

Groton Daily Independent

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Wednesday, April 2

Senior Menu: Chicken cordon blue hotdish, Capri blend, vanilla pudding with oranges, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Cereal.

School Lunch: Chicken piccata, rice.

Cancelled: Large Group Music Contest in Aberdeen.

Groton Chamber meeting, City Hall, noon

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

This hit me...

You never really know the true impact you have on those around you. You never know how much someone needed that smile you gave them. You never know how much your kindness turned someone's entire life around. You never know how much someone needed that long hug or deep talk. So don't wait to be kind. Don't wait for someone else to be kind first. Don't wait for better circumstances or for someone to change. Just be kind, because you never know how much someone needs it.



Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 4 p.m.; Sarah Circle, 5 p.m.; Soup Supper, 6 p.m. (League is host); worship, 7 p.m.

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

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

St. John's Lutheran: Confirmation 3:45 p.m.; Supper, 6 p.m.; Lent Service, 7 p.m.

Thursday, April 3

Senior Menu: Salisbury steak, mashed potato with gravy, carrots, fruit, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Pancake on a stick.

School Lunch: Chicken nuggets, mashed potatoes.

State FFA Convention, SDSU

NSU Indoor Track Meet, 3 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Nigeria Circle, 2 p.m.

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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.

'Liberation Day' Arrives

President Donald Trump will announce a long-awaited plan for broad tariffs on several countries at 4 pm ET today. The White House has described the global trade overhaul as necessary to level the playing field while luring manufacturing back to the US.

Details of the plan remain unclear, though options examined by the administration include a flat 20% tariff on most imports into the US (which analysts say could raise \$6T in revenue) and reciprocal tariffs that seek to match import duties placed on US goods by other nations. Once announced, the tariffs are expected to take effect immediately. Exemptions to previously announced 25% tariffs on goods from Mexico and Canada will also expire today.

Proposed and enacted tariffs have strained US relationships with allies, including the European Union and Canada, which have vowed to retaliate. Economists warn the tariffs could spur inflation, slow economic growth, and increase the risk of recession.

Separately, Sen. Cory Booker (D-NJ) broke the record for the longest speech on the Senate floor yesterday as he criticized the Trump administration's broad policy changes in a talk lasting 25 hours and 5 minutes.

Health Agency Layoffs

The US Department of Health and Human Services parted ways with roughly a quarter of its 82,000 workers yesterday as part of the Trump administration's ongoing reduction in force of the government's 2.4 million workers. The layoffs bring the total estimated federal firings this year to more than 55,000 workers, not including those who accepted buyouts (roughly 75,000). Hundreds of thousands more reductions are expected in the coming months.

The Food and Drug Administration saw the biggest cuts yesterday, with 3,500 employees dismissed (about 19% of its workforce), followed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2,400) and the National Institutes of Health (1,200). The cuts or reassignments—expected to cut \$1.8B from HHS' \$1.8T budget— included dozens of top health officials, including infectious disease expert Dr. Jeanne Marrazzo, the successor to Dr. Anthony Fauci.

Elsewhere, the Department of Transportation offered buyouts to thousands of workers in exchange for pay and benefits through Sept. 30.

Historic Polar Flight

SpaceX launched its Fram2 mission this week, marking the first crewed spaceflight to orbit Earth over its poles. The Crew Dragon capsule Resilience carries four private astronauts: Maltese cryptocurrency entrepreneur and mission lead Chun Wang, Norwegian filmmaker and vehicle commander Jannicke Mikkelsen, German robotics engineer and pilot Rabea Rogge, and Australian medical officer and polar explorer Eric Phillips.

The crew is flying in a polar orbit at a 90-degree angle to the equator, a historically challenging path due to higher energy requirements and complex recovery logistics. During the three- to five-day mission, they will conduct 22 experiments, including X-ray imaging in space, studies on microgravity's effects on human health, and attempts to grow mushrooms in space. Upon landing, the crew will test reacclimating to gravity without typical medical and mobility assistance.

The mission honors the Fram, a historic Norwegian ship that explored polar regions starting in the late 19th century.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

NFL owners approve several rule changes, including alterations to kickoffs, replays, and overtime. NFL sets a tripleheader on Christmas, the first-ever Thursday games on the holiday, to be broadcast by Netflix and Amazon.

Sony announces 2028 release date and the cast for a four-film Beatles project with each film centered on a member of the band.

"The Handmaid's Tale" sequel "The Testaments" confirmed for Hulu.

Steve Kornacki, political correspondent known for his election night analysis, to depart MSNBC for chief data analyst role at NBC News and NBC Sports.

Science & Technology

Physicists release proposal for a next-generation particle accelerator to eventually replace the Large Hadron Collider; the Future Circular Collider would have a circumference of almost 57 miles, probe particles beyond the Higgs boson.

Tuna and swordfish hunt for the majority of their prey in the ocean's "twilight zone," roughly half a mile below the sea surface; study sheds light on the marine ecosystem of two of the most common commercial fish species.

Researchers link omega-6 fatty acid to an aggressive type of breast cancer; also known as linoleic acid, the molecule activates a major tumor growth pathway for "triple negative" cancers.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close mixed (S&P 500 +0.4%, Dow -0.0%, Nasdaq +0.9%).

Elon Musk (\$342B), Mark Zuckerberg (\$216B), and Jeff Bezos (\$215B) top Forbes annual list of world's billionaires; list features 3,028 people, up from last year.

Conservative cable channel Newsmax shares rise 179% in second day of trading on NYSE; network now valued at over \$16B, twice as much as The New York Times.

OpenAI closes \$40B funding round, the most ever raised by a private tech company, valuing the ChatGPT maker at \$300B.

Restaurant chain Hooters files for Chapter 11 bankruptcy, sells company-owned restaurants to franchise group led by company's founders.

Judge rejects Johnson & Johnson's \$10B settlement plan over its talc-based baby powder.

Politics & World Affairs

Democrat Susan Crawford defeats Republican Brad Schimel in Wisconsin Supreme Court race.

State Sen. Randy Fine (R) wins former Rep. Mike Waltz's (R) seat in Florida's 6th Congressional District; Jimmy Patronis (R) wins former Rep. Matt Gaetz's (R) seat in Florida's 1st Congressional District.

Trump administration sued by 23 states and Washington, DC, over decision to rescind \$11B in health funding.

ICE admits to mistakenly deporting a Maryland man with protected legal status to an El Salvador prison, says the US is unable to bring him back.

Justice Department seeks death penalty for Luigi Mangione, charged with killing UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson.

Russia calls up 160,000 men aged 18 to 30 for military service, marking the country's largest conscription effort since 2011.

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Due to the weather forecast and road conditions, the Groton Area School District will open two hours late on Wednesday, April 2, 2025. There will be no morning OST, and we will update today as conditions require.

Winter Weather Advisory

URGENT - WINTER WEATHER MESSAGE
National Weather Service Aberdeen SD
355 AM CDT Wed Apr 2 2025

Brown-
Including the cities of Aberdeen
355 AM CDT Wed Apr 2 2025

...WINTER WEATHER ADVISORY REMAINS IN EFFECT UNTIL 7 PM CDT THIS EVENING...

- * WHAT...Snow. Additional snow accumulations between 2 and 4 inches. Winds gusting as high as 35 mph.
- * WHERE...Brown County.
- * WHEN...Until 7 PM CDT this evening.
- * IMPACTS...Plan on slippery road conditions. The hazardous conditions could impact the Wednesday morning and evening commutes.

PRECAUTIONARY/PREPAREDNESS ACTIONS...

Slow down and use caution while traveling. The latest road conditions can be obtained by calling 5 1 1.

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Snowballs of different kinds

The heavy snow that fell on Tuesday gave the kids at the Groton Area Elementary School something to play with. The snow was rolled into balls that contained grass, dirt and wood chips.



Meanwhile further east in the Roslyn area, a Groton man lost control on the icy road and his vehicle went into the water. This was along 129th St near 440th Ave just off of Highway 25 North of Roslyn. He escaped without injury. (Photo from the Day County Sheriff's Office Facebook Page)

Grant County Fatal Crash

What: Two vehicle fatal crash
Where: US Highway 12 and 481st Avenue, two miles east of Milbank, SD
When: 10:30 a.m., Tuesday, April 1, 2025
Driver 1: 61-year-old female from Big Stone City, SD, fatal injuries
Vehicle 1: 2007 Toyota Corolla
Seat belt Used: Under investigation
Driver 2: 34-year-old male from Ortonville, MN, no injuries
Vehicle 2: 2017 Chevrolet Silverado
Seat belt Used: Yes
Passenger 2a: 35-year-old female from Ortonville, MN, serious, non-life-threatening injuries
Seat belt Used: Yes
Passenger 2b: 9-year-old female from Ortonville, MN, no injuries
Seat belt Used: Yes

Grant County, S.D.- One woman died and another was seriously injured in a two-vehicle crash two miles east of Milbank, SD this morning.

The names of the persons involved have not been released pending notification of family members.

Preliminary crash information indicates the driver of a 2007 Toyota Corolla was traveling westbound on US Highway 12 and lost control of the vehicle, entering the eastbound lane. At the same time, the driver of a 2017 Chevrolet Silverado was traveling eastbound, and the two vehicles collided near 481st Avenue.

The driver of the Toyota died from her injuries. The driver and a 9-year-old passenger in the Silverado were not injured. A second passenger in the Silverado sustained serious, non-life-threatening injuries.

Names Released in Lincoln County Fatal Crash

What: Two vehicle fatal crash
Where: 276th Street and 480th Avenue, six miles north of Canton, SD
When: 12:39 p.m., Friday, March 28, 2025
Driver 1: Brian James Campbell, 33-year-old male from Sioux Falls, SD, minor injuries
Vehicle 1: 2003 Chevrolet Suburban
Seat belt Used: Yes
Passenger 1a: Lexus Lynn Shippgaribay, 28-year-old female from Harrisburg, SD, fatal injuries
Seat belt Used: Under investigation
Driver 2: Erica Latrice Carmel, 35-year-old female from Magnolia, MS, serious, non-life-threatening injuries
Vehicle 2: 2014 Chevrolet Malibu
Seat belt Used: Yes

Lincoln County, S.D.- A Harrisburg woman died in a two-vehicle crash early Friday afternoon, approximately six miles north of Canton.

According to preliminary crash reports, a 2003 Chevrolet Suburban driven by Brian James Campbell was traveling northbound on 480th Avenue when it entered the intersection at 276th Street and collided with a westbound 2014 Chevrolet Malibu. The impact sent both vehicles into the northwest ditch, where the Suburban rolled onto its driver's side.

A passenger in the Suburban, Lexus Lynn Shippgaribay, was ejected during the crash and passed away from her injuries. Campbell sustained minor injuries, while the driver of the Malibu, Erica Latrice Carmel, suffered serious, non-life-threatening injuries.

The South Dakota Highway Patrol is investigating the crashes. All information released so far is only preliminary.

The Highway Patrol is an agency of the South Dakota Department of Public Safety.

Groton Robotics Teams Heading to Council Bluffs & Dallas for an Exciting End of Season!

With the State Robotics championship now completed, the Groton Robotics program is typically cleaning and getting ready for the 25'-26' season ahead. Not this year!

Team Galaxy, 9050 E: Axel Warrington & Corbin Weismantel, Co-Lead; Ilyanna Dallaire & Ayce Warrington are heading to the U.S Open Robotics Tournament held this weekend in Council Bluffs, Iowa. This tournament, typically reserved for our graduating seniors as a congratulations for their Robotics career at Groton, is an open event where Robotics teams from around the world bring their robots, with modifications allowed of parts outside of standard VEX parts, to compete. Teams from around the world will be in attendance and with our 2 seniors leaving, Groton Robotics wishes Good Luck to Axel & Corbin.

The senior team members of 9050F – Gladiators: Garrett Schultz, Lead; Jameson Penning & Haden Harder have received a formal invitation to attend the 2025 VEX Robotics World Championships. This invitation came as a very much surprise to the Gladiators! The only way to receive this is to win the SD State Championship, in which they came in runner-up with Mitchell. However, after the tournament it was determined that one of the winning teams qualified in 2 categories. Mitchell was next in line – but declined. After Team Lead Garrett Schultz started receiving messages from fellow robotics students around the state stating “Don’t tear down your robot yet”, they received the call and accepted the invitation.

The VEX World Championships will be held on May 6th-8th in Dallas, Texas. 75 countries will be participating and competitions will be held amongst 800 teams. We believe the last time a Groton Robotics team participated in Worlds was over 10 years ago.

We are humbled by these opportunities and sincerely appreciate the Groton Community for all its support in making these opportunities a reality for our students.

Groton council awards garbage hauling contract, discusses wastewater project

By Elizabeth Varin

The Groton City Council awarded a three-year garbage hauling contract and reviewed funding for its upcoming wastewater project, both decisions that will bring an increase to residents' utility bills in the months ahead.

The city received two bids for a three-year garbage hauling contract, one from current contractor Heartland Waste and the other from A-1 Sanitation.

The A-1 Sanitation bid was \$8,094 per month to pick up one time per week for residences. Residents would have one 95-gallon container. It would equate to \$13.49 per residence per month for about 600 residences.

Heartland Waste Management's bid totaled \$19.44 per residence per month, though president/owner Kent Mauck said the two bids were not "comparing apples to apples."

Heartland has done things a little different in the last few years to help preserve city streets, he said. During times when the road bases are softer due to frost thawing,

Heartland has crews bring lighter trucks that require more manpower, but do less damage to the streets. It's a big difference from what the other companies provide.

"They would choke at the way we do it, bringing in multiple people and a pickup and cleaning up the community," he said.

Heartland Waste's bid comes with a price increase from about \$16 to more than \$19 per residence per month. With that rate increase, the city would have to raise its rate on the utility bill.

Council members said they appreciated Heartland not driving heavy trucks on city streets during spring thaw periods. They also mentioned residents didn't seem like they want to change.

"It ain't broke...," Councilman Brian Bahr said. "...I still think Heartland is the way to go, even though it's a little more money."

Bahr added he likes that Heartland even picks up garbage bags or items left next to trash cans, while A-1 Sanitation's bid only includes one can per residence. The council awarded the bid to Heartland for a three-year term.

In addition, the council examined funding for the city's upcoming wastewater project.

Ted Dickey with Northeast Council of Governments told the council about a recent South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources meeting where staff reviewed water project funding applications, including one from Groton to help with emergency discharges, infiltration and permit violations.

The proposed project includes replacing a lift station, increasing the force main size and creating a new wastewater collection cell. The cost totals \$6.587 million.

The state department funding recommendation included a \$4.587 million loan from the Clean Water State Revolving Fund at 3.75 percent for 30 years and an up to \$2 million grant.

To receive that loan and grant, though, the city will need to increase rates by either \$30.30 or \$35.30 depending on the city's rate structure, Dickey said.

"You're not going to need to have the money immediately, but at some point or another, a year down the line, you're going to have to be at that rate," he said. "In order to close the loan, we're going to need to have your rates up and set aside."

The next steps would be to sign a contract with an engineer to draw up designs, Dickey said. However, if the council's not ready to do that yet, a decision can be pushed back a month without hurting the funding.

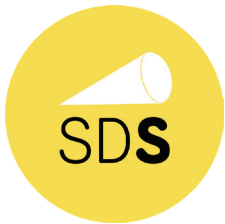
The council asked representatives from IMEG and the Northeast Council of Governments to attend the May 6 council meeting, which may be moved to the Community Center to allow for more people to attend.

- The council approved hiring more seasonal summer staff.
- o Ashlynn Warrington was hired as a lifeguard with one year of experience.

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- o Emma Kutter was hired as a lifeguard with three years of experience.
- o Jerica Locke was hired as a lifeguard with two years of experience.
- o Sydney Locke was hired as a lifeguard with no previous experience listed.
- o Laila Roberts was hired as a lifeguard with two years of experience.
- o Addison Hoffman was hired as a lifeguard with one year of experience.
- o Faith Traphagen was hired as a lifeguard with three years of experience.
- o Talli Wright was hired as a lifeguard with two years of experience.
- o Emerlee Jones was hired as a lifeguard with one year of experience.
- o Avery Crank was hired as a lifeguard with one year of experience.
- o Libby Cole was hired as a lifeguard with no previous experience listed.
- o Brevin Fliehs was hired as a groundskeeper with no previous experience listed.
- o Tevan Hanson was hired as a gatekeeper with no previous experience listed.
- o Axel Abeln was hired as a gatekeeper (with a start date after June 10) with no previous years of experience listed.
- o Previous hire Gracie Pearson, originally hired as a lifeguard, accepted a position elsewhere.
- The city clarified one summer recreation position hire. Kami Lipp, originally hired as swimming pool manager, is co-manager of the pool, along with Tricia Keith.
- City offices will be closed April 18 and 21 for Good Friday and Easter Monday.
- The council renewed three malt beverage licenses for 2025-2026, including ones for MJ's Sinclair, Ken's Food Fair and Dollar General.
- The council approved a special event alcoholic beverage license for the April 12 Fireman's Fun Night at 305 East Railroad Avenue.
- Another event scheduled for April 12 is the Groton Lions Club Annual Easter Egg Hunt, which will start at 10 a.m. at the City Park.
- After receiving no sealed bids for exterior painting of City Hall, the council decided to hold off on the project to save funds.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Ballot group sues state over shorter petition circulation window

BY: SETH TUPPER - APRIL 1, 2025 4:21 PM



Rick Weiland, of Dakotans for Health, answers a question from moderators during an election town hall at Dakota Wesleyan University in Mitchell on Sept. 19, 2024. (Joshua Haiar/South Dakota Searchlight)

A ballot question committee is suing South Dakota's top election official over a new law that shortens the window for petition circulation by three months.

Dakotans for Health filed the lawsuit Tuesday in federal court against Secretary of State Monae Johnson.

"This new law is just another effort to silence the voices of South Dakotans and deny them the right to make decisions that impact their lives," said Dakotans for Health Chairman Rick Weiland in a news release.

South Dakota's Republican-dominated Legislature approved the legislation earlier this month, and Republican Gov. Larry Rhoden signed it into law last week. The law moves the filing deadline up from May to February for petitions seeking to place citizen-initiated questions on the ballot during general election years.

"It also imposes additional challenges," Dakotans for Health said, "including harsher winter conditions and decreased voter interest due to the far-removed election date."

Dakotans for Health is seeking a court order blocking the enforcement of the law, and the payment of its attorney fees and costs.

The law affects initiated measures, which need petition signatures from 17,508 registered South Dakota voters to make the ballot, and initiated constitutional amendments, which need 35,017 signatures. State law says no signatures may be collected more than 24 months preceding the general election.

Dakotans for Health has been active in numerous petition drives, including two last year: a constitutional amendment that would have reinstated abortion rights and an initiated measure that would have repealed the state sales tax on groceries. Voters rejected both measures.

The main sponsor of the new law, House Speaker Jon Hansen, R-Dell Rapids, helped lead a legal challenge last year against the abortion amendment. The case was scheduled for trial after the election, but the lawsuit was dismissed after voters defeated the amendment.

Hansen sent a statement in response to a message Tuesday from South Dakota Searchlight.

"Disputes over the validity of petition signatures should be decided before the election takes place — not after," the statement said. "Amending this deadline is a common sense way to give voters the certainty to know exactly what will be on their ballot before they go to vote while still allowing over a year to gather petition signatures."

Hansen's legislation was one of numerous bills legislators considered to restrict citizen lawmaking. Among those that passed was a resolution that will send a question to the 2026 ballot asking voters to raise the

approval threshold for constitutional amendment ballot questions from a simple majority to 60%. Lawmakers also passed but failed to override Gov. Rhoden's veto of a bill that would have required constitutional amendment petitions to have signatures from every legislative Senate district in the state.

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

Fight at maximum security unit precedes tour by state's prison work group

Corrections spokesman mum on extent of injuries; Division of Criminal Investigation called in

BY: JOHN HULT - APRIL 1, 2025 4:16 PM

SIoux FALLS — The South Dakota Division of Criminal Investigation is looking into a fight at the maximum security wing of the state prison in Sioux Falls that broke out less than 48 hours before a planned tour of the building by a 22-member prison work group.

It's unclear how many people were involved, how long the fighting took place before being brought under control, or how badly anyone was hurt.

Staff "contained" the fight, and no one's life is in danger as a result of their injuries, the Department of Corrections said.

"That incident is under investigation. DCI has been notified of the fight," spokesman Michael Winder wrote in an email to South Dakota Searchlight.

The Project Prison Reset work group is set to convene at 8 a.m. Wednesday for tours of the South Dakota State Penitentiary and Jameson Annex. It's the first portion of a two-day meeting that also includes public presentations and public comments on Thursday at the Military Heritage Alliance in Sioux Falls.

The group's mission is to find consensus on whether the state needs new prison facilities. Gov. Larry Rhoden appointed lawmakers, law enforcement representatives, a judge and other stakeholders to the group in late February, after the Legislature shot down an attempt to finalize funding for a proposed 1,500-bed men's prison in Lincoln County. Had it been approved, the \$825 million prison campus would have been the most expensive taxpayer-funded building project in state history. It was meant to largely replace the penitentiary, a pre-statehood complex built in 1881.

The work group will tour the Lincoln County site, located 14 miles south of Sioux Falls, at 2 p.m. Wednesday.



The sign for the Jameson Prison Annex in Sioux Falls, pictured on April 1, 2025. (John Hult/South Dakota Searchlight)

Details unclear in Monday violence

The Monday fighting broke out in the Jameson Annex, a building erected in 1993 that was home to 473 inmates as of Feb. 28. In addition to housing the state's highest-security inmates, Jameson has the Sioux Falls prison complex's administrative segregation and mental health units and intake unit. All men admitted to the DOC for any level of crime spend time in the intake "fish tank" to be assessed before being assigned a cell in one of the state's various housing facilities.

The Jameson Annex remains on lockdown status after the fight, Winder said Tuesday. He did not say if any correctional officers were among the injured, if any of the injured were transported to the hospital.

for care, or note which area or areas of the facility where the fight occurred.

Winder did not say if the ongoing investigation would keep members of the prison task force out of the building, and did not immediately respond to follow-up questions on the matter.

Tony Mangan, spokesman for the Division of Criminal Investigation, said the agency will work to determine the number of people involved and how the incident began.

"The investigation is ongoing," Mangan said.

Attorney General Marty Jackley, who oversees the DCI, is a member of the prison work group, but he won't be on hand for its first meeting. He's in Pierre this week for the trial of Lonna Carroll, a former Department of Social Services employee accused of embezzling from the state.

Recent history of security trouble

The state's prison system has struggled with a host of security incidents since March of 2024. Two days of unrest broke out at the penitentiary following the temporary shutdown of tablet-based inmate communications with family members that month. One correctional officer was injured in the first of those incidents.

A few months later, fighting broke out at Mike Durfee State Prison in Springfield, which required outside medical care for some inmate victims. Prisoners called out to reporters the following day to express their worries of further violence.

Near the end of the summer, the DOC announced an indefinite lockdown at the penitentiary for what turned out to be a weeklong lockdown in search of contraband. Officers dismantled the campus sweat lodges during the search. After the lockdown ended, Corrections Secretary Kellie Wasko showed lawmakers images of knives fashioned from nail files and Plexiglas, a tattoo gun, mobile Wi-Fi hotspots and bags of homemade alcohol.

During debate on the Lincoln County prison proposal, last year and this year, Wasko argued that the penitentiary is unsafe and unsuited for continued use as offender housing.

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

Work group aims to ditch baggage, find solutions in prison talks

Millions spent on stalled Lincoln County site loom over penitentiary replacement options

BY: JOHN HULT - APRIL 1, 2025 9:37 AM

Members of a prison work group say they'll need to leave the past in the past if they expect to find consensus on new facilities for South Dakota's correctional system.

There's plenty to leave behind, they acknowledge.

Gov. Larry Rhoden wanted lawmakers to greenlight a 1,500-bed, \$825 million men's prison in Lincoln County during this year's legislative session. He needed support from two-thirds of them. He didn't get it.

That proposal's critics — some of whom now serve on the work group — complained about a lack of transparency, as well as the price tag, facility size and the plan's focus on a single site.

Backers, meanwhile, argued that waiting will only cost taxpayers money. The \$825 million price tag was guaranteed through Monday.

Money questions will loom large. Lawmakers have set aside nearly \$600 million for prison construction since 2023, and the state's already spent \$55 million on the Lincoln County prison plan.

The work group has four planned meetings between now and July. The first, a two-day affair in Sioux Falls, begins Wednesday morning.

State Senate Majority Leader Jim Mehlhaff, R-Pierre, a work group member, backed the Lincoln County site during the legislative session. He said it'll be hard to "unlearn things," start fresh, and accept that the road may — or may not — lead back to Lincoln County.

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The conversation might end, he said, with "boy, we really screwed up when we wasted all that money on that Lincoln County site."

"If everybody's going in there with the preconceived notion of where we're going to wind up, it's going to be pretty difficult to reach consensus," Mehlhaff said.



A rendering of a new men's prison proposed for an area of Lincoln County about 15 miles south of Sioux Falls, presented to state lawmakers on Nov. 14, 2024. The complex would house about 1,500 inmates. (Courtesy of SD DOC)

Three goals

for work group

The Rhoden executive order that created the "Project Prison Reset" work group lists three goals: decide if the state needs a new facility, work with a consultant to figure out its size and location, and report findings to a special legislative session on July 22.

Wednesday's meeting starts with a morning tour of the state penitentiary in Sioux Falls, the 1881 structure the proposed Lincoln County prison was meant to largely replace. A tour of the Lincoln County site, located 14 miles south of Sioux Falls, will start at 2 p.m.

The penitentiary tour is not open to the media or the public "for security and logistical" reasons, the meeting agenda says. Lt. Gov. Tony Venhuizen, who will chair the work group, said there are too many people already to add media to the mix.

The media will be able to tour the penitentiary in the weeks between now and July 22, Venhuizen told Searchlight.

"We're very open to the idea of, at some point, coordinating another tour for media members," Venhuizen said, adding that he'd need to check in with Corrections Secretary Kellie Wasko to find a suitable time.

The group's first session will continue Thursday at 8 a.m. at the Military Heritage Alliance in Sioux Falls with a series of informational sessions on inmate job training, behavioral health, prison industries and re-entry programs. A public comment period will start at 12:30 p.m. that day.

Critics: Site could be wrong

Neighbors to the site of the now-paused prison project sued the state because it didn't ask for the county's permission to build there. They lost at the local level, and the state Supreme Court heard arguments on their appeal last week.

The plaintiffs are constituents of House Speaker Pro Tempore Karla Lems, R-Canton, who voted against funding the project this year. She's also appeared at the group's public events. She's now one of 11 lawmakers on the 22-member work group.

The \$55 million spent on that site gives Lems heartburn. Lawmakers approved \$62 million for prison planning in 2024, but Lems said the executive branch spent more than it should've, given that the Lincoln

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County site lacked a final legislative blessing.

Lems is encouraged that Rhoden's office has committed to a "palms up" process for the meetings, and that the group's been advised to "start from scratch."

But "the Lincoln County site is out there" and will need to be addressed.

"I don't want to be the NIMBY person," Lems said, using an acronym for "not in my backyard." "But I do want to have a site that actually makes sense."

