

Groton Daily Independent

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Saturday, Feb, 1

Groton Invitational Wrestling Tournament, 10 a.m., boys and girls
Boys Basketball at DAK XII/NEC Clash at Madison: Groton Area vs. Dell Rapids, 5 p.m., auxiliary gym
Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., 209 N Main

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



Sunday, Feb. 2

GROUNDHOG DAY

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

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.; Sunday School, 10:15 a.m.; Choir, 6 p.m.

United Methodist worship with communion: Conde, 8:15 a.m.; Groton, 9:30 a.m.; Britton, 11:15 a.m.; Sunday School, 9:30 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 10:30 a.m.

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

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

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

Open Gym, 2 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Pancake Sunday, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Groton Community Center

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1440

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

Trio of Tariffs Loom

President Donald Trump's 25% tariffs on imports from Canada and Mexico and 10% tariffs on Chinese imports are expected to take effect as soon as today, according to the White House. Trump has said the tariffs are meant to pressure the three nations to curb illegal immigration and fentanyl trafficking into the US.

Canada, Mexico, and China are America's three largest trading partners, accounting for over 40% of the goods imported into the US last year. Total trade in goods and services with all three countries exceeded \$1T in 2024. The tariffs could significantly impact Canada and Mexico as roughly 70% to 80% of their goods and services are exported to the US. Both North American countries have already said they would respond to US tariffs with their own measures.

The tariffs could raise prices for American consumers and businesses on various goods, including produce, lumber, and electronics. Trump previously said he was considering an exemption for oil imports, but the White House didn't provide further details. Collection on the tariffs is reportedly expected to begin March 1.

Officials restrict helicopters near Reagan National Airport.

The Federal Aviation Administration is allowing only medical and police helicopters between the Washington, DC-area airport and nearby bridges after Wednesday's tragic collision (see map) between an American Airlines regional commuter jet and an Army helicopter. As of this writing, at least 41 bodies of a total of 67 people have been found in the Potomac River. See a list of the victims here.

Hamas to release three hostages today, including an American.

In turn, Israel will release a batch of imprisoned Palestinians. Today's exchange between Hamas and Israel will mark the fourth such swap since the two sides agreed to a ceasefire deal last month. Around 80 hostages are still being held by Hamas militants in Gaza. See latest updates on the war here.

FDA approves first new non-opioid painkiller in over 20 years.

The Food and Drug Administration greenlighted Vertex Pharmaceuticals' Journavx, a new medication to treat short-term pain after surgeries or injuries. The drug offers a non-opioid alternative that aims to eliminate the risks of addiction and overdose associated with traditional opioid medications like OxyContin and Vicodin.

Federal appeals court strikes down ban on handgun sales to teens.

A federal appeals court struck down a longstanding federal ban that prevented handgun sales to Americans ages 18 to 20, ruling the restriction is inconsistent with the Second Amendment. The decision, which cites the Supreme Court's 2022 Bruen opinion, is likely to be appealed to the high court and could have implications for gun control laws nationwide.

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The 67th Grammy Awards show to be held tomorrow (8 pm ET, CBS).

Hosted by comedian Trevor Noah, the ceremony will feature performances by six of this year's best new artist nominees, including Benson Boone, Chappell Roan, Teddy Swims, and Sabrina Carpenter. Other performers include Billie Eilish, Charli XCX, and Shakira. Beyoncé led this year's nominations with 11 nods, including album of the year. See how the Grammy Awards are made here.

Fed's key inflation gauge rises as expected in December.

The core personal consumption expenditures price index, which measures costs consumers pay across a wide swath of items, excluding food and energy, rose 2.8% year-over-year and 0.2% month-over-month. The index is the Federal Reserve's preferred inflation measure; the central bank targets 2% annual inflation.

Humankind(ness)

Dear readers—

We're taking a moment this week to remember our dear friend and colleague, Pierre Lipton, who unexpectedly passed away two years ago on Feb. 4, 2023.

Pierre accomplished more in 26 years than most do in a lifetime—a world traveler, speaker of multiple languages, valedictorian, Forbes 30 Under 30 honoree, startup founder, and more.

What folks may not have seen from the outside was his consistent desire to drive positive impact in the lives of others. At 1440, Pierre pushed for our employee wellness program, employee happiness interviews, vacation incentives, and more. Outside 1440, he cared deeply about making the world a better place, devoting his time and energy to issues he was passionate about—physical health in underserved communities, food security, animal welfare, and the environment.

These are just a few examples of how Pierre turned the spirit of human kindness into daily action. He was humble and took time to deeply connect with people, lifting others up and helping them succeed.

Pierre passed away after completing a marathon in Arizona. He was doing what he loved. He is deeply missed by his family, partner, friends, colleagues, his dog Appa, and many others.

A philanthropic foundation has been established in Pierre's memory to support charitable organizations consistent with his passions.

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Groton Grapplers have clean sweep in quadrangular

Groton Area's wrestling squad easily won all three matches at the quadrangular held Friday in Groton. Groton Area defeated Britton-Hecla, Canistota and McLaughlin. In the other matches, Britton-Hecla defeated Canistota, 54-24, and McLaughlin, 51-21. McLaughlin defeated Canistota, 41-18. Liza Krueger had only one match where she defeated Britton-Hecla's Olivia Borgen with a technical fall, 18-2, in 2:11.

Groton Area 74, Britton-Hecla 6

- 106: Wyatt Hagen (Groton Area) over Lincoln Kilker (Britton-Hecla) (TF 15-0 3:51)
- 113: Keegan Kucker (Groton Area) wins by forfeit
- 120: Kyson Kucker (Groton Area) over Carter Grobe (Britton-Hecla) (Fall 3:52)
- 126: Lincoln Krause (Groton Area) wins by forfeit
- 132: Aiden Strom (Groton Area) wins by forfeit
- 138: Donavon Block (Groton Area) over Max Suther (Britton-Hecla) (Fall 5:06)
- 144: Chris Schwab (Groton Area) wins by forfeit
- 150: Walker Zoellner (Groton Area) wins by forfeit
- 157: Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) over Dashed Davidson (Britton-Hecla) (Fall 1:12)
- 165: Ben Hoeft (Groton Area) over Colton Chapin (Britton-Hecla) (Fall 5:52)
- 175: Korbin Kucker (Groton Area) over Ben Suther (Britton-Hecla) (Dec 7-2)
- 190: Layne Johnson (Groton Area) over Liam Paxton (Britton-Hecla) (Fall 1:04)
- 215: Tucker Hardy (Britton-Hecla) over Charlie Frost (Groton Area) (Fall 3:58)
- 285: Gavin Englund (Groton Area) wins by forfeit

Groton Area 72, Canistota 9

- 106: Wyatt Hagen (Groton Area) over Colt Evenson (Canistota) (Fall 0:41)
- 113: Keegan Kucker (Groton Area) wins by forfeit
- 120: Kyson Kucker (Groton Area) wins by forfeit
- 126: Lincoln Krause (Groton Area) over Lucas Mathieu (Canistota) (Fall 1:02)
- 132: Donavon Block (Groton Area) over Jayze Kuhl (Canistota) (Fall 1:37)
- 138: Koda Popkes (Canistota) over Grayson Flores (Groton Area) (Fall 0:54)
- 144: Chris Schwab (Groton Area) over Joseph Haag (Canistota) (Fall 1:29)
- 150: Joshua Popkes Jr (Canistota) over Walker Zoellner (Groton Area) (Dec 5-2)
- 157: Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) wins by forfeit
- 165: Ben Hoeft (Groton Area) wins by forfeit
- 175: Korbin Kucker (Groton Area) wins by forfeit
- 190: Isiah Scepaniak (Groton Area) over Will Globke (Canistota) (Fall 4:24)
- 215: Charlie Frost (Groton Area) wins by forfeit
- 285: Karter Moody (Groton Area) wins by forfeit

Groton Area 82, McLaughlin 0

- 106: Wyatt Hagen (Groton Area) over Wambli White Tail (McLaughlin) (TF 16-0 2:43)
- 113: Keegan Kucker (Groton Area) wins by forfeit
- 120: Noah Scepaniak (Groton Area) over Ryken McCloud (McLaughlin) (TF 21-4 5:28)
- 126: Lincoln Krause (Groton Area) over Amiel Spotted Horse (McLaughlin) (Fall 2:14)
- 132: Grayson Flores (Groton Area) over Chance Little Bear (McLaughlin) (Fall 3:31)
- 138: Donavon Block (Groton Area) over Keyen Crow Ghost (McLaughlin) (Fall 4:00)
- 144: John Bisbee (Groton Area) wins by forfeit
- 150: Walker Zoellner (Groton Area) wins by forfeit
- 157: Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) wins by forfeit
- 165: Ben Hoeft (Groton Area) over Jacoby Carry Moccasin (McLaughlin) (Fall 2:00)
- 175: Korbin Kucker (Groton Area) wins by forfeit
- 190: Layne Johnson (Groton Area) wins by forfeit
- 215: Charlie Frost (Groton Area) over Quentin White Mountatin (McLaughlin) (Fall 2:55)
- 285: Gavin Englund (Groton Area) wins by forfeit

S.D. Farmers Union President says JBS Settlement is a Significant Milestone for U.S. Cattle Producers

HURON, S.D. - The January 31, 2025 news of preliminary approval of a proposed \$83.5 million class action settlement with the JBS defendants is a significant milestone for cattle producers in South Dakota and across the U.S., said South Dakota Farmers Union President, Doug Sombke.

"We are pleased to have reached a significant milestone in the case with the JBS settlement," said Sombke, referencing the 2019 class-action antitrust lawsuit filed by National Farmers Union, alongside ranch group R-CALF USA and four fed cattle producers.

"Farmers Union suspected that something was not right for many years. This is the reason SDFU worked with National Farmers Union to get the truth and ensure packers are held accountable for their actions," Sombke said. "We look forward to prosecuting our claims against the remaining Defendants, Tyson, Cargill and National Beef."

South Dakota Farmers Union has been working for decades to hold packers accountable. Sombke explained that cattle producers in South Dakota and across the nation were put on high alert because grocery store meat counter prices remained high while the prices they received for weaned and finished cattle remained low.

"In many cases, cattle producers were not able to cover expenses. So many lost money and sadly, we have lost a lot of family farmers and ranchers who raised cattle or operated feedlots," Sombke said. "It is important to understand that JBS is not a U.S.-based corporation. It is based in Brazil. JBS has also been lobbying against MCOOL (Mandatory Country of Origin Labeling.)"

Settlement funds will go to cattle producers who sold finished cattle to harvest from June 1, 2015 to February 1, 2020. No funds go to National Farmers Union, South Dakota Farmers Union or other organizations involved holding meat packers accountable.

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Johnson Invites Trump, Burgum to Host Independence Day Fireworks at Mount Rushmore

Washington, D.C. – Today, U.S. Representative Dusty Johnson (R-S.D.) invited the President Trump and Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum to host a fireworks celebration at Mount Rushmore for Independence Day. The last celebration with fireworks at Mount Rushmore was in 2020, during President Trump's first administration.

"Celebrating our nation's independence at the foot of Mount Rushmore is quintessentially American," said Johnson. "Whether it's fireworks, drones, lasers, or something else, a show brings another level of energy to the patriotic celebration. I hope President Trump and Secretary Burgum can join the festivities at our historic national landmark."

Johnson has been supportive of fireworks celebrations at Mount Rushmore in previous years and has attended past Independence Day events at the monument.

Thursday's Double-Header with Deuel in Groton schedule change

4pm - Boys JV
5pm - Girls JV
6:15pm - Boys varsity
7:45pm - Girls varsity

Coming up on GDILIVE.COM

Groton Area
Tigers



Saturday, Feb. 01

DAK XII vs. NEC

Clash

Boys Varsity

5 p.m.:

Groton Area

vs.

Dell Rapids

Sponsored by Agtegra, Avantara Groton, Bierman Farm Service, BK Custom T's & More, Blocker Construction, Dacotah Bank, Groton Ag Partners, Groton Chamber, Groton Ford, Groton 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.**

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Groton Area January Students of the Month



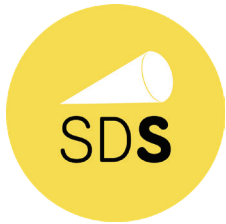
Back left: Brynlee Dunker (6th), Asher Zimmerman (7th), Carlee Johnson (10th), Axel Warrington (12th)

Front Left: Brooklyn Spainer (8th), Chesney Weber (9th), Jaedyn Penning (11th)

Groton Area School works to ensure that all levels of academic instruction also include the necessary life skills teaching, practicing, and modeling that encourages essential personal life habits that are universally understood to facilitate helping our students become good human beings and citizens.

It is learning with our heads, hearts, and hands to be caring and civil, to make healthy decisions, to effectively problem solve, to be respectful and responsible, to be good citizens, and to be empathetic and ethical individuals.

Students are selected based on individual student growth in the areas of: positive behavior, citizenship, good attendance, a thirst for knowledge, and high academic standards.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Meet Larry Rhoden: Colleagues describe SD's new governor as a steady hand and source of humor

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - JANUARY 31, 2025 12:18 PM

Larry Rhoden owes his new job as governor to Kristi Noem, but her political career might have stalled shortly after it began if not for his help, according to a story they've both shared publicly.

As a new state legislator in 2007, Noem thought a fellow Republican lawmaker from her district was insufficiently devoted to anti-abortion legislation. She aired that view in an email to constituents, which angered other Republicans.

Rhoden told the story earlier this month while introducing Noem for her last State of the State speech.

"She got herself in a little trouble, kind of put her foot in her mouth over an issue, and there was a lot of consternation among her colleagues," he said.

Rhoden was the state House majority leader at the time. He arranged a group dinner with Noem, telling other attendees that she didn't "have a lot of friends." The advice Noem received that evening and the relationships she formed helped to put her on a path to political success.

Noem was eventually elected to Congress, and then became South Dakota's first female governor with Rhoden serving as her lieutenant governor. Now she's the secretary of the federal Department of Homeland Security, and Rhoden has succeeded her as governor. He'll serve the remainder of her second term through 2026, when he'll have to decide whether to seek his own term in that year's election.

South Dakotans know a lot about Noem, after her many statewide campaigns, her two books and her consistent presence on social media. They're less acquainted with Rhoden, who took the oath of office Monday as South Dakota's 34th governor. Rhoden said as much when he addressed the Legislature during a joint session on Tuesday.



Then-Lt. Gov. Larry Rhoden chats with lawmakers during the 2025 legislative session on Jan. 21, 2025. (Makenzie Huber/South Dakota Searchlight)

Ranching roots

The 65-year-old is a fourth-generation rancher from rural Union Center, in western South Dakota. He values his faith, family and hard work, he said in his speech. He and his wife, Sandy, have four grown sons and seven grandchildren.

Rhoden's brother still lives on the land where their grandfather homesteaded, while Rhoden lives nearby. His family has a tradition of military service, he said, including in the Revolutionary War and the world wars. Instead of going to college after graduating from high school, Rhoden joined the National Guard.

He's now the 12th governor in South Dakota history to lack a college degree, and the first since Walter

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Dale Miller, another Republican rancher and lieutenant governor who took over as governor after the death of Gov. George Mickelson in 1993.

Rhoden joined the state Legislature in 2000, where he served for 16 years. His interests during his legislative career included property rights, pro-gun policies, anti-abortion legislation and tax reform.

In 2014, he ran in a five-way race for the Republican nomination for an open U.S. Senate seat. He finished a distant second to former Gov. Mike Rounds, who went on to win the general election.

Humorous and serious

Rhoden joined Noem as her running mate in her successful 2018 gubernatorial campaign, after she'd served four terms in the U.S. House. As Noem generated national headlines during her administration, Rhoden was a quiet, sometimes comedic presence in the background.

While fulfilling the lieutenant governor's dual role as president of the state Senate, he broke two gavels—with his powerful strike, earning him good-natured ribbing from legislators and a heavy-duty aluminum gavel as a gift. He also made his own wooden gavels and put his 40 years of custom welding experience to use crafting a "VETO" branding iron for Noem.

While participating in a 2017 debate about legislation to permit concealed guns in the Capitol (an idea that eventually succeeded), Rhoden hit a panic button in a committee room to see how quickly authorities would respond.

In her first book, Noem recalled her years serving in the Legislature with Rhoden and said they were part of a group of lawmakers and lobbyists who enjoyed the "Seinfeld" sitcom and compared themselves to the cast. The group decided Rhoden "was a lot like Kramer," Noem wrote, "with his funny expressions and crazy head tilts."

Noem also described Rhoden in her book as a strategic thinker who knew "when a good quip was exactly what was needed to ease the tension in the room."

Tim Rave was a member of that group of friends. He's now the South Dakota Board of Regents president and South Dakota Association of Healthcare Organizations executive director. He laughed at the "Seinfeld" memory, saying Rhoden took the Kramer comparison well.

Rave, a former speaker of the House, said Rhoden will serve as a "rock steady hand" to navigate the leadership transition. South Dakotans will see a "genuine" man and leader in the coming years who will listen, collaborate and use humor when necessary, Rave said.

Dan Ahlers, executive director of the South Dakota Democratic Party, formerly served with Rhoden in the Legislature. Ahlers remembers Rhoden as a "firebrand" from his early years as a legislator, but said Rhoden has matured into someone who will be more "attentive" to the state than his predecessor.

"I think Larry is more focused on South Dakota," Ahlers said. "What we've seen with Noem throughout her career is, 'What is the next step? What's the next and next and next?'"

Aberdeen Republican Rep. Al Novstrup, who has served in the Legislature since 2003, said Rhoden will bring the same sincere, honest and competent leadership to the governor's office that he embodied during their time together in the Legislature.

"Over the years, we've had a lot of contentious issues. Larry has always been able to reach compromises that treat everybody fairly," Novstrup said. "He's always respectful to people he disagrees with. He's got South Dakota integrity."

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.

COMMENTARY

SD Legislature won't quit trying to make it harder to change the constitution

by Dana Hess

South Dakota voters aren't particularly fond of ballot measures that seek to change the state constitution. They're even less enamored of attempts to mess with the way that their constitution can be changed. That history of failure doesn't keep legislators from trying.

The latest attempt is House Joint Resolution 5003 sponsored by Rep. John Hughes, a Sioux Falls Republican. Currently, constitutional amendments placed on the general election ballot are passed with 50% of the vote plus one. Hughes seeks to raise that benchmark to 60% of the vote.

The resolution has passed its first two hurdles, getting approval from the House State Affairs Committee on an 11-2 vote and passing the full House on a vote of 61-5.

According to Hughes, because South Dakota has a 50% plus one threshold, "We are a target for being used as a laboratory for the emergence of new values and new ideas that many, many, many South Dakotans do not share."

Often during the testimony about HJR 5003, there were complaints about the millions of dollars dumped into South Dakota elections by out-of-state interests. It sounds naive to think that big-money interests would stay away from South Dakota elections if the threshold for passing a constitutional amendment were raised to 60% of the vote.

Many of South Dakota's current crop of legislators weren't around in 2017 when their brethren in the Legislature made quick work of dismantling Initiated Measure 22, an anti-corruption bill endorsed with 51% of the vote. IM 22 may have been as unworkable as it was unconstitutional, but instead of letting the courts decide on its demise, lawmakers acted fast to do the job themselves.

Their eagerness to enact some parts of the initiated measure and ignore other parts led some people — particularly those people who are interested in getting their ideas on the ballot — to believe that the Legislature was circumventing the will of the people. The Legislature's fast action on an initiated measure made constitutional amendments, which can't be messed with by lawmakers once the voters approve, all the more compelling for people who want to raise issues that the Legislature won't tackle.

Resolutions like the one Hughes is backing don't have a good track record with voters. In 2018, the mysteriously named Amendment X sought to raise the approval threshold on constitutional amendments to 55%. It garnered only 46% of the vote. In 2022, Amendment C sought to raise the requirement to three-fifths of the vote if the amendment in question required an increase in taxes or fees or the appropriation of \$10 million over five fiscal years. Voters didn't like that one either, with 67% of them voting against it.

Often during the discussion about HJR 5003, Hughes and the committee members asserted that voters are suffering from "ballot fatigue." Their suffering will only get worse in 2026 when, besides ballot issues, voters will be faced with choices for governor, U.S. representative, state constitutional offices and the Legislature. The "ballot fatigue" argument leads to the realization that lawmakers are irony-impaired.

Prior to voting to put HJR 5003 on the ballot, members of the committee approved HJR 5001, a consti-



State Rep. John Hughes, R-Sioux Falls, speaks on the South Dakota House floor on Jan. 22, 2025.

(Makenzie Huber/South Dakota Searchlight)

tutional amendment that would ease South Dakota's escape from paying for expanded Medicaid. There's also a joint resolution in the Senate seeking to put yet another constitutional amendment of the ballot. If lawmakers themselves weren't so eager to change the constitution, South Dakota's ballots would be shorter.

In 2024, two of the constitutional amendments originated with lawmakers — a work requirement for Medicaid and a neutering of the language used in the constitution to get ride of male pronouns. The language amendment failed. Voters approved of the Medicaid work requirement, but if Hughes' effort was in effect, it would have failed since it got only 56% of the vote.

South Dakota finds itself at a veritable Bermuda Triangle of election factors that attract out-of-state influence. It's a state where it's relatively easy to get on the ballot, media costs are cheap by national standards and campaign finance laws are hard to enact ever since the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that political spending is a form of free speech.

In the end, there's not much that the Legislature can do to keep away out-of-state interests and their fat wallets. But lawmakers can help out voters by curbing their baser instinct to continually use their power to put even more constitutional amendments on the ballot.

Dana Hess spent more than 25 years in South Dakota journalism, editing newspapers in Redfield, Milbank and Pierre. He's retired and lives in Brookings, working occasionally as a freelance writer.

Iowa court suspends license of former South Dakota attorney general

BY: CLARK KAUFFMAN, IOWA CAPITAL DISPATCH - JANUARY 31, 2025 2:53 PM



Jason Ravensborg, former attorney general of South Dakota, speaks during a hearing about the future of his law license on Feb. 14, 2024, at the Capitol in Pierre while his legal team looks on. (David Bordewyk/

SD NewsMedia Association)

The Iowa Supreme Court has suspended for two months the law license of South Dakota's former attorney general due to his involvement in a 2020 traffic fatality.

In September 2024, the South Dakota Supreme Court suspended for six months the South Dakota law license of Jason Ravensborg, who served as that state's attorney general from 2019 until his impeachment and removal from office in 2022.

Because Ravensborg is also licensed to practice law in Iowa, he was notified last year that his Iowa license may be subject to a six-month suspension based on South Dakota's actions.

Ravnsborg argued against such a suspension, citing the fact that he was born on an Iowa farm in Cherokee County and later served three military deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan. He told the court he believed he should "be given no more than a private reprimand" so he could move forward after four years of dealing with the matter.

At a recent hearing on the matter, the Iowa Attorney Disciplinary Board cited the six-month suspension of Ravensborg's South Dakota license and asked the Iowa justices to impose identical, reciprocal discipline.

The court instead issued an order stating, without explanation, that it "finds that a 60-day suspension of Ravensborg's license to practice law in Iowa is the appropriate discipline."

Question raised after fatality

Court records indicate that on 10:30 p.m. on Sept. 12, 2020, Ravensborg was driving from a political event

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in Redfield, South Dakota, to his home in Pierre, South Dakota, when he struck and killed 55-year-old Joe Boever, who was walking on the shoulder of the road near the town of Highmore.

According to court records, Ravensborg slowly brought his vehicle to a stop and called 911, telling the operator, "I'm the attorney general. And I am — I don't know — I hit something." The operator asked whether he had hit "a deer or something," and he allegedly replied, "I have no idea, yeah, it could be, I mean it was right in the roadway."

Hyde County Sheriff Mike Volek was dispatched to the scene but couldn't locate anything Ravensborg struck. The next day, Ravensborg returned to Highmore with his chief of staff to return the sheriff's vehicle. On the way, they stopped at the site of the crash and found Boever's body lying just off the side of the road and informed Volek of their discovery.

When he was interviewed by investigators, Ravensborg denied having consumed any drugs or alcohol on the night of the accident — which, according to court records, was confirmed by a blood test. Ultimately, investigators concluded Ravensborg had been driving outside the lane of travel, just off the roadway, when the accident occurred.

Ravnsborg pleaded guilty to two misdemeanor offenses — operating a vehicle while using a cell phone and improper lane driving — and a charge of careless driving was dismissed.

Ravnsborg then entered into a confidential civil settlement with Boever's estate. In June 2022, he was impeached by the South Dakota Senate, removed from office and barred from ever holding public office again in South Dakota.

The Disciplinary Board of the State Bar of South Dakota subsequently investigated the matter and recommended a 26-month suspension of Ravensborg's law license.

The board alleged that when responding to questions by accident investigators, Ravensborg "did not appear to be forthright, and (was) only willing to acknowledge certain conduct after being confronted with evidence by the investigators."

The board also alleged that Ravensborg frequently identified himself as "the attorney general" when encountering law enforcement for minor traffic violations. The board also noted that from the night of the accident and continuing throughout his service as attorney general, Ravensborg made no public or private apology, never expressed his condolences to the Boever family, and he never acknowledged any culpability.

Ravnsborg, the board concluded, was more concerned with the "impact of the incident on his political and military careers than the victim, the victim's family and the public he served."

In opting for a six-month law license suspension, the South Dakota Supreme Court stated that "several of Ravensborg's statements after the accident raise questions about his honesty and truthfulness." The court noted that Ravensborg had repeatedly denied using his phones during his drive from Redfield to Highmore.

According to the court, the metadata on one of Ravensborg's phones showed that "minutes before" he called 911, he had unlocked his phone, checked his Yahoo email account, accessed the Dakota Free Press website, and clicked on a political news article.

It was only after investigators informed him of that evidence, the court said, that "Ravnsborg's story took another turn" and he admitted "looking at stuff" on his phone before the accident.

"Ravnsborg's responses demonstrated a concerted effort to avoid criminal liability through dishonesty and misrepresentations," the court concluded.

Ravnsborg now lives in Fort McCoy, Wisconsin, according to court records.

Deputy Editor Clark Kauffman of the Iowa Capital Dispatch has worked during the past 30 years as both an investigative reporter and editorial writer at two of Iowa's largest newspapers, the Des Moines Register and the Quad-City Times. He has won numerous state and national awards for reporting and editorial writing. His 2004 series on prosecutorial misconduct in Iowa was named a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for Investigative Reporting. From October 2018 through November 2019, Kauffman was an assistant ombudsman for the Iowa Office of Ombudsman, an agency that investigates citizens' complaints of wrongdoing within state and local government agencies.

COMMENTARY

Costs of diagnostic screening should not stand in the way of lifesaving care

Legislation pending in South Dakota could extend and save lives

by Doris Caldwell

Watching someone die from cancer is hard.

I have done it more than once. I feared it would be me when I received an inflammatory breast cancer (IBC) diagnosis at the age of 38.

Our children were 10, 12 and 17 at the time. My husband and I both worked for a nonprofit that had just recently added health insurance benefits. If it would have been a year earlier, we would have been without coverage. We were building homes on the Rosebud Indian Reservation, money was tight. I am thankful we had good coverage then with a reasonable deductible.

Looking back through the process of diagnosis, I have to say if I had the insurance that I do now, I don't know that I would be here today. Early detection saves lives and, with IBC, every day matters. It is that aggressive. I was able to get testing that I needed and finances were not a factor.

Unfortunately, the facts are that now, too many South Dakota women are left exposed to large out-of-pocket costs for diagnostic tests to detect breast cancer early, a loophole we could close this legislative session. Screening mammograms are usually covered in full by insurance carriers, but for women like me, the additional diagnostics required for follow-up testing after an abnormal mammogram can cost thousands of dollars, forcing patients to make a big out-of-pocket payment to get the work-up they need or gamble with their health.

Women like me, our daughters and granddaughters fall into high-risk categories. This means we often need testing beyond an annual screening mammogram. Breast density and family history are factors in that. These two things affect so many, putting many families in a difficult financial position.

In many ways I was fortunate. It wasn't until I had been diagnosed that cost became a conversation for our family. For some women, out-of-pocket costs add up for the diagnostic tests they need even before they are diagnosed with cancer.

I say I am not sure I would be here today because with our current deductible \$7,500 applies to everything past a screening mammogram. I might not be here because – like many South Dakota women today — my diagnosis required multiple tests. We could not have afforded to pay for those tests then and many women surely cannot afford it now.

I had more than one mammogram, ultrasound, lab work and two biopsies. Today, that would all be out of pocket. For way too many women, the cost of diagnostic testing causes delays. Delays in screening, in



A nurse provides assistance to a patient undergoing a mammogram. (Tom Werner/Getty Images)

diagnosis and delays in beginning lifesaving treatments. Everyone agrees early detection saves lives, yet deductibles have increased across the board, creating a large obstacle for many.

It makes sense to remove barriers to early detection so women can get the care they need without facing grave financial consequences. Across our state, there is a growing group of women and families who work hard but are struggling to make ends meet.

South Dakota has done a good job for very low-income women. Our All Women Count program can cover a diagnostic mammogram. But this is only for women who fall within certain income guidelines. For example, a woman in a family of two must fall below \$51,100 before taxes to qualify for those services.

We need to provide solutions for women above that threshold. They need to receive the benefit of early detection. I spent a few years working in the cancer center I received treatment in. I can't tell you how often I served women who had advanced cancer. Many times it was not found early because of financial concerns. This should not be common.

Legislation pending in South Dakota, House Bill 1070, would eliminate cost sharing on diagnostic breast screening. Asking insurance companies to pay for diagnostic screening makes sense. This legislation has been enacted in nearly half of the states.

Some say legislation shouldn't be needed for this. In that case, we should already have it.

Others say that breast cancer shouldn't be treated differently than other cancers. I say we must start somewhere.

Breast cancer screening is expensive and some women need supplemental screening based on individual risk factors or family history to ensure early detection to save and extend our lives. Treating a localized cancer is easier and more cost effective than once it has spread.

My hope is that one day we have a world without cancer. Until then, we should do everything we can to facilitate early detection.

Doris Caldwell is a breast cancer survivor, a wife, and a mother of three in Spearfish.

Federal judge blocks Trump plan to freeze spending on grants, loans

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - JANUARY 31, 2025 4:18 PM

WASHINGTON — A federal district judge issued a temporary restraining order on Friday, blocking the Trump administration from moving forward with a proposed spending freeze on grants and loans.

Chief Judge John J. McConnell Jr. of the U.S. District Court in Rhode Island wrote in the 13-page ruling the administration's "actions violate the Constitution and statutes of the United States."

"Federal law specifies how the Executive should act if it believes that appropriations are inconsistent with the President's priorities—it must ask Congress, not act unilaterally," McConnell wrote. "The Impoundment Control Act of 1974 specifies that the President may ask that Congress rescind appropriated funds. Here, there is no evidence that the Executive has followed the law by notifying Congress and thereby effectuating a potentially legally permitted so-called 'pause.'"

The lawsuit, filed by Democratic attorneys general from 22 states and the District of Columbia, stems from a two-page memo the Office of Management and Budget issued Monday evening.

The document called for a freeze on all federal grants and loans, leading to widespread confusion about how far reaching the halt could be and how long it would last.

While the memo said it wouldn't impact Social Security or Medicare, it was silent on Medicaid and hundreds of other federal programs, including those that go to veterans, schools and food support programs.

A separate document from OMB listed thousands of programs that were subject to the original OMB memo.

District Judge Loren L. AliKhan of the U.S. District Court of the District of Columbia issued a short-term administrative stay of OMB's actions Tuesday, blocking the Trump administration from implementing the

freeze. That ruling was in response to a separate lawsuit over the OMB memo filed by the National Council of Nonprofits, American Public Health Association and Main Street Alliance.

The following day, the Trump administration rescinded the OMB memo shortly before McConnell heard from the attorneys in the lawsuit filed by the attorneys general.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt posted on social media that rescinding the memo was "NOT a rescission of the federal funding freeze."

"It is simply a rescission of the OMB memo," Leavitt wrote. "Why? To end any confusion created by the court's injunction."

"The President's EO's on federal funding remain in full force and effect, and will be rigorously implemented," she added.

Her comments were noted in Judge McConnell's temporary restraining order.

"Based on the Press Secretary's unequivocal statement and the continued actions of Executive agencies, the Court finds that the policies in the OMB Directive that the States challenge here are still in full force and effect and thus the issues presented in the States' TRO motion are not moot," McConnell wrote.

An attorney for the U.S. Justice Department had argued during a virtual hearing before McConnell on Wednesday that the case was no longer necessary since OMB rescinded the original memo.

McConnell's temporary restraining order will stay in place until he rules on an upcoming request from the Democratic state attorneys general for a preliminary injunction.

