

# Groton Daily Independent

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## **Sunday, April 6**

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.; Last day of Sunday School, 10:15 a.m.; Choir, 6 p.m.

United Methodist: Worship with communion at Conde, 8:15 a.m.; at Groton, 9:30 a.m.; at Britton, 11:15 a.m.; Sunday School, 9:30 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 10:30 a.m.

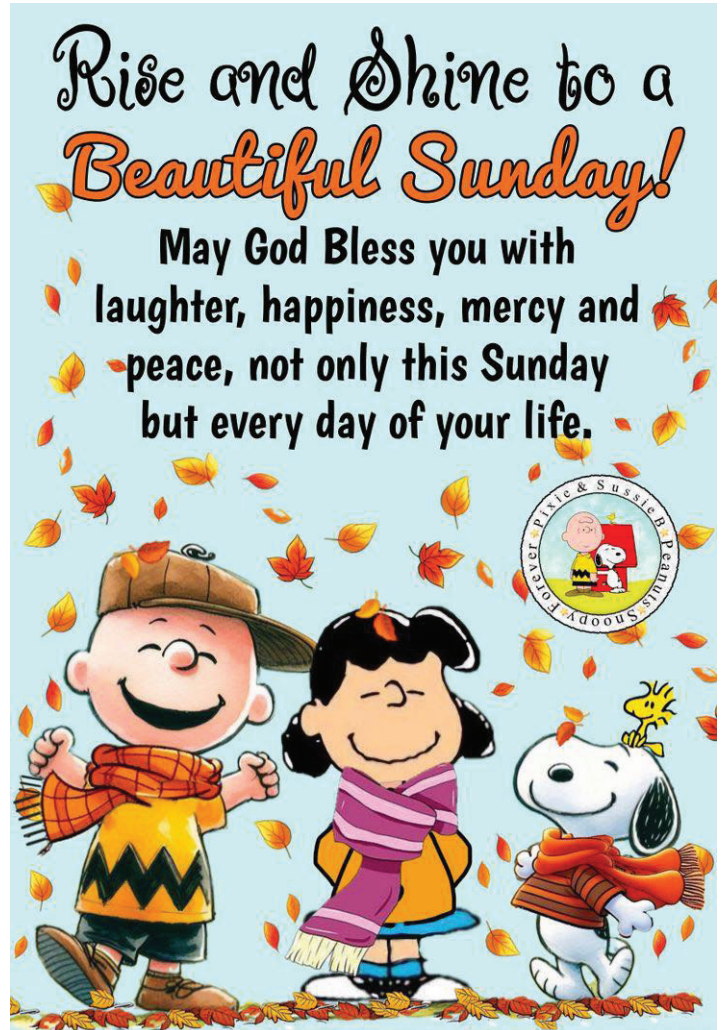
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m.; SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.

First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.

Groton CM&A: Sunday School, 9:15 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Worship with communion at St. John's, 9 a.m.; and Zion, 11 a.m.; Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.

POPS Concert, 2 p.m. and 5 p.m.



Rise and Shine to a  
**Beautiful Sunday!**

May God Bless you with  
laughter, happiness, mercy and  
peace, not only this Sunday  
but every day of your life.

Pancake Sunday, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Groton Community Center

Baseball at Redfield, Varsity at 2 p.m., JV at 4 p.m.

## **Monday, April 7**

Senior Menu: Ham with pineapple, au gratin, glazed carrots, Easter cake, dinner roll.

School Breakfast: French toast.

School Lunch: Chicken pasta, cooked broccoli.

Smarter Balance Testing for Grades 6-8 and 11 (ELA and Math)

Baseball at Madison, 7 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.

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

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# Groton Daily Independent

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## Tina's Baskets - for Easter 605-397-7285

Cow basket - \$20



Includes - green drink cup, light up football, play dough, dinosaur bubble, bubbles, and 4 filled eggs

Teenager or adult Easter basket - \$25



Includes- cross word, sudoku book, word find, colored pencils, three color books, pack of pens, Reese's pieces candy, solid chocolate bunny, neapolitan flavored Lindt candy, and Dunkin chocolate brownie batter crème filled eggs



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Rainbow basket - \$25



Includes- two color books 7 filled eggs, pink drink cup crayons, Reese's candy , egg chalk, playdough, bubbles fan bubbles and a rabbit bubble



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Blue basket - \$20

Pink basket - \$20



Blue bunny includes bubble machine, bluey and his friend bingo, small Pail for the sand , bubbles, 6 filled eggs

Includes a pink bear with hugs in it , bubble machine, bubbles, side chalk bunny book, 6 eggs filled Reeses pieces candy



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## Name Released in 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: Kila Louann Good, 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 Wednesday morning in a single vehicle crash on SD Highway 14, one mile west of Wessington, SD.

Preliminary crash information indicates Kila Louann Good, 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. Good 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.

# # #


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.



POPS CONCERT  
Sunday, April 6, 2 p.m.


Groton  
Area  
Tigers  
Groton, SD

**GDILIVE**



A production of the  
**Groton Daily Independent**


\$5 ticket or GDI Subscription required



POPS CONCERT  
Sunday, April 6, 5 p.m.

Groton  
Area  
Tigers  
Groton, SD

**GDILIVE**



A production of the  
**Groton Daily Independent**

\$5 ticket or GDI Subscription required



## Two Groton DI team advance to Global Finals



### Seven Pentagoni Pickles win at state

The Seven Pentagoni Pickles took first place at the State Destination Imagination Tournament held Saturday in Pierre. They will advance to the Global Finals, taking place in Kansas City, Mo., from May 22-25. Pictured left to right are Rowan Hanson, Gideon Rix, Calvin Locken, Titan Johnson, Jernie Weig, Taylor Fliehs and Willow Cowan. Not pictured: Team Manager Julie Milbrandt, Assistant Team Manager Joni Groeblichhoff. (Photo

from Groton Area Imagination Destination Facebook Page)



### Triple A's take second at state

The Triple A's placed second at the State Destination Imagination Tournament held Saturday in Pierre. They will advance to the Global Finals, taking place in Kansas City, Mo., from May 22-25. Pictured left to right are Aryanna Cutler, Ava Strom, Aschar Warrington, Freddy Cole and Conrad Rix. Not pictured: Team Manager Julie Milbrandt, Assistant Team Manager Joni Groeblichhoff. (Photo

from Groton Area Imagination Destination Facebook Page)





**Groton  
American Legion**

# GRAND REOPENING

**Groton  
Legion Lounge  
"Legion  
Remodel  
Celebration!"**

**When: Friday,  
April 11**

**Time: 5-10pm  
(reduced drink  
prices & door  
prizes)**

**Where: Groton  
American Legion  
Lounge, Main St,  
Groton**

**Appetizers:  
6 pm until gone**

**Door prices:  
hourly cash  
prizes (must be  
present to win)**

**Music:  
Karaoke 9-1  
B&M Tunes**

Our Legion Post  
Lounge & Hall  
remodel  
celebration has  
been  
finalized.  
Please come and  
celebrate with  
our customers,  
friends, and  
Legion family.





## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### Thousands gather in Sioux Falls to protest Trump's actions

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - APRIL 5, 2025 4:10 PM

SIoux FALLS — A crowd estimated in the thousands protested Saturday in downtown Sioux Falls as part of a nationwide movement to resist President Donald Trump's agenda, with attendees focusing on the protection of things such as abortion rights, Social Security and free trade.

"My angst is really about the millions of people who are hurting and will hurt because of his policies," said Roni Wegner, with Indivisible 605, which helped organize the protest. "I don't see how it's going to help. There is no long-term plan."

Another attendee, Reed Boyesen, said, "This is not a left or right moment, this is a right or wrong moment."

There were also protests in Pierre and Rapid City. The South Dakota chapter of the national 50501 Movement (50 protests, 50 states, one movement) was an organizer, saying that the protests were staged to "resist executive overreach, defend democracy, and oppose the harmful policies of Project 2025." Conservative political groups wrote and published the Project 2025 plan as a roadmap to remake the federal government during Trump's presidency.

The 50501 movement called on South Dakotans to "remove corrupt politicians from office," "reverse the damage inflicted" and "reclaim our rights, our government and our future." Across the country, the protests were known as "Hands Off" rallies, with partner organizations posting a website saying "Donald Trump and Elon Musk think this country belongs to them. They're taking everything they can get their hands on, and daring the world to stop them."

Since Trump took office, he has moved rapidly with billionaire Musk and his Department of Government Efficiency to fire hundreds of thousands of federal workers, cut or freeze billions in federal government spending, eliminate the federal Department of Education and take other actions that drew protesters into the streets Saturday.

*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.*



**Attendees carry signs during a protest against President Donald Trump on April 5, 2025, in Sioux Falls.** (Joshua Haiar/South Dakota Searchlight)



## U.S. Senate GOP wins approval of sprawling budget blueprint, shipping it to the House

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - APRIL 5, 2025 9:12 AM

WASHINGTON — U.S. Senate Republicans, in the early morning hours Saturday, approved their budget resolution that will aid the party in maintaining the 2017 tax cuts but also paves the way for them to add nearly \$6 trillion to the deficit under an outside analysis.

The 51-48 vote sends the compromise measure to the House, where Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., hopes to adopt the tax-and-spending blueprint within the next week. No Democrats backed the bill and no Democratic amendments were accepted during an overnight marathon voting session.

Maine Sen. Susan Collins and Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul were the only two Republicans who voted against the resolution, which needed only a majority vote under the complicated process being used in the Senate.

The lengthy voting session, known as the vote-a-rama, included debate on 28 amendments, with one adopted.

Alaska Republican Sen. Dan Sullivan was the only member of either party to have their change agreed to, following a 51-48 vote. His amendment addressed Medicaid, which has become a flash point in the battle over the budget this year, as well as Medicare.

Sullivan said his proposal would strengthen Medicaid, the state-federal health program for lower-income people that House GOP lawmakers are looking at as one place to cut spending, and Medicare, the health insurance program for seniors and some people with disabilities.

"We should all want to weed out waste, fraud and abuse in Medicaid and Medicare, and we must keep these programs going. We should do both," Sullivan said.

Oregon Democratic Sen. Ron Wyden spoke against the amendment, saying it didn't clearly define which "vulnerable people" would have their access to Medicare and Medicaid protected.

"By not defining the vulnerable, the Sullivan amendment is code for states to cut benefits or kick people off their coverage altogether," Wyden said. "To me, the Sullivan amendment basically says if somebody thinks you're not poor enough, you're not sick enough, or you're not disabled enough, we're not going to be there for you."

Democrats unsuccessfully offered messaging amendments dealing with everything from Social Security phone service to the minimum wage to contracts with farmers.



**The U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C., is pictured on Feb. 25, 2025.** (Photo by Jennifer Shutt/States Newsroom)



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## **'Start the game'**

Senate Budget Committee Chairman Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., said during a floor speech Friday the budget resolution will clear the way for lawmakers to extend the 2017 tax cuts permanently, bolster federal spending on border security and defense, rewrite energy policy and cut spending.

"The resolution opens up that process that will be done by the House and Senate authorizing committees," Graham said. "So this doesn't do anything other than start the game and it's time this game started."

Wyden, ranking member on the Senate Finance Committee, vehemently opposed the budget resolution, saying the tax cuts it sets up would predominantly help the wealthy.

Wyden argued the tariffs that President Donald Trump has instituted would negate any potential positive impacts of the upcoming GOP tax cuts. The tariffs sent markets diving on Friday for a second day in a row.

"People following along at home are going to hear a lot of sweet-sounding promises from Republicans about what they're trying to accomplish," Wyden said. "They claim their tax bill is just all unicorns and rainbows. They'll say everybody is going to benefit from a tax cut and typical families will get the help they need. They'll promise rising wages and a booming economy."

"It's just not true. The reality is, unless you're way out at the upper end of the income scale, any benefit you get from this Republican bill is going to get blown out of the water as the Trump tariffs continue to hike inflation."

Paul said during floor debate that he was "concerned" about how his colleagues had written the measure.

"What worries me is that so many things in Washington are smoke and mirrors," Paul said. "On the one hand, it appears as if all of this great savings is happening. But on the other hand, the resolution before us will increase the debt by \$5 trillion."

Paul offered an amendment that would have changed those instructions to set up a three-month debt limit extension, but it was not agreed to following a vote of 5-94.

## **Framework for tax hikes and policy bill**

Congress' budget isn't a bill but a concurrent resolution, meaning it never goes to the president for a signature. Its various provisions take effect once both chambers vote to adopt the same version.

The budget resolution also doesn't include any real money, just plans for the next decade.

But it does lay the groundwork for the GOP to use the complex reconciliation process to extend the 2017 tax law, much of which was set to expire at the end of this year.

Republicans plan to use that reconciliation bill to boost spending on border security and defense by hundreds of billions of dollars and make changes to energy policy.

The budget resolution also includes instructions to raise the debt limit by between \$4 and \$5 trillion later this year.

The reconciliation instructions give a dozen House committees and 10 Senate committees targets for how much they can increase the deficit or how much they need to cut spending when they draft their pieces of the package.

All of those panels are supposed to send their bills to the Budget committees before May 9, so they can be bundled together in one package and sent to the floor.

The House GOP set a minimum of \$1.5 trillion in spending cuts, while Republicans in the Senate set a floor of \$4 billion in funding reductions. Those vast differences foreshadow an internal GOP struggle to achieve a final deal.

## **Nearly \$6 trillion deficit increase**

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office will ultimately calculate the deficit impact of the reconciliation bill once it's written, but several outside organizations have said they disagree with how Republicans are moving forward.

The nonpartisan Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget released an analysis Friday showing the reconciliation bill would increase deficits during the next decade by nearly \$6 trillion.



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"A \$5.8 trillion deficit-increasing bill would be unprecedented," CRFB's analysis states. "It would add 14 times as much to the deficit than the bipartisan infrastructure law (\$400 billion), more than three times as much as American Rescue Plan (\$1.8 trillion), three times the 2020 CARES Act (\$1.7 trillion), and nearly four times the original score of the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (\$1.5 trillion). In fact, it would add more to the deficit than all four of these major laws combined."

Sharon Parrott, president of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, a left-leaning think tank, wrote in a statement "the tax cuts called for in the budget plan are so expensive that deficits will rise substantially, raising economic risks associated with higher debt in service to expensive tax cuts skewed to the wealthy."

"Policymakers need to course-correct and remember their campaign pledges to help ease families' strained budgets, not contort the budget to the desires of the very wealthy," Parrott wrote. "That would mean crafting a budget bill that doesn't raise families' health and grocery costs but instead invests in making health care more affordable and expands the Child Tax Credit to support families who face challenges affording the basics. These investments and lower deficits can be achieved by a sounder tax policy that requires corporations and the wealthy — who benefit enormously from public investments — to pay their fair share."

An analysis from The Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank, called the GOP budget resolution a "fiscal train wreck."

Romina Boccia, director of budget and entitlement policy, and Dominik Lett, a budget and entitlement policy analyst, wrote that Republicans need to start over.

"This budget isn't just a missed opportunity; it actively worsens our nation's debt trajectory," they wrote. "The resolution abandons the House's concrete spending reductions desperately needed in today's high-debt environment, sets a dangerous precedent by adopting a so-called current policy baseline that hides the very real deficit impact of extending tax cuts, and adds hundreds of billions in new deficit spending."