Lems argues that some of the money spent for the site, such as the funds used to buy a stake in electrical and rural water infrastructure, won't be completely wasted if the state can find a better plan. The rural customers will still benefit, she said.

The site "makes no sense to me at all," she said. Rhoden called the site near Sioux Falls "a gift from God" because the state already owned the land, and because of its relative proximity to the interstate.

Backers: Find a way to yes

More than once during the 2025 session, Mehlhaff called on lawmakers to avoid "analysis paralysis" on the prison issue. The state hired a consultant, the DLR Group, to review its prison needs in 2021. A small group of lawmakers digested the findings and recommended a 1,500-bed prison the following summer, adopting the guidance of the Department of Corrections on the best path forward.

There's broad agreement that the state needs to do something, he said — and fast — to ease the overcrowding issues dissected throughout that report, he said.

"I'm going to be focused on finding a solution rather than focusing on finding a problem that prevents us from finding a solution," Mehlhaff said. "You can go down that rabbit hole, and that's what was done before."

Some opponents to the Lincoln County plan have zeroed in on the DLR report's recommendations for multiple, smaller facilities across the state. Lawmakers funded a medium-security women's prison in Rapid City nearly three years ago based on that report, and construction on that \$87 million facility is ongoing.

Mehlhaff's not convinced that smaller facilities for male inmates would make more sense than a centralized location.

"If you spread them out among four different places, you'll have to duplicate programming, you'll have to duplicate food service, you'll have to duplicate prison industries," he said, but added that he and every other member needs to be ready to hold preconceived notions in abeyance.

"We're supposed to be taking a fresh look at it, right?"

Rehabilitation, safety questions

Assistant Senate Minority Leader Jamie Smith, D-Sioux Falls, led an effort to rename the Department of Corrections the "Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation" during the legislative session. The pitch sailed through the Senate but failed in the House of Representatives.

Smith, now a work group member, had hoped a name change would set a tone for the department. There is programming now, but Smith said the ideal is a department that focuses as much on preparing inmates to succeed on the outside as it does on housing them.

Smith said he intends to honor the group's three stated goals, but hopes issues surrounding rehabilitation and finding ways to reduce the state's long-term need for prison beds are in the mix.

"I do believe that we need to make sure that is the focus, and ultimately what we're trying to do," Smith said.

House Minority Leader Erin Healy, of Sioux Falls, is the work group's other Democrat. She's concerned about crowding and security in the 1881 facility. She got a letter recently from a Sioux Falls inmate concerned about safety in the current building, as well as a lack of access to rehabilitation and their ability to "live a dignified life."

During her last tour of the penitentiary, locked-down inmates let loose similar concerns as lawmakers walked by.

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"They know that if you are with Secretary Wasko, you're probably somebody who's making decisions for them or our state," Healy said. "That's kind of what I witnessed last time."

Law enforcement: We need to work with the DOC

The current penitentiary's condition is top of mind for Minnehaha County Sheriff Mike Milstead as he prepares for the first work group meeting. He works closely with the DOC as the elected overseer of a county jail that serves as a pretrial waystation for future penitentiary inmates or parolees nabbed and detained for violations.

Milstead has questions about the price tag and the DLR report's alternative options, but said "the aging facility up on top of the hill is in need of replacing."

In 1998, the sheriff had a similar problem on his hands, though "on a much smaller scale." His jail was old, inefficient and dangerous, he said, so he went to the public to ask for support.

The Argus Leader newspaper's photographers and cameras from local TV stations were invited to visit. That gave Milstead a chance to make the case that a new jail, built with room to expand in the future, would be preferable to upgrades at the old one.

"I am so glad we did not try to cobble together the old jail above the public safety building," Milstead said. Yankton Police Chief Jason Foote heads the South Dakota Police Chiefs' Association. He'll represent local law enforcement on the work group.

He's hoping to learn more about how the DOC's crowded facilities and operations might play into the system's handling of the parolees his officers deal with regularly. He wants parolees held accountable for their actions, he said, which "can be pretty severe."

Law enforcement "has a lot of interactions with those that have been in and are now out."

"So I think it's important to look at the recidivism, and what the prison system can do to maybe change some of the behaviors of people," Foote said.

Like Milstead, though, he's coming to the group without having gone through the legislative battles on what kind of facility the DOC might need. He hopes to offer a different perspective as a result.

"I'm coming in with an open mind," Foote said. "I'm not biased either way."

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

Trump administration targets Planned Parenthood's family-planning grants

BY: KELCIE MOSELEY-MORRIS - APRIL 1, 2025 6:51 PM

More than 1 million people seeking care such as contraception or testing for sexually transmitted diseases and cancer could be affected by the Trump administration withholding more than \$27 million in Title X funding to Planned Parenthood clinics nationwide, according to estimates from the Guttmacher Institute.

Planned Parenthood state affiliates said they were notified that the funding they receive under the Title X family-planning program would be temporarily frozen, Politico first reported Monday night.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which is responsible for managing and distributing Title X funds, told States Newsroom via email that it is reviewing all Title X grant recipients to make sure they comply with federal law and President Donald Trump's executive orders. The department is concerned about "the compliance of several awardees" that together receive \$27.5 million, according to an HHS spokesperson, who added, "HHS expects all recipients of federal funding to comply with federal law."

Letters received by some affiliates detailed possible violations of federal civil rights laws and executive orders recently issued by Trump, including the administration's efforts to prohibit diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives and provide care regardless of a person's immigration status.

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"It is difficult to overstate how ridiculous it is that the administration is premising this funding freeze on a 'DEI review,'" said Amy Friedrich-Karnik, Guttmacher's director of federal policy, in a statement. "The entire point of the Title X program is to address disparities in access to contraception and other sexual and reproductive health care, including serving people with low incomes and those from other historically underserved communities. We need to see this for what it is — a direct attack on health equity."

The Title X program was established in 1970 to provide reproductive health care for anyone who needs it. Federal law prohibits use of federal funds for abortion. Planned Parenthood clinics offer a broad range of non-abortion services.

No final decisions have been made regarding Title X funding for Planned Parenthood.

Affiliates in Alaska, California, Idaho, Hawaii, Maine, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Utah and others reported receiving the notification, representing thousands of people served at each clinic every year and millions in funds. Guttmacher's data shows that 83% of people who visited Title X-funded clinics in 2023 had family incomes at or below 250% of the federal poverty level.

In Missouri and Oklahoma alone, Title X funding totals nearly \$8.5 million, according to a news release from Missouri Family Health Council.

"Withholding these critical funds, even temporarily, threatens the essential sexual and reproductive health care communities depend on," said Michelle Trupiano, executive director of the council.

Kat Mavengere, spokesperson for Maine Family Planning, said the agency also received notice of a freeze affecting \$1.92 million in funds. Planned Parenthood of Northern New England is a sub-grantee of Maine Family Planning. Mavengere told States Newsroom the notice from HHS identified two items on their website "related to documents that detail our commitment to health equity" as reasons for the funding review.

Nicole Clegg, CEO of the Northern New England Planned Parenthood affiliate, said it receives about \$900,000 in funds between Maine and New Hampshire from the family-planning organization.

If people can't seek basic reproductive health services at no cost, including wellness exams, Clegg said they go without.

"We've seen that. When Planned Parenthoods leave communities, the data just speaks to increases in STI transmission, increases in unintended pregnancy ... there are very real consequences to a community when we're no longer there," Clegg said.

A recent poll conducted by Perry Udem showed 77% of respondents were opposed to the idea of the Trump administration cutting funding for services like birth control for people with low incomes.

During his first term, Trump also cut Title X funds to clinics that provided abortions or referred people for abortions in 2019, causing one-third of participating providers to leave the program, according to KFF. The Biden administration reversed the policy two years later.

The U.S. Supreme Court is scheduled to hear arguments Wednesday in a case that will determine whether South Carolina government officials can remove Planned Parenthood clinics from the state's Medicaid program because the organization provides abortions. If the court rules in South Carolina's favor, other states that have tried to drain the organization's funding for decades may follow suit.



Federal health officials temporarily froze Title X family-planning funds for some Planned Parenthood clinics, which provide reproductive health services ranging from birth control to STI testing, across the nation this week. (Photo by Michael M. Santiago/Getty Images)

Anti-abortion organizations celebrated the news of the Title X freeze for some Planned Parenthood clinics on Tuesday, including Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America, which has been pushing efforts to “defund” Planned Parenthood in recent weeks in its fundraising emails. SBA was also involved in the drafting of the Heritage Foundation’s blueprint for the next conservative presidency, Project 2025, and identified this action as a priority.

“This is a big step in the right direction,” President Marjorie Dannenfelser told States Newsroom in a statement. “We thank President Trump for this bold action and urge further steps to eliminate all taxpayer funding for Planned Parenthood.”

Kelcie Moseley-Morris is an award-winning journalist who has covered many topics across Idaho since 2011. She has a bachelor’s degree in journalism from the University of Idaho and a master’s degree in public administration from Boise State University. Moseley-Morris started her journalism career at the Moscow-Pullman Daily News, followed by the Lewiston Tribune and the Idaho Press.

Thune aims for budget resolution vote this week

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - APRIL 1, 2025 5:58 PM

WASHINGTON — U.S. Senate Republicans hope to approve a budget resolution this week that would clear the way for Congress to enact an extension of expiring tax law as well as sweeping cuts to federal spending later this year.

Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., said Tuesday the chamber will likely vote on the House-passed budget resolution later this week, after completing the vote-a-rama, where lawmakers vote on dozens of amendments, typically into the early morning hours.

“Republicans continue to have very productive conversations on how to achieve our agenda and working with President Trump on making sure that we are rebuilding our military, unleashing American energy dominance, making sure there isn’t a four-and-a-half trillion tax increase on the American people at the end of this year and obviously securing our border,” Thune said.

The House and Senate must vote to adopt the same budget resolution with matching instructions before they can use the complicated reconciliation process to move legislation through Congress on their own. The process allows the majority party to avoid the Senate filibuster that requires 60 votes for most legislation.



Senate Majority Leader John Thune speaks to reporters following a weekly Republican policy luncheon at the U.S. Capitol on Feb. 19, 2025. (Photo by Andrew Harnik/Getty Images)

One ‘big, beautiful bill’

GOP lawmakers in the two chambers have been at odds for months over whether to move their core legislative goals in two bills or one package.

The Senate approved a budget resolution in mid-February that would have addressed the issue in two bills, before the House voted later that month to move forward with a different budget resolution.

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The final, adopted budget resolution would set up Republicans to hold floor votes on one “big, beautiful bill,” as President Donald Trump has described it, later this year, if GOP leaders can keep nearly all of their members on board with the final product.

Republicans hold unified control of Congress and the White House, but voters didn’t give the party especially wide margins.

The GOP holds 218 seats in the 435-member House amid absences, though it could pick up two more members following special elections in Florida on Tuesday. Republicans hold 53 seats in the Senate.

Any changes to tax law, energy policy or spending cuts will need support from nearly every GOP lawmaker in Congress, including centrists, who barely won election in swing districts, and far-right members, who are more likely to lose to a primary challenger claiming they’re not conservative enough.

The House-passed resolution includes reconciliation instructions that would allow Congress later this year to extend the 2017 tax cuts and a range of other GOP policy priorities that could not survive the 60-vote threshold.

Democratic amendments

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said Tuesday that Democrats plan to put up amendments during budget debate that will showcase how the eventual bill could impact Americans.

“We have had many good discussions, including today. And you are going to find us focused relentlessly on what ... Donald Trump, Elon Musk and the Republican Senate and House are doing to the American people,” Schumer said. “They’re taking away benefits that they desperately need.”

The Senate adopted just two amendments during its last vote-a-rama in February, one from Alaska Republican Sen. Dan Sullivan and one from Utah Republican Sen. Mike Lee.

Democrats put forward numerous amendments but were unable to get any adopted.

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.

Consumers, business owners hold their breath waiting for the Trump tariffs

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY - APRIL 1, 2025 5:26 PM

WASHINGTON — American business owners and consumers are bracing as President Donald Trump teases, with few details, the announcement of sweeping tariffs expected Wednesday afternoon.

Trump has dubbed April 2 “Liberation Day,” his self-imposed deadline to fulfill his campaign promise of taxing imported products from around the globe.

The White House confirmed Tuesday that Trump had made a decision on tariff levels but would not provide further details.

“He’s with his trade and tariff team right now perfecting it to make sure this is a perfect deal for the American people and the American worker, and you will all find out in about 24 hours from now,” press secretary Karoline Leavitt told reporters Tuesday afternoon at the daily briefing.

The new tariffs come as Trump already imposed 25% duties on imported steel and aluminum, as well as 25% levies on foreign cars and vehicle parts set to begin Thursday.

But the anticipation of more tariffs on numerous imported goods has stopped business owners in their tracks as uncertainty about costs and consumer reaction clouds day-to-day decisions.

Stockpiling coffee cups

Gabe Hagen, owner of Brick Road Coffee in Tempe, Arizona, said small business owners are feeling “whiplash.”

“Are we going to have a tariff? Are we not? It’s not easy for me to change my prices overnight. But at

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the same time, if all of the sudden I have my cost of goods going up, it'll put me into a loss territory."

Most disposable beverage cups are produced in China, so Hagen made the decision last year to purchase and store \$26,000 worth of coffee cups in anticipation of tariffs.

He also had to pull back \$50,000 in capital for development on a second shop location, he said.

"The main thing we're asking for is stability," said Hagen, who also sits on the Small Business for America's Future advisory council.

Walt Rowen, owner and president of Susquehanna Glass Company in Columbia, Pennsylvania, said "there's no clarity at this point at all."

"Everybody is in a holding pattern. We're stuck wondering what is going to happen," Rowen said. "We can sort of know that we're gonna have to increase prices if the tariffs come into effect. But what we don't know is if we increase prices, how much does that affect demand?"

Rowen's historic 1925 three-story production facility right in the middle of the southeastern Pennsylvania town employs anywhere from 35 to 65 workers, depending on the season.

Through a variety of decorating techniques, his employees engrave or imprint screened paint logos, names and other messages on wine glasses he sources from a manufacturer in Italy and mugs made in Vietnam.

Rowen's production rooms buzz, especially in the months leading up to the holidays, when his employees laser engrave and hand paint personalized ornaments sourced from China for the Lenox Corporation.

"My Christmas ornament business is huge for us in the fourth quarter, and I would normally be planning to bring in 20 to 30 people to work in that category of business. But if those prices increase by 30, 40, 50%, I don't know how many we're going to sell this year. So I can't even plan production. It's frightening," he said.

States to feel economic pain

Economists are warning the rollercoaster tariff policy coming from the Oval Office is undermining economic growth and trust in the U.S. as a stable trading partner.

Trump told reporters as recently as Sunday that he was planning to slap tariffs on "all countries."

His administration's mid-March levies on aluminum and steel imports sparked retaliation from the European Union and Canada, which beginning in mid-April will enforce taxes on hundreds of American products crossing their borders, including iconic Kentucky bourbon, Tennessee whiskey and Harley-Davidson motorcycles.

Unless Trump carves out exceptions on certain products, more states can expect to feel economic pain, said Mary Lovely, senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics.

"For example, a state like Washington state is very export dependent, not just obviously aircraft, but also apples and a wide variety of other manufacturing and agricultural (products). That state will be really hard hit if there are retaliatory tariffs, both from Canada, which is a market, but also from Asia," Lovely said.



French wine on display in a District of Columbia shop on March 13, 2025, the day President Donald Trump threatened tariffs on European wine and French Champagne. (Photo by Ashley Murray/States Newsroom)

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Trump's tariffs on products from Canada, China and Mexico could cost the typical American family at least an extra \$1,200 annually in price increases, according to a report Lovely co-authored. The dollar amount increases when calculating for universal tariffs on all imported goods, and when accounting for retaliation from other countries.

European Union President Ursula von der Leyen already made clear in a speech Monday that the bloc wants to negotiate with Trump but will apply more levies on American products given no other choice.

"Europe has not started this confrontation. We do not necessarily want to retaliate, but we have a strong plan to retaliate if necessary," she said.

Tariffs on Canada

On Capitol Hill, Democratic Sens. Tim Kaine and Mark Warner of Virginia and Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota introduced a resolution to block the president's tariffs on Canada, which he triggered under his emergency powers.

Trump's use of the International Emergency Economic Power Act to slap 25% tariffs on products out of Canada and Mexico marked the first time a president had ever done so.

"We think that the economic chaos that's being caused and markets being roiled and consumer confidence dropping, and some predicting recession, together with a bipartisan vote might convince the White House — 'Hey, look, there's a better way to treat American citizens and customers,'" Kaine told reporters outside the U.S. Capitol Tuesday.

Kaine said his message to Republicans is "stand up for your constituents and say no tax increase on them."

The Senate is expected to vote on the legislation late Tuesday or Wednesday.

Bill Butcher, founder of Port City Brewing in Alexandria, Virginia, spoke alongside the senators Tuesday, expressing concern about the price of Canadian Pilsner malt that he's used for 14 years.

"It's a very specific strain of high quality barley that grows in the cold climate of Canada, and there's not a suitable U.S. substitute that we can get at the same quality to make our beer," he said. "If there's a 25% tariff on this basic ingredient, it's going to slow our business down."

"By the time it goes from us to our distributor to the retailer to the consumer, this \$12.99 six-pack of beer is going to end up at \$18.99. How many people are still going to want to buy a six-pack of great-tasting beer but at \$18.99? People are going to start looking for a different substitute," Butcher said.

White House defends tariffs

In an emailed statement Tuesday to States Newsroom, White House spokesperson Kush Desai said Trump used tariffs "to deliver historic job, wage, and economic growth with no inflation in his first term, and he's set to restore American Greatness in his second term."

"Fearmongering by the media and Democrats about President Trump's America First economic agenda isn't going to change the fact that industry leaders have already made trillions in investment commitments to make in America, and that countries ranging from Vietnam to India to the UK have already begun to offer up trade concessions that would help level the playing field for American industries and workers," Desai said.

Peter Navarro, Trump's senior counselor on trade, told "Fox News Sunday with Shannon Bream" Trump's new tariffs will raise \$600 billion a year for the U.S., plus another \$100 billion from the 25% duty on foreign cars that will launch this week.

The government would gain that revenue from U.S. businesses who will need to pay the duty rates to get their purchased goods through the U.S. border.

Erica York with the Tax Foundation, a center-right think tank that advocates for lower taxes, said Tuesday that number is "very, very wrong" because Navarro is basing the math on the current level of imports.

"If we put a 20% tax on imports, people are not going to buy as many imports, so that reduces how much revenue you get," York said. "Also, mechanically, if firms are making all of these tariff payments, that reduces their revenue. They don't have as much to pay workers (and) to return to shareholders."

U.S. stocks showed their biggest losses since 2022, according to Monday's report on the first quarter of 2025.

Both Moody's Analytics and Goldman Sachs warned on Monday that they've raised their forecasts for an economic recession to 35%.

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

ICE admits to 'administrative error' in deporting Maryland man to El Salvador mega-prison

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA - APRIL 1, 2025 5:20 PM



Prisoners look out of their cell as Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem tours the Terrorist Confinement Center or CECOT, on March 26, 2025, in Tecoluca, El Salvador. (Photo by Alex Brandon-Pool/Getty Images)

WASHINGTON — The White House Tuesday defended the deportation of a national from El Salvador to a notorious mega-prison in that country, despite Trump administration officials admitting in court filings that the removal was a mistake.

Kilmar Armando Abrego Garcia of Beltsville, Maryland, was ordered in 2019 to be removed from the United States by an immigration judge, but was granted protection from removal because it was more "likely than not that he would be persecuted by gangs in El Salvador" if he were returned, according to court documents.

Yet on March 15 he was placed on one of three deportation flights to El Salvador. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Department of Justice admitted in separate court filings that his deportation to the brutal prison, Centro de Confinamiento del Terrorismo,

or CECOT, was an "administrative error."

"This was an oversight, and the removal was carried out in good faith based on the existence of a final order of removal and Abrego-Garcia's purported membership in MS-13," ICE Acting Field Office Director of Enforcement and Removal Operations Robert L. Cerna wrote in a Monday court filing.

Simon Y. Sandoval-Moshenberg, the attorney for Abrego Garcia, is requesting a preliminary injunction from the U.S. District Court of Maryland, which would require the Trump administration to make a request to the government of El Salvador for Abrego Garcia to be returned to U.S. custody.

The lawyer also wants a halt to U.S. payments to the government of El Salvador for detaining his client at the "notorious CECOT torture prison."

A hearing is set for 1 p.m. Eastern Friday before U.S. District Judge Paula Xinis. She was appointed by former President Barack Obama in 2016.

Press secretary defends decision

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt Tuesday said that Abrego Garcia was a leader of the MS-13

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gang, despite his deportation being "a clerical error."

"The administration maintains the position that this individual who was deported to El Salvador and will not be returning to our country was a member of the brutal and vicious MS-13 gang," she said.

She said the U.S. Department of Homeland Security has evidence of his gang activity that she has seen and she also alleged that Abrego Garcia was involved in human trafficking.

Sandoval-Moshenberg, the attorney for Abrego Garcia, has denied his involvement in any gangs, noting he has no criminal charges or convictions in the United States, El Salvador or any other country.

"Abrego Garcia is not a member of or has no affiliation with Tren de Aragua, MS-13, or any other criminal or street gang. Although he has been accused of general 'gang affiliation,' the U.S. government has never produced an iota of evidence to support this unfounded accusation," according to court filings.

Leavitt also dismissed the 2019 order from an immigration judge granting Abrego Garcia protections from removal.

Federal law bars the removal of an individual if they will face persecution, known as a "withholding of removal." Because of this condition, Abrego Garcia was required to check in with ICE each year, which he has complied with since 2019, according to court filings.

"Who does that judge work for? It was an immigration judge who works for the Department of Justice at the direction of the attorney general of the United States, whose name is Pam Bondi, who has committed to eradicating MS-13 from our nation's interior," Leavitt said.

Leavitt said that 17 more men were deported to CECOT Monday. The U.S. is paying El Salvador's government \$6 million to detain all those deported there.

Identified from news story

Abrego Garcia, who is married to a U.S. citizen with whom he has a child, was detained by ICE on March 12 while driving with his 5-year-old son near Baltimore, Maryland. He was informed by ICE officials that his "status had changed," according to court filings.

Abrego Garcia's wife, Jennifer Vasquez Sura, "was called and instructed to appear at their location within ten minutes to get her five-year old son, A.A.V.; otherwise, the ICE officers threatened that the child would be handed over to Child Protective Services."

Vasquez Sura tried to call the ICE facility that her husband was transferred to and inform officials that he could not be sent back to El Salvador.

"Her attempts to protest by saying that he had won protection from being removed to El Salvador fell on deaf ears," according to court filings.

Within three days, he would become one of the 261 men on one of three deportation flights to CECOT in El Salvador, despite a temporary restraining order in place from a district court judge from the District of Columbia that applied generally to all the deportations.

Vasquez Sura was able to identify him from a news article when a photo showed men sent to the prison with their heads shaved and arms over their necks. She recognized her husband's scar on his head and his tattoo.

DOJ arguments

Department of Justice attorneys, on behalf of the Trump administration, argued that the district court in Maryland lacks jurisdiction because Abrego Garcia is no longer in U.S. custody and his lawyers have not shown it is likely he could be returned.

"There is no showing that any payment made to El Salvador is yet to occur; no showing that El Salvador is likely to release CECOT detainees but for any such payment; no showing that El Salvador is even inclined to consider a request to release a detainee at the United States' request," according to the DOJ filing.

The Department of Justice also argues that his attorney has "not clearly shown a likelihood that Abrego Garcia will be tortured or killed in CECOT."

"While there may be allegations of abuses in other Salvadoran prisons—very few in relation to the large

number of detainees—there is no clear showing that Abrego Garcia himself is likely to be tortured or killed in CECOT,” according to DOJ.

The Department of Justice said the district court should defer to the Trump administration’s determination “that Abrego Garcia will not likely be tortured or killed in El Salvador.”

“Although the government erred in removing Abrego Garcia specifically to El Salvador, the government would not have removed any alien to El Salvador for detention in CECOT if it believed that doing so would violate the United States’ obligations under the Convention (Against Torture),” according to DOJ.

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

New parents score a win in the U.S. House, and GOP leaders cancel votes for the week

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - APRIL 1, 2025 2:51 PM



Colorado Democratic Rep. Brittany Pettersen speaks on the U.S. House floor on Tuesday, April 1, 2025, while holding her newborn. (Screenshot from U.S. House

Clerk livestream.)

WASHINGTON — U.S. House Republican leaders on Tuesday were unable to use a procedural maneuver to block a Florida Republican and a Colorado Democrat from bringing a resolution to the floor that would allow expecting mothers and new parents to vote by proxy.

GOP leaders tried to block their discharge petition from moving forward by putting language in a rule that would have set up House floor debate on separate pieces of legislation.

That provision and the rule were blocked following a 206-222 vote, with nine Republicans voting to buck party leaders. GOP leaders opted to cancel votes for the rest of the week afterward.

“People have emotional reasons for doing what they’re doing,” Speaker Mike Johnson

told reporters after the failed vote. “But we’re going to keep governing. This is a small, razor-thin majority and we have to build consensus on everything. I wish they had not taken this course, but we’re not shaken by this.”

The discharge petition from Florida GOP Rep. Anna Paulina Luna and Colorado Democratic Rep. Brittany Pettersen received signatures from 218 lawmakers, indicating it has the support needed to change the House’s rules when a vote is held.

Florida Rep. Byron Donalds, Georgia Rep. Richard McCormick, New Jersey Rep. Jeff Van Drew, New York Rep. Michael Lawler, Ohio Reps. Michael Rulli and David Joyce, Pennsylvania Rep. Daniel Meuser, Tennessee Reps. Tim Burchett and Andy Ogles and Texas Reps. Dan Crenshaw and Wesley Hunt were the Republicans who signed the discharge petition.

A newborn on the House floor

Pettersen, holding her newborn in her arms, urged House lawmakers to ensure that women who cannot travel to the Capitol due to their pregnancies and new parents can still represent their constituents.

“When I was pregnant, I couldn’t fly towards the end of my due date because it was unsafe for Sam,

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and you're unable to board a plane," Pettersen said during floor debate. "I was unable to actually have my vote represented here and my constituents represented."

"After giving birth I was faced with an impossible decision: Sam was four weeks old and for all of the parents here we know that when we have newborns it's when they're the most vulnerable in their life, it's when they need 24-7 care, when taking them even to a grocery store is scary because you're worried about exposure to germs and them getting sick — let alone taking them to an airport, on a plane and coming across the country to make sure you're able to vote and represent your constituents."

Pettersen said she was "terrified that no matter what choice" she made about whether to vote in-person, she would have "deep regrets."

"So Sam and I made the trip out and this is our third time coming to the floor for a vote," she said.

Pettersen said it was "unfathomable that in 2025" Congress had not modernized to have basic parental leave and said the institution has "a long ways to go to make this place accessible for young families like mine."

Luna said she had spent years trying to convince Republican leaders to allow new parents to vote by proxy. But after exhausting all of her options, worked with her colleagues to gather signatures for a discharge petition.

