

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 01, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 249 ~ 1 of 60

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- 1440 News Headlines](#)
- [4- Structure Fire in Columbia](#)
- [5- Obit: Jerry Bonn](#)
- [6- Five make it to finals at state wrestling](#)
- [8- Four musicians selected for Middle School All State Band](#)
- [9- Groton Tigers Dominate Aberdeen Christian in Convincing Victory](#)
- [10- Notice of Garbage Pickup- Effective the week of March 3rd](#)
- [10- Bates, Henry Township Notices](#)
- [11- SD SearchLight: South Dakota's lone death row inmate argues for new appeals in federal court](#)
- [13- SD SearchLight: Trump, Zelenskyy clash in Oval Office blowup over peace negotiations](#)
- [14- SD SearchLight: Governor signs age verification bill and lab-grown meat funding restrictions](#)
- [15- SD SearchLight: Trump to sign executive order declaring English as official U.S. language](#)
- [16- SD SearchLight: GOP tax cut plans may depend on savings from Medicaid. What is it and who relies on it?](#)
- [20- SD SearchLight: Vaccination rates are declining. They might get worse as states relax rules.](#)
- [23- Weather Pages](#)
- [27- Daily Devotional](#)
- [28- Subscription Form](#)
- [29- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [30- Upcoming Groton Events](#)
- [31- News from the Associated Press](#)

Saturday, March 1

Girls and boys state wrestling at Rapid City

Sunday, March 2

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

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

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

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

Groton Daily Independent

PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445

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



Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion, 9 a.m.; No Sunday School; Meeting with Pastor Renee from Synod following worship; Choir, 6 p.m.

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

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

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

Monday, March 3

Senior Menu: Beef stew, corn, peaches, biscuit.

School Breakfast: Professor's Stuffed Bagels

School Lunch: Beef sticks, mashed potatoes.

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

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 01, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 249 ~ 2 of 60

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.

The End of Skype

Microsoft announced yesterday it will retire the once-popular video-calling app Skype in May and focus on its flagship Teams service. Skype was considered a pioneer in how people communicated online across borders before competition exploded from platforms like FaceTime, WhatsApp, Slack, and Zoom.

Skype was founded in 2003 by a group of Nordic engineers. The platform quickly reached 10 million users, and two years later, eBay acquired it for \$2.6B. In 2009, a consortium of investors, including Andreessen Horowitz, bought a 65% stake in Skype for \$1.9B, valuing the business at nearly \$3B. Microsoft then bought Skype for \$8.5B in 2011, the tech giant's largest acquisition at the time, to replace its Windows Live Messenger. At its peak in 2016, Skype boasted around 300 million monthly users. By 2023, the number of users had dropped to roughly 36 million.

The name "Skype" originates from "Sky peer-to-peer," which was shortened to "Skyper" and then further shortened to "Skype" because the domain name "Skyper.com" had already been taken.

Zelenskyy clashes with Trump, Vance in White House visit.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy met with President Donald Trump and Vice President JD Vance Friday to discuss a potential rare earth minerals deal. The meeting highlighted tensions over US military aid and Ukraine's sovereignty, with Zelenskyy seeking stronger security guarantees and Trump pushing for a minerals agreement as compensation for US support. The meeting turned tense as Trump and Vance berated Zelenskyy in a televised exchange.

Trump to sign executive order making English the official US language.

The development would mark the first time in history that the US has had an official language since it was founded nearly 250 years ago. Roughly 68 million people of the country's 340 million speak a language other than English at home, according to the US Census Bureau. The US is one of five countries globally that do not have an official language.

Measles outbreak in western Texas grows to 146 infected people.

Most of the individuals are unvaccinated (79), while the rest have an unknown status. At least 20 people have been hospitalized, and one person has died so far. The outbreak is centered in Gaines County, Texas, where vaccination rates are lower than the recommended 95% threshold.

Pope Francis suffers bronchial spasm, Vatican says in health update.

The bronchial spasm—a tightening of the muscles in the airways—caused the 88-year-old pontiff to inhale vomit. He was treated with noninvasive mechanical ventilation and is recovering. The pope has been hospitalized for two weeks now after experiencing bronchitis, which developed into pneumonia in both lungs.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 01, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 249 ~ 3 of 60

The 97th Academy Awards take place tomorrow (7 pm ET, ABC and Hulu).

Spanish-language musical "Emilia Pérez" leads the pack with a record-breaking 13 nominations, followed by "The Brutalist" and "Wicked" with 10 apiece and "A Complete Unknown" and "Conclave" with eight nominations each. Comedian Conan O'Brien will host.

Fed's preferred inflation gauge rises as expected in January.

The core personal consumption expenditures price index, which measures costs consumers pay across a wide range of items, excluding food and energy, rose 2.6% year over year and 0.3% month over month. The annualized rate is down from the upwardly revised 2.9% in December. The central bank targets 2% annual inflation.

Humankind(ness)

Today, we're sharing a story from reader Mike M. in New Jersey.

"When I was about 13 years old, I told my father I needed some 'notebook' paper for school. He brought home a ream of paper that turned out to be 'composition' paper (no holes or red line down the left side). Like a spoiled teenager, I complained about it. My father stayed up all night using a ruler, a red ink pen, and a single hole punch, and made notebook paper out of the 500 sheets. After all these years, I still want to cry thinking about this selfless act of love."

Structure Fire in Columbia

Five fire departments battled a structure fire in Columbia Saturday afternoon. A multi building shop structure was reported on fire around 1:30 p.m. Crews from Columbia, Aberdeen Rural, Aberdeen City, Groton, and Claremont were on scene for much of the afternoon. Strong winds worked against fire fighting efforts. 1 minor injury was reported. The Brown County Emergency Management Office and Brown County Sheriff's office also responded.



(Photo from Brown County Emergency Management Facebook Page)



(Photo from Frederick Area Fire & Rescue Facebook Page)

The Life of Jerry Bonn



A lifelong farmer, devoted family man, and cherished pillar of the Conde community, Jerry Bonn passed away peacefully on February 26, 2025, at the age of 84.

Services will be held at 10:30 a.m., Monday, March 3, 2025, at United Methodist Church in Groton, with Rev. Rob Moorlach officiating. Burial will follow at Bates-Scotland Cemetery, rural Verdon, under the direction of Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton. The service will be live-streamed at GDILIVE.com. Visitation is scheduled for Sunday, March 2, from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. at the chapel, concluding with a prayer service at 7:00 p.m.

Born on June 12, 1940, in Webster, South Dakota, to Joseph and Nina (Mereness) Bonn, Jerry grew up in Groton, where his passion for farming took root. He spent decades tending the land, earning a reputation as a skilled dairy farmer whose dedication to his craft was matched only by his love for his family. On September 7, 1961, Jerry married Beverly Morehouse in Webster, and together they raised five children on the family farm—a home filled with love, laughter, and the rewards of hard work.

Jerry's life was rich with simple joys. An avid hunter and fisherman, he eagerly hosted family and friends for pheasant season's opening day and cherished fishing trips brimming with camaraderie, good food, and shared stories. His farm shop became a beloved gathering spot, where the aroma of fresh coffee mingled with the warmth of conversation among hunters, neighbors, and loved ones. Each morning, Jerry was a familiar face at Marlins, joining friends for coffee, breakfast, and storytelling—an enduring ritual of connection and laughter.

Known for his playful spirit, quick wit, and welcoming smile, Jerry left an indelible mark on all who knew him. His grandchildren and great-grandchildren brought out his lighthearted side, filling his later years with immense joy. A masterful card player, he excelled at Pinochle, Whist, and Euchre, often delighting in friendly competition.

Jerry's commitment extended beyond his family to his community. He served over 50 years on the Scotland Township Board, a testament to his loyalty and sense of duty. After the passing of his beloved wife, Beverly, on February 7, 2013—following 52 years of marriage—Jerry gradually entrusted the farm to his son, Greg, while finding companionship in his later years with Helen Munger.

Jerry is survived by his children: Jeffrey (Gail) Bonn of Mobridge, SD, and their children, Brett (Abbie) Johnson and their children, Dylin and Max, Jared, and Allie; Patty (Rick) Mattox of Bel Air, MD, and their children, Ryan (Christel), Brent (Lia) and daughter, Isla, Kyle, and Cody; Penny (Michael) Polasky of Brandon, SD, and their children, Kara, Kirstyn(Austin) Ryan, and Kenzie; Greg (Stacey) Bonn of Conde, SD, and their children, Skyler (Tyler) Wadman and son, Emmett, Paityn (Braidon) Craig, and Paxton (Taylor); and Clint (Chris) Bonn of Madison, MN, and their children, Austin, Addyson, Aidyn, and Aaron. He also leaves behind his brother, Ronnie Bonn, and sisters, Audrey Christenson, JoAnn Haar, Joyce Smith, and MaryJo Geffre.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Joseph and Nina; his wife, Beverly; his brothers, Donnie, Richard, Eugene, and Marvin; and his sisters, Blanche, Marlys, Carol, Lois, and Margery.

Jerry Bonn's legacy—of love, laughter, and an unwavering work ethic—will live on in the hearts of his family, friends, and the community he so dearly cherished.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 01, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 249 ~ 6 of 60

Five make it to finals at state wrestling

Five Groton Area/Doland wrestlers are still in the running for placement at the state tournament in Rapid City.

Liza Krueger is going for first place, Kyla Logan, Christian Ehresmann and Reganne Miles are going for third place and Korbin Kucker is in the seventh place match.

G100: Liza Krueger (45-2) going for first

Champ. Round 1 - Liza Krueger (Groton Area) 45-2 won by fall over Vanessa Anderson (Watertown) 29-25 (Fall 2:56)

Quarterfinal - Liza Krueger (Groton Area) 45-2 won by fall over Jewel Gannon (Canton) 25-13 (Fall 3:15)

Semifinal - Liza Krueger (Groton Area) 45-2 won in tie breaker - 1 over Madison Little (Aberdeen Central) 43-10 (TB-1 7-1)

B113: Keegan Kucker (31-12) scored 2.5 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Tayten Kurkowski (Webster Area) 14-8 won by decision over Keegan Kucker (Groton Area) 31-12 (Dec 11-6)

Cons. Round 1 - Keegan Kucker (Groton Area) 31-12 won by tech fall over Brysen Baloun (Parker) 13-22 (TF-1.5 2:35 (16-0))

Cons. Round 2 - Ruger Smokov (Bennett County) 26-14 won by fall over Keegan Kucker (Groton Area) 31-12 (Fall 4:33)

B132: Donavon Block (29-17).

Champ. Round 1 - Daniel Dorsey (Mount Vernon/Plankinton/Corsica-Stickney) 43-17 won by fall over Donavon Block (Groton Area) 29-17 (Fall 3:30)

Cons. Round 1 - Kason Barry (Philip/Kadoka Area/Wall) 40-17 won by fall over Donavon Block (Groton Area) 29-17 (Fall 0:43)

G138: Kyla Logan (36-12) going for third

Champ. Round 1 - Kyla Logan (Doland) 36-12 won by fall over Hailey Fortney (West Central) 26-14 (Fall 5:34)

Quarterfinal - Kyla Logan (Doland) 36-12 won by decision over Reese Olson (Beresford/Alcester-Hudson) 41-9 (Dec 9-5)

Semifinal - Kezrey Benning (Pierre T.F. Riggs) 30-3 won by decision over Kyla Logan (Doland) 36-12 (Dec 8-2)

Cons. Semi - Kyla Logan (Doland) 36-12 won by decision over Rakyrh Wallace (Aberdeen Central) 40-17 (Dec 5-3)

B144: Christian Ehresmann (33-5) going for third

Champ. Round 1 - Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 33-5 won by major decision over Tel Gropper (Philip/Kadoka Area/Wall) 18-10 (MD 15-1)

Quarterfinal - Kellan Hurd (Miller/Highmore-Harrold) 45-4 won by fall over Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 33-5 (Fall 1:36)

Cons. Round 2 - Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 33-5 won by tech fall over Owen Rigg (Elk Point-Jefferson) 19-17 (TF-1.5 1:13 (17-2))

Cons. Round 3 - Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 33-5 won by major decision over Bryce Hawkinson (Britton-Hecla) 33-5 (MD 10-2)

Cons. Semi - Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 33-5 won by fall over Leighton Sander (Custer) 44-13 (Fall 2:27)

B157: Walker Zoellner (29-12) scored 1.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Treyson Richter (Tri-Valley) 39-11 won by major decision over Walker Zoellner (Groton Area) 29-12 (MD 13-0)

Cons. Round 1 - Walker Zoellner (Groton Area) 29-12 won by decision over David Lewis (Custer) 24-27 (Dec 4-0)

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 01, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 249 ~ 7 of 60

Cons. Round 2 - Gage Reichert (Parkston) 38-16 won by fall over Walker Zoellner (Groton Area) 29-12 (Fall 1:41)

G165: Reganne Miles (37-10) going for third

Champ. Round 1 - Reganne Miles (Doland) 37-10 won by fall over Faith Slavin (Viborg-Hurley/Irene-Wakonda) 23-19 (Fall 1:31)

Quarterfinal - Reganne Miles (Doland) 37-10 won by fall over Jayda Steinke (Pierre T.F. Riggs) 21-15 (Fall 1:28)

Semifinal - Marieda Kalahar (Rapid City Stevens) 41-2 won by fall over Reganne Miles (Doland) 37-10 (Fall 1:25)

Cons. Semi - Reganne Miles (Doland) 37-10 won by fall over Taylor DeJong (Mitchell) 26-14 (Fall 4:19)

B175: Korbin Kucker (38-6) going for seventh

Champ. Round 1 - Kolter Kramer (Parkston) 21-8 won by decision over Korbin Kucker (Groton Area) 38-6 (Dec 6-4)

Cons. Round 1 - Korbin Kucker (Groton Area) 38-6 won by fall over Taylor Snaza (Sisseton) 28-20 (Fall 2:23)

Cons. Round 2 - Korbin Kucker (Groton Area) 38-6 won by decision over Justin Klein (Flandreau) 43-18 (Dec 10-4)

Cons. Round 3 - Korbin Whiteley (Deuel/Deubrook Area) 26-6 won in tie breaker - 1 over Korbin Kucker (Groton Area) 38-6 (TB-1 4-1)

B285: Gavin Englund (30-11).

Champ. Round 1 - Preston Cavalier (Warner/Northwestern) 43-3 won by fall over Gavin Englund (Groton Area) 30-11 (Fall 0:50)

Cons. Round 1 - Derek Fenenga (Winner) 34-20 won by decision over Gavin Englund (Groton Area) 30-11 (Dec 4-2)

Four musicians selected for Middle School All State Band



Pictured are Novalea Warrington, Aspen Beto, Kyrie Yeigh and Liam Johnson. (Courtesy photo)

Aspen Beto (Clarinet), Liam Johnson (Alto Saxophone), Novalea Warrington (Flute/Piccolo) and Kyrie Yeigh (Clarinet) have been accepted into the 2025 South Dakota Middle School All State Band. This year there was a record breaking of 563 auditions from 82 different schools. Liam and Novalea are both second year members and will be playing in the Honor Band. Aspen and Kyrie are first year members will be playing in the Festival Band.

The South Dakota Music Education Association will present the 2025 SD Middle School All-State Band on Saturday March 8, 2025 in the Mitchell High School Performing Arts Center at 3:00 PM. This concert will feature 200 6th - 8th graders from across the state performing in two bands under the direction of Dr. Kevin Kessler and Dr. Bethany Amundson.

There is a \$5.00 admission fee for the concert. Tickets will be available for purchase at the door the afternoon of the concert. Students 18 and under are free.

The mission of the National Association for Music Education is to advance music education by promoting the understanding and making of music by all. SDMEA is a state affiliate of the National Association for Music Education. With over 400 members, SDMEA is the largest association of instructional musicians in the state catering to the needs of band, choral, general music and orchestral teachers.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 01, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 249 ~ 9 of 60

Groton Tigers Dominate Aberdeen Christian in Convincing Victory

ABERDEEN - The Groton Area Tigers put on a dominant display Friday night at the Aberdeen Civic Center, rolling past the Aberdeen Christian Knights 58-28 in a statement win.

The Tigers wasted no time seizing control, jumping out to a 13-4 lead after the first quarter. Their defensive intensity and rebounding prowess set the tone early, forcing the Knights into difficult shots and capitalizing on turnovers. By halftime, Groton extended its lead to 28-16, and by the end of the third quarter, they had stretched it to 44-25, effectively putting the game out of reach.

Balanced Attack Leads the Way

Ryder Johnson was a force inside, recording a double-double with 16 points and 13 rebounds. His dominance on the boards helped Groton control possessions and limit second-chance opportunities for the Knights. Karson Zac added 13 points while also dishing out four assists to lead the team in playmaking. Keegen Tracy contributed 11 points, while Becker Bosma had nine points, seven rebounds, and a team-high four steals.

The Tigers were efficient from the field, hitting 21 of 41 shots inside the arc for a solid 51%. While their three-point shooting (4-for-15) was not their strongest suit, their ability to attack the basket and control the paint made up for it.

Defense and Rebounding Key to Victory

Groton's defensive effort was relentless, forcing 13 turnovers from Aberdeen Christian and converting six of those into 13 points. The Tigers also racked up 10 steals, with Bosma leading the way. Groton's rebounding advantage was evident, as they hauled in 35 total boards, including seven each from Sippel and Bosma.

On the other end, Aberdeen Christian struggled to find an offensive rhythm. Brooks Jett led the Knights with 13 points, but as a team, they shot just 28% (10-for-36) from the field. Their offensive struggles were magnified in the fourth quarter, where they failed to make a single field goal, leading to their lowest-scoring game of the season.

Groton Sweeps the Night

The Tigers' success wasn't limited to the varsity level, as Groton dominated across all age groups.

Junior Varsity: Groton cruised to a 54-14 victory, with Anthony Tracy leading the charge with 14 points. Jayden Schwan added 10, while Easton Weber chipped in with eight.

Eighth Grade: A 36-20 win showcased the Tigers' depth and future talent.

Seventh Grade: The youngest Tigers secured a 33-17 victory to complete the program sweep.

With this win, Groton Area proved why they are a formidable force this season. Their combination of defensive intensity, rebounding dominance, and balanced scoring makes them a tough matchup for any opponent. Both varsity teams are now 15-5 on the season. Groton Area will host the second round region game on Friday at 7 p.m. The Tigers have a first round bye as the number one seed team in the region.

- Story compiled by ChatGPT

Ryder Johnson: 16 points, 13 rebounds, 2 assists, 2 steals, 2 fouls, 1 block.

Keegen Tracy: 11 points, 1 rebound, 3 assists, 1 steal, 2 fouls.

Gage Sippel: 5 points, 7 rebounds, 2 assists, 1 steal, 1 foul.

Becker Bosma: 9 points, 7 rebounds, 1 assist, 4 steals, 2 fouls.

Karson Zak: 13 points, 3 rebounds, 4 assists, 1 steal, 1 block.

Easton Weber: 1 assist.

Turner Thompson: 2 points, 2 rebounds, 1 foul.

Jayden Schwan: 1 steal, 1 foul.

Logan Warrington: 2 rebounds.

Taylor Diegel: 2 points.

2-Pointers: 21-41 51%, 3-Pointers: 4-15 27%, Free Throws: 4-9 44%, 35 rebounds, 6 turnovers, 13 assists, 10 steals, 9 fouls, 2 blocks.

Aberdeen Christian: Brooks Jett 13, Ellis Russell 6, Grady Jett 5, Dylan Hofer 2, Luke Kaiser 2. Field Goals:

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 01, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 249 ~ 10 of 60

10-36 28%, Free Throws: 6-12 50%, 8 fouls, 13 turnovers.

Groton Junior Varsity: Anthony Tracy 14, Jayden Schwan 10, Easton Weber 8, Ryder Schelle 7, Jordan Schwan 4, Jace Johnson 3, Asher Johnson 2, Ethan Kroll 1. Aberdeen Christian JV: Charles Eichler 9, Daniel Opdahl 3, Owen Russell 1.

The varsity and junior varsity games were broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM. Varsity sponsors were Ag-tegra, 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 and The Meathouse in Andover. Hefty Seed sponsored the junior varsity game. Paul Kosel and Jeslyn Kosel were on hand for the action.

Notice of Garbage Pickup- Effective the week of March 3rd

To help preserve our streets, Groton residents are asked to bring their garbage to the following locations until further notice:

Railroad Avenue, Main Street, Sixth Street, & Highway 37

Residents of the Broadway Mobile Home Park need to take their garbage to Highway 37.

Residents north of 13th Avenue (Olson and Jacobson Developments) need to bring their garbage to the Bus Barns.

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated during the spring thaw.

Please bring your garbage bags and/or cans to these locations for Tuesday pickup!