*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.*



**The pickleball courts are being utilized in the evening hours.** (Photo by Paul Kosel)



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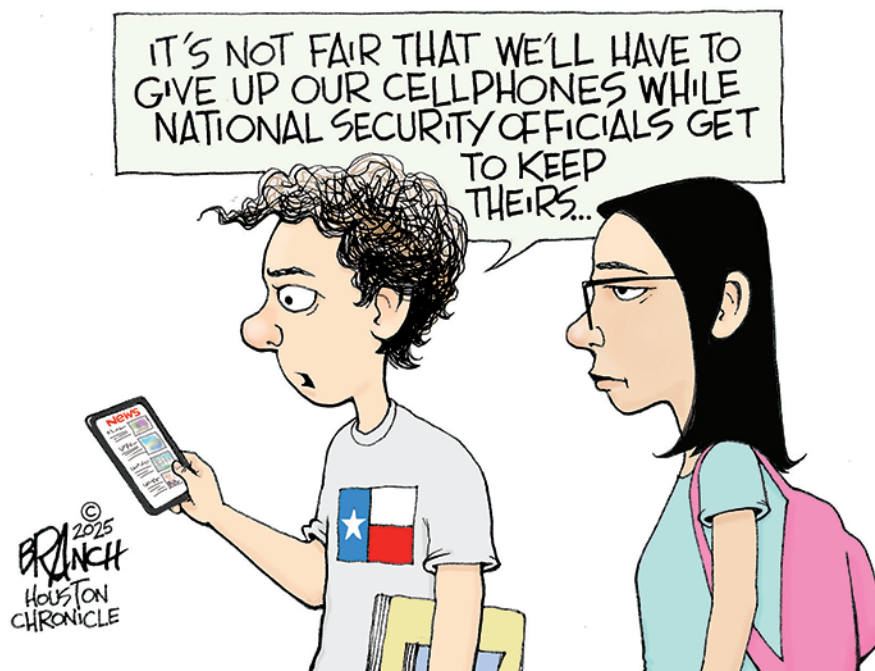
## THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

*Since we are God's offspring,  
we should not think  
that the divine being is  
like gold or silver or stone –  
an image made by human design  
and skill. In the past God over-  
looked such ignorance, but now  
He commands all people everywhere  
to repent. ACTS 17: 29, 30*

*Detail of sculpture of Aztec god 'Quetzalcoatl'*



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## BIBLE

## TRIVIA

by Wilson Casey

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

2. Where does Jesus speak of separating the sheep from the goats? *Matthew, Mark, Luke, John*

3. Who told Saul that rebellion was as bad as witchcraft? *Moloch, Mamath, Marduk, Samuel*

4. From Proverbs 18, "Whoso findeth a wife findeth ..." *Himself, Life, Good thing, Family*

5. How old was Moses when he died? *100, 120, 160, 190*

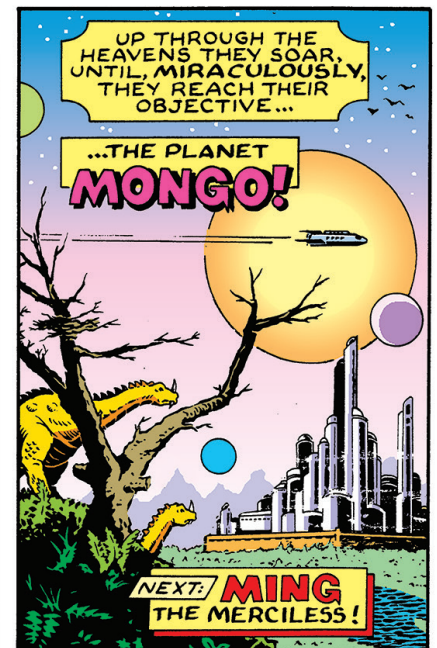
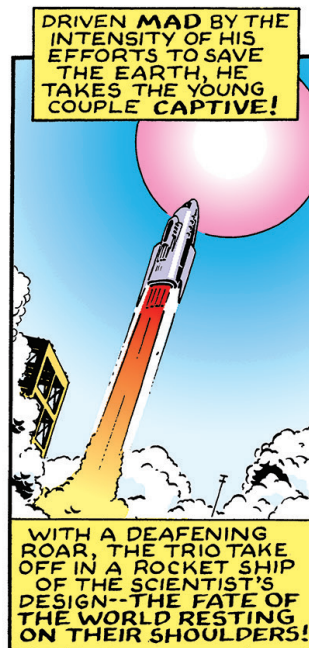
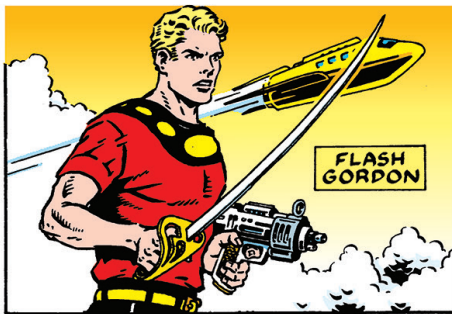
6. How many sons did Judah have? *3, 5, 6, 12*

ANSWERS: 1) Old, 2) Matthew (25:31-33), 3) Samuel, 4) Good thing, 5) 120, 6) Five

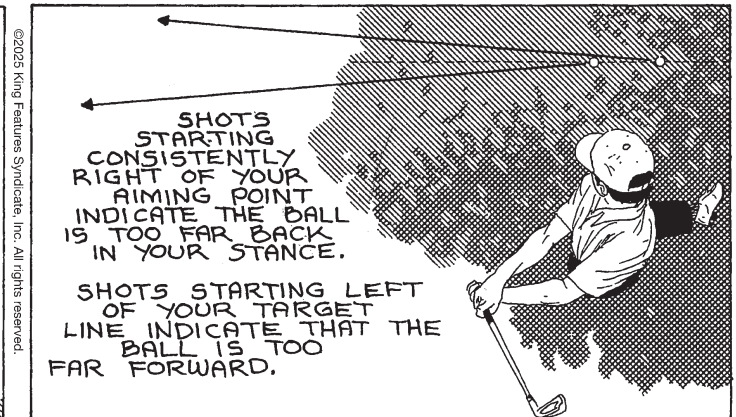
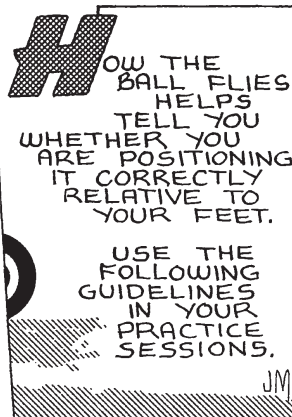
*Sharpen your understanding of scripture with Wilson Casey's latest book, "Test Your Bible Knowledge," available in bookstores and online.*

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## Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS







## Lobular Protrusion Causes Concern for a Spontaneous Rupture

DEAR DR. ROACH: I am an 80-year-old woman in good health with low blood pressure, and the only medication I take is levothyroxine. A 6-by-5.5-mm aneurysm was discovered in my brain, and the scan shows one lobular protrusion that may be of concern for rupture.

I am trying to decide if I should go through with a procedure, but I am not sure about the effectiveness, risks, and possible post-procedure adverse reactions. It is my understanding that these coils have been on the market for a while, and I was wondering which product is best if this information is available. I was informed that the coil is made of platinum.

Two last questions: Does the coil lead to clotting, causing the aneurysm to be occluded? What prevents blood clots from entering the vascular system in the brain and causing problems? -- I.C.

ANSWER: An aneurysm is a weakening in the wall of the artery, which causes part of the artery to enlarge. If the enlargement is big enough, a person is at risk for rupture, which causes a bleed inside the brain that can lead to a potentially devastating stroke, depending on the size and location of the aneurysm.

When the aneurysm is big enough to be concerned for rupture, they are considered for repair, which can be done through the surgical placement of a clip or by placing a platinum coil inside the aneurysm. This is done endovascularly, meaning that a catheter is placed in the affected artery. Under a fluoroscopy (a real-time X-ray), the coil is opened up. This causes a clot in the aneurysm, which protects the thinned wall from enlarging further and reduces the risk of rupture.

You are quite right that the clot can propagate and break off. A large study showed that this can happen up to 9% of the time, but newer techniques and medications to prevent this complication have the potential to reduce it further.

Your neurosurgeon needs to weigh the risk of a clot or rupture during the procedure against the benefit of preventing a spontaneous rupture of the aneurysm. This takes judgment, and only your doctor can make this call based on the precise characteristics of your aneurysm and your overall medical condition.

I will note that the risk of rupture or a clot breaking off are lower when the aneurysm hasn't ruptured, compared to when the procedure is done as an emergency. You also have to rely on your surgeon to choose the best product for you. Unfortunately, there aren't studies to guide the decision, so it's left to clinical judgment. With my own patients, I defer to the surgeon.

\*\*\*

DEAR DR. ROACH: I have never given much thought to the spellings of various medications. Why do some have an uppercase first letter while others do not? Patent versus generic maybe? -- C.A.W.

ANSWER: You're right. All medicines have a generic name, which is uncapitalized, as well as a brand name. For example, furosemide's brand name is Lasix. There's also a chemical name, which is usually a mouthful. Manufacturers try to make the brand name memorable ("Lasix" was chosen to remind doctors that it "lasts six" hours), so they will often choose to use the brand name even when a generic substitute is available.

I prefer generic names when prescribing medications and when discussing them with the students and residents I teach, as the generic name often gives clues to the structure and mechanism of the drug.

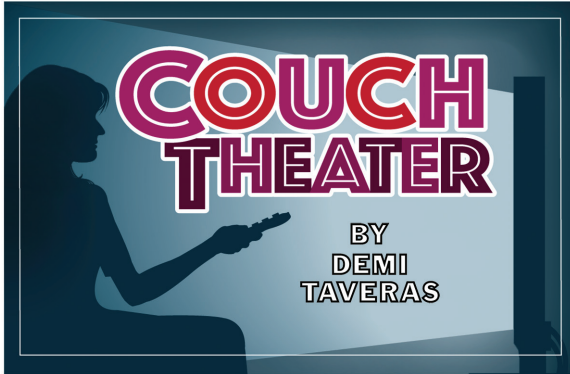
Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual questions, but will incorporate them in the column whenever possible. Readers may email questions to [ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu](mailto:ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu).

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"Black Mirror: Season 7" (TV-MA) -- Fans of the longtime Netflix anthology series "Black Mirror" will be pleased to binge the next mind-bending season on April 10! The British sci-fi series brings six new stories to viewers, one being a continuation of a previous season four episode titled "USS

Callister." Cristin Milioti, a Golden Globe nominee for her recent work on "The Penguin," will reprise her main role as Nanette Cole. Other faces to look out for are comedy actresses Issa Rae and Awkwafina, as well as Rashida Jones ("Sunny") and Academy Award nominee Paul Giamatti ("The Holdovers"). Buckle up for a trippy ride! (Netflix)

"Pets" (G) -- Bryce Dallas Howard is mostly known for acting in franchises like the "Twilight" saga and "Jurassic World," but she also doubles as a director, having spearheaded a documentary film called "Dads," as well as several episodes of "The Mandalorian." This year, she's back with another documentary focusing on the furry friends we hold near and dear to our hearts. Starring real people from around the world and their dogs, cats, pigs, goats and birds, this doc showcases the bond that makes our relationships with animals so special and irreplaceable. Premieres April 11. (Disney+)

"Magpie" (R) -- Daisy Ridley (of the "Star Wars" sequel trilogy) is captivating as the lead in this neo-noir thriller film, co-starring Shazad Latif ("Star Trek: Discovery"). Don't let the previous sci-fi credits of these two actors fool you into thinking that they can't deliver gritty performances; they are incredibly palpable as Annette and Ben (respectively), a couple with two young children who reach a shattering moment within their marriage. When their daughter gets the opportunity to star alongside a popular actress in a major film, Ben chaperones her on set while Annette stays at home with their newborn. But Ben's priority shifts from watching his daughter to bonding with the actress, leaving Anette's picture-perfect life to crumble before her. Premieres April 11. (Hulu)

"G20" (R) -- Academy Award winner Viola Davis will never stop being a badass as long as the grass is green and the sky is blue, and she continues to prove why with entertaining action films like "G20." Out on April 10, the film follows U.S. President Danielle Sutton (Davis) as she prepares for the G20 summit in Cape Town, South Africa. Thinking this will be a great experience for her rebel daughter, Serena (Marsai Martin), Danielle brings her entire family to Cape Town with her. Little does she know that an educational experience for her kids does not await them; instead, what awaits is a terrorist plot to hijack the summit. Luckily for them, Danielle's previous military training comes in handy -- very handy! (Amazon Prime Video)

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**From left, Viola Davis and Antony Starr star in "G20."** (Courtesy of MovieStillsDB)



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1. Who wrote and released "What in the World's Come Over You"?

2. Did Rare Earth ever have a U.S. chart-topper hit?

3. Which artist wrote and released "Ashes to Ashes"?

4. What was the title of Neneh Cherry's first album?

5. Name the song that contains this lyric: "Do my dreaming and my scheming, lie awake and pray, Do my crying and my sighing, laugh at yesterday."

Answers

1. Jack Scott, in 1959. It came out on his 1960 album of the same name and has been covered by numerous others

over the years, including Tom Jones, Sonny James and Jim Reeves.

2. No. "Get Ready" in 1970 was closest, hitting No. 4. The song went to No. 1, but that was in Canada.

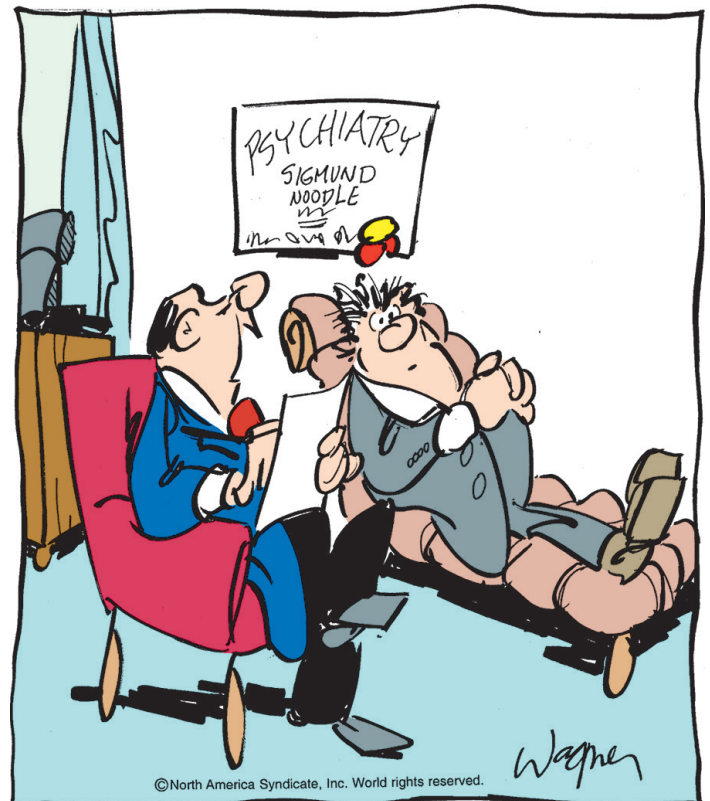
3. David Bowie, on his "Scary Monsters (and Super Creeps)" album in 1980. The music video came in at No. 44 on the Rolling Stone list of the 100 greatest music videos of all time.

4. "Raw Like Sushi," released in 1989.

5. "In My Room," by the Beach Boys in 1963, released on their "Surfer Girl" album. The song only made it to No. 23 on the Hot 100 chart that year, but ended up in the Grammy Hall of Fame in 1999.

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**GRIN and BEAR IT** *Wagner*



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"You have April madness."

## Just Like Cats & Dogs

by Dave T. Phipps



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## HOCUS-FOCUS

BY  
HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



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Differences: 1. Tree is moved. 2. Hat is reversed. 3. Man is thinner. 4. Glove is missing. 5. Fence is shorter. 6. Window is moved.



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\* Got fresh herbs? Try this drying tip/car freshener in one: Lay herbs flat on newspaper in your car. Keep windows closed, and after a nice sunny day, you'll have a delicious-smelling car and dried herbs to store for later dishes.

\* "Raised beds are a nice addition to our garden area, but it seems the gophers liked them too. To combat the problem of the beds being attacked from below, we lined them with chicken wire this time, and everything is going really well so far." -- J.J. in Illinois

\* When starting plants from seeds, you can use an old cupcake pan. Use paper liners or coffee filters to line the cups. Add soil and seeds. Water as necessary. When the seedlings are ready for replanting, simply lift out and break the bottom seal

of the paper or filter, and plant as-is in the ground. It's east to transport them in the pan, and no leaks.

\* Two things your garden should have: a rain barrel and a compost pile. Both are relatively easy to set up, and pay big dividends. You can get a book at your local library on how to set up a compost pile. Some cities will give away rain barrels or hold workshops. Find out today!

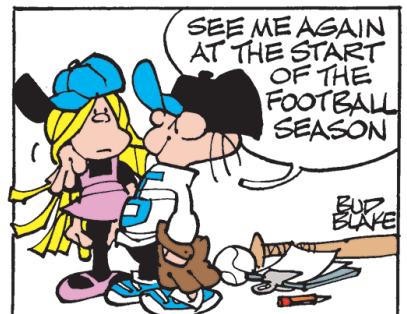
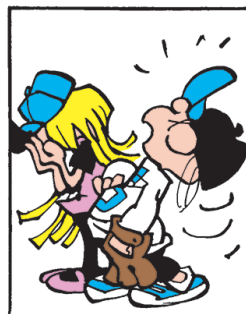
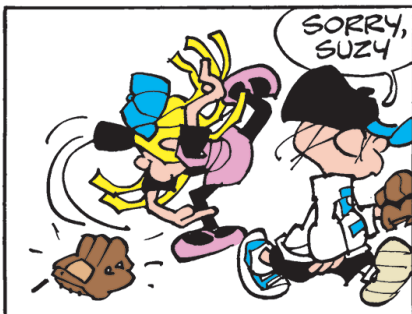
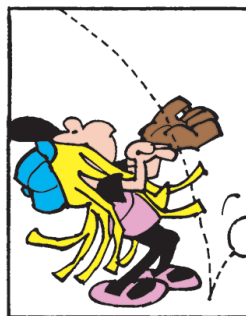
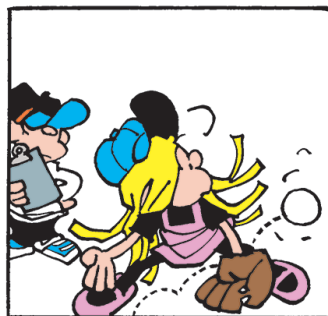
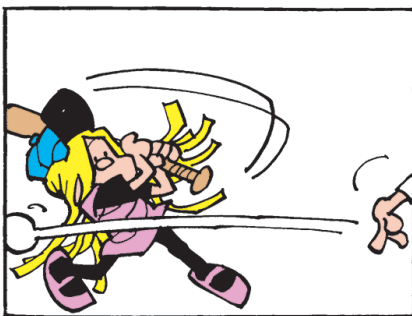
\* "To keep track of what is planted in your garden, you use garden markers. Make your own by writing the type of flower, plant or herb on a brick or large flat stone. Use permanent marker and cover with clear acrylic if you want it to last longer. You can even use both sides for different seasonal items." -- Z.M. in Georgia

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

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 **TIGER**

by **BUD BLAKE**



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## King Crossword

### ACROSS

- 1 Mediocre  
5 Church seat  
8 Greenish blue  
12 Tora —,  
Afghanistan  
13 Noshed  
14 PETA con-  
cerns  
15 Slight criti-  
cisms  
17 Pear-shaped  
fruits  
18 Step  
19 Hot dish  
holder  
21 Oodles  
24 Log chopper  
25 Mandatory  
coll. courses  
28 Calendar  
entry (Abbr.)