"Now, leadership, because of the fact they don't like that I was successful at this, is trying to change the rules," Luna said, calling GOP leaders' choice "fundamentally dangerous."

'A new laptop class in America'

Massachusetts Democratic Rep. Jim McGovern, ranking member on the Rules Committee, said Republican leadership was "trying to overturn the Democratic process of majority rule."

"When 218 of us sign a petition, the House rules say it can be brought up for a vote," McGovern said. "But a backdoor provision slipped into this rule is being used to shut down that process — an unprecedented step. Literally, it has never been done before in the history of the House."

House Rules Chairwoman Virginia Foxx, R-N.C., opposed moving forward with the discharge petition and a floor vote on proxy voting.

"I know there's a new laptop class in America that seems to operate increasingly in a virtual space, but that's simply not a fact of life for most American workers and I believe Congress should live by that standard," Foxx said.

Members of Congress, including dozens of Republicans, voted by proxy during the coronavirus pandemic.

Speaker Johnson has also allowed discharge petitions to move forward before. Just last year Congress cleared a bill making changes to Social Security benefits for some Americans after members from both political parties signed a discharge petition.

Tuesday's measure, titled Proxy Voting for New Parents Resolution, would allow House members who just gave birth, or had a spouse give birth, to designate another lawmaker to vote on their behalf for 12 weeks.

The resolution would also allow House lawmakers to vote by proxy before giving birth if their health care providers advised the "pregnancy presents a serious medical condition or that she is unable to travel safely."

The legislation would not affect the Senate. Generally, each chamber of Congress sets its own rules and does not try to tell the other chamber how to operate.

Luna quits Freedom Caucus

Luna left the far-right Freedom Caucus on Monday over the group's efforts to block her discharge petition from moving forward, writing in a two-page letter that "the mutual respect that has guided our caucus" for years was "shattered last week."

"This was a modest, family-centered proposal," Luna wrote. "Yet, a small group among us threatened the Speaker, vowing to halt floor proceedings indefinitely — regardless of the legislation at stake, including President Trump's agenda — unless he altered the rules to block my discharge petition."

Luna rebuked several of the Freedom Caucus members, without naming names. She said their choice

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to try to block the discharge petition from moving forward by embedding language in a rule that set up debate on a separate bill was duplicitous.

"This tactic was not just a betrayal of trust; it was a descent into the very behavior we have long condemned — a practice that we, as a group, have repeatedly criticized leadership for allowing," Luna wrote. "To those involved, I ask: Why? Why abandon the principles we've championed and resort to such conduct?"

"The irony in all of this is that I have never voted by proxy, yet one of our own on the Rules Committee that is so adamantly opposed has done so over 30 times."

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.



Grad cards done in Groton

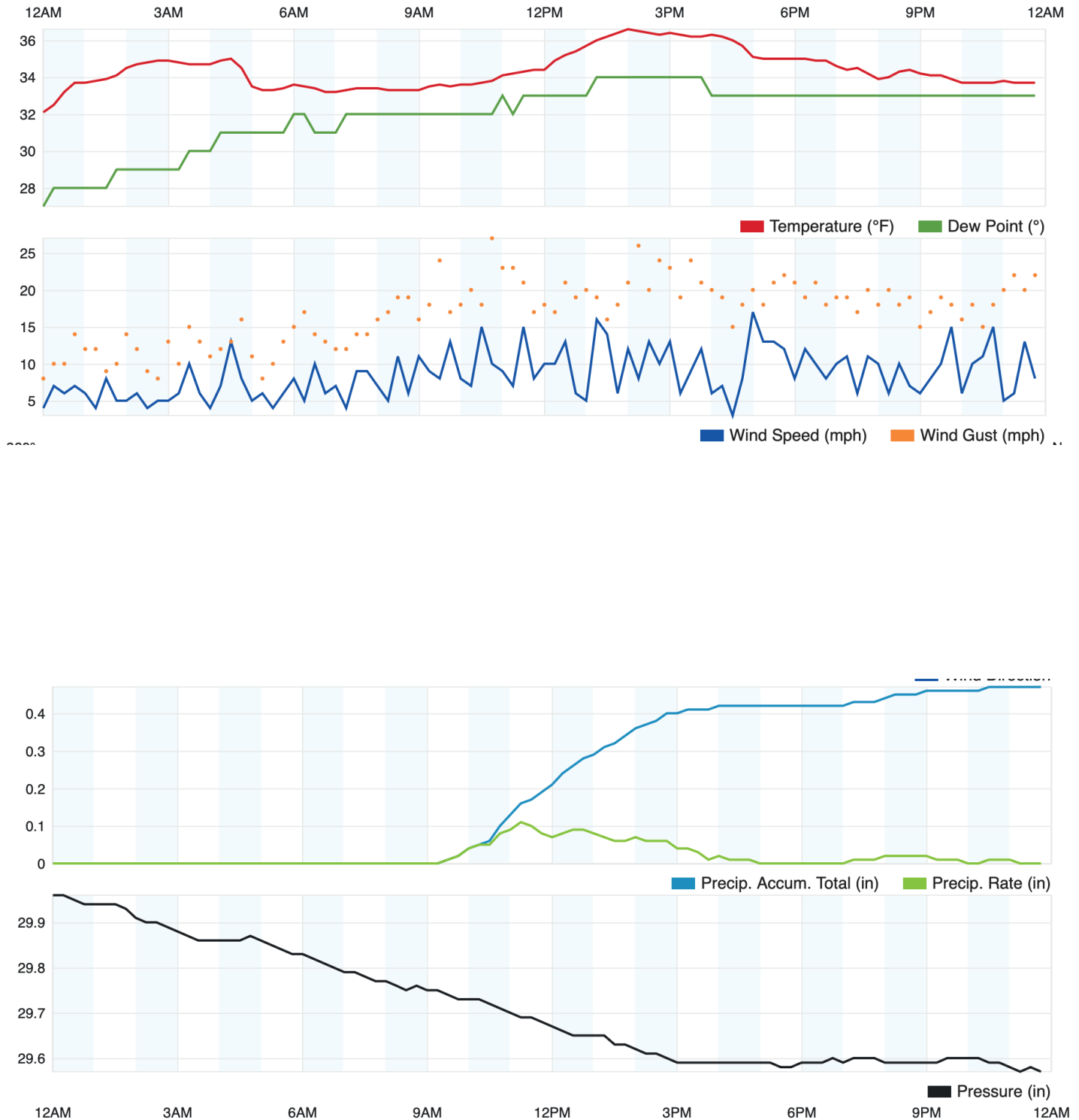
Thanks Rebecca for having your grad cards done at the Groton Independent! In an hour you left with your cards! We appreciate your business! All less than \$40 for her order.

Text/Paul at 605-397-7460 to set up a time for your grad cards

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Winter Weather Advisory

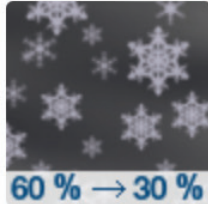
Today



High: 35 °F

Snow and
Patchy
Blowing Snow

Tonight



Low: 27 °F

Snow Likely
then Chance
Snow

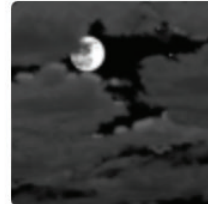
Thursday



High: 41 °F

Partly Sunny

Thursday Night



Low: 23 °F

Mostly Cloudy

Friday



High: 42 °F

Mostly Cloudy
then Chance
Rain



Winter Weather Headlines

April 2, 2025
5:42 AM

Winter Headlines are in effect today (See Map)

Key Messages

- **Freezing Rain, Rain/Snow mix and all Snow** expected today.
 - 0.1-0.3 inches of ice for southern Prairie Coteau region this morning.
 - Between 1-6" additional snowfall today (Location Dependent/See Next Slide)

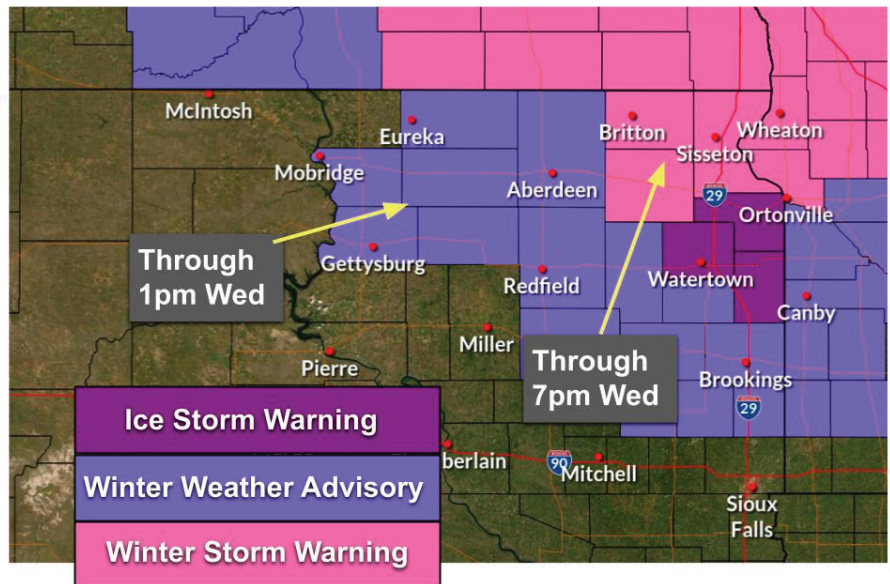
NEW

Important Updates

- Ice Storm Warning issuance for parts of east central South Dakota.

Next Scheduled Briefing

- Wednesday Afternoon.



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

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Winter weather headlines continue as we see temperatures hovering around the critical freezing mark. Bouts of freezing rain will transition to a rain/snow mix and then become all snow with time through today into this evening.

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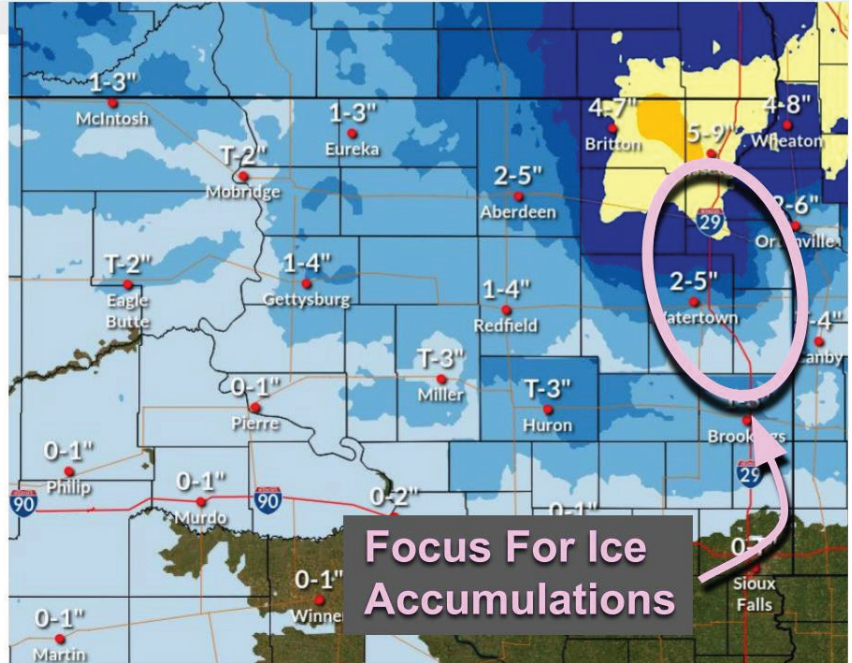
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Additional Snowfall Totals

April 2, 2025
5:47 AM

- Mainly falling today into this evening
- Despite cloud cover, some melting and compaction of the snow expected during the day
- Ice accumulations in east-central SD coinciding with bulk of snowfall through mid-day



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

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Areas of freezing rain and snow this morning may transition to a rain/snow mix by late morning before becoming all snow later this afternoon and evening. Still a lot of range within the forecast as there is still some uncertainty as to when and how quick this change in phases take place.

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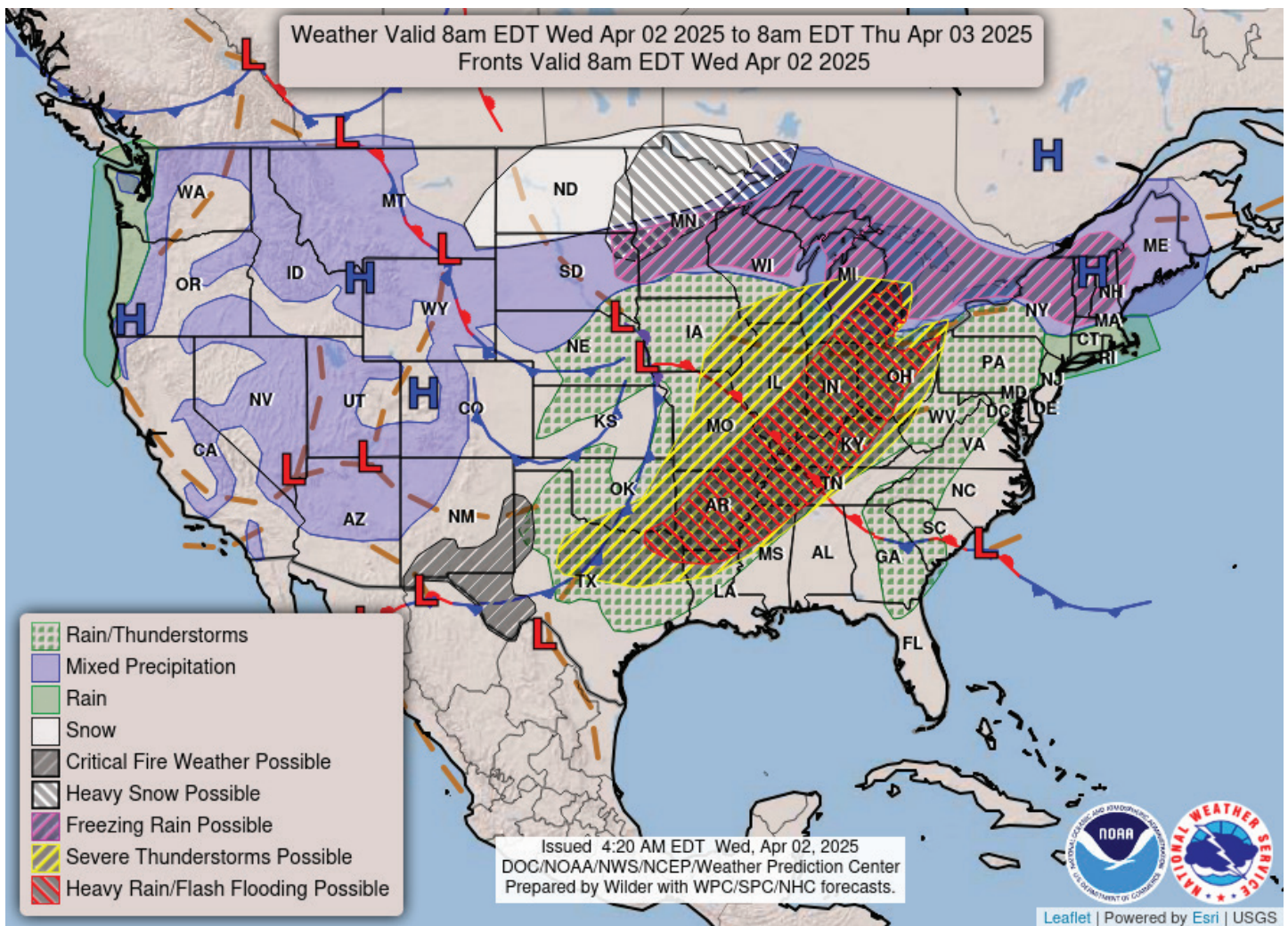
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 37 °F at 1:50 PM
Low Temp: 32 °F at 12:00 AM
Wind: 27 mph at 10:38 AM
Precip: : 0.47

Day length: 12 hours, 55 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 84 in 1921
Record Low: 3 in 1975
Average High: 51
Average Low: 26
Average Precip in April.: 0.08
Precip to date in April.: 0.47
Average Precip to date: 2.14
Precip Year to Date: 1.10
Sunset Tonight: 8:03:31 pm
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:06:13 am



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Today in Weather History

April 2nd, 1998: The James River began to flood in early April from Columbia to Stratford. Throughout April and May, it rose to around 1.5 feet above flood stage at Columbia and Stratford. The James River mainly flooded farmland, pastureland, and a few roads near the channel.

April 2nd, 2010: In South Dakota, a band of heavy snow set up across Corson and Dewey counties during the early morning hours of April 2nd. Along with heavy wet snow, northwest winds gusting up to 40 mph developed. By the time the storm ended in the late morning hours, 6 to 8 inches of snow had fallen. The heavy snow and strong winds downed many power poles across the region, making travel treacherous. Some snowfall amounts included 4 inches at Eagle Butte, 6 inches at Timber Lake, McLaughlin, 14 miles north of Isabel, 7 inches at Isabel and 6 miles southeast of McIntosh, and 8 inches southwest of Keldron. Over 400 poles were lost to the heavy snow, leaving approximately 800 people without power. Eighty linemen worked through the Easter weekend in the snow and mud. McLaughlin and Keldron were the hardest hit. Several hundred people were still without power on April 5th.

1975 - The northeastern U.S. was in the grips of a severe storm which produced hurricane force winds along the coast, and two to three feet of snow in Maine and New Hampshire. Winds atop Mount Washington NH gusted to 140 mph. (David Ludlum)

1975 - The biggest snowstorm of record for so late in the season paralyzed Chicago, IL. Up to 20 inches of snow fell in extreme northeastern Illinois, and 10.9 inches of snow closed Chicago's O'Hare Airport. (The Weather Channel)

1982 - Severe thunderstorms spawned fifty-six tornadoes in the central U.S., including seventeen in the Red River Region of Texas and Oklahoma. The tornadoes claimed thirty lives, and injured 383 other persons. A violent tornado near Messer OK left only the carpet tack strips on the slab of a house it destroyed, and carried a motel sign thirty miles. (The Weather Channel) (Storm Data)

1987 - Eleven cities in Florida reported record low temperatures for the date, including Tallahassee with a reading of 31 degrees. The low of 48 degrees at Key West smashed their previous record for the date by 13 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Thunderstorms produced up to nine inches of rain around New Orleans LA causing 18 million dollars damage. A tornado caused three million dollars damage at Slidell LA. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Strong and gusty winds prevailed from California to Colorado and Wyoming. Winds gusted to 50 mph at Lancaster CA, and reached 85 mph at Berthoud Pass CO. Snow and high winds created blizzard conditions in the Colorado Rockies. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather in North Carolina and Virginia during the afternoon and evening. Thunderstorms produced golf ball size hail, and spawned a tornado near Chester VA which caused half a million dollars damage. A storm system produced snow and gale force winds across northern Michigan, with 8.3 inches of snow reported at Marquette. Temperatures in the north central U.S. soared from morning lows in the 20s and 30s to afternoon highs in the 60s and 70s. Eight cities reported record highs for the date, including Havre MT with a reading of 77 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2005 - Heavy rainfall in the Northeast produced flooding in parts of New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Severe flooding along the Delaware River forced the evacuation of 6,000 residents in New Jersey and over 5,700 in Pennsylvania during the weekend of the 2nd-3rd. Around 3,200 homes in New Jersey were damaged, while one fatality was reported in New York (Associated Press).

2006 - Tornadoes and hail as big as softballs ripped through eight Midwestern states, killing at least 27 people, injuring scores and destroying hundreds of homes. In Tennessee, tornadoes killed 23 people, including an infant and a family of four. Severe thunderstorms, many producing tornadoes, also struck parts of Iowa, Kentucky, Arkansas, Missouri, Ohio, Illinois and Indiana. Strong wind was blamed for at least three deaths in Missouri. The weather service's Storm Prediction Center in Norman, Okla., said it had preliminary reports of 63 tornadoes. The worst damage occurred throughout the Tennessee Valley.

2015 - Late night severe storms produced 80 to 100 mph straight-line winds that caused extensive damage from Hutchinson to Newton and Wichita. An 89 mph wind gust was reported at the Kansas Aviation Museum located in southeast Wichita. (NWS, Wichita, KS)

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WISDOM

Some have it. Some seek it. Some use it. Some avoid it. Some write it. Some ignore it. Some deride it. Some see it. Some share it. Some chose it. Some lose it.

Wisdom can be an essential part of life. Most people, from the dawn of creation until this very moment, have wanted their share. Not all of them, however, have gone to the right place to find it or looked to the right Person to get it.

Take Eve, for example, in the Garden. It seems as though she had everything she needed. And, a little bit more. But, like many today, she was not satisfied. In fact, in spite of everything she had, she asked for one more thing: to be wise. Being wise is a good thing. Surely, God wants each of us to be wise, to make the right choice every time we come to a "Y" in the road. But, we must be very, very cautious about our sources of wisdom.

Look at what happened to Eve. "When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it."

God carefully instructed Eve not to eat from that one tree. But, the serpent said, "You don't need God's wisdom. If you follow Him, you're going to miss out on some wonderful things in life." And he was right! She missed the best God had to offer!

Rather than following the wisdom of God, she decided that she wanted wisdom apart from God. And, look what happened. She did receive what she asked for, but the results destroyed her, and God's perfect plan for all of His creation.

Prayer: Father, You have a plan for each of us as You did Eve. May we be wise enough to seek, find and follow it. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Genesis 3:6

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: 04.01.25

11 12 21 29 49 3

MegaPlier: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$43,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 38 Mins 25 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 03.31.25

11 24 33 38 47 1

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$28,410,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 53 Mins 25 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.01.25

9 20 29 36 41 8

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 8 Mins 25 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 03.29.25

3 15 20 26 30

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$84,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 8 Mins 25 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 03.31.25

2 44 52 65 66 12

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 37 Mins 24 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 03.31.25

12 41 44 52 64 25

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$30,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 37 Mins 24 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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Upcoming Groton Events

03/22/2025 Spring Vendor Fair at the GHS Gym 10am-2pm
03/29/2025 Men's Singles Bowling Tournament at the Jungle 10am, 1pm & 4pm
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
04/12/2025 Groton Firemens Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
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
07/09/2025 Legion Auxiliary #39 Salad Buffet & Dessert Bar at the Groton Legion 11am-1pm
07/11-13/25 2025 VFW 12U Class B State Baseball Tournament
07/13/2025 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm
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
08/14/2025 Family Fun Fest, Downtown Main Street 5:30-7:30pm (2nd Thursday)
08/23/2025 Glacial Tournament at Olive Grove
09/05/2025 Homecoming Parade 1pm
09/06/2025 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
09/07/2025 Sunflower Classic Couples Scramble at Olive Grove
10/10/2025 Lake Region Marching Band Festival 10am
10/11/2025 Pumpkin Fest 10am-3pm City Park
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

News from the **AP** Associated Press

Man rescued from rubble in Myanmar's capital as civil war complicates relief efforts

By DAVID RISING Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — Rescue crews in Myanmar pulled a 26-year-old man out alive from the rubble of the capital city hotel where he worked early Wednesday, but most teams were finding only bodies five days after a massive earthquake hit the country.

After using an endoscopic camera to pinpoint Naing Lin Tun's location in the rubble and confirm that he was alive, the man was gingerly pulled through a hole jackhammered through a floor and loaded on to a gurney nearly 108 hours after he was trapped in the hotel where he worked.

Shirtless and covered in dust, Naing Lin Tun appeared weak but conscious in a video released by the local fire department, as he was fitted with an IV drip and taken away. State-run MRTV reported that the rescue in the city of Naypyitaw was carried out by a Turkish and local team and took more than nine hours.

The 7.7 magnitude earthquake hit midday Friday, toppling thousands of buildings, collapsing bridges and buckling roads. So far, 2,886 people have been reported dead in Myanmar and another 4,639 injured, according to state television MRTV, but local reports suggest much higher figures.

The earthquake also rocked neighboring Thailand, causing the collapse of a high-rise building under construction in Bangkok. One body was removed from the rubble early Wednesday, raising the death total in Bangkok to 22 with 34 injured, primarily at the construction site.

Myanmar has been wracked by civil war and the earthquake is making a dire humanitarian crisis even worse, with more than 3 million people displaced from their homes and nearly 20 million in need even before it hit, according to the United Nations.

Claims of an attack on a Chinese Red Cross convoy

The Three Brotherhood Alliance, one of a powerful group of militias that has taken a large swath of the country from the military, announced a unilateral one-month ceasefire on Tuesday to facilitate the humanitarian response. The shadow opposition National Unity Government had already called a ceasefire for its forces.

But attacks have continued since the quake. Most recently, an opposition militia belonging to the Brotherhood Alliance reported that the military fired on a relief convoy of nine Chinese Red Cross vehicles late Tuesday on a road in the northern part of Shan state near Ohn Ma Tee village.

The Ta'ang National Liberation Army said the Chinese Red Cross was bringing supplies to Mandalay and had reported its route to the military.

But Maj. Gen. Zaw Min Tun, spokesman for the military regime, told state-run MRTV that the convoy had not notified authorities of its route ahead of time. While not mentioning the Red Cross, he said security forces had fired into the air to deter a convoy that refused to stop near Ohn Ma Tee village, the site of recent fighting with the TNLA.

Asked about the incident, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun did not comment on the attack, but said "relief supplies provided by the Red Cross Society of China to Myanmar have arrived in Myanmar and are on the way to Mandalay," adding that "rescue personnel and supplies are safe."

China is incredibly economically important to Myanmar, and also one of the military's largest suppliers with weapons, along with Russia.

On Tuesday, Tom Andrews, a monitor on rights in Myanmar commissioned by the U.N.-backed Human Rights Council, said on X that military attacks must stop to facilitate aid.

"The focus in Myanmar must be on saving lives, not taking them," he said.

More international aid heads to Myanmar

Countries have pledged millions in assistance to help Myanmar and humanitarian aid organizations with the monumental task ahead.

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Australia on Wednesday said it was providing another \$4.5 million, in addition to \$1.25 million it had already committed, and had a rapid response team on the ground.

India has flown in aid and sent two Navy ships with supplies as well as providing some 200 rescue workers. Multiple other countries have sent teams, including 270 people from China, 212 from Russia and 122 from the United Arab Emirates.

A three-person team from the U.S. Agency for International Development arrived Tuesday to determine how best to respond given limited U.S. resources due to the slashing of the foreign aid budget and dismantling of the agency as an independent operation. Washington said on the weekend it would provide \$2 million in emergency assistance.

Extent of devastation beyond major cities is still unclear

Most of the details so far have come from Mandalay, Myanmar's second-largest city, which was near the epicenter of the earthquake, and the capital Naypyitaw, about 270 kilometers (165 miles) north of Mandalay.

Many areas are without power, telephone or cell connections, and difficult to reach by road, but more reports are beginning to trickle in.

In Singu township, about 65 kilometers (40 miles) north of Mandalay, 27 gold miners were killed were killed in a cave-in, the independent Democratic Voice of Burma reported.

In the area of Inle Lake, northeast of the capital, many people died when homes built on wooden stilts in the water collapsed in the earthquake, the government's official Global New Light of Myanmar reported without providing specific figures.

