne Watson welcomed the moves by Netanyahu, adding that the plan "must now be fully and rapidly implemented."

"As the President said today on the call, U.S. policy with respect to Gaza will be determined by our assessment of Israel's immediate action on these and other steps, including steps to protect innocent civilians and the safety of aid workers," Watson said.

The leaders' conversation comes as the World Central Kitchen, founded by restaurateur José Andrés to provide immediate food relief to disaster-stricken areas, called for an independent investigation into the Israeli strikes that killed seven of the group's staff members, including an American citizen. The White House has said the U.S. has no plans to conduct its own investigation.

Separately, Secretary of State Antony Blinken told reporters in Brussels that U.S. support would be curtailed if Israel doesn't make significant adjustments to how it's carrying out the war. "If we don't see the changes that we need to see, there will be changes in our policy," he said.

White House national security spokesman John Kirby echoed the call for "tangible" and "concrete" changes to be taken by the Israelis beyond reiterating long stated calls for allowing additional aid to get into Gaza.

"If there's no changes to their policy in their approaches, then there's going to have to be changes to ours," Kirby said. "There are things that need to be done. There are too many civilians being killed."

The demands for Israel to bring the conflict to a swift close were increasing across the political spectrum, with former President Donald Trump, the Republicans' presumptive nominee to face Biden this fall, saying Thursday that Israel was "absolutely losing the PR war" and calling for a resolution to the bloodshed.

"Get it over with and let's get back to peace and stop killing people. And that's a very simple statement," Trump told conservative radio host Hugh Hewitt. "They have to get it done. Get it over with and get it over with fast because we have to -- you have to get back to normalcy and peace."

Biden and Netanyahu also discussed Iranian threats against Israel, Kirby said. Earlier this week, Iranian leaders vowed to hit back after an airstrike widely blamed on Israel destroyed Iran's Consulate in Syria, killing 12 people, including two elite Iranian generals. Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi said Wednesday the attack "will not remain without answer."

Biden also renewed his concerns about Netanyahu's plan to carry out an operation in the southern city of Rafah, where about 1.5 million displaced Palestinians are sheltering, as Israel looks to eliminate Hamas following the militant group's deadly Oct. 7 attack. Vice President Kamala Harris, Blinken and national security adviser Jake Sullivan also joined the call.

Still, the Biden administration has proceeded apace with arms transfers and deliveries to Israel, many of which were approved years ago but had only been partially or not at all fulfilled. Just this week, on Monday, the Democratic administration's "Daily List" of munitions transfers included the sale to Israel of more than 1,000 500-pound (225-kilograms) bombs and more than 1,000 1,000-pound (450-kilogram) bombs.

Officials said those transfers had been approved before the publication of the list on Monday — the day Israeli airstrikes hit the World Central Kitchen aid convoy — and that they fell below the threshold for new congressional notification. Also, they noted that the bombs are not for delivery to Israel until 2025.

Meanwhile, the Pentagon on Thursday said plans to build a temporary pier off the coast of Gaza to help boost the flow of aid into the territory continue to move forward. Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder, Pentagon press secretary, said the pier will be on line by the end of the month or early May. Biden announced plans to build the floating pier during his State of the Union address last month.

Ryder said Israel has agreed to provide security on the shore as aid is transferred and distributed, but details are still being worked out.

Israel has acknowledged responsibility for the strikes on the World Central Kitchen workers but said the convoy was not targeted and their deaths were not intentional. The country continues to investigate the circumstances surrounding the killings.

Andrés harshly criticized the Israeli military for the strike, and his organization has paused its work in Gaza. "The Israeli government needs to stop this indiscriminate killing. It needs to stop restricting humanitarian aid, stop killing civilians and aid workers, and stop using food as a weapon," he wrote on X. "No more innocent lives lost."

The war in Gaza began when Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking around 250 people hostage.

The Israeli military campaign in Gaza, experts say, is among the deadliest and most destructive in recent history. Within two months, researchers say, the offensive already has wreaked more destruction than the razing of Syria's Aleppo between 2012 and 2016, Ukraine's Mariupol or, proportionally, the Allied bombing of Germany in World War II. It has killed more civilians than the U.S.-led coalition did in its three-year campaign against the Islamic State group.

## Judge rejects Trump request to dismiss classified documents prosecution

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal judge refused Thursday to throw out the classified documents prosecution of Donald Trump, turning aside defense arguments that a decades-old law permitted the former president to retain the sensitive records after he left office.

Lawyers for Trump had cited a 1978 statute known as the Presidential Records Act in demanding that the case, one of four against the presumptive Republican nominee, be tossed out before trial. That law requires presidents upon leaving office to turn over presidential records to the federal government but permits them to retain purely personal papers. Trump's lawyers have said he designated the records as personal, making them his own property, and that that decision can not be second-guessed in court.

Prosecutors on special counsel Jack Smith's team countered that the law had no relevance to a case concerning the mishandling of classified documents and said the files Trump is alleged to have hoarded at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Palm Beach, Florida were unquestionably presidential records, not personal ones, and therefore had to be returned to the government when Trump left the White House.

U.S. District Judge Aileen Cannon, who heard arguments on the dispute last month, permitted the case to proceed in a three-page order that rejected the Trump team claims. She wrote that the indictment makes "no reference to the Presidential Records Act" nor does it "rely on that statute for purposes of stating an offense." The act, she said, "does not provide a pre-trial basis to dismiss" the case.

The ruling is the second time in three weeks that Cannon has rebuffed defense efforts to derail the case. It represents a modest win for Smith's team, which has been trying to push the prosecution forward to trial this year but has also expressed mounting frustration, including earlier this week, with Cannon's oversight of the case.

Other Trump motions to dismiss the indictment remain unresolved by the judge, the trial date is in flux, and additional legal disputes have slowed the progress of a case that prosecutors say features voluminous evidence of guilt by the former president.

In Thursday's ruling, Cannon also defended an order from last month that asked lawyers for both sides to formulate potential jury instructions and to respond to two different scenarios in which she appeared to be continuing to entertain Trump's presidential records argument.

The order puzzled legal experts and drew a sharp rebuke from Smith's team, with prosecutors in a filing this week calling the premises the judge laid out "fundamentally flawed" and warning that they were prepared to appeal if she pushed ahead with jury instructions that they considered wrong.

"The Court's Order soliciting preliminary draft instructions on certain counts should not be misconstrued

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as declaring a final definition on any essential element or asserted defense in this case," Cannon wrote. "Nor should it be interpreted as anything other than what it was: a genuine attempt, in the context of the upcoming trial, to better understand the parties' competing positions and the questions to be submitted to the jury in this complex case of first impression."

Still, she said, if prosecutors were demanding that jury instructions be finalized prior to trial and the presentation of evidence, "the Court declines that demand as unprecedented and unjust."

In addition to affirming the indictment Thursday, she also rejected a separate motion to dismiss last month that argued that the Espionage Act statute underpinning the bulk of the charges was unconstitutionally vague and should be struck down.

Cannon has yet to rule on other Trump efforts to dismiss the case, including arguments that presidential immunity shields him from prosecution and that he has been subject to "selective and vindictive prosecution."

Trump is facing dozens of felony counts related to the retention of classified documents, according to an indictment alleging he improperly shared a Pentagon "plan of attack" and a classified map related to a military operation. Authorities say the records were stowed in dozens of boxes haphazardly warehoused at Mar-a-Lago, which was searched by the FBI in August 2022 in an escalation of the investigation.

The case was initially set for trial on May 20, but Cannon heard arguments last month on a new date without immediately setting one. Both sides have said they could be ready for trial this summer, though defense lawyers have also said Trump should not be forced to stand trial while the election is pending.

Smith's team has separately charged Trump with plotting to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election, a case delayed by a Supreme Court review of his arguments that he is immune from federal prosecution. Prosecutors in Fulton County, Georgia, have also charged Trump with trying to subvert that state's election, though it remains unclear when that case will reach trial.

Jury selection is set for April 15 in Trump's hush money criminal trial in New York.

