

Groton Daily Independent

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Wednesday, March 12

Senior Menu: Chicken alfredo, California blend, Cherry fluff, breadstick.
School Breakfast: Cereal.
School Lunch: Chicken nuggets, potato wedges.
Groton United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.
Groton C&MA: Kid's Club, Youth Group, Adult Bible Study, 7 p.m.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 4 p.m.; Lenten

Groton Daily Independent
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Supper, 6 p.m. (host - Emmanuel Men), worship, 7 p.m.
St. John's Lutheran: Confirmation, 3:45 p.m.; Lenten Service, 7 p.m.
United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.

Thursday, March 13

Senior Menu: Salisbury steak, mashed potato with gravy, peaches, peas and carrots, whole wheat bread.
School Breakfast: Biscuits.
School Lunch: Chicken nachoes, refried beans.
State A Girls Tournament, Spearfish (BHSU)
Groton Lions Club Meeting, 6 p.m., 104 N Main.

Friday, March 14

Senior Menu: Chicken strips, au gratin, mied vegetables, tropical fruit, whole wheat bread.
School Breakfast: Breakfast cookie.
School Lunch: Fish nuggets, baby bakers.
State A Girls Tournament, Spearfish (BHSU)

Saturday, March 15

State A Girls Tournament, Spearfish (BHSU)

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1440

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

Ukraine Ceasefire Proposal

Ukraine accepted a US-proposed 30-day ceasefire deal yesterday amid negotiations in Saudi Arabia. The agreement, contingent upon Russian acceptance, would halt fighting along the front line as well as in the air and sea. In exchange, the US agreed to restore military aid to Ukraine, which was cut off after a tense Oval Office exchange between President Donald Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy two weeks ago.

The joint statement from the US and Ukraine came hours after Kyiv launched the war's largest drone attack against the Moscow region, killing at least three and wounding another 18. More than 300 drones were intercepted in Moscow and elsewhere in the country. The attack highlighted Kyiv's ability to strike deep into Russian territory despite recent setbacks in the war, disrupting train and air travel while damaging key oil-processing plants.

The three-year war has left more than 1 million combatants dead or wounded and has displaced more than 10 million civilians. The UN estimates rebuilding Ukraine will cost more than \$500B over a decade.

Duterte Arrested

Former Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte was arrested yesterday at Manila's international airport under a warrant issued by the International Criminal Court. The 79-year-old was returning from Hong Kong when law enforcement took him into custody for alleged crimes against humanity tied to his antidrug campaign.

The arrest concludes the yearslong ICC investigation into Duterte's war on drugs, spanning from his mayorship in Davao (November 2011) through his presidency (2016-22) until March 2019, when the Philippines withdrew from the ICC. Official records cite more than 6,000 deaths, while human rights groups estimate the toll could be closer to 30,000. The ICC accuses Duterte of orchestrating widespread unlawful killings targeting civilians while providing immunity to perpetrators and rewarding police officers with financial incentives.

His supporters argue the arrest is illegal because the court lacks jurisdiction, but the ICC maintains it retains authority over crimes committed before the withdrawal.

Bags (Don't) Fly Free

Southwest Airlines is dropping its long-standing "bags fly free" policy for most travelers starting May 28, which analysts say could impact customer loyalty. Only top-tier customers will retain the perk of two free checked bags, while some members will be allowed one free checked bag, and others will be charged.

The decision marks a major shift in Southwest's 54-year history and comes amid financial pressures and changing customer preferences post-pandemic. The airline could generate up to \$1.5B per year in revenue from baggage fees while losing \$1.8B in market share, per a consulting firm's analysis. (In 2023, US airlines collectively brought in \$7.1B from baggage fees.) Southwest will also introduce assigned seating, extra legroom seats for a fee, and a basic economy fare class. Southwest shares closed up 8% yesterday.

In related news, Delta Air Lines, American Airlines, and Southwest lowered their financial forecasts for the first quarter of this year, citing bad weather, plane crashes, and less consumer spending.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

"Othello," starring Denzel Washington and Jake Gyllenhaal, hauls in \$2.8M to break record for highest-grossing week for a Broadway play.

Wendy Williams taken to hospital after being removed from her assisted-living home following a wellness check by NYC police.

Stanley R. Jaffe, Oscar-winning producer known for "Kramer vs. Kramer" and "Fatal Attraction," dies at age 84.

College basketball conference championship week is under way; see schedules and odds for the men's tournaments ... and complete schedule for the women's tournaments.

Science & Technology

Researchers demonstrate recycling process that breaks down common plastics using only an inexpensive catalyst and moisture pulled from the air.

Scientists create "berkelocene," the first metallic compound using the element berkelium; with an atomic number of 97, the achievement sheds light on chemistry with elements heavier than uranium.

Water droplets flowing across a surface generate as much as 10 times more electric charge than previously believed; results shed light on the microscopic physics of interfaces, may lead to improved fuel systems.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close lower (S&P 500 -0.8%, Dow -1.1%, Nasdaq -0.2%) amid trade policy uncertainty.

Ontario, Canada, temporarily suspends planned 25% surcharge on electricity exported to US states; comes after President Donald Trump vowed to raise Canadian steel and aluminum imports tariffs to 50% before reversing course.

US job openings rose to 7.7 million in January, after falling in December, per the Labor Department's Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey report.

Politics & World Affairs

Education Department sends reduction-in-force notices to 1,315 staffers yesterday evening, while 572 employees have accepted separation packages in recent weeks and 63 probationary workers were laid off last month; roughly 50% of around 4,000 agency employees have been let go.

House Republicans vote 217-213 to pass bill to fund the government through Sept. 30, includes increasing military spending by \$6B and rolling back \$20B in IRS funding; bill heads to Senate ahead of shutdown deadline at midnight Friday.

Former US Rep. Katie Porter (D, CA-47) to run for California governor.

UK police arrest 59-year-old man on suspicion of manslaughter a day after a container ship struck an oil tanker in the North Sea, leaving one crew member missing and presumed dead; 36 others were rescued alive.

Groton Area Punches Ticket to State with Statement Win Over Winner

HURON—The Groton Area Tigers are heading back to the State A Boys Basketball Tournament after a gritty 51-38 victory over the Winner Warriors in the SODAK 16 showdown Tuesday night.

The game, played in front of an electric crowd in Huron, started as a back-and-forth battle. The lead changed hands three times in the first quarter before Winner managed to hold a slim 9-6 advantage heading into the second. However, Groton Area wasted no time regaining control. A quick basket by Gage Sippel with an assist by Karson Zak put the Tigers up 10-9 early in the second quarter, setting the tone for what would become a dominant second-half performance.

Winner's big man, Shawn Hammerbeck, was a force in the first half, scoring 12 points and helping the Warriors stay within striking distance. By halftime, Groton Area clung to a narrow 17-15 lead, with both teams bracing for a physical second half.



Seniors Teylor Diegel, Turner Thompson and Blake Pauli get the SoDak16 plaque as the Tigers celebrate the win. (Photo by Paul

Kosel)



Keegen Tracy
(Photo by Paul Kosel)

The third quarter, however, was all Groton Area. The Tigers came out of the locker room with renewed intensity, scoring 10 unanswered points to open up a 27-17 lead. The defensive effort by Sippel was nothing short of exceptional, as he completely neutralized Hammerbeck, holding him scoreless from the field in the final two quarters. Hammerbeck managed just one free throw after halftime.

The Tigers continued to build momentum, closing the third quarter with a 33-23 lead. A crucial 8-0 run spanning the final moments of the third and the opening minutes of the fourth quarter extended their advantage to 42-23, all but sealing the game.

Offensively, Groton Area caught fire in the second half. Keegen Tracy scored all nine of his points after the break, while Ryder Johnson added seven of his nine. Becker Bosma led the Tigers with 15 points, including 13 in the second half, while Zac also delivered with 13 points of his own. Sippel contributed across the board, pulling down a team-high 10 rebounds, blocking three shots, and notching three steals.

Winner fought hard, with Carter Craven doing everything he could to keep the Warriors in the game. He scored 14 of his team-high 17 points in the second half, but the deficit proved too large to overcome. Hammerbeck finished with 13 points and seven rebounds, while Aidan Schroeder added six points.

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Statistically, the game was even in many ways. Both teams had 14 turnovers, and Winner won the rebounding battle 26-23. However, Groton Area's defensive adjustments and second-half scoring explosion made the difference. The Tigers shot 52% from two-point range (16-for-31) and 38% from beyond the arc (5-for-13), with Bosma knocking down two triples. Winner, meanwhile, struggled from the field, hitting just 35% of their shots (15-for-43).

With the win, Groton Area improves to 17-5 on the season and will enter the State A Tournament as the No. 8 seed. Their reward? A matchup with powerhouse No. 1 seed Sioux Falls Christian at noon on Thursday, March 20.

For now, though, the Tigers will savor this victory—a testament to their grit, teamwork, and second-half dominance. The road to a championship won't be easy, but Groton Area has already proven they belong among the state's best.

- Story compiled by ChatGPT

Ryder Johnson: 9 points, 1 assist, 4 fouls, 1 block.

Keegen Tracy: 9 points, 2 assists, 1 steal, 3 fouls, 3 blocks.

Becker Bosma: 15 points 7 rebounds, 3 assists, 1 steal, 1 foul.

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

Easton Weber: 2 rebounds, 1 assist.

Turner Thompson: 1 assist.

Logan Warrington: 1 rebound.

Taylor Diegel, Blake Pauli and Jayden Schwan also played.

2-Pointers: 16-31 52%, 3-Pointers: 5-13 38%, Free Throws: 4-9 44%, 23 rebounds, 14 turnovers, 13 assists, 6 steals, 12 fouls, 5 blocks.

Winner: Carter Craven 17, Shawn Hammerbeck 13, Aiden Schroeder 6, Ryder Halligan 2. Field Goals: 15-43 35%, 3-Pointers: 2-13 15%, Free Throws: 6-9 67%, 26 rebounds, 13 fouls, 2 assists, 14 turnovers, 2 blocks, 7 steals.

Record: Groton Area 17-5, Winner: 16-6.

The game was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Bary Keith at Harr Motors, Bierman Farm Service, Blocker Construction, Dacotah Bank, Farmers Union Coop, Ferney and Conde, Greg Johnson Construction, Bristol, Groton Ag Partners, Groton Chamber, Groton Dairy Queen, Groton Ford, Hanlon Brothers, Groton and Verdon, John Sieh Agency, Ken's Food Fair, Lori's Pharmacy, Olive Grove Golf Course, Rix Farms/R&M Farms, S & S Lumber, Spanier Harvesting, The MeatHouse, Andover, Weismantel Agency, Columbia. Paul Kosel and Jeslyn Kosel were on hand for the action.





Ryder Johnson
(Photo by Paul Kosel)



State A Boys Basketball Tournament Pairings

March 20-22
Sioux Falls



#1 - Denny Sanford PREMIER Center

 1 Sioux Falls Christian	21-1	3/20 12:00 PM CT
 8 Groton Area	17-5	

#2 - Denny Sanford PREMIER Center

 4 West Central	19-3	3/20 1:45 PM CT
 5 Lennox	19-4	

#3 - Denny Sanford PREMIER Center

 2 Hamlin	20-2	3/20 6:00 PM CT
 7 Hill City	19-4	

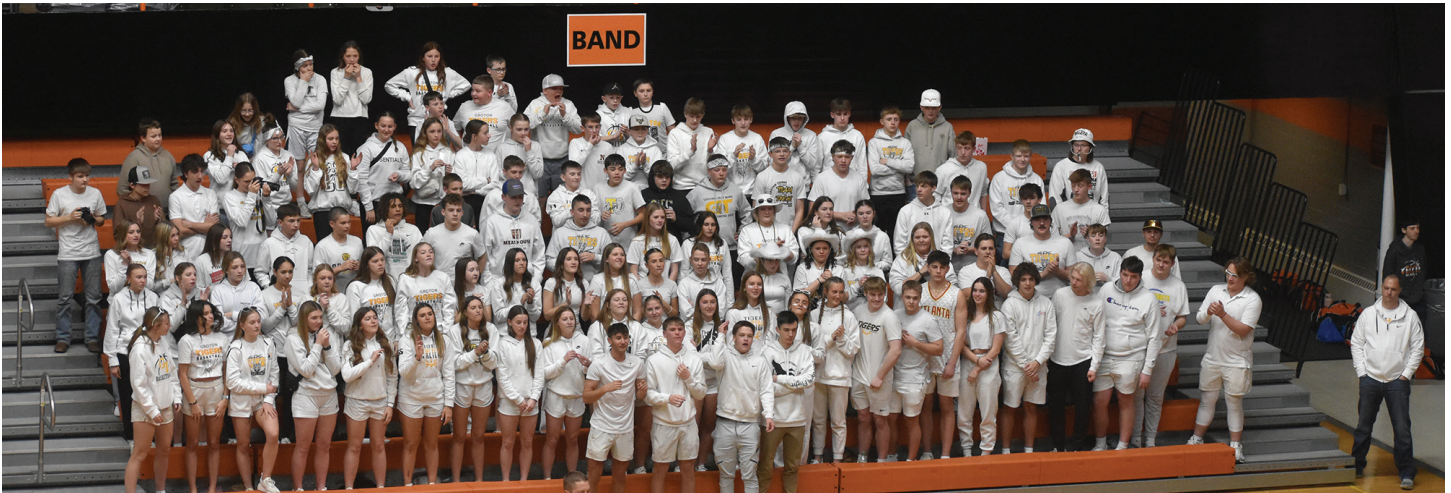
#4 - Denny Sanford PREMIER Center

 3 Rapid City Christian	20-2	3/20 7:45 PM CT
 6 Clark/Willow Lake	18-4	



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White-Out!

The Groton student section wore white for the game Tuesday as it was a white-out night for the Tigers. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

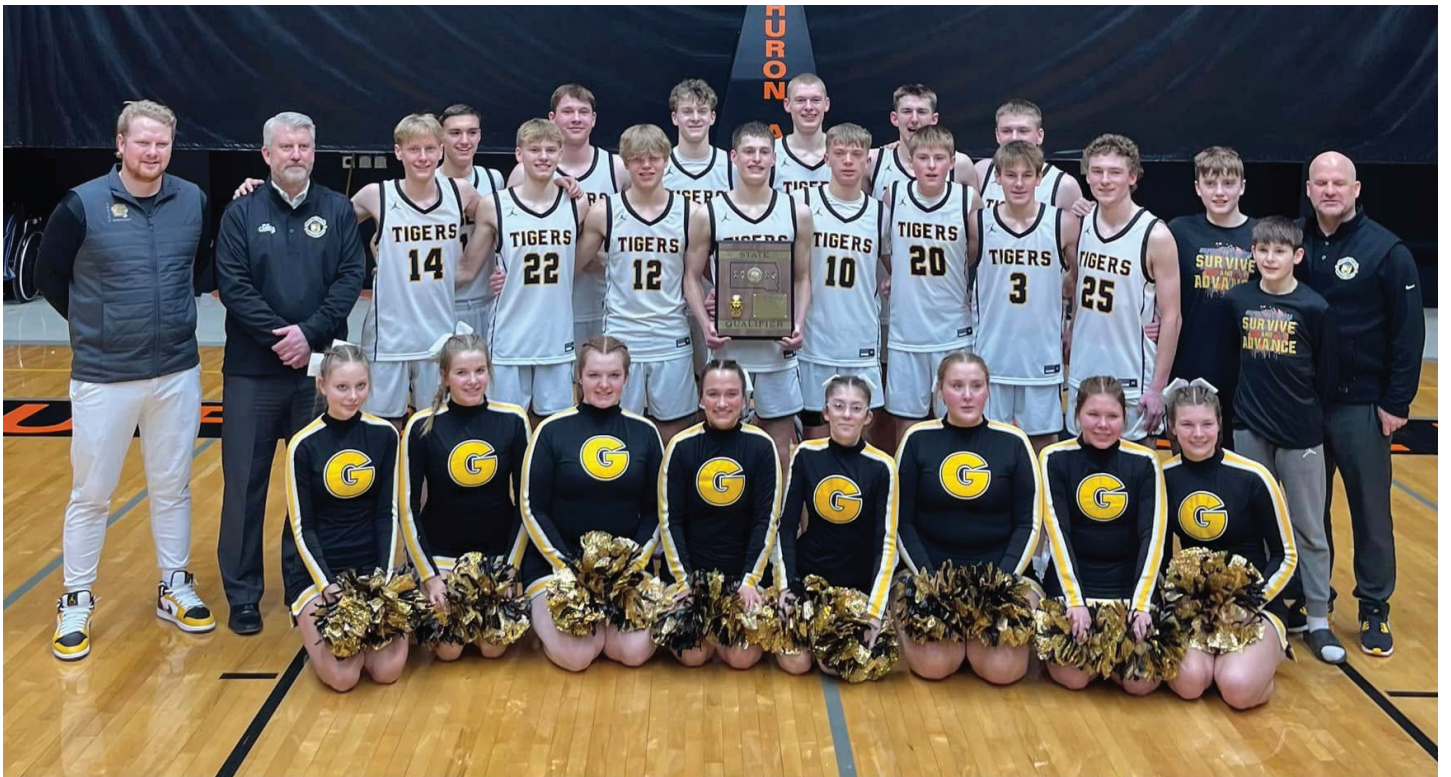


Photo from Jennifer Schelle's Facebook Page



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Attempt to revive 'locking up librarians' bill fails; version with appeal process goes to governor

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - MARCH 11, 2025 6:14 PM

PIERRE — The South Dakota House of Representatives voted 36-34 Tuesday at the Capitol to accept Senate amendments to a controversial bill originally intended to hold librarians criminally accountable for knowingly providing obscene materials to minors.

The amended version of the bill removes the criminal penalty and instead requires an appeals process for challenging materials in school and public libraries.

The Senate wholly replaced the language in the measure on Monday, stripping provisions that would have repealed a legal exemption protecting librarians from prosecution for distributing content deemed "harmful to minors." Instead, the revised bill allows people to challenge librarians' decisions about what material should be available to children, first through the school board or a public library's governing body, and ultimately through the courts.

House supporters of the original bill asked fellow representatives to vote against the Senate's changes, which would have sent the bill to a conference committee of members from both chambers for further deliberation.

"This bill does absolutely nothing," said Rep. Bethany Soye, R-Sioux Falls. She introduced the original version of the bill.

Opponents of the original bill said criminalizing librarians is not a measured approach to alleviate concerns about inappropriate books.

"Everybody says we want to get these books out of schools," said Rep. Drew Peterson, R-Salem. "Locking up librarians if they accidentally give a book to a minor isn't going to do it, but this bill will do it."

The bill now heads to Gov. Larry Rhoden for final consideration.

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.

U.S. Education Department to cut hundreds of staff members

BY: SHAUNEEN MIRANDA - MARCH 11, 2025 5:24 PM

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Education on Tuesday said it's cutting a substantial number of the agency's staff through a "reduction in force" process, bringing the department's workforce to roughly half the number in place when President Donald Trump took office.

According to senior department officials speaking on background to reporters Tuesday evening, roughly 1,315 employees are subject to the initiative. The officials said the employees will get, starting Tuesday, 90 days full pay and benefits and will telework from Wednesday until March 21, when they are placed on administrative leave.

The sweeping cuts are part of a government-wide effort by Trump and billionaire White House adviser Elon Musk to reduce the federal workforce in an effort to slash government spending and reduce what they see as waste.

When Trump took office, the department had 4,133 employees. Following Tuesday's announcement, the

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agency said it will have roughly 2,183 workers remaining. In the past several weeks, nearly 600 workers took voluntary resignation opportunities or retirement, according to a Tuesday evening press release.

The department also terminated 63 probationary employees in February, according to senior department officials.

The senior officials clarified that this staffing reduction will not impact the department's ability to deliver on civil rights investigations, the rollout of the federal student aid application, Title I funding for low-income school districts and other statutorily mandated functions Congress has given the agency.

The senior officials confirmed earlier reporting that the department's Washington-area office buildings would close Tuesday evening for safety reasons and would reopen Thursday.

"Today's reduction in force reflects the Department of Education's commitment to efficiency, accountability, and ensuring that resources are directed where they matter most: to students, parents, and teachers," Secretary of Education Linda McMahon said in a statement Tuesday.

"I appreciate the work of the dedicated public servants and their contributions to the Department. This is a significant step toward restoring the greatness of the United States education system."

Layoffs gut department, Dems say

Congressional Democrats and labor union leaders blasted the cuts Tuesday.

"Today's staff eliminations are illegal, and they are a slap in the face to the dedicated public servants who work to make sure American children have access to a quality education," Connecticut U.S. Rep. Rosa DeLauro, the top Democrat on the House Appropriations Committee, said. "No president or member of the executive branch has the authority to end public education, violate the law, and unilaterally steal dollars promised to students."

Sen. Patty Murray, a Washington state Democrat who is the vice chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee, said the cuts were meant to sidestep the legislative difficulty of eliminating the department itself.

"Donald Trump and Linda McMahon know they can't abolish the Department of Education on their own but they understand that if you gut it to its very core and fire all the people who run programs that help students, families, and teachers, you might end up with a similar, ruinous result," she said.

"Ultimately, what they want to do is clear: fire the people who help our kids and gut funding for our students, teachers, and schools. This is about breaking government for working families — and enriching billionaires like themselves in the process."

Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers, said "denuding an agency so it cannot function effectively is the most cowardly way of dismantling it."

"The massive reduction in force at the Education Department is an attack on opportunity that will gut the agency and its ability to support students, throwing federal education programs into chaos across the country," said Weingarten, who leads one of the largest teachers unions in the country.

Department overhaul

Trump has targeted the Education Department specifically in the spending cuts initiative, repeatedly pledging to shutter the 45-year-old agency in his quest to move education "back to the states."

The department had already seen dramatic shifts in the weeks since Trump took office — from major contract cuts, to staff buyouts.

Other departments and agencies, including the Department of Veterans Affairs, have also seen broad staffing decreases under Trump.

Last week, McMahon sent an email to department employees regarding the agency's "final mission," where she detailed her plans to "overhaul" the federal agency.

The former World Wrestling Entertainment executive told employees that the department's "role in this new era of accountability is to restore the rightful role of state oversight in education and to end the overreach from Washington."

McMahon said "this restoration will profoundly impact staff, budgets, and agency operations here at the

Department.”

Congressional action would be tough

Even if Trump were to sign an executive order on dismantling the department, only Congress has the authority to shut it down. Any bill to close down the agency would face extreme difficulties getting through the narrowly GOP-controlled Senate, with at least 60 senators needed to advance past the filibuster.

In her statement, DeLauro dared Republican lawmakers to try to eliminate the department through legislation.

“To my Republican colleagues: if you want to eliminate the Department of Education, then put your name on a bill to do that,” she said. “Let your constituents see it. Let us debate it. Let us and the American people deliberate. Do not yield our authority, and the rule of law, to unchecked billionaires.”

Trump’s push to move education “back to the states” also comes as much of the funding and oversight of schools already occurs at the state and local levels. Legally, the department cannot control the curriculum of schools across the country.

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

Lawmakers on budget committee reject Noem’s public broadcasting cut

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - MARCH 11, 2025 2:07 PM

PIERRE — Members of the Legislature’s main budget committee voted to maintain state funding for South Dakota Public Broadcasting on Tuesday, reversing former Gov. Kristi Noem’s proposed \$3.6 million cut.

The Joint Appropriations Committee, meeting at the Capitol, rejected the provision in the governor’s December budget proposal. Lawmakers on both sides of the aisle praised the decision, citing the importance of SDPB’s communication towers, which relay public safety messages; its legislative and other state government livestreams that support government transparency; and its broadcasts of state high school activities.

“As long as I’m here, it’s safe,” said Rep. Liz May, R-Kyle. “Because I have got to watch basketball.”

The move follows an avalanche of opposition to the proposed cut. Earlier this legislative session, busloads of SDPB supporters traveled to the Capitol to urge lawmakers to maintain funding. They and staff warned the cut would jeopardize federal matching dollars and force the network to significantly scale back local programming. SDPB leaders had warned that without the funding, the network’s ability to broadcast high school sports, legislative hearings and emergency alerts would be severely diminished.

SDPB Executive Director Julie Overgaard, addressing the committee Tuesday, described the past few months as some of the most challenging in her decades with the organization.

“I cannot tell you how much my staff, myself, our boards and everybody who has spent so much of their life to make this a great service for South Dakota, we appreciate the work you did, and the decision you made,” Overgaard said.

The funding reduction was included in the budget proposal from former Gov. Kristi Noem before she departed for a federal Cabinet position. Gov. Larry Rhoden, who succeeded Noem, acknowledged concerns over the cut but had not committed to restoring it.

SDPB’s budget now moves forward in the legislative process as lawmakers work to finish the next fiscal year’s state budget by the time their annual legislative session concludes Thursday. Lawmakers will return to Pierre on March 31 to consider any vetoes from Rhoden.

SDPB is requesting \$5.6 million in state funding for the 2026 fiscal year. The organization’s total budget is about \$11 million, with the rest of the money from federal matching funds and private fundraising.

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

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South Dakota Searchlight, Joshua worked for five years as a multimedia specialist and journalist with South Dakota Public Broadcasting.

COMMENTARY

Noem gets a prison in New Jersey, while SD struggles with her poorly executed project back home

by Dana Hess

I always look forward to South Dakota Searchlight's daily email of state and national news. The editor who puts that email together probably didn't mean for it to happen, but one day recently there was quite a juxtaposition of two stories about prisons.

In the state news there was reporting about Gov. Larry Rhoden doing the right thing by suspending legislative action on the new prison and appointing a committee to seek a way forward on the project. In the national news there was another story about a \$1 billion contract the federal government was signing with GEO Group, a private prison company, for detaining up to 1,000 immigrants in New Jersey.

The story about the appointment of Rhoden's committee to work on the prison project was good news for South Dakota. That project has been lamented by various groups ever since its inception. Rhoden's call for a "reset" was the right one after the Legislature proved that it was unwilling to release the funding for the 1,500-bed men's prison that would be located about 15 miles south of Sioux Falls.

The reset work group, made up of legislators and various law enforcement types, will meet four times starting on April 2, culminating in a special legislative session on July 22. In announcing the reset, Rhoden kept talking about "a new prison." Don't be surprised, however, if the work group finds that the easiest way forward is to bulk up existing prison facilities or use current Corrections Department locations rather than pick another fight with a new set of neighbors who don't want a prison in their backyard.

As for the New Jersey prison story, that one was full of dollar signs. George Zoley, the founder and executive chairman of GEO Group, talked about how increasing the bed capacity at the company's prisons, due to the need to detain more immigrants, could result in annual revenues up to \$600 million.

