

House approves \$825B for Pentagon

By SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The House on Friday approved \$825 billion in defense spending for the remainder of fiscal 2024 that funds pay increases for troops and compels the Pentagon to address the military's recruiting crisis.

The 286-134 vote for the legislation, which is part of a \$1.2 trillion package to fund the federal government through September, came as lawmakers raced to avert a partial government shutdown at midnight. Funding could briefly lapse over the weekend as the Senate takes up the bill but it is not expected to cause any major disruptions.

House lawmakers rushed to pass the legislation after months of stopgap funding measures that kept the Pentagon's spending frozen since the start of the fiscal year on Oct. 1. The bill provides a \$27 billion funding increase to the Defense Department from last year.

Congress was supposed to ap-

prove full-year funding for the government by the end of September but the process was delayed by nearly six months due to partisan bickering over spending amounts and policies.

The Republican-led House last year approved a defense appropriations bill that had no chance of passing in the Democrat-controlled Senate. It included provisions to reduce Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin's salary to \$1 and restrict funding for transgender troops' medical care and the Pentagon's abortion access policies.

None of those measures made it into the final legislation, though Republicans touted cuts to climate-related funding and a \$50 million cut to the Pentagon's diversity and inclusion programs. They also blocked the Pentagon from spending money to repeal the 2022 law that ended the military's coronavirus vaccine mandate.

Both parties found common ground on military pay, arguing boosting compensation was

critical for solving persistent recruiting challenges affecting most of the services.

The bill fully funds the 5.2% pay raise troops received in January while also providing \$43 million more than the White House requested for monthly economic hardship bonuses for junior enlisted service members through the end of 2024.

The legislation also allocates \$80 million more than requested for enlistment bonuses and \$30 million more than requested for recruiting and advertising efforts.

"The military services are in the midst of one of the greatest recruiting crises since the creation of the all-volunteer force," lawmakers wrote in a report accompanying the defense bill.

To address the issue, lawmakers said the Pentagon needed to work with Congress to "provide legislative options for addressing this crisis to include, but not [be] limited to, increases to junior enlisted basic military pay, as well as other ways to in-

centivize new recruits and prepare them for duty."

Members of Congress attempted to hike pay for junior enlisted troops by more than 30% last year but were told to hold off until the Defense Department completed a quadrennial review of military pay by the end of December.

In the meantime, lawmakers are mandating the defense secretary brief them on the review within a month of the funding bill's enactment into law. They are also directing the Defense Department to conduct an independent survey to better understand recruitment failures by the services.

The bill provides other incentives to attract and retain service members, including nearly \$30 million for housing allowances and \$8 million for an allowance that offsets meal costs. Lawmakers are also providing \$10 million more than requested for a program to address the inability of some military families to have enough food.

Russia attacks Ukrainian electrical power facilities

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Russia attacked electrical power facilities in much of Ukraine, including the country's largest hydroelectric plant, causing widespread outages and killing at least five people, officials said Friday.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said more than 60 drones and about 90 rockets were used in the attack.

The attack came a day after Russia launched 31 missiles in a single attack on the capital. It

was the largest assault on Ukraine's energy infrastructure during the more than two-year-long war, said Volodymyr Kurytsky, head of the national utility Ukrenergo.

"This attack was especially dangerous because the adversary combined different means of attack, kamikaze drones, ballistic and cruise missiles," he said. He said the city of Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest, suffered the most damage.

Last winter, Russia targeted Ukraine's energy infrastruc-

ture, resulting in frequent blackouts across the country. Many had warned that Russia might repeat this strategy this winter. But instead, Russia has launched massive missile and drone attacks primarily directed at Ukraine's defense industry.

Every large-scale air attack depletes Ukraine's capabilities to repel Russian missiles. Zelenskyy has been urging Ukraine's Western allies for weeks to provide additional air defense systems and ammunition amid de-

lays in aid from the U.S.

Russian officials said Friday that one person died and at least three were injured in Ukrainian shelling of areas near the border.

The governor of the Belgorod region, Vyacheslav Gladkov, said a woman was killed when a shell hit nearby while she was walking her dogs and that two others were injured.

The town of Tetkino in the Kursk region was shelled, injuring one person, said Gov. Roman Starovoit.

Russia, China veto resolution calling for cease-fire in Gaza

Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS — Russia and China on Friday vetoed a U.S.-sponsored U.N. resolution calling for “an immediate and sustained cease-fire” in the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza to protect civilians and enable humanitarian aid to be delivered to more than 2 million hungry Palestinians.

The vote in the 15-member Security Council was 11 members in favor and three against, including Algeria, the Arab representative on the council. There was one abstention, from Guyana.

Before the vote, Russian U.N. Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia said Moscow supports an immediate cease-fire, but he criticized diluted language

that referred to moral imperatives, which he called philosophical wording that does not belong in a U.N. resolution.

He accused U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and U.S. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield of “deliberately misleading the international community.”

“This was some kind of an empty rhetorical exercise,” Nebenzia said. “The American product is exceedingly politicized, the sole purpose of which is to help to play to the voters, to throw them a bone in the form of some kind of a mention of a cease-fire in Gaza ... and to ensure the impunity of Israel, whose crimes in the draft are not even assessed.”

