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Sunday, March 9

SPRING FORWARD - Turn Clocks ahead 1 hour

- Open Gym: 2 p.m. to 5 p.m.
- United Methodist: Worship at Conde, 8:15 a.m.; at Groton, 9:30 a.m.; at Britton, 11:15 a.m.; Sunday School, 9:30 a.m.; Coffee hour, 10:30 a.m.
- St. John's Lutheran: Worship at St. John's, 9 a.m.; at Zion, 11 a.m.; Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.
- Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship/Milestones for 7th and 8th graders, 9 a.m.; Sunday School, 10:15 a.m.; Choir, 6 p.m.
- Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m.; SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.
- First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.
- Groton CM&A: Sunday School, 9:15 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m.

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

It's Sunday

Good Morning

"This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it." — Psalm 118:24

No matter what you're facing today, remember that God's love surrounds you, His peace is within you, and His joy is your strength.



God's Spoken
Word Ministries

Monday, March 10

- Senior Menu: Beef tips on rice, Capri blend, oranges with vanilla pudding, whole wheat bread.
- School Breakfast: Breakfast sliders.
- School Lunch: French bread pizza, corn.
- School Board Meeting, 7 p.m.
- Groton Senior Citizens Meet, 1 p.m., Groton Community Center
- Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.
- United Methodist: PEO Meeting, 7 p.m.

Tuesday, March 11



- Senior Menu: Tatertot hot dish, green beans, pineapple, whole wheat bread.
- School Breakfast: Egg Omelet.
- School Lunch: Sloppy joe, tater tots.
- Boys SoDak16 Basketball
- Emmanuel Lutheran: Church Council, 6 p.m.
- United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

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Class A - SoDak 16

#1 - Harrisburg High School Gym Main

	1 Sioux Falls Christian	20-1	3/11 7:00 PM CT
	16 McCook Central/Montrose	12-10	





STATE QUALIFIER



STATE QUALIFIER



#5 - Huron Arena

	5 Lennox	18-4	3/11 5:30 PM CT
	12 Mobridge-Pollock	14-8	

#6 - Miller Armory

	6 Clark/Willow Lake	17-4	3/11 6:00 PM CT
	11 St. Francis Indian	16-6	

#2 - Watertown Civic Arena Waterto...

	2 Hamlin	19-2	3/11 7:15 PM CT
	15 Milbank	12-10	





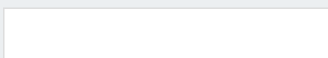
STATE QUALIFIER



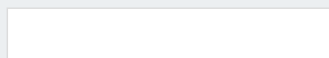
STATE QUALIFIER

#3 - Jones County High School Jone...

	3 Rapid City Christian	19-2	3/11 6:00 PM CT
	14 Dell Rapids	13-9	





STATE QUALIFIER





STATE QUALIFIER

#7 -

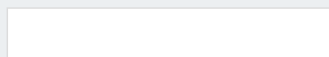
	7 Hill City	18-4	3/11 TBD
	10 Cheyenne-Eagle Butte	16-5	

#4 - Madison High School Main Gym

	4 West Central	18-3	3/11 7:15 PM CT
	13 Hanson	14-7	





STATE QUALIFIER



STATE QUALIFIER

#8 - Huron Arena

	8 Groton Area	16-5	3/11 7:15 PM CT
	9 Winner	16-5	

Seed Points Averages (calculated Mar. 1)

#1 Sioux Falls Christian 46.600 - #2 Hamlin 45.900 - #3 Rapid City Christian 45.600 - #4 West Central 44.900 - #5 Lennox 44.500 - #6 Clark/Willow Lake 44.368 - #7 Hill City 44.050 - #8 Groton Area 43.950 - #9 Winner 43.800 - #10 Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 43.350 - #11 St. Francis Indian 42.500 - #12 Mobridge-Pollock 42.450 - #13 Hanson 41.650 - #14 Dell Rapids 41.600 - #15 Milbank 40.150 - #16 McCook Central/Montrose 39.550



SoDak16 at the Huron Arena, 7:15 p.m.
#8 Groton Area (16-5) vs. #9 Winner (16-5)

Groton
Area
Tigers
Groton, SD

GDILIVE



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A production of the
Groton Daily Independent

For more info: GDILIVE.COM



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Legislative tone shifts from helping counties to blaming their spending

Some Republican lawmakers also say growth of school budgets is driving property tax increases

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - MARCH 8, 2025 3:11 PM

PIERRE — Two years ago, South Dakota lawmakers were so concerned about the financial struggles of counties that they devoted a summer study to the topic.

After it was completed, state Sen. Randy Deibert, R-Spearfish, a former Lawrence County commissioner and member of the study committee, said it was illuminating.

"I do believe we've had a lot of education that's taken place because of the summer study — especially with the committee members and the word they're getting out to constituents and fellow legislators about the hardships counties are having and why they're having it."

This winter during the annual legislative session, the conversation has changed. Some Republican lawmakers are arguing that spending — not inadequate funding — is the problem.

Deibert's fellow Spearfish resident, Republican House Majority Leader Scott Odenbach, has been repeating a mantra this session: "It's the spending." He applies the criticism to both schools and counties, saying the growth in property taxes is driven by their budgets.

The shift in rhetoric has the president of the South Dakota Association of County Commissioners frustrated. "The property tax problem has been caused by the state legislators' push of all the unfunded mandates onto the backs of the counties," said Dan Klimisch, who also serves as a Yankton County commissioner.

Sandra Waltman, director of public affairs for the South Dakota Education Association, said recent polling conducted by a coalition of public education advocates shows most South Dakotans think public schools receive too little funding, with only 9% of respondents saying they receive too much.

"We're 49th in the nation for teacher pay," Waltman cited as evidence that schools are not overspending.



House Majority Leader Scott Odenbach, R-Spearfish, left, and House Assistant Majority Leader Marty Overweg, R-New Holland, speak with reporters on Mar. 6, 2025, at the South Dakota Capitol in Pierre. (Joshua Haiar/South Dakota Searchlight)

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From cash-strapped to a spending problem

The debate over county and school finances comes amid discussions about property tax reform. It's a top priority for Republicans responding to voter frustration over increased home valuations and taxes, particularly in areas of the state that experienced rapid growth during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lawmakers are considering multiple property tax bills that would place stricter caps on local property tax collections, roll back and cap the growth of home assessments, expand eligibility among disabled and elderly people for relief programs, and more.

Rep. Greg Jamison, R-Sioux Falls, introduced a bill that would lower the cap on annual property tax collection inflationary growth from the lower of 3% or inflation to the lower of 2.5% or inflation. He said the bill sends a message to local taxing districts.

"And that message is, 'give me a break,'" he said. "Property taxes are haunting all of us."

Last year, after the summer study on county funding, it was counties that were asking for a break. Many lawmakers were inclined to help.

The Legislature funded a \$7 million initiative to help local governments with cybersecurity, and approved a \$3 million, one-time appropriation to help counties cover costs they're required to pay for criminal defendants who need public defenders or court-appointed attorneys. Lawmakers also approved the creation of a new state public defender's office to handle appeals from some of those defendants, taking some of the burden off counties.

Meanwhile, homeowner property taxes continued to rise, demand for relief increased, and many legislators campaigned last fall on delivering relief.

An initial proposal this year from Deibert and then-Rep. Tony Venhuizen, R-Sioux Falls (now the lieutenant governor), would have reduced the property tax levy on owner-occupied homes for general education and special education to zero and raised the state sales tax rate from 4.2% to 5% to replace the revenue.

That proposal went nowhere, and legislators have subsequently focused on proposals — including one from Venhuizen's new boss, Gov. Larry Rhoden — that would achieve property tax relief through one or more limits on local government spending, with no replacement funding for lost revenue.

Odenbach is calling for greater fiscal restraint at the county and school level.

"You're not going to get property tax relief until you look at the spending done by our public school system and our counties, because that's where local property taxes go," Odenbach said.

Counties and schools are funded mostly by property taxes. Cities receive property tax revenue and sales tax revenue, while the state depends on sales taxes.

Governor's advice: Find efficiencies

Gov. Rhoden said that when he took office, he told his staff to take inspiration from the Department of Government Efficiency, or DOGE, referencing the federal group managed by billionaire Elon Musk tasked with cutting government spending.

"And I believe the counties should do the same thing," Rhoden said.

Rhoden pointed to the state's 10% budget cuts in 2011 as an example of the kind of austerity counties should take inspiration from. He said local governments are often not held to the same standards as the state when it comes to belt-tightening.

But not all Republicans agree. Senate Majority Leader Jim Mehlhaff disagreed with Odenbach's comments about local government spending during a recent Republican legislative leadership press conference. Mehlhaff was a member of the 2023 county funding study committee.

"I actually do have a little bit more sympathy for the job that our county commissioners are faced with, in trying to maintain the infrastructure, the roads and bridges that they have to take care of," Mehlhaff said. "I know they are grinding a lot of the roads into gravel."

Counties: We don't have a choice

Klimisch said some Republican lawmakers' shift in messaging ignores the financial realities counties face.

He rejected claims of runaway spending, saying counties have been forced to absorb costs the state has offloaded onto them.

He said counties collect 100% of property taxes but only get about 27% of what's collected. The rest is redistributed to schools, cities and other local entities.

Klimisch pointed to the rising costs of essential county services, including law enforcement, court-mandated public defense, and road maintenance. He highlighted the unpredictable nature of legal costs, noting that a single major criminal case could throw a county budget into disarray.

He and others who represent local governments will be busy lobbying legislators next week. Lawmakers have three property tax relief bills under consideration and four days left in this year's legislative session.

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

Property tax relief plans loom over final days of SD legislative session

Lawmakers have four days to make decisions on three proposals

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - MARCH 8, 2025 3:12 PM

South Dakota lawmakers have four days left to agree on a property tax relief plan.

There are three bills left on the table:

House Bill 1235 from Rep. Greg Jamison, R-Sioux Falls, caps local governments' inflationary property tax collection growth at a lower amount year over year.

Senate Bill 191 from Sen. Amber Hulse, R-Hot Springs, rolls back assessments for some homeowners and caps assessment growth for all of them.

Senate Bill 216 from Gov. Larry Rhoden caps countywide residential assessment growth for five years, caps the amount local governments can increase tax collections based on new construction and growth, exempts some home improvements from affecting assessments, and expands eligibility among disabled and elderly people for relief programs.

Legislators – including many who campaigned on the issue – must determine which bill or bills will make it to the governor's desk. They went home Thursday evening for a long weekend and will return Monday to Pierre for the final four days of the legislative session, except for a day in late March to consider the governor's vetoes.

"The best measure with the most relief should make it through," said House Majority Leader Scott Odenbach, R-Spearfish.

Lawmakers are responding to public calls for relief, largely from non-agricultural property owners. Since 2017, property tax payments have gone up 47% for owner-occupied homes and 36% for commercial property, while rising 3% for agricultural property. Ag land taxes have been held in check by a change from market-based to productivity-based assessments.

All three bills are expected to be debated on Monday. Meanwhile, the Legislature passed a resolution-Thursday to ensure the body will dig deeper into property tax policies. That bill creates an interim task force to "identify impactful, substantive measures" to provide significant and lasting tax relief. The task force will include 16 lawmakers, a representative from the Bureau of Finance and Management, and a representative from the Governor's Office.

Senate President Pro Tempore Chris Karr, R-Sioux Falls, said property tax reform is "one of the most important priorities" of the legislative session.

"We need to take a look at the whole picture of what's happening," Karr told lawmakers, "what forces

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are driving the property taxes to increase and what some of the mechanisms are that we can look at and consider to provide relief.”

Budget cap bill called ‘more survivable’ for cities

Jamison’s House Bill 1235 would reduce local taxing districts’ annual inflationary budget growth from a 3% cap to a 2.5% cap. In both cases, the inflation rate becomes the cap if it’s lower than either percentage.

The majority of property taxes — 56% — goes toward public school funding. Around 13% goes to cities, 27% goes to counties and the rest goes to various local entities, according to the state Department of Revenue. The state does not receive property taxes, relying instead on sales taxes.

Yvonne Taylor, representing the South Dakota Municipal League, told lawmakers earlier this week that Jamison’s legislation is “much more survivable” for city budgets than the other bills proposed. Counties and schools affected by the legislation, lobbyists said, would face more difficulties to meet obligations without seeking “opt outs” to generate more taxes. An opt out is a decision by a local governing body to exceed the cap on annual property tax collection growth.

Jamison told lawmakers on the Senate Taxation Committee that the legislation would not provide as much property tax relief “as you want, or the people that I represent want.”

But it’s enough to send a message to local governments, according to Jamison, that they need to re-evaluate their budgets and address the burden on homeowners.

“It’s a little bit of a punch in the face to all these taxing districts,” Jamison said. “No special privileges. But it’s not a bloody nose, it’s just a bruise.”

The committee unanimously agreed to move the legislation to the Senate floor, though some told the lawmaker they didn’t believe it would provide enough relief and voted in favor simply to keep the conversation alive. The Senate deferred its debate on the bill to Monday.

Governor’s bill isn’t ‘perfect policy,’ but it’s ‘politically possible’

The governor’s bill would be more like a bloody nose to some of the local governments, Jamison told South Dakota Searchlight. That’s because the plan could be particularly problematic for high-growth cities, counties and school districts, such as the Sioux Falls metro and the Black Hills areas, by holding down one of the levers that raises tax revenue.

Rhoden’s bill would limit annual growth based on new construction and home improvements to 2% and apply the same limit to school capital outlay funds. Schools use their capital outlay funds for land, buildings and equipment.

School districts with high growth wouldn’t be able to take care of their infrastructure needs to accommodate the growing population of students, said Heath Larson, executive director of Associated School Boards of South Dakota, in an interview with South Dakota Searchlight.

Lobbyists and officials for cities and counties oppose the bill because it would cut high-growth local government revenues by millions of dollars within a few years and would result in reduced services, they testified.

The plan could shift the property tax burden from homeowners onto agricultural and commercial properties in areas of high growth, said State Department of Revenue Secretary Michael Houdyshell. That’s if the value of a county’s owner-occupied homes exceed the 3% assessment growth cap set by Rhoden’s legislation.

But Houdyshell called the proposal the most “politically possible” of the three options, despite concerns raised. He added that it’s “not perfect policy.”

“This is a feasible path forward that accomplishes a lot of goals we set out to accomplish,” Houdyshell testified. “It’s not an earth-shattering change to the taxes folks are going to pay, but it does provide relief and I think that’s the goal the governor is trying to accomplish with this bill.”

If Jamison’s and Rhoden’s proposals both pass, Jamison equated the limitations to counties to a broken neck. Or “if not a broken neck, a bent one.”

Rhoden called the analogy a "gross overstatement," saying it won't hamstring counties "in any form, shape or fashion." He believes the two bills could complement each other if passed, though he didn't support a proposal to merge them into one package.

The House State Affairs Committee endorsed the governor's legislation in a 9-4 vote. The House of Representatives deferred debate on the proposal until Monday.

Rollback bill would restructure SD's property tax system

If a lawmaker can earn a trophy for the most opponents to a bill, Hulse joked during Senate Bill 191's committee hearing Wednesday night, then she's likely to take home that honor this session.

Senate Bill 191 would roll back owner-occupied residential property valuations to 2020 assessments for those who bought a property prior to November of that year. For those who bought a property after that, the valuation would roll back to the assessment at the time of the purchase. In both cases, future annual valuation increases would be capped at 3% until the property is sold, transferred or significantly renovated.

Of the dozen opponents to speak against the bill, the Department of Revenue's Wendy Semmler was the most vehemently opposed.

The rollback would remove \$16 billion from the assessment rolls, Semmler said, leading to a \$42 million loss in local funding for schools. That \$42 million would then be the responsibility of the state to make up. Other opponents stressed it would hurt county budgets and could jeopardize South Dakota's AAA bond rating.

Semmler said proposed changes to the bill wouldn't help.

"My opposition is that Senate Bill 191 is bad policy and amending it at this stage of the game doesn't save it," Semmler said.

But Hulse believes it's worth attempting to shake up the current property tax system.

"Right now I think our system as it stands is inequitable because you're sitting in your home, you've done nothing to your home, and you're being taxed more," Hulse said. "In what other situation do you do nothing and get taxed more?"

The bill passed out of House State Affairs with a 7-6 vote and is expected to be debated on the House floor Monday.

Makenzie Huber is a lifelong South Dakotan who regularly reports on the intersection of politics and policy with health, education, social services and Indigenous affairs. Her work with South Dakota Searchlight earned her the title of South Dakota's Outstanding Young Journalist in 2024, and she was a 2024 finalist for the national Livingston Awards.

Congressman defends 'needed' disruptions from Trump cuts but says methods could be better

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - MARCH 8, 2025 10:07 AM

BRANDON — South Dakota's lone congressman defended some of the Trump administration's mass firings and funding freezes as needed "disruptions" while acknowledging "there are methods that can be improved."

South Dakota Searchlight interviewed U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson, R-South Dakota, on Feb. 28 when he visited the Brandon Valley Area Chamber of Commerce.

Johnson did not know how many federal employees in the state had been fired, or how much federal funding had been frozen or eliminated in the state.

"Certainly, we would like the information on employees impacted," Johnson said, "and so I'm looking forward to getting that information as soon as I can."

He added that funding freezes at the beginning of an administration are not unusual, and that "Joe Biden never gave me any of those dollars about how much had been frozen."

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"Now, I do have the sense that was smaller in size and scope than maybe the funding freezes we're dealing with now, but it's not the kind of thing the last administration provided either," Johnson said.

The Trump administration, acting through its Department of Government Efficiency led by the world's richest person, Elon Musk, has fired more than 30,000 federal employees, according to some reports. The administration has also frozen or attempted to freeze or eliminate trillions of dollars' worth of grants, loans and foreign aid, sparking litigation from some states and affected organizations.



An attendee interacts with U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson, R-South Dakota, on Feb. 28, 2025, at a Brandon Valley Area Chamber of Commerce meeting. (Joshua Haiar/South Dakota Searchlight)

'Waste, fraud and abuse' in SD?

Searchlight asked Johnson if he approves of the Trump administration's approach.

"I mean, clearly, there have been some disruptions," Johnson said. "Now, a lot of these disruptions have been needed for a long time. Clearly this is not exactly how I would have done it. I mean, there are methods that can be improved. And we've been talking with the administration about how they can make things more effective in the weeks to come."

Regarding the need for the disruptions, Johnson said it was self-apparent.

"Can't everybody agree that when you're releasing millions and billions of dollars, there would be waste, fraud and abuse?" he said. "And that we should look for it?"

Searchlight asked Johnson if he could name a specific example of federal "waste, fraud and abuse" found in South Dakota.

"I would tell you I am aware of funding that I just can't understand how that could be beneficial," Johnson said. "Millions of dollars was provided to, I think, some protest organizations in the state that I have not seen any real track record of deliverables from those grants."

He added later, "I don't want to attack a particular organization."

At the chamber of commerce event, Johnson took questions from attendees. Some expressed concerns about the mass firings. Johnson described them as harsh but necessary course corrections for the country.

"These are very standard HR disruptions in the private sector," he told attendees. "I get it, they are far less common in the public sector."

Senators react

The offices of Senate Majority Leader John Thune and Sen. Mike Rounds, both Republicans from South Dakota, did not respond to similar questions sent via email to their spokespeople.

Thune recently told CNN that while "the objectives" of DOGE are "right," he would go about achieving the objectives differently.

"DOGE is going about this and doing the big scrub," Thune said. "But now that you've got — this is why we worked so hard to get Cabinet people in place — is hand it off to these leaders, these managers, who are going to be making decisions. And I think they're probably better attuned to the individual programs."

Sen. Mike Rounds recently joined News Nation and said Republicans will do whatever they can to help

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the president reduce the size of the federal government.

“They’re doing it so rapidly that they are making some mistakes,” Rounds said. “Where we find them, we’re going to do our best to repair them.”

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

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THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

*Out of the ground
the Lord God formed
every beast of the field
and every bird of the air, and
brought them to Adam to see
what he would call them.
And whatever Adam
called each living creature,
that was its name.*

GENESIS 2:19



Detail of "Katzen (Cats)" by Karl Schmidt-Roluff (1919)

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BIBLE

TRIVIA

by Wilson Casey

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

2. From 1 Kings 20, when Benhadad gathered all his forces together, how many kings were with him? 0, 2, 11, 32

3. According to John 18, what priest was the first to examine the arrested Jesus? *Annas, Haggai, Abiathar, Eliashib*

4. From Revelation 21, how many angels will be at the gates of the New Jerusalem? 7, 9, 12, 15

5. In Jeremiah 8:7, what in the sky knows her appointed times? *Raven, Stork, Dove, Eagle*

6. From Acts 2, about how many thousand were baptized on the day of Pentecost? 1, 3, 5, 7

ANSWERS: 1) Neither, 2) 32, 3) Annas, 4) 12, 5) Stork, 6) 3

“Test Your Bible Knowledge,” a book with 1,206 multiple-choice questions by columnist Wilson Casey, is available in stores and online.

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LOWLAND STATION.

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

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

FLASH GORDON



THIS IS PEPA. SHE'S A LIZARDWOMAN.

LIZARDFOLK DIDN'T FARE TOO WELL UNDER MING.

DANN SCHKADE
ART BY ERICA HENDERSON
3-9-25



THEIR CLAWS ARE IDEAL FOR PICKING GRAPES FOR THE MONGOTHIC WINE CALLED VOKKO.

ONE DAY, PEPA LOOKED AT THOSE VOKKO BARRELS AND SAW HER LIFE DRAINING AWAY...



...SO SHE DECIDED TO ESCAPE.



IMMEDIATELY, SHE SAW A FUGITIVE-HUNTING DEATH PATROL SWEEPING THE VINEYARDS.

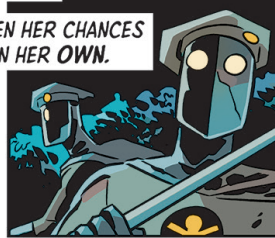
THEN SHE REALIZED THEY WEREN'T AFTER HER.



THEY WERE SEARCHING FOR FLASH GORDON.

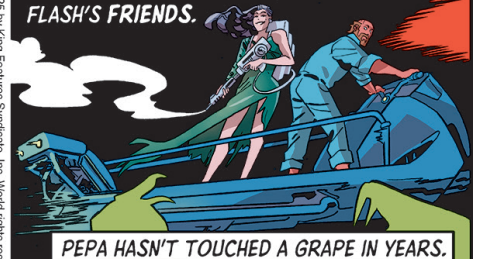
SHE COULD'VE LEFT HIM.

TAKEN HER CHANCES ON HER OWN.



INSTEAD, THEY HELPED EACH OTHER EVADE THE DEATH PATROL...

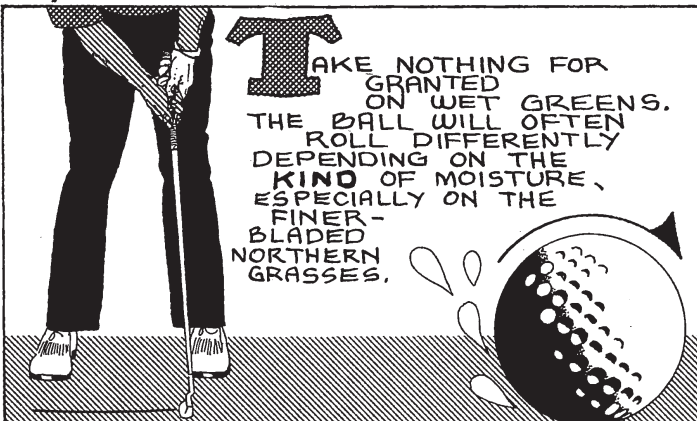
...LONG ENOUGH TO BE RESCUED BY FLASH'S FRIENDS.



PEPA HASN'T TOUCHED A GRAPE IN YEARS.

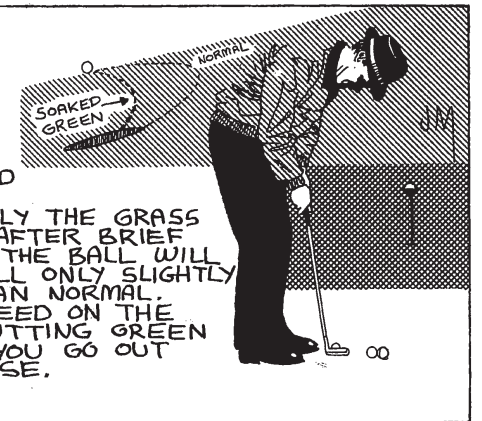
NEXT: THE ALCHEMIST

Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS



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WHEN MOISTURE HAS SOAKED DEEP INTO THE GREENS, PUTTS WILL USUALLY RUN SLOWER AND BREAK LESS. WHEN ONLY THE GRASS IS WET - AS AFTER BRIEF SHOWERS - THE BALL WILL GENERALLY ROLL ONLY SLIGHTLY SLOWER THAN NORMAL. CHECK THE SPEED ON THE PRACTICE PUTTING GREEN BEFORE YOU GO OUT ON THE COURSE.





Follow-Up Biopsies Help Confirm Healing for Celiac Disease

DEAR DR. ROACH: I've been diagnosed with silent celiac disease at the late age of 62, but I've probably had it for decades. (It may have led to my serious osteoporosis.) A biopsy revealed totally flattened villi.

I am gluten-free and will be getting celiac-antibody, nutrient and other regular lab work from now on. But my doctors stated that no further scopes are needed unless my blood work reveals a problem, or I get symptoms while on a gluten-free diet. But for asymptomatic people like me, there are no symptoms, and blood work doesn't show whether the small intestine has physically healed. I tried to ask my doctor this follow-up question but never received an answer.

Should I get a second opinion? I hear from other patients that their doctors did schedule a follow-up scope one to two years after their diagnosis to check their physical healing. For senior patients who can tolerate a scope and have had major villi destruction, is a follow-up scope prudent or unnecessary? -- W.C.S.

ANSWER: People with unexpected osteoporosis should be considered for celiac disease testing. Celiac disease is a condition of damage to the small intestine due to gliadin sensitivity. Gliadin is a protein that is found in gluten, wheat and other cereals, and it is thought to directly damage the lining of the intestine. This causes flattening of the villi, which is the absorptive surface of the small intestine. The only treatment for celiac disease is strict avoidance of gluten in the diet.

