


**MONDAY**  
February 19, 2024

# StarTribune

**38°**  **28°**  
Milder, with 40s  
on tap this week **A10**

# 'HORRIFIC LOSS'

## GUNMAN KILLS 2 BURNSVILLE COPS, PARAMEDIC 3rd officer hurt; shooter dead after early-morning standoff



By GRETA KAUL, DEE DePASS  
LIZ SAWYER, PAUL WALSH  
and JOSIE ALBERTSON-GROVE  
Star Tribune staff

Two Burnsville police officers and a Fire Department paramedic were shot and killed early Sunday morning after an hourslong standoff at the scene of a domestic abuse call.

The gunman, who had barricaded himself inside the home with a woman and seven children, died after turning his weapon on himself, authorities said.

Officers were sent to the residence in the 12600 block of 33rd Avenue S. just before 2 a.m. and attempted to communicate with those inside. Several hours later, gunfire erupted, striking three officers and the firefighter-paramedic as he tended to one of the wounded.

The dead were identified as officers Paul Elmstrand and Matthew Ruge, both 27, and firefighter-paramedic Adam Finseth, 40.

Police Sgt. Adam Medlicott was hospitalized with gunshot wounds but was expected to survive, city officials said.

"This is a hard day. It's a really hard day for our public safety family. We're hurting; we're hurting," Burnsville Police Chief Tanya Schwartz said at an afternoon news conference. "Today three members of our team made the ultimate sacrifice for this community. They are heroes."

"Our law enforcement community is heartbroken. We're just devastated at the horrific loss," Brian Peters, executive director of the Minnesota Police and Peace Officers Association, said in a statement.

BCA Superintendent Drew Evans said the standoff began after a 1:50 a.m. call about domestic abuse in a middle-class neighborhood near Terrace Oaks East Park in southeast Burnsville. According to the caller, the man was armed and barricaded in the single-family home with the woman and children ages 2 to 15.

Evans said there had not been a significant history of police calls to the home before Sunday.

Gunfire erupted about 5:30 a.m. Evans said the suspect fired at officers as they tried to negotiate with him to leave the house.

See **SHOOTING** on A4 ►

Law enforcement officers saluted Sunday as the bodies of two slain Burnsville police officers and a medic were taken from HCMC in downtown Minneapolis. LIZ SAWYER • liz.sawyer@startribune.com



## Slain first responders are hailed as heroes

By GRETA KAUL  
greta.kaul@startribune.com

Burnsville Police Chief Tanya Schwartz described the three members of Burnsville's public safety team who were fatally shot Sunday morning as heroes who made the ultimate sacrifice.

"They come to work every day," Schwartz said. "They know they may have to give up their life for their partners, for someone else."

Officer Paul Elmstrand, 27, was with the department since 2017, according to the city. He was promoted from community service officer to officer in 2019, and served with the department's mobile command staff, peer team, honor guard and field training unit.

Matthew Ruge, also 27, joined the department in 2020 and was on its crisis negotiations team and worked as a physical evidence officer.

Burnsville firefighter and paramedic Adam Finseth, 40,

formerly served in the Army's Bravo Company 1st battalion 327th Infantry during Operation Iraqi Freedom, according to his LinkedIn page. He was hired in Burnsville in 2019 and previously worked for the cities of Savage and Hastings. The three were fatally shot in the 12600 block of 33rd Avenue in Burnsville about 5:30 a.m. The suspect is also dead after a standoff that took place in the home, where seven children also were present.

To Savage Fire Chief Jeremie Bresnahan, Finseth "embodied the true spirit of a firefighter," showing others respect, empathy and compassion, the chief wrote in an email Sunday to city staff and shared with the Star Tribune. Finseth worked as a paid on-call firefighter for Savage for more than six years.

"His legacy is etched in the memories of those who served alongside him and characterized by his calm demeanor and

See **OFFICERS** on A5 ►



ANGELINA KATSANIS • angelina.katsanis@startribune.com

Stella McCurdy joined mourners Sunday night at a vigil outside Burnsville City Hall.

## Hundreds turn out in show of support

By LIZ SAWYER and  
JOSIE ALBERTSON-GROVE  
Star Tribune staff

The mourners arrived by the busload, their eyes puffy with tears as they filed past a phalanx of police. Hundreds of uniformed officers stood at solemn attention in the HCMC ambulance bay, a show of solidarity for fellow law enforcement and their families.

A domestic assault call and hourslong standoff in Burnsville turned deadly early Sunday morning when the suspect fired upon responding officers, striking three — two fatally — and also killing a firefighter-paramedic attempting to treat one of the wounded.

A sea of police and firefighters saluted in unison as the bodies of Burnsville officers Paul Elmstrand and

Matthew Ruge, both 27, and paramedic Adam Finseth, 40, were rolled out on American flag-draped gurneys.

Dozens of doctors and nurses peered down from the hospital's windows, filming the spectacle. Other medical professionals stood outside in their scrubs, some grouped together under a thin blanket, and quietly wept as all three bodies were loaded into vans bound for the Hennepin

County Medical Examiner's office in Minnetonka.

Trailing behind, a police sergeant tucked three folded American flags under his arm for the victims' families.

Minneapolis Police Chief Brian O'Hara and senior commanders were present, alongside Mayor Jacob Frey and Hennepin County Sheriff Dawanna Witt. Minneapolis officer Jacob Spies, who was

See **REACTIONS** on A5 ►

**TOP NEWS**

**Iran:** Wary of wider war, Tehran urges proxies to cool it against U.S. **A3**

**NATION & WORLD**

**Jimmy Carter:** Former president marks one year in hospice care. **A2**

**MINNESOTA**

**A young life mourned:** Funeral held for boy killed in St. Paul house fire. **A6**

**SPORTS**

**Finch looks back:** Wolves coach says KAT's phone call in 2021 set the tone. **C1**

**BUSINESS**

**International trips:** Early planning, timing are key to vacationing abroad. **D1**

**VARIETY**

**Setting the scene in St. Paul:** 'Unholy Communion' films along W. 7th. **E1**

**HAVE YOU HEARD?**

**'Oppenheimer' takes home seven BAFTAs:** The atomic bomb epic cements front-runner status going into Oscars. **A2**

**More of what matters to Minnesota.** All day. Every day.

**ONLINE:** startribune.com • **TIPS:** 612-673-4414 • **COMMENTS:** 612-673-4000  
**SUBSCRIPTIONS:** Call 612-673-4343 or go to startribune.com/subscribe

**STAR TRIBUNE**  
Minneapolis, St. Paul MN  
Volume XLII • No. 321  
Feb. 19, 2024



## NATION &amp; WORLD

## Iran, wary of wider war, urges proxies to cool it

Tehran calls for restraint against U.S. forces in region.

WASHINGTON POST

DUBAI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES - Iran, eager to disrupt U.S. and Israeli interests in the Middle East but wary of provoking a direct confrontation, is privately urging Hezbollah and other armed groups to exercise restraint against U.S. forces, according to officials in the region.

Israel's brutal war on Hamas in Gaza has stoked conflict between the United States and Iran's proxy forces on multiple fronts. With no cease-fire in sight, Iran could face the most significant test yet of its ability to exert influence over these allied militias.

When U.S. forces launched strikes this month on Iran-backed groups in Yemen, Syria and Iraq, Tehran publicly warned that its military was ready to respond to any threat. But in private, senior leaders are urging caution, according to Lebanese and Iraqi officials who were briefed on the talks.

U.S. officials say the message might be having some effect. As of Saturday, Iran-backed militias in Iraq and Syria hadn't attacked U.S. forces in more than 13 days, an unusual lull since the war in Gaza began in October. The militants held their fire even after a U.S. drone strike in Baghdad killed a senior Kataib Hezbollah official.

"Iran may have realized their interests are not served by allowing their proxies unrestricted ability to attack U.S. and coalition forces," one U.S. official said, speaking on the condition of anonymity.

The Biden administration has taken a similarly cautious approach with Iran. In launching dozens of strikes on Feb. 2 — retaliation for a drone strike last month that killed three U.S. service members in Jordan — U.S. forces targeted Iranian proxies in Iraq and Syria but did not strike inside Iran.

One Iranian-backed group has given no indication of



Iranian Foreign Ministry  
Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, right, met with Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh on Tuesday in Doha, Qatar.

standing down. The Houthis in Yemen have disrupted global trade by harassing commercial shipping through the Red Sea. They've launched at least 48 attacks since November, according to U.S. defense officials, including missile strikes, attack drones and uncrewed boats laden with explosives. The attacks have prompted shipping companies to avoid the area, adding time and money to operational costs.

Last week, the Houthis

launched two missiles into the Bab al-Mandeb Strait and an anti-ship ballistic missile into the Gulf of Aden. On Thursday, an anti-ship ballistic missile launched from Houthi territory struck the cargo ship M/V Lycavitos, causing minor damage, U.S. military officials said. Beginning Friday, the group launched four missiles into the Red Sea, at least three of which were aimed at the M/T Pollux, a tanker ship, defense officials said in a statement.

U.S. forces have maintained a steady drumbeat of strikes on Houthi targets. On Saturday night, U.S. forces carried out five self-defense strikes against three anti-ship cruise missiles, one unmanned underwater vessel and one unmanned surface vessel, defense officials said.

U.S. diplomats, meanwhile, are pressuring Israel and Hamas to agree on a cease-fire in Gaza. During the negotiated pause in the fighting in November, attacks by Iran-backed groups dropped across the region. To emphasize the new directive, Iran has dispatched regional military leaders and diplomats to meet with local officials and militia members.

