

Groton Daily Independent

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Wednesday, March 5

ASH WEDNESDAY

Senior Menu: Baked fish, Mac n Cheese, peas, fruit, dinner roll.

School Breakfast: Colonel Mustard's Muffins.

School Lunch: Mac and cheese, mixed vegetables

Groton Chamber Meeting, Noon, City Hall

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

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

Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 4 p.m.; Sarah

Groton Daily Independent

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

TODAY I WILL NOT STRESS OVER
THINGS I CAN'T
CONTROL..

KRYZTLE'S PEANUTS GALORE



Circle, 5 p.m.; Lenten Supper, 6 p.m. (Host-WELCA Board), worship, 7 p.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Confirmation, 3:45 p.m.; Lenten Service, 7 p.m.

United Methodist: Community Coffee hour, 9:30 a.m.; Groton Ash Wednesday Service, 6 p.m.

Thursday, March 6

Senior Menu: New England Ham Dinner, carrots, Mandarin Orange salad, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Ballroom Breakfast Pizza.

School Lunch: Hamburgers, fries.

Girls SoDak16 Basketball

Emmanuel Lutheran: Nigeria Circle, 2 p.m.

Friday, March 7

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

Senior Menu: Tuna noodle hotdish, mixed vegetables, baked apples, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Confidential Egg Wraps.

School Lunch: Pizza crunchers, green beans.

Region 1A Boys. Basketball

End of Third Quarter

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1440

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

Panama Ports Deal

A group of investors led by American asset management giant BlackRock has agreed to buy majority stakes in two strategic ports at both ends of the Panama Canal. The nearly \$23B deal places two of the four major ports along the 51-mile canal more firmly within US influence.

The US purchase comes after President Donald Trump expressed concerns about potential Chinese influence over the Panama Canal's operations. In addition to acquiring Hong Kong-based CK Hutchison's 90% ownership in Panama's Balboa and Cristóbal ports, the BlackRock consortium will gain control of more than 40 ports in 23 countries, including Mexico, the Netherlands, Egypt, Australia, and Pakistan.

The Panama Canal is a vital trade route connecting the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, and the US is its largest user, accounting for roughly 70% of its shipping traffic. The US built and operated the canal from its opening in 1914 until ownership was transferred to Panama in 1999 under a treaty signed in 1977. Last year, the canal made nearly \$5B in revenue.

A 'Woolly Mouse' is Born

De-extinction company Colossal Biosciences genetically engineered a shaggy, light brown mouse with fat deposits as part of its effort to revive the extinct woolly mammoth. The experiment, published in a paper not yet peer-reviewed, shows the company's ability to edit multiple genes in an attempt to achieve a single expressed trait—in this case, cold tolerance. Further tests will demonstrate whether the changes are effective in colder climates.

Scientists focused on mouse genes related to hair expression with links to the mammoth's genome. Each mouse received different combinations of edits, but some saw up to eight genes edited using three distinct techniques. In most cases, the gene was edited to shut off its typical expression, as with the hair-regulating gene FGF-5 (fibroblast growth factor 5), which allowed the fur to grow long.

Colossal, currently valued at \$10B, was founded in 2021 by entrepreneur Ben Lamm and geneticist George Church to develop a method to recreate extinct species, including the mammoth, dodo, and Tasmanian tiger.

US Gunmakers Challenged

The US Supreme Court heard arguments yesterday in a \$10B lawsuit filed by Mexico against US gun manufacturers, alleging they are complicit in supplying firearms to drug cartels. The lawsuit claims 70%-90% of guns recovered in Mexico originate from the US. The justices, who appeared skeptical of Mexico's claims, will decide whether to dismiss an appeals court ruling that allowed Mexico to sue the companies.

Mexico argues gun manufacturers knowingly profit up to \$170M from sales to traffickers who smuggle weapons into the country, where strict laws make civilian gun purchases nearly impossible. The case is brought by Smith & Wesson and wholesaler Witmer Public Safety Group—six other companies were dismissed in August—who claim protection under a federal law barring lawsuits for criminal activities involving their products. A ruling favoring Mexico could weaken legal protections for gunmakers and expose other industries to similar liability suits.

Mexico has since said it may expand the lawsuit, arguing the companies are enabling terrorism following the Trump administration's designation of six Mexican cartels as terrorist organizations. A ruling is expected by late June.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

The 2025 Academy Awards haul in 19.69 million viewers across ABC and Hulu, the largest audience since 2020.

Philadelphia Eagles sign Saquon Barkley to two-year, \$41.2M extension, making Barkley the highest-paid running back in NFL history.

UEFA Champions League knockout stage kicks off.

Chinese architect Liu Jiakun wins prestigious Pritzker Architecture Prize; see gallery of some of Liu's top designs.

Science & Technology

OpenAI announces NextGenAI consortium with MIT, Harvard, and others to advance AI-assisted research at top universities; OpenAI to provide \$50M and computational resources in support.

Uber expands driverless Waymo rideshares to Austin, Texas; marks the fourth market to receive the company's autonomous vehicles, behind Phoenix, San Francisco, and Los Angeles.

Protein derived from tardigrades shown to help shield DNA in mouse cells from radiation; also known as water bears, the microorganisms can withstand extreme environments from the Arctic to outer space.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close lower (S&P 500 -1.2%, Dow -1.6%, Nasdaq -0.4%); S&P 500 wipes out postelection gains as investors assess US tariffs.

China retaliates with tariffs of up to 15% on US farm imports, while Canada says it will apply tariffs on over \$100B of US goods; Mexico to announce tariffs Sunday.

Best Buy shares close down 13% after CEO warns price increases are highly likely due to US tariffs on Mexico, China, and Canada; Target CEO also warns of price hikes on fruits and vegetables.

Consumer Financial Protection Bureau dismisses fraud lawsuit against Bank of America, JPMorgan Chase, Wells Fargo, and Zelle's operator.

Politics & World Affairs

President Donald Trump delivers address to Congress over trade, Ukraine, the economy, and more, while setting the record for longest address to a joint session of Congress in modern history; see key takeaways.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy says he is ready to sign minerals deal with the US; offers to release Russian prisoners of war, halt long-range drone and missile strikes on Russia, and declare immediate maritime truce.

Office of Personnel Management revises guidance, says federal agencies have authority to decide whether to fire probationary employees.

Powerful storms sweep across the US, with weather ranging from high winds and possible tornadoes in the South and East to blizzards in the Midwest.

Don't Empower Others to Upset You

By Bryan Golden

You have no control over other people's actions. But you do have total control over your response. Someone else can't upset you unless you empower them to. "They make me so mad," "they make me so upset," and "they make me so unhappy," are statements based on the false premise that other people have power over your emotions.

Don't empower others to upset you. Don't make excuses which justify your becoming upset. Comments such as, "I have every right to be upset," don't help you. Anger, bitterness, and resentment, are all self-destructive reactions which cause you a great deal of harm.

You obviously don't have to like, agree with, or condone what other people do. You allow other people to control you when you react to them by getting upset. Although people do things which are upsetting, you don't have to become ensnared.

You stop empowering people to upset you by taking responsibility for, and control of, your response to others. Your response is up to you. It's independent of anyone else's actions. You have no control over other's actions; you only have control over your actions.

Cutting free from this emotional entanglement begins with the recognition that you are in control of your thoughts, emotions, and behavior. Make a commitment to yourself to stop empowering others to upset you.

The next time someone does something which would normally upset you, say to yourself, "I will not empower this person to upset me." This strategy short circuits the automatic reaction you are used to having. It does not make issues requiring your attention disappear. It gives you a clear-headed response, which is the best way to handle problems.

Becoming upset, although a normal reaction to problems, does not benefit you. Your judgement is clouded and your perspective becomes distorted when you are emotional. You make better decisions when you are calm, collected, and rational. Sound decisions are essential for solving problems.

You won't change others. They are who they are and they do what they do. There are even some people who intentionally attempt to upset you. If they know you well, they say and do things specifically designed to set you off. They gain perverse pleasure from your distress.

Your stress level will be significantly lowered when you stop allowing others to upset you and when you stop trying to change others. You are responsible for how you respond to others. Don't make excuses or place blame.

In response to a situation which would normally upset you, try a new approach. Recognize and acknowledge what has occurred. Then you can objectively formulate what course of action you should take, if any, in response.

There are many circumstances where no response is appropriate. These are situations which don't matter in the long run. For example, you don't need to respond to idiotic comments. Ignore behavior and statements designed to annoy you. You don't have to react just because someone acts. Additionally, let stuff go that you have no control over.

For issues which do matter, and over which you have some control or influence, determine your objective. Your objective should be obtainable, relevant, and worth your time and effort. Achieving your objective should yield positive benefits which improve your life.

Negative objectives such as getting even, teaching someone a lesson, or retribution harm you when they are attempted or achieved. Your goal is to make circumstances better, not worse. Empowering others to upset you puts you on a negative path.

It doesn't matter what other people say, think, or do. Your thoughts and actions are what matter. Stay on your path. Don't empower others to upset you.

Bryan is the author of "Dare to Live Without Limits." Contact Bryan at Bryan@columnist.com or visit www.DareToLiveWithoutLimits.com Copyright 2025 Bryan Golden

Electric rates increase by 3%, base increases by \$5

The Groton City Council approved the first reading of the electric rates as WAPA is increasing its electric rate. The \$5 base increase to help pay for the metering costs. Those on LIEAP will not have to pay the \$5 increase. Electric rates will see an increase of 3 percent except for dual fuel meters which will see an increase to \$25 (from \$10) for a minimum fee for the months of November through April. Electric rates will increase from 10.7 cents per KWH to 11.0 cents per KWH. Dual Fuel will increase from .05 to .057. Geo rates will increase from .085 to .087. Demand customers will see a KWH increase from .085 to .087. The KW rate will remain unchanged at \$14 per Kilowatt.

Dwight Zerr, sewer superintendent, said, "We're doing well with the sewer end of things. It's pretty dry." He said there are three broken clean-outs and instead of digging up the whole street, they could be repaired for a total of \$18,000.

Terry Herron reported that there was a water break with lead pipe. Looking at getting the chip seal project ready for bid.

Todd Gay reported that he will be meeting with the Hecla City Council to discuss a project that they need help with.

Mike Shilhanek - Vice President of the Groton Development Corporation, came before the council to talk about an activity center. They are looking at getting the property south of the Groton Community Center. It would like a pole barn for an indoor playground. "We think it's a great location in Groton," Shilhanek said. Long term plans could also include having the Thrift Store and Pantry in the facility along with a youth center. He said that in a couple of months they will bring in the day care providers to get their input on it. Councilman Kevin Nehls said, "It's a nice concept."

There was also short discussion of possibly moving the city hall back to the original city hall, but Mayor Scott Hanlon quickly said, "That won't fly. The girls have done a great job with the library and we are not so cramped here. This has been a Godsend for us."

The council approved the transfer of a liquor license of the Red Horse Inn. There is a Contract for deed sale of the Red Horse from Darren and Lisa Locke, dba D & L Enterprises, to Keith Landwehr, dba American Grain LLC.

The baseball scoreboards at Nelson and Falk Fields need some repair work. Councilman Jason Wambach said the controllers need to be replaced which would cost \$2,300 each. Replacement of the scoreboards range from \$4,985 to \$6,560. "I hate to throw \$2,300 at it and still have an old system," Wambach said.

The council approved the purchase of scoreboards similar to the size we have now for \$4,985. If the foundation or Legion want a bigger board, they can chip in the difference.

Garbage bids will be going out for the next three years. This time, there will be no bid for automatic pickup as the city's streets are not capable handling the load. There was discussion if they have a smaller garbage truck to use when there is spring load limits in place.

Bids will also be let for painting the exterior of City Hall.

The council went into executive session for nearly an hour with Kami Lipp and Tricia Keith in attendance.

The second reading of the summer salary ordinance was approved. Applications are open for the summer recreational positions. The assistant part-time swimming pool manager's position was eliminated as the council will go with co-managers.

The equalization meeting is set for March 18th after the regular council meeting.


The council approved for Finance Officer Douglas Heinrich to attend finance officers/human resource school June 10-13 in Pierre.

The council tabled the hiring of summer recreation employees.

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Class A - Region 1 Boys Basketball



Seed	Team	Record	Score	Opponent	Opponent Record	Score	Time
#1 - Britton-Hecla School District Bri...							
4	Britton-Hecla	15-5	51	5	Sisseton	10-11	3/7 7:00 PM CT
FINAL							
#2 - Aberdeen Catholic Schools							
2	Aberdeen Roncalli	10-11	79	7	Redfield	11-10	3/7 7:00 PM CT
FINAL							
#3 - Aberdeen Catholic Schools							
3	Milbank	11-10	54	6	Webster Area	37.850	
FINAL							
#4 - Groton Area							
1	Groton Area	15-5		4	Britton-Hecla	39.600	
3/7 7:00 PM CT							
#5 - Aberdeen Catholic Schools							
2	Aberdeen Roncalli	10-11		3	Milbank	40.150	
3/7 7:00 PM CT							

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

Conde National League

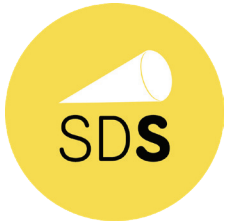
March 3 Team Standings: Braves 39 (winner of second half), Cubs 29, Giants 25, Pirates 22, Stooges 21, Mets 20.

Men's High Games: Butch Farmen 213, Skip Kettering 198, Aaron Severson 173.

Men's High Series: Butch Farmen 549, Skip Kettering 495, Dion Bahr 479.

Women's High Games: Sam Bahr 189, Nancy Radke 177, Suzi Easthouse 171, Sandy Hoops 171.

Women's High Series: Sam Bahr 535, Suzi Easthouse 507, Nancy Radke 457.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

South Dakota should protect students from a dual-credit price hike, state Senate committee decides

BY: SETH TUPPER - MARCH 4, 2025 11:05 AM

The state should maintain its subsidy for dual credit students, a group of South Dakota legislators decided Tuesday at the Capitol in Pierre.

The Senate Education Committee voted 4-3 to defeat a proposed reduction of the subsidy. That means the reduction is likely dead, barring the use of any procedural maneuver to revive it during the last two weeks of the annual legislative session.

Sen. Jamie Smith, D-Sioux Falls, was among the committee members who voted to retain the existing level of support.

"This is a very affordable investment in our kids," he said.

The dual enrollment program lets high school juniors and seniors earn both high school and college credits through in-person or online courses. The state offers the courses at a reduced rate of \$150 per credit hour, with the state paying two-thirds and students paying one-third.

To help balance this year's state budget, former Gov. Kristi Noem — before she departed to become secretary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security — proposed a half-and-half split. Students' costs would have increased from about \$50 to \$75 per credit hour, saving the state about \$1.2 million annually.

State Education Secretary Joe Graves, representing the administration of new Gov. Larry Rhoden, spoke in favor of the subsidy reduction Tuesday. The assistance has already incentivized dual credit enrollment, Graves said, with almost 6,000 South Dakota students taking the courses last year. Now that students and families are aware of the program and see its value, a modest reduction in the subsidy would not significantly discourage enrollment, Graves said.

Yet he acknowledged that the program helps students prepare for college and graduate in four years or less. Backers of the program testified that for those and other benefits, the state should maintain its current level of financial support.

Meanwhile, state budget talks continue. Although the dual credit decision avoids a budget cut, lawmakers have already made other cost-saving decisions, including a rejection of Noem's proposal to spend \$4 million to create an education savings account program. That proposal would have provided public funds to help students attend private school or pay for homeschooling or other alternative instruction costs.

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

Legislative panel breaks 'piggy bank' plan for water projects

Lawmakers argue that South Dakota has too many savings accounts

BY: JOHN HULT - MARCH 4, 2025 11:00 AM

A state House panel shut down a bill that would have created a place to set aside cash for water projects across South Dakota.

The bill earned the support of the state Senate, but floundered in front of the House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources on Tuesday at the Capitol in Pierre. It failed 10-3.

Senate Bill 202 would've created a water infrastructure development fund, but wouldn't have put any money in it.

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Several committee members worried aloud that simply creating a fund presents a risk of its use as an excuse to plan for projects before those projects earn the support of lawmakers.

Some committee members referenced the incarceration construction fund to make their point. That fund, set up three years ago and now worth more than \$600 million, was created to fund a new prison. This year, lawmakers rejected the state's plans to open up the fund for use in building an \$825 million men's facility in a controversial Lincoln County location.

Rep. Richard Vasgaard, R-Centerville, said he's no longer certain that taxpayers trust the value of specialty savings accounts.

New Holland Republican and Committee Chair Marty Overweg, meanwhile, said previous legislatures had "built governmental monsters" by setting up such accounts.

"Now we're having to feed them," Overweg said.

Backer: We need a piggy bank

Sen. Helene Duhamel, R-Rapid City, did indeed bring Senate Bill 202 in hopes that future legislatures would feed it.

Her take, however, is that doing so would be a smart way to leverage federal dollars and protect South Dakotans' access to clean drinking water. As envisioned, water infrastructure project managers would be able to request grants worth up to 10% and loans worth up to 50% of a project's cost.

The idea would be for the fund – if lawmakers chose to put money in it – to earn interest and be large enough to match any federal dollars that might come available. With talk from the Trump administration of bumping up state and local governments' share of funding in a range of areas, the state could benefit from such a setup, Duhamel said.

"We may, as a state and as local governments, need to come up with more money for these projects in the future," she said, referencing changes at the federal level without mentioning Trump by name.

The state Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources opposed the idea from the start, though. The Board of Water and Natural Resources, which would distribute dollars from the fund, already has a process for requesting water project funding.

The bill creates a "carve-out" for projects to go around "an established process," according to the department's Andy Bruels.

Bruels told lawmakers the department oversees the disbursement of around \$180 million in water funding through various channels each year. Federal COVID-19 pandemic relief added around \$700 billion to those typical dollar amounts in recent years.

But Duhamel has argued that the rapid gobble-up of federal COVID relief dollars for water projects across the state over the past few years is proof that the state needs a "piggy bank" for water.

"Every year, everything we have is spent," Duhamel said.

The bill's supporters included an economic development lobbyist from Rapid City and a representative from Black Hills Energy.

Western Dakota project earns committee backing

Duhamel had pointed to large-scale water projects for South Dakota as proof of the need for a fund. Just after shooting down that idea on Tuesday, the ag committee endorsed one of those projects.

Senate Joint Resolution 501 asks lawmakers to agree with a decision by the state's Water Resources Board to grant the Western Dakota Regional Water System's permit for the use of Missouri River water in its pipeline plans.

The water allotment in the system's pipeline application is large enough to trigger a clause in state law requiring legislative approval. The system wants to reserve 20,765 acre-feet of Missouri River water annually for use in 19 western South Dakota counties – nearly 7 billion gallons per year.

The system will take decades and significant federal investment to complete, ag committee members heard Tuesday morning, but all of it would hinge on SJR 501.

The committee sent the resolution to the House floor with a "do pass" recommendation on an 11-2 vote.

John is the senior reporter for South Dakota Searchlight. He has more than 15 years experience covering crimi-

nal justice, the environment and public affairs in South Dakota, including more than a decade at the Sioux Falls Argus Leader.

Witness: Most tribal nations at Dakota Access Pipeline protest 'didn't know who Greenpeace was'

BY: MARY STEURER - MARCH 4, 2025 8:14 AM

MANDAN, N.D. — A Lakota organizer said in a video deposition played to jurors Monday that the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe led the protests against the Dakota Access Pipeline, not Greenpeace.

Nick Tilsen, an Oglala Sioux Tribe citizen and activist, called the notion that Greenpeace orchestrated the protests "paternalistic."

"I think that people underestimate the complexity and the sophistication of tribal nations," Tilsen said.

Tilsen's deposition was the latest testimony heard by the nine-person jury in the marathon trial between pipeline developer Energy Transfer and Greenpeace.

Energy Transfer claims Greenpeace secretly aided and abetted destructive and violent behavior by protesters during the demonstrations, which took place in south central North Dakota near the Standing Rock Reservation in 2016 and 2017. It also claims that Greenpeace orchestrated a misinformation campaign to defame the company, leading a group of banks to back out of financing the project. Energy Transfer seeks roughly \$300 million from the environmental organization.

Greenpeace denies Energy Transfer's allegations. The group says it has never condoned violence, and only played a supporting role during the protests.

Tilsen said he got involved in the protests before Greenpeace. He was invited to join the cause by former Standing Rock Chairman Dave Archambault and his sister, Jodi Archambault, he said.

"They called me and said, 'Hey, we need your help at Standing Rock,'" Tilsen said.

Standing Rock has long opposed the Dakota Access Pipeline, stating the project poses a pollution threat, infringes on tribal sovereignty and has disrupted sacred cultural sites.

It was Standing Rock leadership that laid the groundwork for the protests against the pipeline's construction in 2016, Tilsen said.

He said organizers later invited Greenpeace to support the camps, including by providing supplies and nonviolent direct action training. Tilsen said he only felt comfortable reaching out to Greenpeace because a friend of his, Cy Wagoner, worked there.

He said since Wagoner is from the Navajo nation, he trusted that Greenpeace would respect Standing Rock's leadership of the camps.

Indigenous communities are often reluctant to invite outside nonprofits to help with Native rights issues, Tilsen added. He said they often don't understand Native nations' unique relationship with the U.S. government.

Greenpeace wasn't a big part of the protests, Tilsen said.

"To be honest, most of the tribal nations didn't know who Greenpeace was," he said.

Countless other groups — including representatives from more than 300 Native nations — came to the protest camps in solidarity with Standing Rock, said Tilsen.

"Quite frankly, our list of allies was hundreds," he said.

