

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 217 ~ 1 of 85

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- 1440 News Headlines](#)
- [3- Today on GDILIVE.COM](#)
- [4- Governor Rhoden to Address Joint Session of the South Dakota Legislature](#)
- [4- Reeses Peanut Butter "cake"](#)
- [4- Nelson Card Shower](#)
- [5- Today's game information](#)
- [6- Dak XII/NEC Clash pairings](#)
- [7- Carnival of Silver Skates pictures](#)
- [17- SD SearchLight: Ban on eminent domain for carbon pipelines passes SD House, heads to Senate](#)
- [18- SD SearchLight: Lawmaker tries to revive bill that would open public officials' calendars, but fails in SD Senate](#)
- [19- SD SearchLight: Lawmakers advance bill to mandate cash acceptance at school events](#)
- [20- SD SearchLight: Get rid of FEMA? Trump-appointed group to look at shifting disaster response to states](#)
- [22- SD SearchLight: U.S. Senate Dems push for vote on condemning Trump Jan. 6 pardons](#)
- [24- SD SearchLight: Former state employee pleads guilty, receives sentence for grocery voucher fraud](#)
- [25- SD SearchLight: North Dakota sued Interior at least five times under Doug Burgum. Now he's set to run the agency.](#)
- [30- Weather Pages](#)
- [34- Daily Devotional](#)
- [35- Subscription Form](#)
- [36- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [37- Upcoming Groton Events](#)
- [38- News from the Associated Press](#)

## Tuesday, Jan. 28

Senior Menu: Parmesean chicken, baked potato, peaches, California blend, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Oatmeal.

School Lunch: Tacos.

Girls Basketball hosts Aberdeen Roncalli (JV at 6 p.m. followed by Varsity)

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  
United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

## Groton Daily Independent

PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445

Paul's Cell/Text: 605-397-7460



## Wednesday, Jan. 29

Senior Menu: Breaded cod, rice pilaf, tomato spoon salad, blushing pears, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Cereal.

School Lunch: Chicken pasta, cooked broccoli.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 4 p.m.

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

Groton C&MA: Kid's Club, Youth Group, Adult Bible Study, 7 p.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Confirmation, 3:45 p.m.

High School Baseball Informational Meeting, 6:30 p.m., Groton Legion

## Thursday, Jan. 30

Senior Menu: Goulash, corn, pineapple, breadstick.  
School Breakfast: Pancake on stick.

School Lunch: Hamburgers, fries.

Boys JH Basketball hosts Webster in the GHS Gym, 7th at 4 p.m., 8th at 5 p.m.

Girls Basketball hosts Webster (C-5 p.m., JV-6:15, varsity to follow)

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 217 ~ 2 of 85

# 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.**

## DeepSeek Rocks Stocks

Technology stocks dropped sharply yesterday as a cheap but powerful Chinese chatbot made waves in Silicon Valley, suggesting cutting-edge AI applications may be possible without expensive processors and intricate models. The three major US stock indexes closed mixed (S&P 500 -1.5%, Dow +0.7%, Nasdaq -3.1%).

Known as DeepSeek, the company released its latest R1 model last week, claiming it performed as well as OpenAI's latest-generation o1 model at 3% to 4% of the cost per output. Officials said the model took just two months and less than \$6M to build and relied on earlier-generation chips to operate. The model is both free and open source—meaning anyone can take and modify it—and R1 has become the top free download in the Apple App Store. Analysts say DeepSeek likely won't displace US AI companies but may reshape the industry's economics.

Among those hardest hit was chipmaker Nvidia, which saw almost \$600B in market cap evaporate—the biggest single-day loss in history—as shares dropped nearly 17%.

## Congo City Captured

Rwanda-backed M23 rebels have captured Goma, the largest city in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, causing panic among its 2 million residents. The rebels announced their takeover early yesterday following a 48-hour ultimatum for Congolese troops to surrender, marking a significant escalation in the long-standing conflict between rebels and the DRC government.

Goma, located in the North Kivu province, serves as a regional hub for humanitarian efforts and security operations. The M23 rebels, primarily an ethnically Tutsi group, are one of many armed factions vying for control in the region, which boasts an estimated \$24T in mineral wealth. M23 captured Goma in 2012 but withdrew under international pressure. UN experts estimate the group has since added 3,000 to 4,000 Rwandan Defense Force soldiers. About 2.8 million people, more than one-third of North Kivu's population, have already been displaced.

The DRC has cut diplomatic relations with Rwanda and called for UN sanctions; however, both nations' presidents have reportedly agreed to meet at an upcoming summit to discuss the crisis.

## Remembering Auschwitz

Holocaust survivors and world leaders gathered at Auschwitz in southern Poland yesterday to commemorate 80 years since the liberation of the largest Nazi concentration and extermination camp.

More than 1.1 million people, mostly Jews, were systematically executed at Auschwitz during World War II, primarily by poison gas, as part of the Nazi party's plans to form an ethnically German state. Others in the camp died from mass shootings, starvation, and disease before Soviet troops arrived and freed roughly 7,000 prisoners. In total, around 6 million Jews were killed across German-occupied Europe from 1941 to 1945. Roughly 220,000 Jewish Holocaust survivors are still alive today, with ages ranging from their late 70s to over 100 years old. See a virtual tour of Auschwitz.

Separately, an exhibit featuring a full-scale replica of Anne Frank's home—where she hid with her parents, sister, and others before being discovered by the Nazis—opened in New York City yesterday.

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 217 ~ 3 of 85

## Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Top execs at Fuji TV, one of Japan's biggest networks, resign over handling of sexual assault allegations against one of Fuji TV's hosts.

"The Lost Boys" musical, based on the 1987 cult horror-comedy film, set for 2026 opening on Broadway.

Lady Gaga's new album "Mayhem" to be released March 7.

Kennedy Center President Deborah Rutter to step down after more than a decade leading the performing arts institution.

## Science & Technology

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ordered to suspend collaboration on World Health Organization projects following last week's executive order from President Donald Trump.

Astronomers discover 74 nearby stars surrounded by small comet-like objects, similar to the Kuiper Belt in our solar system.

Genetic analysis reveals how giant clams evolved to harness certain species of algae to provide nutrition; study sheds light on the evolution of symbiotic relationships in the ocean.

## Business & Markets

Scott Bessent secures Senate confirmation for treasury secretary role by a vote of 68-29, becoming fifth official member of President Donald Trump's Cabinet.

Startup Manas AI, co-led by LinkedIn cofounder Reid Hoffman, raises nearly \$25M for developing new treatments for cancer and other autoimmune diseases using artificial intelligence.

China Vanke, one of China's largest property developers, replaces top executives and warns of record \$6.2B loss for 2024; China Vanke is latest firm to feel ripple effects from China's real estate slump.

## Politics & World Affairs

President Donald Trump signs executive orders to reshape the military, including reinstating service members discharged for declining the COVID-19 vaccine.

At least eight hostages of 26 due to be released by Hamas in coming weeks are deceased, Israel says; announcement comes as more than 200,000 Palestinians return to northern Gaza.

Duck DNA found in both engines of South Korea's Jeju Air commercial plane that crashed on landing in December, killing 179 of 181 people on board.

**Coming up on GDILIVE.COM**

Groton Area  
Tigers



**Tuesday, Jan. 28**

**Girls Basketball**

**Roncalli**

**at Groton Area**

**6:00 JV Game**

Sponsored by Dave and Tammy Dohman

**Followed by Girls Varsity**

Sponsored by Agtegra, Avantara Groton, Bierman Farm Service, BK Custom T's & More, Blocker Construction, Dacotah Bank, Dan Richardt at Groton Ford, Farmers Union Co-op of Ferney and Conde, Groton Ag Partners, Groton Chamber, Groton Ford, John Sieh Agency, Jungle Lanes & Lounge, Locke Electric, Krueger Brothers, R&M Farms/Rix Farms, The Meathouse in Andover

**\$5 ticket or**

**GDI Subscription**

**required to watch the games.**

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 217 ~ 4 of 85

## Governor Rhoden to Address Joint Session of the South Dakota Legislature

PIERRE, S.D. – Governor Larry Rhoden will address a joint session of the South Dakota legislature on Tuesday, January 28, 2025, at 1:30 pm CT/12:30 pm MT. This address will take place in the South Dakota House of Representatives.

In the address, Governor Rhoden will announce his plans to keep South Dakota strong, safe, and free.

WHAT: Governor Rhoden to address a joint session of the South Dakota legislature.

WHEN: Tuesday, January 28, 2025, at 1:30 pm CT/12:30 pm MT

WHERE: South Dakota House of Representatives

LIVESTREAM: SDPB, SD.net, facebook.com/GovLarryRhoden



**This Reeses Peanut Butter "cake" will put a smile on your loved ones face or child! Text or call Tina at 605-397-7285 to reserve this masterpiece! It's only \$35! And don't forget we can add a balloon for just \$5.**



This beloved mother, grandmother, and teacher is requesting a card shower.

**Card Shower**  
Dorene Nelson will be celebrating her  
on January 29, 2025.



Greetings may be sent to  
PO Box 675  
Groton, SD 57445

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 217 ~ 5 of 85



## GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT 06-6

### MIDDLE/HIGH SCHOOL

P.O. Box 410  
502 North 2<sup>nd</sup> Street  
Groton, SD 57445  
Fax: (605) 397-8453

### ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

P.O. Box 410  
810 North 1<sup>st</sup> Street  
Groton, SD 57445  
Fax: (605) 397-2344

#### Groton Area School Board

Grant Rix, President  
Nick Strom, VP  
Debra Gengerke  
Martin Weismantel  
Tigh Flichs  
Travis Harder  
Dr. Heather Lerseth-Flichs,  
DVM

#### Superintendent

Joseph J. Schwan  
(605) 397-2351 ext. 1003  
Joe.Schwan@k12.sd.us

#### High School Principal

Shelby Edwards  
(605) 397-8381 ext. 1004  
Shelby.Edwards@k12.sd.us

#### Elementary Principal

Brett Schwan  
(605) 397-2317  
Brett.Schwan@k12.sd.us

#### Business Manager

Becky Hubsch  
(605) 397-2351 ext. 1008  
Becky.Hubsch@k12.sd.us

#### Athletic Director

Alexa Schuring  
(605) 397-8381 ext. 1068  
Alexa.Schuring@k12.sd.us

#### Opportunity Coordinator

Jodi Schwan  
(605) 397-8381 ext. 1015  
Jodi.Schwan@k12.sd.us

#### K-12 School Counselor

Emily Neely  
(605) 397-2317  
Emily.VanGerpen@k12.sd.us

#### Technology Coordinator

Aaron Helvig  
(605) 397-8381 ext. 1025  
Aaron.Helvig@k12.sd.us

### HS Girls Basketball Game

Roncalli @ Groton Area  
Tuesday, January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2025

#### Game Times/Locations: Main Court in Arena

- 6:00 PM CT → Girls JV
- 7:30 PM CT → Girls Varsity
  - o *Halftime Entertainment: Middle School Pep Band & FCCLA Shoot for a Pop*

\*Middle School Pep Band will be playing during pre-game warm-ups.

**Prior to the Girls Varsity game, the National Anthem will be first, with Varsity Introductions/Lineups to follow.**

**ADMISSION & SPECTATORS: Adults: \$5.00 Students: \$4.00.**

**CONCESSIONS:** Will be available

**LOCKER ROOM:** Roncalli will use the far back locker room down the JH Locker Room Hallway.

**Team Benches – Groton:** South Bench  
**Roncalli:** North Bench

**ATHLETIC TRAINER:** There will be an athletic trainer on site. AED is located near the ticket booth.

**Livestream:** [www.GDlive.com](http://www.GDlive.com) or [Groton High School | High School Sports | Home | Hudl](#)

**JV/Varsity Officials:** Josh Maag, Scott Hoeke, Brayton Mack

**Announcer:** Mike Imrie

**JV/V Scoreboard:** Kristen Dolan

**JV/V Official Book:** Alexa Schuring

**JV/V Shot Clock Operator:** Kristi Zoellner

**National Anthem:** Groton Middle School Pep Band, under the direction of Desiree Yeigh

**\*\*Groton Area's HOSA Chapter (Future Healthcare Leaders) is doing a Split-Pot Fundraiser!**

Thank you,  
Alexa Schuring, Athletic Director




# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 217 ~ 6 of 85

## 2025 Dak XII/NEC Conference Clash

Boys Event – February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025

### SCHEDULE (AUXILIARY GYM)

Time	Dak XII Team		NEC Team
11:00am	 Canton C-Hawks	vs.	Redfield Pheasants
12:30pm	 Tri-Valley Mustangs	vs.	Sisseton Redmen
2:00pm	Elk Point/Jefferson Huskies	vs.	Milbank Bulldogs
3:30pm	 Madison Bulldogs	vs.	Webster Area Bearcats
5:00pm	Dell Rapids Quarriers	vs.	Groton Area Tigers

### SCHEDULE (MAIN GYM)

Time	Dak XII Team		NEC Team
11:45am	Lennox Orioles	vs.	Aberdeen Roncalli Cavaliers
1:15pm	Vermillion Tanagers	vs.	Sturgis Scoopers
2:45pm	Dakota Valley Panthers	vs.	Deuel Cardinals
4:15pm	West Central Trojans	vs.	Hamlin Chargers
5:45pm	Sioux Falls Christian Chargers	vs.	Clark/Willow Lake Cyclones

- All games played at Madison High School and Auxiliary Gymnasiums
- Seed points calculated for all games played through Saturday, January 26<sup>th</sup> then matchups were determined by those seed points as well as consideration to eliminating any repeat opponents during the season.
- Ticket Prices (\$7 adults, \$5 students)
- Games will not start early.

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 217 ~ 7 of 85

87<sup>th</sup> Carnival of Silver Skates  
January 26, 2025



Specialty act performers Aurora, Nova and Sunny Washenberger performs to the song "Rock with You" during the Carnival of Silver Skates. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



Eighth and ninth graders Libby Cole, Tenley Frost, Tevan Hanson, Suri Jetto, and Aurora Washenberger perform to the song "Ain't No Mountain High Enough" during the evening performance of the 87th Carnival of Silver Skates. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 217 ~ 8 of 85



Senior Emily Overacker and juniors Mia Crank, Emma Davies, and Rylee Dunker perform to the song "Material Girl" during the afternoon performance of the Carnival of Silver Skates.

(Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



Fifth graders Taylor Flihs, Shealee Gilchrist, Ryan Hanson, Avery Huber, Devan Locke, Colton Pullan, Avery Roettele, and Jack Schuelke perform to the song "One Less Lonely Girl" during the afternoon performance of the Carnival of Silver Skates. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



More than 85 skaters end the afternoon performance by gathering together for a group skate. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 217 ~ 9 of 85



First graders Maya Anderson, Kylie Borg, Ivy Cole, Layla Feist, Emme Flihs, Emersyn Giedt, Kaylee Hofer, Kayleigh Raba, Molly Swisher, Aubrie Traphagen, Collins Traphagen, Sunny Washenberger, and Nova Washenberger perform to the song "Can't Stop The Feeling" during the afternoon performance of the Carnival of Silver Skates. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



Guest skater Elin Gossen performs to the song "Wings" during the afternoon performance of the Carnival of Silver Skates. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



Guest skater Savannah Sovell performs to the song "Toxic" during the evening performance of the Carnival of Silver Skates. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)

Right: Emcee Tom Woods announces the beginning of the 87th Carnival of Silver Skates afternoon performance. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 217 ~ 10 of 85



Guest skater Savannah Sovell performs to the song "Toxic" during the afternoon performance of the Carnival of Silver Skates. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



Groton High School juniors Natalia Warrington and Gentry Pigors perform the National Anthem while Amy Warrington holds their music up. The National Anthem kicked off the 87th Carnival of Silver Skates afternoon performance. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



Kindergarten students Huntley Frost, Hazel Giedt, and Graham Locken perform to the song "Firework" with their instructors Claire Schuelke, Tevan Hanson and Ryan Hanson during the evening performance of the Carnival of Silver Skates. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 217 ~ 11 of 85



**2024 Carnival of Silver Skates Queen Emma Schinkel crowns 2025 queen Rylee Dunker during the afternoon performance of the Carnival of Silver Skates.** (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



**Queen candidates Emily Overacker, Mia Crank and Emma Davies pull newly crowned Queen Rylee Dunker during the afternoon performance of the Carnival of Silver Skates.** (Photo by Elizabeth

Varin)

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 217 ~ 12 of 85



**Second graders Brielle Dunbar, Mya Flihs, Kinsey Frost, Amara Graff, Laker Hanson, Kodi Hinman, Liv Huber, Avril Jetto, Ellie Lassle, Jorie Locken, and River Wipf perform to the song "Party in the USA" during the evening performance of the Carnival of Silver Skates.** (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



**Seventh graders Rachel Dobbins, Andi Gauer, GraceLynn Hubbs, and Chloe Witchey perform to the song "Bloody Mary" during the afternoon performance of the Carnival of Silver Skates.** (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 217 ~ 13 of 85



Sixth graders Gracie Borg, Brynlee Dunker, Ambrielle Feist, Kierea Jetto, Libby Johnson, Mya Moody, Maycee Moody, Caelynn Pullan, Kinley Sandness, Tori Schuster, and Taylynn Traphagen perform to the song "Up" during the Carnival of Silver Skates. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



Snowflakes River Anderson, Elowen Cutler, Collyns Dunbar, Alandra Graff, Faith Johnson, Blake Locke, Makenna Sternhagen, and Beau Traphagen perform to the song "Three Little Birds" during the Carnival of Silver Skates. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 217 ~ 14 of 85



**Specialty act performer Teagan Hanten performs to the song "Thriller" during the Carnival of Silver Skates.** (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



**Specialty act performers Avery Crank and Emerlee Jones perform to the song "You're the One That I Want" during the Carnival of Silver Skates.** (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 217 ~ 15 of 85



**Specialty act performers Avery Crank and Emerlee Jones perform to the song "You're the One That I Want" during the Carnival of Silver Skates.** (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



**Specialty act performers Tevan and Ryan Hanson perform to the song "Set Fire to the Rain" during the Carnival of Silver Skates.**

(Photo by Elizabeth Varin)

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 217 ~ 16 of 85



Tenth graders Avery Crank, Teagan Hanten, Addison Hoffman, Emerlee Jones, Claire Schuelke, and McKenna Tietz perform to the song "9 to 5" during the Carnival of Silver Skates. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)

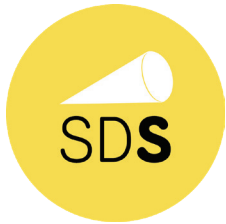


Third and fourth graders Haley Erickson, Preslee Giedt, Reagen Harry, Madison Harry, Hazel Hill, Nori Hinman, Raziah Jetto, Railey Mulder, Presley Olson, and Calli Wilkinson perform to the song "Shake It Off" during the Carnival of Silver Skates. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



The Carnival of Silver Skates board recognizes an individual, business or organization that has been an important part to the event. This year, they recognized Jessie Overacker who has run a spotlight in the night session for many years. Pictured are Lindsey Tietz, Katie Anderson, Coralea Wolter, Sarah Hanten, Carrie Feser, Jessie Overacker, Aubray Miller, Shonna Harry and Elizabeth Varin. (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)





## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### Ban on eminent domain for carbon pipelines passes SD House, heads to Senate

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - JANUARY 27, 2025 5:37 PM



**State Rep. Karla Lems, R-Canton, speaks on the floor of the South Dakota House of Representatives on Jan. 27, 2025.** (Joshua Haiar/South Dakota Searchlight)

PIERRE — The South Dakota House of Representatives advanced a bill 49–19 that would ban the use of eminent domain for carbon dioxide pipelines, sending the legislation to the state Senate.

Eminent domain refers to the power to take private property for public use, with just compensation to the owner determined by a court.

Supporters of the bill attended the House debate Monday at the Capitol and cheered when the vote was displayed. House Speaker Pro Tempore Karla Lems, R-Canton, proposed the legislation and said it does not stop carbon pipelines from being built in the state.

“They just don’t get the supreme power of eminent domain to force their projects down the throats of South Dakota people,” Lems said.

She owns land near the route of the proposed \$9 billion Summit Carbon Solutions pipeline.

That project aims to transport some of the CO<sub>2</sub> emitted by 57 ethanol plants in five states, including eastern South Dakota, to an underground storage site in North Dakota. The project would be eligible for billions in climate-change-related federal tax credits, for preventing the release of heat-trapping carbon into the atmosphere.

Summit has voluntary easement agreements with some landowners to cross their land, but needs eminent domain to gain access from landowners who are unwilling to sign easements.

Supporters of the bill said carbon pipelines do not meet the public-use standard required for eminent domain, which has typically been used by projects such as water and oil pipelines and electrical transmission lines.

Opponents of the bill warned of economic repercussions for the ethanol industry.

“It sends a terrible message to the country,” said Rep. Greg Jamison, R-Sioux Falls.

Rep. Drew Peterson, R-Salem, said the bill could make South Dakota an impediment to President Donald Trump’s energy independence goals.

“Trump supports biofuels,” Peterson said. “We don’t get to affect federal policy, whether we want to or not.”

But House Majority Leader Scott Odenbach, R-Spearfish, said Trump is eliminating unwise environmental

policies, and tax credits for carbon pipelines could be next. He said there were three reasons to vote in favor of the bill: voters sent a message in November with the defeat of a referred law perceived as helping carbon pipelines; carbon pipelines are hazardous when they leak; and the Legislature has a responsibility to clarify if carbon pipelines have eminent domain authority.

Gov. Larry Rhoden has not yet indicated whether he would sign the bill.

Attempts to ban eminent domain for carbon pipelines failed during prior legislative sessions, but supporters of the idea used grassroots efforts last year to get their candidates elected to the Legislature and installed in leadership positions, thereby improving the chances for this year's legislation.

*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.*

## Lawmaker tries to revive bill that would open public officials' calendars, but fails in SD Senate

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - JANUARY 27, 2025 4:30 PM



**State Sen. Michael Rohl, R-Aberdeen, testifies before the South Dakota Senate State Affairs Committee on Jan. 22, 2025.** (Makenzie Huber/South Dakota Searchlight)

senators "feel government transparency isn't worth debate," he's grateful for other senators who supported his motion.

"I might make it even more narrow in scope, which would be pretty hard," Rohl said. "This was pretty much the first baby step you could take toward public transparency."

Some other bills intended to support open records and open meetings are still alive, including Rohl's bill to open the records of governors and lieutenant governors after five years instead of 10, a bill supported by the South Dakota NewsMedia Association that would require public boards and commissions to annually review open meetings laws, and a bill from Rep. Mary Fitzgerald, R-Spearfish, clarifying that electronic communications conducted among all members of a public board or commission are subject to open meetings laws.

An effort to revive a bill that would open the calendars and appointment logs of statewide officeholders to the public failed Monday in the South Dakota Senate with a 16-18 vote.

Sen. Michael Rohl, R-Aberdeen, used a procedural maneuver to force the State Affairs Committee to send Senate Bill 9 to the Senate after the committee rejected the bill last week. But he did not garner enough support Monday to have the bill considered on the Senate floor.

Some state officials raised concerns with the bill in last week's committee hearing, including increased administrative burdens and the bill's potential to compromise the safety of elected officials.

Rohl's options now include refiling the bill or "letting it go," he told South Dakota Searchlight after the vote.

While he was disappointed a majority of

*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.*

## Lawmakers advance bill to mandate cash acceptance at school events

**Committee rejects legislation that proposed similar requirement for businesses**

**BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - JANUARY 27, 2025 4:09 PM**

Two bills that would mandate the acceptance of cash for certain transactions met different fates Monday morning at the Capitol in Pierre.

A bill that advanced out of a committee would require South Dakota public schools, state-accredited private schools, public universities and technical colleges to accept cash transactions at events.

The other bill, which would require all businesses in the state to accept cash for purchases smaller than \$100, was defeated.

Rep. John Sjaarda, R-Valley Springs, introduced both bills.



**State Rep. John Sjaarda, R-Valley Springs, listens to a speaker during a meeting of the South Dakota Legislature's Joint Committee on Appropriations on Jan. 21, 2025.** (Makenzie Huber/South Dakota Searchlight)

### **HB 1017: Mandating schools accept cash for events and activities**

House Bill 1017 passed the House Education Committee with an 8-7 vote.

Supporters of the bill told lawmakers they were denied access to high school activities in the Sioux Falls area because schools used smartphone app-based, cashless ticketing at events. The move discriminates against people who don't have smartphones or credit cards, they said.

Susan Luschas, a Brandon resident with two children who open-enrolled to Lincoln High School in Sioux Falls, told lawmakers the Brandon School Board opened a cash lane for school events and activities after she shared her concerns with the district. The Sioux Falls School District, Luschas said, has not changed its policy.

Her family is sometimes let into events free of charge since they only have cash. Other times they're presumed "low income" and lectured that they need to get free tickets printed out at the school during business hours, said her 18-year-old daughter, Soraya Luschas. For those families, it isn't always possible to visit school during the work day, or for students to acquire the tickets themselves during the school day, Soraya said.

Opponents included public education organizations, the South Dakota Board of Regents, the Board of Technical Education, the South Dakota High School Activities Association and the South Dakota Retailers Association.

Opponents said the language of the bill doesn't make an exception for pre-registered events or advance

ticket sales that depend on internet credit transactions. If schools and event organizers didn't have a way to accept cash, it could force them to allow entrance for free. It would hamper decision-making that organizations think is best for their needs, they said.

Some technical colleges and universities hold events at third-party venues, such as the Summit League collegiate basketball tournament at the Premier Center in Sioux Falls. Opponents of the bill said it would require private businesses to change their ticketing system to accommodate school events, or force schools to seek other venues.

"We don't bring our local problems for state legislation without at least first trying to solve it at the local level," said Sam Nelson, a lobbyist representing the Sioux Falls School District, adding that a formal petition to accept cash at events hasn't been introduced to the local school board.

## **HB 1048: Mandating all businesses accept cash for small purchases**

HB 1048 would require all businesses in the state accept cash for purchases under \$100, except for rental cars, sales on an airplane or at a financial institution, and security deposits.

The House Commerce and Energy Committee voted unanimously to reject the bill, though Rep. Tina Mulally, R-Rapid City, said she hoped to see a similar bill introduced in the future to "stop us being forced into a cashless society."

Nathan Sanderson, executive director of the South Dakota Retailers Association, testified against the bill. "When you decide to patronize a business, it's not a right," Sanderson said. "This bill is putting convenience for the individual above the freedom to operate."

*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.*

## **Get rid of FEMA? Trump-appointed group to look at shifting disaster response to states**

### **New Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem will co-chair 20-member committee**

**BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - JANUARY 27, 2025 4:56 PM**

WASHINGTON — Governors and state legislatures may have to bolster their natural disaster response and recovery efforts in the coming years as President Donald Trump looks for ways to shift the federal government's role onto states.

Trump, who proposed doing away with the Federal Emergency Management Agency altogether last week, has since established a 20-member committee via executive order to review the agency and propose ways to overhaul its work.

The fate of the National Flood Insurance Program, managed by FEMA and relied on by more than 4.7 million homeowners, will also be up in the air as the process gets underway.

"I think, frankly, FEMA is not good," Trump said in North Carolina on Friday. "I think when you have a problem like this, I think you want to go and — whether it's a Democrat or a Republican governor, you want to use your state to fix it and not waste time calling FEMA."

Trump said he planned to recommend that "FEMA go away and we pay directly — we pay a percentage to the state."

"But the state should fix this," Trump said. "If the state did this from the beginning, it would have been a lot better situation."

### **'Full-scale review' for FEMA**

Trump's executive order states that "Americans deserve an immediate, effective, and impartial response

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 217 ~ 21 of 85

to and recovery from disasters.”

