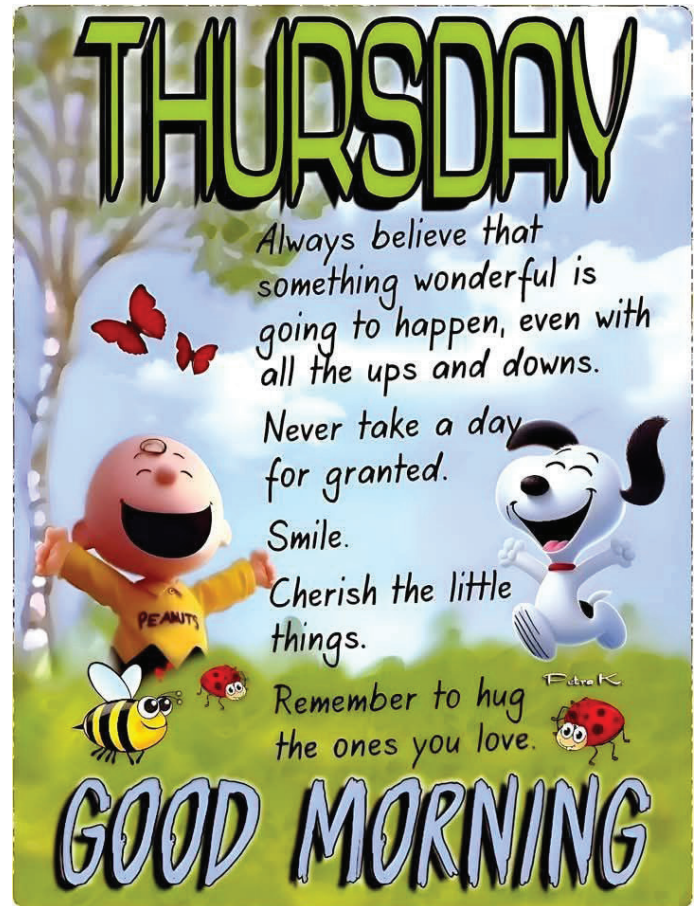


Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 1 of 70

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- 1440 News Headlines](#)
- [4- School 2 hours late](#)
- [4- Grad cards done in Groton](#)
- [5- POPS Concert is Sunday](#)
- [6- Obit: Ronald Hoops](#)
- [7- Sixth Graders place runner-up](#)
- [8- Hand County Fatal Crash](#)
- [9- SD SearchLight: Tobacco tax shift burns up mosquito control money for cities, counties](#)
- [11- SD SearchLight: 'I stole some money': Jurors hear interview recording in \\$1.8 million state theft trial](#)
- [13- SD SearchLight: Rural hospitals question whether they can afford Medicare Advantage contracts](#)
- [15- SD SearchLight: Senate GOP budget resolution sets stage for raising debt limit by as much as \\$5 trillion](#)
- [17- SD SearchLight: Vexed by judicial restraints on Trump, U.S. Senate GOP floats bill to undercut courts](#)
- [18- SD SearchLight: Trump to impose 10% base tariff on international imports, higher levies on some nations](#)
- [21- SD SearchLight: Surprise guest shows up as U.S. House Dems slam education cuts: the Education secretary](#)
- [22- SD SearchLight: Justice Department announces focus on crimes and missing people in Native American areas](#)
- [23- SD SearchLight: Judge orders fired federal probationary workers reinstated in 19 states, D.C.](#)
- [24- Weather Pages](#)
- [28- Daily Devotional](#)
- [29- Subscription Form](#)
- [30- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [31- Upcoming Groton Events](#)
- [32- News from the Associated Press](#)



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.

Friday, April 4

Senior Menu: Lemon baked fish, parsley buttered potatoes mixed vegetables, tropical fruit, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Egg bake.

School Lunch: Fish nuggets, tri taters.

State FFA Convention, SDSU

Saturday, April 5

State FFA Convention, SDSU

Dueling Duo at Groton Legion, 6 p.m.

State DI in Pierre at Middle School

Groton Daily Independent
PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445
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Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 2 of 70

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.

Tariff Time

All imports into the US will face a 10% tariff, following a broad order by President Donald Trump yesterday, while many nations with existing levies on US goods will face additional reciprocal tariffs. The move marks one of the most significant shifts in US trade policies in generations and the realization of a core pillar of Trump's 2024 campaign.

The order targeted a number of countries deemed to have unfair trade practices with the US. Notably, goods from China will face a new 34% tariff (the US imports about \$460B annually), Japan will get hit with a 24% hike (\$152B in annual imports), and the European Union will see a 20% hike (\$605B in annual imports). Lesotho—which sends the US about \$350M in goods—will see the highest tariff, at 50%.

Mexico and Canada will face an already imposed 25% tax, excluding goods covered under existing free trade agreements, while all foreign autos will also see a 25% hike.

Stocks tumbled in extended trading on the news.

World's Smallest Pacemaker

Scientists at Northwestern University announced yesterday they have developed the world's tiniest pacemaker—smaller than a grain of rice—that can be inserted with a syringe. The device could revolutionize heart surgery, offering a minimally invasive way to regulate the essential organ.

Pacemakers are small, battery-operated devices that assist heartbeats with irregular rhythms by sending small electric shocks to help the heart beat normally. The devices can be permanent or temporary, with insertion and removal surgery posing potential risks. The new invention, years from being tested on humans, is activated by infrared light pulses from a wearable device and dissolves after the patient no longer needs it.

Its small size is partially due to its power source, a galvanic cell, which is a simple battery that uses the body's fluids to convert chemical energy into electrical energy. The pacemaker could be especially effective in helping children with congenital heart defects who require temporary pacemakers after surgery.

Experts say the breakthrough in technology opens up possibilities for use in bioelectric medicines, including healing wounds and blocking pain.

Val Kilmer Dies

Actor Val Kilmer, whose many credits include leading roles as Batman and the Doors' Jim Morrison, died yesterday from complications of pneumonia, according to a statement from his daughter. A 2014 throat cancer diagnosis and years of treatment had led to the loss of his voice. He was 65.

Born New Year's Eve 1959, Kilmer grew up in Los Angeles and became one of the youngest students admitted to Juilliard's acting program at age 17. In 1983, he made his Broadway debut in "Slab Boys" alongside Sean Penn and Kevin Bacon, going on to play a mix of theatrical roles, including Hamlet. Regarded by colleagues as an eccentric, Kilmer would perform in more than 60 films including "Top Gun," "Tombstone," and "The Saint."

A fascination with American humorist Mark Twain led the actor to write and perform in a solo play on the writer, "Citizen Twain," amid a broader hiatus from Hollywood in the 2010s.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 3 of 70

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

James Beard Foundation announces 2025 James Beard Award finalists for America's best restaurants and chefs.

"The Simpsons" renewed through its 40th season, extending the show's record as the longest-running scripted prime-time series.

Washington Capitals star Alex Ovechkin now just three goals away from breaking Wayne Gretzky's all-time NHL goals record.

Science & Technology

Engineers develop large language model to solve multistep logistical problems with reasoning similar to that of humans; approach showed 85% success rate on problems such as optimizing the route of robots on a factory floor.

Researchers repurpose modified smartphone camera sensors to image matter-antimatter collision events in real time.

Genetic analysis reveals the first DNA profile of the pastoral culture that inhabited the Sahara during the African Humid Period; the now-desert landscape was a lush savanna between 14,000 and 5,000 years ago.

Business & Markets

Amazon reportedly submits last-minute bid to acquire TikTok ahead of Saturday deadline for TikTok's Chinese parent, ByteDance, to sell its stake in the app or face a US ban; mobile technology company AppLovin also submits bid.

Tesla reports 336,681 vehicle deliveries in Q1, a 13% year-over-year drop; shares still rise on reports CEO Elon Musk could leave role in Department of Government Efficiency.

President Donald Trump's social media company files paperwork with SEC to allow Trump's trust to sell over \$2B of Trump Media and Technology Group shares.

HR software company Rippling publicly releases affidavit of employee who admitted to carrying out corporate espionage for rival firm Deel.

Cryptocurrency firm Circle files for initial public offering, seeks valuation of up to \$5B.

Politics & World Affairs

Federal judge dismisses bribery case against New York City Mayor Eric Adams (D) with prejudice, barring prosecutors from renewing charges in the future.

Over 65 million Americans across 13 states, from Texas to Ohio, brace for extreme weather event that could spawn tornado outbreaks, record flooding, and heavy rain into the weekend.

US Supreme Court weighs whether South Carolina can cut off Medicaid funding to Planned Parenthood ... and rules the Food and Drug Administration

acted lawfully in blocking two manufacturers from marketing fruity- and dessert-flavored vapes.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 4 of 70



Groton Area School District will open two hours late on Thursday, April 3, 2025. OST will open at 7 a.m.



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

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 5 of 70

POPS Concert is Sunday

The Groton Area High School music department will present its annual POPS Concert on Sunday, April 6th at 2:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. in the high school gym. Tickets will not be sold in advance. Admission is \$5.00 at the door.

The concert will feature performances from the Prismatic Sensations Show Choir, Flex Band, and Chamber Choir. Along with the groups, there will be talented soloists and pianists as well. There will not be reserved seating, and seats do fill up quickly, so plan on arriving early to get a great view of the show! The doors will open one hour prior to show time. This concert is one of the highlights of the year for the music department, and you do not want to miss it!

There will also be a Silent Auction with a variety of baskets created by our music students. This is a fundraiser for the music students, so please come ready to support them.

Come on out, have some pop and popcorn, and enjoy performances by the students of the Groton Music Department!

A special "thank you" goes out to Paper Paul for livestreaming this event at GDILIVE!

The Life of Ronald Hoops

Services for Ronald Roy Hoops, 88, of rural Ferney will be 11:00 a.m., Friday, April 4th at Our Savior Lutheran Church, Aberdeen. Rev. Chad Schopp will officiate. Services will be live streamed through the church website. Burial will follow at Union Cemetery, Groton under the direction of Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton.

Visitation will be held at the funeral chapel on Thursday from 5-7 p.m. and on Friday from 10-11 a.m. at the church before the funeral. Service will be live streamed on the Our Savior Lutheran Church Facebook page.

Ron passed away March 25, 2025 at Avera McKennan Hospital in Sioux Falls.

Ronald Roy Hoops was born on September 19, 1936 in Ferney to Roy and Helena (Bahr) Hoops. He attended school in Groton where he excelled in basketball, football, track and baseball. Ron and his brother were part of the Groton baseball team that won the Junior Junior State Championship in 1951. Ron graduated in 1954 and began work as a lineman at James Valley Co-op. He married the love of his life, Maralyn Richardson, on August 11, 1957 in Groton. Together they were blessed with four children. Ron later began doing accounting for James Valley until his retirement in the late 1980's. During all these years, he was also actively farming near their home outside Ferney.



Ron was a passionate sports fan for all of his life. For many years, he would videotape Groton High School basketball and football games with commentary and broadcast them on the local access channel at James Valley. He was an avid Minnesota Vikings and Twins fan. He and Maralyn held Viking season tickets for many years and never missed a home game regardless of the weather. Later, they followed Northern State Wolves basketball with the same intensity.

Ron had the same passion for his faith as he had for sports. He was always very active in his church in positions of leadership and was ahead of his time pioneering the "streaming" of church services on the local access channel. He and Maralyn were involved in Lutherans For Life, manning the Brown County Fair Booth for many years. He also purchased a trailer and created the Witness of the Crosses mobile display that is still in use today. Following his son's injury, Ron became a strong advocate for victims of traumatic brain injuries. He started the Aberdeen Area Brain Injury Support Group that later influenced others around the state and even extended outside of South Dakota. He served as the chairman of the South Dakota Freedom to Work Leadership Council which advised and influenced state legislators and policy makers regarding those affected by brain and other injuries.

Celebrating his life is his wife, Maralyn of Aberdeen, his children, Kyle (Cindy) Hoops of Cedarburg, WI, Karleen (Scott) James of West Chester, IA, Kolin (Abby) Hoops of Denver, CO, Kelly (Neile) Hoops of Sturgis, eight grandchildren: Kayla (Aaron) Waller, Tyler (Gabby) Hoops, Blake James, Ashlee James, Becca Dhliwayo, Gwen Hoops, Owen Hoops, Liam Hoops and five great-grandchildren. Ron is also survived by his siblings, Delores "Dodie" Neumann, JoAnne (Henry) Elsing, Berdeen "Deenie" Fingerlin, and Darold "Darry" (Karen) Hoops.

Preceding him in death were his parents, sister, Betty Jean Jensen and three brothers-in-law, Marion Jensen, Duane Neumann and Henry Fingerlin.

Memorials may be directed to Lutherans for Life.

Casket bearers will be grandsons Blake James, Tyler Hoops, Owen Hoops and Liam Hoops, grandson-in-law Aaron Waller and son-in-law Scott James.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 7 of 70



Groton 6th grade boys finished their season as the runner-up in the Willie Mac tournament in Brookings.

Back row: Rylan Blackwood, coach Jason Rowen, Graham Rose, Drew Fjeldheim, Mason Locke, Carter Boerger, Kinton Tracy, Coach Ryan Fjeldheim and Ivan Schwan; Front row: Hank Hill and Gradyn Rowen. (Courtesy photo)

Hand County Fatal Crash

What: Single vehicle fatal crash

Where: US Highway 14, mile marker 314, one mile west of Wessington, SD

When: 9:24 a.m., Wednesday, April 2, 2025

Driver 1: 22-year-old female from Highmore, SD, fatal injuries

Vehicle 1: 2005 Ford Excursion

Seat belt Used: No

Hand County, S.D.- A 22-year-old Highmore woman died this morning in a single vehicle crash on SD Highway 14, one mile west of Wessington, SD.

The name of the person involved has not been released pending notification of family members.

Preliminary crash information indicates the driver of a 2005 Ford Excursion was traveling eastbound on US Highway 14 near mile marker 314 when the vehicle left the roadway and entered the north ditch where it rolled. The driver died at the scene.

Road conditions may have been a contributing factor in the crash.

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

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

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Note: Records of state-reportable crashes are now available at <http://www.safesd.gov/> . Records should be available about 10 days after the investigation is complete.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Tobacco tax shift burns up mosquito control money for cities, counties

Quiet change in 2014 tied West Nile prevention budget to anti-smoking efforts

BY: JOHN HULT - APRIL 2, 2025 5:05 PM

A move to put more tobacco tax money toward South Dakota's day-to-day government expenses might mean more mosquito bites — and a greater risk of West Nile virus — after July.

Gov. Larry Rhoden signed Senate Bill 54 into law on Friday. It reduces the amount of yearly tobacco tax revenue used to help people quit and avoid smoking from \$5 million to \$2 million. The rest of the money raised annually by the tax — more than \$40 million, typically — goes to the state's general fund.

Backers of the bill said smoking rates have dropped, the need for prevention is lower, and the state needs the money to pay for its expanded Medi-

icaid program. Opponents called the move foolish, citing spikes in the use of nicotine vape products as a blind spot in tobacco prevention that could cause public health trouble down the road.

One piece of the tobacco tax change didn't get much attention, though.

For the past 10 years, South Dakota has funneled a half-million dollars of the sin tax bounty it collects annually from tobacco users into mosquito control grants for cities and counties.

Those grants, cities and counties learned last week, won't be available for the next fiscal year, which starts July 1.

The goal of the grant program was to reduce the risk of West Nile virus, the most severe version of which can be deadly. Fifty-four South Dakotans have died from West Nile since 1999.

The loss of the grant money could impact smaller communities more than larger ones. Joe Kippley, public health director for the city of Sioux Falls, said his department anticipated the loss and has budgeted to continue mosquito spraying.

In smaller towns, the loss of grant funding could be a little harder to replace.

After this summer, "we're not sure what will happen," Viborg Finance Officer Brandy Skonhovd said.



Tom Hedrick calibrates a mosquito fogger for the city of Groton.

(Paul Kosel/Groton Independent)

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 10 of 70

Moving mosquito money around

The story of how cigarette dollars turned into insecticide grants begins in 2006.

That's the year voters passed Initiated Measure 2, which slapped an additional \$1-per-pack tax on cigarettes and an extra 25% tax on other forms of tobacco on top of the state's existing tobacco taxes.

The first \$30 million of tax revenue generated as a result went to the state's general fund, the measure specified, after which \$5 million would be put in the Tobacco Prevention and Reduction Trust Fund and used for anti-smoking programming.

Tax collections beyond \$35 million would split between the Property Tax Reduction Fund, the Education Enhancement Tobacco Trust Fund and the Health Care Tobacco Trust Fund.

That setup had shifted by 2014.

That's the year Doneen Hollingsworth, who was the secretary of the Department of Health, asked lawmakers to sign off on using a half-million dollars from the \$5 million anti-smoking fund for mosquito control grants.

The recession of 2007 through 2009 tightened budgets, she said. The state had already begun to dip into that fund to pay for things like childhood immunizations, she told them, and there was a new problem to address in 2014.

The federal money for West Nile monitoring and mosquito control made available to states when the virus first emerged had dried up. Then-Gov. Dennis Daugaard proposed using tobacco tax money that year, Hollingsworth said, "to address this urgent public health issue" by keeping the grant money flowing to local governments.

That wouldn't break the law, Hollingsworth assured the Legislature's Joint Appropriations Committee.

The state, in 2014 and today, gets about a million anti-smoking dollars a year from the federal government. As long as that money is available, she said, the state could skim up to a million prevention trust fund dollars off the top and still meet voters' expectations.

"We've always spent at least \$5 million on tobacco prevention and control," she said.

Another tobacco tax shift

Since then, the state has spent about \$5 million from the fund to control mosquitoes. Grant awards, used for chemicals or the equipment needed to spray it, are tied to the prevalence and risk of West Nile in local communities.

During debate on this year's legislative Senate Bill 54, Bureau of Finance and Management Commissioner Jim Terwilliger told lawmakers it never made much sense to tie the grants to tobacco funding.

"That's an example of the different things that I think can go away, and we could be smarter with these funds," the commissioner told the Senate Appropriations Committee in February, during his pitch for reducing the amount of tobacco tax money the state spends on anti-smoking programs.

Terwilliger rattled off statistics on lower smoking rates among teens and adults in the years since voters passed the tobacco tax, too, and said South Dakota spends more on anti-tobacco programming than other states.

Jennifer Stalley, Midwest policy director for the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, was on hand to refute Terwilliger point-by-point in her opposition testimony.

But she and Terwilliger saw eye to eye on one thing.

"I would tell you that I don't think that fits within the letter of the law," Stalley said of the use of tobacco money for mosquito control.

Lawmakers' passage of SB 54 put an end to the \$500,000 carve-out for West Nile, and appropriators didn't supplement the state budget with any replacement funds to keep the grants going.

Tia Kafka, spokeswoman for the state Department of Health, said the state will continue parts of its West Nile virus programming. That includes federally funded risk prediction modeling and a federally funded epidemiologist to serve as the program's overseer.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 11 of 70

Also continued will be the state's West Nile Virus dashboard, which shows modeled risk and the mapped results of the mosquito collection efforts that attempt to catalog the prevalence of the mosquito species that spread the virus.

"However, very limited mosquito testing will occur in 2025, and the program's sustainability beyond that year is uncertain," Kafka said.

Virus modeling predicted 60 cases for 2024; the dashboard lists 21 total West Nile cases and one death from the disease. The Health Department's website does not show a prediction for 2025.

Cities plan for uncertain future

It costs Viborg around \$2,500 to buy the insecticide used to reduce West Nile risk, according to Skonhovd, the city finance officer. The city got \$8,000 last year, though, to pay for new equipment.

The spraying in and around the southeast South Dakota town of 834 starts in May and continues into the fall.

"When we have football games, we try to keep the mosquito population down for those," Skonhovd said.

Paul Kosel runs the mosquito control program for Groton, population 1,355. Kosel is also the newspaper publisher and information technology supervisor for the community, bordered by wetlands on the eastern side of Brown County. That county has long been the state's most reliably risky for West Nile in the two-plus decades the disease has been endemic in South Dakota.

"Trying to do mosquito control in Groton is a living nightmare because we're surrounded by water," Kosel said.

Kosel and Skonhovd both say they feel confident they'll be able to pay for this year's work with the money that's available until July 1, when the tobacco-funded grant spigot turns off with the end of the state's fiscal year.

After that, they both hope the state finds a way to keep things going. Insecticide and equipment can be a strain on a small-town budget.

"It's not cheap, that's for sure," Kosel said.

Larger cities could have an easier time. Joe Kippley, public health director for the city of Sioux Falls, set aside \$750,000 for mosquito control this summer. Last year, the city received \$20,000 from the state for spraying, but Kippley said the city knew the money would go away this year, and that it had previously set its budget up to withstand the expense of spraying with or without state help.

"We do not budget for these grant dollars annually because they are distributed through an application process and are therefore not guaranteed each year," Kippley said in an emailed statement. "The discontinuation of this funding will not impact the city's mosquito control program and services."

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.

'I stole some money': Jurors hear interview recording in \$1.8 million state theft trial

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - APRIL 2, 2025 8:49 PM

PIERRE — Prosecutors played a recording Wednesday of a defendant allegedly confessing to the theft of \$1.8 million from the state of South Dakota.

"I stole some money," Lonna Carroll said while audibly crying in the recording.

Meanwhile, her defense attorney continued to say the state was negligent in its oversight and the case is too old to prosecute.

Wednesday was the second day of a trial expected to last three days at the Hughes County Courthouse. The state continued to present its case, after Tuesday's opening statements and jury selection.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 12 of 70

Carroll, a 68-year-old retiree, is charged with two felony counts of grand theft for crimes she allegedly committed from 2010 to 2023 while working as an administrative assistant for the Division of Child Protection Services in the state Department of Social Services. She faces up to 25 years in prison and a \$50,000 fine for the first count, and 15 years in prison and a \$30,000 fine for the second count.

Once a child is placed in the state's care, Child Protection Services employees can make financial requests on the child's behalf for items such as school supplies, clothing or a bed. The funds are deposited into a bank account for the child.

The prosecution alleges Carroll made requests for children that were no longer in the state's care, approved the requests, deposited checks into accounts for the children at American Bank and Trust in Pierre, and later withdrew the deposited amounts in cash. Carroll allegedly did that 215 times, stealing a total of \$1,777,665.73 over the course of 13 years.

The audio recording played for jurors included state Division of Criminal Investigation agent Charles Swanson walking Carroll through some evidence illustrating her involvement in the case.

She verbally admitted to depositing checks at American Bank and Trust and withdrawing the funds in cash, and answered yes when asked if the situation spiraled out of control.

The case is part of a rash of criminal allegations against state employees that state Attorney General Marty Jackley has filed since last year, leading not only to criminal prosecutions but also to a series of administrative and legislative reforms adopted in response.

Evidence shows spending on clothing, big cash deposits

Division of Criminal Investigation agent Matt Glenn led the investigation of Carroll after Department of Social Services staff contacted him on Feb. 26, 2024. A department employee had noticed discrepancies between spreadsheets and the balances in accounts that were managed by Carroll, who by that time had retired and moved to Algona, Iowa.

