

Groton Daily Independent

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Good Morning

Let your heart
be as light as
Snoopy's
playful spirit.
May today bring
you endless joy
and love.



Goodmorningmsg.com

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.
- 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.

Tuesday, March 4

- Senior Menu: Chicken fried steak, mashed potato with gravy, California blend, blushing pears, whole wheat bread.
- School Breakfast: Mrs. White's Waffles.
- School Lunch: Tacos.
- Region 1A Boys Basketball
- City Council Meeting, 4 p.m.
- St. John's Lutheran: Ladies Aid LWML, 1:30 p.m.
- United Methodist: New Bible Study - Book of Ruth, 10 a.m.

Groton Daily Independent
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Liza Krueger is state champion

The state wrestling tournament concluded Saturday with Groton Area's Liza Krueger, sophomore, becoming a state champion at 100 pounds. She pinned Kyra Vandenberg of Belle Fourche in 5:26. Krueger finishes the season with a 46-2 record.

The two senior Doland wrestlers, Kyla Logan at 138 pounds and Reganne Miles at 165 pounds, have been practicing at Groton Area and both placed third.

Two senior boys were also in the finals with Christian Ehresmann placing fourth at 144 pounds and Korbin Kucker winning the seventh place match at 175 pounds.



Liza Krueger celebrates after winning her match.

Photo courtesy of South Dakota Public Broadcasting.
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G100: Liza Krueger (46-2) placed 1st and scored 28.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Liza Krueger (Groton Area) 46-2 won by fall over Vanessa Anderson (Watertown) 29-25 (Fall 2:56)

Quarterfinal - Liza Krueger (Groton Area) 46-2 won by fall over Jewel Gannon (Canton) 25-13 (Fall 3:15)

Semifinal - Liza Krueger (Groton Area) 46-2 won in tie breaker - 1 over Madison Little (Aberdeen Central) 44-10 (TB-1 7-1)

1st Place Match - Liza Krueger (Groton Area) 46-2 won by fall over Kyra Vandenberg (Belle Fourche) 40-4 (Fall 5:26)

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 (37-12) placed 3rd and scored 18.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Kyla Logan (Doland) 37-12 won by fall over Hailey Fortney (West Central) 26-14 (Fall 5:34)

Quarterfinal - Kyla Logan (Doland) 37-12 won by decision over Reese Olson (Beresford/Alcester-Hudson) 41-10 (Dec 9-5)

Semifinal - Kezrey Benning (Pierre T.F. Riggs) 30-4 won by decision over Kyla Logan (Doland) 37-12 (Dec 8-2)

Cons. Semi - Kyla Logan (Doland) 37-12 won by decision over Rakyrh Wallace (Aberdeen Central) 40-18 (Dec 5-3)

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3rd Place Match - Kyla Logan (Doland) 37-12 won by fall over Reese Olson (Beresford/Alcester-Hudson) 41-10 (Fall 1:57)

B144: Christian Ehresmann (33-6) placed 4th and scored 17.5 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 33-6 won by major decision over Tel Gropper (Philip/Kadoka Area/Wall) 18-10 (MD 15-1)

Quarterfinal - Kellan Hurd (Miller/Highmore-Harrold) 46-4 won by fall over Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 33-6 (Fall 1:36)

Cons. Round 2 - Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 33-6 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) 33-6 won by major decision over Bryce Hawkinson (Britton-Hecla) 34-5 (MD 10-2)

Cons. Semi - Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 33-6 won by fall over Leighton Sander (Custer) 44-14 (Fall 2:27)

3rd Place Match - Ryken Orel (Winner) 46-7 won by major decision over Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 33-6 (MD 8-0)

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)

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

G165: Reganne Miles (38-10) placed 3rd and scored 20.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Reganne Miles (Doland) 38-10 won by fall over Faith Slavin (Viborg-Hurley/Irene-Wakonda) 23-19 (Fall 1:31)

Quarterfinal - Reganne Miles (Doland) 38-10 won by fall over Jayda Steinke (Pierre T.F. Riggs) 22-15 (Fall 1:28)

Semifinal - Marieda Kalahar (Rapid City Stevens) 41-3 won by fall over Reganne Miles (Doland) 38-10 (Fall 1:25)

Cons. Semi - Reganne Miles (Doland) 38-10 won by fall over Taylor DeJong (Mitchell) 26-15 (Fall 4:19)

3rd Place Match - Reganne Miles (Doland) 38-10 won by decision over Lilly Nelson (Aberdeen Central) 35-14 (Dec 3-0)

B175: Korbin Kucker (39-6) placed 7th and scored 6.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Kolter Kramer (Parkston) 21-8 won by decision over Korbin Kucker (Groton Area) 39-6 (Dec 6-4)

Cons. Round 1 - Korbin Kucker (Groton Area) 39-6 won by fall over Taylor Snaza (Sisseton) 28-20 (Fall 2:23)

Cons. Round 2 - Korbin Kucker (Groton Area) 39-6 won by decision over Justin Klein (Flandreau) 43-18 (Dec 10-4)

Cons. Round 3 - Korbin Whiteley (Deuel/Deubrook Area) 27-6 won in tie breaker - 1 over Korbin Kucker (Groton Area) 39-6 (TB-1 4-1)

7th Place Match - Korbin Kucker (Groton Area) 39-6 won by decision over Ben Suther (Britton-Hecla) 38-17 (Dec 7-2)

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)

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Liza Krueger, sophomore, is a state champion at 100 pounds.

Photo courtesy of South Dakota Public Broadcasting.

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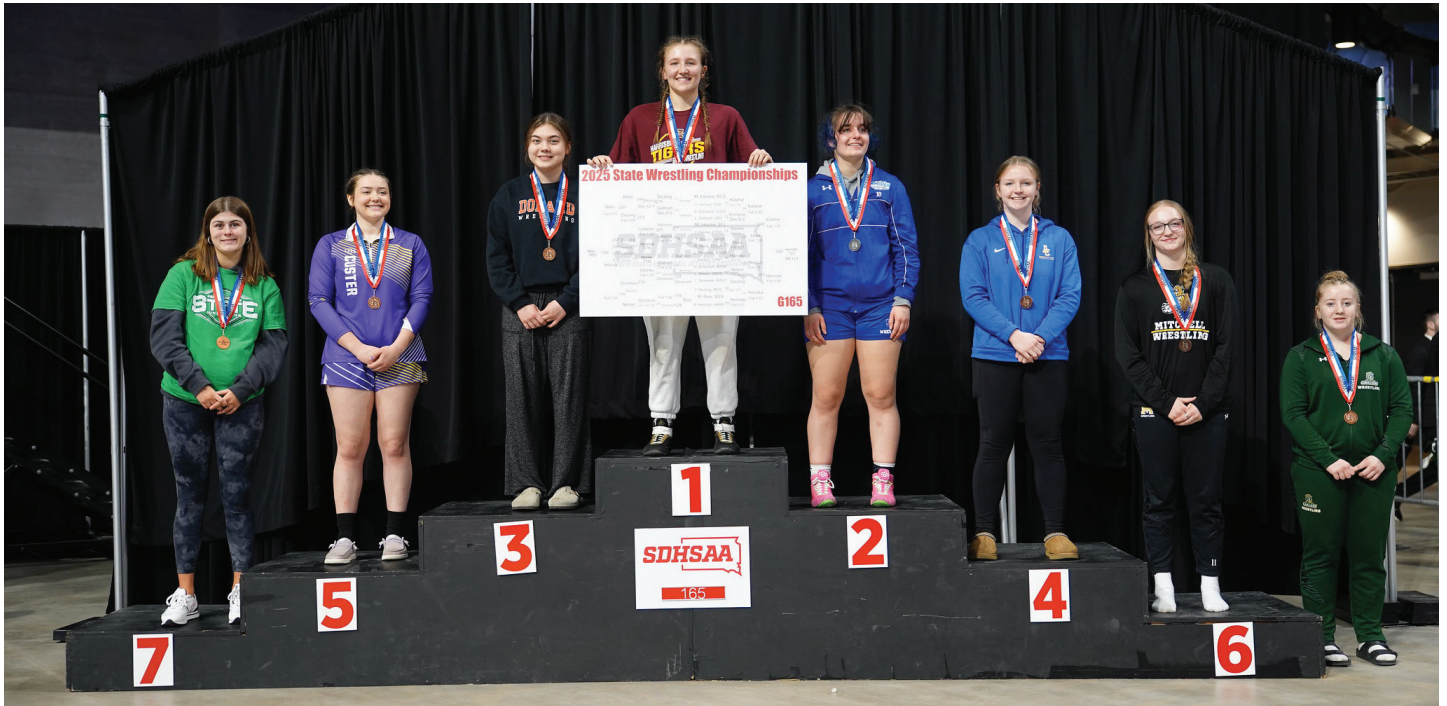
Kyla Logan, Doland senior, placed third at 138 pounds.

Photo courtesy of South Dakota Public Broadcasting.

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Reganne Miles, Doland senior, placed third at 165 pounds.

Photo courtesy of South Dakota Public Broadcasting.

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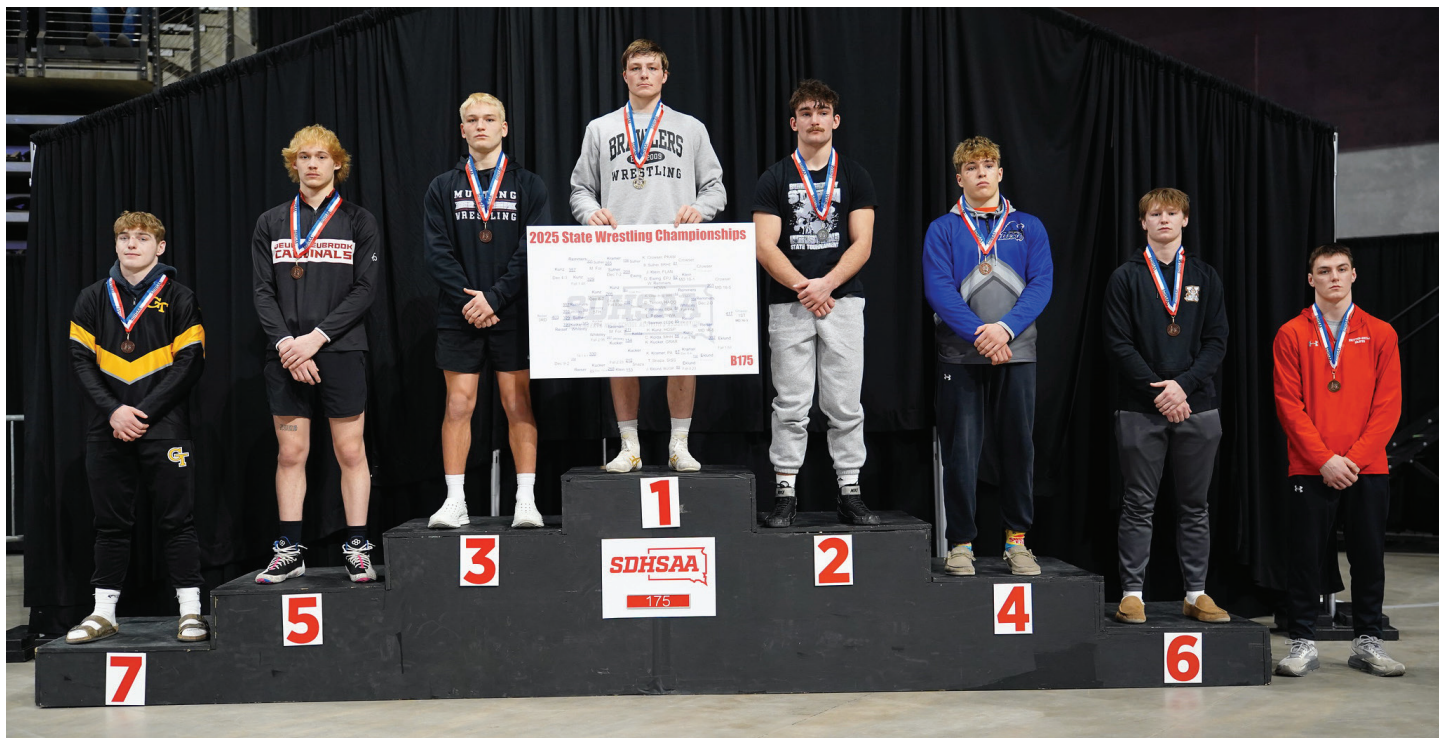
Christian Ehresmann, senior, placed fourth at 144 pounds.

Photo courtesy of South Dakota Public Broadcasting.

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Korbin Kucker, senior, placed seventh at 175 pounds.

Photo courtesy of South Dakota Public Broadcasting.

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Class A - Region 1

Boys Basketball



#1 -

 4 Britton-Hecla	9-11	3/4 TBD
 5 Sisseton	7-13	


#2 -

 2 Aberdeen Roncalli	9-11	3/4 TBD
 7 Redfield	2-18	

#3 -

 3 Milbank	10-10	3/4 TBD
 6 Webster Area	5-15	

#4 -

 1 Groton Area	15-5	3/7 TBD
#1 WINNER		

#5 -

#2 WINNER		3/7 TBD
#3 WINNER		



SODAK 16 QUALIFIER



SODAK 16 QUALIFIER

Seed Points Averages (calculated Mar. 1)

#1 Groton Area 43.950 - #2 Aberdeen Roncalli 40.650 - #3 Milbank 40.150 - #4 Britton-Hecla 39.600 - #5 Sisseton 38.350 - #6 Webster Area 37.850 - #7 Redfield 35.300



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

68-turbine, \$621 million wind project approved in northeast South Dakota

BY: SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT STAFF - MARCH 1, 2025 10:13 AM

South Dakota regulators awarded a permit Friday for a 68-turbine wind energy project in northeastern South Dakota.

Chicago-based Invenergy applied to build the project through its South Dakota subsidiary, Deuel Harvest Wind Energy South. The turbines will be spread across 46 square miles of privately owned land near the small town of Brandt in Deuel County. According to the company's application last year, the project's estimated cost is \$621 million.

The "south" in the project's name distinguishes it from the 109-turbine Deuel Harvest Wind Farm, which Invenergy completed in 2021 and sold to Atlanta-based Southern Power.

The new project site is about six miles south of the existing Deuel Harvest wind farm. Another wind farm, Tatanka Ridge, is adjacent to the southwest edge of the proposed project area. The new project would raise the number of wind turbines in Deuel County to 233.

The project will deliver up to 260 megawatts of electricity. South Dakota ranks 13th in the nation with 3,462 megawatts of installed wind energy capacity, according to the American Wind Power Association.

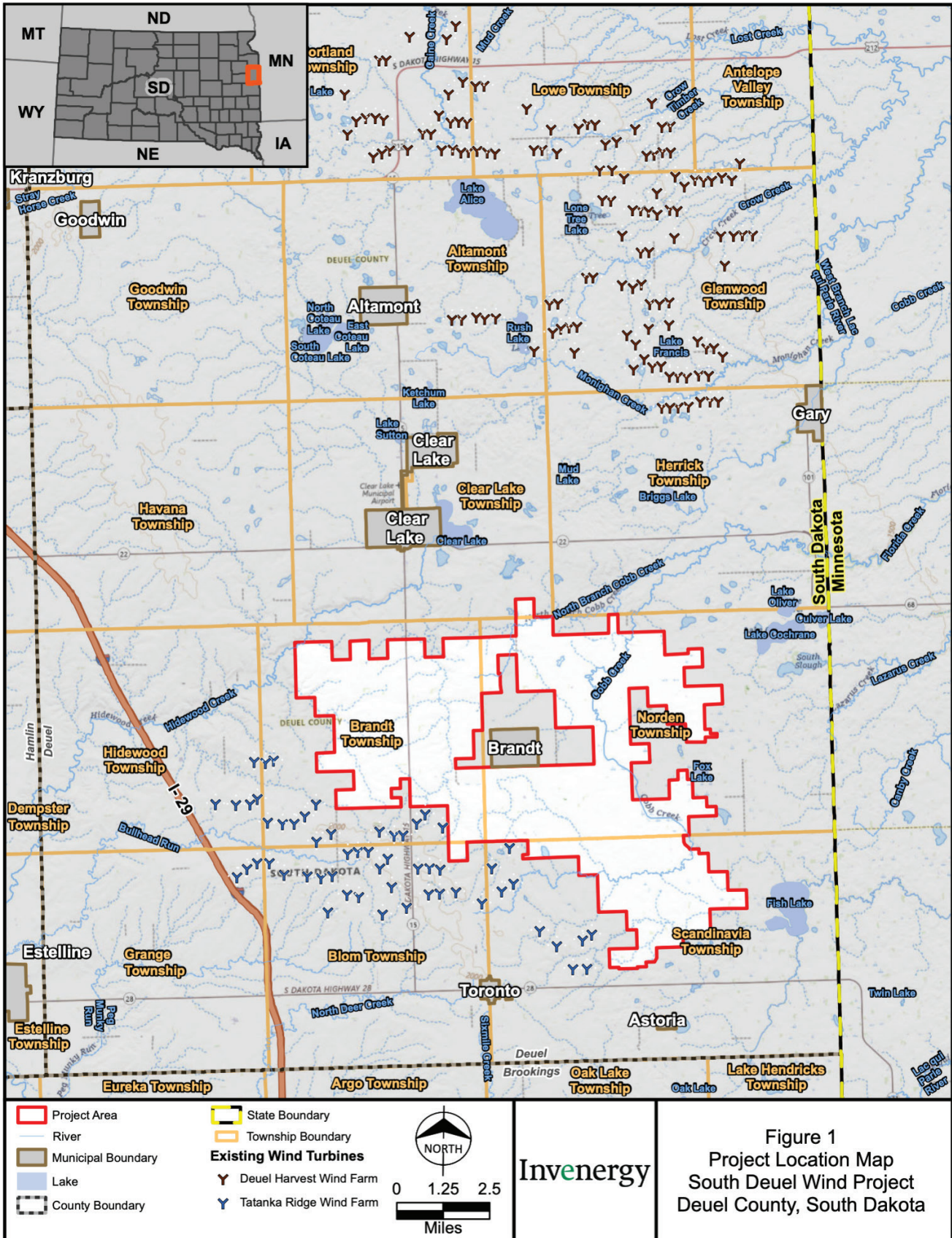
More than 50 conditions are included with the permit, according to the Public Utilities Commission, addressing cooperation with local agricultural operations, daily time limits on construction, protection of threatened or endangered species, noise levels and more. In a news release, the commission said the Federal Aviation Administration is studying the potential aeronautical hazards at the site.

"How many of the turbine locations are actually constructed will be determined by additional FAA evaluation and noise modeling based on turbine type," Commission Vice Chairman Chris Nelson said in the release.

In its application, Invenergy estimated the project will generate payments to landowners totaling \$78 million over the next 30 years, and property tax revenue generated for local governments will total \$38 million during the same period. The project is expected to create 243 jobs during construction and eight long-term operational jobs.

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Source: ESRI, Census TIGER Data, NHD, Invenergy, Burns & McDonnell

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School looking at offering LiveTicket.TV

by Dorene Nelson

There may soon be three choices for remote viewing of Groton Area School District sporting events. Two of the three are already available. GDILIVE has been broadcasting local games and events for 10 years. Hudl TV is available for sporting events in the arena. The third option is an offer from LiveTicket.TV.

LiveTicket.TV has contacted the Groton Area School Board with an offer to broadcast the home sporting events. Their offer could include video and commentary recording, if local people do the play-by-play action can be found. There are no subscription fees for the viewers since all costs for this service are covered by corporate sponsors.

The cameras to do this broadcasting will have to be purchased by the school district at a cost of about \$6000; however, the school district would receive revenue from the sponsors which should cover the cost of the cameras. The school currently has revenue from graduated class accounts to cover the start-up equipment expenses. No public tax funds are needed to begin this project.

Large corporation sponsors as well as local supporters pay for the bulk of the cost of LiveTicket.TV. Sponsorships provide ongoing support for the use of the system that produces the broadcasts and to support the student activities that viewers want to see.

There are four tiers of sponsorship for LiveTicket.TV. These increase in number and cost depending upon the areas covered. Currently the Groton Baseball/Softball Foundation has a contract with LiveTicket.TV to broadcast their games in Groton.

Another source of broadcasting sporting events is Hudl TV, already installed in the school, and providing some of the same features that LiveTicket.TV does. The coaching staff uses Hudl recordings to review how their athletes are doing, check on the statistics for each game and player, and for general information on games.

Coaches are also able to view the strategies and statistics from other schools. They can watch videos of other schools and their games and players to get a good idea of what the competition has to offer.

LiveTicket.TV needs sponsorships with half of the revenue being returned to the school district. Most of these sponsors are large, corporate companies.

The broadcasts are only provided for home games since no one hauls the equipment from school to school as is now being done by Paul Kosel. GDILIVE doesn't provide any revenue for the school, but he does devote much of his "free" time to broadcasting local events that are of great interest to local citizens. Kosel also broadcasts all sporting events, whether they are held in Groton or in another town.

In addition to GDILIVE, Kosel also publishes the Groton Independent, a weekly printed newspaper as well as a daily online publication, very rare in towns the size of Groton. Many local events, including school activities, are featured in his newspapers.

GDILIVE charges viewers \$5 per game to watch from the comfort of their home. A \$50 yearly subscription to the Groton Daily Independent includes free viewing of all GDILIVE recordings.

LiveTicket.TV is mainly for sporting events and not for other local school activities such as homecoming coronation, school plays, Veterans' Day programs, Christmas programs, the Ice Carnival, and non-school events like live-streaming funerals and city council meetings. Only Paper Paul covers these special events on GDILIVE. LiveTicket.TV would however be available for broadcasting school board meetings. GDILIVE also broadcasts the school board meetings.

LiveTicket.TV equipment can be used to broadcast any event in the school. The sponsorship agreements require the production of football, volleyball, boys and girls basketball, and wrestling.

If LiveTicket.TV is approved by the school board, the earliest it would be available is in the fall of 2025. Long term goals might include an elective class to teach students how to provide commentary and explanations during the broadcast of the games.

Those individuals who support the addition of LiveTicket.TV to the school's sporting events must consider everything involved. Free viewing of sporting events vs. a local newspaper and coverage of all school and city events, not just sports. Groton can do both!

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THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

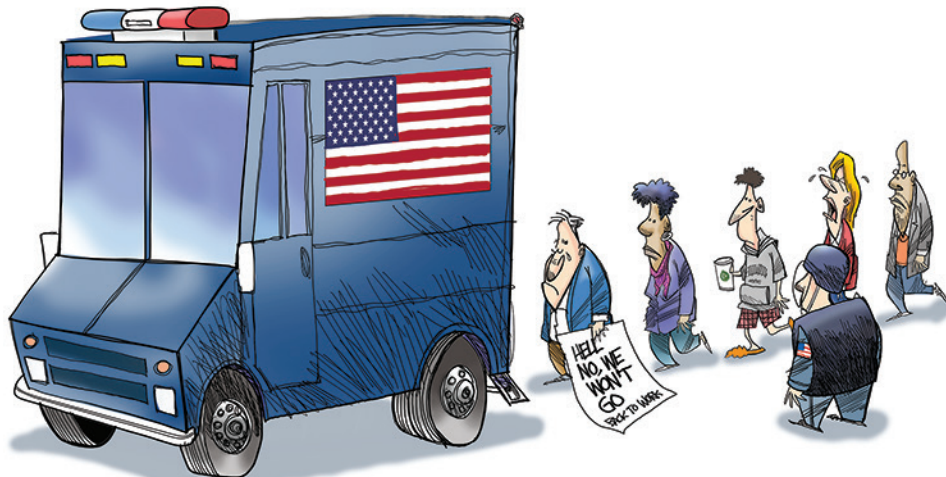


(As well as) those who were tormented with unclean spirits - (and) they were healed. And the whole multitude sought to touch Him, for power went out from Him and healed them all.

LUKE 6: 18, 19

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TRUMP ADMINISTRATION ROUNDS UP WORK-AT-HOME GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES AND RETURN THEM BACK TO THE OFFICE...



KRK ©2025 DIST. BY KING FEATURES SYNDICATE
email: WaltersWork54@gmail.com

BIBLE

TRIVIA

by Wilson Casey

1. Is the book of Lamentations (KJV) in the Old or New Testament or neither?

2. In 1 Kings 20:29, how many footmen (soldiers) of the Syrians were killed in one day? *5,000; 10,000; 50,000; 100,000*

3. Who made the first “piggy bank” by placing a chest with a hole in it near the altar? *Ezra, Jehoiada, Ahab, Jethro*

4. From Jeremiah 7:32, what did the Lord say that Tophet will be called? *Syria, Valley of Slaughter, Galilee, Mount Zion*

5. Who was the father of Elisha? *Josiah, Shaphat, Zadok, Joshua*

6. In Esther 1, how many provinces did Ahasuerus reign over? *11, 90, 127, 140*

ANSWERS: 1) Old, 2) 100,000, 3) Jehoiada, 4) Valley of Slaughter, 5) Shaphat, 6) 127

Comments? More Trivia? Gift ideas? Visit www.TriviaGuy.com.

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LOWLAND STATION.

A STORM HAS TRAPPED A GROUP OF TRAVELERS IN THE KOMOK'S BRIDE PUB...

...WHERE SIX STRANGERS SHARE THEIR ENCOUNTERS WITH THE ALIEN WARRIOR

FLASH GORDON



DAN SCHKADE ARTS AND BY JARRELL 3-2-25

IT'S BEEN A ROUGH COUPLE OF YEARS FOR AIRMAN GALO...

...EVER SINCE MING TASKED HIM WITH FLYING TWO PRISONERS TO AN IMPERIAL WORK CAMP.

PRINCE BARIN AND DALE ARDEN.

EN ROUTE, THEY WERE INTERCEPTED BY A SMALL FIGHTER.

GALO SHOT IT DOWN...

...AND FLASH GORDON BAILED OUT.

BEHIND GALO, DALE QUIETLY WORKED HER WAY OUT OF HER ZEROSTONE MANACLES...

...SO SHE COULD LET FLASH INTO THE CABIN.

THINGS WENT SOUTH FROM THERE.

THEY TOSSED HIM OUT AND TOOK THE JET. FOR HIS FAILURE, GALO WAS SENT TO THE VERY SAME WORK CAMP BARIN AND DALE WERE BOUND FOR.

THAT'S MING'S JUSTICE FOR YOU.

NEXT: THE GRAPE PICKER

Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS

TOUR GOLFERS SOMETIMES WIN WHEN PLAYING AT LESS THAN THEIR BEST FROM TEE TO GREEN, BUT VERY RARELY WHEN THEIR PUTTING IS OFF. THAT'S ONE REASON I BUILT A PRACTICE GREEN IN MY BACKYARD.

IF YOU TAKE YOUR GOLF SERIOUSLY, NEVER FORGET THAT ALMOST HALF OF THE GAME IS PLAYED ON THE PUTTING SURFACE.

RECOGNIZING THAT THIS IS WHERE YOU CAN MOST EASILY MAKE UP FOR PREVIOUS MISTAKES MIGHT ENCOURAGE YOU TO PRACTICE THERE.



Bird Lover Is Troubled Over the Possible Transmission of Bird Flu

DEAR DR. ROACH: I have two bird feeders off my back deck. They hang from tall poles as a vain attempt to keep squirrels from eating all of the birdseed! But to refill them, I must take them down and handle them, and I recently wondered if I might be exposing myself to the new bird flu.

Is there any information about this possibility? Any possible transmission of the virus might have occurred to other bird lovers, too. -- J.F.

ANSWER: The songbirds you are attracting to your feeders, such as cardinals, sparrows and woodpeckers, are not likely to be infected with avian influenza ("bird flu"). It generally infects waterfowl such as gulls and ducks.

Most experts do not recommend taking down your feeders but do recommend a periodic cleaning of feeders and baths with a diluted bleach (10%) solution. You should wash your hands after refilling your feeders.

Those who keep poultry such as chickens, ducks, geese or turkeys (which may also be infected by bird flu) should not use feeders or baths that attract wild birds.

DEAR DR. ROACH: I see commercials about different kinds of pillows, asserting that they are better for you medically in various ways, especially with enhancing your sleep experience. This implies to me that conventional pillows can be bad for you. Is any of this true? -- W.R.G.

ANSWER: No, I wouldn't say that conventional pillows are bad for you. However, there is evidence that in people with chronic neck pain, pillows made with latex or springs have been shown to reduce neck pain, waking symptoms and disability. They also enhance the satisfaction that people have with their pillows, but studies taken as an aggregate did not show an improvement in sleep quality. It seems that the height and composition of the pillow can affect the alignment of your neck bones.

If you aren't having any problems, there is no reason to change. But if you wake up with a sore neck or have chronic neck pain, a special pillow might help, although I doubt there is one pillow that is right for everybody.

DEAR DR. ROACH: Is it OK for an 80-year-old male who has abused alcohol for many years (6-8 drinks per evening) to stop drinking cold turkey? I have not slept in 48 hours! -- R.B.

ANSWER: No, it's not OK. It's very unsafe for anyone to stop drinking so much so quickly, especially an older adult. What you should have done is gotten in contact with your regular physician who can determine if it is safe for you to stop alcohol at home, or whether you need to be in a more supervised situation (such as a person with heart problems or those with a history of severe alcohol withdrawal in the past).

If it is safe for you to do so at home, medication to help prevent withdrawal symptoms may be given. An expert in addiction medicine has more experience than nearly all generalists, so your regular physician may recommend that you see an expert. Given your symptoms, you should see someone right away, whether they're your own doctor or an emergency physician, as you are at risk for moderate or severe withdrawal.

I congratulate you on wanting to stop alcohol after many years, but getting some help will make stopping safer and make quitting for good more likely.

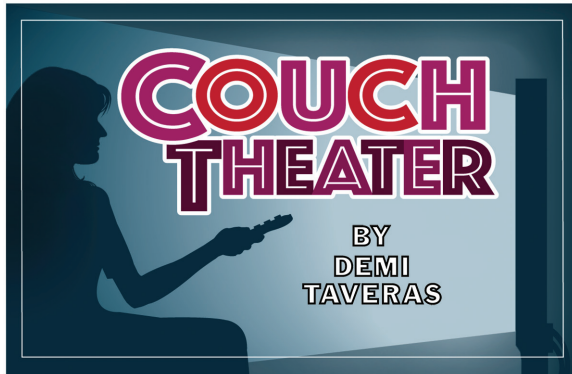
Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual questions, but will incorporate them in the column whenever possible. Readers may email questions to ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu.

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From left, Hugh Grant, Sophie Thatcher and Chloe East star in "Heretic." Courtesy of MovieStillsDB

"The 97th Academy Awards" (TV-14) -- Hosted by former late-night talk show host Conan O'Brien, this year's Oscars ceremony is out now to stream after its live broadcast on ABC on March 2. In keeping with other awards shows this season, the musical film "Emilia Perez" received the most

nominations (13), followed by "The Brutalist" and "Wicked" with 10 each. The Best Actor award will be an interesting category to watch after Adrien Brody landed the Golden Globe and Timothee Chalamet received the SAG. Zoe Saldana, Demi Moore and Kieran Culkin are the frontrunners for the other acting categories, while the Best Picture category is stacked with great films from 2024 like "Anora," "Conclave," and "The Substance." (Hulu)

"Heretic" (R) -- Hugh Grant ("Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy") leads this chilling horror film from A24, co-starring Sophie Thatcher ("Companion") and Chloe East ("The Fablemans"). Thatcher and East star as two Mormon missionaries who visit the home of Mr. Reed (Grant) to spread information about their church. Mr. Reed invites the girls into his home and welcomes a discussion about religion, but as the discussion carries on, the atmosphere becomes uncomfortable and intense. The girls soon realize that they're stuck inside the house with no phone signal and no way out, leaving Mr. Reed to commence his own sadistic lesson about the nature of belief and faith. Premieres March 7. (Max)

"With Love, Meghan" (TV-PG) -- Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, is finally premiering her lifestyle show on March 4 after the series was postponed back in January due to the Southern California wildfires. The show will consist of eight 33-minute episodes filmed at a farmhouse near Meghan and Harry's home in Montecito, California. Throughout the episodes, Meghan will showcase her personal "tips and tricks" in the kitchen, garden and more. Notable guests on the show include actress Mindy Kaling, actress Abigail Spencer, and chefs Roy Choi and Alice Water. Oh, and Prince Harry, of course! (Netflix)

In Case You Missed It

"Yellowjackets" (TV-MA) -- This thriller-drama series just had its season three premiere back in February, but it's not too late to binge the series and catch up in time for its season three finale in April. "Yellowjackets" follows a high school soccer team whose plane crashes on the way to a tournament in 1996, leaving them stranded in the wilderness for a year and a half. Bouncing between the events in 1996 and the girls' current lives in 2021, viewers get to see firsthand the trauma that the teenagers experienced and how the crash remains a part of them as they navigate the world as adults. The show features an incredibly talented ensemble cast that includes Sophie Thatcher (yes, the same one from "Heretic"), Christina Ricci, Juliette Lewis and Samantha Hanratty. Go stream season one, season two, and the first four episodes of season three! (Paramount+)

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1. Name the singer-songwriter who released "Him."
2. Which artist wrote "Solitary Man," "Brother Love's Traveling Salvation Show" and "Thank the Lord for the Night Time"?
3. Who released "The Happening"?
4. Name the one memorable song by Strawberry Alarm Clock.
5. Name the song that contains this lyric: "Well the midnight headlight find you on a rainy night steep grade up ahead slow me down makin no time gotta keep rollin."