Tilsen said he was involved in several protest actions against the Dakota Access Pipeline in 2016 and 2017, including those that involved marching on the pipeline easement, jumping in front of equipment and using lockboxes — also known as "sleeping dragons" — to disable construction machinery.

None of the protest actions were coordinated by Greenpeace, he said.

Tilsen said he never saw or endorsed any destruction of property or acts of violence toward construction workers or law enforcement. He also pushed back on the assertion that any of the protest activities he participated in qualified as trespassing.

The pipeline passes through land recognized as belonging to the Sioux Nation under treaties signed by

the U.S. government in 1851 and 1868. The U.S. government later annexed that land in violation of those treaties.

Tilsen asked how Lakota citizens could be trespassing on land that was unlawfully taken from them.

"This is the conundrum we find ourselves in," he said.

Employees of Greenpeace said during video depositions played last week that the environmental organization brought 20 to 30 lockboxes to the camps.

Tilsen said while he saw many lockboxes during protests, he wasn't sure where any of them came from. He also said he never heard anyone from Greenpeace tell demonstrators to use the devices.

Tilsen said that David Khoury, an employee for Greenpeace, helped identify potential sites for protest actions. Tilsen added that while Wagoner — another Greenpeace employee — didn't plan protest activities, he trained people on how to conduct them.

The trial, which is before Southwest Central Judicial District Judge James Gion, is expected to last roughly four more weeks.

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

Fired federal workers among Democrats' guests at Trump address to Congress

Republican Rep. Dusty Johnson of South Dakota will host two county sheriffs

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA - MARCH 4, 2025 4:39 PM

WASHINGTON — As President Donald Trump gives his first address to Congress of his second term, among the hundreds of guests in attendance will be federal employees fired by Elon Musk's U.S. DOGE Service.

In a rebuke against the Trump administration's first month in office, Democrats invited fired federal employees, along with migrants who have been harmed by the president's immigration crackdown.

"The slash-and-burn approach that Trump and DOGE have taken has already disrupted so many lives, and does nothing to bring down the rising prices across the country," Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer said in a statement.

The New York Democrat invited Alissa Ellman, a veteran with a disability who served in Afghanistan. She was fired from her job at the Department of Veterans Affairs because she was hired last year and therefore a probationary employee, along with workers who were recently promoted and in a probationary period.

NIH cancer researcher fired

Democrats invited as their guests park rangers, cancer researchers and veterans. Roughly 30% of the 2 million federal government employees are veterans.

Arizona Democratic Sen. Ruben Gallego will bring Kyle Rahn as his guest. Rahn is a disabled veteran and was a federal worker at the Department of Homeland Security who was fired by DOGE cuts.

DOGE stands for Department of Government Efficiency, although the entity is not a federal department. Musk's title is special government employee.

Democratic Rep. Jamie Raskin of Maryland invited one of the thousands of employees purged from the Department of Health and Human Services — Lauren McGee, a biologist researching children's cancer at the National Institutes of Health's National Cancer Institute in Bethesda, Maryland.

Raskin, who is a cancer survivor, said McGee's firing has "devastating consequences for all Americans when President Trump and Elon Musk indiscriminately attack public health authorities."

"Her unceremonious discharge hurts all the current and future patients depending on her research for medical progress," Raskin said.

Guests invited by Republicans included immigration enforcement officials and student athletes who oppose allowing transgender athletes to compete in sports, and the American families of the Israeli hostages from the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza.

First lady Melania Trump invited more than a dozen guests, including Marc Fogel, a teacher from Butler,

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Pennsylvania who was held hostage by Russia and freed last month, and Payton McNabb from Murphy, North Carolina, a former student athlete who is opposed to transgender women athletes competing in women's sports.

Laken Riley family invited

The president's address is likely to highlight the administration's push for mass deportations, and the passage of an immigration detention bill, known as the Laken Riley Act.

The White House invited the family of Laken Riley to attend the address — her mother, Allyson Phillips, and her sister, Lauren Phillips, from Woodstock, Georgia.

Iowa Republican Sen. Joni Ernst also pushed an amendment to that bill to require the detention of any migrant without legal status charged with bodily harm or death. The amendment was in response to the death of Sarah Root, a Council Bluffs, Iowa, woman who was killed by an immigrant in the country without legal authorization and released by local law enforcement.

Ernst invited Scott Root, the father of Sarah Root, as a guest for the address.

"After a nine-year battle for change, this week we remember Sarah and the fact that under the leadership of President Trump, our nation's laws will no longer prioritize illegal immigrants over Americans," Ernst said in a statement. "I continue to elevate Sarah's story to the highest levels and partner with the White House to provide closure for her loved ones."

Haitian migrant invited

Democrats invited guests who have been affected by the White House's efforts to limit legal pathways for immigration.

Florida's Rep. Maxwell Alejandro Frost invited a guest who was previously a labor organizer and has been extended Temporary Protected Status for Haiti, Wilna Destin.

TPS is granted by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security when a country is deemed too dangerous to return to for reasons such as violence, political instability or natural disasters. DHS Secretary Kristi Noem ended TPS for Haiti last month, removing protections for hundreds of thousands of Haitian immigrants and subjecting them to deportation by August.

"After more than 20 years of working in the hospitality industry and raising a family here, she and her husband—along with over 500,000 Haitian TPS holders—now face the threat of deportation," Frost said of Destin in a statement.

Oregon forest ranger a guest

One of the 16 forest rangers fired from Oregon's Deschutes National Forest will be a guest of Rep. Janelle Bynum.

The Oregon Democrat said the decision to fire Liz Crandall, a former U.S. Forest Service ranger, undermines public safety and puts the community at a disadvantage during the next wildfire season.

"Our communities are vulnerable to wildfires and after the recent devastation we've seen across the country, the Trump Administration has responded by firing those who help keep us safe," Bynum said in a statement. "Liz is a dedicated public servant and played a key role in public safety — her firing benefits no one."

Colorado Sen. Michael Bennet will also bring a Forest Service employee who was fired as a probationary employee. In a statement, Bennet said that 3,400 U.S. Forest Service employees were fired, including 90 in Colorado.

"Forest Service employees across the West are true public servants, dedicating their lives to managing our public lands to power our economy, keep our air and water clean, and protect our communities from growing wildfire risk," Bennet said. "The decision to terminate these employees at our already understaffed land management agencies reveals a complete disregard for the importance of public lands in the West and the value of these employees' contributions to our local communities."

Democratic Sen. Mark Warner of Virginia will bring one of the 1,000 fired National Park Service employees. His guest, Ashley Ranalli of Fredericksburg, was a NPS park ranger at Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park.

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He said that Ranalli survived thyroid cancer and now has no health insurance.

“Ashley Ranalli is one of the many dedicated public servants who have been forced out of their jobs serving Americans by President Trump and Elon Musk,” Warner said. “These indiscriminate cuts of Park Service personnel are devastating to the parks and their local communities.”

South Dakota congressman announces guests

FROM SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

U.S. Representative Dusty Johnson, R-South Dakota, announced that Meade County Sheriff Pat West and Clay County Sheriff Andy Howe will join him for President Trump’s joint address to Congress.

Johnson said in a news release that “law and order has returned to America” with Trump’s return to office.

West, elected in 2022, was previously an agent with the state Division of Criminal Investigation. He has worked on cases in western South Dakota caused by the opioid, methamphetamine and fentanyl crises, according to Johnson.

Howe was elected in 2002 and also serves as South Dakota’s delegate to the Mid-States Organized Crime Information Center, advocating for support for the Regional Information Sharing System, which helps law enforcement at all levels facilitate information sharing for criminal investigations and protecting officers.

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

Governor bans Chinese apps from use on state devices and by state employees at work

BY: JOHN HULT - MARCH 4, 2025 4:05 PM

South Dakota Gov. Larry Rhoden has added an artificial intelligence chatbot and social media platform to the list of applications banned for use by state employees because the companies behind them are based in China.

The bans cover DeepSeek, a ChatGPT competitor, and RedNote, an app similar to TikTok, which itself is an app barred from use by state employees on state-owned devices.

“My Administration will continue to defend South Dakota citizens from Evil Foreign Governments, including the Chinese Communist Party,” Rhoden said in a press release on the decision.

The bans came under Executive Order 2023-06, inked by former Gov. Kristi Noem in 2023 to ban a Chinese-owned app called WeChat. The order also empowered the commissioner of the Bureau of Information and Telecommunication to ban “any other application, website, platform, service, or product whose use or access would be detrimental to state security.”

Similar to the bans on Bytedance, TikTok’s parent company, and Tencent, the ban blocks DeepSeek and RedNote from use on state devices, and blocks state employees from using them on their own devices during work.

A complete list of banned apps is located on the Bureau’s website.

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

New Secretary Linda McMahon unveils ‘final mission’ for U.S. Department of Education

BY: SHAUNEEN MIRANDA - MARCH 4, 2025 12:54 PM

WASHINGTON — In her first hours as the new Education secretary, Linda McMahon wasted no time informing U.S. Education Department employees in an email titled “Our Department’s Final Mission” of her plans to “overhaul” the federal agency.

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McMahon — sworn in shortly after the Senate confirmed her bid Monday evening in a party-line vote — is already carrying out President Donald Trump’s sweeping education vision, part of which, she said, is “to send education back to the states and empower all parents to choose an excellent education for their children.”

Trump, who’s said he wants McMahon “to put herself out of a job,” could soon issue an executive order that lays out his pledge to diminish the department, though it would take an act of Congress to abolish it entirely. The email, also posted on the Education Department website, did not mention any upcoming executive order.

Former wrestling exec

McMahon is a former World Wrestling Entertainment executive and served as head of the Small Business Administration during Trump’s first term.

She’s now in charge of the department that, among many responsibilities, enforces civil rights cases, provides funding for low-income school districts, administers federal student aid and guarantees a free public education for children with disabilities.

But the push to move education “back to the states” comes as much of the funding and oversight of schools already occurs at the state and local level. The federal government also has little say, in general, over the curriculum of schools across the country.

“The Department of Education’s role in this new era of accountability is to restore the rightful role of state oversight in education and to end the overreach from Washington,” McMahon wrote to employees at the department, which has already witnessed dramatic shifts in the weeks since Trump took office.

“This restoration will profoundly impact staff, budgets, and agency operations here at the Department,” she added, noting that in the coming months, the department would work with Congress and other federal agencies to “determine the best path forward to fulfill the expectations of the President and the American people.”

“We will eliminate unnecessary bureaucracy so that our colleges, K-12 schools, students, and teachers can innovate and thrive,” she said.

In January, Kentucky GOP Rep. Thomas Massie reintroduced a bill in the House that would “terminate” the department.

Parental rights, DEI

McMahon outlined three of the department’s “convictions,” including the administration’s push for parental rights — a core component of Trump’s education platform.

She also said “taxpayer-funded education should refocus on meaningful learning in math, reading, science, and history — not divisive DEI programs and gender ideology” and “postsecondary education should be a path to a well-paying career aligned with workforce needs.”

Even before McMahon secured her post as Education secretary, Trump began carrying out a series of education-related executive orders, including one that prioritizes school choice funding and another on ending what the administration sees as “radical indoctrination in K-12 schooling.”

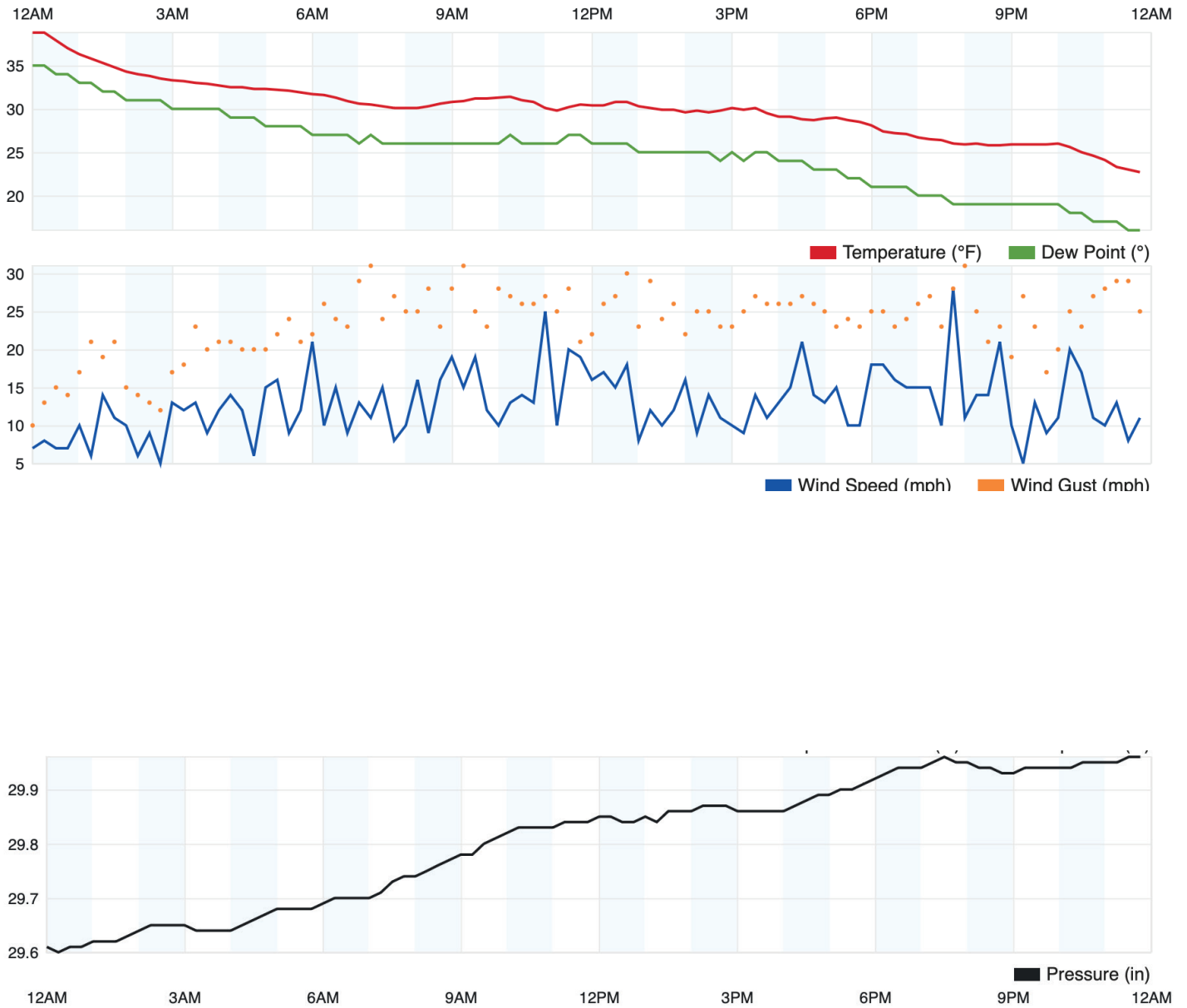
He also fulfilled his long-held campaign promise to ban transgender athletes from participating on women’s school sports teams consistent with their gender identity. A GOP-led effort in the U.S. Senate that would help codify that executive order into law failed to advance Monday.

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

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Wednesday



High: 39 °F

Sunny and Breezy

Wednesday Night



Low: 19 °F

Chance Snow

Thursday



High: 42 °F

Partly Sunny

Thursday Night



Low: 17 °F

Mostly Cloudy

Friday



High: 48 °F

Sunny



Strong Winds into Wednesday

March 4, 2025
2:54 PM

Winds to slowly diminish during the day Wednesday

Wind Gust Forecast...

- **Tonight: Out of the north 35 to 50 mph**
- Winds weakening with gusts 20 to 40 mph by Wednesday afternoon
- Over and east of the Prairie Coteau of northeastern SD: **Snow on the ground will combine with the strong winds to create reduced visibilities of 1 to 3 miles through tonight.**
- Strong winds will cause travel difficulties in crosswinds for those travelling on west and east roads.



Maximum Wind Gust Forecast (mph)

	3/4 Tue		3/5 Wed							
	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm
Aberdeen	38	39	39	38	35	32	29	23	9	9
Britton	38	39	39	37	33	31	26	22	12	7
Brookings	51	52	51	51	45	44	39	36	24	14
Chamberlain	37	38	38	38	36	30	29	24	12	8
Clark	43	44	44	40	38	36	35	29	13	8
Eagle Butte	46	45	45	38	32	28	21	17	14	20
Ellendale	38	38	38	37	35	33	30	22	9	8
Eureka	37	36	35	33	30	28	24	18	10	12
Gettysburg	38	38	38	37	32	29	25	20	10	15
Huron	40	43	44	44	40	36	32	28	15	12
Kennebec	43	40	41	36	32	31	29	22	8	12
McIntosh	37	33	31	29	23	18	15	15	14	20
Milbank	41	44	44	43	40	40	37	32	16	10
Miller	37	39	39	36	33	31	29	24	9	12
Mobridge	33	33	33	31	26	23	18	14	10	14
Murdo	43	40	40	36	30	29	24	20	9	15
Pierre	40	38	38	32	26	25	22	16	6	10
Redfield	39	41	41	39	37	33	32	26	9	9
Sisseton	41	44	44	43	40	37	32	26	15	9
Watertown	45	47	47	45	43	39	37	32	16	9
Webster	43	44	44	40	38	36	33	29	15	9
Wheaton	40	41	41	40	37	36	33	29	17	10



Winds out of the north continue with gusts of 35 to 50 mph through Wednesday morning, and weakening by Wednesday evening. Strong winds will cause travel difficulties in crosswinds for those traveling on west to east roads.

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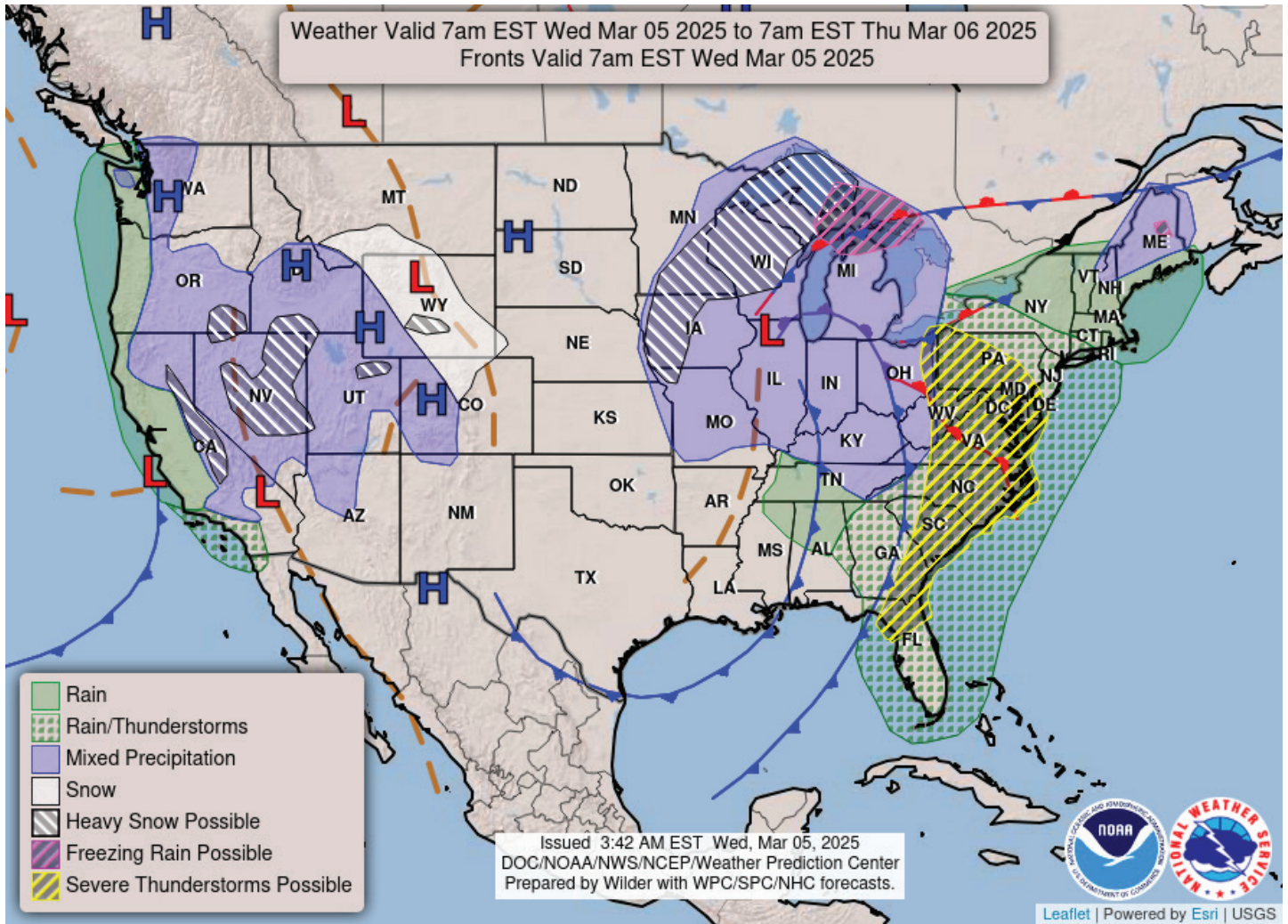
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 39 °F at 12:00 AM
Low Temp: 23 °F at 11:26 PM
Wind: 31 mph at 7:07 AM
Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 11 hours, 25 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 74 in 2000
Record Low: -22 in 1919
Average High: 36
Average Low: 14
Average Precip in March.: 0.12
Precip to date in March.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 1.29
Precip Year to Date: 0.45
Sunset Tonight: 6:26:39 pm
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:59:00 am



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Today in Weather History

March 5, 1966: The historic blizzard of 1966, which started on March 2, ended in the Dakotas. North Dakota saw severe livestock losses, with an estimated 18,500 cattle, 7,500 sheep, and 600 hogs killed. On a farm in eastern North Dakota, 7,000 turkeys perished. The total damage to livestock was estimated at nearly \$4 million. In South Dakota, an estimated 50,000 cattle, 46,000 sheep, and 1,800 hogs were killed by this storm. Most of the deaths occurred in the state's central and northern parts.

