



MOHAMMED HAJJAR/ASSOCIATED PRESS

A graveyard on the grounds of a Gaza hospital. “The lucky are those who have someone to bury them when they die,” a doctor said.

Leaders Reach
Spending Deal
As Clock Ticks

By CARL HULSE

WASHINGTON — Senate and House leaders announced on Sunday that they had struck an overarching agreement on 2024 government funding, but it was not clear whether they would be able to cement the deal and pass it into law in time to avert a partial government shutdown in less than two weeks.

After weeks of negotiations and on the eve of Congress returning from its holiday break, top Senate and House members said they had agreed to set the total amount of spending at nearly \$1.66 trillion, bringing funding in line with the deal struck last year between President Biden and then-Speaker Kevin McCarthy that met with vehement conservative opposition.

The agreement includes an increase in Pentagon spending to \$886.3 billion and holds nondefense funding essentially flat at \$772.7 billion, including \$69 billion of added money agreed to through a handshake deal between Mr. McCarthy and the White House. That additional spending is offset by speeding up \$10 billion in cuts to I.R.S. enforcement and clawing back \$6 billion in unspent Covid dollars and other emergency funds. Officials said the agreement did not include an additional \$14 billion sought by the Republican and Democratic appropriators in the Senate to beef up both domestic and military spending.

“By securing the \$772.7 billion for nondefense discretionary funding, we can protect key domestic priorities like veterans benefits, health care and nutrition assistance from the draconian cuts sought by right-wing extremists,” a White House spokesman said.

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In War, Gazans Can’t Bury the Dead With Dignity

This article is by Raja Abdulrahim, Samar Abu Elouf and Yousef Masoud.

For four days, Kareem Sabawi’s body lay wrapped in a blanket in a cold, empty apartment as his family sheltered nearby. He was killed during intense Israeli bombardment near his family home, his father and mother said, and in the days that followed, it was too dangerous to step outside and lay their 10-year-old child to rest.

His family called the Palestine Red Crescent for help. But it was the early days of Israel’s ground invasion in northern Gaza, and forces were blocking streets with tanks and gunfire, preventing rescue workers from reaching those

Bodies Left Behind or
Rushed, at Risk, Into
Shallow Graves

killed by Israeli airstrikes. Each day, the father, Hazem Sabawi, suffered a double torment — mourning his son and unable to afford him the final dignity of a proper burial.

“After the fourth day, I said that’s it. Either I will be buried with him, or I won’t bury him at all,” he said, recounting how he laid his son under a guava tree behind a neighbor’s apartment building.

“Every human has the right to be buried,” Mr. Sabawi said.

It has been 13 weeks since Israel’s war in Gaza began after the attack on Israel by Hamas, which killed about 1,200 people, according to Israeli officials. Since then, the living in Gaza have been forced to inter their dead hurriedly and without ceremony or last rites, lest they risk the same fate as their loved ones.

More than 22,000 Palestinians have been killed by Israel since Oct. 7, according to the Gaza Health Ministry. Civilians are being killed at a pace with few precedents in this century. The conflict has turned Gaza into a “graveyard for thousands of children,” the

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TYLER HICKS/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Saving Ukraine’s Soldiers

Combat medics, hidden near the eastern front lines, risk everything to aid injured troops. Page A7.

Safer Childbirth for Black Mothers Faces Obstacles in New York

By JOSEPH GOLDSTEIN

Late last year, a 30-year-old woman, Christine Fields, died after giving birth at a public hospital in Brooklyn. Within a few weeks, inspectors from the New York State Department of Health arrived and began pulling medical files and interviewing doctors and nurses, the agency said.

This was not the first time government authorities had investi-

gated the labor and delivery department at the hospital, Woodhull Medical Center. In 2020, inspectors determined that a botched epidural, one in a series by the same Woodhull anesthesiologist, had led to the death of a 26-year-old first-time mother named Sha-Asia Semple.

Both Ms. Fields and Ms. Semple were Black. Their deaths have made Woodhull a symbol of one of the most striking racial disparities

Less Access to Doctors,
and Worse Hospitals

ties in New York: Black women are nine times more likely to die from pregnancy or childbirth than white women in New York City, a far starker disparity than the national one.

New York’s disturbing record

on maternal health has received growing attention from lawmakers, health authorities, activists and even filmmakers. In recent years, there has been a flurry of new legislation and programs: more government funding for doulas; a state board examining every maternal death; surveys for new mothers about their childbirth experience, with questions about racism.

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Conflict Looms With Iran,
From Lebanon to Red Sea

Using Hamas, Hezbollah and the Houthis,
Tehran Threatens Its Western Foes

By DAVID E. SANGER and STEVEN ERLANGER

BERLIN — President Biden and his top national security aides believed last summer that the chances of conflict with Iran and its proxies were well contained.

After secret talks, they had just concluded a deal that led to the release of five imprisoned Americans in return for \$6 billion in frozen Iranian funds and some Iranian prisoners. The militants that Tehran finances and arms — Hamas in the Palestinian territories, Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Houthis in Yemen — seemed relatively quiet. Iran even slowed enrichment of uranium at its underground nuclear sites, delaying its progress toward a weapon.