McConnell wrote in the temporary restraining order that the Trump administration's assessment that it has a responsibility "to align Federal spending and action with the will of the American people as expressed through Presidential priorities ... is a constitutionally flawed statement."

"The Executive Branch has a duty to align federal spending and action with the will of the people as expressed through congressional appropriations, not through 'Presidential priorities,'" McConnell wrote.

The U.S. Constitution gives Congress the power to approve and direct federal spending in Article 1, Clause 9, Section 7. Lawmakers have used that over time to approve mandatory spending on programs like Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security, as well as discretionary spending on the dozen annual appropriations bills.

Those measures fund the vast majority of federal departments and agencies, including Agriculture, Energy, Homeland Security, Interior, Justice, State, Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development.

Those bills include hundreds of grant and loan programs, many of which were frozen by the original OMB memo, which McConnell wrote in his temporary restraining order would have significantly impacted states.

"The Executive Orders threaten the States' ability to conduct essential activities and gave the States and others less than 24 hours' notice of this arbitrary pause, preventing them from making other plans or strategizing how they would continue to function without these promised funds." McConnell wrote.

Since Congress approved funding for those programs, McConnell wrote, "the Executive's refusal to disburse them is contrary to congressional intent and directive and thus arbitrary and capricious."

Democratic attorneys general who filed the lawsuit before McConnell are from New York, Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, North Carolina, New Jersey, New Mexico, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington, Wisconsin, and the District of Columbia.



A federal judge has temporarily blocked the Trump administration's plan to suspend spending on grants and loans. (Photo by Joe Raedle/Getty Images)

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.

White House announces tariffs on products from Canada, Mexico, China

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - JANUARY 31, 2025 2:25 PM

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump plans to implement tariffs on Canada, Mexico and China on Saturday, potentially starting off a trade war that would likely lead to price increases on groceries and numerous other products.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said during a briefing Friday that Trump will place 25% tariffs on goods coming into the United States from Canada and Mexico, and a 10% tariff on imports from China. Tariffs are paid by businesses bringing goods into the United States from other countries and they often pass on the increase in costs to consumers.

"The tariffs are incoming tomorrow on Canada and the reason for that is because both Canada and Mexico have both allowed an unprecedented invasion of illegal fentanyl that is killing American citizens and also illegal immigrants into our country," Leavitt said.

Trump hasn't yet decided if he will later implement tariffs on the European Union, made up of 27 countries, according to Leavitt.

"I won't get ahead of the president on tariffs when it comes to the European Union," she said.

Trump said later Friday from the Oval Office that he wasn't using the tariffs as a negotiating tool, but as a way to raise revenue for the federal government and bring attention to fentanyl flowing into the country.

"We're not looking for a concession. We'll just see what happens," Trump said.

The new tariffs will be stacked on top of existing tariffs, he said.

Trump said he planned to add additional tariffs at some point on computer chips and "things associated with chips," oil and gas, steel, aluminum, copper, pharmaceuticals and "all forms of medicine."

Trump said he will likely implement the oil and gas tariffs on Feb. 18, but didn't provide dates for the other tariffs.

Trump brushed aside a question about how tariffs would impact prices, saying he was elected to reduce inflation. He said he wasn't concerned about the stock market's reaction on Friday afternoon to the impending tariffs.

Many economists, including those at conservative think tanks, like the American Enterprise Institute, have warned against broadly applying tariffs in this way.

Phil Gramm, former Republican chairman of the Senate Banking Committee and nonresident senior fellow at AEI, and Larry Summers, former Treasury Secretary during the Clinton administration, wrote an op-ed published by the Wall Street Journal on Thursday urging Trump not to implement tariffs.

"Our united opposition to non-defense-related tariffs is based not on our faith in free trade but on evi-



The White House announced that tariffs on products from Mexico, Canada and China will begin Feb. 1. (Getty Images)

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dence that tariffs are harmful to the economy," they wrote.

"Protective tariffs distort domestic production by inducing domestic producers to commit labor and capital to produce goods and services that could have been acquired more cheaply on the international market," Gramm and Summers wrote. "That labor and capital are in turn diverted from producing goods and services that couldn't be acquired more cheaply internationally. In the process, productivity, wages and economic growth fall while prices rise. Tariffs and the retaliation they bring also poison our economic and security alliances."

Leavitt said during the press briefing that only Trump could decide whether he would eventually lift or alter the tariffs, while brushing aside the potential impacts to the U.S. economy.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service writes on its website that Canada and Mexico "are the United States' first and third largest suppliers of agricultural products (averaging \$30.9 billion and \$25.5 billion in 2017–21, respectively).

"Mexico supplied the United States with 31 percent of imported horticultural products including fruit, vegetables, and alcoholic beverages. Canada is also a source of horticultural products, as well as grains, and meats."

The Office of the United States Trade Representative writes on its website that the U.S. imported \$562.9 billion worth of goods from China during 2022.

U.S. agricultural exports to China, which could be impacted by retaliatory tariffs, totaled \$36.4 billion during fiscal year 2022, according to the USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service.

"U.S. exports have returned to trend growth experienced since the People's Republic of China's (PRC) accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) and in the last 2 years the United States has witnessed record export values to China for soybeans, corn, beef, chicken meat, tree nuts, and sorghum. Cotton exports to China have also rebounded, propelled by strong demand. All these products are major contributors to the U.S. farm economy."

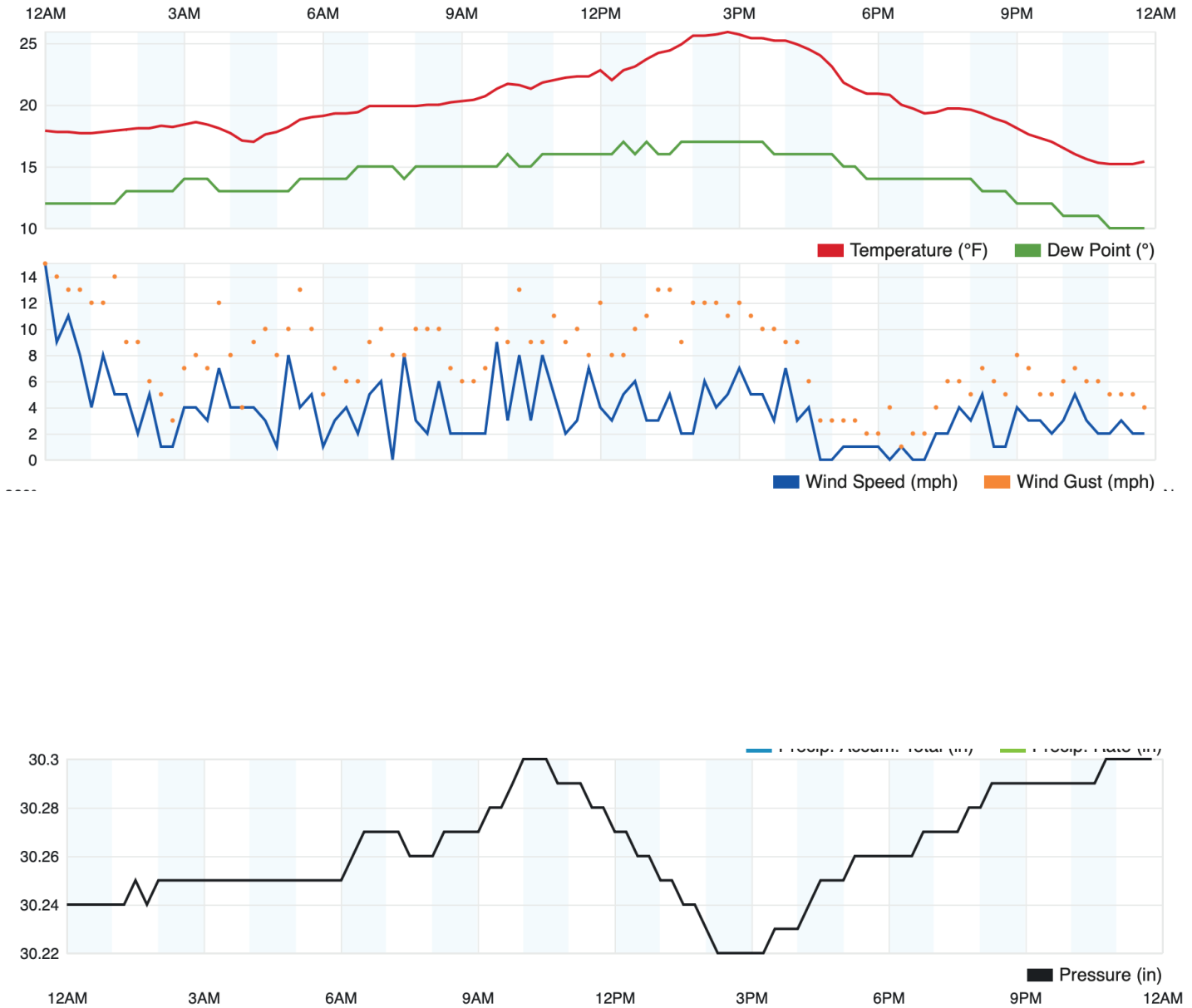
Ashley Murray contributed to this report.

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

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



High: 49 °F

Mostly Cloudy

Tonight



Low: 25 °F

Partly Cloudy

Sunday



High: 35 °F

Mostly Cloudy

Sunday Night



Low: 5 °F

Chance Snow
then Snow

Monday



High: 13 °F

Snow Likely
then Mostly
Cloudy

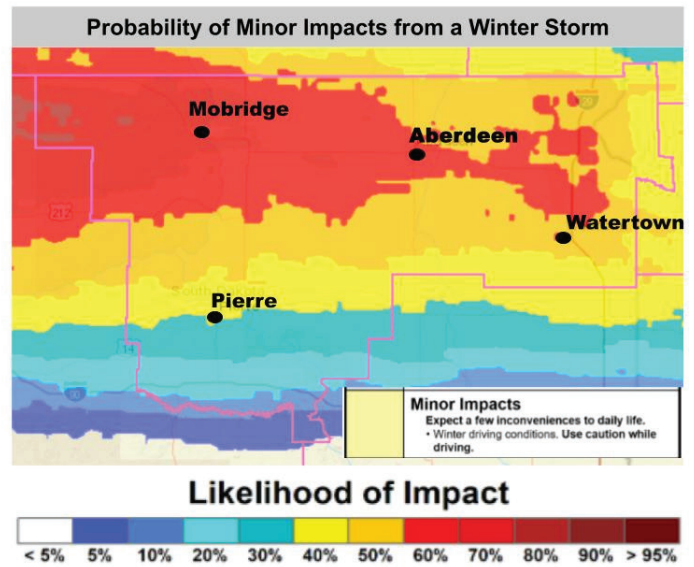
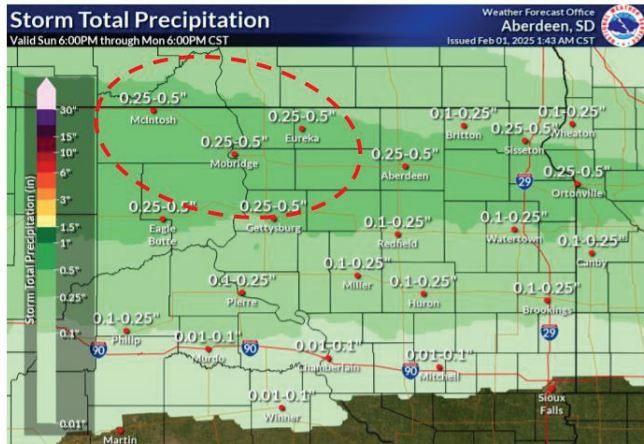


Snow Sunday night through Monday

February 1, 2025
3:58 AM

Widespread minor impacts, including hazardous driving conditions, are expected.

- Snow will begin Sunday night and continue through Monday.
- The period with the heaviest expected snowfall is Midnight to 6 AM Monday. **This will create dangerous driving conditions during the morning commute.**
- Highest totals currently expected within the red circle.



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

The next snow system will begin Sunday night and continue through Monday. While there is still uncertainty, the highest totals are currently expected over north central South Dakota. The timing of the storm means that hazardous driving conditions during the morning commute.

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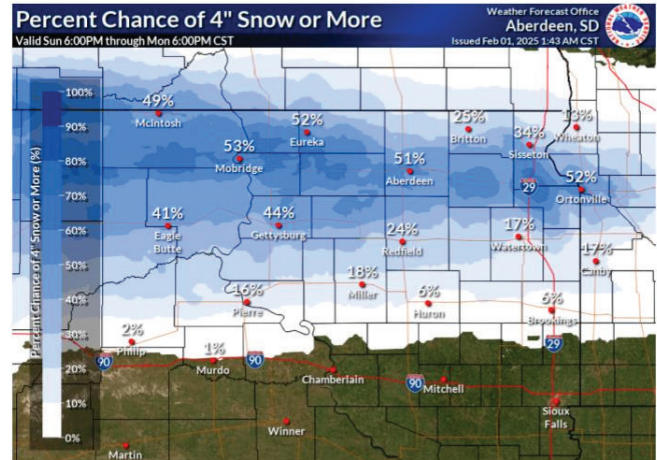
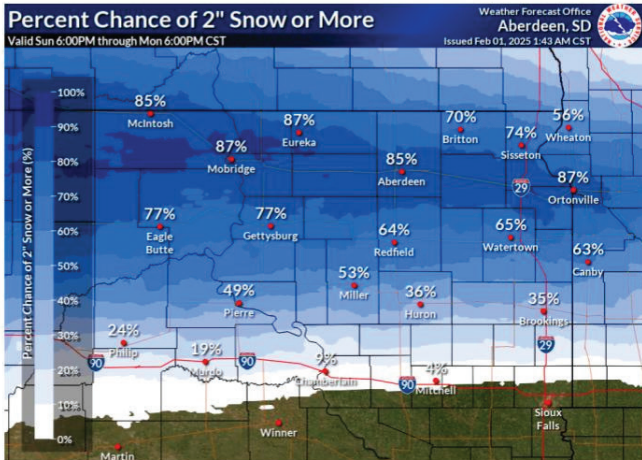


Probability of Snowfall Totals

February 1, 2025
3:58 AM

2-5" expected for most places, some areas may see upwards of 5".

- Most areas across central and northeastern South Dakota as well as western Minnesota have a high probability (>65%) of receiving 2 inches of snow or more.
- The greatest chances for the highest snow totals are over north central and parts of northeastern South Dakota.
- ***There is still uncertainty about where the snow band will set up. These probabilities and expected amounts may change as the system approaches.***



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

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Most of the forecast area is expected to receive at least 2 inches of snow. The greatest probabilities of receiving 4 inches or more will be over north central and parts of northeastern South Dakota. Some areas may see up to 5 inches of snow or more.

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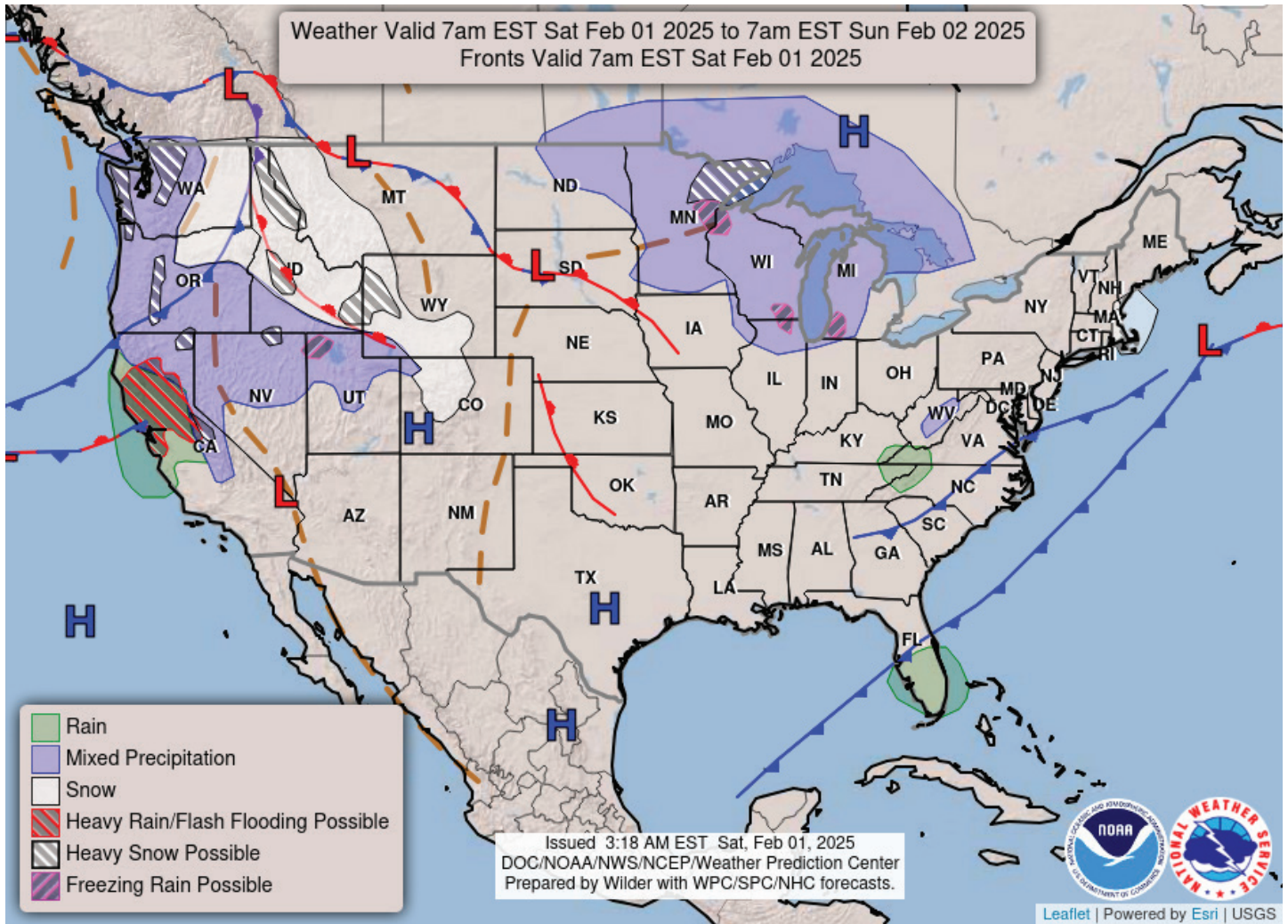
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 25 °F at 3:22 AM
Low Temp: 19 °F at 10:41 AM
Wind: 20 mph at 10:38 AM
Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 9 hours, 50 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 58 in 1931
Record Low: -42 in 1893
Average High: 25
Average Low: 2
Average Precip in Feb.: 0.02
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 0.57
Precip Year to Date: 0.00
Sunset Tonight: 5:41:09 pm
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:49:39 am



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Today in Weather History

February 1, 1969: Across central and eastern South Dakota, February 1969 contained a variety of winter weather causing many difficulties. Glazing due to dense fog and drizzle periodically formed on utility lines creating numerous broken power lines. Strong winds caused widespread blowing and drifting snow resulting in many closed roads. Snowplows would open the streets, and often drifting snow would close the roads again. Frequent uses of pusher-type snowplows piled banks of snow 20 to 30 feet along the roads, and it became impractical to open routes with this type of snowplow. Several rotary snowplows were flown in from military airbases outside the state to open some of the roads in the eastern part of the state. Many school closings occurred during the month due to snow blocked roads.

February 1, 1989: Four to eight inches of snow fell across western and northern South Dakota. Winds of 25 mph and subzero temperature produced wind chills in the 50 to 80 below zero range. Several schools were closed across the area due to the dangerous wind chills. The storm continued into the 2nd.

1893 - Thunder and lightning accompanied sleet and snow at Saint Louis MO during the evening hours, even though the temperature was just 13 degrees above zero. (The Weather Channel)

1916: Seattle, Washington, was buried under 21.5 inches of snow, their most significant 24-hour snowfall. A total of 32.5 inches of wet snow accumulated over three days. The Seattle cathedral dome collapsed under the snow's weight.

1947: January 30th through February 8th, a great blizzard occurred in Saskatchewan, Canada. All highways into Regina were blocked. Railway officials declared the worst conditions in Canadian rail history. One train was buried in a snowdrift over a half-mile long and 36.7 feet deep.

1951 - The greatest ice storm of record in the U.S. produced glaze up to four inches thick from Texas to Pennsylvania causing twenty-five deaths, 500 serious injuries, and 100 million dollars damage. Tennessee was hardest hit by the storm. Communications and utilities were interrupted for a week to ten days. (David Ludlum)

1951 - The temperature at Taylor Park Dam plunged to 60 degrees below zero, a record for the state of Colorado. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1955: Seen first as a "well-defined cone-shaped funnel" over the Mississippi River, this F3 tornado cut a path from Commerce Landing to Clark in northeastern Mississippi. This tornado killed 20 and injured at least 141 individuals. Most of the deaths were in a plantation school. The following is from Thomas Grazulis, "Significant Tornadoes 1680-1991" book: "Despite the fact that a funnel was seen, that heavy objects were thrown long distances, and that the tornado was in a forecast box, the event was not officially called a tornado. A survey team state that since all debris was thrown in one direction, the event should not be listed as a tornado."

1985 - Snow, sleet and ice glazed southern Tennessee and northern sections of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. The winter storm produced up to eleven inches of sleet and ice in Lauderdale County AL, one of the worst storms of record for the state. All streets in Florence AL were closed for the first time of record. (1st-2nd) (The Weather Channel)

1990 - Thunderstorms associated with an upper level weather disturbance produced severe weather across the eastern half of Texas during the late afternoon and evening. Four persons were injured at Waco TX where thunderstorms produced wind gusts to 80 mph. Thunderstorms produced wind gusts to 97 mph at Cotulla TX injuring two other persons. Golf ball size hail was reported at Whitney and northeast of Whitsett. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2011: One of the most significant events of the 2010-2011 winter season affected a widespread region from Texas to the Midwest and Northeast from February 1st to 3rd 2011. The system produced widespread heavy snow with blizzard conditions and significant freezing rain and sleet to other locations. Snowfall amounts of 10 to 20 inches were common from northeast Oklahoma to lower Michigan. The storm produced 20.2 inches at Chicago, the third heaviest snowfall in the city since their records began in 1886, along with a peak wind of 61 mph. Kansas City received just under 9 inches of snow. The high temp was 17 degrees.



ANYONE CAN BE A QUITTER

His lifelong ambition was to play professional football. Finally, the day was scheduled for him to try out before the coaches of the San Diego Chargers. But on the day before the try out, Dale lost both of his legs and several fingers in an explosion.

Sixty long days after the explosion, he was discharged from the hospital. As he was wheeled from his room to a waiting car, he looked at the two "stubs" that were now his legs and his right hand that had only a thumb and little finger remaining.

He could have given up in disappointment, gone on welfare and received a lifelong disability. But he didn't.

He could have focused on everything he lost in the explosion and chosen to live a life of anger and hatred. But he didn't.

He could have become filled with resentment for those who made the team that year and were hailed as heroes. But he didn't.

Instead of giving up or becoming angry and hateful or filled with resentment, he challenged himself with the reality that "Anyone can become a quitter. But I'm going to become the greatest insurance salesman my company has ever seen!" And he did.

Paul said, "I can really know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised Him from the dead."

Fortunately, that same power is available today for Christians who choose to use that power to glorify Him.

Prayer: Help us, Heavenly Father, to accept the challenges You bring into our lives as opportunities to trust in Your power to accomplish great things for You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death. Philippians 3:10

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

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

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.31.25

9 28 48 56 63 2

MegaPlier: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$77,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.29.25

9 20 23 42 45 2

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$23,190,000

NEXT DRAW: 13 Hrs 21 Mins 28 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.31.25

3 7 34 39 44 13

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 13 Hrs 36 Mins 28 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.29.25

5 10 27 30 34

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$23,000

NEXT DRAW: 13 Hrs 36 Mins 29 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.29.25

18 28 41 63 68 4

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 5 Mins 29 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.29.25

8 12 31 33 38 18

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$89,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 5 Mins 29 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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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

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News from the **AP** Associated Press

Friday's Scores

The Associated Press

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Roncalli 67, Britton-Hecla 22
Arlington 56, Estelline-Hendricks 33
Brandon Valley 61, Yankton 11
Brookings 40, Watertown 35
Burke 44, Tripp-Delmont-Armour 37
Colman-Egan 43, De Smet 27
Dell Rapids St Mary 54, Chester 44
Edgemont 50, Hay Springs, Neb. 45
Elkton-Lake Benton 70, Oldham-Ramona-Rutland 40
Ethan 65, Howard 28
Faith 58, Newell 44
Gregory 48, Jones County 40
Hanson 54, Bridgewater-Emery 51
Harding County 54, Hill City 39
Herreid-Selby 53, Ipswich 36
Hills-Beaver Creek, Minn. 38, Garretson 23
Kadoka 60, Bison 18
Lemmon High School 55, South Heart, N.D. 31
Mahpiya Luta Red Cloud 69, Sturgis Brown High School 31
McCook Central-Montrose 29, Canistota 26
Millard North, Neb. 59, Harrisburg 41
Mitchell 63, Sioux Falls Lincoln 41
Mobridge-Pollock 73, Chamberlain 27
Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 41, Winner 36
Northwestern 46, Langford 29
Platte-Geddes 48, Colome 18
Rapid City Stevens 50, Rapid City Central 38
Sioux Falls O'Gorman 67, T F Riggs High School 44
Sioux Valley 71, Lakota Tech 53
Sunshine Bible Academy 47, Aberdeen Christian 36
Warner 63, Waubay/Summit 44
White River 66, St. Francis Indian 54
Dakota Oyate Challenge=
Consolation Semifinal=
Lower Brule 71, Crazy Horse 14
Wakpala 69, Flandreau Indian 33
Semifinal=
Omaha Nation, Neb. 61, Marty 26
Tiospaye Topa 56, Tiospa Zina 23

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BOYS PREP BASKETBALL

Brandon Valley 57, Yankton 51, OT
Bridgewater-Emery 52, Hanson 46
Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 72, Little Wound 64
Clark-Willow Lake 82, Redfield 30
DeSmet 53, Colman-Egan 49
Dell Rapids St Mary 67, Chester 36
Faith 56, Newell 31
Freeman 64, Avon 39
Gregory 66, Jones County 24
Harrisburg 66, T F Riggs High School 48
Hay Springs, Neb. 76, Edgemont 54
Howard 58, Ethan 31
Kadoka 61, Bison 32
McCook Central-Montrose 47, Canistota 35
Mitchell 69, Sioux Falls Lincoln 58
Mobridge-Pollock 73, Chamberlain 43
North Central 56, Strasburg, N.D. 27
Northwestern 69, Langford 67, OT
Platte-Geddes 74, Colome 18
St. Francis Indian 51, White River 41
Sturgis Brown High School 63, Mahpíya Lúta Red Cloud 46
Sunshine Bible Academy 45, Potter County 39
Tripp-Delmont-Armour 51, Burke 44
Watertown 63, Brookings 40
Waubay/Summit 66, Warner 44
West Central 54, Flandreau 30
Winner 60, Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 42
Dakota Oyate Challenge=
Consolation Semifinal=
Flandreau Indian 61, Wakpala 43
Tiospaye Topa 50, Tiospa Zina 45
Semifinal=
Lower Brule 71, Crazy Horse 36
Omaha Nation, Neb. 65, Marty 56

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

With home prices and mortgage rates high, many families find the American dream out of reach

By R.J. RICO Associated Press

The Petersen family's two-bedroom apartment in northern California is starting to feel small.

Four-year-old Jerrik's toy monster trucks are everywhere in the 1,100-square-foot unit in Campbell, just outside of San Jose. And it's only a matter of time before 9-month-oldCarolynn starts amassing more toys, adding to the disarray, says her mother, Jenn Petersen.

The 42-year-old chiropractor had hoped she and her husband, Steve, a 39-year-old dental hygienist, would have bought a house by now. But when they can afford a bigger place, it will have to be another rental. Petersen has done the math: With mortgage rates and home prices stubbornly high, there's no way the couple, who make about \$270,000 a year and pay about \$2,500 in monthly rent, can afford a

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home anywhere in their area.

According to October data from the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, a San Jose family with a median income of \$156,700 would need to spend 80% of their income on housing — including an \$8,600 monthly mortgage payment — to own a median-priced \$1.54 million home. That's far higher than the general rule of thumb that people should pay no more than 30% of their income on a mortgage or rent.

Moving out of state is out of the question for the Petersens — they have strong family ties to the area and their income would plummet if they move to a lower cost-of-living area. "I'm not willing to give up my job and close connections with my family for a house," Petersen said.

The issue is widespread and near historic highs nationally: As of last fall, the median homeowner in the U.S. was paying 42% of their income on homeownership costs, according to the Atlanta Fed. Four years ago, that percentage was 28% and had not previously reached 38% since late 2007, just before the housing market crash.

"The American dream, as our parents knew it, doesn't exist anymore," Petersen said. "The whole idea that you get a house after you graduate college, get a steady job and get married? I've done most of those milestones. But the homeownership part? That just doesn't fit financially."

First-time homeowners are getting older

The same is true for an increasing number of American families.

In 2024, the median first-time homebuyer was 38 years old, a jump from age 35 the previous year, according to a recent report by the National Association of Realtors. That's significantly above historic norms, when median first-time buyers hovered between 30 and 32 years old from 1993 to 2018.

The biggest driver of this trend, experts said, is simple: There are far too few houses on the market to match pent-up demand, driving prices past the point of affordability for many people who are relatively early in their careers. Coupled with high mortgage rates, many have concluded that renting is their only option.

"Wage growth hasn't kept up with the increase in home prices and interest rates," said Domonic Purviance, who studies housing at the Atlanta Fed. "Even though people are making more money, home prices are increasing at a faster rate."

That gap has left many out of the housing market, which for generations has been a way for Americans to build equity and wealth that they can pass down or leverage to buy a larger home. It's also led to widespread worries about housing in the U.S. About 7 in 10 voters under age 45 said they were "very" concerned about the cost of housing in their community, according to AP VoteCast, a survey of more than 120,000 voters in the 2024 election.

Is the dream of homeownership going to fade?

Brian McCabe, a sociology professor at Georgetown University, said he frequently tells his students that "there are few things that all Americans agree on, but one of them is that they'd rather own a home than rent."

McCabe said homeownership, especially as a wealth-building tool, is the right move for many, especially if the owner intends to be in one place for a long time. But he also said many are realizing that not owning a home has its advantages, too — it gives people more flexibility to move and allows them to live in exciting neighborhoods they would not be able to afford to buy property in.

McCabe said millennials are getting married later, having children later, have a stronger desire to stay in cities and, especially due to remote work, value the flexibility of being able to move with ease — all of which he said could prompt an end to the notion that homeownership is the "apex of the American dream."

"The big question is whether we see the sheen of homeownership start to fade," McCabe said. "It's such an interesting cultural marker: Why is owning a home the pinnacle for so many people?"

It's a question Petersen wrestles with because she knows any three-bedroom home she found in her area would leave her family "house poor."

"I used to subscribe to the idea that owning a house is just a natural milestone you have to reach," she said. "At some point, though, what are you sacrificing by just owning a house and gaining equity? I want to be able to travel with my kids. I want to be able to sign them up for extracurriculars. How are we sup-

posed to do that if we're paying a mortgage that's most of our take-home pay?"

Petersen said she'll "always hold out a little bit of hope" that homeownership will be in her family's future. But if they find a townhouse to rent that has space for her kids and fits within their \$3,600 monthly rental budget?

"I'd take that," she said.

Some cities are providing crucial aid to first-time homebuyers

Lifelong Boston resident Julieta Lopez, 63, spent decades hoping to buy a home but watched as prices became increasingly out of reach.

"The prices in Boston just got higher and higher and higher and higher," said Lopez, who works for the city traffic department issuing tickets for parking violations.

Two years ago, furious to learn that her subsidized apartment's monthly rent was being hiked to \$2,900, Lopez, who earns about \$60,000 annually, took out her phone and began searching for government programs that help first-time homebuyers. She was determined to finally own her own place.

Within months, she had succeeded. Lopez qualified to receive \$50,000 from the local Massachusetts Affordable Homeownership Alliance nonprofit and another \$50,000 from the city of Boston's Office of Housing — funds that helped her with a down payment on the \$430,000 two-bedroom condominium she shares with her 30-year-old son. She now pays about \$2,160 a month on her mortgage.

Lopez knows she is lucky the city has placed such a focus on aiding first-time buyers like herself — Boston has poured more than \$24 million into its homeownership assistance programs since Mayor Michelle Wu took office in 2021, helping nearly 700 residents get their first homes.

But Lopez also feels proud to have her own place after years of working so hard — jobs that included everything from telecommunications to health care to electronics.