Answers

1. Rupert Holmes, in 1980. Released on his "Partners in Crime" album, Holmes expected "Him" to be the most popular, but "Escape (The Piña Colada Song)" is the one that shot to the top of the chart.
 2. Neil Diamond. A prolific songwriter, Diamond penned many songs over the years for other artists. Jay and the Americans, Elvis Presley and The Monkees all had hits with Diamond's songs.
 3. The Supremes, in 1967. It was also used as the theme song in the film of the same name. The song topped the chart; the film did not.
 4. "Incense and Peppermints," in 1967.
 5. "Drivin' My Life Away," by Eddie Rabbitt in 1980. The song peaked at No. 5 on the chart but ended up being used in films, such as "Roadie" and "Everybody Wants Some!!"
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Just Like Cats & Dogs by Dave T. Phipps



GRIN and BEAR IT by Wagner



"This is in case you take his side!"

HOCUS-FOCUS

BY
HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



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Differences: 1. Purse is smaller. 2. Tie is missing. 3. Hair is longer. 4. Item in display case is different. 5. Label is missing. 6. Necklace is missing from display stand.

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* My family's spring-cleaning checklist is in full effect. Some people dread seasonal chores, but I relish the sense of accomplishment that comes from a job well done. With the right planning, and some helpful tips, spring-cleaning can be a breeze. Here are some of the best we have to share.

* "Stainless steel appliances are very popular, and in the kitchen, they get plenty of chances to get fingerprinted up. My appliance guy recommended using a light-mist, wax-based aerosol dusting spray once or twice a week to keep my stainless steel appliance fronts looking their best." -- R.C. in North Carolina

* In the closet, we all want to pare away unused items, but sometimes it seems like you wear clothes that you don't. Turn

all the clothes hangers the opposite way (facing out instead of in). When you use an item and it is returned to the closet, replace the hanger normally. In a few months, if an item has not been worn, it'll be apparent. If it's not likely to be worn, it should go.

* Spring is a wonderful time to clean the walls inside your house. It clears away hidden dust and really freshens a room. Clean painted walls by dusting them first with a dry mop, then washing with a rag dampened in water. If you need a little extra oomph -- say, in the kitchen or bath -- add a couple drops of mild dish soap.

* New drapes or even new pillow covers in a fabulous pattern can really jazz up a room. Consider switching smaller furniture accents between common rooms or a fresh furniture arrangement to change it up.

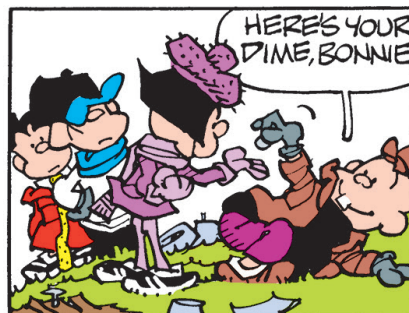
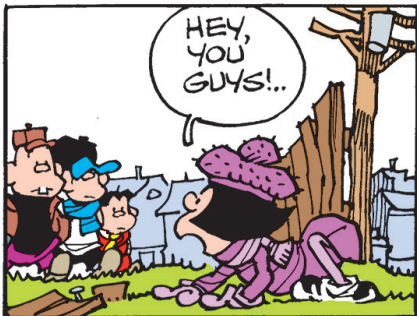
* Keep a bottle of club soda handy for spot stains on carpets or upholstery. It's good for more than just drinks.

Send your tips to Now Here's a Tip, 628 Virginia Drive, Orlando, FL 32803.

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TIGER

by BUD BLAKE



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King Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Rug cleaner, briefly
- 4 500 sheets
- 8 Nursery cry
- 12 — -de-France
- 13 "Prometheus" actor Idris
- 14 Tehran's country
- 15 Pottery
- 17 Dweeb
- 18 Ecol. watchdog
- 19 Church meet-ups
- 21 Mellow yellows
- 24 Calendar abbr.
- 25 Train unit
- 26 Actress Cattrall

1	2	3		4	5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12				13					14			
15			16						17			
		18				19		20				
21	22				23		24					
25				26		27		28		29	30	31
32			33		34		35		36			
37				38		39		40		41		
			42		43		44		45			
46	47	48				49		50				
51					52		53				54	55
56					57					58		
59					60					61		

- 28 Rural buildings
- 32 Pharmaceutical
- 34 Crosses (out)
- 36 Cranny
- 37 "The Stranger" author
- 39 Drone
- 41 Roman 1006
- 42 Judge in 1995 news
- 44 Polite denial
- 46 Height
- 50 Sunbather's goal
- 51 Part of N.B.
- 52 Mob bully
- 56 Composer Stravinsky
- 57 Baltic feeder
- 58 Big bird
- 59 Brady and Hanks
- 60 Scatters seeds
- 61 Filch
- DOWN**
- 1 London's Old —
- 2 Pub serving
- 3 Part of the brain
- 4 Comment
- 5 Inventor Whitney
- 6 Grade-school basics
- 7 Brick worker
- 8 SUV's kin
- 9 Location
- 10 Crumbly earth
- 11 Common conjunctions
- 16 Mimic
- 20 Male swan
- 21 Outlet letters
- 22 Actress Kate
- 23 Half dozen
- 27 "Whatever"
- 29 Lothario
- 30 PBS science show
- 31 Nonfat
- 33 Fender instruments
- 35 Heat source
- 38 "Rugrats" dad
- 40 Engines
- 43 Two-tone cookies
- 45 Scratch
- 46 Tizzy
- 47 Takeout request
- 48 Physics bit
- 49 Within (Pref.)
- 53 Hardly any
- 54 Punk-rock subgenre
- 55 Massage

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King Crossword

Answers

Solution time: 25 mins.

V	A	C		R	E	A	M		M	A	M	A
I	L	E		E	L	B	A		I	R	A	N
C	E	R	A	M	I	C	S		N	E	R	D
		E	P	A		S	O	C	I	A	L	S
A	M	B	E	R	S		N	O	V			
C	A	R		K	I	M		B	A	R	N	S
D	R	U	G		X	E	S		N	O	O	K
C	A	M	U	S		H	U	M		M	V	I
				I	T	O		N	O	M	A	A
S	T	A	T	U	R	E		T	A	N		
N	O	T	A		E	N	F	O	R	C	E	R
I	G	O	R		O	D	E	R		E	M	U
T	O	M	S		S	O	W	S		R	O	B

Olive



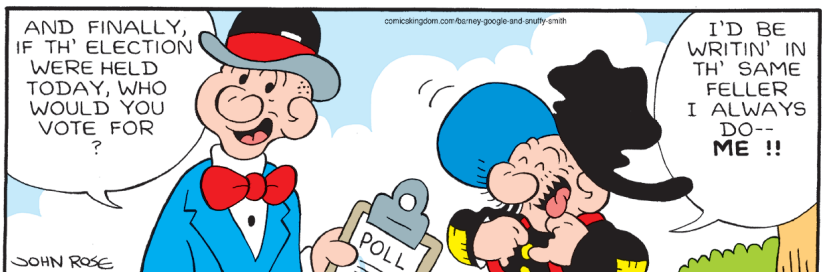
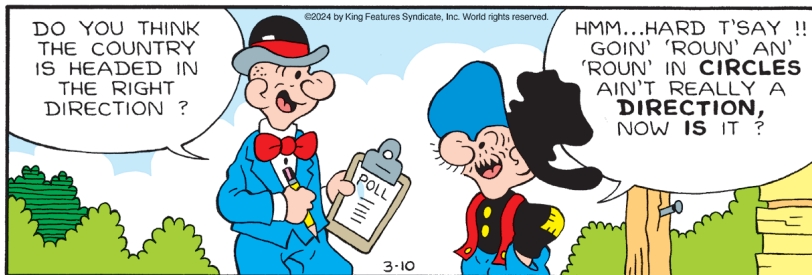
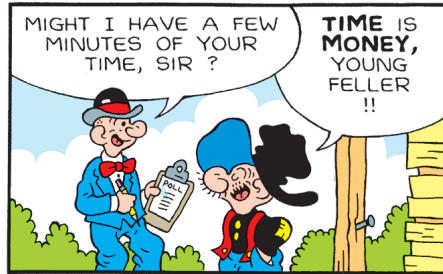
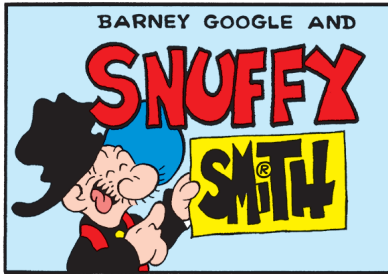
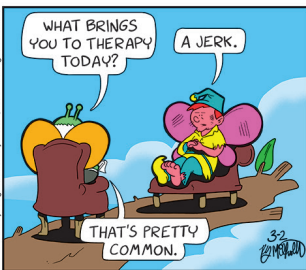
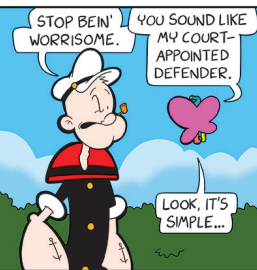
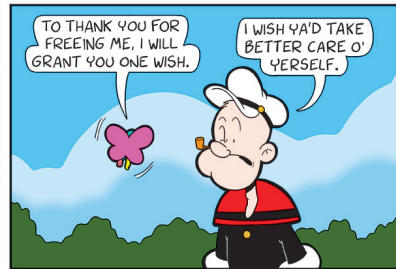
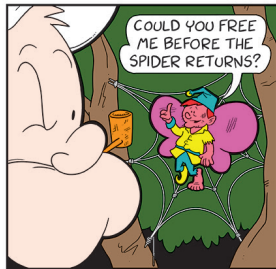
Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas



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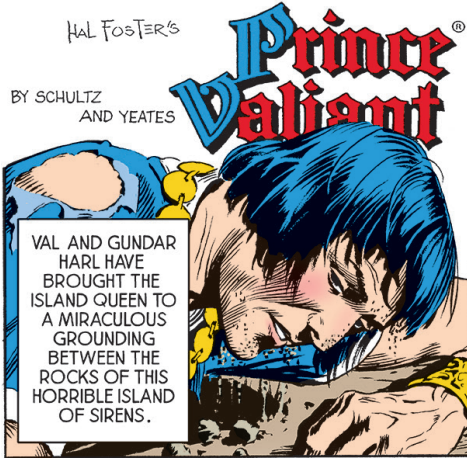


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HAL FOSTER'S
BY SCHULTZ AND YEATES

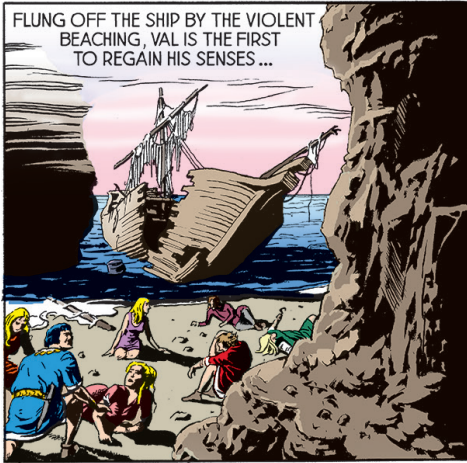
Prince Valiant®



VAL AND GUNDAR HARL HAVE BROUGHT THE ISLAND QUEEN TO A MIRACULOUS GROUNDING BETWEEN THE ROCKS OF THIS HORRIBLE ISLAND OF SIRENS.

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FLUNG OFF THE SHIP BY THE VIOLENT BEACHING, VAL IS THE FIRST TO REGAIN HIS SENSES ...



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...AND TO AGAIN HEAR THE SIREN'S CALL. AT THE TOP OF THE CLIFF HE SEES A HAZY, BECKONING PHANTOM ...



... WHICH HE CANNOT RESIST. UP INTO THE ROCKS HE STUMBLES ...



4013

... UNTIL HE DISAPPEARS INTO THE MISTS.



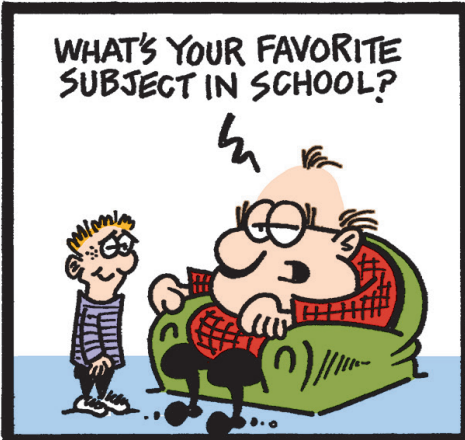
NEXT: The phantom

YEATES 1/5/14

The Spats

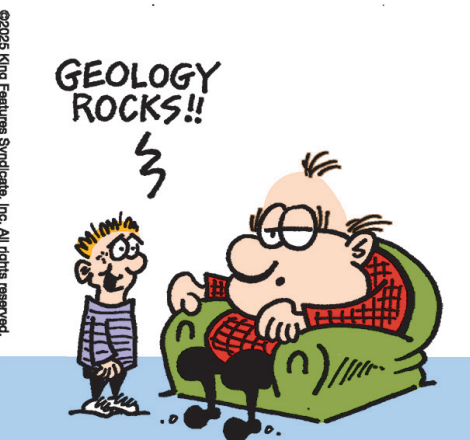
by Jeff Pickering

WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE SUBJECT IN SCHOOL?

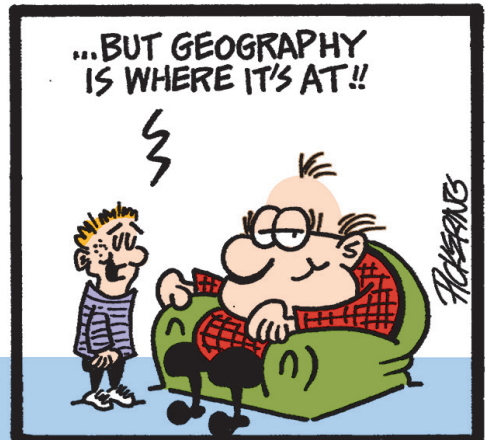


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GEOLOGY ROCKS!!



...BUT GEOGRAPHY IS WHERE IT'S AT!!



PICKERING

SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

Getting through the winter

The top five items tonight on my local news channel were automobile crashes caused by slick road surfaces. And these weren't just little fender benders, although there was one of those that happened in a store parking lot. These five crashes produced crushed cars, serious injuries and yes, in one case, death of the occupant of the vehicle ... all because of the condition of the roads.

And while I hate to think of myself as a coward, more and more there are things I just don't want to risk.

I check the weather news for the temperature before I venture out by car. If it's too cold (or will be by the time I get home), the roads could be slick. Black ice is hard to see but once your vehicle is on it, there's no steering. Too cold and I just stay home.

During a recent storm we had yet another power outage. I keep thermometers in the fridge to keep track of how warm the temperature gets. For iffy items, I just don't take the chance that they might have gone bad. While several sources say to be sure the foods have stayed below 40 degrees in the fridge, the CDC puts a specific time limit on it: four hours in a refrigerator without power. After that time, throw it out.

Instead of waiting for a warm day (which isn't going to happen soon) to melt the ice and snow on my walk and driveway, I hire someone to clear it, and I just pay the cost, even though it's not a welcome expense.

And in case you've never looked it up, it appears that over the age of 45 is when we're advised not to shovel snow because of the risk of heart attack! For me, 45 was a very long time ago!

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Call/Text Tina: 605-397-7285



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Senior Citizens 65+
Physical Therapy. **\$20 a month**

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1. Name the San Francisco 49ers tight end who caught a 14-yard touchdown pass with 9 seconds left to beat the New Orleans Saints 36-32 in a divisional playoff game for the 2011 NFL season.

2. Not to be confused with the NFL's Lombardi Trophy award, the Lombardia Trophy in Italy is a competition in what sport?

3. In the final round of the PGA Tour's 2014 Puerto Rico Open, what creature attempted to steal golfer Andrew Loupe's ball from the green on the 16th hole?

4. Name the 1980s Houston Oilers head coach who berated an official by telling him, "This isn't college. You're not at a homecoming. This is N-F-L, which stands for 'not for long' when you make them [expletive] calls."

5. What sport, originating in the Netherlands in the early 1900s, is similar to netball and has four male players and four female players per team?

6. Left-handed pitcher Mel Parnell played his entire Major League Baseball career from 1947-56 with what team?

7. What one-mile oval racetrack opened near Colorado Springs, Colorado, in 1997 and last hosted a major pro motorsports race in 2005?

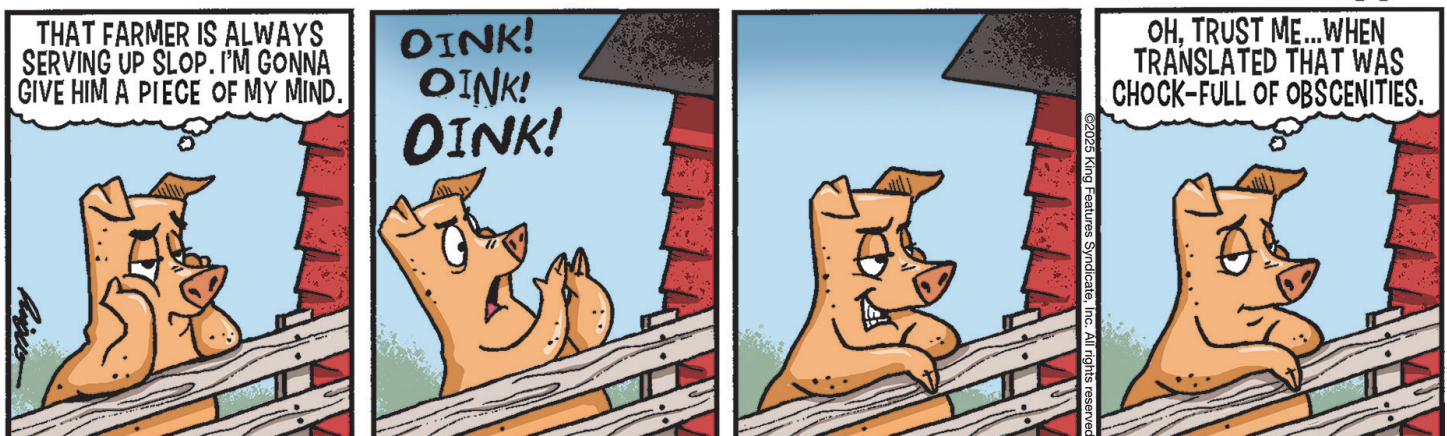


Answers

1. Vernon Davis.
 2. Figure skating.
 3. An iguana.
 4. Jerry Glanville.
 5. Korfbal.
 6. The Boston Red Sox.
 7. Pikes Peak International Raceway.
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Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps





Honoring search and rescue dogs

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: I'm writing to ask if you can call attention to search and rescue dogs, who do heroic work every day -- from the recent fires in southern California to avalanche rescues and more. I just think they're amazing. -- Carlo in Missoula, Montana

DEAR CARLO: You're absolutely right: Search and rescue (SAR) dogs do amazing work nearly every day in the U.S. and around the world. They are unique, highly trained working dogs, often specializing in types of rescue or recovery.

SAR dogs must be energetic but even-tempered, as they often work long hours in chaotic environments. They must be confident, motivated and responsive to

their handler. Most are selected when they're puppies, after a period of observation and interaction, and not every SAR candidate makes the cut, even at this early stage. Training can take at least two years, and most SAR dogs retire before they're 9 or 10 years old, as the physical requirements can be demanding.

There are two types of SAR dogs: air-scenting and trailing. An air-scenting dog detects and follows airborne or wind-borne scents over a large area (up to 150 acres or a quarter mile in some instances) and follows them as close to the source as possible; cadaver dogs are one example. They frequently work off-lead and return to their handler to lead them to the source. A trailing dog can discern a specific scent, such as that of a missing person, and follow the exact track of that scent; they usually work on-lead with the handler, proceeding more slowly.

These dogs are so effective that they're used in 70% of rescue missions worldwide, entering dangerous areas ahead of human teams to pinpoint survivors.

So, hats off to search and rescue dogs! And to their dedicated trainers and handlers.

Is there a working animal you'd like to highlight? Tell me at ask@pawscorner.com.

Send your tips, comments or questions to ask@pawscorner.com.

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Strange BUT TRUE

* A Spanish civil servant went unnoticed for six years after he stopped showing up for work until someone tried to give him an award for his long service.

* The Spangler Candy Company named their famous lollipops “Dum Dums” because it was a word that was easy for any kid to say.

* In the 1960s, the Goodyear tire company tested the bright idea of lighted tires, to be available in a range of colors. They looked pretty cool in the dark, but their unfortunate

tendency to melt under heavy braking and poor performance in wet conditions doomed the concept to the dustbin.

* A 2016 study revealed that only 27% of the words spoken in the biggest movies were uttered by women.

* National Donut Day originally started as a way to honor Salvation Army volunteers who served donuts to soldiers in World War I.

* When a man allegedly found a dead mouse in his can of Mountain Dew, Pepsi had an expert claim in an affidavit that the drink was so acidic it would have dissolved the mouse after 30 days.

* The Hubble Space Telescope is so powerful that it can spot the glow of a firefly from some 7,000 miles away.

* Professional wrestler and mixed martial arts champion Ronda Rousey confessed on the “Jim Rome on Showtime” TV show that she tries to have as much sex as possible before a match because it boosts her testosterone levels.

* During his inauguration, Teddy Roosevelt wore a ring that contained a lock of Abraham Lincoln’s hair.

* The mayor of Bogotá, Colombia, once hired 420 mimes to make fun of traffic violators, believing his fellow countrymen feared ridicule more than fines.

Thought for the Day: “My best friend is the one who brings out the best in me.” -- Henry Ford

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The Garden Bug

The vernal equinox



ARTIST'S DEPICTION - NOT TO SCALE

- The **first day of spring** arrives Thursday, March 20, 2025.
- This day is known as the “vernal equinox.” In Latin, *ver* means “spring,” *aequus* means “equal” and *nox* means “night.”
- On this day, Earth’s position allows the northern and southern hemispheres to receive the sun’s rays equally; night and day are nearly equal in length. Spring comes to the northern hemisphere and autumn to the southern hemisphere. – Brenda Weaver

Sources: earthsky.org, almanac.com, vocabulary.com, @NWSNorman



by Freddy Groves

Holes in the fiduciary program

The Department of Veterans Affairs' Fiduciary Program is set up to help veterans take care of their finances and benefits if they can't handle it themselves because they're sick, injured or elderly. There is a lot of money at stake: \$2.7 billion in a recent year. Each of the hundred thousand veterans who fall in the category of needing assistance are assigned a fiduciary, someone who protects the veterans and their finances.

The VA's Pension and Fiduciary Service, which manages the fiduciaries, is tasked with ensuring the proper handling of veterans' affairs through in-person examinations, fiduciary accountings and investigations into misuse. All goes well with this arrangement ... until it doesn't.

A recent VA Office of Inspector General report details what they found when they investigated the Fiduciary Program.

Over 300 veterans and their financial affairs were not being monitored or supervised by the Fiduciary Program for three years and in some cases longer. The hole in the system was because the program had no way to identify veterans who were in need of fiduciary services or because their records did not move from one system to the other, the Veterans Benefits Management System--Fiduciary (VBMS-Fid), after need was determined.

Which left a whole lot of money out there without oversight: in excess of \$24 million.

A fiduciary is required to submit written reports about how the veteran's money is being spent, and those reports are reviewed by program staff. In the event there's a question, the fiduciary must clear it up. Failure to do that constitutes misuse, and an investigation is supposed to follow.

If you are a veteran who has a fiduciary managing your benefits and if you suspect that person is not acting in your best interests, let the VA know. Call them at 800-827-1000 to report possible fraud and misuse of your benefits. Or call the VAOIG hotline at 800-488-8244 to make a complaint. For a flyer about the VAOIG's crime alert, put "Protect Vulnerable Veterans from Fiduciary Theft" in a search box online.

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Wishing Well®

5	8	7	6	2	5	7	2	8	6	5	6	7
W	M	A	T	Y	I	W	O	O	H	S	E	O
2	7	3	8	6	5	8	2	8	5	6	8	6
U	R	S	D	W	H	E	W	R	S	A	A	Y
8	7	3	5	6	3	4	8	3	8	5	7	6
T	T	P	O	I	E	B	E	N	D	M	H	S
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A	D	I	I	O	F	S	O	E	N	S	T	E
5	4	5	3	2	4	5	3	5	4	5	4	4
E	R	W	L	R	U	E	Y	L	L	L	E	S

HERE IS A PLEASANT LITTLE GAME that will give you a message every day. It's a numerical puzzle designed to spell out your fortune. Count the letters in your first name. If the number of letters is 6 or more, subtract 4. If the number is less than 6, add 3. The result is your key number. Start at the upper left-hand corner and check one of your key numbers, left to right. Then read the message the letters under the checked figures give you.

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1. LITERATURE: Who lives at 4 Privet Drive?
2. TELEVISION: Which 1980s sitcom featured the Keaton family?
3. U.S. PRESIDENTS: Who was the first American-born president?
4. COMICS: What is Deadpool's profession?
5. AD SLOGANS: Which makeup company's slogan is "Maybe she's born with it"?
6. HISTORY: Which battles marked the beginning of the American Revolution?
7. INVENTIONS: The 1904 World's Fair introduced which fluffy confection?
8. MOVIES: In which year were the first Oscars awarded?
9. MEASUREMENTS: What does 1 gallon of water weigh?
10. GEOGRAPHY: What are the colors of the Italian flag?

Answers

1. Harry Potter and the Dursley family.
2. "Family Ties."
3. Martin Van Buren, born after the Revolutionary War.
4. Mercenary.
5. Maybelline.
6. Battles of Lexington and Concord.
7. Cotton candy.
8. 1929.
9. 8.34 pounds.
10. Green, white and red.

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South Dakota Governor



Larry Rhoden



South Dakota: *Under God, the People Rule*

It Is Time to Reset

Living on a ranch, I've never had much time for technology. I've always preferred riding a horse over online entertainment, and at work, I stick to the traditional pen-and-paper approach. However, I do rely on my phone daily. And when my technology fails, the first suggestion I often hear is, "Have you tried restarting your device?" Nine times out of ten, this simple solution works.

I think the same concept can be applied to other problems in our lives. Sometimes all we need is a reset — to pause, regroup, and keep moving forward.

I recently announced Project Prison Reset — a working group that will determine the best path forward for a new prison. We've received the message that the current prison plan does not have buy-in this legislative session. We've also heard agreement from pretty much everyone that we need a new prison. I signed an Executive Order to stand up the working group, and they'll get to work on April 2.

This working group is our "reset" button. Everything that came before is in the rearview mirror. From now on, we're looking forward.

Project Prison Reset convenes a group of solution seekers, including House representatives, senators, and outside parties. It will be chaired by Lieutenant Governor Tony Venhuizen. I intentionally appointed both proponents and opponents of the current plan to have a seat at the table because it is important to listen to different perspectives. I am empowering this group to determine the best path forward and build buy-in to whatever that solution may be.

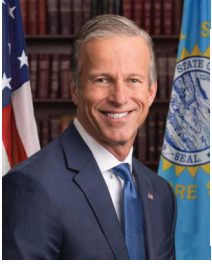
This reset is an important step towards improving public safety in our state. But it's also time for a reset on a broader level.

When I became your Governor, I pledged to reset — with the press, the legislature, and the public. I see so much division today — even between those within the same political party. As South Dakotans, we need to regain perspective and unite. We need to talk with each other and not at each other. We need to reset.

Ronald Reagan once wisely said, "The person who agrees with you 80 percent of the time is a friend and an ally — not a 20 percent traitor." As fellow South Dakotans, we are all friends and allies. And we have so much to be proud of!

South Dakota boasts the lowest unemployment rate, the highest birth rate, and the fastest decline in overdose deaths in America. We are also the number one state to support the Second Amendment and have the lowest child-care costs in the nation. There is much to celebrate!

South Dakota is "Open for Opportunity," and I'm excited for the journey ahead. We are on the right path. With a simple reset, I believe we can achieve even greater things. By uniting together, I am confident that we will keep South Dakota strong, safe, and free.



JOHN THUNE
U.S. SENATOR FOR SOUTH DAKOTA

Unleash American Energy to Power America's Future

For the last four years, the Biden administration's energy policies put our country on a dangerous path toward a future defined by less affordable and less reliable energy. America is rich in energy resources, and we should be leveraging those resources for a safe, secure, and affordable energy supply. Energy is critical for national security and economic prosperity, which is why unleashing American energy dominance is a priority for President Trump and Republicans in Congress.

Over the last few years, we've seen some of the warning signs of a coming energy crisis. The North American Electric Reliability Corporation warns of "mounting resource adequacy challenges" in the next decade. A headline in the Washington Post last year declared, "Amid explosive demand, America is running out of power."

In the not-too-distant future, America is going to need much more power. One reason for the increase in demand is data centers for artificial intelligence. It takes roughly 10 times as much electricity to run a ChatGPT query as it takes to run a Google search. Imagine the energy demands of AI at scale. Failing to leverage all our energy resources is simply an unforced error.

President Trump is taking this challenge seriously. On his first day in office, he declared an energy emergency with the goal of producing more energy, building more infrastructure, and ultimately bringing energy prices down. Senate Democrats don't share this sense of urgency. Recently, they attempted to end the energy emergency, calling it a "sham." Fortunately, their efforts failed, and President Trump and Republicans will proceed with our efforts to unleash American energy dominance.

The U.S. Senate is also moving to eliminate some of the Biden's administration's anti-energy regulations. We recently passed legislation to block Democrats' natural gas tax from going into effect. This \$6 billion tax would limit energy production and increase costs for energy producers – and ultimately increase Americans' utility bills. Not to mention it would put tens of thousands of jobs at risk.

The Senate also blocked the Biden administration's marine archeology rule, which was just another way to slow down production and heap more costs on producers. Offshore oil and gas projects have long been required to submit an archeological report before drilling if their project area was thought to include shipwrecks, settlements, or other archeological sites. The Biden administration expanded this to all projects, even when nothing suggests the project will be near archeological sites. It was just one of many actions from the Biden administration designed to end energy production in America's waters.

Energy is one of our nation's most critical assets. For the last four years, the Biden administration took a number of actions to limit use of these resources. Those days are over. Under President Trump and Republican majorities in Congress, we will leverage our natural resources to produce more energy, lower prices, and restore American energy dominance.

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Serving South Dakota

BIG Update

President Trump and his Administration have been in office for just over a month, and the results at the southern border are remarkable. In a single month, Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) arrested more than 20,000 illegal aliens. Under Biden's Administration, ICE arrested 33,000 for the entire year. The Trump Administration has seen a 627% increase in arrests – removing criminal illegal aliens from our communities. Legislation passed by Congress, like the Laken Riley Act, has been effective in helping ICE arrest and remove these criminals.

Additionally, daily border encounters have dropped 93% and hit a 15-year low. Working together, we are securing the border and keeping America safe. Promises made, promises kept.

BIG Idea

Welfare programs exist to help people who need it the most – they are not a handout to those who are unwilling to work. Yet, each year, millions of dollars in SNAP benefits (commonly referred to as food stamps) get sent to adults who are able-bodied and without children who are choosing not to work. In fact, there are 42 million people receiving benefits, which is the same number of enrollees seen during the COVID-19 pandemic, but 64% of the able-bodied adults on food stamps don't work at all.

I introduced a bill, the America Works Act, to ensure that people receiving these benefits work at least 20 hours a week. As a former SNAP recipient, I've experienced firsthand how work is the best pathway out of poverty. Let me be clear – these work requirements would not be applied to children, pregnant mothers, people over 65 years of age, and those who are disabled.

The success of enforcing work requirements is clear. For states like Arkansas, Missouri, and Mississippi that implemented work requirements, able-bodied adults who began working saw their income double or triple within a few months or years. I want to help people up and out of poverty, not leave them there.

BIG News

America is \$37 trillion in debt, and trillions more in debt get added each year with current spending levels. Essential programs are headed for insolvency within a decade if real reforms are not made and waste, fraud, and abuse are not ended. Now is the time to reverse the curse and put America on the right path.

Thankfully, this week, House Republicans put forward a goal for significant cuts across the federal government. Don't worry, cuts will not be made to Social Security and SNAP benefits for hungry children, pregnant women, elderly, and disabled individuals. This bill will allow Congress to enhance border security, lock in your current tax rate and child tax credit, and unleash American energy.

I was proud to vote for this budget framework. I refuse to stand idly by and allow America to fall off a fiscal cliff. Congress must restore fiscal sanity to protect the financial health of our country for our children and generations to come. Council, chaired by Secretary of the Interior, Doug Burgum. This council will cut red tape and spur innovation across the energy sector to lower prices for consumers and make America energy secure again.

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FEBRUARY 17-23, 2025

Welcome back to another edition of the Weekly Round[s] Up. We had another week full of meetings, hearings and votes – 32 of them, to be exact. And while voting is a big part of our job in the Senate, we typically don't take that many in one week! This was due to a process we call a "vote-a-rama," in which

we vote on a series of amendments to our budget resolution before it passes. While it took staying until nearly 5:00 AM on Friday, the Senate managed to pass our budget resolution which accomplishes President Trump's priorities for his administration. We also confirmed three more nominees to serve as members of President Trump's team, making a total of 19 cabinet members confirmed. More in my Weekly Round[s] Up:

South Dakotans I met with: Representatives from the Manitou Group, which has equipment facilities in Madison and Yankton.

Other meetings: David Sampson, President and CEO of the American Property Casualty Insurance Association; Jakob Stausholm, CEO of Rio Tinto; Jensen Huang, CEO of NVIDIA; Laurent Bili, France's Ambassador to the United States; Bob Buddecke with Honeywell; and Bob Frenzel, CEO of Xcel Energy. I attended our Senate Prayer Breakfast, where Minority Leader Chuck Schumer was our speaker this week. I also attended a breakfast with the Senate National Guard Caucus where we were able to sit down with National Guard state Adjutants General from across the country.