One of the elements that connects the two stories is their similar price tags — the billion dollar cost of the federal contract and the \$825 million price tag on South Dakota's prison project. Former Gov. Kristi Noem and the Legislature worked for years to save enough for a new prison. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, run now by Noem as secretary of Homeland Security, agreed to a billion-dollar prison contract with the stroke of a pen.

After six years as South Dakota's governor, leading a federal agency must seem like heaven for Noem when it comes to getting the prison space that she needs:

No Lincoln County neighbors who got cranky and vocal when they were surprised by the state's plan to plop down a new prison next door.

No litigation over the state's failure to apply for a county zoning permit.

No recalcitrant new-age Republican lawmakers who refuse to go along with the governor's plan for a new prison.

No worries that the \$62 million allocated for prison design and site prep work on her watch — much of which has already been spent — might be wasted if the "reset" work group decides to go in another direction.

South Dakota finds itself having to "reset" its prison project largely because of Noem's management style. With her penchant for secrecy and her my-way-or-the-highway style of negotiations, she poisoned the project since its inception. If Noem had been open about the process, willing to follow local rules and welcoming of other ideas and opinions, the state would be well on its way to building a new men's prison rather than being forced to start over.

Rhoden made a difficult choice when he made the right call to give the state's prison project more study.

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Too bad that kind of clear-headed leadership has not been on display in Pierre since the start of the project.

Dana Hess spent more than 25 years in South Dakota journalism, editing newspapers in Redfield, Milbank and Pierre. He's retired and lives in Brookings, working occasionally as a freelance writer.

Rhoden signs bills including school cash mandate, Mickelson Trail e-bike limitation, 911 surcharge

BY: SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT STAFF - MARCH 11, 2025 9:22 PM

South Dakota Gov. Larry Rhoden announced Tuesday that he signed 31 more bills into law, including legislation to require the acceptance of cash at school events, regulate e-bikes on the Mickelson Trail, and make an increase in the state's 911 surcharge permanent.

The cash acceptance bill was motivated by complaints about parents not being able to attend high school activities in some parts of the state, especially in the Sioux Falls area, because some schools exclusively use smartphone app-based, cashless ticketing.

The Mickelson Trail bill allows only the slowest class of e-bikes, Class I, on the trail.

The 911 bill makes a temporary increase in the state's 911 surcharge permanent. The monthly, per-line charge applies to landline and cellphone service, and is used to help local governments fund their 911 call centers. Legislators and Gov. Kristi Noem adopted a 75-cent increase in the surcharge last year, from \$1.25 to \$2. The temporary measure was set to expire on July 1, 2026.

Rhoden has now signed 97 bills into law this legislative session, which began in January and concludes Thursday, except for a day on March 31 to consider any vetoes that Rhoden issues. Legislators introduced more than 500 bills, resolutions and commemorations this session.

U.S. House GOP pushes through bill averting shutdown on Friday; Senate is next

South Dakota Republican Rep. Dusty Johnson votes yes

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - MARCH 11, 2025 5:12 PM

WASHINGTON — House Republicans approved a stopgap spending bill Tuesday that would keep the government funded for about six months, though the legislation must pass the Senate before a Friday midnight deadline to avoid a partial government shutdown.

The 217-213 House vote was largely along party lines, with Democrats opposing the measure saying they instead want to work toward an agreement on the dozen full-year government funding bills. Kentucky Rep. Thomas Massie was the only GOP lawmaker to vote against approval and Maine Rep. Jared Golden was the only Democratic member to support approval.

President Donald Trump and other members of the Trump administration sought to sway Massie to support the spending bill, in part, by encouraging Republicans to challenge Massie during the 2026 primary election.

Massie rejected the pressure on social media, writing that his "constituents prefer transparency and principles over blind allegiance."

"POTUS is spending his day attacking me and Canada," Massie wrote in a separate post, referring to Trump's threats to hike tariffs on Canada. "The difference is Canada will eventually cave."

Senate passage will require some Democrats to join Republicans for 60 votes to limit debate. Republicans hold 53 seats at the moment.

House Republicans announced a few hours before their vote that the chamber would leave for a 12-day recess on Tuesday, instead of on Wednesday.

The schedule change prevents the Senate from amending the stopgap spending bill in any way, which would require the legislation to go back to the House for final approval. The House won't return until Monday, March 24.

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During a shutdown, exempt employees are generally considered essential for the preservation of life or property and continue working as normal. Non-exempt federal workers are not considered essential and are sent home until Congress approves a funding bill. Members of the military are considered exempt.

Neither group of federal employees receives a paycheck until after the shutdown ends, when they'll receive back pay.

Shutdowns don't historically impact the administration of mandatory programs, like Social Security, Medicare or Medicaid.

Thune feels 'very comfortable'

Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., said he's "hoping" Democrats vote to limit debate on the stopgap spending bill.

"We feel very comfortable that we will deliver a majority vote for this," Thune said. "The question is, can we get the 60-vote supermajority threshold that's necessary to pass it. And in order to do that, we need Democrats."

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said Democrats in that chamber are going to "wait to see what the House does first" before deciding if they'll support or oppose the bill.

The last time Congress relied on a full-year continuing resolution was in fiscal 2013, but lawmakers had also passed the Agriculture-FDA, Commerce-Justice-Science, Defense, Homeland Security and Military Construction-VA appropriations bills that year.

Lawmakers also relied on a full-year stopgap for fiscal 2011, but passed a full-year Defense spending bill as well.

Better than a shutdown, Cole says

House Appropriations Chairman Tom Cole, R-Okla., said during floor debate that another stopgap spending bill is "not what I wanted, but at the end of the day it is significantly better than the alternative — a government shutdown."

"Despite our best efforts, we were unable to come to a final agreement on the full-year appropriations bills," Cole said. "Although we were very close on a final dollar figure, my colleagues in the minority made additional demands that would restrict the legitimate authority of the executive in the appropriations process."

"These are restrictions that the minority would never accept for a Democratic president, nor are they provisions that President Trump would or should sign into law."

Connecticut Democratic Rep. Rosa DeLauro, ranking member on the spending panel, said she wanted provisions added to the bill ensuring that the Trump administration would have to spend the money Congress appropriates as directed.

"This bill creates more flexibility for this administration to continue to undermine the Constitution and the countless spending laws by stealing promised investments from American families, children and businesses," DeLauro said.

The stopgap spending bill, she said, would allow the Trump administration to continue to dismantle agencies, fire civil servants and cancel union contracts.

"Read the Constitution — Article 1, Section 9, Clause 7 — the power of the purse resides with the Congress and not with the executive," DeLauro said. "And in fact, the president has no legitimate authority from meddling in the appropriations process."

Congress should instead pass the stopgap spending bill Democrats introduced to fund the government through April 11, allowing time for both chambers to work out agreement on the full-year spending bills, DeLauro said.

Third continuing resolution

Congress was supposed to pass the dozen annual funding bills before the start of the current fiscal year on Oct. 1. But, as is typical, especially during an election year, lawmakers used a stopgap spending bill to

fund the government through mid-December.

Normally, that is when the House and Senate would have wrapped up negotiations on final versions of the fiscal 2025 appropriations bills. But GOP lawmakers, who won unified control of government in November, used another stopgap spending bill to move final decisions on full-year bills into this year.

Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., said in December just after the House voted to approve that stopgap spending bill that it would help Republicans change how things are done.

"In January we will make a sea change in Washington. President Trump will return to D.C. and to the White House, and we will have Republican control of the Senate and the House. Things are going to be very different around here," Johnson said at the time. "This was a necessary step to bridge the gap to put us into that moment, where we can put our fingerprints on the final decisions on spending for 2025."

Johnson ultimately decided this weekend to release a third continuing resolution that would fund the federal government through the rest of the fiscal year, instead of having leaders on the Appropriations Committees negotiate full-year spending bills.

Jennifer covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include congressional policy, politics and legal challenges with a focus on health care, unemployment, housing and aid to families.

Congressional panel debates the future of school choice programs, vouchers

BY: SHAUNEEN MIRANDA - MARCH 11, 2025 4:54 PM

WASHINGTON — As school choice continues to take heat across the country, the debate surrounding these programs came to the forefront Tuesday at a hearing in a U.S. House education panel.

Republicans defended them as needed for parents unhappy with their local public schools while Democrats said the programs can drain money from school districts and have a poor track record when it comes to results.

The umbrella term "school choice" centers on programs that offer alternatives to one's assigned public school and includes private school vouchers.

Parents can use these vouchers paid for with public funds to help with the cost of private education for their kids, and these programs have drawn strong criticism over who exactly benefits and how they can contribute to the underfunding and lack of resources already facing public schools across the country.

President Donald Trump took major steps in support of school choice programs during his first days back in office. He signed an executive order in January that gave the U.S. secretary of Education two months to offer guidance on how states can use "federal formula funds to support K-12 educational choice initiatives."

The order also directed the Education secretary to "include education freedom as a priority in discretionary grant programs."

Education data

Trump and other advocates for school choice programs have pointed to the latest data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress, which found that average math and reading scores in 2024 for pupils in fourth grade and eighth grade were lower compared to before the coronavirus pandemic, in 2019.

Rep. Kevin Kiley, who chairs the House Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education, said the report "paints an alarming picture — math and reading scores continue to decline despite a steady increase in overall spending."

The California Republican said "embracing school choice means that parents should have a range of high-quality education options and that includes their neighborhood public school."

Michael McShane, director of national research at EdChoice, a nonprofit focused on advancing school choice options, said school choice programs "have widened the educational opportunities open to our children and the variety of educational institutions available to them."

McShane pointed out that "there are 8,150 charter schools educating 3.7 million students; 3,105 magnet

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schools educating 2.7 million students; more than 415,000 students enrolled in open enrollment programs and more than 6,750 private schools participating in choice programs educating 1.2 million students."

'Voucher scams'

Meanwhile, Democrats on the panel took specific aim at private school vouchers within school choice initiatives, arguing that these programs divert funds from public schools and exacerbate inequalities in education.

Rep. Suzanne Bonamici, ranking member of the panel, said "we need to protect public education and importantly, funding for public education, from voucher scams that funnel taxpayer dollars into private institutions."

The Oregon Democrat said these vouchers "are often pushed with little or no income restrictions, meaning that every student, whether from a single parent home where the mom is working and making minimum wage or from a billionaire family like Elon Musk's, they could all receive the same amount of taxpayer money, all while the public schools that serve the rest — the majority — are left to do more with less."

Jessica Levin, litigation director at the Education Law Center, said "there's an ever-mounting body of evidence that (private school vouchers) do not provide a better education for the most vulnerable, high-need students and, in fact, cause great harm to students, families and communities."

"The data shows that academic outcomes for voucher students are dismal — study after study in places like Louisiana, Indiana and Ohio reveal that vouchers actually have a detrimental academic impact on participating students," Levin said.

Rep. Summer Lee said "it's clear that school choice, this school choice fallacy we're talking about today, just exacerbates the inequalities, the inequities we already have."

"Wealthy white families will continue to have their choices subsidized by depriving largely Black and brown and other marginalized children of educational opportunities," the Pennsylvania Democrat added.

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

Vets worry Trump cuts to VA workforce will interrupt benefits

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY - MARCH 11, 2025 3:17 PM

WASHINGTON — A group of veterans sounded the alarm Tuesday over the Trump administration's job cuts and canceled contracts at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, saying the massive agency that administers benefits and health care programs to millions of vets and their families would see disruptions from the proposed downsizing.

The administration is eyeing a reduction of as many as 83,000 in the agency's workforce as part of President Donald Trump and adviser Elon Musk's agenda to shrink the civil service and reduce government contractors.

The VA has already cut roughly 2,400 positions and began canceling 585 contracts this year, according to agency figures.

Future Zhou, a medically retired veteran, said during a virtual press briefing Tuesday she was among several workers abruptly fired last month from the hospital supply logistics team at VA Puget Sound in Washington state, and she worries about the "stress and devastation that these indiscriminate firings have caused."

Zhou told reporters she was hired in July 2024 to a position managing medical supplies, including for daily surgeries, and removing recalled equipment and medication.

The veteran, who also receives care at the hospital, said her firing has "deeply eroded" her confidence in the VA.

"I was shocked and deeply disappointed when I received an email on Monday, February 24 at 1:56 p.m. notifying me of my immediate removal from my position. I was left with the task of informing my supervisor, my section chief and my (human resources department) of this decision, without the chance to undergo

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a formal assessment of my performance," Zhou said.

Zhou said her former coworkers have told her they are a week behind on "critical supply requests for medication and equipment in our hospital."

Sen. Patty Murray, Democrat of Washington state, said that as the daughter of a World War II Purple Heart recipient who later received VA health care for multiple sclerosis, the issue is "really personal to me."

"And when I see Musk and Trump firing VA workers left and right, when I hear that they now plan to fire over 80,000 more VA workers, you can bet I will not be quiet about this," said Murray, who convened the press conference.

'Government does not exist to employ people'

VA Secretary Doug Collins told Fox News Monday that cutting roughly 80,000 jobs is "a goal" for the administration.

In a video posted on social media March 5, Collins said the administration's target to cut 15% of the VA's workforce will be done without decreasing benefits and health care to veterans and other beneficiaries.

"We regret anyone who loses their job, and it's extraordinarily difficult for me especially as a VA leader and your secretary to make these types of decisions, but the federal government does not exist to employ people. It exists to serve people," said Collins, a former Georgia congressman who still serves in the Air Force Reserve. Collins previously served as an Air Force chaplain and was a Baptist minister in Georgia for 11 years.

Collins said the agency is aiming to return to the 2019 employment level of 398,000, down from the current approximately 470,000 positions.

Hiring increased under former President Joe Biden following the enactment of the PACT Act in 2022, which expanded VA health care for millions of veterans who were exposed to toxic environments while serving.

According to the Biden administration, the VA processed more than 2 million claims, accounting for \$137 billion in benefits, three-quarters of the way through fiscal year 2024, setting "an all-time record." Nearly 33% of the claims could be traced back to the PACT Act's expansion, according to Biden administration figures.

Benefits disruptions feared

Murray is not the only Democrat to express outrage over the planned cuts. The vice chair of the Senate Committee on Appropriations joined colleagues in a March 6 letter demanding more information on decision-making at the VA.

The letter, led by top Democrats on the Senate and House committees on Veterans' Affairs, said "reductions in claims processing turnaround can be directly attributed to the growth in the workforce. Returning to pre-PACT levels explicitly goes against Congressional intent."

"It defies logic and reason that the agency could cut an additional 83,000 employees, beyond the 2,400 or more you have already terminated, without health care and benefits being interrupted," according to the letter led by Sen. Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut and Rep. Mark Takano of California.

In a statement Tuesday, White House spokesperson Anna Kelly told States Newsroom, "President Trump refuses to accept the VA bureaucracy and bloat that has hindered Veterans' ability to receive timely and quality care. By making the VA workforce more efficient, President Trump and Secretary Collins will ensure greater efficiency and transparency for our nation's heroes while preserving the benefits they earned."

Ashley Murray covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include domestic policy and appropriations.

Trump withdraws threat of double tariffs on Canadian metals in dispute over electricity

BY: JACOB FISCHLER - MARCH 11, 2025 12:45 PM

President Donald Trump said Tuesday he would double tariffs on Canadian steel and aluminum to 50%, escalating a trade war that has contributed to a falling stock market in recent days.

Later Tuesday, Trump withdrew that threat following a negotiation between Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick and Ontario Premier Doug Ford that led to Ford dropping a surcharge on electricity from the province sold into three U.S. states.

In a Tuesday morning post to his social media platform, Truth Social, Trump said he instructed Lutnick to put the additional tariffs into effect Wednesday. The move was a response to Ontario imposing a 25% surcharge on electricity sold to Minnesota, Michigan and New York state, Trump said.

"Why would our Country allow another Country to supply us with electricity, even for a small area?" Trump wrote in a follow-up post. "Who made these decisions, and why? And can you imagine Canada stooping so low as to use ELECTRICITY, that so affects the life of innocent people, as a bargaining chip and threat? They will pay a financial price for this so big that it will be read about in History Books for many years to come!"

Trump also called on Canada to reduce tariffs on U.S. dairy products. He threatened that if Canada does not drop those and other long-standing tariffs, he would impose further tariffs on imported cars April 2.

"If other egregious, long time Tariffs are not likewise dropped by Canada, I will substantially increase, on April 2nd, the Tariffs on Cars coming into the U.S. which will, essentially, permanently shut down the automobile manufacturing business in Canada," he wrote. "Those cars can easily be made in the USA!"

Electricity surcharge

Ford announced the electricity surcharge Monday. He said the move was in response to Trump's imposition last week of 25% tariffs on Canadian metals, which the U.S. president later suspended.

The electricity surcharge would cost electricity consumers in the three states up to \$400,000 per day, Ford said.

Ford criticized Trump for an aggressive stance on tariffs and said last-minute suspensions did little to repair the damage created by the U.S. president's threats.

"It's hurting families on both sides of the border," Ford said. "It needs to end. That's why I'm being crystal clear: Until these tariffs are off the table, until the threat of tariffs is gone for good, Ontario will not relent."

He said the province would "apply maximum pressure to maximize our leverage" and threatened to shut off the supply of Ontario electricity if the trade war continues.

Ford did relent, though, according to the White House press office.

"After President Trump threatened to use his executive powers to retaliate with a colossal 50 percent tariff against Canada, Ontario Premier Doug Ford spoke with Secretary Lutnick to convey that he is backing down on implementing a 25 percent charge on electricity exports to the United States," White House spokesman Kush Desai said in a statement.

Traders react

U.S. stock markets recorded their worst trading day of the year Monday – and continued to fall Tuesday morning – amid concern about the economic impacts of Trump's tariff threats.

In his Tuesday morning posts, Trump also repeated a call for Canada to join the United States as the 51st state, saying that would solve any problem stemming from U.S. tariffs and provide the country of 40 million people with military security and reduced taxes. He noted that the U.S. subsidizes Canada's military.

"The only thing that makes sense is for Canada to become our cherished Fifty First State," Trump wrote. "This would make all Tariffs, and everything else, totally disappear. Canadians' taxes will be very substantially reduced, they will be more secure, militarily and otherwise, than ever before, there would

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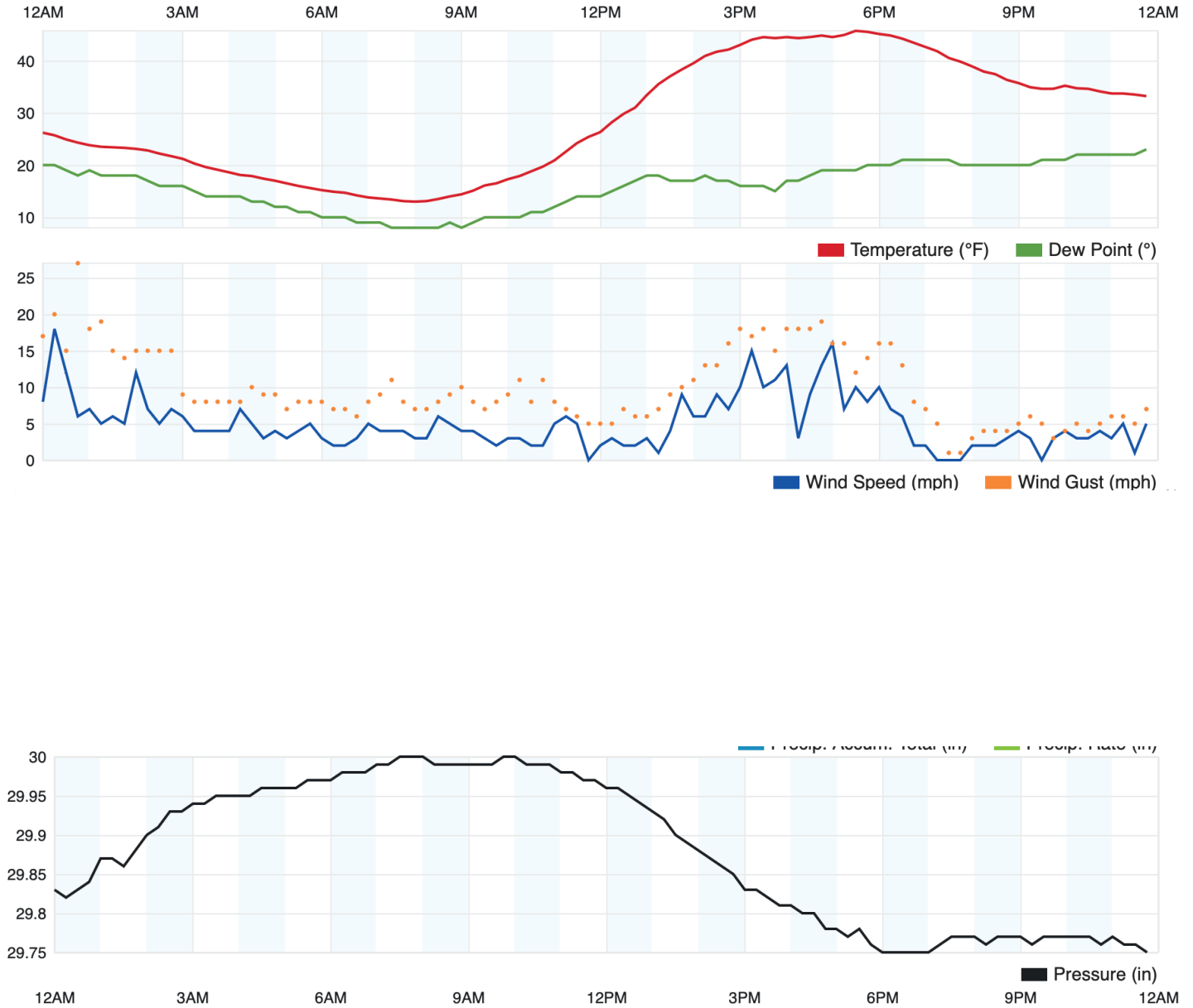
no longer be a Northern Border problem, and the greatest and most powerful nation in the World will be bigger, better and stronger than ever — And Canada will be a big part of that.”

Jacob covers federal policy as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Based in Oregon, he focuses on Western issues. His coverage areas include climate, energy development, public lands and infrastructure.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



High: 60 °F

Mostly Sunny

Tonight



Low: 34 °F

Partly Cloudy

Thursday



High: 73 °F

Partly Sunny

Thursday
Night



Low: 45 °F

Mostly Cloudy

Friday



High: 68 °F

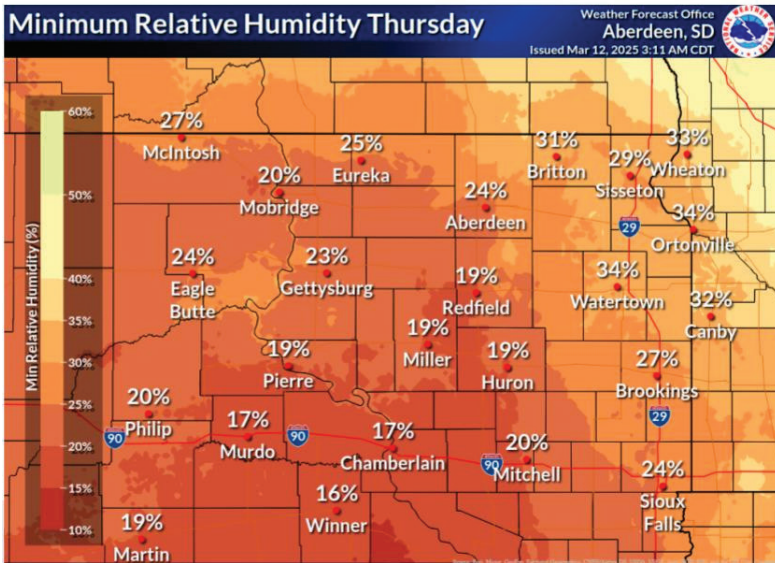
Slight Chance
Rain then
Chance Rain



Increasing Fire Danger on Thursday

March 12, 2025
4:33 AM

- Wind gusts of 20 to 30 mph Thursday afternoon
- Afternoon relative humidity values drop and below 20% over south central SD.



Maximum Wind Gust Forecast (mph)

	3/13 Thu										
	11 am	12 pm	1 pm	2 pm	3 pm	4 pm	5 pm	6 pm	7 pm	8 pm	9 pm
Aberdeen	24	24	28	25	25	25	23	22	21	21	21
Britton	24	23	24	26	24	24	23	21	20	21	22
Brookings	28	29	31	31	32	32	30	29	26	25	25
Chamberlain	14	16	20	23	28	30	28	23	21	20	21
Clark	28	29	32	31	30	30	28	26	24	25	26
Eagle Butte	23	25	26	28	30	30	29	28	22	21	18
Ellendale	21	21	22	23	23	23	22	20	18	18	18
Eureka	18	20	21	22	23	24	23	22	18	17	17
Gettysburg	22	23	24	26	26	28	26	24	18	17	17
Huron	25	25	26	28	28	29	28	25	24	24	25
Kennebec	21	23	25	28	29	29	26	23	17	17	17
McIntosh	15	16	17	18	20	20	18	17	16	16	16
Milbank	22	24	25	25	25	25	23	22	21	21	23
Miller	23	23	25	26	28	30	30	25	20	20	22
Mobridge	16	18	20	21	22	23	22	21	17	16	16
Murdo	29	30	31	32	31	29	24	21	15	14	14
Pierre	20	22	25	26	28	28	25	21	14	13	12
Redfield	26	28	28	28	28	30	28	25	22	22	24
Sisseton	23	24	25	26	26	25	22	21	18	20	22
Watertown	26	29	31	31	30	30	28	26	24	25	26
Webster	29	29	30	30	29	28	26	25	24	24	26
Wheaton	24	25	25	25	24	24	22	21	20	21	22

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Accumulating Snowfall Probability

March 12, 2025
4:35 AM

Between 7 PM CDT Friday And 7 PM CDT Saturday

What

Accumulating snow and wind particularly east of the James River into west central Minnesota.

When

Snow beginning late Friday night across northeast South Dakota, then expanding to west central Minnesota Saturday morning. Departing Saturday evening. Wind late Friday night through Saturday night, with gusts of 30 mph and greater.

Impacts

Traveling? Pay attention to the latest forecast as well as road conditions before heading out.