"I was determined to have my piece of the pie," she said. "I felt I deserved that. I've always worked. Always. Nonstop."

Arab nations reject Trump's suggestion to relocate Palestinians from Gaza to Egypt and Jordan

By SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — Powerful Arab nations on Saturday rejected U.S. President Donald Trump's suggestion to relocate Palestinians from Gaza to neighboring Egypt and Jordan.

Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, the Palestinian Authority and the Arab League released a joint statement rejecting any plans to move Palestinians out of their territories in Gaza and the occupied West Bank.

Trump floated the idea last month, saying he would urge the leaders of Jordan and Egypt to take in Gaza's now largely homeless population, so that "we just clean out that whole thing." He added that resettling most of Gaza's population of 2.3 million could be temporary or long term. Some Israel officials had raised the transfer idea early in the war.

"It's literally a demolition site right now," Trump said, referring to the vast destruction caused by Israel's 15-month war with Hamas, now paused by a fragile ceasefire.

The Arab statement warned that such plans "threaten the region's stability, risk expanding the conflict, and undermine prospects for peace and coexistence among its peoples."

The statement followed a meeting in Cairo of top diplomats from Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar, as well as Hussein al-Sheikh, a senior Palestinian official who serves as the main liaison with Israel, and Arab League chief Ahmed Aboul-Gheit.

They said they were looking forward to working with the Trump administration to "achieve a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East, based on the two-state solution," according to the statement.

They called for the international community to help "plan and implement" a comprehensive reconstruction plan for Gaza to ensure that Palestinians stay on their land.

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi rejected Trump's suggestion in a news conference last week,

saying that the transfer of Palestinians "can't ever be tolerated or allowed."

"The solution to this issue is the two-state solution. It is the establishment of a Palestinian state," he said. "The solution is not to remove the Palestinian people from their place. No."

Jordan's Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi also said that his country's opposition to Trump's idea was "firm and unwavering."

Egypt and Jordan, along with the Palestinians, worry that Israel would never allow them to return to Gaza once they have left. Egypt and Jordan also fear the impact any such influx of refugees would have on their struggling economies as well as the stability of their governments.

Jordan already is home to more than 2 million Palestinians. Egypt has warned of security implications of transferring large numbers of Palestinians to Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, bordering Gaza.

Both countries were the first to make peace with Israel but they support the creation of a Palestinian state in the occupied West Bank, Gaza and east Jerusalem, territories that Israel captured in the 1967 Mideast War.

Author's story of coping after a wildfire resonates with community affected by latest LA-area fires

By DEEPA BHARATH Associated Press

PASADENA, Calif. (AP) — On a quiet summer evening in June 1990, Pico Iyer sat in his family home in Santa Barbara, California, when suddenly, he was surrounded by walls of flames five stories high.

Thirty-four years after that conflagration turned his life upside down, Iyer returned to Southern California to share how it transformed his life, nudging him toward what he now values — simplicity, silence, solitude and love. The novelist and essayist addressed about 80 people Tuesday at Vroman's Bookstore in Pasadena, the very community devastated by the deadly Eaton Fire earlier this month.

Now intimately familiar with a wildfire's destructive powers, many who came to hear Iyer speak clutched his book with a fiery orange cover titled "Aflame: Learning from Silence."

During his hour-long conversation with violinist and social justice advocate Vijay Gupta, Iyer admitted that soon after the fire, all he could see was loss. But now, he says, he sees "all those doors that have gradually opened." As they conversed, a poster for Octavia Butler's novel "Parable of the Sower," considered prophetic by some in its depiction of a dystopian future where Los Angeles is ravaged by climate change among other ills, graced the background.

Iyer said the fire "liberated" him in many ways.

"To write a different way, to live more simply, to remember what is really important in life. Today, I wouldn't say it was a calamity, but a dramatic wake-up call for me."

Iyer's story resonated with Jeremy Hunter, an Altadena resident whose historic home burned in the Eaton Fire. His feelings after the blaze are mixed: purified and liberated by losing his possessions, but also grieved. Hunter said listening to Iyer has inspired him to figure out his family's next act.

"I guess the key is to let that pain pass through you," he said. "That way, you're less afraid of the pain."

In 1990, Iyer, then 33, an author and columnist for Time magazine, grabbed his mother's aging cat and his latest manuscript, jumped in his car and tried to flee the fire. But, he was trapped in the area for three hours, watching, as it turned everything in his childhood home to ash — furniture, stuffed toys, notes for his next three books. Iyer escaped thanks to a Good Samaritan with a water truck.

Safe but shaken, he wrote an essay that night. It appeared in Time magazine with the title "California: In the Blazing Eye of the Inferno." He ended it with a poem by the 17th century Japanese poet, Mizuta Masahide, describing how destruction can sometimes bring clarity:

My house burned down.

Now I can better see

The rising moon.

Eight months after the fire, Iyer took his friend's suggestion to stay for a few days at the New Camal-

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doli Hermitage, a Benedictine monastery nestled in the Santa Lucia Mountains of Big Sur, California. The Catholic order, founded by St. Romuald in the late 10th century, is known globally for its austere way of life and keenness to engage in interfaith and ecumenical dialogue. At the hermitage, Iyer paid \$30 a day for a room, shower, food — and so much more.

The tranquility of the grounds with its tolling bells, lavender-covered hills, panoramic ocean views, and the compassion of the monks, eventually, proved life changing. The silence and solitude gave him clarity to make sense of his life and work.

A repeated visitor to this spiritual oasis, Iyer says the hermitage helps him remember what he loves and what matters the most. One of his 100 or so visits motivated him to get married and move into a small, two-room apartment with his wife in Nara, Japan, where he still resides, splitting his time between that country and California.

And somehow, he lives without a cell phone.

The monks helped him understand “how luxury is defined not by what you have but what you don’t need.”

“Moving into that tiny apartment didn’t seem like a hardship and being without a car and cell phone actually seems like a luxury,” Iyer said.

The hermitage has become a kind of soul-sustaining medicine, even though he says he is not religious. He was born into a Hindu family, and his parents were Indian immigrants, both professors and followers of the Theosophical movement, which combines Eastern and Western beliefs. In the book, Iyer also speaks about his close relationship with the Dalai Lama and singer Leonard Cohen who lived for several years as a Zen Buddhist monk.

While he has grown spiritually thanks to them, Iyer says his Benedictine brothers — and fire itself — have helped him understand how to cope with death and impermanence. Just like his family home, his happy place in Big Sur is also vulnerable to wildfires.

“There is no safe place in this world that is immune to impermanence or reality,” Iyer said. “The fact that these monks live unflinchingly in the midst of that acute vulnerability and go about their regular business even as they are encircled by flames, is powerful to witness.”

His book’s title comes from a quote by Abba Joseph, an early Christian hermit who told a young monk as they traversed the Egyptian desert: “If you will, you can become all aflame.” The hermit meant that fully committing to a spiritual life would mean being completely consumed by God’s love and transformed to a state of radiant holiness.

“It’s about kindling the internal fires as a response to the external fires,” Iyer said. “My monk friends see fire as an act of God, which is not something they quarrel with, but simply act with.”

Iyer still turns away when he sees footage of wildfires on television.

“Being stuck in that fire for three hours, I had a visceral sense of how powerful those flames were. But then, coming that close to losing my life made losing my possessions much easier.”

He said several who stood in line at Vroman’s to get his book signed talked about their recent loss. The Eaton Fire killed at least 17 people, destroyed thousands of structures and scorched over 14,000 acres. Iyer said he started to write a “bright message” for one woman who appeared positive and smiling when she told him: “Oh, I just lost everything I had.”

“I was taken aback and as we continued the conversation, she seemed so strong, clear and unrattled,” he said. “I was touched and inspired by her presence.”

This week’s book event was already scheduled when the Eaton Fire started burning. The timing was uncanny for some, including Suzanne McDonnell, a Glendale resident whose friends lost their homes in the recent fires.

“I thought it was providential,” she said about Iyer’s talk. “There can be so much hope, even in suffering.”

18 Pakistani soldiers killed in fighting with separatist rebels in Balochistan

By ABDUL SATTAR Associated Press

QUETTA, Pakistan (AP) — Pakistani troops fought insurgents who set up roadblocks in the restive north-western region of Balochistan, leaving 18 paramilitary security forces and 23 rebels dead in some of the heaviest clashes in recent years, officials said Saturday.

The military said troops suffered casualties when they engaged the insurgents who erected barricades on a key highway in Kalat, bordering Afghanistan.

The security forces “successfully removed the roadblock” following the fighting overnight into Saturday morning, the military said in a statement.

It said 18 security personnel died during the operation and vowed that “the perpetrators, facilitators and abettors of this heinous and cowardly act, will be brought to justice.” Security forces recovered the bodies of 12 insurgents, the military said.

Troops also killed another 11 insurgents in an operation that was still underway, it said.

The latest attacks drew condemnation from President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and other provincial leaders in Balochistan, who also praised the security forces for eliminating the “terrorists.”

Zardari and Sharif said the operations will continue in Balochistan until the insurgents are eliminated.

The Baloch National Army separatist group claimed responsibility for attack.

In a statement, BLA said its fighters “have made significant progress in the Kalat attacks, achieving their targeted objectives.” It also claimed that insurgents attacked a military post in the district.

The BLA often targets security forces, civilians and foreigners, especially Chinese working on multibillion-dollar projects in Pakistan. In November, a BLA suicide bomber detonated at a train station in the southwestern city of Quetta, killing 26 people, including soldiers and railway staff.

Since then, the military and police have stepped up operations against the insurgents in the oil- and mineral-rich Balochistan, which is a hub for the country’s ethnic Baloch minority, whose members say they face discrimination and exploitation by the central government.

Balochistan has for years been the scene of a long-running insurgency, with several separatist groups staging attacks, targeting mainly security forces in their quest for independence. The province also has an array of militant groups that are active there.

BLA also enjoys the backing of Pakistani Taliban, who are known as Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan and are a separate group but allied with the Afghan Taliban.

Authorities say the BLA and TTP have been using weapons that fell into their hands after the Afghan Taliban came into power in neighboring Afghanistan in 2021. The Islamic State group also has a presence in the province.

Sick and wounded children begin crossing from Gaza to Egypt in first opening in months

By AHMED HATEM and AMR NABIL Associated Press

RAFAH CROSSING, Egypt (AP) — A group of 50 sick and wounded Palestinian children began crossing to Egypt for treatment through Gaza’s Rafah crossing on Saturday, the first opening of the border since Israel captured it nearly nine months ago.

The reopening of the Rafah crossing represents a significant breakthrough that bolsters the ceasefire deal Israel and Hamas agreed to earlier this month. Israel agreed to reopen the crossing after Hamas released the last living female hostages in Gaza.

Egypt’s Al-Qahera television showed at least two Palestinian Red Cross ambulances pulling up to the crossing gate. Several children were brought out on gurneys and transferred to ambulances on the Egyptian side. From there, they were rushed to hospitals in the nearby Egyptian city of el-Arish and elsewhere.

Footage showed one young girl whose foot had been amputated being loaded into an Egyptian ambulance. Gaza's Health Ministry said around 60 family members were accompanying the children.

The children are the first in what are meant to be regular evacuations of Palestinians through the crossing for treatment abroad. Over the past 15 months, Israel's campaign against Hamas in retaliation for the militants' Oct. 7, 2023, attack on southern Israel has decimated Gaza's health sector, leaving most of its hospitals out of operation even as more than 110,000 Palestinians were wounded by Israel's bombardment and ground offensives, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry.

Remaining facilities are unable to perform many crucial treatments or specialized surgeries for wounds or diseases. Mohammed Zaqout, the director of hospitals in Gaza's Health Ministry, said more than 6,000 patients were ready to be evacuated abroad, and more than 12,000 patients were in urgent need of treatment. He said the small numbers set to be evacuated will not cover the need, "and we hope the number will increase."

Rafah is Gaza's only crossing that does not enter into Israel. Israeli forces closed the Rafah crossing in early May after seizing it during an offensive on the southern city. Egypt shut down its side of the passage in protest.

Even before the Gaza war began, the Rafah crossing represented a crucial escape valve from the territory, where a 15-year Israeli-Egyptian blockade aimed at containing Hamas undermined health facilities and impoverished the population. Palestinians routinely applied for permission to travel outside the territory for lifesaving treatments not available in Gaza, including chemotherapy.

It took some diplomatic gymnastics to reopen the crossing and overcome security disputes between Israeli, Egyptian and Palestinian officials. Hamas had overseen the border since 2007, when it took control of Gaza from its rival, the internationally recognized Palestinian Authority, or PA, after winning parliamentary elections in 2006.

Israeli troops remain at the Rafah crossing and in the Philadelphia Corridor, a band of land running the length of the border. Israel has refused to allow Hamas to resume management of the crossing, accusing it of smuggling weapons through tunnels under the border, though Egypt says it destroyed the tunnels from its side and stopped smuggling years ago. Israel also refuses to allow the Palestinian Authority to officially run the crossing.

Instead, the crossing will be staffed by Palestinians from Gaza who previously served as border officers with the PA, but they will not be allowed to wear official PA insignia, a European diplomat said, speaking on condition of anonymity because the official was not authorized to brief the media. Israel has screened the officers to ensure they have no affiliation with Hamas, the European diplomat added.

European Union monitors will also be present, as they were before 2007.

Negotiations on the second phase of the deal — which calls for a permanent ceasefire, full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and the release of any remaining hostages — are supposed to begin Monday. Israel has resisted the notion that the PA would control postwar Gaza.

Who are the Palestinian prisoners released in exchange for Israeli hostages?

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

RAMALLAH, West Bank (AP) — Israel on Saturday released a total of 183 Palestinian prisoners in exchange for three Israeli hostages held in Gaza as the ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas continued to gain traction after nearly two weeks.

In a sign of progress, Saturday's release included for the first time some of the 1,000 detainees from Gaza that Israel has agreed to free during Phase 1 of the deal on condition that they did not participate in Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack that triggered the Israel-Hamas war.

Detained in Gaza on suspicion of militancy, the 111 Palestinians released Saturday have been held without trial since the day after the Oct. 7 attack.

The remaining 72 Palestinians, all arrested from either the West Bank or Gaza before the war, served

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long sentences or life sentences for deadly attacks against Israelis. They are all men, ranging in age from 30 to 66.

The release of Palestinians from Gaza draws attention to Israel's mass roundups of men in the enclave during the past 15 months of its military campaign against Hamas. Many were taken to Israel.

Images of Israeli forces rounding up Palestinians in Gaza — showing men stripped to their underwear, sitting or kneeling on the ground, with some bound and blindfolded — have sparked outrage and concern from the U.N. human rights body. The Israeli military says it arrests those suspected of involvement in Hamas and other militant groups.

In the occupied West Bank, excited crowds thronged the Red Cross bus carrying the Palestinians from Ofer prison near Ramallah. But the festivities were muted compared to previous weeks. Just 25 prisoners were set free into the West Bank, while another seven were being transferred to Egypt before deportation.

The rest were headed home to Gaza for the first time in months, or, in some cases, years, where celebrations awaited.

Here's a look at some prominent Palestinian prisoners released since the ceasefire deal went into effect on Jan. 19:

Mohammed el-Halabi

The Palestinian manager of the Gaza branch of World Vision, a major Christian aid organization, was arrested in 2016 and accused of diverting tens of millions of dollars to Hamas in a high-profile case that drew criticism from rights groups. He was freed on Saturday.

Both el-Halabi, 47, and World Vision vigorously denied the allegations and independent investigations found no proof of wrongdoing. One independent audit found that el-Halabi had enforced internal controls and ordered employees to avoid anyone suspected of Hamas ties.

World Vision has also said that the accusations that el-Halabi transferred 60% of the charity's annual budget for Gaza to Hamas could not be reconciled with its financial records.

Rights groups say el-Halabi was denied a fair and transparent trial, as he and World Vision had no chance to review the evidence against them, with all procedures shielded from the public and shrouded in unusual secrecy. U.N. experts say el-Halabi was questioned for 50 days without access to a lawyer. He was sentenced to 12 years in prison.

Israel has attributed the closed hearings to sensitive security information being relayed. Israeli courts typically hold closed hearings to protect the sources of their information.

His prolonged detention sent a chill through nongovernmental groups providing aid to Palestinians in Gaza. After el-Halabi's arrest, World Vision suspended its activities in Gaza, where it says its aid had benefited nearly 40,000 children affected by the crippling Israeli-Egyptian blockade on the enclave.

Shadi Amouri

Amouri, 44, from the northern West Bank city of Jenin, was arrested for his alleged role in manufacturing the powerful car bomb that detonated beside an Israeli bus packed with passengers on June 5, 2002, killing 17 Israelis in what became known as the Megiddo Junction suicide bombing.

The attack during the second intifada, or Palestinian uprising, between 2000 and 2005, took place in northern Israel. The Palestinian militant group Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility.

Amouri was sentenced to life in prison, plus 20 years. He was among those transferred to Egypt Saturday and released into exile.

"We wish to have felt the joy of his release here, on the land of Jenin refugee camp," said Bassam Amouri, his brother. "But, thank God, what matters is that he is free of the suffering of prison."

Ashraf Abu Srour

Abu Srour, 50, sentenced to life in prison over a 2000 attack that killed Israeli soldier Shahar Veckart, was also among those released Saturday into exile.

Hailing from Aida refugee camp in the West Bank city of Bethlehem, Abu Srour was detained in 2001 and convicted the next year over the shooting at Rachel's Tomb, the traditional burial place of the wife of the biblical patriarch Jacob. During the second intifada, the shrine became a target of Palestinian militants

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protesting Israel's claim to the holy site revered by Jews, Christians and Muslims alike.

Abu Srouf belonged to the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade — an armed group affiliated with Fatah, the secular political party that controls the Palestinian Authority.

Zakaria Zubeidi

Zakaria Zubeidi is a prominent former militant leader and theater director whose dramatic jailbreak in 2021 thrilled Palestinians across the Middle East and stunned the Israeli security establishment.

Zubeidi once led the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade. After the second intifada in 2006, he co-founded a theater in his hometown of Jenin refugee camp, a hotbed of Palestinian militancy, to promote what he described as cultural resistance to Israel. Even today, the Freedom Theater puts on everything from Shakespeare to stand-up comedy to plays written by residents.

In 2019, after Zubeidi had already served years in prison for attacks in the early 2000s, Israel arrested him again over his alleged involvement in shooting attacks that targeted buses of Israeli settlers but caused no injuries.

Zubeidi, who was released Thursday into the West Bank, had been awaiting trial in prison. He denies the charges, saying that he gave up militancy to focus on his political activism after the intifada.

In 2021, he and five other prisoners tunneled out of a maximum-security prison in northern Israel, an escape that helped solidify Zubeidi's image among Palestinians as a folk hero. All six were recaptured days later.

Mohammed Abu Warda

A Hamas militant during the second intifada, Abu Warda helped organize a series of suicide bombings that killed over 40 people and wounded more than a hundred others. Israel arrested him in 2002, and sentenced him to 48 terms of lifetime imprisonment, among the longest sentences it ever issued.

As a young student, Abu Warda joined Hamas at the start of the intifada following Israel's killing of Yahya Ayyash, the militant group's leading bomb maker, in 1996.

Palestinian authorities said at the time that Warda had helped to recruit suicide bombers — including his cousin, his cousin's neighbor and a classmate at the Ramallah Teachers College — whose attacks targeting crowded civilian areas in Israeli cities killed scores of people in the early 2000s.

Warda was released and deported on Thursday.

Mohammed Aradeh, 42

An activist in Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Aradeh was sentenced to life in prison for a range of offenses going back to the second intifada. Some of the charges, according to the Israeli Prison Service, included planting an explosive device and attempting murder.

He was credited with plotting the extraordinary prison escape in 2021, when he and five other detainees, including Zubeidi, used spoons to tunnel out one of Israel's most secure prisons. They remained at large for days before being caught.

From an impoverished and politically active family in Jenin, in the northern occupied West Bank, Aradeh has three brothers and a sister who have all spent years in Israeli prisons.

He was welcomed as a sort of cult hero in Ramallah on Jan. 25 as family, friends and fans swarmed him, some chanting "The freedom tunnel!" in reference to his jailbreak.

Mohammed Odeh, 52, Wael Qassim, 54, and Wissam Abbasi, 48

All three men hail from the neighborhood of Silwan, in east Jerusalem, and rose within the ranks of Hamas. Held responsible for a string of deadly attacks during the second intifada, the men were sentenced to multiple life sentences in 2002.

They were accused of plotting a suicide bombing at a crowded pool hall near Tel Aviv in 2002 that killed 15 people. Later that year, they were found to have orchestrated a bombing at Hebrew University that killed nine people, including five American students. Israel had described Odeh, who was working as a painter at the university at the time, as the kingpin in the attack.

All three were transferred to Egypt on Jan. 25. Their families live in Jerusalem and said they will join them in exile.

The Abu Hamid brothers

Three brothers from the prominent Abu Hamid family of the Al-Amari refugee camp in Ramallah — Nasser, 51, Mohammad, 44, and Sharif, 48 — were also deported to Egypt on Jan. 25. They had been sentenced to life in prison over deadly militant attacks against Israelis in 2002.

Their brother, a different Nasser Abu Hamid, was one of the founders of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade. He was also sentenced to life in prison for several deadly attacks. His 2022 death from lung cancer behind bars unleashed a wave of angry protests across the West Bank as Palestinian officials accused Israel of medical neglect.

The family has a long arc of Palestinian militancy. The mother, Latifa Abu Hamid, 72, now has three sons exiled, one still imprisoned, one who died in prison and one who was killed by Israeli forces. Their family house has been demolished at least three times by Israel, which defends such punitive home demolitions as a deterrent against future attacks.

Mohammad al-Tous, 67

Al-Tous had held the title of longest continuous Israeli imprisonment until his release last Saturday, Palestinian authorities said.

First arrested in 1985 while fighting Israeli forces along the Jordanian border, the activist in the Fatah party spent a total of 39 years behind bars. Originally from the West Bank city of Bethlehem, he was among the prisoners exiled on Jan. 25.

Hamas frees 3 hostages and Israel releases Palestinian prisoners in 4th exchange of ceasefire

By MOHAMMAD JAHJOUH and IMAD ISSEID Associated Press

KHAN YOUNIS, Gaza Strip (AP) — Hamas militants freed three male hostages held for more than a year in the Gaza Strip on Saturday and Israel released 183 Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails in the fourth such exchange of a ceasefire deal that has halted 15 months of intense fighting.

Militants handed Yarden Bibas and French-Israeli Ofer Kalderon to Red Cross officials in the southern city of Khan Younis, while American-Israeli hostage Keith Siegel, looking pale and thin, was released to the Red Cross later Saturday morning in Gaza City to the north.

All three were abducted during the Hamas-led attack on Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, that sparked the war. Their release brings to 18 the number of hostages released since the ceasefire began on Jan. 19.

The releases were quick and orderly, in contrast to chaotic scenes that unfolded on Thursday when armed militants appeared to struggle to hold back a crowd during a hostage release. In both of Saturday's releases, masked and armed militants stood in lines as the hostages walked onto a stage and waved before being led off and handed over to the Red Cross.

In Tel Aviv's Hostages Square, thousands of people gathered to watch the releases being transmitted live on a large screen, waving signs and cheering.

Shortly after Siegel arrived in Israel, a bus departed Ofer Military Prison with some 32 prisoners bound for the West Bank. Crowds of well-wishers greeted the bus, cheering and hoisting the released prisoners on their shoulders in scenes of jubilation.

The Israeli Prison Authority said all 183 Palestinian prisoners slated for release Saturday had been freed. Most, including 111 arrested after Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023 attack, were released to Gaza. Just over two dozen returned to cheering crowds in the occupied West Bank. Another seven serving life sentences were transferred to Egypt ahead of their deportation.

Ceasefire brings respite to battered Gaza

The ceasefire is aimed at winding down the deadliest and most destructive war ever fought between Israel and Hamas. The deal has held for two weeks, allowing for increased aid to flow into the tiny coastal territory and for hundreds of thousands of Palestinians to return to the remnants of their homes in the north of the strip.

During the truce's six-week first phase, a total of 33 Israeli hostages are to be freed in exchange for

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nearly 2,000 Palestinian prisoners. Israel says it has received information from Hamas that eight of those hostages were either killed in Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack or have died in captivity.

Also on Saturday, a group of 50 sick and wounded Palestinian children left Gaza for treatment through the Rafah border crossing to Egypt, in the first opening of the enclave's sole exit since Israel captured it nine months ago. A European Union civilian mission was deployed Friday to prepare for the reopening.

The reopening of Rafah marked another key step in the first phase of the ceasefire.

Israel and Hamas are set next week to begin negotiating a second phase of the ceasefire, which calls for releasing the remaining hostages and extending the truce indefinitely. The war could resume in early March if an agreement is not reached.

Israel says it is still committed to destroying Hamas, even after the militant group reasserted its rule over Gaza within hours of the latest ceasefire. A key far-right partner in Netanyahu's coalition is calling for the war to resume after the ceasefire's first phase.

Hamas says it won't release the remaining hostages without an end to the war and a full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza.

Families and neighbors celebrate return of hostages

Siegel, 65, originally from Chapel Hill, North Carolina, was taken hostage from Kibbutz Kfar Aza, along with his wife, Aviva Siegel. She was released during a brief 2023 ceasefire and has waged a high-profile campaign to free Keith and other hostages.

There were sighs of relief and cheers in a living room where members of the kibbutz watched Siegel's release. Many of those in the room were family friends, who applauded upon seeing Siegel, while some teared up.

Meanwhile, the release of Bibas, 35, brought renewed attention to the fate of his wife, Shiri, and their two young sons, Ariel and Kfir, who were 4 years old and 9 months old when they were abducted. All four were captured from Kibbutz Nir Oz.

Kfir was the youngest of about 250 people taken captive on Oct. 7, and his plight quickly came to represent the helplessness and anger the hostage-taking stirred in Israel, where the Bibas family has become a household name.

Hamas has said Shiri and her sons were killed in an Israeli airstrike, but Israel has not confirmed that. Gal Hirsch, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's special coordinator for returning the hostages, said Israel has "grave concern for the lives" of Shiri and her sons, and pleaded with negotiators to provide information on their situation.

Kalderon, 54, was also captured from Kibbutz Nir Oz.

In Kfar Saba, north of Tel Aviv, Kalderon's family hugged and cheered as they saw the images of him climbing onto the stage in Khan Younis and being transferred to the Red Cross.

"Ofer is coming home!" they said, arms lifted to the sky.

Kalderon's two children, Erez and Sahar, were abducted alongside him and released during the November 2023 ceasefire. Family members said they weren't able to recover from their ordeal until their father returned.

"We are sorry it took so long, Ofer," said Eyal Kalderon. "We will soon be a whole family again. We hope other families will soon feel like this, until the last family."

French President Emmanuel Macron said France "shares in the relief and joy" of Kalderon's return after 483 days of "unimaginable hell," adding that France would continue doing all it can to secure the release of another French Israeli hostage still being held in Gaza.

More than 100 of the hostages abducted on Oct. 7 were released during the weeklong Nov. 2023 ceasefire. About 80 more remain in Gaza, at least a third of them believed dead.

In the Oct. 7 attack that started the war, some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, were killed. More than 47,000 Palestinians have been killed in Israel's retaliatory air and ground war, over half of them women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not say how many of the dead were militants.

The Israeli military says it killed over 17,000 fighters, without providing evidence. It blames civilian deaths on Hamas because its fighters operate in residential neighborhoods.

LeBron, Lindsey Vonn, Ronaldo keep going; Faster, stronger and longer, with plenty of help

By STEPHEN WADE AP Sports Writer

Aging athletes such as LeBron James, Cristiano Ronaldo and Lindsey Vonn are similar to racing cars — maintained by tinkering mechanics, data analysts, and shelves of replacement parts

"If you look at many elite athletes now, they have an army of supporting staff like a Formula 1 team," Hirofumi Tanaka, a Japan-born exercise physiologist at the University of Texas at Austin, told The Associated Press in an interview.

Los Angeles Lakers star James and World Cup skier Vonn just turned 40, and soccer's Ronaldo hits the Big-Four-Oh on Feb. 5. Add seven-time Formula 1 champion Lewis Hamilton, who turned 40 just a few weeks ago as he moves this season to Ferrari.

"They have physical therapists, dietitians, massage therapists, strength coaches, and so on," Tanaka added. "With this holistic approach these elite athletes are helped to maintain their performance."

Others like quarterback Tom Brady, hockey's Jaromir Jagr, and pitcher Nolan Ryan retired at the top and well into their 40s. Martina Navratilova won the U.S. Open mixed doubles title in 2006 — just a month short of turning 50.

Then there's Gordie Howe, who finished his last National Hockey League season (1979-80) at 52. Japanese soccer player Kazuyoshi Miura turns 58 in February and plans to play with fourth-tier club Suzuka — his 40th professional season.

And don't forget Hall of Famer Satchel Paige, who didn't allow a run pitching three innings in a Major League game at 59 with the Kansas City Athletics in 1965.

This isn't exactly new, but it used to be rare. What's changed is the frequency, the array of aides supporting the stars, and the reality — the expectation — that athletes can compete longer and produce.

Watch any Grand Slam tennis tournament. The winner and losing finalist inevitably thank their "teams" as a half-dozen staffers rise to stadium applause.

Peak performance at the Olympics

Tanaka analyzed Olympic data starting with the first modern Games in 1896, and he's found the peak-performance age for men has remained stable — between 20-30 — depending on the discipline.

But gradually all Olympians are getting older, and the statistics for women bear this out.

"Women's peak performance age was much younger 20 or 30 years ago," he said. "But now that peak-performance age is becoming very similar to men."

Tanaka attributed this partly to cultural change in regard to marriage and child-bearing, which used to prompt women to drop out earlier from elite competition.

Of course, there are exceptions like Syrian Hend Zaza. At 12, she was the youngest in the Tokyo Olympics, delayed a year until 2021.

The best evidence that athletes are staying longer and maintaining performance is seen in so-called Masters athletes. There is no standard age as each sport sets different parameters.

"Older athletes are getting closer and closer to younger athletes," Tanaka said, speaking of both men and women. "And the older the Masters athlete is, the greater the improvement."

The case of LeBron James

James is reported to spend about \$1.5 million annually on his body to stay fit, a number he neither confirms nor denies. He can afford it with an estimated worth of more than \$1 billion.

James talks about staying on top in the Netflix series "Starting 5." Maybe he's not getting better with age, but there is little drop-off.

"In some ways he's a freak of nature," NBA Commissioner Adam Silver has said. "I've been around a lot of great players and he's one of the hardest-working players I've been around. I mean, he doesn't take a day off. He seems to not take an afternoon off."

"He's always working on some part of his body," Silver added. "You meet with him and he's always soaking something or eating something or has some contraption attached to him."

Lindsey Vonn's comeback and her titanium knee

Vonn is making a comeback on the World Cup circuit after getting a new titanium right knee. James, of course, has never been away after breaking into the NBA and 18.

Like James, Vonn talks about the benefits of ice baths and new recovery methods that were not around earlier in her career.

She said she gets inspiration from athletes like Brady, Hamilton and Serena Williams, who won her last Grand Slam singles title at 35 at the Australian Open in 2017. She was several weeks pregnant at the time, which she didn't announce until months later.

"Tom, Lewis, Serena. They've all done it," Vonn said. "The resources that athletes have now allow for a better recovery. So even though you're older, you're still recovering faster than I was when I was in my 20s."

Vonn told The AP recently in an interview in Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy, that she might be doing less to stay fit, or at least less to keep her knee functioning.

"My knee doesn't bother me," she said. "I don't wake up and have to do kneecap (exercises) for 15 minutes and do a 30-minute warmup just to walk out the door.

"I am doing a normal warmup like normal athletes do," she added. "I don't have to do anything different which takes a lot less energy, a lot less mental strain."

Now she simply focuses on maintaining the other parts of her body.

A medical plane carrying a child patient and 5 others crashes in Philadelphia, setting homes ablaze

By MICHAEL R. SISAK and MATT ROURKE Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — A medical transport jet transporting a child who had just completed treatment for a life-threatening condition, her mother and four others crashed into a Philadelphia neighborhood shortly after takeoff Friday evening, exploding in a fireball that engulfed several homes.

Jet Rescue Air Ambulance, which operated the Learjet 55, said in a statement: "We cannot confirm any survivors." There was no immediate word whether anyone on the ground was killed, but at least six people were treated for injuries at a hospital.

Everyone aboard the flight was from Mexico. The child was being transported home, according to Jet Rescue spokesperson Shai Gold. The flight's final destination was Tijuana after a stop in Missouri.

The patient and her mother were on board along with four crew members. Gold said this was a seasoned crew and everyone involved in these flights goes through rigorous training.

