

Groton Daily Independent

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Groton Daily Independent
PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445
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The Groton Area School District will be opening two hours late on Tuesday, February 11, 2025. OST will be opening at 7:00 AM.

Tuesday, February. 11

Senior Menu: Ham, au gratin, broccoli, pineapple, whole wheat bread.

Boys Basketball hosts Leola-Frederick: C at 5:15 p.m., JV at 6 p.m., varsity to follow.

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

Pantry, 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., Groton Community Center
Groton United Methodist Bible Study, 10 a.m.
Emmanuel Lutheran: council, 6 p.m.

Wednesday, Feb. 12

Senior Menu: Chicken tetrazzine, mixed vegetables, accini depepi salad, whole wheat bread.

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

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

Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 4 p.m.

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

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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.

Pennies Make No Cents

President Donald Trump has ordered the Treasury Department to stop minting new pennies, citing the high cost of production as wasteful government spending as part of the administration's broader effort to reduce federal expenditure. Each penny costs approximately 3.69 cents to produce. The US made nearly 3.2 billion pennies in FY2024, costing taxpayers \$85.3M, excluding the value of the pennies themselves.

It remains uncertain whether Trump can unilaterally halt penny production or if congressional legislation is required. Congress has constitutional authority over coinage and currency regulation, though federal law allows the Treasury Secretary some discretion in minting coins.

Proponents say discontinuing the penny could save millions annually and reduce environmental waste, while critics warn of potential economic disruptions, such as price rounding and consumer losses. The nickel also costs more to produce than its value, costing nearly 14 cents to produce per coin—a loss of \$17.7M last year.

Earth's Changing Core

The superhot inner core of planet Earth is both changing shape and the speed at which it rotates, according to a new study. The results may shed light on Earth's magnetic field, how the inner core affects the length of a day, and more.

Earth consists of four layers: the crust (about 20 miles thick), the mantle (1,800 miles thick), a liquid metal outer core (1,400 miles thick), and the inner core (1,500 miles across). Made primarily of nickel and iron, the inner core was long thought to be solid due to the extreme pressure at the center of Earth.

The new findings—determined by measuring how Antarctic earthquakes traveled through the different layers—reveal the inner core is not entirely solid but has a soft, deformable outer layer. The study also confirmed previous results showing the inner core rotates at different speeds than the rest of the planet.

Scientists say the core's behavior may alter the length of a day by fractions of a second.

China's Demographic Crisis

Marriage registrations in China fell to a record low of 6.1 million couples last year, a nearly 21% decrease from 2023 and the lowest number since the government began tracking data in 1986.

Chinese officials are concerned declining marriages are contributing to falling birth rates due to social norms and regulations that have discouraged unmarried couples from having children. The declines pose a challenge for the world's second-largest economy, which faces a shrinking workforce and an aging population (w/graph) amid an economic slowdown. Those over 60 years old account for about 22% of China's overall population, and roughly 300 million people—close to the entire US population—are projected to enter retirement in the next decade.

The drop in marriages is part of a decadelong trend (with the exception of a rebound in 2023)—total marriages in 2024 were less than half of the roughly 13 million marriages recorded in 2013. Chinese authorities have tested various measures to increase marriages, including financial incentives and speed dating programs.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Nearly 50 arrested in Philadelphia in wake of celebration following Eagles' Super Bowl win Sunday night. Halftime show dancer banned from NFL events for life but won't face criminal charges after waving Sudanese and Palestinian flags during Kendrick Lamar's performance.

Tom Robbins, prolific bestselling comedy novelist, dies at age 92.

Former Ohio State football coach Jim Tressel (R) tapped for Ohio lieutenant governor role.

Fox Corp. purchases podcast company Red Seat Ventures, producer of podcasts by Megyn Kelly, Tucker Carlson, and Piers Morgan.

Science & Technology

Twenty-two states sue to block Trump administration's plan to cap indirect grant costs—funding that goes to overhead expenses—from the National Institutes of Health at 15%.

Ride-sharing platform Lyft to launch driverless robotaxis in Dallas as early as next year.

Astronomers discover the largest known structure in the universe to date, a cosmic filament—a strand connecting dark matter, galaxies, and more—roughly 1.3 billion light-years in length.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close higher (S&P 500 +0.7%, Dow +0.4%, Nasdaq +1.0%), led by tech stocks as well as steel and aluminum stocks; President Donald Trump imposes global 25% tariff on steel and aluminum imports.

Gold prices climb above \$2,900 to new record amid escalating tariff threats.

Elon Musk-led group of investors submits \$97.4B unsolicited offer to buy nonprofit that controls Sam Altman's OpenAI.

Hyatt Hotels expands in the Caribbean and Mexico with \$2.6B acquisition of Playa Hotels & Resorts.

McDonald's reports lower-than-expected Q4 revenue as US sales saw the biggest drop since the pandemic, partly due to last fall's E. coli outbreak.

Politics & World Affairs

Hamas accuses Israel of violating ceasefire deal, including shelling areas of Gaza, and says it will indefinitely suspend the release of hostages.

President Donald Trump says displaced Palestinians won't be allowed to return to Gaza under his proposal to rebuild the territory.

Justice Department official orders federal prosecutors to drop charges against New York Mayor Eric Adams (D).

Judge directs Trump administration to unfreeze federal spending after finding the administration hasn't fully followed a previous court order ... and another judge extends pause on resignation buyout offer to federal workers until a ruling on the legality of the plan.

At least 51 people dead after bus plunges off a bridge, falling into a sewer-polluted stream on the outskirts of Guatemala's capital.

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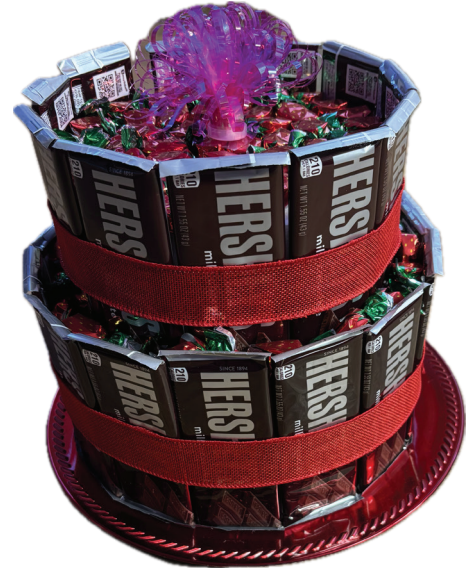
Tina's Baskets! Text/Call at 605-397-7285 to reserve your basket now. They are going fast! Cash, check or Venmo.



2. White vase with sour suckers. \$7.50



3. Kit Kat Cake with Valentine suckers on top. \$35



4. Hersheys Cake, two tier with strawberry hard candy. \$40



7. Valentine container with fake roses and white bears. \$5



8. Reeses candy bars with Valentine suckers. \$50



9. Heart basket with as-sorted candy. \$15



10. Vase filled with strawberry drops and chocolate rose candy. \$9



12. Valentine's love balloon with fake flowers, MMs, skittles. \$15



14. Mini chip ahoy's cookies, be mine valentines book, a bear with a love heart on it and some hot wheels in it. \$12

15. Bet-sie Voucher book, puppy, mini chocolate hearts. Behind the dog a bag of heart bear gummies and a small box of mix chocolates. \$12



Tigers Dominate in Victory Over Great Plains Lutheran

The Groton Area Tigers showed grit and determination Monday night as they powered their way to a 55-34 win over the Great Plains Lutheran Panthers in Watertown. With the victory, the Tigers improved to 13-6 on the season, while the Panthers dropped to 12-4.

Varsity Showdown

The game started off slow, with both teams struggling to find their rhythm. After a 2-2 tie, the Tigers found their stride and went on a scoring run to take a 9-3 lead at the end of the first quarter. By the second quarter, Great Plains Lutheran battled back, trimming Groton's lead to just two points at 21-19. However, the Tigers responded with another surge, heading into halftime with a 27-19 advantage.

The third quarter was all Groton. With two key scoring runs - one of five points and another of seven - the Tigers extended their lead to 41-26 heading into the final frame. They continued to dominate defensively and offensively, closing out the game with a convincing 55-34 win.

Foul trouble plagued both teams throughout the night. Groton was whistled for 24 fouls, leading to two players - Laila Roberts and Chesney Weber- fouling out. The Panthers had their own issues, picking up 19 fouls with Myra Lentz fouling out. Both teams struggled at the free-throw line, with Groton making just 10 of 22 attempts (45%) and Great Plains Lutheran hitting 11 of 25 (44%).

Groton's aggressive defense was a difference-maker, forcing 27 Panther turnovers compared to just 11 of their own. The Tigers were efficient from inside the arc, shooting 50% (18-for-36) on two-pointers. Their outside shooting, however, struggled at 19% (3-for-16) from beyond the arc. Taryn Traphagen drained two three-pointers, while Jerica Locke added another.

Key Performers:

- Rylee Dunker led the Tigers in scoring with 13 points.
- Jerica Locke added 12 points and four steals.
- Taryn Traphagen contributed 6 rebounds, 2 three-pointers, and a block.
- Layla Roberts and Faith Traphagen each dished out 3 assists.
- Madeline Prahll led the Panthers with 15 points.

JV and C Team Clean Sweep

Groton Area's success carried over to the junior varsity and C team games, securing a complete program sweep.

• The JV squad battled through nine lead changes before breaking away with a dominant second-half performance, fueled by a 16-point run. They turned a 13-12 advantage into a 21-14 halftime lead and continued their momentum to secure a 37-16 victory. Chesney Weber led the way with 15 points, while McKenna Tietz chipped in 12 followed by Talli Wright with 3, Kella Tracy, Ashlynn Warrington and Mia Crank each had 2 points and Tevan Hanson had 1. Julia Prahll led the Panthers with 8 points.

The C team left no doubt in their matchup, suffocating Great Plains Lutheran in a 38-8 win. The Tigers raced out to a 15-0 first-quarter lead and never looked back. Kella Tracy paced Groton with 15 points followed by Makenna Krause with 6, Kinsley Rowen and Ashlynn Warrington each had 4, Tevan Hanson 3, and



Laila Roberts

(Photo by Paul Kosel)

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adding 2 points apiece were Sydney Locke, Teagan Hanten and Avery Crank. Maddie Kannas led the Panthers with five.

Looking Ahead

With momentum on their side, the Tigers now shift their focus to their next challenge- a road matchup against Mobridge on Saturday. If Monday night was any indication, Groton Area is ready to keep rolling.

- Story compiled by ChatGPT

Rylee Dunker: 13 points 5 rebounds, 2 assists, 2 steals, 2 fouls.

Jerica Locke: 12 points 2 rebounds, 2 assists, 4 steals, 2 fouls.

Taryn Traphagen: 8 points, 6 rebounds, 1 assist, 1 steal 1 foul, 1 block.

Kennedy Hansen: 7 points, 4 rebounds, 2 assists, 1 steal, 1 foul.

Jaedyn Penning: 4 points, 5 rebounds, 1 assist, 1 steal, 3 fouls.

Faith Traphagen: 4 points, 3 rebounds, 2 assists, 1 steal, 2 fouls.

Laila Roberts: 3 points, 3 assists, 4 steals, 5 fouls.

McKenna Tietz: 2 points, 2 rebounds, 1 steal.

Chesney Weber: 2 points, 3 rebounds, 1 steal, 5 fouls.

Brooklyn Hansen: 1 rebound, 1 steal, 2 fouls.

Mia Crank: 1 rebound.

2-Pointers: 18-36 50%, 3-Pointers: 3-16 19%, Free Throws:

10-22 45%,

3 2 re-

bounds, 11

turnovers,

14 assists, 18 steals, 23 fouls, 1 block.



Kennedy Hansen

(Photo by Paul Kosel)



Jerica Locke

(Photo by Paul Kosel)

Great Plains Lutheran: Madeline Prah 15, Myra Lentz 7, Katherine Prah 5, Jolie Lien 4, Lydia Schleusener 2, Julia Prah 1. Field Goals: 10-25 40%, Free Throws: 11-25 44%, 19 fouls, 27 turnovers.

All three games were broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM. The varsity game was sponsored by Agtegra, Avantara Groton, Bierman Farm Service, BK Custom T's & More, Blocker Construction, Dacotah Bank, Groton Ag Partners, Groton Chamber, Groton Ford, John Sieh Agency, Jungle Lanes & Lounge, Locke Electric, Krueger Brothers, R&M Farms/Rix Farms, The Meathouse in Andover. Weber Landscaping sponsored the junior varsity game and Locke Electric sponsored the C game. Paul Kosel and Jeslyn Kosel were on hand for the action.

The Life of Jean Walter



Services for Jean Walter, 94, of Groton will be 11:00 a.m., Friday, February 14th at the United Methodist Church, Groton. Rev. Rob Moorlach will officiate. Burial will follow in Sunset Memorial Gardens, Aberdeen under the direction of Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton. Services will be live streamed at GDILIVE.com

Visitation will be held for one hour prior to services at the church.

Jean passed away peacefully on January 30, 2025 at Avantara Groton.

Jean Ann Voigt was born on May 18, 1930 to Ervin and Clara Voigt in Groton, SD. Jean was the youngest of the seven Voigt children and she attended school in Groton.

Jean married Vernon Walter on September 18, 1947 and began life as a dairy farmer's wife, working alongside Vernon. Along came three sons that added many memories of fishing, baseball games, 4-H projects, and all sharing in the farm work. Jean and Vernon were instrumental in the foundation of the James Jimmies Baseball Team by their support and donation of land for the baseball field. Together, they enjoyed playing cards, league bowling and golf. They spent many winters in Mesa, Arizona. After moving from the farm in 2006, they made their home in Groton. Vern passed away February 4, 2010. Jean then moved to Rosewood Court in May of 2018-2024, where she enjoyed being with other residents and appreciated the employees.

Jean was a member of the United Methodist Church in Groton and a 65 year member of the American Legion Auxiliary. Jean will be remembered as fun loving, a hard worker, and always ready for a good time. She loved having company on the farm, or later in town, always insisting "sit down and eat". Jean made friends and memories easily!

Grateful for having shared her life are Jean's sons, Merle (Nancy) Walter of Arlington, Robert (Vicki) Walter of Groton, 10 grandchildren and 22 great-grandchildren. Jean loved her family and they loved her.

Preceding her in death were her parents, her husband, Vernon in 2010, her son, Terry Walter in 2020, granddaughter, Becky Diegel in 2022, and her siblings: Myrtis (Lawrence) Larson, Lorraine (Ervin) Pasch, Donald (Marianne) Voigt, Vivian (LeRoy) Locken, Robert Voigt and Beverly (Lucille) Voigt.

Casketbearers will be all of Jean's great-grandchildren.

The family would like to extend a sincere thank you to Avantara in Groton for the great nursing care they gave Jean. A special thanks to Monte & Sandi Sippel and family and the entire staff & residents for being a part of her 7 years at Rosewood Court. You were all so very special to her.

Service Notice: Faye Stohr

Services for Faye Stohr, 76, of Aberdeen will be 11:00 a.m., Saturday, February 15th at the Claremont Community Church. Rev. Rodney Ulmer will officiate. Entombment will follow in Sunset Memorial Gardens Mausoleum, Aberdeen under the direction of Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton.

Visitation will be held at the funeral chapel on Friday from 5-7 p.m. with a prayer service at 7:00 p.m.

Faye passed away February 7, 2025 at Primrose Cottages in Aberdeen.

Brock Abeln completes book inspired by God

by Dorene Nelson

Brock Abeln worked for the City of Groton during the summer when he was in high school. Life changed for him when an accident while cutting down a tree fractured and distorted his spinal cord, causing permanent paralysis from his shoulders down. At that time he was seventeen years old and would be a senior in high school in the fall.

For the past 22 years, Brock has faced more extreme physical issues and crises than most people will in their entire life. Looking back on his past, Abeln decided to share these experiences by writing a book about his life.

"I wrote this book because God told me to!" Abeln explained. "One day while I was on my computer, I heard God's voice say, 'Brock, you need to write a book about your life because it will help other people.'"

"I was very moved by this experience and broke down in tears," he admitted. "I'd never experienced anything like that before. God's voice was so clear it was as if He were in the room with me!"

"I hope my book teaches people that no matter how bad things get, they have to stay positive," Abeln explained. "Unfortunately, they can always get worse!"

"My advice is to stay determined and find ways to persevere! When you do fail, accept the challenge and figure out another way to succeed. Above all, trust in God. Let Him guide you. Dreams do come true," he stated. "I hope that my book inspires people

to seize the day and live their lives to the fullest!"

"The human spirit has no limits," Abeln explained. "Sometimes the only thing stopping us from being successful is us, letting our attitude defeat us before we even start."

"I also decided to tackle this task as a way of giving back to the community with the hope of helping people get through any hardship they may face in their own lives," he added. "The community and surrounding areas have given my family and me so much over the years and helped us through some of the toughest times in our lives. We thank them greatly!"

Brock uses his computer with the use of a voice-activated software program and controls his power wheelchair through "sips and puffs" on a straw. With modifications made to his hunting rifle, Brock continues to hunt, ride in his side-by-side/UTV, and live his life as normally as possible!

"I faced many challenges while working on my book, My Journey :



Brock Abeln is pictured with the book he wrote. (Photo by Dorene Nelson)

MY JOURNEY: LEARNING TO TRIUMPH

How Living with a Spinal Cord Injury Taught Me That
Nothing is Impossible



Brock Abeln

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Learning to Triumph," Abeln admitted. "Obviously there are always medical issues, but putting this experience down on paper triggered memories that I'd subsequently re-live!"

"I decided to self-publish my book for a few main reasons," Abeln explained. "Using a regular publisher takes longer and is more of a hassle than self-publishing."

"When I first decided to go the self-publishing route, I received some help from a lady in Aberdeen," he said. "She did editing for me and had great advice which encouraged me to continue with this project."

"Most published books have very few photos due to the extra expense involved," Abeln added. "But I wanted lots of photos because I believe they provide the needed evidence and proof that I've actually done what my book says I have!"

"My mom Wynella Abeln did a lot of proofreading for me," he smiled. "She also helped me with word choice and even convinced my high school English teachers to read my 'finished' product before sending it to be printed!"

The books are available at Lori's Pharmacy, Groton; Novel Ideas, South Main Street Aberdeen, across from the Capital Theatre; and on Amazon. There will be a "Meet the Author" on Monday, February 17, at Lori's Pharmacy from 3:30 – 5:30 p.m. Snacks and coffee will be available.

Coming up on GDILIVE.COM

Tuesday, Feb. 11

Groton Area
Tigers

BBB: Groton Area

hosts Leola-Frederick

GT

5:15: C Game

Sponsored for the grandparents watching.

6:00 JV Game

Sponsored by Hefty Seed

Followed by Boys Varsity

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



\$5 ticket or

GDI Subscription

required to watch the games.

Proposed state legislation a concern for Groton Area School District officials

by Elizabeth Varin

A dense list of 50 bills dealing with everything from property tax changes and school voucher programs to curriculum requirements and displaying the Ten Commandments greeted the Groton Area School District board during Monday's meeting.

Superintendent Joe Schwan provided an update on the numerous education-related bills moving through the South Dakota Legislature. The list only included legislation that would impact the district and that had not already been defeated.

Bills discussed Monday include HB 1138, which would reduce the maximum property tax levy for owner-occupied single-family dwellings. Another pair of bills briefly discussed include House Bills 1171 and 1172, which mandate health curriculum changes that include showing videos of human growth and development in the womb starting as early as third grade, as well as showing videos of chemical and surgical abortions to students in grades nine through 12.

Senate Bill 51, which would have required the display and curriculum inclusion of the Ten Commandments and other documents, was defeated in the House on Monday.

Another bill that would impact the district is Senate Bill 74, which is currently awaiting the Governor's signature. That bill requires the publication and review of open meeting laws in the state.

Senate Bill 55, which revises property tax levies for school districts, is one to keep an eye on, though it won't be discussed until the final week of the legislative session.

Board President Grant Rix asked why there is so much legislation this year dealing with schools.

Schwan replied that some issues, like "school choice" or voucher programs, have become a national conversation. Some are looking at leveraging federal and state public school funding to go toward voucher programs that allow parents to use public funds to pay for private school or homeschooling.

"One way to make a case for that is to run down public schools," Schwan told the board. "That's one way you can craft an argument."

Two bills – House Bills 1009 and 1020 – have already been sent to the 41st legislative day, essentially killing the bills. However, Schwan said, there are some bills making their way through the state Senate that deal with the same issue.

"The worst part, in my opinion, is all the education bills, they paint us all in a negative light," Schwan said. "They beat up our schools. They beat up our teachers. They beat up our school administrators, beat up our school boards and the counselors."

Even more legislation is based on information heard through the grapevines.

Some legislators have testified about issues based on information one family has told them. They propose legislation about it rather than working with the appropriate board to learn more and potentially solve the issue, Schwan said.

"I just think that's a completely wrong way to go about it," he said. "I mean, we're a very conservative state. We're anti-regulation, right? Generally speaking, we're anti-regulation, stay-out-of-your-business. This is not reflective of that at all. Not at all."

When asked whether there were any particular bills concerning him, board President Rix said school funding is always a concern.

"There are a myriad of things going through the legislature that are concerning, but it's really not worth talking about at this point until they start narrowing them down," he said. "...Until they start dwindling down all the bills that aren't going to make it, it's not worth talking about."

He advises people to keep a record of what's going on in the legislature. If it looks like it's going to affect the Groton school district, reach out to the legislators because they do listen.

Bills on the list presented to the board include HB1019, HB1035, HB1039, HB1040, HB1059, HB1089, HB1092, HB1094, HB1105, HB1119, HB1130, HB1138, HB1171, HB1172, HB1177, HB1180, HB1181, HB1182,

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HB1183, HB1185, HB1197, HB1200, HB1201, HB1222, HB1224, HB1229, HB1235, HB1239, HB1241, HB1244, HB1254, HB1255, HB1259, SB51, SB55, SB70, SB71, SB74, SB85, SB101, SB113, SB121, SB169, SB190, SB191, SB196, SB207, SB208, SB216 and SB219.

- The board accepted the resignation of Butch Farmen, maintenance team member, quickly followed by a vote to hire Adam Hjernstad as maintenance team member.
- Technology Coordinator Aaron Helvig reviewed recently completed project and discussed some issues looking to the future. Helvig told the board that some of the district's iPads no longer support system upgrades. They are fine for this year, but moving forward, new iPads will need to be purchased. Helvig also pushed for more technology-related classes. There are currently no computer classes offered at the high school level, and the last chance for students to take a computer class is as an elective in eighth grade. He recommended looking into some computer science classes that could be incorporated into the school year.
- Two board members (Nick Strom and Tigh Fliehs) will meet with Superintendent Joe Schwan to discuss whether the district should contract with LiveTicket.TV to live stream events for the 2025-2026 school year. Currently, the Groton Baseball/Softball Foundation contracts with the company to livestream games during the summer. The contract would require the district to purchase live streaming equipment (estimated to cost about \$6,000), but the district would split advertising revenue with the company.
- Middle school and high school Opportunity Coordinator Jodi Schwan discussed dual credit classes with the board. Of the about 100 juniors and seniors at the high school, 48 are taking dual credit classes (college-level courses that allow students to earn both college and high school credit), and some are taking multiple courses. For the spring semester, one student is taking a class from Dakota State University, 29 are taking classes from Lake Area Technical College, 36 are taking classes from Northern State University, 12 are taking classes from South Dakota State University and five are taking classes from the University of South Dakota.
- Both middle/high school Principal Shelby Edwards and elementary school Principal Brett Schwan noted parent-teacher conferences are Thursday.
- Business Manager Becky Hubsch reminded those in attendance that school board nomination petitions are due by 5 p.m. Friday, Feb. 28. Three positions are up for election in April.

Superintendent's Report to the Groton Area School District 06-6 Board of Education
February 10, 2025

Food Service Inspections. On February 10, 2025, the Elementary and Middle/High School Food Service facilities were inspected for routine inspection by the South Dakota Department of Health. Both facilities received a perfect score of 100. Congratulations to the Food Service Team for their diligence in adherence to safety standards!

Perkins IMPROVE Meeting. On January 30, I attended the Department of Education's Perkin's IMPROVE meeting in Aberdeen to learn more about the updates to the CTE Career Clusters.

NSU Teacher Job Fair. On January 31, I attended the Northern State University Teacher Job Fair. This year's event was held in the Barnett Center Kessler's Champions Room and the Barnett Center Arena. In addition to the round table discussions with teacher candidates and the job fair meet-and-greet, the 2024 South Dakota Teacher of the Year addressed the group.

Legislative Session.

HB1019 An Act to eliminate certain property taxes levied on owner-occupied single-family dwellings, and to increase certain gross receipts tax rates and use tax rates.

HB1035 An Act to make an appropriation for school security enhancement grants [Joint Appropriations].

HB1039 An Act to repeal the programs reimbursing a teacher or school counselor for earning national board certification [House Appropriations].

HB1040. An Act to reduce the state's contribution to a subsidized high school dual credit program [House Appropriations].

HB1059. An Act to clarify the meaning of teleconference for purposes of open meeting requirements [Senate State Affairs].

HB1089. An Act to establish parameters for the reimbursement of school districts that provide free or reduced-price meals to students [House Appropriations].

HB1092. An Act to make an appropriation for a student teacher stipend grant program [Joint Appropriations].

HB1094. An Act to modify laws regarding school bus safety and to provide a penalty therefor [Senate Judiciary].

HB1105. An Act to require the display of the state seal or motto in public school classrooms [Full House].

HB1119. An Act to limit annual valuation increases on owner-occupied single-family dwellings and nonagricultural property [House State Affairs].

HB1130. An Act to provide permissible dates for municipal and school district elections [Passed House].

HB1138. An Act to reduce a maximum property tax mill levy on owner-occupied single-family dwellings for school district general funds, and to repeal certain sales tax exemptions [House State Affairs].

HB1171. An Act to require that a school curriculum include human growth and development within the health curriculum [House Education].

HB1172. An Act to require that a high school health curriculum include human sexuality and human development within the womb [House Education].

HB1177. An Act to require an employee of a school district, the Board of Regents, or the South Dakota Board of Technical Education to receive permission of a parent or guardian of an unemancipated minor student before addressing the student with a name other than the student's legal name and to prohibit the compulsory use of gendered language inconsistent with sex [House Education].

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HB1180. An Act to require that a candidate for election to the board of a school district disclose the candidate's party affiliation on a declaration of candidacy [House Education].

HB1181. An Act to require a school district to provide dyslexia screening [House Education].

HB1182. An Act to provide for the recall of a member of a board of a school district [House Education].

HB1183. An Act to amend the other revenue base amount available to certain school districts [House Education].

HB1185. An Act to provide that public moneys for education may not be used for lobbying purposes [House Education].

HB1197. An Act to permit a teacher to assist a student in objectively reviewing scientific information [House Education].

HB1200. An Act to permit merit pay as a component of teacher compensation [House Education].

HB1201. An Act to establish requirements for school counseling services [House Education].

HB1222. An Act to expand the authorized carrying, possession, and storage of a concealed pistol [House Judiciary].

HB1224. An Act to Defund the Huron School District [Withdrawn].

HB1229. An Act to provide an exemption from certain property taxation for owner-occupied single-family dwellings, and to limit the taxes due on property over the previous year [House State Affairs].

HB1235. An Act to reduce a limit on the annual increases of property tax revenues payable to certain taxing districts, and to subject school districts to a limit on property taxes collected in a year [House State Affairs].

HB1239. An Act to revise certain affirmative defenses to dissemination of material harmful to minors and obscenity defenses [House Education].

HB1241. An Act to reduce the growth in the assessed value of owner-occupied property tax assessments [House State Affairs]. *Placeholder Bill

HB1244. An Act to make certain federal laws applicable to public employees [House Judiciary].

HB1254. An Act to prohibit a school district from offering a reward to or imposing disciplinary action on a student to incentivize the return of required parental consent forms [House Education].

HB1255. An Act to require that public school students be provided with information regarding age-of-consent laws and legal and mental health resources [House Education].

HB1259. An Act to prohibit unauthorized access to multi-occupancy rooms and to provide a penalty therefor.

SB51. An Act to require the display and curricular inclusion of the Ten Commandments and other documents [Defeated in House 2/10/25].

SB55. An Act to revise property tax levies for school districts and to revise the state aid to general and special education formulas [Joint Appropriations].

SB70. An Act to modify the maximum sparsity benefit a sparse school district is eligible to receive [Senate Appropriations].

SB71. An Act to revise provisions pertaining to the compulsory age for school attendance [House Education].

SB74. An Act to require the publication and review of an explanation of the open meeting laws of this state [Awaiting Governor's Signature].

SB85. An Act to provide property tax relief to certain senior owners of owner-occupied single-family dwellings [Senate Taxation].

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SB101. An Act to provide a tax credit to limit the taxes due on property over the previous year [Senate Taxation].

SB113. An Act to provide protections for parental rights [Senate State Affairs].

SB121. An Act to reduce maximum values for certain property taxes levied on owner-occupied single-family dwellings, and to increase the rates for certain gross receipts taxes and use taxes [Senate Taxation].

SB169. An Act to require that taxing districts hold a public hearing when increasing property tax revenues relative to the previous year [Senate Taxation].

SB190. An Act to establish an education property tax credit program [Senate Education].

SB191. An Act to limit annual valuation increases on owner-occupied single-family dwellings [Senate Taxation].

SB196. An Act to require the display and curricular inclusion of the Wooke Sakowin in public schools [Senate Education].

SB207. An Act to freeze property tax revenues and assessments for two years [Senate Taxation].

SB208. An Act to amend provisions pertaining to a school district's proposed opt out, capital outlay certificate, or other agreement.

SB216. An Act to reduce the growth in the assessed value of owner-occupied property tax assessments [Senate State Affairs].

SB219. An Act to require the acceptance of cash payment for admission to a school-affiliated event [Senate Education].

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Brett Schwan
Elementary Board Report
February 10, 2025

Enrollment:

Preschool: 12
Early Childhood: 10
JK: 13
KG: 31
1st: 52
2nd: 39
3rd: 46
4th: 41
5th: 50

Conferences: Students will be dismissed at 1:00 on Thursday. OST will be open on Thursday from 1:00 – 6:00 PM.

DST: OST will be closed this Friday for in-service. OST will be open on Monday, February 17 from 7:00 AM – 6:00 PM.

ELL Tutoring: With the 1003 grant money we receive, Ms. Serr has started after school tutoring for our ELL students. This is being help Monday – Thursday.

Friday's In-service: Dr. Pirllet from NSU will be here to talk about technology in the classroom. His presentation will be roughly 3 hours.

Track and Field Day: Track and field day will be on Thursday, May 8th from 12:30 – 3:00.