Hearings: I had one closed hearing this past week in the Select Committee on Intelligence.

Classified briefings: I attended one classified briefing this past week related to my work on the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Votes taken: 32 – we were able to confirm three more nominees for President Trump this past week: Howard Lutnick to lead the Department of Commerce, Kelly Loeffler to lead the Small Business Administration and Kash Patel to lead the FBI.

As I mentioned, we also held a vote-a-rama on Thursday night into Friday morning. Two weeks ago, my colleagues on the Senate Budget Committee released our Senate version of a budget resolution. This legislation focuses on accomplishing President Trump's priorities, including unleashing American energy, bolstering our national security and securing our border. Because this resolution isn't able to be filibustered, Senate Democrats slowed down this legislation by debating on the Senate floor and offering amendments, which we voted on through the night for hours on end. Despite this process, we still passed the budget resolution, bringing us one step closer to accomplishing the President's agenda.

Legislation introduced: I introduced legislation with my colleagues on the Senate Banking Committee which would ease burdens and shield small businesses from excessive legal red tape. The Protect Small Businesses from Excessive Paperwork Act of 2025 would extend the filing deadline for businesses to report beneficial ownership information until January 1, 2026. [Read more on this legislation here.](#)

I also reintroduced the Postal Processing Protection Act, legislation that would require the U.S. Postal Service to consider consequences for rural areas during its closure or downsizing review process in order to protect rural mail processing facilities. [Read more about this legislation here.](#)

My staff in South Dakota visited: Aberdeen.

Steps taken: 49,237 steps or 24.57 miles.

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Dr. James L. Snyder Ministries

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How Coffee Has Changed My Life

Recently, I was sitting drinking a nice hot cup of coffee. It's the first thing I do, and I can't get anything done until I do.

I was thinking about this coffee as I was drinking it and remembered there was a time when I did not like coffee at all.

When I was young, my parents made coffee in the morning, and it was the worst coffee you could ever drink. I tried it and could not get beyond the first sip. I tried it with cream and sugar, black, cream, and sugar, but none of those ingredients enabled me to drink any of that coffee.

I couldn't understand why my parents drank that coffee in the morning. It didn't make sense to me, but then a lot of things my parents did, made no sense at the time.

My father had to have a cup of coffee just before he left for work. He also took a thermos of coffee to work. It never made sense to me.

It wasn't until many years later that I realized why that coffee was so terrible.

After graduating high school, I went to a Bible college where I met the future Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage. My life changed in so many ways that it would take a series of books to explain them all.

The one thing that really changed my life had to do with coffee.

Up until this point in my life, I never drank coffee. When I went out with friends to a restaurant, I was the only one who did not order coffee.

I didn't notice until we were married that The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage was highly addicted to coffee. I don't know how I missed that before we married, but I did.

After we were married, one of the first things she bought was a coffee maker. That was the first time I really saw a genuine coffee maker.

Every morning, the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage would make coffee. The smell of that coffee filled the little apartment we lived in then. It was an aroma I had never smelled before, and I just couldn't quite place it.

On our first morning in our apartment, she said, "How do you like your coffee?" I looked at her, smiled and replied, "I like my coffee in the coffee pot."

She didn't understand what I was saying, but she let it go.

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Several weeks later, I began to think through this coffee business. What puzzled me was why her coffee smelled so much better than I remember my parent's coffee.

I didn't address it because it wasn't necessary. But as the days and weeks went by, I soon became addicted to the aroma of that fresh coffee in the morning. I tried to figure out what the difference was between her coffee and my parent's coffee.

One morning, as she made her coffee, she said, "Why don't you try some of my coffee this morning? I think you just might like it."

It took me several weeks to accept her invitation, but I finally agreed to have a cup of coffee.

"Do you want cream and sugar in your coffee?" I agreed, so she fixed my coffee and brought it to me.

I smelled the coffee, which smelled so wonderful that I couldn't believe it was coffee. After looking at the coffee for a while, the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage said, "Are you going to taste it or not?"

Looking at her and smiling, I nodded and took my first sip of real coffee. It was the most wonderful sip I've ever had. I responded, "This is wonderful."

"See," she replied, "I knew you would like it."

It didn't take long for me to drink that first cup of genuine coffee. My wife offered to get me another cup of coffee, and I did not stop her.

When she brought the coffee back, I looked at her and said, "Why is this coffee so much better than the coffee my parents made?"

"I'm not sure," she replied, "maybe your parents were making instant coffee. There's a great difference between instant coffee and real coffee."

I looked at her for a while and remembered those days when I lived at home. When my parents got up early in the morning, my mother would heat water on the stove, put instant coffee in both their cups, and then pour the hot water into each cup. I did not realize at the time that they were not drinking real coffee.

I started giggling, and my wife said, "What are you giggling about?"

With a huge smile on my face, I looked at her, raised my coffee cup, and said, "This, my dear, is the real thing."

From then on, I have enjoyed many cups of real coffee daily. It has wonderfully changed my life.

Thinking on this I was reminded of a scripture, "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32).

Many misquote this verse. But to know God's word is to know the truth which will set you free from all hypocrisy. I want the real truth not some artificial truth.

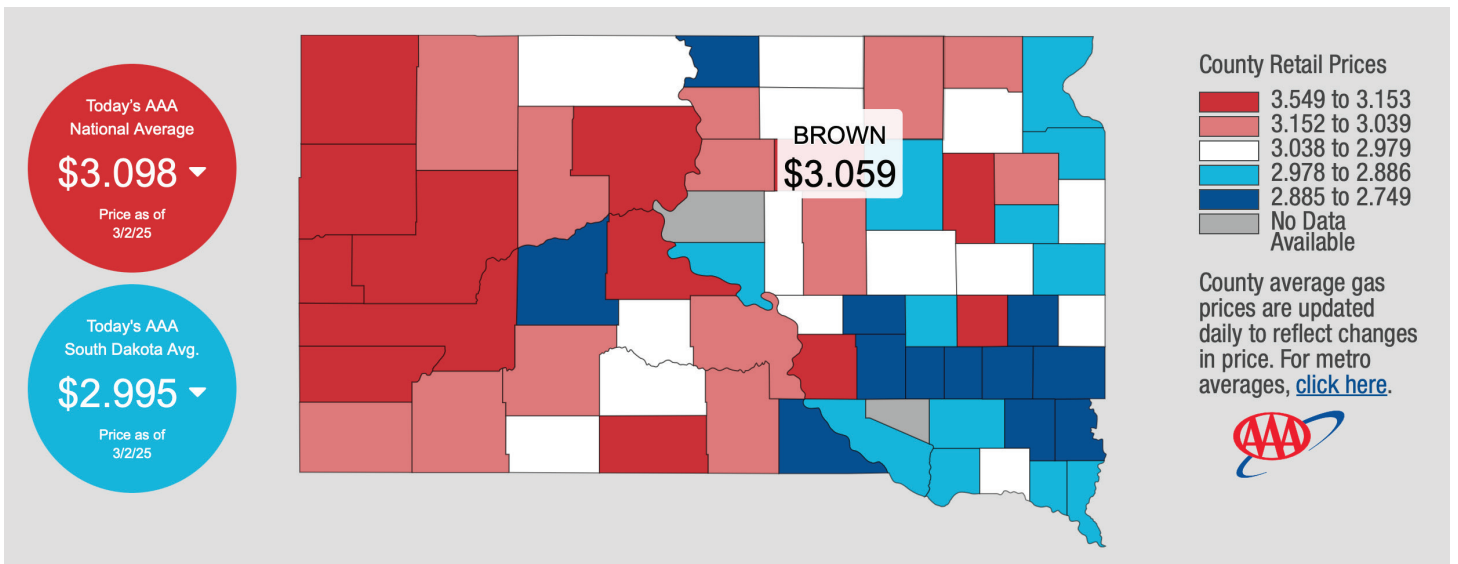
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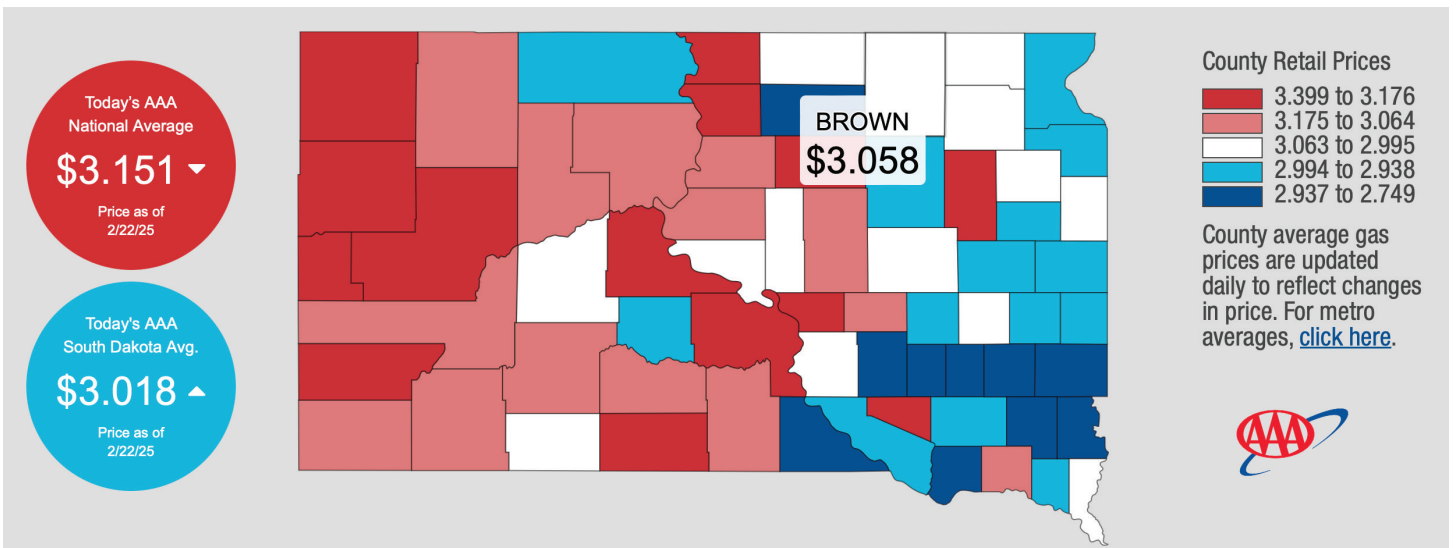
South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Yesterday Avg.	\$3.007	\$3.169	\$3.608	\$3.347
Week Ago Avg.	\$3.014	\$3.191	\$3.627	\$3.374
Month Ago Avg.	\$2.963	\$3.151	\$3.604	\$3.380
Year Ago Avg.	\$3.057	\$3.208	\$3.673	\$3.717

This Week



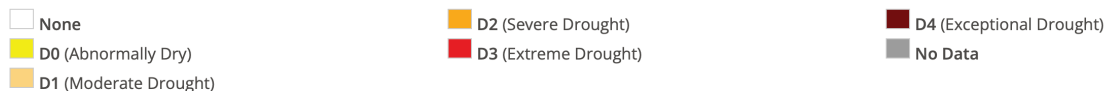
Last Week



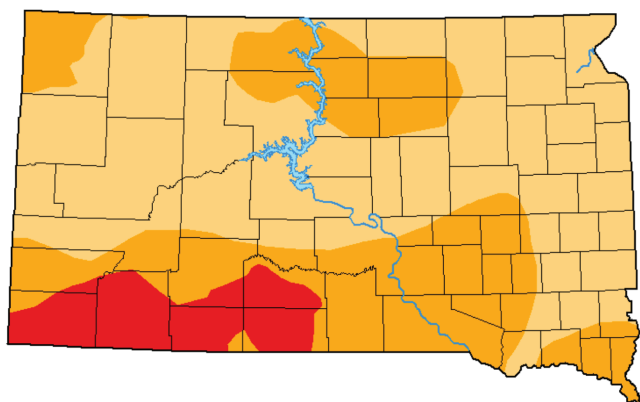
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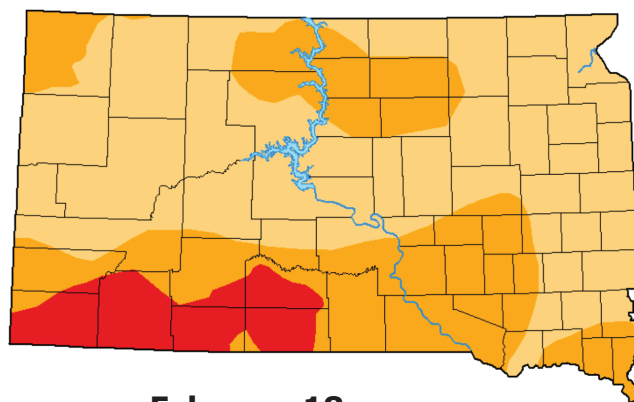
Drought Classification



Drought Monitor



February 25



February 18

Light precipitation was measured from eastern Wyoming into Kansas and Nebraska as well as in portions of western North Dakota and the plains of eastern Montana. Most other areas were dry for the week. Colder-than-normal temperatures dominated the region with areas of southeast Kansas 20-25 degrees below normal for the week. With the dry conditions, moderate drought levels were expanded over southern Kansas along with additional abnormally dry conditions being shown.

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EARTHTALK

Dear EarthTalk: How do environmentalists feel about RFK Jr.'s oversight of health in the next Trump administration, given his background as an environmental activist lawyer?

When Time named Robert F. Kennedy Jr. one of its early 2000s "Heroes for the Planet," the outspoken lawyer was a clear choice for the honor, having gained fame during his fight to protect New York City's water supply. He advocated for "the environment [as] the most important, the most fundamental, civil-rights issue," according to a 2004 interview. Many of Kennedy's views can be summarized in the June 18, 2007 issue of Rolling Stone in which he demanded investment into renewable energy sources, blamed America for its "reckless consumption of oil and coal," and emphasized the need to slow global warming.

Almost twenty years later, as RFK Jr. takes the reins as America's top health official, the same magazine has quoted former friends, colleagues, and family members calling the former 'hero' a "conspiracist" with "dangerous views." The Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), a leading environmental non-profit, used the term "one-man misinformation superspreader" to describe its former Senior Attorney, a statement corroborated by former allies who have stated that Kennedy is not an environmentalist, but a "science denier" and a "conspiracy theorist."

Even before his endorsement of President Trump, who has famously called climate change a 'hoax', environmentalists had begun to turn against Kennedy. Liz Barratt-Brown, a senior adviser for NRDC and Kennedy's former coworker, told the New York Times that he had begun drifting away from the environmental movement in the early 2000s when he started spreading unproven theories regarding vaccinations, such as linking vaccines to autism without evidence.

Around the same time that RFK Jr. became invested in the anti-vaccine movement, he opposed the construction of the Cape Wind Project, an offshore wind farm in Nantucket Sound that would have provided roughly 75 percent of the electricity used by Cape Cod, Nantucket, and Martha's Vineyard. Kennedy's position began as an instance of NIMBYism, or the "not in my backyard" mentality, as he owned a home nearby and had cited unsightly aesthetics as a partial reason for his dissent, and has grown in recent years to staunchly oppose all offshore wind.

While offshore wind farms have several disadvantages, they are also a promising source of clean energy; thus, Kennedy's opposition sparked disdain from climate activists like Bill McKibben who claim "he could have used his name and platform" to promote renewable energy. Furthermore, many of Kennedy's reasons for opposition have been proven repeatedly to be rumors. For example, in January 2023, Kennedy adamantly promoted the idea that offshore wind is killing whales despite the claim having been proven unfounded by a variety of organizations including by the Federal Bureau of Ocean Energy Management.

Once a "hero for the planet," many environmentalists now echo Dan Reicher, a former peer and colleague of RFK Jr. and a Stanford University senior energy researcher: "Stay very far away from today's RFK Jr. if you're interested in environmental protection." RFK Jr. has told the Washington Post that he believes he can help sway President Trump's environmental policies. Environmentalists are "deeply skeptical," as less than one month into office Trump has withdrawn the U.S. from the Paris Climate Accords and dismantled a series of environmental policies and funding. It remains to be seen whether the Secretary of Health is successful in turning the tides of the environmental movement back in his favor.

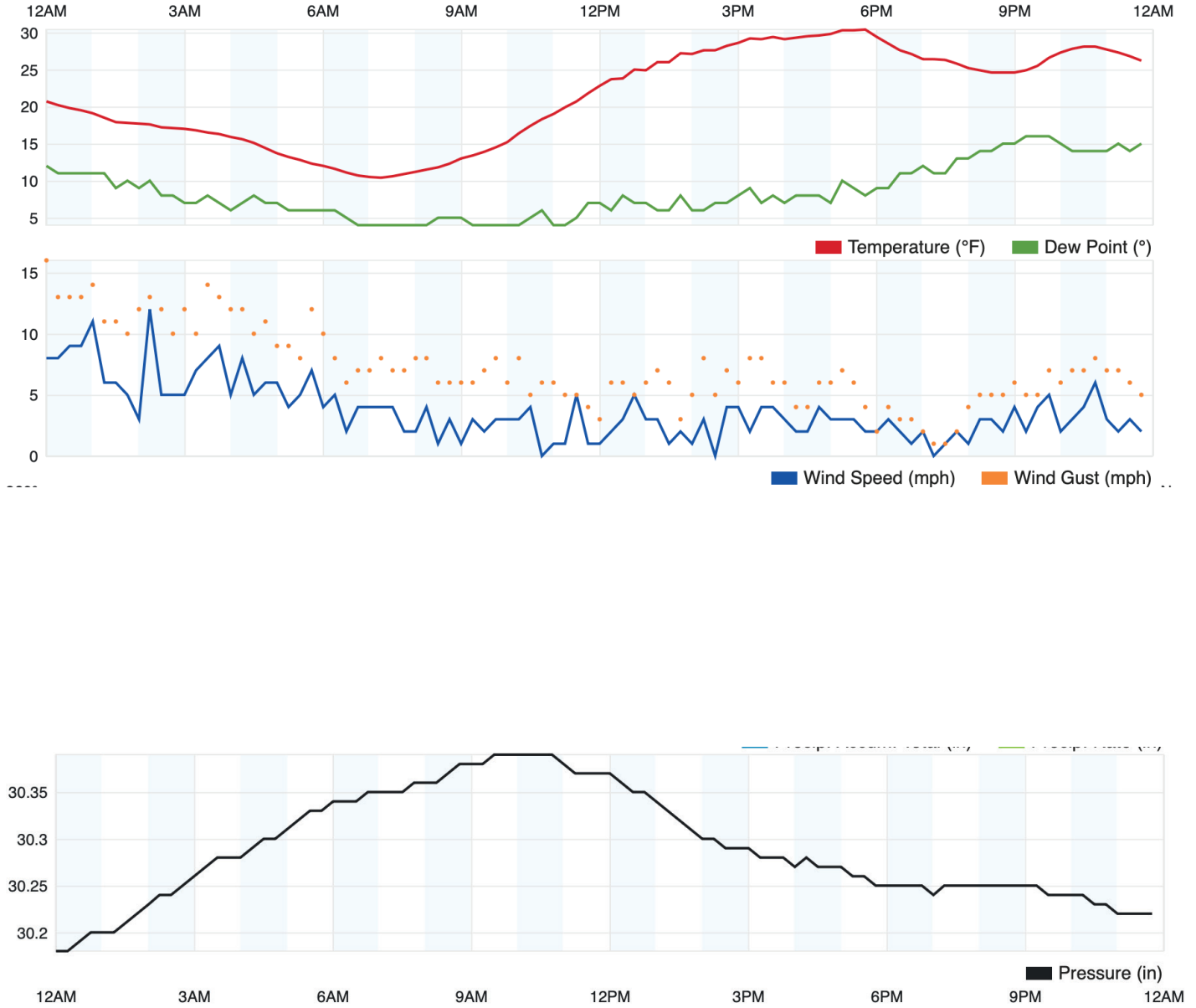


Most environmentalists consider RFK Jr. a former ally and current foe given his flop on environmental issues in recent years. Credit: Gage Skidmore, FlickrCC.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



High: 56 °F

Sunny

Tonight



Low: 26 °F

Mostly Clear

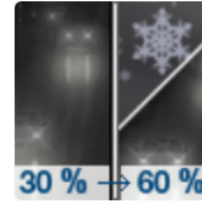
Monday



High: 57 °F

Partly Sunny

Monday Night



Low: 29 °F

Chance Rain
then
Rain/Snow
Likely and
Blustery

Tuesday



High: 37 °F

Wintry Mix
Likely and
Patchy
Blowing Snow

Much Warmer Today



48-62°

Cooler across the Prairie
Coteau and west central MN

Temperatures will be **15-20 degrees warmer** than yesterday!



weather.gov/aberdean
March 2, 2025 2:31 AM

Warmer air will move into the area today and make afternoon temperatures 15 to 20 degrees warmer than yesterday afternoon. Expect a sunny sky today, with southeast winds of 5 to 15 mph.

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Rain Monday Night, Changing To Snow on Tuesday

March 2, 2025
2:40 AM

Associated with a strong low pressure system moving through the Central Plains

Key Points



Rain Monday night, changing to snow on Tuesday. Fastest turn over is expected to be over south central SD and the Prairie Coteau. Snow will come to an ending Tuesday night.



Temperatures will fall into the low to mid 30s on Tuesday. Where the temperatures end up, and how heavy the snow falls, will determine how much snow accumulates.



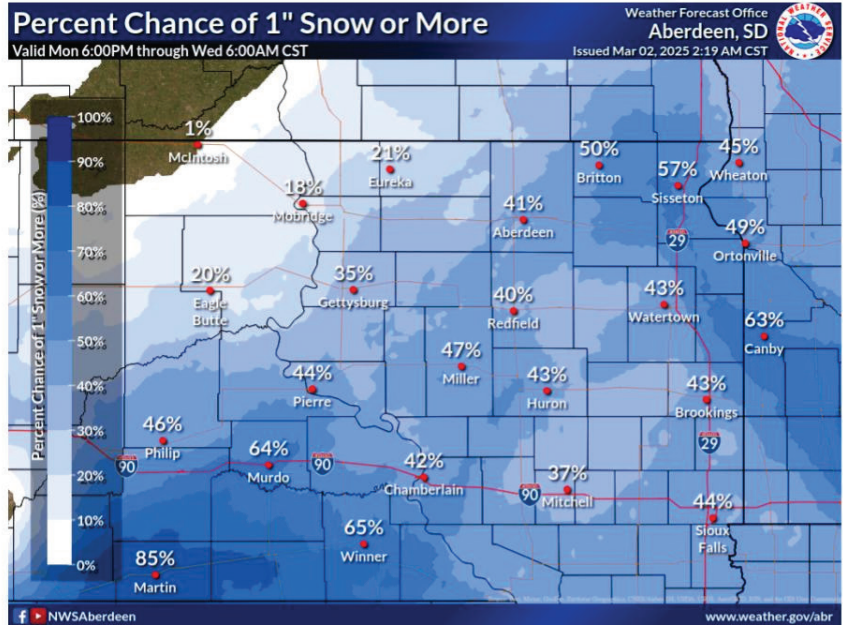
Northerly wind gusts of 35 to 45 mph will develop late Monday Night and continue into Wednesday morning.

Travel Impacts



Where snow falls, roads may become slushy and slippery. Strong winds will cause travel difficulties for those travelling on west & east roads.

**Plan ahead!
Check the forecast.
Give yourself extra time.**



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

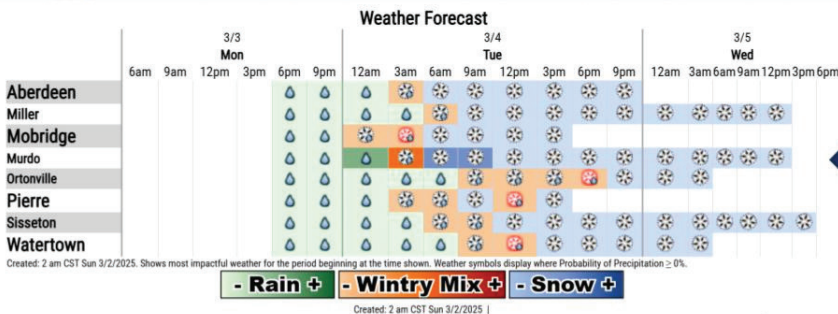
Rain will develop Monday night and then change to snow on Tuesday. There's still uncertainty on how much snow will accumulate with temperatures in the low to mid 30s on Tuesday. In addition, northerly winds will gust to 35 to 45 mph on Tuesday into Wednesday morning.



Timing of the Precipitation and Winds

March 2, 2025
2:47 AM

Precipitation will start Monday Evening, with the winds increasing Tuesday Morning



Precipitation

Rain is expected Monday night, with it mixing with and changing to snow from west to east on Tuesday

The timing of the Snow/Rain transition will be fine tuned over the next 2 days.

Winds

Northerly winds will increase in intensity on Monday night and peak at 35 to 45 mph during the day on Tuesday.

The winds will still gust to 30-40 mph Tuesday night into Wednesday morning.

Maximum Wind Gust Forecast (mph)

	3/3 Mon				3/4 Tue				3/5 Wed													
	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	
Aberdeen	10	13	16	17	18	22	26	31	36	38	40	41	37	37	36	35	32	32	32	32	26	15
Miller	12	15	17	17	15	15	17	25	32	36	39	39	36	36	33	32	32	32	31	26	15	
Mobridge	9	13	16	17	20	22	26	30	33	35	36	37	36	32	30	29	28	26	24	20	12	
Murdo	9	12	13	15	17	18	24	33	39	41	44	44	39	36	33	32	31	31	28	22	12	
Ortonville	9	12	15	15	13	12	12	15	21	26	32	35	36	36	36	36	37	37	36	31	22	
Pierre	6	8	12	13	14	16	22	29	36	37	40	41	38	35	30	29	28	28	25	21	10	
Sisseton	8	12	14	14	12	12	15	21	28	32	35	37	38	38	38	38	37	38	36	30	20	
Watertown	14	16	17	17	15	14	14	20	26	32	39	40	40	40	40	39	39	39	38	33	22	

Created: 2 am CST Sun 3/2/2025 | Values are maximums over the period beginning at the time shown.



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

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2024-2025 Meteorological Winter Summary

March 1, 2025
10:32 AM

December 2024 through February 2025 Climate Based on 1991-2020 Normals

	Aberdeen (Since 1898)	Sisseton (Since 1935)	Mobridge (Since 1927)	Pierre (Since 1934)	Watertown (Since 1898)
Average Temperature	16.1°	16.6°	18.6°	21.1°	15.7°
Normal	16.2°	16.7°	19.9°	21.7°	15.6°
Departure	-0.1°	-0.1°	-1.3°	-0.6°	+0.1°
# Days with Highs Below 32° (out of 90)	51	55	47	44	59
Precipitation	0.93"	0.91"	1.07"	1.27"	0.78"
Normal	1.78"	1.97"	1.54"	1.83"	1.91"
Departure	-0.85"	-1.06"	-0.47"	-0.56"	-1.13"
Snowfall	10.1"	10.4"	9.6"	7.3"	10.7"
Departure	-14.3"	-8.6"	-8.8"	-12.0"	-13.8"



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Meteorological winter of 2024-2025 (Dec-Feb) ending up being near to slightly below normal for temperatures, while both precipitation and snowfall were below normal across the region. What did you think of this meteorological winter?

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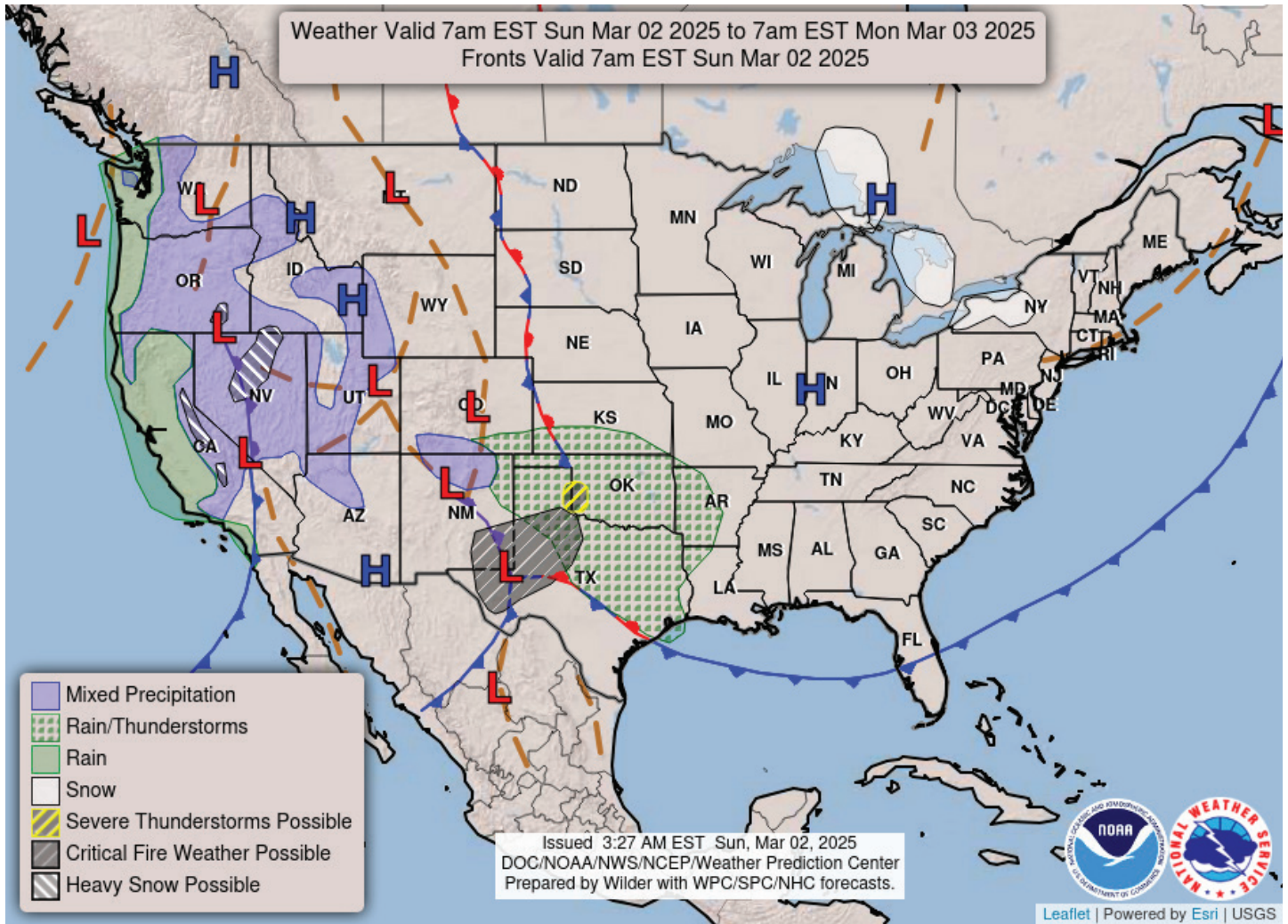
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 31 °F at 5:38 PM
Low Temp: 10 °F at 7:05 AM
Wind: 15 mph at 12:18 AM
Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 11 hours, 16 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 67 in 2021
Record Low: -21 in 1913
Average High: 34
Average Low: 13
Average Precip in March.: 0.05
Precip to date in March.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 1.22
Precip Year to Date: 0.45
Sunset Tonight: 6:22:33 pm
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:04:27 am



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Today in Weather History

March 2, 1966: The blizzard began late on March 2 in the west and moved very slowly across the state, reaching the extreme east on the 4th and continuing into the 5th. Snow depths ranged from 2 to 4 inches in southeast South Dakota to nearly 3 feet in north-central South Dakota. Winds of 40 to 55 mph with gusts to 70 mph caused widespread blowing snow and near-zero visibilities during the storm. Drifts up to 30 feet were reported in sheltered areas with bare open fields. The storm caused massive livestock losses. Estimated losses were 50,000 cattle, 46,000 sheep, and 1800 hogs. The most substantial losses were in the central and north-central parts of the state. The heavy snow also collapsed many structures. The storm directly caused three deaths due to exposure, and three were indirectly caused by the storm; 2 due to heart attacks and one by asphyxiation. The blizzard was rated as one of the most severe that has been experienced in South Dakota. Many roads were blocked for days, and many schools and businesses closed.

March 2, 2007: An area of low pressure moved slowly northeast across the central and northern plains, bringing widespread snowfall and intense winds. The combination of the falling snow and the existing snow cover resulted in blizzard conditions with visibilities to zero at times. This blizzard event was part of the same upper-level low-pressure trough that brought the heavy snowfall to the area on February 28. Additional snowfall occurred across the region on March 1st and 2nd as a large area of snow wrapped in from the east. Widespread blizzard conditions developed by noon on March 2 and continued into the early morning hours of the 3rd. Snowfall amounts, including the snow on February 28, ranged from 2 inches to 22 inches across central and northeast South Dakota. The heaviest snowfall amounts were across northeastern South Dakota, where total snow depths were in the 25 to 30-inch range. Northwest winds of 30 to 45 mph with gusts near 60 mph brought zero visibilities across the area, creating large snowdrifts. Schools, businesses, airports, roads, and interstates were closed for up to two days. Travel was not advised across the area. Also, many cars were ditched, along with several accidents. Many travelers were stranded, and several shelters were opened. The Emergency Operations Center was activated in Pierre, and the Governor declared the blizzard area a disaster. Some of the most significant snowfall amounts over the 3 days included 11 inches at Andover, Hosmer, and Redfield, 12 inches at Webster, 13 inches at Miller, 14 inches at Victor, Groton, and Clark, 15 inches at Castlewood and Summit, 16 inches at Watertown and Roy Lake, 19 inches at Sisseton, 20 inches at Milbank, 21 inches at Bryant, and 22 inches at Clear Lake.