Bates Township

BATES TOWNSHIP ANNUAL MEETING NOTICE

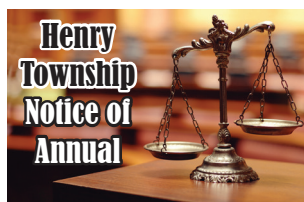
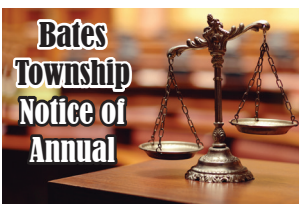
Bates Township will hold its annual meeting and election on Tuesday, March 4th, 2025 at the home of the Clerk, 14523 409th Ave, Conde.

Election of officers and business meeting will be held at 6:30 p.m.

We will be receiving bids for road maintenance and gravel. Please mail bids to Betty Geist, Bates Township Clerk, 14523 409th Ave., Conde, SD 57434 prior to meeting date.

Betty Geist, Township Clerk

Published February 19 and 26, 2025 at the total approximate cost of \$12.69 and may be viewed free of charge at www.sdpublicnotices.com. 25276



Henry Township Annual Meeting Notice

Notice is hereby given that the annual Henry Township caucus and election of officers along with the other business that may come before the board will be held Tuesday, March 4, 2025, at 7 p.m., at Doug Abeln's Seed Company Office. Will also take bids for gravel and road maintenance.

Darlene Sass

Henry Township Clerk



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

South Dakota's lone death row inmate argues for new appeals in federal court

Briley Piper leans on recent U.S. Supreme Court decision about bureaucratic rulemaking

BY: JOHN HULT - FEBRUARY 28, 2025 4:21 PM

SIOUX FALLS — The only man on death row in South Dakota wants a federal judge to give him another set of appeals because of a U.S. Supreme Court ruling that upended its prior guidance on the authority of federal bureaucrats.

In 2000, Briley Piper, Elijah Page and Darrell Hoadley tortured and killed Chester Allan Poage near Spearfish.

Piper and Page received death sentences; Hoadley was sentenced to life in prison.

Page was put to death by lethal injection on July 11, 2007. His was the first death sentence carried out in South Dakota in 60 years. The state has since executed four other convicted murderers.

Piper, who was not in the courtroom on Friday, has exhausted his appeals in state court, including with the state Supreme Court.

On Friday at the federal courthouse in Sioux Falls, Piper's public defender team told U.S. District Judge Roberto Lange he ought to review some of the state Supreme Court's conclusions and overturn them.

They took two tacks: one aimed to show that judges, prior legal teams and prosecutors made mistakes in areas like jury selection or the presentation of certain witnesses in ways that made a death sentence more likely. Claims of that nature are quite common in death penalty appeals.

The other argument came from a more novel angle, based on a U.S. Supreme Court decision last summer in *Loper Bright v. Raimondo* that had nothing whatsoever to do with anyone on death row — or even with criminal law.

Ruling opens new avenue for Piper

The *Loper Bright* decision overturned a four-decade precedent under which judges were generally expected to defer to the expertise of administrative rulemakers when the rules they've written are challenged in court.

Critics of that "Chevron doctrine" precedent, including Republican U.S. Sen. Mike Rounds of South Dakota, had long argued that agencies like the Environmental Protection Agency hyperextend their authority under the color of laws like the Clean Air or Clean Water acts to make life difficult for citizens and businesses.

The *Loper Bright* ruling says judges have supremacy to interpret laws under the Constitution, including rules written in service of those laws. If Congress wants the EPA to enforce rules on wetlands or allowable levels of lead in old pipes, the justices reasoned, Congress should write those rules into law.

South Dakota Attorney General Marty Jackley was among the state attorneys general to sign on to briefs supporting the prevailing arguments in *Loper Bright*.

From *Loper Bright* to death penalty

Piper's legal team wants Judge Lange to use the reasoning of *Loper Bright* to reset the appeals process in hopes of sparing their client from execution.

Federal judges, they argue, ought not defer to state courts any more than they should to bureaucratic rulemakers.

They're challenging the constitutionality of parts of a law passed by Congress in 1996, called the Antiter-

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 01, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 249 ~ 12 of 60

rorism and Effective Death Penalty Act. It expects federal judges to respect state court rulings in certain death penalty case appeals unless those state courts "unreasonably" ignore federal law or federal court precedent on constitutional questions.

The issues raised through Piper's numerous appeals, including those on witnesses and jurors argued on Friday, relate to his constitutional right to a fair trial. The South Dakota Supreme Court rejected those arguments.

But his lawyers said Friday that federal courts have the final say on federally guaranteed rights. Judge Lange asked skeptical questions from the bench. He pointed out that the federal death penalty law offers federal judges numerous avenues through which to rule that a state court made a mistake.

He also noted the factual differences between criminal law and civil challenges to administrative rules. "Loper Bright isn't really talking about this situation, is it?" Lange said.

Attorney Stuart Lev acknowledged that, but said "the fundamental constitutional questions are the same."

Lev pointed to other federal cases making similar arguments in death penalty appeals. He expects at least one to wind up in the U.S. Supreme Court.

"This is a claim that clearly is in the developmental stage," Lev said.

Were Piper's arguments on the Loper Bright issue to ultimately succeed, he could ask Judge Lange to take a closer look at the arguments he presented to the justices of the South Dakota Supreme Court.

Jackley: Loper Bright doesn't apply

Attorney General Jackley was on hand to argue against that interpretation of Loper Bright.

"This isn't an instance where a federal agency is making a decision, it's an instance where a state court is making a decision," Jackley said.

He pointed out that Congress has frequently drawn lines around which courts, state or federal, have jurisdiction in different kinds of cases. In this situation, he said, Congress wanted state courts to have a greater say in death penalty appeals.

Jackley nodded to the ongoing cases in which defense lawyers are making arguments similar to Piper's, but said none have yet succeeded.

He asked Lange to resist being "the first to overrule" the federal death penalty law.

What's next for Piper

On the steps of the U.S. courthouse after the hearing, Jackey told reporters that Piper has exhausted his state court appeals, and that Lange has already ruled against Piper on nearly every appealable issue he's presented in state court.

Jackley spoke of Dottie Poage, Chester's mother, who was on hand for the hearing.

He suggested that rulings against Piper could turn Friday into one of the last times she'd need to sit through a hearing before an execution could proceed.

"She's been listening to the arguments today for 25 years," Jackley said. "This case is about Chester and her, and I hope that the arguments today reflect that."

Lange said he would make a ruling on the Loper Bright argument, and on Piper's remaining claims on ineffective assistance of counsel, witness and juror issues by the end of March. Piper could try other avenues to appeal his case, would still be able to ask for clemency from Gov. Larry Rhoden, and could ask for a review by the U.S. Supreme Court.

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.

Trump, Zelenskyy clash in Oval Office blowup over peace negotiations

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT AND SHAUNEEN MIRANDA - FEBRUARY 28, 2025 4:45 PM

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump appeared to even more decisively break with Ukraine and its resistance to the Russian invasion on Friday, when he got into a heated exchange with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy during a meeting at the White House.

Trump posted on social media afterward the discussion between the two leaders was a “very meaningful meeting” and that he learned much “that could never be understood without conversation under such fire and pressure.”

“It’s amazing what comes out through emotion, and I have determined that President Zelenskyy is not ready for Peace if America is involved, because he feels our involvement gives him a big advantage in negotiations,” Trump wrote. “I don’t want advantage, I want PEACE. He disrespected the United States of America in its cherished Oval Office. He can come back when he is ready for Peace.”

Russia invaded Ukraine more than three years ago, leading to a war that until now unified Western democracies.

But Trump’s history with Ukraine, which was at the center of his first impeachment, and his friendly relationship with Russian leader Vladimir Putin, have moved America further away from supporting European allies.

Made-for-TV blowup

The disagreement during Friday’s meeting, which was supposed to precede the signing of a rare earth mineral deal between the United States and Ukraine, came about 40 minutes into a 50-minute made-for-TV session in the Oval Office.

Zelenskyy asked Vice President J.D. Vance what types of diplomacy he was suggesting countries engage in with Russia after Zelenskyy detailed Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the signing of a ceasefire deal between Ukraine and Russia in 2019.

“In 2019, I signed with him, (French President Emmanuel) Macron and (Then-German Prime Minister Angela) Merkel, we signed (a) ceasefire,” Zelenskyy said. “All of them told me that he will never go ... But after that he broke the ceasefire, he killed our people and he didn’t exchange prisoners. We signed the exchange of prisoners, but he didn’t do it. What kind of diplomacy, J.D., are you speaking about?”

Vance responded that he was “talking about the kind of diplomacy that’s going to end the destruction of your country” before telling Zelenskyy that his actions were disrespectful.

Zelenskyy invited Vance to come to Ukraine to see what’s happening on the ground amid Russia’s ongoing war, before warning about what Russia’s actions in the future could yield for the United States.

“First of all, during the war, everybody has problems. Even you, but you have nice ocean and don’t feel now. But you will feel it in the future,” Zelenskyy said, before Trump interjected.

“You’re not in a good position. You don’t have the cards right now. With us, you start having cards,” Trump said while he and Zelenskyy spoke over each other for several minutes.

Vance then told Zelenskyy to thank Trump for “trying to save your country.”

Zelenskyy said repeatedly that he was thankful for U.S. military aid and that “of course we want to stop the war.”

“But I said to you with guarantees,” Zelenskyy added, referring to his hope that there would be ramifications if Russia were to break a potential ceasefire, just as it did before.

Trump, asked by a reporter what would happen if a ceasefire is signed and then Russia violates the deal, appeared frustrated.

“What if anything? What if a bomb drops on your head right now?” Trump said. “What if they break it? I don’t know.”

Trump said Ukraine wouldn’t be “tough” without the backing of the United States and that Zelenskyy either needs to make a deal with Russia or Trump would rescind military support.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 01, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 249 ~ 14 of 60

"You either have to make a deal or we're out. And if we're out, you'll fight it out. I don't think it's going to be pretty, but you'll fight it out," Trump said.

After the meeting ended, Zelenskyy left and the White House canceled a joint press conference.

Europeans back Ukraine, Lindsey Graham backs Trump

European leaders took to social media afterward to post their support for Ukraine, further separating those democracies from the current foreign policy of the Trump administration.

Zelenskyy quoted each post with "Thank you for your support" in English and not Ukrainian, likely to bolster his message with an American audience.

Sen. Lindsey Graham told reporters outside of the White House: "What I saw in the Oval Office was disrespectful, and I don't know if we could ever do business with Zelenskyy again."

The South Carolina Republican defended Trump and Vance, saying he's "never been more proud" of the president and was "very proud" of the vice president for "standing up for our country."

Graham said he thinks Zelenskyy "has made it almost impossible to sell to the American people that he's a good investment."

In a post on social media, New York GOP Rep. Mike Lawler, a member of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, described the meeting as a "missed opportunity for both the United States and Ukraine — an agreement that would undoubtedly result in stronger economic and security cooperation."

"Diplomacy is tough and often times there are serious differences of opinion and heated exchanges behind closed doors. Having this spill out into public view was a disaster — especially for Ukraine," he added.

Nebraska GOP Rep. Don Bacon described the meeting as "a bad day for America's foreign policy," per a statement shared with States Newsroom.

"Ukraine wants independence, free markets and rule of law," Bacon said. "It wants to be part of the West. Russia hates us and our Western values. We should be clear that we stand for freedom."

Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., posted on social media that the "death and destruction of the Russian-provoked war needs to stop immediately, and only our American President can put these two countries on a path to lasting peace."

"President Zelenskyy needed to acknowledge that, and accept the extraordinary mineral rights partnership proposal that President Trump put on the table."

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.

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.

Governor signs age verification bill and lab-grown meat funding restrictions

BY: SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT STAFF - FEBRUARY 28, 2025 11:22 AM

South Dakota Republican Gov. Larry Rhoden has signed bills prohibiting state funding of the lab-grown meat industry and requiring websites with pornographic material to verify that their users are adults.

Rhoden announced the signings earlier this week, and included a comment on the age verification bill in a news release.

"As parents, we just want to protect our kids. But technology moves so fast that it often seems impossible," he said. "I signed a bill to require age verification by websites containing material that is harmful to minors. I will continue to find ways to keep South Dakota safe for our kids."

More than a dozen other states have passed or are considering laws to require porn sites to ask adults who want to visit them for personal information to prove their age. So far, each of them — including Texas, whose law had an audience with the U.S. Supreme Court last month — have applied the rule to sites on which a third or more of the content counts as pornography.

South Dakota is the first state to affix the expectation to any site that hosts any pornography in the

"regular course of the website's trade or business." The law requires that users prove they're at least 18 years of age.

The bill addressing lab-grown meat prohibits the use of state money for the research, production, promotion, sale or distribution of lab-grown meat, also known as cell-cultured or cultivated meat. There's an exception in the bill for public universities, which could still do research on lab-grown meat. But the bill would prevent, for example, the awarding of state economic development grants to companies who sell the product.

Another bill already signed by Rhoden requires lab-grown meat to be clearly labeled. A bill to ban lab-grown meat in the state passed the House of Representatives but failed narrowly in the Senate.

The governor has signed 45 bills into law so far this legislative session, which began last month and continues for two more weeks. Lawmakers have introduced more than 500 bills, resolutions and commemorations.

Trump to sign executive order declaring English as official U.S. language

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA - FEBRUARY 28, 2025 5:31 PM

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump was expected Friday to sign an executive order that establishes English as the official U.S. language, while also revoking a decades-old requirement for federal agencies to provide language assistance to non-English speakers, according to the White House.

Trump's Friday executive order will rescind an executive order signed by former President Bill Clinton in 2000 that directed federal agencies and organizations that receive federal funding to improve access to services for those who are limited with their English proficiency, according to the Wall Street Journal, which first reported the news.

It's the latest in the Trump administration's efforts to curb resources for immigrants, from suspending funding for legal aid services to terminating contracts with organizations that handle refugee resettlement services in the United States.

The U.S. has never had an official language, mostly because of its multiracial demographic that stems from nearly 250 years of immigrants arriving from across the world.

However, 32 states have passed their own laws making English, along with some Indigenous languages in some cases, the official state language.

Campaign issue

While on the campaign trail, Trump was critical that the U.S. does not mandate English as the official language. Congressional Republicans have also introduced legislation throughout the years to designate English as the official language.

Republican Ohio freshman Sen. Bernie Moreno introduced legislation earlier this month to make English the official U.S. language. Ohio does not have an official state language.

Anabel Mendoza, communications director of the immigration advocacy youth group United We Dream, said in a statement that the executive order targets "Black and brown immigrants and communities who speak different languages."

"We mean this with all disrespect, no gracias," she said. "Trump will try to use this executive order as a crutch to attack schools providing curriculum to immigrant students in other languages, gut programs and roles that help to promote inclusive language access, and embolden immigration agents to single out and harass individuals who speak a certain way."

A nation of many languages

There are more than 350 languages spoken across the country, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Some of the most widely spoken languages in the U.S., other than English, include Spanish, Chinese, Tagalog, Vietnamese and Arabic. There is also a large population of people who speak Indigenous lan-

languages such as Navajo, Yupik, Dakota, Apache, Keres and Cherokee.

Some states have multiple official languages, such as Alaska, South Dakota and Hawaii, which all are home to many Indigenous people.

In Alaska, English and 20 Alaskan native languages are the official state language. They are Inupiaq, Siberian Yupik, Central Alaskan Yup'ik, Alutiiq, Unangax, Dena'ina, Deg Xinag, Holikachuk, Koyukon, Upper Kuskokwim, Gwich'in, Tanana, Upper Tanana, Tanacross, Hän, Ahtna, Eyak, Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian.

In South Dakota, English and Sioux are the official state languages. And in Hawaii, English and the Hawaiian language are the official languages of the state.

Puerto Rico also has two official languages, Spanish and English.

The more than 30 states where English is the official language include Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Utah, Virginia, West Virginia and Wyoming.

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

GOP tax cut plans may depend on savings from Medicaid. What is it and who relies on it?

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - FEBRUARY 28, 2025 2:57 PM

WASHINGTON — Republicans in Congress have gotten a crash course in Medicaid during the last few weeks, as they eye the health care program for lower-income Americans as a source for hundreds of billions of dollars in savings to pay for tax cuts.

The 72 million Americans who rely on Medicaid, especially those represented by GOP lawmakers, as well as state leaders nervous about the effect on their budgets, are closely watching what Congress does.

Democrats already have seized on potential cuts in the state-federal program to portray Republicans as trying to harm poor and vulnerable Americans to preserve tax cuts for the wealthy.

Some GOP lawmakers have begun signaling to leadership they won't vote for anything that reduces benefits to Medicaid recipients, a position that once would have left that handful of centrists out of negotiations.

But the extremely narrow majority in the House means that Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., will have to keep pretty much everyone on the same page as the package takes shape in the weeks ahead.

Johnson himself might hear from constituents about Medicaid, given his deeply red state holds the nation's second-highest percentage of residents enrolled in the program. Other GOP-led states like Arkansas and West Virginia have more than a quarter of their residents signed up for Medicaid.

Johnson is suggesting as much as \$50 billion a year in Medicaid waste, fraud and abuse could be recouped, though that won't come near the level of savings the GOP has tasked its committee that oversees health care with finding.

"Medicaid is hugely problematic because it has a lot of fraud, waste and abuse. Everybody knows that. We all know it intuitively," Johnson said in late February. "It doesn't matter what party you're in, you should be for that because it saves your money and it preserves the program so that it is available for the people who desperately need it."

Beyond that, it's unclear at the moment how exactly Republicans may alter Medicaid in the yet-to-be written package they hope to use to bolster defense and border security spending, rewrite energy policy and extend the 2017 GOP tax law.

The House and Senate must agree to adopt a budget resolution to unlock the reconciliation process that will allow them to pass their legislation without Democratic votes in the upper chamber.

The House's budget resolution, which the Senate GOP plans to alter, proposes the Energy and Commerce Committee cut at least \$880 billion from programs under its jurisdiction — which include Medicaid.

President Donald Trump has essentially said Republicans won't "touch" Medicaid (or Medicare or Social

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 01, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 249 ~ 17 of 60

Security), but he's left the door open to addressing fraud.

Here is a brief explanation of why Medicaid exists, who relies on the program, what exactly is known about fraud and how the federal government splits the cost with states:

Why did Congress establish Medicaid?

President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Social Security Amendments of 1965 into law in July of that year, formally establishing Medicare, the nation's health program for people over 65 and some younger people with disabilities, and Medicaid, which also includes some seniors.

But, the National Archives writes that debate "over the program actually began two decades earlier when President Harry S. Truman sent a message to Congress asking for legislation establishing a national health insurance plan.

"At that time, vocal opponents warned of the dangers of 'socialized medicine.' By the end of Truman's administration, he had backed off from a plan of universal coverage, but administrators in the Social Security system and others began to focus on the idea of a program aimed at insuring Social Security beneficiaries whose numbers and needs were growing."

During the 1950s and early 1960s, Congress increasingly paid attention to the number of uninsured Americans, the rising cost of health care and the growing population of seniors not covered.

"Public hearings were held, and the House of Representatives considered several proposals, but the debate did not intensify until 1960, when it became clear that private insurers were becoming increasingly incapable of providing comprehensive, affordable health care coverage to the rapidly growing population of older adults," the archives writes.

How is Medicaid funded?

The federal government covers a minimum of 50%, based on a formula that increases the federal share in states with lower per capita incomes. The states pay the rest.

The states with the highest percentage of federal funding are Alabama with 73%, Arkansas with 71%, Kentucky with 71%, Mississippi with 77%, New Mexico with 72% and West Virginia with 74%, according to the non-partisan health policy research organization KFF.

The federal government spent a total of \$6.8 trillion during the last full fiscal year, with about \$611 billion going toward Medicaid.

Who receives their health care through Medicaid?

Medicaid eligibility differs in each state, but the federal government sets mandatory eligibility groups, including low-income families, qualified pregnant women and children, and individuals receiving Supplemental Security Income.

There are both financial and non-financial eligibility requirements to enroll in Medicaid, like living in the state. The program also requires participants to "be either citizens of the United States or certain qualified non-citizens, such as lawful permanent residents."

Medicaid covers 63% of the 1.2 million nursing home residents in the country, according to KFF. West Virginia, Alaska, Louisiana, Mississippi and Georgia are the states with the highest percentage of nursing home residents relying on Medicaid for their coverage, according to a chart from KFF.

The Peter G. Peterson Foundation notes in an explainer on Medicaid that about "60 percent of the nation's 73 million children received their health insurance through Medicaid or CHIP, which extends Medicaid benefits to children of low-income families who make too much money to qualify for the traditional Medicaid program."

People with disabilities and senior citizens make up another 23% of Medicaid recipients, according to the foundation's analysis.