That case centers on allegations that Trump falsified his company's internal records to hide the true nature of payments to his former lawyer Michael Cohen, who helped Trump bury negative stories during his 2016 presidential campaign. Among other things, Cohen paid porn actor Stormy Daniels \$130,000 to suppress her claims of an extramarital sexual encounter with Trump years earlier.

Trump has pleaded not guilty and denied having a sexual encounter with Daniels.

## South Carolina's Dawn Staley is the AP Coach of the Year for the 2nd time

By DOUG FEINBERG AP Basketball Writer

CLEVELAND (AP) — Dawn Staley did a masterful job guiding a young South Carolina team back to the Final Four with an undefeated record for the second straight season.

Staley was honored Thursday as The Associated Press women's college basketball Coach of the Year for the second time. She received 27 votes from the 35-member national media panel that votes on the AP Top 25 each week. She also won the award in 2020.

Staley joins an elite group of coaches that include Geno Auriemma (9), Muffet McGraw (4), Kim Mulkey (3) and Brenda Frese (2) who have won the AP award multiple times since it was first given in 1995.

Lindsay Gottlieb of Southern California, Felisha Legette-Jack of Syracuse and Scott Rueck of Oregon State tied for second with two votes each. Voting was done before the NCAA Tournament.

"I don't coach to win awards, I really don't," Staley said. "I'm very, very satisfied with just being there for my players. ... I'm forever indebted to basketball for what it's given to me."

Staley, who was presented the award alongside AP Player of the Year Caitlin Clark, thanked her own staff for all of their hard work helping the team go undefeated again.

South Carolina faces North Carolina State on Friday night in a national semifinal and is the overwhelming favorite to win its second title in three years and third overall, all since 2017. The Gamecocks are two wins away from completing the 10th undefeated season in NCAA Division I history.

"We had our fair share of rocky in the beginning and then as we continued throughout the season, the

road got a little smoother and then obviously you're going to face some adversity throughout the season, and this team being undefeated really is a shocker to me," Staley said this week.

Staley has rebuilt the program into a power since she arrived in 2008 and last year's team was expected to add another championship until Iowa knocked off the Gamecocks in the Final Four. This season, Staley had to replace her entire starting lineup and still guided them back to the semifinals for a fourth consecutive year.

She's built a fanbase that has led the nation in attendance the past 10 years and in 2021 the school announced a new, seven-year contract that will pay her \$2.9 million this season and grow to \$3.5 million in the final season of 2027-28. She said then the \$22.4 million deal should make an impact and perhaps lead to equity in the men's and women's games.

Along the way, Staley has become a voice of leadership and direction in the women's game. The former point guard is already the first Black coach to win two NCAA titles — success that has given Staley the platform to champion issues off the court. She continues to speak out about gender equity, diversity and opportunities for women.

## **Caitlin Clark of Iowa is the AP Player of the Year in women's hoops for the 2nd straight season**

By DOUG FEINBERG AP Basketball Writer

CLEVELAND (AP) — Caitlin Clark is capping her illustrious college career with another record-breaking season and another set of prestigious awards.

The star guard from Iowa was honored Thursday as The Associated Press Player of the Year in women's basketball for the second consecutive year.

Clark received 34 votes from the 35-member national media panel that votes on the AP Top 25 each week. Cameron Brink of Stanford received the other vote. Voting was done before March Madness began.

The 22-year-old Clark is the sixth player to win the award more than once and fifth to do it in consecutive seasons. She joined Chamique Holdsclaw, Seimone Augustus, Maya Moore, Brittney Griner and Breanna Stewart as multi-time winners.

"This is a tremendous honor to be on the same list as a lot of great players that I grew up idolizing," Clark said. "I grew up as a young kid watching them and wanting to be like them."

The NCAA Division I career scoring leader set numerous records while helping Iowa reach the Final Four for a second consecutive season. A semifinal matchup with UConn awaits on Friday night in Cleveland.

Clark's play with her logo-depth 3-pointers and dazzling passes has captured the hearts of fans who showed up by the thousands wearing her No. 22 jersey whether Iowa was at home or on the road all season.

One of those players she inspired was Love Johnson, a standout player on her Cleveland middle school basketball team. Johnson and her coach Shawn Cox were on stage with Clark when she was presented the award.

"If we're at home or on the road the arena is screaming, there's young boys, there's young girls that you know are inspired," Clark said. "Whether you win or lose, no matter how many points you score, at the end of the day that doesn't really matter. It's the people that you're inspiring. I think that's been the coolest part of my journey."

Opposing coaches, including AP Coach of the Year Dawn Staley, have called Clark a generational talent and tried to stifle her creativity and scoring, but she averaged 31.9 points, 7.3 rebounds and 8.9 assists during the regular season to help Iowa go 29-4 and earn a No. 1 seed in the NCAA Tournament.

Her games have become appointment viewing for millions — the Elite Eight rematch with LSU earlier this week was seen by more than 12 million, a record for a women's college basketball game — and raised the profile of the sport even higher as it enjoys a surge in popularity. She is the presumptive No. 1 pick in the WNBA draft later this month, a slot held by the Indiana Fever.

Clark has been quick to credit her teammates and coach, and note that the women's game had stars



like Lynette Woodard and Pearl Moore and many others long before she started dazzling fans in an era where games are easily found on TV every season.

Her college career will be come to an end this weekend and it has been quite a ride for the West Des Moines native.

"I feel like I've talked about her, like used every word imaginable to describe her," coach Lisa Bluder said. "She is spectacular. I don't know how else to describe what she does on the basketball court."

## **British billionaire Joe Lewis gets no prison time at sentencing for insider trading**

By LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — British billionaire Joe Lewis, whose family trust owns the Tottenham Hotspur soccer club, will not spend any time in prison after pleading guilty to insider trading and conspiracy charges in New York, a federal judge said Thursday.

Judge G.L. Clarke cited Lewis' decision to promptly come to the United States to face charges and his failing health, along with a lifetime of good works, in ruling that Lewis will face three years on probation and a \$5 million fine rather than time behind bars.

Lewis, 87, was wearing an eye patch and one of his hands shook steadily throughout the one-hour proceeding in a federal court in Manhattan. He has remained in the United States since last July.

Before he was sentenced, Lewis spoke briefly, saying he learned growing up in England during World War II how "precious" life is and decided to devote much of his life to finding a cure for "horrendous diseases."

"Your honor, I'm here today because I made a terrible mistake. I'm ashamed," he said.

Lewis said he hoped "to make amends and to rebuild the trust that I have squandered" for the remainder of his life.

U.S. sentencing guidelines had called for Lewis, a citizen of the United Kingdom and resident of the Bahamas, to serve 18 months to two years behind bars. Even prosecutors, though, agreed time behind bars was not necessary.

At his January plea, Lewis admitted that he agreed in 2019 to share secrets about publicly traded companies with several individuals. Prosecutors said afterward that his company, Broad Bay Limited, and Lewis would pay \$50 million in financial penalties, the largest such penalty for insider trading in a decade.

His lawyer said Thursday that the money was in escrow and ready to be paid and plans were for him to leave the United States for the Bahamas on Thursday night.

Prosecutors wrote in their presentence submission that Lewis deserved leniency because he is older and "battles significant health issues" that would cause a term of imprisonment to be more difficult for him than others.

They cited his acceptance of responsibility that he demonstrated by voluntarily surrendering rather than forcing a drawn-out extradition battle, and said that he'd "otherwise lived a law-abiding life."

The government also noted that Lewis is recognized as one of the 500 richest people in the world with approximately \$6.2 billion as of February, including homes in several countries; a \$250 million yacht; private planes valued at \$90 million and an art collection worth \$100 million.

When she announced the sentence, the judge said: "It is clear to me that Mr. Lewis's life would be at serious risk if he were to be incarcerated."

Defense attorneys said in their presentence submission that Lewis "is nearing the end of life in declining health."

They said Lewis was aware that his conviction meant he can't return to the United States to see his children, grandchildren or great-grandchildren, who all live in the U.S.

From the start, Lewis was no ordinary defendant. After his arrest less than a year ago, he had been free on \$300 million bail after putting up a yacht and private plane as collateral.