The inability to absorb nutrients can lead to symptoms such as diarrhea and weight loss, but symptoms can also be very subtle. Some people have mild abdominal discomfort after eating, but the symptoms usually disappear once they're on a gluten-free diet.

People with celiac disease often have low calcium levels, the reasons for which are complex and involve parathyroid hormone and vitamin D, in addition to the direct malabsorption of calcium. I had one colleague with undiagnosed celiac disease who woke up after yet another colonoscopy, and she was unable to move her muscles due to low blood calcium levels. Since the major reservoir of calcium in the body is the bone, calcium is taken from the bone to preserve blood calcium levels, which can lead to severe osteoporosis over the years.

Blood tests can be highly suggestive of a celiac disease diagnosis, but small bowel biopsies remain the definitive way to diagnose celiac disease. Blood tests can turn out negative if a person is on a gluten-free diet, so the blood tests must be done while a person is consuming gluten.

Your question about getting another biopsy after being on a gluten-free diet is debated. However, the consensus of opinion as published by the American Gastroenterological Association is that people like you with severe celiac disease should get another biopsy within 12 months to confirm the original diagnosis and establish that your diet has allowed the intestine to heal.

In your case, carefully monitoring your vitamin D, parathyroid hormone and calcium levels, as well as keeping up with your bone density, will be important ways of confirming whether your treatment was successful. Unfortunately, bone is slow to change, and it will take years to be sure that your osteoporosis is improving through bone density tests.

You can read a lot more about celiac disease at celiac.org.

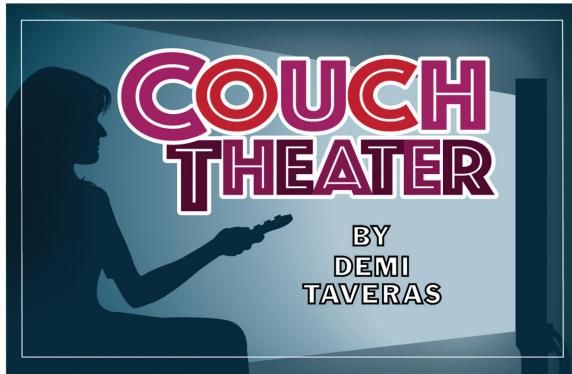
Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual questions, but will incorporate them in the column whenever possible. Readers may email questions to ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu.

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From left, Millie Bobby Brown, Chris Pratt and Ke Huy Quan star in "The Electric State." Courtesy of Netflix

"The Electric State" (PG-13) -- Based on the illustrated novel by Simon Stalenhag, this sci-fi adventure film from the Russo Brothers ("The Gray Man") stars Netflix darling Millie Bobby Brown ("Damsel") and "Guardians of the Galaxy" star Chris Pratt. Premiering March 14, the film fol-

lows teenage orphan Michelle (Brown) in an alternate reality of the '90s where robots exist but have been banished to a single area called the Electric State. Convinced that she can find her lost brother, Michelle teams up with a kind robot and a drifter named Keats (Pratt) to travel across the American West to find him. This is an adventure you won't want to miss! (Netflix)

"Long Bright River" (TV-MA) -- In recent years, Amanda Seyfried ("The Crowded Room") has become a serious dramatic television actress, even earning herself an Emmy for her work in "The Dropout." Her latest role in a new limited series based on the book by Liz Moore only adds to her growing repertoire. Seyfried plays a police officer named Mickey in a neighborhood of Philadelphia where women begin to fall like flies due to a mysterious killer on the loose. As the murders rise in number, Mickey fears for her drug-abusing sister, Casey (Ashleigh Cummings), who has been missing longer than normal. Nicholas Pinnock ("For Life") co-stars in this eight-episode series out on March 13. (Peacock)

"Dope Thief" (TV-MA) -- Ridley Scott ("Gladiator II") is an executive producer behind this new crime-drama series premiering March 14. Starring Academy Award nominee Brian Tyree Henry ("Causeway") and Golden Globe nominee Wagner Moura ("Narcos"), this eight-episode series also takes place in Philadelphia and centers around two friends who have a charade of posing as DEA agents in order to rip off drug dealers. With another big score in mind, the two men decide to rob a house in the countryside but face a sticky situation when the drug traffickers vow to exact revenge on them. As the adage goes: "Play stupid games, win stupid prizes!" (Apple TV+)

"Rumours" (R) -- This eccentric comedy-horror film led by Cate Blanchett ("Disclaimer") flew completely under the radar after its release in May 2024, with nothing but its campiness to thank for that! The film interweaves two distinct tones, one with the feel of a modern comedy and the other with the vibe of a 1970s thriller. The premise consists of seven world leaders who meet at the G7 to devise a statement regarding a current global crisis. But as their evening carries on, a thick fog looms around the woods surrounding them, undead bodies and demons seem to appear within the fog, and a way out is nowhere to be found. Charles Dance ("Game of Thrones"), Denis Menochet ("Beau Is Afraid"), and Alicia Vikander ("The Assessment") co-star in "Rumours," out now. (Paramount+)

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1. Name the first artist to release "Angel of the Morning."
2. Who wrote and released "I Was Made to Love Her"?
3. Name the singer-songwriter who released "Donna the Prima Donna."
4. Who released "Babe" in 1979?
5. Name the song that contains this lyric: "I've been to Nice and the Isle of Greece while I've sipped champagne on a yacht."

Answers

1. Singer-songwriter Chip Taylor, in 1967. But it was Merrilee Rush who made the song a hit in 1968, earning her a Grammy.

2. Stevie Wonder, in 1967. The song almost made it to the top of the chart but was blocked from the No. 1 slot by "Light My Fire."

3. Dion (born Dion Francis DiMucci) in 1963. Dion had been invited to fly on the ill-fated plane that crashed and killed Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens and J.P. Richardson (the Big Bopper) on Feb. 3, 1959, but didn't want the expense of the ticket.

4. Styx. It was used in the 1999 film "Big Daddy."

5. "I've Never Been to Me," by Charlene, in 1976. The first release of the song didn't get much notice, but the re-release in 1982 shot the song to the top of charts around the globe.

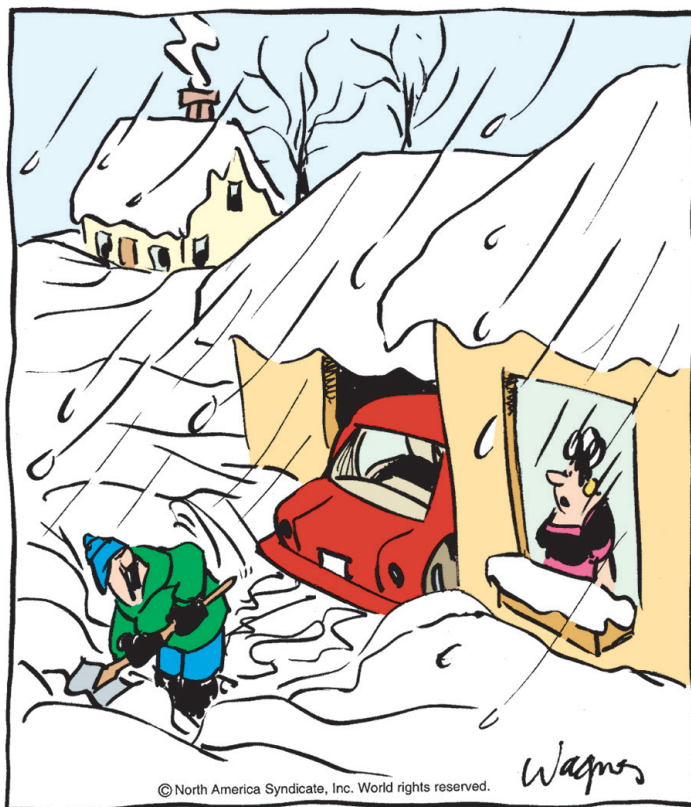
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Just Like Cats & Dogs

by Dave T. Phipps



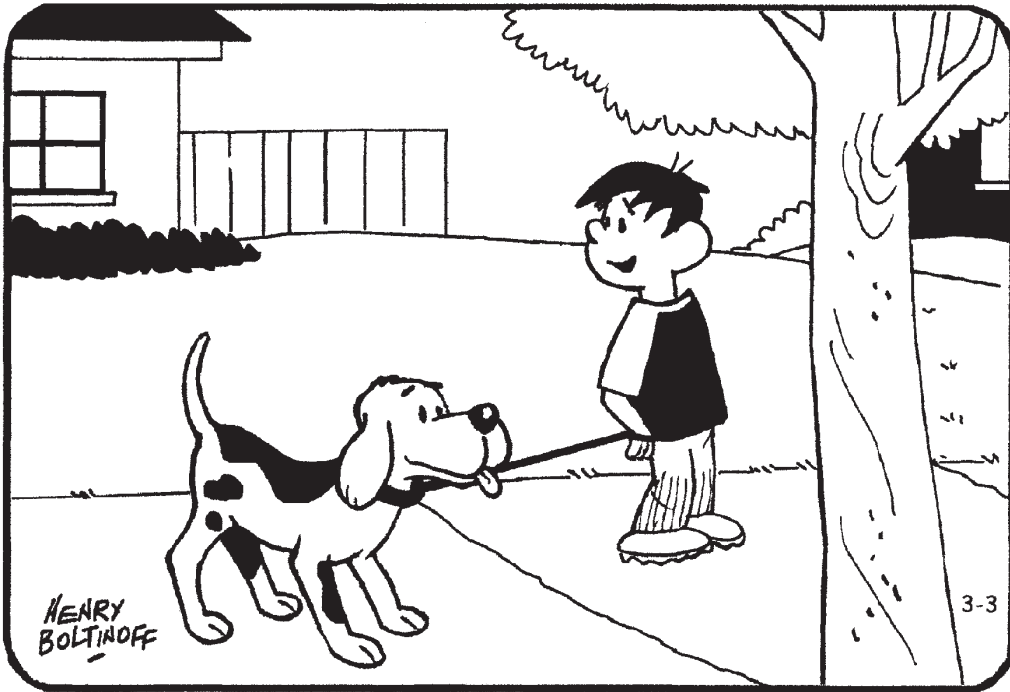
GRIN *and* BEAR IT ^{by Wagner}



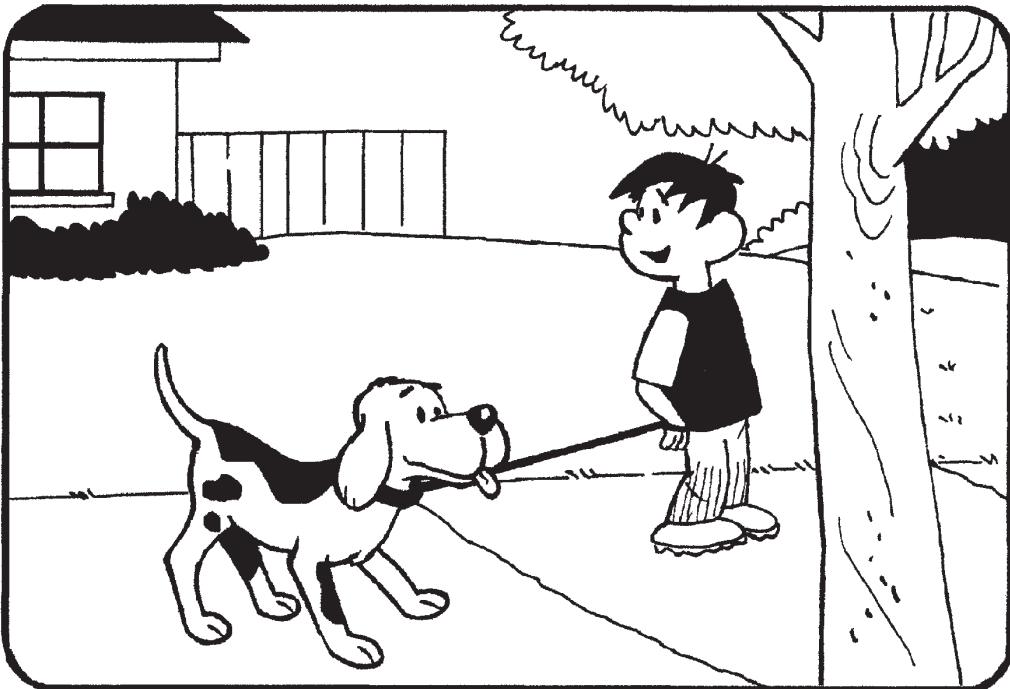
"Call the conference on global warming and tell them I'm running late!"

HOCUS-FOCUS

BY
HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



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Differences: 1. Boy is moved. 2. Shirt is different. 3. Tail is moved. 4. Window is missing. 5. Bush is larger. 6. Dog's leg is moved.

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* Have your carpets cleaned. High-traffic areas may require it as much as every three or four months, but bedrooms can go as long as 18 months. Use runners and area rugs to safeguard spots that may be vulnerable, like under a vanity or by your sofas.

* "I had some residue on my bathroom ceiling from hard water condensation. I happened to have a set of crutches lying around. I used a hair elastic to secure a hand towel to the arm rest of one crutch. Then I sprayed it with water and used it to scrub the ceiling. It worked really well. I was done in no time." -- A.A. in Florida

* A baking soda and water mix is great for tile floors if you want a quick mop up. If a lot of your floors are tile, do yourself

a favor and invest in a steam mop. They clean and sanitize, leaving your floors brilliant.

* "One of the things I do each spring (and fall) is to go through my makeup and toss the old items. I also freshen up my first aid kit, and get new bottles of sunscreen and bug spray to keep in my car kit, so I will always have it around." -- E.A. in California

* Be sure you use a trivet or other protectant when placing flowerpots on wood floors. Also, purchase felt pads for the bottoms of furniture. This will eliminate divots or other kinds of depressions or scratches in the floor.

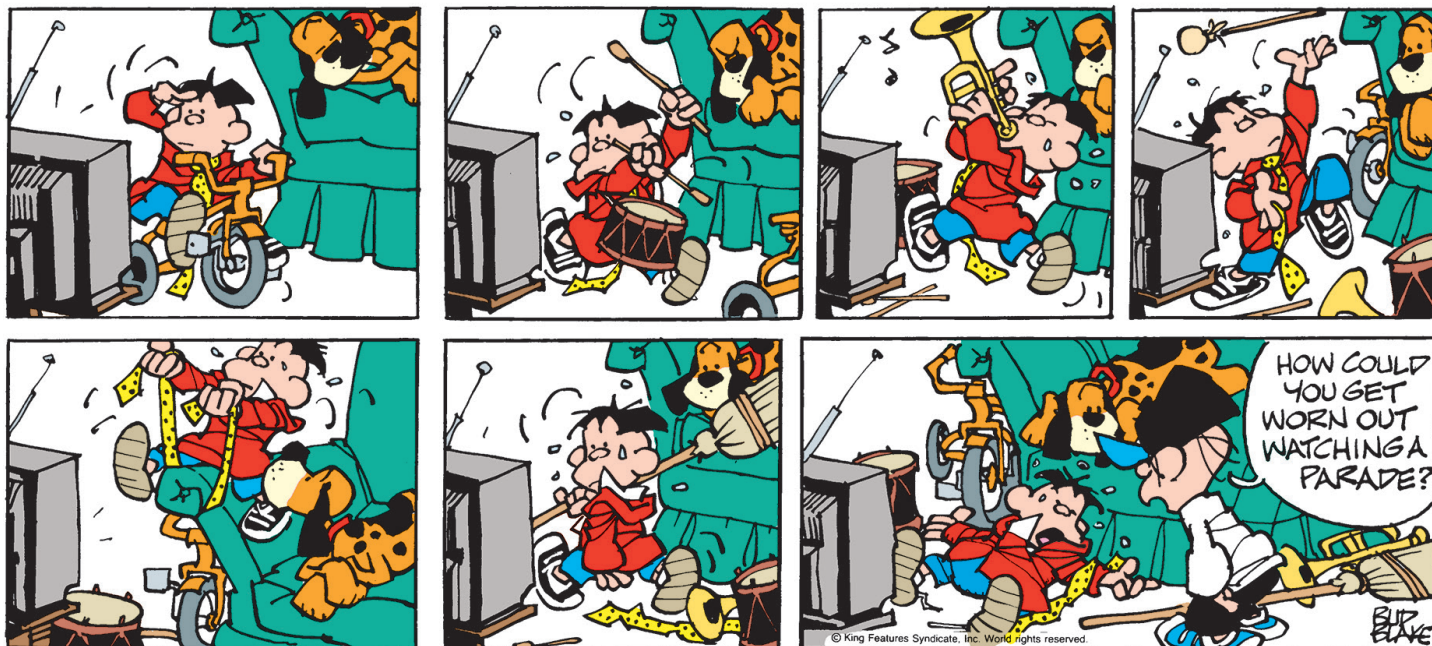
* "Tiny tears in your window screen can be secured with clear nail polish. I dab the spot, then use tweezers to line up the tiny wires, then dab again. Just make sure the window is open, or the screen might stick to the windowpane." -- T.T. in Indiana

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

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TIGER

by BUD BLAKE



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King Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Solo of "Star Wars"
- 4 Dandy guy
- 7 Sir's counterpart
- 12 Coach Parseghian
- 13 Lab eggs
- 14 Mountain crest
- 15 Roulette bet
- 16 "Absolutely not!"
- 18 Genetic letters
- 19 Long journeys
- 20 Informal pronoun
- 22 JFK's predecessor
- 23 Slightly wet
- 27 Id counterpart
- 29 Small burger
- 31 Majestic
- 34 Paris school
- 35 Diocese part
- 37 Iota
- 38 Tennis score
- 39 Author Umberto
- 41 Slightly open
- 45 Stand-in
- 47 Japanese sash
- 48 "Absolutely not!"
- 52 Eggy quaff
- 53 Love, Italian-style

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

- 54 Indian lentil dish
- 55 Citric beverage
- 56 Already
- 57 Magic, on scoreboards
- 58 French salt
- 9 "Lion" actor Patel
- 10 Chowed down
- 11 Sea, to Henri
- 17 Stretches (out)
- 21 Bolshevik leader
- 23 Formal decrees
- 24 Fuss
- 25 Singer Torme
- 26 Season opener?
- 28 Dept. store inventory
- 30 Luau souvenir
- 31 Transcript no.
- 32 "Awesome!"
- 33 "Entourage" role
- 36 Olympian queen
- 37 Freight train unit
- 40 Homebuyer's option
- 42 Singer Nick
- 43 Home
- 44 Star in Orion's foot
- 45 "Close one!"
- 46 Holler
- 48 "Terrif!"
- 49 Author Tan
- 50 Heavy weight
- 51 — -Magnon

DOWN

- 1 Wizard Potter
- 2 Sports venue
- 3 Tennis star Rafael
- 4 Type choice
- 5 Go too far
- 6 Macadamized
- 7 Earth's neighbor
- 8 Common verb

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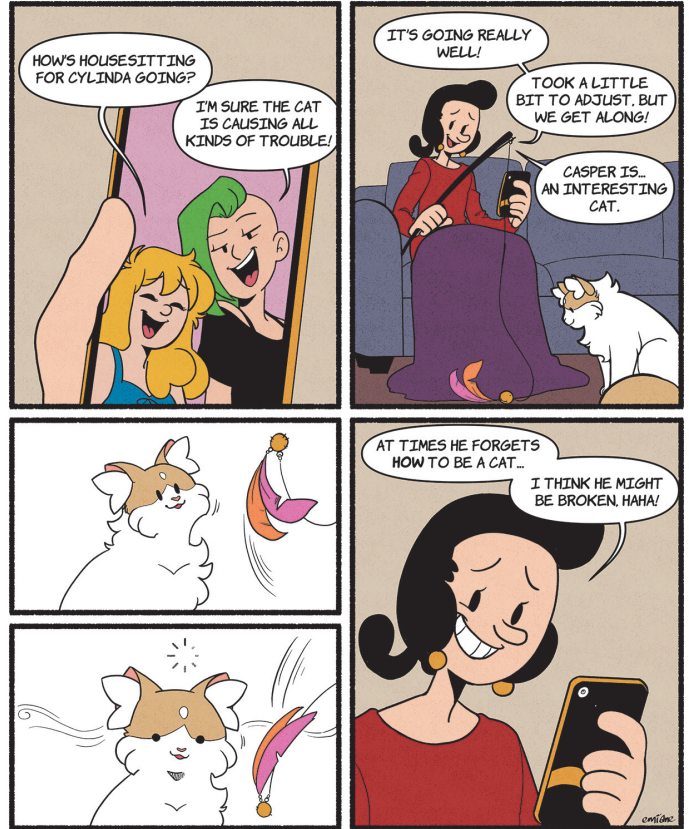
King Crossword

Answers

Solution time: 26 mins.

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

Olive



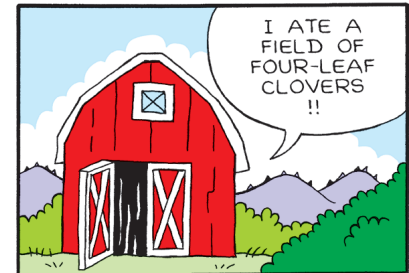
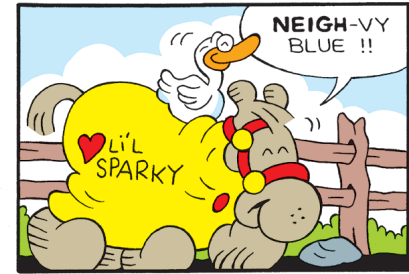
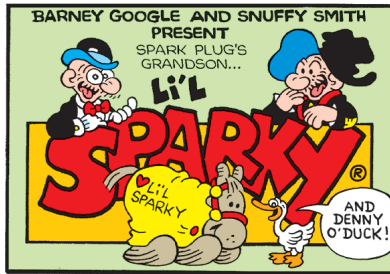
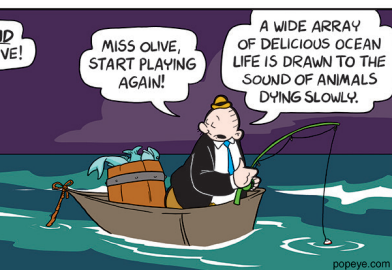
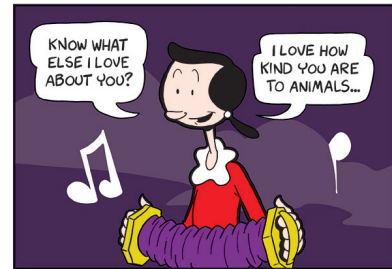
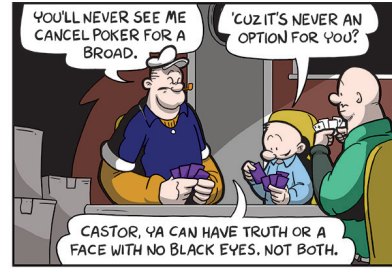
Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas



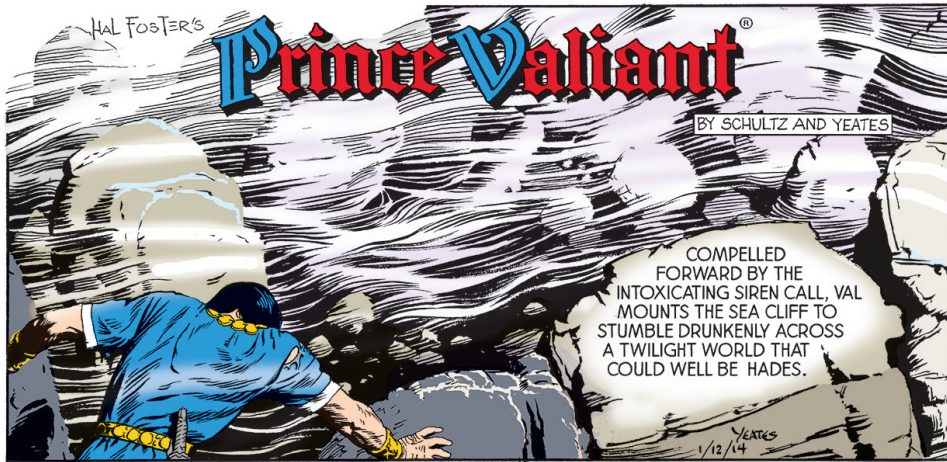
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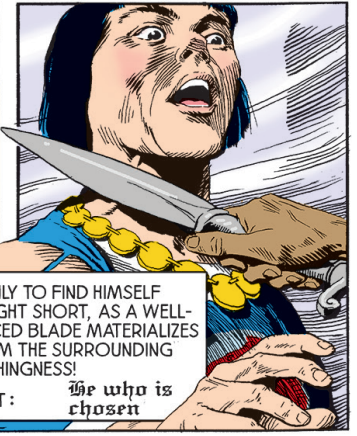


THE MADDENING SONG SEEMS TO ENCIRCLE HIM, TORMENT HIM, ITS SOURCE ALWAYS JUST OUT OF REACH, BEYOND THE VEILS OF MIST.



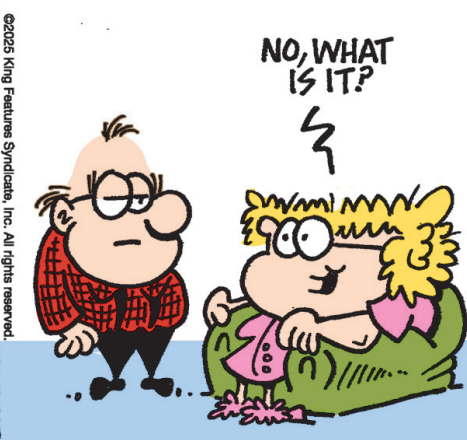
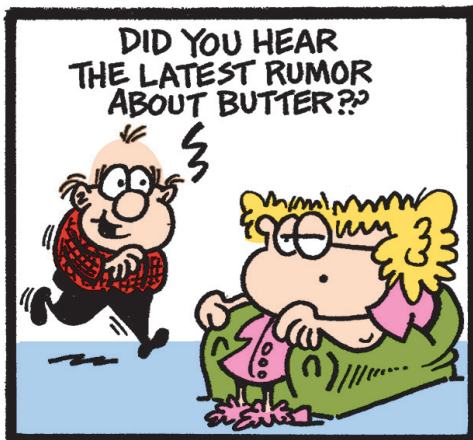
BUT THEN HE SEES A WINGED FIGURE, DIMLY LIT AND ONLY FOR A MOMENT, AS THE SWIRLING AIR BRIEFLY CLEARS AND THEN THICKENS.