1894: The low temperature of 36 degrees in San Diego, California, on this day was their lowest on record for March.

4-6, 1959: In Iowa, the record-breaking snowstorm on March 4-6 began with light snow in western Iowa on the morning of the 4th, then spread across the state and intensified with heavy snow falling from the night of the 4th through the 5th and into the early morning on the 6th in eastern Iowa. The snowfall and its subsequent effects were less severe in western Iowa and grew progressively worse, moving eastward. In central Iowa, snowfall amounts were generally 6 to 10 inches. In contrast, in eastern Iowa, a swath of about 12 to 20 inches of snow fell roughly from Appanoose County through Tama County and north-east to Allamakee County. Reported storm total snowfall amounts included 12.9 inches at Waterloo, 14.5 inches at Decorah, 16.0 inches at Oelwein, 17.0 inches at Oskaloosa, 17.6 inches at Dubuque, 19.8 inches at Marshalltown, where 17.8 inches fell in just 24 hours, and 22.0 inches at Fayette where 21.0 inches fell in 24 hours. Winds strengthened steadily during the storm, with speeds reaching 30 to 50 mph at times and causing extensive blowing and drifting of snow. Drifts 6 to 10 feet deep were common, and in north-eastern Iowa, a few locations reported drifts 15 to 20 feet deep.

1959: Near blizzard conditions occurred over northern and central Oklahoma. Up to seven inches of snow fell and winds up to 50 mph created snow drifts 4 to 8 feet deep. In Edmond, a bus slid off the road into a ditch and overturned, injuring 16 people.

1960 - Eastern Massachusetts greatest March snowstorm of record began to abate. The storm produced record 24 hour snowfall totals of 27.2 inches at Blue Hill Observatory, 17.7 inches at Worcester, and 16.6 inches at Boston. Winds gusted to 70 mph. (3rd-5th) (The Weather Channel)

1962 - A tremendous storm raged along the Atlantic coast. The great Atlantic storm caused more than 200 million dollars property damage from Florida to New England. Winds along the Middle Atlantic Coast reached 70 mph raising forty foot waves, and as much as 33 inches of snow blanketed the mountains of Virginia. The Virginia shoreline was rearranged by historic tidal flooding caused by the combination of the long stretch of strong onshore winds and the Spring Tides. (David Ludlum)

1966: A plane crashes near Mount Fuji in Japan after severe turbulence. Aviation-safety.net said the probable cause was, "The aircraft suddenly encountered abnormally severe turbulence over Gotemba City, which imposed a gust load considerably over the design limit." All 124 people on board were killed in the crash.

1972: Palm Springs, California, recorded a high of 100 degrees, the earliest the city has ever hit the century mark.

1987 - A storm in the western U.S. produced heavy rain and high winds in California. Up to six inches of rain soaked the San Francisco Bay area in 24 hours, and winds gusted to 100 mph at the Wheeler Ridge Pumping Plant near the Tehachapi Mountains. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - While snow blanketed eastern Kansas and northern Oklahoma, eight cities in North Dakota reported new record high temperatures for the date. The afternoon high of 61 degrees at Bismarck ND was 27 degrees warmer than that at Chanute KS. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989: A F2 tornado killed one person and injured six others in Heard County, Georgia. A stronger F3 tornado injured 23 persons and caused more than \$5 million in damage around Grantville, Georgia.

1998: A thunderstorm dropped dime to golfball size hail along its track from McLain to Leakesville, Mississippi. The most severe damage was around the city of Leakesville. Hail depth was six to twelve inches throughout the city. The elementary school in Leakesville reported hail drifts to the bottom of the school's windows.

2007: The morning temperature dropped to 51 degrees below zero at Key Lake, Saskatchewan, Canada.



A THANKFUL HEART

Mary Jo was unable to attend school because of her mumps. Realizing how uncomfortable she was, her mother wanted her to forget her pain and think of something pleasant. After reading a story from the Bible, her Mom said, "What shall we thank Jesus for this morning?"

"My mumps!" came the quick reply.

"Your mumps? Why thank God for your mumps?" wondered her mother.

"Because now He can heal me," Mary Jo said confidently.

Every problem we encounter, every fear we face, every pain we have and every obstacle that comes into our lives provides an opportunity for God to show His power. It does not matter what it is, where it came from or how long we think it will last, we have His Word that His power will eventually deliver us and set us free.

Paul said, "How we thank God who gives us victory over sin and death through Jesus Christ our Lord!" What a loving God we have. Here Paul wants us to express our gratitude to a God Who gives us victory over sin and death. It does not say that He might or could or would if we never disobey Him. No, indeed not. It says He gives – and there are no strings attached.

Here is our God – standing with outstretched arms, open hands and listening ears ready to respond to our every need. He is worthy of our thanks and praise.

Prayer: We take great comfort, Lord, knowing that whatever concerns us concerned You first. We thank You for giving us victory over sin and life everlasting. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: But thank God! He gives us victory over sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 15:57

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: 03.04.25

14 19 47 52 70 6

MegaPlier: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$233,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 26 Mins 33 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 03.03.25

12 25 29 40 49 3

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$25,510,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 41 Mins 33 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 03.04.25

2 11 25 30 31 7

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 56 Mins 34 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 03.01.25

6 16 21 31 33

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$52,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 56 Mins 34 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 03.03.25

9 34 54 67 69 11

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 25 Mins 33 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 03.03.25

18 20 50 52 56 20

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$295,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 25 Mins 33 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

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Upcoming Groton Events

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

Tuesday's Scores

The Associated Press

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL

SDHSAA Class A Region 1=

First Round=

Aberdeen Roncalli 79, Redfield 34

Britton-Hecla 51, Sisseton 49

Milbank 54, Webster 20

SDHSAA Class A Region 8=

First Round=

Custer 66, Lead-Deadwood 42

Hill City 58, Hot Springs 38

St Thomas More 64, Belle Fourche 29

SDHSAA Class B Region 6=

Semifinal=

Ipswich 63, Tiospaye Topa 29

Potter County 58, Faulkton 56

Sully Buttes 65, North Central 34

Wakpala 59, Highmore-Harrold 53

SDHSAA Class B Region 7=

Semifinal=

Crazy Horse 51, Jones County 43

Kadoka 48, White River 30

New Underwood 73, Bennett County 46

Wall 80, Philip 40

SDHSAA Class B Region 8=

Semifinal=

Dupree 62, Bison 43

Lemmon High School 77, Takini 25

McLaughlin 50, Harding County 43

Timber Lake 82, Faith 51

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

Groceries around the country remain expensive. That's why more states want to stop taxing them

By ANDREW DeMILLO Associated Press

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (AP) — The number of states imposing sales taxes on groceries has shrunk over the years, and the number may decrease further in the coming months as lawmakers hear complaints about high prices for eggs and other household staples.

Arkansas Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders on Tuesday unveiled the details of her proposal to eradicate the remaining 1/8th of a cent sales tax the state levies on groceries. Lawmakers in Tennessee, Mississippi and Alabama and are also calling for grocery-tax reductions.

The efforts come as states face uncertainty about their budgets because of cuts in Medicaid and other federal programs being eyed by Republicans in Washington. But supporters of the tax cuts are citing

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headlines about soaring egg prices as the reason they are needed now.

"We're getting rid of Arkansas' most regressive tax and giving a helping hand to those who need it the most," Sanders, a Republican, said at a news conference to discuss the proposal.

The number of states taxing groceries has decreased in recent years, with laws eliminating the state levy taking effect in Oklahoma and Kansas over the last year. A law eliminating Virginia's tax on groceries took effect in 2023. A law eliminating Illinois' 1% grocery tax is set to take effect next year.

State sales taxes are levied on groceries in nine states: Arkansas, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Mississippi, Missouri, South Dakota, Tennessee and Utah. Hawaii and Idaho offer tax credits to residents to help offset the tax, though.

In Tennessee, Republican legislative leaders have proposed abolishing the state's 4% sales tax on groceries. The legislation comes after the state's handful of Democratic lawmakers have unsuccessfully introduced similar proposals as they argue that Tennesseans are paying as much as 6.75% in sales tax on essentials like bread and milk in some areas with local sales taxes.

However, it is unclear how far even a GOP-backed bill will fare in Republican-dominant Tennessee. State revenues are expected to be tighter this year, and Gov. Bill Lee didn't include a cut in his proposed budget, nor did he include a grocery sales tax holiday that has typically been included in his legislative priorities.

House Majority Leader William Lamberth, one of the sponsors of the repeal, said the bill could be narrowed down to only apply to essentials hitting people's pocketbooks the hardest rather than junk foods.

"Milk, eggs, bread, I mean, that's a great place to start," Lamberth said.

Alabama Democratic lawmakers plan to introduce tax cut legislation that will include eliminating the state's remaining 3% grocery tax. Lawmakers in 2023 approved legislation to gradually drop it from 4% to 2%.

Democrats said families need relief.

"If we're serious about helping working people get ahead, the best and most impactful way to do that is to take less in taxes and give them some peace of mind when they pay the rent or go to the grocery store," Democratic Rep. Adline Clarke said in a news release.

Lawmakers have for decades have discussed removing the tax, but the proposals never came to fruition because of the loss it would cause to education funding.

A tax cut package moving its way through the Mississippi legislature would cut that state's 7% sales tax on groceries.

Other grocery tax cut proposals have run into obstacles. South Dakota voters last year rejected a ballot measure that would have repealed the state's grocery tax.

Arkansas had all but eliminated the grocery tax under Sanders' predecessors, Democratic Gov. Mike Beebe and Republican Gov. Asa Hutchinson. All that remains is the 1/8th sales tax that's applied under a voter-approved constitutional amendment for outdoors programs.

Eliminating that will cost Arkansas nearly \$11 million a year, a figure Sanders said the programs can absorb.

Reducing or getting rid of grocery taxes can make a state's tax system less regressive, but it comes at a time that states face the potential of additional costs because of federal budget cuts.

States could instead look at other cuts such as earned income tax credits or child care tax credits, said Aidan Davis, state policy director for the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy.

"If the goal is to make sure people can make ends meet, then I think doing it in a more targeted way makes a lot of sense," Davis said.

Federal cuts roundup: The impact on South Dakota

South Dakota News Watch undefined

Sioux Falls, SD (South Dakota News Watch)

After DOGE job cuts and an ongoing staffing shortage, former National Park Service employee Sydney Hansen isn't sure whether anyone will be available to lead popular cave tours at Jewel Cave National Monument in the Black Hills moving forward.

Or, for that matter, if anyone will be on the job to pull weeds at the park.

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Hansen, 24, was hired as a physical science technician at Jewel Cave in June and was using her master's degree in geology to do research on caves, rocks and soil at the national monument site. She also "wore many hats" at the park, leading discussions to educate the public, working to protect habitat of endangered species and managing invasive species at the park, which included removing weeds from the property.

On Feb. 14, Hansen was in the final stages of training to lead cave tours in preparation of the upcoming summer tourist season. Jewel Cave and Wind Cave national parks are both low on staff to take visitors on the tours, she said.

After emerging from a cave, she received a text message to report to the park office, where she found an email saying she had been terminated from her position.

"My heart just dropped," she recalled in an interview with News Watch. "We were told we were safe if we had a good employee evaluation, so I felt pretty good."

According to recent reports, the park service has eliminated 1,000 jobs and accepted 700 early retirement offers from employees as part of the DOGE employment crackdown. The effects of the cuts are being felt around the country, as visitor centers closed at sites in Arizona, some parks restricted open hours and patron wait times have increased.

Hansen worries for the many park service employees who lost their jobs, but also about what the cuts will mean for the parks and the public. A hiring freeze in the park service won't help fill any gaps, she said.

"It's only going to get worse, and I can't even imagine how some of these busy parks are going to operate this summer," she said. "They're going to be hurting."

The most hurtful part of losing her job was the reason the termination letter cited: "The Department determined that you have failed to demonstrate fitness or qualifications for continued employment."

In an October job performance review Hansen provided to News Watch, she received an overall rating of "exceeds expectations" and was complimented repeatedly by her supervisor.

Hansen is uncertain about her future and might seek a job as a substitute teacher to make ends meet. When hired at Jewel Cave, she bought a house in nearby Newcastle, Wyoming, and only has enough money to pay bills for about two months.

"I'm still definitely upset about it and unsure where I'm going to go next because there's not a lot of jobs in the geology field," she said.

Obtaining details about job cuts within the NPS has been difficult. The state is home to several parks and monuments, including Jewel Caves, Wind Cave, Badlands and Mount Rushmore.

An official at Badlands National Park directed inquiries to a spokeswoman from the NPS Midwest regional office, which oversees South Dakota facilities. The spokeswoman did not return a call from News Watch seeking information or comment.

The employee cuts in NPS drew the attention and ire of a group of 22 Democratic U.S. senators who wrote a letter to Interior Secretary Doug Burgum on Feb. 7, urging him to undo cuts to staffing at national parks and monuments.

The letter asked Burgum to rescind deferred resignations, early retirement officers and the revocation of offers to seasonal employees within the NPS.

Beyond those position cuts, NPS had rescinded employment offers to about 6,000 seasonal employees who help manage the surge in visitors to parks and monuments in the summer, though the Trump administration said it has since reversed the seasonal worker cuts.

But if the seasonal workers are not hired as promised, the senators warned that, "visitor centers may close, bathrooms will be filthy, campgrounds may close, guided tours will be cut back or altogether cancelled, emergency response times will drop, and visitor services like safety advice, trail recommendations and interpretation will be unavailable."

The senators noted that in the 2010s, the NPS cut its staffing by 15% at a time when park visitation rose by 15%. The culmination of probationary position cuts, early retirements and threats to eliminate seasonal staffing could put parks and monuments in "chaos."

A Department of Interior report said that in 2023, the national park system attracted 325.5 million visitors

and generated \$55.6 billion in economic impact. Parks also supported 415,400 local jobs and generated \$26.4 billion in revenue for communities surrounding the parks.

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Trailblazing Olympic refugee boxer Cindy Ngamba set for a pro debut on all-female fight card

By KEN MAGUIRE AP Sports Writer

LONDON (AP) — Something stood out to Cindy Ngamba as she glanced around when Friday's all-female boxing event was first announced.

So many world championship belts. Ngamba wants one of her own.

"I saw Natasha Jonas and Lauren Price and Caroline Dubois with their belts, and I remember saying 'Oh, that looks nice, I would love to have one of them,'" she said.

Achieving goals is kind of Ngamba's thing. At the Paris Games, she became the first athlete competing as a refugee to earn a medal when she took bronze in the middleweight category.

A decade ago the Cameroon—born Ngamba thought she was about to be deported from Britain. Now she's set to make her professional debut at Royal Albert Hall. She's facing veteran Kirstie Bavington in a super welterweight bout in London as part of an all-female card headlined by the Jonas vs. Price welterweight world title unification fight.

"I can see it, that dream of me having a belt and being the world champion," Ngamba told The Associated Press, "but at the same time you have to be in the present and you have to make sure you get the job done."

The 26-year-old Ngamba tries not to think ahead too much. That's because she knows circumstances can change so quickly.

Ngamba had arrived in Britain at age 11 — her father and siblings live here, too — in Bolton, just north of Manchester, and set about learning English and trying to fit in. She picked up boxing at age 15, and it became an escape from the stress of worrying about her residency status.

She described being arrested as a teenager while checking in at an immigration center in Manchester.

"My case was still pending. I applied and they rejected it. When they reject your case, you have to go and re-apply again. I was in a situation where even though I was re-applying every time, they could have arrested me at any moment," she said. "I visualized that they could arrest me in the street or in my house, in school or with my friends. I never knew it was going to be at an immigration center where I usually (went) every weekend."

Worried she would be deported, she thought to herself: "I have no one in Cameroon, no family in Cameroon. Who is going to take care of me?"

She was held overnight at a detention facility in London before being released.

Ngamba, who came out as gay when she was 18, eventually won her case and was given refugee status. Same-sex relations in Cameroon can result in prison sentences of five years in the country.

Her progress in the boxing ring — Ngamba was an England amateur champion at three different weights — attracted the attention of Britain's elite development program. Ngamba was brought in to spar the likes of Jonas, Price and others in hopes that she would eventually compete for Britain.

Ngamba, one of the flagbearers for the Olympic refugee team at the opening ceremony in Paris, is still treated as one of their own at "GB Boxing." After the Olympics, her name was added to the wall of fame

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at the English Institute of Sport in Sheffield, and she joined British Olympians at a Buckingham Palace reception where she meet King Charles III.

Jonas vs. Price: British Olympians square off

The main attraction is a welterweight clash of generations with 40-year-old Natasha Jonas facing 30-year-old Lauren Price.

Both are former Olympians. Welsh boxer Price (8-0) won a gold medal for Britain at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021. She is the WBA champion.

Jonas (16-2-1), of Liverpool, competed at the 2012 London Games when women's boxing made its debut in the Olympic program. She fell just short of a medal when she lost to Ireland's Katie Taylor in the quarterfinals. Jonas holds the WBC and IBF welterweight titles.

American boxer Mikaela Mayer holds the other major welterweight belt — the WBO championship.

WBC lightweight champion Caroline Dubois is also on the card. Dubois, whose older brother Daniel is the IBF heavyweight champion, will face Bo Mi Re Shin of South Korea.

It's the second all-female event by promotion company Boxxer and Sky Sports following their October 2022 event at a sold-out O2 Arena (20,000 capacity) in London. Sky said that event had a TV audience of more than 2 million in Britain and Ireland.

By comparison, Royal Albert Hall is a smaller arena with an expected sellout at 5,200. The venue goes way back in boxing, though.

Israel cut off food and supplies to Gaza. Aid groups are scrambling.

What's happening on the ground?

By JULIA FRANKEL and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel's cutoff of food, fuel, medicine and other supplies to Gaza's 2 million people has sent prices soaring and humanitarian groups into overdrive trying to distribute dwindling stocks to the most vulnerable.

The aid freeze has imperiled the tenuous progress aid workers say they have made to stave off famine over the past six weeks during Phase 1 of the ceasefire deal Israel and Hamas agreed to in January.

After more than 16 months of war, Gaza's population is entirely dependent on trucked-in food and other aid. Most are displaced from their homes, and many need shelter. Fuel is needed to keep hospitals, water pumps, bakeries and telecommunications — as well as trucks delivering aid — operating.

Israel says the siege aims at pressuring Hamas to accept its spinoff ceasefire proposal. Israel has delayed moving to the second phase of the deal it reached with Hamas, during which the flow of aid was supposed to continue. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Tuesday that he is prepared to raise the pressure and would not rule out cutting off all electricity to Gaza if Hamas doesn't budge. Rights groups have called the cutoff a "starvation policy."

Three days in, how is the cutoff impacting Gaza on the ground?

Food, fuel and shelter supplies are imperiled

There's no major stockpile of tents in Gaza for Palestinians to rely on during the aid freeze, said Shaina Low, communications adviser for the Norwegian Refugee Council. The aid that came in during the ceasefire's first phase was "nowhere near enough to address all of the needs," she said.

"If it was enough, we wouldn't have had infants dying from exposure because of lack of shelter materials and warm clothes and proper medical equipment to treat them," she said.

Six infants in the Gaza Strip died from hypothermia during Phase 1.

Aid groups are now trying to assess what stocks they have in Gaza.

"We're trying to figure out, what do we have? What would be the best use of our supply?" said Jonathan Crickx, chief of communication for UNICEF. "We never sat on supplies, so it's not like there's a huge amount left to distribute."

He predicted a "catastrophic result" if the freeze continues.

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During the ceasefire's first phase, humanitarian agencies rushed in supplies and quickly ramped up their capabilities. Aid workers set up more food kitchens, health centers and water distribution points. With more fuel coming in, they were able to double the amount of water drawn from wells, according to the U.N. humanitarian coordination agency, or OCHA.

The United Nations and associated nongovernmental organizations brought in around 100,000 tents as hundreds of thousands of Palestinians tried to return to their homes, only to find them destroyed or too damaged to live in.

But the progress relied on the flow of aid continuing.

The International Organization for Migration now has 22,500 tents sitting in its warehouses in Jordan, after supply trucks brought back their undelivered cargo once entry was barred, said Karl Baker, the agency's regional crisis coordinator.

The International Rescue Committee has 6.7 tons (14,771 pounds) of medicines and medical supplies waiting to enter Gaza, the delivery of which is now "highly uncertain," said Bob Kitchen, vice president of the Emergencies and Humanitarian Action Department.

"It's imperative that aid access is now immediately resumed. With humanitarian needs sky high, more aid access is required, not less," Kitchen said.

Medical Aid for Palestinians said it has trucks stuck at the border carrying medicine, mattresses, and assistive devices for people with disabilities. The organization has some medicine and materials in reserve, said Tess Pope, MAP spokesperson, but, she said, "We don't have stock that we can use during a long closure of Gaza."

Prices are up

The U.N.'s humanitarian office said Tuesday that prices of vegetables and flour shot up after the crossings closed.

Sayed Mohamed al-Dairi walked through a bustling market in Gaza City just after the cutoff was announced. Prices that had just started to come down during the ceasefire had jumped back up, as sellers hiked the prices of their dwindling wares.

"The traders are massacring us, the traders are not merciful to us," he said. "In the morning, the price of sugar was 5 shekels. Ask him now, the price has become 10 shekels."