Meanwhile, Blinken met

with Israeli leaders in Tel Aviv on Friday on the final stop in his sixth urgent trip to the region since the start of the war. Thomas-Greenfield urged the council to adopt the resolution to press for an immediate cease-fire and the release of the hostages, as well as to address Gaza’s humanitarian crisis and support ongoing diplomacy by the United States, Egypt and Qatar.

After the vote, Thomas-Greenfield accused Russia and China of voting for “deeply cynical reasons,” saying they could not bring themselves to condemn Hamas’ terrorist attacks in southern Israel on Oct. 7, which the resolution would have done for the first time.

Apple is sued by US in antitrust lawsuit

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Justice Department on Thursday announced a sweeping antitrust lawsuit against Apple, accusing the tech giant of engineering an illegal monopoly in smartphones that boxes out competitors, stifles innovation and keeps prices artificially high.

The lawsuit, filed in federal court in New Jersey, alleges that Apple has monopoly power in the smartphone market and leverages control over the iPhone to “engage in a broad, sustained, and illegal course of conduct.”

“Apple has locked its consumers into the iPhone while locking its competitors out of the market,” said Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco. Stalling the advancement of the very market it revolutionized, she said, it has “smothered an entire industry.”

Apple called the lawsuit “wrong on the facts and the law” and said it “will vigorously defend against it.”

The suit takes aim at how Apple allegedly molds its technology and business relationships to “extract more money from consumers, developers, content creators, artists, publishers, small businesses, and merchants, among others.”

That includes diminishing the functionality of non-Apple smartwatches, limiting access to contactless payment for third-party digital wallets and refusing to allow its iMessage app to exchange encrypted messaging with competing platforms.

Prosecutors say Trump’s hush money criminal trial should start on April 15

Associated Press

NEW YORK — New York prosecutors on Thursday urged a judge to start Donald Trump’s hush money criminal trial on April 15, saying the defense’s calls for further delays or dismissal of the former president’s case because of a last-minute evidence dump were a “red herring.”

The vast majority of records that Trump’s lawyers received in recent weeks — more than 100,000 pages from a prior federal investigation into the matter — were “entirely immaterial, duplicative or substantially duplicative” of evidence they’d already been given, the Manhattan district attorney’s office said.

One batch containing 31,000 documents had fewer than 270 that were relevant to Trump’s case and had not previously been given to his lawyers, prosecutors said. The U.S. attorney’s office in Manhattan finished giving evidence to Trump’s lawyers on March 15.

Trump pleaded not guilty last year to 34 felony counts of falsifying business records in what prosecutors said was an effort to hide arrangements to bury damaging stories during his 2016 presidential campaign.

His lawyers’ “grab-bag of meritless discovery arguments is the latest of a long series of attempts to evade responsibility for the conduct charged in the indictment,” Assistant District

Attorney Matthew Colangelo wrote.

In all, about 10 million pages of evidence have been turned over to Trump’s lawyers since his indictment a year ago, including grand jury minutes, bank records, witness statements, cellphone data and records from his company, the Trump Organization, Colangelo said.

Judge Juan M. Merchan last week postponed the trial until at least mid-April after Trump’s lawyers complained that their preparations were being hampered by the late arrival of evidence from the 2018 federal investigation that sent his former lawyer and fixer Michael Cohen to prison.

Mayorkas: Texas law is unconstitutional

Associated Press

GUATEMALA CITY — U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said Thursday that a Texas law giving state authorities the power to arrest and deport migrants who have entered the country illegally is unconstitutional.

“It is our strongly held view as a matter of law that SB4 (the Texas law) ... is unconstitutional and it is our hope and confidence that the courts will strike it down with finality,” Mayorkas said during a joint news conference with Guatemala President Bernardo Arévalo in the Guatemalan capital.

The Texas law passed last year would allow the state to arrest and deport people who enter the U.S. illegally. The U.S.

Justice Department has challenged the law as a clear violation of federal authority.

A three-judge panel of the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals heard arguments on the Texas law Wednesday, but did not rule. The law is on hold for now.

In an interview with The Associated Press later Thursday, Mayorkas added that “Should SB4 be permitted to proceed, we are very concerned about the effect it would have and the chaos that it could bring to the challenge of border migration.”

Mayorkas described the U.S.-led regional strategy toward immigration as seeking to “build lawful, safe and orderly pathways for people to reach safety from their place of persecution and, at the same time, returning

people to their countries as a consequence when they do not take advantage of those lawful pathways.”

Among those safe pathways is a U.S. effort to streamline the process for those seeking U.S. asylum in the region through so-called safe mobility offices. They allow migrants to start the process where they are rather than making the dangerous and costly journey to the U.S. border.

Guatemala’s safe mobility office, unlike some others like Colombia’s, is only open to Guatemalans seeking U.S. protection. One of the requests made by Mayorkas’ delegation was that Guatemala allow the safe mobility office to process requests for migrants from other countries, according to a Guatemalan offi-

cial who requested anonymity because the issue was still under discussion.

Asked during the joint news conference if the U.S. government had asked Guatemala to sign a safe third country agreement, which Guatemala’s previous president had agreed to during the Trump administration, Mayorkas did not directly answer. Such an agreement would require migrants from other countries passing through Guatemala to seek protection from the Guatemalan government rather than at the U.S. border.