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The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

Downsizing help

Sometimes we just don't want to face the truth, so we ignore it as long as we can. But eventually it becomes clear: We need to downsize.

Just the word can be painful as we contemplate moving to a smaller place and likely needing to get rid of many of our belongings. And then there are all the details -- what to keep, how to pack, lifting those heavy boxes.

The good news is that we don't have to do it alone. The National Association of Senior & Specialty Move Managers (www.nasmm.org) can steer you toward move managers in your area, people who are trained in all aspects of moving seniors. In the Find A Move Manager section of their website, put in your ZIP code to find people in your area.

In my town I found three companies. All advertise stress-free moves and help with organizing, downsizing and relocating. It seems they can do it all -- starting with the decluttering that will be necessary for any move to a smaller place. They organize which belongings go to which family members, arrange for the sale of valuables or donations to charity and even take care of trash disposal. And that's just the first step in the process.

What I like best is that they'll do the packing. Then on moving day, they'll be there supervising the movers, dealing with the utility companies to get the power turned on in the new place and, surprise, they'll even unpack on the other end and haul away the empty boxes.

Moving to a smaller place might not be what we'd like to do, but when it becomes necessary, it's good to know that we don't have to do it alone. There are experts who know what to do and when. That should make the whole process much easier.

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1. Nino Salukvadze, who at age 55 competed in her 10th Olympics at the 2024 Paris Summer Games, participates in what sport?

2. The Conerly Trophy has been awarded annually since 1996 to the best college football player in what U.S. state?

3. Steve Phoenix, a pitcher for the Oakland Athletics in 1994-95, was born in what Arizona city in 1968?

4. What U.S. athlete won a gold medal in the 4x100 meter relay at the 1968 Mexico City Olympics and then was awarded the Bronze Star while serving with the U.S. Army in the Vietnam War?

5. Rosey Rowswell was the play-by-play radio voice of what Major League Baseball team from 1936 until his death in 1955?

6. Name the member of the 2006 NBA champion Miami Heat who won the NBA All-Star Three-Point Contest two straight years from 2007-08.

7. What Pro Football Hall of Fame cornerback retired after the 2013 season with an NFL career record 203 pass deflections?



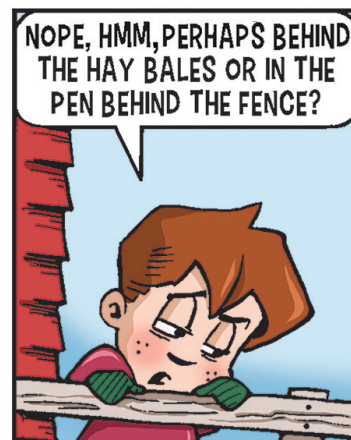
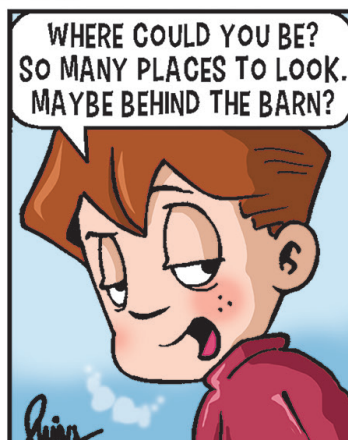
Answers

1. Shooting.
2. Mississippi.
3. Phoenix.
4. Melvin Pender Jr.
5. The Pittsburgh Pirates.
6. Jason Kapon.
7. Champ Bailey.

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Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps



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Are big dogs passe? Smaller, indoor dogs gain popularity

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: Why are so many people opting for small, yappy dogs these days instead of big dogs? That seems to be all I see when folks walk their dogs around here. A small dog won't protect you or your home. -- Bobby T., Oak Ridge, Tennessee

DEAR BOBBY: While it may seem that most dog owners are choosing smaller breeds, the number of small vs. large dogs varies greatly depending on where you live. So you may observe that most of your immediate neighbors have small dogs -- but their popularity is not as universal as you think.

The American Kennel Club, for example, annually lists the most popular dogs by number of registrations per breed. In 2023, the most recent year of published data, the French bulldog was the most popular registered breed in the U.S. However, among the top 10 breeds, only four -- including the French bulldog, Dachshund, Beagle and Bulldog -- could be classified as "small." The remaining six most popular dogs, including the Rottweiler, Golden Retriever and German Shorthaired Pointer, are all large breeds.

Not all U.S. households that own dogs have registered breeds, of course, The American Veterinary Medical Association in 2024 reported that just under half of U.S. households own dogs, while 32.1% are cat owners. So, while the French bulldog may be the most popular AKC-registered pet, that statistic doesn't take into account all of the dogs that are being walked through their neighborhoods nationwide.

Security-wise, having a dog of any size can be a deterrent for potential intruders (or attackers). Large breeds, often gentle giants, can deter people with bad intentions easily, but smaller breeds should not be underestimated.

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

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Strange BUT TRUE

* When Katherine Johnson was little, she loved to count things. By the age of 10, she was in high school. In 1961, she calculated the trajectory of NASA's first trip into space. She was so consistently accurate that when NASA began to use computers, they had her check the calculations to make sure they were correct.

* In Norse, the name Siri means "a beautiful woman that leads you to victory."

* And speaking of Siri ... she will flip a coin for you if you

can't make a decision.

* Looney Tunes was created to promote the Warner Brothers music catalog in the 1930s, hence the name "Looney Tunes" instead of "Toons."

* James Vernor put the basic components of a new beverage into a barrel in 1861 before heading off to serve in the 4th Michigan Cavalry during the Civil War. When he returned four years later, he tasted the barrel's contents and, voila!, Vernor's Ginger Ale was born.

* Norway's Bouvet Island was discovered in 1739, then "lost" again for the next 69 years due to the original spotter's mislabeling its coordinates.

* Canada has a strategic maple syrup reserve to ensure global supply in case of emergency.

* When President Donald Trump asked the Guggenheim Museum to loan the White House an original Van Gogh painting, they responded with the counteroffer of a solid-gold toilet.

* Elvis Presley wore a cross, a Star of David and the Hebrew letter chai because he didn't want to "miss out on heaven due to a technicality."

* A single person's DNA contains as much information as 50 novels.

* Soccer player Mohammed Anas accidentally thanked both his wife and girlfriend in a post-match speech.

Thought for the Day: "The road to success is dotted with many tempting parking spaces." -- Will Rogers
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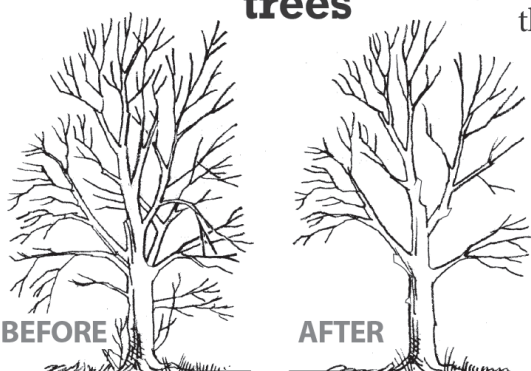
The Garden Bug

Pruning trees

Create adequate spacing for the main branches along the trunk, and prevent branches below the permanent canopy from growing upright or getting too large. Always prune just outside the branch "collar," the point where one branch attaches to a larger one or to the trunk. Remove any branches that cross or rub against each other, and any torn, dead or broken branches.

— Brenda Weaver

Source: csfs.colostate.edu





by Freddy Groves

The VA in the news

So much is going on right now. With the new administration making many changes on a daily basis across the federal government, some of those changes were sure to affect the Department of Veterans Affairs. Here is one thing that has happened: The VA let go 1,000 employees.

For the most part they were probationary employees (deemed non-mission critical) with less than one year on the job or those in another employment category who had worked for less than two years.

This 1,000 is out of the 43,000 probationary employees they didn't fire because they were mission critical and out of a total of 473,000 employees at the VA. One year ago the VA had planned to reduce their numbers by 10,000 employees in 2025. Then there are the many thousands who took the deferred resignation offer, which will allow them to stay home and still be paid through September. So the 1,000 fewer employees isn't a massive number.

The financial bottom line from this recent move is that \$98 million was saved, money that will be plowed back into services and benefits for veterans, per Secretary Doug Collins.

While this move was effective immediately, there is a catch: Management can ask that certain employees not be terminated to ensure that the work can go on, that benefits and services aren't effected.

Rumor has it that some of the employees who were let go had handled the phones at the suicide crisis line. A senator stepped in and asked that two of the employees be reinstated.

While it might be a bit unnerving to see cuts at the VA for the benefits and services we depend on, I say we should just wait it out and not let panic set in. We have a new VA secretary, and for now we should trust him to fight for what's right for us, despite all the loud naysayers who excel at stirring up anxiety. I think it will all be OK.

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Wishing Well®

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

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

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1. TELEVISION: Which 1960s sitcom was about a TV comedy writer, his job and his family?
2. AD SLOGANS: Which candy slogan urges consumers to "Taste the rainbow"?
3. COMICS: Which superhero gets his power from a ring?
4. GEOGRAPHY: Which country has the most islands?
5. MEASUREMENTS: How many cups are in a pint?
6. MOVIES: Which scary 1980 movie contained the phrase "red rum" and what does it mean?
7. ANATOMY: What is the outermost layer of human skin called?
8. U.S. PRESIDENTS: Who was the first president to ride in a car to his inauguration?
9. HISTORY: When did India gain its independence from Great Britain?
10. CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: Who lives at 32 Windsor Gardens?

Answers

1. "The Dick Van Dyke Show."
2. Skittles.
3. The Green Lantern.
4. Sweden.
5. Two.
6. "The Shining." It's the word "murder" spelled backward.
7. Epidermis.
8. Warren Harding (1921).
9. 1947.
10. Paddington Bear and the Brown family.

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South Dakota Governor



Larry Rhoden



South Dakota: *Under God, the People Rule*

Protecting Property Rights

I am no stranger to discussions about eminent domain and property rights. I've fought for private property rights in this Capitol for over 20 years. When I was a legislator, I was the prime sponsor of legislation that reformed eminent domain to protect property rights. I don't just care about landowners – I am a landowner.

I also want to ensure that we keep South Dakota Open for Opportunity. That includes the opportunity for every family, every business owner, and every farmer or rancher to pursue their own American Dream.

But those dreams should not be pursued at the expense of others. Freedom ends when it infringes on the freedom of another. And when those situations arise, "governments are instituted among men" to protect the rights of the people.

Over the past few years, I've become thoroughly familiar with the details of a carbon dioxide pipeline proposed by Summit Carbon Solutions (Summit). I've had hundreds of conversations about this issue. I've met with all sides and heard all the arguments. I made my decision to sign House Bill 1052 based on my own consideration of the facts, the policy arguments, legislative history, my own opinions and experience, and my judgment about what is best for South Dakota.

South Dakota landowners feel strongly that the threat of involuntary easements for the proposed carbon dioxide pipeline infringes on their freedoms and their property rights. I have said many times that Summit needs to earn back trust from South Dakota landowners. Unfortunately, once trust is lost, it is a difficult thing to regain.

One perspective in this debate is that we should not change the rules in the middle of the game, and I agree. However, the proposed carbon dioxide pipeline is still just that – a proposed project. Summit has not yet received their permit from the Public Utilities Commission.

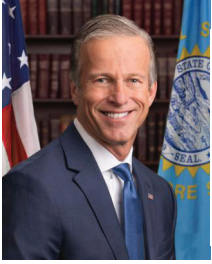
HB 1052 does not kill the proposed project. Rather than viewing this legislation as an obstacle, I encourage Summit and others to view it as an opportunity for a needed reset. Voluntary easements for this proposed project will still be able to move forward and are not impacted by HB 1052. In fact, without the threat of eminent domain, the opportunity might finally be available for trust to be rebuilt and for more productive conversations to occur between Summit and South Dakota landowners.

We are keeping South Dakota Open for Opportunity, and HB 1052 will not change that. The ethanol industry will remain a crucial part of our state's economy and a key asset as we implement an all-of-the-above energy approach to restore American energy dominance. I am honored to serve as governor of all South Dakotans, and I will continue to support the private property rights of our people, and opportunity for value-added agriculture and our state as a whole.

This column was first written as a letter to the legislature and to the people of South Dakota outlining the Governor's thought process for signing HB 1052.

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JOHN THUNE
U.S. SENATOR FOR SOUTH DAKOTA

We're Just Getting Started

President Trump recently came to Congress to report on his first few weeks in office and lay out his vision for the next four years. In just a few weeks, President Trump has already accomplished an incredible amount, and this is just the start.

Chief among his achievements is restoring order to the southern border. In February, 8,450 illegal immigrants were caught trying to cross the southern border. Not long ago, Border Patrol was sometimes dealing with that many apprehensions in a single day. This turnaround means that Border Patrol can focus on the criminals, cartels, traffickers, and terrorists who once tried to hide behind the chaos.

President Trump has also wasted no time in addressing the national energy emergency our country faces. The United States is heading toward an energy crisis where we don't have enough energy to meet demand. Instead of taking steps to increase our energy supply, the Biden administration pushed us further toward crisis with measures to restrict conventional energy development. President Trump and Republicans in Congress are already working to increase our nation's energy supply to promote a secure and affordable energy future.

One of the signature accomplishments of President Trump's first term was the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. Making that tax relief permanent is a priority for President Trump and congressional Republicans. We are hard at work laying the groundwork to protect American families, small businesses, and farmers and ranchers from a tax hike next year, and we will keep working to put more money in hardworking Americans' pockets.

President Trump has also taken actions to restore commonsense in government. He's worked to protect children from a radical gender ideology and keep biological men out of women's and girls' sports. He's committed to eliminating 10 regulations for every new regulation his administration proposes. And the list goes on.

This is just the start. I'm proud that the Senate has already confirmed almost all of the president's Cabinet. Senate Republicans helped get President Trump's team in place faster than any of the last three administrations, and they're on the job delivering on the promises President Trump made to the American people.

President Trump has brought a new direction to Washington and to our country. As always, I'm particularly grateful for President Trump's faith in America. He reminds us of how blessed we are to live in this great country and that, in America, everything is possible.

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Serving South Dakota

BIG Update

Forestry is a big part of the local economy in the Black Hills but is at risk due to the Black Hills National Forest's failure to hit their harvest targets. As a result, timber production and harvest in South Dakota has been declining for years, forcing many mills to close. Not to mention that when timber harvest is decreased, forests are more prone to bug outbreaks and catastrophic fires. America has outsourced much of its timber supply, causing us to rely on imported lumber from other countries. When timber production decreases in America, due in part to heavy-handed government regulations, we lose jobs and the infrastructure needed to properly manage our forests.

No one wants to over-harvest the Black Hills, of course. For a number of years, though, timber production has been below levels that the data indicates is sustainable. That's why I've been calling for increased timber production in the area. Last year, I hosted a roundtable in Spearfish for other members of Congress to hear from South Dakota's forest industry leaders about how these policies are impacting their livelihoods and our forests. I recently spoke with the new Forest Service Chief, Tom Schultz, who echoed this sentiment. I was encouraged when I read President Trump's Executive Order to expand timber production and improve forest management practices. I'm glad the Trump Administration is taking action to increase American production and manufacturing and make our forests healthy again.

BIG Idea

The bird flu is taking a catastrophic toll on our poultry population. The egg supply has quickly dropped, skyrocketing prices across the country. Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins recently announced her plan to save the poultry industry. The plan assists producers' implementation of enhanced biosecurity measures, takes steps to develop a vaccine or similar solution, and cuts unnecessary red tape in the poultry industry. I'm glad Secretary Rollins is taking swift action to increase the egg supply and bring prices down. Eggs are a staple for many American families – we must address this crisis.

BIG News

I was joined by Meade County Sheriff Pat West and Clay County Sheriff Andy Howe to hear President Trump's Joint Address to Congress this week. As law enforcement officers, both West and Howe faced the impacts of Biden's border crisis that left American communities flooded with fentanyl and criminal illegal immigrants. Both sheriffs were excited to hear Trump talk about his Administration's success in securing the border, resulting in a 95% decrease in daily crossings from the previous Administration.

I thought the President's speech was great, specifically how he used the stories of real Americans to highlight the welcome need for change from the previous four years of policy. Families like Laken Riley's and Jocelyn Nungaray's were changed forever due to heinous crimes committed by violent illegal immigrants. Law and order has returned to America so tragedies like these don't happen again.

Sheriff Pat West was featured in a Fox News article about the results of Trump's commanding border policy.

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Dr. James L. Snyder Ministries

PO Box 831313 - Ocala, FL 34483

1-352-216-3025

Make Room For Laughter

After about two months in recovery mode, I had an opportunity to go to the neighborhood Publix. It's been a long time since I've been in a store, and I was happy to get out of the house and give The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage a break.

While walking around, I noticed everybody seemed very sad. It looked like everybody was worried about something and had no solution.

There is something about me that makes me want to bring a smile to someone who is sad. I'm not always successful, but at least I try.

Walking around, I tried to think of what I could do to make somebody smile.

Maybe I could do something to make at least one person smile. I might not have a good prank, but how do I know until I try?

I approached an older couple pushing a cart and said, "Pardon me, do you know who I am?"

They both looked at me a little confused and shook their heads. The woman said, "No, I don't know who you are."

I smiled at them and replied, "That's great. I thought I was the only one who didn't know who I was. Thank you."

As I walked away, I heard them giggle and laugh. I heard the man say, "He sure was crazy." Then they laughed some more.

I was satisfied that I at least got someone to laugh. If you go through a whole day without laughing, you have wasted that day.

There are so many things that I laugh about that I rarely have a day or an hour in which I am not laughing at something or someone. I don't know how many people laugh at me, but I hope there are some.

I also noticed the store staff seemed rather stressed. The store was overly crowded with customers, and particularly, the people at the checkout counter seemed rather stressed.

I got what I was shopping for, went up to the checkout counter, and stood in line for several minutes, waiting for those in front of me to get fully processed. As I was waiting

there, I was trying to think of what I could do to brighten up that young lady behind the checkout counter, who seemed quite stressed.

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Then, an idea came to me. I laughed as I thought of it, and I didn't know if it was a good joke, but you never know until you process it, and I was in the processing mood at the time.

I grinned as I waited in line, and finally, my turn came. I looked at the lady behind the register and said, "There was a lady in the back of the store that told me if I mentioned how nice you look today, you could give me a discount." Then I smiled, the biggest smile I had all day.

Looking at me, she said, "What?"

I knew she was under stress, so I repeated it to her and asked her what kind of discount I would get.

At first, she didn't know what to do and looked over her shoulder to see if anybody was watching her. Then she finally looked at me and said, "Sir, I'm new here and have never heard of that discount before, and I do not believe that I can do it for you today. I'm so sorry for the misunderstanding." Then, much to my surprise, she smiled. After all, that's all I wanted.

I thanked her for her service, smiled, and told her to have a great day.

As I walked out, I could hear some customers behind me giggling. They were talking, but I couldn't understand what they were saying. At least I got a couple of people to smile.

Driving home from the store, the traffic was rather congested. People were going home from work, and many were not very patient. There was a lot of horn blowing and some old guys screaming. I'm unsure how that solved their problem, but I guess they had no other option. They must have had a hard day at work.

I just smiled as they drove by, not knowing their story. Why can't people just learn how to smile? I looked at all of them as they went by and smiled as best I could.

A couple of drivers looked a little religious in my mind. I'm unsure what they were yelling at me, but one person pointed me to heaven. I smiled and was very appreciative. I nodded, affirming that I was planning to go to heaven. I noticed, though, that, being as religious as he was, he got his fingers mixed up and used the wrong finger to point to heaven.

Instead of being offended, I just smiled and even got to the point of laughing.

My day was successful because I made about five people laugh and several others smile. That makes for a great day.

I couldn't help but think of one of my favorite Bible verses. "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones" (Proverbs 17:22).

Laughter is the best medicine we could possibly have. And, we never run out of this medicine no matter our circumstances. My goal is to share my medicine with as many people as possible.

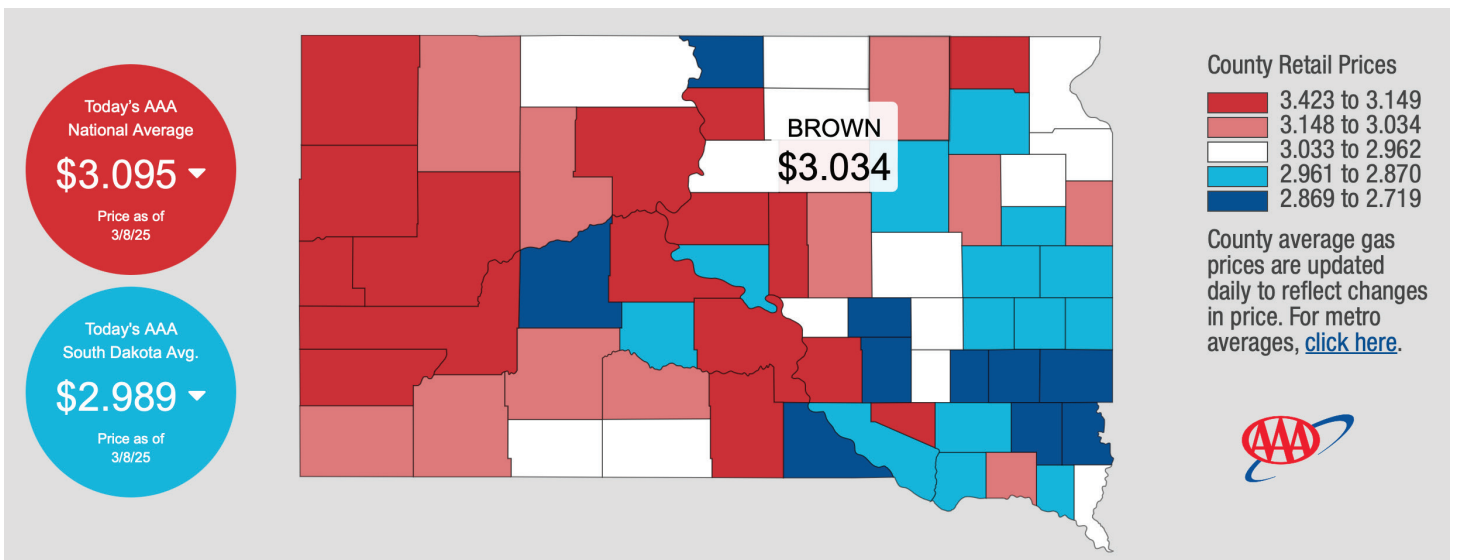
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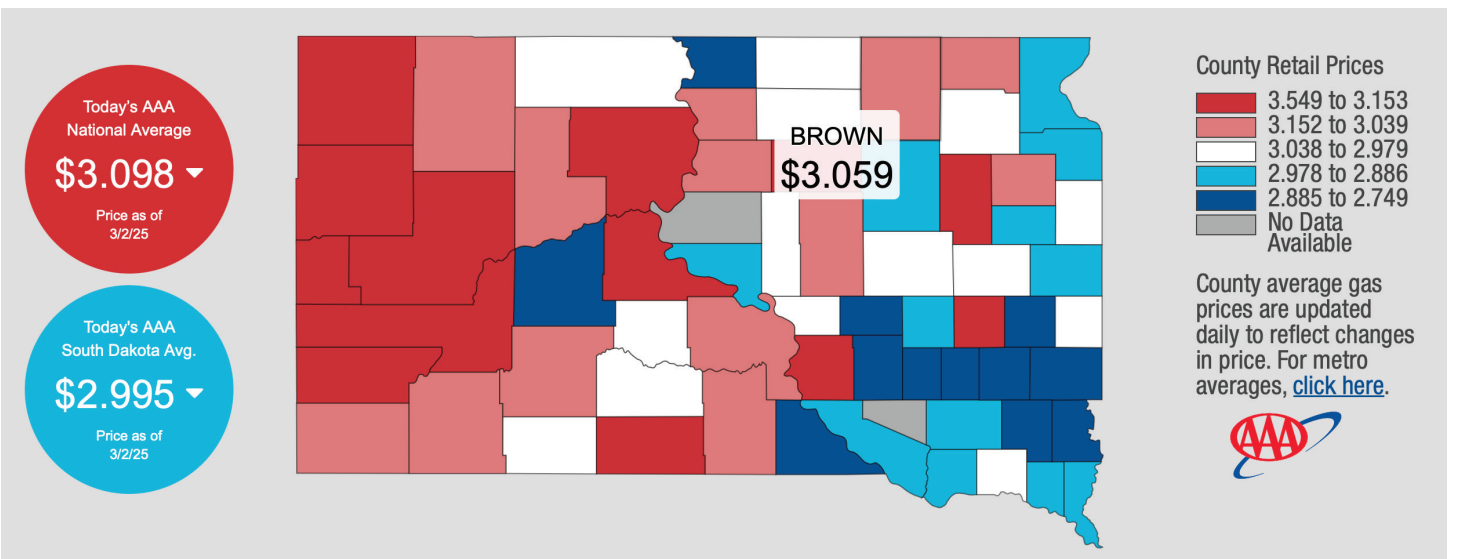
South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Current Avg.	\$2.989	\$3.191	\$3.618	\$3.310
Yesterday Avg.	\$2.999	\$3.181	\$3.624	\$3.315
Week Ago Avg.	\$3.007	\$3.169	\$3.608	\$3.347
Month Ago Avg.	\$2.966	\$3.140	\$3.578	\$3.446
Year Ago Avg.	\$3.185	\$3.335	\$3.765	\$3.720

This Week



Last Week



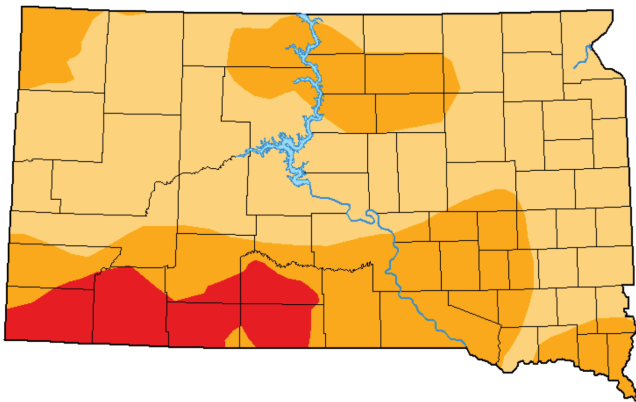
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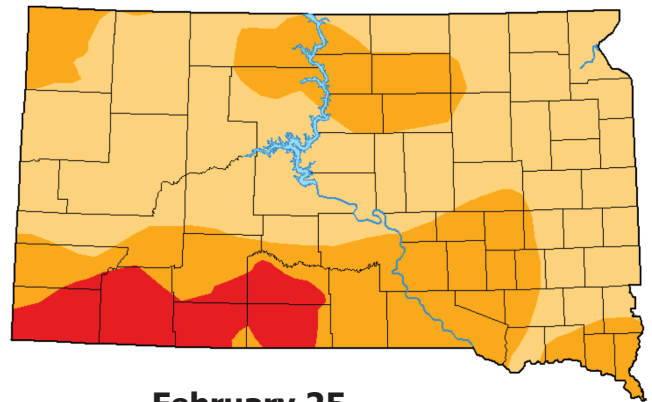
Drought Classification

- None
- D0 (Abnormally Dry)
- D1 (Moderate Drought)
- D2 (Severe Drought)
- D3 (Extreme Drought)
- D4 (Exceptional Drought)
- No Data

Drought Monitor



March 4



February 25

Temperatures across most of the High Plains were above normal, with most locations east of the Rocky Mountains finishing the week between 9 and 15 degrees warmer than normal. Some precipitation fell in mountainous areas of Colorado and Wyoming, and snow occurred Monday night into Tuesday morning in parts of the northeast Colorado plains into western and central Nebraska. Most of the High Plains region east of the Rocky Mountains did not see any changes to ongoing drought or abnormal dryness, except for southern Kansas, where abnormal dryness expanded in response to unusually dry weather in the last few months. In western Colorado, moderate and severe drought expanded in coverage due to very low snowpack and growing precipitation deficits. Recent precipitation in west-central Wyoming led to localized improvements to drought conditions there.