- 30 Zodiac  
animal  
33 Chit  
34 Concepts  
35 Swelled head  
36 Singer  
DiFranco  
37 Proscribes  
38 Eve's mate  
39 Born  
41 Entryway  
43 Dress desig-  
nation  
46 Ignited again  
50 Shake —  
(hurry)  
51 Dropouts

1	2	3	4		5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12					13				14			
15				16					17			
18							19	20				
			21		22	23		24				
25	26	27			28		29			30	31	32
33				34						35		
36				37					38			
		39	40			41		42				
43	44				45			46		47	48	49
50					51	52	53					
54					55				56			
57					58				59			

- 54 Portnoy's  
creator  
55 Coffee  
vessel  
56 Barrel part  
57 Fine spray  
58 Sort  
59 Curry and  
Reinking

### DOWN

- 1 Cookouts,  
briefly  
2 LummoX  
3 Met solo  
4 Customs  
5 Bud

- 6 Bordeaux  
summer  
7 Left on a map  
8 Tack on  
9 Trembled  
10 Desire  
11 Celeb's aide  
16 Buddy  
20 "Phooey!"  
22 Zilch  
23 Shell out  
25 Estuary  
26 A gazillion  
years  
27 Groups of five  
29 El —, Texas  
31 Turkish title

- 32 Off-tattooed  
word  
34 "A likely  
story!"  
38 "Queen of  
Soul" Franklin  
40 Skating figure  
42 Scrap  
43 Italian cheese,  
for short  
44 Sci-fi race  
45 Iso-  
47 Boxer Spinks  
48 Press  
49 Recipe amts.  
52 Web address  
53 Squid squirt



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## King Crossword

Answers

Solution time: 24 mins.

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

Olive



Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas

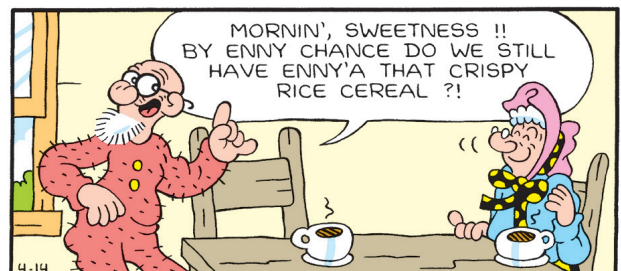
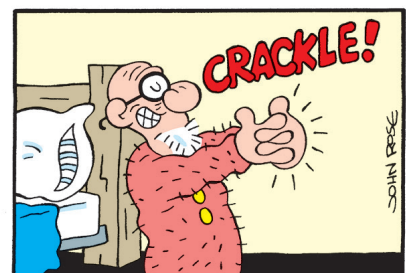
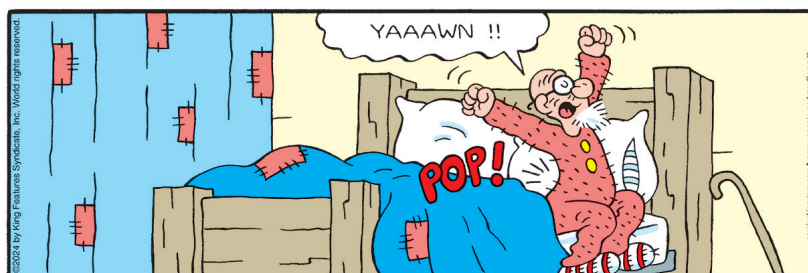
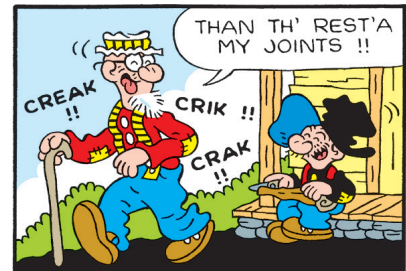
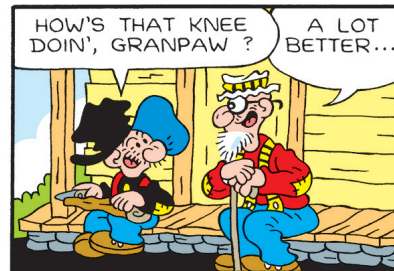
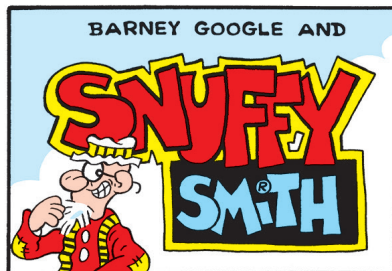
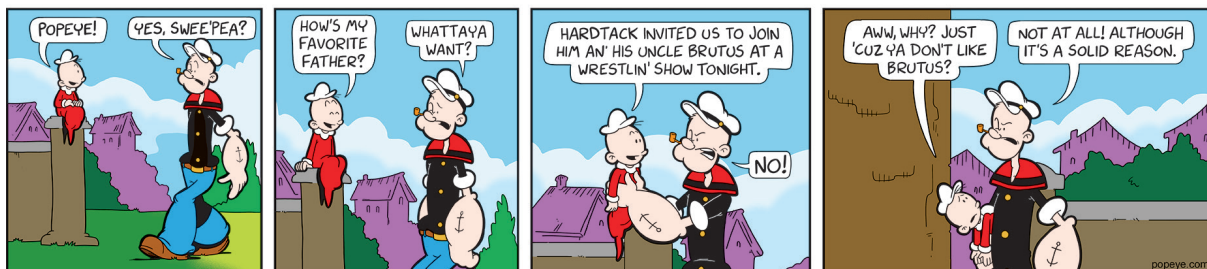
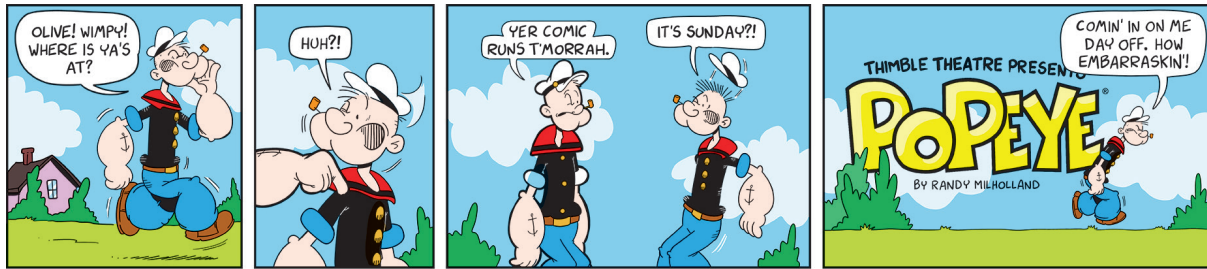


LARRY MINKUS:  
THE CENTAUR  
MENTOR

KOPERVAS

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HAL FOSTER'S

## Prince Valiant

BY SCHULTZ AND YEATES

... VAL HIMSELF STRUGGLES TO FIND A WAY PAST THE SIREN ARROWS AND SPEARS THAT KEEP HIM FROM RUSHING TO THEIR AID.

WHILE VAL'S FAMILY AND FRIENDS BATTLE THE EEL-LIKE SCYLLA FOR THEIR LIVES ...

AT LAST, FRANTIC, HE MAKES A CHOICE AND RACES FOR THE STEEP RAVINE. "KILL ME IF YOU MUST, BUT I WILL NOT BE HELD PRISONER WHILE MY FAMILY IS SLAUGHTERED!"

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THEN CALYPSO VOICES A WILD, WEIRD CRY - ONE THAT IS ANSWERED FROM THE DARKNESS...

... AND IS FOLLOWED BY A GREAT HULKING SHAPE! "POLYPHEMUS!" CRIES CALYPSO, "HERE IS ULYSSES, YOUR TORMENTOR! CRIPPLE HIM!"

NEXT: An epic battle

MORE SIRENS EMERGE FROM THE MIST TO IMPEDE HIS PASSAGE, BUT AS HE HAD HOPED, NONE LOOSE SHAFTS AT THE "CHOSEN ONE." THEY WANT HIM ALIVE.

YEATES 2/9/14

## The Spats

by Jeff Pickering

IS DR. PEPPER A REAL DOCTOR?

YES, HE'S A FIZZICIAN.

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## SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

### Social Security to recover overpayments

Word is that Social Security is going to "claw back" any overpayment to the tune of 100% of the monthly benefit check until it's all paid back, inciting panic across the land.

But it's not necessarily true.

That recovery of benefits will only affect overpayments that began on March 27 of this year. Yes, they'll take full payments until that overpayment is repaid. But any overpayments made prior to that date will be made at the rate that was in place before: 10% of the benefit check.

So, if your check is usually \$1,000, the amount they'll take out is \$100, not your full check. It will be the same if you receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI). They'll take 10%, not the full check.

Not that having any amount deducted will be easy.

Before you start to panic that you might get the dreaded "overpayment" letter from Social Security, here are a few facts, courtesy of a report by Social Security's Office of the Inspector General:

Overpayment (and even underpayment) doesn't happen very often, in less than 1% of benefits paid.

There are two main reasons why an error can occur: People report the wrong information about their income or fail to make corrections if there are changes (especially those who are under full retirement age and still working), and there are problems with Social Security's processing, specifically errors made when workers enter the data.

If you receive the overpayment letter, you might be able to waive the recovery of the amount owed, especially if the overpayment was not your fault. Go to the Social Security website and look for SSA form 632 ([www.ssa.gov/forms/ssa-632.html](http://www.ssa.gov/forms/ssa-632.html)). If that doesn't go well, you can appeal by using SSA form 561 ([www.ssa.gov/forms/ssa-561.html](http://www.ssa.gov/forms/ssa-561.html)).

You can also try calling them at 800-772-1213. If that doesn't work, look for a Social Security office in your area by going to [secure.ssa.gov/ICON/main.jsp](http://secure.ssa.gov/ICON/main.jsp) and putting in your ZIP code.

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1. The NFL's 1977 rule stating "any shoe that is worn by a player with an artificial limb on his kicking leg must have a kicking surface that conforms to that of a normal kicking shoe" was informally named after what placekicker?

2. What Chicago White Sox outfielder was accidentally doused with a cup of spilt beer while watching a Los Angeles Dodgers home run ball sail over his head in Game 2 of the 1959 World Series?

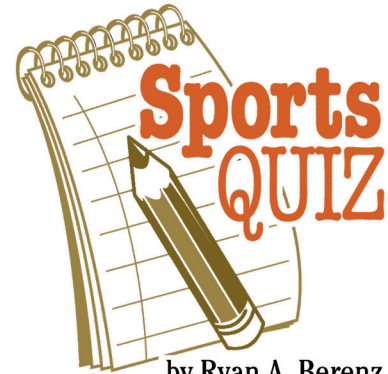
3. What Pro Football Hall of Fame linebacker, nicknamed "Dr. Doom," played his entire NFL career with the Houston Oilers from 1975-84?

4. What team selected the Duke Blue Devils' Cherokee Parks in the first round of the 1995 NBA Draft?

5. What American swimmer won a gold medal at the 1932 Los Angeles Olympics and went on to play Tarzan, Flash Gordon and Buck Rogers roles in 1930s serial films?

6. If you're in Germany and attending a game between the Iserlohn Roosters and the Schwenninger Wild Wings, what sport are you watching?

7. Name the 1986 NCAA regulation that set minimum high school academic requirements for students to be eligible to compete in college athletics.



by Ryan A. Berenz

## Answers

1. Tom Dempsey, who was born without toes on his right foot and wore a custom shoe.

2. Al "Fuzzy" Smith.

3. Robert Brazile.

4. The Dallas Mavericks.

5. Buster Crabbe.

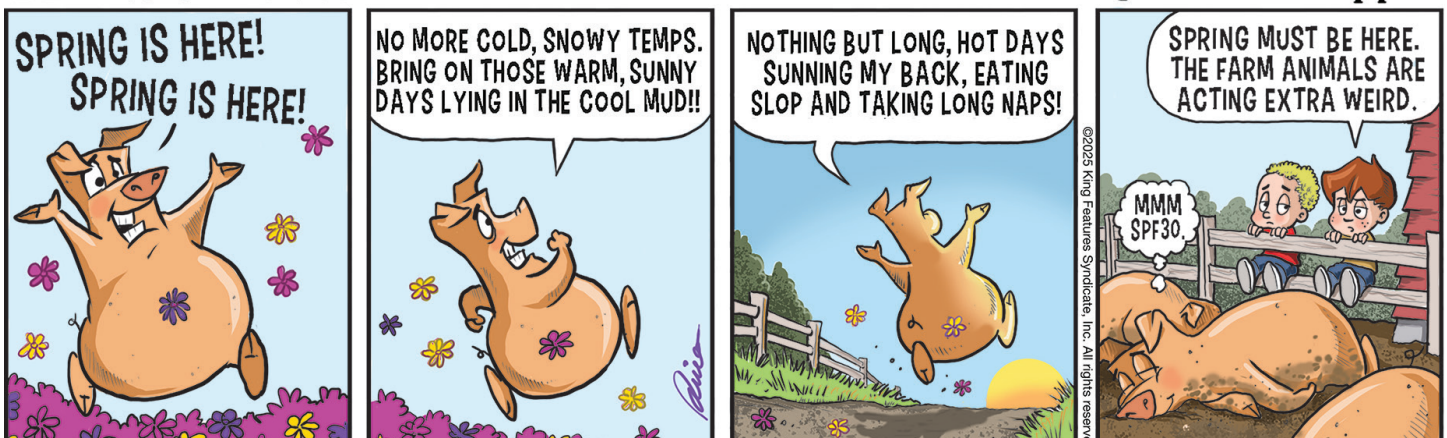
6. Ice hockey in the Deutsche Eishockey Liga (DEL).

7. Proposition 48.

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## Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps





## Tick season shifts into full gear--are you ready?

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: My dog "Happy" and I went hiking this weekend, and when we got back to the car, I did the usual check for bugs and burrs on his long coat. I was shocked to find 12 tiny ticks clinging to his fur. I brushed them off and found five more scurrying around my boot laces. These are baby ticks, right? Should I be worried about tick bites for both of us? -- Karl M., Roanoke, Virginia

DEAR KARL: You should continue to be vigilant over the next few days, but don't worry too much -- unless Happy shows signs of illness. Doing a "tick check" after each trip outdoors is important, and you did exactly what you needed to do.

Over the next few days, brush through Happy's coat frequently to dislodge any additional ticks. Newly

hatched ticks are indeed tiny and hard to see. Run your hand through Happy's coat so that you can check his skin for visible bites or lodged ticks. If you notice a bull's-eye rash around an area, contact the veterinarian.

If you haven't treated your hiking boots or clothing with permethrin yet, now is the time to do so. Spray the treatment outside, away from Happy or any other animal, and do not let Happy near those clothes until they have dried completely. The permethrin will stay effective through a few washes.

To keep ticks out of the house, follow similar procedures to flea prevention. Give Happy a regular flea and tick preventative; vacuum and mop the house regularly, and terminate any ticks you find.

A new edition of "Fighting Fleas" is coming, and 10 lucky readers will get a free, signed copy! To enter, email [ask@pawscorner.com](mailto:ask@pawscorner.com).

Send your tips, comments or questions to [ask@pawscorner.com](mailto:ask@pawscorner.com).

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## Strange BUT TRUE

\* When the Apostle Paul wrote about seeing “through a glass darkly,” there were no glass windows in the Greco-Roman world.

\* There are more trees on earth than stars in our galaxy.

\* The Roman Empire didn’t have a Foreign Office, but they did boast a “Bureau of Barbarians.”

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

\* Actress Angelina Jolie once attempted to hire a hitman to kill her, instead of committing suicide. Fortunately, the would-be assassin successfully talked her out of it by asking her to wait a month.

\* The largest print photograph ever taken was 111 feet wide and 32 feet high.

\* In 2008, the Municipality of Florence officially apologized for expelling Dante Alighieri seven centuries earlier.

\* A cat’s ability to see well at night is due to its tapetum lucidum, a structure that reflects visible light back through the cat’s retina. It’s also what causes the eyes’ weird “glowing” effect in the dark.

\* Records suggest that between 1529 and 1532, King Henry VIII gambled away nearly a million pounds, by modern standards.

\* Retired Jamaican sprinter Usain Bolt was offered the position of wide receiver in the NFL but declined it due to the hits that NFL players typically take.

\* “Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychw-yrndrobwllllantysiliogogogoch” is the world’s longest train station name. Located in Wales, the moniker has no historical significance, but was created in the 1880s as a marketing ploy to attract tourists!