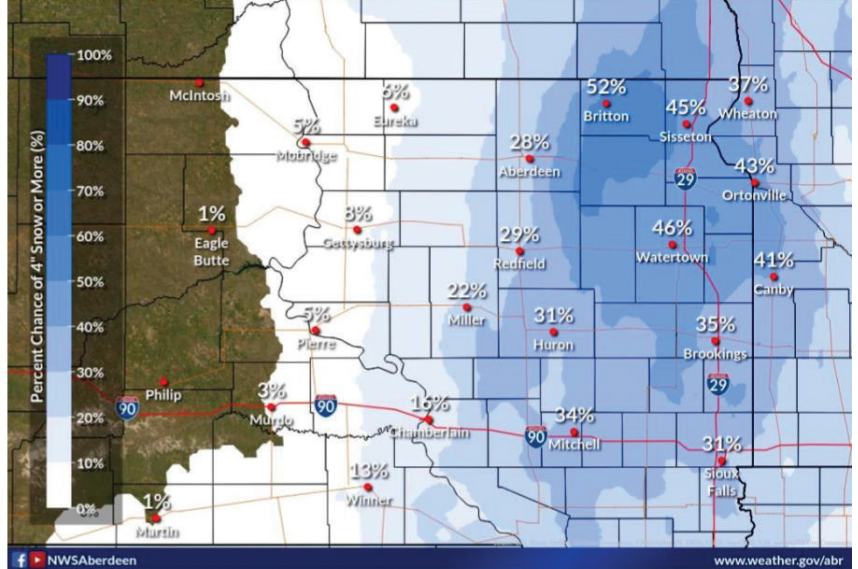
Uncertainty

A bit of a shift east or west remains possible.

Percent Chance of 4" of Snow or More

For the 24 hours ending on Sat Mar 15, 2025 at 7:00PM CDT

Weather Forecast Office
Aberdeen, SD
Issued Mar 12, 2025 3:51 AM CDT



National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 46 °F at 5:28 PM

Low Temp: 13 °F at 7:52 AM

Wind: 27 mph at 12:34 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 11 hours, 48 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 72 in 2016

Record Low: -20 in 1897

Average High: 39

Average Low: 18

Average Precip in March.: 0.29

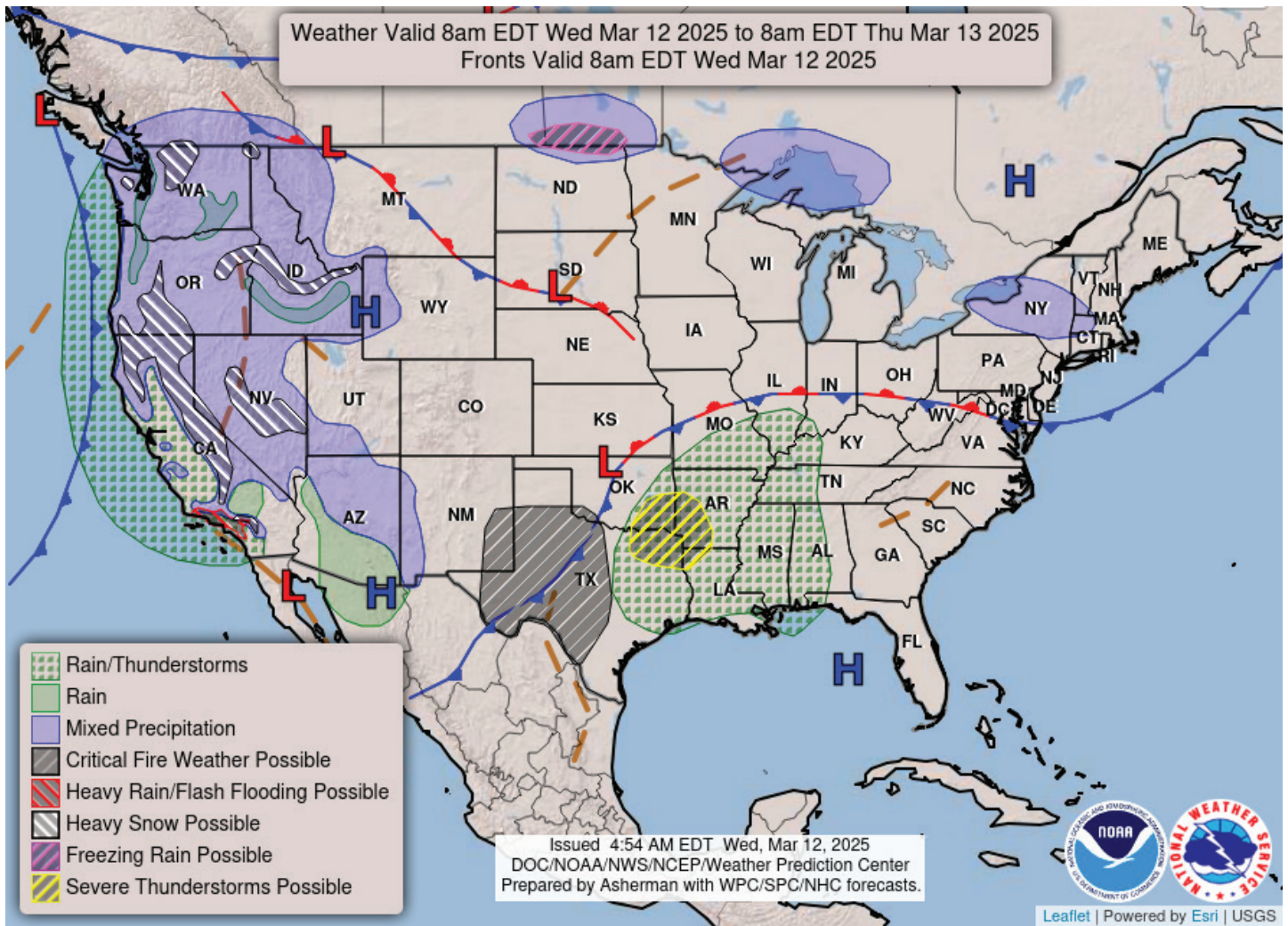
Precip to date in March.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 1.46

Precip Year to Date: 0.45

Sunset Tonight: 7:36:04 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:46:00 am



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Today in Weather History

March 12, 1995: Rapid snowmelt, due to warm temperatures, caused widespread flooding of streams, low areas, and farmland. Many roads were covered with water, and some were washed out. Some utility poles and lines were damaged. High water levels destroyed some schools, houses, and other buildings. Day County was especially stricken, with damage to roads alone estimated at \$75,000. Ice jams exacerbated the flooding on some culverts and streams.

1888 - A blizzard paralyzed southeastern New York State and western New England. The storm produced 58 inches of snow at Saratoga NY, and 50 inches at Middletown CT. The blizzard was followed by record cold temperatures, and the cold and snow claimed 400 lives. New York City received 20.9 inches of snow, Albany NY reported 46.7 inches. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1928: The St. Frances dam near Santa Paula, California, burst before midnight, sending 138,000 acres of water rushing down the San Francisquito Canyon, killing 450 people. The dam was designed and built between 1924 and 1926 by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, then named the Bureau of Water Works and Supply.

1954 - A blizzard raged from eastern Wyoming into the Black Hills of western South Dakota, while a severe ice storm was in progress from northeastern Nebraska to central Iowa. The ice storm isolated 153 towns in Iowa. Dust from the Great Plains caused brown snow, and hail and muddy rain over parts of Wisconsin and Michigan. (11th-13th) (The Weather Channel)

1967 - A tremendous four day storm raged across California. Winds of 90 mph closed mountain passes, heavy rains flooded the lowlands, and in sixty hours Squaw Valley CA was buried under 96 inches (eight feet) of snow. (David Ludlum)

1976: A massive tornado outbreak spawned tornadoes in the Great Lakes and Midwest, including 9 in northern Indiana and extreme southern Michigan. A tornado missed President Ford's motorcade by a quarter-mile near O'Hare. The next morning, he got out of his vehicle to view the damage.

1987 - Unseasonably cold weather prevailed in the southeastern U.S., with gale force winds along the Middle Atlantic Coast. A storm in the Pacific Northwest produced rain and gale force winds. Crescent City CA received 2.27 inches of rain in 24 hours. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1993: An incredible blizzard known as "The Superstorm" struck the eastern United States on this date through the 15th. The storm was described as the most costly non-tropical storm ever to hit the U.S., doing an estimated \$6 billion in damage. The storm was as strong as a hurricane regarding winds and low pressure. The pressure dropped to an incredible 28.35 inches of mercury or 960 millibars when then the storm was located over the Chesapeake Bay. Boston, Massachusetts, recorded a wind gust to 81 mph, the most substantial wind they had recorded since Hurricane Edna in 1954. Also, as the storm was intensifying over the Gulf of America, a wind gust to 99 mph was recorded by an offshore oil rig. It dumped incredible amounts of snow from Alabama to New England. The snow amounts were significant everywhere, but for places like Birmingham, Alabama, the 17 inches recorded brought the city to a standstill for three days. Mount Leconte, North Carolina, recorded 60 inches of snow. Practically every weather station in West Virginia established a new 24-hour snowfall record during the event. Syracuse, New York was buried under 43 inches of snow. The storm killed 220 people, and another 48 lost at sea. The storm also brought a 12-foot storm surge and 15 tornadoes to Florida, where 51 people were killed. Air travel was brought to a halt as every major airport from Atlanta north was closed during the height of the storm. During the late evening into the early morning hours of the 13th, a vicious squall line swept through Florida and spawned 11 tornadoes resulting in five fatalities. Thunderstorm winds gusted to 110 mph at Alligator Point and 109 mph at Dry Tortugas. Exceptionally high tides occurred along the western Florida coast. A 13-foot storm surge occurred in Taylor County, Florida, resulting in 10 deaths with 57 residences destroyed. A 5 to 8-foot storm surge moved ashore in Dixie County. Over 500 homes were destroyed, with major damage to another 700 structures.

2006 - High school senior Matt Suter survives being blown 1,307 feet by a tornado. (The exact distance is determined by NWS GPS.) The twister rips open his grandmother's mobile home and tosses Suter into the night, launching him over a barbed wire fence and eventually depositing him on the soft grass in an open field. He suffers only a head wound from being hit by a lamp. The Weather Doctor's Diary



FAITH: FACTS OF FEELINGS!

Faith is very much an important part of every moment of every day of our lives. Yet, we rarely think about our "applied faith."

Think, for a moment, about driving a vehicle. We turn on the ignition, start the car and begin to drive. Without thinking about it, we have faith that when we apply the brakes the car will stop. When we approach a chair and sit down, we have faith that the chair will support us and will not collapse. When we drink water, we have faith that it will quench our thirst. Faith comes from facts that "things" will always do what they have always done. It is believing that I can depend on something or someone because of its record of reliability.

"Faith," says the author of Hebrews, "is the confident assurance that what we hope for is going to happen." Like brakes stopping a car, a chair holding us up or water quenching our thirst.

So it with our faith in God. Because God has always done what He said He was going to do, we can believe that He will continue to honor His Word throughout eternity. When He called the universe into existence, it happened. When He promised a Savior, He "gave His only Son" to be our Savior.

The beginning of our faith is in the character of God and the end of our faith is in the work of Christ. Our faith is established in the Word of God – "for by grace are we saved through faith – not of ourselves, but from God."

Prayer: We thank you, Lord, for Your faithfulness in honoring Your Word and keeping Your promises. May our faith continue to grow as we come to know You better. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see. Hebrews 11:1

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: 03.11.25

1 19 26 38 69 15

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$277,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 25 Mins 52 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 03.10.25

13 15 34 36 39 10

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$25,910,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 40 Mins 52 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 03.11.25

2 7 17 18 28 14

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 55 Mins 52 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 03.08.25

6 9 11 14 29

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$60,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 55 Mins 52 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 03.10.25

41 42 46 48 59 3

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 24 Mins 52 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 03.10.25

17 40 47 50 55 6

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$353,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 24 Mins 52 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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Upcoming Groton Events

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

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News from the **AP** Associated Press

Tuesday's Scores

The Associated Press

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL

SDHSAA Class A SoDak 16 State Qualifier

Clark-Willow Lake 63, St. Francis Indian 49

Groton 51, Winner 38

Hamlin 64, Milbank 30

Hill City 55, Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 38

Lennox 58, Mobridge-Pollock 51

Rapid City Christian 69, Dell Rapids 54

Sioux Falls Christian 84, McCook Central-Montrose 41

West Central 91, Hanson 47

SDHSAA Class B SoDak 16 State Qualifier

Aberdeen Christian 55, Lemmon High School 33

Castlewood 55, Ipswich 19

Dell Rapids St Mary 80, Waverly-South Shore 50

Freeman 72, Howard 60

Lyman 58, Gregory 56

Viborg-Hurley 73, Crazy Horse 37

Wall 64, Sully Buttes 51

Wessington Springs 75, Timber Lake 49

The Education Department was created to ensure equal access. Who would do that in its absence?

By BIANCA VÁZQUEZ TONESS AP Education Writer

As the Trump administration moves to dismantle the Education Department, officials have suggested other agencies could take over its major responsibilities: civil rights enforcement to the Justice Department, perhaps; student loans to Treasury or Commerce; oversight of student disability rights to Health and Human Services.

Less clear is what could happen with a more lofty part of its mission — promoting equal access for students in an American education system that is fundamentally unequal.

The department has cut its workforce in half, including a layoff of 1,300 people announced Tuesday. President Donald Trump pledged during his campaign to eliminate the department entirely, calling it wasteful and infiltrated by leftists.

Without the department, advocates worry the federal government would not look out in the same way for poor students, those still learning English, disabled students and racial and ethnic minorities.

"Gutting the agency that is charged to ensure equal access to education for every child is only going to create an underclass of students," said Weadé James, senior director of K-12 education policy for the Center for American Progress, a think tank that advocates for racial equity policies and increased investment in public schools.

The equity goal of the Education Department, which was founded in 1980, emerged partly from the anti-poverty and civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s. The act creating the department described its mission, in part, as: "To strengthen the Federal commitment to ensuring access to equal educational opportunity for every individual."

If new Education Secretary Linda McMahon really does work herself "out of a job," as Trump has said he

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wants, the government will lose a bully pulpit to draw attention to the nation's challenges and evangelize solutions, said Michael Petrilli, president of the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, an education think tank that advocates for more rigorous academic standards and accountability for public schools.

But Petrilli doubts that significantly paring back the department — if not completely eliminating it — will be “noticeable in the real world.”

Test scores continue to show many school children are struggling academically. The latest national tests showed one-third of eighth grade students missing fundamental skills in reading, and a widening gap between the highest-performing and lower-performing students. That's the justification McMahon and other Trump allies have used for dismantling the department and sending its funding directly to states to spend.

Far from perfect, the department has offered a valuable “north star” for schools, said Wil Del Pilar, senior vice president of EdTrust, a Washington, D.C.-based think tank that advocates for educational equity. It is the role of the department to institute guardrails, investments and protections “that support equal outcomes for students,” he said.

Trump has said he wants to return all control of schools to states.

The biggest question for many is what happens to the billions of dollars sent to run public schools every year, such as Title I funding, which supports schools in communities with high concentrations of poverty.

Educating low-income children, students learning English and those with disabilities often costs more because it requires specialized teaching or smaller class sizes. Districts without a strong tax base to fund schools often struggle to meet these students' needs, which Congress recognized by authorizing the money.

McMahon has said she wants to send the money directly to states, with fewer restrictions. Some have worried that without guardrails or federal oversight, states will use the money to advance their own priorities in ways that potentially entrench inequality.

If the funding is distributed to states as block grants, it's potentially a “way to defund public education,” said Del Pilar. Block grants allow politicians to “direct funds as they see fit, and that could be away from schools,” he said.

Students in Mississippi, South Dakota, Arkansas, Montana and Alaska could be affected the most if rules or oversight changes for how states spend this money. During the 2021-2022 school year, these states relied on federal aid for at least 20% of school funding, according to government data.

The agency traditionally has worked on behalf of disadvantaged students through its Office for Civil Rights, with an emphasis defending the rights of students with disabilities and students facing harassment tied to their skin color. Under the Trump administration, the agency has prioritized allegations of antisemitism.

While some advocates worry about the pivot in priorities, some attorneys say they had given up on recommending parents pursue complaints with the Office for Civil Rights, which they perceived as understaffed and too slow to provide relief.

Well before Trump was sworn in for a second term, the system moved slowly, but it has now gotten even worse, said A. Kelly Neal, a special education attorney in Macon, Georgia.

“Usually they were a little bit more responsive,” Neal said. “It may not have been the response you wanted. But at least they tried to pretend they were doing something.”

She said she would have no problem if the Department of Justice took on enforcement of these cases.

As part of a crackdown on diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives, the Trump administration last month ended the contract for the Equity Assistance Center-South, a technical assistance program for Southern school districts still operating under federal desegregation orders. On Tuesday, the Southern Education Foundation appealed the decision to cancel its contract to run the center.

The attempt to close these centers abdicates the government's responsibility to “help school districts address educational inequities and provide greater education opportunities for our students,” said Raymond Pierce, Southern Education Foundation's president and chief executive officer.

Canadian man sentenced to 25 years for shootings that damaged pipeline and power station in Dakotas

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — A Canadian man has been sentenced to 25 years in federal prison for shootings at an oil pipeline in South Dakota and an electrical substation in North Dakota that caused \$1.7 million in damages after a judge found that his crimes met the definition of terrorism.

Cameron Smith, 50, was also ordered Monday to pay more than \$2.1 million in restitution, the Bismarck Tribune reported, as well as fines totaling \$250,000. He faces deportation after his release.

Smith, who is originally from the Toronto area but had been living in Astoria, Oregon, pleaded guilty last September to charges of destroying energy facilities for the incidents near Carpenter, South Dakota, in 2022 and in 2023 near Ray, North Dakota.

U.S. District Judge Daniel Traynor sentenced Smith to two consecutive 12 ½-year terms, far above federal sentencing guidelines that recommended 3 ½ to 4 ¼ years per count.

Prosecutor David Hagler said the higher sentence was justified because Smith's actions met the definition of terrorism by "attempting to intimidate or coerce a civilian population."

Defense attorney Douglas Passon argued against the longer sentence, describing Smith as a "hyper-aware individual wanting to create awareness about climate change" who intentionally avoided harming anyone.

In the South Dakota incident, prosecutors said the damage inflicted by Smith caused a shutdown of a pump station on the Keystone XL Pipeline, which led to a leak that damaged neighboring land. Damages to transformers and other infrastructure at a North Dakota power substation caused outages to 243 customers.

Smith told the court his actions were driven by frustration after years of trying to raise awareness of climate change through lawful means. He said he chose remote locations to avoid harming people, and he argued for a lesser sentence, citing his autism and Crohn's disease.

"This is tantamount to a life sentence, and I don't think that's right," Smith said. He expressed doubt he would receive adequate medical care while incarcerated.

"I won't survive this," Smith said.

Traynor was not swayed.

"You ignored the rule of law in the United States and carried out your actions in a terrorist manner," Traynor said. "You did not engage in this conduct on a whim. You committed two separate attacks on critical infrastructure 10 months apart and traveled a great distance to do so."

Passon told The Associated Press on Tuesday that they will appeal. He said the sentence was unjust given Smith's medical and mental conditions and disproportionate compared with similar crimes.

Pakistani security forces battle to free about 300 hostages aboard a hijacked train

By ABDUL SATTAR and MUNIR AHMED Associated Press

QUETTA, Pakistan (AP) — Pakistani security forces battled hundreds of separatist militants who were holding about 300 people hostage Wednesday on a train they hijacked in the country's remote southwest, officials said. Militants wearing vests loaded with explosives surrounded the hostages. The Baloch Liberation Army group claimed responsibility for the attack, which happened as the train entered a tunnel Tuesday in Bolan, a district in restive Balochistan province. Spokesman Jeeyand Baloch said the group was ready to free passengers if authorities agree to release jailed militants. There has been no comment from the government, which has rejected such demands in the past. At least 27 militants have been killed and security forces rescued more than 150 of the 450 passengers initially on the train. Government spokesman Shahid Rind said helicopters were backing up Pakistani forces in the rugged region and described the attack as "an act of terrorism." It was the first time the the BLA has hijacked a train.

The BLA regularly targets Pakistani security forces, but has also in the past attacked civilians, including Chinese nationals working on multibillion-dollar projects related to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, or CPEC.

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Pakistan hosts thousands of Chinese workers as part of Beijing's multibillion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative, which is building major infrastructure projects including ports and airports in Balochistan.

China condemned the attack and foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said her country "will continue to firmly support Pakistan in advancing its counter-terrorism efforts."

Authorities said the rescued so far included women and children, while an undisclosed number of security personnel have been killed, according to three security officials who spoke on condition of anonymity as they were not authorized to speak to media.

According to the officials, the train was partially inside a tunnel when the militants blew up the tracks and immobilized the engine and its nine coaches. The driver was critically wounded by gunfire and guards aboard the train were attacked, although the officials gave no details on the number of guards who were aboard or their fate.

Rescued passengers were being sent to their home towns and injured were being treated at hospitals in Mach district in Balochistan. Others were taken to Quetta about 100 kilometers (62 miles) away.

The train that was traveling from the provincial capital, Quetta, to the northern city of Peshawar when the attack took place.

Balochistan, which borders Iran and Afghanistan, has long been a hotspot for separatist insurgencies in those countries, with militants demanding greater autonomy and a larger share of the region's natural resources. The main insurgencies, however, have centered on Pakistan and Iran.

Insurgencies on either side of the Iran-Pakistan border have frustrated both countries. Their governments suspect each other of supporting — or at least tolerating — some of the groups operating on the other side of the border.

In Iran, the militant group Jaish al-Adl has carried out many attacks in recent years. Tehran has sought help from Pakistan in countering the threat from Jaish al-Adl, and Pakistan also wants Tehran to deny sanctuaries to BLA fighters. In January 2024, the two nations engaged in a tit-for-tat airstrike targeting insurgents inside each other's border areas, killing at least 11 people, but later they quickly deescalated the situation through talks.

The BLA, which has waged a yearslong insurgency in Pakistan, said the hostages and some captured members of the security forces were being guarded by suicide bombers. The BLA has warned that the life of hostages would be at risk if the government does not negotiate.

Trains in Balochistan typically have security personnel on board as members of the military frequently use trains to travel from Quetta, the capital of Balochistan to other parts of the country.

Militants have attacked trains in the past but have never managed to hijack one.

In November, The BLA carried out a suicide bombing at a train station in Quetta that killed 26 people. Pakistani authorities and analysts estimate that the BLA has around 3,000 fighters.

Analysts said the train attack and its focus on civilians could backfire.

"After failing to damage the Pakistan Army within Balochistan, BLA has shifted its targets from military to unarmed civilians. This may give them instant public and media attention, but it will weaken their support base within the civilian population, which is their ultimate objective," said Syed Muhammad Ali, an Islamabad-based independent security analyst.

Oil- and mineral-rich Balochistan is Pakistan's largest and least populated province. It's a hub for the country's ethnic Baloch minority, whose members say they face discrimination and exploitation by the central government.

The EU retaliates against Trump's trade moves and slaps tariffs on produce from Republican states

By LORNE COOK Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — The European Union on Wednesday announced retaliatory trade action with new duties on U.S. industrial and farm products, responding within hours to the Trump administration's increase in tariffs on all steel and aluminum imports to 25%.

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The world's biggest trading bloc was expecting the U.S. tariffs and prepared in advance, but the measures still place great strain on already tense transatlantic relations. Only last month, Washington warned Europe that it would have to take care of its own security in the future.

The EU measures will cover goods from the United States worth some 26 billion euros (\$28 billion), and not just steel and aluminum products, but also textiles, home appliances and agricultural goods. Motorcycles, bourbon, peanut butter and jeans will be hit, as they were during President Donald Trump's first term.

The EU duties aim for pressure points in the U.S. while minimizing additional damage to Europe. The tariffs — taxes on imports — primarily target Republican-held states, hitting soybeans in House speaker Mike Johnson's Louisiana, but also beef and poultry in Kansas and Nebraska. Produce in Alabama, Georgia and Virginia is also on the list.

The EU moves to protect itself

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said in a statement that the bloc "will always remain open to negotiation."

"As the U.S. are applying tariffs worth 28 billion dollars, we are responding with countermeasures worth 26 billion euros," she said. The commission manages trade and commercial conflicts on behalf of the 27 member EU countries.

"We firmly believe that in a world fraught with geopolitical and economic uncertainties, it is not in our common interest to burden our economies with tariffs," von der Leyen said.

The commission also said that steel and aluminum products would be hit in return, but also textiles, leather goods, home appliances, household tools, plastics and wood. Agricultural products will also be impacted — including poultry, beef, some seafood, nuts, eggs, sugar and vegetables.

Trump said his taxes would help create U.S. factory jobs, but von der Leyen said: "Jobs are at stake. Prices will go up. In Europe and in the United States."

"We deeply regret this measure. Tariffs are taxes. They are bad for business, and even worse for consumers. These tariffs are disrupting supply chains. They bring uncertainty for the economy," she said.

American business group urges talks

The American Chamber of Commerce to the EU said the U.S. tariffs and EU countermeasures "will only harm jobs, prosperity and security on both sides of the Atlantic."

"The two sides must de-escalate and find a negotiated outcome urgently," the chamber said Wednesday. What will actually happen?

Trump slapped similar tariffs on EU steel and aluminum during his first term in office, which enraged European and other allies. The EU also imposed countermeasures in retaliation at the time, raising tariffs on U.S.-made motorcycles, bourbon, peanut butter and jeans, among other items.

This time, the EU action will involve two steps. First, on April 1, the commission will reintroduce what it calls "rebalancing measures," which the EU had from 2018 and 2020 but which were suspended under the Biden administration. Then on April 13 come the additional duties targeting 18 billion euros (\$19.6 billion) in U.S. exports to the bloc.

EU Trade Commissioner Maroš Šefčovič traveled to Washington last month in an effort to head off the tariffs, meeting with U.S. Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick and other top trade officials.

He said on Wednesday that it became clear during the trip "that the EU is not the problem."

"I argued to avoid the unnecessary burden of measures and countermeasures, but you need a partner for that. You need both hands to clap," Šefčovič told reporters at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, France.

European steel companies brace for losses

The EU could lose up to 3.7 million tons of steel exports, according to the European steel association Eurofer. The U.S. is the second biggest export market for EU steel producers, representing 16% of the total EU steel exports.

The EU estimates that annual trade volume between both sides stands at about \$1.5 trillion, representing some 30% of global trade. While the bloc has a substantial export surplus in goods, it says that is partly

offset by the U.S. surplus in the trade of services.

Britain, which isn't part of the EU, meanwhile said it won't impose retaliatory measures of its own on the U.S.