How does Medicaid coverage affect prenatal and postpartum care, as well as maternal mortality?

Medicaid covers about 41% of all births in the United States, according to a fact sheet that includes a state-by-state breakdown.

That means the program has a significant impact on the type of health care women receive before, dur-

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 01, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 249 ~ 18 of 60

ing and after giving birth, potentially setting it up as one avenue to address the country's high maternal mortality rate.

Federal law requires states to cover postpartum coverage for at least 60 days, but it's up to each state to decide if they want to extend coverage after that.

Democrats in Congress included provisions in the \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief package they approved in 2021 that gave states a way to extend that coverage up to one year. So far, nearly every state, except Arkansas and Wisconsin, has opted to do just that, according to an analysis by KFF.

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists writes that expanding postpartum coverage to one year "is especially critical because of the Medicaid unwinding, which began in April 2023 and allowed states (to) restart the process of disenrolling ineligible members from Medicaid.

"Soon, many people who had Medicaid coverage will no longer be eligible for that coverage and may become uninsured, making Medicaid extension even more critical."

Which states have the highest percentage of residents on Medicaid?

New Mexico holds the top spot, with 34.3% of its citizens enrolled in the program, followed by Louisiana with 32.2%, New York at 28.8%, Kentucky with 27.9% and California at 27.2%, West Virginia with 26.2% and Arkansas at 25.3%, according to KFF.

States with between 20% and 25% of their residents on Medicaid:

Michigan: 23.9%
Oregon: 23.8%
Massachusetts: 23.6%
Mississippi: 23.5%
Alaska: 23%
Connecticut: 22.7%
Oklahoma: 22.7%
Rhode Island: 22.6%
Vermont: 22.5%
Montana: 21.6%
Delaware: 21.6%
Pennsylvania: 21.4%
Maine: 21.4%
Ohio: 21.4%
Hawaii: 21%
Indiana: 20.8%
Alabama: 20.7%
Nevada: 20.6%
Iowa: 20.5%
Arizona: 20.4%
Washington: 20.3%

States with between 15% and 20% of their residents on Medicaid:

South Carolina: 19.9%
Tennessee: 19.9%
Illinois: 19.5%
North Carolina: 19.1%
Maryland: 18.9%
Georgia: 18.8%
Colorado: 18.7%
New Jersey: 18.7%
Idaho: 18.3%

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 01, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 249 ~ 19 of 60

Minnesota: 18.3%
Wisconsin: 18.2%
Florida: 17.7%
Missouri: 17.7%
Virginia: 17.1%
Nebraska: 16.9%
Texas: 16.2%
States with less than 15% of their residents on Medicaid:
South Dakota: 14.7%
Wyoming: 14.6%
Kansas: 14.4%
New Hampshire: 13.4%
North Dakota: 12.8%
Utah: 11.3%

Georgetown University's McCourt School of Public Policy has a breakdown by congressional district here. Medicaid has a state-by-state breakdown on its website with detailed state profiles.

How do states name their Medicaid programs?

Some states call Medicaid by its name, though others have differing titles, according to a list from the program.

States that call Medicaid something other than its name include: Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System, Medi-Cal in California, Health First Colorado, Hawaii QUEST Integration, KanCare in Kansas, MaineCare, MassHealth, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, Minnesota Medical Assistance, Mississippi Health Benefits, MO HealthNet in Missouri, New Jersey FamilyCare, SoonerCare in Oklahoma, Oregon Health Plan, Pennsylvania Medical Assistance, Rhode Island Medical Assistance, Healthy Connections in South Carolina, TennCare in Tennessee, Apple Health in Washington state and BadgerCare Plus in Wisconsin.

What do we know about waste, fraud and abuse in Medicaid?

The Government Accountability Office's high-risk list for 2025 kept Medicaid among the more challenging programs and called for "strengthening" program integrity.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, which administer both programs, estimated that during the most recent full fiscal year the improper payment rate for Medicaid was 5.09%, or \$31.1 billion.

That is lower than the 8.6% rate in fiscal year 2023 and the 15.6% rate in fiscal year 2022, according to the GAO report.

GAO placed Medicaid on the high-risk list due to improper payments, "limitations in CMS efforts to ensure states use Medicaid funds in accordance with federal requirements" and "limited CMS oversight of states' Medicaid data, including on expenditure and utilization."

Separately, the U.S. Health and Human Services Department's Office of the Inspector General oversees Medicaid Fraud Control Units in every state, typically run by the attorney general.

The most recent annual report details 814 convictions for Medicaid fraud and an additional 329 convictions for patient abuse or neglect. The efforts recovered \$1.2 billion.

A state-by-state breakdown shows Ohio had the most convictions at 183, followed by Arizona and California with 67 convictions each.

What does the Affordable Care Act, or Obamacare, have to do with Medicaid?

The law, approved by Democrats 15 years ago, expanded Medicaid eligibility to adults who are not seniors and earn up to \$21,597 annually for one person, which is 138% of the federal poverty level.

The Supreme Court ruled in 2012 that states could choose whether to expand Medicaid eligibility or not,

but expansion came with some more money from the federal government.

Ten states — Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kansas, Mississippi, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Wisconsin and Wyoming — have decided against expanding eligibility for adults.

How would Congress eliminating the expanded Federal Medical Assistance Percentage that goes along with Medicaid expansion under the ACA impact states?

A report from The Urban Institute, a left-leaning think tank, projects that if lawmakers eliminate that boosted federal match for states that expanded Medicaid under the ACA, and those states choose to keep the expansion in place, it would cost "\$44.3 billion in state budget cuts or additional revenues that year to replace reductions in federal spending."

"To offset such large reductions in federal spending, states would be forced to consider making cuts to their Medicaid programs, including limiting Medicaid eligibility, further reducing already low provider reimbursement rates, or eliminating optional benefits, raising new revenues, and cutting state spending in other areas," the report states.

Should states eliminate the Medicaid expansion under that one potential scenario, the report states enrollment in both Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program would drop by 15.9 million people, or 21.8%.

How would work requirements impact Medicaid recipients?

Republicans are generally supportive of work requirements for safety net programs like Medicaid, making it one route the GOP could take as its members look for ways to offset the cost of tax cuts.

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, a left-leaning think tank, estimates that as many as 36 million Medicaid recipients could lose coverage if work requirements were implemented. Their projections include a breakdown by how many people would potentially be affected in each of the country's 435 congressional districts.

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.

Vaccination rates are declining. They might get worse as states relax rules.

More states are loosening vaccine mandates and scaling back campaigns to get people immunized

BY: SHALINA CHATLANI - FEBRUARY 28, 2025 9:32 AM

More states are loosening vaccine mandates, scaling back vaccine promotion efforts and taking other steps likely to lower vaccination rates — even as a major measles outbreak spreads in Texas.

Meanwhile, public health experts worry that the confirmation of vaccine skeptic Robert F. Kennedy Jr. as secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services could add fuel to such efforts, leading to the resurgence of long-tamed infectious diseases. Kennedy has made numerous baseless or false claims about vaccines, including linking them to autism and cancer and saying there is "poison" in the coronavirus vaccine.

This week, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, which Kennedy now oversees, canceled the upcoming meeting of a scientific panel that was slated to discuss next year's flu vaccines. Also this week, an unvaccinated child died of measles in Texas — the country's first measles death in a decade. The outbreak, which has spilled into neighboring New Mexico, has now grown to more than 130 cases.

Already, vaccination rates are lower than they were before the pandemic. The COVID-19 vaccines saved millions of lives, but many Americans bristled at vaccine mandates, and disinformation and rapidly evolving

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 01, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 249 ~ 21 of 60

public health advice undermined many people's trust in scientific authorities.

Changing attitudes have had an impact: Vaccination rates among children born in 2020 and 2021 declined by between 1.3 and 7.8 percentage points for recommended shots, compared with children born in 2018 and 2019, according to a September report by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The anti-vaccination trend is "the antithesis of public health," Dr. Scott Rivkees, a pediatric endocrinologist who served as Florida's surgeon general and health secretary from 2019 to 2021, told Stateline.

"The role of people in departments of health and the role of people in health care and medicine is to promote health and make sure the public is safe," Rivkees told Stateline. "There's such a rich history of legal precedent, such a rich history of public health precedent, saying that society benefits by having individuals vaccinated."

In all 50 states plus the District of Columbia, children must receive certain vaccines to attend school. Every state offers an exemption for children who cannot be vaccinated for medical reasons. Thirty states plus the district allow families to skip the vaccinations for religious reasons, 13 states grant exemptions for religious or personal reasons, and two states — Louisiana and Minnesota — don't require people to specify whether their objection is religious or personal.

Five states — California, Connecticut, Maine, New York and West Virginia — don't allow nonmedical exemptions.

Republican officials in more than a dozen states have introduced legislation to loosen vaccine rules or otherwise reduce their use.

Legislation in Arizona would make it easier to claim a school exemption, while GOP-sponsored bills in Connecticut, Minnesota, New York and Oregon would limit or prohibit vaccine mandates for adults.

In Idaho, a Senate panel last week debated a bill that would ban mRNA vaccines, including COVID-19 vaccines, for a decade. Montana and Mississippi lawmakers considered but defeated similar proposals. And in West Virginia — one of the five states that currently does not allow nonmedical exemptions to school vaccine requirements — lawmakers are advancing a bill that would allow religious and philosophical objections.

"Public health will always, to some extent, involve politics, because it requires resources," said Dr. Paul Offit, director of the Vaccine Education Center at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. Offit serves on the FDA panel that was supposed to discuss next year's flu vaccines.

"But it doesn't have to be partisan, which is what has happened."

A shift in Louisiana

Earlier this month, Dr. Ralph Abraham, Louisiana's first-ever surgeon general, sent a memo to staff at the Louisiana Department of Health saying they should no longer recommend that Louisianans get "any and all vaccines." The memo also said the agency will "no longer promote mass vaccination." Instead, Abraham said, health workers should encourage residents to discuss the risks and benefits of vaccines with their doctors.

The memo puts an end to the Louisiana health department's robust history of promoting vaccinations through local public health departments, community health fairs and media campaigns.

"Vaccines should be treated with nuance, recognizing differences between seasonal vaccines and childhood immunizations, which are an important part of providing immunity to our children. ... Getting vaccinated, like any other health procedure, is an individual's personal choice," the memo states.

The agency did not respond to multiple requests for comment via email and phone call. But in a letter posted to the department's website earlier this month, Abraham wrote that the state had made several missteps during the pandemic, including: promoting "inaccurate and inconsistent guidance on masking, poor decisions to close schools, unjustifiable mandates on civil liberties, and false claims regarding natural immunity."

Abraham wrote that vaccinations can be good for some, but can be harmful for others, and that for decades public health has been driven by an ideology that "the sacrifice of a few is acceptable and nec-

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 01, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 249 ~ 22 of 60

essay for the 'greater good.'"

"We should reject this utilitarian approach and restore medical decision-making to its proper place: between doctors and patients," he wrote.

Louisiana Republican lawmakers have embraced this sentiment, saying that after the COVID-19 pandemic, they want to see less government involvement in vaccinations.

"I'm pleased that Dr. Abraham has taken this approach," said Republican state Rep. Kathy Edmonston, who last year authored laws prohibiting Louisiana schools from requiring COVID-19 vaccinations and mandating that they provide exemption information to parents. "I'm not against vaccinations. He's not against vaccinations. I'm for people being able to make up their own mind."

Jill Hines, co-director of Health Freedom Louisiana, a group that opposes vaccine mandates, dismissed the significance of ending mass vaccination campaigns, because "everybody should have a primary care physician if they want one, and nobody is really denied access to a vaccine."

But Kimberly Hood, former assistant secretary of the Louisiana Office of Public Health, noted that the state is largely rural, and many residents don't have easy access to a health care provider.

"Failing to promote vaccination may not sound like a huge deal, but it actually invalidates what we in public health have seen and learned for many, many years, which is that you have to make it easy, affordable, accessible," Hood told Stateline.

"It's not just stepping away from vaccination; we're stepping away from our kind of obligation together, what it means to live together in a society."

Staying the course in Mississippi

But in neighboring Mississippi, which is also Republican-dominated, GOP leaders are staying the course — at least so far. More than two dozen anti-vaccine bills have died in the Mississippi legislature in the past two years, including this year's proposed ban on mRNA vaccines.

The state struggled with COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy during the pandemic, and in 2022 Republican Gov. Tate Reeves signed into law a measure banning COVID-19 vaccine mandates.

But for years, Mississippi maintained one of the highest childhood vaccination rates in the nation. The state slipped from first to third between 2023 and 2024, after a federal judge ruled that the state must allow religious exemptions. Its current childhood vaccination rate is 97.5%, well above the 91% national average but lower than the 99.3% rate it had in 2019.

"Our law is still in effect, and if you don't have a medical or religious exemption, then you must be fully vaccinated to attend school or go to day care in Mississippi," said Dr. Daniel Edney, Mississippi's state health officer. "The science is clear and in Mississippi we stand on the science."

Edney said he hasn't faced any political pressure to reverse course. Unlike in Louisiana, where Republican Gov. Jeff Landry tapped Abraham — a former three-term Republican congressman who co-chaired his transition committee — as surgeon general, Edney was selected by the 11-member Mississippi State Board of Health. The governor chooses the members of that panel, but they serve staggered four-year terms.

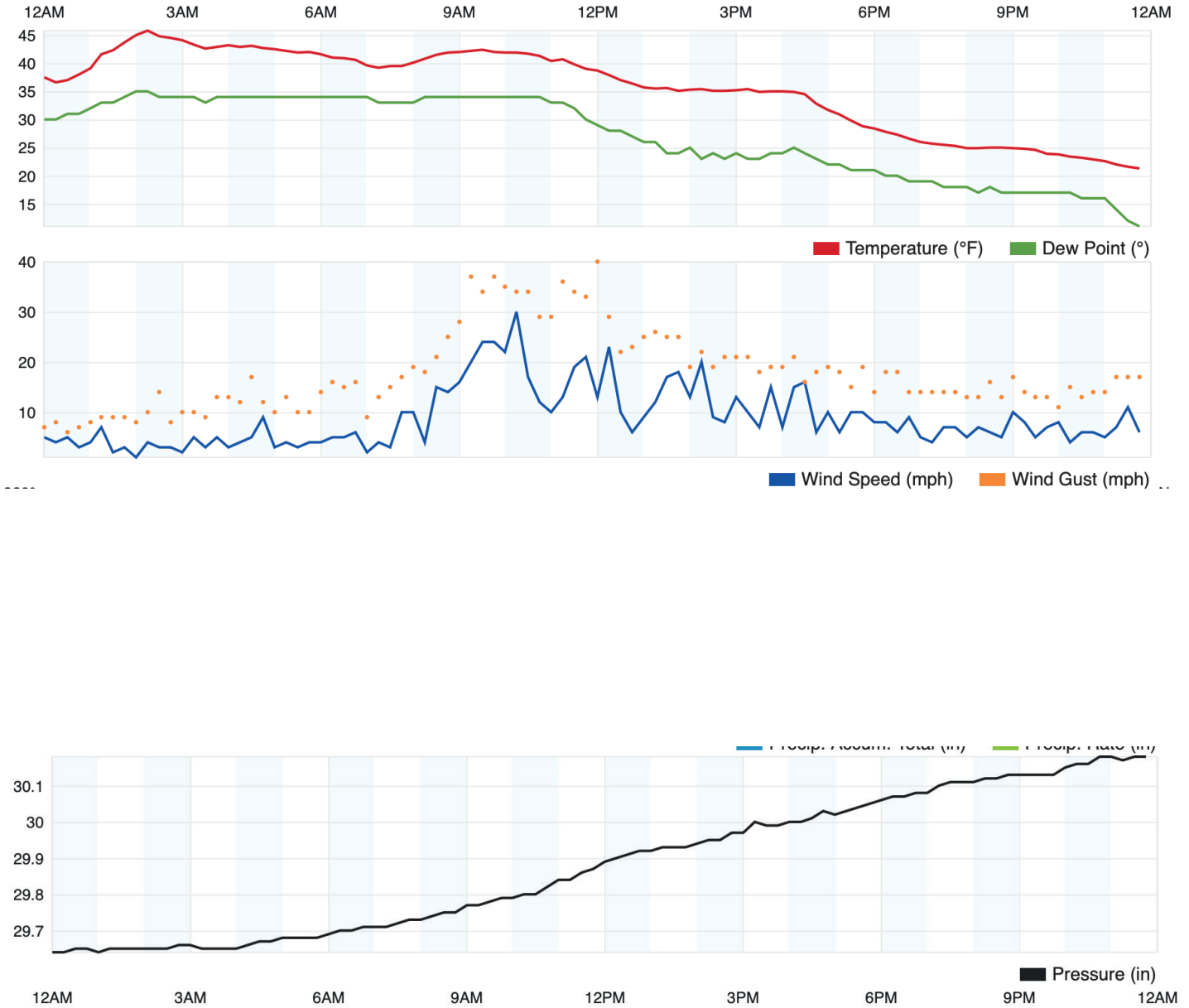
"I have zero pressure from the governor or legislative leadership regarding our approach to vaccines," Edney told Stateline. "We're not focused on politics. We don't blow in the wind based on what administration is in power."

Shalina Chatlani covers health care and environmental justice for Stateline.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 01, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 249 ~ 23 of 60

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Broton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 01, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 249 ~ 24 of 60

Today



High: 34 °F

Mostly Sunny

Tonight



Low: 21 °F

Mostly Clear

Sunday



High: 53 °F

Sunny

Sunday Night



Low: 28 °F

Mostly Clear

Monday



High: 60 °F

Partly Sunny

Today

Mar 1st, 2025



Highs 27 to 45°

Near average temperatures - Coldest ne SD & wc MN, warmest south central SD.

Mostly cloudy in central SD, mostly sunny in west-central MN

Sunday



47 to 61°

Monday



54 to 64°

Increasing clouds on Monday.

Temperatures 15 to 25° above average



March 1, 2025

2:36 AM



March will start with near average temperatures today, then southerly winds will bring warmer air back into the region for Sunday and Monday, with temperatures 15 to 25 degrees above average.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 01, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 249 ~ 25 of 60

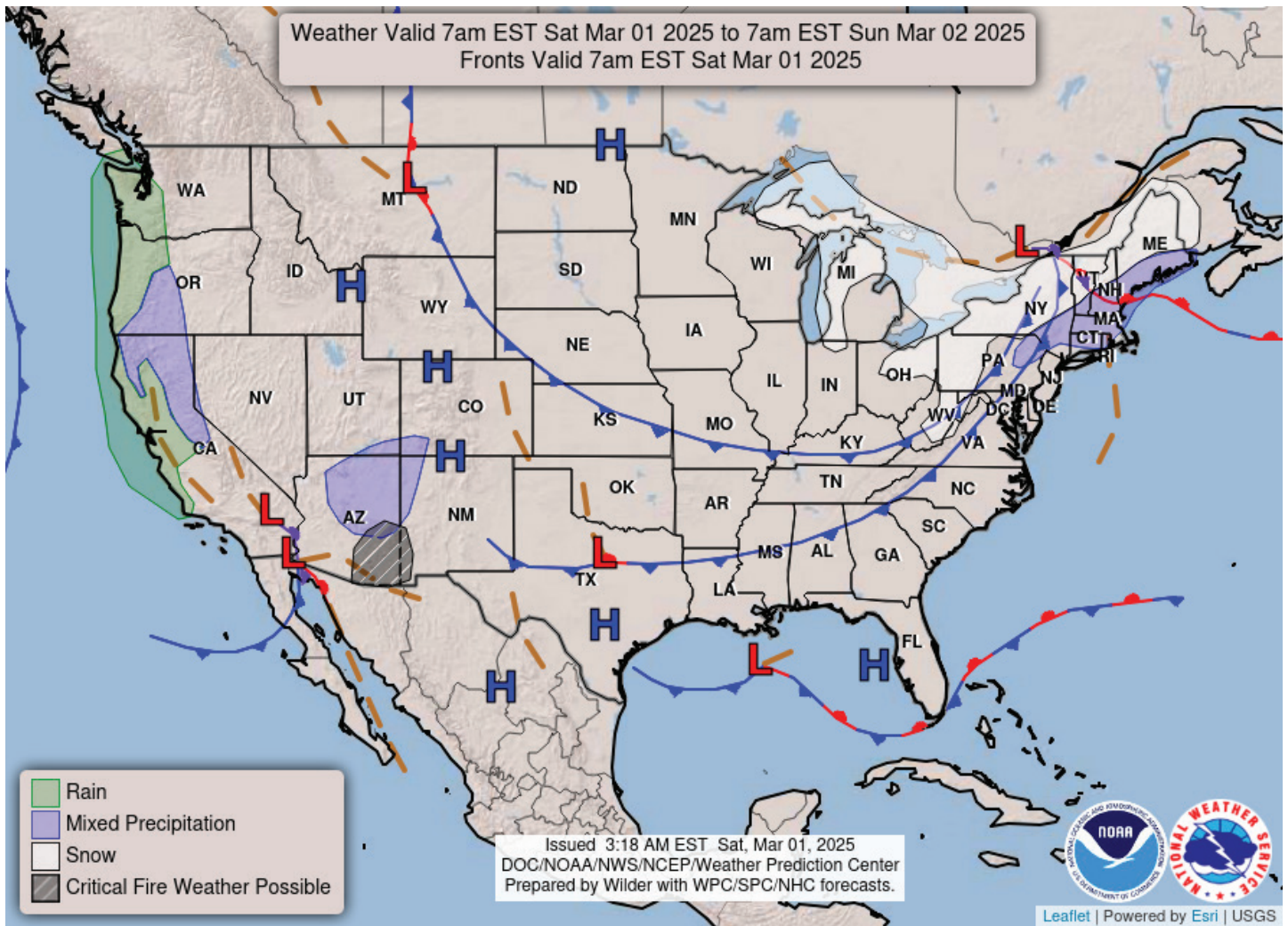
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 46 °F at 2:15 AM
Low Temp: 22 °F at 11:24 PM
Wind: 41 mph at 9:47 AM
Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 11 hours, 13 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 73 in 1992
Record Low: -29 in 1962
Average High: 34
Average Low: 12
Average Precip in March.: 0.02
Precip to date in March.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 1.19
Precip Year to Date: 0.45
Sunset Tonight: 6:21:10 pm
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:06:14 am



Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 01, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 249 ~ 26 of 60

Today in Weather History

March 1, 1970: Freezing rain and drizzle impacted much of South Dakota on March 1, 1970. Ice accumulation up to 1/8 of an inch thick was reported in Rapid City, with heavier amounts in the northwestern part of the state. Some utility lines were broken, but there was no extensive line damage. Also, some schools were closed due to icy roads.