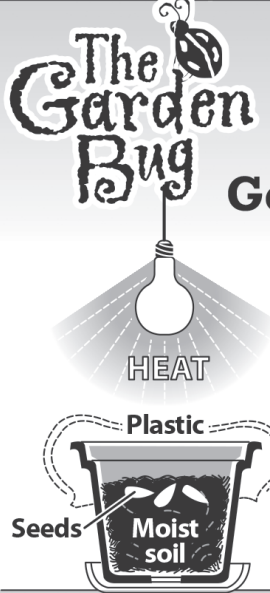
\* More germs are transferred by shaking hands than kissing.

\* Fearing someone would murder him at Alcatraz, Al Capone practiced his banjo in the shower room.

\*\*\*

Thought for the Day: “Wars and elections are both too big and too small to matter in the long run. The daily work -- that goes on, it adds up.” -- Barbara Kingsolver

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**The Garden Bug**

### Germination

Place potting soil in a small container. Moisten the soil well, but do not soak. Place seeds just below the surface of the soil, and cover the container with clear plastic, or insert it into a plastic bag, without letting plastic rest directly on the soil. This helps the soil retain moisture and heat. Place under a lamp for warmth, and keep the soil moist by “misting.” As your sprouts appear and grow, remove plastic. Mist daily and keep sprouts warm until you are ready to transplant into your garden.

– Brenda Weaver  
Source: extension.umd.edu

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by Freddy Groves

## Missing inventory

If you're getting care at a Department of Veterans Affairs facility and staff can't find the equipment or supplies needed for your treatment, somebody has goofed up, likely somebody in inventory control.

One hospital alone, as investigated by the VA Office of Inspector General, was supposed to stock \$203 million in equipment and \$5.5 million in expendable supplies. In verifying the accuracy of the inventories, 82% of items in a random sample of surgical or medical items were found to be incorrect. That's 49 of

the 60 items checked. As an example, inventory records showed over 1,100 decontamination gowns. In reality, there was one gown.

Then there were the over 1,500 expired items, the 94% of items that were not in the locations where they should have been and the new supplies found in dumpsters.

Interestingly enough, the Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) had conducted quality control reviews two years in a row, which meant they received documents and information from the facility. Their on-site reviews didn't find the deficiencies the VAOIG did: missing data, expired supplies, inventory discrepancies, missing medicine cabinets, lack of correct use of the barcode system and more. Then there was the lack of training.

And the VISN reviewers -- because they lean heavily on data supplied to them -- apparently didn't notice the unlocked bins of veteran files, containing personal and health information, sitting outside the warehouse door.

The finger of blame for the expiration of biological and non-biological implant items can be pointed in several directions: staff because they weren't tracking the inventory, the various departments that used different methods to track their items, vendors that weren't made responsible for monitoring the items they supplied. And when problems did surface (damage and loss, for example), no one investigated.

The end result of this VAOIG inspection was chilling: Patients were medically at risk because of expired implant items and financially at risk due to their personal and health information sitting in bins outside the warehouse door.

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## Wishing Well®

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

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

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1. TELEVISION: Who had a 1980s workout video series called "Sweatin' to the Oldies"?

1. ANATOMY: What is heterochromia?

3. GEOGRAPHY: What is a chain of islands called?

4. FOOD & DRINK: What is Canada's national dish?

5. HISTORY: When was Facebook launched?

6. MEASUREMENTS: What is the shortest wavelength in the visible light spectrum?

7. U.S. STATES: Which state has the most miles of interstate highway?

8. MOVIES: What type of fish is Nemo in the animated film "Finding Nemo"?

9. GENERAL KNOWLEDGE: Which month is designated as National Ice Cream Month in the United States?

10. SCIENCE: How long does it take for the International Space Station to orbit the Earth?

### Answers

1. Richard Simmons.

2. When the colored part of the eyes (irises) are two different colors.

3. Archipelago.

4. Poutine (French fries, cheese curds and gravy).

5. 2004.

6. Violet.

7. Texas.

8. Clownfish.

9. July.

10. 90 minutes.

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South Dakota Governor



**Larry Rhoden**



**South Dakota:** *Under God, the People Rule*

## Real Property Tax Relief

Now that the legislative session is in the rearview mirror, I'm focused on looking forward and unlocking new opportunities for South Dakota. We had a historic 100th legislative session, and we accomplished a lot for the people of South Dakota – but there's more work to do!

I recently announced next steps to deliver a real property tax cut for the people of South Dakota. During legislative session, we passed my bill, Senate Bill 216, which delivered meaningful, impactful changes to slow down future increases in homeowner property taxes. Now, it's time to go a step further.

I am proposing to the legislature's Property Tax Relief Task Force that we give counties the option to cut homeowner property taxes by instead implementing a sales tax of up to 0.5%. The proceeds of that tax must go directly to homeowner tax relief – they cannot be used to grow government. And if homeowner taxes are completely offset, then whatever money is left must go towards commercial and agriculture property taxes.

This proposal will be referable to a vote of the people, and the people could use an initiative process to put it on their local ballot themselves. This means that every county will have every opportunity to decide if this option is right for them.

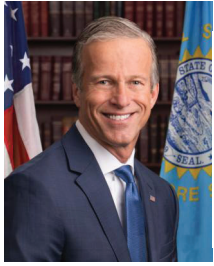
During legislative session, we had a couple dozen property tax bills proposed. Only my Senate Bill 216 became law. One reason for that is because many of those bills tried to solve a five-county problem with a statewide solution. My new proposal addresses that by giving counties the option to choose what is best for their people.

It just so happens that many of the counties that have the biggest issues with property taxes are also the counties that see the most out-of-state visitors – like Minnehaha and Lincoln Counties in the Sioux Falls metro and several counties in the Black Hills. If those counties implement this proposal, they'll shift a sizable portion of their local tax burden onto out-of-state residents, which saves money for South Dakotans.

My team will get to work with the legislature's Property Tax Relief Tax Force to hammer out this proposal and get it into a final form. I promised to address property taxes for our people – and I am delivering on that promise.

I want to thank the people of South Dakota for the opportunity to serve as your Governor. Becoming governor in the middle of session was its own unique challenge and opportunity. I've really enjoyed getting around the state in the last couple of weeks on my Open for Opportunity tour, and that will continue in the weeks to come. I hope to see you in your hometown!





**JOHN THUNE**  
U.S. SENATOR FOR SOUTH DAKOTA

## Fixing Biden's Broken Broadband Program

More than three years ago, Congress created the \$42.5 billion BEAD program to bring broadband service to unserved parts of the country. It was the single largest federal investment in broadband expansion ever made. But to date, it has not connected a single household to the internet.

The reason? The Biden administration chose to load up this program with a slew of extraneous conditions that made it unworkable for many providers. The program's requirements read like a progressive wish-list, and they bear little resemblance to what Congress envisioned for this program.

The Biden administration added irrelevant climate mandates. They required union labor and DEI hiring practices. The program prioritizes government-owned networks over private investment. And despite a clear prohibition on rate regulation in the law, the Biden administration tried to add that in, too.

So many extraneous requirements were added to this program that it couldn't fulfill its core function, and we're now in a situation where a \$42 billion taxpayer-funded program hasn't connected even a single household to the internet after three-plus years.

But now there's a new administration in the White House. President Trump has expressed interest in finally getting this program off the ground, and the Commerce Department has begun to review these requirements. I recently led my colleagues in urging Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick to remove the Biden-era mandates that stopped the BEAD program from actually connecting unserved communities to the internet. By reviewing and ultimately eliminating these unnecessary requirements, we can ensure that this funding is finally deployed to expand broadband access to unserved areas quickly and efficiently.

The BEAD program is one particularly egregious example of the consequences of overregulation. The Trump administration and Republicans in Congress are working to eliminate some of the Biden administration's burdensome regulations. Democrats don't seem to see the downside of government mandates, but the American people feel them. Those mandates have costs: financial costs and opportunity costs. In the case of the BEAD program, it's meant unserved areas have been kept waiting years for a reliable internet connection.

Regulatory relief continues to be a priority for the Trump administration and Republicans in Congress. The American people can be confident that we will continue working to eliminate the red tape that stifles progress.

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## Trucks and Trade

### **BIG Update**

Common food and drink names like parmesan, chateau, and bologna are used around the world to describe products to consumers. However, due to geographic indication to European locations, the European Union has begun using economic and political influence to implement unfair trade practices under the guise of protecting geographic indicators. These unfair trade practices have the potential to block United States agricultural products from being sold in international markets.

I, along with Senator Thune, reintroduced the Safeguarding American Food and Export Trade Yields Act to protect American food products. Our bill amends the Agriculture Trade Act of 1978 to include and define a list of common names for commodities, food products, and terms used in marketing and packaging of products. I'll keep working to ensure American ag producers don't face unnecessary barriers in foreign markets..

### **BIG Idea**

As a recognized leader in Congress on transportation and infrastructure issues, Portland Cement Association asked me to give an update at their annual meeting about legislation I lead that they are supportive of.

We discussed my bill, the Fair SHARE Act, ensuring electric vehicles (EVs) contribute to the Highway Trust Fund (HTF) that supports repairs and upkeep for our roads and bridges. The HTF is on the road to insolvency and this bill is a step in the right direction towards funding our roads.

We also talked about my bill to increase shipping capacity for truckers, the SHIP IT Act. It increases safety, provides recruitment and retention incentives for drivers, and includes flexibility during times of emergencies – ensuring our supply chain is operating at its fullest potential. I look forward to advocating for these initiatives during highway reauthorization this Congress..

### **BIG News**

I'm sure you saw President Trump announce sweeping tariffs this week. Under President Biden's trade policies, our country saw the largest ever trade deficit – more than \$1.2 trillion in 2024 alone. While tariffs can be a powerful negotiating tool, I don't support high tariffs as a long-lasting or permanent trade policy. We need to work quickly to secure better trade deals, reduce trade barriers, and deliver for American producers and consumers.



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MARCH 24-30, 2025



Welcome back to another Weekly Round[s] Up! We're back in session after a one-week in-state work period. I was able to meet with several South Dakotans to talk about agriculture, education and energy issues. In addition, I met with U.S. Secretary of Education Linda

McMahon to discuss my legislation to eliminate the federal Department of Education. Getting rid of the bureaucratic overhead and administrative costs will allow us to put more money into the critical programs to support special education, children with disabilities, tribal education, high-poverty areas, Impact Aid, career and technical education and Pell Grants. Under my legislation, all of these programs will remain operational, just housed under other departments. More on these meetings and the rest of my week in my Weekly Round[s] Up:

South Dakota groups I met with: Agtegra Cooperative; José-Marie Griffiths, President of Dakota State University; Miles Beacom, board member of the Dakota State Applied Research Corporation; Dr. Sheila Gestring, President of the University of South Dakota; Jim Dover, President and CEO of Avera Health, and Kim Malsam-Rysdon, Vice President of Public Policy at Avera Health; Joseph Graves, South Dakota's Secretary of Education; members of the South Dakota Farm Bureau; students from West Central and Lemmon High Schools; members of the South Dakota Cattlemen's Association; and a group of South Dakota ethanol producers.

South Dakota towns represented: Amherst, Dell Rapids, Harrisburg, Hartford, Houghton, Lemmon, Leola, Madison, Mellette, Midland, Pierre, Sioux Falls, Vermillion and Winner.

Other meetings: Svanhildur Hólm Valsdóttir, Iceland's Ambassador to the United States; Keith Bass, nominee for Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs; Lt. Gen. Dan Caine, nominee for Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Bradley Hansell, nominee for Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security; Margie Palmieri, acting Chief of the Chief Digital and Artificial Intelligence Office; Even Rogers, CEO of True Anomaly; Linda McMahon, U.S. Secretary of Education; Brig. Gen. Patrick Karuretha, head of International Military Cooperation within the Rwanda Defense Force; Gen. Gregory Guillot, Commander of United States Northern Command and North American Aerospace Defense Command; and Jack Hidary, CEO of SandboxAQ. In addition, I spoke at the National Low Income Housing Coalition's conference about policy to make housing more affordable.

I hosted our Senate Bible Study, where Luke 3:3 was our verse of the week.

Center for Effective Lawmaking: This past week, I was named as one of the top-five most effective Republican lawmakers in the 118th Congress by the Center for Effective Lawmaking, which is run by the University of Virginia and Vanderbilt University. This score is based on metrics such as substance of bills introduced, their progression throughout the legislative process and how many were signed into law. Read more about this [here](#).

As lawmakers, one of the most important parts of our jobs is writing and introducing substantive bills and shepherding them through the legislative process with the ultimate goal of getting them signed into law. We were successful in getting results for the people of South Dakota in the 118th Congress across policy areas ranging from agriculture to national security and defense. There is still plenty of work to be

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done on all of these issues and more in the current Congress. I look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues in the Senate to get results for our state.

Hearings: I attended five hearings. I had two hearings in the Select Committee on Intelligence, one of which was closed. In the open hearing, we heard from leaders in the Intelligence Community, including CIA Director John Ratcliffe, Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard, FBI Director Kash Patel and NSA Director Timothy Haugh. You can watch a clip of that [here](#).

In addition, I had one hearing in the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC), where we heard from Dr. Troy Meink, nominee to serve as Secretary of the Air Force. Dr. Meink is a native of Lemmon, South Dakota and a graduate of South Dakota State University (Go Jacks!). I was pleased to introduce him at this hearing. You can watch a clip of that [here](#).

I also had two SASC Subcommittee hearings: one in the Subcommittee on Cybersecurity and the other in the Subcommittee on Strategic Forces.

Classified briefings: I had one classified briefing as part of my work on the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Votes taken: 19 – As most of President Trump’s cabinet is now confirmed, we continue to work on confirming other executive branch positions, such as Deputy Secretaries and Assistant Secretaries at various federal Departments. One confirmation I’m particularly excited about is Michael Kratsios, the Director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. I’m looking forward to working with him on issues relating to the Sanford Underground Research Facility near Lead, as well as artificial intelligence.

Legislation introduced: This past week, I reintroduced the MedShield Act of 2025. This legislation would implement a recommendation of the National Security Commission on Artificial Intelligence to create a program titled MedShield to leverage AI for national pandemic preparedness and response. Read more about this [here](#).

Tribal public safety letter: I sent a letter to Attorney General Pam Bondi and Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum requesting the creation of a “Violent Crime Reduction Commission” to address violent crime on reservations. This proposed body would be made up of officials from the Department of Justice, the Department of the Interior and leaders from tribal areas under federal criminal jurisdiction. Read more [here](#).

My staff in South Dakota visited: Dell Rapids, Madison, Sioux Falls, Sturgis and Watertown.

Steps taken: 53,522 steps or 26.13 miles.



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Dr. James L. Snyder Ministries

PO Box 831313 - Ocala, FL 34483

1-352-216-3025

## Sir Procrastinate-A-Lot Rules My Day

I must admit that I procrastinate a lot. The biggest example is when I get up in the morning. I wait until the very last minute to get up. My goal is to get up before lunch.

This is the primary difference between me and The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage. She couldn't procrastinate even if I gave her a thousand dollars. Of course, I would procrastinate in giving over that thousand dollars because that's how I operate.

My "to-do list" is put together with this understanding; I put things on this list that I know will be affected by my procrastination. If I want to get three things done in one day, I have to make a list of 25 things to do.

That may not make sense to some people, but if you have that procrastination virus, it does. It is not how much I can do in a day but how much I actually do.

Unfortunately, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage has not learned this about me. As long as we have been together which is something like 54 years, she doesn't get the notion that I'm a procrastinator. I'm not even sure if she knows what that means, and I'm not going to be the one to tell her. At least, I won't tell her today. Maybe tomorrow.

She believes that when she gives me a list of 45 things to do, I will jump up and finish them as soon as possible. But as a high-level procrastinator, that's not how it works.

When I get a list from her, it takes me all morning to read it.

Usually, at lunchtime, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage will say, "Well, did you get the list done yet?"

I will look at her with a blank look on my face and say, "What list?"

With a bit of growling in her voice, she responds, "You know, the list I gave you this morning of things I wanted you to do."

"Oh, that list. I'm still working on it."

She doesn't understand that when I have a list of things she wants me to do, I have to meditate on that list and really get into its vibe. She doesn't realize that it takes me quite a while to get into a certain vibe when it comes to things I need to do. I must admit that I never get into some things' vibe.

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The last time I did not procrastinate was August 14, 1971, when we stood before a minister who said, "Do you promise..." And with a nervous stutter, I responded immediately, "I do."

I think that was the first time I didn't procrastinate, and I believe it was the last time. I'll think about that later.

It's hard for me to jump into a project and get it done. Sure, I like completing a project, but it takes me a long time to get to the end of it.

I learned years ago that procrastinating on certain things and actually not doing them is a blessing. If I had done what I was supposed to do, I probably would've been in trouble.

Over the years, I have earned the title, Sir Procrastinate-A-Lot.

Occasionally, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage will ask, "Are you acting like a procrastinator?"

"No, my dear," I will say as calmly as possible, "I'm not acting."

Even as a procrastinator, I'm the real thing. I'm not lying; I'm just dragging my heels along the way.