"When an incident like this happens, it's shocking and surprising," Gold told The Associated Press. "All of the aircraft are maintained, not a penny is spared because we know our mission is so critical."

Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro said at a news conference late Friday that officials expected fatalities in the "awful aviation disaster."

"We know that there will be loss," he said.

A spokesperson for Temple University Hospital-Jeanes, Jennifer Reardon, said they had treated six people with injuries from the crash. Three of those people had since been released and the others were in fair condition. She wasn't able to provide information about their injuries or where the people were when they sustained them.

The plane was registered in Mexico. Jet Rescue is based in Mexico and has operations both there and in the U.S.

The crash came just two days after the deadliest U.S. air disaster in a generation. On Wednesday night, an American Airlines jet carrying 60 passengers and four crew members collided in midair in Washington, D.C., with an Army helicopter carrying three soldiers. There were no survivors.

The Philadelphia crash was the second fatal incident in 15 months for Jet Rescue. In 2023 five crewmembers were killed when their plane overran a runway in the central Mexican state of Morelos and crashed into a hillside.

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In Philadelphia, a doorbell camera captured video of the plane plunging in a streak of white and exploding as it hit the ground near a shopping mall and major roadway.

"All we heard was a loud roar and didn't know where it was coming from. We just turned around and saw the big plume," said Jim Quinn, the owner of the doorbell camera.

The crash happened less than 3 miles (5 kilometers) from Northeast Philadelphia Airport, which primarily serves business jets and charter flights.

The Learjet 55 quickly disappeared from radar after taking off from the airport at 6:06 p.m. and climbing to an altitude of 1,600 feet (487 meters). It was registered to a company operating as Med Jets, according to the flight tracking website Flight Aware.

Shortly after 6 p.m., audio recorded by LiveATC captured an air traffic controller telling "Medevac Med-service 056" to turn right when departing. About 30 seconds later it repeats the request before asking, "You on frequency?" Minutes later, the controller says, "We have a lost aircraft. We're not exactly sure what happened, so we're trying to figure it out. For now the field is going to be closed."

In a post on the social media platform Truth Social, President Donald Trump said: "So sad to see the plane go down in Philadelphia."

"More innocent souls lost," he added. "Our people are totally engaged."

A continuous stream of police vehicles and fire trucks initially responded at the crash site, taking over business parking lots. Within about an hour, the cry of sirens and shouted orders had faded into relative quiet at the edges of the closed-off area, and darkness settled in as drivers passing by peered out trying to see what was happening.

The plane crashed in a busy intersection near Roosevelt Mall, an outdoor shopping center in the densely populated neighborhood of Rhawnhurst.

One cellphone video taken by a witness moments after the crash showed a chaotic scene with debris scattered across the intersection. A wall of orange glowed just beyond as a plume of black smoke rose into the sky and sirens blared.

Michael Schiavone, 37, was sitting at his home in Mayfair, a nearby neighborhood, when he heard a loud bang and his house shook. He said it felt like a mini earthquake and when he checked his home security camera, it looked like a missile came down.

"There was a large explosion, so I thought we were under attack for a second," he said.

Jet Rescue, which provides global air ambulance services, flew baseball Hall of Famer David Ortiz to Boston after he was shot in the Dominican Republic in 2019 and was involved in transporting patients critically ill with COVID-19.

The FAA said the National Transportation Safety Board will lead the investigation. The NTSB said an investigator arrived and more officials would be there Saturday.

Rangers get center J.T. Miller from Canucks in multiplayer deal

By VIN A. CHERWOO AP Sports Writer

The New York Rangers acquired veteran center J.T. Miller from the Vancouver Canucks in a multiplayer deal on Friday night.

The Rangers sent center Filip Chytil, defenseman Victor Mancini and a 2025 conditional draft pick to Vancouver. New York also received defensemen Jackson Dorrington and Erik Brannstrom.

The Canucks were expected to trade either Miller or Elias Pettersson after a reported rift between the two stars. Miller was a last-minute scratch before Vancouver's 5-3 loss at Dallas on Friday, and the teams announced the deal during the game.

"I want to thank J.T. for his time here in Vancouver," Canucks general manager Patrik Allvin said in a statement. "J.T. was a passionate impact player and good leader for our hockey team. Moving him was not an easy decision but we are pleased with our return from the Rangers. Both Filip and Victor are good additions for our club and we are excited to see what they bring to us on the ice."

Miller, 31, was drafted by the Rangers with the 15th overall pick in the 2011 NHL draft and spent parts

of six seasons in New York before being dealt to Tampa Bay along with defenseman Ryan McDonagh on Feb. 26, 2018.

Miller, in the second year of a seven-year, \$56 million deal, will be counted on to bolster a Rangers lineup that has struggled after winning the Presidents' Trophy a year ago and reaching the Eastern Conference final. Miller had nine goals and 26 assists in 40 games with Vancouver this season.

"When you're in this business long enough, there's going to be things like that," Canucks coach Rick Tocchet said of the trade. "Millsey was a big part of the team. I'm sure he's emotional. ... Millsey's played great hockey for the Canucks and myself. Obviously, a heart-and-soul guy. I think he's going to do well over there."

Pettersson didn't want to discuss his issues with Miller or what it means for him going forward.

"I don't want to get into that," he said. "All we can do is look forward."

The Canucks later acquired defenseman Marcus Pettersson — no relation to Elias — and forward Drew O'Connor from Pittsburgh in exchange for forward Danton Heinen, defenseman Vincent Desharnais, prospect Melvin Fernstrom and the draft pick they got from the Rangers in the earlier deal.

New York is in 13th place in the East, five points behind Columbus for the conference's second wild card. Vancouver is ninth in the West and one point out of a wild-card spot.

For his career, Miller has totaled 247 goals and 427 assists in 839 games with the Rangers, Lightning and Canucks. He also has 12 goals and 44 assists in 91 career playoff games. Miller had a career-high 37 goals and 66 assists last season, while also setting bests with 103 points, 40 power-play points, nine game-winning goals and 217 hits.

During his first stint in New York, Miller had 72 goals and 100 assists in 341 games.

The 25-year-old Chytil, selected by the Rangers with the 21st overall pick in the 2017 draft, has 75 goals and 89 assists in 378 games, including 11 goals and nine assists in 41 games this season.

"Heard some really good things," Tocchet said of Chytil. "I heard he's very excited to come. Mancini I hear is a really big defenseman, young, that can play. Yeah, I think there's some stuff to work with."

Marcus Pettersson has 14 goals and 119 assists in 444 games for Anaheim and Pittsburgh. O'Connor has totaled 24 goals and 26 assists in 157 games for the Penguins.

Heinen has 93 goals and 137 assists in 538 games for Boston, Anaheim, Pittsburgh and Vancouver. Desharnais has one goal and 15 assists in 114 games.

Mancini, 22, made his NHL debut earlier this season and had a goal and four assists in 15 games with the Rangers. He also had three goals and seven assists in 23 games for Hartford of the AHL.

Brannstrom, 25, has 10 goals and 67 assists in 294 games. Dorrington, 20, was selected by Vancouver in the sixth round of the 2022 draft.

Beneath the surface, Groundhog Day's deep roots predate Punxsutawney Phil

By MARK SCOLFARO Associated Press

Groundhog Day predictions about the coming of spring put the spotlight on Punxsutawney Phil every Feb. 2, but celebrating the midpoint between the shortest and darkest day of the year and the spring equinox has ancient roots in European agricultural life.

Punxsutawney Phil is far from the only groundhog whose human handlers make annual announcements about whether they've seen their own shadows and are predicting six more weeks of winter or an early spring.

The date not only divides the calendar between the winter solstice and the spring equinox — it's also a time of year that figures in the Celtic calendar and the Christian holiday of Candlemas.

And in eastern and central Pennsylvania, where people of German descent have been watching the groundhog's annual emergence from hibernation for centuries, there's a tradition of groundhog clubs and celebrations that are independent of Phil.

Some dismiss the Punxsutawney event as an unworthy rival to their own festivities, which they say

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forecast more accurate weather predictions. There have been weather-predicting groundhogs in at least 28 U.S. states and Canadian provinces, and less formal celebrations far and wide.

One thing it's not: serious business.

"We know this is silly; we know this is fun," said Marcy Galando, executive director of the Punxsutawney Groundhog Club. "We want people to come here with a sense of humor."

Here are some things to know about the holiday:

What are the origins of Groundhog Day?

Celtic people across Europe marked the four days that are midway between the winter solstice, the spring equinox, the summer solstice and the fall equinox. What the Celts called Imbolc is also around when Christians celebrate Candlemas, timed to Joseph and Mary's presentation of Jesus at the Temple in Jerusalem.

Ancient people would watch the sun, stars and animal behavior to guide farming practices and other decisions, and the practice of watching an animal's emergence from winter hibernation to forecast weather has roots in a similar German tradition involving badgers or bears. Pennsylvania Germans apparently substituted the groundhog, endemic to the eastern and midwestern United States.

Historians have found a reference in an 1841 diary to groundhog weather forecasts in early February among families of German descent in Morgantown, Pennsylvania, according to the late Don Yoder, a University of Pennsylvania professor whose 2003 book about Groundhog Day explored the Celtic connection.

Yoder concluded the festival has roots in "ancient, undoubtedly prehistoric, weather lore."

Why is it celebrated in Punxsutawney?

Pennsylvania Germans settled in the area, and in the late 1880s, they started celebrating the holiday by picnicking, hunting and eating groundhogs.

Members of Punxsutawney Groundhog Club, organized in 1899, care for Phil and his woodchuck family at a customized space beside Punxsutawney Memorial Library, where there's a window with a view into the creature's burrow.

The Punxsutawney groundhog makes predictions, but he's not always predictable. The designated groundhog emerged before sunrise in 1929 and didn't come out until late afternoon in 1941.

The 1993 Bill Murray movie "Groundhog Day" caused such a resurgence of interest that two years after it came out, event organizers voiced concern about rowdy crowds drinking all night, people climbing trees and others stripping to their underwear. In 1998, a groundhog club leader wearing a \$4,000 groundhog suit reported being assaulted by a half-dozen young men.

Alcohol is now prohibited at Gobbler's Knob, Phil's spot some 80 miles (123 kilometers) northeast of Pittsburgh.

Does Phil have any competition?

The early festivities in Punxsutawney were followed in 1907 by folks in Quarryville, a farming area in Lancaster County in Pennsylvania's southeastern corner. The roughly 240 members of the Slumbering Groundhog Lodge there report the winter forecast from Octoraro Orphie, or least via his well-preserved remains.

Whistle pigs on the menu?

The groundhog is a member of the squirrel family and related to chipmunks and prairie dogs. It's also known as a woodchuck, a whistle pig — or in the parlance of Pennsylvania Dutch, a language with German roots, a "grundsau."

Groundhogs are herbivores that are themselves edible to humans, although they are not widely consumed. Their lifespan in the wild is typically two or three years.

Some cooks advise groundhogs are best taken when they are young and after clover is in bloom, since a clover diet is thought to improve the meat's taste.

When did clubs and lodges spring up?

Starting in the 1930s, groundhog lodges opened in eastern Pennsylvania. They were social clubs with similarities to Freemasonry.

Intended to preserve Pennsylvania German culture and traditions, clubs would sometimes fine those who

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were caught speaking anything but their Pennsylvania Dutch language at meetings. They were traditionally all-male groups and several of the clubs remain active.

They all share the unifying feature of a groundhog's weather prognostication, according to William W. Donner, a Kutztown University anthropology professor and author of "Serious Nonsense," a book about the lodges and other efforts to preserve German heritage.

"I think it's just one of these traditional rituals that people enjoy participating in, that maybe take them away from modern life for 15 minutes," Donner said.

How often does Phil get it right?

Some well-meaning efforts have sought to determine Phil's accuracy, but what "six weeks of winter" means is debatable. Claims that a groundhog has or has not seen its shadow — and that it's able to communicate that to a human — are also fair territory for skeptics and the humor impaired.

By all accounts, Phil predicts more winter far more often than he predicts an early spring.

Groundhogs are mostly solitary creatures who start to emerge in midwinter to find a mate. The science behind whether they can make any accurate weather predictions is problematic at best.

Among the skeptics is the National Centers for Environmental Information, within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The government agency compares Phil's record with U.S. national temperatures to conclude he's hardly perfect.

A deadly flight out of Wichita has one of America's most historic aviation cities reeling

By JOHN HANNA and HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH Associated Press

WICHITA, Kan. (AP) — When American Eagle Flight 5342 took off from Wichita, the Midwest city with a proud aviation history was glowing from a big moment.

It had just hosted the next generation of Olympic hopefuls at the U.S. Figure Skating Championships, the kind of major sporting event that leaders of the largest city in Kansas had envisioned when they opened a 15,000-seat arena in 2010. For Wichita, which once built many of the nation's aircraft, the skating showcase was another way of putting the community in America's heartland on a larger stage.

Then came the horror of learning the flight never made it.

"We were so proud to see these high-level athletes, their families, their friends, fans, coming to our community and sharing their skills and talents so that the whole world could see," Mayor Lily Wu said. "To end it with this type of tragedy just truly breaks my heart."

The midair collision Wednesday night between the plane and an Army helicopter in Washington, D.C., has left Wichita grieving. The worst U.S. air disaster in a generation killed 67 people, including young figure skaters who had attended a national development camp in Wichita following the championships. No one survived.

The city of nearly 400,000 residents has deep connections to America's aviation history and is a regional hub for oil companies, engineers and drillers, riding the industry's boom-and-bust cycles.

It was unclear how many of the victims may have been Wichita residents. Authorities have not released a list of the passengers, who included hunting buddies, an attorney on a business trip and a college student returning from her grandfather's funeral.

Following the collision, city and religious leaders held a prayer vigil that turned out hundreds of people who prayed for victims' families and pledged to provide comfort.

"This unity cannot just stay in sadness. It has to elicit something greater, something brighter, something that can shine forth," said Rabbi Shmulik Greenberg of Chabad, a Hasidic synagogue and community center in Wichita.

An aircraft hub in the Midwest

Wichita started as a trading post after the American Civil War, had a short life as a cattle drive town and boomed in the 1940s and 1950s, with military and civilian aircraft production.

Passengers moving through security at Dwight D. Eisenhower National Airport, named for the president

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who grew up in Abilene, first walk past a display describing Wichita as the "Air Capital of the World."

The industry has a history of more than a century in the area, with storied founders such as Clyde Cessna and Walter and Olive Ann Beech, who gave their names to aircraft companies. During World War II, Boeing made more than 1,700 bombers in Wichita, said Logan Daugherty, curator of the Kansas Aviation Museum.

The industry employs tens of thousands of area residents, who work for major manufactures such as Spirit AeroSystems, as well as a network of more than 350 suppliers, according to an economic development agency called the Greater Wichita Partnership.

The community has had its share of other strivers: The first White Castle restaurant opened here in 1921, beginning one of the first fast-food hamburger chains. Two Wichita State University students opened the first Pizza Hut in 1958. Koch Industries — the energy, agriculture and manufacturing conglomerate with 121,000-plus employees — has its leafy headquarters grounds in the north part of the city.

The city recently celebrated the first anniversary of the start of the single daily commercial American Airlines flight from Wichita to Washington.

The manufacturer of the passenger airline that went down, Bombardier, has its U.S. headquarters in Wichita. Jim Howell, who serves on the local county commission, said the plane had been certified in the city.

"There's a lot of connections to this plane. There's a lot of connections to Bombardier as a company," said Howell, who spent two decades working in flight testing, including a stint with Bombardier in the early 1990s. "We have a lot of employees who work for Bombardier who are still involved in testing and maintaining those types of planes here in Wichita."

A growing city

Wichita's population more than doubled between 1940 and 1960 and has since grown steadily and more diverse. The public school system — the largest in the state, educating roughly 11% of all Kansas students — says it has families from more than 100 nations, speaking more than 110 languages and dialects other than English.

It's also a politically diverse city. Although President Donald Trump has carried Sedgwick County, which includes Wichita, three times, Democratic Gov. Laura Kelly has won it twice.

Rushing to help

The city has mourned other aviation tragedies, including in 1970, when a plane carrying players, coaches and fans of Wichita State University's football team crashed in Colorado, killing 31 of the 37 people on board.

Following the tragedy in Washington, the city's nonprofit Wichita Community Foundation almost immediately set up a fund to collect donations for victims' families, to cover burial expenses and provide mental health or other services. Shelly Prichard, the foundation's president and CEO, said on the night of the crash they "started having people reach out to us about how they could help."

Kristin Anneler, who attended the vigil in Wichita following the collision, said she was impressed that people of different faiths and views came together to mourn the victims.

"It's just a tiny little bite — right? Of the cross section of humanity that we often forget about because we run in our own circles and we think our own thoughts," she said.

Pro-RFK Jr. letter to the Senate includes names of doctors whose licenses were revoked or suspended

By MICHELLE R. SMITH Associated Press

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (AP) — A letter submitted to the U.S. Senate that states it was sent by physicians in support of Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s nomination as secretary of Health and Human Services includes the names of doctors who have had their licenses revoked, suspended or faced other discipline, The Associated Press has found.

The letter was meant to lend credibility to Kennedy's nomination, which has faced strenuous opposition from medical experts due to his two decades of anti-vaccine activism. Republican Sen. Bill Cassidy of Louisiana, a medical doctor who boasts on his official website of an effort he created to vaccinate 36,000

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children against hepatitis B, expressed hesitancy about Kennedy's nomination and is seen as a key vote.

The AP found that in addition to the physicians who had faced disciplinary action, many of the nearly 800 signers are not doctors. The letter with the names of those who signed was provided to the AP by Sen. Ron Johnson's office after he entered it into the Congressional Record on Wednesday during the first of Kennedy's two confirmation hearings.

Among those who signed it were a self-described journalist, a certified public accountant, a firefighter/paramedic, a certified health coach and someone who said they had a bachelor's degree "with an emphasis on Jungian Psychology." The signers include at least 75 nurses, as well as physician's assistants. More than 90 did not include any credentials at all.

Over 20 were chiropractors, representing an industry that has funded Kennedy's work. An AP investigation found that donations from a chiropractic group represented one-sixth of the revenues collected by Kennedy's anti-vaccine nonprofit in 2019.

The letter was organized and submitted by MAHA Action, which is run by Del Bigtree, who worked for Kennedy's presidential campaign and is a longtime anti-vaccine activist. The Washington Post reported Wednesday that Kennedy transferred the trademark for the "MAHA" slogan to a limited liability company run by Bigtree. Kennedy reported that he received \$100,000 in income from licensing the slogan and said in his financial disclosures that he had transferred the trademark for "no compensation."

MAHA stands for "Make America Healthy Again," a play on President Donald Trump's "Make America Great Again."

Emma Post, a MAHA Action spokesperson, said in an email that the letter was "shared and circulated organically in a grassroots manner with explicit instructions that it was for physicians only to sign on to."

She did not address the AP's questions about what further steps the group took to verify credentials, if any. Bigtree and Kennedy did not return messages seeking comment. A White House spokesman, Kush Desai, said the administration looks forward to the Senate's swift confirmation of Kennedy.

The letter includes the header "Doctors for Robert F. Kennedy Jr." and begins with the words, "We, the undersigned physicians." It says lower down that it "reflects the collective voice of physicians and medical professionals" committed to addressing chronic disease.

The AP's review found that at least 10 doctors who signed the letter had run into trouble with state medical boards or their board certification body for a variety of alleged misconduct. Sanctions they faced included having their license revoked or suspended, being put on probation, receiving a reprimand or other action. One received a warning letter from the Federal Trade Commission, which said he was unlawfully advertising products as treatments or prevention for COVID-19, including intravenous nutrient therapy and vitamins.

Among the signers was Paul Thomas, an anti-vaccine doctor who voluntarily surrendered his medical license in 2022 after Oregon's medical board found he had engaged in repeated and gross negligence in the practice of medicine.

Thomas did not admit or deny the finding. NBC News reported that Thomas was part of a team assembled by Kennedy who remotely advised an anti-vaccine activist in Samoa during a measles outbreak there on how to treat children with vitamins. A person who responded on behalf of Thomas, DeeDee Hoover, said the information the AP had was inaccurate but did not reply when asked what specifically was wrong.

Other signers included Dr. Simone Gold, who was reprimanded by California's medical board after she pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor for her conduct at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. Gold was recently pardoned by Trump and told the AP in an email that her reprimand and other disciplinary action were overturned by a judge prior to her pardon.

"Robert F. Kennedy Jr. is an honorable and honest person with vast subject matter knowledge and experience who values the health of the American people, and furthermore because he is willing to challenge corporate interests where they conflict with the best interests of those citizens," Gold wrote in an email.

Meryl Nass, whose medical license was suspended in Maine over her treatment of COVID-19 patients, also signed. She told the AP she is appealing the decision and expects to be fully vindicated.

At least two of the doctors were disciplined, prior to the pandemic, for improperly giving out vaccine waivers, including one who had his license revoked and another who was put on probation. Another doctor's license was revoked for refusing to follow COVID-19 guidelines.

Post said MAHA Action's letter was just one of several provided to the Senate supporting Kennedy, including one that she provided a link to that she said was signed by "17,000 medical professionals." That letter stated it was from international medical providers and did not include the names of those who signed.

Opponents of Kennedy's nomination sent their own letter with signatures from what they said were more than 18,000 "vetted and verified" doctors. The group, the Committee to Protect Health Care, said that the letter was initially circulated among verified physicians and that as additional signatures were added, their credentials were checked. The group provided the list of signatories to the AP but with anonymized names that included the first initial of their first name along with the first three letters of their last name, as well as their medical credentials. They said doctors' names were anonymized for their privacy and to protect them from harassment.

Things to know about how Trump's policies target transgender people

By GEOFF MULVIHILL Associated Press

President Donald Trump has targeted transgender and nonbinary people with a series of executive orders since he returned to office.

He has done it with strong language. In one executive order, he asserted "medical professionals are maiming and sterilizing a growing number of impressionable children under the radical and false claim that adults can change a child's sex."

That's a dramatic reversal of the policies of former President Joe Biden's administration — and of major medical organizations — that supported gender-affirming care.

American Civil Liberties Union lawyer Sruti Swaminathan said that to be put into effect, provisions of the orders should first go through federal rulemaking procedures, which can be years long and include the chance for public comment.

"When you have the nation's commander-in-chief demonizing transgender people, it certainly sends a signal to all Americans," said Sarah Warbelow, the legal director at Human Rights Campaign.

Things to know about Trump's actions:

Recognizing people as only men or women

On Trump's first day back in office, he issued a sweeping order that signaled a big change in how his administration would deal with transgender people and their rights.

It questions their existence by saying the government would recognize only two unchangeable sexes: female and male.

The stated purpose is to protect women. "Efforts to eradicate the biological reality of sex fundamentally attack women by depriving them of their dignity, safety, and well-being," the order says.

The document calls on government agencies to use the new definitions of the sexes, and to stop using taxpayer money to promote what it calls "gender ideology," the idea broadly accepted by medical experts that gender falls along a spectrum.

Federal agencies have been quick to comply. Andrea Lucas, the acting chair of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, for example, announced this week that she would remove identity pronouns from employees' online profiles and disallow the "X" gender marker for those filing discrimination charges.

"Biology is not bigotry. Biological sex is real, and it matters," Lucas said in a statement.

On Friday, information about what Trump calls "gender ideology" was removed from federal government websites and the term "gender" was replaced by "sex" to comport with the order. The Bureau of Prisons stopped reporting the number of transgender incarcerated people and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention removed lessons on building supportive school environments for transgender and nonbinary students.

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Researchers have found less than 1% of adults identify as transgender and under 2% are intersex, or born with physical traits that don't fit typical definitions for male or female.

Requests denied for passport gender markers

In the order calling for a new federal definition of the sexes, Trump included some specific instances in which policy should be changed, including on passports.

The State Department promptly stopped granting requests for new or updated passports with gender markers that don't conform with the new definition.

The agency is no longer issuing the documents with an "X" that some people who identify as neither male nor female request and will not honor requests to change the gender markers between "M" and "F" for transgender people.

The option to choose "X" was taken off online passport application forms Friday.

The ACLU says it's considering a lawsuit.

Transgender women moved into men's prisons

Trump's initial order called for transgender women in federal custody to be moved to men's prisons. Warbelow, from Human Rights Campaign, said her organization has received reports from lawyers that some have been.

The Federal Bureau of Prisons did not immediately respond to requests for information about such moves.

There have been at least two lawsuits trying to block the policy. In one, a federal judge has said a transgender woman in a Massachusetts prison should be housed with the general population of a woman's prison and continue to receive gender-affirming medical care for now.

Opening the door to another ban on transgender service members

Trump set the stage for a ban on transgender people in the military, directing Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth to come up with a new policy on the issue by late March.

In the executive order, the president asserted that being transgender "conflicts with a soldier's commitment to an honorable, truthful, and disciplined lifestyle, even in one's personal life."

Trump barred transgender service members in his first term in office, but a court blocked the effort.

A group of active military members promptly sued over the new order this week.

Defunding gender-affirming medical care for transgender youth

Trump called for halting the use of federal money to support gender-affirming medical care for transgender youth under 19 years old.

The care in question includes puberty blocking drugs, hormone therapy and gender-affirming surgery, which is rare for minors.

If fully implemented, the order would cut off government health insurance including Medicaid and TRICARE, which serves military families, for the treatments.

It also calls on Congress to adopt a law against the care, though whether that happens is up to lawmakers.

Twenty-six states already have passed laws banning or limiting gender-affirming care for minors, so the change could be smaller in those places.

Some hospitals have paused some gender-affirming care for people under 19 following the executive order while they evaluate how it might apply to them.

Barring schools from helping student social transitioning

Another executive order this week seeks to stop "radical indoctrination" in the nation's school system.

It calls on the Education Department to come up with a policy blocking schools from using federal funds to support students who are socially transitioning or using their curriculum to promote the idea that gender can be fluid, along with certain teachings about race.

The order would block schools from requiring teachers and other school staff to use names and pronouns that align with transgender students' gender identify rather than the sex they were assigned at birth.

Some districts and states have passed those requirements to prevent deadnaming, the practice of referring to transgender people who have changed their name by the name they used before their transition. It is widely considered insensitive, offensive or traumatizing.

An air ambulance has crashed in Philadelphia. What to know about air medical transport

By AUDREY McAVOY Associated Press

A medical transport jet carrying a child patient, her mother and four others slammed into a Philadelphia neighborhood and exploded in flames.

The child had been treated in Philadelphia for a life-threatening condition and was being transported home to Mexico, according to Jet Rescue Air Ambulance, the plane's operator. The flight's final destination was Tijuana after a stop in Missouri. All six people aboard were from Mexico.

The plane crashed Friday 30 seconds after takeoff from Northeast Philadelphia Airport, which primarily serves business jets and charter flights.

Here's what to know about air medical transport:

What is an air ambulance?

An air ambulance provides transportation to people in critical or life-threatening situations when a ground ambulance can't reach a patient or wouldn't get to them fast enough.

They help boost a patient's odds of surviving and recovering, particularly in rural areas that don't have trauma or burn centers, according to a 2017 U.S. Government Accountability Office report.

They've grown in importance as more rural hospitals have closed, according to a medical journal report from 2022.

Air ambulances can be either a helicopter or a fixed wing aircraft. Helicopters are generally used to take patients between hospitals or from the scene of an accident to a hospital. The airplane versions fly longer distances between airports.

Helicopters make up 74% of all air ambulances, according to the GAO report.

The Philadelphia crash involved a Learjet 55, a small business jet.

Who rides air ambulances?

People with traumatic injuries, pregnancy complications, heart attacks, strokes and respiratory diseases are the most common users of air ambulances, according to the National Association of Insurance Commissioners. More than 550,000 patients in the U.S. use them every year.

In Hawaii, for example, they are frequently used to take patients from less populated islands, where health care is more limited, to Honolulu, where the state's biggest hospitals are located.

The owner of the plane that crashed in Philadelphia, Jet Rescue, flew baseball Hall of Famer David Ortiz to Boston after he was shot in the Dominican Republic in 2019.

What are they equipped with?

Air ambulances will often have similar life-saving equipment like ventilators and blood transfusion devices. They will have stretchers and incubators.

The Mayo Clinic, for example, said its air ambulances will have an external defibrillator, an external pacemaker and more than 60 medications.

Paramedics and emergency medical technicians care for patients on board. Sometimes doctors and nurses are on board.

What does an air ambulance cost?

The average air ambulance trip is 52 miles (84 kilometers) and costs between \$12,000 and \$25,000 per flight, according to the National Association of Insurance Commissioners. The medical condition of the patient and the staff on board can influence the price.

Many insurers will pay what they believe to be a reasonable but sometimes they will disagree with the air ambulance provider and in these cases the patient may have to pay the difference.

Insurance experts say big invoices are becoming more common as costs rise and coverage shifts.

Have there been other fatal crashes with air ambulances?

Yes, there were 87 accidents that led to 230 deaths from 2000 to 2020, according to a study in the journal Prehospital and Disaster Medicine. Nearly three-fourths of those accidents were on helicopters.

Human factors that can include pilot error or disorientation, impairment and fatigue contributed to 87% of the fatal crashes.

The Philadelphia crash was the second fatal incident in 15 months for Jet Rescue. In 2023, five crewmembers were killed when their plane overran a runway in the central Mexican state of Morelos and crashed into a hillside.

Peace prospects look bleak in Myanmar as a civil war rages

BANGKOK (AP) — Peace prospects look bleak in Myanmar as a civil war rages despite international pressure on the military four years after it seized power from an elected civilian government.

The political situation remains tense with no negotiation space in sight between the military government and the major opposition groups fighting against it.

The four years after the army's takeover on Feb. 1, 2021, have created a profound situation of multiple, overlapping crises with nearly half the population in poverty and the economy in disarray, the U.N. Development Program said.

The U.N. Human Rights Office said the military ramped up violence against civilians last year to unprecedented levels, inflicting the heaviest civilian death toll since the army takeover as its grip on power eroded.

The army launched wave after wave of retaliatory airstrikes and artillery shelling on civilians and civilian populated areas, forced thousands of young people into military service, conducted arbitrary arrests and prosecutions, caused mass displacement, and denied access to humanitarians, even in the face of natural disasters, the rights office said in a statement Friday.

"After four years, it is deeply distressing to find that the situation on the ground for civilians is only getting worse by the day," U.N. human rights chief Volker Türk said. "Even as the military's power wanes, their atrocities and violence have expanded in scope and intensity," he said, adding that the retaliatory nature of the attacks were designed to control, intimidate, and punish the population.

The United States, United Kingdom, European Union and others criticized the military takeover in a statement that also called for the release of ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi and other political prisoners.

They said nearly 20 million people need humanitarian assistance and up to 3.5 million people are displaced internally, an increase of nearly 1 million in the last year. They also expressed concern about increased cross-border crime in Myanmar such as drug and human trafficking and online scam operations, which affect neighboring countries and risk broader instability.

"The current trajectory is not sustainable for Myanmar or the region," the countries said in the joint statement that also included Australia, Canada, South Korea, New Zealand, Norway and Switzerland.

The status of the fighting

The military's 2021 takeover prompted widespread public protests, whose violent suppression by security forces triggered an armed resistance that has now led to a state of civil war. Ethnic minority militias and people's defense forces that support Myanmar's main opposition control large parts of the country, while the military holds much of central Myanmar and big cities including the capital, Naypyidaw.

The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, which keeps detailed tallies of arrests and casualties linked to the repression of the military government, said that at least 6,239 were killed and 28,444 were arrested since the takeover. The actual death toll is likely to be much higher since the group does not generally include deaths on the side of the military government and cannot easily verify cases in remote areas.

Aung Thu Nyein, director of communications for the Institute for Strategy and Policy-Myanmar think tank, told The Associated Press that Myanmar's current situation is at its worst with peace and development being pushed back.

"What's worse is that the sovereignty which ever-proclaimed by the military is losing, and the country's borders could even shift," Aung Thu Nyein said in a text message.

Myanmar's army suffered unprecedented battlefield defeats over the past year, when a coalition of ethnic armed groups won victories in the northeast near the Chinese border and in the western state of Rakhine.

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The ethnic rebels were able to quickly capture several towns, military bases and two important regional commands, and their offensive weakened the army's grip in other parts of the country.

The ethnic minorities have been fighting for decades for greater autonomy from Myanmar's central government and are loosely allied with the People's Defense Force, the pro-democracy armed resistance formed after the army's 2021 takeover.

The U.N. Human Rights Office and rights groups including Amnesty International also made rare allegations in recent statements that armed groups opposing the military have also committed human rights violations in areas under their control.

The status of election plans

In pursuit of a political solution, the military government is pushing for an election, which it has promised to hold this year. Critics say the election would not be free or fair as civil rights have been curtailed and many political opponents imprisoned and the election would be an attempt to normalize military control.