Center-right party wins most votes in Greenland's parliamentary election as Trump seeks control

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

NUUK, Greenland (AP) — The center-right Demokraatit Party won the most votes in a surprising result in Greenland's parliamentary elections, held in the shadow of U.S. President Donald Trump's stated goal of taking control of the island one way or another.

Both Demokraatit, or the Democrats, and the second-place finisher Naleraq, or Point of Orientation, favor Greenland's independence from Denmark but differ on the pace of change.

Demokraatit won 30% of the vote, compared to just 9% in the election four years ago, Greenlandic Broadcasting Corporation KNR TV reported.

Naleraq came in second with almost 25% of the vote. In the 2021 election, they received just under 12%, according to KNR TV.

Demokraatit's upset victory over parties that have governed the territory for years indicated many in Greenland care just as much about health care, education, cultural heritage and other social policies.

"I think this is a historic result in Greenland's political history," Demokraatit party leader Jens-Frederik Nielsen said.

Nielsen, 33, appeared to be surprised by his party's gains, with photos showing him sporting a huge grin and applauding at the election party.

The Danish Broadcasting Corporation DR reported that Nielsen said his party would reach out to all other parties to negotiate the future political course for Greenland.

"We had not expected that the election would have this outcome," Nielsen said, according to KNR TV. "We are very happy."

Nielsen also said that Greenland needs to stand together "in a time of great interest from outside," KNR TV reported.

Prime Minister Mute Bourup Egede had called the early vote in February, saying the country needed to be united during a "serious time" unlike anything Greenland has ever experienced.

On Wednesday, after the results were known, Egede thanked voters in a Facebook post for turning out and said the parties were ready to turn to negotiations to form a government.

His party, Inuit Ataqatigiit, or United Inuit, received 21% of the vote. This is a significant decline from the last election, when the party came in strongest with 36% of the vote, according to KNR TV.

Inuit Ataqatigiit had been widely expected to win, followed by Siumut — two parties which had dominated Greenland's politics in recent years.

Siumut came in fourth with 14% of the vote.

Danish Defense Minister Troels Lund Poulsen congratulated the Demokraatit party and said the future Greenlandic government would likely have to "deal with massive pressure from U.S. President Donald Trump," according to DR.

He added that "it's not the case that you can just take part of the Danish Realm — the future of Greenland is based on what the Greenlandic people and government want," DR reported.

Trump has been outspoken about his desire to control Greenland, telling a joint session of Congress last week that he thought the U.S. was going to get it "one way or the other."

Greenland, a self-governing region of Denmark, straddles strategic air and sea routes in the North Atlantic and has rich deposits of the rare earth minerals needed to make everything from mobile phones to renewable energy technology.

A break from Denmark wasn't on the ballot, but it was on everyone's mind. The island of 56,000 people has been on a path toward independence since at least 2009, and the 31 lawmakers elected will shape

the island's future as it debates whether the time has come to declare independence.

Four of the five main parties in the race sought independence, but disagreed on when and how.

Naleraq is the most aggressively pro-independence, while Demokraatit favors a more moderate pace of change.

"What approach to independence will win the day will ultimately depend on if Demokraatit decides to form a coalition government, and if so, with which party," said Dwayne Menezes, managing director of the Polar Research and Policy Initiative.

Pope Francis notching important milestones this week as he recovers from pneumonia in Rome hospital

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

ROME (AP) — The recovery of Pope Francis from double pneumonia continued Wednesday as he inched toward notching some important milestones in his papacy: The 12th anniversary Thursday of his election as pope and a near-record in hospital stays for a pontiff.

The Vatican said Wednesday that Francis had a quiet night at Rome's Gemelli hospital.

If the last few days are any guide, the 88-year-old Argentine will likely follow the Vatican's spiritual retreat remotely while his physical and respiratory therapy continues. The pope's weekly Wednesday general audience was canceled anyway, since the entire Vatican hierarchy is on retreat this week as part of the Lenten spiritual exercises that have been a mainstay of the Jesuit pope's pontificate.

Doctors have said Francis is making slow, gradual improvements and this week declared that he's no longer in imminent danger of death as a result of the complex respiratory infection he had when he was admitted on Feb. 14. But they remain cautious, given the complexity of his condition and overall fragility, and say he needs to remain hospitalized for an unspecified number of days.

Another medical update was expected later Wednesday.

Thursday marks the 12th anniversary of Francis' election as the 266th pope. The former Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio was elected on the fifth ballot of the 2013 conclave that was called after Pope Benedict XVI resigned. While Francis has praised Benedict's humility in stepping down and said that he too might follow in his footsteps, more recently he has said that the papacy is a job for life.

The Holy See hasn't said how the anniversary, which is a public holiday in the Vatican, might be commemorated this year.

Another milestone comes Friday, when Francis marks four weeks or 28 days of hospitalization. St. John Paul II has the record for a hospital stay, at 55 days in 1981 when he underwent a minor surgical operation and was then treated for a cytomegalovirus infection. Francis is on track to equal the second-longest stay, 28 days, which John Paul recorded in 1994 when he had surgery to repair his right hip joint after he fractured his right femur in a fall, according to Gemelli hospital.

The Vatican has released no photos or video of Francis since he was admitted. The pope recorded an audio message last week to thank people for their prayers, though the weakness and breathlessness of his voice made clear just how frail he was.

Trump's 25% tariffs on all steel and aluminum imports go into effect

By JOSH BOAK and PAUL WISEMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump officially increased tariffs on all steel and aluminum imports to 25% on Wednesday, promising that the taxes would help create U.S. factory jobs at a time when his seesawing tariff threats are jolting the stock market and raising fears of an economic slowdown.

Trump removed all exemptions from his 2018 tariffs on the metals, in addition to increasing the tariffs on aluminum from 10%. His moves, based off a February directive, are part of a broader effort to disrupt and transform global commerce. The U.S. president has separate tariffs on Canada, Mexico and China,

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with plans to also tax imports from the European Union, Brazil and South Korea by charging “reciprocal” rates starting on April 2.

The EU announced its own countermeasures on Wednesday. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said that as the United States was “applying tariffs worth 28 billion dollars, we are responding with countermeasures worth 26 billion euros,” or about \$28 billion. Those measures, which cover not just steel and aluminum products, but also textiles, home appliances and agricultural goods, are due to take effect on April 1.

Trump told CEOs in the Business Roundtable on Tuesday that the tariffs were causing companies to invest in U.S. factories. The 8% drop in the S&P 500 stock index over the past month on fears of deteriorating growth appears unlikely to dissuade him, as Trump argued that higher tariff rates would be more effective at bringing back factories.

“The higher it goes, the more likely it is they’re going to build,” Trump told the group. “The biggest win is if they move into our country and produce jobs. That’s a bigger win than the tariffs themselves, but the tariffs are going to be throwing off a lot of money to this country.”

Trump on Tuesday threatened to put tariffs of 50% on steel and aluminum from Canada, but he chose to stay with the 25% rate after the province of Ontario suspended plans to put a surcharge on electricity sold to Michigan, Minnesota and New York.

In many ways, the president is addressing what he perceives as unfinished business from his first term. Trump meaningfully increased tariffs, but the revenues collected by the federal government were too small to significantly increase overall inflationary pressures.

Trump’s 2018 tariffs on steel and aluminum were eroded by exemptions.

After Canada and Mexico agreed to his demand for a revamped North American trade deal in 2020, they avoided the import taxes on the metals. Other U.S. trading partners had import quotas supplant the tariffs. And the first Trump administration also allowed U.S. companies to request exemptions from the tariffs if, for instance, they couldn’t find the steel they needed from domestic producers.

While Trump’s tariffs could help steel and aluminum plants in the United States, they could raise prices for the manufacturers that use the metals as raw materials.

Moreover, economists have found, the gains to the steel and aluminum industries were more than offset by the cost they imposed on “downstream” manufacturers that use their products.

At these downstream companies, production fell by nearly \$3.5 billion because of the tariffs in 2021, a loss that exceeded the \$2.3 billion uptick in production that year by aluminum producers and steelmakers, the U.S. International Trade Commission found in 2023.

Trump sees the tariffs as leading to more domestic factories, and the White House has noted that Volvo, Volkswagen and Honda are all exploring an increase to their U.S. footprint. But the prospect of higher prices, fewer sales and lower profits might cause some companies to refrain from investing in new facilities.

“If you’re an executive in the boardroom, are you really going to tell your board it’s the time to expand that assembly line?” said John Murphy, senior vice president at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

The top steel exporters to the U.S. are Canada, Mexico, Brazil, South Korea and Japan, with exports from Taiwan and Vietnam growing at a fast pace, according to the International Trade Administration. Imports from China, the world’s largest steel producer, account for only a small fraction of what the U.S. buys.

The lion’s share of U.S. aluminum imports comes from Canada.

Yemen’s Houthi rebels say ‘any Israeli vessel’ in nearby Mideast waterways again a target

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Yemen’s Houthi rebels warned shippers early Wednesday that “any Israeli vessel” traveling through nearby Mideast waters is now a target as Israel continues to block aid to the Gaza Strip.

The warning from the Houthis again throws into chaos a crucial maritime waterway between Asia and

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Europe, threatens revenue from Egypt's Suez Canal and possibly will halt aid shipments to war zones. The rebels in the past have also had a loose definition of what constitutes an Israeli ship, meaning other vessels could be targeted as well.

The statement from the Houthis' Humanitarian Operations Coordination Center follows a four-day deadline set by the rebels for Israel to resume aid shipments.

"We hope it is understood that the actions taken by the (Houthi military) ... stem from a deep sense of religious, humanitarian and moral responsibility toward the oppressed Palestinian people and aim to pressure the Israeli usurper entity to reopen the crossings to the Gaza Strip and allow the entry of aid, including food and medical supplies," the statement said.

It described the warning as taking hold in the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, the Bab el-Mandeb Strait and the Arabian Sea.

The statement added: "Any Israeli vessel attempting to violate this ban will be subject to military targeting in the declared operational area."

There was no immediate sign of an attack on ships. Israel's military did not respond to a request for comment.

Houthi warning comes as Gaza aid halted

Israel earlier this month halted all aid coming into the Gaza Strip and has warned of "additional consequences" for Hamas if the fragile ceasefire in the war isn't extended as negotiations continue over starting a second phase of the pause in fighting. The move drew intense international criticism as even before the war the over 2 million Palestinians living in Gaza relied on international aid, something that's only intensified after a grinding Israeli military offensive destroyed the enclave.

The maritime security firm Ambrey warned the statements from the Houthis were "ambiguous," likely putting more ships at risk.

It's "likely to have extended once more toward ships partially owned by Israeli individuals or entities, vessels managed and/or operated by Israeli individuals or entities, vessels heading to Israel and to ships of companies that call Israel," the firm said.

There was no direct threat made against the U.S. Navy, whose Bahrain-based 5th Fleet patrols the Mideast. However, the earlier Houthi campaign saw American and Western warships repeatedly targeted, sparking the most-serious combat the Navy had seen since World War II.

The aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman and other ships associated with its carrier group are operating in the Red Sea now. The U.S. military said Wednesday that its forces in the region "remain vigilant."

"We will do what is necessary to protect and defend U.S. personnel, assets and partners," it said.

Houthi attacks on ships began in November 2023

The rebels' secretive leader, Abdul-Malik al-Houthi, warned Friday that attacks against Israel-linked vessels would resume within four days if Israel didn't let aid into Gaza. That deadline passed Tuesday.

The rebels had targeted over 100 merchant vessels with missiles and drones, sinking two vessels and killing four sailors during their campaign targeting ships from November 2023 until January of this year.

The attacks greatly raised the Houthis' profile as they faced economic problems and launched a crack-down targeting any dissent and aid workers at home amid Yemen's decadelong stalemated war that's torn apart the Arab world's poorest nation.

Court stays execution of Texas man days before he was set to die by lethal injection

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — A Texas appeals court on Tuesday halted the execution of a man who has spent more than 30 years on death row and had been set to die by lethal injection this week over the killings of six girls and young women found buried in the desert near El Paso.

It was the second scheduled execution in the U.S. halted on Tuesday after a federal judge stopped Louisiana's first death row execution using nitrogen gas, which was to take place next week.

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In Texas, the order was another reprieve for David Leonard Wood, who in 2009 was about 24 hours away from execution when it was halted over claims he is intellectually disabled and thus ineligible for execution.

Those claims were later rejected by a judge and Wood, 67, had been set to die Thursday. But the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals, the state's highest criminal court, issued a stay of execution after his latest appeal, which renewed his claims of innocence.

The court put Wood's execution on pause "until further order." It did not elaborate on the decision in a brief three-page order.

Had Wood been executed this week, he would have spent 32 years and two months on Texas' death row, the longest time a Texas inmate has waited before being put to death.

The 1987 murders remained unsolved for several years until authorities say Wood bragged to a cellmate that he was the so-called "Desert Killer." The victims' bodies were found buried in shallow graves in the same desert area northeast of El Paso.

Authorities said Wood gave rides to the victims and then drove them into the desert, where he sexually assaulted and killed them. The victims were Rosa Casio and Ivy Williams, both 23; Karen Baker, 21; Angelica Frausto, 17; Desiree Wheatley, 15; and Dawn Smith, 14.

Two other girls and a young woman were also reported missing but were never found.

Wood, a repeat convicted sex offender who had worked as a mechanic, has long maintained his innocence.

"I did not do it. I am innocent of this case. I'll fight it," Wood said in recent documents filed in his appeals.

On March 4, the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles declined a request to commute his death sentence to a lesser penalty or grant him a 90-day reprieve.

His lawyers have for years sought to have hundreds of pieces of evidence tested for DNA after testing in 2011 of bloodstains on the clothing Smith wore found a male DNA profile that was not Wood. The Texas Attorney General's Office has fought against new DNA tests and various courts have denied Wood's request for it.

Prior to the court's decision Tuesday, Gregory Wiercioch, one of Wood's attorneys, said that when authorities identified Wood as a suspect, they focused on him and not on the evidence they had.

"We've tried to make it clear to the courts that he's innocent, and we'll see if anyone listens," Wiercioch said.

NASA's newest space telescope blasts off to map the entire sky and millions of galaxies

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

NASA's newest space telescope rocketed into orbit Tuesday to map the entire sky like never before — a sweeping look at hundreds of millions of galaxies and their shared cosmic glow since the beginning of time.

SpaceX launched the Spherex observatory from California, putting it on course to fly over Earth's poles. Tagging along were four suitcase-size satellites to study the sun. Spherex popped off the rocket's upper stage first, drifting into the blackness of space with a blue Earth in the background.

The \$488 million Spherex mission aims to explain how galaxies formed and evolved over billions of years, and how the universe expanded so fast in its first moments.

Closer to home in our own Milky Way galaxy, Spherex will hunt for water and other ingredients of life in the icy clouds between stars where new solar systems emerge.

The cone-shaped Spherex — at 1,110 pounds (500 kilograms) or the heft of a grand piano — will take six months to map the entire sky with its infrared eyes and wide field of view. Four full-sky surveys are planned over two years, as the telescope circles the globe from pole to pole 400 miles (650 kilometers) up.

Spherex won't see galaxies in exquisite detail like NASA's larger and more elaborate Hubble and Webb space telescopes, with their narrow fields of view.

Instead of counting galaxies or focusing on them, Spherex will observe the total glow produced by the whole lot, including the earliest ones formed in the wake of the universe-creating Big Bang.

"This cosmological glow captures all light emitted over cosmic history," said the mission's chief scientist

Jamie Bock of the California Institute of Technology. "It's a very different way of looking at the universe," enabling scientists to see what sources of light may have been missed in the past.

By observing the collective glow, scientists hope to tease out the light from the earliest galaxies and learn how they came to be, Bock said.

"We won't see the Big Bang. But we'll see the aftermath from it and learn about the beginning of the universe that way," he said.

The telescope's infrared detectors will be able to distinguish 102 colors invisible to the human eye, yielding the most colorful, inclusive map ever made of the cosmos.

It's like "looking at the universe through a set of rainbow-colored glasses," said deputy project manager Beth Fabinsky of NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

To keep the infrared detectors super cold — minus 350 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 210 degrees Celsius) — Spherex has a unique look. It sports three aluminum-honeycomb cones, one inside the other, to protect from the sun and Earth's heat, resembling a 10-foot (3-meter) shield collar for an ailing dog.

Besides the telescope, SpaceX's Falcon rocket provided a lift from Vandenberg Space Force Base for a quartet of NASA satellites called Punch. From their own separate polar orbit, the satellites will observe the sun's corona, or outer atmosphere, and the resulting solar wind.

The evening launch was delayed two weeks because of rocket and other issues.

Most AAPI adults don't support cutting agencies and want a focus on costs: AP-NORC/AAPI Data poll

By TERRY TANG and LINLEY SANDERS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Most Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders do not agree with the strategy of putting entire federal agencies on the chopping block, nor are they broadly on board with mass layoffs of federal workers, according to a new poll.

The survey, released Wednesday from AAPI Data and The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, shows that AAPI adults want the government to concentrate more on everyday costs. They feel the federal government should do more to address high prices. About 8 in 10 AAPI adults say the federal government should make health care costs "a high priority," while about 7 in 10 say the same about the cost of food, and roughly 6 in 10 feel similarly about housing.

The poll is part of an ongoing project exploring the views of Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders, whose views are usually not highlighted in other surveys because of small sample sizes and lack of linguistic representation.

The results come as President Donald Trump continues what his administration says are cost-cutting measures under the newly formed Department of Government Efficiency, or DOGE, led by adviser Elon Musk. This has included layoffs of thousands of government workers and discussion of dismantling entire agencies like the Department of Education.

About 6 in 10 AAPI adults "strongly" or "somewhat" oppose eliminating entire federal agencies, while about 1 in 10 are in favor, which is slightly below the roughly 2 in 10 U.S. adults overall who expressed the same sentiments in a January AP-NORC poll. About 3 in 10 are neutral, saying they neither favor nor oppose this move. Nearly half oppose eliminating a large number of federal jobs, while about one-quarter are in favor.

The recent cuts have left Celeste Hong, a 56-year-old registered Democrat living in Los Angeles, feeling angry about where the cost-saving efforts have focused.

"Understandably, people don't like inefficiency and waste. Well, I kind of feel the Pentagon is the most wasteful area of our federal government," Hong said.

She thinks the government isn't concentrating enough on lowering the costs of health care, child care and food. Hong worries Trump's tariff policies will end up increasing costs.

"You know, I can afford to absorb an extra cost," said Hong, who is semi-retired. "But, what about the

family of four whom you know is living paycheck to paycheck?"

The poll found that — amid nationwide problems that often cannot be solved easily — there are about two-thirds of AAPI adults who think the country is "spending too little" on improvements for the nation's education system. Around 6 in 10 say the same about improving the nation's health, protecting the environment and addressing the problem of homelessness.

There is one area where more AAPI adults see spending as excessive: Like Hong, about half of AAPI adults say "too much" is being spent on the military, armaments and defense.

Stacy Armstrong, 61, and a registered Republican in Bay City, Michigan, is an exception — he thinks the government is not spending enough on defense. He thinks more money should also go toward higher education and health care. Spending inefficiencies, in his view, stem from aid to other countries like Ukraine.

"We need to take care of our own," said Armstrong, who is half Japanese. "I think it's an important thing, but I think there's other countries that can help out, too. We need to at least reduce it drastically, if not cut it off altogether."

But Armstrong, who voted for Trump last year, thinks it's wrong to excise federal agencies. To him, it would be better if the Trump administration could instead work to streamline or consolidate operations. However, he added he's not privy to information the administration has and said every president has to make hard choices to get results.

"I know he's going to do some good things," Armstrong said.

Karthick Ramakrishnan, executive director of AAPI Data and researcher at the University of California, Berkeley, said it's not surprising that some conservative AAPI adults would hold nuanced views on government spending, including opposition to dismantling federal agencies or a desire for greater government spending in some areas.

AAPI adults "tend to be focused on solutions and less so on partisanship," Ramakrishnan said.

At the same time, they may be willing to give the Trump administration a chance to keep trying new strategies to save money. AAPI voters, who are more Democratic-leaning than the electorate as a whole, shifted slightly to the right in November.

"A certain chunk of voters were persuaded that the Republican Party would do a better job on the issues and the economy," Ramakrishnan said.

The Education Department was created to ensure equal access. Who would do that in its absence?

By BIANCA VÁZQUEZ TONESS AP Education Writer

As the Trump administration moves to dismantle the Education Department, officials have suggested other agencies could take over its major responsibilities: civil rights enforcement to the Justice Department, perhaps; student loans to Treasury or Commerce; oversight of student disability rights to Health and Human Services.

Less clear is what could happen with a more lofty part of its mission — promoting equal access for students in an American education system that is fundamentally unequal.

The department has cut its workforce in half, including a layoff of 1,300 people announced Tuesday. President Donald Trump pledged during his campaign to eliminate the department entirely, calling it wasteful and infiltrated by leftists.

Without the department, advocates worry the federal government would not look out in the same way for poor students, those still learning English, disabled students and racial and ethnic minorities.

"Gutting the agency that is charged to ensure equal access to education for every child is only going to create an underclass of students," said Weadé James, senior director of K-12 education policy for the Center for American Progress, a think tank that advocates for racial equity policies and increased investment in public schools.

The equity goal of the Education Department, which was founded in 1980, emerged partly from the anti-poverty and civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s. The act creating the department described

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its mission, in part, as: "To strengthen the Federal commitment to ensuring access to equal educational opportunity for every individual."

If new Education Secretary Linda McMahon really does work herself "out of a job," as Trump has said he wants, the government will lose a bully pulpit to draw attention to the nation's challenges and evangelize solutions, said Michael Petrilli, president of the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, an education think tank that advocates for more rigorous academic standards and accountability for public schools.

But Petrilli doubts that significantly paring back the department — if not completely eliminating it — will be "noticeable in the real world."

Test scores continue to show many school children are struggling academically. The latest national tests showed one-third of eighth grade students missing fundamental skills in reading, and a widening gap between the highest-performing and lower-performing students. That's the justification McMahon and other Trump allies have used for dismantling the department and sending its funding directly to states to spend.

Far from perfect, the department has offered a valuable "north star" for schools, said Wil Del Pilar, senior vice president of EdTrust, a Washington, D.C.-based think tank that advocates for educational equity. It is the role of the department to institute guardrails, investments and protections "that support equal outcomes for students," he said.

Trump has said he wants to return all control of schools to states.

The biggest question for many is what happens to the billions of dollars sent to run public schools every year, such as Title I funding, which supports schools in communities with high concentrations of poverty.

Educating low-income children, students learning English and those with disabilities often costs more because it requires specialized teaching or smaller class sizes. Districts without a strong tax base to fund schools often struggle to meet these students' needs, which Congress recognized by authorizing the money.

McMahon has said she wants to send the money directly to states, with fewer restrictions. Some have worried that without guardrails or federal oversight, states will use the money to advance their own priorities in ways that potentially entrench inequality.

If the funding is distributed to states as block grants, it's potentially a "way to defund public education," said Del Pilar. Block grants allow politicians to "direct funds as they see fit, and that could be away from schools," he said.

Students in Mississippi, South Dakota, Arkansas, Montana and Alaska could be affected the most if rules or oversight changes for how states spend this money. During the 2021-2022 school year, these states relied on federal aid for at least 20% of school funding, according to government data.

The agency traditionally has worked on behalf of disadvantaged students through its Office for Civil Rights, with an emphasis defending the rights of students with disabilities and students facing harassment tied to their skin color. Under the Trump administration, the agency has prioritized allegations of antisemitism.

While some advocates worry about the pivot in priorities, some attorneys say they had given up on recommending parents pursue complaints with the Office for Civil Rights, which they perceived as understaffed and too slow to provide relief.

Well before Trump was sworn in for a second term, the system moved slowly, but it has now gotten even worse, said A. Kelly Neal, a special education attorney in Macon, Georgia.

"Usually they were a little bit more responsive," Neal said. "It may not have been the response you wanted. But at least they tried to pretend they were doing something."

She said she would have no problem if the Department of Justice took on enforcement of these cases.

As part of a crackdown on diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives, the Trump administration last month ended the contract for the Equity Assistance Center-South, a technical assistance program for Southern school districts still operating under federal desegregation orders. On Tuesday, the Southern Education Foundation appealed the decision to cancel its contract to run the center.

The attempt to close these such centers abdicates the government's responsibility to "help school districts address educational inequities and provide greater education opportunities for our students," said Raymond Pierce, Southern Education Foundation's president and chief executive officer.

Mahmoud Khalil didn't wear a mask. He's now the face of Trump's crackdown on campus protests

By JAKE OFFENHARTZ and JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — When protests over the Israel-Hamas war took root on Columbia University's campus last spring, Mahmoud Khalil became a familiar, outspoken figure in a student movement that soon spread to other U.S. colleges.

The international-affairs graduate student was a fixture in and around the protest encampment on Columbia's Manhattan campus, serving as a spokesperson and negotiator for demonstrators who deplored Israel's military campaign in Gaza and pressed the Ivy League school to cut financial ties with Israel and companies that supported the war.

"We want to be visible," Khalil said last April.

Now that visibility has helped make him the face of President Donald Trump's drive to punish what he calls antisemitic and "anti-American" campus protests. In the first publicly known arrest of the crackdown, federal immigration agents took Khalil, a legal U.S. resident married to an American citizen, from his apartment Saturday and held him for potential deportation.

To Trump and his administration, Khalil's arrest is an opening move in a campaign to rid the country of foreign students accused of helping to make American campuses intimidating territory for Jewish students. To civil rights advocates and Khalil's lawyers, his detention is an assault on free speech and an attempt to suppress pro-Palestinian views.

And to some who have worked alongside the 30-year-old graduate student at the protests and elsewhere, his arrest is a startling takedown of someone with diplomatic experience that he brought to bear in the charged days of the demonstrations.

"You couldn't meet a kinder or nicer person to work with. He's thoughtful. He's intelligent. He's conscientious," said former British diplomat Andrew Waller, a colleague of Khalil's from the U.K.'s Beirut-based embassy for Syria.

Khalil worked there from about 2018 to 2022, running a scholarship fund and supporting the U.K.'s diplomatic engagement with Syria, Waller said, noting that the role required an extensive background check.

He said the two spoke a few weeks ago, and Khalil was focused on becoming a father — his wife is pregnant — and on strife in Syria, where he was born and raised in a Palestinian family. Khalil also expressed concern that he might be targeted by the new Trump administration, Waller said.