Brett Schwan
Principal/OST Director
Groton Area Elementary

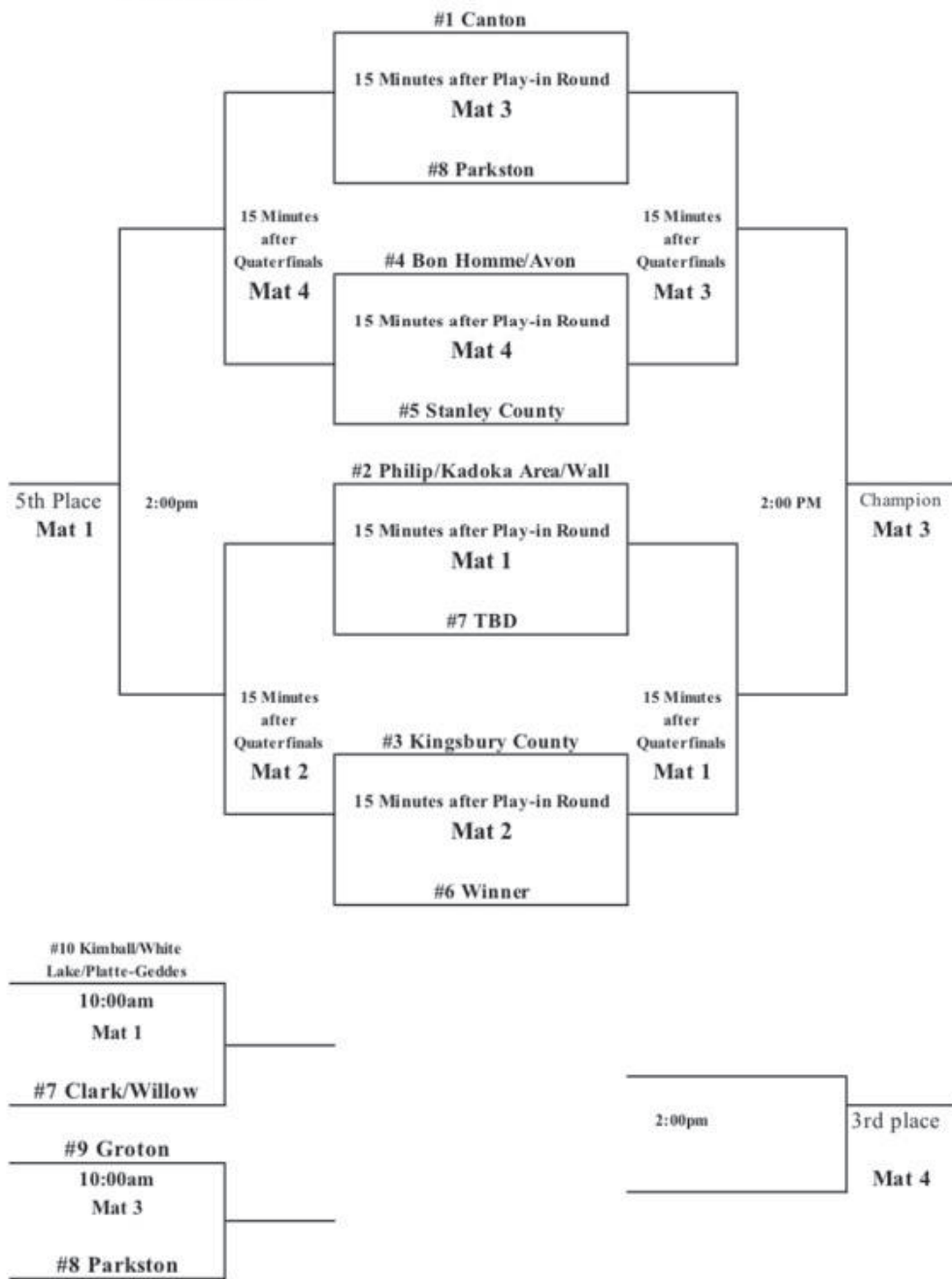
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Groton Area qualifies for State B Duals

The Groton Area Tiger Wrestling Team has qualified for the State B Duals this Friday in Pierre!! It is the first time Groton Area has qualified for this tournament since its inception.

CLASS B





SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Bill requiring posting, teaching of Ten Commandments fails in SD House

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - FEBRUARY 10, 2025 6:40 PM

A bill that would have required South Dakota public schools to display and teach the Ten Commandments failed to clear its final legislative hurdle Monday at the Capitol in Pierre as the state House voted 37-31 to reject it.

State representatives engaged in a lengthy, impassioned debate. Opponents said the bill represented an unconstitutional government endorsement of religion, and warned of legal challenges.

Rep. David Kull, R-Brandon, referenced out-of-state support for the bill, including from Texas-based WallBuilders, which says it works to protect the nation's "Biblical foundation."

"Make no mistake, this bill is an experiment, and we're the lab rats, and the leading scientists from out of state are driving us," Kull said. "The beauty for them is they aren't at risk. Their money isn't at risk — ours is."

A similar bill adopted by Louisiana is being challenged in court.

The South Dakota bill originally mandated that all public school classrooms feature 8-by-14-inch posters of the Ten Commandments with a three-part, 225-word statement explaining their historical significance. The bill was amended during the Monday debate to require only one display for each school, but the House rejected the bill even with the amendment.

Additionally, schools would have been required to incorporate lessons on the commandments at least once during elementary, middle and high school as part of civics and history classes.

Supporters of the bill said the Ten Commandments played a fundamental role in shaping American law and culture.

Rep. John Hughes, R-Sioux Falls, was among the lawmakers who said the commandments are needed in schools. He said the Judeo-Christian worldview is under attack.

"Our system of public education instructs our children that no god is responsible for how we came to be, for what purpose we were created, and for what becomes of us when we breathe our last breath on this earth," he said.

Rep. Tim Goodwin, R-Rapid City, said he supported the bill even though the religious leaders and public school superintendents he talked to were against it.

Goodwin said he prayed about the bill and experienced a calmness that influenced his vote.

"The calmness had a voice saying to me, if one person comes to Christ because the Ten Commandments are posted, vote yes," he said.

Rep. Keri Weems, R-Sioux Falls, said a government mandate is not the right way to spread Christianity.

"This is brought about by relationships," she said, "not words on a wall."

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

Legislation would require schools to notify parents if students discuss gender identity

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - FEBRUARY 10, 2025 7:19 PM

Public school counselors, teachers, administrators and staff would be required to alert parents if a student discusses gender identity with them under legislation endorsed by a legislative committee Monday at the South Dakota Capitol in Pierre.

Rep. Logan Manhart, R-Aberdeen, introduced House Bill 1201, which would require parental notification of discussions of a student's "gender confusion or gender dysphoria."

Sen. Amber Hulse, R-Hot Springs, also spoke in support of the bill, saying school staff shouldn't be "pushing these ideas" onto students.

"If you as a parent want to teach that to your child, that's all for you," Hulse said.

Several school counselors opposed the bill, saying it was unnecessary since discussing gender identity or diagnosing gender dysphoria is outside of school counselors' scope of practice and code of ethics. They also told lawmakers that they encourage students who are interested in discussing gender identity to talk to their parents.

"House Bill 1201 comes out of fear and misinformation that school counselors and school staff are indoctrinating students into gender sexuality choices that are contrary to family beliefs," said Kim Goebel, a school counselor for the Gettysburg School District.

Lawmakers who voted against the bill raised concerns about requiring mandatory parental notification without exceptions for abusive situations, and said they wanted to hear from more education professionals and school districts.

The only public education lobbyist to testify on the bill was Rob Monson, executive director for School Administrators of South Dakota. He opposed it, saying the bill's use of "discussed" is too vague and that the bill lacks an enforcement mechanism.

The House Education Committee passed the bill 8-7. It'll head to the House floor next.

Another bill addressing the intersection of gender identity and education failed to pass the committee Monday. The committee voted 9-5 against a bill that would prohibit schools from disciplining students, teachers and staff who refuse to use a student's preferred name, title and pronouns.

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.

Proposal to allow concealed pistols on college campuses advances in SD Legislature

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - FEBRUARY 10, 2025 4:44 PM

A South Dakota Senate committee advanced a bill Monday at the Capitol in Pierre that would allow people to carry concealed pistols on technical college and public university campuses.

Policies in both systems currently prohibit guns and other dangerous weapons on campus. The bill only addresses concealed carry and does not include language saying open carry would be allowed.

Higher education officials and law enforcement authorities raised concerns during the committee hearing about improperly stored guns in dorms and increased risks for students.

"A student living in a communal area could leave their gun sitting on their nightstand, could leave it on a dining room table when they are not actively carrying it, and we wouldn't be able to place any constraints, restrictions," said Nathan Lukkes, executive director of the South Dakota Board of Regents, which oversees

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the state's six public universities.

The legislation would not only force the Board of Regents and Board of Technical Education to allow the possession of concealed pistols and ammunition, but also stun guns, mace and pepper spray.

Sen. Mykala Voita, R-Bonesteel, is the bill's primary sponsor. She said the measure aligns with South Dakota's other gun laws and ensures students can defend themselves.

"Is the security guard going to walk with you to the parking lot?" Voita asked rhetorically. "Are they going to be with you in every building?"

The National Shooting Sports Foundation and National Rifle Association spoke in favor of the bill.

Jenna Severyn, representing the South Dakota Police Chiefs Association, spoke against the bill and said the association is concerned about young people controlling their impulses while carrying concealed firearms.

"This is about, can my brain think quicker than my trigger finger?" she said. "And studies have shown that youth, specifically in the age we are talking about today, don't have that."

The bill passed the Senate State Affairs Committee 7-2 and now heads to the full Senate.

Meanwhile, the House Commerce and Energy Committee unanimously endorsed separate firearms legislation Monday morning. That bill would prohibit credit card companies and financial institutions from requiring retail tracking codes specifically for gun and ammunition sales. It's already passed the Senate and will go to the House next.

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

Lab-grown meat labeling, fees for serving legal papers, stenography rule change signed into law

BY: JOHN HULT - FEBRUARY 10, 2025 5:14 PM

South Dakota Gov. Larry Rhoden has signed bills into law to let county sheriffs charge a fee for serving legal papers, open the records of former governors five years faster, and require lab-grown meat to be labeled as such.

Also among the 14 bills Rhoden signed Monday: A repeal of the right of parties in some court cases to demand a court reporter if a judge feels a transcribable audio recording will do.

Under the lab-grown meat labeling law, which will take effect July 1, packages must "clearly state in a prominent and conspicuous manner" that there's cell-cultured or lab-grown meat inside.

The meat is produced from sample cells that are fed sugars, water, proteins and vitamins. The state Senate is poised to ponder a more severe approach to the product, which some ranchers see as a threat to their livelihood.

That bill, sponsored by Dupree-area rancher and Republican Rep. Jana Hunt, would bar altogether the manufacture or sale of the products in South Dakota. It passed the state House of Representatives 42-26 on Thursday.

The stenography bill sailed through both chambers with unanimous support. The state court system brought the bill in response to a court reporter shortage, noting that its courtroom recording systems capture audio that can be transcribed as needed.

The process service bill lets sheriffs charge a range of fees – including mileage – to recoup costs associated with things like serving warrants or serving a summons to appear; the records bill opens previously sealed records of a former South Dakota governor five years after they leave office. Current law seals those records for 10 years.

John is the senior reporter for South Dakota Searchlight. He has more than 15 years experience covering criminal justice, the environment and public affairs in South Dakota, including more than a decade at the Sioux Falls Argus Leader.

What happens to a school that refuses to obey the Trump ban on transgender athletes?

BY: SHAUNEEN MIRANDA - FEBRUARY 10, 2025 5:07 PM

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump's recent executive order prohibiting transgender athletes from competing on women's sports teams consistent with their gender identity raises complex questions about enforcement mechanisms and consequences for schools that do not comply.

The executive order, part of Trump's broader anti-trans agenda, rescinds federal funds from "educational programs" if schools fail to adhere to the ban.

The administration is asking federal agencies to interpret Title IX — a federal civil rights law barring schools that receive federal funding from practicing sex-based discrimination — in a way that complies with the order.

"The war on women's sports is over," Trump said at a crowded Feb. 5 executive order signing ceremony in the White House.

Transgender issues in South Dakota

FROM SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

Lawmaker loses vice chairmanship after trying to defund Huron schools over bathroom issue

Noem signs transgender youth health care ban into law

State apologizes, pays transgender advocacy group \$300,000 for discrimination

South Dakota joins Arkansas federal lawsuit over Title IX transgender protections

"We're putting every school receiving taxpayer dollars on notice that if you let men take over women's sports teams or invade your locker rooms, you will be investigated for violations of Title IX and risk your federal funding — there will be no federal funding," he said.

The order asks the secretary of Education to "take all appropriate action to affirmatively protect all-female athletic opportunities and all-female locker rooms" — going beyond just women's sports teams and including locker rooms used for physical education classes.

Trump's effort also came as an increasing number of states have passed laws banning trans students from participating in sports that align with their gender identity.

At least half of all states have enacted a law that bans trans students from taking part in sports that align with their gender identity, according to the Movement Advancement Project, an independent think tank.

Many others, led by both Democrats and Republicans, have not taken that step.

The Human Rights Campaign, an LGBTQ+ advocacy group, has noted that there has been "considerable disinformation and misinformation about what the inclusion of transgender youth in sports entails" and that trans students' sports participation "has been a non-issue; many states, athletic organizations, and governing bodies successfully balanced fairness, inclusion, and access to play without any problem."

'Extremely broad'

But lawyers and Title IX experts told States Newsroom it remains to be seen how exactly schools across the country will enforce the executive order and how the administration would rescind federal funds for any schools failing to adhere.

Shiwali Patel, a Title IX expert and senior director of safe and inclusive schools at the National Women's Law Center, said the "blatantly discriminatory" order is "extremely broad" and raises "a lot of questions."

"It touches educational institutions, it touches international competitions, it touches immigration of trans women athletes, it calls for these convenings, it calls for state attorneys general to identify some enforcement mechanisms," Patel said.

The order asks the assistant to the president for domestic policy to bring together state attorneys general to "identify best practices" in enforcing the ban.

The assistant is also responsible for bringing together "representatives of major athletic organizations

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and governing bodies” to promote such policies regarding trans athletes’ participation in women’s sports.

Elana Redfield, a lawyer and federal policy director at the Williams Institute at the University of California, Los Angeles School of Law, which focuses on laws and policies affecting LGBTQ+ people, pointed out that the executive order “contains kind of broad language, including addressing locker rooms.”

“So, it suggests that any kind of space ... for example, PE classes or locker rooms for use in elementary and high school, middle schools as well — those kinds of spaces would be affected,” she said.

Kelli Rodriguez, assistant dean for academic affairs at Seattle University School of Law, said it’s going to be “really confusing for a while” and “a lot of waiting and seeing.”

Rodriguez, who is also the director of sports law at Seattle University School of Law, said “the one thing that’s different is that the executive order calls for, potentially, ramifications or punitive actions if institutions don’t comply.”

“I don’t know what that means yet, I think that’s one of the things that’s kind of outstanding — we’ll see what that means from an enforcement standpoint,” she said, noting that she thinks many schools right now are “very anxious” for what exactly those punitive actions would look like when it comes to federal funding.

Rodriguez also said she expects to see state attorneys general, individual athletes, parents of athletes and institutions challenge the executive order.

Breaking down Title IX

Redfield noted that Title IX is a spending clause type of legislation, which “gives the federal government enforcement power by giving grants to agencies, and then withholding those grants if the law is violated.”

“The Trump administration is sort of referencing things that are out there as a way to try to provide support for their position on the definition and meaning of Title IX, but ultimately, this is going to probably be decided by Congress or a court or both,” she added.

The House passed a measure in January that would bar trans students from participating on women’s school sports teams consistent with their gender identity.

The legislation would also amend Title IX so that “sex shall be recognized based solely on a person’s reproductive biology and genetics at birth.”

A similar measure from last session was reintroduced in the Senate in January, but the effort would likely need the backing of at least 60 senators to advance past the filibuster.

New investigations

Meanwhile, shortly after Trump signed the executive order, the Education Department announced investigations into two universities and an athletic association where they say “violations of Title IX have been reported.” Those under investigation include: San Jose State University in California; the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia; and the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association.

Following the executive order, the NCAA also announced last week that the organization would update its transgender student-athlete participation policy to limit “competition in women’s sports to student-athletes assigned female at birth only.”

Shauneen Miranda is a reporter for States Newsroom’s Washington bureau. An alumna of the University of Maryland, she previously covered breaking news for Axios.

Federal judge orders all grant and loan payments must be resumed by Trump administration

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - FEBRUARY 10, 2025 3:54 PM

WASHINGTON — A federal judge told the Trump administration on Monday that it must comply with a previous ruling that required the government to unfreeze funding on grants and loans.

Chief Judge John J. McConnell Jr. of the U.S. District Court in Rhode Island issued the new five-page ruling just days after Democratic attorneys general filed an emergency motion, alleging the Trump administration wasn't following a temporary restraining order the judge issued in late January.

McConnell wrote in his latest ruling the Trump administration must "restore withheld funds" connected to the bipartisan infrastructure law and the so-called Inflation Reduction Act, the climate change, health care and tax package that Democrats passed when they held unified control of government.

He also wrote that the Trump administration needed to unfreeze funding at the National Institutes of Health.

Two lawsuits

The ongoing case in the U.S. District Court in Rhode Island, State of New York v. Trump, is just one of two lawsuits challenging the Trump administration's attempt to freeze trillions of dollars in grant and loan funding.

The other case, National Council of Nonprofits v. Office of Management and Budget, includes its own temporary restraining order requiring the Trump administration to release the funds it tried to halt.

The cases began in late January when the Office of Management and Budget issued a two-page memorandum instructing departments and agencies to halt the payments.

The memo immediately came under a short-term administrative stay from a federal judge and the Office of Management and Budget decided to withdraw the memo the next day.

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

Both federal judges later issued temporary restraining orders blocking the Trump administration from implementing the type of halt in grant and loan payments envisioned in the OMB memo.

All freezes included, judge says

McConnell tried to clear up any confusion about his temporary restraining order with the emergency order on Monday, writing the "plain language of the TRO entered in this case prohibits all categorical pauses or freezes in obligations or disbursements based on the OMB Directive or based on the President's 2025 Executive Orders."

"The States have presented evidence in this motion that the Defendants in some cases have continued to improperly freeze federal funds and refused to resume disbursement of appropriated federal funds," McConnell wrote.

"The Defendants now plea that they are just trying to root out fraud," he wrote. "But the freezes in effect now were a result of the broad categorical order, not a specific finding of possible fraud. The broad categorical and sweeping freeze of federal funds is, as the Court found, likely unconstitutional and has caused and continues to cause irreparable harm to a vast portion of this country. These pauses in funding violate the plain text of the TRO."

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.

Legislation restricting labor union activity passes SD committee

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - FEBRUARY 10, 2025 3:07 PM

A bill proposing to strengthen South Dakota's "right-to-work" laws — described by critics as anti-union laws — will head to the House floor, despite hesitancy among legislative committee members who endorsed the legislation Monday at the Capitol in Pierre.

Twenty-eight states, including South Dakota, have "right-to-work" laws stipulating that workers can't be forced to join or pay dues to a labor union, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

House Bill 1166, introduced by Rapid City Republican Rep. Tony Randolph, would expand South Dakota's "right-to-work" laws by requiring labor union representatives to get permission from an owner or employer to enter worksites before they collect dues, solicit membership or organize a strike. It also increases penalties for violating some "right-to-work" laws from a misdemeanor to a felony.

Union representatives opposed the legislation, saying references to the penalized activity are too vague, as is the definition for who qualifies as an "employer" to grant permission for entering a worksite. They also said the bill violates federal law and would disrupt standardization for companies operating in several states.

"If we have union members on job sites, we represent them. We have a legal right and need to communicate with them," said Kory Rawstern, representing the South Dakota State Federation of Labor.

The National Right to Work Committee and the South Dakota Association of Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors spoke in support of the bill. Association Vice President Kristie Brunick said members are frustrated with union officials recruiting on private construction sites.

Rep. Steve Duffy, R-Rapid City, voted in favor of the bill, though he and other committee members were skeptical of the bill's language because of concerns raised by opponents.

"I'm not a pro-union person, but the bill looks like a mess, to be honest with you," Duffy said during the hearing. "I'm probably going to support it either way. But it does not look like it's been done right."

The bill passed with a 10-2 vote and heads to the House floor next.

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.

SD lawmakers consider higher license fees for drivers and tradespeople

BY: SETH TUPPER - FEBRUARY 10, 2025 2:31 PM

Fees for drivers, plumbers, cosmetologists, electricians and accountants would increase if lawmakers adopt a package of bills pending in the South Dakota Legislature.

A state Senate budget committee advanced several of the bills Monday at the Capitol in Pierre and delayed action on one.

The trade-specific bills are recommended by state boards and commissions consisting of industry representatives. Those bodies oversee licensing and inspections that are funded by fees, with caps set in state law. The bills would increase those caps, many of which have not increased in several years during a time of high inflation.

Republican Sen. Paul Miskimins, a retired dentist from Mitchell, said the boards and commissions are a vital part of state government.

"No matter whether you're a cosmetologist, a dentist, a veterinarian — the standards of practice need to be upheld and to be checked to make sure that the public safety is being supported," Miskimins said.

Examples of the proposals include increasing the caps on single-family dwelling plumbing inspection permits from \$75 to \$125, on initial cosmetology licenses from \$100 to \$125, on electrical inspections for new residential installations from \$300 to \$390, and on accountant examinations from \$350 to \$450.

The Senate Appropriations Committee voted to send those industry-specific bills to the Senate floor.

The committee delayed action on driver's license fees, which have not increased since 2016. The bill includes a bump from \$28 to \$38 for a standard driver's license, along with other increases for commercial licenses and for various other fees, such as those applied to license reinstatements after a revocation. A representative of the state Department of Public Safety said the increases are necessary to cover the program's costs and keep it self-sustaining.

Seth is editor-in-chief of South Dakota Searchlight. He was previously a supervising senior producer for South Dakota Public Broadcasting and a newspaper journalist in Rapid City and Mitchell.

State seeks to capture \$7 million by repealing credit for online sales tax filers

Business group says loss of \$70 monthly allowance amounts to a tax increase

BY: JOHN HULT - FEBRUARY 10, 2025 2:12 PM

PIERRE — South Dakota could do \$6.8 million worth of good for its bottom line by repealing a \$70 monthly credit for businesses that remit sales tax returns online, lawmakers learned Monday at the Capitol.

The state's Bureau of Finance and Management delivered the message to the House Appropriations Committee, which acts as a screening panel for budgetary proposals as they move toward a place in the state's financial plan for the coming fiscal year.

The money would come from undoing what's known as the "sales tax collection allowance" by way of House Bill 1037. The allowance lets businesses who file their taxes online keep up to \$70 of the sales taxes they've collected on the state's behalf.

The cut is one of many under consideration this session as legislators deal with declining sales tax revenues.

The time to repeal the allowance has come, contended Bureau of Finance and Management Commissioner Jim Terwilliger, and not just for the incidental purpose of attending to a tighter-than-average budget.

It's tax money left on the table, he said.

"At the end of the day, this is significantly different than repealing an exemption on the sales tax, because this tax is already being paid," he said.

In its current form, the allowance is designed to push businesses to remit electronically. In 2013, lawmakers restricted the credit's availability to businesses that ditched paper for digital.

That year, Terwilliger said, about 51% of businesses were sending sales tax returns electronically; today the figure is closer to 80%.

At this point, the budget manager said, the \$70 monthly credits to local businesses would be worth more as a source of funding for essential government services.

"It's a really, really small amount to businesses, but it's a meaningful amount for us," Terwilliger said.

South Dakota Retailers Association Executive Director Nathan Sanderson took issue with that characterization of the fee's origin and impact.

"This is a \$7 million tax increase on businesses," Sanderson said.

The allowance first appeared in 1990, he said, long before the practice of online remittance became possible, let alone incentivized as a means to streamline the flow of sales tax dollars.

In truth, Sanderson argued, the money helps cover fees charged to businesses by credit card companies on each transaction. It's a recognition that businesses do the state a favor by collecting money and sending it to Pierre month after month.

Businesses are “not getting rich” on the allowance, Sanderson said, but it does defray some of their costs. Sanderson was the first of nine opponents to testify. The others included business owners, as well as lobbyists for hoteliers, convenience store owners and economic development associations.

When Terwilliger returned to rebut their arguments, he said “this is absolutely not a new tax,” that South Dakota is “a pretty darn business friendly state,” and that the taxes that go unremitted under the allowance now are being paid by consumers at the checkout counter.

“I also want to point out that it is my job, and ultimately your job as the Appropriations Committee, to ensure that at the end of the day we have a balanced budget,” he said.

The committee voted to defer action until lawmakers set the state’s official revenue forecasts later this week.

John is the senior reporter for South Dakota Searchlight. He has more than 15 years experience covering criminal justice, the environment and public affairs in South Dakota, including more than a decade at the Sioux Falls Argus Leader.

Third judge blocks Trump’s executive order to end birthright citizenship

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA - FEBRUARY 10, 2025 11:09 AM

WASHINGTON — A New Hampshire federal judge Monday blocked President Donald Trump’s executive order that aims to end the constitutional right of birthright citizenship.

His preliminary injunction was the third judicial action against the executive order the president signed on his first day of his second term, following nationwide injunctions from Washington state and Maryland.

Judge Joseph N. Laplante said he would issue a statement on his reasoning Tuesday, but noted an injunction was needed due to “the status of children born” as the lawsuit continues. Laplante was appointed by former President George W. Bush in 2007.

The suit, brought by the American Civil Liberties Union, argues that the executive order violates the U.S. Constitution.

“The framers of the Fourteenth Amendment specifically enshrined this principle in our Constitution’s text to ensure that no one—not even the President—could deny children born in America their rightful place as citizens,” according to the complaint. “They did so with full knowledge and intent that this would protect the children of immigrants, including those facing discrimination and exclusion.”

Those who brought the suit against the Trump administration include organizations that advocate for immigrants’ rights and have members whose children would be denied citizenship under the executive order.

The Department of Justice, arguing on behalf of the Trump administration, argues that the 14th Amendment’s phrase, “subject to the jurisdiction” of the United States, does not extend birthright citizenship to children if their parents are either in the country without legal status or have a temporary form of legal status such as a visa.

“Prior misimpressions of the Citizenship Clause have created a perverse incentive for illegal immigration that has negatively impacted this country’s sovereignty, national security, and economic stability,” according to DOJ. “But the Framers of the Fourteenth Amendment did not fate the United States to that reality. Instead, text, history, and precedent support what common sense compels: the Constitution does not harbor a windfall clause granting American citizenship to, inter alia, the children of those who have circumvented (or defied) immigration laws.”

Ariana covers the nation’s capital for States Newsroom. Her areas of coverage include politics and policy, lobbying, elections and campaign finance.

Health insurance for millions could vanish as states put Medicaid expansion on chopping block

Uncertainty at the federal level is fueling efforts by GOP state lawmakers, including in SD

BY: ANNA CLAIRE VOLLERS, STATELINE - FEBRUARY 10, 2025 9:13 AM

Republican lawmakers in several states have Medicaid expansion in their crosshairs, energized by President Donald Trump's return to the White House and a GOP-controlled Congress set on reducing spending on the public health insurance program for low-income people.

As the feds consider cuts to Medicaid, some states are already moving to end or shrink their expanded Medicaid programs.

Legislators in Idaho have introduced a bill that would repeal voter-approved expansion, while Republicans in Montana are considering allowing their expanded program to expire. Some South Dakota lawmakers want to ask voters to let the state end expansion if federal aid declines. Nine other states already have trigger laws that will end their expansion programs if Congress cuts federal funding.

Meanwhile, discussions have stalled in non-expansion states such as Alabama, as lawmakers wait to see what the Trump administration will do.

Many conservatives argue that Medicaid expansion has created a heavy financial burden for states and that reliance on so much federal funding is risky. They argue that expansion shifts resources away from more vulnerable groups, such as children and the disabled, to low-income adults who could potentially get jobs.

In South Dakota, where voters approved Medicaid expansion in 2022 by a constitutional amendment, Republican state Sen. Casey Crabtree wants to bring expansion before voters again with a trigger measure. He told Stateline via text that his proposed amendment to the state constitution "empowers voters to maintain financial accountability, ensuring that if federal funding drops below the agreed 90%, the legislature can responsibly assess the state's financial capacity and the impact on taxpayers while still honoring the will of the people."

But even some Republicans are uneasy about what repealing expansion would mean for their constituents. "Quite honestly, I have received hundreds of emails from constituents that have said, 'please do not repeal.' I have received zero asking me to repeal, which I think is very telling," said Idaho state Rep. Lori McCann, a Republican who represents a swing district in the northern part of the state.

McCann said she's interested in reining in Medicaid costs, but skeptical about a full expansion repeal. More than 89,000 Idahoans could lose their coverage if the state repeals its expansion, according to the latest numbers from the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare. McCann said she learned this month that only a fraction of those would qualify to buy discounted insurance on the state exchange.

"For the rest, what's going to happen to them? They will utilize the emergency rooms again, and we'll be back to the same problems we had prior to the Medicaid expansion."

Before President Barack Obama signed the Affordable Care Act into law in 2010, traditional Medicaid insurance was mainly available to children and their caregivers, people with disabilities and pregnant women. But under the ACA's Medicaid expansion program, states can extend coverage to adults making up to 138% of the federal poverty level — about \$21,000 a year for a single person — and the federal government will cover 90% of the costs for those newly eligible enrollees. States kick in the rest.

All but 10 states, most of them controlled by Republicans, have taken the deal. Nationwide, more than 21 million people with low incomes get their health insurance because of expanded Medicaid eligibility.

But the Trump administration and a Republican-controlled Congress are seriously considering options for shrinking Medicaid as they look for ways to pay for extending tax cuts enacted during Trump's first term in office. Proposals include reducing the federal 90% funding match, which could shift a greater chunk of Medicaid spending onto states, and greenlighting extra hurdles such as requiring enrollees to work in order to qualify for coverage.

The swirl of uncertainty at the federal level is supercharging efforts by Republican state lawmakers who

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have long opposed the program, despite its popularity.

In a public address last month, Arkansas Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders, a Republican, announced the state would ask the federal government for permission to institute work requirements for adults to qualify for coverage.

"If you want to receive free health care — paid for by your fellow taxpayer — able-bodied, working-age adults have to work, go to school, volunteer or be home to take care of their kids" she said.

Sanders argued coverage without such requirements discourages people from working and being self-sufficient.

But advocates and experts point to a wide body of research that links Medicaid expansion to lower uninsured rates, better health care outcomes and economic benefits for states, hospitals and other providers.

Without expansion, they say, many of the working poor who don't have employer-sponsored insurance exist in a coverage gap: They don't earn enough to afford private insurance, and yet they earn too much to qualify for traditional Medicaid. Expansion bridges that gap.

And, advocates argue, yanking health insurance from tens of thousands of people in a state would have far-reaching consequences for families, hospitals and state finances.

"It would be absolutely disastrous for everybody at all levels of the state," said Idaho Democratic state Rep. Ilana Rubel, the House minority leader, who is on the committee considering bills that could repeal the state's Medicaid expansion.

"We would go right back to people being unable to seek preventative care until it's too late, back to loss of life, loss of health and financial catastrophe."

A coordinated national effort

Many of the attempts to repeal Medicaid expansion in states such as Idaho and Montana are coordinated by national conservative-backed groups, said Joan Alker, executive director of Georgetown University's Center for Children and Families.

"It's important to understand this is part of a well-orchestrated and financed effort to undermine Medicaid generally, especially for adults," said Alker, who is also a research professor at Georgetown's McCourt School of Public Policy, where her work focuses on Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program.

Conservative-backed think tanks, including the Foundation for Government Accountability and the Paragon Health Institute, have testified before several state legislatures against Medicaid expansion and have worked to thwart state ballot initiatives.

In Montana, where Medicaid expansion is set to expire this year unless the legislature and governor opt to renew it, representatives from the foundation and the institute urged state lawmakers to scrap Medicaid expansion. Montana Republican state Rep. Jane Gillette, a dentist, appeared in a video produced by the foundation advocating for the state to allow its expansion to expire.

Neither organization responded to interview requests.

In Idaho last year, state Rep. Jordan Redman, a Republican, ceded most of his time introducing his Medicaid bill to a representative from the Foundation for Government Accountability. That bill later failed to advance out of committee after intense public pushback.

'Repeal in sheep's clothing'

This month, Redman revived his Medicaid bill. It would repeal Medicaid expansion next year if the federal government does not maintain the 90% match and the state does not receive federal permission to enact work requirements and a host of other new restrictions, including a 50,000 cap on expansion enrollment — just over half of its current enrollment — and a three-year limit on receiving benefits.

"This safeguard approach will strengthen Idaho's Medicaid program while maintaining flexibility," Redman told the Idaho House Health & Welfare Committee earlier this month. "If the federal government or state agencies fail to meet the program's safeguards, this legislation ensures those Medicaid dollars will be redirected to serve the truly needy." Redman did not respond to an interview request from Stateline.

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Rubel, the Democratic leader, described Redman's bill as "Medicaid repeal in sheep's clothing." "It's a type of trigger law with incredibly unlikely-to-be-met conditions," she said. "Basically, they're saying unless you can fly a unicorn to the moon and back, Medicaid expansion will be repealed."

Idaho voters approved Medicaid expansion by ballot measure in 2018, with nearly 61% in favor. The law took effect in 2020.

Conservative lawmakers in Idaho have tried without success to repeal Medicaid expansion ever since, including introducing another repeal bill last month. But this could be conservatives' year. Before the session, Idaho's Republican House speaker expanded the committee from 13 seats to 15. It's a move that some state Democrats say was an effort to ram through Medicaid expansion repeal. At least eight committee members have pledged support for the Idaho Republican Party's platform, which calls for repeal of Medicaid expansion.

Medicaid is popular nationally, in expansion and non-expansion states. Three-fourths of Americans have a favorable view of Medicaid, according to a January 2025 health tracking poll from KFF, a health research organization. It's a preference that crosses political boundaries: 63% of Republicans, 81% of independents and 87% of Democrats view it favorably.

Polling in Idaho in 2023 found 75% of voters — including 69% of Republican voters — held a favorable view of Medicaid.

"Citizens should not have to work this hard to get something passed that they want and need so desperately, and then keep imploring legislators not to take it away again," said Rubel.

Trigger laws

If Congress reduces the 90% federal match rate for Medicaid expansion, more than 3 million adults could immediately lose their health coverage.