During Glenn's testimony, the prosecution presented evidence that Carroll had been spending thousands on clothing. The evidence included photos of storage unit 56 at Capital Storage in Pierre. Carroll's Wells Fargo bank statements showed she had been paying for the unit.

The unit was "full of totes and garbage bags full of clothes and other personal items," Glenn said, including boxes of receipts.

Those receipts showed thousands of dollars spent on clothing, mostly in cash. One receipt showed \$1,000 in cash spent at Al's Oasis in Oacoma on clothing.

"It was clear she was living outside her means," Glenn said.

Eric Grover, who identified as a coworker and friend of Carroll's, said during his testimony that a local boutique knew her "and they would give her a call when they would get new shipments in."

Carroll's court-appointed attorney Timothy Whalen asked Glenn if the statute of limitations — a time limit on the prosecution of crimes — was considered in his investigation. Glenn replied that "the clock starts" when the crime is first reported.

Whalen has frequently objected to the admittance of evidence during the trial, arguing unsuccessfully that the charges were brought after the statute of limitations expired.

April Pontrelli works in the Attorney General's Office as an intelligence analyst looking into white collar crimes, typically fraud. She conducted an analysis of Carroll's personal Wells Fargo bank account, which showed cash deposits from 2010 to 2023 totaling \$682,900.30.

The cash depositing peaked in 2016 when she deposited \$79,815.13 — more than three times her annual take-home pay. The analysis showed she spent \$48,000 on retail goods that year.

The analysis also showed she was leasing three vehicles by 2020 and had multiple apartments.

Defense questions state oversight

The Department of Social Services was audited while Carroll worked there. The department has an annual budget of \$1.8 billion and more than 1,500 full-time positions.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 13 of 70

Kelly Mikkelsen with the state Department of Legislative Audit testified that sample batches are used to audit state departments. He said those samples did not necessarily include accounts Carroll allegedly stole from.

Exhibits showed during his testimony that Carroll made and approved initial requests as low as \$1,500 that eventually reached over \$27,000. She would then deposit those sums as separate checks into accounts, and withdraw the money soon after.

Legislative Audit's investigation indicated Carroll's involvement in the theft of \$591,305.20 from 2019 to 2022 alone. Those years were separated out because the transactions included the entire paper trail — from Carroll making and approving requests, to bank statements, slips and receipts for the cash she withdrew.

"Something that should have raised an eyebrow with somebody, wouldn't you agree?" Whalen said.

He asked Mikkelsen why internal controls to catch such behavior were not in place.

"I think those were circumvented by Lonna Carroll," Mikkelsen said. "There's always another angle. There's always a way to circumvent them."

The prosecution is expected to rest its case Thursday, after which the defense will have a chance to present its case.

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

Rural hospitals question whether they can afford Medicare Advantage contracts

Some have canceled — or are considering ending — agreements with insurance companies that offer the plans, saying they jeopardize their finances and impede patient care

BY: ARIELLE ZIONTS, KFF HEALTH NEWS - APRIL 2, 2025 8:27 AM

Rural hospital leaders are questioning whether they can continue to afford to do business with Medicare Advantage companies, and some say the only way to maintain services and protect patients is to end their contracts with the private insurers.

Medicare Advantage plans pay hospitals lower rates than traditional Medicare, said Jason Merkley, CEO of Brookings Health System in South Dakota. Merkley worried the losses would spark staff layoffs and cuts to patient services. So last year, Brookings Health dropped all four contracts it had with major Medicare Advantage companies.

"I've had lots of discussions with CEOs and executive teams across the country in regard to that," said Merkley, whose health system operates a hospital and clinics in the small city of Brookings and surrounding rural areas.

Merkley and other rural hospital operators in recent years have enumerated a long list of concerns about the publicly funded, privately run health plans. In addition to the reimbursement issue, their complaints include payment delays and a resistance to authorizing patient care.

But rural hospitals abandoning their Medicare Advantage contracts can leave local patients without nearby in-network providers or force them to scramble to switch coverage.

Medicare is the main federal health insurance program for people 65 or older. Participants can enroll in traditional, government-run Medicare or in a Medicare Advantage plan run by a private insurance company.

In 2024, 56% of urban Medicare recipients were enrolled in a private plan, according to a report by the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission, a federal agency that advises Congress. While just 47% of rural recipients enrolled in a private plan, Medicare Advantage has expanded more quickly in rural areas.

In recent years, average Medicare Advantage reimbursements to rural hospitals were about 90% of

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 14 of 70

what traditional Medicare paid, according to a new report from the American Hospital Association. And traditional Medicare already pays hospitals much less than private plans, according to a recent study by Rand Corp., a research nonprofit.

Carrie Cochran-McClain, chief policy officer at the National Rural Health Association, said Medicare Advantage is particularly challenging for small rural facilities designated critical access hospitals. Traditional Medicare pays such hospitals extra, but the private insurance companies aren't required to do so.

"The vast majority of our rural hospitals are not in a position where they can take further cuts to payment," Cochran-McClain said. "There are so many that are just really in a precarious financial spot."

Nearly 200 rural hospitals have ended inpatient services or shuttered since 2005.

Mehmet Oz — doctor, former talk show host, and President Donald Trump's nominee to lead the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services — has promoted and worked for the private Medicare industry and called for "Medicare Advantage for all." But during his recent confirmation hearing, he called for more oversight as he acknowledged bipartisan concerns about the plans' cost to taxpayers and their effect on patients.

Cochran-McClain said some Republican lawmakers want to address these issues while supporting Medicare Advantage.

"But I don't think we've seen enough yet to really know what direction that's all going to take," she said.

Medicare Advantage plans can offer lower premiums and out-of-pocket costs for some participants. Nearly all offer extra benefits, such as vision, hearing, and dental coverage. Many also offer perks, such as gym memberships, nutrition services, and allowances for over-the-counter health supplies.

But a recent study in the Health Services Research journal found that rural patients on private plans struggled to access and afford care more often than rural enrollees on traditional Medicare and urban participants in both kinds of plans.

Susan Reilly, a spokesperson for the Better Medicare Alliance, said a recent report published by her group, which promotes Medicare Advantage, found that private plans are more affordable than traditional Medicare for rural beneficiaries. That analysis was conducted by an outside firm and based on a government survey of Medicare recipients.

Reilly also pointed to a study in The American Journal of Managed Care that found the growth of private plans in rural areas from 2008-2019 was associated with increased financial stability for hospitals and a reduced risk of closure.

Merkley said that's not what he's seeing on the ground in rural South Dakota.

He said traditional Medicare reimbursed Brookings Health System 91 cents for every dollar it spent on care in 2023, while Medicare Advantage plans paid 76 cents per dollar spent. He said his staff tried negotiating better contracts with the big Medicare Advantage companies, to no avail.

Patients who remain on private plans that no longer contract with their local hospitals and clinics may face higher prices unless they travel to in-network facilities, which in rural areas can be hours away. Merkley said most patients at Brookings Health switched to traditional Medicare or to regional Medicare Advantage plans that work better with the hospital system.

But switching from private to traditional Medicare can be unaffordable for patients.

That's because in most states, Medigap plans — supplemental plans that help people on traditional Medicare cover out-of-pocket costs — can deny coverage or base their prices on patients' medical history if they switch from a private plan.

Some rural health systems say they no longer work with any Medicare Advantage companies. They include Great Plains Health, which serves parts of rural Nebraska, Kansas, and Colorado, and Kimball Health Services, which is based in two small towns in Nebraska and Wyoming.

Medicare Advantage plans often limit the providers patients can see and require referrals and prior authorization for certain services. Requesting referrals, seeking preauthorization, and appealing denials can delay treatment for patients while adding extra work for doctors and billing staff.

"The unique rural lens on that is that rural providers really tend to be pretty bare-bone shops," Cochran-McClain said. "That kind of administrative burden pulls people away from really being able to focus on

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 15 of 70

providing quality care to their beneficiaries.”

Jonathon Green, CEO of Taylor Health Care Group in rural Georgia, said his system had to set up a team to deal solely with coverage denials, mostly from Medicare Advantage companies. He said some plans frequently decline to authorize payments before treatments, refuse to cover services they already approved, and deny payment for care that shouldn't need approval.

In these cases, Green said, the companies argue that the care wasn't appropriate for the patient.

“We hear that term constantly — ‘It's not medically necessary,’” he said. “That's the catchall for everything.”

Green said Taylor Health Care Group has considered dropping its Medicare Advantage contracts but is keeping them for now.

Cochran-McClain said her group supports policy changes, such as a federal bill that aims to streamline prior authorization while requiring Medicare Advantage companies to share data about the process. The 2024 bill was co-sponsored by more than half of U.S. senators, but needs to be reintroduced this year.

Cochran-McClain said rural-health advocates also want the government to require private plans to pay critical access hospitals and similar rural facilities as much as they would receive from traditional Medicare.

Green and Merkley stressed that they aren't against the concept of private Medicare plans; they just want them to be fairer to rural facilities and patients.

Green said rural and independent hospitals don't have the leverage that urban hospitals and large chains do in negotiations with giant Medicare Advantage companies.

“We just don't have the ability to swing the pendulum enough,” he said.

Arielle Zions, rural health care correspondent for KFF Health News, is based in South Dakota. She primarily covers South Dakota and its neighboring states and tribal nations. Arielle previously worked at South Dakota Public Broadcasting, where she reported on business and economic development. Before that, she was the criminal justice reporter at the Rapid City Journal and a general assignment reporter at the Nogales International, on the border of Arizona and Mexico. She graduated from Pitzer College in Claremont, California. Arielle lives in Rapid City with her cat, Sully.

Senate GOP budget resolution sets stage for raising debt limit by as much as \$5 trillion

Thune says it's time to move forward and 'further advance our shared Republican agenda'

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - APRIL 2, 2025 5:39 PM

WASHINGTON — U.S. Senate Republicans released an updated budget resolution Wednesday that sets a May 9 deadline for more than a dozen committees to approve their slice of the massive package that will permanently extend the GOP tax cuts and make significant reductions in spending.

The 70-page budget resolution, however, includes different guidelines for the House and Senate committees, allowing GOP leaders to sidestep their differences on policy for the moment, but not the long haul.

The budget resolution also sets the stage for the House to raise the debt limit by \$4 trillion and the Senate to lift it by not more than \$5 trillion in the reconciliation package.

Senate Budget Committee Chairman Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., wrote in a statement that final approval of the budget resolution would “unlock the ability for the appropriate Senate committees to fully fund our border needs for four years, provide much-needed financial relief to our military at a time of great danger, make the 2017 tax cuts permanent to energize the economy, and do what has been promised for decades: go through every line item of the budget to cut wasteful and unnecessary spending — hopefully by the trillions.”

Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., released a statement of his own, saying the “parliamentarian has reviewed the Budget Committee's substitute amendment and deemed it appropriate for consideration

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 16 of 70

under the Budget Act.”

“It is now time for the Senate to move forward with this budget resolution in order to further advance our shared Republican agenda in Congress,” Thune wrote.

The Senate parliamentarian is the nonpartisan scorekeeper who ensures everything included in a reconciliation bill meets the chamber’s strict rules.

Here comes the vote-a-rama

The complicated reconciliation process will allow the GOP to approve its core policy goals without needing support from Democrats in the Senate, where 60 votes are usually needed to advance legislation. Reconciliation does, however, come with several hoops to jump through.

One of those hurdles will come later this week when the Senate endures the dreaded vote-a-rama; a marathon amendment voting session that typically lasts overnight. After that, senators will be able to send the budget resolution to the House for final approval.

The tax-and-spending blueprint released Wednesday will send a dozen House committees instructions on how to draft their pieces of the package, while 10 Senate committees will write bills.

Typically, the committee instructions, which just include a budget target, are similar, if not identical, for the House and Senate. But differences of opinion between Republican leaders about how much to cut federal spending, as well as other disagreements, led to differing instructions.

The House has a significantly higher threshold for cutting government spending than the Senate.

The Agriculture Committee needs to slice at least \$230 billion; Education and Workforce must reduce spending by a minimum of \$330 billion; Energy and Commerce needs to cut no less than \$880 billion; Financial Services must find at least \$1 billion in savings; Natural Resources has a minimum of \$1 billion; Oversight and Government Reform has a floor of \$50 billion; and the Transportation Committee needs to reduce deficits by \$10 billion or more.

House committees that can increase the federal deficit include the Armed Services Committee with a cap of \$100 billion in new spending, Homeland Security with a \$90 billion ceiling for new funding for programs it oversees, Judiciary with a maximum of \$110 billion and Ways and Means, which can increase deficits up to \$4.5 trillion for tax cuts.

Spending cuts in Senate

Senators set a much lower bar for themselves in terms of spending cuts, though the way the reconciliation instructions are written, as a floor and not a ceiling, will give leeway for those committees to cut much more.

Four Senate committees — Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry; Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs; Energy and Natural Resources; and Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, or HELP — must each find at least \$1 billion in spending cuts over the 10-year budget window.

Senate committees also got instructions for increasing the deficit, which will allow them to spend up to the dollar amount outlined in the budget resolution. Those committees include Armed Services at \$150 billion; Commerce, Science and Transportation with \$20 billion; Environment and Public Works at \$1 billion; Finance with \$1.5 trillion in new deficits, likely for tax cuts; Homeland Security at \$175 billion and Judiciary with \$175 billion.

Once the House and Senate both vote to adopt the same budget resolution, the committees can formally begin drafting and marking up their bills.

Those bills, according to the instructions, must be sent to the Budget committees before May 9. That panel will then bundle all of the various pieces together into one reconciliation package and send it to the floor.

The House and Senate must vote to approve the same reconciliation package before it can go to President Donald Trump for his signature and become law.

Republicans have a paper-thin majority in the House and will need to ensure that lawmakers from across the party support all of the elements going into the reconciliation package. Even a few defectors in that

chamber could block the bill from moving forward.

Senate GOP leaders have a bit more wiggle room, but cannot lose more than three of their members and pass a reconciliation bill.

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.

Vexed by judicial restraints on Trump, U.S. Senate GOP floats bill to undercut courts

Thune says Republicans are considering bill, but doesn't commit to a floor vote

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA - APRIL 2, 2025 5:33 PM

WASHINGTON — Amid dozens of injunctions placed against the Trump administration, Republicans on the U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary discussed a bill Wednesday to curb the nationwide effects of those orders from federal judges.

The bill, sponsored by GOP Iowa Sen. Chuck Grassley, who leads the committee, would prohibit district court judges from issuing injunctions that have nationwide effects.

"We all have to agree to give up the universal injunction as a weapon against policies we disagree with," Grassley said. "The damage it causes to the judicial system and to our democracy is too great."

As of Friday, 39 judges who were appointed across "five different presidents and sitting in 11 different district courts across seven circuits" have ruled against the Trump administration, said one of the witnesses, Stephen Vladeck of Georgetown University Law Center.

President Donald Trump and Republican allies in Congress have complained that such injunctions give judges in single districts too much power to stymie the administration's agenda.

Trump has also taken to social media to attack the judges, especially one who temporarily barred use of the Alien Enemies Act of 1798 to quickly deport Venezuelan nationals.

Senate Majority Leader John Thune of South Dakota said Tuesday that Republicans are considering Grassley's bill, but did not commit to bringing it to the floor for a vote.

House Republicans have introduced a similar bill.

Senate Democrats criticized the hearing and argued that the reason there are so many injunctions against the president's executive orders is because they are unconstitutional.

The top Democrat on the committee, Sen. Dick Durbin of Illinois, pointed to the several nationwide injunctions against Trump's executive order to end the constitutional right to birthright citizenship, which the administration has asked the U.S. Supreme Court in an emergency request to reverse.

Republicans see abuse

Republicans characterized the flurry of injunctions against administration actions as judicial activism.

Republican Sen. Josh Hawley of Missouri said the injunctions were unprecedented.

Hawley called the rulings from district courts a "pattern of abuse." He added that it's not only being done with nationwide injunctions, but with temporary restraining orders.

Florida Sen. Ashley Moody also took issue with temporary restraining orders, which generally are not appealable.

"There is keen interest in making sure our judiciary system remains impartial and that it is making rulings only in terms of relief to the parties before it and that we are encouraging expeditious resolution of these extraordinary important matters," Moody said.

Criticism sparks threats, Dems say

Sens. Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota and Sheldon Whitehouse of Rhode Island raised concerns about the increased threats of violence aimed at judges.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 18 of 70

Whitehouse said the reaction from Republicans about preliminary injunctions against the Trump administration puts those judges and their families at risk.

"The discomfort to fury...about decisions against the Trump administration may actually have a lot to do with the unprecedented lawlessness and lawbreaking of the Trump administration rather than a weird cabal of judges trying to intrude," Whitehouse said.

Klobuchar said that Trump has attacked judges on social media and has posted images of himself wearing a crown.

"We do not live in a kingdom," she said. "It is important that we not lose sight of the underlying cause of these injunctions. It is not that these judges are 'crooked' or 'lunatics' or 'evil.' Those are words used by the president, it is because the administration is violating the constitution.

Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts on March 18 issued a rare statement, pushing back against Trump's suggestion that a judge who issued an injunction against an administration order face impeachment.

"For more than two centuries, it has been established that impeachment is not an appropriate response to disagreement concerning a judicial decision," Roberts said. "The normal appellate review process exists for that purpose."

Jennifer Shutt contributed to this story.

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

Trump to impose 10% base tariff on international imports, higher levies on some nations

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY - APRIL 2, 2025 4:23 PM

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump rolled out sweeping "reciprocal" tariffs Wednesday on trading partners and allies across the globe.

Declaring that foreign trade practices have created a "national emergency," the president unveiled a baseline 10% levy on all international imports, plus what he described as additional "kind" and "discounted" tariff rates that will increase but not match the rates other countries apply to American imports.

The levies will hit U.S. industries from agriculture to manufacturing to fashion.

The 10% universal tariffs become effective April 5, with higher levies set for April 9, according to Trump's executive order. Trump's remarks Wednesday about the start dates varied from the order's language.

Trump is the first president to enact tariffs under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act — something he already did in March when slapping levies on China, Canada and Mexico over the production and smuggling of illicit fentanyl.

According to a table distributed at Trump's speech, U.S. tariffs will reach 34% on imports from China, 46% on products from Vietnam and 20% on European Union imports, among other increases.

Canada and Mexico will not see additional tariffs on top of the already imposed 25% on goods (10% on energy and potash) not compliant with the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement, or USMCA. All compliant goods can continue to enter the U.S. levy-free.

The new 34% duties on China are set to stack on top of older 20% tariffs, according to some media reports, though Trump did not specify in his remarks or order.

Countries that levy a 10% tax on American goods — including Brazil and the United Kingdom — will only see a 10% match.

The increased levies come as 25% tariffs on foreign cars kick in at midnight.

Business owners who purchase goods from outside the U.S. will have to pay the increased duty rates to bring the products over the border, unless Trump carves out exceptions for certain industries.

The president did not mention carve-outs in his remarks, but language in his subsequent executive order details exceptions for steel, aluminum, cars and auto parts already subject to tariffs under Section 232

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 19 of 70

of the Trade Expansion Act. Any products designated in the future under Section 232 will also be exempt from the new levies announced Wednesday.

Other goods not subject to the "reciprocal" tariffs include copper, pharmaceuticals, semiconductors, lumber, and "energy and other certain minerals that are not available in the United States," according to the order.

Trump introduced the taxes on imports with fanfare Wednesday in the White House Rose Garden, where he said, "This is Liberation Day."

"April 2, 2025, will forever be remembered as the day American industry was reborn," Trump said.

"For decades, our country has been looted, pillaged, raped and plundered by nations near and far, both friend and foe alike," Trump said.

Republican lawmakers, including House Speaker Mike Johnson of Louisiana and Georgia U.S. Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, attended the event alongside several of Trump's Cabinet members and representatives from the United Auto Workers.

Not all Republicans have signaled support for tariffs. Senate Majority Leader John Thune said at an event in his home state of South Dakota in August 2024 that Trump's trade policy is a "recipe for increased inflation."

The White House has circulated figures claiming the U.S. will raise up to \$600 billion in revenue per year as a result of the tariffs. The figure was met with skepticism by economists because the amount of imports will likely change under higher levies.

The U.S. is the largest importer of goods in the world, according to the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative. The country's top suppliers in 2022 included China, Mexico, Canada, Japan and Germany.

Economists: Americans will pay

Since Trump began campaigning on tariffs, economists have warned that increased costs for businesses will be passed onto consumers.

Rising prices under Trump's "reciprocal" tariff scenario are likely to cost an extra \$2,400 to \$3,400 per family, according to the Yale Budget Lab, with most of the financial burden falling on the lowest-income households.

An analysis from the Peterson Institute on International Economics estimated the typical American household would lose over \$1,200, just from the 25% tariffs already imposed on China, Canada and Mexico.

Several small business owners told States Newsroom Tuesday they're worried about increasing production costs and whether higher prices will chase away customer demand.

Erica York, of the center-right Tax Foundation that advocates for lower taxes, said in an interview with States Newsroom Tuesday that the levies will be "the largest peacetime tax increase we've seen in history."

State officials worry over impact

Democratic state officials sounded the alarm Wednesday over losses for key industries that drive their local economies.

New Mexico State Treasurer Laura Montoya said her state's energy and agriculture sectors would be victims in a trade war.

"New Mexico is a key player in this conversation, because the non-negotiable reality is that New Mexico is, like the United States as a whole, dependent on trade with our international partners particularly Mexico," Montoya said on a virtual press briefing hosted by the state economic advocacy group Americans for Responsible Growth.

Montoya said oil and gas production accounts for 35% of the state's budget and that the industry relies on machinery imported from Mexico.

Additionally, New Mexico, a largely rural state, relies heavily on agricultural trade. It processes a third of the cattle coming across the southwest border, and Montoya said farmers and ranchers will "face blows as tariffs on cattle and produce will result in slow food production."

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 20 of 70

Washington state, a top U.S. agricultural exporter, sources 90% of its fertilizer from Canada. Treasurer Mike Pellicciotti said the state would be "completely squeezed" by "reckless economic decisions." "He is crushing the free exchange of goods, and making it much more difficult and much more burdensome on working families. So of course, he needs to call it 'Liberation Day,' because he knows he's doing the complete opposite, and he is trying to frame it in a way that is completely the opposite of what is being accomplished today," Pellicciotti said.

Dems predict consumer stress

Democrats on Capitol Hill seized on Trump's new trade policy as a way to push their message that the president is abandoning middle and working class households.

Sen. Angela Alsobrooks of Maryland said the White House is "tone-deaf" in dubbing the tariff announcement as "Liberation Day."

Trump has said in media interviews, "'You know, there's going to be a little pain, some minor pain and disruption.' But the people that I represent don't regard increasing costs of groceries, increasing costs of owning a home, increasing costs of owning an automobile, as a minor disruption," Alsobrooks said.