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EARTHTALK

Dear EarthTalk: Why is the Great Salt Lake shrinking so much and can it be saved? – E.T., via email

Utah's Great Salt Lake is the largest saltwater lake in the Western Hemisphere. It is a remnant of Lake Bonneville, which dried up 14,000 years ago due to extreme drought. It contributes \$1.9 billion annually to Utah's economy and provides 7,700 jobs. Over 10 million birds rely on this lake for their survival.

Apart from natural fluctuations, the Great Salt Lake's water level has dropped continuously since 1870, mainly due to the desiccation of the lake in the diversion of upstream water. The Great Salt Lake gets most of its water from the Bear, Weber and Jordan rivers, but now a significant portion of water is being diverted for agricultural and industrial use. Climate change and increase in temperature are also contributing to the Great Salt Lake's desiccation. Due to temperature increases, the rate of evaporation has also increased, impacting the salinity of the lake. Agriculture dominates water use by 74 percent, nine percent by mineral extraction, nine percent by industrial use and eight percent by evaporation.

"The lake has a lot of social and economic relevance for the region and Utah," says Siiri Bigalke, a climate scientist at Portland State University who has studied recent volume levels of the Great Salt Lake. Indeed, the cost of the Great Salt Lake drying—including loss of mineral extraction, landscape mitigation costs, the loss of lake recreation and economic value, the loss of brine shrimp, health costs, and impacts to ski resorts—could total as much as \$2.17 billion per year. The decline in Great Salt Lake water levels could kill some 6,500 jobs, most of which stem from a loss of mineral extraction output. Researchers say the tax rate in Utah would have to increase by more than 50 percent to make up for these potential losses.

The desiccation of the Great Salt Lake will lead to air and water pollution, a decline in agricultural productivity, loss of industry, and economic devastation. Even if the lake is not completely lost, the shrinkage can expose lakebed sediments containing heavy metals and organic pollutants which could significantly deteriorate air quality.

To save the lake, a minimum streamflow of 2.5 million acre-feet per year must be maintained. Ensuring that river flow remains at or above this threshold is essential for stabilizing the lake's water levels. Water flow to upstream farms should be limited. Local governments should coordinate with state and federal programs to expand water conservation awareness. You can get involved by creating and sharing media on this issue to raise awareness. Additionally outdoor vegetation should be converted to drought tolerant to conserve water.

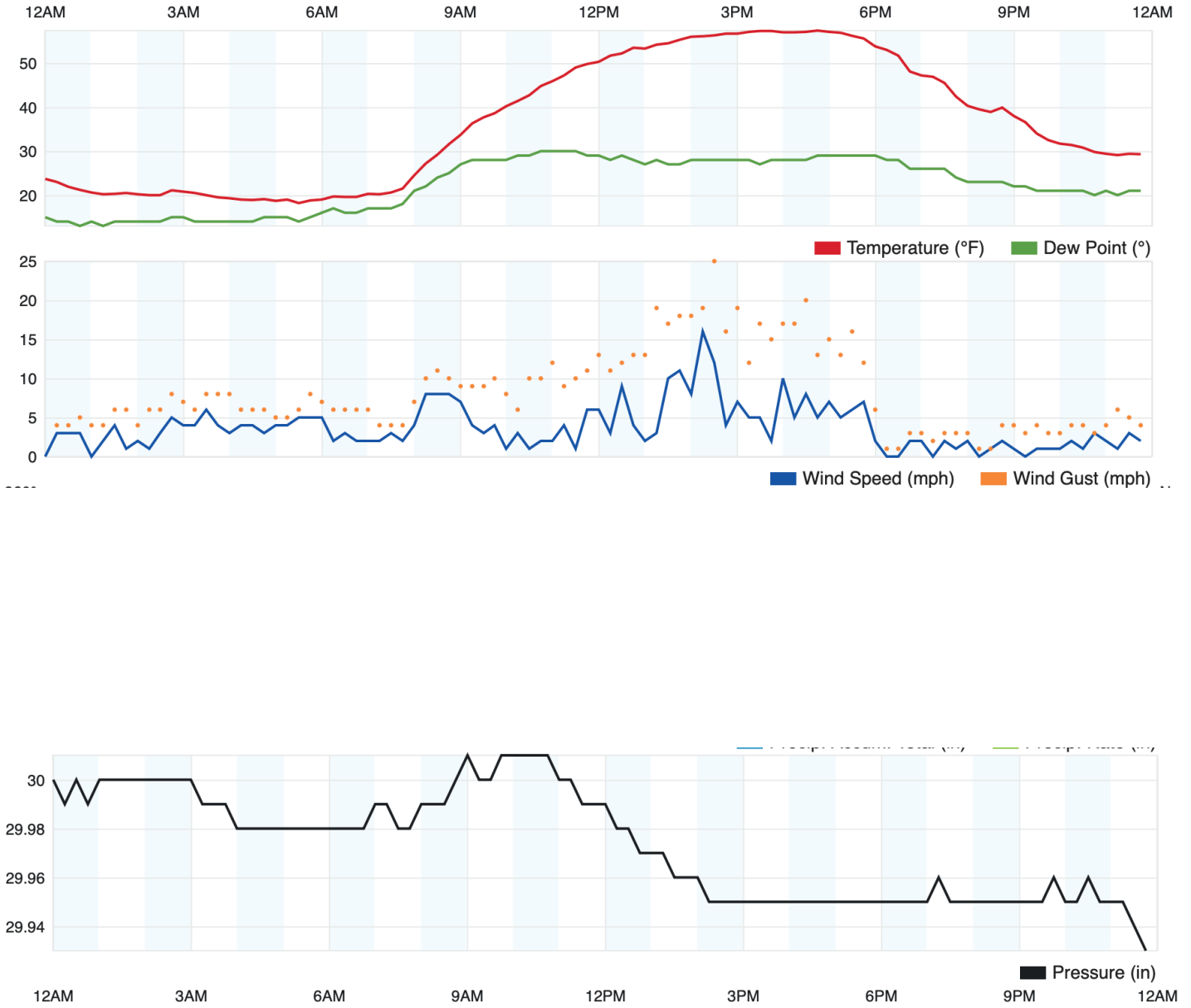


The Great Salt Lake's overall water level has been dropping since 1870 due to naturally occurring desiccation but also due to the diversion of upstream water by farmers and other human consumers. Credit: Pexels.com

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today	Tonight	Monday	Monday Night	Tuesday
				
				
High: 68 °F	Low: 32 °F	High: 72 °F	Low: 16 °F	High: 43 °F
Mostly Sunny and Breezy	Partly Cloudy	Sunny then Mostly Sunny and Windy	Partly Cloudy and Blustery	Mostly Sunny



Elevated Fire Danger Sunday & Monday

March 8, 2025
3:39 PM

Key Messages

- Increasing west winds, with gusts of 25 to 35 mph Sunday afternoon and 35 to 55 mph Monday afternoon.
- Relative humidity dropping to or below 25%.
- The combination of gusty winds, low relative humidity, and ongoing dry fuels lead to **very high fire danger Sunday** and **very high to extreme fire danger Monday**.

NEW

Important Updates

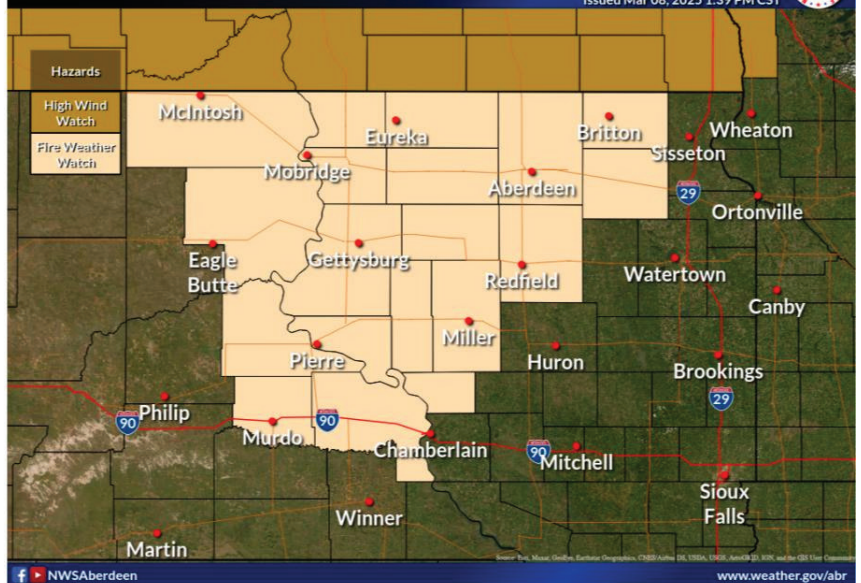
- **Fire Weather Watch** has been issued for north central, central, and portions of northeastern SD both Sunday and Monday.

Next Scheduled Briefing

- Sunday morning

Sunday and Monday Headlines

Weather Forecast Office
Aberdeen, SD
Issued Mar 08, 2025 1:39 PM CST



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Increasing west winds both Sunday and Monday afternoon, relative humidity dropping to or below 25%, and ongoing dry fuels will lead to very high fire danger Sunday and very high to extreme fire danger Monday. A Fire Weather Watch has been issued for these days.

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Strongest Forecast Wind Gusts

March 8, 2025
3:49 PM

Sunday Through Monday

Main Takeaways

- ➔ Wind gusts from 25 to 35 mph Sunday afternoon.
- ➔ Wind gusts of 35 to 55 mph Monday afternoon.
 - ◆ Potential of 55+ mph wind gusts over north central SD.

Maximum Wind Gust Forecast (mph)

	3/9 Sun								3/10 Mon							
	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm		
Aberdeen	25	29	30	30	22	14	15	15	14	17	30	36	36	31		
Britton	24	26	28	29	21	13	16	17	18	21	30	37	36	31		
Brookings	18	24	26	26	18	13	14	13	13	18	24	25	22	24		
Chamberlain	14	20	23	23	15	12	12	12	12	15	22	24	21	20		
Clark	20	23	26	28	21	14	15	14	15	16	24	29	29	28		
Eagle Butte	30	32	33	32	25	17	15	16	18	24	35	41	44	35		
Ellendale	26	30	32	32	23	14	16	17	17	23	38	44	43	35		
Eureka	25	30	32	32	24	15	16	15	15	24	43	52	49	35		
Gettysburg	23	26	30	30	22	15	15	14	14	18	29	35	35	30		
Huron	17	22	25	26	18	12	14	14	12	14	21	25	24	24		
Kennebec	20	24	28	28	18	15	16	16	15	16	25	29	26	24		
McIntosh	31	35	37	37	28	18	20	20	21	32	52	58	56	37		
Milbank	24	28	28	26	17	13	16	17	17	22	29	30	29	29		
Miller	25	29	30	30	21	16	18	18	17	21	25	29	29	25		
Mobridge	24	28	29	29	22	14	15	14	12	18	30	37	37	31		
Murdo	23	25	29	29	22	18	20	21	22	23	29	32	30	26		
Pierre	17	22	26	26	18	13	14	13	9	13	22	30	29	25		
Redfield	23	28	31	31	21	15	16	15	12	15	25	31	31	28		
Sisseton	28	30	29	29	21	13	16	18	21	26	33	36	36	31		
Watertown	22	26	28	28	21	13	14	14	14	16	22	25	25	26		
Webster	25	28	30	30	23	16	17	17	17	20	29	32	31	30		
Wheaton	22	25	25	24	17	12	13	15	16	18	30	35	33	29		



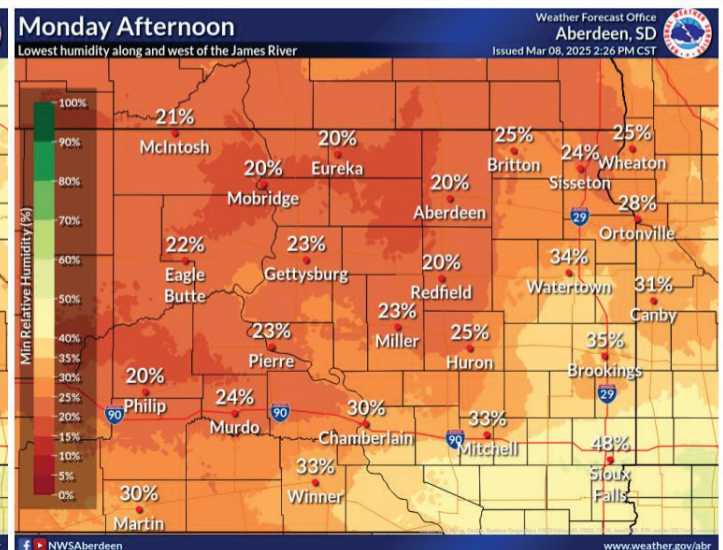
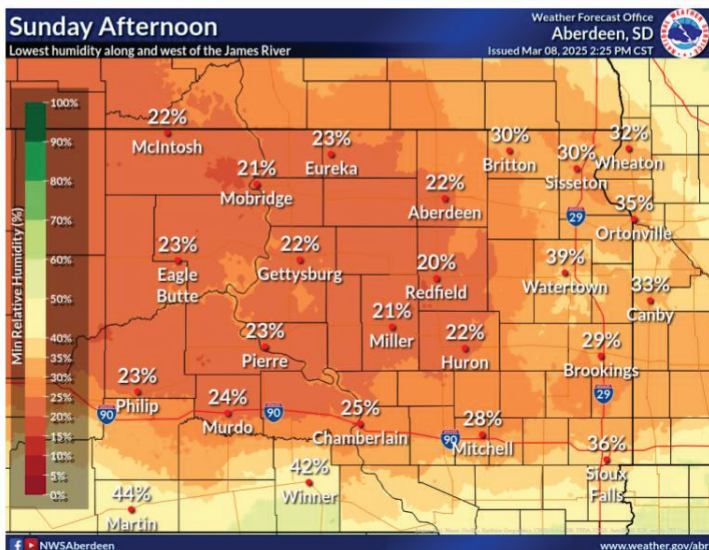
National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Wind gusts from 25 to 35 mph expected Sunday afternoon and gusts of 35 to 55 mph Monday afternoon.



Lowest Forecast Relative Humidity

March 8, 2025
3:54 PM



- ➔ Afternoon relative humidity will drop at or below 25% for north central, central, and portions of northeastern SD both Sunday and Monday



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 58 °F at 3:37 PM

Low Temp: 18 °F at 5:25 AM

Wind: 25 mph at 2:19 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 11 hours, 16 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 69 in 2021

Record Low: -20 in 1951

Average High: 38

Average Low: 16

Average Precip in March.: 0.22

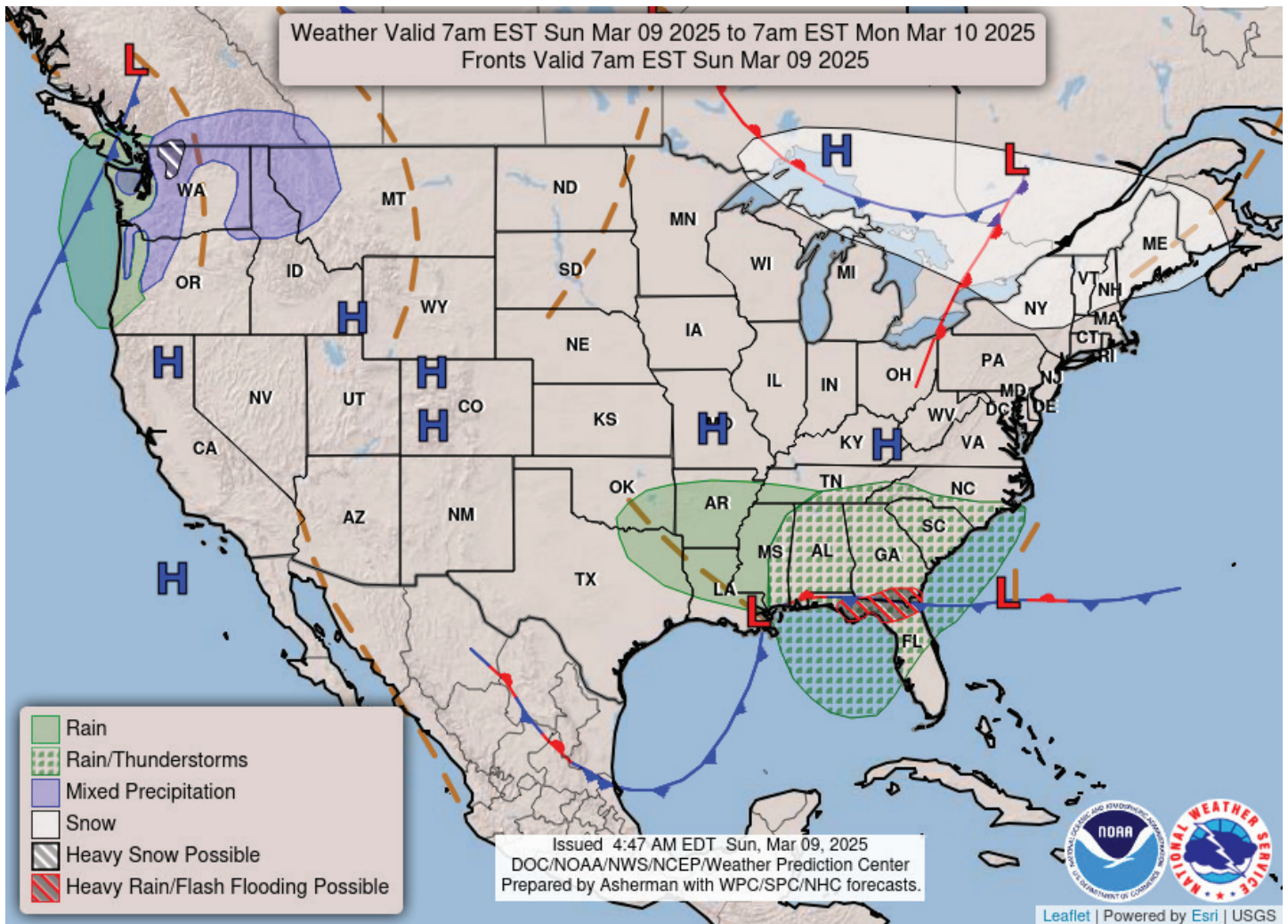
Precip to date in March.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 1.39

Precip Year to Date: 0.45

Sunset Tonight: 7:32:03 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:51:37 am



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Today in Weather History

March 9, 1993: High winds gusting more than 50 mph moved east across South Dakota behind a strong cold front. Peak wind gusts reported included 62 mph at Pierre and 49 mph at Aberdeen. High winds flipped over a mobile home on top of a car and a utility shed near The Oahe Reservoir. In addition, a semi-tractor trailer was overturned while crossing Ft. Randall Dam. An office trailer was also tipped over at the exact location.

1891: From March 9 through the 13th, a blizzard struck southern England and Wales with gale-force winds. 220 people were killed; 65 ships foundered in the English Channel, and 6,000 sheep perished. Countless trees were uprooted, and trains were buried. Up to a foot of snow and snowdrifts of 11.5 feet were reported in Dulwich, London, Torquay, Sidmouth, and Dartmouth. Click [HERE](#) for more information about this storm from the National Maritime Museum.

1956: A whopping 367 inches of snow was measured at the Rainier Paradise Ranger Station in Washington. The snow depth was a state record and the second-highest total for the continental U.S.

1957: An earthquake measuring 8.6 struck the Aleutian Islands of Alaska. A Pacific-wide tsunami was generated that caused damage in Hawaii, but fortunately, no lives were lost. The most brutal hit was the island of Kauai, where houses were destroyed and roads washed away. Waves reached 34.1 feet high at Haena, HI.

1960 - A winter storm produced a narrow band of heavy snow from north central Kentucky into Virginia and the mountains of North Carolina. Snowfall amounts ranged from 12 to 24 inches, with drifts up to eleven feet high in western Virginia. (David Ludlum)

1987 - Gale force winds ushered arctic air into the north central U.S. Some places were 50 degrees colder than the previous day. Northeast winds, gusting to 60 mph, produced 8 to 15 foot waves on Lake Michigan causing more than a million dollars damage along the southeastern shoreline of Wisconsin. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - A cold front brought high winds to the southwestern U.S. Winds in the Las Vegas Valley of Nevada gusted to 70 mph, and one person was injured by a falling tree. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Twenty-two cities in the southwestern U.S. reported new record high temperatures for the date. In New Mexico, afternoon highs of 72 at Los Alamos, 76 at Ruidoso, and 79 at Quemado, were records for March. (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - Evening thunderstorms produced severe weather in West Texas. Thunderstorms produced wind gusts to 71 mph at Lubbock, and golf ball size hail was reported at several other locations. Strong thunderstorm winds injured two persons north of the town of Canyon. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2013: A supercell over eastern Oahu in Hawaii produced 4.25" hail NW of Kailua, the largest hailstone ever recorded in Hawaii. The storm also spawned a tornadic waterspout that came ashore and caused EF-0 damage.



BACK TO THE BASICS

A once successful football team experienced several successive losing seasons. The fans were unhappy, and many stopped attending their games. So the owner decided it was time for a new coach. After a lengthy search, he located a leader whom he felt was up to the challenge – one who could inspire the players.

At the team's first meeting he stood before the players and said, "Gentlemen, we are going back to the basics. We are going to start at the beginning."

"This is a football," he said forcefully – making certain that each of them knew how serious he was.

"Basics" are important for any endeavor in life. They provide the foundation for growth and expansion. They assure stability in times of distress and doubt and direction when the path seems uncertain. They enable one generation to pass on a heritage of guidance and hope to another and give structure to families and institutions.

Paul passed on a "basic" to young Timothy. He gave him a "solemn warning before God" to be faithful in his responsibilities to Christ. "Preach the Word!" he wrote. "Be persistent whether it is convenient or not. Patiently correct and encourage your people with good teaching," he concluded.

That "warning" has never been more important than it is now. We who are His disciples must be willing to listen, hear, obey and follow His "basic" teachings.