Asked again in the interview with the AP, Mayorkas said that Guatemala could be a safe destination for some migrants, but that he deferred to Arévalo’s administration on that.

Ex-officers sentenced in in torture of 2 Black men

Associated Press

JACKSON, Miss. — A federal judge on Thursday finished handing down prison terms of about 10 to 40 years to six white former Mississippi law enforcement officers who pleaded guilty to breaking into a home without a warrant and torturing two Black men in an hourslong attack that included beatings, repeated uses of stun guns and assaults with a sex toy before one of the victims was shot in the mouth.

U.S. District Judge Tom Lee called the culprits’ actions “egregious and despicable” and gave sentences near the top of federal guidelines to five of the six men who attacked Michael Corey Jenkins and Eddie Terrell Parker in January 2023.

The case drew condemnation from top law enforcement officials in the country, including Attorney General Merrick Garland. In its grisly details, local residents saw echoes of Mississippi’s history of racist atrocities by people in authority. The dif-

ference this time is that those who abused their power paid a steep price for their crimes, the victims’ attorneys said.

“The depravity of the crimes committed by these defendants cannot be overstated,” Garland said Thursday.

The only defendant who didn’t receive a prison term at the top of the sentencing guidelines was Joshua Hartfield, 32, a former Richland police officer who did not work in a sheriff’s department with the others and was not a member of a “Goon Squad.” He was the last of the six former officers sentenced this week, months after they all pleaded guilty.

Before giving him a 10-year sentence Thursday, Lee said Hartfield did not have a history of using excessive force and was roped into the brutal episode by one of the former deputies. Lee said, however, that Hartfield failed to intervene in the violence and participated in a cover-up.

Escaped Idaho prisoner and accomplice captured

Associated Press

Police on Thursday arrested two white supremacist gang members — an Idaho prison inmate and the accomplice who helped him escape — following an attack on corrections officers at a Boise hospital, and investigators are looking into whether they killed two people while on the run.

Skylar Meade, the escaped inmate, and Nicholas Umphenour, the man who police say shot two Idaho corrections officers early Wednesday to break Meade out of custody, were arrested after a brief car chase Thursday afternoon in Twin Falls, about 130 miles from the hospital.

Authorities said during a news conference Thursday that they were investigating two homicides, in Clearwater County and Nez Perce County, which borders Washington state. Both victims were men. Police found shackles at the scene of one of the killings and

“that’s one of the ways we tied them together,” Idaho State Police Lt. Colonel Sheldon Kelley said.

The Clearwater County Sheriff’s Office said via Facebook that it received a request for a welfare check Wednesday evening and deputies found a man who had died. The suspects were several hours out of the county when the call came in, according to the office. No further details were released.

Meade, 31, was sentenced to 20 years in prison in 2017 for shooting at a sheriff’s sergeant during a high-speed chase. Umphenour was released from the same prison — the Idaho Maximum Security Institution in Kuna, south of Boise — in January. The two had at times been housed together, were both members of the Aryan Knights prison gang and had mutual friends in and out of prison, officials said.

No shots were fired during the arrest, police said.

Gene-edited pig kidney is transplanted into a patient

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Doctors in Boston have transplanted a pig kidney into a 62-year-old patient, the latest experiment in the quest to use animal organs in humans.

Massachusetts General Hospital said Thursday that it's the first time a genetically modified pig kidney has been transplanted into a living person. Previously, pig kidneys have been temporarily transplanted into brain-dead donors. Also, two men received heart transplants from pigs, although both died within months.

The patient, Richard "Rick" Slayman of Weymouth, Mass., is recovering well from the surgery last Saturday and is expected to be discharged soon, doctors said Thursday.

Dr. Tatsuo Kawai, the transplant surgeon, said the team believes the pig kidney will work

for at least two years. If it fails, Slayman could go back on dialysis, said kidney specialist Dr. Winfred Williams. He noted that unlike the pig heart recipients who were very sick, Slayman is "actually quite robust."

Slayman had a kidney transplant at the hospital in 2018, but had to go back on dialysis last year when it showed signs of failure. When dialysis complications arose requiring frequent procedures, his doctors suggested a pig kidney transplant, he said in a statement released by the hospital.

"I saw it not only as a way to help me, but a way to provide hope for the thousands of people who need a transplant to survive," said Slayman.

The transplant surgery took four hours, with 15 people in the operating room who applauded when the kidney turned pink and started making urine, doc-

tors said at a news conference.

"It was truly the most beautiful kidney I have ever seen," said Kawai.

Dr. Parsia Vagefi, chief of surgical transplantation at UT Southwestern Medical Center, called the announcement "a big step forward." But echoing the Boston doctors, he said studies involving more patients at different medical centers would be needed for it to become more commonly available.

The experiment marks the latest development in xenotransplantation, the term for efforts to try to heal human patients with cells, tissues, or organs from animals. For decades, it didn't work — the human immune system immediately destroyed foreign animal tissue. More recent attempts have involved pigs that have been modified so their organs are more humanlike.

Menendez won't run in Democratic primary

Associated Press

TRENTON, N.J. — U.S. Sen. Bob Menendez of New Jersey said Thursday he won't run in the Democratic primary as he faces federal corruption charges, but he left open the possibility that he would reenter the race as an independent later this year if he is exonerated at a trial.