I suppose that if I had cleaned up my procrastinating, I could have accomplished twice as much in my life as I have. But then, where would that have gotten me?

That is the difference between The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage and her marvelous husband. It took me a few years to understand this difference. But once I did, I was able to use it to my advantage.

If I asked The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage to do two things, she would jump to it and begin doing it before I finished my sentence. Within a few moments, those two things are accomplished.

If I asked her to do five things again, she would jump up and do all five as fast as she could without even taking a break.

I think she is the most anti-procrastinator I have ever known. She can never procrastinate; she always must get everything done before the time. If she has 60 minutes to do something, she will do it in 50 minutes or less.

In a marriage such as ours, we cannot both be procrastinators. That is why I stepped up to the plate and chose to be the procrastinator in our house. I've done a great job of it all these years.

Of course, there is a cost that comes with procrastination. Solomon hit it on the head when he said, "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man" (Proverbs 24:33-34).

As my father used to say, "You can't kick a can down the road forever. At some point you need to stop and pick it up."

My problem is I think I can do more than I can really do. Maybe I should be more realistic and concentrate on doing what I can do.

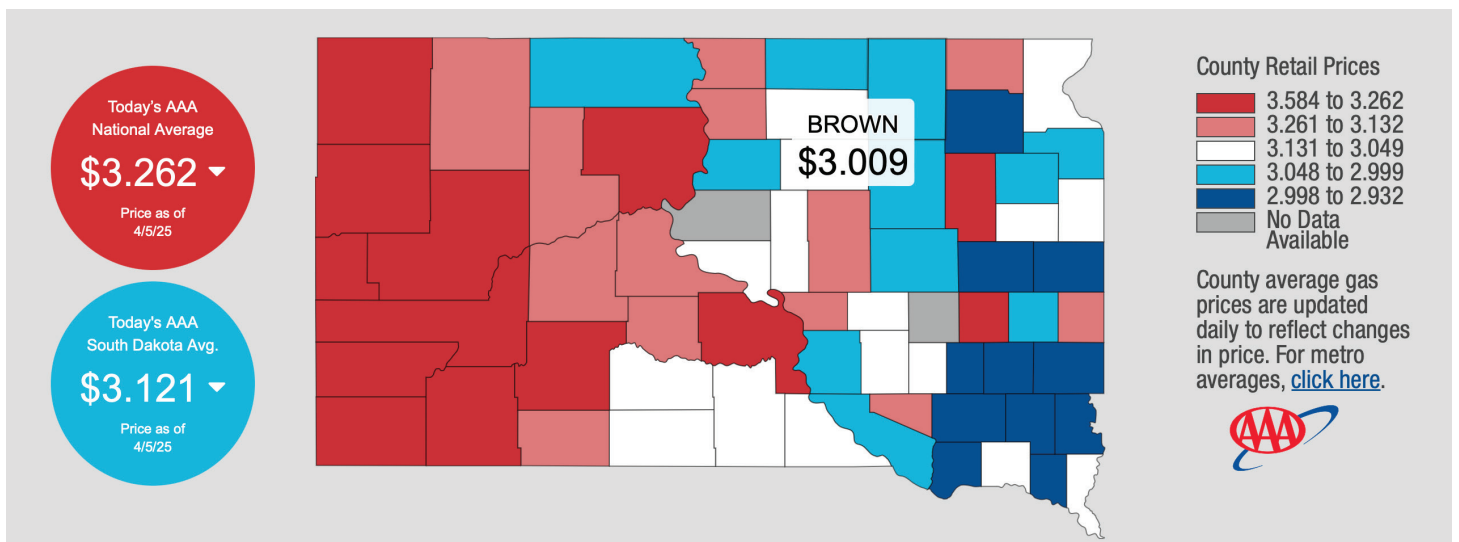
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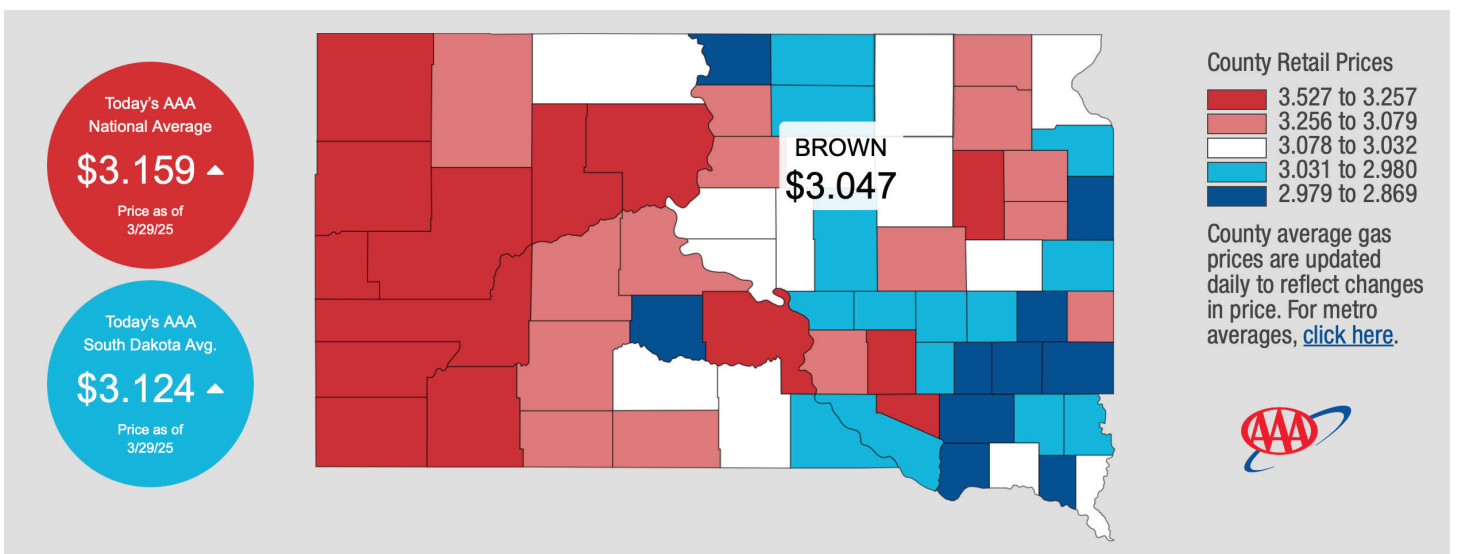
## South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Current Avg.	\$3.121	\$3.318	\$3.744	\$3.334
Yesterday Avg.	\$3.130	\$3.326	\$3.769	\$3.339
Week Ago Avg.	\$3.124	\$3.296	\$3.728	\$3.342
Month Ago Avg.	\$2.989	\$3.167	\$3.614	\$3.338
Year Ago Avg.	\$3.318	\$3.452	\$3.858	\$3.682

### This Week



### Last Week

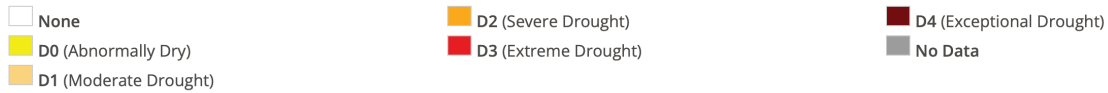




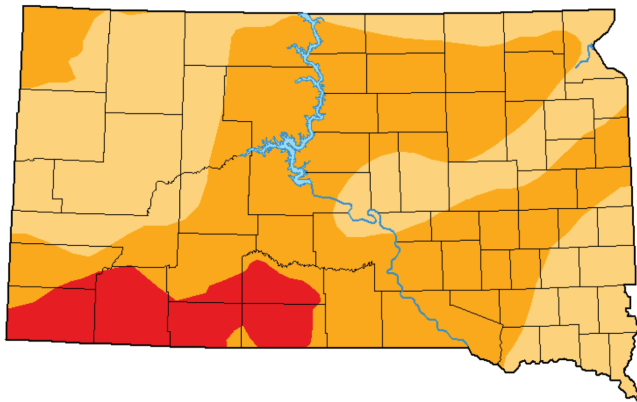
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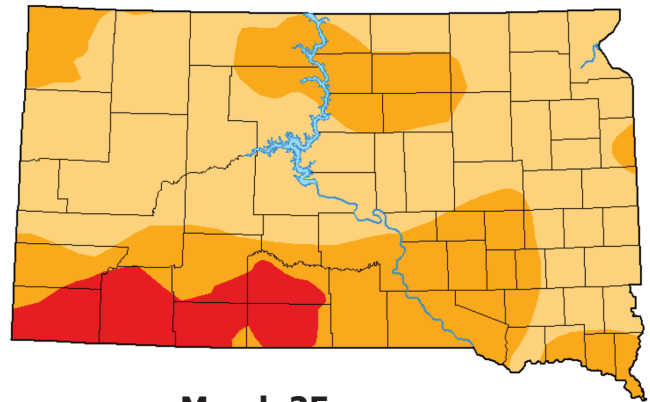
## Drought Classification



## Drought Monitor



April 1



March 25

On this week's map, only minor changes were made in the region, namely in western Nebraska and areas of Kansas. In the Sand Hills of Nebraska, precipitation during the past 7-day period (1 to 2 inches) led to 1-category improvements in areas of Severe (D2) and Extreme (D3) drought. In Kansas, short-term dry conditions (past 30-60 days) led to the expansion of isolated areas of drought in the southwestern and northeastern parts of the state. Generally dry conditions prevailed across much of the region for the week, with some small accumulations (0.5 to 1 inch liquid) observed in southern and eastern South Dakota, northern Nebraska, and southeastern Kansas. In terms of temperatures, near-normal average temperatures were logged across the region.

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## EARTHTALK

Dear EarthTalk: How will Trump pulling the U.S. out of the Paris climate accord affect international efforts to cut greenhouse gas emissions?

-- Paul B., Houston, TX

The Paris Climate Accord, established in 2015, is a global agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and limit temperature rise to well below 2°C—ideally 1.5°C. Nearly every nation has signed on, signaling a shared commitment to combating climate change. In January 2025, Trump signed an executive order to withdraw the U.S. from both the accord and the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change.



**Whether or not international negotiators can rein in carbon emissions in time to stave off cataclysmic climate change is anybody's guess without the U.S. involved.** Credit: Pexels.com.

This isn't the first time. In his previous term, Trump also initiated a withdrawal, but a statutory four-year delay meant the U.S. was only out for four months—remaining party to the accord for most of his term. That delay was since shortened to 12 months, enabling a quicker, more complete withdrawal this time.

With this move, the U.S. joins Iran, Libya and Yemen as the only non-participating nations. Critics say it signals that the U.S. is an unreliable partner, undermining diplomatic relations and weakening its global credibility. Even the brief withdrawal last time disrupted momentum—Biden was late preparing for the COP26 conference due to the reentry process, creating uncertainty among allies and competitors alike.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has called the Paris Agreement “the best hope for all humanity,” underscoring its global significance. But this second U.S. exit could be very damaging. Already, Argentina is reportedly re-evaluating its commitment—raising concerns that the U.S. withdrawal could trigger a broader unraveling of climate consensus.

Domestically, the move undercuts the momentum of the Inflation Reduction Act, casting doubt on clean energy investments and rattling the renewable energy sector. Internationally, it threatens efforts to meet COP29's goal of mobilizing \$100 billion annually to help developing nations adapt to climate change, a target heavily reliant on U.S. contributions. The European Union may respond by pushing ahead with ambitious climate policies, further isolating the U.S. on the global stage. And fossil fuel-rich countries like Saudi Arabia could double down on their interests, no longer facing strong U.S. counterbalance.

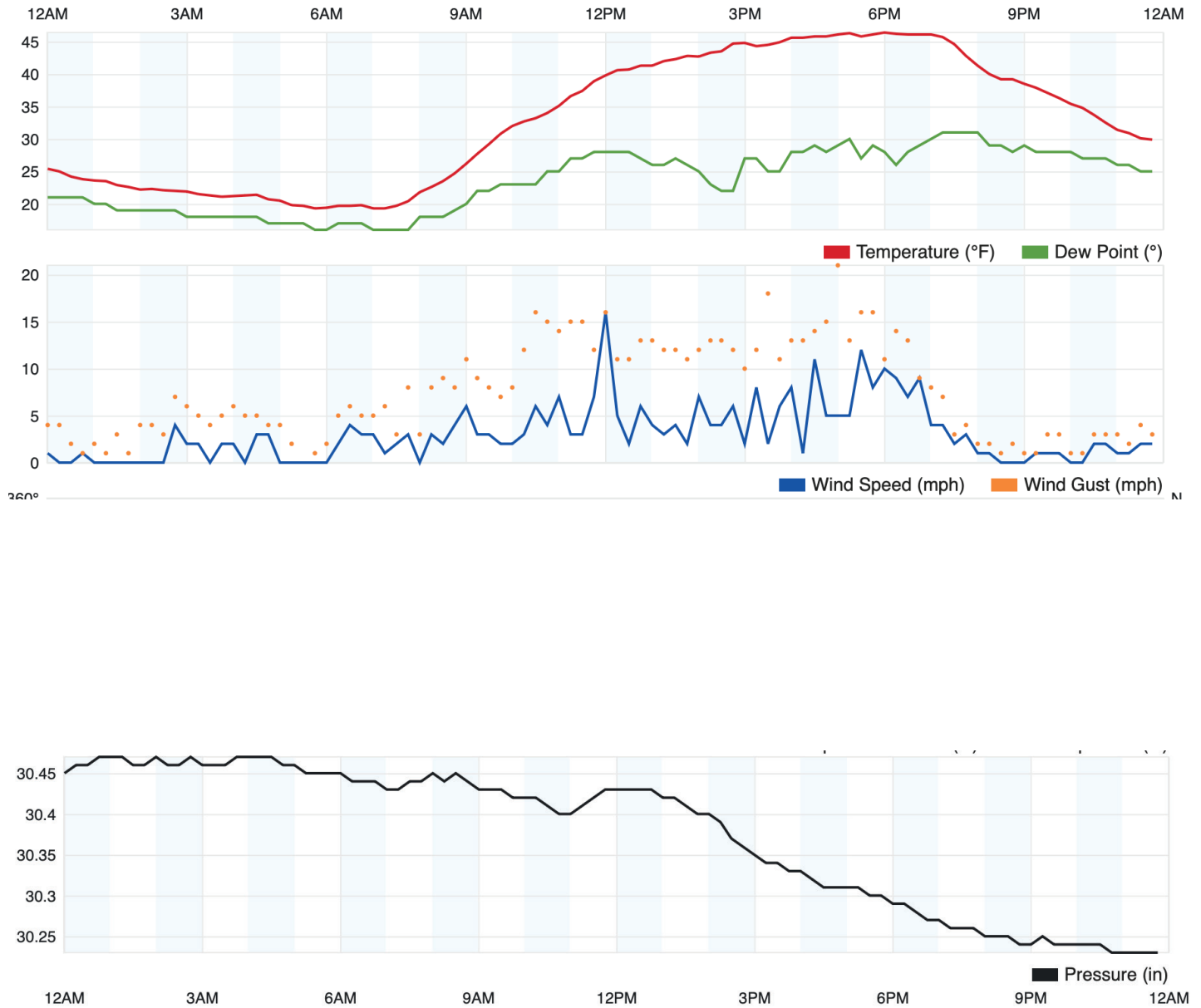
At home, Trump has declared a “national energy emergency,” prioritizing fossil fuels and rolling back environmental regulations. This has emboldened the oil, gas and coal sectors, while leaving renewable energy companies in limbo.

“Pulling out of the Paris Agreement is an abdication of responsibility and undermines the very global action that people at home and abroad desperately need,” says Rachel Cleetus of the Union of Concerned Scientists—echoing a chorus of scientists warning that the U.S. retreat threatens both international co-operation and the planet's future.

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs





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Today



High: 56 °F

Mostly Sunny

Tonight



Low: 18 °F

Mostly Clear

Monday



High: 39 °F

Sunny

Monday Night



Low: 19 °F

Mostly Clear

Tuesday

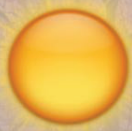


High: 54 °F

Mostly Sunny

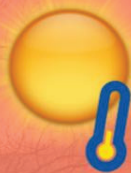
## Next Several Days

Sunday



*Highs:*  
**49-60°**

Monday



Turning  
Colder

*Highs:*  
**35-48°**

Tuesday



*Highs:*  
**49-61°**

Wed



*Highs:*  
**59-66°**

Thursday



Windy

*Highs:*  
**55-63°**

Mostly dry conditions expected for the next several days, with a low chance for 0.1 to 0.25 inches of moisture mid-week. Temperatures will be on a slow, gradual increase.