Israel's military operation in Gaza Strip expanding to seize 'large areas,' defense minister says

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel's military operation in the Gaza Strip is expanding to seize "large areas," the defense minister said Wednesday.

Israel's offensive in the Palestinian territory was "expanding to crush and clean the area" of militants and "seizing large areas that will be added to the security zones of the State of Israel," Defense Minister Israel Katz said in a written statement.

The Israeli government has long maintained a buffer zone just inside Gaza along its security fence and has greatly expanded since the war began in 2023. Israel says the buffer zone is needed for its security, while Palestinians view it as a land grab that further shrinks the narrow coastal territory, home to around 2 million people.

Katz didn't specify which areas of Gaza would be seized in the expanded operation, which he said includes the "extensive evacuation" of the population from fighting areas. His statement came after Israel ordered the full evacuation of the southern city of Rafah and nearby areas.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said Israel aims to maintain an open-ended but unspecified security control of the Gaza Strip once it achieves its aim of crushing Hamas.

The minister called on Gaza residents to "expel Hamas and return all hostages." The militant group still holds 59 captives, of whom 24 are believed to still be alive, after most of the rest were released in cease-fire agreements or other deals.

"This is the only way to end the war," Katz said.

The Hostage Families Forum, which represents most captives' families, said that it was "horrified to wake up this morning to the Defense Minister's announcement about expanding military operations in Gaza."

The group said the Israeli government "has an obligation to free all 59 hostages from Hamas captivity — to pursue every possible channel to advance a deal for their release," and stressed that every passing day puts their loved ones' lives at greater risk.

"Their lives hang in the balance as more and more disturbing details continue to emerge about the horrific conditions they're being held in — chained, abused, and in desperate need of medical attention," said the forum, which called on the Trump administration and other mediators to continue pressuring Hamas to release the hostages.

"Our highest priority must be an immediate deal to bring ALL hostages back home — the living for rehabilitation and those killed for proper burial — and end this war," the group said.

Israel continued to target the Gaza Strip, with airstrikes overnight killing 17 people in the southern city of Khan Younis, hospital officials said.

Officials at the Nasser Hospital said the bodies of 12 people killed in an overnight airstrike that were brought to the hospital included five women, one of them pregnant, and two children. Officials at the Gaza European Hospital said they received five bodies of people killed in two separate airstrikes.

The war began when Hamas-led militants attacked southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killing around 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking 251 hostages.

Israel's offensive has killed more than 50,000 Palestinians, including hundreds killed in strikes since a ceasefire ended about two weeks ago, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which doesn't say whether those killed are civilians or combatants. Israel says it has killed around 20,000 militants, without providing evidence.

Val Kilmer, 'Top Gun' and Batman star with an intense approach, dies at 65

By MARK KENNEDY and ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Val Kilmer, the brooding, versatile actor who played fan favorite Iceman in "Top Gun," donned a voluminous cape as Batman in "Batman Forever" and portrayed Jim Morrison in "The Doors," has died. He was 65.

Kilmer died Tuesday night in Los Angeles, surrounded by family and friends, his daughter, Mercedes Kilmer, said in an email to The Associated Press. The Times was the first to report his death on Tuesday.

Val Kilmer died from pneumonia. He had recovered after a 2014 throat cancer diagnosis that required two tracheotomies.

"I have behaved poorly. I have behaved bravely. I have behaved bizarrely to some. I deny none of this and have no regrets because I have lost and found parts of myself that I never knew existed," he says toward the end of "Val," the 2021 documentary on his career. "And I am blessed."

Kilmer, the youngest actor ever accepted to the prestigious Juilliard School at the time he attended, experienced the ups and downs of fame more dramatically than most. His break came in 1984's spy spoof "Top Secret!" followed by the comedy "Real Genius" in 1985. Kilmer would later show his comedy chops again in films including "MacGruber" and "Kiss Kiss Bang Bang."

His movie career hit its zenith in the early 1990s as he made a name for himself as a dashing leading man, starring alongside Kurt Russell and Bill Paxton in 1993's "Tombstone," as Elvis' ghost in "True Romance" and as a bank-robbing demolition expert in Michael Mann's 1995 film "Heat" with Al Pacino and Robert De Niro.

"While working with Val on 'Heat' I always marvelled at the range, the brilliant variability within the powerful current of Val's possessing and expressing character," director Michael Mann said in a statement Tuesday night.

Actor Josh Brolin, a friend of Kilmer, was among others paying tribute.

"You were a smart, challenging, brave, uber-creative firecracker," Brolin wrote on Instagram. "There's not a lot left of those."

Kilmer — who took part in the Method branch of Suzuki arts training — threw himself into parts. When he played Doc Holliday in "Tombstone," he filled his bed with ice for the final scene to mimic the feeling of dying from tuberculosis. To play Morrison, he wore leather pants all the time, asked castmates and crew to only refer to him as Jim Morrison and blasted The Doors for a year.

That intensity also gave Kilmer a reputation that he was difficult to work with, something he grudgingly agreed with later in life, but always defending himself by emphasizing art over commerce.

"In an unflinching attempt to empower directors, actors and other collaborators to honor the truth and essence of each project, an attempt to breathe Suzukian life into a myriad of Hollywood moments, I had

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been deemed difficult and alienated the head of every major studio," he wrote in his memoir, "I'm Your Huckleberry."

One of his more iconic roles — hotshot pilot Tom "Iceman" Kazansky opposite Tom Cruise — almost didn't happen. Kilmer was courted by director Tony Scott for "Top Gun" but initially balked. "I didn't want the part. I didn't care about the film. The story didn't interest me," he wrote in his memoir. He agreed after being promised that his role would improve from the initial script. He would reprise the role in the film's 2022 sequel, "Top Gun: Maverick."

One career nadir was playing Batman in Joel Schumacher's goofy, garish "Batman Forever" with Nicole Kidman and opposite Chris O'Donnell's Robin — before George Clooney took up the mantle for 1997's "Batman & Robin" and after Michael Keaton played the Dark Knight in 1989's "Batman" and 1992's "Batman Returns."

Janet Maslin in The New York Times said Kilmer was "hamstrung by the straight-man aspects of the role," while Roger Ebert deadpanned that he was a "completely acceptable" substitute for Keaton. Kilmer, who was one and done as Batman, blamed much of his performance on the suit.

"When you're in it, you can barely move and people have to help you stand up and sit down," Kilmer said in "Val," in lines spoken by his son Jack, who voiced the part of his father in the film because of his inability to speak. "You also can't hear anything and after a while people stop talking to you, it's very isolating. It was a struggle for me to get a performance past the suit, and it was frustrating until I realized that my role in the film was just to show up and stand where I was told to."

His next projects were the film version of the 1960s TV series "The Saint" — fussily putting on wigs, accents and glasses — and "The Island of Dr. Moreau" with Marlon Brando, which became one of the decade's most infamously cursed productions.

David Gregory's 2014 documentary "Lost Soul: The Doomed Journey of Richard Stanley's Island of Dr. Moreau," described a cursed set that included a hurricane, Kilmer bullying director Richard Stanley, the firing of Stanley via fax (who sneaked back on set as an extra with a mask on) and extensive rewrites by Kilmer and Brando. The older actor told the younger at one point: "It's a job now, Val. A lark. We'll get through it. I was as sad as I've ever been on a set," Kilmer wrote in his memoir.

In 1996, Entertainment Weekly ran a cover story about Kilmer titled "The Man Hollywood Loves to Hate." The directors Schumacher and John Frankenheimer, who finished "The Island of Dr. Moreau," said he was difficult. Frankenheimer said there were two things he would never do: "Climb Mount Everest and work with Val Kilmer again."

Other artists came to his defense, like D. J. Caruso, who directed Kilmer in "The Salton Sea" and said the actor simply liked to talk out scenes and enjoyed having a director's attention.

"Val needs to immerse himself in a character. I think what happened with directors like Frankenheimer and Schumacher is that Val would ask a lot of questions, and a guy like Schumacher would say, 'You're Batman! Just go do it,'" Caruso told The New York Times in 2002.

After "The Island of Dr. Moreau," the movies were smaller, like David Mamet human-trafficking thriller "Spartan"; "Joe the King" in 1999, in which he played a paunchy, abusive alcoholic; and playing the doomed '70s porn star John Holmes in 2003's "Wonderland." He also threw himself into his one-man stage show "Citizen Twain," in which he played Mark Twain.

"I enjoy the depth and soul the piece has that Twain had for his fellow man and America," he told Variety in 2018. "And the comedy that's always so close to the surface, and how valuable his genius is for us today."

Kilmer spent his formative years in the Chatsworth neighborhood of Los Angeles. He attended Chatsworth High School alongside future Oscar winner Kevin Spacey and future Emmy winner Mare Winningham. At 17, he was the youngest drama student ever admitted at the Juilliard School in 1981.

Shortly after he left for Juilliard, his younger brother, 15-year-old Wesley, suffered an epileptic seizure in the family's Jacuzzi and died on the way to the hospital. Wesley was an aspiring filmmaker when he died.

"I miss him and miss his things. I have his art up. I like to think about what he would have created. I'm still inspired by him," Kilmer told the Times.

While still at Juilliard, Kilmer co-wrote and appeared in the play "How It All Began" and later turned down a role in Francis Ford Coppola's "The Outsiders" for the Broadway play, "Slab Boys," alongside Kevin Bacon and Sean Penn.

Kilmer published two books of poetry (including "My Edens After Burns") and was nominated for a Grammy in 2012 for spoken word album for "The Mark of Zorro." He was also a visual artist and a lifelong Christian Scientist.

He dated Cher, married and divorced actor Joanne Whalley. He is survived by their two children, Mercedes and Jack.

"I have no regrets," Kilmer told the AP in 2021. "I've witness and experienced miracles."

Worried families and search dogs bond during the long days of rescue effort at Bangkok collapse

By SAHATTHAYA KRAIKHUNTHOT and JINTAMAS SAKSORNCHAI Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — For most of the day, somberness clouded over a makeshift shelter set up for grief-stricken relatives of dozens of workers who remain missing at the building collapse in Bangkok. They huddled together, a short distance from the rubble, awaiting news for their loved ones to be found.

But for a few minutes, their faces broke out in smiles, as a group of fluffy, playful golden retrievers approached the waiting relatives on a break from the dogs' rescue mission.

Bangkok is more than 800 miles (1,287 kilometers) from the epicenter of the magnitude 7.7 earthquake that struck Myanmar on Friday. Fifteen of the 22 deaths reported in Bangkok were people found at the site of the collapsed high-rise, according to the Bangkok city authorities. Around 70 workers remain missing.

Pornchai Chaodongbang has been waiting for her missing brother at the site since Sunday. She said she was crying every day since the news broke, and when she saw the site of the ruins, she collapsed.

On Tuesday evening, she and dozens of others were visited by Sahara, Safari and Lek, search dogs from K9 USAR Thailand, a non-profit that works closely with the Thai government in disaster and humanitarian relief efforts.

Pornchai's face lit up as she played with them. She said her spirit was lifted a little. "I saw in the news that they were helping the crew up there. I felt a little happier," she said.

It's the dogs' main job to climb the rubble, sniffing for any sign of humans trapped underneath. But Alongkot Chukaew, deputy director of the group, said they are also offering emotional support on the side, as his experience working with the dogs in many of their missions showed that they can give moments of comfort to disaster victims.

He saw that happened with Sahara during the rescue mission after the 2023 earthquake in Turkey.

"At times when people were feeling down, she walked over to relatives of the victims who were sitting among the rubble. I saw the children come to her, play with her. Amid those great losses, it's a small moment of happiness that can lift their spirits. From that day on, it's what we have been trying to do during our breaks," he said.

They chose the dogs that are gentle to visit the relatives, he said. "I believe their gentleness is what gives a spirit to the relatives. It's also like making a promise that they will be here with them until all the victims are found."

Samran Khotchomphun said she has been waiting for her missing grandson and granddaughter since the first day of the collapse. She said she cried through the first three days because she couldn't cope with the situation.

Samran said the dogs offered her a brief comfort and hope on day five of the search and rescue operations.

"I told the dogs, please help find them. My hope is hanging on you," she said.

Democrats' win in Wisconsin court race also is a big loss for Elon Musk

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI and THOMAS BEAUMONT Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — Judge Susan Crawford preserved liberals' narrow majority on the Wisconsin Supreme Court Tuesday by defeating conservative Brad Schimel, but in a way the real loser of the election was billionaire Elon Musk.

Musk and his affiliated groups sunk at least \$21 million into the normally low-profile race and paid three individual voters \$1 million each for signing a petition in an effort to goose turnout in the pivotal battleground state contest. That made the race the first major test of the political impact of Musk, whose prominence in President Donald Trump's administration has skyrocketed with his chaotic cost-cutting initiative that has slashed federal agencies.

Crawford and the Democrats who backed her made Musk the focus of their arguments for holding the seat, contending he was "buying" the election, which set records for the costliest judicial race in history.

"Today Wisconsinites fended off an unprecedented attack on our democracy, our fair elections and our Supreme Court," Crawford said in her victory speech. "And Wisconsin stood up and said loudly that justice does not have a price, our courts are not for sale."

Trump endorsed Schimel as the race turned into a proxy fight over national political issues. The state's high court can rule on cases involving voting rights and redistricting in a state likely to be at the center of both next year's midterm elections and the 2028 presidential contest.

But Musk's involvement dialed those dynamics up to 11: "A seemingly small election could determine the fate of Western civilization," the billionaire said Tuesday in a last-ditch call to voters on his social media site X. "I think it matters for the future of the world."

Notably, America PAC, the super PAC backed by Musk, spent at least \$6 million on vendors who sent door-to-door canvassers across the state, according to the non-partisan Wisconsin Democracy Campaign. It was a reprise of what the group did across the seven most competitive presidential battleground states, including Wisconsin, which were carried by Trump in November.

But the end results this time were not good for Musk. Despite the millions he spent on Schimel, as of late Tuesday night the Supreme Court candidate was losing by four percentage points more than the other Republican-backed statewide candidate, Brittany Kinser, who also fell short in her bid for superintendent of public instruction.

Musk's court race defeat wasn't only because of crushing Democratic margins in deep blue cities like Madison and Milwaukee. Crawford's margins were higher in places where the Musk-backed group America PAC had been active, including Sauk County, just north of Madison, which Crawford was carrying by 10 points after Trump won it by less than 2 points in November.

In Brown County, the home of Green Bay where Musk headlined a campaign rally with 2,000 people on Sunday, Crawford beat Schimel. Trump won the county by 7 percentage points last year.

Overnight, Musk posted on his X platform that "The long con of the left is corruption of the judiciary." In another comment, he seemed to take solace from voters' approval to elevate the state's photo ID requirement from state law to constitutional amendment. The platform was rife with criticism from Trump opponents for his involvement in the race.

"Please send @elonmusk to all the close races!" Jon Favreau, former speechwriter for President Barack Obama, wrote.

"Elon Musk is not good at this," J.B. Pritzker, Illinois' Democratic governor and a billionaire himself who donated to support Crawford, posted on X.

Voters definitely had Musk on their minds.

"There's an insane situation going on with the Trump administration, and it feels like Elon Musk is trying to buy votes," said Kenneth Gifford, a 22-year-old Milwaukee college student, as he cast his ballot on Tuesday. "I want an actual, respectable democracy."

Others may not have had their vote decided by the billionaire but were all-too aware of the money pour-

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ing into their state.

Jim Seeger, a 68-year-old retiree who previously worked in communications and marketing, said he voted for Schimel because he wants Republicans to maintain their outsized majority in Wisconsin's congressional delegation, which could be at risk if Crawford wins and the court orders the maps redrawn. But, he added, he was disappointed the election had become a "financial race."

"I think it's a shame that we have to spend this much money, especially on a judicial race," Seeger said as he voted in Eau Claire.

Wisconsin's Democratic Attorney General, Josh Kaul, sued to bar Musk from making his payments to voters if they signed a petition against "activist judges." The state Supreme Court unanimously declined to rule on the case over a technicality.

Musk swooped into the race shortly after Trump's inauguration. Republicans were pessimistic about being able to win the seat. They lost a longtime conservative majority on the state high court in 2023, and Democrats have excelled in turning out their educated, politically tuned-in coalition during obscure elections such as the one in Wisconsin.

Musk duplicated and expanded on some of the methods he used in the final weeks of last year's presidential race, when he spent more than \$200 million on Trump's behalf in the seven swing states, including Wisconsin.

This time, in addition to the \$1 million checks, Musk offered to pay \$20 to anyone who signed up on his group's site to knock on doors for Schimel and posted a photo of themselves as proof. His organization promised \$100 to every voter who signed the petition against liberal judges and another \$100 for every signer they referred.

Democrats were happy to make Musk a lightning rod in the race.

"People do not want to see Elon Musk buying election after election after election," Wisconsin Democratic Party Chair Ben Wikler said Monday. "If it works here, he's going to do it all over the country."

Wisconsin and Florida elections provide early warning signs to Trump and Republicans

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

A trio of elections Tuesday provided early warning signs to Republicans and President Donald Trump at the beginning of an ambitious term, as Democrats rallied against his efforts to slash the federal government and the outsized role being played by billionaire Elon Musk.

In the marquee race for a Wisconsin Supreme Court seat, the conservative judge endorsed by Trump and backed by Musk and his groups to the tune of \$21 million lost by a significant margin in a state the president won in November. And while Florida Republicans held two of the most pro-Trump House districts in the country, both candidates also significantly underperformed Trump's November margins.

The elections — the first major contests since Trump's return to power — were seen as an early measure of voter sentiment as Trump works with unprecedented speed to dramatically upend the federal government, clashing with the courts and seeking revenge as he tests the bounds of presidential power.

The party that loses the presidency in November typically picks up seats in the next midterm elections, and Tuesday's results provided hope for Democrats — who have faced a barrage of internal and external criticism about their response to Trump — that they can follow that trend.

Charlie Kirk, the conservative activist and podcaster whose group worked alongside Musk to boost conservative Brad Schimel in Wisconsin, argued Tuesday's Supreme Court loss underscored a fundamental challenge for Republicans, particularly in races where Trump is not on the ballot.

"We did a lot in Wisconsin, but we fell short. We must realize and appreciate that we are the LOW PROP party now," he said, referring to low-propensity voters who don't regularly cast ballots. "The party has been remade. Special elections and off-cycle elections will continue to be a problem without a change of strategy."

Major shifts in Wisconsin

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Trump won Wisconsin in November by 0.8 percentage points, or fewer than 30,000 votes. In the first major test since he took office, the perennial battleground state shifted significantly to the left.

Sauk County, northwest of the state capital of Madison, is a state bellwether. Trump won it in November by 626 votes. Sauk shifted 16 points in the direction of Judge Susan Crawford, the liberal favorite backed by national Democrats and liberal billionaire donors like George Soros.

In addition to strong turnout in Democratic-heavy areas, Crawford did measurably better in the suburban Milwaukee counties that Republicans rely on to run up their margins statewide.

Crawford won Kenosha and Racine counties, both of which went for Trump over Democratic nominee Kamala Harris. She was on pace to win by 9 points.

In interviews with more than 20 voters in Waunakee, a politically mixed town north of Madison, several Democrats suggested without prompting that their vote was as much if not more of a repudiation of Trump's first months in office as it was a decision on the direction of the state high court.

"This is our chance to say no," said Linda Grassl, a retired OB-GYN registered nurse, after voting at the Waunakee Public Library corridor Tuesday.

Others disliked the richest man in the world playing such a prominent role.

"I don't like Elon Musk spending money for an election he should have no involvement in," said Antonio Gray, a 38-year-old Milwaukee security guard. "They should let the voters vote for who they want to vote for instead of inserting themselves like they have."

Republicans warn against drawing national conclusions

Former Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker said that part of the challenge for Republicans had been "trying to connect the dots" to turn the state Supreme Court race into one about Trump — a difficult task in a state judicial race.

"If you're somebody who showed up for Trump because you feel forgotten, you don't typically show up to vote in" these kinds of elections, he said, imagining voters asking themselves: "What does this have to do with Trump?"

Still, Walker cautioned against reading the tea leaves too closely.

"I'd be a little bit careful about reading too much into what happens nationally," he said.

Trump had better luck in Florida, where Republican Randy Fine won his special election in the 6th District to replace Rep. Mike Waltz, who stepped down to serve as Trump's national security adviser. But Fine's Democratic challenger, Josh Weil, lost by 14 points less than five months after Waltz won the district by 33.

"This is the functional equivalent of Republicans running a competitive race in the district that is represented by Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez," said House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries beforehand, invoking a liberal favorite whom Trump often denigrates. "Kamala Harris won that district by 30 points. Do you think a Republican would even be competitive in that district in New York, currently held by Alex? Of course, not."

Jimmy Patronis, the state's chief financial officer, fended off a challenge from Democrat Gay Valimont to win the northwest Florida seat vacated by Matt Gaetz but also underperformed Gaetz's last margin of victory.

The pair of wins gave Republicans a 220-213 margin in the House of Representatives, at a time when concerns about a thin GOP majority led Trump to pull the nomination of New York Rep. Elise Stefanik to be United Nations ambassador.

For voters in both districts, the clear draw was Trump.

Teresa Horton, 72, didn't know much at all about Tuesday's election -- but said she didn't need to.

"I don't even know these people that are on there," she said of her ballot. "I just went with my ticket."

Brenda Ray, 75, a retired nurse, said she didn't know a lot about Patronis, either, but cast her ballot for him because she believes he'll "vote with our president."

"That's all we're looking for," she said.

Both Patronis and Fine were badly outtraced by their Democratic challengers. Michael Whatley, chairman of the Republican National Committee, argued that what was a GOP concern before Tuesday night had been a sign of the party's strength.

"The American people sent a clear message tonight: they want elected officials who will advance President Trump's America First agenda, and their votes can't be bought by national Democrats," he said in a statement.

As Israel advances in Gaza, many exhausted families flee again. Some can't bear it

By FATMA KHALED and MOHAMMAD JAHJOUH Associated Press

KHAN YOUNIS, Gaza Strip (AP) — As Israel orders wide new evacuations across the Gaza Strip, Palestinians say they are crushed by exhaustion and hopelessness at the prospect of fleeing once again. Many are packing a few belongings and trudging off in search of new shelters. Some say they just can't bear to move.

When ordered out of Jabaliya in northern Gaza, Ihab Suliman and his family could only grab some food and blankets before making their way south March 19. It was their eighth time fleeing over the past 18 months of war.

"There is no longer any taste to life," said Suliman, a former university professor. "Life and death have become one and the same for us."

Suliman is among the tens of thousands of Palestinians who have fled temporary shelters since Israel shattered a 2-month-old ceasefire on March 18 with renewed bombardment and ground assaults.

Daunted by the notion of starting over, some Palestinians are ignoring the latest evacuation orders — even if it means risking their lives.

"After one year and a half of war that has exhausted everyone, children and their parents, too, are just worn out physically and mentally," said Rosalia Bollen, UNICEF's communication specialist.

For the past month, Israel has blocked all food, fuel and supplies from entering Gaza, and aid groups say there are no more tents or other shelter supplies to help the newly displaced. On Tuesday, the World Food Program shut down all its bakeries in Gaza, on which hundreds of thousands rely for bread, because it had run out of flour.

Many are fleeing with almost no belongings

Israel's evacuation orders now cover large swaths of the Gaza Strip, including many areas of Gaza City and towns in the north, parts of the southern city of Khan Younis, and almost the entire southern city of Rafah and its surroundings.

As of March 23, more than 140,000 people had been displaced again since the end of the ceasefire, according to the latest U.N. estimate — and tens of thousands more are estimated to have fled under evacuation orders over the past week.

Every time families have moved during the war, they have had to leave behind belongings and start nearly from scratch, finding food, water and shelter. Now, with no fuel entering, transportation is even more difficult, so many are fleeing with almost nothing.

"With each displacement, we're tortured a thousand times," Suliman said. He and his family found an apartment to rent in the central town of Deir al-Balah. He said they're struggling, with no electricity and little aid. They must walk long distances to find water.

Fleeing from Rafah on Monday, Hanadi Dahoud said she is struggling to find essentials.

"Where do we go?" she said. "We just want to live. We are tired. There are long queues waiting for bread and charity kitchens."

During the two-month ceasefire that began in mid-January, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians flowed back to their neighborhoods. Even if their homes were destroyed, they wanted to be near them — sometimes setting up tents on or next to the rubble.

They had hoped it would be the end of their displacement in a war that has driven nearly the entire population of some 2.3 million from their homes.

The war in Gaza began with Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack on southern Israel. Since then, Israel's retaliation

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tory offensive has left hundreds of thousands of Palestinians in squalid, crowded tent camps or schools-turned-shelters. Most have had to move multiple times to escape fighting and bombardment.

Shelter is limited

Some shelters are so crowded they have had to turn families away, said Shaina Low, communications adviser at the Norwegian Refugee Council.

Many families are streaming back to Muwasi, a barren coastal stretch of southern Gaza where, before the ceasefire, hundreds of thousands had been packed into tent cities. During the ceasefire, the camps thinned out as people returned to their neighborhoods. Those returning are finding that tents are scarce; aid groups say they have none to give out because of Israel's blockade.

More than a million people urgently need tents, while thousands of others require plastic sheets and ropes to strengthen fragile makeshift shelters, Gavin Kelleher, NRC's humanitarian access manager in Gaza, said at a recent media briefing.

For now, people are cramming into tents or moving into destroyed buildings that are in danger of collapse — trying "to put absolutely anything between themselves and the sky at night," Kelleher said.

Relocating and reinstalling health and nutrition facilities amid declining aid supplies has been "absolutely draining" for families and humanitarian workers, UNICEF's Bollen said.

"Our job would be much easier if we had access to our supplies and if we didn't have to fear for our own lives at every moment," she said.

Khaled Abu Tair led a donkey cart with some bread and blankets as he and his family fled Khan Younis. He said they were heading "God knows where," and would have to set up on the street a makeshift shelter out of sheets.

"We do not have a place, there are no tents, no places to live or shelter, or anything," he said.

Some can't bear to move

When orders came to evacuate Gaza City's Tel Hawa district, Sara Hegy and her mother decided to stay. Their original home in the nearby district of Zaytoun is too destroyed to be livable, and Hegy said she was in despair at the thought of starting over again.

"I had a breakdown the day the war resumed. I didn't leave the house," said Hegy, who had started an online tutoring job a few days before Israel relaunched its assault.

Others dread the evacuation orders that might come.

Noor Abu Mariam said she and her brother and parents have already been displaced 11 times over the course of the war, moving through tent camps and houses around the south, each time starting over in the search for shelter, food and supplies.

Now back in Gaza City, she can't do it again, she said.

"I refuse to leave the house no matter the circumstances because I am not psychologically prepared to relive those difficult days I lived in the south," she said.

Survivors still being found from Myanmar earthquake, but hopes begin to fade as deaths exceed 2,700

By DAVID RISING Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — Rescue workers saved a 63-year-old woman from the rubble of a building in Myanmar's capital on Tuesday, but hope was fading of finding many more survivors of the violent earthquake that killed more than 2,700 people, compounding a humanitarian crisis caused by a civil war.