In the central Gaza city of Deir Al-Balah, one cigarette priced at 5 shekels (\$1.37) before the cutoff now stands at 20 shekels (\$5.49). One kilo of chicken (2.2 pounds) that was 21 shekels (\$5.76) is now 50 shekels. (\$13.72). Cooking gas has soared even more, from 90 shekels (\$24.70) for 12 kilos (26.4 pounds) to 1,480 shekels (\$406.24).

Following the Oct. 7, 2023 Hamas attack on Israel, Israel cut off all aid to Gaza for two weeks — a measure central to South Africa's case accusing Israel of genocide in Gaza at the International Court of Justice. That took place as Israel launched the most intense phase of its aerial bombardment campaign on Gaza, one of the most aggressive in modern history.

With the ceasefire expiring and aid again frozen, Palestinians fear a repeat of that period.

"We are afraid that Netanyahu or Trump will launch a war more severe than the previous war," said Abeer Obeid, a Palestinian woman from northern Gaza.

"The crossings are the means by which people obtain the basic necessities of life, why are they closing them," she asked. "For the extension of the truce, they must find any other solution."

Pope resting after sleeping through the night with a ventilation mask as he battles pneumonia

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Pope Francis was resting Wednesday, the start of the solemn Lenten period leading up to Holy Week observances, after sleeping through the night with a ventilation mask as he undergoes hospital treatment for double pneumonia.

In its latest update, the Vatican said that the pope rested well overnight, waking up shortly after 8 a.m.

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Pope Francis remained in stable condition, with a guarded prognosis, meaning he was not out of danger. The 88-year-old pope, who has chronic lung disease and had part of one lung removed as a young man, had two respiratory crises on Monday in a setback to his recovery.

On Tuesday, he was breathing with just the help of supplemental oxygen after respiratory crises a day earlier, but resumed using a ventilation mask at night, the Vatican said.

Francis' hospitalization began on Feb. 14 and is the longest of his 12-year papacy.

Ash Wednesday

Francis' treatment continues as the Vatican prepares for Lent, the solemn period beginning with Ash Wednesday and leading up to Easter on April 20. A cardinal has been designated to take Francis' place at Vatican celebrations, with a traditional service and procession in Rome

On Ash Wednesday, observant Catholics receive a sign of the cross in ashes on their foreheads, a gesture that underscores human mortality. It is an obligatory day of fasting and abstinence for Catholics that signals the start of Christianity's most penitent season.

Vatican prepares for Lent without Francis

The pope was also supposed to attend a spiritual retreat this coming weekend with the rest of the Holy See hierarchy. On Tuesday, the Vatican said the retreat would go ahead without Francis but in "spiritual communion" with him. The theme, selected weeks ago and well before Francis got sick, was "Hope in eternal life."

Francis, who is not physically active, uses a wheelchair and is overweight, had been undergoing respiratory physiotherapy to try to improve his lung function. The accumulation of secretions in his lungs was a sign that he doesn't have the muscle tone to cough vigorously enough to expel the fluid.

Doctors often use noninvasive ventilation to stave off intubation or the use of more invasive mechanical ventilation. Francis has not been intubated during this hospitalization. It's not clear if he has provided any instructions on the limits of his care if he declines seriously or loses consciousness.

Catholic teaching holds that life must be defended from conception until natural death. It insists that chronically ill patients, including those in vegetative states, must receive "ordinary" care such as hydration and nutrition, but "extraordinary" or disproportionate care can be suspended if it is no longer beneficial or is only prolonging a precarious and painful life.

FACT FOCUS: A look at false and misleading claims made by Trump during his address to Congress

By The Associated Press undefined

President Donald Trump's Tuesday night address to a joint session of Congress highlighted several of the initiatives he's started in his first six weeks in office, but many of his comments included false and misleading information.

Here's a look at the facts.

He overstated the numbers on his immigration crackdown

TRUMP: "Illegal border crossings last month were by far the lowest ever recorded. Ever."

THE FACTS: Trump wrote in a Truth Social post on Saturday that Border Patrol apprehended 8,326 people on the U.S.-Mexico border last month. But U.S. government data show that Border Patrol routinely averaged below that number in the 1960s.

While February marked the lowest arrest total in decades, Border Patrol averaged less than February 2025 for the first seven years of 1960s. The government website does not track U.S.-Mexico border totals before 1960. Border Patrol's monthly average was 1,752 arrests in 1961.

He inflated the number of people who entered the U.S. illegally under President Joe Biden

TRUMP: "Over the past four years, 21 million people poured into the United States. Many of them were murderers, human traffickers, gang members."

THE FACTS: That figure, which Trump cites regularly, is highly inflated. U.S. Customs and Border Protection reported more than 10.8 million arrests for illegal crossings from Mexico from January 2021 through

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December 2024.

But that's arrests, not people. Under asylum restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic, many people crossed more than once until they succeeded because there were no legal consequences for getting turned back to Mexico. So the number of people is lower than the number of arrests.

There is no evidence other countries are sending their criminals or people with mental illness across the border, despite this frequent line from Trump.

Economists differ with Trump on tariffs

TRUMP: "Tariffs are about making America rich again and making America great again. And it's happening. And it will happen rather quickly. There'll be a little disturbance, but we're OK with that. It won't be much."

THE FACTS: Trump is banking on the idea that taxing imports is the road to riches for the United States. Most economists say Trump's tariffs would hurt the country, as they're tax increases that could raise the costs of goods in ways that could also harm economic growth. Trump suggests that the impact on inflation would be minimal.

When the Yale University Budget Lab looked at the tariffs that Trump imposed Tuesday on Canada, Mexico and China, it found that inflation would increase a full percentage point, growth would fall by half a percentage point and the average household would lose about \$1,600 in disposable income.

There's no evidence Social Security money is being paid to many people over age 100

TRUMP: "Believe it or not, government databases list 4.7 million Social Security members from people aged 100 to 109 years old. It lists 3.6 million people from ages 110 to 119. ... 3.47 million people from ages 120 to 129. 3.9 million people from ages 130 to 139. 3.5 million people from ages 140 to 149. And money is being paid to many of them, and we are searching right now."

THE FACTS: The databases may list those people, but that does not mean they are getting paid benefits.

Part of the confusion comes from Social Security's software system based on the COBOL programming language, which doesn't use a specific format for dates. This means that some entries with missing or incomplete birthdates will default to a reference point of more than 150 years ago. The news organization Wired first reported on the use of COBOL programming language at the Social Security Administration.

Additionally, a series of reports from the Social Security Administration's inspector general in March 2023 and July 2024 state that the agency has not established a new system to properly annotate death information in its database, which included roughly 18.9 million Social Security numbers of people born in 1920 or earlier but were not marked as deceased. This does not mean, however, that these people were receiving benefits.

The agency decided not to update the database because of the cost to do so, which would run upward of \$9 million. As of September 2015, the agency automatically stops payments to people who are older than 115 years old.

Trump did not inherit an 'economic catastrophe'

TRUMP: "Among my very highest priorities is to rescue our economy and get dramatic and immediate relief to working families. As you know, we inherited from the last administration an economic catastrophe and an inflation nightmare."

THE FACTS: Inflation peaked at 9.1% in 2022 under President Joe Biden, but Trump did not inherit a disastrous economy by any measure. The unemployment rate ticked down to a low 4% in January, the month he took office, while the economy expanded a healthy 2.8% in 2024. Inflation-adjusted incomes have grown steadily since mid-2023. And inflation, while showing signs of stickiness in recent months and still elevated at 3% in January, is down from its 2022 peak.

Trump's reference to an 'EV mandate' is inaccurate

TRUMP: "We ended the last administration's insane electric vehicle mandate, saving our auto workers and companies from economic destruction."

THE FACTS: There was no federal mandate to force the purchase of EVs, as Trump has falsely claimed many times before.

Biden had set up a non-binding goal that EVs make up half of new cars sold by 2030. Trump issued an executive order on his first day in office revoking that goal.

Biden's policies tightened restrictions on pollution from gas-powered cars and trucks in an effort to encourage Americans to buy EVs and car companies to shift from gas-powered vehicles to electric cars.

A closer look at Army recruitment numbers

TRUMP: "I am pleased to report that in January, the U.S. Army had its single best recruiting month in 15 years."

THE FACTS: Trump has repeatedly claimed that the Army's recruiting turnaround is tied to his time in office.

In fact, according to Army data, recruiting numbers have been increasing steadily over the past year, with the highest total coming in August 2024 — before the November election. Army officials closely track recruiting numbers.

A significant driver of the recruiting success was the Army's decision to launch the Future Soldier Prep Course at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, in August 2022. That program gives lower-performing recruits up to 90 days of academic or fitness instruction to help them meet military standards and move on to basic training.

LeBron James becomes first to score 50,000 combined points in NBA regular season and playoffs

By GREG BEACHAM AP Sports Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — LeBron James is well on his way to rewriting every previous definition of basketball longevity, and the 40-year-old star is now racking up numbers the NBA has never seen before.

James became the first player to score 50,000 combined points in the regular season and postseason on Tuesday night, surpassing the mark with a 3-pointer early in the first quarter of the Los Angeles Lakers' 136-115 win over New Orleans.

James finished with 34 points against the Pelicans after toppling another milestone in his unprecedented career.

"I mean, that's a lot of points," James said afterward, rubbing his beard in wonder. "Obviously, the first thing that comes to mind is where I'm from. Picking up the game when I was a little kid and having a love for the sport, and hoping that someday I'd be able to play at the highest level. I've been able to do that and really enjoy my career. So it's definitely an honor. It's pretty cool to see that."

James already is the top scorer in NBA history in both the regular season and the playoffs. Maintaining a spectacular level of play midway through his record-tying 22nd season, he is pulling away from the other greats of the game: Lakers great Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, who played 20 seasons, is a now-distant second with 44,149 combined points.

James got his milestone 3-pointer off an assist by Luka Doncic, a trivia tidbit that pleased both superstars. Doncic's arrival in last month's seismic trade with the Dallas Mavericks has invigorated both James and the Lakers, who look like championship contenders with a seven-game winning streak and 17 victories in their last 20 games.

"It's amazing, watching him do this stuff at this age," said Doncic, who had 30 points, 15 assists and eight rebounds against New Orleans. "It's just unbelievable, that 50K points. I can't even explain how insane that is. He might get to 70K. You never know."

The Lakers recognized the milestone at the next timeout, with public address announcer Lawrence Tanter saying: "Ladies and gentlemen, we all have just witnessed history." James acknowledged the standing ovation with several waves from the bench.

James is tied with Vince Carter for the most seasons played in NBA history. But while nearly every other NBA player who lasted to his late 30s finished at a fraction of his peak powers, James' game shows no signs of decline in his 40s.

He was named the NBA's Western Conference player of the month earlier Tuesday after he averaged 29.3 points, 10.5 rebounds, 6.9 assists and 1.2 steals in February while playing more than 35 minutes per

game for the Lakers, who went 9-2 to surge into second place in the West.

With their victory over the Pelicans, the Lakers improved to 11-2 since acquiring Doncic.

James has played in 1,548 regular-season games, trailing only Robert Parish (1,611) and Abdul-Jabbar (1,560). If he stays healthy and elects to return for a record 23rd season, he will likely surpass Parish next winter.

James has also played in 287 postseason games, the most in NBA history. He became the league's career playoff scoring leader on May 25, 2017, when he surpassed Michael Jordan's total of 5,987 during the Cleveland Cavaliers' Eastern Conference finals game at Boston.

James then became the top scorer in regular-season history on Feb. 7, 2023, when he topped Abdul-Jabbar's record of 38,387 points during the Lakers' game against Oklahoma City.

James' prolific scoring is due in large part to his metronomic consistency. With his performance against the Pelicans, he has scored at least 10 points in 1,278 consecutive games since Jan. 6, 2007 — by far the longest such streak in NBA history.

James' player of the month award for February was his 41st, extending his own league record. He is also the oldest player to win the award, surpassing a 37-year-old Karl Malone in November 2000.

China sticks to economic growth target of 'around 5%' despite a looming trade war

By SIMINA MISTREANU and KEN MORITSUGU Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — The Chinese government unveiled an annual economic growth target of "around 5%" on Wednesday, despite the possible negative impact of a looming trade war with the United States, and pledged to address what it called "inadequate" consumer spending at home.

The target, announced at the opening session of the annual meeting of China's legislature, is the same as the last two years but will likely be more difficult to achieve because of higher U.S. tariffs on Chinese products and other economic headwinds. The use of the modifier "around" gives the government some wiggle room if growth falls short of the target.

The level signals the government's intention to try to stabilize growth in challenging economic times but hold back on more dramatic action that some economists say is needed to supercharge it.

The government also said in a draft budget released Wednesday that defense spending would rise 7.2% this year to 1.78 trillion yuan (\$245 billion), second only to the United States.

It released the growth target in a separate report, portions of which were presented to the nearly 3,000 members of the National People's Congress by Premier Li Qiang in a 55-minute address. The 32-page document acknowledged both international and domestic challenges.

"An increasingly complex and severe external environment may exert a greater impact on China in areas such as trade, science, and technology," the report said. "Domestically, the foundation for China's sustained economic recovery and growth is not strong enough. Effective demand is weak, and consumption, in particular, is sluggish."

The IMF has projected China's economy will grow 4.6% this year, down from 5% in 2024, according to Chinese government statistics.

The annual report placed more emphasis on reviving domestic demand and consumption than last year's version, echoing a shift by the ruling Communist Party at meetings in December. It said the government should "make domestic demand the main engine and anchor of economic growth."

The question is whether the steps the government takes will be enough to stabilize the economy and reach its targets for growth, employment and other economic indicators.

"Achieving this year's targets will not be easy, and we must make arduous efforts to meet them," the report said.

It offered some details on the party's plans for a "more proactive fiscal policy," including a rise in the government budget deficit from 3% to 4% of GDP, or the size of the overall economy.

Economists expressed doubts over whether the policies will do enough, noting that the government

reduced its inflation target to 2% from 3% last year, suggesting leaders have accepted that the economy is still mired in deflation, or a cycle of weakening prices.

The degree of support is "more modest than it may appear," Julian Evans-Pritchard of Capital Economics said in a report. "We remain skeptical that it will be sufficient to prevent growth from slowing this year, especially given the headwinds on the external front and the lack of a more pronounced shift in government spending toward support for consumption."

The government will issue 1.3 trillion yuan (\$180 billion) in ultra-long term bonds, up from 1 trillion yuan last year, the report said. Of that, 300 billion yuan would go toward a program launched last year that offers rebates to consumers who trade in automobiles or appliances for new ones, doubling central government support for the program.

Across-the-board 20% tariffs imposed on Chinese products by U.S. President Donald Trump pose the latest threat to an economy already weighed down by a prolonged real estate slump and sluggish consumer spending and private business investment. The tariffs could crimp sales to one of China's major export markets, making the need to boost domestic demand more urgent.

At the same time, Chinese leader Xi Jinping wants to wean the economy off its long-running dependence on the highly indebted real estate market.

He is directing economic resources into developing a more innovative, high-tech economy — and with growing restrictions on U.S. technology exports to China, one that isn't beholden to other countries for the most powerful semiconductors and other electronic components.

That has remained an overarching long-term economic goal of the Communist Party, though it has enacted various measures since September that suggest a shift in emphasis toward shoring up growth in the short-term.

"A target of around 5% is well aligned with our mid- and long-term development goals and underscores our resolve to meet difficulties head-on and strive hard to deliver," Li said, reading from the government report.

The report highlighted artificial intelligence in a section on fostering "industries of the future," saying the government would support the application of large-scale AI models, smart manufacturing equipment, connected vehicles and intelligent robots.

It also reiterated the party's announcement in December that the central bank would shift its monetary policy from "prudent" to "moderately loose" for the first time in more than a decade.

Elissa Slotkin assails Trump's early actions, offers Democrats a way to fight back

By JOEY CAPPELLETTI Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — First-term Michigan Sen. Elissa Slotkin accused President Donald Trump of driving up costs while pushing for an "unprecedented giveaway to his billionaire friends" in Tuesday night's Democratic response to his first joint congressional address of his second term.

Slotkin, just months into her first term in the U.S. Senate after winning an open Michigan seat despite Trump carrying the state, said Trump "has not laid out a credible plan" to address rising everyday expenses for Americans. She said tariffs that went into effect early Tuesday would only worsen the economy.

Slotkin spoke from Wyandotte, Michigan, a working-class community south of Detroit, after Trump delivered the longest address to Congress by a president in U.S. history. In her opening, Slotkin acknowledged that "America wants change. But there is a responsible way to make change, and a reckless way."

"We can make that change without forgetting who we are as a country and as a democracy," said Slotkin.

In a speech that lasted an hour and 40 minutes, Trump claimed credit for "swift and unrelenting action" in reshaping the nation's economy, immigration and foreign policy within his first weeks in office. The Republican-controlled House and Senate have done little to check the president's agenda.

In her rebuttal, which lasted a little more than 10 minutes, Slotkin told Americans that "change doesn't

need to be chaotic or make us less safe” and warned of the dangers of Trump’s economic approach.

“For those keeping score, the national debt is going up, not down,” Slotkin said. “And if he’s not careful, he could walk us right into a recession.”

Slotkin, a former CIA analyst with an extensive background in national security, said the meeting between Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy last week must have had former President Ronald Reagan “rolling in his grave.”

Her remarks came as Democrats struggle to find a unified message to counter Trump. That was evident Tuesday night in the House chamber, where some Democratic members held placards with various messages. Some Democrats chose not to attend the speech at all while others sat in silence. Some shouted criticism at Trump, and one House member, Texas Rep. Al Green, was escorted from the chamber after repeatedly interrupting him.

Slotkin focused on economic issues after Trump’s Monday announcement that 25% tariffs on imports from Mexico and Canada would begin Tuesday reignited fears of a North American trade war, which has already shown signs of driving up inflation and stalling growth.

“President Trump is trying to deliver an unprecedented giveaway to his billionaire friends,” she said. “He’s on the hunt to find trillions of dollars to pass along to the wealthiest in America. And to do that, he’s going to make you pay in every part of your life.

“Grocery and home prices are going up, not down — and he hasn’t laid out a credible plan to deal with either.”

She also warned that democracy, which “has been the aspiration of the world,” is at risk.

“It’s at risk when the president decides to pick and choose what rules you want to follow, when he ignores court orders and the Constitution itself, or when elected leaders stand by and just let it happen,” Slotkin said.

Her team said her guest for the Trump address was Marine veteran Andrew Lennox, who recently spoke out after losing his job at a Veterans Affairs hospital in Ann Arbor due to cuts implemented by the Department of Government Efficiency, or DOGE, led by billionaire Elon Musk.

The 48-year-old Slotkin is seen as a leading figure in the party’s next generation. She first ran for office in 2018, defeating a two-term incumbent Republican. After redistricting, she consistently won one of the nation’s most competitive House seats, earning a reputation as one of the party’s top fundraisers. In 2023, she announced a run for Michigan’s open Senate seat after Sen. Debbie Stabenow announced she would not seek a fifth term.

Rep. Al Green shouts down Trump and may face censure by the House for the outburst

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democratic Rep. Al Green of Texas wasn’t the first lawmaker ever to blurt out a shout of protest during a presidential address to Congress.

But he’s perhaps the only one in recent memory to actually be ejected from the hall Tuesday night by the Speaker of the House.

Green said afterward it was worth it to make his point — even if he is punished by House leaders, who later called for the congressman to be censured.

“The president was saying he had a mandate, and I was making it clear that he has no mandate to cut Medicaid,” Green told reporters, referring to the health care program used by 80 million Americans.

“It’s worth it to let people know that there are some of us who are going to stand up against this president.”

Green’s outburst came at the start of President Donald Trump’s speech to Congress and immediately set the tone. The night was already uneasy. Stone-faced Democrats, now the minority party, had been sitting silently on one side of the chamber, rambunctious Republicans on the other.

As Green rose to speak, shaking his walking cane at the president, the Republicans drowned him out

with muscular chants of "USA! USA!"

Johnson eyed the situation from his perch on the dais behind Trump, appearing hesitant to interrupt the president's address. But the speaker was shaking his head and clearly desiring decorum in the chamber. Vice President JD Vance motioned with his thumb to throw Green out.

The speaker issued a warning for order, banging the gavel. "Take your seat, sir!" But the long-serving congressman remained standing. And then Johnson ordered the Sergeant at Arms to restore order by removing Green from the chamber.

Rarely has a lawmaker been so swiftly and severely disciplined for improper behavior.

Johnson said afterward that Green should be censured by the House — among the more severe reprimands his colleagues could mete out.

"He's made history in a terrible way," Johnson told reporters afterward.

"If they want to make a 77-year-old heckling congressman the face of their resistance, if that's the Democrat Party, so be it," Johnson said. "But we will not tolerate it on the House floor."

In past years, several lawmakers have raised their voices to shout at presidents — from GOP Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene's shouts against President Joe Biden and the "You lie!" outburst from Rep. Joe Wilson, R-S.C. against President Barack Obama.

Of course, during Trump's first term, then-Speaker Nancy Pelosi did not raise her voice, but silently ripped up the president's speech on the dais, once he had finished delivering it.

Green has been a pivotal lawmaker since he was first elected to Congress in 2004, often standing as he did Tuesday night, alone.

He introduced articles of impeachment against Trump in 2017, maneuvering around party leadership. And he did it again in 2019, shortly before the House led by Pelosi actually did move forward with separate impeachment proceedings over Trump withholding funding for Ukraine as it battled Russia.

Last year, Green stunned his own colleagues when he dashed from his hospital bed where he was recovering from surgery to vote against the Republican effort to impeach Biden's Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas. With his arrival, the vote failed, though Republicans recouped and impeached Mayorkas days later.

Green warned Tuesday against Republican efforts in their budget proposal to change Medicaid, which is the program he said many people in his Houston-area district rely on for health care. He also warned against cuts to Medicare, the program for seniors, and the Social Security retirement program.