"Iran is doing its utmost to prevent the expansion of the war and the escalation from reaching the point of no return," said an Iraqi official with close ties to Iranian-backed forces there.

Days after Kataib Hezbollah claimed responsibility for the attack that killed the three U.S. Army reservists, an Iranian

military commander landed in Baghdad to meet with the group's leaders. The commander pressured it to issue a statement suspending attacks on U.S. targets.

The leaders were unhappy, the Iraqi official said, but acceded to the request of the country that has trained and armed their forces. Still, the exchange might also have demonstrated the limits of Tehran's influence: After the U.S. strikes, the group reversed itself, pledging "painful strikes and broad attacks."

It's been a balancing act for Iran since Oct. 7, when Hamas' surprise attack on Israel near Gaza triggered the war there.

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian praised the groups during a recent visit to Lebanon and promised continued support. He told reporters in Beirut that Israel sought "to drown the United States in the swamp of war in the Middle East."

But in private, Iranian emissaries have adopted a more measured tone.

## Israel to 'finish the job' in Gaza

Netanyahu says offensive isn't over; Cabinet member threatens Rafah invasion.

By WAFSA SHURAF, KAREEM CHEHAYEB and MELANIE LIDMAN • Associated Press

RAFAH, GAZA STRIP - Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday brushed off growing calls to halt the military offensive in Gaza, vowing to "finish the job" as a member of his War Cabinet threatened to invade the southern city of Rafah if remaining Israeli hostages are not freed by the upcoming Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

Israel's government has not publicly discussed a timeline for a ground offensive on Rafah, where more than half the enclave's 2.3 million Palestinians have sought refuge. Retired Gen. Benny Gantz, part of Netanyahu's three-member War Cabinet, represents an influential voice but not the final word on what might lie ahead.

"If by Ramadan our hostages are not home, the fighting will continue to the Rafah area," Gantz told a conference of Jewish American leaders. Ramadan, expected to begin March 10, is historically a tense time in the region.

The United States, Israel's top ally, says it still hopes to broker a cease-fire and hostage-release agreement, and envisions a wider resolution of the war sparked by Hamas' deadly Oct. 7 attack in southern Israel.

The U.S. also says it will veto another draft U.N. resolution calling for a cease-fire, with its U.N. ambassador warning against measures that could jeopardize "the opportunity for an enduring resolution of hostilities."

But Netanyahu opposes Palestinian statehood, which the U.S. calls a key element in a broader vision for normalization of relations between Israel and regional heavy-weight Saudi Arabia. The international community overwhelmingly supports an independent Palestinian state as part of a future peace agreement.

Israeli strikes across Gaza continued, killing at least 18 people overnight into Sunday, according to medics and witnesses. A strike in Rafah killed six people, including a woman and three children, and another killed five in Khan Younis, the main target of the southern Gaza offensive in recent weeks.



MARCO UGARTE • Associated Press

Demonstrators in Mexico City on Sunday called for free and fair elections on June 2 when voters pick a president and legislators.

## Mexican message: People power is greater than people in power

By AMARANTA MARENTES  
Associated Press

MEXICO CITY - Thousands of demonstrators cloaked in pink marched through cities in Mexico and abroad on Sunday in what they called a "march for democracy" targeting the ruling party in advance of the country's June 2 elections.

The demonstrations called by Mexico's opposition parties advocated for free and fair elections in the Latin American nation and

railed against corruption the same day presidential front-runner Claudia Sheinbaum officially registered as a candidate for ruling party Morena.

Sheinbaum is largely seen as a continuation candidate of Mexico's highly popular populist leader Andres Manuel López Obrador. He's adored by many voters who say he bucked the country's elite parties from power in 2018 and represents the working class.

But the 70-year-old presi-

dent has also been accused of making moves that endanger the country's democracy. Last year, the leader slashed funding for the country's electoral agency, the National Electoral Institute, and weakened oversight of campaign spending, something INE's head said could "wind up poisoning democracy itself." The agency's color, pink, has been used as a symbol by demonstrators.

López Obrador has also attacked journalists in hours-long press briefings, has

frequently attacked Mexico's judiciary and claimed judges are part of a conservative conspiracy against his administration.

In Mexico City on Sunday, thousands of people dressed in pink flocked to the city's main plaza roaring, "Get López out." Others carried signs reading "the power of the people is greater than the people in power."

Marches were organized in a hundred cities across the country, and in other cities in the United States and Spain.

## Hungary pressed to OK Sweden's NATO bid

By JUSTIN SPIKE  
Associated Press

BUDAPEST, HUNGARY - A bipartisan delegation of U.S. senators made an official visit to Hungary's capital Sunday and called on the government to immediately approve Sweden's request to join NATO.

Hungary is the only one of NATO's 31 existing members not to have ratified Sweden's bid. The government faces mounting pressure to act after delaying the move for more than 18 months. Admitting a new country requires unanimous approval.

The visiting senators announced they would submit a joint resolution to Congress condemning alleged democratic backsliding in Hungary and urging the government of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán to lift its block on Sweden's trans-Atlantic integration. "With accession, Hungary and your



DENES ERDOS • Associated Press

prime minister will be doing a great service to freedom-loving nations worldwide," Sen. Thom Tillis, R-N.C., said at a news conference at the U.S. Embassy in Budapest.

The resolution was authored by Tillis and Sen. Jeanne Shaheen, D-N.H. Joining them was Sen. Chris Murphy, D-Conn.

On Sunday, Shaheen said

it was "disappointing" that no members of the Hungarian government had accepted invitations to meet the delegation, but that she was "hopeful and optimistic" that Sweden's accession would be submitted for ratification on Feb. 26 when Hungarian lawmakers reconvene.

Earlier, Sen. Ben Cardin, D-Md., and chair of the Sen-

ate Foreign Relations Committee, raised the prospect of imposing sanctions on Hungary, calling Orbán "the least reliable member of NATO."

In the resolution, the senators note "the important role Hungary can have in European and trans-Atlantic security," but point out its failure to keep earlier promises not to be the last NATO ally to sign off on Sweden's membership.

Hungary, the resolution says, "has not joined all other NATO member states in approving the accession of Sweden to NATO, failing to fulfill a commitment not to be last to approve such accession and jeopardizing trans-Atlantic security at a key moment for peace and stability in Europe."

Orbán, in a state of the nation speech in Budapest on Saturday, indicated that Hungary's legislature might soon relent.

## Texas to build base near border

Site in Eagle Pass is near where state leaders have been quarreling with feds.

By BEN BRASCH  
Washington Post

Flanked by armed National Guard members, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott announced on Friday plans to build a base housing up to 1,800 troops in Eagle Pass, close to the riverfront area where state leaders have been at loggerheads with the Biden administration over immigration enforcement.

The base, planned to house an initial 300 troops by April, is the latest effort by Abbott to curb border crossings into Texas under a mission dubbed Operation Lone Star that he began less than two months after President Biden was inaugurated. Plans for the base come as the country gears up for a presidential election and reckons with the hundreds of thousands of migrants who have illegally crossed the southern border in recent months.

The base "will amass a large army at a very strategic area. It will increase the speed and flexibility of the Texas National Guard to be able to respond to crossings," Abbott said Friday during a news conference in Eagle Pass. "This will organize substantial forces also to expand the razor-wire barriers that are going up."

The 80-acre "forward operating base" — a phrase the U.S. military used to label many of its camps dotting Iraq and Afghanistan — will sit near the Rio Grande. It will also include command posts, weapons storage rooms, vehicle maintenance bays and a helicopter pad, according to Maj. Gen. Thomas Suelzer, the head of the Texas Military Department.

Forward Operating Base Eagle, as Abbott called it, will reduce the pricey hotel stays and hourlong commutes some troops have been making each way to fulfill their border duties, the governor said.

A contract, awarded Feb. 9 to the New Braunfels, Texas, company Team Housing Solutions, lists a completion date of Sept. 7 and a price of \$131 million for the construction of the base, the military newspaper Stars and Stripes reported.

The base will be about 6 miles south of Shelby Park — the battleground between Texas and the federal government that has been the site of thousands of unauthorized border crossings from Mexico.

## TRAGEDY IN BURNSVILLE



ELIZABETH FLORES • liz.flores@startribune.com

Investigators converged Sunday on this Burnsville home where a gunman killed three and then himself. "We're hurting," Police Chief Tanya Schwartz said at an afternoon news conference.

# 'Two down! Officer down!'

## ◀ SHOOTING from A1

He declined to identify the gunman.

At least one of the officers was inside the house, Evans said, and it was not clear where the others were. Shots were fired from the upper and main levels of the home.

Evans confirmed that an armored vehicle — now with a bullet-riddled windshield — took part in the operation. "Which was why it was shot," he said.

Evans said the suspect was dead by 8 a.m., but the others inside the house were unharmed. Law enforcement sources confirmed that the suspect killed himself.

The BCA was investigating, and Evans said the Medical Examiner's Office will release the suspect's cause of death.

Elmstrand was a five-year veteran of the Police Department, who served on its mobile command staff, peer team, honor guard and field training unit. He joined the department as a community service officer in 2017 and was promoted to an officer two years later.

Ruge joined the force in April 2020 and was a member of the crisis negotiations team. Finseth had been a Burnsville firefighter and paramedic since February 2019.

By noon Sunday, several hundred police officers gathered outside HCMC in downtown Minneapolis, where the three dead were taken. They stood vigil before the bodies — draped in American flags — were taken in a procession to the Medical Examiner's Office in Minnetonka.