That's because nine states have so-called trigger laws that would automatically end Medicaid expansion if federal funding is cut: Arizona, Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Montana, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Utah and Virginia. Three additional states — Iowa, Idaho and New Mexico — would require the government to take cost-saving steps to ease the financial impact of federal cuts.

Alker is skeptical that Congress would be able to get such legislation passed before most state legislative sessions end this spring. But if cuts are made, the impacts could start showing up in 2026.

Regardless of possible cuts at the federal level, states including Arkansas and Idaho are looking at ways to reduce the number of Medicaid-eligible people by instituting work requirements or benefit caps.

States need federal approval to impose such additional conditions on Medicaid eligibility.

The first Trump administration approved work requirements in 13 states, but the courts later struck those down and the Biden administration rejected such requests. States, including Arkansas, are trying again, hoping they're more likely to get what they want under the new Trump administration.

Redman told Idaho legislators that he expects the Trump administration to grant the waivers that would be needed under his proposed bill.

"I actually spoke to several folks at the new federal administration, and they said they're looking for waivers that are unique and creative, that they want to grant," he said.

Meanwhile, Republican lawmakers in non-expansion states have in recent years warmed to the idea of expansion. It was arguably the biggest issue of last year's legislative session in solidly red Mississippi, and was backed by Republican Lt. Gov. Delbert Hosemann. Expansion is back on the table this year, though lawmakers have said they won't consider a plan unless it includes work requirements.

But in Alabama last month, House Speaker Nathaniel Ledbetter, a Republican, said expansion would no longer be a priority this session because Medicaid was likely to see changes at the federal level.

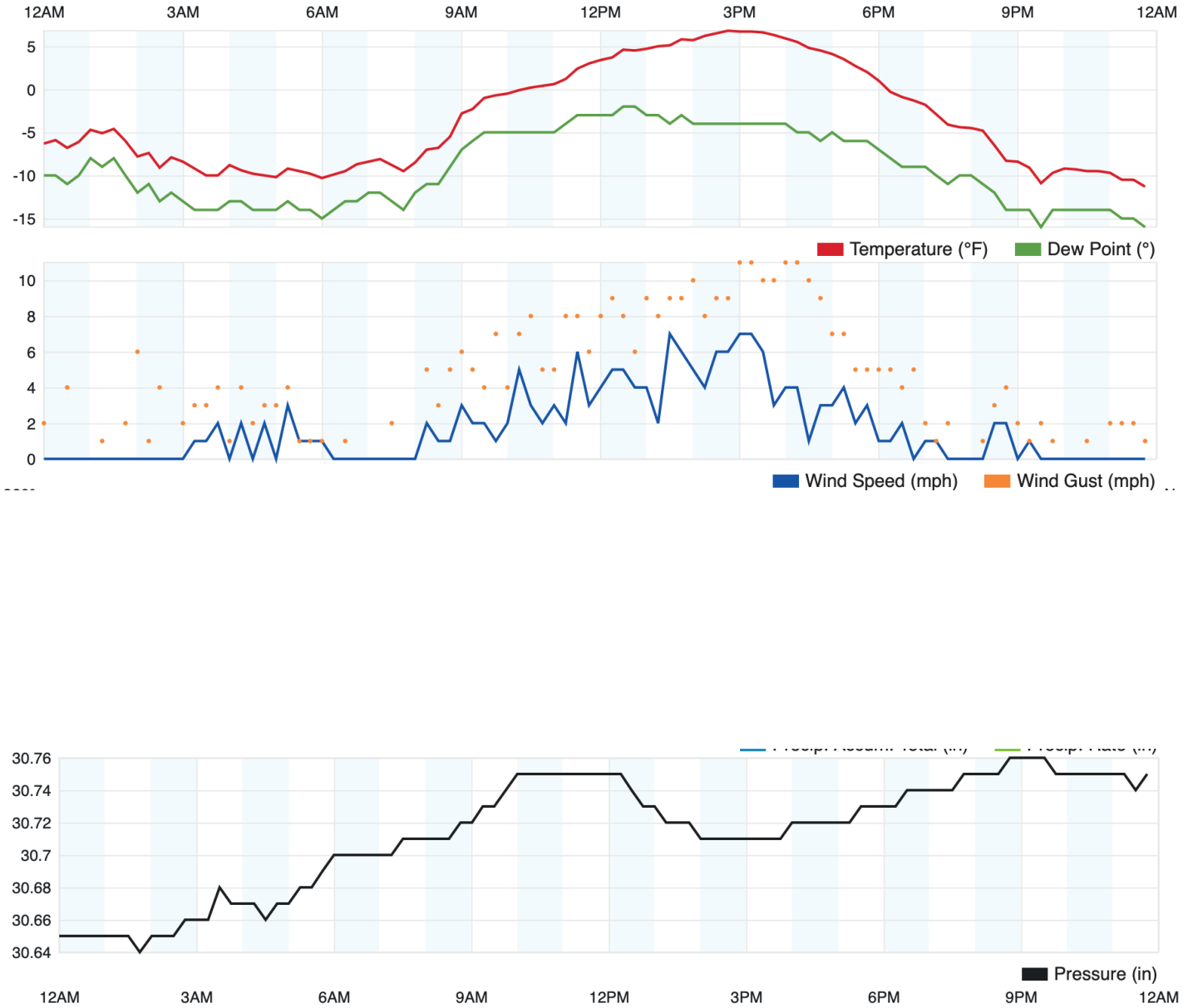
"I think we are better off seeing what they are going to do," he told reporters.

Anna Claire Vollers covers health care for Stateline. She is based in Huntsville, Alabama.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Extre...
Today



High: 5 °F

Cold

Tonight



Low: -13 °F

Mostly Cloudy

Wednesday



High: 5 °F

Cold

Wednesday
Night



Low: -20 °F

Mostly Clear

Thursday



High: 15 °F

Sunny



Hourly Wind Chill Forecast

February 11, 2025
3:20 AM

Minimum Wind Chill Forecast (°F)

	2/11 Tue																	
	6am	7am	8am	9am	10am	11am	12pm	1pm	2pm	3pm	4pm	5pm	6pm	7pm	8pm	9pm	10pm	11pm
Aberdeen	-37	-37	-37	-32	-26	-23	-16	-12	-8	-5	-2	2	-1	-4	-6	-16	-16	-18
Britton	-38	-38	-40	-35	-31	-27	-24	-20	-15	-12	-12	-11	-15	-19	-19	-22	-22	-22
Brookings	-23	-14	-16	-11	-7	-13	-10	-7	2	3	4	3	1	1	-1	-2	-2	-3
Chamberlain	-14	-14	-6	-4	-3	-1	-7	-7	-5	-2	-1	0	-2	-2	-5	-5	-4	-4
Clark	-32	-30	-30	-25	-25	-20	-16	-14	-11	-8	-6	-6	0	-10	-10	-16	-12	-12
Eagle Butte	-32	-32	-32	-28	-23	-23	-20	-18	-15	-13	-12	-11	-13	-14	-13	-14	-15	-15
Ellendale	-41	-41	-42	-38	-29	-25	-19	-14	-11	-8	-8	-9	-17	-20	-23	-25	-27	-28
Eureka	-42	-42	-42	-39	-33	-29	-25	-19	-14	-11	-8	-9	-13	-19	-20	-21	-23	-21
Gettysburg	-31	-32	-32	-28	-25	-20	-18	-13	-10	-9	-6	-6	-9	-10	-10	-10	-13	-13
Huron	-26	-22	-12	-9	-6	-4	-1	2	3	4	5	-1	-4	-5	-6	-7	0	-1
Kennebec	-17	-18	-15	-12	-11	-11	-9	-8	-7	-4	-2	-4	-4	-6	-6	-8	-8	-10
McIntosh	-45	-45	-45	-42	-33	-30	-25	-20	-15	-12	-9	-8	-12	-16	-17	-20	-24	-23
Milbank	-29	-29	-29	-25	-22	-18	-16	-12	-8	-7	2	0	-3	-5	-5	-7	-7	-7
Miller	-24	-22	-22	-19	-15	-11	-10	-8	-4	-3	1	-2	-4	-5	-5	-9	-9	-9
Mobridge	-23	-23	-23	-30	-24	-18	-15	-10	-3	-3	0	-1	-6	-8	-9	-10	-12	-16
Murdo	-22	-22	-22	-22	-20	-19	-14	-14	-11	-8	-6	-6	-7	-7	-7	-8	-8	-8
Pierre	-16	-8	-8	-7	-4	-2	-7	-6	-3	-2	2	2	0	-2	-2	-3	-1	-3
Redfield	-29	-29	-27	-24	-19	-13	-8	-6	-4	-2	-1	-1	-4	-6	-10	-10	-10	-13
Sisseton	-34	-34	-34	-31	-26	-23	-19	-13	-10	-9	-8	1	-2	-4	-5	-16	-14	-16
Watertown	-27	-26	-26	-24	-22	-20	-16	-12	-9	-8	-4	2	0	-3	-3	-4	-3	-4
Webster	-34	-33	-34	-32	-28	-23	-21	-18	-13	-12	-8	-1	-4	-6	-6	-15	-15	-17
Wheaton	-35	-33	-34	-30	-26	-24	-21	-16	-13	-9	-10	-3	-6	-7	-8	-18	-18	-18

- Values are approximate. A change of wind by only a few miles per hour when it's this cold can change the wind chill by several degrees!
- Use caution when heading outside, dress in several layers covering all exposed skin.
- Remember to bring your pets inside!

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Wind chills this morning will be in the -20 to -40 degree range. Wear appropriate clothing, a hat and gloves and make sure to bring your pets inside!

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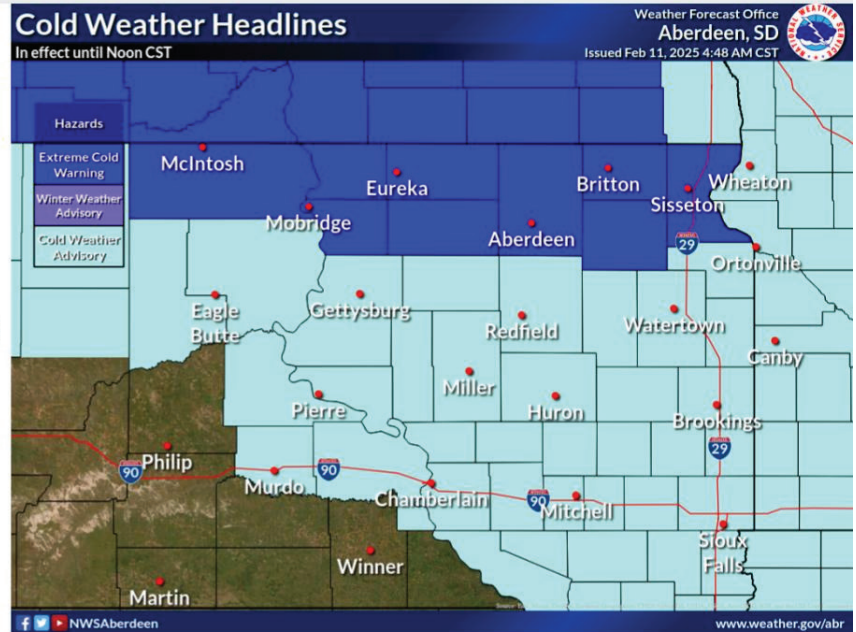
Bitterly Cold Temperatures

February 11, 2025
5:06 AM

- An **Extreme Cold Warning** is in effect until Noon CST today.
- Additionally, a **Cold Weather Advisory** is also in effect until Noon CST today.
- Wind chills between **-20 and -45°** are expected this morning (coldest across northern SD).



- *These wind chills could cause frostbite on exposed skin in as little as 10 to 35 minutes.*



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

An Extreme Cold Warning is in effect until Noon CST today for portions of northern SD, and a Cold Weather Advisory is in effect, also until Noon CST today for portions of central and northeastern SD and west central MN. Wind chills between -20 and -45 are expected which can cause frostbite on exposed skin in as little as 10 to 35 minutes.

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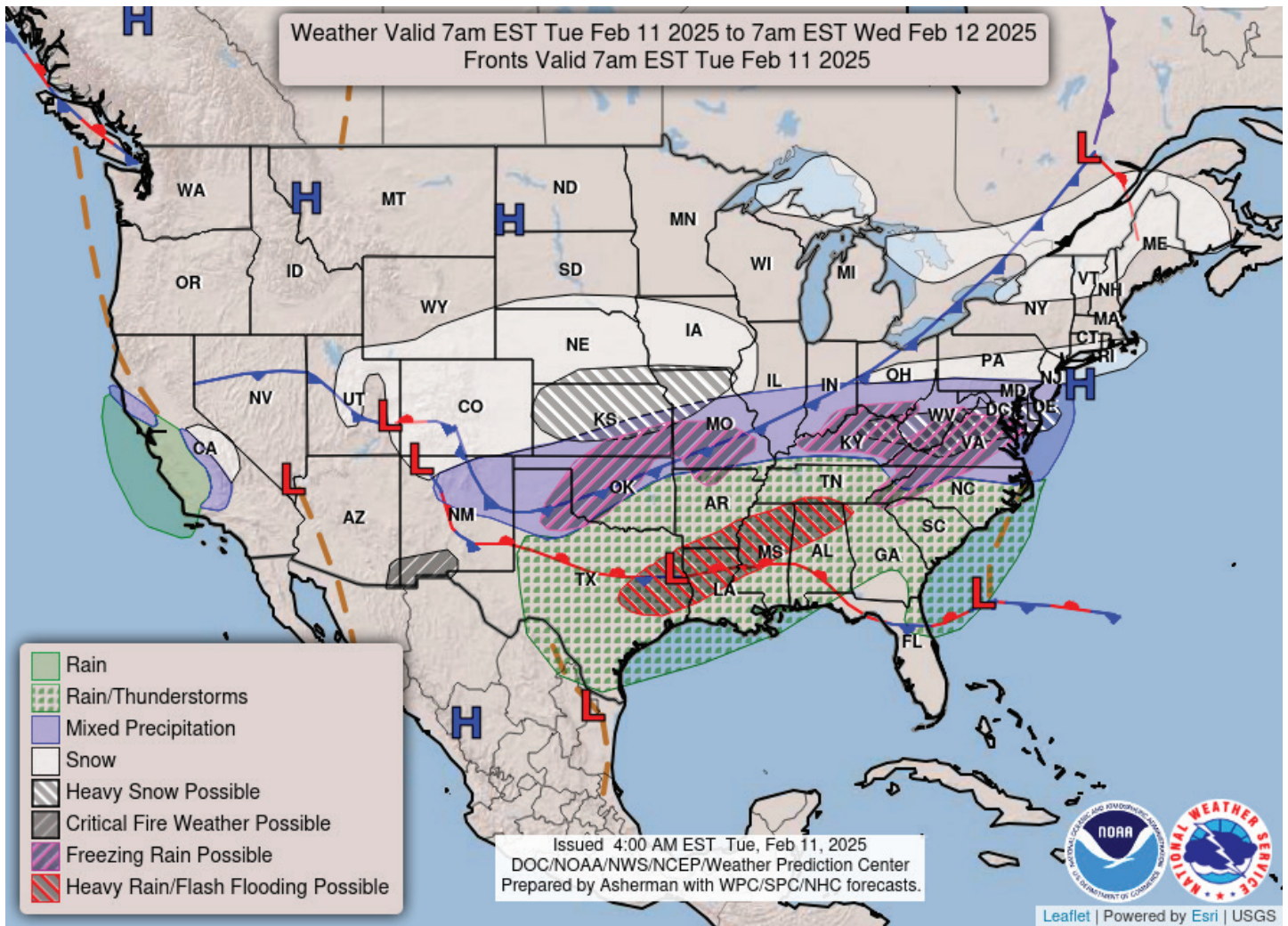
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 7 °F at 2:42 PM
Low Temp: -11 °F at 9:29 PM
Wind: 11 mph at 2:55 PM
Precip: 0.00

Day length: 10 hours, 18 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 58 in 2005
Record Low: -35 in 1988
Average High: 27
Average Low: 5
Average Precip in Feb.: 0.22
Precip to date in Feb.: 0.20
Average Precip to date: 0.77
Precip Year to Date: 0.20
Sunset Tonight: 5:55:40 pm
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:36:01 am



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Today in Weather History

February 11, 2002: High winds of 35 to 45 mph gusting to 60 to 65 mph affected central and northeast South Dakota and west-central Minnesota through the afternoon and into the evening hours. The high winds caused some spotty tree and roof damage, along with a few power outages. In addition, a few downed power lines in Aberdeen resulted in a short power outage for some people. Some wind gusts included 55 mph at Wheaton, 58 mph at McLaughlin, 59 mph at Pierre, 61 mph at Sisseton and Aberdeen, 62 mph at Mobridge, and 63 mph at Graceville, Minnesota.

1895: The low temperature was 11 degrees below zero at Moline, Illinois, marking the last of 16 consecutive days on which the low temperature was at or below zero. During the first 11 days of February, Moline's highest temperature was only 13 degrees above zero. Their current average high temperature for early February is in the lower 30s.

1899 - Perhaps the greatest of all arctic outbreaks commenced on this date. The temperature plunged to 61 degrees below zero in Montana. At the same time a "Great Eastern Blizzard" left a blanket of snow from Georgia to New Hampshire. The state of Virginia took the brunt of the storm, with snowfall totals averaging 30 to 40 inches. (David Ludlum)

1935: The lowest recorded temperature on the continent of Africa occurred on this date in 1935. A bitterly cold 11 degrees below zero was registered at the Atlas Mountains village of Ifrane, Morocco.

1962: A powerful F3 tornado struck Holstebro in Denmark, causing devastating damage. More than 100 houses were severely damaged or destroyed, making this event the most devastating tornado in Denmark's history. The tornado could have been a low-end F4.

1983: Called the "Megalopolitan blockbuster snowstorm," this major snowstorm impacted the Mid-Atlantic and southern New England. Snowfall up to 25 inches fell at Allentown, Pennsylvania. Snowfall amount of 35 inches occurred in parts of the Blue Ridge Mountains of West Virginia at Glen Cary. Windsor Locks, Connecticut, recorded a record 19 inches in 12 hours. A ship sunk off the Virginia/Maryland coast, killing 33. There were 46 total storm-related fatalities. New 24-hour snowfall records were set in Philadelphia, Harrisburg, Allentown, Pennsylvania, and Hartford, Connecticut. Five inches of snow in one hour was recorded at Allentown and Hartford.

1983 - The Middle Atlantic Coast States and southern New England were in the midst of a major snowstorm. In Pennsylvania, the storm produced 21 inches at Philadelphia, 24 inches at Harrisburg, and 25 inches at Allentown, establishing record 24 hour totals and single storm totals for those locations. New York City received 22 inches of snow, and 35 inches was reported at Glen Gary, located in the Blue Ridge Mountains of West Virginia. Windsor Locks CT received a record 19 inches of snow in 12 hours. The storm resulted in forty-six deaths, thirty-three of which occurred when a freighter capsized and sank off the Maryland/Virginia coast. Heavy snow was reported from northeastern Georgia to eastern Maine. (10th-12th) (Storm Data) (The Weather Channel)

1988 - Bitter cold air gripped the north central U.S. Morning lows of 35 degrees below zero at Aberdeen SD, Bismarck ND and International Falls MN were records for the date. Bemidji MN was, officially, the cold spot in the nation with a low of 39 degrees below zero, however, a reading of 42 degrees below zero was reported at Gettysburg SD. In the Northern High Plains Region, Baker MT warmed from 27 degrees below zero to 40 above. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - While much of the continental U.S. enjoyed sunshine and seasonable temperatures, a strong weather system over the Hawaiian Islands deluged Honolulu with 2.5 inches of rain. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2004 - North Dakota Governor John Hoeven declares a snow emergency as winds gusting over 70 mph along with heavy snow produces low visibilities and drifts up to 20 feet in northwestern North Dakota. Amtrak train service is interrupted in the region. The Weather Doctor

2006 - Snowfall records fell in Philadelphia and Allentown, Pennsylvania, Bridgeport and Hartford, Connecticut, Newark, New Jersey, and Worcester and Boston, Massachusetts. The highest total reported was 30.2 inches at Fairfield, CT. New York City set a record one-day snowfall record of 26.9 inches in Central Park.



FROM TRIALS TO TRIUMPH

What do you do when you have a difficult time pleasing someone?

George Crum was the chef at a famous country club in Saratoga Springs, New York. One evening there was a guest who ordered fried potatoes to go with his meal. When his order of fries was served, he asked the waiter to return it to the kitchen saying they were too thick. This happened several times. Crum became frustrated. But he did not give up.

Challenged, he took his sharpest knife, sliced some potatoes wafer-thin, deep-fried them in boiling oil, and sprinkled salt on them. Then he had the waiter take them to the guest. The guest sampled them, smiled and decided to pass them around the table to his friends. Everyone enjoyed them and ordered more. The "potato chip" was born that evening and has become one of our favorite snacks.

There are times in all of our lives when people irritate us or bother us. It seems like nothing we do will ever please them or meet the standards they have set for us. No matter what we do or how hard we try, it is not going to be good enough. So, we are tempted to give up or quit. Paul said, "God causes all things to work together for our good." This includes the most painful problems and difficult demands of life. In all things we must trust Him, be willing to do our best, and leave the results to Him. He, not others, knows what is best for our lives.

Prayer: Thank You, Father, for giving us problems to solve and challenges to meet, so we can grow strong. Help us to be patient, to be polite, and to persevere. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. Romans 8:28

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

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 02.07.25

4 24 32 41 55 16

MegaPlier: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$110,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 5 Mins 57 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 02.10.25

7 10 13 31 50 5

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$23,620,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 15 Hrs 20 Mins 57 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 02.10.25

1 2 16 18 30 6

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 35 Mins 57 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 02.08.25

11 20 26 28 34

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$32,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 15 Hrs 35 Mins 57 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 02.10.25

2 21 34 38 44 19

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 4 Mins 57 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 02.10.25

2 17 18 29 43 3

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$154,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 4 Mins 57 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

Monday's Scores

The Associated Press

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Christian 55, Mobridge-Pollock 47
DeSmet 76, Iroquois-Lake Preston 55
Dell Rapids St Mary 81, Arlington 38
Gregory 51, Platte-Geddes 45, OT
Timber Lake 55, Bison 51

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL

Bennett County 58, Hot Springs 24
Dell Rapids St Mary 73, Arlington 58
Groton 55, Great Plains Lutheran 34
Wall 59, Newell 25
Webster 57, Florence-Henry 51

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

JD Vance rails against 'excessive regulation' of AI at Paris summit

By AAMER MADHANI and THOMAS ADAMSON Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — U.S. Vice President JD Vance on Tuesday warned global leaders and tech industry executives that "excessive regulation" in the artificial intelligence industry will kill the rapidly growing industry just as it's taking off.

Vance, making his first major policy speech since becoming vice president last month, said the Trump administration will "ensure that AI systems developed in America are free from ideological bias," and that the United States would "never restrict our citizens' right to free speech."

He also said the Trump administration is troubled that some foreign governments are considering "tightening the screws" on U.S. tech companies with international footprints.

"Now, at this moment, we face the extraordinary prospect of a new industrial revolution, one on par with the invention of the steam engine," Vance said. "But it will never come to pass. If overregulation deters innovators from taking the risks necessary to advance the ball."

Vance's address challenged Europe's regulatory approach to artificial intelligence and its moderation of content on Big Tech platforms, underscoring divergence between the United States and its allies on AI governance.

With the global public both excited and worried about the power of AI, EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen stressed that, "AI needs the confidence of the people and has to be safe."

She mentioned EU guidelines intended to standardize how the bloc's AI Act is applied across the 27-nation bloc. "At the same time, I know that we have to make it easier and we have to cut red tape and we will," she added.

Von der Leyen announced that the so-called "InvestAI" initiative reached a total of 200 billion euros in investments in Europe, including a new fund of 20 billion euros for AI gigafactories.

The summit has drawn world leaders, top tech executives, and policymakers to debate AI's impact on security, economics, and governance.

A three-way race for AI dominance

The differences were openly displayed at the summit: Europe seeks to regulate and invest, China expands access through state-backed tech giants, and the U.S., under President Donald Trump, champions

a hands-off approach.

Among the high-profile attendees is Chinese Vice Premier Zhang Guoqing, special envoy of Xi Jinping, reflecting Beijing's interest in shaping global AI standards.

Vance has been an outspoken critic of European content moderation policies. He has suggested the U.S. should reconsider its NATO commitments if European governments impose restrictions on Elon Musk's social media platform, X. His Paris visit is also expected to include candid discussions on Ukraine, AI's role in global power shifts, and U.S.-China tensions.

How to regulate AI?

Concerns over AI's potential dangers have loomed over the summit, particularly as nations grapple with how to regulate a technology that is increasingly entwined with defense and warfare.

"I think one day we will have to find ways to control AI or else we will lose control of everything," said Admiral Pierre Vandier, NATO's commander who oversees the alliance's modernization efforts.

Beyond diplomatic tensions, a global public-private partnership is being launched called "Current AI," aimed at supporting large-scale AI initiatives for the public good.

Analysts see this as an opportunity to counterbalance the dominance of private companies in AI development. However, it remains unclear whether the U.S. will support such efforts.

Separately, a high-stakes battle over AI power is escalating in the private sector.

A group of investors led by Musk — who now heads Trump's Department of Government Efficiency — has made a \$97.4 billion bid to acquire the nonprofit behind OpenAI. OpenAI CEO Sam Altman, attending the Paris summit, swiftly rejected the offer on X.

The US-China rivalry

In Beijing, officials on Monday condemned Western efforts to restrict access to AI tools, while Chinese company DeepSeek's new AI chatbot has prompted calls in the U.S. Congress to limit its use over security concerns. China promotes open-source AI, arguing that accessibility will ensure global AI benefits.

French organizers hope the summit will boost investment in Europe's AI sector, positioning the region as a credible contender in an industry shaped by U.S.-China competition.

French President Emmanuel Macron, addressing the energy demands of AI, contrasted France's nuclear-powered approach with the U.S.'s reliance on fossil fuels, quipping: France won't "drill, baby, drill," but "plug, baby, plug."

Vance's diplomatic tour will continue in Germany, where he will attend the Munich Security Conference and press European allies to increase commitments to NATO and Ukraine. He may also meet with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Talking Ukraine and Middle East with Macron

Vance will discuss Ukraine and the Middle East over a working lunch with Macron.

Like Trump, he has questioned U.S. aid to Kyiv and the broader Western strategy toward Russia. Trump has pledged to end the war in Ukraine within six months of taking office.

Vance is also set to meet separately with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen.

Sweden blazes trail in women's hockey by allowing body checking and finds health, quality benefits

By STEVE DOUGLAS AP Sports Writer

ÖRNSKÖLDSVIK, Sweden (AP) — Lauren Bellefontaine came off the ice after a game in Sweden's top women's hockey league and detailed the toll her body had just taken.

"I got a stick to the collarbone tonight and also a hit to the head. Definitely some bumps and bruises," she said with a smile. "But I'm feeling fine."

Growing up in Canada, Bellefontaine kept hearing people ask why there was no hitting in women's hockey. It has taken a move to northern Sweden for her to discover the more physical side of the sport.

In 2022, Sweden became the first country to introduce body checking to its premier women's league,

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bringing its rule book closer to men's hockey even though hockey's world governing body does not formally allow the practice because of safety concerns. It has opened up a new world for women's players, who say they feel more empowered playing the game the way it was intended.

Swedish hockey officials say the results have been overwhelmingly positive: The women's game has become faster and more entertaining while concussions, which have been a scourge for the sport, have decreased.

Other countries are now looking to follow suit, with the PWHL — the professional women's league in North America with some of the world's top players — putting checking in the rules for its inaugural season last year.

"It has given us the opportunity to prove we're physical, we're strong and we can play just like the men's players," Bellefontaine said. "It allows us to show we can — and we will."

Bellefontaine joined MoDo for the start of the 2023-24 season. It's a title-contending team from Örn-sköldsvik, a sleepy coastal town some 530 kilometers (330 miles) north of Stockholm — and not far from the Arctic Circle — whose population of 30,000 lives and breathes hockey and whose most famous alumni include NHL greats Peter Forsberg, Henrik and Daniel Sedin, and Markus Naslund.

Initially it was something of a culture shock to her.

"I had no prior experience of hitting at all," the 25-year-old Bellefontaine said, "and we went right into the season so it took me a while to get into it ... it was tough but now it's just fun."

Safer, too.

Benefits of body checking

Statistics supplied by the Swedish women's league show the number of concussions sustained by players has dropped since 2018, when its "Project Zero Vision" was launched. There were 35 reported concussions in the 2018-19 regular season, 10 in 2022-23 and 15 in 2023-24. By Jan. 8 this year, which was approaching the end of the regular season, there had been six.

Preventing concussions was the main driver behind the introduction of checking, as counterintuitive as that may seem. It has forced players to skate with their heads up, increasing their ice awareness.

There have been other benefits of bringing back checking, which was part of the game in women's hockey in Europe and North America until the mid-1980s but isn't in the International Ice Hockey Federation's current rule book. Coaches, league officials and fans say the speed of the Swedish game has gotten quicker, as players make smarter and faster decisions.

For many, it restores the balance between skill and physicality that is important in making the sport an entertaining watch.

"It creates some tension in the game that you otherwise don't get," said Luc de Keijzer, a 27-year-old student who is a regular at MoDo games.

One big hope is that increased physical play makes Sweden more competitive at the international level against traditional hockey powers like the United States, Canada and Finland. Sweden's women's team regularly goes deep in world championships and Olympic Games but hasn't won the gold medal at either tournament.

Closing the equality gap

For some female players, the biggest effect has been to make them feel more empowered. That's because they are essentially following the same rules as the men, except for one key difference: hits on open ice — when players are skating freely away from the boards — are forbidden in women's hockey.

"We're trying to close the gap between men's and women's hockey, so this is one way we are doing it — to have similar rules as they do," said Alexie Guay, another Canadian playing for MoDo. "It's not as intense and there are different rules still — I don't know if there will be fighting in women's hockey in the future — but we're definitely closing the gap and I think it's a cool thing."

According to research by Lund University in Sweden, 88% of the 159 players from the league who responded to a questionnaire said they were in favor of checking.

Jared Cipparone, the coach of MoDo's women's team, said he hasn't encountered any resistance from

his players about checking.

"Everyone was excited about it," said Cipparone, who is also from Canada. "The first year was trial and fire for many, but last year and this year you see the significance it's made in the game and I've only heard good things about it."

At MoDo's home game against HV71 at Hagglunds Arena in early January, a MoDo player was almost knocked off her skates by a full-body hit. Many others were smashed into the boards but went on with the game. There were no roughing penalties and certainly no brawling.

The 5-foot-7 Bellefontaine, who describes herself as "pretty small," has had to adapt her game. She said she trains harder, watches what she eats to "bulk up a little bit" and is making use of the sauna in her apartment for post-match recovery.

"I'm definitely squeezing my core a little more," she said. "Before, I wouldn't even expect to be hit so now it's head on a swivel, always looking, always watching, and just being ready to take a hit. You have to make sure you're not in a position to jeopardize yourself.

"It's definitely changed the way we play and made us better players."

In Sweden, they start early

USA Hockey and Hockey Canada do not allow checking in girls and women's hockey. In Sweden, body checking is part of the rules for boys and girls starting at the age of 12. League officials say being educated so early prepares players for when they are older.

MoDo fan Marie Johansson said her 18-year-old daughter, Amanda, started with checking from age 12, initially while playing with boys.

"All parents are worried about their children getting injured," Johansson said, "but when they learn to do the checking, they train a lot, they learn how to hold their heads up high, and she learnt how to avoid injuries. I don't think because she's a girl I've been more worried than if she'd been a boy."

Morgan Johansson, an official who helped to launch the Zero Vision project, said he has shared information with the IIHF and the PWHL about the effects the rule change has had on the Swedish league. Norwegian and Danish leagues have also contacted him.

Last year, the IIHF had PWHL officials in North America outline the league's rules on checking and officiating in a potential first step to modify its rulebook and provide a new standard at international competitions, league vice president of hockey operations Jayna Hefford said.

Contacted by the AP, the IIHF said its rulebook "does not prohibit competitive body contact between players" but noted its staff was working with its membership "to clarify the interpretation of this part in women's hockey."

As for the Swedes, they are happy to have made the bold step that others are starting to follow.

"We are kind of a trailblazer when it comes to women's hockey in challenging the old structures that said, 'Women can't,'" said Angelica Lindeberg, operations manager for the Swedish league. "Now we say, of course they can. We are very proud of that."