In court papers, prosecutors said Lewis learned secrets about public companies after making large invest-

ments. They said that on at least four occasions, he tipped off his girlfriend, personal pilots, employees and friends, enabling them to profit from the secrets.

"This insider trading was not the result of aberrant, one-time conduct, but rather, a troubling pattern of misconduct over the course of several years," they wrote.

Prosecutors said the insider activity might have resulted from "hubris, ego, a desire to make a financial gift without parting with his own money, an irrational form of greed, or some other reason."

But, regardless, "it is clear that Lewis believed he was above the law — that he had achieved a level of wealth and stature that relieved him from having to operate by the same rules that apply to everyday investors," prosecutors said.

As he left the courthouse, Lewis was surrounded by aides who blocked members of the media from seeing him as he walked a short distance to a waiting vehicle.

## Trump says Israel has to get war in Gaza over 'fast' and warns it is 'losing the PR war'

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Former President Donald Trump offered a tough message to Israel over its war against Hamas on Thursday, urging the country to: "Get it over with."

In an interview with conservative radio host Hugh Hewitt, Trump said that Israel is "absolutely losing the PR war" and called for a swift resolution to the bloodshed.

"Get it over with and let's get back to peace and stop killing people. And that's a very simple statement," Trump said. "They have to get it done. Get it over with and get it over with fast because we have to -- you have to get back to normalcy and peace."

The presumptive GOP nominee, who has criticized President Joe Biden for being insufficiently supportive of Israel, also appeared to question the tactics of the Israeli military as the civilian death toll in Gaza continues to mount. Since Hamas militants attacked Israel on Oct. 7, Israel's military has battered the territory, killing more than 30,000 Palestinians, according to the Gaza Health Ministry, and creating a humanitarian catastrophe.

"I'm not sure that I'm loving the way they're doing it, because you've got to have victory. You have to have a victory, and it's taking a long time," Trump said.

He specifically criticized Israel's decision to release footage of its offensive actions. Throughout the war, the Israeli military has released videos of airstrikes and other attacks against what it describes as "terrorist infrastructure."

"They shouldn't be releasing tapes like that," he said. "That's why they're losing the PR war. They, Israel is absolutely losing the PR war."

"They're releasing the most heinous, most horrible tapes of buildings falling down. And people are imagining there's a lot of people in those buildings, or people in those buildings, and they don't like it," he added. "They're losing the PR war. They're losing it big. But they've got to finish what they started, and they've got to finish it fast, and we have to get on with life."

The comments offered a vivid example of the attention Trump pays to imagery and optics as he measures the cost of war. But they also show the similarities between Trump's and Biden's positions, even as Trump has criticized Biden's handling of the conflict, going so far as to charge that Jews who vote for Democrats "hate Israel" and hate "their religion"

Until Thursday, Biden's administration had broadly backed Israeli efforts to try to remove Hamas' grip over Gaza, even as he called for a short term cease-fire to free hostages and surge humanitarian aid. He had also expressed concern that Israel's operation was isolating it on the world stage.

That concern has intensified since an Israeli air strike this week killed seven World Central Kitchen humanitarian aide workers try to deliver food to Palestinians, adding a new layer of complication to Biden and Netanyahu's increasingly strained relationship.

In a phone call Thursday Biden issued a stark new warning to Israel, telling Netanyahu that future U.S. support for the war depends on new steps to protect civilians and aid workers.

Biden "made clear the need for Israel to announce and implement a series of specific, concrete, and measurable steps to address civilian harm, humanitarian suffering, and the safety of aid workers," the White House said in a statement. He also told Netanyahu that an "immediate cease-fire is essential" and urged Israel to reach a deal "without delay."

The tougher stance comes as the administration continues to try to dissuade Israel from launching a major offensive against the southern Gaza city of Rafah, where more than a million civilians are sheltering.

Biden had issued an unusually sharp statement after the aid workers' deaths criticizing Israel for not doing more to protect humanitarian workers and civilians and for refusing to allow more food into the Gaza Strip.

Trump has long labeled himself the most pro-Israel president in the nation's history and often notes his decision to move the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem.

But Trump has also had a tense relationship with Netanyahu since he left the White House. Though the two were close allies for years, the former president responded with fury after the Israel leader congratulated then-President-elect Biden for winning the 2020 election while Trump was still trying to overturn the results.

In interviews for a book about his Middle East peace efforts, Trump, according to the author, used an expletive to describe Netanyahu, accused him of disloyalty and said he believed the Israeli leader never really wanted to make peace.

In the immediate aftermath of the Oct. 7 attack by Hamas, Trump drew rare condemnation from his GOP rivals when he lashed out at Netanyahu, saying Israeli leaders needed to "step up their game" and that Netanyahu "was not prepared" for the deadly incursion that killed some 1,200 people. More than 250 people were also taken hostages.

At the time, Trump said that he supported the country's efforts to "crush" Hamas.

Trump was also criticized by some in Israel for comments he made to the Israeli newspaper Israel Hayom last month calling for a swift end to the war.

"I will say Israel has to be very careful because you are losing a lot of the world. You are losing a lot of support," he had warned.

## **ALS drug will be pulled from US market after study showed patients didn't benefit**

By MATTHEW PERRONE AP Health Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The maker of a drug for Lou Gehrig's disease that recently failed in a large study said Thursday it will pull the medicine from the market, acknowledging it didn't help patients with the deadly neurological condition.

Amylyx Pharmaceuticals announced it will voluntarily halt sales and marketing of the drug in the U.S. and Canada, where new patients will no longer be able to get a prescription.

"While this is a difficult moment for the ALS community, we reached this path forward in partnership with the stakeholders who will be impacted and in line with our steadfast commitment to people living with ALS," company co-founders said in a statement. Patients already taking the therapy who wish to continue will be able to enroll in a program to receive it for free.

The Food and Drug Administration approved the much-debated drug, Relyvrio, in September 2022, following a years-long advocacy campaign by patients with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or ALS.

The drug's failure is a bitter disappointment for patients and advocates, who have pressed the FDA and other federal agencies to fund and approve more experimental therapies for the fatal muscle-wasting disease.

Relyvrio's withdrawal leaves just three ALS medicines available to U.S. patients, only one of which has been shown to extend survival by several months.

Cambridge, Massachusetts-based Amylyx also said Thursday it will lay off 70% of its more than 350

employees as part of a major restructuring effort. Company executives said they plan to continue studying Relyvrio and another experimental drug for several rare diseases, including Wolfram syndrome, which causes childhood diabetes and blindness.

Company shares climbed more than 7.5% in trading Thursday morning.

Amylyx said last month it was considering pulling its drug after a clinical trial in 600 patients failed to show any improvements in survival or other health measures, such as muscle strength or walking ability.

The company's voluntary action resolves what could have been a major dilemma for the FDA. The agency's regulators would not have had a clear path to quickly force the drug from the market if the company had refused to remove it. That's because the FDA granted the drug full approval, despite the preliminary nature of the company's data on effectiveness.

The 2022 approval was mainly based on results from one small, mid-stage study that was criticized by some of the agency's own internal scientists. Normally the agency requires two large, late-stage studies that show a clear benefit before granting approval. But at the time FDA officials explained that "regulatory flexibility" was appropriate when reviewing Relyvrio, "given the serious and life-threatening nature of ALS and the substantial unmet need."

The medication is part of a string of drugs for deadly, degenerative diseases that have won FDA approval in recent years despite questionable evidence they work.

ALS gradually destroys the nerve cells and connections needed to walk, talk, speak and breathe. Most patients die within three to five years of a diagnosis.

Relyvrio is a powder that combines two older drugs: a prescription medication for liver disorders and a dietary supplement associated with traditional Chinese medicine.

Amylyx faced criticism for pricing the drug at \$158,000 for a year's supply. Sales were disappointing, with some patients discontinuing the medicine after only a few months.

## **Police officers' trial on civil rights charges in Tyre Nichols death to stay in Memphis, judge says**

By ADRIAN SAINZ Associated Press

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP) — The federal trial of four former Memphis police officers charged with civil rights violations in the beating death of Tyre Nichols will be held in the city, a judge ruled Thursday.