“FEMA therefore requires a full-scale review, by individuals highly experienced at effective disaster response and recovery, who shall recommend to the President improvements or structural changes to promote the national interest and enable national resilience,” the executive order says.

Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth will co-chair the 20-member group. The White House did not respond to a question as to when Trump would name the other members.

The council is supposed to release a report later this year comparing FEMA’s response to various natural disasters with how the state affected by the emergency responded. The report is also expected to include how states responded to natural disasters before then-President Jimmy Carter signed in executive order in 1979 establishing FEMA.

U.S. House Speaker Mike Johnson said during a press conference Monday that he supports reviewing how FEMA operates, but he stopped short of eliminating the agency.

“In my experience, it is very often the case that local workers, people who are working through FEMA, do a pretty good job,” Johnson said. “But often, it’s the leadership at the top that can affect the outcome of how a disaster is handled.”

Johnson said no department or agency should be considered out of bounds for evaluation as Trump looks to “make the government more efficient and effective” and Republican lawmakers look for ways “to limit the size and scope of government.”

“FEMA has been a partner, but they probably could be a better partner,” Johnson said.

## Let states run response

Republican U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham said Monday that Trump’s preferred approach would be to let states run their own emergency response and be reimbursed with federal dollars.

“FEMA is frustrating at times,” Graham told reporters in Columbia, S.C. “I’d like to make it easier to help people with disaster relief.”

Graham expects anything that comes out of the study to land somewhere in the middle — not completely eliminating the federal agency but cutting through some of the red tape.

“If you want to look at FEMA, reshape FEMA, to make it more effective, count me in,” Graham said.

Congress appropriated \$25.3 billion for FEMA in the last full-year spending bill for the agency, which was \$72.9 million less than its previous funding level and \$267.7 million less than then-President Joe Biden’s budget request, according to a House GOP summary.

Lawmakers provided an additional \$29 billion for FEMA’s disaster relief fund in an emergency spending bill that Congress approved in late December.

Democratic Governors Association national press secretary Devon Cruz wrote in a statement the GOP was “floating dangerous ideas.”



**California Gov. Gavin Newsom, right, tours the downtown business district of Pacific Palisades as the Palisades Fire continued to burn on Jan. 8, 2025, in Los Angeles, California.** (Photo by Eric Thayer/Getty Images)

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 217 ~ 22 of 85

“When natural disasters hit, Democratic governors have been a leading example of putting politics aside, and helping families rebuild and recover,” Cruz wrote. “Now, Donald Trump and Congressional Republicans are shamelessly politicizing disaster aid, and floating dangerous ideas that would make it harder to help families rebuild their homes, schools, and communities. This is just the latest example of the growing contrast between Republican-led dysfunction in D.C. and Democratic governors getting real results in their states every day.”

The National Governors Association declined to comment on how the potential changes would affect states and their budgets. The National Conference of State Legislatures and Republican Governors Association did not respond to requests for comment.

## Billions in federal dollars sent to states

FEMA has an interactive state-by-state breakdown of how much the federal government has spent on natural disaster response and recovery since 2017, though it doesn't include the emergency funding for COVID-19.

The webpage shows how much FEMA has spent to help each state or territory recover from emergencies, as well as how much the departments of Agriculture, Defense, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Interior and Transportation have spent.

The webpage shows the departments and agencies have allocated about \$250 billion on the natural disasters covered in the data, with significant amounts going to red states that backed Trump in the presidential election and are predominantly represented by GOP lawmakers in Congress.

Speaker Johnson's home state of Louisiana, for example, has been allocated \$19.3 billion in funding, with \$11.5 billion of that from FEMA.

South Dakota, home to Senate Majority Leader John Thune, has been allocated nearly \$400 million from the federal government, with FEMA accounting for \$275.6 million of that total.

Florida, which has borne the brunt of several hurricanes and tropical storms during the years covered, was allocated \$29.5 billion in federal disaster assistance, with \$19 billion of that from FEMA.

*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.*

## U.S. Senate Dems push for vote on condemning Trump Jan. 6 pardons

**BY: ASHLEY MURRAY - JANUARY 27, 2025 2:46 PM**

WASHINGTON — Democratic and independent U.S. senators introduced a resolution Monday to condemn President Donald Trump's clemency for the rioters who attacked the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, injuring numerous law enforcement officers and sending lawmakers into hiding as they tried to certify the 2020 presidential election results.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York along with Sens. Patty Murray of Washington, Chris Murphy of Connecticut and Andy Kim of New Jersey are leading all Democrat and independent senators who signed the resolution that “disapproves of any pardons for individuals who were found guilty of assaulting Capitol Police officers.”

An initial press release did not include Democratic Sen. John Fetterman of Pennsylvania as a co-sponsor, but reports on social media indicated he signed on. Fetterman's office did not immediately confirm.

Murray will seek unanimous consent on the floor to pass the resolution. Only one senator needs to object to stop it from being adopted.

Murray said in a statement Monday that she refuses to “allow President Trump to rewrite what happened on January 6th— armed insurrectionists, incited by Trump himself, broke into the U.S. Capitol and violently assaulted Capitol Police officers in their attempt to overthrow a free and fair election.”

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 217 ~ 23 of 85



**Donald Trump supporters clash with police and security forces as rioters try to storm the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, in Washington, D.C.** (Photo

by Brent Stirton/Getty Images)

Condemning the pardons and commutations for those who caused cracked ribs, crushed spinal disks and other injuries, “should be the easiest thing in the world,” Murray said.

“I hope and expect my Republican colleagues will allow this very simple resolution to pass as a show of support for the officers who put their lives on the line to keep senators safe,” Murray said.

## Republicans quiet about Jan. 6 pardons

States Newsroom asked 22 Republican senators how they felt about the pardons and commutations the day after Trump signed the order. Barring a few exceptions, most either refused to answer, said they hadn’t seen Trump’s high-profile order, or spoke only on pardons issued by former President Joe Biden in the hours before he left office.

GOP Sen. Lindsey Graham, a Trump ally, told

NBC News’ “Meet the Press with Kristen Welker” on Sunday that the president’s pardons of violent Jan. 6 defendants were “a mistake because it seems to suggest that’s an OK thing to do.”

Trump commuted the prison sentences of 14 of the attack’s ringleaders and members of the paramilitary groups the Oath Keepers and Proud Boys. The president granted a “full, complete and unconditional pardon” to all others charged with crimes after the attack.

Among the approximately 1,572 defendants, 608 were charged with assaulting, resisting or impeding law enforcement, including 174 charged with using a deadly or dangerous weapon or causing serious bodily injury to an officer. Of those charged, 172 pleaded guilty to assaulting police — 69 of them pleading guilty to assaulting the officers with some sort of weapon.

Investigators found that the rioters brought and improvised numerous types of weapons, including firearms, chemical sprays, tasers, knives, flagpoles and broken furniture.

## Violent offenders

Murray, Schumer, Murphy and Kim highlighted several specific cases of violent offenders pardoned by Trump. Here are a few:

Christopher Quaglin, of North Brunswick, New Jersey, was sentenced to 12 years in prison for spraying bear spray directly in the faces of officers, stealing riot shields and striking the officers, grabbing an officer’s neck and tackling him to the ground, and numerous other assaults on law enforcement that day.

Tyler Bradley Dykes, of Bluffton, South Carolina, was sentenced to nearly five years in prison for stealing a police riot shield and using it to obstruct and assault officers at multiple locations in the Capitol.

Robert Sanford Jr., of Chester, Pennsylvania, was sentenced to just over four years in prison for hitting three officers in the head with a fire extinguisher, among other actions.

Robert Scott Palmer, of Largo, Florida, was sentenced to just over five years in prison for throwing a wooden plank at officers and spraying the entire contents of a fire extinguisher at them before throwing it in an attempt to strike them.

Prior to leaving office Jan. 20, Biden preemptively pardoned all members of the congressional committee that investigated the attack as well as four police officers who testified before the panel. Trump is on record as recently as December saying the committee members “should go to jail.”

*Ashley Murray covers the nation’s capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include domestic policy and appropriations.*

## Former state employee pleads guilty, receives sentence for grocery voucher fraud

Case was one of at least five filed against former state workers since July

BY: SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT STAFF - JANUARY 27, 2025 10:15 AM

A former state employee was sentenced to pay a fine, court costs and repay the state Monday after she pleaded guilty to using a grocery voucher that was intended for a foster family.

Amalia Escalante Barrientos, 28, of Brookings, pleaded guilty in Brookings County Circuit Court to one misdemeanor count of obtaining money, property or assistance by fraud from social services or related programs. She was sentenced to pay a \$400 fine, \$96.50 in court costs and \$449.98 in restitution. She'll avoid serving 180 days in jail if she complies with the sentence.

The case was at least the fifth brought against a former state employee by Attorney General Marty Jackley since last summer, all for fraud-related allegations.

"This is another example of an individual using their power to abuse their position for personal gain, hurting those in need and the reputation of hard-working state employees," Jackley said Monday in a news release. "The Attorney General's Office will continue to investigate and prosecute cases to regain the public's trust in state government."

An investigation by the South Dakota Division of Criminal Investigation found Barrientos had used the voucher, which is provided by the Department of Social Services to families the department works with, to purchase groceries for her own use. The incident occurred at a Brookings business on Oct. 11.

### Updates on earlier cases

The recent rash of revelations about alleged criminal behavior by state employees dates to at least July, when Lonna Carroll, 68, of Algona, Iowa, was accused of embezzling \$1.8 million from the state by creating and approving fraudulent financial support orders for children over the course of 13 years while she worked for the Department of Social Services. Her case is scheduled for an April trial.

In August, Jackley said a deceased former three-decade employee of the state Department of Revenue, Sandra O'Day, had allegedly created 13 fake vehicles to help her secure \$400,000 in loans. No charges were filed, because O'Day died before her alleged behavior came to light.

In October, Jackley announced charges against two more former Department of Revenue employees, Lynne Hunsley, 64, and Danielle Degenstein, 51, both of Pierre.

Hunsley has since pleaded guilty to forgery and grand theft by deception for creating a fake vehicle title that she used as proof of a trade-in to help her avoid excise taxes. She was sentenced to three years of probation and ordered to pay a \$1,000 fine and \$1,200 in restitution to the state.

Degenstein is charged with a misdemeanor for allegedly concealing her knowledge of a crime committed by a person identified in court documents as "S.O." — initials that match O'Day's. Degenstein's case



**The South Dakota Department of Social Services in Pierre.** (John Hult/South Dakota Searchlight)



is scheduled for a June trial.

In another pending case announced last month, Renee Strong, 55, of Springfield, faces felony charges for allegedly submitting falsified reports of food-serve health inspections she never conducted while working for the state Department of Public Safety.

### Legislation introduced

Jackley announced a legislative package recently intended to help prevent and catch state employee crimes. The bills include proposed new requirements for supervisors to report suspected wrongdoing, protections for whistleblowers, a greater investigatory role for the state auditor, and requirements for state agencies to conduct annual risk reviews.

Lawmakers will consider the bills during the annual legislative session that began earlier this month at the Capitol in Pierre.

Then-Gov. Kristi Noem responded to the string of charges in November by adding an extra internal control officer position to the executive branch and by ordering state employees to undergo annual training aimed at preventing criminal activity.

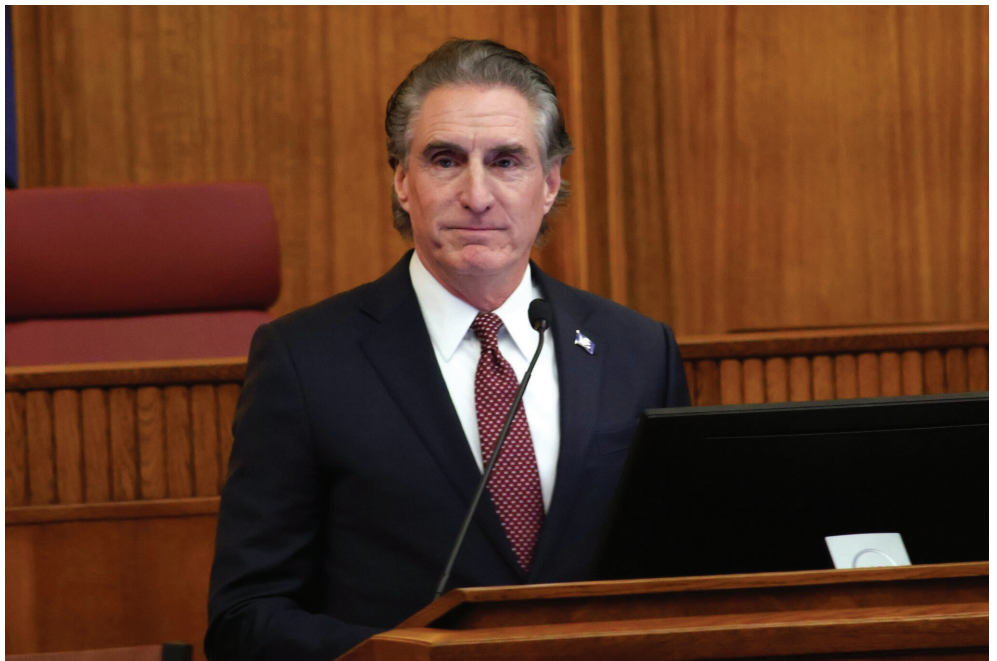
## North Dakota sued Interior at least five times under Doug Burgum. Now he's set to run the agency.

BY: MARY STEURER AND MARK OLALDE - JANUARY 27, 2025 9:09 AM

This article was produced for ProPublica's Local Reporting Network in partnership with the North Dakota Monitor. Sign up for Dispatches to get stories like this one as soon as they are published.

During Doug Burgum's two terms as North Dakota governor, the state repeatedly sued the U.S. Department of the Interior, attempting to rip up rules that govern federal lands in his state and across the country.

Now, Burgum is poised to oversee that same department as President Donald Trump's nominee for secretary of the interior. Those lawsuits and a host of others the state launched against the federal government, some of which are ongoing, reveal the worldview he'll bring to a department that touches nearly every aspect of life in the West. Its agencies oversee water policy, operate the national parks, lease resources to industries including oil and ranching, provide services across Indian Country and manage more land than any person or corporation in the nation.



**Former North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum participates in a swearing-in ceremony of state lawmakers on Dec. 2, 2024, in Bismarck, North Dakota, shortly before completing his term as governor.** (Photo by Michael Achterling/North Dakota Monitor)

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 217 ~ 26 of 85

During his confirmation hearing last week before the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, Burgum portrayed the Interior Department as key to geopolitical power struggles. On energy policy, he said that growing consistently available types of energy production — namely nuclear and climate-warming coal, oil and gas — is a matter of national security; he claimed that greenhouse gas emissions can be mitigated with carbon capture technology that's unproven at scale; and he argued that renewable energy is too highly subsidized and threatens the electrical grid.

The committee advanced his nomination to the full Senate on Thursday.

The North Dakota Monitor and ProPublica reviewed the nearly 40 lawsuits in which the state was a named plaintiff against the federal government at the time Burgum left the governor's office. In addition, the review included friend of the court briefs the state filed to the Supreme Court and Burgum's financial disclosures and public testimony. Many of the nearly 40 suits were cases North Dakota filed or signed onto with other Republican-led states, although the state brought a handful independently. Five of the cases were lodged against the Interior Department.

Burgum is a relative newcomer to politics who initially made his fortune when he sold his software company. But the cases and disclosures highlight his deep ties to the oil and gas industry, which have aided his political rise. The records also put on display his sympathy for Western states that chafe at what they believe is overreach by the Interior Department and that attack federal land management.

Notably, the litigation includes a case aimed at undoing the Interior Department's hallmark Public Lands Rule that designated the conservation of public lands as a use equal in importance to natural resource exploitation and made smaller changes such as clarifying how the government measures landscape health. Additionally, North Dakota filed a case to roll back the agency's rule intended to limit the amount of methane that oil companies could release, a practice that wastes a valuable resource and contributes to climate change. North Dakota also cosigned a brief in support of a controversial, although ultimately futile, attempt by Utah to dismantle the broader federal public lands system.

While some of the cases mirror his party's long-running push to support the oil and gas industry over other considerations, including conservation, the litigation over public lands represents a more extreme view: that federal regulation of much of the country's land and water needs to be severely curtailed.

Burgum did not respond to requests for comment but made clear many of his positions in public statements. A spokesperson did not answer a question on whether Burgum would recuse himself from matters pertaining to the cases his state filed.

While the state's attorney general handled the lawsuits, Burgum emphatically supported them, urging state lawmakers last spring to fully fund the legal fights. He also cited the litigation during his confirmation hearing to assure Republican lawmakers that he would increase oil and gas leasing on public lands.

While speaking to North Dakota lawmakers about federal actions, Burgum characterized the Biden administration's environmental policies as "misguided rules and regulations proposed often by overzealous bureaucrats." The rules, he said, pose "an existential threat to the energy and ag sectors, our economy and our way of life."

Burgum is considered less controversial than some other Trump nominees and is expected to gain Senate approval in the days ahead. Outdoor recreation groups and multiple tribes publicly supported his nomination, and he was lauded at his confirmation hearing by Republican as well as some Democratic senators. "If anybody is the pick of the litter, it's got to be this man," said Sen. Jim Justice, a Republican of West Virginia, another key fossil fuel-producing state.

Conservation groups, meanwhile, decried Burgum as an anti-public lands zealot who does oil companies' bidding. Among them is Michael Carroll, who runs the Wilderness Society's Bureau of Land Management campaign.

"If you're not a reality TV star or under investigation for ethics violations or misconduct, you're considered a normal nominee," Carroll said of Trump's picks. But, he continued, that obscures how Burgum and a Republican sweep of the federal government present a threat to public lands that's "as extreme as we've seen. Period. Full stop."

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 217 ~ 27 of 85

## 'Giveaways of federal public lands'

The federal government manages significant portions of the West. Most of that comes through the Interior Department's Bureau of Land Management, which oversees an area more than five times the size of North Dakota. As a result, public lands management is a local flashpoint.

North Dakota has had a particularly contentious relationship with the federal government over its management of public lands that intermingle with parcels owned by the state or private citizens.

Lynn Helms was the state's top oil regulator for more than 25 years before retiring last year, and he witnessed constant conflict over how federal agencies wanted to manage land in the state. "From the time I took this office until the day I walked away, there has always been at least one federal resource management plan or leasing plan under development and in controversy," he told the North Dakota Monitor and ProPublica.

Two titanic legal fights will shape the future of federal land management. North Dakota is not a named plaintiff in the cases, but the state and Burgum have made known their opposition to federal authority in both.

Last August, Utah sued the United States, asking the Supreme Court to rule that the federal government's oversight of 18.5 million acres of public land in the state was unconstitutional. Utah, in its founding documents, forswore any unappropriated public lands to the federal government. Still, legal scholars and environmentalists worried a conservative Supreme Court might remove land management responsibilities from the federal government, which is widely seen as more favorable to conservation than Republican-led states are.

"Few issues are as fundamentally important to a State as control of its land," a coalition that included North Dakota wrote in support of Utah's case in a friend of the court brief during Burgum's tenure.

Carroll, of the Wilderness Society, said that North Dakota siding with Utah was cause for concern about Burgum leading the Interior Department. "Supporting that lawsuit suggests that he'd be willing to support large-scale sell-off or giveaways of federal public lands, which, for most of us who live in the West and are concerned about the future of those public lands, is a very extreme position," he said.

The Supreme Court in mid-January declined to take up the case, but Utah pledged to keep fighting. Burgum expressed sympathy for the state during his confirmation hearing, agreeing with Sen. Mike Lee, a Utah Republican and champion of the anti-federal movement, who said that Western states feel like "floating islands within a sea of federal land."

Meanwhile, Republicans and industry groups also have their sights set on the 118-year-old Antiquities Act, which gives the president authority to create national monuments to protect areas of cultural, historical or scientific significance. Using the act, former President Joe Biden set aside more land and water for conservation than any previous president.

Burgum's stance on the act is key, as the Interior Department typically handles details of these monuments, including where their borders are drawn.

During his confirmation hearing, Burgum said the Antiquities Act should be used for limited "Indiana Jones-type archeological protections," not the sweeping landscapes that recent Democratic presidents have protected. While various tribes supported the use of the Antiquities Act in recent years, Burgum suggested monument designations have hurt tribes.

In western North Dakota, tribal representatives, conservation groups and others have pushed for a monument — which they've suggested calling Maah Daah Hey National Monument — to preserve 140,000 acres considered sacred by members of the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Nation and other nearby Indigenous cultures. Burgum has expressed concern that such a designation would impede oil and gas drilling. And while he boasted at his confirmation hearing about conservation wins in his home state — such as creating the North Dakota Office of Outdoor Recreation — he didn't mention the monument proposal.

In addition to legal challenges against the Interior Department, North Dakota is part of 14 lawsuits against the Environmental Protection Agency and at least five cases that challenge environmental or climate-related

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 217 ~ 28 of 85

regulations against other federal agencies.

One of those cases, led by Iowa and North Dakota, seeks to roll back updates to Biden-era rules concerning the implementation of the National Environmental Policy Act, one of the nation's core environmental laws. The legal battle will have sweeping implications for the government's environmental permitting process, influencing major construction projects across the country, including those aimed at building infrastructure to meet the ongoing surge in electricity demand.

## **'Blatant conflicts with the oil industry'**

In North Dakota's litigation and Burgum's record, one idea stands out for how often it is repeated: the opinion that the federal government impedes oil and gas drilling. The state, one of the country's top oil and gas producers, has consistently pushed for more drilling on public lands. Burgum has been cheerleading the industry for years.

Shortly before completing his term in mid-December, Burgum appealed a Bureau of Land Management land-use plan for the state, saying it hindered oil and gas development by barring oil, gas and coal leasing on several hundred thousand acres of federal mineral rights. (The agency denied Burgum's appeal and finalized the plan.)

Under Burgum, North Dakota also sued the Bureau of Land Management over the agency's handling of mineral lease sales, a system that allows companies to drill for and profit off publicly owned natural resources and that Helms labeled as "badly broken." In the lawsuit, which is ongoing, the state argued the bureau neglected its duty to host quarterly lease sales under the Mineral Leasing Act. (A federal judge has ordered the bureau to address this issue.)

Environmental groups worry that Burgum's ties to the oil industry influence his oversight of fossil fuels. Trump also picked Burgum to run the nascent National Energy Council, which will focus on boosting energy production.

His relationship with oil magnate Harold Hamm, the richest man in Oklahoma and a pioneer in hydraulic fracturing and horizontal drilling technology, has been well-documented.

Hamm pledged \$50 million to the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library, a favored project for Burgum. When Burgum ran for president before dropping out and supporting Trump, he received nearly \$500,000 in campaign contributions from oil and gas interests, about half of which came via a PAC sponsored by Continental Resources, which Hamm founded. Burgum also has acknowledged that he attended an April 2024 meeting at Mar-a-Lago that Hamm helped organize for oil executives to meet with Trump and pledge financial support for his campaign.

Burgum's financial disclosure reports reveal a personal fortune spread across software companies, real estate ventures and farmland. He also listed royalties from oil and gas leases involving Hess Corporation, Kodiak Oil & Gas Corp. and Continental Resources.

In his required ethics agreement to become secretary of the interior, Burgum committed to resign from several companies, divest from energy-related holdings and work with agency ethics officials to avoid conflicts, including those tied to his home state. He also testified at his confirmation hearing that he had no outstanding conflicts of interest.

"Doug Burgum's blatant conflicts with the oil industry cast doubt on his ability to fairly manage our public lands," said Tony Carr, executive director of government ethics watchdog Accountable.US.

## **'He wants to cut tape so that the benefits actually get to the tribes'**

Among its many mandates, the Interior Department is tasked with fulfilling the United States' trust responsibility to 574 federally recognized sovereign tribes. This includes providing schools and health care, representing tribes as they negotiate water rights settlements and liaising between tribes and the federal bureaucracy.

Burgum has had good relationships with tribal leaders in North Dakota. He partnered with tribes to pass tax-sharing agreements, was the first North Dakota governor to permanently display tribal nations' flags

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 217 ~ 29 of 85

outside his office and created an annual conference to bring together leaders of tribal and state governments.

Burgum also found common ground with a local tribe seeking to expand oil and gas drilling. "He wants to cut tape so that the benefits actually get to the tribes," said Chairman Mark Fox of the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Nation, who hopes to see more wells drilled on the Fort Berthold Reservation.

Fox said that he stays in touch with the former governor and that Burgum has asked him for input on issues affecting Indian Country, although he declined to share specifics.

"The No. 1 priority in discussion is: How do we enhance our opportunity to develop our trust resources of oil and gas?" Fox said.

But the state, under Burgum's leadership, has also taken opposing positions on major issues to tribes, both inside and outside its boundaries.

When Burgum assumed the governorship in December 2016, a monthslong protest was raging against construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline, which transports oil from North Dakota to Illinois. Thousands of protesters joined with the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, who assert that the pipeline infringes on its tribal sovereignty, disrupts sacred cultural sites and poses an environmental hazard.

Burgum supports the project.

North Dakota sued the federal government over claims that the Army Corps of Engineers should have done more to quell the demonstrations, leaving state and local law enforcement and first responders to step in at a cost of \$38 million. During the case, which went to trial in early 2024 and is yet unresolved, Burgum also criticized other agencies, including the Interior Department, alleging they sided with protesters.

"It's dangerous in our country where politics on either side — either party, either direction, whatever — can somehow inject themselves in a permitting process," Burgum said, according to court records.

The difference between Burgum's views and that of many tribes around the country is especially stark on conservation.

The state became a co-defendant in December in a separate lawsuit the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe brought against the Army Corps of Engineers calling for the pipeline to be shuttered. Parties to the litigation have filed briefs, and the case is ongoing.

And the state and some tribes are at odds over the Bureau of Land Management's Public Lands Rule, which clarified the role of a land designation called "areas of critical environmental concern." A central purpose of the designation is to protect "rare or sensitive archeological resources and religious or cultural resources important to Native Americans." Various tribes support the rule, but North Dakota is suing to halt it.

Despite those disagreements, tribal leaders in North Dakota said they respect Burgum, and several credited him with rebuilding relations. Standing Rock Sioux Tribe Chairwoman Janet Alkire said Burgum has a strong grasp of issues facing Indian Country, while Fox said Burgum has been willing to work with tribal leaders.

As Burgum takes the reins at the Interior Department, Monte Mills, director of the Native American Law Center at the University of Washington School of Law, said he is watching how Burgum will work with tribes that favor conservation over natural resource extraction.

It remains to be seen if keeping the federal government's commitments to Indian Country are a priority for Burgum, Mills said, or whether tribal issues are "only really taken up where they align with other priorities of the administration."