In back-to-back Democratic press conferences Wednesday, Sen. Tim Kaine of Virginia slammed Trump's use of emergency powers in March to justify a 10% duty on Canadian energy and 25% on all other imports.

Kaine warned about the effect on his state's sizable shipbuilding industry. Approximately 35% of steel and aluminum used to build U.S. ships and submarines comes from Canada, he said.

Senators approved, 51-48, a joint resolution Wednesday evening on a bill, sponsored by Kaine, that would undo Trump's tariffs on Canadian imports triggered by an emergency declaration targeting illicit fentanyl coming over the northern border.

Four Republicans joined the Democrats in passing the largely symbolic legislation, which will now head to the House. The GOP senators included: Susan Collins of Maine, Mitch McConnell and Rand Paul of Kentucky, and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska.

Earlier Wednesday, Kaine pointed to a report in Canadian news outlet The Globe and Mail that found the White House grossly overstated the amount of fentanyl smuggled through the northern border.

"Canada stood with us on 9/11, Canada has stood side-by-side with U.S. troops in every war we have been in. They have fought with our troops. They've bled with our troops. They've died with our troops in every war since the war of 1812, and yet we're going to treat them like an enemy," Kaine said.

Kaine's bill, co-signed by eight Democratic and independent senators, drew one Republican co-sponsor, Paul of Kentucky.

The bill gained statements of support from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and former Vice President Mike Pence's advocacy group Advancing American Freedom, among numerous organizations across the political spectrum.

House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries criticized Trump's anticipated tariff announcement Wednesday morning at his weekly press conference.

"We were told that grocery costs were going to go down on day one of the Trump presidency. Costs aren't going down in America. They're going up, and the Trump tariffs are going to make things more costly," Jeffries, of New York, said.

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

Surprise guest shows up as U.S. House Dems slam education cuts: the Education secretary

BY: SHAUNEEN MIRANDA - APRIL 2, 2025 3:19 PM

WASHINGTON — A press conference by a dozen U.S. House Democrats outside the U.S. Department of Education took an unusual turn on Wednesday when the subject of their criticism — Education Secretary Linda McMahon — unexpectedly joined them.

The Democrats had met with the Trump administration appointee a few minutes earlier to press her about the sweeping shifts at the U.S. Department of Education, where she and President Donald Trump are seeking to dismantle the agency.

The lawmakers told reporters that at the scheduled meeting, they questioned McMahon on how the department could carry out its primary responsibilities when the agency continues to see dramatic changes. That includes mass layoffs that hit core units and an executive order from Trump calling on the secretary to “take all necessary steps to facilitate the closure” of the department to the maximum extent she legally can.

Only Congress, which established the 45-year-old department, has the power to abolish it.

The Democrats said they were grateful that McMahon met with them but dissatisfied with and even alarmed by the secretary’s responses, especially on a timeline for closing the agency.

“It’s very apparent that the secretary is treating this as a corporate restructuring, and we want to be clear that the education of our children is not a corporate enterprise — it is how we move this country forward,” Rep. Melanie Stansbury of New Mexico said.

“It’s very clear that the (reduction in force), the firing of probationary staff, the so-called restructuring that’s happening — when we asked for a plan multiple times in this meeting, we were told there is not a plan yet,” she added.

The secretary arrives, and leaves

As the Democrats spoke, McMahon emerged from the building, accompanied by aides, and joined them at their lectern emblazoned with a U.S. House of Representatives logo.

She reiterated that “funding from the United States government will continue through the programs that have already been established” and said she looked forward to continuing to work with members of Congress on both sides of the aisle.

After her remarks, Rep. Mark Takano pressed McMahon on when she would close the department.

“Well, we’ve had our discussions already, so thank you all very, very much for coming,” McMahon replied, proceeding to walk back into the building.

“You see, she’s not answering the question when she’s going to shut down the department,” Takano, of California, said as the secretary walked away.

Barred from building

Wednesday’s meeting came after Takano and other Democratic lawmakers were blocked from entering the building in February while trying to meet with Denise Carter, acting Education secretary at the time, over Trump’s plans to dismantle the agency.

The California Democrat had led dozens of others in writing a letter to Carter and requesting a meeting over those efforts.

A day after Trump signed the executive order surrounding the department, he announced that special education services would be transferred to the Department of Health and Human Services and that the Small Business Administration would be handling the student loan portfolio.

The department has not taken any steps to move either — both of which would require acts of Congress and raise a slew of logistical questions.

Rep. Jamie Raskin of Maryland said “the idea of dismembering the department and then parceling it out

to other agencies and departments does not give us a lot of confidence or hope in what's happening."

The lawmakers said McMahon repeatedly stressed during the meeting that she plans to abide by federal law and would look carefully at what she's legally allowed to do before moving any functions of the department.

Yet Rep. Greg Casar of Texas said he and the group "became more and more alarmed as the meeting went on," noting that "current law won by so many Americans in this democracy, is that all kids deserve a decent education, that the money goes to your kid if they're in need, the money goes to your kid no matter their race or their background or their neighborhood, and they want to change that."

The lawmakers who met with McMahon included: U.S. Reps. Terri Sewell of Alabama; Takano; Frederica Wilson of Florida; Raskin and Sarah Elfreth of Maryland; Maggie Goodlander of New Hampshire; Stansbury; Casar, Julie Johnson and Veronica Escobar of Texas; Don Beyer of Virginia; and Gwen Moore of Wisconsin.

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

Justice Department announces focus on crimes and missing people in Native American areas

BY: SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT STAFF - APRIL 2, 2025 11:40 AM

The U.S. Justice Department announced Tuesday that it will surge FBI assets across the country to address unresolved violent crimes in areas with high Native American populations, including crimes related to missing and murdered Indigenous people.

The FBI will send 60 personnel, rotating in 90-day temporary duty assignments over a six-month period. A news release described the effort as "Operation Not Forgotten" and said it will be "the longest and most intense national deployment of FBI resources to address Indian Country crime to date."

FBI personnel will support field offices in Albuquerque; Denver; Detroit; Jackson, Mississippi; Minneapolis; Oklahoma City; Phoenix; Portland, Oregon; Seattle; and Salt Lake City. The FBI will work in partnership with other federal and tribal law enforcement agencies across jurisdictions, the Justice Department said, including the Bureau of Indian Affairs Missing and Murdered Unit.

The territory of the FBI's Minneapolis office includes South Dakota. The U.S. attorney for the state, Alison Ramsdell, said in the news release that "these additional resources will aid in our effort to hold offenders accountable and achieve justice on behalf of victims."

At the beginning of fiscal year 2025, the FBI's Indian Country program had approximately 4,300 open investigations, including over 900 death investigations, 1,000 child abuse investigations, and more than 500 domestic violence and adult sexual abuse investigations, according to the news release.

"Crime rates in American Indian and Alaska Native communities are unacceptably high," U.S. Attorney General Pam Bondi said in the release. "By surging FBI resources and collaborating closely with U.S. attorneys and tribal law enforcement to prosecute cases, the Department of Justice will help deliver the accountability that these communities deserve."

FBI director Kash Patel said in the news release that "the FBI will manhunt violent criminals on all lands" and also "find those who have gone missing."

Judge orders fired federal probationary workers reinstated in 19 states, D.C.

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY - APRIL 2, 2025 10:40 AM

WASHINGTON — A federal judge in Maryland late Tuesday ordered federal agencies across 19 states and the District of Columbia to reinstate thousands of probationary workers who were fired as part of White House adviser Elon Musk's government-slashing agenda.

U.S. Judge James Bredar for the District of Maryland issued the preliminary injunction mandating 20 federal departments and agencies rehire the new or recently promoted employees whose duty stations or residences prior to termination were in the following states:

Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont and Wisconsin.

The lawsuit is among dozens brought against President Donald Trump's second administration over deep cuts to the federal workforce and funding, sweeping arrests and deportations of immigrants, Musk's access to Americans' sensitive data, and press access in the White House.

Trump and Musk have repeatedly criticized federal judges who have ruled unfavorably, even calling for their impeachment.

Republicans have assumed the mantle on the issue, criticizing wide-reaching injunctions from U.S. district courts.

"Although our Founders saw an important role for the judiciary, they didn't design a system that made judges national policymakers," Iowa Sen. Chuck Grassley, chair of the Senate Committee on the Judiciary, said in his opening statement at a hearing Wednesday.

The Democratic attorneys general who brought the lawsuit against the federal agencies had requested a nationwide injunction, arguing the mass firings were illegal and harmed states financially, but Bredar only applied the order to the plaintiffs' jurisdictions.

Bredar has previously issued a temporary emergency order mandating agencies reinstate employment for all 24,418 fired probationary workers, according to government figures, but expressed reluctance at a March 26 hearing to extend his order nationwide. The breakdown of fired probationary employees by state is unclear and the total number could be from the states involved in the lawsuit or other states or both.

Departments and agencies named as defendants in the lawsuit must now return the probationary workers' jobs to status quo by 2 p.m. Eastern on April 8, Bredar ordered. The agencies also "shall not conduct any future reductions in force ("RIFs") — whether formally labeled as such or not" involving the affected probationary employees unless the process follows the law, Bredar wrote.

The enjoined defendants include:

The departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense (civilian employees only), Education, Energy, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Housing and Urban Development, Interior, Labor, Transportation, Treasury and Veterans Affairs, as well as the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, Environmental Protection Agency, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, General Services Administration, Office of Personnel Management, Small Business Administration and the U.S. Agency for International Development.

The order will remain in place while the case is pending.

The states allege the mass firings led by Trump and Musk harmed them because the federal government did not provide the legally required advance notice that gives states time to prepare "rapid response activities" — including unemployment and social services — ahead of an influx of unemployed residents.

Bredar highlighted in a memorandum opinion accompanying his order Tuesday that 31 states did not join the lawsuit, writing that nationwide injunctions are required in "rare" instances, and that "this case is not one of them."

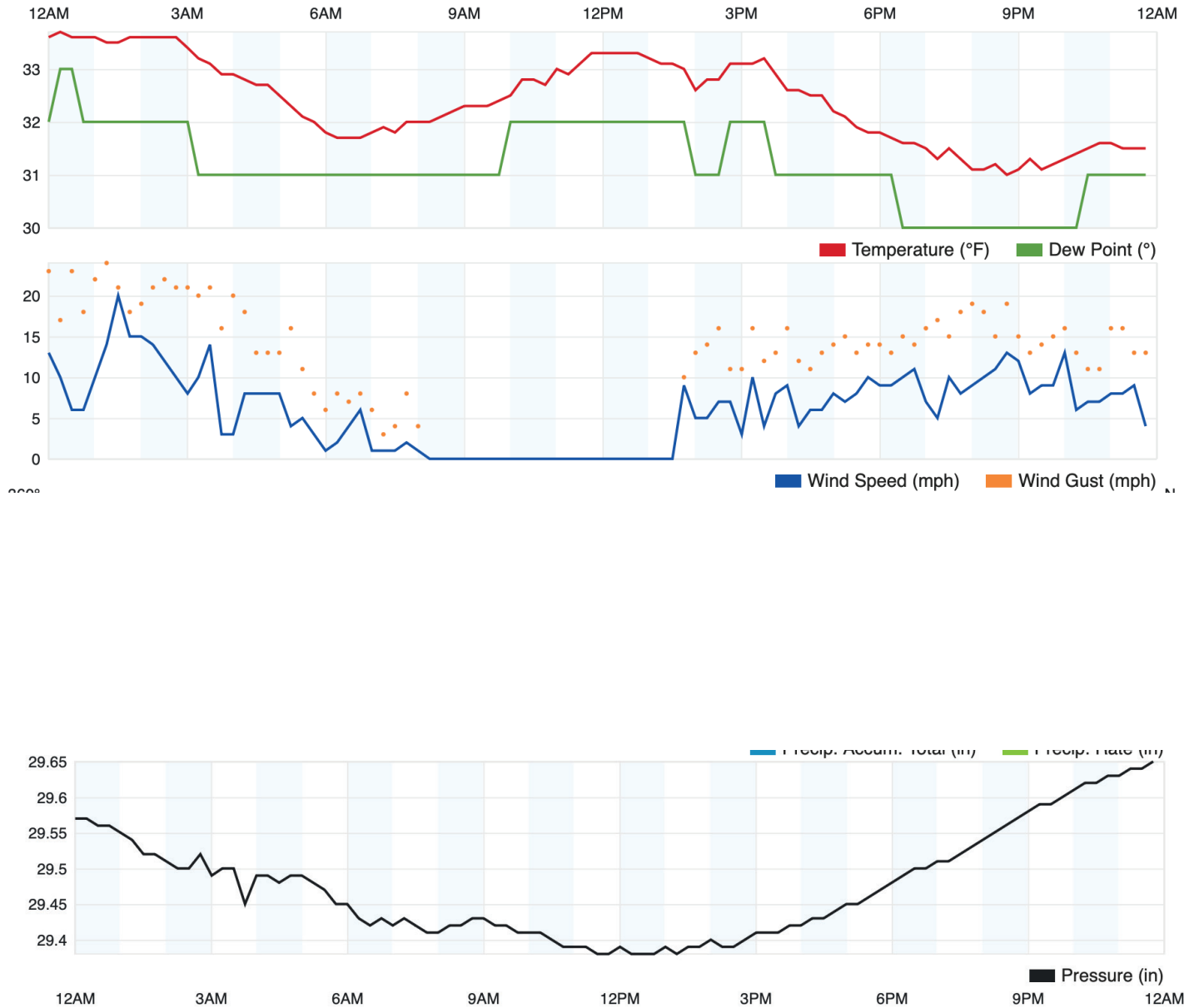
"The Court's injunction is not national in scope because it is possible to substantially stop the harms inflicted on the states that did sue without extending judicial authority over those that didn't," Bredar wrote.

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

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 24 of 70

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 25 of 70

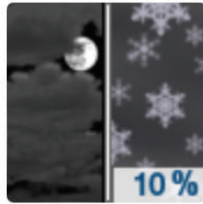
Today



High: 39 °F

Partly Sunny

Tonight



Low: 25 °F

Mostly Cloudy
then Slight
Chance Snow

Friday



High: 36 °F

Rain/Snow

Friday Night



Low: 15 °F

Slight Chance
Rain/Snow
then Slight
Chance Snow

Saturday



High: 41 °F

Sunny



March 2025 Weather In Review

April 2, 2025
6:23 PM

Warm and Dry March across most of Central and Northeast South Dakota.

	Aberdeen (Since 1898)	Sisseton (Since 1935)	Mobridge (Since 1927)	Pierre (Since 1934)	Watertown (Since 1898)
Average Temperature	36.2°	36.5°	40.0°	40.2°	36.2°
Departure from Normal	+5.7° 13th warmest	+6.6° 12th warmest	+6.6° 5th warmest	+5.9° 12th warmest	+7.1° 10th warmest
Warmest Year	2012 (43.8°)	2012 (42.9°)	2012 (44.7°)	2012 (48.3°)	1910 (45.0°)
Coldest Year	1899 (10.8°)	2013 (18.2°)	1951 (16.2°)	1951 (18.5°)	1960 (14.3°)
Warmest of the month	86° (3/31)	82° (3 Days)	75° (3/10 & 3/13)	77° (3/13)	70° (3/13 & 3/14)
Coldest of the month	-32° (3/8)	-22° (3/10)	13° (3/7)	14° (3/11)	7° (3/1)
Precipitation	0.28"	0.32"	0.21"	0.83"	1.42"
Departure from Normal	-0.61"	-0.79"	-0.50"	-0.13"	+0.42"
Snowfall	0.6"	1.0"	0.2"	7.2"	8.2"
Departure from Normal	-5.7"	-5.1"	-3.9"	+2.2"	+2.8"

March was warm and dry for northeastern and central South Dakota, with all sites 5 degrees above normal and some sites half an inch of more below normal for precipitation

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 26 of 70

Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 34 °F at 12:00 AM

Low Temp: 31 °F at 8:00 PM

Wind: 24 mph at 1:09 AM

Precip: : 0.47 (Storm total: 0.94)

Day length: 12 hours, 58 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 83 in 1921

Record Low: -2 in 2018

Average High: 52

Average Low: 27

Average Precip in April.: 0.12

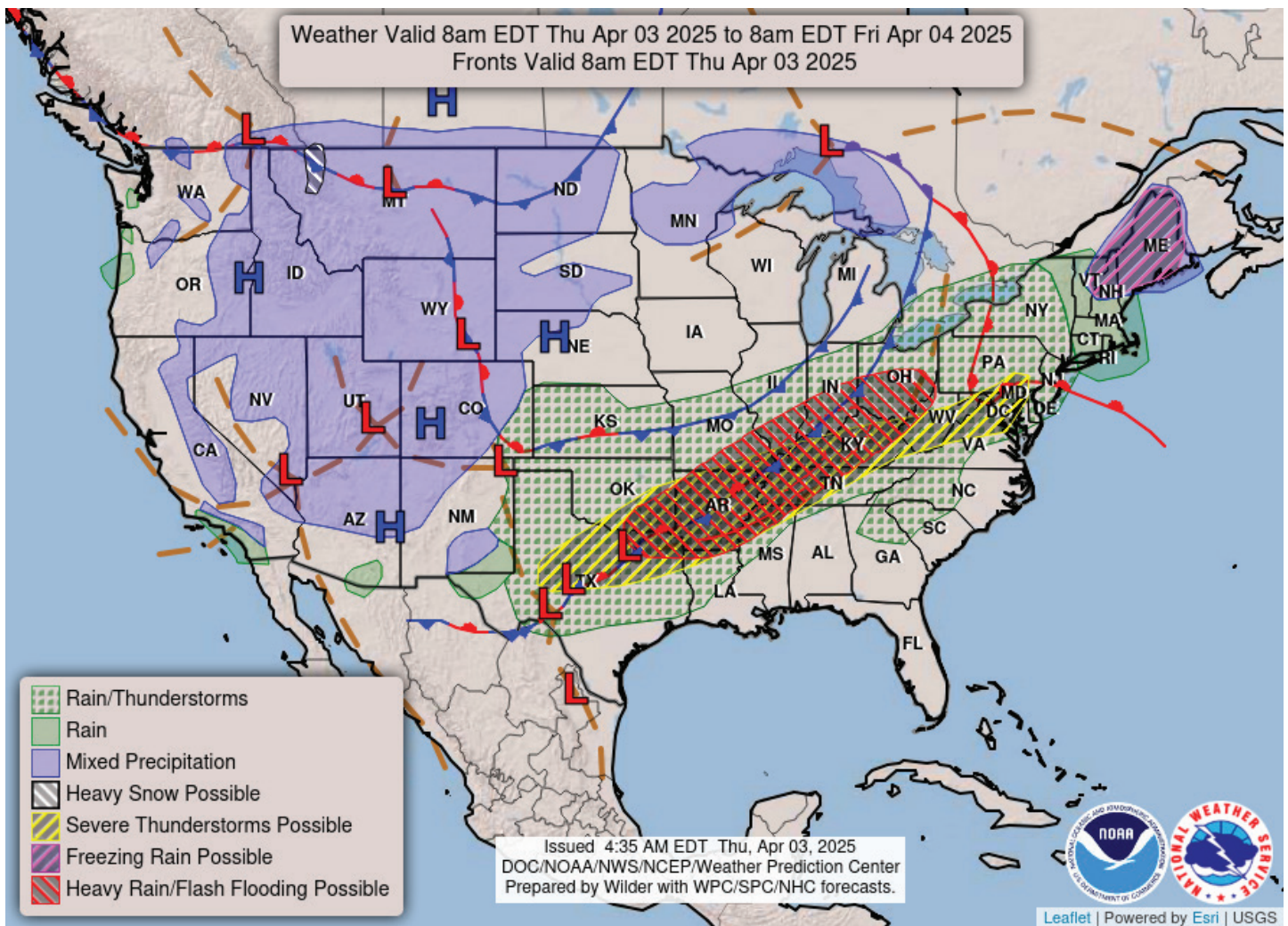
Precip to date in April.: 0.94

Average Precip to date: 2.18

Precip Year to Date: 1.57

Sunset Tonight: 8:04:48 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:04:20 am



Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 27 of 70

Today in Weather History

April 3rd, 1968: Heavy snowfall, up to ten inches, was accompanied by winds of over 60 mph in South Dakota. Snowdrifts of up to 4 feet were reported, and many roads were closed. Aberdeen was one of the hardest hit areas, with 10.5 inches of snow and wind gusts of 62 mph. The strong winds and localized areas of icing caused considerable damage to utility lines.

April 3rd, 2003: Dry vegetation and windy conditions caused a grassland burn northeast of Bath, near the James River in South Dakota, to get out of control during the early afternoon hours. Strong north-to-northeast winds of 20 to 35 mph caused the fire to spread quickly south along the James River. The fire became one and a half miles wide and burned six miles to the south before being controlled. A total of 4,000 acres were consumed. The smoke from the fire could be seen from miles around and lowered visibilities enough to close State Highway 12 twice. At one point, traffic had to be diverted on Highway 12 for six hours due to the low visibility in smoke. Also, the smoke delayed the Burlington Northern/Santa Fe Railroad in Bristol and Andover on April 3rd. Twenty-one fire departments with around 250 people worked to bring the fire under control.

April 3rd, 2007: A sharp frontal boundary and an upper-level disturbance brought an unusual band of heavy snow across northern South Dakota. Snowfall amounts of 6 to 12 inches occurred from Eureka to Summit. Roads became snow-covered or slushy, making travel difficult. Due to the poor road conditions, several vehicles ended up in the ditch. Several schools and events were either postponed or canceled. Snowfall amounts included 6 inches at Eureka and Milbank, 7 inches at Conde, 8 inches at Hosmer, Columbia, Summit, and Britton, 10 inches at Webster, and 12 inches at Waubay.

April 3rd, 2009: An area of low pressure moved across the Central Plains, producing widespread snow over central and north-central South Dakota. Along with the snow came strong north winds of 15 to 30 mph, causing areas of blowing snow and reduced visibility. The snow and reduced visibility caused some travel problems. Snowfall amounts ranged from a few inches to almost a foot of snow. Some snowfall amounts included 6 inches near Presho and Okaton, Fort Thompson, and Timber Lake; 7 inches in Murdo and 16 S Ree Heights; 8 inches 14 NNE Isabel; and 11 inches 3 NW Parade and 6 E Hayes.