During a hearing in federal court, U.S. District Judge Mark S. Norris denied motions filed by defense attorneys to move the trial out of the city or bring in a jury from elsewhere in Tennessee. The attorneys argued that intense news media coverage and the public release of video related to the beating would make it impossible to seat a fair and impartial jury in Memphis, where Nichols died in January 2023.

A document filed by lawyers for one of the officers, Emmitt Martin, said the trial atmosphere in Memphis has been "utterly corrupted by press coverage." Norris disagreed, saying media coverage and the video release won't bias a Memphis jury against the officers. The judge did say that defense attorneys can file another change of venue motion after potential jurors are questioned about their knowledge of the case.

The police video shows officers yanking Nichols out of his car during a traffic stop on Jan. 7, 2023, after he is pulled over for alleged reckless driving. Nichols is pepper-sprayed and hit with a stun gun, but he manages to get away and run toward his house nearby. Officers catch up with Nichols and punch him, kick him and hit him with a police baton as he yells for his mother, the video shows.

Nichols died three days later at a hospital. The cause of death was blows to the head, according to an autopsy report, which ruled the death a homicide.

Nichols was Black. The five officers also are Black. Memphis' police chief has said the department couldn't substantiate any reason for officers to pull Nichols over. The case sparked outrage around the world and intensified calls for police reform in the city and the U.S.

Martin, Tadarrius Bean, Demetrius Haley, Desmond Mills Jr. and Justin Smith were fired after Nichols' death. They were indicted in September on federal charges that they deprived Nichols of his rights through

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excessive force and failure to intervene, and obstructed justice through witness tampering. They also have been charged in state court with second-degree murder. The state trial has been delayed until the federal trial is complete.

Mills pleaded guilty to federal charges in November. He also intends to plead guilty in state court and could testify against his four ex-colleagues, who have pleaded not guilty in both cases, his lawyer Blake Ballin has said. The federal trial is scheduled to start Sept. 9.

The criminal case is separate from the U.S. Department of Justice's "patterns and practices" investigation into how Memphis officers use force and conduct arrests, and whether the department in the majority-Black city engages in racially discriminatory policing.

The Justice Department also has announced a separate review concerning use of force, de-escalation strategies and specialized units within Memphis police.

Nichols' mother has filed a \$550 million lawsuit against the city and its police chief.

## Powerball jackpot reaches \$1.23B as long odds mean lots of losing, just as designed

By SCOTT McFETRIDGE Associated Press

Powerball will match a record for lottery drawings Saturday night with a stretch of more than three months without a jackpot winner.

It's that string of futility that has enabled Powerball's top prize to reach \$1.23 billion, the 8th largest in U.S. lottery history. And it's a sign that the game is operating exactly as designed, with long odds creating a massive jackpot that entices people to drop \$2 on a ticket.

It means no one should ever expect to match all six numbers and hit it rich, though it's likely someone eventually will.

### ABOUT THOSE ODDS

The last time someone won the Powerball jackpot was on New Year's Day, when a player in Michigan hit an \$842.4 million jackpot.

Since then, there have been 40 consecutive drawings without a jackpot winner. The 41st on Saturday night will match the record for most drawings, set twice before in 2022 and 2021.

The winless streak isn't a fluke. Lottery officials set the odds at 1 in 292.2 million in hopes that jackpots will roll over with each of the three weekly drawings until the top prize becomes so enormous that more people take notice and play.

The odds used to be significantly better, at 1 in 175 million, but were made tougher in 2015 to create the humongous jackpots. Lottery officials at that time also made it easier to win smaller prizes, and they note that the overall odds of winning something are about 1 in 25.

### MORE ABOUT THOSE ODDS

It's hard to envision what odds of 1 in 292.2 million mean.

One way is to think of the roughly 322 million people who live in spots where they can buy Powerball tickets — five states don't participate. If each person bought one ticket, you would expect one person to win and hundreds of millions of people to lose.

Put another way, the odds of winning the jackpot are a little worse than flipping a coin and getting heads 28 straight times, according to Andrew Swift, a University of Nebraska-Omaha mathematics professor.

### A BIT MORE ABOUT THOSE ODDS

Of all the people who bought lottery tickets for the last drawing Wednesday night, only 22.6% of the 292.2 million possible number combinations were covered, according to the Multi-State Lottery Association. That means that 77.4% of number combinations were not covered, and it's an indication of why people so rarely win a jackpot.

Remember, the odds of an individual ticket winning never changes, but as more people play, more number combinations will be covered and the odds of someone winning rise.

And as bad as Powerball odds are, they're a little better than Mega Millions, the other nearly national

lottery game, which has jackpot odds of 1 in 302.6 million. And, to be fair, someone won a \$1.13 billion Mega Millions prize last month.

## THE PAYOFF, AND WHY IT'S SMALLER THAN YOU THINK

Without a doubt, the Powerball jackpot is an incredible amount of money, but it's also less than you might expect.

That's because while officials tout the \$1.23 billion prize, that is for a sole winner who chooses to be paid through an annuity, with an immediate payment and then annual payments over 29 years. Winners almost always opt for cash, which for Saturday night's drawing would be an estimated \$595.1 million.

Regardless of the payment option, a big chunk of the winnings would go toward taxes, though that amount would vary depending on winners' other assets and whether their state taxes lottery winnings. Just note that the top federal tax income tax rate is 37%, meaning a lot of the winnings would go to Washington.

## Oklahoma executes man convicted of double slaying in 2002

By SEAN MURPHY Associated Press

McALESTER, Okla. (AP) — A man convicted of shooting and killing two people in Oklahoma City more than two decades ago was executed Thursday morning.

Michael Dewayne Smith received a lethal injection at the Oklahoma State Penitentiary in McAlester and was pronounced dead at 10:20 a.m., Oklahoma Department of Corrections spokesperson Lance West said.

After the first of three lethal drugs, midazolam, was administered, Smith, 41, appeared to shake briefly and attempt to lift his head from the gurney before relaxing. He then took several short, audible breaths that sounded like snores or gasps. Oklahoma DOC Director Steven Harpe said after the execution that Smith "appeared to have some form of sleep apnea."

A masked doctor entered the execution chamber at 10:14 a.m. and shook Smith several times before declaring him unconscious.

Smith appeared to stop breathing about a minute later. The doctor reentered the execution chamber at 10:19 a.m. and checked for a pulse before Harpe announced the time of death.

Smith was sentenced to die in the separate shooting deaths of Janet Moore, 41, and Sharath Pulluru, 22, in February 2002. He is the first person executed in Oklahoma this year and the 12th put to death since the state resumed executions in 2021 following a nearly seven-year hiatus resulting from problems with executions in 2014 and 2015.

Given the opportunity to say last words, Smith responded, "Nah, I'm good."

Moore's son Phillip Zachary Jr. and niece Morgan Miller-Perkins witnessed the execution from behind one-way glass. Attorney General Gentner Drummond read a statement on their behalf that said in part: "Justice has been served."

Drummond, in his own statement, called Moore "a rock for her family" and said Pulluru "was an inspiration to his family" as the first member to come to the United States for an education.

"Janet and Sharath were murdered simply because they were in the wrong place at the wrong time; that was all. I am grateful that justice has been served," Drummond said.

During a clemency hearing last month, Smith expressed his "deepest sorrows" to the victims' families, but denied he was responsible.

"I didn't commit these crimes. I didn't kill these people," Smith said, occasionally breaking into tears during his 15-minute address to the board, which denied him clemency in a 4-1 vote. "I was high on drugs. I don't even remember getting arrested."

The U.S. Supreme Court on Thursday morning denied a stay of execution requested by Smith's attorneys, who argued that his confession to police was not sufficiently corroborated.

Prosecutors say Smith was a ruthless gang member who killed both victims in misguided acts of revenge and confessed his involvement in the killings to police and two other people.

They claim he killed Moore because he was looking for her son, who he mistakenly thought had told police about his whereabouts. Later that day, prosecutors say Smith killed Pulluru, a convenience store

clerk who Smith believed had disrespected his gang during an interview with a newspaper reporter.

