

# Groton Daily Independent

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## Wednesday, Nov. 27

Senior Menu: Chili, corn bread, coleslaw, fruit.

Emmanuel Lutheran: No Confirmation

St. John's Lutheran: Thanksgiving Eve Service, 7 p.m.

United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.

No School - Thanksgiving Break

## Thursday, Nov. 28

HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

No School - Thanksgiving Break

Community Thanksgiving Dinner, 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., Groton Community Center

## Friday, Nov. 29

No School - Thanksgiving Break

## Saturday, Nov. 30

Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., 209 N Main

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

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## FROSTY CLUE

I/My.....

27. Am a North Carolina Tar Heels Fan



### Snow Queen Contest is Sunday

The 79th Groton Area Snow Queen Contest will be held on Sunday, December 1st in the GHS Old Gymnasium at 4:30pm. The contest will feature three high school seniors and seven high school freshmen vying for the Senior and Junior Snow Queen Titles, the crowning of a kindergarten prince and princess, a talent contest that will exhibit a senior and five junior talent entries, ice cream refreshments, and the unveiling of the mystery frosty (\$100 Chamber Bucks for the correct guess – must be present to win)! The Groton Area Snow Queen Committee welcomes all to come and enjoy the show!

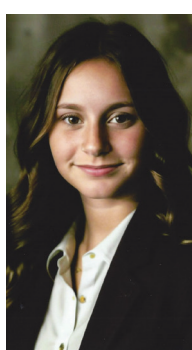
### Freshmen Candidates



Gracie Pearson,  
daughter of  
Lucas and  
Trish Pearson



Elizabeth  
Cole,  
daughter of  
Charles and  
Carrie Cole



Taryn Thomp-  
son, daughter  
of  
Mark and June  
Thompson



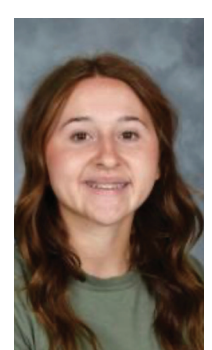
Kyleigh Kroll,  
daughter of  
John and  
Katie Kroll



Addison  
Hoeft,  
daughter of  
Travis and  
Tiffany Hoeft



Chesney  
Weber,  
daughter of  
Jeremy and  
Samantha  
Weber



Sydney Locke,  
daughter  
of Matt and  
Tammy Locke

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# 1440

**Why 1440? The printing press was invented around the year 1440, spreading knowledge to the masses and changing the course of history. More facts: In every day, there are 1,440 minutes. We're here to make each one count.**

## Thanksgiving Logistics

A record 80 million Americans will travel 50 miles or more over Thanksgiving weekend, the majority (a record 71.7 million) by car. Millions more are expected to fly, including a record-breaking 3 million on Sunday alone.

Over 80% of Americans will eat turkey, requiring an estimated 46 million birds to supply the feast. A recent survey suggests mashed potatoes, bread rolls, and pie will be standard fare; macaroni and cheese consumption is highly regionalized. A holiday meal for 10 will cost \$58 on average, down 5% from last year and the lowest inflation-adjusted cost in the 39 years of the farmers' survey.

Meteorologists are predicting a relatively wet, chilly Thanksgiving for half the country, with snow in the Midwest and rain on the East Coast. A cold front will impact close to 200 million Americans by Saturday. The Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade will take place rain or shine tomorrow in New York City (8:30 am ET, NBC).

## Proposed Obesity Coverage

The Biden administration introduced a proposal yesterday to expand Medicare and Medicaid coverage to include popular weight-loss medications like Wegovy and Zepbound. The initiative, led by the Department of Health and Human Services, would classify obesity as a treatable disease to reduce associated health risks including heart disease and diabetes.

Roughly 40% of Americans are considered clinically obese. Weight-loss drugs can reduce weight by as much as 15% to 25% by regulating appetite, signaling to the brain that the body is full, and reducing hunger. The proposed rule could reduce out-of-pocket costs for the drug—which can exceed \$1,000 per month—by up to 95% for over 7.4 million Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries. The estimated cost to taxpayers is \$35B over the next decade.

The rule would not be finalized until after President-elect Donald Trump takes office; his HHS pick, Robert F. Kennedy Jr., has criticized the drugmakers, instead seeking to prioritize access to healthy nutrition.

## Tit-for-Tat Tariffs

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum threatened retaliatory tariffs on US goods yesterday, in response to President-elect Donald Trump's pledged 25% tariffs if Mexico fails to halt the flow of drugs and migrants into the US. Trump also indicated he would impose a 25% tariff on goods from Canada and an additional 10% tariff on goods from China.

The US is the world's largest importer, with Mexico topping its list of trading partners, followed by Canada and China. The three North American countries exchanged \$1.8T worth of goods in 2022; annual US trade with China is \$600B. The US is Mexico's top importer, with cars, food, and beer among the goods most likely to be impacted by tariffs. Canada supplied 60% of the US' crude oil, among other goods.

The announcement shook up global markets yesterday, with automakers' stocks especially hard hit. Canadian and Mexican currencies fell against the value of the dollar.

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## Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Disney settles \$43M class-action lawsuit with 9,000 female workers alleging they were paid less than their male counterparts in comparable roles.

Jim Abrahams, film director and writer best known for "Airplane!" and "Naked Gun" series, dies at age 80. French-Japanese TV series "Les Gouttes de Dieu (Drops of God)" wins best drama at 2024 International Emmy Awards.

Former show host Wendy Williams reportedly "permanently disabled and legally incapacitated" amid dementia battle; Williams revealed her dementia diagnosis earlier this year.

## Science & Technology

Chipmaker Intel awarded close to \$7.9B to support building and expansion of semiconductor manufacturing facilities in Arizona, New Mexico, Oregon, and Ohio; funds come from the 2022 CHIPS Act.

Cancer researchers discover how low glucose environments around tumors help cancer cells evade chemotherapy drugs; findings may lead to more effective treatments.

Scientists transplant pig heart valve into a rodent with the assistance of human skin cells reprogrammed into heart valve cells; the procedure paves the way for similar organ transplants to humans, with roughly 30,000 Americans dying each year from aortic heart valve failure.

## Business & Markets

US stock markets close higher (S&P 500 +0.6%, Dow +0.3%, Nasdaq +0.6%) following news of Israel-Hezbollah ceasefire deal.

Walmart rolls back diversity programs; changes include closing \$100M equity racial center launched in 2020, phasing out the term "DEI," ending preference for suppliers majority owned by women, LGBTQ+ members, veterans, and others; ends sale of some transgender-linked products on Walmart.com.

Federal Reserve minutes from meeting earlier this month suggest slower pace of interest rate cuts than previously indicated; next meeting is Dec. 17-18.

Heard about the Fed, but don't know how it works? Sign up for 1440 Business & Finance, where we cover this topic and many more.

## Politics & World Affairs

Israel and Hezbollah agree to US- and France-led ceasefire, ending 14 months of rocket, missile exchanges; Israeli soldiers to withdraw, Lebanese army to repopulate country's south in the coming 60 days.

President-elect Donald Trump signs memorandum of understanding with the Biden White House, clearing the stage for the next phase of the presidential transition.

Thirty-three survivors rescued after Red Sea tourist boat with Egyptian crew sinks; seven people remain unaccounted for.

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## Groton Community December Calendar of Events

### Sunday, Dec. 1

St. John's Lutheran: Worship with communion: St. John's at 9 a.m.; Zion at 11 a.m.  
Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.; No Sunday School; Choir, 6 p.m.  
FFA State LDE, Rapid City  
Pancake Sunday: 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., Groton Community Center (proceeds benefit the Historical Society's jail restoration.  
Snow Queen Contest, 4:30 p.m., GHS Gym.  
Groton CM&A: Sunday School, 9:15 a.m. (Daniel and Karla Grenz will be speaking); worship, 10:30 a.m.  
First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.  
Groton CM&A: Sunday School, 9:15 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m.  
United Methodist: Worship with communion: Conde at 8:30 a.m.; Groton at 10:30 a.m.; No Sunday School, Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.

### Monday, Dec. 2

Senior Menu: Spaghetti with meat sauce, corn, garlic bread, fruit.  
School Breakfast: French Toast.  
School Lunch: Chicken patty, sweet potato puffs.  
Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.  
First day of allowable boys' basketball practice  
FFA State LDE in Rapid City  
JH and JV Boys Wrestling Invitational at Faulkton  
JH GBB at Clark (7th at 6 p.m., 8th at 7 p.m.)  
Pantry, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Groton Community Center

### Tuesday, Dec. 3

Senior Menu: Swiss steak, mashed potato with gravy, winter blend, pears, whole wheat bread.  
School Breakfast: Scones  
School Lunch: Pasta with meat sauce, bread stick.  
St. John's Lutheran: Ladies Aid/LWML Christmas Party, noon.  
JH GBB hosts Redfield (7th at 6:15 p.m.; 8th at 7:15 p.m.)  
City Council meeting, 7 p.m.  
Common Cents Thrift Store, 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., 209 N Main.  
Pantry, 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., Groton Community Center  
Groton United Methodist: Bible Study with Pastor Rob, 10 a.m.

### Wednesday, Dec. 4

Senior Menu: Tater tot hot dish, mixed vegetables, pineapple, whole wheat bread.  
School Breakfast: Oatmeal.  
School Lunch: Cheese stuffed breadstick, Marinara Sauce.  
St. John's Lutheran: Confirmation, 3:45 p.m.; DFC Youth supper, 6 p.m.; Advent Service, 7 p.m.  
Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 4 p.m.; Sarah Circle, 5 p.m.; League, 6:30 p.m.  
Groton Chamber Board Meeting, 6 p.m., at the Jungle  
Groton United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.

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## DID YOU KNOW . . .

You can use the GDI Fitness Center by paying by the month and you can cancel any time without penalty. Call/Text Paul at 605-397-7460 for details!

### Thursday, Dec. 5

Senior Menu: Chicken cordon bleu hot dish, catalina blend, oranges, whole wheat bread.  
School Breakfast: Biscuits.  
School Lunch: Italian Rice Bake, corn.  
Emmanuel Lutheran: Nigeria Circle, 2 p.m.  
MS/HS Christmas Program, 7 p.m., GHS Gym

### Friday, Dec. 6

Senior Menu: New England Ham Dinner, California blend, peaches, dinner roll.  
School Breakfast: Breakfast cookie.  
School Lunch: Potato soup, ham sandwich.  
St. John's Lutheran: Preschool Christmas Program, 7 p.m.  
GBB hosts Timber Lake (C game at 5 p.m., JV at 6 p.m., varsity to follow)  
Girls Varsity Wrestling at Watertown, 4 p.m.  
Christmas Tour of Trees at Wage Memorial Library, 3:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

### Saturday, Dec. 7

St. John's Lutheran: Christmas Season Parents Day Out, 1-5 p.m.  
Girls Varsity Wrestling at Dell Rapids, 9 a.m.  
Boys Varsity Wrestling at Clark Tourney, 9:30 a.m.  
JH GBB Jamboree at Groton Area, 10 a.m.  
Olive Grove Holiday Party, 6 p.m. to midnight.  
Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., 209 N Main  
Groton Robotics is in Mitchell.

### Sunday, Dec. 8

St. John's Lutheran: Worship at St. John's, 9 a.m.; Zion, 11 a.m.; Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.  
Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion, 9 a.m.; Sunday School, 10:15 a.m.; Choir, 6 p.m.  
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m.; SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.;  
Turton Mass, 11 a.m.  
First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.  
Groton CM&A: Sunday School, 9:15 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m.  
Fellowship of Christian Students (FCS), 3:16 p.m., GHS Conference Room  
United Methodist: Conde worship at 8:30 a.m.; Groton worship at 10:30 a.m.; Sunday School Christmas Practice with snack, 9:30 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.

### Monday, Dec. 9

Senior Menu: Beef noodle stroganoff, mixed vegetables, fruit cocktail, cookie, whole wheat bread.  
School Breakfast: Stuffed bagels.  
School Lunch: Corndogs, baked beans.  
Groton Senior Citizens meet at the Groton Community Center, 1 p.m.  
Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.  
JH Boys Wrestling at Sisseton, 5 p.m.  
JH GBB hosts Northwestern, one combined 6-quarter game, 6:30 p.m.  
School Board Meeting, 7 p.m.  
Pantry, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Groton Community Center

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## Tuesday, Dec. 10

Senior Menu: Baked fish, au gratin, winter blend, tropical fruit, whole wheat bread.

School Lunch: Waffles.

School Breakfast: Chicken strips, waffle fries.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Church Council, 6 p.m.

JH Boys Wrestling at Pierre, 4 p.m.

Common Cents Thrift Store, 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., 209 N Main.

Pantry, 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., Groton Community Center

Groton United Methodist: Bible Study with Pastor Rob, 10 a.m.

## Wednesday, Dec. 11

Senior Menu: Ham and raisin sauce, baked sweet potato, cheesy green beans, Jell-O cake, dinner roll.

School Breakfast: Muffins.

School Lunch: Cheese quesadilla, refried beans.

St. John's Lutheran: Confirmation, 3:45 p.m.; DFC Youth supper, 6 p.m.; Advent Service, 7 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Caroling, 6 p.m.

Groton United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.

## Thursday, Dec. 12

Senior Menu: Pork cutlet, creamy noodles, California blend, fruit, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Breakfast Pizza.

School Lunch: Chicken alfredo, cooked broccoli.

Groton Lions Club meeting, 6 p.m., 104 N Main

## Friday, Dec. 13

Senior Menu: Potato soup, ham salad croissant, Monterey blend, fruit.

School Breakfast: Egg wraps.

School Lunch: Garlic cheese bread, cooked carrots.

Girls Varsity Wrestling at Rapid City

Basketball Double Header at Hamlin (Boys C at 4 p.m., Girls JV at 4 p.m.; Boys JV at 5 p.m., Girls Varsity and Boys Varsity to follow

## Saturday, Dec. 14

Girls Varsity Wrestling at Rapid City

Santa Day at Professional Management Services, 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.

Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., 209 N Main

## Sunday, Dec. 15

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

Emmanuel Lutheran: Sunday School kids practice for program. 9 a.m.; Sunday School Christmas Program, 10:30 a.m.; Choir, 6 p.m.

Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m.; SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.

First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.

Groton CM&A: Sunday School, 9:15 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m.; Christmas program and dinner, 5 p.m.

United Methodist: Conde worship at 8:30 a.m.; Groton Sunday School program at 10:30 a.m.; Sunday School Christmas Practice, 9:30 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Lunch at Groton, 11:30 a.m.

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## Monday, Dec. 16

Senior Menu: Chicken tetrazzine, peas and carrots, pineapple tidbits, breadsticks.  
School Breakfast: Breakfast sliders.  
School Lunch: Chicken legs, mashed potatoes.  
Groton Senior Citizens meet at the Groton Community Center, 1 p.m.  
St. John's Lutheran: Christian Literature Circle, 7:30 p.m.  
Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.  
JH GBB at Sisseton, one game at 4 p.m.; Boys JH Wrestling at Webster, 4:30 p.m.; Boys JV Invitational Wrestling at Madison, 5 p.m.  
Pantry, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Groton Community Center

## Tuesday, Dec. 17

Senior Menu: Beef and broccoli stir fry, rice, mixed vegetables, firve cup salad, whole wheat bread.  
School Breakfast: Oatmeal.  
School Lunch: Hot dogs, chips.  
City Council Meeting, 7 p.m.  
St. John's Lutheran: Quilting, 9 a.m.  
Basketball Doubleheader - Hosts Sisseton: Boys C at 4 p.m. and Girls C at 5 p.m. in the gym; Girls JV at 4 p.m. and Boys JV at 5 p.m. followed by girls varsity and boys varsity in the Arena.  
Common Cents Thrift Store, 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., 209 N Main.  
Pantry, 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., Groton Community Center  
Groton United Methodist: Bible Study with Pastor Rob, 10 a.m.

## Wednesday, Dec. 18

Senior Menu: Chicken fried steak, mashed potatoes with gravy, oriental blend, fruit, whole wheat bread.  
School Breakfast: Cereal.  
School Lunch: Sweet and sour pork, rice.  
St. John's Lutheran: Confirmation, 3:45 p.m.; DFC Youth supper, 6 p.m.; Advent Service, 7 p.m.  
Groton United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Groton Ad Council, 7 p.m.

## Thursday, Dec. 19

Senior Menu: Baked pork chop, sweet potato, Catalina blend, chocolate pudding with banana, whole wheat bread.  
School Breakfast: Pancake on stick.  
School Lunch: Chicken nuggets, tater tots.  
JH GBB at Aberdeen Roncalli  
NEC Boys and Girls Wrestling at Groton Area, 4 p.m.  
Holiday Light Contest

## Friday, Dec. 20

Senior Menu: Bean and ham soup, egg salad sandwich, tomato spoon salad, fruit.  
School Breakfast: Egg bake.  
School Lunch: Cheese pizza, green beans.  
End of Second Quarter  
Elementary Christmas Program, 1 p.m., in the Arena.  
Early Dismissal, 2 p.m.  
Basketball hosts West Central: Gym: Boys C at 4 p.m.; Girls C at 5:15 p.m.; Arena: Girls JV at 4 p.m., Boys JV at 5:15 p.m.; followed by girls varsity and boys varsity.



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## Saturday, Dec. 21

FIRST DAY OF WINTER

Girls Varsity Wrestling vs. South Border at Ashley, N.D., 9 a.m.

Boys Varsity Wrestling at Sioux Valley Tourney, 10 a.m.

Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., 209 N Main

## Sunday, Dec. 22

St. John's Lutheran: Worship at St. John's at 9 a.m.; at Zion at 11 a.m.; Voter's Meeting, 9:45 a.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.; No Sunday School, Choir, 6 p.m.

Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m.; SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.

First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.

Groton CM&A: Sunday School, 9:15 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m.

United Methodist: Worship at Conde, 8:30 a.m., at Groton, 10:30 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.

## Monday, Dec. 23

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

Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.

Groton Senior Citizens meet at the Groton Community Center with a noon potluck.

Pantry, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Groton Community Center

## Tuesday, Dec. 24

Senior Menu: Creamed chicken, mixed vegetables, biscuit, fruit.

St. John's Lutheran: Christmas Eve Service, 4 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Christmas Eve Service, 7 p.m.

Common Cents Thrift Store, 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., 209 N Main.

Pantry is closed.

United Methodist: Groton Service at 5 p.m. Conde Service at 7 p.m.

## Wednesday, Dec. 25

St. John's Lutheran: Christmas Day Service at Zion, 9 a.m.

## Thursday, Dec. 26

Senior Menu: Tuna noodle hot dish with peas, California blend, peaches, whole wheat bread.

## Friday, Dec. 27

Senior Menu: Ranch chicken breast, rice, Normandy blend, apple crisp, whole wheat bread.

## Saturday, Dec. 28

The Doubleheader with Dakota Valley will now just be a Boys Basketball game at Dakota Valley on Saturday, January 18th

Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., 209 N Main

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## Sunday, Dec. 29

St. John's Lutheran: Worship at St. John's, 9 a.m. and at Zion, 11 a.m.  
Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.; No Sunday School.  
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m.; SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.;  
Turton Mass, 11 a.m.  
First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.  
Groton CM&A: Sunday School, 9:15 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m.  
United Methodist: Worship at Conde, 8:30 a.m., at Groton, 10:30 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.

## Monday, Dec. 30

Senior Menu: Chicken alredo, broccoli, pineapple, breadstick.  
Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.  
Girls Varsity Wrestling at Sioux Falls Lincoln.  
Boys Basketball at Westber: C at 5 p.m. followed by JV and Varsity.  
Pantry, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Groton Community Center

## Tuesday, Dec. 31

Senior Menu: Roast pork, mashed potatoes and gravy, three bean salad, fruit, whole wheat bread.  
Common Cents Thrift Store, 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., 209 N Main.  
Pantry, 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., Groton Community Center

### **\*\*LAND AUCTION\*\***

Up for auction is 66+/- acres land. 22.91 acres of tillable, 24.10 acres of CRP/CREP, 19.12+/- acres of hunting in Groton, SD on US Hwy 12. No easements on any of the acres. Unlimited possibilities ranging from recreational property of development property. You can bid online at HIBid.com up until we start the live auction Dec. 7th at 1 p.m. From there we will be taking live bids and internet bids. Auction will be held at the American Legion in Groton at 1 p.m.

Terms of the auction, 10% down on sale day (non-refundable). Closing within 20 days of auction at Kolker Law Office in Groton SD.

SAM HANSON, EXIT REALTY CONNECTION  
1001 9th Ave SE., Watertown, SD 57201, 605-520-6349  
shauctioneer@hotmail.com

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**The Gladiators won the Ezra Award for Innovation at the Tiger Nation Qualifier on November 23rd. Left to right are Haden Harder, Garrett Schultz, Rylee Hofer and Jameson Penning.**

(Courtesy Photo)

## Gladiators win Ezra Award at Harrisburg Robotics Tournament

Groton Robotics has had an exciting beginning of the 2024-2025 season! First going out to Box Elder, SD – Groton Robotics competed at Douglas High Stakes on October 26th. Recently they competed again in Harrisburg on November 23rd. This year, the newly built robots have several objectives. #1 Stacking rings and moving the targets to the proper locations. #2 Climbing – elevating their robot in the last 30 seconds in order to score points. #3 Strategy. There are ways to add points to your score or subtract points from the opponents scoring, it's just figuring out how to do it with the Offensive and Defensive plans in place!

These kids are performing against kids from around the state and region, such as Harrisburg, Omaha, Rapid City, Gillette, WY, Mitchell. They are holding their own and we're looking forward to continued progress throughout the season! Our next tournament will be held at the Corn Palace on December 7th.

**9050F – Gladiators:** Garrett Schultz, Lead – Rylee Hofer, Jameson Penning and Haden Harder  
Douglas High Stakes: Qualifiers Rank - 12 out of 24. Won Round of 16, Won quarterfinal, loss 17-8 semifinal.  
Harrisburg: Won the 2024 Ezra Award for Innovation! Qualifier Rank 2nd out of 21. Won quarterfinals, semifinal loss of 15-23.

**9050E - Galaxy-** Axel Warrington and Corbin Weismantel, Co-Lead, Ilyanna Dallaire and Ayce Warrington  
Douglas High Stakes: Qualifiers Rank – 3rd out of 24. Loss quarterfinal 14-20.  
Harrisburg: Qualifiers Rank 15th out of 21. Loss quarterfinal match 8-50.

**9050B – Gearheads:** Logan and Kira Warrington, Co-Lead, Peyton Padfield, Emmett Zoellner  
Douglas High Stakes: Qualifiers Rank – 18th out of 24. Won Round of 16, Loss 39 to 9 in the Quarter Final.  
Harrisburg: Qualifiers Rank 11th out of 21. Loss in quarterfinal match 7 to 40.

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## **NSU Men's Basketball**

### **Brooke and Mitchell Career Highs Not Enough in Loss to Marauders**

Aberdeen, S.D. – The Northern State University men's basketball team mounted a comeback Tuesday evening, out-scoring the University of Mary by 13 in the second half, however it was not enough to secure their first league win of the season.

#### THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 72, MARY 76

Records: NSU 1-5 (0-1 NSIC), MARY 2-6 (1-0 NSIC)

Attendance: 1176

#### HOW IT HAPPENED

The Marauders jumped out to an early double-digit lead at 6:41 in the first half and led 45-28 as the two teams entered the locker room

Northern rallied back with 44 points in the second, however it wasn't enough to break the deficit

The Wolves shot 45.9% from the floor, 45.8% from the 3-point line, and 55.6% from the foul line in the game

They scored 35 points off the bench and 28 points in the paint and added 11 made 3-pointers, 27 rebounds, 19 assists, five steals, and one block

The difference maker in the game with 12 offensive boards for the Marauders in their 39 total, which resulted in 20 UMary points

Devon Brooke led the team with a career high 16 points off the bench, hitting 6-of-9 from the floor, including four 3-pointers

Kaleb Mitchell was second on the team knocking down 6-of-9 as well with 14 points and a team leading nine rebounds; both numbers matched his career highs in each category

James Glenn and Kwat Abdelkarim added 12 and 11 points respectively, with Glenn dishing out a team leading eight assists

Mitchell also grabbed a team leading and career high three steals, while Marcus Burks was second on the team with five assists

#### NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

Devon Brooke: 16 points, 66.7 field goal%

Kaleb Mitchell: 14 points, 66.7 field goal%, 9 rebounds, 3 steals, 2 assists

James Glenn: 12 points, 8 assists, 4 rebounds, 1 steal

Kwat Abdelkarim: 11 points, 6 rebounds, 2 assists, 1 steal

#### UP NEXT

Northern State continues NSIC play next Thursday, December 5 on the road at MSU Moorhead. Tip-off is set for 7:30 p.m. against the Dragons.

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## Skating Rink taking shape

The Groton Skating Rink is taking shape as water has been added to the pond and is freezing rapidly with the recent cold temperature. So far about 80,000 gallons of water has been added to the pond. This will be the earliest that ice has been made at the skating rink.

### Groton Prairie Mixed Bowling League Week #1 Results

**Team Standings:** Coyotes 3, Cheetahs 3, Jackelopes 2, Shihtzus 2, Chipmunks 1, Foxes 1

**Men's High Games:** Lance Frohling 224, Brad Larson 200, Butch Farmen 197

**Women's High Games:** Michelle Johnson 176, Alexa Schuring 162, Nancy Radke 158

**Men's High Series:** Lance Frohling 538, Randy Stanley 520, Brad Larson and Butch Farmen 512

**Women's High Series:** Nancy Radke 462, Michelle Johnson 407, Alexa Schuring 391

### Groton Prairie Mixed Bowling League Week #2 Results

**Team Standings:** Coyotes 6, Chipmunks 5, Foxes 4, Cheetahs 4, Jackelopes 3, Shihtzus 2

**Men's High Games:** Brad Waage 210, Brad Larson 201, Larry Frohling 185

**Women's High Games:** Darci Spanier 177, Sue Stanley 171, Vicki Walter 167

**Men's High Series:** Brad Waage 536, Butch Farmen 523, Randy Stanley 497

**Women's High Series:** Vicki Walter 464, Darci Spanier 439, Brenda Waage 424

### Groton Prairie Mixed Bowling League Week #3 Results

**Team Standings:** Coyotes 9, Cheetahs 8, Chipmunks 7, Foxes 6, Jackelopes 4, Shihtzus 2

**Men's High Games:** Brad Waage 236, Brad Larson 192, Brody Sombke 187

**Women's High Games:** Sue Stanley 167, Dar Larson 154, Darci Spanier 149

**Men's High Series:** Brad Waage 547, Lance Frohling 536, Brody Sombke 509

**Women's High Series:** Sue Stanley 442, Dar Larson 433, Darci Spanier 419

## McCook County Fatal Crash

What: Two vehicle fatal crash

Where: SD Highway 42, mile marker 345, 10 miles northeast of Monroe, SD

When: 7:58 a.m., November 26, 2024

Driver 1: 39-year-old male from Monroe, SD, fatal injuries

Vehicle 1: 2012 Volkswagen CC Sport

Seat belt Used: Yes

Driver 2: 52-year-old male from Mitchell, SD, no injuries

Vehicle 2: 2025 Western Tanker Truck

Seat belt Used: Yes

McCook County, S.D.- A 39-year-old man died this morning in a head-on collision, 10 miles northeast of Monroe, SD.

The names of the persons involved have not been released pending notification of family members.

Preliminary crash information indicates the driver of a 2012 Volkswagen CC Sport was traveling east on SD Highway 42 near the intersection of 454th Avenue when the vehicle crossed the center line and collided head-on with an approaching tanker truck.

The driver of the Volkswagen passed away at the scene from his injuries. The driver of the tanker truck was not injured.

The South Dakota Highway Patrol is investigating the crash. All information released so far is only preliminary.

The Highway Patrol is an agency of the South Dakota Department of Public Safety.

###

## S.D. Highway 37 (Dakota Avenue) to Reopen to Traffic in Huron

HURON, S.D. – On Tuesday, Nov. 26, 2024, S.D. Highway 37 (Dakota Avenue) is scheduled to reopen to traffic from Market Street to 7th Street in Huron. This section of Highway 37 has been closed since April 2024 as part of a two-year reconstruction project. Highway 37 will be fully reopened to traffic until operations continue in the spring of 2025.

Phase two of the reconstruction project from U.S. Highway 14 to Market Street and 7th Street to 9th Street will be completed during the summer of 2025. The prime contractor for the \$14.2 million project is BX Civil and Construction of Dell Rapids, SD. The overall completion date for the project is October 2025.

## Names Released in Hanson County Fatal Crash

What: Single vehicle fatal crash

Where: I-90, mile marker 344, 1 mile north of Alexandria, SD

When: 8:41 a.m., Saturday, November 23, 2024

Driver 1: Lois Kelli Watson, 68-year-old female from Council Bluffs, IA, fatal injuries

Vehicle 1: 2024 Chevy Silverado 2500

Seat Belt Used: Yes

Passenger 1: Caroline Delia Nadeau, 62-year-old female from Oceanside, CA, serious, life-threatening injuries

Seat Belt Used: Yes

Passenger 2: 4-year-old female, minor injuries. The passenger's name has not been released.

Seat Belt Used: Yes

Hanson County, S.D.- One person died and another was seriously injured Saturday morning in a single-vehicle crash near Alexandria, SD.

Preliminary crash information indicates Lois Kelli Watson, the driver of a 2024 Chevy Silverado, was traveling westbound on I-90 near mile marker 344. She drifted into the median, corrected her steering, then entered the north ditch where the vehicle rolled.

Watson died at the scene. Her adult passenger, Caroline Delia Nadeau, was transported to a Sioux Falls hospital with serious, life-threatening injuries.

The South Dakota Highway Patrol is investigating the crash. All information released so far is only preliminary.

The Highway Patrol is an agency of the South Dakota Department of Public Safety.



## Wedding Reception

A wedding reception will be held for Julianna (Kosel) and Isaac Moll on Saturday, Nov. 30, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., at the Paul and Tina Kosel home, 110 N Washington St. The reception will be held in the garage.

The couple was married on July 30, 2024 at Sarasota, Fla. Julianna and Isaac are coming home for the Thanksgiving break.



## 90th Birthday Card Shower

A card shower is requested for Darrell Henderson on his 90th birthday, December 1, 2024.

Darrell and Deanna have two children: Jeffrey and Beth, with Jeff's wife, Joyce, and grandson, Dustin, and a great granddaughter, Avianna.

**Cards may be sent to:**

**Darrell Henderson  
PO Box 494  
Groton, SD 57445**





## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### Congress may have to 'put the brakes on' some uses of presidential power, Thune says

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - NOVEMBER 26, 2024 4:43 PM

BRANDON — Incoming U.S. Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-South Dakota, signaled Tuesday he's willing to push back against potential attempts by President-elect Donald Trump to expand presidential power over federal spending.

"Every president is going to come in and try to do as much as they can by executive action as possible," Thune said. "Congress, in some cases, is going to be the entity that sometimes will have to put the brakes on."

Thune spoke Tuesday to the Brandon Valley Area Chamber of Commerce and also took questions from reporters. He said Republicans in Congress will work with Trump to achieve shared policy goals.

"The things we want to achieve at present are by and large the same," Thune said. "How we get there is another matter, and we'll have to work through that."

Trump's pick for his budget director, Russ Vought, served in the same role during the first Trump administration. Vought has since outlined an aggressive vision for presidential power in Project 2025, a 922-page document from the conservative-leaning Heritage Foundation.

"The President should use every possible tool to propose and impose fiscal discipline on the federal government," Vought wrote. "Anything short of that would constitute abject failure."

Trump has meanwhile tried to assert greater control over the Cabinet selection process, calling for the Senate to recess the chamber early next year so he can appoint whoever he wants without having to go through the confirmation process.

Thune said Tuesday he plans to immediately begin committee hearings on Cabinet nominees when Congress is sworn in on Jan. 3, 2025.

That'll give the Senate a head start vetting Trump's nominees before his inauguration on Jan. 20. After Trump is sworn in, Thune expects some nominations to quickly hit the floor of the Senate.

"The committees can't report them out until the president is officially sworn in and they're officially nominated," Thune told the audience Tuesday in Brandon. "But they could do hearings."

Thune told South Dakota reporters after the event that even though some questions have been raised about nominees, they "deserve a fair process" where senators question them on their background, qualifications and whether they "ought to be in these really important positions."



**U.S. Sen. John Thune, R-South Dakota, speaks to the Brandon Valley Area Chamber of Commerce on Nov. 26, 2024, in Brandon.** (Makenzie Huber/South Dakota Searchlight)

Thune said he has not taken recess appointments off the table if Democrats try to obstruct or delay the confirmation of nominees when they reach the Senate floor, "particularly if they're well regarded and they have bipartisan support."

Top priorities for Republican senators heading into the new session of Congress, Thune said, include extending Trump's 2017 tax cuts and securing the nation's southern border.

Thune said he plans to begin drafting a budget reconciliation resolution to push an extension of the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, key provisions of which expire at the end of 2025. The reconciliation process allows tax and spending bills to pass the Senate with 51 votes, instead of the 60 needed for most Senate legislation. Republicans will control 53 seats in the new Senate and will also control the House.

Failing to extend the tax cuts would lead to a \$4 trillion tax increase, Thune said.

*States Newsroom's D.C. Bureau contributed to this report.*

*Makenzie Huber is a lifelong South Dakotan who regularly reports on the intersection of politics and policy with health, education, social services and Indigenous affairs. Her work with South Dakota Searchlight earned her the title of South Dakota's Outstanding Young Journalist in 2024, and she was a 2024 finalist for the national Livingston Awards.*

## Carbon pipeline company has failed to address crossing concerns, oil pipeline company says

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - NOVEMBER 26, 2024 6:10 PM



**A sign displays the names of South Dakota's three elected public utilities commissioners outside of their Pierre office in January 2023.** (South

Dakota Searchlight/Joshua Haiar)

A company proposing a carbon dioxide pipeline should have conditions on its potential permit after it failed to address concerns about crossings with a crude oil pipeline, said the company that operates the oil pipeline.