Menendez's announcement comes four days before a state deadline to file to run in the June 4 Democratic primary that's already being contested by Rep. Andy Kim and New Jersey first lady Tammy Murphy. The almost 10-minute video shows Menendez speaking about his decades in Congress, pushing for aid for his state, including for Superstorm Sandy recovery and COVID-19 relief.

"The present accusations I am facing of which I am innocent and will prove so will not allow me to have that type of dialogue and debate with political opponents," he said in a video posted on social media. "You deserve to hear from those who wish to represent you about what they would do for you and your families in the future. Therefore I will not file for the Democratic party this June."

Menendez said he's hopeful that he will be exonerated at trial and could run as an "independent Democrat" in the general election.

The decision comes as Menendez fights federal bribery charges, along with his wife, Nadine, and three business associates.

Menendez and his spouse are charged with taking bribes of gold bars, cash and a Mercedes-Benz in return for the senator's help with projects pursued by three New Jersey businessmen.

Court rules requiring graphic images on cigarettes won't breach First Amendment

Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — A federal requirement that cigarette packs and advertising include graphic images demonstrating the effects of smoking — including pictures of smoke-damaged lungs and feet blackened by diminished blood flow — does not violate the First Amendment, an appeals court ruled Thursday.

The ruling from a three-judge panel of the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals was a partial victory for federal regulators seeking to toughen warning labels. But the court kept alive a tobacco industry challenge of the rule, saying a lower court should review whether it was

adopted in accordance with the federal Administrative Procedure Act, which governs the development of regulations.

The 5th Circuit panel rejected industry arguments that the rule violates free speech rights or that it requires images and lettering that take up so much space that they overcome branding and messaging on packages and advertisements.

The ruling overturns a lower court order from a federal district court in Texas, where a judge found the requirements violate the First Amendment.

"We disagree," Judge Jerry Smith wrote for the 5th Circuit panel. "The warnings are both factual and uncontroversial."

While reversing the lower court's First Amendment finding, the panel noted that the judge had not ruled on the APA-based challenge. It sent the case back to the district court to consider that issue.

The images in question include a picture of a woman with a large growth on her neck and the caption "WARNING: Smoking causes head and neck cancer." Another shows a man's chest with a long scar from surgery and a different warning: "Smoking can cause heart disease and strokes by clogging arteries."

Nearly 120 countries around the world have adopted larger, graphic warning labels.

Michigan State tops Mississippi State

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Tyson Walker scored 19 points and Spartans coach Tom Izzo picked up his 20th win in the first round of the NCAA Tournament as his ninth-seeded Spartans beat the eighth-seeded Bulldogs 69-51 on Thursday in the West Region.

Michigan State improved to 20-6 in March Madness openers under Izzo, who is making his 26th straight NCAA Tournament appearance — an NCAA Division I record for a coach at one school.

Jaden Akins added 15 points and seven rebounds and Mailk Hall scored 10 points for the Spartans (20-14), who'll face top-seeded North Carolina on Saturday.

Freshman Josh Hubbard scored 15 points for the Bulldogs (21-14), who haven't won an NCAA Tournament game since 2021. Hubbard had just two points in the second half.

Both teams entered the tournament having lost five of seven games.

The Spartans, who led wire to wire, pushed the tempo early and jumped out to an 20-8 lead after hitting 4 of 7 shots from beyond the arc, including two from Walker.

East Region

No. 4 Iowa State 82, South Dakota State 65: Milan Momcilovic looked nothing like a freshman while pouring in 19 points, Tamin Lipsey had 17 with seven assists, and No. 2 Iowa State used big runs to start each half to beat No. 15 seed South Dakota State in the NCAA Tournament.

Keshon Gilbert had 15 points and Hason Ward dunked his way to 10, helping the Cyclones (28-7) avenge an embarrassing first-round loss to Pittsburgh a year ago. They advanced to a second-round matchup with seventh-seeded Washington State.

South Dakota State (22-13) showed plenty of gumption after allowing Iowa State to race to a 17-3 lead to start the game, cutting the deficit in half by the break. But the Cyclones blitzed the Jackrabbits to start the second half, too, going on a 14-5 run to pull away.

Zeke Mayo hit four 3s and had 19 points for South Dakota State. William Kyle III added 14 points and Charlie Easley finished with 11.

No. 10 Illinois 84, Morehead State 69: Marcus Domask posted the NCAA Tournament's first triple-double since 2019 and Terrence Shannon scored 26 points, helping No. 3 seed Illinois pull away from No. 14 Morehead State.

Domask had 12 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists in his first career triple-double. It was the first triple-double in the NCAA tourney since Ja Morant accomplished the feat.

Dain Dainja scored 17 of his 21 points in the second half as the Illini shook off the pesky Eagles. Dainja went 9 for 9 from the field and matched his career high with eight rebounds.

Next up for Illinois (27-8) is No. 11 seed Duquesne on Saturday.

Riley Minix led the Eagles (26-9) with 27 points, giving him at least 20 in 13 of his past 14 games.

Duquesne 71, No. 21 BYU 67: Dae Dae Grant scored 19 points, including four clinching free throws in the final 10 seconds, and the Dukes kept retiring coach Keith Dambrot working for a little bit longer with a victory against the Cougars.