Smith's attorney, Mark Henricksen, argued that Smith is intellectually disabled, a condition worsened by years of heavy drug use, and that his life should be spared and he should be allowed to spend the rest of it in prison. Henricksen said Smith was in a PCP-induced haze when he confessed to police and that key elements of his confession aren't supported by facts.

## **Senior UK jurists have joined calls to stop arms sales to Israel. Other allies face similar pressure**

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — More than 600 British jurists, including three retired judges from the U.K. Supreme Court, are calling on the government to suspend arms sales to Israel, piling pressure on Prime Minister Rishi Sunak after the deaths of three U.K. aid workers in an Israeli strike.

Britain is just one of a number of Israel's longstanding allies whose governments are under growing pressure to halt weapons exports because of the toll of the six-month-old war in Gaza.

In an open letter to Sunak published late Wednesday, the lawyers and judges said the U.K. could be complicit in "grave breaches of international law" if it continues to ship weapons.

Signatories, including former Supreme Court President Brenda Hale, said Britain is legally obliged to heed the International Court of Justice's conclusion that there is a "plausible risk of genocide" in Gaza.

The letter said the "sale of weapons and weapons systems to Israel ... falls significantly short of your government's obligations under international law."

Britain is a staunch ally of Israel, but relations have been tested by the mounting death toll, largely civilian, from the war. Calls for an end to arms exports have escalated since an Israeli airstrike killed seven aid workers from the aid charity World Central Kitchen, three of them British.

Israel says the attack on the aid workers was a mistake caused by "misidentification."

The U.K.'s main opposition parties have all said the Conservative government should halt weapons sales to Israel if the country has broken international law in Gaza.

Several senior Conservatives have urged the same, including Alicia Kearns, who heads the House of Commons foreign affairs committee.

Sunak has not committed to an arms export ban, but said Wednesday that "while of course we defend Israel's right to defend itself and its people against attacks from Hamas, they have to do that in accordance with international humanitarian law."

British firms sell a relatively small amount of weapons and components to Israel. Defense Secretary Grant Shapps has said that military exports to Israel amounted to 42 million pounds (\$53 million) in 2022.

Other allies of Israel are also facing calls to cut off the supply of weapons and to push for a cease-fire in the conflict, which has killed more than 32,000 Palestinians, according to health authorities in Gaza.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez said Thursday that his country had stopped selling weapons to Israel, and urged other nations to do the same. Sanchez said Wednesday that his government has left "the door open" to diplomatic actions against Israel over its "insufficient" explanation of the aid workers' deaths.

In February, Canada announced it would stop future shipments, and the same month a Dutch court ordered the Netherlands to stop the export of F-35 fighter jet parts to Israel. The Dutch government said it would appeal.

Other countries, including Israel's two biggest arms suppliers, the United States and Germany, continue to allow weapons sales.

Germany is one of Israel's closest allies in Europe and, given memories of the Holocaust, treads carefully when criticizing Israel. But Chancellor Olaf Scholz has increasingly voiced unease, asking Netanyahu at a meeting last month how any goal can "justify such terribly high costs."

Peter Ricketts, a former U.K. national security advisor, said suspension of U.K. arms sales would not change the course of the war, but "would be a powerful political message."

"And it might just stimulate debate in the U.S. as well, which would be the real game-changer," he told the BBC.

## In the coliseum of American over-the-topness, WrestleMania stands alone

By DAN GELSTON AP Sports Writer

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — He surveyed the Arizona crowd that had paid to catch a wrestling glimpse of the planet's mightiest heavyweight, as measured in both box-office heft and ink-stained muscles. Then The Rock let the abuse fly. And as with so many public outbursts these days, attacking his opponents wasn't enough. He had to insult the people, too.

"The Rock did a little bit of research, and here's what he found out. This is the truth. This is a fact. The No. 1 city in America for cocaine and meth use is Phoenix, Arizona," The Rock said to a roaring crowd that seemed to revel in the insults. Then and only then did he lay the smack down on his WrestleMania opponents.

Were The Rock's assertions true? Or just an engine for vigorous trash talk? Most importantly: Does anyone really care, as long as the entertainment value is cranked to 11 and WWE churns out more fans to watch and fork over cash for its signature spectacle, WrestleMania, unfolding in Philadelphia this weekend?

Along the murky lines that intertwine sports, entertainment and, yes, politics, the ethos of being bad has never been so good. Say what you want. Do you want. The public eats it up. And for decades, somehow, the garish world of professional wrestling has sat smack in the middle of it all.

Outside the ring, the Superman spandex traded for Clark Kent glasses and a leather jacket, Dwayne Johnson crafts his good-guy image to plug his movies, his tequila label, his men's care line, his football league — business interests where the bottom line doesn't require calling the competition a bunch of "roody-poo candy-asses." But under the house lights each week on live TV, Johnson knows storylines are sold on his Hollywood heel persona.

"I feel like everybody wants to be the good guy, the good girl. Everyone wants to be loved and cheered and considered the hero, which is great and it's natural," he says. "But, I have felt in my career, the rare air is when you have the opportunity to grab it by the throat, you don't let it go. And that's the opportunity to be a great bad guy."

### WRESTLEMANIA AND ITS CULTURAL PULL

The Rock is set to headline one of two nights of the annual WrestleMania event this weekend in Philadelphia, where more than 70,000 fans each night are expected to pack the NFL stadium that is home to the Eagles.

Banners of your favorite wrestlers, or the ones you love to hate, have smothered city street poles. Philly has been overrun by wrestling conventions, autograph signings, independent wrestling shows, podcast tapings, a 2K24 gaming tournament and all the other trappings that have turned the industry into a mainstream cultural phenomenon.

From the start, WrestleMania was born to be different.

Mr. T and Muhammad Ali helped pack Madison Square Garden in 1985, and "The Showcase of the Immortals" quickly turned a night of wrestling usually reserved for smoky arenas into the Super Bowl of entertainment. As WrestleMania approaches 40, it's never been bigger — even with brainchild Vince McMahon a pariah and ousted from the company in the wake of a sex abuse lawsuit.

Yes, McMahon and Donald Trump even tangled at WrestleMania in 2007 in a "Battle of the Billionaires" match.

"Donald Trump, to a certain extent, represents a great deal of Americana," McMahon said in 2007. "He's larger than life, which really fits into what the WWE is."

Maybe wrestling really does represent who we are as a nation. But even if you still scrunch your nose like you took a whiff of curdled milk over the very idea that anyone would like this flavor of wrestling, odds are you've still heard of The Rock and Hulk Hogan. Andre the Giant and John Cena. You've snapped into a Slim Jim because Randy Savage ordered you to, or let out a "Woooo!" at a hockey game like Ric Flair. Dave Bautista won a WrestleMania championship before he ever guarded the galaxy.

"Look at the way it was marketed in the 80s, when Vince McMahon really changed the whole industry



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forever," said author Brad Balukjian, whose new book is on 1980s WrestleMania stars. "He's got the action figures, he's got the cartoon and the bedsheets and the lunch boxes. He turned these guys into the Batmans and the Marvel Cinematic Universe of the 80s, in a way."

## REVEL IN THE UNIVERSALLY ACCEPTED FAKERY

Fans have long been in on the con — and embraced it. It's a mutual agreement forged for even paying customers to play their own roles in the four-sided ring performance. So they cheer. They boo. And despite all evidence to the contrary, they openly accept that each move is as legitimate a sporting action as anything found in a weeknight ballgame.

Wrestling pretended for so long to be on the up-and-up. Comedian Andy Kaufman drew gasps when he was slapped by wrestler Jerry Lawler on "Late Night with David Letterman." But the curtain was yanked open long ago. On Wednesday, Johnson and WWE Universal Champion Roman Reigns appeared on the "The Tonight Show" without any manufactured theatrics on their final hype job ahead of WrestleMania.

Former WWE star Dave Schultz slapped a "20/20" reporter in the 1980s for calling wrestling fake. Now ESPN, The Athletic, Sports Illustrated and CBS Sports have dedicated pages that report on both storylines and behind-the-scenes news, where the real drama is more likely found. Wrestling news is treated as seriously as any other sport's.