"This is about the people being punished by virtue of losing their health care," Green said.

"This is the richest country in the world," he said. "And health care is about to become wealth care, and we can't let that happen."

Green has said he is working on new articles of impeachment against Trump.

"This president is unfit," Green said. "He should not hold the office."

Pritzker Prize goes to Liu Jiakun of China, an architect who celebrates lives of ordinary citizens

By JOCELYN NOVECK AP National Writer

The annual Pritzker Architecture Prize has been awarded to Liu Jiakun of China, who earned the field's highest honor for "affirming architecture that celebrates the lives of ordinary citizens," organizers announced Tuesday.

Liu, 68, becomes the 54th laureate of the prize, considered akin to a Nobel in the field of architecture. In an interview with The Associated Press in his office in Chengdu in China's southwestern Sichuan region, the architect said he had a simple definition of his profession:

"To simplify, the task of architects is to provide a better living environment for human beings," he said, speaking in Mandarin. "First of all, you do something that is functional. But if it is just like that, it cannot be called architecture. (So) you have to provide poetry."

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Liu is known for creating public areas in highly populated cities where there is little public space, "forging a positive relationship between density and open space," a Pritzker statement said.

The architect "upholds the transcendent power of the built environment through the harmonizing of cultural, historical, emotional and social dimensions, using architecture to forge community, inspire compassion and elevate the human spirit," the statement said.

Among his 30 or so projects, which range from academic institutions to commercial buildings to civic spaces, organizers cited in particular his 2015 West Village in Chengdu, which spans a block. The five-story project includes a perimeter of pathways for cyclists and pedestrians around "its own vibrant city of cultural, athletic, recreational, office and business activities within, while allowing the public to view through to the surrounding natural and built environments."

They also noted the Sichuan Fine Arts Institute Department of Sculpture in Chongqing, which they said displays an alternate solution to maximizing space, "with upper levels protruding outward to extend the square footage of a narrow footprint."

Liu was born in 1956 in Chengdu and sent at age 17, during the Cultural Revolution, to labor on a farm in the countryside. He has said life felt inconsequential — until he was accepted to architecture school in Chongqing, where he "suddenly realized my own life was important."

In the interview Sunday in his office in Chengdu, Liu said the speed of change in China during his early adulthood was "very fast, and it was turning things upside down. Even until now, sometimes I feel like I have lived several lifetimes."

Liu established his practice, Jiakun Architects, in 1999. He said he is not one of those architects who likes to have a strongly recognizable visual style. Rather, Liu said, he pays more attention to method and strategy.

"Many architects use a strong personal style and form to gain a foothold in the world," Liu said. "No matter where it is, people can tell immediately that it is his or her work with a very strong symbolism. But I am not such a kind of architect."

"I don't want to have a very clear or obvious style that can be recognized as mine just at a glance," he said. "I take a more methodological and strategic approach. I hope that when I go to a specific place, I can use my methodology and strategy to adapt to local conditions. I like to fully understand the place, and then look for resources, problems ... and then distill and refine, and finally turn (this) into my work."

Liu also said he tries to balance his country's artistic and architectural heritage with the realities of modern technology.

"I think China's traditional architecture is of course brilliant and very classic," he said, "but it is a product of its time."

He said he hopes to deeply understand "the thematic part of tradition that can survive," and then express it with contemporary technology and language. In that way, he said, "tradition can be used as a core ... but the presentation of your work is contemporary."

Liu said he also seeks to balance commercial imperatives with civic concerns.

"The rapid development of cities nowadays is basically driven by capital. It is natural for capital to pursue profits," he said. But he added: "You have to leave the public the space they deserve. Only in this way can the development of a city be positive and healthy, rather than being completely high-density, where people live in drawers and boxes ... without even a place to go and no space for communication."

The Pritzker Architecture Prize was established in 1979 by the late entrepreneur Jay A. Pritzker and his wife, Cindy. Winners receive a \$100,000 grant and a bronze medallion.

Asked if he thought the honor would impact his life, Liu replied: "I have thought about it. But I want to maintain normalcy ... I don't want to become nervous about everything. Of course, it has its advantages. I will definitely not need to promote myself too much. But will it also make me better at work? Not necessarily. Excessive expectations may become a pressure."

He had another concern, too.

"And will it make me too busy and prevent me from working more attentively?" he pondered. "I hope to keep the normalcy and the freedom, as well as calmness."

A South African play about Winnie Madikizela-Mandela explores Black women's long wait for absent men

By MOGOMOTSI MAGOME Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — A new play about anti-apartheid icon Winnie Madikizela-Mandela seeks to highlight the struggles of Black women in South Africa who had to wait years for their husbands' return from exile, prison or faraway work during decades of white minority rule.

The play about the late former wife of Nelson Mandela, South Africa's first Black president, is adapted from the novel "The Cry of Winnie Mandela" by Njabulo Ndebele. It explores themes of loneliness, infidelity and betrayal.

At the height of apartheid, Madikizela-Mandela was one of the most recognizable faces of South Africa's liberation struggle while her husband and other freedom fighters spent decades in prison. That meant constant harassment by police.

At one point, she was banished from her home in Soweto on the outskirts of Johannesburg and forcefully relocated to Brandfort, a small rural town she had never visited nearly 350 kilometers (217 miles) away.

Even after she walked hand-in-hand with her newly freed husband in 1990 and raised her clenched fist, post-apartheid South Africa was tumultuous for her.

Madikizela-Mandela, who died in 2018 aged 81, was accused of kidnapping and murdering people she allegedly suspected of being police informants under apartheid. She also faced allegations of being unfaithful to Mandela during his 27 years in prison.

Those controversies ultimately led to her divorce from Mandela, while their African National Congress political party distanced itself from her.

The isolation and humiliation inspired Ndebele to write about Madikizela-Mandela for South Africa's post-apartheid generations.

"How can they implicate Winnie in such horrendous events? She is the face of our struggle," Ndebele's character, played by South African actor Les Nkosi, wonders as he describes his thoughts upon hearing the news of the ANC distancing itself. "The announcement invokes in me a moral anguish from which I'm unable to escape. Is she a savior or a betrayer to us?"

A key scene addresses Madikizela-Mandela's appearance before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, a body formed to investigate human rights abuses during apartheid. She denied murder and kidnapping allegations and declined a request to apologize to families of alleged victims.

"I will not be the instrument that validates the politics of reconciliation, because the politics of reconciliation demands my annihilation. All of you have to reconcile not with me, but the meaning of me. The meaning of me is the constant search for the right thing to do," she says in a fictional monologue in the novel.

The play also reflects how the Mandelas' divorce proceedings played out in public, with intimate details of their marriage and rumors of her extramarital affair.

For the play's director, Momo Matsunyane, it was important to reflect the role of Black women in the struggle against apartheid who also had to run their households and raise children, often in their husbands' long absence.

"It's also where we are seeing Black women be open, vulnerable, sexual and proud of it, not shying away. I think apartheid managed to dismantle the Black family home in a very terrible way. How can you raise other Black men and women when our household is not complete?" Matsunyane said.

In the play, one Black woman tells a group of friends how her husband ended their marriage when he returned home after 14 years abroad studying to be a doctor and found she had given birth to a child who was now 4 years old.

Another woman tells the same group — who call themselves "Ibandla Labafazi Abalindileyo" (Organization of Women in Waiting in the isiXhosa language) — that her husband returned from many years in prison but left her to start a new family with a white woman.

Madikizela-Mandela, played by Thembisa Mdoda, gets to answer questions about her life and the decisions she made during an encounter with the women.

The play, which also draws on the protest music of that period, opened at The Market Theatre in Johannesburg and will run until March 15.

Trump vows to press ahead on reshaping America in speech to Congress as Democrats register dissent

By ZEKE MILLER and MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump vowed Tuesday to keep up his campaign of “swift and unrelenting action” in reorienting the nation’s economy, immigration and foreign policy in an unyielding address before Congress that left Democratic legislators to register their dissent with stone faces, placards calling out “lies,” and one legislator’s ejection.

Trump’s prime-time speech was the latest marker in his takeover of the nation’s capital, where the Republican-led House and Senate have done little to restrain the president as he and his allies work to slash the size of the federal government and remake America’s place in the world.

The president’s address, clocking in at a record 99 minutes, added up to a defiant sales pitch for the policies that Trump promised during his campaign and leaned into during his first weeks back in office. Trump pledged to keep delivering sweeping change to rescue the nation from what he described as destruction and mistakes left by his predecessor. He seldom addressed his comments directly to the American people, who are trying to keep up with the recent upheaval, while repeatedly needling the Democratic lawmakers seated before him.

Michigan Sen. Elissa Slotkin, who delivered the Democratic response following Trump’s speech, allowed that “America wants change, but there’s a responsible way to make change and a reckless way, and we can make that change without forgetting who we are as a country and as a democracy.”

Emboldened after overcoming impeachments in his first term, outlasting criminal prosecutions in between his two administrations and getting a tight grip on the GOP-led Congress, Trump has embarked on a mission to dismantle parts of the federal government, remake the relationship with America’s allies and slap on tariffs that have sparked a North American trade war.

“It has been nothing but swift and unrelenting action,” Trump said of his opening weeks in office. “The people elected me to do the job, and I am doing it.”

Trump, who has billionaire adviser Elon Musk orchestrating his efforts to slash the size and scope of the federal government, said he is working to “reclaim democracy from this unaccountable bureaucracy” and threatened federal workers anew with firings if they resist his agenda.

Musk, who was seated in the House gallery, received a pair of standing ovations from Republicans in the chamber, as Trump exaggerated and shared false claims about alleged government abuse uncovered by the Tesla and SpaceX founder and his team of disrupters.

Trump repeated false claims that tens of millions of dead people over 100 years old are receiving Social Security payments, prompting some Democrats to shout, “Not true!” and “Those are lies!”

Trump spoke at a critical juncture in his presidency, as voters who returned him to the White House on his promise to fix inflation are instead finding economic chaos. All the gains the S&P 500 have made since Election Day are now gone, while consumer sentiment surveys show the public sees inflation as worsening.

Trump seemed prepared to double down on his trade policies, which experts have warned will raise prices for consumers.

“Whatever they tariff us, we tariff them. Whatever they tax us, we tax them,” Trump said. At the same time, he tried to ease concerns about the resulting price increases, saying, “There’ll be a little disturbance, but we’re okay with that. It won’t be much.”

Trump said one of his “very highest priorities” was to rescue the economy and offer relief to working families. He promised to organize the federal government to lower costs on eggs and energy, blaming his Democratic predecessor Joe Biden for the situation and offering scant details of his own plans.

Trump also called for the extension of his first-term tax cuts and additional federal funding for his border crackdown, including for his promised efforts at “mass deportation” of people in the U.S. illegally.

He celebrated his crackdown on migration, saying, “It turns all we really needed was a new president.”

Speaking about his promised tax cuts, Trump seemed to goad Democrats, saying: “I’m sure you’re going to vote for those tax cuts. Because otherwise I don’t believe the people will ever vote you into office.”

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The backdrop was the new economic uncertainty unleashed after the president opened the day by placing stiff tariffs on imports from the country's neighbors and closest trading partners. A 25% tax on goods from Canada and Mexico went into effect early Tuesday — ostensibly to secure greater cooperation to tackle fentanyl trafficking and illegal immigration — triggering immediate retaliation and sparking fears of a wider trade war. Trump also raised tariffs on goods from China to 20%.

Republicans were boisterous as Trump stepped to the lectern in the House, chanting "USA! USA!" as the president basked in the cheers. The GOP lawmakers were jubilant, having won a trifecta of the White House, Senate and House in the elections. However, they face the challenging task of delivering on Trump's agenda as well as avoiding a government shutdown later this month.

Across the aisle, out-of-power Democrats set the tone early, with most remaining seated without applauding or making eye contact with Trump as he was introduced in the chamber.

After several interruptions, House Speaker Mike Johnson jumped in and called for decorum to be restored in the chamber as Republicans shouted "USA" to drown out the cries from the other side of the aisle. Johnson then ordered Texas Rep. Al Green removed from the chamber.

"It's worth it to let people know that there are some people who are going to stand up" to Trump, Green told reporters after being thrown out of the chamber.

Other Democrats held up signs criticizing like "Save Medicaid" and "Protect Veterans" during Trump's remarks, seeking to drive public awareness to elements of Trump's agenda they believed might offer them a pathway back to the majority.

Some Democrats chose to highlight the impact of Trump's actions by inviting fired federal workers as guests, including a disabled veteran from Arizona, a health worker from Maryland and a forestry employee who worked on wildfire prevention in California.

Trump also used his speech to address his proposals for fostering peace in Ukraine and the Middle East, where he has unceremoniously upended the policies of the Biden administration in a matter of just weeks. On Monday, Trump ordered a freeze to U.S. military assistance to Ukraine, ending years of staunch American support for the country in fending off Russia's invasion.

Trump recited a letter he received earlier Tuesday from Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, saying that the wartime president wants to come back to the table after a explosive Oval Office meeting last week broke down negotiations for a peace deal between Russia and Ukraine. "We've had serious discussions with Russia and have received strong signals that they are ready for peace," Trump said. "Wouldn't that be beautiful?"

He also announced the arrest of a suspect in the 2021 suicide bombing at the Kabul airport that killed U.S. troops during the withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Trump's 1 hour and 39 minute speech was the longest annual address a president has ever delivered to Congress, breaking Bill Clinton's record of 1 hour and 28 minutes.

Watching from the gallery with first lady Melania Trump were guests including 15-year-old Elliston Berry, of Aledo, Texas, who was the victim of an explicit deepfake image sent to classmates.

Other White House guests included relatives of Corey Comperatore, the former Pennsylvania fire chief who was killed as he protected his family during an assassination attempt on Trump last summer.

Republican lawmakers cheered the conclusion of Trump's address with chants that echoed his words after he was struck in the ear by a bullet: "Fight! Fight! Fight!"

Zelenskyy calls Oval Office spat with Trump 'regrettable,' says he's ready to work for Ukraine peace

By SAMYA KULLAB and HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Tuesday that the Oval Office blowup with U.S. counterpart Donald Trump last week was "regrettable," adding that he stands ready to work under Trump's "strong leadership" to get a lasting peace.

Zelenskyy's remarks — an apparent attempt to placate Trump — came in a social media post on X,

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hours after the White House announced a pause in military aid to Ukraine that is critical to fighting Russia's invasion.

But later during his nightly address, Zelenskyy indicated that Ukraine hadn't received direct notification from the U.S. that aid had been cut and was seeking confirmation.

"I have instructed Ukraine's minister of defense, the heads of our intelligence agencies and our diplomats to contact their counterparts in the United States and obtain official information. People should not have to guess," he said.

"Ukraine and America deserve a respectful dialogue and a clear position from one another. Especially when it comes to protecting lives during a full-scale war," he added, saying that military aid had been cut once before in January for a brief period.

Zelenskyy also said Ukraine is ready to sign a lucrative deal on rare-earth minerals and security with Washington. Trump said during his address to Congress late Tuesday that he received a letter from Zelenskyy saying as much and that it noted Kyiv valued "how much America has done to help Ukraine maintain its sovereignty and independence."

"I appreciate that he sent this letter, just got it a little while ago," Trump said. "Simultaneously, we've had serious discussion with Russia and have received strong signals that they are ready for peace."

Earlier, in an apparent reference to Trump's criticism following the contentious White House meeting Friday that Zelenskyy does not want a peace deal, the Ukrainian leader said, "None of us want an endless war."

"Ukraine is ready to come to the negotiating table as soon as possible to bring lasting peace closer. Nobody wants peace more than the Ukrainians. My team and I stand ready to work under President Trump's strong leadership to get a peace that lasts," he said.

Asked by reporters in Moscow about Zelenskyy voicing readiness for the resumption of talks, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said, "It's good, it's positive."

In his post, Zelenskyy said the Oval Office meeting "did not go the way it was supposed to be."

"It is regrettable that it happened this way. It is time to make things right," he added. "We would like future cooperation and communication to be constructive."

The pause of U.S. military aid catapulted Ukraine into alarm and apprehension. Zelenskyy's statement came before Trump was expected to address the U.S. Congress later Tuesday.

"Regarding the agreement on minerals and security, Ukraine is ready to sign it in any time and in any convenient format," Zelenskyy said. "We see this agreement as a step toward greater security and solid security guarantees, and I truly hope it will work effectively."

French President Emmanuel Macron spoke by phone successively with Trump and Zelenskyy, Macron's office said, and "welcomes" the Ukrainian's "willingness to re-engage in dialogue with the U.S." It released no details about the discussion with Trump.

U.K. Prime Minister Keir Starmer also spoke to the Ukrainian leader and "welcomed President Zelenskyy's steadfast commitment to securing peace."

Zelenskyy's post came as officials in Kyiv said they were grateful for vital U.S. help in the war and want to keep working with Washington. Ukraine's prime minister, though, said the country still wants security guarantees to be part of any peace deal and won't recognize Russian occupation of any Ukrainian land. Those are potential stumbling blocks for Washington and Moscow, respectively.

Ukraine and its allies are concerned Trump is pushing for a quick ceasefire that will favor Russia, which Kyiv says cannot be trusted to honor truces.

A White House official said the U.S. was "pausing and reviewing" its aid to "ensure that it is contributing to a solution." The order will remain in effect until Trump determines that Ukraine has demonstrated a commitment to peace negotiations, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the assistance.

The pause in U.S. aid isn't expected to have an immediate impact on the battlefield. Ukrainian forces have slowed Russian advances along the 1,000-kilometer (600-mile) front line, especially in the fiercely contested Donetsk region in the east. The Russian onslaught has been costly in troops and armor but hasn't brought a strategically significant breakthrough for the Kremlin.

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Ukraine needs help to fight Russia

Ukraine, which depends heavily on foreign help to hold back Russia's full-scale invasion that began on Feb. 24, 2022, has feared that aid could be stopped since Trump took office.

U.S.-made Patriot air defense missile systems, for example, are pivotal to protecting Ukraine. Just as vital is U.S. intelligence assistance, which has allowed Ukraine to track Russian troop movements and select targets.

"I feel betrayed, but this feeling is not really deep for some reason. I was expecting something like that from Trump's side," said a Ukrainian soldier fighting in Russia's Kursk region, where Ukraine launched a daring incursion in August 2024 to improve its hand in negotiations. The soldier spoke by phone to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to the media.

On the front line, where Ukraine is struggling to fend off the larger and better-equipped Russian army, another soldier said the U.S. decision would allow further battlefield gains for Moscow.

"War is very pragmatic," he told AP, speaking on condition of anonymity in compliance with military regulations. "If we have weapons, enough ammunition, infantry, armored vehicles and aviation — great. If not, then we're done," he said.

He recalled a seven-month delay in U.S. aid that ended in April 2024 but opened a door for Russia's capture of the strategic city of Avdiivka.

Olena Fedorova, 46, of the southern port city of Odesa, said she hoped Trump's decision would be temporary because "we really need help."

U.S. support is vital because Europe cannot fully provide what Ukraine needs in air defense systems, leading to increased civilian casualties, said lawmaker Yehor Chernov.

The suspension of U.S. military aid is already being felt at a hub in eastern Poland that has been used to ferry Western weapons into neighboring Ukraine, Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk said.

The U.S.-Ukraine relationship has taken a downturn since Trump took office and his team launched bilateral talks with Russia.

Trump had vowed during his campaign to settle the war in 24 hours, but later changed that time frame and voiced hope that peace could be negotiated in six months.

Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal said U.S. help is "vital" and has saved "perhaps tens of thousands" of civilian and military lives. But he emphasized that any peace agreement must be "on Ukraine's terms, as the victim country."

Ukraine wants "concrete security guarantees" from Washington, European countries and Group of Seven leading industrialized nations, he said. Giving up territory to Russia, which occupies nearly 20% of Ukraine, "is not possible" under the U.N. Charter, he said.

European allies stress support for Kyiv

Noting that the U.S. has been "the chief supplier" of aid to Ukraine, Peskov said that if Washington suspends these supplies, "it will make the best contribution to peace."

Poland's Foreign Ministry said the U.S. had not consulted with or informed NATO countries before announcing the pause.

Russia will likely try to use the halt in supplies to extend its territorial gains and strengthen its position in prospective peace talks.

Andrei Kartapolov, a retired general who heads a defense committee in parliament, told Russia's state RIA news agency that Ukraine would exhaust its current ammunition reserves within months.

"We need to keep up the pressure and continue to target their bases and depots with long-range precision weapons to destroy the stockpiles," he said.

Ukraine's European allies, meanwhile, reaffirmed their commitment to Kyiv.

The chief of the European Union's executive proposed an 800-billion-euro (\$841 billion) plan to bolster defenses of EU nations and provide Ukraine with military muscle.

The U.K. government, which has been leading European efforts to keep Trump from pushing to end the war on terms that could favor Moscow, said it remains "absolutely committed to securing a lasting peace in Ukraine."

Malcolm Chalmers, deputy director-general of the Royal United Services Institute, a London-based defense think tank, said Washington's move could encourage Russia to seek more Ukrainian concessions, including demilitarization and neutrality.

Powerful US storms kill 2 and bring threats from critical fire weather to blizzard conditions

By JEFF MARTIN and JACK BROOK Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Powerful storms killed two people in Mississippi, tore the roofs off an apartment building and a nursing home in a small town in Oklahoma and threatened more communities across the nation Tuesday with wide-ranging weather.

The large storm system also brought blinding dust storms to the Southwest, blizzards with whiteout conditions to the Midwest and fears of wildfires elsewhere.

In Irving, Texas, a tornado with winds up to 110 mph (177 kph) struck, while another touched down in the 16,000-resident city of Ada, Oklahoma, according to preliminary information from the National Weather Service. There were also two tornadoes in Louisiana's northern Caddo Parish and at least five in eastern Oklahoma.