The fire department in Naypyitaw said the woman was successfully pulled from the rubble 91 hours after being buried when the building collapsed in the 7.7 magnitude earthquake that hit midday Friday. Experts say the likelihood of finding survivors drops dramatically after 72 hours.

Death toll numbers forecast to increase

The head of Myanmar's military government, Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, told a forum for relief donations in Naypyitaw that 2,719 people have now been found dead, with 4,521 others injured and 441 missing, Myanmar's state MRTV television reported.

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He said Friday's earthquake was the second most powerful in the country's recorded history after a magnitude 8 quake east of Mandalay in May 1912.

The casualty figures are widely expected to rise. The earthquake hit a wide swath of the country, leaving many areas without power, telephone or cell connections and damaging roads and bridges, making the full extent of the devastation hard to assess.

Most of the reports so far have come from Mandalay, Myanmar's second-largest city, which was near the epicenter of the earthquake, and Naypyitaw, the capital.

"The needs are massive, and they are rising by the hour," said Julia Rees, UNICEF's deputy representative for Myanmar.

Myanmar's fire department said 403 people have been rescued in Mandalay and 259 bodies have been found so far. In one incident, 50 Buddhist monks who were taking a religious exam in a monastery were killed when the building collapsed, and 150 more are thought to be buried in the rubble.

Structural damage is extensive

The World Health Organization said more than 10,000 buildings overall are known to have collapsed or been severely damaged by the quake.

The earthquake also rocked neighboring Thailand, causing a high-rise building under construction to collapse and burying many workers.

Two bodies were pulled from the rubble Monday and another was recovered Tuesday, but dozens were still missing. Overall, there were 22 people killed and 34 injured in Bangkok, primarily at the construction site.

In Myanmar, search and rescue efforts across the affected area paused briefly at midday Tuesday as people stood for a minute in silent tribute to the dead.

Relief efforts moving at a sluggish pace

Foreign aid workers have been arriving slowly to help in the rescue efforts, but progress lagged due to a lack of heavy machinery in many places.

In one site in Naypyitaw on Tuesday, workers formed a human chain, passing chunks of brick and concrete out hand-by-hand from the ruins of a collapsed building.

The state Global New Light of Myanmar newspaper reported Tuesday that a team of Chinese rescuers saved four people the day before from the ruins of an apartment complex. They included a 5-year-old and a pregnant woman who had been trapped for more than 60 hours.

It also reported that two teenagers were able to crawl out of the rubble of the same building using their cellphone flashlights to help guide them. Rescue workers were then able to use details from what they told them to locate their grandmother and sibling.

International rescue teams from several countries are on the scene, including from Russia, China, India, the United Arab Emirates and several Southeast Asian countries.

A small U.S. Agency for International Development disaster assessment team arrived Tuesday to determine how best to respond given limited U.S. resources due to the slashing of the foreign aid budget and dismantling of the agency as an independent operation.

A U.S. official said the three-person team had waited for visas before making the trip from neighboring Thailand following a weekend decision to provide \$2 million in emergency assistance to Myanmar. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because the team's arrival has not yet been publicly announced.

Aid pledges pouring in as officials warn of disease risk

Meantime, multiple countries have pledged millions in assistance to help Myanmar and humanitarian aid organizations with the monumental task ahead.

Even before the earthquake, more than 3 million people had been displaced from their homes by Myanmar's brutal civil war, and nearly 20 million were in need, according to the U.N.

Many were already lacking in basic medical care and standard vaccinations, and the destruction of water and sanitation infrastructure by the earthquake and the movement of people into overcrowded shelters raises the risk of disease outbreaks, warned the U.N.'s Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

"Vulnerability to respiratory infections, skin diseases, vector-borne illnesses such as dengue fever, and

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vaccine-preventable diseases like measles is escalating,” OCHA said in its latest report.

The onset of monsoon season also a worry

Shelter is also a major problem, especially with the monsoon season looming.

Since the earthquake, many people have been sleeping outside, either because homes were destroyed or out of fear of aftershocks.

Civil war complicates disaster relief

Myanmar’s military seized power in 2021 from the democratically elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi, sparking what has turned into significant armed resistance and a brutal civil war.

Government forces have lost control of much of Myanmar, and many places were dangerous or impossible for aid groups to reach even before the quake.

Military attacks and those from some anti-military groups have not stopped in the aftermath of the earthquake, though the shadow opposition National Unity Government has called a unilateral ceasefire for its forces.

The NUG, established by elected lawmakers who were ousted in 2021, called for the international community to ensure humanitarian aid is delivered directly to the earthquake victims, urging “vigilance against any attempts by the military junta to divert or obstruct humanitarian assistance,” saying that could have “devastating consequences.”

The ceasefire plan for the armed wing of the NUG, called the People’s Defense Force, would have little effect on the battlefield, but could draw more international condemnation of continuing operations by the military, including air attacks reported by independent media.

A second armed opposition group, a coalition of three powerful ethnic minority guerrilla armies called the Three Brotherhood Alliance, announced Tuesday that it would also implement a monthlong unilateral ceasefire.

Before the announcement, Min Aung Hlaing earlier seemed to reject implementing a ceasefire, saying in his speech on Tuesday that the military will continue to take necessary defensive measures against some ethnic armed groups that were currently not carrying out combat operations, but were conducting military training, which he said amounted to hostile action.

It wasn’t immediately clear whether the military has been impeding humanitarian aid. In the past, it initially refused to allow in foreign rescue teams or many emergency supplies after Cyclone Nargis in 2008, which resulted in well more than 100,000 deaths. Even once it did allow foreign assistance, it was with severe restrictions.

In this case, however, Min Aung Hlaing pointedly said on the day of the earthquake that the country would accept outside help.

Tom Andrews, a monitor on rights in Myanmar commissioned by the U.N.-backed Human Rights Council, said on X that to facilitate aid, military attacks must stop.

“The focus in Myanmar must be on saving lives, not taking them,” he said.

A wary Europe awaits Rubio with NATO’s future on the line

By MATTHEW LEE and LORNE COOK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio travels this week to a gathering of top diplomats from NATO countries and is sure to find allies that are alarmed, angered and confused by the Trump administration’s desire to reestablish ties with Russia and its escalating rhetorical attacks on longtime transatlantic partners.

Allies are deeply concerned by President Donald Trump’s readiness to draw closer to Russian leader Vladimir Putin, who sees NATO as a threat, amid a U.S. effort to broker a ceasefire in Ukraine. Recent White House comments and insults directed at NATO allies Canada and Denmark — as well as the military alliance itself — have only increased the angst, especially as new U.S. tariffs are taking effect against friends and foes alike.

Rubio arrives in Brussels on Thursday for two days of meetings with his NATO counterparts and European

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officials, and he can expect to be confronted with questions about the future U.S. role in the alliance.

For 75 years, NATO has been anchored on American leadership, and based on what they have seen and heard since Trump took office in January, European officials have expressed deep concerns that Trump may upend all of that when he and other NATO leaders meet for a June summit in the Netherlands.

Can Rubio reassure allies?

As Rubio did last month at a meeting of foreign ministers from the Group of 7 industrialized democracies, America's top diplomat, who is regarded by many overseas as a more pragmatic and less dogmatic member of Trump's administration, may be able to salvage a watered-down group consensus on the war in Ukraine.

That's even as Trump said this week that Ukraine "was never going to be a member of NATO" despite leaders declaring at last year's summit that the country was on an "irreversible" path to join.

But Rubio will be hard-pressed to explain Washington's unprovoked verbal attacks on NATO allies Canada, which Trump says he wants to claim as a 51st state, and Denmark, whose territory of Greenland he says the U.S. should annex. Both have been accused of being "bad allies" by Trump and Vice President JD Vance.

"It's pretty clear neither territory has any interest in joining a Trumpian America," said Ian Kelly, U.S. ambassador to Georgia during the Obama and first Trump administration and now an international studies professor at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois.

"There's going to be a lot of very anxious Euros about what Trump is going to call for and what announcements he's going to make," he said. "If he isn't already, Rubio is going to be in a mode of trying to reassure European allies that we are not, in fact, not dependable."

Yet, in just under two months, NATO has been shaken to its core, challenged increasingly by Russia and the biggest land war in Europe since 1945 from the outside, and by the Trump administration from within, breaking with decades of relatively predictable U.S. leadership.

Trump has consistently complained about NATO members' defense spending and even raised doubts about the U.S. commitment to mutual defense in the alliance's founding treaty, which says an attack on one NATO member is considered an attack on all.

Europeans taking on more security guarantees

Since Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth warned last month that U.S. security priorities lie elsewhere — in Asia and on its own borders — the Europeans have waited to learn how big a military drawdown in Europe could be and how fast it may happen.

In Europe and Canada, governments are working on "burden shifting" plans to take over more of the load, while trying to ensure that no security vacuum is created if U.S. troops and equipment are withdrawn from the continent.

These allies are keen to hear from Rubio what the Trump administration's intentions are and hope to secure some kind of roadmap that lays out what will happen next and when, so they can synchronize planning and use European forces to plug any gaps.

At the same time, NATO's deterrent effect against an adversary like Russia is only credible when backed by U.S. firepower. For the Europeans and Canada, this means that U.S. nuclear weapons and the 6th Fleet must remain stationed in Europe.

"America is indispensable for credible deterrence," a senior NATO diplomat told reporters on condition of anonymity to speak ahead of the meeting.

Around 100,000 U.S. troops are deployed across the continent. European allies believe at least 20,000 personnel sent by the Biden administration after Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine three years ago could be withdrawn.

Another priority for U.S. allies is to understand whether Trump believes that Russia still poses the greatest security threat. In their summit statement last year, NATO leaders insisted that "Russia remains the most significant and direct threat to Allies' security."

But Trump's receptiveness to Putin and recent favorable remarks by some U.S. officials have raised doubts. The question, diplomats say, is why allies should spend 5% of their gross domestic product on

their defense budgets if Russia is no longer a threat.

At the same time, the Europeans and Canada know they must spend more — not least to protect themselves and keep arming Ukraine. At their next summit in June, NATO leaders are expected to raise the alliance's military budget goal from at least 2% to more than 3%.

Rubio "is in a very difficult position," said Jeff Rathke, president of the American-German Institute at Johns Hopkins University. Trump "has tried to convince allies that a U.S. realignment with Russia is in the best interests of the U.S. and presumably Europe, and at the same time tell them that they need to double their defense spending to deal with threats posed by Russia," he said. "The logical question they will ask is 'why?'"

Trump is set to announce 'reciprocal' tariffs in a risky move that could reshape the economy

By JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — After weeks of White House hype and public anxiety, President Donald Trump is set Wednesday to announce a barrage of self-described "reciprocal" tariffs on friend and foe alike.

The new tariffs — coming on what Trump has called "Liberation Day" — is a bid to boost U.S. manufacturing and punish other countries for what he has said are years of unfair trade practices. But by most economists' assessments, the risky move threatens to plunge the economy into a downturn and mangle decades-old alliances.

The White House is exuding confidence despite the political and financial gamble being undertaken.

"April 2, 2025, will go down as one of the most important days in modern American history," White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said at Tuesday's briefing while adding that the new tariffs will take effect immediately.

The reciprocal tariffs Trump plans to announce follow similar recent announcements of 25% taxes on auto imports; levies against China, Canada and Mexico; and expanded tariffs on steel and aluminum. Trump has also put tariffs against countries that import oil from Venezuela and plans separate import taxes on pharmaceutical drugs, lumber, copper and computer chips.

None of the warning signs about a falling stock market or consumer sentiment turning morose have caused the administration to publicly second-guess its strategy.

White House trade adviser Peter Navarro has suggested that the new tariffs would raise \$600 billion annually, which would be the largest tax increase since World War II. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent told lawmakers that the tariffs would be capped and could be negotiated downward by other countries, according to the office of Rep. Kevin Hern, R-Okla. But the White House has yet to confirm policy details, despite Trump saying on Monday that he had made his decision.

Importers would likely pass along some of the cost of the taxes on to consumers. The Budget Lab at Yale University estimates that a 20% universal tariff would cost the average household an additional \$3,400 to \$4,200.

The administration's premise is that manufacturers will quickly increase domestic production and create new factory jobs — and the White House is expressing confidence that Trump's approach is absolutely correct.

"They're not going to be wrong," Leavitt said. "It is going to work. And the president has a brilliant team of advisers who have been studying these issues for decades. And we are focused on restoring the golden age of America and making America a manufacturing superpower."

The bold optimism has done little to reassure the public or allies who see the import taxes as a threat.

Based on the possibility of broad 20% tariffs that have been floated by some White House aides, most analyses see an economy tarnished by higher prices and stagnation. U.S. economic growth — as measured by gross domestic product — would be roughly a percentage point lower, and clothing, oil, automobiles, housing, groceries and even insurance would cost more, the Budget Lab analysis found.

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Trump would single-handedly be applying these tariffs, since he has ways of legally doing so without congressional approval. That makes it easy for Democratic lawmakers and policymakers to criticize the Republican administration, if the uncertainty expressed by businesses and declining consumer sentiment are, in fact, signs of trouble to come.

Heather Boushey, who served as a member of the Biden White House's Council of Economic Advisers, noted that the less aggressive tariffs Trump imposed during his first term failed to stir the manufacturing renaissance he promised voters.

"We are not seeing indications of the boom that the president promised," Boushey said. "It's a failed strategy."

Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer of New York said the tariffs were fundamentally a way for Trump to raise revenues in order to pay for his planned extensions of income tax cuts that disproportionately favor millionaires and billionaires.

"Almost everything they do, including tariffs, it seems to me, is aimed at getting those tax cuts for the wealthy," Schumer said Tuesday on the Senate floor.

Even Republicans who trust Trump's instincts have acknowledged that the tariffs could be disruptive to an economy with an otherwise healthy 4.1 % unemployment rate.

"We'll see how it all develops," said House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La. "It may be rocky in the beginning. But I think that this will make sense for Americans and help all Americans."

Longtime trading partners are preparing their own countermeasures. Canada has already imposed some in response to the 25% tariffs that Trump tied to the trafficking of fentanyl. The European Union, in response to the steel and aluminum tariffs, put taxes on 26 billion euros' worth (\$28 billion) of U.S. goods, including on bourbon, which prompted Trump to threaten a 200% tariff on European alcohol.

Many allies feel they have been reluctantly drawn into a confrontation by Trump, who routinely says that friends and foes have essentially ripped off the United States with a mix of tariffs and other trade barriers.

The flip side, of course, is that Americans also have the incomes to choose to buy designer gowns by French fashion houses and autos from German manufacturers, whereas World Bank data show the EU has lower incomes per capita than the United States.

"Europe has not started this confrontation," said European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. "We do not necessarily want to retaliate but, if it is necessary, we have a strong plan to retaliate and we will use it."

Because Trump has hyped his tariffs without providing specifics, he has provided a deeper sense of uncertainty for the world, a sign that the economic slowdown could possibly extend beyond U.S. borders to other nations that would see one person to blame.

Ray Sparnaay, general manager of JE Fixture & Tool, a Canadian tool and die business that sits across the Detroit River, said the uncertainty has crushed his company's ability to make plans.

"There's going to be tariffs implemented. We just don't know at this point," he said Monday. "That's one of the biggest problems we've had probably the last — well, since November — is the uncertainty. It's basically slowed all of our quoting processes, business that we hope to secure has been stalled."

Nintendo Direct to unveil Switch 2 details as release date, price have yet to be announced

By RYAN KRYSKA Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Nintendo is set to provide a closer look at its highly anticipated Switch 2 gaming console on Wednesday.

The 60-minute Nintendo Direct presentation will be live-streamed at 9 a.m. EDT. A release date and price have yet to be announced, but Nintendo said earlier this year the console will hit the market in 2025.

The Switch 2 is Nintendo's latest hybrid console that can be played in hand with all of the nostalgia of a Game Boy, or connected to a screen and controller for a traditional home console experience.

A January tease of the Switch successor showcased a smooth, nearly all-black handheld console, shaped

similarly but lacking the vibrant colors of its predecessor. It appears as if the Joy-Con handles might click, or even magnetize, to the screen instead of sliding into place.

Two USB-C ports (a convenient upgrade for gamers), a docking system and a built-in kickstand were part of the features shown in January. The teaser also showed there might be some sort of Joy-Con mouse control feature.

The new console will be backwards compatible — able to play physical and digital Switch games — although some may not be supported or fully compatible with the Switch 2, Nintendo said. The company's previous Nintendo Direct on March 27 announced games would continue to be made well into 2025 for the first-generation console, which debuted in 2017.

Nintendo plans to host "Switch 2 Experience" events in several countries, where gamers can get a hands-on experience with the new system. Those events are planned for cities such as Los Angeles, New York, London and Paris beginning this month.

Democratic-backed Wisconsin state schools chief Jill Underly wins reelection over GOP-backed rival

By SCOTT BAUER and TODD RICHMOND Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — Wisconsin voted Tuesday for Jill Underly to remain as the state's top education official during President Donald Trump's second term, choosing the Democratic-backed incumbent over a Republican-supported critic.

Wisconsin voters also decided to enshrine the state's voter ID law in the state constitution.

Both contests had sharp partisan divisions, though they have drawn far less spending and national attention than the race for control of the Wisconsin Supreme Court.

Here's a look at the two races:

Union-backed incumbent defeats GOP-backed voucher advocate

Underly, the Democratic-backed state education chief, defeated her Republican-aligned opponent, Britany Kinser. Unofficial results showed Underly with almost 53% of the vote with 85% of votes counted statewide.

"Tonight, we celebrate a victory not just for our campaign, but for every educator, family and most importantly - kids - across our great state," Underly said in a statement.

Underly will guide policies affecting K-12 schools as Trump moves to eliminate the U.S. Department of Education. Her second term comes at a time when test scores are still recovering from the pandemic, Wisconsin's achievement gap between white and Black students remains the worst in the country and more schools are asking voters to raise property taxes to pay for operations.

Wisconsin is the only state where voters elect the top education official but there is no state board of education. That gives the superintendent broad authority to oversee education policy, from dispersing school funding to managing teacher licensing.

Underly, 47, had the support of the teachers union in the general election after failing to secure it in the three-person primary. She also was backed financially by the state Democratic Party.

Underly, who was first elected as state superintendent in 2021, ran as a champion of public schools. Kinser supports the private school voucher program.

Underly's education career began in 1999 as a high school social studies teacher in Indiana. She moved to Wisconsin in 2005 and worked for five years at the state education department. She also was principal of Pecatonica Elementary School for a year before becoming district administrator.

Kinser, whose backers included the Wisconsin Republican Party and former Republican Govs. Tommy Thompson and Scott Walker, previously worked for Rocketship schools, part of a national network of public charter institutions. She rose to become its executive director in the Milwaukee region.

In 2022 she left Rocketship for City Forward Collective, a Milwaukee nonprofit that advocates for charter and voucher schools. She also founded a consulting firm where she currently works.

Kinser tried to brand Underly as being a poor manager of the Department of Public Instruction and keyed

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in on her overhaul of state achievement standards last year.

Underly said that was done to better reflect what students are learning now, but the change was met with bipartisan opposition including from Democratic Gov. Tony Evers, who was previously state superintendent himself. Evers did not make an endorsement in the race.

Kinser said in a statement late Tuesday that she hopes her candidacy inspired conversations about restoring high standards and making sure children can read, write and do math.

"Our kids' future shouldn't rest on the politicization of our education system, but on the belief that our kids deserve so much better than they currently receive," she said.

Longtime voter ID law enshrined in the state constitution

Wisconsin voters overwhelmingly elevated the state's photo ID requirement from state law to constitutional amendment under a proposal approved by voters.

Unofficial results showed the amendment passing with almost 63% of the vote with almost 90% of ballots counted.

The Republican-controlled Legislature placed the measure on the ballot and pitched it as a way to bolster election security and protect the law from being overturned in court.

President Donald Trump trumpeted the measure's approval on his social media platform, Truth Social, calling it "maybe the biggest win of the night."

"It should allow us to win Wisconsin, like I just did in the presidential election, for many years to come!" he said.

Trump narrowly lost Wisconsin to Joe Biden in 2020 but defeated Kamala Harris last November election to claim its 10 electoral votes.

Elon Musk, the world's richest man, who is leading Trump's efforts to shrink the federal government, also noted the outcome on his social media platform, X, saying: "Yeah!"

Democratic opponents argued that photo ID requirements are often enforced unfairly, making voting more difficult for people of color, disabled people and poor people.

All Voting is Local, a nonpartisan voting rights organization, warned that placing the photo ID mandate in the constitution will make it harder to vote.

"We should not be purposefully leaving eligible voters behind by setting up additional barriers to the ballot, but unfortunately, those in the Badger State have one more step to take before voting," Sam Liebert, the organization's state director, said in a statement.

Wisconsin voters won't notice any changes when they go to the polls. They will still have to present a valid photo ID just as they have under the state law, which was passed in 2011 and went into effect permanently in 2016 after a series of unsuccessful lawsuits.

Placing the photo ID requirement in the constitution makes it more difficult for a future Legislature controlled by Democrats to change the law. Any constitutional amendment must be approved in two consecutive legislative sessions and by a statewide popular vote.

Wisconsin is one of nine states where people must present photo ID to vote, and its requirement is the nation's strictest, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. Thirty-six states have laws requiring or requesting that voters show some sort of identification, according to the NCSL.

With a nod to America's civil rights legacy, Sen. Cory Booker makes a mark of his own

By MATT BROWN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democratic Sen. Cory Booker ended his record-setting speech the same way he began it, more than 25 hours earlier: by invoking the words of his mentor, the late congressman and civil rights icon John Lewis.

"He endured beatings savagely on the Edmund Pettus Bridge, at lunch counters, on freedom rides. He said he had to do something. He would not normalize a moment like this," Booker said of Lewis' work as a young activist during the Civil Rights movement. "He would not just go along with business as usual."

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"He said for us to go out and cause some good trouble, necessary trouble, to redeem the soul of our nation," Booker said.

A break from "business as usual" was what Booker had in mind as he performed a feat of political endurance, holding the Senate floor for 25 hours and 5 minutes while delivering a wide-ranging critique of President Donald Trump and his policies.

In doing so, Booker of New Jersey broke the record for longest Senate floor speech, a mark that had belonged for decades to Strom Thurmond, the avowed segregationist from South Carolina who filibustered the Civil Rights Act of 1957. Booker said he'd been aware of Thurmond's record since first coming to the Senate in 2013 — a room near the Senate chamber is still named for him — and it bothered him.

"It seemed wrong to me," Booker said. "It always seemed wrong."

Booker, a Black progressive, spoke about his roots as a descendant of both slaves and slave-owners as he invoked the Civil Rights movement, implicitly linking Lewis' steadfast resistance to Jim Crow to the modern-day opponents of Trump's reshaping of government and society.

Throughout his speech he read letters from Americans about the impact that Trump's agenda is having on their lives, drawing historical parallels and warning that the country faces a "looming constitutional crisis."

"This is a moral moment," Booker said. "It's not left or right; it's right or wrong."

As Booker held the floor, dozens of members of the Congressional Black Caucus flanked the back of the Senate chamber in support, including House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries and Rep. Maxine Waters. Other CBC members kept close to the floor, including Sens. Angela Alsobrooks, Lisa Blunt Rochester and Raphael Warnock.

Before Booker surpassed Thurmond's 68-year-old record, Jeffries said Booker's speech was "an incredibly powerful moment ... because he is fighting to preserve the American way of life and our democracy. And the record was held by Strom Thurmond who was actually defending Jim Crow segregation."

Rep. Hank Johnson, D-Ga., a close friend of Lewis who represented the neighboring district in metropolitan Atlanta, said Booker's speech was "an act of resistance."

"The American people want to see us as their representatives do everything we can to resist the encroachment on our liberties and the taking away of benefits," Johnson said.

Booker's speech captured attention at a time when Democrats have grown frustrated and despondent at their inability to stop Trump's plans. Locked out of power in Congress and the executive branch, Democrats have struggled with how to take on Trump and the slashing of government being carried out by Elon Musk and his Department of Government Efficiency.

Grassroots liberal organizers have been urging major Democratic figures to take a more combative approach. Some hoped that Booker's speech would offer the party lessons going forward.

Booker "is reminding all of America and his own party, not simply to stand for what we're against, but to stand up for what we believe in," said Brittany Packnett Cunningham, an activist who helped lead the 2014 protests against police brutality in Ferguson, Mo.

"I think he recognized that people are looking for our leaders to have the moral clarity to declare that what's happening is wrong, and to determine, to do something about it," she said.

As Booker's marathon speech drew to a close, he recalled the last conversation he ever had with Lewis, who was known for his acts of civil disobedience in Congress throughout his career until his passing in 2020.

Booker recalled telling Lewis, "we'll do everything possible to make you proud." And he said he had no doubt what Lewis' message would be if he were alive today.

"John Lewis would say, do something," Booker said.

"He wouldn't treat this moral moment like it was normal."

Cory Booker sets a record with marathon Senate speech.

Will it rally anti-Trump resistance?

By MIKE CATALINI and STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In a feat of determination, New Jersey Democratic Sen. Cory Booker held the Senate floor with a marathon speech that lasted all night and into Tuesday night, setting a historic mark to show Democrats' resistance to President Donald Trump's sweeping actions.

Booker took to the Senate floor on Monday evening, saying he would remain there as long as he was "physically able." It wasn't until 25 hours and 5 minutes later that the 55-year-old senator, a former football tight end, finished speaking and limped off the floor. It set the record for the longest continuous Senate floor speech in the chamber's history. Booker was assisted by fellow Democrats who gave him a break from speaking by asking him questions on the Senate floor.

It was a remarkable show of stamina as Democrats try to show their frustrated supporters that they are doing everything possible to contest Trump's agenda. Yet Booker also provided a moment of historical solace for a party searching for its way forward: By standing on the Senate floor for more than a night and day and refusing to leave, he had broken a record set 68 years ago by then Sen. Strom Thurmond of South Carolina, a segregationist and southern Democrat, to filibuster the advance of the Civil Rights Act in 1957.

"I'm here despite his speech," said Booker, who spoke openly on the Senate floor of his roots as the descendant of both slaves and slave-owners. He added, "I'm here because as powerful as he was, the people are more powerful."

House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries, the first Black party leader in Congress, slipped into the Senate chamber to watch Booker on Tuesday afternoon. He called it "an incredibly powerful moment" because Booker had broken the record of a segregationist and was "fighting to preserve the American way of life and our democracy."

Still, Booker centered his speech on a call for his party to find its resolve, saying, "We all must look in the mirror and say, 'We will do better.'"

"These are not normal times in our nation," Booker said as he began the speech Monday evening. "And they should not be treated as such in the United States Senate. The threats to the American people and American democracy are grave and urgent, and we all must do more to stand against them."

Booker warns of a 'looming constitutional crisis'

Shifting his feet, then leaning on his podium, Booker railed for hours against cuts to Social Security offices led by Trump adviser Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency. He listed the impacts of Trump's early orders and spoke to concerns that broader cuts to the social safety net could be coming, though Republican lawmakers say the program won't be touched.

Booker also read what he said were letters from constituents. One writer was alarmed by the Republican president's talk of annexing Greenland and Canada and a "looming constitutional crisis."