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 47 °F at 5:15 PM

Low Temp: 19 °F at 7:04 AM

Wind: 21 mph at 4:56 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 13 hours, 08 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 85 in 1991

Record Low: 0 in 2023

Average High: 53

Average Low: 28

Average Precip in April.: 0.26

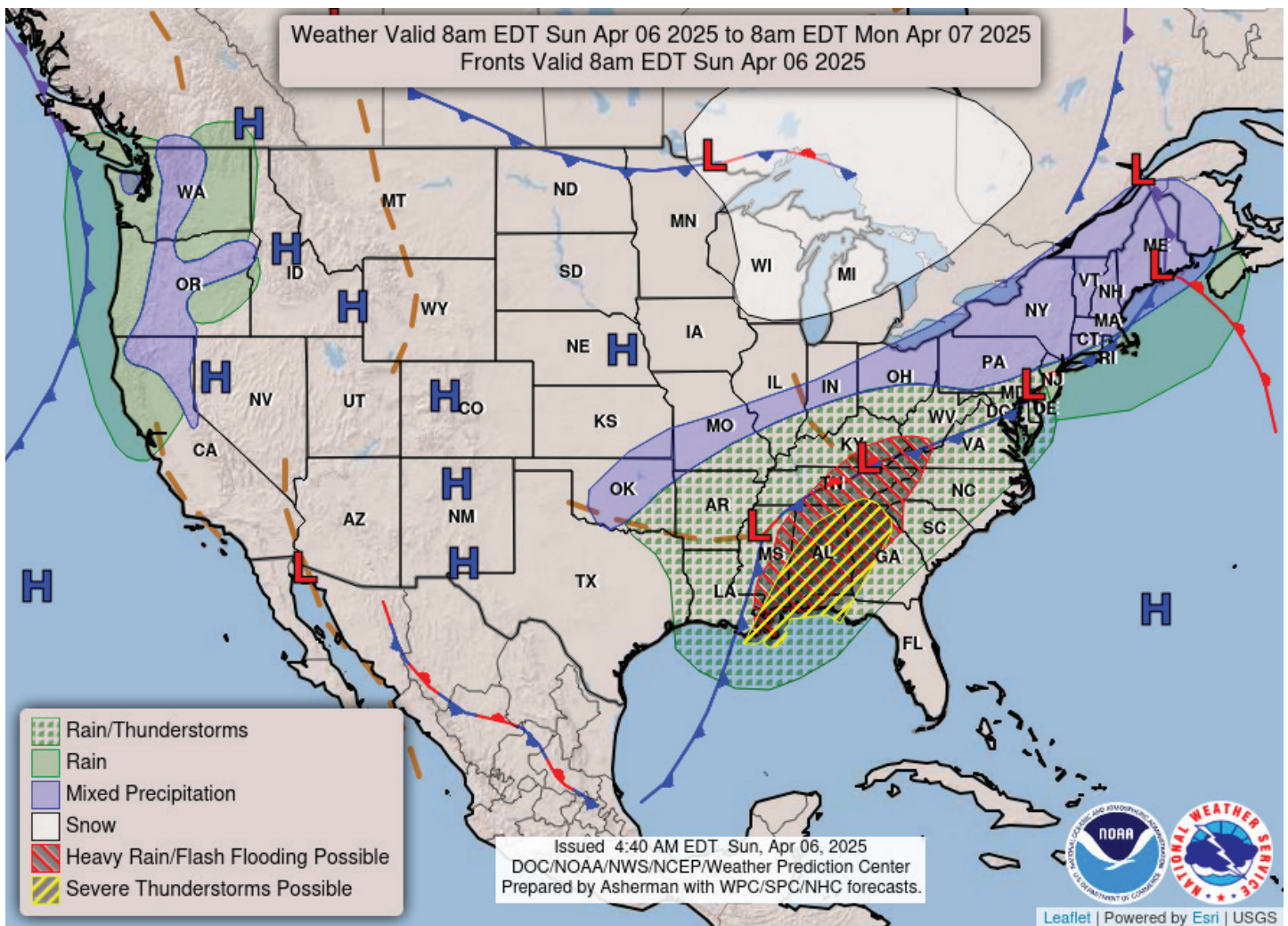
Precip to date in April.: 1.07

Average Precip to date: 2.32

Precip Year to Date: 1.70

Sunset Tonight: 8:08:41 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:58:46 am





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## Today in Weather History

April 6-7th, 1959: Beginning on the 6th and continuing into the 7th, dust storms impacted much of the state of South Dakota. The preceding drought period had left little moisture in the soil, so the fall-plowed fields in exposed locations eroded severely. Strong winds on the 6th and 7th lifted the loose soil, creating areas of blowing dust. In the localities, visibility was less than a quarter mile for short periods. Some observers stated that it was the worst dust event since the 1930s.

April 6th, 2006: Severe thunderstorms the morning of the 6th produced large hail up to 1.75 inches in diameter near Miller in Hand County. Later, heavy rains of 3 to 6 inches fell, causing flash flooding across Spink, Clark, and Day counties. Many county and township roads were flooded with several damaged or thoroughly washed out. Areas around Frankfort, Doland, Turton, Conde, Crandall, Raymond, Butler, and Bristol were most affected. Many roads were closed. Also, several basements were flooded, and sewers were backed up.

April 6th, 2008: An area of low pressure moving across South Dakota spread 6 to 15 inches of heavy snow across much of central, northcentral, and northeast South Dakota. Also, strong winds gusting to 25 to 40 mph caused some blowing and drifting snow. Many activities were canceled, and roads became treacherous. Many vehicles went into the ditch, and several accidents also occurred. Snowfall amounts included 6 inches at Mission Ridge, Isabel, Mellette, and Britton, 7 inches at Faulkton, Andover, Columbia, Timber Lake, and Eureka, 8 inches at Bath, Selby, Mobridge, and Leola, 9 inches at Hosmer, 10 inches at Ipswich, 11 inches at Mound City, and 6 miles east of Hayes. Locations with a foot or more of snow included 12 inches at Roscoe and Elm Lake, 13 inches at Eagle Butte, Onaka, 23 miles north of Highmore, and 15 inches at Bowdle.

1936 - A tornado outbreak in the Deep South resulted in a total of 446 deaths and eighteen million dollars damage. It was a "Tale of Two Cities". During the evening of the 5th a tornado hit Tupelo MS killing 216 persons, injuring 700 others, and causing three million dollars damage. The next morning the paths of two tornadoes met about 8:30 AM and cut a swath four blocks wide through Gainesville GA killing 203 persons, injuring 934, and causing thirteen million dollars damage. Eight to ten feet of debris filled the streets following the storm. At least 70 persons died in the Cooper Pants Factory, the greatest tornado toll of record for a single building. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1983 - The temperature at Denver, CO, dipped to a record cold seven degrees above zero. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Rain and melting snow caused flooding from New England to Ohio. Flooding in the Merrimack Valley of Massachusetts was the worst in fifty years, causing forty-two million dollars damage. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - A powerful storm produced wind gusts to 75 mph around Chicago, IL, and wind gusts to 92 mph at Goshen IN. The high winds created twenty-five foot waves on Lake Michigan. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Unseasonably hot weather prevailed in California. Afternoon highs of 91 degrees in Downtown San Francisco, 93 degrees at San Jose, 98 degrees at San Diego, 103 degrees at Santa Maria, 104 degrees at Riverside, and 106 degrees in Downtown Los Angeles established records for the month of April. (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - Snow developed in the northeastern U.S. for the second time in the month. In Virginia, a heavy wet snow blanketed northern and central sections of the Shenandoah Valley, and eastern foothills, with up to 12 inches reported around Harrisonburg. Heavy snow also blanketed the high elevations of West Virginia, with 10 inches reported at Snowshoe. An inch of snow at Syracuse NY raised their total for the winter season to a record-tying 161.3 inches. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2005 - Thunderstorms erupted and produced severe weather including 32 reports of tornadoes, most of which touched down in Mississippi and Louisiana. Between 20 and 25 homes were destroyed and 7 people were injured. Mississippi governor Haley Barbour declared a state of emergency (CNN).



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## FROM FAILURE TO FORTUNE

Harlan Sanders had just turned forty. No matter what he tried, he failed. Nothing he did succeeded. He was discouraged and disheartened.

Then, one day someone said to him, "Life begins at forty!"

He decided to open a gas station. Shortly afterward, he added a luncheonette. People said that his chicken was tasteless. Rather than giving up on his tasteless chicken, he worked on new and different seasonings. One day he finally combined the right seasonings in the right amounts for his now famous recipe and called it Harlan Sanders' Fried Chicken. It soon brought him fame and fortune and the governor of Kentucky made him a "Kentucky Colonel." It was the beginning of Kentucky Fried Chicken.

Through his faith in God he turned failure into fortune and tragedy into triumph and gave God the credit for his success. Life began at forty for the Colonel because he worked hard and trusted God. Hard work, trusting God and being faithful to the Lord is a winning combination. Follow the formula daily. It works.

Prayer: Father, help us to realize that failing does not make us a failure, but our lack of faith will. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength. Philippians 4:13

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

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## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.04.25

11 28 35 37 69 25

MegaPlier: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$54,000,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.05.25

17 26 37 40 51 9

All Star Bonus: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$28,770,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.05.25

8 15 29 37 47 6

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 4 Mins 12 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.05.25

4 10 13 18 28

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$95,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.05.25

10 16 20 48 51 5

TOP PRIZE:

**\$10,000,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.05.25

4 23 30 46 62 2

Power Play: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$54,000,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)



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## **Upcoming Groton Events**

03/22/2025 Spring Vendor Fair at the GHS Gym 10am-2pm  
03/29/2025 Men's Singles Bowling Tournament at the Jungle 10am, 1pm & 4pm  
04/05/2025 Dueling Duo Baseball/Softball Fundraiser at the Legion Post #39, 6-11:30pm  
04/06/2025 Pancake Sunday, Historical Society Fundraiser, 10am-1pm, Community Center  
04/12/2025 Lion's Club Easter Egg Hunt at the City Park 10am Sharp  
04/12/2025 Groton Firemens Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)  
05/03/2025 Lion's Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm  
05/12/2025 High School Girls Golf Meet at Olive Grove  
05/26/2025 Memorial Day Services Groton Union Cemetery with lunch at Legion Post #39, 12pm  
06/07/2025 Day of Play  
06/13/2025 SDSU 4 Person Scramble at Olive Grove  
06/21/2025 Groton Triathlon  
06/23/2025 Ladies 2 Person Scramble at Olive Grove  
07/04/2025 Firecracker Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course  
07/09/2025 Legion Auxiliary #39 Salad Buffet & Dessert Bar at the Groton Legion 11am-1pm  
07/11-13/25 2025 VFW 12U Class B State Baseball Tournament  
07/13/2025 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm  
07/16/2025 Men's Pro Am Golf at Olive Grove  
07/25/2025 Ferney Open Scramble Golf at Olive Grove  
08/01/2025 Wine on Nine Fundraiser at Olive Grove  
08/09/2025 2nd Annual Celebration in the Park/Rib Cook-Off 1-9:30pm  
08/14/2025 Family Fun Fest, Downtown Main Street 5:30-7:30pm (2nd Thursday)  
08/23/2025 Glacial Tournament at Olive Grove  
09/05/2025 Homecoming Parade 1pm  
09/06/2025 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm  
09/07/2025 Sunflower Classic Couples Scramble at Olive Grove  
10/10/2025 Lake Region Marching Band Festival 10am  
10/11/2025 Pumpkin Fest 10am-3pm City Park  
10/31/2025 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm  
11/27/2025 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1:30pm  
12/06/2025 Olive Grove Holiday Party and Silent Live Auction Fundraiser

## News from the **AP** Associated Press

### **1 killed in Russian attack on Kyiv as death toll from earlier missile strike rises to 19**

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — One person was killed Sunday as Russian air strikes hit the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, while the death toll from Friday's deadly attack on the central Ukrainian city of Kryvyi Rih continued to rise.

The Kyiv victim was found close to the strike's epicenter of the attack in the city's Darnytskyi district, Mayor Vitali Klitschko said. A further three people were injured in the strike, which saw fires break out in several nonresidential areas, damaging cars and buildings.

In a statement on social media, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said the intensifying Russian attacks showed that there is still insufficient international pressure on Moscow.

He said Russia has launched more than 1,460 guided aerial bombs, nearly 670 attack drones and more than 30 missiles at Ukraine in the past week alone.

"These attacks are (Russian President Vladimir) Putin's response to all international diplomatic efforts. Each of our partners — the United States, all of Europe, the entire world — has seen that Russia intends to continue the war and the killing," Zelenskyy said.

"That is why there can be no easing of pressure. All efforts must be aimed at guaranteeing security and bringing peace closer."

Meanwhile, officials said that the death toll from Friday's attack on the central city of Kryvyi Rih had continued to grow, with 19 dead — including many children — and a further 75 wounded.

Oleksandr Vilkul, head of Kryvyi Rih's military administration, declared three days of mourning for the attack, starting on April 7. He said that there was "pain in the hearts of millions of people".

"Together we will stand. And no matter how difficult it is, we will win," he said. "The enemy will be punished for every Ukrainian and for every mother's tear."

Local authorities said the Kryvyi Rih strike damaged 44 apartment buildings and 23 private houses.

The Russian Defense Ministry claimed Friday that it had carried out a high-precision missile strike with a high explosive warhead on a restaurant where a meeting with unit commanders and Western instructors was taking place.

Russian military claimed that the strike killed 85 military personnel and foreign officers and destroyed 20 vehicles. The military's claims could not be independently verified. The Ukrainian General Staff rejected the claims.

Elsewhere, Russian troops fired 23 missiles and 109 strike and decoy drones across Ukraine overnight, the Ukrainian air force said Sunday. Thirteen missiles and 40 drones were shot down, while 53 decoy drones were jammed and did not reach their destinations, it said.

Russia's Defense Ministry said that its air defenses had destroyed 11 Ukrainian drones, including eight over the Rostov region and two over the Kursk region.

### **Yemen Houthi rebels say US strikes kill 2; Trump's bombing video suggests higher overall death toll**

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Suspected U.S. airstrikes killed at least two people overnight in a stronghold of Yemen's Houthi rebels, the group said Sunday, while a bombing video posted by U.S. President Donald Trump suggested casualties in the overall campaign may be higher than the rebels acknowledge.

The strikes in Saada killed two people and wounded nine others, with footage aired by the Houthis' al-Masirah satellite news channel showing a strike collapsing what appeared to be a two-story building. The Iranian-backed Houthis aired no footage from inside the building, which they described as a solar power shop.

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The intense campaign of airstrikes in Yemen under Trump targeting the rebels over their attacks on shipping in Mideast waters stemming from the Israel-Hamas war has killed at least 69 people, according to casualty figures released by the Houthis.

However, the Houthis have not acknowledged any casualties from their security and military leadership — something challenged after an online video posted by Trump.

Trump bombing footage suggests rebel leaders targeted

Early Saturday, Trump posted what appeared to be black-and-white video from a drone of a group of over 70 people gathered in a circle. An explosion detonates during the 25-second video, with a massive crater left in its wake.

"These Houthis gathered for instructions on an attack," Trump claimed, without offering a location for the attack or any other details about the strike. "Oops, there will be no attack by these Houthis! They will never sink our ships again!"

The U.S. military's Central Command, which oversees America's Mideast military operations, has not published the video, nor offered any specific details about the strikes it has conducted since March 15. The White House has said there have been over 200 strikes so far targeting the Houthis.

The rebel-controlled SABA news agency in Yemen, citing an anonymous source, described the bombing as targeting "a social Eid visit in Hodeida governorate." Muslims across the world just celebrated Eid al-Fitr, the festival at the end of the holy Muslim fasting month of Ramadan. SABA had published images of other commanders meeting fighters during the holiday, though not any high-level Houthi officials.

"Those present at that gathering had no connection to the operations carried out by the (Houthis), which are implementing the decision to ban navigation on ships linked to the American and Israeli enemy," the SABA report said, adding that the attack killed and wounded "dozens."

However, the Houthis previously have not acknowledged any strike on Hodeida during that time with such a high casualty count. The SABA report also did not describe those killed as civilians, suggesting they did have ties to the rebels' security or military forces. Hodeida has been a site of Houthi attacks into the Red Sea.

Moammar al-Eryani, the information minister for Yemen's exiled government opposing the Houthis, claimed the strike killed some 70 Houthi fighters and leaders, as well as "experts" from Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard. He offered no evidence for the claim, though Iran has backed the Houthis in the war. Neither the Iranian government nor the Guard has not acknowledged the attack.

Mohammed al-Basha, a Yemen expert of the Basha Report risk advisory firm, cited social media condolence notices suggesting a colonel overseeing police stations for the Houthis in Hodeida had been killed in the strike Trump highlighted, alongside his two brothers.

"The strikes have expanded significantly, hitting multiple governorates simultaneously, alongside telecommunications infrastructure, command nodes, properties tied to senior Houthi leadership and previously untouched tunnel networks in mountainous areas," al-Basha told The Associated Press.

"We've also seen direct targeting of Houthi force gatherings, indicating a more aggressive and evolving shift in the targeting strategy," al-Basha said.

Intense US bombings began nearly a month ago

An AP review has found the new American operation against the Houthis under Trump appears more extensive than those under former U.S. President Joe Biden, as Washington moves from solely targeting launch sites to firing at ranking personnel and dropping bombs on cities.

The new campaign of airstrikes started after the rebels threatened to begin targeting "Israeli" ships again over Israel blocking aid entering the Gaza Strip. The rebels have loosely defined what constitutes an Israeli ship, meaning many vessels could be targeted.

The Houthis targeted more than 100 merchant vessels with missiles and drones, sinking two of them and killing four sailors from November 2023 until January of this year. They also launched attacks targeting American warships without success.