Dakota Access LLC, which is controlled by Energy Transfer Partners, operates the Dakota Access Pipeline. It transports crude oil 1,172 miles from North Dakota to Illinois.

Summit Carbon Solutions plans a 2,500-mile pipeline to capture carbon dioxide from 57 ethanol plants across five states and transport it to North Dakota for underground storage. The project would capitalize on federal tax credits incentivizing the prevention of heat-trapping carbon emissions.

The routes of the existing and proposed pipeline cross eastern South Dakota. Summit recently reapplied for a permit after being re-

jected last year by the South Dakota Public Utilities Commission.

In a new filing with the commission, Dakota Access said Summit has not provided sufficient details — such as maps, depths and safety measures — about its proposed crossings of the Dakota Access Pipeline, known by the acronym "DAPL."

"Summit has largely refused to talk to Dakota Access about pipeline crossing agreements and necessary mitigation measures to prevent damage to DAPL," Dakota Access attorneys wrote.

To address the concerns, Dakota Access asked for 12 conditions if Summit receives a permit. The conditions include prohibiting heavy equipment or vehicles from operating directly on DAPL's right-of-way without protective measures, requiring abrasive-resistant coating to be applied to the carbon pipeline at crossings,

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and mandating that Summit monitor all crossing locations and notify Dakota Access at least 48 hours in advance of any construction activity near DAPL's right-of-way in South Dakota.

Alternatively, Dakota Access has requested that state regulators delay Summit's permit proceedings until an agreement on crossing terms is reached.

Summit Carbon Solutions did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Brian Jorde, an attorney for landowners opposing the carbon pipeline, said in a news release that Summit's failure to work with Dakota Access is problematic.

"The theme has been clear in South Dakota and across the region – Summit does not respect the law, they don't respect the will of the people, and they think they can force themselves on and through South Dakota," Jorde said.

Summit already has permits in Iowa and North Dakota. A decision is pending in Minnesota, and Nebraska has no state permitting processing for carbon pipelines.

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

## COMMENTARY

### It's time to crack down on the meat market monopoly

**National Beef Packing Company, Cargill, JBS and Tyson control 80% of the beef market**

**DAVE DICKEY, INVESTIGATE MIDWEST**

Big Beef has a history of breaking the law if it means making more money for its shareholders and company executives. When just four companies — National Beef Packing Company, Cargill, JBS, and Tyson — collectively control 80% of the U.S. beef market, it's relatively easy to collude and manipulate prices.

And should Big Beef get caught with its hooves in the cookie jar, the playbook says admit to nothing and try to negotiate with plaintiffs and the courts for a quick settlement. Just make the lawsuits go away.

You don't have to go back very far in time to find examples.

Two years ago, JBS agreed to pony up \$52.5 million dollars in a 2020 cattle market manipulation class action lawsuit that also roped in Tyson, NBPC and Cargill:

"Since at least the start of 2015, Defendants have exploited their market power in this highly concentrated market by conspiring to limit the supply of, and to fix the prices of, beef sold to Central Grocers and others in the U.S. wholesale market (the 'Conspiracy'). The principal, but not exclusive, means Defendants have used to effectuate their Conspiracy is a concerted scheme to artificially constrain the supply of beef entering the domestic supply chain. Defendants' collusive restriction of the beef supply has had the intended effect of artificially inflating beef prices. As a result,



**A JBS processing plant stands dormant after halting operations on June 1, 2021, in Greeley, Colorado. JBS facilities around the globe were impacted by a ransomware attack, forcing many of their facilities to shut down.** (Chet Strange/Getty Images)

As a result, the principal, but not exclusive, means Defendants have used to effectuate their Conspiracy is a concerted scheme to artificially constrain the supply of beef entering the domestic supply chain. Defendants' collusive restriction of the beef supply has had the intended effect of artificially inflating beef prices. As a result,

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Central Grocers and other Class members paid higher prices than they would have paid in a competitive market.”

Sysco Corporation — the nation’s largest food distributor — has filed a similar lawsuit claiming Big Beef coordinated efforts to limit the number of cattle slaughtered in order to boost profits.

Big Meat price fixing lawsuits also dot the landscape in the pork and chicken processing businesses.

And now the Golden Arches have joined the fray. McDonald’s — the nation’s largest fast food burger company — says Big Beef has been ripping the company off for almost a decade in violation of the federal Sherman Antitrust Act:

“Beginning at a time yet to be determined but at least as early as 2015 and continuing in force and effect, or both, thereafter, Defendants and their co-conspirators entered and engaged in a continuing agreement, understanding, and conspiracy in unreasonable restraint of trade to artificially fix, raise, increase, and/or stabilize the wholesale price for beef sold to Plaintiff, through its assignors, in the United States at artificially elevated levels, in unreasonable restraint of trade and commerce in violation of Section 1 of the Sherman Act, 15 U.S.C. § 1.”

McDonald’s wants a big splashy jury trial. The company claims it has witnesses with firsthand knowledge of the scheme. That’s the last thing Big Beef wants to see. But it may be just the ticket to get Congress to get off its collective backsides and put real pressure on the White House to bring criminal charges against Big Meat executives who conspire to price fix.

The Department of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission need to jointly study and release a report evaluating the current competitiveness of Big Beef and whether antitrust enforcers should attempt to break up the industry. Any future mergers making the Big Meat industry less competitive should be blocked pending the aforementioned DOJ/FTC study.

For far too long Big Meat in general and Big Beef in particular have been handled with kid gloves by the feds, receiving what amounts to slap-on-the wrist fines. It’s time — beyond time — to get serious with Big Beef’s unethical and illegal conduct. The question is do the feds have the political will?

*David Dickey served tours in the U.S. Marine Corps and U.S. Navy, is a 1988 graduate of the University of Illinois College of Media, and spent 28 years at the University of Illinois NPR member station WILL-AM 580. During the last 13 years of his career at WILL, he served as the station’s director of agricultural programming. He started contributing on a freelance basis to Investigate Midwest in 2015. His focus is on national agricultural issues that often cross over into state agricultural or local agricultural policy.*

## **New Trump budget chief wrote Project 2025’s agenda for empowering the presidency**

**BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - NOVEMBER 26, 2024 4:19 PM**

WASHINGTON — Incoming White House budget director Russ Vought has spent much of his career learning the detailed, often convoluted mechanisms that make up the Office of Management and Budget.

The agency, little known outside Washington, D.C., is relatively small compared to the rest of the federal government, but it acts like a nucleus for the executive branch and holds significant power.

OMB is responsible for releasing the president’s budget request every year, but also manages much of the executive branch by overseeing departments’ performance, reviewing the vast majority of federal regulations and coordinating how the various agencies communicate with Congress.

Vought was deputy director, acting director and then director at OMB during Trump’s first term.

Before that Vought worked as vice president of Heritage Action for America, policy director for the U.S. House Republican Conference, executive director of the Republican Study Committee and a legislative assistant for former Texas Republican Sen. Phil Gramm. He has an undergraduate degree from Wheaton College and a law degree from George Washington University Law School.

Following Trump’s first term in office, Vought founded the right-leaning Center for Renewing America. The group’s mission is “to renew a consensus of America as a nation under God with unique interests worthy of defending that flow from its people, institutions, and history, where individuals’ enjoyment of freedom

is predicated on just laws and healthy communities.”

## Cutting government spending

Vought outlined his agenda for the next four years in Project 2025, a 922-page document from the conservative-leaning Heritage Foundation that led to speculation during the presidential campaign about what Trump would seek to do without Congress, including in areas that constitutionally fall within the legislative branch, like government spending.

The Democratic presidential nominee, Vice President Kamala Harris, repeatedly tried to tie Project 2025 to Trump and his campaign, and they sought to distance themselves from its proposals. But Trump has since nominated some of its authors or contributors to run federal departments and agencies.

Vought, in a 26-page chapter on the executive office of the president, wrote the OMB director “must ensure the appointment of a General Counsel who is respected yet creative and fearless in his or her ability to challenge legal precedents that serve to protect the status quo.”

Trump, Vought and many others are bullish about cutting government spending, but will likely run into legal challenges if they try to spend more or considerably less than lawmakers approve in the dozen annual government funding bills.

## Budget request

One of Vought’s most visible responsibilities will be releasing the president’s annual budget request, a sweeping document that lays out the commander-in-chief’s proposal for the federal government’s tax and spending policy.

The president’s budget, however, is just a request since Congress has the constitutional authority to establish tax and spending policy.

Lawmakers on Capitol Hill write the dozen annual government funding bills that account for about one-third of annual federal spending. The rest of the federal government’s spending comes from Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, which are classified as mandatory programs and mostly run on autopilot unless Congress approves changes and the president signs off on a new law.

That separation of powers led to frustration during Trump’s first term in office and will likely do so again, since he spoke during the 2024 campaign about using “impoundment” to prevent the federal government from spending money Congress has approved.

Trump withheld security assistance funding from Ukraine during his first term in office, leading to one of his two impeachments and a ruling from the Government Accountability Office — a nonpartisan government watchdog — that he had violated the law.

“Faithful execution of the law does not permit the President to substitute his own policy priorities for those that Congress has enacted into law,” GAO wrote. “OMB withheld funds for a policy reason, which is not permitted under the Impoundment Control Act (ICA). The withholding was not a programmatic delay. Therefore, we conclude that OMB violated the ICA.”

Trump spoke on the campaign trail about using “impoundment” to drastically cut government spending, but that would likely lead to lawsuits and a Supreme Court ruling.

Vought’s think tank, Center for Renewing America, published analysis of presidents using impoundment throughout the country’s history, with the authors concluding the Impoundment Control Act is unconstitutional.



**Donald Trump, at the time president of the United States, listens to then-Office of Management and Budget Acting Director Russ Vought deliver remarks prior to Trump signing executive orders on Oct. 9, 2019, in the Roosevelt Room of the White House.** (Official White House

Photo by Shealah Craighead)

## 'Every possible tool'

Vought sought to defend the president's budget request in his chapter in Project 2025, writing that though "some mistakenly regard it as a mere paper-pushing exercise, the President's budget is in fact a powerful mechanism for setting and enforcing public policy at federal agencies."

He signaled the second Trump administration would be more nuanced in its interpretation of presidential authority.

"The President should use every possible tool to propose and impose fiscal discipline on the federal government," Vought wrote. "Anything short of that would constitute abject failure."

Vought also wrote about the management aspect of OMB's portfolio, pressing for political appointees to have more authority and influence than career staff.

"It is vital that the Director and his political staff, not the careerists, drive these offices in pursuit of the President's actual priorities and not let them set their own agenda based on the wishes of the sprawling 'good government' management community in and outside of government," Vought wrote. "Many Directors do not properly prioritize the management portfolio, leaving it to the Deputy for Management, but such neglect creates purposeless bureaucracy that impedes a President's agenda—an 'M Train to Nowhere.'"

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

## Biden administration unveils plan to cover weight loss meds under Medicare, Medicaid

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - NOVEMBER 26, 2024 10:56 AM

WASHINGTON — The Biden administration announced Tuesday it's reinterpreting federal law to allow Medicare and Medicaid patients access to anti-obesity medications to reduce their weight over the long term.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid's proposed rule, which the Trump administration would need to finalize before it would take effect, is expected to cost \$25 billion for Medicare combined with \$11 billion in federal spending and \$3.8 billion in state spending for Medicaid coverage throughout the next decade.

CMS is encouraging states to submit comments to the proposed rule explaining when they could implement the Medicaid provision, since that health care program includes cost sharing between federal and state governments.

Medicare is the federal health insurance program for people 65 and older and some younger people with certain disabilities or conditions.

Medicaid provides health care to some low-income individuals.

"People with obesity deserve to have affordable access to medical treatment and support, including anti-obesity medications for this disease; just as a person with type two diabetes can access these medications to get healthy," CMS Administrator Chiquita Brooks-LaSure said on a call with reporters. "That's why we're proposing to revise our interpretation of the law and provide coverage of anti-obesity medications for the treatment of obesity."

Brooks-LaSure said CMS was reinterpreting the law to view obesity as a chronic condition, which the



**The Biden administration is proposing to cover drugs like Ozempic, which is used to treat heart disease, diabetes and obesity, under Medicare and Medicaid.** (Photo illustration by Mario Tama/Getty Images)

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agency believes provides a pathway for Medicare and Medicaid to cover anti-obesity medications.

"The medical community today agrees that obesity is a chronic disease," Brooks-LaSure said. "It is a serious condition that increases the risk of premature death and can lead to other serious health issues, such as heart disease, stroke and diabetes."

More than 40% of Americans have obesity and CMS data shows 22% of Medicare recipients were diagnosed with obesity during 2022, double the number from 10 years ago, she said.

CMS wrote in a fact sheet about the proposed rule that since creation of the Medicare Part D program, which provides prescription drug coverage, the agency has "interpreted the statutory exclusion of 'agents when used for weight loss' to mean that a drug, when used for weight loss, is excluded from the definition of a covered Part D drug."

## Trump and RFK Jr.

President-elect Donald Trump hadn't commented on the proposal as of late Tuesday morning, but his planned nominee for Health and Human Services secretary, Robert F. Kennedy Jr., has repeatedly criticized newer weight loss drugs like Ozempic.

Kennedy was skeptical of studies showing the benefits of weight loss drugs during an appearance on Fox News last month, arguing the federal government would spend less money if it provided healthy meals to all Americans instead of coverage for weight loss drugs.

"If we spent about one-fifth of that giving good food, three meals a day, to every man, woman and child in our country, we could solve the obesity and diabetes epidemic overnight," Kennedy said.

CMS expects that about 3.4 million people in the Medicare program would become eligible for anti-obesity medication coverage under the proposed rule that would take effect in 2026 if Trump decides to finalize it.

Dan Tsai, CMS deputy administrator and director for the Center for Medicaid and CHIP Services, said during the call the agency hopes states submit comments in the weeks and months ahead detailing "when states would be required to implement this provision."

"We note in the rule that the rule reinterprets the Medicaid statute, which means this would govern all Medicaid programs," Tsai said. "But we specifically invite comment on a range of implications and timing for states."

## Cost differs in CBO report

The total cost of the program during the next decade that CMS provided on the call for Medicare was somewhat different from a cost estimate the Congressional Budget Office released last month. CBO is a government agency that provides nonpartisan budget information to Congress.

CBO projected it would cost the federal government \$35 billion between 2026 and 2034 to cover anti-obesity medications for Medicare patients.

"Relative to the direct costs of the medications, total savings from beneficiaries' improved health would be small—less than \$50 million in 2026 and rising to \$1.0 billion in 2034," CBO wrote in the analysis.

The report explained that Medicare currently covers "some obesity-related services, including screening, behavioral counseling, and bariatric surgery (a procedure performed on the stomach or intestines to induce weight loss)."

While Medicare does cover anti-obesity medications for recipients with diabetes or cardiovascular disease, CBO wrote, Medicare "is prohibited by law from covering medications for weight management as part of the standard prescription drug benefit."

The CBO report didn't include a cost estimate for Medicaid, but noted that weight management drug coverage within that program is optional.

"According to one study, of the 47 states with publicly available lists of preferred drugs, nine had Medicaid programs that covered Wegovy in the first quarter of 2023."

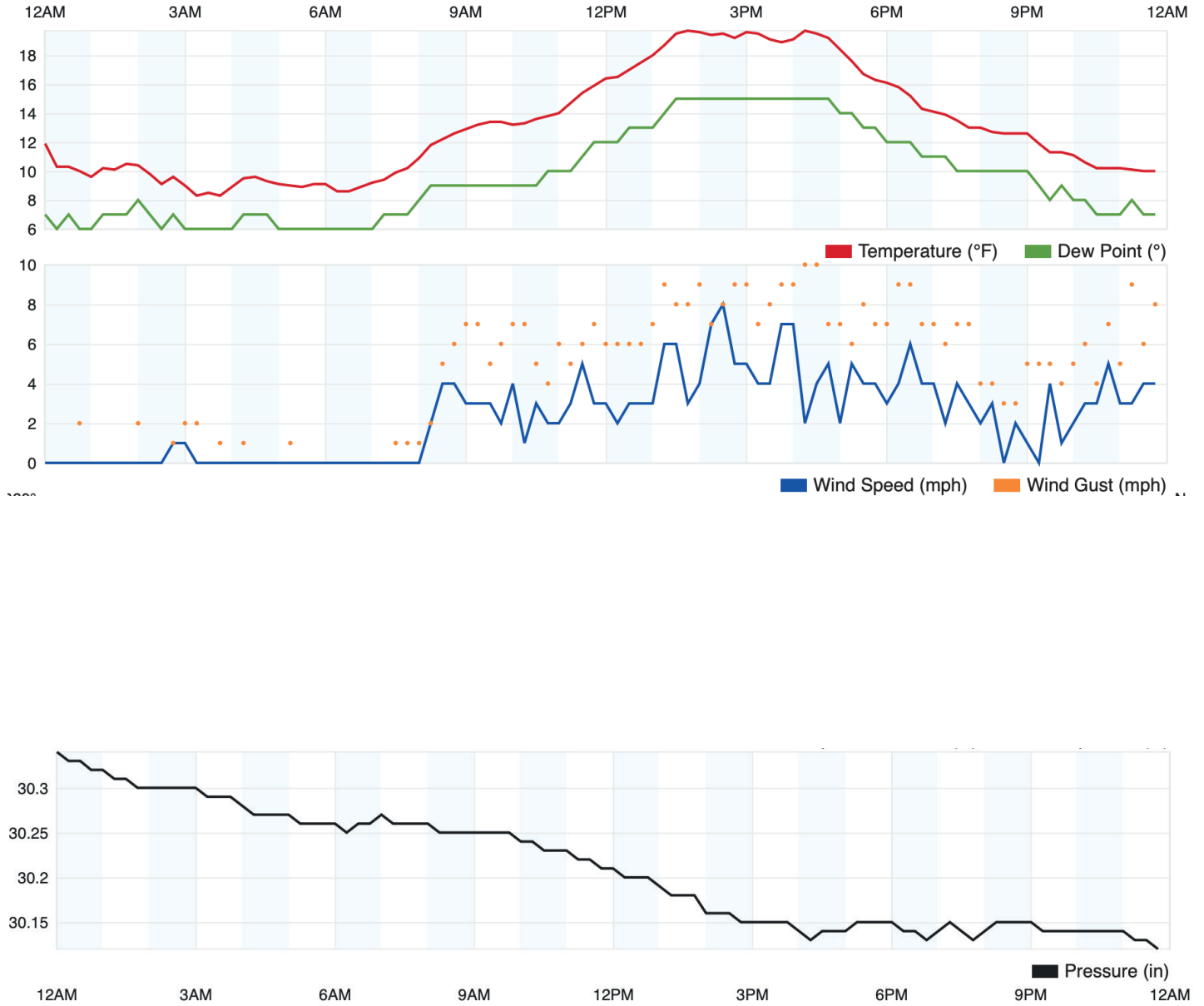
The National Governors Association and National Conference of State Legislatures both declined to comment on the proposed rule and its effect on state Medicaid programs.

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

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs





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Wednesday



High: 24 °F

Snow Likely  
and Patchy  
Fog then  
Patchy Fog

Wednesday  
Night



Low: 10 °F

Mostly Cloudy

Thanksgiving  
Day



High: 19 °F

Slight Chance  
Flurries

Thursday  
Night



Low: -4 °F

Mostly Clear

Friday



High: 13 °F

Sunny

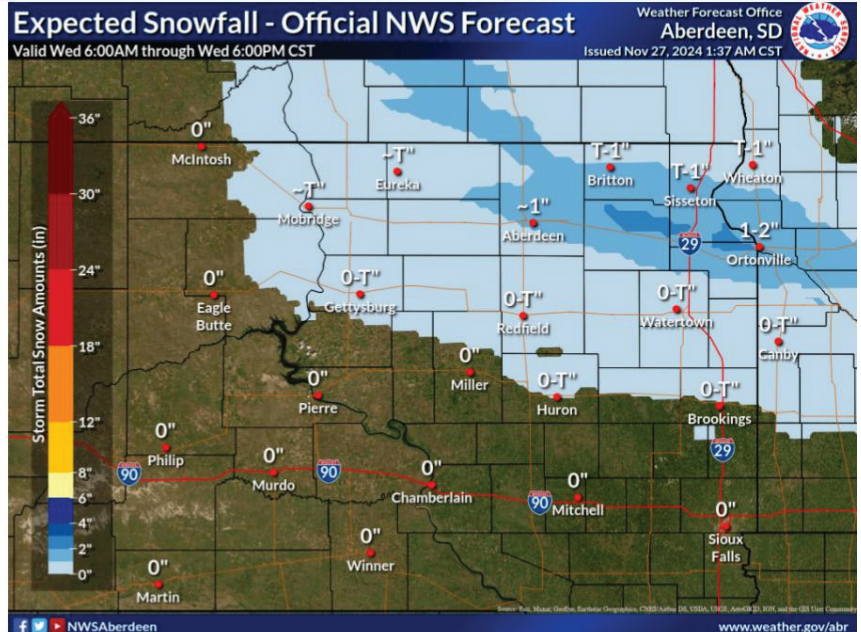


## Light Snow Ending This Evening

November 27, 2024  
3:42 AM

### Key Messages

- Light snow today over portions of central through northeastern SD into west central MN.
- Generally a **trace to as much as 2 inches** of snow expected, with the highest snow amounts over portions of northeastern SD into west central MN.
- **Roads could become slippery** where snow is falling and when the snow ends.
  - ◆ Could continue to be slippery for holiday travel Thursday



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

Portions of central and northeastern SD along with west central MN will see some light snow today. Accumulations are expected to be between a trace and 2 inches with highest amounts around and east of I-29. This could cause roads to become slippery so please be careful if you are driving today or on Thanksgiving Day.

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## Snow Timing and Probability

November 27, 2024  
3:47 AM

### Overview

- Highest chances (40-70%) over portions of northeastern SD into west central MN
- Snow will diminish northwest to southeast over the forecast area through the afternoon

### Weather Forecast

	11/27 Wed													
	4am	5am	6am	7am	8am	9am	10am	11am	12pm	1pm	2pm	3pm	4pm	
McIntosh	5%	0%	30%	25%	10%	10%	5%	5%	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%	
Eagle Butte	0%	0%	5%	10%	5%	5%	5%	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	
Murdo	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	
Mobridge	15%	15%	30%	25%	20%	10%	5%	5%	5%	5%	0%	0%	5%	
Pierre	5%	5%	0%	0%	0%	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	
Gettysburg	10%	10%	10%	5%	5%	10%	5%	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	
Kennebec	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	
Eureka	25%	25%	45%	35%	25%	5%	10%	5%	5%	5%	5%	0%	0%	
Chamberlain	5%	5%	5%	5%	10%	5%	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	
Miller	5%	5%	5%	15%	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	
Ellendale	25%	30%	50%	55%	70%	60%	45%	35%	5%	5%	0%	5%	5%	
Redfield	10%	10%	10%	30%	20%	10%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	0%	5%	
Aberdeen	20%	20%	35%	45%	55%	40%	30%	15%	5%	0%	0%	5%	5%	
Huron	5%	10%	10%	10%	15%	15%	10%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	
Britton	25%	20%	50%	50%	50%	55%	55%	45%	30%	5%	0%	5%	5%	
Clark	15%	15%	5%	15%	30%	35%	20%	10%	5%	5%	0%	5%	5%	
Webster	20%	20%	20%	50%	50%	60%	60%	55%	40%	30%	5%	5%	5%	
Watertown	10%	15%	5%	10%	20%	50%	45%	35%	15%	15%	5%	5%	5%	
Sisseton	25%	30%	40%	50%	55%	60%	60%	40%	20%	5%	5%	5%	5%	
Brookings	5%	10%	10%	10%	15%	20%	25%	30%	20%	10%	10%	10%	5%	
Milbank	5%	10%	5%	10%	50%	70%	75%	70%	50%	40%	25%	5%	10%	
Wheaton	15%	40%	30%	35%	40%	40%	30%	25%	15%	5%	5%	5%	5%	

Created: 3 am CST Wed 11/27/2024. Shows most impactful weather for the period beginning at the time shown. Weather symbols display where Probability of Precipitation ≥ 0%.



National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
U.S. Department of Commerce

- Snow + - Fog +

Created: 3 am CST Wed 11/27/2024 |  
(Sorted geographically from West to East)

Light snow will start this morning and continue into the afternoon. The highest chance of snow (40 to 70% chance) will be over northeastern SD into west central MN.

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 20 °F at 1:49 PM

Low Temp: 8 °F at 3:08 AM

Wind: 10 mph at 3:52 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 9 hours, 7 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 70 in 1914

Record Low: -18 in 1985

Average High: 37

Average Low: 15

Average Precip in Nov.: 0.68

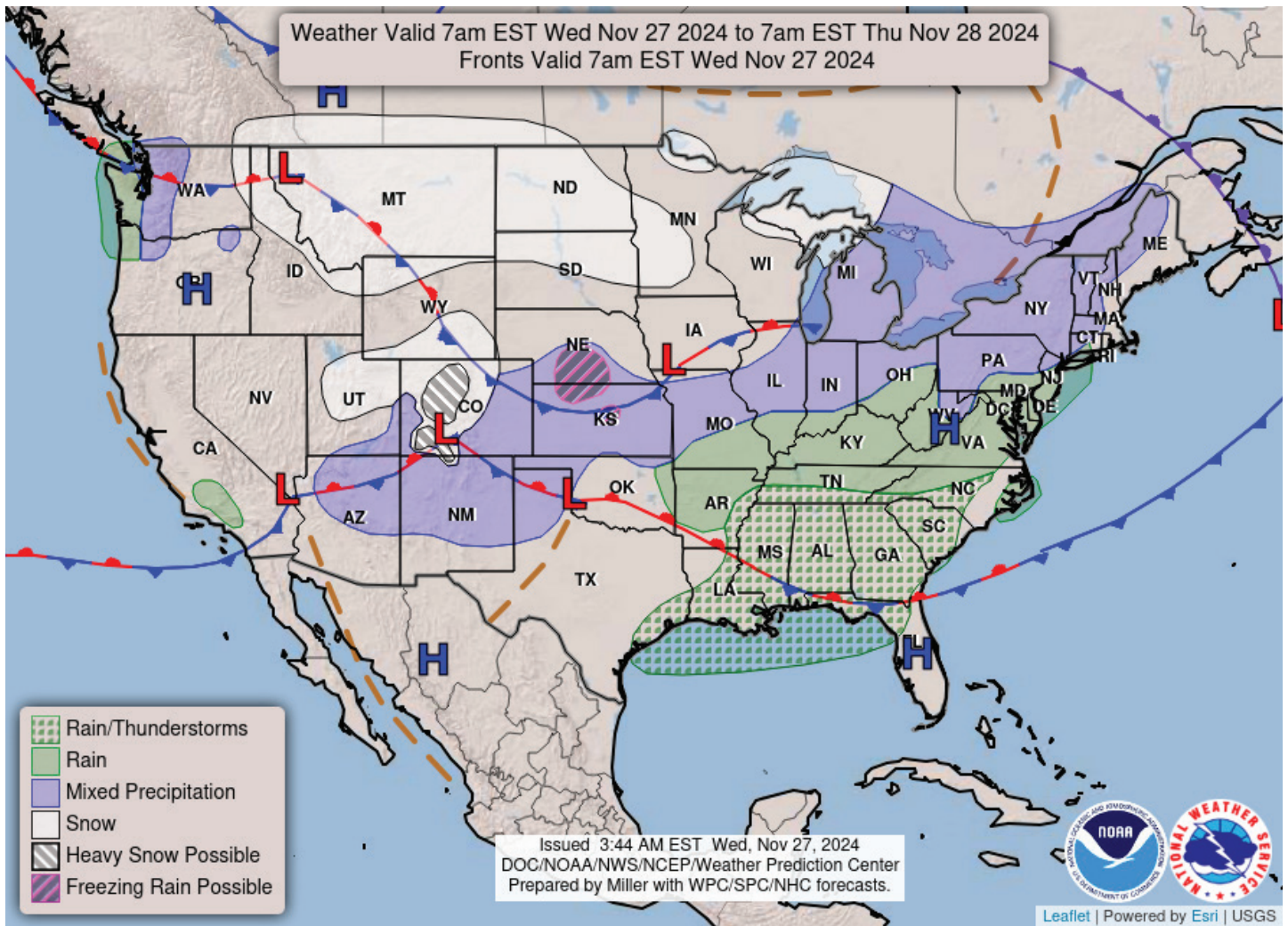
Precip to date in Nov.: 1.83

Average Precip to date: 21.15

Precip Year to Date: 21.71

Sunset Tonight: 4:54:12 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:47:31 am



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## Today in Weather History

November 27, 1960: An ice storm occurred from 40 miles on either side of a line from Pipestone to Brainerd, Minnesota. Power and communication lines were downed, leaving at least 22 communities isolated. Ice coating reported ranged from one half to three fourth of an inch at Lake Benton. Heavy snow fell in eastern North Dakota with blizzard conditions throughout the state. In South Dakota, this storm began as freezing rain on the 27th and remained largely as such in the southeast quarter of the state. The remainder of the experienced blizzard conditions with 5 to 10 inches of snow and winds gusting to 30 to 60 mph. These horrible caused extensive closing of schools and businesses, blocked highways, and disrupted telephone and power services. Slippery highways caused many auto accidents. Some loss of livestock was reported, such as 1,000 turkeys in Gettysburg. Restoration of telephone service alone was estimated to have cost \$210,000 and required up to three days after the storm.

November 27, 1983: A weekend storm that began with light snow on the 26th continued to gather strength, culminating in a blizzard that was accompanied by thunder and lightning during the evening hours on the 27th. The heaviest snowfall occurred from Marshall County SSE to Gregory County in South Dakota, with the heaviest snow falling as thunder snow showers. Snow amounts ranged from 4 to 18 inches. Strong winds up to 50 mph created near zero visibilities and difficult driving conditions as numerous roads drifted shut with up to eight-foot drifts. Numerous accidents ensued, with many people forced to stay overnight in their stranded vehicles. Airlines were forced to cancel all flights as airports were closed into midday on the 28th. Almost all schools and businesses were closed on the 28th and even on the 29th in many areas. Storm total snowfall amounts included 8 inches at Clark; 7 inches at Artichoke Lake, Bryant 1NE, Clear Lake, Victor 4 NNE, and Browns Valley; 6 inches at Wheaton, Wilmot, and Harrold 12 SSW; 5 inches at Kennebec, Sisseton, and Mellette 4W; 4 inches at Watertown, Highmore 1W, Murdo, Redfield, Waubay, Ashton 2S, and Britton; and 3 inches at Aberdeen, Castlewood, Columbia 8N, Onida 4NW, and Pierre.

November 27, 1994: Low pressure developed over eastern Colorado late Saturday the 26th and strengthened over Kansas early on the 27th. By late in the day on the 27th, the low pressure system had developed into the first winter storm for Minnesota. By the early morning hours of the 28th, a swath of snow in excess of 6 inches had blanketed much of southwest through central into northeast Minnesota.

Snowfalls of 6 inches or more occurred south of a line from Gunflint Lake in Cook County to near Ortonville in Big Stone County and along and north of a line from near Blue Earth in Faribault county to Red Wing in Goodhue county. The snow closed the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport for a short time on the 27th, and contributed to hundreds of accidents and at least three fatalities. The greatest snowfall was 14.1 inches in Duluth. In addition, very strong east winds gusted over 50 mph in Duluth causing blizzard conditions. The high winds brought waves in excess of 16 feet crashing against the Lake Superior shoreline in Duluth, covering the Duluth Canal Park Lake Walk with extensive debris. A buildup of ice and snow in combination with strong winds resulted in numerous downed power lines in southeast Minnesota. Widespread heavy snow fell over mostly the eastern half of South Dakota on November 27-28. Peak accumulations were 10 inches at Sioux Falls and 9 inches at Howard and near Canton. Damage resulted mainly from numerous minor traffic accidents. Storm snowfall amounts in this area included 8 inches at Eureka; 7 inches at Victor 4NNE, Leola, Onaka 2N, Roscoe, Faulkton, Columbia 8N, Aberdeen, and Selby; 6 inches at Redfield, Mellette 4W, Bryant 1NE, Blunt, Wheaton, and Raymond 3NE; 5 inches at Pollock, Miller, Milbank 2SSW, Ipswich, Harrold 12SSW, Eagle Butte, Clark, Artichoke Lake, and Onida 4NW; 4 inches at Mobridge, Timber Lake, McIntosh 6SE, Conde, Clear Lake, Pierre, and Ashton 2S; 3 inches at Sisseton, Webster, Waubay, Summit 1W, Presho 7NW, Kennebec, Highmore 1W, Gann Valley 4NW, Castlewood, Browns Valley, Watertown, and Wilmot.

November 27, 1701: Anders Celsius, the astronomer who invented the Celsius, often called the centigrade thermometer scale was born on this date.

November 27, 1898: A powerful storm, known as the "Portland Gale" impacted the coastal areas of New England on November 26 - 27, 1898. The storm formed when two areas of low pressures merged off the coast of New Jersey and traveled up the east coast. This storm produced hurricane force winds in Nantucket and sank more than 150 boats and ships.



## USING EVERYTHING FOR THE LORD

Shauna was on her way home from work, tired from a difficult day. The road was icy and the curves dangerous. Suddenly the car began to skid and plunged into an icy river.

A truck with four men also returning from work was following some distance behind her. When they saw what had happened, they stopped their truck and with no hesitation dove into the icy water to help.

One of the four men was Terry Kelly. Terry did not know how to swim and had a withered right arm that was almost useless. Nevertheless, he knew he wanted to do something. And he did.