According to emergency dispatch audio, when police determined just after 4:30 a.m. that several firearms were in the home, an officer on scene radioed the suspect's first name and physical description.

"He's dangerous. ... Currently negotiating with him upstairs still," the officer said. "He's refusing to come out."

As negotiations continued, an officer called in: "It seems the children are getting a little antsy and started moving around and are making more noise in the house."

At 5:26 a.m. came the call: "Two down! Officer down!"

Barely a minute later, an officer radioed, "More shots." Then another reported: "Rifle fire from the house. Anybody got eyes on?"

At 6:45 a.m., an officer radioed: "Shots fired from inside. ... I don't know where they came from."

"We have a caller calling from inside saying the dad is down," a dispatcher told officers at 6:55 a.m. "He is not breathing. He is in the bedroom. ... He just shot himself in the head."

Randy and Alicia McCullum, who live two houses from the scene, said they awoke to a gunshot at 5:12 a.m., followed by three more. They went to their window and saw police officers and a SWAT vehicle with an extended battering ram-type arm.

Randy McCullum said he soon heard glass crashing and a barrage of gunfire. Flash grenades exploded in the driveway. The couple and their two teenage children huddled in a bathroom and prayed.

Around 7 a.m., as daylight emerged, they saw at least seven people — mostly children — leaving the house.

"Our hearts go out to them," Randy McCullum said, touching his hands to his heart. "We are just so glad the mom and the kids are safe."

The McCullums met the family a year ago and gave the man tickets to the Minnesota State Fair.

"They seem like really good kids," Alicia McCullum said. "The mom seemed really good with the kids."

Milo and Lynn Hartman, who live three houses away, said they heard pounding and "a lot of gunfire." They then saw a rescue vehicle drive from the scene to an ambulance waiting near their home. Three people appeared unconscious as they were transferred into the ambulance, they said.

"We've lived here 39 years and never had any shootings like this," Milo Hartman said. "My son says it's time to move, but this happens everywhere. The world is crazy. Everyone has guns, way too many guns."

Daniel Dix, who lives with his wife, Jennifer, two blocks away in Ville Du Parc, said



JEFF WHEELER • jeff.wheeler@startribune.com

Dozens of police cars lined up Sunday behind the emergency vehicle carrying the bodies of slain Burnsville officers Paul Elmstrand and Matthew Ruge, and paramedic Adam Finseth.

they were notified by Dakota County at 5:50 a.m. and told to shelter in place. The order was lifted shortly before 11 a.m., and police soon began cordoning off the area with yellow crime scene tape.

It was the ninth time in barely 10 months that law enforcement officers have been killed or wounded by gunfire in Minnesota or an adjoining state.

At dusk, several hundred people gathered for a vigil at Burnsville City Hall. They crowded around police cars and an ambulance strewn with flowers as the city manager and a police chaplain spoke about the need to support one another.

Dozens of police from across the metro and Minnesota joined the mourners.

A few families brought candles, but the vigil was mostly lit by the flickering blue and red lights atop the squad cars blocking the parking lot where mourners stood.

Gov. Tim Walz said the state stands ready to assist the three slain men's families.

"That's just not today and tomorrow, it's for many years to come, and I think, for Minnesotans to recognize families that are shattered by something like this forever."

The governor said the state Department of Public Safety is coordinating with local police to investigate the shootings. He is ordering flags to be flown at half-staff beginning Monday.

"Our police officers and our fire paramedics, they come to work every day, they do it willingly, they know that they might have to give up their life for their partners, for someone else," said Schwartz, the Burnsville police chief. "They know they have to give up their life sometime, and they do it anyways."

"And you cannot understand it if you're not in our profession. Every day we want them to go home to their families. Every day we pray that they go home to their families. And today that's not happening."

Greta Kaul • 612-673-4451

Dee DePass • 612-673-7725

Liz Sawyer • 612-673-4648

Paul Walsh • 612-673-4482

Josie Albertson-Grove • 612-673-4391

## TRAGEDY IN BURNSVILLE

## ‘We lost some heroes today’

◀ **REACTIONS** from Al shot in the shoulder pursuing a suspect last August, stood in the front row. Many officers, including O’Hara, placed black mourning bands over their police badges.

“Our prayers go out to [Burnsville] Chief Tanya Schwartz, all the police and their families affected by this

horror,” O’Hara told the Star Tribune shortly before a large procession began.

Squad cars from every corner of the Twin Cities escorted the slain officers’ motorcade. Along the way, civilians and police gathered on street corners and interstate overpasses, often placing their hands over their heart, as the trail of blink-

ing blue and red lights inched toward the morgue.

The on-duty killings shook the south metro neighborhood and larger law enforcement community, which has endured nine such shootings of sworn personnel in the region in the past 10 months. Unsure how to help, area residents dropped off homemade

hot dishes at the Burnsville police headquarters Sunday morning.

“This is an extremely difficult day for our Police Department and Fire Department,” said Burnsville City Council Member Cara Schulz, who was serving as acting mayor Sunday morning. “As a community we are standing with them in

solidarity, and we show our gratitude for their unwavering dedication and willingness to sacrifice for us.”

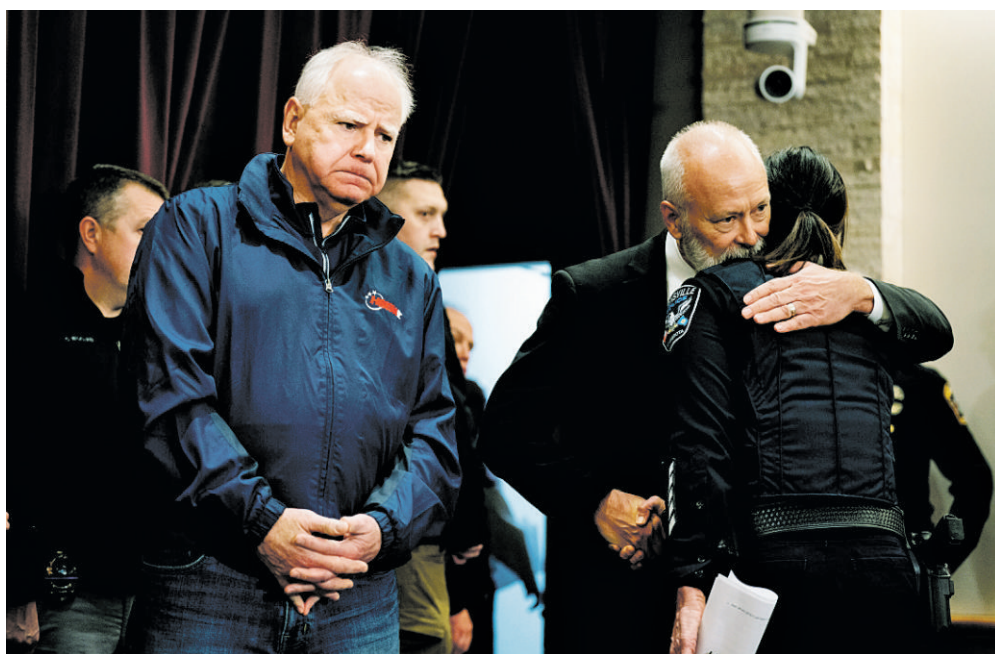
“We lost some heroes today, and we’re all feeling it,” fellow City Council Member Dan Kealey added.

Liz Sawyer • 612-673-4648

Josie Albertson-Grove • 612-673-4391

“We show our gratitude for their unwavering dedication and willingness to sacrifice.”

Burnsville City Council Member Cara Schulz



Photos by ANGELINA KATSANIS and JEFF WHEELER • Star Tribune staff

Top photo, mourners held a “blue lives matter” flag at a vigil Sunday for the two police officers and paramedic killed that morning. After a news conference, bottom left, Gov. Tim Walz joined Bob Jacobson, Minnesota public safety commissioner, who hugged Burnsville Police Chief Tanya Schwartz. At right, a Minneapolis officer saluted the passing procession of hundreds of police cars.

## Slain police officers, medic remembered

◀ **OFFICERS** from Al unwavering support for his fellow team members,” Bresnahan wrote. “Adam’s impact on our department and community will be remembered, and his selfless service inspires us all.”

Sgt. Adam Medicott was taken to a hospital with injuries and is expected to survive, according to the city.

“This is the toughest day that the city of Burnsville and our public safety family has ever experienced. My heart and prayers go out to the families who lost a loved one in the line of duty today,” Burnsville Fire Chief BJ Jungmann said at the news conference.

Gov. Tim Walz ordered that flags be flown at half-staff Monday to honor the victims.

Walz, who was at the news conference, asked Minnesotans to pause and reflect on the families who will be forever affected by Sunday’s events

when they see flags half-staff.

“They’re moms and dads, brothers and sisters, sons and daughters,” Walz said of first responders. “They’re the world to a lot of people, and they go out and do the job to provide us safety.”

In a statement, Edward Kelly, the general president of the International Association of Fire Fighters, said Sunday’s tragedy in Minnesota and others this week — including an exploded truck that injured nearly a dozen firefighters in Los Angeles — are a reminder that there are no routine calls for first responders.

“No matter who needs help or why, we are coming,” Kelly said. “My thoughts and prayers are with those who died, those recovering, and the brave men and women who are responding to a cry for help right now — whatever that call may be.”

Greta Kaul • 612-673-4451

## A deadly year for law enforcement

By PAUL WALSH • paul.walsh@startribune.com

Sunday’s fatal shooting of two Burnsville police officers and a medic marks the ninth time in barely 10 months that law enforcement officers have been killed or wounded by gunfire in or near Minnesota.