Prayer: It is so easy, Father, to forget what matters most in life. Help us to accept and follow the "basics" of Your Word and live lives that are pleasing to You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Preach the word of God. Be prepared, whether the time is favorable or not. Patiently correct, rebuke, and encourage your people with good teaching. 2 Timothy 4:1-2

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

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 03.07.25

8 20 48 58 60 7

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$256,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 03.08.25

1 30 31 36 43 9

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$25,700,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 03.08.25

9 20 31 40 44 10

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 45 Mins 14 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 03.08.25

6 9 11 14 29

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$60,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 03.08.25

21 24 37 62 68 11

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 03.08.25

2 4 16 23 63 13

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$335,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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Upcoming Groton Events

- 01/05/2025 Pancake Sunday, Historical Society Fundraiser, 10am-1pm, Community Center
- 01/26/2025 Groton Robotics Pancake Feed at the Community Center 10am-1pm
- 01/26/2025 87th Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm
- 02/02/2025 Pancake Sunday, Historical Society Fundraiser, 10am-1pm, Community Center
- 02/05/2025 FB Live Electronic Hwy 12 Sign Drawing City Hall 12pm
- 03/02/2025 Pancake Sunday, Historical Society Fundraiser, 10am-1pm, Community Center
- 03/22/2025 Spring Vendor Fair at the GHS Gym 10am-2pm
- 04/05/2025 Dueling Duo Baseball/Softball Fundraiser at the Legion Post #39, 6-11:30pm
- 04/06/2025 Pancake Sunday, Historical Society Fundraiser, 10am-1pm, Community Center
- 04/12/2025 Lion's Club Easter Egg Hunt at the City Park 10am Sharp
- 05/03/2025 Lion's Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
- 05/12/2025 High School Girls Golf Meet at Olive Grove
- 05/26/2025 Memorial Day Services Groton Union Cemetery with lunch at Legion Post #39, 12pm
- 06/07/2025 Day of Play
- 06/13/2025 SDSU 4 Person Scramble at Olive Grove
- 06/21/2025 Groton Triathlon
- 06/23/2025 Ladies 2 Person Scramble at Olive Grove
- 07/04/2025 Firecracker Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 07/13/2025 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm
- 07/09/2025 Legion Auxiliary #39 Salad Buffet & Dessert Bar at the Groton Legion 11am-1pm
- 07/16/2025 Men's Pro Am Golf at Olive Grove
- 07/25/2025 Ferney Open Scramble Golf at Olive Grove
- 08/01/2025 Wine on Nine Fundraiser at Olive Grove
- 08/09/2025 2nd Annual Celebration in the Park/Rib Cook-Off 1-9:30pm
- 08/23/2025 Glacial Tournament at Olive Grove
- 09/06/2025 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
- 09/07/2025 Sunflower Classic Couples Scramble at Olive Grove
- 10/31/2025 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm
- 11/27/2025 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1:30pm
- 12/06/2025 Olive Grove Holiday Party and Silent Live Auction Fundraiser

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News from the **AP** Associated Press

Saturday's Scores

The Associated Press

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL

SDHSAA Class A Region 2 Playoffs SoDak Qualifier

Clark-Willow Lake 65, Deuel 43

Hamlin 77, Sioux Valley 46

SDHSAA Class A Region 3 Playoffs SoDak Qualifier

West Central 53, Madison 44

SDHSAA Class A Region 4 SoDak 16 Qualifier

Lennox 53, Vermillion 48

Sioux Falls Christian 79, Dakota Valley 38

SDHSAA Class A Region 5 Playoffs SoDak Qualifier

Hanson 77, Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 44

McCook Central-Montrose 55, Wagner 38

SDHSAA Class A Region 6 Playoffs SoDak Qualifier

Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 58, Platte-Geddes 55

Mobridge-Pollock 66, Stanley County 54

SDHSAA Class A Region 7 Playoffs SoDak Qualifier

St. Francis Indian 58, Pine Ridge 57

Winner 72, Mahpiya Luta Red Cloud 55

SDHSAA Class AA SoDak 16 State Qualifier

Brandon Valley 53, T F Riggs High School 42

Harrisburg 70, Rapid City Stevens 59

Huron 68, Sturgis Brown High School 58

Mitchell 61, Rapid City Central 49

Sioux Falls Jefferson 58, Sioux Falls Washington 48

Sioux Falls Lincoln 48, Yankton 26

Sioux Falls O'Gorman 74, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 65

Spearfish 54, Tea 48, OT

SDHSAA Class B Region 1 Playoffs SoDak Qualifier

Aberdeen Christian 49, Waubay/Summit 22

Waverly-South Shore 62, Leola-Frederick High School 57

SDHSAA Class B Region 2 Playoffs SoDak Qualifier

DeSmet 47, Castlewood 45, OT

Wessington Springs 61, Wolsey-Wessington 37

SDHSAA Class B Region 3 Playoffs SoDak Qualifier

Dell Rapids St Mary 69, Colman-Egan 59

Howard 49, Bridgewater-Emery 48

Viborg-Hurley 71, Centerville 37

SDHSAA Class B Region 4 Playoffs SoDak Qualifier

Freeman 86, Parkston 76

SDHSAA Class B Region 5 Playoffs SoDak Qualifier

Gregory 47, Corsica/Stickney 12

Lyman 72, Lower Brule 59

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

March Madness: Omaha headed to 1st NCAA Tournament, even with a loss in Summit League final

STIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Omaha is headed to its first NCAA Tournament — even if the Mavericks lose the Summit League championship game.

Omaha will play St. Thomas in the tournament final Sunday night, but St. Thomas is ineligible for the NCAA Tournament while completing its transition to Division I. That means Omaha will receive the league's automatic bid no matter the result, because the Mavericks won the regular-season conference title.

Tony Osburn scored 30 points in Omaha's 100-75 victory over South Dakota in the semifinals Saturday night. St. Thomas beat North Dakota 85-69.

Playing its 14th season since moving up to Division I status, Omaha is in the Summit League championship game for the third time but has never won it.

St. Thomas was kicked out of its Division III league for being too dominant. The Minnesota school then jumped all the way up to Division I. This is the final year the Tommies won't be eligible for the NCAA Tournament.

South Dakota law raises questions about future of massive Midwest pipeline

By SARAH RAZA and JACK DURA Associated Press

STIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A new law in South Dakota prohibiting the use of eminent domain to acquire land for carbon capture pipelines raises questions about the viability of a proposed 2,500-mile (4,023-kilometer) project snaking through five Midwest states.

Summit Carbon Solutions, the company behind the estimated \$8.9-billion pipeline, vowed to keep pursuing the project despite South Dakota Gov. Larry Rhoden's announcement Thursday that he had signed a bill into law that will make routing the line much more difficult. The law bans Summit from forcing South Dakota landowners to allow the pipeline through their property.

Plans call for the pipeline to carry greenhouse gas emissions from more than 50 ethanol plants in Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota to a spot in North Dakota, where it would be permanently stored underground.

Legal action is possible

It's unclear whether Summit will pursue legal action but the company said in a statement that "all options are on the table" and the project "moves forward" in other states. The company promised it would have more news soon.

Large pipeline projects typically rely on eminent domain, with companies arguing that even if most landowners agree to grant access to their property, a project can be scuttled if only a few refuse.

Summit says the company, which has secured over 2,700 easements across the region, has approval for routes in Iowa and North Dakota and a leg in Minnesota.

Can the line be routed through Minnesota?

The current proposed route would cut through nearly 700 miles (1,126.5 kilometers) of South Dakota before entering North Dakota, so rerouting to the east through Minnesota would be a big challenge.

A Summit spokesperson did not respond to questions Friday about whether the company would consider a new route.

The sponsor of the South Dakota bill, Republican Rep. Karla Lems, said Summit could either reroute its pipeline through Minnesota into North Dakota or "negotiate with landowners in South Dakota" and go around opponents.

Gov. Rhoden said the South Dakota law wasn't intended to kill the project and suggested Summit see it as "an opportunity to reset."

Minnesota is a relatively small part of Summit's overall project. The only segment approved in the state is a 28-mile (45-kilometer) leg from an ethanol plant near Fergus Falls to the North Dakota border. Sum-

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mit's project also includes two legs in southern Minnesota that would go into Iowa.

A Minnesota Public Utilities Commission spokesperson did not respond to phone or email messages.

The pipeline's importance to the ethanol industry

The country's transition to electric vehicles has been slower than many people expected, but most think a shift away from internal combustion engines will eventually happen.

Nearly 40% of the nation's corn crop is brewed into ethanol, which is blended into most gasoline sold in the U.S. Midwest farmers and the ethanol industry therefore see it as essential to have new markets as less of the fuel additive goes to power cars.

They see passenger jet fuel as a potentially huge new market for ethanol. However, under current rules the process for turning ethanol into aviation fuel would need to emit less carbon dioxide to qualify for tax breaks intended to reduce greenhouses.

The carbon capture pipeline is a key part of achieving those goals, Iowa Renewable Fuels Association Executive Director Monte Shaw said.

Walt Wendland, who runs an ethanol plant in Onida, South Dakota, said the "ethanol industry is a margin business" and the new state law will put South Dakota ethanol producers at a disadvantage.

"Ever since I built a plant, I never wanted an advantage, just don't put me at a disadvantage," Wendland said.

Will the pipeline ever be built?

It has been four years since Summit proposed building the pipeline, along with two other companies that later abandoned their plans. It has been a challenging process for Summit, which dealt with lawsuits in Nebraska and elsewhere, opposition before a regulatory commission in Iowa and now the eminent domain ban in South Dakota.

In its statement, Summit expressed optimism about the future but didn't offer specifics about how it could build a pipeline without eminent domain authority in South Dakota.

Since the pipeline was proposed, the federal government's approach to climate change also has changed dramatically. Democratic President Joe Biden increased tax incentives under the Inflation Reduction Act and Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to encourage carbon capture as an effort to slow climate change.

However, Republican President Donald Trump has emphasized the need for more oil and gas drilling and coal mining, and has put far less emphasis on alternative energy. Trump has not indicated whether his views will lead to changing federal policy regarding carbon capture pipelines.

Osburn scores 30 points, Omaha knock offs South Dakota in Summit League Tournament semifinal 100-75

By The Associated Press undefined

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Tony Osburn scored 30 points and top-seeded Omaha beat No. 5 seed South Dakota 100-75 on Saturday night in a Summit League Tournament semifinal.

Omaha (21-12) will make its third appearance in the championship game against St. Thomas on Sunday. The Mavericks, in their 14th season at Division I, have already clinched the conference's automatic berth to NCAA Tournament — the program's first — due to the fact that the Tommies are in their final year of postseason ineligibility following the transition from Division III.

Osburn shot 9 for 11 (8 for 9 from 3-point range) and 4 of 4 from the free-throw line. Marquel Sutton scored 19 points and added eight rebounds. JJ White finished with 14 points and six assists.

The Coyotes (19-14) were led by Chase Forte, who posted 24 points and three steals. South Dakota also got 13 points from Kaleb Stewart. Paul Bruns finished with 10 points and seven rebounds.

Omaha led 55-26 at halftime, with Osburn racking up 18 points. Omaha opened the second half with an 8-0 run to extend the lead to 37 points.

Brooklyn Meyer, Timmer have double-doubles, No. 25 South Dakota State women reach Summit final

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Brooklyn Meyer had 22 points and 10 rebounds, Haleigh Timmer also had a double-double and No. 25 South Dakota State advanced to the Summit League championship game for the 14th time in 17 seasons with an 83-55 win over North Dakota on Saturday.

Paige Meyer had 17 points for the Jackrabbits (29-3), the two-time defending champions who entered the tournament as the No. 1 seed for the fifth-straight season. Timmer had 14 points and 10 rebounds and Mesa Byom added 11 points.

South Dakota State, seeking its 12th title since becoming eligible in 2009, faces the winner of Kansas City-Oral Roberts in Sunday's championship. The Jackrabbits are 40-5 all-time in the tourney, went undefeated in league for the third year in a row and have an 18-game winning streak since losing to now No. 1 Texas.

South Dakota State held the fighting Hawks to 29% shooting and had a 52-26 rebounding edge, 18-5 on the offensive glass. That led to a 42-12 advantage in points in the paint and 22-4 on second-chance points.

Kiera Pemberton had 23 points for fifth-seeded North Dakota (12-19).

The only tie was at 6 then Timmer scored the next seven points for the Jackrabbits, igniting a 12-3 run. Despite missing all seven 3-pointers and going 5 of 20 from the field in the second quarter, SDSU upped its lead to 34-21 at the half.

Brooklyn Meyer had a pair of three-point plays and eight points and Paige Meyer had a pair of 3-pointers in a 16-3 run in the third quarter, with the second 3 just before the midpoint making it 53-28.

Panama releases dozens of detained deportees from US into limbo following human rights criticism

BY MEGAN JANETSKY, ALMA SOLIS and MATÍAS DELACROIX Associated Press

PANAMA CITY (AP) — After weeks of lawsuits and human rights criticism, Panama on Saturday released dozens of migrants who were held for weeks in a remote camp after being deported from the United States, telling them they have 30 days to leave the Central American nation.

It thrust many like Hayatullah Omagh, a 29-year-old who fled Afghanistan in 2022 after the Taliban took control, into a legal limbo, scrambling to find a path forward.

"We are refugees. We do not have money. We cannot pay for a hotel in Panama City, we do not have relatives," Omagh told the Associated Press in an interview. "I can't go back to Afghanistan under any circumstances ... It is under the control of the Taliban, and they want to kill me. How can I go back?"

Authorities have said deportees will have the option of extending their stay by 60 days if they need it, but after that many like Omagh don't know what they will do.

Omagh climbed off a bus in Panama City alongside 65 migrants from China, Russia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Nepal and other nations after spending weeks detained in poor conditions by the Panamanian government, which has said it wants to work with the Trump administration "to send a signal of deterrence" to people hoping to migrate.

Human rights groups and lawyers advocating for the migrants were waiting at the bus terminal, and scrambled to find the released migrants shelter and other resources. Dozens of other people remained in the camp.

Among those getting off buses were migrants fleeing violence and repression in Pakistan and Iran, and 27-year-old Nikita Gaponov, who fled Russia due to repression for being part of the LGBTQ+ community and who said he was detained at the U.S. border, but not allowed to make an asylum claim.

"Once I get off the bus, I'll be sleeping on the ground tonight," Gaponov said.

Others turned their eyes north once again, saying that even though they had already been deported, they had no other option than to continue after crossing the world to reach the U.S.

The deportees, largely from Asian countries, were part of a deal struck between the Trump administration and Panama and Costa Rica as the U.S. government attempts to speed up deportations. The administration

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sent hundreds of people, many families with children, to the two Central American countries as a stopover while authorities organize a way to send them back to their countries of origin.

Critics described it as a way for the U.S. to export its deportation process.

The agreement fueled human rights concerns when hundreds of deportees detained in a hotel in Panama City held up notes to their windows pleading for help and saying they were scared to return to their own countries.

Under international refugee law, people have the right to apply for asylum when they are fleeing conflict or persecution.

Those that refused to return home were later sent to a remote camp near Panama's border with Colombia, where they spent weeks in poor conditions, were stripped of their phones, unable to access legal council and were not told where they were going next.

Lawyers and human rights defenders warned that Panama and Costa Rica were turning into "black holes" for deportees, and said their release was a way for Panamanian authorities to wash their hands of the deportees amid mounting human rights criticism.

Those who were released Saturday night, like Omagh, said they could not return home.

As an atheist and member of an ethnic minority group in Afghanistan known as the Hazara, he said returning home under the rule of the Taliban — which swept back into power after the Biden administration pulled out of the country — would mean he would be killed. He only went to the U.S. after trying for years to live in Pakistan, Iran and other countries but being denied visas.

Omagh was deported after presenting himself to American authorities and asking to seek asylum in the U.S., which he was denied.

"My hope was freedom. Just freedom," he said. "They didn't give me the chance. I asked many times to speak to an asylum officer and they told me 'No, no, no, no, no.'"

Still, he said that leaving the camp was a relief. Omagh and other migrants who spoke to the AP detailed scarce food, sweltering heat with little relief and aggressive Panamanian authorities.

In one case, Omagh and others said, a Chinese man went on a week-long hunger strike. In another, a small riot broke out because guards refused to give a migrant their phone. The riot, they said, was suppressed by armed guards.

Panamanian authorities denied accusations about camp conditions, but blocked journalists from accessing the camp and cancelled a planned press visit last week.

While international aid organizations said they would organize travel to a third country for people who didn't want to return home, Panamanian authorities said the people released had already refused help.

Omagh said he was told in the camp he could be sent to a third country if it gives people from Afghanistan visas. He said that would be incredibly difficult because few nations open their doors to people with a Afghan passport.

He said he asked authorities in the camp multiple times if he could seek asylum in Panama, and said he was told that "we do not accept asylum."

"None of them wants to stay in Panama. They want to go to the U.S.," said Carlos Ruiz-Hernandez, Panama's deputy foreign minister, in an interview with the AP last month.

That was the case for some, like one Chinese woman who spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity, fearing repercussions from Panamanian authorities.

Upon getting off the bus, the first thing she wanted to do was find a Coca-Cola. Then, she'd find a way back to the U.S.

"I still want to continue to go to the United States and fulfill my American dream," she said.

Pope, responding well, rests as Vatican marks another Holy Year event without him

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press
ROME (AP) —

Pope Francis continued his recovery from double pneumonia Sunday after doctors reported some positive news: After more than three weeks in the hospital, the 88-year-old pope is responding well to treatment and has shown a "gradual, slight improvement" in recent days.

In the early Sunday update, the Vatican said Francis was resting after a quiet night. For the fourth Sunday in a row, the pope will not appear for his weekly noon blessing, though the Vatican planned to distribute the text he would have delivered if he were well enough.

The Argentine pope, who has chronic lung disease and had part of one lung removed as a young man, has remained stable, with no fever and good oxygen levels in his blood for several days, doctors reported in a Vatican statement Saturday.

The doctors said that such stability "as a consequence testifies to a good response to therapy." It was the first time the doctors had reported that Francis was responding positively to the treatment for the complex lung infection that was diagnosed after he was hospitalized on Feb. 14.

But they kept his prognosis as "guarded", meaning he's not out of danger.

In his absence, the Vatican's day-to-day operations continued alongside celebrations of its Holy Year, the once-every-quarter-century Jubilee that brings millions of pilgrims to Rome. On Sunday, Canadian Cardinal Michael Czerny, who is close to Francis, celebrates the Holy Year Mass for volunteers that Francis was supposed to have celebrated.

Francis has been using high flows of supplemental oxygen to help him breathe during the day and a noninvasive mechanical ventilation mask at night.

Francis was hospitalized Feb. 14 for what was then just a bad case of bronchitis. The infection progressed into a complex respiratory tract infection and double pneumonia that has sidelined Francis for the longest period of his 12-year papacy and raised questions about the future.

Macron's diplomatic comeback: from France's domestic crisis to reshaping Europe's defense

By SYLVIE CORBET Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — French President Emmanuel Macron is back at the center of global diplomacy, seeking to ease relations with President Donald Trump, championing a Ukraine peace plan alongside his British counterpart, and seeing his longstanding desire to boost European defense turning into reality.

Six months ago, Macron seemed weaker than ever after his call for early legislative elections produced a hung parliament, sparking an unprecedented crisis. Known for his nonstop political activism, Macron shifted his focus to foreign policy, leaving domestic struggles largely to the prime minister.

Now, he appears as the one leader who speaks to Trump several times per week and takes the lead in European support for Ukraine, while positioning himself as the commander-in-chief of the European Union's only nuclear power.

Key world player

Macron, 47, is one of the few leaders who knew Trump during his first term in office, maintaining despite disagreements a cordial relationship, which both describe as "friendship."

He was the first European leader to visit Trump since his reelection, seeking to persuade him not to abandon Ukraine in pursuit of a peace deal with Russia.

Macron is also a heavyweight of European politics, and shifting U.S. policies gave momentum to his longstanding views.

Since he was first elected in 2017, Macron has pushed for a stronger, more sovereign Europe. That same year, in a sweeping speech at Sorbonne University, he called for a common European defense policy, with

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increased military cooperation and joint defense initiatives.

He later lamented the "brain death" of the NATO military alliance, insisting the EU should step up and start acting as a strategic world power.

On Thursday, EU leaders committed to strengthening defenses and freeing up hundreds of billions of euros for security in the wake of Trump's warnings that they might face the Russian threat alone.

Nuclear power

In a resounding declaration last week, Macron announced he would discuss extending France's nuclear deterrent to European partners to help protect the continent.

France's nuclear power is inherited from the strategy set by wartime hero Gen. Charles de Gaulle, president from 1958 to 1969, who sought to maintain France's independence from the U.S. and assert the country's role as a global power. That went through the development of an independent French nuclear arsenal.

Poland and Baltic nations welcomed the proposal.

France's Minister for European affairs Benjamin Haddad praised Macron's efforts, saying they were aimed at ensuring that "in the face of this world upheaval, Europeans are not spectators but players."

New British and German partners

Some other key players appear to back Macron's approach.

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, in office for eight months, has sought closer defense cooperation with Europe as part of a "reset" with the EU after years of bitterness over Brexit.

Macron and Starmer are now spearheading a desperate diplomatic drive to bolster Ukraine's defenses, drawing up a peace plan with Kyiv at its core. That plan includes the possibility of sending European troops to Ukraine to enforce a potential peace agreement.

Meanwhile, Germany's conservative election winner Friedrich Merz said his top priority would be to "strengthen Europe as soon as possible" and gradually move toward "real independence" from the U.S.

Only three days after his victory last month, Merz, who has called for a discussion on "nuclear sharing" with France, traveled to Paris for a working dinner with Macron.

No statement was released after the meeting, but French officials with knowledge of the matter said both men's visions for Europe align. They spoke anonymously because the talks were not to be made public.

Russia's criticism

Russia's foreign ministry accused Macron of "demonstrative militarism dictated by the domestic agenda."

The ministry said that Macron seeks to distract the French public from "worsening socio-economic problems in France and the European Union."

Moscow dismissed Macron's nuclear deterrent offer as "extremely confrontational," saying the remarks reflected Paris' ambitions to "become the nuclear 'patron' of all of Europe," despite the fact that France's nuclear forces are far smaller than those of the U.S.

Russian President Vladimir Putin drew a comparison with Napoleon, saying that some people "want to return to the times of Napoleon, forgetting how it ended" — a reference to the emperor's failed invasion of Russia in 1812. Macron responded by calling Putin "an imperialist."

Reinvigorated at home

Reelected in 2022, Macron last year struggled not to become a lame duck after his call for early legislative elections led to a chaotic situation in parliament, delaying the approval of the state budget and forcing the quick replacement of the prime minister.

However, the French Constitution grants the president some substantial powers over foreign policy, European affairs and defense. Macron has a presidential mandate until 2027 and he has said he won't step down before the end of his term.

Macron's activism on the global stage drew criticism from opposition leaders.

Far-right National Rally party vice president Sébastien Chenu described Macron's "moody" character as "one of the biggest issues" for French diplomacy. "He offended many people, he often changed his mind," Chenu said.

The head of the hard-left France Unbowed group at the National Assembly, Mathilde Panot, also voiced

concerns.

"The situation is too serious and the President of the Republic is too weakened for him to decide on his own," she said. "We don't just want to be consulted. ... It's up to the parliament to decide on such serious issues."

How a canoe helped turn Hawaiian culture into a source of pride and even influenced Hollywood

By AUDREY McAVOY Associated Press

KANEOHE, Hawaii (AP) — Hawaii's American colonizers once banned the Hawaiian language in schools. Some Native Hawaiians tried to lighten their skin with lye. Many people believed Polynesian voyagers had simply lucked into finding the islands by drifting on logs.

But a canoe launched half a century ago helped turn Hawaiian culture from a source of shame to one of pride, reviving the skill of traveling the seas by decoding the stars, waves and weather. That vessel — a double-hulled sailing canoe called the Hokulea, after the Hawaiian name for the star Arcturus — would even influence the Disney blockbuster "Moana" decades later.

To mark the anniversary, the Hokulea's early crew members gathered Saturday for ceremonial hula and kava drinking at the Oahu beach where the canoe launched on March 8, 1975, and where they began their first training sails.

"It's a vehicle of exploration. It's a vehicle of discovery," Nainoa Thompson, the CEO of the Polynesian Voyaging Society, said in an interview. "It's also been our vehicle for justice as Native Hawaiians, as Pacific Islanders, as a very unique, special culture of the Earth."

In 1980, Thompson became the first Hawaiian in six centuries to navigate to Tahiti without a compass or other modern instruments — a span of about 2,700 miles (4,300 kilometers).

Hawaiian culture had long been repressed

Thompson, 71, remembers stories from his grandmother, born less than a decade after the U.S.-backed overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom in 1893. Teachers beat her for speaking Hawaiian, and her uncle tried to wash the brown off his skin with lye.

When she had children, she didn't teach them Hawaiian.

"If her children tried to be Hawaiian, they would get hurt in the new society," Thompson said. "And so you have to become something else."

A resurgence of Hawaiian pride and identity starting in the late 1960s and 1970s set off a cultural renaissance. Artist Herb Kane began painting ancient canoes based on drawings from European explorers and got the idea to build a double-hulled canoe with tall, triangular sails similar to those his ancestors had used hundreds of years earlier.

Debunking the drifting log theory

At the time, many people accepted the notion that Polynesians settled islands by accident.

Norwegian explorer Thor Heyerdahl had theorized that Polynesians arrived from South America, pushed west by the prevailing winds and currents. In 1947, he set out to prove it by floating from Peru on a log raft. He landed in the Tuamotu Islands north of Tahiti and wrote a best-seller.

Heyerdahl's theory took hold even though Hawaiians for generations had passed down stories of people who traveled from the distant lands -- including Kahiki, possibly what is today known as Tahiti — by canoe, bringing with them edible plants such as ulu, or breadfruit.

Kane, University of Hawaii archaeologist Ben Finney and Honolulu surfer Tommy Holmes wanted to challenge the drifting log concept. They started the Polynesian Voyaging Society, intent on sailing a canoe to Tahiti without modern instruments.

They needed a navigator. Traditional long-distance voyaging skills had all but disappeared, but a Peace Corps volunteer on the isolated atoll of Satawal in Micronesia told them about Pius "Mau" Pailug, who had been taught navigation from childhood. Over about a month in 1976, Pailug guided the Hokulea from Hawaii to Tahiti — about the same distance from Hawaii to California.

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Some 17,000 people thronged the Tahitian shore to greet them and witness what one crew member called "the spaceship of our ancestors."

Former Hawaii Gov. John Waihe'e was in his 20s then, and a delegate to the 1978 state Constitutional Convention. The Hokulea's success spurred delegates to make Hawaiian an official state language even though few residents still spoke it, he said. They also created the Office of Hawaiian Affairs to improve the well-being of Native Hawaiians.

"It helped us believe in everything that we were doing," Waihe'e said.

Today, two dozen schools have Hawaiian language immersion programs, and Census data show more than 27,000 people in Hawaii, and 34,000 in the U.S., speak Hawaiian at home.

Bringing dignity to the elders

In 1978, an ill-prepared crew set out for Tahiti in poor weather, and the Hokulea capsized just hours after leaving port. Crew member Eddie Aikau paddled his surfboard to get help. The Coast Guard rescued the canoe, but Aikau was never found.

The voyaging society overhauled itself in response, setting clear goals and training requirements. Thompson studied at a Honolulu planetarium and spent over a year under the tutelage of Pailug. In 1980, he navigated to Tahiti.

Thompson said he felt a deep obligation to fulfill Aikau's wish to follow the path of his ancestors and "pull Tahiti out of the sea." But he didn't celebrate when the Hokulea got there.

"I just went into a quiet, dark place and just told Eddie we pulled it out of the sea," Thompson said. "There's no high fives. It's too profound."

In decades since, the society has sailed the canoe around the Pacific and world, including New Zealand, Japan, South Africa and New York.

It inspired other Pacific Island communities to revive or newly appreciate their own wayfinding traditions.

In Rapa Nui, Chile — also known as Easter Island — islanders have embarked on long-distance canoe voyages. The University of Guam has a navigation program. Similar trends have surfaced in the Cook Islands, French Polynesia, Samoa and Tonga, said Mary Therese Perez Hattori, the director of the Pacific Islands Development Program at the East-West Center.

"We come from very, very ancient societies," said Hattori, who is Chamorro, the Indigenous people of the Mariana Islands. "Hokulea sort of helped us remind the world of this."

Hollywood makes a blockbuster

Hokulea's influence spread in 2016 when Disney released "Moana," an animated film about a 16-year-old girl who learns wayfinding about 3,000 years ago.

Thompson spoke to hundreds on the movie's creative team about wayfinding and the importance of canoes to Pacific culture, said Aaron Kandell, a Hawaii-born writer who worked on the movie.

Kandell, who is not Native Hawaiian, spent a year studying navigation with the Polynesian Voyaging Society during his 20s and incorporated that into the script, including where Moana learns to use her outstretched hand to track the stars and runs her hand in the ocean to feel the currents.