The attacks greatly raised the profile of the Houthis, who faced economic problems and launched a crackdown targeting dissent and aid workers in Yemen amid a decadelong stalemated war that has torn



apart the Arab world's poorest nation.

The campaign shows no signs of stopping as the Trump administration repeatedly has linked its airstrikes on the Houthis to an effort to pressure Iran over its rapidly advancing nuclear program.

## **At least 16 dead in flooding and tornadoes as storms slash from Texas to Ohio**

By BRUCE SCHREINER and OBED LAMY Associated Press

DYERSBURG, Tennessee. (AP) — Another round of torrential rain and flash flooding came Saturday for parts of the South and Midwest already heavily waterlogged by days of severe storms that also spawned deadly tornadoes. Forecasters warned that rivers in some places would continue to rise for days.

Overnight into Sunday morning there were new tornado warnings issued in Alabama and Mississippi, along with flash flood warnings in several counties in Kentucky, Mississippi and Tennessee.

Day after day of heavy rains have pounded the central U.S., rapidly swelling waterways and prompting a series of flash flood emergencies in from Texas to Ohio. The National Weather Service said dozens of locations in multiple states were expected to reach what the agency calls "major flood stage," with extensive flooding of structures, roads, bridges and other critical infrastructure possible.

At least 16 weather-related deaths have been reported since the start of the storms, including 10 in Tennessee.

A 57-year-old man died Friday evening after getting out of a car that washed off a road in West Plains, Missouri. Flooding killed two people in Kentucky including a 9-year-old boy swept away that same day on his way to school and a 74-year-old whose body was found Saturday inside a fully submerged vehicle in Nelson County, authorities said.

Also Saturday, a 5-year-old died at a home in Little Rock, Arkansas, in a weather-related incident, according to police. No details were immediately provided.

Tornadoes earlier in the week destroyed entire neighborhoods and were responsible for at least seven of the deaths.

There were 521 flights cancelled and more than 6,400 flights delayed within the U.S. or coming into or leaving the country on Saturday, according to FlightAware.com, which reported 74 cancellations and 478 delays of U.S. flights early Sunday.

Interstate commerce also could be affected. The extreme flooding across a corridor that includes the major cargo hubs in Louisville, Kentucky, and Memphis could lead to shipping and supply chain delays, said Jonathan Porter, chief meteorologist at AccuWeather.

The outburst comes at a time when nearly half of NWS forecast offices have 20% vacancy rates after Trump administration job cuts, twice that of just a decade ago.

Louisville Mayor Craig Greenberg said Saturday that the Ohio River rose 5 feet (about 1.5 meters) in 24 hours and would continue to swell for days.

"We expect this to be one of the top 10 flooding events in Louisville history," he said.

Flash flood threat looms over many states

Flash flood emergency and tornado warnings continued to be issued Saturday across Arkansas, Mississippi, Tennessee and Kentucky, with more heavy rains and damaging winds in the mix. All of eastern Kentucky was under a flood watch through Sunday morning.

Hundreds of Kentucky roads across the state were impassable because of floodwaters, downed trees or mud and rock slides.

Downtown Hopkinsville, Kentucky, reopened in the morning after floodwaters from the Little River receded, giving a much-needed reprieve, but still more rainfall was on its way, Mayor James R. Knight Jr. said.

"We got a little rain, but most of it went north of us," Knight said. "Thank goodness on that. Gave us a little break."

In north-central Kentucky, emergency officials ordered a mandatory evacuation for Falmouth, a town of 2,000 people in a bend of the rising Licking River. The warnings were similar to catastrophic flooding

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nearly 30 years ago when the river reached a record 50 feet (15 meters), resulting in five deaths and 1,000 homes destroyed.

In Arkansas, weather officials pleaded with people to avoid travel unless absolutely necessary due to widespread flooding.

BNSF Railway confirmed that a railroad bridge in Mammoth Spring was washed out by floodwaters, causing the derailment of several cars. No injuries were reported, but there was no immediate estimate for when the bridge would reopen.

Why so much nasty weather?

Since Wednesday, more than a foot of rain (30.5 centimeters) has fallen in parts of Kentucky, and more than 8 inches (20 centimeters) in parts of Arkansas and Missouri, forecasters said Saturday.

Forecasters attributed the violent weather to warm temperatures, an unstable atmosphere, strong wind shear and abundant moisture streaming from the Gulf.

At least two reports of observed tornadoes were noted Friday evening in Missouri and Arkansas, according to the National Weather Service. One, near Blytheville, Arkansas, lofted debris at least 25,000 feet (7.6 kilometers) high, according to NWS meteorologist Chelly Amin. The state's emergency management office reported damage in 22 counties from tornadoes, wind, hail and flash flooding.

In Dyersburg, Tennessee, dozens of people arrived Saturday at a storm shelter near a public school in the rain, clutching blankets, pillows and other necessities.

Among them was George Manns, 77, who said he was in his apartment when he heard a tornado warning and decided to head to the shelter. Just days earlier the city was hit by a tornado that caused millions of dollars in damage.

"I grabbed all my stuff and came here," said Mann, who brought a folding chair, two bags of toiletries, laptops, iPads and medications: "I don't leave them in my apartment in case my apartment is destroyed. I have to make sure I have them with me."

## **Thousands of Ukrainian civilians are still held by Russia with uncertain hope of release**

By DASHA LITVINOVA and HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

When she heard her front door open almost two years ago, Kostiantyn Zinovkin's mother thought her son had returned home because he forgot something. Instead, men in balaclavas burst into the apartment in Melitopol, a southern Ukrainian city occupied by Russian forces.

They said Zinovkin was detained for a minor infraction and would be released soon. They used his key to enter, said his wife, Liusiena, and searched the flat so thoroughly that they tore it apart "into molecules."

But Zinovkin wasn't released. Weeks after his May 2023 arrest, the Russians told his mother he was plotting a terrorist attack. He's now standing trial on charges his family calls absurd.

Zinovkin is one of thousands of civilians in Russian captivity. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy insists their release, along with prisoners of war, will be an important step toward ending the 3-year-old war.

So far, it hasn't appeared high on the agenda in U.S. talks with Moscow and Kyiv.

"While politicians discuss natural resources, possible territorial concessions, geopolitical interests and even Zelenskyy's suit in the Oval Office, they're not talking about people," said Oleksandra Matviichuk, head of the Center for Civil Liberties, which won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2022.

Thousands held

In January, the center and other Ukrainian and Russian rights groups launched "People First," a campaign that says any peace settlement must prioritize the release of everyone they say are captives, including Russians jailed for protesting the war, as well as Ukrainian children who were illegally deported.

"You can't achieve sustainable peace without taking into account the human dimension," Matviichuk told The Associated Press.

It's unknown how many Ukrainian civilians are in custody, both in occupied regions and in Russia. Ukraine's human rights ombudsman Dmytro Lubinets has estimated over 20,000.

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Matviichuk says her group received over 4,000 requests to help civilian detainees. She notes it's against international law to detain noncombatants in war.

Oleg Orlov, co-founder of the Russian rights group Memorial, says advocates know at least 1,672 Ukrainian civilians are in Moscow's custody.

"There's a larger number of them that we don't know about," added Orlov, whose organization won the Nobel alongside Matviichuk's group and is involved in People First.

Detained without charges

Many are detained for months without charges and don't know why they're being held, Orlov said.

Russian soldiers detained Mykyta Shkriabin, then 19, in Ukraine's Kharkiv region in March 2022. He left the basement where his family was sheltering from fighting to get supplies and never returned.

Shkriabin was detained even though he wasn't charged with a crime, said his lawyer, Leonid Solovyov. In 2023, the authorities began referring to him as a POW, a status Solovyov seeks to contest since the student wasn't a combatant.

Shkriabin's mother, Tetiana, told AP last month she still doesn't know where her son is held. In three years, she's received two letters from him saying he's doing well and that she shouldn't worry.

She's hoping for "a prisoner exchange, a repatriation, or something," Shkriabina said. Without hope, "how does one hang in there?"

Terrorism, treason and espionage

Others face charges that their relatives say are fabricated.

After being seized in Melitopol, Zinovkin was jailed for over two years and charged with seven offenses, including plotting a terrorist attack, assembling weapons and high treason, his wife Liusiena Zinovkina told AP, describing the charges as "absurd."

While vocally pro-Ukrainian and against Russia's occupation, her husband couldn't plot to bomb anyone and had no weapons skills, she said.

Especially nonsensical is the treason charge, she said, because Russian law stipulates that only its citizens can be charged with that crime, and Zinovkin has never held Russian citizenship, unless it was forced upon him in jail. A conviction could bring life in prison.

Ukrainian civilian Serhii Tsyhipa, 63, was convicted of espionage and sentenced to 13 years in a maximum-security prison after he disappeared in March 2022 while walking his dog in Nova Kakhovka, in the partially occupied Kherson region, said his wife, Olena. The dog also vanished.

Tsyhipa, a journalist, was wearing a jacket with a large red cross sewn on it. Both he and his wife, Olena, had those jackets, she told AP, because they volunteered to distribute food and other essentials when Russian troops invaded.

Serhii Tsyhipa protested the occupation, and Olena believes that led to his arrest.

He was held for months in Crimea and finally charged with espionage in December 2022. Almost a year later, in October 2023, Tsyhipa was convicted and sentenced in a trial that lasted only three hearings.

He appealed, but his sentence was upheld. "But the Russian authorities must understand that we are fighting — that we are doing everything possible to bring him home," she said.

Mykhailo Savva of the Expert Council of the Center for Civil Liberties said rights advocates know of 307 Ukrainian civilians convicted in Russia on criminal charges — usually espionage or treason, if the person held a Russian passport, but also terrorism and extremism.

He said that in Ukraine's occupied territories, Russians see activists, community leaders and journalists as "the greatest threat."

Winning release for those already serving sentences would be an uphill battle, advocates say.

Held in harsh conditions

Relatives must piece together scraps of information about prison conditions.

Zinovkina said she has received letters from her husband who told her of problems with his sight, teeth and back. Former prisoners also told her of cramped, cold basement cells in a jail in Rostov, where he's being held.



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She believes her husband was pressured to sign a confession. A man who met him in jail told her Kostiantyn "confessed to everything they wanted him to, so the worst is over" for him.

Orlov said Ukrainian POWs and civilians are known to be held in harsh conditions, where allegations of abuse and torture are common.

The Kremlin tested those methods during the two wars it waged in Chechnya in the 1990s and 2000s, well before invading Ukraine, said Orlov, who recently went to Ukraine to document Russia's human rights violations and saw the pattern repeated from the North Caucasus conflicts.

"Essentially, a misanthropic system has been created, and everyone who falls into it ends up in hell," added Matviichuk, the Ukrainian human rights worker.

A recent report by the U.N. Human Rights Council said Russia "committed enforced disappearances and torture as crimes against humanity," part of a "systematic attack against the civilian population and pursuant to a coordinated state policy."

It said Russia "detained large numbers of civilians," jailed them in occupied Ukraine or deported them to Russia, and "systematically used torture against certain categories of detainees to extract information, coerce, and intimidate."

Russia's Defense Ministry, the Federal Penitentiary Service and the Federal Security Service did not respond to requests for comment.

Tempering hope with patience

As the U.S. talks about a ceasefire, relatives continue to press for the captives' release.

Liusiena Zinovkina says she hasn't abandoned hope as her husband, now 35, stands trial but is tempering her expectations.

"I see that it's not as simple as the American president thought. It's not that easy to come to an agreement with Russia," she said, reminding herself "to be patient. It will happen, but not tomorrow."

Olena Tsyhipa said every minute counts for her husband, whose health has deteriorated.

"My belief in his return is unwavering," she said. "We just have to wait."

## **Houston rallies to beat Duke 70-67 in the Final Four and advance to face Florida for the NCAA title**

By EDDIE PELLIS AP National Writer

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — Sorry guys, "Phi Slama Jamma" is already taken. How 'bout something simple, like "Comeback Kids."

"National champs" might be a possibility, too.

Houston's no-room-to-breathe defense wiped away a 14-point deficit over the final eight minutes, erased Cooper Flagg and Duke's title hopes and brought the Cougars within a win of a championship of their own Saturday night with a 70-67 stunner over the Blue Devils.

Led by Joseph Tugler's four blocks and an amoeba-like defense that smothers everything, Houston held Duke to a grand total of one field goal over the last 10 1/2 minutes. The 67 points were Duke's second-lowest output of its now-ended season.

The Blue Devils' second-to-last attempt during their contest-ending 1-for-9 stretch was a step-back jumper in the paint by Flagg that J'Wan Roberts disrupted. The last was a desperation heave by Tyrese Proctor that caught nothing at the buzzer and sent Flagg and company shuffling off in shock.

"We just had to keep that belief and keep the faith," said LJ Cryer, who won a title with Baylor in 2021 and led the Cougars in this one with 26 points.

This is the program's first trip to the final since 1984 — which marked the official close of the Phi Slama Jamma era, a fun-and-gun dunkfest that never won the title despite the efforts of Clyde Drexler and Ha-keem Olajuwon, who was at the Alamodome for this one.

Lots has changed since then. One constant: Defense wins championship.

Houston has allowed the fewest points this season and even against Duke, with Flagg, Kon Knueppel (16 points) and a roster with five or six NBA prospects, it made things impossible down the stretch.

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"Got to give them a lot of credit for what they do every single night they play," Flagg said. "We could have been a little bit more sharp down the stretch executing some things. At the end of the day, you got to give them a lot of credit, as well."

It was Roberts' two free throws with 19.6 seconds left that gave the Cougars their first lead since 6-5. Cryer made two more to push the advantage to three. That matched Houston's biggest lead of the night.

The Cougars (35-4), who have never won a title, will play Florida on Monday night for the championship.

Florida's 79-73 win over Auburn in the early game was a free-flowing bundle of fun. This one would've looked perfect on a cracked blacktop and a court with chain-link nets. Neither team cracked 40% shooting.

That's just how Houston likes it.

It closed the game on a 9-0 run over the final 33 seconds, and though Flagg, the AP Player of the Year, finished with 27 points, he did it on 8-for-19 shooting and never got a good look after his 3 at the 3:02 mark put the Blue Devils (35-4) up by nine.

"Knowing going into that game that he was the player of the year, that he brought his team to the Final Four, we knew it would be challenging," Roberts said.

Trailing 64-55, things looked dire for the Cougars. But they were just getting started.

A team that prides itself on getting three stops in a row — calling the third one the "kill stop" — strung together two stretches like that, broken up only by Flagg's 3.

Duke settled for a measly three free throws over the final 3 minutes. One came when Tugler got a technical for batting the ball from Sion James' hands as he was trying to throw an inbounds pass.

That didn't make things any better for the Blue Devils.

On the possession following the technical, Tugler rejected Knueppel, then Emanuel Sharp (16 points) made a 3 to cut the deficit to three.

Mylik Wilson stole the next inbounds pass and missed a game-tying 3, but Tugler tipped it in to cut the deficit to one.

Proctor missed the front end of a 1-and-1 with 20 seconds left to set the stage for the Roberts free throws.

Duke's slow walk off the court came through a phalanx of Houston fans who waved goodbye to Flagg, who will likely be off to the NBA as the first pick in the draft.

Houston held Duke to 37.5% shooting in the second half; that was nearly 20% lower than its first four games of the tournament, which included a blowout over the nation's best offense, Alabama, in the Elite Eight.

"We held that team to 67 points," Houston coach Kelvin Sampson said, marveling at what they'd done.

The Cougars finished with six steals and six blocked shots, and a bunch more altered by Roberts and Tugler, who might be the best shot blockers to wear that Cougars uniform since Olajuwon himself.

There are no stats, however, for the heart Houston showed after the country's best player had all but buried them with 8 minutes to go.

"Cooper was not going to beat us by himself," Sampson said. "Even when we were down 14, these guys will tell you what I was talking about in the huddle was, 'Just hang in there, hang in there.'"

Big win for AI

The huge comeback also netted a \$1 million win for artificial intelligence. An AI disruptor bet a professional gambler that his program could do a better March Madness bracket, and it all came down to the Duke-Houston game.

Even if the Houston loses in the final, the AI bracket will get more points in the contest and the disruptor, Alan Levy, will pocket the million.

## **Texas county that swung to Trump grapples with immigration crackdown after bakery is targeted**

By VALERIE GONZALEZ Associated Press

LOS FRESNOS, Texas (AP) — Leonardo Baez and Nora Avila-Guel's bakery in the Texas community of Los Fresnos is a daily stop for many residents to share gossip over coffee and pick up cakes and pastries

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for birthdays, office parties or themselves.

When Homeland Security Investigations agents showed up at Abby's Bakery in February and arrested the owners and eight employees, residents of Los Fresnos were shocked. Abby's Bakery doesn't employ violent criminals and Baez and Avila-Guel are not the people who border czar Tom Homan calls the "worst of the worst" and says are the priority for mass deportations.

"I was surprised because I know that they're not taking advantage of the people," Esteban Rodriguez, 43, said after pulling into the bakery's parking lot to discover it was closed. "It was more like helping out people. They didn't have nowhere to go, instead of them being on the streets."

