

Xmas Parade

'Person of interest' in custody

5 dead, 40 injured after SUV speeds into parade

WAUKESHA, Nov 22, (AP): A joyous scene of marching bands and children dancing in Santa hats and waving pompoms turned deadly in an instant, as an SUV sped through barricades and into a Christmas parade in suburban Milwaukee, killing at least five people and injuring more than 40 others.

One video showed a woman screaming, "Oh my God!" repeatedly as a group of young dancers was struck Sunday. A father talked of going "from one crumpled body to the other" in search of his daughter. Members of a "Dancing Grannies" club were among those hit.

The city of Waukesha posted on its social media accounts late Sunday that it could confirm at least five died and more than 40 were injured, while noting that it was still collecting information. The city's statement also noted that many people took themselves to hospitals. The city did not release any additional information about those who died.

A "person of interest" was in custody, Waukesha Police Chief Dan Thompson said, but he gave no details about the person or any possible motive. The investigation was ongoing, with assistance from the Wisconsin Department of Justice.

"What took place in Waukesha today is sickening, and I have every confidence that those responsible will be brought to justice," Attorney General Josh Kaul, the state's top law enforcement officer, tweeted.

The horror was recorded by the city's livestream and onlookers' cellphones. One video shows the moment the SUV broke through the barricades and the sound of what appears to be several gunshots. Thompson said a Waukesha police officer fired his gun to try to stop the vehicle. No bystanders were injured by the gunfire, and Thompson said he did not know if the driver was struck by the officer's bullets.

Dancing

Another video shows a young child dancing in the street as the SUV speeds by, just a few feet from her, before it hurtles into parade participants a few hundred feet ahead. One video, of dancers with pompoms, ends with a group of people tending to a girl on the ground.

"There were pompoms and shoes and spilled hot chocolate everywhere. I had to go from one crumpled body to the other to find my daughter," Corey Montinho, a Waukesha school district board member, told the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. "My wife and two daughters were almost hit. Please pray for everybody. Please pray."

The Milwaukee Dancing Grannies posted on its Facebook page early Monday that some of its members were among the dead. The group's profile describes them as a "group of grannies that meet once a week to practice routines for summer and winter parades."

"Our group was doing what they loved, performing in front of crowds in a parade putting smiles on faces of all ages, filling them with joy and happiness," the post said.

"Those who died were extremely passionate Grannies. Their eyes gleamed ... joy of being a Grannie. They were the glue ... held us together."

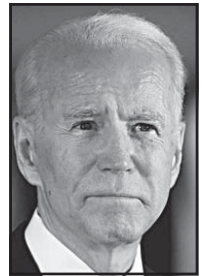
President Joe Biden was briefed Sunday night, White House press secretary Jen Psaki said on Twitter. Assistance is being offered to local officials, she said, and "Our hearts are with the families and the entire community."

The parade, held each year on the Sunday before Thanksgiving, is sponsored by the city's Chamber of Commerce. This year's, the 59th, had the theme of "comfort and joy."

A Catholic priest, multiple parishioners and Waukesha Catholic schoolchildren were among those injured, the Archdiocese of Milwaukee spokeswoman Sandra Peterson said.

Chris Germain, co-owner of the Aspire Dance Center studio, had about 70 people in the parade ranging from as young as 2 being pulled in wagons to age 18. Germain, whose 3-year-old daughter was in the parade, said he was driving at the head of their entry when he saw a maroon SUV that "just blazed right past us." A police officer ran past in chase. Germain said he jumped out of his own SUV and gathered the girls who were with him to safety. Then he walked forward to see the damage.

"There were small children laying all over the road, there were police officers and EMTs doing CPR on multiple members of the parade," he said.



Biden

Budget bill moves to Senate

Democrats confident on methane fee

'We are at a pivotal moment'

Vermont Democratic Welch to seek Senate seat

WASHINGTON, Nov 22, (AP): A Democratic plan to impose a fee on methane emissions from oil and gas wells has cleared a key hurdle, but it faces strong opposition from the oil and gas industry and criticism by centrist Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va.

The proposed fee on methane - a powerful pollutant that contributes to global warming - was included in a huge social and environmental policy bill passed by House Democrats last Friday.

As the bill moves to the Senate, attention again will focus on Manchin, a moderate who has already forced Democrats to abandon one of their biggest climate proposals: a clean-electricity program that would boost wind and solar power while phasing out coal and gas-fired power plants.