March 1, 1998: An incredible amount of snow falls on Lead, South Dakota, from February 25 through March 1. The official storm total was 103 inches for five days.

March 1, 2014: Arctic air combined with strong northwest winds brought bitter cold wind chills to central and northeast South Dakota east of the Missouri River. Bitter wind chills of 35 below to around 40 below occurred. Some coldest wind chills include; 39 degrees below zero west of Long Lake, 40 degrees below zero at Highmore; 41 degrees below zero near Roy Lake; and 42 degrees below zero at Summit.

1849: The first recorded weather observation for Blowing Green, Kentucky, occurred on March 1, 1849.

1910: The worst avalanche in US history regarding lives lost occurred in Wellington, Washington. Heavy snow occurred from February 26 through the 28th, which blocked the rail lines. Weather conditions turned on the 28th, with a thunderstorm occurring over the area. Just after 1 AM on March 1, a ten to the 14-foot-high mass of snow broke free from the mountainside and pushed the trains 150 feet down into the Tye River Gorge. In all, 96 people were killed by this avalanche.

1914 - High winds and heavy snow crippled New Jersey and New York State. Two feet of snow were reported at Ashbury Park, and at New York City the barometric pressure dropped to a record 28.38 inches. The storm caused complete disruption of electric power in New Jersey. (David Ludlum)

1980: March 1-3rd, North Carolina experienced a significant winter storm with heavy snow across the entire state and near blizzard conditions in the eastern part of the state. Widespread snowfall totals of 12 to 18 inches were observed over Eastern North Carolina, with localized amounts ranging up to 22 inches at Morehead City and 25 inches at Elizabeth City, with unofficial reports of up to 30 inches at Emerald Isle and Cherry Point.

1980 - An unusually large Florida tornado, 500 yards in width at times, killed one person and caused six million dollars damage near Fort Lauderdale. (The Weather Channel)

1983: Two tornadoes caused damage in the Los Angeles areas during the morning hours. The strongest tornado was an F2 on the ground for 21 minutes.

1986: Light snow fell during the early morning hour in Jacksonville, Florida. A half inch of snow was reported at the Jacksonville International Airport, the highest amount ever recorded in March.

1987 - A storm crossing the Great Lakes Region produced heavy snow and gale force winds from Wisconsin to northern New England, with eight inches of snow reported at Ironwood MI. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Thunderstorms produced large hail and damaging winds in north central Texas. Baseball size hail was reported at Lake Kickapoo. Hail fell continuously for thirty minutes in the Iowa Park area of Wichita Falls. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - A series of low pressure systems moving out of the Gulf of Alaska spread high winds and heavy snow across western Alaska. Winds in the Anchorage area gusted to 69 mph at Glen Alps, and Talkeetna was buried under three feet of snow in two days. Valdez received 21.4 inches of snow, raising their total for the winter season to 482.4 inches. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2006: The day's temperature of 93 degrees at the Dallas/Fort Worth Airport in Texas broke a 107-year-old record. Other hot North Texas cities included Wichita Falls at 96 degrees and Fort Worth Meacham Airport at 90 degrees.

2007: An EF4 tornado traveled 10 miles through Enterprise, Alabama. The storm caused nine fatalities and injured 50 people.

2011 - Snowfall across Idaho broke numerous accumulation records. Pierce received 15 inches, Powell 14.5 inches, Potlatch 12 inches and Kellogg and Plummer 7 inches. The same storm created high winds across the Pacific Northwest. A weather station at 10,000 feet on Mount Ranier measures a wind gust of 137 MPH with a sustained 1-minute wind reading of 112 MPH.



"WHY DO SOMETHING FOR OTHERS?"

Alfred Adler is known as one of the "founding fathers" of modern psychology. He is remembered mostly for his analysis of the impact of birth order on personality and what he called his "Fourteen-Day Cure Plan."

He claimed that his plan could cure anyone of mental illness in just fourteen days if they would just do exactly as he told them to do. One day a woman who was extremely depressed came to see him. He told her, "I can cure you of your depression in just fourteen days if you will follow my advice."

"What do you want me to do?" she asked.

"If you will do one thing for someone else every day for fourteen days, at the end of that time your depression will be gone," he told her.

She objected, "Why should I do something for someone else when no one ever does anything for me?"

Jokingly he responded, "Well, maybe it will take you twenty-one days." He knew that if she did something for someone she would be on her way toward improving her mental condition and "curing" her depression.

Paul said that we are to "share each others problems and troubles." Christians must never develop an attitude that entertains the idea that we are excused from the task of helping others. It is sometimes difficult to think of "service before self." But that is the way Jesus lived and died. As His disciples, can we do less?

Prayer: Lord, may we move from an attitude of self-centeredness to one of other-centeredness and see, hear, feel and meet the needs of others as You did. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ. Galatians 6:2

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

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 01, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 249 ~ 28 of 60

The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition Subscription Form

All prices listed include 6.5% Sales Tax

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

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

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City _____

State, Zip Code _____

E-mail _____

Phone Number _____

Mail Completed Form to:

Groton Independent

P.O. Box 34

Groton, SD 57445-0034

or scan and email to paperpaul@grotonsd.net

Groton Daily Independent www.397news.com Subscription Form

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

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

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City _____

State, Zip Code _____

Phone Number _____

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

E-mail _____

Password _____

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

paypal.me/paperpaul

Pay with Venmo: @paperpaul Phone Number to Confirm: 7460

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 01, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 249 ~ 29 of 60



WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 02.28.25

9 19 30 35 66 16

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$215,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

PREVIOUS RESULTS

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 02.26.25

8 11 21 27 39 5

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$25,410,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 27 Mins 12 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 02.28.25

9 16 18 23 42 13

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 42 Mins 12 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 02.26.25

7 10 13 17 28

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$48,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 42 Mins 12 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 02.26.25

21 26 45 46 64 11

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 11 Mins 13 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 02.26.25

28 48 55 60 62 20

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$272,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 11 Mins 12 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 01, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 249 ~ 30 of 60

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
05/12/2025 High School Girls Golf Meet at Olive Grove
05/26/2025 Memorial Day Services Groton Union Cemetery with lunch at Legion Post #39, 12pm
06/07/2025 Day of Play
06/13/2025 SDSU 4 Person Scramble at Olive Grove
06/21/2025 Groton Triathlon
06/23/2025 Ladies 2 Person Scramble at Olive Grove
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
07/16/2025 Men's Pro Am Golf at Olive Grove
07/25/2025 Ferney Open Scramble Golf at Olive Grove
08/01/2025 Wine on Nine Fundraiser at Olive Grove
08/09/2025 2nd Annual Celebration in the Park/Rib Cook-Off 1-9:30pm
08/23/2025 Glacial Tournament at Olive Grove
09/06/2025 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
09/07/2025 Sunflower Classic Couples Scramble at Olive Grove
10/31/2025 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm
11/27/2025 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1:30pm
12/06/2025 Olive Grove Holiday Party and Silent Live Auction Fundraiser

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 01, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 249 ~ 31 of 60

News from the **AP** Associated Press

Friday's Scores

The Associated Press

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL

Belle Fourche 74, Faith 45
Brandon Valley 58, Huron 45
Brookings 66, Douglas 56
Burke 58, Avon 39
Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 63, Lower Brule 57
Clark-Willow Lake 76, Arlington 33
Colman-Egan 58, Sioux Falls Lutheran 43
Corsica/Stickney 53, Chamberlain 42
Crazy Horse 78, Wakpala 63
Dell Rapids St Mary 69, Bridgewater-Emery 48
Dupree 71, Tiospaye Topa 26
Florence-Henry 58, Webster 48
Freeman 73, Kimball-White Lake 24
Great Plains Lutheran 66, Sisseton 30
Groton 58, Aberdeen Christian 28
Hanson 78, Mitchell Christian 22
Harding County 47, Bison 42
Howard 52, Canistota 29
Kadoka 68, Philip 57
Lakota Tech 69, White River 45
Lennox 58, Dakota Valley 49
Leola-Frederick High School 57, Ipswich 31
Madison 51, Baltic 49
Milbank 58, Tiospa Zina 49
Miller 61, Highmore-Harrold 42
Mitchell 68, Sioux Falls O'Gorman 62
New Underwood 62, Jones County 33
Northwestern 74, Hitchcock-Tulare 63
Rapid City Christian 63, Hot Springs 41
Sioux Falls Christian 85, Tri-Valley 52
Sioux Falls Jefferson 75, Aberdeen Central 54
Sioux Falls Lincoln 66, Rapid City Central 39
Sioux Falls Roosevelt 72, T F Riggs High School 61
Sioux Falls Washington 62, Rapid City Stevens 43
St. Francis Indian 64, McLaughlin 56
Stanley County 65, Mobridge-Pollock 60
Sully Buttes 65, North Central 36
Sunshine Bible Academy 71, Iroquois-Lake Preston 67
Timber Lake 67, Potter County 65
Tripp-Delmont-Armour 85, Colome 8
Vermillion 78, Parker 42
Waverly-South Shore 63, Langford 48
Wessington Springs 71, Sanborn Central-Woonsocket 64

Winner 69, Freeman Academy-Marion 34
Wolsey-Wessington 62, Warner 35
Yankton 48, Spearfish 42, OT

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL

Brandon Valley 60, Huron 36
Brookings 58, Douglas 30
O’Gorman High School 66, Mitchell 48
Rapid City Central 40, Sioux Falls Lincoln 38
Sioux Falls Jefferson 62, Aberdeen Central 57
Sioux Falls Roosevelt 62, T F Riggs High School 54
Sioux Falls Washington 63, Rapid City Stevens 59
Spearfish 50, Yankton 47

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

Pope has coffee, rests after setback in recovery — a bronchial spasm requiring further ventilation

By NICOLE WINFIELD and GIOVANNA DELL’ORTO Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Pope Francis had coffee and was reading newspapers Saturday after an alarming setback in his two-week recovery from double pneumonia: Doctors had to put him on noninvasive mechanical ventilation following a coughing fit in which he inhaled vomit that needed to then be extracted.

Doctors said it would take a day or two to evaluate how and if the Friday afternoon episode impacted Francis’ overall clinical condition. His prognosis remained guarded, meaning he wasn’t out of danger.

In its morning update Saturday, the Vatican said the 88-year-old pope didn’t have any further respiratory crises overnight: “The night has passed quietly, the pope is resting.” He had coffee in the morning for breakfast, suggesting that he was not dependent on a ventilation mask to breathe and was still eating on his own.

In the late Friday update, the Vatican said Francis suffered an “isolated crisis of bronchial spasm,” a coughing fit in which Francis inhaled vomit, that resulted in a “sudden worsening of the respiratory picture.” Doctors aspirated the vomit and placed Francis on noninvasive mechanical ventilation.

The pope remained conscious and alert at all times and cooperated with the maneuvers to help him recover. He responded well, with a good level of oxygen exchange and was continuing to wear a mask to receive supplemental oxygen, the Vatican said.

The episode, which occurred in the early afternoon, marked a setback in what had been two successive days of increasingly upbeat reports from doctors treating Francis at Rome’s Gemelli hospital since Feb. 14. The pope, who had part of one lung removed as a young man, has lung disease and was admitted after a bout of bronchitis worsened and turned into pneumonia in both lungs.

Doctors say the episode is alarming

The Vatican said the episode was different from the prolonged respiratory crisis on Feb. 22, that was said to have caused Francis discomfort.

Dr. John Coleman, a pulmonary critical care doctor at Northwestern Medicine in Chicago, said the isolated episode Friday as relayed by the Vatican was nevertheless alarming and underscored Francis’ fragility and that his condition “can turn very quickly.”

“I think this is extremely concerning, given the fact that the pope has been in the hospital now for over two weeks, and now he’s continuing to have these respiratory events and now had this aspiration event that is requiring even higher levels of support,” he told The Associated Press.

“So given his age and his fragile state and his previous lung resection, this is very concerning,” added Coleman, who is not involved in Francis’ care.

Dr. William Feldman, a pulmonary specialist at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, said it was a good sign that the pope remained alert and oriented during the episode, but concurred that it marked "a worrying turn."

"Often we will use noninvasive ventilation as a way of trying to stave off an intubation, or the use of invasive mechanical ventilation," Feldman said.

Types of noninvasive ventilation include a BiPAP machine, which helps people breathe by pushing air into their lungs. Doctors will often try such a machine for a while to see if the patient's blood gas levels improve so they can eventually go back to using oxygen alone. Friday's statement said Francis showed a "good response" to the gas exchange using the ventilation.

Doctors did not resume referring to Francis being in "critical condition," which has been absent from their statements for three days now. But they say he isn't out of danger, given the complexity of his case.

Prayers continued to pour in

Francis' hospitalization has come as the Vatican is marking its Holy Year that is drawing pilgrims to Rome from all over. They are walking through the Holy Door at St. Peter's Basilica and also making pilgrimages to the hilltop Umbrian town of Assisi, to pray at the home of Francis' namesake, St. Francis.

"Every day we're praying for the pope," said the Rev. Jacinto Bento, a priest visiting Assisi on Saturday with a group of 30 Jubilee pilgrims from the Azores Islands. "We're very sad for his situation."

Veronica Abraham, a catechist and Argentine native, came to Assisi on Saturday with her two children and other kids from her parish on Lake Garda and said the group had prayed for the pope at every church they'd visited.

"I'm sure that he's hearing our prayers, that he feels our closeness," she said.

Serena Barbon, visiting Assisi from Treviso on Saturday with her husband and three children, said she hoped that if Francis doesn't make it, the next pope will be just like him.

"He's been very charismatic and we pray for him and that any new pope might also be someone who puts the poor in the center. Because we're all a bit the poor," she said.

Trump expected to sign order designating English as the official language of the US

By MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

President Donald Trump is expected to sign an executive order designating English as the official language of the United States, according to the White House.

The order will allow government agencies and organizations that receive federal funding to choose whether to continue to offer documents and services in language other than English, according to a fact sheet about the impending order.

Trump had been expected to sign the order Friday. But by Friday night, the White House had not announced the order had been signed and did not immediately respond to a message seeking comment.

The executive order will rescind a mandate from former President Bill Clinton that required the government and organizations that received federal funding to provide language assistance to non-English speakers.

Designating English as the national language "promotes unity, establishes efficiency in government operations, and creates a pathway for civic engagement," according to the White House.

More than 30 states have already passed laws designating English as their official language, according to U.S. English, a group that advocates for making English the official language in the United States.

For decades, lawmakers in Congress have introduced legislation to designate English as the official language of the U.S., but those efforts have not succeeded.

Within hours of Trump's inauguration last month, the new administration took down the Spanish language version of the official White House website.

Hispanic advocacy groups and others expressed confusion and frustration at the change. The White House said at the time it was committed to bringing the Spanish language version of the website back online. As of Friday, it was still not restored.

The White House did not immediately respond to a message about whether that would happen. Trump shut down the Spanish version of the website during his first term. It was restored when President Joe Biden was inaugurated.

The Wall Street Journal first reported on the order Friday.

Gene Hackman and his wife tested negative for carbon monoxide, sheriff says

By SUSAN MONTOYA BRYAN, JACQUES BILLEAUD and JOHN SEEWER Associated Press

SANTA FE, N.M. (AP) — Preliminary autopsy results didn't determine how Oscar-winner Gene Hackman and his wife died at their home in Santa Fe, New Mexico, but did rule out that they were killed by carbon monoxide poisoning, the sheriff leading the investigation said Friday.

The condition of the bodies found Wednesday indicated the deaths occurred at least several days earlier and there was no sign of foul play.

At a news conference, Santa Fe County Sheriff Adan Mendoza said the initial examination by the medical examiner showed no sign of carbon monoxide, a colorless and odorless gas produced from kitchen appliances and other fuel-burning items. When it collects in poorly ventilated homes, it can be fatal.

Mendoza also said an examination of the 95-year-old Hackman's pacemaker showed it stopped working on Feb. 17, which means he may have died nine days earlier.

Hackman was found in an entryway. His wife, Betsy Arakawa, 65, was found in a bathroom on her side. A space heater was near her head, and pills were scattered next to an open prescription bottle on the counter. Investigators said the heater likely was pulled down when she fell.

Whether the pills or other drugs were a factor won't be known until toxicology tests are completed in the coming weeks.

Carbon monoxide can be ruled out since it can dissipate from the environment but not from a body, renowned medical examiner Dr. Michael Baden said.

Examiners will look to test blood and urine, if available, but also could turn to an oily fluid that typically accumulates in lung and abdominal cavities, and samples of muscle and brain, to help determine the causes of death.

Dr. Philip Keen, the retired chief medical examiner in Maricopa County, Arizona, said the moment when a pacemaker stops working could mark the point when a person dies, but not always.

"If your heart required a pacemaker, there would certainly be an interruption at that point — and it might be the hallmark of when the death occurred," Keen said. "But it's not necessarily because some people get a pacemaker to augment things, not necessarily replace things."

The initial autopsy also found no external trauma to either body. Dr. Victor Weedn, forensic pathologist, said there are plenty of reasons a body could be found on the ground without any sort of bumps or bruises, including if they simply lay down due to feeling unwell.

Investigators planned to comb through the couple's phones and monthly planners and reach out to family members, neighbors and workers from the gated community to figure out the last time anyone saw or spoke to Hackman or Arakawa.

The couple was a "very private family," Mendoza said, making it challenging to piece together a timeline. Authorities do not believe the home had any surveillance cameras, he said.

Investigators who searched the home retrieved medication that treats high blood pressure and chest pain, thyroid medication, Tylenol, and records from medical diagnostics testing, court records filed Friday showed.

Detectives wrote in a search warrant affidavit that investigators thought the deaths were "suspicious enough in nature to require a thorough search and investigation."

No gas leaks were discovered in or around the home.

A maintenance worker who showed up to do routine work at the house could not get inside and called a security worker who spotted two people on the ground, Mendoza said.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 01, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 249 ~ 35 of 60

The worker called 911 and told an operator he did not know if they were breathing. He and another worker later told authorities that they rarely saw the homeowners and that their last contact with them had been about two weeks ago.

Hackman was among the most accomplished actors of his generation, appearing as villains, heroes and antiheroes in dozens of dramas, comedies and action films from the 1960s until his retirement in the early 2000s.

He was a five-time Oscar nominee who won best actor in a leading role for "The French Connection" in 1972 and best actor in a supporting role for "Unforgiven" two decades later. He also won praise for his role as a coach finding redemption in the sentimental favorite "Hoosiers."

He met Arakawa, a classically trained pianist, at a California gym in the mid-1980s. They moved to Santa Fe by the end of the decade. Their Pueblo revival home sits on a hill with views of the foothills of the Rocky Mountains.

In his first couple of decades in New Mexico, Hackman was often seen around the state capital and served on the board of trustees for the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum from 1997 to 2004.

Aside from appearances at awards shows, Hackman was rarely seen in the Hollywood social circuit in recent years.