But is it? A sport, that is.

Debate the definition all you want. Wrestling — a precursor to reality TV and all the Real Housewives — isn't going anywhere. And its biggest fans are often the athletes who want to emulate the super-sized stars.

This week, Joel Embiid was about to divulge that he suffered from depression during an injury that cost him two months of his NBA career. But before the Philadelphia 76ers big man unburdened himself, he pulled on a WWE T-shirt emblazoned with the slogan of the wrestling company's most boorish faction, Degeneration X: "Suck It."

For pro wrestling, momentum is at hand. WWE's weekly television show "Raw" will move to Netflix next year as part of a major streaming deal worth more than \$5 billion. That's some serious cash that even the "Million Dollar Man" Ted DiBiase would envy.

So go ahead. Sneer at wrestling. Or let go, turn a blind eye to the subterfuge and embrace Hulkamania and the frenzy that followed as a staple of the global sports landscape. Because it's not leaving the building anytime soon.

Consider John Kruk, retired Phillies star and team broadcaster. You'd think that the pinnacle moment of baseball each year would be a must-see for him. But if pro wrestling is coming to town, as he told wrestler Kofi Kingston on TV recently, other priorities prevail.

"If it was a World Series game, if the Phillies aren't participating, and wrestling was on," Kruk said, "I'm watching wrestling."

## One Tech Tip: How to use apps to track and photograph the total solar eclipse

By KELVIN CHAN AP Business Writer

Monday's total solar eclipse might become one of the most filmed and photographed events of the year. As the moon passes in front of the sun, plunging a swath of North America into a few minutes of darkness, throngs will take pictures or videos of the moment. But powerful solar rays and drastic changes in lighting pose unique challenges in catching that perfect image.

Here are some pointers on how to get the best shot:

How can I find the best place to capture the eclipse?

First, get in the right position. You'll want to be as close as possible to the path of totality, which passes over Mexico's Pacific coast and ends in eastern Canada. Fifteen U.S. states get to see the full eclipse.

There are online maps to check if you'll be anywhere near the path. NASA's map shows how many minutes of totality there will be if you're inside the path depending on location, and how much of a partial eclipse you'll see if you're outside of it.

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For spectators in Mexico and Canada, eclipse expert Xavier Jubier's website overlays the eclipse's path on Google Maps, which allows zooming into street level detail.

Be ready to adapt to changing weather conditions. Use weather forecast and cloud coverage apps, including ones from the National Weather Service and Astrospheric, on the morning or the day before to find locations with clearer skies.

What can I use to plan a good shot?

With so many factors in play including cloud cover and the sun's position in the sky, planning is key to getting the best image.

There are a host of smartphone apps for eclipse chasers. The American Astronomical Society has compiled a list of useful ones for both iOS and Android devices, including its own Totality app that shows your location on a map of the totality path.

The Solar Eclipse Timer uses your phone's GPS to play an audio countdown to the moment of totality and highlights key moments. The app's maker advises using a separate phone for taking photos.

Eclipse Calculator 2 for Android devices uses the phone's camera to depict how the event will look in the sky from your position, using lines overlaid on top of the camera image. For iPhone users, apps like Sky Guide and SkySafari have eclipse simulators. There are other iOS apps that use augmented reality to simulate the eclipse, but they're pricier and not yet on the society's list.

How can I take a great photo of the eclipse?

Digital SLR cameras will produce the best photos. Their manual exposure controls and ability to add zoom lenses and accessories like remote shutter buttons will let you make great pictures.

Associated Press chief photographer Julio Cortez advises using a smaller aperture — f11 or f17 — to keep the focus "a little bit sharper." When he shot the 2017 total solar eclipse, he used an ISO setting of 1250 and 1/500 shutter speed.

The rest of us have our smartphones.

NASA published detailed guidelines for smartphone eclipse photography in 2017 with the caveat that "smartphones were never designed to do sun and moon photography." That's because the wide-angle lenses on most devices won't let you capture close-up detail. But new phones released since then come with sophisticated sensors, multiple lenses and image stabilization software that give a better chance.

Some experts suggest HDR, or High Dynamic Range, mode, which takes a series of pictures at different light levels and then blends them into a single shot — ideal for combining an eclipse's very dark and very bright areas.

But don't use flash. You can spoil the moment by ruining the vision of those around you whose eyes have adapted to darkness.

What will I need to protect against the sun?

The American Astronomical Society advises using a solar filter to protect cameras against intense sunlight and heat.

You can buy a filter that screws onto DSLR lenses, but it will take time to remove when totality happens. Cortez made his own with cardboard, tinted film and fasteners that he can quickly rip off.

For smartphones, you can use a spare pair of eclipse glasses and hold it over the lens, or buy a smartphone filter. There's no international standard, but the society's website has a list of models it considers safe. Make sure macro mode is not on.

If you plan to shoot for an extended time, use a tripod. To line up his camera after mounting it on a tripod, Cortez uses a solar finder, which helps locate the sun without damaging your eyes or equipment.

Cortez also advises bringing a white towel to cover up your gear after setting up to keep it from overheating as you wait for the big moment.

Can I take a selfie with the eclipse?

It's very tempting to make a TikTok or Instagram-friendly eclipse video. Perhaps you want to selfie video, narrating into the camera while the cosmic ballet between sun and moon plays out over your shoulder.

Be careful: While you might think your vision isn't at risk because you're not looking at the sun, your phone's screen could reflect harmful ultraviolet light, eye experts have warned.

And if you're using a solar filter on the selfie camera, it will turn the picture dark and you won't show up.

## Rescuers in Taiwan search for those missing or stranded after major earthquake kills 10

By JOHNSON LAI and KANIS LEUNG Associated Press

HUALIEN, Taiwan (AP) — Rescuers searched Thursday for missing people and worked to reach hundreds stranded when Taiwan's strongest earthquake in 25 years sent boulders and mud tumbling down mountainsides, blocking roads. Ten people died and more than 1,000 were injured.

The powerful quake struck during the morning rush hour a day earlier, sending schoolchildren rushing outdoors and families fleeing their apartments through the windows. The ground floors of some buildings collapsed, leaving them leaning at precarious angles. Though the island is regularly rattled by earthquakes and generally well prepared, authorities did not send out the usual alerts because they were expecting a smaller tremor.

Some 200 residents of Hualien County near the epicenter were staying in temporary shelters, and the main road linking the county to the capital, Taipei, was still closed Thursday afternoon, but much of Taiwan's day-to-day life returned to normal. Some local rail service to Hualien resumed, and Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co., one of the world's most important manufacturers of computer chips, restarted most operations, the Central News Agency reported.

Nearly 1,100 people were injured in the quake. Of the 10 dead, at least four were killed inside Taroko National Park, a tourist attraction famous for canyons and cliffs in mountainous Hualien about 150 kilometers (90 miles) from Taipei. One person was found dead in a damaged building and another was found in the Ho Ren Quarry. Rescuers also carried out the body of a man, who had severe wounds on his head, from a hiking trail.

Hundreds of people were stranded when rocks and mud blocked the roads leading to their hotel, campground or work site — though most were safe while they awaited rescue. It wasn't clear Thursday if any people were still trapped in buildings.

Liu Zhong-da, a 58-year-old construction worker, and his colleague were on their way to work on a road in the national park and were inside a tunnel when the quake hit. A boulder blocked their exit and they were trapped along with some other people.

"We almost got covered up," Liu said. "No communication could be made (to the outside world)." Liu and his colleague were rescued Thursday afternoon and received a quick medical checkup outside the park.

About 60 workers who had been unable to leave a quarry because of damaged roads were also freed, authorities said. Six workers from another quarry were airlifted out.

Some 700 people remain cut off, the vast majority of them employees and guests at a hotel in the national park. Authorities said they were safe and had food and water, and that work to repair the roads to the hotel was nearly finished. Another 10 workers from the same hotel were stranded elsewhere in the park, after most of the others in the group were rescued or managed to walk out.