1927: Raleigh, North Carolina, was buried under 17.8 inches of snow in 24 hours, a record for that location until 2000. On January 25, 2000, Raleigh saw 17.9 inches of snow in 24 hours.

March 2, 2007: An area of low pressure moved slowly northeast across the central and northern plains, bringing widespread snowfall and intense winds. The combination of the falling snow and the existing snow cover resulted in blizzard conditions with visibilities to zero at times. This blizzard event was part of the same upper-level low-pressure trough that brought the heavy snowfall to the area on February 28. Additional snowfall occurred across the region on March 1st and 2nd as a large area of snow wrapped in from the east. Widespread blizzard conditions developed by noon on March 2 and continued into the early morning hours of the 3rd. Snowfall amounts, including the snow on February 28, ranged from 2 inches to 22 inches across central and northeast South Dakota. The heaviest snowfall amounts were across northeastern South Dakota, where total snow depths were in the 25 to 30-inch range. Northwest winds of 30 to 45 mph with gusts near 60 mph brought zero visibilities across the area, creating large snowdrifts. Schools, businesses, airports, roads, and interstates were closed for up to two days. Travel was not advised across the area. Also, many cars were ditched, along with several accidents. Many travelers were stranded, and several shelters were opened. The Emergency Operations Center was activated in Pierre, and the Governor declared the blizzard area a disaster. Some of the most significant snowfall amounts over the 3 days included 11 inches at Andover, Hosmer, and Redfield, 12 inches at Webster, 13 inches at Miller, 14 inches at Victor, Groton, and Clark, 15 inches at Castlewood and Summit, 16 inches at Watertown and Roy Lake, 19 inches at Sisseton, 20 inches at Milbank, 21 inches at Bryant, and 22 inches at Clear Lake.

1927: Raleigh, North Carolina, was buried under 17.8 inches of snow in 24 hours, a record for that location until 2000. On January 25, 2000, Raleigh saw 17.9 inches of snow in 24 hours.

1988: Thunderstorms produced severe weather in the south-central U.S. A tornado in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, injured two persons, and another tornado caused five million dollars in damage at the airport in Lafayette, Louisiana.

2005: Waterspouts were recorded in Redondo Beach in southern California. Pea size hail accumulated to a depth of one inch on Huntington Beach.



WHY NOT YOUR BEST?

A well-dressed gentleman stepped from a taxicab in New York whistling half-heartedly as he collected his briefcase and umbrella. A newsboy, just a few feet away, listened for a brief moment and said, "You're not much of a whistler are you? Listen to how good I am!"

When the newsboy finished, he asked the gentleman, "Can you do better?"

"Indeed I can," came the reply. The man was an expert whistler who was in New York for a performance. And then he whistled his very best to the astonishment of the young newsboy.

Puzzled, the young boy looked at him and then asked, "Why were you doing so poorly when you got out of the cab?"

Solomon wrote the book of Ecclesiastes to challenge God's followers to live lives with meaning and purpose. "Whatever you do," he wrote, "do well!" He very clearly and convincingly encourages us to enjoy life as a gift from God and to focus on doing our very best – always. If you are a whistler, whistle the best you can all of the time – not only during a "performance" in front of an audience. After all, we are all "performing" everything we do before God our Creator. We are always on "stage" demonstrating our gratitude for the gifts He has given us.

We must always be aware of the fact that no matter where we are or what we are doing we are living to bring honor and glory to God. We must always "do well."

Prayer: Lord of our lives, it is never what we have, but what we do with what You have given us. May we do our best with each of the gifts You have given us. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Whatever you do, do well. For when you go to the grave, there will be no work or planning or knowledge or wisdom. Ecclesiastes 9:10

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

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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: 03.01.25

8 9 13 33 41 6

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$25,460,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 03.01.25

12 25 28 30 43 3

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 13 Hrs 41 Mins 39 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 03.01.25

6 16 21 31 33

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$52,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 03.01.25

6 19 37 66 68 6

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 03.01.25

2 23 36 44 49 25

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$279,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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Upcoming Groton Events

01/05/2025 Pancake Sunday, Historical Society Fundraiser, 10am-1pm, Community Center
01/26/2025 Groton Robotics Pancake Feed at the Community Center 10am-1pm
01/26/2025 87th Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm
02/02/2025 Pancake Sunday, Historical Society Fundraiser, 10am-1pm, Community Center
02/05/2025 FB Live Electronic Hwy 12 Sign Drawing City Hall 12pm
03/02/2025 Pancake Sunday, Historical Society Fundraiser, 10am-1pm, Community Center
03/22/2025 Spring Vendor Fair at the GHS Gym 10am-2pm
04/05/2025 Dueling Duo Baseball/Softball Fundraiser at the Legion Post #39, 6-11:30pm
04/06/2025 Pancake Sunday, Historical Society Fundraiser, 10am-1pm, Community Center
04/12/2025 Lion's Club Easter Egg Hunt at the City Park 10am Sharp
05/03/2025 Lion's Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
05/12/2025 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

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News from the **AP** Associated Press

Saturday's Scores

The Associated Press

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL

Mobridge-Pollock 77, Todd County 59
Sioux Falls Lincoln 70, Rapid City Stevens 56
Sioux Falls Washington 78, Rapid City Central 64
Spearfish 69, Brookings 47
Watertown 67, T F Riggs High School 44
Yankton 71, Douglas 34

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL

Rapid City Stevens 55, Sioux Falls Lincoln 34
Sioux Falls Washington 68, Rapid City Central 42
Spearfish 56, Brookings 55, OT
T F Riggs High School 60, Watertown 48
Yankton 55, Douglas 33

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

Forte scores 31 as South Dakota downs North Dakota 92-79 in regular-season finale

By The Associated Press undefined

VERMILLION, S.D. (AP) — Chase Forte scored 31 points as South Dakota beat North Dakota 92-79 on Saturday in a regular-season finale.

Forte had seven rebounds for the Coyotes (18-13, 9-7 Summit League). Isaac Bruns added 19 points while shooting 6 for 13 (1 for 4 from 3-point range) and 6 of 8 from the free-throw line while he also had seven rebounds. Quandre Bullock had 15 points and shot 4 for 9 (0 for 4 from 3-point range) and 7 of 7 from the free-throw line.

The Fightin' Hawks (11-20, 5-11) were led by Mier Panoam, who posted 16 points and four assists. Dariyus Woodson added 15 points for North Dakota. Treysen Eaglestaff also had 14 points, seven rebounds and five assists.

Akins scores 17, Denver takes down South Dakota State 78-62 in Summit League finale

By The Associated Press undefined

DENVER (AP) — Sebastian Akins scored 17 points as Denver upset South Dakota State 78-62 on Saturday in a Summit League finale..

Akins shot 6 of 13 from the field and 5 for 5 from the line for the Pioneers (11-20, 5-11 Summit League). DeAndre Craig scored 16 points while going 6 of 8 and 4 of 4 from the free-throw line. Isaiah Addo-Ankrah went 4 of 8 from the field (4 for 7 from 3-point range) to finish with 12 points.

The Jackrabbits (20-11, 11-5), who entered the game tied for second, were led by Kalen Garry, who recorded 18 points. Oscar Cluff added 13 points for South Dakota State.

The league tournament starts Wednesday in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

Israel cuts off Gaza aid to pressure Hamas to accept new ceasefire proposal

By TIA GOLDENBERG and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Israel stopped the entry of all goods and supplies into the Gaza Strip on Sunday and warned of “additional consequences” if Hamas doesn’t accept a new proposal to extend a fragile ceasefire.

Hamas accused Israel of trying to derail the existing ceasefire agreement and said its decision to cut off aid was “cheap extortion, a war crime and a blatant attack” on the truce, which took hold in January after more than a year of negotiations. Both sides stopped short of saying the ceasefire had ended.

The first phase of the ceasefire, which included a surge in humanitarian assistance, expired on Saturday. The two sides have yet to negotiate the second phase, in which Hamas was to release dozens of remaining hostages in return for an Israeli pullout and a lasting ceasefire.

Egypt, which has served as a key mediator between Israel and Hamas, condemned the closure and accused Israel of using “starvation as a weapon.” Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty called for the immediate implementation of Phase 2 of the existing ceasefire agreement.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that under the existing agreements Israel could resume fighting after the first phase if it believed negotiations were ineffective. He said the ceasefire would only continue if Hamas kept releasing hostages, telling his Cabinet that “there will be no free lunches.” He said Israel was “full coordinated” with President Donald Trump’s administration.

There was no immediate comment from the United States on the proposal announced by Israel or its decision to cut off aid.

Hundreds of aid trucks have entered Gaza daily since the ceasefire began on Jan. 19. But residents said prices doubled on Sunday as word of the closure spread and people raced to stock up.

“Everyone is worried,” said Sayed al-Dairi, a man living in Gaza City. “This is not a life.”

Fayza Nassar, a woman living in the heavily destroyed urban Jabaliya refugee camp, said the closure would exacerbate already dire living conditions.

“There will be famine and chaos,” she said. “Closing the crossings is a heinous crime.”

Israel says it has US backing

Israel said the new proposal, which it said came from U.S. Mideast envoy Steve Witkoff, called for extending the ceasefire through Ramadan — the Muslim holy month that began over the weekend — and the Jewish Passover holiday, which ends on April 20.

Under that proposal, Hamas would release half the hostages on the first day and the rest when an agreement is reached on a permanent ceasefire, Netanyahu said.

Hamas warned that any attempt to delay or cancel the ceasefire agreement would have “humanitarian consequences” for the hostages and reiterated that the only way to free them was through implementing the existing deal, which did not specify a timeline for freeing the remaining captives.

Hamas has said it is willing to free the hostages all at once in Phase 2, but only in return for the release of more Palestinian prisoners, a permanent ceasefire and the withdrawal of Israeli forces.

An Egyptian official said Hamas and Egypt would not accept a new proposal aimed at returning the remaining hostages without ending the war. The official noted that the agreement had called on the two sides to begin negotiations over Phase 2 in early February.

The official, who was not authorized to brief media and spoke on condition of anonymity, said mediators were trying to resolve the dispute.

Ceasefire has been marred by disputes

Under the first, six-week phase of the ceasefire, Hamas released 25 Israeli hostages and the bodies of eight others in exchange for the release of nearly 2,000 Palestinians imprisoned by Israel. Israeli forces pulled back from most of Gaza and Israel allowed a surge of humanitarian aid to enter.

But the first phase was marred by repeated disputes, with each side accusing the other of violations.

Israeli strikes have killed dozens of Palestinians who the military said had approached its forces or entered

areas in violation of the truce. Israel carried out an airstrike on Palestinians who it said were planting an explosive device in northern Gaza near the border on Sunday. Gaza's Health Ministry said two men were killed in the strike and that Israeli fire killed two other people elsewhere.

Hamas paraded the captives — some of whom were emaciated — before crowds in public spectacles that Israel and the United Nations said were cruel and degrading. It initially returned the wrong set of remains instead of those of a mother who was killed in captivity along with her two young children.

Hamas said Israel's aid suspension was another violation, saying the ceasefire and aid deliveries were supposed to continue during negotiations over Phase 2.

Israel was accused of blocking aid throughout the war

Israel imposed a complete siege on Gaza in the opening days of the war and only eased it later under U.S. pressure.

U.N. agencies and aid groups accused Israel of not facilitating enough aid during 15 months of war, and the Biden administration repeatedly pressed it to do more. Experts warned on several occasions that hunger was widespread in Gaza and that there was a risk of famine.

The International Criminal Court said there was reason to believe Israel had used "starvation as a method of warfare" when it issued an arrest warrant for Netanyahu last year. The allegation is also central to South Africa's case at the International Court of Justice accusing Israel of genocide.

Israel has denied the accusations and rejected both court actions as being biased against it. Israel says it has allowed enough aid to enter and blamed shortages on what it said was the U.N.'s inability to distribute it. It also accused Hamas of siphoning off aid.

Kenneth Roth, the former head of Human Rights Watch who is now a visiting professor at Princeton University, said that Israel as an occupying power has an "absolute duty" to facilitate humanitarian aid under the Geneva Conventions.

"Israel's latest threat to cut off all aid is a resumption of the war-crime starvation strategy" that led to the ICC warrant, he said.

The war began when Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking 251 hostage. The militants are currently holding 59 hostages, 32 of whom are believed to be dead, after releasing most of the rest in two ceasefire agreements.

Israel's offensive has killed over 48,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. It says more than half of those killed were women and children but does not specify how many of the dead were combatants.

Israeli bombardment and ground operations pounded large areas of the strip to rubble and at the height of the conflict displaced some 90% of the population of 2.3 million Palestinians. The war has left most of Gaza's population dependent on international aid for food and other essentials.

UK, France and Ukraine agree to work on ceasefire plan for Russia's war in Ukraine

By BRIAN MELLEY Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Britain, France and Ukraine have agreed to work on a ceasefire plan to present to the United States, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said Sunday before a summit with European leaders to discuss ending the war.

The meeting has been overshadowed by the extraordinary scolding by U.S. President Donald Trump of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy at the White House on Friday for being ungrateful for U.S. support against the invasion by Russia.

But Starmer said he's focused on being a bridge to restore peace talks, whose collapse he used as an opportunity to re-engage with Trump, Zelenskyy and French President Emmanuel Macron rather than "ramp up the rhetoric."

"We've now agreed that the United Kingdom, along with France and possibly one or two others, will work with Ukraine on a plan to stop the fighting, and then we'll discuss that plan with the United States," Starmer told the BBC. Starmer and Macron have both spoken to Trump since Friday.

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Sunday's meeting is an important step

The London meeting has taken on greater importance in defending the war-torn ally and shoring up the continent's defenses.

Sunday's summit is likely to include talks on establishing a European military force to be sent to Ukraine to underpin a ceasefire. Starmer said it would involve "a coalition of the willing."

Starmer said he does not trust Russian President Vladimir Putin but does trust Trump. "Do I believe Donald Trump when he says he wants lasting peace? The answer to that is yes," he said.

Starmer said there are "intense discussions" to get a security guarantee from the U.S.

"If there is to be a deal, if there is to be a stopping of the fighting, then that agreement has to be defended, because the worst of all outcomes is that there is a temporary pause and then (Russian President Vladimir) Putin comes again," Starmer said. "That has happened in the past, I think it is a real risk, and that is why we must ensure that if there's a deal, it is a lasting deal, not a temporary pause."

The three essentials listed by Starmer for a successful peace deal were: arm the Ukrainians to put them in a position of strength; a European element to guarantee security; and a "U.S. backstop," to prevent Putin from breaking promises.

"That's the package. All three parts need to be in place, and that's what I'm working hard to bring together," Starmer said.

Leaders began arriving early Sunday afternoon for the meeting at Lancaster House, a 200-year-old mansion near Buckingham Palace, following a charm offensive last week to persuade Trump to put Ukraine at the center of negotiations and tilt his allegiances toward Europe.

Leaders from France, Germany, Denmark, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Spain, Canada, Finland, Sweden, the Czech Republic and Romania will be at the summit. The Turkish foreign minister, NATO secretary-general and the presidents of the European Commission and European Council will also attend.

European leaders are backing Zelenskyy

Zelenskyy received broad support from leaders across Europe after the White House fiasco, an exceptional attack on an ally broadcast on live television.

Starmer embraced Zelenskyy when he arrived Saturday for a private meeting in Downing Street.

"As you heard from the cheers on the street outside, you have full backing across the United Kingdom," Starmer said. "We stand with you, with Ukraine, for as long as it may take."

Europe has been anxious since Trump initiated direct peace talks with Putin, who had been isolated by most Western leaders since invading Ukraine three years ago. The scramble to remain relevant and protect European interests as their once stalwart ally appeared to be cozying up to Putin was even more troubling when Trump called Zelenskyy a dictator and falsely said Ukraine started the war.

Meetings in recent days had provided some hope — until Zelenskyy's visit to the White House.

Visits to the Oval Office by Macron, who had declared his visit a "turning point," and Starmer were seen as steps in the right direction. The meetings were cordial and Trump even took a gentler tone toward Ukraine, though he would not commit to providing U.S. security guarantees and maintained Europe would need to provide peacekeeping troops.

Within 12 hours of Starmer's return from Washington, the talk of peace seemed to collapse as Vice President JD Vance berated Zelenskyy for challenging Trump's assertions that Russian President Vladimir Putin could be trusted.

"Starmer did an impressive job of asserting Europe's agency in the war on Ukraine and conveying to President Trump that Europe is willing and able to take a leading role in implementing any credible peace deal," said Rachel Ellehuus, director-general of Royal United Services Institute, a defense and security think tank. "Unfortunately, Friday's White House meeting was a major step backward."

Ukraine can no longer count on military or political support from the U.S. after Trump declared himself neutral in negotiations, Ellehuus said. She said Europe needs to step in and could release some 200 billion euros (\$207 billion) in seized Russian assets to help fund that effort.

"The immediate goal of the meetings in London must be to keep Ukraine in the fight so it can negotiate

from a maximum position of strength," she said.

European leaders pledge to increase military spending

Starmer pledged this week to boost military spending to 2.5% of gross domestic product by 2027. Other European nations may follow suit.

Czech Prime Minister Petr Fiala said Saturday that Europe faces a historic test and has to look after itself. He said European countries have to increase their arms spending to reach at least 3% of GDP.

"If we don't increase our effort fast enough and let the aggressor dictate its conditions, we won't end up well," he said.

Macron, who said it was legitimate for the U.S. to shift its focus to dealing with China and Asia, also called for more defense spending as he called for unity.

"We should have woken up earlier," Macron said. "I've been saying for years that we need a more sovereign, more united, more independent Europe."

From Alaska to Maine, communities that border Canada worry US tariffs come at a personal cost

By DEE-ANN DURBIN and SALLY HO AP Business Writers

DETROIT (AP) — At the U.S. Embassy in Ottawa, a quote from former President Ronald Reagan is engraved on one wall.

"Let the 5,000-mile border between Canada and the United States stand as a symbol for the future," Reagan said upon signing a 1988 free trade pact with America's northern neighbor. "Let it forever be not a point of division but a meeting place between our great and true friends."

But a point of division is here. On Tuesday, President Donald Trump plans to impose a 25% tariff on most imported Canadian goods and a 10% tariff on Canadian oil and gas. Canada has said it will retaliate with a 25% import tax on a multitude of American products, including wine, cigarettes and shotguns.

The tariffs have touched off a range of emotions along the world's longest international border, where residents and industries are closely intertwined. Ranchers in Canada rely on American companies for farm equipment, and export cattle and hogs to U.S. meat processors. U.S. consumers enjoy thousands of gallons of Canadian maple syrup each year. Canadian dogs and cats dine on U.S.-made pet food.

The trade dispute will have far-reaching spillover effects, from price increases and paperwork backlogs to longer wait times at the U.S.-Canada border for both people and products, said Laurie Trautman, director of the Border Policy Research Institute at Western Washington University.

"These industries on both sides are built up out of a cross-border relationship, and disruptions will play out on both sides," Trautman said.

Even the threat of tariffs may have already caused irreparable harm, she said. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has urged Canadians to buy Canadian products and vacation at home.

The Associated Press wanted to know what residents and businesses were thinking along the border that Reagan vowed would remain unburdened by an "invisible barrier of economic suspicion and fear." Here's what they said:

Skagway, Alaska-Whitehorse, Yukon

People flocked from the boomtown of Skagway, Alaska, to Canada's Yukon in search of riches during the Klondike gold rush of the late 1890s, following routes that Indigenous tribes long used for trade.

Today, Skagway trades on its past, drawing more than 1 million cruise ship passengers a year to a historic downtown that features Klondike-themed museums. But the municipality with a population of about 1,100 still holds deep ties to the Yukon.

Skagway residents frequently travel to Whitehorse, the territory's capital, for a wider selection of groceries and shopping, dental care, veterinary services and swimming lessons. The Alaskan city's port, meanwhile, still supports Yukon mining and is a critical hub for fuel and other essentials both communities need.

"It's a special connection," Orion Hanson, a contractor and Skagway Assembly member, said of White-

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horse, which sits 110 miles (177 kilometers) north and has 30,000 people. "It's really our most accessible neighbor."

Hanson is concerned about what tariffs might mean for the price of building supplies, such as lumber, concrete and steel. The cost of living in small, remote places already is high. People in Whitehorse and Skagway worry about the potential impact on community relations as well as prices.

Norman Holler, who lives in Whitehorse, said the months the tariffs have loomed created "an uncomfortable feeling and resentment." If the threat becomes reality, Holler said he would probably still visit Alaska border towns but not other parts of the United States.

"Is it rational? I don't know, but it satisfies an emotional need not to go," he said.

- Becky Bohrer in Juneau, Alaska

Point Roberts, Washington-Delta, British Columbia

At the border of Washington state and British Columbia, the tension over tariffs is evident in a waterfront community that is hoping for Canadian mercy.

Point Roberts is a 5-square-mile (13-square kilometer) U.S. exclave whose only land connection lies in Canada, which supplies the unincorporated nub of American soil its water and electricity. It's a geographic oddity that requires a 20-mile drive around Canada to reach mainland Washington state.

Local real estate agent Wayne Lyle, who like many of his neighbors has dual U.S.-Canadian citizenship, said some of Point Roberts' roughly 1,000 residents are signing a petition pleading with British Columbia's premier for an exemption to whatever retaliatory tariffs Canada may institute.

"We're basically connected to Canada. We're about as Canadian as an American city can be," Lyle said. "We're unique enough that maybe we can get a break."

Lyle, who serves as the president of the Point Roberts Chamber of Commerce, said it's too early to identify measurable effects, but he fears Canadians won't visit the popular summer getaway destination out of spite.

"We don't want Canada to think we're the bad guys," Lyle said. "Please don't take it out on us."

- Sally Ho in Seattle

Billings, Montana-Alberta

The 545-mile (877-kilometer) stretch of land that separates Montana from Canada includes some of the sleepest checkpoints on the binational border. Several of the state's border posts had fewer than 50 crossings a day on average last year.

But unseen, in underground pipelines that cut through vast fields of barley, flows about \$5 billion annually worth of Canadian crude oil and natural gas, most of it from Alberta. The lines traverse a continental pivot point -- Montana is the only state with rivers that drain into the Pacific Ocean, Gulf of Mexico and Canada's Hudson Bay -- and deliver to refineries around Billings.

"Canada is one of our major supply sources for oil across the United States," said Dallas Scholes, the government affairs director of Houston-based refinery company Par Pacific, which runs a processing facility along the Yellowstone River. "If tariffs are imposed on the oil and gas industry, ... it's not going to be good for consumers."

People in Montana drive long distances given its sprawling size and burn lots of natural gas through harsh winters, making its residents the highest energy consumers per capita in the U.S., according to federal data.

That means a 10% tax on Canadian energy resources would be felt broadly. The state's farmers would be among those hit more severely, given the large volumes of gasoline needed to run tractors and other equipment, according to Jeffrey Michael, director of the University of Montana's Bureau of Business and Economic Research.

"It will be painful, but there are larger concerns if I were an agricultural producer in Montana," Michael said. "I'd be worried about the trade war escalating to where my products start to get hit with reciprocal tariffs."

- Matthew Brown in Billings, Mont.

Detroit-Windsor, Ontario

The Detroit River is all that separates Windsor, Ontario, from Detroit. The cities are so close that De-

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troiters can smell the drying grain at Windsor's Hiram Walker distillery and Windsor can hear the music drifting from Detroit's outdoor concert venues.

Manufacturing muscle makes the Ambassador Bridge, the 1.4-mile-long span connecting the two cities, the busiest international crossing in North America. According to the Michigan company that owns the bridge, \$323 million worth of goods travel each day between Windsor and Detroit, the automotive capitals of their countries.

The U.S., Canada and Mexico have long operated as one nation when it comes to auto manufacturing, noted Pat D'Eramo, CEO of Vaughan, Ontario-based automotive supplier Martinrea. Tariffs will cause confusion and disruption, he said.

Right now, steel coils arrive at a plant in Michigan and get stamped into parts that are shipped to Martinrea in Canada. Martinrea uses the parts to build vehicle sub-assemblies that get shipped back to an automaker in Detroit.

It's unclear if parts would be taxed twice if they crossed the border multiple times, and if suppliers or their customers will have to pay for the tariffs. Also unclear is how a separate 25% levy on steel and aluminum that Trump said would take effect starting March 12 factors into the mix.

D'Eramo understands the impulse to strengthen U.S. manufacturing but says the U.S. doesn't have the capacity to make all the tooling Martinrea would need if it were to shift production there. At the end of the day, he thinks it's sad tariffs will take up so much time, energy and resources, and only make vehicles even more expensive.

"We need to be spending our time and money to get more efficient and reduce our costs so customers can reduce their costs," he said.

-Dee-Ann Durbin in Detroit

Buffalo, New York-Ontario

Buffalo, New York is, decidedly, a beer town. It's also a border town.

That makes for a complementary relationship. Western New York's dozens of craft breweries rely on Canada for aluminum cans and much of the malted grain that goes into their brews. Canadians regularly cross one of the four international bridges into the region to shop, go to sporting events and sip Buffalo's beers.

Brewers and other businesses fear there may be less of that, though, if the tariffs on Canada and aluminum go into effect. Trump's repeated comments about making the neighboring nation the 51st U.S. state already offended its citizens - so much so that Buffalo's tourism agency paused a campaign running in Canada because of negative comments.

"Obviously, having a bad taste in their mouth and booing the national anthem at sporting events is not a great thing for them coming down here and drinking our beer and hanging out in our city," said Jeff Ware, president of Resurgence Brewing Co.

The historic factory building housing Ware's business in Buffalo is about 4 miles from the Peace Bridge border crossing, where 1.8 million cars and buses and 518,000 commercial trucks entered Buffalo from Ontario last year.

It's a terrible time to alienate customers, Canadian or American. The snowy first months of the year are hard enough for Buffalo's breweries, Ware said. Higher prices from 25% tariffs would be yet another obstacle. Ware gets about 80% of the base malt he uses to make his specialty beers from Canada.

"Labor is more expensive, energy is more expensive, all of our raw ingredients are more expensive," he said. "It's death by a thousand cuts."

- Carolyn Thompson in Buffalo, N.Y.

Cutler, Maine-New Brunswick

Commercial lobsterman John Drouin has fished for Maine's signature seafood for more than 45 years, often in disputed waters known as the "grey zone" that straddle the U.S.-Canada border.

The relationship between American and Canadian fishermen can sometimes be fraught, but harvesters on both side of the border know they depend on each other, Drouin said. Maine fishermen catch millions

of pounds of lobsters every year, but much of the processing capacity for the valuable crustaceans is in Canada.

If Trump follows through with the threatened tariffs next week, lobsters sent to Canada for processing would be subject to customs duties when they return to the U.S. to go to market. Drouin fears what will happen to the lobster industry if the trade dispute persists and Canada enacts a retaliatory tariff on lobsters.

"As the price goes up to the consumer, there comes a point where it just doesn't become palatable for them to purchase it," Drouin said.

Drouin, 60, fishes out of Cutler, Maine, and sees Grand Manan Island, an island in the Bay of Fundy that is part of the province of New Brunswick, when he takes his boat out. He described his business as "right smack on the Canadian border" in terms of both economics and geography.

He described himself as a fan of Trump's first term who is "not overly thrilled with what he's been doing here." And he said he's concerned his home state could ultimately be hurt by the tariffs if the president isn't mindful of border industries such as his.

"The rhetoric is a bit much, what's taking place," Drouin said.

The Latest: Britain is hosting a summit of European leaders to shore up support for Zelenskyy

By The Associated Press undefined

Britain is hosting a summit of European leaders on Sunday to shore up support for Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy after an astonishing Oval Office blowout with President Donald Trump that left many uncertain where the once staunch allies stood.

The London meeting has now taken on greater importance in defending the war-torn ally and boosting the continent's defenses.

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, who is hosting the leaders of more than a dozen countries and other officials, embraced Zelenskyy on his arrival in London on Saturday, saying he is determined to find an end to Russia's war on Ukraine.

Starmer announced Sunday that Britain, France and Ukraine have agreed to work on a ceasefire plan to present to the United States — a plan that emerged, he said, in talks among the countries' leaders following the White House spat.

Here's the latest:

European leaders arrive for the summit

Leaders from around Europe are arriving at a summit in London to discuss the war in Ukraine and beefing up defenses across the continent.

Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk and NATO's new Secretary General Mark Rutte were among the first to arrive at Lancaster House in central London. British Prime Minister Keir Starmer also welcomed French President Emmanuel Macron with a hug at the entrance to the 19th century mansion near Buckingham Palace. The entrance was flanked with purple banners with the name of the summit: "Securing our Future."

Starmer said in advance that Britain, France and Ukraine have agreed to work on a ceasefire plan to present to the United States.

The summit will also include leaders from Germany, Denmark, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Canada, Finland, Sweden, the Czech Republic and Romania. The Turkish foreign minister, and the presidents of the European Commission and European Council will also attend.

Starmer briefs Baltic leaders about Ukraine peace efforts

Keir Starmer's office said he has updated the leaders of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania about his efforts to bring an end to the war in Ukraine.

Starmer held a joint call with Estonian President Alar Karis, Latvian Prime Minister Evika Siliņa of Latvia and Lituianian President Gitanas Nausėda in advance of a summit he's hosting of other European leaders to discuss the war.

"The Prime Minister updated them on his discussions with the leaders of Ukraine, France and the United

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States in recent days -- and underlined his focus on securing a lasting peace in Ukraine that ensures their future sovereignty, backed up by strong security guarantees," his office said.

Starmer's office says they agreed Europe must unite and "drive forward urgent action that will secure the best outcome, which will be vital for Europe's future security.

The Baltic nations are partners with the U.K. in a Joint Expeditionary Force, which can be deployed to support NATO.

Meloni says West must stay united in support of Ukraine

Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni told British Prime Minister Keir Starmer that the West must remain united in support of Ukraine.

Meloni says she is in London at a "precious moment" for a summit Sunday with the goal of achieving a lasting piece for Ukraine. "I think it is very, very important that we avoid the risk that the West divides," Meloni said. "On this the U.K. and Italy can play an important role in bridge-building."

Starmer told Meloni that they have a similar mindset on their approach over the conflict. Both leaders said they spoke with U.S. President Donald Trump on Saturday, a day after his talks collapsed in extraordinary fashion with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Meloni is a strong supporter of Ukraine and has a bond with Trump. She was the only European leader to attend his inauguration.

Russian drone attacks and Ukrainian shelling kill 2 people on each side of the front line, officials say

A Russian drone attack Sunday on the Ukrainian city of Kherson killed one person and wounded six, according to the city's military administration chief, Roman Mrochko.

Also in Ukraine's southern Kherson region, which was mostly occupied by Russia early in the war but later partially retaken by Ukrainian forces, a man was killed in another drone attack some 57 kilometers (35 miles) away in a village on the right bank of the Dnieper River, regional head Oleksandr Prokudin said Sunday.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the Dnieper River, Moscow-appointed officials in the Russian-occupied part of the Kherson region said Sunday that two people died in Ukrainian shelling.

Moscow sent 79 drones into Ukraine overnight into Sunday, Ukrainian officials said. According to Ukraine's Air Force, 63 drones were destroyed during the overnight attacks. A further 16 simulator drones were "lost," likely having been electronically jammed.

Russia's Defense Ministry said Sunday morning that 62 Ukrainian drones had been shot down over Russia over the previous 24 hours.

Norway vows to keep supplying US Navy vessels following reports that one company is ceasing them

Norway's defense minister says the country will continue to support U.S. Navy vessels in Norway, after reports surfaced that a private Norwegian company refuses to supply U.S. ships to protest the new U.S. policy toward Ukraine.

Norwegian Defense Minister Tore Sandvik said in a statement on Sunday such claims are "not in line with the Norwegian government's policy. I can confirm that all requested support has been provided."

"The U.S. and Norway maintain a close and strong defense cooperation," he added. "American forces will continue to receive the supply and support they require from Norway."

Reports spread online that fuel company company, Haltbakk Bunkers, announced on social media that it would stop supplying fuel to U.S. forces in Norway and American ships docking in Norwegian ports.

The post has since disappeared. But company CEO Gunnar Gran told the Norwegian state broadcaster NRK that it was true. "We follow our moral compass," he said.

Czech prime minister hopes the relationship between Trump and Zelenskyy can be repaired

Czech Prime Minister Petr Fiala says that only "military support for Ukraine" can lead to a just peace and that it's the only way forward to resolve Russia's war on Kyiv.

The diverging views that Europe and the U.S. have on Ukraine should be "a wake up call for us," he said. Fiala spoke before leaving for London on Sunday to take part in a summit of European leaders seeking to offer support for Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelenskyy in the wake of the White House spat.

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Fiala added that he hopes Donald Trump and Zelenskyy can repair their ties in the wake of the Oval Office blowout.

"None of us is happy about the conclusion of Friday's talks" between Trump and Zelenskyy, he added.

Russia's foreign minister slams the idea of European peacekeepers in Ukraine

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said Sunday that sending European peacekeepers to Ukraine would amount to a continuation of Europe's "incitement" of Ukraine to wage war against Russia.

European leaders, Lavrov said in comments published on the foreign ministry's website, "want to prop up (Zelenskyy) with their 'bayonets' in the form of peacekeeping units."

Lavrov also commented on the warming U.S.-Russia relations, describing negotiations between senior Russian and U.S. diplomats and other officials in Saudi Arabia in February as "a completely normal conversation between two delegations."