Hackman had three children from a previous marriage. He and Arakawa had no children but were known for having German shepherds.

Trump and Zelenskyy through the years: From a 'perfect' call to an Oval Office meltdown

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The first time he spoke to Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President Donald Trump tried to pressure Ukraine's new leader to dig up dirt on Joe Biden ahead of the 2020 election. It was a 2019 phone call that eventually sparked an impeachment.

On Friday, a meeting in the Oval Office that started out with cordialities turned heated at the end, with Vice President JD Vance telling Zelenskyy to show more gratitude toward Trump, before the president himself began shouting.

"You're gambling with the lives of millions of people," Trump berated Zelenskyy. "You're gambling with World War III."

With that, Trump scrapped plans to sign an agreement that would have allowed the U.S. to access Ukraine's rare earth minerals, a deal the U.S. president had said would have helped move the war toward a conclusion. The blowup cast new doubt on the future of U.S. support for Kyiv in fending off Russia's invasion.

A look at the evolution of Trump and Zelenskyy's relationship over the years:

'Perfect' phone call

In July 2019, Zelenskyy was anxious for a meeting with Trump at the White House, one of the Ukrainian leader's top foreign policy priorities at the time.

During a 30-minute call, Trump dangled the possibility of a face-to-face meeting. But he also suggested that future U.S. military support for Ukraine might be contingent on its leader helping investigate business dealings there by Hunter Biden, the former vice president's son.

The elder Biden was competing for the Democratic presidential nomination, and Trump seemed to want to weaken him 15 months out from Election Day.

Trump denied wrongdoing and began referring to his exchange with Zelenskyy as a "perfect" phone call. Even Zelenskyy later insisted that he faced "no blackmail."

But Trump was impeached by the Democratic-controlled House in December 2019 on abuse of power and obstruction of justice charges, only the third American commander in chief to be in that situation. He was acquitted by the Senate.

Russia's war in Ukraine

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 01, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 249 ~ 36 of 60

Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24, 2022, triggering the biggest conflict on the European continent since World War II.

Since then, the U.S. has provided more than \$65 billion in military assistance to Ukraine. The Biden administration made steadfast military and political support for Zelenskyy's country a centerpiece of his foreign policy.

As the war raged, the Biden White House staunchly defended continuing to provide support to Ukraine, even as some Republicans began grumbling about so much funding for a war that had no end in sight.

In a speech to Congress in December 2022, Zelenskyy thanked "every American" for supporting his country.

"Your money is not charity," he said then. "It's an investment in the global security and democracy that we handle in the most responsible way."

Trump, then campaigning for his second term, said repeatedly that Russia would never have invaded Ukraine if he'd been president and that he'd have no trouble solving the conflict.

Upon taking office, he upended years of U.S. policy by dispatching negotiators to Saudi Arabia to meet with officials from Russian President Vladimir Putin's government, and also began hammering out the minerals deal that he and Zelenskyy had planned to sign Friday.

Trump meets with Zelenskyy ahead of Election Day 2024

Last September, Zelenskyy accompanied Biden to a Pennsylvania ammunition factory to thank the workers producing some of the most critically needed munitions for his country's fight with Russian ground forces.

A few days later, he traveled to Trump Tower in Manhattan and discussed ending the war. In comments to Fox News Channel afterward, Trump said of the fighting, "It should stop and the president wants it to stop," meaning Zelenskyy.

"And I'm sure President Putin wants it to stop and that's a good combination," Trump added. Zelenskyy invited Trump to visit Ukraine, to which Trump responded, "I will."

That trip came up again Friday, when Vance told Zelenskyy, "You went to Pennsylvania and campaigned for the opposition."

Zelenskyy's September trip was not billed as political, though, and Trump's election opponent was Vice President Kamala Harris, not Biden. Still, Pennsylvania is a battleground state and some congressional Republicans at the time accused Democrats of using Zelenskyy's visit to bolster Harris politically.

Trump calls Zelenskyy a dictator, then suggests he didn't

Last December, Trump met with Zelenskyy again during a visit to Paris to attend the reopening of the Notre Dame cathedral. It was a hastily arranged three-way meeting set up by French President Emmanuel Macron, who was trying to push the president-elect to maintain support for Ukraine in its defense against Russia's invasion.

As president, Trump has publicly prodded Zelenskyy that he had better move quickly to negotiate an end to Russia's war in Ukraine, or risk no longer having a country to lead. On his social media site, Trump decried Zelenskyy for not organizing an election to decide if he should remain in power — an idea backed by Russia — calling him a "dictator without elections."

He also suggested that Ukraine was responsible for Russia's invasion, but later conceded that Russia was the aggressor.

Before this week, Zelenskyy had been to the White House four times — all during the Biden administration. When the Ukrainian leader announced he was coming to Washington and was ready to sign a minerals deal, Trump's tone got more conciliatory.

He called America's support for Ukraine against Russia's invasion "a very worthy thing to do." And, when pressed about having called Zelenskyy a dictator, Trump responded: "Did I say that? I can't believe I said that. Next question."

It all served to make Friday's blowup all the more spectacular.

Zelenskyy leaves White House without signing minerals deal after Oval Office blowup

By WILL WEISSERT, ZEKE MILLER and AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump berated Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy for being “disrespectful” Friday in an extraordinary Oval Office meeting, then abruptly called off the signing of a minerals deal that Trump said would have moved Ukraine closer to ending its war with Russia.

The astonishing turn of events could scramble affairs in Europe and around the globe. During his visit with Trump, Zelenskyy was expected to sign the deal allowing the U.S. greater access to Ukraine’s rare earth minerals and hold a joint news conference, but that plan was scrapped after the heated engagement between the leaders in front of the news media.

It’s unclear what the blowup could mean for the deal that Trump insisted was essential to repay the U.S. for the more than \$180 billion in American aid sent to Kyiv since the start of the war. And it remains to be seen what, if anything, Trump wants Zelenskyy to do to get the deal back on track.

The Ukrainian leader was asked to leave the White House by top Trump advisers shortly after Trump shouted at him, showing open disdain.

“You’re gambling with World War III, and what you’re doing is very disrespectful to the country, this country that’s backed you far more than a lot of people say they should have,” Trump told Zelenskyy.

The last 10 minutes of the nearly 45-minute meeting devolved into a tense back and forth between Trump, Vice President JD Vance and Zelenskyy, who had urged skepticism about Russia’s commitment to diplomacy, citing Moscow’s years of broken commitments on the global stage.

Zelenskyy’s main objective going into the sit-down had been to press Trump not to abandon his country and to warn against moving too close to Russian President Vladimir Putin. Instead he got shouted at while Trump appeared to play up the drama for the cameras.

At one point, Zelenskyy said Putin had broken “his own signature” 25 times on ceasefires and other agreements and could not be trusted. Trump responded that Putin had not broken agreements with him and ducked questions about offering security guarantees to Ukraine, saying he thought the minerals deal — which is now on-hold — would effectively end the fighting.

Things first got testy after Vance challenged Zelenskyy, telling him, “Mr. President, with respect, I think it’s disrespectful for you to come to the Oval Office to try to litigate this in front of the American media.” Zelenskyy tried to object, prompting Trump to raise his voice and say, “You’re gambling with the lives of millions of people.”

At another point, Trump declared himself “in the middle” and not on the side of either Ukraine or Russia in the conflict. He went on to deride Zelenskyy’s “hatred” for Putin as a roadblock to peace.

“You see the hatred he’s got for Putin,” Trump said. “That’s very tough for me to make a deal with that kind of hate.”

Trump later told reporters, shortly before departing for his Mar-a-Lago resort in South Florida for the weekend, that he wanted an “immediate ceasefire” between Russia and Ukraine but expressed doubt that Zelenskyy was ready to make peace.

Zelenskyy made an appearance on Fox News on Friday evening in which he said his public spat with Trump and Vance was “not good for both sides.” But Zelenskyy said Trump — who insists Putin is ready to end the three-year grinding war — needs to understand that Ukraine can’t change its attitudes toward Russia on a dime.

Zelenskyy added that Ukraine won’t enter peace talks with Russia until it has security guarantees against another offensive.

“It’s so sensitive for our people,” Zelenskyy said. “And they just want to hear that America (is) on our side, that America will stay with us. Not with Russia, with us. That’s it.”

Following the meeting, Trump posted on his social media site that he had “determined” that Zelenskyy “is not ready for Peace.”

“He disrespected the United States of America in its cherished Oval Office. He can come back when he

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 01, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 249 ~ 38 of 60

is ready for Peace," Trump wrote.

Democrats immediately criticized the administration for the breakdown. Democratic Senate leader Chuck Schumer said Trump and Vance "are doing Putin's dirty work."

The testy discussion was especially surprising since it came a day after Trump struck a more conciliatory tone toward Ukraine, calling America's support against Russia's invasion "a very worthy thing to do" and disclaiming any memory that he had called the Ukrainian leader a "dictator."

Trump and Zelenskyy spoke politely, even with admiration, of each other for the first half hour of the meeting. But, when the Ukrainian leader raised alarm about trusting any promises from Putin to end the fighting, Vance offered his strong rebuke for airing disagreements with Trump in public.

That instantly shifted the tenor of the conversation as Zelenskyy grew defensive and Trump and his vice president blasted him as ungrateful and issued stark warnings about future American support.

"It's going to be a very hard thing to do business like this," Trump said to Zelenskyy as the two leaders talked over each other about past international support for Ukraine.

Vance then interjected, "Again, just say thank you."

Zelenskyy pushed back on Vance, telling him he's offered his appreciation "a lot of times" to the American people and the president. The Ukrainian leader after leaving the White House expressed his gratitude on social media.

"Thank you America, thank you for your support, thank you for this visit," Zelenskyy wrote. "Thank you @POTUS, Congress, and the American people. Ukraine needs just and lasting peace, and we are working exactly for that."

But administration officials were not satisfied with Zelenskyy and perceived a "hostility" with him and his body language in the Oval Office, according to a White House official. Trump also objected to the Ukrainian leader bringing up the issue of security guarantees when Trump made clear he wanted to focus on the minerals deal, said the official, who requested anonymity to discuss internal deliberations.

Former President Joe Biden had also grown frustrated at moments with Zelenskyy for being insufficiently grateful of American support, according to former administration officials. But unlike Trump, Biden expressed his displeasure with Zelenskyy privately.

Trump also suggested that Zelenskyy should not be demanding concessions.

"You're not in a good position. You don't have the cards right now," Trump said pointing his finger toward Zelenskyy.

Shortly before the meeting ended, Trump said, "This is going to be great television."

As Ukrainian forces hold out against slow but steady advances by Russia's larger and better-equipped army, leaders in Kyiv have sought to ensure any potential U.S.-brokered peace plan would include guarantees for the country's future security.

Many Ukrainians fear that a hastily negotiated peace — especially one that makes too many concessions to Russian demands — would allow Moscow to rearm and consolidate its forces for a future invasion.

Sen. Lindsey Graham, a Trump ally who has advocated to keep up American support for Ukraine, said he wasn't confident that the Trump-Zelenskyy relationship could be repaired.

"I don't know if you can ever do a deal with Zelenskyy anymore," the South Carolina Republican said.

Fears that Trump could broker a peace deal with Russia that is unfavorable to Ukraine have been amplified by recent precedent-busting actions by his administration.

Trump held a lengthy phone call with Putin, and U.S. officials met with their Russian counterparts in Saudi Arabia without inviting European or Ukrainian leaders — both dramatic breaks with previous U.S. policy to isolate Putin over his invasion.

European leaders were quick to reinforce their support for Ukraine after the contentious Oval Office meeting.

In a post on X, EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said Zelenskyy's "dignity honors the bravery of the Ukrainian people."

"Be strong, be brave, be fearless," she added. "You are never alone, dear President."

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni proposed "an immediate summit" between the United States and

European allies “to speak frankly about how we intend to face today’s great challenges, starting with Ukraine.”

“Every division of the West makes us all weaker and favors those who would like to see the decline of our civilization,” she said. “A division would not benefit anyone.”

Texas measles cases rise to 146 in an outbreak that led to a child’s death

By JAMIE STENGLE Associated Press

DALLAS (AP) — The number of people with measles in Texas increased to 146 in an outbreak that led this week to the death of an unvaccinated school-aged child, health officials said Friday.

The number of cases — Texas’ largest in nearly 30 years — increased by 22 since Tuesday. The Texas Department of State Health Services said cases span over nine counties in Texas, including almost 100 in Gaines County, and 20 patients have been hospitalized.

The child who died Tuesday night in the outbreak is the first U.S. death from the highly contagious but preventable respiratory disease since 2015, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said. The child was treated at Covenant Children’s Hospital in Lubbock, though the facility said the patient didn’t live in Lubbock County.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr., the nation’s top health official and a vaccine critic, said Wednesday that the U.S. Department of the Health and Human Services was watching cases but dismissed the outbreak as “not unusual.”

But on Friday afternoon, Kennedy said in a post on X that his heart went out to families impacted by the outbreak, and he recognized “the serious impact of this outbreak on families, children, and healthcare workers.”

Kennedy went on to say in the post that his agency will continue to fund Texas’ immunization program and that ending the outbreak is a “top priority” for him and his team.

The virus has largely spread through rural, oil rig-dotted West Texas, with cases concentrated in a “close-knit, undervaccinated” Mennonite community, state health department spokesperson Lara Anton has said.

Gaines County has a strong homeschooling and private school community. It is also home to one of the highest rates of school-aged children in Texas who have opted out of at least one required vaccine, with nearly 14% skipping a required dose last school year.

Texas law allows children to get an exemption from school vaccines for reasons of conscience, including religious beliefs. Anton has said the number of unvaccinated kids in Gaines County is likely significantly higher because homeschooled children’s data would not be reported.

The measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine is safe and highly effective at preventing infection and severe cases. The first shot is recommended for children ages 12 to 15 months, and the second for ages 4 to 6 years. Most kids will recover from measles, but infection can lead to dangerous complications such as pneumonia, blindness, brain swelling and death.

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.

The U.S. had considered measles, a respiratory virus that can survive in the air for up to two hours, eliminated in 2000, which meant there had been a halt in continuous spread of the disease for at least a year. Measles cases rose in 2024, including a Chicago outbreak that sickened more than 60.

Eastern New Mexico has nine cases of measles currently, but the state health department said there is no connection to the outbreak in West Texas.

At a news conference Friday in Austin, officials confirmed the first reported case in Travis County since 2019. Dr. Desmar Walkes of the Austin-Travis County Health Authority said the case involved an unvaccinated infant who was exposed to the virus during a vacation overseas.

Texas Department of State Health Services spokesman Chris Van Deusen said the case was one of four linked to international travel so far this year, none of which were part of the West Texas outbreak. The others were two in Houston last month and one reported this week in Rockwall County, east of Dallas.

In the Travis County case, the child's family members were vaccinated and were isolating at home and no exposures were expected, Walkes said. She could not give the exact age of the infant.

Officials at the news conference urged people to get vaccinated if they are not already.

"We're here to say quite simply: Measles can kill, ignorance can kill and vaccine denial definitely kills," said U.S. Rep. Lloyd Doggett, a Democrat.

School officials in two Texas cities each reported one rubella case this week, but Van Deusen said no infections had been confirmed.

Jury finds Illinois landlord guilty of murder, hate crime in 2023 attack on Palestinian American boy

By SOPHIA TAREEN and MELISSA PEREZ WINDER The Associated Press

JOLIET, Ill. (AP) — A jury found an Illinois landlord guilty of murder and hate crime charges Friday for the brutal killing of a 6-year-old whose mother rented rooms in the man's home, an attack that spiked fears over anti-Muslim discrimination in the earliest days of the war in Gaza.

Joseph Czuba, 73, was charged in the fatal stabbing of Wadee Alfayoumi and the wounding of his mother, Hanan Shaheen on Oct. 14, 2023 in Plainfield, about 40 miles (64 kilometers) from Chicago. Authorities alleged the family was targeted because of their Islamic faith and as a response to the war between Israel and Hamas that erupted on Oct. 7, 2023.

Jurors deliberated less than 90 minutes before returning with the verdict.

"I don't know if I should be pleased or upset, if I should be crying or laughing," Wadee's father, Odai Alfayoumi, said at a news conference, speaking in Arabic. "People are telling me to smile. Maybe if I were one of you, I would be smiling, but I'm the father of the child and I've lost the child. And I feel like this decision came to a little too late."

Ben Crump, the national civil rights attorney representing Shaheen, released a statement calling the verdict a "measure of justice."

"Wadee was an innocent six-year-old child whose life was stolen in an act of unimaginable violence fueled by hatred," the statement added. "While we are relieved that his killer has been held accountable, we must continue to stand against the rising tide of hate that led to this senseless act. We must honor Wadee's memory by continuing to fight against hate in all its forms and working toward a future where every child is safe, valued, and free from violence."

Crump asked that the media continue respecting Shaheen's privacy as she honors her son's memory.

Shaheen did not speak at a press conference following the jury decision. Ahmed Rehab, executive director of the civil rights group Council on American-Islamic Relations, or CAIR-Chicago, said it was too difficult for her and added that she "only prays for peace and love."

The trial featured detailed testimony from police officers, medical workers, Czuba's ex-wife and Shaheen, who described how Czuba attacked her with a knife before going after her son in a different room. Prosecutors say that the child had been stabbed 26 times. He was found naked with a knife still in his side.

Graphic photos of the murder, a knife holder Czuba allegedly used that day, along with police video footage were central to the Will County prosecutors' case. At times video screens showing explicit footage were turned away from the public viewing audience where members of Wadee's family sat during the trial.

"If it wasn't enough that this defendant killed that little boy, he left the knife in the little boy's body," Michael Fitzgerald, a Will County assistant state's attorney, told jurors during opening statements.

Czuba's attorney, George Lenard, declined comment Friday. Czuba had pleaded not guilty. He faced murder, attempted murder, aggravated battery and hate crime charges in an eight-count indictment.

Czuba is scheduled for sentencing on May 2, according to the Will County Circuit Clerk's office.

Defense attorneys insisted pieces of evidence tying Czuba to the crimes were missing. His ex-wife, tes-

tifying for the prosecution, could only describe one outburst during their 30 years of marriage and said he carried knives often because he was handy around the house.

"Go beyond the emotions to carefully examine the evidence," said Kylie Blatti, one of Czuba's public defenders. "It is easy to get lost in the horror of those images."

One of the critical parts of the trial was Shaheen's testimony and the 911 call she made to report the crime that happened just days after the war started. She said they had not previously had any issues in the two years they rented from the Czubas. They shared a kitchen and living room with the Czubas.

Then after the start of the war, Czuba told her that they had to move out because Muslims were not welcome. Later, he confronted Shaheen and attacked her, holding her down, stabbing her and trying to break her teeth.

"He told me 'You, as a Muslim, must die,'" said Shaheen, who testified in English and Arabic through a translator.

Shaheen had more than a dozen stab wounds and it took her weeks to recover. The boy was later pronounced dead.

Police testified that officers found Czuba outside the house sitting on the ground with blood on his body and hands.

Separately, civil lawsuits have been filed over the boy's death, including by his father, Alfayoumi, who is divorced from Shaheen and was not living with them.

The case generated headlines around the world and struck deeply for the Chicago area's large and established Palestinian community. The U.S. Department of Justice also launched a federal hate crimes investigation.

"All of us who are parents, who are Arab or Palestinian ... who are Muslim, we all saw our children die in Wadee Alfayoumi, because this could have been any one of our boys, any one of our girls," CAIR-Chicago's Rehab said. "It just so happened that it was Wadee Alfayoumi. When he was targeted, all of our children were targeted. Every Muslim was targeted when he (Czuba) yelled, 'All Muslims must die.'"

Pope had coughing fit, inhaled vomit and now requires assisted ventilation, Vatican says

By NICOLE WINFIELD and CARLA K. JOHNSON Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Pope Francis suffered an isolated coughing fit on Friday that resulted in him inhaling vomit and requiring non-invasive mechanical ventilation, the Vatican said in relaying an alarming setback in his two-week long battle against double pneumonia.

The 88-year-old pope remained conscious and alert at all times and cooperated with the maneuvers to help him recover. He responded well, with a good level of oxygen exchange and was continuing to wear a mask to receive supplemental oxygen, the Vatican said.

The episode, which occurred in the early afternoon, resulted in a "sudden worsening of the respiratory picture." Doctors decided to keep Francis' prognosis as guarded and indicated they needed 24 to 48 hours to evaluate how and if the episode impacted his overall clinical condition.

The development marked a setback in what had been two successive days of increasingly upbeat reports from doctors treating Francis at Rome's Gemelli hospital since Feb. 14. The pope, who had part of one lung removed as a young man, has lung disease and was admitted after a bout of bronchitis worsened and turned into pneumonia in both lungs.