**Dec. 7, 2023**

In St. Paul, Brandon Daleshaun Keys, 24, of Maplewood died in an exchange of gunfire with a police officer. The officer, Michael Tschida, was shot in the leg.

**Oct. 12, 2023**

In Glenwood Township near Princeton, Minn., five officers with a search warrant were shot during an exchange of gunfire with a man who was inside his home with numerous guns. The suspect, 64-year-old Karl Thomas Holmberg, was wounded before his apprehension and was charged with six counts each of attempted murder and first-degree assault of a police officer.

**Sept. 13, 2023**

In Algona, Iowa, police officer Kevin Cram was fatally shot while trying to arrest Kyle L. Ricke, 43, of Fargo over an active warrant for harassment. About four hours later, Ricke

was apprehended about 110 miles to the north in Sleepy Eye, Minn.

**Aug. 11, 2023**

A Minneapolis police officer was shot and wounded by automatic gunfire while pursuing a robbery suspect in an unmarked car on the North Side. Four people were arrested that night.

**July 14, 2023**

In Fargo, officer Jake Wallin, 23, was killed and two fellow officers and a civilian were wounded by gunfire from Mohamad Barakat, 37, of Fargo. A fourth officer shot and killed Barakat.

**May 6, 2023**

In western Wisconsin, St. Croix County sheriff’s deputy Kaitie Leising, 29, was fatally shot just outside of Glenwood. Leising was answering a call about a drunken driver stuck in a ditch. The suspect, Jeremiah D. Johnson, 34, of Shakopee, was found dead nearby with

a gun close to his body.

**April 15, 2023**

In western Minnesota, Pope County sheriff’s deputy Joshua Owen was killed on his 44th birthday while responding to a domestic dispute call. Two other officers were wounded. The suspected shooter, Bryan Nygard, 34, of Cyrus, Minn., died when officers returned fire.

**April 8, 2023**

In western Wisconsin, two police officers were shot and killed in Barron County during a traffic stop in Cameron: Emily Breidenbach, 32, of the Chetek Police Department, and Hunter Scheel, 23, of the Cameron Police Department. The suspect, Glenn Douglas Perry, 50, of New Auburn, Wis., died in an exchange of gunfire.

Paul Walsh • 612-673-4482

## Scores mourn a young life lost

Boy, 4, was among four children who died when a fire swept through St. Paul home.

By KYELAND JACKSON and JOSIE ALBERTSON-GROVE  
Star Tribune staff

Pa Cheng Vang always seemed happy in pictures with his family. Whether it was Christmas, Halloween or a visit to the aquarium, Vang's smile beamed in photos with his wife and six children. But Vang's face was somber Saturday as he and hundreds of others said goodbye to Muaj Tshav Ntuj, Pa Cheng's 4-year-old son who died in a fire last month that killed three other children and hospitalized the rest of Vang's family.

More than 200 people from across the country attended the preschooler's weekend-long service at the Legacy

Funeral Home in St. Paul. White flowers and blue ribbons filled the chapel. Pictures of Muaj playing with siblings and posing with family surrounded a portrait of him smiling in orange overalls.

Many stopped to gaze at the pictures. Some paused over Muaj's casket, holding each other in support. All the while, a man sang the Taw Kev prayer meant to help guide the boy's spirit to the afterlife. His voice bounced from the walls as nearby more than a dozen family members cooked food for those who had traveled from as far as California for the funeral.

Pa Cheng greeted visitors, thanking and embracing them, See **VANG** on A7 ▶



RICHARD TSONG-TAATARI • richard.tsong-taatarii@startribune.com  
Father Pa Cheng Vang, second from left, joined other mourners at weekend services for his 4-year-old son, Muaj Tshav Ntuj Vang, who died after a house fire last month in St. Paul.

## Free tips for more transit options

THE DRIVE  
TIM HARLOW

Move Minneapolis knows the car is still king for many, but the nonprofit transportation management organization is piloting one-on-one conversations to make it easier and less threatening for people considering going multimodal who don't know where to start.

Called Customized Consultations, the 15-minute virtual or phone sessions are designed to help the uninitiated become comfortable with making sustainable trips by taking the bus, carpool, bike, scooter — or hoofing it.

"We don't imply that nobody should ever use a car to get anywhere," said outreach specialist Catherine Windyk. "Sometimes they need to drive, and alone. We want people to know their options and what would work best for them."

The free service is available to anyone who lives or works in downtown Minneapolis. It also can be used by people in the suburbs who need to come downtown for appointments, want to take in a show, see the Timberwolves or for any other reason. There has to be a connection to downtown, Windyk said.

In the webinar "How to Plan a Multimodal Trip in the Twin Cities" Move Minneapolis held last week, Windyk, with help from four panelists who get around mostly without a car, highlighted several tools for multimodal trip planning.

Among them is Google Maps. Many use the app for driving directions, but it's loaded with features for transit users to plan trips by bus or train. Cyclists can compare suggested routes and avoid things like hills or click on the "layer" tab to find bike lanes, trails or bicycle-friendly streets.

Windyk drew attention to the Metro Transit website, the popular Transit app and the lesser-known Pointz app for bicyclists.

"We live in a top-10 biking city, but people don't know where to go," Windyk said.

The phone and virtual consultations can go further into the specific needs of potential transit users, Windyk said, and help address questions about costs and schedules, she said.

"There are choices, and it does not have to be one or the other," Windyk said. "Be excited to try things, and find joy in the commute. It does not have to be a boring thing to ruin the day."

In the coming months, Move Minneapolis plans additional webinars and will share its message during events such as Bike Week in May, Carfree MSP in September and during this fall's Minneapolis Transportation Summit.

### Blue Line extension

Wonder what's happening with the planned Blue Line extension from downtown Minneapolis to Brooklyn Park?

Project staff will host an online question-and-answer session on route and station design, schedule and anti-displacement efforts at 5:30 p.m. Feb. 28. An in-person meeting will be from 5-7 p.m. on March 7 at the Crystal Community Center, 4800 N. Douglas Drive.

Follow news about traffic and commuting at The Drive on startribune.com. Got traffic or transportation questions, or story ideas? Email [drive@startribune.com](mailto:drive@startribune.com), tweet @sribdrive or call Tim Harlow at 612-673-7768.



ANGELINA KATSANIS • angelina.katsanis@startribune.com

## Up to the challenge

Team With No Name member Paul Gan celebrated a successful run during practice rounds at the 2024 High Tech Kids FIRST Lego League Challenge on Sunday at Roy Wilkins Auditorium in St. Paul. Seventy teams with their colorfully decorated Lego robots came from across Minnesota to compete in the state championship. The robots performed a variety of challenges and were scored on how many tasks were completed as well as design and aesthetics.

## Tribal colleges receive \$5 million in science grants

Native schools plan to invest in wide variety of classes, broaden options.

By JACK O'CONNOR  
Special to the Star Tribune

Two Minnesota tribal colleges recently won millions in grant money from the National Science Foundation to offer more opportunities for Indigenous students to study sciences.

Red Lake Nation College and White Earth Tribal and Community College, both two-year colleges, will each receive \$2.5 million over five years. Officials at Red Lake plan to invest in training students in health and behavioral sciences, while White Earth will create an associate degree in natural sciences

covering biology, chemistry and physics.

Allen Derks, a science faculty member from White Earth Tribal and Community College, said the funding will have an impact on the Indigenous community, setting students up with the education to become nurses, doctors and environmental scientists.

"It'll give a new, accessible pathway for our tribal community members to get training that they can then use to get meaningful jobs and to give back to the community, especially within our tribal service organizations," Derks said.

Red Lake Nation College President Dan King, who is hereditary chief of the Red Lake Nation, said it is important that Indigenous people receive the education and training needed to thrive in

higher education and beyond so they can make a positive impact in their future careers.

"There's really a great under representation of Natives in social services really all throughout the state," King said. "The idea is that if you have more Natives educated and trained, then they'll be there to serve the cultural sensitivity and the values in the [social services] system."

Indigenous students can use the two-year tribal college education to springboard into four-year universities or a future career, King said.

U.S. Sens. Tina Smith and Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn., announced the grants in a joint statement Wednesday.

"This funding will provide accessible pathways for Native students to pursue higher education and serve their com-

munities, all while integrating Tribal cultural heritage and roots into their curriculum," said Smith, a member of the Senate Indian Affairs and Education Committees.

White Earth Tribal and Community College is in Mahanomen, Minn. Red Lake Nation College has a campus in Red Lake, Minn., and plans to open another in Minneapolis this year.

National Science Foundation documents said funding for Red Lake Nation College would fill a community need and workforce opportunity and that funding for White Earth Tribal and Community College supports studies in areas that may be culturally significant to the community.

Both colleges factor traditional Indigenous culture and knowledge into their

curriculum.

Ojibwe culture and language are prioritized at Red Lake Nation College, with students having to complete two Ojibwe language classes to graduate, according to King.

Derks said students' research projects for the new associate degree at White Earth will integrate Indigenous environmental knowledge to study topics such as soil health and water quality.

"We're going to be incorporating lots of aspects of traditional ecological knowledge," Derks said. "We'll be addressing a lot of topics that are very important, such as food sovereignty and environmental health."

Jack O'Connor is a University of Minnesota student reporter on assignment for the Star Tribune.

# REMEMBERING

## PLACE A NOTICE

612-673-4130 or 1-800-927-9133  
**Email to:**  
 paidobits@startribune.com  
**Information to include:**  
 Billing Name, Address, Phone, Preferred publication dates, Name and phone number of funeral home, crematorium, or bequest program to verify death prior to publication. Obituary wording and photos.