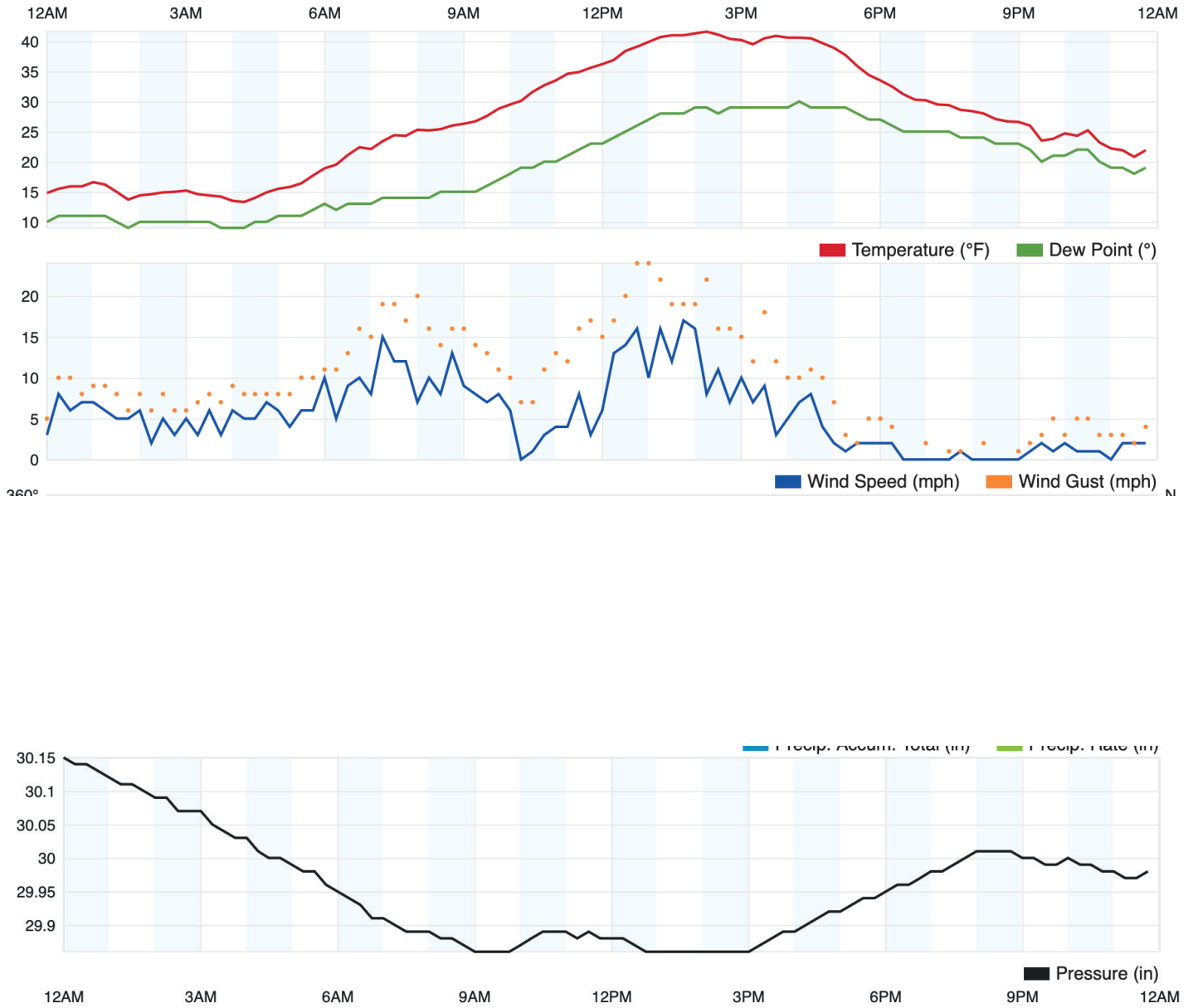
*Mary Steurer is a reporter based in Bismarck for the North Dakota Monitor. A native of St. Louis, Steurer previously worked as the local government reporter for the Casper Star-Tribune newspaper in Wyoming.*

*Mark Olalde is a ProPublica reporter who covers the environment, natural resources and public health around the Southwest.*

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 217 ~ 30 of 85

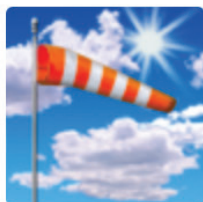
## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 217 ~ 31 of 85

Today



High: 48 °F

Mostly Sunny  
and Breezy

Tonight



Low: 23 °F

Mostly Clear

Wednesday



High: 44 °F

Sunny

Wednesday  
Night



Low: 24 °F

Mostly Clear

Thursday



High: 46 °F

Sunny



## Warm Today!

January 28, 2025  
3:35 AM

Temperatures 15 to 30 degrees above average!

- Highs will be 15 to 30 degrees above average ranging from the mid 40s to lower 50s
- We will be close to record highs for Aberdeen and Mobridge!



...Record or Near Record Max Temperatures Forecast for today, Tuesday January Twenty Eighth...

Listed below are cities with the forecast temperature, the record temperature, and the year of the record temperature.

City.....	Forecast Temp...	Record Temp...	Year Set	
Aberdeen.....	52.....	53.....	1931	←
Watertown.....	46.....	49.....	1931	
Pierre.....	52.....	60.....	2015	
Mobridge.....	53.....	54.....	2015	←
Sisseton.....	45.....	51.....	2008	



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

The calendar says January 28th but it will not feel like it today with high temperatures forecasted in the mid 40s to the lower 50s! This runs about 15 to 30 degrees above average for this time of year! We could be nearing (or even breaking) records for Aberdeen and Mobridge. Get out there and enjoy it!

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 217 ~ 32 of 85

## Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 42 °F at 2:14 PM

Low Temp: 13 °F at 4:12 AM

Wind: 24 mph at 12:42 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 9 hours, 39 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 53 in 1931

Record Low: -31 in 1915

Average High: 24

Average Low: 2

Average Precip in Jan.: 0.50

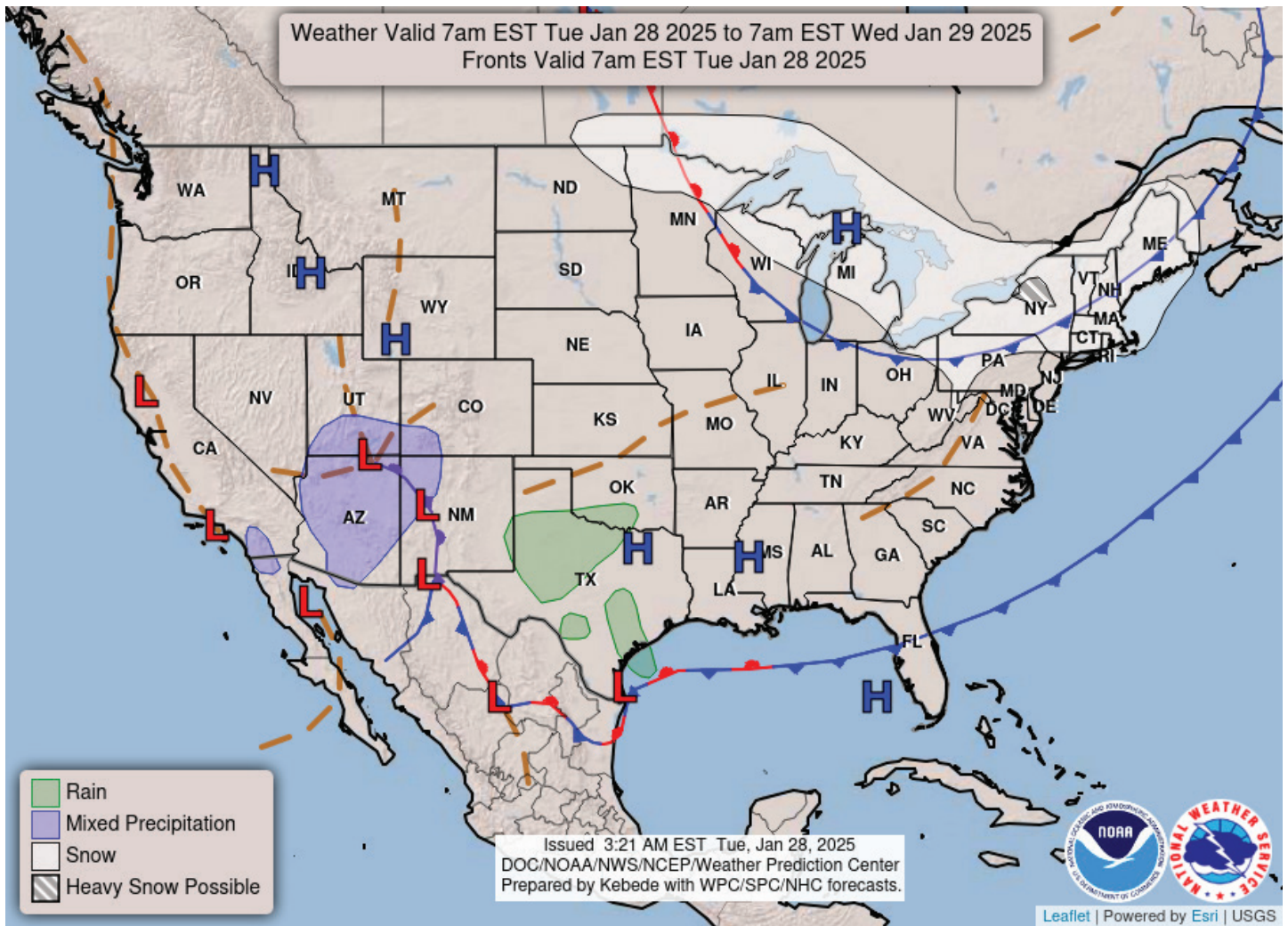
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 0.50

Precip Year to Date: 21.71

Sunset Tonight: 5:35:24 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:54:19 am





# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 217 ~ 33 of 85

## Today in Weather History

January 28, 1983: Freezing rain coated much of eastern South Dakota with up to a half-inch accumulation before it changed over to light snow from the late evening of the 28th to the late evening of the 29th. The combination of ice, light snow, and powerful winds made travel extremely difficult. Numerous accidents and stranded vehicles resulted. Visibilities were near zero at times.

January 28, 1996: Extreme wind chills developed across central, north-central, and northeast South Dakota, and west-central Minnesota as cold arctic air moved in behind an area of low pressure. With temperatures falling well below zero and northwest winds increasing to 20 to 35 mph, wind chills dropped to 40 to 70 below throughout the night of the 28th and into the evening of the 29th. Two to five inches of snow had fallen across the area. The strong northwest winds caused areas of blowing snow, significantly reducing visibilities. Big Stone and Traverse counties experienced a blizzard for about six hours on the 29th.

January 28, 2013: A low-pressure system moving slowly across the region produced a moderate to a heavy band of snow across much of central and northeastern South Dakota. Snowfall rates exceeded one inch per hour in some locations. Several area schools and businesses were either closed or opened late on the 29th.

1772 - The "Washington and Jefferson Snowstorm" occurred. George Washington reported three feet of snow at Mount Vernon, and Thomas Jefferson recorded about three feet at Monticello. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1887: Snowflakes "as large as milk pans" fell at Fort Keogh of Montana. The flakes, which were said to measure 15 inches across and 8 inches thick, hold the unofficial size record!

1966 - Oswego, NY, was in the midst of a five day lake effect storm which left the town buried under 102 inches of snow. (David Ludlum)

1967 - Residents of Chicago, IL, began to dig out from a storm which produced 23 inches of snow in 29 hours. The snow paralyzed the city and suburbs for days, and business losses were enormous. (David Ludlum)

1969: Heavy rains of tropical origin that began on 1/18 ended on this day. As much as 50 inches of rain fell at 7,700 feet. 31 inches of rain fell on the south slopes of Mt. San Geronimo, 15.5 inches at San Jacinto Peak, around ten inches at Banning, less than one inch from Indio southeast. 91 were reported dead from flooding and mudslides all over California and state-wide.

1977: The Blizzard of '77 was one of the worst winter storms to hit southern Ontario and upstate New York. With the rapid onset of the storm, about 2,000 students in the Niagara region were stranded overnight in schools.

1986: The Space Shuttle Challenger broke apart at 11:39 am EST, 73 seconds after liftoff from the Kennedy Space Center at Cape Canaveral, Florida, on a frigid morning. Starting in the 20s, the ground temperature at liftoff was 36 degrees. Morton Thiokol recommended not launching if the liftoff temperature was below 53 degrees. The cold was blamed for causing the O-rings on the Shuttle's external booster to fail, leading to the explosion. Low-level wind shear also played a factor.

1987 - A powerful storm moving into the western U.S. produced 13 inches of snow at Daggett Pass NV, and 16 inches in the Cascade Mountains of Oregon. Winds gusted to 63 mph at Reno NV, and wind gusts in Oregon exceeded 80 mph. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - The nation got a breather from winter storms, however, cold arctic air settled into the southeastern U.S. Hollywood FL reported a record low reading of 39 degrees. (National Weather Summary)

1989 - The last half of January was bitterly cold over most of Alaska. Nearly thirty stations established all-time record low temperatures. On this date Tanana reported a low of -76 degrees. Daily highs of -66 degrees were reported at Chandalar Lake on the 22nd, and at Ambler on the 26th. (The Weather Channel)

1989 - Low pressure in north central Alaska continued to direct air across northern Siberia and the edges of the Arctic Circle into the state. The temperature at Fairbanks remained colder than 40 degrees below zero for the eighth day in a row. Lows of 68 below at Galena, 74 below at McGrath, and 76 below at Tanana, were new records for the date. Wind chill readings were colder than 100 degrees below zero. (National Weather Summary)



## THE "IN" IN WINNERS

It was the end of the football season and Ryan received a trophy for rushing for over 1,500 yards – the most in the history of his high school. On the way home his father said, "I'm proud of you, Son. I never won a trophy!"

"Dad," he asked softly, "did you ever try?"

Some never win anything in life because they never begin anything in life that is worthwhile. They wander aimlessly from one interest to another because they are unwilling to do what is necessary or make the sacrifice to become a winner.

Others do not win anything because they give in to doubts and difficulties. They lack the determination to seek help or advice from others who faced the same problems but refused to give in and persevered until they achieved their goals.

If we want to win, we need to begin where the Bible begins – with God. Moses wrote, "In the beginning God..." When we begin any project or attempt to achieve any goal we can count on God to be with us to guard us and guide us, to uphold us and sustain us.

Before we begin a task or work toward any goal we need to stop and pray earnestly and sincerely asking God to guide us, guard us and give us His wisdom and strength. If we rely on Him in all things for all things, He will lead us from one victory to another.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we know that we can do all things through You and for You, if we remain in You. May we overcome all obstacles in life as we follow You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Genesis 1:1

*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*

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 217 ~ 35 of 85

## The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition Subscription Form

All prices listed include 6.5% Sales Tax

- Black & White ..... \$48.99/year
- Colored ..... \$79.88/year
- Colored ..... \$42.60/6 months
- E-Weekly\* ..... \$31.95/year

\* The E-Weekly is a PDF file emailed to you each week. It does not grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State, Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Mail Completed Form to:

Groton Independent

P.O. Box 34

Groton, SD 57445-0034

or scan and email to [paperpaul@grotonsd.net](mailto:paperpaul@grotonsd.net)

## Groton Daily Independent [www.397news.com](http://www.397news.com) Subscription Form

This option will grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

- 1 Month ..... \$15.98
- 3 Months ..... \$26.63
- 6 Months ..... \$31.95
- 9 Months ..... \$42.60
- 12 Months ..... \$53.25

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State, Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

The following will be used for your log-in information.

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Password \_\_\_\_\_

Pay with Paypal. Type the following into your browser window:

[paypal.me/paperpaul](https://paypal.me/paperpaul)

Pay with Venmo: [@paperpaul](https://venmo.com/paperpaul) Phone Number to Confirm: 7460

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 217 ~ 36 of 85



## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.24.25

8 12 43 52 62 18

MegaPlier: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$44,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 41 Mins 41 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.27.25

3 7 21 33 45 2

All Star Bonus: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$22,870**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 56 Mins 41 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.27.25

7 16 41 42 48 5

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 11 Mins 41 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.25.25

6 7 14 29 32

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$20,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 11 Mins 41 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.27.25

1 9 34 63 67 6

TOP PRIZE:

**\$10,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 40 Mins 41 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.27.25

2 40 47 53 55 20

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$69,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 40 Mins 41 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 217 ~ 37 of 85

## Upcoming Groton Events

- 01/05/2025 Pancake Sunday, Historical Society Fundraiser, 10am-1pm, Community Center
- 01/26/2025 Groton Robotics Pancake Feed at the Community Center 10am-1pm
- 01/26/2025 87th Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm
- 02/02/2025 Pancake Sunday, Historical Society Fundraiser, 10am-1pm, Community Center
- 02/05/2025 FB Live Electronic Hwy 12 Sign Drawing City Hall 12pm
- 03/02/2025 Pancake Sunday, Historical Society Fundraiser, 10am-1pm, Community Center
- 03/22/2025 Spring Vendor Fair at the GHS Gym 10am-2pm
- 04/05/2025 Dueling Duo Baseball/Softball Fundraiser at the Legion Post #39, 6-11:30pm
- 04/06/2025 Pancake Sunday, Historical Society Fundraiser, 10am-1pm, Community Center
- 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
- 06/07/2025 Day of Play
- 07/04/2025 Firecracker Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 07/13/2025 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm
- 07/09/2025 Legion Auxiliary #39 Salad Buffet & Dessert Bar at the Groton Legion 11am-1pm
- 08/09/2025 2nd Annual Celebration in the Park/Rib Cook-Off 1-9:30pm
- 09/06/2025 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
- 10/31/2025 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm
- 11/27/2025 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1:30pm

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 217 ~ 38 of 85

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

### Monday's Scores

The Associated Press

#### **GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL**

Baltic 61, Madison 56  
Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 58, Dupree 55  
Corsica/Stickney 58, Bridgewater-Emery 27  
Ethan 65, Canistota 21  
Harding County 76, McIntosh High School 23  
Hay Springs, Neb. 65, Oelrichs 40  
Herreid-Selby 68, Wakpala 35  
Jones County 55, Wolsey-Wessington 28  
Langford 59, Tri-State, N.D. 45  
Mobridge-Pollock 90, Potter County 44  
Webster 61, Waverly-South Shore 43  
Winner 70, Crow Creek Tribal School 48

#### **BOYS PREP BASKETBALL**

Clark-Willow Lake 70, Great Plains Lutheran 46  
Gregory 72, Lyman 60  
Langford 55, Tri-State, N.D. 48  
Marty 88, Avon 71

Some high school basketball scores provided by Scorestream.com, <https://scorestream.com/>

## DeepSeek's new AI chatbot and ChatGPT answer sensitive questions about China differently

By KANIS LEUNG Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — Chinese tech startup DeepSeek's new artificial intelligence chatbot has sparked discussions about the competition between China and the U.S. in AI development, with many users flocking to test the rival of OpenAI's ChatGPT.

DeepSeek's AI assistant became the No. 1 downloaded free app on Apple's iPhone store on Tuesday afternoon and its launch made Wall Street tech superstars' stocks tumble. Observers are eager to see whether the Chinese company has matched America's leading AI companies at a fraction of the cost.

The chatbot's ultimate impact on the AI industry is still unclear, but it appears to censor answers on sensitive Chinese topics, a practice commonly seen on China's internet. In 2023, China issued regulations requiring companies to conduct a security review and obtain approvals before their products can be publicly launched.

Here are some answers The Associated Press received from DeepSeek's new chatbot and ChatGPT:

What does Winnie the Pooh mean in China?

For many Chinese, the Winnie the Pooh character is a playful taunt of President Xi Jinping. Chinese censors in the past briefly banned social media searches for the bear in mainland China.

ChatGPT got that idea right. It said Winnie the Pooh had become a symbol of political satire and resistance, often used to mock or criticize Xi. It explained that internet users started comparing Xi to the bear over similarities in their physical appearances.

DeepSeek's chatbot said the bear is a beloved cartoon character that is adored by countless children

and families in China, symbolizing joy and friendship.

Then, abruptly, it said the Chinese government is "dedicated to providing a wholesome cyberspace for its citizens." It added that all online content is managed following Chinese laws and socialist core values, with the aim of protecting national security and social stability.

Who is the current US president?

It might be easy for many people to answer, but both AI chatbots mistakenly said Joe Biden, whose term ended last week, because their data was last updated in October 2023. But they both tried to be responsible by reminding users to verify with updated sources.

What happened during the military crackdown in Beijing's Tiananmen Square in June 1989?

The 1989 crackdown saw government troops open fire on student-led pro-democracy protesters in Beijing's Tiananmen Square, resulting in hundreds, if not thousands, of deaths. The event remains a taboo subject in mainland China.

DeepSeek's chatbot answered, "Sorry, that's beyond my current scope. Let's talk about something else."

But ChatGPT gave a detailed answer on what it called "one of the most significant and tragic events" in modern Chinese history. The chatbot talked about the background of the massive protests, the estimated casualties and the legacy.

What is the state of US-China relations?

DeepSeek's chatbot's answer echoed China's official statements, saying the relationship between the world's two largest economies is one of the most important bilateral relationships globally. It said China is committed to developing ties with the U.S. based on mutual respect and win-win cooperation.

"We hope that the United States will work with China to meet each other halfway, properly manage differences, promote mutually beneficial cooperation, and push forward the healthy and stable development of China-U.S. relations," it said.

ChatGPT's answer was more nuanced. It said the state of the U.S.-China relationship is complex, characterized by a mix of economic interdependence, geopolitical rivalry and collaboration on global issues. It highlighted key topics including the two countries' tensions over the South China Sea and Taiwan, their technological competition and more.

"The relationship between the U.S. and China remains tense but crucial," part of its answer said.

Is Taiwan part of China?

Again — like the Chinese official narrative — DeepSeek's chatbot said Taiwan has been an integral part of China since ancient times.

"Compatriots on both sides of the Taiwan Strait are connected by blood, jointly committed to the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation," it said.

ChatGPT said the answer depends on one's perspective, while laying out China and Taiwan's positions and the views of the international community. It said from a legal and political standpoint, China claims Taiwan is part of its territory and the island democracy operates as a "de facto independent country" with its own government, economy and military.

## **Judge to seat jury in trial of ex-prosecutor accused of shielding Ahmaud Arbery's killers**

By RUSS BYNUM Associated Press

BRUNSWICK, Ga. (AP) — Jury selection is set to conclude Tuesday in the criminal misconduct trial of a former Georgia prosecutor charged with interfering in the police investigation of the 2020 killing of Ahmaud Arbery.

White men with guns and pickup trucks chased and fatally shot the running Black man on a neighborhood street after they wrongly suspected he was a thief. The man who started the deadly pursuit had worked for the local district attorney.

Now that prosecutor, former District Attorney Jackie Johnson, has returned to court as a criminal defendant, charged with violating her oath of office, a felony, and a misdemeanor count of hindering police

as they investigated Arbery's killing. Johnson has denied wrongdoing, saying she immediately handed the case to an outside prosecutor.

Senior Judge John R. Turner planned to seat a jury Tuesday morning at the Glynn County courthouse in the port city of Brunswick. Jury selection began a week ago but was delayed by a rare winter storm that left the coastal community coated in snow and ice.

Opening statements from prosecutors and defense attorneys were scheduled for later Tuesday after a 12-person jury plus two alternate jurors are seated. Georgia Attorney General Chris Carr's office is prosecuting the case.

The judge said he expects Johnson's trial to last two weeks or more. It's being held at the same courthouse where Arbery's assailants were convicted of murder in 2021.

Father and son Greg and Travis McMichael armed themselves and chased the 25-year-old Arbery in a pickup truck after seeing him run past their house on Feb. 23, 2020. A neighbor, William "Roddie" Bryan, joined the pursuit in his own truck and recorded cellphone video of Travis McMichael shooting Arbery with a shotgun at point-blank range.

Greg McMichael was a retired investigator who had worked for Johnson. He called her roughly an hour after the killing.

"My son and I have been involved in a shooting, and I need some advice right away," he said in a voice-mail left on Johnson's cellphone and later included in court records.

More than two months passed with no arrests until Bryan's graphic video of the shooting leaked online. The Georgia Bureau of Investigation took over the case from local police and arrested the McMichaels and Bryan on murder charges.

Prosecutors say Johnson abused her office by trying to shield the McMichaels. The indictment says Johnson showed "favor and affection" toward Greg McMichael and interfered with police by "directing that Travis McMichael should not be placed under arrest."

All three men were sentenced to life in prison after being convicted of murder in 2021. They were also found guilty of federal hate crimes in a separate trial the following year.

Johnson was voted out of office in November 2020 after 10 years as district attorney for the five-county Brunswick Judicial Circuit. She largely blamed her defeat on controversy over Arbery's killing months earlier.

## Trump signs order that likely sets in motion a future ban on transgender troops

By TARA COPP and LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump signed an executive order Monday directing Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth to revise the Pentagon's policy on transgender troops, likely setting in motion a future ban on their military service.

He also ordered troops to be reinstated who had left voluntarily or been booted for refusing COVID-19 vaccines, outlined new rollbacks in diversity programs and provided for the deployment of a space-based missile defense shield for the U.S. — all on Hegseth's first day.

Trump and Hegseth had described parts of the anticipated orders throughout the day, but the exact language did not drop until late Monday.

Transgender order

A transgender ban had been widely expected, and Trump's order largely sets the stage for a future ban — but directs Hegseth to come up with how that would be implemented in policy.

In his order, Trump claimed that service by troops who identify as a gender other than their biological one "conflicts with a soldier's commitment to an honorable, truthful, and disciplined lifestyle, even in one's personal life" and is harmful to military readiness, requiring a revised policy to address the matter.

Trump had tried to ban transgender troops during his first term, but it was tangled up in the courts for years before being overturned by then-President Joe Biden shortly after he took office.

Two groups, Lambda Legal and Human Rights Campaign, which represented transgender troops the



# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 217 ~ 41 of 85

first time, vowed to fight again.

"We have been here before and seven years ago were able to successfully block the earlier administration's effort," Lambda Legal attorney Sasha Buchert said. "Not only is such a move cruel, it compromises the safety and security of our country and is particularly dangerous and wrong. As we promised then, so do we now: we will sue."

## Space-based missile defense

During his first presidency, Trump established U.S. Space Command and the U.S. Space Force, which just marked its fifth birthday. Space continues to be a priority for the president, who has now directed the Pentagon to begin to develop the capability to shoot down missiles from space.

For years, the U.S. has cautioned that China, Russia and others were weaponizing space. It has at times declassified information about both countries' efforts to create offensive weapons to disable critical U.S. satellites, including the capability to move satellites from orbit, temporarily blind them or potentially even destroy them.

The Space Force is building a low-orbit ring of redundant satellites that can more quickly track and detect potential missile launches.

But establishing a way to shoot missiles down from space is something the U.S. has not pursued since President Ronald Reagan announced the Strategic Defense Initiative — "Star Wars" as it was commonly known — in the 1980s. The system was never developed due to cost and technological limitations.

In his order called "an Iron Dome for America," Trump called for a multilayer missile defense system capable of countering an array of threats to the U.S., to include development and deployment of space-based interceptors.

## COVID-19 vaccination

At least 8,200 troops were forced out of the military in 2021 for refusing to obey a lawful order when they declined to get the vaccine. Notices advising them they could return were sent out in 2023, but just 113 have reenlisted.

The reinstatement process for any who now want to return requires that they meet military entry standards. Trump and Hegseth have persistently stated that the military must not reduce standards.

"We will offer full reinstatement to any service member who was expelled from the armed forces due to the COVID vaccine mandate," Trump told a Republican crowd at the Trump National Doral Miami, a resort he owns. "And we will restore them to their former rank with full pay. "

In addition to troops forced out for refusing the shot, the order extends the same offer to anyone who signs a sworn statement saying they left the service voluntarily to avoid the vaccine.

The order isn't expected to have a major impact on the number of service members returning. But it could take a bite out of the budget if more do now, since it requires back pay.

To return, all would have to meet weight, fitness, medical and other requirements, and they could be refused if they now have a criminal record or other disqualifying factor. Officers would have to get recommissioned, which is a simple appointment process.

According to the services, 3,748 Marines were discharged, and 25 have opted to re-enlist; 1,903 Army soldiers were discharged, and 73 returned; 1,878 sailors were discharged and two returned; 671 airmen were discharged and 13 returned.

The Pentagon made the COVID-19 vaccine mandatory in August 2021 for all service members, including the National Guard and Reserve. Then-Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said getting the vaccine was critical to maintaining a healthy, ready force that could be prepared to defend the nation.

The Pentagon formally dropped the mandate in January 2023.