The men found the car locked, and Shauna on the inside losing consciousness, struggling in fear. But Terry got his small withered arm through a window that was partially open and unlocked the door. The men were then able to rescue and revive Shauna.

Though many would have questioned the value of Terry's withered arm, it worked when it had to.

Paul said, "Give yourselves completely to God since you have been given new life. And use your whole body as a tool to do what is right for the glory of God."

God has a unique plan for each of our lives. And He wants to do through us what He has not or cannot do through anyone else. Whatever He asks us to do is within the gifts and abilities He has given us. His plan for each of us may include what we consider our defects.

Prayer: Lord, we are all "perfect" in Your sight for the work that You have called us to do. May we look beyond what we see to what You see as our worth to You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. Romans 6:13

*We all need the encouragement, comfort, and peace that comes through God's grace. Our daily devotionals, known as Seeds of Hope, have been a means through which thousands of people have experienced this grace. Each devotional comes from God's Word and we pray this good "seed" finds good soil in your heart. Our aim is that the Seeds of Hope will be a great source of daily encouragement to you and that God will use them to draw you near to Him*

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## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:

11.26.24

5 22 24 39 42 3

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$514,000,000**

NEXT 2 Days 17 Hrs 35  
DRAW: Mins 17 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

11.25.24

12 14 16 25 33 1

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$15,950,000**

NEXT 16 Hrs 50 Mins  
DRAW: 17 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

11.26.24

27 29 32 33 47 2

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT 17 Hrs 5 Mins 17  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

11.23.24

18 20 28 30 33

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$118,000**

NEXT 17 Hrs 5 Mins 17  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

11.25.24

2 13 25 27 39 10

TOP PRIZE:

**\$10,000,000**

NEXT 17 Hrs 34 Mins  
DRAW: 16 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

11.25.24

5 35 45 60 63 12

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$196,000,000**

NEXT 17 Hrs 34 Mins  
DRAW: 16 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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## Upcoming Groton Events

07/04/2024 Firecracker Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course  
07/09/2024 FREE SNAP Application Assistance 1-6pm at the Community Center  
07/14/2024 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm  
07/17/2024 Legion Auxiliary #39 Salad Buffet & Dessert Bar at the Groton Legion 11am-1pm  
07/17/2024 Pro Am Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course  
07/25/2024 Dairy Queen Miracle Treat Day  
07/25/2024 Summer Downtown Sip & Shop 5-8pm  
07/25/2024 Treasures Amidst The Trials 6pm at Emmanuel Lutheran Church  
07/26/2024 Ferney Open Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Start  
07/27/2024 1st Annual Celebration in the Park 1-9:30pm  
08/05/2024 School Supply Drive 4-7pm at the Community Center  
**Cancelled:** Wine on 9 at Olive Grove Golf Course 6pm  
08/08/2024 Family Fun Fest 5:30-7:30pm  
08/9-11/2024 Jr. Legion State Baseball Tournament  
08/12/2024 Vitalant Blood Drive at the Community Center 1:15-7pm  
09/07/2024 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm  
09/07-08/2024 Groton Airport Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport  
09/08/2024 Sunflower Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 10am  
10/05/2024 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm  
10/11/2024 Lake Region Marching Band Festival 10am  
10/31/2024 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm  
10/31/2024 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm  
11/16/2024 Groton American Legion "Turkey Raffle" 6:30-11:30pm  
11/28/2024 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm  
12/01/2024 Groton Snow Queen Contest, 4:30 p.m.  
12/07/2024 Olive Grove 8th Annual Holiday Party with Live & Silent Auctions 6pm-close  
12/14/2024 Santa Day at Professional Management Services, downtown Groton  
04/12/2025 Lion's Club Easter Egg Hunt at the City Park 10am Sharp  
05/03/2025 Lion's Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm  
05/26/2025 Memorial Day Services Groton Union Cemetery with lunch at Legion Post #39, 12pm  
07/04/2025 Firecracker Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course  
07/09/2025 Legion Auxiliary Salad Luncheon  
07/13/2025 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm  
09/06/2025 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm  
09/20/2025 NSU Gypsy Day  
10/31/2025 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm  
11/27/2025 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm



## News from the **AP** Associated Press

### **Brooklyn Meyer scores 19 and South Dakota State women beat No. 21 Oregon 75-70**

LAIE, Hawaii (AP) — Brooklyn Meyer had 19 points and eight rebounds, Paige Meyer added 16 points, six rebounds and four assists and South Dakota State beat No. 21 Oregon 75-70 on Tuesday in the Hawaii North Shore Showcase.

Haleigh Timmer made a 3-pointer with 44 seconds left to give South Dakota State a 72-66 lead. The Jackrabbits turned it over on their next possession and Amina Muhammad made a fast-break layup to get Oregon within 72-70.

Timmer made 1 of 2 free throws with 24.7 seconds left for a 73-70 lead. After a timeout, Peyton Scott was short on a 3-point attempt and Madison Mathiowetz added two free throws at the other end for a two-possession lead.

The game featured nine ties and nine lead changes.

Timmer finished with 15 points for South Dakota State (4-2). Madysen Vlastuin made all three of her 3-point attempts and scored 11 points.

Deja Kelly scored 19 points and Muhammad had 10 points and eight rebounds for Oregon (6-2), which was coming of a 74-58 loss to Georgia Tech.

South Dakota State plays on Sunday at Ball State. Oregon hosts Washington State on Wednesday.

### **Cluff scores 20 as South Dakota State beats Missouri State 75-55**

By The Associated Press undefined

GEORGE TOWN, Cayman Islands (AP) — Oscar Cluff's 20 points helped South Dakota State defeat Missouri State 75-55 on Tuesday night.

Cluff also contributed 12 rebounds and five assists for the Jackrabbits (6-2). Kalen Garry scored nine points, shooting 3 for 6, including 1 for 3 from beyond the arc. Owen Larson went 3 of 8 from the field (2 for 6 from 3-point range) to finish with eight points, while adding seven assists.

Dez White finished with 15 points for the Bears (4-3). Michael Osei-Bonsu added nine points and seven rebounds for Missouri State. Zaxton King also had eight points.

### **Nebraska judge's ruling moves the state closer to legalizing medical marijuana**

By JOSH FUNK Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Three weeks after Nebraska voters overwhelmingly approved medical marijuana the state moved a step closer to allowing it Tuesday when a judge ruled that the petitions that put the question on the ballot were valid.

The decision by Lancaster County District Judge Susan Strong was a victory for advocates of medical marijuana, but opponents are likely to appeal it to the state Supreme Court.

"To prevail in this action, the plaintiff and Secretary had to show that more than 3,463 signatures on the Legalization Petition and 3,357 signatures on the Regulatory Petition are invalid. The Plaintiff and Secretary are well short," Strong wrote. Fewer than 1,000 signatures on each petition were shown to be invalid.

A spokesperson for the Nebraska attorney general said the office's lawyers were reviewing the ruling and considering whether to file an appeal.

Medical marijuana supporters didn't immediately respond to calls or emails seeking comment Tuesday after the ruling was released.

More than two-thirds of Nebraska voters supported legalization at the polls Nov. 5. The results are

scheduled to be certified Dec. 2.

Secretary of State Bob Evnen and Attorney General Mike Hilgers argued that problems with the way thousands of signatures were gathered meant the ballot initiatives shouldn't have been put to voters. One person who circulated petitions in Grand Island was criminally charged with falsifying at least 164 signatures. Evnen, Hilgers and former state Sen. John Kuehn also raised questions about whether other signatures were properly notarized.

Nebraskans for Medical Marijuana argued in court that even if some of the signatures gathered were flawed, the group still had well over the 86,499 needed. The Secretary of State's office certified nearly 90,000 signatures on both the petition to allow marijuana for medical use and the one to set up a commission to regulate it.

The judge agreed that the state wasn't able to show any widespread fraud. Instead the ruling pointed primarily to the one petition circulator who was charged and raised questions about whether some other signatures were properly notarized.

Strong said she reviewed thousands of messages that top two organizers of the petition campaign exchanged that filled more than 800 pages and only found one mention of notarizing petitions outside of the petition circulator's presence.

This year marked the third time Nebraskans for Medical Marijuana tried to get the issue on the ballot and the first time it made it there.

In 2020, the group came close after meeting signature requirements. But opponents sued, arguing that advocates violated state rules requiring ballot measures to focus on a single question. Instead, the measure posed two separate questions: whether residents should have the right to use marijuana for medical purposes, and whether private companies should be allowed to grow and sell it.

The state Supreme Court prevented the questions from going to voters.

In 2022, organizers failed to collect enough signatures in time to get the question on the November ballot.

Voters in North Dakota, South Dakota and Florida all rejected measures to legalize recreational marijuana use this year. But dozens of states have previously legalized it for either medical or recreational use, most recently in Ohio last year. In May, the federal government also began a process to reclassify marijuana as a less dangerous drug.

## **Repealing no-fault divorce has so far stalled across the US. Some worry that'll change under Trump**

By KIMBERLEE KRUESI Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Married couples across the U.S. have had access to no-fault divorce for more than 50 years, an option many call crucial to supporting domestic abuse victims and key to preventing already crowded family courts from drowning in complicated divorce proceedings.

But some advocates for women worried as old comments from now Vice President-elect JD Vance circulated during the presidential campaign opposing no-fault divorce. And after President-elect Donald Trump and Vance won the election, warnings began popping up on social media urging women who might be considering divorce to "pull the trigger" while they still could. Some attorneys posted saying they were seeing a spike in calls from women seeking divorce consultations.

Trump — who is twice-divorced — hasn't championed overhauling the country's divorce laws, but in 2021 Vance lamented that divorce is too easily accessible, as have conservative podcasters and others.

"We've run this experiment in real time and what we have is a lot of very, very real family dysfunction that's making our kids unhappy," Vance said during a speech at a Christian high school in California, where he criticized people being able to "shift spouses like they change their underwear."

Despite concerns, even those who want to make divorces harder to get say they don't expect big, swift changes. There is not a national coordinated effort underway. And states determine their own divorce laws, so national leaders can't change policy.

"Even in some of the so-called red states, it hasn't gotten anywhere," said Beverly Willett, co-chair of

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the Coalition for Divorce Reform, whose group has unsuccessfully attempted to convince states to repeal their no-fault divorce laws.

Mark A. Smith, a political science professor at the University of Washington, said that while many Americans have become accustomed to no-fault divorce being an option, Vance's previous comments on making it more difficult to separate from a spouse could help jumpstart that effort.

"Even though he's not directly proposing a policy, it's a topic that hasn't gotten a ton of discussion in the last 15 years," Smith said. "And so to have a national profile politician talk that way is noteworthy."

Meanwhile, Republican Party platforms in Texas and Nebraska were amended in 2022 to call for the removal of no-fault divorce. Louisiana's Republican Party considered something similar earlier this year but ultimately declined to do so.

A handful of proposals have been introduced in conservative-led statehouses over the years, but all immediately stalled after they were filed.

In January, Oklahoma Republican Sen. Dusty Deever introduced legislation that would have removed married couples from filing for divorce on the grounds of incompatibility. Deever backed the bill after writing a piece declaring no-fault divorce was an "abolition of marital obligation."

Similarly, in South Carolina, two Republican lawmakers in 2023 filed a bill that would have required both spouses to file for a no-fault divorce application rather than just one. And in South Dakota, a Republican lawmaker has attempted to remove irreconcilable difference as grounds for divorce since 2020.

None of the sponsors of these bills responded to interview requests from The Associated Press. All are members of their state's conservative Freedom Caucus.

Nevertheless, some Democratic lawmakers say they remain worried about the future of no-fault divorce. They point to the U.S. Supreme Court overturning the constitutional right to abortion in 2022 as an example of a long-accepted option that was revoked through a decades-long effort.

"When you choose to be silent, you allow for this to creep in," said Democratic South Dakota Rep. Linda Duba. "These are the bills that gain a foothold because you choose to be silent."

Before California became the first state to adopt a no-fault divorce option in 1969, married couples had to prove their spouse had violated one of the approved "faults" outlined in their state's divorce law or risk a judge denying their divorce, said Joanna Grossman, a law professor at Southern Methodist University in Dallas. Qualified reasons varied from state to state, but largely included infidelity, incarceration or abandonment.

The system was a particular burden on domestic violence victims, often times women, who could be stuck in dangerous marriages while they try to prove their partner's abuse in court through expensive and lengthy legal proceedings.

"If there was any evidence that the couple both wanted to get divorced that was supposed to be denied because divorce was not something you got because you wanted it, it was something you got because you've been wronged in a way that the state thought was significant," Grossman said.

To date, every state in the U.S. has adopted a no-fault divorce option. However, 33 states still have a list of approved "faults" to file as grounds for divorce — ranging from adultery to felony conviction. In 17 states, married people only have the option of choosing no-fault divorce to end their marriages.

Calls to reform no-fault divorce have remained fairly silent until the late 1990s, when concern pushed by former President George Bush's administration over the country's divorce rate sparked a brief movement for states to adopt "covenant marriages." The option didn't replace a state's no-fault divorce law, but provided an option for couples that carried counseling requirements and strict exceptions for divorce.

Louisiana was the first state to embrace covenant marriage options, but the effort largely stopped after Arizona and Arkansas followed suit.

Christian F. Nunes, president of the National Organization for Women, said she is "extremely worried" about the possibility of no-fault divorce being removed with the incoming Trump administration, Republican-controlled Congress and wide range of conservative state leaders.

"With so many states focusing on a misogynistic legislative agenda, this will turn back the clocks on

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women's rights even more," Nunes said in a statement. "This is why removing 'no fault' divorce is another way for the government to control women, their bodies, and their lives. Eliminating no-fault divorce is also a backdoor way of eliminating gay marriage, since this implies that a marriage is only between a man and a woman."

With Trump's reelection, Willett, whose group opposes no-fault divorce, said she's cautiously optimistic that the political tide could change.

"Was what he said an indication of things to come? I don't know," Willett said. "It's a good thing but it's certainly not anything that has been really discussed other than a few high profile conservatives who talk about it."

## Presidents have used immigration 'parole' since the 1950s. Now it could disappear under Trump

By GISELA SALOMON Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — Cuba's at one of its lowest points since the 1959 revolution, with nationwide scarcity fueling massive emigration, occasional protests and government crackdowns. Gangs control the streets of Haiti's capital, firing on arriving jets and forcing delays in elections to replace slain President Jovenel Moïse.

Nicaragua's president has imprisoned protesters, opposition members and Catholic leaders. Severe shortages and one of the world's highest inflation rates have helped drive nearly 8 million Venezuelans from the petrostate of 28 million people.

Half a million Cubans, Haitian, Nicaraguans and Venezuelans were welcomed by President Joe Biden using a legal tool known as humanitarian parole, granted for seven decades by Republican and Democratic administrations to people unable to use standard immigration routes because of time pressure or their government's poor relations with the U.S.

President-elect Donald Trump appears certain to dismantle this legal tool, saying during his campaign that he would end the "outrageous abuse of parole."

Trump made anti-immigration rhetoric a key part of his campaign, warning that he would kick out hundreds of thousands of migrants who entered the country under Biden programs.

"Get ready to leave because you're going to be going out real fast," Trump said.

A giant group of people with tenuous legal status formed under Biden and many now expect their protections to vanish with a stroke of a pen. Those protections include Biden's parole efforts; his support for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, program; parole for people who entered the country on a border appointment app called CBP One and his expanded use of a law to shield people from deportation — known as Temporary Protected Status.

What's the purpose of parole?

The U.S. has a thicket of complicated immigration laws that drive many to enter the country illegally but parole allows the president to admit people "for urgent humanitarian reasons or significant public benefit."

Since 1952 it has been ordered 126 times by every president, except for Trump, according to the pro-immigration Cato Institute.

The Trump administration could revoke parole for everyone who has it, said Aaron Reichlin-Melnick, senior fellow at the American Immigration Council.

Going back is not an option

"All immigrants are fearful," said Manuel Castaño, a 39-year-old human rights activist from Nicaragua whose parole expires in March 2025 and has requested asylum, a process that can take years.

Castaño, who works in building maintenance in South Florida, applied for parole in February 2023 after his uncle sponsored him, a requirement under the law. Less than a month later, he arrived at Miami with his wife and their 13-year-old daughter.

He said he was threatened in his country and feared for his and his family in their homeland.

"Going back to Nicaragua is not an option," he said.

A focus on Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans and Venezuelans

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More than a million people have been granted parole under Biden, including tens of thousands of Afghans and Ukrainians.

Biden introduced parole for Venezuelans in October 2022 and expanded it in early 2023 to include Cubans, Haitians, and Nicaraguans. These countries refuse to take back most citizens deported from the U.S.

Under an aspect of parole known as CHNV, up to 30,000 people from the four countries are accepted monthly. They can obtain work authorization for two years and apply online. The goal of the tool is dissuading migrants from crossing the border illegally.

According to U.S. Customs and Border Protection, more than 110,240 Cubans, 211,010 Haitians, 93,070 Nicaraguans, and 117,310 Venezuelans were granted parole through the end of October.

The team reshaping the policies under Trump is expected to include former acting U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement director Tom Homan, as "border czar;" immigration hardliner Stephen Miller as deputy chief of staff for policy; and South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem as head of the Department of Homeland Security. All have been outspoken opponents of Biden's immigration policies.

Kyle Varner, a 39-year-old doctor and real-estate investor from Spokane, Washington, says he has spent \$150,000 on plane tickets, housing and other costs for 47 Venezuelans he's sponsored over the last two years. Now he is desperately saving as much money as possible to pay immigration attorneys that could figure out a way for the Venezuelans to stay after Trump takes office.

"I am very alarmed," Varner said.

Legal challenges are certain

Mass termination of migrants' two-year parole terms would be subject to legal challenge but the Trump administration could simply halt new admissions and just wait until beneficiaries' status expired, Reichlin-Melnick said.

Another possibility, said Charles Kuck, a former president of the American Immigration Lawyers Association, is that the Trump administration could find a relatively easy way to deport people granted parole because there are official records of them and their sponsors.

"Those are the easiest people to be in rounding up because the government knows where they live," said Kuck.

Leaving the U.S. before you're expelled

That is why Venezuelan Ireswa Lopez is already thinking of leaving the U.S. when her parole expires in March 2025.

Lopez, 48, was having a hard time working at a family butcher shop in Venezuela, where food is scarce and water often contaminated. She learned that there was a program to come to the United States legally, and with a cousin's sponsorship she flew to Miami in January 2023.

Although she has found a job at an Atlanta children's day care, she says, "I am leaving."

"Staying illegally is not in my plans," she said.

## Middle East latest: Displaced people return to south Lebanon as ceasefire appears to hold

By The Associated Press undefined

Long-displaced residents of south Lebanon started returning to their homes amid celebrations hours after a ceasefire between Israel and the Hezbollah militant group took effect early Wednesday morning.

The ceasefire has brought relief across the Mediterranean nation, coming after days of some of the most intense airstrikes and clashes since the war began, though many wondered if the agreement to stop fighting would hold. Israel has said it will attack if Hezbollah breaks the ceasefire agreement, which was announced Tuesday.

Thousands of people made their way into southern Lebanon, defying a warning from the Israeli military to stay away from previously evacuated areas.

At least 42 people were killed by Israeli strikes across Lebanon on Tuesday, according to local authori-

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ties. Hezbollah also fired rockets into Israel on Tuesday, triggering air raid sirens in the country's north.

The Israel-Hezbollah ceasefire marks the first major step toward ending the regionwide unrest triggered by Hamas' attack on Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, but it does not address the devastating war in Gaza.

Hezbollah began attacking Israel a day after Hamas' attack. The fighting in Lebanon escalated into all-out war in September with massive Israeli airstrikes across the country and an Israeli ground invasion of the south.

In Gaza, more than 44,000 people have been killed and more than 104,000 wounded in the nearly 14-month war between Israel and Hamas, according to Gaza's Health Ministry.

Here's the Latest:

Lebanese politician who helped broker ceasefire calls for effort to fill the country's presidency

BEIRUT — The speaker of Lebanon's parliament called for another effort to fill the country's long-vacant presidency just hours after a ceasefire to halt hostilities between Hezbollah and Israel went into effect.

Lebanon has been without a president since October 2022, as its deeply divided parliament has been unable to elect a new head of state. The last effort to elect a president was more than a year ago.

Speaker Nabih Berri called for political parties to come together to elect a president "who unites rather than divides."

"I call upon you because a moment of truth in which we must unite for the sake of Lebanon has arrived," Berri said in a televised address.

"This is a test for how we can save Lebanon. How we can build it and how we can bring back life for its constitutional institutions."

The war compounded Lebanon's economic troubles and worsened tensions between political groups allied and opposed to Hezbollah.

Berri spearheaded Lebanon's negotiation efforts for a U.S.-brokered ceasefire to end the war between Israel and Hezbollah. He's a top Shiite politician and a key ally of Hezbollah.

Iran-backed Iraqi militia vows to continue fighting Israel

One of the most powerful Iran-backed factions in Iraq said it would continue its operations in support of Gaza despite the Israel-Hezbollah ceasefire.

Iraqi militias have repeatedly launched attacks on Israel from Iraq in the nearly 14 months since the Israel-Hamas war broke out.

In a statement, the Kataib Hezbollah group said that the ceasefire would not have been possible without the "resilience of Hezbollah fighters and the failure of the Zionists to achieve their objectives, making the decision solely Lebanese."

The group said that a pause by one member of the so-called Axis of Resistance, which includes Iran-backed groups from Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen, would not undermine the broader "unity of fronts" strategy.

The militia also said the U.S. had been Israel's partner "in all acts of betrayal, killing, destruction and displacement," and said it "will eventually have to pay for its actions."

A Lebanese man who's lived through multiple wars says this one has been the worst

TYRE, Lebanon — Mohammed Kaafarani has lived through multiple conflicts with Israel. But he says the past two months were the worst of them all.

"They were a nasty and ugly 60 days," said Kaafarani, 59, who was displaced from the Lebanese village of Bidias, near the southern port city of Tyre.

Thousands of displaced people poured into the city Wednesday after a ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah went into effect.

Kaafarani said the latest war was the most difficult because the bombardment was so intense. "We reached a point where there was no place to hide. Even buildings were destroyed."

He said Tyre was left almost empty as most of its residents fled.

Kaafarani said he hopes his children and grandchildren will have a better future without wars because "our generation suffered and is still suffering."

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"The last two months were way too long," said Kaafarani, whose home was badly damaged in the fighting. He vowed to fix it and continue on with life.

Some people displaced from northern Israeli towns say they still don't feel safe enough to return HAIFA, Israel — Some people in Israel who have been displaced by fighting with the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah say the ceasefire deal doesn't make them feel secure enough to go home.

Some 50,000 people have been displaced from a string of cities, towns and villages along Israel's northern border with Lebanon. Those communities have been pummeled by Hezbollah rocket and drone fire for 13 months, with dozens of houses damaged and in need of rebuilding or rehabilitation.

Noy Friedman, who was displaced from the town of Shlomi to the city of Haifa, said she wouldn't feel safe in her hometown.

"I am also not ready for my family to return to Shlomi," said Friedman.

Many displaced Israelis have been living in hotels since the fighting began in Oct. 2023 or have tried to reestablish their lives in new areas far from the fighting.

Returning could take months because of the damage caused to the communities, but also because of the fears many of the displaced still feel.

On a cold, rainy Wednesday morning, the hard-hit Israeli town of Kiryat Shmona was quiet. A handful of people milled about, inspecting damage from rocket attacks, including to the roof of a bus.

The town's shopping mall, which had been hit before, appeared to have new damage. A rocket was seen stuck in the ground next to an apartment building.

"I am against the ceasefire," said Eliyahu Maman, a Kiryat Shmona resident displaced to Haifa who feared Hezbollah could still attack from southern Lebanon. "I am not ready to return to Kiryat Shmona."

Jordan says ceasefire is 'an important step'

AMMAN, Jordan — Jordan on Wednesday welcomed the ceasefire between Israel and the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah, saying it should be followed by an international effort to wind down the war in Gaza.

In a statement, Jordan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs called the ceasefire "an important step." But it said "Israeli aggression on Gaza" must be stopped.

Jordan expressed support for Lebanon and stressed the importance of fully implementing the ceasefire.

Jordan is a close Western ally that made peace with Israel in 1994. But Israel's devastating offensive in the Gaza Strip, launched after Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023 attack, has strained relations. The country has a large Palestinian population which has demonstrated regularly against the war in Gaza.

Gaza residents hope for ceasefire after nearly 14 months of grueling war

KHAN YOUNIS, Gaza Strip — Palestinians said Wednesday they hoped there would be a ceasefire in Gaza now that Israel and the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah agreed to a truce.

But some feared that Israel would be more heavy handed with Gaza now that its forces were freed up from the fighting against Hezbollah.

"The situation will be worse, because the pressure will be more on Gaza," said Mamdouh Yonis, a man currently living in Khan Yunis after being displaced from the southern city of Rafah, told The Associated Press.

Palestinians in Gaza are desperately waiting for a ceasefire agreement that would end the war between Hamas and Israel. It's already killed over 44,000 people according to local authorities, who don't distinguish between combatants and civilians in their count.

The war was sparked when Hamas raided southern Israel in Oct. 2023, killing 1,200 and kidnapping 250, about 100 of whom remain in Gaza.

International mediation efforts meant to clinch a deal have faltered repeatedly, and the war is now in its 14th month with no end in sight.

"They agree to a ceasefire in one place and not in the other? Have mercy on the children, the elderly and the women. We are sitting in tents and now it is winter," said Ahlam Abu Shalabi, a woman displaced from Gaza City.

Turkey welcomes ceasefire in Lebanon

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ANKARA, Turkey — Turkey welcomed the ceasefire reached between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon, expressing hope that it would lead to a lasting truce.

In a statement issued Wednesday, Turkey's Foreign Ministry also called on the international community to exert pressure on Israel to force it to "strictly comply with the ceasefire and compensate for the damage it has caused in Lebanon."

The ministry also urged the establishment of "permanent and comprehensive" ceasefire in Gaza, calling on Israel to "end its aggressive policies."

Israeli military says it fired at cars in Lebanon after they approached restricted area

TEL AVIV, Israel — The Israeli military said Wednesday that its forces opened fire in Lebanon on a number of cars that approached an area it said was restricted, as a ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah appeared to take hold.

The military said the vehicles drove away. It was not immediately clear if there were any injuries as a result.

The Israeli military has warned residents of previously evacuated areas of Lebanon that had been evacuated, but displaced people have been streaming south to their homes.

The military said soldiers remained in position in southern Lebanon and that the air force was ready to act if needed. It said Israel's aerial defense array was also at the ready for any ceasefire violations.

France highlights its role in brokering the deal

France's foreign minister underlined his country's role in brokering an agreement that ended fighting between Israel and Lebanon's Hezbollah militant group alongside the U.S., saying the deal wouldn't have been possible without France's special relationship with its former protectorate.

"It's a success for French diplomacy and we can be proud," said the minister, Jean-Noël Barrot, speaking hours after the ceasefire went into effect Wednesday.

"It is true that the United States have a privileged relationship with Israel. But with Lebanon, it's France that has very old ties, very close ties," the minister added. "It would not have been possible to envisage a ceasefire in Lebanon without France being involved on the front line."

France will be involved in monitoring the ceasefire, Barrot noted, with 700 French soldiers deployed as part of the 10,000-strong United Nations peacekeeping force, known as UNIFIL, that has been patrolling the border area between Lebanon and Israel for nearly 50 years.

The minister said France will also work to strengthen Lebanese troops that will deploy in the south of the country as part of the ceasefire, although he didn't specify what that might include.

Lebanese military warns people returning homes in south Lebanon to wait for Israeli troops to leave

BEIRUT — The Lebanese military asked displaced people returning to southern Lebanon to avoid front-line villages and towns near the border where the Israeli military is still present until the troops withdraw.

Thousands of people have been returning to other previously evacuated areas in south Lebanon in defiance of an Israeli warning to avoid all previously evacuated areas. Many of those areas were hit by strikes just hours before the ceasefire took effect.

Iran welcomes ceasefire

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Iran welcomed the ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon's Hezbollah, Tehran's main militant partner in the Mideast.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei praised the ceasefire in a statement Wednesday morning.

Baghaei said that Iran still sought a ceasefire in the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip. But like Hezbollah, it's dropped the demand that a ceasefire also take place at the same time in the Gaza Strip.

He also called for the International Criminal Court to try the "criminals of the occupying regime," referring to Israel. The ICC has issued arrest warrants for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Israel's former defense minister.

Celebrations and relief as displaced people return to Tyre

TYRE, Lebanon — Displaced people started returning to the coastal city of Tyre on motorcycles and in cars early Wednesday, defying an Israeli military warning to stay away from previously evacuated areas.



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Ahmad Husseini said returning to southern Lebanon was an “indescribable feeling” and praised Speaker of Parliament Nabih Berri, who led Lebanon’s negotiations with Washington. “He made us and everyone proud.”

Husseini, who earlier fled a town near the coastal city, spoke to The Associated Press while in his car with family members.

Meanwhile, sporadic celebratory gunfire could be heard at a main roundabout in the city, as people returning honked the horns of cars — some piled with mattresses — and residents cheered.

A couple of men shouted slogans praising slain Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, who was killed in an Israeli airstrike in September.

Hussein Sweidan said he sees the ceasefire as a victory for Hezbollah. “This is a moment of victory, pride and honor for us, the Shia sect, and for all of Lebanon,” he said.

Smoke rises over Beirut from overnight strikes

BEIRUT — As dawn broke in Beirut, plumes of smoke were visible rising from places hit by Israeli strikes before the ceasefire took effect at 4 a.m. Residents of Lebanon’s capital and its southern suburbs endured the most intense day of strikes since the war began on Tuesday.

Lebanon sees quiet, but recovery could be slow

BEIRUT — As the ceasefire went into effect early Wednesday, much of Lebanon was quiet for the first time since late September, following weeks of intense overnight strikes in southern and eastern Lebanon.

Some celebratory gunshots could be heard in parts of Beirut’s southern suburbs, battered over the past two months.

Israel’s Arabic military spokesperson Avichay Adraee has warned displaced Lebanese not to return to their villages in southern Lebanon, but some videos circulating on social media show displaced Lebanese defying these calls and returning to villages in the south near the coastal city of Tyre.

Israeli troops are still present in parts of southern Lebanon after Israel launched a ground invasion in October.

Lebanese have also been displaced from other parts of the country, notably the southern Beirut suburbs and the eastern Bekaa province. It’s unclear how long it will take cash-strapped Lebanon to rebuild these bombarded neighborhoods.

The war has displaced some 1.2 million people, according to the Lebanese government.

Israeli military says its evacuation orders in south Lebanon are in still in effect

JERUSALEM — As the ceasefire took effect early Wednesday, Israel’s military warned people with homes in areas of south Lebanon that it ordered evacuated to stay away for now.

Israeli military spokesman Col. Avichay Adraee issued the warning on the social platform X.

“You are prohibited from heading towards the villages that the IDF has ordered to be evacuated or towards IDF forces in the area,” Adraee wrote, using an acronym for the Israeli military. “For your safety and the safety of your family members, refrain from moving to the area.”

There were no immediate signs of renewed fighting as the ceasefire took hold early Wednesday morning.

Ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon begins

The ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon’s Hezbollah militants has begun as a region on edge wonders whether it will hold.

The ceasefire announced Tuesday is a major step toward ending nearly 14 months of fighting sparked by the ongoing war in Gaza between Israel and Hamas.

Israel has said it will attack if Hezbollah breaks the ceasefire agreement.

The ceasefire calls for an initial two-month halt to fighting and requires Hezbollah to end its armed presence in southern Lebanon, while Israeli troops are to return to their side of the border. An international panel led by the United States will monitor compliance.

The ceasefire began at 4 a.m. Wednesday, a day after Israel carried out its most intense wave of air-strikes in Beirut since the start of the conflict that in recent weeks turned into all-out war.

Read more here.

## **Worst November snowstorm in half century hits Seoul and grounds hundreds of airplane flights**

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — The most severe November snowstorm to hit South Korea's capital in more than a half century blanketed the capital on Wednesday, grounding hundreds of airplane flights and disrupting commuter traffic.

South Korea's weather agency said 20 centimeters (7.8 inches) of snow fell in northern areas of Seoul and nearby areas. The agency said it was the heaviest snowstorm Seoul has experienced in 52 years. A storm on Nov. 28, 1972 dumped 12 centimeters (4.7) inches of snow on the capital.

South Korea's Yonhap news agency said one person died and four others were injured in a five-vehicle accident in the eastern town of Hongcheon.

The storm blanketed much of the country, with the country's central, eastern and southwestern regions seeing about 10 to 23 centimeters (3.9 to 9 inches) of snow.

At least 220 flights were canceled or delayed at airports nationwide, while authorities ordered around 90 ferries to remain at port. They also shut down hundreds of hiking trails.

Icy road conditions slowed down the morning commute in Seoul, while emergency workers across the country responded to fallen trees, signs, and other safety risks.

The weather agency said snow will continue in most parts of the country until noon Thursday.

President Yoon Suk Yeol instructed the safety and transport ministries to mobilize all available relevant personnel and equipment to prevent traffic accidents and other snow-related incidents. Yoon also asked officials to convey weather and traffic information to the public swiftly to help ensure they avoid snow-related damages and inconveniences, according to the presidential office.

## **Australia's House of Representatives passes bill that would ban young children from social media**

By ROD McGUIRK Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — Australia's House of Representatives on Wednesday passed a bill that would ban children younger than 16 years old from social media, leaving it to the Senate to finalize the world-first law.

The major parties backed the bill that would make platforms including TikTok, Facebook, Snapchat, Reddit, X and Instagram liable for fines of up to 50 million Australian dollars (\$33 million) for systemic failures to prevent young children from holding accounts.

The legislation passed 102 to 13. If the bill becomes law this week, the platforms would have one year to work out how to implement the age restrictions before the penalties are enforced.