1955 - Record snows fell in north central Wyoming and south central Montana. Billings MT received a storm total of 42.3 inches, and on the 4th reported a record snow depth of 35 inches. Sheridan WY established a 24 hour snowfall record of 26.7 inches. (2nd-4th) (The Weather Channel)

1974 - A "Super-Outbreak" of tornadoes ravaged the Midwest and the eastern U.S. Severe weather erupted early in the afternoon and continued through the next day. Severe thunderstorms spawned 148 tornadoes from Alabama to Michigan, most of which occurred between 1 PM (CST) on the 3rd and 1 AM on the 4th. The tornadoes killed 315 persons, injured 5300 others, and caused 600 million dollars damage. Alabama, Kentucky and Ohio were especially hard hit in the tornado outbreak. One tornado destroyed half of the town of Xenia OH killing 34 persons. Another tornado, near the town of Stamping Ground KY, produced a path of destruction a record five miles in width. A tornado raced through Guin AL at a speed of 75 mph. Two powerful tornadoes roared across northern Alabama during the early evening hours, killing fifty persons and injuring 500 others. Some rescue vehicles responding to the first tornado were

1987 - A storm in the southeastern U.S. produced a trace of snow at Mobile, AL, one inch at Jackson MS, and two inches at Meridian MS, the latest snow of record for those three locations. Birmingham AL received seven inches of snow, and up to nine inches was reported in northeast Alabama. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - A wind gust to 114 mph was clocked at Ann Arbor, MI, during a tornadic thunderstorm. Thunderstorms in Michigan and Indiana spawned five tornadoes that Easter Sunday, and also produced golf ball size hail. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from the Southern Plains to the southern and central Appalachians. The thunderstorms spawned twenty tornadoes, including one which caused eight million dollars damage at Fort Branch IN. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Rain and snow prevailed in the northeastern U.S., with snow reported in New York State. Boston MA was soaked with 2.91 inches of rain during the day and night, and up to half a foot of snow blanketed the hills of Steuben County NY that Tuesday night. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2008 - An EF-1 tornado knocks down numerous tress and powerlines, destroys homes in Leawood and Cammack Village and passes directly over the Little Rock National Weather Service office. Six tornados were confirmed in central Arkansas, but no fatalities were reported.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 28 of 70



WHAT'S A PROVERB?

Little Ruby was saying her bedtime prayers. "Dear God," she prayed, "please help bad people to be good and good people to be nice." Whether Ruby knew it or not, she provided a simple way of describing what the book of Proverbs is: "a guidebook for living a life that pleases God."

Over the years, various cultures and societies have established different criteria to describe whether or not one is "successful." Many have put "wealth" at the top of the list. And, money, to some degree, is important and necessary if one is to have the necessities of life. Others would speak of power, prestige, and one's position in society as being critical. Those words express the core values of individuals who want to be recognized for what they have accomplished on the world's stage in politics, the military, banking, or finance. No doubt some want to be remembered for doing some "thing" that no one else has done - like discovering a medicine that extends life or setting a record in a particular sport, inventing a product or procedure that makes life better or is useful, valuable or delightful.

But, those whose lives are guided by the lessons that we find in The Proverbs are those who fear God and allow Him to guide them, guard them and give them His gifts.

We often talk about hindsight, sometimes we wish we had foresight, but Solomon's Proverbs gives us the insight to make decisions based on God's laws. Proverbs provide us with God's wisdom that is unwritten by God to give us His power to live good, godly lives.

Prayer: Grant us willful hearts, Lord, to obey Your laws. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel. Proverbs 1:1

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

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 29 of 70

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Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 30 of 70



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: 1 Days 17 Hrs 30 Mins
48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.02.25

12 28 39 41 44 1

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$28,720,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 45
Mins 48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.02.25

18 22 35 36 43 8

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.02.25

2 10 20 25 26

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$90,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 48
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.02.25

7 18 23 31 44 24

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 29
Mins 48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.02.25

5 17 41 64 69 1

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$47,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 29
Mins 48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 31 of 70

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

The Latest: Key US trading partners and global officials react to Trump's new tariffs

By The Associated Press undefined

Sweeping new tariffs announced Wednesday by U.S. President Donald Trump provoked dismay, threats of countermeasures and calls for further negotiations to make trade rules fairer.

But responses were measured, highlighting a lack of appetite among key trading partners for an outright trade war with the world's biggest economy.

Trump said the import taxes, ranging from 10% to 49%, would do to U.S. trading partners what they have long done to the U.S. He maintains they will draw factories and jobs back to the United States.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said they are a "major blow to the world economy," while Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba said they will have a "great impact" on U.S.-Japan relations and Korean Prime Minister Han Duck-soo called for emergency measures to support industries affected by the tariffs.

Asian markets fell in Thursday trading and U.S. futures tumbled.

Here's the latest:

Ukrainian minister says her country can get better tariff conditions from US

Ukraine is working to get better tariff conditions from the United States, Ukrainian Economy Minister Yuliia Svyrydenko wrote on her X account.

Svyrydenko says Ukrainian tariffs on U.S. goods are "quite low" and that Ukraine imported more goods from the U.S. in 2024 than exported to the country.

She said the 10% tariff Trump imposed on Ukrainian goods will mainly impact small producers. "Ukraine has something to offer the United States as a reliable ally and partner. Both our countries will benefit from fair tariffs," she wrote.

Japan PM regrets US tariffs and says ready to negotiate with Trump

Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba said it was "extremely regrettable" that the United States slapped the 25% auto tariff on Japan despite its huge contribution to the U.S. economy.

Japanese companies have been the world's biggest investors in the U.S. since 2019, especially automakers, creating jobs for millions of Americans, Ishiba said.

Ishiba said Japan will continue to strongly request the United States to reconsider its tariffs measures and that he will directly negotiate with Trump, whenever it is considered appropriate. "I will do so at a most appropriate time and method without hesitation."

Germany's Scholz says tariffs are an 'attack' on global trade

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz says the tariffs are an "attack" on a trading system that brought global prosperity and that America itself helped design.

Scholz said Thursday "the whole global economy will suffer from these decisions that haven't been thought through." He added that "the U.S. administration is setting off on a road at the end of which there will only be losers."

Scholz said in Berlin that "this is an attack on a trading order that has created prosperity across the globe — a trading order that is also to a very significant extent the result of American efforts."

Fiji criticizes tariffs as 'disproportionate' and 'unfair'

Among the small island nations of the South Pacific Ocean, a few were singled out for higher tariff rates than the 10% baseline. Fiji's Deputy Prime Minister Biman Prasad on Thursday criticized as "disproportionate" and "unfair" the 32% tariffs announced on Fiji's exports to the U.S.

The U.S. is a major trading partner for the nation of 924,000 people, accounting for 10% of total imports and exports, Prasad said Thursday on social media. Fiji's biggest export to the U.S. is bottled water, with

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 33 of 70

its most famous brand — Fiji Water — owned by a U.S. conglomerate.

The U.S. administration justified Fiji's higher tariffs with a claim that the Pacific nation imposes 63% tariffs on American goods arriving on its shores. Prasad rejected that figure, telling reporters that Fiji does not impose such tariff rates on any country.

'There are no winners in trade wars,' China's Foreign Ministry says

A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson says "there are no winners in trade wars and tariff wars, and protectionism is not a way out. What the U.S. should do is to correct its wrong practices and resolve trade disputes with all countries, including China, through consultations based on equality, mutual respect and mutual benefit."

Guo Jiakun added that the tariffs violate WTO rules, "harm the common interests of people of all countries, and do not help solve the problems of the U.S. itself. It is clear to everyone that more and more countries are opposing the U.S.'s unilateral bullying actions, such as imposing tariffs."

Israeli finance minister says his office is 'analyzing' tariff implications

Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich says his office is studying Trump's tariff order and "analyzing its implications for the economy," in the country's first reaction to Trump's announcement of a 17% tariff on imports from Israel.

On Wednesday, ahead of Trump's announcement, Israel cancelled all remaining tariffs on imports from the U.S. The Prime Minister's Office said in a statement the move would go into effect after final approval by the economy minister and the parliament's finance committee.

Smotrich said in a statement on X he was talking with industry leaders about Trump's new order and would meet Thursday with the Finance Ministry leadership to decide on "courses of action" in response to it.

Spain's economy minister says negotiations with US essential

Spain's Economy Minister Carlos Cuerdo said a negotiated solution with the United States was essential for the eurozone's fourth-largest economy, but that Spain was prepared to take steps to protect its companies and industries.

"We have a lot at stake. We have to protect the very important trade and economic relationship we have between the planet's two biggest partners," Cuerdo said in an interview Thursday with the RNE radio station after the U.S. announced 20% tariffs against the European Union.

German economy minister says this day will become US Inflation Day

"This day is not going to become Liberation Day for consumers in the U.S., but Inflation Day," said Germany's vice chancellor and economy minister, Robert Habeck. "The U.S. mania for tariffs could set off a spiral that could also pull countries into recession and cause massive damage worldwide."

"We have always pushed for negotiations, not confrontation. That remains right," Habeck said. "So it is good that the European Commission still aims for a negotiated solution with the U.S. There is still some time for that. But if the U.S. doesn't want a negotiated solution, the EU will give a balanced, clear and determined answer. We have prepared for this."

Germany's main industry federation calls for a coordinated reaction to tariffs

Germany's main industry lobby group, the Federation of German Industries, said that "the EU must now strengthen its alliances with other major trading partners and should coordinate its reaction with them. A coordinated reaction is also necessary to counter diversionary effects in international trade."

The group, known by its German acronym BDI, said that the tariffs are "an unprecedented attack on the international trade system, free trade and global supply chains. The reasoning for this protectionist escalation is incomprehensible."

The United States was Germany's biggest single trading partner last year for the first time since 2015, displacing China.

UK's Starmer vows to act with 'cool and calm heads' to Trump's tariffs

Prime Minister Keir Starmer said the U.K. government would react with "cool and calm heads" to Trump's announcement of a 10% tariff on imports from Britain.

Starmer told business leaders gathered in 10 Downing St. that "clearly there will be an economic impact," but that he still hoped to get tariffs lifted through a trade deal with Washington.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 34 of 70

"Negotiations on an economic prosperity deal — one that strengthens our existing trading relationship — they continue and we will fight for the best deal for Britain," Starmer said.

"Nobody wins in a trade war. That is not in our national interest," he added.

Honda CEO says company will take some time to determine how to respond to tariffs

Honda Chief Executive Toshihiro Mibe says the Japanese automaker will take some time to look at the market situation and other factors to determine the right way to respond to Trump's tariffs.

"Sudden changes like this are tough as it's hard to respond speedily," he told reporters on Thursday.

Taiwan calls US tariffs 'strongly unreasonable'

Taiwan responded to the imposition of a 32% tariff on its high-tech economy by calling it "strongly unreasonable and highly regrettable," adding it would "lodge solemn representations with the United States."

"The proposed tax rate does not reflect the actual economic and trade situation between Taiwan and the United States (and) is unfair to Taiwan," Cabinet spokesperson Lee Hui-chih said in an official news release.

Lee said the tariff calculation method was unscientific and unclear and "cannot reflect the high degree of complementarity in the trade structure between Taiwan and the U.S. and the actual trade relationship."

Taiwan's exports to the U.S. and corresponding trade surplus have risen significantly in recent years, mainly reflecting the surge in demand from U.S. customers for semiconductors and related products, especially AI products, Lee said.

British officials say they will push to secure a free trade deal with US

The British government says it will push to secure a free trade deal with the United States rather than retaliate after Trump slapped a 10% tariff on U.K. goods.

Labelling the announcement a "disappointment," Business Secretary Jonathan Reynolds said "I'm pleased the U.K. is in a better position than other countries, but I'm not satisfied."

Reynolds told Sky News that the message he was hearing from businesses was "remain at the table, don't overreact."

Britain argues that it has a broadly balanced trade relationship with the U.S., and has been negotiating with Washington on a trade deal in hope of escaping import taxes.

Japan's prime minister says tariffs will have a 'great impact' on U.S.-Japan relations

Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba says the tariffs are a matter of great concern and stressed that Japan's contributions to the American economy are significant both in terms of investment and jobs.

He said he repeatedly made his case with the Trump administration not to move ahead with the tariffs.

"They will have a great impact not only on U.S.-Japanese economic relations but also on the global economy and various trade relations overall," Ishiba told reporters Thursday.

"We as the government will work as one to decisively protect people's lives, jobs and industries," he added.

Thailand says it is ready to negotiate with US over trade balance

The Thai prime minister says her country is ready to negotiate with the U.S. to find a fair trade balance for both sides, after Trump announced 36% tariffs on Thailand.

Paetongtarn Shinawatra said Thursday that Thailand is committed to working with the U.S. to achieve sustainable economic growth.

She added that Thai exporters should also look for additional markets for their products to reduce their risk of relying on one main market.

Indian analysts see opportunity in supply chain realignments

Indian exporters and analysts say Trump's new tariffs are a mixed bag for the country.

Trump announced a reciprocal tariff of 26% for India, as compared to 34% for China, 46% for Vietnam, 37% for Bangladesh and 36% for Thailand.

Observers said Thursday the move will likely impact Indian industry and pressure jobs, but that there is room for new business to come in since India is in a lower band than its Asian peers.

"These tariffs do present challenges, but India's position remains comparatively favorable," said S.C. Ralhan, president of the Federation of Indian Exports Organisations.

Ajay Srivastava, a former Indian trade official and founder of the New Delhi-based think tank Global

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 35 of 70

Trade Research Initiative, said the protectionist tariff regime could be a catalyst for India to gain from global supply chain realignments.

South and Southeast Asia are targeted with some of the highest tariff rates

Vietnam, Sri Lanka and other countries across South and Southeast Asia are the targets of some of the highest tariff rates.

Trump imposed 46% "reciprocal" duties on goods from Vietnam, 49% on products from Cambodia, 37% on Bangladesh and 44% on Sri Lanka.

The duties will affect domestic exporters to the U.S. but also Chinese, Japanese and South Korean companies that have over the past few years shifted production to Southeast Asian nations to escape the trade frictions during Trump's first term in office.

Automaker Stellantis will shut down its assembly plant in Windsor, Canada, for 2 weeks

Automaker Stellantis will shut down its assembly plant in Windsor, Canada, for two weeks from April 7, the local union said late Wednesday.

The president of Unifor Local 444, James Stewart, said more scheduling changes were expected in coming weeks.

"The company said there are multiple factors at play, with the primary driver behind the final decision being this afternoon's announcement from U.S. President Donald Trump of the U.S. tariffs," Stewart said. "This has and continues to create uncertainty across the entire auto industry. This is not just affecting our plant—it's impacting facilities in the U.S. and Mexico as well."

EU leader says tariffs are a major blow to the world economy

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen says the tariffs are a "major blow to the world economy."

"The consequences will be dire for millions of people around the globe," von der Leyen said. Groceries, transport and medicines will cost more, she said, "And this is hurting, in particular, the most vulnerable citizens."

Von der Leyen acknowledged that the world trading system has "serious deficiencies" and said the EU was ready to negotiate with the U.S.

Japan's chief cabinet secretary calls tariffs 'extremely regrettable'

Japan's chief cabinet secretary has called the tariffs "extremely regrettable," saying officials thought the country deserved an exemption, after Trump slapped 24% additional tariffs on Japan.

Yoshimasa Hayashi on Thursday also questioned whether the tariffs are compatible with Japan-U.S. bilateral trade agreements and said the move would likely impact their economic ties, as well as the global economy and multilateral trade system.

He said Japanese officials are continuing to negotiate with Washington seeking an exemption. Asked if Japan would consider retaliatory tariffs or file complaints with the World Trade Organization, Hayashi declined to comment.

Asian markets tumble following Trump's tariff announcement

Tokyo's Nikkei 225 index dipped more than 3.4%, while the Kospi in South Korea dropped 1.8%. In Australia, the S&P/ASX 200 also sank 1.8%.

U.S. stocks whipped through another dizzying day before Trump's unveiled the tariffs Wednesday. The S&P 500 rose 0.7%, and the Dow gained 0.6%. The Nasdaq composite surged 0.9%.

Tesla swung from a sharp loss in the morning to a gain later in the day to help pull the market higher. Treasury yields also veered from lower to higher following a better-than-expected report on the job market.

□ Read more about markets' reaction to the tariffs

House majority whip praises Trump's actions, including tariffs, during town hall

House Majority Whip Tom Emmer fielded mostly friendly questions during an hourlong telephone town hall with constituents in Minnesota.

House Speaker Mike Johnson has encouraged Republican lawmakers to avoid holding in-person town halls where they'd run the risk of hostile questioning and protesters.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 36 of 70

Emmer extensively praised the actions that Trump has been taking in his first months back in office, including the tariffs he announced earlier Wednesday.

"How about we give this guy some grace while he tried to actually do what he's been campaigning on for years and his mission to protect American companies and workers?" Emmer said. "There's still going to be some choppy waters, but when we come out the other side, it's going to be much better than it was beforehand, and certainly much better than it was the last four years."

South Korea prime minister calls for emergency measures to support industries affected by tariffs

South Korea's acting leader called for swift emergency measures to support the auto industry and other businesses potentially affected by the Trump administration's new tariffs, pledging full government efforts to address what he described as a looming "global tariff war."

During an emergency government meeting, Prime Minister Han Duck-soo also instructed officials to work with business groups to analyze the impact of the U.S. tariff increases and actively engage in negotiations with Washington to "minimize damage" to South Korea's economy, the trade ministry said.

Han, serving as South Korea's acting leader while President Yoon Suk Yeol remains impeached over his December imposition of martial law, convened the meeting with trade and foreign policy officials after Trump announced a 25% tariff on South Korea.

Myanmar earthquake death toll rises to 3,085 as more bodies found

By DAVID RISING Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — The death toll from the massive earthquake that hit Myanmar nearly a week ago rose Thursday to 3,085 as search and rescue teams found more bodies, the military-led government said, and humanitarian aid groups scrambled to provide survivors medical care and shelter.

In a short statement, the military said another 4,715 people have been injured and 341 are missing.

The epicenter of Friday's 7.7 magnitude earthquake was near Mandalay, Myanmar's second-largest city. It brought down thousands of buildings, buckled roads and destroyed bridges in multiple regions.

Local media reports of casualties have been much higher than the official figures and with telecommunications widely out and many places difficult to reach, it's thought the numbers could rise sharply as more details come in.

The World Health Organization said that according to its initial assessment, four hospitals and one health center had been completely destroyed while another 32 hospitals and 18 health centers had been partially damaged.

"With infrastructure compromised and patient numbers surging, access to health care has become nearly impossible in many of the worst-hit areas," the U.N. said. "Thousands of people are in urgent need of trauma care, surgical interventions and treatment for disease outbreaks."

A mobile hospital from India and a joint Russian-Belarusian hospital also were now operating in Mandalay.

With many left homeless by the earthquake, and many others staying away from their homes over fears ongoing aftershocks will bring them down, workers in Naypyitaw labored in the 40 degree Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit) busily erected big tents in open fields to provide some shelter.

Myanmar's military seized power in 2021 from the democratically elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi, sparking what has turned into a civil war.

The quake worsened an already dire humanitarian crisis, 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.

As concerns grew that ongoing fighting could hamper humanitarian aid efforts, the military declared a temporary ceasefire Wednesday, through April 22. The announcement followed unilateral temporary ceasefires announced by armed resistance groups opposed to military rule.

The military said it would still take "necessary" measures against those groups if they use the ceasefire to regroup, train or launch attacks.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 37 of 70

Already on Thursday there were reports from local media in Kachin state in the north of Myanmar that military attacks continued in several areas, but they could not be independently confirmed. Prior to the earthquake the military was battling the Kachin Independence Army militia group. The earthquake shook Kachin, but there have been no reports of damage there.

In Bangkok, where the quake brought down a skyscraper under construction, the search for survivors and bodies continued as Gov. Chadchart Sittipunt said a possible sound of life was detected in the rubble. By mid-afternoon, more than 144 hours after the earthquake, nobody had been found.

Twenty-two people were killed and 35 injured in the city, mostly by the collapse of the unfinished building.

Israeli strikes on Gaza overnight leaves more than 50 Palestinians dead

By WAFSA SHURFA Associated Press

DEIR AL BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Overnight strikes by Israel killed at least 55 people across the Gaza Strip, hospital officials said Thursday, a day after senior government officials said Israel would seize large areas of Gaza and establish a new security corridor across the Palestinian territory.

Israel has vowed to escalate the nearly 18-month war with Hamas until the militant group returns dozens of remaining hostages, disarms and leaves the territory. Israel has imposed a month-long halt on all imports of food, fuel and humanitarian aid that has left civilians facing acute shortages as supplies dwindle.

Officials in Khan Younis, in the southern part of the strip, said the bodies of 14 people had been taken to Nasser Hospital — nine of them from the same family. The dead included five children and four women. The bodies of another 19 people, including five children aged between 1 and 7 years and a pregnant woman, were taken to the European hospital near Khan Younis, hospital officials said. In Gaza City, 21 bodies were taken to Ahli hospital, including those of seven children.

The Israeli military ordered the residents of several areas -- Shujaiya, Jadida, Turkomen and eastern Zeytoun -- to evacuate on Thursday, adding that the army "will work with extreme force in your area." It said people should move to shelters west of Gaza City.

On Wednesday, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced Israel was establishing a new security corridor across the Gaza Strip to pressure Hamas, suggesting it would cut off the southern city of Rafah, which Israel has ordered evacuated, from the rest of the Palestinian territory.

Netanyahu referred to the new axis as the Morag corridor, using the name of a Jewish settlement that once stood between Rafah and Khan Younis, suggesting it would run between the two southern cities. He said it would be "a second Philadelphia corridor" referring to the Gaza side of the border with Egypt further south, which has been under Israeli control since last May.

Israel has reasserted control over the Netzarim corridor, also named for a former settlement, that cuts off the northern third of Gaza, including Gaza City, from the rest of the narrow coastal strip. Both of the existing corridors run from the Israeli border to the Mediterranean Sea.

"We are cutting up the strip, and we are increasing the pressure step by step, so that they will give us our hostages," Netanyahu said.

The Western-backed Palestinian Authority, led by rivals of Hamas, expressed its "complete rejection" of the planned corridor. Its statement also called for Hamas to give up power in Gaza, where the militant group has faced rare protests recently.

Netanyahu's announcement came after the defense minister, Israel Katz, said Israel would seize large areas of Gaza and add them to its so-called security zones, apparently referring to an existing buffer zone along Gaza's entire perimeter. He called on Gaza residents to "expel Hamas and return all the hostages," saying "this is the only way to end the war."

Hamas has said it will only release the remaining 59 hostages — 24 of whom are believed to be alive — in exchange for the release of more Palestinian prisoners, a lasting ceasefire and an Israeli pullout. The group has rejected demands that it lay down its arms or leave the territory.

Violate international law

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 38 of 70

On Sunday, Netanyahu said Israel plans to maintain overall security control of Gaza after the war and implement U.S. President Donald Trump's proposal to resettle much of its population elsewhere through what the Israeli leader referred to as "voluntary emigration."

Palestinians have rejected the plan, viewing it as expulsion from their homeland after Israel's offensive left much of it uninhabitable, and human rights experts say implementing the plan would likely violate international law.

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, most of whom have since been released in ceasefire agreements and other deals. Israel rescued eight living hostages and has recovered dozens of bodies.

Israel's offensive has killed more than 50,000 Palestinians, 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.

The war has left vast areas of Gaza in ruins and at its height displaced around 90% of the population.