Flight from civil war to the halls of academia

After finishing high school in Syria, Khalil was on track to study aviation engineering there, but his plans were upended by the country's civil war, he wrote in a 2017 essay for an international education charity. He recounted that he left for Beirut, got a job with an education nonprofit that helps Syrian children, and went to a Lebanese university.

"Where would I be if, like countless other Syrian refugees before me, I could not get a scholarship, could not work, or worst of all, could not leave Syria in the depths of the ongoing war?" he wondered in the essay.

Khalil earned a bachelor's degree in computer science and decided to continue his studies at Columbia, according to an online bio for a 2020 international development conference where he was listed as a speaker.

Then, last spring, protests over the war in Gaza erupted at Columbia, where demonstrators set up tents in the middle of campus and took over an administration building. A wave of similar demonstrations spread to some other colleges around the country.

Khalil served as a prominent student mediator on behalf of pro-Palestinian activists and Muslim students concerned for their safety.

But images of his maskless face at protests, along with his willingness to share his name with reporters, quickly made him a target among those who saw antisemitism in the demonstrations.

"I'm an easy scapegoat for them to say, 'Look at this Palestinian who never wore a mask and was active

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in the school protests," Khalil told an Associated Press reporter in an interview last week.

The Columbia Jewish Alumni Association, meanwhile, has called Khalil a "ringleader of the chaos" on campus. A new Columbia disciplinary committee has investigated various allegations against Khalil, most recently whether he violated a university anti-harassment policy by calling a dean "genocidal."

Targeted by the Trump administration

Khalil is now being held in a federal detention complex in Louisiana.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said Tuesday that Khalil should be deported because he organized "protests that not only disrupted college campus classes and harassed Jewish American students and made them feel unsafe on their own college campus, but also distributed pro-Hamas propaganda." The U.S. government has designated Hamas, the militant group that controls Gaza, as a terrorist organization.

Those who protested alongside Khalil dispute that account.

"If someone distributed something at a protest that has nothing to do with the group, they attribute it to him for having his face at the action," said Maryan Alwan, a Columbia University senior.

She described Khalil as mild-mannered and gifted at navigating internal disputes among student protesters. Outside of activism, she said he enjoyed cooking and playing drums in Columbia's Arab Music Ensemble.

Columbia protest leaders have insisted they're anti-war, not antisemitic, and the demonstrations include some Jewish students and groups.

Still, a Columbia task force on antisemitism found "serious and pervasive" problems with the climate on campus. The group said in a report that during the demonstrations, Jews and Israelis had been verbally abused, humiliated in classes and ostracized from student groups.

Khalil finished his master's degree studies in December and has been scheduled to receive his degree in May, his lawyers said in a court filing.

Meanwhile, he and his wife are expecting their first child. She is eight months pregnant, according to his attorneys. While not giving her name, they released a statement in which she implored the public "to see Mahmoud through my eyes as a loving husband" and father-to-be.

"I need your help to bring Mahmoud home, so he is here beside me, holding my hand in the delivery room," she wrote.

In his own words: Trump takes credit for stock market rises but casts aside blame for sell-off

By MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump in recent days has dismissed fears of a recession and brushed aside the stock market sell-off, going so far as to say, "You can't really watch the stock market." That's a new message from a leader who has frequently pointed to the market's ups and downs as a reflection of himself and his activities, even when he was not in power.

Over the last year, while President Joe Biden was in office, Trump took credit for stock market rallies as a vote of confidence in his electoral prospects. When the market dipped, he blamed Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris. And he predicted that if Democrats won the 2024 presidential election, the stock market would have crashed.

A look at some of Trump's observations on the stock market over the last year:

Jan. 29, 2024, on Truth Social

"THIS IS THE TRUMP STOCK MARKET BECAUSE MY POLLS AGAINST BIDEN ARE SO GOOD THAT INVESTORS ARE PROJECTING THAT I WILL WIN, AND THAT WILL DRIVE THE MARKET UP — EVERYTHING ELSE IS TERRIBLE (WATCH THE MIDDLE EAST!), AND RECORD SETTING INFLATION HAS ALREADY TAKEN ITS TOLL. MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN"

March 12, 2024, on Truth Social

"High Interest Rates and Inflation are choking our great middle class, and ALL, our Economy is bad, and our Stock Market is rising only because Polls are strongly indicating that we will WIN the Presidential Election of 2024."

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April 25, 2024, on his way into court for his criminal trial in New York

"The stock market is, in a sense, crashing. The numbers are very bad. This is Bidenomics. It's catching up with him. It's lucky that it's catching up before he leaves office as opposed to after he leaves office."

May 15, 2024, on Truth Social

"Thank you to Scott Bessent, one of the Great Prognosticators on Wall Street! There are many people that are saying that the only reason the Stock Market is high is because I am leading in all of the Polls, and if I don't win, we will have a CRASH of similar proportions to 1929. I agree, but let's hope we don't have to worry about that!"

May 18, 2024, at an NRA event in Dallas, Texas:

"We are a nation whose stock market's continued success is contingent on MAGA winning the next election."

July 16, 2024, on Truth Social

"Dow Jones UP 742 based on the fact that the Market expects a TRUMP WIN in November! Nice compliment — Thank you!"

Aug. 4, 2024, on Truth Social

"STOCK MARKETS CRASHING. I TOLD YOU SO!!! KAMALA DOESN'T HAVE A CLUE. BIDEN IS SOUND ASLEEP. ALL CAUSED BY INEPT U.S. LEADERSHIP!"

Aug. 14, 2024, at a rally in Asheville, North Carolina

"If Harris wins this election, the result will be a Kamala economic crash, a 1929-style depression. 1929. When I win the election, we will immediately begin a brand new Trump economic boom. It'll be a boom. We're going to turn this country around so fast. Many people say that they only reason the stock market is up is because people think I am going to win."

Oct. 29, 2024, during a rally in Allentown, Pennsylvania

"You want to see a market crash? If we lost this election, I think the market would go down the tubes."

Nov. 4, 2024, at a rally in Grand Rapids, Michigan

Trump started praising Bessent and said: "You know what his theory is? The stock market is the only sign of life, and it's only going up because everyone thinks Trump is going to win the election. And others, too. Others, too. I'm seeing it a lot. I think they're following your lead. But I appreciate that confidence."

Nov. 14, 2024, at a Mar-a-Lago gala in Florida:

"We had three or four of the highest -- I guess, almost every single day, we set new records in the stock market. We set new records economically."

Trump, in comments directed at House Speaker Mike Johnson, then said: "Mr. Speaker, I think it's important, maybe you should pass a bill, you have to start my term from Nov. 5, OK, or Nov. 6, if you want. Nov. 5 because the market has gone through the roof. Enthusiasm has doubled."

Dec. 12, 2024, in an interview with CNBC at the New York Stock Exchange:

Trump was asked by host Jim Cramer whether it's still the case that stock market indexes were a good barometer of his performance.

"Well, I think I've always said, you know, to me, stock market is very — all of it, you know, all of it together, it's very important. It's an honor to be here in New York Stock Exchange. I sort of joked that I actually bought the building across the street because the stock exchange was here. It's a big deal."

Dec. 16, 2024, during a news conference at Mar-a-Lago

Trump was asked whether he is concerned that his tariffs might hurt the stock market.

"Make our country rich. Tariffs will make our country rich," Trump responded.

Jan. 7, 2025, during a news conference at Mar-a-Lago

"Since my election, the stock market has set records. The S&P 500 index has broken above 6,000 points for the first time ever, never even close."

Jan. 19, 2025. at a rally in Washington, D.C.

"Everyone is calling it the — I don't want to say this. It's too braggadocious, but we'll say it anyway, the Trump effect. It's you. You're the effect. Since the election, the stock market has surged, and small business optimism has soared, a record 41 points to a 39-year high."

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Feb. 19, 2025, at an investment conference in Miami Beach

"I think the stock market is going to be great. In other words, we will rapidly grow our economy by dramatically shrinking the federal government."

Feb. 21, 2025, speaking to the nation's governors at the White House

"When we turned over the reins, the stock market was higher than just previous to COVID coming in, which was an amazing achievement."

March 4, 2025, in a joint address to Congress

Having sparked a North American trade war and with the S&P 500 losing all of its post-election gains, Trump said in his speech to Congress: "Tariffs are about making America rich again and making America great again, and it's happening and it will happen rather quickly. There'll be a little disturbance, but we're OK with that. It won't be much."

March 9, 2025, in a taped interview on Fox News Channel's "Sunday Morning Futures"

After a week of wild swings on Wall Street over uncertainty about his tariffs, Trump was asked whether he was expecting a recession in 2025. He said: "I hate to predict things like that. There is a period of transition because what we're doing is very big. We're bringing wealth back to America. That's a big thing." He added, "It takes a little time. It takes a little time. But I think it should be great for us."

Elsewhere in the interview, when Trump was asked about the market going down: "You can't really watch the stock market. ... You can't go by that. You have to do what's right."

March 9, 2025, to reporters on Air Force One

When asked about his hesitation during the "Sunday Morning Futures" interview before answering the recession question, Trump said: "I tell you what, of course you hesitate. Who knows? All I know is this: We're going to take in hundreds of billions of dollars in tariffs, and we're going to become so rich you're not going to know where to spend all that money. I'm telling you, you just watch."

March 11, 2025, to reporters at the White House

Trump was asked about the market after a selloff Monday and more trembling on the markets Tuesday. "Markets are going to go up and they're going to go down. We have to rebuild our country," he said.

In response to a question about whether his tariffs caused the turmoil in the markets, Trump said: "Biden gave us a horrible economy. He gave us horrible inflation. And I think the market was going to go very, very bad. If anything, I have a lot of very smart people, friends of mine, and great businessmen. They're not investing because of what I've done."

On whether he thinks there will be a recession: "I don't see it at all. I think this country's going to boom. But as I said, I can do it the easy way or the hard way. The hard way to do it is exactly what I'm doing, but the results are going to be 20 times greater. Remember, Trump is always right."

States should scale back abortion reporting demands, advocacy group says

By GEOFF MULVIHILL Associated Press

States should stop requiring health providers to file reports on every abortion because the information poses a risk to both them and their patients in the current political environment, a research group that advocates for abortion access says.

The Guttmacher Institute says in a new recommendation that the benefit of mandated and detailed data collection is no longer worth the downsides: It could reveal personal information, be stigmatizing for patients and cumbersome for providers — or could be used in investigations.

"It would be a mistake for anyone to assume now that the information a state could collect about abortion would not be used to harm people," said Kelly Baden, Guttmacher's vice president for public policy.

Roe v. Wade reversal sparks a battle over reports

When the U.S. Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade nearly three years ago, it opened the door for states to ban most abortions. It also ignited policy battles over information collected about ending pregnancies.

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The possibility of reports being used in investigations has increased with the return of President Donald Trump and anti-abortion officials in key federal government jobs, Baden said.

Most state health departments require medical providers to report data about each abortion, though without including patient names. Massachusetts and Illinois mandate that providers give the state only aggregated data.

The states that collect the information, in turn, produce reports on abortion statistics and send their information to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for a nationwide tally. Together, that information gives a picture of how often abortion takes place, when in the pregnancy the abortion occurs and the age of patients.

Those reports provide the fullest government pictures of abortion nationally, but they come with a lag time of about two years and lack data from states that don't require the reports: California, the country's most-populous state, as well as Maryland, Michigan and New Jersey.

Reports with personal information could hurt patients, data scientist says

Certain information that some states collect — such as the patient's marital status or ZIP code and the reason for the abortion — do not serve a meaningful research purpose and could stigmatize patients, says Guttmacher data scientist Isaac Maddow-Zimet. In conjunction with other data, these details could even be used to identify people who obtain abortions, he said.

The same level of detail is not required to be reported to the state for other medical care, Maddow-Zimet added.

"The real concern here is that it fits into a broader pattern of abortion exceptionalism," he said.

But Carol Tobias, president of National Right to Life, said rolling back reporting requirements can be detrimental: It could downplay the frequency of abortion complications, for instance, she said. Additionally, details such as the reason for the abortion could shape public policy if it reveals increases in sexual assault, she said.

"The more information we have, the better it is for women," Tobias said.

An Indiana anti-abortion group began using public records requests to obtain individual abortion reports from the state in 2022 and report on alleged violations by providers — including submitting the reports late.

The state Health Department eventually declared that individual reports are not public records because a ban on most abortions means so few happen that the reports could be used to reveal who's obtaining them. Earlier this year, state Attorney General Todd Rokita settled a lawsuit from the group, Voices for Life, by mandating that reports — with some personal information redacted — be available to the public. But the documents are not being provided as litigation continues.

Melanie Garcia Lyon, the Voices for Life executive director, said in an email that one doctor had his licensed suspended in part because of a violation that someone spotted in a terminated pregnancy report. "Abortion reporting protects women," she said in an email.

Some states are reducing or eliminating reporting requirements

Michigan has halted required reporting. Minnesota has removed some required information, such as the marital status, race and ethnicity of patients.

Arizona's Gov. Katie Hobbs, a Democrat in a state where Republicans control the legislature, is calling for that state to drop mandated reporting. A bill that would repeal the requirements hasn't advanced.

Connie Fei Lu, a medical fellow in complex family planning at the University of Illinois Chicago, said the 2022 Illinois change to collect a tally of abortions rather than detail on each one can protect the privacy of patients, especially those who travel from other states for abortion.

But she said the data collection policies need to be thoughtful.

"I completely understand the delicate balance in abortion data collection in an environment where that data can end up in the wrong hands," she said. "From a research perspective, from a scientific perspective, not having this data is not a good thing."

While Guttmacher wants an end to mandatory abortion reports, it's not calling for states to get out of the abortion data-collection business entirely; the group says states could instead use voluntary approaches to gather information.

Guttmacher and another abortion-rights group, the Society of Family Planning, have been surveying providers over the past few years. The groups' analyses rely in part on estimates, but they have been released much more quickly than government data and have become key resources for understanding the impact of state bans and restrictions since Roe was overturned.

Bills agree to sign edge rusher Joey Bosa to 1-year, \$12.6 million contract, AP source says

By JOHN WAWROW AP Sports Writer

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. (AP) — The Buffalo Bills turned to Joey Bosa to fill their pass-rush needs, agreeing with him on a one-year, \$12.6 million contract, a person familiar with the deal told The Associated Press on Tuesday night.

The person spoke on the condition of anonymity because the agreement won't be official until the NFL's new business year begins on Wednesday. ESPN.com first reported the deal.

Bosa joins the Bills after the team cut Von Miller on Sunday to free up salary-cap space.

Bosa was the NFL's defensive rookie of the year after being selected by the Chargers with the No. 3 pick in the 2016 draft out of Ohio State. He played nine seasons with the franchise before being cut last week, also for salary-cap reasons.

At 29, Bosa is six years younger than Miller, though his production has dwindled because of injuries. Bosa's 72 sacks are tied for 10th most since 2016, but he's combined for only 14 over the past three seasons.

He played in 14 games with nine starts last season after agreeing to restructure his contract. But Bosa battled hip and back injuries, and his five sacks were his fewest in the six seasons during which he has played at least 12 games.

Bosa played 14 games total in 2022 and '23 due to groin and foot injuries.

Bosa should fill a starting spot opposite Greg Rousseau, who had a team-leading eight sacks last season. Rousseau is entering his fifth season and last week signed a four-year, \$80 million extension that locks him in through 2028.

The five-time defending AFC East champions also return edge rusher A.J. Epenesa.

Buffalo moved on from Miller after three seasons because his salary didn't match his dip in production. The NFL's active leader in sacks was limited to six sacks last year, and had none in 2023 in being slowed after having surgery to repair a right knee injury sustained in November 2022.

Buffalo finished 18th in the NFL with 39 sacks last season, down from 54 in 2023. The Bills' defense doesn't often blitz, instead relying on its four-man front to apply pressure.

Bosa is a five-time Pro Bowl selection and has topped 10 sacks four times, most recently with 10 1/2 in 2021. He had a career-best 12 1/2 sacks in 2017.

Trump halts doubling of tariffs on Canadian metals after Ontario suspends electricity price hikes

By JOSH BOAK, ROB GILLIES and MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's threat Tuesday to double his planned tariffs on steel and aluminum from 25% to 50% for Canada led the provincial government of Ontario to suspend its planned surcharges on electricity sold to the United States.

As a result, White House trade adviser Peter Navarro said the U.S. president pulled back on his doubling of steel and aluminum tariffs, even as the federal government still plans to place a 25% tariff on all steel and aluminum imports starting Wednesday.

The drama delivered a win for Trump but also amplified concerns about tariffs that have roiled the stock market and stirred recession risks. Tuesday's escalation and cooling in the ongoing trade war between the United States and Canada only compounded the rising sense of uncertainty of how Trump's tariff hikes will affect the economies of both countries.

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Trump shocked markets Tuesday morning, saying the increase of the tariffs set to take effect Wednesday was a response to the 25% price hike that Ontario put on electricity sold to the United States.

"I have instructed my Secretary of Commerce to add an ADDITIONAL 25% Tariff, to 50%, on all STEEL and ALUMINUM COMING INTO THE UNITED STATES FROM CANADA, ONE OF THE HIGHEST TARIFFING NATIONS ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD," Trump posted on Truth Social.

Ontario Premier Doug Ford said Tuesday afternoon that U.S. Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick called him and Ford agreed to remove the surcharge. He said he was confident that the U.S. president would also stand down on his own plans for 50% tariffs on Canadian steel and aluminum.

"He has to bounce it off the president but I'm pretty confident he will pull back," Ford said on Trump's steel and aluminum tariff threat. "By no means are we just going to roll over. What we are going to do is have a constructive conversation."

After a brutal stock market selloff Monday and further jitters Tuesday, Trump faces increased pressure to show he has a solid plan to grow the economy. So far the president is doubling down on tariffs and can point to Tuesday's drama as evidence that taxes on imports are a valuable negotiating tool, even if they can generate turmoil in the stock market.

Trump suggested Tuesday that tariffs were critical for changing the U.S. economy, regardless of stock market gyrations.

The U.S. president has given a variety of explanations for his antagonism of Canada. He has said that his separate 25% tariffs on all imports from Canada, some of which are suspended for a month, are about fentanyl smuggling and objections to Canada putting high taxes on dairy imports that penalize U.S. farmers. He also continued to call for Canada to become part of the United States, which has infuriated Canadian leaders.

"The only thing that makes sense is for Canada to become our cherished Fifty First State," Trump posted Tuesday. "This would make all Tariffs, and everything else, totally disappear."

Tensions between the United States and Canada

Incoming Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney said his government will keep tariffs in place until Americans show respect and commit to free trade after Trump threatened historic financial devastation for his country.

Carney, who will be sworn in as Justin Trudeau's replacement in coming days, said Trump's latest tariffs are an attack on Canadian workers, families and businesses.

"My government will keep our tariffs on until the Americans show us respect and make credible, reliable commitments to free and fair trade," Carney said in a statement.

Canadian officials are planning retaliatory tariffs in response to Trump's specific steel and aluminum tariffs. Those are expected to be announced Wednesday.

Carney was referring to an initial \$30 billion Canadian (US\$21 billion) worth of retaliatory tariffs that have been applied on items like American orange juice, peanut butter, coffee, appliances, footwear, cosmetics, motorcycles and certain pulp and paper products.

Trump also has targeted Mexico with 25% tariffs because of his dissatisfaction over drug trafficking and illegal immigration, though he suspended the taxes on imports that are compliant with the 2020 USMCA trade pact for one month.

Asked if Mexico feared it could face the same 50% tariffs on steel and aluminum as Canada, President Claudia Sheinbaum, said, "No, we are respectful."

Trump participated in a question and answer session Tuesday afternoon with the Business Roundtable, a trade association of CEOs that he wooed during the 2024 campaign with the promise of lower corporate tax rates for domestic manufacturers. But his tariffs on Canada, Mexico and China — with plans for more to possibly come on Europe, Brazil, South Korea, pharmaceutical drugs, copper, lumber and computer chips — would amount to a massive tax hike.

The stock market's vote of no confidence over the past two weeks puts the president in a bind between his enthusiasm for taxing imports and his brand as a politician who understands business based on his

own experiences in real estate, media and marketing.

"The tariffs are having a tremendously positive impact — they will have, and they are having." Trump told the gathering of CEOs, saying the import taxes would cause more factories to relocate to the United States.

Worries about a recession are growing

Harvard University economist Larry Summers, President Bill Clinton's treasury secretary, has put the odds of a recession at 50-50. The investment bank Goldman Sachs revised down its growth forecast for this year to 1.7% from 2.2% previously. It modestly increased its recession probability to 20% "because the White House has the option to pull back policy changes if downside risks begin to look more serious."

Trump has tried to assure the public that his tariffs would cause a bit of a "transition" to the economy, with the taxes prodding more companies to begin the yearslong process of relocating factories to the United States to avoid the tariffs. But he set off alarms in an interview broadcast Sunday in which he didn't rule out a possible recession.

The stock market slide continues

The promise of great things ahead did not eliminate anxiety, with the S&P 500 stock index tumbling 2.7% on Monday in an unmistakable Trump slump that has erased the market gains that greeted his victory in November 2024. The S&P 500 index fell roughly 0.8% on Tuesday, paring some of the earlier losses after Ontario backed down on electricity surcharges.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average lost 478 points, and the Nasdaq composite slipped 0.2%.

Trump has long relied on the stock market as an economic and political gauge to follow, only to look past it as he remains determined so far to impose tariffs. When he won the election last year, he proclaimed that he wanted his term to be considered to have started Nov. 6, 2024, on Election Day, rather than his Jan. 20, 2025, inauguration, so that he could be credited for post-election stock market gains.

Trump also repeatedly warned of an economic freefall if he lost the election.

"If I don't win you will have a 1929 style depression. Enjoy it," Trump said at an August rally in Pennsylvania.

NTSB urges ban on some helicopter flights at Washington airport where 67 people died in midair crash

By JOSH FUNK, JOHN SEEWER and NATHAN ELLGREN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Federal investigators looking into the cause of the January collision between a passenger jet and an Army helicopter near Washington, D.C., that killed 67 people recommended a ban on some helicopter flights Tuesday, saying the current setup "poses an intolerable risk."

National Transportation Safety Board Chairwoman Jennifer Homendy laid out frightening statistics about near misses to underscore the danger that has existed for years near Ronald Reagan National Airport and expressed anger that it took a midair collision for it to come to light.

In just over three years, she said, there were 85 close calls when a few feet (meters) in the wrong direction could have resulted in the same kind of accident that happened Jan. 29 when the military helicopter collided with an American Airlines jet over the Potomac River as the plane was approaching the airport.

Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy said he'll adopt the NTSB's recommendations for the route where the midair collision occurred. He noted there will be some modifications in the guidelines to be released Wednesday, including allowing presidential flights and lifesaving missions.

Helicopters no longer will be "threading the needle" flying under landing planes, he said.

The Federal Aviation Administration also will use artificial intelligence to analyze data from every airport to make sure there aren't similar dangers elsewhere, he said, adding that there are other airports with cross-traffic.

Homendy and Duffy both said the hazards at Reagan airport should have been recognized earlier by the FAA.

"The data was there. It wasn't effectively analyzed to see we had this risk," Duffy said.

The NTSB determined that the existing separation distance between planes and helicopters at Reagan airport is "insufficient and poses an intolerable risk to aviation safety," Homendy said.

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She said she was devastated for families that are grieving because they lost loved ones. Among the victims were 28 members of the figure skating community.

"It shouldn't take tragedy to require immediate action," she said.

Members of several families who lost loved ones said in a statement that the NTSB's preliminary report showed this was not an isolated incident.

"It also reinforces what we, as the families of the victims, already suspected: serious, systemic failures in air travel safety cost our loved ones their lives and continues to threaten public safety," the statement said.

Aviation lawyer Robert Clifford, who represents at least six families, said the airline had a responsibility to address known problems.

"Those charged in transportation with the highest duty of care can't run yellow lights, and they've been running flashing red lights for years, it sounds like, and it's just pathetic," he said.

Proposed changes aimed at improving safety

Under current practice helicopters and planes can be as close as 75 feet (23 meters) apart from each other during landing, Homendy said. Investigators have identified 15,000 instances of planes getting alerts about helicopters being in close proximity between October 2021 and December 2024, she said.

Investigators determined that planes got serious alerts to take evasive action because they were too close to a helicopter at least once a month between October 2011 and December 2024, Homendy said. In over half those instances, the helicopter may have been above its established altitude restriction for the route.

Safety advocate Mary Schiavo, a former Inspector General of the U.S. Transportation Department, called it a "shocking dereliction of duty" for the FAA to have failed to act on data the NTSB gathered in just a few weeks since the crash. She noted that the FAA had pledged to warn pilots about places with higher collision risk.

"They were going to really be proactive to warn pilots about these hotspots. I mean, this is beyond a hotspot," Schiavo said. "This is absolutely radioactive, to have 15,214 close proximity events in three years, it's unbelievable."

Following the midair collision, the FAA took steps to restrict helicopter flights around the airport to ensure that planes and helicopters are no longer sharing the same airspace. Now flights are put on hold temporarily when helicopters need to pass by.

The NTSB's proposal would close a vital route for law enforcement, Coast Guard patrols and government operations flights at times, but only when the runways in question are in use, and they account for only about 5% of flights at Reagan.

Homendy said the NTSB is recommending that the FAA find a "permanent solution" for alternate routes farther away for helicopter traffic.

Searching for a cause of the crash

Investigators have said the helicopter may have had inaccurate altitude readings in the moments before the crash, and the crew may not have heard key instructions from air traffic controllers. The radio altitude of the helicopter was 278 feet (85 meters), which would put it above its 200-foot (61-meter) limit for the location.

The helicopter pilots may have also missed part of another communication, when the tower said the jet was turning toward a different runway, Homendy said last month. And the crew was wearing night-vision goggles that would have limited their peripheral vision.

The Black Hawk crew was made up of an instructor pilot with 968 hours of flight experience, a pilot with about 450 and a crew chief with nearly 1,150. Army officials have said the crew was familiar with the crowded skies around Washington.

The NTSB in its ongoing investigation will look at the amount of traffic at Reagan and the staffing in the control tower to determine if either of those factors played a role. It will take more than a year to get the final NTSB report.

Aviation safety expert John Cox said he piloted in and out of Reagan in all different kinds of planes since the late 1970s and sometimes received collision alerts about helicopters, but it was usually easy to see

that they were going to pass behind him.

"That's just something that occurred going in and out of there, and it worked successfully for decades," said Cox, who is CEO of aviation safety consulting firm Safety Operating Systems in St. Petersburg, Florida.

Multiple things had to go wrong for this collision to happen, he added.