Defense officials said then that many troops appeared to use the vaccine mandate as a way to quickly and easily to get out of their service obligations.

## DEI initiatives

Trump also, as expected, issued a sweeping order to abolish all programs, initiatives and mentions of diversity, equity and inclusion across the Defense Department and the Coast Guard, which is governed by

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 217 ~ 42 of 85

the Department of Homeland Security.

The order looks to scrub “any vestiges” of such initiatives that seek to “promote a race-based preferences system that subverts meritocracy, perpetuates unconstitutional discrimination, and promotes divisive concepts or gender ideology.”

It prohibits the departments from promoting or following “un-American” theories that suggest that America’s founding documents are racist or sexist; that discuss gender ideology; and that promote “divisive concepts” such as “race or sex stereotyping.”

The order says the defense and homeland security secretaries must issue guidance to implement the order in 30 days. It calls for a review to find any instances of actions taken in pursuit of DEI, which will be due to the defense secretary in 90 days.

The secretaries must submit a report to the White House in six months outlining their progress.

The Pentagon had already been taking steps to comply with Trump’s initial action ending DEI programs across the U.S. government, and it has had far-reaching consequences. Without clearer direction, agencies were taking a broad approach to removing any content that seemed to run afoul of Trump’s ban.

That temporarily included videos of the storied Tuskegee Airmen and World War II Women’s Airforce Service Pilots, or WASPs, which were part of DEI training courses for the Air Force’s basic military training. Videos on both the Tuskegee Airmen and WASPs were removed as the courses were taken down last week, causing an uproar.

WASPs were vital in ferrying warplanes for the military. The Tuskegee Airmen were the nation’s first Black military pilots, serving in a segregated WWII unit, and their all-Black 332nd Fighter Group had one of the lowest loss records of all the bomber escorts in the war.

On Sunday, the Air Force clarified that the DEI courses had been removed to be edited but that the Tuskegee Airmen and WASP content would continue to be taught.

## How the Los Angeles wildfires will transform the 2025 Grammys

By MARIA SHERMAN AP Music Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The Grammy Awards will look a little bit different this week.

Each year, the Recording Academy hosts a multitude of events to welcome the music industry during Grammy week and record labels do the same. However, many institutions have canceled their plans — Universal Music Group, Sony, Spotify, BMG and Warner Music Group among them — and instead are allocating resources to help those affected by the devastating Los Angeles-area wildfires.

The Grammys will still take place on Sunday at the Crypto.com Arena in Los Angeles but now will focus its attention on helping wildfire victims.

How will Grammy week differ in 2025?

Within days of fires ravaging the Pacific Palisades and Altadena neighborhoods, the Recording Academy and its affiliated MusiCares charity launched the Los Angeles Fire Relief Effort with a \$1 million dollar donation. According to a letter sent to members on Jan. 13, thanks to additional contributions, they’ve already distributed \$2 million in emergency aid.

Once the fund was set up, Recording Academy CEO Harvey Mason jr. said they began focusing on re-formatting what Grammy week would look like — many conversations conducted “on the road, mobile-y, virtually” as staffers had evacuated their homes.

“That process has really consisted of reaching out to just listen and learn from a lot of people — state officials, local officials, the governor’s office, the mayor’s office, the fire department. We talked to hotel managers, just really trying to get a grasp on what was happening currently. What did they project was going to happen in the next week to 10 days? Would be safe to have a show?”

Ultimately, the Recording Academy decided to condense its pre-Grammy week plans to just four events, each featuring a fundraising element.

On Friday, MusiCares, an organization that helps music professionals who need financial, personal or medical assistance, will hold its annual Persons of the Year benefit gala celebrating the Grateful Dead.

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 217 ~ 43 of 85

On Saturday, the Special Merit Awards Ceremony and Grammy nominees' reception will still take place, followed by Clive Davis' pre-Grammy fundraising event.

Then the Grammys take the stage on Sunday.

Events like the annual pre-Grammy Black Music Collective event, Grammy advocacy brunch, and others scheduled to take place at the immersive pop-up Grammy house have been canceled.

"We thought consolidating the events would allow us to have more impact," Mason explains. "And we just don't feel it was the right time to have social gatherings or places to party or schmooze and just hang out. We wanted to have our events be places that could be purposeful and impactful. Some of the party settings, we decided to fold down into our fundraising efforts."

How has the Grammy award show been reformatted?

"Obviously, we can't have a normal show in the midst of people's belongings being burned or loss of life or other things like that. At the same time, canceling would not have helped," Mason says.

"We needed to raise money. We needed to show unity and come together around music. We need to support the city of L.A. (Over) 6,500 people work on our shows and ancillary gatherings. So, once we decided to move forward, it was really a conversation with (Grammy producers) Ben Winston, Raj Kapoor and Jesse Collins and myself. And we started to think about, 'How do we make the show have the greatest impact?'"

They decided the path forward was to still give out awards and host performances to give viewers and attendees a bespoke concert experience. But most importantly, the show could raise awareness, drive donations and resources to funds that benefit people in need.

And the conversations are ongoing. "We have some great things in the show that will definitely help to raise funds," he assures. "It will honor some of the heroes that have been protecting our lives and our homes. It will hopefully shine a light on some people that need more help and more services."

Don't expect a traditional telethon, but he says the show will feature announcements and activations in the arena.

"Hopefully we'll be talking about things that have been pledged from the sponsors or from the community," he adds.

How many Recording Academy members were affected by the fires?

"We know right off the bat that we've got almost 3,000 requests for help from our members or people in the music community," Mason says. "So that was just in the first few days."

The immediate needs have been "the basics," as he explains. "Food, water, shelter, the bare necessities to live."

"The next phase will involve, you know, where they're going to live, how are they going to replace maybe damaged or destroyed instruments, studios. How will they make a living? I'm sure there'll be some mental health component that people may need assistance with. But it's really across the board. But the early, immediate relief is around just the bare necessities."

Has anything like this happened before?

There's no shortage of natural disasters, and they affect the music community too. Mason brings up the COVID-19 pandemic as a recent example. With MusiCares, they were able to contribute "over \$40 million to people who needed help." They have the infrastructure to provide assistance quickly.

However, he notes, the Grammys are the first major award show taking place after the wildfires, which means "there's no playbook for this."

"But I've always said it all changes if the fires were to continue, or possibly got worse, or the winds changed. So, I always want to reserve that right. We're not going to go blindly forward if things are unsafe or if it feels inappropriate," he says.

But consider the fundraising, the economic and financial impacts, and the possibility of unity, "It all makes sense for us to move forward."

## Trump fills his government with billionaires after running on a working-class message

By BILL BARROW Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — President Donald Trump's brash populism has always involved incongruence: the billionaire businessman-politician stirring the passions of millions who, regardless of the U.S. economy's trajectory, could never afford to live in his Manhattan skyscraper or visit his club in south Florida.

His second White House is looking a lot like the inside of Mar-a-Lago, with extremely wealthy Americans taking key roles in his administration.

The world's richest man, Elon Musk, is overseeing a new Department of Government Efficiency. Billionaires or mega-millionaires are lined up to run the treasury, commerce, interior and education departments, NASA and the Small Business Administration, and fill key foreign posts.

"He's bringing in folks who have had great success in the private sector," said Debbie Dooley, an early 2015 Trump supporter and onetime national organizer in the anti-establishment Tea Party movement. "If you need to have brain surgery, you want the proven brain surgeons."

Others raise concerns about conflicts of interest at odds with Trump's pledge to fight for "forgotten men and women" in a country where the median household net worth is about \$193,000 and median annual household income is about \$81,000.

"It's hard to conceive how the wealthiest set of Cabinet nominees and White House appointments in history will understand what average working people are going through," said former Labor Secretary Robert Reich, who served under President Bill Clinton and has warned for decades about the nation's widening wealth and wage gaps.

Countered Dooley: "Trump sets the agenda. If they won't enact his policies, then they will hear him say what we hear on 'The Apprentice' all the time: 'You're fired!'"

Here is a closer look at some of Trump's picks, their net worth according to Forbes, and what the choices could mean:

Elon Musk

Musk (net worth estimated above \$400 billion) is chairing the new Department of Government Efficiency, which is a special commission charged with slashing federal spending. The extensive ties his businesses have to the government have raised questions about Musk's potential conflicts in the role.

Linda McMahon

McMahon was picked to be Trump's secretary of education. She is the wife of Vince McMahon, who is worth at least \$3 billion.

The former WWE wrestling executive will lead an agency that many conservatives have called for abolishing altogether. While that's a heavy lift politically, McMahon and Trump have endorsed an expansion of "school choice," programs that steer taxpayer money to private school tuition. She also could be in charge of implementing Trump's proposals to withhold federal money from public schools — K-12 and higher education — that do not meet White House demands to modify or scrap diversity programs.

Doug Burgum

The North Dakota governor (estimated net worth \$1.1 billion) made his money as a software entrepreneur. Burgum impressed Trump during his own failed bid for the GOP's 2024 presidential nomination. As interior secretary, Burgum would be charged with implementing Trump's "Drill, baby, drill" promise — making it even easier for energy companies to tap fossil fuel resources, including from public lands.

Scott Bessent

Forbes has not yet identified Bessent as a billionaire, but the veteran hedge fund manager confirmed Monday as treasury secretary certainly is worth many hundreds of millions. At Treasury, he will play key roles in selling and implementing a number of Trump's signature policies: reinstating the 2017 tax cuts tilted to corporations and wealthy individuals, imposing tariffs on many imports and cutting taxes on overtime wages, Social Security benefits and tip income.

Reich, the former labor secretary, noted that Bessent and his fellow wealthy Cabinet designees stand to

benefit personally from Trump's tax ideas. Trump tax policies, which helped widen the deficit in Trump's first term, are juxtaposed with Bessent's warnings about the dangers of rising U.S. debt and the cost of annual interest payments to the government's bond holders.

Howard Lutnick

An apparent runner-up to head Treasury, Lutnick (estimated net worth \$1.5 billion) has been nominated to be secretary of commerce. Lutnick, who made his fortune as a financial services executive, is still slated for a high-profile post that will put him at the center of Trump's promised trade wars with China and other nations, including Mexico and Canada. Commerce also oversees several agencies, including the Census Bureau, whose calculations are key to determining the funding distributions of programs across the federal government.

Kelly Loeffler

The Georgia businesswoman named to lead the Small Business Administration was the wealthiest member of the Senate during her brief stay on Capitol Hill. Loeffler is married to Jeffrey Sprecher, CEO of Intercontinental Exchange, the publicly traded firm that owns the New York Stock Exchange. That's not the center of commerce for the SBA's usual clientele. The agency was founded in 1953 and describes itself as "the only cabinet-level federal agency fully dedicated to small business" by providing "counseling, capital, and contracting expertise as the nation's only go-to resource and voice for small businesses."

As a senator, Loeffler faced ethics complaints over alleged insider trading tied to stock trades she and her husband made as members of Congress first started receiving briefings related to the coronavirus pandemic. The trades occurred weeks before the pandemic caused markets to plummet. Justice Department and Senate inquiries later found no wrongdoing on Loeffler's part.

Jared Isaacman

Isaacman, another financial services billionaire, was the first wealthy individual to take a space walk through Musk's company, SpaceX. This choice, as much as any, illustrates Trump's lean to the wealthy private sector, given that billionaires like Musk and Amazon chief Jeff Bezos are now competing in a space sector that was once the province of the federal government and the agency that Isaacman would lead as NASA administrator.

## **New top prosecutor for DC advocated for Jan. 6 rioters and echoed Trump's false 2020 election claims**

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and MICHAEL KUNZELMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — For years, conservative activist Ed Martin has promoted Donald Trump's false claims about a stolen 2020 election, railed against the prosecution of the rioters who stormed the U.S. Capitol and represented some of them in court.

Now he's leading the office that prosecuted the nearly 1,600 defendants charged in the Jan. 6, 2021, riot before Trump — now back in the White House — ended the largest investigation in Justice Department history with the stroke of a pen.

Martin's first week as the interim U.S. attorney for the District of Columbia ushered in a dizzying sea change for the office's rank-and-file prosecutors. He oversaw the dismissals of hundreds of Jan. 6 cases and celebrated Trump's pardons for police officers and anti-abortion activists who had been prosecuted by attorneys in the office. And on Monday, Martin ordered an internal review of prosecutors' use of a felony charge brought against hundreds of Capitol rioters, directing employees to hand over files, emails and other documents, according to an email obtained by The Associated Press.

The appointment of Martin, the former head of the Missouri Republican Party, underscores Trump's commitment to installing loyalists in key positions at the Justice Department, which the Republican president contends was "weaponized" against him and his supporters by President Joe Biden's administration. Mike Davis, a Trump ally, called Martin in a social media post a "bold and fearless" leader who will "clean house" at the office, which Davis described as "an epicenter of the lawfare and political persecution."

Martin told employees in an email that he was alongside Trump in the Oval Office when the president

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 217 ~ 46 of 85

granted clemency last week to two Washington police officers prosecuted by the U.S. attorney's office for their roles in the deadly chase of a man on a moped and the subsequent cover-up. And in a social media post last week, Martin appeared to describe federal prosecutors as "the President's lawyers."

"Based on the public reporting, it appears that he is in this role purely to execute on the president's political priorities more so than the work of protecting public safety in Washington," said Alexis Loeb, who was deputy chief of the section that prosecuted the Jan. 6 cases before leaving the government last year.

It's unclear whether Trump intends to nominate Martin to the permanent post, which would require Senate confirmation. A White House spokesperson didn't immediately respond to a text message about Martin on Monday.

Prosecutors were directed last week to refer to Martin in court papers simply as "U.S. Attorney Ed Martin" after some filed documents describing him as the "acting" top prosecutor, according to a former federal prosecutor who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of persistent threats of violence.

Shortly after Trump's sweeping clemency order, Martin's name showed up last on a flurry of court filings seeking to dismiss the pending Jan. 6 prosecutions, including cases against people charged with assaulting police officers.

One week later, Martin announced a "special project" to review the use of an obstruction felony charge brought against hundreds of Capitol riot defendants. Prosecutors had to drop the obstruction of an official proceeding charge in many cases after a Supreme Court ruling last year limiting the offense, finding it must include proof that defendants tried to tamper with or destroy documents.

Calling the use of the charge "a great failure of our office," Martin ordered attorneys to hand over to two supervisors all relevant "files, documents, notes, emails and other information," according to a copy of the email reviewed by the AP. He ordered the supervisors to provide a preliminary report on the matter to him by Friday.

"We need to get to the bottom of it," Martin wrote. He's calling it the "1512 Project," because the offense falls under that section of the law.

Trump's clemency action led to the release of more than 200 people in federal custody, including people seen on camera engaging in hand-to-hand combat with police and violently attacking law enforcement with makeshift weapons.

Vice President JD Vance, who previously said violent rioters should "obviously" not be pardoned, defended Trump's action in a CBS interview that aired Sunday. Vance alleged, without providing evidence, that the Jan. 6 defendants were "denied constitutional protections."

Ashley Akers, who prosecuted dozens of Jan. 6 cases before leaving the Justice Department on Friday, said Vance is "misleading the American public in an attempt to excuse the unjustifiable blanket pardon of rioters who overtook the United States Capitol."

"It's telling that he has not identified a single example of how these defendants' constitutional rights have been violated," Akers said. "The evidence in the public record speaks for itself."

After Trump's clemency order, Martin urged a judge to drop restrictions barring Oath Keepers founder Stewart Rhodes and several other Jan. 6 defendants from entering Washington and the Capitol building. Martin said that if a judge barred visits to Washington from people pardoned by Joe Biden — like the former president's brother, Jim, or Gen. Mark Milley — "I believe most Americans would object."

U.S. District Judge Amit Mehta changed course Monday, ruling that Rhodes and other Oath Keepers with commuted prison sentences are not bound by the travel restrictions he ordered last week.

Martin spoke at a "Stop the Steal" rally on the eve of the riot and served on the board of a group called the Patriot Freedom Project, which has raised money to support Jan. 6 defendants and their families. Court filings listed him as an attorney for at least three Capitol riot defendants, including a Proud Boys member who pleaded guilty to felony charges.

A day before the Capitol riot, Martin led an audience in a "Stop the Steal" chant during a rally in Washington, D.C.

"What they're stealing is not just an election. It's our future and it's our republic," he told the crowd.

The next day, Martin attended Trump's Jan. 6 rally near the White House and posted messages on social media about the crowd.

"I'm at the Capitol right now," Martin tweeted after the riot erupted. "Rowdy crowd but nothing out of hand. Ignore the #FakeNews."

On a blog, he has parroted some of Trump's rhetoric about the deep state, a politically weaponized Justice Department and the events of Jan. 6, 2021. Martin said he has watched thousands of hours of video from that day.

"And, if you watch it for a while you realize that 99.9% of it is normal people doing normal things: sauntering around and through the Capitol grounds and building," he wrote.

## Immigration officers say 'the worst go first,' but now there's no 'free pass'

By REBECCA SANTANA Associated Press

SILVER SPRING, Md. (AP) — A week into Donald Trump's second presidency and his efforts to crack down on illegal immigration, federal officers are operating with a new sense of mission, knowing that "nobody gets a free pass anymore."

A dozen officers from Immigration and Customs Enforcement gathered before dawn Monday in a Maryland parking lot, then fanned out to the Washington suburbs to find their targets: someone wanted in El Salvador for homicide, a person convicted of armed robbery, a migrant found guilty of possessing child sexual abuse material and another with drug and gun convictions. All were in the country illegally.

"The worst go first," Matt Elliston, director of ICE's Baltimore field office, said of the agency's enforcement priorities.

The Associated Press accompanied the officers, who offered a glimpse of how their work has changed under a White House intent on deporting large numbers of immigrants living in the U.S. without permission.

People considered public safety and national security threats are still the top priority, Elliston said.

That is no different from the Biden administration, but a big change has already taken hold: Under Trump, officers can now arrest people without legal status if they run across them while looking for migrants targeted for removal. Under Joe Biden, such "collateral arrests" were banned.

"We're looking for those public safety, national security cases. The big difference being, nobody has a free pass anymore," Elliston said.

The number of collateral arrests has fluctuated, he said. By the end of Monday across Maryland, ICE had arrested 13 people. Of those, nine were targets and the other four were people ICE came across during the course of the morning.

Of those "collaterals," one had an aggravated theft conviction. Another had already been deported once, and two others had final orders of removal.

### Changes to immigration enforcement under Trump

The administration highlighted the participation of other agencies in immigration operations over the weekend, including the FBI, the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, which are part of the Justice Department.

Emile Bove, the acting deputy attorney general, observed arrests Sunday in Chicago, a sign of the Justice Department's growing involvement.

ICE's daily arrests, which averaged 311 in the year ending Sept. 30, stayed fairly steady in the first days after Trump took office, then spiked dramatically Sunday to 956 and Monday to 1,179. If sustained, those numbers would mark the highest daily average since ICE began keeping records.

Trump also has lifted longtime guidelines that restricted ICE from operating at "sensitive locations" such as schools, churches or hospitals. That decision has worried many migrants and advocates who fear children will be traumatized by seeing their parents arrested in the drop-off line at school or that migrants needing medical care won't go to the hospital for fear of arrest.

Elliston pushed back on those fears, saying it's been exceedingly rare for ICE to enter one of those

locations. In his 17 years on the job, he said he's gone into a school only once and that was to help stop an active shooter.

He said the removal of other guidelines that had restricted ICE operations at courthouses makes a bigger difference in the agency's work.

But getting rid of the sensitive locations policy does affect ICE in more subtle ways.

For example, at one point Monday, the team stopped at a parking lot in hopes of catching a Venezuelan gang member who was believed to be working as a delivery driver at a nearby business. Across the street was a church, and one street over was an elementary school, which under the previous guidance would have made it off limits to park to do surveillance.

Some enforcement policies have not changed

What has not changed, Elliston said, is that these are targeted operations. ICE has a list of people they're going after as opposed to indiscriminately going to a workplace or apartment building looking for people in the country illegally.

"I really hate the word 'raids' because it gives people the wrong impression, as if we're just arbitrarily going door to door and saying, 'Show us your papers,'" he said. "Nothing could be further from the truth."

In the week since Trump returned to office, Elliston said he's constantly been on the phone, trying to dispel rumors about what ICE is doing and who is getting arrested.

Since starting his job in 2022, Elliston said he's worked to build relations with elected officials and law enforcement agencies across Maryland, a state where many communities have sanctuary policies limiting their cooperation with federal immigration authorities.

Elliston has reached out to cities to educate them about what ICE does and whom officers pursue. He also tries to build relationships with city officials so they feel more comfortable letting authorities know when migrants who have been detained are going to be released. That way ICE can get them.

Another thing that hasn't changed? Sometimes when looking for someone, they come up empty.

In one apartment building in Takoma Park, just outside Washington, three ICE officers pounded on the door of an apartment, asking whoever was inside to come to the door.

"Miss, can you open up?" the officer said. "Can you come to the door and we'll talk to you? ... We're going to have to keep coming back until we clear this address."

Eventually a man who lived at the apartment came home and talked with the ICE officers. It turned out that the person they were looking for likely gave police the wrong address when he was arrested and he didn't live there.

If they cannot find a person, Elliston said, they keep looking.

"Looking for these guys will never stop," he said.

## In '2000 Meters to Andriivka,' Oscar winner takes viewers back to Ukraine's frontlines

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

PARK CITY, Utah (AP) — The day Mstyslav Chernov won the BAFTA for his documentary "20 Days in Mariupol" was the day he learned two soldiers he knew had been killed in combat. They were primary subjects of his new film "2000 Meters to Andriivka," a harrowing portrait of modern warfare that puts audiences on the frontlines of the 2023 Ukrainian counteroffensive.

"The film changed along the way," Chernov, a videojournalist with The Associated Press, said last week after its premiere at the Sundance Film Festival. "From a story of the success of that operation it became a story of loss, of memory, of the price that soldiers pay for every single inch of the land. And that's where the name came from."

Coming back to Park City, Utah, with a new film has been a sobering, full circle moment for Chernov. It's the place where he first showcased "20 Days in Mariupol" two years ago. Although he received the highest honors a journalist and a filmmaker can get for his work, a Pulitzer Prize and an Oscar included,



# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 217 ~ 49 of 85

it's for reportage on a war in his home country that won't end and that he can't stop covering.

The AP spoke to Chernov about "2000 Meters to Andriivka," a co-production between the AP and PBS Frontline, the cognitive dissonance of whiplashing between a movie release and the frontlines as well as his responsibility to Ukraine. Remarks have been edited for clarity and brevity.

AP: Two years ago at Sundance, you were eager to go back to Ukraine. Was this already on your mind that you wanted to show the soldiers?

CHERNOV: I gave a lot of thought after I left Mariupol. Do I want to continue doing what I was doing? We felt a lot of trauma and a lot of loss, guilt even, that we didn't do enough. But then again, that tragedy you go through, the tragedy of people who you're filming, it doesn't let you to just stop doing what you do. You always want to do more and you actually can't stop.

At every point in this journey I was also editing "20 Days in Mariupol" and then it went on to screen all over the world. The response was great, but more I felt that response and more I saw that things are not changing, more I wanted to go back and to continue shooting, and that's what I did.

At some point in summer of 2023, when Ukraine had a highly anticipated and very important counteroffensive, we also had our theatrical release for "20 Days in Mariupol." So from LA, where at Laemmle Cinema, you would see "Barbie" and "Oppenheimer" and "20 Days in Mariupol" posters and (after) speaking to the public, I would fly back to Poland, drive to the frontline and start shooting this film.

The story of Andriivka captured me so much that I would go back and keep following the platoon. And the tragedy was that as more time passed more people who we initially filmed on the journey to Andriivka have died.

AP: With '20 Days in Mariupol' you found yourself in situations and knew to keep shooting. Here, you went in knowing you wanted to make a film. How did that change what you were doing?

CHERNOV: Making "20 Days in Mariupol" and seeing the impact it ultimately had, seeing how big the audience was, made me think that the impact of journalism could be complemented with an impact of documentary filmmaking and that combination, if you can find the right balance between those two approaches, could be very powerful.

The form of the cinema is much more long lasting than the news. As important as journalism is, unfortunately, there's just so much of things happening in the world, so many important stories, that it takes extraordinary efforts to keep someone's attention on the story, especially if that story is important to you personally. And the story of Andriivka and the soldiers who are trying to get there is personally very important to me.

AP: This film puts audiences on the frontline in ways that we're only used to seeing in fictional war films. How were able to do that?

CHERNOV: Technology is changing. The audience is changing. So the medium of documentary that talks about important current events has to change as well. To be able to catch up, we constantly need to search for new forms, for new ways of telling the story, for new visual solutions to that. The making of "2000 Meters to Andriivka," the approach is experimental. We are trying to show modern warfare the way no one has done it before or since. Of course there are elements that are classic for the documentary, but I also wanted the story to be so immersive, so on the ground, so experiential for the audience, that they forget that they are watching a narrative fiction film or a documentary. Then when they reach the end of the film, when they realize that everything they just saw was real, it would hit them even harder.

AP: You gave one of the all-time great Oscar speeches. Was Andriivka heavy on your mind when you took that stage?

CHERNOV: I was thinking about all the boys, yes, when I was on stage. There'd been so many things happening in the background when we were sitting in that beautiful place with all the movie stars and seeing the speeches that they were giving.

I had got hundreds of messages of people who were telling me what to say on the stage, all important. I had a feeling that 40 million Ukrainians, if I will be lucky to go on that stage, will be watching me and every single word that will be said. There is a responsibility, a responsibility to journalism and a responsibility to me being Ukrainian, the responsibility to the people of Mariupol and responsibility to these soldiers

that I was, by that time, filming for almost a year.

AP: What has all of this meant to friends at home, to the people of Ukraine?

CHERNOV: After the premiere, we received a lot of messages or just comments on social media that it is so timely to have a film like that when there are almost no reports, either journalistic or documentary from the frontline from the perspective of a soldier. Partially because the interest has shifted elsewhere. Partially because it has become impossible to work at the frontline because of the drones, because of the how precise and deadly weapons are and because journalists have become targets.

I think people are just grateful for that. They say, thank you for showing that perspective and thank you for reminding the world about Ukraine, that it is not just a political chip in a bargaining, that it is actually real people. And that's what we have to keep in mind, that these are real people. These are not numbers and not distances.

## What to know about Tuesday's US House primaries to replace Matt Gaetz and Mike Waltz

By KATE PAYNE and STEPHANY MATAT Associated Press/Report for America

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) — The races to fill the U.S. House seats of former Reps. Mike Waltz and Matt Gaetz begin Tuesday with primaries in reliably conservative districts that solidly back President Donald Trump.

One of the seats up for grabs is northwest Florida's 1st Congressional District, long represented by Gaetz. He announced he wouldn't be returning to Congress after he withdrew from consideration to be Trump's attorney general amid allegations of sexual misconduct.

The other race is for the 6th Congressional District, which extends south of Jacksonville and includes Daytona Beach. The seat had been held by Waltz, who is now serving as Trump's national security adviser, a position that doesn't require Senate confirmation.

Republicans are expected to hold the seats, which will restore their thin 220-215 majority in the U.S. House as they pursue Trump's agenda. But the push to implement Trump's policies could be slowed as Congress waits for the primary winners to be confirmed in general elections scheduled for April 1.

Here's what to know about Tuesday's special elections.

Who are the Trump-endorsed candidates?

For the 1st District, Trump chose Florida Chief Financial Officer Jimmy Patronis, a former state lawmaker from Panama City whose family is well-known in the area for founding Capt. Anderson's, a local seafood restaurant. Patronis has been a familiar face in Florida politics for decades and is a longtime ally of now-Sen. Rick Scott, who as governor appointed him to be Florida's chief financial officer in 2017.