Crew members taught animators about coconut fiber ropes so they would look right when Moana pulls on them, Kandell said.

The Polynesian Voyaging Society's initial plan was to sail to Tahiti once, supporting a documentary, book and research papers. Thompson remembers pushing Hokulea's hull into the water with the crew back in 1975.

"It was really a moment — I didn't recognize it — but this was going to change everything," he said.

Israel will send a delegation to Qatar to try to 'advance' ceasefire negotiations

By WAFAA SHURAFU Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israel said that it would send a delegation to Qatar on Monday "in an effort to advance the negotiations" around the ceasefire in Gaza, while Hamas reported "positive signals" in talks with Egyptian and Qatari mediators on starting negotiations on the truce's delayed second phase.

The statement from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office gave no details except to say it had "accepted the invitation of U.S.-backed mediators." Hamas spokesman Abdel-Latif al-Qanoua also gave no details. Talks on the second phase should have started a month ago.

There was no immediate comment from the White House, which on Wednesday made the surprise confirmation of direct U.S. talks with Hamas.

Over the past week, Israel has pressed Hamas to release half of the remaining hostages in return for an extension of the first phase, which ended last weekend, and a promise to negotiate a lasting truce. Hamas is believed to have 24 living hostages and the bodies of 35 others.

Israel last weekend cut off all supplies to Gaza and its more than 2 million people as it pressed Hamas to agree. The militant group has said that the move would affect the remaining hostages as well.

The ceasefire has paused the deadliest and most destructive fighting ever between Israel and Hamas, sparked by the Hamas-led attack on southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023. The first phase allowed the return of 25 living hostages and the remains of eight others in exchange for the release of nearly 2,000 Palestinian prisoners.

Israeli forces have withdrawn to buffer zones inside Gaza, hundreds of thousands of displaced Palestinians have returned to northern Gaza for the first time since early in the war and hundreds of trucks of aid entered per day until Israel suspended supplies.

Before their weekly rally in Tel Aviv, relatives of hostages appealed to U.S. President Donald Trump, who met with eight former hostages on Wednesday.

"Mr. President, a return to war means a death sentence for the living hostages left behind. Please, sir, do not allow Netanyahu to sacrifice them."

Muslim countries reject moving Palestinians from Gaza

Also on Saturday, foreign ministers from Muslim nations rejected Trump's calls to empty the Gaza Strip of its Palestinian population and backed a plan for an administrative committee to govern the territory to allow reconstruction to proceed.

The foreign ministers gathered in Saudi Arabia for a special session of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to address the situation in Gaza. The OIC has 57 nations with largely Muslim populations.

They supported a plan to rebuild Gaza put forward by Egypt and backed by Arab states, including Saudi Arabia and Jordan.

Without mentioning Trump, the ministers' statement said that they rejected "plans aimed at displacing the Palestinian people individually or collectively ... as ethnic cleansing, a grave violation of international law and a crime against humanity."

They also condemned "policies of starvation" they said aim to push Palestinians to leave, a reference to Israel's cutting off all supplies to Gaza.

Trump has called for Gaza's population to be resettled elsewhere permanently, so that the United States can take over the territory and develop it for others. Palestinians have rejected calls to leave.

The ministers at the OIC gathering supported a proposal that an administrative committee replace Hamas in governing Gaza. The committee would work "under the umbrella" of the Palestinian Authority, based in the occupied West Bank. Israel has rejected the PA having any role in Gaza, but hasn't put forward an alternative for postwar rule.

The foreign ministers of France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom said in a joint statement that they welcome the Arab initiative for a Gaza reconstruction plan, calling it "a realistic path." They added that "Hamas must neither govern Gaza nor be a threat to Israel anymore," and they support the central

role for the PA.

Early Saturday, an Israeli strike killed two Palestinians in the southernmost city of Rafah, the Health Ministry there said. The Israeli military said that it struck several men who appeared to be flying a drone that entered Israel.

Israel's military offensive has killed more than 48,000 Palestinians in Gaza, mostly women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which doesn't say how many of the dead were militants.

Hamas' attack in October 2023 killed around 1,200 people, mostly civilians, inside Israel and took 251 people hostage. Most have been released in ceasefire agreements or other arrangements. The militants also hold the remains of a soldier killed in the 2014 war.

Consumer prices fell in China in February and remain flat in a sluggish economy

BEIJING (AP) — Consumer prices fell in China in February for the first time in 13 months, as persistent weak demand was compounded by the early timing of the Lunar New Year holiday.

The National Bureau of Statistics said Sunday that the consumer price index dropped 0.7% in February compared to a year ago. On a monthly basis, prices were down 0.2% from January.

While many other countries wrestle with inflation, China's policymakers face flat to falling prices, and the possibility they could evolve into a deflationary spiral that would drag down the economy. The government stressed the need to increase domestic demand and consumer spending in an annual report last week to its ceremonial legislature, the National People's Congress, but held back on unveiling any dramatic new steps to boost the economy.

The Lunar New Year, a time when spending rises for travel, dining out and entertainment, came in late January this year instead of February, as it's based on the cycles of the moon. Holiday spending helped drive the consumer price index up 0.5% in January, but it then fell last month compared to 2024's elevated level.

Factoring out the impact of the holiday, the index rose 0.1% last month, Dong Lijuan, a statistician at the government's statistics bureau, said in a written analysis.

That is still far lower than ideal. Last week's government annual report included an inflation target of 2% for this year, but it is likely to fall far short of that goal. The consumer price index was flat in 2024, rising 0.2%.

A burgeoning trade war with the United States could add to China's economic headwinds.

Besides the early Lunar New Year, two other factors contributed to falling prices in February, Dong said: Better weather boosted farm production, driving down the price of fresh vegetables and automakers also stepped up promotions to try to boost sales, reducing prices for new cars.

The producer price index, which measures the wholesale price of goods, fell 2.2% in February, the statistics bureau said. Producer prices have been falling more sharply than consumer prices, putting pressure on companies to cut labor and other costs.

No disease is deadlier in Africa than malaria. Trump's US aid cuts weaken the fight against it

By RODNEY MUHUMUZA and CHINEDU ASADU Associated Press

KAMPALA, Uganda (AP) — Malaria season begins this month in a large part of Africa. No disease is deadlier on the continent, especially for children. But the Trump administration's decision to terminate 90% of USAID's foreign aid contracts has local health officials warning of catastrophe in some of the world's poorest communities.

Dr. Jimmy Opigo, who runs Uganda's malaria control program, told The Associated Press that USAID stop-work orders issued in late January left him and others "focusing on disaster preparedness." The U.S. is the top bilateral funder of anti-malaria efforts in Africa.

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Anti-malarial medicines and insecticide-treated bed nets to help control the mosquito-borne disease are "like our groceries," Opigo said. "There's got to be continuous supply."

As those dwindle with the U.S.-terminated contracts, he expects a rise in cases later this year of severe malaria, which includes problems like organ failure. There is no cure. Vaccines being rolled out in parts of Africa are imperfect but are expected to largely continue with the support of a global vaccine alliance.

The Washington-based Malaria No More says new modeling shows that just a year of disruption in the malaria-control supply chain would lead to nearly 15 million additional cases and 107,000 additional deaths globally. It has urged the Trump administration to "restart these life-saving programs before outbreaks get out of hand."

Africa's 1.5 billion people accounted for 95% of an estimated 597,000 malaria deaths worldwide in 2023, according to the World Health Organization.

Health workers in the three African nations most burdened by malaria — Nigeria, Congo and Uganda — described a cascade of effects with the end of most U.S. government support.

The U.S. has provided hundreds of millions of dollars every year to the three countries alone through the USAID-led President's Malaria Initiative.

The U.S. funding has often been channeled through a web of non-governmental organizations, medical charities and faith-based organizations in projects that made malaria prevention and treatment more accessible, even free, especially for rural communities.

Uganda in 2023 had 12.6 million malaria cases and nearly 16,000 deaths, many of them children under 5 and pregnant women, according to WHO.

Opigo said the U.S. has been giving between \$30 million and \$35 million annually for malaria control. He didn't say which contracts have been terminated but noted that field research was also affected.

Some of the USAID funding in Uganda paid for mosquito-spraying operations in remote areas. Those operations were supposed to begin in February ahead of the rainy season, when stagnant water becomes breeding ground for the wide-ranging anopheles mosquito. They have been suspended.

"We have to spray the houses before the rains, when the mosquitoes come to multiply," Opigo said.

Already, long lines of malaria patients can be seen outside clinics in many areas every year. Malaria accounts for 30% to 50% of outpatient visits to health facilities across the country, according to Uganda National Institute of Public Health.

Nigeria and Congo

Nigeria records a quarter of the world's malaria cases. But authorities have reduced malaria-related deaths there by 55% since 2000 with the support of the U.S. and others.

That support is part of the \$600 million in health assistance the west African country received from the U.S. in 2023, according to U.S. Embassy figures. It was not immediately clear whether all of that funding has stopped.

The President's Malaria Initiative has supported Nigeria's malaria response with nearly 164 million fast-acting medicines, 83 million insecticide-treated bed nets, over 100 million rapid diagnostic tests, 22 million preventive treatments in pregnancy and insecticide for 121,000 homes since 2011, the embassy says.

In Congo, U.S. government funding has contributed about \$650 million towards malaria control since 2010.

Now, some of the successes in fighting malaria in Congo are being threatened, which will complicate already difficult efforts to identify and track disease outbreaks across the vast country as supplies and expertise for malaria testing are affected.

Worsening conflict in Congo's east, where some health workers have fled, has raised the risk of infection, with little backup coming.

With the loss of substantial U.S. support, "a lot of people are going to be affected. Some people are really poor and cannot afford (malaria treatment)," said Dr. Yetunde Ayo-Oyalowo, a Nigerian who runs the Market Doctors nonprofit providing affordable local healthcare services.

Up to 40% of her organization's clients are diagnosed with malaria, Ayo-Oyalowo said.

There is hope among health workers in Africa that, even after the dismantling of USAID, some U.S. funding will continue flowing via other groups including the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and

Malaria. But that group also received U.S. support and has not issued a public statement on the dramatic cuts in U.S. aid.

Opigo in Uganda said the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Institutes of Health might be sources of help.

But he added: "We need to manage the relationship with the U.S. very carefully."

'Bloody Sunday' 60th anniversary marked in Selma with remembrances and concerns about the future

By KIM CHANDLER and SAFIYAH RIDDLE Associated Press

SELMA, Ala. (AP) — Charles Mauldin was near the front of a line of voting rights marchers walking in pairs across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama on March 7, 1965.

The marchers were protesting white officials' refusal to allow Black Alabamians to register to vote, as well as the killing days earlier of Jimmie Lee Jackson, a minister and voting rights organizer who was shot by a state trooper in nearby Marion.

At the apex of the span over the Alabama River, they saw what awaited them: a line of state troopers, deputies and men on horseback. After they approached, law enforcement gave a warning to disperse and then unleashed violence.

"Within about a minute or a half, they took their billy clubs, holding it on both ends, began to push us back to back us in, and then they began to beat men, women and children, and tear gas men, women and children, and cattle prod men, women and children viciously," said Mauldin, who was 17 at the time.

Alabama this weekend is marking the 60th anniversary of the clash that became known as Bloody Sunday. The attack shocked the nation and galvanized support for the U.S. Voting Rights Act of 1965. The annual commemoration pays homage to those who fought to secure voting rights for Black Americans and each year brings calls to recommit to the fight for equality.

For foot soldiers of the movement, the celebration comes amid concerns about new voting restrictions and the Trump administration's effort to remake federal agencies they said helped make America a democracy for all

"This country was not a democracy for Black folks until that happened," Mauldin said of voting rights. "And we're still constantly fighting to make that a more concrete reality for ourselves."

U.S. Rep. Terri Sewell of Alabama this week reintroduced legislation to restore a VRA requirement for jurisdictions with a history of racial discrimination to pre-clear new voting laws with the Justice Department. The legislation is named for John Lewis, the late Georgia congressman who was at the lead of the Bloody Sunday march.

"It is clear that the values that guided John Lewis and those foot soldiers across the Edmund Pettus Bridge are under attack every day. We see new efforts to roll back our progress and to make it harder for Americans to vote," Sewell said.

The bill has stalled repeatedly in Congress as opponents argue such measures are no longer needed because the country has changed since the 1960s.

The Bloody Sunday marchers walked in pairs across the Selma bridge. Mauldin was in the third pair of the line led by Lewis and Hosea Williams.

"We had steeled our nerves to a point where we were so determined that we were willing to confront. It was past being courageous. We were determined, and we were indignant," Mauldin recalled in an interview with The Associated Press.

Mauldin, who took a blow to the head, said he believes law enforcement officers were trying to incite a riot as they attacked marchers.

Kirk Carrington was just 13 on Bloody Sunday. As the violence erupted, a white man on a horse wielding a stick a chased him all the way back to the public housing projects where his family lived.

Carrington said he started marching after witnessing his father get belittled by his white employers

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when his father returned from service in World War II. Standing in Tabernacle Baptist Church where he was trained in non-violent protest tactics 60 years earlier, he was brought to tears thinking about what the people of his city achieved.

"When we started marching, we did not know the impact we would have in America. We knew after we got older and got grown that the impact it not only had in Selma, but the impact it had in the entire world," Carrington said.

Dr. Verdell Lett Dawson, who grew up in Selma, remembers a time when she was expected to lower her gaze if she passed a white person on the street to avoid making eye contact.

Dawson and Maudlin said they are concerned about the potential dismantling of the Department of Education and other changes to federal agencies. Trump has pushed to end diversity, equity and inclusion programs within the federal government.

Support from the federal government "is how Black Americans have been able to get justice, to get some semblance of equality, because left to states' rights, it is going to be the white majority that's going to rule," Dawson said.

"That that's a tragedy of 60 years later: what we are looking at now is a return to the 1950s," Dawson said.

Facing competition from Big Tech, states dangle incentives and loosen laws to attract power plants

By MARC LEVY Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — Facing projections of spiking energy demand, U.S. states are pressing for ways to build new power plants faster as policymakers increasingly worry about protecting their residents and economies from rising electric bills, power outages and other consequences of falling behind Big Tech in a race for electricity.

Some states are dangling financial incentives. Others are undoing decades of regulatory structures in what they frame as a race to serve the basic needs of residents, avoid a catastrophe and keep their economies on track in a fast-electrifying society.

"I don't think we've seen anything quite like this," said Todd Snitchler, president and CEO of the Electric Power Supply Association, which represents independent power plant owners.

The spike in demand for electricity is being driven, in large part, by the artificial intelligence race as tech companies are snapping up real estate and seeking power to feed their energy-hungry data centers. Federal incentives to rebuild the manufacturing sector also are helping drive demand.

In some cases, Big Tech is arranging its own power projects.

But energy companies also are searching for ways to capitalize on opportunities afforded by the first big increase in electricity consumption in a couple of decades, and that is pitting state political leaders against each other for the new jobs and investment that come with new power plants.

Governors want to fast-track power plants

Moves by states come as a fossil fuel - friendly President Donald Trump and Republican-controlled Congress take power in Washington, D.C., slashing regulations around oil and gas, boosting drilling opportunities and encouraging the construction of pipelines and refineries that can export liquefied natural gas.

States are seeking action, with the National Governors Association asking Congress to make it easier and faster to build power plants and criticizing the U.S. as among the slowest developed nations in approving energy projects.

But there may be less that the federal government can do right away about a looming power shortage, since greenlighting power plants to feed the electric grid is largely the province of state regulators and regional grid operators.

Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro wants to establish an agency to fast-track the construction of big power plants and dangle hundreds of millions of dollars in tax breaks for projects providing electricity to the grid.

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The state, and the country, needs more power plants to win the artificial intelligence race and provide reliable and affordable power to residents, said Shapiro, who suggested Pennsylvania may leave the regional grid operated by PJM Interconnection in favor of "going it alone."

"It has proven over the last number of years too darn hard to get enough new generation projects off the ground because of how slow PJM's queue is," Shapiro told a news conference on Feb. 27.

Indiana, Michigan and Louisiana are exploring ideas to attract nuclear power while Maryland lawmakers are floating ideas about commissioning the construction of a new power plant there.

In Ohio, a lawmaker wants to restrict the influence of electric utilities in hopes of giving independent power producers more incentive to build power plants to feed the state's fast-growing tech sector.

The bill, which awaits a vote, won the support of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel, the state's residential ratepayer watchdog, and business groups whose members care about electric prices. However, it split the energy sector between companies operating in competitive markets and those operating under state utility monopolies.

States competing against each other

In Missouri, utilities including Ameren and Evergy, as well as the Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry, labor unions and the state's top utility regulator are backing legislation to repeal a nearly half-century old law preventing utilities from charging customers to build a power plant until it is operational.

The law was approved in a 1976 voter referendum when states were looking to hedge against utilities saddling ratepayers with financing upfront, potentially bloated, inefficient or, worse, aborted power projects.

Consumer and environmental groups protested the bill, saying it would result in new natural gas plants that are likelier to be more costly to ratepayers.

Last year, similar legislation passed almost unanimously in Kansas, along with companion legislation extending tax breaks to new power plants.

Within months, Evergy announced alongside the state's leaders that it would build two 705-megawatt natural gas plants and said the legislation will "help Kansas compete with other states for investment and ultimately save customers money."

John Coffman, the utility consumer counsel for the Consumers Council of Missouri, said utilities are playing the two states, Missouri and Kansas, against each other and were planning to build the power plants anyway.

But, he said, "They're just looking for opportunities to squeeze more money out of the process."

Energy companies see an opportunity

Snitchler said action is being spurred by states realizing that longstanding power reserves are dwindling, especially as coal-fired and nuclear power plants retire, and now all sorts of power companies are leaping at the chance to make money.

A pitfall he sees in the race to build plants is an undoing of protections that some states once adopted to shield ratepayers and put the risk of building expensive power projects onto corporate shareholders.

"The problem, of course, is it shifts the risk back on the people who perhaps should not be bearing it," Snitchler said.

A Pennsylvania state lawmaker, Sen. Gene Yaw, wants to set up a massive power plant-financing fund like Texas, which established a \$10 billion low-interest loan program after the state was wracked by a deadly winter blackout in 2021.

Yaw, a Republican, has no misgivings about Pennsylvania helping finance power plants. Even by conservative estimates, the state will need dozens more power plants to meet projections of rising demand, he said.

"And what do we have underway or planned right now? Nothing," Yaw said. "And we haven't built anything since 2019. So we've got to do something to encourage people to come here and build in Pennsylvania just to maintain the status quo."

China learned from Trump's first trade war and changed its tactics when tariffs came again

By DIDI TANG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The leaders of both Canada and Mexico got on the phone with President Donald Trump this past week to seek solutions after he slapped tariffs on their countries, but China's president appears unlikely to make a similar call soon.

Beijing, which unlike America's close partners and neighbors has been locked in a trade and tech war with the U.S. for years, is taking a different approach to Trump in his second term, making it clear that any negotiations should be conducted on equal footing.

China's leaders say they are open to talks, but they also made preparations for the higher U.S. tariffs, which have risen 20% since Trump took office seven weeks ago. Intent on not being caught off guard as they were during Trump's first term, the Chinese were ready with retaliatory measures — imposing their own taxes this past week on key U.S. farm imports and more.

"As Washington escalates the tariff, Beijing doesn't see other options but to retaliate," said Sun Yun, director of the China program at the Stimson Center, a Washington-based think tank. "It doesn't mean Beijing doesn't want to negotiate, but it cannot be seen as begging for talks or mercy."

As the world's second-largest economy, China aspires to be a great power on both the regional and global stage, commanding respect from all countries, especially the United States, as proof that the Communist Party has made China prosperous and strong.

After the U.S. this past week imposed another 10% tariff, on top of the 10% imposed on Feb. 4, the Chinese foreign ministry uttered its sharpest retort yet: "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."

The harsh rhetoric echoed similar comments in 2018, when Trump launched his first trade war with China and it scrambled to line up tit-for-tat actions. Beijing's leaders have since developed a toolkit of tariffs, import curbs, export controls, sanctions, regulatory reviews and measures to limit companies from doing business in China.

All are designed to inflict pain on the U.S. economy and businesses in response to the American measures.

That allowed the Chinese government to react swiftly to Trump's recent across-the-board doubling of new tariffs on Chinese goods by rolling out a basket of retaliatory measures, including taxing many American farm goods at up to 15%, suspending U.S. lumber imports and blacklisting 15 U.S. companies.

Beijing showed restraint in its response to leave room for negotiation, analysts say.

Xi Jinping's leadership of the ruling Communist Party spans both of Trump's terms, giving Beijing more continuity in its planning. He is the one who decided it's not yet time to speak with Trump, said Daniel Russel, vice president for international security and diplomacy at the Asia Society Policy Institute.

"That's not a scheduling issue, it's leverage for China," said Russel, who previously served as the assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific Affairs. "Xi won't walk into a call if there's a chance he'll be harassed or humiliated and for both political and strategic reasons, Xi won't play the role of a supplicant."

"Instead, China is hitting back promptly — but judiciously — to each set of tariffs," Russel said.

At his annual press conference Friday, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said that "no country should fantasize that it can suppress, contain China while developing good relations with China."

"Such two-faced acts not only are bad for the stability of bilateral relations but also will not build mutual trust," Wang said. He added that China welcomes cooperation with the U.S., but noted that "if you keep pressuring, China will firmly retaliate."

Scott Kennedy, a trustee chair in Chinese business and economics at the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies, said the Chinese this time are "not psychologically shocked" by Trump's "shock-and-awe" tactics.

"They've seen this before," Kennedy said. "These are the kind of things that they've anticipated."

China's economy has slowed but is still growing at nearly a 5% annual pace, and under Xi, the party is investing heavily in advanced technology, education and other areas. It has stronger trade ties with many

other countries than during Trump's first term and has diversified where it gets key products, for example, buying most of its soybeans from Brazil and Argentina instead of the U.S.

In turn, the percentage of Chinese goods sold to the U.S. has fallen.

"They are better prepared to absorb the effect of the shocks, compared to several years ago," Kennedy said.

Meanwhile, more than 80% of Mexico's exports go to the U.S., and Canada sends 75% of its exports here.

China has learned from its previous dealings with Trump, Russel said. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum are facing a reversal of Trump's previous trade policies, with tariffs imposed and then postponed twice on at least some goods.

"Beijing has seen enough to know that appeasing Trump doesn't work," Russel said. In the first go-around, Trudeau and Sheinbaum "bought a little time, but the pressure only came roaring back stronger."

Trudeau flew to Mar-a-Lago to meet Trump in December after the president-elect threatened tariffs. But in announcing retaliatory tariffs Tuesday, Trudeau sternly warned: "This is a time to hit back hard and to demonstrate that a fight with Canada will have no winners."

Sheinbaum also has said that "no one wins with this decision."

New York governor declares state of emergency for wind-driven brush fire on Long Island

NEW YORK (AP) — Fast-moving brush fires fanned by high winds burned through a large swath of land on New York's Long Island on Saturday, spewing thick gray smoke into the sky and prompting the evacuation of a military base and the closure of a major highway.

Gov. Kathy Hochul declared a state of emergency and said state agencies were responding to the fires around the Pine Barrens, a wooded area that is home to commuter towns east of New York City. She said homes, a chemical factory and an Amazon warehouse were at risk and more evacuations may be needed.

"This is still out of control at this moment," Hochul told Long Island TV station News 12. "We're seeing people having to be evacuated from the Westhampton area."

Officials said three of the four fires were fully contained, with the fire in Westhampton 50% contained. Two commercial buildings were partially burned, but officials said homes were not in the line of fire.

One firefighter was flown to a hospital to be treated for burns to the face.

"Our biggest problem is the wind," Suffolk County Executive Ed Romaine said. "It is driving this fire."

Videos posted to social media showed flames shooting into the air and columns of black smoke rising above roads.

Air National Guard helicopters dropped water on the flames.

The Town of Southampton issued a warning in the afternoon against starting recreational fires due to the wildfire risk. That came around the time that the videos began appearing.

In a statement, Hochul said the National Guard was providing support by helicopter and working with local law enforcement.

"Public safety is my top priority, and I'm committed to doing everything possible to keep Long Islanders safe," she said.

In her comments to News 12, Hochul declined to estimate the extent of the flames, saying only that they were growing rapidly.

Rough satellite data indicated that fire and smoke stretched roughly 2.5 miles (3 kilometers) along Sunrise Highway, according to NASA's Fire Information for Resource Management System.

Police closed a section of the highway, which is a thoroughfare to the East End of Long Island.

The fires raged near the Francis S. Gabreski Airport, from which the National Guard launched at least one helicopter. One of the commercial buildings that partially burned was near the airport.

Personnel at the base evacuated as a precautionary measure starting around 1:45 p.m., spokesman Cheran Cambell said in a statement.

Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh brace for upcoming food reductions as aid agencies cut funding

By SHAFIQR RAHMAN and JULHAS ALAM Associated Press

COX'S BAZAR, Bangladesh (AP) — Rohingya refugees in cramped Bangladeshi camps say they are worried about a U.S. decision to cut food rations by half beginning next month, while a refugee official says the reduction will impact the nutrition of more than 1 million refugees and create "social and mental pressure."

President Donald Trump abruptly stopped most foreign aid and dismantled the U.S. Agency for International Development, which has significantly hampered the global humanitarian sector. Trump's Jan. 20 executive order froze the funding for a 90-day review.

The World Food Program, the main U.N. food agency, recently announced that cuts to food rations will take effect from April 1 in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, where dozens of camps are inhabited by Rohingya refugees.

More than 700,000 Muslim Rohingya fled to Bangladesh from Myanmar starting in late August 2017 when Myanmar's military launched a "clearance operation." The ethnic group faces discrimination and are denied citizenship and other rights in the Buddhist-majority nation. Following a military takeover in 2021, the country has been engulfed in an armed conflict widely seen as civil war.

It was not immediately clear if the WFP's decision was directly related to the Trump administration's action.

"We received a letter that (says) previously it was \$12.50, and now it is \$6. They used to get \$12.50 per month, and from now \$6, this will greatly affect them," Shamsud Douza, additional refugee relief and repatriation commissioner of Bangladesh, told The Associated Press.

"As the food is cut, they will get less nutritious food, which may lead to a lack of nutrition. There will be social and mental pressure created amongst the Rohingya people in their community. They will have to look for an alternative for the food," he said.