A spate of recent aviation disasters

Within just a month's time earlier this year, there were four major aviation disasters in North America, most recently in mid-February when a Delta flight flipped and landed on its roof at Toronto's Pearson Airport, injuring 21 people.

Those accidents and close calls left some worried about the safety of flying, though fatal crashes are rare and U.S. airlines' track record is remarkably sound.

President Donald Trump blamed the midair collision on what he called an "obsolete" air traffic control system and promised to replace it. He also faulted the helicopter for flying too high.

Federal officials have been raising concerns about an overtaxed and understaffed air traffic control system for years, especially after a series of close calls at airports.

Doug Lane, whose wife Christine Conrad Lane, and their 16-year-old son Spencer, died in the crash, said Tuesday he hopes the way the near-misses are reported gets a closer look and that NTSB recommendations will be implemented.

"If we're going to invest in an organization like this, it needs to be outfitted with state of the art technology and given staffing at a level that's going to set them up for success," Lane said.

Duffy said Tuesday that he will present an expensive plan to Congress within the next few weeks to overhaul the system with new technology. He hopes to complete it within four years.

Education Department cuts half its staff as Trump vows to wind the agency down

By COLLIN BINKLEY and MORIAH BALINGIT AP Education Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Education Department plans to lay off more than 1,300 of its employees as part of an effort to halve the organization's staff -- a prelude to President Donald Trump's plan to dismantle the agency.

Department officials announced the cuts Tuesday, raising questions about the agency's ability to continue usual operations.

The Trump administration had already been whittling the agency's staff, though buyout offers and the termination of probationary employees. After Tuesday's layoffs, the Education Department's staff will sit at roughly half of its previous 4,100, the agency said.

The layoffs are part of a dramatic downsizing directed by Trump as he moves to reduce the footprint of the federal government. Thousands of jobs are expected to be cut across the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Social Security Administration and other agencies.

The department is also terminating leases on buildings in cities including New York, Boston, Chicago and Cleveland, officials said.

Department officials said it would continue to deliver on its key functions such as the distribution of federal aid to schools, student loan management and oversight of Pell Grants.

Education Secretary Linda McMahon said when she got to the department, she wanted to reduce bloat to be able to send more money to local education authorities.

"So many of the programs are really excellent, so we need to make sure the money goes to the states," McMahon said in an interview Tuesday on Fox News.

McMahon told employees to brace for profound cuts in a memo issued March 3, the day she was confirmed by the Senate. She said it was the department's "final mission" to eliminate bureaucratic bloat and turn over the agency's authority to states.

The department sent an email to employees Tuesday telling them its Washington headquarters and regional offices would be closed Wednesday, with access forbidden, before reopening Thursday. The only

reason given for the closures was unspecified "security reasons."

Trump campaigned on a promise to close the department, saying it had been overtaken by "radicals, zealots and Marxists." At McMahon's confirmation hearing, she acknowledged only Congress has the power to abolish the agency but said it might be due for cuts and a reorganization.

Whether the cuts will be felt by America's students — as Democrats and advocates fear — is yet to be seen. Already there are concerns the administration's agenda has pushed aside some of the agency's most fundamental work, including the enforcement of civil rights for students with disabilities and the management of \$1.6 trillion in federal student loans.

McMahon told lawmakers at her hearing that her aim is not to defund core programs, but to make them more efficient.

Even before the layoffs, the Education Department was among the smallest Cabinet-level agencies. Its workforce included 3,100 people in Washington and an additional 1,100 at regional offices across the country, according to a department website.

The department's workers had faced increasing pressure to quit their jobs since Trump took office, first through a deferred resignation program and then through a \$25,000 buyout offer that expired March 3.

Jeanne Allen of the Center for Education Reform, which advocates for charter school expansion, said the cuts were important and necessary.

"Ending incessant federal interference will free up state and local leaders to foster more opportunities to give schools and educators true flexibility and innovation to address the needs of students, wherever they are educated," Allen said.

Some advocates were skeptical of the department's claim that its functions would not be affected by the layoffs.

"I don't see at all how that can be true," said Roxanne Garza, who was chief of staff in the Office of Postsecondary Education under President Joe Biden.

Much of what the department does, like investigating civil rights complaints and helping families apply for financial aid, is labor intensive, said Garza, who is now director of higher education policy at Education Trust, a research and advocacy organization. "How those things will not be impacted with far fewer staff ... I just don't see it."

Polls close in Greenland's capital for parliamentary election as Trump seeks control

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

NUUK, Greenland (AP) — The polling station in Greenland's capital closed Tuesday in a parliamentary election that will determine the leaders who will confront U.S. President Donald Trump's effort to take control of the strategically placed Arctic country.

Huge crowds streamed into the polling station in the capital, Nuuk, throughout the day, warmed by sunny skies. Exhausted voting officials closed the polls well after the planned 8 p.m. local time (2200 GMT) to make sure everyone in line got a chance to cast their ballot.

Unofficial election results should be available in the coming hours, but they won't be certified for weeks as paper ballots make their way to the capital from remote settlements by boat, plane and helicopter.

Prime Minister Mute Bourup Egede in February called elections a bit early, saying the country needed to be united during a "serious time" that is unlike anything Greenland has ever experienced.

Greenland, a self-governing region of Denmark, straddles strategic air and sea routes in the North Atlantic and has rich deposits of the rare earth minerals needed to make everything from mobile phones to renewable energy technology.

Trump has been outspoken about his desire to control Greenland, telling a joint session of Congress last week that he thought the U.S. was going to get it "one way or the other."

While the island of 56,000 people has been on a path toward independence since at least 2009, a break from Denmark isn't on the ballot — even though it's on everyone's mind. Voters will instead elect 31

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lawmakers who will shape the island's future at a defining moment in history: Should Greenland declare independence?

Polls indicate support for independence

The mood was festive Tuesday at the sole polling station in Greenland's capital city, Nuuk, as election workers opened the doors to cheers at 1100 GMT.

Opinion polls show most Greenlanders favor independence. Most say they don't dislike Americans, pointing to the good relations they have with the local Pituffik Space Base, formerly Thule Air Force Base, where U.S. military personnel have been stationed since 1951.

But Greenlanders show no sign of wanting to become Americans. Even some of Trump's biggest fans cling to the principle that they should control their destiny: their mantra is that Greenland is open for business, but not for sale.

"The situation has changed because of Trump and because of the world," said Doris Jensen, representative of the social democratic Siumut party who said she has always favored independence. "So we have decided in our party that we have to do (it) more quickly."

Trump's attention has transformed the deeply local process of democracy. Suddenly, the presence of journalists from as far away as Japan and Croatia are reminders that these are far from normal times.

Voter Sofia Rossen had a message for Trump: "Stop talking about Greenland. Stop," she said in the polling station in Nuuk.

The island and the U.S. previously had a positive relationship, but that doesn't mean they want to be part of the United States, she told The Associated Press. Greenland's future must be decided by its people, she said.

"It is us, we are living here and we know what to do," she said. "We are not for sale. We are not American, we won't be Americans. We are not (Danes), but we are part of the Danish community."

"I think most of us have been scared since the new year because of (Trump's) interest," Pipaluk Lyngge, a member of parliament from the ruling Inuit Ataqatigiit, or United Inuit party, told The Associated Press. "So we're really, really looking to Europe right now to see if we could establish a stronger bond with them to secure our sovereign nation."

After one of the final televised debates at a school auditorium in Nuuk, Prime Minister Egede was greeted by about 75 supporters who were almost outnumbered by photographers and cameramen.

"All these reporters are frightening to us," said Aviaja Sinkbaek, who works at the school. "It means that something must be happening soon."

She added: "I wonder what Trump has up his sleeve."

A vast island draws outside attention

Politics in Greenland have a different rhythm. Debates during campaigning rarely got heated. People who became too animated were asked to step outside. Issues included building a skilled workforce and how to decorate the new airport, which in November opened a runway long enough to handle jumbo jets.

On Tuesday, political parties pitched tents outside the polling station at the Nuuk sports hall, offering hot drinks and Greenlandic cake — a raisin-laced bread served with butter — in hopes of swaying voters.

Certifying results will take weeks as ballot papers make their way to Nuuk. That's because there are no roads connecting communities across the island's 2.16 million square kilometers (836,330 square miles).

Now the vast size has drawn outside attention.

Greenlanders know what they have. They hope the rare earth minerals will help diversify an economy where government jobs account for 40% of employment.

But the government has imposed strict rules to protect the environment on the island, most of which is covered by ice year-round. The harsh atmospheric conditions raise questions about whether mineral extraction is commercially feasible.

SUVs caused a traffic jam on the main road to the hall. Elderly people with canes tromped up the icy roads.

A lot was at stake. And so the people came.

Measles cases are still rising in Texas. Here's what you should know about the contagious virus

By DEVI SHASTRI AP Health Writer

Measles outbreaks in West Texas and New Mexico are now up to more than 250 cases, and two unvaccinated people have died from measles-related causes.

Measles is caused by a highly contagious virus that's airborne and spreads easily when an infected person breathes, sneezes or coughs. It is preventable through vaccines, and has been considered eliminated from the U.S. since 2000.

Here's what you need to know about measles in the U.S.

How many measles cases are there in Texas and New Mexico?

Texas state health officials said Tuesday there were 25 new cases of measles since the end of last week, bringing Texas' total to 223. Twenty-nine people in Texas are hospitalized.

New Mexico health officials announced three new cases Tuesday, bringing the state's total to 33. The outbreak has spread from Lea County, which neighbors the West Texas communities at the epicenter of the outbreak, to include one case in Eddy County.

Oklahoma's state health department reported two probable cases of measles Tuesday, saying they are "associated" with the West Texas and New Mexico outbreaks.

A school-age child died of measles in Texas last month, and New Mexico reported its first measles-related death in an adult last week.

Where else is measles showing up in the U.S.?

Measles cases have been reported in Alaska, California, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Vermont.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines an outbreak as three or more related cases — and there have been three clusters that qualified as outbreaks in 2025.

In the U.S., cases and outbreaks are generally traced to someone who caught the disease abroad. It can then spread, especially in communities with low vaccination rates.

Do you need an MMR booster?

The best way to avoid measles is to get the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine. The first shot is recommended for children between 12 and 15 months old and the second between 4 and 6 years old.

People at high risk for infection who got the shots many years ago may want to consider getting a booster if they live in an area with an outbreak, said Scott Weaver with the Global Virus Network, an international coalition. Those may include family members living with someone who has measles or those especially vulnerable to respiratory diseases because of underlying medical conditions.

Adults with "presumptive evidence of immunity" generally don't need measles shots now, the CDC said. Criteria include written documentation of adequate vaccination earlier in life, lab confirmation of past infection or being born before 1957, when most people were likely to be infected naturally.

A doctor can order a lab test called an MMR titer to check your levels of measles antibodies, but health experts don't always recommend this route and insurance coverage can vary.

Getting another MMR shot is harmless if there are concerns about waning immunity, the CDC says.

People who have documentation of receiving a live measles vaccine in the 1960s don't need to be re-vaccinated, but people who were immunized before 1968 with an ineffective measles vaccine made from "killed" virus should be revaccinated with at least one dose, the agency said. That also includes people who don't know which type they got.

What are the symptoms of measles?

Measles first infects the respiratory tract, then spreads throughout the body, causing a high fever, runny nose, cough, red, watery eyes and a rash.

The rash generally appears three to five days after the first symptoms, beginning as flat red spots on the face and then spreading downward to the neck, trunk, arms, legs and feet. When the rash appears,

the fever may spike over 104 degrees Fahrenheit, according to the CDC.

How can you treat measles?

There's no specific treatment for measles, so doctors generally try to alleviate symptoms, prevent complications and keep patients comfortable.

Why do vaccination rates matter?

In communities with high vaccination rates — above 95% — diseases like measles have a harder time spreading through communities. This is called "herd immunity."

But childhood vaccination rates have declined nationwide since the pandemic and more parents are claiming religious or personal conscience waivers to exempt their kids from required shots.

The U.S. saw a rise in measles cases in 2024, including an outbreak in Chicago that sickened more than 60. Five years earlier, measles cases were the worst in almost three decades in 2019.

House passes bill to fund federal agencies through September, though prospects unclear in Senate

By KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House passed legislation Tuesday to avert a partial government shutdown and fund federal agencies through September, providing critical momentum as the measure now moves to the Senate, where bipartisan support will be needed to get it over the finish line.

Republicans needed overwhelming support from their members to pass the funding measure, and they got it in the 217-213 House vote. Just one Republican, Rep. Thomas Massie of Kentucky, voted against the measure. And just one Democratic lawmaker, Rep. Jared Golden of Maine, voted for it.

In the Senate, they'll need support from at least eight Democrats to get the bill to President Donald Trump's desk. It's one of the biggest legislative tests so far of the Republican president's second term, prompting Vice President JD Vance to visit Capitol Hill on Tuesday morning to rally support.

Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., moved ahead on the bill, essentially daring Democrats to oppose it and risk a shutdown that would begin Saturday if lawmakers failed to act on the continuing resolution, often referred to by lawmakers as a CR.

"We did our job today," Johnson said moments after the vote.

Johnson's strategy had the backing of Trump, who called on Republicans to "remain UNITED — NO DISSENT — Fight for another day when the timing is right."

Lawmakers said the bill would trim \$13 billion in non-defense spending from the levels in the 2024 budget year and increase defense spending by \$6 billion, which are rather flat changes for both categories when compared with an overall topline of nearly \$1.7 trillion in discretionary spending. The bill does not cover the majority of government spending, including Social Security and Medicare. Funding for those two programs is on autopilot and not regularly reviewed by Congress.

Democrats mostly worried about the discretion the bill gives the Trump administration on spending decisions. They are already alarmed by the administration's efforts to make major cuts through the Department of Government Efficiency, or DOGE, run by billionaire Trump adviser Elon Musk. And they say the spending bill would fuel the effort.

Spending bills typically come with specific funding directives for key programs, but hundreds of those directives fall away under the legislation. So the administration will have more leeway to reshape priorities.

For example, a Democratic memo said the bill would allow the administration to steer money away from combating fentanyl and instead use it on mass deportation initiatives.

"It is not a simple stopgap that keeps the lights on and the doors open," said Rep. Rosa DeLauro, the top Democrat on the House Appropriations Committee. "This is Republican leadership handing over the keys of the government, and a blank check to Elon Musk and to President Trump."

Rep. Tom Cole, the Republican chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, acknowledged the continuing resolution was not the outcome he sought but said it was time to end the cycle of short-term funding extensions. This will be the third in recent months. He blamed Democrats for trying to rein in

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Trump's authority on spending.

"We're not going to have a Republican Senate and a Republican House restrict a Republican president from the legitimate exercise of executive authority," Cole said. "And then, oh, by the way, ask him to sign the bill."

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 extensions on their own.

Rep. Andy Harris, R-Md., and chairman of the House Freedom Caucus, the most conservative wing of the Republican conference, said he supported this one because it would cut spending and not lead to a massive, catch-all spending bill, which has become the norm over the years.

"This is not your grandfather's continuing resolution," Harris said.

Massie was still a holdout, though, despite Trump going after him on social media, calling him a "GRAND-STANDER, who's too much trouble."

"HE SHOULD BE PRIMARIED, and I will lead the charge against him," Trump posted online.

Massie responded by saying Trump was "attacking me and Canada today. The difference is: Canada will eventually cave."

House Democratic leaders came out strongly against the legislation. Less clear was how strongly they would push members in competitive battleground districts to follow their lead. In the end, they held the entire caucus together with the exception of Golden.

"This Republican shutdown bill does nothing to enhance the American dream. It undermines it," House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries, D-N.Y., said ahead of the vote.

Democratic leaders in the Senate generally seemed to be emphasizing patience at this stage and were waiting to see if Republicans can muscle the bill through the House before taking a stand.

"We're going to see what the House does first," said top Democratic Sen. Chuck Schumer of New York.

Still, several rank-and-file Democrats criticized the measure. Sen. Cory Booker of New Jersey said he was stunned that Republicans were "trying to jam through something that is their way or the highway."

Democrats also introduced an alternative bill Monday night funding the government through April 11. The bill could serve as a Plan B if the GOP-led effort falters.

Both parties were prepared to blame the other if the bill failed.

"It looks like they're going to try to shut down the government," Johnson said of Democrats.

"If the government shuts down with a Republican House, Republican Senate and Republican president, it will be solely because the Republicans have moved forward with a terrible, partisan, take-it-or-leave-it bill," said Rep. Dan Goldman, D-N.Y.

The spending bill could also have major ramifications for the District of Columbia's government.

Mayor Muriel Bowser, a Democrat, said the proposal would require the district to cut \$1.1 billion in spending in the next six months since it has already passed a balanced budget and is midway through its fiscal year. That means, officials said, cuts to critical services such as education and public safety.

Wall Street falls in a manic day after briefly dropping more than 10% below its record

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The U.S. stock market fell further Tuesday following President Donald Trump's latest escalation in his trade war, briefly pulling Wall Street 10% below its record set last month. And like it's been for most of the past few weeks, the market's slide on Tuesday was erratic and dizzying.

The S&P 500 fell 0.8%, but only after careening between a modest gain and a tumble of 1.5%. The main measure of Wall Street's health finished 9.3% below its all-time high after flirting with the 10% threshold that professional investors call a "correction."

Other indexes likewise swung sharply through the day. The Dow Jones Industrial Average lost 478 points, or 1.1%, and the Nasdaq composite ended up slipping 0.2%.

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Such head-spinning moves are becoming routine in what's been a scary ride for investors as Trump tries to remake the country and world through tariffs and other policies. Stocks have been heaving mostly lower on uncertainty about how much pain Trump is willing for the economy to endure in order to get what he wants.

And moves by Trump and comments by his White House on Tuesday didn't clarify much.

Stocks began tumbling in the morning after Trump said he would double planned tariff increases on steel and aluminum coming from Canada. The president said it was a response to moves a Canadian province made after Trump began threatening tariffs on one of the United States' most important trading partners.

Trump has acknowledged the economy could feel some "disturbance" because of the tariffs he's pushing. Asked on Tuesday just how much pain Trump would be willing for the economy and stock market to take, White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt declined to give an exact answer. But she said earlier in the press briefing that "the president will look out for Wall Street and for Main Street."

For his part, Trump said earlier on social media, "The only thing that makes sense is for Canada to become our cherished Fifty First State. This would make all Tariffs, and everything else, totally disappear."

Stocks pared their losses later in the day, even briefly eliminating them altogether, after Ontario's premier said he had agreed to remove the surcharge on electricity that had enraged Trump so much. Trump would afterward say that he would "probably" return the steel and aluminum tariffs on Canada to 25%.

After that brief perk higher, though, stocks would go on to slide again into the end of trading.

Tuesday's swings followed more warning signals flashing about the economy as Trump's on-and-off-again rollout of tariffs creates confusion and pessimism for U.S. households and businesses.

Such tariffs can hurt the economy directly by raising prices for U.S. consumers and gumming up global trade. But even if they end up being milder than feared, all the whipsaw moves could create so much uncertainty that U.S. companies and consumers freeze, which would sap energy from the economy.

Delta Air Lines' stock lost 7.3% after it said it's already seeing a change in confidence among customers, which is affecting demand for close-in bookings for its flights. That pushed the airline to roughly halve its forecast for revenue growth in the first three months of 2025, down to a range of 3% to 4% from a range of 7% to 9%.

Southwest Airlines also cut its forecast for an important underlying revenue trend, and it pointed specifically to less government travel, among other reasons, including wildfires in California and "softness in bookings and demand trends as the macro environment has weakened."

Its stock nevertheless rallied 8.3% after the airline said it would soon begin charging some passengers to check bags, among other announcements.

Oracle dropped 3.1% after the technology giant reported profit and revenue for the latest quarter that fell short of analysts' expectations.

Helping to keep the market in check were several Big Tech stocks, which steadied a bit after getting walloped in recent months. Elon Musk's Tesla rose 3.8%, for example, after Trump said he would buy a Tesla in a show of support for "Elon's 'baby.'"

Tesla's sales and brand have been under pressure as Musk has led efforts in Washington to cut spending by the federal government. Tesla's stock is down 42.9% for the young year so far.

Other Big Tech superstars, which had led the market to record after record in recent years, also held a bit firmer. Nvidia added 1.7% to trim its loss for the year so far to 19%. It's struggled as the market's sell-off has particularly hit stocks seen as getting too expensive in Wall Street's frenzy around artificial-intelligence technology.

Because Nvidia, Tesla and other Big Tech stocks have grown so massive in size, their movements carry much more weight on the S&P 500 and other indexes than any other company.

All told, the S&P 500 fell 42.49 points to 5,572.07. The Dow dropped 478.23 to 41,433.48, and the Nasdaq composite slipped 32.23 to 17,436.10.

In stock markets abroad, which have mostly been beating the United States so far this year, indexes fell across much of Europe and Asia.

Stocks rose 0.4% in Shanghai and were nearly unchanged in Hong Kong as China's annual national congress wrapped up its annual session with some measures to help boost the slowing economy.

In the bond market, Treasury yields clawed back some of their tumbles in recent months. The yield on the 10-year Treasury rose to 4.28% from 4.22% late Monday. In January, it was nearing 4.80%, before it began sinking on worries about the U.S. economy.

A report released Tuesday morning showed U.S. employers were advertising 7.7 million job openings at the end of January, just as economists expected. It's the latest signal that the U.S. job market remains relatively solid overall, for now at least, after the economy closed last year running at a healthy pace.

Court asked to intervene after email tells USAID workers to destroy classified documents

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER and FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A union for U.S. Agency for International Development contractors asked a federal judge Tuesday to intervene in any destruction of classified documents after an email ordered staffers to help burn and shred agency records.

Judge Carl Nichols set a Wednesday morning deadline for the plaintiffs and the government to brief him on the issue. A person familiar with the email who spoke on the condition of anonymity for fear of reprisal verified that it was sent to at least some essential personnel.

It comes as the Trump administration has been dismantling USAID, cutting off most federal funding and terminating 83% of humanitarian and development programs abroad, pulling all but a few hundred staffers off the job, and shutting down the agency's Washington headquarters.

Lawsuits are mounting over the abrupt shutdown of most U.S. foreign assistance and the targeting of the aid agency. In the latest court challenge, Personal Services Contractor Association, representing thousands of contractors now furloughed or fired from USAID, asked the judge to stop any document destruction to preserve evidence.

The email was sent under the name of Erica Carr — the acting executive secretary at USAID — and bears a USAID logo.

"Thank you for your assistance in clearing our classified safes and personnel documents" at USAID headquarters in Washington, it begins.

It directed staffers to report to work starting Tuesday. "Shred as many documents first," then stuff remaining classified material into designated bags for burning if the demand on the shredder becomes too great, the email instructed.

Staffers were told to write "secret" on the bag with a marker.

The State Department did not immediately respond to questions about the email, including whether officials were following the legally required procedures in any destruction of documents.

The collection, retention and disposal of classified material and federal records are closely regulated by federal law. Improper handling or disposal can be charged as a crime.

Rep. Gregory Meeks, the ranking Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, accused the Trump administration of not complying with federal records law.

"Haphazardly shredding and burning USAID documents and personnel files seems like a great way to get rid of evidence of wrongdoing when you're illegally dismantling the agency," Meeks said in a statement.

A group representing USAID workers, the American Foreign Service Association, said in a statement that it feared documents being destroyed could be relevant to the ongoing lawsuits over USAID's firings and program terminations.

The classified documents at USAID emerged last month when the Trump administration put the agency's top two security officials on leave after they refused to grant members of Elon Musk's government-cutting teams access to classified material.

The Associated Press reported that the classified material included intelligence reports. Kate Miller, who serves on an advisory board for DOGE, said at the time that no classified material was accessed "without

proper security clearances.”

The wide firings at USAID have left relatively few staffers with access to agency systems.

White House pressures Columbia University as it seeks to deport pro-Palestinian activists

NEW YORK (AP) — The White House complained Tuesday that Columbia University is refusing to help federal agents find people being sought as part of the government’s effort to deport participants in pro-Palestinian demonstrations, as the administration continued to punish the school by yanking federal research dollars.

Immigration enforcement agents on Saturday arrested and detained Mahmoud Khalil, a legal U.S. resident and Palestinian activist who played a prominent part in protests at Columbia last year. He is now facing possible deportation.

President Donald Trump has vowed additional arrests. In a briefing with reporters in Washington, White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said federal authorities have been “using intelligence” to identify other people involved in campus demonstrations critical of Israel that the administration considered to be antisemitic and “pro-Hamas.”

She said Columbia had been given names and was refusing to help the Department of Homeland Security “to identify those individuals on campus.”

“As the president said very strongly in his statement yesterday, he is not going to tolerate that,” Leavitt said.

A spokesperson for Columbia University did not directly respond to a message seeking comment on the administration’s response but referred The Associated Press to a letter sent to students Monday by Interim President Katrina Armstrong.

“We will follow the law, as has always been the case, and rumors suggesting that any member of Columbia leadership requested the presence of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents on or near campus are false,” the letter stated.

Last week, the Trump administration announced it was pulling \$400 million in grants and contracts from Columbia, accusing the school of failing to stop antisemitism on campus. As part of those cuts, the National Institutes of Health late Monday said it was cutting more than \$250 million in funding, which included more than 400 grants.

X. Edward Guo, director of Columbia’s Bone Bioengineering Laboratory, posted a screenshot on X of an email he received notifying him that one of his NIH awards had been canceled. “We understand this may be shocking news,” the email reads.

The university was wracked last spring by large demonstrations by students calling for an end to Israeli military action in Gaza and a recognition of Palestinians’ human rights and territorial claims. The university ultimately called in police to dismantle a protest encampment and end a student takeover of an administration building.

Khalil, 30, had been a spokesperson for the protesters. He hasn’t been charged with any crimes, but Leavitt said the administration had moved to deport him under a section of the Immigration and Nationality Act that gives the secretary of state the power to deport a non-citizen if the government “has reasonable ground to believe” the person’s presence could have “serious adverse foreign policy consequences for the United States.”

As of Tuesday, Khalil was being held at an immigration detention center in Louisiana.

Civil rights groups and Khalil’s attorneys say the government is unconstitutionally using its immigration-control powers to stop him from speaking out. A federal judge set a hearing for Wednesday and ordered the government not to deport him in the meantime.

Trump, a Republican, has suggested that some protesters support Hamas, the Palestinian militant group that attacked Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killing 1,200 people and abducting 251. Israel responded with bombardment and other military offensives that have left over 48,000 Palestinians dead in Hamas-ruled Gaza.