Hamas' threat to delay the next release of Israeli hostages raises fears for Gaza ceasefire

JERUSALEM (AP) — Hamas' threat to delay the next planned release of Israeli hostages from the Gaza Strip has jolted a fragile ceasefire that's seen as having the potential to wind down the war.

It has brought new dismay for Israelis who watched the latest Hamas handover of hostages in growing horror over the weekend as the three emaciated men came into sight. Of the 17 hostages yet to be released from Gaza under this phase of the ceasefire, Israel has said eight are dead.

The next handover of three hostages had been scheduled for Saturday, and families say time is running out for those still alive. Israel now awaits what comes from a security Cabinet meeting Tuesday morning, moved up in response to Monday's Hamas announcement.

The developments also have led to new fear in Gaza, where hundreds of thousands of displaced Palestinians have surged to what remains of their homes in the territory's north after fleeing in the war's earliest

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weeks.

The uncertainty, just over halfway into the ceasefire's six-week first phase, complicates talks on the far more difficult phase. It also jeopardizes the pause in the devastating fighting and the increase in humanitarian aid for Gaza that it has made possible.

Already, there had been concerns that the war would resume at the end of the first phase in early March. What happened?

Hamas accused Israel of not holding up its end of the deal by initially delaying the return of Palestinians to northern Gaza over an earlier dispute, carrying out strikes across the territory and hindering the entry of humanitarian aid.

The militant group, which quickly reasserted control over Gaza when the ceasefire began on Jan. 19, said the next hostage release would be delayed "until further notice."

Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz called the delay "a complete violation" of the ceasefire agreement, and he instructed the military to be on highest alert. The prime minister's coordinator for hostages said the government intends to live up to its end of the deal.

A later Hamas statement called the postponement a "warning signal" to Israel and noted that five days remained for mediators – the United States, Qatar and Egypt -- to pressure Israel to act. "The door remains open for the exchange to proceed as planned if Israel abides by its obligations," it said.

There was no immediate public reaction from mediators.

What's Trump saying?

The Hamas announcement came as U.S. President Donald Trump pressed further on his stunning proposal to remove the Palestinian population from devastated Gaza and have the U.S. take "ownership" of the territory. He told Fox News on Sunday that the Palestinians would not have the right to return.

That deepened the shock among Palestinians, who live with the history of fleeing or being forced from their homes in what is now Israel during the 1948 war. And it brought new condemnation from Arab nations that have long pressed for an independent Palestinian state.

Trump's comments contradicted some of his own administration officials who had said the president was only calling for the Palestinians' temporary relocation.

The Hamas statements on Monday made no mention of Trump's proposal, which they have rejected multiple times.

Who and what is at stake?

In immediate limbo is the planned release on Saturday of three more Israeli hostages, along with dozens more Palestinian prisoners from Israeli custody.

Such exchanges – five so far in a gradual release of 33 hostages – have been sometimes tense and chaotic acts of trust that have gradually pushed the ceasefire forward, allowing its other measures to fall into place.

But the latest release brought home like no other the bleak and dangerous conditions for those still held in Gaza.

Relatives of the newly released hostages, at times sobbing, have described people being chained or held underground for months and eating half a piece of pita per day. Freed hostages have described going months without showering.

The accounts have put furious new pressure on Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government to begin the delayed talks on the ceasefire's second phase, which is meant to see more hostages released and bring a full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza.

"The hostages are in a clear and present danger. Their lives are at risk," a doctor working with families of hostages, Hagai Levine, warned Monday. "Delaying their release means that some of them will not survive."

Israel's fatal shooting of a pregnant Palestinian woman raises fears in the West Bank

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

KAFR AL-LABAD, West Bank (AP) — The call came in the middle of the night, Mohammed Shula said. His daughter-in-law, eight months pregnant with her first child, was whispering. There was panic in her voice. "Help, please," Shula recalled her saying. "You have to save us."

Minutes later, Sondos Shalabi was fatally shot.

Shalabi and her husband, 26-year-old Yazan Shula, had fled their home in the early hours of Sunday as Israeli security forces closed in on Nur Shams refugee camp, a crowded urban district in the northern West Bank city of Tulkarem.

Israeli military vehicles surrounded the camp days earlier, part of a larger crackdown on Palestinian militants across the northern occupied West Bank that has escalated since the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas in Gaza took effect last month. Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz has announced the expansion of the army's operations, saying it aimed to stop Iran — Hamas' ally — from opening up a new front in the occupied territory.

Palestinians see the shooting of Shalabi, 23, as part of a worrying trend toward more lethal, warlike Israeli tactics in the West Bank. The Israeli army issued a short statement afterward, saying it had referred her shooting to the military police for criminal investigation.

Also on Sunday, just a few streets away, another young Palestinian woman, 21, was killed by the Israeli army. An explosive device it had planted detonated as she approached her front door.

In response, the Israeli army said that a wanted militant was in her house, compelling Israeli forces to break down the door. It said the woman did not leave despite the soldiers' calls. The army said it "regrets any harm caused to uninvolved civilians."

Across the West Bank and east Jerusalem, at least 905 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli forces since Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack triggered the war in Gaza, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry. Many appear to have been militants killed in gunbattles during Israeli raids. But rock-throwing protesters and uninvolved civilians — including a 2-year-old girl, a 10-year-old boy and 73-year-old man — have also been killed in recent weeks.

"The basic rules of fighting, of confronting the Palestinians, is different now," said Maher Kanan, a member of the emergency response team in the nearby village of Anabta, describing what he sees as the army's new attitude and tactics. "The displacement, the number of civilians killed, they are doing here what they did in Gaza."

Mohammed Shula, 58, told The Associated Press that his son and daughter-in-law said they started plotting their flight from Nur Shams last week as Israeli drones crisscrossed the sky, Palestinian militants boobytrapped the roads and their baby's due date approached.

His son "was worried about (Shalabi) all the time. He knew that she wouldn't be able to deliver the baby if the siege got worse," he said.

Yazan Shula, a construction worker in Israel who lost his job after the Israeli government banned nearly 200,000 Palestinian workers from entering its territory, couldn't wait to be a father, his own father said.

Shalabi, quiet and kind, was like a daughter to him — moving into their house in Nur Shams 18 months ago, after marrying his son. "This baby is what they were living for," he said.

Early Sunday, the young couple packed up some clothes and belongings. The plan was simple — they would drive to the home of Shalabi's parents outside the camp, some miles away in Tulkarem where soldiers weren't operating. It was safer there, and near the hospital where Shalabi planned to give birth. Yazan Shula's younger brother, 19-year-old Bilal, also wanted to get out and jumped in the backseat.

Not long after the three of them drove off, there was a burst of gunfire. Mohammed Shula's phone rang.

His daughter-in-law's breaths came in gasps, he said. An Israeli sniper had shot her husband, she told her father-in-law, and blood was flowing from the back of his head. She was unscathed, but had no idea what to do.

He coached her into staying calm. He told her to knock on the door of any house to ask for help. Her phone on speaker, he could hear her knocking and shrieking, he said. No one was answering.

She told him she could see soldiers approaching. The line went dead, said Mohammed Shula, who then called the Palestinian Red Crescent rescue service.

"We couldn't go outside because we were afraid we'd be shot," said Suleiman Zuheiri, 65, a neighbor of the Shula family who was helping the medics reach their bodies. "We tried and tried. All in vain. (The medics) kept getting turned back, and the girl kept bleeding."

Bilal Shula wasn't hurt. He was arrested from the scene and detained for several hours.

The Red Crescent said that the International Committee of the Red Cross had secured approval from the Israeli military to allow medics inside the camp. But the paramedics were detained twice, for a half-hour each time, as they made their way toward the battered car, it said.

The Israeli military did not respond to a request for comment on why soldiers had blocked ambulances.

It wasn't until after 8:00 a.m. that medics finally reached the young couple, and were detained a third time while rushing the husband out of the camp to the hospital, the Red Crescent said.

Yazan Shula was unconscious and in critical condition, and, as of Tuesday, remains on life support at a hospital. Shalabi was found dead. Her fetus also did not survive the shooting.

Mohammed Shula keeps thinking about how soldiers saw Shalabi's body bleeding on the ground and did nothing to help as they handcuffed his other son and marched him into their vehicle.

"Why did they shoot them? They were doing nothing wrong. They could have stopped them, asked a question, but no, they just shot," he said, his fingers busily rubbing a strand of prayer beads.

Israeli security forces invaded the camp some hours later. Explosions resounded through the alleyways. Armored bulldozers rumbled down the roads, chewing up the pavement and rupturing underground water pipes. The electricity went out. Then the taps ran dry.

Before Mohammed Shula could process what was happening, he said, Israeli troops banged on his front door and ordered everyone — his daughter, son and several grandchildren, one of them a year old, another two months old — to leave their home.

The Israeli military did not respond to a request for comment on why it was forcibly evacuating civilian homes in Nur Shams.

Mohammed Shula pointed to a bag of baby diapers in the corner of his friend's living room. That's all he had time to bring with him, he said, not even photographs, or clothes.

South Korea's top think tank lowers economic growth projection, citing Trump's tariffs

By KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korea's top economic think tank slashed its growth forecast for the country's economy for the second time in four months on Tuesday, expressing concern about the impact of U.S. President Donald Trump's expanding tariffs.

The state-run Korea Development Institute now projects South Korea's economy to grow by 1.6% in 2025, which is 0.4 percentage points lower than its previous estimate announced in November.

Kim Jiyeon, a KDI economist, said the "deterioration of the trade environment" following Trump's inauguration was a major factor. South Korea is also grappling with political instability caused by the impeachment and criminal indictment of President Yoon Suk Yeol after he briefly imposed martial law in December.

Domestic demand remains weak due to slowing consumer spending and a declining job market, and the pace of exports is slowing with most key industries aside from semiconductors struggling to find momentum, said Jung Kyuchul, who heads KDI's macroeconomic analysis department. KDI could be further lower its growth projections if Trump's trade actions intensify or South Korea's political turmoil drags on, Jung said.

"In November, we assumed that Trump's steps to increase tariffs would proceed gradually over time and wouldn't be carried out so quickly this year, but there have already been tariff increases targeting countries like China," Jung said in a briefing. "We expected that uncertainties would be gradually resolved after the

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Trump administration took office, but we are now in a situation where uncertainties have actually grown.”

Trump this week announced plans to impose 25% tariffs on all foreign steel and aluminum, following his decision last month to impose 10% duties on all Chinese imports, as he accelerates an aggressive push to reset global trade.

Jung said Trump’s steel and aluminum tariffs won’t likely have a major impact on South Korea’s economy, as those products account for less than 1% of its exports to the United States. However, Trump says he is also contemplating tariffs on cars, semiconductors and pharmaceuticals.

“Since our semiconductor exports are substantial, the economic impact would be considerable if that sector takes a hit,” Jung said.

Choi Sang-mok, the country’s acting leader and finance minister, said Seoul will pursue negotiations with the Trump administration before the U.S. tariffs on steel and aluminum take effect on March 12 and promised “necessary assistance” to companies disadvantaged by the duties.

“We will monitor the trends of countries in similar situations to ours, such as Japan and the European Union, and will discuss response measures together,” Choi said during a meeting with foreign policy and trade officials. The EU vowed Tuesday to impose tough countermeasures in response to U.S. tariffs.

According to the Korea International Trade Association, South Korea shipped about \$4.8 billion worth of steel to the United States from January to November last year, which accounted for 14% of its global exports of the products during the period.

The Trump administration’s overhaul of U.S. trade policies comes at a challenging time for South Korea, as the country grapples with political uncertainty. Recent domestic developments, including the legal saga surrounding Yoon, could weaken South Korea’s position in responding to the U.S. trade policy changes, according to some analysts.

EU vows tough countermeasures to US tariffs

By RAF CASERT Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — European Union chief Ursula von der Leyen vowed on Tuesday that U.S. tariffs on steel and aluminum “will not go unanswered,” adding that they will trigger tough countermeasures from the 27-nation bloc.

“The EU will act to safeguard its economic interests,” von der Leyen said in a statement in reaction to U.S. President Donald Trump’s imposition of tariffs on steel and aluminum the previous day.

“Tariffs are taxes — bad for business, worse for consumers,” von der Leyen said. “Unjustified tariffs on the EU will not go unanswered — they will trigger firm and proportionate countermeasures.”

In Germany, home to the EU’s largest economy, Chancellor Olaf Scholz told parliament that “if the U.S. leaves us no other choice, then the European Union will react united,” adding that “ultimately, trade wars always cost both sides prosperity.”

Trump is hitting foreign steel and aluminum with a 25% tax in the hope that they will give local producers relief from intense global competition, allowing them to charge higher prices. He imposed similar tariffs during his first presidency but the move damaged relations with key U.S. allies and drove up costs for “downstream” manufacturers that buy steel and aluminum.

It is not clear what countermeasures would seek to apply, but officials and observers have said they would target Republican states and traditionally strong U.S. exports.

After Trump imposed steel tariffs in 2018, the EU imposed counter-tariffs on U.S.-made motorcycles, bourbon, peanut butter and jeans, among other items.

EU Commission vice-president Maroš Šefčovič said Tuesday that the tariffs are “economically counter-productive, especially given the deeply integrated production chains established through our extensive transatlantic trade and investment ties.”

“We will protect our workers, businesses and consumers,” Šefčovič said, but added that “it is not our preferred scenario. We remain committed to constructive dialog. We stand ready for negotiations and to find mutually beneficial solutions where possible.”

The EU estimates that the trade volume between both sides stands at about \$1.5 trillion, representing some 30% of global trade. "There is a lot at stake for both sides," he told the EU legislature.

While the EU has a substantial export surplus in goods, it says that is partly offset by the U.S. surplus in the trade of services.

The EU says that trade in goods reached 851 billion euros (\$878 billion) in 2023, with a trade surplus of 156 billion euros (\$161 billion) for the EU. Trade in services was worth €688 billion (\$710 billion) with a trade deficit of 104 billion euros (107 billion) for the EU.

Middle East latest: Hamas brushes off Trump and insists all parties must be committed to ceasefire

By The Associated Press undefined

Hamas has brushed off President Donald Trump's threat that "all hell" will break out if it does not release the remaining Israeli hostages held in the Gaza Strip by Saturday.

Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri said Tuesday that the dozens of hostages would only be returned if all parties remain committed to a ceasefire deal reached last month.

"Trump must remember there is an agreement that must be respected by both parties," he said, adding that threatening language only complicates matters.

Hamas has threatened to delay the next release of three Israeli hostages, due Saturday, accusing Israel of violating the ceasefire agreement, including by not allowing a surge of tents and shelters into the devastated territory.

While Trump said the ceasefire should be canceled if Hamas doesn't release all the remaining hostages Saturday, he also said such a decision would be up to Israel.

During the first phase of the ceasefire, Hamas has committed to freeing a total of 33 hostages captured in its Oct. 7, 2023, attack in exchange for Israel releasing nearly 2,000 Palestinian prisoners.

The sides have carried out five swaps since Jan. 19, freeing 21 hostages and over 730 Palestinian prisoners so far. The war could resume in early March if no agreement is reached on the more complicated second phase of the ceasefire, which calls for the return of all remaining hostages and an indefinite extension of the truce.

Here's the latest:

Hamas brushes off Trump's words

CAIRO — Hamas has brushed off President Donald Trump's threat that "all hell" will break out if it does not release the remaining Israeli hostages held in the Gaza Strip by Saturday.

Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri said Tuesday that the dozens of hostages would only be returned if all parties remain committed to a ceasefire deal reached last month.

"Trump must remember there is an agreement that must be respected by both parties. This is the only way to bring back prisoners," he said.

"The language of threats has no value; it only complicates matters," he added.

Hamas has threatened to delay the next release of three Israeli hostages planned for Saturday, accusing Israel of violating the ceasefire agreement, including by not allowing a surge of tents and shelters into the devastated territory.

Trump said Monday that the ceasefire should be canceled if Hamas doesn't release all the remaining hostages it is holding in Gaza by midday on Saturday — though he also said that such a decision would be up to Israel.

The agreement calls for the gradual release of dozens of hostages in exchange for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners.

Israeli man thought to be the oldest hostage was killed in 2023 attack, military says

TEL AVIV, Israel — An Israeli man who was thought to be alive and in Hamas captivity was killed during the 2023 attack and his body taken to Gaza, the military said Tuesday.

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Shlomo Mantzur was thought to be the oldest hostage held by the militant group in Gaza and because of his age became a symbol in Israel of the brutality of Hamas' hostage-taking tactic.

He was 85 at the time of the attack on southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023. The military said the determination of Mantzur's death was based on intelligence gathered in recent months.

News of Mantzur's death comes as Israelis have been outraged over the poor condition of hostages who are being freed under the ceasefire with Hamas. On Tuesday, protesters briefly blocked a main highway calling for more hostages to be freed.

That anger is putting heavy pressure on Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to extend the ceasefire, what would allow for more hostages to be freed. More than 70 hostages, nearly half of them said by Israel to be dead, are still held captive in Gaza.

Kibbutz Kissufim, where Mantzur was from, said he was "a father, a grandfather, a true friend and the beating heart" of the community.

Malaysia's Anwar criticizes Israel's actions

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia — Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim criticized Israel's actions in the Gaza Strip as colonization as the ceasefire with Hamas seemed to falter.

"This is a colonization, a project of colonization," he said at a news conference Tuesday with visiting Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. "How much negotiations can you have when the colonizer has not withdrawn?"

Israel and Hamas are halfway through the six-week first phase of their ceasefire, but Hamas has threatened to delay the next release of hostages because it accused Israel of continuing airstrikes and hindering humanitarian aid and the return of Palestinians to northern Gaza.

Predominantly Muslim Malaysia is a staunch supporter of the Palestinian cause and has pushed for a two-state solution.

Israel captured the West Bank, Gaza, and east Jerusalem in the 1967 Mideast war, territories the Palestinians want for a future state.

"This is also an issue of politics of dispossession. When you rob people's land, people's houses, people's property... therefore there are two issues here we have to resolve. One of course immediate humanitarian assistance, but also a long term just amicable resolution to the problem," Anwar said.

UN chief says renewed fighting would led to an 'immense tragedy'

UNITED NATIONS — U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres has called for the extension of a fragile ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, saying a resumption of hostilities "would lead to an immense tragedy."

He called on the Hamas militant group to continue freeing Israeli hostages after it threatened to delay the next release. Hamas accuses Israel of violating the ceasefire agreement.

"Both sides must fully abide by their commitments," Guterres said in a statement Tuesday. He also urged the sides to hold serious negotiations over the next phase of the agreement, in which Hamas is to release dozens of remaining hostages abducted in its 2023 attack in exchange for an end to the war.

Egyptian envoy says Arab countries reject Trump's Gaza plan

CAIRO — Egypt's top diplomat has told U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio that Arab countries reject President Donald Trump's proposal to take over the Gaza Strip and relocate its Palestinian population.

That's according to a statement from the Egyptian Foreign Ministry after Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty's meeting late Monday with Rubio in Washington.

The statement said Abdelatty stressed the importance of accelerating Gaza's reconstruction while Palestinians remain there.

Abdelatty also stressed the importance of "finding a political horizon leading to a final settlement for the Palestinian-Israeli conflict" in a way that ensures "the establishment of an independent Palestinian state on the June 4, 1967 border with East Jerusalem as its capital," the statement said.

Israel captured the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and east Jerusalem in the 1967 Mideast war. The Palestinians want all three territories for their future state. There is wide international support for a two-state solution to the decadeslong conflict along those lines.

Some Israeli soldiers traveling abroad are targeted for alleged war crimes in Gaza

By MOLLY QUELL Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — An Israeli army reservist's dream vacation in Brazil ended abruptly last month over an accusation that he committed war crimes in the Gaza Strip.

Yuval Vagdani woke up on Jan. 4 to a flurry of missed calls from family members and Israel's Foreign Ministry with an urgent warning: A pro-Palestinian legal group had convinced a federal judge in Brazil to open a war crimes investigation for his alleged participation in the demolition of civilian homes in Gaza.

A frightened Vagdani fled the country on a commercial flight the next day to avoid the grip of a powerful legal concept called "universal jurisdiction," which allows governments to prosecute people for the most serious crimes regardless of where they are allegedly committed.

Vagdani, a survivor of Hamas' deadly Oct. 7, 2023, attack on an Israeli music festival, told an Israeli radio station the accusation felt like "a bullet in the heart."

The case against Vagdani was brought by the Hind Rajab Foundation, a legal group based in Belgium named after a young girl who Palestinians say was killed early in the war by Israeli fire as she and her family fled Gaza City.

Aided by geolocation data, the group built its case around Vagdani's own social media posts. A photograph showed him in uniform in Gaza, where he served in an infantry unit; a video showed a large explosion of buildings in Gaza during which soldiers can be heard cheering.

Judges at the International Criminal Court concluded last year there was enough evidence to issue an arrest warrant for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for crimes against humanity for using "starvation as a method of warfare" and for intentionally targeting civilians. Both Israel and Netanyahu have vehemently denied the accusations.

Since forming last year, Hind Rajab has made dozens of complaints in more than 10 countries to arrest both low-level and high-ranking Israeli soldiers. Its campaign has yet to yield any arrests. But it has led Israel to tighten restrictions on social media usage among military personnel.

"It's our responsibility, as far as we are concerned, to bring the cases," Haroon Raza, a co-founder of Hind Rajab, said from his office in Rotterdam in the Netherlands. It is then up to authorities in each country — or the International Criminal Court — to pursue them, he added.

The director general of Israel's Foreign Ministry, Eden Bar-Tal, last month said fewer than a dozen soldiers had been targeted, and he dismissed the attempted arrests as a futile public relations stunt by "terrorist organizations."

Universal jurisdiction is not new. The 1949 Geneva Conventions -- the post Second World War treaty regulating military conduct — specify that all signatories must prosecute war criminals or hand them over to a country who will. In 1999, the United Nations Security Council asked all U.N. countries to include universal jurisdiction in their legal codes, and around 160 countries have adopted them in some form.

"Certain crimes like war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity are crimes under international law," said Marieke de Hoon, an international law expert at the University of Amsterdam. "And we've recognized in international law that any state has jurisdiction over those egregious crimes."

Israel used the concept to prosecute Adolf Eichmann, an architect of the Holocaust. Mossad agents caught him in Argentina in 1960 and brought him to Israel where he was sentenced to death by hanging.

More recently, a former Syrian secret police officer was convicted in 2022 by a German court of crimes against humanity a decade earlier for overseeing the abuse of detainees at a jail. Later that year, an Iranian citizen was convicted by a Swedish court of war crimes during the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s.

In 2023, 16 people were convicted of war crimes through universal jurisdiction, according to TRIAL International, a Swiss organization that tracks proceedings. Those convictions were related to crimes committed in Syria, Rwanda, Iran and other countries.

In response to Brazil's pursuit of Vagdani, the Israeli military has prohibited soldiers below a certain rank

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from being named in news articles and requires their faces to be obscured. It has also warned soldiers against social media posts related to their military service or travel plans.

The evidence Hind Rajab lawyers presented to the judge in Brazil came mostly from Vagdani's social media accounts.

"That's what they saw and that's why they want me for their investigation," he told the Israeli radio station Kan. "From one house explosion they made 500 pages. They thought I murdered thousands of children."

Vagdani does not appear in the video and he did not say whether he had carried out the explosion himself, telling the station he had come into Gaza for "maneuvers" and "was in the battles of my life."

Social media has made it easier in recent years for legal groups to gather evidence. For example, several Islamic State militants have been convicted of crimes committed in Syria by courts in various European countries, where lawyers relied on videos posted online, according to de Hoon.

The power of universal jurisdiction has limits.

In the Netherlands, where Hind Rajab has filed more than a dozen complaints, either the victim or perpetrator must hold Dutch nationality, or the suspect must be in the country for the entirety of the investigation — factors likely to protect Israeli tourists from prosecution. Eleven complaints against 15 Israeli soldiers have been dismissed, some because the accused was only in the country for a short time, according to Dutch prosecutors. Two complaints involving four soldiers are pending.

In 2016, activists in the U.K. made unsuccessful attempts to arrest Israeli military and political leaders for their roles in the 2008-09 war in Gaza.

Raza says his group will persist. "It might take 10 years. It might be 20 years. No problem. We are ready to have patience."

There is no statute of limitations on war crimes.

Why are Ukraine's minerals key to keeping US military aid flowing?

By SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukraine has offered to strike a deal with U.S. President Donald Trump for continued American military aid in exchange for developing Ukraine's mineral industry, which could provide a valuable source of the rare earth elements that are essential for many kinds of technology.

Trump said he wanted such a deal earlier this month, and it was initially proposed last fall by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy as part of his plan to strengthen Kyiv's hand in future negotiations with Moscow.

"We really have this big potential in the territory which we control," Andrii Yermak, chief of staff to the Ukrainian president, said in an exclusive interview with The Associated Press. "We are interested to work, to develop, with our partners, first of all, with the United States."

Here is a look at Ukraine's rare earth industry and how a deal might come together:

What are rare earth elements?

Rare earth elements are a set of 17 elements that are essential in many kinds of consumer technology, including cellphones, hard drives and electric and hybrid vehicles.

It is unclear if Trump is seeking specific elements in Ukraine, which also has other minerals to offer.

"It can be lithium. It can be titanium, uranium, many others," Yermak said. "It's a lot."

China, Trump's chief geopolitical adversary, is the world's largest producer of rare earth elements. Both the U.S and Europe have sought to reduce their dependence on Beijing.

For Ukraine, such a deal would ensure that its biggest and most consequential ally does not freeze military support, which would be devastating for the country that will soon enter its fourth year of war against Russia's full-scale invasion.

The idea also comes at a time when reliable and uninterrupted access to critical minerals is increasingly hard to come by globally.

What is the state of the Ukrainian minerals industry?

Ukraine's rare earth elements are largely untapped because of the war and because of state policies

regulating the mineral industry. The country also lacks good information to guide the development of rare earth mining.

Geological data is thin because mineral reserves are scattered across Ukraine, and existing studies are considered largely inadequate. The industry's true potential is clouded by insufficient research, according to businessmen and analysts.

In general, the outlook for Ukrainian natural resources is promising. The country's reserves of titanium, a key component for the aerospace, medical and automotive industries, are believed to be among Europe's largest. Ukraine also holds some of Europe's largest known reserves of lithium, which is required to produce batteries, ceramics and glass.

In 2021, the Ukrainian mineral industry accounted for 6.1% of the country's gross domestic product and 30% of exports.

An estimated 40% of Ukraine's metallic mineral resources are inaccessible because of Russian occupation, according to data from We Build Ukraine, a Kyiv-based think tank. Ukraine has argued that it is in Trump's interest to develop the remainder before Russian advances capture more.

The European Commission identified Ukraine as a potential supplier for over 20 critical raw materials and concluded that the country's accession to the EU could strengthen the European economy.

What happens next?

Details of any deal will likely develop in meetings between U.S. and Ukrainian officials. Zelenskyy and Trump will probably discuss the subject when they meet.

U.S. companies have expressed interest, according to Ukrainian business officials. But striking a formal deal would likely require legislation, geological surveys and negotiation of specific terms.

It is unclear what kind of security guarantees companies would require to risk working in Ukraine, even in the event of a ceasefire. And no one knows for sure what kind of financing agreements would underpin contracts between Ukraine and U.S. companies.

Haitian migrants share harrowing stories of abuse as Dominican Republic ramps up deportations

By DÁNICA COTO Associated Press

BELLADERE, Haiti (AP) — A crowd of 500 descended from dusty trucks on a recent morning and shuffled through a tiny gap in a border gate separating Haiti from the Dominican Republic.

They were the first deportees of the day, some still clad in work clothes and others barefoot as they lined up for food, water and medical care in the Haitian border city of Belladère before mulling their next move.

Under a broiling sun, the migrants recounted what they said were mounting abuses by Dominican officials after President Luis Abinader ordered them in October to start deporting at least 10,000 immigrants a week under a harsh new policy widely criticized by civil organizations.

"They broke down my door at 4 in the morning," said Odelyn St. Fleur, who had worked as a mason in the Dominican Republic for two decades. He had been sleeping next to his wife and 7-year-old son.

The number of alleged human rights violations ranging from unauthorized home raids to racial profiling to deporting breastfeeding mothers and unaccompanied minors is surging as officials ramp up deportations to Haiti, which shares the island of Hispaniola with the Dominican Republic.

More than a quarter million people were deported last year, and more than 31,200 in January alone.

"The situation has reached a critical point," said Roudy Joseph, an activist who accused officials of ignoring due process during arrests. "Every day, children are left abandoned at schools."

'I'll wait for you on the other side'

On a recent afternoon, dozens of vendors lined up on either side of the men, women and unaccompanied children who marched single file into Belladère after being deported, their feet sinking into a muddy, garbage-strewn trail that smelled of urine.

The men tried to sell them jeans, water, SIM cards and illegal trips back to the Dominican Republic:

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"Would you like to pass through? I'll wait for you on the other side," they whispered in Creole.

Despite the crackdown, many re-enter the Dominican Republic, exposing a broken system.

That afternoon marked the second time Jimmy Milien, a 32-year-old floor installer, was deported. He was arrested in the capital, Santo Domingo, in 2024 and again in mid-January when authorities boarded a public bus and pointed at him.

"Damn devil Haitian, get off," he recalled them saying before they even asked for documents.

He left behind his wife and two children, ages 3 and 12, and doesn't know when he'll see them again.

He was planning to travel to Haiti's capital, but like thousands of others dropped off in Belladère, he would have to cross through gang territory where gunmen open fire on public transport.

"There's no food, there's nothing, only criminals," he said of Haiti, where more than 5,600 people were reported killed last year, the majority by gangs that control 85% of the capital, Port-au-Prince.

If Milien were to return a third time to the Dominican Republic, dozens of smugglers await.

Mack, a Haitian who only gave his first name to speak freely about smuggling, said he ferries migrants across the border up to six times a week.

He charges \$3 per person, and then offers \$8 to Dominican border guards: "If you pay them, they will let you through," he said.

He lived almost three years in Santo Domingo, installing drywall until he got deported. He then joined a thriving smuggling operation and said he doesn't plan on returning to the capital until the crackdown eases.

"Here, everyone knows me," he said. "They don't bother me."

Young and alone at the border

Military checkpoints dot the road leading out of the dusty border to the Dominican capital. Authorities board buses, stick their heads into car windows and detain suspected undocumented migrants, but many jump out before a checkpoint and hop on again further down the road.

The influx of Haitian migrants and their attempts to re-enter illegally is something that vexes Vice Admiral Luis Rafael Lee Ballester, Dominican migration director.

"The Dominican Republic...has taken too much responsibility for the situation in Haiti," he said. "We are willing to provide support, but it's important that Haiti's leaders instill order in their country, that they look after their people."

Dominican officials argue that Haitian immigrants have overburdened the country's public services, with more than 80,000 new Haitian students enrolled in public schools in the past four years. Health officials say Haitian women account for up to 70% of births in the country, costing the government millions of dollars.

Ballester said he will deploy additional migration officials across the country to tackle what he described as a surge in undocumented immigrants, saying they're a burden and a danger to his country.

While he denied abuse allegations, he acknowledged officials are allowed to enter homes "during a hot pursuit" and that personnel are being retrained "because our commitment to respecting human rights is unquestionable."

Ballester said the Dominican Republic does not deport unaccompanied minors and that officials now separate women and children from men during deportations.

But in late January, five teenagers without their parents were deported. Among them was Jovenson Morette, 15, who said he was detained while working in a field.

He and the four others were interviewed by Haitian officials in Belladère who were trying to track down their parents.

Further north, in the Haitian border town of Ouanaminthe, a 10-year-old unaccompanied girl was deported in late January, said Geeta Narayan, UNICEF's representative in Haiti.

"These children are amongst the most vulnerable," she said, noting that gangs along the border prey on them.

Last year, the Dominican Republic deported 1,099 unaccompanied children; 786 of them were reunited with their families, according to UNICEF.

Josette Jean, 45, feared for her 16-year-old son, who was born in the Dominican Republic, when he was

recently deported alone to Haiti.

Clutching a picture of him, she said she rushed to the Dominican detention center where he was being held but was told the government doesn't deport unaccompanied minors. He was deported anyway.

Jean paid a smuggler to bring her son back to the Dominican Republic days later.

"Children who are born here have no idea where to go," she said of those deported to Haiti, a country her son had never visited.

A significant number of those deported, like Jean's son, were born in the Dominican Republic but lack birth certificates or other official documentation proving their legal status, with activists accusing the government of allowing work permits to expire or refusing to process their paperwork. The Dominican Republic does not automatically bestow citizenship to everyone born there.

As mass deportations continue, Dominican employers in the agriculture and construction industries are complaining.

Ballester's response? Hire Dominican workers.