Jakub Necas added 12 points and Jimmy Clark III had 11 for the Atlantic 10 tourney champs celebrated their return to the dance after 47 years with their first win there since 1969. The Dukes (25-11) will play No. 3 seed Illinois for a spot in the Sweet 16 on Saturday.

The Cougars (23-11) trailed by as many as 14 in the second half before drawing even when Foussyni Traore, who had struggled all game, slammed down the second of back-to-back baskets to knot the game at 60-all with 1:45 to go.

Clark was fouled at the other end and made two free throws, and when Traore missed a floater for BYU, the Duquesne guard got to the foul line again. He made the first of two foul shots but was able to help tie up a loose ball after missing the second, and on the ensuing play, Clark was able to break down the defense for an easy layup and a 65-60 lead with 26.9 seconds left.

Dallin Hall tried to give the Cougars a chance with four free throws and a deep 3-pointer in the final 20 seconds, but Grant — one of the nation's best foul shooters — was stoic from the free-throw line in sending the Dukes to the next round.

No. 25 Washington State 66, Drake 61: Isaac Jones had 20 points and 11 rebounds, Isaiah Watts' first 3-pointer in three

games gave Washington State the lead with 1:51 left and the seventh-seeded Cougars beat No. 10 Drake.

The Cougars (25-9) shot just 29.6% while trailing most of the second half, but Drake's season-worst 6-of-14 performance at the free-throw line allowed them to win in their first tournament appearance since 2008.

Drake (28-7) had its largest lead at 54-46 when WSU started its comeback.

Tucker DeVries had a shot swirl in and out, and Andrej Jakimovski made a 3 from the wing as the Cougars cut it to 54-51. Drake's Darnell Brodie had the ball slip out of his hands as he was making a move to the basket, and Jones snaked in for a layup on the other end to make it 54-53.

Brodie, who controlled much of the second half for Drake offensively, fouled out with 2:26 left before Watts connected for the lead. The Cougars made 5 of 6 free throws to hold off the Bulldogs.

Midwest Region

No. 6 Tennessee 83, Saint Peter's 49: Dalton Knecht scored 23 points and Tennessee shot 64% in the first half to build a huge lead before beating Saint Peter's in the first round of the NCAA Tournament.

Jonas Aidoo added 13 of his 15 points by halftime for the Midwest Region's No. 2 seed, which quickly erased any chance of another improbable March Madness run for the 15th-seeded Peacocks. Tennessee (25-8) ran out to a double-digit lead in

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the first eight minutes, used a 9-0 burst to push the margin past 20, then increased that margin to 29 shortly before halftime.

There was no sign of the hiccups from multiple recent March stumbles, setting up a reunion for coach Rick Barnes and his former Texas program in the second round.

No. 11 Creighton 77, Akron 60: Ryan Kalkbrenner scored 23 points and Trey Alexander had 19 as the Bluejays, which came within seconds of making the Final Four a year ago, opened the NCAA Tournament with a win over the Zips.

The third-seeded Bluejays (24-9) got all they could handle in the first half from the 14th-seeded Zips (24-11), the Mid-American Conference tourney champions who came in as a 10½-point underdog.

However, Creighton flexed its Big East muscles after halftime and pulled away to advance to the second round and a matchup against Oregon on Saturday at PPG Paints Arena.

This was the start Creighton was hoping for. A year ago, the Bluejays' season ended with a heartbreaking 57-56 loss to San Diego State — Creighton committed a foul in the closing seconds — in the South Region final. Much of that squad came back for coach Doug McDermott to try and make another deep run, and the Bluejays have taken the first step.

Baylor Scheierman added 15 points and 13 rebounds for Creighton, which made 10 of 17 3-pointers.

Akron's Enrique Freeman, the MAC Player of the Year and nation's leading rebounder, finished with 21 points and 14 boards. It was Freeman's 31st double-double, tying him with Navy great David Robinson (1986) for the single-season NCAA record.

Oregon 87, No. 16 South Carolina 73: Jermaine Cousinard scored a career-high 40

points to haunt South Carolina — his former school — while leading Oregon to a victory.

Cousinard, who spent three years at South Carolina (26-8) before transferring in part because of a coaching change following the 2022 season, made five 3-pointers and went 14 of 22 from the field to pace the 11th-seeded Ducks (24-11).

Oregon advanced to the second round to face No. 3 seed Creighton.

The Creighton-Oregon matchup will have a family feel, as it will reunite Ducks coach Dana Altman and Creighton, where he spent 16 years and built the Nebraska school into one of the nation's best mid-major programs.

Altman has done OK for himself while coaching out West as well. The Ducks improved to 8-0 in first-round NCAA Tournament games under him.

Oregon center N'Faly Dante added 23 points, some of them coming on some backboard-shaking dunks.

No. 17 Kansas 93, Samford 89: Kansas got a kind whistle at the end and Nicolas Timberlake made both his free throws to help the Jayhawks hold off Samford.

The 13th-seeded Bulldogs were trapping after trimming a 22-point deficit to one when Timberlake took a long pass as he was streaking toward the basket. He went to dunk and Samford's A.J. Staton-McCray came from behind and blocked the shot, appearing to touch nothing but ball.

The whistle blew and Timberlake calmly made both free throws with 14.7 seconds left to help the fourth-seeded Jayhawks push the lead to three. They will play Gonzaga on Saturday in the second round of the Midwest Region.