On Friday, the military government extended a state of emergency another six months because it said more time was needed to restore stability before the election, state-run MRTV television reported. No exact date for the polls was given.

Tom Andrews, a special rapporteur working with the U.N. human rights office, said it wasn't possible to hold a legitimate election while arresting, detaining, torturing and executing leaders of the opposition and when it is illegal for journalists or citizens to criticize the military government.

"Governments should dismiss these plans for what they are – a fraud," Tom Andrews said.

Health data, entire pages wiped from federal websites as Trump officials target 'gender ideology'

By CARLA K. JOHNSON AP Medical Writer

Public health data disappeared from websites, entire webpages went blank and employees erased pronouns from email signatures Friday as federal agencies scrambled to comply with a directive tied to President Donald Trump's order rolling back protections for transgender people.

The Office of Personnel Management directed agency heads to strip "gender ideology" from websites, contracts and emails in a memo sent Wednesday, with changes ordered to be instituted by 5 p.m. Friday. It also directed agencies to disband employee resource groups, terminate grants and contracts related to the issue, and replace the term "gender" with "sex" on government forms.

Some parts of government websites appeared with the message "The page you're looking for was not found." Some pages disappeared and came back intermittently.

Asked by reporters Friday about reports that government websites were being shut down to eliminate mentions of diversity, equity and inclusion, Trump said he didn't know anything about it but that he'd endorse such a move.

"I don't know. That doesn't sound like a bad idea to me," Trump said, adding that he campaigned promising to stamp out such initiatives.

Much public health information was taken down from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's website: contraception guidance; a fact sheet about HIV and transgender people; lessons on building supportive school environments for transgender and nonbinary kids; details about National Transgender HIV Testing Day; and a set of government surveys showing transgender students suffering higher rates of depression, drug use, bullying and other problems.

Eliminating health resources creates dangerous gaps in scientific information, disease experts said. The Infectious Diseases Society of America, a medical association, issued a statement decrying the removal of information about HIV and people who are transgender. Access is "critical to efforts to end the HIV epidemic," the organization's leaders said.

A Bureau of Prisons web page originally titled "Inmate Gender" was relabeled "Inmate Sex" on Friday. A breakdown of transgender inmates in federal prisons was no longer included.

The State Department on Friday removed the option to select "X" as a gender on passport applications

for nonbinary applicants. It also replaced the word "gender" from the descriptor with the word "sex." Nonetheless, the online passport application form was no longer available late Friday, linking simply to a message that said the system was "undergoing maintenance."

All State Department employees were ordered to remove gender-specific pronouns from their email signatures. The directive, from the acting head of the Bureau of Management, said this was required to comply with Trump's executive orders and the department was also removing all references to "gender ideology" from websites and internal documents.

"All employees are required to remove any gender identifying pronouns from email signature blocks by 5:00 PM today," said the order from Tibor Nagy. "Your cooperation is essential as we navigate these changes together."

An official from the U.S. Agency for International Development said staffers were directed to flag the use of the word "gender" in each of thousands of award contracts. Warnings against gender discrimination are standard language in every such contract. The official spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisal, under a Trump administration gag order prohibiting USAID staffers from speaking with people outside their agency.

The official said staffers fear that programs and jobs related to inclusion efforts, gender issues and issues specific to women are being singled out and possibly targeted under two Trump executive orders.

Some Census Bureau and National Park Service pages were also inaccessible or giving error messages.

Trump's executive order, signed on his first day back in office, calls for the federal government to define sex as only male or female and for that to be reflected on official documents such as passports and policies such as federal prison assignments.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth ordered the military to immediately stop recognizing identity a day before the start of February's Black History Month, saying such events "erode camaraderie and threaten mission execution."

A medical plane carrying a child patient and 5 others crashes in Philadelphia, setting homes ablaze

By MICHAEL R. SISAK and MATT ROURKE Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — A medical transport jet with a child patient, her mother and four others aboard crashed into a Philadelphia neighborhood shortly after takeoff Friday evening, exploding in a fireball that engulfed several homes.

Jet Rescue Air Ambulance, which operated the Learjet 55, said in a statement: "We cannot confirm any survivors." There was no immediate word whether anyone on the ground was killed.

All six people aboard were from Mexico. The child had been treated in Philadelphia for a life-threatening condition and was being transported home, according to Jet Rescue spokesperson Shai Gold. The flight's final destination was to have been Tijuana after a stop in Missouri.

The patient and her mother were on board along with four crew members. Gold said this was a seasoned crew and everyone involved in these flights goes through rigorous training.

"When an incident like this happens, it's shocking and surprising," Gold told The Associated Press. "All of the aircraft are maintained, not a penny is spared because we know our mission is so critical."

Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro said at a news conference late Friday that officials expected fatalities in the "awful aviation disaster."

"We know that there will be loss," he said.

The plane was registered in Mexico. Jet Rescue is based in Mexico and has operations both there and in the U.S.

The crash came just two days after the deadliest U.S. air disaster in a generation. On Wednesday night, an American Airlines jet carrying 60 passengers and four crew members collided in midair in Washington, D.C., with an Army helicopter carrying three soldiers. There were no survivors.

The Philadelphia crash was the second fatal incident in 15 months for Jet Rescue. In 2023 five crewmem-

bers were killed when their plane overran a runway in the central Mexican state of Morelos and crashed into a hillside.

In Philadelphia, a doorbell camera captured video of the plane plunging in a streak of white and exploding as it hit the ground near a shopping mall and major roadway.

"All we heard was a loud roar and didn't know where it was coming from. We just turned around and saw the big plume," said Jim Quinn, the owner of the doorbell camera.

The crash happened less than 3 miles (5 kilometers) from Northeast Philadelphia Airport, which primarily serves business jets and charter flights.

The Learjet 55 quickly disappeared from radar after taking off from the airport at 6:06 p.m. and climbing to an altitude of 1,600 feet (487 meters). It was registered to a company operating as Med Jets, according to the flight tracking website Flight Aware.

In a post on the social media platform Truth Social, President Donald Trump said: "So sad to see the plane go down in Philadelphia."

"More innocent souls lost," he added. "Our people are totally engaged."

A continuous stream of police vehicles and fire trucks initially responded at the crash site, taking over business parking lots. Within about an hour, the cry of sirens and shouted orders had faded into relative quiet at the edges of the closed-off area, and darkness settled in as drivers passing by peered out trying to see what was happening.

The plane crashed in a busy intersection near Roosevelt Mall, an outdoor shopping center in the densely populated neighborhood of Rhawnhurst.

One cellphone video taken by a witness moments after the crash showed a chaotic scene with debris scattered across the intersection. A wall of orange glowed just beyond as a plume of black smoke rose into the sky and sirens blared.

Michael Schiavone, 37, was sitting at his home in Mayfair, a nearby neighborhood, when he heard a loud bang and his house shook. He said it felt like a mini earthquake and when he checked his home security camera, it looked like a missile came down.

"There was a large explosion, so I thought we were under attack for a second," he said.

Jet Rescue, which provides global air ambulance services, flew baseball Hall of Famer David Ortiz to Boston after he was shot in the Dominican Republic in 2019 and was involved in transporting patients critically ill with COVID-19.

The FAA said the National Transportation Safety Board will lead the investigation. The NTSB said an investigator arrived and more officials would be there Saturday.

Arrest warrant issued for New York doctor indicted in Louisiana for prescribing abortion pill

By SARA CLINE and GEOFF MULVIHILL Associated Press

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — An arrest warrant has been issued for a New York doctor indicted on Friday by a Louisiana grand jury for allegedly prescribing abortion pills online to a pregnant minor in the Deep South state, which has one of the strictest near-total abortion bans in the country.

Grand jurors at the District Court for the Parish of West Baton Rouge unanimously issued an indictment against Dr. Margaret Carpenter; her company, Nightingale Medical, PC; and the minor's mother. All three were charged with criminal abortion by means of abortion-inducing drugs, a felony.

In addition to Carpenter, an arrest warrant was issued for the mother, who has not been publicly identified to protect the identity of the minor. District Attorney Tony Clayton told The Associated Press that the mother turned herself in to police on Friday.

The case appears to be the first instance of criminal charges against a doctor accused of sending abortion pills to another state, at least since the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* in 2022 and opened the door for states to have strict anti-abortion laws.

"We expect Dr. Carpenter to come to Louisiana and answer to these charges, and if 12 people (a jury)

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think she's innocent then, let it go," Clayton said.

New York Gov. Kathy Hochul said in a video posted on social media, "I will never, under any circumstances, turn this doctor over to the state of Louisiana under any extradition requests," signaling a potential legal battle between the states.

Last year, the Port Allen, Louisiana, woman requested abortion medication online from Carpenter for her daughter, whose age has not been specified. Clayton said the request was made through a questionnaire only and no consultation with the girl.

A "cocktail of pills" was mailed to the woman who directed her daughter to take the pill, Clayton said.

After taking the drug, the girl experienced a medical emergency while alone, called 911 and was transported to the hospital where she was treated. While responding to the emergency, a police officer learned about the pills and under further investigation found that a doctor in New York state had supplied the drugs and turned their findings over to Clayton's office.

It is unclear how far along the girl was in her pregnancy.

"The (adult) mother has since been arrested, but the other person we believe is just as culpable here is the person who sat in an office, wrapped a box of pills, put a stamp on the box and mailed it to the state of Louisiana for a child to take," Clayton said.

Carpenter was sued in December by the Texas attorney general under similar allegations of sending pills to that state. That case did not involve criminal charges.

Carpenter did not immediately return a message from the AP.

The indictment comes just months after Louisiana became the first state with a law reclassifying both mifepristone and misoprostol as "controlled dangerous substances." The drugs are still allowed, but medical personnel must take extra steps to access them.

Under the legislation, if someone knowingly possesses either medication without a valid prescription, they could be fined up to \$5,000 and sent to jail for one to five years. The law carves out protections for pregnant women who obtain the drug without a prescription to take on their own.

"I have said it before and I will say it again: We will hold individuals accountable for breaking the law," Louisiana Attorney General Liz Murrill, a Republican, said in a statement on Friday.

Abortion opponents and reproductive rights groups alike flooded social media scrutinizing the indictment.

"We cannot continue to allow forced birth extremists to interfere with our ability to access necessary healthcare, Chasity Wilson, executive director of the Louisiana Abortion Fund, said in a statement. "Extremists hope this case will cause a chilling effect, further tying the hands of doctors who took an oath to care for their patients."

Since the fall of *Roe v. Wade*, Louisiana has had a near-total abortion ban, without any exceptions for rape or incest. Under the law, physicians convicted of performing an illegal abortion, including one with pills, face up to 15 years in prison, \$200,000 in fines and the loss of their medical license.

"Make no mistake, since *Roe v. Wade* was overturned, we've witnessed a disturbing pattern of interference with women's rights," the Abortion Coalition of Telemedicine, where Carpenter is one of the founders, said in a statement. "It's no secret the United States has a history of violence and harassment against abortion providers, and this state-sponsored effort to prosecute a doctor providing safe and effective care should alarm everyone."

Friday's indictment could be the first direct test of New York's shield laws, which are intended to protect prescribers who use telehealth to provide abortion pills to patients in states where abortion is banned. New York Attorney General Letitia James said "we will not allow bad actors to undermine our providers' ability to deliver critical care."

"This cowardly attempt out of Louisiana to weaponize the law against out-of-state providers is unjust and un-American," James added.

Pills have become the most common means of abortion in the U.S., accounting for nearly two-thirds of them by 2023. They're also at the center of political and legal action over abortion. In January, a judge let three states continue to challenge federal government approvals for how one of the drugs usually involved can be prescribed.

Venezuela frees 6 Americans after meeting between President Maduro and Trump's envoy

By REGINA GARCIA CANO and JOSHUA GOODMAN Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — Six Americans who had been detained in Venezuela in recent months were freed by the government of President Nicolás Maduro after he met Friday with a Trump administration official tasked with urging the authoritarian leader to take back deported migrants who have committed crimes in the United States.

U.S. President Donald Trump and his envoy for special missions, Richard Grenell, announced the release of the six men on social media. The visit by Grenell came as a shock to many Venezuelans who hoped that Trump would continue the “maximum pressure” campaign he pursued against Maduro during his first term.

Grenell's hours long trip to Venezuela, according to the White House, was focused on Trump's efforts to deport Venezuelans back to their home country, which currently does not accept them, and on the release of the detained Americans.

“We are wheels up and headed home with these 6 American citizens,” Grenell posted on X along with a photo showing him and the men aboard an aircraft. “They just spoke to @realDonaldTrump and they couldn't stop thanking him.”

The meeting in Venezuela's capital took place less than a month after Maduro was sworn in for a third six-year term despite credible evidence that he lost last year's election. The U.S. government, along with several other Western nations, does not recognize Maduro's claim to victory and instead points to tally sheets collected by the opposition coalition showing that its candidate, Edmundo González, won by a more than a two-to-one margin.

Venezuelan state television aired footage of Grenell and Maduro speaking in the Miraflores Palace and said the meeting had been requested by the U.S. government.

Signing an executive order in the Oval Office on Friday, Trump was asked if Grenell being filmed meeting with Maduro lent legitimacy to a government that the Trump White House does not officially recognize.

“No. We want to do something with Venezuela. I've been a very big opponent of Venezuela and Maduro,” Trump responded. “They've treated us not so good, but they've treated, more importantly, the Venezuelan people, very badly.”

Maduro, appearing on state television after Grenell had left Venezuela, said the visit yielded “initial agreements” but did not provide any details.

“I have seen three U.S. presidents pass before me,” Maduro said. “This is the fourth term, and our message has been one: We want to build relationships of respect for Venezuela's sovereignty, for Venezuela's democratic life, for international law and for our Latin American region.”

Some Republicans criticized the visit.

“This is terrible timing,” said Elliott Abrams, who served as special envoy to Venezuela and Iran during the first Trump administration. “A meeting with Maduro will be used by him to legitimize his rule and show that the Americans recognize him as president. If the purpose is to deliver a tough message about migration issues, the president could've done that himself. There was no need to send someone to Caracas.”

The dispute over the election results sparked nationwide protests. More than 2,200 people were arrested during and after the demonstrations.

Among those detained are as many as 10 Americans who the government has linked to alleged plots to destabilize the country. Neither the White House nor Maduro's government immediately released the names of the six who were freed Friday.

A nonprofit group that had advocated for the release of a detainee said David Estrella, a 62-year-old who was last heard from in September, was among those on their way back to the U.S. Venezuelan Interior Minister Diosdado Cabello had accused Estrella of being part of an alleged plot to assassinate Maduro.

The Trump administration has taken a slew of actions to make good on promises to crack down on illegal immigration and carry out the largest mass deportation effort in U.S. history.

Those measures include the revocation earlier this week of a Biden administration decision that would have protected roughly 600,000 people from Venezuela from deportation, putting some at risk of being removed from the country in about two months.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt told reporters Friday that Trump had instructed Grenell to "identify a place and ensure that repatriation flights" carrying Venezuelans, including members of the Tren de Aragua criminal organization, "land in Venezuela." She said Trump also ordered Grenell to "ensure that all U.S. detainees in Venezuela are returned home."

More than 7.7 million Venezuelans have left their home country since 2013, when its economy unraveled and Maduro first took office. Most settled in Latin America and the Caribbean, but after the pandemic, migrants increasingly set their sights on the U.S.

Venezuelans' desire for better living conditions and their rejection of Maduro are expected to keep pushing people to emigrate.

Ahead of the presidential election last year, a nationwide poll by Venezuela-based research firm Delphos showed about a quarter of the population thinking about emigrating if Maduro was re-elected.

Grenell has reached out to Maduro before on Trump's behalf to secure the release of imprisoned Americans only to come home empty handed.

In 2020, he traveled with Erik Prince, the founder of controversial security firm Blackwater, to Mexico City for a secret meeting with a top Maduro aide. The backchannel talks centered on Maduro's offer to swap eight Americans then imprisoned in Venezuela for businessman Alex Saab, a close ally of the president charged in the U.S. with money laundering, The Associated Press previously reported.

No deal was struck and Grenell's demand that Maduro step down was dismissed by the Venezuelan president's envoy. Grenell has always denied he was negotiating a hostage swap.

Later, in December 2023, the Biden administration exchanged Saab for 10 Americans as part of a policy to re-engage Maduro ahead of presidential elections.

Trump administration fires prosecutors involved in Jan. 6 cases and moves toward ousting FBI agents

By ERIC TUCKER and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration on Friday fired a group of prosecutors involved in the Jan. 6 criminal cases and demanded the names of FBI agents involved in those same probes so they can possibly be ousted, moves that reflect a White House determination to exert control over federal law enforcement and purge agencies of career employees seen as insufficiently loyal.

Acting Deputy Attorney General Emil Bove ordered the firings of the Jan. 6 prosecutors days after President Donald Trump's sweeping clemency action benefiting the more than 1,500 people charged in the U.S. Capitol attack, according to a memo obtained by The Associated Press. About two dozen employees at the U.S. attorney's office in Washington were terminated, said a person familiar with the matter who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss personnel issues.

A separate memo by Bove identified more than a half-dozen FBI senior executives who were ordered to retire or be fired by Monday, and also asked for the names, titles and offices of all FBI employees who worked on investigations into the Jan. 6, 2021, U.S. Capitol riot — a list the bureau's acting director said could number in the thousands. Bove, who has defended Trump in his criminal cases before joining the administration, said Justice Department officials would then carry out a "review process to determine whether any additional personnel actions are necessary."

"As we've said since the moment we agreed to take on these roles, we are going to follow the law, follow FBI policy, and do what's in the best interest of the workforce and the American people — always," acting FBI Director Brian Driscoll wrote in a letter to the workforce.

The prosecutors fired in the D.C. U.S. attorney's office had been hired for temporary assignments to support the Jan. 6 cases, but were moved into permanent roles after Trump's presidential win in November, according to the memo obtained by the AP. Bove, the acting deputy attorney general, said he would not

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“tolerate subversive personnel actions by the previous administration.”

Any mass firings at the FBI would be a major blow to the historic independence from the White House of the nation’s premier federal law enforcement agency but would be in keeping with Trump’s persistent resolve to bend the law enforcement and intelligence community to his will. It would be part of a startling pattern of retribution waged on federal government employees, following the forced ousters of a group of senior FBI executives earlier this week as well as a broad termination by the Justice Department of prosecutors on special counsel Jack Smith’s team who investigated Trump.

The FBI Agents Association said the reported efforts to oust agents represented “outrageous actions by acting officials” that were “fundamentally at odds with the law enforcement objectives outlined by President Trump and his support for FBI Agents.”

“Dismissing potentially hundreds of Agents would severely weaken the Bureau’s ability to protect the country from national security and criminal threats and will ultimately risk setting up the Bureau and its new leadership for failure,” the association said in a statement.

It was not immediately clear what recourse any fired agent might take, but the bureau has a well-defined process for terminations and any abrupt action that bypasses that protocol could presumably open the door to a legal challenge.

When pressed during his confirmation hearing Thursday, Trump’s pick for FBI director, Kash Patel, said he was not aware of any plans to terminate or otherwise punish FBI employees who were involved in the Trump investigations. Patel said if he was confirmed he would follow the FBI’s internal review processes for taking action against employees.

Asked by Democratic Sen. Cory Booker whether he would reverse any decisions before his confirmation that don’t follow that standard process, Patel said, “I don’t know what’s going on right now over there, but I’m committed to you, senator, and your colleagues, that I will honor the due process of the FBI.”

Before he was nominated for the director’s position, Patel had remarked on at least one podcast appearance about what he called anti-Trump “conspirators” in the government and news media who he said needed to be rooted out.

Trump has for years expressed fury at the FBI and Justice Department over investigations that shadowed his presidency, including an inquiry into ties between Russia and his 2016 campaign, and continued over the last four years. He fired one FBI director, James Comey, amid the Russia investigation and then replaced his second, Christopher Wray, just weeks after his win in November.

Asked at the White House on Friday if he had anything to do with the scrutiny of the agents, he said: “No, but we have some very bad people over there. It was weaponized at a level that nobody’s never seen before. They came after a lot of people — like me — but they came after a lot of people.”

He added, “If they fired some people over there, that’s a good thing, because they were very bad.”

The FBI and Smith’s team investigated Trump over his efforts to overturn the 2020 presidential election and his hoarding of classified documents at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida. Both of those cases resulted in indictments that were withdrawn after Trump’s November presidential win because of longstanding Justice Department policy prohibiting the federal prosecution of a sitting president.

The Justice Department also charged more than 1,500 Trump supporters in connection with the Capitol riot, though Trump on his first day in office granted clemency to all of them — including the ones convicted of violent crimes — through pardons, sentence commutations and dismissals of indictments.

This week, the Justice Department fired more than a dozen prosecutors who worked on Smith investigations, and a group of senior FBI executives — including several executive assistant directors and agents in charge of big-city field offices — have been told to either resign or retire or be fired Monday.

‘Heartbreaking’ search for those killed in DC air crash as army helicopter’s black box recovered

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST, ZEKE MILLER, CLAUDIA LAUER and ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON Associated Press ARLINGTON, Va. (AP) — Police boats combed the banks of the Potomac River on Friday, slowly scanning

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the shoreline in the rain as investigators sought clues into the midair collision that killed 67 people and raised questions about air traffic safety around the nation's capital.

The black box from the Army Black Hawk helicopter that collided with a commercial jetliner and crashed into the Potomac River has been recovered, investigators announced. They are reviewing that flight data recorder along with two recovered earlier from the jet.

No one survived the Wednesday night collision. The remains of 41 people had been pulled from the river as of Friday afternoon, including 28 that had been positively identified, Washington, D.C., Fire Chief John Donnelly Sr. said at a news conference. He said next of kin notifications had been made to 18 families, and he expects all the remains to be recovered.

The wreckage of the plane's fuselage will probably have to be pulled from the water to get all the bodies, he said.

"This is heartbreaking work," Donnelly said, noting that more than 300 responders were taking part in the effort at any one time, including teams of divers and two U.S. Coast Guard cutters, at least one of which carries a crane. "It's been a tough response for a lot of our people."

It was unclear how long the recovery operation would take.

"We're working as fast as we can," Donnelly said. "We need your patience."

The American Airlines jet was carrying 60 passengers and four crew members. The helicopter had three soldiers on board.

Although Ronald Reagan National Airport reopened, two of its three runways remained closed to keep aircraft from flying over the crash scene, said Terry Liercke, the airport's vice president and manager. Roughly 100 flights were canceled Friday.

The Federal Aviation Administration also heavily restricted helicopter traffic around the airport, the Department of Transportation said in a statement, hours after President Donald Trump claimed in a social media post that the Army Black Hawk had been flying higher than allowed.

Investigators have recovered the cockpit voice recorder and flight data recorder of the American Airlines jetliner, which collided with the chopper as the plane was coming in for a landing at the airport, which is just across the Potomac from Washington.

The flight data recorder was in good condition and its information was expected to be downloaded shortly, National Transportation Safety Board member Todd Inman told reporters. He said water entered the cockpit voice recorder, and while that's not unusual, it adds to investigators' work.

The helicopter's data, contained in a single black box, was at NTSB headquarters and appears to be undamaged, Inman said.

Investigators are examining the actions of the military pilot as well as air traffic control, after the helicopter apparently flew into the jet's path. NTSB investigations normally take at least a year, though investigators hope to have a preliminary report within 30 days.

Military aircraft frequently conduct such flights in and around the capital to practice routes they would fly if key government officials had to be quickly moved during a major catastrophe or attack.

Other potential factors in the crash, including the helicopter's altitude and whether the crew was using night vision goggles, are still under investigation, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth told Fox News Channel.

On Friday the Army released the names of two of the soldiers who died: Staff Sgt. Ryan Austin O'Hara, 28, of Lilburn, Georgia, the crew chief; and Chief Warrant Officer 2 Andrew Loyd Eaves, 39, of Great Mills, Maryland. Eaves was one of the pilots on the helicopter.

But in an unusual move, the name of the third soldier is not being released for now at the family's request, the Army said.

The FAA on Friday barred helicopters from flying over a roughly 6-mile (10-kilometer) stretch of the Potomac and parts of its shoreline, including over the airport, according to the Department of Transportation statement. The new limits exempt helicopters on emergency medical flights, active law enforcement and air defense missions, and carrying the president. They are expected to remain in place at least until the NTSB finishes its preliminary report.

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Officials said flight conditions were clear as the jet arrived from Wichita, Kansas, carrying, among others, nine students and parents from Fairfax County, Virginia schools, a group of elite young figure skaters, their parents and coaches and a group of hunters.

Crash debris has drifted miles (kilometers) downriver.

Dean Naujoks, who routinely patrols the Potomac for the environmental group Waterkeeper Alliance, found floating debris Thursday in a pair of shallow coves along the Maryland shore.

The wreckage included pages from a flight manual, part of the plane's cabin wall, a woman's sweater and dozens of sugar packets with the American Airlines logo. Naujoks, who had law enforcement permission to take his motorboat about 2 miles (roughly 3 kilometers) from the crash site, turned the items over to the FBI.

"Everything is covered in jet fuel," Naujoks said Friday. "The sugar packets made me think of the flight attendants. I'm thinking of the people these things belonged to, and it's a punch to the gut. It's just a sad day on the river."

According to an FAA report obtained by the AP, one air traffic controller was responsible for coordinating helicopter traffic and arriving and departing planes when the collision happened. Those duties are often divided between two people, but the airport typically combines them at 9:30 p.m., once traffic begins to slow down. On Wednesday, though, the tower supervisor combined them earlier, which the report called "not normal."

However, a person familiar with the matter said tower staffing that night was actually normal. The positions are regularly combined when controllers need to step away for breaks, shift changes or when traffic slows, the person said, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal procedures.

Inman said investigators had interviewed at least one air traffic controller working at the time of the crash. He said interviews were ongoing, and it was unclear how many controllers were working at the time.

"Air traffic control interviews are critical," Inman said. "That's the reason why there's a process in place that began immediately after the accident."

Investigators will also examine staffing levels, training, hiring and other factors, in addition to looking at controllers' records.

The FAA has long struggled with a shortage of air traffic controllers.

Jonathan Koziol, chief of staff for Army aviation, said the helicopter crew was "very experienced" and familiar with the congested flying that occurs daily around the city.

The helicopter's maximum allowed altitude at the time was 200 feet (about 60 meters), Koziol said. It was not immediately clear whether it exceeded that limit, but Hegseth said altitude seemed to be a factor in the collision.

A day after he questioned the helicopter pilot's actions and blamed diversity initiatives for undermining air safety, Trump said Friday that the helicopter was "flying too high."

"It was far above the 200 foot limit. That's not really too complicated to understand, is it???" Trump said in a post on the Truth Social platform.

Wednesday's crash was the deadliest in the U.S. since Nov. 12, 2001, when a jet slammed into a residential area of Belle Harbor, New York, just after takeoff from Kennedy Airport, killing all 260 people aboard and five people on the ground.

Experts often highlight that plane travel is overwhelmingly safe, but the crowded airspace around Reagan National can challenge even the most experienced pilots.

AP photos capture a day of wrenching emotion as Israel and Hamas release hostages and prisoners

By The Associated Press undefined

It was a day of wrenching emotions: Relief, joy, anger and trauma all spilled out as Hamas released a new round of hostages and Israel freed more Palestinians from its prisons.

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In the latest in the series of exchanges under the Israel-Hamas ceasefire deal Thursday, three Israeli hostages, five Thai workers who had also been held captive by militants in Gaza and 110 Palestinians were freed.

Friends of Arbel Yehoud gripped each other's hands, tears in their eyes, as they gathered at a home in southern Israel to watch on TV as the 29-year-old emerged surrounded by masked Hamas fighters with their green headbands and automatic rifles.

After more than 470 days of captivity, Yehoud looked stunned, surrounded by a giant crowd of Palestinians in the ruins of the southern Gaza city of Khan Younis gathered to witness her handover. The fighters marched her through the crowd to vehicles of the Red Cross. The scenes were similar as militants freed Gadi Moses, an 80-year-old man, and female soldier Agam Berger, 20.

Since the ceasefire began, Hamas has turned each round of hostage releases into a combination of spectacle and ceremony with large crowds, flags and stages. For the militants, it's a chance to show off their survival as a fighting force to Israelis and Palestinians alike, as well as to highlight the devastation wreaked by Israel in Gaza during its 15-month campaign of retaliation over the Oct. 7, 2023 Hamas-led attacks in which the hostages were snatched.

But the images of hostages being led through the crowds have unnerved and angered Israelis. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu condemned the "shocking scenes" and called on international mediators to ensure the safety of hostages in future releases — a commitment he said he later received.

For more than 15 months, Israelis have been riveted by the ordeals of the hostages. Each release has brought an outpouring of relief, intertwined with frustration and sorrow over the dozens who remain captive.

For Palestinians, the releases of those imprisoned by Israel bring an end to years of separation. Palestinians view the prisoners released as heroes who have sacrificed for the cause of ending Israel's decades-long occupation of their land.

In the Israeli-occupied West Bank, a cheering crowd lifted Zakaria Zubeidi onto their shoulders after his release. Zubeidi thrilled Palestinians — and stunned the Israeli security establishment — with a dramatic jailbreak alongside other prisoners in 2021, though they were all soon recaptured.

Zubeidi once headed an armed militia and was imprisoned in the early 2000s for attacks on Israelis. After serving his time, he said he set aside militancy for political activism and opened a theater for "cultural resistance" in the Jenin refugee camp. Israel arrested him again in 2019 for alleged involvement in attacks on settlers, though in the six years since he was not tried.

Those released included 30 serving life sentences for deadly attacks against Israelis, all but seven of whom were immediately sent into exile.

What is known about the fatal crash of a plane and Army chopper

By DAVE COLLINS and HALLIE GOLDEN Associated Press

American Airlines Flight 5342 hit an Army helicopter near Washington D.C.'s Reagan National Wednesday night, sending the two aircraft into the Potomac River and killing all 67 aboard in the deadliest U.S. air crash in more than two decades.

The crash around 9 p.m. threw one of the world's most tightly controlled airspaces into chaos, 3 miles (5 kilometers) south of the White House and U.S. Capitol. Officials were probing the cause Friday as they searched the river.

By Friday afternoon, crews had recovered 41 bodies and 28 had been positively identified, D.C. Fire Chief John Donnelly Sr. said at a news conference. He said 18 families have been told loved ones died.

The crash

The regional jet out of Wichita, Kansas with 60 passengers and four crew was preparing to land. The UH-60 Black Hawk based at Fort Belvoir in Virginia was on a training exercise carrying three soldiers, according to the Federal Aviation Administration.

Skies were clear.

A few minutes before the Canadian-made Bombardier CRJ-700 series twin-engine jet was to land, air

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traffic controllers asked Flight 5342 if it could use a shorter runway. The pilots agreed. Controllers cleared the landing. Flight-tracking sites show the plane adjusted its approach to the new runway.

Less than 30 seconds before the collision an air traffic controller asked the helicopter if it had the plane in sight. The military pilot responded yes.

Moments later the controller made another call to the helicopter, apparently telling the copter to wait for the jet to pass.

There was no reply and the aircraft collided.

The plane's radio transponder stopped transmitting about 2,400 feet (732 meters) short of the runway, roughly over the middle of the Potomac, and the plane was found upside-down in three sections in waist-deep water. The helicopter's wreckage was also found in the river.

NTSB investigators have recovered the cockpit voice recorder and flight data recorder from the plane.

The investigation

Federal investigators will try to piece together any communication between the two aircraft and air traffic controllers, other pilot actions and the aircraft altitudes.

A key question early in the investigation is how high the helicopter was flying, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said Friday on Fox News. Its maximum altitude allowed was 200 feet (about 60 meters), said Jonathan Koziol, chief of staff for Army aviation.

It wasn't immediately clear if it went higher: Koziol said investigators need to analyze flight data before making conclusions about altitude.

Investigators have the plane's flight data recorder and cockpit voice recorder and the helicopter's black box and are working to download the information inside all three.

At least one air traffic controller who was working at the time of the crash has been interviewed by investigators, National Transportation Safety Board member Todd Inman said. Interviews were ongoing, he said. It was unclear how many controllers was working, he said.

Hegseth said the army also wants to know if the helicopter crew was using night vision goggles.

Air crash investigations normally take 12-18 months, and investigators told reporters Thursday they would not speculate on the cause.

But at a news conference Thursday, President Donald Trump cast blame on the helicopter pilots without evidence and baselessly alleged that diversity initiatives had undermined air safety. Trump doubled down in a Friday morning post on his Truth Social platform that said the helicopter was "flying too high" at the time of the crash.

"It was far above the 200 foot limit. That's not really too complicated to understand, is it???" Trump said.

White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt was asked Friday afternoon how Trump knew that that helicopter was flying too high. She said Trump was being briefed by investigators.