Douza said there are more sectors where budgets have been cut beyond the food rations, but he would not say whether WFP cuts were related to the U.S. funding rollback.

"Generally, there will be less (support) for the (Rohingya) response after the funding cuts. The response already has been slowed, and some people, including Rohingya, have lost their jobs, and some services are reduced. It does not bring a good result when the available services get reduced," he said.

The interim Bangladesh government said the end of USAID payments would stop other projects in Bangladesh, but funding for Rohingya refugees will continue to flow.

The U.S. has been the top donor to Bangladesh for Rohingya refugees, providing the U.N. with emergency food and nutrition assistance. The U.S. usually provides almost half of the aid money spent on the humanitarian response to Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, which provided about \$300 million in 2024.

As the news of the impending food reductions spread through the camps in Cox's Bazar, fear and frustration gripped the refugees.

"I am afraid now about how I am going to run my family, as we don't have any income-generating opportunities here. I got scared when I heard it," 40-year-old Manzur Ahmed said. "How will I buy rice, chilies, salt, sugar and dal, let alone fish, meat and vegetables, with 700 taka (\$6)? We won't even be able to buy (cooking) oil. How are we going to get them?"

Medical treatment also is decreasing, refugees said.

"When we go to the hospital, they don't provide medicines unless it's an emergency. They only provide medicines to the very emergency patients. Earlier, they would treat anyone who felt unwell, but now they only provide treatment to those who are in an emergency," 32-year-old Dildar Begum said.

Hundreds of thousands have lived in Bangladesh for decades and about 70,000 crossed the border from Myanmar in 2024. During fighting with the military junta, the opposition force known as the Arakan Army effectively took over the Rakhine state where Rohingya were displaced and took shelter in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh says Rohingya refugees must return to Myanmar, which has been accused in an international court of genocide against Rohingya.

8 hurt when driver plows vehicle into Southern California car dealership

INGLEWOOD, Calif. (AP) — Eight people were injured Saturday when a driver plowed a vehicle into a CarMax location in the Los Angeles area.

Two people were critically hurt at the dealership in Inglewood, while the other six had minor injuries, Los Angeles County Fire Department spokesperson Jonathan Torres said.

Video of the aftermath posted on social media showed a damaged SUV backing into the building, followed by an employee rushing out. The vehicle pivoted in a lobby area and drove out of the opposite end of the building.

CarMax said the driver was a customer whose vehicle had been appraised. He was later arrested.

"We appreciate the authorities' swift response to this terrible event," the company said.

The Associated Press left messages for the Inglewood Police Department on Saturday evening.

The incident was initially reported as an active shooter situation, but Torres said that turned out not to be the case.

Inglewood is a city located about 10 miles (16 kilometers) southwest of downtown Los Angeles.

2 days of clashes and revenge killings in Syria leave more than 1,000 people dead

By BASSEM MROUE and SARAH EL DEEB Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — The death toll from two days of clashes between Syrian security forces and loyalists of ousted President Bashar Assad and revenge killings that followed has risen to more than 1,000, a war monitoring group said Saturday, making it one of the deadliest acts of violence since Syria's conflict began 14 years ago.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said in addition to 745 civilians killed, mostly in shootings from close distance, 125 government security force members and 148 militants with armed groups affiliated with Assad were killed. It added that electricity and drinking water were cut off in large areas around the city of Latakia.

The clashes, which erupted Thursday, marked a major escalation in the challenge to the new government in Damascus, three months after insurgents took authority after removing Assad from power.

The government has said that they were responding to attacks from remnants of Assad's forces and blamed "individual actions" for the rampant violence.

Retribution killings between Sunnis and Alawites

The revenge killings that started Friday by Sunni Muslim gunmen loyal to the government against members of Assad's minority Alawite sect are a major blow to Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, the faction that led the overthrow of the former government. Alawites made up a large part of Assad's support base for decades.

Residents of Alawite villages and towns spoke to The Associated Press about killings during which gunmen shot Alawites, the majority of them men, in the streets or at the gates of their homes. Many homes of Alawites were looted and then set on fire in different areas, two residents of Syria's coastal region told the AP from their hideouts.

They asked that their names not be made public out of fear of being killed by gunmen, adding that thousands of people have fled to nearby mountains for safety.

Residents speak of atrocities in one town

Residents of Baniyas, one of the towns worst hit by the violence, said bodies were strewn on the streets or left unburied in homes and on the roofs of buildings, and nobody was able to collect them. One resident said that the gunmen prevented residents for hours from removing the bodies of five of their neighbors killed Friday at close range.

Ali Sheha, a 57-year-old resident of Baniyas who fled with his family and neighbors hours after the violence broke out Friday, said that at least 20 of his neighbors and colleagues in one neighborhood of

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Baniyas where Alawites lived, were killed, some of them in their shops, or in their homes.

Sheha called the attacks "revenge killings" of the Alawite minority for the crimes committed by Assad's government. Other residents said the gunmen included foreign fighters, and militants from neighboring villages and towns.

"It was very very bad. Bodies were on the streets," as he was fleeing, Sheha said, speaking by phone from nearly 20 kilometers (12 miles) away from the city. He said the gunmen were gathering less than 100 meters from his apartment building, firing randomly at homes and residents and in at least one incident he knows of, asked residents for their IDs to check their religion and their sect before killing them. He said the gunmen also burned some homes and stole cars and robbed homes.

Death toll has multiplied

The Observatory's chief Rami Abdurrahman said that revenge killings stopped early Saturday.

"This was one of the biggest massacres during the Syrian conflict," Abdurrahman said about the killings of Alawite civilians.

The previous figure given by the group was more than 600 dead. No official figures have been released.

A funeral was held Saturday afternoon for four Syrian security force members in the northwestern village of Al-Janoudiya after they were killed in the clashes along Syria's coast. Scores of people attended the funeral.

Official reports say Syrian forces regaining control

Syria's state news agency quoted an unnamed Defense Ministry official as saying that government forces have regained control of much of the areas from Assad loyalists. It added that authorities have closed all roads leading to the coastal region "to prevent violations and gradually restore stability."

On Saturday morning, the bodies of 31 people killed in revenge attacks the day before in the central village of Tuwaym were laid to rest in a mass grave, residents said. Those killed included nine children and four women, the residents said, sending the AP photos of the bodies draped in white cloth as they were lined in the mass grave.

Lebanese legislator Haidar Nasser, who holds one of the two seats allocated to the Alawite sect in parliament, said that people were fleeing from Syria for safety in Lebanon. He said he didn't have exact numbers.

Nasser said that many people were sheltering at the Russian air base in Hmeimim, Syria, adding that the international community should protect Alawites who are Syrian citizens loyal to their country. He said that since Assad's fall, many Alawites were fired from their jobs and some former soldiers who reconciled with the new authorities were killed.

Under Assad, Alawites held top posts in the army and security agencies. The new government has blamed his loyalists for attacks against the country's new security forces over the past several weeks.

France expressed "its deep concern" over recent violence in Syria. Paris "condemns in the strongest possible terms atrocities committed against civilians on the basis of religion grounds and against prisoners," its foreign ministry said in a statement Saturday.

France urged Syrian interim authorities to make sure independent investigations "shed full light on these crimes."

The most recent clashes started when government forces tried to detain a wanted person near the coastal city of Jableh, and were ambushed by Assad loyalists, according to the Observatory.

House Republicans unveil bill to avoid shutdown and they're daring Democrats to oppose it

By KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Republicans unveiled a spending bill Saturday that would keep federal agencies funded through Sept. 30, pushing ahead with a go-it-alone strategy that seems certain to spark a major confrontation with Democrats over the contours of government spending.

The 99-page bill would provide a slight boost to defense programs while trimming nondefense programs

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below 2024 budget year levels. That approach is likely to be a nonstarter for most Democrats who have long insisted that defense and nondefense spending move in the same direction.

Congress must act by midnight Friday to avoid a partial government shutdown.

Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., is teeing up the bill for a vote on Tuesday despite the lack of buy-in from Democrats, essentially daring them to vote against it and risk a shutdown. He also is betting that Republicans can muscle the legislation through the House largely by themselves.

Normally, when it comes to keeping the government fully open for business, Republicans have had to work with Democrats to craft a bipartisan measure that both sides can support. That's because Republicans almost always lack the votes to pass spending bills on their own.

Crucially, the strategy has the backing of President Donald Trump, who has shown an ability so far in his term to hold Republicans in line.

Trump praised the bill, posting on his Truth Social platform that Republicans have to "remain UNITED — NO DISSENT — Fight for another day when the timing is right."

"Great things are coming for America, and I am asking you all to give us a few months to get us through to September so we can continue to put the Country's 'financial house' in order," he said.

House Republicans' leadership staff outlined the contours of the measure, saying it would allow for about \$892.5 billion in defense spending and about \$708 billion in nondefense spending. The defense spending is slightly above the prior year's level, but the nondefense spending, the aides said, was about \$13 billion below last year.

The measure also will not include funding requested by individual lawmakers for thousands of community projects around the country, often referred to as earmarks.

But Republicans noted that it would provide for the largest pay increase to junior enlisted servicemembers in more than 40 years, and it included an additional \$500 million for a nutritional assistance program for women, infants and young children.

The bill does not cover the majority of government spending, including Social Security and Medicare. Funding for those two programs is on auto pilot and not regularly reviewed by Congress. Still, Democratic leadership issued a statement Saturday saying they were troubled the bill doesn't take steps to protect those programs and Medicaid, which Republicans are eying to help pay for extending tax cuts passed in Trump's first term.

"We are voting no," said a trio of House Democratic leaders, including Rep. Hakeem Jeffries.

The top Democrats on the House and Senate Appropriations Committees, Connecticut Rep. Rosa DeLauro and Washington Sen. Patty Murray, both issued statements blasting the legislation.

Murray said the legislation would "give Donald Trump and Elon Musk more power over federal spending — and more power to pick winners and losers, which threatens families in blue and red states alike."

Maine Sen. Susan Collins, who heads the Senate Appropriations Committee, said the focus must be on preventing a shutdown because closures have negative consequences all across government.

"They require certain essential government employees, such as Border Patrol agents, members of our military and Coast Guard, TSA screeners, and air traffic controllers, to report to work with no certainty on when they will receive their next paycheck," Collins said. "We cannot allow that to occur."

Trump's request for unity appears to be having an effect. Some conservatives who almost never vote for continuing resolutions expressed much openness to one last week.

Rep. Ralph Norman, R-S.C., says he has never voted for a continuing resolution, what lawmakers often call a CR, but he is on board with Johnson's effort. He says he has confidence in Trump and the Department of Government Efficiency, led by Elon Musk, to make a difference on the nation's debt.

"I don't like CRs," Norman said. "But what's the alternative? Negotiate with Democrats? No."

"I freeze spending for six months to go identify more cuts? Somebody tell me how that's not a win in Washington," added Rep. Chip Roy, R-Texas.

Republicans are also hoping that resolving this year's spending will allow them to devote their full attention to extending Trump's tax cuts and raising the nation's debt limit to avoid a catastrophic federal default.

Democratic leaders are warning that the decision to move ahead without consulting them increases the prospects for a shutdown. One of their biggest concerns is the flexibility the legislation would give the Trump administration on spending.

The Democratic leadership in both chambers has stressed that Republicans have the majority and are responsible for funding the government. They have said any legislation should have input from both parties.

"We've always believed the only solution is a bipartisan solution, no matter what," said Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer of New York.

Trump has been meeting with House Republicans in an effort to win their votes on the legislation. Republicans have a 218-214 majority in the House, so if all lawmakers vote, they can afford only one defection if Democrats unite in opposition. The math gets even harder in the Senate, where at least seven Democrats would have to vote for the legislation to overcome a filibuster. And that's assuming all 53 Republicans vote for it.

12 people injured by 3 men shooting randomly at Toronto pub customers

TORONTO (AP) — A dozen people were injured in a shooting at an eastern Toronto pub in what police called a reckless act of violence by three men who entered the bar and fired randomly without warning.

Superintendent Paul MacIntyre of the Toronto Police Service said that authorities received numerous emergency calls reporting a shooting at the Piper Arms around 10:40 p.m. Friday.

A preliminary investigation determined that three males entered the pub and began shooting at customers, MacIntyre said during a news conference at the scene. There were no immediate arrests.

"One male was armed with what appears to be an assault rifle, the other two males were armed with handguns, and they walked into the bar, they produced their guns and they opened fire indiscriminately on the people sitting inside," MacIntyre said, adding that there were no fatalities.

Police arrived at the scene and found 12 people suffering from various injuries. The victims were transported to local hospitals and six were confirmed to have gunshot wounds that were not life-threatening, MacIntyre said, calling the victims "extremely lucky." The remaining six victims were hurt by flying and broken glass.

The motive wasn't immediately clear, MacIntyre said, calling the shooting "a brazen and reckless act of violence that's really shaken our community and the city itself."

MacIntyre said that he and other officers were "horrified" by what they saw on a security video.

"These guys just looked at the ground and opened fire," he said.

Shortly after the shooting, police said that a suspect wearing a black balaclava was seen fleeing in a silver car and was still at large after the shooting. People were being warned to stay away from the area.

Toronto Mayor Olivia Chow said she had spoken to Police Chief Myron Demkiw and was told "all necessary resources" had been deployed.

"It is troubling because of the magnitude of the shootings and the number of people hurt, and I don't want to speculate as to the why and how," Chow told reporters Saturday morning at a news conference.

Iran's top leader rejects talks with the US over missile range, regional influence

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said he rejects a U.S. push for talks between the two countries because they would be aimed at imposing restrictions on Iranian missile range and its influence in the region.

Speaking to a group of officials on Saturday, Khamenei did not identify the United States by name but said a "bullying government" was being persistent in its push for talks.

"Their talks are not aimed at solving problems, it is for ... let's talk to impose what we want on the other party that is sitting on the opposite side of the table."

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Khamenei's remarks came a day after President Donald Trump acknowledged sending a letter to Khamenei seeking a new deal with Tehran to restrain its rapidly advancing nuclear program and replace the nuclear deal he withdrew America from during his first term in office.

Khamenei said U.S. demands would be both military and related to the regional influence of Iran.

"They will be about defense capabilities, about international capabilities of the country. (They will urge Iran) not to do (certain) things, not to meet some certain people, not to go to a certain place, not to produce some items, your missile range should not be more than a certain distance. Is it possible for anybody to accept these?"

Khamenei, who has final say on all state matters, said such talks would not address solving problems between Iran and the West. Though Khamenei did not name any person or country, he said the push for talks creates pressure on Iran in public opinion. "It is not negotiation. It is commanding and imposition," he said.

Trump in comments to reporters in the Oval Office on Friday did not mention the letter directly. But he made a veiled reference to possible military action, saying: "We have a situation with Iran that, something's going to happen very soon. Very, very soon."

His overture comes as both Israel and the United States have warned they will never let Iran acquire a nuclear weapon, leading to fears of a military confrontation as Tehran enriches uranium at near weapons-grade levels — something only done by atomic-armed nations.

Tehran has long maintained its program is for peaceful purposes, even as its officials increasingly threaten to pursue the bomb as tensions are high with the U.S. over its sanctions and with Israel as a shaky cease-fire holds in its war against Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

Iran's accelerated production of near weapons-grade uranium puts more pressure on Trump. He's repeatedly said he's open to negotiations with the Islamic Republic while also increasingly targeting Iran's oil sales with sanctions as part of his reimposed "maximum pressure" policy.

Late in August, Khamenei in a speech opened the door to possible talks with the U.S., saying there is "no harm" in engaging with the "enemy." However, more recently the supreme leader tempered that, saying that negotiations with America "are not intelligent, wise or honorable," after Trump floated nuclear talks with Tehran.

Russian strikes on Ukraine kill more than 20 as Polish prime minister warns against appeasement

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia launched heavy aerial attacks on Ukraine for a second night Saturday after the United States stopped sharing satellite images with the Ukrainian government, officials said. At least 22 people have been killed.

The U.S. decision to withhold intelligence and military aid came on the heels of a tempestuous White House visit last week by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. President Donald Trump is trying to pressure Ukraine into accepting a peace deal with Russia.

Without U.S. satellite imagery, Ukraine's ability to strike inside Russia and defend itself from bombardment is significantly diminished.

"This is what happens when someone appeases barbarians," Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk wrote on X Saturday. "More bombs, more aggression, more victims. Another tragic night in Ukraine."

At least 11 people were killed in multiple strikes on a town in Ukraine's embattled eastern Donetsk region late Friday, and another seven people were killed in four towns close to the front where Russian troops have been making steady advances, said regional Gov. Vadym Filashkin. Three others died when a Russian drone hit a civilian workshop in the northeastern Kharkiv region, emergency service officials reported. One man was killed by shelling in the region.

Filashkin declared a day of mourning Saturday and warned that more victims could still be found in the rubble.

Russia fired two ballistic missiles into the center of the front-line town of Dobropillya, then launched a

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strike targeting rescuers who responded, according to Zelenskyy. Forty-seven people, including seven children, were injured in the attack.

"It is a vile and inhumane intimidation tactic to which the Russians often resort," he said.

Just 24 hours before the attacks, Russia hit Ukrainian energy facilities with dozens of missiles and drones, hobbling its ability to deliver heat and light to its citizens and to power weapons factories vital to its defenses.

Trump says Putin is 'doing what anybody else would'

When asked Friday if Russian President Vladimir Putin was taking advantage of the U.S. pause on intelligence-sharing to attack Ukraine, Trump responded: "I think he's doing what anybody else would."

Zelenskyy did not mention intelligence-sharing Saturday, but said he welcomed Trump's proposal Friday to impose large-scale banking sanctions and tariffs on Russia until a ceasefire and final peace settlement is reached.

"Everything that helps Putin finance the war must be broken," the Ukrainian president said.

Zelenskyy also said he and other high-ranking Ukrainian officials would travel to Saudi Arabia later this week to discuss proposals aimed at ending the war. In a post on X, he wrote that he was scheduled to meet with Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman on Monday, but that only his team would remain in the country to meet with U.S. officials.

"Ukraine has been seeking peace from the very first second of this war," he wrote. "Realistic proposals are on the table. The key is to move quickly and effectively."

A barrage of missiles and drones

Ukraine's air force reported Saturday that Russian troops launched three Iskander missiles and 145 drones over the country overnight. The bombardment contained a mix of attack and decoy drones intended to confuse air defenses. One missile and 79 drones were shot down, while 54 more drones were lost without causing damage, the Ukrainian air force said.

Meanwhile, Russian troops shot down 31 Ukrainian drones overnight, including 26 over the country's Krasnodar region, Russia's Defense Ministry said Saturday.

Falling debris from one drone sparked a blaze at the KINEF oil refinery in Russia's northern Leningrad region, local Gov. Aleksandr Drozdenko said in a statement. No casualties were reported.

In his own words: Pope Francis' views on resigning changed over time

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

ROME (AP) — As he recovers from pneumonia in the hospital, Pope Francis has increasingly handed off his day-to-day responsibilities to cardinals as questions swirl about the near and long-term future of his papacy.

On Saturday, the Vatican secretary of state, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, took Francis' place to celebrate Mass for an anti-abortion group. On Sunday, another Vatican official, Cardinal Michael Czerny, is stepping in for the pope to celebrate a Holy Year Mass for volunteers.

There is no reason why such delegation of papal obligations can't continue, especially since Francis remains conscious and working from the hospital. And on Saturday, his doctors reported a "gradual, slight improvement" in his condition. But the 88-year-old pope has spoken about the possibility of resignation, though his position has changed over time, especially after the death of Pope Benedict XVI.

Here's what Francis has said about pope's retiring, in his own words:

On Benedict's resignation:

In his 2024 memoir, "Life: My Story Through History," Francis recounted how he first learned about Benedict's resignation, the first in 600 years. He said that a Vatican journalist had called him in Buenos Aires on Feb. 11, 2013, and told him the news as it was breaking.

"For a moment I was paralyzed. I could hardly believe what I was hearing," Francis wrote in the memoir. "This was news I had never expected to receive in my lifetime: the resignation of a pope was unimaginable."

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nable, although it was provided for in canon law. In the first few moments I said to myself, 'I must have misunderstood, it's not possible.' But then I understood that Benedict had surely meditated and prayed for a long time before making this brave and historic decision. Faced with his declining strength, he had evidently realized that the only irreplaceable element in the Church is the Holy Spirit, and the only Lord is Jesus Christ. This is why he was a great pope, humble and sincere, who loved the church until the end."

During the decade they lived together in the Vatican as a reigning and retired pope, Francis repeatedly praised Benedict's courage and humility for resigning and said that he had "opened the door" to future popes also stepping down.

On the chance he might follow:

In a 2022 interview with Spain's ABC daily, Francis revealed that he had written a letter of resignation soon after he was elected pontiff. The letter laid out his resignation if medical problems impeded him from carrying out his duties or from freely announcing a resignation.

The text of the letter hasn't been released and it's not known what sort of medical impairment or lack of consciousness might trigger a resignation. Canon law has no provision for what to do if a pope is permanently impaired, and canonists are divided on whether a prewritten letter of resignation would be valid.

Canon 332.2 says that for a pope to resign his office, "it is required for validity that the resignation is made freely and properly manifested but not that it is accepted by anyone."

Francis referred the existence of his resignation letter as recently as last year. But in his memoir, which was published a year ago this month, Francis said that he had no plans to resign and was, at least at that time, enjoying good health.

"But this is, I repeat, a distant possibility, because I truly do not have any cause serious enough to make me think of resigning," he said. "Some people may have hoped that sooner or later, perhaps after a stay in the hospital, I might make an announcement of that kind, but there is no risk of it: Thanks be to God, I enjoy good health, and as I have said, there are many projects to bring to fruition, God willing."

And what changed after Benedict died:

Benedict died Dec. 31, 2022, at the age of 95.

In his first interview with The Associated Press after the death, Francis again repeated that Benedict had opened up the possibility of future retired popes. He repeated that if he were to follow, he would live outside the Vatican in a home for retired priests in the diocese of Rome and be referred to as the "emeritus bishop of Rome" as opposed to "emeritus pope."

Francis said Benedict's decision to live in a converted monastery in the Vatican Gardens was a "good intermediate solution," but that future retired popes might want to do things differently.

But a few weeks later, speaking to Congolese and South Sudanese priests, Francis changed tune. Freed from Benedict's presence, Francis pointed out the risks that papal resignations might become the norm. He repeated that he had written a letter of resignation, but made clear that the papacy was for life.

"I did it in case I have some health problem that prevents me from exercising my ministry and I am not fully conscious in order to resign," he said, according to the closed-door comments reported by the Jesuit journal *La Civiltà Cattolica*.

"However, this doesn't mean that resigning popes should become, let's say, a 'fashion,' or a normal thing. Benedict had the courage to do it because he didn't feel like going on because of his health. I for the moment do not have that on my agenda. I believe that the pope's ministry is *ad vitam* (for life). I see no reason why it shouldn't be so. The ministry of the great patriarchs is always for life. And historical tradition is important."

"If, on the other hand, we listen to the gossip well, then we should change popes every six months!"

Pope Francis responding well to pneumonia therapy and showing 'gradual, slight improvement'

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Pope Francis is responding well to the treatment for double pneumonia and has shown a "gradual, slight improvement" in recent days, the Vatican said Saturday. But his doctors have decided to keep his prognosis as guarded, meaning that he's not out of danger yet.

The 88-year-old pope, who has chronic lung disease and had part of one lung removed as a young man, has remained stable, with no fever and good oxygen levels in his blood for several days, doctors reported in a Vatican statement.

The doctors said that such stability "as a consequence testifies to a good response to therapy." It was the first time the doctors had reported that Francis was responding positively to the treatment for the complex lung infection that was diagnosed after he was hospitalized on Feb. 14.

Francis worked and rested during the day on Saturday, as he entered his fourth week at Rome's Gemelli hospital with his condition stabilized following a few bouts of acute respiratory crises last week.

"In order to record these initial improvements in the coming days as well, his doctors have prudently maintained the prognosis as guarded," the statement said.

In his absence, the Vatican's day-to-day operations continued, with Cardinal Pietro Parolin celebrating Mass for an anti-abortion group in St. Peter's Basilica. At the start, Parolin delivered a message from the pope from the hospital on the need to protect life, from birth to natural death.

In the message, dated March 5 and addressed to the Movement for Life, which seeks to provide women with alternatives to abortion, Francis encouraged the faithful to promote anti-abortion activities not just for the unborn, but "for the elderly, no longer independent or the incurably ill."

Later Saturday, another cardinal closely associated with Francis' papacy, Canadian Cardinal Michael Czerny, presides over the nightly recitation of prayers for Francis. Czerny then returns on Sunday to celebrate the Holy Year Mass for volunteers that Francis was supposed to have celebrated.

Francis has been using high flows of supplemental oxygen to help him breathe during the day and a noninvasive mechanical ventilation mask at night.

Francis was hospitalized Feb. 14 for what was then just a bad case of bronchitis. The infection progressed into a complex respiratory tract infection and double pneumonia that has sidelined Francis for the longest period of his 12-year papacy and raised questions about the future.

Unions ask court to stop DOGE from accessing Social Security data of millions of Americans

By FATIMA HUSSEIN and LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A group of labor unions are asking a federal court for an emergency order to stop Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency from accessing the sensitive Social Security data of millions of Americans.

The motion for emergency relief was filed late Friday in federal court in Maryland by the legal services group Democracy Forward against the Social Security Administration and its acting commissioner, Leland Dudek. The unions want the court to block DOGE's access to the vast troves of personal data held by the agency.

Included in the filing is an affidavit from Tiffany Flick, a former senior official at the agency who says career civil servants are trying to protect the data from DOGE. "A disregard for our careful privacy systems and processes now threatens the security the data SSA houses about millions of Americans," Flick wrote in court documents.

Karianne Jones, a lawyer for the unions and a retiree group behind the lawsuit, said it is not fully clear what kind of access that DOGE might have to personal data about taxpayers. But she said the apparent scope and the lack of information about what DOGE is looking for mean the potential impact is "huge."

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"Essentially what you have is DOGE just swooping in and bullying their way into access to millions of Americans private data. They cannot explain why they want this data. They can't really tell you what data they want. They just want everything. They want the source code, and they want to do it without any restrictions," she said.

The Social Security Administration did not immediately respond to a request Saturday for comment on the lawsuit, which was originally filed last month.