In the 6th District, Trump is backing state Sen. Randy Fine, a conservative firebrand known for his support of Israel and his efforts to restrict LGBTQ+ rights. Fine was first elected to the Florida House in 2016, and recently broke with Gov. Ron DeSantis, accusing the governor of not doing enough to combat antisemitism.

Who's challenging Trump's picks?

One of the main Republican challengers running against Patronis in the 1st District is former state Rep. Joel Rudman, a doctor who built his political profile by criticizing mask mandates during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Fine faces two other Republicans in the 6th District race, Aaron Baker of Sorrento and Ehsan Joarder of Brooksville, who describes himself as a "young entrepreneur" on his website.

Who are the Democrats?

In the 1st District, Gay Valimont, an activist with Moms Demand Action, challenged Gaetz as a Democrat this past election cycle. She's running again in the special election after losing in November with just 34% of the vote.

Waltz carried the 6th District by a 30-point margin in November. Now two Democrats are running for his seat — Josh Weil, an Orlando area teacher, and Ges Selmont, a businessman from Elkton. This isn't

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 217 ~ 51 of 85

Selmont's first time running for Congress — he challenged Rep. John Rutherford in Florida's 4th Congressional District in 2018.

What are experts watching?

In both districts, Republican primary winners should have the inside track to join Congress, said Aubrey Jewett, a political scientist at the University of Central Florida.

Both Fine and Patronis had high name recognition even before winning Trump's endorsement. But they've also both faced criticism for not living in the districts they want to represent. Jewett said the Republican primary for Gaetz's seat in particular could prove competitive.

Jewett said there's even a chance Democrats could run up the margins in a low turnout scenario, pointing to other recent special elections.

"Democrats might be able to take Waltz's seat, but it would take a small miracle," Jewett said. "I think for the Gaetz seat, that would be more than a small miracle. It would be like a very large miracle to take that one."

## **In the early going, Trump 2.0 approach on foreign policy is to talk loudly and carry a big stick**

By AAMER MADHANI and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Donald Trump in his first week back in the White House has offered an early preview to his second-term foreign policy approach: Talk loudly and wield a big stick.

Over the weekend, Trump threatened to levy massive tariffs on Colombia after the country's leftist president refused to allow a U.S. military plane returning deported migrants from the South American nation to land in the country.

He's needled the Ukrainian president for "talking so brave" instead of negotiating with Russia. He's flummoxed even Republican allies with his calls on Mideast nations to take in Palestinian refugees from Gaza, potentially moving out enough of the population to "just clean out" the war-torn area to create a virtual clean slate.

Through economic coercion and sharp rhetoric, Trump is signaling that he intends to be a bull in the China shop in hopes of extracting what he wants from allies and adversaries alike.

In the Colombia episode, President Gustavo Petro quickly relented in the face of Trump's threatened tariffs — 25% on all Colombian goods coming into the country and doubling to 50% in a week. The moment may be just a taste of what is to come.

"As you saw yesterday, we've made it clear to every country that they will be taking back ... people that we're sending out," Trump said in a Monday speech before House Republicans at their annual policy retreat. "The criminals and illegal aliens coming from their countries we're (sending) them back, and they're going to take them back fast. And if they don't, they'll pay a very high economic price."

The hard-nosed approach from Trump in the showdown with Colombia was hardly unexpected. He vowed to quickly reverse the approach of his Democratic predecessor, President Joe Biden, whom he frequently criticized as demonstrating weakness on the international stage when the world was looking for stronger leadership from the world's foremost power.

White House counselor Alina Habba said Petro miscalculated and "flexed with the wrong president."

"You mess with the bull, you get the horns," Habba told Newsmax.

Big stick diplomacy

During planning for their return to power, Trump's team decided on an aggressive course of action to respond to any nation that moved to block his agenda, hoping to make an example of them right out of the gate, according to a senior official who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations.

And with the heavy reliance on sticks rather than carrots in the opening days of Trump 2.0, the administration has sought to send a clear message that U.S. foreign policy will be driven by an unrelenting

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 217 ~ 52 of 85

commitment to the "America First" worldview.

Soon after the Colombia matter was resolved, Trump posted on social media a photo of himself in a pinstripe suit and Trilby fedora favored by American gangsters in the 1920s as well as a crass acronym that warns not to test him. The posting was a decidedly modern, and Trumpian, turn on President Theodore Roosevelt's use of the West African aphorism to "speak softly and carry a big stick."

"It seems to me that from the Trump administration's perspective, they've met their goal, right?" said Kevin Whitaker, who served as the U.S. ambassador to Colombia from 2014 to 2019. "It's not just that they got what they wanted. The approval for the flights was secured. But they sent a message about their commitment to use all of the tools in their toolkit in order to achieve them."

It's not just on immigration where Trump is trying to rattle his international counterparts to get in line with blunt talk.

The president said that he used a phone call last week with Saudi Arabia Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman to press for OPEC+ to slash oil prices, a move that he believes is the most effective way to force Russia to negotiate an end to its war against Ukraine. The kingdom is the most prominent member of OPEC+, a group of major oil exporting nations.

Trump, a critic of the Biden administration's spending to back Ukraine's war effort, pledged during the campaign to bring a quick end to the nearly three-year war.

"One way to stop it quickly is for OPEC to stop making so much money," Trump told reporters, in what could be interpreted as a blunt critique of the Saudis, a key ally. "So, OPEC ought to get on the ball and drop the price of oil. And that war will stop right away."

On Saturday evening, Trump also grabbed the attention of Middle East partners, Egypt and Jordan, when he said that the two countries should take hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from war-ravaged Gaza. Officials from both countries flatly rejected the idea, and even a prominent Republican Trump backer, Sen. Lindsey Graham of North Carolina, said he was puzzled by Trump's comments.

"The idea that all the Palestinians are going to leave and go somewhere else, I don't see that to be overly practical," Graham said in a Sunday morning appearance on CNN's "State of the Union."

### Rubio heads to Central America

The dispute with Colombia's Petro comes as Trump is dispatching Secretary of State Marco Rubio this week to Central America for his first international travel as America's top diplomat. The trip will take him to Panama, El Salvador, Guatemala, Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic.

The decision to put an early focus on Central America — including nations that are central to the success of Trump's mass deportation effort and his bid to clamp down on illegal immigration — speaks to how big a priority immigration is for Trump out of the gate.

Rubio's stop in Panama also comes as Trump in recent weeks has said he wants the Panama Canal back under U.S. control, claiming that "American ships are being severely overcharged and not treated fairly in any way, shape or form," and that "China is operating the Panama Canal."

Some Panamanians have interpreted Trump's remarks as a way of applying pressure on Panama for something else he wants: better control of migration through the Darien Gap. Others have recalled the 1989 U.S. invasion of Panama with concern.

To be certain, China's growing commercial interest in the Western Hemisphere, including its operation of a port at the canal, have long fueled U.S. concerns about Beijing's broader role in global shipping and port operations. The Biden administration shared similar worries, but sought to counter China by rallying wealthy economies to band together against China's trillion-dollar "Belt and Road Initiative," which has launched a network of infrastructure projects and maritime lanes that snake around large portions of the world.

### Colombia 'firestorm' a preview of what's to come?

The Biden administration also sought to make the case to developing nations that the U.S. offered a better partner than Beijing, which it accused of exploiting poorer nations with "coercive and unsustainable lending" to build infrastructure.

But Trump in his approach to Panama has taken a wholly different approach, jostling and threatening

an ally to get in line.

Colombia, which was at the center of Sunday's diplomatic hullabaloo, has a strategic partnership with China, but thus far has resisted joining the belt and road project as many of its Latin American and Caribbean neighbors have.

Geoff Ramsey, a senior fellow at the Adrienne Arsht Latin America Center at the Atlantic Council, said that he expects Petro to aggressively pursue infrastructure deals with China moving forward.

"I think that's going to be a source of tensions with Washington," Ramsey said. "For better or for worse, Sunday's firestorm may be just a preview of what's to come."

## Canadian PM hopeful lays out plan to fight Trump's tariff threats 'where it hurts'

By JIM MORRIS Associated Press

VANCOUVER, British Columbia (AP) — Chrystia Freeland, the former finance minister who is running to replace Justin Trudeau as Canada's prime minister, said Monday Canada needs to release a "retaliation list" of goods the country would target if U.S. President Donald Trump makes good on his threat to slap 25% tariffs on Canadian goods.

A list of products worth \$200 billion Canadian dollars (US\$139 billion) would send a message to U.S. exporters about the harm tariffs would cause them, Freeland said in a statement.

"Being smart means retaliating where it hurts," she said. "Our counterpunch must be dollar-for-dollar — and it must be precisely and painfully targeted: Florida orange growers, Wisconsin dairy farmers, Michigan dishwasher manufacturers, and much more."

"Now is the moment when Canada must make clear to Americans the specific costs that will accompany any tariff measures by the Trump administration."

Trump has said he will use economic coercion to pressure Canada to become the nation's 51st state. He continues to erroneously cast the U.S. trade deficit with Canada — a natural resource-rich nation that provides the U.S. with commodities like oil — as a subsidy.

Canada is the top export destination for 36 U.S. states. Nearly \$3.6 billion Canadian (US\$2.7 billion) worth of goods and services cross the border each day.

John Ries, senior associate dean at the University of British Columbia Sauder School of Business, said Canada should retaliate against any tariffs but warned against publicizing a list in advance, citing the risk of antagonizing Trump — and making it harder for him to back off on his threats.

"He always wants to win," said Ries. "He doesn't want to show any weakness."

Freeland said Monday that if she wins the leadership race and become prime minister she would also prohibit American companies from bidding on Canadian federal procurement (excluding defense).

She also said she would convene an international summit with the leaders of Mexico, Denmark, Panama, and the president of the European Union to "coordinate a joint response to challenges to our sovereignty and our economies."

Some lawmakers have suggested Canada could stop energy shipments to the United States, a move opposed by Daniele Smith, the premier of Canada's oil-rich province of Alberta.

Former central banker Mark Carney, who is also running for the Liberal leadership, said over the weekend that cutting off Quebec's hydro exports to the U.S. should remain an option on the table in a trade fight with Trump.

It was Freeland's abrupt resignation as finance minister last month that forced Trudeau to say he is resigning as prime minister and party leader.

Trudeau is to remain prime minister until a new Liberal Party leader is chosen on March 9.

The next Liberal leader could be the shortest-tenured prime minister in the country's history. All three opposition parties have vowed to bring down the Liberals' minority government in a no-confidence vote after parliament resumes on March 24. An election is expected this spring.

## Workers at a Whole Foods Market in Philadelphia become the 1st to unionize

By HALELUYA HADERO and LISA BAUMANN Associated Press

Workers at a Whole Foods Market in Pennsylvania voted to unionize on Monday, becoming the first group of employees to pull off a labor win at the Amazon-owned grocery store chain.

Employees at the Philadelphia store cast 130 votes — or about 57% of the ballots cast — in favor of joining a local chapter of The United Food and Commercial Workers International Union for the purposes of collective bargaining. According to the National Labor Relations Board, which oversaw the election, 100 workers rejected the motion.

“This fight is far from over, but today’s victory is an important step forward,” said Wendell Young IV, the president of UFCW Local 1776. “We are ready to bring Whole Foods to the bargaining table to negotiate a fair first contract that reflects the workers’ needs and priorities.”

The results mark the first successful entry of organized labor into Amazon’s grocery business, which includes Whole Foods, Amazon Fresh and the Amazon Go convenience stores. Amazon, which purchased Whole Foods in 2017 for \$13.7 billion, has tried to fend off organizing efforts in its stores as well as by delivery drivers and warehouse workers.

Nearly three years ago, Amazon warehouse workers in the New York City borough of Staten Island voted to be represented in labor negotiations by a fledgling union that has since affiliated with the Teamsters. But Amazon has refused to come to the bargaining table.

Employees at the Whole Foods store, located in the center of Philadelphia, started organizing early last year, Young said. They teamed up with UFCW Local 1776 in the late summer, and in November petitioned the National Labor Relations Board to hold an official election.

The local union said the store workers hoped a successful vote would help them secure higher wages, more affordable health care coverage, child care support, greater work-life balance and better working conditions.

In a statement after the votes were counted Monday night, Whole Foods said it “is proud to offer competitive compensation, great benefits, and career advancement opportunities to all Team Members.”

“We are disappointed by the outcome of this election, but we are committed to maintaining a positive working environment in our Philly Center City store,” the company added.

The company said it provides store employees with a competitive average hourly wage and other benefits, such as 401(k) plans and “on-demand” mental health support. It did not disclose its average hourly rate, but some online job postings show store employees can earn \$16 per hour or higher.

After the union filed the election petition, workers at the Philadelphia store were given free snacks, and the company repainted their break rooms, according to Young.

Earlier this month, UFCW Local 1776 filed unfair labor practice charges with the NLRB against the company, accusing it of firing one worker in retaliation for union activities and alleging that supervisors told employees they would get paid more if they rejected the union bid. Whole Foods disputed the worker was fired in retaliation.

The union has also accused Whole Foods of withholding region-wide wage increases from employees at the Philadelphia store because of the union activities.

The company acknowledges it did not offer wage increases to workers at the store, even though it did so at a number of other stores as part of a quarterly review. Whole Foods maintains it would have been illegal to make wage adjustments in the lead-up to the union election, an argument Young disputed.

The company said it was delaying the pay bumps until after the election to avoid the appearance of trying to influence the vote with raises.

Seattle-based Amazon has resisted union organizing efforts by its workers. Amazon delivery drivers went on strike in a handful of U.S. cities before Christmas to exert pressure on the the company to recognize them as unionized employees or to meet demands for an inaugural labor contract.

Workers at an Amazon warehouse in North Carolina are scheduled to vote next month on whether they

want to be represented by an upstart union called Carolina Amazonians United for Solidarity and Empowerment.

The retail giant has challenged the structure of the National Labor Relations Board in court. Amazon accused the federal agency of tampering in the 2022 union election at the Staten Island warehouse, in part by bringing a lawsuit against the company to reinstate a fired organizer close to when voting began.

## **ICC prosecutor seeking arrest warrants for those accused of atrocities in Sudan's West Darfur region**

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The prosecutor of the International Criminal Court announced Monday that his office will be seeking arrest warrants for those accused of atrocities in Sudan's West Darfur region, which has seen reported ethnic cleansing by paramilitary forces that have been fighting government forces for 19 months.

Karim Khan told the U.N. Security Council that crimes are being committed in Darfur "as we speak and daily" and are being used as a weapon of war. He said that conclusion is the result of "a hard-edged analysis" based on evidence and information collected by his office.

Sudan plunged into conflict in mid-April 2023, when long-simmering tensions between its military and paramilitary leaders broke out in the capital, Khartoum, and spread to other regions, including the vast western Darfur region.

Two decades ago, Darfur became synonymous with genocide and war crimes, particularly by the notorious Janjaweed Arab militias, against populations that identify as Central or East African. Up to 300,000 people were killed and 2.7 million were driven from their homes.

Khan told the council in January there were grounds to believe both government forces and the paramilitary Rapid Support Force, which was born out of the Janjaweed, may be committing war crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide in Darfur.

The Biden administration, just before it left office this month, determined that the RSF and its proxies are committing genocide in Sudan's civil war. And the ICC prosecutor told the council Monday that there are "very clear echoes" in the current conflict of what happened 20 years ago.

"The pattern of crimes, the perpetrators, the parties, tracked very closely with the same protagonists, the same targeted groups as existed in 2003" and led the Security Council to refer Darfur to the ICC, Khan said. "It's the same communities, the same groups suffering, a new generation suffering the same hell that has been endured by other generations of Darfuris, and this is tragic."

Human Rights Watch in a major report last May said the Rapid Support Forces and their allied militias carried out attacks against the ethnic Masalit and other non-Arab groups in El Geneina, the capital of West Darfur state, from April to June 2023, with attacks intensifying that November.

At least thousands of people were killed and hundreds of thousands displaced during the attacks, according to the report by the leading rights group.

"I can confirm today that my office is taking the necessary steps to put forward applications for warrants of arrest in relations to crimes we allege are being committed and have been committed in West Darfur," Khan told the council on Monday.

He gave no details on the specific crimes or the people the ICC wants arrested. But he did say his office is particularly concerned about a stream of allegations of gender crimes against women and girls, which he said were "a priority" for the ICC.

He said the last six months have seen "a tailspin into deeper suffering, deeper misery for the people of Darfur," with famine present, conflict increasing, children targeted, girls and women subjected to rape and the whole landscape "one of destruction."

Khan had a simple message for those on the ground in El Geneina in West Darfur, the city of El Fasher in North Darfur, which is besieged by RSF forces, and elsewhere in Darfur: "Now, better late than never, for goodness sake, comply with international humanitarian law, not as a charity, not out of some political

necessity, but out of the dictates of humanity.”

Khan told the council he made efforts to engage with the RSF to obtain information relevant to the ICC’s investigations, and members of his office met with representatives of the paramilitary force last week.

“I do expect, and hope, and require swift and meaningful action, and will be monitoring that,” he said.

## **US places dozens of senior aid officials on leave, citing possible resistance to Trump orders**

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER and MATTHEW LEE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — At least 56 senior officials in the top U.S. aid and development agency were placed on leave Monday amid an investigation into an alleged effort to thwart President Donald Trump’s orders.

A current official and a former official at the U.S. Agency for International Development confirmed the reason given for the move Monday. Both spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisal.

Several hundred contractors based in Washington and elsewhere also were laid off, the officials said.

It follows Trump’s executive order last week that directed a sweeping 90-day pause on most U.S. foreign assistance disbursed through the State Department.

As a result of the freeze, thousands of U.S.-funded humanitarian, development and security programs worldwide had stopped work or were preparing to do so. Without funds to pay staff, aid organizations were laying off hundreds of employees.

An internal USAID notice sent late Monday and obtained by The Associated Press said new acting administrator Jason Gray had identified “several actions within USAID that appear to be designed to circumvent the President’s Executive Orders and the mandate from the American people.”

“As a result, we have placed a number of USAID employees on administrative leave with full pay and benefits until further notice while we complete our analysis of these actions,” Gray wrote.

Trump has signed many executive orders since taking office a week ago, but the notice did not say which orders the employees were suspected of violating.

The senior agency officials put on leave were experienced employees who had served in multiple administrations, including Trump’s, the former USAID official said.

Before those officials were removed from the job Monday, they were scrambling to help U.S.-funded aid organizations cope with the new funding freeze and seek waivers to continue life-saving activities, from getting clean water to war-displaced people in Sudan to continuing to monitor for bird flu globally, the former official said.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio has specifically exempted only emergency food programs and military aid to Israel and Egypt from the freeze on foreign assistance.

The Trump administration and GOP lawmakers, many of them skeptical of the need for foreign aid and eager to see other countries pay more, say they will review each foreign assistance program to determine whether it is directly in U.S. interests and eliminate those that are deemed wasteful or liberal social engineering.

Politico first reported the USAID officials being put on leave.

## **Trump pushes border crackdown at House Republican retreat as he caps first week in office**

By KEVIN FREKING, WILL WEISSERT and CHRIS MEGERIAN Associated Press

DORAL, Fla. (AP) — President Donald Trump regaled House Republicans on Monday with a rhetorical highlight reel from his first week in office, and he urged them to support his immigration crackdown and border security proposals.

“We have no apologies and we’re moving very fast,” Trump said.

“I really focus on the border more than anything else,” he said, downplaying the importance of inflation, an issue that fueled his candidacy last year but one that he has less control over as president.



# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 217 ~ 57 of 85

Speaking at House Republicans' annual policy retreat, Trump made clear his political ambitions as he rallied lawmakers to advance their conservative agenda.

"We're forging a new political majority that's shattering and replacing Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal coalition, which dominated American politics for over 100 years," he said.

The conference is being held at Trump National Doral Miami, a posh resort with four golf courses owned by the billionaire president. Although Republicans are euphoric over election victories that have given them total control in Washington, they're also facing difficult negotiations in the coming weeks and months.

They need to find consensus on a spending bill before a March 14 deadline, when funding for the federal government expires.

In addition, Republicans are working on a budget blueprint that would set the stage for their broader plans, including tax cuts, fossil fuel development and border security. With thin majorities in the House and Senate, they will need near-unanimity to pass their proposals without Democratic support.

Speaker Mike Johnson, a Louisiana Republican, set the first week of February for the House Budget Committee to pass the blueprint that is key to the whole process.

"That will be where the lion's share of these campaign promises we made are fulfilled," Johnson said. "And that's what all the hard work here is, in the room with all of us negotiating and coming to consensus."

Political capital is almost always at its peak at the start of a new presidential term, even more so because this is Trump's second and he is prevented under the Constitution from a third.

However, that didn't stop Trump from joking Monday about running again.

"I think I'm not allowed to run again," Trump said as he turned to Johnson. "Am I allowed to run again, Mike?"

Johnson is trying to lump many of the Republican priorities into one massive catch-all bill that Senate Democrats cannot filibuster, but many Republican senators think it would be better to do two bills — the first focused on border security and defense, and the second on extending and expanding upon the tax cuts passed in Trump's first term.

"Whether it's one bill, two bills, I don't care," Trump said in Doral.

Republicans are also eyeing potential changes to key safety net programs, such as work requirements for those participating in Medicaid, to help offset the cost of enacting their priorities. Trump has pushed expensive ideas like exempting tipped wages and Social Security checks from income taxes.

House Republicans said they expect more specifics to be announced after the retreat in Doral. Until then, they were highlighting Trump's first week in office, particularly reveling in the showdown Trump had with Colombia this past weekend over accepting flights of deported migrants from the U.S.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said in a statement that Colombia agreed to all of Trump's terms, "including the unrestricted acceptance of all illegal aliens from Colombia returned from the United States, including on U.S. military aircraft, without limitation or delay."

"Think about it, President Trump, I don't even think had finished the front nine before he successfully forced the Colombian president to take back their illegal immigrants," said Rep. Lisa McClain, R-Mich. "The days of America being walked all over are long gone thanks to President Trump."

On the budget fight to come, Democrats are already casting it as one that would primarily benefit the wealthy at the expense of others, with House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries labeling the Republican effort a "contract against America."

"It will hurt working families, hurt the middle class, hurt our children, hurt our seniors and hurt our veterans," Jeffries said.

Republicans are warning that if Congress does not act quickly to extend tax relief, capital will remain on the sidelines and families next year would see child tax credits and a guaranteed tax deduction greatly reduced, upping their federal tax bill.

One of Trump's parting admonitions to lawmakers in the room was to stick together because "we have a chance to win like never before."

"There's nothing we cannot achieve as long as the Republican Party remains united. I hope you can remain united," Trump said.

## Scott Bessent confirmed as treasury secretary, giving him a key role in extending Trump's tax cuts

By FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. Senate confirmed billionaire investor Scott Bessent on Monday to serve as President Donald Trump's treasury secretary, giving him the delicate balancing act of cutting taxes and curbing deficits while putting forward a plan on tariffs that doesn't jeopardize growth.

He was confirmed on a 68-to-29 vote, with 16 Democrats voting in favor of making him the nation's 79th treasury secretary.

The South Carolina resident will be the first openly gay individual in the role, a historic first as Trump seeks novel ways to implement a policy agenda driven by both billionaire business leaders with concerns over regulations and a populist base that wants government leaders to fight for them.

Bessent, a past supporter of Democrats who once worked for George Soros, has become an enthusiastic supporter of Trump.

He has said the U.S. faces economic calamity if Congress does not renew key provisions of Trump's Tax Cuts and Jobs Act that are set to expire Dec. 31, 2025. Negotiating the extension of those tax cuts will be one of his major responsibilities even as he has also pushed for 3% annual growth, significant trims to deficits and increasing domestic oil production by 3 million barrels a day.

After Bessent was confirmed, Republican Sen. Mike Crapo of Idaho, chair of the Senate Finance Committee, said approving Bessent was "one of the easiest votes we could ever take."

However, he faced pushback from Democrats on unpaid tax liabilities.

Democrats say Bessent has engaged in tax avoidance by failing to pay nearly \$1 million in Medicare taxes related to his limited partnership in his hedge fund. Bessent, meanwhile, takes issue with his tax liability to the IRS and is in litigation over the tax bill. He committed during his confirmation hearing that he would pay the tax bill if a court rules against him.

Other Democrats have voiced support for Bessent, including Sen. Chris Coons, D-Del.

"While I disagree with many of his policy positions, particularly his support for extending tax cuts for the wealthy and President Trump's tariff threats, I hope that he will focus the Treasury Department on bringing down costs for middle-class Americans," Coons said in a statement, adding that he supports Bessent's commitment to continue U.S. investment in international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

Trump took his time before settling on Bessent as his nominee. He also mulled over billionaire investor John Paulson and Howard Lutnick, whom Trump tapped for commerce secretary.

The treasury secretary is responsible for serving as the president's fiscal policy adviser and managing the public debt. He is also a member of the president's National Economic Council.

Among his responsibilities will be investigating the feasibility of creating an External Revenue Service to collect tariff revenue from other nations. Trump announced the creation of the agency — which requires an act of Congress— on Truth Social earlier this month.

Tariffs have become a benchmark of Trump's economic agenda. He has threatened a potential 25% levy on all goods from allies like Canada and Mexico and 60% on goods from China.

In addition, Bessent faces a mounting and record U.S. debt load. Before leaving office this month, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen warned congressional leaders that Treasury would start taking "extraordinary measures," or special accounting maneuvers intended to prevent the nation from hitting the debt ceiling. And on Thursday, Treasury deployed such measures.

With Trump's return to the White House and his Republican Party controlling majorities in Congress, his outsider Cabinet choices are getting confirmed despite initial skepticism and opposition from both sides of the aisle.

In his testimony, Bessent committed to maintaining the IRS' Direct File program — which allows taxpayers to file their returns directly to the IRS for free — at least for the 2025 tax season, which begins Jan. 27. Republican lawmakers say the program is a waste of money because free filing programs already exist,

although they are not popular.

He also said during his confirmation hearing that the Federal Reserve should remain independent from the president's influence and that U.S. sanctions on Russian oil should be more aggressive.

## Rain douses wildfires in Southern California without causing serious mudslides

By CHRISTOPHER WEBER Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The first significant storm of the season brought snow and downpours to Southern California that doused wildfires and caused some ash and mud to flow across streets in the Los Angeles area on Monday.

More than an inch (2.5 centimeters) of rain fell in many areas, loosening Los Angeles hillsides burned bare by the recent blaze near the Pacific Palisades neighborhood, where crews cleared inundated roadways including the famed Pacific Coast Highway.

In neighboring Malibu, four schools were closed Monday "due to dangerous road conditions," the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District said in a statement.

Clouds were clearing, but flood watches from lingering pockets of rain were still in effect for fire-scarred areas of the Palisades, Altadena and Castaic Lake.

"All these fresh burns are very susceptible to rapid runoff," said Joe Sirard, a meteorologist for the National Weather Service's office for Los Angeles.

North of Los Angeles, snowy conditions late Sunday shut down the mountainous Tejon Pass section of Interstate 5, a key north-south artery for the state. It reopened Monday afternoon. The highway rises to more than 4,100 feet (1,250 meters) between LA and the San Joaquin Valley, making it susceptible to storm closures.

Mountains across San Bernardino and Riverside counties were under a winter storm warning Monday and were forecast to get about a foot (0.30 meters) of snow from the storm. Chains were required for some vehicles heading to ski resorts in the Big Bear Lake area northeast of Los Angeles because of icy roads.

Parts of San Diego County received more than an inch of rain, while other areas got less.

The rain began Saturday after months of dry and often gusty weather that created dangerous fire conditions.

Los Angeles County crews spent much of last week removing vegetation, shoring up slopes and reinforcing roads in areas devastated by the Palisades and Eaton fires, which reduced entire neighborhoods to rubble and ash after breaking out during powerful winds Jan. 7.