Throughout the day Tuesday, Booker got help from Democratic colleagues, who gave him a break from speaking to ask him questions. Booker yielded for questions but made sure to say he would not give up the floor. He read that line from a piece of paper to ensure he did not slip and inadvertently end his speech. He stayed standing to comply with Senate rules.

"Your strength, your fortitude, your clarity has just been nothing short of amazing and all of America is paying attention to what you're saying," Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer said as he asked Booker a question on the Senate floor. "All of America needs to know there's so many problems, the disastrous actions of this administration."

As Booker stood for hour after hour, he appeared to have nothing more than a couple glasses of water to sustain him. He later told reporters that he had fasted for days before the speech and stopped drinking fluids the night before.

He suffered through cramps as the day wore on, he said. Yet his voice grew strong with emotion as his speech stretched into the evening, and House members from the Congressional Black Caucus stood on the edge of the Senate floor in support.

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"Moments like this require us to be more creative or more imaginative, or just more persistent and dogged and determined," Booker said.

Booker's cousin and brother, as well as Democratic aides, watched from the chamber's gallery. Sen. Chris Murphy accompanied Booker on the Senate floor throughout the day and night. Murphy was returning the comradeship that Booker had given to him in 2016 when the Connecticut Democrat held the floor for almost 15 hours to argue for gun control legislation.

His Senate floor speech breaks Thurmond's record

Still hours away from breaking Thurmond's record, Booker remarked Tuesday afternoon, "I don't have that much gas in the tank."

Yet as anticipation in the Capitol grew that he would supplant Thurmond, who died in 2003, as the record holder for the longest Senate floor speech, Democratic senators filled the chamber to listen and the Senate gallery filled with onlookers. The chamber exploded in applause as Schumer announced that Booker had broken the record.

Booker told reporters afterward that he had thought of Thurmond's speech ever since he arrived in the Senate, calling it a "strange shadow to hang over this institution."

Throughout his determined performance, Booker repeatedly invoked the civil rights leader Rep. John Lewis of Georgia on Tuesday, arguing that overcoming opponents like Thurmond would require more than just talking.

"You think we got civil rights one day because Strom Thurmond — after filibustering for 24 hours — you think we got civil rights because he came to the floor one day and said, 'I've seen the light,'" Booker said. "No, we got civil rights because people marched for it, sweat for it and John Lewis bled for it."

Booker's speech was not a filibuster, which is a speech meant to halt the advance of a specific piece of legislation. Instead, Booker's performance was a broader critique of Trump's agenda, meant to hold up the Senate's business and draw attention to what Democrats are doing to contest the president. Without a majority in either congressional chamber, Democrats have been almost completely locked out of legislative power but are turning to procedural maneuvers to try to thwart Republicans.

Can his speech rally the anti-Trump resistance?

Booker, serving his second Senate term, was an unsuccessful presidential candidate in 2020, when he launched his campaign from the steps of his home in Newark. He dropped out after struggling to gain a foothold in a packed field, falling short of the threshold to meet in a January 2020 debate.

But as Democrats search for a next generation of leadership, frustrated with the old-timers at the top, Booker's speech could cement his status as a leading figure in the party.

On Tuesday afternoon, tens of thousands of people were watching on Booker's Senate YouTube page, as well as on other live streams. A small group gathered outside the Capitol to cheer him on.

Booker said he was ultimately calling on all Americans to respond not just with resistance to Trump's actions but with kindness and generosity for those in their communities.

He said, "I may be afraid — my voice may shake — but I'm going to speak up more."

Naval Academy removes nearly 400 books from library in new DEI purge ordered by Hegseth's office

By LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. Naval Academy has removed nearly 400 books from its library after being told by Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth's office to review and get rid of ones that promote diversity, equity and inclusion, U.S. officials said Tuesday.

Academy officials were told to review the library late last week, and an initial search had identified about 900 books for a closer look. They decided on nearly 400 to remove and began doing so Monday, finishing before Hegseth arrived for a visit Tuesday that had already been planned and was not connected to the library purge, officials said. A list of the books has not yet been made available.

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Pulling the books off the shelves is another step in the Trump administration's far-reaching effort to eliminate so-called DEI content from federal agencies, including policies, programs, online and social media postings and curriculum at schools.

Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell said late Tuesday, "All service academies are fully committed to executing and implementing President Trump's Executive Orders."

The Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, the Air Force Academy near Colorado Springs, Colorado, and the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, New York, had not been included in President Donald Trump's executive order in January that banned DEI instruction, programs or curriculum in kindergarten through 12th grade schools that receive federal funding. That is because the academies are colleges.

Pentagon leaders, however, suddenly turned their attention to the Naval Academy last week when a media report noted that the school had not removed books that promoted DEI. A U.S. official said the academy was told late last week to conduct the review and removal. It isn't clear if the order was directed by Hegseth or someone else on his staff.

A West Point official confirmed that the school had completed a review of its curriculum and was prepared to review library content if directed by the Army. The Air Force and Naval academies had also done curriculum reviews as had been required.

An Air Force Academy official said the school continually reviews its curriculum, coursework and other materials to ensure it all complies with executive orders and Defense Department policies. Last week, Lt. Gen. Tony Bauernfeind, the Air Force Academy superintendent, told Congress that the school was in the middle of its course review, but there was no mention of books.

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss academy policies.

Hegseth has aggressively pushed the department to erase DEI programs and online content, but the campaign has been met with questions from angry lawmakers, local leaders and citizens over the removal of military heroes and historic mentions from Defense Department websites and social media pages.

In response, the department has scrambled to restore some of those posts as their removals have come to light.

The confusion about how to interpret the DEI policy was underscored Monday as Naval Academy personnel mistakenly removed some photos of distinguished female Jewish graduates from a display case as they prepared for Hegseth's visit. The photos were put back.

In a statement, the Navy said it is aware that photos were mistakenly removed from the Naval Academy Jewish Center. It said U.S. Naval Academy leadership was immediately taking steps to review and correct the unauthorized removal.

Hegseth spoke with students and had lunch at the academy Tuesday, but media were not invited or allowed to cover the visit.

Republicans win Florida special elections in Trump strongholds by narrower margins than in 2024

By STEPHANY MATAT, KATE PAYNE and ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON Associated Press

ORMOND BEACH, Fla. (AP) — Republicans Jimmy Patronis and Randy Fine won special elections Tuesday in two Florida congressional districts, bolstered by President Donald Trump's endorsement to fill vacant seats in reliably Republican strongholds.

Patronis, the state's chief financial officer, fended off a challenge from Democrat Gay Valimont even though she far outraised and outspent him. He will fill the northwest Florida 1st District seat vacated by former Rep. Matt Gaetz, who was chosen to be Trump's attorney general but withdrew from consideration amid allegations of sexual misconduct, which he has denied.

In north Florida's 6th District, Fine won against Democratic challenger Josh Weil for a seat vacated by Mike Waltz when he was tapped to become Trump's national security adviser.

The win bolsters Republicans' margin to 220-213 in the House of Representatives.

Special elections are often low-turnout events that can lead to surprising results. While GOP wins were

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widely expected in both districts — two of the most heavily Republican in the country — it's notable that Democrats narrowed the margins considerably from November.

The races were among the first electoral tests of Trump's new administration. The narrowing margins may signal a shift in public sentiment, driven by unusually strong enthusiasm as Democrats from across the country poured millions into the races. The opposition party hoped that backlash to the president's overhaul of federal agencies and firing of federal workers would carve into the GOP's margins at the polls.

Trump takes credit for the wins

Trump congratulated both candidates late Tuesday and said his endorsement helped them secure a victory. "THE TRUMP ENDORSEMENT, AS ALWAYS, PROVED FAR GREATER THAN THE DEMOCRATS FORCES OF EVIL. CONGRATULATIONS TO AMERICA!" he said on his Truth Social platform.

At a waterfront restaurant in Pensacola, congratulatory text messages were already lighting up Patronis' phone as early results were posted Tuesday night. Patronis worked the crowd of about 100 people, shaking hands and giving hugs, his wife Katie and two sons in tow.

"Let it be known that this election is a reminder the Florida Panhandle will forever be red, and it'll forever be Trump country," Patronis told his supporters. "And even their \$6 million could not overcome one simple post on social media by Donald Trump."

Fine spoke to about 100 supporters at the 2A Ranch Saloon in Ormond Beach, a barn-like building adorned with Trump decor, including cardboard cutouts of the president and a photo signed by first lady Melania Trump. Above Fine, a glowing "Trump is still my president" sign hung from the overhead balcony.

After the speech, Fine downplayed the narrowing margin, saying it was in the double digits and in a special election.

"I think it's hard to say that's an underperformance," Fine said.

Weil said in a statement that the "race was closer than anyone ever imagined."

"This result is also a warning sign to Donald Trump, Randy Fine, and the unelected oligarchs taking apart the government," Weil said.

What do the results show?

Republicans in both districts are on track to win with narrower margins than their predecessors in every county. They also are on track to trail Trump's 2024 share of the vote in the two congressional districts.

In the 6th Congressional District, Trump received roughly 65% of the vote in 2024, just behind the 67% Waltz received in his final House reelection bid. In Tuesday's special election, Fine was underperforming Waltz by about 10 percentage points.

In Volusia County, Trump received 58% and Waltz received about 60% in 2024, while Fine was hovering around the 50% mark with nearly all the votes reported.

Fine, a self-described "conservative firebrand," had faced growing pressure during the race's final days as some Republicans publicly criticized his campaign and fundraising efforts, questioning whether this race would embarrass Republicans less than 100 days into Trump's administration. Weil's campaign raised an eye-popping \$9 million compared to Fine's \$1 million.

National Democratic leaders attributed Weil's fundraising success to what they characterized as widespread outrage against Trump. That outrage failed to materialize in large enough numbers to overturn the outcome, foiling Democrats' hope to pull off a huge upset that would have buoyed their party.

The Democratic National Committee's chair, Ken Martin, said the results showed "Democrats overperformed." The National Republican Congressional Committee said the victories sent a message that "Americans are fired up to elect leaders who will fight for President Trump's agenda and reject the Democrats' failed policies," spokesperson Mike Marinella said.

What did voters say?

Carol Vyhonsky, who drove to Fine's election party from her home in Brevard County with a group of her friends, said she had no issues with Fine's victory not being as strong as his predecessor's was last year.

"The polling was looking a little iffy there for a while, but he pulled through," Vyhonsky said. "As long as he won, that's the important thing."

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Retired nurse Brenda Ray and her husband, Vietnam War veteran Mike Ray, made it to the polls to support Patronis earlier in the day. Brenda Ray said she didn't know a lot about him but supported him because she believes he'll "vote with our president."

"That's all we're looking for," she said.

Who are Fine and Patronis?

Fine was first elected to the Florida House in 2016 and ran each year as a representative until 2024 when he successfully won his election to the Florida Senate. He is known for his support of Israel and his efforts to restrict LGBTQ+ rights.

Patronis' family founded the well-known Panama City restaurant Capt. Anderson's, located along the Gulf of Mexico. He has been involved in Florida politics since he was in college, interning in the Florida Senate before being elected to the Florida House of Representatives in 2006. He was appointed by then-Gov. Rick Scott to become the state's CFO in 2017 and won races to keep the Cabinet-level office in 2018 and 2022.

Storms could unleash deadly floods, strong tornadoes in large part of US in coming days

By JEFF MARTIN Associated Press

Forecasters are warning of potentially deadly flash flooding and strong tornadoes as more rounds of thunderstorms are poised to strike parts of the Midwest and South.

The potent storm system will bring the threat of "significant, life-threatening flash flooding" starting Wednesday, according to the Weather Prediction Center, a part of the National Weather Service.

The new flood threat also comes as residents in parts of Michigan continue to dig out from a weekend ice storm.

Floods could inundate towns, sweep cars away

Thunderstorms with multiple rounds of heavy rain are expected in parts of Texas, the lower Mississippi Valley and the Ohio Valley beginning at midweek and lasting through Saturday. Forecasters warn the storms could track over the same areas repeatedly and produce heavy rains and dangerous flash floods capable of sweeping cars away.

Parts of Arkansas, west Tennessee, western Kentucky and southern Indiana are at an especially high risk for flooding this week, the weather service said.

Rain totaling up to 15 inches (38 centimeters) is forecast over the next seven days in northeastern Arkansas, the southeast corner of Missouri, western Kentucky and southern parts of Illinois and Indiana, the weather service warned.

Rainfall could be a once-in-a-quarter-century event

"We're potentially looking at about two months of rain in just a handful of days," said Thomas Jones, a meteorologist at the National Weather Service in Little Rock, Arkansas.

Little Rock's monthly average rainfall for March is just under 5 inches (12.7 centimeters). The rainfall that eastern and northeastern Arkansas could see is something only expected once every 25 to 50 years.

The copious amount of rain in the forecast is rare, Jones said, and moisture from the Gulf is boosting the amount of precipitation the thunderstorms could release.

Strong tornadoes could slam the Midwest on Tuesday

Storms could spin up tornadoes in Oklahoma, Kansas and Missouri on Tuesday, forecasters said.

The National Weather Service's Storm Prediction Center in Norman, Oklahoma, said intense thunderstorms, including a few supercells, are possible Tuesday evening and overnight from central and southern Oklahoma up into central Kansas and western Missouri.

The primary risks are for very large hail — 2 inches (5 centimeters) in diameter or greater — as well as a few tornadoes, some of which could be strong, and severe wind gusts. The area at greatest risk for a strong tornado includes Oklahoma City, and the Kansas cities of Wichita and Topeka. The risk of large hail extends from Fort Worth, Texas, to Kansas City.

43 million people at risk for severe weather on Wednesday

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On Wednesday, a large swath of the nation from northeast Texas to Michigan will see the potential for high winds and tornadoes. The area at highest risk for severe weather includes 43 million people and many of the nation's largest cities, including Chicago, Indianapolis, St. Louis and Memphis, Tennessee.

Dallas, Detroit, Milwaukee, and Nashville, Tennessee, will also be at risk for severe storms on Wednesday. Earthquake center prepared for floodings

The heaviest rains are forecast to fall in the New Madrid Seismic Zone, where researchers constantly monitor earthquake activity in the nation's most active area for earthquakes east of the Rocky Mountains. Centered in southeast Missouri, the seismic zone extends to several nearby states, including Arkansas and Tennessee. It's famous for a series of powerful earthquakes in 1811 and 1812 that were felt in a large part of the Midwest and South. Experts say another devastating earthquake in the zone is possible.

Scientists have learned lessons from Mississippi River flooding to be vigilant about where they locate monitoring equipment, said Mitch Withers, a research professor at the Center for Earthquake Research and Information at the University of Memphis. About 70 stations in the area should be protected from flooding, and "we'll still be getting our data and monitoring for earthquakes," he said.

Wintry mix blasts Upper Midwest

In Michigan, crews were trying to restore power Tuesday after a weekend ice storm toppled trees and power poles. Nearly 200,000 customers were without power in Michigan, plus another 25,000 in Wisconsin, according to PowerOutage.us, which tracks outages nationwide.

In the mitten-shaped Lower Peninsula of Michigan, schools in several counties were closed for a second day on Tuesday. Sheriff's deputies used chain saws to clear roads. Drivers waited at gas stations in lines that stretched for blocks.

More wintry precipitation is in store for the region: A mix of sleet and freezing rain could keep roads treacherous Tuesday night into Wednesday across parts of Michigan and Wisconsin, the weather service said.

Heavy, wet snow was forecast for Tuesday night into Wednesday across the eastern Dakotas and parts of Minnesota.

Mass layoffs are underway at the nation's public health agencies

By CARLA K. JOHNSON AP Medical Writer

Employees across the massive U.S. Health and Human Services Department received notices Tuesday that their jobs were being eliminated, part of a sweeping overhaul designed to vastly shrink the agencies responsible for protecting and promoting Americans' health.

The cuts include researchers, scientists, doctors, support staff and senior leaders, leaving the federal government without many of the key experts who have long guided U.S. decisions on medical research, drug approvals and other issues.

"The revolution begins today!" Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. wrote on social media as he celebrated the swearing-in of his latest hires: Dr. Jay Bhattacharya, the new director of the National Institutes of Health and Martin Makary, the new Food and Drug Administration commissioner. Kennedy's post came just hours after employees began receiving emailed layoff notices. He later wrote, "Our hearts go out to those who have lost their jobs," but said that the department needs to be "recalibrated" to emphasize disease prevention.

Kennedy announced a plan last week to remake the department, which, through its agencies, is responsible for tracking health trends and disease outbreaks, conducting and funding medical research, and monitoring the safety of food and medicine, as well as for administering health insurance programs for nearly half the country.

The plan would consolidate agencies that oversee billions of dollars for addiction services and community health centers under a new office called the Administration for a Healthy America.

HHS said layoffs are expected to save \$1.8 billion annually — about 0.1% — from the department's \$1.7 trillion budget, most of which is spent on Medicare and Medicaid health insurance coverage for millions

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of Americans.

The layoffs are expected to shrink HHS to 62,000 positions, lopping off nearly a quarter of its staff — 10,000 jobs through layoffs and another 10,000 workers who took early retirement and voluntary separation offers. Many of the jobs are based in the Washington area, but also in Atlanta, where the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is based, and in smaller offices throughout the country.

Some staffers began getting termination notices in their work inboxes at 5 a.m., while others found out their jobs had been eliminated after standing in long lines outside offices in Washington, Maryland and Atlanta to see if their badges still worked.

Some gathered at local coffee shops and lunch spots after being turned away, finding out they had been eliminated after decades of service.

One wondered aloud if it was a cruel April Fools' Day joke. Adding to the confusion, some layoff notices included instructions to file equal employment complaints to a person who had died in November.

At the NIH, cuts included at least four directors of the NIH's 27 institutes and centers who were put on administrative leave, and nearly entire communications staffs were terminated, according to an agency senior leader, speaking on the condition of anonymity to avoid retribution.

An email viewed by The Associated Press shows that some senior-level employees of the Bethesda, Maryland, campus who were placed on leave were offered a possible transfer to the Indian Health Service in locations including Alaska and given until the end of Wednesday to respond.

At least nine high-level CDC directors were placed on leave and were also offered reassignments to the Indian Health Service. Some public health experts outside the agency saw it as a bid to get veteran agency leaders to resign.

At CDC, union officials said programs were eliminated because of the layoffs focused on smoking, lead poisoning, gun violence, asthma and air quality, and occupational safety and health. The entire office that handles Freedom of Information Act requests was shuttered. Infectious disease programs took a hit, too, including programs that fight outbreaks in other countries and labs focused on HIV and hepatitis in the U.S. and staff trying to eliminate tuberculosis.

At the FDA, dozens of staffers who regulate drugs, food, medical devices and tobacco products received notices, including the entire office responsible for drafting new regulations for electronic cigarettes and other tobacco products. The notices came as the FDA's tobacco chief was removed from his position. Elsewhere at the agency, more than a dozen press officers and communications supervisors were notified that their jobs would be eliminated.

"The FDA as we've known it is finished, with most of the leaders with institutional knowledge and a deep understanding of product development and safety no longer employed," said former FDA Commissioner Robert Califf in an online post. Califf stepped down at the end of the Biden administration.

The layoff notices came just days after President Donald Trump moved to strip workers of their collective bargaining rights at HHS and other agencies throughout the government.

"Congress and citizens must join us in pushing back," said Everett Kelley, president of the American Federation of Government Employees. "Our health, safety, and security depend on a strong, fully staffed public health system."

Democratic Sen. Patty Murray of Washington predicted the cuts will have ramifications when natural disasters strike or infectious diseases, like the ongoing measles outbreak, spread.

"They may as well be renaming it the Department of Disease because their plan is putting lives in serious jeopardy," Murray said Friday.

The intent of cuts to the CDC seems to be to create "a much smaller, infectious disease agency," but it is destroying a wide array of work and collaborations that have enabled local and national governments to be able to prevent deaths and respond to emergencies, said Dr. Georges Benjamin, executive director of the American Public Health Association.

Cuts were less drastic at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, where Trump's Republican administration wants to avoid the appearance of debilitating the health insurance programs that cover

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roughly half of Americans, many of them poor, disabled and elderly.

However, the impact will still be felt, with the department slashing much of the workforce at the Office of Minority Health.

Jeffrey Grant, a former CMS deputy director, said the office is not part of a diversity, equity and inclusion program, the kind Trump's Republican administration has sought to end.

"This is not a DEI initiative. This is meeting people where they are and meeting their specific health needs," said Grant, who resigned last month and now helps place laid-off CMS employees into new jobs.

Beyond layoffs at federal health agencies, cuts are beginning at state and local health departments as a result of an HHS move last week to pull back more than \$11 billion in COVID-19-related money. Some health departments have identified hundreds of jobs that stand to be eliminated, "some of them overnight, some of them are already gone," said Lori Tremmel Freeman, chief executive of the National Association of County and City Health Officials.

A coalition of state attorneys general sued the Trump administration on Tuesday, arguing the cuts are illegal, would reverse progress on the opioid crisis and would throw mental health systems into chaos.

HHS has not provided additional details or comments about Tuesday's mass firings, but on Thursday, it provided a breakdown of some of the cuts:

___3,500 jobs at the FDA, which inspects and sets safety standards for medications, medical devices and foods.

___2,400 jobs at the CDC, which monitors for infectious disease outbreaks and works with public health agencies nationwide.

___1,200 jobs at the NIH, the world's leading medical research agency.

___300 jobs at the CMS, which oversees the Affordable Care Act marketplace, Medicare and Medicaid.

NFL postpones a decision on the tush push but passes other rule changes

By ROB MAADDI AP Pro Football Writer

PALM BEACH, Fla. (AP) — A decision on the future of the tush push has been pushed until next month.

NFL team owners had been set to vote Tuesday on Green Bay's proposal to ban the play that's helped the Philadelphia Eagles win one Super Bowl and reach another, but it was tabled until May.

Team owners approved modifying the kickoff rule, expanding replay assist, revising overtime rules, along with other changes.

Postponing the tush push vote means the debate will continue while teams gather more information. Proponents of the play and those who oppose it presented strong arguments while the league's medical experts expressed safety concerns.

NFL Competition Committee chairman Rich McKay stressed the issues surrounding the play extend beyond safety because there's not enough data to indicate it's dangerous. The league already has said no injuries have been reported on a tush push.

"There are definitely some people that have health and safety concerns, but there's just as many people that have football concerns," McKay said. "So I wouldn't say it was because of one particular health and safety video or discussion. It was much more about the play, the aesthetics of the play, is it part of what football has been traditionally, or is it more of a rugby play? All those types of discussions. Health and safety is still there because of potential but I wouldn't go beyond that."

The league prohibited pushing or pulling a player before a rule change in 2004. McKay said the Packers asked to pull the proposal so they could reintroduce the previous language, study it, and bring it up for discussion for a vote at the May meetings.

It takes 24 of 32 votes to approve rule changes.

"There's a lot of discussion about going back to the previous rule, back to pre-2004," NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell said. "I think that makes a lot of sense in many ways because it expands it beyond that single play. There are a lot of plays where you see someone pulling or pushing somebody that are not in

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the tush push formation that I think do have an increased risk of injury. And so I think the committee will look at that and come back in May with some proposals.”

As for changes that did pass, regular-season overtime rules now will match those in the playoffs and both teams will have a chance to get a possession even if the offense scores a touchdown on the opening drive. The proposal was amended to make overtime 10 minutes, not 15 minutes.

Owners also approved a proposal from the NFL Competition Committee to allow replay assist to consult on-field officials to overrule objective calls such as facemask penalties, whether there was forcible contact to the head or neck area, horse-collar tackles or tripping if there was “clear and obvious” evidence that a foul didn’t occur. Replay also would be able to overturn a roughing-the-kicker or running-into-the-kicker penalty if video showed the defender made contact with the ball.

Replay assist could wipe out a foul only if it was incorrectly called, but it will not be used to throw a flag if a penalty wasn’t called.

The dynamic kickoff rule becomes permanent, with touchbacks moving to the 35-yard line instead of the 30.

Pittsburgh’s proposal to allow teams to have one video or phone call with no more than five prospective unrestricted free agents during the two-day negotiation period was approved. Teams now can make travel arrangements with such players upon agreeing to terms.

Also, owners approved a rule to permit clubs to prepare kicking footballs (“K-Balls”) before game day, similar to the process permitted for game footballs.

Detroit’s proposal for playoff seeding to be based on winning percentage was also tabled for May. The proposal to stop automatic first downs from being awarded on defensive holding and illegal contact penalties didn’t pass.

Philadelphia’s version of the quarterback sneak sparked the most intense discussions.

Bills coach Sean McDermott was among those leading the push to get rid of it, even though Buffalo used it more than any team other than the Eagles.

“It’s two things. It’s force, added force, No. 1, and then the posture of the players, being asked to execute that type of play, that’s where my concern comes in,” McDermott said Monday. “I’m not a doctor. I’m not going to get too deep into that situation there, in terms of how much data, how much sample. I don’t think that’s really always the best way to go. There is other data out there that suggests when you’re in a posture like we’re talking about, that can lead to serious injury. I think being responsible and proactive in that regard is the right way to go.”

The Eagles began using the play in short-yardage situations in 2022. Two or three players line up behind quarterback Jalen Hurts and push him forward. Several other teams including the Bills began using it, but no team has matched Philadelphia’s success rate.

“There’s no data that shows it isn’t a very safe play, or else we wouldn’t be pushing the tush push,” Eagles owner Jeffrey Lurie said.

Sportsmanship

The NFL is expanding prohibited acts to include banning the “nose wipe” gesture that league executive Troy Vincent said is affiliated with gangs.

The unsportsmanlike conduct rule now states: “any violent gesture, which shall include but not be limited to a throat slash, simulating firing or brandishing a gun, or using the ‘nose wipe’ gesture, or an act that is sexually suggestive or offensive.

Vincent said “violent gestures” used by players increased 133% and “sexual taunting” went up 52%.

“We have to be responsible adults,” Vincent said. “We’re not trying to take away the spontaneous moments. But the shooting and the killing and the sexual acts — you’re a professional.”

Virtual measurements

The NFL will use Sony’s Hawk-Eye technology for virtual line-to-gain measurements next season, but officials will continue to spot the football and the chain crew will remain on the sideline in a secondary role.

The virtual measurement system allows the NFL to accurately and efficiently measure the distance be-

tween the spotted ball and the line to gain. The technology was tested extensively last season.

Christmas Day games

The NFL is planning a Christmas Day tripleheader this year after playing two games last year when the holiday fell on a Wednesday.

2028 Olympics

Many NFL players have said they'd like to play flag football in the 2028 Olympic Games in Los Angeles since the sport was added in 2023. But they'll need their teams to sign off on their participation.

"I've heard directly from a lot of players who want to participate and represent their country, whether it's United States or the country that they came from," Goodell said. "I think that's something that we'll continue to discuss with, not just the union, but also the clubs. I think both of those are things that we'll probably resolve sometime in the next 60 days."

An 'administrative error' sent a Maryland man to an El Salvador prison, ICE says

By BEN FINLEY Associated Press

President Donald Trump's administration has acknowledged mistakenly deporting a Maryland man with protected legal status to a notorious El Salvador prison last month, but is arguing against returning him to the United States because of his alleged gang ties and the U.S. government's lack of power over the Central American nation.