Israeli strikes on Syria

Separately, Israeli strikes killed at least nine people in southwestern Syria, Syrian state media reported Thursday.

SANA said the nine were civilians, without giving details. Britain-based war monitor The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said they were local gunmen from the Daraa province, frustrated with Israeli military encroachment and attacks in recent months.

Israel has seized parts of southwestern Syria and created a buffer-zone there, which it says is to secure Israel's safety from armed groups. But critics say the military operation has created tensions in Syria and prevents any long-term stability and reconstruction for the war-torn country.

Israel also struck five cities in Syria late Wednesday, including over a dozen strikes near a strategic air-base in the city of Hama.

Stock market today: Trump's tariff hikes pull Asian shares, US futures sharply lower

By ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

BANGKOK (AP) — Shares tumbled in Europe and Asia and U.S. futures tumbled Thursday following U.S. President Donald Trump's announcement of big increases in tariffs on imports of goods from around the world.

The double-digit tariff hikes sent shivers across world markets, as economists warned it raises the risk of recession.

The future for the S&P 500 dropped 3.1% while that for the Dow Jones Industrial Average lost 2.6%, auguring potential losses when U.S. markets reopen on Thursday.

Germany's DAX fell 1.7% to 21,998.48, while the CAC 40 in Paris lost 1.8% to 7,716.66. Britain's FTSE 100 shed 1.2% to 8,506.44.

In Asian trading, Tokyo's Nikkei 225 index dipped 4% briefly, with automakers and banks taking big hits. It closed down 2.8% at 34,735.93.

Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group's shares plunged 7.2% as the potential impact of the 24% tariffs on the export-dependent Japanese economy dashed expectations that the central bank will keep raising interest rates. Mizuho Financial Group skidded 8%.

Sony Corp.'s stocks sank 4.8% and Toyota Motor Corp. gave up 5.2%.

Japan's yen gained, with the U.S. dollar falling to 147.42 Japanese yen from 149.28 yen. The euro rose to \$1.0952 from \$1.0855.

In South Korea, which was hit with a 25% tariff, the benchmark Kospi fell 1.1% to 2,486.70.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng lost 1.7% to 22,813.22, while the Shanghai Composite index edged 0.2% lower to 3,342.01.

The announcement came as a "major shock," Yeap Junrong of IG said in a commentary. "China, in par-

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 39 of 70

ticular, was hit with an additional 34% tariff, bringing its total tariff burden to 64% when accounting for previous measures."

However, losses were partly blunted by expectations of further economic stimulus from Beijing to offset the impact of the higher tariffs.

In Australia, the S&P/ASX 200 fell 0.9% to 7,859.70.

Bangkok's SET shed 1.1% after Thailand was assigned at 36% tariff on its exports to the U.S. That could cause Thai exports to fall by \$7 billion to \$8 billion, or about 2.3% of the total, Kasem Prunratnamala of CGS International said in a report.

On Wednesday, U.S. stocks whipped through another dizzying day before Trump's unveiling of his "Liberation Day" tariffs.

The S&P 500 rose 0.7% to 5,670.97 after careening between an earlier loss of 1.1% and a later gain of 1.1%. It's had a pattern this week of opening with sharp drops only to finish the day higher.

The Dow industrials added 0.6% to 42,225.32, and the Nasdaq composite climbed 0.9% to 17,601.05.

Financial markets around the world have broadly been shaky lately because of uncertainty about Trump's trade war. He has said he wants tariffs to make the global system more fair and to bring manufacturing jobs back to the United States from other countries. But tariffs also threaten to grind down growth for the U.S. and other economies, while worsening inflation when it may be stuck above the Federal Reserve's 2% target.

After the U.S. market closed, Trump declared a 10% baseline tax on imports from all countries and higher tariff rates on dozens of nations that run trade surpluses with the United States. The president held up a chart while speaking at the White House, showing the United States would charge a 34% tax on imports from China, a 20% tax on imports from the European Union, and 32% on Taiwan.

Trump earlier announced 25% tariffs 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.

Treasury yields swung in the bond market, echoing the indecision seen in the stock market.

The yield on the 10-year Treasury fell as low as 4.11% in the morning from 4.17% late Tuesday and from roughly 4.80% early this year. But it later rose to 4.18%. Higher yields can indicate higher expectations for the economy or for inflation.

In other dealings early Thursday, U.S. benchmark crude shed \$2.63 to \$69.08 per barrel. Brent crude, the international standard, gave up \$2.62 to \$72.33 per barrel.

Rubio arrives for NATO talks as allies wait to learn of US plans for a likely drawdown in Europe

BRUSSELS (AP) — U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio and the Trump administration's new envoy to NATO arrived Thursday in Brussels, where the alliance's top diplomats are hoping they'll shed light on U.S. security plans in Europe.

European allies and Canada are deeply concerned by President Donald Trump's readiness to draw closer to Russian leader Vladimir Putin, who sees NATO as a threat, as the U.S. works 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 raised alarm and confusion, especially with new U.S. tariffs targeting U.S. friends and foes alike.

Since Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth warned last month that U.S. security priorities lie elsewhere — in Asia and on the U.S.'s 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.

In a statement, newly confirmed U.S. ambassador to NATO Matt Whitaker said that "under President Trump's leadership, NATO will be stronger and more effective than ever before, and I believe that a robust NATO can continue to serve as a bedrock of peace and prosperity."

But he added: "NATO's vitality rests on every ally doing their fair share."

Whitaker affirmed the U.S. commitment to NATO's collective security guarantee, which says that an attack on any ally must be considered an attack on them all, but that his brief would also be to encourage Europe to lead on "peace, security, and the rebuilding of Ukraine."

The statement said allies should demonstrate that NATO takes seriously threats from China.

Violent storms cut through the South and Midwest, spawning tornadoes and killing 1 person

By JEFF MARTIN and HALLIE GOLDEN Associated Press

Violent storms cut through a wide swath of the South and Midwest, spawning tornadoes and killing at least one person, knocking down power lines and trees and ripping roofs off homes.

Dozens of tornado and severe thunderstorm warnings were issued Wednesday in parts of Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Missouri and Mississippi as storms hit those and other states in the evening. Forecasters attributed the violent weather to daytime heating combining with an unstable atmosphere, strong wind shear and abundant moisture streaming into the nation's midsection from the Gulf.

At least one person was killed in southeast Missouri, KFVS-TV reported, while part of a warehouse collapsed in a suburb of Indianapolis, temporarily trapping at least one person inside. In northeast Arkansas a rare tornado emergency was issued as debris flew thousands of feet in the air.

The coming days were also forecast to bring the risk of potentially deadly flash flooding to the South and Midwest as severe thunderstorms blowing eastward become supercharged. The potent storm system will bring "significant, life-threatening flash flooding" each day through Saturday, the National Weather Service said.

With more than a foot (30 centimeters) of rain possible over the next four days, the prolonged deluge "is an event that happens once in a generation to once in a lifetime," the weather service said. "Historic rainfall totals and impacts are possible."

More than 90 million people were at some risk of severe weather in a huge part of the nation stretching from Texas to Minnesota and Maine, according to the Oklahoma-based Storm Prediction Center.

Tornadoes touch down, and more could be coming

A tornado emergency — the weather service's highest alert — was briefly declared around Blytheville, Arkansas, on Wednesday evening, with debris lofted at least 25,000 feet (7.6 kilometers), according to Chelly Amin, a meteorologist with the service.

"It's definitely going to be a really horrible situation here come sunrise in the morning in those areas," Amin said.

A tornado was also reported on the ground near Harrisburg, Arkansas, in the evening.

The Arkansas Division of Emergency Management reported that there was damage in 22 counties due to tornadoes, wind gusts, hail and flash flooding. At least four people were injured, but there were no reports of fatalities as of Wednesday evening.

In Kentucky, a tornado touched down Wednesday night around Jeffersontown, a suburb of Louisville, passing the Interstate 64 and Interstate 265 interchange, according to the weather service.

Four people were injured in Kentucky when a church was hit by debris from a suspected tornado, according to Ballard County Emergency Management. One person was in critical condition, while the others have non-life-threatening injuries.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 41 of 70

In Brownsburg, Indiana, where part of a warehouse collapsed, the police department told people to not travel through the city. Five semitrucks were blown over on Interstate 65 near Lowell, Indiana, state police reported.

In Pilot Grove, Missouri, several structures were damaged, cars flipped over and power poles were snapped, the state emergency management agency said. Minor injuries were reported, according to the Missouri State Highway Patrol.

Authorities in eastern Missouri were trying to determine whether it was a tornado that damaged buildings, overturned vehicles and tore down utility poles, tree limbs and business signs in the morning in and around the city of Nevada.

Another tornado touched down in the northeastern Oklahoma city of Owasso on Wednesday, according to the weather service. There were no immediate reports of injuries, but the twister heavily damaged the roofs of homes and knocked down power lines, trees, fences and sheds.

Power was knocked out to nearly 90,000 customers in Arkansas, Mississippi, Missouri, Illinois, Kentucky and Tennessee, according to PowerOutage.us, which tracks outages nationwide. As storms moved through Indiana on Wednesday night, more than 182,000 customers lost power.

Strong and long-lasting tornadoes are possible in highest-risk area

About 2.5 million people were in a rarely called "high-risk" zone, covering parts of west Tennessee including Memphis; northeast Arkansas; the southeast corner of Missouri; and parts of western Kentucky and southern Illinois.

The Storm Prediction Center said "multiple long-track EF3+ tornadoes" were likely. Tornadoes of that magnitude are among the strongest in intensity.

At a slightly lower risk for severe weather was an area that included Chicago, Indianapolis, St. Louis and Louisville, Kentucky. Dallas, Detroit, Milwaukee and Nashville, Tennessee, were also at risk.

Floods could inundate towns, sweep cars away

A line of thunderstorms dropped heavy rain through parts of Indiana on Wednesday night. At least one street was flooded in Indianapolis, with water nearly reaching the windows of several cars, according to the city's metropolitan police department. No one was in the vehicles.

Additional rounds of heavy rain were expected in parts of Texas, the lower Mississippi Valley and the Ohio Valley from midweek through Saturday. Forecasters warned that they could track over the same areas repeatedly, producing dangerous flash floods capable of sweeping cars away.

Middle Tennessee was looking at severe storms followed by four days of heavy rains as the front stalls out and sticks around through the weekend, according to NWS meteorologist Mark Rose.

"I don't recall ever seeing one like this, and I've been here 30 years," Rose said. "It's not moving."

Rain totaling up to 15 inches (38 centimeters) was 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, with some areas in Kentucky and Indiana at an especially high risk for flooding.

Power outages in Upper Midwest

In Michigan, crews worked to restore power after a weekend ice storm. More than 122,000 customers were still without electricity on Wednesday, according to PowerOutage.us.

The Mackinac Bridge connecting Michigan's Lower and Upper Peninsulas was shut down because large chunks of ice were falling from cables and towers. It was the third consecutive day of bridge interruptions from the ice storm.

Netanyahu is rocked by a new scandal linking his close advisers to Qatar

By TIA GOLDENBERG Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office is once again ensnared in scandal after police arrested two of his close associates this week on suspicion of accepting money from Qatar to promote a positive image of the Gulf Arab state in Israel.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 42 of 70

The affair has gripped Israelis because Qatar, a country that many view as a patron of Hamas, and which has no formal diplomatic ties to Israel, appears to have penetrated the highest corridors of power.

Qatar, which is a key mediator for Hamas in its ceasefire negotiations with Israel, denies backing the militant group. Netanyahu has given a statement to police on the matter but is not a suspect in the case, which he says is baseless and meant to topple his rule.

The investigation is just the latest scandal to roil Netanyahu, who is the subject of a long-running corruption trial and regularly rails against a "deep state" that is out to get him.

Critics say Netanyahu, the country's longest-serving prime minister, has worked in recent years to undermine Israel's state institutions, including its judiciary. Most recently, they point to his attempt to dismiss the head of Israel's domestic security agency, which is also investigating his office's alleged links to Qatar.

Netanyahu advisers allegedly promoted Qatari interests

Dubbed "Qatargate" by Israeli media, the investigation centers on accusations that two close advisers to Netanyahu — longtime media consultant Jonatan Urich, and former spokesman Eli Feldstein — were hired to run a public-relations campaign to improve Qatar's image among Israelis while it was negotiating on behalf of Hamas for a ceasefire in Gaza. Payments were allegedly funneled through an American lobbyist.

According to a court document, the American lobbyist and Urich struck a "business connection" to positively promote Qatar and spread negative messages about Egypt, another important mediator in the Israel-Hamas ceasefire negotiations.

Feldstein was allegedly paid to pass on those messages to journalists. He and Urich could face charges of contact with a foreign agent, money laundering, bribery, fraud and breach of trust, according to Israeli media. Other than financial gain, any other possible motives are unclear.

One Israeli journalist questioned in the case is Zvika Klein, the editor-in-chief of the Jerusalem Post, an English-language daily. According to a report this week in the Post, Klein visited Qatar at the invitation of its government last year and subsequently wrote a series of articles about his impressions, one of which laid out Qatar's case against Israeli claims that it backs the militant group. The newspaper said Klein, who could not be reached for comment, is currently barred from speaking to journalists.

Lawyers for Urich and Feldstein did not respond to requests for comment.

Netanyahu has slammed the probe as a political witch hunt and accused police of holding his advisers as "hostages" — wording that angered many in Israel because Hamas is still holding dozens captive inside Gaza after its Oct. 7, 2023, attack that ignited the war.

A judge on Tuesday extended the detentions of Urich and Feldstein, who has been indicted in a separate case involving the leak of classified information to a German tabloid.

If the new allegations are substantiated, "it's an abuse of the office," said Tomer Naor, of the Movement of Quality Government in Israel. What's particularly worrying, he said, is how easily outside actors appear to have gained access to the prime minister's inner circle — and that the advisers allegedly promoted Qatari talking points to journalists while giving the impression that the messaging was coming from the prime minister's office.

Qatar is a key mediator on Gaza with ties to Hamas

The nearly 18-monthlong war in Gaza rages on after last month's collapse of a 42-day ceasefire that Qatar played a key role in helping secure.

Among Israelis, the gas-rich emirate is best known for sending money to Gaza beginning in 2018 — an effort meant to help poor families. But analysts and former officials say some of the money dispatched with Netanyahu's blessing made its way to Hamas' military wing and helped it prepare for the Oct. 7, 2023, attacks.

Israelis are also suspicious of Qatar's intentions because it is the homebase for Hamas' political leaders, and its broadcaster Al Jazeera is seen by Israel as a mouthpiece for Hamas, allegations the network denies. Qatar says it provided humanitarian aid to Gaza in full coordination with the Israeli government.

When reached by the AP, a Qatari government official did not directly respond to the alleged links to Netanyahu's advisers. He said mediation efforts on Gaza would continue. He spoke on condition of ano-

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 43 of 70

nymity in line with regulations.

Once the target of a regional blockade over its alleged ties to Islamist extremist groups and Iran, Qatar has long sought to be seen as an influential regional player and as a trusted conflict mediator.

But throughout the war in Gaza, many in Israel, including Netanyahu, have expressed anger that Qatar wasn't doing enough to pressure Hamas to meet Israel's terms for a ceasefire.

Qatar's aim in the alleged public-relations campaign in Israel may have been to quell those accusations and make sure they didn't influence the U.S., with whom it has close security ties, said Yoel Guzansky, a senior researcher at the Institute for National Security Studies, a Tel Aviv think tank.

He said any effort to besmirch Egypt, a longtime mediator between Israel and the Palestinians, may have been a way to improve Qatar's own regional standing.

Qatar "brings up a lot of emotions" in Israel because it is viewed as having played a key role in bolstering Hamas ahead of its Oct. 7 attack, Guzansky said. Before the war, Netanyahu had approved the transfer of funds from Qatar to Gaza as part of a strategy to contain Hamas, he explained.

"Qatar is contemptible. But we should check ourselves first," he said. "We not only allowed, we encouraged Qatar to invest in Gaza."

The affair is the latest scandal to dog Netanyahu

It's not clear what, if anything, Netanyahu knew about his advisers' alleged wrongdoing.

Previous aides who got into trouble with the law have turned state witness against Netanyahu in his corruption trial. Netanyahu's testimony in that trial was halted after Urich and Feldstein's arrest this week; he was summoned to give police a statement about the case.

Netanyahu is under immense public pressure to accept responsibility for his role in failing to prevent the Oct. 7 attack, including allowing the transfer of Qatari cash to Gaza.

Mass protests erupted in recent weeks over Netanyahu's decision to end the Gaza ceasefire that had facilitated the release of dozens of hostages, and over his moves to fire the head of the country's domestic security agency and its attorney general.

The attempt to fire Shin Bet chief Ronen Bar came as the agency was running its own probe into the Qatar links. That prompted accusations that Netanyahu was trying to snuff out the investigation.

Netanyahu has suggested, with little evidence, that the probe was a result of collusion between Bar and the attorney general as a way to thwart the domestic security chief's dismissal. A court froze Bar's dismissal pending further hearings. That hasn't stopped Netanyahu from trying to appoint his replacement.

1 person dead as violent storms, including tornadoes, wallop Midwest and South

By JEFF MARTIN and HALLIE GOLDEN Associated Press

Tornadoes and violent storms struck parts of the South and Midwest on Wednesday, killing at least one person, knocking down power lines and trees, ripping roofs off homes and shooting debris thousands of feet into the air.

A tornado emergency was briefly issued in northeast Arkansas, with the National Weather Service telling residents on social media: "This is a life threatening situation. Seek shelter now."

Dozens of tornado and severe thunderstorm warnings were issued in parts of Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Missouri and Mississippi as storms hit those and other states in the evening. Forecasters attributed the violent weather to daytime heating combining with an unstable atmosphere, strong wind shear and abundant moisture streaming into the nation's midsection from the Gulf.

The Missouri State Highway Patrol said at least one person was killed Wednesday in southeast Missouri, KFVS-TV reported.

The coming days were also forecast to bring the risk of potentially deadly flash flooding to the South and Midwest as severe thunderstorms blowing eastward become supercharged. The potent storm system will bring "significant, life-threatening flash flooding" each day through Saturday, the National Weather Service said.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 44 of 70

With more than a foot (30 centimeters) of rain possible over the next four days, the prolonged deluge "is an event that happens once in a generation to once in a lifetime," the weather service said. "Historic rainfall totals and impacts are possible."

More than 90 million people were at some risk of severe weather in a huge part of the nation stretching from Texas to Minnesota and Maine, according to the Oklahoma-based Storm Prediction Center.

Tornadoes touch down, and more could be coming

A tornado emergency was briefly declared around Blytheville, Arkansas, Wednesday evening, with debris lofted at least 25,000 feet (7.6 kilometers), according to Chelly Amin, a meteorologist with the weather service. That was the weather service's highest alert, and rare. It was not immediately clear whether there were any injuries.

"It's definitely going to be a really horrible situation here come sunrise in the morning in those areas, coming out of Arkansas," Amin said.

More than 2 miles (3 kilometers) of Highway 18 in the area was temporarily shut down due to a downed power line.

A tornado was also reported on the ground near Harrisburg, Arkansas, in the evening.

The Arkansas Division of Emergency Management reported that there was damage in 22 counties due to tornadoes, wind gusts, hail and flash flooding. At least four people were injured and there were no reports of fatalities as of Wednesday evening.

In Pilot Grove, Missouri, several structures were damaged, cars flipped over and power poles were snapped, the state emergency management agency said. Minor injuries were reported, according to the Missouri State Highway Patrol. Meanwhile roads were closed because of storm debris and downed utility lines near the town of Potosi, southwest of St. Louis, according to the state transportation department.

Authorities in eastern Missouri were trying to determine whether it was a tornado that damaged buildings, overturned vehicles and tore down utility poles, tree limbs and business signs in the morning in and around the city of Nevada.

Another tornado touched down in the northeastern Oklahoma city of Owasso about 6:40 a.m., according to the weather service office in Tulsa. There were no immediate reports of injuries, but the twister heavily damaged the roofs of homes and knocked down power lines, trees, fences and sheds.

Forecasters at the National Weather Service office in the area of Paducah, Kentucky, took cover during a warning at night.

"We're all good here at the office, the circulation JUST missed us to the south," the agency said on social media.

Power was knocked out to nearly 90,000 customers in Arkansas, Mississippi, Missouri, Illinois, Kentucky and Tennessee, according to PowerOutage.us, which tracks outages nationwide. As storms moved through Indiana on Wednesday night, more than 182,000 customers lost power.

News outlets reported part of a warehouse collapsed in Brownsburg, Indiana, a suburb of Indianapolis, temporarily trapping at least one person inside, while the police department told people to not travel through the city. Five semitrucks were blown over on Interstate 65 near Lowell, Indiana, state police reported.

The dangerous weather came nearly two years to the day after an EF-3 tornado struck Little Rock, Arkansas. No one was killed, but there was major destruction to neighborhoods and businesses that are still being rebuilt today.

Strong and long-lasting tornadoes are possible in highest-risk area

About 2.5 million people were in a rarely called "high-risk" zone, covering parts of west Tennessee including Memphis; northeast Arkansas; the southeast corner of Missouri; and parts of western Kentucky and southern Illinois.

The Storm Prediction Center said "multiple long-track EF3+ tornadoes" were likely. Tornadoes of that magnitude are among the strongest on the Enhanced Fujita scale, used to rate their intensity.

At a slightly lower risk for severe weather was an area that included Chicago, Indianapolis, St. Louis and Louisville, Kentucky. Dallas, Detroit, Milwaukee and Nashville, Tennessee, were also at risk.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 45 of 70

Floods could inundate towns, sweep cars away

A line of thunderstorms dropped heavy rain through parts of Indiana on Wednesday night. At least one street was flooded in Indianapolis, with water nearly reaching the windows of several cars, according to the city's metropolitan police department. No one was in the vehicles.

Additional rounds of heavy rain were expected in parts of Texas, the lower Mississippi Valley and the Ohio Valley from midweek through Saturday. Forecasters warned that they could track over the same areas repeatedly, producing dangerous flash floods capable of sweeping cars away.

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Rain totaling up to 15 inches (38 centimeters) was 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, with some areas in Kentucky and Indiana at an especially high risk for flooding.

Power outages in Upper Midwest

In Michigan, crews worked to restore power after a weekend ice storm. More than 122,000 customers were still without electricity on Wednesday, according to PowerOutage.us.

The Mackinac Bridge connecting Michigan's Lower and Upper Peninsulas was shut down because large chunks of ice were falling from cables and towers. It was the third consecutive day of bridge interruptions from the ice storm.

Journalists in Haiti defy bullets and censorship to cover unprecedented violence

By PIERRE-RICHARD LUXAMA, DÁNICA COTO and EVENS SANON Associated Press

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) — Jean-Jacques Asperges once relished returning home after a long day working at a radio station in one of the world's most dangerous places for journalists.

He had a roof and four walls for protection, but gang violence forced him and his family to flee their home twice.