The Palisades Fire, the largest of the blazes that destroyed thousands of homes and killed at least 12 people, reached 94% containment Monday. The Eaton Fire, which broke out near Altadena and has killed at least 17 people, was 98% contained.

The Hughes Fire, which ignited north of Los Angeles last week and caused evacuation orders or warnings for more than 50,000 people, was nearly contained.

Downpours in San Diego County, helped firefighters make significant progress against the smaller Border 2 Fire churning through a remote area of the Otay Mountain Wilderness near the U.S.-Mexico border.

Los Angeles city and county officials last week expedited cleanup efforts and other measures aimed at mitigating the environmental impacts of fire-related pollutants, and a White House statement on Friday said President Donald Trump has directed federal officials to help local authorities. Within five days of the order, the Federal Emergency Management Agency and other departments "shall develop and execute a plan to expedite the bulk removal of contaminated and general debris," the statement said.

Officials cautioned that ash in recent burn zones was a toxic mix of incinerated cars, electronics, batteries, building materials, paints, furniture and other household items. It contains pesticides, asbestos, plastics and lead. Residents were urged to wear protective gear while cleaning up.

Concerns about post-fire debris flows have been especially high since 2018, when the town of Montecito, up the coast from Los Angeles, was ravaged by mudslides after a downpour hit mountain slopes charred

by a huge wildfire. Hundreds of homes were damaged and 23 people died.

The rain ended a near-record streak of dry weather for Southern California. Most of Southern California is currently in "extreme drought" or "severe drought," according to the U.S. Drought Monitor.

## **Trump Justice Department says it has fired employees involved in prosecutions of the president**

By ERIC TUCKER and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Justice Department said Monday that it had fired more than a dozen employees who worked on criminal prosecutions of President Donald Trump, moving rapidly to pursue retribution against lawyers involved in the investigations and signaling an early willingness to take action favorable to the president's personal interests.

The abrupt termination targeting career prosecutors who worked on special counsel Jack Smith's team is the latest sign of upheaval inside the Justice Department and is consistent with the administration's determination to purge the government of workers it perceives as disloyal to the president.

The norm-shattering move, which follows the reassignment of multiple senior career officials across divisions, was made even though rank-and-file prosecutors by tradition remain with the department across presidential administrations and are not punished by virtue of their involvement in sensitive investigations. The firings are effective immediately.

"Today, Acting Attorney General James McHenry terminated the employment of a number of DOJ officials who played a significant role in prosecuting President Trump," said a statement from a Justice Department official. "In light of their actions, the Acting Attorney General does not trust these officials to assist in faithfully implementing the President's agenda. This action is consistent with the mission of ending the weaponization of government."

It was not immediately clear which prosecutors were affected by the order, or how many who worked on the investigations into Trump remained with the department as Trump took office last week. It was also not immediately known how many of the fired prosecutors intended to challenge the terminations by arguing that the department had cast aside civil service protections afforded to federal employees.

The action was the latest effort to turn the table on criminal investigations that for years shadowed Trump, resulting in separate indictments that never went to trial and were ultimately abandoned.

On his first day in office, he issued sweeping pardons and sentence commutations to the more than 1,500 supporters charged in the Jan. 6 riot at the U.S. Capitol, a massive clemency grant that benefited even those found guilty of violent attacks on police, as well as leaders of far-right extremist groups convicted of failed plots to keep the Republican in power.

Trump has long sought to exert control over a Justice Department that investigated him both during his first term as well as during the last four years under former Attorney General Merrick Garland. He has repeatedly said he expects loyalty from a law enforcement community trained to put facts, evidence and the law ahead of politics. He's moved to put close allies in high-level positions, including replacing his first FBI director, Christopher Wray, with loyalist Kash Patel.

Trump's pick for attorney general, Pam Bondi, said at her confirmation hearing this month that she would not play politics but did not rule out the potential for investigations into Trump adversaries like Smith.

Smith resigned from the department earlier this month after submitting a two-volume report on the twin investigations into Trump's efforts to undo the 2020 presidential election and his hoarding of classified documents at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida. At least one other key member of the team, Jay Bratt, also retired from the department this month after serving as a lead prosecutor in the classified documents case.

Both the election interference case and the classified documents prosecution were withdrawn by Smith's team following Trump's presidential win in November, in keeping with longstanding Justice Department policy.

The firings were first reported by Fox News.

## **Palestinians celebrate their return to northern Gaza after 15 months of war**

By ABDEL KAREEM HANA, WAFAA SHURAFU and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

WADI GAZA, Gaza Strip (AP) — Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians streamed into Gaza's most heavily destroyed area on Monday after Israel opened the north for the first time since the early weeks of the war with Hamas, a dramatic reversal of their exodus 15 months ago.

As a fragile ceasefire held into a second week, Israel was told by Hamas that eight of the hostages to be freed during the deal's first phase are dead.

Joyous crowds of Palestinians, some holding babies or pushing wheelchairs, walked along a seaside road all day and into the night, carrying bedrolls, bottles of water and other belongings. Armed and masked Hamas fighters flashed a victory sign. The crowd was watched over by Israeli tanks on a nearby hill.

The United Nations said over 200,000 people were observed moving north on Monday morning.

Palestinians who have been sheltering in squalid tent camps and former schools are eager to return to their homes — even though they are likely damaged or destroyed. Many had feared that Israel would make their displacement permanent.

Yasmin Abu Amshah, a mother of three, said she walked 6 kilometers (nearly 4 miles) to reach her damaged but habitable Gaza City home. She saw her younger sister for the first time in over a year.

"It was a long trip, but a happy one," she said.

Many saw their return as an act of steadfastness after Israel's military campaign, which was launched in response to the Hamas militant group's Oct. 7, 2023, attack on southern Israel. The return was also seen as a repudiation of U.S. President Donald Trump's suggestion that many Palestinians be resettled in Egypt and Jordan. Both countries rejected the idea.

Families of dead hostages are informed

Whether hostages are still alive inside Gaza has been a heartbreaking question for waiting families who have pushed Israel's government to reach a deal to free them, fearing that time was running out.

Before Monday's announcement, Israel believed that at least 35 of the about 90 hostages taken in the Oct. 7 attack and still in Gaza were dead.

Government spokesman David Mencer told journalists that a list received overnight from Hamas on the status of the 33 hostages being freed under the ceasefire's first phase showed eight were dead.

The families have been informed, he said, adding that the information matched what Israeli intelligence had believed.

The ceasefire is aimed at winding down the deadliest and most destructive war ever fought between Israel and Hamas. Militants killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, in the Oct. 7 assault and abducted another 250.

Israel responded with an air and ground war that has killed over 47,000 Palestinians, over half of them women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. It does not say how many of the dead were combatants. Israel says it has killed over 17,000 militants, without providing evidence.

In all, around 90% of Gaza's 2.3 million people have been displaced, and they face new health risks as they return.

'The joy of return'

Ismail Abu Mattar, a father of four who waited for days near the crossing point for northern Gaza, described scenes of jubilation, with people singing, praying and crying.

"It's the joy of return," said Abu Mattar, whose relatives were among the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who fled or were driven out of what is now Israel during the 1948 war surrounding its creation. "We had thought we wouldn't return, like our ancestors."

In the war's opening days, Israel ordered the evacuation of the north and sealed it off after ground troops moved in. Around a million people fled south while hundreds of thousands remained in the north, which had some of the heaviest fighting and the worst destruction.

The opening to the north was delayed for two days as Israel said Hamas had changed the order of the

hostages it released in exchange for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners. Local medical officials said Israeli forces opened fire at the waiting crowd and killed several Palestinians over the weekend. Israel's military said it fired warning shots at approaching groups it deemed a threat.

Mediators resolved the dispute overnight. Hamas called the return "a victory for our people."

Later Monday in central Gaza, Awda hospital said it received the body of a child killed in the Nuseirat refugee camp when returnees were hit, and three others were wounded. It said three more were wounded in a separate attack near the camp.

Israel's military said one of its aircraft fired "to distance a number of suspicious vehicles" moving north in unauthorized areas. And it said it fired shots in northern Gaza to "remove" someone it deemed a threat who didn't move away.

Hostage dispute rattled week-old ceasefire

Palestinians were crossing on foot without inspection through part of the Netzarim corridor, a military zone bisecting the territory just south of Gaza City that Israel carved out early in the war. A checkpoint for vehicles opened later on Gaza's main north-south highway, where traffic was backed up for around 3 kilometers (2 miles).

Under the ceasefire agreement, vehicles are to be inspected for weapons before entering the north.

An Egyptian official said Egyptian contractors, along with a U.S. firm, run checkpoints that inspect vehicles heading via Salahuddin road. The contractors are part of an Egyptian-Qatari committee implementing the ceasefire, according to the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media. The contractors are cleared by Israel.

Israel had delayed the crossing's opening, which was supposed to happen over the weekend, saying it would not allow Palestinians north until a civilian hostage, Arbel Yehoud, was released. Israel said she should have been released before four female soldiers who were freed on Saturday.

Qatar, a key mediator, announced early Monday that Yehoud and two other hostages would be released by Friday. Israel said the release — which will include female soldier Agam Berger — will take place on Thursday. Another three hostages should be released on Saturday as previously planned.

There were mixed emotions among Israelis watching the scene in Gaza from the nearby city of Sderot. Some expressed mistrust toward the Palestinians. Others were empathetic.

"Let them come back home safely and conduct a normal life," said one, Rachel Osher. "We also want it. We want the same on both sides of the border."

## What is DeepSeek, the Chinese AI company upending the stock market?

By MATT O'BRIEN AP Technology Writer

A frenzy over an artificial intelligence chatbot made by Chinese tech startup DeepSeek was upending stock markets Monday and fueling debates over the economic and geopolitical competition between the U.S. and China in developing AI technology.

DeepSeek's AI assistant became the No. 1 downloaded free app on Apple's iPhone store Monday, propelled by curiosity about the ChatGPT competitor. Part of what's worrying some U.S. tech industry observers is the idea that the Chinese startup has caught up with the American companies at the forefront of generative AI at a fraction of the cost.

That, if true, calls into question the huge amounts of money U.S. tech companies say they plan to spend on the data centers and computer chips needed to power further AI advancements.

But hype and misconceptions about DeepSeek's technological advancements also sowed confusion.

"The models they built are fantastic, but they aren't miracles either," said Bernstein analyst Stacy Rasgon, who follows the semiconductor industry and was one of several stock analysts describing Wall Street's reaction as overblown.

"They're not using any innovations that are unknown or secret or anything like that," Rasgon said. "These are things that everybody's experimenting with."

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 217 ~ 63 of 85

What is DeepSeek?

The startup DeepSeek was founded in 2023 in Hangzhou, China and released its first AI large language model later that year. Its CEO Liang Wenfeng previously co-founded one of China's top hedge funds, High-Flyer, which focuses on AI-driven quantitative trading. The fund, by 2022, had amassed a cluster of 10,000 of California-based Nvidia's high-performance A100 graphics processor chips that are used to build and run AI systems, according to a post that summer on Chinese social media platform WeChat. The U.S. soon after restricted sales of those chips to China.

DeepSeek has said its recent models were built with Nvidia's lower-performing H800 chips, which are not banned in China, sending a message that the fanciest hardware might not be needed for cutting-edge AI research.

DeepSeek began attracting more attention in the AI industry last month when it released a new AI model that it boasted was on par with similar models from U.S. companies such as ChatGPT maker OpenAI, and was more cost-effective in its use of expensive Nvidia chips to train the system on troves of data. The chatbot became more widely accessible when it appeared on Apple and Google app stores early this year.

But it was a follow-up research paper published last week — on the same day as President Donald Trump's inauguration — that set in motion the panic that followed. That paper was about another DeepSeek AI model called R1 that showed advanced "reasoning" skills — such as the ability to rethink its approach to a math problem — and was significantly cheaper than a similar model sold by OpenAI called o1.

"What their economics look like, I have no idea," Rasgon said. "But I think the price points freaked people out."

The 'Sputnik' backdrop

Behind the drama over DeepSeek's technical capabilities is a debate within the U.S. over how best to compete with China on AI.

"Deepseek R1 is AI's Sputnik moment," said venture capitalist Marc Andreessen in a Sunday post on social platform X, referencing the 1957 satellite launch that set off a Cold War space exploration race between the Soviet Union and the U.S.

Andreessen, who has advised Trump on tech policy, has warned that overregulation of the AI industry by the U.S. government will hinder American companies and enable China to get ahead.

But the attention on DeepSeek also threatens to undermine a key strategy of U.S. foreign policy in recent years to restrict the sale of American-designed AI semiconductors to China. Some experts on U.S.-China relations don't think that is an accident.

"The technology innovation is real, but the timing of the release is political in nature," said Gregory Allen, director of the Wadhvani AI Center at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. Allen compared DeepSeek's announcement last week to U.S.-sanctioned Chinese company Huawei's release of a new phone during diplomatic discussions over Biden administration export controls in 2023.

"Trying to show that the export controls are futile or counterproductive is a really important goal of Chinese foreign policy right now," Allen said.

On Monday, Trump said DeepSeek's breakthrough was "good because you don't have to spend this much money."

Speaking Monday to House Republicans in Miami, Trump called the DeepSeek news "positive" if it is accurate because "you won't be spending as much and you'll get the same result." He called the development a "wake up call for our industries that we need to be laser focused on competing to win."

Trump signed an order on his first day in office last week that said his administration would "identify and eliminate loopholes in existing export controls," signaling that he is likely to continue and harden Biden's approach.

DeepSeek's progress on AI without the same amount of spending could possibly undermine the potentially \$500 billion AI investment by OpenAI, Oracle and SoftBank that Trump touted at the White House.

Nvidia's stock dropped 17% Monday, but the company in a statement commended DeepSeek's work as "an excellent AI advancement" that leveraged "widely-available models and compute that is fully export control compliant."

What makes DeepSeek different?

One thing that distinguishes DeepSeek from competitors such as OpenAI is that its models are “open source” — meaning key components are free for anyone to access and modify, though the company hasn’t disclosed the data it used for training.

But what’s attracted the most admiration about DeepSeek’s R1 model is what Nvidia calls a “perfect example of Test Time Scaling” — or when AI models effectively show their train of thought, and then use that for further training without having to feed them new sources of data.

“It’s just thinking out loud, basically,” said Lennart Heim, a researcher at Rand Corp.

OpenAI’s reasoning models, starting with o1, do the same, and it’s likely that other U.S.-based competitors such as Anthropic and Google have similar capabilities that haven’t been released, Heim said.

But “it’s the first time that we see a Chinese company being that close within a relatively short time period. I think that’s why a lot of people pay attention to it,” Heim said. “I used to believe OpenAI was the leader, the king of the hill, and that nobody could catch up. Turns out this is not completely the case.”

## **Hundreds of US visa appointments canceled in Colombia following spat with Trump over deportations**

By MANUEL RUEDA and ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON Associated Press

BOGOTA, Colombia (AP) — Visa appointments at the U.S. Embassy in Colombia were canceled Monday following a dispute between President Donald Trump and his Colombian counterpart Gustavo Petro over deportation flights from the U.S. that nearly turned into a costly trade war between the two countries.

Dozens of Colombians arrived at the U.S. Embassy in Bogota and were handed letters by local staff that said their appointments had been canceled “due to the Colombian government’s refusal to accept repatriation flights of Colombian nationals” over the weekend.

Later on Monday, Colombia’s Foreign Affairs Ministry said the government was sending a Colombian Air Force plane to San Diego to pick up a group of Colombians who were on a deportation flight that was not allowed to land on Sunday morning.

The victory claimed in Washington turned Colombia into an example of what other nations could face if they stand in the way of Trump’s illegal immigration crackdown. It also put on display a clash with a leftist leader of a country that had long been a U.S. partner against drug trafficking.

U.S. State Department spokesperson Tammy Bruce said Monday the Trump administration will take action if countries do not abide by their agreements, such as accepting deportees.

“This was about reminding Colombia that there is a price to pay if you go against your agreements, things that you promise,” she said in an interview on Fox News’ “The Story.” “Ultimately, what one would expect to happen did happen. They said ‘oh, our bad,’ and they reversed everything.”

Colombians, like most non-U.S. citizens, require a visa to travel to the United States for tourism, business or other purposes.

But in Colombia it can take up to two years to get a visa appointment at the U.S. embassy in Bogotá, which has also been handling visa requests from neighboring Venezuela for several years. Those who had their Monday appointments cancelled will likely have to wait several months for a new appointment. And many said they were frustrated with the unexpected cancellations.

“President Petro did not represent our interests,” said Elio Camelo, a U.S. visa seeker from the city of Cali who had traveled to Bogota for his appointment.

“There is a lot of uncertainty now over what will happen next,” said Mauricio Manrique, who had his Monday morning appointment canceled. He had traveled from Popayan, about 600 kilometers (about 370 miles) south of Bogota, for his appointment.

Tensions between Colombia and the U.S. escalated Sunday after Petro wrote an early morning message on X saying he would not allow two U.S. Air Force planes carrying Colombian deportees to land in the country.

Petro also shared a video that showed another group of deportees reportedly arriving in Brazil with shackles on their legs. He said Colombia would only accept deportation flights when the United States had



established protocols that ensured the “dignified treatment” of expelled migrants.

Trump responded with a post of his own on Truth Social, in which he called for 25% emergency tariffs on Colombian exports to the United States, and also said that the U.S. visas of Colombian government officials would be revoked, while goods coming from the South American country would face enhanced customs inspections.

Meanwhile, the State Department said Sunday it would stop issuing visas to Colombian nationals until deportation flights resumed.

Tensions decreased Sunday night following negotiations between the countries, with the White House saying in a statement that Colombia had allowed the resumption of deportation flights and “agreed to all of President Trump’s terms,” including the arrival of deportees on military flights.

Last year Colombia accepted 124 deportation flights. But those were charter flights organized by U.S. government contractors.

The White House said tariffs on Colombian exports would be put on hold, but added that visa restrictions on Colombian officials and enhanced custom inspections would remain “until the first planeload of Colombian deportees is successfully returned.”

A State Department spokesperson said Monday the agency had no updates on when visas for Colombian travelers would again be issued at the U.S. Embassy in Bogota.

Last year, more than 1.6 million Colombians traveled to the U.S. legally, according to a report by the Ministry of Commerce. The report said the United States was the top destination for Colombians traveling abroad.

## **CDC ordered to stop working with WHO immediately, upending expectations of an extended withdrawal**

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — U.S. public health officials have been told to stop working with the World Health Organization, effective immediately.

A U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention official, John Nkengasong, sent a memo to senior leaders at the agency on Sunday night telling them that all staff who work with the WHO must immediately stop their collaborations and “await further guidance.”

Experts said the sudden stoppage was a surprise and would set back work on investigating and trying to stop outbreaks of Marburg virus and mpox in Africa, as well as brewing global threats. It also comes as health authorities around the world are monitoring bird flu outbreaks among U.S. livestock.

The Associated Press viewed a copy of Nkengasong’s memo, which said the stop-work policy applied to “all CDC staff engaging with WHO through technical working groups, coordinating centers, advisory boards, cooperative agreements or other means — in person or virtual.” It also says CDC staff are not allowed to visit WHO offices.

President Donald Trump last week issued an executive order to begin the process of withdrawing the U.S. from WHO, but that did not take immediate effect. Leaving WHO requires the approval of Congress and that the U.S. meets its financial obligations for the current fiscal year. The U.S. also must provide a one-year notice.

His administration also told federal health agencies to stop most communications with the public through at least the end of the month.

“Stopping communications and meetings with WHO is a big problem,” said Dr. Jeffrey Klausner, a University of Southern California public health expert who collaborates with WHO on work against sexually transmitted infections.

“People thought there would be a slow withdrawal. This has really caught everyone with their pants down,” said Klausner, who said he learned of it from someone at CDC.

“Talking to WHO is a two-way street,” he added, noting that the two agencies benefit from each other’s expertise. The collaboration allows the U.S. to learn about new tests, new treatments and emerging out-

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 217 ~ 66 of 85

breaks — information “which can help us protect Americans abroad and at home,” Klausner said.

The CDC details nearly 30 people to WHO and sends many millions of dollars to it through cooperative agreements. The U.S. agency also has some of the world’s leading experts in infectious diseases and public health threats, and the two agencies’ staffers are in daily contact about health dangers and how to stop them.

The collaboration halt isn’t the only global health effect of Trump’s executive orders. Last week, the president froze spending on another critical program, PEPFAR or the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief.

The anti-HIV program is credited with saving 25 million lives, including those of 5.5 million children, since it was started by Republican President George W. Bush. It was included in a Trump administration freeze on foreign aid spending slated to last at least three months.

PEPFAR provides HIV medication to more than 20 million people “and stopping its funding essential stops their HIV treatment,” International AIDS Society President Beatriz Grinsztejn said in a statement. “If that happens, people are going to die and HIV will resurge.”

A U.S. health official confirmed that the CDC was stopping its work with WHO. The person was not authorized to talk about the memo and spoke on condition of anonymity.

A WHO spokesperson referred questions about the withdrawal to U.S. officials.

Officials at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services didn’t immediately respond to an emailed request for comment. And CDC officials didn’t respond to the AP’s request to speak with Nkengasong about the memo.

## **Chiefs look to join the Shaq-Kobe Lakers, Yankees and Michael Jordan with a rare three-peat**

By JOSH DUBOW AP Pro Football Writer

Patrick Mahomes and the Kansas City Chiefs accomplished a feat that had never been done before: Getting back to the NFL’s championship game following back-to-back Super Bowl wins.

Next up is the rare championship three-peat that hasn’t been accomplished in the NFL, NBA, NHL or Major League Baseball in more than 20 years.

The most recent team in those four leagues to win three straight championships was the Los Angeles Lakers with Shaquille O’Neal and Kobe Bryant in the 2000-02 NBA Finals.

Only two NFL teams have ever won three straight championships with Green Bay doing it from 1929-31 when the champion was determined by regular-season record and then again in the 1965-67 seasons. Vince Lombardi’s Packers won the final NFL championship before the start of the Super Bowl era in 1966 and then won the first two games between the AFL and NFL champions that determined the true kings of pro football.

Since the end of that Green Bay run, there have been seven three-peats in the four biggest North American pro sports leagues. Here’s a look at those dynastic teams:

Oakland Athletics, 1972-74

Charlie Finley’s Swingin’ A’s dominated baseball in the early 1970s with a roster filled with big characters. Led by slugger Reggie Jackson, dominant starters Catfish Hunter and Vida Blue, the A’s knocked off the Reds, Mets and Dodgers in successive seasons to join the Yankees as the only baseball franchises to win three straight titles.

Montreal Canadiens, 1976-79

Montreal dominated the NHL for decades with 23 Stanley Cups. The majority of those came in the pre-expansion Original Six era, but the Canadiens put together an impressive run in the late 1970s under coach Scotty Bowman. Led by dynamic scorer Guy Lafleur, two Cup-clinching goals by Jacque Lemaire, Hall of Fame defenseman Larry Robinson and goalie Ken Dryden, Montreal raced to four straight titles with a 48-10 record in the four postseason runs.

New York Islanders, 1980-83

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 217 ~ 67 of 85

As soon as the Canadiens' dynastic run ended, the Islanders started one of their own as the last hockey team to win at least three straight titles. Al Arbour's squad was led by high-scoring wing Mike Bossy, defenseman Denis Potvin and goalie Billy Smith. The run started with an overtime clincher by Bobby Nystrom against Philadelphia in the 1980 Stanley Cup Final and then they lost only once in three other trips to the Final.

Chicago Bulls, 1991-93 and 1996-98

After coming up short in back-to-back seasons against the Detroit Pistons, Michael Jordan and the Bulls broke through in the 1991 NBA Finals by beating Magic Johnson and the Lakers in five games. Chicago then dominated for most of the decade, repeating as champs in 1992 and 1993 for the NBA's first three-peat since Boston won eight straight titles from 1959-66.

After a brief step back in the 1994-95 seasons after Jordan stepped away to play baseball, the Bulls were even more dominant in their second run. Chicago won a then-record 72 regular-season games on the way to the title in 1996 and then won again the next two years before Jordan temporarily retired and the team broke up.

New York Yankees, 1998-2000

The Yankees had several dynastic runs in their history, winning four straight World Series from 1936-39 and then five in a row from 1949-53. But they are the only team to win three straight World Series in the free agency era. Led by homegrown stars Derek Jeter, Mariano Rivera, Andy Pettitte and Bernie Williams, Joe Torre's squad won the franchise's first title in 18 years in 1996.

After a playoff loss to Cleveland the next season, New York won three in a row starting with a then-record 114 wins in 1998. The Yankees dominated in the postseason with a 33-8 record.

Los Angeles Lakers 2000-02

After helping the Bulls to both of their three-peats in the 1990s, coach Phil Jackson did the same when he joined a talented Lakers team led by O'Neal and Bryant that had underperformed before his arrival. The Lakers needed an epic Game 7 comeback against Portland in the Western Conference Finals in 2000 on the way to the first title, went 15-1 in the postseason to repeat the following year and then had to pull out another Game 7 conference final win in 2002 against Sacramento on the way to the three-peat.

## Tech stocks tank as a Chinese competitor threatens to upend the AI frenzy; Nvidia sinks nearly 17%

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Wall Street's superstars tumbled Monday as a competitor from China threatens to upend the artificial-intelligence frenzy they've been feasting on.

The S&P 500 dropped 1.5%, dragged down in large part by a 16.9% fall for Nvidia. Other Big Tech stocks also took heavy losses, and they pulled the Nasdaq composite down 3.1% for its worst loss in more than a month.

The damage was focused on AI-related stocks, while the rest of the market held up much better. The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 289 points, or 0.7%, and the majority of U.S. stocks climbed. But anyone holding an S&P 500 index fund, which are found in many 401(k) accounts, felt the pain because of how influential those tech giants have become on indexes.

The shock to financial markets came from China, where a company called DeepSeek unveiled a large language model that can compete with U.S. giants but at potentially a fraction of the cost. DeepSeek had already hit the top of the chart for free apps on Apple's App Store by Monday morning, and analysts said such a feat would be particularly impressive given how the U.S. government has restricted Chinese access to top AI chips.

Skepticism, though, remains about how much DeepSeek's announcement will ultimately shake the economy that's built around the AI industry, from the chip makers making semiconductors to the utilities hoping to electrify vast data centers gobbling up computing power.

"It remains to be seen if DeepSeek found a way to work around these chip restrictions rules and what

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 217 ~ 68 of 85

chips they ultimately used as there will be many skeptics around this issue given the information is coming from China," according to Dan Ives, an analyst with Wedbush Securities.

DeepSeek's disruption nevertheless rocked AI-related stocks worldwide.

In Amsterdam, Dutch chipmaking equipment company ASML slid 7%. In Tokyo, Japan's Softbank Group Corp. lost 8.3% to pull closer to where it was before leaping on an announcement trumpeted by the White House that it was joining a partnership to invest up to \$500 billion in AI infrastructure.

And on Wall Street, Constellation Energy lost more than a fifth of its value, 20.8%. The company has said it would restart the shuttered Three Mile Island nuclear power plant to supply power for data centers for Microsoft.

All the worries sent investors toward bonds, which can be safer investments than any stock. The rush pushed the yield of the 10-year Treasury down to 4.52% from 4.62% late Friday.

It's a sharp turnaround for the AI winners, which had soared in recent years on hopes that all the investment pouring in would remake the global economy and deliver gargantuan profits along the way. Such stellar performances also raised criticism that their stock prices had gone too far, too fast.

Before Monday's drop, which was its worst since the 2020 COVID crash, Nvidia's stock had soared from less than \$20 to more than \$140 in less than two years, for example.