## Marstad, Steven



age 81, of Eagan passed away at his home on February 17, 2024. Survived by his wife, Gail, daughters, Betsy Marstad, Nancy (Joe) Hedlund and Laura (Lance) Hartmann, and his five grandchildren. Funeral services will be at 11am on Thursday February 22nd at Christ Lutheran Church, Eagan, MN. Visitation will be 2 hours prior to the service. Private burial in Starbuck, MN. Condolences:  
 www.whitefuneralhomes.com

## Sherman, Estelle "Estie" Serene

age 91 of St. Louis Park, formerly of Sioux City, IA passed away Feb 17, 2024. Survived by husband of 70 years James, children Jeffrey, David (Julie), Shruga (Michal), 18 grandchildren and spouses, 11 great grandchildren, countless loving nieces, nephews and friends. Funeral 2:00 pm Monday Feb 19 at Adath Jeshurun Congregation followed by burial at Adath Yeshurun Cemetery. Shiva at 7:00 pm Mon and Tues at Adath, and 7:00 PM Wed at Knollwood Place Apts.  
 www.Washburn-McReavy.com  
 Edina Chapel 952-920-3996

## Smith, Clifford C.

age 70 of New Brighton, passed away on February 16th, 2024. Funeral service will be held Wednesday, February 21st at 11 AM at the Washburn-McReavy Hopkins Chapel.  
 www.Washburn-McReavy.com  
 Strobeck Johnson 952-938-9020

## Swanson, Mark Richard

Age 68, of Hopkins, passed away February 13, 2024. Survived by significant other, Kitty Reinke; brother, Craig; and nephew, Benjamin. Services at Cross of Glory Baptist Church, 11am on February 24, 2024. Mark enjoyed weekly visits with the Hopkins Historical Society, his daily coffee at Dunn Bros., and with a passion for spherical geometry.

## Helpful Telephone Numbers

Social Security Admin.  
 1-800-772-1213  
 Service available from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. on business days. Call to provide notification of death or to inquire about survivor benefits.  
 U.S. Dept. Of Veterans Affairs (VA)  
 1-800-827-1000  
 Call for survivor benefits, burial benefits or to provide notification of death.  
 United Way 2-1-1  
 Metro: 2-1-1  
 or (651) 291-0211  
 Free, confidential, multilingual information is offered 24 hours every day. United Way 2-1-1 is a unique community information and referral service. Call if you need to know where to turn for help.

**IN MEMORIAMs**  
 are a personal message meant to honor & remember a loved one that has passed.

**PLACE A NOTICE**  
 612-673-4130 or 1-800-927-9133  
 Email to:  
 paidobits@startribune.com

## FUNERAL HOMES



Funeral Chapels & Cremation Services  
 16 Convenient Chapels  
 For 24-hour assistance call  
 612-377-2203  
 washburn-mcreavy.com

## MORRIS NILSEN

6527 Portland Ave, Richfield, 612-869-3226  
 www.morrisnilsen.com

## ALWAYS REMEMBERING

Our enhanced **online obituary**. Featuring expanded storytelling and a photo gallery. Celebrate the whole story of a loved one that will live on for future generations.

Star Tribune offers many ways to remember their legacy, call 612-673-4130.



Create a lasting tribute of your loved one.

SHARE more about their amazing life with our enhanced online obituary,  
**ALWAYS REMEMBERING**

Featuring expanded storytelling and a photo gallery, celebrate the whole story of a loved one that will live on for future generations.

Call 612-673-4130 and let us assist you.

StarTribune.com/always



# New Prague to get new post office

Residents say the current building is cramped and lacks sufficient parking.

By ERIN ADLER  
 erin.adler@startribune.com

During the past 15 years, Dennis Dvorak has written six editorials in the New Prague Times about the city's need for an improved post office, citing the current building's cramped conditions, inconvenient drop-off mailbox location and lack of parking, especially for people with disabilities.

"I've just taken this as my issue," he said, adding that the building has also closed several times in that period to deal with asbestos. "We deserve better."

This week, there was good news for Dvorak and others — including U.S. Rep. Angie

Craig — who have been pushing for a new post office in the small city south of the Twin Cities. The U.S. Postal Service said it will either build a new post office on another New Prague site or look for an existing building that's more suitable.

Officials are seeking a building within 2 miles that has 5,200 square feet and parking for at least 24 people. They're taking comments on the proposed move for 45 days, ending April 14.

"I can't tell you what a huge development this is for the city of New Prague," said Craig, who has worked to bring attention to the building's deficiencies since 2019.

Craig said she held a listening session in 2022 in New Prague where officials and residents told her about the post office's problems, adding that "this location has been

just saddled and riddled with issues."

The post office has no parking lot for the public or for people with disabilities. There's street parking, but the spots designated "handicapped" are down the street. The drop-off mailbox is in an actual parking spot — and drivers have to reach across the passenger side of their vehicle to put mail in the mailbox.

The project's estimated completion date is spring 2026, Craig said, and local residents will receive a postcard about the USPS' plans.

Craig has also advocated for the USPS to improve mail service amid "persistent mail delays" across the south metro. In January, the inspection arm of the USPS said it will investigate delivery delays and other problems across the entire Minnesota

and North Dakota postal district.

"I'm just overly excited," said New Prague Mayor Duane Jirik. "It's been a 2½-year process."

The post office has been in its current location for more than 100 years, Jirik said. It's leased from an out-of-state company called American Postal Infrastructure.

Jirik said a new facility will probably have to be built because finding a suitable building in town is unlikely. "I don't think we have something big enough for them," he said.

Scott County Commissioner Barb Weckman Brekke said the post office announcement is a testament to the collaboration and perseverance of Craig, Jirik and residents.

Erin Adler • 612-673-1781

# What's open, closed on Presidents' Day

Meters at U, Mpls. parks enforced unless noted.

By PATRICIA GRICE  
 pat.grice@startribune.com

Here is a list of what's open and closed on the Presidents' Day holiday:

**Post offices:** Closed. No regular mail service.

**Banks:** All traditional

and any in-store branches of Bremer Bank, Huntington Bank, Wells Fargo and U.S. Bank will be closed.

**Groceries:** Major supermarkets will be open. Call for hours.

**Malls:** Many stores will be open. Call for hours.

**Masstransit:** Metro Transit buses and Metro Blue, Green and Red lines will follow regu-

lar schedules. For route information, call 612-373-3333 or go to metrotransit.org.

Also following regular schedules are Minnesota Valley Transit Authority, Maple Grove Transit, Plymouth Metrolink and SouthWest Transit. Northstar will have service.

**Parking meters:** Not enforced in Minneapolis and St.

Paul. The University of Minnesota will enforce meters unless noted on the meter. Minneapolis parks will enforce meters unless noted on meter.

**Libraries:** Libraries will be closed.

**Schools:** Many public schools will be closed.

**Public agencies:** Local, state and federal offices will be closed.

# 'You harm my health when we ride together'

Metro Transit uses kids' voices in new campaign to root out smoking.

By TIM HARLOW  
 tim.harlow@startribune.com

The voices of children are pleading with riders on light-rail trains and platforms in the Twin Cities to "love your lungs," just one of a series of anti-smoking messages recorded by the kids of Metro Transit employees meant to discourage lighting up on the Blue and Green lines.

"Please don't smoke at the station or on the train. You harm my health when we ride together. Thank you," says part of one of the announcements that began playing on platforms and trains this week.

Smoking on light-rail trains has drawn more customer complaints than any of the bad behavior that has plagued the Blue and Green lines in recent years, General Manager Lesley Kandaras said.

"We were looking to communicate our expectations to riders in a new way," Kandaras said, noting that standard recorded announcements using a monotonous voice



Star Tribune

A sign aboard a light-rail train notes that smoking is among the activities prohibited on Metro Transit's Green Line.

can easily blend into the background. "It is intended to get attention, but also to humanize the impact of this really inconsiderate act of smoking in an enclosed transit vehicle."

Some riders who have heard the young voices come over the intercom have taken to social media to describe the effect as "jarring," "startling," "annoying" and "loud." But that doesn't mean they don't want it to work.

"It definitely made me think I was in a horror movie for a minute the first time I heard the disembodied voice of a small child echo through the train," wrote a user on the

social network Reddit. "No idea if it will make any kind of difference, and if it does that would be great."

Kandaras said the recordings alone won't solve the problem, but that it's meant as an innovative attempt at solving a persistent problem.

Besides bringing the anti-smoking messages to social media platforms in the coming weeks, Kandaras said Metro Transit continues to deploy police officers and community service officers to remind people not to smoke on trains or at platforms and who will respond when they find that behavior. By the end of the month, more agents from the

agency's Transit Rider Investment Program will also be on the case, too, she said.

Metro Transit recently revised its code of conduct and placed signs at bus stops and rail platforms setting rules and expectations for users of the state's largest transit system. Future announcements may focus on littering, vandalism, playing loud music and other unsavory behaviors.

"We are not going to stop with smoking," Kandaras said.

In conjunction with the announcements, Metro Transit recently kicked off an evolving "Take Pride in Your Ride" campaign. It begins with "The Great Week in Transit," which will run Monday through Friday. Hundreds of Metro Transit employees will be riding trains and buses to mingle with passengers and share information about the revised code of conduct.

Executives such as Kandaras will be out and about as well.

"We want everyone to have a comfortable and safe experience riding with us," Kandaras said. "We need all riders respecting each other on the system."