Now, Asperges, 58, his wife and their two children are forced to sleep on the floor of a soiled and overcrowded makeshift shelter with thousands of other Haitians also left homeless by gang violence.

"Bullets fall here all the time," he said.

Having lost all his work equipment, Asperges relies solely on his phone, but he remains undeterred like dozens of other journalists in Haiti who are under attack like never before. They are dodging bullets, defying censorship and setting personal struggles aside as they document the downfall of Haiti's capital and the surge in violence blamed on powerful gangs that control 85% of Port-au-Prince.

Heavily armed gangs attacked at least three TV and radio stations in March. Two of the buildings were already abandoned because of previous violence, but gunmen stole equipment that had been left behind.

"It's a message: You don't operate without our permission, and you don't operate at all in our turf," said David C. Adams, an expert on press freedom issues in Haiti.

Gangs sent an even deadlier message on Christmas Eve, when they opened fire on journalists covering the failed reopening of Haiti's largest public hospital, saying they had not authorized its reopening.

Two journalists were killed and at least seven others were injured, including Asperges, who was shot in the stomach. It was the worst attack on reporters in Haiti in recent history.

"Everyone is threatened. Everyone is under pressure," said Max Chauvet, director of operations at Le Nouvelliste, Haiti's oldest independent newspaper.

'You feel in danger doing your job'

Donning a bulletproof vest emblazoned with "PRESS" on it is now a dangerous move in Haiti. What used to serve as a symbolic and physical shield has become a target.

At least 10 journalists covering a major March protest were attacked, including Jephthe Bazil, a videog-

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 46 of 70

rapher who runs his own media company, Machann Zen Haïti.

He was threading his way through a protest in the Canapé-Vert neighborhood of Port-au-Prince when three men dressed in black and with their faces covered called him over.

"What the hell are you doing around here?" Basil recalled them asking.

They searched his bag, took away his cellphone and demanded multiple forms of ID. Basil handed over only his passport, keeping his ID card hidden because it stated he was from Martissant, a community that gangs seized several years ago. He was too scared to show it and possibly be accused of being a gang member or a sympathizer.

"I believe I could have been killed," Basil said.

After an interrogation that lasted at least half an hour, Basil said the men released him. As he walked away, one followed him with a machete to see if he was headed where he said he was going.

Once he reached his destination, Basil said the man told him: "If you had made any other turn, I would have...cut your head off."

It was not the first time Basil feared for his life. He was injured in December's hospital attack and, in February, while covering a confrontation between police and gangs, his motorcycle was shot but he was spared.

"Journalists are targets now, whether police or gangs," he said.

Haitians increasingly distrust the media, accusing local journalists of working for gangs. Meanwhile, gang members have taken to social media to threaten journalists. One gang leader said he would kidnap radio reporters and ensure they won't ever talk into a microphone again, while another threatened a talk show host based outside of Haiti, saying that if he ever set foot in the country, it would be the last time he would do so.

As a result, Haiti's Online Media Collective has advised that journalists not cover incidents involving armed groups.

"It's not just journalists who are the victims, it's press freedom itself," said Obest Dimanche, the collective's spokesperson.

But given the persistent attacks by heavily armed gangs in the capital and beyond, most journalists disregard that advice.

They travel in packs and zoom around on motorcycles through Port-au-Prince's hilly neighborhoods, ducking in unison when shots are fired. At the end of the day, they check in on each other to ensure everyone returned safely home. Those who lost their homes to gang violence like Asperges go back to a shelter while others sleep on the floor of their media company.

"You feel in danger doing your job nowadays," said Jean Daniel Sénat, a journalist at Le Nouvelliste and Magik9 radio station.

He lamented how journalists no longer have access to many neighborhoods in the capital because of gang violence: "If you can't talk to the people...you won't be able to report."

The violence also has forced media companies to close, lay off reporters or stop printing, as was the case for Le Nouvelliste when gunmen attacked and occupied its offices last year. Since then, the newspaper has operated solely online.

Killings and impunity

On March 13, Haiti's prime minister condemned the attack on the building that once housed Radio et Télévision Caraïbes, the country's oldest radio station, and pledged to protect media institutions.

Located on Rue Chavannes, the station's former headquarters were considered a "heritage monument," said journalist Richecarde Célestin, who works for the station.

Founded in 1949, the station has reported on Haiti's tumultuous history: its coups, dictatorships and first democratic elections.

Considered one of Haiti's most influential radio stations, it was a blow to many to see smoke and flames rising from the building.

"Every employee has a story with the space," said journalist Dénel Sainton, who described the former headquarters as the "soul" of Radio et Télévision Caraïbes, which has been forced to move twice because

of gang violence.

Also attacked that week was radio station Mélodie FM and TV station Télé Pluriel.

"What we're seeing now, kind of the wholesale targeting of the media, is different," said Adams, the expert on press freedom issues in Haiti. "In the old days, individual journalists were targeted."

According to UNESCO, at least 21 journalists were reported killed from 2000 to 2022 in Haiti, with nine killed in 2022, the deadliest year for Haitian journalism in recent history.

The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists reported one journalist killed in 2023 and two more in 2024.

Investigative journalist Gardy Saint-Louis recently told Télégramme360, an online news site, that he planned to go into hiding. Saint-Louis was quoted as saying that he began receiving anonymous calls in September 2024, and that death threats escalated into an attack in February, when armed men opened fire on his house.

Other journalists have fled Haiti, where attacks and killings are rarely solved.

Haiti ranks first globally as the country most likely to let journalists' murders go unpunished, according to a 2024 CPJ report. Since 2019, seven killings remain unsolved, including that of Garry Tesse, a radio host whose mutilated body appeared six days after he vanished in 2022. Shortly before his death, Tesse accused a powerful prosecutor of plotting to kill him.

Myanmar's military declares a ceasefire to ease quake relief as deaths pass 3,000

By DAVID RISING Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — Myanmar's ruling military declared a temporary ceasefire in the country's civil war Wednesday to facilitate relief efforts following a 7.7 magnitude earthquake that has killed more than 3,000 people.

The surprise announcement by military leaders who also head the unelected government came late Wednesday on state television MRTV, which said the halt in fighting would run until April 22 to show compassion for people affected by Friday's quake.

The announcement followed unilateral temporary ceasefires announced by armed resistance groups opposed to military rule, and the military warned that those groups must refrain from attacking the state and regrouping, or else face "necessary" measures.

The resistance forces have also reserved the right to fight in self-defense.

Earlier Wednesday, rescuers pulled two men alive from the ruins of a hotel in Myanmar's capital, a third from a guesthouse in another city, and another in the country's second city, Mandalay, five days after the quake. But most teams were finding only bodies.

The quake hit midday Friday, toppling thousands of buildings, collapsing bridges and buckling roads. The death toll rose to 3,003 on Wednesday, with more than 4,500 people injured, MRTV reported. Local reports suggest much higher figures.

The quake worsened an already dire humanitarian crisis due to Myanmar's civil war. More than 3 million people had been displaced from their homes and nearly 20 million were in need even before it hit, according to the United Nations.

Dramatic rescue in Myanmar capital

In the capital, Naypyitaw, a team of Turkish and local rescue workers used an endoscopic camera to locate Naing Lin Tun on a lower floor of the damaged hotel where he worked. They pulled him gingerly through a hole jackhammered through a floor and loaded him on to a gurney nearly 108 hours after he was first trapped.

Shirtless and covered in dust, he 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 later in the day that another man was saved from the same building, more than 121 hours after the quake struck. Both were age 26.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 48 of 70

Another man, a 47-year-old primary school principal, was rescued by a team of Malaysian and local crews from a collapsed guesthouse in the Sagaing township, near the epicenter of the earthquake close to Myanmar's second-largest city, Mandalay, where a fourth rescue was reported Wednesday night.

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 35 injured, primarily at the construction site.

Resistance groups have announced ceasefires

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.

Ceasefires had been announced earlier this week by the People's Defense Force, which is the armed wing of the shadow opposition National Unity Government, and the Three Brotherhood Alliance, a trio of ethnic minority guerrilla armies.

That had put pressure on the military government to follow suit, said Morgan Michaels, a Singapore-based analyst with the International Institute of Strategic Studies.

It's too early to say whether a pause in fighting could lead to something longer lasting, he said. "It would require very deft and active diplomacy to transform a humanitarian pause into something more lasting. And that's not guaranteed," Morgans said.

Military leader due in Thailand

The military government was particularly vulnerable to bad publicity this week because its leader, Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, was expected for a high-profile visit to a regional conference in the Thai capital Thursday.

It will be his first to a country other than his government's main supporters and backers — China, Russia and Russia ally Belarus — since he attended another regional meeting in Indonesia in 2021.

Min Aung Hlaing and other senior leaders are shunned and sanctioned by many Western countries for their 2021 takeover and human rights abuses as they try to crush the resistance to their rule.

Claims of an attack on a Chinese Red Cross convoy

Before Wednesday's ceasefire announcement, 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 in the northern part of Shan state.

The Ta'ang National Liberation Army said that 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 government, said that the convoy hadn't notified authorities of its route ahead of time, MRTV reported. While not mentioning the Red Cross, he said that security forces had fired into the air to deter a convoy that refused to stop.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun didn't comment on the attack. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies said it was looking into the matter.

More international aid heads to Myanmar

Countries have pledged millions in assistance to help Myanmar and humanitarian aid organizations with the monumental task ahead, while also sending in specialist search and rescue teams and setting up field hospitals.

India and China, both neighbors of Myanmar that compete for influence there, have been especially quick and generous with assistance. Multiple other countries have sent teams, including Turkey, Vietnam, Singapore and Malaysia.

The U.S. government has pledged \$2 million in emergency aid and sent a three-person team to assess how best to respond given drastic cuts to U.S. foreign assistance.

United Nations spokesman Stephane Dujarric said that continuing aftershocks are complicating humanitarian response efforts. In Mandalay City, many people are completely cut off from electricity and running water.

"People affected continue to need urgent healthcare and medical supplies, safe drinking water, food and

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 49 of 70

other critical items," Dujarric said. "Tents and temporary shelter are needed, as well as latrines and other hygiene items, to prevent disease outbreaks."

Extent of devastation is still unclear

Most of the details so far have come from Mandalay, which was near the epicenter of the earthquake, and Naypyitaw, about 270 kilometers (165 miles) north of Mandalay.

Many areas are without power, telephone or cellphone 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 in a cave-in, the independent Democratic Voice of Burma reported.

In the area of Inle Lake, a popular tourist destination northeast of the capital, many people died when homes built on wooden stilts in the water collapsed in the earthquake, the Global New Light of Myanmar reported.

Trump announces sweeping new tariffs to promote US manufacturing, risking inflation and trade wars

By JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Wednesday announced far-reaching new tariffs on nearly all U.S. trading partners — a 34% tax on imports from China and 20% on the European Union, among others — that threaten to dismantle much of the architecture of the global economy and trigger broader trade wars.

Trump, in a Rose Garden announcement, said he was placing elevated tariff rates on dozens of nations that run meaningful trade surpluses with the United States, while imposing a 10% baseline tax on imports from all countries in response to what he called an economic emergency.

The president, who said the tariffs were designed to boost domestic manufacturing, used aggressive rhetoric to describe a global trade system that the United States helped to build after World War II, saying "our country has been looted, pillaged, raped and plundered" by other nations.

The action amounts to a historic tax hike that could push the global order to a breaking point. It kick-starts what could be a painful transition for many Americans as middle-class essentials such as housing, autos and clothing are expected to become more costly, while disrupting the alliances built to ensure peace and economic stability.

Trump said he was acting to bring in hundreds of billions in new revenue to the U.S. government and restore fairness to global trade.

"Taxpayers have been ripped off for more than 50 years," he said. "But it is not going to happen anymore."

Trump declared a national economic emergency to levy the tariffs. He has promised that factory jobs will return to the United States as a result of the taxes, but his policies risk a sudden economic slowdown as consumers and businesses could face sharp price hikes.

Trump was fulfilling a key campaign promise as he imposed what he called "reciprocal" tariffs on trade partners, acting without Congress under the 1977 International Emergency Powers Act. But his action Wednesday could jeopardize Trump's voter mandate in last year's election to combat inflation. Several Republican senators, particularly from farm and border states, have questioned the wisdom of the tariffs. U.S. stock market futures sold off sharply overnight in anticipation of the economy weakening, after having already dropped since the start of this year.

"With today's announcement, U.S. tariffs will approach levels not seen since the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act of 1930, which incited a global trade war and deepened the Great Depression," said Scott Lincicome and Colin Grabow of the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank.

The president's higher rates would hit foreign entities that sell more goods to the United States than they buy. The administration essentially calculated its tariff rates to raise revenues equal in size to the trade imbalances with those nations. Trump then halved that rate in act that he described as "very kind."

The White House says the tariffs and other trade imbalances led to an \$1.2 trillion imbalance last year.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 50 of 70

Administration officials suggested it could take an extended set of actions by other countries to bring down the new tariffs their imports now face, and retaliatory tariffs by those countries could make the situation worse.

Olu Sonola, head of U.S. economic research at Fitch Ratings, said the average tariff rate charged by the United States would increase to roughly 22% from 2.5% in 2024.

"Many countries will likely end up in a recession," Sonola said. "You can throw most forecasts out the door, if this tariff rate stays on for an extended period of time."

The new tariffs will come on top of recent announcements of 25% taxes on auto imports; levies against China, Canada and Mexico; and expanded trade penalties on steel and aluminum. Trump has also imposed tariffs on countries that import oil from Venezuela and he plans separate import taxes on pharmaceutical drugs, lumber, copper and computer chips.

Canada and Mexico would not face higher rates on what they're already being charged by Trump in what he says is an effort to stop illegal immigration and drug smuggling. As of now, goods that comply with the USMCA North American trade pact would be excluded from those tariffs.

But the 20% charged on imports from China due to its role in fentanyl production would largely be added to the 34% announced by Trump. The specific products that Trump is tariffing, such as autos, would be exempt from the tariffs unveiled Wednesday, as would products such as pharmaceutical drugs that he plans to tariff at a later date.

Threats of backlash

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, despite the risk of political backlash.

Senior administration officials, who insisted on anonymity to preview the new tariffs with reporters ahead of Trump's speech, said the taxes would raise hundreds of billions of dollars annually in revenues. They said the 10% baseline rate existed to help ensure compliance, while the higher rates were based on the trade deficits run with other nations and then halved to reach the numbers that Trump presented in the Rose Garden.

The 10% rate would be collected starting Saturday and the higher rates would be collected beginning April 9.

Trump removed the tariff exemptions on imports from China worth \$800 or less. He plans to remove the exemptions other nations have on imports worth \$800 or less once the federal government certifies that it has the staffing and resources in place.

Based on the possibility of broad tariffs that have been floated by some White House aides, most outside analyses by banks and think tanks see an economy tarnished by higher prices and stagnating growth.

Trump would be applying these tariffs on his own; he has ways of doing so without congressional approval. That makes it easy for Democratic lawmakers and policymakers to criticize the administration if the uncertainty expressed by businesses and declining consumer sentiment are signs of trouble to come.

Rep. Suzan DelBene, D-Wash., said the tariffs are "part of the chaos and dysfunction" being generated across the Trump administration. The chair of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee stressed that Trump should not have the sole authority to raise taxes as he intends without getting lawmakers' approval, saying that Republicans so far have been "blindly loyal."

"The president shouldn't be able to do that," DelBene said. "This is a massive tax increase on American families, and it's without a vote in Congress. ... President Trump promised on the campaign trail that he would lower costs on day one. Now he says he doesn't care if prices go up — he's broken his promise."

Even Republicans who trust Trump's instincts have acknowledged that the tariffs could disrupt 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."

Allies brace themselves

Longtime trading partners are preparing their own countermeasures. Canada has imposed some in response to the tariffs that Trump tied to the trafficking of fentanyl. The European Union, in response to

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 51 of 70

the steel and aluminum tariffs, put taxes on 26 billion euros (\$28 billion) worth 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 America's friends and foes have essentially ripped off the United States with a mix of tariffs and other trade barriers.

The flip side 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 U.S.

The Chinese government delivered a measured response to the new tariffs, saying in a statement: "China believes that protectionism leads nowhere, and trade and tariff wars have no winners. This has been widely recognized in the international community."

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney said Trump's new tariffs would "fundamentally change the international trading system." He noted that the tariffs already in place against his country and those Trump says he plans to add will be fought with countermeasures.

"In a crisis, it's important to come together and it's essential to act with purpose and with force and that's what we will do," Carney said.

Italy's conservative Premier Giorgia Meloni said Trump's new tariffs against the EU were "wrong" and Italy would work toward an agreement with the United States to avoid a trade war that would weaken all involved.

Basic Fun CEO Jay Foreman, whose company is behind such classic toys as Tonka trucks, Lincoln Logs and Care Bears, has been working hard to come up with new ways to cut tariff-related costs like reduce packaging and eliminate batteries with the products.

But Trump's announcement that he plans a 34% increase in tariffs on Chinese imports has solidified his decision to hike prices. Most of the company's toys are made in China. He said the Tonka Mighty Dump Truck will go from \$29.99 to \$39.99 this holiday season, possibly even \$45.

"There is no other way," he said.

Shingles is awful, but here's another reason to get vaccinated: It may fight dementia

By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — A vaccine to fight dementia? It turns out there may already be one — shots that prevent painful shingles also appear to protect aging brains.

A new study found shingles vaccination cut older adults' risk of developing dementia over the next seven years by 20%.

The research, published Wednesday in the journal *Nature*, is part of growing understanding about how many factors influence brain health as we age — and what we can do about it.

"It's a very robust finding," said lead researcher Dr. Pascal Geldsetzer of Stanford University. And "women seem to benefit more," important as they're at higher risk of dementia.

The study tracked people in Wales who were around 80 when receiving the world's first-generation shingles vaccine over a decade ago. Now, Americans 50 and older are urged to get a newer vaccine that's proven more effective against shingles than its predecessor.

The new findings add another reason for people to consider rolling up their sleeves, said Dr. Maria Nagel of the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus, who studies viruses that infiltrate the nervous system.

The virus "is a risk for dementia and now we have an intervention that can decrease the risk," Nagel said.

With Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia on the rise in an aging population, "the implications of the study are profound," Dr. Anupam Jena, a Harvard physician and health economist, wrote in a *Nature* commentary.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 52 of 70

What is shingles?

Anyone who's had ever had chickenpox – nearly everybody born before 1980 – harbors that virus for the rest of their life. It hides in nerves and can break out when the immune system weakens from illness or age, causing painful, blister-like sores typically on one side of the body that last for weeks – what's called shingles.

About 1 in 3 Americans will get shingles, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. While most recover, it sometimes causes severe complications. If it infects an eye it can cause vision loss. Up to 20% of shingles patients suffer excruciating nerve pain months or even years after the rash itself is gone.

What's the link between shingles and dementia?

It's not clear exactly how Alzheimer's and other types of dementia form. But certain viruses that sneak inside the nervous system – especially members of the herpes family including the chickenpox virus -- have long been suspected of adding to genetic and other factors that make people more vulnerable.

Last summer, doctors at Boston's Brigham and Women's Hospital reported that an episode of shingles could raise someone's risk of dementia by about 20%.

Partly, it's because that virus can cause inflammation, bad for organs including the brain. It also can directly infect blood vessels in the brain, causing clots and impeding blood flow, said Colorado's Nagel, a risk both for strokes and for dementia.

More intriguing, her lab also discovered shingles can spur formation of a sticky protein called amyloid that's one of the hallmarks of Alzheimer's.

Do shingles vaccines protect against dementia?

Adults who get recommended vaccines tend to have other brain-healthy habits including exercising and a good diet, which made it hard to prove an extra benefit.

Stanford's Geldsetzer took advantage of "a natural experiment" in Wales, which opened shingles vaccinations with an age limit: anyone 80 or older on Sept. 1, 2013, was ineligible but those still 79 could squeeze in. Comparing seniors who just met or just missed that cutoff would mimic a research study that randomly assigned otherwise similar people to be vaccinated or not.

Geldsetzer's team analyzed more than 280,000 medical records and found evidence that vaccination did offer some protection against dementia. At the time, people received a first-generation vaccine called Zostavax.

An important next step is testing whether today's vaccine, Shingrix, also offers dementia protection, Nagel said. Another research group recently reported some evidence that it does. Vaccine manufacturer GSK last month announced a collaboration with UK health officials to track seniors' cognitive health as they get vaccinated.

Geldsetzer also hopes to further study that earlier shot to see if the type of vaccine might make a difference.

What are the shingles vaccine recommendations?

Shingrix is a onetime vaccination, given in two doses a few months apart. The CDC recommends it starting at age 50 for most people but also for younger adults with certain immune-weakening conditions – including those who years ago got that first-generation shingles vaccine. Fewer than 40% of eligible Americans have gotten vaccinated.

Side effects including injection-site pain and flu-like fever and achiness are common. The CDC cautions if you're currently fighting another virus such as the flu or COVID-19, to wait on a shingles shot until you're well.

While there's no proven prevention for dementia, doctors also recommend other commonsense steps to lower the risk. Stay socially and cognitively active. And control high blood pressure and, for people with diabetes, high blood sugar, both of which are linked to cognitive decline.

Judge dismisses corruption case against New York City Mayor Eric Adams

By JENNIFER PELTZ and MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A federal judge dismissed New York City Mayor Eric Adams' corruption case on Wednesday, agreeing it was the only practical outcome while blasting the Justice Department's "troubling" rationale for wanting the charges thrown out — namely so the Democrat could help President Donald Trump's immigration crackdown.

The judge, though, denied prosecutors the option to refile the charges after the mayoral election. Judge Dale E. Ho's order to dismiss the case "with prejudice" spares Adams from having to govern in a way that pleases Trump or potentially risk having the Republican's Justice Department revive the charges.

The judge said he wasn't opining on the merits of the case, but that courts can't force prosecutors to move forward. Still, he expressed qualms about the government's move, saying "there are many reasons to be troubled" by its reasoning.

"Everything here smacks of a bargain: dismissal of the indictment in exchange for immigration policy concessions," Ho wrote. He said he found it "disturbing" that public officials might get special treatment from prosecutors by complying with policy goals.

He rejected an alternative the Justice Department had sought — dismissing the case "without prejudice," which would have left room for the charges to be refiled.

"Dismissing the case without prejudice would create the unavoidable perception that the mayor's freedom depends on his ability to carry out the immigration enforcement priorities of the administration, and that he might be more beholden to the demands of the federal government than to the wishes of his own constituents," the judge wrote.

The mayor claims victory

Adams lauded the judge's decision during brief remarks outside the mayoral residence.

"As I said all along, this case never should have been brought, and I did nothing wrong," he said.

"I have always been solely beholden to the people of this city," the mayor added. "No special interests, no political opponents, but just everyday New Yorkers, just you."

Asked about his chances for reelection, Adams said: "I'm gonna win."