"We will never think alike on every issue of world politics. We acknowledged this in Riyadh," Lavrov said.

"Two serious countries simply sat down to talk about where they are going wrong, and what their predecessor messed up in four years," he added, accusing the Biden administration of "destroying all channels of contact without exception."

Polish prime minister says Europe should have confidence in its strength

Poland's Prime Minister Donald Tusk says he's flying to London with a message that Europe must believe that it can be a major military power.

Tusk told reporters at the airport before leaving Warsaw on Sunday that Europe has 2.6 million professional soldiers — more than the U.S., China or Russia — and that in the areas of combat aircraft and artillery it is also strong.

"Europe has an advantage over everyone here," Tusk said.

He added that he'd reiterate at the summit in London that Poland's support for Kyiv remains firm.

"Today in Europe there is a deficit of imagination and courage," he said. "Europe must understand its strength."

Kremlin spokesman says Russia's and US foreign policies are in alignment

With a thaw in U.S.-Russia relations, Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said the "foreign policy" alignment of the U.S. administration largely mirrors that of Moscow.

"The new (U.S.) administration is rapidly changing all foreign policy configurations. This largely coincides with our vision," Peskov said, according to a post by state TV reporter Pavel Zarubin on Sunday on the Telegram channel.

Peskov spoke on Wednesday, before the Zelenskyy-Trump blowout on Friday.

His remarks were seen as a follow-up on the U.S. splitting with its European allies by refusing to blame Russia for its invasion of Ukraine. In the U.N. General Assembly last week, the U.S. joined Russia in voting against a Europe-backed Ukrainian resolution that calls out Moscow's aggression and demands an immediate withdrawal of Russian troops.

Ties between Moscow and Washington had plummeted to their lowest levels since the Cold War after Russia illegally annexed Crimea from Ukraine in 2014 and invaded Ukraine in 2022.

European Commission chief says path to peace in Ukraine is a surge in Europe's defenses

The European Commission president, Ursula von der Leyen, says she will "highlight Europe's ongoing support to Ukraine" during the London summit on Sunday.

As she traveled to the United Kingdom, von der Leyen said the aim of the 27-nation bloc is to create a path "to a just and lasting peace in Ukraine."

Von der Leyen, the head of the EU's executive arm, wrote on the social network X: "The path to peace is strength. Weakness breeds more war. We will support Ukraine, while undertaking a surge in European defense."

Macron says Russia is a threat not just to Ukraine but also Europe

French President Emmanuel Macron says Russia must be stopped or it's likely to expand its military operations in Ukraine further west.

Macron told La Tribune Dimanche newspaper ahead of a summit in London that Vladimir Putin's ambi-

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tions pose an existential threat to Europe.

"We have an over-armed and aggressive Russia on our borders. It is carrying out terrorist actions and massive disinformation campaigns here and in Europe," Macron said. If Putin is not stopped, Macron said, "he will certainly move on to Moldova and perhaps beyond to Romania."

"It's our security that's at stake," Macron added.

"The clear destiny of the Americans is to be on the side of the Ukrainians, I have no doubt about that," he said. "I want the Americans to understand that disengagement from Ukraine is not in their interests."

Starmer says the UK, France and Ukraine will draft a ceasefire plan to present to the US

The British prime minister says the United Kingdom, France and Ukraine have agreed to work on a ceasefire plan to present to the United States.

Starmer says the plan emerged after talks among the four countries' leaders following President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's spat with President Donald Trump at the White House on Friday.

The prime minister told the BBC he believes the U.S. president wants a durable peace in Ukraine. He repeated his assertion that American security guarantees will be needed to make it stick.

London summit welcomes Europe leaders after stunning Oval Office spat

The meeting at Lancaster House, a 200-year-old elegant mansion near Buckingham Palace, follows a charm offensive last week to engage with Trump to tilt his allegiances toward Europe.

That offensive, however, devolved into a meltdown on live television from the Oval Office on Friday with Trump's extraordinary scolding of Zelenskyy.

It seemed to dash, at least for now, Ukrainian hopes that the United States could be locked in as a reliable partner in helping fend off, and conclude, Russia's three-year onslaught on Ukraine.

Sunday's summit will also include leaders from France, Germany, Denmark, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Spain, Turkey, Finland, Sweden, Czechia and Romania, as well as the NATO secretary-general and the presidents of the European Commission and European Council.

The summit on Sunday will also include leaders from France, Germany, Denmark, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Spain, Turkey, Finland, Sweden, Czechia and Romania, as well as the NATO secretary-general and the presidents of the European Commission and European Council.

Republicans once maligned Medicaid. Now some see a program too big to touch

By AMANDA SEITZ Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Every time a baby is born in Louisiana, where Republican House Speaker Mike Johnson handily won reelection last year, there's more than a 60% chance taxpayers will finance the birth through Medicaid.

In Republican Rep. David Valadao's central California district, 6 out of 10 people use Medicaid to pay for doctor visits and emergency room trips.

And one-third of the population is covered by Medicaid in GOP Sen. Lisa Murkowski's Alaska, one of the nation's costliest corners for health care.

Each of these Republicans — and some of their conservative colleagues — lined up last week to defend Medicaid, in a departure from long-held GOP policies. Republicans, who already have ruled out massive cuts to Social Security and Medicare, are turning their attention to siphoning as much as \$880 billion from Medicaid over the next decade to help finance \$4.5 trillion in tax cuts.

But as a deadline to avoid a partial government shutdown nears, hesitation is surfacing among Washington's Republican lawmakers — once reliable critics of lofty government social welfare programs such as Medicaid — who say that deep cuts to the health care program could prove too untenable for people back home.

"I've heard from countless constituents who tell me the only way they can afford health care is through programs like Medicaid," Valadao said on the House floor. "And I will not support a final reconciliation bill

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that risks leaving them behind.”

And on Wednesday, President Donald Trump, too, made his position on Medicaid clear: “We’re not going to touch it.”

States and the federal government jointly pay for Medicaid, which offers nearly-free health care coverage for roughly 80 million poor and disabled Americans, including millions of children. It cost \$880 billion to operate in 2023.

Johnson has ruled out two of the biggest potential cuts: paying fixed, shrunken rates to states for care and changing the calculation for the share of federal dollars that each state receives for Medicaid. Just a few years ago, Johnson spearheaded a report that lobbied for some of those changes during the first Trump administration.

Johnson insisted in a CNN interview that the focus will instead be ferreting out “fraud, waste and abuse, in Medicaid, although it’s unlikely to deliver the savings Republicans seek.

GOP pressure over Medicaid is mounting, with some state party leaders joining the calls to preserve the program. States are already struggling with the growing cost of sicker patients and could be left to cover more if the federal government pulls back. In some states, the federal government picks up over 80%.

More than a dozen Minnesota GOP lawmakers wrote the president recently warning that “too deep of a cut is unmanageable in any instance.” Gov. Joe Lombardo, R-Nev., told Congress in a letter that “proposed reductions would put lives at risk.” In Alaska, state Senate Majority Leader Cathy Giessel, a Republican and nurse, cited “huge concerns” during a floor speech.

Nationally, 55% of Americans said the government spends too little on Medicaid, according to a January poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

“It’s now a very popular program that touches a very broad cross-section of American society,” said Drew Altman, president of the health care research firm KFF. “Roughly half of the American people say that they or a family member have at one time been served by the program.”

Significant changes to Medicaid are still on the table. They have to be for Republicans get the savings they need to pay for tax cuts.

Work requirements, which could save as much as \$109 billion over the next decade, seem to have solid support among GOP members, with some individual Republican-led states already moving to implement them.

Republicans also could consider cuts in benefits or coverage, as well as eliminating a provider tax that states use to finance Medicaid, Altman added.

Democrats warn that reductions are inevitable and could be dire.

Starting Monday, TV ads will caution people across 20 congressional districts that hospitals are at risk of closing and millions of people could lose coverage if Republicans cut Medicaid “to fund massive tax cuts for Elon Musk and billionaires.” The Democratic super political action committee House Majority Forward has launched the seven-figure campaign.

Trump and Republicans have for years called to lower government spending on health care, but they have struggled to formulate a serious plan that gains traction. Trump, for example, has spent nearly a decade arguing for an overhaul of the Affordable Care Act. His efforts to repeal the Obama-era national health care law failed during his first term and in his most recent presidential campaign he offered only “concepts of a plan” to adapt the program.

Michael Cannon, a director of health studies at libertarian Cato Institute, believes Medicaid needs an overhaul because it is a significant part of the federal budget and a contributor to the nation’s growing debt.

But Republicans, he said, are not looking at serious ways to drive down the cost of health care.

“The only reason for the cuts right now is to pay for the tax cuts,” Cannon said. “None of them are talking about the need to do better health reform.”

Pope gets visit from Vatican secretary of state, says he's sharing the suffering of all sick people

By NICOLE WINFIELD and FRANCESCO SPORTELLI Associated Press

ROME (AP) — A stable Pope Francis had a visit Sunday from the Vatican secretary of state as he continued his recovery from double pneumonia, but again skipped his weekly noon blessing to avoid even a brief public appearance from the hospital.

Instead, the Vatican distributed a message from the pope in which he thanked his doctors for their care and well-wishers for their prayers, and prayed again for peace in Ukraine and elsewhere.

"From here, war appears even more absurd," Francis said in the message, which he drafted in recent days from the Gemelli hospital, the Vatican said. Francis said he was living his hospitalization as an experience of profound solidarity with people who are sick and suffering everywhere.

"I feel in my heart the 'blessing' that is hidden within frailty, because it is precisely in these moments that we learn even more to trust in the Lord," Francis said in the text. "At the same time, I thank God for giving me the opportunity to share in body and spirit the condition of so many sick and suffering people."

Signs point to a recovery

It marked the third weekend in a row that Francis has canceled the Sunday appointment delivering the Angelus prayer in person. He could have done so from his 10th floor hospital suite at the Gemelli hospital if he were well enough.

But many signs indicated he was improving, especially after a respiratory crisis on Friday afternoon that resulted in him inhaling vomit during a coughing fit and raising the possibility of new infection.

"The night was quiet, the pope is still resting," the Vatican said in its Sunday update. Francis was up, read the Sunday papers and had coffee and breakfast while continuing with his therapy.

Cardinal Pietro Parolin and his chief of staff, Archbishop Edgar Pena Parra, also called on the pope Sunday morning, their second visit since Francis' Feb. 14 hospitalization, according to the Vatican spokesman, Matteo Bruni. There were no details of what was discussed, but the mere visit suggested Francis' condition was stabilizing.

Doctors on Saturday reported that Francis was in stable condition, with no mention of him being critical, and managed to take "long periods" of time off the noninvasive mechanical ventilation he needed to recover after Friday's respiratory crisis.

The 88-year-old pope had a "good response" in his gas exchange levels even while off the ventilator mask Saturday and only using high-flow supplemental oxygen, the Vatican said.

He had no fever or signs of elevated white blood cells, which would signal his body was fighting a new infection.

The fact that Francis was able to use just high-flow oxygen for long periods, without any significant effect on the levels of oxygen in his blood, was a sign his respiratory function was improving.

Doctors were cautious however and kept his prognosis as guarded, meaning he wasn't out of danger. He was eating and drinking and continued his respiratory physiotherapy, and spent 20 minutes in his private chapel down the hall on Saturday, the Vatican said.

The pope, who had part of one lung removed as a young man, has lung disease and was admitted to Gemelli on Feb. 14 after a bout of bronchitis worsened and turned into a complex pneumonia in both lungs.

Prayers continued to pour in

Francis' hospitalization has come as the Vatican is marking its Holy Year, drawing pilgrims to Rome from all over. Many have added a pilgrimage destination to their itineraries so they can pray for Francis at the Gemelli hospital, which is around a 20-minute drive from the Vatican, longer in rush hour or on public transport.

The Rev. Riccardo Fumagalli had accompanied a group of young people from Milan to Rome for the Jubilee and would have attended Francis' Angelus prayer in St. Peter's Square on Sunday if he had delivered it as usual. Instead, they went to Gemelli.

"It seemed good to us to come here to express our closeness, especially of these teenagers, to be close

to the Holy Father to pray for him, to pray for this moment of illness," he said.

Cancer patient Antonino Cacace was also arriving Sunday at Gemelli from Milan for his own treatment, saying he has to undergo surgery in the coming days and was counting on Francis' prayers.

"I am glad the pope is giving me help," he said. "I am on the ninth (floor) and he is on the 10th (floor). I hope to meet him and see him," he said.

GOP pushes ahead with citizenship voting bill. Some state election officials say it's problematic

By CHRISTINA A. CASSIDY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The centerpiece election legislation from congressional Republicans would require voters to prove their citizenship when registering, raising concerns among state election officials about how it would be implemented and who would pay for it.

In recent interviews, secretaries of state from both parties said they were wary of federal lawmakers creating state election rules and of costly new procedures that would come with them, including collecting and storing sensitive documents. They also criticized a provision that would allow for civil or criminal penalties against any election official who registers someone without evidence of citizenship.

Maine Secretary of State Shenna Bellows said there is no federal database that states can use to confirm a person's citizenship status. Election officials described databases maintained by the Social Security Administration and Department of Homeland Security as unreliable.

"Reasonable people can agree that only citizens should be voting in our elections," said Bellows, a Democrat. "If they want us to prove citizenship, then they need to build the infrastructure for that to happen."

House Republicans are ready to act quickly

With the urging of President Donald Trump, House Republicans are expected to move quickly to advance the legislation, known as the Safeguard American Voter Eligibility Act. A proof of citizenship requirement was included in a package of priority bills that can bypass committee and head straight to a floor vote. That could happen as soon as this week, though the bill's prospects in the Senate are uncertain amid likely Democratic opposition.

State election officials said they generally support steps to ensure that only U.S. citizens are voting, an issue that typically involves a tiny fraction of ballots and is more often an individual mistake rather than an intentional and coordinated attempt to subvert an election. Debates largely center on how best to accomplish that, whether the responsibility should fall on the voter or whether the federal government should do a better job providing states with reliable data to verify citizenship status.

"Every time there's federal legislation, I've got concerns, especially when the feds talk about things that the states typically do on a year-by-year, day-to-day basis," said Kansas Secretary of State Scott Schwab, a Republican. "Just because you think it'll work in your state doesn't mean it will work in everybody else's state."

Republicans in Congress have said the current process for registering voters is filled with loopholes that have allowed people who are not U.S. citizens to vote in past elections and relies on a system in which voters sign an oath that they are a citizen.

Before the 2024 election, Trump pushed claims without evidence that such people might vote in large enough numbers to sway the outcome. In fact, voting by noncitizens is rare and can lead to felony charges and deportation.

Since his victory in November, Trump has continued to press for changes to how elections are run, including requiring proof of citizenship.

No money included and the threat of prosecution

Utah Lt. Gov. Deidre Henderson, a Republican who oversees elections in her state, said she was concerned about federal overreach and the legislation lacking the support states will need to make it work.

"It definitely shouldn't be on throwing election workers or secretaries of state or county clerks in jail for

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accidentally registering a noncitizen to vote when we don't have adequate tools to even verify citizenship," she said.

Another concern is funding. The bill does not include an appropriation, leaving states to cover the costs of its implementation. Federal money for elections has long been a point of contention for some election officials.

"If you talk to the vast majority of election officials, they will tell you that federal investment in our elections is sorely needed, especially if folks in Congress are going to be talking about things like the SAVE Act, which will only increase costs of running elections and increase federal oversight and involvement in our elections," said Michigan Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson, a Democrat.

Concerns about voters having the right documents

Voting rights groups have said married women who have changed their name could have trouble registering under the SAVE Act because their birth certificate lists their maiden name.

Those groups also have criticized the bill's requirement that people provide documents in person, saying that could be a challenge for people in rural parts of the country where visiting an election office might require a long drive and taking time off from work.

Under the current registration system, those seeking to register are asked to provide either a state driver's license number or the last four digits of their Social Security number and are directed to sign an oath swearing they are a U.S. citizen. A few states require a full Social Security number.

Republicans say states can add people to the voter rolls even if they do not provide that information and that some noncitizens can receive Social Security numbers and driver's licenses. The legislation outlines documents that could prove citizenship, including a REAL ID-compliant driver's license, a passport or a birth certificate.

It also allows for states to establish a way for voters to provide other supporting documents. Only about 50% of Americans have a passport, and adoption of REAL ID has been slow. As of January 2024, about 56% of driver's licenses and IDs in the U.S. were REAL ID-compliant, according to data collected by DHS.

State citizenship requirements have mixed results

Currently, eight states have laws requiring proof of citizenship for voters while lawmakers in 17 states have introduced legislation this year to add that requirement, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Experiences have been mixed. In Kansas, where a proof of citizenship requirement was in effect for three years, the state's own expert estimated that almost all the roughly 30,000 people who were prevented from registering to vote during that time were U.S. citizens eligible to vote.

Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger, a Republican, has said his state has been successful in establishing a system with the state's motor vehicle agency to verify citizenship. He and 20 other Republican secretaries of state sent a letter this past week asking the Department of Homeland Security to improve its database and eliminate fees for using it.

Arizona Secretary of State Adrian Fontes, a Democrat, described federal data as "totally unreliable" and pointed to an issue in his state, which has for years sought to implement a state-level proof of citizenship requirement. A recent state audit revealed instances in which U.S. passports might not prove citizenship because U.S. nationals – those born in U.S. territories – are eligible for passports but are not eligible to vote in U.S. elections.

"We've got so many issues to deal with and such a poor understanding of our own laws that I think a massive shift like this is just problematic," Fontes said. "I don't think Congress has taken the time to ask the folks who actually do this work if what they are proposing is workable in the first place. And that's dangerous, especially when you are criminalizing some of these activities."

Trump's next first speech to Congress is bound to have little resemblance to his last first one

By CALVIN WOODWARD Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The nation will hear a new president sing a far different tune in his prime-time address before Congress on Tuesday night. Some Americans will lustily sing along. Others will plug their ears.

The old tune is out — the one where a president declares “we strongly support NATO,” “I believe strongly in free trade” and Washington must do more to promote clean air, clean water, women’s health and civil rights.

That was Donald Trump in 2017.

That was back when gestures of bipartisanship and appeals to national unity were still in the mix on the night the president comes before Congress to hold forth on the state of the union. Trump, then new at the job, was just getting his footing in the halls of power and not ready to stomp on everything.

It would be three more years before Americans would see Democratic Rep. Nancy Pelosi of California, then the House speaker and his State of the Union host in the chamber, performatively rip up a copy of Trump’s speech in disgust over its contents.

On Tuesday, Americans who tune into Trump’s address will see whether he speaks to the whole country, as he mostly did in his first such speech in the chamber as president, or only to the roughly half who voted for him.

They will see also whether he hews to ceremony and common courtesies, as he did in 2017, or goes full bore on showmanship and incitement.

He comes into it days after assailing Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to his face and before the cameras in the Oval Office for not expressing sufficient gratitude for U.S. support in Ukraine’s war with Russia. It was a display of public humiliation by an American president to an allied foreign leader with no parallel in anyone’s memory.

Jarrett Borden, walking to lunch on Hollywood Boulevard in Hollywood, Florida, this past week, expressed ambivalence about Trump, having heard a lot of “hogwash” from him even while liking some of what he has done. Borden anticipates a good show Tuesday and will watch.

“I want to see if he’s going to leave the mic open for Elon Musk, like it’s an open mic at a club or something,” he said, citing the billionaire architect of Trump’s civil service purge. “This is what he’s been doing recently, which is comical.”

In Philadelphia, visual artist Nova Villanueva will spend Tuesday evening doing something — anything — else. She is into avoiding politics and social media altogether these fraught days.

“Yeah, it’s kind of sad,” she said. “It’s almost like I have to be ignorant to be at peace with myself and my life right now.”

A new president’s first speech to Congress is not designated a State of the Union address, coming so close to the Jan. 20 inauguration. But it serves the same purpose, offering an annual accounting of what has been done, what is ahead and what condition the country is in, as the president sees it.

It is customary in modern times for the president to say the state of the union is strong, no matter what a mess it may be in. Trump won the election saying the state of the union was in shambles and he was going to make it right.

The Trump who addressed Congress on Feb. 28, 2017, is recognizable now, despite the measured tone and content of that speech. After all, he had already shocked the political class by assailing “American carnage” from the inaugural stage.

He told Congress that night he wanted NATO members to spend more on their armed forces, wanted trade to be “fair” as well as free, and wanted foreign countries in crises to be made stable enough so that people who fled to the U.S. could go back home. But he did not open his first term with the wrenching turns in foreign policy, civil service firings, stirrings of mass deportation or cries of “drill, baby, drill” of today.

In a line that could have come from any president of either party, Trump noted in his 2017 speech that, “with the help of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, we have formed a council with our neighbors in Canada

to help ensure that women entrepreneurs have access to the networks, markets and capital they need to start a business and live out their financial dreams.”

Now he belittles Trudeau as “governor” of a land he wants to make the 51st state and is about to slam with tariffs, along with Mexico. Canadians, not known for displays of patriotism, are seething about their neighbor and rushing to buy and fly their flag.

In Philadelphia, small-time entrepreneur Michael Mangraviti cannot help but take some satisfaction in Trump’s scouring of the bureaucracy as the firings pile up with scant regard for how well people did their jobs or how those jobs helped keep services to the public running.

“He said for years and years, ‘Drain the swamp, drain the swamp,’” Mangraviti said. “But, you know, now is the time to actually drain the swamp.”

“We’ve seen time and time and time again that the government is horribly, horribly ineffective at everything it wants to do,” he went on. “The fact that they’re actually taking action on something that they say they’re going to do, the fact that they’re ready to take the ax and take it to our government, is something I appreciate.”

To Cassandra Piper, a Philadelphia instrumentalist, Trump’s move to stop making pennies was a “fine decision” — unlike everything else he has said and done.

“I comprehensively disapprove of the changes that are being made,” Piper said, stopping to speak while walking by the Liberty Bell Center. “Not that I was all too happy with the status quo beforehand in the first place, but there’s absolutely no good that can come from the inhumanity of mass deportation, something that this country has already been scarred by.”

So, too, with Trump’s selection of vaccination skeptic Robert F. Kennedy Jr. as health secretary and his choice of Musk to lead the effort to “effectively plunder the government of its resources,” in Piper’s view.

In Hollywood, Florida, Borden, who is Black, said that to the extent Trump can take money that Washington spends overseas and pump it into the U.S. economy, “then you are making America great again. But do that without the racial overtones. Do that without the negative energy, and we’re going to be OK.”

“I think the world is just the world, and we should all just love each other,” he said.

Abraham Lincoln might have agreed, as he summoned the “better angels of our nature” in an inaugural speech, a month before the Civil War, that pleaded with Americans not to “break our bonds of affection.”

Trump had something to say on that subject, too, in 2017: “We all bleed the same blood.”

Private lunar lander Blue Ghost aces moon touchdown with a special delivery for NASA

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — A private lunar lander carrying a drill, vacuum and other experiments for NASA touched down on the moon Sunday, the latest in a string of companies looking to kickstart business on Earth’s celestial neighbor ahead of astronaut missions.

Firefly Aerospace’s Blue Ghost lander descended from lunar orbit on autopilot, aiming for the slopes of an ancient volcanic dome in an impact basin on the moon’s northeastern edge of the near side.

Confirmation of successful touchdown came from the company’s Mission Control outside Austin, Texas, following the action some 225,000 miles (360,000 kilometers) away.

“You all stuck the landing. We’re on the moon,” Firefly’s Will Coogan, chief engineer for the lander, reported.

An upright and stable landing makes Firefly — a startup founded a decade ago — the first private outfit to put a spacecraft on the moon without crashing or falling over. Even countries have faltered, with only five claiming success: Russia, the U.S., China, India and Japan.

A half hour after landing, Blue Ghost started to send back pictures from the surface, the first one a selfie somewhat obscured by the sun’s glare. The second shot included the home planet, a blue dot glimmering in the blackness of space.

Two other companies’ landers are hot on Blue Ghost’s heels, with the next one expected to join it on the moon later this week.

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Blue Ghost — named after a rare U.S. species of fireflies — had its size and shape going for it. The squat four-legged lander stands 6-foot-6 (2 meters) tall and 11 feet (3.5 meters) wide, providing extra stability, according to the company.

Launched in mid-January from Florida, the lander carried 10 experiments to the moon for NASA. The space agency paid \$101 million for the delivery, plus \$44 million for the science and tech on board. It's the third mission under NASA's commercial lunar delivery program, intended to ignite a lunar economy of competing private businesses while scouting around before astronauts show up later this decade.

Firefly's Ray Allensworth said the lander skipped over hazards including boulders to land safely. Allensworth said the team continued to analyze the data to figure out the lander's exact position, but all indications suggest it landed within the 328-foot (100-meter) target zone in Mare Crisium.

The demos should get two weeks of run time, before lunar daytime ends and the lander shuts down.

It carried a vacuum to suck up moon dirt for analysis and a drill to measure temperature as deep as 10 feet (3 meters) below the surface. Also on board: a device for eliminating abrasive lunar dust — a scourge for NASA's long-ago Apollo moonwalkers, who got it caked all over their spacesuits and equipment.

On its way to the moon, Blue Ghost beamed back exquisite pictures of the home planet. The lander continued to stun once in orbit around the moon, with detailed shots of the moon's gray pockmarked surface. At the same time, an on-board receiver tracked and acquired signals from the U.S. GPS and European Galileo constellations, an encouraging step forward in navigation for future explorers.

The landing set the stage for a fresh crush of visitors angling for a piece of lunar business.

Another lander — a tall and skinny 15-footer (4 meters tall) built and operated by Houston-based Intuitive Machines — is due to land on the moon Thursday. It's aiming for the bottom of the moon, just 100 miles (160 kilometers) from the south pole. That's closer to the pole than the company got last year with its first lander, which broke a leg and tipped over.

Despite the tumble, Intuitive Machines' lander put the U.S. back on the moon for the first time since NASA astronauts closed out the Apollo program in 1972.

A third lander from the Japanese company ispace is still three months from landing. It shared a rocket ride with Blue Ghost from Cape Canaveral on Jan. 15, taking a longer, windier route. Like Intuitive Machines, ispace is also attempting to land on the moon for the second time. Its first lander crashed in 2023.

The moon is littered with wreckage not only from ispace, but dozens of other failed attempts over the decades.

NASA wants to keep up a pace of two private lunar landers a year, realizing some missions will fail, said the space agency's top science officer Nicky Fox.

"It really does open up a whole new way for us to get more science to space and to the moon," Fox said.

Unlike NASA's successful Apollo moon landings that had billions of dollars behind them and ace astronauts at the helm, private companies operate on a limited budget with robotic craft that must land on their own, said Firefly CEO Jason Kim.

Kim said everything went like clockwork.

"We got some moon dust on our boots," Kim said.

How to watch — and stream — the 2025 Oscars show and red carpet

LOS ANGELES (AP) — It's almost time to see how the biggest nailbiter Oscar season of recent years concludes.

Stars will converge at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood on Sunday for the 97th annual Academy Awards, which will undoubtedly see some first-time Oscar winners in top categories.

It's the second year the Oscars are starting earlier in the hope that the best picture award will be announced before audiences go to bed.

The best picture race has been a real horserace this year, with "Anora" and "Conclave" scooping up top awards at other shows in recent weeks. "Emilia Pérez," the leading nominee this year, has had its Oscar

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chances upended by the surfacing of racist tweets by star Karla Sofía Gascón, so it remains to be seen how often the divisive Netflix narco-musical has its name out after the envelopes are opened Sunday.

Here's how to watch and other key things to know before Sunday's show:

What time do the Oscars start?

The Oscars start at 7 p.m. Eastern, 4 p.m. PST. ABC is available with an antenna or through cable and satellite providers.

How can I stream the Oscars?

The show is being livestreamed this year on Hulu. It's also available on services offering live streaming of ABC such as Hulu Live TV, YouTubeTV, AT&T TV and FuboTV.

I don't live in the U.S. How can I watch the Oscars?

The Oscars are widely broadcast beyond the United States.

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences has a handy guide to dozens of international territories that have Oscar telecasts.

How can I watch the red carpet?

The Oscars red carpet is a major fashion showcase. Oscar nominees and winners from past, present and future pose and mingle ahead of the ceremony.

ABC will begin its red carpet pre-show at 6:30 p.m. Eastern, live on air and streaming on Hulu.

E! will kick off its show, "Live From E!: The Oscars," beginning at 4 p.m. Eastern.

The Associated Press will have a livestream of stars' arrivals available on APNews.com and YouTube.

What's likely to win and how can I watch the nominated films?

AP Film Writers Jake Coyle and Lindsey Bahr have made their predictions for this year's show. And for the first time, you can make your own predictions on APNews.

This year's nominees are widely available on streaming platforms. The AP has compiled a guide of where to watch, whether you're trying to cram a film in before the show or catching up after the awards.

Transgender women near Rome pray for Pope Francis, celebrate his outreach

By GIOVANNA DELL'ORTO Associated Press

TORVAIANICA, Italy (AP) — Moira Camila Garnica and a group of fellow migrant transgender women have been gathering at their parish church to pray for Pope Francis as he continues to battle pneumonia in a Rome hospital, about an hour away from this modest seaside town.

Many grew up Catholic in Argentina like Francis, and their prayers encompass gratitude for his outreach — several met him in person — as well as hope that the door he opened toward a doubly marginalized community will not be shut in the future.

"The biggest fear is that you never know how things will be in the future, should he no longer lead the church, that it might go backwards," said Garnica, 47. "We hope that the church will continue with this empathy, continue to be open to everyone, continue to help, because sometimes one person can take a big step forward and then others take three steps back."

Garnica and several other Latin American women, most sex workers who have been in Italy for a couple of decades, gathered for evening Mass in late February at the Blessed Immaculate Virgin Church. It was here they found food, medicine and basic financial assistance when Italy's strict COVID-19 lockdown rendered them unable to work, isolated and destitute.

The parish priest, the Rev. Andrea Conocchia, invited them to write letters to Francis outlining their needs. The Vatican's almoner office not only provided money but brought a few dozen of them to the Vatican for vaccines. Years later, some were invited to a lunch for the poor with the pope.

"In this Covid period, it was important that Pope Francis got inside the mind of transgender women, in the mind of the human beings that we are, and started to treat us like human beings, and that I think is the moment when faith or Christianity could embrace us," said Carla Segovia.

The 48-year-old woman, of Indigenous Bolivian descent, left her native Argentina as a college student

during its financial crisis more than 20 years ago. She has been working as a prostitute since she started to pay for her gender surgeries as a youth, and calls the violence and discrimination she has faced a tough test of "your potential to survive."

Now that Francis is ill, she said she wants to "transmit to him our strength, the same thing that he brought to us in the difficult time of the pandemic. We want to inoculate him with this strength that is so crucial – the fact that you need to fight for your life."

Gender transition is a controversial issue in many countries including the United States, where Catholic bishops reject it, and immigration is also roiling politics on both sides of the Atlantic. But Francis has made inclusion a hallmark of his papacy; specifically, the Vatican has stated it's permissible, under certain circumstances, for trans people to be baptized as Catholics and serve as godparents.

Segovia and other women in their community were involved in the church as children but later felt their identity and work pushed them away – until they came to the Torvaianica parish's food distribution site, during the pandemic lockdown.

"We Latin Americans are very Catholic, but being trans, many doors close, and people walk away from us, and we walk away too," Garnica said. "The word-of-mouth was that this church welcomed you, helped you, and I came to ask for help because I felt so alone."

So did Minerva, a Peruvian 54-year-old who asked only her professional name be used, her voice shaking with emotion as she recounted how the experience changed her life in town.

"We had no work, we had no money to buy food. A friend through word of mouth told me, go to the parish and knock, ask for Father Andrea. I came, I knocked, and like never before he opened his arms, he provided a support so big that still today he's helping us," Minerva said.

"He opened for us so many doors. At the beginning even here people didn't pay attention to us. Now, when they see us, they greet us."

For the Rev. Conocchia, helping this group of women is perfectly in line with the model of an open church reaching out to the margins that Francis has promoted, as well as the pope's famous "who am I to judge" approach to LGBTQ+ issues.

"We put the poor back at the center, we put people back at the center, and that's the Gospel," Conocchia said. "What matters to me is a person, a person's life and their story ... a person is never what they do."

He said the Vatican's more open attitude, as well as its concrete welcome for this group of women, can help abolish prejudices that religious people hold – since it's possible the women's clients might include people who attend Mass, he wryly noted.

For the women, who often are rejected by their own families, it's a moment of grace that went straight to the heart.

"A trans girl would have never imagined in her life that she could see the pope receive her, welcome her, and help her," Garnica said. "Already here people mistreat you for being Latin American, imagine Latin America and trans. ... But thanks to Father Andrea, people understood that we also have a heart, we also can contribute, we need the church, too."

Minerva was a First Communion catechist in her parish in Peru, until she said she was kicked out for her identity. In the Torvaianica sacristy, under a picture of Francis, she practiced singing a Spanish-language version of "Amazing Grace" in hopes of joining the local choir. One verse, that she likes to sing to Mary, is about coming out of the shadows and into the light.

"I am church – not part of the church, I am church because each one of us is church," she said.

Loss, worry and prayers for better days mark Ramadan's start as fragile ceasefire holds in Gaza

By MOHAMMAD JAHJOUH, WAFAA SHURAFa and MARIAM FAM Associated Press

JABALIYA, Gaza Strip (AP) — Before the war, the Muslim holy month of Ramadan was a festive time of increased worship, social gatherings and cheer for Fatima Al-Absi. Together with her husband, the resi-

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dent of Jabaliya in Gaza said she used to do Ramadan shopping, visit relatives and head to the mosque for prayers.