Tim Harlow • 612-673-7768

# Mourners came from as far as California

◀ VANG from A6

and sometimes rocked back and forth near his son's casket at the front of the chapel.

St. Paul Mayor Melvin Carter was among the mourners who embraced Pa Cheng during the second day of services.

"Even in the midst of such horror, even in the midst of such sadness as brings us into the room today, I also feel a sense of blessing to be in a space with people like all of you," Carter said, "who know that now is a time for community to be community."

Carter turned to face a photo of Muaj, looking at the little boy's delighted face as he stood on a lawn in orange snow pants. "Young baby, God rest your soul," Carter said. "We love you, and we miss you."

St. Paul Fire Chief Butch Inks said the entire fire department will carry the weight of the loss of the four children but said their memory will bring light to those who loved them.

"Even though life is short, it is not in any way insignificant, because significance isn't



RICHARD TSONG-TAATARI • richard.tsong-taatarii@startribune.com

Mourners attending weekend services paused at the photo of a smiling Muaj Tshav Ntj Vang, 4, in his orange snow pants. The boy died in a fire at the family's home in St. Paul last month.

measured in years," Inks said.

State Sen. Foung Hawj mourned the loss of potential. The four children could have become firefighters themselves, he said, or teachers or leaders in their communities. "The possibility is limitless," he said.

The losses are anguishing, Hawj said, but the memory of the children brought people

together. "They brought our community together of all race and creed, to care, comfort and hope that incidents like this can be prevented in the future," Hawj said.

"This entire community grieves with you," state Sen. Susan Pha said.

On Monday, people chosen by the family will hold ceremonial rods and serve as final

guides for Muaj's journey to the afterlife. Family say that his ancestors, as well as his 5-year-old sisters and 1-year-old brother, will join him.

Funeral services for the other three children are scheduled in the weeks to come.

Kyeland Jackson • 612-673-4750  
 Twitter: @KyelandJ

# Editorials

Editorials represent the opinions of the Star Tribune Editorial Board, which operates independently and is not involved in setting newsroom policies or in reporting or editing articles in other sections of the newspaper or [startribune.com](http://startribune.com). To learn about the Editorial Board or about how the opinion pages are produced, see [startribune.com/opinion](http://startribune.com/opinion).

★ **StarTribune**

STEVE GROVE, CEO and Publisher  
SCOTT GILLESPIE, Editor, Editorial Pages

## More pain for those who protect, serve

A beautiful winter morning in the Twin Cities — a day made for church-going, sledding with kids and quiet walks in the bright sun — was marred before it even could begin when tragedy struck in Burnsville.

Two of the city's police officers, Paul Elmstrand and Matthew Ruge, and a firefighter/paramedic, Adam Finseth, were shot and killed Sunday after they answered a domestic abuse call. Police Sgt. Adam Medicott also was shot and was hospitalized. The suspected shooter died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound, the Star Tribune reported.

A standoff in Burnsville takes the lives of two police officers and a paramedic.

The investigation was beginning as this editorial was being written. In the days ahead we'll learn more about the horror that unfolded in a residential neighborhood of the typically quiet south metro suburb.

And we'll learn more about some of the lives forever changed — those of the shattered families and friends of the victims and of the shooter. Just don't expect it to ever make sense.

Don't expect to be able to fully answer the question that will be asked again and again on behalf of those who died: Why?

There are others still asking that question in the wake of the eight other incidents over the past 10 months in which law enforcement officers have been killed or wounded by gunfire within or just beyond Minnesota's borders.

Today we have new images from the ninth. Police officers and public officials from around the metro standing vigil as the bodies of the slain officers and medical responder were transported from Hennepin County Medical Center in downtown Minneapolis to the medical examiner's office in Minnetonka.

A police sergeant leaving HCMC with an American flag under his arm; a SWAT vehicle with its windshield shattered by bullets — images that remind us of what can happen to those brave enough to run into danger to help others.

A Jan. 23 Star Tribune editorial recounted a Minneapolis incident in which police arrested a man who had been holding a grandmother and child at gunpoint. Charges alleged that the suspect shot in the direction of five officers as they went up a staircase in tactical formation, yet they did not return fire.

Minneapolis Police Chief Brian O'Hara thanked the officers involved in the arrest for their courage and "extreme restraint" and expressed gratitude "that this situation did not turn out much more dangerous and even deadly than it was."

Just a few weeks later, on Sunday at HCMC, O'Hara joined the tribute for those killed in Burnsville. "Our prayers go out to Chief Tanya Schwartz, all the police and their families affected by this horror," he told the Star Tribune.

As the state lowers its flags to half staff on Monday, we hope Minnesotans will take time to reflect on the lives lost in the line of duty on Sunday. And, for those so moved, to say a prayer.

As police officers and first responders across the state return to work during what is sure to be an especially challenging week of mourning, may they find strength in knowing that their fellow citizens are thankful for all that they do to serve, protect and save lives.

**The investigation is beginning, and we'll learn more. Just don't expect it to ever make sense. Don't expect to be able to fully answer the question that will be asked again and again on behalf of those who died: Why?**



ELIZABETH FLORES • [liz.flores@startribune.com](mailto:liz.flores@startribune.com)

Police investigate the scene where two police officers and a fire department medic were shot and killed in Burnsville on Sunday.

# Readers Write



DAWN VILLELLA • Associated Press

A gray wolf at a science center in Forest Lake.

## WOLVES

### A wolf-bites-deer story

A short video of a healthy wolf successfully chasing down a deer in the forests of St. Louis County wouldn't normally be newsworthy ("Video of wolf killing deer becomes political fodder," Feb. 14). It's disturbing to me, however, that some deer hunters and politicians keep complaining about this natural predator-prey process.

It seems that Minnesota's anti-wolf contingent, led by U.S. Rep. Pete Stauber, is looking for any excuse to demonize wolves. To be sure, in some parts of the state hunters killed fewer deer. But that's not unexpected because of last winter's brutal conditions, which led to deer dying off.

In fact, there are troves of scientific evidence showing that wolves are beneficial to deer populations. They filter out sicker and weaker deer and improve the strength of herds. Most reasonable Minnesotans know this, so it's baffling why some of our elected officials seem so determined to strip wolves of the strong and effective federal protections they need.

We've seen what happens when these federal protections are removed. In 2021, Wisconsin allowed hunters to slaughter more than 200 wolves in just three days. While I hope my neighbors here in Minnesota wouldn't let that happen, it's worth remembering what's at stake if we fail to protect our cherished and awe-inspiring wolves.

LORI ANDRESEN, Duluth

...

Perhaps someone should tell Rep. Stauber that the wolf in that video was probably very hungry, so it went after a deer, one of its main food sources, and in no way threatened the logger standing there filming it.

Wolves can't buy chuck roasts at grocery stores. They hunt and kill for food. The rest of the article indicates the wolf population in Minnesota has remained stable for the last 30 years. The rest of the country "poisoned, shot and trapped" them out of existence by the early 1900s.

MARY BOWMAN, Minnetonka

## BIDEN'S AGE

### You don't need a degree to see this

A Feb. 14 letter "The special counsel is not a doctor" takes the Robert Hur report to task for including comments regarding President Joe Biden's mental fitness because Hur is not a "medical professional." That opinion put me in mind of a famous song lyric from our own Bob Dylan: "You don't need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows." In context, it emphasizes the point that there are some facts that one needs no special training or expertise to state with complete confidence.

JOHN CHAPMAN, Victoria

...

Donald Trump vs. Joe Biden ... Joe Biden vs. Donald Trump. This seems to be the only presidential matchup that previous letter writers seem to be able to focus on. How shortsighted can seemingly intelligent adults be? I implore you: Just stop already! There is far too much saber-rattling about the merits and shortcomings of only these two candidates. Most of you are totally missing the real point: Both parties need to select and run a different candidate, and that needs to happen yesterday! And, rather than either of the two current, poor choices, the voters should have the choice of someone like Nikki Haley or maybe Gavin Newsom, both of whom offer a much younger and much less controversial choice than either Trump or Biden. Or, possibly consider a centrist like Dean Phillips, a reasonable mashup of Haley and Newsom? Maybe some of you have other alternate choices in mind for each party and that's fine, start talking them up. But, please, no more talk of Trump or Biden and "holding your nose" and voting only for your perception of the lesser of those two evils. We have to do better for the future success, survival and status of the United States as the most respected and revered nation in the free world, and our best choices are not Joseph R. Biden or Donald J. Trump.

MIKE MEHLE, Minnetonka

...

Let's ignore Biden's cognitive decline and focus on the results of his first three years compared to his promises from his campaign and inaugural speech. He stated he would unite the country and bring stability to the world stage.

The actual facts:

1. Before Biden we were not actively involved in any wars. His actions led to two wars that have the world on edge.

2. His massive spending created record inflation so the cost of some basics is 20% higher than when he took office. Two-thirds of the country now live paycheck to paycheck.

3. He made no attempt to unite the country by immediately calling half of the country extremists.

4. Under his "leadership," almost 80% of the country believe we are heading in the wrong direction.

These basic facts of his administration and the fact that he can't coherently read a teleprompter should concern anyone about four more years of this rudderless leadership.

BOB TUMILSON, Apple Valley

...

I have read with interest the letters/articles regarding Biden's age, memory problems and the

Hur report. My mother suffered with and from dementia the last few years of her life. And we suffered right along with her. We saw a decline in physical coordination (she broke her ankle), a lack of ability to do things (even routine) without supervision, and an inability to stay on point with her thought and speech process. She also had that lost, "what am I doing here" expression on her face. I now see all of these in Biden. However, I don't think that will be the terrible scar on the Biden presidency and legacy. That has already been eclipsed by the failure to secure our southern border and the effects of that disaster for decades to come. I really don't think you should lose sleep over Biden's age, memory or dementia symptoms. There are much bigger things to worry about!