He closed by holding up a copy and encouraging people to read FBI Director Kash Patel's 2023 book "Government Gangsters," which alleged a "sinister cabal" at the heart of government.

The Justice Department said in a statement that Adams' case had been "an example of political weaponization and a waste of resources."

Ho's decision follows a legal drama that roiled the Justice Department, created turmoil in City Hall and left Adams' mayoralty hanging by a thread amid questions about his political independence and ability to govern.

Several prosecutors in New York and Washington quit rather than carry out the Justice Department's directive to drop the case against Adams.

After four of Adams' top deputies decided to resign, Gov. Kathy Hochul pondered taking the unprecedented step of ousting a New York City mayor. The governor, a fellow Democrat, ultimately concluded it would be undemocratic and disruptive to do so and instead proposed new oversight for city government.

At a Feb. 19 hearing, Adams told Ho: "I have not committed a crime."

The basis for the case

Adams pleaded not guilty to bribery and other charges after a 2024 indictment accused him of accepting illegal campaign contributions and travel discounts from a Turkish official and others — and returning the favors by, among other things, helping Turkey open a diplomatic building without passing fire inspections.

The case, brought during President Joe Biden's administration, was on track for an April trial until Trump's Justice Department moved to drop it. Ho delayed the trial while considering what to do, seeking advice from former U.S. Solicitor General Paul Clement.

Ho's decision comes about three months before a Democratic primary that will likely choose the New

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 54 of 70

York's next mayor.

Adams faces a large field of challengers, including former Gov. Andrew Cuomo and several Democrats who say he's now too indebted to Trump for New Yorkers to be sure he'll prioritize their interests. Adams has said he's "solely beholden to the 8.3 million New Yorkers that I represent, and I will always put this city first."

As recently as Jan. 6, Manhattan federal prosecutors wrote in court papers that they continued to "uncover additional criminal conduct by Adams." But a month later, their new Washington superiors decided to abandon the case.

In court filings and a hearing, then-acting Deputy Attorney General Emil Bove said he was "particularly concerned about the impact of the prosecution on Mayor Adams' ability to support" Trump's immigration objectives. Bove also questioned the prior administration's motives in pursuing Adams, who had criticized Biden's handling of immigration.

The Trump administration's acting U.S. attorney in New York, Danielle Sassoon, resisted Bove's order, saying she couldn't defend a dismissal linked to political considerations.

Sassoon and several other career prosecutors quit in protest.

Adams, a retired police captain and former state lawmaker and Brooklyn official, was elected in 2021 as a centrist Democrat in a liberal stronghold. Since his indictment, Adams has cultivated a warmer relationship with Trump, telling mayoral staffers not to criticize the president publicly.

Tesla sales tumble 13% as Musk backlash, competition and aging lineup turn off buyers

By BERNARD CONDON AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Tesla sales fell 13% in the first three months of the year, another sign that Elon Musk's once high-flying car company is struggling to attract buyers.

The leading electric vehicle maker has faced a growing backlash from Musk's embrace of right-wing politics and his role in the Trump administration. Opponents have staged protests at Tesla showrooms in the U.S. and in Europe, where the sales declines have been steeper.

Tesla's line-up is aging, and some consumers may have held off from buying its bestselling Model Y while waiting for an updated version. The Austin, Texas, company also faces fierce competition from other EV makers offering vastly improved models, including those of China's BYD.

Tesla reported deliveries of 336,681 globally in the January to March quarter. The figure was down from sales of 387,000 in the same period a year ago. The decline came despite deep discounts, zero financing and other incentives and could be a warning that the company's first-quarter earnings report later this month could disappoint investors.

Dan Ives of Wedbush said Wall Street financial analysts knew the first quarter was likely bad, but turned out even worse than expected. He called the sales results a "disaster on every metric."

"The brand crisis issues are clearly having a negative impact on Tesla...there is no debate," he said.

Musk has been President Donald Trump's point man in his effort to cut government spending. As criticism of Musk mounted and Tesla's sales and stock price slumped, Trump last month held an extraordinary press conference outside the White House in which he praised Tesla, blasted boycotts against the company and bought a Tesla himself while TV cameras rolled.

Tesla investors have complained Musk's work at the Department of Government Efficiency has diverted his focus from running Tesla. On Tuesday, New York City's comptroller overseeing pension funds holding Tesla stock called for a lawsuit accusing a distracted Musk of "driving Tesla off a financial cliff."

After falling as much as 6% in early Wednesday, Tesla stock shot up more than 5% on indications that Musk may soon return his attention to Tesla. Politico, citing anonymous sources, reported Trump has told Cabinet members that Musk will step back from his role at DOGE in coming weeks.

Tesla's stock has plunged by roughly half since hitting a mid-December record as expectations of a lighter regulatory touch and big profits with Donald Trump as president were replaced by fear that the

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 55 of 70

boycott of Musk's cars and other problems could hit the company hard. Analysts are still not sure exactly how much the fall in sales is due to the protests or other factors.

Still, even bullish financial analysts who earlier downplayed the backlash to Musk's polarizing political stances are saying it is hurting the company, something that Musk also recently acknowledged.

"This is a very expensive job," Musk said at a Wisconsin rally on Sunday, referring to his DOGE role. "My Tesla stock and the stock of everyone who holds Tesla has gone roughly in half."

Tesla cars have been smashed and set on fire in recent weeks, and protests have been staged at hundreds of Tesla dealerships. Owners have put bumper stickers on their cars saying, "I bought this before Elon went crazy."

Europeans have also balked at buying Tesla, especially Germans upset after Musk publicly supported a far-right party in national elections and gave what many say was a Nazi-like salute at a Trump inauguration rally in January.

Tesla is expected to report earnings of 48 cents per share for the first quarter later this month, up 7% from a year earlier, according to a survey of financial analysts by research firm FactSet.

Nearly all of Tesla's sales in the quarter came from the smaller and less-expensive Models 3 and Y, with the company selling less than 13,000 more expensive models, which include X and S as well as the Cybertruck.

Netanyahu says Israel will establish a new security corridor across Gaza to pressure Hamas

By WAFAA SHURAF and ISAAC SCHARF Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Wednesday that Israel is establishing a new security corridor across the Gaza Strip to pressure Hamas, suggesting it would cut off the southern city of Rafah, which Israel has ordered evacuated, from the rest of the Palestinian territory.

The announcement came after Netanyahu's defense minister said Israel would seize large areas of Gaza and add them to its so-called security zones. A wave of Israeli strikes, meanwhile, killed more than 40 Palestinians, nearly half of them women and children, according to Palestinian health officials.

Israel has vowed to escalate the nearly 18-month war with Hamas until the militant group returns dozens of remaining hostages, disarms and leaves the territory. Israel ended a ceasefire in March and has imposed a monthlong halt on all imports of food, fuel and humanitarian aid.

Netanyahu described the new axis as the Morag corridor, using the name of a Jewish settlement that once stood between Rafah and Khan Younis, suggesting it would run between the two southern cities. He said it would be "a second Philadelphia corridor" referring to the Gaza side of the border with Egypt further south, which has been under Israeli control since last May.

Israel has reasserted control over the Netzarim corridor, also named for a former settlement, that cuts off the northern third of Gaza, including Gaza City, from the rest of the narrow coastal strip. Both of the existing corridors run from the Israeli border to the Mediterranean Sea.

"We are cutting up the strip, and we are increasing the pressure step by step, so that they will give us our hostages," Netanyahu said.

The Western-backed Palestinian Authority, led by rivals of Hamas, expressed its "complete rejection" of the planned corridor. Its statement also called for Hamas to give up power in Gaza, where the militant group has faced rare protests recently.

In northern Gaza, an Israeli airstrike hit a U.N. building in the built-up Jabaliya refugee camp, killing 15 people, including nine children and two women, according to the Indonesian Hospital. The Israeli military said it struck Hamas militants in a command and control center.

The building, previously a clinic, had been converted into a shelter for displaced people, with more than 700 residing there, according to Juliette Touma, a spokesperson for the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees, the main aid provider in Gaza. No U.N. staff were wounded in the strike.

She said U.N. staff warned people about the dangers of remaining there after Wednesday's strike but

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 56 of 70

that many chose to stay, "simply because they have absolutely nowhere else to go."

U.N. says most of Gaza is a 'no-go' zone

More than 60% of Gaza is now considered a "no-go" zone because of Israeli evacuation orders, according to Olga Cherevko, a spokesperson for the U.N. humanitarian aid office. Hundreds of thousands of people are living in squalid tent camps along the coast or in the ruins of their destroyed homes.

Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz earlier said Israel would seize "large areas" and add them to its security zones, apparently referring to an existing buffer zone along Gaza's entire perimeter. He called on Gaza residents to "expel Hamas and return all the hostages," saying "this is the only way to end the war."

On Sunday, Netanyahu said Israel plans to maintain overall security control of Gaza after the war and implement President Donald Trump's proposal to resettle much of its population elsewhere through what the Israeli leader referred to as "voluntary emigration."

Palestinians have rejected the plan, viewing it as expulsion from their homeland after Israel's offensive left much of it uninhabitable, and human rights experts say implementing the plan would likely violate international law.

Hamas has said it will only release the remaining 59 hostages — 24 of whom are believed to be alive — in exchange for the release of more Palestinian prisoners, a lasting ceasefire and an Israeli pullout. The group has rejected demands that it lay down its arms or leave the territory.

Concern over hostages

The decision to resume the war has fueled protests in Israel, where many fear it has put the hostages at grave risk and are calling for another ceasefire and exchange with Hamas.

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

The group called on the Trump administration, which took credit for brokering the ceasefire but has supported Israel's decision to end it, to do everything possible to free the remaining captives.

"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.

Strikes kill dozens

In addition to the 15 killed in northern Gaza, Israeli airstrikes overnight into Wednesday killed another 28 people across the territory, according to local hospitals. The Nasser Hospital in the southern city of Khan Younis said the dead included five women, one of them pregnant, and two children.

Israel says it targets only militants and makes every effort to spare civilians, blaming Hamas for their deaths because the militants operate in densely populated areas.

Two projectiles were fired out of Gaza late Wednesday and intercepted, the Israeli military said. It later issued evacuation orders for several communities in northern Gaza, "with a focus on shelters," indicating it would soon carry out retaliatory strikes.

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, most of whom have since been released in ceasefire agreements and other deals. Israel rescued eight living hostages and has recovered dozens of bodies.

Israel's offensive has killed more than 50,000 Palestinians, 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.

The war has left vast areas of Gaza in ruins and at its height displaced around 90% of the population.

Musk could be headed for a Washington exit after turbulent times at Trump's DOGE

By CHRIS MEGERIAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — DOGE's days appear to be numbered.

Elon Musk recently suggested that he will be done with his work in the near future. President Donald Trump told reporters this week that "at some point, he's going to be going back" to running his companies. As far as the Department of Government Efficiency, Trump said "it will end."

All of that talk was before Musk faced a setback Tuesday in Wisconsin, where voters rejected his choice for a state Supreme Court candidate despite more than \$21 million in personal donations and his campaign appearance over the weekend. There are more problems for the billionaire entrepreneur at Tesla, his electric automaker, which saw a 13% drop in sales in the first three months of the year.

The White House has not disclosed any clear timeline for closing down DOGE, and the government cost-cutting organization was never supposed to become a permanent fixture in Washington. But it could be reaching a conclusion faster than anticipated. DOGE was originally intended to operate until July 4, 2026.

Now there are signs that it already is winding down. DOGE employees have been shifted to various federal agencies, which are supposed to take the lead on cutting costs. Government-wide layoffs are underway to accomplish some of the goals laid out by Musk and Trump.

"We think probably over the next two or three months, we'll be pretty much satisfied with the people that are working hard and want to be members of the administration," Trump said last week.

The potential end of DOGE does not mean Trump will stop shaking up Washington. But it appears the administration's efforts will be entering a new phase that is less focused on Musk, whose chain saw-wielding work as a presidential adviser made him a political lightning rod.

DOGE was initially envisioned as an independent advisory panel, with Musk sharing leadership with Vivek Ramaswamy, a biotech entrepreneur. Ramaswamy dropped out and is running for Ohio governor, and DOGE became part of the government. It was stocked with Musk's allies, who were dispatched throughout the bureaucracy to cancel contracts, access sensitive data and push for cuts.

Musk presumably has a ticking clock on his tenure. He was hired as a special government employee, which means he can only work 130 days in a 365-day time period.

"I think we will have accomplished most of the work required to reduce the deficit by a trillion dollars within that time frame," Musk told Bret Baier of Fox News on March 27. So far DOGE is well short of that target, according to its own calculations, which have been criticized as inflated and inaccurate.

Musk did not commit to leaving the administration by any particular date, and it is unclear how the administration is tracking Musk's time. On May 30, it will be 130 days since Trump's inauguration on Jan. 20.

Trump told reporters on Monday in the Oval Office that "I'd keep him as long as I could keep him" and "he's a very talented guy."

The Republican president was known for explosive breakups with top advisers during his first term, but anyone hoping for such a split with Musk has been disappointed.

"I think he's amazing, but I also think he's got a big company to run," Trump said. "And so, at some point, he's going to be going back."

Asked if DOGE would continue without Musk, Trump demurred. He said Cabinet officials have worked closely with Musk and may keep some of the DOGE people at their agencies.

"But at a certain point I think it will end," Trump said.

Musk's poll numbers lag behind Trump's, which Democrats believe they were able to use to their advantage in Wisconsin.

Susan Crawford defeated Brad Schimel, who Musk supported, and ensured the state Supreme Court's liberal majority.

In the closing days of that campaign, Musk described the race as "important for the future of civilization." He struck a different tone afterward.

"I expected to lose, but there is value to losing a piece for a positional gain," Musk wrote on X at 3:13 a.m.

Amazon's last-minute bid for TikTok comes as a US ban on the platform is set to take effect Saturday

By AAMER MADHANI and SARAH PARVINI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Amazon has put in a bid to purchase TikTok, a Trump administration official said Wednesday, in an eleventh-hour pitch as a U.S. ban on the platform is set to go into effect Saturday.

The official, who was not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on the condition of anonymity, said the Amazon offer was made in a letter to Vice President JD Vance and Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick. The New York Times first reported on the bid.

President Donald Trump on Inauguration Day gave the platform a reprieve, barreling past a law that had been upheld unanimously by the Supreme Court, which said the ban was necessary for national security.

Under the law, TikTok's Chinese-owned parent company ByteDance is required to sell the platform to an approved buyer or take it offline in the United States. Trump has suggested he could further extend the pause on the ban, but he has also said he expects a deal to be forged by Saturday.

Amazon declined to comment. TikTok did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The existence of an Amazon bid surfaced as Trump was scheduled on Wednesday to meet with senior officials to discuss the coming deadline for a TikTok sale.

Although it's unclear if ByteDance plans to sell TikTok, several possible bidders have come forward in the past few months. Among the possible investors are the software company Oracle and the investment firm Blackstone. Oracle announced in 2020 that it had a 12.5% stake in TikTok Global after securing its business as the app's cloud technology provider.

In January, the artificial intelligence startup Perplexity AI presented ByteDance with a merger proposal that would combine Perplexity's business with TikTok's U.S. operation. Last month, the company outlined its approach to rebuilding TikTok in a blog post, arguing that it is "singularly positioned to rebuild the TikTok algorithm without creating a monopoly."

"Any acquisition by a consortium of investors could in effect keep ByteDance in control of the algorithm, while any acquisition by a competitor would likely create a monopoly in the short form video and information space," Perplexity said in its post.

The company said it would remake the TikTok algorithm and ensure that infrastructure would be developed and maintained in "American data centers with American oversight, ensuring alignment with domestic privacy standards and regulations."

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. Jesse Tinsley, the founder of the payroll firm Employer.com, says he too has organized a consortium and is offering ByteDance more than \$30 billion for the platform. Wyoming small business owner Reid Rasner has also announced that he offered ByteDance roughly \$47.5 billion.

Both the FBI and the Federal Communications Commission have warned that ByteDance could share user data — such as browsing history, location and biometric identifiers — with China's authoritarian government. TikTok said it has never done that and would not do so if asked. The U.S. government has not provided evidence of that happening.

Trump has millions of followers on TikTok and has credited the trendsetting platform with helping him gain traction among young voters.

During his first term, he took a more skeptical view of TikTok and issued executive orders banning dealings with ByteDance as well as the owners of the Chinese messaging app WeChat.

Once common, now unusual: Conservative candidate publicly quashes shouts that the other side cheated

By ALI SWENSON and CHRISTINE FERNANDO Associated Press

PEWAUKEE, Wis. (AP) — As the first news outlets began calling the Wisconsin Supreme Court election for the liberal candidate Susan Crawford, her opponent called her — to concede.

Minutes later Tuesday night, the conservative-backed Brad Schimel took the stage at his watch party to acknowledge the loss. Angry yells broke out. One woman began to chant about his opponent: “Cheater.”

Schimel didn’t hesitate. “No,” he responded. “You’ve got to accept the results.” Later, he returned to the stage with his classic rock cover band to jam on his bass.

In any other American era, Schimel’s concession wouldn’t be considered unusual — except maybe the guitar part. But it stands out at a time when the nation’s politics have opened a fissure between those who trust election results and those who don’t.

“It shouldn’t be super laudable,” said Jeff Mandell, general counsel of the Madison-based liberal law firm Law Forward. “But given where we are and given what we’ve seen over the past few years nationwide and in Wisconsin, it is laudable.”

Accusations of cheating are common now

Over the past several years, numerous Republicans — and some Democrats — have lobbed unfounded accusations of voter fraud, harassed election officials and pointed to “irregularities” to dispute their election losses. President Donald Trump led that movement in 2020, when he filed lawsuits in battleground states, including one thrown out by the Wisconsin Supreme Court, seeking to overturn his loss to Democrat Joe Biden.

Schimel’s concession of that very same court to a liberal majority, though in line with what generations of candidates have done in the past, was not a given in today’s divisive atmosphere.

Onstage, as his supporters yelled, Schimel shook his head and left no uncertainty he’d lost — a result that would become even clearer later in the night as Crawford’s lead grew to around 10 percentage points.

“The numbers aren’t going to — aren’t going to turn around,” he told the crowd. “They’re too bad, and we’re not going to pull this off.”

By acknowledging his loss quickly, Schimel curtailed the kind of explanation-seeking and digital digging that erupted online after Trump, a Republican, lost the 2020 presidential election, with citizen journalists falsely accusing innocent election workers and voters of fraud.

Schimel also avoided the impulses to which many in his party have defaulted in recent elections across the country, as they’ve dragged their feet to avoid accepting defeat.

Last fall, Wisconsin Republican Eric Hovde spent days sowing doubt in the results after he lost a Senate race to Democrat Tammy Baldwin. He conceded nearly two weeks after Election Day, saying he did not want to “add to political strife through a contentious recount” even as he raised debunked election conspiracies.

In a 2024 state Supreme Court race in North Carolina, two recounts have affirmed Democrat Allison Riggs narrowly won the election, but her Republican opponent, Jefferson Griffin, is still seeking to reverse the outcome by having ballots thrown out.

Trump also has continued to falsely claim he won the 2020 presidential election, even though there was no evidence of widespread fraud and the results were confirmed through multiple recounts, reviews and audits. His close adviser, billionaire Elon Musk, has also spread a flurry of unfounded claims about voter fraud involving noncitizens.

Musk and his affiliated groups sank at least \$21 million into the Wisconsin Supreme Court race, and he personally paid three voters \$1 million each for signing a petition to boost turnout. He had said the race was central to the “future of America and Western civilization.”

But after the results came in, he said he “expected to lose” and touted the successful passage of a voter ID amendment in Wisconsin’s Constitution. Trump, who had endorsed Schimel, didn’t post about the loss but used his Truth Social platform to celebrate the voter ID win.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 60 of 70

An assessment: 'That's democracy'

Not all Republicans watching the race were in a magnanimous mood as they processed the results. Peter Bernegger, the head of an election integrity organization who has brought numerous lawsuits against Wisconsin election clerks and offices, raised the specter that an "algorithm" was behind Crawford's win. InfoWars founder and conspiracy theorist Alex Jones reacted to the results on X, saying, "Election fraud should be investigated."

But at Schimel's watch party, several supporters applauded his high road.

"He was all class," said Russell Jones, a 51-year-old attorney. "That's how you lose."

Adam Manka, of the La Crosse County Republican Party, said he worries about how a liberal court could redraw the state's congressional districts. "But you can't exactly change it," Manka said, calling Schimel "very graceful" in his defeat. "This is democracy."

Crawford, in an interview Wednesday, said Schimel's phone call was "the way elections should conclude" and said she would have done the same thing if she had lost.

The moment is a good example for future candidates, said Ari Mittleman, executive director of the Wisconsin-based nonprofit Keep Our Republic, which aims to rebuild trust and confidence in elections. He compared elections to a Green Bay Packers football game: "We know who won, we know who lost." He said he thinks Schimel, a lifelong Wisconsinite, understands that.

"It's transparent, and we accept the final score," Mittleman said. "That's democracy."

Schimel and his band, performing for a thinning crowd Tuesday night, took the loss in stride.

"Can you ask them at the bar to get me a Coors Light please?" Schimel said between songs. "Put it on my tab."

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

By JILL COLVIN and MAYA SWEEDLER Associated Press

A trio of spring elections offered early warning signs to Republicans and President Donald Trump, as Democrats rallied against his efforts to slash the federal government and the outsize role being played by billionaire Elon Musk in the early days of his new administration.

In the marquee race for a Wisconsin Supreme Court seat Tuesday, the conservative judge endorsed by Trump and backed by Musk and his groups to the tune of \$21 million lost by 10 percentage points in a state Trump won in November. And while Florida Republicans held two of the most pro-Trump House districts in the country, both candidates 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 in an X post, 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

Trump narrowly won Wisconsin in November by fewer than 30,000 votes. In the first major test since he took office in January, 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 Novem-

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 61 of 70

ber by 626 votes. Sauk shifted 16 percentage points in the direction of Judge Susan Crawford, the liberal backed by national Democrats and billionaire donors like George Soros.

Besides 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 won by about 10 percentage points there.

In interviews with dozens of voters across the state, including more than 20 in Waunakee, a politically mixed town north of Madison, many Democrats suggested without prompting that their vote was as much if not more of a repudiation of Trump's first months in office than 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.

"We have to fight, and this is where the fight is today," agreed Theresa Peer, a 49-year-old business-owner born and raised in Milwaukee. She said she hoped a Crawford win would serve as a "symbol of opposition" to the Trump administration, particularly on the issues of women's reproductive rights and slashed education spending.

Others disliked the richest man in the world playing such a prominent role. Musk was not only the race's biggest donor, but he campaigned in Green Bay on Sunday.

"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."

Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer, in a floor speech Wednesday, called the results "a political warning shot from the American people" and a sign that "Democrats' message is resonating."

"Just 70 days into Trump 2.0, Americans are tired of the chaos. They are tired of Elon Musk attacking Social Security, Medicaid, Medicare," he said.