Opposition lawmaker Dan Tehan told Parliament the government had agreed to accept amendments in the Senate that would bolster privacy protections. Platforms would not be allowed to compel users to provide government-issued identity documents including passports or driver's licenses, nor could they demand digital identification through a government system.

"Will it be perfect? No. But is any law perfect? No, it's not. But if it helps, even if it helps in just the smallest of ways, it will make a huge difference to people's lives," Tehan told Parliament.

The bill was introduced to the Senate late Wednesday but it adjourned for the day hours later without putting it to a vote. The legislation will likely be passed on Thursday, the Parliament's final session for the year and potentially the last before elections, which are due within months.

The major parties' support all but guarantees the legislation will pass in the Senate, where no party holds a majority of seats.

Lawmakers who were not aligned with either the government or the opposition were most critical of the legislation during debate on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Criticisms include that the legislation had been rushed through Parliament without adequate scrutiny, would not work, would create privacy risks for users of all ages and would take away parents' authority

to decide what's best for their children.

Critics also argue the ban would isolate children, deprive them of positive aspects of social media, drive children to the dark web, make children too young for social media reluctant to report harms encountered, and take away incentives for platforms to make online spaces safer.

Independent lawmaker Zoe Daniel said the legislation would "make zero difference to the harms that are inherent to social media."

"The true object of this legislation is not to make social media safe by design, but to make parents and voters feel like the government is doing something about it," Daniel told Parliament.

"There is a reason why the government parades this legislation as world-leading, that's because no other country wants to do it," she added.

The platforms had asked for the vote to be delayed until at least June next year when a government-commissioned evaluation of age assurance technologies made its report on how the ban could be enforced.

Melbourne resident Wayne Holdsworth, whose 17-year-old son Mac took his own life last year after falling victim to an online sextortion scam, described the bill as "absolutely essential for the safety of our children."

"It's not the only thing that we need to do to protect them because education is the key, but to provide some immediate support for our children and parents to be able to manage this, it's a great step," the 65-year-old online safety campaigner told The Associated Press on Tuesday.

"And in my opinion, it's the greatest time in our country's history," he added, referring to the pending legal reform.

## ICC prosecutor requests arrest warrants for the head of Myanmar's military regime

By MOLLY QUELL Associated Press

THE HAGUE (AP) — The International Criminal Court's chief prosecutor asked judges on Wednesday to issue an arrest warrant for the head of Myanmar's military regime for crimes committed against the country's Rohingya Muslim minority.

Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, who took power from elected leader Aung San Suu Kyi in a coup in 2021, is accused of crimes against humanity for the deportation and persecution of the Rohingya.

Nearly a million people were forced into neighboring Bangladesh to escape what has been called an ethnic cleansing campaign involving mass rapes, killings and the torching of homes.

From a refugee camp in Bangladesh, the court's top prosecutor, Karim Khan, said in a statement that he intends to request more warrants for Myanmar's leaders soon.

"In doing so, we will be demonstrating, together with all of our partners, that the Rohingya have not been forgotten. That they, like all people around the world, are entitled to the protection of the law," the British barrister said.

The allegations stem from a counterinsurgency campaign that Myanmar's military began in August 2017 in response to an insurgent attack. Hlaing, who heads the Myanmar Defense Services, is said to have directed the armed forces of Myanmar, known as the Tatmadaw, as well as national police to attack Rohingya civilians.

Khan was in Bangladesh where he met with members of the displaced Rohingya population.

Myanmar does not belong to the global court, but Bangladesh does. In 2018 judges at the court ruled the prosecutor could look into crimes which were "completed" on the territory of a member state, such as forcible deportation.

In 2019, Khan's predecessor, Fatou Bensouda, formally requested to open an investigation into the situation and judges gave the green light for investigations into "any crime, including any future crime" committed at least partly in Bangladesh or another court member state and linked to the Rohingya.

The move paved the way for Khan to pursue crimes beyond forcing men, women and children over the border and into refugee camps.

The request comes days after a powerful rebel group seized a key trading town in northeastern Myanmar on the Chinese border, taking control of a lucrative rare earth mining hub in another setback for the military-led government.

The military seized power from Aung San Suu Kyi's government in February 2021, triggering intensified fighting with long-established armed militias organized by Myanmar's ethnic minority groups in its border regions which have struggled for decades for more autonomy.

In 2022, the International Court of Justice, the United Nations' highest court, advanced a separate case against Myanmar brought by Gambia alleging the Southeast Asian nation is responsible for genocide against the Rohingya. Five European countries and Canada have asked the court to back Gambia in the proceedings.

## What to know about the ceasefire deal between Israel and Lebanon's Hezbollah

By ADAM GELLER Associated Press

A ceasefire deal that went into effect on Wednesday could end more than a year of cross-border fighting between Israel and Lebanon's Hezbollah militant group, raising hopes and renewing difficult questions in a region gripped by conflict.

The U.S.- and France-brokered deal, approved by Israel late Tuesday, calls for an initial two-month halt to fighting and requires Hezbollah to end its armed presence in southern Lebanon, while Israeli troops are to return to their side of the border. It offers both sides an off-ramp from hostilities that have driven more than 1.2 million Lebanese and 50,000 Israelis from their homes.

An intense bombing campaign by Israel has left more than 3,700 people dead, many of them civilians, Lebanese officials say. Over 130 people have been killed on the Israeli side.

But while it could significantly calm the tensions that have inflamed the region, the deal does little directly to resolve the much deadlier war that has raged in Gaza since the Hamas attack on southern Israel in October 2023 that killed 1,200 people.

Hezbollah, which began firing scores of rockets into Israel the following day in support of Hamas, previously said it would keep fighting until there was a stop to the fighting in Gaza. With the new cease-fire, it has backed away from that pledge, in effect leaving Hamas isolated and fighting a war alone.

Here's what to know about the tentative ceasefire agreement and its potential implications:

The terms of the deal

The agreement reportedly calls for a 60-day halt in fighting that would see Israeli troops retreat to their side of the border while requiring Hezbollah to end its armed presence in a broad swath of southern Lebanon. President Joe Biden said Tuesday that the deal is set to take effect at 4 a.m. local time on Wednesday (9 p.m. EST Tuesday).

Under the deal, thousands of Lebanese troops and U.N. peacekeepers are to deploy to the region south of the Litani River. An international panel led by the U.S. would monitor compliance by all sides. Biden said the deal "was designed to be a permanent cessation of hostilities."

Israel has demanded the right to act should Hezbollah violate its obligations, but Lebanese officials rejected writing that into the proposal. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Tuesday that the military would strike Hezbollah if the U.N. peacekeeping force, known as UNIFIL, does not enforce the deal.

Lingering uncertainty

Hezbollah indicated it would give the ceasefire pact a chance, but one of the group's leaders said the group's support for the deal hinged on clarity that Israel would not renew its attacks.

"After reviewing the agreement signed by the enemy government, we will see if there is a match between what we stated and what was agreed upon by the Lebanese officials," Mahmoud Qamati, deputy chair of Hezbollah's political council, told the Qatari satellite news network Al Jazeera.

"We want an end to the aggression, of course, but not at the expense of the sovereignty of the state" of Lebanon, he said.

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The European Union's top diplomat, Josep Borrell, said Tuesday that Israel's security concerns had been addressed in the deal.

Where the fighting has left both sides

After months of cross-border bombings, Israel can claim major victories, including the killing of Hezbollah's top leader, Hassan Nasrallah, most of his senior commanders and the destruction of extensive militant infrastructure.

A complex attack in September involving the explosion of hundreds of walkie-talkies and pagers used by Hezbollah was widely attributed to Israel, signaling a remarkable penetration of the militant group.

The damage inflicted on Hezbollah has hit not only in its ranks, but the reputation it built by fighting Israel to a stalemate in the 2006 war. Still, its fighters managed to put up heavy resistance on the ground, slowing Israel's advance while continuing to fire scores of rockets, missiles and drones across the border each day.

The ceasefire offers relief to both sides, giving Israel's overstretched army a break and allowing Hezbollah leaders to tout the group's effectiveness in holding their ground despite Israel's massive advantage in weaponry. But the group is likely to face a reckoning, with many Lebanese accusing it of tying their country's fate to Gaza's at the service of key ally Iran, inflicting great damage on a Lebanese economy that was already in grave condition.

No answers for Gaza

Until now, Hezbollah has insisted that it would only halt its attacks on Israel when it agreed to stop fighting in Gaza. Some in the region are likely to view a deal between the Lebanon-based group and Israel as a capitulation.

In Gaza, where officials say the war has killed more than 44,000 Palestinians, Israel's attacks have inflicted a heavy toll on Hamas, including the killing of the group's top leaders. But Hamas fighters continue to hold scores of Israeli hostages, giving the militant group a bargaining chip if indirect ceasefire negotiations resume.

Hamas is likely to continue to demand a lasting truce and a full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza in any such deal, while Netanyahu on Tuesday reiterated his pledge to continue the war until Hamas is destroyed and all hostages are freed.

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, whose forces were ousted from Gaza by Hamas in 2007 and who hopes to one day rule over the territory again as part of an independent Palestinian state, offered a pointed reminder Tuesday of the intractability of the war, demanding urgent international intervention.

"The only way to halt the dangerous escalation we are witnessing in the region, and maintain regional and international stability, security and peace, is to resolve the question of Palestine," he said in a speech to the U.N. read by his ambassador.

## **UN Resolution 1701 is at the heart of the Israel-Hezbollah ceasefire. What is it?**

By KAREEM CHEHAYEB Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — In 2006, after a bruising monthlong war between Israel and Lebanon's Hezbollah militant group, the United Nations Security Council unanimously voted for a resolution to end the conflict and pave the way for lasting security along the border.

But while relative calm stood for nearly two decades, Resolution 1701's terms were never fully enforced.

Now, figuring out how to finally enforce it is key to a U.S.-brokered deal that brought a ceasefire Wednesday.

In late September, after nearly a year of low-level clashes, the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah spiraled into all-out war and an Israeli ground invasion. As Israeli jets pound deep inside Lebanon and Hezbollah fires rockets deeper into northern Israel, U.N. and diplomatic officials again turned to the 2006 resolution in a bid to end the conflict.

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Years of deeply divided politics and regionwide geopolitical hostilities have halted substantial progress on its implementation, yet the international community believes Resolution 1701 is still the brightest prospect for long-term stability between Israel and Lebanon.

Almost two decades after the last war between Israel and Hezbollah, the United States led shuttle diplomacy efforts between Lebanon and Israel to agree on a ceasefire proposal that renewed commitment to the resolution, this time with an implementation plan to try to reinvigorate the document.

What is UNSC Resolution 1701?

In 2000, Israel withdrew its forces from most of southern Lebanon along a U.N.-demarcated "Blue Line" that separated the two countries and the Israeli-annexed Golan Heights, which most of the world considers occupied Syrian territory. U.N. peacekeeping forces in Lebanon, known as UNIFIL, increased their presence along the line of withdrawal.

Resolution 1701 was supposed to complete Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon and ensure Hezbollah would move north of the Litani River, keeping the area exclusively under the Lebanese military and U.N. peacekeepers.

Up to 15,000 U.N. peacekeepers would help to maintain calm, return displaced Lebanese and secure the area alongside the Lebanese military.

The goal was long-term security, with land borders eventually demarcated to resolve territorial disputes.

The resolution also reaffirmed previous ones that call for the disarmament of all armed groups in Lebanon — Hezbollah among them.

"It was made for a certain situation and context," Elias Hanna, a retired Lebanese army general, told The Associated Press. "But as time goes on, the essence of the resolution begins to hollow."

Has Resolution 1701 been implemented?

For years, Lebanon and Israel blamed each other for countless violations along the tense frontier. Israel said Hezbollah's elite Radwan Force and growing arsenal remained, and accused the group of using a local environmental organization to spy on troops. Lebanon complained about Israeli military jets and naval ships entering Lebanese territory even when there was no active conflict.

"You had a role of the UNIFIL that slowly eroded like any other peacekeeping with time that has no clear mandate," said Joseph Bahout, the director of the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy at the American University of Beirut. "They don't have permission to inspect the area without coordinating with the Lebanese army."

UNIFIL for years has urged Israel to withdraw from some territory north of the frontier, but to no avail. In the ongoing war, the peacekeeping mission has accused Israel, as well as Hezbollah, of obstructing and harming its forces and infrastructure.

Hezbollah's power, meanwhile, has grown, both in its arsenal and as a political influence in the Lebanese state.

The Iran-backed group was essential in keeping Syrian President Bashar Assad in power when armed opposition groups tried to topple him, and it supports Iran-backed groups in Iraq and Yemen. It has an estimated 150,000 rockets and missiles, including precision-guided missiles pointed at Israel, and has introduced drones into its arsenal.

Hanna says Hezbollah "is something never seen before as a non-state actor" with political and military influence.

How do mediators hope to implement 1701 almost two decades later?

Israel's security Cabinet approved the ceasefire agreement late Tuesday, according to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office. The ceasefire began at 4 a.m. local time Wednesday.

Efforts led by the U.S. and France for the ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah underscored that they still view the resolution as key. For almost a year, Washington has promoted various versions of a deal that would gradually lead to its full implementation.

International mediators hope that by boosting financial support for the Lebanese army — which was not a party in the Israel-Hezbollah war — Lebanon can deploy some 6,000 additional troops south of the Litani

River to help enforce the resolution. Under the deal, an international monitoring committee headed by the United States would oversee implementation to ensure that Hezbollah and Israel's withdrawals take place.

It is not entirely clear how the committee would work or how potential violations would be reported and dealt with.

The circumstances now are far more complicated than in 2006. Some are still skeptical of the resolution's viability given that the political realities and balance of power both regionally and within Lebanon have dramatically changed since then.

"You're tying 1701 with a hundred things," Bahout said. "A resolution is the reflection of a balance of power and political context."

Now with the ceasefire in place, the hope is that Israel and Lebanon can begin negotiations to demarcate their land border and settle disputes over several points along the Blue Line for long-term security after decades of conflict and tension.

## **Pakistan ends lockdown of its capital after Imran Khan supporters are dispersed by police**

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Authorities reopened roads linking Pakistan's capital with the rest of the country, ending a four-day lockdown, on Wednesday after using tear gas and firing into the air to disperse supporters of imprisoned former Prime Minister Imran Khan who marched to Islamabad to demand his release from prison.

"All roads are being reopened, and the demonstrators have been dispersed," Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi said.

Khan's wife, Bushra Bibi, who was leading the protest, and other demonstrators fled in vehicles when police pushed back against the rallygoers following clashes in which at least seven people were killed.

The police operation came hours after thousands of Khan supporters, defying government warnings, broke through a barrier of shipping containers blocking off Islamabad and entered a high-security zone, where they clashed with security forces.

Tension has been high in Islamabad since Sunday when supporters of the former prime minister began a "long march" from the restive northwest to demand his release. Khan has been in a prison for over a year and faces more than 150 criminal cases that his party says are politically motivated.

Hundreds of demonstrators have been arrested since Sunday.

Bibi and leaders of her husband's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party fled to Mansehra in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, where the party still rules.

Khan, who remains a popular opposition figure, was ousted in 2022 through a no-confidence vote in Parliament.

## **Israel and Lebanon's Hezbollah start a ceasefire after nearly 14 months of fighting**

By JOSEF FEDERMAN, KAREEM CHEHAYEB and BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel and Lebanon-based Hezbollah militants began a ceasefire Wednesday in a major step toward ending nearly 14 months of fighting as a region on edge wondered whether it will hold.

Some celebratory gunshots could be heard in parts of Beirut's southern suburbs, battered over the past two months, but no immediate violations of the ceasefire were reported.

Israel has said it will attack if Hezbollah breaks the agreement, and an Israeli military spokesman, in an Arabic-language X post in the first half-hour of the ceasefire, warned evacuated residents of southern Lebanon to not head home yet, saying the military remained deployed there.

The ceasefire calls for an initial two-month halt to fighting and requires Hezbollah to end its armed presence in southern Lebanon, while Israeli troops are to return to their side of the border. Thousands of additional Lebanese troops and U.N. peacekeepers would deploy in the south, and an international panel

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headed by the United States would monitor compliance.

The ceasefire began at 4 a.m. Wednesday, a day after Israel carried out its most intense wave of airstrikes in Beirut since the start of the conflict that in recent weeks turned into all-out war. At least 42 people were killed in strikes across the country, according to local authorities.

The ceasefire does not address the devastating war in Gaza, where Hamas is still holding dozens of hostages and the conflict is more intractable.

There appeared to be lingering disagreement over whether Israel would have the right to strike Hezbollah if it believed the militants had violated the agreement, something Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu insisted was part of the deal but which Lebanese and Hezbollah officials have rejected.

Israel's security Cabinet approved the U.S.-France-brokered ceasefire agreement after Netanyahu presented it, his office said. President Joe Biden, speaking in Washington, called the agreement "good news" and said his administration would make a renewed push for a ceasefire in Gaza.

The Biden administration spent much of this year trying to broker a ceasefire and hostage release in Gaza but the talks repeatedly sputtered to a halt. President-elect Donald Trump has vowed to bring peace to the Middle East without saying how, and his team linked the deal to Trump's looming return to office.

Any halt to the fighting in Lebanon is expected to reduce the likelihood of war between Israel and Iran, which backs both Hezbollah and Hamas and exchanged direct fire with Israel on two occasions earlier this year.

Israel says it will 'attack with might' if Hezbollah breaks truce

Netanyahu presented the ceasefire proposal to Cabinet ministers after a televised address in which he listed accomplishments against Israel's enemies. He said a ceasefire with Hezbollah would further isolate Hamas in Gaza and allow Israel to focus on its main enemy, Iran.

"If Hezbollah breaks the agreement and tries to rearm, we will attack," he said. "For every violation, we will attack with might."

Biden said Israel reserved the right to quickly resume operations in Lebanon if Hezbollah breaks the terms of the truce, but that the deal "was designed to be a permanent cessation of hostilities."

Netanyahu's office said Israel appreciated the U.S. efforts in securing the deal but "reserves the right to act against every threat to its security."

Lebanon's caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati welcomed the ceasefire and described it as a crucial step toward stability and the return of displaced people.

Hezbollah has said it accepts the proposal, but a senior official with the group said Tuesday it had not seen the agreement in its final form.

"After reviewing the agreement signed by the enemy government, we will see if there is a match between what we stated and what was agreed upon by the Lebanese officials," Mahmoud Qamati, deputy chair of Hezbollah's political council, told the Al Jazeera news network.

"We want an end to the aggression, of course, but not at the expense of the sovereignty of the state," he said, referring to Israel's demand for freedom of action. "Any violation of sovereignty is refused."

Warplanes bombard Beirut and its southern suburbs

Even as ceasefire efforts gained momentum in recent days, Israel continued to strike what it called Hezbollah targets across Lebanon while the militants fired rockets, missiles and drones across the border.

An Israeli strike on Tuesday leveled a residential building in central Beirut — the second time in recent days warplanes have hit the crowded area near downtown. At least seven people were killed and 37 wounded, according to Lebanon's Health Ministry.

Israel also struck a building in Beirut's bustling commercial district of Hamra for the first time, hitting a site around 400 meters (yards) from Lebanon's Central Bank. There were no reports of casualties.

The Israeli military said it struck targets linked to Hezbollah's financial arm.

The evacuation warnings covered many areas, including parts of Beirut that previously were not targeted. Residents fled. Traffic was gridlocked, with mattresses tied to some cars. Dozens of people, some wearing pajamas, gathered in a central square, huddling under blankets or standing around fires as Israeli drones buzzed overhead.



Israeli military spokesman Avichay Adraee issued evacuation warnings for 20 buildings in Beirut's southern suburbs, where Hezbollah has a major presence, as well as a warning for the southern town of Naqoura where the U.N. peacekeeping mission, UNIFIL, is headquartered.

UNIFIL spokesperson Andrea Tenenti said peacekeepers will not evacuate.

Israeli forces reach Litani River in southern Lebanon

The Israeli military also said its ground troops clashed with Hezbollah forces and destroyed rocket launchers in the Slouqi area on the eastern end of the Litani River, a few kilometers (miles) from the Israeli border.

Under the ceasefire deal, Hezbollah is required to move its forces north of the Litani, which in some places is about 30 kilometers (20 miles) north of the border.

Hezbollah began firing into northern Israel on Oct. 8, 2023, saying it was showing support for the Palestinians, a day after Hamas carried out its attack on southern Israel, triggering the Gaza war. Israel returned fire on Hezbollah, and the two sides have exchanged barrages ever since.

Israel escalated its bombardment in mid-September and later sent troops into Lebanon, vowing to put an end to Hezbollah fire so tens of thousands of evacuated Israelis could return to their homes.

More than 3,760 people have been killed by Israeli fire in Lebanon the past 13 months, many of them civilians, according to Lebanese health officials. The bombardment has driven 1.2 million people from their homes. Israel says it has killed more than 2,000 Hezbollah members.

Hezbollah fire has forced some 50,000 Israelis to evacuate in the country's north, and its rockets have reached as far south in Israel as Tel Aviv. At least 75 people have been killed, more than half of them civilians. More than 50 Israeli soldiers have died in the ground offensive in Lebanon.

## Long-sought court ruling restores Oregon tribe's hunting and fishing rights

By CLAIRE RUSH Associated Press

LINCOLN CITY, Ore. (AP) — Drumming made the floor vibrate and singing filled the conference room of the Chinook Winds Casino Resort in Lincoln City, on the Oregon coast, as hundreds in tribal regalia danced in a circle.

For the last 47 years, the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians have held an annual powwow to celebrate regaining federal recognition. This month's event, however, was especially significant: It came just two weeks after a federal court lifted restrictions on the tribe's rights to hunt, fish and gather — restrictions tribal leaders had opposed for decades.

"We're back to the way we were before," Siletz Chairman Delores Pigsley said. "It feels really good."

The Siletz is a confederation of over two dozen bands and tribes whose traditional homelands spanned western Oregon, as well as parts of northern California and southwestern Washington state. The federal government in the 1850s forced them onto a reservation on the Oregon coast, where they were confederated together as a single, federally recognized tribe despite their different backgrounds and languages.

In the 1950s and '60s, Congress revoked recognition of over 100 tribes, including the Siletz, under a policy known as "termination." Affected tribes lost millions of acres of land as well as federal funding and services.

"The goal was to try and assimilate Native people, get them moved into cities," said Matthew Campbell, deputy director of the Native American Rights Fund. "But also I think there was certainly a financial aspect to it. I think the United States was trying to see how it could limit its costs in terms of providing for tribal nations."

Losing their lands and self-governance was painful, and the tribes fought for decades to regain federal recognition. In 1977, the Siletz became the second tribe to succeed, following the restoration of the Menominee Tribe in Wisconsin in 1973.

But to get a fraction of its land back — roughly 3,600 acres (1,457 hectares) of the 1.1-million-acre (445,000-hectare) reservation established for the tribe in 1855 — the Siletz tribe had to agree to a federal court order that restricted their hunting, fishing and gathering rights. It was only one of two tribes in the

country, along with Oregon's Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, compelled to do so to regain tribal land.

The settlement limited where tribal members could fish, hunt and gather for ceremonial and subsistence purposes, and it imposed caps on how many salmon, elk and deer could be harvested in a year. It was devastating, tribal chair Pigsley recalled: The tribe was forced to buy salmon for ceremonies because it couldn't provide for itself, and people were arrested for hunting and fishing violations.

"Giving up those rights was a terrible thing," Pigsley, who has led the tribe for 36 years, told The Associated Press earlier this year. "It was unfair at the time, and we've lived with it all these years."

Decades later, Oregon and the U.S. came to recognize that the agreement subjecting the tribe to state hunting and fishing rules was biased, and they agreed to join the tribe in recommending to the court that the restrictions be lifted.

"The Governor of Oregon and Oregon's congressional representatives have since acknowledged that the 1980 Agreement and Consent Decree were a product of their times and represented a biased and distorted position on tribal sovereignty, tribal traditions, and the Siletz Tribe's ability and authority to manage and sustain wildlife populations it traditionally used for tribal ceremonial and subsistence purposes," attorneys for the U.S., state and tribe wrote in a joint court filing.

Late last month, the tribe finally succeeded in having the court order vacated by a federal judge. And a separate agreement with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife has given the tribe a greater role in regulating tribal hunting and fishing.

As Pigsley reflected on those who passed away before seeing the tribe regain its rights, she expressed hope about the next generation carrying on essential traditions.

"There's a lot of youth out there that are learning tribal ways and culture," she said. "It's important today because we are trying to raise healthy families, meaning we need to get back to our natural foods."

Among those celebrating and praying at the powwow was Tiffany Stuart, donning a basket cap her ancestors were known for weaving, and her 3-year-old daughter Kwestaani Chuski, whose name means "six butterflies" in the regional Athabaskan language from southwestern Oregon and northwestern California.

Given the restoration of rights, Stuart said, it was "very powerful for my kids to dance."

"You dance for the people that can't dance anymore," she said.

## **Trump promised mass deportations.**

### **Educators worry fear will keep immigrants' kids from school**

By BIANCA VÁZQUEZ TONESS AP Education Writer

Last time Donald Trump was president, rumors of immigration raids terrorized the Oregon community where Gustavo Balderas was the school superintendent.

Word spread that immigration agents were going to try to enter schools. There was no truth to it, but school staff members had to find students who were avoiding school and coax them back to class.

"People just started ducking and hiding," Balderas said.

Educators around the country are bracing for upheaval, whether or not the president-elect follows through on his pledge to deport millions of immigrants who are in the country illegally. Even if he only talks about it, children of immigrants will suffer, educators and legal observers said.

If "you constantly threaten people with the possibility of mass deportation, it really inhibits peoples' ability to function in society and for their kids to get an education," said Hiroshi Motomura, a professor at UCLA School of Law.

That fear already has started for many.

"The kids are still coming to school, but they're scared," said Almudena Abeyta, superintendent of Chelsea Public Schools, a Boston suburb that's long been a first stop for Central American immigrants coming to Massachusetts. Now Haitians are making the city home and sending their kids to school there.

"They're asking: 'Are we going to be deported?'" said Abeyta.

Many parents in her district grew up in countries where the federal government ran schools and may think it's the same here. The day after the election, Abeyta sent a letter home assuring parents their

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children are welcome and safe, no matter who is president.

Immigration officials have avoided arresting parents or students at schools. Since 2011, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement has operated under a policy that immigration agents should not arrest or conduct other enforcement actions near "sensitive locations," including schools, hospitals and places of worship. Doing so might curb access to essential services, U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas wrote in a 2021 policy update.

The Heritage Foundation's policy roadmap for Trump's second term, Project 2025, calls for rescinding the guidance on "sensitive places." Trump tried to distance himself from the proposals during the campaign, but he has nominated many who worked on the plan for his new administration, including Tom Homan for "border czar."

If immigration agents were to arrest a parent dropping off children at school, it could set off mass panic, said Angelica Salas, executive director of the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights in Los Angeles.

"If something happens at one school, it spreads like wildfire and kids stop coming to school," she said.

Balderas, now the superintendent in Beaverton, a different Portland suburb, told the school committee there this month it was time to prepare for a more determined Trump administration. In case schools are targeted, Beaverton will train staff not to allow immigration agents inside.

"All bets are off with Trump," said Balderas, who is also president of ASSA, The School Superintendents Association. "If something happens, I feel like it will happen a lot quicker than last time."

Many school officials are reluctant to talk about their plans or concerns, some out of fear of drawing attention to their immigrant students. One school administrator serving many children of Mexican and Central American immigrants in the Midwest said their school has invited immigration attorneys to help parents formalize any plans for their children's care in case they are deported. The administrator spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media.

Speaking up on behalf of immigrant families also can put superintendents at odds with school board members.

"This is a very delicate issue," said Viridiana Carrizales, chief executive officer of ImmSchools, a nonprofit that trains schools on supporting immigrant students.

She's received 30 requests for help since the election, including two from Texas superintendents who don't think their conservative school boards would approve of publicly affirming immigrant students' right to attend school or district plans to turn away immigration agents.

More than two dozen superintendents and district communications representatives contacted by The Associated Press either ignored or declined requests for comment.

"This is so speculative that we would prefer not to comment on the topic," wrote Scott Pribble, a spokesperson for Denver Public Schools.

The city of Denver has helped more than 40,000 migrants in the last two years with shelter or a bus ticket elsewhere. It's also next door to Aurora, one of two cities where Trump has said he would start his mass deportations.

When pressed further, Pribble responded, "Denver Public Schools is monitoring the situation while we continue to serve, support, and protect all of our students as we always have."

Like a number of big-city districts, Denver's school board during the first Trump administration passed a resolution promising to protect its students from immigration authorities pursuing them or their information. According to the 2017 resolution, Denver will not "grant access to our students" unless federal agents can provide a valid search warrant.

The rationale has been that students cannot learn if they fear immigration agents will take them or their parents away while they're on campus. School districts also say these policies reaffirm their students' constitutional right to a free, public education, regardless of immigration status.

## Democrats in Pennsylvania had a horrible 2024 election. They say it's still a swing state

By MARC LEVY Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — The drubbing Democrats took in Pennsylvania in this year's election has prompted predictable vows to rebound, but it has also sowed doubts about whether Pennsylvania might be leaving the ranks of up-for-grabs swing states for a right-leaning existence more like Ohio's.

The introspection over voters' rejection of Democrats comes amid growing speculation about Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro as a contender for the party's 2028 presidential nomination.

Widely expected to seek reelection in the 2026 mid-terms, Shapiro was considered a rising star in the party even before he garnered heavy national attention for making Vice President Kamala Harris' shortlist of candidates for running mates.

Some Pennsylvania Democrats say 2024's losses are, at least in part, attributable to voters motivated specifically by President-elect Donald Trump. Many of those voters won't show up if Trump isn't on the ballot, the theory goes, leaving Pennsylvania's status as the ultimate swing state intact.

"I don't think it's an indicator for Pennsylvania," said Jamie Perrapato, executive director of Turn PA Blue, which helps organize and train campaign volunteers. "I'll believe it when these people come out and vote in any elections but for the presidency."

Pennsylvania's status as the nation's premier battleground state in 2024 was unmistakable: political campaigns dropped more money on campaign ads than in any other state, according to data from ad-tracking firm AdImpact.

Plenty of that money was spent by Democrats, but their defeat was across the board. Democrats in Pennsylvania lost its 19 presidential electoral votes, a U.S. Senate seat, three other statewide races, two congressional seats and what was once a reassuring advantage in voter registration.

Some of those losses were particularly notable: Democrats hadn't lost Pennsylvania's electoral votes and a Senate incumbent in the same year since 1880. The defeat of three-term Sen. Bob Casey is especially a gut-punch for Democrats: the son of a former governor has served in statewide office since 1997.

An echo of what happened everywhere

The same debate that Democrats are having nationally over Harris' decisive loss is playing out in Pennsylvania, with no agreement on what caused them to be so wrong.

Some blamed President Joe Biden, a Pennsylvania native, for backtracking on his promise not to run for reelection. Some blamed the party's left wing and some blamed Harris, saying she tried to woo Republican voters instead of focusing on pocketbook issues that were motivating working-class voters.

In Pennsylvania, finger-pointing erupted in the Democratic stronghold of Philadelphia — where Trump significantly narrowed his 2020 deficit — between the city's Democratic Party chair and a Harris campaign adviser.

The nation's sixth-most populous city is historically a driver of Democratic victories statewide, but Harris' margin there was the smallest of any Democratic presidential nominee since John Kerry's in 2004, and turnout there was well below the statewide average.

Rural Democrats suggested the party left votes on the table in their regions, too. Some said Harris hurt herself by not responding forcefully enough in the nation's No. 2 natural gas state against Trump's assertions that she would ban fracking.

Ed Rendell, the former two-term governor of Pennsylvania and ex-Democratic National Committee chair, said Trump had the right message this year and that Harris didn't have enough time on the campaign trail to counter it.

Still, Rendell said Pennsylvania remains very much a swing state.

"I wouldn't go crazy over these election results," Rendell said. "It's still tight enough to say that in 2022 the Democrats swept everything and you would have thought that things looked pretty good for us, and this time we almost lost everything."

That year, Shapiro won the governor's office by nearly 15%, John Fetterman was the only candidate in

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the nation to flip a U.S. Senate seat despite suffering a stroke in the midst of his campaign, and Democrats captured control of the state House of Representatives for the first time in a dozen years.

Bethany Hallam, an Allegheny County council member who is part of a wave of progressive Democrats to win office around Pittsburgh in recent years, said the party can fix things before Pennsylvania becomes Ohio. But she cautioned against interpreting 2024 as a one-time blip, saying it would be a mistake to think Trump voters will never be heard from again.

"They're going to be more empowered to keep voting more," Hallam said. "They came out, finally exercised their votes and the person they picked won. ... I don't think this was a one-off thing."

The ever-changing political landscape

Shapiro, assuming he seeks another term in 2026, would likely benefit from a mid-term backlash that has haunted the party in power — in this case, Republicans and Trump — in nearly every election since World War II.

The political landscape never stays the same, and voters two years from now will be reacting to a new set of factors: the state of the economy, the ups and downs of Trump's presidency, events no one sees coming.

Rendell predicted that Trump's public approval ratings will be badly damaged — below 40% — even before he takes office.

Democrats, meanwhile, fully expect Republicans to come after Shapiro in an effort to damage any loftier ambitions he may have.

They say they'll be ready.

"He's on the MAGA radar," said Michelle McFall, the Westmoreland County Democratic Party chair. "He's a wildly popular governor in what is still the most important battleground state ... and we're going to make sure we're in fighting shape to hold that seat."

In 2025, partisan control of the state Supreme Court will be up for grabs when three Democratic justices elected a decade ago must run to retain their seats in up-or-down elections without an opponent. Republicans have it marked on their calendars.