'Haiti is drowning'

At least one cell phone was recording when Mikelson Germain, 25, tried to evade Dominican authorities late last year. He was running on a roof when an official caught him and pushed him off it. The woman recording shrieked and started crying, thinking he was dead.

"By the grace of god, I fell on an electrical wire first," Germain said in a video taped by a nonprofit organization.

With his leg injured and his cousin's children holding on to him, Germain said authorities left the scene.

Activists accused the official of attempted murder, but despite the widespread outcry, they say abuses persist.

Last year, a group of Dominican men, outraged at what they said was the treatment and arrests of their Haitian neighbors, threw rocks, bottles and other objects at authorities. One man tried to disarm a migration official before shots were fired and everyone scattered.

As mass deportations continue, President Abinader warned Haiti's situation is a danger to the region and that there could be an "uncontrollable wave of migration" as he called for more support for a U.N.-backed mission in Haiti struggling to fight gangs.

"There is no Dominican solution to the Haitian crisis," he said. "Haiti is drowning while an important part of the international community watches passively from the shore."

Virginia governor declares storm emergency as snow and ice bear down on mid-Atlantic states

By JOHN RABY Associated Press

A wintry mess was bearing down on mid-Atlantic states Tuesday with forecasts of significant snow and ice accumulations prompting warnings of potential power outages.

The National Weather Service said travel would become treacherous Tuesday through early Wednesday in much of Virginia and West Virginia.

Virginia Republican Gov. Glenn Youngkin on Monday declared a state of emergency ahead of the storm, allowing state agencies to assist local governments. Schools and government offices throughout Virginia were closed Tuesday.

The heaviest snow, up to 10 inches (25.4 centimeters), was forecast in portions of northern and central Virginia and eastern West Virginia. Ice accumulations could range from a glaze in Kentucky and West Virginia to a half-inch (1.3 centimeters) in the Roanoke Valley of southwest Virginia, the weather service said. Power outages and tree damage were likely in places with heavy ice buildups.

"Did you think winter was over? Think again!" the weather service's office in Blacksburg, Virginia, said in a post on the social media platform X.

Appalachian Power, which serves 1 million customers in West Virginia, Virginia and Tennessee, said it has requested 700 additional workers from neighboring utilities to assist with problems by Tuesday morning.

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In northern Virginia, the National Park Service closed a portion of the George Washington Memorial Parkway, a narrow highway that winds its way through woods along the Potomac River. The parkway connects multiple small national park sites and has historically been a trouble spot during winter storms for abandoned cars that created a slalom course for snowplows and other vehicles.

Winter storm warnings extended from Kentucky to southern New Jersey, and a flood watch was posted for a wide swath of Kentucky, Tennessee, southwest Virginia and northern Georgia. The snow-and-ice mix was expected to become all rain as temperatures climb by Wednesday afternoon.

A separate storm system is set to bring heavy snow from Kansas and Missouri to the Great Lakes on Wednesday, the weather service said.

Dangerous cold was forecast Tuesday from an Arctic air mass stretching from Portland, Oregon, to the Great Lakes.

The temperature was expected to bottom out Tuesday morning at minus 33 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 36 degrees Celsius) in Butte, Montana, where over the past two winters at least five people died due to cold exposure, said Brayton Erickson, executive director of the Butte Rescue Mission. Advocates for the homeless in the city of about 35,000 planned to be out on the streets distributing sleeping bags, jackets, mittens and other cold weather gear to anyone who needs them, Erickson said.

"When it gets this cold, we kind of pull out all the stops," he said. "Having all those resources available literally can save their life or keep them from frostbite."

How Elon Musk's crusade against government could benefit Tesla

By KIMBERLY KINDY and BRIAN SLODYSKO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Elon Musk has long railed against the U.S. government, saying a crushing number of federal investigations and safety programs have stymied Tesla, his electric car company, and its efforts to create fleets of robotaxis and other self-driving automobiles.

Now, Musk's close relationship with President Donald Trump means many of those federal headaches could vanish within weeks or months.

On the potential chopping block: crash investigations into Tesla's partially automated vehicles; a Justice Department criminal probe examining whether Musk and Tesla have overstated their cars' self-driving capabilities; and a government mandate to report crash data on vehicles using technology like Tesla's Autopilot.

The consequences of such actions could prove dire, say safety advocates who credit the federal investigations and recalls with saving lives.

"Musk wants to run the Department of Transportation," said Missy Cummings, a former senior safety adviser at the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. "I've lost count of the number of investigations that are underway with Tesla. They will all be gone."

Within days of Trump taking office, the White House and Musk began waging an unbridled war against the federal government — freezing spending and programs while sacking a host of career employees, including prosecutors and government watchdogs typically shielded from such brazen dismissals without cause.

The actions have sparked outcries from legal scholars who say the Trump administration's actions are without modern-day precedent and are already upending the balance of power in Washington.

The Trump administration has not yet declared any actions that could benefit Tesla or Musk's other companies. However, snuffing out federal investigations or jettisoning safety initiatives would be an easier task than their assault on regulators and the bureaucracy.

Investigations into companies like Tesla can be shut down overnight by the new leaders of agencies. And safety programs created through an agency order or initiative — not by laws passed by Congress or adopted through a formal regulatory process — can also be quickly dissolved by new leaders. Unlike many of the dismantling efforts that Trump and Musk have launched in recent weeks, stalling or killing such probes and programs would not be subject to legal challenges.

As such, the temporal and fragile nature of the federal probes and safety programs make them easy

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targets for those seeking to weaken government oversight and upend long-established norms.

"Trump's election, and the bromance between Trump and Musk, will essentially lead to the defanging of a regulatory environment that's been stifling Tesla," said Daniel Ives, a veteran Wall Street technology and automobile industry analyst.

Musk's empire

Among Musk's businesses, the federal government's power over Tesla to investigate, order recalls, and mandate crash data reporting is perhaps the most wide-ranging. However, the ways the Trump administration could quickly ease up on Tesla also apply in some measure to other companies in Musk's sprawling business empire.

A host of Musk's other businesses — such as his aerospace company SpaceX and his social media company X — are subjects of federal investigations.

Musk's businesses are also intertwined with the federal government, pocketing hundreds of millions of dollars each year in contracts. SpaceX, for example, has secured nearly \$20 billion in federal funds since 2008 to ferry astronauts and satellites into space. Tesla, meanwhile, has received \$41.9 million from the U.S. government, including payment for vehicles provided to some U.S. embassies.

Musk, Tesla's billionaire CEO, has found himself in his newly influential position by enthusiastically backing Trump's third bid for the White House. He was the largest donor to the campaign, plunging more than \$270 million of his vast fortune into Trump's political apparatus, most of it during the final months of the heated presidential race.

Those donations and his efforts during the campaign — including the transformation of his social media platform X into a firehose of pro-Trump commentary — have been rewarded by Trump, who has tapped the entrepreneur to oversee efforts to slash government regulations and spending.

As the head of the Department of Government Efficiency, Musk operates out of an office in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building, where most White House staff work and from where he has launched his assault on the federal government. Musk's power under DOGE is being challenged in the courts.

Even before Trump took office, there were signs that Musk's vast influence with the new administration was registering with the public — and paying dividends for Tesla.

Tesla's stock surged more than 60% by December. Since then, its stock price has dropped, but still remains 40% higher than it was before Trump's election.

"For Musk," said Ives, the technology analyst, "betting on Trump is a poker move for the ages."

Proposed actions will help Tesla

The White House did not respond to questions about how it would handle investigations and government oversight involving Tesla or other Musk companies. A spokesman for the transition team said last month that the White House would ensure that DOGE and "those involved with it are compliant with all legal guidelines and conflicts of interest."

In the weeks before Trump took office on Jan. 20, the president-elect's transition team recommended changes that would benefit the billionaire and his car company, including scrapping the federal order requiring carmakers to report crash data involving self-driving and partially automated technology.

The action would be a boon for Tesla, which has reported a vast majority of the crashes that triggered a series of investigations and recalls.

The transition team also recommended shelving a \$7,500 consumer tax credit for electric vehicle purchases, something Musk has publicly called for.

"Take away the subsidies. It will only help Tesla," Musk wrote in a post on X as he campaigned and raised money for Trump in July.

Auto industry experts say the move would have a nominal impact on Tesla — by far the largest electric vehicle maker in the U.S. — but have a potentially devastating impact on its competitors in the EV sector since they are still struggling to secure a foothold in the market.

Musk did not respond to requests for comment. Before the election, he posted a message on X, saying he had never asked Trump "for any favors, nor has he offered me any."

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Although most of the changes that Musk might seek for Tesla could unfold quickly, there is one long-term goal that could impact the autonomous vehicle industry for decades to come.

Though nearly 30 states have rules that specifically govern self-driving cars, the federal government has yet to craft such regulations.

During a late October call with Tesla investors, as Musk was pouring hundreds of millions of dollars into Trump's campaign, he signaled support for having the federal government create these rules.

"There should be a federal approval process for autonomous vehicles," Musk said on the call. "If there's a department of government efficiency, I'll try to help make that happen."

Musk leads that very organization.

Those affected by Tesla crashes worry about lax oversight

People whose lives have been forever changed by Tesla crashes fear that dangerous and fatal accidents may increase if the federal government's investigative and recall powers are restricted.

They say they worry that the company may otherwise never be held accountable for its failures, like the one that took the life of 22-year-old Naibel Benavides Leon.

The college student was on a date with her boyfriend, gazing at the stars on the side of a rural Florida road, when they were struck by an out-of-control Tesla driving on Autopilot — a system that allows Tesla cars to operate without driver input. The car had blown through a stop sign, a flashing light and five yellow warning signs, according to dashcam video and a police report.

Benavides Leon died at the scene; her boyfriend, Dillon Angulo, suffered injuries but survived. A federal investigation determined that Autopilot in Teslas at this time was faulty and needed repairs.

"We, as a family, have never been the same," said Benavides Leon's sister, Neima. "I'm an engineer, and everything that we design and we build has to be by important codes and regulations. This technology cannot be an exception."

"It has to be investigated when it fails," she added. "Because it does fail."

Tesla's lawyers did not respond to requests for comment. In a statement on Twitter in December 2023, Tesla pointed to an earlier lawsuit the Benavides Leon's family had brought against the driver who struck the college student. He testified that despite using Autopilot, "I was highly aware that it was still my responsibility to operate the vehicle safely."

Tesla also said the driver "was pressing the accelerator to maintain 60 mph," an action that effectively overrode Autopilot, which would have otherwise restricted the speed to 45 mph on the rural route, something Benavides Leon's attorney disputes.

Federal probes into Tesla

The federal agency that has the most power over Tesla — and the entire automobile industry — is the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, which is part of the Department of Transportation.

NHTSA sets automobile safety standards that must be met before vehicles can enter the marketplace. It also has a quasi-law enforcement arm, the Office of Defects Investigation, which has the power to launch probes into crashes and seek recalls for safety defects.

The agency has six pending investigations into Tesla's self-driving technology, prompted by dozens of crashes that took place when the computerized systems were in use.

Other federal agencies are also investigating Musk and Tesla, and all of those probes could be sidelined by Musk-friendly officials:

—The Securities and Exchange Commission and Justice Department are separately investigating whether Musk and Tesla overstated the autonomous capabilities of their vehicles, creating dangerous situations in which drivers may over rely on the car's technology.

—The Justice Department is also probing whether Tesla misled customers about how far its electric vehicles can travel before needing a charge.

—The National Labor Relations Board is weighing 12 unfair labor practice allegations leveled by workers at Tesla plants.

—The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission is asking a federal judge to force Tesla to enact reforms and pay compensatory and punitive damages and backpay to Black employees who say they

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were subjected to racist attacks. In a federal lawsuit, the agency has alleged that supervisors and other employees at Tesla's plant in Fremont, California, routinely hurled racist insults at Black employees.

Experts said most, if not all, of those investigations could be shut down, especially at the Justice Department where Trump has long shown a willingness to meddle in the department's affairs. The Trump administration has already ordered the firing of dozens of prosecutors who handled the criminal cases from the Jan. 6, 2021 attack on the Capitol.

"DOJ is not going to be prosecuting Elon Musk," said Peter Zeidenberg, a former Assistant U.S. Attorney in the Justice Department's public integrity section who served during the Clinton and George H.W. Bush administrations. "I'd expect that any investigations that were ongoing will be ground to an abrupt end."

Trump has also taken steps to gain control of the NLRB and EEOC. Last month, he fired Democratic members of the board and commission, breaking with decades of precedent. One member has sued, and two others are exploring legal options.

Tesla and Musk have denied wrongdoing in all those investigations and are fighting the probes.

The small safety agency in Musk's crosshairs

The federal agency that appears to have enjoyed the most success in changing Tesla's behavior is NHTSA, an organization of about 750 staffers that has forced the company to hand over crash data and cooperate in its investigations and requested recalls.

"NHTSA has been a thorn in Musk's side for over the last decade, and he's grappled with almost every three-letter agency in the Beltway," said Ives, the Wall Street analyst who covers the technology sector and automobile industry. "That's all created what looks to be a really big soap opera in 2025."

Musk has repeatedly blamed the federal government for impeding Tesla's progress and creating negative publicity with recalls of his cars after its self-driving technology malfunctions or crashes.

"The word 'recall' should be recalled," Musk posted on Twitter (now X) in 2014. Two years ago, he posted, "The word 'recall' for an over-the-air software update is anachronistic and just flat wrong!"

Michael Brooks, executive director of the Center for Auto Safety, a non-profit consumer advocacy group, said some investigations might continue under Trump, but a recall is less likely to happen if a defect is found.

As with most car companies, Tesla's recalls have so far been voluntary. The threat of public hearings about a defect that precedes a NHTSA-ordered recall has generally prompted car companies to act on their own.

That threat could be easily stripped away by the new NHTSA administrator, who will be a Trump appointee.

"If there isn't a threat of recall, will Tesla do them?" Brooks said. "Unfortunately, this is where politics seeps in."

NHTSA conducting several probes of Tesla

Among the active NHTSA investigations, several are examining fundamental aspects of Tesla's partially automated driving systems that were in use when dozens of crashes occurred.

An investigation of Tesla's "Full Self-Driving" system started in October after Tesla reported four crashes to NHTSA in which the vehicles had trouble navigating through sun glare, fog and airborne dust. In one of the accidents, an Arizona woman was killed after stopping on a freeway to help someone involved in another crash.

Under pressure from NHTSA, Tesla has twice recalled the "Full Self-Driving" feature for software updates. The technology — the most advanced of Tesla's Autopilot systems — is supposed to allow drivers to travel from point to point with little human intervention. But repeated malfunctions led NHTSA to recently launch a new inquiry that includes a crash in July that killed a motorcyclist near Seattle.

NHTSA announced its latest investigation in January into "Actually Smart Summon," a Tesla technology that allows drivers to remotely move a car, after the agency learned of four incidents from a driver and several media reports.

The agency said that in each collision, the vehicles were using the system that Tesla pushed out in a September software update that was "failing to detect posts or parked vehicles, resulting in a crash." NHTSA also criticized Tesla for failing to notify the agency of those accidents.

NHTSA is also conducting a probe into whether a 2023 recall of Autopilot, the most basic of Tesla's

partially automated driver assistance systems, was effective.

That recall was supposed to boost the number of controls and alerts to keep drivers engaged; it had been prompted by an earlier NHTSA investigation that identified hundreds of crashes involving Autopilot that resulted in scores of injuries and more than a dozen deaths.

In a letter to Tesla in April, agency investigators noted that crashes involving Autopilot continue and that they could not observe a difference between warnings issued to drivers before or after the new software had been installed.

Critics have said that Teslas don't have proper sensors to be fully self-driving. Nearly all other companies working on autonomous vehicles use radar and laser sensors in addition to cameras to see better in the dark or in poor visibility conditions. Tesla, on the other hand, relies only on cameras to spot hazards.

Musk has said that human drivers rely on their eyesight, so autonomous cars should be able to also get by with just cameras. He has called technology that relies on radar and light detection to discern objects a "fool's errand."

Bryant Walker Smith, a Stanford Law School scholar and a leading automated driving expert, said Musk's contention that the federal government is holding him back is not accurate. The problem, Smith said, is that Tesla's autonomous vehicles cannot perform as advertised.

"Blaming the federal government for holding them back, it provides a convenient, if dubious, scapegoat for the lack of an actual automated driving system that works," Smith said.

Smith and other autonomous vehicle experts say Musk has felt pressure to provide Tesla shareholders with excuses for repeated delays in rolling out its futuristic cars. The financial stake is enormous, which Musk acknowledged during a 2022 interview. He said the development of a fully self-driving vehicle was "really the difference between Tesla being worth a lot of money and being worth basically zero."

The collisions from Tesla's malfunctioning technology on its vehicles have led not only to deaths but also catastrophic injuries that have forever altered people's lives.

Attorneys representing people injured in Tesla crashes — or who represent surviving family members of those who died — say without NHTSA, the only other way to hold the car company accountable is through civil lawsuits.

"When government can't do it, then the civil justice system is left to pick up the slack," said Brett Schreiber, whose law firm is handling four Tesla cases.

However, Schreiber and other lawyers say if the federal government's investigative powers don't remain intact, Tesla may also not be held accountable in court.

In the pending wrongful death lawsuit that Neima Benavides Leon filed against Tesla after her sister's death, her attorney told a Miami district judge the lawsuit would have likely been dropped if NHTSA hadn't investigated and found defects with the Autopilot system.

"All along we were hoping that the NHTSA investigation would produce what it did, in fact, end up producing, which is a finding of product defect and a recall," attorney Doug Eaton said during a March court hearing. "And we had told you very early on in the case if NHTSA had not found that, we may very well drop the case. But they did, in fact, find this."

Migrants stranded in Mexico try to restart life after Trump eliminates legal pathway to US

By JULIE WATSON Associated Press

TIJUANA, Mexico (AP) — Margelis Rodriguez and her two children took selfies on their flight to Tijuana, showing off the T-shirts she had custom-made to mark what she expected to be her family's life-changing moment.

On the back of the shirts were their names and the flags of the six countries they passed through in 2024. On the front between the flags of her native Venezuela and the United States, was written in Spanish: "Yes it was possible, thank God. The wait was worth it. I made it!!"

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The celebratory words now sting — driving home how close they came without making it and how precarious their lives are with their future more uncertain than ever, Rodriguez said while standing near the tent her family lives in at a shelter in Tijuana, a block from the towering wall marking the U.S. border.

The family is among tens of thousands of people who had appointments into February, many of them left stranded in Mexican border cities after President Donald Trump took office. As part of a broader immigration crackdown, his administration quickly canceled all appointments people had made through a U.S. government app. Under the Biden administration, the CBP One app facilitated the entry of nearly 1 million people since January 2023, and supporters say it helped bring order to the border and reduced illegal crossings.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection estimates about 280,000 people were trying to get appointments each day, many of them after traveling to Mexico, the only country where the app worked. Now they face the daunting question of what to do next.

Some returned home. Others left shelters vowing to cross the border illegally. The Rodriguez family appears to capture the prevailing mood: Stay put and see how Trump's policies unfold over the next few months.

Everything changed in a moment

Rodriguez flew to Tijuana with her 12-year-old son and 6-year-old daughter on Jan. 19, the day before Trump was sworn in. She never worried the change in administrations would affect their Jan. 21 appointment. A Venezuelan friend in Chicago had a job for her at a factory, a place to live and a school for her children.

She cried when the notification popped into her email. "It felt like being punched," she said. But she still went to the port of entry with her children at 5 a.m. and waited seven hours, hoping to be called. They never were.

It has been over a year since they left their hometown of Tumeremo in a region plagued by violence and gang feuds tied to illegal gold mining in the remote, mineral-rich area near the borders of Guyana and Brazil. Rodriguez said gangs increasingly controlled life there, including by shuttering her children's school periodically and hiding in people's houses.

She and her family left with her friend and the friend's 16-year-old son, taking buses and walking 2 1/2 days through the rugged Darién Gap. They spent nine months in Pachuca, outside Mexico City, where Rodriguez, 38, found jobs at a tortilla shop, butchery and then caretaking while waiting for their CBP One appointment.

Life in Tijuana

Nearly all the money she earned was spent on the trip to Tijuana. She doesn't have the \$1,200 needed to return to Pachuca.

She and her children pass the days in an uncomfortable state of boredom piqued with anxiety. They help clean the bathrooms, cook and sweep at the shelter.

"There are no kids here my age so I don't play with anyone," said her son, Mickel, who dreams of becoming a soccer player and buying his mom a house.

At night, the family stays in the shelter's covered patio filled with roughly three dozen small tents under a giant banner that reads: "This is about humanity." They share their tent with her Venezuelan friend and her son, the boy's feet hanging out of the opening.

Rodriguez has not been able to sleep.

"I have so many worries," she said.

She won't put her children at risk by trying to enter the U.S. illegally. Her mom says things in Venezuela are worse than ever. Family and friends in Denver and Chicago who entered the United States under a Biden administration program that granted them humanitarian parole fear they may be deported.

"I don't see anything that gives me hope," she said. "All I see is everyone getting deported."

Though she worries about safety in Tijuana, she is applying for a Mexican visa so she can work there. She plans to start apartment hunting and enrolling her children in school.

Looking for hope

On a recent afternoon, she and her children and a half dozen other migrants walked to a laundromat, the T-shirts she had made wadded up in a bag of dirty laundry that teetered on a stroller she pushed down unbroken pavement past a pack of dogs and people picking through a pile of trash. A Haitian friend of Rodriguez's hung back and scanned for trouble as they walked on the edge of a red light district filled with strip bars.

A few days later, she was more at ease. A local pastor had reassured Rodriguez that she's in the best spot right now.

"Look at the situation with migrants in the United States, where they are chasing out everyone," she said, echoing his words.

Her relatives tell her things might improve in a few months, saying the U.S. is just "cleaning out" the immigrants with criminal records and maybe the Trump administration will open another legal pathway.

"We have been left stranded, stuck in limbo," she said. "Of course at times I still despair, but I also keep a bit of hope, too. We just have to start over, start over again."

Trump will host Jordan's King Abdullah II as he escalates pressure on his Gaza resettlement plan

By ZEKE MILLER AP White House Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump will host Jordan's King Abdullah II at the White House on Tuesday as he escalates pressure on the Arab nation to take in refugees from Gaza — perhaps permanently — as part of his audacious plan to remake the Middle East.

The visit is happening at a perilous moment for the ongoing ceasefire in Gaza as Hamas, accusing Israel of violating the truce, has said it is pausing future releases of hostages and as Trump has called for Israel to resume fighting if all those remaining in captivity are not freed by this weekend.

Trump has proposed the U.S. take control of Gaza and turn it into "the Riviera of the Middle East," with Palestinians in the war-torn territory pushed into neighboring nations with no right of return.

He suggested on Monday that, if necessary, he would withhold U.S. funding from Jordan and Egypt, longtime U.S. allies and among the top recipients of its foreign aid, as a means of persuading them to accept additional Palestinians from Gaza.

"Yeah, maybe. Sure, why not?" Trump told reporters. "If they don't, I would conceivably withhold aid, yes."

Jordan is home to more than 2 million Palestinians and, along with other Arab states, has flatly rejected Trump's plan to relocate civilians from Gaza.

Jordan's foreign minister, Ayman Safadi, said last week that his country's opposition to Trump's idea was "firm and unwavering."

In addition to concerns about jeopardizing the long-held goals of a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestinian conflict, Egypt and Jordan have privately raised security concerns about welcoming large numbers of additional refugees into their countries even temporarily.

When asked how he'd persuade Abdullah to take in Palestinians, Trump told reporters, "I do think he'll take, and I think other countries will take also. They have good hearts."

The king is also meeting with top Trump administration officials during his visit, including Secretary of State Marco Rubio, national security adviser Mike Waltz, Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth. He is the third foreign leader to hold an in-person meeting with Trump since his Jan. 20 inauguration.

Trump announced his ideas for resettling Palestinians from Gaza and taking ownership of the territory for the U.S. during a press conference last week with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Trump initially didn't rule out deploying U.S. troops to help secure Gaza but at the same time insisted no U.S. funds would go to pay for the reconstruction of the territory, raising fundamental questions about the nature of his plan.

After Trump's initial comments, Rubio and White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt insisted that

Trump only wanted Palestinians relocated from Gaza “temporarily” and sought an “interim” period to allow for debris removal, the disposal of unexploded ordnance and reconstruction.

But asked in an interview with Fox News’ Bret Baier that aired Monday if Palestinians in Gaza would have a right to return to the territory under his plan, he replied, “No, they wouldn’t.”

What to know about proposals to ban abortion pills and punish women who seek abortion

By GEOFF MULVIHILL Associated Press

Lawmakers in some states where abortion is already banned are seeking to explicitly bar abortion pills or take a step that most leading anti-abortion groups oppose: punish women who seek to end their pregnancies.

It’s too early in some legislative sessions to know whether the measures will get serious consideration. But it does show that the policy debate continues to evolve following the Supreme Court’s 2022 ruling that overturned Roe v. Wade and opened the door to state bans on abortion.

Here’s a look at where things stand:

Some lawmakers target pills that are used in most abortions

Lawmakers in several states have introduced measures to classify the drugs mifepristone and misoprostol — which are used together in the majority of U.S. abortions — as controlled dangerous substances, making it a crime to possess them without prescriptions.

Louisiana last year became the first state to adopt such a law, despite concerns from doctors who contended that the restrictions would make it harder for them to access the drugs to perform life-saving procedures.

The measures have been introduced in states where Republicans control the government and where there are bans on abortion at all stages of pregnancy, with some exceptions.

The legislation has died or appears unlikely to advance in Indiana and Mississippi.

Elsewhere — including Idaho, Oklahoma, Tennessee and Texas — it’s too early to know whether they have a chance.

In Oklahoma, Gov. Kevin Stitt, a staunch opponent of abortion, has vowed to sign any anti-abortion measure that comes to his desk.

And one scholar who follows abortion policy said that the bills can affect the debate even if they don’t pick up momentum.

“The more often that they’re introduced, the more normalized these sorts of bills and these sorts of concepts that they’re pushing become,” said Laura Hermer, a professor at Mitchell Hamline School of Law in St. Paul, Minnesota.

The pill fight is roaring even without additional state laws

Authorities in two states with stringent abortion laws have targeted a New York doctor for allegedly sending abortion pills to patients in those states.

Last month, a Louisiana grand jury indicted Dr. Maggie Carpenter on charges of criminal abortion by means of abortion-inducing drugs, a felony. Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton sued Carpenter in civil court under similar circumstances.

The legal actions set up a test of laws in some Democratic-controlled states, including New York, that seek to protect health care providers who use telehealth to prescribe and then mail abortion pills to patients in states where they’re banned. New York officials say they will not extradite the doctor to Louisiana.

Since Carpenter’s indictment, New York Gov. Kathy Hochul signed a law that allows doctors to leave their names off prescription bottles for abortion pills as a way to further insulate them. Similar legislation has been introduced in Maine.

The attorneys general of Idaho, Kansas and Missouri are also suing in federal court to roll back federal approvals for mifepristone and bar prescriptions for it by telehealth.

Some advocates are calling on President Donald Trump to enforce an 1873 law to ban mailing medica-

tion or instruments used in abortion, but he has not done so.

While critics say the drugs are unsafe, some major medical groups disagree. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists says there is decades of evidence that mifepristone and misoprostol are safe and effective. The group cited a study showing that major adverse events such as significant infection and excessive blood loss occur in less than 0.32% of patients taking mifepristone for a medication abortion. Medical organizations say mifepristone's safety compares to that of the over-the-counter pain medication ibuprofen.

There are attempts to punish women, though they rarely gain traction

Bills in several states would open the door to criminal charges against women who seek or obtain abortions on charges including murder.

That's a step no state has taken so far, and which leading anti-abortion groups such as Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America and the National Right to Life Committee oppose.

Still, such bills have been introduced in Idaho and Indiana, where they're unlikely to advance, and Oklahoma, North Dakota and South Carolina, where they're all early in the legislative process.

Reached by phone, South Carolina Rep. Luke Rankin, a Republican who added his name to a list of bill sponsors last week, said, "I've always been pro-life." When asked about the provision to allow prosecution of women seeking abortion, he said: "I can't help you there" and declined to answer questions.

Trump once again slaps taxes on foreign steel, aluminum, a move that proved costly in his first term

By PAUL WISEMAN AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) —

President Donald Trump is hitting foreign steel and aluminum with a 25% tax. If that sounds familiar, it's because he did pretty much the same thing during his first term.

Trump's original metals tariffs gave America's struggling steel and aluminum producers some relief from intense global competition, allowing them to charge higher prices. In anticipation of the new tariffs, shares of steel and aluminum producers climbed Monday. Nucor rose 5.6%, Cleveland-Cliffs jumped 17.9% and Alcoa ticked up 2.2%.

But the tariffs took a toll last time, too, damaging U.S. relations with key allies and driving up costs for "downstream" U.S. producers that buy steel and aluminum and use them to manufacture goods.

Timothy Zimmerman is CEO of one of those downstream companies: Mitchell Metal Products in Merrill, Wisconsin. And he still has bad memories of those times.

"We were significantly impacted," he said. "The challenges we faced were unprecedented -- rapid inflationary impacts from domestic steel producers. We saw steel prices rise within a few months about 70% over what they had been ... Our (steel) suppliers simply broke contracts and gave us an option: Take this or take nothing."

But Mitchell Metal Products was locked into contracts with its own customers — a wide range of businesses from furniture makers to telecommunications firms -- that didn't allow it to pass along all or part of the higher cost. His company's profit margins were squeezed, and it ended up losing business to European rivals that didn't have to contend with the fallout from Trump's steel tariffs.

The overall economic impact on the United States was limited then — and is likely to be limited again -- because steel and aluminum imports amount to barely a ripple in the almost \$30 trillion U.S. economy.

Still, the new taxes on foreign steel and aluminum and Trump's other import tax plans — including his promise to raise American tariffs to match those charged by other countries -- are likely "to boost U.S. inflation and weigh on global growth this year," Jennifer McKeown and Hamad Hussain of Capital Economics wrote Monday.

Tariffs would hit American allies — again

The steel and aluminum tariffs would hit U.S. allies. Canada is the No. 1 supplier of foreign steel and aluminum to the United States. Mexico is the No. 3 steel supplier, and Japan and South Korea are also

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major steel exporters to the U.S.

China is widely seen as source of the world steel industry's problems. Chinese overproduction has flooded the world with steel and kept prices low, hurting steelmakers in the United States and elsewhere. But the U.S. already uses trade barriers to keep out all but a trickle of Chinese steel. China accounted for less than 2% of U.S. steel imports last year, making it the No. 10 supplier of steel to the U.S., according to the American Iron and Steel Institute, a trade group.

In slapping duties on steel and aluminum nearly seven years ago, Trump reached into the federal government's tariff toolkit and pulled out Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962. Section 232 gives the president the power to impose tariffs on other countries national security grounds.

The 2018 tariffs — 25% on steel and 10% on aluminum — provoked outrage in Canada and Mexico, U.S. neighbors and allies that resented being hit with trade sanctions and labeled as threats to U.S. national security.

The steel and aluminum tariffs also drew retaliation as U.S. trading partners hit back with taxes on U.S. exports from Kentucky bourbon to Levi's jeans.

Trump's first-term tariffs proved costly

By making foreign steel costlier, the tariffs allowed U.S. steelmakers to raise prices and encouraged them to keep mills running and to invest in new capacity.

But the tariffs hammered downstream businesses like Zimmerman's that had to pay the higher prices. In 2021, production at downstream companies dropped by nearly \$3.5 billion because of the tariffs, canceling out the \$2.3 billion uptick in production that year by aluminum producers and steelmakers, according to a 2023 study by the U.S. International Trade Commission, an independent federal agency that investigates trade disputes.

In 2020, researchers from Harvard University and the University of California, Davis, found that the tariffs created 1,000 jobs — but reduced employment elsewhere by 75,000. When the tariffs hit seven years ago, Mitchell Metal Products employed a peak of 102 workers. It had to cut its payrolls by leaving openings unfilled and weeding out some workers. The company now employs about 75 people.

Gary Hufbauer, senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, said that Trump's first-term trade wars, including his tariffs on most Chinese imports, were costly to American industry.

"The net effect of all these tariffs at that time — on China, aluminum, steel, plus retaliation — was to reduce U.S. manufacturing unemployment," he said. "I'm expecting the same thing this time around."

The 2018 metals tariffs were partially eased. For some countries, they were dropped. For some, they were replaced with import quotas. On Monday, Trump removed all exceptions and exemptions on the original tariffs and upped the levy on aluminum from 10% to 25%.