The victims

It was the deadliest U.S. air crash since 2001.

Among the passengers were members of the Skating Club of Boston who were returning from a development camp that followed the 2025 U.S. Figure Skating Championships in Wichita.

Victims included teenage figure skaters Jinna Han and Spencer Lane, the teens' mothers and two Russian-born coaches, Evgenia Shishkova and Vadim Naumov, who won a 1994 world championship in pairs skating.

The victims also included a group of hunters returning from a guided trip in Kansas, nine students and parents from Fairfax County, Virginia, schools and four steamfitters members of a steamfitters' local in suburban Maryland and two Chinese nationals.

The plane captain was Jonathan Campos, 34, according to multiple media reports.

Koziol said the helicopter crew was "very experienced" and familiar with the congested flying around Washington.

The Army on Friday identified two of the three soldiers on the helicopter — Staff Sgt. Ryan Austin O'Hara, 28, of Lilburn, Georgia, and Chief Warrant Officer 2 Andrew Loyd Eaves, 39, of Great Mills, Maryland. The third soldier's name was not being released at the family's request, the Army said. Only O'Hara's remains

had been found by Friday, officials said.

DC's crowded airspace

Located along the Potomac just southwest of Washington, Reagan National requires pilots to navigate hundreds of commercial planes, military aircraft, and restricted areas.

After the crash, authorities restricted some of the airspace near the airport. Later the Federal Aviation Administration indefinitely barred most helicopters from using routes that run under or parallel to flight paths, an official told the AP on Friday. The official spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the matter.

Two of Reagan National's runways were closed Friday afternoon because recovery efforts caused flight cancellations and delays, airport manager Terry Liercke said.

Federal authorities, aviation experts and pilots have long worried about an increase in close calls. In May, an American Airlines plane canceled its takeoff from Reagan to avoid a plane that was landing on an intersecting runway. It was the second close call in six weeks.

A little more than 24 hours before Wednesday's collision, a different regional jet descending to land at Reagan executed a go-around maneuver because of a military helicopter in the same area. Flight tracking sites and air-traffic control logs show the Embraer E-175 was cleared to land and advised about a helicopter in its vicinity when its automated collision avoidance system pushed it out of proper alignment for landing. It landed safely minutes later.

The Latest: Recovery and investigation underway in deadly aircraft collision over DC

By The Associated Press undefined

Investigators are seeking clues into this week's deadly midair collision this week, the deadliest aviation disaster in the U.S. almost a quarter century.

The collision between an American Airlines passenger jet and an Army helicopter at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport near Washington, D.C, late Wednesday killed 67 people, including more than a dozen figure skaters. More than 40 bodies have been recovered.

Air crash investigations can take months — or longer. Investigators have declined to publicly speculate on the cause of the collision.

Here's the latest:

At least one air traffic controller working during the crash has been interviewed, investigators say

At least one air traffic controller who was working at the time of the crash has been interviewed by investigators, National Transportation Safety Board member Todd Inman said.

He said interviews are ongoing and it was unclear how many controllers were working at the time.

"Air traffic control interviews are critical," he said. "That's the reason why there's a process in place that began immediately after the accident."

He said investigators would also examine staffing levels, training, hiring and other factors, in addition to looking at the records of all air traffic controllers involved.

Helicopter's black box appears undamaged, NTSB says

The plane had two recorders. One, a flight data recorder, was in good condition. It was opened Friday, and its information is expected to be downloaded shortly, National Transportation Safety Board member Todd Inman said.

Water had gotten inside the cockpit voice recorder, however. While that's not unusual, it adds to investigators' work to download the data.

The helicopter's data is all held in one black box. It is now at the NTSB headquarters. While investigators have not attempted to open it yet, it appears to be undamaged.

Helicopter and plane's flight data recorders are being reviewed, investigators say

The black box from the Black Hawk helicopter that collided with a commercial jetliner in Washington has been recovered, investigators say.

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Investigators are reviewing the flight data recorder along with two from the plane as they probe the cause of the devastating crash.

Victims' family members are getting assistance, NTSB member says

National Transportation Safety Board member Todd Inman said he spent the past several hours with the victims' families.

"They are one of our primary concerns, along with making sure we get factual information out," he said.

He said there are now over 100 family members in the area receiving briefings and assistance.

Helicopters restricted near airport, with some exceptions

The area over the Potomac River and near Reagan National is now off-limits to most helicopters to ensure safety in the aftermath of the crash, the FAA said.

Exceptions include aircraft for medical emergencies, active law enforcement and air defense. Marine One, the presidential helicopter, is also exempt.

The restrictions are expected to continue at least until the National Transportation Safety Board finishes its preliminary report, expected within 30 days.

Operations remain disrupted at Ronald Reagan National Airport

Two of the three main runways at the airport remain closed because of the crash and recovery effort.

Terry Liercke, vice president and manager at Reagan National Airport, said 100 flights were cancelled Friday.

The runways are closed to prevent planes from flying over the crash site while taking off or landing. Liercke said they will likely remain closed for about a week, but that will be reassessed as the recovery effort continues.

Army releases names of two soldiers who died in midair collision

The Army has released the names of two soldiers who died when their Black Hawk helicopter collided with an American Airlines jet earlier this week.

At the family's request, the name of the third crew member killed in the crash is not being released at this time, the Army said.

The remains of Staff Sgt. Ryan Austin O'Hara, 28, of Lilburn, Georgia, the crew chief, have been recovered and a positive identification is pending, the Army said.

The remains of Chief Warrant Officer 2 Andrew Loyd Eaves of Great Mills, Maryland, and of the third soldier have not yet been recovered.

The 39-year-old Eaves, one of the pilots on the helicopter, served in the U.S. Navy from August 2007 to September 2017, then moved to the Army, to serve as a Black Hawk pilot.

His awards include three Army commendation medals and three Navy achievement medals, as well as a Global War on Terrorism medal.

O'Hara had served as a helicopter repairer for Black Hawks since July 2014. He deployed to Afghanistan from March to August 2017. He also has two Army commendation medals, four achievement medals and a Global War on Terrorism medal.

Airport open but some restrictions remain

Two out of the three runways at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport are closed.

That is according to Terry Liercke, vice president and airport manager.

He encouraged passengers to reach out to airlines for flight delays. Some 100 flights were canceled Friday, two days after the deadly collision.

He said he expects the runways to be closed for a week, but that the situation was "fluid."

The runways remain closed because to prevent aircraft from taking off or landing over the crash site, Liercke said.

Remains of 41 bodies recovered; 28 positively ID'd so far

Fire Chief John Donnelly Sr. said crews have recovered 41 bodies and 28 of them have been positively identified.

He said next of kin notifications have been made to 18 families.

The collision between an American Airlines passenger jet and an Army helicopter at Ronald Reagan

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Washington National Airport near Washington, D.C, late Wednesday killed 67 people,

Cruise ship provides space for rescuers to take a break

The crew of a City Cruises harbor touring cruise ship were asked in the hours after the crash Wednesday night to help provide a floating space of respite for first responders and divers.

Its cruise ship provided a place to warm up, for first responders to have a warm meal or coffee, even using table linens as blankets for responders coming out of the water.

In a statement Friday, a spokesperson for Hornblower Group's City Cruises said the crew of its ship, the National Elite, was continuing to assist searchers, and the crew of a second ship had begun plans to do the same.

FAA indefinitely closes routes near DC-area airport to most helicopter traffic

The Federal Aviation Administration is significantly restricting helicopter traffic in the immediate vicinity of Washington Reagan National Airport.

That is according to an official briefed on the matter.

Wednesday's collision between an Army Black Hawk helicopter and a commercial jet killed 67 people. Some of the airspace has already been restricted due to ongoing search and recovery efforts over the crash site, but now agency responsible for air traffic control is indefinitely barring most helicopters from using the low-to-the-ground routes that run under or parallel to the airport's flightpaths.

The official spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the matter.

By Zeke Miller

Personal items found in the Potomac turned over to FBI

A riverkeeper who routinely patrols for the environmental group Potomac Riverkeeper Network got permission Thursday to take his motorboat to the Woodrow Wilson Memorial Bridge, about 2 miles (3.2 kilometers) down from the crash site.

Dean Naujoks said he found that floating debris from the passenger plane had been pushed by the wind and current into a pair of shallow coves along the Maryland shore.

Naujoks recovered a piece of the interior wall from the passenger cabin that had surrounded a window, pages from a flight manual, a woman's sweater and what appeared to be the cushion from a pilot's seat. He turned over the items to the FBI.

"Everything is covered in jet fuel," Naujoks said. "I'm thinking of the people these things belonged to and it's a punch to the gut. It's just a sad day on the river."

Official tells the AP that more than 40 bodies recovered

More than 40 bodies have been pulled from the Potomac River as a massive recovery effort continues following the deadliest aviation disaster in a generation, a law enforcement official told Associated Press.

The recovery efforts were continuing on Friday.

The official was not authorized to discuss details of the investigation and spoke on condition of anonymity.

By Mike Balsamo

Trump says Army Black Hawk was flying too high at time of midair crash

"It was far above the 200 foot limit. That's not really too complicated to understand, is it???" Trump added in a Friday morning post on his Truth Social platform.

The comments from the president come the day after he questioned the actions of a U.S. Army helicopter pilot involved in the midair collision with a commercial airliner, while also blaming diversity initiatives for undermining air safety.

The maximum altitude where the Black Hawk was at the time of the crash — along a published corridor called Route 4 — was 200 feet (61 meters) above ground, according to Jonathan Koziol, chief of staff for Army aviation.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said Thursday that elevation seemed to be a factor in the crash.

Pentagon chief Pete Hegseth stresses importance of U.S. military's 'continuity' training

The three-person Army crew on the UH-60 Blackhawk was conducting a continuity of government planning training mission at the time of the midair crash.

Military aircraft frequently conduct such training flights in and around the nation's capital for familiariza-

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tion with routes they would fly in case of a major catastrophe or an attack on the U.S. that would require relocation of key officials from the capital region.

"You need to train as you fight, you need to rehearse in ways that would reflect a real world scenario," Hegseth said during a Friday morning appearance on Fox and Friends.

Hegseth stressed that it remained the Pentagon's duty to also mitigate risks, while conducting such training. But he underscored U.S. forces need "to ensure, if unfortunately, there were a real world event where things needed to happen we could respond to it day or night."

Hegseth says helicopter black box still not recovered

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth says investigators have not yet recovered a key recording device from the Army helicopter involved in Wednesday's fatal collision at Ronald Reagan National Airport.

Speaking on Fox News Channel on Friday, Hegseth noted authorities were still looking for the helicopter's black box. Other factors in the crash, including the helicopter's altitude and whether the crew was using its night vision goggles, are still under investigation, Hegseth said.

Cockpit voice and flight data recorders have been recovered from the plane

"NTSB investigators recovered the cockpit voice recorder and flight data recorder from the Bombardier CRJ700 airplane involved in yesterday's midair collision at DCA," National Transportation Safety Board spokesperson Peter Knudson said. "The recorders are at the NTSB labs for evaluation."

2 Chinese nationals were among the victims

The Chinese embassy in the U.S. said two Chinese nationals were among the victims of the crash and would provide consular protection and assistance. It has asked the U.S. side to verify the information, officially inform the Chinese side and provide assistance to the families of the victims.

"The Chinese Embassy extends deepest condolences to all the victims and sympathies to the bereaved families," an embassy statement said. It did not offer further details on the victims.

Aviation experts have long worried DC's congested airspace could lead to catastrophe

Even in peak flying conditions, experts said, the airspace around Reagan Airport can challenge the most experienced pilots, who must navigate hundreds of other commercial planes, military aircraft and restricted areas around sensitive sites.

"This was a disaster waiting to happen," said Ross Aimer, a retired United Airlines captain and chief executive officer of Aero Consulting Experts. "Those of us who have been around a long time have been yelling into a vacuum that something like this would happen because our systems are stretched to extremes."

A different regional jet had to maneuver around a military helicopter at Reagan Airport just over 24 hours prior to collision

Just over 24 hours before Wednesday's fatal midair collision, a different regional jet executed a go-around maneuver when descending to land at Reagan Airport due to a military helicopter in the same area.

Flight tracking sites and air traffic control logs show the Embraer E-175 was cleared to land at the airport's Runway 19 and advised about a helicopter in its vicinity. It executed a go-around after its automated collision avoidance system ordered what is known as a 'resolution advisory' to avoid nearby traffic, which put the aircraft out of proper alignment for landing. It landed safely minutes later.

The military helicopter, callsign PAT1, was advised of the descending airplane. Flight tracking sites show the plane flew roughly 1,000 feet (300 meters) above the helicopter, a normally acceptable separation.

Airline pilots are trained to respond immediately to resolution advisories, which are designed to avoid a potential mishap, but occasionally sound alarms for traffic that does not pose an immediate threat to safety.

Other deadly commercial airline crashes in the US

Fatal crashes of commercial aircraft in the U.S. have become a rarity. The deadliest recent crash was in 2009 near Buffalo, New York. All 45 passengers and the four crew members were killed when the Bombardier DHC-8 propeller plane crashed into a house. One person on the ground also was killed.

The collision Wednesday of the Bombardier CRJ-701 twin-engine plane and UH-60 Blackhawk occurred over the Potomac River and the aircraft fell into the water. In 1982 an Air Florida flight crashed into the Potomac and killed 78.

Pilots union says its accident investigation team is working with the NTSB

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Jason Ambrosi, president of the Air Line Pilots Association said the union's accident investigation team was on the scene working with the National Transportation Safety Board, and its Critical Incident Response Program was working to support union members and the families involved in the collision.

"We mourn the loss of our friends, colleagues, and members of our ALPA and Association of Flight Attendants union family," he said.

Ambrosi reiterated in a statement what the NTSB has said — the investigation must have the time to do its work.

"A lot of details and speculation will come out in response to this tragedy, but we must remember to let the investigation run its course," he said.

Air traffic control staffing was normal, AP source says

One air traffic controller was responsible for coordinating helicopter traffic and arriving and departing planes when the collision happened, according to a report by the Federal Aviation Administration obtained by The Associated Press.

The configuration was "not normal," the report said, but a person familiar with the matter said the staffing at the air traffic control tower on Wednesday night was at a normal level. The positions are regularly combined when controllers need to step away from the console for breaks, are in the process of a shift change, or air traffic is slow, the person said, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal procedures.

Trump says he'll place tariffs on Canada, Mexico and China on Saturday

By ZEKE MILLER, AAMER MADHANI and JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump said Friday he would place 25% tariffs on imports from Canada and Mexico and 10% tariffs on goods from China effective Saturday, raising the specter of swift price increases for U.S. consumers even though he suggested he would try to blunt the impact on oil imports.

Trump had been threatening the tariffs to ensure greater cooperation from the countries on stopping illegal immigration and the smuggling of chemicals used for fentanyl, but he has also pledged to use tariffs to boost domestic manufacturing and raise revenues for the federal government.

"Starting tomorrow, those tariffs will be in place," White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt told reporters earlier Friday. "These are promises made and promises kept by the president." Speaking to reporters in the Oval Office later, Trump said there was nothing the three countries could do to prevent the tariffs from going into force Saturday.

The tariffs carry both political and economic risks for Trump, who is just two weeks into his second term. Many voters backed the Republican on the promise that he could tamp down inflation, but the possibility of tariffs could trigger higher prices and potentially disrupt the energy, auto, lumber and agricultural sectors.

Trump also drew fire for starting a trade fight with U.S. neighbors and allies Canada and Mexico as well as geopolitical rival China. "We should be focused on going hard against competitors who rig the game, like China, rather than attacking our allies," said Democratic Senate Leader Chuck Schumer of New York. "If these tariffs go into full effect, they will raise prices for everything from groceries, to cars, to gas, making it even harder for middle-class families to just get by."

Trump had said he was weighing issuing an exemption for Canadian and Mexican oil imports. He said Friday that he was considering a lower tariff rate on oil, but it was unclear if that lower rate would be in place when he signs the order Saturday.

"I'm probably going to reduce the tariff a little bit on that," Trump said of oil. "We think we're going to bring it down to 10%."

The United States imported almost 4.6 million barrels of oil daily from Canada in October and 563,000 barrels from Mexico, according to the Energy Information Administration. U.S. daily production during that month averaged nearly 13.5 million barrels a day.

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Trump has previously stated a 10% tariff on Chinese imports would be on top of other import taxes charged on products from the country.

The president also said more tariffs were coming, though he offered few specifics. "We're going to put tariffs on (computer) chips, we're going to put tariffs on oil and gas. That'll happen fairly soon, I think around the 17th of February," Trump said, also promising tariffs on copper and the European Union.

Shortly after Leavitt spoke, the S&P 500 stock index sold off and largely erased its gains on the day. "We should expect all three countries to retaliate," said Wendy Cutler, a former U.S. trade negotiator. China responded aggressively to tariffs Trump imposed on Chinese goods during his first term, targeting the president's supporters in rural America with retaliatory taxes on U.S. farm exports.

Kurt Tong, former U.S. consul general in Hong Kong and Macau and now managing partner at The Asia Group, said he was surprised by the new levies on China. Trump had shown "a real effort" to establish channels of communication with Chinese President Xi Jinping, Tong said, and imposing tariffs on Chinese products "at this very early stage" would make it difficult to get to the negotiating table. He expects "measurable and significant" retaliation from Beijing.

Both Canada and Mexico have said they've prepared the option of retaliatory tariffs to be used if necessary, which in turn could trigger a wider trade conflict that economic analyses say could hurt growth and further accelerate inflation.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said Friday that Canada is ready to respond if Trump goes ahead with the tariffs, but he did not give details.

"We're ready with a response, a purposeful, forceful but reasonable, immediate response," he said. "It's not what we want, but if he moves forward, we will also act."

Trudeau said tariffs would have "disastrous consequences" for the U.S., putting American jobs at risk and causing prices to rise. Trudeau reiterated that less than 1% of the fentanyl and illegal crossings into the U.S. come from Canada.

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum said Friday that Mexico has maintained a dialogue with Trump's team since before he returned to the White House, but she emphasized that Mexico has a "Plan A, Plan B, Plan C for what the United States government decides."

"Now it is very important that the Mexican people know that we are always going to defend the dignity of our people, we are always going to defend the respect of our sovereignty and a dialogue between equals, as we have always said, without subordination," Sheinbaum said.

Liu Pengyu, spokesman for the Chinese embassy in Washington, said the two countries should resolve their differences through dialogue and consultation. "There is no winner in a trade war or tariff war, which serves the interests of neither side nor the world," Liu said in a statement. "Despite the differences, our two countries share huge common interests and space for cooperation."

A study this month by Warwick McKibbin and Marcus Noland of the Peterson Institute for International Economics concluded that the 25% tariffs on Canada and Mexico and 10% tariffs on China "would damage all the economies involved, including the U.S."

"For Mexico," the study said, "a 25% tariff would be catastrophic. Moreover, the economic decline caused by the tariff could increase the incentives for Mexican immigrants to cross the border illegally into the U.S. — directly contradicting another Trump administration priority."

Cutler, now vice president at the Asia Society Policy Institute, said the extent of the economic damage will depend on how long the tariffs are in effect.

If it's just a few days, "that's one thing. If they are in place for weeks onto months, we're going to see supply chain disruptions, higher costs for U.S. manufacturers, leading to higher prices for U.S. consumers," she said. "It could have macroeconomic impacts. It could affect the stock market. Then internationally it could lead to more tension with our trading partners and make it harder for us to work with them."

The University of Michigan has suspended a pro-Palestinian group for 2 years

By COREY WILLIAMS Associated Press

A pro-Palestinian group at the University of Michigan has been suspended for two years and will lose its funding in connection with protesters' demands for divestiture from companies doing business with Israel.

Students Allied for Freedom and Equality, also known as SAFE, was accused of violating the university's standards of conduct for recognized student organizations following a protest last spring outside a regent's home and a demonstration without school permission on its Ann Arbor campus.

Tensions over the Israel-Hamas war led to emotional demonstrations on U.S. campuses, including a wave of pro-Palestinian tent encampments that led to about 3,200 arrests.

The war was sparked by an Oct. 7, 2023, attack on Israel in which Hamas-led militants killed about 1,200 people and took about 250 hostages.

On Wednesday, President Donald Trump signed an executive order calling for aggressive action to fight antisemitism on college campuses and promising to prosecute offenders and revoke visas for international students found to be "Hamas sympathizers."

The University of Michigan's sanctions against SAFE were handed down nearly two weeks earlier, on Jan. 16. The group also is prohibited from reserving university spaces. It has until next Thursday to appeal.

The suspension could be lifted earlier than two years if the group satisfies all the sanctions against it and meets with school officials to discuss the university's decision and the awareness of policies for student organizations. However, that could occur no sooner than winter 2026.

"Protests are welcome at U-M, so long as those protests do not infringe on the rights of others, significantly disrupt university events or operations, violate policies or threaten the safety of the community," the school said in a statement. "The university has been clear that we will enforce our policies related to protests and expressive activity, and that we will hold individuals and student organizations accountable for their actions in order to ensure a safe and inclusive environment for all."

The Associated Press left several email messages seeking comment with SAFE and with its national umbrella organization, Students for Justice in Palestine, on Friday.

Last May, protesters wearing masks pitched tents and placed fake bloody corpses outside the Okemos home of University of Michigan board member Sarah Hubbard.

Okemos is a community 60 miles (100 kilometers) northwest of the Ann Arbor campus. Hubbard said at the time that about 30 people were involved in the 6 a.m. demonstration.

"They approached my home and taped a letter to my front door and proceeded to erect the tents. A variety of other things were left in the front yard," Hubbard told The Associated Press. "They started chanting with their bullhorn and pounding on a drum in my otherwise quiet neighborhood."

The protesters left 30 to 45 minutes later when Meridian Township police arrived, Hubbard said. No arrests were made.

A few days later police wearing helmets and face shields broke up a pro-Palestinian encampment on the Ann Arbor campus. Charges later were filed against nine people who were accused of trespassing or resisting police during the break-up of the camp.

Protesters wanted the school's endowment to stop investing in companies with ties to Israel. The university has insisted that it has no direct investments.

Trump targets FAA diversity efforts in plane crash probe despite no evidence they played any role

By MELISSA GOLDIN, ALI SWENSON and ALEXANDRA OLSON Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — President Donald Trump wasted little time this week trying to assign blame for the nation's deadliest air disaster in more than two decades. Among his chief targets: An FAA diversity hiring initiative he suggested had undermined the agency's effectiveness.

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"But certainly for an air traffic controller, we want the brightest, the smartest, the sharpest. We want somebody that's psychologically superior," Trump said at a news conference Thursday.

No evidence has emerged that rules seeking to diversify the FAA played any role in the collision Wednesday between an American Airlines regional jet and an Army Black Hawk helicopter that killed 67 people.

Nevertheless, Trump's comments drew attention to the agency's attempts to address its most pressing and long-standing problem — a persistent shortage of air traffic controllers who are critical to keeping the nation's skies safe.

How has Trump tied diversity hiring to the collision?

Trump is using this week's disaster as another opportunity to push back against diversity programs, after signing executive orders that banned such initiatives across the federal government. That included one specifically for the secretary of transportation and the federal aviation administrator.

During the White House press briefing, Trump said the FAA diversity program allowed for hiring people with hearing and vision issues, as well as paralysis, epilepsy and "dwarfism."

"The FAA is actively recruiting workers who suffer severe intellectual disabilities, psychiatric problems and other mental and physical conditions under a diversity and inclusion hiring initiative spelled out on the agency's website," he said.

The FAA's own data shows people with such disabilities make up only a tiny fraction of air traffic controllers. And there is no indication that investigators into the crash are focused on diversity hiring or staffers with disabilities.

Later Thursday, Trump doubled down on his criticism by signing a presidential memorandum on aviation safety he said would undo "damage" done to federal agencies by the Biden administration's diversity and inclusion initiatives.

Are FAA diversity initiatives part of the investigation?

Asked Thursday about Trump's comments, National Transportation Safety Board Chair Jennifer Homendy said her team examines all factors in any investigation, "the human, the machine and the environment." She said that means looking at the people involved, the aircraft and the environment in which they were operating.

"That is standard," she said.

Trump's remarks drew strong rebukes from Democrats and civil rights leaders.

"There are still bodies being pulled from the Potomac River. Families are grieving the loss of loved ones. Yet Donald Trump is baselessly blaming DEI for last night's tragic collision," said Sen. Tammy Duckworth, a Democrat who lost both legs while flying Black Hawk helicopters in the Iraq War, referring to diversity, equity and inclusion policies.

"Absolutely shameful," Duckworth said on the X social media platform.

Democratic Sen. Ruben Gallego, a Marine veteran, was blunt in his response to Trump's remarks. "DEI did not cause this tragedy," he said on X.

Groups representing disabled workers issued a joint statement saying they were dismayed by the scapegoating, noting that anyone hired under the FAA's diversity initiative had to meet its stringent qualifications.

"The implication that people are being hired to do a job for which they are unqualified is an unfounded lie that further reinforces harmful stereotypes against disabled people," it said.

What's behind the FAA's recruitment strategy?

The FAA has long faced a shortage of air traffic controllers, which was compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic. Homendy told a Senate panel in 2023 that a surge in close calls between planes at U.S. airports that year was a "clear warning sign" the aviation system was stressed.

The FAA's diversity efforts aren't new and were not started under the Biden administration.

Before Trump removed them from the agency's website after taking office this month, they had been promoted since at least 2013, including during Trump's first term. Similar language seeking candidates with disabilities was on the site during both Biden's term and Trump's first term. Disabilities identified for special emphasis in hiring included conditions such as paralysis, epilepsy or missing extremities.

The FAA during Trump's first term launched a pilot program to prepare people with disabilities for jobs

in air traffic operations.

A 2019 announcement detailed a program to enroll up to 20 people with targeted disabilities in up to a year of training at air traffic control centers, with the potential to be appointed to a temporary position at the FAA's academy. It noted candidates were subject to the same rigorous standards for aptitude, medical and security qualifications as any other candidates. A federal report from 2023 describes the qualifications.

What do aviation experts say about the FAA's recruitment program?

The FAA says its Aviation Development Program for hiring diverse candidates into "mission critical occupations" required them to meet the same qualifications as any other applicant.

Former FAA administrator Michael Whitaker said last year that the FAA seeks qualified candidates from a range of sources who must "meet rigorous qualifications" that vary by position.

Paul Hanges, a professor of industrial and organizational psychology at the University of Maryland, helped compile a report for the FAA in 2013 documenting barriers for women and minorities. The agency followed up by hiring a consulting firm to find the root causes, which led to changes in the testing and hiring process — but Hanges said that did not lower hiring standards.

"It was the same kind of protocol, the same cognitive test, but a different version of it," he said. "One thing I know about the FAA is they take public safety very seriously. So I'd be surprised that they systematically did stuff that would have put the flying public in danger. I always got the impression that was job one."

He called Trump's assertion that this week's crash is related to diversity efforts "an illogical leap."

"It is something that is consistent with his message, but we don't have the data," he said.

How have the FAA's recruitment efforts worked?

The agency's recruitment programs have resulted in a modest deepening of its workforce diversity over the years. Progress has been especially slow in roles it considers "mission critical," including air traffic controllers.

The FAA's overall workforce of more than 44,000 employees remains predominately male, according to a 2023 FAA report on the status of its Equal Employment Opportunity program.

Among its nearly 18,000 air traffic controllers, more than 80% were men. White men constituted the biggest percentage of air traffic controllers at 64%, the report said.

The FAA's overall workforce also remained predominately white, with racial minorities making up 30% of its employees.

About 2% of the FAA's overall workforce are people with more severe disabilities. Among air traffic controllers, less than 1% are people with such disabilities.

The claims that diversity efforts factored into this week's crash come after Trump surrogates blamed other recent crises, including the wildfires that devastated Los Angeles, on diversity, equity and inclusion policies, although there has been no evidence to support that.

It's a focus that has generated anger among those who feel Trump and his allies are quick to use horrific disasters to further their political agenda.

Democratic Sen. Dick Durbin specifically called out Trump for quickly pointing the finger this week at the FAA's diversity programs: "The American people deserve real answers, not narcissistic speculations."

US colleges returning to campus sexual assault rules created during Trump's first term

By COLLIN BINKLEY AP Education Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Schools and universities responding to complaints of sexual misconduct must return to policies created during President Donald Trump's first term, with requirements for live hearings and more protections for accused students, according to new guidance issued Friday by the Education Department.

In a memo to education institutions across the nation, the agency clarified that Title IX, a 1972 law barring discrimination based on sex, will be enforced according to a set of rules created by former Education Secretary Betsy DeVos. The rules govern how complaints of misconduct are investigated and how to settle

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cases where students present differing accounts.

Colleges already have been returning to DeVos' 2020 rules in recent weeks since a federal judge in Kentucky overturned the Biden administration's Title IX rules. The court's decision effectively ordered a return to the earlier Trump administration rules.

A statement from the Education Department called Biden's rules an "egregious slight to women and girls." "Under the Trump Administration, the Education Department will champion equal opportunity for all Americans, including women and girls, by protecting their right to safe and separate facilities and activities in schools, colleges and universities," said Acting Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights Craig Trainor.

The Biden administration sought to overhaul the rules and expand Title IX to protect LGBTQ+ students. It expanded the type of behavior that's considered sexual harassment — a reversal of the DeVos policy, which used a narrower definition.

But a federal judge in Kentucky overturned Biden's rule on Jan. 9, saying it was a presidential overstep and violated constitutional free speech rights by telling schools to honor students' preferred pronouns. The judge, U.S. District Judge Danny C. Reeves, said there was nothing in Title IX suggesting it should cover anything more than it did when Congress created it.

Even before the decision, Biden's rule had been halted in half the states amid legal challenges from Republicans.

The full text of the Title IX law is just 37 words long, but the federal government has added rules over the years explaining how it's interpreted. DeVos' policy adds 500 pages detailing how schools must address complaints and how the Education Department makes sure schools comply.

Already, the Trump administration has taken a hard turn on its enforcement of Title IX: On Tuesday the Education Department said it opened an investigation into Denver schools after the district converted a girl's restroom into an all-gender restroom while leaving another bathroom exclusive to boys.

The new memo says even investigations that started when Biden's rules were in effect "should be immediately reoriented to comport fully with the requirements of the 2020 Title IX Rule."

The change was celebrated by advocates who said Biden's rules did too little to protect accused students. The Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression said the 2020 rules will ensure fairness, highlighting a requirement that both parties be able to have a lawyer at campus hearings and to review all evidence.

"The return to the 2020 rules ensures that all students — whether they are the accused or the accuser — will receive fair treatment and important procedural safeguards," said Tyler Coward, lead counsel for government affairs at FIRE.

Victims' rights groups called it a step backward that will deter students from reporting assaults.

"Schools must step up to protect students in the absence of adequate federal guidance," said Emma Grasso Levine, senior manager of Title IX policy and programs at Know Your IX, a student-led group.

Among the most controversial elements of DeVos' policy is a requirement to hold live hearings where accused students can cross-examine their accusers through an adviser. The Biden rule had eliminated the requirement and made live hearings optional, though some courts had previously upheld an accused student's right to cross examination.

More broadly, the 2020 policy narrows the definition of sexual harassment and the scope of cases that schools must address. It also reduces the liability for colleges, holding them responsible only if they acted with "deliberate indifference."

Trump's new pick for education secretary is Linda McMahon, a longtime Trump ally known for building the World Wrestling Entertainment professional wrestling empire with her husband, Vince McMahon. Her Senate confirmation hearing has yet to be scheduled.

Grim memories resurface after DNA advances lead to arrest of suspect in Hawaii teen's 1977 murder

By JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER and HANNAH SCHOENBAUM Associated Press
HONOLULU (AP) — Former Hawaii lawmaker Suzanne Chun Oakland remembers arriving at school one morning in 1977 to an eerie buzz.

She had met up with girlfriends as usual before class at Honolulu's McKinley High School when she learned a student named Dawn Momohara had been found dead on the second floor of a school building.

"I don't know how we got word of it, but everything spread really quickly," Chun Oakland said.

Chun Oakland didn't know Momohara, who was 16, but the unsolved death has haunted her and other McKinley students and staff for nearly half a century. That was until last week, when police used advances in DNA technology to arrest a 66-year-old resident of a Utah nursing home.

The suspect, former McKinley student Gideon Castro, appeared in court via video on Friday from a hospital bed in the medical wing of a Utah jail. Castro told the judge he wanted to hire his own attorney and was ordered to return virtually to Salt Lake County District Court for an initial appearance on Wednesday.

He remained in custody Friday with the bond for his release set at \$250,000, according to Salt Lake County Sheriff's Office records. Castro faces eventual extradition to Honolulu.

His current court-appointed attorney, Marlene Mohn, did not respond to email and phone messages seeking comment.