Democrats will go into those battles with their narrowest voter registration edge in at least a half-century. What was an advantage of 1.2 million voters in 2008, the year Barack Obama won the presidency, is now a gap of fewer than 300,000.

University of Pennsylvania researchers found that, since the 2020 presidential election, Republican gains weren't because Republicans registered more new voters.

Rather, the GOP's gains were from more Democrats switching their registration to Republican, a third party or independent, as well as more inactive Democratic voters being removed from registration rolls, the researchers reported.

Democrats have won more statewide elections in the past 25 years, but the parties are tied in that category in the five elections from 2020 through 2024.

Daniel Hopkins, a political science professor at the University of Pennsylvania, said it is hard to predict that Pennsylvania is trending in a particular direction, since politics are evolving and parties that lose tend to adapt.

Even when Democrats had larger registration advantages, Hopkins said, Republicans competed on a statewide playing field.

Hopkins said Democrats should be worried that they lost young voters and Hispanic voters to Trump, although the swing toward the GOP was relatively muted in Pennsylvania. Trump's 1.8 percentage-point victory was hardly a landslide, he noted, and it signals that Pennsylvania will be competitive moving forward.

"I don't think that the registration numbers are destiny," Hopkins said. "That's partly because even with Democrats losing their registration advantage, whichever party can win the unaffiliated voters by a healthy margin will carry the state."

## **Conservatives love him. Liberals disdain him. For residents of Maine town, it's more complicated**

By DAN MERICA Associated Press

NORTHEAST HARBOR, Maine (AP) — When Donald Trump was elected president earlier this month, Caroline Pryor's mind turned immediately to the man who lives down the road — Leonard Leo.

Few people in America have done more to advance conservative causes than Leo. Years ago, the then-unknown conservative lawyer began executing a plan that has helped reshape the U.S. courts and Republican politics, an effort that culminated in Trump's first term with the appointment of three conservative Supreme Court justices.

The success moved Leo out of the shadows, turning him into a hero to conservatives and a villain to liberals. But for his neighbors on a sparsely populated island off the coast of Maine, the equation is more complicated. Leo and his family moved to Mount Desert Island in 2020, seeking a relatively anonymous life among its unpretentious year-round residents. A refuge it has not turned out to be.

The conservative's presence — despite significant charitable giving to local nonprofits and big spending locally — has generated fissures in a place known for tranquility. That anxiety has only spiked since Trump's victory.

"It feels very personal," said Pryor, a 65-year-old who has lived on the island for four decades. "He comes to a small quiet community in the very northeast corner of the country and does this evil, far-reaching work that is going to affect so many millions of people, but he wants to just live this anonymous, quiet life."

Leo draws protesters

Those feelings were on display on a brisk morning in October, just two weeks before November's election. With sunlight flickering through the yellowing leaves, Pryor and a dozen other people — mostly women — gathered outside Leo's estate to protest during the island's annual marathon.

They came armed with a cartoonish life-sized puppet of Leo, a rainbow arch for runners to pass through and blue and pink chalk with which they scribbled slogans — "You Are Amazing, Leonard Leo Is Not" — across the road. They rang cowbells as a boombox blasted Dolly Parton, Taylor Swift and Queen.

"We are making people on the island aware of who he is, and they might question taking his money," Mary Jane Schepers, one of the protesters, said as she urged runners to flip off Leo's home. "They are taking dirty money."

Leo, in response to a series of written questions, said he "had never really thought about" whether his move to the island would spur opposition.

"While I disagree with them and with what some of them do and say, they are people created by God with dignity and worth and their presence has been an invitation to pray for them," Leo wrote. He declined an interview request.

Money sparks controversy

Leo, 59, and his family for decades have vacationed on Mount Desert Island, an idyllic island known for its rocky beauty, windswept beaches and the famed Acadia National Park.

In 2018, he purchased a \$3.3 million, 8,000-square-foot Tudor-style estate in Northeast Harbor, one of Mount Desert Island's wealthiest towns. Some of the country's most influential and wealthy people — scions like John D. Rockefeller Jr., billionaires like Mitchell Rales and celebrities such as Martha Stewart — have sought privacy and anonymity on the island. Backlash swiftly followed Leo's arrival. The next year, protesters descended on his home as he hosted a fundraiser for Republican Sen. Susan Collins. He soon drew more protests when he was invited to introduce the then-president of The Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank, at a nearby college, leading the institution to rescind the invitation.

The protests grew near the end of Trump's first term and spiked after the conservative-dominated Supreme Court in 2022 overturned the constitutional right to abortion.

The activist's initial goal was lofty: Convince Leo to leave. When that failed, they turned their focus to informing residents about the man in the Tudor-style mansion.

"He felt he could come here, and it would be a place to get away" from the negative attention he gets

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for his politics, said Murray Ngoima, a regular protester. "We have managed to draw attention to what he is doing. And that is a problem for him."

The protests have compelled Leo to step up security at his estate. A protester was arrested in 2022, a confrontation with police that led to a lawsuit and \$62,500 settlement over First Amendment violations.

Amid the protests, Leo has stepped up his charitable giving, telling The Associated Press that the activists have "strengthened our conviction to be as active as possible in helping various institutions on the island." That has meant tens of thousands of dollars to local nonprofits.

He and his wife, Sally, gave over \$50,000 in 2020 to the Island Housing Trust, an organization seeking to boost the amount of affordable housing on the island, according to the trust's annual giving report that also listed Leo as a member of the group's leadership committee. They made similar donations over the next three years, trust records show, consistently ranking them among the group's top donors. Leo and his wife were also listed as donors to the Mount Desert Island Hospital. The Leos have also been listed as regular donors to the Northeast Harbor Library.

Some residents are suspicious of Leo's donations

Those donations have raised suspicion, with protesters urging the groups to return the money and comparing the donations to the way Leo has used the money to influence Republican politics.

"He is a wolf in sheep's clothing," said Susan Covino Buell, an island resident. "We can't just act like he is a regular person in our community."

Buell, 75, resigned her position on the housing nonprofit's campaign committee when Leo got involved with the charity. She had tried to convince the nonprofit to reject the money "because I just felt it was so tainted," Buell said.

The trust's executive director did not respond to the AP's request for comment.

A group of anti-Leo activists also penned an open letter urging the hospital to return the donation because of Leo's role in ending federal abortion protections.

Mariah Cormier, a hospital spokesperson, said the institution accepts "charitable donations that aid in strengthening the health and vibrancy of our community."

Leo dismissed the idea his donations were aimed at buying acceptance from a skeptical community, saying people "can judge for themselves why I do what I do."

It isn't just Leo's philanthropy that is controversial. His business at local establishments presents a quandary for shop owners and service workers. Many said they oppose Leo's political positions, but they need his money to sustain their enterprises, allowing shops and restaurants that once closed during frigid winters to stay open longer.

Leo is such a sensitive topic that multiple shop owners declined to be interviewed about the wealthy conservative lawyer, explaining they did not want to damage their relationship with him by discussing how his views conflicted with their own and the internal conflict his business causes.

Leo, a devout Roman Catholic, has also used money to influence the island's Catholic churches.

Sacred Spaces Foundation, a nonprofit that counts Leo as its president and sole member, purchased St. Ignatius of Loyola Catholic Church in Northeast Harbor for \$2.65 million in 2023 from the Roman Catholic Bishop of Portland, according to records obtained from the county government. The church now holds one service a week during the summer, when Northeast Harbor is busiest.

Leo is a regular at another parish, Holy Redeemer, a large stone sanctuary in Bar Harbor where his wife is the head of the music ministry. His presence has driven off some longtime congregants, residents said.

Lindy Stretch, an 80-year-old who converted to Catholicism at Holy Redeemer over a decade ago, left the congregation because of what she said was Leo's growing influence in the church. "I just couldn't stand to watch that," Stretch said.

Asked about people leaving the island church, Leo wrote he was "thankful for every person who takes the time to come to Holy Redeemer and is striving to be in union with the church and Christ, regardless of what they do or believe in their private lives."

'He isn't going anywhere'

Not everyone is upset about Leo's Maine move. Though the island's population is liberal — over 70% of

residents voted against Trump in 2024 — Republicans in the state have come to Leo's defense.

House Republican Leader Billy Bob Faulkingham, who represents a district just off the island, excoriated the protesters in an op-ed and heralded Leo in an interview for "sticking to his beliefs and donating to the causes he believes in."

Since 2020, Leo's network has funneled over \$1 million to conservative causes in the state, including around \$800,000 to a policy institute that funds a conservative website and over \$300,000 to a conservative state representative's political network.

Those donations have only deepened the opposition to Leo among his most frequent protesters, they said.

Most who gathered in October to protest during the marathon have lost count of how often they have met outside Leo's estate. They have come so frequently they have a routine — each standing in the same place, chanting the same slogans and waving the same signs.

Though energized, they have come to accept they may never drive Leo from the island.

"He is succeeding," admitted Bo Greene, a 63-year-old who lives in Bar Harbor, citing the way nonprofits have taken his money. "We are making him uncomfortable, and he hates us," she said. "But he is still here."

After the last marathoner had plodded by, the women collected their trash and packed away their puppet and signs before heading home.

A few hours later, it was like they had never even been there.

Not even their chalk slogans on the road remained: Someone had washed them away.

## Walmart's DEI rollback signals a profound shift in the wake of Trump's election victory

By ALEXANDRA OLSON and CATHY BUSSEWITZ AP Business Writers

NEW YORK (AP) — Walmart's sweeping rollback of its diversity policies is the strongest indication yet of a profound shift taking hold at U.S. companies that are re-evaluating the legal and political risks associated with bold programs to bolster historically underrepresented groups.

The changes announced by the world's biggest retailer on Monday followed a string of legal victories by conservative groups that have filed an onslaught of lawsuits challenging corporate and federal programs aimed at elevating minority and women-owned businesses and employees.

The retreat from such programs crystalized with the election of former President Donald Trump, whose administration is certain to make dismantling diversity, equity and inclusion programs a priority. Trump's incoming deputy chief of policy will be his former adviser Stephen Miller, who leads a group called America First Legal that has aggressively challenged corporate DEI policies.

"There has been a lot of reassessment of risk looking at programs that could be deemed to constitute reverse discrimination," said Allan Schwyer, principal researcher at the Human Capital Center at the Conference Board.

"This is another domino to fall and it is a rather large domino," he added.

Among other changes, Walmart said it will no longer give priority treatment to suppliers owned by women or minorities. The company also will not renew a five-year commitment for a racial equity center set up in 2020 after the police killing of George Floyd. And it pulled out of a prominent gay rights index.

Schwyer said the biggest trigger for companies making such changes is simply a reassessment of their legal risk exposure, which began after U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in June 2023 that ended affirmative action in college admissions. Since then, conservative groups using similar arguments have secured court victories against various diversity programs, especially those that steer contracts to minority or women-owned businesses.

Most recently, the conservative Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty won a victory in a case against the U.S. Department of Transportation over its use of a program that gives priority to minority-owned businesses when it awards contracts.

Companies are seeing a big legal risk in continuing with DEI efforts, said Dan Lennington, a deputy



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counsel at the institute. His organization says it has identified more than 60 programs in the federal government that it considers discriminatory, he said.

"We have a legal landscape within the entire federal government, all three branches -- the U.S. Supreme Court, the Congress and the President -- are all now firmly pointed in the direction towards equality of individuals and individualized treatment of all Americans, instead of diversity, equity and inclusion treating people as members of racial groups," Lennington said.

The Trump administration is also likely to take direct aim at DEI initiatives through executive orders and other policies that affect private companies, especially federal contractors.

"The impact of the election on DEI policies is huge. It can't be overstated," said Jason Schwartz, co-chair of the Labor & Employment Practice Group at law firm Gibson Dunn.

With Miller returning to the White House, rolling back DEI initiatives is likely to be a priority, Schwartz said.

"Companies are trying to strike the right balance to make clear they've got an inclusive workplace where everyone is welcome, and they want to get the best talent, while at the same time trying not to alienate various parts of their employees and customer base who might feel one way or the other. It's a virtually impossible dilemma," Schwartz said.

Marc Morial, CEO of the National Urban League, a civil rights group that has worked with Walmart on diversity and inclusion efforts in the past, called the company's pullback from DEI "stunning" and "unexpected."

"This is inconsistent with the Walmart I know," said Morial, who argued that DEI policies are how organizations ensure compliance with federal anti-discrimination laws like the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and any suggestion of favoritism or preferential treatment "is really defamatory against what DEI represents."

He said that Walmart would see "a strong message" to the decision but that civil rights leaders "are first very interested in dialogue" with Walmart executives.

A recent survey by Pew Research Center showed that workers are divided on the merits of DEI policies. While still broadly popular, the share of workers who said focusing on workplace diversity was mostly a good thing fell to 52% in the October survey, compared to 56% in a similar survey in February 2023. Rachel Minkin, a research associate at Pew, called it a small but significant shift in short amount of time.

There will be more companies pulling back from their DEI policies, but it likely won't be a retreat across the board, said David Glasgow, executive director of the Meltzer Center for Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging at New York University.

"There are vastly more companies that are sticking with DEI," Glasgow said. "The only reason you don't hear about it is most of them are doing it by stealth. They're putting their heads down and doing DEI work and hoping not to attract attention."

Glasgow advises organizations to stick to their own core values, because attitudes toward the topic can change quickly in the span of four years.

"It's going to leave them looking a little bit weak if there's a kind of flip-flopping, depending on whichever direction the political winds are blowing," he said.

One reason DEI programs exist is because without those programs, companies may be vulnerable to lawsuits for traditional discrimination. "Really think carefully about the risks in all directions on this topic," Glasgow said.

Walmart confirmed will no longer consider race and gender as a litmus test to improve diversity when it offers supplier contracts. Walmart says its U.S. businesses sourced more than \$13 billion in goods and services from diverse suppliers in fiscal year 2024, including businesses owned by minorities, women and veterans.

It was unclear how its relationships with such business would change going forward. Organizations that have partnered with Walmart on its diversity initiatives offered a cautious response.

The Women's Business Enterprise National Council, a non-profit that last year named Walmart one of America's top corporation for women-owned enterprises, said it was still evaluating the impact of Walmart's announcement.

Pamela Prince-Eason, the president and CEO of the organization, said she hoped Walmart's need to cater to its diverse customer base will continue to drive contracts to women-owned suppliers even if the company has no explicit dollar goals.

"I suspect Walmart will continue to have one of the most inclusive supply chains in the World," Prince-Eason wrote. "Any retailer's ability to serve the communities they operate in will continue to value understanding their customers, (many of which are women), in order to better provide products and services desired and no one understands customers better than Walmart."

Walmart's announcement came after the company spoke directly with conservative political commentator and activist Robby Starbuck, who has been going after corporate DEI policies, calling out individual companies on the social media platform X. Several of those companies have subsequently announced that they are pulling back their initiatives, including Ford, Harley-Davidson, Lowe's and Tractor Supply.

Walmart confirmed to The Associated Press that it will better monitor its third-party marketplace items to make sure they don't feature sexual and transgender products aimed at minors. The company also will stop participating in the Human Rights Campaign's annual benchmark index that measures workplace inclusion for LGBTQ+ employees.

A Walmart spokesperson added that some of the changes were already in progress and not as a result of conversations that it had with Starbuck.

RaShawn "Shawnie" Hawkins, senior director of the HRC Foundation's Workplace Equality Program, said companies that "abandon" their commitments workplace inclusion policies "are shirking their responsibility to their employees, consumers, and shareholders." She said the buying power of LGBTQ customers is powerful and noted that the index will have record participation of more than 1,400 companies in 2025.

## **Trump team says Israel-Hezbollah ceasefire deal brokered by Biden is actually Trump's win**

By AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration kept President-elect Donald Trump's incoming administration closely apprised of its efforts to broker the ceasefire deal between Israel and Hezbollah that took effect early Wednesday, according to the outgoing Democratic administration.

Trump's team, meanwhile, was quick to spike the football and claim credit for the rare spot of good news for a Democratic administration that's been dragged down by the grinding Mideast conflict.

"Everyone is coming to the table because of President Trump," Florida Rep. Mike Waltz, Trump's choice for his national security adviser, said in a post on X on Tuesday, shortly before the Israel Cabinet signed off on the agreement. "His resounding victory sent a clear message to the rest of the world that chaos won't be tolerated. I'm glad to see concrete steps towards deescalation in the Middle East."

The Biden administration's reported coordination with Trump's team on its efforts to forge the ceasefire in Lebanon is perhaps the highest-profile example of cooperation in what's been a sometimes choppy transition period.

Trump's transition team just Tuesday reached a required agreement with President Joe Biden's White House that will allow transition staff to coordinate with the existing federal workforce before Trump takes office on Jan. 20. There has been some coordination on high levels between the outgoing Biden and incoming Trump teams, including talks between Biden's national security adviser Jake Sullivan and Waltz.

Biden in Rose Garden remarks on Tuesday cheered the ceasefire agreement as a critical step that he hoped could be the catalyst for a broader peace in the Mideast, which has been shaken by nearly 14 months of war following Hamas' attack on Israel on Oct. 7, 2023.

"This is designed to be a permanent cessation of hostilities," Biden said. "What is left of Hezbollah and other terrorist organizations will not be allowed — I emphasize, will not be allowed — to threaten the security of Israel again."

White House officials are now hopeful that a calm in Lebanon will reinvigorate a multi-country effort at finding an endgame to the devastating war in Gaza, where Hamas is still holding dozens of hostages and

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the conflict is more intractable.

Biden said the U.S., as well as Israel, will engage in talks in the coming days with officials from Egypt, Qatar and Turkey to try to get Gaza talks back on track.

But during Biden's moment of success in a conflict that has roiled his reputation at home and abroad, the specter of the incoming Trump administration loomed large.

Trump's senior national security team was briefed by the Biden administration as negotiations unfolded and finally came to a conclusion on Tuesday, according to a senior Biden administration official. The official, who briefed reporters on the condition of anonymity on a call organized by the White House, added that the incoming Trump administration officials were not directly involved in the talks, but that it was important that they knew "what we were negotiating and what the commitments were."

Trump's team and allies, meanwhile, said there was no doubt that the prospect of the Republican president returning to power pushed both sides to get the agreement done.

Waltz, in addition to giving Trump credit for the ceasefire deal coming together, added a warning to Iran, Hezbollah's chief financial backer.

"But let's be clear: The Iran Regime is the root cause of the chaos & terror that has been unleashed across the region. We will not tolerate the status quo of their support for terrorism," Waltz said in his post.

Sen. Lindsey Graham, a Trump ally, also gave a shoutout to the incoming administration, while giving a nod to Biden's team.

"I appreciate the hard work of the Biden Administration, supported by President Trump, to make this ceasefire a reality," Graham said in a statement.

Richard Goldberg, a senior adviser at the Washington group Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, said the moment magnifies that Iran — which he said would have needed to approve of Hezbollah agreeing to the ceasefire — is carefully weighing what lays ahead with Trump.

"There's zero doubt that Iran is pulling back to regroup ahead of Trump coming into office," said Goldberg, a National Security Council official in Trump's first administration. "It's a combination of Israeli military success and Trump's election — the ayatollah has no clothes and he knows we know."

The Biden White House is also holding on to a sliver of hope that the Lebanon ceasefire deal could help reinvigorate a long sought after Israel-Saudi normalization deal.

The official said a "lot of work has been done" to get such an agreement on track "but clearly where we are in Gaza is holding us back."

Biden has said his administration was tantalizingly close to reaching a deal between the Middle East's two most important powers shortly before the Hamas attack sent tremors throughout the region. He has speculated that the emerging normalization deal was part of Hamas' motivation in carrying out its attack on Israel when it did.

Just weeks before the attack, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu sat beside Biden on the sidelines of the annual U.N. General Assembly and marveled that a "historic peace between Israel and Saudi Arabia" seemed within reach — a diplomatic advance that the Israeli leader predicted could lead to lasting peace between the Israelis and Palestinians.

The so-called normalization push, which began during Trump's first administration and was branded the Abraham Accords, is an ambitious effort to reshape the region and boost Israel's standing.

The Biden White House plans to keep the incoming Trump administration looped in on its efforts and "anything that we will do on this ... we won't do this unless they know what we're doing," the Biden administration official said.

## **SEC losses are big gains for SMU and Indiana in latest College Football Playoff rankings**

By EDDIE PELLIS AP National Writer

The Southeastern Conference's losses were almost everyone else's gain in the College Football Playoff rankings, with SMU nudging its way into the top 12 and Indiana staying in the mix at No. 10 despite a

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lopsided loss of its own.

The 12-team bracket released Tuesday placed undefeated Oregon on top for the fourth straight week. It did not include Alabama or Mississippi of the SEC, both of which suffered their third losses of the season last week.

That helped move SMU up four spots to No. 9, joining No. 6 Miami to give the Atlantic Coast Conference two teams in the 12-team bracket. They could meet in the ACC title game in two weeks. Clemson, ranked 12th, is also in the mix.

"We've been in that position where, so far, our resume hadn't been good enough, so we needed some help," SMU coach Rhett Lashlee said a few hours before the rankings were released.

All eyes were on Indiana, and how harshly the committee would penalize the Hoosiers for their first loss of the season, a 38-15 thumping by No. 2 Ohio State. Indiana coach Curt Cignetti scoffed at the idea the Hoosiers weren't a playoff team. The selection committee agreed, only bumping the Hoosiers down five spots.

"We were impressed with some of the things Indiana did," said Michigan athletic director Warde Manuel, the chair of the selection committee. "They dropped five but we still felt their body of work was strong enough to remain in the top 10."

The committee wasn't nearly as generous to the Big 12. Losses by its top two teams last week — BYU and Colorado — vaulted Arizona State, which beat BYU, into the bracket.

The Sun Devils were ranked 16th. That afforded them the 12th and final spot in the bracket as the fifth-best projected conference champ, but gave the Big 12 the distinct feel of a one-bid league.

Another bid would belong to Boise State of the Mountain West. The Broncos were ranked 11th but got the fourth seed in the bracket as the fourth-best projected conference champion.

SEC leader Texas was ranked third.

Alabama dropped six spots to No. 13 and Ole Miss dropped five spots to No. 14. Both are out of the mix, but not completely out of the question, as the committee wrestles over the next two weeks with whether a three-loss team belongs in the playoff.

"The appetite is there to rank the teams as we see them," Manuel said, while pointing out that in the 10-year history of the CFP, the committee has placed 22 three-loss teams in the top 12.

Before this year, of course, only the top four seeds mattered.

Other rankings: No. 4 Penn State, No. 5 Notre Dame, No. 7 Georgia and No. 8 Tennessee.

There are two more rankings to come out — next week, then the last one on Dec. 8, which will set the pairings for the playoffs that start Dec. 20. The national title game is set for Jan. 20 in Atlanta.

Games to watch

Michigan at No. 2 Ohio State: A Buckeyes win sets up a rematch with Oregon in the Big Ten title game (with a third meeting possible in the playoffs).

No. 3 Texas at No. 20 Texas A&M: The winner plays Georgia for the SEC title. The Longhorns would presumably make the 12-team bracket either way.

No. 15 South Carolina at No. 12 Clemson: The Palmetto Bowl for a chance to stay on the fringes of consideration for the CFP.

This week's projected first-round matchups

Teams listed by seed, not ranking.

No. 12 Arizona State at No. 5 Ohio State: Fun fact: The Big 12 is NOT guaranteed a spot in these playoffs, and Tulane of the American Athletic Conference is No. 17, only one spot behind ASU.

No. 9 Tennessee at No. 8 Georgia: The Bulldogs are vulnerable to a third loss in the SEC title game. This would be rematch of Georgia's 31-17 win on Nov. 16.

No. 11 Indiana at No. 6 Penn State: An argument could be made that had these Big Ten foes played this season, both might not be here.

No. 10 SMU at No. 7 Notre Dame: They haven't squared off since 1989, but are scheduled to play again in 2026.

## Trump vows tariffs over immigration. What the numbers say about border crossings, drugs and crime

By REBECCA SANTANA Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In a Monday evening announcement, President-elect Donald Trump railed against Mexico and Canada, accusing them of allowing thousands of people to enter the U.S.

Hitting a familiar theme from the campaign trail and his first term in office, Trump portrayed the country's borders as insecure and immigrants as contributing to crime and the fentanyl crisis. In an announcement that could have stark repercussions, he threatened to impose 25% tariffs on everything coming into the country from those two countries.

Trump's anti-immigration rhetoric has resonated with voters concerned about immigration and crime. Yet there's more to the story than Trump's short statement suggested.

A look at what the numbers and studies say about border crossings, fentanyl smuggling and whether there's a connection between immigration and crime:

### Border crossings

The number of migrants crossing the U.S.-Mexico border is a key metric watched intensely by both Republicans and Democrats.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection, an arm of the Department of Homeland Security, releases monthly statistics that track everything from drug seizures to cross-border trade. One of the metrics tracked is the number of Border Patrol arrests or encounters each month with people entering the country between the official border crossings — known as the ports of entry.

The vast majority of those arrests happen at the southern border.

Those numbers have actually been falling this year under the Biden administration. The Border Patrol made 56,530 arrests in October, which is about a four-year low.

It hasn't always been like that. The Biden administration struggled to bring down the growing number of migrants coming to the southern border. A little less than a year ago, in December 2023, the Border Patrol made about a quarter of a million arrests along the southern border — an all-time high. Cross-border trade was damaged as border agents were reassigned to help process migrants and train traffic was temporarily shut down.

Since then, the numbers of people encountered at the southern border have dropped and stayed down through a combination of stricter enforcement on the Mexican side and asylum restrictions announced earlier this year by the Biden administration.

Republicans put a caveat on those numbers.

They have frequently accused the Biden administration of using an app called CBP One to let hundreds of thousands of people into the country who otherwise wouldn't be allowed in. They've described the program where 1,450 people a day can schedule an appointment to come into the U.S. as essentially a way to keep the border encounter numbers artificially low.

On the northern border, the numbers are much smaller. Border Patrol made 23,721 arrests between October 2023 and September 2024, compared with 10,021 the previous 12 months.

Trump also struggled to get a handle on illegal border crossings. Arrests topped 850,000 in 2019, nearly triple the amount two years earlier, though still far below the tally of more than 2 million for two different years under Biden.

### Drug smuggling

Trump and many Republicans have often portrayed the U.S.'s southern border as wide open to drug smuggling. They have also linked immigrants to drug smuggling and accused Mexico of doing little to stop it.

Much of America's fentanyl is smuggled from Mexico.

The fentanyl scourge began well before Biden took office. Border seizures have jumped sharply under Biden, which may partly reflect improved detection. About 27,000 pounds (12,247 kilograms) of fentanyl was seized by U.S. authorities in the 2023 government budget year, compared with 2,545 pounds (1,154 kilograms) in 2019, when Trump was president.

Cooperation between the Mexican and U.S. governments on fighting drug smuggling undoubtedly suffered under President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, who left office at the end of September.

Before López Obrador took office in December 2018, the U.S. worked closely with Mexico's military to take down drug capos.

But López Obrador, a nationalist and folksy populist, railed against the violence set off by the drug war waged by his predecessors and the Americans. He proposed addressing the root societal causes of violence found in poverty and a lack of opportunity for young people, in what he called "hugs, not bullets."

For years, López Obrador denied that Mexico made fentanyl, despite evidence to the contrary, including statements from his own security officials. He blamed U.S. society, where he said families push children out of home too early, for cultivating addicts.

It's only two months into the term of President Claudia Sheinbaum but there are signs that she appears more willing to let the military go after the cartels than her predecessor.

But while most of the fentanyl comes from Mexico, statistics show that it is Americans who are doing the smuggling across the border. According to the U.S. Sentencing Commission, 86.4% of people sentenced for fentanyl trafficking crimes in a 12-month period ending September 2023 were American citizens.

## Crime and immigration

Trump also has argued that the influx of immigrants is causing a crime surge in the U.S., although statistics show violent crime is on the way down.

Texas is the only state that tracks crime by immigration status. A study published by the National Academy of Sciences, based on Texas Department of Public Safety data from 2012 to 2016, found people in the U.S. illegally had "substantially lower crime rates than native-born citizens and legal immigrants across a range of felony offenses."

While FBI statistics do not separate out crimes by the immigration status of the assailant, there is no evidence of a spike in crime perpetrated by migrants, either along the U.S.-Mexico border or in cities seeing the greatest influx of migrants, like New York. Studies have found that people living in the U.S. illegally are less likely than native-born Americans to have been arrested for violent, drug and property crimes.

Some crime is inevitable given the large population of immigrants. There were an estimated 11 million people in the country illegally in January 2022, according to the latest estimate by U.S. Homeland Security Department. In 2022, the Census Bureau estimated the foreign-born population at 46.2 million, or nearly 14% of the total, with most states seeing double-digit percentage increases in the last dozen years.

Republicans have highlighted high-profile crimes by immigrants such as the February killing of 22-year-old Laken Riley in Georgia and argued that any crime committed by someone in the country illegally is a crime that shouldn't have happened.

A Venezuelan man who entered the country illegally was convicted and sentenced to life in prison this month in Riley's killing.

## **Pakistani authorities start clearing Imran Khan supporters from the capital after deadly clashes**

By RIAZAT BUTT Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Pakistani security forces launched an operation Tuesday night to disperse supporters of imprisoned former Prime Minister Imran Khan who had gathered in the capital to demand his release from prison.

The latest development came hours after thousands of Khan supporters, defying government warnings, broke through a barrier of shipping containers blocking off Islamabad and entered a high-security zone, where they clashed with security forces, facing tear gas shelling, mass detentions and gunfire.

Tension has been high in Islamabad since Sunday when supporters of the former prime minister began a "long march" from the restive northwest to demand his release. Khan has been in a prison for over a year and faces more than 150 criminal cases that his party says are politically motivated.

Khan's wife, Bushra Bibi, led the protest, but she fled as police pushed back against demonstrators.

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Hundreds of Khan's supporters are being arrested in the ongoing nighttime operation, and police are also seeking to arrest Bibi.

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi told reporters that the Red Zone, which houses government buildings and embassies, and the surrounding areas have been cleared. Leaders from Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party, or PTI, have also fled the protest site.

Earlier Tuesday, Pakistan's army took control of D-Chowk, a large square in the Red Zone, where visiting Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko is staying.

Since Monday, Naqvi had threatened that security forces would use live fire if protesters fired weapons at them. "We have now authorized the police to respond as necessary," Naqvi said Tuesday while visiting the square.

Before the operation began, protester Shahzor Ali said people had taken to the streets because Khan had called for them. "We will stay here until Khan joins us. He will decide what to do next," Ali said.

"If they fire bullets again, we will respond with bullets," he said.

Protester Fareeda Bibi, who is not related to Khan's wife, said people have suffered greatly for the last two years.

"We have really suffered for the last two years, whether it is economically, politically or socially. We have been ruined. I have not seen such a Pakistan in my life," she said.

Authorities have struggled to contain the protest-related violence. Six people, including four members of the security services, were killed when a vehicle rammed them on a street overnight into Tuesday. A police officer died in a separate incident.

Dozens of Khan supporters beat a videographer covering the protest for The Associated Press and took his camera. He sustained head injuries and was treated in a hospital.

By Tuesday afternoon, fresh waves of protesters made their way unopposed to their final destination in the Red Zone. Most demonstrators had the flag of Khan's party around their shoulders or wore its tricolors on accessories.

Naqvi said Khan's party had rejected a government offer to rally on the outskirts of the city.

Information Minister Atta Tarar warned there would be a severe government reaction to the violence. He said the government did not want Bushra Bibi to achieve her goal of freeing Khan. "She wants bodies falling to the ground. She wants bloodshed," he said.

The government says only the courts can order Khan's release. He was ousted in 2022 through a no-confidence vote in Parliament.

In a bid to foil the unrest, police have arrested more than 4,000 Khan supporters since Friday and suspended mobile and internet services in some parts of the country. Messaging platforms were also experiencing severe disruption in the capital.

Khan's party relies heavily on social media and uses messaging platforms such as WhatsApp to share information, including details of events. The X platform, which is banned in Pakistan, is no longer accessible, even with a VPN.

Last Thursday, a court prohibited rallies in the capital and Naqvi said anyone violating the ban would be arrested. Travel between Islamabad and other cities has become nearly impossible because of shipping containers blocking the roads. All education institutions remain closed.

Pakistan's Stock Exchange lost more than \$1.7 billion Tuesday due to rising political tensions, according to economist Mohammed Sohail from Topline Securities.

## **Mexico suggests it would impose its own tariffs to retaliate against any Trump tariffs**

MEXICO CITY (AP) — President Claudia Sheinbaum suggested Tuesday that Mexico could retaliate with tariffs of its own, after U.S. President-elect Donald Trump threatened to impose 25% import duties on Mexican goods if the country doesn't stop the flow of drugs and migrants across the border.

Sheinbaum said she was willing to engage in talks on the issues, but said drugs were a U.S. problem.

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"One tariff would be followed by another in response, and so on until we put at risk common businesses," Sheinbaum said, referring to U.S. automakers that have plants on both sides of the border.

She said Tuesday that Mexico had done a lot to stem the flow of migrants, noting "caravans of migrants no longer reach the border." However, Mexico's efforts to fight drugs like the deadly synthetic opioid fentanyl — which is manufactured by Mexican cartels using chemicals imported from China — have weakened in the last year.

Sheinbaum said Mexico suffered from an influx of weapons smuggled in from the United States, and said the flow of drugs "is a problem of public health and consumption in your country's society."

Sheinbaum also criticized U.S. spending on weapons, saying the money should instead be spent regionally to address the problem of migration. "If a percentage of what the United States spends on war were dedicated to peace and development, that would address the underlying causes of migration," she said.

Sheinbaum's bristly response suggests that Trump faces a much different Mexican president than he did in his first term.

Back in late 2018, former President Andrés Manuel López Obrador was a charismatic, old-school politician who developed a chummy relationship with Trump. The two were eventually able to strike a bargain in which Mexico helped keep migrants away from the border — and received other countries' deported migrants — and Trump backed down on the threats.