Authorities said they were unable to contact about 15 people, and their condition was not known. Numbers have fluctuated frequently as authorities have learned of more people in trouble and rescued others.

In the city of Hualien on Thursday, workers used an excavator to stabilize the base of a damaged building, as chickens pecked among potted plants on the flat roof slanting at a severe angle.

Mayor Hsu Chen-wei previously said 48 residential buildings were damaged in the quake. Hendri Sutrisno, a 30-year-old professor at Hualien Dong Hwa University, spent Wednesday night in a tent inside a shelter with his wife and baby, fearing aftershocks.

"We ran out of the apartment and waited for four to five hours before we went up again to grab some important stuff such as our wallet. And then we're staying here ever since to assess the situation," he said.

Others also said they didn't dare to go home because the walls of their apartments were cracked or they lived on higher floors. Taiwanese Premier Chen Chien-jen visited some earthquake evacuees in the morning at a temporary shelter.

The earthquake was the strongest to hit Taiwan in 25 years, measured at magnitude 7.4 by the U.S. Geological Survey.

Huang Shiao-en was in her apartment when the quake struck. "At first the building was swinging side to side, and then it shook up and down," she said.

The Central Weather Administration recorded more than 400 aftershocks from Wednesday morning into Thursday night. The national legislature and sections of Taipei's main airport suffered minor damage.

Hualien was last struck by a deadly quake in 2018 which killed 17 people and brought down a historic hotel. Taiwan's worst recent earthquake struck on Sept. 21, 1999, a magnitude 7.7 temblor that caused 2,400 deaths, injured around 100,000 and destroyed thousands of buildings.

## **US treasury secretary is in China to talk trade, anti-money laundering and Chinese 'overproduction'**

By FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

GUANGZHOU, China (AP) — Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen arrived in China on Thursday for five days of meetings in a nation determined to avoid open conflict with the United States, yet the world's two largest economies still appear to be hashing out the rules on how to compete against each other.

There are tensions over Chinese government support for the manufacturing of electric vehicles and solar panels, just as the U.S. government ramps up its own aid for those tech sectors. There are differences in trade, ownership of TikTok, access to computer chips and national security — all of them a risk to what has become a carefully managed relationship.

The 77-year-old Yellen, a renowned economist and former Federal Reserve chair, laid out to reporters the issues that she intends to raise with her Chinese counterparts during her five-day visit. Yellen begins her trip in Guangzhou and later moves to Beijing for meetings with finance leaders and state officials. Her engagements will include Vice Premier He Lifeng, Chinese Central Bank Governor Pan Gongsheng, former Vice Premier Liu He, leaders of American businesses operating in China, university students and local leaders.

Yellen, speaking to reporters Wednesday during a refueling stop in Alaska en route to Asia, said her visit would be a "continuation of the dialogue that we have been engaged and deepening" ever since U.S. President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping met in 2022 in Indonesia. She noted that it would be her third meeting with China's vice premier.

Yellen recently accused China of flooding global markets with heavily subsidized green energy products, possibly undercutting the subsidies the U.S. has provided to its own renewable energy and EV sector with funds provided by the Democrats' Inflation Reduction Act. She said she intends to repeat her concerns to Chinese officials that they're flooding the global market with cheap solar panels and EVs that thwart the ability of other countries to develop those sectors.

"We need to have a level playing field," Yellen told reporters. "We're concerned about a massive investment in China in a set of industries that's resulting in overcapacity."

Yellen didn't rule out taking additional steps to counter Chinese subsidies in the green energy sectors, adding, "It's not just the United States but quite a few countries, including Mexico, Europe, Japan, that are feeling the pressure from massive investment, in these industries in China."

The Treasury secretary's travels come after Biden and Xi held their first call in five months on Tuesday, meant to demonstrate a return to regular leader-to-leader dialogue between the two powers. The leaders discussed Taiwan, artificial intelligence and security issues.

The call, described by the White House as "candid and constructive," was the leaders' first conversation since their November summit in California, which renewed ties between the two nations' militaries and enhanced cooperation on stemming the flow of deadly fentanyl and its precursors from China.

Still, it appears to be difficult for the two countries to strike a balance between competition and antagonism.

For instance, Xi last week hosted American CEOs in Beijing to court them on investing in China. Meanwhile, Biden last August issued an executive order that instructed an inter-agency committee, chaired by Yellen, to closely monitor U.S. investment in China related to high-tech manufacturing.

Jude Blanchette, a China expert at the Center for Strategic & International Studies, said, "the Biden administration's efforts over the last year to stabilize the relationship are clearly working, but the main friction points all remain unresolved and will likely challenge the relationship for the foreseeable future."

"For the time being, a 'managed rivalry' might be the best we can hope for, given the potentially catastrophic consequences of the relationship really going off the rails," he said.

Yellen last week said China is flooding the market with green energy that "distorts global prices," and plans to tell her counterparts that Beijing's increased production of solar energy, electric vehicles and lithium-ion batteries poses risks to productivity and growth to the global economy.

China began to broaden its presence in the global economy more than two decades ago, exporting cheap goods that appealed to U.S. consumers at the expense of factory jobs in many of those consumers' hometowns. Research by the economists David Autor, David Dorn and Gordon Hanson into what's known as the "China Shock" led to the steady demise of many factory towns, and in some cases led to greater political discontent.

Still, some experts see a benefit in an economic showdown to produce green products.

Shang-Jin Wei, a professor of Chinese business at Columbia University, says that a subsidy war could ultimately help consumers in both countries buy more climate-friendly products, which is an aim of the Biden administration.

"In contrast, a U.S. tariff on EV imports could raise the price of EVs in the U.S. and is therefore counterproductive for the purpose of inducing a green transition."

Yellen's trip will run from April 4 to 9. It's intended as a follow-up to Yellen's travel to China last July, which resulted in the launch of a pair of economic working groups between the two nations' finance departments to ease tensions and deepen ties.

But this visit falls in an election year, where tough talk on China has increased by Democrats and Republicans — who criticize Chinese ownership of popular social media app TikTok, the nation's censorship and human rights record and hold a deep mistrust over recent acts of espionage such as hacking and the use of a spy balloon.

Scheherazade S. Rehman, a professor of International Business and Finance and International Affairs at George Washington University, said while "it's an election year, so all the rhetoric is going to be sharper, the U.S and China are in a symbiotic trading relationship and ultimately need each other."

China is one of the United States' biggest trading partners, and economic competition between the two nations has increased in recent years. Yellen stressed Wednesday that the United States has no interest in decoupling from China.

China's support of Russia as it continues its invasion of neighboring Ukraine is another issue that will come up during the meetings. As the U.S. and its allies sanction Russian officials and entire sectors of the Russian economy, like banking, oil production and manufacturing, trade between China and Russia has increased.

## **Awe and dread: How religions have responded to total solar eclipses over the centuries**

By DEEPA BHARATH, DAVID CRARY and MARIAM FAM Associated Press

Throughout history, solar eclipses have had profound impact on adherents of various religions around the world. They were viewed as messages from God or spiritual forces, inducing emotions ranging from dread to wonder.

Ahead of the total solar eclipse that will follow a long path over North America on Monday, here's a look at how several of the world's major religions have responded to such eclipses over the centuries and in modern times.

**Buddhism:**

In the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, it is believed that the energy of positive and negative actions is multiplied during major astronomical events such as a solar eclipse.

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According to the late Lama Zopa Rinpoche with the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition, both lunar and solar eclipses are auspicious days for spiritual practice. He has said that the merit — which represents the positive karmic results of good intentions and actions — generated on lunar eclipses is multiplied by 700,000 and on solar eclipses by 100 million. Some of the recommended spiritual activities on these days include chanting mantras and sutras.

## Christianity:

Some Christians have believed that an eclipse portends the coming of the “end times” that will precede Christ’s return to Earth as prophesized at various points in the Bible. One such passage is in the second chapter of Acts: “The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.”

There also has been a persisting belief among some Christians that an eclipse occurred during the crucifixion because three of the Bible’s four Gospels mention a three-hour period of darkness as Jesus died.

“It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, for the sun stopped shining,” says Luke 23:44.