High winds forced some changes to Mardi Gras in New Orleans, which moved up and shortened the two biggest parades to wrap them up before the bad weather moved in.

The weather didn't stop Shalaska Jones and her 2-year-old daughter from waving at passing Mardi Gras floats and hoping to catch one of the coveted coconuts thrown to the crowd.

"We was coming out, rain, sleet or snow," Jones said.

The alarming weather could be one of the first big tests for the National Weather Service after hundreds of forecasters were fired last week as part of President Donald Trump's moves to slash the size of the federal government. Former employees said the firing of meteorologists who make crucial local forecasts nationwide could put lives at risk, though it was too soon to know the impact on forecasts and warnings for this storm.

Deaths from storms in Mississippi

Two people died due to the severe weather, Gov. Tate Reeves posted on the social platform X, without going into detail.

WAPT-TV reported that one person died from a falling power line in Madison County, while a driver in the same county was killed by a tree falling on his car.

Hundreds of thousands left without power

Storms that swept through Texas and Oklahoma brought high winds and rain, overturning tractor-trailers and damaging roofs. More than 178,000 customers were without power in Texas, about 23,000 in Louisiana, another 18,000 in Mississippi, about 88,000 in Alabama, more than 16,000 in Oklahoma and more than 23,000 in Tennessee, according to PowerOutage.us.

More outages were expected as a line of storms raced across Mississippi and Louisiana and headed for Alabama, producing gusts of 70 mph (113 kph), the weather service said.

Strong winds lead to fires and damage in Texas

In San Antonio, high winds caused at least two grass fires that damaged several structures and prompted officials to order mandatory evacuations in two areas south of the city. One fire prompted officials to call for the evacuation of about 30 homes, San Antonio Fire Chief Valerie Frausto told reporters.

By late Tuesday afternoon, the Texas A&M Forest Service was responding to 13 active wildfires across the state, service spokesperson Adam Turner said.

In North Texas, strong thunderstorms with gusts over 70 mph (113 kph) damaged apartments, schools and RVs. At the Las Haciendas Apartments in Irving, northwest of Dallas, winds blew out windows and damaged brick siding along the walls of a building.

Power was knocked out to several Irving schools. In Plano, north of Dallas, winds tore off parts of a

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high school's metal roof. In Parker County, west of Fort Worth, at least three RV trailers were overturned by strong winds.

Central Plains and Midwest brace for blizzard conditions

Blizzard conditions were forecast that could make travel treacherous.

Schools will be closed Wednesday in several southern Minnesota districts with 5 to 11 inches (about 13 to 28 centimeters) of snow expected. More concerning were winds forecasted to gust over 50 mph (80 kph) and stay high.

The National Weather Service in the Twin Cities said on X Tuesday night that travel was not advised over a large portion of southern Minnesota.

"It's tough to find a @MnDOT road camera that isn't covered in ice or blocked completely by blowing snow," the post said.

South Dakota was expected to receive up to 5 inches (12.7 centimeters) of snow in some areas, and by Tuesday evening, high winds had already deteriorated road conditions.

Jay Jones, who works at Love's Truck Stop in Sioux Falls, said he saw garbage cans flying around as winds gusted around 50 mph (80.5 kph). Parts of Interstate 29 heading north to North Dakota were shut down.

"It looks really bad out there," Jones said, adding that he walked to work and would have to "have to tough it out" on his way home.

In Des Moines, Iowa, gusts up to 65 mph (105 kph) were expected Tuesday night — a rare occurrence, forecasters said.

Strong winds and snowfall were making travel hazardous Tuesday night in eastern Nebraska, according to the National Weather Service. Part of Interstate 80 was temporarily closed and the agency recommended staying off the roads if possible.

Nationwide, more than 500 flights were canceled, according to FlightAware.com, which tracks delays and cancellations. Airports in Dallas canceled the most flights.

Severe weather threatens during Mardi Gras

New Orleans Police Superintendent Anne Kirkpatrick ordered parade-goers to not bring umbrellas, tents or "anything that could fly in the wind and cause mayhem." In neighboring Jefferson Parish, officials canceled planned parades due to anticipated high winds and thunderstorms.

Even with winds sweeping through New Orleans, the city's festive Bourbon Street was packed with revelers clad in purple, gold and yellow, shouting for bead necklaces tossed from balconies.

Ashley Luna and her aunt danced and skipped down the street holding beverages beneath the darkening sky, unconcerned about the evening's prospects.

"The weather can always change. I'm not really worried about it," Luna said. "I am just going with the flow."

Trump's trade war draws swift retaliation with new tariffs from Mexico, Canada and China

By JOSH BOAK, PAUL WISEMAN and ROB GILLIES Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump launched a trade war Tuesday against America's three biggest trading partners, drawing immediate retaliation from Mexico, Canada and China and sending financial markets into a tailspin as the U.S. faced the threat of rekindled inflation and paralyzing uncertainty for business.

Just after midnight, Trump imposed 25% taxes, or tariffs, on Mexican and Canadian imports, though he limited the levy to 10% on Canadian energy. Trump also doubled the tariff he slapped last month on Chinese products to 20%.

Beijing retaliated with tariffs of up to 15% on a wide array of U.S. farm exports. It also expanded the number of U.S. companies subject to export controls and other restrictions by about two dozen.

In an address to Congress Tuesday night, Trump repeated two different explanations for his tariffs on Canada and Mexico. He cited the trade deficits the U.S. has with both countries, but also said, "they've

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allowed fentanyl to come into our country at levels never seen before, killing hundreds of thousands of our citizens."

Trump also acknowledged there could be "a little disturbance" from the tariffs, a possible nod to the stock market's sharp falls in the past two days as well as concerns about inflation.

"It may be a little bit of an adjustment period," he said after claiming that farmers would benefit from reciprocal tariffs on countries that have tariffs on U.S. exports. "You have to bear with me again and this will be even better."

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said his country would plaster tariffs on over \$100 billion (U.S. dollars) of American goods over the course of 21 days.

"Today the United States launched a trade war against Canada, their closest partner and ally, their closest friend. At the same time, they are talking about working positively with Russia, appeasing Vladimir Putin, a lying, murderous dictator. Make that make sense," Trudeau said.

Later in the day, Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick said the U.S. would likely meet Canada and Mexico "in the middle," with an announcement coming as soon as Wednesday.

Lutnick told Fox Business News that the tariffs would not be paused, but that Trump would reach a compromise.

"I think he's going to figure out, you do more, and I'll meet you in the middle in some way," Lutnick said.

A Canadian senior government official said Lutnick called Ontario Premier Doug Ford after Ford's press conference and asked him to stand down. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly about the call, said Ford told the U.S. commerce secretary he'll go harder.

The official said Lutnick told Ford that Trudeau's "very dumb" comment and remarks by other Canadian officials were not helpful, but said Lutnick seemed to acknowledge the tariffs are a part of negotiation toward a trade deal.

A senior Canadian official said Trudeau told the premiers of Canada's provinces that he hopes to speak to Trump on Wednesday. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly about the call.

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum said Mexico will respond to the new taxes with its own retaliatory tariffs. Sheinbaum said she will announce the products Mexico will target on Sunday. The delay might indicate that Mexico still hopes to de-escalate Trump's trade war.

China indicated on Tuesday night that it would not back down.

"If war is what the U.S. wants, be it a tariff war, a trade war or any other type of war, we're ready to fight till the end," China's embassy to the United States posted on X.

The president is abandoning the free trade policies the United States pursued for decades after World War II. He argues that open trade cost America millions of factory jobs and that tariffs are the path to national prosperity. He rejects the views of mainstream economists who contend that such protectionism is costly and inefficient.

Import taxes are "a very powerful weapon that politicians haven't used because they were either dishonest, stupid or paid off in some other form," Trump said Monday. "And now we're using them."

Dartmouth College economist Douglas Irwin, author of a 2017 history of U.S. tariff policy, has calculated that Tuesday's hikes will lift America's average tariff from 2.4% to 10.5%, the highest level since the 1940s. "We're in a new era for sure."

As the trade disputes escalated, stocks racked up more losses Tuesday on Wall Street, wiping out all the gains since Election Day for the S&P 500. Markets in Europe also fell sharply.

The American president has injected a disorienting volatility into the world economy, leaving it off balance as people wonder what he will do next.

During his first term, Trump imposed tariffs only after lengthy investigations — into the national security implications of relying on foreign steel, for example, said Michael House, co-chair of the international trade practice at the Perkins Coie law firm.

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But by declaring a national emergency involving the flow of immigrants and illicit drugs across U.S. borders, "he can modify these tariffs with a stroke of the pen," House said. "It's chaotic."

Democratic lawmakers were quick to criticize the tariffs.

"Presidents don't get to invent emergencies to justify bad policies," said Rep. Gregory Meeks, the top Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee. "Abusing emergency powers to wage an economic war on our closest allies isn't leadership — it's dangerous."

Even some Republican senators raised alarms. "Maine and Canada's economy are integrated," said Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, explaining that much of the state's lobsters and blueberries are processed in Canada and then sent back to the U.S.

Truck driver Carlos Ponce, 58, went about business as usual Tuesday morning, transporting auto parts from Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, to El Paso, Texas, just as he's done for decades.

Like many on the border, he was worried about the fallout from the tariffs. "Things could change drastically," Ponce said. Truckers could lose their jobs or have to drive farther to coastal ports as Mexican manufacturers look for trading partners beyond the U.S.

Alan Russell, head of Tecma, which helps factories set up in places like Ciudad Juarez, is skeptical that Trump's tariffs will bring manufacturing back to the United States.

"Nobody is going to move their factory until they have certainty," Russell said. Just last week, he said, Tecma helped a North Carolina manufacturer that moved to Mexico because it couldn't find enough workers in the United States.

U.S. businesses near the Canadian border scrambled to deal with the impact. Gutherie Lumber in suburban Detroit reached out Tuesday to Canadian suppliers about the cost of 8-foot wood studs. About 15% of the lumber at the Gutherie yard in Livonia, Michigan, comes from Canada.

Sales manager Mike Mahoney said Canadian suppliers are already raising prices. "They're putting that 25% on studs." Builders will strain to stay within their budgets.

After years of effort and thousands of dollars in investment, Tom Bard, a Kentucky craft bourbon distiller, gained a foothold in the Canadian provinces of British Columbia and Alberta and watched his sales grow north of the border. Now Kentucky bourbon is in Canada's crosshairs, and an order from his Canadian distributors is on hold.

"That hurts," he said. At his small distillery "every single pallet that goes out the door makes a huge difference ... The last thing you want is to have an empty spot where your bottles are supposed to be on a shelf."

Bard co-owns the Bard Distillery with his wife, Kim, in western Kentucky's Muhlenberg County, about 135 miles (217 kilometers) southwest of Louisville, Kentucky.

Trump overwhelmingly carried Kentucky in the November election. In Muhlenberg County, Trump defeated Kamala Harris by a more than 3-to-1 margin.

The China tariffs also threaten the U.S. toy industry. Greg Ahearn, president and CEO of the Toy Association, said the 20% tariffs on Chinese goods will be "crippling," as nearly 80% of toys sold in the U.S. are made in China.

Rachel Lutz owns the Peacock Room, four women's boutique shops with about 15 employees in Detroit. She's been bracing for the tariffs but doesn't understand the logic behind them.

"I'm struggling to see the wisdom in picking a fight with our largest trading partner that we've had historically wonderful relationships with," Lutz said Tuesday from her shop. "I'm struggling to really understand how they can't see that will profoundly impact our economy in ways that I think the American consumer has not predicted. We're about to find out."

Arab leaders endorse Egypt's plan to rebuild Gaza as an alternative to Trump's proposal

By SAMY MAGDY and MOHAMMAD JAHJOUH Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — Arab leaders on Tuesday endorsed Egypt's postwar plan for the Gaza Strip that would allow its roughly 2 million Palestinians to remain, in a counterproposal to U.S. President Donald Trump's plan to depopulate the territory and redevelop it as a beach destination.

The \$53 billion plan's endorsement by Arab leaders at a summit in Cairo amounted to a rejection of Trump's proposal. The summit conclusions were welcomed by Hamas, rejected by Israel and given a lukewarm response by the Trump administration.

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi expressed his appreciation for "the consensus among the Arab countries to support the reconstruction plan for the Gaza Strip, which allows the Palestinian People to stay on their land without displacement."

In a social media post after the summit, el-Sissi said he looked forward to working with Trump, other Arab nations and the international community "to adopt a plan that aims for a comprehensive and just settlement of the Palestinian Issue, ends the root causes of the Israeli Palestinian conflict, guarantees the security and stability of the peoples of the region and establishes the Palestinian State."

Initial reactions

White House National Security Council spokesman Brian Hughes dismissed the Egyptian proposal as unworkable.

"The current proposal does not address the reality that Gaza is currently uninhabitable and residents cannot humanely live in a territory covered in debris and unexploded ordnance," Hughes said. "President Trump stands by his vision to rebuild Gaza free from Hamas. We look forward to further talks to bring peace and prosperity to the region."

A spokesperson for Israel's foreign ministry, Oren Marmorstein, posted on X that the Egyptian plan "fails to address the realities of the situation" and said the summit's joint communique does not mention Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023 attack that sparked the war or condemn the militant group. The plan, he said, remains "rooted in outdated perspectives."

Marmorstein reiterated Israel's support for Trump's plan to resettle Gaza's population elsewhere, describing it as "an opportunity for the Gazans to have free choice based on their free will."

Egypt's Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty blasted Israel's rejection as "unacceptable," describing its position as "stubborn and extremist."

"There will be no peace neither to Israel or to the region" without establishing an independent Palestinian state in accordance with United Nations resolutions, he said. He said "Israel violates all international law rules ... the international law must be imposed."

"No single state should be allowed to impose its will on the international community," Abdelatty said.

Hamas welcomed the summit's outcome, saying it marked a new phase of Arab and Islamic alignment with the Palestinian cause and that it valued Arab leaders' rejection of attempts to transfer Palestinians from their territories in Gaza and the occupied West Bank.

Israel has embraced what it says is an alternative U.S. proposal for the ceasefire itself and the release of hostages taken in Hamas' attack on southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, which triggered the war. Israel has blocked the entry of food, fuel, medicine and other supplies to Gaza to try to get Hamas to accept the new proposal and has warned of additional consequences, raising fears of a return to fighting.

The suspension of aid drew widespread criticism, with human rights groups saying that it violated Israel's obligations as an occupying power under international law.

The alternative proposal would require Hamas to release half its remaining hostages — the militant group's main bargaining chip — in exchange for a ceasefire extension and a promise to negotiate a lasting truce. Israel made no mention of releasing more Palestinian prisoners — a key component of the first phase.

Egypt's postwar plan

Egypt's plan foresees rebuilding Gaza by 2030 without removing its population. The first phase calls

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for starting the removal of unexploded ordnance and clearing more than 50 million tons of rubble left by Israel's bombardment and military offensives.

Arab League chief Ahmed Aboul Gheit said the summit's final communique calls on the U.N. Security Council to deploy an international peacekeeping force in Gaza and the occupied West Bank.

"Peace is the Arabs' strategic option," he said, adding that the communique rejected the transfer of Palestinians and endorsed Egypt's reconstruction plan. "The Egyptian plan creates a path for a new security and political context in Gaza."

The communique said Egypt will host an international conference in cooperation with the United Nations for Gaza's reconstruction, and a World Bank-overseen trust fund will be established to receive pledges to implement the early recovery and reconstruction plan.

According to a 112-page draft of the plan obtained by The Associated Press, hundreds of thousands of temporary housing units would be set up for Gaza's population while reconstruction takes place. Rubble would be recycled, with some of it used as infill to expand land on Gaza's Mediterranean coast.

In the following years, the plan envisages completely reshaping the strip, building "sustainable, green and walkable" housing and urban areas, with renewable energy. It renovates agricultural lands and creates industrial zones and large park areas.

It also calls for the opening of an airport, a fishing port and a commercial port. The Oslo peace accords in the 1990s called for the opening of an airport and a commercial port in Gaza, but the projects withered as the peace process collapsed.

Hamas would cede power to an interim administration of political independents until a reformed Palestinian Authority can assume control. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, head of the Western-backed authority and an opponent of Hamas, attended the summit.

Israel has ruled out any role for the Palestinian Authority in Gaza and, along with the United States, has demanded Hamas' disarmament. Hamas, which doesn't accept Israel's existence, has said it's willing to cede power in Gaza to other Palestinians, but won't give up its arms until there is a Palestinian state.

Israel has vowed to maintain open-ended security control over both territories, which it captured in the 1967 Mideast war and which Palestinians want for their future state. Israel's government and most of its political class are opposed to Palestinian statehood.

Trump shocked the region last month by suggesting Gaza's roughly 2 million Palestinians be resettled in other countries. He said the United States would take ownership of the territory and redevelop it into a Middle Eastern "Riviera."

Netanyahu embraced the proposal, which was roundly rejected by Palestinians, Arab countries and human rights experts, who said it would likely violate international law.

The war began with Hamas' Oct. 7 attack on Israel, in which Palestinian militants killed about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took 251 people hostage. Hamas-led militants are still holding 59 hostages, 35 of whom are believed to be dead.

Most of the rest were released in ceasefire agreements. Israel has rescued eight living hostages and recovered the remains of dozens more.

Israel's 15-month offensive killed more than 48,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. It doesn't say how many were fighters, but the ministry says women and children made up more than half the dead. Israel says it killed over 17,000 militants, without providing evidence.

The offensive destroyed large areas of Gaza, including much of its health system and other infrastructure. At its height, the war displaced about 90% of the population, mostly within the territory, where hundreds of thousands packed into squalid tent camps and schools repurposed as shelters.

Gene Hackman's dog was misidentified as other mysteries swirl around actor's death

By MORGAN LEE Associated Press

SANTA FE, N.M. (AP) — Authorities misidentified a deceased dog while investigating the deaths of actor Gene Hackman and his wife, pianist Betsy Arakawa, according to a pet care specialist.

The couple's German shepherd, named Bear, survived along with a second dog named Nikita, but their kelpie mix, Zinna, died, according to Joey Padilla, owner of the Santa Fe Tails pet care facility that is involved in the surviving dogs' care.

The dog that died "was always attached to Betsy at the hip and it was a beautiful relationship," Padilla said in an email statement Tuesday. "Zinna went from being a returned shelter dog to this incredible companion under Betsy's hand."

Authorities have been searching for answers after the deaths of Hackman and Arakawa, whose partially mummified bodies were discovered on Feb. 26 at their Santa Fe home. Hackman and Arakawa may have died up to two weeks earlier, Santa Fe County Sheriff Adan Mendoza said.

Authorities did not perform a necropsy on Zinna, who was found in a kennel in a bathroom closet near Arakawa, a sheriff's office spokesperson said. Investigators initially noted the discovery of a "deceased brown in color German-Shepard canine."

Avila acknowledged that sheriff's deputies initially misidentified the breed of the deceased dog.

"Our deputies, they don't work with canines on a daily basis," she said.

USA Today first reported on the mistaken identification of the dead dog.

Arakawa's body was found with an open prescription bottle and pills scattered on the bathroom countertop, while Hackman's remains were found in the home's entryway.

The two bodies both have tested negative for carbon monoxide, a colorless and odorless gas that is a byproduct of fuel burned in some home appliances and can be fatal in poorly ventilated homes. No gas leaks were discovered in or around the home.

On Tuesday, the sheriff's office also said that a more extensive utility company inspection found that one burner on a stove in the house had a miniscule leak that could not be lethal.

Authorities retrieved personal items from the home, including a monthly planner and two cellphones that will be analyzed. Medical investigators are still working to clarify the cause of deaths but the results of toxicology reports aren't expected for weeks. ____

This story has been updated to correct the definition of carbon monoxide.

Groceries around the country remain expensive. That's why more states want to stop taxing them

By ANDREW DeMILLO Associated Press

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (AP) — The number of states imposing sales taxes on groceries has shrunk over the years, and the number may decrease further in the coming months as lawmakers hear complaints about high prices for eggs and other household staples.

Arkansas Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders on Tuesday unveiled the details of her proposal to eradicate the remaining 1/8th of a cent sales tax the state levies on groceries. Lawmakers in Tennessee, Mississippi and Alabama and are also calling for grocery-tax reductions.

The efforts come as states face uncertainty about their budgets because of cuts in Medicaid and other federal programs being eyed by Republicans in Washington. But supporters of the tax cuts are citing headlines about soaring egg prices as the reason they are needed now.

"We're getting rid of Arkansas' most regressive tax and giving a helping hand to those who need it the most," Sanders, a Republican, said at a news conference to discuss the proposal.

The number of states taxing groceries has decreased in recent years, with laws eliminating the state levy taking effect in Oklahoma and Kansas over the last year. A law eliminating Virginia's tax on groceries

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took effect in 2023. A law eliminating Illinois' 1% grocery tax is set to take effect next year.

State sales taxes are levied on groceries in nine states: Arkansas, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Mississippi, Missouri, South Dakota, Tennessee and Utah. Hawaii and Idaho offer tax credits to residents to help offset the tax, though.

In Tennessee, Republican legislative leaders have proposed abolishing the state's 4% sales tax on groceries. The legislation comes after the state's handful of Democratic lawmakers have unsuccessfully introduced similar proposals as they argue that Tennesseans are paying as much as 6.75% in sales tax on essentials like bread and milk in some areas with local sales taxes.

However, it is unclear how far even a GOP-backed bill will fare in Republican-dominant Tennessee. State revenues are expected to be tighter this year, and Gov. Bill Lee didn't include a cut in his proposed budget, nor did he include a grocery sales tax holiday that has typically been included in his legislative priorities.