Lawyers for Kilmar Armando Abrego Garcia, 29, maintain he is not affiliated with MS-13 or any other street gang and argue the U.S. government "has never produced an iota of evidence" that he does.

Abrego Garcia was arrested in Baltimore on March 12 after working a shift as a sheet metal apprentice in Baltimore and picking up his 5-year-old son, who has autism and other disabilities, from his grandmother's house, his lawyers' complaint stated.

Abrego Garcia was then sent to the Terrorism Confinement Center, or CECOT, which activists say is rife with abuses and where inmates are packed into cells and never allowed outside. Abrego Garcia's wife later saw him in photos and video from the prison, identifying her husband through his distinctive tattoos and two scars on his head.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials admitted in a court filing on Monday to an "administrative error" in deporting him. The government's acknowledgment sparked immediate uproar from immigration advocates while prompting Vice President JD Vance and other administration officials to repeat the allegation that he's a gang member.

MS-13 allegation stems from a 2019 arrest

Abrego Garcia came to the U.S. illegally from El Salvador around 2011, "fleeing gang violence," according to his lawyers, and made his way to Maryland to join his older brother, a U.S. citizen.

"Beginning around 2006, gang members had stalked, hit, and threatened to kidnap and kill him in order to coerce his parents to succumb to their increasing demands for extortion," the complaint states of his life in his native country.

Abrego Garcia later married a U.S. citizen and worked in construction to support her, their son and her two children from a previous relationship.

The allegations about his affiliation with MS-13 stem from a 2019 arrest outside a Maryland Home Depot store, where he and other young men were looking for work, according to the complaint.

County police asked if he was a gang member and demanded information about other gang members. After explaining that he wasn't a gang member and had no information, he was turned over to ICE.

ICE argued against Abrego Garcia's release at a subsequent immigration court hearing because local police had "verified" his gang membership, the complaint said. The evidence they cited included his wearing of a Chicago Bulls hat and hoodie and a confidential informant's claim that Abrego Garcia belonged to MS-13's "Westerns clique" in Long Island, New York, despite having never lived there.

Abrego Garcia filed for asylum, while his lawyer submitted a "voluminous evidentiary filing establishing

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his eligibility for protection and contesting the unfounded allegation of gang membership," the complaint stated. In response, ICE cited the information previously provided by local police.

An immigration judge denied Abrego Garcia's asylum request in October 2019 but granted him protection from being deported back to El Salvador. He was released after ICE did not appeal.

Abrego Garcia's lawyers say "he has neither been convicted nor charged with any crime" and has fully complied with the conditions of his protected status, checking in with ICE yearly.

Abrego Garcia's lawyer, Simon Sandoval-Moshenberg, said U.S. government lawyers had multiple opportunities to try legally to deport him, including appealing the judge's 2019 decision or deporting him elsewhere.

"There are lots of things they could have done," Sandoval-Moshenberg told The Associated Press. "But each one of those is in a court and gives him the opportunity to defend himself. And they didn't do any of them. They just put him on an airplane."

ICE calls deportation 'an oversight'

In its court filing on Monday, the Trump administration said ICE "was aware of his protection from removal to El Salvador," but still deported Abrego Garcia "because of an administrative error."

An ICE official called his deportation to El Salvador "an oversight" in a statement submitted to the court on Monday.

Robert Cerna, ICE's acting field office director of enforcement and removal operations, wrote that it was "carried out in good faith based on the existence of a final order of removal and Abrego-Garcia's purported membership in MS-13."

The administration argued against his return to the U.S., citing alleged gang ties and claiming that he is a danger to the community.

They also argued that the court lacks jurisdiction in the matter because Abrego Garcia is no longer in U.S. custody.

The administration wrote that Abrego Garcia's attorneys "do not argue that the United States can exercise its will over a foreign sovereign. The most they ask for is a court order that the United States entreat — or even cajole — a close ally."

In response to criticism, Vance posted a screenshot of court documents related to Abrego Garcia's 2019 bond proceeding on the social platform X and wrote that "it's gross to get fired up about gang members getting deported while ignoring citizens they victimize."

Abrego Garcia's removal comes as Trump follows up on campaign promises of mass deportations. Last month, he invoked the 18th-century Alien Enemies Act, granting himself powers to summarily deport to a notorious El Salvador prison hundreds of Venezuelans who were deemed by U.S. authorities to be associated with the Venezuelan gang Tren de Aragua.

Abrego Garcia was deported at the same time on March 15 but under the U.S.'s general immigration laws, not the wartime powers act, the White House said.

Stock market today: More swerves hit Wall Street as Trump's "Liberation Day" nears

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — U.S. stocks swerved through another shaky day of trading Tuesday, with uncertainty still high about just what President Donald Trump will announce about tariffs on his "Liberation Day" coming Wednesday.

The S&P 500 rose 0.4% after roaring back from an early drop of 1%. The Dow Jones Industrial Average edged down by 11 points, or less than 0.1%, after pinging between a loss of 480 points and a gain of nearly 140, while the Nasdaq composite added 0.9%.

Wall Street has been particularly shaky recently, and momentum has been swinging not just day to day but also hour to hour because of uncertainty about what Trump will do with tariffs — and by how much they will worsen inflation and grind down growth for economies. On Monday, for example, the S&P 500

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careened from an early loss of 1.7% to a gain of 0.7%.

In the bond market, Treasury yields sank after a report said U.S. manufacturing activity contracted last month, breaking a two-month streak of growth. A separate report said U.S. employers were advertising slightly fewer job openings at the end of February than economists expected.

Companies are saying they're already feeling effects from Trump's trade war, even with the main event potentially coming on Wednesday, when the president will announce a sweeping set of tariffs.

"Customers are pulling in orders due to anxiety about continued tariffs and pricing pressures," one computer and electronic products company told the Institute for Supply Management in its monthly manufacturers' survey.

"Starting to see slower-than-normal sales in Canada, and concerns of Canadians boycotting U.S. products could become a reality," a manufacturer in the food, beverage and tobacco products industry said in the ISM's survey.

The U.S. economy is still growing, to be sure, and the job market has remained relatively solid even with February's slightly weaker-than-expected job openings.

But one of the worries hitting the market is that even if Trump announces less-punishing tariffs than feared on Wednesday, the stop-and-start rollout of his trade strategy may by itself cause U.S. households and businesses to freeze their spending, which would damage the economy. Trump has pushed for tariffs in part to bring manufacturing jobs back to the United States from other countries.

All the nervousness in the market has helped push the price of gold to records, and it briefly topped \$3,175 per ounce Tuesday. That's up from less than \$2,700 at the start of the year.

On Wall Street, Tesla charged 3.6% higher a day ahead of reporting how many vehicles it delivered during the first three months of the year.

Worries have grown about a potential backlash from customers, and protestors have been swarming Tesla showrooms due to anger about CEO Elon Musk's leading the U.S. government's efforts to cut spending. Tesla's stock is still down by roughly a third for the year so far.

PVH jumped 18.2% after the company behind the Calvin Klein and Tommy Hilfiger brands reported a stronger profit for the latest quarter than analysts expected. It also said it plans to send \$500 million to shareholders this year through purchases of its own stock.

Newsmax soared another 179% to follow up on its 735% surge from Monday, which was the first day of trading for the news company's stock.

On the losing end of Wall Street was Johnson & Johnson, which dropped 7.6% after a U.S. bankruptcy court judge denied the company's settlement plan related to baby powder containing talc. It's the third time the company's attempt to resolve the baby powder settlement through bankruptcy has been rejected by courts.

All told, the S&P 500 rose 21.22 points to 5,633.07. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dipped 11.80 to 41,989.96, and the Nasdaq composite gained 150.60 to 17,449.89.

In stock markets abroad, indexes rose across much of Europe and Asia to recover some of their sharp drops from the day before.

In Europe, Germany's DAX returned 1.7%, and France's CAC 40 rose 1.1% after European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said the world's biggest trade bloc would not cower in the face of U.S. trade demands.

"Europe holds a lot of cards, from trade to technology to the size of our market. But this strength is also built on our readiness to take firm counter measures if necessary," von der Leyen said. "All instruments are on the table."

In Japan, the Nikkei 225 held steady as Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba said he was imploring Trump not to impose higher auto tariffs on Japan, a longtime U.S. ally. A central bank survey found a worsening in business sentiment among big manufacturers.

In the bond market, the yield on the 10-year Treasury fell to 4.16% from 4.23% late Monday and from roughly 4.80% in January. That's a significant move for the bond market, and yields have been falling with worries about a potentially slowing U.S. economy.

Trump to hold a meeting on possible investors to buy TikTok with possible ban at stake

By SARAH PARVINI and JOSH BOAK Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — President Donald Trump will hold a Wednesday meeting with aides about possible investors who could buy a stake in TikTok, a deal that could potentially stop the social media site from being banned in the United States.

The details of the meeting were confirmed by a person familiar with the situation who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations.

There has been uncertainty about the popular video app after a law took effect on Jan. 19 requiring its China-based parent, ByteDance, to divest its ownership because of national security concerns. After taking office, Trump gave TikTok a 75-day reprieve by signing an executive order that delayed until April 5 the enforcement of the law requiring a sale or effectively imposing a ban.

Among the possible investors are the software company Oracle and the investment firm Blackstone.

Likely to attend the Oval Office meeting with Trump on Wednesday are Vice President JD Vance, Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick, White House national security adviser Mike Waltz and Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard.

CBS News first reported on the meeting.

Talking to reporters Sunday while on Air Force One, Trump said he would "like to see TikTok remain alive." He previously indicated that he might consider reducing tariffs against China if the country approves the sale.

During his first term, Trump tried to ban TikTok on national security grounds, which was halted by the courts before his administration negotiated a sale of the platform that eventually failed to materialize. He changed his position on the popular app during last year's presidential election and has credited the platform with helping him win more young voters.

"I won the young vote by 36 points. Republicans generally don't do very well with the young vote," he said Sunday. "I think a lot of it could have been TikTok."

Trump has said that the deadline on a TikTok deal could be extended further if needed. He previously proposed terms in which the U.S. would have a 50% stake in a joint venture. The administration hasn't provided details on what that type of deal would entail.

TikTok and ByteDance have not publicly commented on the talks. It's also unclear if ByteDance has changed its position on selling TikTok, which it said early last year it does not plan to do.

What will happen on April 5?

If TikTok is not sold to an approved buyer by April 5, the original law that bans it nationwide would once again go into effect. However, the deadline for the executive order doesn't appear to be set in stone and the president has reiterated it could be extended further if needed.

Trump's order came a few days after the Supreme Court unanimously upheld a federal law that required ByteDance to divest or be banned in January. The day after the ruling, TikTok went dark for U.S. users and came back online after Trump vowed to stall the ban.

The decision to keep TikTok alive through an executive order has received some scrutiny, but it has not faced a legal challenge in court.

Who wants to buy TikTok?

Although it's unclear if ByteDance plans to sell TikTok, several potential bidders have come forward in the past few months.

Aides for Vice President JD Vance, who was tapped to oversee a potential deal, have reached out to some parties, such as the artificial intelligence startup Perplexity AI, to get additional details about their bids, according to a person familiar with the matter. In January, Perplexity AI presented ByteDance with a merger proposal that would combine Perplexity's business with TikTok's U.S. operation.

Other potential bidders include a consortium organized by billionaire businessman Frank McCourt, which recently recruited Reddit co-founder Alexis Ohanian as a strategic adviser. Investors in the consortium

say they've offered ByteDance \$20 billion in cash for TikTok's U.S. platform. And if successful, they plan to redesign the popular app with blockchain technology they say will provide users with more control over their online data.

Jesse Tinsley, the founder of the payroll firm Employer.com, says he too has organized a consortium, which includes the CEO of the video game platform Roblox, and is offering ByteDance more than \$30 billion for TikTok.

Trump said in January that Microsoft was also eyeing the popular app. Other interested parties include Trump's former Treasury secretary Steve Mnuchin and Rumble, the video site popular with some conservatives and far-right groups. In a post on X last March, Rumble said it was ready to join a consortium of parties interested in purchasing TikTok and serving as a tech partner for the company.

Trump's 'Liberation Day' is unlikely to free businesses from uncertainty surrounding trade policy

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER and PAUL WISEMAN AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump says his tariff announcements slated for Wednesday will amount to a "Liberation Day" for the United States. But American businesses and financial markets are unlikely to be freed from the uncertainty generated by his often stop-and-go trade policy.

Some big questions will be resolved when Trump announces what are expected to be reciprocal tariffs that involve raising U.S. import duties to be equal to the levies that other countries impose on U.S. goods. Companies will have a greater sense of how many countries will be affected, and how high the duties will be.

Yet questions will still swirl around trade and tariffs for months to come, economists say. More tariffs are in the pipeline and could target specific industries such as pharmaceuticals, copper and lumber. And the United States may reach deals with other countries that could alter the reciprocal tariffs. There will also be countless details that could take months to resolve to determine precisely which imports will be hit with taxes.

As a result, few analysts expect Wednesday's announcement to bring the certainty that many businesses — and Wall Street investors — crave.

"April 2 is when this all kicks off, it's not when all of this ends," said Kelly Ann Shaw, a former senior White House trade adviser during Trump's first term. "At some point this will settle. But because we're at the very beginning of what will fundamentally be a total rethink of the global trading system, there are going to be a lot more questions than answers in the near term."

For now, a measure of economic policy uncertainty maintained by Nicholas Bloom, a Stanford University economist and two colleagues, is at its highest level — outside of the pandemic — since its inception in 1985.

When businesses are unsure about where economic policy is headed, they are more likely to put major spending projects on hold and slow hiring, Bloom said. And when unsure, consumers typically take a more cautious approach to spending.

"April 2 could reduce uncertainty if this is a once and final announcement on tariffs," Bloom said. "But I suspect it will be one of a series of ongoing announcements."

Trump "has been unequivocally clear for decades about the need to restore American greatness," said White House spokesman Kush Desai. "America cannot just be an assembler of foreign-made parts — we must become a manufacturing powerhouse that dominates every step of the supply chain of industries that are critical for our national security and economic interests."

Randy Carr, CEO of World Emblem, said he expects the products he makes in Mexico and Canada will face a 25% tariff as soon as Wednesday. The company has already notified customers that it will raise prices 8%. World Emblem makes badges, patches and labels for companies, universities and law enforcement agencies.

In February, Carr put about \$9 million in investment on hold, most of which he planned to spend on

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artificial intelligence and online commerce. He has started to spend some of that money but is doing so more slowly than he would prefer.

"We don't know if we'll need the money for tariffs," he said. "Who knows what will happen on Wednesday."

Already in place are duties on cars, steel, aluminum and all imports from China. Surveys have found widespread uncertainty among manufacturing firms and even oil company executives, who say that higher costs for steel pipe will cut into their profits.

Emerald Packaging, which makes packaging for produce and whose clients include Walmart and Kroger, is holding back on investment for now, given the uncertainty.

CEO Kevin Kelly said the Union City, California-based company learned a big lesson during the height of the pandemic. It started 2021 with \$7 million in cash but depleted its reserves by year-end because of the costs of navigating supply chain snarls.

"We're not spending any money right now," he said. "We're trying to build cash ... because we'll need a cushion."

One reason the cloudy outlook surrounding tariffs is likely to remain for months is that Trump wants to maintain some uncertainty about his next steps as a negotiating strategy, Shaw said.

"Intentional ambiguity is a key component" of his approach to trade talks, Shaw said. Those negotiations will likely start after reciprocal duties are announced and could take months to resolve.

At the same time, Trump is due to receive a series of reports this week on other countries' trade policies, including tariffs but also the subsidies, currency manipulation and tax policies that Trump officials say can distort trade. Those reports could prompt further steps.

And then there is Trump's confessed love of tariffs and his willingness to use them for a variety of policy goals, including raising revenue, forcing action on fentanyl trafficking and bringing back manufacturing. The White House has also said it will slap 25% tariffs on any country that imports oil from Venezuela, though that also includes the United States.

"Given that tariffs seem to be an answer for every problem, who knows what might happen next and what will lead to yet another ad hoc round of tariffs?" said Marc Busch, professor of international business diplomacy at Georgetown University.

A big question for the economy is how long this might last.

Matthew Luzzetti, an economist at Deutsche Bank, said that even if Wednesday's announcement were the final word on tariffs, the uncertainty around the president's actions so far could drag down growth by about 1% for several quarters.

"If that uncertainty were to extend further, or remain elevated for longer, that would only amplify the effects," Luzzetti said.

Neil Bradley, chief policy officer at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, said that even with more certainty, adding tariffs will harm the economy.

"To the extent that April 2 provides clarity, then you can begin to make adjustments and plans," Bradley said. "But having certainty about economically harmful policies is not a positive."

Federal prosecutors to seek death penalty for Luigi Mangione in UnitedHealthcare CEO's killing

By MICHAEL R. SISAK and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — U.S. Attorney General Pam Bondi said Tuesday that she has directed prosecutors to seek the death penalty against Luigi Mangione in the killing of UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson, following through on the president's campaign promise to vigorously pursue capital punishment.

It is the first time the Justice Department has sought to bring the death penalty since President Donald Trump returned to office in January with a vow to resume federal executions after they were halted under the previous administration.

"Luigi Mangione's murder of Brian Thompson — an innocent man and father of two young children —

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was a premeditated, cold-blooded assassination that shocked America," Bondi said in a statement. She described Thompson's killing as "an act of political violence."

Mangione, a 26-year-old Ivy League graduate from a prominent Maryland real estate family, faces separate federal and state murder charges after authorities say he gunned down Thompson, 50, outside a Manhattan hotel on Dec. 4 as the executive arrived for UnitedHealthcare's annual investor conference.

Mangione's lawyer, Karen Friedman Agnifilo, said Tuesday that in seeking the death penalty "the Justice Department has moved from the dysfunctional to the barbaric."

Mangione "is caught in a high-stakes game of tug-of-war between state and federal prosecutors, except the trophy is a young man's life," Friedman Agnifilo said in a statement, vowing to fight all charges against him.

The killing and ensuing five-day manhunt leading to Mangione's arrest rattled the business community, with some health insurers hastily switching to remote work or online shareholder meetings. It also galvanized health insurance critics — some of whom have rallied around Mangione as a stand-in for frustrations over coverage denials and hefty medical bills.

Surveillance video showed a masked gunman shooting Thompson from behind. Police say the words "delay," "deny" and "depose" were scrawled on the ammunition, mimicking a phrase commonly used to describe insurer tactics to avoid paying claims.

Mangione's federal charges include murder through use of a firearm, which carries the possibility of the death penalty. The state charges carry a maximum punishment of life in prison. Mangione has pleaded not guilty to a state indictment and has not yet been required to enter a plea on the federal charges.

Prosecutors have said the two cases will proceed on parallel tracks, with the state case expected to go to trial first. It wasn't immediately clear if Bondi's announcement will change the order.

Mangione was arrested Dec. 9 in Altoona, Pennsylvania, about 230 miles (about 370 kilometers) west of New York City and whisked to Manhattan by plane and helicopter.

Police said Mangione had a 9mm handgun that matched the one used in the shooting and other items including a notebook in which they say he expressed hostility toward the health insurance industry and wealthy executives.

Among the entries, prosecutors said, was one from August 2024 that said "the target is insurance" because "it checks every box" and one from October that describes an intent to "wack" an insurance company CEO. UnitedHealthcare, the largest U.S. health insurer, has said Mangione was never a client.

Mangione's lawyer has said she would seek to suppress some of the evidence.

Former President Joe Biden's Justice Department filed the federal case against Mangione but left it to Trump and his administration to decide whether to seek the death penalty. Because the federal case had been taking a backseat to the state case, federal prosecutors have yet to seek a grand jury indictment, which is required for capital cases.

Trump oversaw an unprecedented run of 13 executions at the end of his first term and has been an outspoken proponent of expanding capital punishment. Trump signed an executive order on his first day back in office on Jan. 20 that compels the Justice Department to seek the death penalty in federal cases where applicable.

Bondi's order comes weeks after she lifted a Biden-era moratorium on federal executions.

Biden campaigned on a pledge to work toward abolishing federal capital punishment but took no major steps to that end. While Attorney General Merrick Garland halted federal executions in 2021, Biden's Justice Department at the same time fought vigorously to maintain the sentences of death row inmates in many cases.

In his final weeks in office, Biden commuted the sentences of 37 of the 40 people on federal death row, converting their punishments to life in prison.

The three inmates that remain are Dylann Roof, who carried out the 2015 racist slayings of nine Black members of Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina; 2013 Boston Marathon bomber Dzhokhar Tsarnaev; and Robert Bowers, who fatally shot 11 congregants at Pittsburgh's Tree of Life synagogue in 2018, the deadliest antisemitic attack in U.S. history.

UN agency closes its remaining Gaza bakeries as food supplies dwindle under Israeli blockade

By WAFAA SHURAF and SAM MEDNICK Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — The U.N. food agency is closing all of its bakeries in the Gaza Strip, officials said Tuesday, as supplies dwindle after Israel sealed off the territory from all imports nearly a month ago.

Israel, which later resumed its offensive to pressure the Hamas militant group into accepting changes to their ceasefire agreement, said enough food had entered Gaza during the six-week truce to sustain the territory's roughly 2 million Palestinians for a long time.

U.N. spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said Israel's assertion was "ridiculous," calling the food shortage very critical. The organization is "at the tail end of our supplies" and a lack of flour and cooking oil are forcing the bakeries to close, Dujarric said Tuesday.

Markets largely emptied weeks ago. U.N. agencies say the supplies they built up during the truce are running out. Gaza is heavily reliant on international aid because the war has destroyed almost all of its food production capability.

Mohammed al-Kurd, a father of 12, said his children go to bed without dinner.

"We tell them to be patient and that we will bring flour in the morning," he said. "We lie to them and to ourselves."

For the second consecutive day, Israel's military warned residents of Gaza's southernmost city of Rafah to immediately evacuate, a sign that it could soon launch a major ground operation. At least 140,000 people were under orders to leave, according to the head of the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees.

Gaza's bakeries shut down

A World Food Program memo circulated to aid groups said it could no longer operate its remaining bakeries, which produce the bread on which many rely. The U.N. agency said it was prioritizing its remaining stocks to provide emergency food aid and expand hot meal distribution. WFP spokespeople didn't immediately respond to requests for comment.

Olga Cherevko, a spokesperson for the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, said WFP was closing its remaining 19 bakeries after shuttering six last month. She said hundreds of thousands of people relied on them.

The Israeli military body in charge of Palestinian affairs, known as COGAT, said more than 25,000 trucks entered Gaza during the ceasefire, carrying nearly 450,000 tons of aid. It said the amount represented around a third of what has entered during the war.

"There is enough food for a long period of time, if Hamas lets the civilians have it," it said.

U.N. agencies and aid groups say they struggled to bring in and distribute aid before the ceasefire took hold in January. Their estimates for how much aid reached people in Gaza were consistently lower than COGAT's, which were based on how much entered through border crossings.

Israeli strikes kill dozens

Gaza's Health Ministry reported that at least 42 bodies and more than 180 wounded arrived at hospitals over the past 24 hours. At least 1,042 Palestinians have been killed in the two weeks since Israel broke the ceasefire and resumed heavy bombardments.

The war began when Hamas-led militants attacked southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killing around 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking 251 hostages. Hamas is still holding 59 captives — 24 believed to be alive — after most of the rest were released in ceasefire agreements or other deals.

Israel's offensive has killed more than 50,000 Palestinians, including hundreds killed in strikes since the ceasefire ended, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which doesn't say whether those killed are civilians or combatants. Israel says it has killed around 20,000 militants, without providing evidence.

Israel sealed off Gaza from all aid at the start of the war but later relented under pressure from Washington. U.S. President Donald Trump's administration, which took credit for helping to broker the ceasefire, has expressed full support for Israel's actions, including its decision to end the truce.

Israel has demanded that Hamas release several hostages before further talks on ending the war. Those negotiations were supposed to begin in early February. It has also insisted that Hamas disarm and leave Gaza, conditions that weren't part of the ceasefire agreement.

Hamas has called for implementing the agreement, in which the remaining hostages would be released in exchange for the release of more Palestinian prisoners, a lasting ceasefire and an Israeli withdrawal.

Palestinian journalist and family killed by Israeli strike

Palestinians mourned Mohamed Salah Bardawil, a journalist with Hamas-affiliated Aqsa Radio who was killed along with his wife and three children by an Israeli strike early Tuesday at their home in southern Gaza.

Associated Press footage showed the building in Khan Younis collapsed, with dried blood splattered on the rubble. A child's school notebook, dust-covered dolls and clothing lay half-buried in the ruins. The Israeli military declined to comment.

The journalist is the nephew of Salah Bardawil, a well-known member of Hamas' political bureau who was killed in an Israeli strike that also killed his wife last month.

Israeli strikes have killed more than 170 journalists and media workers since the war began, the Committee to Protect Journalists has estimated.

FDA tobacco official is removed from post in latest blow to health agency's leadership

By MATTHEW PERRONE AP Health Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Food and Drug Administration's chief tobacco regulator was removed from his post Tuesday, part of sweeping cuts to the federal health workforce that have cleared out many of the nation's top experts overseeing food, drugs, vaccines and products containing nicotine.

The agency's tobacco director, Brian King, notified his staff in an email: "It is with a heavy heart and profound disappointment that I share I have been placed on administrative leave."

Dozens of other employees in FDA's tobacco center also received notices Tuesday morning that they were being dismissed, including two entire offices responsible for drafting new tobacco regulations and setting policy.

"If you make it virtually impossible to create and draft policy, then you are eviscerating the role of the center," Mitch Zeller, the FDA's former tobacco chief, said in an interview. "From a public health perspective it makes absolutely no sense."

Elsewhere at the FDA, the entire press office was also given notice. Senior officials who help oversee new drug reviews and vaccines were also let go, according to FDA staffers who spoke on condition of anonymity because they did not have permission to speak publicly.

King, who joined the agency in 2022, has been vigorously criticized by vaping lobbyists for ordering thousands of companies to remove their fruit and candy-flavored e-cigarettes from the market. During his time at FDA, teen vaping has fallen to a 10-year low.

His removal comes just days after FDA vaccine chief Dr. Peter Marks was forced out, citing Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s support for vaccine "misinformation and lies" in his resignation letter.

The latest changes mean that nearly all of FDA's top leaders overseeing drugs, food, vaccines, medical devices and now tobacco products have turned over in recent months, mainly through resignations and retirements.

Former FDA Commissioner Robert Califf said in an online post that "history will see this as a huge mistake."

"The FDA as we've known it is finished, with most of the leaders with institutional knowledge and a deep understanding of product development and safety no longer employed," said Califf, who stepped down at the end of the Biden administration.

The leadership vacuum comes as Kennedy moves to fire 3,500 FDA staffers and pushes ahead with plans to scrutinize ultraprocessed foods, childhood vaccines, antidepressants and other long-established products.

The wave of departures means incoming FDA commissioner Marty Makary — who was confirmed last week — inherits an agency without many of its top experts and a beleaguered workforce that has been

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rocked by weeks of layoffs and a chaotic return-to-office process. Only a handful of FDA employees are political appointees, with nearly all of the agency's scientific reviews and decisions overseen by career officials.