Zimmerman is bracing for the new tariffs to hit. "Already last week several large (steel) mills operating in the United States announced price increases in anticipation of the tariffs, not due to increased demand," he said. "I think the domestic producers will work to do the same thing, or very close to the same thing, as what happened in 2018."

This time, he said, Mitchell Metal Products will seek to be more pro-active in getting its customers to absorb some of the higher costs. Otherwise, he said, "It's not a healthy place to be as a company."

What the Westminster show dogs' names mean

By JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

They have names that could make a random password generator cry uncle.

Meet, for example, GCHG CH Calicops Sassafras Gonnakikurass.

"She's a saucy girl. Her name says it all," Fred Ortiz said as he groomed the Brussels griffon to compete Monday at the Westminster Kennel Club dog show.

Her name says ... what exactly? Well, ponder the final part, and you may understand what her owners are wryly getting at. But in any event, you can just call her Wrassy.

After agility and obedience contests Saturday, Westminster's main competition began Monday with breed-

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by-breed judging that leads to U.S. dogdom's most illustrious best in show prize, awarded Tuesday night.

In semifinals Monday night at Madison Square Garden, judges chose a bichon frise known as Neal; a German shepherd named Mercedes, who was last year's runner-up; a shih tzu called Comet, who was a finalist last year and won the huge American Kennel Club National Championship in 2023; and a whippet dubbed Bourbon, who's a two-time runner-up at Westminster.

Comet "enjoys every moment of this," co-breeder, co-owner and handler Luke Ehricht told the crowd at Madison Square Garden, where the show returned for the first time since early 2020. "He's such a fun dog, too."

Three more finalists will be picked Tuesday night.

The full, formal names of those chosen so far? That would make for a dizzying paragraph.

If show dogs are the aristocrats of the canine world, they often have the names, titles and nicknames to match.

Their "registered," or formal, names are the ones used for showing. Those long, confounding-sounding appellations are actually packed with show-dog information.

Clumps of capital letters at the beginning, and sometimes also the end, signify the dogs' achievements in various sports. "GCHG" and "CH," for example, denote various levels of championship in the traditional, breed-by-breed judging.

After those titles, the first word in a registered name generally indicates the kennel, or breeding program, that produced the dog. Other kennels or dogs in the pedigree might get a shout-out at the end.

Meanwhile, show dogs have "call names" that they go by on a day-to-day basis. A dog might also have had a different "puppy name" bestowed by its breeder and later changed by its eventual owner.

The portmanteau words and puzzling phrases in registered names are partly meant to avoid duplication with other dogs in registries that go back over a century.

But many breeders also use patterns to help them remember which litter was which.

Professional dog handlers and sometime miniature schnauzer breeders Rachel Adams and Alberto Montila name their litters in alphabetical order — one litter had names that start with "A," the next with "B," and so on, Adams said Monday. She was blow-drying a French bulldog named GCHG CH Elysium's Adventurous Rapsallion D'Assisi, better known as Finn.

When Amie McLaughlin picks names for her litters of Norwegian buhunds, she just likes to have pun.

"I like the name to be something that someone looks at and says, 'Oh, that's cute,'" said McLaughlin, of Kent, Washington.

A dog she bred and guided to a best-of-breed win on Monday, GCH CH Cloudpointe Nothing Betta Than This CGC, was born into a fish-themed litter (hence "Betta," a type of Southeast Asian fish). He goes by Eirik when he's at home with co-owner Sarah Woodworth in Paloa, Hawaii.

GCH CH Aberdeen's Zoltar RN BN-V — just Zoltar, to his friends — has owners who appreciate humor, too. For one thing, they share their Los Angeles-area home with a shaggy, clownish, 120-pound otterhound who likes to cuddle.

Comedian and actor Chris Hardwick, who owns the dog with his wife, model and actor Lydia Hearst, named Zoltar for the fortune-telling machine that makes a teenager grow to adult proportions overnight in the movie "Big."

"We knew he was going to grow," and plenty big, explained Hearst.

Zoltar got some recognition Monday from the judge, but the dog's cousin Melody, a.k.a. GCHS CH Dobhran's Alexa Play Some Music, won best of breed.

Hardwick and Hearst were also cheering on the French bulldog breed winner, called Sassy, or GCHS Diva's Sassafras Lass. She and other breed winners were headed into a semifinal round Monday night.

Sassy is owned and was co-bred by Hearst's mother, newspaper heir Patricia Hearst Shaw. Famous in the 1970s for her abduction and involvement in a robbery by a radical group, she's been renowned in recent years for her Frenchies and other show dogs.

Colton Johnson and his family name their litters of old English sheepdogs by themes, such as songs, movies, money, or — appropriately — fluffy things.

One of those “fluff” dogs is GCH CH Bugaboo’s Give Me S’more, who lolled on a table while Johnson brushed him Monday, before competing and winning his breed.

The dog’s call name is Graham, as in the crackers that join toasted marshmallow and chocolate to make s’mores. He’s a grandson of Swagger, whom Johnson handled to a second-place finish at Westminster in 2013.

Graham came close to nabbing a finalist nod Monday but lost the “herding group” spot to Mercedes. The 5-year-old, formally named GCHP Kaleef’s Mercedes, is making Westminster her last show before retiring.

As for her name, “I wanted something German and something that represented excellence,” said co-owner Cynthia Wilhelmy of Martinsburg, West Virginia. “Classic, reliable and excellent — that’s Mercedes.”

Hamas says it will delay the release of more hostages, putting Gaza ceasefire at risk

By MELANIE LIDMAN and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Hamas said Monday it will delay the further release of hostages in the Gaza Strip after accusing Israel of violating a fragile ceasefire that now faces its most serious crisis since it began three weeks ago.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is under heavy pressure to secure the release of remaining hostages after three Israelis freed Saturday came home emaciated after 16 months in captivity. Yet in a sign of the precarious nature of the truce, the Israeli military said late Monday it had canceled leave for soldiers assigned to Gaza.

Hamas’ said its plan to delay the next hostage release “until further notice” depended on whether Israel “abides by its obligations.” The announcement came as Palestinians and the international community seethed over President Donald Trump’s recent comments that Palestinians from Gaza would not have a right to return under his proposal for the U.S. to take over the war-torn territory.

In an effort to improve relations with the Trump administration, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas on Monday ended a controversial system that paid stipends to the families of Palestinian prisoners, including those convicted in deadly attacks on Israel. The U.S. and Israel have said the so-called “martyrs fund” rewarded violence against Israel.

Israel and Hamas are in the midst of a six-week ceasefire during which Hamas has committed to releasing 33 hostages captured in its Oct. 7, 2023, attack in exchange for nearly 2,000 Palestinian prisoners.

The sides have carried out five swaps since the ceasefire’s first phase went into effect on Jan. 19, freeing 21 hostages and over 730 Palestinian prisoners. The next exchange, scheduled for Saturday, called for three more Israeli hostages to be freed in exchange for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners.

The war could resume in early March if no agreement is reached on the more complicated second phase of the ceasefire, which calls for the return of all remaining hostages and an indefinite extension of the truce.

Threatening a fragile ceasefire deal

An Israeli official said Netanyahu was consulting security officials after the Hamas announcement. The official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations, said Netanyahu also pushed forward a scheduled meeting of his Security Cabinet to Tuesday morning from later in the day.

In addition to canceling leave for soldiers in Gaza, the Israeli military also said Monday it was bolstering defensive forces responsible for areas along the border with Gaza.

A judge granted Netanyahu’s request to postpone his testimony in an ongoing corruption trial on Tuesday due to the security situation.

Defense Minister Israel Katz said Hamas’ plan to delay the next release of hostages was “a complete violation” of the ceasefire agreement and that he instructed the Israeli military to be on the highest level of alert. The prime minister’s coordinator for hostages said the Israeli government intends to live up to its end of the agreement.

Hamas spokesman Abu Obeida said on social media that Israel has obstructed key provisions of the ceasefire by not allowing Palestinians to return to northern Gaza, carrying out strikes across the territory

and failing to facilitate the entry of humanitarian aid.

The group later put out a statement calling its planned postponement a “warning signal,” adding that “the door remains open for the exchange to proceed as planned if Israel abides by its obligations.”

The group representing many of the families of hostages called on mediating countries to prevent the deal from collapsing.

“Recent evidence from those released, as well as the shocking conditions of the hostages released last Saturday, leaves no room for doubt — time is of the essence, and all hostages must be urgently rescued from this horrific situation,” the Hostages and Missing Families Forum said.

In Gaza, Palestinians fretted the possibility of the truce falling apart.

“People are all afraid. Today, people have begun to stock up on supplies for fear that war will return again,” said Mohammad Yusuf of Khan Younis. “There is no safety, because any defect in the agreement leads to the return of war, and the threat of a return of war.”

Trump made his latest comments about Gaza in an interview with FOX News set to air Monday, less than a week after he floated his plan for the U.S. to take control of Gaza and turn it in “the Riviera of the Middle East.” He has also ramped up pressure on Arab states, especially U.S. allies Jordan and Egypt, to take in Palestinians from Gaza, who claim the territory as part of a future homeland.

The ceasefire previously hit a snag when an Israeli female civilian held hostage wasn’t released as early as planned, and Israel delayed the return of Palestinians to northern Gaza for two days. Negotiators were able to find a solution, and the hostage, Arbel Yehoud, was eventually released with two other hostages.

Palestinian Authority ends payments to prisoners’ families

Under the new system announced by Abbas, the Palestinian president, prisoners’ families will still be eligible for government assistance, but only depending on their financial needs. Previously, payments were determined based on the amount of time a prisoner had spent in prison.

The system will also be transferred from the Palestinian government to an outside foundation.

There was no immediate reaction from the U.S. or Israel.

During Trump’s first term, the U.S. halted assistance to the Palestinian Authority because of the martyr’s fund. Israel has withheld hundreds of millions of dollars of tax transfers to the cash-strapped authority because of the policy.

A senior Palestinian official said the Palestinians have informed the Trump administration of the decision and hope the U.S. legislation cutting assistance, known as the Taylor Force Act, will be rescinded and that Israel will unfreeze the transfers. He spoke on condition of anonymity because he was discussing internal deliberations.

Hamas condemned the Palestinian Authority’s move, calling it “an unpatriotic move that violates one of our core national principles.”

Top Justice Department official orders prosecutors to drop charges against New York Mayor Eric Adams

By JAKE OFFENHARTZ, ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The Justice Department on Monday ordered federal prosecutors to drop corruption charges against New York City Mayor Eric Adams, arguing in a remarkable departure from long-standing norms that the case was interfering with the mayor’s ability to aid the president’s crackdown on illegal immigration.

In a two-page memo obtained by The Associated Press, acting Deputy Attorney General Emil Bove told prosecutors in New York that they were “directed to dismiss” the bribery charges against Adams immediately.

Bove said the order was not based on the strength of evidence in the case, but rather because it had been brought too close to Adams reelection campaign and was distracting from the mayor’s efforts to assist in the Trump administration’s law-and-order priorities.

“The pending prosecution has unduly restricted Mayor Adams’ ability to devote full attention and resources to the illegal immigration and violent crime,” Bove wrote.

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The memo also ordered prosecutors in New York not to take "additional investigative steps" against the Democrat until after November's mayoral election, though it left open the possibility that charges could be refiled after that following a review.

The intervention and reasoning — that a powerful defendant could be too occupied with official duties to face accountability for alleged crimes — marked an extraordinary deviation from long-standing Justice Department norms.

Public officials at the highest level of government are routinely investigated by the Justice Department, including President Donald Trump during his first term, without prosecutors advancing a claim that they should be let off the hook to attend to government service.

An attorney for Adams, Alex Spiro, said the Justice Department's order had vindicated the mayor's claim of innocence. "Now, thankfully, the mayor and New York can put this unfortunate and misguided prosecution behind them," said Spiro, who has also represented Elon Musk.

A spokesperson for the acting U.S. attorney for the Southern District of New York, Danielle Sassoon, declined to comment. The case against Adams was brought under the previous U.S. attorney for the district, Damien Williams, who stepped down before Trump became president.

The memo follows months of speculation that Trump would take steps to end the case against Adams, who was charged in September with accepting bribes of free or discounted travel and illegal campaign contributions from foreign nationals seeking to buy his influence.

Adams, a Democrat elected on a centrist platform, has moved noticeably right following his indictment, rankling some within his own party.

Rather than restricting cooperation with Immigration and Customs Enforcement, as Adams once promised, he has expressed a willingness to roll back the city's so-called sanctuary policies and pledged not to publicly criticize a president whose policies he once described as "abusive."

In recent weeks, he implied that Trump's agenda would be better for New York than former President Joe Biden's.

Several of the mayor's opponents in the Democratic mayoral primary claimed Monday that Adams had agreed to do Trump's bidding because he hoped for leniency.

"Instead of standing up for New Yorkers, Adams is standing up for precisely one person," said Brad Lander, the city's comptroller and a mayoral challenger.

Zohran Mamdani, a state assemblymember who is also running for mayor, called for an investigation into whether Adams "cut any kind of deal with the Trump administration that involves breaking city law."

Trump, who was convicted last year of falsifying business records to cover up a hush money payment, has previously expressed solidarity with Adams. He hinted at the possibility of a pardon in December, telling reporters that the mayor had been "treated pretty unfairly."

He had also claimed, without offering evidence, that Adams was being persecuted for criticizing former President Joe Biden's policies on immigration.

"I know what it's like to be persecuted by the DOJ, for speaking out against open borders," Trump said in October at a Manhattan event attended by Adams. "We were persecuted, Eric. I was persecuted, and so are you, Eric."

The prosecutors in New York had noted that the investigation into Adams began before he began feuding with Biden over migrant funding.

Still, Bove, in his memo, echoed some of Trump's and Adams' claims about politicization.

"It cannot be ignored that Mayor Adams criticized the prior Administration's immigration policies before the charges were filed,"

The criminal case against Adams involves allegations that he accepted illegal campaign contributions and lavish travel perks worth more than \$100,000 — including expensive flight upgrades, luxury hotel stays and even a trip to a bathhouse — while serving in his previous job as Brooklyn Borough president.

The indictment said a Turkish official who helped facilitate the trips then leaned on Adams for favors, at one point asking him to lobby the Fire Department to allow a newly constructed, 36-story diplomatic

building to open in time for a planned visit by Turkey's president.

Prosecutors also said they had evidence of Adams personally directing campaign staffers to solicit foreign donations, then disguising those contributions in order to qualify for a city program that provides a generous, publicly-funded match for small dollar donations. Foreign nationals are banned from contributing to U.S. election campaigns under federal law.

As recently as Jan. 6, prosecutors had indicated their investigation remained active, writing in court papers that they continued to "uncover additional criminal conduct by Adams."

The task of carrying out the order to dismiss the case will fall to Sassoon, who assumed job the day after Trump took office. Her role was intended to be temporary. Trump in November nominated Jay Clayton, the former chairman of the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, to the post, an appointment that must be confirmed by the Senate.

Federal agents had also been investigating other senior Adams aides. Prior to the mayor's indictment, federal authorities seized phones from a police commissioner, schools chancellor, multiple deputy mayors and the mayor's director of Asian Affairs. Each of those officials denied wrongdoing but have since resigned.

In December, Adams' chief adviser and closest confidant, Ingrid Lewis-Martin, was indicted by a state prosecutor — the Manhattan district attorney — on charges that she and her son accepted \$100,000 in bribes related to real estate construction projects.

With firings and lax enforcement, Trump moving to dismantle government's public integrity guardrails

By ERIC TUCKER, MICHELLE L. PRICE and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In the first three weeks of his administration, President Donald Trump has moved with brazen haste to dismantle the federal government's public integrity guardrails that he frequently tested during his first term but now seems intent on removing entirely.

In a span of hours on Monday, word came that he had forced out leaders of offices responsible for government ethics and whistleblower complaints. And in a boon to corporations, he ordered a pause to enforcement of a decades-old law that prohibits American companies from bribing foreign governments to win business. All of that came on top of the earlier late-night purge of more than a dozen inspectors general who are tasked with rooting out waste, fraud and abuse at government agencies.

It's all being done with a stop-me-if-you-dare defiance by a president who the first time around felt hemmed in by watchdogs, lawyers and judges tasked with affirming good government and fair play. Now, he seems determined to break those constraints once and for all in a historically unprecedented flex of executive power.

"It's the most corrupt start that we've ever seen in the history of the American presidency," said Norm Eisen, a former U.S. ambassador to the Czech Republic who was a legal adviser to Democrats during Trump's first impeachment.

"The end goal is to avoid accountability this time," said Princeton University presidential historian Julian Zelizer. "Not just being protected by his party and counting on the public to move on when scandals or problems emerge, but this time by actually removing many of the key figures whose job it is to oversee" his administration.

Zelizer added: "It's a much bolder assertion than in his first term, and if successful and if all these figures are removed, you'll have a combination of an executive branch lacking independent voices that will keep their eye on the ball and then a congressional majority that at least thus far isn't really going to cause problems for him."

Picking up where he left off

To some degree, Trump's early actions reflect a continuation of the path he blazed in his first term, when he dismissed multiple key inspectors general — including those leading the Defense Department and intelligence community — and fired an FBI director and an attorney general amid a Justice Department investigation into his ties between his 2016 presidential campaign and Russia.

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This time, though, his administration has moved much more swiftly in reprisal against those he feels previously wronged him — or still could.

His Justice Department last month fired more than a dozen prosecutors involved in investigations into his hoarding of classified documents and his efforts to undo the 2020 presidential election, both of which resulted in since-abandoned indictments after he left office. It's also demanded a list of all agents who participated in investigations related to the Jan. 6, 2021 riot at the U.S. Capitol, with Trump saying Friday that he intends to quickly and "surgically" fire some of them.

The actions reflect the administration's intent to keep a tight grip on the Justice Department and even purge it of investigators seen as insufficiently loyal, even though career civil servants are typically not replaced by new presidents. Trump's actions are in keeping with the dramatic dismissal on his first Friday night in office of nearly 20 inspectors general in a broad cross-section of government agencies, all in seeming violation of a law requiring that Congress be given 30-day advance notice of such firings.

The latest moves came Monday, when the recently fired head of the Office of Special Counsel, which processes whistleblower complaints and handles the Hatch Act that prohibits federal employees from partisan activities on the job, sued over his dismissal days earlier. Trump separately fired the head of the Office of Government Ethics.

He named as acting head of the watchdog agencies Doug Collins, a loyal ally and former Republican congressman from Georgia who was recently confirmed as secretary of veteran affairs. But late Monday, a federal judge in Washington ordered the fired OSC head, Hampton Dellinger, to be reinstated while a court fight continues over his removal.

Trump's administration on Monday also moved to wipe away two high-profile public integrity cases of elected officials. Trump pardoned former Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich, who was convicted on political corruption charges that included seeking to sell an appointment to then-President Barack Obama's old Senate seat.

Hours later, Trump's Justice Department ordered federal prosecutors to drop charges against New York Mayor Eric Adams, who was accused of accepting bribes of free or discounted travel and illegal campaign contributions.

"I think Trump has sent an unmistakable message that corruption is welcome in his new administration," said Eisen, who now works with State Democracy Defenders Fund, a nonprofit watchdog group that says it fights "election sabotage and autocracy," and has been filing lawsuits against Trump's administration.

Trump has portrayed the cases the same way he labeled his own investigations: as politically motivated witch hunts.

Loosening rules related to business

Trump, who in 2016 campaigned on a pledge to rid Washington of corruption with his "drain the swamp" refrain, has also taken aim at ethics and watchdog rules when it comes to business.

On Monday, he paused enforcement of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, which prevents U.S. companies from paying bribes to foreign government officials to win business, until new Attorney General Pam Bondi can design new guidance.

The White House said the action was needed because American companies "are prohibited from engaging in practices common among international competitors, creating an uneven playing field."

"It sounds good on paper but in practicality it's a disaster," Trump said at the White House.

On his first day in office last month, Trump signed an executive order that rescinded one issued by former President Joe Biden that had prohibited executive branch employees from accepting major gifts from lobbyists and bans people jumping from lobbying jobs to executive branch jobs, or the reverse, for two years. The bans were aimed at curbing the "revolving door" in Washington, where incoming government workers could bring a minefield of ethical conflicts and later find lucrative lobbying jobs.

The move came as Trump returned to power with fresh overlaps between his personal and business interests, including his launch of a new cryptocurrency token.

His family business, the Trump Organization, meanwhile, adopted a voluntary agreement that bars it from making deals with foreign governments but not with private companies abroad, a significant change

from the company's ethics pact in the first term.

The Trump Organization has in recent months struck deals for hotels and golf resorts in Vietnam, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Government ethics experts have raised concerns that the president's personal financial interests in the deals could influence the way he conducts foreign policy.

Elon Musk-led group proposes buying OpenAI for \$97.4 billion. OpenAI CEO says 'no thank you'

By MATT O'BRIEN AP Technology Writer

A group of investors led by Elon Musk is offering about \$97.4 billion to buy the nonprofit behind OpenAI, escalating a dispute with the artificial intelligence company that Musk helped found a decade ago.

Musk and his own AI startup, xAI, and a consortium of investment firms want to take control of the ChatGPT maker and revert it to its original charitable mission as a nonprofit research lab, according to Musk's attorney Marc Toberoff.

OpenAI CEO Sam Altman quickly rejected the unsolicited bid on Musk's social platform X, saying, "no thank you but we will buy Twitter for \$9.74 billion if you want."

Musk bought Twitter, now called X, for \$44 billion in 2022.

Musk and Altman, who together helped start OpenAI in 2015 and later competed over who should lead it, have been in a long-running feud over the startup's direction since Musk resigned from its board in 2018.

Musk, an early OpenAI investor and board member, sued the company last year, first in a California state court and later in federal court, alleging it had betrayed its founding aims as a nonprofit research lab that would benefit the public good by safely building better-than-human AI. Musk had invested about \$45 million in the startup from its founding until 2018, Toberoff has said.

The sudden success of ChatGPT two years ago brought worldwide fame and a new revenue stream to OpenAI and also heightened the internal battles over the future of the organization and the advanced AI it was trying to develop. Its nonprofit board fired Altman in late 2023. He came back days later with a new board.

Now a fast-growing business still controlled by a nonprofit board bound to its original mission, OpenAI last year announced plans to formally change its corporate structure. But such changes are complicated. Tax law requires money or assets donated to a tax-exempt organization to remain within the charitable sector.

If the initial organization becomes a for-profit, generally, a conversion is needed where the for-profit pays the fair market value of the assets to another charitable organization. Even if the nonprofit OpenAI continues to exist in some way, some experts argue it would have to be paid fair market value for any assets that get transferred to its for-profit subsidiaries.

Lawyers for OpenAI and Musk faced off in a California federal court last week as a judge weighed Musk's request for a court order that would block the ChatGPT maker from converting itself to a for-profit company.

U.S. District Judge Yvonne Gonzalez Rogers hasn't yet ruled on Musk's request but in the courtroom said it was a "stretch" for Musk to claim he will be irreparably harmed if she doesn't intervene to stop OpenAI from moving forward with its planned transition.

But the judge also raised concerns about OpenAI and its relationship with business partner Microsoft and said she wouldn't stop the case from moving to trial as soon as next year so a jury can decide.

"It is plausible that what Mr. Musk is saying is true. We'll find out. He'll sit on the stand," she said.

Along with Musk and xAI, others backing the bid announced Monday include Baron Capital Group, Valor Management, Atreides Management, Vy Fund, Emanuel Capital Management and Eight Partners VC.

Toberoff said in a statement that if Altman and OpenAI's current board "are intent on becoming a fully for-profit corporation, it is vital that the charity be fairly compensated for what its leadership is taking away from it: control over the most transformative technology of our time."

Musk's attorney also shared a letter he sent in early January to the attorneys general of California, where OpenAI operates, and Delaware, where it is incorporated.

Since both state offices must “ensure any such transactional process relating to OpenAI’s charitable assets provides at least fair market value to protect the public’s beneficial interest, we assume you will provide a process for competitive bidding to actually determine that fair market value,” Toberoff wrote, asking for more information on the terms and timing of that bidding process.

Unspent aid worth billions lacks oversight as Trump dismantles USAID, watchdog warns

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. Agency for International Development has lost almost all ability to track \$8.2 billion in unspent humanitarian aid following the Trump administration’s foreign funding freeze and idling of staffers, a government watchdog warned Monday.

The administration’s fast-moving dismantling of the agency has left oversight of the aid “largely nonoperational,” USAID’s inspector general’s office said. That includes a greatly reduced ability to ensure that no assistance falls into the hands of violent extremist groups or goes astray in unstable regions or conflict zones, the watchdog said.

The Trump administration’s actions have “significantly impacted USAID’s capacity to disburse and safeguard its humanitarian assistance programming,” it said, also citing the risk of hundreds of millions of dollars in commodities rotting after staff was barred from delivering it.

The inspector general, however, also noted that it has “longstanding concerns about existing USAID oversight mechanisms.”

Meanwhile, the administration and billionaire ally Elon Musk continued their unraveling of the aid agency. The General Services Administration, which manages government buildings, told The Associated Press that it had stripped USAID from the lease on its Washington headquarters.

Staffers — some dressed in USAID sweatshirts or T-shirts — were blocked from going upstairs to their offices Monday. Guards, federal officers and officials stopped some from retrieving their belongings.

“Go home,” a man who identified himself as a USAID official told some staffers. “Why are you here?”

The eviction from the building, which USAID had occupied for decades, follows a court late Friday temporarily blocking a Trump administration order that would have pulled all but a fraction of workers off the job worldwide.

Two workers’ groups that sued over the targeting of USAID asked the court on Monday to find the Trump administration in violation of the judge’s order, after some workers were still locked out of USAID’s systems.

The government’s steps suggest it “intends to continue taking potentially irreversible steps to dismantle the agency” before the court can issue a final ruling in the case, the employee associations said. Another hearing is scheduled for Wednesday.

Trump and Musk, who runs what is billed as a cost-cutting Department of Government Efficiency, have taken aim at other government agencies. But USAID has been hit hardest, with Trump and Musk accusing the agency’s work around the world of being out of line with Trump’s agenda and wasteful.

A Trump appointee at the heart of the sweeping changes at USAID defended the shutdown of the agency in a court filing Monday, saying Trump officials have been faced with “noncompliance” and “insubordination” from staff.

Peter Marocco, USAID’s recently appointed deputy administrator, submitted an affidavit Monday in the lawsuit brought by employees’ groups.

In it, he accuses USAID staff of stalling and resisting the administration’s funding freeze and what he described as a program-by-program review. Marocco said that made it necessary to pull all but about 600 staff off the job.

Trump signed an executive order Jan. 20 freezing foreign assistance, forcing U.S.-funded aid and development programs worldwide to shut down and lay off staff. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said he had sought to mitigate the damage by issuing a waiver to exempt emergency food aid and “life-saving”

programs.

But USAID officials and aid groups say neither funding nor staffing have resumed to allow even the most essential programs to start work again.

The Norwegian Refugee Council, one of the largest humanitarian groups, called the U.S. cutoff the most devastating of any in its 79-year history. It said Monday that it will have to suspend programs serving hundreds of thousands of people in 20 countries.

"The impact of this will be felt severely by the most vulnerable, from deeply neglected Burkina Faso, where we are the only organization supplying clean water to the 300,000 trapped in the blockaded city of Djibo, to war-torn Sudan, where we support nearly 500 bakeries in Darfur providing daily subsidized bread to hundreds of thousands of hunger-stricken people," the group said in a statement.

In an interview with Fox News host Bret Baier that aired Sunday before the Super Bowl, Trump suggested that he might allow a handful of aid and development programs to resume under Rubio's oversight.

"Let him take care of the few good ones," Trump said.

Aid organizations say the damage that has been done to programs would make it impossible to restart many operations without additional substantial investment.

U.S. District Judge Carl Nichols on Friday temporarily blocked a Trump administration order that would have put thousands of USAID staffers on administrative leave that day and given those abroad just 30 days to get back to the United States at government expense.

While the judge ordered the administration to restore agency email access for staffers, the order said nothing about reopening USAID headquarters. Some staffers and contractors reported having their agency email restored by Monday, while others said they did not.

The inspector general advisory notice said the Trump administration's moves would cut 90% of the staff in USAID's Bureau of Humanitarian Affairs.

The cutoff of funds means that the monitors charged with making sure no U.S. aid in the Middle East or Central Asia reaches the Islamic State group, Hezbollah, the Houthis or Hamas have been told not to come to work, the watchdog said.

The watchdog office noted that it had pushed USAID last year to boost its training of agency staff to make sure that those monitors were properly screening for any such diversion of aid.

In Washington, some staffers said they came to the USAID on Monday offices because they were confused by conflicting agency emails and notices over the weekend about whether they should go in. Others expected they would be turned away but went anyway.

A USAID email sent Sunday night, saying it was "From the office of the administrator," told employees that what it called "the former USAID headquarters" and other USAID offices in the Washington area were closed until further notice.

DOGE's access to Treasury data risks US financial standing and raises security worries, experts warn

By FATIMA HUSSEIN and DAVID KLEPPER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Department of Government Efficiency's embed into the federal government has raised a host of concerns, transforming a debate over how to cut government waste into a confrontation over privacy rights and the nation's financial standing in the world.

DOGE, spearheaded by billionaire Donald Trump donor Elon Musk, has rapidly burrowed deep into federal agencies and taken drastic actions to cut spending. This includes trying to get rid of thousands of federal workers, shuttering the U.S. Agency for International Development and accessing the Treasury Department's enormous payment systems.

Advocacy groups and labor unions have filed lawsuits in an attempt to save agencies and federal worker jobs, and five former treasury secretaries are sounding the alarm on the risks associated with Musk's DOGE accessing sensitive Treasury Department payment systems and potentially stopping congressionally authorized payments.

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"Any hint of the selective suspension of congressionally authorized payments will be a breach of trust and ultimately, a form of default. And our credibility, once lost, will prove difficult to regain," said former treasury secretaries Robert Rubin, Larry Summers, Timothy Geithner, Jacob Lew and Janet Yellen in an op-ed in The New York Times on Monday.

They warn about the risks of "arbitrary and capricious political control of federal payments, which would be unlawful and corrosive to our democracy."

Musk said on his social media platform X on Monday that "we need to stop government spending like a drunken sailor on fraud & waste or America is gonna go bankrupt. That does mean a lot of grifters will lose their grift and complain loudly about it. Too bad. Deal with it."

Experts in the financial and digital privacy worlds warn that the U.S. financial system is delicate and complicated and could be harmed by unilateral moves. They also say that Americans' personal information could be compromised by the unsafe handling of sensitive data.

Andrew Metrick, director of the Yale Program on Financial Stability, says DOGE's actions as a "go fast and break things group" pose a danger to the U.S. financial system and the U.S. dollar's standing as the world's reserve currency.

On the issue of cutting government programs or potentially undermining U.S. democratic norms, DOGE is "not going to care, but they should care about harming the dollar and harming the safety of U.S. government debt," Metrick said.

Crossing the Rubicon of danger would be something perceived as a default event on bonds, Metrick said, especially as the U.S. runs very close to its statutory debt limit.

"We maintain a complicated financial system — a few wrong actions and the world loses confidence in our ability to manage that system."

On cybersecurity issues, the public has no idea what safeguards or policies, if any, Musk and his staffers used to protect the sensitive data they accessed, according to John Davisson, senior counsel at the Electronic Privacy Information Center, a Washington-based nonprofit that advocates for digital privacy. Davisson called DOGE's access "the largest data breach and most consequential data breach in U.S. history."

The Treasury Department's databases include information about individual and business taxes, medical records, Social Security payments and numbers, and government payments, as well as a long list of other personal data, such as birthdates, home addresses and phone numbers, military records and disability information, Davisson said.

Typically, government employees who handle the data are subject to training requirements and myriad rules to ensure the data isn't mishandled, leaked or breached. Often, data is kept segregated in different systems to ensure no one person has easy access to all the information. What may look like inefficiency, Davisson said, is actually a means of securing sensitive data.

It was an "imperfect but quite robust" system, Davisson said, and without it, Americans could be at greater risk of identity theft, stalking or other crimes. Personal information could be sold to online data brokers, who could use the data to gain an even more accurate portrait of Americans and their habits.

Davisson said he doesn't accept arguments from Musk and Trump that the data access is about finding efficiencies in government.

"This is about control. There are ways to improve efficiency in government. ... They involve legislation, they involve regulation, they involve trained personnel and experts," he said. "This is about establishing control over databases and thereby establishing control over federal agencies."

In one of several disputes over DOGE's access to the Treasury Department, labor unions and advocacy groups have sued to block the payments system review from proceeding because of concerns about its legality. U.S. District Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly on Thursday restricted DOGE's read-only access of Treasury's payment systems to two workers, one of them Tom Krause, who now appears on the Treasury Department website as performing the functions of fiscal assistant secretary.