House Majority Leader William Lamberth, one of the sponsors of the repeal, said the bill could be narrowed down to only apply to essentials hitting people's pocketbooks the hardest rather than junk foods.

"Milk, eggs, bread, I mean, that's a great place to start," Lamberth said.

Alabama Democratic lawmakers plan to introduce tax cut legislation that will include eliminating the state's remaining 3% grocery tax. Lawmakers in 2023 approved legislation to gradually drop it from 4% to 2%.

Democrats said families need relief.

"If we're serious about helping working people get ahead, the best and most impactful way to do that is to take less in taxes and give them some peace of mind when they pay the rent or go to the grocery store," Democratic Rep. Adline Clarke said in a news release.

Lawmakers have for decades have discussed removing the tax, but the proposals never came to fruition because of the loss it would cause to education funding.

A tax cut package moving its way through the Mississippi legislature would cut that state's 7% sales tax on groceries.

Other grocery tax cut proposals have run into obstacles. South Dakota voters last year rejected a ballot measure that would have repealed the state's grocery tax.

Arkansas had all but eliminated the grocery tax under Sanders' predecessors, Democratic Gov. Mike Beebe and Republican Gov. Asa Hutchinson. All that remains is the 1/8th sales tax that's applied under a voter-approved constitutional amendment for outdoors programs.

Eliminating that will cost Arkansas nearly \$11 million a year, a figure Sanders said the programs can absorb.

Reducing or getting rid of grocery taxes can make a state's tax system less regressive, but it comes at a time that states face the potential of additional costs because of federal budget cuts.

States could instead look at other cuts such as earned income tax credits or child care tax credits, said Aidan Davis, state policy director for the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy.

"If the goal is to make sure people can make ends meet, then I think doing it in a more targeted way makes a lot of sense," Davis said.

Pope stable with no new respiratory crises but will sleep with ventilation mask, Vatican says

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Pope Francis was in stable condition Tuesday and breathing with just the help of supplemental oxygen after respiratory crises a day earlier, but will resume using a ventilation mask at night, the Vatican said.

In its late update, the Vatican said Francis had no further respiratory episodes during a day spent praying, resting and undergoing respiratory physiotherapy to try to help him fight double pneumonia.

The 88-year-old pope, who has chronic lung disease and had part of one lung removed as a young man, had two respiratory crises on Monday in a setback to his recovery.

Doctors extracted "copious" amounts of mucus from his lungs. They put him on a noninvasive mechanical ventilation mask to help him breathe and he slept with it through the night, but was stable enough on

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Tuesday morning to use just high flows of supplemental oxygen delivered by a nasal tube.

Doctors planned to resume using the mask while he sleeps Tuesday night, so that oxygen is pumped into his lungs via a mask that covers his nose and mouth.

Doctors said his clinical condition was stable and that his prognosis remained guarded, meaning he is not out of danger.

Francis' medical team has not provided an in-person update on his condition since Feb. 21, a sign of the up-and-down nature of his hospitalization, which began on Feb. 14 and is the longest of his 12-year papacy.

Argentines pray for the pope at hospital

On Tuesday, a group of Argentines from the country's embassies in Rome brought a statue of Our Lady of Lujan to the Gemelli hospital to pray for Francis. The Argentine pope is particularly devoted to the blue veiled Lujan Madonna, which has been revered in Argentina since the 17th century.

"I am very happy to be now close to him," said the Rev. Fernando Laguna, parish priest of the Argentine church in Rome. "I would like to hug him, but it's not possible, but he told us that a prayer is like a hug. So I am happy despite the pain."

Vatican prepares for Lent without Francis

Francis' treatment comes as the Vatican prepares for Lent, the solemn period leading up to Easter on April 20. As it is, a cardinal has been designated to take Francis' place this week on Ash Wednesday, which opens Lent with a traditional service and procession in Rome. The pope was also supposed to attend a spiritual retreat this coming weekend with the rest of the Holy See hierarchy.

On Tuesday, the Vatican said the retreat would go ahead without Francis but in "spiritual communion" with him. The theme, selected weeks ago and well before Francis got sick, was "Hope in eternal life."

Francis, who is not physically active, uses a wheelchair and is overweight, had been undergoing respiratory physiotherapy to try to improve his lung function. The accumulation of secretions in his lungs was a sign that he doesn't have the muscle tone to cough vigorously enough to expel the fluid.

Doctors often use noninvasive ventilation to stave off intubation or the use of more invasive mechanical ventilation. Francis has not been intubated during this hospitalization. It's not clear if he has provided any instructions on the limits of his care if he declines seriously or loses consciousness.

Catholic teaching holds that life must be defended from conception until natural death. It insists that chronically ill patients, including those in vegetative states, must receive "ordinary" care such as hydration and nutrition, but "extraordinary" or disproportionate care can be suspended if it is no longer beneficial or is only prolonging a precarious and painful life.

Francis articulated that in a 2017 speech to a meeting of the Vatican's bioethics think tank, the Pontifical Academy for Life. He said there was "no obligation to have recourse in all circumstances to every possible remedy." He added: "It thus makes possible a decision that is morally qualified as withdrawal of 'overzealous treatment.'"

Two Oscar-winning films shed light on the thousands of disappeared people in Latin America

By FABIOLA SANCHEZ Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — If there is a still open wound in Latin America, it is that of the tens of thousands of disappeared people and decadeslong pain that has accumulated in parts of the region such as Mexico and Colombia.

Two visions of the trauma had a central role at the 97th Academy Awards: the Brazilian film "Ainda Estou Aqui" ("I'm Still Here"), which tells the drama of the family of a leftist former congressman who disappeared in 1971 at the height of the military dictatorship; and the musical "Emilia Pérez," about a fictional Mexican drug lord who leaves a life of crime to become a transgender woman and searcher for the disappeared in Mexico.

"We hope that in this way the society will be sensitized," said activist Indira Navarro, who directs the Guerreros Buscadores de Jalisco collective in Mexico and has been searching for her brother, who disap-

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peared in the northern state of Sonora nine years ago.

The Academy Awards' recognition of the films, both of which were nominated in multiple categories, was an unparalleled opportunity to make the problem visible, Navarro said.

"I'm Still Here," by Brazilian Walter Salles, won the Oscar in the category of best international film. "Emilia Pérez," by renowned French director Jacques Audiard, was this year's most-nominated film and won in the categories of best original song and best supporting actress for Zoe Saldaña.

Salles and Audiard's films also had a common denominator of disappearances in Latin America: impunity.

The story behind 'I'm Still Here'

"I'm Still Here" was inspired by the book "Ainda Estou Aqui" by Marcelo Rubens Paiva, son of the disappeared former congressman Rubens Paiva. More than five decades after he was taken from his Rio de Janeiro home and disappeared, none of those responsible for Paiva's case have been held accountable.

His widow, Eunice, and their five children have sought justice for years. His family had to wait 40 years to receive his death certificate and even longer for the authorities to recognize that he, like others, died in the context of the violence of the military dictatorship.

Salles, accepting the award, said from the Oscars stage: "This goes to a woman who, after a loss suffered during an authoritarian regime, decided not to bend and to resist...Her name is Eunice Paiva."

Marcelo Rubens Paiva told The Associated Press of the impact of the Oscars recognition: "People everywhere are afraid of watching their democracies become dictatorships... This movie glorifies democracy and the understanding that human rights, empathy are in short supply."

The disappeared in Mexico

In the case of "Emilia Pérez" the central character, a drug trafficker nicknamed Manitas del Monte (Karla Sofia Gascón), tries to vindicate his years as a criminal looking for disappeared people along with lawyer Rita Castro (Saldaña). He never pays for his crimes nor are those responsible for disappearances held accountable before the Mexican justice system.

That is very similar to the reality in Mexico, where according to official figures there are currently 123,147 disappeared.

The United Nations Committee on Enforced Disappearances acknowledged in a report it presented in April 2022, after a visit to Mexico, that only between 2% and 6% of cases of disappearances were prosecuted.

"Organized crime has become a central perpetrator of disappearances in Mexico, with varying degrees of participation, acquiescence or omission of public servants," the committee said.

The phenomenon of disappearances in Mexico began in the 1960s, but the numbers skyrocketed from the 2000s with the increase in drug trafficking activities and the war against cartels undertaken by the government of then-President Felipe Calderón (2006-2012).

In Mexico the search for many disappeared rests on the shoulders of their relatives who, with scarce resources and without protection from the authorities, enter regions controlled by criminals to search for their loved ones.

That's true for Navarro, who spoke Monday while searching a grave in western state of Jalisco that she and other activists located. She said she hopes the Oscars will serve as "a wake-up call for the whole world and to know what we are really experiencing here in Mexico."

The IRS is drafting plans to cut as much as half of its 90,000-person workforce, AP sources say

By FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The IRS is drafting plans to cut its workforce by as much as half through a mix of layoffs, attrition and incentivized buyouts, according to two people familiar with the situation.

The people spoke Tuesday on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to disclose the plans.

The layoffs are part of the Trump administration's efforts to shrink the size of the federal workforce through billionaire Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency by closing agencies, laying off nearly

all probationary employees who have not yet gained civil service protection and offering buyouts to almost all federal employees through a "deferred resignation program" to quickly reduce the government workforce.

A reduction in force of tens of thousands of employees would render the IRS "dysfunctional," said John Koskinen, a former IRS commissioner.

The federal tax collector employs roughly 90,000 workers total across the United States, according to the latest IRS data. People of color make up 56% of the IRS workforce, and women represent 65%.

Already, roughly 7,000 probationary IRS employees with roughly one year or less of service were laid off from the organization in February.

The organization also offered IRS employees — along with almost all federal employees across the government — "deferred resignation program" buyouts, though IRS employees involved in the 2025 tax season were told earlier this month that they would not be allowed to accept a buyout offer from the Trump administration until mid-May, after the taxpayer filing deadline.

In addition to the planned layoffs, the Trump administration intends to lend IRS workers to the Department of Homeland Security to assist with immigration enforcement. In a letter sent in February, DHS Secretary Kristi Noem asked Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent to borrow IRS workers to help with ongoing immigration crackdown efforts.

Koskinen and six other former IRS Commissioners wrote in the New York Times earlier this month: "Aggressive reductions in the I.R.S.'s resources will only render our government less effective and less efficient in collecting the taxes Congress has imposed."

According to a White House memo sent to federal agencies in late February, agencies are to develop a report by March 13 on its reduction in force plans — but it is unclear whether the White House will approve the IRS' reorganization plan and over what period of time it would be implemented.

Representatives for the White House, the Treasury Department and IRS did not respond to an Associated Press request for comment. The New York Times first reported the deliberations.

Cybercrime crew stole then resold hundreds of tickets to Swift concerts, prosecutors say

NEW YORK (AP) — A cybercrime crew stole then resold more than 900 digital tickets to Taylor Swift concerts and other pricey events on StubHub, according to prosecutors in New York.

The international scam involved people working in Jamaica for a firm contracted by the online ticket marketplace, Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz said Monday.

The contractors stole the URLs of tickets purchased on StubHub and emailed them to others in New York, who then downloaded and resold them on StubHub at exorbitant prices, she said.

The crew raked in more than \$600,000 in profits over roughly a year between June 2022 and July 2023, according to prosecutors.

The majority of the stolen tickets were for Swift's Eras Tour, but the thieves also boosted ones for Adele and Ed Sheeran concerts, NBA games and the U.S. Open Tennis Championships.

Katz added that investigators are still determining the extent of the operation, including other potential co-conspirators.

Two of those involved, Tyrone Rose and Shamara Simmons, were arrested and charged last Thursday with grand larceny, computer tampering and conspiracy charges, Katz's office said.

Rose, 20, was among those in Jamaica who re-directed purchased tickets to the emails of Simmons, 31, and another accomplice based in the New York City borough of Queens, according to prosecutors.

Rose was apprehended while he was visiting New York and was ordered to surrender his passport, Katz's office said Tuesday. He and Simmons pleaded not guilty and were released pending their next court date Friday.

The public defender's office representing Rose declined to comment, and lawyers for Simmons didn't immediately respond Tuesday.

StubHub said Tuesday that it had discovered the criminal scheme and reported it to authorities and its

third-party customer service vendor.

The company said it has since terminated its relationship with the vendor and strengthened its security measures. All ticket orders so far identified as impacted by the theft have also been replaced or fully refunded, according to StubHub.

Only 2 NFL players get the franchise tag after the Vikings let Sam Darnold hit the market

By JOSH DUBOW AP Pro Football Writer

Dallas signed defensive tackle Osa Odighizuwa before the franchise tag deadline Tuesday and Minnesota declined to give the tag to quarterback Sam Darnold, clearing the way for him to hit the open market next week.

Only two players were given the tag for 2025 before Tuesday's deadline with Cincinnati receiver Tee Higgins getting it on Monday and Kansas City guard Trey Smith getting it last week.

This marked a significant downturn in tags handed out from eight last season and an average of more than nine a year over the previous five seasons. The previous time only two or fewer players got tagged was in 1994 when Pittsburgh tight end Eric Green and Minnesota defensive tackle Henry Thomas were the only players, according to the NFL.

Among the top players other than Darnold who can sign with any other team as free agents starting March 12 after not getting tagged are Tampa Bay receiver Chris Godwin, Miami safety Jevon Holland, Philadelphia defensive standouts Milton Williams, Zack Baun and Josh Sweat, and Baltimore left tackle Ronnie Stanley.

The Cowboys locked up Odighizuwa by agreeing to an \$80 million, four-year contract with \$58 million guaranteed, according to his agent. Agent Sam Leaf Ireifej confirmed the deal to The Associated Press and said it includes a \$20 million signing bonus. A franchise tag would have been worth \$25.1 million for 2025.

Odighizuwa, a third-round pick in 2021, is coming off his best season with career highs with 4 1/2 sacks, 47 tackles and 23 quarterback hits.

Darnold had a breakthrough season in his only year in Minnesota, throwing for 4,319 yards and 35 TDs while posting a 102.5 passer rating. Darnold was drafted third overall by the New York Jets in 2018 but struggled mightily during three seasons with the Jets and two with Carolina.

After spending the 2023 season as a backup in San Francisco, Darnold finally played to his potential for most of the season before posting back-to-back duds in his final two games: a Week 18 game against Detroit for the No. 1 seed in the NFC and a wild-card loss to the Los Angeles Rams.

His performance in those key games contributed to the decision by the Vikings to pass on the \$40.2 million franchise tag number and turn the team over to J.J. McCarthy, who was drafted 10th overall last season.

McCarthy missed his rookie season with a knee injury but is expected to be the starter on coach Kevin O'Connell's talented offense featuring star receiver Justin Jefferson.

Higgins got the tag for a second straight season with his worth \$26.2 million. Higgins was tied for sixth in the league this past season with 10 touchdown catches. He also had 73 receptions for 911 yards and averaged 12.5 yards per catch.

Smith, a sixth-round pick in 2021, received a tag worth \$23.402 million. He has missed just one game in four seasons and has helped the Chiefs win Super Bowls following the 2022 and 2023 seasons.

Kansas City lost the Super Bowl last month to Philadelphia thanks in part to struggles on the offense line. That contributed to the decision to give the tag to one of their more reliable linemen in hopes of giving better protection to Patrick Mahomes.

Teams can sign players on the franchise tags by July 15, otherwise they will have to play on the tag in 2025.

Wall Street falls again as losses wipe out all post-election gains for the S&P 500

By DAMIAN J. TROISE and ALEX VEIGA AP Business Writers

Stocks racked up more losses on Wall Street Tuesday as a trade war between the U.S. and its key trading partners escalated, wiping out all the gains since Election Day for the S&P 500.

The Trump administration imposed tariffs on imports from Canada and Mexico starting Tuesday and doubled tariffs against imports from China. All three countries announced retaliatory actions, sparking worries about a slowdown in the global economy.

The S&P 500 fell 1.2%, with more than 80% of the stocks in the benchmark index closing lower. The Dow Jones Industrial Average slid 1.6%.

The Nasdaq composite slipped 0.4%. The tech-heavy index briefly reached a 10% decline from its most recent closing high, which is what the market considers a correction, but gains for Nvidia, Microsoft and other tech heavyweights helped pare those losses.

Financial stocks were among the heaviest weights on the S&P 500 index. JPMorgan Chase fell 4% and Bank of America lost 6.3%.

Markets in Europe fell sharply, with Germany's DAX falling 3.5% as automakers saw sharp losses. Stocks in Asia saw more modest declines.

"The markets are having a tough time even setting expectations for what this trade war could look like," said Ross Mayfield, investment strategy analyst at Baird. "This is clearly a level step higher than anything we saw during (Trump's) first term."

The market could soon face more twists in the tariff drama. President Donald Trump addresses a joint session of Congress Tuesday night. After the closing bell, Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick told Fox Business News that the U.S. would likely meet Canada and Mexico "in the middle" on tariffs, with an announcement coming as soon as Wednesday.

The recent decline in U.S. stocks has wiped out all of the markets' gains since Trump's election in November. That rally had been built largely on hopes for policies that would strengthen the U.S. economy and businesses. Worries about tariffs raising consumer prices and reigniting inflation have been weighing on both the economy and Wall Street.

The tariffs are prompting warnings from retailers, including Target and Best Buy, as they report their latest financial results. Target fell 3% despite beating Wall Street's earnings forecasts, saying there will be "meaningful pressure" on its profits to start the year because of tariffs and other costs.

Best Buy plunged 13.3% for the biggest drop among S&P 500 stocks after giving investors a weaker-than-expected earnings forecast and warning about tariff impacts.

"International trade is critically important to our business and industry," said Best Buy CEO Corie Barry.

Barry said China and Mexico are the top two sources for products that Best Buy sells, and it also expects vendors to pass along tariff costs, which would make price increases for American consumers likely.

Imports from Canada and Mexico are now to be taxed at 25%, with Canadian energy products subject to 10% import duties. The 10% tariff that Trump placed on Chinese imports in February was doubled to 20%. Retaliations were swift.

China responded to new U.S. tariffs by announcing it will impose additional tariffs of up to 15% on imports of key U.S. farm products, including chicken, pork, soy and beef, and expanded controls on doing business with key U.S. companies. Canada plans on slapping tariffs on more than \$100 billion of American goods over the course of 21 days. Mexico also plans tariffs on goods imported from the U.S.

Companies in the S&P 500 are wrapping up the latest round of quarterly financial reports. They've posted broad earnings growth of 18% for the fourth quarter. But Wall Street has already trimmed expectations for the current quarter to about 7% growth from just over forecasts of 11% at the beginning of the year.

"The hit to growth is more of the commentary that we'll be looking for from companies," said Kevin Gordon, senior investment strategist at Charles Schwab.

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Concerns about profits follow a series of economic reports with worrisome signals that include U.S. households becoming more pessimistic about inflation and pulling back on spending. Consumer spending has essentially driven U.S. economic growth in the face of high interest rates.

Wall Street has been hoping that the Federal Reserve would continue lowering interest rates in 2025. The central bank has signaled more caution, though, partly because of uncertainty surrounding the economic impact of tariffs. The Fed is expected to hold rates steady at its upcoming meeting later in March.

The Fed raised interest rates to their highest level in two decades in order to tame inflation. It started cutting its benchmark rate in 2024 as the rate of inflation moved closer to its target of 2%. But inflation remains stubbornly just above that target and tariffs threaten price increases that could fuel inflation.

In the bond market, Treasury yields were mixed. The yield on the 10-year Treasury rose to 4.20% from 4.16% late Monday. It's still down sharply from last month, when it was approaching 4.80%, as worries have grown about the strength of the U.S. economy.

"Because tariffs are in effect, and there's no guarantee that they're likely to be temporary, that's filtering its way to the bond market and we're seeing the threat of higher inflation eroding the value of the 10-year note," said Sam Stovall, chief investment strategist at CFRA.

The yield on the 2-year Treasury held steady at 3.94%.

All told, the S&P 500 fell 71.57 points to 5,778.15. The Dow dropped 670 points to 42,520.99, and the Nasdaq shed 65.03 points to 18,285.16.

NASA's two stuck astronauts are finally closing in on their return to Earth after 9 months in space

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — NASA's two stuck astronauts are just a few weeks away from finally returning to Earth after nine months in space.

Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams have to wait until their replacements arrive at the International Space Station next week before they can check out later this month.

They'll be joined on their SpaceX ride home by two astronauts who launched by themselves in September alongside two empty seats.

During a news conference Tuesday, Wilmore said that while politics is part of life, it did not play into his and Williams' return, moved up a couple weeks thanks to a change in SpaceX capsules. President Donald Trump and SpaceX's Elon Musk said at the end of January that they wanted to accelerate the astronauts' return, blaming the previous administration.

But Williams, in response to a question, did take issue with Musk's recent call to dump the space station in two years, rather than waiting until NASA's projected deorbit in 2031. She noted all the scientific research being performed at the orbiting lab.

"This place is ticking. It's just really amazing, so I would say we're actually in our prime right now," said Williams, a three-time space station resident. "I would think that right now is probably not the right time to say quit, call it quits."

Williams said she can't wait to be reunited with her Labrador retrievers. The hardest part about the unexpected extended stay, she added, was the wait by their families back home.

"It's been a roller coaster for them, probably a little bit more so than for us," she said. "We're here. We have a mission. We're just doing what we do every day, and every day is interesting because we're up in space and it's a lot of fun."

Wilmore and Williams expected to be gone just a week or so when they launched last June aboard Boeing's new Starliner capsule, making its crew debut after years of delay. The Starliner had so many problems getting to the space station that NASA ruled it too dangerous to carry anyone and it flew back empty.

Their homecoming was further delayed by extra completion time needed for the brand new SpaceX capsule that was supposed to deliver their replacements.

Last month, NASA announced the next crew would launch in a used capsule instead, pushing up liftoff to March 12. The two crews will spend about a week together aboard the space station before Wilmore and Williams depart with NASA's Nick Hague and the Russian Space Agency's Alexander Gorbunov.