It was just on Friday that Meta Platforms CEO Mark Zuckerberg was saying he expects his company to invest up to \$65 billion this year and grow its AI teams significantly, while talking up a data center in Louisiana that will be so large it could cover a significant part of Manhattan.

A small group of seven such companies has become so dominant that they alone accounted for more than half the S&P 500's total return last year, according to S&P Dow Jones Indices. They include Alphabet, Amazon, Apple, Meta Platforms, Microsoft, Nvidia and Tesla.

Their immense sizes give them huge sway over the S&P 500 and other indexes that give more weight to bigger companies. That's why many 401(k) holders felt the pain of Nvidia's drop, even if they didn't know they owned any Nvidia, so long as they owned a fund that tracks the S&P 500.

All told, the S&P 500 fell 88.96 points to 6,012.28. The Nasdaq composite dropped 612.47 to 19,341.83, and the Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 289.33 to 44,713.58.

Brian Jacobsen, chief economist at Annex Wealth Management, suggested not overreacting to Monday's sharp swings.

"It is possible that the news out of China could be overstated and then we could see a reversal of the recent market moves," Jacobsen said. "It is also possible that the news is true, but then that would present new investment opportunities."

More big swings may be ahead. Apple, Meta Platforms, Microsoft and Tesla are all on the schedule this upcoming week to report how much profit they made at the end of 2024.

The pressure is on companies to keep delivering strong profits, particularly after a recent jump in Treasury yields. When bonds are paying more in interest, they put downward pressure on stock prices. Yields have been on the rise amid a solid U.S. economy and worries about possibly higher inflation coming from tariffs and other policies favored by President Donald Trump.

So far, big U.S. companies have been reporting better results than analysts expected. AT&T became the latest on Monday, and its stock rose 6.3%.

In stock markets abroad, movements for broad indexes across Europe and Asia weren't as forceful as for the big U.S. tech stocks. Stocks edged 0.1% lower in Shanghai after a survey of manufacturers showed export orders in China dropping to a five-month low.

## **At Auschwitz memorial, survivors see echoes of the past in rising antisemitism**

By VANESSA GERA Associated Press

OSWIECIM, Poland (AP) — Auschwitz survivors warned Monday of the rising antisemitism and hatred they are witnessing in the modern world as they gathered with world leaders and European royalty on

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 217 ~ 69 of 85

the 80th anniversary of the death camp's liberation.

In all, 56 survivors gathered under a huge tent set up over a gate and railway tracks at the site of the former camp. Many participants expect it to be the last major observance with any notable number of survivors given how exhausting it is for a group whose youngest members are in their late 80s. The numbers have already dwindled considerably from the 200 survivors who attended the 75th anniversary event.

Nazi German forces murdered some 1.1 million people at the site in southern Poland, which was under German occupation during World War II. Most of the victims were Jews killed on an industrial scale in gas chambers, but also Poles, Roma, Soviet prisoners of war, gay people and others who were targeted for elimination in the Nazi racial ideology.

Marian Turski, a 98-year-old Polish Jewish survivor, called on those gathered to turn their thoughts to the victims of the Holocaust, recalling that the number of those murdered was always far greater than the smaller group of survivors.

"We have always been a tiny minority," Turski said. "And now only a handful remain."

In all, the Nazi regime murdered 6 million Jews from all over Europe, annihilating two-thirds of Europe's Jews and one-third of all Jews worldwide. In 2005, the United Nations designated Jan. 27 as International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

Leon Weintraub, a 99-year-old survivor from Lodz, Poland, decried the rising hatred which he blames on "increasingly vocal movements of the radical and anti-democratic right." He said he also sees that in Sweden, where he settled after fleeing postwar antisemitism in Poland.

"This ideology, an attitude that preaches hostility and hatred towards others, defines racism, antisemitism and homophobia as virtues," Weintraub, a doctor, said.

Germany was represented by both Chancellor Olaf Scholz and President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, the first time that the country's two highest leaders attended. It was a sign of Germany's continued commitment to take responsibility for the nation's crimes, even with a far-right party gaining increased support in recent years.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who leads a nation defending itself against Russia's brutal invasion, was among those in attendance, along with Poland's President Andrzej Duda, French President Emmanuel Macron, Britain's King Charles III and other royalty.

Ukrainians, like Russians, made up the Red Army forces that liberated the camp.

"The evil that seeks to destroy the lives of entire nations still remains in the world," Zelenskyy, himself of Jewish descent, wrote on his Telegram page a day earlier.

Russian representatives were honored guests at the past observances in recognition of the Red Army liberation of the camp on Jan. 27, 1945. But they have not been welcome since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

The Russian leadership expressed anger over its exclusion. "We will always remember that it was the Soviet soldier who crushed this dreadful, total evil and won the victory, the greatness of which will forever remain in world history," President Vladimir Putin said in a message to participants.

Ronald Lauder, head of the World Jewish Congress, called on the leaders gathered to oppose antisemitism, saying it was "the world's silence that led to Auschwitz."

"When the Red Army entered these gates, the world finally saw where the step-by-step progression of antisemitism leads. It leads right here. The gas chambers. The piles of bodies. All the horrors within these gates," Lauder said.

He also said that while Adolf Hitler's first targets were Jews, by the time World War II was over, "more than 60 million human beings were dead and this continent lay in ruins."

Lauder, 80, recalled how he has been attending the anniversary observances for 50 years, but now he must be "realistic."

"This may well be the last commemoration, and also that I will speak at. But I leave today with the understanding that I did my best, I did my utmost to be worthy of the memory of all those who were lost there. ... I hope I was worthy," he said to applause.

Another survivor who spoke was 86-year-old Tova Friedman, who was brought to the camp aged 5 with her mother and was 6 when she was among the 7,000 people liberated. She recalled arriving after a long ride in a dark cattle car. She said she was hot, hungry, thirsty and very terrified and still remembers the cries of desperate women around her. When she arrived at Auschwitz the sky was obscured by dark smoke and stench from the burning bodies.

After the war Friedman settled in the United States where she became a therapist and raised a family. She fears that rising antisemitism is also destroying the safe haven that the United States represented for Jews in the postwar era.

"The world has become toxic," she told The Associated Press a day before the observances. "I realize that we're in a crisis again, that there is so much hatred around, so much distrust, that if we don't stop, it may get worse and worse. There may be another terrible destruction."

## What is happening in eastern Congo, where rebels claim they captured a key city?

By MONIKA PRONCZUK and MARK BANCHEREAU Associated Press

DAKAR, Senegal (AP) — Rwanda-backed rebels claimed on Monday they captured eastern Congo's strategic city of Goma, the hub of a region containing trillions of dollars in mineral wealth that remains largely untapped.

Analysts said the M23 fighters aimed to control the city of about 2 million people and perhaps other areas in the region nearly 1,000 miles from the Congolese capital.

It marks a sharp escalation in one of Africa's longest wars, threatening to dramatically worsen a dire humanitarian crisis.

The rebels' offensive has sent thousands fleeing their homes, in addition to 1 million displaced who are already in Goma, and stretched hospitals to the limit, with hundreds of wounded coming in every day as civilians get caught in the crossfire.

Here is what to know about the conflict:

Who are the rebels and what do they want?

The M23 group is one of about 100 armed factions vying for a foothold in eastern Congo, where a decades-long conflict has raged. The group, made up primarily of ethnic Tutsis who failed to integrate into the Congolese army, led a failed insurgency against the Congolese government in 2012. It was then dormant for a decade, until its resurgence in 2022.

Between 1996 and 2003, the region was at the heart of a protracted conflict dubbed "Africa's world war," as armed groups fought over access to metals and rare earth minerals such as copper, cobalt, lithium and gold. Up to 6 million people died.

The conflict can be traced to the aftermath of the 1994 genocide in neighboring Rwanda, where Hutu militias killed between 500,000 and 1 million ethnic Tutsi, as well as moderate Hutus and Twa, Indigenous people.

When Tutsi-led forces fought back, nearly 2 million Hutus crossed into Congo, fearing reprisals. Tensions between Hutus and Tutsis have repeatedly flared in Congo since then.

Rwandan authorities have accused the Hutus who fled of participating in the genocide and alleged that elements of the Congolese army protected them. They have argued that the militias formed by a small fraction of the Hutus are a threat to Rwanda's Tutsi population.

M23 claims to defend Tutsi and Congolese of Rwandan origin from discrimination. Critics say it's a pretext for Rwanda to obtain economic and political influence over eastern Congo.

Why is control of eastern Congo so important?

As the world relies more than ever on Congo's metals and rare earth minerals to produce electronics, the stakes have risen. Neighboring Rwanda and Uganda have financial interests in Congolese mines, as well as China and the United States.

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 217 ~ 71 of 85

Most of Congo's mineral resources, estimated to be worth \$24 trillion, remain untapped, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce last year, which called the country the world's leading producer of cobalt, key to making batteries.

Little of the region's wealth has trickled down to Congolese citizens, with 60% out of its 100 million residents living below the poverty line. Instead, fighting over natural resources has destabilized the country.

What's the role of neighboring Rwanda?

Congo, the United States and U.N. experts accuse Rwanda of backing the M23, which had hundreds of members in 2021. Now, according to the United Nations, the group has around 6,500 fighters.

While Rwanda denies that claim, it acknowledged last year that it has troops and missile systems in eastern Congo, allegedly to safeguard its security. U.N. experts estimate there are up to 4,000 Rwandan forces in Congo.

Analysts say that Rwandan troops in eastern Congo have been increasingly active in recent weeks.

Why is Goma important for the rebels?

The city is a regional hub for trade, security and humanitarian efforts, and its airport is key for transporting supplies.

Since 2021, Congo's government and allied forces, including Burundian troops and U.N. troops, have been keeping the rebels away from Goma.

The capture of such a large city will be a huge boost for the rebels and a major defeat for government forces.

Goma's fall would also have a "catastrophic impact on hundreds of thousands of civilians, putting them at risk of heightened exposure to human rights violations and abuses," said Ravina Shamdasani of the U.N. human rights office.

Is this likely to resolve like the last time?

In 2012, the rebels seized Goma and controlled it for about a week but surrendered the city after mounting international pressure on Rwanda — including suspension of aid from the United States and Britain.

But analysts say this time around, it will be more difficult.

"Previously, they (M23) had clear demands to be integrated into the DRC army and have greater participation in the political process," said Darren Davids, an analyst with the Economist Intelligence Unit. But now, he said, "it seems like M23, with the help of Rwanda, are intent on holding control of Goma and, more specifically, the supply chain routes in North Kivu."

The rebels could use Goma as a bargaining chip, strengthening their position in possible negotiations with Congo.

What is the situation for civilians?

There are 4 million displaced people in eastern Congo. The U.N. refugee agency says more than 400,000 have been displaced already this year, exacerbating "desperate conditions" in severely overcrowded displacement centers in and around Goma and triggering an increase in cholera cases.

As rebels closed in on Goma, many more fled from surrounding villages and displacement camps into the city. Others fled from Goma into Rwanda.

Some of the staff at Goma's main hospital were sheltering in a bunker, treating the wounded while coming under gunfire and artillery fire.

## Northern Gaza is shattered.

### The spirit of returning Palestinians is not

By OSAMA SALEH, ABDEL-KAREEM HANA and SAMY MAGDY undefined

WADI GAZA, Gaza Strip (AP) — They walked for hours loaded with whatever clothes, food and blankets they could carry. Many smiled, some hugged loved ones they hadn't seen for months. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians filled Gaza's main coastal road as they streamed back to homes in the north.

The mood was joyous, even though many knew their homes had been destroyed in Israeli offensives against Hamas that leveled large parts of Gaza City and the surrounding north.

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 217 ~ 72 of 85

The important thing was to go back, they said, to prevent what many had feared would be a permanent expulsion from their homes.

"By returning, we are victorious," said Rania Miqdad, who was heading back to Gaza City with her family.

Ismail Abu Mattar returned with his wife and four children to the ruins of their Gaza City home, which was partially destroyed by Israeli bombardment early in the war. Like many others whose houses are damaged, he planned to set up a tent nearby and start clearing the rubble.

"A tent here is better than a tent there," he said, referring to the vast, squalid tent camps that arose in central and southern Gaza where he and much of the territory's population have lived for months.

"We had thought we wouldn't return, like our ancestors," said Abu Mattar. His grandparents were among the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians driven from what is now Israel during the 1948 war surrounding its creation.

A mass return on foot and by car

Under the ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas, Palestinians were allowed starting Monday to return north. U.N. officials estimated that some 200,000 people made their way back over the course of the day. The scenes of celebration were a sharp contrast to the misery and fear during the war as more than 1 million people fled south on the same routes to escape Israel's assaults.

Associated Press photos, videos and drone footage showed huge crowds heading north on foot along Gaza's main coastal road. On one side was the Mediterranean Sea; on the other stretched a landscape of destroyed buildings and bulldozed land left behind by withdrawing Israeli forces. Armed Hamas fighters were visible in some spots, a sign of the militant group's continued power in Gaza despite Israel's vows to eliminate it.

Families carried bags of belongings and rolled up blankets. On their shoulders, men carried young children — or sacks of food and metal cannisters of cooking gas. Women balanced infants in their arms with satchels of clothes and jugs of water.

A little girl dressed in teddy-bear pajamas held her younger sister's hand as they trailed their mother. A teenager strapped a pet carrier to his chest with his cat inside.

Others returned in cars and trucks piled high with mattresses and other belongings via a second route, Salah al-Din Road.

Many were smiling. A child waved a "V-for-victory" sign. People tearfully hugged relatives and friends they'd been separated from for months.

One old woman being pushed in a wheelchair sang a traditional Palestinian song of perseverance dating back to 1948.

"Stand by each other, people of Palestine, stand by each other. Palestine is gone, but it has not bid you a final farewell," she sang with a smile on her face. Then she added, "Thank God, we're returning to our homes, after suffering so much ruin and hunger and disease."

The joy was tempered by war's cost and future's uncertainty

Those returning crossed through the Netzarim corridor, a swath of land bisecting the Gaza Strip that Israeli forces turned into a military zone to seal off the north. The north saw some of the most intense Israeli offensives, aimed at eliminating Hamas fighters operating in densely populated areas.

Throughout the war, Israel repeatedly ordered civilians to evacuate the north — for their safety, it said — but barred their return. Under the ceasefire's terms, Israeli troops pulled back from the main routes to allow returns and are eventually to pull out completely from the corridor.

For some, the joy of return was blemished by the deaths of loved ones.

Kamal Hamadah was returning to Gaza City, where his eldest son, his daughter and her children were killed by bombardment early in the war. Their bodies were left buried under rubble in the streets, even as the rest of the family fled south, he said.

Then just over a month ago, another of his sons who fled with him was killed.

"When his mother learned we were going back home, she was struck by a great sadness that she was returning without the boy," he said.



Returning home, Yasmin Abu Amshah had a happy reunion with her younger sister, Amany, who had stayed in Gaza City throughout the war. "I thought it wouldn't happen, and we wouldn't see each other again," the 34-year-old mother of three said.

Her four-story building was damaged but not destroyed, so she and other members of her extended family will stay there.

Those returning face an uncertain future. If the ceasefire collapses, they could face new Israeli offensives. If peace lasts, it's not clear when Palestinians will be able to rebuild homes, leaving much of the population in temporary housing.

Ibrahim Hammad, his wife and five children walked five hours back to their neighborhood in Gaza City – knowing their house there had been destroyed by an airstrike in December 2023. His family will stay at his brother's house until he can clear a space in the ruins of his house to set up a tent.

"We had to return, even to the rubble," the 48-year-old told the AP. "Here we don't have a house, but our family is here, and we will help each other."

## Huge health challenges face Gaza residents returning to their homes

By TAMMY WEBBER Associated Press

Hospitals and clinics destroyed. Millions of tons of debris contaminated with toxic substances, unexploded ordnance and human remains. Tens of thousands of people with injuries that will require a lifetime of care.

As Gaza's residents return to what is left of their homes, they face new risks on top of monumental health challenges. Fifteen months of war has killed more than 47,000 people, according to local health officials, displaced 90% of Gazans and reduced many areas to rubble. Clean water is in short supply and sewers, so important for protecting public health, are badly damaged spurring worries about the spread of infectious disease.

Aid groups are rushing to provide food and supplies amid a fragile ceasefire between Israel and Hamas as they plan the best way forward.

"You have a population with just every health need imaginable ... (who have) been unable to get access to care ... for more than a year," said Yara Asi, an expert in global health management and visiting scholar at the FXB Center of Health and Human Rights at Harvard. "What is that going to look like in the near future and the long term?"

Here's a look at some of the urgent health issues.

### Healthcare in shambles

Most of Gaza's 36 hospitals were damaged or partly destroyed by Israeli bombs, with only half still partially operational, according to the World Health Organization. Almost two-thirds of health clinics aren't open. That makes it impossible to treat everyone who needs urgent and long-term care — including an estimated 30,000 people who need ongoing rehabilitation for "life-changing injuries," such as amputations.

The WHO said that when it's safe, it'll team up with other organizations to prioritize critical services such as trauma and emergency care, primary health care and mental health support.

That includes increasing hospital-bed capacity in northern and southern Gaza, and bringing in prefabricated containers to help treat patients at damaged hospitals and clinics, the WHO said.

International workers also are needed to ease staffing shortages, the organization said.

Asi and other experts said most hospital equipment has been destroyed, and is expensive and difficult to import.

"How are Palestinians going to import the advanced, expensive medical equipment that actually makes the hospital more than a building?" Asi said. "That's going to take years."

Israel says Hamas is responsible for damage to the health system because the group often used hospitals to hide or gather its men. Under the current six-week ceasefire, Israel has allowed sharp increases of humanitarian supplies. But the sides have not agreed on a permanent end to the war, and Israel has not publicly laid out a postwar vision that would include plans for reconstruction and cleanup of the territory.

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 217 ~ 74 of 85

## Life-changing injuries

The WHO said one-fourth of the estimated 110,000 people injured in the fighting suffered "life-changing" injuries, including over 12,000 who need to be evacuated as soon as possible for specialized care.

Among the injured are thousands of children who lost limbs and will need prosthetics and long-term care, said Marc Sinclair, a pediatric orthopedic surgeon from Dubai who has volunteered in Gaza for over a decade.

He said the charity he helped start, Little Wings Foundation, will partner with the Palestinian Children's Relief Fund and a German prosthetics company that will supply containers that can be turned into workshops.

They hope to begin training doctors and manufacturing prosthetics in the West Bank and move the operation to Gaza when they are able.

"The volume of injured is so huge that it's going to be an enormous task to fulfill the needs," Sinclair said. "We're talking about children that have not just single amputations, but ... multiple amputations."

Asi, from Harvard, said thousands of people also suffered traumatic injuries, including brain damage, that will require lifelong care. "And then you have those people that have regular health ailments," she said. "They've been unable to get access to care or medications in some cases for more than a year."

## Threat of infectious disease

A shortage of clean water, destroyed sanitation systems, overcrowding and missed childhood vaccinations have created ideal circumstances for spread of infectious disease, said Asi, also co-director of the Palestine Program for Health and Human Rights.

She said children — many of whom experienced malnutrition and mental trauma — are a special concern.

Gaza experienced a polio outbreak for the first time in decades, so it is clear that both children and adults are at risk of other infectious diseases, Asi said.

She said people have described crowded living conditions, a lack of hygiene supplies and garbage and sewage in the streets.

"It's really a health catastrophe from every potential facet," she said, adding that there have been outbreaks of respiratory infections in tent camps and shelters, and many people are living with undiagnosed skin rashes and infections.

## Dangerous debris

Experts say Palestinians returning to their homes in Gaza will be at risk from breathing dust or touching debris contaminated with toxic chemicals, asbestos and human remains, as well as munitions that never exploded. On Monday, tens of thousands of people began returning to northern Gaza as part of the ceasefire, finding piles of rubble where their homes once stood.

It's critical to move quickly to identify and contain environmental hazards to "prevent returning residents from inadvertently coming into contact with harmful pollutants" and to keep it from spreading, a United Nations Environment Programme spokesperson said.

The agency plans to begin an on-the-ground assessment within two to three months, as security allows.

The first priority should be for specialized teams to search for and clear unexploded ordnance, then to test air, water and soil for toxic substances, said Paul Walker, chair of the Chemical Weapons Convention Coalition and a former staff member of the House Armed Services Committee.

"People are anxious, I know, to rebuild," he said, but returning home right now "could be very dangerous ... I think we've got to expect as people work through the rubble there will inevitably be injuries and deaths."

But it might be difficult to convince residents to delay their return, said Asi. She said she's seen videos showing caravans of people walking "in some cases knowing that there's nothing waiting for them but just wanting to go back to the land to recover the bodies of loved ones or to see if their house survived or what survives from their home."

## Thousands flee fighting in Congo as rebels claim they've captured the key city of Goma

By JUSTIN KABUMBA and CHINEDU ASADU Associated Press

GOMA, Congo (AP) — Thousands fled the city of Goma on Monday as fighting raged between Congolese forces and rebels backed by neighboring Rwanda, who claimed to have captured eastern Congo's largest regional hub.

Pockets of chaos and gunfire had some people hunkering down as the rebels marched into the city with a population of about 2 million. Others hurried to safer areas of the province; some applauded and cheered on the rebels from the roadside, even shaking hands with them. Many, however, tried to flee into neighboring Rwanda, marching in the heat and through the night along roads with heavy traffic, clinging to their babies, clothes and other belongings on their backs and heads.

Goma is a key location in the conflict-battered North Kivu province whose minerals are critical to much of the world's technology. Rebel groups have long fought over control of eastern Congo's mineral wealth, and the conflict has often pitted ethnic groups against one another, with civilians forced to flee their homes and seek protection from armed groups.

It was unclear how much of Goma was occupied by the rebels, but the events are a huge escalation in the decades-long battle between the two countries.

"There is shooting all over the city. We don't know who is shooting, whether it's the M23 or our soldiers," said Patrice Naanga, a resident of Goma.

The Congolese government confirmed the presence of M23 rebels in Goma, 1,500 kilometers (930 miles) east of capital Kinshasa, but stopped short of saying they were in control of the city. "No centimeter will be given up!!!" government spokesman Patrick Muyaya wrote on X as he called for support for the country.

A fire at the city's Munzenze prison on Monday morning resulted in the escape of thousands of inmates. "All the prisoners who were detained came out, whether women, men or minors, everyone came out," said Mwamisyo Ndungu, one of the escapees who estimated that more than 2,000 fled the facility.

The M23 rebels are one of about 100 armed groups vying for a foothold in the mineral-rich region in a decades-long conflict, one of Africa's largest. The rebels temporarily took over Goma in 2012, before they were forced to pull out under international pressure, and resurfaced in late 2021, with increasing support from Rwanda, according to Congo's government and United Nations experts. Rwanda has denied such support.

Rwanda's Ministry of Foreign Affairs accused Congo of failing to enter a dialogue with M23, which it described as a "Congolese rebel group fighting to protect their community." That failure, it said, has prolonged the fighting that continues to present "a serious threat to Rwanda's security and territorial integrity, and necessitates Rwanda's sustained defensive posture."

The advance into Goma is the culmination of a prolonged battle between the rebels and the Congolese security forces that saw several towns along the Rwandan border falling to the insurgents.

Analysts have warned the latest escalation could further destabilize the region, which is already home to one of the world's largest humanitarian crises with more than 6 million people displaced, including more than a third of North Kivu's population.

A regional hub for trade, security and humanitarian efforts, Goma's airport, which is key for transporting supplies, has been shut following the fighting.

Rwanda's state television also showed several Congolese soldiers surrendering in the Rwandan town of Rubavu after crossing the border from Goma.

UN peacekeeping mission prioritizing its personnel and facilities

Speaking at a virtual press briefing on Monday, U.N. peacekeeping chief Jean-Pierre Lacroix confirmed M23 has made significant advances in Goma but added that "there's significant fighting" going on in the city. "Therefore it's very fluid and still very volatile, and increasingly dangerous in terms of the impact on the already very much affected civilian population," said Lacroix.

Lacroix said he has heard estimates of 3,000 to 4,000 Rwandans in Goma, but "it's difficult to tell exactly

what the numbers are.”

The U.N. peacekeeping mission is also prioritizing the protection of its personnel and premises as well as that of civilians sheltering in its facilities in and around Goma, he said.

The U.N. Security Council has asked the M23 to immediately reverse its advances. Other countries including the United States, United Kingdom and France have also condemned the rebel push.

Congolese government, which cut ties with Rwanda over the weekend, said the country is “in a war situation” and accused Rwanda of committing “a frontal aggression (and) a declaration of war.”

Rwanda accuses Congo of enlisting and fighting alongside Hutu rebels and former militiamen responsible for the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, particularly the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda, a group formed by the Hutus who fled to Congo after the killings.

Residents seek safety across the border in Rwanda

The M23 rebels’ march towards Goma threw the city into chaos, from hospitals overstretched with injured residents to internally displacement camps being hit amid intensified shelling that forced displaced families to once again grab what was left of their belongings before loading them alongside their children into cramped vehicles and scooters.

As some residents remained indoors worried for their safety, hundreds including children on Monday trekked for hours to other parts of North Kivu and to cross over the border into Rwanda where several Congolese forces have surrendered.

“We are fleeing because we saw soldiers on the border with Rwanda throwing bombs and shooting,” said Safi Shangwe, who was among those on the move.

Fighting with M23 rebels in eastern Congo has left at least 13 peacekeepers and foreign soldiers dead, United Nations and army officials said Saturday. The U.N. peacekeeping force, also known as MONUSCO, entered Congo more than two decades ago and has around 14,000 peacekeepers on the ground.

The Uruguayan army, in Goma serving with the U.N. peacekeeping mission, said in a statement on the social platform X late Sunday that more than 100 Congolese soldiers were laying down their weapons.

Who are the rebels and why is Goma of interest to them?

The M23 refers to the March 23, 2009, agreement that ended a previous uprising in the region. The group was created in 2012 after the failed integration of ethnic Tutsis who broke away from the Congolese army. It claims it took up arms against Congolese forces to defend the Tutsis from discrimination but has often talked about targeting the Congolese government.

Unlike in 2012 when the rebels only wanted to be integrated into the Congolese army and to have greater participation in the political process, their motive this time is rooted in a desire to control parts of eastern Congo, said Darren Davids, analyst at the Economist Intelligence Unit. “DRC will have to rely on the international community to once again pressure Rwanda and M23 into releasing the city, but it’s unclear if they will this time around,” Davids added.

## State lawmakers are pushing for vaccine exemptions even as childhood vaccination rates fall

By SUSAN HAIGH and DEVI SHASTRI Associated Press

HARTFORD, Conn. (AP) — Vaccination bills are popping up in more than 15 states as lawmakers aim to potentially resurrect or create new religious exemptions from immunization mandates, establish state-level vaccine injury databases or dictate what providers must tell patients about the shots.

Many see a political opportunity to rewrite policies in their states after President Donald Trump’s return to the White House and anti-vaccine activist Robert F. Kennedy Jr. ’s nomination as the next secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. The agency oversees virtually every aspect of vaccination efforts in the U.S., from funding their development to establishing recommendations for medical providers to distributing vaccines and covering them through federal programs.

Childhood vaccination rates against dangerous infections like measles and polio continue to fall nationwide, and the number of parents claiming non-medical exemptions so their kids don’t get required shots is rising.

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 217 ~ 77 of 85

In 2024, whooping cough cases reached a decade-high and 16 measles outbreaks, the largest among them in Chicago and Minnesota, put health officials on edge. Most states are below the 95% vaccination threshold for kindergartners — the level needed to protect communities against measles outbreaks.

About half of Americans are “very” or “extremely” concerned that those declining childhood vaccination rates will lead to more outbreaks, according to a new poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. Yet only about 4 in 10 Americans oppose reconsidering the government’s recommendations for widely used vaccines, while roughly 3 in 10 are in favor. The rest — about 3 in 10 — are neutral.