"I was just really sad," Chun Oakland recalled earlier this week. "I think for our student body, of course, there's that concern that what if he's still out there and he does it to somebody else."

On March 21, 1977, shortly after 7:30 a.m., Honolulu police found Momohara lying on her back, partially clothed, an orange cloth wrapped tightly around her neck.

She had been sexually assaulted and strangled, police said.

Details from more than four decades ago are fuzzy for 1967 McKinley graduate Grant Okamura, who was the school's 28-year-old band teacher in 1977, but the morning Momohara was found remains a core memory.

Momohara's sister — one of Okamura's flute players — arrived at school that day not knowing her sister had been found dead, he recalled. The sister was called to the office and later walked into the band room, devastated.

"The other students were trying to console her," Okamura said. "At that point, I couldn't have band. How do you have a class? She just sat there crying."

She didn't return to school for weeks afterward.

He doesn't remember the sister's name. The Associated Press was unable to make contact with any possible relatives. Okamura said he met Momohara a few times when he let her into the air-conditioned band room to wait for her sister.

The morning before Momohara was killed, she got a call from an unknown male and told her mother she was going to a nearby shopping center with friends. That was the last time her mother saw her, homicide Lt. Deena Thoemmes said.

Police released sketches of a person of interest and a possible vehicle described by witnesses as a 1974 or 1975 Pontiac LeMans. A witness reported seeing the car when he and his girlfriend drove through campus the night before Momohara died. The witness saw a man and the car on the grass near the school's English building, Thoemmes said.

The witness circled back around but the car and the man were gone.

Police were unable to identify a suspect and the case grew cold, though grief lingered over the campus.

In 2019, cold case detectives asked a forensic biology unit to examine several items of evidence from the scene, including Momohara's underwear. They were able to develop a DNA profile in 2020. Then, in 2023, police received information about potential suspects — two brothers who had been interviewed in 1977.

Several days after Momohara was killed, detectives interviewed Castro, who graduated from McKinley High in 1976. He said he met Momohara at a school dance that year and last saw her at a carnival on

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campus in February 1977. Police interviewed his brother, who also met Momohara at the dance.

In November 2023, Honolulu police went to Chicago, where the brother was living. They “surreptitiously” obtained DNA from one of the brother’s adult children, Thoemmes said.

Lab findings excluded the brother as a suspect, but a DNA sample from Castro’s adult son, and later from Castro himself, proved he was responsible, Thoemmes said.

He was arrested last week at the nursing home where he lived in Millcreek, just south of Salt Lake City, on suspicion of second-degree murder.

Neither Okamura nor Chun Oakland remembered Castro.

Chun Oakland graduated in 1979 and grew up to become a Democratic member of the Hawaii Senate. She said Momohara’s killing bothered her over the years, especially when she would meet victims through her work as a lawmaker or as a board member of the nonprofit Sex Abuse Treatment Center, a statewide program providing services for sexual assault survivors.

The former lawmaker said she is grateful an arrest was possible even after all these years.

“I think the community in general, and our elected officials, they know the importance of trying to preserve the evidence that can someday be able to see justice for that individual or individuals,” she said.

Taylor Swift will present at the Grammys. Here’s more to know about Sunday’s show

By MARIA SHERMAN AP Music Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The 2025 Grammy Awards are right around the corner, which means it is time to get those viewing party plans in action. Allow us to help.

The 67th annual Grammy Awards will still take place Sunday at the Crypto.com Arena in Los Angeles — though the Recording Academy has refocused its aim to support relief efforts following the devastating Los Angeles-area wildfires.

Here’s what you need to know about watching the 2025 Grammys, including how to stream and where you can see music’s biggest stars walking the red carpet.

When does the Grammys start and how can I watch?

The main show will air live on CBS and Paramount+ beginning at 8 p.m. Eastern. Paramount+ with Showtime subscribers can also watch live and on demand.

Who is performing at the Grammys?

Benson Boone, Billie Eilish, Chappell Roan, Charli xcx, Doechii, RAYE, Sabrina Carpenter, Shakira and Teddy Swims will perform at the Grammys.

Will Smith, Stevie Wonder and Janelle Monáe will pay tribute to the late, legendary producer Quincy Jones.

Brad Paisley, Brittany Howard, Coldplay’s Chris Martin, Cynthia Erivo, Herbie Hancock, Jacob Collier, John Legend, Lainey Wilson, Sheryl Crow and St. Vincent will also appear.

Taylor Swift, who last month wrapped her massive Eras tour, is not performing, but was added Thursday as a presenter.

Other presenters will include Cardi B, Gloria Estefan, Olivia Rodrigo, Queen Latifah, SZA, Victoria Monét, and the Red Hot Chili Peppers’ Anthony Kiedis and Chad Smith.

Who is hosting the Grammys?

Comedian Trevor Noah will host the show for the fifth consecutive time.

The only other people to host five or more Grammy telecasts were musical artists: Andy Williams hosted seven shows, followed by John Denver with six and LL Cool J with five.

How do I stream the Grammys?

The Grammys can also be watched through live TV streaming services that include CBS in their lineup, like Hulu + Live TV, YouTube TV and FuboTV.

Paramount+ subscribers will be able to stream the Grammy Awards the day after the ceremony.

The premiere ceremony, hosted by songwriter Justin Tranter, will take place at 3:30 p.m. Eastern, 12:30

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p.m. Pacific at the Peacock Theater in Los Angeles on Sunday. It can be streamed at the Recording Academy's YouTube channel and on live.GRAMMY.com.

How can I watch the red carpet?

The Associated Press will stream a three-hour red carpet show with interviews and fashion footage. It will be streamed on YouTube and APNews.com.

Who is nominated for the Grammys?

Beyoncé leads the Grammy nods with 11, bringing her career total to 99 nominations. That makes her the most nominated artist in Grammy history.

As of 2023, she's also the most decorated artist, having earned 32 trophies across her career.

Post Malone, Billie Eilish, Kendrick Lamar and Charli XCX follow with seven nominations.

Taylor Swift and first-time nominees Sabrina Carpenter and Chappell Roan boast six nominations each.

How will the Los Angeles-area wildfires affect the Grammys?

The 2025 Grammy Awards will go on as planned but will focus its attention on wildfire relief efforts.

Each year, the Recording Academy hosts a multitude of events to welcome the music industry during Grammy week; record labels do the same. However, many institutions have canceled their plans — Universal Music Group, BMG and Warner Music Group among them — and instead are allocating resources to Los Angeles-area wildfire relief and rebuilding efforts.

The Recording Academy condensed pre-Grammy week plans to just four events, each featuring a fundraising element. 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 were canceled. In all, at least 16 pre-Grammy events sponsored by the Recording Academy have been canceled.

"This is our home, it's home to thousands of music professionals, and many of us have been negatively impacted," Recording Academy CEO Harvey Mason jr. said in a statement.

The Recording Academy and MusiCares also launched the Los Angeles Fire Relief Effort with a \$1 million donation. Currently, they've raised and pledged more than \$4 million in emergency aid to those in the music industry affected by the wildfires.

How is the broader music industry responding to the fires?

Spotify has canceled all of its Grammy week events, including its annual Best New Artist showcase. "We've decided that the most impactful approach is canceling all our Grammy Week events, including our annual Best New Artist party, and redirecting funds to support efforts to reach local fans and charitable organizations," Spotify's Global Head of Music Partnerships & Audience Joe Hadley wrote in an announcement.

Universal Music Group, one of the big three major record labels, has canceled all of its Grammy-related events. Those include its annual artist showcase, held on Saturday, and its after-party on the Sunday of Grammys week. Instead, it will redirect those funds to wildfire relief.

BMG will no longer host its pre-Grammy party and a representative for Warner Music Group confirmed to The Associated Press that the major label will not host a party this year and are instead "redirecting funds to support efforts." Earlier this week, WMG and the Blavatnik Family Foundation Social Justice Fund pledged \$1 million to Los Angeles area fire relief and rebuilding efforts.

Sony Music Group confirmed it has canceled its events during Grammy week and after the ceremony and will instead redirect efforts and money to local relief efforts.

MusiCares, an organization that helps music professionals who need financial, personal or medical assistance, holds its annual Persons of the Year benefit gala at the Los Angeles Convention Center a few days before the Grammys. The 2025 gala will still take place on Friday, this year honoring the Grateful Dead with an additional commitment to wildfire relief.

RFK Jr. says he'll stop collecting fees from HPV vaccine lawsuit, but other ethics questions remain

By AMANDA SEITZ Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Facing intense scrutiny from senators over his potential profit from vaccine lawsuits while serving as the nation's health secretary, Robert F. Kennedy Jr. said that if he is confirmed he will not collect fees from litigation against the drugmakers of a cervical cancer vaccine.

Kennedy, who's President Donald Trump's pick to lead the U.S. Health and Human Services agency, told the Senate finance committee that he would amend his ethics disclosure after several senators, including Democrat Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, and his cousin Caroline Kennedy raised concerns about his financial arrangement with the law firm representing patients who are claiming injuries from the vaccines.

"An amendment to my Ethics Agreement is in process, and it provides that I will divest my interest in this litigation," Kennedy said in a written response to the committee.

Initially, Kennedy had told the committee that he would continue to accept referral fees in legal cases that don't involve the U.S. government. That included an arrangement with a law firm that's sued Merck over Gardasil, its human papillomavirus vaccine that prevents cervical cancer. The deal earned Kennedy \$850,000 last year, and he told senators he had referred hundreds of clients to the firm.

During Wednesday's hearing, Warren outlined several ways in which Kennedy could make it easier to sue vaccine manufacturers.

"Kennedy can kill off access to vaccines and make millions of dollars while he does it," Warren said. "Kids might die, but Robert Kennedy can keep cashing in."

The issue also may have been a concern for Sen. Bill Cassidy, a Louisiana Republican who is also a physician and is conflicted over his vote on Kennedy's confirmation because of Kennedy's anti-vaccine views.

The Republican president's nominee is "financially vested in finding fault with vaccines," Cassidy, the chairman of the health committee, noted as he ended Thursday's confirmation hearing.

Kennedy also stopped short of making other commitments, refusing to promise that he would not engage in lobbying Health and Human Services after his term ends.

Kennedy and his supporters have railed against that sort of activity, saying the "revolving door" of Washington — where federal officials trade public services jobs to influence government agencies while in the private sector — has undermined the U.S. public health system. He has criticized the practice at least a half-dozen times in social media posts over recent years.

Kennedy, who ran for president last year before dropping his bid and endorsing Trump, vowed in one post on X to "rein in lobbyists and slam shut the revolving door," if elected president.

He first challenged President Joe Biden for the 2024 Democratic presidential nomination but then ran as an independent before striking a deal to endorse Trump in exchange for a promise to serve in a health policy role during a second Trump administration. Now, after two days of hearings, his shot at that job is on the line with concerns about his anti-vaccine advocacy prompting nearly all Democrats to reject his nomination and a handful of Republicans who are at least considering doing the same.

If Democrats unanimously oppose Kennedy, he'll need support from all but three Republicans. The Senate finance committee is expected to decide if he makes it to the Senate floor for a vote next week.

Kennedy's response to the Senate committee was first reported by The New York Times.

How the All-Star Game works: A breakdown of the NBA's new format

By TIM REYNOLDS AP Basketball Writer

The NBA All-Stars have been selected. Next up: Assigning them to teams.

The 10 players designated as starters were announced on Jan. 23, the remaining 14 players designated as reserves were revealed Thursday — and now, those 24 players will be drafted onto eight-player teams for the games that will be played on Feb. 16 in San Francisco.

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TNT analysts and basketball greats Shaquille O'Neal, Charles Barkley and Kenny Smith will draft the teams on Feb. 6. The eight-player teams will bear their names — Team Shaq, Team Charles and Team Kenny.

They'll pick from this pool of players:

- LeBron James and Anthony Davis of the Los Angeles Lakers
- Donovan Mitchell, Evan Mobley and Darius Garland of the Cleveland Cavaliers
- Jayson Tatum and Jaylen Brown of the Boston Celtics
- Giannis Antetokounmpo and Damian Lillard of the Milwaukee Bucks
- Shai Gilgeous-Alexander and Jalen Williams of the Oklahoma City Thunder
- Jalen Brunson and Karl-Anthony Towns of the Minnesota Timberwolves
- Cade Cunningham of the Detroit Pistons
- Anthony Edwards of the Minnesota Timberwolves
- James Harden of the Los Angeles Clippers
- Kevin Durant of the Phoenix Suns
- Nikola Jokic of the Denver Nuggets
- Stephen Curry of the Golden State Warriors
- Pascal Siakam of the Indiana Pacers
- Tyler Herro of the Miami Heat
- Alperen Sengun of the Houston Rockets
- Jaren Jackson Jr. of the Memphis Grizzlies
- Victor Wembanyama of the San Antonio Spurs

How the tournament works

The games will be fast. Games are to 40 points; first one to reach that total wins. The two semifinal winners will meet in the All-Star final, that game also goes only to 40 points.

Voting format

There was a weighted formula to pick the 10 players designated as "starters." It was 50% fan vote, 25% media panel vote, 25% current player vote. NBA head coaches picked the 14 players designated as "reserves."

But the starter and reserve columns won't mean much on game night, since there will be 15 different players starting — five from each of the three teams — and only nine players coming off the bench in those semifinal games.

How the tournament works

The Rising Stars event winner — that tournament will be held Feb. 14, another four-team event made up of first- and second-year players — will be the fourth team in the All-Star games on Feb. 16. That team will be called Team Candace, for Candace Parker.

Why the change

NBA Commissioner Adam Silver has wanted a more competitive All-Star event for some time, and this change comes after the teams combined to score a record 397 points — 211-186 was the final — in last season's game at Indianapolis.

The teams combined to take 289 shot attempts in last year's game, 94% of those being either inside the paint or beyond the 3-point line.

Coaching staffs

Kenny Atkinson of the Cleveland Cavaliers will coach one All-Star team, Mark Daigneault of the Oklahoma City Thunder will coach another, and two of their assistants — one from each team — will have the other teams under their direction.

Cleveland and Oklahoma City are sending their staffs to the game because those are the teams with the best records in the Eastern and Western Conferences.

Prize money

There is a prize pool of \$1.8 million for the All-Star Game.

Each player on the All-Star champion team gets \$125,000, each player on the runner-up team will get

\$50,000 and the players on the teams eliminated in the semifinals will each get \$25,000.

About half of Americans approve of using weight-loss drugs to treat obesity, AP-NORC poll finds

By KENYA HUNTER and LINLEY SANDERS AP Health Writer

More U.S. adults believe it is a good thing than a bad thing for adults to use weight-loss drugs like Ozempic, Wegovy and other brands if they are struggling with obesity or have a health condition tied to weight, but they are not broadly supportive of teens who have obesity using the medications, according to a new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

When it comes to ages 12 to 18 who are dealing with obesity, Americans are divided: About one-third say the use of weight-loss drugs in this context is a "very" or "somewhat" good thing, a similar share say it's a bad thing and about 3 in 10 say it isn't good or bad.

For adults, about half think it's a good thing, and about 2 in 10 think it's a bad thing.

The popular weight-loss drugs known as GLP-1 receptor agonists, which were originally meant to treat diabetes, surged in popularity after the Food and Drug Administration approved them for weight loss in 2021. Now, they're all over the place — celebrities, TV advertisements, social media, news media, your neighbor.

Doctors and researchers say the injectable drugs are an effective tool when it comes to treating obesity. The American Medical Association has urged health insurance companies to cover the drugs, and the American Academy of Pediatrics has said that doctors should consider giving the medications to kids 12 and older who are struggling with obesity.

The AP-NORC poll results indicate that even as doctors urge the drugs' use, some Americans continue to have concerns about weight-loss drugs, particularly for teens and people who aren't struggling with obesity.

Using obesity drugs

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 100 million adults in the U.S. are obese — defined as having a body mass index of 30 or higher — and more than 22 million adults are severely obese, with a BMI of 40 or higher.

Obesity is classified as a chronic disease that needs medical attention, because it can result from genetics, environmental factors and socioeconomic factors. Patients who use the drugs as an extra boost to lose weight can face criticism that they're somehow "cheating," said Dr. Cate Varney, who treats patients with obesity at UVA Health in Charlottesville, Virginia.

"It's like telling somebody to nail a nail into a board and then giving one person a hammer and another person, you know, like a chopstick," Varney said, adding, "we're leveling the playing field with these medications."

Anjanette Ewen lost 67 pounds on Mounjaro, and credits that weight loss as the reason she found a cancerous lump on her breast. The 50-year-old from Fort Walton Beach, Florida, who responded to the AP-NORC poll, said she had struggled to lose weight for years because of complications with polycystic ovarian syndrome.

Because of PCOS, which has a common symptom of sudden weight fluctuations, Ewen went from 150 pounds to 220 pounds in eight months.

"I've been on a weight loss journey for forever, it seems like, and nothing was working," she said.

About 20% of children in the U.S. have obesity, according to CDC data. Dr. Gitanjali Srivastava, the medical director of obesity medicine at Vanderbilt University School of Medicine, said obesity is easier to treat in children than in adults.

"The youth actually respond beautifully to these medications," she said, adding that obesity at a young age increases the chance "of having even severe and more profound obesity as an adult ... to the point that you will actually have to have medications and or bariatric surgery as an adult."

Insurance coverage is an issue

Without insurance, out-of-pocket costs for the drugs can run hundreds of dollars each time you fill a prescription.

The AP-NORC poll shows about half of Americans “strongly” or “somewhat” favor having the federal programs Medicare and Medicaid cover weight-loss drugs for people who have obesity, while about 2 in 10 are opposed the idea and about one-quarter have a neutral view.

So far, Medicare, the health insurance program for 66 million Americans 65 and older, doesn’t cover the drugs for obesity. Coverage varies under Medicaid, which provides health insurance for low-income Americans.

Some large companies with 500 employees or more and some Medicaid programs are adding coverage. But many other employers and health insurers are scaling back, with some citing treatment costs.

Using GLP-1s if you’re not obese

You can’t get weight-loss drugs without a prescription, though there are off-market compounds that people can purchase.

The AP-NORC poll showed that about 6 in 10 Americans believe it is a “very” or “somewhat” bad thing for adults to take GLP-1s for weight loss if they’re not obese, and that increases to about 7 in 10 for teens in the same situation.

Younger adults, though, are a little more open to the use of GLP-1s for teens who aren’t dealing with obesity. About 8 in 10 Americans above the age of 45 believe it’s a “bad idea” for teenagers who want to lose weight by using the drugs but aren’t obese, but about two-thirds of American adults under the age of 45 hold the same opinion.

Take it from locals: Super experience in New Orleans entails more than just the French Quarter

By BRETT MARTEL AP Sports Writer

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Desiring a more local taste of Big Easy life during Super Bowl week?

There’s plenty to explore both in and outside the city center.

Streetcar lines roll to Uptown, Mid-City or City Park. A ferry crosses the Mississippi River to Algiers Point. By car, it’s easy to reach Esplanade Ridge; the shops and eateries on Magazine Street or Metairie Road; and seafood spots in Bucktown, along the shore of Lake Pontchartrain.

The Lakeview neighborhood is where you’ll find chef Susan Spicer.

She has taken her Louisiana-inspired cuisine to Super Bowl host cities across the country during the past three decades while participating in the Taste of the NFL charity event. She is involved again this year in her hometown, but those who wish to dine in the spot where Spicer does most of her cooking should visit Rosedale Restaurant.

Spicer, whose culinary career has included decades in fine-dining kitchens in the French Quarter and downtown, would by no means advise visitors to eschew the renowned attractions in those historically significant areas.

“There’s so much concentrated in the French Quarter, the CBD (central business district) and the Warehouse District, that you can just really get absorbed by everything that’s going on there,” Spicer said.

“But if you just venture out a little bit,” she added, “there’s a lot to discover.”

Political pundit James Carville, a Louisiana native and New Orleans resident, says first-time visitors with just a few days in town shouldn’t “feel like if you’re going to the French Quarter, you’re not being a local.” He says the Friday lunch scene at Galatoire’s is “legendary.”

But if you do decide to explore, here are some options:

Popular Neighborhood Spots

— Rosedale: This spot exemplifies the neighborhood restaurant scene in New Orleans, where standards for food are high and must be met for an establishment that can’t depend on tourists to make it. The ambiance is casual, the menu includes sandwiches (duck pastrami) and po’boys (cochon de lait), but a lot of work, attention to detail and creativity go into the ingredients and preparation.

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— Clancy's. It is located not far from Audubon Park. New Orleans' power brokers are spotted there regularly, as are celebrity residents such as John Goodman, Harry Shearer and members of the Manning family.

Waiters wear tuxedos at this white-table-cloth spot, but the vibe is casual, lively and suitably loud, with diners regularly making the rounds to say hello to friends and acquaintances at other tables or at the compact (and busy) bar area.

— Commander's Palace. It is housed in a historic property across from Lafayette Cemetery in the Garden District and is arguably the city's most famous restaurant. Its list of former chefs that rose to culinary stardom includes Emeril Lagasse.

Other popular neighborhood dinner destinations include:

Gautreau's, La Petite Grocery, Brigtsen's, Mr. John's and Jacque-Imo's in Uptown; Cafe Degas, Mandina's and Liuzza's in Mid-City; Tana in Old Metairie; Station 6 in Bucktown; Rizutto's in Lakeview; and N7 on edge of the Bywater Historic District.

Finding that Big Easy staple: Po'boys

— Domilise's, Tracey's and Mahony's. These are well-regarded Uptown spots.

— In Mid-City, there's Parkway Bakery and Liuzza's by the Track — the latter known for its barbecue shrimp po'boy and sinus-clearing roast beef with horseradish.

— In the Bucktown/Lakeview area, a popular spot is R&O's, across the street from the Lake Pontchartrain levee.

The roast beef in a po'boy usually is slow-cooked, often is called "debris," for how it falls apart in the pot, and is served with gravy. Central Poboy in suburban Jefferson has developed a strong reputation for this.

Meanwhile, some no-frills takeout seafood spots around town produce highly regarded shrimp, oyster and catfish po'boys, as well as soft-shell crab when in season. Spicer likes to get her oyster po'boys at Zimmer's Seafood, in the Gentilly neighborhood.

When it's time for dessert

— Angelo Brocato. Some of the best gelato and Italian pastries in the South can be found in this beloved Mid-City landmark, which was just celebrating a 100-year anniversary renovation when it was flooded by Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Its 2006 reopening was widely celebrated. It's on the Carrollton branch of the red Canal streetcar line and gets busy when school lets out.

— Creole Creamery — a popular ice cream parlor on Prytania Street in Uptown

— Sucre, also Uptown on Magazine Street, offers French style pastries and gelato.

The locals love beignets, too.

— Cafe Du Monde. While its best known location is in Jackson Square, another is next to the New Orleans Museum of Art and sculpture garden in City Park.

— Morning Call. It's the oldest Cafe du Monde rival in the beignet business. There's one at the end of the cemetery branch of the Canal streetcar line.

When it's cocktail hour

Locals take their cocktails seriously and a number of recipes — such as the Sazerac or Ramos Gin Fizz — originated in New Orleans. When the weather is pleasant, boutique hotel bars on St. Charles are among the places to be.

— The Columns Hotel. This converted historic mansion has inviting outdoor seating beneath a sprawling canopy of massive live oaks and offers views off passing streetcars. A similar option is The Chloe, just four blocks down the avenue.

— Hot Tin. This bar is on the roof of the Pontchartrain Hotel — a few doors down from Mr. John's and just blocks away from Commander's Palace — and offers a panoramic view of New Orleans' skyline from the Superdome to the Crescent City Connection bridge.

— The Paradise Lounge. Located in the Hotel St. Vincent on Magazine Street, its dark wood and marble-top bar and tropical-themed wall paper make for an inviting place to meet friends for a drink in the Lower Garden District.

— Cure. Housed in a handsomely renovated building along the popular Freret Street corridor, Cure is committed to craft cocktails.

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— Jewel of the South. This relatively new spot is drawing critical acclaim for its cocktail scene. It is a small, inventive restaurant on the edge of the French Quarter.

If you're looking for live music

— Frenchman Street, which begins where the French Quarter ends at Esplanade Avenue, has several bars or clubs showcasing live traditional and modern jazz, brass, blues, funk and other genres. One is Snug Harbor, among the more sophisticated Jazz spots in the city. DBA, virtually next door, and the Spotted Cat across the street offer multiple options within steps of one another.

— Tipitinas is one of the most revered music venues in town; it is Uptown near the river. Many of New Orleans' best known bands and musicians play there between dates booked with traveling, widely known acts.

— For a more intimate music scene, try the Maple Leaf on Oak Street (next door to Jacque-Imo's); Dos Jefes on Tchoupitoulas Street; or Bacchanal, a rustic wine shop deep in the Bywater with outdoor seating and performances by a regular rotation of musicians.

Some other attractions

— Audubon Park and City Park.

These are beloved public spaces filled with large oak trees adorned with dangling Spanish moss, as well as magnolia trees and subtropical vegetation. Joggers and walkers flock to both (as do migrating birds).

There are challenging public golf courses, as well as other attractions, contained within each of the parks. Audubon has the zoo, City Park has the New Orleans Museum of Art and Sculpture Garden, as well as paddle boats and the Children's Museum.

In win for Trump, oil giant Shell walks away from major New Jersey offshore wind farm

By JENNIFER McDERMOTT Associated Press

In the first serious fallout from President Donald Trump's early actions against offshore wind power, oil and gas giant Shell is walking away from a major project off the coast of New Jersey.

Shell told The Associated Press it is writing off the project, citing increased competition, delays and a changing market.

"Naturally we also take regulatory context into consideration," spokesperson Natalie Gunnell said in an email.

Shell co-owns the large Atlantic Shores project, which has most of its permits and would generate enough power for 1 million homes if both of two phases were completed. That's enough for one-third of New Jersey households.

It's unclear whether Shell's decision kills the project — partner EDF-RE Offshore Development says it remains committed to Atlantic Shores.

On his first day in office, Trump signed an executive order singling out offshore wind for contempt with a temporary halt on all lease sales in federal waters and a pause on approvals, permits and loans. Perhaps most of interest to Shell, the order directs administration officials to review existing offshore wind energy leases and identify any legal reasons to terminate them.

Large offshore wind farms have been making electricity for three decades in Europe, and more recently in Asia. They are considered by experts to be an essential part of addressing climate change because they can take the place of fossil fuel plants, if paired with battery storage. New Jersey has set a goal of generating 100% of its energy from clean sources by 2035.

The Biden administration approved plans to build the Atlantic Shores project in two phases in October, but construction has not begun. Oliver Metcalfe, head of wind research at BloombergNEF, said the partners are facing significant uncertainty about their lease, and other developers are watching what happens with Atlantic Shores closely. "We're in uncertain territory here," he added.

Offshore wind foes, who are particularly vocal and well-organized in New Jersey, celebrated Shell's with-

drawal. Republican Rep. Jeff Van Drew, of New Jersey, helped the Trump team draft the executive order. He said Shell's decision is a "big win" for New Jersey's coastline and economy but "this fight is not over."

Robin Shaffer, president of Protect Our Coast NJ, said that without Shell's financial backing, it appears the project is "dead in the water."

Shell is writing off a nearly \$1 billion investment. It announced its decision on Thursday, as it reported a 16% decline in full-year earnings of \$23.7 billion from \$28.3 billion. Most of its business is oil and gas.

Danish wind developer Orsted was close to beginning work on two offshore wind farms in New Jersey but scrapped the project in Oct. 2023 after deciding it would not be economical.

A lot of clean energy is cheap now, but offshore wind is still among the most expensive. That can make these projects less attractive to investors, absent strong policy support, said Coco Zhang, vice president for environmental, social and governance research at ING.

"The potential uncertainty that the executive order has brought to the market, it cannot be ignored," she said.

The Biden administration sought to ramp up offshore wind as a climate change solution, setting national goals to deploy offshore wind energy, holding lease sales and approving nearly a dozen commercial-scale offshore wind energy projects.

US inflation is lingering and tariffs threatened by Trump could nudge prices in wrong direction

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — An inflation gauge closely watched by the Federal Reserve rose slightly last month, while some underlying price pressures showed signs of easing.

The latest inflation figures arrive as President Donald Trump has threatened to impose big import taxes on goods from Canada and Mexico, potentially affecting everything from autos to avocados, which could push prices higher in the coming months.

Friday's report from the Commerce Department showed that consumer prices rose 2.6% in December from a year earlier, up from a 2.4% annual pace in November and the third straight increase. Excluding the volatile food and energy categories, core prices increased 2.8% compared with a year ago, the same as in November and October.

There were some positive signs in Wednesday's report, however. When measured in shorter time frames, inflation is slowing: In December, core prices ticked up 0.2% from the previous month, a pace that is nearly consistent with the Fed's annual target. Economists — and Fed officials — pay close attention to core prices because they provide a better read on where inflation is headed.

The figures arrive just two days after Federal Reserve officials, led by Chair Jerome Powell, decided to pause their interest rate cuts in part because inflation has largely been stuck at about 2.5%, above their 2% target, for the past six months.

In the past three months, core prices have risen at an annual rate of just 2.2%, down from 2.6% in November.

Many businesses raise prices at the start of the year, which could push up inflation a bit when January's figures are released next month. But the Fed's preferred gauge should decline steadily in the next few months, economists say, as higher inflation readings early last year fall out of the year-over-year figures.

"Beyond that, however, the growing risk that Trump will impose tariffs a little earlier than we are assuming presents an upside risk to inflation," Paul Ashworth, chief North America economist at Capital Economics, a forecasting firm, said in a written note.

Overall inflation climbed 0.3% in December from the previous month, driven higher by a jump in gas prices. Monthly increases at that level, if they continued, would exceed the Fed's target.

The Commerce Department's report also showed consumer spending rose a healthy 0.7% in December from the previous month, fueled in part by steady wage gains and higher stock prices and home values.

Incomes rose 0.4%, the government said. With spending outpacing incomes, the savings rate fell to 3.8% from 4.1%.

Americans specifically ramped up spending on goods, such as electronics and furniture, likely a sign that consumers are buying more manufactured products, many of which are imported, before the potential imposition of tariffs that Trump has threatened to implement.

Underlying trends point to lower inflation ahead. Apartment rental prices and other housing costs are slowly moderating. And a sluggish labor market has meant wage growth has slipped, which means companies are under less pressure to raise prices to offset higher labor costs.

"We seem to be set up for further progress," Powell said Wednesday at a news conference, referring to inflation. "But being 'seem to set up for' it is one thing, having it is another. So we're going to want to see further progress on inflation."

Until then, Powell suggested, the Fed is likely to keep its key rate at about 4.3%, down a full percentage point from a two-decade peak last year before three cuts at the end of 2024. The Fed expects higher borrowing costs will weigh on spending and bring inflation down further.

Consumers, meanwhile, powered strong growth in the final three months of last year, when the economy expanded at a solid 2.3% annual rate. Growth was stronger in the July-September quarter, at 3.1%, but the fourth-quarter expansion was held back by a sharp reduction in business inventories, which should reverse in coming quarters.

Regime change in Syria has Iraqi factions backtracking on push for US withdrawal

By QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA and ABBY SEWELL Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — The fall of Bashar Assad in Syria has led Iran-allied factions in neighboring Iraq to reconsider their push for U.S. forces to exit the country, multiple Iraqi and American officials told The Associated Press.

The U.S. and Iraq announced an agreement last year to wind down the military mission in Iraq of an American-led coalition fighting the Islamic State group by September 2025, with U.S. forces departing some bases where they have stationed troops during a two-decade-long military presence in the country.

Political and armed factions linked to Iran had been among the loudest voices calling for a U.S. exit from Iraq — particularly after the Oct. 7, 2023 Hamas attack in southern Israel and Israel's ensuing bombardment and ground invasion of Gaza.

In Iraq, as in much of the Arab world, U.S. backing for Israel in a war that killed tens of thousands of civilians and displaced nearly Gaza's entire population of 2.3 million was unpopular.

When the agreement was reached to end the coalition's mission in Iraq, Iraqi political leaders said the threat of IS was under control and they no longer needed Washington's help to beat back the remaining cells.

But the fall of Assad in a lightning offensive led by Sunni Islamist rebels in December led some to reassess that stance, including members of the Coordination Framework, a coalition of mainly Shiite, Iran-allied political parties that brought current Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Shia al-Sudani to power in late 2022.

The fall of Assad — an ally of Iran — weakened Tehran's hand in the region, leaving allied groups in Iraq feeling vulnerable. Many in Iraq also fear that IS could take advantage of the security vacuum to stage a comeback while Syria's new leaders are still consolidating their control over the country and forming a national army.