During his confirmation hearing, Makary told Senate lawmakers he wanted to "conduct an assessment" of recent probationary layoffs at the agency.

Neither Makary nor Kennedy have said much about how tobacco policy fits into their plan to "Make America Healthy Again." Despite historically low rates of smoking, tobacco-related diseases remain the nation's leading preventable cause of death, blamed for more than 490,000 annually.

In recent years, the FDA's tobacco center has been besieged by criticism from all sides.

Politicians, parents and anti-tobacco groups want the FDA to do more to stamp out unauthorized vaping products that can appeal to teens, many of which are imported from China. Tobacco and vaping companies say the FDA has been too slow to approve newer products for adult smokers — including e-cigarettes — that generally carry much lower risks than traditional cigarettes.

Under King, the FDA rejected applications for millions of flavored e-cigarettes, citing insufficient data that the products would help adult smokers. Those rejections have resulted in multiple lawsuits against FDA from vape makers, including one that was argued before the Supreme Court in December.

The Vapor Technology Association, an industry group highly critical of King's leadership, said in a statement that his removal "is the first step in correcting the broken mindset that has crippled the FDA and the Center for Tobacco Products over the past four years."

Other recent departures of FDA leaders include:

- Deputy commissioner for foods, Jim Jones, who resigned in February after dozens of his staffers were fired.

- The director of FDA's drug center, Dr. Patrizia Cavazzoni, who stepped down days before President Donald Trump took office.

- The agency's second-ranking official, Dr. Namandje Bumpus, who resigned late last year.

- FDA's longtime medical devices director, Dr. Jeffrey Shuren, who retired last summer.

Many deputies and senior scientists have also retired or stepped down in recent weeks.

No batteries? Thinner packaging? US businesses look for ways to offset tariffs

By ANNE D'INNOCENZIO AP Retail Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Gadgets sold without batteries. Toys sold in slimmed-down boxes or no packaging at all. More household goods that shoppers need to assemble themselves.

These are some of the ways consumer product companies are retooling their wares to reduce costs and avoid raising prices as President Donald Trump levies new import taxes on key trading partners as well as some materials used by American manufacturers.

The economic environment in which the president has imposed, threatened and occasionally postponed repeated rounds of tariffs is more precarious than during his first term. U.S. consumers are feeling tapped out after several years of inflation. Businesses say tariffs add to their expenses and eat into their profits, but they are wary of losing sales if they try to pass all of the increase on to customers.

Instead, some companies are exploring cost-cutting options, both ones that consumers likely would notice in time — remember "shrinkflation?" — and ones that exist too far down the supply chain for them to see. The changes may help minimize price increases yet won't be enough in every case to offset them completely.

These are some of the strategies retailers and brands have in mind:

A kink in the supply chain:

After putting an extra 20% tariff on all goods from China, as well as a 25% tariff on imported steel, aluminum and automobiles, Trump said he would announce on Wednesday the targets of "reciprocal tariffs" that mirror the taxes all other nations apply to certain U.S. exports.

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He argues the tariffs will spur domestic manufacturing, among other goals.

Also on the horizon: twice-delayed tariffs on most goods from Canada and Mexico, and duties on copper, lumber and pharmaceutical drugs.

Kimberly Kirkendall, president of supply-chain consulting firm International Resource Development, has told clients — U.S. makers of shelving, home goods and food products — that given all the uncertainty, this is not the time for long-term moves like seeking factories outside of China.

She encouraged them to focus on the short term, particularly the need to scrutinize product lines from every angle for possible savings.

"You've got to collaborate and work together with your suppliers in this situation to be able to bring costs down," Kirkendall said.

Sourcing concerns are not only a worry for big companies that rely on Chinese manufacturers. Sasha Iglehart, founder of a small online clothing company called Shirt Story, has a collection of upcycled men's shirts that sell for around \$235. She said she typically gets her vintage buttons from an Austrian supplier and knows Trump has talked about taxing goods from the European Union.

"I will continue to look for local vendors and collectors here in the States as back up," said Iglehart, whose company is based in Connecticut.

Reworking a product

For many companies, evaluating which components or details they can remove from their products or replace with less expensive ones is the go-to move for absorbing the potential financial hit from tariffs.

Los Angeles-based toy company Abacus Brands Inc., which designs science kits and other educational toys, has most of its products made in China. By using slightly thinner paper in an 80-page project book that comes with two of its kits, the company expects to avert a \$10 retail price increase, President Steve Rad said.

"Three or 4 cents here," Rad said. "Seven or 6 cents there. Two more pennies over there. All of a sudden, you've made up the difference."

Aurora World Inc., known for its plush pets and toy vehicles, is looking at using fewer paint colors as a way to counteract tariff costs, according to Gabe Higa, managing director of the California company's toy division. All of Aurora World's toys come from factories in China.

"This is something that makes it a little bit simpler so that there's less manual labor involved or less material cost," Higa said. "(It) doesn't have a lot of incremental value so it's easy to take away."

The company still may have to raise prices as long as the new tariffs are in effect, he said.

Economy packaging:

Tweaking or reducing product packaging is another area where importers may cut back and carries the advantage of possibly appealing to eco-conscious customers.

Basic Fun CEO Jay Foreman, whose company markets classic toys like Tonka trucks, Lincoln Logs and Care Bears, said he is presenting retailers with three different packaging options and asking them to decide which ones they prefer for the trucks and some other products that will be in stores next spring.

The first is the current packaging, which consists of a box with a big open window that lets customers see what's inside. The second option: no box, just a tray attached to the bottom of toys to hold them in place on shelves. The third: unwrapped but affixed with a simple paper price tag that features brand information.

The second-tier packaging would reduce the toy company's cost per item by \$1.25, and the package-free version would yield savings of \$1.75, Foreman said. Both would diminish the appeal of the products and would not come close to canceling out the tariff on goods made in China, Foreman said.

He said he would make pricing decisions later this week after Trump provides details about his planned reciprocal tariffs.

To further reduce its production costs, Abacus Brands is thinking of switching from plastic to cardboard for the package inserts that keep toy parts in place. Cardboard trays cost 7 cents per unit compared to 30 cents for the plastic version, according to Rad.

The change requires finding a new factory to make the inserts, a move that did not make financial

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sense before now, he said. The various tariff-related modifications should be effective for fall and holiday deliveries to stores, Rad said.

"The compromises we're making are things that do not matter to the consumer," he said.

Forget the extras

Shoppers will likely have to assemble more of their products at home as companies look to reduce shipping costs, according to Kirkendall of International Resource Development.

One of her clients manufactures self-watering planters that are made in China. The product is undergoing a redesign so it can be shipped as separate nesting components instead of fully assembled.

Companies also are reevaluating the pieces of their products that are essential or extra. Chris Bajda, managing partner at online wedding gift retailer Groomsday, said accessories like batteries and decorative gift boxes may end up in the latter category.

"We now carefully assess what's truly necessary and avoid including items that don't serve a functional purpose for the customer," Bajda said.

The return of shrinkflation?

Reducing the size or weight of products without lowering prices proliferated as a business practice from 2021 through 2024 as companies grappled with rising costs for ingredients, packaging, labor and transportation.

Edgar Dworsky, a consumer advocate and former assistant attorney general in Massachusetts, suspects the makers of consumer goods will embrace shrinkflation again to hide costs given the blast of new tariffs. The additional import tax on Canadian soft lumber, for example, might show up in smaller toilet paper rolls, he said.

"Shrinkflation has been a little quiet" in the last few months, Dworsky said. "But I would expect to see both price increases and product shrinkage."

Scientists release plans for an even bigger atom smasher to address the mysteries of physics

By JAMEY KEATEN Associated Press

GENEVA (AP) — Top minds at the world's largest atom smasher have released a blueprint for a much bigger successor that could vastly improve research into the remaining enigmas of physics.

The plans for the Future Circular Collider — a nearly 91-kilometer (56.5-mile) loop along the French-Swiss border and below Lake Geneva — published late Monday put the finishing details on a project roughly a decade in the making at CERN, the European Organization for Nuclear Research.

The FCC would carry out high-precision experiments in the mid-2040s to study "known physics" in greater detail, then enter a second phase — planned for 2070 — that would conduct high-energy collisions of protons and heavy ions that would "open the door to the unknown," said Giorgio Chiarelli, a research director at Italy's National Institute of Nuclear Physics.

"History of physics tells that when there is more data, the human ingenuity is able to extract more information than originally expected," Chiarelli, who was not involved in the plans, said in an e-mail.

For roughly a decade, top minds at CERN have been making plans for a successor to the Large Hadron Collider, a network of magnets that accelerate particles through a 27-kilometer (17-mile) underground tunnel and slam them together at velocities approaching the speed of light.

The blueprint lays out the proposed path, environmental impact, scientific ambitions and project cost. Independent experts will take a look before CERN's two dozen member countries — all European except for Israel — decide in 2028 whether to go forward, starting in the mid-2040s at a cost of some 14 billion Swiss francs (about \$16 billion).

CERN officials tout the promise of scientific discoveries that could drive innovation in fields like cryogenics, superconducting magnets and vacuum technologies that could benefit humankind.

Outside experts point to the promise of learning more about the Higgs boson, the elusive particle that has been controversially dubbed "the God particle," which helped explain how matter formed after the

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Big Bang.

Work at the Large Hadron Collider confirmed in 2013 the existence of the Higgs boson, the central piece in a puzzle known as the standard model that helps explain some fundamental forces in the universe.

CERN Director-General Fabiola Gianotti said the future collider "could become the most extraordinary instrument ever built by humanity to study the constituents and the laws of nature at the most fundamental levels in two ways," by improving study of the Higgs boson and paving the way to "explore the energy frontier," and by looking for new physics that explain the structure and evolution of the universe.

One unknown is whether the Trump administration, which has been cutting foreign aid and spending in academia and research, will continue to support CERN a year after the Biden administration pledged U.S. support for the study and collaboration on the FCC's construction and "physics exploitation" if it's approved.

The United States is home to 2,000 users of CERN, making them the single largest national contingent among the 17,000 people working there, including outside experts abroad and staff on site, Gianotti said.

While an observer state and not a member, the U.S. doesn't pay into the CERN regular budget but has contributed to specific projects. Most of the CERN regular budget comes from Europe.

Costas Fountas, the CERN Council president, said he had spoken with some U.S. National Science Foundation and Department of Energy staff who relayed the message that so far "they're 'under the radar of the cuts of the Trump administration'. That's their words."

CERN scientists, engineers and partners behind the plans considered at least 100 scenarios for the new collider before coming up with the proposed 91-kilometer circumference at an average depth of 200 meters (656 feet). The tunnel would be about 5 meters (16 feet) in diameter, CERN said.

US-Canada-Mexico joint World Cup goes from unity to acrimony thanks to tariffs and '51st state' talk

By HOWARD FENDRICH AP National Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Seven years ago, when a joint bid by the United States, Canada and Mexico was awarded the 2026 World Cup, rifts created by tariffs — yes, back then, too! — and a proposed border wall were glossed over because of the neighbors' longstanding political and economic alliances.

"The unity of the three nations" was the overriding theme articulated by Carlos Cordeiro, then-president of the U.S. Soccer Federation. "A powerful message," he called it.

Well, here we are now, with the soccer showcase arriving in North America in about 15 months, and President Donald Trump back in office — inciting trade wars between the neighbors, not to mention across the globe, by levying tariffs that come, then go, then return, with more promised, including what the Republican calls "reciprocal tariffs" starting Wednesday.

It's hard to know how, exactly, the current geopolitical fissures, made all the more stark every time Trump or those in his administration talk provocatively about making Canada the 51st state, might affect the World Cup, its organization and coordination, fans' travel plans and more.

"Oh, I think it's going to make it more exciting," was Trump's take during an Oval Office appearance with FIFA President Gianni Infantino last month. "Tension's a good thing."

Will the world come to the 2026 World Cup and the 2028 Olympics?

Given that the U.S. also is preparing to welcome the world for FIFA's Club World Cup in June, golf's Ryder Cup in September and the Los Angeles Olympics in 2028, the question becomes: Will the world want to come?

And, taking Trump's border and visa policies into account, will the world be able to?

Alan Rothenberg, who ran the 1994 World Cup and successfully oversaw the bid to host the 1999 Women's World Cup as then-president of U.S. Soccer, thinks the answers to those questions are "Yes." Pointing to concerns about the last two World Cups, in Russia in 2018 and Qatar in 2022, he noted those still attracted attendance totals above 3 million apiece.

"People love the United States around the world — frankly, we wouldn't have the immigration issue that we're dealing with if that weren't the case — so a lot of this is government-to-government," Rothenberg

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said. "A passionate soccer fan is not going to be held up by that."

He doesn't think one of the host nations would drop out of the World Cup, say, or that other countries might boycott, as happened at the 1976, 1980 and 1984 Summer Olympics.

"More than anything, they'll see it as an opportunity for, perhaps, rapprochement, rather than escalating the tensions," Rothenberg said.

"Besides, from an organizing standpoint, if either Canada or Mexico withdrew" from the World Cup, he said, "the U.S. would pick up the games in a heartbeat."

Spectators booing the U.S. national anthem

Still, as the White House stance on tariffs and Russia's war in Ukraine have put Europe on edge, and relations with other countries have become fraught, it might not be a surprise if soccer stadiums for the U.S. games at the World Cup offer the same sort of anti-American sentiment heard when spectators in Canada booed "The Star-Spangled Banner" during hockey's 4 Nations Face-Off in February.

FIFA, soccer's governing body, did not respond to Associated Press requests for comment, but Infantino has never hidden his admiration for Trump, which he often demonstrates via social media. They have met at least five times since the U.S. election in November.

Last week, when Kirsty Coventry was elected president of the International Olympic Committee — becoming the first woman in that position — she was asked how she would work with Trump and what she would tell athletes about traveling to the U.S. for the next Games.

"I have been dealing with, let's say, difficult men, in high positions since I was 20 years old," Coventry said with a chuckle, "and first and foremost, what I have learned is that communication will be key. That is something that will happen early on. And my firm belief is that President Trump is a huge lover of sports. He will want these Games to be significant. He will want them to be a success."

Referring to concerns about whether the administration might deny some athletes visas, she added: "We will not waver from our values ... of solidarity in ensuring that every athlete that qualifies for the Olympic Games has the possibility to attend the Olympic Games and be safe during the Olympic Games."

The overriding assumption among those involved in the Olympics is that Trump will assure the 2028 Games are a success.

As U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee chairman Gene Sykes put it: "I can't speak for him, but I think he's the kind of person who probably believes that having these go very, very well is a reflection of his leadership."

Will Trump's tariffs and other policies affect soccer's World Cup?

"The most likely outcome is that Trump's nonsense won't have an impact," said Smith College professor Andrew Zimbalist, an expert on the economics of sports.

"My guess is that if relations between Canada and the U.S. deteriorate to the point that there are travel restrictions and spending restrictions," Zimbalist said, "Trump would — just like he's making exceptions all the time on his tariffs policies — make an exception for a month or six weeks."

The U.S. and Canadian soccer federations declined AP requests for comment on how White House policies might affect the 2026 World Cup.

Gabriela Cuevas, who represents Mexico's government in meetings with FIFA, said she considers the tariffs and the soccer event "separate issues," adding that she believes "the World Cup could be a route to engage in a conversation."

Observers tend to agree, saying logistics such as security cooperation or team transportation from city to city — or country to country — should not be hampered when it comes to the World Cup, scheduled to take place in 16 cities across the U.S., Canada and Mexico from June 11 to July 19, 2026.

The borders might become an issue, though.

"The main thing FIFA needs to move for this event is not car parts, and it's not wheat, and it's not electricity. It's people. That's your real concern," said Victor Matheson, an economics professor at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts.

"What were previously pretty reasonable border crossings could become much more challenging, simply because both sides amp up their level of inspections and the United States, in particular, cuts down

government services that allow people to move effectively between countries.”

As for the fans, 29-year-old Mexican businessman German Camacho Pacheco said “soccer is religion” in his country, so when it comes to the World Cup, “I don’t think they care about tariffs.”

Camacho, wearing the Monterrey club jersey of defender Sergio Ramos while on the way to watch a game at a sports bar in Mexico City, said he doesn’t expect there to be any effect at all on the World Cup “unless this goes from a trade war to an actual war.”

A Palestinian from the West Bank is first detainee under 18 to die in Israeli prison, officials say

By JULIA FRANKEL Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — A teenager from the West Bank who was held in an Israeli prison for six months without being charged died after collapsing in unclear circumstances, becoming the first Palestinian under 18 to die in Israeli detention, officials said.

Walid Ahmad, 17, was a healthy high schooler before his arrest in September for allegedly throwing stones at soldiers, his family said. Rights groups have documented widespread abuse in Israeli detention facilities holding thousands of Palestinians who were rounded up after Hamas’ Oct. 7, 2023, attack ignited the war in the Gaza Strip.

Prison authorities deny any systematic abuse and say they investigate accusations of wrongdoing by prison staff. But the Israeli ministry overseeing prisons acknowledges conditions inside detention facilities have been reduced to the minimum level allowed under Israeli law.

Israel’s prison service did not respond to questions about the cause of death. It said only that a 17-year-old from the West Bank had died in Megiddo Prison, a facility that has previously been accused of abusing Palestinian inmates, “with his medical condition being kept confidential.” It said it investigates all deaths in detention.

Khalid Ahmad, Walid’s father, said his son was a lively teen who enjoyed playing soccer before he was taken from his home in the occupied West Bank during a predawn arrest raid.

Six months later, after several brief court appearances during which no trial date was set, Walid collapsed on March 23 in a prison yard and struck his head, dying soon after, Palestinians officials said, citing eyewitness accounts from other prisoners.

The family believes Walid contracted amoebic dysentery from the poor conditions in the prison, an infection that causes diarrhea, vomiting and dizziness — and can be fatal if left untreated.

The Western-backed Palestinian Authority says he is the first Palestinian under 18 to die in Israeli detention — and the 63rd Palestinian from the West Bank or Gaza since the start of the war. Palestinian prisoner rights groups say that is about one-fifth of the roughly 300 Palestinians who have died in Israeli custody since the 1967 Mideast war, when Israel captured the West Bank, Gaza and east Jerusalem. The Palestinians want all three territories for their future state.

The Palestinian Authority says Israel is holding the bodies of 72 Palestinian prisoners who died in Israeli jails, including 61 who died since the beginning of the war.

Conditions in Israeli prisons have worsened since the start of the war, former detainees told The Associated Press. They described beatings, severe overcrowding, insufficient medical care, scabies outbreaks and poor sanitary conditions.

Israel’s National Security Ministry, which oversees the prison service and is run by ultranationalist Cabinet Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, has boasted of reducing the conditions of Palestinian detainees “to the minimum required by law.” It says the policy is aimed at deterring attacks.

‘Don’t worry about me’

Israel has rounded up thousands of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, saying it suspects them of militancy. Many have been held for months without charge or trial in what is known as administrative detention, which Israel justifies as a necessary security measure. Others are arrested on suspicion of aggression toward soldiers but have their trials continuously delayed, as the military and Israel’s security

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services gather evidence.

Walid sat through at least four court appearances over videoconference, his father said. Each session lasted about three minutes, and another hearing was scheduled for April 21, Walid's father said.

In a February session, four months after Walid was detained, his father noticed that his son appeared to be in poor health.

"His body was weakened due to malnutrition in the prisons in general," the elder Ahmad said. He said Walid told him he had gotten scabies — a contagious skin rash caused by mites that causes intense itching — but had been cured.

"Don't worry about me," his father remembers him saying.

Khalid Ahmad later visited his son's friend, a former soccer teammate who had been held with Walid in the same prison. The friend told him Walid had lost weight but that he was OK.

Four days later, the family heard that a 17-year-old had died in the prison. An hour and half later, they got the news that it was Walid.

"We felt the same way as all the parents of the prisoners and all the families and mothers of the prisoners," said Khalid Ahmad. "We can only say, 'Indeed, we belong to Allah, and indeed to him we shall return.'"

Cause of death is unknown

Walid's lawyer, Firas al-Jabrini, said Israeli authorities denied his requests to visit his client in prison. But he says three prisoners held alongside Walid told him that he was suffering from dysentery, saying it was widespread among young Palestinians held at the facility.

They said Walid suffered from severe diarrhea, vomiting, headaches and dizziness, the lawyer said. He said they suspected the disease was spreading because of dirty water, as well as cheese and yogurt that prison guards brought in the morning and that sat out all day while detainees were fasting for the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

Megiddo, in northern Israel, "is the harshest prison for minors," al-Jabrini said. He said he was told that rooms designed for six prisoners often held 16, with some sleeping on the floor. Many complained of scabies and eczema.

Thaer Shriteh, spokesperson for the Palestinian Authority's detainee commission, said Walid collapsed and hit his head on a metal rod, losing consciousness. "The prison administration did not respond to the prisoners' requests for urgent care to save his life," he said, citing witnesses who spoke to the commission.

The lawyer and the Palestinian official both said an autopsy is needed to determine the cause of death. Israel has agreed to perform one but a date has not been set.

"The danger in this matter is that the Israeli occupation authorities have not yet taken any action to stop this (disease) and have not provided any treatment in general to save the prisoners in Megiddo prison," Shriteh said.

More Republicans want the US to focus on ceasefires in Ukraine and Gaza, a new AP-NORC poll finds

By MARC LEVY and LINLEY SANDERS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — While most Americans disapprove of President Donald Trump's handling of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the conflict is not weighing as heavily on his public perception as it did on President Joe Biden, a new poll shows.

That's because of Trump's solid support from his base on this issue. The survey of U.S. adults from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research finds that about 8 in 10 Republicans approve of Trump's handling of the conflict. Only about 4 in 10 Democrats approved of Biden's handling of the conflict last June, shortly before Biden dropped out of the presidential race.

"During Trump's first administration, we did not actively start any wars. And there's a stark difference between his history and his first term versus the Biden presidency. And I think Trump is just trying to fix things that Biden let get out of hand," said Patrick Vigil, a 60-year-old Republican from New Mexico who voted for Trump in November's election.

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The poll suggests Republicans are growing more satisfied with the country's foreign policy actions as Trump pulls back U.S. support for Ukraine and puts new pressure on allies — notably with his talk of annexing Canada, Greenland and the Panama Canal.

Trump has warned Hamas that there would be "hell to pay" if Israeli hostages weren't returned immediately and urged Israel to wrap up their offensive and "get it over with." He has supported ceasefire talks in both conflicts and said he'd end the war between Ukraine and Russia within "24 hours" — or even before taking office. Since becoming president again, Trump has publicly torn into Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy but also tried to pressure Russia's Vladimir Putin to accept a peace deal.

Broadly, Republicans are more content with the U.S. on solving global issues now that President Trump is in office. About half of Republicans say the U.S.'s current role in world affairs is about right, up from about 2 in 10 last February when Biden was president.

There's a greater consensus that the U.S. should be focused on ceasefire negotiations in Israel and Ukraine than there was last year too. About 6 in 10 U.S. adults say it's "extremely" or "very" important for the U.S. to negotiate a permanent ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine, up from about half in an AP-NORC poll conducted in February 2024, with a similar uptick on the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians.

Republicans have grown more committed to both foreign policy goals since Trump took office, according to the poll. For instance, about 6 in 10 Republicans now think it's highly important for the U.S. to negotiate a permanent ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine, up from about 4 in 10 last year.

"I think we really need to step back and figure out a way just to bring everybody to the table so that they can use their own resources and figure out what they need to do to compromise," said Lisa Major, 61, a registered Republican from Kentucky who voted for Trump in November.

Keith Willey, a Republican-leaning registered independent from Florida who voted for a third-party candidate for president, said peace deals in Ukraine and Gaza have become more important to him over time amid mounting death and destruction.

But Willey said he doesn't support a deal that allows Hamas to stay in control in Gaza and he doesn't support a ceasefire in Ukraine that divides it up with Russia or hinges on the U.S. taking control of Ukraine's rare earth minerals.

He still supports strong American intervention on Ukraine's behalf against Russia, supports strong U.S. backing of Israel and doesn't like Trump's friendly relationship with Russia or Russian President Vladimir Putin.

"I'm not tired of giving weapons to Ukraine. I think we should support where we can to have them fight for their own country. But, generally speaking, I would like to see a ceasefire," Willey, 63, said.

Many Republicans don't want more investment in Ukraine, though — only about 2 in 10 think providing aid to Ukraine's military to fight Russia is "extremely" or "very" important — and not all of Trump's voters are satisfied with Trump's ceasefire efforts.

Michael Johnson, a 36-year-old registered independent from North Carolina who voted for Trump, isn't happy with Trump's handling of Israel's war in Gaza or the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Johnson said Trump had held himself out as a president who could bring the wars to an end quickly but hasn't.

"I don't think he went through with what he said he would do," Johnson said. "He said he would stop it, but it's still going on. There's a lot of people losing their lives out there, young kids and stuff."

And many Republicans want Trump to continue shrinking American involvement abroad. About 4 in 10 Republicans now say the U.S. should take a less active role in world affairs.

That includes Major, who supports Trump, likes how he's handling foreign conflicts and sees him trying to reduce the role the U.S. plays in the world, as she wants him to do.

"For one, it takes our attention off of the citizens of America, but also it may be sending a really negative message where we keep involving ourselves in other people's issues when we can't figure out our own issues," Major said.

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Today in History: April 2, Pope John Paul II dies at 84

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Wednesday, April 2, the 92nd day of 2025. There are 273 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On April 2, 2005, John Paul II, the Polish pope born Karol Józef Wojtyła, died in his Vatican apartment at age 84. The first non-Italian pope in over 450 years, John Paul II became one of the most influential leaders of the late 20th and early 21st centuries while playing a crucial role in the fall of communism in Europe.

Also on this date:

In 1792, Congress passed the Coinage Act, which authorized establishment of the U.S. Mint.

In 1865, Confederate President Jefferson Davis and most of his Cabinet fled the Confederate capital of Richmond, Virginia, after Union troops broke through Confederate lines in the Third Battle of Petersburg.

In 1917, President Woodrow Wilson asked Congress to declare war against Germany, saying, "The world must be made safe for democracy." (Congress declared war four days later.)

In 1982, Argentine troops seized the disputed Falkland Islands from the United Kingdom, sparking the Falklands War.

In 1992, mob boss John Gotti was convicted in New York of murder and racketeering; he was later sentenced to life in prison without parole. (Gotti died in prison in 2002.)

In 2007, in its first case on climate change, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *Massachusetts v. Environmental Protection Agency*, ruled 5-4 that carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases were air pollutants under the Clean Air Act.

In 2012, a gunman killed seven people at Oikos University, a Christian school in Oakland, California. (The gunman, One Goh, died in 2019 while serving a life prison sentence.)

In 2020, the number of confirmed coronavirus cases worldwide surpassed 1 million, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University.

Today's Birthdays: Disc jockey Dr. Demento is 84. Actor Linda Hunt is 80. Musician Emmylou Harris is 78. Actor Christopher Meloni is 64. Tennis Hall of Famer Todd Woodbridge is 54. Actor Pedro Pascal is 50. Actor Adam Rodriguez is 50. Actor Michael Fassbender is 48. Country musician Chris Janson is 39. Actor Jesse Plemons is 37. Rapper Quavo is 34. Country musician Zach Bryan is 29.