CURT REESE, Olivia, Minn.

## BUSINESS LEADERS

### A high standard, huh?

Forget for a moment the puerile notion that being a corporate CEO has anything to do with being president of the United States ("Would a board of directors retain Biden as CEO? Or Trump?" Opinion Exchange, Feb. 15).

Focus, if you will, "on the integrity side," on the Republican candidate who misled banking institutions, and author Roy Ginsburg's claim that, "A CEO who engaged in comparable conduct wouldn't last a minute in corporate America."

According to the firm Better Markets, over the past 23 years six U.S. megabanks — JPMorgan Chase, Wells Fargo, Bank of America, Citigroup, Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley — have accrued over 400 major legal actions including multiple felonies, resulting in over \$200 billion in fines and settlements. We're still waiting for even one of their CEOs to be fired.

"A minute in corporate America" appears to be a very long time.

WILLIAM BEYER, St. Louis Park

## ALEXEI NAVALNY

### GOP sides with his killer

After years of abuse and degradation, Russian President Vladimir Putin was finally able to kill Alexei Navalny. He was killed because he opposed the corruption and absolutism of a murderous dictator. Today, the Republican caucus seems determined to advance the geopolitical agenda of Navalny's killer. What a bitter irony. Navalny was willing to die for the future of his country. The Republican caucus is now supporting an adjudicated sexual abuser, grifter, embezzler, fraudster, pathological liar and would-be dictator. They do this because they are terrified of a primary challenge. I'm sure that as they are voting against the next aid package for Ukraine, they are sending their thoughts and prayers to the beleaguered Ukrainian troops, who are manning the front lines of freedom. Is there any courage or integrity left in the Republican Party?

TIMOTHY NEIL McLEAN, Blaine

## YOUR VIEWS?

We welcome your participation in these pages, whether in letters for the "Readers Write" section or commentaries for the "Opinion Exchange" page.

The best way to contribute is through the "Submit a letter or commentary" link on our website, at [startribune.com/opinion](http://startribune.com/opinion). You can also submit by email to [opinion@startribune.com](mailto:opinion@startribune.com).

Submissions must be exclusive to us in Minnesota. All must include the writer's real, legal name, address, occupation and phone numbers. Letters and rebuttals become the property of the Star Tribune and may be republished in any format. Letters should be brief, up to 250 words. Articles should be fewer than 700 words. Because of the volume of submissions, we cannot respond to all writers.



# Opinion Exchange

Commentaries are selected to present a range of perspectives and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Star Tribune Editorial Board.

## GUN VIOLENCE

# We have 90 days to make Minnesota safer for kids

Three steps the 2024 Legislature can take regarding guns.

By MARC GORELICK

We are not protecting our children. Yes, we buckle them into car seats. We strap seat belts across them and require them to wear bike helmets. We teach them to safely cross the street, take them to the doctor for checkups and get them vaccinated against disease.

We do all that, and then we send them into a society where they could get shot anywhere, at any time. A July 4th parade. Their own classroom. A trampoline at a birthday party. A Super Bowl celebration.

As pediatricians, we work day in and day out to prevent illness in our community's children and keep them healthy. Yet, guns are the No. 1 killer of kids in our country, and it is absolutely preventable. When it comes to the largest threat to children's health, we allow partisanship to defeat safety. The cost is our kids' lives.

We are not protecting our children.

We as Minnesotans have 90 days to make our state safer for our kids. That's about how long this year's legislative session, now underway, will last. It's the amount of time we have to demand lawmakers pass effective gun safety measures.

We need lawmakers to:

1. Require safe gun storage. We know that unsecured guns pose clear risks, especially to children. Safe storage has been shown to significantly decrease firearm injuries among kids.
2. Require gun owners to more immediately

report lost or stolen firearms. Stolen guns pose a risk to our communities as they enter the illegal gun market and fuel more violence.

3. Allow Medicaid to pay for hospital-based violence intervention programs like Next Step that interrupt the cycle of violence and help victims of gun violence heal.

Thankfully, the 11 children shot in Kansas City on Wednesday will likely survive. But they are also likely to bear the physical and emotional trauma of sudden, inexplicable violence for the rest of their lives.

This is not normal. Unlike kids today, most parents didn't grow up with the fear of being gunned down in a public place, having to perform active shooter drills at school. We cannot allow this to be our normal any longer.

Our children cannot protect themselves. That is our job. Our most important job. In the next 90 days, in partnership with our Minnesota legislators, let's do that job to the very best of our ability.

Dr. Marc Gorelick is president and CEO of Children's Minnesota.



EMILY CURIEL • TNS

A firefighter waited outside an ambulance after several people were shot near a rally during the Kansas City Chiefs' Super Bowl LVIII victory parade Feb. 14 in Kansas City, Mo.

## CREATIVE WORK

# Minneapolis Park Board must stop exploiting artists

Not paying for performances is unethical. The city should set a better example.

By LAURA ZABEL

When I moved to Minneapolis, my first week in the city, I went to a concert at the Lake Harriet Band Shell. I had relocated from Kansas after college seeking a place to call home, and that evening in the park was a powerful signal that I had made the right choice. The park felt welcoming, creative and like there was room for me here.

Since that concert 25 years ago, I have attended countless concerts and outdoor performances in Minneapolis parks, and they always engender a feeling of belonging that renews my love of this community. I was dismayed to learn from the Feb. 14 article "Musicians not feeling love from Park Board," referring to unpaid performances, that all this time these experiences were being created by extracting resources from our local creative workers.

Creative work is work. Labor deserves to be compensated. A budget is a reflection of values, and not including artists in the budget for these park events is an ethical failure on the part of the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. By asking musicians to play for free at more than 200 events, the board is telling us that it is fine with extracting hundreds of thousands of dollars in unpaid labor from its own citizens. I know that some readers might point out that many artists have been willing to do this work for free. But just because someone is willing to do something for free does not make it ethical to exploit them.

Artists are our neighbors and community members who need to eat, put food on the table and pay their rent just like everyone else. Artists are often piecing together dozens of contract gigs to make ends meet, and they often fall through the cracks of contract protections and small-business support. Economic conditions like widening wealth gaps, systemic inequity,

and a lack of safety nets like health care, housing and unemployment benefits also impact artists. As most people know, the pandemic was particularly devastating for artists and creative workers, and those sectors have been among the slowest to recover.

And yet we also know that we have never needed our artists and culture makers more than we do now. The U.S. Surgeon General declared an epidemic of loneliness and isolation last May, and recently spoke at length about the power of art to help us address this crisis. In Minneapolis specifically, we need spaces of belonging, connection and healing if we have any hope of addressing the many crises and challenges facing our city. We can't create those spaces and experiences by extracting labor from the people who bring us together. If anything, the Park Board should be expanding its budget to increase support of our artists because of their impact on our community's health, economy and well-being.

Dismissing these concerns by offering that artists should pass the hat or be grateful for the exposure is, frankly, offensive. As many artists have pointed out over many years, you can't eat exposure. Minneapolis could be setting an example for other cities, yet here we are, behind many other cities in our own state that have recognized the value of creative work.

We have the power to change this, and we should. I hope that everyone who has enjoyed a summer evening in the park, listening to music, feeling a sense of belonging, and marveling at the beauty, creativity and potential of our city will call on the Park Board and our elected officials to behave in an ethical manner and value the labor of our musicians, artists and creative community.

Laura Zabel is executive director of Springboard for the Arts.

## COUNTERPOINT

# Why Essentia is adjusting baby delivery services in northwestern Minnesota

If the circumstances were different, our preference would be to deliver babies in Fosston.

By MARK THOMPSON and STEFANIE GEFROH

The discontinuation or relocation of hospital services has made headlines across the state. Those conversations are often accompanied by assertions that finances are the only factor driving these decisions ("Baby delivery in Fosston is latest victim of health care executives' greed," Opinion Exchange, Feb. 14).

That narrative is untrue and unfortunate, because it allows the systemic challenges plaguing health care — especially rural health care — to be obscured. As long as the blame is misplaced on health systems, the real work of identifying and solving root causes cannot begin.

Rural health care is at an inflection point. The current landscape — marred by inadequate reimbursement rates, workforce shortages, a lack of providers and increasing labor costs — is not sustainable. Without change, it will be difficult to preserve access to care in rural communities. That is particularly concerning when you consider that rural populations tend to be older, with more pronounced health needs and a higher likelihood of chronic disease.

Chartis, a health care advisory and analytics firm, reports that about one-fifth of the nation's rural hospitals are in jeopardy of closing. That's in addition to the 136 rural hospitals that closed between 2010 and 2021, according to the American Hospital Association (AHA).

The situation is similarly dire in labor and delivery. The Center for Healthcare Quality and Payment Reform states that fewer than half of all rural counties in the U.S. have hospitals that deliver babies.

At Essentia Health, multiple factors led us to relocate baby deliveries from our hospital in Fosston to St. Mary's-Detroit Lakes, beginning with a shortage of trained staff. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists stipulates that a safe and sustainable labor and delivery program entails a well-trained team of caregivers — physicians, including those with OB emergency intervention capabilities, along with additional advanced practice providers, nurses, anesthesiologists and other supporting roles. The care team must have emergency response training, and 24/7 coverage, along with a 20-minute response time for C-section emergencies, is required.