Dr. John Coleman, a pulmonary critical care doctor at Northwestern Medicine in Chicago, said the episode as relayed by the Vatican was alarming and underscored Francis' fragility and that his condition "can turn very quickly."

"I think this is extremely concerning, given the fact that the pope has been in the hospital now for over two weeks, and now he's continuing to have these respiratory events and now had this aspiration event that is requiring even higher levels of support," he told The Associated Press.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 01, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 249 ~ 42 of 60

"So given his age and his fragile state and his previous lung resection, this is very concerning," added Coleman, who is not involved in Francis' care.

Dr. William Feldman, a pulmonary specialist at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, said it was a good sign that the pope remained alert and oriented, but concurred that the episode marked "a worrying turn."

"Often we will use noninvasive ventilation as a way of trying to stave off an intubation, or the use of invasive mechanical ventilation," Feldman said.

Types of noninvasive ventilation include a BiPAP machine, which helps people breathe by pushing air into their lungs. Doctors will often try such a machine for a while to see if the patient's blood gas levels improve so they can eventually go back to using oxygen alone.

The episode, which doctors described as an "isolated crisis of bronchial spasm" began as a coughing fit in which Francis inhaled vomit. The longer respiratory crisis Francis suffered on Feb. 22 was a longer crisis in actually breathing, the Vatican said.

Doctors did not resume referring to Francis being in "critical condition," which has been absent from their statements for three days now. But they say he isn't out of danger, given the complexity of his case.

Earlier on Friday, Francis had spent the morning alternating high flows of supplemental oxygen with a mask and praying in the chapel. He had breakfast, read the day's newspapers and was receiving respiratory physiotherapy, the Vatican said.

The Vatican also published a document signed by Francis on Feb. 26 "From the Gemelli Polyclinic," a new official tagline that showed Francis was still working from the hospital.

Prayers continued to pour in

Late on Friday, Francis' closest friend in the Vatican bureaucracy, Argentine Cardinal Victor Manuel Fernández, led the nightly prayer in St. Peter's Square to pray for Francis' health.

With other cardinals bundled against the night chill, Fernández urged the crowd to pray not just for Francis but for others as the pope himself would.

"Certainly it is close to the Holy Father's heart that our prayer is not only for him, but also for all those who in this particular dramatic and suffering moment of the world, bear the hard burden of war, of sickness, of poverty," said Fernández, the Vatican's doctrine chief.

In Mexico City, a few dozen people gathered Thursday night at the cathedral to pray for Francis' recovery.

"He is like part of the family," said Araceli Gutiérrez, who treasures the time she saw the pope during his trip to the country of nearly 100 million Catholics in 2016. "That's why we feel so concerned for him."

María Teresa Sánchez, who was visiting from Colombia with her sister, said that she has always felt close to Francis — the first Latin American pope.

"That's like having a relative within the higher-ups, with God," she said. "He has done so much for religion; he's such a humble person."

WHO says water contamination is suspected in one of the Congo villages struck by illness

BASANKUSU, Congo (AP) — Authorities investigating the deaths of at least 60 people in northwestern Congo suspect the water source in one of the areas may have been contaminated, the World Health Organization said Friday. But the agency said it's too early for any definitive conclusion.

Doctors are investigating more than 1,000 illnesses that emerged since late January in five villages in Congo's Equateur province, where high rates of malaria have complicated efforts to diagnose the cases and where officials have said they've been unable so far to confirm the main cause.

WHO emergencies chief Dr. Michael Ryan said during an online briefing Friday that for one of the villages there is "a very strong level of suspicion of a poisoning event related to the poisoning of a water source."

Ryan did not clarify whether he was referring to contamination by accident, negligence or deliberate action. He also did not identify the village where the poisoning was suspected.

"We will not stop investigating until we are sure that the true cause or the absolute cause of what is

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 01, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 249 ~ 43 of 60

occurring here is fully investigated," Ryan said.

Illnesses were first detected in late January in the village of Boloko after three children ate a bat and died within 48 hours.

Twelve cases and eight deaths in total have been recorded in Boloko, with no new cases recorded since January, officials say, adding that nearly half of deaths there occurred within hours of the onset of symptoms.

The village of Bomate in Basankusu health zone, around 200 kilometers (125 miles) from Boloko, has been hit the most: 98% of the cases and 86% of deaths have been recorded there, health officials say.

WHO said on Thursday that hundreds of the patients have tested positive for malaria, which is common in the region. In addition to common malaria symptoms such as fever and body aches, patients have also shown symptoms like chills, sweating, stiff neck, runny or bleeding nose, cough, vomiting and diarrhea.

The health crisis has caused fear among residents, some of whom have said they fled the villages to avoid falling sick.

Experts say access to the sick has been hindered by the remote locations of the affected villages and that several people died before medical teams were able to reach them.

For more on Africa and development: <https://apnews.com/hub/africa-pulse>

The Associated Press receives financial support for global health and development coverage in Africa from the Gates Foundation. The AP is solely responsible for all content. Find AP's standards for working with philanthropies, a list of supporters and funded coverage areas at AP.org.

The World Health Organization on Friday said water poisoning is a suspect in the illnesses that have killed at least 60 people and infected more than 1,000 others in northwestern Congo. The agency, however, added that detailed investigations are still ongoing to make a definitive conclusion.

Indications from authorities in Congo show "a very strong level of suspicion of a poisoning event related to the poisoning of a water source" in one of the affected villages, WHO emergencies chief Dr. Michael Ryan said during an online briefing.

"Clearly, at the centre of this, we have some kind of poisoning event. We will not stop investigating until we are sure that the true cause or the absolute cause of what is occurring here is fully investigated," Dr Ryan said.

Another likely suspect could be a "toxic-type event either from a biological perspective like meningitis or from a chemical exposure," the WHO emergencies chief said, citing systematic investigations carried out so far by experts.

Officials, though, haven't been able to confirm the main cause of the illnesses, he said, adding that the high rates of malaria and other common illnesses in the villages are making it difficult to determine the cause.

Up to five villages in Congo's Equateur province have recorded the illnesses first detected in the village of Boloko after three children ate a bat and died within 48 hours.

Twelve cases and eight deaths in total have been recorded in Boloko, with no new cases recorded since January, officials say, adding that nearly half of deaths there occurred within hours of the onset of symptoms.

The village of Bomate in Basankusu health zone, around 200 kilometers (125 miles) from Boloko, has been hit the most: 98% of the cases and 86% of deaths have been recorded there, health officials say.

WHO said on Thursday that hundreds of the patients have tested positive for malaria, which is common in the region. In addition to common malaria symptoms such as fever and body aches, patients have also shown symptoms like chills, sweating, stiff neck, runny or bleeding nose, cough, vomiting and diarrhea.

The health crisis has caused fear among residents, some of whom have said they fled the villages to avoid falling sick.

Experts say access to the sick has been hindered by the remote locations of the affected villages and that several people died before medical teams were able to reach them.

Mourners bury one of the last hostages released from Gaza as talks start for ceasefire future

By JULIA FRANKEL Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Mourners in Israel on Friday buried the remains of one of the final hostages released in the first phase of the ceasefire between Hamas militants and Israel, as negotiators discussed a second phase that could end the war in Gaza and see the remaining living captives returned home.

The funeral procession for Tsachi Idan, an avid soccer fan who was 49 when he was abducted by Hamas militants, began at a Tel Aviv football stadium en route to the cemetery where he was buried in a private ceremony.

The office of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said Idan, taken from Kibbutz Nahal Oz during the Hamas-led Oct. 7 2023 attack that left 1,200 dead in Israel and sparked the war in Gaza, was killed in captivity.

His body was one of four released by Hamas early Thursday in exchange for over 600 Palestinian prisoners, the last planned swap of the ceasefire's first phase, which began in January.

Idan was the only one of his family taken to Gaza. His eldest daughter, Maayan, was killed as militants shot through the door of their saferoom. Hamas militants broadcast themselves on Facebook live holding the Idan family hostage in their home, as his two younger children pleaded with the militants to let them go.

"My brother is the real hero. He held on," Idan's sister, Noam Idan ben Ezra, said in an interview on Israeli radio Friday. She said Idan had been "a pace away" from being released during a brief ceasefire in November 2023, when more than 100 of the 251 people abducted on Oct. 7 were released.

"Tsachi was forsaken twice. The first time when he was kidnapped from his home and the second time when the deal blew up," she added. "The fact that Tsachi is not standing next to me today is the outcome of the decision-making and the policy here in Israel. They did not listen to us then, but it's not too late to listen to us today."

Concern for remaining hostages

With the first phase of the ceasefire deal set to end Saturday, relatives of hostages still held in Gaza are ramping up pressure on Netanyahu to secure the release of their loved ones.

According to Israel, 32 of the 59 hostages still in Gaza are dead, and there has been growing concern about the welfare of an unknown number who are still alive, particularly after three hostages released Feb. 8 appeared emaciated.

One of the three, Eli Sharabi, said in an interview with Israel's Channel 12 Friday that he and other hostages had been held in iron chains, starved and sometimes beaten or humiliated.

"During the first three days, my hands are tied behind my back, my legs are tied, with ropes that tear into your flesh, and a bit of food, a bit of water during the day," he said, in one of the first interviews by a hostage released under the current deal. "I remember not being able to fall asleep because of the pain, the ropes are already digging into your flesh, and every movement makes you want to scream."

Sharabi found out after his release that his wife and daughters had been killed during the Oct. 7 attack.

The next phase of the ceasefire

Officials from Israel, Qatar and the United States have started "intensive discussions" on the ceasefire's second phase in Cairo, Egypt's state information service said Thursday. The agreement calls for those talks to bring an end to the war, with the return of all remaining living hostages and the withdrawal of Israeli troops.

Hamas said in a statement released Friday that it "reaffirms its full commitment to implementing all terms of the agreement in all its stages and details." It called on the international community to pressure Israel to "immediately proceed to the second phase without any delay or evasion."

Hamas has rejected an Israeli proposal to extend the first phase by 42 days, saying it goes against the ceasefire agreement, according to a member of the group who requested anonymity to discuss the closed-door negotiations. The Israeli proposal calls for extending the ceasefire through the Islamic holy

month of Ramadan in return for an additional hostage exchange, the Hamas member said.

Netanyahu's office confirmed he had sent a delegation to Cairo.

Mediators in the talks are "also discussing ways to enhance the delivery of humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip, as part of efforts to alleviate the suffering of the population and support stability in the region," the statement from Netanyahu's office said.

Israel's negotiators were to return home Friday night, said an Israeli official, speaking to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity to discuss the closed-door talks. Negotiations are set to continue Saturday, the official said. But it was not clear if the Israeli team would travel back to Cairo to attend them.

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said Friday that the coming days are "critical," and urged Israel and Hamas to fulfill their commitments.

The first phase of the ceasefire, which paused 15 months of fighting, saw the release of 33 hostages, including eight bodies, in exchange for nearly 2,000 Palestinian prisoners. Netanyahu has vowed to return all the hostages and destroy the military and governing capabilities of Hamas, which remains in control of Gaza.

But it's unclear how Israel would destroy Hamas without resuming the war, and Hamas is unlikely to release the remaining hostages — its main bargaining chips — without a lasting ceasefire.

Israel's military offensive has killed more than 48,000 Palestinians, according to Palestinian health officials, who don't differentiate between civilian and combatant deaths but say over half the dead have been women and children.

Palestinians prepare for Ramadan amid destroyed homes

Palestinians who returned to destroyed homes in Gaza City started Friday to prepare for Ramadan, shopping for essential household goods and foods. Some say the Islamic holy month feels better than one spent last year, but still far from normal.

"The situation is very difficult for people and life is very hard. Most people — their homes have been destroyed. Some people can't afford to shop for Ramadan, but our faith in God is great as he never forgets to bless people," said Gaza City resident Nasser Shoueikh.

Ramadan is a holy Islamic month during which observant Muslims around the world practice the ritual of daily fasting from dawn to sunset. It's often known for increased prayers, charity and spirituality as well as family gatherings enjoying different dishes and desserts during Iftar, when Muslims break their fasting, and Suhoor, the last meal before sunrise.

What they said: Trump, Zelenskyy and Vance's heated argument in the Oval Office

By ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP) — President Donald Trump and Vice President JD Vance on Friday berated Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy over the war in Ukraine, accusing him of not showing gratitude after he challenged Vance on the question of diplomacy with Russia's Vladimir Putin.

The argument in the Oval Office was broadcast globally. It led to the rest of Zelenskyy's White House visit being canceled and called into question how much the U.S. will still support Ukraine in its defense against Russia's 2022 invasion.

Here is a transcript of the key moments of the exchange.

Zelenskyy challenges Vance on Russia and diplomacy

Vance: "For four years, the United States of America, we had a president who stood up at press conferences and talked tough about Vladimir Putin, and then Putin invaded Ukraine and destroyed a significant chunk of the country. The path to peace and the path to prosperity is, maybe, engaging in diplomacy. We tried the pathway of Joe Biden, of thumping our chest and pretending that the president of the United States' words mattered more than the president of the United States' actions. What makes America a good country is America engaging in diplomacy. That's what President Trump is doing."

Zelenskyy: "Can I ask you?"

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 01, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 249 ~ 46 of 60

Vance: "Sure. Yeah."

Zelenskyy: "OK. So he (Putin) occupied it, our parts, big parts of Ukraine, parts of east and Crimea. So he occupied it in 2014. So during a lot of years — I'm not speaking about just Biden, but those times was (Barack) Obama, then President Obama, then President Trump, then President Biden, now President Trump. And God bless, now, President Trump will stop him. But during 2014, nobody stopped him. He just occupied and took. He killed people. You know what the --"

Trump: "2015?"

Zelenskyy: "2014."

Trump: "Oh, 2014? I was not here."

Vance: "That's exactly right."

Zelenskyy: "Yes, but during 2014 'til 2022, the situation is the same, that people have been dying on the contact line. Nobody stopped him. You know that we had conversations with him, a lot of conversations, my bilateral conversation. And we signed with him, me, like, you, president, in 2019, I signed with him the deal. I signed with him, (French President Emmanuel) Macron and (former German Chancellor Angela) Merkel. We signed ceasefire. Ceasefire. All of them told me that he will never go ... But after that, he broke the ceasefire, he killed our people, and he didn't exchange prisoners. We signed the exchange of prisoners. But he didn't do it. What kind of diplomacy, JD, you are speaking about? What do you mean?"

Vance: "I'm talking about the kind of diplomacy that's going to end the destruction of your country. Mr. President, with respect, I think it's disrespectful for you to come into the Oval Office to try to litigate this in front of the American media. Right now, you guys are going around and forcing conscripts to the front lines because you have manpower problems. You should be thanking the president for trying to bring an end to this conflict."

Zelenskyy: "Have you ever been to Ukraine that you say what problems we have?"

Vance: "I have been to --"

Zelenskyy: "Come once."

Vance: "I've actually watched and seen the stories, and I know that what happens is you bring people, you bring them on a propaganda tour, Mr. President. Do you disagree that you've had problems, bringing people into your military?"

Zelenskyy: "We have problems --"

Vance: "And do you think that is respectful to come to the Oval Office of the United States of America and attack the administration that is trying to prevent the destruction of your country?"

Zelenskyy: "A lot of questions. Let's start from the beginning."

Vance: "Sure."

Trump erupts when Zelenskyy suggests the U.S. might 'feel it in the future'

Zelenskyy: "First of all, during the war, everybody has problems, even you. But you have nice ocean and don't feel now. But you will feel it in the future. God bless --"

Trump: "You don't know that. You don't know that. Don't tell us what we're going to feel. We're trying to solve a problem. Don't tell us what we're going to feel."

Zelenskyy: "I'm not telling you. I am answering on these questions."

Trump: "Because you're in no position to dictate that."

Vance: "That's exactly what you're doing."

Trump: "You are in no position to dictate what we're going to feel. We're going to feel very good."

Zelenskyy: "You will feel influenced."

Trump: "We are going to feel very good and very strong."

Zelenskyy: "I am telling you. You will feel influenced."

Trump: "You're, right now, not in a very good position. You've allowed yourself to be in a very bad position --"

Zelenskyy: "From the very beginning of the war --"

Trump: "You're not in a good position. You don't have the cards right now. With us, you start having cards."

Zelenskyy: "I'm not playing cards. I'm very serious, Mr. President. I'm very serious."

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 01, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 249 ~ 47 of 60

Trump: "You're playing cards. You're gambling with the lives of millions of people. You're gambling with World War III."

Zelenskyy: "What are you speaking about?"

Trump: "You're gambling with World War III. And what you're doing is very disrespectful to the country, this country that's backed you far more than a lot of people said they should have."

Vance: "Have you said thank you once?"

Zelenskyy: "A lot of times. Even today."

Vance: "No, in this entire meeting. You went to Pennsylvania and campaigned for the opposition in October."

Zelenskyy: "No."

Vance: "Offer some words of appreciation for the United States of America and the president who's trying to save your country."

Zelenskyy: "Please. You think that if you will speak very loudly about the war, you can —"

Trump: "He's not speaking loudly. He's not speaking loudly. Your country is in big trouble."

Zelenskyy: "Can I answer —"

Trump: "No, no. You've done a lot of talking. Your country is in big trouble."

Zelenskyy: "I know. I know."

Trump: "You're not winning. You're not winning this. You have a damn good chance of coming out OK because of us."

Zelenskyy: "Mr. President, we are staying in our country, staying strong. From the very beginning of the war, we've been alone. And we are thankful. I said thanks."

Trump demands Zelenskyy accept a ceasefire

Trump: "If you didn't have our military equipment, this war would have been over in two weeks."

Zelenskyy: "In three days. I heard it from Putin. In three days."

Trump: "Maybe less. It's going to be a very hard thing to do business like this, I tell you."

Vance: "Just say thank you."

Zelenskyy: "I said a lot of times, thank you, to American people."

Vance: "Accept that there are disagreements, and let's go litigate those disagreements rather than trying to fight it out in the American media when you're wrong. We know that you're wrong."

Trump: "But you see, I think it's good for the American people to see what's going on. I think it's very important. That's why I kept this going so long. You have to be thankful."

Zelenskyy: "I'm thankful."

Trump: "You don't have the cards. You're buried there. People are dying. You're running low on soldiers. It would be a damn good thing, and then you tell us, 'I don't want a ceasefire. I don't want a ceasefire, I want to go, and I want this.' Look, if you can get a ceasefire right now, I tell you, you take it so the bullets stop flying and your men stop getting killed."

Zelenskyy: "Of course we want to stop the war. But I said to you, with guarantees."

Trump: "Are you saying you don't want a ceasefire? I want a ceasefire. Because you'll get a ceasefire faster than an agreement."

Zelenskyy: "Ask our people about a ceasefire, what they think."

Trump: "That wasn't with me. That was with a guy named Biden, who is not a smart person."

Zelenskyy: "This is your president. It was your president."

Trump: "Excuse me. That was with Obama, who gave you sheets, and I gave you Javelins. I gave you the Javelins to take out all those tanks. Obama gave you sheets. In fact, the statement is Obama gave sheets, and Trump gave Javelins. You've got to be more thankful because let me tell you, you don't have the cards. With us, you have the cards, but without us, you don't have any cards."

Trump says Putin respects him due to the investigations of his first term

Vance, restating a reporter's question: "She is asking what if Russia breaks the ceasefire."

Trump: "What, if anything? What if the bomb drops on your head right now? OK, what if they broke it? I

don't know, they broke it with Biden because Biden, they didn't respect him. They didn't respect Obama. They respect me. Let me tell you, Putin went through a hell of a lot with me. He went through a phony witch hunt ... All I can say is this. He might have broken deals with Obama and Bush, and he might have broken them with Biden. He did, maybe. Maybe he did. I don't know what happened, but he didn't break them with me. He wants to make a deal. I don't know if you can make a deal."

"The problem is I've empowered you (turning toward Zelenskyy) to be a tough guy, and I don't think you'd be a tough guy without the United States. And your people are very brave. But you're either going to make a deal or we're out. And if we're out, you'll fight it out. I don't think it's going to be pretty, but you'll fight it out. But you don't have the cards. But once we sign that deal, you're in a much better position, but you're not acting at all thankful. And that's not a nice thing. I'll be honest. That's not a nice thing.

"All right, I think we've seen enough. What do you think? This is going to be great television. I will say that."

Getting the Israel-Hamas ceasefire to the next phase will be difficult. Here's why

By SAMY MAGDY and JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

Israel and Hamas have begun working to advance their ceasefire agreement in Gaza to the next phase, but it's unclear if they'll get there and, if not, what comes next.

The first phase of the ceasefire, which paused 15 months of war, freed Israeli hostages and Palestinian prisoners, and enabled more humanitarian aid to reach Gaza, expires on Saturday. The two sides seem willing to maintain their truce while negotiators from the U.S., Egypt and Qatar guide talks aimed at getting to the next phase.