Manchin, whose state is a leading producer of coal and natural gas, has said he worries a methane tax could be used to drive energy companies out of business. He said before the House vote that he wants to make sure the fee is structured to incentivize innovation and not just "punish" energy companies "for the sake of punishing" them.

Comment

A spokeswoman for Manchin declined to comment after the House vote, but Democrats in the House and Senate said they are confident the fee will remain in the Senate bill, despite a 50-50 split in the chamber that gives every Democrat veto power. Republicans unanimously oppose the bill.

Language approved by the House represents a compromise that would slap a rising fee on excess emissions at oil and gas facilities, reaching \$1,500 per ton in 2025, along with \$775 million in subsidies for companies that take steps to reduce emissions.

Rep Frank Pallone, D-N.J., who chairs the House Energy and Commerce Committee, said he and other Democrats have been working with senators on the methane fee, including Manchin, who chairs the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

"We have this very important provision with regard to methane emissions that was

WASHINGTON, Nov 22, (AP): Vermont's sole member of the US House of Representatives, Democrat Peter Welch, announced Monday that he will run for the U.S. Senate seat now held by Democratic Sen. Patrick Leahy.

Welch's decision comes a week after the 81-year-old Leahy's announcement that he will not seek reelection to the seat he first won in 1974.

The 74-year-old Welch said the 2022 election will determine control of the Senate and, with it, what he can accomplish for Vermont families.

"We are at a pivotal moment," Welch said in a statement distributed by his campaign. "Vermont families are struggling through multiple crises: a global pandemic, the consequences of climate change, and a racial reckoning genera-

tions in the making."

He said that if elected he would be ready to fight for progressive change from the first day in office.

He promised to continue to fight to ensure working families have access to child care and paid family leave. He said he also would work to pass a Green New Deal to protect the environment, lower the cost of healthcare and prescription drug costs, ensure that women have control over their own healthcare decisions and protect voting rights and American democracy.

The decisions by Leahy and now Welch will create the first open seats in Vermont's three-member congressional delegation since 2006, when independent Bernie Sanders moved to the Senate and Welch took his seat in the House.

While the Senate seat will be open, Welch, who during his years in the House has been consistently one of Vermont's top vote-getters, would have an instant advantage.

Vermont's popular Republican governor, Phil Scott, has said he is not interested in running for the Senate. It's unclear whom the state GOP will find to run for either the Senate seat or the House seat.

Vermont has never sent a woman or a member of a racial minority community to Washington. Several female politicians have expressed interest in running for a vacant seat, but the only person who has said she would run for the House if Welch ran for the Senate is Democratic state Sen. Keshia Ram Hinsdale.

worked on with the senators and was also worked on with House members over the last few weeks," Pallone said at a news conference Friday. "So I believe this is pretty much it. I mean, there may be some additional changes, but ... in terms of the actual substantive authorizing language, I think we're pretty solid at this point."

While the Senate may make minor revisions over the next few weeks, "nothing major, in my opinion," will be changed or taken out, Pallone said.

Delaware Sen. Tom Carper, a Democrat who chairs the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, also is optimistic that the methane fee - formally known as the Methane Emissions Reduction Program - will be included in the final bill.

"Instead of punishing industry, our program incentivizes good behavior, phases in

over time, and ramps up (fees) over time as well," Carper said in a statement. "It's good for the planet and good for job creation - a win-win in my book."

The proposed methane tax comes as President Joe Biden launches a wide-ranging plan to reduce methane emissions, which pack a stronger short-term punch on climate than even carbon dioxide.

Pledged

Biden pledged at a UN climate summit in Glasgow, Scotland, earlier this month to work with the European Union and dozens of other nations to reduce global methane emissions by 30% by 2030.

The centerpiece of US actions is a long-awaited rule by the Environmental Protection Agency to tighten methane regulations for the oil and gas sector. The proposed rule

would for the first time target reductions from existing oil and gas wells nationwide, rather than focus only on new wells as previous regulations have done.

The new US rule, along with the global pledge, should "make a huge difference, not only in fighting climate change, but in improving health and reducing asthma and other respiratory problems, Biden said.

Once finalized, the proposed requirements should reduce methane emissions from US drilling operations and equipment by approximately 75% by 2030, compared with 2005 levels, the White House said.

The oil and natural gas industry, the nation's largest industrial source of methane emissions, supports methane regulation but opposes the congressional fee as an unnecessary tax that could drive up energy costs and result in the loss of thousands of jobs.

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