Recruiting that kind of team isn't always possible, especially in small towns. For starters, there are fewer family physicians practicing obstetrics than there once were. According to the American Academy of Family Physicians, only 12% of all medical students were matched to family medicine in 2023. Of those, 7% practiced OB, and 1.6% had C-section competency. There also is an acute OB-GYN shortage.

Essentia Health is the only organization in Minnesota that offers obstetric fellowship training for family medicine physicians to better prepare them to provide services in rural areas. We are passionate about rural health care, but we are facing challenges that are bigger than us.

Only 10% of U.S. physicians practice in rural areas. Yet, the workforce issue isn't limited to clinicians. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that 275,000 additional nurses will be needed through 2030. There are tens of thousands of open health care jobs in Minnesota. While the demand for care is increasing, the labor supply is decreasing.

In Fosston, we worked with search firms to recruit numerous physician candidates. But we repeatedly heard from clinicians that they preferred to work at a hospital with larger teams, and thus a better work-life balance. They did not want to be on call 24/7 and wanted to practice at a facility with more births. From 2017 to 2021, Essentia Health-Fosston averaged 72 births per year, or about one every five days.

If the circumstances were different, our preference would be to deliver babies in Fosston. Studies continue to show increased risks to moms and newborns at low-volume birth centers. Complications have become more common in pregnancies, and rural hospitals often don't have sufficient care teams to offer the proper level of support. The heightened potential for maternal morbidity and mortality at rural hospitals presents too great of a safety risk. We are unwilling to compromise the safety of our patients.

This is not an isolated incident. Systems will continue to discontinue or relocate baby deliveries from rural communities, even with significantly higher birth volumes. As we've seen elsewhere, this is true for other services as well. The challenges are too many, and too complex, to expect otherwise.

Inaccurate and inflammatory rhetoric will neither properly frame nor solve these challenges. It's imperative that we collaborate with lawmakers, educational institutions, professional organizations and our communities to affect meaningful change and solve issues that cannot be solved by health systems alone. One of those changes should be aligning reimbursement rates with the cost of care. For rural systems, most patients have government insurance, which reimburses about 70% of care costs. Rural emergency medical services are reimbursed at about 25-30% the cost of care by government programs. Reimbursement for behavioral health faces a similar gap.

This model is not sustainable. By working together, we are better equipped to find solutions to these problems and preserve care in rural communities.

Dr. Mark Thompson is Essentia Health West Market president. Dr. Stefanie Gefroh, OB-GYN, is Essentia Health West Market associate chief medical officer.

A Star Tribune editorial on this subject, "Worthy battle to keep hospital birth care," was published Feb. 4.

## YOU DON'T SAY L.K. HANSON

*ALL PRESIDENTS start out to run a crusade but after a couple of years they find they are running something less heroic and much more intractable: namely the presidency.*

Alistair COOKE 1908-2004  
British-American  
writer and journalist



Weather forecast table for Twin Cities and surrounding areas from Tuesday to Sunday, including temperature ranges and conditions.

\*Overnight low: Lowest temperature between 7 p.m. and 7 a.m. the next day



WEATHER with Paul Douglas

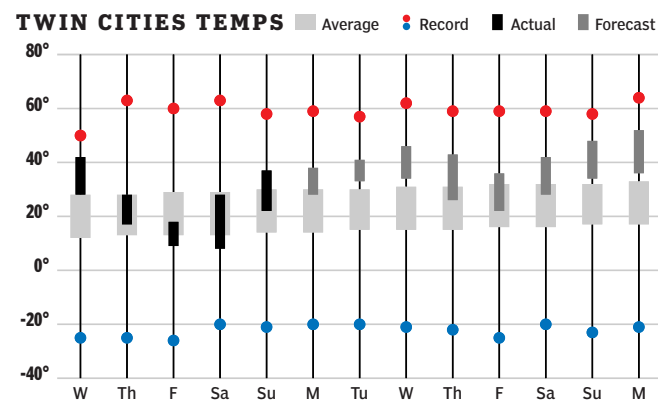
Video forecasts: startribune.com/weather
Paul's blog: startribune.com/pauldouglas

Another extended thaw stretches into the week

According to a DNA test I took, I am related to Thomas Jefferson on my German father's side. Weird. Jefferson may have been our most prolific presidential weather enthusiast.

On Presidents' Day we also salute President Ulysses S. Grant for ordering the military to begin tracking weather in 1870. In 1890, President Benjamin Harrison moved the weather bureau to the Department of Agriculture...

No heavy weather here anytime soon, just another extended thaw. Expect highs in the 40s this week with a few days near 50 early next week. Late March comes early this year, but at this point, why not? No snow in sight, but maybe a little rain in one week.



Summary statistics for Twin Cities temps: Yesterday, High, Low, Precipitation, Heating degree days, etc.

Forecasts and graphics, with the exception of Paul Douglas' article and 7-day forecast, provided by AccuWeather.com ©2024

HEALTH REPORT TODAY'S ASTHMA INDEX with color-coded scale from 0-2 to 11+.

TODAY'S AIR QUALITY Good with color-coded scale from 0 to 300.

TODAY'S UV INDEX Moderate with color-coded scale from 0-2 to 11+.

TODAY'S COLD INDEX Moderate with color-coded scale from 0-2 to 9-10.

AROUND MINNESOTA table listing cities and their today/tue temperatures.

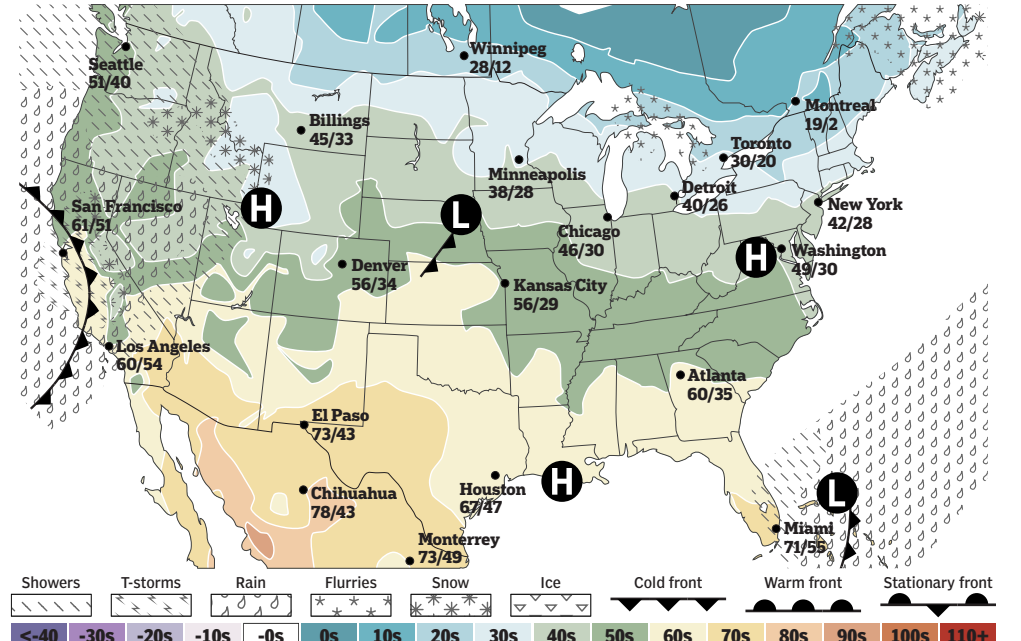
RIVER STAGES table listing river names, stages, and changes.

SKI REPORT table listing resorts, base inches, trails open, and lifts open.

SUN AND MOON TODAY table with moon phase icons and times.

AccuWeather Visit AccuWeather.com

NATIONAL OUTLOOK Temperature forecasts are the highs for the day; weather patterns are for conditions at noon.



Yesterday's high / low (for the 48 contiguous states): 80 in El Centro, CA / -22 in Walden, CO

U.S. & WORLD CITIES table listing cities and their today/tue temperatures.

NATION & WORLD

WASHINGTON, D.C. Mother charged with murder in daughter's fentanyl death

A D.C. woman was charged Friday with first-degree murder in the 2022 death of her 3-year-old daughter, who authorities said ingested her mother's Percocet that was laced with fentanyl...



MARK ABRAMSON • New York Times

CALIFORNIA: Workers put down large plastic tarps to cover the side of a hill in the Baldwin Hills neighborhood of Los Angeles on Sunday in preparation for torrential rainfall...

UNITED STATES

Trump remains silent on Navalny death in Russian prison

Former President Donald Trump, who earlier this month set off worries among allies after he said he would encourage Russia to invade a NATO country that wasn't spending enough on defense, has remained silent on the death of Alexei Navalny...

JAPAN

Tokyo hosting conference to help Ukraine rebuild from war

Japan will host a reconstruction conference for Ukraine on Monday, just ahead of the two-year anniversary of Russia's invasion as Tokyo seeks to showcase its commitment to supporting the war-torn country.

JORDAN

Five smugglers killed trying to bring drugs in from Syria

Jordanian soldiers killed five smugglers who allegedly tried to bring drugs into the country from neighboring Syria. The army said four other suspected smugglers were wounded and "large quantities of drugs" were seized.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

At least 53 men dead in tribal massacre, with more expected

At least 53 men were massacred in a major escalation of tribal violence in Papua New Guinea, Australian media reported Monday. A tribe, their allies and mercenaries were on their way to attack a neighboring tribe when they were ambushed Sunday in Enga Province...

Magnifi Financial advertisement for High-Yield Checking with 4.50% APY, QR code, and contact information.