Wilmore and Williams — retired Navy captains and repeat space fliers — have insisted over the months that they are healthy and committed to the mission as long as it takes. They took a spacewalk together in January.

They will wear generic SpaceX flight suits for the ride back, not the usual custom-made outfits bearing their names because their trip home in a Dragon capsule was unplanned. That's fine with them, although Wilmore hinted he might use a pen to write his name on his suit.

"We're just Butch and Suni," Williams said. "Everybody knows who we are by now."

Trump wants to use the 'God Squad' to increase logging, but it must follow strict rules

By TAMMY WEBBER Associated Press

President Donald Trump wants to increase logging in national forests and on public lands, including by bypassing endangered species protections.

To do that, the federal government would have to activate a seldom-used committee nicknamed the "God Squad" because it can approve federal projects even if it leads to extinction of a species otherwise protected by the Endangered Species Act.

But experts say there are strict procedural requirements — and no provision under law to proactively use the committee to bypass protections.

Here's what to know:

What does Trump want?

The president on Saturday signed actions to increase domestic lumber production in national forests and other public lands, directing federal agencies to look for ways to bypass protections for endangered species.

Upon taking office in January, Trump declared a national energy emergency and directed the committee to convene at least quarterly to either consider exemptions or, if there are none, "to identify obstacles to domestic energy infrastructure" related to the Endangered Species Act or the Marine Mammal Protection Act. The Endangered Species Act makes it illegal to harm or kill protected species and has led to restrictions on logging, mining and oil and gas development. The Marine Mammal Protection Act bans killing and harassment of marine mammals with some limited exceptions.

What is the God Squad?

Officially called the Endangered Species Committee, it was established in 1978 as a way to exempt projects from Endangered Species Act protections if a cost-benefit analysis concluded it was the only way to achieve net economic benefits in the national or regional interest.

In the case of logging, the analysis also should determine if the benefits of cutting trees outweigh the economic value of watershed and other protections provided by standing timber, said Patrick Parenteau, an emeritus professor at the Vermont Law and Graduate School who helped write criteria for the God Squad.

The seven-member committee is led by the secretary of the Interior and includes the secretaries of Agriculture and the Army, administrators of the Environmental Protection Agency and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers. Affected states also would be represented with one vote total, meaning multiple states would each get a fraction of a vote.

Five votes are required for an exemption.

When can the God Squad be convened?

The secretary of the Interior can convene the committee only for a specific project and only if the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or the National Marine Fisheries Service — after a required environmental review — concludes the project would jeopardize survival of a protected species, Parenteau said.

Otherwise, "there is no basis to convene the God Squad," he said. "Contrary to what Trump has been talking about, you don't convene this committee to grant exemptions prospectively. That is not legal."

There's no jurisdiction for the committee to even be convened to do that."

What has the committee done in the past?

Only twice in its 47 years has the committee issued exemptions. The first allowed construction of a dam on a section of the Platte River considered critical habitat for whooping cranes. But a negotiated settlement won significant protections that led to overall ecosystem improvement and a rebounded crane population.

The second exemption, during the George H.W. Bush administration, was for logging in northern spotted owl habitat. But the Bureau of Land Management under President Bill Clinton withdrew the request after environmental groups sued, arguing that the committee's decision was political and violated legal procedures.

Variety is the spice that has Alex Ovechkin fast approaching Wayne Gretzky's NHL career goals record

By STEPHEN WHYNO AP Hockey Writer

ARLINGTON, Va. (AP) — Wayne Gretzky was so able to control hockey games from behind the net that the area became known as "Gretzky's office," as he put up more assists than anyone else in NHL history has points.

Alex Ovechkin has scored so many goals with his patented one-timer from the left faceoff circle on the power play that it became known as his spot. Retired goaltender Eddie Lack referred to it as the "Ovizoid."

Just like with Gretzky, whose record of 894 goals he is closing in on breaking, Ovechkin's brilliance comes not from one shot but rather the variety with which he has scored over his two-decade-long career. He has the most career power-play goals and the most empty-netters and soon will pass Gretzky for tops on the overall list thanks to an evolution of his game that has seen him score from more places on the ice in his 20th season than previous years.

"Everyone talks about his spot, but he scores goals from everywhere," said St. Louis coach Jim Montgomery, who played against Gretzky in North America and then briefly faced a young Ovechkin in Russia. "The true test to his intelligence and creativity is the fact that he's done it for so many years as the league has continued to change."

According to NHL Edge puck and player tracking data, Ovechkin has put a shot on net from 15 of the 16 quadrants in the offensive zone and scored from 11 of them.

That is a testament to Ovechkin, now 39 and scoring at a rate almost never seen at this age, adjusting to how opponents defend him and fooling goaltenders in different ways. He has scored on a league-record 181 goalies, adding six new ones to that list this season.

"He shoots hard, he can shoot through you, so it makes it more difficult, especially when it's coming from a bunch of different angles," said Logan Thompson, in his first season as a teammate of Ovechkin's with the Washington Capitals after being the 160th netminder he beat along the way. "He's always finding a way to get it through and he makes it really tricky on goalies. There's really no method on how to stop him."

For the defenders tasked with trying to contain Ovechkin, the approach changes with the situation. From his spot, everyone knows what is coming because he has scored 320 times on the power play — 46 more than the next closest.

At even strength, where Ovechkin has scored 495 of his 884 goals and counting, the challenge is keeping an eye on him knowing he has what Blues goalie Jordan Binnington called an "on-off release" and can fling the puck at the net unexpectedly at times.

"I'm not really sure where he shoots it from, and it just finds a way to go in the net," said Ottawa defenseman Nick Jensen, who played parts of six seasons with Ovechkin on the Capitals. "He's been doing it for so long that I can't really explain it. It's kind of a phenomenon a little bit — or an anomaly. But he's been doing it for so long, and he continues to do this year."

Ovechkin reached the 30-goal mark again this season, the record 19th time he has done that, one of the biggest reasons the Capitals are among the top teams in the league. He has thrived alongside 20-some-

thing linemates Dylan Strome and Aliaksei Protas, who have embraced the role of getting Ovechkin the puck as much as reasonably possible.

"He can pretty much get his shot off anywhere," said Strome, who assisted on 17 of Ovechkin's first 31 goals. "He's been scoring in front of the net or even some wrist shots from the other side. I think the more shot volume the better. It's good when you come out of a game and see like 12 or 13 shot attempts and seven or eight on net. Usually good things happen when there's that many chances."

Ovechkin has put more shots on net than any player in league history, and the only reason he's not again in the top 10 this season is that he missed 16 games with a broken left leg. Quality over quantity, perhaps, as he is scoring at a career-best shooting rate of 18.1 percent.

According to NHL statistics, Ovechkin has gotten seven different types of shots on net: 62 snap, 50 wrist, 36 slap, 10 backhand, 10 tips, two deflections and one between the legs. Fourteen goals have come on snap shots, eight on wrist shots, five on slap shots, three on backhanders and one on a tip.

"Any time there's unpredictability, it makes it hard," said retired defenseman Karl Alzner, who played nine seasons with Ovechkin and three more against him with Montreal.

"As long as he continues to be unpredictable and do things a little bit different than we've seen from his whatever it is 18 years of resume, it's going to be hard for teams to shut him down."

Ovechkin is tied for the league lead with seven empty-netters and has the most all time with 64. Gretzky scored 56 of them, too, and coach Spencer Carbery is quick to point out that it's not as easy as it looks.

"There's a lot of skilled players that play around the league 5 on 6 that aren't your quote-unquote defensive specialists or your penalty-kill guys that have a ton of value playing 5 on 6 because they are so intelligent with what the offensive players want to do," Carbery said. "They know where the next play is and where the puck's going, and that's what you see from 'O' constantly is he's reading where the next puck is going."

Ovechkin is on pace to break Gretzky's record sometime in April before the end of this regular season, and No. 895 could come from any number of different ways. Even his teammates don't know what to expect.

"One-timer would be a nice thing to see, but obviously any goal would be," Protas said. "Any way, no matter how, it's going to be a special moment."

Scientists genetically engineer mice with thick hair like the extinct woolly mammoth

By CHRISTINA LARSON AP Science Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Extinction is still forever, but scientists at the biotech company Colossal Biosciences are trying what they say is the next best thing to restoring ancient beasts — genetically engineering living animals with qualities to resemble extinct species like the woolly mammoth.

Woolly mammoths roamed the frozen tundras of Europe, Asia and North America until they went extinct around 4,000 years ago.

Colossal made a splash in 2021 when it unveiled an ambitious plan to revive the woolly mammoth and later the dodo bird. Since then, the company has focused on identifying key traits of extinct animals by studying ancient DNA, with a goal to genetically "engineer them into living animals," said CEO Ben Lamm.

Outside scientists have mixed views about whether this strategy will be helpful for conservation.

"You're not actually resurrecting anything — you're not bringing back the ancient past," said Christopher Preston, a wildlife and environment expert at the University of Montana, who was not involved in the research.

On Tuesday, Colossal announced that its scientists have simultaneously edited seven genes in mice embryos to create mice with long, thick, woolly hair. They nicknamed the extra-furry rodents as the "Colossal woolly mouse."

Results were posted online, but they have not yet been published in a journal or vetted by independent scientists.

The feat "is technologically pretty cool," said Vincent Lynch, a biologist at the University of Buffalo, who

was not involved in the research.

Scientists have been genetically engineering mice since the 1970s, but new technologies like CRISPR “make it a lot more efficient and easier,” said Lynch.

The Colossal scientists reviewed DNA databases of mouse genes to identify genes related to hair texture and fat metabolism. Each of these genetic variations are “present already in some living mice,” said Colossal’s chief scientist Beth Shapiro, but “we put them all together in a single mouse.”

They picked the two traits because these mutations are likely related to cold tolerance — a quality that woolly mammoths must have had to survive on the prehistoric Arctic steppe.

Colossal said it focused on mice first to confirm if the process works before potentially moving on to edit the embryos of Asian elephants, the closest living relatives to woolly mammoths.

However, because Asian elephants are an endangered species, there will be “a lot of processes and red tape” before any plan can move forward, said Colossal’s Lamm, whose company has raised over \$400 million in funding.

Independent experts are skeptical about the idea of “de-extinction.”

“You might be able to alter the hair pattern of an Asian elephant or adapt it to the cold, but it’s not bringing back a woolly mammoth. It’s changing an Asian elephant,” said University of Montana’s Preston.

Still, the refinement of precision gene-editing in animals could have other uses for conservation or animal agriculture, said Bhanu Telugu, who studies animal biotechnology at the University of Missouri and was not involved in the new research.

Telugu said he was impressed by Colossal’s technology advances that enabled scientists to pinpoint which genes to target.

The same approach might one day help fight diseases in people, said Lamm. So far, the company has spun off two health care companies.

“It’s part of how we monetize our business,” said Lamm.

More endangered Mexican gray wolves are roaming the southwestern US, annual survey shows

By SUSAN MONTOYA BRYAN Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) — It is a ritual that takes place every winter — federal and state wildlife managers use remote cameras, scat collection, radio telemetry devices and helicopters to count Mexican gray wolves that are roaming mountain ranges in parts of New Mexico and Arizona.

The predators that are captured during the annual survey are weighed and vaccinated, their blood is drawn and their radio collars are checked. It is all part of a decades-long effort to gauge the success of the work being done to return the endangered species to its historic range in the southwestern U.S. and in Mexico.

This year’s count shows the recovery of Mexican wolves is inching forward.

The smallest subspecies of gray wolf in North America, Mexican wolves were listed as endangered in 1976, and a binational captive breeding program was started to guard against extinction. The reintroduction program has been the source of many legal battles over the years — with environmentalists seeking to get more captive wolves released into the wild and ranchers fighting to protect their way of life.

Here is a look at Mexican gray wolves by the numbers:

286

That is at least how many Mexican wolves there are in the wild in New Mexico and Arizona. It’s 11% more than the previous year, and it marks the ninth straight year that the population has grown. Reintroductions began in 1998 with the release of 11 captive-reared wolves in southeastern Arizona.

60

The minimum number of packs that were documented at the end of 2024, with more than half of those living in southwestern New Mexico. Wildlife managers define a pack as two or more wolves that stick to a home range.

26

That is how many breeding pairs are in the wild — 16 in New Mexico and 10 in Arizona.

48%

The survival rate of the 160 pups that were born in 2024. Wildlife managers say 79 pups survived at least through the end of the year.

27

Mexican wolf pups that were fostered in 2024 — captive bred pups that were placed into dens in the wild to be raised by other wolf packs. Officials say cross-fostering pups helps boost wolf numbers and genetic diversity.

30

The number of wolf deaths documented during 2024. That includes six in fourth quarter, with all but one of those being in New Mexico.

99

The number of confirmed cases in 2024 in which wolves killed livestock, with seven investigations still pending. Officials with the wolf recovery team say the number of livestock deaths due to wolves has been decreasing, but ranchers still see it as a safety issue for their families and livelihoods.

290

That is how many times wildlife managers conducted successful hazing operations in 2024 to keep wolves away from rural homes and livestock.

350

There are about that many Mexican wolves living in captivity in zoos and other facilities in the United States and Mexico that work to conserve the species.

\$203 million

The price tag of Mexican gray wolf recovery based on a 25-year time frame, according to estimates included in the 2022 revised recovery plan. Environmentalists are concerned that recent federal funding and job cuts could derail the progress made so far.

Robert Clark, Mississippi's first Black lawmaker after Civil Rights era, dies at 96

By EMILY WAGSTER PETTUS Associated Press

LEXINGTON, Miss. (AP) — Robert G. Clark, who was elected in 1967 as Mississippi's first Black lawmaker of the 20th century and rose to the second-highest leadership role in the state House of Representatives, died Tuesday at age 96, his son said.

Rep. Bryant Clark, who succeeded Robert Clark, said his father died of natural causes at home in Holmes County, north of Jackson.

A teacher and descendant of slaves, Clark was ostracized during his first years at the state Capitol, relegated to sitting solo at a two-person desk in the House chamber and ignored by white colleagues at social events.

By the time he left office 36 years later, he had served as chairman of both the House Ethics Committee and the powerful Education Committee. In a state where nearly 40% of residents are Black, he saw more Black candidates win seats as voting rights were enforced and more majority-Black districts were drawn, sometimes under court order.

Clark also won the respect and support of colleagues, Black and white, who elected him in January 1992 to House speaker pro tempore, a position he retained until he retired in 2004.

Clark was among five activists and elected officials honored in February 2018 during a black-tie-optional gala at the newly opened Mississippi Civil Rights Museum.

The glitzy event was a lifetime away from Clark's hardscrabble early days, when most of his relatives worked in cotton fields on family land in Holmes County. As a small child, he would sit by the side of the field with his elderly grandfather, William Clark, who was born a slave and shared vivid memories of

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deprivation.

"He had never owned a pair of pants or shoes until after slavery," Robert Clark told The Associated Press in a 2018 interview. "Their feed was poured over to them in a trough just like we feed hogs, and they had to get down and eat the best way they could."

That grandfather's wisdom, he said, helped give him the sense of self to become a leader.

"I'd throw a hand of corn over and the chickens would be eating. I'd throw another hand of corn over there, and chickens would leave that hand of corn and run to another hand," Clark said. "And I asked him, 'Grandpa, why them old crazy chickens got corn and just run to the other corn?' He said, 'Young man, they're just following the crowd.' And he said, 'That's something I never want you to do.'"

"And from feeding the chickens, that became a part of me — not just following the group."

Clark went to Michigan to earn a master's degree in education, and then fulfilled a promise he had made to older relatives by returning to the family land in Mississippi. As a teacher and coach, he often went into his athletes' homes.

"I realized many of the parents could not help their children with the lessons," Clark said. "And I went to the superintendent of education to ask him if he would implement an adult education program. And he told me, 'No, I don't think it's in the best interest of the county to do that.'"

After the all-white local school board denied Clark's request to start the program that would primarily help Black adults, he announced his candidacy for that board. Maneuvering to keep a Black man off the board, the local state representative got a change in state law to make that school board appointed rather than elected. Rather than accept defeat, Clark ran against that representative, and made history by winning.

Because Black people were generally not accepted in the Democratic Party that controlled Mississippi, Clark's family had belonged to what they called the "Black and Tan" segment of the Republican Party when he was a child. With allegiances flipping in the late 1960s, he ran his first legislative race as an independent. Only later would he run, and win, as a Democrat.

On inauguration day in January 1968, Clark didn't know if he would be allowed to take his oath. The white candidate he defeated had filed a complaint claiming he didn't live in Holmes County, where his family had lived for generations.

Clark arrived at the Capitol with his attorney, Marian Wright, who later founded the Children's Defense Fund, a national advocacy group for the poor. They were standing near a statue of the late Theodore Bilbo, an arch-segregationist who had served as Mississippi governor and U.S. senator, when they were told about 10 minutes before the ceremony that Clark would be sworn in.

The ornate House chamber, with marble walls and stained-glass windows, was filled with two-person oak desks where seatmates swapped gossip and often became fast friends. In January 1968, in deeply segregated Mississippi, the senior member of Clark's local legislative delegation decreed that Clark would sit by himself.

The isolation extended to group dinners for legislators: "Nobody would sit with me," Clark said.

Sitting alone at tables set for six or eight created a dilemma, he recalled: "I very shortly went up to 240 pounds. I didn't intend to gain weight. I just wasn't going to leave all that food on the table."

Clark and his first wife, Essie, had two sons — Robert G. Clark III and Wandrick Bryant Clark. She died of cancer in 1977, and he raised their sons as a widower, homeschooling them and taking them to the state Capitol while the Legislature was in session.

About 19 years after her death, Clark married Jo Ann Ross. In 2003, he chose not to seek re-election, and the seat was won by his second son. Bryant Clark also continued to practice law. Robert G. Clark III, meanwhile, served as a chancery judge in four counties.

Inside the numbers: LeBron James and his path to 50,000 points in the NBA, including playoffs

By TIM REYNOLDS AP Basketball Writer

Another milestone awaits LeBron James: 50,000 NBA points.

He's one point away from getting to that number, which takes into account his regular season and playoff scoring. By NBA rule, the 99 points he's scored in play-in tournament games and the 2023 in-season tournament final don't count, so he's officially at 49,999 for now.

James could get the mark Tuesday night when the Los Angeles Lakers host the New Orleans Pelicans.

A look at the magnitude of 50,000 points:

Only two other players have 40,000

The only two players, other than James, who scored more than 40,000 points in NBA regular season and playoff games were Kareem Abdul-Jabbar (44,149) and Karl Malone (41,689).

Kobe Bryant (39,283) and Michael Jordan (38,279) came close.

Will anyone else ever score 50,000?

Maybe. Probably not. Certainly, no time soon, and not under the current rules. If the league ever adds a 4-point shot or something along those lines, it'll obviously be easier for great players to pile up points.

Kevin Durant is second to James among active players with 35,191 points including playoffs — which means even if he averaged 2,000 points a season (something he's done only once in the last five years) he would still have to play into the 2032-33 season to have a shot at reaching 50,000.

Who does James score the most against?

In terms of total points, that would be the Boston Celtics — who have given up 2,935 points to James. In terms of points per game, it's the Golden State Warriors (29.4).

When did James reach his other milestones?

The other milestone-scoring games for James, with the totals also reflecting playoff numbers:

1 point — Oct. 29, 2003, with Cleveland against Sacramento.

10,000 points — Dec. 23, 2007, with Cleveland against Golden State.

20,000 points — Dec. 27, 2011, with Miami against Boston.

30,000 points — Nov. 2, 2015, with Cleveland against Philadelphia.

40,000 points — Dec. 4, 2019, with the Los Angeles Lakers against Utah.

Today in History: March 5, the Boston Massacre

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Wednesday, March 5, the 64th day of 2025. There are 301 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On March 5, 1770, the Boston Massacre took place as British soldiers who'd been taunted by a crowd of colonists opened fire, killing five people.

Also on this date:

In 1933, in German parliamentary elections six days after the Reichstag fire, the Nazi Party won 44% of the vote; the Nazis joined with a conservative nationalist party to gain a slender parliamentary majority.

In 1946, Winston Churchill delivered a speech at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri, in which he said: "From Stettin in the Baltic, to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the continent."

In 1953, Soviet dictator Josef Stalin died from a stroke at age 74 after nearly three decades in power.

In 1963, country music performers Patsy Cline, Cowboy Copas and Hawkshaw Hawkins died in the crash of their plane, a Piper Comanche, near Camden, Tennessee, along with pilot Randy Hughes (Cline's manager).

In 1979, NASA's Voyager 1 space probe made its closest approach to Jupiter, sending back photographs of the planet and its moons.

In 1982, comedian John Belushi was found dead of a drug overdose in a rented bungalow at Hollywood's Chateau Marmont hotel; he was 33.

In 2004, Martha Stewart was convicted in New York of conspiracy, obstructing justice and lying to the

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government about why she'd sold her Imclone stock just before the stock's price plummeted; her ex-stockbroker, Peter Bacanovic, also was found guilty in the stock scandal. (Each later received a five-month prison sentence.)

In 2022, a promised ceasefire in the Ukrainian port city of Mariupol collapsed amid scenes of terror in the besieged town. The number of people fleeing the country reached 1.4 million just 10 days after Russian forces invaded.

Today's birthdays: Actor Fred Williamson is 87. Magician Penn Jillette is 70. Actor Adriana Barraza is 69. Football Hall of Famer Michael Irvin is 59. Actor-comedian Aasif Mandvi is 59. Rock musician John Frusciante (Red Hot Chili Peppers) is 55. Actor Eva Mendes is 51. Model Niki Taylor is 50. Singer-songwriter Amanda Shires is 43.