Israel says more than 17,000 were militants.

Trump heralded Khalil's arrest as the first "of many to come," vowing on social media to deport students the president described as engaging in "pro-terrorist, anti-Semitic, anti-American activity."

Immigration agents also tried to arrest another international student at Columbia, but they weren't allowed into an apartment where she was, according to a union representing the student.

Khalil, who finished his requirements for a Columbia master's degree in December, and protest leaders have said they are anti-war, not antisemitic. They note that some Jewish students and groups have joined the demonstrations. A Columbia disciplinary body recently told Khalil it was investigating whether he violated a new harassment policy by calling a school official "genocidal."

Leavitt didn't detail specific wrongdoing by Khalil. But she said he had organized protests that disrupted classes, harassed Jewish students and "distributed pro-Hamas propaganda, fliers with the logo of Hamas."

Born in Syria, Khalil is a grandson of Palestinians who were forced to leave their homeland, his lawyers said in a legal filing. It didn't address his citizenship but said his relatives have been displaced anew amid Syria's civil war and are now in other countries.

Khalil is married to a U.S. citizen, who is expecting their first child.

"For everyone reading this, I urge you to see Mahmoud through my eyes as a loving husband and the future father to our baby," his wife, who has not been publicly identified, wrote in a statement provided by his lawyers. "I need your help to bring Mahmoud home, so he is here beside me, holding my hand in the delivery room as we welcome our first child into this world."

US resumes military aid and intelligence sharing as Ukraine says it is open to a 30-day ceasefire

By MATTHEW LEE Associated Press

JEDDAH, Saudi Arabia (AP) — The Trump administration lifted its suspension of military aid and intelligence sharing for Ukraine, and Kyiv signaled that it was open to a 30-day ceasefire in the war with Russia, pending Moscow's agreement, American and Ukrainian officials said Tuesday following talks in Saudi Arabia.

The administration's decision marked a sharp shift from only a week ago, when it imposed the measures in an apparent effort to push Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to enter talks to end the war with invading Russian forces. The suspension of U.S. assistance came days after Zelenskyy and President Donald Trump argued about the conflict in a tense White House meeting.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who led the U.S. delegation to the talks in Jeddah, said Washington would present the ceasefire offer to the Kremlin, which has so far opposed anything short of a permanent end to the conflict without accepting any concessions.

"We're going to tell them this is what's on the table. Ukraine is ready to stop shooting and start talking. And now it'll be up to them to say yes or no," Rubio told reporters after the talks. "If they say no, then we'll unfortunately know what the impediment is to peace here."

Trump's national security adviser, Mike Waltz, added: "The Ukrainian delegation today made something very clear, that they share President Trump's vision for peace."

Tuesday's discussions, which lasted for nearly eight hours, appeared to put to rest — for the moment at least — the animosity between Trump and Zelenskyy that erupted during the Oval Office meeting last month.

Waltz said the negotiators "got into substantive details on how this war is going to permanently end," including long-term security guarantees. And, he said, Trump agreed to immediately lift the pause in the supply of billions of dollars of U.S. military aid and intelligence sharing.

Seeking a deal with Russia

Trump said he hoped that an agreement could be solidified "over the next few days."

"I've been saying that Russia's been easier to deal with so far than Ukraine, which is not supposed to be the way it is," Trump said later Tuesday. "But it is, and we hope to get Russia. But we have a full ceasefire

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from Ukraine. That's good."

The Kremlin had no immediate comment on the U.S. and Ukrainian statements. Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova said only that negotiations with U.S. officials could take place this week.

Trump's special envoy, Steve Witkoff, is expected to travel later this week to Moscow, where he could meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin, according to a person familiar with the matter but not authorized to comment publicly. The person cautioned that scheduling could change.

Officials met in Saudi Arabia only hours after Russia shot down over 300 Ukrainian drones in Ukraine's biggest attack since the Kremlin's full-scale invasion. Neither U.S. nor Ukrainian officials offered any comment on the barrage.

Russia also launched 126 drones and a ballistic missile at Ukraine, the Ukrainian air force said, as part of Moscow's relentless pounding of civilian areas.

Zelenskyy renews calls for lasting peace

In an address posted shortly after Tuesday's talks ended, Zelenskyy reiterated Ukraine's commitment to a lasting peace, emphasizing that the country has sought an end to the war since its outset.

"Our position is absolutely clear: Ukraine has strived for peace from the very first second of this war, and we want to do everything possible to achieve it as soon as possible — securely and in a way that ensures war does not return," Zelenskyy said.

Ukrainian presidential aide Andriy Yermak, who led the Ukrainian delegation, described the negotiations as positive. He said the two countries "share the same vision, and that we are moving in the same direction toward the just peace long awaited by all Ukrainians."

In Kyiv, Lena Herasymenko, a psychologist, accepts that compromises will be necessary to end the war, but she said they must be "reasonable."

"We had massive losses during this war, and we don't know yet how much more we'll have," she told The Associated Press. "We are suffering every day. Our kids are suffering, and we don't know how the future generation will be affected."

Oleksandr, a Ukrainian soldier who could give only his first name because of security restrictions, warned that Ukraine cannot let down its guard.

"If there is a ceasefire, it would only give Russia time to increase its firepower, manpower, missiles and other arms. Then they would attack Ukraine again," he said.

Hawkish Russians push back against a ceasefire

In Moscow, hawkish politicians and military bloggers spoke strongly against a prospective ceasefire, arguing that it would play into Kyiv's hands and damage Moscow's interests at a time when the Russian military has the advantage.

"A ceasefire isn't what we need," wrote hardline ideologue Alexander Dugin.

Viktor Sobolev, a retired general who is a member of the Russian parliament's lower house, warned that a 30-day truce would allow Ukraine to beef up arms supplies and regroup its troops before resuming hostilities.

Sergei Markov, a pro-Kremlin political commentator, suggested that Moscow could demand a halt on Western arms supplies to Ukraine as part of a ceasefire. "An embargo on arms supplies to Ukraine could be a condition for a truce," he wrote.

The Kremlin sticks to its conditions for peace

Russia has not publicly offered any concessions. Putin has repeatedly declared that Moscow wants a comprehensive settlement, not a temporary truce.

Russia has said it's ready to cease hostilities on the condition that Ukraine drops its bid to join NATO and recognizes regions that Moscow occupies as Russian. Russia has captured nearly a fifth of Ukraine's territory.

Russian forces have held the battlefield momentum for more than a year, though at a high cost in infantry and armor, and are pushing at selected points along the 1,000-kilometer (600-mile) front line, especially in the eastern Donetsk region.

Ukraine has invested heavily in developing its arms industry, especially high-tech drones that have reached deep into Russia.

4 charged in death of 5-year-old boy 'incinerated' in hyperbaric chamber explosion

By COREY WILLIAMS Associated Press

TROY, Mich. (AP) — Four people have been charged in the death of a 5-year-old boy who was "incinerated" inside a pressurized oxygen chamber that exploded at a suburban Detroit medical facility, Michigan's attorney general said Tuesday.

Thomas Cooper from Royal Oak, Michigan, was pronounced dead at the scene Jan. 31 at the Oxford Center in Troy. His mother suffered burn wounds while trying to save her boy.

"A single spark it appears ignited into a fully involved fire that claimed Thomas's life within seconds," Attorney General Dana Nessel said, adding many safeguards have been developed since "every such fire is almost certainly fatal."

The center's founder and chief executive, Tamela Peterson, 58, is charged with second-degree murder. Facility manager Gary Marken, 65, and safety manager Gary Mosteller, 64, are charged with second-degree murder and involuntary manslaughter. The operator of the chamber when it exploded, Aleta Moffitt, 60, is charged with involuntary manslaughter and intentionally placing false medical information on a medical records chart.

Each was arrested Monday. Handcuffed at their waists, they entered not guilty pleas Tuesday before Troy District Court Magistrate Elizabeth Chiappelli.

Assistant Attorney General Chris Kessel said during Peterson's arraignment that there was concern Peterson could flee and that she has access "to a considerable sum of money."

Peterson's lawyer Gerald Gleeson II had asked for a reasonable bond.

Chiappelli set bond at \$2 million for Peterson, \$250,000 each for Marken and Mosteller, and \$100,000 for Moffitt.

NBC News reported the family's attorney said the boy received multiple sessions for sleep apnea and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder. These conditions aren't among those approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for marketing of hyperbaric oxygen therapy treatment — a fact reiterated by Nessel, who described the boy's treatment as "unsupported by medical science."

"Because these treatments were so medically unsound, patient insurance policies would not cover the use of these chambers to treat these conditions," Nessel said. "This business was a pure cash-flow, for-profit business."

Mosteller requested a court-appointed lawyer at arraignment. Gleeson declined to comment.

Both Marken's attorney, Raymond Cassar, and Moffitt's lawyer Ellen Michaels, said they were surprised by the high bonds set.

"The charge was second-degree murder but this is not the type of murder case that would require this type of bond," Cassar later told reporters.

Earlier, Cassar told The Associated Press the second-degree murder charge against Marken came as "a total shock."

"For fairness, he is presumed innocent," Cassar said. "This was a tragic accident and our thoughts and our prayers go out to the family of this little boy. I want to remind everyone that this was an accident, not an intentional act."

Michaels also extended prayers and sympathy to the boy's family, while asking for "patience and fairness as this process unfolds."

"This event has had a profound impact on so many, including my client, the community, and the first responders," Michaels said in a statement. "I pray for healing for all those affected. Aleta Moffitt is a dedicated professional with many years of experience in the healthcare industry. She has always been a committed and hardworking individual, adhering to all corporate policies and procedures while prioritizing

the well-being of her patients.”

The AP also sought comments Tuesday from attorneys for the Oxford Center and emailed the family’s lawyers for comment.

The Oxford Center said shortly after the explosion that “the safety and wellbeing of the children we serve is our highest priority.”

“Nothing like this has happened in our more than 15 years of providing this type of therapy. We do not know why or how this happened and will participate in all of the investigations that now need to take place,” its statement said.

Hyperbaric therapy delivers pure oxygen to a person’s body at about five times the amount of oxygen in a normal room. The FDA has cleared it to be marketed as safe and effective for 13 listed disorders including severe burns, decompression sickness and non-healing wounds. The list doesn’t include many additional disorders advertised by the Oxford Center.

Nessel suggested the boy’s death could have been avoided if safety measures had been followed. She said a maintenance check had not been performed that day, no medical doctor was on-site and the treatment was not performed by a licensed technician.

Experts consulted by investigators reached “horrifying” conclusions, Nessel said: “The Oxford Center routinely operated sensitive and lethally dangerous hyperbaric chambers beyond their expected service lifetime and in complete disregard of vital safety measures.”

The FDA recommends only using hyperbaric centers inspected and accredited by the Undersea and Hyperbaric Medical Society. The Oxford Center doesn’t appear on the society’s February 2025 list of accredited facilities.

US factories likely to feel the pain from Trump’s steel and aluminum tariffs

By PAUL WISEMAN and JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump is once again lashing out at three of his biggest irritants: foreign steel, foreign aluminum and Canada.

Trump on Wednesday will effectively plaster 25% taxes – tariffs – on all steel and aluminum imports. And on Tuesday the president said the U.S. would double the forthcoming levy on the two metals to 50% if they come from Canada — only for the White House to pull back its threat by the afternoon after the province of Ontario suspended its own retaliatory plans.

The pain won’t just be felt by foreign steel and aluminum plants. The tariffs will likely drive up costs for American companies that use the metals, such as automakers, construction firms and beverage makers that use cans. The threats to the economy have rattled stock markets.

“Unilateral tariffs will raise prices, cost American jobs, and strain alliances,” Philip Luck and Evan Brown of the Center for Strategic and International Studies wrote in a report last month.

Trump is pressing tariffs from his first term

The latest tariffs are an amped-up replay from Trump’s first term.

In 2018, in an effort to protect American steelmakers from foreign competition, he imposed tariffs of 25% on foreign steel and 10% on aluminum, using a 1962 trade law to declare them a threat to U.S. national security.

The tariffs landed most heavily on American allies: Canada is the No. 1 supplier of foreign steel and accounts for more than half of aluminum exports to the United States. Mexico, Japan and South Korea are also major steel exporters to the U.S.

The president insists that steel imports are a threat to the very existence of the United States. “If we don’t have, as an example, steel, and lots of other things, we don’t have a military and frankly we won’t have — we just won’t have a country very long,” Trump said last week in his joint address to Congress.

His 2018 sanctions were gradually watered down.

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Trump spared Canada and Mexico after they agreed to his demand for a revamped North American trade deal in 2020. For some U.S. trading partners, the tariffs were supplanted by import quotas. And the first Trump administration also allowed American companies to request exemptions from the tariffs if, for instance, they couldn't find the steel they needed from domestic U.S. producers.

This time, Trump is closing those loopholes and raising the levy on aluminum to 25%.

He's shown a willingness to go higher — as the apparently short-lived 50% tariffs on Canadian steel and aluminum suggest.

Trump was originally punching back at the government of Ontario for imposing a 25% surcharge on electricity sold to the United States, a move that was itself a response to Trump's tariff threats. After Trump said he'd hit the Canadians with a 50% metals tax, Ontario suspended its planned electricity surcharge. In response, White House trade adviser Peter Navarro said the U.S. would pull back on doubling the tariffs on Canadian steel and aluminum.

Expecting more of the same

Trump's first-term steel and aluminum tariffs benefited American producers of the two metals, encouraging them to increase production. But the beneficiaries were relatively few: The U.S. steel industry, for instance, employs fewer than 150,000 people. Walmart alone has 1.6 million employees in the United States.

Moreover, economists have found, the gains to the steel and aluminum industries were more than offset by the cost they imposed on "downstream" manufacturers that use steel and aluminum. In 2021, production at such companies dropped by nearly \$3.5 billion because of the tariffs, canceling out the \$2.3 billion uptick in production that year by aluminum producers and steelmakers, the U.S. International Trade Commission found in 2023.

This time, "there is no particular reason to think that the economics won't be more of the same: small gains for the U.S. steel and aluminum producers and employees, but larger overall losses for the rest of U.S. manufacturing," said Christine McDaniel, research fellow at George Mason University's Mercatus Center.

Taken by themselves, the metals tariffs are unlikely to do much damage to the nearly \$30 trillion U.S. economy. "Steel and aluminum — they're just a drop in the ocean," said Satyam Panday, chief U.S. and Canada economist at S&P Global Ratings.

But Trump isn't just hitting steel and aluminum. He's slapped 20% tariffs on all Chinese imports. He's set to hammer all Canadian and Mexican products with 25% taxes next month, while limiting the tariff on Canadian energy to 10% — moves he has twice postponed with 30-day reprieves. And he has an ambitious and complicated plan to impose "reciprocal tariffs," raising U.S. import taxes to match those of countries that impose higher levies on American products.

The scope and unpredictability of Trump's tariff agenda threatens to rekindle inflation and to slow growth by discouraging companies from making investments until the trade tensions have eased. "If you're an executive in the board room, are you really going to tell your board it's the time to expand that assembly line?" said John Murphy, senior vice president at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

US steelmakers raise prices

U.S. steelmakers can step up production to offset lost imports. They can also raise prices — and have already started, putting U.S. companies that use American steel at a disadvantage to competitors who get theirs elsewhere.

U.S. steel was priced at \$854 per metric ton as of Feb. 24, considerably higher than the average world export price of \$488, according to Steel Benchmark.

Aluminum is a different story. The United States has just four aluminum smelters and only two of them were fully operating last year. Increasing U.S. smelter production would require "enough power for a small city," S&P Global said in a report last week.

Trump's steel and aluminum tariffs are also certain to draw retaliatory taxes. Canada's are expected to be announced Wednesday.

Contending with angry Canadians

Critics say Trump's metals tariffs are hitting the wrong target.

China is widely seen as a source of the world steel industry's problems. Chinese overproduction, heavily

subsidized by Beijing, has flooded the world with steel and kept prices low, hurting steelmakers in the United States and elsewhere.

But the U.S. already uses trade barriers to keep out most Chinese steel. China accounted for less than 2% of U.S. steel imports last year, according to the American Iron and Steel Institute. "Instead of focusing on the real issue — China's market-distorting policies — the United States risks entangling itself in tariff disputes with its closest allies," wrote Luck and Brown at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Meanwhile, companies that use steel are already feeling the pain.

Steelport Knife Co. in Portland, Oregon, uses U.S. steel in its knives for home cooks and professional chefs. Last month, its American steel supplier, anticipating Trump's tariffs, raised its price by 10%.

CEO Ron Khormaei says Steelport's Japanese and German competitors are benefiting. "It's cheaper for them," he said. Khormaei says his small company — it has 12 employees — will lose business if it raises prices. So he's doing everything he can to cut costs — keeping inventories tight, for example, and limiting travel to trade shows.

And he's facing another problem. "Canadians are mad at us," he said.

Khormaei said that one of his Canadian customers just cancelled an order by email: "Thank you. We love your product. We are not buying."

Tiger Woods says he ruptured his Achilles tendon, an injury that will keep him out of the Masters

By DOUG FERGUSON AP Golf Writer

PONTE VEDRA BEACH, Fla. (AP) — Tiger Woods had a less invasive surgery for a ruptured Achilles tendon on Tuesday, which will keep him out of the Masters and leaves in question whether he can play in any other major championship the rest of the year.

Woods posted the development on his social media accounts without saying how long he expected to be out or any other details except that the surgery went well.

"As I began to ramp up my own training and practice at home, I felt a sharp pain in my left Achilles, which was deemed to be ruptured," Woods said.

He said he had a minimally invasive Achilles tendon repair for a ruptured tendon that the doctor said went smoothly. Such surgeries involve smaller incisions, and the recovery time is quicker. But most recoveries take at least a month before someone can even put weight on their foot.

Two-time Masters champion Bernhard Langer had a tear in his Achilles tendon last year that kept him out for three months.

Dr. Charlton Stucken of the Hospital for Special Surgery in West Palm Beach performed the surgery and said in the post, "The surgery went smoothly, and we expect a full recovery."

The Masters is April 10-13.

Woods set the tournament record last year by making the cut for the 24th time in a row. He missed the cut in the other three majors in 2024. The British Open in July was the last time he played against top competition. He played with his son in the 36-hole PNC Championship in December. Woods also has played his TGL indoor circuit, the 18-hole Seminole Pro-Member last week and a round with President Donald Trump a month ago.

Woods entered the Genesis Invitational at Torrey Pines until withdrawing because he was still processing the Feb. 4 death of his mother, Kultida.

Woods had a sixth back surgery last September. He had issues with the Achilles tendon before, injuring the left one from hitting a shot at the Masters with an awkward stance. He also cited the left Achilles tendon in withdrawing from The Players Championship in 2011, when he was out for two months.

Woods badly damaged his right leg and ankle in a February 2021 car crash outside Los Angeles.

The US agency that monitors weather will cut another 1,000 jobs, AP sources say

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration is starting another round of job cuts — this one more than 1,000 — at the nation's weather, ocean and fisheries agency, four people familiar with the matter tell The Associated Press.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration on Tuesday began plans to lay off 10% of its current workforce, people inside and outside the agency said, with some of them requesting anonymity due to fear of retribution. The numbers were presented to NOAA employees and managers were asked to submit names of positions for layoffs to agency headquarters, which will then go to NOAA's parent agency, the Department of Commerce, on Wednesday, the people said.

Three former senior NOAA officials — two former political appointees from the Biden administration — who speak regularly with managers at their old agency used the same number for upcoming job cuts: 1,029, 10% of the current 10,290. They talked to multiple people still in NOAA and a current agency worker detailed the cuts that a manager explained to employees.

While most people know about NOAA and its daily weather forecasts, the agency also monitors and warns about hurricanes, tornadoes, floods and tsunamis, manages the country's fisheries, runs marine sanctuaries, provides navigation information to ships and observes changes in the climate and oceans. The agency also plays a role in warning about avalanches and space weather that could damage the electrical grid. It helps respond to disasters, including oil spills.

The new cuts come after earlier rounds of Trump administration firings and encouraged retirements at NOAA, plus the elimination of nearly all new employees last month. After this upcoming round of cuts, NOAA will have eliminated about one out of four jobs since President Donald Trump took office in January.

"This is not government efficiency," said former NOAA Administrator Rick Spinrad. "It is the first steps toward eradication. There is no way to make these kinds of cuts without removing or strongly compromising mission capabilities."

The cuts are being ordered without specific guidance from the Trump administration on how or where, which makes it even worse, Spinrad said.

NOAA spokeswoman Monica Allen said the agency's policy is not to discuss internal personnel matters, but said NOAA will "continue to provide weather information, forecasts and warnings pursuant to our public safety mission."

NOAA has already stopped releasing some weather balloons that gather crucial observations for forecasts in two locations — Albany, New York, and Gray, Maine — because of lack of staffing, the agency said last week.

This is all happening as severe storm system is forecast to move through the central and southern parts of the nation late this week in a multi-day outburst with strong tornadoes, hail and damaging winds expected.

Weather forecasts will worsen and "people are going to start seeing this very quickly," warned former NOAA chief scientist Craig McLean. It will also limit how much commercial fishermen will be able to catch, he said.

On top of all the job losses, cuts in research grants to universities will also make it harder for the U.S. to keep improving its weather forecasts and better monitor what's happening to the planet, McLean said.

"People are silently watching the United States decline as a technological leader," McLean said. "America got to the moon, but our weather forecasts won't be the greatest."

Trump selects a new Tesla on White House driveway to show support for Elon Musk

By CHRIS MEGERIAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump shopped for a new Tesla on the White House driveway on Tuesday, selecting a shiny red sedan to show his support for Elon Musk's electric vehicle company as it faces blowback because of his work to advance the president's political agenda and downsize the federal government.

"Wow," Trump said as he eased his way into the driver's seat of a Model S. "That's beautiful."

Musk got in on the passenger side and joked about "giving the Secret Service a heart attack" as they talked about how to start a vehicle that can reach 60 miles (95 kilometers) per hour in a few seconds.

Trump told reporters that he would write a check for the car, which retails for roughly \$80,000, and leave it at the White House so his staff can drive it. The president also said he hopes his purchase will boost Tesla, which is struggling with sagging sales and declining stock prices.

"It's a great product," he said. Referring to Musk, Trump said "we have to celebrate him."

It was the latest — and most unusual — example of how Trump has demonstrated loyalty to Musk, who spent heavily on his comeback campaign last year and has been a key figure in his second administration. Tesla's stock price increased nearly 4% on Tuesday after dropping almost 48% since Trump took office in January.

The Republican president announced on social media overnight that he was going to buy a new Tesla as "a show of confidence and support for Elon Musk, a truly great American."

Musk continues to run Tesla — as well as the social media platform X and the rocket manufacturer SpaceX — while also serving as Trump's adviser.

"Elon Musk is 'putting it on the line' in order to help our Nation, and he is doing a FANTASTIC JOB!" Trump wrote. "But the Radical Left Lunatics, as they often do, are trying to illegally and collusively boycott Tesla, one of the World's great automakers, and Elon's 'baby,' in order to attack and do harm to Elon, and everything he stands for."

Speaking later Tuesday at a business roundtable event, Trump said that Musk, the world's richest man, "shouldn't be scarified or have to suffer because he wants to help the government."

Others have also rallied to Musk's defense. Alex Jones, a prominent conspiracy theorist, said that he bought a customized version of a Cybertruck that he'll give away to a customer of his online store next month.

In addition to Tesla's struggles, Musk has faced other challenges too. He said X was targeted by a "massive cyberattack" that disrupted the social media platform on Monday, and the last two test launches of his Starship rocket ended in explosions.

Presidents almost never drive for security reasons. Joe Biden got behind the wheel of an electric truck while promoting domestic manufacturing, and Barack Obama took a spin with Jerry Seinfeld in the White House driveway for a comedy show.

But regardless of the practicality of Trump's purchase, his overnight announcement about buying a Tesla represented another step in how the president has blurred lines between private and public interests.

During his first term, top adviser Kellyanne Conway urged people to show their support for Trump's daughter Ivanka by purchasing her retail products.

"Go buy Ivanka's stuff," she said. "I'm going to give it a free commercial here."

Trump's wealth and business savvy is core to his political appeal. The president promoted his products while running for office last year, and he attached his name to a cryptocurrency meme coin that launched shortly before he took office.

However, it's rare to see Trump use his own money to support an ally, no matter how important they are.

Musk is the world's richest person, with billions of dollars in government contracts. He's also exerting sweeping influence over Trump's administration through the Department of Government Efficiency, or DOGE, and traveling frequently with the president.

During an interview with the Fox Business Network on Monday, host Larry Kudlow asked Musk "how are you running your other businesses" while also advising Trump.

"With great difficulty," he said.

"But there's no turning back, you say?" Kudlow responded.

"I'm just here trying to make government more efficient, eliminate waste and fraud," Musk said.

Tesla has recently faced protests and vandalism. Police are investigating gunshots fired at a dealership in Oregon, and fire officials are examining a blaze that destroyed four Cybertrucks at a Tesla lot in Seattle.

At times, the White House has needed to play cleanup for Musk, who had never worked in public service before and has admitted that he'll make mistakes along the way.

For example, Musk presented inflated estimates of fraud in government benefits like Social Security on Monday, leading Democrats to argue that he was planning cuts to the popular programs.

"Most of the federal spending is entitlements," Musk said in the interview. "That's the big one to eliminate."

The next morning, a White House account on X criticized news organizations as "lying hacks" and told Democrats to "spare us the fake outrage" about reducing benefits.

"He was clearly talking about the WASTE in the programs," the White House posted.

Explainer: What's a recession and why is rising anxiety about it roiling markets?

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Stock markets are plunging, consumers and businesses have started to sour on the economy, and economists are marking down their estimates for growth this year, with some even seeing rising odds of a recession.

The tech-heavy Nasdaq stock index slipped into a correction last week, defined as a 10% drop from its most recent peak. The broader S&P 500 neared that level Tuesday.

It's a sharp shift from just a month ago, when stock indices were at record highs and consumer sentiment was rapidly improving. Many business executives were optimistic that President Donald Trump would cut taxes and pursue deregulation, which they expected would bolster growth.

Instead, Trump has aggressively implemented tariffs — and tariff threats — against the United States' largest trading partners. On Tuesday, Trump boosted import taxes on steel and aluminum from Canada to 50%, from 25%, in response to Ontario's imposition of duties on electricity it sends to the United States.

For now, the economy appears to be stable. Stock prices often fluctuate and sharp, temporary drops typically don't harm the economy. Most analysts still think the chances of a recession are fairly small. Goldman Sachs expects slower growth this year than last but still puts the odds of a recession at just 20%.