But Sheinbaum, who took office Oct. 1, is a stern leftist ideologue trained in radical student protest movements, and appears less willing to pacify or mollify Trump.

"We negotiate as equals, there is no subordination here, because we are a great nation," Sheinbaum said, while adding, "I think we are going to reach an agreement."

But Gabriela Siller, director of economic analysis of the financial group Banco Base, fears the personality clash could escalate things into brinkmanship; Trump clearly hates to lose.

"Trump may have just tossed the threat out there, as he does," Siller said. "But Mexico's response, that we're going to respond to you with tariffs, that will make Trump really impose them."

It's not clear how serious Trump's threat is. The U.S.-Mexico-Canada free trade agreement forbids just imposing tariffs on other member countries. And it's not clear whether the economy could even tolerate sudden levies on imports: Auto plants on both sides of the border rely on each other for parts and components, and some production lines could screech to a halt.

"It is unacceptable and would cause inflation and job losses in Mexico and the United States," Sheinbaum said, while offering to talk about the issues. "If tariffs go up, who will it hurt? General Motors," she said.

"Dialogue is the best path to achieve understanding, peace and prosperity for our two countries," Sheinbaum said. "I hope our teams can meet soon."

Late Monday, Trump said he would impose a 25% tax on all products entering the country from Canada and Mexico, and an additional 10% tariff on goods from China, as one of his first executive orders.

The tariffs, if implemented, could dramatically raise prices for American consumers on everything from gas to automobiles to agricultural products. The U.S. is the largest importer of goods in the world, with Mexico, China and Canada its top three suppliers, according to the most recent U.S. Census data.

Trump made the threats Monday in a pair of posts on his Truth Social site in which he railed against an influx of illegal migrants, even though apprehensions at the southern border have been hovering near four-year lows.

"On January 20th, as one of my many first Executive Orders, I will sign all necessary documents to charge Mexico and Canada a 25% Tariff on ALL products coming into the United States, and its ridiculous Open Borders," he wrote.

He said the new tariffs would remain in place "until such time as Drugs, in particular Fentanyl, and all Illegal Aliens stop this Invasion of our Country!"

"Both Mexico and Canada have the absolute right and power to easily solve this long simmering problem. We hereby demand that they use this power," he went on, "and until such time that they do, it is time for them to pay a very big price!"



## **Brazil's Bolsonaro planned and participated in a 2022 coup plot, an unsealed police report alleges**

By MAURICIO SAVARESE and ELÉONORE HUGHES Associated Press

SAO PAULO (AP) — Brazil's former far-right President Jair Bolsonaro was fully aware of and actively participated in a coup plot to remain in office after his defeat in the 2022 election, according to a Federal Police report unsealed Tuesday.

Federal Police last Thursday formally accused Bolsonaro and 36 other people of attempting a coup. They sent their 884-page report to the Supreme Court, which lifted the seal. The unsealed document provides a first glimpse of several testimonies that describe the former president as one of the key leaders of the plot, and not a mere observer.

"The evidence collected throughout the investigation shows unequivocally that then-President Jair Messias Bolsonaro planned, acted and was directly and effectively aware of the actions of the criminal organization aiming to launch a coup d'état and eliminate the democratic rule of law, which did not take place due to reasons unrelated to his desire," the document said.

At another point, it says: "Bolsonaro had full awareness and active participation."

Bolsonaro, who had repeatedly alleged without evidence that the country's electronic voting system was prone to fraud, called a meeting in December 2022, during which he presented a draft decree to the commanders of the three divisions of the armed forces, according to the police report, signed by four investigators.

The decree would have launched an investigation into suspicions of fraud and crimes related to the October 2022 vote, and suspended the powers of the nation's electoral court.

The navy's commander stood ready to comply, but those from the army and air force objected to any plan that prevented Lula's inauguration, the report said. Those refusals are why the plan did not go ahead, according to witnesses who spoke to investigators.

Bolsonaro never signed the decree to set the final stage of the alleged plan into action.

Federal Police say the former president and his allies at first expected to launch the coup d'état on Dec. 15, 2022. The document also said that top military personnel who stood in the way became targets of online attacks by a pro-Bolsonaro digital militia group.

Bolsonaro has repeatedly denied any wrongdoing or awareness of any plot to keep him in power or oust his leftist rival and successor, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

"No one is going to do a coup with a reserve general and half a dozen other officers. What is being said is absurd. For my part, there has never been any discussion of a coup," Bolsonaro told journalists in Brazil's capital Brasilia on Monday.

"If someone came to discuss a coup with me, I'd say, that's fine, but the day after, how does the world view us?" he added. "The word 'coup' has never been in my dictionary."

The top court has passed the report to Prosecutor-General Paulo Gonet. He will decide whether to formally charge Bolsonaro and put him on trial, or toss the investigation. The former president was formally accused of three crimes: violent elimination of the rule of law, staging a coup d'état and forming a criminal organization.

Rodrigo Rios, a law professor at the PUC university in the city of Curitiba, said Bolsonaro could face at least 11 years in prison if convicted on all charges.

"A woman involved in the Jan. 8 attack on the Supreme Court received a 17-year prison sentence," Rios told The Associated Press, noting that the former president is more likely to receive 15 years or more if convicted. "Bolsonaro's future looks dark."

In the Jan. 8, 2022 riot, his followers ransacked the Supreme Court and presidential palace in Brasilia, seeking to prompt intervention by the army that would oust Lula from power.

João Pedro Pádua, a law professor at the Universidade Federal Fluminense in Rio de Janeiro, said Bolsonaro's defense could argue that actions of planning for a coup d'état, as many described in the document, shouldn't be prosecuted as if the group had acted.

"There's a distinction between preparatory actions and execution actions. Planning is typically a preparatory action," Pádua said. "Of course there are some execution actions here, too. Pressure on key military agents is one. But there will be a debate about that."

Pádua added that Bolsonaro faces the biggest risk of conviction on the count of forming a criminal organization, as the document shows evidence that he held several meetings with key allies to discuss the plot.

Ahead of the 2022 election, Bolsonaro repeatedly alleged that the election system, which does not use paper ballots, could be tampered with. The top electoral court later ruled that he had abused his power to cast unfounded doubt on the voting system, and ruled him ineligible for office until 2030.

Still, he has maintained that he will stand as a candidate in the 2026 race.

Since Bolsonaro left office, he has been targeted by several investigations, all of which he has chalked up to political persecution. Federal Police have accused him of smuggling diamond jewelry into Brazil without properly declaring it and directing a subordinate to falsify his and others' COVID-19 vaccination statuses.

Authorities are also investigating whether he incited the Jan. 8, 2022 riot.

Bolsonaro had left for the United States days before Lula's inauguration on Jan. 1, 2023 and stayed there three months, keeping a low profile. The police report unsealed Tuesday alleges he was seeking to avoid possible imprisonment related to the coup plot, and awaiting the uprising that took place a week later.

Sen. Flavio Bolsonaro, one of the former president's sons, said Tuesday evening that "the only path for some normalcy and some balance between the powers is amnesty" for the far-right leader, his allies and his supporters.

"It has to be wide-ranging, general and unrestricted amnesty. I am very convinced of that. It has to include Justice Alexandre de Moraes, too," Flavio Bolsonaro said during a session at the Senate. He and his allies claim de Moraes has overstepped in the investigations of the former president and want him impeached.

De Moraes denies any wrongdoing in the probe and has insisted he will not leave the investigation even though he was one of the targets of the plot.

## Surveillance tech advances by Biden could aid in Trump's promised crackdown on immigration

By SARAH PARVINI, GARANCE BURKE and JESSE BEDAYN Associated Press

President-elect Donald Trump will return to power next year with a raft of technological tools at his disposal that would help deliver his campaign promise of cracking down on immigration — among them, surveillance and artificial intelligence technology that the Biden administration already uses to help make crucial decisions in tracking, detaining and ultimately deporting immigrants lacking permanent legal status.

While immigration officials have used the tech for years, an October letter from the Department of Homeland Security obtained exclusively by The Associated Press details how those tools — some of them powered by AI — help make decisions over whether an immigrant should be detained or surveilled.

One algorithm, for example, ranks immigrants with a "Hurricane Score," ranging from 1-5, to assess whether someone will "abscond" from the agency's supervision.

The letter, sent by DHS Chief Artificial Intelligence Officer Eric Hysen to the immigrant rights group Just Futures Law, revealed that the score calculates the potential risk that an immigrant — with a pending case — will fail to check in with Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers. The algorithm relies on several factors, he said, including an immigrant's number of violations and length of time in the program, and whether the person has a travel document. Hysen wrote that ICE officers consider the score, among other information, when making decisions about an immigrant's case.

"The Hurricane Score does not make decisions on detention, deportation, or surveillance; instead, it is used to inform human decision-making," Hysen wrote.

Also included in the government's tool kit is a mobile app called SmartLINK that uses facial matching and can track an immigrant's specific location.

Nearly 200,000 people without legal status who are in removal proceedings are enrolled in the Alternatives to Detention program, under which certain immigrants can live in the U.S. while their immigration

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cases are pending.

In exchange, SmartLINK and GPS trackers used by ICE rigorously surveil them and their movements. The phone application draws on facial matching technology and geolocation data, which has been used before to find and arrest those using the app.

Just Futures Law wrote to Hysen earlier this year, questioning the fairness of using an algorithm to assess whether someone is a flight risk and raising concerns over how much data SmartLINK collects. Such AI systems, which score or screen people, are used widely but remain largely unregulated even though some have been found to discriminate on race, gender or other protected traits.

DHS said in an email that it is committed to ensuring that its use of AI is transparent and safeguards privacy and civil rights while avoiding biases. The agency said it is working to implement the Biden administration's requirements on using AI, but Hysen said in his letter that security officials may waive those requirements for certain uses. Trump has publicly vowed to repeal Biden's AI policy when he returns to the White House in January.

"DHS uses AI to assist our personnel in their work, but DHS does not use the outputs of AI systems as the sole basis for any law enforcement action or denial of benefits," a spokesperson for DHS told the AP.

Trump has not revealed how he plans to carry out his promised deportation of an estimated 11 million people living in the country illegally. Although he has proposed invoking wartime powers, as well as military involvement, the plan would face major logistical challenges — such as where to keep those who have been detained and how to find people spread across the country — that AI-powered surveillance tools could potentially address.

Karoline Leavitt, a spokesperson for Trump, did not answer questions about how the incoming administration plans to use DHS' tech, but said in a statement that "President Trump will marshal every federal and state power necessary to institute the largest deportation operation" in American history.

Over 100 civil society groups sent a letter on Friday urging the Office of Management and Budget to require DHS to comply with the Biden administration's guidelines. A spokesperson for OMB said that agencies must align their AI tools with the guidelines by December 1, and that any extensions or waivers of that deadline will be publicly disclosed next month.

Just Futures Law's executive director, Paromita Shah, said if immigrants are scored as flight risks, they are more likely to remain in detention, "limiting their ability to prepare a defense in their case in immigration court, which is already difficult enough as it is."

SmartLINK, part of the Intensive Supervision Appearance Program, is run by BI Inc., a subsidiary of the private prison company The GEO Group. The GEO Group also contracts with ICE to run detention centers.

ICE is tight-lipped about how it uses SmartLINK's location feature to find and arrest immigrants. Still, public records show that during Trump's first term in 2018, Manassas, Virginia-based employees of BI Inc. relayed immigrants' GPS locations to federal authorities, who then arrested over 40 people.

In a report last year to address privacy issues and concerns, DHS said that the mobile app includes security features that "prohibit access to information on the participant's mobile device, with the exception of location data points when the app is open."

But the report notes that there remains a risk that data collected from people "may be misused for unauthorized persistent monitoring."

Such information could also be stored in other ICE and DHS databases and used for other DHS mission purposes, the report said.

On investor calls earlier this month, private prison companies were clear-eyed about the opportunities ahead.

The GEO Group's executive chairman George Christopher Zoley said that he expects the incoming Trump administration to "take a much more aggressive approach regarding border security as well as interior enforcement and to request additional funding from Congress to achieve these goals."

"In GEO's ISAP program, we can scale up from the present 182,500 participants to several hundreds of thousands, or even millions of participants," Zoley said.

That same day, the head of another private prison company told investors he would be watching closely to see how the new administration may change immigrant monitoring programs.

"It's an opportunity for multiple vendors to engage ICE about the program going forward and think about creative and innovative solutions to not only get better outcomes, but also scale up the program as necessary," Damon Hininger, CEO of the private prison company CoreCivic Inc. said on an earnings call.

GEO did not respond to requests for comment. In a statement, CoreCivic said that it has played "a valued but limited role in America's immigration system" for both Democrats and Republicans for over 40 years.

## After delay, Trump signs agreement with Biden White House to begin formal transition handoff

By ZEKE MILLER AP White House Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — President-elect Donald Trump on Tuesday reached a required agreement with President Joe Biden's White House to allow his transition staff to coordinate with the existing federal workforce before taking office on Jan. 20.

The congressionally mandated agreement allows transition aides to work with federal agencies and access non-public information and gives a green light to government workers to talk to the transition team.

But Trump has declined to sign a separate agreement with the General Services Administration that would have given his team access to secure government offices and email accounts, in part because it would require that the president-elect limit contributions to \$5,000 and reveal who is donating to his transition effort.

The White House agreement was supposed to have been signed by Oct. 1, according to the Presidential Transition Act, and the Biden White House had issued both public and private appeals for Trump's team to sign on.

The agreement is a critical step in ensuring an orderly transfer of power at noon on Inauguration Day, and lays the groundwork for the White House and government agencies to begin to share details on ongoing programs, operations and threats. It limits the risk that the Trump team could find itself taking control of the massive federal government without briefings and documents from the outgoing administration.

As part of the agreement with the White House, Trump's team will have to publicly disclose its ethics plan for the transition operation and make a commitment to uphold it, the White House said. Transition aides must sign statements that they have no financial positions that could pose a conflict of interest before they receive access to non-public federal information.

Biden himself raised the agreement with Trump when they met in the Oval Office on Nov. 13, according to the White House, and Trump indicated that his team was working to get it signed.

Trump chief of staff-designate Susie Wiles met with Biden's chief of staff Jeff Zients at the White House on Nov. 19 and other senior officials in part to discuss remaining holdups, while lawyers for the two sides have spoken more than a half-dozen times in recent days to finalize the agreement.

"Like President Biden said to the American people from the Rose Garden and directly to President-elect Trump, he is committed to an orderly transition," said White House spokesperson Saloni Sharma. "President-elect Trump and his team will be in seat on January 20 at 12 pm – and they will immediately be responsible for a range of domestic and global challenges, foreseen and unforeseen. A smooth transition is critical to the safety and security of the American people who are counting on their leaders to be responsible and prepared."

Without the signed agreement, Biden administration officials were restricted in what they could share with the incoming team. Trump national security adviser-designate Rep. Mike Waltz met recently with Biden national security adviser Jake Sullivan, but the outgoing team was limited in what it could discuss.

"We are doing everything that we can to effect a professional and an orderly transition," White House national security spokesman John Kirby told reporters on Monday. "And we continue to urge the incoming team to take the steps that are necessary to be able to facilitate that on their end as well."

"This engagement allows our intended Cabinet nominees to begin critical preparations, including the

deployment of landing teams to every department and agency, and complete the orderly transition of power," said Wiles in a statement.

The Trump transition team says it would disclose its donors to the public and would not take foreign donations.

A separate agreement with the Department of Justice to coordinate background checks for vetting and security clearances is still being actively worked on and could be signed quickly now that the White House agreement is signed. The agency has teams of investigators standing by to process clearances for Trump aides and advisers once that document is signed.

That would clear the way for transition aides and future administration appointees and nominees to begin accessing classified information before Trump takes office. Some Trump aides may hold active clearances from his first term in office or other government roles, but others will need new clearances to access classified data.

Trump's team on Friday formally told the GSA that they would not utilize the government office space blocks from the White House reserved for their use, or government email accounts, phones and computers during the transition.

The White House said it does not agree with Trump's decision to forgo support from the GSA, but is working on alternate ways to get Trump appointees the information they need without jeopardizing national security. Federal agencies are receiving guidance on Tuesday on how to share sensitive information with the Trump team without jeopardizing national security or non-public information.

For instance, agencies may require in-person meetings and document reviews since the Trump team has declined to shift to using secure phones and computers. For unclassified information, agencies may ask Trump transition staff to attest that they are taking basic safeguards, like using two-factor authentication on their accounts.

"The signing of this agreement is good news, and a positive step toward an effective transfer of power," said Max Stier, the president and CEO of the Partnership for Public Service. "This agreement unlocks direct access to information from federal agencies, which is vital for the incoming administration to be ready to govern on Day One and critical to the transition's success."

## **Cheap Ozempic? How millions of Americans with obesity may get access to costly weight-loss drugs**

By AMANDA SEITZ Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Millions of obese Americans would get access to popular weekly injectables that would help them shed pounds quickly if a \$ 35 billion proposal from the Biden administration is blessed by President-elect Donald Trump.

The rule, unveiled Tuesday by the Health and Human Services Department, would require Medicare and Medicaid to cover weight-loss drugs like Wegovy or Zepbound for a large segment of Americans who are obese.

But it's unclear if the proposal, which would not go into effect until after Trump takes office, will have support from his new administration — including from Robert F. Kennedy Jr., an opponent of the drugs whom the president-elect has tapped to serve as head of HHS.

Here's what to know about the drugs and the Biden administration's proposal:

The drugs work by regulating appetites

The weight-loss drugs, also called anti-obesity medications or GLP-1s, mimic the hormone known as glucagon-like peptide 1, which regulates appetites by communicating fullness between the gut and brain when people eat.

The drugs include Novo Nordisk's Wegovy and Ozempic as well as Eli Lilly's Zepbound and Mounjaro.

In clinical trials, most participants taking Wegovy or Mounjaro to treat obesity lost an average of 15% to 22% of their body weight — up to 50 pounds or more in many cases. But a slice of "nonresponders" did not lose significant body weight.

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Private health insurers have limited coverage of the drugs. Medicare has been barred from covering them under a law that says the program cannot pay for weight-loss products. Coverage through Medicaid, meanwhile, has varied from state to state.

That's meant the drugs — which can cost upwards of \$1,000 monthly — have been largely unaffordable for many.

It would benefit millions, but cost billions

The rule announced Tuesday affects Medicaid, which provides health care coverage for roughly 70 million of the nation's poorest people, and Medicare, the health insurance program for about 67 million older Americans.

Under the proposal, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, or CMS, would reinterpret the federal law, to consider the drugs as a treatment for obesity diseases.

The nation's top health agency estimates as many as 3.5 million people on Medicare and 4 million on Medicaid could qualify for coverage of the drugs. But research suggests far more people might qualify, with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services estimating roughly 28 million people on Medicaid are considered obese.

And the proposal would cost a lot of money — at least \$35 billion over the next decade.

It's not clear if Trump will support it

The drugs are popular — with a majority of Americans telling health firm KFF in a poll earlier this year that Medicare should cover the drugs. A bipartisan coalition of lawmakers, too, has lobbied for coverage of the drugs.

But support is mixed in Trump's inner circle.

Kennedy has railed against the idea of Medicare or Medicaid covering the drugs. Instead, he's told Congress that they should expand coverage of healthier foods and gym memberships through the government-sponsored health care programs.

Meanwhile Dr. Mehmet Oz, who is poised to take the helm of CMS, has said the drugs can be a helpful tool. In a video posted to Instagram last year, Oz praised some of the benefits of the drugs, but said the long-term effects should be further studied.

"I think these new generation of medications offer us a huge opportunity," Oz said.

Trump or Kennedy could ultimately ignore Biden's proposal and not implement it.

Some lawmakers praised the move on Tuesday, while others expressed skepticism.

Rep. Brad Wenstrup, a Republican who sponsored a bill to have Medicare cover the weight-loss drugs, has argued that covering the drugs and other obesity treatments could save taxpayers in the long run.

"I am encouraged to see the Administration support our efforts to help make Americans healthier by allowing Medicare coverage of new, physician prescribed and FDA approved anti-obesity medications," Wenstrup said in a statement.

He called for the Congress to pass a law that would help pay for dietitians, nutritionists and behavioral therapy to treat obesity.

Sen. Bernie Sanders, however, warned that unless the government required drugmakers to lower the price of the medications Medicare premiums would "skyrocket" under the plan.

Doctors praise the drugs, but still have concerns

It's good for more Americans to have access to these drugs, which have proven effective, but Dr. David Ludwig, a nutrition and obesity expert at Harvard University, hopes that it doesn't become the primary way obesity is treated in America.

He worries that not enough investment is being made to figure out what is driving climbing obesity rates across the U.S., and the role that healthy foods and exercise might play in solving that epidemic.

"It's appropriate to treat the problems that we now face with drugs, but let's not stop there," Ludwig said. "Let's identify what's causing the problem, and ultimately rely on these drugs — which have side effects — less and less over time."

Dr. Andrew Kraftson, who treats obese patients at the University of Michigan, is happy that more of his patients might be able to afford these drugs, which he has prescribed for patients and has had successful

results. But he, too, would like to see more research and guidance from the government on prescribing the medications.

Kraftson also worries about some of the side effects for elderly patients. The drugs, he points out, can lead to muscle loss, which is a bigger problem for older Americans who are at risk of falling, for example.

"I'm advocating for their thoughtful use," Kraftson said. "Because if you have a senior and you just write a prescription and the visit takes five minutes, is that an appropriate level of care? Have we defined that well?"

## **How Trump's bet on voters electing him managed to silence some of his legal woes**

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — One year after the Jan. 6, 2021, U.S. Capitol attack, Attorney General Merrick Garland said the Justice Department was committed to holding accountable all perpetrators "at any level" for "the assault on our democracy." That bold declaration won't apply to at least one person: Donald Trump.

Special counsel Jack Smith's move on Monday to abandon the federal election interference case against Trump means jurors will likely never decide whether the president-elect is criminally responsible for his attempts to cling to power after losing the 2020 campaign. The decision to walk away from the election charges and the separate classified documents case against Trump marks an abrupt end of the Justice Department's unprecedented legal effort that once threatened his liberty but appears only to have galvanized his supporters.

The abandonment of the cases accusing Trump of endangering American democracy and national security does away with the most serious legal threats he was facing as he returns to the White House. It was the culmination of a monthslong defense effort to delay the proceedings at every step and use the criminal allegations to Trump's political advantage, putting the final word in the hands of voters instead of jurors.

"We always knew that the rich and powerful had an advantage, but I don't think we would have ever believed that somebody could walk away from everything," said Stephen Saltzburg, a George Washington University law professor and former Justice Department official. "If there ever was a Teflon defendant, that's Donald Trump."

While prosecutors left the door open to the possibility that federal charges could be re-filed against Trump after he leaves office, that seems unlikely. Meanwhile, Trump's presidential victory has thrown into question the future of the two state criminal cases against him in New York and Georgia. Trump was supposed to be sentenced on Tuesday after his conviction on 34 felony counts in his New York hush money case, but it's possible the sentencing could be delayed until after Trump leaves office, and the defense is pushing to dismiss the case altogether.

Smith's team stressed that their decision to abandon the federal cases was not a reflection of the merit of the charges, but an acknowledgement that they could not move forward under longstanding Justice Department policy that says sitting presidents cannot face criminal prosecution.

Trump's presidential victory set "at odds two fundamental and compelling national interests: On the one hand, the Constitution's requirement that the President must not be unduly encumbered in fulfilling his weighty responsibilities . . . and on the other hand, the Nation's commitment to the rule of law," prosecutors wrote in court papers.

The move just weeks after Trump's victory over Vice President Kamala Harris underscores the immense personal stake Trump had in the campaign in which he turned his legal woes into a political rallying cry. Trump accused prosecutors of bringing the charges in a bid to keep him out of the White House, and he promised revenge on his perceived enemies if he won a second term.

"If Donald J. Trump had lost an election, he may very well have spent the rest of his life in prison," Vice President-elect JD Vance, wrote in a social media post on Monday. "These prosecutions were always political. Now it's time to ensure what happened to President Trump never happens in this country again."

After the Jan. 6 attack by Trump supporters that left more than 100 police officers injured, Republican leader Mitch McConnell and several other Republicans who voted to acquit Trump during his Senate im-

peachment trial said it was up to the justice system to hold Trump accountable.

The Jan. 6 case brought last year in Washington alleged an increasingly desperate criminal conspiracy to subvert the will of voters after Trump's 2020 loss, accusing Trump of using the angry mob of supporters that attacked the Capitol as "a tool" in his campaign to pressure then-Vice President Mike Pence and obstruct the certification of Democrat Joe Biden's victory.

Hundreds of Jan. 6 rioters — many of whom have said they felt called to Washington by Trump — have pleaded guilty or been convicted by juries of federal charges at the same courthouse where Trump was supposed to stand trial last year. As the trial date neared, officials at the courthouse that sits within view of the Capitol were busy making plans for the crush of reporters expected to cover the historic case.

But Trump's argument that he enjoyed absolute immunity from prosecution quickly tied up the case in appeals all the way up to the Supreme Court. The high court ruled in July that former presidents have broad immunity from prosecution, and sent the case back to the trial court to decide which allegations could move forward. But the case was dismissed before the trial court could get a chance to do so.

The other indictment brought in Florida accused Trump of improperly storing at his Mar-a-Lago estate sensitive documents on nuclear capabilities, enlisting aides and lawyers to help him hide records demanded by investigators and cavalierly showing off a Pentagon "plan of attack" and classified map.

But U.S. District Judge Aileen Cannon dismissed the case in July on grounds that Smith was illegally appointed. Smith appealed to the Atlanta-based 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, but abandoned that appeal on Monday. Smith's team said it would continue its fight in the appeals court to revive charges against Trump's two co-defendants because "no principle of temporary immunity applies to them."

In New York, jurors spent weeks last spring hearing evidence in a state case alleging a Trump scheme to illegally influence the 2016 election through a hush money payment to a porn actor who said the two had sex. New York prosecutors recently expressed openness to delaying sentencing until after Trump's second term, while Trump's lawyers are fighting to have the conviction dismissed altogether.

In Georgia, a trial while Trump is in office seems unlikely in a state case charging him and more than a dozen others with conspiring to overturn his 2020 election loss in the state. The case has been on hold since an appeals court agreed to review whether to remove Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis over her romantic relationship with the special prosecutor she had hired to lead the case.

## **Trump's threat to impose tariffs could raise prices for consumers, colliding with promise for relief**

By TOM KRISHER and CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Business Writers

DETROIT (AP) — If Donald Trump makes good on his threat to slap 25% tariffs on everything imported from Mexico and Canada, the price increases that could follow will collide with his campaign promise to give American families a break from inflation.

Economists say companies would have little choice but to pass along the added costs, dramatically raising prices for food, clothing, automobiles, booze and other goods.

The president-elect floated the tariff idea, including additional 10% taxes on goods from China, as a way to force the countries to halt the flow of illegal immigrants and drugs into the U.S. But his posts Monday on Truth Social threatening the tariffs on his first day in office could just be a negotiating ploy to get the countries to change behavior.

High food prices were a major issue in voters picking Trump over Vice President Kamala Harris, but tariffs almost certainly would push those costs up even further.

For instance, the Produce Distributors Association, a Washington trade group, said Tuesday that tariffs will raise prices for fresh fruit and vegetables and hurt U.S. farmers when other countries retaliate.

"Tariffs distort the marketplace and will raise prices along the supply chain, resulting in the consumer paying more at the checkout line," said Alan Siger, association president.

Mexico and Canada are two of the biggest exporters of fresh fruit and vegetables to the U.S. In 2022, Mexico supplied 51% of fresh fruit and 69% of fresh vegetables imported by value into the U.S., while



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Canada supplied 2% of fresh fruit and 20% of fresh vegetables.

Before the election, about 7 in 10 voters said they were very concerned about the cost of food, according to AP VoteCast, a survey of more than 120,000 voters.

"We'll get them down," Trump told shoppers during a September visit to a Pennsylvania grocery store.

The U.S. is the largest importer of goods in the world, with Mexico, China and Canada its top three suppliers, according to the most recent U.S. Census data.

People looking to buy a new vehicle likely would see big price increases as well, at a time when costs have gone up so much they are out of reach for many. The average price of a new vehicle now runs around \$48,000.

About 15% of the 15.6 million new vehicles sold in the U.S. last year came from Mexico, while 8% crossed the border from Canada, according to Global Data.

Much of the tariffs would get passed along to consumers, unless automakers can somehow quickly find productivity improvements to offset them, said C.J. Finn, U.S. automotive sector leader for PwC. That means even more consumers "would potentially get priced out," Finn said.

Hardest hit would be Volkswagen, Stellantis, General Motors and Ford, Bernstein analyst Daniel Roeska wrote Tuesday in a note to investors. "A 25% tariff on Mexico and Canada would severely cripple the U.S. auto industry," he said.

The tariffs would hurt U.S. industrial production so much that "we expect this is unlikely to happen in practice," Roeska said.

The tariff threat hit auto stocks on Tuesday, particularly shares of GM, which imports about 30% of the vehicles it sells in the U.S. from Canada and Mexico, and Stellantis, which imports about 40% from the two countries. For both, about 55% of their lucrative pickup trucks come from Mexico and Canada. GM stock lost almost 9% of its value, while Stellantis dropped nearly 6%.

It's not clear how long the tariffs would last if implemented, but they could force auto executives to move production to the U.S., which could create more jobs in the long run. However, Morningstar analyst David Whiston said automakers probably won't make any immediate moves because they can't quickly change where they build vehicles.

Millions of dollars worth of auto parts flow across the borders with Mexico and Canada, and that could raise prices for already costly automobile repairs, Finn said.

The Distilled Spirits Council of the U.S. said tariffs on tequila or Canadian whisky won't boost American jobs because they are distinctive products that can only be made in their country of origin. In 2023, the U.S. imported \$4.6 billion worth of tequila and \$108 million worth of mezcal from Mexico and \$537 million worth of spirits from Canada, it said.

"Tariffs on spirits products from our neighbors to the north and south are going to hurt U.S. consumers and lead to job losses across the U.S. hospitality industry," it added.

Electronics retailer Best Buy said on its third-quarter earnings conference call that it runs on thin profit margins, so while vendors and the company will shoulder some increases, Best Buy will have to pass tariffs to customers. "These are goods that people need, and higher prices are not helpful," CEO Corie Barry said.

Walmart also warned last week that tariffs could force it to raise prices.

Tariffs could trigger supply chain disruptions as people buy goods before they are imposed and companies seek alternate sources of parts, said Rob Handfield, a professor of supply chain management at North Carolina State University. Some businesses might not be able to pass on the costs.

"It could actually shut down a lot of industries in the United States. It could actually put a lot of U.S. businesses out of business," he said.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, who talked with Trump after his call for tariffs, said they had a good conversation about working together. "This is a relationship that we know takes a certain amount of working on and that's what we'll do," Trudeau said.

Trump's threats come as arrests for illegally crossing the border from Mexico have been falling. But arrests for illegally crossing the border from Canada have been rising over the past two years. Much of America's fentanyl is smuggled from Mexico, and seizures have increased.

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Trump has sound legal justification to impose tariffs, even though they conflict with a 2020 trade deal brokered in large part by Trump with Canada and Mexico, said William Reinsch, senior adviser at the Center for Strategic and International Studies and a former Clinton administration trade official. The treaty, known as the USMCA, is up for review in 2026.

In China's case, he could simply declare Beijing hasn't met obligations under an agreement he negotiated in his first term. For Canada and Mexico, he could say the influx of migrants and drugs are a national security threat, and turn to a section of trade law he used in his first term to slap tariffs on steel and aluminum.

The law he would most likely use for Canada and Mexico has a legal process that often takes up to nine months, giving Trump time to seek a deal.

If talks failed and the duties were imposed, all three countries would likely retaliate with tariffs on U.S. exports, said Reinsch, who believes Trump's tariffs threat is a negotiating ploy.

U.S. companies would lobby intensively against tariffs, and would seek to have products exempted. Some of the biggest exporters from Mexico are U.S. firms that make parts there, Reinsch said.

Longer term, Mary Lovely, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, said the threat of tariffs could make the U.S. an "unstable partner" in international trade. "It is an incentive to move activity outside the United States to avoid all this uncertainty," she said.

Trump transition team officials did not immediately respond to questions about what he would need to see to prevent the tariffs from being implemented and how they would impact prices in the U.S.

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum suggested Tuesday that Mexico could retaliate with tariffs of its own. Sheinbaum said she was willing to talk about the issues, but said drugs were a U.S. problem.

## **Trump won about 2.5M more votes this year than he did in 2020. This is where he did it**

By THOMAS BEAUMONT, MAYA SWEEDLER, PARKER KAUFMANN and HUMERA LODHI Associated Press  
It's a daunting reality for Democrats: Republican Donald Trump's support has grown broadly since he last sought the presidency.

In his defeat of Democrat Kamala Harris, Trump won a bigger percentage of the vote in each one of the 50 states, and Washington, D.C., than he did four years ago. He won more actual votes than in 2020 in 40 states, according to an Associated Press analysis.

Certainly, Harris' more than 7 million vote decline from President Joe Biden's 2020 total was a factor in her loss, especially in swing-state metropolitan areas that have been the party's winning electoral strongholds.

But, despite national turnout that was lower than in the high-enthusiasm 2020 election, Trump received 2.5 million more votes than he did four years ago. He swept the seven most competitive states to win a convincing Electoral College victory, becoming the first Republican nominee in 20 years to win a majority of the popular vote.

Trump cut into places where Harris needed to overperform to win a close election. Now Democrats are weighing how to regain traction ahead of the midterm elections in two years, when control of Congress will again be up for grabs and dozens of governors elected.