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. He wondered if the outcome would have been different had Trump paid a visit instead of hosting a telephone town hall.

"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 Mike Waltz, who stepped down to serve as Trump's national security adviser. But Fine beat his Democratic challenger, Josh Weil, by 14 percentage 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.

Patronis carried the 1st Congressional District by a 14-percentage-point margin, according to preliminary results. In many districts, that would be seen as a landslide. But that's less than half of Trump's November margin of victory. And in a stunning development, Democrats were able to turn Escambia County blue,

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 62 of 70

flipping the county that's home to Pensacola in the ruby red Florida Panhandle.

Sally Dutcher, a 77-year-old retired search and rescue worker in Pensacola, said the time of "complacency" among conservatives accustomed to blowout victories in northwest Florida has to come to an end.

"We're overconfident," she said. "And we need to not be."

Still, the pair of wins gave Republicans a 220-213 margin in the House of Representatives, where 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.

Wild weather expected Wednesday gets a rare 'high-risk' designation — the most severe category

By JEFF MARTIN Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — U.S. government forecasters are using a relatively rare "high-risk" designation — the highest category they use — to warn that a major tornado outbreak appears likely Wednesday in an area that's home to about 2.5 million people.

That area most at risk of catastrophic weather on Wednesday includes parts of west Tennessee including Memphis; northeast Arkansas; the southeast corner of Missouri; and parts of western Kentucky and southern Illinois.

The Norman, Oklahoma-based Storm Prediction Center says that "multiple long-track EF3+ tornadoes, appear likely." Tornadoes of that magnitude are among the strongest on the Enhanced Fujita scale, used to rate their intensity.

Historically, the "high-risk" designation has been used sparingly, but it did appear just a couple of weeks ago to warn of a deadly tornado outbreak in mid-March.

Magenta marks areas at highest risk

The Storm Prediction Center uses five categories to warn of expected severe weather, ranging from marginal to high. Its forecast maps are color-coded, with the lowest risk areas in green and the highest shown in magenta.

The "high risk" designation is used when severe weather is expected to include "numerous intense and long-tracked tornadoes" or thunderstorms producing hurricane-force wind gusts and inflicting widespread damage, according to the agency.

On many days when the "high risk" designation was used in recent years, the forecasts became reality. 2024 Kansas and Oklahoma tornado outbreak

On May, 6, 2024, the Storm Prediction Center assigned the high-risk category to parts of Kansas and Oklahoma, warning of "multiple significant tornadoes along potentially long paths."

The forecast was prescient, as dozens of tornadoes gouged the landscape. One of the strongest twisters tore through the small town of Barnsdall, Oklahoma and then struck the larger community of Bartlesville.

Aerial video showed many homes reduced to piles of rubble. About 25 people were rescued from homes where buildings had collapsed on or around them, the town's mayor said at the time.

2023 Mississippi River Valley tornadoes

On March 31, 2023, the Storm Prediction Center outlined two areas along the Mississippi River Valley at high risk for tornadoes.

Hours after that forecast was issued, multiple twisters collapsed a theater roof during a heavy metal concert in Illinois and shredded homes and shopping centers in Arkansas.

A roof collapse at the Apollo Theatre in Belvidere, Illinois, killed one person and injured more than two

dozen others. About 260 people were in the venue at the time, the local fire chief said.

In all, 146 tornadoes from the 2023 outbreak were confirmed, making it the third-largest tornado outbreak on record in the U.S., the National Weather Service said. More than two dozen people were killed and dozens of others injured.

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

By MARK KENNEDY and ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writers

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. Kilmer died from pneumonia. He had recovered after a 2014 throat cancer diagnosis that required two tracheotomies. The New York Times was the first to report his death.

Kilmer, who at 17 was 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.

"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."

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 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, while 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 Hollywood moments, I had been deemed difficult and alienated the head of every major studio," he wrote in his 2020 memoir, "I'm Your Huckleberry."

One of his more iconic roles — hotshot pilot Tom "Iceman" Kazansky opposite Tom Cruise in 1986's "Top Gun" — almost didn't happen. Kilmer was courted by director Tony Scott 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" (1995) with

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 64 of 70

Nicole Kidman and Chris O'Donnell — 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."

The New York Times' Janet Maslin 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 after Kilmer's ability to speak was impaired by cancer treatment. "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 1990s' 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 subject to a hurricane, Kilmer bullying director Richard Stanley, the firing via fax of Stanley (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 Times in 2002.

After "The Island of Dr. Moreau," the movies were smaller, like David Mamet's human-trafficking thriller "Spartan"; "Joe the King," in which he played a paunchy, abusive alcoholic; and 2003's "Wonderland," in which he played the doomed '70s porn star John Holmes. 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. Shortly after he left for Juilliard, his younger brother Wesley suffered an epileptic seizure in the family's Jacuzzi and died on the way to the hospital. Wesley, just 15, was an aspiring filmmaker.

"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 in 2002.

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 spoken word album Grammy in 2012 for "The Mark of Zorro." He was also a visual artist and a lifelong Christian Scientist.

He dated Cher, and 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 witnessed and experienced miracles."

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 65 of 70

There's no one-and-done path in women's college basketball. And NIL money makes that a good thing

By TIM REYNOLDS and ALANIS THAMES AP Sports Writers

Paige Bueckers is widely expected to become the first WNBA No. 1 overall draft pick from the University of Connecticut since Breanna Stewart nine years ago. Both became can't-miss stars in college, both are UConn icons, both went to four Final Fours.

Stewart did it while making nothing. Bueckers, who has UConn in the Final Four for the second straight year, has done it while making millions. And she's far from the only one cashing in right now.

There's no one-and-done path to the WNBA for women's players like there is for men, who can jump to the pros after one year of college regardless of age. Duke's standout freshman, Cooper Flagg, for example, is expected to go No. 1 in the NBA draft and he just turned 18 in December.

The NBA and WNBA have different rules regarding draft eligibility. For years, that impeded how and when women's players could start making money. The name, image and likeness era of college sports has changed just about everything, leveling the playing field in some respects for female athletes like Bueckers and allowing her to have deals with Nike, Gatorade and other sponsors while still wearing UConn colors.

"I think Paige is the poster child for how it's supposed to be," coach Geno Auriemma said. "That's the way it's supposed to work. She came out of high school at a time when people weren't just getting paid to play. ... She made a name for herself and set a standard for exactly why you're supposed to be able to appreciate this stuff. You go to college. You're the best player in the country, and everybody wants to be associated with you, and the school doesn't give you a dime."

To jump to the WNBA draft, players must either be a senior with all college eligibility exhausted or turn 22 in the draft year and renounce any remaining eligibility.

Yet there is no clamoring to change the women's rules because, frankly, it wouldn't make much sense under the current salary structure. The No. 1 pick in this year's NBA draft will make somewhere around \$13.8 million in his rookie season. The No. 1 pick in this month's WNBA draft will make \$78,831 in her rookie season.

Smart business for women's players to stay in school

Staying in school isn't a bad thing for women's players. It's smart business. NIL deals will follow many of them to the WNBA. But the pro check isn't exactly a game changer for those at the top of the women's game. The top current WNBA base salary is around \$242,000, though that's expected to increase with the recent financial boom in women's sports.

Former Miami guards Haley and Hanna Cavinder became the first faces of the NIL era in college sports when it started on July 1, 2021, while they were still at Fresno State. They were immediately featured on a billboard in Times Square, the new faces of Boost Mobile. College sports were immediately changed.

The Cavinder twins have built a multimillion-dollar fortune and have more than 7 million followers across their Instagram and TikTok accounts. They've never confirmed actual numbers, but it's reasonable to believe the Cavinder twins are among the top-paid college athletes given both their earnings and equity stakes in various companies. Their college careers ended last month.

"I think we were pretty naive in the beginning with it, honestly," Haley Cavinder said. "To be transparent, I don't think Hanna and I really knew. We had talks of what NIL was, and I always saw tweets about it. But I never really envisioned myself getting paid or Hanna getting paid until July 1 happened. And then I was like, 'Wow, this is overwhelming.' I didn't know how much money there was."

Olivia Miles, who starred at Notre Dame for four seasons, was widely expected to go between No. 2 and No. 4 in this month's WNBA draft. Instead, she decided to enter the transfer portal and play one last college season — taking her lucrative NIL deals with her wherever she ends up and missing out on the \$78,000 WNBA payday for the 2025 season.

Same goes for Southern California's JuJu Watkins, perhaps the most talented player in the women's game. Her season ended with a torn ACL in the NCAA Tournament, but her NIL deals will live on and could even grow by the time she returns to the court — presumably sometime next season. There's no

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 66 of 70

urgency for her to go pro, since her earning stream already exists.

Female college athletes 'most effective media buy in sports'

Opendorse, a company that provides NIL services to dozens of schools, has data that might be shocking to some. It shows that top women's programs have a combined social media following that exceeds that of the top men's programs, which is a clear factor in determining NIL value.

While the numbers of those engaging with top men's programs on social media skew about 4-to-1 male, it's close to a 50-50 split when charting those engaging with women's basketball stars and teams.

"Female student-athletes are probably the most effective media buy in sports right now," Opendorse CEO Steve Denton said. "And everything I see in the data tells me that, which is that their social audiences are three times as large as the average social audience. ... They're just better at it in terms of — they curate their social feeds better than the men do."

The opportunities afforded by NIL were certainly a reason why Bueckers chose to stay in college. Same goes for Miles.

It was one of the reasons why Kate Martin was in no hurry to leave Iowa and end her time as teammates with Caitlin Clark — who obviously played a major role in the explosion of women's basketball in recent years. Martin was in college for six years. When she got there, NIL didn't exist. When she left, people were paying money to wear things bearing her name.

"To get my education paid for and then to be able to capitalize and make a little bit of money off of my NIL, I thought was huge," said Martin, who's going into her second WNBA season. "And so that was one of the main reasons why I decided to stay."

"So, I don't blame people. You know, I would get made fun of because I was there for six years, but I didn't really care. I wouldn't be where I am right now if I didn't stay."

Why no one is challenging Trump's executive order that keeps TikTok running

By SARAH PARVINI and MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — After TikTok was banned in the United States earlier this year, President Donald Trump gave the platform a reprieve, barreling past a law that was passed in Congress and upheld unanimously by the Supreme Court that said the ban was necessary for national security.

The Republican president's executive orders have spurred more than 130 lawsuits in the little more than two months he has been in office, but this one barely generated a peep. None of those suits challenges his temporary block of the 2024 law that banned the popular social video app after the deadline passed for it to be sold by ByteDance, its China-based parent company.

Few of the 431 members of the House of Representatives and the Senate who voted for the law have complained.

Despite a bipartisan consensus about the risk to national security posed by TikTok's ties to China, "it's as if nothing ever happened," said Sarah Kreps, director of Cornell University's Tech Policy Institute.

TikTok has stayed online, delighting 170 million users in the U.S.

TikTok continues to function, much to the delight of its 170 million users in the U.S., and the tech giants Apple, Google and Oracle have been persuaded to continue to offer and support the app, on the promise that Trump's Justice Department would not use the law to seek potentially steep fines against them.

Trump declared he was suspending the law for 75 days, though no provision of the rule would appear to allow for that, to give ByteDance a fresh chance to find a U.S. buyer. The president has suggested he could extend the pause, but he has since said he expects a deal by Saturday, when the reprieve expires. He is meeting Wednesday with aides about possible suitors for TikTok. Oracle and the investment firm Blackstone are among the potential investors.

Trump's action followed a fast-tracked free-speech challenge by TikTok and its users that ended with a unanimous Supreme Court ruling days before Trump's inauguration, in which the justices held that national

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 67 of 70

security concerns overcame their usual receptivity to First Amendment claims.

The court's opinions dealt at length with the potential for China to harvest vast quantities of TikTok users' data that could allow it to track the locations of federal employees and contractors.

"The record before us establishes that TikTok mines data both from TikTok users and about millions of others who do not consent to share their information," Justice Neil Gorsuch wrote in a brief separate opinion. "According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, TikTok can access 'any data' stored in a consenting user's 'contact list' — including names, photos, and other personal information about unconsenting third parties."

TikTok, which has headquarters in Singapore and Los Angeles, has said it prioritizes user safety, and China's Foreign Ministry has said China's government has never and will not ask companies to "collect or provide data, information or intelligence" held in foreign countries.

Trump was against TikTok before he was for it

The day after the ruling, TikTok went dark for U.S. users, but it came back online after Trump vowed to stall the ban.

The president's position has evolved over time. During his first term, he used an executive order to try to ban TikTok on national security grounds. But federal courts blocked it. His administration then tried to negotiate a sale of the platform, but it failed.

Trump changed his tune during his 2024 campaign and said he would "save TikTok," then credited the platform with helping him win more young voters. He issued the 75-day pause on the first day of his second term.

The law allows for one 90-day reprieve, but only if there's a deal on the table and a formal notification to Congress.

Trump's actions so far violate the law, said Alan Rozenshtein, an associate law professor at the University of Minnesota. "The law does not permit the sort of 'extension' that Donald Trump has announced," Rozenshtein said.

But both he and Kreps acknowledged a court challenge or other pushback is unlikely.

"Who's the constituency? You have 170 million Americans using the app, and they're pretty happy to see this continue to be available to them," Kreps said.

It also might be hard for someone to establish the legal right, or standing, to sue, Rozenshtein said. A plaintiff would have to be able to show harm from the delay in enforcing the law, he said.

More importantly, he said, the TikTok executive order was an early "example of the Trump administration not caring about the rule of law."

While Trump has directed the Justice Department not to seek fines from the tech companies, they still are taking a legal gamble, according to Democratic lawmakers who oppose the TikTok ban but also criticize Trump for his actions. A future administration might have its own reasons to pursue legal claims against Apple, Google and Oracle, they wrote Trump in a letter last week.

Companies could face hundreds of billions of dollars in legal liability for facilitating TikTok's operations since the law's effective date of Jan. 19, Democratic Sens. Cory Booker of New Jersey, Chris Van Hollen of Maryland and Ed Markey of Massachusetts wrote.

Tech companies initially lacked clear guidance

The companies themselves acknowledged their legally uncertain situation in their initial response to Trump's order. Oracle continued to provide cloud services to TikTok, the senators said, but "Apple and Google, however, initially came to a different decision and refused to reinstate TikTok in their app stores."

The companies changed course only after receiving written assurance from the Justice Department.

The Democrats have called for amending the law to extend the deadline for a sale to October. Other opponents of the TikTok ban support a full repeal.

Among the few supporters of the ban to speak out is Rep. John Moolenaar, R-Michigan, chairman of the House Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party.

But rather than take on Trump, Moolenaar has focused his criticism on ByteDance and its ties to the Chinese Communist Party. "If ByteDance stays involved in any way, the deal is illegal — plain and simple," Moolenaar said in remarks to a TikTok event on Capitol Hill last week.

Several potential bidders have stepped forward.

Perplexity AI presented ByteDance in January with a merger proposal that would combine Perplexity's business with TikTok's U.S. operations.

Another possibility is a consortium organized by billionaire businessman Frank McCourt, which recently recruited Reddit co-founder Alexis Ohanian as a strategic adviser. Investors in the consortium previously said they offered ByteDance \$20 billion in cash for TikTok's U.S. platform. They had planned to redesign the popular app with blockchain technology they said would provide users with more control over their online data.

Jesse Tinsley, the founder of the payroll firm Employer.com, had also organized a consortium, which included the CEO of the video game platform Roblox, and offered ByteDance more than \$30 billion for TikTok.

Counting the potential toll of Trump's tariffs on major Asian economies

By ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

BANGKOK (AP) — The trade war that U.S. President Donald Trump has escalated in his second term is a challenge for all Asian economies, large and small, in an era when the most populous region of the world is expected to drive global economic growth.

Export manufacturing and free trade helped transform China and other Asian countries into economic powerhouses over the past decades. Trump's barrages of tariffs, aimed at compelling companies to keep or set up their factories in the United States, are rupturing trade agreements often made at great political cost to trading partners.

The White House says the criteria for raising tariffs will include not just U.S. trade deficits but also various taxes, exchange rates, government subsidies and various non-tariff trade barriers. Apart from the tariffs to be announced on Wednesday's "Liberation Day," as Trump calls it, 25% tariffs on imports of autos and auto parts are due to take effect on Thursday.

Trump has also ordered levies against China, Canada and Mexico; expanded tariffs on steel and aluminum, and imposed tariffs on countries that import oil from Venezuela. He plans more import taxes on pharmaceutical drugs, lumber, copper and computer chips.

Higher costs already have led many manufacturers to shift away from China to other economies in South and Southeast Asia, Africa and Latin America. But for now the prevailing uncertainty over what Trump will do with what he calls "reciprocal" tariffs may lead most to sit tight and see what comes next.

"There's no script for how reciprocal tariffs get priced, and uncertainty is the only constant," Stephen Innes of SPI Asset Management said.

Here's a look at how higher U.S. tariffs might affect some major Asian economies.

China

Despite some decrease in trade since Trump launched a trade war with China during his first term in office, the U.S. trade deficit has continued to climb, hitting \$295.4 billion last year.

China, the world's No. 2 economy, has leaned heavily on exports to make up for weak demand at home. The ruling Communist Party has made exports of autos, especially electric vehicles, and batteries a priority, but 27.5% tariffs on auto exports and 102.5% duties on EVs have in effect closed the U.S. market for its automakers. China is the second largest supplier of auto parts to the U.S. behind Mexico.

During Trump's first term, higher tariffs led leader Xi Jinping to champion a shift to high-tech production. That will likely continue as U.S. pressure intensifies, causing job losses due to changes in manufacturing rather than direct damage from the tariffs themselves, Raymond Yeung of ANZ Research said in a report.

As Trump has rolled out rounds of tariff hikes that have piled on an extra 20%, China has raised its own import duties, targeting U.S. farm goods. It also expanded export controls, especially on strategically important minerals used in high-tech electronics.

U.S. exports of liquefied natural gas (LNG) to China have fallen since the beginning of the year, and are

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 69 of 70

expected to fall further after Beijing imposed a 15% tariff on U.S. LNG imports.

Japan

Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba said Tuesday that his government was making last ditch efforts to get the United States to exclude his country from auto tariffs. The U.S. absorbs about one-fifth of Japan's exports, or about 1.5 million passenger cars a year.

Even though major Japanese automakers like Toyota Motor Corp., Honda Motor Co. and Nissan Motor Co. have factories in the U.S. and increasingly, in Mexico, it's an important industry back home. Nearly 5.6 million people are employed in auto-related jobs, according to the Japan Automobile Manufacturing Association.

Japan's exports of electronics, machinery, chemicals and steel are also potential targets. A central bank survey released Monday found business sentiment among large manufacturers worsened in the past quarter, for the first time in a year. Tokyo's Nikkei 225 share benchmark has fallen more than 10% in the past three months, while shares in Toyota Motor Corp. have tumbled 27%.

Taiwan

More than 60% of the self-governed island's economy comes from exports, and it ran a trade surplus with the U.S. of nearly \$74 billion last year. Computer chips are one of Taiwan's biggest exports to the United States, along with computers and other office machines and consumer products.

Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Corp. is expanding its U.S. factories in Arizona, enticed by U.S. incentives and its own strategic needs. In early March, its CEO C.C. Wei pledged \$100 billion in new U.S. investments.

South Korea

South Korea ran a \$66 billion trade surplus with the U.S. last year, and autos, electronics and computer chips were a large share. The country could boost investments in making autos, steel, and semiconductors in the U.S. and also consider revising the Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement to promote more balanced trade, Patrick Cronin of the Hudson Institute said in a recent report.

South Korea is among several big importers of LNG that may try to buy more of the gas from the US to help balance trade, researchers at RaboBank said in a recent report.

Vietnam

Like most of its Southeast Asian neighbors, Vietnam has emulated Japan, China and other major exporting nations in relying on trade and foreign investment to develop their economies.

It had the third-largest trade surplus with the United States last year, after Mexico and China, at \$123.5 billion. Its biggest exports are machinery, textiles and footwear.

A 14% increase in exports helped Vietnam's economy expand at a sizzling 7.1% annual rate last year. The government recently said it would slash tariffs on LNG, autos, ethanol and some other farm products, moves meant to placate Trump and reduce its trade surplus. Vietnam also has agreed to allow a five-year trial launch of Elon Musk's Starlink satellite internet service.

India

The world's most populous country ran a trade surplus of nearly \$46 billion with the U.S. in 2024, according to the U.S. Trade Representative's office. The main exports are medicines and chemicals to make them, pearls, diamonds and other gems.

Exports account for just under a quarter of India's GDP, providing millions of jobs, and the U.S. is its largest overseas market.

Today in History: April 3, Unabomber arrested in Montana

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Thursday, April 3, the 93rd day of 2025. There are 272 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On April 3, 1996, Theodore Kaczynski (kah-ZIHN'-skee), also known as the Unabomber, was arrested at his remote Montana cabin by FBI agents.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 282 ~ 70 of 70

Also on this date:

In 1860, the first Pony Express mail delivery rides began; one heading west from St. Joseph, Missouri, and one heading east from Sacramento, California.

In 1882, outlaw Jesse James was shot and killed in St. Joseph, Missouri, by Robert Ford, a member of James' gang.

In 1936, Bruno Richard Hauptmann was electrocuted in Trenton, New Jersey, for the kidnap-murder of 20-month-old Charles Lindbergh Jr.

In 1944, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *Smith v. Allwright*, struck down a Democratic Party of Texas rule that allowed only white voters to participate in Democratic primaries.

In 1948, President Harry S. Truman signed into law the Marshall Plan, designed to help European allies rebuild after World War II and resist communism.

In 1968, civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. delivered what was to be his final speech, telling a rally of striking sanitation workers in Memphis, Tennessee, "I've been to the mountaintop. ... I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land!" (The following day, King was killed by an assassin's bullet at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis.)

In 1973, the first handheld portable telephone was demonstrated for reporters on a New York City street corner as Motorola executive Martin Cooper called Joel S. Engel of Bell Labs.

In 1974, an outbreak of tornadoes began hitting wide parts of the South and Midwest before jumping across the border into Canada; 148 tornadoes caused more than 300 fatalities in what became known as the 1974 Super Outbreak.

In 1996, a U.S. Air Force jet crashed as it approached Dubrovnik, Croatia; all 35 people on board were killed, including U.S. Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown.

Today's birthdays: Conservationist Jane Goodall is 91. Actor Marsha Mason is 83. Singer Wayne Newton is 83. Singer Tony Orlando is 81. Singer-songwriter Richard Thompson is 76. Actor Alec Baldwin is 67. Actor David Hyde Pierce is 66. Actor-comedian Eddie Murphy is 64. Celebrity chef Cat Cora is 58. Olympic skiing gold medalist Picabo Street is 54. Actor Jennie Garth is 53. Actor Adam Scott is 52. Football Hall of Famer Jared Allen is 43. Actor Cobie Smulders is 43. Singer Leona Lewis is 40. Actor-comedian Rachel Bloom is 38.