Hamas’s Oct. 7 invasion of Israel and Israel’s response have changed all that. Now American and Israeli officials, and a dozen countries working in concert to keep commerce flowing in the Red Sea, are confronting a newly aggressive Iran. After launching scores of attacks, from Lebanon to the Red Sea to Iraq, the proxy groups have come into direct conflict with U.S. forces twice in the past week, and Washington is openly threatening airstrikes if the violence does not abate.

At the same time, though little discussed by the Biden administration, the Iranian nuclear program has suddenly been accelerated. International inspectors announced in late December that

Iran initiated a threefold increase in its enrichment of near-bomb-grade uranium. By most rough estimates, Iran now has the fuel for at least three atomic weapons — and American intelligence officials believe the additional enrichment needed to turn that fuel into bomb-grade material would take only a few weeks.

“We are back to square one,” Nicolas de Rivi re, a top French diplomat deeply involved in negotiating the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, said last week.

Taken together, the dynamic with Iran is more complex than at any point since the seizure of the American Embassy in 1979 after the overthrow of the shah. American and European intelligence officials say they do not believe the Iranians want a direct conflict with the United States or Israel, which they suspect would not end well. But they seem more than willing to push the envelope, enabling attacks, coordinating targeting of American bases and ships carrying goods and fuel, and walking to the edge, again, of nuclear weapons capability.

Added to the complexity of the problem is the dramatically widening scope of Iran’s aid to Russia. What began as a trickle of Shahed drones sold to Russia for use against Ukraine has turned into a

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Town Turned Marijuana Oasis
Near Texas Rakes In the Green

By J. DAVID GOODMAN

SUNLAND PARK, N.M. — In a desert valley along the Rio Grande in New Mexico, the city of Sunland Park has generally offered few amenities for its

roughly 17,000 residents. No large grocery store. Few shops. Little to offer those uninterested in the racetrack casino or a hike to the gigantic cross of Cristo Del Rey that looms from a nearby mountaintop.

But for Texans who live in El Paso, just over the state line, Sunland Park has lately become a regular destination. The reason: marijuana.

Cars with Texas plates flock regularly to the many cannabis dispensaries — one with a drive-through, another offering discounts on “Texas Tuesday” — that have sprung up since New Mexico began legal recreational sales in 2022.

In Texas, recreational marijuana



ERIN SCHAFF/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Jesus Mu oz working at Ultra Health in Sunland Park, N.M.

na is still illegal.

Legalization in New Mexico vaulted Sunland Park, a bedroom community with an aging industrial zone in a landscape of rock and sand, almost overnight into the top ranks of the nation’s marijuana boom towns, many of which have emerged on the borders of states with sharply different laws. Some locals have

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Blessing of Same-Sex Couples
Tests Faith of Africa’s Catholics

By JOHN ELIGON

MTHATHA, South Africa — The Vatican’s recent declaration allowing the blessing of same-sex couples caused a stir around the globe, but perhaps most of all in Africa, a rising center of the Roman Catholic Church’s future. In one statement after the next, bishops in several countries spoke of the fear and confusion the declaration has caused among their flocks, and said it was out of step with the continent’s culture and values.

The bishops also harbored a deeper fear: that in a place where the church is growing faster than anywhere else in the world, and where many forms of Christianity

are competing for worshipers, the declaration could slow the church’s expansion on the continent.

Bishop John Oballa of the Ngong Diocese near Nairobi said that a woman had written to him saying that a friend told her he wanted clarification on the declaration, or else he would convert to the Methodist Church.

“There’s a lot of vibrancy in many, many dioceses of Africa,” Bishop Oballa said in an interview. “We need to safeguard against anything that might derail that growth.”

He said he would advise his

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Winter Storm Hits Northeast

Forecasters warn of low visibility and poor road conditions in snowfall that may reach two inches an hour. PAGE A16

The Iowa Homestretch

Nearly a week before the state’s caucuses, a frenzy of campaigning belies a seemingly static G.O.P. race. PAGE A12

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A Stabbing’s Significance

A small-town death has stirred the far right in France, as the victim was white and some suspects are from an immigrant community. PAGE A4

Bangladesh Votes Amid Chaos

With the opposition in jail or off the ballots, the prime minister is expected to maintain her grip on power. PAGE A6

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Rock ‘n’ Roll Stateswoman

A record-label owner and engineer, Cordell Jackson played guitar in a raw, abrasive way. Overlooked. PAGE B6



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We look at nine picture books, including “I Am Jazz,” above, that have been challenged in parts of America. PAGE C2

Championing Female Writers

The playwright Julia Jordan, who helped the Lilly Awards take off, is back to concentrating on her own work. PAGE C1

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Boeing Jets Still Grounded

Airlines awaited word from the F.A.A. and from the manufacturer on how the 737 Max 9 should be inspected, after a hole appeared in the side of an Alaska Airlines plane. PAGE B1

The Dark Side of A.I.

In the hands of anonymous internet users, tools can create waves of harassing, racist and pornographic material. It is already happening on the 4chan message board. PAGE B1

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David French

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Sizing Up the Championship

The College Football Playoff final offers a clash of styles. Coaches who have played Washington and Michigan this season weigh in. PAGE D4