"Most leaders of the Shiite Coordination Framework are in favor of keeping American forces in Iraq and will not want American forces to leave Iraq as a result of what happened in Syria," said one official with the group. "They are afraid of ISIS exploiting the vacuum if the Americans leave Iraq and the situation in Iraq collapses."

Multiple other Iraqi political and security officials gave similar assessments. They spoke on condition of

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anonymity because they were not authorized to comment publicly.

A high-ranking official in Iraq's National Security Service said that in a meeting with the Iraqi government, his agency had made the argument that "it is not in Iraq's interest to request the withdrawal of the US and the international coalition from Iraq at the present time."

"The loud voices that were previously talking about the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq have decreased significantly," he said. "I expect that there will be no withdrawal this year by the Americans."

A senior U.S. defense official, who also spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to comment publicly, said that since the fall of Assad in Syria, Iraqi government officials have asked "informally at the highest of levels" to delay the end of the mission in Iraq of an American-led coalition fighting the Islamic State group and the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq.

He said the Iraqis were anxious that IS could take advantage of the chaos following Assad's ouster — and of large stockpiles of weapons abandoned by the former Syrian army — to stage a comeback, which he described as a "valid concern."

"ISIS is not imminently going to make a resurgence, but it certainly could," he said, using an alternative name for IS.

The Iraqi government has not made any public statement about the possibility of extending the coalition's mandate. Iraqi government spokesperson Bassim al-Awadi said Friday that the "time frames between Iraq and the international coalition have not changed" and that meetings between Iraq and coalition officials are ongoing.

While Iraq would likely need to make a formal written request to extend the withdrawal timeline, al-Sudani might be reluctant to make the request publicly out of fear of being portrayed by domestic rivals as backing down after he had previously called for a U.S. exit. The Iraqi government has attempted to maintain a delicate balance between its ties to Iran and to the United States.

Iraqi armed groups have also had a complicated relationship with U.S. forces, with the same groups sometimes attacking them and on other occasions becoming allies of convenience in a fight against a common enemy.

The Popular Mobilization Forces, a coalition of primarily Shiite, Iran-backed armed groups, fought against the Islamic State group beginning in 2014, when IS militants rampaged across the country, seizing large swathes of territory.

Renad Mansour, a senior research fellow at the Chatham House think tank in London, said that while there wasn't "active coordination" between the U.S. forces and PMF at the time "they were fighting the same war on the same side against the same enemy."

During the war in Gaza, some of the groups that make up the PMF launched drone attacks on U.S. bases in Iraq and Syria. They have not launched any attacks since the fall of Assad.

Mansour said that much of the anxiety in Iraq about the post-Assad future of Syria stems from Iraq's own history. Many of the country's current leaders remember the chaotic years following the fall of Iraq's former strongman leader, Saddam Hussein, in a U.S.-led invasion in 2003.

"If the argument for removing the U.S. troops from Iraq was that the fight against ISIS was over and the region is stable, that calculation has changed following regime change in Syria," he said. "The threat of Daesh (the Arabic acronym for IS) in the context of an unstable and precarious Syria for the next few years is very real for the Coordination Framework and the government in Iraq."

From avocados to autos, Trump tariffs on Canada and Mexico could hit close to home

By PAUL WISEMAN AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The 25% tax that President Donald Trump plans to slap on imports from Canada and Mexico as soon as Saturday could drive up the price of everything from gasoline and pickup trucks, to Super Bowl party guacamole dip.

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The tariffs would also invite retaliation. Doug Ford, the premier of Ontario, has already vowed to counterpunch by pulling American alcohol off store shelves in the Canadian province – no idle threat; Canada is the world's No. 2 market for America's distilled spirits (behind the 27-nation European Union).

Trump's tariffs threaten to blow up the trade agreement he himself negotiated with America's neighbors in his first term. His U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement – “the fairest, most balanced, and beneficial trade agreement we have ever signed into law,” Trump once declared -- was supposed to bring predictability to North American trade, giving businesses the confidence to make investments.

But when it comes to the self-proclaimed “Tariff Man,” Trump and his passion for plastering taxes on foreign goods, nothing is predictable, and nothing is ever really settled.

“Tariffs at those levels and at that scope would effectively destroy the agreement that Trump himself negotiated and always brags about,” said Scott Lincicome, a trade analyst at the libertarian Cato Institute.

The president says the 25% levies are designed to pressure America's two neighbors to do more to stop the flow of undocumented immigrants and fentanyl into the United States.

Michael Robinet of S&P Global Mobility and many other analysts suspect the tariff threat is also designed to get Canada and Mexico to go along with America's demands for changes to the USMCA when it comes up for renewal next year.

Robinet, executive director of automotive consulting at S&P Global, said he doubts that Trump will go ahead with 25% across-the-board tariffs on Canadian and Mexican imports – what he calls a “shock-to-the-system” approach that would freeze the North American economy in a “Tariff Winter.” Instead, Robinet said, Trump might postpone or phase in the tariffs or initially exempt some industries to show Canada and Mexico how much worse things could get if he doesn't get his way.

Trump pressured Mexico and Canada into agreeing to the USMCA five years ago, partly to narrow the United States' big trade deficit – the gap between what the U.S. sells and what it buys.

It hasn't worked out that way.

The U.S. deficit in the trade of goods of Mexico has widened from \$106 billion in 2019 to \$161 billion in 2023 (the last full year for which numbers are available). That is partly because Mexico has replaced China, locked in an ongoing trade war with the United States, as the source of many U.S. imports – furniture, textiles, shoes, laptops, computer servers.

The trade gap in goods with Canada has ballooned, too: From \$31 billion in 2019 to \$72 billion in 2023. The deficit largely reflects America's imports of Canadian energy.

“The USMCA has not met the goals that Trump set forth for it. Our trade deficit with Canada and Mexico is bigger than it was, considerably,” said Lori Wallach, director of the Rethink Trade program at the American Economic Liberties Project and a longtime critic of America's free trade pacts. “A lot of jobs have been offshored to Mexico since USMCA.”

When the USMCA comes up for renewal next year, the U.S. is expected to press for rules that would do more to encourage factories to produce in the United States. And it could seek a crackdown on Chinese goods being sent through Mexico to the United States to evade tariffs that Trump and President Joe Biden imposed on Beijing.

The United States now does far more business – exports and imports alike – with both Canada and Mexico than it does with China. In 2023, U.S. trade of both goods and services with Canada and Mexico came to more than \$1.8 trillion, compared with \$643 billion with China. Because of USMCA – and the regional trade deal it replaced in 2020 – most products cross the region's borders tariff-free.

The threatened 25% tariffs are causing heartburn in corporate boardrooms. If Trump goes ahead with his threat, tariffs would surge from \$1.3 billion to \$132 billion a year on Mexico's imports to the United States and from \$440 million to \$107 billion on Canada's, according to the tax and consulting firm PwC.

And no one knows if Trump will really pull the trigger or how long the tariffs would stay in place if he does. “It's really thrown industry into this turmoil of anxiety,” said trade lawyer Chandri Navarro, senior counsel at Baker & McKenzie. “What industry likes is certainty. You're making production decisions, supply chain decisions, purchasing decisions five years out.”

Trump views tariffs as a fix-it for most of what ails the economy. He says they raise money for cuts in

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income and corporate taxes, encourage companies to move production to the United States and offer useful leverage in pressuring other countries to make concessions on trade and other issues.

Trump administration officials also say critics of potential tariffs shouldn't view them in isolation, arguing that their other policies, including lowering taxes and easing regulations, will strengthen the economy.

Companies are scrambling to prepare. Some bought goods and shipped them to the United States ahead of time to beat the tariffs. Others are calculating how much of the cost they can pass along to their customers. "Unfortunately, it's going to impact a lot of consumers," said Dave Evans, co-founder and CEO of Fictiv, a San Francisco company that helps clients manage their supply chains in plastics and metals. "We saw this in his first term. A tariff isn't fully absorbed by the companies."

Canada and Mexico are bracing, too. Chrystia Freeland, the former finance minister who represented Canada in USMCA negotiations, has called for retaliation if Trump moves ahead with tariffs. "Being smart means retaliating where it hurts," said Freeland, who is running to replace prime minister Justin Trudeau. "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."

Mexico President Claudia Sheinbaum said Friday that Mexico has maintained a dialogue with Trump's team since before he returned to the White House. She emphasized that the communication has been constant and continuing.

Trump has made clear that he has two main interests: immigration and fentanyl, Sheinbaum said. Her team is coordinating with the U.S. government on both of those issues, she said.

On trade, "We shouldn't see ourselves as competitors," she said, but rather partners. But if the U.S. imposes tariffs, Mexico is prepared and has been for months, Sheinbaum said.

"Now it is very important that the Mexican people know that we are always going to defend the dignity of our people, we are always going to defend the respect of our sovereignty and a dialogue between equals, as we have always said, without subordination," Sheinbaum said.

Black History Month explained: Its origins, celebrations and myths

By HAYA PANJWANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Beginning Feb. 1, schools, museums and communities across the nation will mark the start of Black History Month — a celebration of Black history, culture and education.

The history of the month dates back almost a century, and the way it is celebrated and evolved has created history in itself.

The origins of the month

Black History Month wasn't always a monthlong celebration. In February 1926, historian and author Carter G. Woodson created Negro History Week. It was a weeklong celebration in an effort to teach people about African-American history and the contributions of Black people.

This effort was made under the umbrella of an organization he founded in September 1915 called the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, or ASALH.

"I think Black folks understood what they had contributed to America's historical narrative, but no one was talking about it," said Kaye Whitehead, the organization's president. "No one was centralizing it until Dr. Carter G. Woodson was in 1926."

After he passed away in 1950, the members of the Omega Psi Phi fraternity, which Dr. Woodson was a member of, did a lot of groundwork to encourage celebrating the week. The fraternity was also responsible for the push to extend the celebrations to a full month. Eventually, in 1976, President Gerald Ford became the first president to issue a message recognizing the month.

Since then, presidents have made annual proclamations for National Black History Month, a tradition that President Donald Trump plans to continue, according to White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt.

Celebrating Black history

The Association for the Study of African American Life and History releases a theme for each year, which is a practice Woodson started.

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This year's theme is African Americans and Labor. The organization plans to use the month, and the rest of the year, focusing on the role of Black labor in building the nation through industry or community work.

Black history is also celebrated within communities and families. Worth K. Hayes, an associate professor of history and Africana studies at Morehouse College, said some families may use the month to explore their genealogy, learn about their ancestors or come together to eat a meal and make family trees.

"We may be more familiar with the more public ways, but there are also a lot more intimate ways in which these messages are spread and the way that the holiday is propagated," Hayes said.

At some schools, assemblies or gatherings are held to honor Black leaders, according to the nonpartisan organization the Center for Racial Justice in Education.

"Some schools invite elders to share their wisdom and lived experiences, allowing young people to learn from them, ask questions, and build meaningful connections across generations," the center said in an email to The Associated Press. "Additionally, some communities select specific topics or principles for in-depth exploration during the month."

Myths about Black History Month

Myths around Black History Month continue, Whitehead said, including the idea that the U.S. government purposely chose the shortest month of the year. In reality, Woodson chose February because two prominent figures in the civil rights movement — Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass — had birthdays in the week he chose.

Whitehead also stresses that Black history shouldn't just be taught for the month of February, but rather taught and celebrated for the entire year.

Celebrities, including actor Morgan Freeman, have criticized it being just a monthlong celebration. But Hayes argued that the month isn't just about celebrating African-American history, but Black history as a whole.

"I think that there is this desire to make this point that African-American history or Black history is so integral to the American story, American history," Hayes said. "But that reduces Black history to African-American history, and that's not how it is and is celebrated from its origins to this day ... So if you're talking about Black History Month, you're not only talking about Nat Turner, you're also talking about Toussaint Louverture and the Haitian Revolution. You're talking about many of the women and men who led the independence movements on the African continent."

Whitehead added that Black history is not just for Black people, it is for all people.

"If you're in an environment and everybody in the environment is white, you need Black History Month more than ever because you need to understand that the world, even though you like to believe it fits into this box, it does not," Whitehead said.

Black history doesn't rely on a presidential proclamation, Whitehead and others said. Whitehead said Black people don't need permission to mark the month.

"It doesn't happen because we're waiting for a statement to be released. We proclaim it, We celebrate it, we uplift, we center it and we help people to understand that this is our history," she said.

Black History Month in 2025

At least one government agency has paused celebrations of cultural or historic events, including Black History Month. But at the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, the decisions of the new Trump administration around Diversity, Equity and Inclusion initiatives will not affect how Black History Month is celebrated.

"Negro History Week started in 1926 without any proclamation from anyone other than the people," said ASALH executive director Sylvia Cyrus. "The president of the United States has his views, and certainly we assume that he understands the contributions that African Americans and other people of color have made."

A White House spokesperson has said that they intend to celebrate the month.

Some believe how Black history is taught could be affected by the new administration's outlook on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion programs.

The Center for Racial Justice in Education said educators may be more encouraged to teach Black history in their classrooms throughout the year. "Resistance takes many inspiring forms, and those dedicated

to celebrating this essential history are employing creative and strategic approaches to share and further develop it," the organization said in an email.

Hayes agreed and said it could encourage others to teach communities about the contributions of Black people.

"African Americans, Black folks throughout the world, just like all cultures throughout the world, have taken ownership of their history," he said. "And these various political developments may shape the contours of it. But this story is going to be told regardless of the political dynamics of the particular time."

Expected release of high-profile male hostages sparks excitement and anxiety in Israel

By JULIA FRANKEL Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — News that three high-profile hostages are expected to be released Saturday, including the father of the youngest captives held in Gaza, brought excitement and trepidation to Israel on Friday.

Yarden Bibas — father to young Ariel and Kfir Bibas — Keith Siegel and Ofer Kalderon have all become household names in Israel since their abduction, with major campaigns calling for their release.

The men's release would be the fourth since a ceasefire paused the war in Gaza between Israel and Hamas this month. In its first phase, 33 Israeli captives are expected to be freed in exchange for nearly 2,000 Palestinian prisoners.

Israel's announcement of the names provided by Hamas dimmed hopes that the Bibas boys and their mother, Shiri, are still alive in captivity. Hamas has said they are dead and Israel says it is gravely concerned about them. Around a third of some 80 people still held hostage in Gaza are believed to be dead.

Activists dressed in white and carrying white umbrellas held a silent protest Friday outside the U.S. Embassy branch office in Tel Aviv to call for more releases, with yellow chairs representing the hostages. A group representing the captives' families called the news "joyous" but said Israel had the "sacred duty and moral right" to bring all the hostages home, dead and alive.

To the men's families, the news was a relief.

"Thank God," Sahar Kalderon, one of Ofer Kalderon's children, wrote on Instagram. "What a perfect morning."

Aviva Siegel, Keith Siegel's wife, exclaimed with joy in a video her daughter posted to Instagram. "Dad is coming!" she cried. "Dad is on the list!"

Around 250 were abducted when Hamas stormed into southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians. Israel's ensuing air and ground war has been among the deadliest and most destructive in decades. More than 47,000 Palestinians have been killed, over half of them women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not say how many of the dead were militants.

Here's a closer look at the men set to be freed Saturday.

Yarden Bibas, 35

News that Yarden Bibas would be released dimmed hopes that his wife and children were still alive in Gaza.

Hamas has claimed that the three were killed in an Israeli airstrike. Israel has not confirmed that, but spokesperson Daniel Hagari said last week that the military was "extremely concerned" about the family's welfare.

Yarden Bibas was taken from Kibbutz Nir Oz on Oct. 7. Photos from the abduction appear to show him wounded.

It's believed he was taken captive separately from his wife and sons. A video of the family's abduction showed Shiri swaddling her two redheaded boys in a blanket and being whisked away by armed men.

Kfir, who was 9 months old at the time, was the youngest to be taken captive. The infant with a then-toothless smile has come to represent the helplessness and anger over the hostage crisis.

Keith Siegel, 65

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Keith Siegel, an Israeli-American, was abducted with his wife, Aviva Siegel, from Kibbutz Kfar Aza, a communal farming village heavily damaged by the attack. She was freed during the November 2023 ceasefire deal, and has campaigned across the world for her husband's release.

Keith Siegel, from Chapel Hill, North Carolina, worked as an occupational therapist and loves spending time with his grandchildren, according to the forum representing the hostage families.

Aviva Siegel said that she was held hostage with her husband during her 51 days in captivity. She said she took comfort from having her husband by her side as they were moved from tunnel to tunnel, the two given almost no food or water. Her parting words to him were, "Be strong for me."

Ofer Kalderon, 54

Ofer Kalderon, a French-Israeli hostage, was taken captive by the militants from Kibbutz Nir Oz, along with his children, Sahar and Erez. His ex-wife, Hadas, was also abducted.

The children and Hadas Kalderon were released during the hostage exchange in November. Hadas Kalderon has said that the children have struggled since leaving captivity, worried for their father's health.

Ofer Kalderon worked as a carpenter and loves biking and flying model planes, according to the hostage forum.

Marianne Faithfull, singer and pop icon, dies at 78

By HILLEL ITALIE AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Marianne Faithfull, the British pop star, muse, libertine and old soul who inspired and helped write some of the Rolling Stones' greatest songs and endured as a torch singer and survivor of the lifestyle she once embodied, has died. She was 78.

Faithfull passed away Thursday in London, her music promotion company Republic Media said.

"It is with deep sadness that we announce the death of the singer, songwriter and actress Marianne Faithfull," a company spokesperson said in a statement. "Marianne passed away peacefully in London today, in the company of her loving family. She will be dearly missed."

The blonde, voluptuous Faithfull was a celebrity before turning 17, homeless by her mid-20s and an inspiration to peers and younger artists by her early 30s, when her raw, explicit "Broken English" album brought her the kinds of reviews the Stones had received. Over the following decades, her admirers would include Beck, Billy Corgan, Nick Cave and PJ Harvey, although her history would always be closely tied to the Stones and to the years she dated Mick Jagger.

"I am so saddened to hear of the death of Marianne Faithfull," Jagger wrote on Instagram. "She was so much a part of my life for so long. She was a wonderful friend, a beautiful singer and a great actress."

One of the first songs written by Jagger and Keith Richards, the melancholy "As Tears Go By," was her breakthrough hit when released in 1964 and the start of her close and tormented relationship with the band.

She and Jagger began seeing each other in 1966 and became one of the most glamorous and notorious couples of "Swinging London," with Faithfull once declaring that if LSD "wasn't meant to happen, it wouldn't have been invented." Their rejection of conventional values was defined by a widely publicized 1967 drug bust that left Jagger and Richards briefly in jail and Faithfull identified in tabloids as "Naked Girl At Stones Party," a label she would find humiliating and inescapable.

"One of the hazards of reforming your evil ways is that some people won't let go of their mind's eye of you as a wild thing," she wrote in "Memories, Dreams and Reflections," a 2007 memoir.

Jagger and Richards often cited bluesmen and early rock 'n rollers as their prime influences, but Faithfull and her close friend Anita Pallenberg, Richards' longtime partner, also opened the band to new ways of thinking. Both were worldlier than their boyfriends at the time, and helped transform the Stones' songwriting and personas, whether as muses or as collaborators.

Faithfull helped inspire such Stones songs as the mellow tribute "She Smiled Sweetly" and the lustful "Let's Spend the Night Together." It was Faithfull who lent Jagger the Russian novel "The Master and Margarita" that was the basis for "Sympathy for the Devil" and who first recorded and contributed lyrics

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to the Stones' dire "Sister Morphine," notably the opening line, "Here I lie in my hospital bed." Faithfull's drug use helped shape such jaded takes on the London rock scene as "You Can't Always Get What You Want" and "Live with Me," while her time with Jagger also coincided with one of his most vulnerable love songs, "Wild Horses."

On her own, the London-born Faithfull specialized at first in genteel ballads, among them "Come Stay With Me," "Summer Nights" and "This Little Bird." But even in her teens, Faithfull sang in a fragile alto that suggested knowledge and burdens far beyond her years. Her voice would later crack and coarsen, and her life and work after splitting with Jagger in 1970 was one of looking back and carrying on through emotional and physical pain.

She had become addicted to heroin in the late '60s, suffered a miscarriage while seven months pregnant and nearly died from an overdose of sleeping pills. (Jagger, meanwhile, had an affair with Pallenberg and had a baby with actor Marsha Hunt). By the early '70s, Faithfull was living in the streets of London and had lost custody of the son, Nicholas, she had with her estranged husband, the gallery owner John Dunbar. She would also battle anorexia and hepatitis, was treated for breast cancer, broke her hip in a fall and was hospitalized with COVID-19 in 2020.

She shared everything, uncensored, in her memoirs and in her music, notably "Broken English," which came out in 1979 and featured her seething "Why'd Ya Do It" and conflicted "Guilt," in which she chants "I feel guilt, I feel guilt, though I know I've done no wrong." Other albums included "Dangerous Acquaintances," "Strange Weather," the live "Blazing Away" and, most recently, "She Walks in Beauty." Though Faithfull was defined by the 1960s, her sensibility often reached back to the pre-rock world of German cabaret, and she covered numerous songs by Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill, including "Ballad of the Soldier's Wife" and the "sung" ballet "The Seven Deadly Sins."

Her interests extended to theater, film and television. Faithfull began acting in the 1960s, including an appearance in Jean-Luc Godard's "Made In U.S.A." and stage roles in "Hamlet" and Chekhov's "Three Sisters." She would later appear in such films as "The Girl on a Motorcycle," "Marie Antoinette" and "The Girl from Nagasaki," and the TV series "Absolutely Fabulous," in which she was cast as — and did not flinch from playing — God.

Faithful was married three times, and in recent years dated her manager, Francois Ravard. Jagger was her most famous lover, but other men in her life included Richards ("so great and memorable," she would say of their one-night stand), David Bowie and the early rock star Gene Pitney. Among the rejected: Bob Dylan, who had been so taken that he was writing a song about her, until Faithfull, pregnant with her son at the time, turned him down.

"Without warning, he turned into Rumpelstiltskin," she wrote in "Faithfull," published in 1994. "He went over to the typewriter, took a sheaf of papers and began ripping them up into smaller and smaller pieces, after which he let them fall into the wastepaper basket."

Faithfull's heritage was one of intrigue, decadence and fallen empires. Her father was a British intelligence officer during World War II who helped saved her mother from the Nazis in Vienna. Faithfull's more distant ancestors included various Austro-Hungarian aristocrats and Count Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, a 19th century Austrian whose last name and scandalous novel "Venus in Furs" helped create the term "masochism."

Faithfull's parents separated when she was 6 and her childhood would include time in a convent and in what she would call a "nutty" sex-obsessed commune. By her teens, she was reading Simone de Beauvoir, listening to Odetta and Joan Baez and singing in folk clubs. Through the London art scene, she met Dunbar, who introduced her to Paul McCartney and other celebrities. Dunbar also co-founded the Indica Gallery, where John Lennon would say he met Yoko Ono.

"The threads of a dozen little scenes were invisibly twining together," she wrote in her memoir. "All these people — gallery owners, photographers, pop stars, aristocrats and assorted talented layabouts more or less invented the scene in London, so I guess I was present at the creation."

Her future was set in March 1964, when she attended a recording party for one of London's hot young

bands, the Rolling Stones. Scorning the idea that she and Jagger immediately fell for each other, she would regard the Stones as “yobby schoolboys” and witnessed Jagger fighting with his then-girlfriend, the model Chrissie Shrimpton, so in tears that her false eyelashes were peeling off.

But she was deeply impressed by one man, Stones manager Andrew “Loog” Oldham, who looked “powerful and dangerous and very sure of himself.” A week later, Oldham sent her a telegram, asking her to come to London’s Olympic Studios. With Jagger and Richards looking on, Oldham played her a demo of a “very primitive” song, “As Tears Go By,” which Faithfull needed just two takes to complete.

“It’s an absolutely astonishing thing for a boy of 20 to have written,” Faithfull wrote in her 1994 memoir. “A song about a woman looking back nostalgically on her life. The uncanny thing is that Mick should have written those words so long before everything happened. It’s almost as if our whole relationship was prefigured in that song.”

FireAid delivered loads of surprises. Here are some of the best moments from the musical benefit

By JONATHAN LANDRUM Jr. and MARK KENNEDY AP Entertainment Writers

INGLEWOOD, Calif. (AP) — The FireAid benefit was fueled by some of music’s best performers to raise money for Los Angeles-area wildfire relief efforts.

The event at the Kia Forum and the Intuit Dome in Inglewood, California, on Thursday night featured a long list of stars including Billie Eilish, Rod Stewart, Dr. Dre and Joni Mitchell during a pair of concerts that mixed stories of heartbreak, music and surprises galore.

They started right out of the gate, with Eilish joining Green Day for the first song of the night, leading to a cute moment greeting the band’s frontman, Billie Joe Armstrong.

Another Billy, comedian Billy Crystal, quickly followed them and reminded everyone of why they were there and watching: to raise money to help rebuild the devastated Pacific Palisades and Altadena neighborhoods and other impacted areas.

The show ended with a big surprise: Lady Gaga performing an upbeat new song she said she wrote with her fiancé specifically for FireAid.

Here are some of FireAid’s outstanding moments:

Billy Crystal says ‘We’ll laugh again’

Crystal appeared as the first host in the same clothes he was wearing when he fled his family home, which was lost in the Palisades Fire. Then, with his trademark humor and heart, he recalled another national spasm of pain.

Crystal reminded the crowd that 23 years before, he attended the Concert for New York City in the wake of 9/11 and had seen grieving attendees holding up signs with pictures of their loved ones, asking if anyone had seen them.

“And tonight, here I am, talking to all of you in pain,” he said. “But I’m also one of the hurting thousands asking, ‘Have you seen my school?’ ‘Have you seen my church?’ ‘Have you seen my house?’ ‘Have you seen my town?’ ‘Have you seen the 29 people who lost their lives?’”

“On that night in 2001, we were mourning the loss of hundreds of firefighters and police officers and first responders,” Crystal said. “Tonight, we are here together to thank them and all those who run towards danger while we run to shelter and safety.”

Crystal said he returned to the wreckage of his home and began to wail: “I had not cried like that since I was 15 and I was told that my father had just died.” His daughters soon found a rock with the word “Laughter” engraved in it.

He recalled how his uncle at his father’s funeral service made everyone laugh by telling stories and doing magic tricks. “It changed my life. I knew at that moment — even in your worst pain, folks — it’s OK and it’s important to laugh,” he said.

“We’ll laugh again,” he said. “Let’s show the world who we are: We’re Los Angeles, one city, one heart.”

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L.A. Strong!"

Eilish's early surprise

FireAid kicked off with a surprise guest appearance from Grammy winner Eilish.

The superstar singer strutted onstage while Green Day performed "Last Night on Earth," which includes the lyrics, "If I lose everything in the fire/I'm sending all my love to you." She stood next to Armstrong as the band's frontman played his guitar.

After Eilish finished, she blew kisses to the crowd, who who rose to their feet and threw their lit-up wrists toward the sky. She and the band performed as a series of photos showed devastated homeowners watching their houses burn to the ground.

Dr. Dre gives Cali love

Dr. Dre took the energy to another level, dashing onto the stage to join Anderson .Paak and Sheila E.

As Anderson .Paak introduced him, the crowd erupted with many rising to their feet, some jumping in excitement, as the super producer launched into a couple West Coast hip-hop classics: his 1999 hit "Still D.R.E." and Tupac Shakur's 1995 jam "California Love," which he produced.

"I'm all about love for me tonight," Dr. Dre said alongside Sheila E. standing behind her drums and Anderson.Paak, who wore a black jersey with "Koreatown" across his chest.

Dr. Dre talked about being in the music game for 40 years before showing his appreciation for the first responders. "I appreciate all the first responders and all the firemen who put their lives on the line," he told the crowd.

Before Dr. Dre's surprise appearance, Anderson .Paak performed "Put Me Thru" and "Come Down" from his 2016 album "Malibu."

Flea sets tone for Chili Peppers' closing set

Red Hot Chili Peppers guitarist Flea made his signature grand entrance — because, of course, he did — setting the tone for his band's high-energy finale at the Forum.

Wearing nothing but a black Speedo, he flipped onto the stage with a handstand, instantly sending the crowd into a frenzy. Up until that moment, many had been seated, casually watching Lil Baby's performance on the venue's big screens. But Flea's wild antics had them on their feet in no time.

Once they were up, many stayed up. The Chili Peppers kept the energy soaring, tearing through a set packed with their biggest hits such as "Californication" and "Give it Away."

"LA is our home," Flea said. "We ... love you."

Nirvana's reunion

This is probably the closest thing to a Nirvana reunion we'll ever see. The three surviving members — Krist Novoselic, Dave Grohl and Pat Smear — took the stage for a powerful, nostalgia-fueled performance that left the crowd in awe.

A special lineup of St. Vincent, Kim Gordon and Joan Jett filled in for the late Kurt Cobain, the band's frontman who died in 1994. The trio separately delivered renditions of Nirvana's classics including "Breed," "School" and "Territorial Pissings."

Another poignant moment involved Grohl's daughter, Violet, who stepped onto the stage to perform "All Apologies," adding a personal touch to the night.

Dawes invites iconic friends

The band Dawes performed three songs with some icons and an intimate knowledge of what the city has gone through. Brothers Taylor and Griffin Goldsmith both had substantial damage to their homes.

The band played their melancholy ode to the city, "Time Spent in Los Angeles," with the lyrics, "Cause you got that special kind of sadness/You got that tragic set of charms/That only comes from time spent in Los Angeles."

They invited Stephen Stills to play a jammy version of Still's "For What It's Worth (Stop, Hey What's That Sound)." Then Graham Nash, a longtime musical partner to Stills, was invited to the stage to sing "Teach Your Children" by Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young. At the end, Nash let the audience sing the final words.

"Whenever Los Angeles gets into trouble, the musicians are right there, and I'm proud to be one of them," Nash said.

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A prayer for teachers

Quinta Brunson, who plays a teacher on the television show "Abbott Elementary," introduced a real teacher and shined the spotlight on the impact the fires had on schools and education.

Glendale High School math teacher Aurora Barboza Flores said she lost the Altadena home she had been saving for over 21 years.

"So now I've lost more than my home. I've lost my community, too. I was so proud to be a homeowner, so proud to have a place to call my own in this city," she said.

She managed to find one thing in the wreckage: A dish she kept her jewelry in, inscribed with the words "I think I'll just be happy today." The crowd in the Intuit Dome cheered.

"Sometimes, that's all we can do. Even though it's hard there are moments that get us through. Moments like tonight," Flores said.

"That's right," Brunson added. "Everybody, let's thank Aurora and all the teachers out there right now."

Today in History: February 1

Space shuttle Columbia destroyed during re-entry

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Saturday, Feb. 1, the 32nd day of 2025. There are 333 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Feb. 1, 2003, the space shuttle Columbia broke apart as it re-entered the earth's atmosphere, killing all seven crew members: commander Rick Husband; pilot William McCool; payload commander Michael Anderson; mission specialists Kalpana Chawla, David Brown and Laurel Clark; and payload specialist Ilan Ramon.

Also on this date:

In 1865, abolitionist John S. Rock became the first Black lawyer admitted to the bar of the U.S. Supreme Court.

In 1943, during World War II, one of America's most highly decorated military units, the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, made up almost exclusively of Japanese Americans, was activated.

In 1959, men in Switzerland rejected giving women the right to vote by a more than 2-to-1 margin in a referendum. (Swiss women finally gained the right to vote in 1971.)

In 1960, four Black college students began a sit-in protest at a Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina, where they had been refused service.

In 1979, Iranian religious leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (hoh-MAY'-nee) was welcomed home by millions in Tehran as he ended nearly 15 years of exile.

In 1991, an arriving USAir jetliner crashed atop a commuter plane on a runway at Los Angeles International Airport, resulting in 35 deaths.

In 1994, Jeff Gillooly, Tonya Harding's ex-husband, pleaded guilty in Portland, Oregon, to racketeering for his part in the attack on figure skater Nancy Kerrigan in exchange for a 24-month sentence and a \$100,000 fine.

In 2002, Wall Street Journal journalist Daniel Pearl was killed by Islamist militants in Pakistan after being kidnapped nine days earlier.

In 2016, the World Health Organization declared a global emergency over the explosive spread of the Zika virus, which was linked to birth defects in the Americas.

Today's birthdays: Actor Garrett Morris is 88. Political commentator Fred Barnes is 82. Princess Stephanie of Monaco is 60. Actor Sherilyn Fenn is 60. U.S. Soccer Hall of Famer Michelle Akers is 59. Comedian-actor Pauly Shore is 57. Actor Michael C. Hall is 54. Rapper Big Boi (Outkast) is 50. Singer-songwriter Jason Isbell is 46. TV personality Lauren Conrad is 39. Mixed martial artist Ronda Rousey is 38. Actor Julia Garner is 31. Singer-actor Harry Styles is 31.