Still, fears of a downturn are rising as investors, economists, and business executives are realizing that Trump's import taxes are much more at the forefront of his economic policy this time than his last term in the White House. Tax cuts and deregulation appear for now to be on the back-burner. During Trump's first term, tax cuts came before the import duties.

Tariffs can slow the economy in a variety of ways: By raising prices for consumers, they can slow spending. Businesses may pull back on investing in new projects if they face higher costs from tariffs. And the uncertainty from Trump's on-again, off-again approach can also cause firms to delay hiring and investment.

"The longer the tariffs stay on, the more the risk of recession grows," says Luke Tilley, chief economist at M&T Bank/Wilmington Trust.

Here are some questions and answers about recessions:

Are there any signs a recession is imminent?

Not really. But one development that has sparked widespread fears is a real-time economy tracker maintained by the Federal Reserve's Atlanta branch. Last week it showed a sharp downshift and is now projecting that the U.S. economy will shrink at an annual rate of 2.4% in the first three months of this year.

The Atlanta Fed's tracker is not technically a forecast but instead a running tally that is updated as economic data is released. It turned negative after trade data showed a surge in imports in January, which

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likely reflected an effort by businesses to get ahead of tariffs.

Most economists still expect the U.S. economy to expand in the first quarter, though at a slower pace. JPMorgan sees growth slowing to just 1% at an annual rate in the first quarter, down from 2.3% in last year's fourth quarter.

Still, Harvard University economist Larry Summers, a former treasury secretary for the Clinton administration, on Monday put the odds of a recession at 50-50.

"All the emphasis on tariffs and all the ambiguity and uncertainty has both chilled demand and caused prices to go up," Summers posted on X. "We are getting the worst of both worlds -- concerns about inflation and an economic downturn and more uncertainty about the future and that slows everything."

Typically, a recession occurs when some sort of shock hits the economy, such as the pandemic in 2020, or the bursting of the housing bubble in 2007. It's not yet clear that tariffs will have a large enough impact to knock the economy into reverse.

Dan North, senior economist at Allianz Trade Americas, a financial services firm, doesn't expect a recession, but says a "full-blown trade war" with all Trump's proposed tariffs taking effect and sparking retaliation by other countries overseas "could constitute a shock."

What else has caused the stock markets to drop?

Trump helped spark the sharp market selloff Monday by refusing to rule out a recession during a Sunday interview on Fox Business News.

When asked whether he expected a recession this year, Trump said, "I hate to predict things like that. There is a period of transition because what we're doing is very big. ... It takes a little time."

Some of Trump's advisers, however, have dismissed recession concerns and have said the economy should continue to grow.

Why didn't Trump's tariffs spark recession fears last time?

The import taxes Trump is threatening to impose this time are far more sweeping than the duties he put in place in 2018-2019, which were mostly focused on China and a few targeted items, such as steel, aluminum, and washing machines.

Now, Trump has placed 20% duties on all imports from China, has threatened to impose 25% tariffs on all imports from Canada and Mexico — the United States' two largest trading partners — and also says the U.S. will place reciprocal tariffs on all countries that have tariffs on U.S. exports, including Europe, India, and Japan.

All told, Jan Hatzius, chief economist at Goldman Sachs, estimates that the average U.S. tariff on imported items could rise 10 percentage points as a result, five times the increase he imposed in his first term.

And most economists say that Trump's 2018-2019 duties did cause a downturn in the manufacturing sector. The Federal Reserve ended up cutting its benchmark interest rate three times in 2019 to shore up the economy.

Other things also could take a toll on the economy: Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency, or DOGE, is seeking to cut tens of thousands of federal government jobs and sharply cut government spending, which could weigh on the economy. Major commercial airlines said this week that they are seeing a slowdown in government travel.

Delta Air Lines said Monday that declining consumer and business confidence amid widespread economic uncertainty is weakening demand.

What signals would suggest that a recession has begun?

The clearest signal would be a steady rise in job losses and a surge in unemployment. Companies generally stop hiring, and sometimes lay off workers, if they see their business shrinking.

The unemployment rate did tick up last month, to 4.1% from 4%, though that is still quite low. But employers added 151,000 jobs, a sign that businesses are still seeking to add workers.

Many economists monitor the number of people who seek unemployment benefits each week, a gauge that indicates whether layoffs are worsening. Weekly applications for jobless aid remain quite low by historical standards.

Who decides when a recession has started?

Recessions are officially declared by the obscure-sounding National Bureau of Economic Research, a group of economists whose Business Cycle Dating Committee defines a recession as “a significant decline in economic activity that is spread across the economy and lasts more than a few months.”

The committee considers trends in hiring. It also assesses many other data points, including gauges of income, employment, inflation-adjusted spending, retail sales and factory output. It assigns heavy weight to a measure of inflation-adjusted income that excludes government support payments like Social Security.

Yet the organization typically doesn’t declare a recession until well after one has begun, sometimes as long as a year afterward.

Trump is buying a Tesla. Here are some of the harsh things he’s said about EVs over the years

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump, who said Tuesday he was buying a Tesla to show loyalty to company CEO Elon Musk, has had plenty to say about electric vehicles over the years. Most of it is not good.

Of course, Trump was once a sharp critic of Musk, too, which is especially notable given how tight the pair are now.

A look at some of Trump’s comments on EVs — and Musk:

Trump includes electric cars in a sour Christmas message

Trump marked Christmas 2023 with a social media post lumping “All Electric Car Lunacy” in with a number of political enemies that he said “are looking to destroy our once great USA. MAY THEY ROT IN HELL.”

A few weeks earlier, during a rally in Ankeny, Iowa, Trump said of EVs: “They don’t go far. They cost a fortune.” He also suggested that the U.S. military was looking at making “Army tanks all electric” and scoffing, “you’re in the middle of the desert and you say, ‘You know what, we’re running low on electric. Do they have a charger around anywhere?’”

In November 2023, at a Claremont, New Hampshire, rally, Trump similarly picked up on distance being an electric vehicle issue: “You can’t get out of New Hampshire in an electric car.”

“Where are you going? ‘I’m going to Massachusetts.’ Well, you better get yourself a gas turbine because this car is not going to get you there,” he said. “Well, you could, if you stop about four times.”

That followed his joke during an event in Clive, Iowa, the previous month: “Electric cars are good if you have a towing company.”

Trump bashes Biden’s electric car ‘Hoax’

Electric vehicles were an especially attractive Trump target during the six-week United Auto Workers strike in September 2023. That’s when he told a rally in Clinton Township, Michigan, “You go all electric so you can drive for 15 minutes before you have to get a charge.”

Trump, a Republican, also posted on his social media site that then-President Joe Biden, a Democrat, sold autoworkers “down the river with his ridiculous all Electric Car Hoax.” He suggested that promoting electric vehicles “was the idea of the Radical Left Fascists, Marxists, & Communists” and that “Within 3 years, all of these cars will be made in China.”

Trump has also praised EVs at times

As on many top issues, Trump has been inconsistent on electric vehicles. During his first term, in September 2020, Trump cheered an all-electric Lordstown Motors Endurance truck at an event outside the White House, calling it an “incredible vehicle.”

After Musk endorsed the former president’s bid to return to the White House, Trump began suggesting that electric vehicles could work for some buyers.

“I’m for electric cars. I have to be because Elon endorsed me very strongly,” Trump said during an August rally in Atlanta.

In a subsequent conversation on X, the social media platform Musk also owns, Trump called Tesla a “great product” while noting, “That doesn’t mean everybody should have an electric car.”

During his inaugural address, Trump promised, "We will revoke the electric vehicle mandate, saving our auto industry," but he also said that Americans will "be able to buy the car of your choice." While there was no Biden mandate to force the purchase of EVs, his policies were aimed at encouraging Americans to buy them and car companies to shift from gas-powered vehicles to electric cars.

On Tuesday afternoon, officials lined up a Tesla Cybertruck and four of the company's cars in front of the White House. Trump emerged with Musk, who is now in charge of a sweeping administration effort to cut federal jobs and shrink the size of government. Trump said he'd buy a Tesla.

"I'm president, so I want to pay full price," Trump said.

Trump sat in and eventually chose a red Tesla Model S. Though he was not permitted to drive it, Trump said he planned to keep it at the White House and let his staff use it.

"I love Tesla," Trump proclaimed, saying he hoped that his buying one would boost the company's stock.

Trump has previously pilloried Musk, too — but not anymore

Just like he had a change of heart about EVs, Trump has changed his tune about Musk, who's now one of his advisers. When the pair got into an online feud in 2022, Trump ridiculed Musk for seeking support during his first term.

"When Elon Musk came to the White House asking me for help on all of his many subsidized projects, whether it's electric cars that don't drive long enough, driverless cars that crash, or rocketships to nowhere, without which subsidies he'd be worthless, and telling me how he was a big Trump fan and Republican, I could have said, 'drop to your knees and beg,' and he would have done it," Trump wrote then.

It was a far different story on Tuesday, when Trump had nothing but praise for Musk.

He noted that his administration got rid of the Biden era "electric vehicle mandate" and expected complaints from Musk about Tesla being damaged by that decision — but didn't hear anything.

"In the time I've known him, he has never asked me for a favor," Trump said of Musk.

Trump is buying a Tesla to aid the company and Musk, who has faced criticism for his role in the administration, the president said.

"I think he's been treated very unfairly by a very small group of people," Trump said of Musk. "And I just want people to know that he can't be penalized for being a patriot."

UK police arrest captain of cargo ship on suspicion of manslaughter over North Sea collision

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — British police on Tuesday arrested the captain of a cargo ship on suspicion of manslaughter as they searched for answers about why it hit a tanker transporting jet fuel for the U.S. military off eastern England, setting both vessels ablaze. One sailor was presumed dead in the collision, which sparked fears of significant environmental damage.

Humberside Police said the 59-year-old was detained "on suspicion of gross negligence manslaughter in connection with the collision." He wasn't named by the police and has not been charged.

The owner of the container carrier, shipping company Ernst Russ, said the arrested man was the ship's master. It said he "and our entire team are actively assisting with the investigations."

The government said the cause of the collision was being investigated, but there was no indication of foul play.

U.K. officials were watching for damage to birds and sea life after jet fuel poured into the North Sea when the Portugal-registered Solong broadsided the U.S.-flagged tanker MV Stena Immaculate on Monday. The collision sparked explosions and fires that burned for more than 24 hours.

Footage filmed from a helicopter on Tuesday morning showed the fire appeared to largely be out on the tanker, which had a large gash on its port side.

The U.K. coast guard agency said Tuesday that the Solong was still afloat. It said the cargo ship, whose front end was crushed and blackened, was drifting south, away from the tanker, and a 1 kilometer (around a ½ mile) exclusion zone had been put in place around both ships.

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"No sign of pollution from vessels is observed at this time," Transport Minister Mike Kane told lawmakers in the House of Commons.

The government said air quality readings were normal and the risk to public health onshore was "very low."

Kane initially said the Solong was expected to sink, but the government said later that both vessels were likely to stay afloat.

The collision triggered a major rescue operation by lifeboats, coast guard aircraft and commercial vessels in the foggy North Sea.

All but one of the 37 crew members from the two vessels were brought safely ashore in the port of Grimsby, about 150 miles (240 kilometers) north of London, with no major injuries. One crew member was missing, and the coast guards called off the search late Monday.

"Our working assumption is that, very sadly, the sailor is deceased," Kane said.

The U.K. Marine Accident Investigation Branch has begun gathering evidence of what caused the Solong, bound from Grangemouth, Scotland, to Rotterdam, Netherlands, to hit the stationary tanker, which was anchored about 10 miles (16 kilometers) off the English coast.

The investigation will be led by the U.S. and Portugal, the countries where the vessels are flagged.

The 183-meter (596-foot) Stena Immaculate was operating as part of the U.S. government's Tanker Security Program, a group of commercial vessels that can be contracted to carry fuel for the military when needed. Its operator, U.S.-based maritime management firm Crowley, said that it was carrying 220,000 barrels of Jet-A1 fuel in 16 tanks, at least one of which was ruptured.

The company said it was unclear how much fuel had leaked into the sea.

The owner of the Solong said that contrary to earlier reports, the vessel wasn't carrying containers of sodium cyanide, which can produce harmful gas when combined with water. It said that four empty containers had previously contained the chemical.

"Our team is actively engaged with all local authorities, and we will work with cleanup teams to ensure every effort is made to mitigate further impacts on the marine environment," the company said in a statement.

Greenpeace U.K. said it was too early to assess the extent of any environmental damage from the collision, which took place near busy fishing grounds and major seabird colonies.

Environmentalists said that oil and chemicals posed a risk to sea life, including whales and dolphins and to birds, including puffins, gannets and guillemots that live on coastal cliffs.

Tom Webb, senior lecturer in marine ecology and conservation at the University of Sheffield, said that wildlife along that stretch of coast "is of immense biological, cultural and economic importance."

Alex Lukyanov, who models oil spills at the University of Reading, said the environmental impact would depend on multiple factors, including "the size of the spill, weather conditions, sea currents, water waves, wind patterns and the type of oil involved."

"This particular incident is troubling because it appears to involve persistent oil, which breaks up slowly in water," he said. "The environmental toll could be severe."

Philippine ex-leader Duterte is being flown to The Hague to face charges of crimes against humanity

By JIM GOMEZ Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — Philippine police arrested former President Rodrigo Duterte in Manila on Tuesday and sent him by plane to the Netherlands to face charges of crimes against humanity at the International Criminal Court, President Ferdinand Marcos said.

The global court in The Hague had ordered Duterte's arrest through Interpol after accusing him of crimes against humanity over deadly anti-drug crackdowns he oversaw while in office, Marcos said in a late-night news conference. Duterte had been arrested at the Manila international airport Tuesday morning when he arrived with his family from Hong Kong.

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Walking slowly with a cane, the 79-year-old former president turned briefly to a small group of aides and supporters, who wept and bid him goodbye, before an escort helped him into the plane.

His daughter, Vice President Sara Duterte, said she sought entry to the airbase where her father was held but was refused. She criticized the Marcos administration for surrendering her father to a foreign court which currently has no jurisdiction to the Philippines.

Marcos said Duterte's arrest was "proper and correct" and not an act of political persecution, since the Philippines is a member of Interpol.

Among the most feared leaders in Asia while in power, Duterte became the first ex-leader from the region to be arrested by the global court.

Clad in a dark jacket, an irate Duterte protested his arrest after arrival in Manila and asked authorities the legal basis of his detention. His lawyers immediately asked the Supreme Court to block any attempt to transport him out of the Philippines.

"Show to me now the legal basis for my being here," Duterte asked authorities in remarks captured on video by his daughter, Veronica Duterte, who posted the footage on social media. "You have to answer now for the deprivation of liberty."

The surprise arrest sparked a commotion at the airport, where Duterte's lawyers and aides protested that they, along with a doctor, were prevented from coming close to him after he was taken into police custody. "This is a violation of his constitutional right," Sen. Bong Go, a close Duterte ally, told reporters.

ICC probes killings during drug crackdown

The ICC has been investigating mass killings in crackdowns overseen by Duterte when he served as mayor of the southern Philippine city of Davao and later as president. Estimates of the death toll of the crackdown during Duterte's presidential term vary, from the more than 6,000 that the national police have reported up to 30,000 claimed by human rights groups.

The ICC arrest warrant, seen by The Associated Press, said "there are reasonable grounds to believe that" the attack on victims "was both widespread and systematic: the attack took place over a period of several years and thousands people appear to have been killed."

Duterte's arrest was necessary "to ensure his appearance before the court," the March 7 warrant said. "Mindful of the resultant risk of interference with the investigations and the security of witnesses and victims, the chamber is satisfied that the arrest of Mr. Duterte is necessary."

In a brief statement after the plane had taken off, the ICC confirmed that one of its pre-trial chambers had issued an arrest warrant for Duterte on charges of "murder as a crime against humanity allegedly committed in the Philippines between Nov. 1, 2011, and March 16, 2019."

Families of the slain celebrate the arrest

Duterte's arrest and downfall drove families of slain victims of his crackdown to tears. Some gathered in a street rally to welcome his arrest.

"This is a big, long-awaited day for justice," Randy delos Santos told the AP. His teenage nephew was gunned down by police in a dark riverside alley during an anti-drug operation in suburban Caloocan city in August 2017.

"We hope that top police officials and the hundreds of police officers who were involved in the illegal killings should also be placed in custody and punished," delos Santos said.

Three police officers were convicted in 2018 for the high-profile murder of his nephew, Kian delos Santos, prompting Duterte to suspend his crackdown temporarily.

The conviction was one of only around three so far against law enforcers involved in the anti-drugs campaign. Former Sen. Antonio Trillanes, who led the filing of a complaint against Duterte before the ICC, said the arrest was historic, a major blow to state impunity and tyranny.

"This is like the downfall of an emperor," Trillanes told the AP. "The next step now is to make sure that all his followers who have committed criminal transgressions like him should also be held to account."

The government said the 79-year-old former leader was in good health and was examined by government doctors.

Duterte's government tried to block ICC probe

The ICC began investigating drug killings under Duterte from Nov. 1, 2011, when he was still mayor of Davao, to March 16, 2019, as possible crimes against humanity. Duterte withdrew the Philippines in 2019 from the Rome Statute, the court's founding treaty, in a move human rights activists say was aimed at escaping accountability.

The Duterte administration moved to suspend the global court's investigation in late 2021 by arguing that Philippine authorities were already looking into the same allegations, arguing the ICC — a court of last resort — therefore didn't have jurisdiction.

Appeals judges at the ICC ruled in 2023 the investigation could resume and rejected the Duterte administration's objections. Based in The Hague, the Netherlands, the ICC can step in when countries are unwilling or unable to prosecute suspects in the most serious crimes, including genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., who succeeded Duterte in 2022, has decided not to rejoin the global court. But the Marcos administration had said it would cooperate if the ICC asked international police to take Duterte into custody through a so-called Red Notice, a request for law enforcement agencies worldwide to locate and temporarily arrest a crime suspect.

16 are dead and dozens are hurt after a bus flips on a highway in South Africa

By MICHELLE GUMEDE Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — A bus lost control and flipped on a highway early Tuesday near Johannesburg's international airport, killing 16 as some were thrown from the vehicle, the transport ministry said.

Ministry spokesman Collen Msibi said 12 people died at the scene and four at a hospital. Msibi said reports indicated that 11 passengers were critically injured and 24 had moderate to serious injuries.

"On arrival we found patients lying across the road," said William Ntladi, an emergency management spokesperson for the Ekurhuleni municipality.

Two bodies were trapped in the wreckage, Ntladi said. Handbags, a lunch box and a water bottle were scattered among the debris.

The crash occurred near Johannesburg's O.R. Tambo International Airport. No other vehicle was involved, and officials weren't yet able to determine the cause.

The bus had been transporting people from the township of Katlehong, east of Johannesburg, and was a short distance from exiting the highway, officials said.

"We are lost for words. This is a disaster," said Andile Mngwevu, a city councilor. "To see so many bodies lying around is quite saddening, and the city really feels for the families who would have expected to see their loved ones return home later today."

South African Transport Minister Barbra Creecy said she was "extremely concerned" since this was the third serious bus accident in the past week. She has instructed the Road Traffic Management Corporation to meet with all bus operators in the coming week to discuss ways to improve passenger safety.

Supreme Court seems intent on taking small steps in dealing with challenges to Trump's agenda

By MARK SHERMAN and LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In fewer than 500 carefully chosen and somewhat opaque words, the Supreme Court has now weighed in twice on President Donald Trump's rapid-fire efforts to remake the federal government.

The justices did not give Trump's administration what it sought. The court rejected the Republican administration's position that it had the immediate power to fire the head of a watchdog office. In the other, the court slowed the effort to block the release of up to \$2 billion in foreign aid.

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In the end, the short-term losses for the administration may mean little, and the court's actions arguably reflect less about whether Trump was right or wrong in either case.

Instead, they may stand for an important, but less showy, commitment to regular order from the top of a judicial system that has emerged as a key check on Trump's power with the Republican-controlled Congress largely supportive or silent.

Jack Goldsmith, a Justice Department official during President George W. Bush's administration, said there may be benefits for the court in taking small steps and delaying, which "brought the court advantage by achieving emergency outcomes it wanted without having to tip its hand prematurely on the merits of the cases."

Trump's unparalleled flex of presidential power seems destined for several dates at a Supreme Court that he helped shape with three appointees during his first term.

But even a conservative majority that has a robust view of presidential power and granted him broad immunity from criminal prosecution might balk at some of what the president wants to do.

His push to end birthright citizenship for the children of parents who are in the U.S. illegally, for instance, would discard more than 100 years of practice and a relatively settled understanding of the 14th Amendment's guarantee of citizenship to "all persons born or naturalized in the United States."

Challenges to the citizenship order are among more than 100 lawsuits that have been filed, and lower-court judges have hit pause on the administration's plans more than 30 times.

The Supreme Court's early forays have largely not been about the substance of what the president wants to do but about the procedures used by federal judges who have the first crack at evaluating the lawfulness of the administration's actions.

Trump allies, most notably his billionaire adviser Elon Musk, have railed at judges slowing his agenda, threatening impeachment and launching personal attacks. The Federal Judges Association, the largest such organization, issued a rare public statement decrying "irresponsible rhetoric shrouded in disinformation" that could undermine public confidence in the judiciary.

Though Trump has said he would obey the courts, Vice President JD Vance, Musk and others have suggested the administration could defy a court order, which would spark a constitutional crisis. Trump has vowed to appeal decisions he doesn't like, something his administration has done quickly in several cases even as some plaintiffs question whether the government is fully following judges' orders.

"It seemed to me that they're playing pretty fast and loose," said Jeffrey Schmitt, a professor at the University of Dayton School of Law. "They don't want to be seen as blatantly disrespecting the courts and refusing to follow their orders. They also don't want to change their behavior."

The Supreme Court, meanwhile, is getting drawn into the fray in fits and starts. That could change soon, as more lawsuits reach a stage at which they can be appealed to the high court.

"It strikes me that the court is trying to signal that the normal processes should take place," said Kent Greenfield, a Boston College law professor who is the main author of a letter signed by roughly 1,000 scholars contending that the nation already is in a constitutional crisis as a result of Trump's actions.

A progressive group, Court Accountability, said the court's more recent order, in the foreign aid freeze case, may have been reported as a setback for the administration.

"But a closer look at the majority's short order reveals that the Chief Justice actually gave Trump everything he wanted," the group wrote on its blog, explaining that additional delays only make it harder for people and groups hurt by the freeze to recover.

Josh Blackman, a professor at the South Texas College of Law, wrote on The Volokh Conspiracy blog that the high court has ducked urgent constitutional issues it should have decided about the extent of the president's power. Instead, he wrote, district judges "are now confident they can issue any order they wish against the executive branch, and the Supreme Court will not stop them. This is the judiciary run amok."

But while they sparked online outrage in some quarters of the president's base, the events of the past few days could be seen as validation for the justices' cautious approach.

On Feb. 21, a Supreme Court order temporarily kept Hampton Dellinger, the head of the Office of Special

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Counsel, in his job despite efforts by Trump to fire him.

In fact, the justices didn't rule either way on the administration's request to throw out an order in Dellinger's favor. The high court held the matter "in abeyance," pending further proceedings in the lower court.

On Thursday, Dellinger ended his legal fight after a federal appeals court ruled against him — but not before he stalled the firing of 5,000 federal workers slated for layoffs.

The Supreme Court finally acted on the administration's request, hours after Dellinger dropped out, dismissing it as moot.

The scale of the federal layoffs that the new administration wants to carry out could also put federal employment law in front of the high court. While experts say the justices appear inclined to allow the president more power to hire and fire agency heads, the outlook is less clear for civil service protections for other federal workers.

In the foreign aid freeze case, U.S. District Judge Amir Ali narrowed his payment order to require the administration to immediately pay only those organizations that had originally filed the lawsuit.

But with nearly a dozen lawsuits filed over moves to freeze federal funding abroad and at home so they can align spending with Trump's agenda, the fight over "power of the purse" seems bound to return to the Supreme Court.

The justices have played a limited role so far, but Trump's presidency is less than two months old.

Today in History: March 12, Gandhi begins 'Salt March'

Today is Wednesday, March 12, the 71st day of 2025. There are 294 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On March 12, 1930, Mohandas Gandhi began his 24-day, 240 mile (387 kilometer) "Salt March" to the Indian village of Dandi (then called Navsari) as an act of non-violent civil disobedience to protest the salt tax levied by colonial Britain.

Also on this date:

In 1912, the Girl Scouts of the USA had its beginnings as Juliette Gordon Low of Savannah, Georgia, founded the first American troop of the Girl Guides.

In 1928, the St. Francis Dam north of Los Angeles, California failed, sending over 12 billion gallons of water into San Francisquito Canyon and killing over 400 people.

In 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt delivered the first of his "fireside chats," a series of evening radio broadcasts to the American public.

In 1938, Nazi Germany annexed Austria, as German troops crossed the border into the country.

In 1947, President Harry S. Truman announced what became known as the "Truman Doctrine" to help Greece and Turkey resist Communism during the Cold War.

In 1980, a Chicago jury found John Wayne Gacy Jr. guilty of the murders of 33 men and boys. (The next day, Gacy was sentenced to death; he was executed in May 1994.)

In 2003, Elizabeth Smart, the 15-year-old girl who vanished from her bedroom nine months earlier, was found alive in a Salt Lake City suburb with two drifters, Brian David Mitchell and Wanda Barzee. (Mitchell is serving a life sentence for kidnapping Smart; Barzee was released from prison in September 2018.)

In 2009, disgraced financier Bernard Madoff pleaded guilty in New York to the largest Ponzi scheme in history, having defrauded his clients of nearly \$65 billion; he would later be sentenced to 150 years behind bars. (Madoff died in prison in April 2021.)

In 2021, the city of Minneapolis agreed to pay \$27 million to settle a civil lawsuit from George Floyd's family over Floyd's murder by police.

Today's Birthdays: Politician and civil rights activist Andrew Young is 93. Actor Barbara Feldon is 92. Actor-singer Liza Minnelli is 79. Politician Mitt Romney is 78. Singer-songwriter James Taylor is 77. Author Carl Hiaasen is 72. Actor Lesley Manville is 69. Singer Marlon Jackson (The Jackson Five) is 68. Actor Courtney B. Vance is 65. Sen. Tammy Duckworth, D-Ill., is 57. Actor Aaron Eckhart is 57. TV journalist Jake Tapper is 56. Actor Jaimie Alexander is 41.