The parties were supposed to have begun ironing out the details of phase two weeks ago. But talks were delayed as the first six weeks of the ceasefire were marred by disputes between Israel and Hamas over alleged violations of the deal.

Under the terms of the truce that began in Jan. 19, the second phase would compel Hamas to release all the remaining living hostages from its Oct. 7, 2023, attack that triggered the war, in exchange for more Palestinian prisoners in Israel, a lasting ceasefire and a full Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip.

Over the past six weeks, Hamas has freed 33 living and dead hostages in exchange for more than 1,700 Palestinian prisoners. The militant group still holds 59 captives, 32 of whom are believed to be dead.

Israel is reportedly seeking an extension of the first phase to secure the freedom of more captives.

Getting to the ceasefire's next phase will be challenging

Getting to the second phase will be difficult because it will likely force Israel to choose between its two main war goals — the safe return of the hostages and the annihilation of Hamas.

Already, there are signs of strain. The agreement calls for Israel to begin withdrawing troops from a narrow strip of land in southern Gaza this weekend and to complete the process within eight days. But an Israeli official said Thursday that Israeli forces would remain in the Philadelphi corridor indefinitely.

One possibility is that instead of moving to phase two, Israel will try to extend phase one and push for more exchanges of hostages for prisoners. Steve Witkoff, the Trump administration's Mideast envoy, said in an interview with CNN's "State of the Union" on Sunday that he hoped to negotiate the second phase during an elongated first phase.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has not publicly supported that idea. He is under pressure from hard-liners in his governing coalition to resume the war against Hamas. But he also faces pressure from the Israeli public to bring the remaining hostages home.

Witkoff said Netanyahu is committed to bringing back all the hostages but has set a "red line" that Hamas cannot be involved in governing Gaza after the war. Netanyahu has also ruled out any role in Gaza for the Western-backed Palestinian Authority, dominated by Hamas' main rival, Fatah.

Hamas has said it is willing to hand over control of Gaza to other Palestinians, but it has dismissed Israel's suggestion that its leadership go into exile.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 01, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 249 ~ 49 of 60

That means the militant group, which does not accept Israel's existence, would remain entrenched in Gaza. And it says it won't lay down its arms unless Israel ends its occupation of the West Bank, Gaza and east Jerusalem — lands captured by Israel in the 1967 Mideast war that Palestinians want for a future state.

The ceasefire's first phase has further embittered both sides

The first phase of the ceasefire has only deepened the mistrust on both sides.

Israelis were shocked to see the captives — some of whom were emaciated — paraded before crowds upon their release. After returning to Israel, hostages said they were held under harsh conditions.

Last Thursday, Hamas handed over coffins it said held the remains of Shiri Bibas and her two small children, who it said were killed in an Israeli airstrike. But Israel said a forensic investigation showed the two children were killed by their captors, and that the third body was a Palestinian woman. Hamas later released another body that was confirmed to be the mother.

On Saturday, Hamas further infuriated Israel by filming two hostages who were forced to watch the release of others. In the footage Hamas released, the hostages turn to a camera and beg to be released. Israel then delayed the release of hundreds of prisoners.

Hamas has accused Israel of violating the ceasefire by killing dozens of people who the army said had approached its forces or entered unauthorized areas. It also accused Israel of dragging its feet on the entry of mobile homes and equipment for clearing rubble, which entered late last week, and of beating and abusing Palestinian prisoners prior to their release.

Mixed signals from Trump

President Donald Trump took credit for the ceasefire, which Witkoff helped push across the finish line after a year of negotiations led by the Biden administration, Egypt and Qatar.

But Trump has since sent mixed signals about the deal.

Earlier this month, he set a firm deadline for Hamas to release all the hostages, warning that "all hell is going to break out" if the militants didn't. But he said it was ultimately up to Israel, and the deadline came and went.

Trump sowed further confusion by proposing that Gaza's population of some 2 million Palestinians be relocated to other countries and for the United States to take over the territory and develop it. Netanyahu welcomed the idea, which was universally rejected by Palestinians and Arab countries, including close U.S. allies. Human rights groups said it could violate international law.

Trump stood by the plan in a Fox News interview over the weekend but said he's "not forcing it."

Tariff threats and uncertainty could weigh on consumers, drag down US economy, gov't report suggests

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER and ANNE D'INNOCENZIO AP Business Writers

WASHINGTON (AP) — Ongoing tariff threats from Washington and potentially sweeping government job cuts have darkened consumers' mood and may be weighing on an otherwise mostly healthy economy.

Data released Friday showed that consumers slashed their spending by the most since February 2021, even as their incomes rose. On a positive note, inflation cooled, but President Donald Trump's threats to impose large import taxes on Canada, Mexico, and China -- the United States' top trading partners -- will likely push prices higher, economists say. Some companies are already planning to raise prices in response.

Americans cut their spending by 0.2% in January from the previous month, the Commerce Department said Friday, likely in part because of unseasonably cold weather. Yet the retreat may be hinting at more caution by consumers amid rising economic uncertainty.

"The roller coaster of news headlines emanating from Washington D.C. is likely going to push businesses to the sidelines for a time and even appears to be impacting consumers," said Stephen Stanley, chief U.S. economist at Santander, in an email.

The reduction in consumer spending — coupled with a surge of imports in January, also reported Friday, as companies likely sought to front-run tariffs — led the Federal Reserve's Atlanta branch to project that the economy would shrink 1.5% at an annual rate in the January-March quarter, a sharp slowdown from

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 01, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 249 ~ 50 of 60

the 2.3% growth in the final three months of last year.

Most analysts still expect the economy to expand in the first quarter, but at a much slower pace. Stanley lowered his estimate for first-quarter growth to just 1.25%, from about 2.25%.

Inflation declined to 2.5% in January compared with a year earlier, down from 2.6% in December, the Commerce Department said Friday. Excluding the volatile food and energy categories, core prices dropped to 2.6%, the lowest since June, from 2.9%.

Economists noted that inflation would likely keep cooling, but the progress could be upended by tariffs. Trump said Thursday he would impose 25% duties on imports from Canada and Mexico, though just 10% on oil from Canada. He also said he wanted to double the current tariff on imports from China to 20%.

Trump is also calling for widespread layoffs of federal workers, which could cause hundreds of thousands of job losses and potentially lift the unemployment rate.

Randy Carr, CEO of World Emblem, says the tariffs, if imposed, will force him to raise prices and cut jobs. World Emblem makes patches, labels and badges for companies, universities and law enforcement agencies.

The firm has factories in Georgia and California but it makes about 60% of its products in Mexico. Carr said if the 25% import taxes are imposed, he expects to raise prices by 5% to 10%. He also plans to cut "a handful" of jobs among the 500 workers his company has in the United States to help absorb the rest of the costs.

Carr said he would also cancel about \$9 million in planned investments in artificial intelligence and online commerce.

"It's so annoying," he said. "Right now you have this volatility, and so you really can't plan anything. You just got to wait until we get a final verdict from from the administration. It's definitely not punishing Mexico, it's punishing us."

The inflation-fighters at the Federal Reserve said in January they planned to keep their key short-term interest rate on hold, at 4.3%, to slow borrowing and spending enough to lower inflation back to their 2% target. The Fed's elevated rate has contributed to higher borrowing costs for mortgages, auto loans, and credit cards.

The Fed prefers Friday's inflation measure to the more widely-known consumer price index, which rose for the fourth straight month in January to 3%. Friday's gauge calculates inflation slightly differently: For example, it puts less weight on the costs of housing and used cars.

Inflation spiked in 2022 to its highest level in four decades, propelling President Donald Trump to the White House and leading the Fed to rapidly raise interest rates to tame prices. It has since fallen from a peak of 7.2%, and some economists expect it could fall closer to 2% in the coming months, absent tariffs.

"The inflation data could be distorted higher at exactly the time when the Fed would otherwise be in a position to declare a win," Stanley said.

One other bright spot in the report was that incomes jumped 0.9% in January from December, fueled in part by a large annual cost of living adjustment for Social Security beneficiaries.

Yet Americans spent less anyway, in particular on cars, where purchases fell sharply. Some consumers could be trying to save money after splurging during the holiday shopping season. Credit card debt surged in December, economists noted.

A big concern right now is whether tariffs will push up inflation, or slow the economy, or — in a particularly toxic combination — both.

Jeffrey Schmid, president of the Fed's Kansas City branch, said Thursday he has become "more cautious" about inflation, in part because Americans are expecting higher prices in the coming months.

But he also said discussions with businesses in his district "suggest that elevated uncertainty might weigh on growth." A weaker economy would normally lead the Fed to cut rates, but if inflation remains a threat, it would likely keep rates unchanged.

Many toy companies had expressed relief when Trump announced only a 10% increase in tariffs on products from China because they thought they could share the extra costs with retailers. But a 20% tariff

means that many will have no choice but to raise prices. Around 80% of toys sold in the U.S. are made in China, according to industry reports.

Curtis McGill, CFO of small toy maker Hey Buddy Hey Pal, called the move “a nightmare scenario.”

McGill had just confirmed a price for a toy with one major retailer Wednesday, but then had to withdraw it after he heard about the tariffs. For the year-end holiday season, he estimates his toys will see a 10% price increase.

And Walmart, the nation’s largest retailer, last week cited uncertainty about the health of the American consumer as it provided weaker-than-expected sales growth estimates for this year, sending shares lower.

Worries about tariffs pushing prices higher have sent consumer confidence plunging, unwinding the modest gains that had occurred after the election.

After the Tate brothers return to the US, DeSantis says they are not welcome. Here’s what to know

By KATE PAYNE Associated Press/Report for America

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) — Andrew and Tristan Tate, who are charged with human trafficking in Romania, have returned to the U.S. after authorities lifted travel restrictions on the siblings, who have millions of online followers.

After the pair arrived in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, on Thursday, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis made it clear the influencer brothers are not welcome in his state and that his administration is conducting a preliminary inquiry into the pair — sparking pushback from supporters of the Tates.

Here is what to know.

Who are the Tates?

Andrew Tate, 38, is a former professional kickboxer and self-described misogynist who has amassed more than 10 million followers on X. He and his brother Tristan Tate, 36, are vocal supporters of U.S. President Donald Trump.

Andrew Tate is a hugely successful social media figure, attracting millions of followers, many of them young men and schoolchildren who were drawn in by the luxurious lifestyle the influencer projects online.

He previously was banned from TikTok, YouTube and Facebook for hate speech and his misogynistic comments, including that women should bear responsibility for getting sexually assaulted.

The Tates, who are dual U.S.-British citizens, were arrested in late 2022 and formally indicted last year on charges they participated in a criminal ring that lured women to Romania, where they were sexually exploited. Andrew Tate was also charged with rape. They deny the allegations.

The Tates’ departure came after Romanian Foreign Minister Emil Hurezeanu said this month that a Trump administration official expressed interest in the brothers’ case at the recent Munich Security Conference.

Just weeks ago, Andrew Tate posted on X: “The Tates will be free, Trump is the president. The good old days are back. And they will be better than ever. Hold on.”

Where are they now?

The Tates arrived in the U.S. Thursday, landing in Fort Lauderdale around midday.

Speaking to reporters at the airport, Andrew Tate repeated his insistence that the siblings had done nothing wrong.

“We live in a democratic society where it’s innocent until proven guilty. And I think my brother and I are largely misunderstood. There’s a lot of opinions about us, things that go around about us on the internet,” he said.

The brothers are expected to return to Romania, where they still face criminal charges. An attorney for the siblings there did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Friday on when they are due back in the country.

What has the response been to their return?

The brothers’ return to the U.S. — after a Trump official expressed interest in their case — has sparked disagreement among conservative commentators and officials.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 01, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 249 ~ 52 of 60

Speaking to reporters, Florida's Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis made clear he doesn't want the brothers to remain in his state.

"Florida is not a place where you're welcome with that type of conduct," DeSantis said.

Florida's attorney general is examining whether the state may have any jurisdiction over the brothers' alleged crimes, and if so, how to "hold them accountable." In court documents, the Tates have said they are not and have never been Florida residents.

Other Republicans in the Sunshine State — which has become a stronghold of Trump's MAGA movement — are rolling out the welcome mat.

In a post on X, the Tampa Bay Young Republicans club formally invited Andrew Tate to speak to their group.

"As free speech absolutists, the Tate's haven't been formally convicted of any crimes and are welcome to speak to our group," the post reads. "We're old enough to remember when a (asterisk)"Convicted Felon."(asterisk) won the Presidency."

What is next on the legal front?

The Tates still face criminal charges in Romania and will have to return at least from time to time for proceedings in that case, which is expected to take years to resolve.

Once the legal saga in Romania ends, the United Kingdom has an extradition request — that was approved last year by a Romanian court — for separate charges the Tates face there related to allegations of sexual aggression.

Meanwhile, a defamation lawsuit the brothers filed in Palm Beach Circuit Court in 2023 continues to proceed. The pair filed the case against a woman who accused them of imprisoning her in Romania. A judge has denied a motion by the woman, identified as Jane Doe, to pause the case until the Romanian matter is concluded.

Now that they are back in the U.S., the Tates have filed a motion seeking a temporary restraining order against the woman, but no ruling has been issued as of Friday afternoon. The siblings want the woman barred from coming within 500 feet (152 meters) of them and that she be prevented from "contacting, threatening, stalking, harming or harassing" either Tate brother.

Shedeur Sanders and Cam Ward take center stage at NFL combine, though neither will step on the field

By MICHAEL MAROT AP Sports Writer

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Shedeur Sanders and Cam Ward stood one podium apart Friday, each making his case to be the first quarterback selected in this year's NFL draft at the same moment.

They couldn't have taken more different approaches.

Sanders arrived in a sparkly necklace and spoke with the same brash confidence that defined the career of his longtime coach and Hall of Fame father, Deion Sanders. Ward delivered a blue-collar message, describing his six-year journey from overlooked Texas prep player to Heisman Trophy finalist and now, perhaps, to being the first pick in April.

And yet, these two college stars managed to cast aside the playful, public verbal barbs to show a mutual respect on one of the most crucial stages in football.

"We'll both end up being one of the best quarterbacks in the league," Ward said. "We play around, we joke around with it (who will be first), but it really doesn't mean nothing. At the end of the day, you've got to show you can improve each and every Sunday. You can't just do it one year. You've got to do it each and every time you step on the field."

League scouts will have to wait until the players' college pro days to get an actual glimpse of this year's top two quarterbacks because Ward and Sanders reiterated they would not work out Saturday with the quarterbacks, running backs and receivers in Indianapolis.

Instead, these two added their names to a long list of top prospects opting to wait to show their stuff on familiar turf while throwing to college teammates. The list includes Caleb Williams, Bryce Young and

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 01, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 249 ~ 53 of 60

Joe Burrow, all quarterbacks who were chosen No. 1 overall.

There's no telling yet if Ward or Sanders will be next, but each has plenty of tape for scouts to pore through since both started 50 or more games while playing at multiple colleges.

Sanders and his father used their flashy style to help revive programs at Jackson State in Mississippi before repeating the feat at Colorado. Ward threw an NCAA record 158 TD passes as he ascended from FCS star at Incarnate Word in Texas to become Washington State's starter before nearly leading Miami to the CFP playoffs.

This week, though, Sanders and Ward seem virtually inseparable as they stroll through the Indianapolis Convention Center hallways, part of the same quarterback group as they ponder their futures and how to sell themselves to coaches and general managers.

"If you ain't trying to change the franchise then don't get me," Sanders said. "You should know history repeats itself over and over and over, and I've done it over and over and over, so there should be no question why an NFL franchise should pick me."

While there's little debate over their productivity or penchant for winning, there are plenty of questions to answer.

At 6-foot-2, 215 pounds, Sanders possesses good size, a solid arm, mobility in the pocket and the kind of strong personality needed from a locker room leader. Still, he must show the throws he made into tight windows in college will not become interceptions in the NFL and he needs to eliminate his propensity for taking sacks. Others wonder if his father's influence might become a problem.

Sanders shrugged off any such doubts.

"You think I'm worried about what critics say or what people got to say? You know who my dad is? They hated on him, too," Shedeur Sanders said. "So it's almost normal. Without people hating, it's not normal for us. We like the adversity. We like everything that comes with the name. That's why we are who we are."

Ward is slightly bigger at 6-2, 223 pounds, has a stronger arm, a quicker release and throws with more velocity. But he can struggle with accuracy and his ability to read coverages.

And while he's more reserved as a public speaker than Sanders, those who have played with Ward insist he has a different personality in the locker room.

"Everybody sees what he does on the field, his confidence and everything, but the biggest thing I would say is the type of leader he is," former Miami tight end Elijah Arroyo said Thursday. "He's not afraid to hold people accountable. He wants to win, and he holds the team to a certain standard and he doesn't care how he's going to get his point across."

But with no clear-cut favorite entering or leaving combine week, the debate over who's better will only continue to rage as they hold campus workouts and fly around the country for team interviews.

They just believe one thing: Both will be successful, wherever they land.

"I just think the work me and him are willing to put in, the relationship we have to constantly compete each and every day to better our craft and ourselves," Ward said, "I just think it's going to end up paying off for us in the long run."

Leonard Peltier remains defiant in AP interview, maintaining innocence and vowing continued activism

By GRAHAM LEE BREWER Associated Press

BELCOURT, N.D. (AP) — More than 50 years after a shootout on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation landed him in federal prison, Leonard Peltier remains defiant.

Despite being convicted and sentenced to life in prison, he maintains his innocence in the killings of two FBI agents in 1975 and sees his newfound freedom — the result of a commutation from former President Joe Biden — as the beginning of a new phase of his activism.

"I'm going to spend the rest of my life fighting for our people, because we ain't finished yet. We're still in danger," Peltier, now 80, said in an exclusive interview with The Associated Press at his new home on the Turtle Mountain Reservation, his tribal homeland in North Dakota, near the Canadian border.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 01, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 249 ~ 54 of 60

There among the rolling, often snow-covered hills, he will serve out the rest of his sentence on house arrest.

Born into an era of violent hostility between the American government and Indigenous peoples, the former American Indian Movement member has now stepped into another politically volatile moment in the country. He said he understands well the threats the rise of the far right, as well as the federal government, pose to tribal nations and Indigenous peoples. He believes that, like previous administrations, President Donald Trump will come for minerals and oil on tribal lands.

"You don't have to get violent, you don't have to do nothing like that. Just get out there and stand up," he told AP this week, in his first sit-down conversation with a journalist in over 30 years. "We got to resist."

The FBI and Native American activists: A volatile mix

Peltier was part of a movement in the late 1960s and 1970s that fought for Native American rights and tribal self-determination, sometimes occupying federal and tribal property.

The movement grabbed headlines in 1973 when it took over the village of Wounded Knee on Pine Ridge, leading to a 71-day standoff with federal agents. They also protested at Alcatraz and the Bureau of Indian Affairs headquarters. For many members of the American Indian Movement, or AIM, their activism was part of legacy of resistance stretching back to the country's founding.

The day of the shootout came amid heightened tensions on the Pine Ridge reservation, where residents felt the FBI's heavy presence was a threat to the people's autonomy. Peltier and other AIM members got into a confrontation with agents Jack Coler and Ron Williams when the agents drove onto a rural property where the AIM members were staying. Both agents were shot and killed, along with Joseph Stuntz, another AIM member.

The FBI says Peltier shot the agents at close range. In a letter sent to Biden last year opposing his release, former FBI director Christopher Wray called Peltier a "remorseless killer."

His guilt is clear to many, including North Dakota Gov. Kelly Armstrong.

"More than 20 federal judges upheld his conviction, and he was denied parole as recently as last July," Armstrong said in a statement to the AP. "There was no legal justification for his release. He should still be in prison."

Peltier was not pardoned; Biden said he was commuting Peltier's sentence because of his age, his declining health, and the long period he had already been in prison.

Peltier has acknowledged he was at the shootout, but he says he acted in self-defense and wasn't the one whose bullets killed the agents. He believes the FBI and prosecutors were looking for someone to take the blame, after his two co-defendants were exonerated for self-defense.

"They wanted revenge, and they didn't know who was responsible," Peltier told the AP from the kitchen table of his new home. "And they said 'Put the full weight of the American government on Leonard Peltier, we need a conviction.' And when they say that you don't have no rights," he said.

Amnesty International and scores of political leaders around the world called Peltier a political prisoner of the U.S., questioning the fairness of his trial and conviction. James Reynolds, a former U.S. Attorney for Northern Iowa, whose office oversaw post-conviction proceedings, urged clemency in a letter to Biden in 2021. He wrote that prosecutors couldn't prove Peltier fired the fatal shots and called his imprisonment "unjust".

Peltier's grandson, Cyrus Peltier, remembers visiting him every weekend at Leavenworth, a federal prison in Kansas. He didn't always understand why his grandfather wouldn't just tell the parole board he was sorry for the crimes, and hopefully win his freedom.