But the Israel-Hamas war has shredded many of the familiar and cherished threads of Ramadan as Al-Absi once knew it: her husband and a son-in-law have been killed, her home was damaged and burnt and the mosque she attended during Ramadan destroyed, she said.

"Everything has changed," she said on Saturday as her family observed the first day of Ramadan. "There's no husband, no home, no proper food and no proper life."

For Al-Absi and other Gaza residents, Ramadan started this year under a fragile ceasefire agreement that paused more than 15 months of a war that has killed tens of thousands of Palestinians and devastated the Gaza Strip. Compared to last Ramadan, many found relief in the truce — but there's also worry and fear about what's next and grief over the personal and collective losses, the raw wounds and the numerous scars left behind.

"I've lost a lot," said the 57-year-old grandmother, who's been reduced to eking out an existence amid the wreckage. "Life is difficult. May God grant us patience and strength," she added.

Israel cut off all aid and other supplies to Gaza on Sunday to pressure Hamas to accept a new proposal to extend the first phase of the ceasefire. Hamas accused Israel of trying to derail the existing ceasefire agreement, but both sides stopped short of declaring the truce over.

"We're scared because there's no stability," Al-Absi said and added that she's praying for the war to end and that she can't bear any more losses. She spoke before Israel announced the new proposal and the aid cutoff on Sunday.

Though Ramadan is still far from normal, some in the Gaza Strip said that, in some ways, it feels better than last year's.

"We can't predict what will happen next," Amal Abu Sariyah, in Gaza City, said before the month's start. "Yes, the country is destroyed and the situation is very bad, but the feeling that the shelling and the killing ... have stopped, makes you (feel) that this year is better than the last one."

Overshadowed by war and displacement, last Ramadan was "very bad" for the Palestinian people, she said. The 2024 Ramadan in Gaza began with cease-fire talks then at a standstill, hunger worsening across the strip and no end in sight to the war.

The war was sparked by the Oct. 7, 2023 attack on Israel in which Hamas-led militants killed some 1,200 people and took about 250 hostages. Israel's military offensive has killed over 48,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between combatants and civilians. Vast areas of Gaza have been destroyed.

Under the ceasefire, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians flooded back into northern Gaza. After initial relief and joy at returning to their homes — even if damaged or destroyed — they've been grappling with living amid the wreckage.

As Palestinians in the Gaza Strip prepared for Ramadan, shopping for essential household goods and food, some lamented harsh living conditions and economic hardships, but also said they rely on their faith in God to provide for them.

"I used to help people. ... Today, I can't help myself," said Nasser Shoueikh. "My situation, thank God, used to be better and I wasn't in need for anything. ... We ask God to stand by us."

For observant Muslims the world over, Ramadan is a time for fasting daily from dawn to sunset, increased worship, religious reflection, charity and good deeds. It often brings families and friends together in festive gatherings around meals to break their fast.

Elsewhere in the Gaza Strip, Fatima Barbakh, from the southern city of Khan Younis, said her Ramadan shopping was limited to the essentials.

"We can't buy lanterns or decorations like we do every Ramadan," she said.

Back in Jabaliya, Al-Absi bitterly recalled how she used to break her fast with her husband, how much she misses him and how she remembers him when she prays.

"We don't want war," she said. "We want peace and safety."

Miami Beach mayor says no to getting back together a year after breaking up with spring breakers

By DAVID FISCHER Associated Press

MIAMI BEACH, Fla. (AP) — Miami Beach broke up with spring break last year and city leaders still aren't interested in couples counseling.

Officials recently announced they were bringing back enhanced security measures for practically the entire month of March, including parking restrictions and increased fees for nonresidents.

The new rules were introduced last year after three consecutive years of spring break violence. The city is again warning visitors to expect curfews, bag searches at the beach, early beach closures, DUI checkpoints and arrests for drug possession and violence.

"Last year's spring break was a success on any level you measure it," Miami Beach Mayor Steven Meiner said. "We had zero fatalities, zero shootings, zero stampedes. The majority of our businesses did very well and actually thanked us for the measures we took."

Most spring break activity centers around a 10-block stretch of Ocean Drive known for its Art Deco hotels, restaurants and nightclubs. Before spring break last year, city officials launched a marketing campaign that said, "Miami Beach Is Breaking Up With Spring Break." A video featured residents "breaking up" with spring breakers and warning them to expect restrictions if they decided to come anyway.

This year, officials followed up with a "Reality Check" video featuring a group of young people on a fictitious reality show having their spring break ruined by the city's enhanced rules.

"We broke up a spring break," Meiner said. "Some people ask, are you getting back together? No, we're done."

City leaders want visitors to come and enjoy the beaches, hotels and restaurants, as long as they behave, Meiner said, noting that overall hotel occupancy actually increased in 2024 over 2023.

"And that's because when you walked around Ocean Drive and South Beach, you felt welcoming, you felt safe," Meiner said.

Other Florida cities struggle with spring break crowds

Miami Beach isn't the only Florida city bracing for spring breakers this year. Orlando, Fort Lauderdale, Miami and Tampa are among the top 10 domestic spring break destinations, according to AAA booking data.

Following a particularly rowdy Presidents Day weekend in Daytona Beach, Volusia County Sheriff Mike Chitwood recently announced plans to crack down on bad behavior from spring breakers.

"They don't bring any financial benefit," Chitwood said. "All they do is bring chaos, and if they want to bring chaos, I am going to bring chaos in return."

Businesses have mixed reactions

Some Miami Beach business owners see the restrictions as necessary to ensure public safety, while others are concerned that driving away spring breakers could irreparably damage Miami Beach's status as an iconic tourist destination.

Louis Taic, owner of the Z Ocean Hotel, said he welcomes visitors to Miami Beach any time of the year, but he understands why city officials have taken to actions that they have.

"What we don't like is people that take advantage of Miami Beach, that take advantage by doing things here that they would never do at home," Taic said.

David Wallack, owner of Mango's Tropical Cafe, said Miami Beach has thrived as an entertainment destination for nearly a century, even through Prohibition and the Great Depression.

Instead of trying to scare people away, city officials need to organize events such as concerts, art festivals and sporting events to attract people who will spend money, Wallack said.

"Miami Beach is magical, but you've got to still give customers what they want," Wallack said.

Are restrictions linked to race?

Some civil rights advocates believe the restrictions are racially motivated.

South Beach became popular among Black tourists about two decades ago as promoters organized Urban Beach Week during the Memorial Day weekend. Many locals have complained about violence and

other crime associated with the event, which led to an increased police presence. But the event's continued popularity correlates to a bump in Black tourism throughout the year.

Stephen Hunter Johnson, an attorney and member of Miami-Dade's Black Affairs Advisory Board, said city leaders are using a brief spike in violence as an excuse to discourage Black visitors.

Most of the problems experienced by Miami Beach in recent years began during the pandemic, when Florida remained open while other popular tourist destinations around the U.S. were locked down, and officials are unfairly crediting the new spring break restrictions with decreasing violence last year, Johnson said.

"Arrests were down, and no one was shot," Johnson said. "Those things were going to occur anyway, because the farther we get away from COVID restrictions, the more normalized things are."

Meiner has repeatedly rejected the notion that the restrictions are racially motivated. He always hates the idea of anyone getting injured, but as an elected official he feels an additional sense of responsibility when people are shot and killed in the city he serves, he said.

"We are going to keep people safe," Meiner said. "Law and order is the number one priority in our city. There is no compromising on that."

Iraq's displaced Kurds hope to return home after Turkey's Kurdish militants declare a ceasefire

By STELLA MARTANY Associated Press

GUHARZE, Iraq (AP) — Iraqi Kurdish villagers, displaced by fighting between Turkish forces and Kurdish militants that has played out for years in northern Iraq, are finally allowing themselves to hope they will soon be able to go home.

Their hopes were raised after the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, on Saturday declared a ceasefire in the 40-year insurgency against the Turkish government, answering a call to disarm from earlier in the week by the group's leader, Abdullah Ocalan, imprisoned in Turkey since 1999.

The truce — if implemented — could not only be a turning point in neighboring Turkey but could also bring much needed stability to the volatile region spanning the border between the two countries.

In northern Iraq, Turkish forces have repeatedly launched blistering offensives over the past years, pummeling PKK fighters who have been hiding out in sanctuaries in Iraq's northern semi-autonomous Kurdish region, and have set up bases in the area. Scores of villages have been completely emptied of their residents.

A home left decades ago

Adil Tahir Qadir fled his village of Barchi, on Mount Matin in 1988, when Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein launched a brutal campaign against the area's Kurdish population.

He now lives in a newly built village — also named Barchi, after the old one that was abandoned — about 2 kilometers (1.2 miles) away, south of the mountain.

He used to go back to the old village every now and then to farm his land. But that stopped in 2015 when Turkish forces moved in and set up camp there in the fight against PKK, hitting the group with wave after wave of airstrikes.

Iraqi Kurdish farmers and their lands became collateral damage. The Turkish airstrikes and ground incursions targeting PKK positions displaced thousands of Iraqi Kurdish civilians, cutting off many from their land.

"Because of Turkish bombing, all of our farmlands and trees were burned," Qadir said.

If peace comes, he will go back right away, he says. "We wish it will work so we can return."

Fighting emptied out villages in Iraq

In the border area of Amedi in Iraq's Dohuk province — once a thriving agricultural community — around 200 villages had been emptied of their residents by the fighting, according to a 2020 study by the regional Iraqi Kurdish government.

Small havens remained safe, like the new Barchi, with only about 150 houses and where villagers rely on sesame, walnuts and rice farming. But as the fighting dragged on, the conflict grew ever closer.

"There are many Turkish bases around this area," said Salih Shino, who was also displaced to the new Barchi from Mount Matin.

"The bombings start every afternoon and intensify through the night," he said. "The bombs fall very close ... we can't walk around at all."

Airstrikes have hit Barchi's water well and bombs have fallen near the village school, he said.

Najib Khalid Rashid, from the nearby village of Belava, says he also lives in fear. There are near-daily salvos of bombings, sometimes 40-50 times, that strike in surrounding areas.

"We can't even take our sheep to graze or farm our lands in peace," he said.

Ties to Kurdish brethren in Turkey

Iraqi Kurdish villagers avoid talking about their views on the Kurdish insurgency in Turkey and specifically the PKK, which has deep roots in the area. Turkey and its Western allies, including the United States, consider the PKK a terrorist organization.

Still, Rashid went so far as to call for all Kurdish factions to put aside their differences and come together in the peace process.

"If there's no unity, we will not achieve any results," he said.

Ahmad Saadullah, in the village of Guharze, recalled a time when the region was economically self-sufficient.

"We used to live off our farming, livestock, and agriculture," he said. "Back in the 1970s, all the hills on this mountain were full of vines and fig farms. We grew wheat, sesame, and rice. We ate everything from our farms."

Over the past years, cut off from their farmland, the locals have been dependent on government aid and "unstable, seasonal jobs," he said. "Today, we live with warplanes, drones, and bombings."

Farooq Safar, another Guharze resident, recalled a drone strike that hit in his back yard a few months ago.

"It was late afternoon, we were having dinner, and suddenly all our windows exploded," he said. "The whole village shook. We were lucky to survive."

Like others, Safar's hopes are sprinkled with skepticism — ceasefire attempts have failed in the past, he says, remembering similar peace pushes in 1993 and 2015.

"We hope this time will be different," he said.

Syrians begin fasting during first Ramadan without Assad family rule in decades

By ABDULRAHMAN SHAHEEN Associated Press

DAMASCUS, Syria (AP) — Some restaurants and coffee shops in Syria were closed during the day Saturday while others opened as usual as observant Muslims began fasting during the holy month of Ramadan, the first since the fall of Assad family rule in the war-torn country.

Syria's interim Ministry of Religious Endowments reportedly called for all restaurants, coffee shops and street food stands be closed during the day and that people must not eat or drink in public or face punishment. Those who violate the rule could get up to three months in jail. However, it did not appear that any official order had been issued by the government to that effect.

Associated Press journalists who toured Damascus on Saturday said some coffee shops were opened but had their windows closed so that people can't see who is inside.

Insurgents led by the Islamist Hayat Tahrir al-Sham group, or HTS, overthrew President Bashar Assad's secular government in early December ending the 54-year Assad family dynasty. Since then, Syria's new Islamist government under former insurgent leader Ahmad al-Sharaa, has been in control and many fear that the country could turn into an Islamic state, although al-Sharaa has so far promised to respect religious minorities.

Under Assad's rule during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, when observant Muslims abstain from eating and drinking from sunrise to sunset, people were allowed to eat in public. This year, many people are abstaining from eating in public fearing reprisals.

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"Ramadan this year comes with a new flavor. This is the Ramadan of victory and liberation," said interim Minister of Religious Affairs Hussam Haj-Hussein in a televised statement.

Most countries around the world, including Saudi Arabia, Indonesia and Kuwait began observing Ramadan on Saturday, while a few other countries such as Malaysia and Japan, as well as some Shiite Muslims, will begin the fast on Sunday.

In many parts of the region, the holy month this year is bittersweet. Lebanese this year mark Ramadan after the 14-month Israel-Hezbollah war ended with a U.S.-brokered ceasefire that went into effect in late November.

In the Gaza Strip, a fragile ceasefire deal, which has paused over 15 months of war between Israel and Hamas, nears the end of its first phase, and many Palestinians ate their first iftar in the middle of the rubble where their houses used to be.

"This year, after the fall of the regime, there are many confirmations regarding the prohibition of publicly breaking the fast, with violators facing imprisonment," said Damascus resident Munir Abdallah. "This is something new, good and respectable, meaning that the rituals of Ramadan should be fully observed in all their aspects."

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar; the month cycles through the seasons. The start of the month traditionally depends on the sighting of the crescent moon.

The actual start date may vary among Muslim communities due to declarations by multiple Islamic authorities around the globe on whether the crescent has been sighted or different methodologies used to determine the start of the month.

The fast breaking meal is known as iftar and usually family members and friends gather at sunset to have the main meal. Muslims eat a pre-dawn meal, called "suhoor," to hydrate and nurture their bodies ahead of the daily fast.

The holy month is also a time when Islamic and charitable organizations frequently provide meals for those unable to afford their own.

In the Iraqi capital of Baghdad, Bashar al Mashhadani, imam of the Sheikh Abdulqadir al Gailani Mosque in Baghdad said the mosque was preparing to serve 1,000 free meals per day to people coming to break their fast.

Ramadan is followed by the Islamic holiday of Eid al-Fitr, one of Islam's most important feasts.

Anti-DOGE protests at Tesla stores target Elon Musk's bottom line

By RODRIQUE NGOWI and JONATHAN J. COOPER Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — Demonstrators gathered outside Tesla stores across the U.S. Saturday to protest the automaker's billionaire CEO, Elon Musk, and his push to slash government spending on behalf of President Donald Trump.

The demonstrations are part of a growing backlash in North America and Europe to Musk's disruptive role in Washington.

Critics of Trump and Musk hope to discourage and stigmatize purchases of Tesla, the electric car company that is the world's most valuable automaker. Liberal groups for weeks have organized anti-Tesla protests in hopes of galvanizing opposition to Musk's Department of Government Efficiency and energizing Democrats still demoralized by Trump's November victory.

"We can get back at Elon," said Nathan Phillips, a 58-year-old ecologist from Newton, Massachusetts, who was protesting in Boston on Saturday. "We can impose direct economic damage on Tesla by showing up at showrooms everywhere and boycotting Tesla and telling everyone else to get out, sell your stocks, sell your Teslas."

Musk is taking direction from Trump to slash federal spending and sharply reduce the workforce, arguing that Trump's victory gave the president and him a mandate to restructure the U.S. government. DOGE officials have swiftly gained access to sensitive databases, directed thousands of federal job cuts, canceled contracts and shut down sections of the government, including the U.S. Agency for International

Development.

Musk's critics say his actions defy Congress's power to control the U.S. budget and present a host of ways for him to enrich himself. Musk leads several other companies, notably SpaceX, which conducts launches for NASA and the intelligence community, and the social media platform X.

"Protests will not deter President Trump and Elon Musk from delivering on the promise to establish DOGE and make our federal government more efficient and more accountable to the hardworking American taxpayers across the country," said White House spokesperson Harrison Fields.

Tesla did not respond to an emailed request for comment.

More than 50 demonstrations were listed Saturday on the website Tesla Takedown, with more planned later in March from coast to coast in the United States along with England, Spain and Portugal. News reports showed demonstrations in recent days in U.S. cities including Tucson, Arizona; St. Louis; New York City; Dayton, Ohio; Charlotte; and Palo Alto, California.

Some Tesla owners have also reported their vehicles vandalized with spray painted swastikas amid what Jewish groups and observers fear is a rise in antisemitism.

Federal prosecutors charged a woman in connection with a string of vandalism against a Colorado Tesla dealership, which included Molotov cocktails being thrown at vehicles and the words "Nazi cars" spray painted on the building.

Saturday's demonstration in Boston had a festive atmosphere, with a brass band playing music as protesters carried signs and chanted. Several of the signs mocked Musk and DOGE, with one reading: "Stop Elon and his despicable Muskrats."

"This government led by Trump and Musk, it's gone completely off the rails and we are here to stop that," said Carina Campovasso, a retired federal worker. "And I hope they listen."

About 300 demonstrators protested at a Tesla dealership in New York City on Saturday. Police said nine people were taken into custody but did not elaborate on the charges they faced.

Tesla's share price has fallen by nearly a third since Trump took office, though it's still higher than it was a year ago. Musk's current net worth is an estimated \$359 billion, according to Forbes, which calculated his 2024 net worth as \$195 billion.

Manfred considering petition to have Rose posthumously removed from ineligible list, AP source says

By JAY COHEN AP Baseball Writer

Baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred is considering a petition to have Pete Rose posthumously removed from Major League Baseball's ineligible list, according to a person familiar with the situation.

The person spoke to the AP on Saturday night on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the conversations.

ESPN was the first to report on the reinstatement petition filed by Jeffrey Lenkov, a Southern California lawyer who represented Rose prior to his death at age 83 in September.

Lenkov attended a Dec. 17 meeting with Rose's daughter, Fawn, Manfred and MLB executive Pat Courtney in the commissioner's office. The petition was filed Jan. 8.

A message was left by the AP on Saturday night seeking comment from Lenkov.

A 17-time All-Star, Rose is baseball's career leader with 4,256 hits. He also holds the major league record for games played (3,562) and plate appearances (15,890). He was the 1973 National League MVP and played on three World Series winners.

An investigation for MLB by lawyer John M. Dowd found Rose placed numerous bets on the Cincinnati Reds to win from 1985-87 while playing for and managing the team. Rose agreed with MLB on a permanent ban in 1989.

Lenkov told ESPN he is seeking Rose's removal from the banned list "so that we could seek induction into the National Baseball Hall of Fame, which had long been his desire and is now being sought posthumously by his family." He described Manfred as respectful, gracious and an active participant during their

one-hour meeting in December.

Under a rule adopted by the Hall's board of directors in 1991, anyone on the permanently ineligible list can't be considered for election to the Hall.

Rose applied for reinstatement in 1997 and met with Commissioner Bud Selig in November 2002, but Selig never ruled on Rose's request. Manfred in 2015 denied Rose's application for reinstatement.

President Donald Trump posted on social media on Friday night that he plans to issue "a complete PARDON of Pete Rose." Trump posted on Truth Social that Rose "shouldn't have been gambling on baseball, but only bet on HIS TEAM WINNING."

Trump did not specifically mention Rose's tax case in which Rose pleaded guilty in 1990 to two counts of filing false tax returns and served a five-month prison sentence.

The president said he would sign a pardon for Rose "over the next few weeks."

Judge rules head of watchdog agency must keep his job, says Trump's bid to oust him was unlawful

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The head of a federal watchdog agency must remain in his job, a judge in Washington ruled on Saturday, saying President Donald Trump's bid to remove the special counsel was unlawful.

U.S. District Judge Amy Berman Jackson sided with Hampton Dellinger, who leads the Office of Special Counsel, in a legal battle over the president's authority to oust the head of the independent agency that's likely headed back to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Dellinger sued Trump last month after he was fired, even though the law says special counsels can be removed by the president "only for inefficiency, neglect of duty, or malfeasance in office." Jackson, who was nominated to the bench by Democratic president Barack Obama, quickly reinstated Dellinger in the job while he pursued his case.

Jackson rejected the Trump administration's claims that the special counsel's removal protections are unconstitutional because they prevent the president from rightfully installing his preferred agency head.

The judge said allowing the president to remove the special counsel at will would have a chilling effect on his crucial duties, which include guarding the federal workforce from illegal personnel actions, such as retaliation for whistleblowing.

"The Special Counsel is supposed to withstand the winds of political change and help ensure that no government servant of either party becomes the subject of prohibited employment practices or faces reprisals for calling out wrongdoing — by holdovers from a previous administration or by officials of the new one," Jackson wrote in her decision.

The Justice Department quickly filed court papers indicating it will challenge the ruling to Washington's federal appeals court. The case has already gone up once to the Supreme Court, which previously temporarily allowed Dellinger to remain in his job.

The ruling comes as Dellinger is challenging the removal of probationary workers who were fired as part of the Trump administration's massive overhaul of the government. A federal board on Tuesday halted the terminations of several probationary workers after Dellinger said their firings may have been unlawful.

"I'm glad and grateful to see the court confirm the importance and legality of the job protections Congress afforded my position," Dellinger said in a statement on Saturday. "My efforts to protect federal employees generally, and whistleblowers in particular, from unlawful treatment will continue."

The judge said the special counsel has a "unique status and mission," which requires independence from the president to ensure he can carry out his responsibilities. The office investigates whistleblower claims of reprisal, can pursue disciplinary action against employees who punish whistleblowers and provides a channel for employees to disclose government wrongdoing.

"If I don't have independence, if I can be removed for no good reason, federal employees are going to have no good reason to come to me," Dellinger told reporters outside Washington's federal courthouse after a recent hearing.

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The Office of Special Counsel is also responsible for enforcing the Hatch Act, which restricts the partisan political activities of government workers. Dellinger's firing came as Trump administration employees have touted their support on social media for his policies even though the Hatch Act is meant to restrict political advocacy while on duty.

The Justice Department employed sweeping language in urging the Supreme Court last month to allow the termination of the head of an obscure federal agency with limited power. Acting Solicitor General Sarah Harris wrote in court papers that the lower court had crossed "a constitutional red line" by blocking Dellinger's firing and stopping Trump "from shaping the agenda of an executive-branch agency in the new administration's critical first days."

Dellinger was appointed by Democratic President Joe Biden and confirmed by the Senate to a five-year term in 2024.

Lifelong New York civil rights advocate and NAACP leader Hazel Dukes dies at 92

By SEJAL GOVINDARAO Associated Press

Hazel Dukes, the president of the New York State chapter of the NAACP and lifelong civil rights advocate, died Saturday at the age of 92.

Dukes peacefully passed away in her New York City home surrounded by family, her son, Ronald Dukes, said in a statement.

Dukes, who led the New York State NAACP for nearly five decades, fought tirelessly for voting rights, economic development, fair housing and education through her career. Even in her 90s, she spoke out against police brutality and for adequate health care in underserved neighborhoods, the NAACP's New York State chapter said in a statement.

In 2023, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton presented Dukes with the NAACP's highest honor — the Spingarn Medal.

"I'm not tired yet," Dukes said in her acceptance speech for the award. She added that she would continue her advocacy and empower the next generation of NAACP leaders.

Dukes helped lay the foundation for Black women to ascend to the nation's highest offices. In 1972, she took the stage at the Democratic National Convention to second the presidential candidacy of Shirley Chisholm, the first Black woman to run for the party's nomination.

Dukes was instrumental in former President Joe Biden's decision to choose a Black woman as his 2020 running mate, she noted in an interview with CBS last year. Her career-long fight was bookended by former Vice President Kamala Harris' 2024 bid for the presidency.

In a post in X Saturday, Harris called Dukes one of the heroes "upon whose broad shoulders we stand."

"I'm just proud of Kamala. I'm just excited if I can live to see this happen. It would be the joy of my life," Dukes said in the CBS interview.

Dukes was the president of her own consulting firm. She also served as the member of the NAACP National Board of Directors. Leaders of the NAACP said in a statement Saturday that Dukes was a "living embodiment" of the NAACP and that her legacy has touched every aspect of the movement.

New York City Mayor Eric Adams ordered flags to be lowered at half-staff as a tribute to Dukes.

Trump signs order designating English as the official language of the US

By MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

President Donald Trump signed on Saturday an executive order designating English as the official language of the United States.

The order allows government agencies and organizations that receive federal funding to choose whether to continue to offer documents and services in language other than English.

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It rescinds 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.

"Establishing English as the official language will not only streamline communication but also reinforce shared national values, and create a more cohesive and efficient society," according to the order.

"In welcoming new Americans, a policy of encouraging the learning and adoption of our national language will make the United States a shared home and empower new citizens to achieve the American dream," the order also states. "Speaking English not only opens doors economically, but it helps newcomers engage in their communities, participate in national traditions, and give back to our society."

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 Saturday, 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 in 2021.

Grammy-nominated R&B singer Angie Stone dies in car crash

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP) — Grammy-nominated R&B singer Angie Stone, a member of the all-female hip-hop trio The Sequence and known for the hit song "Wish I Didn't Miss You," was killed early Saturday in a car crash. She was 63.

About 4 a.m., the vehicle she was riding in back to Atlanta from Alabama "flipped over and was subsequently hit by a big rig," music producer and Stone's longtime manager Walter Millsap III told The Associated Press in an email.

Everyone else in the cargo van survived except Stone, he said.

The Alabama Highway Patrol said in a news release that the 2021 Mercedes-Benz Sprinter van turned over on Interstate 65 about 4:25 a.m. Saturday before being hit by a 2021 Freightliner Cascadia truck driven by a 33-year-old man from Texas.

Angie Stone was pronounced dead at the scene, the highway patrol said. The crash was about 5 miles (8 kilometers) south of the Montgomery city limits.

The Sprinter driver and seven others in the van were taken to Baptist Medical Center for treatment. Officials continue to investigate the cause.

Millsap said he learned the news from Angie Stone's daughter, Diamond, and longtime The Sequence member Blondy.

"Never in a million years did we ever expect to get this horrible news," Angie Stone's children, Diamond and Michael Archer, said in a statement shared by the SRG Group. "We are still trying to process and are completely heartbroken."

Millsap added: "We are truly devastated by this unexpected and unfortunate tragedy and there are simply no words to express how we feel."

Stone was scheduled to perform at the halftime show of the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association men's Championship basketball game on Saturday. CIAA Chaplain Pastor Jerome Barber called for a moment of silence at the game.

CIAA Commissioner Jacqie McWilliams-Parker said they were heartbroken by the loss. "She used her incredible talent, passion, and presence to inspire and touch us with strength and hope," Parker said.

The singer-songwriter created hits like "No More Rain (In This Cloud)" which reached No. 1 for 10 weeks

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on Billboard's Adult R&B airplay chart, "Baby" with legendary soul singer Betty Wright, another No. 1 hit, and "Wish I Didn't Miss You" and "Brotha."

Stone found a sweet spot in the early 2000s as neo-soul begin to dominate the R&B landscape with the emergence of singers like Erykah Badu, Jill Scott, Maxwell and D'Angelo.

Her 2001 album "Mahogany Soul" reached No. 22 on the Billboard 200, while 2007's "The Art Of Love & War" peaked at No. 11.

The church-grown singer was born in Columbia, South Carolina. She helped form The Sequence, the first all-female group on the hip-hop trailblazing imprint Sugar Hill Records, becoming one of the first female groups to record a rap song.

The group recorded "Funk You Up," which has been sampled by numerous artists, including Dr. Dre. After finding success in the early 1980s, Stone later joined the trio Vertical Hold before launching her solo career.

Stone came from a musical family

Music had been a part of her life since she was a child, with her mother singing around the house and her father singing gospel and blues at spots around town, Stone told the AP in 1999 interview.

"I'm an only child, so my dad and my mom are my life, and when I was I kid I'd look up to my dad," she told the AP. "He was very influential in what I wanted to do."

Years later, after being hospitalized for congestive heart failure, she changed her life, dropped more than 40 pounds and started eating better, she told the AP. At the time, she said she was just happy to be alive and making music.

"I feel complete. I have a new love, a new album, a new outlook and a newfound joy. A few years ago, I was unhappy, depressed, not happy with the label's efforts to market me. I had to still manage to uplift my audience," she told the AP in 2007. "Now I feel like I'm on my way to a happily ever after. I've been in the business since 1979. I've grugged and drugged. ... Now I can finally say I feel I've arrived and mean it."

A Soul Train Lady of Soul winner, Stone went on to showcase her acting chops with film roles in "The Hot Chick" starring Rob Schneider, "The Fighting Temptations" which starred Cuba Gooding Jr. and Beyoncé, and "Ride Along" led by Ice Cube and Kevin Hart.

She also hit the Broadway stage as Big Mama Morton in "Chicago," and she showcased her vulnerability on the reality TV shows "Celebrity Fit Club" and "R&B Divas: Atlanta."

David Johansen, singer from the seminal punk band the New York Dolls, dies at 75

By MARK KENNEDY AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — David Johansen, the wiry, gravelly-voiced singer and last surviving member of the glam and protopunk band the New York Dolls who later performed as his campy, pompadoured alter ego, Buster Poindexter, has died. He was 75.

Johansen died Friday at his home in New York City, Jeff Kilgour, a family spokesperson told The Associated Press. It was revealed in early 2025 that he had stage 4 cancer and a brain tumor.

The New York Dolls were forerunners of punk and the band's style — teased hair, women's clothes and lots of makeup — inspired the glam movement that took up residence in heavy metal a decade later in bands like Faster Pussycat and Mötley Crüe.

"When you're an artist, the main thing you want to do is inspire people, so if you succeed in doing that, it's pretty gratifying," Johansen told The Knoxville News-Sentinel in 2011.

Guitarist Steve Stevens, a kid from Queens who went on to work with Billy Idol and Robert Palmer, said the Dolls were never about technique: "It was always about the sound of the subway, the stinking, overflowing garbage cans, the misfits of Times Square. The Dolls did it to perfection. Safe travels David Johansen," he wrote on X.

'Mutant children of the hydrogen age'

Rolling Stone once called the Dolls "the mutant children of the hydrogen age" and Vogue called them

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the “darlings of downtown style, tarted-up toughs in boas and heels.”

“The New York Dolls were more than musicians; they were a phenomenon. They drew on old rock ‘n’ roll, big-city blues, show tunes, the Rolling Stones and girl groups, and that was just for starters,” Bill Bentley wrote in “Smithsonian Rock and Roll: Live and Unseen.”

The band never found commercial success and was torn by internal strife and drug addictions, breaking up after two albums by the middle of the decade. In 2004, former Smiths frontman and Dolls admirer Morrissey convinced Johansen and other surviving members to regroup for the Meltdown Festival in England, leading to three more studio albums.

In the ‘80s, Johansen assumed the persona of Buster Poindexter, a pompadour-styled lounge lizard who had a hit with the kitschy party single “Hot, Hot, Hot” in 1987. He also appeared in such movies as “Candy Mountain,” “Let It Ride,” “Married to the Mob” and had a memorable turn as the Ghost of Christmas Past in Bill Murray-led hit “Scrooged.”

Johansen was in 2023 the subject of Martin Scorsese and David Tedeschi’s documentary “Personality Crisis: One Night Only,” which mixed footage of his two-night stand at the Café Carlyle in January 2020 with flashbacks through his wildly varied career and intimate interviews.

“I used to think about my voice like: ‘What’s it gonna sound like? What’s it going to be when I do this song?’ And I’d get myself into a knot about it,” Johansen told The Associated Press in 2023. “At some point in my life, I decided: ‘Just sing the (expletive) song. With whatever you got.’ To me, I go on stage and whatever mood I’m in, I just claw my way out of it, essentially.”

Named after a toy hospital

David Roger Johansen was born to a large, working class Catholic family on Staten Island, his father an insurance salesman. He filled notebooks with poems and lyrics as a young man and liked a lot of different music — R&B, Cuban, Janis Joplin and Otis Redding.

The Dolls — the final original lineup included guitarists Sylvain Sylvain and Johnny Thunders, bassist Arthur Kane and drummer Jerry Nolan — rubbed shoulders with Lou Reed and Andy Warhol in the Lower East Side of Manhattan the early 1970s.

They took their name from a toy hospital in Manhattan and were expected to take over the throne vacated by the Velvet Underground in the early 1970s. But neither of their first two albums — 1973’s “New York Dolls,” produced by Todd Rundgren, nor “Too Much Too Soon” a year later produced by Shadow Morton — charted.

“They’re definitely a band to keep both eyes and ears on,” read the review of their debut album in Rolling Stone, complementary of their “strange combination of high pop-star drag and ruthless street arrogance.”

Their songs included “Personality Crisis” (“You got it while it was hot/But now frustration and heartache is what you got”), “Looking for a Kiss” (I need a fix and a kiss”) and a “Frankenstein” (Is it a crime/For you to fall in love with Frankenstein?”)

Their glammed look was meant to embrace fans with a nonjudgmental, noncategorical space. “I just wanted to be very welcoming,” Johansen said in the documentary, “cause the way this society is, it was set up very strict — straight, gay, vegetarian, whatever... I just kind of wanted to kind of like bring those walls down, have a party kind of thing.”

Rolling Stone, reviewing their second album, called them “the best hard-rock band in America right now” and called Johansen a “talented showman, with an amazing ability to bring characters to life as a lyricist.”