It’s been noted that a three-hour period of darkness doesn’t suggest a solar eclipse, which produces only a few minutes of darkness.

But a recent commentary on ChurchLeaders.com — a website supported by numerous prominent evangelical pastors — said the darkness depicted in the three Gospels “represents a profound spiritual transition.”

“The temporary obscuring of the sun, juxtaposed with the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus, offers a powerful metaphor for the transient nature of despair and the eternal promise of salvation and rebirth,” the commentary says.

## Hinduism:

The origin of eclipses in Hinduism is explained in ancient legends known as puranas. In one legend, the devas and asuras, who symbolized good and evil respectively, churned the ocean to receive the nectar of eternal life. As one of the asuras, Svarbhanu, posed as a deva to receive the nectar, the Sun god (Surya) and Moon god (Chandra) alerted Mohini, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, who then used a discus to behead Svarbhanu.

But because the asura had already consumed a portion of the nectar, his immortal but detached head and body lived on under the names Rahu and Ketu. Legend has it that Rahu occasionally swallows the sun and the moon because of the gods’ part in his misery, causing solar and lunar eclipses.

Hindus generally regard a solar or lunar eclipse as a bad omen. Some observe fasts before and many do not eat during the period of the eclipse. Observant Hindus ritually bathe to cleanse themselves during the first and final phases of an eclipse. Some also offer prayers to ancestors. Most temples are closed for the duration of the eclipse. Devotees gather for prayers along pilgrimage sites near holy rivers during the onset of an eclipse. The event is considered to be a good time for prayer, meditation and chanting of mantras — all believed to ward off evil.

## Islam:

In Islam, a solar eclipse is a time to turn to God and pray. The eclipse prayer is based on narrations of sayings and actions of Prophet Muhammad.

Kaiser Aslam, Muslim chaplain at the Center for Islamic Life at Rutgers University, said one narration cited the prophet as saying: “The sun and the moon are two signs amongst the signs of Allah and they do not eclipse because of the death of someone. ... Whenever you see these eclipses pray and invoke (Allah).”

The story was that “after the death of the Prophet Muhammad’s son, Ibrahim, his companions tried to comfort him by saying that the sun eclipsed due to the greatness of the loss,” Aslam said. “The Prophet corrected them by reminding them that the sun and moon are signs of God and to not add any superstitions as to why an eclipse happens.”

On April 8, Aslam will lead the “kusuf” prayer on campus. Customarily, there’s a brief sermon after the prayer to explain the lessons behind it and dispel any superstitions around it, he added.

“It is a beautiful and meaningful prayer that emphasizes our relationship with God’s creation, making sure

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to give our devotion to God, instead of incidental occurrences in God's creation," Aslam said.

Mahmoud Alhawary, an official with Al-Azhar's Islamic Research Academy in Cairo, said it's better for the eclipse prayer to be performed in congregation at the mosque, but that Muslims may also pray individually elsewhere.

The wisdom "is for the individual to seek refuge in God, requesting the lifting of this affliction," Alhawary said. "People should know that the occurrences of the whole universe are in God's hands."

Judaism:

The Talmud — the collection of writings compiled more than 1,500 years ago that constitute Jewish religious law — offers specific blessings for many natural phenomena, but not for eclipses. Instead, it depicts an eclipse as "an ill omen for the world."

On Chabad.org — a website serving an Orthodox Jewish audience — Chicago-based Rabbi Menachem Posner sought to view the Talmud passage in a modern context, given the consensus that eclipses are natural events that can be predicted centuries in advance.

"Eclipses should be opportunities to increase in prayer and introspection — as opposed to prompting joyous blessings," Posner wrote. "It is a sign that we really could and should be doing better."

Writing in early March for the Orthodox Jewish education organization Aish, Rabbi Mordechai Becher noted that Judaism has longstanding interconnections with astronomy. He said there are three craters on the moon named after medieval rabbis with expertise in astronomy.

As for eclipses, Becher — an instructor at Yeshiva University — suggested they were made possible by God for a profound reason.

"He created a system that would remind us regularly that our choices can create darkness, even at times when there should be light," he wrote. "Our free will choices can create a barrier between us and the Divine light, but can also allow Divine light to be seen here."

## Today in History: April 5

### Julius and Ethel Rosenberg are sentenced to death

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, April 5, the 96th day of 2024. There are 270 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On April 5, 1951, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were sentenced to death following their conviction in New York on charges of conspiring to commit espionage for the Soviet Union.

On this date:

In 1614, Indian Chief Powhatan's daughter Pocahontas married Englishman John Rolfe, a widower, in the Virginia Colony.

In 1621, the Mayflower sailed from Plymouth Colony in present-day Massachusetts on a monthlong return trip to England.

In 1764, Britain's Parliament passed The American Revenue Act of 1764, also known as the Sugar Act.

In 1887, in Tuscumbia, Alabama, teacher Anne Sullivan achieved a breakthrough as her 6-year-old deaf-blind pupil, Helen Keller, learned the meaning of the word "water" as spelled out in the Manual Alphabet.

In 1976, reclusive billionaire Howard Hughes died in Houston at age 70.

In 1986, two American servicemen and a Turkish woman were killed in the bombing of a West Berlin discotheque, an incident that prompted a U.S. air raid on Libya more than a week later.

In 1987, Fox Broadcasting Co. made its prime-time TV debut by airing the situation comedy "Married with Children" followed by "The Tracey Ullman Show," then repeating both premiere episodes two more times in the same evening.

In 1991, former Sen. John Tower, R-Texas, his daughter Marian and 21 other people were killed in a commuter plane crash near Brunswick, Georgia.

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In 2008, actor Charlton Heston, big-screen hero and later leader of the National Rifle Association, died in Beverly Hills, California, at age 84.

In 2010, an explosion at the Upper Big Branch mine near Charleston, West Virginia, killed 29 workers. In a televised rescue, 115 Chinese coal miners were freed after spending eight days trapped in a flooded mine, surviving an accident that had killed 38.

In 2016, UConn won an unprecedented fourth straight women's national championship, capping another perfect season by routing Syracuse 82-51.

In 2018, in his first public comments about Stormy Daniels, President Donald Trump said he didn't know about the \$130,000 payment his personal attorney Michael Cohen had made to the porn actress who alleged she had an affair with Trump.

In 2019, inspecting a refurbished section of fencing at the Mexican border in California, President Donald Trump declared that "our country is full," and that illegal crossings must be stopped.

In 2021, the Minneapolis police chief testified that former officer Derek Chauvin had violated departmental policy in pressing his knee against George Floyd's neck and keeping Floyd down after he had stopped breathing; the testimony came on the sixth day of Chauvin's murder trial. (Chauvin would be convicted of murder and manslaughter.)

In 2022, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy accused Russian troops of gruesome atrocities in Ukraine and told the U.N. Security Council that those responsible should immediately be brought up on war crimes charges in front of a tribunal like the one set up at Nuremberg after World War II.

In 2023, Democrat Robert F. Kennedy Jr., an anti-vaccine activist and scion of one of the country's most famous political families, announced he was running for president.

Today's Birthdays: Movie producer Roger Corman is 98. Country singer Tommy Cash is 84. Actor Michael Moriarty is 83. Pop singer Allan Clarke (The Hollies) is 82. Writer-director Peter Greenaway is 82. Actor Max Gail is 81. Actor Jane Asher is 78. Singer Agnetha (ag-NEE'-tah) Faltskog (ABBA) is 74. Actor Mitch Pileggi is 72. Singer-songwriter Peter Case is 70. Hip-hop artist/actor Christopher "Kid" Reid is 60. Rock musician Mike McCready (Pearl Jam) is 58. Singer Paula Cole is 56. Actor Krista Allen is 53. Actor Victoria Hamilton is 53. Country singer Pat Green is 52. Rapper-producer Pharrell (fa-REHL') Williams is 51. Rapper/producer Juicy J is 49. Actor Sterling K. Brown is 48. Country singer-musician Mike Eli (The Eli Young Band) is 43. Actor Hayley Atwell is 42. Actor Lily James is 35.