"And he would say 'Well, that's just not what I'm fighting for, grandson,'" Cyrus Peltier, now 39, recalled from his home in North Dakota this week. "I'm sorry for what happened to those agents, but I'm not going to sit here and admit to something I didn't do. And if I have to die in here for that, I'm going to."

A life behind bars, but always hope for freedom

In prison, Peltier's fame only grew, as he amassed the support of prominent political leaders around the globe and celebrities in the U.S. and became a symbol of the injustices against Native Americans.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 01, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 249 ~ 55 of 60

He said it was all their letters of support and acts of protest for his release that kept him going. Peltier said there were moments in the last few years where he began to lose hope that he would ever see freedom. His denial of parole in July was another crushing blow.

"They gave me the strength to stay alive and to know what I was in prison for," he said.

Many Indigenous people, leaders, and organizers lobbied for decades for Peltier's release.

However, some who believe Peltier was involved in the murder of AIM member Anna Mae Pictou Aquash in 1975 fought against his release. Two other AIM members were convicted of the crime.

"Their ability to say that he is free and he gets to go home negates the whole fact that Anna Mae never got to go home," said Aquash's daughter, Denise Pictou Maloney.

In his interview with the AP, Peltier denied having any knowledge of Aquash's death.

'I didn't give my life for nothing'

In the end, Biden listened to the counsel of former Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland, a member of the Pueblo of Laguna and the first Native American to lead the Interior Department. Peltier was released on Feb. 18, and returned to North Dakota.

A week later, he still often wakes up at night terrified that it is all a dream and that he is still in a cell.

Peltier remains confined to his home and nearby community. But he now has access to routine medical treatment for his many health issues, including an aortic aneurysm. He gets around with the help of a cane or a walker.

He is heartened by the many people who come to visit him and drop off gifts like beaded medallions, letters and artwork, which are piling up in his home.

Peltier wants to make a living selling his paintings, as he did in prison, and he plans to write more books. He also wants to train young activists about the threats they will face.

When he was in prison, lying in his bunk at night, he would often wonder if his protest efforts resulted in any change. Seeing young Native activists today continuing to fight for the same things gives meaning to the 49 years he was incarcerated.

"It makes me feel so good, man, it does," he said, holding back tears. "I'm thinking, well, I didn't give my life for nothing."

Where things stand as Congress tries to avoid a partial government shutdown in two weeks

By KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As House members finished voting for the week and left Washington, the lead Democrat on the House Appropriations Committee, Rep. Rosa DeLauro, voiced frustration that Republicans had yet to respond to her latest offer on a full-year spending bill, even though it had been made five days earlier.

Meanwhile, her Republican counterpart outright dismissed Democratic efforts to include assurances in the legislation that funding approved by Congress would be spent by President Donald Trump's administration as lawmakers intended.

"A Republican Senate and a Republican House are not going to limit what a president can do, particularly when he has to sign the bill," said Rep. Tom Cole, R-Okla.

The exchanges demonstrate the divides that remain as the nation approaches a March 14 deadline to avoid a partial federal government shutdown.

Such deadlines have become commonplace in recent years with lawmakers almost always working out their differences in the end, or at least agreeing to a short-term funding extension.

But with Republicans now in charge of the White House and Trump sidestepping Congress on previous funding decisions, a more contentious dynamic has emerged during negotiations, raising questions about whether lawmakers will avoid a shutdown this time.

Here's a look at where things stand.

First things first: How much to spend?

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 01, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 249 ~ 56 of 60

The stage for the current negotiations was set nearly two years ago when then-House Speaker Kevin McCarthy and then-President Joe Biden worked out a two-year budget deal that would essentially hold non-defense spending flat for 2024, while boosting it slightly for defense. The agreement provided for 1% increases for both in 2025.

Democrats want to adhere to that agreement, which would bring defense spending to about \$895.2 billion and non-defense to about \$780.4 billion. Republicans are looking to spend less on non-defense programs. Cole has argued Republicans are not bound to an agreement negotiated by two men no longer in office.

It's unclear how much the two sides disagree on an overall spending amount. But Sen. Patty Murray, the lead Democrat on the Senate Appropriations Committee, said they weren't far apart.

"We are close on topline spending, but we need to know Republicans are willing to work with us to protect Congress' power of the purse — and I welcome any and all ideas they may have on how we can work together to do just that," Murray said.

With Trump and Musk slashing government, Democrats want guarantees

Trump pushed early to pause grants and loans potentially totaling trillions of dollars while his administration conducted an across-the-board review of federal programs. A subsequent memorandum purported to rescind the pause.

Still, a federal judge issued an order earlier this week as a backstop. The preliminary injunction continued to block the pause. The judge said the freeze had "placed critical programs for children, the elderly, and everyone in between in serious jeopardy."

Meanwhile, Trump has empowered Elon Musk to help engineer the firing of thousands of federal employees and potentially shutter entire agencies created by Congress.

The U.S. Constitution grants Congress the power to appropriate money and requires the executive to pay it out. A 50-year-old law known as the Impoundment Control Act makes that explicit by prohibiting the president from halting payments on grants or other programs approved by Congress.

Democrats have sought to place in the spending bill some guarantees the administration would follow what Congress intended.

"What we've been talking about is the numbers, and we're talking about the issue of assurances," DeLauro said. "It's trying to make it possible to have the money go as intended."

But Republicans are making clear that's a non-starter.

"Democrats are placing completely unreasonable conditions on the negotiations. They want us to limit the scope of executive authority. They want us to tie the hands of the president," House Speaker Mike Johnson said.

Why is Congress so late?

The current fiscal year began in October, so lawmakers are already five months late.

Trump complained Thursday on Truth Social, blaming Biden, saying he "left us a total MESS."

"The Budget from last YEAR is still not done. We are working very hard with the House and Senate to pass a clean, temporary government funding Bill ("CR") to the end of September. Let's get it done!"

But it was congressional Republicans who opted in December to hold over budget negotiations for a few months, largely because Trump would be in the White House. Johnson on Fox News in December urged a short-term extension so "we get to March where we can put our fingerprints on the spending. That's when the big changes start."

What happens if they can't reach an agreement?

The first fallback option is the continuing resolution Trump endorsed, a stopgap measure that would generally fund federal agencies at current levels.

"It looks as though it is becoming inevitable at this point," Johnson said, blaming Democrats.

That will be tough for defense hawks to accept, as many Republicans already consider the Pentagon to be underfunded. But it will also be tough for Democrats who worry that funding for housing programs, child care, nutrition assistance and other services is failing to keep pace with inflation, fraying the safety net for many Americans.

Murray and DeLauro issued a joint statement Friday morning, saying they hoped Republicans would re-

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 01, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 249 ~ 57 of 60

turn to the negotiating table and that “walking away” from bipartisan talks “raised the risk of a shutdown.”

They also said the continuing resolution being pursued by Republicans would “give Trump new flexibility to spend funding as he sees fit.”

“While Elon Musk has been calling for a shutdown, Democrats have been working to pass bills that make sure Congress decides whether our schools or hospitals get funding — not Trump or Musk,” the two Democratic lawmakers said.

The White House has submitted to lawmakers a list of what are referred to as “anomalies” that it wants to see added to a continuing resolution. For example, it wants an additional \$1.6 billion to increase pay for junior enlisted service members by an average of 10% effective April 1. Congress has also supported a pay increase in previous legislation.

The White House is also seeking \$485 million for more immigrant detention beds and for removal operations at U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The request also seeks to give Trump more flexibility on how money within certain departments is spent. For example, the White House wants language allowing \$30 billion in Department of Defense transfers.

Democrats will want to negotiate some of the changes the White House is seeking, adding to the uncertainty of reaching a final agreement.

Republicans likely need votes from the other side

Getting spending bills over the finish line has required support from both parties. Some Republicans never vote for continuing resolutions. Nearly three dozen House Republicans voted against the last one in December, and they now only have a one-vote cushion to work with in the House if Democrats withhold their support.

If talks break down completely, funding for agencies will end at midnight March 14. Both parties will pin the blame on the other — and some of that is already happening.

Trump is no stranger to shutdowns. He presided over the longest one in the nation’s history, one that lasted 35 days, with Trump relenting only after intensifying delays at the nation’s airports and another missed payday for hundreds of thousands of federal workers brought new urgency to resolving the standoff.

Best mullet? Best use of Taylor Swift?

AP hands out its own movie awards ahead of the Oscars

By JAKE COYLE and LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writers

Hollywood’s never-ending awards season can make it easy to get a little lost in the run-of-the-mill “best” categories. Actor. Actress. Director. Picture. A great movie can be reduced to a single performance; those that are left out seem to simply vanish for a while.

But more often than not, it’s the little things that make us love the movies we love — the lines we quote, the props we delight in, the character quirks we remember, the songs we actually add to our playlists.

In that spirit, ahead of Sunday’s Oscars, AP Film Writers Jake Coyle and Lindsey Bahr make selections for their own awards — some more offbeat than others.

Most trusty steed: Aaron Pierre’s bike, “Rebel Ridge”

Jeremy Saulnier’s lean thriller is like an Western fable: An innocent guy who doesn’t want any trouble rides into town and becomes ensnared by corrupt lawmen. Protagonists before him might have come on a horse, but Terry Richmond (Pierre) gets around by bike. Pierre oozes movie-star cool, even while pedaling furiously. (A second award to “Rebel Ridge,” too, for best scene involving Wikipedia.) — J.C.

Best stuffy: Chris Hemsworth’s teddy bear, “Furiosa”

Hemsworth may play a maniac warlord named Dementus who rides a Roman chariot across the wasteland of George Miller’s “Furiosa,” but he’s also a big softy who carries his childhood stuffy. Strapped to Dementus is a teddy bear, an artifact of a childhood that, like Furiosa’s, is marked by grief. — J.C.

Best tearjerker: “My Old Ass”

Megan Park’s “My Old Ass” sneaks up on you. Oh, you think, it’s just some funny high-concept movie about a teenage girl who starts talking to her almost 40-year-old self after a mushroom trip. Sure, it is

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 01, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 249 ~ 58 of 60

that, but it's also a profound meditation on time, family and the impossibility of really, truly appreciating things in the moment. It's done with such a light, entertaining touch that by the time the waterworks really start, you almost don't know what hit you. — L.B.

Best action hero: June Squibb, "Thelma"

All I need to say is: Mobility scooter chase scene. Plus, the now-95-year-old did her own stunts. — J.C.

Best part of a so-so movie: Kumail Nanjiani, "Ghostbusters: Frozen Empire"

Awards to go to movies that people think are, you know, really good. But great performances can happen in not-so-good movies. "Frozen Empire" is a lightly enjoyable, slightly kid-oriented extension of "Ghostbusters," but every time Nanjiani is on screen, as the reluctant heir to the role of "Firemaster," the movie is hysterical. — J.C.

Best song: "Brighter Days" and "Harper and Will Go West" (tie)

The original song category at the Oscars is deeply broken. Or maybe I'm just wildly out of sync with that branch, but there were two great, memorable songs from wonderful films and neither was even shortlisted. One, Kristen Wiig's charming "Harper and Will Go West" was technically in the end credits of "Will & Harper," but the wait for said song was a key thread throughout. The other, Nicholas Britell's "Brighter Days" provided a profound moment of mourning and catharsis in "Blitz." They're both songs that I've added to playlists — unlike any of the nominated ones. — L.B.

Best use of Taylor Swift: "The Fall Guy"

I've probably already seen David Leitch's stuntman extravaganza half a dozen times, partially because my kids like it, too, and partially because Ryan Gosling and Emily Blunt are absurdly winning in it. There's just not much better than Gosling cry-singing to "All Too Well." — J.C.

Best scene-stealer: Adam Pearson, "A Different Man"

Sebastian Stan has gotten most of the awards love for Aaron Schimberg's twisty dark comedy, but it's Pearson who lifts "A Different Man" to another level. In a movie full of artifice and identity shifts, he's the real deal. — J.C.

Best prop: The glass of milk, "Babygirl"

I don't make the rules, Harris Dickinson's Samuel does. — L.B.

Most beavers: "Hundreds of Beavers"

It would be hard to find a movie more predicated on mascot costumes and hats. Director Mike Cheslik didn't have much more than a handful of beaver costumes when he went into rural wintry Wisconsin to make this slapstick, microbudget, almost-instant cult classic. But cheap visual effects can do wonders, even when it comes to multiplying semiaquatic rodents (or guys in beaver mascot costumes). — J.C.

Most understood assignment: Aubrey Plaza, "Megalopolis"

There's a lot going on in Francis Ford Coppola's long-awaited epic, and, understandably, I'm not sure everyone knew what they were in for. Some characters talk in verse. A Russian satellite is said to be falling to Earth. Adam Driver can stop time. Any actor could be forgiven for losing their bearings. But Plaza, playing a character named, um, Wow Platinum, is supremely spot on no matter how scattershot everything around her is. — J.C.

Best mullet: Kristen Stewart, "Love Lies Bleeding"

Rose Glass' "Love Lies Bleeding," that sweaty, pulpy, violent, romantic ride, is a cult classic in the making thanks in no small part to Stewart's fearless performance as Lou, a gym manager in rural New Mexico in 1989 who falls for a drifter bodybuilder. And at least 35% of that great performance is in Lou's greasy mullet. — L.B.

Best ensemble: "His Three Daughters"

Carrie Coon, Natasha Lyonne and Elizabeth Olsen make up a very dysfunctional family but one stirring ensemble in Azazel Jacobs' tender family drama. They are a perfect trio, with the added charm of Jay O. Sanders as their ailing Jets-fan father. And us Jets fans take any win we can. — J.C.

Most memorable moviegoing experience: "Sing Sing" at Sing Sing

Easily the most unforgettable and moving time at the movies for me in 2024 was seeing "Sing Sing" at its namesake New York correctional facility, in a crowd half-filled with incarcerated men and with much of the movie's cast returning to where they began acting. It was a reminder that, through acting and art, you can win a lot more than an Oscar. — J.C.

Are egg producers inflating prices during the bird flu outbreak to boost profits?

By JOSH FUNK AP Business Writer

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Egg producers blame the bird flu outbreak for driving prices to record highs, but critics believe giant companies are taking advantage of their market dominance to profit handsomely at the expense of budget-conscious egg buyers.

Advocacy groups, Democratic lawmakers and a Federal Trade Commission member are calling for a government investigation after egg prices spiked to a record average of \$4.95 per dozen this month. The Trump administration did unveil a plan this week to combat bird flu, but how much that might ease egg prices — a key driver of inflation — remains to be seen.

“Donald Trump promised to lower food prices on ‘Day One’, but with egg prices skyrocketing out of control, he fired the workers charged with containing bird flu. Working families need relief now,” Sen. Elizabeth Warren said in a statement.

What’s behind the record egg prices?

The industry, and most experts, squarely blame bird flu. More than 166 million birds have been slaughtered to contain the virus. Some 30 million egg layers have been wiped out just since January, significantly disrupting egg supplies. The Department of Agriculture’s longstanding policy has been to kill entire flocks anytime the virus is found on a farm.

As a result, the number of egg layers has dropped nationwide by about 12% from before the outbreak to 292 million birds, according to a Feb. 1 USDA estimate, but another 11 million egg layers have been killed since then, so it’s likely worse. When prices spiked to \$4.82 two years ago and prompted initial calls for price gouging probes, the flock was above 300 million.

“This has nothing to do with anything other than bird flu. And I think to suggest anything else is a misreading of the facts and the reality,” American Egg Board President Emily Metz said.

“Our farmers are in the fight of their lives, period, full stop. And they’re doing everything they can to keep these birds safe,” Metz said. “This is a supply challenge. Due to bird flu. Nothing else.”

Farm Action suspects monopolistic behavior. The group that lobbies on behalf of smaller farmers, consumers and rural communities notes that egg production is only down about 4% from last year and some 7.57 billion table eggs were produced last month, yet some consumers are still finding egg shelves empty at their local grocery stores.

“Dominant egg corporations are blaming avian flu for the price hikes that we’re seeing. But while the egg supply has fallen only slightly, these companies profits have soared,” said Angela Huffman, Farm Action’s president. The Justice Department acknowledged receiving the group’s letter calling for an investigation but declined to comment on it.

The fact that a jury ruled in 2023 that major egg producers used various means to limit the domestic supply of eggs to increase the price of products during the 2000s only adds to the doubts about their motives now.

What do the numbers show?

Retail egg prices had generally remained below \$2 per dozen for years before this outbreak began. Prices have more than doubled since then, boosting profits for egg producers even as they deal with soaring costs.

Most of the dominant producers are privately held companies and don’t release their results. But the biggest, Cal-Maine Foods, which supplies about 20% of the nation’s eggs, is public, and its profits increased dramatically. Cal-Maine reported a \$219 million profit in the most recent quarter when its eggs sold for an average of \$2.74 per dozen, up from just \$1.2 million in the quarter just before this outbreak began in early 2022 when its eggs were selling for \$1.37 per dozen.

Sherman Miller, Cal-Maine’s president and CEO, said in reporting the numbers that higher market prices “have continued to rise this fiscal year as supply levels of shell eggs have been restricted due to recent outbreaks of highly pathogenic avian influenza.”

But he said Cal-Maine also sold significantly more eggs — some 330 million dozens, up from 288 mil-

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 01, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 249 ~ 60 of 60

lion the year before — in the quarter because demand is so strong and Cal-Maine has made a number of acquisitions. Cal-Maine also suffered few outbreaks on its farms, outside of a couple facilities in Kansas and Texas. The Mississippi-based company didn't respond to calls from The Associated Press.

What about production costs?

Economists and analysts say the record egg prices aren't a sure sign of something nefarious, and short-term profits might only last until farms get hit. Once a flock is slaughtered, it can take as long as a year to clean a farm and raise new birds to egg-laying age. The USDA pays farmers for every bird killed, but it doesn't cover all the costs for farmers as they go without income.

"The consumer, I think, will probably feel like they're getting the rough end of the stick. But I guarantee you, the farmers that are having to depopulate the barns, they're having a rougher time," CoBank analyst Brian Earnest said.

Inflation in the costs of feed and fuel and labor have contributed to rising egg prices, and farmers have been investing in biosecurity measures to help keep the virus away. So production costs also appear to be at an all-time high, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' producer price index.

"This isn't a case where they're taking the price up to gouge the market. It is the price is going up through auction at wholesale. And they're benefiting from higher prices because supplies are tight," University of Arkansas agricultural economist Jada Thompson said.

Today in History: March 1, Peace Corps established

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Saturday, March 1, the 60th day of 2025. There are 304 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On March 1, 1961, President John F. Kennedy signed an executive order establishing the Peace Corps; since its establishment, over 240,000 Americans have served as Peace Corps volunteers.

Also on this date:

In 1872, President Ulysses S. Grant signed the Yellowstone National Park Protection Act, making Yellowstone the nation's first national park.

In 1932, Charles A. Lindbergh Jr., the 20-month-old son of Charles and Anne Lindbergh, was kidnapped from the family home in East Amwell Township, New Jersey. (Remains identified as those of the child were found two months later.)

In 1954, four Puerto Rican nationalists opened fire from the spectators gallery of the U.S. House of Representatives, wounding five members of Congress.

In 1966, the Soviet space probe Venera 3 made contact with the surface of Venus, becoming the first spacecraft to reach another planet. Venera was unable to transmit any data, however, because its communications system failed.

In 1971, a bomb went off inside a men's room at the U.S. Capitol. The radical group Weather Underground claimed responsibility for the pre-dawn blast, which damaged the building but resulted in no injuries.

In 1974, seven people, including former Nixon White House aides H.R. Haldeman and John D. Ehrlichman; former Attorney General John Mitchell; and former assistant Attorney General Robert Mardian, were indicted by a grand jury on charges of conspiring to obstruct justice in connection with the Watergate break-in. (These four defendants were convicted in January 1975, though Mardian's conviction was later reversed.)

In 2005, Dennis Rader, the churchgoing family man accused of leading a double life as the BTK serial killer, was charged in Wichita, Kansas, with 10 counts of first-degree murder. (Rader later pleaded guilty and received multiple life sentences.)

Today's birthdays: Rock singer Roger Daltrey is 81. Actor Dirk Benedict is 80. Sen, Deb Fischer, R-Neb., is 74. Filmmaker Ron Howard is 71. Actor Tim Daly is 69. Hockey Hall of Famer Ron Francis is 62. Filmmaker Zack Snyder is 59. Actor Javier Bardem is 56. Basketball Hall of Famer Yolanda Griffith is 55. Basketball Hall of Famer Chris Webber is 52. Actor Mark-Paul Gosselaar is 51. Actor Jensen Ackles is 47. Actor Lupita Nyong'o is 42. Pop singer Kesha is 38. Pop singer Justin Bieber is 31.