Hunter Dickinson led the dinged-up Jayhawks with 19 points, 20 rebounds and four blocks.

No. 18 Gonzaga 86, McNeese State 65: Graham

Ike scored 16 points and Anton Watson added 13 points, 13 rebounds and nine assists to power fifth-seeded Gonzaga over No. 12 seed McNeese State.

Ike made all six of his field goals and all four free throws while grabbing 10 rebounds.

Ben Gregg had 12 points, Nolan Hickman scored 11 and Dusty Stromer finished with 10 for the hot-shooting Bulldogs, who spoiled McNeese State's first trip to the NCAA Tournament in 22 years.

They will face No. 4 Kansas in the next round.

Gonzaga, which shot 52% from the field and 48% from 3-point range, appears to feel right at home in Salt Lake City, and has played here more than any other site over the years and has posted a 9-3 record.

Christian Shumate and Shakhada Wells had 19 for the Cowboys.

Texas 56, Colorado State 44: Max Abmas and Dylan Disu each scored 12 points, and No. 7 seed Texas held Colorado State to 11 points in the first half en route to a victory in the first round of the NCAA Tournament.

The Longhorns (21-12) will meet second-seeded Tennessee on Saturday.

Isaiah Stevens and Joel Scott paced the Rams (25-11) with 10 points each. The Rams shot 29% from the field.

Colorado State, which held Virginia to 14 first-half points in their First Four game on Tuesday, jumped out to an 8-2 lead before the wheels came off.

The Rams missed 18 of their next 19 shots and scored just three points over the final 15½ minutes of the first half. Texas closed the half on a 25-3 run to take a 27-11 lead into the locker room after Abmas hit from downtown at the buzzer.

South Region

Oakland 80, No. 12 Kentucky 76: Jack Gohlke made 10 3-pointers and 14th-seeded Oakland delivered the first true

shock of this year's March Madness, beating third-seeded Kentucky in the first round of the NCAA Tournament.

The Grizzlies (24-11) sent the Wildcats (23-10) to another early March exit behind Gohlke, a graduate transfer who finished with 32 points, and some late shot-making by his teammates. Trey Townsend had 17 points for the Horizon League champions. DQ Cole added 12, including a 3 from the corner with 28 seconds left that gave the Grizzlies a four-point lead.

Antonio Reeves led Kentucky with 27 points. Tre Mitchell added 14 and Rob Dillingham scored 10, but the Wildcats and their roster stacked with NBA prospects spent most of the night trying — and failing — to chase down Gohlke.

The 6-foot-3 guard who came to the Grizzlies this season after playing for Division II Hillsdale College made 10 of 20 3-point attempts, seven in the first half. His only other points came after he was fouled — while attempting a 3.

Gohlke cooled off a bit over the final 20 minutes while often getting picked up at halfcourt, but his teammates helped pick up the slack. Oakland never trailed over the final 14:32 to give the program its first victory in the round of 64.

NC State 80, No. 22 Texas Tech 67: Ben Middlebrooks scored a career-high 21 points and 11th-seeded North Carolina State surged past sixth-seeded Texas Tech.

The Wolfpack (23-14), who won five games in five days in the ACC Tournament, won their first March Madness game in nine years behind Middlebrooks' boost off the bench and another bruising performance by center DJ Burns Jr.

The 6-foot-9, 275-pound Burns finished with 16 points. Mo Diarra had 17 points and 12 rebounds for N.C. State, and DJ

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Banchero, Magic top Pelicans 121-106

Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. — Paolo Banchero had 20 points, 10 rebounds and 11 assists for his second career triple-double, overcoming early shooting woes to help the Orlando Magic beat the New Orleans Pelicans 121-106 on Thursday night.

At 42-28, the Magic guaranteed its second winning season in 12 years.

Banchero made 9 of his last 18 shots from the field. Jalen Suggs led Orlando with 22 points.

Trey Murphy III had 21 points for New Orleans.

Wizards 109, Kings 102: Kyle Kuzma scored 31 points and host Washington snapped a five-game losing streak with a win over Sacramento.

Kuzma, who also had six rebounds, had missed the team's previous two games with shoulder soreness. Deni Avdija added 17 points and Corey Kispert scored 15, sending Sacramento

to its first loss in the past five meetings in Washington.

Bucks 115, Nets 108: Damian Lillard had 30 points and 12 assists and made two late steals as host Milwaukee capitalized on Giannis Antetokounmpo's return to beat Brooklyn.

Antetokounmpo had 21 points, nine rebounds and five assists after missing two games because of an issue with his left hamstring.

Mikal Bridges scored 24 points, Nic Claxton had 22 and Cam Thomas 21 for the Nets.

Rockets 127, Bulls 117: Jalen Green scored 26 points, Dillon Brooks had 23 before he was ejected from the game and host Houston won against Chicago.

Houston has gone 9-1 in March and is 2½ games behind Golden State for the final play-in spot in the Western Conference.

Jock Landale scored 17, Aaron

Holiday had 15 and Jeff Green added 14, all off the bench, for Houston.

Mavericks 113, Jazz 97: Luka Doncic had 34 points, nine rebounds and eight assists and host Dallas beat Utah to move into the sixth and final guaranteed playoff position in the Western Conference.