Scott Burris, director of Temple University’s Center for Public Health Law Research, has tracked public health legislation for years, and watched backlash against COVID-19 vaccines grow to include more routine vaccines as anti-vaccine activists take hold of powerful political puppets.

“I think COVID and the politics gave standard vaccine denialists a lot of wind in their sails,” he said.

It’s hard to predict what will pass into law in the states, Burris said, considering the vast majority of proposed bills in any state go nowhere. But the proposed legislation offers a glimpse into lawmakers’ thoughts, and what else might follow.

Religious exemptions lead the pack

Religious exemptions for school vaccine requirements are among the most popular proposals so far. Lawmakers in New York, Virginia, Connecticut and Mississippi have introduced bills that would allow more people to waive routine shots. Indiana lawmakers will weigh religious exemptions for medical students.

Earlier this month, West Virginia Republican Gov. Patrick Morrisey issued an executive order on his first day in office that enabled families to receive religious exemptions from required school vaccinations.

“That’s a huge step,” said Brian Festa, co-founder of the law firm We The Patriots USA, which works on vaccination-related cases throughout the country. “That’s a state that never had a religious exemption.”

Now, only four states allow just a medical exemption from childcare and K-12 immunization requirements: Connecticut, California, New York and Maine.

Festa credited West Virginia’s new religious exemption to Trump’s nomination of Kennedy, as well as a 2023 federal court ruling that required Mississippi to allow residents to cite religious beliefs when seeking exemptions from state-mandated vaccinations for children.

“I think the writing’s on the wall and they did feel the pressure,” Festa said of West Virginia.

In Connecticut, at least four Republican bills will try to revive the state’s religious exemption for schools, colleges and daycares — something a contentious 2021 state law eliminated for students without an existing exemption.

Connecticut health experts said at the time there was a slow but steady increase in the number of religious exemptions and declining vaccination rates in some schools. The state has historically maintained some of the highest childhood vaccination rates in the country, and in the 2023-2024 school year, more than 97% of kindergartners protected against chickenpox, measles, tetanus, diphtheria, polio and more.

Given that the U.S. Supreme Court last year rejected a challenge to the Connecticut law and the statehouse is controlled by Democrats, GOP state Sen. Eric Berthel said he’s not optimistic legislative leaders will allow debate on his exemption bill, but does believe the broader cultural shift means “maybe there is a bit of an appetite to look at things like this again.”

“I think that we’re not being fair to families who have a true faith-based reason to not vaccinate their child,” he said.

There’s one outlier so far among statehouse trends on exemptions. Hawaii, where legislators are looking to move in the opposite direction with a bill to eliminate all non-medical waivers after struggling for years with high exemption rates.

Vaccine injuries and consent laws

Other vaccine-related bills touch on some of the opposition that’s been growing since the pandemic.

Oklahoma and Alabama have proposals that would require parental consent for any vaccine given to minors. Bills in Wyoming, Oregon and Oklahoma would prohibit “discrimination” against people who aren’t vaccinated against COVID-19 or other diseases.

New York and Oklahoma have bills that would require providers to give people getting shots a full in-

redient list, and Florida legislation would ban edible vaccines, though none are approved for use in the U.S. and research is still in early stages.

Vaccine injury is also a popular topic, and bills in Indiana and North Dakota propose creating state versions of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System — a federal database that drew the attention of vaccine skeptics during the pandemic. Anyone can file a report about a potential issue after a vaccine, though the CDC's website notes a report doesn't prove the shot caused a health issue.

North Dakota Republican state Rep. Dick Anderson said he's not against people getting vaccines — he got one COVID-19 shot himself — but proposed the bill because many people don't trust the CDC.

"We have to do something to restore trust in the system," Anderson said.

But experts note state databases are unnecessarily duplicative.

"A lot of these proposals, they're trying to fix something that's not broken and really working to counter the goal of preventing the spread of communicable disease," said Andy Baker-White, senior director of state health policy for the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials.

Policy should be focused on getting rid of barriers to vaccination, not adding to them, said Dr. Susan Kressly, a pediatrician and president of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Many families miss vaccinations not because of ideology, she said, but because of lack of transportation or not having primary care doctors or clinics nearby, among other things.

But because most Americans are vaccinated, they haven't seen the effects of dangerous infections like bacterial meningitis that Kressly fielded calls about from fearful parents early in her career.

"Vaccines are really an American success story," she said.

## What to know about Trump's first executive actions on climate and environment

By MELINA WALLING Associated Press

President Donald Trump's first week in office included a flurry of executive orders with implications for Earth's climate and environment.

While former President Joe Biden made climate change a hallmark of his administration and some of his policies remain, at least for now, Trump is quickly unraveling that, even as many of his moves are likely to be challenged in court.

Experts say Trump's moves to step away from global climate action, ramp up domestic oil and gas production and remove incentives for electric vehicles are worrisome as the planet continues to heat up. 2024 was Earth's hottest year on record, and climate scientists say the rising heat is contributing to extreme weather affecting millions.

"These orders will make our air dirtier, make people sicker, make energy more expensive, and make our communities less prepared for extreme weather," wrote Ayana Elizabeth Johnson, a marine biologist, policy expert and author who co-founded the non-profit think tank Urban Ocean Lab.

Here are some of Trump's most notable moves affecting climate and environmental issues in his first week:

Pulling the U.S. out of the Paris Agreement

Trump signed an executive order Monday directing the United States to again withdraw from the landmark Paris climate agreement aimed at global cooperation on climate change.

The agreement requires participating countries to come up with nationally determined contributions to the effort to limit greenhouse gas emissions that are heating the planet. Trump's move means the federal government won't be trying to meet emissions reductions goals, nor any financial commitments to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

"Walking away from the Paris Agreement won't protect Americans from climate impacts, but it will hand China and the European Union a competitive edge in the booming clean energy economy and lead to fewer opportunities for American workers," said Ani Dasgupta, president and CEO of the World Resources Institute.

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 217 ~ 79 of 85

Declaring a "national energy emergency," doubling down on oil and gas

Trump declared an energy emergency via executive order amid a promise to "drill, baby, drill."

The order urges oil and gas expansion including through federal use of eminent domain and the Defense Production Act, which allow the government to use private land and resources to produce goods deemed to be a national necessity.

Experts dispute his description of an "inadequate energy supply" as part of the basis for the order.

"The reality is that the United States is well-supplied with energy in all of its forms," said Gary Dirks, senior director of the Global Futures Laboratory at Arizona State University. Dirks said he thinks the move is actually more targeted at bringing down prices at the pump.

"It's important to note that the United States right now is the largest producer of oil of any nation in history. And we got to that point under the Biden administration, not because of the Biden administration's policies necessarily, but because of policies that have been ongoing for four decades," he said.

Faster permitting for energy; harsh words for Endangered Species Act and Arctic protections

One section of the order declaring an energy emergency states that the Endangered Species Act cannot be an obstacle to energy development.

The Endangered Species Act has been a hurdle for the development of fossil fuels in the U.S. for decades, and weakening it would accelerate the decline and potential extinction of numerous endangered species, including whales and sea turtles, said Gib Brogan, a campaign director with conservation group Oceana.

Trump also opened up areas in the pristine Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for drilling. Biden had previously both restricted and approved drilling in other parts of the Arctic, part of a long process mired in litigation and complicated by political battles.

"I would begin by pointing out that there was an attempt to lease for oil drilling recently and nobody bid," Dirks said. "I don't actually think that the Alaskan National Wildlife Refuge is an exciting place for oil and gas exploration."

But he expressed concern about preserving biodiversity, something other scientists and environmental groups have highlighted.

"The Arctic is a very fragile system," said Peter Schlosser, vice president and vice provost of global futures at Arizona State. Schlosser added that drilling there would disrupt the land and sea, and that potential contamination or oil spills are more difficult to clean up there due to low temperatures.

Revoke Biden's goals on electric vehicles

Trump promised to eliminate what he incorrectly calls Biden's "electric vehicle mandate."

What that means in practice is that the order will revoke a non-binding goal set by Biden to have EVs make up half of new cars sold by 2030. He will also likely seek repeal of a \$7,500 tax credit for new EV purchases approved by Congress as part of Biden's landmark 2022 climate law, the Inflation Reduction Act.

All of that is likely frustrating for automakers, who have to make long-term decisions, said Jessica Caldwell, head of insights at auto-buying research firm Edmunds. As the rest of the world moves to electric cars, automakers have to decide how to factor in the global direction the industry is headed alongside the sudden lack of federal support.

"We do think that the long-term end goal here is going to be electrification. It's just the timeline it seems is uncertain right now," she said.

Eliminate a push for environmental justice

When the government reviews new facilities that emit pollution, officials are no longer likely to consider a concept known as environmental justice, or how that new pollution will add to the emissions that have tended to fall more heavily on poor and minority communities.

Those are sweeping moves that Rena Payan, chief program officer at nonprofit Justice Outside, called "rolling back decades of progress in addressing environmental discrimination."

That means more of a burden for state and local groups to fight to protect those communities. Trump's decision to cut off support will hurt, but many of these organizations are used to operating without federal support — they have done so for years, according to Peggy Shepard, co-founder and executive director of WE ACT for Environmental Justice.

"What I'm grappling right now with is both the grief of these losses, and the fact that we were on an upward swing, if you will, just weeks ago," said Jade Begay, an Indigenous rights and climate organizer.

## **Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s famous name and controversial views collide in his bid for top health job**

By AMANDA SEITZ Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Robert F. Kennedy Jr. has said vaccines are not safe. His support for abortion access has made conservatives uncomfortable. And farmers across the Midwest are nervous over his talk of banning corn syrup and pesticides from America's food supply.

The 71-year-old, whose famous name and family tragedies have put him in the national spotlight since he was a child, has spent years airing his populist — and sometimes extreme — views in podcasts, TV interviews and speeches building his own quixotic brand.

A son of a Democratic political dynasty, Kennedy is seeking to become the nation's top health official under President Donald Trump. To get there, he's softening those long-held beliefs, hoping to win approval from the Republican Party.

At stake is Kennedy's control of the nation's sprawling \$1.7 trillion U.S. Health and Human Services agency, which oversees food and hospital inspections, health insurance for roughly half of the country and vaccine recommendations. The job would finally give him the kind of political power Kennedys have wielded for decades.

He made a long-shot bid for the presidency last year, following uncles John, who won the White House in 1960, and Edward, who lost his bid in 1980, along with his father, Robert, a leading contender who was assassinated after winning the California primary in 1968.

With a strong resemblance to his father and lawyer credentials to match, he found ardent followers who embrace the critiques he's lodged against unhealthy foods, pharmaceutical companies and chemicals.

But he couldn't get Democrats on his side, with some of his relatives shunning him over his vaccine views. His has been a flexible ideological journey, part liberal Democrat, part libertarian, and now, an adherent of the MAGA agenda after dropping out of the race last year to back Trump.

The president has since directed him to "go wild" on health. Together, they've even hatched a new slogan: "Make America Healthy Again."

Kennedy's aspirations now rest with the Republican-controlled Senate, where he can lose only three GOP votes if all Democrats oppose him.

As Kennedy's confirmation hearings approach this week, he faces a coordinated effort to stop his nomination. A television and digital ad campaign is highlighting his anti-vaccine work. And former Vice President Mike Pence, a stalwart of the conservative anti-abortion movement, is lobbying against him, too.

Kennedy's closest supporters believe he'll prevail. He plans to focus on issues that have bipartisan consensus, like reducing food additives and increasing access to healthier foods. When concerns about his views on conservative priorities like abortion come up, he's promised to follow Trump's lead.

Then there is Kennedy's biggest advantage — and maybe, too, his biggest liability for someone working under Trump — his star power.

"Bobby K. is coming in with a bigger microphone than any HHS Secretary," said Calley Means, a close adviser to Kennedy.

Kennedy's biggest hurdles: Anti-vaccine statements and tragedy in Samoa

Kennedy's numerous remarks, anti-vaccine nonprofit and lawsuits against immunizations are likely to haunt him.

He's rejected the anti-vaccine label, instead casting himself as a crusader for "medical freedom" who wants more research. He and Trump have vowed not to "take away" vaccines. To defuse criticism, he resigned from the Children's Health Defense, his nonprofit that has filed dozens of lawsuits against vaccines, including the government authorizations of some of them.

But critics have argued that his work advocating against vaccine use has cost lives. Democrats are poised



# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 217 ~ 81 of 85

to home in on his social media campaigns and work in Samoa, the island nation in the Pacific Ocean where doctors say he and his anti-vaccine acolytes seized on a tragedy to campaign against childhood inoculations.

In 2018, two Samoan children died from botched vaccinations, prompting the government to suspend the childhood vaccination program.

Kennedy showed up with his wife, actor Cheryl Hines, to meet with the prime minister, health minister and other health officials in 2019. Kennedy says he promoted a "medical informatics system" that would "assess the efficacy and safety of every medical intervention or drug on overall health."

Later that year, a measles epidemic killed dozens of infants and children.

Hawaii Gov. Josh Green, a Democrat and an emergency room doctor who organized flights loaded with 50,000 vaccine doses, doctors and nurses to administer inoculations, has led the campaign to highlight Kennedy's role. He shared during one-on-one meetings with a handful of senators earlier this month what he witnessed there, including accounts from villagers who told them about Facebook posts that scared them away from vaccinations.

"He went there and used celebrity status to scare the country away from vaccinating," Green said of Kennedy. "You have to ask yourself, 'Why, RFK Jr., would you go to Samoa and do this to innocent people?'" Kennedy has denied playing any role in the outbreak.

A Democratic group is running digital ads that accuse Kennedy of spreading misinformation in Samoa. The campaign is targeting senators in nine states, including Sens. Susan Collins of Maine, Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, Thom Tillis of North Carolina and John Curtis of Utah, which boasts a significant Samoan population.

Another they're targeting is Republican Sen. Bill Cassidy, chair of the Health, Education, Labor and Pension Senate committee, which holds a hearing Thursday. Cassidy, who is also a doctor, stopped short of endorsing Kennedy after they met and is seen as swayed.

Sen. Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, who suffered from polio as a child, may also be in play. At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021, McConnell dipped into his own campaign funds to urge Kentucky residents to vaccinate against the virus.

Last month, McConnell sent a warning about attempts to discredit the polio vaccine.

"Efforts to undermine public confidence in proven cures are not just uninformed — they're dangerous," McConnell said. "Anyone seeking the Senate's consent to serve in the incoming Administration would do well to steer clear of even the appearance of association with such efforts."

A former vice president questions his commitment to 'pro-life' policies

Other conservatives have questioned Kennedy's abortion views, after he said last year that it should be legal for full-term pregnancies. His campaign later clarified that he supports abortion rights until fetal viability, around 22 to 24 weeks.

In meetings with some senators, he's promised to follow Trump's directive on the issue.

Republican Sen. Josh Hawley of Missouri, for example, said he was convinced after talking to Kennedy that he would be a strong anti-abortion advocate.

But skepticism remains, with Pence's advocacy group highlighting his abortion views in an ad campaign.

"RFK Jr. has made certain overtures to pro-life leaders that he would be mindful of their concerns at HHS, there is little reason for confidence at this time," his group said in a letter sent to senators last week.

Senators ask: Will his ideas hurt farmers?

In Iowa, Kennedy's nomination both excites and worries corn and soybean farmer Brian Fyre.

The sixth-generation farmer and Republican thinks Kennedy will offer a fresh perspective, but he also can't afford the ban on corn syrup or pesticides that Kennedy has promised. If confirmed, Kennedy would oversee the Food and Drug Administration, which has the power to enact restrictions.

"We'd be pinched out. It would devastate rural, Midwest communities," Fyre said. "You're talking about a food supply for a nation. You can't upend that without a viable alternative."

Republican Sen. Chuck Grassley of Iowa said he planned to offer some "educating" on agriculture to Kennedy.

Wisconsin Sen. Ron Johnson, a Republican from a dairy farm state, sees it differently, telling a crowd at the Heritage Foundation last month that Kennedy's agriculture ideas are a promising part of a bigger goal: "to Make America Healthy Again."

## Rise in diagnoses is prompting more US adults to ask: 'Do I have ADHD?'

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Allison Burk's teenage daughter struggled with uncontrolled emotions, a shrinking attention span and a growing tendency to procrastinate. A family doctor suggested ADHD testing, which led to an unexpected discovery: The teen had ADHD, and Burk did too.

During her daughter's evaluation, Burk thought, "Wait a minute. This sounds familiar," she recalled.

"I was able to piece together that this might be something I was experiencing," said Burk, of Columbus, Ohio. She subsequently underwent her own testing and was diagnosed with ADHD — at age 42.

More adults are being diagnosed with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder. Diagnoses have been rising for decades but seem to have accelerated in the last few years.

A recent study suggested that more than 15 million U.S. adults — roughly 1 in 17 — have been diagnosed with ADHD. The condition always starts in childhood, but about half of adults with it are diagnosed when they are 18 or older.

Some doctors say the number of people coming in for evaluation is skyrocketing.

"Just in our clinic, requests for assessments have doubled in the last two years," said Justin Barterian, a psychologist based at Ohio State University.

Here's a look at the phenomenon, and how to know if you might have the condition.

### ADHD symptoms in adults

ADHD makes it hard for people to pay attention and control impulsive behaviors. It can be inherited, and is often treated with drugs, behavioral therapy, or both.

"It's like there's an engine in you and you feel like it's always running, and you can't turn it off except with medication," said Judy Sandler, a 62-year-old Maine woman who was diagnosed in her 50s.

ADHD has been called the most commonly diagnosed mental health disorder in U.S. children, with more than 7 million kids diagnosed. Historically, it was thought to mainly affect boys (perhaps because boys with ADHD were seen as more disruptive in school) and to be something that kids grew out of.

But experts believe many people aren't diagnosed as kids and live with symptoms into adulthood.

Adults with the condition talk about having trouble focusing on tasks, juggling responsibilities, and planning and managing their time. Some talk about not putting things away, and straining personal relationships with their restlessness, mood swings and impulsiveness.

Burk said she was grouped with talented and gifted students in grade school but didn't complete college until her 30s because, "when I was 19, I hitchhiked across the country on a whim" and ended up a single mother in her early 20s. She now works in marketing and media relations for Ohio State University's College of Veterinary Medicine.

### Diagnoses have been rising

Diagnoses have been climbing in both kids and adults, and the recent government report found adult ADHD was more common than earlier estimates.

"We haven't had (federal) adult ADHD data in a long time," said one of the study's authors, Angelika Claussen of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

There were indicators of the rise, she added. Increasing demand for ADHD medication led to widespread shortages after the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March 2020. A 2023 study showed the rise in prescriptions was particularly notable in adults — especially women.

ADHD diagnoses and prescriptions were increasing before the pandemic, due partly to a change in general diagnostic criteria in 2013 that broadened the definition of ADHD and reduced the number of symptoms a patient needed to have.

But case counts really seemed to jump in 2020, when schools were closed and many adults were forced to work from home.

"It's very difficult to focus when you are home and you have kids," Claussen said. "That may have exacerbated the symptoms for people who'd had mild ADHD but were able to cope" before the pandemic.

How ADHD is diagnosed in adults

The last few years have seen growing cultural acceptance and curiosity about the condition, fueled by a proliferation of "I have ADHD" social media videos and online medical start-up companies offering 5-minute diagnostic quizzes.

Indeed, the long-held belief that ADHD was underdiagnosed in adults has given way to recent debates about whether it's become overdiagnosed.

There's no blood test or brain scan for ADHD. Experts say it is diagnosed when symptoms are severe enough to cause ongoing problems in more than one area of life, and when those symptoms can be traced to pre-adolescent childhood.

Ideally, a psychologist or psychiatrist diagnoses it by taking careful histories from patients and from people who know them, experts say. They also might ask patients to take tests designed to check their memory and ability to concentrate. Doctors also must rule out anxiety, depression and other conditions that can have similar symptoms.

But getting an appointment with a mental health professional can take months, and intensive ADHD evaluations can cost thousands of dollars. Many patients turn to family doctors or even online diagnostic quizzes, some of them connected to telehealth companies that prescribe medications.

"There is wide variability in this country in how people diagnose, how strict they are, and who they diagnose," said Margaret Sibley, a University of Washington psychologist.

The American Professional Society of ADHD and Related Disorders is drafting a first national set of diagnosis and treatment guidelines for health professionals who treat adults, and expects to release them later this year.

The goal is "to improve the accuracy of diagnoses in this country," said Sibley, who is leading the work on the guidelines.

## Dubai's ceaseless boom is putting strains on its residents

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Skyscraper-studded Dubai has been on a hot streak for the last five years — and some residents are starting to feel burned.

The city-state has seen record-breaking real estate transactions and as more and more people come to live there, and its state-owned airline Emirates is booking record earnings. But all that growth comes with strains for the city's population.

Traffic feels worse than ever on Dubai's roads. The price of housing continues to spike even with new real estate projects being announced almost daily. Caught in the middle are both its Emirati citizens and the vast population of foreigners who power its economy — sparking rare public expressions of concern.

"Dubai is on steroids but affordability risks are increasing," warned Hasnain Malik in a starkly titled report he wrote for the global data firm Tellimer, where he's a managing director.

Skyrocketing housing prices

Under Dubai's current plans, the city aims to have 5.8 million residents by 2040, adding more than half its current estimated population in just 15 years. Since 1980, its population has already soared from around 255,000 to around 3.8 million.

Real estate lit the fire in Dubai's growth in 2002, when the desert sheikdom began allowing foreigners to own property. After sharp falls during both the 2008-2009 financial crisis and Dubai's brief coronavirus lockdown, prices have been soaring.

Today, average prices per square foot are at all-time highs, according to Property Monitor. Rental prices increased as much as 20% in key neighborhoods last year, with further rises likely this year, with some residents moving to communities further out in the desert, the real estate firm Engel & Völkers said.

Jammed roads

Even before the boom, some people who worked in Dubai chose to live in the neighboring emirate of Sharjah, some 20 kilometers (12 miles) north of the city's downtown, or further away. Some 1 million

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 217 ~ 84 of 85

commuters from other emirates jam the 12-lane Sheikh Zayed Road that runs through the center of the city and other highways every day, as studies suggest that as many as four out of five employees drive to work alone.

That traffic has only intensified with Dubai's new arrivals.

While the rest of the world saw as much as a 4% increase in the number of registered vehicles in the last two years, the city's Road and Transportation Authority says there's been a 10% increase in the number of vehicles.

So many vehicles have been registered that the city has had to make license plates longer.

And while the city keeps building new flyovers and other road improvements, more cars are coming from more directions than ever before.

"Dubai is very attractive, more and more people are coming," said Thomas Edelmann, the founder and managing director of RoadSafetyUAE, which advocates about traffic issues. "I think it's easier to get people quickly to come to Dubai and to convince them about Dubai, then to build a new intersection or a new highway."

Boom concerns also raised by Emiratis

Congestion has got so bad that it's driving even prominent Emiratis to break their customary silence on public affairs.

Habib Al Mulla, a prominent Emirati lawyer, wrote on the social platform X in December that while authorities were working on congestion, the problem demanded "a set of immediate and long-term mechanisms." He followed up by publishing an opinion piece twice mentioning "congestion" as being among "pressing issues" for global cities like Dubai.

While phrased in mild language, Al Mulla's comments represented rare public criticism in the United Arab Emirates, where speech is tightly controlled by criminal law and social norms favor raising issues at a "majlis" — a semiprivate setting convened by a traditional ruler.

"The concentration of wealth and opportunities created in global cities may cause income inequality that pushes out lower-income residents," Al Mulla warned in the English-language Khaleej Times newspaper on Jan. 15.

"The problem becomes acute when the wealth and opportunities remain inaccessible to segments of the national population who witness the city's allure being seized by outsiders. This may carry significant social risks, if not mitigated."

Then there's demographic concerns as the Emirati share of the population dwindles. While the number of citizens isn't public, a back-of-the-envelope, informal calculation shared for years by experts suggests Emirati citizens represent around 10% of the country's overall population of more than 9 million people, a number that's likely falling as foreigners rush in.

In December, sermon scripts issued for the Dec. 13 Friday's prayers directly touched on the duty of having more children.

"Increasing offspring is both a religious obligation and a national responsibility, as it contributes to the protection and sustainability of nations," the sermon read, according to a transcript issued by the federal government's General Authority of Islamic Affairs and Endowments.

A search for high-tech solutions

For Dubai's autocratic government, overseen by ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, possible solutions to the grinding traffic have ranged from the practical to the fanciful. The government in recent months has repeatedly encouraged companies to allow more remote work options, including in a report released in November that also suggested staggered and flexible working hours.

Adding as many as five remote workdays a month, along with the other steps, "can reduce morning peak travel time across Dubai by 30%," the study stated.

Dubai's road toll system, known as Salik, has added gates to charge drivers more and will institute surge pricing at the end of the month. Dubai's Metro, which boasts the world's longest self-driving rail line, will also grow beyond its broadly north-south routes in a nearly \$5 billion expansion.

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 217 ~ 85 of 85

Then there's the flying taxi project. Since 2017, Dubai has been announcing plans for airborne cabs in the city. A first "vertiport" is being built by Dubai International Airport with the aim of offering the service from next year.

Dubai also plans 3,300 kilometers (2,050 miles) of new pedestrian paths, although during Dubai's summer months pedestrians have to contend with high humidity and heat of around 45 degrees Celsius (113 degrees Fahrenheit).

"In the coming years, residents of Dubai will be able to move around by walking, cycling, its extensive network of roads and bridges, the Metro and its new lines, water taxis, or flying taxis on specific air routes," Sheikh Mohammed said on X in December.

But for now, Dubai keeps attracting more people and more cars — and the traffic jams only get longer.

## Today in History: January 28 Explosion of the space shuttle Challenger

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Tuesday, Jan. 28, the 28th day of 2025. There are 337 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Jan. 28, 1986, the space shuttle Challenger exploded 73 seconds after liftoff from Cape Canaveral, Florida, killing all seven crew members including schoolteacher Christa McAuliffe.

Also on this date:

In 1547, England's King Henry VIII died at age 55; he was succeeded by his 9-year-old son, Edward VI.

In 1813, the novel "Pride and Prejudice" by Jane Austen was first published, anonymously, in London.

In 1922, 98 people were killed when the roof of the Knickerbocker Theatre in Washington, D.C., collapsed under the weight of nearly 2 feet of snow.

In 1956, Elvis Presley made his first national TV appearance on "Stage Show," a CBS program hosted by Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey.

In 1980, six U.S. diplomats who had avoided being taken hostage at their embassy in Tehran flew out of Iran with the help of Canadian diplomats; the events were later dramatized in the film "Argo."

In 1985, to raise funds in support of famine relief in Ethiopia, the supergroup USA For Africa recorded the song "We Are the World."

In 2011, chaos engulfed Egypt as protesters seized the streets of Cairo, battling police, burning down the ruling party's headquarters and defying a military curfew.

In 2017, Serena Williams won her record 23rd Open Era Grand Slam singles title, defeating her sister Venus at the Australian Open for what would be her final major championship.

Today's birthdays: Actor Alan Alda is 89. Sen. Jeanne Shaheen, D-N.H., is 78. NBA coach Gregg Popovich is 76. Golf Hall of Famer Nick Price is 68. Film director Frank Darabont is 66. Singer Sarah McLachlan is 57. Rapper Rakim is 57. Humorist Mo Rocca is 56. R&B singer Anthony Hamilton is 54. Supreme Court Justice Amy Coney Barrett is 53. Rapper Rick Ross is 49. Singer Joey Fatone Jr. ('N Sync) is 48. Singer Nick Carter (Backstreet Boys) is 45. Actor Elijah Wood is 44. Rapper J. Cole is 40. Actor Ariel Winter is 27.