There were some notable pieces to how Trump's victory came together:

Trump took a bite in Northern metros

Though Trump improved across the map, his gains were particularly noteworthy in urban counties home to the cities of Detroit, Milwaukee and Philadelphia, electoral engines that stalled for Harris in industrial swing states Michigan, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania.

Harris fell more than 50,000 votes — and 5 percentage points — short of Biden's total in Wayne County, Michigan, which makes up the lion's share of the Detroit metro area. She was almost 36,000 votes off Biden's mark in Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania, and about 1,000 short in Milwaukee County, Wisconsin.

It wasn't only Harris' shortfall that helped Trump carry the states, a trio that Democrats had collectively carried in six of the seven previous elections before Nov. 5.

Trump added to his 2020 totals in all three metro counties, netting more than 24,000 votes in Wayne

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County, more than 11,000 in Philadelphia County and almost 4,000 in Milwaukee County.

It's not yet possible to determine whether Harris fell short of Biden's performance because Biden voters stayed home or switched their vote to Trump — or how some combination of the two produced the rightward drift evident in each of these states.

Harris advertised heavily and campaigned regularly in each, and made Milwaukee County her first stop as a candidate with a rally in July. These swings alone were not the difference in Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, but her weaker performance than Biden across the three metros helped Trump, who held on to big 2020 margins in the three states' broad rural areas and improved or held steady in populous suburbs.

Trump's team and outside groups supporting him knew from their data that he was making inroads with Black voters, particularly Black men younger than 50, more concentrated in these urban areas that have been key to Democratic victories.

When James Blair, Trump's political director, saw results coming in from Philadelphia on election night, he knew Trump had cut into the more predominantly Black precincts, a gain that would echo in Wayne and Milwaukee counties.

"The data made clear there was an opportunity there," Blair said.

AP VoteCast, a nationwide survey of more than 120,000 voters, found Trump won a larger share of Black and Latino voters than he did in 2020, and most notably among men under age 45.

Democrats won Senate races in Michigan and Wisconsin but lost in Pennsylvania. In 2026, they will be defending governorships in all three states and a Senate seat in Michigan.

Trump gained more than Harris in battlegrounds

Despite the burst of enthusiasm Harris' candidacy created among the Democratic base when she entered the race in July, she ended up receiving fewer votes than Biden in three of the seven states where she campaigned almost exclusively.

In Arizona, she received about 90,000 fewer votes than Biden. She received about 67,000 fewer in Michigan and 39,000 fewer in Pennsylvania.

In four others — Georgia, Nevada, North Carolina and Wisconsin — Harris won more votes than Biden did. But Trump's support grew by more — in some states, significantly more.

That dynamic is glaring in Georgia, where Harris received almost 73,000 more votes than Biden did when he very narrowly carried the state. But Trump added more than 200,000 to his 2020 total, en route to winning Georgia by roughly 2 percentage points.

In Wisconsin, Trump's team reacted to slippage it saw in GOP-leaning counties in suburban Milwaukee by targeting once-Democratic-leaning, working-class areas, where Trump made notable gains.

In the three largest suburban Milwaukee counties — Ozaukee, Washington and Waukesha — which have formed the backbone of GOP victories for decades, Harris performed better than Biden did in 2020. She also gained more votes than Trump gained over 2020, though he still won the counties.

That made Trump's focus on Rock County, a blue-collar area in south central Wisconsin, critical. Trump received 3,084 more votes in Rock County, home of the former automotive manufacturing city of Janesville, than he did in 2020, while Harris underperformed Biden's 2020 total by seven votes. That helped Trump offset Harris' improvement in Milwaukee's suburbs.

The focus speaks to the strength Trump has had and continued to grow with middle-income, non-college educated voters, the Trump campaign's senior data analyst Tim Saler said.

"If you're going to have to lean into working-class voters, they are particularly strong in Wisconsin," Saler said. "We saw huge shifts from 2020 to 2024 in our favor."

Trump boosted 2020 totals as Arizona turnout dipped

Of the seven most competitive states, Arizona saw the smallest increase in the number of votes cast in the presidential contest — slightly more than 4,000 votes, in a state with more than 3.3 million ballots cast.

That was despite nearly 30 campaign visits to Arizona by Trump, Harris and their running mates and more than \$432 million spent on advertising by the campaigns and allied outside groups, according to the ad-monitoring firm AdImpact.

Arizona, alone of the seven swing states, saw Harris fall short of Biden across small, midsize and large

counties. In the other six states, she was able to hold on in at least one of these categories.

Even more telling, it is also the only swing state where Trump improved his margin in every single county.

While turnout in Maricopa County, Arizona's most populous as the home to Phoenix, dipped slightly from 2020 — by 14,199 votes, a tiny change in a county where more than 2 million people voted — Trump gained almost 56,000 more votes than four years ago.

Meanwhile, Harris fell more than 60,000 votes short of Biden's total, contributing to a shift significant enough to swing the county and state to Trump, who lost Arizona by fewer than 11,000 votes in 2020.

Rightward shift even in heavily Democratic areas

The biggest leaps to the right weren't taking place exclusively among Republican-leaning counties, but also among the most Democratic-leaning counties in the states. Michigan's Wayne County swung 9 points toward Trump, tying the more Republican-leaning Antrim County for the largest movement in the state.

AP VoteCast found that voters were most likely to say the economy was the most important issue facing the country in 2024, followed by immigration. Trump supporters were more motivated by economic issues and immigration than Harris', the survey showed.

"It's still all about the economy," said North Carolina Democratic strategist Morgan Jackson, a senior adviser to Democrat Josh Stein, who won North Carolina's governorship on Nov. 5 as Trump also carried the state.

"Democrats have to embrace an economic message that actually works for real people and talk about it in the kind of terms that people get, rather than giving them a dissertation of economic policy," he said.

Governor's elections in 2026 give Democrats a chance to test their understanding and messaging on the issue, said Democratic pollster Margie Omero, whose firm has advised Wisconsin's Democratic Gov. Tony Evers in the past and winning Arizona Senate candidate Ruben Gallego this year.

"So there's an opportunity to really make sure people, who governors have a connection to, are feeling some specificity and clarity with the Democratic economic message," Omero said.

## **Biden proposes Medicare and Medicaid cover costly weight-loss drugs for millions of obese Americans**

By AMANDA SEITZ Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Millions of Americans with obesity would be eligible to have popular weight-loss drugs like Wegovy or Zepbound covered by Medicare or Medicaid under a new rule the Biden administration proposed Tuesday morning.

The costly proposal from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services immediately sets the stage for a showdown between the powerful pharmaceutical industry and Robert F. Kennedy Jr., an outspoken opponent of the weight-loss drugs who, as President-elect Donald Trump's nominee to lead the agency, could block the measure.

While the rule would give millions of people access to weekly injectables that have helped people shed pounds so quickly that some have labeled them miracle drugs, it would cost taxpayers as much as \$35 billion over the next decade.

"It's a good day for anyone who suffers from obesity," U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra told The Associated Press in an interview. "It's a game changer for Americans who can't afford these drugs otherwise."

The rule would not be finalized until January, days after Trump takes office. A bipartisan coalition of congressional members has lobbied for the drugs to be covered by Medicare, saying it could save the government from spending billions of dollars on treating chronic ailments that stem from obesity. While it's unclear where Trump himself stands on coverage of the weight-loss drugs, his allies and Cabinet picks who have vowed to cut government spending could balk at the upfront price tag.

Under the proposal, only those who are considered obese — someone who has a body mass index of 30 or higher — would qualify for coverage. Some people may already get coverage of the drugs through Medicare or Medicaid, if they have diabetes or are at risk for stroke or heart disease.

Becerra estimated that an additional 3.5 million people on Medicare and 4 million on Medicaid could qualify for coverage of the drugs. But research suggests far more people might qualify, with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services estimating roughly 28 million people on Medicaid are considered obese.

Medicare has been barred from offering the drugs under a decades-old law that prohibits the government-backed insurance program from covering weight-loss products. The rule proposed by the Biden administration, however, would recognize obesity as a disease that can be treated with the help of the drugs.

The anti-obesity drug market has expanded significantly in recent years, with the Food and Drug Administration approving a new class of weekly injectables like Novo Nordisk's Wegovy and Eli Lilly's Zepbound to treat obesity.

People can lose as much as 15% to 25% of their body weight on the drugs, which imitate the hormones that regulate appetites by communicating fullness between the gut and brain when people eat.

The cost of the drugs has largely limited them to the wealthy, including celebrities who boast of their benefits. A monthly supply of Wegovy rings up at \$1,300 and Zepbound will put you out \$1,000. Shortages of the drugs have also limited the supplies.

Kennedy, who as Trump's nominee for HHS secretary is subject to Senate confirmation, has railed against the drugs' popularity. In speeches and on social media, he's said the U.S. should not cover the drugs through Medicaid or Medicare. Instead, he supports a broad expansion of coverage for healthier foods and gym memberships.

"For half the price of Ozempic, we could purchase regeneratively raised, organic food for every American, three meals a day and a gym membership, for every obese American," Kennedy said to a group of federal lawmakers during a roundtable earlier this year. Ozempic is a diabetes drug that can stimulate weight loss.

## Takeaways from AP's report on a study into extremism in the military that used old data

By MICHELLE R. SMITH and JASON DEAREN Associated Press

The Associated Press has found that a Pentagon-funded study that looked into extremism in the military relied on old data, included misleading analyses and ignored evidence that could have led to a different conclusion.

Here are takeaways from the AP's reporting.

What was the study?

After the Jan. 6 insurrection, when military leadership reacted with alarm when people in tactical gear stormed up the U.S. Capitol steps in military-style stack formation, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin outlined a variety of steps. Those included a request for a study by the Institute for Defense Analyses. The IDA, which a spokesman said was paid \$900,000 for the study, is a longtime partner to the Pentagon that has received more than a billion dollars in contracts over the past decade to provide research and strategic consulting to the nation's military.

The IDA's study, entitled "Prohibited Extremist Activities in the U.S. Department of Defense," was published quietly just before Christmas 2023 — nearly 18 months late and with no announcement. Its key recommendation: the DOD should "not overreact and draw too large of a target" in its anti-extremism efforts, despite Austin's promise to attack the problem head-on in the wake of Jan. 6.

What did the AP find?

The AP found that the IDA report's authors did not use newer data that was offered to it, and instead based one of its foundational conclusions on Jan. 6 arrest figures that were more than two years out of date by the time of the report's public release.

As a result, the report grossly undercounted the number of military and veterans arrested for the Jan. 6 attack and provided a misleading picture of the severity of the growing problem, the AP has found.

The IDA based its conclusion on arrests made as of Jan. 1, 2022, the year immediately following the attack. As of that date, 82 of the 704 people arrested had military backgrounds, or 11.6% of the total

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arrests, IDA reported.

But in the months and years that followed, the number of arrestees with a military background nearly tripled.

IDA's report states that its research was conducted from June 2021 through June 2022. By June 2022, the number of active or former military arrested had grown by nearly 50%, according to the same dataset IDA cited from the Program on Extremism at George Washington University. When IDA's report was published a year and a half later, in December 2023, 209 people with military backgrounds who attended the insurrection had been arrested, or 15.2% of all arrests.

That has since grown to 18%, according to data collected by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, or START, at the University of Maryland. It represents a significant statistical increase, and rises above the general population estimates IDA cited among its reasoning for recommending the Pentagon not overreact. START's research was also funded by DOD and other federal agencies.

What is the extent of the problem of extremism in the military?

The number of service members and veterans who radicalize make up a tiny fraction of a percentage point of the millions and millions who have honorably served their country. Yet their impact can be large.

As the AP reported in an investigation published last month, more than 480 people with a military background were accused of ideologically driven extremist crimes from 2017 through 2023, including the more than 230 arrested in connection with the Jan. 6 insurrection, according to data collected and analyzed by START. Though those numbers reflect a small fraction of those who have served in the military — and Austin, the current defense secretary, has said that extremism is not widespread in the U.S. military — AP's investigation found that plots involving people with military backgrounds were more likely to involve mass casualties.

The IDA's 199-page report conceded that there was "some indication" that the radicalization numbers in the veterans community could be "slightly higher and may be growing" but said its review found "no evidence" that was the case among active duty troops.

In fact, data show that since 2017 both service members and veterans are radicalizing at a faster rate than people without military training. Less than 1% of the adult population is currently serving in the U.S. military, but active duty military members make up a disproportionate 3.2% of the extremist cases START researchers found between 2017 and 2022.

IDA's researchers were offered START's data, according to Michael Jensen, START's lead researcher. IDA's report even called it "perhaps the best effort to date" in collecting data on extremists in the military. But IDA never followed up to get it, Jensen said.

"We showed them data from over 30 years when they visited with us, so they knew the data were out there to look at a longer timespan," Jensen said. "We offered it, and offered to help in any other way we could, but we never heard from them again after our one and only meeting."

An IDA spokesman defended the report, saying it remains confident that its findings were "solidly based on the best data available at the time the work was conducted." The AP reached out by email and LinkedIn messages to several people listed as authors of the report. None provided comment. A Defense official said the department "is committed to maintaining high standards for its data collection and transparency" and referred specific questions on the methodology and analysis of the report to IDA.

Hegseth and Trump's transition team did not respond to emails seeking comment.

What did others say about the IDA report?

In January of this year, Pete Hegseth, Donald Trump's pick to be defense secretary, told a Fox News audience the study proved that the number of military service members and veterans involved in the Jan. 6 insurrection did not indicate a wider problem in the armed forces.

"They knew this was a sham," Hegseth said, referring to Austin and other military leaders. "Then they do the study, which confirms what we all know."

Hegseth, who was working for Fox News at the time and had no involvement in the report, wasn't alone.

The Wall Street Journal's opinion page highlighted the same report as evidence that extremists in military communities were "phantoms" created by a "false media narrative." The X account for Republicans on the House Armed Services Committee posted that the study showed the focus on extremism in the military was a "witch hunt."

## **AP finds that a Pentagon-funded study on extremism in the military relied on old data**

By MICHELLE R. SMITH and JASON DEAREN Associated Press

Pete Hegseth, Donald Trump's pick to lead the Department of Defense, sat in front of a screen with the headline: "Study Disproves Military Extremism Problem."

It was Jan. 4 of this year and Hegseth told a Fox News audience the new study proved that the number of military service members and veterans involved in the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection did not indicate a wider problem in the armed forces. The Pentagon-funded report to which Hegseth referred said there was no evidence the number of violent extremists in the military was "disproportionate to extremists in the general population."

"They knew this was a sham," Hegseth said, referring to Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and other military leaders. "Then they do the study, which confirms what we all know."

Hegseth, who was working for Fox News at the time and had no involvement in the report, wasn't alone. The Wall Street Journal's opinion page highlighted the same report as evidence that extremists in military communities were "phantoms" created by a "false media narrative." The X account for Republicans on the House Armed Services Committee posted that the study showed the focus on extremism in the military was a "witch hunt."

But The Associated Press has found that the study, "Prohibited Extremist Activities in the U.S. Department of Defense" conducted by the Institute for Defense Analyses, relied on old data, misleading analyses and ignored evidence that pointed to the opposite conclusion.

In fact, the AP found that the IDA report's authors did not use newer data that was offered to it, and instead based one of its foundational conclusions on Jan. 6 arrest figures that were more than two years out of date by the time of the report's public release.

As a result, the report grossly undercounted the number of military and veterans arrested for the Jan. 6 attack and provided a misleading picture of the severity of the growing problem, the AP has found.

### Spike in military extremism

The number of service members and veterans who radicalize make up a tiny fraction of a percentage point of the millions and millions who have honorably served their country. Yet their impact can be large.

Ordered by Austin after the Jan. 6 insurrection, the IDA research was published quietly just before Christmas 2023 — nearly 18 months late and with no announcement. Its key recommendation: the DOD should "not overreact and draw too large of a target" in its anti-extremism efforts, despite Austin's promise to attack the problem head-on in the wake of Jan. 6.

But IDA's researchers based a key finding on an undercount of military service members and veterans who participated in the Jan. 6 insurrection. The IDA — a longtime partner to the Pentagon that has received more than a billion dollars in contracts over the past decade to provide research and strategic consulting to the nation's military — based this conclusion on arrests made as of Jan. 1, 2022, the year immediately following the attack. As of that date, 82 of the 704 people arrested had military backgrounds, or 11.6% of the total arrests, IDA reported.

But in the months and years that followed, the number of arrestees with a military background nearly tripled.

IDA's report states that its research was conducted from June 2021 through June 2022. By June 2022, the number of active or former military members arrested had grown by nearly 50%, according to the same dataset IDA cited from the Program on Extremism at George Washington University. When IDA's

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report was published a year and a half later, in December 2023, 209 people with military backgrounds who attended the insurrection had been arrested, or 15.2% of all arrests.

That has since grown to 18%, according to data collected by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, or START, at the University of Maryland. It represents a significant statistical increase, and rises above the general population estimates IDA cited among its reasoning for recommending the Pentagon not overreact. START's research was also funded by DOD, and other federal agencies.

More broadly, as the AP reported in an investigation published last month, more than 480 people with a military background were accused of ideologically driven extremist crimes from 2017 through 2023, including the more than 230 arrested in connection with the Jan. 6 insurrection, according to data collected and analyzed by START. Though those numbers reflect a small fraction of those who have served in the military — and Austin, the current defense secretary, has said that extremism is not widespread in the U.S. military — AP's investigation found that plots involving people with military backgrounds were more likely to involve mass casualties.

The IDA's 199-page report conceded that there was "some indication" that the radicalization numbers in the veterans community could be "slightly higher and may be growing" but said its review found "no evidence" that was the case among active duty troops.

In fact, data show that since 2017 both service members and veterans are radicalizing at a faster rate than people without military training. Less than 1% of the adult population is currently serving in the U.S. military, but active duty military members make up a disproportionate 3.2% of the extremist cases START researchers found between 2017 and 2022.

Even that number is thought to be an undercount, according to Michael Jensen, START's lead researcher. He noted that the military uses administrative discharges to quietly remove extremists from the ranks — such cases do not show up in START's data because the military does not release information about them.

Jensen, who was consulted by IDA for its report and is cited in it 24 times, said using the Jan. 6 arrest data alone, even if calculated correctly, was not a valid approach to measuring extremism among active duty military.

"J6 is an absolutely terrible event to use to try to estimate the scope of extremism in the active service population since most active services members would not have had the opportunity to participate in that event even if they wanted to," Jensen said.

Jensen's observation is underscored by records obtained by AP. One complaint filed to the DOD Inspector General's whistleblower hotline on March 17, 2021, and obtained through a Freedom of Information Act request, said an active duty service member in Germany expressed an interest in heading to Washington for Jan. 6, but said he wasn't able to go because of his military service.

Screenshots from Facebook provided with the complaint show he told his cousin, "I would join you but my current tour is in Germany," and said in another post on Jan. 3, 2021, he was considering buying a plane ticket. The complaint said the servicemember's cousin was later arrested.

An IDA spokesman defended the report, for which he said the company was paid \$900,000, saying it remains confident that its findings were "solidly based on the best data available at the time the work was conducted." The AP reached out by email and LinkedIn messages to several people listed as authors of the report. None provided comment. A defense official said the department "is committed to maintaining high standards for its data collection and transparency" and referred specific questions on the methodology and analysis of the report to IDA.

Hegseth and Trump's transition team did not respond to emails seeking comment.

Bad data, false assertions

IDA's researchers were offered START's data, Jensen said, which is widely considered the most comprehensive look at the issue. IDA's report even called it "perhaps the best effort to date" in collecting data on extremists in the military. But IDA never followed up to get it, he said.

"We showed them data from over 30 years when they visited with us, so they knew the data were out



there to look at a longer timespan," Jensen said. "We offered it, and offered to help in any other way we could, but we never heard from them again after our one and only meeting."

The IDA spokesperson said its researchers relied on reports START published that summarized parts of their data through 2021. Those reports and the data that underlie them all found "a significant uptick" in such cases, but IDA failed to note those findings in its conclusions.

And in some parts of the report, IDA cited START's numbers from 2018, which were by then years out of date, and which did not fully reflect a significant increase that began the previous year. A footnote says there is more recent data, but fails to mention Jensen's offer to provide access.

AP also found several instances where IDA made assertions that were factually inaccurate or incomplete, leading to questions about the rigor of its work, and about whether the Pentagon provided adequate access to information.

As one example, IDA states that "IDA found no evidence of participation in violent extremist events by DOD civilians or defense contractor employees."

But AP obtained records showing multiple allegations about Jan. 6 alone against contractors and a civilian employee.

One, made to the Inspector General's office on Jan 8, 2021, nearly three years before the report was published, said a contractor at the Joint Artificial Intelligence Center called in to meetings from the protest on Jan. 6, and had spread conspiracy theories including QAnon as well as others involving artificial intelligence and the DOD. This complaint resulted in the contractor's termination.

In addition, there were widely publicized cases of defense contractors who were accused of participating in Jan. 6, including a Navy contractor who was a Nazi sympathizer and a former Special Forces soldier who was a military contractor.

And in one of the most notable violent extremist events in the years prior to Jan. 6, a defense contractor with a security clearance participated in the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, in 2017. Michael Miselis, a member of the violent white supremacist group Rise Above Movement, pleaded guilty to federal rioting charges.

The cases together raise questions about the rigor of the IDA's report and why it would make such assertions. IDA did not explain why it missed those widely reported cases.

Heidi Beirich, co-founder of the Global Project Against Hate and Extremism, said the AP's review showed the IDA report was "a mess," with "bad data, unsubstantiated conclusions, and false assertions."

That Hegseth, a former National Guardsman who himself had been flagged as a potential insider threat for a tattoo on his bicep that has been linked to extremist groups, doesn't see the importance of rooting out extremism in the ranks is a disaster, she said.

"It's a shame that a shoddy report by the Pentagon gives an opening to views like Hegseth's and will perpetuate a head-in-the-sand approach to a serious national security issue," said Beirich, an expert in extremist movements who has testified before Congress about extremism in the military.

"Too many terrorist attacks have been perpetrated by active-duty military and veterans, and ignoring this problem just makes the American people less safe," she said. "Making light of the problem is ultimately a threat to the security of the American people, and politicizing the problem, which Republicans have done over recent years, means more violence."

## **Trump threatens to impose sweeping new tariffs on Mexico, Canada and China on first day in office**

By JILL COLVIN and ROB GILLIES Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — President-elect Donald Trump threatened to impose sweeping new tariffs on Mexico, Canada and China as soon as he takes office as part of his effort to crack down on illegal immigration and drugs. He said he would impose a 25% tax on all products entering the country from Canada and Mexico, and an additional 10% tariff on goods from China, as one of his first executive orders.

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The tariffs, if implemented, could dramatically raise prices for American consumers on everything from gas to automobiles to agricultural products. The U.S. is the largest importer of goods in the world, with Mexico, China and Canada its top three suppliers, according to the most recent U.S. Census data.

Trump made the threats Monday in a pair of posts on his Truth Social site in which he railed against an influx of migrants crossing into the U.S. illegally, even though southern border apprehensions have been hovering near four-year lows.

"On January 20th, as one of my many first Executive Orders, I will sign all necessary documents to charge Mexico and Canada a 25% Tariff on ALL products coming into the United States, and its ridiculous Open Borders," he wrote, complaining that "thousands of people are pouring through Mexico and Canada, bringing Crime and Drugs at levels never seen before," even though violent crime is down from pandemic highs.

He said the new tariffs would remain in place "until such time as Drugs, in particular Fentanyl, and all Illegal Aliens stop this Invasion of our Country!"

"Both Mexico and Canada have the absolute right and power to easily solve this long simmering problem. We hereby demand that they use this power," he went on, "and until such time that they do, it is time for them to pay a very big price!"

A senior Canadian government official said Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Trump spoke after Trump's posts. The two spoke about the border and trade and had a good conversation, the official said. The official was not authorized to speak publicly about the matter and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Trump also turned his ire on China, saying he has "had many talks with China about the massive amounts of drugs, in particular Fentanyl, being sent into the United States – But to no avail."

"Until such time as they stop, we will be charging China an additional 10% Tariff, above any additional Tariffs, on all of their many products coming into the United States of America," he wrote.

The Chinese Embassy in Washington cautioned on Monday that there will be losers on all sides if there is a trade war.

"China-US economic and trade cooperation is mutually beneficial in nature," embassy spokesman Liu Pengyu posted on X. "No one will win a trade war or a #tariff war." He added that China had taken steps in the last year to help stem drug trafficking.

It is unclear whether Trump will actually go through with the threats or if he is using them as a negotiating tactic before he returns to the White House in the new year.

Trump's nominee for treasury secretary, Scott Bessent — who if confirmed, would be one of several officials responsible for imposing tariffs on other countries — has on several occasions said tariffs are a means of negotiation.

He wrote in a Fox News op-ed last week, before his nomination, that tariffs are "a useful tool for achieving the president's foreign policy objectives. Whether it is getting allies to spend more on their own defense, opening foreign markets to U.S. exports, securing cooperation on ending illegal immigration and interdicting fentanyl trafficking, or deterring military aggression, tariffs can play a central role."

Trump won the election in large part due to voter frustration over inflation, but his threatened tariffs pose the risk of pushing prices even higher for food, autos and other goods. If inflationary pressures increase, the Federal Reserve might need to keep its benchmark interest rates higher.

Trump's threats come as arrests for illegally crossing the border from Mexico have been falling. The most recent U.S. numbers for October show arrests remain near four-year lows, with U.S. Border Patrol making 56,530 arrests in October, less than one third of the tally from October last year.

Meanwhile, arrests for illegally crossing the border from Canada have been rising over the past two years. The Border Patrol made 23,721 arrests between October 2023 and September 2024, compared with 10,021 the previous 12 months. More than 14,000 of those arrested on the Canadian border were Indian — more than 10 times the number two years ago.

Last week, a jury convicted two men on charges related to human smuggling for their roles in an international operation that led to the deaths of a family of Indian migrants who froze while trying to cross the Canada-U.S. border during a 2022 blizzard.

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Much of America's fentanyl is smuggled from Mexico. Border seizures of the drug rose sharply under President Joe Biden, and U.S. officials tallied about 21,900 pounds (12,247 kilograms) of fentanyl seized in the 2024 government budget year, compared with 2,545 pounds (1,154 kilograms) in 2019, when Trump was president.

If Trump were to move forward with the threatened tariffs, the new taxes would pose an enormous challenge for the economies of Canada and Mexico, in particular.

The Canadian dollar weakened sharply in foreign exchange markets immediately following Trump's post.

During Trump's first term, his move to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement, or NAFTA, and reports that he was considering a 25% tariff on the Canadian auto sector were considered an existential threat in Canada. Canada is one of the most trade-dependent countries in the world, and 75% of Canada's exports go to the U.S.

The tariffs would also throw into doubt the reliability of the 2020 trade deal brokered in large part by Trump with Canada and Mexico, the USMCA, which replaced NAFTA and is up for review in 2026.

It's unclear from Trump's social media post how he would legally apply tariff hikes on those two pivotal U.S. trade partners, but the 2020 deal allows for national security exceptions.

Trump transition team officials did not immediately respond to questions about what authority he would use, what he would need to see to prevent the tariffs from being implemented and how they would impact prices in the U.S.

When Trump imposed higher tariffs during his first term in office, other countries responded with retaliatory tariffs of their own. Canada, for instance, announced billions of new duties in 2018 against the U.S. in a tit-for-tat response to new taxes on Canadian steel and aluminum.

Many of the U.S. products were chosen for their political rather than economic impact. For example, Canada imports just \$3 million worth of yogurt from the U.S. annually and most of it comes from one plant in Wisconsin, the home state of then-Republican House Speaker Paul Ryan. That product was hit with a 10% duty.

The Canadian government, in a joint statement from Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland and Public Safety Minister Dominic LeBlanc, emphasized the close relationship between the two countries and said they will discuss the border and vast economic ties with the incoming administration.

"Canada places the highest priority on border security and the integrity of our shared border. Our relationship today is balanced and mutually beneficial, particularly for American workers," the statement read.

Freeland, who chairs a special Cabinet committee on Canada-U.S. relations to address concerns about another Trump presidency, has said the president-elect's promise to launch a mass deportation and concern that that could lead to an influx of migrants to Canada, is a top focus of the committee.

A second senior Canadian official had said before Trump's posts that Canadian officials were expecting him to issue executive orders on trade and the border as soon as he assumes office. The official was not authorized to speak publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Mexico's Foreign Relations Department and Economy Department also had no immediate reaction to Trump's statements. Normally such weighty issues are handled by the president at her morning press briefings.

Last week, a senior Chinese commerce official said higher tariffs on Chinese exports would backfire by raising prices for consumers. Vice Commerce Minister Wang Shouwen also said China can manage the impact of such "external shocks."

## Trump's latest tariff plan aims at multiple countries.

### What does it mean for the US?

By PAUL WISEMAN AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — President-elect Donald Trump has identified what he sees as an all-purpose fix for what ails America: Slap huge new tariffs on foreign goods entering the United States.

On Monday, Trump sent shockwaves across the nation's northern and southern borders, vowing sweeping new tariffs on Mexico, Canada, as well as China, as soon as he takes office as part of his effort to crack down on illegal immigration and drugs.

In a pair of posts on his Truth Social site Trump railed against an influx of immigrants lacking permanent legal status, even though southern border apprehensions have been hovering near four-year lows.

He said he would impose a 25% tax on all products entering the country from Canada and Mexico, and an additional 10% tariff on goods from China, as one of his first executive orders.

He said the new tariffs would remain in place "until such time as Drugs, in particular Fentanyl, and all Illegal Aliens stop this Invasion of our Country!"

The president-elect asserts that tariffs — basically import taxes — will create more factory jobs, shrink the federal deficit, lower food prices and allow the government to subsidize childcare.

Economists are generally skeptical, considering tariffs to be a mostly inefficient way for governments to raise money. They are especially alarmed by Trump's latest proposed tariffs.

Carl B. Weinberg and Rubeela Farooqi, economists with High Frequency Economics said Tuesday that energy, automobiles and food supplies will be particularly hit hard.

"Imposing tariffs on trade flows into the United States without first preparing alternative sources for the goods and services affected will raise the price of imported items at once," Weinberg and Farooqi wrote. "Since many of these goods are consumer goods, households will be made poorer."

High Frequency Economics believes the threats are not meant to support new trade policy and are instead a tool to elicit some changes along the borders and for imports from Canada, Mexico and China.

Though Vice President Kamala Harris criticized Trump's tariff threats as unserious during her failed bid for the presidency, the Biden-Harris administration retained the taxes the Trump administration imposed on \$360 billion in Chinese goods. And it imposed a 100% tariff on Chinese electric vehicles.

Indeed, the United States in recent years has gradually retreated from its post-World War II role of promoting global free trade and lower tariffs. That shift has been a response to the loss of U.S. manufacturing jobs, widely attributed to unfettered trade and an increasingly aggressive China.

Tariffs are a tax on imports

They are typically charged as a percentage of the price a buyer pays a foreign seller. In the United States, tariffs are collected by Customs and Border Protection agents at 328 ports of entry across the country.

The tariff rates range from passenger cars (2.5%) to golf shoes (6%). Tariffs can be lower for countries with which the United States has trade agreements. For example, most goods can move among the United States, Mexico and Canada tariff-free because of Trump's US-Mexico-Canada trade agreement.

There's much misinformation about who actually pays tariffs

Trump insists that tariffs are paid for by foreign countries. In fact, it is importers — American companies — that pay tariffs, and the money goes to U.S. Treasury. Those companies, in turn, typically pass their higher costs on to their customers in the form of higher prices. That's why economists say consumers usually end up footing the bill for tariffs.

Still, tariffs can hurt foreign countries by making their products pricier and harder to sell abroad. Yang Zhou, an economist at Shanghai's Fudan University, concluded in a study that Trump's tariffs on Chinese goods inflicted more than three times as much damage to the Chinese economy as they did to the U.S. economy

Tariffs are intended mainly to protect domestic industries

By raising the price of imports, tariffs can protect home-grown manufacturers. They may also serve to punish foreign countries for committing unfair trade practices, like subsidizing their exporters or dumping

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products at unfairly low prices.

Before the federal income tax was established in 1913, tariffs were a major revenue driver for the government. From 1790 to 1860, tariffs accounted for 90% of federal revenue, according to Douglas Irwin, a Dartmouth College economist who has studied the history of trade policy.

Tariffs fell out of favor as global trade grew after World War II. The government needed vastly bigger revenue streams to finance its operations.

In the fiscal year that ended Sept. 30, the government is expected to collect \$81.4 billion in tariffs and fees. That's a trifle next to the \$2.5 trillion that's expected to come from individual income taxes and the \$1.7 trillion from Social Security and Medicare taxes.

Still, Trump wants to enact a budget policy that resembles what was in place in the 19th century.

He has argued that tariffs on farm imports could lower food prices by aiding America's farmers. In fact, tariffs on imported food products would almost certainly send grocery prices up by reducing choices for consumers and competition for American producers.

Tariffs can also be used to pressure other countries on issues that may or may not be related to trade. In 2019, for example, Trump used the threat of tariffs as leverage to persuade Mexico to crack down on waves of Central American migrants crossing Mexican territory on their way to the United States.

Trump even sees tariffs as a way to prevent wars.

"I can do it with a phone call," he said at an August rally in North Carolina.

If another country tries to start a war, he said he'd issue a threat:

"We're going to charge you 100% tariffs. And all of a sudden, the president or prime minister or dictator or whoever the hell is running the country says to me, 'Sir, we won't go to war.'"

Economists generally consider tariffs self-defeating

Tariffs raise costs for companies and consumers that rely on imports. They're also likely to provoke retaliation.

The European Union, for example, punched back against Trump's tariffs on steel and aluminum by taxing U.S. products, from bourbon to Harley-Davidson motorcycles. Likewise, China responded to Trump's trade war by slapping tariffs on American goods, including soybeans and pork in a calculated drive to hurt his supporters in farm country.