Doncic didn't have a rebound or an assist in the fourth quarter, playing four minutes. He shot 11 of 23 from the floor, 4 of 10 on 3s.

Daniel Gafford added 24 points.

Kyrie Irving scored 16 points, 11 in the second half.

Lauri Markkanen led Utah with 21 points.

Nuggets 113, Knicks 100: Michael Porter Jr. had a sensational shooting night on his way to 31 points, Nikola Jokic notched his 22nd triple-double of the season and host Denver held off New York.

Jokic finished with 30 points, 14 rebounds and 11 assists as the Nuggets improved to 13-2 since the All-Star break.

Porter was 13 of 16 from the field and 2 of 2 from the free-throw line.

Jamal Murray added 23 points before limping off the floor with under a minute remaining after hurting his ankle.

Suns 128, Hawks 115: Devin Booker scored 30 points, Eric Gordon added 21 off the bench and host Phoenix beat Atlanta.

Phoenix won largely thanks to superior long-range shooting, making 22 of 41 3-pointers. Booker hit six 3s while Gordon and Royce O'Neale both added four. Kevin Durant had 19 points and Grayson Allen added 13.

Atlanta has lost five of its past six. Dejounte Murray scored 29 points while De'Andre Hunter added 22.

NCAA

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Horne also scored 16.

The Wolfpack will face 14th-seeded Oakland on Saturday, ensuring that a double-digit seed will advance to the South Region semifinals.

Joe Toussaint led the Red Raiders (23-11) with 16 points.

West Region

No. 5 North Carolina 90, Wagner 62: Armando Bacot had 20 points and 15 rebounds, and No. 1 seed North Carolina never trailed in beating 16th-seeded Wagner.

Jae'Lyn Withers had a season-high 16 points and matched his best rebounding work with 10 boards for the West Region's headliner. That helped the Tar Heels (28-7) finish the game shooting 55% while dominating up front against a short-handed upstart aiming to pull off only

the third opening-round take-down of a 1-seed in March Madness history.

RJ Davis, named this week as a first-team All-American by The Associated Press, had 17 of his 22 points after halftime for the Tar Heels.

The Tar Heels dominated this one inside, finishing with 48 points in the paint and a 43-24 rebounding advantage to go with 17 second-chance points.

Melvin Council Jr. and Julian Brown each scored 18 points for the Seahawks (17-16).

No. 9 Arizona 85, Long Beach State 65: Arizona scored 16 straight points over a five-minute stretch to pull away for a victory in the first round of the NCAA Tournament and snuff out Dan Monson's coaching tenure at Long Beach State.

Kylan Boswell scored 20 points for the second-seeded

Wildcats (26-8), who made 13 3-pointers, the program record for March Madness.

This marked the end of a 17-year stretch at Long Beach State for the 62-year-old Monson. He learned last week that he wouldn't return next season. His team responded by unexpectedly winning the Big West Tournament to send the program to March Madness for the first time since 2012.

Arizona trailed by one with 2:34 left in the first half. A few free throws and a 3-pointer by Caleb Love started the Wildcats' onslaught before halftime. Keshad Johnson (13 points) kicked off the second half with a layup, a 3 and a dunk off an alley-oop from Love, who finished with 18 points and 11 rebounds.

Aboubacar Traore and A.J. George led the Beach (21-15) with 14 points each.

Dayton 63, Nevada 60: Darin Holmes II and seventh-seeded Dayton staged a huge March Madness rally, closing with a 24-4 run to erase a 17-point deficit and beat 10th-seeded Nevada in the West Region.

Holmes, the Atlantic 10 player of the year, finished with 18 points, including a three-point play with 2:01 remaining that gave Dayton its first lead since the first half.

The Flyers (25-7) trailed 56-39 with 7:36 remaining but responded with a 17-0 run that included two 3-pointers by Koby Brea, who finished with 15 points.

Enoch Cheeks' layup with 34 seconds left gave Dayton the lead for good.

Jarrod Lucas scored 17 points, and Kenan Blackshear and Nick Davidson scored 15 apiece for the Wolf Pack (26-8).

Hurricanes slip past Flyers 3-2 in OT

Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. — Seth Jarvis scored 1:28 into overtime to keep Carolina goalie Frederik Andersen unbeaten since returning to action in the Hurricanes' 3-2 victory over Philadelphia on Thursday night.

Jarvis posted his 26th goal to give Carolina its fifth consecutive victory.

Anderson made 31 saves to improve to 5-0-0 following a long absence. Jordan Martinook and Jalen Chatfield scored in the second period for the Hurricanes.

Scott Laughton and Travis Konecny had Philadelphia's goals, but the Flyers lost for the third time in their last four games. Goalie Samuel Ersson made 30 saves.

Konecny's team-leading 28th goal came with 9:44 remaining in regulation.

Rangers 5, Bruins 2: Artemi Panarin was credited with three goals — the second when Bruins forward Jake DeBrusk knocked the puck into the Boston net in the final minute of the second period — and New York went on to beat host Boston.

The Rangers' third victory over Boston in as many tries this season brings the Metropolitan Division leaders one point away from the defending Presidents' Trophy winners for the best record in the NHL.

Adam Fox also scored and Jonathan Quick stopped 24 shots for New York, which has won six of its past eight games. Mika Zibanejad added an empty-netter with two minutes left, and Panarin added his career-high 41st goal of the season a minute later with the Bruins' goal still empty.