Decades later, the Dolls’ influence would be cherished. Rolling Stone would list their self-titled debut album at No. 301 of the 500 Greatest Albums of All Time, writing “it’s hard to imagine the Ramones or the Replacements or a thousand other trash-junky bands without them.”

Blondie’s Chris Stein in the Nolan biography “Stranded in the Jungle” wrote that the Dolls were “opening a door for the rest of us to walk through.” Tommy Lee of Motley Crue called them early inspirations.

“Johansen is one of those singers, to be a little paradoxical, who is technically better and more versatile than he sounds,” said the Los Angeles Times in 2023. “His voice has always been a bit of a foghorn — higher or lower according to age, habits and the song at hand — but it has a rare emotional urgency.

‘Dirty angels with painted faces’

The Dolls, representing rock at its most debauched, were divisive. In 1973, they won the Creem magazine poll categories as the year's best and worst new group. They were nominated several times for The Rock & Roll Hall of Fame but never got in.

"Dirty angels with painted faces, the Dolls opened the box usually reserved for Pandora and unleashed the infant furies that would grow to become Punk," wrote Nina Antonia in the book "Too Much, Too Soon." "As if this legacy wasn't enough for one band, they also trashed sexual boundaries, savaged glitter and set new standards for rock 'n' roll excess."

By the end of their first run, the Dolls were being managed by legendary promoter Malcolm McLaren, who would later introduce the Sex Pistols to the Dolls' music. Culture critic Greil Marcus in "Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century" writes the Dolls played him some of their music and he couldn't believe how bad they were.

"The fact that they were so bad suddenly hit me with such force that I began to realize, 'I'm laughing, I'm talking to these guys, I'm looking at them, and I'm laughing with them; and I was suddenly impressed by the fact that I was no longer concerned with whether you could play well,'" McLaren said. "The Dolls really impressed upon me that there was something else. There was something wonderful. I thought how brilliant they were to be this bad."

After the first demise of the Dolls, Johansen started his own group, the David Johansen band, before reinventing himself yet again in the 1980s as Buster Poindexter.

Inspired by his passion for the blues and arcane American folk music Johansen also formed the group The Harry Smiths, and toured the world performing the songs of Howlin' Wolf with Hubert Sumlin and Levon Helm. He also hosted the weekly radio show "The Mansion of Fun" on Sirius XM and painted.

He is survived by his wife, Mara Hennessey, and a stepdaughter, Leah Hennessey.

Israel supports a US proposal to extend Gaza ceasefire's first phase. But Hamas wants Phase 2

By SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — Israel's government said early Sunday it supports a proposal to extend the first phase of the ceasefire in Gaza through Ramadan and Passover, though Hamas has insisted on negotiating the truce's second phase instead.

The statement by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office came minutes after the first phase ended, and as talks have begun on starting the second phase that's aimed at ending the war and seeing all remaining living hostages in Gaza returned home.

The statement gives new details on what Israel described as a U.S. proposal: A ceasefire extension through Passover, or April 20. On the first day, half the hostages, alive and dead, would be released. The rest would be released if agreement is reached on a permanent ceasefire.

The statement said it was proposed after U.S. envoy Steve Witkoff got "the impression that at this stage there was no possibility of bridging the positions of the parties to end the war, and that more time was needed for talks on a permanent ceasefire."

There was no immediate comment from Hamas, which earlier rejected an Israeli proposal to extend the ceasefire's first phase by 42 days — doubling its length — saying it goes against the truce agreement, according to a member of the group who requested anonymity to discuss the closed-door negotiations.

Officials from Israel and mediators Qatar, Egypt and the United States have been involved in negotiations on starting the ceasefire's second phase in Cairo. But Basem Naim, a member of Hamas' political bureau, told The Associated Press there had been "no progress" before Israeli negotiators returned home on Friday. Hamas did not attend, but its position has been represented through Egyptian and Qatari mediators.

Under the ceasefire deal's terms, fighting should not resume while negotiations are underway on phase two.

Israel's new statement says it can return to fighting "if it believes that the negotiations are ineffective,"

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and it noted Hamas' refusal to accept the proposal for an extension of the first phase.

However, "if Hamas changes its position, Israel will immediately enter into negotiations on all the details of the Witkoff plan," the statement says.

Before Israel's new statement, an Egyptian official involved in the talks spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the negotiations. The official said Hamas, Qatar and Egypt wanted to continue with the existing ceasefire deal, and they rejected Israel's proposal to extend the ceasefire for four weeks with a release of hostages every Saturday without officially entering negotiations on the second phase.

The Egyptian official said the U.S. wants to start negotiations on the second phase but called for hostage releases during the negotiations. Hamas insisted on a full implementation of the ceasefire terms.

The first phase, which paused 15 months of fighting in Gaza, saw the release of 33 hostages, including eight bodies, in exchange for nearly 2,000 Palestinian prisoners. Hundreds of thousands of people returned home to northern Gaza, aid into the territory increased and Israeli forces withdrew to buffer zones.

Hamas started the war with its Oct. 7, 2023, attack that left 1,200 dead in Israel, mostly civilians, and took some 250 hostage. Since then, Israel's military offensive has killed more than 48,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza health officials, who do not differentiate between civilian and combatant deaths but say more than half the dead have been women and children.

According to Israel, 32 of the 59 hostages still in Gaza are dead.

The two sides agreed to the three-phase ceasefire deal in January. Talks on the second phase were meant to start the first week of February. Israelis rallied Saturday night to urge their government to continue the deal.

Hamas has reaffirmed its "full commitment to implementing all terms of the agreement in all its stages and details" and called on the international community to pressure Israel to immediately proceed to the second phase.

Other challenges complicate the ceasefire's future. Israel has said 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 leader Mohamed Darwish on Saturday reiterated the group is willing to hand over power to a Palestinian national consensus government or an Egypt-proposed body of technocrats not aligned with Hamas or Fatah. His comments came in an open letter to next week's summit of Arab leaders in Cairo. Hamas has dismissed Israel's suggestion that its leadership go into exile.

Ramadan in Gaza

In Gaza's southern city of Rafah, AP video showed a long table set for the breaking of the day's Ramadan fast, snaking through the ruins and lit by strings of lights as the sky darkened.

War-weary Palestinians marked the first day of the holy month with fasting and more worries.

"Today there is a lot of goodness, but there is no money," said Huda Matar about the skyrocketing prices, even though more food and other staples are available compared with last year.

"May God have mercy on us and restore reconstruction quickly," said Rafah resident Fatima Abu Helal.

Netanyahu's office said last week that mediators were "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 U.N. food agency said on social media it reached 1 million Palestinians across Gaza during the deal's first phase.

"The ceasefire must hold," the World Food Program said. "There can be no going back."

New video of hostages

Hamas published video footage Saturday showing a group of hostages, including two brothers embracing before one of them was released from Gaza.

The video, filmed under duress, was likely taken before Feb. 15, when Iair Horn was released and left his brother, Eitan, behind. The faces of what appear to be other hostages are blurred.

"I am very happy that my brother will be released tomorrow, but this is not logical in any way to separate

families," Eitan says. "Sign the second and third phase. enough of war."

___ Rising reported from Bangkok. Associated Press writer Julia Frankel in Jerusalem contributed to this report.

Attorneys are suing to keep 10 migrants out of Guantanamo Bay as others say they were abused there

By JOHN HANNA Associated Press

Civil rights attorneys sued the Trump administration Saturday to prevent it from transferring 10 migrants detained in the U.S. to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and filed statements from men held there who said they were mistreated there in conditions that of one of them called "a living hell."

The federal lawsuit came less than a month after the same attorneys sued for access to migrants who were already detained at the naval base in Cuba after living in the U.S. illegally. Both cases are backed by the American Civil Liberties Union and filed in Washington.

The attorneys also filed statements translated from Spanish into English from two men still held at Guantanamo Bay, four men held there in February and sent back to Venezuela, and a Venezuelan migrant sent back to Texas. The men said they were kept in small, windowless cells, with lights on around the clock, hindering sleep, and had inadequate food and medical care. One man reported attempting suicide there, and two said they knew of others' attempts. The men said migrants were verbally and physically abused by staffers.

"It was easy to lose the will to live," said Raul David Garcia, a former Guantanamo detainee sent back to Venezuela. "I had been kidnapped in Mexico before, and at least my captors there told me their names."

Another former detainee sent back to Venezuela, Jonathan Alejandro Alviares Armas, reported that fellow detainees were sometimes denied water or "tied up in a chair outside our cells for up to several hours" as punishment, including for protesting conditions.

"Guantanamo is a living hell," he said.

In another, separate federal lawsuit filed in New Mexico, a federal judge on Feb. 9 blocked the transfer of three immigrants from Venezuela being held in that state to Guantanamo Bay.

Trump says Guantanamo Bay can hold thousands of 'the worst'

The White House and the Defense and Homeland Security departments did not immediately respond to emails Saturday seeking comment about the latest lawsuit. The two agencies are among the defendants.

Trump has promised mass deportations of immigrants living in the U.S. illegally and has said Guantanamo Bay, also known as "Gitmo," has space for up to 30,000 of them.

He also has said he plans to send "the worst" or high-risk "criminal aliens" to the base in Cuba. The administration has not released specific information on who is being transferred, so it is not clear what crimes they are accused of committing in the U.S. and whether they have been convicted in court, or merely been charged or arrested.

At least 50 migrants have been transferred already to Guantanamo Bay, and the civil rights attorneys believe the number now may be about 200. They have said it is the first time in U.S. history that the government has detained noncitizens on civil immigration charges there. For decades, the naval base was primarily used to detain foreigners associated with the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

A separate military detention center once held 800 people, but that number has dwindled to 15, including 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed. Critics have said for years that the center is notorious for poor conditions for detainees. A 2023 report from a United Nations inspector said detainees faced "ongoing cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment," though the U.S. rejected much of her criticism.

Migrants say they were tortured or threatened before coming to the U.S.

The 10 men involved in the latest lawsuit came to the U.S. in 2023 or 2024, seven from from Venezuela, and the others from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan.

The lawsuit said the Afghan and Pakistani migrants were fleeing threats from the Taliban, and two of the Venezuelans had been tortured by the government there for their political views. One of the Venezuelans,

Walter Estiver Salazar, said government officials kidnapped him after he refused to follow an order to cut off his town's electricity.

"The officials beat me, suffocated me, and eventually shot me," he said. "I barely survived."

Salazar said he had been convicted in the U.S. of driving under the influence, "which I deeply regret," while another of the Venezuelans said charges against him tied to a domestic dispute had been dropped. The men's attorneys allege that many of the people who have been sent to Guantanamo Bay do not have serious criminal records or even any criminal history.

Four Venezuelans said they had been falsely accused of being gang members based on their tattoos, including one who said his tattoo was of a Catholic rosary.

Transfer to Guantanamo violates constitutional right, attorneys say

The latest lawsuit contends that the transfers violate the men's right to due legal process, guaranteed by the Fifth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution

The lawsuit also argues that federal immigration law bars the transfer of non-Cuban migrants from the U.S. to Guantanamo Bay; that the U.S. government has no authority to hold people outside its territory; and the naval base remains part of Cuba legally. The transfers are also described as arbitrary.

Their first lawsuit, filed Feb. 12, said Guantanamo Bay detainees had "effectively disappeared into a black box" and couldn't contact attorneys or family. The Department of Homeland Security said they could reach attorneys by phone.

One of the formerly detained Venezuelans, Yoiker David Sequera, said he was permitted to make one phone call to the ACLU, but when he asked to speak with his family, he was told "it was not possible." A current detainee, Tilso Ramon Gomez Lugo, said that for two weeks he was not able to communicate "with anyone in the outside world" until he was allowed to make a single call to attorneys.

The lawsuit also argues that Guantanamo Bay "does not have the infrastructure" to hold even the 10 men. Garcia said a part of the base for migrants like him known as Camp 6, where he was confined, seemed "prepared at the last minute" and was "not even finished."

"It was freezing, and I felt like chicken trapped in an incubator," he said.

Former Gov. Andrew Cuomo launches political comeback with a run for New York City mayor

By ANTHONY IZAGUIRRE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Former New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced Saturday that he is running for mayor of New York City, relaunching his political career following a yearslong exile over a barrage of sexual harassment accusations.

In a 17-minute video, Cuomo pitched himself as an accomplished moderate who can save a city he described as threatening and "out of control," and is capable of navigating the delicate balance between working with Republican President Donald Trump and fighting him, when necessary.

"I am not saying this is going to be easy. It won't be easy, but I know we can turn the city around, and I believe I can help," he said.

The Democrat is expected to mount a formidable campaign, despite entering the race deeply wounded by the scandal that forced his resignation as governor in 2021.

He takes on a large field of primary opponents with low name recognition plus an incumbent, Mayor Eric Adams, who — for now — remains under indictment on federal corruption charges and under scrutiny from critics who question his independence from Trump.

Cuomo brings fundraising prowess, a record of accomplishments over three terms as governor and potential support among moderate voters who helped propel Adams to office.

Yet it is unclear whether voters are willing to give Cuomo another chance following his remarkable downfall, when he went from being hailed for his leadership during the onslaught of COVID-19 to being castigated for his behavior with women and questioned about his pandemic response.

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In his campaign video, Cuomo acknowledged past "mistakes" but did not directly address the harassment allegations.

"Did I always do everything right in my years of government service? Of course not," he said. "Would I do some things differently knowing what I know now — certainly. Did I make mistakes, some painfully? Definitely, and I believe I learned from them and that I am a better person for it, and I hope to show that every day."

Adams, caught on a city street by a Politico reporter Saturday, welcomed Cuomo to the race.

"Come one, come all. Everybody should put their position forward," Adams said. "I have a great record to run on. We look forward to the campaign."

Plotting a comeback

Cuomo had been circling a return to politics for years while his lawyers and political consultants kept trying to discredit his accusers.

At least 11 women credibly accused him of harassment that included unwanted kissing and touching and remarks about their looks and sex lives, according to a report released by New York's attorney general. One aide filed a criminal complaint accusing Cuomo of grabbing her breast when they were alone in the governor's mansion.

Cuomo denied the sexual assault allegation, which a prosecutor ultimately dropped, citing a lack of enough proof to get a conviction.

Cuomo, 67, said he did not intentionally mistreat women and had simply fallen behind the times of what was considered appropriate workplace conduct.

Taxpayers spent millions of dollars defending him and his aides against lawsuits related to the allegations.

The first woman to publicly accuse Cuomo of harassment, Lindsey Boylan, wrote in an essay published in Vanity Fair on Saturday that New York "deserves better."

She said that rather than repent and atone, Cuomo has waged a "vengeful" legal campaign against his accusers.

"While the women who worked for and with Cuomo may no longer be subject to inappropriate behavior, misconduct, or sexual harassment, some of us remain the victims of what could be interpreted as an ongoing campaign that weaponizes the legal system as a tactic for retribution," Boylan wrote.

She added that even though she never sued Cuomo, she has spent \$1.5 million on lawyers to respond to subpoenas in his other cases.

A crowded Democratic primary

There are already several candidates vying to beat Adams in June.

Among them are city Comptroller Brad Lander, state Sen. Zellnor Myrie, state Sen. Jessica Ramos, state Assemblyman Zohran Mamdani and former city Comptroller Scott Stringer, who was a front-runner in the mayor's race four years ago until a woman accused him of groping and kissing her without her consent 20 years earlier.

In a statement, Ramos called Cuomo a "corrupt bully" who "brings nothing to this race but baggage."

Myrie said New York shouldn't be forced to relive "the Andrew Cuomo show."

"We deserve better than selfish leaders who spent decades in office putting their desire for power above New Yorkers' needs," Myrie said.

Adams is a vulnerable incumbent

The mayor is facing a tempest over the U.S. Justice Department's extraordinary effort to end the criminal case against him over the objection of the prosecutors who brought the charges.

An indictment said Adams accepted luxury travel perks and illegal campaign contributions from people who wanted to buy his influence, including a Turkish official and other foreign nationals.

After Trump took office, a top Justice Department official ordered prosecutors to dismiss the charges so Adams could focus on assisting the president's immigration agenda, while leaving open the possibility that charges could be refiled after the election.

The dynamic led critics to claim that Adams struck a deal to help Trump's immigration crackdown in exchange for legal salvation.

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Adams has strongly denied such an arrangement, while resisting intense pressure to step down. Some of his top deputies announced plans to resign in protest.

Long rise to power, quick fall

Cuomo started in politics working for his father, former Gov. Mario Cuomo, and later became U.S. housing secretary under President Bill Clinton and New York attorney general before being elected governor in 2010.

His star power was highest during the pandemic, when his televised daily briefings attracted admirers who saw him as a steady hand during a frightening time. The briefings led to a more than \$5 million book deal to write "American Crisis: Leadership Lessons From the Covid-19 Pandemic."

But women began coming forward in late 2020 and early 2021 to accuse Cuomo of misconduct, and he faced a potential impeachment before stepping down. A state ethics panel concluded that he improperly used taxpayer resources to prepare and edit his book.

Questions about COVID-19 in nursing homes

Cuomo was further damaged by allegations that his administration unintentionally contributed to a wave of COVID-19 deaths in nursing homes by initially barring them from refusing to readmit virus patients discharged from hospitals.

The governor said the allegations were baseless, but his administration was found to have substantially undercounted nursing home deaths as it sought to deflect criticism.

Cuomo still has a significant campaign war chest that, technically, he could draw on. But the process of transferring state donations to a city committee would be complicated and require each donor to sign off, a potentially burdensome effort.

Zelenskyy embraced by British prime minister a day after White House blowout

By BRIAN MELLEY Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — British Prime Minister Keir Starmer embraced Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Saturday and told him he had the U.K.'s unwavering support, a day after the blowout at the White House with President Donald Trump.

Zelenskyy arrived to cheers from people who had gathered outside of 10 Downing St., where Starmer gave him a hug and ushered him inside. The two leaders met on the eve of a meeting of European leaders in London. Called to discuss how European nations can defend Ukraine — and themselves — if the U.S. withdraws support, it has taken on new urgency following Trump's televised berating of Zelenskyy.

"And as you heard from the cheers on the street outside, you have full backing across the United Kingdom," Starmer told the leader of the war-torn country. "We stand with you, with Ukraine, for as long as it may take."

Zelenskyy thanked him and the people of the U.K. for their support and friendship.

After the meeting, Britain announced it was extending a 2.26 billion pound (\$2.84 billion) loan to Kyiv for military procurement, with the money coming from the profits on frozen Russian assets. It's Britain's contribution to a \$50 billion package of support pledged by the G-7 group of wealthy industrialized nations.

Zelenskyy thanked Britain in a statement on X, saying: "This is true justice — the one who started the war must be the one to pay."

Starmer spoke to both Trump and French President Emmanuel Macron on Saturday evening after meeting Zelenskyy, the prime minister's office said.

The meeting comes the day after an extraordinary diplomatic meltdown when Trump and Vice President JD Vance blasted Zelenskyy in the Oval Office on live television for not being grateful enough for U.S. support.

Zelenskyy had been poised to ink a deal to give the U.S. access to mineral riches as Trump pressures Ukraine to reach a deal to end the war with Russia. But he left town without signing anything.

Zelenskyy had been scheduled to meet with Starmer on Sunday before the European summit, but the timetable for their bilateral meeting was apparently sped up in the aftermath of the Washington visit.

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Zelenskyy will meet with King Charles III on Sunday before the meeting at Lancaster House, a 200-year-old mansion near Buckingham Palace.

For Gene Hackman, Santa Fe was a refuge from the limelight

By SUSAN MONTOYA BRYAN Associated Press

SANTA FE, N.M. (AP) — The piñon- and juniper-scented Rocky Mountain foothills overlooking Santa Fe have helped the city earn a reputation as a refuge for famous actors and authors seeking to escape the spotlight.

Sometimes the world's attention is unavoidable, as it was this week when Oscar-winner Gene Hackman and his wife, Betsy Arakawa, were found dead inside their home in those very foothills.

Hackman, 95, and Arakawa, 65, eschewed fame and made Santa Fe their home decades ago, like many other acclaimed artists, including the actors Shirley MacLaine and Ali MacGraw and "Game of Thrones" author George R. R. Martin.

In addition to the fresh air and mountain vistas, Santa Fe — situated more than a mile above sea level — is known for Pueblo-style architecture, Southwest-themed art galleries and turquoise jewelry-filled boutiques. Initially settled by Indigenous people and once colonized by Spain, the capital city of New Mexico today embraces a low-key vibe where young skateboarders share the sidewalks with wealthy retirees decked out in Pendleton cardigans and cowboy boots.

It's not uncommon to see a famous person strolling downtown, dining out or hiking on the numerous trails; it's just that locals know not to gush over them.

"You recognize that celebrities who come here are coming here for the same reason. They just want to live and be normal people," artist Kristin Bortles said, taking a break from planning a mural for a new coffee shop.

The normally laid back city was in collective shock Thursday as news spread about Hackman and Arakawa. The last time a crush of media descended on Santa Fe was when Alec Baldwin shot and killed a cinematographer on the set of the movie "Rust."

On Friday, conversations about what had happened to Hackman and his wife always came back to Santa Fe's reputation as a place where celebrities could unwind and live unassuming lives far from the glitz of Los Angeles or New York City — and even some of the more glamorous Rocky Mountain enclaves, like Vail, Colorado.

Hackman retired in the early 2000s after a decades-long career that included roles as villains, heroes and antiheroes in dozens of dramas, comedies and action films. Aside from appearances at awards shows, he was rarely seen on the Hollywood social circuit.

He served for several years on the board of trustees at the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum in Santa Fe and wrote a novel about the American West centered on New Mexico called "Payback at Morning Peak" and coauthored one on the Civil War entitled "Escape from Andersonville." (A real life battle took place just east of Santa Fe in 1862, at Glorieta Pass.)

Hackman and Arakawa lived in a multilevel Pueblo-style home that blends in with the surrounding geography. He enjoyed weekly Pilates classes, bicycle rides along paved trails and getting fresh eggs dropped off by friends.

While Hackman kept a tight circle of friends and didn't go out much, he was sometimes spotted downtown. But one of the most accomplished actors of his generation mostly blended in.

"The thing I've learned about Santa Fe is that you never know who you're talking to, you never know who you're going to meet or who's around the corner," said Gabriel Garcia, whose family has been selling jewelry and leather crafts on the Santa Fe Plaza for more than 60 years.

Hackman usually was in jeans, a flannel shirt and sometimes a baseball cap, said friend Stuart Ashman, the former head of the New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs and past CEO of the International Folk Art Market.

"Obviously he was a huge star," Ashman said, "but you would never know it when you talked to him

because he had that sort of what I call a princely attitude, where he's focused on you and asks you about you, not talking about himself."

Hackman enjoyed painting and was drawn to the beauty of the hills surrounding Santa Fe and the light of the high desert, Ashman said.

Arakawa, a classical musician, was soft spoken and never one to expect special treatment, said Larry Keller, owner of a high-end furniture and art store where she would shop.

Being a part of the Santa Fe community, he said, means not drawing extra attention to someone because of their celebrity status.

"We're too cool for school, you know. That's the Santa Fe vibe," Keller said.

Pope Francis stable a day after respiratory crisis, spent 'long periods' off noninvasive ventilator

By NICOLE WINFIELD and GIOVANNA DELL'ORTO Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Pope Francis remained in stable condition Saturday a day after a respiratory crisis during his battle with double pneumonia, the Vatican said. He spent long periods of the day off the noninvasive mechanical ventilation he initially needed in a sign that his lung function was improving.

Francis had no further episodes of bronchial spasms like the one he suffered Friday, in which he inhaled vomit during a coughing fit. He had no fever and no signs of new infection, was feeding himself solid food and coffee for breakfast, and continued his respiratory physiotherapy, the Vatican said.

The 88-year-old pope had a "good response" in his gas exchange levels even during the "long periods" he was off the ventilator mask and only using high-flow supplemental oxygen. But his prognosis remained guarded, meaning he wasn't out of danger.

"The Holy Father is always vigilant" and aware of what's going on around him, the statement said, adding that he received the Eucharist and spent 20 minutes in prayer in the private chapel down the hall from his 10th floor hospital room.

The comparatively positive update came after Francis suffered a setback Friday in his two-week battle against pneumonia.

After the bronchial spasm, doctors aspirated the vomit and placed Francis on noninvasive mechanical ventilation, a mask that pumps oxygen into his lungs. Doctors said episode resulted in a "sudden worsening of the respiratory picture."

The pope remained conscious and alert at all times and cooperated with the maneuvers to help him recover.

The fact that Francis on Saturday was able to use just high-flow oxygen for long periods, without any significant effect on the levels of oxygen in his blood, was a sign his respiratory function was improving.

The pope, who had part of one lung removed as a young man, has lung disease and was admitted to Gemelli after a bout of bronchitis worsened and turned into pneumonia in both lungs.

Doctors say the episode is alarming

Doctors not involved in Francis' care said Friday's episode was particularly alarming given his existing lung disease and overall fragility.

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 avoid the more invasive intubation ventilation and eventually go back to using supplemental oxygen alone.

Doctors did not resume referring to Francis being in "critical condition," which has been absent from their statements for four 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."

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.

In an odd coincidence, Francis was supposed to have presided Saturday over a Holy Year audience in the Vatican's auditorium for the staff of the Gemelli hospital and other healthcare workers. They came as planned and completed the pilgrimage, walking through the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica, while Francis continued his recovery at the hospital.

"We thought we would be able to meet him this morning in Paul VI Hall for the Jubilee Catechesis, but he surprised us by coming to us," said Monsignor Claudio Giuliodori, spiritual guide of the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, of which Gemelli is a part.

Giovanni Frisullo, a Gemelli neurologist, said the atmosphere at Gemelli was one of tension and prayer. "There is a situation of waiting but also of hope," he said.

Life imitates art as Pope Francis fights pneumonia while 'Conclave' heads into Academy Awards

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — There has long been a Vatican taboo against openly talking about a conclave when a pope is sick: It's considered gauche to speculate about the election of a new pope while the current one is fighting for his life. And that is certainly true as Pope Francis battles double pneumonia at Rome's Gemelli hospital.

But the surprising success of "Conclave" the film and its momentum going into Sunday's Academy Awards have thrust the arcane rules, glorious ceremony and supreme drama of one of the Catholic Church's most solemn moments into popular culture. And it's put the Catholic hierarchy in something of a bind as it simultaneously prays for Francis.

The film can't be dismissed as distasteful or blasphemous, since it treats the gravity of a papal election with respect and accurately portrays the ancient rituals and contemporary problems facing today's Catholic Church. Both the Vatican newspaper L'Osservatore Romano and the Avvenire daily of the Italian bishops conference gave "Conclave" rave reviews.

Granted, those reviews were published before Francis entered the hospital Feb. 14 with a complex lung infection that has taken him out of commission for the longest period of his 12-year papacy.

It's unclear if the newspapers would have published them after Francis' health took such a dire turn. That's even more the case since it's clear that the figure of Francis is very much present in the film, from the opening scenes of the pope's death in the Vatican's modern Santa Marta hotel where Francis chose to live, to one of the figures central to the plot.

But at the very least, the life-imitating-art coincidence of "Conclave" the movie finding mass popular appeal at a time when the world's media has descended on Rome to monitor every update of Francis' health has certainly piqued interest in what might happen in a real-life conclave.

Author Harris knows it's a sensitive time

Francis was in stable condition Saturday and seemingly improving, a day after he inhaled vomit during a coughing fit and had to be put on noninvasive mechanical ventilation. On Saturday, he was able to get off the ventilator for "long periods" and use high flows of supplemental oxygen instead.

Additionally, there was no evidence of fever or elevated white blood cells that would signal infection, in another positive sign, though doctors said his prognosis remained guarded.

But the gravity of his illness and ups and downs of his recovery have made "Conclave" the film a bit too close for comfort for anyone following Francis' plight and concerned about what it means for the Catholic Church.

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Director Edward Berger's adaptation of the Robert Harris novel has been nominated for eight Academy Awards, including Best Picture. It goes into Sunday's Oscars with a Bafta win for best picture and a SAG award for best ensemble.

Harris is well aware of the sensitivity of the moment, and how the surreal turn of events of an ailing pope dovetailing with an Oscar campaign had made his book and the film relevant to say the least. But he is adamant against trying to milk the moment for publicity.

"I've been refusing all requests to talk about it and a future conclave because I think that's in extreme bad taste," Harris told The Associated Press. "I really hope he's got some more years yet."

Mild spoiler alert

To recap: The film opens with the death of the pope and turns around the political maneuvering and manipulations behind the election of his successor. Cardinal Thomas Lawrence (Ralph Fiennes) is dean of the College of Cardinals, who must organize the conclave amid his own crisis of faith.

With the future of the church weighing on him, he has to contend with secrets, scandals, smear campaigns and surprising twists, while ensuring the election's integrity.

Massimo Faggioli, theologian at Villanova University, said the film was "sadly effective" in illustrating the institutional instability that the church is going through now, as well as the ease with which a single act or allegation of misconduct can ruin someone.

"The main threats (are) now coming not from the outside (Napoleon, or Hitler, or secularization), but from the inside (especially the fear of another sexual scandal)," he said.

Berger certainly takes some creative liberties. Lawrence, for example, would have been excommunicated two or possibly three times for his efforts to navigate the intrigue, given the ban on communications with the outside world during a conclave and canon laws governing the seal of the confessional and the sealing of the papal apartment after a pope has died.

But this is Hollywood, and His Eminence can be forgiven.

Catholic media loved the film

Avvenire, which hews to the Vatican establishment line, praised the film for its sumptuous beauty, twists of plot and "anything but trivial" commentary about the current state of the church.

"Let's face it: 'Conclave,' which takes us to the heart of one of the world's most mysterious and secret events, is a highly entertaining film, especially for an American audience that isn't terribly picky," Avvenire said Dec. 20, when the film opened in Italian theaters and well before Francis got sick.

Writing in the Vatican newspaper L'Osservatore Romano on Feb. 1, critic Alessandra Comazzi highlighted the short but critical turn played by Isabella Rossellini as Sister Agnes.

As a longtime critic for the La Stampa daily, Comazzi is well aware of the Vatican taboo of openly talking of a conclave. But in an interview, she said the film managed to treat a conclave as a thriller without causing offense. She said the Vatican newspaper was only too happy to publish her rave.

"Lawrence has to govern the conclave and liberate it from these false prophets," she said. "And I think also from the ecclesial and religious point of view, the director managed to do it in a very respectful way."

But a cardinal close to Francis didn't

That said, someone who has actually participated in a conclave gave the film something of a thumbs down.

"My experience of being in at least one conclave was not that it was some sort of scene of political backroom plotting of how to get your candidate elected," Cardinal Sean O'Malley, the retired archbishop of Boston, wrote in a Feb. 7 blog post.

O'Malley voted in the 2013 conclave that elected Francis pope and is one of his closest allies. He said he and his brother cardinals were well aware that millions of Catholics were praying from afar "so that the Holy Spirit would guide us in our deliberations."

"And, of course, at the moment when each cardinal votes, you take your ballot, stand in front of Michelangelo's image of Christ in the 'Last Judgment' and swear before God that you are going to vote for the person that you believe is God's will for the church," he wrote.

"It's a much different experience than what they depicted in the movie," he wrote. "For all its artistic and entertainment value, I don't think the movie is a good portrayal of the spiritual reality of what a conclave is."

Israel's military is told to prepare to defend a Druze community outside Syria's capital

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel's defense ministry on Saturday said the military has been instructed to prepare to defend a Druze settlement in the suburbs of Damascus, asserting that the minority it has vowed to protect was "under attack" by Syrian forces.

The statement, citing an order from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Israel Katz, follows an Israeli warning last weekend that the forces of neighboring Syria's new government and the insurgent group that led last year's ouster of former President Bashar Assad should not enter the area south of Damascus.

Saturday's statement indicates that Israeli forces could push farther into Syria as its new authorities try to consolidate control after more than a decade of civil war. Israeli forces recently set up posts in a buffer zone and on strategic Mt. Hermon nearby. There have been no major clashes between Israeli troops and Syria's new forces.

"We will not allow the terrorist regime of radical Islam in Syria to harm the Druze. If the regime harms the Druze, it will be harmed by us," the statement said.

There was no immediate response from Syria's government.

The Druze are a religious minority who live in southern Syria and in Israel's Golan Heights, where they navigate their historically Syrian identity while living under Israeli rule.

Israel's statement followed the outbreak of unrest Friday in the Druze settlement of Jaramana, when a member of the security forces entered and started shooting in the air, leading to an exchange of fire with local gunmen that left him dead.

On Saturday, gunmen came from the Damascus suburb of Mleiha to Jaramana, where they clashed with Druze gunmen. That left one Druze fighter dead and nine other people wounded, according to the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a war monitor.

The Israeli warning last Sunday to Syrian forces and Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, the main former rebel group, made clear that Israeli forces would stay in parts of southern Syria for an indefinite period.

"We demand the complete demilitarization of southern Syria in the provinces of Quneitra, Daraa and Sweida from the forces of the new regime," that earlier statement said. "Likewise, we will not tolerate any threat to the Druze community in southern Syria."

After the fall of Assad in December, Israel seized the U.N.-patrolled buffer zone on Syrian territory. The zone was set up under a 1974 ceasefire agreement. Syria's new authorities and U.N. officials have called for Israel to withdraw.

Meanwhile, Netanyahu's government has been under pressure to protect Israelis living near border areas in the north as it tries to return residents of the north to their homes.

Trump's moves test the limits of presidential power and the resilience of US democracy

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

During his first six weeks in office, President Donald Trump has embarked on a dizzying teardown of the federal government and attacks on long-standing institutions in an attempt to increase his own authority.