DOGE's work during the early stages of the Trump administration has drawn nearly two dozen lawsuits. Judges have raised questions in several cases about DOGE's sweeping cost-cutting efforts, conducted with little public information about its staffing and operations. But judges have not always agreed that the risks are imminent enough to block DOGE from government systems.

Across-the-board cuts at the Social Security Administration are prompting questions about the possible effects on benefits for tens of millions of recipients.

Among the potential changes at the agency are layoffs for more than 10% of the workforce and the closure of dozens of offices throughout the country. It's all part of the Trump administration's efforts to shrink the size of the federal workforce.

DOGE has accessed other government databases, including at the Treasury and IRS. The Trump administration has said generally that the efforts are aimed at eliminating what it claims is waste and fraud in government.

On Friday, a federal judge in Washington refused to block DOGE employees from accessing Treasury systems containing sensitive personal data for millions of people. U.S. District Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly did acknowledge privacy concerns about that work. DOGE is still limited by a different court order in New York.

In addition, a February agreement between the Office of Personnel Management and the IRS states that a DOGE employee, Gavin Kliger, would be allowed to have access to IRS systems, but not the personal information of taxpayers.

South Korea's impeached President Yoon released from prison

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korea's impeached conservative President Yoon Suk Yeol was released from prison on Saturday, a day after a Seoul court canceled his arrest to allow him to stand trial for rebellion without being detained.

After walking out of a detention center near Seoul, Yoon waved, clenched his fists and bowed deeply to his supporters who were shouting his name and waving South Korean and U.S. flags. Yoon climbed into a black van headed to his presidential residence in Seoul.

In a statement distributed by his lawyers, Yoon said that he "appreciates the courage and decision by the Seoul Central District Court to correct illegality," in an apparent reference to legal disputes over his arrest. He said he also thanks his supporters and asked those who are on hunger strike against his impeachment to end it.

Yoon was arrested and indicted by prosecutors in January over his Dec. 3 martial law decree that plunged the country into huge political turmoil. The liberal opposition-controlled National Assembly separately voted to impeach him, leading to his suspension from office.

The Constitutional Court has been deliberating whether to formally dismiss or reinstate Yoon. If the court upholds his impeachment, a national election will be held to find his successor within two months.

The Seoul Central District Court said Friday it accepted Yoon's request to be released from prison, citing the need to address questions over the legality of the investigations on the president. Yoon's lawyers have accused the investigative agency that detained him before his formal arrest of lacking legal authority to probe rebellion charges.

The Seoul court also said the legal period of his formal arrest expired before he was indicted.

Yoon's release came after prosecutors decided not to appeal the decision by the Seoul court. South

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Korean law allows prosecutors to continue to hold a suspect while pursuing an appeal, even after his or her arrest is canceled by a court.

The main liberal opposition Democratic Party, which led Yoon's Dec. 14 impeachment, lashed out at the prosecutors' decision, calling them "henchmen" of Yoon, a former prosecutor general. Party spokesperson Cho Seung-rae urged the Constitutional Court to dismiss Yoon as soon as possible to avoid further public unrest and anxiety.

At the heart of public criticism of Yoon over his martial law decree was his dispatch of hundreds of troops and police officers to the National Assembly after placing the country under military rule. Some senior military and police officials sent to the assembly have testified that Yoon ordered them to pull out lawmakers to thwart a parliamentary vote on the decree. Yoon has countered that he aimed to maintain order.

Enough lawmakers eventually managed to enter an assembly hall and voted unanimously to overturn Yoon's decree.

Investigators have alleged Yoon's martial-law decree amounted to rebellion. If he's convicted of that offense, he would face the death penalty or life imprisonment. Yoon has presidential immunity from most criminal prosecutions but that doesn't cover grave charges like rebellion and treason.

Yoon has said he didn't intend to maintain martial law for long as he only attempted to inform the public of the danger of the Democratic Party, which obstructed his agenda and impeached many senior officials and prosecutors. In his martial law announcement, Yoon called the assembly "a den of criminals" and "anti-state forces."

South Korea's conservative-liberal divide is severe, and rallies either supporting or denouncing Yoon's impeachment have divided Seoul streets. Experts say whatever decision the Constitutional Court makes, the division is certain to worsen.

Meet Amy Gleason, the DOGE administrator who may — or may not — be wielding extraordinary power

By RYAN J. FOLEY and BRIAN SLODYSKO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When her daughter was diagnosed with a rare autoimmune disease in 2010, Amy Gleason attacked the challenge.

She carried binders of medical records to doctors' appointments across six health systems seeking the best care for juvenile dermatomyositis. She volunteered at a nonprofit searching for a cure. She also started a health care company to create record-sharing software that would make life easier for chronically ill patients and families.

Within five years, President Barack Obama's White House recognized Gleason as a "Champion of Change" in the industry. When the coronavirus struck in 2020, she was a health care technologist in the first Trump White House who worked grueling hours building data systems to guide the federal response. (And her daughter was a thriving college student.)

Now, her journey has improbably led to President Donald Trump naming her the acting administrator of the U.S. DOGE Service, a position that seems to convey extraordinary power. Except almost no one has heard of her and everyone knows the man the president says is actually leading the unparalleled effort to gut the federal workforce and shutter agencies: Elon Musk.

Gleason's role at DOGE is unclear

While Musk has claimed his Department of Government Efficiency is fully transparent, until last week the White House press secretary would not even say Gleason's name — which does not appear on the DOGE website.

In his address to Congress Tuesday, Trump made clear that Musk is in charge, saluting him as the head of DOGE, with Musk smiling down on the president from the visitors' gallery. Yet government lawyers have argued in court that Gleason and not Musk is the agency's leader.

The confusion has added to the mystery around the role of Gleason, who did not respond to a phone call or text message for comment.

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"I don't think anyone really knows for sure what her role is and whether she actually has any oversight of any of the people doing the work, or is she just there as a punching bag and a distraction to keep their actual activities shielded from the public," said Brett Hartl, government affairs director for the Center for Biological Diversity, an environmental group that sued the DOGE Service and Gleason seeking access to records that would shed light on their operations.

DOGE claims credit for saving more than \$100 billion through mass firings, cancellations of contracts and grants, office closures and other cuts that have paralyzed entire agencies. Many of those claimed savings have turned out to be overstated or unproven.

Gleason is known as a behind-the-scenes operator

On one level, Gleason fits the mold of a Musk employee, one willing to work arduous hours to meet his goals. Former colleagues say she is an effective behind-the-scenes operator and say her rise is the story of a former nurse who got into health care technology to help patients and doctors and climbed through merit.

"From my perspective, I can't imagine somebody I'd rather have there," said Jamie Grant, a former Republican lawmaker in Florida who worked with Gleason to start a health care company. "Somebody saying yes to that job right now better believe in the mission and better have a spine and be talented and she's that in spades."

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt told reporters that Gleason had served as the acting administrator at DOGE for weeks. But that was not the widely held understanding of her position internally, according to three people with knowledge of the office's operation who spoke on condition of anonymity out of fear of retribution.

While the exact nature of Gleason's portfolio was not well defined, what was clear is that she was working closely with DOGE leaders. She attempted to push civil service staffers in the office to hire at least two people who failed screening reviews for prospective hires; both were later hired by DOGE, according to two of the people who spoke to The Associated Press.

The uncertainty over her role — and when she was appointed to it — could have far-reaching implications in a series of ongoing lawsuits filed to blunt the impact of Musk's radical paring of the government workforce.

Under questioning from U.S. District Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly recently, government attorneys struggled to explain who was in charge of DOGE or Musk's precise role. That led Kollar-Kotelly to wonder if the office was running afoul of the Constitution's appointments clause because Musk had not been nominated to lead the office, or received confirmation from the Senate.

The Trump administration announced the following day that Gleason was DOGE's acting administrator, a question they had previously refused to answer.

Gleason has ties to Trump world

Unlike many DOGE workers, Gleason has no prior ties to Musk. She recently worked as chief products officer at Nashville-based health care firms founded by Brad Smith, who worked in the prior Trump administration on health care and is also a DOGE adviser.

Smith and Gleason began working on Trump's transition after the November election, and her role in Trump's orbit has grown. In December, she rejoined the United States Digital Service, where she had previously worked from 2018 through 2021 on high-level government health care technology initiatives.

On his first day back in office, Trump signed an executive order rebranding USDS as the US DOGE Service and giving it a mandate to help Musk's cost-cutting initiative. Soon, dozens of Musk acolytes associated with DOGE began arriving at agencies across the government demanding access to sensitive data systems and pushing for drastic changes.

While 21 others in the office resigned in protest rather than carry out Musk's initiatives, Gleason accepted a position that thrust her into an unfamiliar spotlight.

Health care entrepreneur Travis Bond, Gleason's colleague over two decades at companies in Florida, said Gleason will hate the public attention but excel in her new role.

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"I'm not sure they could have picked a better person. She just thinks, eats and breathes this stuff," he said.

Gleason helped build CareSync, which later collapsed

Bond, Gleason and Grant in 2011 launched CareSync Inc., which developed an app to allow patients suffering from chronic disease to keep their medical records in one place. After benefiting from a \$7.25 million grant from one Florida county, CareSync found it hard to attract buyers for subscriptions that cost up to \$199 annually.

CareSync pivoted in 2015, taking advantage of a new federal rule that allowed Medicare providers to bill for chronic care management services delivered remotely. The company raised millions of dollars from investors and began rapidly adding staff and serving more than 20,000 patients nationwide. By summer 2018, CareSync ran out of cash and closed without notice, firing 300 workers and leaving creditors owed millions.

Gleason recalled later that she was "trying to figure out what in the world to do in life" after that experience and applied for the USDS with encouragement from Aneesh Chopra, U.S. chief technology officer under Obama. Chopra declined comment.

She focused on improving technology systems at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. During the pandemic, she worked under White House response coordinator Dr. Deborah Birx to develop laboratory and hospital data reporting systems. Birx praised Gleason last week in an interview with CNN as a "really competent, hardworking, focused woman who understands the value of data."

Near the end of her three-year stint in 2021, Gleason reflected on her work in a podcast interview, saying the digital service sought to "empower the civil servants and to bring new approaches in technology to the government and to help modernize their efforts."

"Our mission is really to do the greatest good, for the greatest number of people, in the greatest need," she said.

Watch the moon turn red during a total lunar eclipse in March

By ADITHI RAMAKRISHNAN AP Science Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — A total lunar eclipse will flush the moon red Thursday night into Friday morning across the Western Hemisphere.

The best views will be from North America and South America. Parts of Africa and Europe may catch a glimpse.

Lunar eclipses happen when the moon, Earth and sun align just so. The Earth casts a shadow that can partially or totally blot out the moon.

During a partial lunar eclipse, Earth's shadow appears to take a bite of the moon. The full moon is covered during a total eclipse and blushes coppery red because of stray bits of sunlight filtering through Earth's atmosphere.

Lunar and solar eclipses happen anywhere from four to seven times a year, according to NASA. A partial lunar eclipse graced skies in the Americas, Africa and Europe last September and the last total lunar eclipse was in 2022.

How to see the lunar eclipse

The so-called blood moon will be visible for about an hour starting at 2:26 a.m. Eastern on Friday morning. Peak viewing will be close to 3 a.m. Eastern.

To see it, venture outside and look up — no need for eclipse glasses or any special equipment.

"As long as the sky is clear, you should be able to see it," said Shannon Schmoll, director of Abrams Planetarium at Michigan State University.

The setting of the moon may make it harder to see the eclipse in Europe and Africa.

"This is really an eclipse for North and South America," said astronomy expert Michael Faison from Yale University.

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If you miss out, mark your calendar for Sept. 7. Another total lunar eclipse will sweep across parts of Asia, Africa, Australia and Europe. Parts of the Americas will get their next taste in March 2026.

History of eclipses

Civilizations have viewed and interpreted lunar eclipses for thousands of years. Ancient people knew more about the celestial bodies than we give them credit for, said historian Zoe Ortiz.

"They were looking at the night sky and they had a much brighter vision than we do today," said Ortiz with the University of North Texas.

Aristotle noticed that the shadow the Earth cast on the moon during a lunar eclipse was always curved, observations proving that the Earth is round.

And a civilization in ancient Mesopotamia saw the blood red moon as a bad omen for the king. The people installed a substitute king on the throne around the time of the eclipse to protect their ruler from any bad will.

"If there's ever a movie plot," said Ortiz, "that's the one."

House GOP campaign chairman says voters will 'reward us' for the Trump-Musk DOGE cuts

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Almost two months into President Donald Trump's second term, the chairman of the House Republican campaign committee is already predicting his party will pick up seats in the midterm elections some 20 months away.

Rep. Richard Hudson, R-N.C., is in charge of increasing the GOP's slim majority in the House, or at least defending it. After Republicans met privately this past week with Elon Musk, Hudson said the cuts pushed by the Department of Government Efficiency are resonating with voters.

With disruptions at GOP town halls during the recent break, Hudson and House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., have told Republican lawmakers to skip the events for now and meet with constituents elsewhere. Nevertheless, Hudson said Republicans are confident their budget-cutting is "on the side of the angels."

Here's the political outlook from the chairman of the National Republican Congressional Committee as he confronts Democrats trying to win back the House in 2026. This Q&A has been edited for brevity and length.

What was your advice about holding town halls?

HUDSON: "I just said that, it's very important that all of us are communicating with our constituents, are very visible in our districts, very accessible. And it's a shame that Democrat organizations are paying people to disrupt in-person town halls. And so this normal dialogue that we want to have with our constituents isn't possible at in-person town halls. So we need to use technology to reach our constituents."

Do you think the DOGE cuts will be a tough sell?

HUDSON: "I think it's the greatest thing that's happened since I've been in Congress."

"My biggest frustration as a member of Congress is these massive bureaucracies that hide all their spending and when I ask questions or send letters, ignore it. And now it's all mapped. You can see it all. There's transparency for the American people. Now we can go in and decide, do we like the taxpayers' dollars being spent on this program? Yes. Let's keep it. This one? No, let's cut it. I mean, we actually can do our job."

"It's exciting. It's exhilarating."

Do you feel any blowback back home from people losing their jobs, cuts to veterans?

HUDSON: "(Musk) did say that the the the firings at the VA (Department of Veterans Affairs) were a mistake done by that agency, by the VA."

"He said mistakes were made by bureaucrats."

What do you make of the 80,000 cuts at the VA?

HUDSON: "I'm disturbed when I hear veterans are being fired. I think we ought to give veterans priority. But, you know, I do acknowledge that there may need to be firings in all these agencies."

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"When it comes to the VA, for example, what I'm concerned about is giving world class health care to our veterans in a timely manner. And so any waste, fraud and abuse that makes that difficult or messes that up, I'm interested in cutting."

What's your message to the fired federal workers, what do you say to them?

HUDSON: "Hang tight."

What's that mean?

HUDSON: "I mean there may be some mistakes that are being corrected."

Do you think that will be an OK message for other GOP lawmakers to use?

HUDSON: "The American people are sick of the swamp. They're sick of waste, fraud and abuse. For the first time. ever, we finally have the tools to affect it. So I think the voters are going to reward us."

Democrats envision a repeat of Trump's first term, when they won back the House?

HUDSON: "I think they're digging their own grave politically."

"We're on the side of the angels. We're doing what the American people asked us to do, what 77 million people voted for Donald Trump to get."

"We're going to pick up seats."

Trump is forcing a generational shift in GOP foreign policy. Here's how Republicans are responding

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republicans in Congress have long been intent on countering America's rivals and spreading U.S. influence abroad. But when President Donald Trump spelled out a sharp turn from that approach in his recent address to Congress, lawmakers in his party couldn't help but stand and applaud.

Moves toward a neutral position on the war between Russia and Ukraine. Tariffs on trading partners and allies. Cuts in foreign military and humanitarian aid.

More is sure to come as Trump sweeps Washington with his "America First" agenda. "We're going to protect our citizens like never before," he told Congress.

Those ideas have produced some of the most dramatic moments in the early part of his second term, none more so than the Oval Office clash involving Trump, Vice President JD Vance and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Some Republicans who were not shy about countering Trump's foreign policy ideas during his first term are overwhelmingly standing by him now. It shows not only Trump's ability to impose his will on his party, but also the extent to which he is ushering in a potentially generational shift in global alliances and power.

"Honestly, it's a completely different way of looking at the world," said Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Wis. "How do we avoid having enemies and how do we turn even unfriendly adversaries into no worse than friendly rivals?"

Still, in the weeks since taking office, Trump has handled foreign policy with unpredictable starts and stops.

Twice he has pledged to implement tough tariffs on Mexico and Canada, only to pause them. He has suggested the U.S. should take ownership of Gaza, Greenland and the Panama Canal, only to have his administration distance itself from such notions. And he has berated Zelenskyy, paused military aid to Ukraine and engaged in friendlier relations with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Here's how members of Congress navigated Trump's foreign policy moves this past week:

The Oval Office blowup with Zelenskyy

The open display of animosity between Trump and Zelenskyy had many Republicans on edge as they began the week.

Sen. Roger Wicker, R-Miss., who is chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, repeatedly declined to speak to reporters about the exchange.

Another senior Republican who had previously been supportive of Zelenskyy, Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, seemed to make a dramatic shift. After a deal to give the U.S. access to Ukraine's mineral

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riches fell apart, Graham suggested that the Ukrainian president should resign.

Then, as Zelenskyy and Trump raised the prospect of revived talks, Graham praised the deal as an "implicit security guarantee" for Ukraine because it would give Trump a business incentive for ensuring that Russia does not continue to take Ukrainian territory.

"President Trump's a business guy. You got to make business," Graham said, adding that the "America First" policy was a "hybrid" from the GOP's days of "Reagan Republicans."

"I see it as a reevaluation of traditional alignments, a outside-the-box-view of talking to traditional foes, but the reason I support it is because I think this hybrid approach is actually smart," Graham said.

Other Republicans who are opposed to Ukraine aid were delighted to see Trump sour on Zelenskyy.

"What we're seeing, which is a bit of a shock to the system, is a president that's prioritizing American interests," said Sen. Eric Schmitt, R-Mo.

The president's address to Congress

The only part of Trump's address to Congress on Tuesday night that drew more applause from Democrats than Republicans was when the president spoke of how the U.S. had sent billions of dollars in military aid to Ukraine. On the Democratic side of the House chamber, members unfurled a small Ukrainian flag and wore scarfs of blue and gold.

On the Republican side, displays of support for Ukraine were hard to find. A few members wore lapel pins with the American and Ukrainian flags.

Sen. Thom Tillis, R-N.C., who was one of the only GOP lawmakers to defend Zelenskyy this past week, said he was wearing the pin to send the message that "I support Ukraine and that I think that Vladimir Putin is a liar. And the minute that we think there's any redeeming quality from him, we've made a mistake."

Wicker, who also wore a pin Tuesday, said during a committee meeting that day that he hoped "to heaven" that Trump and Zelenskyy would reenter talks and that "friends decide to move on" after conflicts. As Trump spoke of Ukraine that night, Wicker sat on the edge of his seat.

"It's time to end this senseless war," Trump said, adding he wanted to speak to both sides.

A new generation of advisers

Republicans are not just worried about the future of Ukraine.

During a Senate hearing, Republican hawks such as Wicker and Sen. Tom Cotton of Arkansas closely questioned Elbridge Colby, Trump's nominee for the top policy job at the Pentagon, about his ideas, which in the past have included a drawdown of military aid to Ukraine, a greater tolerance for Iran obtaining nuclear weapons and softening the U.S. position that it would help defend Taiwan in the event of a Chinese invasion.

Wicker also questioned Colby on whether he agreed with recently hired Pentagon advisers such as Michael DiMino, who has argued for reducing U.S. involvement in the Middle East, or Andrew Byers, who is in favor of a less confrontational approach to China.

Colby laid out his view that the U.S. cannot currently afford to be involved in countering multiple adversaries. But he also seemed to placate the senators by suggesting Iran could become an "existential threat" to the U.S.

Democrats repeatedly pressed Colby to say that Russia had started its war by invading Ukraine. Colby declined to do so, saying that the Trump administration was in a delicate negotiation with both countries.

Democrats try to rally support for Ukraine

As Trump changed America's position on the war in Ukraine. Democrats took to the Senate floor Wednesday evening to try to pass a series of resolutions declaring U.S. support for repelling Russia's invasion and decrying alleged war crimes by the Kremlin.

Sen. Jim Risch, R-Idaho, who heads the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, objected, blocking the resolutions. He said he agreed with the sentiment, but that it was unhelpful to the negotiations underway.

"Everybody wants the same outcome and that is to have peace in Ukraine," Risch said. "There is one man on this planet, one man that can make that happen, and that is Donald J. Trump."

Sen. Bernie Sanders, a Vermont independent who led the Democrats' effort, responded by saying he

had hoped Republicans could have agreed on rebuking Putin.

"Mr. Putin, you started this terrible war," Sanders said. "You're acting illegally. You're acting barbarically. Stop that war."

When should you eat? Before, after — or even while — exercising?

By ALBERT STUMM Associated Press

If you listen to some self-proclaimed exercise experts on social media, they swear that working out on an empty stomach burns more fat.

But it's a common misconception that exercising in a fasted state improves performance or burns more calories, said Abby Langer, a dietitian in Toronto.

"The research shows that in terms of gains, it doesn't really make much of a difference," she said.

Does that mean you should load up on protein and carbs right before a workout? No, that's not true either.

Here's a look at when — and how — you should eat, before, after or even during a workout. (And remember, experts say what you eat is more important than when you eat.)

What's the case for eating before exercising?

The calories in food literally are energy, so you need them to fuel your body for a proper workout. Eating too much too soon beforehand, though, can be problematic.

Exercising diverts blood from organs including the stomach to the muscles, said Langer, author of "Good Food, Bad Diet." So exercising on a full stomach affects the digestive process, which could cause cramping or even make you feel sick.

That's particularly the case with meals high in fat, protein or fiber, which take longer to digest than carbohydrates. Langer recommends eating a high ratio of carbs beforehand and waiting two to three hours before intense exercise.

"You don't want to eat a big steak an hour before you play hockey," she said.

If you exercise first thing in the morning or before dinner, it's OK to have a carb-rich snack like a banana with peanut butter or yogurt with fruit beforehand. It will give you the energy to perform well, and you can fuel up afterward with a full meal.

When — and what — should you eat after exercise?

That steak may serve you better afterward because that's when a higher ratio of protein is easier to digest, said Krista Austin, a physiologist in Colorado Springs.

Austin said if it will be an hour or longer before you can have a full meal, it's better to have a high-protein snack in the meantime to help curb your appetite. The reason has little to do with muscle recovery or nutrient absorption: Rather, people who are too hungry make poor dietary choices.

"A lot of people get very hungry about an hour after exercise, and you don't want to do that," said Austin, author of "Performance Nutrition: Applying the Science of Nutrient Timing." "You want to catch it early, or you go and overeat."

But it's another myth that you need to grab a protein shake within minutes of finishing to build the biggest muscles, Langer said.

Many exercise enthusiasts point to what's known as an "anabolic window" of about an hour within exercising that the body is primed to repair muscle. For the average person, you have a much longer window, and nutrient timing is less important than making sure you consume some protein at every meal, Langer said. The body needs a continuous supply of amino acids like protein for muscle repair and maintenance, she said, which means about 25 to 30 grams at every meal, depending on various factors.

"Prioritizing that will help with goals, either muscle building, satiety, weight loss, all of that," Langer said.

How about eating during exercise?

Most people who are eating enough throughout the day don't need anything during a workout. Langer and Austin said the threshold is about an hour of intense exercise. Longer than that — say you're training for a marathon — and you can benefit from a carb-rich snack in the middle.

Instead of focusing on when to eat, Austin said to focus on what and how much. She cautioned against

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overcomplicating the topic and recommended following the USDA's My Plate recommendations for a balanced diet.

"The biggest thing we need to teach people is that nutrition is simple," she said. "Maybe you need to stop focusing on the concept of nutrient timing and just make sure that you're consistently eating throughout the day and focus on health."

EDITOR'S NOTE: Albert Stumm writes about wellness, food and travel. Find his work at <https://www.albertstumm.com>

Today in History: March 9

'Operation Meetinghouse' firebombing devastates Tokyo

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Sunday, March 9, the 68th day of 2025. There are 297 days left in the year. Daylight saving time returns at 2 a.m. local time.

Today in history:

On March 9, 1945, during World War II, over 300 U.S. B-29 bombers began Operation Meetinghouse, a massive firebombing raid on Tokyo. The raid killed an estimated 100,000 civilians, left 1 million homeless and destroyed 16 square miles (41 square kilometers) of the city.

Also on this date:

In 1796, the future emperor of the French, Napoleon Bonaparte, married Josephine de Beauharnais.

In 1841, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *United States v. The Amistad*, ruled 7-1 in favor of a group of illegally enslaved Africans who were captured off the U.S. coast after seizing control of a Spanish schooner, *La Amistad*. The justices ruled that the Africans should be set free.

In 1862, during the U.S. Civil War, the ironclad warships *USS Monitor* and *CSS Virginia* (formerly *USS Merrimac*) clashed for five hours to a draw at Hampton Roads, Virginia.

In 1916, more than 400 Mexican raiders led by Pancho Villa attacked Columbus, New Mexico, killing 18 Americans.

In 1959, the Barbie doll was introduced at the American International Toy Fair in New York.

In 1964, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *New York Times Co. v. Sullivan*, raised the standard for public officials to prove they'd been libeled in their official capacity by news organizations.

In 1997, rapper The Notorious B.I.G. (Christopher Wallace) was killed in a still-unsolved drive-by shooting in Los Angeles at age 24.

In 2022, a Russian airstrike devastated a maternity hospital in the besieged Ukrainian port city of Mariupol, killing four people and wounding at least 17.

Today's birthdays: Singer Jeffrey Osborne is 77. Actor Linda Fiorentino is 67. Actor Juliette Binoche is 61. Actor Emmanuel Lewis is 54. Actor Oscar Isaac is 46. Comedian Jordan Klepper (TV: "The Daily Show") is 46. Rapper Chingy is 45. Actor Matthew Gray Gubler is 45. Soccer player Clint Dempsey is 42. Olympic skiing gold medalist Julia Mancuso is 41. Actor Brittany Snow is 39. Rapper Bow Wow is 38. Rapper YG is 35. Social media personality Khaby Lame is 25. Olympic gymnastics gold medalist Sunisa Lee is 22.