DeBrusk and Justin Brazeau scored for Boston, and Jeremy Swayman made 26 saves.

Red Wings 6, Islanders 3: Dylan Larkin had two goals after an eight-game absence, Andrew Copp also scored twice to break a 20-game drought and

host Detroit beat the slumping New York Islanders.

Larkin returned from a lower-body injury to score his team-high 27th and 28th goals to help Detroit avenge a 5-3 home loss to the Islanders on Feb. 29.

Christian Fischer had a goal and two assists, Patrick Kane also scored and Michael Rasmussen and Alex DeBrincat added two assists apiece. James Reimer made 33 saves.

Mike Reilly, Jean-Gabriel Pageau and Mathew Barzal scored for New York, and Ilya Sorokin made 18 saves.

Devils 4, Jets 1: Jack Hughes scored two of the Devils' three power-play goals, brother Luke Hughes had a career-best three assists and host New Jersey stunned red-hot Winnipeg in one of their best performances in a disappointing season.

Nico Hischier scored the go-ahead goal on the power play and added two assists. Timo Meier had an empty net goal and two assists, and Jake Allen made 18 saves in winning for the third time in four starts for New Jersey.

Nikolaj Ehlers scored a spectacular goal for the Jets, while Laurent Brossoit made 37 saves in seeing his five-game winning streak snapped.

Predators 3, Panthers 0: Filip Forsberg scored twice and visiting Nashville extended their franchise-record point streak to 16 games with a win over Florida.

With the win, Nashville eclipsed its 15-game point streak (14-0-1) set in 2017-18 spanning from Feb. 17 to March 19 while surging into the Western Conference's top wild card spot in the process.

Gustav Nyqvist also scored for the Predators while Kevin Lankinen made 33 saves.

Sergei Bobrovsky made 34 saves for the Panthers.

Blues 5, Senators 2: Joel Hofer made 37 saves, Jake Neighbours scored twice and

visiting St. Louis beat Ottawa for their fifth victory in six games as they fight for the second and final Western Conference wild-card spot.

The Blues moved a point ahead of Minnesota and within two points of Vegas.

Jordan Kyrou had a goal and two assists, and Brandon Saad and Colton Parayko also scored.

Mark Kastelic and Dominik Kubalik scored for Ottawa, and Anton Forsberg stopped 22 shots.

Oilers 8, Sabres 3: Zach Hyman scored his 47th and 48th goals, the second in Edmonton's five-goal third period, and the Oilers overcame a two-goal deficit to rout visiting Buffalo.

Mattias Ekholm had two goals and an assist, Leon Draisaitl added a goal and two assists, Darnell Nurse, Ryan McLeod and Connor Brown also scored and Stuart Skinner made 26 saves.

J.J. Peterka scored twice for Buffalo. Victor Olofsson added a goal and Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen stopped 31 shots.

Ducks 4, Blackhawks 0: Rookie Lukas Dostal made 29 saves for his first NHL shutout, Alex Killorn had his second two-goal game of the season and host Anaheim beat Chicago to snap a seven-game losing streak.

Dostal became the third rookie goalie in franchise history with a shutout, joining John Gibson (six) and Ilya Bryzgalov (one).

Frank Vatrano got his 30th goal of the season at 10:31 of the third period when the Ducks had a two-man advantage. He is the second undrafted player in franchise history to reach the 30-goal mark — joining Andy McDonald, who scored 34 in 2005-06.

Brett Leason had a goal and an assist for the Ducks.

Arvid Soderblom made 21 saves for Chicago.

Canucks 4, Canadiens 1: De-

fenseman Nikita Zadorov scored twice in the first period, Casey DeSmith made 16 saves and Western Conference-leading host Vancouver beat struggling Montreal.

Conor Garland and Nils Aman also scored and Ilya Mikheyev had two assists. Vancouver improved to 44-18-8, good for a three-point margin over Winnipeg, Colorado and Dallas.

Juraj Slafkovsky scored for Montreal, and Sam Montembeault stopped 21 shots.

Lightning 4, Sharks 1: Brayden Point scored two goals, Nikita Kucherov had four assists and visiting Tampa Bay beat San Jose for their fifth straight win.

The Lightning, amid a five-game road trip, extended their lead for the top wild-card spot in the Eastern Conference to four points over the Red Wings.

Point broke a 1-1 tie with a power-play goal 34 seconds into the third period, scoring on the rebound from point-blank off a shot by Kucherov.

Anthony Duclair, who was traded to the Lightning from the Sharks at the deadline, extended the lead to 3-1 at 6:50 of the third period. Point then added his 40th goal of the season on a spectacular pass from Kucherov, who delivered a no-look feed from behind the goal line while on his knees battling for a loose puck.

Nicholas Paul also scored for Tampa Bay, and William Ecklund had San Jose's goal.

Golden Knights 2, Kraken 1: Keegan Kolesar scored off a rebound with 1:20 left to put host Vegas ahead for good in a victory over Seattle, strengthening the defending champion Golden Knights' hold on a playoff spot.

Jack Eichel and Chandler Stephenson scored goals, and Logan Thompson made 20 saves.

Jaden Schwartz scored for the Kraken goal, and Philipp Grubauer stopped 34 shots.