He has pardoned those who attacked the U.S. Capitol to overturn his 2020 election loss, placed loyalists atop the FBI and military, and purged the Department of Justice, which dropped investigations against Trump allies. He declared control over independent agencies such as the Federal Election Commission, punished media outlets for coverage he dislikes and his allies suggested he could defy court orders.

Those who monitor democracy across the globe had warned that a second Trump term could endanger America's 240-year experiment with democracy. His opening weeks in office have done nothing to dispel those concerns.

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"Trump is using the classic elected authoritarian playbook," said Brendan Nyhan of Dartmouth College, who joined more than 800 other political scientists in signing a letter warning that Trump is undermining the rule of law and the basic constitutional principle of checks and balances. "It's almost embarrassing how crude it is."

Nyhan said some of Trump's moves echo those made by others who won democratic elections and then moved to centralize control, such as Hungary's Viktor Orban. Those who have resisted authoritarians in other countries say they are alarmed by what is happening in the United States.

"I feel like I'm living through this twice," said Maria Ressa, a journalist who won a Nobel Prize after being prosecuted by the government of former Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte in 2019, on a call last week about the threat of Trump to democracy.

"What you're seeing is exactly that — think about it as death by a thousand cuts," she said. "You're bleeding so much that, at some point, the body politic dies."

'What democracy is all about'

Trump has certainly embraced the image of a strongman.

The president declared, "we are the federal law" and posted on his social media site that "He who saves his country does not violate any law" — a quote often attributed to Napoleon Bonaparte. The official White House account posted on the social media site X an image of a smiling, crowned Trump with the words "LONG LIVE THE KING."

Trump's supporters say he actually is trying to preserve American democracy by giving voters what they want — a strong president. How strong Trump can become is in question. Courts have paused several of his executive orders, including ones seeking to eliminate agencies created by Congress and ending birthright citizenship for the children of parents who are in the U.S. illegally.

Trump campaigned last year promising to dismantle what he contends is a corrupt government bureaucracy, which he blames for failures during his first term and his subsequent prosecution. On his first day in office, the new president told reporters his goal was to "give the people back their faith, their wealth, their democracy and indeed their freedom."

Speaking to reporters in the Oval Office in February, billionaire Elon Musk, who Trump tapped to spearhead cuts to the federal government, claimed he is the one trying to "restore democracy." Some of the lawsuits seeking to stop Musk's actions have been unsuccessful, allowing him to proceed.

"The people voted for major government reform and that's what the people are going to get," Musk told reporters. "That's what democracy is all about."

But many who track democracy warn that Musk's conception is incomplete.

"The power you gain through the ballot box is not unlimited power. That's the essence of liberal democracy," said Kevin Casas-Zamora, secretary general of the Stockholm-based pro-democracy group International IDEA.

'Undermining our democratic traditions'

On the world stage, Trump and his administration have alarmed longtime allies in Europe over whether the U.S. remains committed to NATO and his siding with Russia in talks to end the war in Ukraine, a country the Kremlin invaded three years ago, and at the United Nations last month.

On Friday, Trump berated Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in the Oval Office. Russian officials and many Trump allies expressed glee; European nations reacted in horror.

U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., said the close relations between the Trump administration and Russian President Vladimir Putin's government amounted to an existential threat. "This Putin-Trump alliance means abandoning our allies, supporting authoritarianism and undermining our democratic traditions," he said in a social media post.

The common theme throughout Trump's moves is about expanding his personal power, said Josh Chafetz, a Georgetown law professor.

"It's not even clear what it's power in service of," he added, noting that Trump has few strong ideological convictions.

Politicizing federal law enforcement

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Despite concerns that the administration would disregard the judiciary, Trump and Musk said it would obey court rulings and eventually seek congressional approval for the changes they are making. Still, Musk and some other Republicans have also called for impeaching judges who rule against the administration.

There are plenty of other warning signs, chiefly the aggressive use of the Department of Justice to promote Trump's political interests.

The department directed prosecutors to dismiss corruption charges against New York City Mayor Eric Adams, citing his cooperation with the administration's immigration crackdown. That led to several senior Justice Department officials resigning after saying such a deal was dangerous and some former top prosecutors warning about the risks to the rule of law.

Trump's pick to be U.S. attorney for the District of Columbia, Ed Martin, represented some defendants who attacked the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. Martin, in his interim post as the top federal prosecution in the nation's capital, contacted at least two congressional Democrats, including Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York, to "investigate" previous statements they had made. One statement related to Musk and another dealt with the conservative Supreme Court justices who were in the majority ruling that ended the constitutional right to abortion.

"This notion that you can use your power to reward your friends and punish your enemies — it reminds me of something that has long been a staple of Latin American politics," said Casas-Zamora, who is from Costa Rica.

Threatening perceived enemies

Trump has escalated attacks on media outlets whose coverage he dislikes, kicking them out of their Pentagon workspace or barring them from the Oval Office and Air Force One and picking which will be allowed to cover his events. His appointee to head the Federal Communications Commission is investigating PBS and National Public Radio, which receive federal money.

Trump also issued an executive order to take control of independent agencies such as the FCC, Federal Election Commission and Securities and Exchange Commission.

Some leading Democrats have used striking analogies in warning about Trump's actions. In a State of the State address last month that ended with a scathing assessment of Trump's actions, Democratic Gov. JB Pritzker, who is Jewish, implored lawmakers to remember what gave rise to Nazism in Germany nearly a century ago.

"If we don't want to repeat history," Pritzker said, "then for God's sake in this moment we better be strong enough to learn from it."

Kurdish PKK militants declare a ceasefire in 40-year insurgency in Turkey

By ANDREW WILKS Associated Press

ISTANBUL (AP) — Kurdish militants who have waged a 40-year insurgency in Turkey declared a ceasefire on Saturday in what could mark a significant boost to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's government, two days after their imprisoned leader called for the group to disarm.

The announcement by the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, comes against the backdrop of fundamental changes in the region, including the reconfiguration of power in neighboring Syria after the toppling of President Bashar Assad, the weakening of the Hezbollah militant movement in Lebanon and the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza.

While the government is yet to respond in detail to the PKK's declaration, Erdogan warned that Turkey would "always keep our iron fist ready in case the hand we extend is left in the air or bitten."

Speaking at a Ramadan fast-breaking dinner in Istanbul, Erdogan added: "We will continue our ongoing (military) operations, if necessary, until we eliminate the last terrorist without leaving a single stone on top of another, without leaving a single head on his shoulder."

The conflict between Turkey and the PKK has led to tens of thousands of deaths since it began in 1984. The ceasefire is the first sign of a breakthrough since peace talks between the PKK and Ankara broke

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down in the summer of 2015.

The PKK declaration was published by the Firat News Agency, a media outlet close to the group, on Saturday. It referred to the insurgents' leader, Abdullah Ocalan, who has been imprisoned by Turkey since 1999.

"We declare a ceasefire effective today to pave the way for the implementation of Leader Apo's call for peace and democratic society. None of our forces will take armed action unless attacked," it said, referring to Ocalan by his nickname.

Campaign of pressure on Kurds

On Thursday, a delegation of Kurdish politicians announced Ocalan's call for the PKK to lay down its arms and disband after visiting him on his island prison.

In its statement, the PKK's executive committee said Ocalan's call indicated that a "new historical process has begun in Kurdistan and the Middle East." Kurdistan refers to the parts of Turkey, Iraq, Syria and Iran inhabited by Kurds.

While stating that it would "comply with and implement the requirements of the call from our own side," the PKK emphasized that "democratic politics and legal grounds must also be suitable for success."

Ocalan's call came as the main pro-Kurdish political party in Turkey has faced pressure, with several of its mayors being removed from office in recent months and replaced by government appointees.

The PKK also appealed for Ocalan to be released from Imrali prison, located in the Marmara Sea, to "personally direct and execute" a party congress that would lead to the militants laying down their arms.

'Opportunity to take a historic step'

The peace initiative between the Turkish state and the PKK, which is considered a terrorist organization by Turkey and its Western allies, was started in October by Erdogan's coalition partner, Devlet Bahçeli, a far-right politician who suggested that Ocalan could be granted parole if his group renounces violence and disbands.

Erdogan said Ocalan's message was a "new phase" in peace efforts in Turkey.

"There is an opportunity to take a historic step toward tearing down the wall of terror that has stood between (Turkish and Kurdish peoples') 1,000-year-old brotherhood," Erdogan said on Friday.

Some believe the main aim of the reconciliation effort is for Erdogan's government to garner Kurdish support for a new constitution that would allow him to remain in power beyond 2028, when his term ends.

Bahçeli has openly called for a new constitution, saying it was essential for Turkey's future that Erdogan remain in power. Erdogan and Bahçeli are reportedly seeking parliamentary support from the pro-Kurdish People's Equality and Democracy Party, or DEM.

"There will be a series of meetings next week, including state officials and politicians, and many things will become clearer and more concrete. We hope that everything will be arranged in the next three months," said Sirri Sureyya Onder, one of the DEM members who visited Ocalan in prison on Thursday.

Isolated attacks inside Turkey

Ocalan, 75, wields significant influence in the Kurdish movement despite his 25-year imprisonment, during which the PKK has been led by top figures who have fled and found sanctuary in the Kurdish region in northern Iraq.

In Syria, Kurdish fighters — who have ties to the PKK — have been involved in intense fighting with Turkish-backed forces on the ground there.

The leader of the U.S.-backed, Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces has said Ocalan's call for a ceasefire does not apply to his group in Syria.

The Turkish government, however, says all Kurdish groups it claims are tied to the PKK — whether in Turkey, Syria or Iraq — must disband.

In recent years, the PKK has been limited to isolated attacks inside Turkey as the Turkish military, backed by armed drones, has pushed PKK insurgents increasingly across the mountainous border into Iraq.

Ukrainians rally around Zelenskyy as defender of national interest after Oval Office blowout

By JUSTIN SPIKE Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Soon after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy left the White House on Friday after an astonishing Oval Office blowout with President Donald Trump, Ukrainians rallied around Zelenskyy as a defender of his country's interests.

The shouting match that unfolded in the final minutes of the highly anticipated meeting between the two leaders seemed to dash, at least for now, Ukrainian hopes that the United States could be locked in as a reliable partner in helping fend off, and conclude, Russia's three-year onslaught.

The exchange, which saw a frustrated Zelenskyy lectured by Trump and Vice President JD Vance over what they saw as his lack of gratitude for previous U.S. support, delighted officials in Moscow, who saw it as a final breakdown in relations between Washington and the Ukrainian leader.

'Zelenskyy fought like a lion'

But many Ukrainians on Friday seemed unfazed by the blowout between Zelenskyy and Trump, expressing a sense that the Ukrainian leader had stood up for their country's dignity and interests by firmly maintaining his stance in the face of chiding from some of the world's most powerful men.

Nataliia Serhienko, 67, a retiree in Kyiv, said she thinks Ukrainians approve of their president's performance in Washington, "because Zelenskyy fought like a lion."

"They had a heated meeting, a very heated conversation," she said. But Zelenskyy "was defending Ukraine's interests."

The meeting at the White House was meant to produce a bilateral agreement that would establish a joint investment fund for reconstructing Ukraine, a deal that was seen as a potential step toward bringing an end to the war and tying the two countries' economies together for years to come.

But as Zelenskyy and his team departed the White House at Trump's request, the deal went unsigned, and Ukraine's hopes for securing U.S. security backing seemed farther away than ever.

Yet as the Ukrainian leader was set to return to Kyiv empty handed, his support at home seemed undiminished.

Vitalyna Tarasova, a 43-year old English teacher in Kyiv and the widow of a Ukrainian soldier, told The Associated Press that Trump and Vance's treatment of Zelenskyy amounted to humiliating "all the dead and all these children who have lost their parents" in the war-weary country.

"My husband was a military pilot. He burned alive, his plane was shot down... So yesterday they spat at him, at me, at my children, and it was very painful to watch," she said.

Regional Ukrainian leader says president 'held strong'

As two drones struck Ukraine's second-largest city Kharkiv on Friday night, the head of the region which sits on the border with Russia, Oleh Syniehubov, praised Zelenskyy. He said the president held strong to his insistence that no peace deal could be made without assurances for Ukraine's security against future Russian aggression.

"Our leader, despite the pressure, stands firm in defending the interests of Ukraine and Ukrainians. ... We need only a just peace with security guarantees," Syniehubov said.

Kyiv resident Artem Vasyliiev, 37, said he had seen "complete disrespect" from the United States in the Oval Office exchange, despite the fact that Ukraine "was the first country that stood up to Russia."

"We are striving for democracy, and we are met with total disrespect, toward our warriors, our soldiers, and the people of our country," said Vasyliiev, a native of Russian-occupied Luhansk in eastern Ukraine.

Vasyliiev criticized the U.S. president for what he said was a failure to recognize the human cost of Russia's invasion, saying Trump "doesn't understand that people are dying, that cities are being destroyed, people are suffering, mothers, children, soldiers."

"He cannot understand this, he is just a businessman. For him, money is sacred," he said.

Broad praise for Zelenskyy on social media

Ukrainian social media was awash in praise for Zelenskyy late Friday, with officials on the national, re-

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gional and local level chiming in to voice their support for their leader.

The outpouring resembled a recent surge in Ukrainian unity after Trump denigrated Zelenskyy by making false claims that Ukraine was led by a "dictator" who started the war with Russia — comments that led some of the Ukrainian president's harshest critics to rally around him.

Oleksandr Prokudin, head of Ukraine's southern Kherson region, which was mostly occupied by Russia early in the war but later partially retaken by Ukrainian forces, said three years of war had hardened his countrymen to the ups and downs of the fight to survive.

"We know what pressure is, on the front lines, in politics, in daily struggle," Prokudin said. "It has made us stronger. It has made the president stronger. Determination is the force that drives us forward. And I am confident that we will endure this time as well."

Trump's administration cast the heated exchange with Zelenskyy as part of its "America First" policy and slammed the Ukrainian leader for a perceived lack of gratitude for U.S. assistance.

But Zelenskyy's backers in Ukraine praised his commitment to acting in Ukraine's national interest — even if it meant coming into conflict with the president of the United States.

"Unwavering commitment to Ukraine's interests and devotion to his country. This is what we saw today in the United States. Support for the President of Ukraine," Vice Prime Minister Oleksii Kuleba wrote on Telegram Friday.

Not all of Ukraine's political figures, however, were as full-throated in their praise for how the Oval Office meeting concluded. Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko said that he hoped "that Ukraine does not lose the support of the United States, which is extremely important to us."

"Today is not the time for emotions, from either side. We need to find common ground," Klitschko wrote in a post on Telegram.

Russians predict bleak future for Ukrainian leader

In Moscow, a resident told the Associated Press that Zelenskyy "got what he deserved."

"I think that he's in for some very, very difficult times" at home, Sergei Boldarev argued. "I think the internal attacks on him will intensify."

Russian state TV described the row between Trump and Zelenskyy as "a complete failure for Kyiv," and speculated that Washington would soon stop military aid to Ukraine.

"Scandal, humiliation, shame and disaster - this is how Western journalists describe it. After a squabble in the Oval Office, the Ukrainian delegation was literally kicked out of the White House," said Olga Arnyakova, a presenter on the Rossiya 1 channel.

USAID cuts are already hitting countries around the world. Here are 20 projects that have closed

By SAM MEDNICK, WILSON MCMACKIN and MONIKA PRONCZUK Associated Press

DAKAR, Senegal (AP) — Countries around the world already are feeling the impact of the Trump administration's decision to eliminate more than 90% of foreign aid contracts and cut some \$60 billion in funding. Hours after the announcement earlier this week, programs were shuttered, leaving millions of people without access to life-saving care.

Some 10,000 contracts with the U.S. Agency for International Development were terminated on Wednesday, in letters sent to nongovernmental organizations across the globe.

The letters said that the programs were being defunded "for convenience and the interests of the U.S. government," according to a person with knowledge of the content who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly on the issue.

Many of the programs are in fragile countries that are highly reliant on U.S. aid to support health systems, nutrition programs and stave off starvation. Other major issues like fighting terrorism, human and drug trafficking, including fentanyl, and monitoring and aiding migrants will also suffer as a result of the U.S. cuts, U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric said.

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Here some key projects around the world that AP has confirmed have closed:

- 1: In Congo, aid group Action Against Hunger will stop treating tens of thousands of malnourished children from May, which the charity said will put the children in "mortal danger."
- 2: In Ethiopia, food assistance stopped for more than 1 million people, according to the Tigray Disaster Risk Management Commission. The Ministry of Health was also forced to terminate the contract of 5,000 workers across the country focused on HIV and malaria prevention, vaccinations and helping vulnerable women deal with the trauma of war.
- 3: In Senegal, the biggest malaria project closed. It distributed bed nets and medication to tens of thousands of people, according to a USAID worker who was not authorized to speak to the media. Maternal and child health and nutrition services also closed. They provided lifesaving care to tens of thousands of pregnant women and treatment that would have prevented and treated acute malnutrition.
- 4: In South Sudan, the International Rescue Committee closed a project providing access to quality health care and nutrition services to more than 115,000 people.
- 5: A program shuttered by the Norwegian Refugee Council in Colombia left 50,000 people without life-saving support including in the northeast, where growing violence has precipitated a once-in-a-generation humanitarian crisis. It included food, shelter, clean water and other basic items for people displaced in the region.
- 6: In war-torn Sudan, 90 communal kitchens closed in the capital, Khartoum, leaving more than half a million people without consistent access to food, according to the International Rescue Committee.
- 7: In Bangladesh, 600,000 women and children will lose access to critical maternal health care, protection from violence, reproductive health services and other lifesaving care, according the United Nations Population Fund.
- 8: In Mali, critical aid, such as access to water, food and health services was cut for more than 270,000 people, according to an aid group that did not want to be named for fear of reprisal.
- 9: More than 400,000 people in northern Burkina Faso lost access to services such as water. Services for gender-based violence and child protection for thousands are also no longer available, according to an aid group that did not want to be named for fear of reprisal.
- 10: In Somalia, 50 health centers servicing more than 19,000 people a month closed because health workers are not being paid, according to Alright, a U.S aid group.
- 11: In Ukraine, cash-based humanitarian programs that reached 1 million people last year were suspended, according to the spokesperson for the U.N. secretary-general.
- 12: In Afghanistan, hundreds of mobile health teams and other services were suspended, affecting 9 million people, according to the U.N. spokesperson.
- 13: In Syria, aid programs for some 2.5 million people in the country's northeast stopped providing services, according to the U.N. secretary-general. Also in the north, a dozen health clinics, including the main referral hospital for the area, have shut down, said Doctors Without Borders.
- 14: In Kenya, more than 600,000 people living in areas plagued by drought and persistent acute malnutrition will lose access to lifesaving food and nutrition support, according to Mercy Corps.
- 15: In Haiti, 13,000 people have lost access to nutritional support, according to Action Against Hunger. The cuts will affect in total at least 550,000 people who were receiving aid.
- 16: In Thailand, hospitals helping some 100,000 refugees from Myanmar have shuttered, according to aid group Border Consortium.
- 17: In Nigeria, 25,000 extremely malnourished children will stop receiving food assistance by April, according to the International Rescue Committee.
- 18: In the Philippines, a program to improve access to disaster warning systems for disabled people was stopped, according to Humanity & Inclusion.
- 19: In Vietnam, a program assisting disabled people through training caregivers and providing at home medical care stopped, according to Humanity & Inclusion.
- 20: In Yemen, 220,000 displaced people will lose access to critical maternal health care, protection from

violence, rape treatment and other lifesaving care, according the United Nations Population Fund.

Trump's Oval Office thrashing of Zelenskyy shows limits of Western allies' ability to sway US leader

By ZEKE MILLER AP White House Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — All it took was 90 seconds for weeks of tortured diplomacy to unwind in spectacular fashion.

President Donald Trump's Oval Office thrashing of Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Friday laid bare the limits of a full-court press by America's allies aimed at reshaping Trump's determination to end Russia's invasion even if the terms are not to Ukraine's liking.

It also stressed the profound ways Trump feels emboldened to redirect U.S. foreign policy priorities toward his "America First" agenda in ways that extend well beyond those of his tumultuous first term.

The sudden blowup was the most heated public exchange of words between world leaders in the Oval Office in memory, as the usual staid work of diplomacy descended into finger-pointing, shouting and eye-rolling.

The encounter left the future of the U.S.-Ukraine relationship, and Kyiv's ability to defend itself in the brutal conflict with Russia, in mortal jeopardy.

"You either make a deal or we are out," Trump told Zelenskyy, underscoring the American leader's plans to dictate a swift end to the war or leave its longtime ally to continue the fight without its strongest backer.

Less than a day later, Zelenskyy used a series of posts on X to express his thanks to the American people, Trump and Congress for "all the support," which he said Ukrainians "have always appreciated," especially during the war.

"Our relationship with the American President is more than just two leaders; it's a historic and solid bond between our peoples. That's why I always begin with words of gratitude from our nation to the American nation," he added. Ukrainians want "only strong relations with America, and I really hope we will have them," he said.

Zelenskyy was in London to meet with British Prime Minister Keir Starmer before a summit Sunday of European leaders.

Episode capped intense lobbying effort by American allies

The stunning episode in Washington had capped a week of what turned out to be largely futile efforts by U.S. allies to paper over differences between Washington and Kyiv and to try to steer Trump away from his flirtations with Moscow.

On Monday, French President Emmanuel Macron huddled with Trump to lay the groundwork for an eventual European-led peacekeeping force in Ukraine aimed at deterring future Russian aggression and to encourage the U.S. president to be more skeptical of Vladimir Putin.

But even as Trump and Macron greeted each other with a vise-like grip, the U.S. was splitting with its European allies at the United Nations by refusing to blame Russia for its invasion of Ukraine in a series of resolutions marking the third anniversary of the war.

On Thursday, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer visited Washington and appealed to Trump for a U.S. "backstop" for European nations who would provide front-line security for Ukraine. He was in essence looking for insurance that, should a peace deal be reached, Russia won't restart the fighting in the future. Starmer brought flattery and a state visit invitation from King Charles III to soften the ask.

The approach seemed to work, as Trump struck a more conciliatory tone toward Ukraine, calling America's support for the country against Russia's invasion "a very worthy thing to do" and disclaiming any memory that he had called the Ukrainian leader a "dictator."

But Trump also brushed aside Putin's past broken diplomatic promises, claiming they occurred under different presidents, and saying the Russian leader had never violated a commitment to him. It came as his aides were planning a series of negotiating sessions with Russian officials to lay the groundwork for a

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potential meeting between Trump and Putin in the coming weeks.

Mineral deal pursued by Trump goes by the wayside, for now

All the while, Trump was focused on securing a financial stake in Ukraine's critical minerals to recoup the tens of billions the U.S. has given to Kyiv to defend itself. Zelenskyy, meanwhile, wanted more than Washington's vague promises that the U.S. would work to preserve its economic interest in Ukraine under the agreement and pushed for more concrete security guarantees.

But Trump would not budge, and U.S. officials repeatedly said Zelenskyy would not be welcome to meet with the president to discuss Trump's push for negotiations with Russia until it was signed. After weeks of browbeating, Zelenskyy's government on Wednesday formally agreed to the proposal, clearing the path for Friday's meeting.

It started off cordially enough, as Trump and Zelenskyy spoke politely, even with admiration, of one of another for the first half-hour of the meeting. Trump even suggested he would continue some military assistance to Ukraine until he could secure an enduring peace deal with Russia.

But when the Ukrainian leader raised alarm about trusting any promises from Putin to end the fighting, Vice President JD Vance rebuked him for airing disagreements with Trump in public. It instantly shifted the tenor of the conversation. Zelenskyy grew defensive, and Trump and his vice president blasted him as ungrateful and "disrespectful" and issued stark warnings about future American support.

A warning before the meeting 'not to take the bait'

Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., a defense hawk and Trump ally, said he had warned Zelenskyy before the meeting "not to take the bait" in his dealings with Trump, who has repeatedly shown a penchant for throwing criticism but a deep resistance to receiving it.

It was Vance — a longtime critic of American support for Ukraine — who dangled it, when he insisted diplomacy was the only way forward.

"What kind of diplomacy, JD, you are speaking about?" Zelenskyy said, listing Russia's past violations of ceasefires. "What do you mean?"

"I'm talking about the kind of diplomacy that's going to end the destruction of your country," Vance responded before tearing into the Ukrainian leader. "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."

Trump then let loose, warning the Ukrainian leader, "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."

At another point, Trump declared himself "in the middle," seeming to formally break from years of American support for Ukraine. 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."

"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.

Latest example of major shift in US foreign policy

The episode was just the latest instance of Trump's brazen moves to shift long-held American policy positions in his first six weeks back in office, portending even more uncertainty ahead for longtime American allies and partners who have already felt pressed to justify their place in Trump's eyes. It comes just weeks after Trump floated a permanent relocation of Palestinians in Gaza and an American takeover of the territory, and as he has doubled down on plans to put stiff tariffs on goods from Mexico and Canada starting next week.

After the Oval Office dustup, Zelenskyy was asked to leave the White House by top Trump advisers — scrapping plans for a lunch, a joint press conference and the signing of the economic agreement, even as the Ukrainian leader and his aides pushed for a "reset" on the meeting.

Trump later told reporters he didn't want to "embolden" the Ukrainian leader if he didn't want "peace" with Russia — flipping what Ukraine had seen as an inducement for security guarantees into a cudgel.

"You can't embolden somebody who does not have the cards," Trump said.

After the disastrous encounter, Zelenskyy appeared on Fox News on Friday evening and told Bret Baier that 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.

"Everybody (is) afraid Putin will come back tomorrow," Zelenskyy said. "We want just and lasting peace."

"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."

Zelenskyy acknowledged that without U.S. support, his country's position would grow "difficult."

After repeatedly declining opportunities to apologize to Trump, Zelensky closed his Fox appearance with a sheepish expression of remorse as he struggled with the reality of Trump's new direction in Washington: "Sorry for this."

US auto industry could be collateral damage in Trump's trade wars

By PAUL WISEMAN and ALEXA ST. JOHN The Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — President Donald Trump's trade wars threaten to claim a casualty on the home front: the American auto industry.

If the president goes ahead with 25% taxes on imports from Canada and Mexico on Tuesday, he will disrupt more than \$300 billion in annual U.S. automotive trade with its two neighbors, wreck supply chains that have been operating for decades and likely push up the already-forbidding price of new cars.

The tariffs pose an "existential" threat to North American auto production, said David Gantz, a fellow at Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy. They will push up "the cost of everything that's imported from Mexico or Canada that goes into a car assembled in the U.S."

Kelley Blue Book says Trump's tariffs could raise the U.S. price of the average new car — already approaching \$49,000 — by \$3,000 or more. The price of some full-size pickup trucks could shoot up by \$10,000.

The economic pain would intensify if Canada and Mexico counterpunched with tariffs on American exports.

"The economic impact of a sustained 25% tariff on Canada and Mexico would be severe, with full tit-for-tat retaliation likely to push Canada and Mexico into a recession and the U.S. to a point of stagnant growth," Andrew Foran of TD Economics wrote. Foran estimates that 25% tariffs would push down auto sales by 13.6% a year in Canada and 10.6% in the United States.

Trump's tariffs would upend North American auto supply chains

Since 1965 — when the U.S. and Canada eliminated tariffs on each other's autos and auto parts — North America has turned into an integrated auto manufacturing powerhouse. Mexico was brought into the fold by a 1994 regional trade pact and another one negotiated by Trump himself in 2020.

"The fact that you can tap relatively cheap steel and aluminum from Canada, that you can use the relatively low-cost labor in Mexico to assemble cars, and that you can leverage the high tech expertise and technology of the United States together, makes North America an incredibly competitive place to build automobiles," said Brett House, a professor at Columbia University's business school.

Much of the production has moved to Mexico. Ford, for example, manufactures the small Bronco Sport SUV and Maverick pickup in Sonora in northwestern Mexico. Stellantis makes the Jeep Compass and Wagoneer S at a plant in Toluca, west of Mexico City, which has been in operation since 1968. General Motors turns out GMC and Chevrolet pickups at a plant in Silao in central Mexico.

Just over half the 8 million cars and light trucks the United States imported last year came from Mexico (No. 1 at almost 3 million) and Canada (No. 4 at 1.1 million). Canada and Mexico are also the top two foreign markets for U.S.-built cars and light trucks, accounting for 53% of America's auto exports.

By taxing Canadian and Mexican imports, most of which has been entering the U.S. duty free, Trump would be lobbing an explosive into that elaborate manufacturing network.

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The costs and red tape would pile up

A White House official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss details of the tariff plan, said the taxes would apply each time goods cross the border from Mexico or Canada. That means the costs would pile up as auto components traveled from factories in the United States to Mexico or Canada and back again. So would the red tape: "It's an administrative and bureaucratic nightmare to keep track of things," Gantz said.

What's more, the 25% tariffs on Canada and Mexico would come atop higher taxes Trump intends to impose on foreign steel and aluminum starting March 12. Trump is removing exemptions on the metals tariffs he imposed in his first term — 25% on steel and 10% on aluminum — and raising the levy on aluminum to 25%. That means U.S. importers, including auto companies, would pay 50% duties on steel and aluminum from Canada and Mexico, big sources of the metals.

"You're talking about the material costs going up every time (a part) goes into one market and comes back," said K. Venkatesh Prasad, senior vice president of research at the Center for Automotive Research.

The higher costs would take a toll. A decade ago, Prasad said, the lowest-earning 20% of American consumers couldn't afford a new car. Already, he said, "the bottom 40% of the population is not able to afford a new vehicle."

Ford CEO Jim Farley has complained that "so far what we're seeing is a lot of cost and a lot of chaos."

General Motors CEO Mary Barra said last month at the Wolfe Research auto industry conference that GM has been "doing scenario planning and look at what at the different things we can change, we can move, we can respond." She expressed confidence that company can find ways to "mitigate" the effect of the tariffs. Stellantis chairman John Elkann recently said he thinks the administration's policies will boost American jobs and manufacturing.

Trump's trade war comes at an awkward time for automakers. They're trying to shift from gasoline-powered to electric vehicles, using revenue generated from selling conventional cars to finance EV investments, Prasad said, so the tariffs could hurt sales and limit the money available for the EV transition.

Why is Trump doing this?

Trump insists that the hefty hit to imports from Canada and Mexico aren't about trade; they're about slowing the flow of undocumented immigrants and fentanyl across U.S. borders.

"We cannot allow this scourge to continue to harm the USA, and therefore, until it stops, or is seriously limited, the proposed TARIFFS scheduled to go into effect on MARCH FOURTH will, indeed, go into effect, as scheduled," Trump wrote Thursday in a post on his social media platform Truth Social.

Canada wouldn't seem to be an especially important source of fentanyl: U.S. customs agents seized just 43 pounds of fentanyl at the Canadian border last year, versus the 21,100 pounds at Mexico's.

Many analysts suspect that Trump has another goal: The 2020 U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement he negotiated in his first term comes up for renewal next year.

Although the president characterized the USMCA as a victory and a big improvement over the 1994 pact it replaced, it failed to reduce America's trade deficits with Canada and Mexico. In fact, they've gotten bigger. (In Canada's case, that's largely because of surging energy exports that the American Midwest and Northeast rely on.)

So he is likely to seek revisions meant to ensure that more production — specifically auto production — is done in the United States, not just North America. The tariffs could give him leverage to pressure Canada and Mexico into accepting the USMCA changes he wants.

In the meantime, writes TD Economics' Foran, "the North American auto industry should still prepare itself for a prolonged period of elevated trade uncertainty and potential trade disruptions."

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Today in History: March 2, Wilt Chamberlain's 100-point game

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Sunday, March 2, the 61st day of 2025. There are 304 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On March 2, 1962, Wilt Chamberlain scored 100 points for the Philadelphia Warriors against the New York Knicks, a single-game NBA record that still stands. Philadelphia won by a score of 169-147.

Also on this date:

In 1807, the Act Prohibiting Importation of Slaves was signed by President Thomas Jefferson. (The domestic trade of enslaved people was not affected.)

In 1861, the state of Texas, having seceded from the Union, was admitted to the Confederacy.

In 1877, Republican Rutherford B. Hayes was declared the winner of the 1876 presidential election over Democrat Samuel J. Tilden, despite Tilden winning the popular vote. Tilden remains the only presidential candidate to get over 50% of the popular vote (50.9%) and not win the presidency.

In 1943, the three-day Battle of the Bismarck Sea began in the southwest Pacific during World War II; U.S. and Australian warplanes inflicted heavy damage on an Imperial Japanese convoy.

In 1955, nine months before Rosa Parks' more famous act of defiance, Claudette Colvin, a Black high school student in Montgomery, Alabama, was arrested after refusing to give up her seat on a public bus to a white passenger.

In 1985, the U.S. government approved a screening test for AIDS that detected antibodies to the virus, allowing possibly contaminated blood to be excluded from the blood supply.

In 2011, the Supreme Court ruled, 8-1, that a grieving father's pain over mocking protests near his Marine son's funeral had to yield to First Amendment protections for free speech in a decision favoring the Westboro Baptist Church of Topeka, Kansas.

Today's birthdays: Author John Irving is 83. Actor-comedian Laraine Newman (Saturday Night Live) is 73. Golf Hall of Famer Ian Woosnam is 67. Musician Jon Bon Jovi is 63. Actor Daniel Craig is 57. Rapper-actor Method Man is 54. Musician Chris Martin (Coldplay) is 48. Actor Rebel Wilson is 45. Actor Bryce Dallas Howard is 44. Hockey Hall of Famer Henrik Lundqvist is 43. Actor Robert Iler is 40. Actor Nathalie Emmanuel is 36. Country musician Luke Combs is 35. Singer-actor Becky G is 28.