A study by economists at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the University of Zurich, Harvard and the World Bank concluded that Trump's tariffs failed to restore jobs to the American heartland. The tariffs "neither raised nor lowered U.S. employment" where they were supposed to protect jobs, the study found.

Despite Trump's 2018 taxes on imported steel, for example, the number of jobs at U.S. steel plants barely budged: They remained right around 140,000. By comparison, Walmart alone employs 1.6 million people in the United States.

Worse, the retaliatory taxes imposed by China and other nations on U.S. goods had "negative employment impacts," especially for farmers, the study found. These retaliatory tariffs were only partly offset by billions in government aid that Trump doled out to farmers. The Trump tariffs also damaged companies that relied on targeted imports.

If Trump's trade war fizzled as policy, though, it succeeded as politics. The study found that support for Trump and Republican congressional candidates rose in areas most exposed to the import tariffs — the industrial Midwest and manufacturing-heavy Southern states like North Carolina and Tennessee.

## Movie Review: Daniel Craig is a revelation in 'Queer,' a trippy tale of longing

By MARK KENNEDY AP Entertainment Writer

One of the first real signs that "Queer" is going to be an unconventional movie is when Daniel Craig in a linen suit saunters through Mexico City during the early '50s and the soundtrack blasts a song by Nirvana.

It's a pretty nifty way to explain this story of a man unmoored by time, geography and himself. Craig plays William Lee, an American hiding out in Mexico who spends his time going from bar to bar, knocking

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back tequila or mescal.

Why is he hiding out? For one thing, he's a junkie and Mexico is more permissive about heroin use than the States at this time. He's also gay when being gay was abhorrent and Mexico was, again, more permissive. Lee is part of a wealthy expat contingent that fritters away the days stewed in liquor and gossip.

He doesn't just sound like a William S. Burroughs hero, he's partly Burroughs himself — "Queer" was a confessional novella written long before his breakthrough novel "Naked Lunch." So buckle up. You're going to see some weird stuff.

"Queer" is best when it's a character study of Lee, who in Craig's hands is charming, selfish, arrogant, abrasive, foppish and sometimes unable to read a room. It's a million miles from 007, even if Lee carries a pistol. Craig allows us to see the yearning for real love that Lee numbs with shot glasses and needles. That Nirvana song is "Come as You Are."

One day that real love suddenly appears in the form of the younger Eugene Allerton (a superb, icy Drew Starkey), who unlocks something in Lee. Could Eugene be the one to make Lee whole? Could they ride off into the sunset? Don't be silly. This is a Burroughs story.

Eugene is on-again, off-again, sometimes loving Lee and sometimes preferring a woman's company. Part of Eugene seems to dislike Lee or being seen with him. Lee's voracious need — shown with vigorous lovemaking scenes — is overpowering.

One scene has the two men walking down a street and Eugene subtly shakes off the older man's hand on his shoulder. "Is he a queer?" Lee asks a friend. "I can't tell." One drunken night he approaches his source of adoration and confesses he wants to speak without speaking. He soon will try.

Director Luca Guadagnino and screenwriter Justin Kuritzkes, who teamed up for "Challengers," face enormous challenges in adapting Burroughs's words to the screen and yet they manage it, lyrically.

There is a single-take scene in which Lee assembles the equipment necessary to inject himself with heroin and the camera watches as he gets high, slowing his body down to become a sort of pathetic statue at the kitchen table.

Symbols — a wriggling bug, snakes and mirrors — combine with trippy techniques meant to show Lee's interior life, like his arm superimposed onto a scene tenderly touching his paramour when, in reality, it is hanging still. And there is a late moment of surreal beauty as the lovers climb into each other's bodies, hands under the skin.

"Queer" — broken up into three chapters and an epilogue — gets trippier in the later stages, when Lee and Eugene leave Mexico in search of a South American plant that apparently gives users telepathic powers. Lee is clearly trying to find a shortcut into the soul, bypassing the messiness of human interactions. "You think it can fix things for you," he is told.

But this part isn't well integrated with the first half, almost like a movie fragment, and the filmmakers fumble an attempt to deal with the death of Burroughs' wife, Joan Vollmer. Guadagnino seems to unnecessarily channel Stanley Kubrick as the movie wobbles to its end, with scenes filled with deafening sound, then pregnant silence and an artificial momentousness.

The score by Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross is vibrant but it gets a chef's kiss with the addition of songs by Prince, New Order and Lydia Mendoza, mixed with contemporary songs by Benny Goodman, Eddie Cantor, Frankie Lane and Cole Porter.

The weight of it all comes down to Craig, and he's a wonder in a fedora, dirt stains on his linen pants. "Queer" is a reminder of how good an actor he is and how brave he can be — naked, needy and noxious. You'll be shaken and stirred.

"Queer," a A24 release that hits theaters Wednesday, is rated R for "strong sexual content, graphic nudity, strong drug content, language and brief violence." Running time: 135 minutes. Three stars out of four.

## UK Supreme Court hears landmark legal challenge over how a 'woman' is defined in law

By SYLVIA HUI Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The U.K. Supreme Court on Tuesday began hearing a legal challenge focusing on the definition of "woman" in a long-running dispute between a women's rights campaign group and the Scottish government.

Five judges at Britain's highest court were considering the case, which seeks to clarify whether a transgender person with a gender recognition certificate that recognizes them as female can be regarded as a woman under equality laws.

While the case centers on Scottish laws, the campaign group bringing the challenge, For Women Scotland (FWS), has said its outcomes could have U.K.-wide consequences for sex-based rights as well as everyday single-sex services such as toilets and hospital wards.

What's the case about?

The case stems from a 2018 law passed by the Scottish Parliament stating that there should be a 50% female representation on the boards of Scottish public bodies. That law included transgender women in its definition of women.

The women's rights group successfully challenged that law, arguing that its redefinition of "woman" went beyond parliament's powers.

Scottish officials then issued guidance stating that the definition of "woman" included a transgender woman who has a gender recognition certificate.

FWS is seeking to overturn that.

"Not tying the definition of sex to its ordinary meaning means that public boards could conceivably comprise of 50% men, and 50% men with certificates, yet still lawfully meet the targets for female representation," the group's director Trina Budge said.

The challenge was rejected by a court in 2022, but the group was granted permission last year to take its case to the Supreme Court.

What are the arguments?

Aidan O'Neill, a lawyer acting for FWS, told the Supreme Court judges — three men and two women — that under the Equality Act "sex" should refer to biological sex and as understood "in ordinary, everyday language."

"Our position is your sex, whether you are a man or a woman or a girl or a boy is determined from conception in utero, even before one's birth, by one's body," he said on Tuesday. "It is an expression of one's bodily reality. It is an immutable biological state."

The women's right group counts among its supporters author J.K. Rowling, who reportedly donated tens of thousands of pounds to back its work. The "Harry Potter" writer has been vocal in arguing that the rights for trans women should not come at the expense of those who are born biologically female.

Opponents, including Amnesty International, say barring transgender people who hold a gender recognition certificate from protections against sex discrimination conflicts with human rights principles.

Amnesty submitted a written intervention to the court, saying it was concerned about the deterioration of the rights for trans people in the U.K. and abroad.

"A blanket policy of barring trans women from single-sex services is not a proportionate means to achieve a legitimate aim," the human rights group said.

The appeal hearing is expected to last two days with a judgement expected at a later date.

## Trump transition team suggests sidelining top adviser over pay-to-play allegations

By ZEKE MILLER White House Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — The top lawyer on Donald Trump's transition team investigated a longtime adviser to the president-elect over allegations he used his proximity to Trump to score payments from those seeking roles or influence in the new administration.

The review conducted by lawyer David Warrington recommended that Trump aides sharply constrain adviser Boris Epshteyn's access to the president-elect, according to a person familiar with the matter. The person spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss an internal matter.

The personnel drama spotlights the unusual and often-disorganized cast of characters around Trump who contributed to the chaos of his first term, some of whom are part of the transition to the second as he looks to build out his administration before he takes office on Jan. 20.

Among those Epshteyn is alleged to have sought payments from is Scott Bessent, Trump's nominee to be treasury secretary. Bessent mounted a monthslong campaign to win the job but was opposed by Epshteyn allegedly after the hedge fund executive didn't agree to pay him a substantial retainer.

The review also examined a complaint from former Missouri Gov. Eric Greitens, who resigned in scandal but has expressed interest in joining Trump's administration. Greitens signed a declaration last week recounting a Nov. 7 conversation with Epshteyn that alleged that his "overall tone and behavior gave me the impression of an implicit expectation to engage in business dealings with him before he would advocate for or suggest my appointment to the President. This created a sense of unease and pressure on my part."

Epshteyn isn't accused of doing anything illegal — securing fees for access to senior government officials is the bread and butter of Washington's lobbying establishment — but the investigation appeared designed to weaken or eliminate his prominent position within Trump's orbit. The president-elect has long chafed at those he viewed as using him for their own personal gain.

"As is standard practice, a broad review of the campaign's consulting agreements has been conducted and completed, including as to Boris, among others," said Trump communications director Steven Cheung. "We are now moving ahead together as a team to help President Trump Make America Great Again."

Veterans of other presidential campaigns and transitions said such a review was anything but standard, and Cheung did not comment on Epshteyn's role going forward.

Epshteyn, who served briefly in a mid-level role in Trump's first White House, became a central player in Trump's life after he left office in 2021. He was one of the architects of Trump's legal team and strategy as the former president faced an array of criminal and civil threats after the Jan. 6 insurrection at the Capitol and his efforts to overturn the 2020 presidential election.

Epshteyn himself was indicted on state charges in Arizona related to alleged efforts by Trump allies to subvert that election and has pleaded not guilty. He holds the title of senior counsel and senior adviser to Trump, but even before the review he was not expected to take a role in the incoming administration.

"I am honored to work for President Trump and with his team," Epshteyn said in a statement. "These fake claims are false and defamatory and will not distract us from Making America Great Again."

Eric Trump, the president-elect's son who went to college with Epshteyn, told Fox News that if the reported allegations were true, his old friend might not be around the campaign much longer.

"Listen, I have known Boris for years, and I have never known him to be anything but a good human being," Eric Trump said Monday. "So, that said, I will tell you, my father's been incredibly clear. You do not, you do not do that under any circumstance. And, believe me, there will be repercussions if somebody was."

The investigation into Epshteyn was first reported by the conservative website Just the News.

"I suppose every President has people around them who try to make money off them on the outside. It's a shame but it happens," Trump told the website. "But no one working for me in any capacity should be looking to make money. They should only be here to Make America Great Again."

During the 2022 midterms, some in Trump's orbit also represented candidates seeking his endorsement, leading to accusations that aides were profiting off their proximity to the former president.



## Gunmen in Central African Republic killed 10 people near a diamond mining town

By JEAN FERNAND KOENA Associated Press

BANGUI, Central African Republic (AP) — Gunmen in Central African Republic killed six motorcycle taxi drivers and four of their clients near the central diamond mining town of Bria, authorities said Tuesday.

The motorcycle taxi drivers and their clients were driving back from a religious ceremony in the town of Ippy to Bria, the capital of the central Haute-Kotto prefecture, when they were ambushed by unidentified gunmen, the member of parliament for Bria, Jacques Tafogo, told The Associated Press.

"They were tied up and killed with their clients and their motorcycles set on fire," Tafogo told the AP over the phone. "The town is in psychosis and the army is mobilized with the support of Wagner's Russian mercenaries."

No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack but the mining town of Bria has been plagued by fighting between the country's armed forces and the Coalition of Patriots for Change, an anti-government militant group, in recent years.

Exports of diamonds from the town are forbidden under the 2003 Kimberley Process, which aims to eliminate the trade of "blood diamonds" fueling conflicts in Africa.

Central African Republic has been in conflict since 2013, when predominantly Muslim rebels seized power and forced then-president François Bozizé from office.

A 2019 peace deal only lessened the fighting, and six of the 14 armed groups that signed later left the agreement. The Coalition of Patriots for Change was founded in 2020 in the aftermath of the agreement.

Central African Republic is also one of the first countries in which Kremlin-backed Wagner mercenaries established their operations on the pledge of fighting back rebel groups and bringing back peace.

But instead of stabilizing the country, Wagner forces have been accused of gross human rights violations and defending the brutal military regime of Faustin-Archange Touadéra, in power since March 2016.

"The army is working on a military operation in the area where the tragedy took place with the support of our Russian allies," the military police commander of Haute Kotto, Robestin Yamandé, told the AP following the attack in Bria.

## Ukraine says Russian attack sets a new record for the number of drones used

By HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia launched 188 drones against most regions of Ukraine in a nighttime blitz, the Ukrainian air force said Tuesday, describing it as a record number of drones deployed in a single attack.

Most of the drones were intercepted, according to the air force, but apartment buildings and critical infrastructure such as the national power grid were damaged. No casualties were immediately reported in the 17 targeted regions.

The Russian Defense Ministry, meanwhile, issued a rare official acknowledgement of its assets recently being hit on its own soil by U.S.-made ATACMS missiles, after President Joe Biden authorized Ukraine to use the longer-range weapons to strike deeper inside Russia.

Russia has been hammering civilian areas of Ukraine with increasingly heavy drone, missile and glide bomb attacks since the middle of the year.

At the same time, Russia's army has largely held the battlefield initiative for the past year and has been pushing hard in the eastern Donetsk region where it is making significant tactical advances, according to Western military analysts.

Ukraine faces a difficult winter, with worries about the reliability of the electricity supply amid Russia's attacks and how much U.S. support it can count on next year after President-elect Donald Trump takes office in January.

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The Russian Defense Ministry said five U.S.-made Army Tactical Missile System, or ATACMS, missiles were fired at one of its air defense missile systems in Russia's Kursk border region on Saturday.

It said three of the missiles were downed by the Pantsyr short-range air defense systems protecting the position but that two other missiles hit it, injuring an unspecified number of servicemen and damaging the system's radar.

In another attack with ATACMS on Monday, eight of the missiles were launched at the Kursk-Vostochny military air base near Khalino. Seven of them were shot down and one hit the facility, injuring two servicemen and causing minor damage, the ministry said.

"Preparations for retaliatory action are under way," the ministry said without elaborating.

A U.S. official said Nov. 19 that ATACMS had been fired at targets inside Russia for the first time.

As Russian Shahed drones spread out across Ukraine late Monday, the air raid alert in the Kyiv region overnight lasted more than seven hours. Russia is trying to unnerve civilians and wear down their will to resist in the almost 3-year-old war, military analysts say.

Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy noted that each Shahed has 85 foreign components and that Russia obtained them by circumventing international sanctions. He said on the Telegram messaging app that "we need more joint effort so that the sanctions work and force Russia to stop this war."

Meanwhile, Ukraine's General Staff said Tuesday that over the past 24 hours roughly half of the clashes along the about 1,000-kilometer (600 mile) front line occurred near Pokrovsk and Kurakhove in the Donetsk region.

Ukraine has a critical manpower problem on the front line, and though the Russian army's gains have been incremental its momentum is adding up as the Ukrainians yield ground.

The Russian advance is threatening important supply routes in Donetsk, the Washington-based Institute for the Study of War said late Monday.

Ukrainian defenses in Donetsk are not in danger of being overrun, however, the think tank said. It also noted that Russia would need to capture more than 8,000 square kilometers (3,000 square miles) of territory to achieve the Kremlin's goal of seizing the whole of Donetsk.

In other developments, a court in Russia's Kursk region has ordered a British national fighting with Ukraine to be held in detention pending an investigation and trial.

The ruling on the Briton, identified by state news agency Tass and other media as James Scott Rhys Anderson, was announced Tuesday by court officials, who said in an online statement that it was handed down the previous day.

The hearing took place behind closed doors in the Leninsky District Court in the city of Kursk. It wasn't clear from the statement what charges Anderson is facing and whether he is considered a prisoner of war by the Russian authorities.

The Briton reportedly was captured in the Kursk region, where Ukrainian forces have seized territory following a lightning offensive in August.

## Trump's sharp tariff hikes could speed up China's shift to new markets and offshore factories

By SIMINA MISTREANU and KEN MORITSUGU Associated Press

YIWU, China (AP) — Visitors who bought fridge magnets at Times Square or other tourist hotspots around New York in recent years most likely were purchasing the work of Du Jing or one of her fellow exporters in a small Chinese city that supplies the U.S. and the world with tons of small commodities.

Du and her husband run Yiwu Xianchuang Handicraft Manufacturing in the eastern city of Yiwu, home to the world's largest wholesale market. Products from here — ranging from plushies to glass vases and portable toolboxes — are sold in stores and on online platforms around the world, including to U.S. consumers on Amazon.

For years, the United States has been a major destination for Chinese goods, but exporters like those in Yiwu have been reducing their reliance on the world's largest consumer market as Beijing and Washington

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feud over trade. Some have moved production to Southeast Asia and other parts of the world to evade U.S. tariffs on Chinese goods.

Those trends look to accelerate under President-elect Donald Trump, who has threatened to sharply raise tariffs on all Chinese imports and close some loopholes exporters currently use to sell their products more cheaply in the U.S. If enacted, his plans would likely raise prices in America and squeeze sales and profit margins for Chinese exporters.

Chinese exporters are already looking at new markets

Du, speaking from her booth in the Yiwu wholesale market, the walls covered in colorful magnets and keychains, isn't sure whether higher tariffs or a worsening U.S. market are to blame. What she knows is sales are down.

"The U.S. market has shrunk a lot," she said. "It gives me the feeling that it has something to do with their financial situation."

American customers have been putting a lot of pressure on prices since 2019, frowning at any product that wholesales for more than 25 cents, she said.

In contrast, the Middle East has become a better market, with higher prices and increasingly larger orders, she said.

Elsewhere in the sprawling market, the owner of Yiwu Bixuan Import Export Co. Ltd., echoed her thoughts. Chen Yong's trading company exports glass vases and other home decor, and Chen said business with the U.S. and Europe has suffered over the past few years – but it has boomed with other regions such as Southeast Asia, Africa, South America and Russia.

The share of China's exports going to the U.S. dropped from 19% in 2018 to 15% last year, according to China customs data, even as China's overall exports are forecast to reach a record high this year.

Trump has mentioned tariff hikes of 60% or more. On Monday, he said he would impose an extra 10% tariff on goods from China and a 25% tax on all products entering the country from Canada and Mexico as one of his first executive orders.

Higher tariffs would force Chen to raise prices or accept lower profit margins, he said. If American customers won't accept higher prices, the only choice would be to turn elsewhere.

"We have to wait and see how much he will increase the tariff before knowing how big the impact on us can be," he said. "We don't know now."

An expert says 'no one can face' 60% tariffs

A 60% tariff would have a severe impact on Chinese exports to the U.S., said Tu Xinquan, director of the China Institute for WTO Studies at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing.

"Many companies will completely halt their trade with the U.S.," he predicted. "If the tariffs were not that huge, larger companies could cope better with the situation than medium and small companies. But if it's 60%, no one can face that."

Light manufacturing and textiles are among the industries expected to be hit hardest by new tariffs, along with steel and computers, according to a report by Chinese brokerage Caicong Securities.

During his first term in office, Trump imposed tariffs on more than \$360 billion worth of Chinese products. The tariffs put the brakes on a fairly steady rise in Chinese exports to the U.S. They fell at first, then bounced back as the U.S. economy boomed, before leveling off at \$500 billion last year.

The Biden administration kept most of Trump's duties and layered on fresh ones on products such as steel, solar cells and electric vehicles. Biden's approach has focused on sectors considered strategic, such as artificial intelligence and green energy. Trump's proposed blanket tariffs could spill over into daily-use goods, pressuring smaller manufacturers like those in Yiwu.

Furniture, toys and games were among the top Chinese export categories to the U.S. last year — after electronics and machinery — according to trade data compiled by the United Nations.

Trump wants to end an exemption for shipments under \$800

Trump has vowed to close loopholes through which Chinese goods bypass U.S. tariffs. One such loophole is an exemption that allows small packages under \$800 to enter the U.S. duty free. Many of the products sold through Amazon's third-party marketplace and on the Chinese platforms Temu and Shein qualify for

this exemption.

Biden's administration proposed restricting the tax waiver for goods subject to U.S.-China tariffs, and Trump is expected to move forward with such restrictions, analysts said.

"This would be a crushing blow to Chinese exporters who have built business models around those low-value exports," said Eswar Prasad, a professor of trade policy at Cornell University and a former head of the China division at the International Monetary Fund.

It would also be "a big loss to low-income American consumers," said Gary Hufbauer, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics in Washington, D.C. "Evidence shows that they really benefit from the exemption."

Some Chinese companies are moving production abroad

One workaround for Chinese companies has been moving production abroad. Since Trump started a trade war with China during his first administration, the average U.S. tariffs on Chinese goods have been about 20%, according to Ma Hong, a professor of economics at Tsinghua University in Beijing.

To avoid these tariffs, some Chinese companies have shifted their factories to countries like Vietnam and Mexico.

Shenzhen HIHO Luggage and Bag Industry Development Co., Ltd. opened a factory in Indonesia in 2021. The luggage producer employs about 600 workers in Indonesia and has a similar workforce in China, where it runs factories in three provinces.

The company exports about a quarter of its production to the U.S., according to its marketing director, Steven Wang. He believes that some of the company's clients in Mexico may also be reselling their products to the U.S.

"No one likes to do business at a loss," Wang said. "If Trump imposes any additional tariffs on Chinese goods from ASEAN countries or Mexico, we may need to move the factories somewhere else."

## **New rule allows HIV-positive organ transplants**

By CARLA K. JOHNSON AP Medical Writer

People with HIV who need a kidney or liver transplant will be able to receive an organ from a donor with HIV under a new rule announced Tuesday by U.S. health officials.

Previously, such transplants could be done only as part of research studies. The new rule, which takes effect Wednesday, is expected to shorten the wait for organs for all, regardless of HIV status, by increasing the pool of available organs.

"This rule removes unnecessary barriers to kidney and liver transplants, expanding the organ donor pool and improving outcomes for transplant recipients with HIV," said U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra in a statement.

The safety of the practice is supported by research, including a study published last month in the New England Journal of Medicine. That study followed 198 organ recipients for up to four years, comparing those who received kidneys from HIV-positive donors to those whose kidneys came from donors without HIV. Both groups had similar high rates of overall survival and low rates of organ rejection.

In 2010, surgeons in South Africa provided the first evidence that using HIV-positive donor organs was safe in people with HIV. But the practice wasn't allowed in the United States until 2013 when the government lifted a ban and allowed research studies.

At first, the studies were with deceased donors. Then in 2019, a team at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore performed the world's first kidney transplant from a living donor with HIV to an HIV-positive recipient.

All told, 500 transplants of kidneys and livers from HIV-positive donors have been done in the U.S.

## What Black Friday's history tells us about holiday shopping in 2024

By WYATTE GRANTHAM-PHILIPS AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The holiday shopping season is about to reach full speed with Black Friday, which kicks off the post-Thanksgiving retail rush later this week.

The annual sales event no longer creates the midnight mall crowds or doorbuster mayhem of recent decades, in large part due to the ease of online shopping and habits forged during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Hoping to entice equivocating consumers, retailers already have spent weeks bombarding customers with ads and early offers. Still, whether visiting stores or clicking on countless emails promising huge savings, tens of millions of U.S. shoppers are expected to spend money on Black Friday itself this year.

Industry forecasts estimate that 183.4 million people will shop in U.S. stores and online between Thanksgiving and Cyber Monday, according to the National Retail Federation and consumer research firm Prosper Insights & Analytics. Of that number, 131.7 million are expected to shop on Black Friday.

At the same time, earlier and earlier Black Friday-like promotions, as well as the growing strength of other shopping events (hello Cyber Monday), continue to change the holiday spending landscape.

Here's what you need to know about Black Friday's history and where things stand in 2024.

When is Black Friday in 2024?

Black Friday falls on the Friday after Thanksgiving each year, or Nov. 29 this year.

How old is Black Friday? Where does its name come from?

The term "Black Friday" is several generations old, but it wasn't always associated with the holiday retail frenzy that we know today. The gold market crash of September 1869, for example, was notably dubbed Black Friday.

The phrase's use in relation to shopping the day after Thanksgiving, however, is most often traced to Philadelphia in the mid-20th century — when police and other city workers had to deal with large crowds that congregated before the annual Army-Navy football game and to take advantage of seasonal sales.

"That's why the bus drivers and cab drivers call today 'Black Friday.' They think in terms of headaches it gives them," a Gimbels department store sales manager told The Associated Press in 1975, while watching a police officer try to control jaywalkers the day after Thanksgiving. Earlier references date back to the 1950s and 1960s.

Jie Zhang, a professor of marketing at the University of Maryland's Robert H. Smith School of Business, points to a 1951 mention of "Black Friday" in a New-York based trade publication — which noted that many workers simply called in sick the day after Thanksgiving in hopes of having a long holiday weekend.

Starting in the 1980s, national retailers began claiming that Black Friday represented when they went from operating in the red to in the black thanks to holiday demand. But since many retail companies now operate in the black at various times of the year, this interpretation should be taken with a grain of salt, experts say.

How has Black Friday evolved?

In recent decades, Black Friday became infamous for floods of people in jam-packed stores. Endless lines of shoppers camped out at midnight in hopes of scoring deep discounts.

But online shopping has made it possible to make most, if not all, holiday purchases without ever stepping foot inside a store. And while foot traffic at malls and other shopping areas has bounced back since the start of the pandemic, e-commerce isn't going away.

November sales at brick and mortar stores peaked more than 20 years ago. In 2003, for example, e-commerce accounted for just 1.7% of total retail sales in the fourth quarter, according to Commerce Department data.

Unsurprisingly, online sales make up for a much bigger slice of the pie today. For last year's holiday season, e-commerce accounted for about 17.1% of all nonadjusted retail sales in the fourth quarter, Commerce Department data shows. That's up from 12.7% seen at the end of 2019.

Beyond the rise of online shopping, some big ticket items that used to get shoppers in the door on the Black Friday — like a new TV — are significantly cheaper than they were decades ago, notes Jay Zagorsky,

a clinical associate professor at Boston University's Questrom School of Business.

"There is less need to stand in line at midnight when the items typically associated with doorbuster sales are now much cheaper," Zagorsky told The Associated Press via email. He pointed to Bureau of Labor Statistics data that shows the average price for a TV has fallen 75% since 2014.

While plenty of people will do most of their Black Friday shopping online, projections from the National Retail Federation and Prosper Insights indicated that a majority of Black Friday shoppers (65%) still planned to shop in stores this year.

Black Friday 'month' and the rise of Cyber Monday

It's no secret that Black Friday sales don't last just 24 hours anymore. Emails promising holiday deals now start arriving before Halloween.

"Black Friday is no longer the start of the holiday shopping season. It has become the crescendo of the holiday shopping season" during what now feels like "Black Friday month," Zhang said. Some retailers have updated their official marketing to refer to "Black Friday week."

Retailers trying to get a head start on the competition and to manage shipping logistics helps explain the rush, Zhang said. Offering early holiday deals spreads out purchases, giving shippers more breathing room to complete orders. Zhang therefore doesn't expect the five fewer days between Thanksgiving and Christmas this year to cause significant strain because retailers would have taken them into account.

Linking pre-Thanksgiving sales with Black Friday is also a marketing technique since it's a name consumers recognize and associate with big, limited-time bargains, Zhang said.

Multiple post-Thanksgiving sales events keep shoppers enticed after Black Friday, including Small Business Saturday and Cyber Monday, which the National Retail Federation's online arm designated in 2005.

U.S. consumers spent a record \$12.4 billion on Cyber Monday in 2023, and \$15.7 million per minute during the day's peak sales hour, according to Adobe Analytics. On Black Friday, they spent \$9.8 billion online, Adobe Analytics said.

Enough people still enjoy shopping in person after Thanksgiving that the activity is unlikely to become extinct, Boston University's Zagorsky said.

While Black Friday's significance "is being slightly diminished" over time, the shopping event is still "a way to connect with others," he said. "This social aspect is important and will not disappear, ensuring that Black Friday is still an important day for retailers."

## What to know about the Menendez brothers' resentencing plea

By JAIMIE DING Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Erik and Lyle Menendez will have to wait until next year for a decision on whether they should have the possibility of freedom from prison more than 30 years after killing their parents, a judge said.

The shotgun killings of Jose and Kitty Menendez on Aug. 20, 1989, in their Beverly Hills mansion captured the public's attention. Prosecutors argued the Menendez brothers killed their parents for financial gain. The brothers' attorneys never disputed the pair killed their parents, but argued that they acted out of self-defense after years of emotional and sexual abuse by their father.

After an initial mistrial, the brothers were convicted of murder and sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole.

Los Angeles County prosecutors recommended the resentencing for the brothers last month, arguing that they had demonstrated good behavior and rehabilitation in prison. They have support from their family, and attorneys have presented new evidence of the sexual abuse the brothers allege they suffered at the hands of their father.

Here are some things to know about the case:

What happened Monday?

LA County Superior Court Judge Michael Jesic held a hearing to discuss the Menendez brothers' bid for

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freedom.

Their lawyers first filed a habeas corpus petition — a request for a court to examine whether someone is being lawfully detained — in May 2023, asking a judge to consider new evidence of their father's alleged sexual abuse.

After renewed public interest in the case since the recent Netflix drama and documentary released, Los Angeles District Attorney George Gascón asked the judge to give the brothers a new sentence of 50 years to life, which could make them immediately eligible for parole because they were less than 26 years old when they killed their parents.

On Monday, however, Jescic said he could not move forward with the hearing scheduled for Dec. 11 due to the amount of evidence he needed to go through. He postponed the hearing to Jan. 30.

Who supports the brothers' release?

Erik and Lyle Menendez have the support of almost their entire extended family, who gathered to call for their release last month.

The brothers' two aunts took the stand on Monday in support of their release. Joan Andersen VanderMolen, Kitty Menendez's sister who turns 93 on Tuesday, and Teresita Baralt, Jose's older sister who is 85, both said they wanted their nephews to come home. They said they had kept in contact with the brothers while they have been in prison, though they had not seen them in person for years.

Andersen VanderMolen said the abuse Erik and Lyle Menendez had to suffer was "unconscionable."

Baralt noted that she was close to Jose and lived for years across the street from him and Kitty, who Baralt described as her best friend.

"We miss those who are gone tremendously," Baralt testified through tears. "But we miss the kids too."

What might the judge consider?

The judge might consider new evidence that the brothers' attorneys say corroborate their allegations that they were sexually abused by their father. Much of the evidence and testimony from family members that related to the alleged abuse was excluded during the trial that ultimately convicted them.

The brothers' attorneys said the new evidence includes a letter Erik Menendez wrote in 1988 — the year before the murders — to his uncle Andy Cano, describing the sexual abuse he had endured from his father. The brothers asked their lawyers about it after it was mentioned in a 2015 Barbara Walters television special. The lawyers hadn't known of the letter and realized it had not been introduced at their trials.

More new evidence emerged when Roy Rossello, a former member of the Latin pop group Menudo, recently came forward saying Jose Menendez drugged and raped him when Rossello was a teen in the 1980s. Menudo was signed under RCA Records, where Jose Menendez was chief operating officer. Rossello spoke about his abuse in the Peacock docuseries "Menendez + Menudo: Boys Betrayed," and provided a signed declaration to the brothers' lawyers.

The judge may also consider the brothers' prison record.

In a document filed by the district attorney's office recommending resentencing, prosecutors pointed to the brothers' educational achievements — both have attained several degrees — and contributions to the community. One is a GreenSpace prison beautification program Lyle Menendez started. Both brothers also received low-risk assessment scores, and the document notes that Lyle had not been in a single fight during his 30 years in prison.

Who else could weigh in?

Prosecutors who believe the brothers should not be freed are expected to make their own arguments to the judge.

The brothers' attorneys have submitted papers requesting clemency from California Gov. Gavin Newsom, who has the power to free them. However, Newsom said last week that he won't decide until incoming Los Angeles County District Attorney Nathan Hochman, who takes office on Dec. 2, has the opportunity to review the case.

Hochman, a Republican-turned-independent who unseated the progressive Gascón, said the judge's decision to delay the hearing will give him enough time to "review the extensive prison records, transcripts of

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two lengthy trials and voluminous exhibits, as well as consult with prosecutors, law enforcement, defense counsel and victim family members.”

## Today in History: November 27, Harvey Milk and George Moscone fatally shot

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Wednesday, Nov. 27, the 332nd day of 2024. There are 34 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Nov. 27, 1978, San Francisco Mayor George Moscone (mah-SKOH'-nee) and city Supervisor and gay rights activist Harvey Milk were fatally shot inside City Hall by former Supervisor Dan White.

Also on this date:

In 1924, Macy's first Thanksgiving Day parade — billed as a “Christmas Parade” — took place in New York.

In 1934, bank robber and “Public Enemy No. 1” Lester Joseph Gillis, better known as George “Baby Face” Nelson, was killed in a gun battle with FBI agents in Barrington, Illinois.

In 1970, Pope Paul VI, visiting the Philippines, was slightly wounded at the Manila airport by a dagger-wielding Bolivian painter disguised as a priest.

In 2003, President George W. Bush flew to Iraq under extraordinary secrecy and security to spend Thanksgiving with U.S. troops and thank them for “defending the American people from danger.”

In 2015, a gunman attacked a Planned Parenthood clinic in Colorado Springs, Colorado, killing three people and injuring nine. (The prosecution of suspect Robert Dear stalled in state court, and then federal court, after he was repeatedly found mentally incompetent to stand trial.)

Today's Birthdays: Fashion designer Manolo Blahnik is 82. Film director Kathryn Bigelow is 73. Political strategist Steve Bannon is 71. Science educator and TV host Bill Nye is 69. Author and diplomat Caroline Kennedy is 67. Actor Robin Givens is 60. Actor Michael Vartan is 56. Baseball Hall of Famer Iván Rodríguez is 53. Rapper Twista is 51. Actor Jaleel White is 48.