Saturday's court ruling in favor of 19 Democratic attorneys general who sued to block DOGE from accessing sensitive Treasury Department records shows Americans aren't powerless to stop Musk, said Lisa

Gilbert, co-president of Public Citizen, one of the groups that has sued the government over DOGE's access. She said her group and other advocacy organizations will work to ensure the new administration follows the law — and that court orders are followed.

"This is really clear law. Our federal records have personal information in them. They're protected," she said. "They are moving fast and doing things that normal governments wouldn't try, and the courts are responding appropriately."

Trump told Fox News on Sunday that Musk is "not gaining anything" from his role in DOGE. "We're going to find billions, hundreds of billions, of dollars of fraud and abuse and, you know, the people elected me on that," Trump said.

Metrick said: "I am nervous they have a hammer and the whole government looks like a nail to them, but Treasury is a thumb."

Secrecy preceded the shutdown of the consumer protection agency's Washington headquarters

By CHRIS MEGERIAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Over the weekend, some staff members at the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau saw a sign of trouble to come.

Windows in two basement conference rooms were covered with brown paper and blue painter's tape, concealing their occupants. Voices could be heard inside discussing cuts to government agencies. When the door was cracked open, there were young people with temporary badges.

It was fresh evidence that the agency, which was created to protect Americans from financial fraud, abuse and deceptive practices, was the newest target of Elon Musk and his Department of Government Efficiency, known as DOGE. Now the Washington headquarters is shut down for the week, and there are fears that it will be gutted like the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Pictures of the conference rooms were viewed by The Associated Press, and the scene was described by two current employees who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they feared retaliation. The secrecy contradicts insistence by the White House that Musk is transparently fulfilling President Donald Trump's goal of downsizing the federal government.

Trump defended his administration's broadside against the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, or CFPB, saying it was "set up to destroy people."

"We did the right thing," he told reporters in the Oval Office on Monday.

Demonstrators gathered outside the bureau to criticize Trump and Musk, who has faced escalating scrutiny as DOGE spreads its reach across the federal government.

"Elon Musk, where are you?" said Rep. Maxine Waters, a California Democrat. "We're not afraid of you."

The White House is considering opportunities for Musk to talk publicly about his work for the first time since the billionaire entrepreneur joined the administration as a special government employee, according to an official who spoke on the condition of anonymity about internal discussions.

So far, Musk has only defended himself on social media, saying he's confident that the American people will support DOGE's efforts. He also responded to accusations that he's improperly accessed sensitive information through government databases, saying "I'm 1000% more trustworthy than untold numbers of deep state bureaucrats and fraudsters."

Russ Vought, Trump's budget chief, is serving as the CFBP's acting director after the previous director, Rohit Chopra, was fired by Trump. Vought sent an email to employees on Monday morning saying they should "not perform any work tasks." They were directed to contact the top lawyer for the Office of Management and Budget "to get approval in writing" before doing anything.

Vought's message followed one on Saturday evening that ordered the bureau to "cease all supervision and examination activity."

There are indications that the bureau's website is being disrupted. The homepage displays a "404: Page not found" message, although other parts still work.

The National Treasury Employees Union, which represents more than 1,000 workers at the bureau, filed a lawsuit saying that Vought's order illegally exceeded his authority.

"It is substantially likely that these initial directives are a precursor to a purge of CFPB's workforce, which is now prohibited from fulfilling the agency's statutory mission," the lawsuit said.

The CFPB, was created after the 2008 financial crisis and subprime mortgage-lending scandal. Officials said that it has obtained nearly \$20 billion in financial relief for U.S. consumers since its founding in the form of canceled debts, compensation and reduced loans.

"This is a fight between millions of hardworking people who just don't want to get cheated and a handful of billionaires like Elon Musk, who wants the chance to cheat them," said Sen. Elizabeth Warren, a Massachusetts Democrat who helped create the CFPB.

In recent years, the agency had passed rules capping bank overdraft fees, removing medical debt from consumer credit reports, regulating "buy now, pay later" loans, and requiring disclosures on short-term loans known as earned wage access. It has sued banks for misleading consumers and employers for misleading workers, with a particular focus on curbing junk fees and predatory lending under President Joe Biden's administration.

Banks and industry groups have sued to block some of these rules, claiming the agency has exceeded its regulatory authority. Conservatives and their financial backers have long targeted the bureau, contending it lacks sufficient supervision. However, the bureau's funding and oversight model was upheld by the Supreme Court in May.

On Friday night, Musk posted "CFPB RIP" on X, his social media platform. He added an emoji of a tombstone.

When another person expressed approval of the plan, Musk wrote "they did above zero good things, but still need to go."

Since Congress created the CFPB, it would need to pass additional legislation to formally eliminate it. However, agency leadership can decide what enforcement actions to take.

Democrats and progressives expressed outrage over the Trump administration's decision to target the CFPB.

"Elon Musk and Russ Vought aren't just testing the limits of the law — they're shattering them, daring anyone to stop them," said Leah Greenberg, co-executive director of the activist group Indivisible. "This attack on the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau is illegal, unconstitutional, and a blatant power grab by billionaires who want to rig the system even further in their favor."

Judge finds Trump administration hasn't fully followed his order to unfreeze federal spending

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal judge found Monday that the Trump administration hasn't fully followed his order to unfreeze federal spending and told the White House to release billions of dollars in funding. The Trump administration quickly appealed the ruling.

U.S. District Court Judge John McConnell became the first judge to find that the administration had disobeyed a court order. Federal money for things like early childhood education, pollution reduction and HIV prevention research has remained tied up even after his Jan. 31 order blocking a planned halt on federal spending, he found.

McConnell ordered the Trump administration to "immediately take every step necessary" to follow his temporary restraining order halting plans for a sweeping freeze of federal funding.

McConnell's temporary restraining order issued Monday also blocks the administration from cutting billions of dollars in grant funding from the National Institutes of Health.

"These pauses in funding violate the plain text of the (temporary restraining order)," McConnell wrote. "The broad categorical and sweeping freeze of federal funds is, as the Court found, likely unconstitutional and has caused and continues to cause irreparable harm to a vast portion of this country."

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The ruling comes after top Trump administration officials over the weekend openly questioned the judiciary's authority to serve as a check on executive power as his wide-ranging agenda draws pushback from the courts.

Judges have also blocked, at least temporarily, Trump's push to end birthright citizenship for anyone born in the U.S., access to Treasury Department records by billionaire Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency and a mass deferred resignation plan for federal workers.

The White House did not immediately respond to a message seeking comment. The Justice Department appealed the ruling to the 1st Circuit Court of Appeals.

The administration has said it was making good-faith efforts to comply with the judge's ruling in a lawsuit filed by nearly two dozen states. But the Justice Department also argued that his ruling only applied to a sweeping spending freeze outlined in a late January memo that has since been rescinded.

The ruling doesn't apply to other spending pauses outlined in different memos, including funds that were part of President Joe Biden's signature climate, health care and tax package.

But McConnell, who is based in Rhode Island and was nominated by President Barack Obama, said his order blocked the administration from a wide range of funding cuts.

The Republican administration previously said the sweeping funding pause would bring federal spending in line with the president's agenda, and the White House press secretary has indicated some spending halts would continue as part of his blitz of executive orders.

Trump has sought to increase fossil fuel production, remove protections for transgender people and end diversity, equity and inclusion efforts.

A different federal judge in Washington has issued a temporary restraining order against the funding freeze plan and since expressed concern that some nonprofit groups weren't getting their funding.

Rhode Island Attorney General Peter Neronha applauded McConnell's ruling.

"This is a country of laws. We expect the administration to follow the law," Neronha said in a statement. "We will not hesitate to go back to court if they don't comply."

In Oregon, a group that provides services and support to immigrants working to become U.S. citizens received a letter immediately freezing their funding on Feb. 4, Frank Jay So, executive director of the Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, told The Associated Press.

As of Monday, the group has not received any notice that would indicate the funds are now available, he said.

"It's sooooo frustrating!" he said. "We have a workshop planned for next month and will do so without federal funds if needed but at some point, our savings will dry up and so will this work."

The group has received funding since 2010 and has helped more than 4,000 immigrants from 80 countries become citizens. This work, So said, benefits citizens who depend on the migrant workforce as well as immigrants. "Haphazard actions like this only cause harm."

Fifteen cases of measles reported in small West Texas county with high rate of vaccine exemptions

By SEAN MURPHY and DEVI SHASTRI Associated Press

Fifteen measles cases — mostly in school-aged children — have been confirmed in a small county in West Texas with one of the highest rates of vaccine exemptions in the state.

South Plains Public Health District Director Zach Holbrooks said Monday that his department was first notified in late January about the first two cases in Gaines County, which he said were "two children who had seen a physician in Lubbock."

Some of the cases appear to be connected to private religious schools in the district, said Holbrooks, who cautioned that the investigation is ongoing.

"I wouldn't say they're all connected, but our teams are looking into exposure sites and the background of those cases," he said.

Local health officials set up a drive-through vaccination clinic last week and are offering screening ser-

vices to residents.

The U.S. saw a rise in measles cases in 2024, including an outbreak in Chicago that sickened more than 60. This month, health officials in metro Atlanta are working to contain a measles case that spread to two unvaccinated family members.

Texas law allows children to get an exemption from school vaccines for reasons of conscience, including religious beliefs. The percentage of kids with exemptions has risen over the last decade from .76% in 2014 to 2.32% last year, according to Texas Department of State Health Services data.

Gaines County has one of the highest rates in Texas of school-aged children who opt out of at least one required vaccine: Nearly 14% of children from kindergarten through grade 12 had an exemption in the 2023-24 school year, which is more than five times the state average of 2.32% and beyond the national rate of 3.3%.

But the number of unvaccinated kids in the county is likely significantly higher, DSHS spokeswoman Lara Anton said, because Gaines County has many children who are homeschooled and whose data would not be reported.

The measles, mumps and rubella vaccines is a two-shot series: The first is recommended at 12 to 15 months old and second between 4 to 6 years old. The vaccine is required to attend most public schools in the U.S.

But vaccination rates have declined nationwide since the COVID-19 pandemic and most states are below the 95% vaccination threshold for kindergartners — the level needed to protect communities against measles outbreaks. Lawmakers across the country have proposed various vaccine requirement changes at a time when anti-vaccine activist Robert F. Kennedy Jr. is awaiting confirmation as the secretary of Health and Human Services.

One of the early Gaines County cases traveled to neighboring New Mexico while they were still infectious, Anton said, but there were no immediate reports of infection. New Mexico Department of Health spokesman Robert Nott said the agency has been in communication with Texas officials but there was no known exposure to measles in his state.

"We're going to watch this very closely," Nott said.

Two cases of measles were reported in early January in the Houston area, but Holbrooks said the West Texas cases don't appear to be connected.

Measles is a highly contagious virus that can survive in the air for up to two hours. Up to 9 out of 10 people who are susceptible will get the virus if exposed, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Before the vaccine was introduced in 1963, the U.S. saw some 3 million to 4 million cases per year. Now, it's usually fewer than 200 in a normal year.

New strain of bird flu is detected in a Nevada dairy worker, CDC says

By MIKE STOBBE and JONEL ALECCIA Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A dairy worker in Nevada was infected with a new type of bird flu that's different from the version that has been spreading in U.S. herds since last year, federal health officials said Monday.

The illness was considered mild. The person's main symptom was eye redness and irritation, similar to most bird flu cases associated with dairy cows. The person wasn't hospitalized and has recovered, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The newer strain had been seen before in more than a dozen people exposed to poultry, but this is the first time an infection was traced to a cow. The Nevada dairy worker was exposed at a farm in Churchill County, in the west central part of the state, state health officials said.

CDC officials said there is no evidence the virus has spread from this person to any other people. The agency continues to say the virus poses a low risk to the general public.

The bird flu currently spreading through animals, and some people, is known to scientists as Type A H5N1 influenza. But there are different strains.

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A version known as B3.13 was confirmed in March after spreading to cattle in late 2023, scientists said. It has infected 962 cattle herds in 16 states, the vast majority of them in California.

The newer version, known as D1.1, was confirmed in Nevada cattle on Jan. 31. It was found in milk collected as part of a monitoring program started in December.

That discovery meant distinct forms of the virus spread from wild birds into cattle at least twice. Experts said it raises questions about wider spread and the difficulty of controlling infections in animals and the people who work with them.

At least 68 people in the U.S. have been reported infected with bird flu in the last year, according to CDC data. All but a small handful worked closely with cows or poultry.

Most caught the B3.13 version. The CDC previously said the D1.1 version had been seen only in cases in Louisiana and Washington state. But on Monday, the agency revealed that available data indicates D1.1 last year likely infected a total of 15 people in five states — Iowa, Louisiana, Oregon, Washington and Wisconsin — all related to poultry.

The D1.1 version of the virus was linked to the first U.S. death tied to bird flu and to a severe illness in Canada. A person in Louisiana died in January after developing severe respiratory symptoms following contact with wild and backyard birds. In British Columbia, a teen girl was hospitalized for months with a virus traced to poultry.

While the risk to the general public is low, the CDC says bird flu poses a greater threat to people with close or prolonged contact with infected cows, birds or other animals. Those people are encouraged to wear protective equipment and take other precautions.

So long, penny! Trump orders US to ditch 1-cent coin after decades of complaints

By ALAN SUDERMAN AP Business Writer

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — The lowly penny, the forgotten mainstay of coin jars and car cupholders everywhere, may soon be no more.

President Donald Trump announced Sunday he's ordered his administration to cease production of the 1-cent coin, whose buying power is long past its prime.

Advocates for ditching the penny cite its high production cost — currently almost 4 cents per penny, according to the U.S. Mint — and limited utility. Fans of the penny cite its usefulness in charity drives and relative bargain in production costs compared with the nickel, which costs almost 14 cents to mint.

Trump's surprise order comes after decades of unsuccessful efforts to pitch the penny.

"Only tradition explains our stubborn attachment to the penny. But sometimes traditions get ridiculous," the Farmers' Almanac said in its 1989 edition.

Here's a look at some questions surrounding Trump's order.

Can Trump really order the Treasury to stop minting pennies without Congress' approval?

Yes, according to legal scholar Laurence H. Tribe, the Carl M. Loeb University Professor of Constitutional Law Emeritus at Harvard University.

U.S. code gives the Treasury Secretary the authority to mint and issue coins "in amounts the secretary decides are necessary to meet the needs of the United States."

If Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent decides the amount necessary for the penny is zero, he's within his legal rights, Tribe said.

"Unlike a lot of what the new administration has been doing pursuant to the flood of executive orders since Jan. 20, this action seems to me entirely lawful and fully constitutional," Tribe said, referring to the aggressive executive action Trump's taken on other issues since taking office.

Congress, which dictates currency specifications like the size and metal content of coins, could make Trump's order permanent through law. But past congressional efforts to ditch the penny have failed.

Pennies are mostly made of zinc, and the American zinc lobby has been a major opponent to suggestions that the penny be eliminated.

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How many pennies are in circulation?

It depends on what you mean by circulation.

Pennies are the most popular coin made by the U.S. Mint, which reported making 3.2 billion of them last year. That's more than half of all the new coins it made last year.

MIT professor Jeff Gore, who founded Citizens to Retire the Penny, said coins are supposed to stay in circulation for about 30 years and that in the last three decades the U.S. Mint has made about 250 billion pennies.

But, he says, "because nobody wants to use pennies, they fall out of active circulation much faster than other coins."

If pennies sit in drawer for a decade, Gore asks, "Does that qualify as being in circulation?"

Will Americans miss pennies?

The experience in other countries suggests no.

Canada started phasing out its penny a dozen years ago and urged store owners to round prices to the nearest nickel for cash transactions. Electronic purchases were still billed to the nearest cent. The move came after New Zealand, Australia, the Netherlands, and others dropped their lowest-denomination coins.

After dropping the penny or its equivalent, those countries have not looked back.

What comes next?

Trump's order, which he announced in a social media post as he was departing New Orleans after watching the first half of the Super Bowl, was the latest in his administration's rapid-fire efforts to cut government costs.

"Let's rip the waste out of our great nation's budget, even if it's a penny at a time," Trump wrote in his post, which was light on details about plans for a post-penny future.

After Canada stopped minting new pennies, it began recycling them for their "valuable" copper and zinc, according to a 2022 report from the Canadian Mint.

Little to no relief from high borrowing costs expected as Fed Chair Powell heads to the Hill

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The odds of further interest rate cuts this year by the Federal Reserve dwindled last week as unemployment fell and more officials say they want to see how new policies from the White House affect the economy.

While Fed officials penciled in two rate cuts this year at their December meeting, economists and Wall Street investors are increasingly skeptical, with some predicting no reductions at all this year. On Friday, economists at Morgan Stanley said they now expect just one rate cut in 2025, and investors also expect just one — in July — according to pricing in futures markets.

Fewer cuts could translate into a longer period of elevated mortgage rates and high costs to borrow money for everything from autos to credit cards. Still, mortgage rates are closely tied to the yield on the 10-year Treasury note, which can move independently of the Fed's actions.

The shifting expectations come as Chair Jerome Powell heads to Capitol Hill for two days of testimony this week, beginning Tuesday, before House and Senate committees that oversee the central bank and the financial industry. Fed chairs are required by law to appear before Congress twice a year.

Members of Congress may urge that he cut rates more quickly. He will also likely be grilled about issues that are taking a higher profile under the Trump administration, such as crypto regulation, banking regulation, and allegations of "de-banking."

De-banking is the practice of banks shutting down customer accounts because they believe they pose financial, legal or reputational risks to the banks. Some crypto executives have charged that Biden administration regulators pressured financial firms to target their industry for de-banking.

Regarding interest rates, Fed officials have suggested recently that after cutting their key rate three times at the end of last year — to about 4.3%, down from two-decade high of 5.3% — they are likely to

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be on hold for an extended period, though none will specify how long that might be.

On Friday, Fed governor Adriana Kugler said that the labor market was "stable" and that "gives us a little bit of time to make some decisions." She noted that inflation has "moved sideways" since the fall and is above their 2% target.

She added that potential policy changes from the Trump administration have added uncertainty to their outlook for the economy. Economists have said that widespread tariffs, and the deportation of immigrants that Trump has also promised, could push up inflation. Others argue that Trump's deregulatory policies could, by increasing supply, reduce prices.

"The cautious and the prudent step is to hold the (Fed's key) rate where it is for some time," Kugler said. "Given that the economy is solid, given the fact that we haven't achieved our 2% target, and given the fact that we may have uncertainties and other factors that may be pushing up inflation."

Separately, Austan Goolsbee, president of the Fed's Chicago branch, said in an exclusive interview with The Associated Press Friday that he still expects the central bank's rate will be lower in the next 12 to 18 months than it is now. But he also said it makes sense for the Fed to take a slower approach as it nears a point where it may stop reducing rates.

He also noted that the prospect of tariffs has muddied the waters a bit for the Fed in the coming months. Tariffs may cause a one-time increase in prices but don't necessarily cause ongoing inflation.

As a result, Goolsbee said, Fed officials will have to sort through any price increases that do occur to determine whether they are one-time changes, or a reflection of persistent inflationary pressures.

"That's not that easy to do, it's going to take time to figure that out," he said. "We've still just got to wait for the dust to clear."

Other officials also suggested that it will take time for the Fed to determine what steps it needs to take next.

Lorie Logan, president of the Fed's Dallas branch, said Thursday that while in "some scenarios" the Fed may soon cut rates, it's also possible "we'll need to hold rates at least at the current level for quite some time."

Even if inflation were to fall close to the 2% target, she added, that wouldn't necessarily mean the Fed should "cut rates soon." Instead, with the economy mostly healthy and hiring holding up, the Fed's key rate may already be close to the level at which it doesn't restrict or stimulate growth, she said — a level that economists refer to as the "neutral rate."

The government said Friday that employers added a solid number of jobs last month while the unemployment rate ticked down for the second straight month to 4%, historically quite low. Hiring in November and December was revised much higher.

Steady hiring and a mostly-healthy job market suggest that there is less of an urgent need for the Fed to reduce borrowing rates. It implemented a steep half-point cut in September after weak hiring over the summer spurred fears that the economy was stumbling, possibly into recession.

The jobs report "bolsters our confidence that the Fed cutting cycle is over," economists at Bank of America wrote in a note Friday.

Vance makes his debut as VP on the international stage at a high-stakes AI summit in Paris

By SYLVIE CORBET, AAMER MADHANI and THOMAS ADAMSON Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — JD Vance stepped onto the world stage this week for the first time as U.S. vice president, using a high-stakes AI summit in Paris and a security conference in Munich to amplify Donald Trump's aggressive new approach to diplomacy.

The 40-year-old vice president, who was just 18 months into his tenure as a senator before joining Trump's ticket, is expected, while in Paris, to push back on European efforts to tighten AI oversight while advocating for a more open, innovation-driven approach.

The AI summit has drawn world leaders, top tech executives, and policymakers to discuss artificial intel-

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ligence's impact on global security, economics, and governance. High-profile attendees include Chinese Vice Premier Zhang Guoqing, signaling Beijing's deep interest in shaping global AI standards.

French President Emmanuel Macron said Monday the Paris AI summit is "a wakeup call" for a European strategy to get competitive in a tech world now dominated by the U.S. and China.

Macron also called on "simplifying" rules in France and the European Union to allow AI advances, citing sectors like healthcare, mobility, energy, and "resynchronize with the rest of the world."

"We are most of the time too slow," he said.

The summit underscores a three-way race for AI supremacy: Europe striving to regulate and invest, China expanding access through state-backed tech giants, and the U.S. under Trump prioritizing a hands-off approach.

Vance's debut abroad

Vance has signaled he will use the Paris summit as a venue for candid discussions with world leaders on AI and geopolitics.

"I think there's a lot that some of the leaders who are present at the AI summit could do to, frankly — bring the Russia-Ukraine conflict to a close, help us diplomatically there — and so we're going to be focused on those meetings in France," Vance told Breitbart News.

Vance is expected to meet separately Tuesday with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, according to a person familiar with planning who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

On Tuesday, Vance will have a working lunch with Macron to discuss Ukraine and the Middle East. Vance, like Trump, has questioned U.S. spending on Ukraine and the broader approach to isolating Russian President Vladimir Putin. Trump promised to end the fighting within six months of taking office.

Vance's diplomatic tour continues in Germany, where he will attend the Munich Security Conference and press European allies to increase their commitments to NATO and Ukraine and may meet with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Vance also addressed what he called an "evil trend" in Europe toward censorship.

"We want people to be able to speak their minds, and we believe that free and open debate is actually a good thing. Unfortunately, a lot of our European friends have gone the wrong direction there," he said.

European leaders have been monitoring Trump's recent statements on threats to impose tariffs on the European Union, take control of Greenland and his suggestion that Palestinians clear out of Gaza once the fighting in the Israel-Hamas conflict ends — an idea flatly rejected by Arab allies.

Fostering AI advances

The summit, which gathers major players such as Google, Microsoft and OpenAI, "is the first time we'll have had such a broad international discussion in one place on the future of AI," said Linda Griffin, vice president of public policy at Mozilla. "I see it as a norm-setting moment."

A global public-private partnership named "Current AI" will be launched to support large-scale initiatives that serve the general interest.

Nick Reiners, senior geotechnology analyst at Eurasia Group, noted an opportunity to shape AI governance by "moving away from this concentration of power amongst a handful of private actors and building this public interest AI instead."

However, it remains unclear if the United States will support such initiatives.

"There's a lot of complicated questions to resolve" around issues like the ability to control AI systems, Nobel Prize winner Demis Hassabis, founder of Google's DeepMind research lab, said. "But also I think even more complicated are maybe the geopolitical questions about things like regulation."

A small group of protesters gathered at Paris' Bastille square called for a pause on development of ever-more advanced AI systems, warning that they could pose catastrophic risks for humanity. Another group protested the AI industry's role in exacerbating climate change through fossil fuel emissions. But negotiating strict limits was not expected to be on the agenda of world leaders gathering this week.

Macron's AI pitch

French organizers are also looking for the summit to ignite major investment in Europe, positioning the

region as a contender in an industry increasingly shaped by U.S.-China rivalry.

Macron touted newly announced investments in France worth 109 billion euros (\$113 billion) over the next five years.

The amount includes 50 billion euros (\$52 billion) from the United Arab Emirates for a one-gigawatt data center and other tech facilities, 20 billion euros from Canada's Brookfield to deploy AI projects and 10 billion euros from UK's Fluidstack to build a giant one-gigawatt calculator.

"If you compare with some big recent announcement made in the U.S., it's at the right scale," Macron said in reference to Trump's support of the OpenAI-led Stargate AI data centers project.

Macron said one key asset for France is its "low carbon pilotable available energy" as the country gets about 75% of its electricity from nuclear energy, the highest level in the world. Mentioning Trump's slogan "drill baby drill," Macron said. "Here there's no need to drill, it's just plug baby plug."

Modi is co-hosting the summit

Modi is co-hosting the summit with Macron in an effort to prevent the sector from becoming a U.S.-China battle.

Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri stressed the need for equitable access to AI to avoid "perpetuating a digital divide that is already existing across the world."

But the U.S.-China rivalry overshadowed broader international talks.

In Beijing, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun expressed opposition Monday to moves to restrict access to AI tools. A new AI chatbot from China-based DeepSeek has prompted calls in the U.S. Congress to limit its use for security reasons.

"We oppose drawing ideological lines and oppose overstressing national security concepts and politicizing economic and trade issues," Guo said. He said that China advocates for open-source AI technology and promotes the accessibility of AI services to share the benefits of artificial intelligence with all countries.

Alexandra Reeve Givens, of the Center for Democracy and Technology, a U.S.-based nonprofit, warned that the American approach must extend beyond technological competition.

"If it's just a techno solution that we're going to out-innovate everybody else, but we're not going to have the norms, the support, and the human relationship for our global partners to really make American leadership and allyship stick, then it's a hollow promise," she said.

Most nations miss deadline for plans to fight climate change. UN says take your time to do it right

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

Nearly 200 nations faced a Monday deadline to file what the United Nations' climate chief calls "among the most important policy documents governments will produce this century" — their plans on how they will cut emissions of heat-trapping gases.

Most won't make the deadline. The U.N. says that's OK as long as they are working on them.

So far only a dozen of the 195 nations that signed the 2015 Paris climate agreement have filed their national plans for cutting emissions by 2035. Those nations account for only 16.2% of the world's carbon dioxide emissions — the chief human-caused heat-trapping gas — and almost all of that is from the United States, where President Donald Trump has already discarded the plan submitted by President Joe Biden's administration.

Aside from the U.S., the only major emitters to submit 2035 targets are Brazil, the United Kingdom and the United Arab Emirates. The Marshall Islands, Singapore, Ecuador, Saint Lucia, Andorra, New Zealand, Switzerland and Uruguay have filed their plans, but they all produce less than 0.2% of the world's carbon dioxide.

U.N. Climate Secretary Simon Stiell said that more than 170 countries have told his office they are working on their national plans, so he's not worried. He emphasized quality over timeliness.

"Taking a bit more time to ensure these plans are first-rate makes sense," Stiell said last week in a policy speech in Brazil. "These will be the most comprehensive climate plans ever developed."

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Champa Patel, policy director of the nonprofit Climate Group, wasn't as forgiving. "It's worrying that countries are failing to meet the urgency of the moment," Patel said. "The world cannot afford inaction."

These plans — officially called Nationally Determined Contributions or NDCs — are the main mechanism of the landmark international agreement. Every five years, nations are supposed to come up with new and stronger five-year plans that outline their voluntary plans to limit or reduce emissions of greenhouse gases from the burning of coal, oil and natural gas.

The latest versions are supposed to be compatible with the Paris agreement's goal of limiting long-term warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial times. The world is now at 1.3 degrees Celsius (2.3 degrees Fahrenheit) since the late 1800s and on pace to warm another 1.8 degrees Celsius (3.2 degrees Fahrenheit), according to the U.N.

Scientists say the warming atmosphere is driving ever more extreme weather events, including flooding, droughts, hurricanes, heat waves and wildfires that are killing people and causing billions of dollars in damage every year.

The new targets are also supposed to be for all greenhouse gases: carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons and sulfur hexafluoride. They should cover the entire economy not just the energy sector, according to a 2023 agreement.

Climate Action Tracker — a group of scientists and other experts who analyze nations' climate plans for domestic emissions — found that four of the six NDC targets they looked at so far got an "almost sufficient" for their target of holding warming to 2 degrees Celsius. Switzerland got an insufficient, with the group saying its plan was more compatible with 3 degrees of warming. The U.K.'s plan was rated compatible for 1.5 degrees of warming.

Britain's plan aims to cut emissions by at least 81% by 2035 when compared to 1990 emissions, mentioning efforts to phase out new internal combustion cars — which only use gasoline and diesel — by 2030. Brazil in its plan gave a range of emission cuts of 59% to 67% by 2035 when compared to 2005 emissions, talking heavily about an emphasis on climate justice, repeatedly mentioning efforts to combat deforestation.

Most of those countries were rated insufficient when it compared what they plan to do with what they are actually doing and what their "fair share" is considering their resources and history. That included the U.S., where one of Trump's first actions last month was pulling out of the Paris agreement.

"We know already right now that whatever (other) countries put out, it is not enough," Climate Action Tracker co-founder Niklas Hohne told The Associated Press Monday. "They all need to do more."

The deadline — set in the Paris agreement to be nine months before the next international climate negotiations, this year in Belem, Brazil — is 11:59 p.m. in Germany, where the U.N. climate office is.

But Stiell said the real deadline is in September. That's when the United Nations will tally up all the plans and figure out how much emissions will be cut and how much future warming will be prevented if countries do what they promise.

That's a big if.

The European Union and China should be done by the middle of the year and India will only submit their target after other major emitting nations do so, Hohne said.

Volunteers are now tracking what's already been lost in the USAID freeze

By THALIA BEATY Associated Press

When U.S. Agency for International Development and the State Department told their contractors to pause all work, Sadie Healy expected the impact to be "horrendous."

But Healy, who runs a small global health consulting firm, Molloy Consultants, realized no one was documenting how bad the freeze on U.S. foreign aid would be. USAID wouldn't be cataloging the impacts as President Donald Trump's administration fired senior staff, shuttered its headquarters and then told its

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employees their jobs would end. The nonprofits and aid companies who worked with USAID were fighting to survive.

So Healy decided she would do it.

"I am an action person. The depression and the sadness that we knew this was going to cause was something I couldn't deal with," Healy said in an interview with The Associated Press. "So we called a Zoom meeting."

Healy is one of a growing number of people and organizations in the international development ecosystem stepping forward to track the impact of the freeze on U.S. foreign aid. Many are nonprofits who already support grassroots groups around the world, while others are professionals now volunteering their time, connections and skills.

The U.S. is the largest single global humanitarian funder, giving \$13.9 billion in 2024, and largest supporter of U.N. agencies, meaning any changes to foreign assistance have sweeping impacts across geographies and issues. The pause in funding has since turned into the dismantling of USAID and its programs.

"CLOSE IT DOWN," Trump said on social media on Friday, though a judge has paused a plan to put thousands of employees on paid leave.

Are USAID cuts permanent or not?

Elon Musk, Tesla CEO and billionaire adviser to the Trump administration, has led the campaign to shut down USAID, saying in posts on X that it is "evil," a "criminal organization," and a "viper's nest of radical-left marxists who hate America." Secretary of State Marco Rubio has said funding will not be permanently cut, but people in the field say every day the freeze continues and USAID stops works causes irreparable harm. The State Department did not respond to a request for comment.

Healy and her business partner Meg McClure said they decided to focus on documenting the number of American jobs lost. They eventually got in touch with a staffer from a Senate committee, who advised them on what data to collect.

Within days, they launched a website, USAID Stop-Work, and a survey to document how many U.S. jobs have been lost as a result of the freeze on foreign assistance. So far, employers or employees have reported 10,758 jobs cut since the stop work orders landed on Jan. 24. That number includes some positions at USAID, but not all of the 8,000 workers directly employed by the agency and the thousands more in the field.

"We can document the destruction that this executive order has caused," Healy said. "And we hope that lawyers and we hope that members of Congress can use that for their case."

At least two groups with tech capacity and deep networks circulated online surveys to learn about the extent of the funding cuts. They eventually merged efforts and set up the website, Global Aid Freeze to visualize the initial responses. The nonprofit GlobalGiving launched a fund to support small international organizations, many of whom will not survive even a 90-day pause in U.S. foreign funding.

Roth Smith, an assistant professor in the School of Communication Studies at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, studies how people organize outside of formal structures, often in response to a disaster. He said volunteer efforts to map a crisis and connect that information to people who can act is typical, but the reach of this organizing is impressive.

"This is a much larger scale and it seems to be highly polished," he said.

'Things are fundamentally changed'

The international nonprofit Accountability Lab, which now operates the Global Aid Freeze website, said 568 organizations responded to its survey about the impacts of the U.S. government's foreign aid freeze. Half of the respondents estimated they had less than 3 months of operating reserves, meaning they will shutdown by May if funding remains on hold.

Blair Glencorse, founder and co-CEO of Accountability Lab, said they've been in touch with foundations to try to help them figure out where their support can be most strategic. He said it also seems hard for nonprofits in developing countries to understand how dramatic and lasting the changes in U.S. foreign funding may be.

"Things are fundamentally changed and I don't think the aid system is going to be the same again," he said.

Other grassroots efforts have focused on supporting those who lost their jobs. Joanne Sonenshine, an economist who has worked as a consultant alongside USAID for more than a decade, said she saw a flood of LinkedIn posts about layoffs and in response, a flurry of job announcements. So, she set up a spreadsheet where people could put in their experience and contact information and others could post links to open positions. Almost 800 people wrote in their names, locations and work history. Another spreadsheet included more than 550 entries.

"This just goes to show how much we need support for these people. And this is not just D.C. people, by the way," Sonenshine said. "These are U.S. contractors or U.S. staff all over the world whose livelihoods and their family's life depended on the U.S. government."

These grassroots tracking efforts are largely self-funded and self-directed. Healy and McClure pay for the website tracking U.S. job losses themselves. Accountability Lab stood up their survey without any dedicated funding, though they've recently gotten some support to continue the effort.

Other professionals within international development have also offered to work for free to help people find jobs or help organizations get new funding. Healy said that willingness reflects the broader ethos and resilience of the community.

"We love planning, it's our favorite thing," Healy said. "We are like, 'This is the moment we were made for. Let's go.'"

Vatican charity says Trump administration's gutting of USAID is 'reckless' and could kill millions

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — The Vatican's charity said Monday that U.S. plans to gut USAID were "reckless" and could kill millions, while Pope Francis' point man on development urged the Trump administration to remember Christian principles about caring for others.

Cardinal Michael Czerny, a Czech-born Canadian Jesuit, is one of the cardinals most closely associated with Francis' pontificate and heads the Vatican office responsible for migrants, the environment, the church's Caritas Internationalis charity and development.

Caritas on Monday warned that millions of people could die as a result of the "ruthless" U.S. decision to "recklessly" stop USAID funding, and hundreds of millions more will be condemned to "dehumanizing poverty."

USAID is the main international humanitarian and development arm of the U.S. government and in 2023 managed more than \$40 billion in combined appropriations, accounting for around 40% of the global aid budget. The Trump administration and billionaire ally Elon Musk have targeted USAID hardest so far in their challenge of federal government spending: A sweeping funding freeze has shut down most of USAID's programs worldwide, though a federal judge on Friday put a temporary halt to plans to pull thousands of agency staffers off the job.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Czerny said every incoming government has the right to review its foreign aid budget, and even to reform an agency like USAID. But he said it's another thing to dismantle an agency after it has made funding commitments.

"There are programs underway and expectations and we might even say commitments, and to break commitments is a serious thing," Czerny said Sunday. "So while every government is qualified to review its budget in the case of foreign aid, it would be good to have some warning because it takes time to find other sources of funding or to find other ways of meeting the problems we have."

One of USAID's biggest non-governmental recipients of funding is Catholic Relief Services, the aid agency of the Catholic Church in the U.S., which has already sounded the alarm about the cuts. Other programs, including Caritas international programs at the diocesan and national levels, are also being impacted di-

rectly or indirectly, Czerny said.

In a statement, Caritas asked governments to urgently call on the U.S. administration to reverse course. "Stopping USAID will jeopardize essential services for hundreds of millions of people, undermine decades of progress in humanitarian and development assistance, destabilize regions that rely on this critical support, and condemn millions to dehumanizing poverty or even death," it said.

While large, the USAID budget is less than one percentage point of the U.S. gross domestic product and a fraction of the biblical call to tithe 10% of one's income, Czerny noted.

Czerny acknowledged Francis has often complained about Western aid to poor countries being saddled with conditions that may be incompatible with Catholic doctrine, such as programs promoting gender ideology. The Trump administration has said it is targeting these "woke" programs in its USAID cuts.

"If the government thinks that its programs have been distorted by ideology, well, then they should reform the programs," Czerny said. "Many people would say that shutting down is not the best way to reform them."

Another area of concern for the Vatican and Catholic hierarchy in the U.S. is the Trump administration's crackdown on undocumented migrants. White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said last week that more than 8,000 people had been arrested in immigration enforcement actions since Trump's Jan. 20 inauguration. Some are being held in federal prisons while others are being held at the Guantanamo Bay Naval Base in Cuba.

"A crackdown is a terrible way to administer affairs and much less to administer justice," said Czerny, whose own family immigrated to Canada as refugees after World War II. "And so I'm very sorry that many people are being hurt and indeed terrorized by the measures."

"All we can hope for is that the people, God's people and the people of goodwill, will help and protect those vulnerable people who are suddenly made much more vulnerable," he added.

The U.S. conference of Catholic bishops put out an unusually critical statement after President Donald Trump's initial executive orders, saying those "focused on the treatment of immigrants and refugees, foreign aid, expansion of the death penalty, and the environment, are deeply troubling and will have negative consequences, many of which will harm the most vulnerable among us."

Inspired by the biblical call to "welcome the stranger," Francis has made caring for migrants a priority of his pontificate, demanding that countries welcome, protect, promote and integrate those fleeing conflicts, poverty and climate disasters. Francis has also said governments are expected to do so to the limits of their capacity.

"And I don't think that is any country except perhaps Lebanon, and maybe one or two other exceptions, who are really over the limit," Czerny said. "So I think it's incumbent on us first of all as human beings, as citizens, as believers, and in our case, as Christians."

Auburn edges Alabama atop AP Top 25 despite loss, Duke and Florida tied at No. 3; UConn drops out

By JOHN MARSHALL AP Sports Writer

Auburn's run at No. 1 is still intact despite a loss to No. 3 Florida. UConn's latest loss has dropped the two-time defending national champions out of the poll for the first time in two years.

The Tigers held the top spot in the poll for the fifth straight week Monday, receiving 34 first-place votes from a 61-person media panel. No. 2 Alabama moved up a spot and had 23 first-place votes, just nine points behind Auburn, while Florida earned three top votes and No. 5 Tennessee got one.

Duke was tied with Florida at No. 3, with No. 9 St. John's moving into the top 10 for the first time since finishing the 1999-2000 season at No. 9.

UConn dropped out of the poll from No. 19 after a 68-62 home loss to St. John's on Friday, ending the nation's fourth-longest active streak of being ranked (53 weeks).

Florida has its highest ranking since reaching No. 1 in 2013-14 after beating Auburn 90-81 for the first

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true road win over a top-ranked team in program history. It was the Gators' second win over a top-ranked team this season after beating then-No. 1 Tennessee at home on Jan. 7.

Auburn had won 14 straight and was unanimous No. 1 the past three weeks.

The Tigers weren't the only top team to lose.

Duke dropped two places to No. 4 after a 77-71 loss to Clemson ended its 16-game winning streak. No. 10 Iowa State also dropped two places after losing 69-52 to No. 17 Kansas. The Cyclones reached their highest ranking ever at No. 2 last month, but lost three in a row before blowing out TCU on Saturday.

Sinking Huskies

UConn started the season at No. 3 and climbed to No. 2 its bid to become the first team since John Wooden's UCLA Bruins to win three straight national championships in the early 1960s.

UConn (16-7, 8-4 Big East) has lost three of five and is down to fourth in the Big East, 3 1/2 games behind St. John's.

"I'm very optimistic," UConn coach Dan Hurley said. "I think right now is a really good time to play us. I think we've got a chance in February to kind of get this thing rolling and be looking a lot different in March."

Rising and falling

No. 13 Arizona had the week's biggest jump, climbing seven places after beating BYU and No. 12 Texas Tech last week. No. 16 Ole Miss moved up six places after taking down No. 15 Kentucky and beating LSU 72-70 on Dre Davis' last-second shot.

No. 18 Marquette and No. 25 Maryland had the biggest drops of teams still in the poll, each losing seven places. No. 21 Missouri fell six spots after losing to No. 5 Tennessee and to No. 8 Texas A&M on a last-second 3-pointer.

In and out

No. 24 Creighton returned to the poll for the first time since Nov. 25 after wins over Providence and Marquette. No. 23 Clemson is back in after taking down Duke. Illinois joined UConn in dropping out of the poll following an 82-73 loss to Rutgers.

Conference watch

The SEC had at least nine teams in the poll for the seventh straight week, including the top three and five of the top 10. No other league has had more than six ranked teams in any week this season.

The Big Ten has six ranked teams, followed by the Big 12 with five and the Big East with three. The Atlantic Coast and American Athletic conferences each had one.

Trump has unleashed chaos by distraction upon the international community. That's no accident

By LAURIE KELLMAN Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The Saudis are furious. The Danes are scrambling. Colombia has backed down. Mexico and Canada stand in a purgatory between tariff wars with the US and ... not. China has retaliated, launching a trade war between the economic superpowers. The Brits, long proud of their "special relationship" with the United States, are leaning into their tradition of quiet diplomacy.

It's as if President Donald Trump has flung a bag of marbles across the global stage, under the feet of foreign leaders who have often stepped together through eight decades of postwar global order.

Everyone, it seems, is responding to Trump — even Australia's leader, when asked last week for his thoughts only a few hours after Trump announced the US would "take over" the decimated Gaza Strip and turn it into the "Riviera of the Middle East."

"I'm not going to, as Australia's prime minister, give a daily commentary on statements by the U.S. president," Anthony Albanese told reporters.

Acknowledged publicly or not, world leaders are watching Trump's wood-chipper approach to some American government institutions and wondering about those of the post-Cold War order: What of the U.S. roles in NATO, the United Nations, the World Bank and other pillars of the international order? On U.S.-controlled

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NATO, Trump has long questioned the value of the pact and threatened not to defend members of the alliance that fail to meet defense-spending goals. On his first day back in the Oval Office, Trump began to pull the United States out of the World Health Organization for the second time, an act that would leave the U.N. agency without its biggest donor. WHO's leaders huddled over a response and asked diplomats to lean on Washington to reverse Trump's decision. A German envoy worried: "The roof is on fire."

"Trump's actions portend a permanent shift in the landscape — not just a switch that flips back in four years' time," wrote Heather Hurlburt, a political and international affairs expert with Chatham House, a think tank in London.

Outside of leadership circles, anyone who depends on U.S. aid for food and medicine is coming to grips with the life-and-death implications of not having it after Trump's drive to dismantle USAID and its six-decade mission to stabilize countries by providing humanitarian aid. The Vatican charity voiced outrage Monday at what it called "unhuman" U.S. plans to gut USAID,

"We're waiting for the decisions, but we are not very, I would say, optimistic," said Arjana Qosaj Mustafa of the Kosovo Women's Network, an umbrella group of 140 NGOs. "But nevertheless, we are resilient. So we'll try to do our best."

Emboldened by his reelection and with help from presidential friend Elon Musk, Trump has unleashed his signature chaos by distraction on the world.

A story of 'flooding the zone' and examples set

Presidential orders and utterances — he's suggested annexing Canada and taking over the Panama Canal — occur at a speed that can atomize opposition. No one person or government can keep track of them all. And that, rather than clarity, is the effect of what Trump's allies call "flooding the zone."

Got a problem with it? Trump has an answer: "Fafu," short for "mess around and find out," except the first word isn't "mess." The president posted the acronym on social media, complete with a photo of him in a fedora and pinstripes.

Ask Colombia what happens when you say no to Trump. Its president briefly resisted planeloads of immigrants during Trump's first week — until the 47th US president threatened the country with as much as a 50% hike in tariffs. Colombia accepted the immigrants. Boom, example set.

The enforcement technique has long delighted Trump's supporters, who turned out for him during the 2024 election heavily influenced by their anxiety over the economy and their own finances, according to APVotecast. Trump says he's trying to save taxpayer money and spend it on issues that align with American interests.

Take Greenland and the Gaza Strip. The isolationist, "America first" president says the U.S. will do so. He eventually ruled out using the military to move Gaza's 2 million people elsewhere, but his plan to develop the seaside enclave into a luxury resort apparently stands.

Never mind that friends and foes alike, from the volatile Mideast to China and the staid UK, have cast the idea as a nonstarter. Powerful Saudi Arabia issued an "absolute rejection" of it. Or that it could jeopardize the fragile hostages-for-prisoners ceasefire in the Israel-Hamas war, Egypt's peace deal with Israel. It could violate international law, too.

Also, Palestinians streaming back to what once were their homes after 15 months of relentless air raids overwhelmingly say they're not leaving. But Trump's plan has found support in Israel, with leaders there taking care to say leaving would be "voluntary" rather than forced expulsion, which would be a war crime.

World leaders scramble to lead

"We are not a bad ally," Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen found it necessary to tell reporters last week, like other leaders on their heels as they respond to the Trump administration.

In this case, according to the Copenhagen Post, Frederiksen was responding to comments by Vice President JD Vance on Fox News' "Sunday Morning Futures," that the EU and NATO member nation was "not being a good ally." He repeated that an American acquisition of Greenland was "possible."

That came after Frederiksen had flown to European capitals last month to urge other countries on the continent to respond with one voice against Trump's vow to make Greenland part of the United States.

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Denmark also has legislation to crack down on racism toward Greenlanders and has sent \$2 billion to the Arctic island for its security.

Federiksen also shared a photo on Facebook Jan. 26 of European leaders dining at her home, with the caption: "We have always stood together in the Nordic countries. And with the new and more unpredictable reality in which we are facing, good and close alliances and friendships have only become more important."

The sentiment is spreading to larger groups. A recent meeting of EU leaders in Brussels that was supposed to be about boosting defense against the Russian threat became very much about Trump.

"We have to do everything to avoid this totally unnecessary and stupid tariff war or trade war," Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk told reporters. He said Trump's threats of tariffs on the EU amount to "a serious test" of European unity, and "It's the first time where we have such a problem among allies." Europe's leaders said they were going to wait to see the details of what Trump is proposing.

In Greenland, meanwhile, Trump's remarks have fueled a generational fight for full independence from Denmark and become a key issue ahead of elections in March. Some of its leaders have said the world's largest island, home to 57,000 people, doesn't want to be part of the United States or Denmark.

"The unfortunate rhetoric has caused a lot of worry and concern not only in Greenland but the rest of the Western Alliance," Naaja H. Nathanielsen, Greenland's minister of business and trade, told The Associated Press.

The feelings are not, however, unanimous. Europe's far-right leaders applauded Trump's agenda at a rally Saturday in Madrid under the banner, "Make Europe Great Again." Those gathered included Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, Italy's Deputy Premier Matteo Salvini, French National Rally party leader Marine Le Pen and others.

Some leaders downplayed Trump's threat to hike tariffs on European imports, saying that the EU's taxes and regulations pose bigger dangers to the region's prosperity. But every speaker touched on illegal immigration, as painful and divisive in Europe as it is in the United States.

Le Pen said the Patriots for Europe group had the best chance of working with Trump. "We," Le Pen said, "are the only ones that can talk with the new Trump administration."

No. 2 Notre Dame women have best ranking in 6 years behind UCLA, South Carolina drops to 4th

By DOUG FEINBERG AP Basketball Writer

Notre Dame moved up to No. 2 in The Associated Press women's basketball Top 25 on Monday for the Irish's best ranking since 2019.

The Fighting Irish replaced South Carolina in the second spot behind UCLA after the Gamecocks lost 66-62 to Texas over the weekend. It is Notre Dame's best ranking since the team was No. 1 on Jan. 21, 2019. The Bruins remained the unanimous No. 1 choice of the 31-member media panel.

The Longhorns climbed to third with their victory. South Carolina dropped to fourth after seeing its 57-game conference winning streak in the regular season come to an end.

No. 5 LSU and No. 6 USC followed the Gamecocks, each moving up one spot after UConn lost at then-No. 19 Tennessee last week. The Huskies fell two places to seventh. Tennessee, which lost to LSU on Sunday, moved up four spots to 15th.

Kentucky moved up to eighth, giving the Wildcats their best ranking since Dec. 8, 2015, when they were seventh. Ohio State was ninth and North Carolina State jumped up four places to 10th. The Wolfpack had wins over then-No. 10 Duke and 22nd-ranked Florida State last week.

Ins and outs

Creighton and Baylor came into the poll at No. 24 and 25 while Vanderbilt and California dropped out. The Bluejays were ranked in the preseason Top 25 before falling out. Baylor has been in and out of the poll a few times this season.

Milestone ranking

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The appearance this week was UConn's 600th straight in the poll. It's the longest streak ever, dating to the preseason poll in 1993. South Carolina has the next longest active streak with 242 consecutive weeks in the Top 25.

Receiving recognition

Grand Canyon received its first vote in the poll as the Antelopes were ranked 25th on a ballot. The program underwent the transition to Division I beginning in 2013, joining the Western Athletic Conference that season. They are 22-2 this season and have won 20 consecutive games after losses to Middle Tennessee and Oregon.

Conference breakdown

The Southeastern Conference still reigns with seven ranked teams. The ACC has six, the Big Ten and Big 12 each have five, and the Big East has two.

Games of the week

No. 1 UCLA at No. 6 USC, Thursday. First place will be on the line when the Bruins visit the Trojans in the first of two meetings over the next few weeks.

No. 7 UConn at No. 4 South Carolina, Sunday. The Huskies will have their last chance to get a victory against a top opponent before the NCAA Tournament.

No. 5 LSU at No. 3 Texas, Sunday. Two of the three teams atop the SEC face off in a key conference showdown.

Space telescope spots rare 'Einstein ring' of light around galaxy in our cosmic neighborhood

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — Europe's Euclid space telescope has detected a rare halo of bright light around a nearby galaxy, astronomers reported Monday.

The halo, known as an Einstein ring, encircles a galaxy 590 million light-years away, considered close by cosmic standards. A light-year is 5.8 trillion miles.

Astronomers have known about this galaxy for more than a century and so were surprised when Euclid revealed the bright glowing ring, reported in the journal *Astronomy and Astrophysics*.

An Einstein ring is light from a much more distant galaxy that bends in such a way as to perfectly encircle a closer object, in this case a well-known galaxy in the constellation Draco. The faraway galaxy creating the ring is more than 4 billion light-years away.

Gravity distorted the light from this more distant galaxy, thus the name honoring Albert Einstein. The process is known as gravitational lensing.

"All strong lenses are special, because they're so rare, and they're incredibly useful scientifically. This one is particularly special, because it's so close to Earth and the alignment makes it very beautiful," lead author Conor O'Riordan of Germany's Max Planck Institute for Astrophysics said in a statement.

Euclid rocketed from Florida in 2023. NASA is taking part in its mission to detect dark energy and dark matter in the universe.

Super Bowl delivers moving tributes, memorable action and a historic presidential visit

By BRETT MARTEL AP Sports Writer

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — The Philadelphia Eagles defeated the Kansas City Chiefs 40-22 in the first Super Bowl to be held in New Orleans in a dozen years. It was played amid heavy security — and with President Donald Trump in attendance — just 41 days after a man plowed a truck into New Year's revelers on Bourbon Street.

There were tributes before the game, and some big plays during it.

Here's a look at some of the more memorable moments from Sunday night's NFL title tilt.

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Fly, Eagles Fly

The Eagles convincingly captured the second Super Bowl trophy in franchise history while preventing Kansas City from achieving the first three-peat of the NFL's Super Bowl era.

Hurts opened scoring on Philadelphia's renowned tush push play from 1 yard out in the first quarter. Rookie defensive back Cooper DeJean returned an interception 38 yards for a score and Hurts found A.J. Brown with a 12-yard scoring pass that gave the Eagles a stunning 24-0 lead at halftime.

The Eagles widened their lead to 34-0 in the third quarter on Hurts' 46-yard scoring strike deep down the middle to DeVonta Smith before Kansas City finally got on the board.

"We were here to play the game and make sure that green confetti fell at the end," Brown said.

Virtually all of the Chiefs' points were academic, but they made Patrick Mahomes' statistical line (257 yards passing and three TDs) look a lot better than they did after one of his worst first halves of football as a pro.

Defensive dominance

The Eagles held Mahomes to just 6 of 14 passing for 33 yards in the first half, and they also became the first NFL team to sack Mahomes as many as three times and intercept him twice in the first half of any regular-season or playoff game.

DeJean, who was celebrating his 22nd birthday on Sunday, made it 17-0 with his interception return in the second quarter.

He undercut a pass intended for DeAndre Hopkins and crossed most of the field before weaving his way through pursuing Chiefs players near the Eagles sideline during the final 5 yards of his return.

Late in the second quarter, former New Orleans Saints linebacker Zach Baun made a diving interception of a Mahomes pass at the Kansas City 14, setting up Hurts' TD pass to Brown.

Philadelphia finished with six sacks of Mahomes, the most the Chiefs QB has taken in a game in his NFL career.

"We didn't pressure much," Eagles defensive coordinator Vic Fangio said. "He's so good against pressure that I was hoping we could play the game without having to pressure much — and that happened."

Rushing record

Philadelphia's Saquon Barkley, the AP Offensive Player of the Year, completed the most prolific NFL season ever by a running back.

Barkley entered the Super Bowl needing 30 yards to break the record of 2,476 yards rushing set by Terrell Davis in 1998, when he helped the Denver Broncos win the Super Bowl.

Barkley had 31 by halftime and finished with 57 yards, giving him 2,504 yards in 20 games. Davis set his mark in 18 contests.

Presidential visit

Trump became the first sitting US president to attend a Super Bowl.

Trump spent a few minutes on the field before he headed to his suite to watch the game with Saints owner Gayle Benson, along with several lawmakers and family members.

After entering through a tunnel near the Chiefs' end of the field, Trump greeted first responders and victims of the New Year's Day attack in the French Quarter.

He was greeted with a mix of cheers and boos from fans.

As expected, Trump left the game after halftime.

Before Trump exited, Mahomes' mother, brother and sister posed for a photo with him.

Kendrick Lamar

With actor Samuel L. Jackson serving as emcee and dressed like Uncle Sam, Kendrick Lamar opened his halftime performance crouched atop a Buick Grand National Experimental — the car for which his newest album, "GNX," is named.

Dancers wearing red, white and blue came pouring out of the car and moved in sync to songs such as "Humble."

Guest star SZA later joined Lamar for their slow-jam-style collaboration "Luther."

Near the conclusion of his performance, Lamar transitioned to "Not Like Us," which won him Grammys

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for song of the year and record of the year. The song takes shots at rival artist Drake, who has sued the Universal Music Group record label for defamation over the track.

Big Easy bash

What is already considered Carnival season in New Orleans — it runs from Twelfth Night through Mardi Gras Day — was ramped up even more with a week of Super Bowl-related festivities.

The NFL Honors awards show was held at the historic Saenger Theater, where Buffalo Bills quarterback Josh Allen was named AP NFL Most Valuable Player for the 2024 season, and the Minnesota Vikings' Kevin O'Connell was named AP NFL Coach of the Year.

But nothing, it seemed, was more talked about than 72-year-old former NFL coach Bill Belichick — now the coach of the North Carolina Tarheels — arriving on the red carpet with 24-year-old girlfriend Jordon Hudson.

Meanwhile, there were parties all over town, with several popular restaurants and cocktail bars — from Nina Compton's Compere Lapin to the Columns Hotel and Hot Tin bar atop the roof of the Pontchartrain Hotel — rented out for Super Bowl visitors' private events.

While there was a heavy law enforcement presence, it didn't stop crowds from flocking to the famed French Quarter.

New Orleans flair

Pregame performances were highlighted by several musical artists from Louisiana.

Harry Connick Jr. performed a rendition of Professor Longhair's, "Go to the Mardi Gras."

Terence Blanchard joined the Southern University Band, nicknamed "the Human Jukebox," to perform Teddy Swims' "Lose Control."

Trombone Shorty joined singer Lauren Daigle to perform "America the Beautiful," and Jon Batiste sang "The Star-Spangled Banner," while playing a grand piano at midfield.

Somber remembrances

Shortly before the coin toss, New Orleans Saints defensive end Cameron Jordan introduced local first responders who responded to the Jan. 1 terrorist attack on Bourbon Street.

Each of them held a photo of one of the 14 New Year's revelers who died in the attack.

Family members of two of the victims — Tiger Bech and Matthew Tenedorio — were on the field as honorary captains.

"Together, we rise. Together, we heal. Together we will carry your memory with us forever," Jordan said.

HIV infections could jump over 6 times if US support is dropped and not replaced, UNAIDS chief says

By MARIA CHENG AP Medical Writer

LONDON (AP) — The head of the U.N. AIDS agency said Monday the number of new HIV infections could jump more than six times by 2029 if American support of the biggest AIDS program is dropped, warning that millions of people could die and more resistant strains of the disease could emerge.

In an interview with The Associated Press, UNAIDS Executive Director Winnie Byanyima said HIV infections have been falling in recent years, with just 1.3 million new cases recorded in 2023, a 60% decline since the virus peaked in 1995.

But since President Donald Trump's announcement the U.S. would freeze all foreign assistance for 90 days, Byanyima said officials estimate that by 2029, there could be 8.7 million people newly infected with HIV, a tenfold jump in AIDS-related deaths — to 6.3 million — and an additional 3.4 million children made orphans.

"We will see a surge in this disease," Byanyima said, speaking from Uganda. "This will cost lives if the American government doesn't change its mind and maintain its leadership," she said, adding that it was not her place to criticize any government's policy.

Byanyima pleaded with the Trump administration not to abruptly cut off funding, which she said has

resulted in “panic, fear and confusion” in many of the African countries hardest hit by AIDS.

In one Kenyan county, she said 550 HIV workers were immediately laid off, while thousands of others in Ethiopia were terminated, leaving health officials unable to track the epidemic.

She noted that the loss of U.S. funding to HIV programs in some countries was catastrophic, with external funding, mostly from the U.S., accounting for about 90% of their programs. Nearly \$400 million goes to countries like Uganda, Mozambique and Tanzania, she said.

“We can work with (the Americans) on how to decrease their contribution if they wish to decrease it,” she said. Byanyima described the American withdrawal from global HIV efforts as the second biggest crisis the field has ever faced — after the years-long delay it took for poor countries to get the lifesaving antiretrovirals long available in rich countries.

Byanyima also said the loss of American support in efforts to combat HIV was coming at another critical time, with the arrival of what she called “a magical prevention tool” known as lenacapavir, a twice-yearly shot that was shown to offer complete protection against HIV in women, and which worked nearly as well as for men.

Widespread use of that shot, in addition to other interventions to stop HIV, could help end the disease as a public health problem in the next five years, Byanyima said.

She also noted that lenacapavir, sold as Sunlenca, was developed by the American company Gilead.

International aid, Byanyima said, “helped an American company to innovate, to come up with something that will pay them millions and millions, but at the same time prevent new infections in the rest of the world.” The freeze in American funding, she said, didn’t make economic sense.

“We appeal to the U.S. government to review this, to understand that this is mutually beneficial,” she said, noting that foreign assistance makes up less than 1% of the overall U.S. budget. “Why would you need to be so disruptive for that 1%?”

Byanyima said that so far, no other countries or donors have stepped up to fill the void that will be left by the loss of American aid, but that she plans to visit numerous European capitals to speak with global leaders.

“People are going to die because lifesaving tools have been taken away from them,” she said. “I have not yet heard of any European country committing to step in, but I know they are listening and trying to see where they can come in because they care about rights, about humanity.”

Trump says he will announce 25% steel and aluminum tariffs Monday, and more import duties are coming

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER and DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump said he will announce on Monday that the United States will impose 25% tariffs on all steel and aluminum imports, including from Canada and Mexico, as well as other import duties later in the week.

“Any steel coming into the United States is going to have a 25% tariff,” he told reporters Sunday on Air Force One as he flew from Florida to New Orleans to attend the Super Bowl. When asked about aluminum, he responded, “aluminum, too” will be subject to the trade penalties.

Shares of U.S. steel companies rose sharply in futures trading before the opening bell Monday. Cleveland-Cliffs, which wants to buy Pittsburgh’s U.S. Steel, jumped 8%. U.S. Steel rose 5%. Nucor rose almost 8%, and Steel Dynamics rose more than 6%.

Trump also reaffirmed that he would announce “reciprocal tariffs” — “probably Tuesday or Wednesday” — meaning that the U.S. would impose import duties on products in cases in which another country has levied duties on U.S. goods.

“If they are charging us 130% and we’re charging them nothing, it’s not going to stay that way,” he told reporters.

Trump’s comments are the latest example of his willingness to threaten, and in some cases to impose,

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import taxes. Tariffs are coming much earlier in his presidency than during his previous four years in the White House, when he prioritized tax cuts and deregulation. Trump, a Republican, has alternately said he sees import taxes as tools to force concessions on issues such as immigration but also as a source of revenue to help close the government's budget deficit.

Financial markets fell on Friday after Trump first said he would impose the reciprocal tariffs. Stock prices also dropped after a measure of consumer sentiment declined on Friday, largely because many respondents cited tariffs as a growing worry. The survey also found that Americans are expecting inflation to tick up in the coming months because of the duties.

Trump on Sunday did not offer any details about the steel and aluminum duties, or the reciprocal tariffs. Trump previously threatened 25% import taxes on all goods from Canada and Mexico, though he paused them for 30 days barely a week ago. At the same time, he proceeded to add 10% duties on imports from China.

Yet on Friday, he said he would also delay the tariffs on the millions of small packages — often from fast-fashion firms such as Temu and Shein — until customs officials can figure out ways to impose them. The small packages have previously been exempt from tariffs.

Trump's latest remarks stirred immediate worry from some global trading partners.

South Korea's acting president, Choi Sang-mok, called a meeting with the country's top foreign policy and trade officials on Monday to examine how Trump's proposed tariffs on steel and aluminum would affect its industries.

The office of Choi, who also serves as the country's finance minister, said officials discussed the potential impact and Seoul's possible responses, but specific details of the meeting were not disclosed. The stock prices of major South Korean steelmakers, including POSCO and Hyundai Steel, dropped as the market opened on Monday. South Korea shipped about \$4.8 billion worth of steel to the United States from January to November last year, which accounted for 14% of its global exports of the products during the period.

Today in History: February 11 Nelson Mandela released from prison

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Tuesday, Feb. 11, the 42nd day of 2025. There are 323 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Feb. 11, 1990, South African anti-apartheid activist Nelson Mandela was freed after 27 years in prison. (Mandela would be elected president of South Africa four years later.)

Also on this date:

In 1847, American inventor Thomas Alva Edison was born in Milan, Ohio.

In 1937, a 6-week-old sit-down strike against General Motors ended, with the company agreeing to recognize and negotiate with the United Auto Workers union.

In 1945, U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Soviet leader Josef Stalin signed the Yalta Agreement, in which Stalin agreed to declare war against Imperial Japan following Nazi Germany's capitulation.

In 1975, Margaret Thatcher was elected leader of Britain's opposition Conservative Party.

In 1990, in one of the biggest upsets in sports history, 42-1 underdog Buster Douglas knocked out the previously undefeated heavyweight champion Mike Tyson at Japan's Tokyo Dome.

In 2008, the Pentagon charged Khalid Sheikh Mohammed (HAH'-leed shayk moh-HAH'-med) and five other detainees at Guantanamo Bay with murder and war crimes in connection with the Sept. 11 attacks.

In 2011, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak resigned in the wake of pro-democracy protests, ending three decades of authoritarian rule.

In 2012, singing superstar Whitney Houston was found dead in a hotel room bathtub in Beverly Hills, California, on the eve of the Grammy Awards; she was 48.

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In 2013, during a routine morning meeting of Vatican cardinals, Pope Benedict XVI announced he would resign as pope effective Feb. 28; it was the first papal resignation in nearly 600 years.

In 2020, the World Health Organization gave the official name of COVID-19 to the disease caused by the coronavirus that had emerged in the Chinese city of Wuhan.

Today's birthdays: Actor Tina Louise is 91. Former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush is 72. Sen. Tammy Baldwin, D-Wis., is 63. Musician Sheryl Crow is 63. Former Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin is 61. Actor Jennifer Aniston is 56. Actor Damian Lewis is 54. Surfer Kelly Slater is 53. Musician D'Angelo is 51. Singer-actor Brandy is 46. Singer Kelly Rowland is 44. Actor Natalie Dormer is 43. Actor Taylor Lautner is 33. Singer-songwriter Khalid is 27.