The reaction in the town of 8,500 residents may show the limits of support for President Donald Trump's immigration crackdown in a majority Hispanic region dotted with fields of cotton, sugarcane and red grapefruit where Republicans made gains in last year's elections. Cameron County voted for a GOP president for the first time since 2004. For neighboring Starr County, it was the first time since 1896.

Now, Baez and Avila-Guel, a Mexican couple who are legal U.S. permanent residents, could lose everything after being accused of concealing and harboring immigrants who were in the U.S. illegally. It's a rare case in which business owners face criminal charges rather than just a fine.

Los Fresnos, which is 90% Latino and counts the school district as its largest employer, is about a half-hour drive from the U.S.-Mexico border. Hundreds of school bus drivers, painters, retirees and parishioners from the nearby Catholic church come into Abby's Bakery each day. Customers with silver trays and tongs select pastries from glass-door cabinets.

The owners had green cards but employees did not

Six of Abby's eight employees were in the U.S. on visitor visas but none had work permits when Homeland Security Investigations agents came to the business Feb. 12. The owners acknowledged they knew that, according to a federal complaint.

Employees lived in a room with six beds and shared two bathrooms in the same building as the bakery, according to an agent's affidavit.

Baez, 55, and Avila-Guel, 46, have pleaded not guilty. They referred questions to their attorneys, who noted the workers were not held against their will and there was no attempt to hide their presence, as a smuggler would.

As green card holders, the couple could be deported if they are convicted. They have five children who are U.S. citizens.

The bakery closed for several days after their arrest, drawing about 20 people to protest on an uncharacteristically chilly evening.

Monsignor Pedro Briseño of St. Cecilia Church often visited before early morning Mass for the campechana, a flaky, crunchy pastry dough layered with caramelized sugar. His routine was interrupted when plainclothes immigration agents arrived in unmarked vehicles.

"A woman came here crying. She said, 'Father, Father, they're taking my brother,'" Briseño said. The priest walked over and saw agents use zip ties to bind employees' hands.

Support for deportations has limits

There is overwhelming bipartisan support to deport people who are in the U.S. illegally and have been convicted of a violent crime, with 82% in favor, according to an Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll in January. Support softens considerably for deportations of all people in the country illegally, with 43% in favor and 37% opposed.

Trump and top aides repeatedly emphasize they are deporting criminals. But, as Homan often says, others in the country illegally who are there when officers arrest criminals also will be deported, a departure from the Biden administration's practices.

So far, Trump has avoided the large-scale factory and office raids that characterized his first term and that of Republican President George W. Bush. Scattered reports of smaller operations included the recent arrests of 37 people at a roofing business in northern Washington state.

ICE says it made 32,809 arrests in Trump's first 50 days in office, or a daily average of 656, which compared with a daily average of 311 during a 12-month period ending Sept. 30. ICE said nearly half (14,111)



were convicted criminals and nearly one-third (9,980) had pending criminal charges but did not specify the charges.

People with deep ties in their communities and no criminal records tend to generate more sympathy.

The bakery is a Los Fresnos staple

Abby's reopened after the owners were released on bond.

Chela and Alicia Vega, two sisters in their 60s who retired from the school district and have known the bakery owners for years, were among the customers filling trays with pastries. Chela Vega said the couple once took a week off from work to drive them to San Luis Potosi in Mexico after their sister died. When a hurricane struck, Leonardo Baez cut down their damaged trees without charge.

For Terri Sponsler, 61, shopping at Abby's is now a political statement. "With everything going on right now in our country, we need to find ways to protest," she said.

Mark W. Milum, the Los Fresnos city manager, said Abby's is an important business that contributes property and sales tax revenue to the \$13 million annual municipal budget.

Some customers just love the products.

"Other bakeries, they pop up, right?" said Ruth Zamora, 65. "But when you go there, it's not the same."

## **Facing a government crackdown on dissent, Turkey's protesters put aside their differences**

By ROBERT BADENDIECK Associated Press

ISTANBUL (AP) — The arrest of an opposition presidential candidate last month has triggered Turkey's largest anti-government protests in more than a decade, uniting demonstrators from different walks of life and sometimes diametrically opposed political views.

It includes supporters of popular Istanbul Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu, and young people who see all politicians as ineffective. Protesters range from the socialist left to the ultra-nationalist right, and from university students to retirees.

They are united by a sense that the government of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has grown increasingly authoritarian, diminishing the secular and democratic values and laws that the country was built upon. They are fueled by outrage at Imamoglu's arrest and the government's attempts to quell the ensuing protests.

Protests began after opposition leader was arrested

The protests began after the government arrested Imamoglu, the man seen as posing the most serious electoral challenge to Erdogan in years, on March 19. Prosecutors accuse him of corruption and aiding an outlawed Kurdish organization.

Critics say the charges are an excuse to get a key rival out of the way, but the government denies interfering with the legal process.

The largest protests have happened alongside rallies of Imamoglu's center-left pro-secularist Republican People's Party, known as the CHP, but many young protesters said they don't support the party.

Ogulcan Akti, a 26-year-old university student working two part-time jobs to support his family, said both the opposition and the ruling party are "liars."

"The ones in power and the opposition that will come later, they're all the same," he said. "We don't trust anyone."

Students led the charge

In the days after the mayor's arrest, thousands of students converged near Istanbul city hall. Some waved Turkish flags; others held images of left-wing figures from the 1970s and sang a Turkish version of the Italian protest song "Bella ciao."

In images on social media, some protesters made the ultranationalist "grey wolf" hand sign, standing next to others showing the leftists' raised fist. Some showed the peace sign favored by both leftists and pro-Kurdish groups, while others chanted slogans attacking the banned militant Kurdistan Workers' Party.

Berk Esen, an associate professor of political science at Sabanci University, said most protesters he has

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seen are educated, urban young people aged 18 to 25, but they have little else in common: "This is a much more amorphous, eclectic group politically," he said.

## Anger spurs unrest

One afternoon last week, dozens of students from Bogazici University gathered at a metro station in Istanbul, many wearing masks to avoid reprisals or arrest.

More than 2,000 people, including journalists, have been detained since the protests began. Around 300 were formally arrested on charges including "joining an illegal protest" and "resisting the police," with some accused of "terrorism links."

Lawyers for the arrested students say that the charge of "joining an illegal protest" does not justify extended detention, and that the number of arrests is "unusually high" compared to offenses such as terrorism or drugs.

At the metro station, 22-year-old management student Burak Turan and his girlfriend slipped into a mall, watching officers detain dozens of protesters.

"We are here because so many students are getting arrested for no reason," Turan said. "They act like it's a war; they are exercising wartime laws." Turan refused to wear a mask, saying he had nothing to be ashamed of.

Other protesters include public employees, artists and retirees, many of whom support the CHP.

A man in his 60s watching a standoff at city hall said he was there to defend the rights of the younger generation. "We don't matter, they do. They are our future," he said.

Others were there to speak out against as what they perceived as a slide away from Turkey's secular and democratic values under Erdogan.

Mehtap Bozkurt, a 70-year-old pensioner and a CHP supporter, joined a protest outside Istanbul city hall.

"This country is secular and will remain secular," she said. "We will resist until the end. I am ready to give my life and blood for this issue."

That doesn't mean that people protesting aren't practicing Muslims, said Esen, the Sabanci academic. "There are Muslims, religious people and those who at least perform some religious duties amongst the protesters," he said. "But they also probably define themselves as secular."

## Parents protest treatment of students

Outside the courts in Istanbul, parents and relatives, some holding flowers, maintained an anxious vigil. Some hoped for a loved one's immediate release, while others were overcome with frustration. One family member, who asked to remain anonymous fearing reprisals from officials, told local media that the detained students had "studied day and night to get into the best universities."

"Look at the treatment they are receiving now. There are no rights. There is no law. There is no justice," she said.

Another woman showed journalists a picture of her son with a black eye. "He told me, 'Mom, they beat me up,'" she said tearfully. Another woman said she was a cancer patient left waiting since dawn. "What did these kids do? Did they murder someone? What did they even do?"

Around 300 protesters spent the Eid holiday in prison, separated from their families.

Lawyers for several protesters told The Associated Press that students are held in overcrowded cells and face physical and verbal mistreatment, as well as limited access to meals since prison commissaries are closed for Eid. Lawyers also fear that students could miss exams or be expelled as a "punishment" for taking part in the protests.

On Thursday the police issued a statement describing as "vile slander" claims that women had been sexually assaulted in custody.

The Interior Ministry said that at least 150 police officers were injured in clashes with demonstrators. Images from the protests showed riot police using tear gas and plastic pellets, while students threw plastic water bottles and flares.

## A pivotal moment

Esen says the protests may mark a pivotal moment for Turkey.

"Will the police violence used by the government against them make them throw in the towel after a

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certain point or will it bring about a bigger showdown and make this a long-term affair? If the latter happens, I will be very optimistic about Turkey becoming democratic again. If the former happens, all of this is heading toward a very bad place," he said.

A young female protester wearing a mask watched the standoff with police unfolding near city hall last week.

"I am here today because I do not accept autocracy," she said. "Ekrem Imamoglu's arrest means that we accept that there will be no more elections in this country. I do not accept this."

## **Tariffs will make sneakers, jeans and almost everything Americans wear cost more, trade groups warn**

By ANNE D'INNOCENZIO AP Retail Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Sending children back to school in new sneakers, jeans and T-shirts is likely to cost U.S. families significantly more this fall if the bespoke tariffs President Donald Trump put on leading exporters take effect as planned, American industry groups warn.

About 97% of the clothes and shoes purchased in the U.S. are imported, predominantly from Asia, the American Apparel & Footwear Association said, citing its most recent data. Walmart, Gap Inc., Lululemon and Nike are a few of the companies that have a majority of their clothing made in Asian countries.

Those same garment-making hubs took a big hit under the president's plan to punish individual countries for trade imbalances. For all Chinese goods, that meant tariffs of at least 54%. He set the import tax rates for Vietnam and neighboring Cambodia at 46% and 49%, and products from Bangladesh and Indonesia at 37% and 32%.

Working with foreign factories has kept labor costs down for U.S. companies in the fashion trade, but neither they nor their overseas suppliers are likely to absorb new costs that high. India, Indonesia, Pakistan and Sri Lanka also got slapped with high tariffs so aren't immediate sourcing alternatives.

"If these tariffs are allowed to persist, ultimately it's going to make its way to the consumer," said Steve Lamar, president and CEO of the American Apparel & Footwear Association.

Another trade group, Footwear Distributors and Retailers of America, provided estimates of the price increases that could be in store for shoes, noting 99% of the pairs sold in the U.S. are imports. Work boots made in China that now retail for \$77 would go up to \$115, while customers would pay \$220 for running shoes made in Vietnam currently priced at \$155, the group said.

FDRA President Matt Priest predicted lower-income families and the places they shop would feel the impact most. He said a pair of Chinese-made children's shoes that cost \$26 today will likely carry a \$41 price tag by the back-to-school shopping season, according to his group's calculations.

Preparing for a moving target

The tariffs on the top producers of not only finished fashion but many of the materials used to make footwear and apparel shocked U.S. retailers and brands. Before Trump's first term, U.S. companies had started to diversify away from China in response to trade tensions as well as human rights and environmental concerns.

They accelerated the pace when he ordered tariffs on Chinese goods in 2018, shifting more production to other countries in Asia. Lululemon said in its latest annual filing that 40% of its sportswear last year was manufactured in Vietnam, 17% in Cambodia, 11% in Sri Lanka, 11% in Indonesia and 7% in Bangladesh.

Nike, Levi-Strauss, Ralph Lauren, Gap Inc., Abercrombie & Fitch and VF Corporation, which owns Vans, The North Face and Timberland, also reported a greatly reduced reliance on garment-makers and suppliers in China.

Shoe brand Steve Madden said in November it would reduce imports from China by as much as 45% this year due to Trump's campaign pledge to impose a 60% tariff on all Chinese products. The brand said it already had spent several years developing a factory network in Cambodia, Vietnam, Mexico and Brazil.

Industry experts say reviving the American garment industry would be hugely expensive and take years if



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it were feasible. The number of people working in apparel manufacturing in January 2015 stood at 139,000 and had dwindled to 85,000 by January of this year, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Sri Lanka employs four times as many despite having a population less than one-seventh the size of the U.S.

Along with lacking a skilled and willing workforce, the U.S. does not have domestic sources for the more than 70 materials that go into making a typical shoe, the Footwear Distributors & Retailers of America said in written comments to Trump's trade representative.

Shoe companies would need to find or set up factories to make cotton laces, eyelets, textile uppers and other components to make finished footwear in the U.S. on a large scale, the group wrote.

"These materials simply do not exist here, and many of these materials have never existed in the U.S.," the organization said.

Price increases may come as a shock

The expected barrage of apparel price increases would follow three decades of stability. Clothes cost U.S. consumers essentially the same in 2024 as they did in 1994, according to U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data.

Economists and industry analysts have attributed the trend to free trade agreements, offshoring to foreign countries where workers are paid much less and heated competition for shoppers among discount retailers and fast-fashion brands like H&M, Zara and Forever 21.

But customers unaccustomed to inflation in the apparel sector and coming off several years of steep rise in the costs of groceries and housing may be extra sensitive to any big jumps in clothing prices. Priest, of the Footwear Distributors and Retailers of America, said he has observed shoppers pulling back on buying shoes since Trump's return to the White House.

"They're nervous," he said. "They've obviously been playing the long game as it relates to inflation for a number of years now. And they just don't have the endurance to absorb higher prices, particularly as they're inflicted by the U.S. government."

Winners and losers in a garment trade war

According to a report by British bank Barclays published Friday, the winners in the tariff wars are retailers that have at least one of these attributes: big negotiating power with their suppliers, a strong brand name and limited sourcing in Asia.

In clothing and footwear, that includes off-price retailers Burlington, Ross Stores Inc. and TJX Companies, which operates T.J. Maxx and Marshalls, as well as Ralph Lauren and Dick's Sporting Goods, according to the report.

The companies in for a tougher time are those with limited negotiating power, limited pricing power and high product exposure in Asia, a list including Gap Inc., Urban Outfitters and American Eagle Outfitters, according to the report.

Secondhand clothing resale site ThredUp cheered a related action Trump took with his latest round of tariffs: eliminating a widely used tax exemption that has allowed millions of low-cost goods — most of them originating in China — to enter the U.S. every day duty-free.

"This policy change will increase the cost of cheaply produced, disposable clothing imported from China, directly impacting the business model that fuels overproduction and environmental degradation," ThredUp said.

Several industry analysts and economists said they think tariffs will end up being a consumer sales tax that widens the yawning gap between America's wealthiest residents and those in the middle and lower end of the income spectrum.

"So where will the U.S. be buying its apparel now that the tariff rates on Bangladesh, Vietnam and China are astronomical?" Mary E. Lovely, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, said of the schedule set to take effect Wednesday. "Will the new 'Golden Age' involve knitting our own knickers as well as snapping together our cellphones?"

## Storms tore up two of America's most iconic trails. Federal cuts have disrupted repairs

By JULIE WATSON Associated Press

CAMPO, Calif. (AP) — Hiking the Pacific Crest Trail is a challenge, especially for adventurers making the entire run from Southern California to Canada, and Eric Kipperman's job is to greet them at the start and lay bare the difficulties ahead.

He has lately begun warning that the journey may be even tougher. Following cuts by the Trump administration, plans to clear downed trees and rebuild storm-battered stretches in 2025 have been scrapped.

"This year, we're going to have less trail work done on the trails, so just know that going into your hike, safety is the most important thing," Kipperman told a group of backpackers from Europe and the United States at the trailhead near Campo, California, an hour's drive east of San Diego.

He cautioned there is "no trail" at all in parts of the 2,650-mile (4,265 kilometers) path through California, Oregon and Washington state.

The cutbacks are not just on the West Coast. Ahead of the busy summer hiking season, funding freezes and mass layoffs also are disrupting repairs on the East Coast's Appalachian Trail after nearly 500 miles (800 kilometers) were damaged by Hurricane Helene, underscoring how President Donald Trump's dramatic downsizing of the U.S. government is touching even the nation's remote backcountry where vacationers, wanderers and escapists alike retreat to leave modern life behind.

Wildfires and more intense storms due in part to climate change have been taking a toll on the legendary trails. The federal cuts threaten their very existence, according to the Pacific Crest Trail Association and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, which oversee their preservation in partnership with the government and receive millions in federal dollars.

The U.S. Forest Service called the situation "dynamic and evolving" in an email to The Associated Press, but said they are committed to ensuring public safety and access to recreation areas that are vital to local economies.

The Trump administration has let go some 3,400 workers at the U.S. Forest Service, and nearly 1,500 at the National Park Service, including trail repair specialists. The associations said the cuts also led to the rescinding of job offers for seasonal crews with technical skills to rebuild boardwalks, bridges and campsites and train thousands of volunteers.

Courts have ordered federal agencies to rehire thousands of workers, but some say they are not coming back.

"For hikers, they're going to be crawling, navigating, working their way through downed trees across the trail that won't get cut out," said Justin Kooyman, director of the Pacific Crest Trail operations. "It's going to make for a little more rough and tumble."

A backlog of projects

While the trails are not in total disarray and many hikers may not see any damaged areas, maintenance is critical to their existence, the associations say. More than 20 miles (32 kilometers) of the Appalachian Trail remain closed following Helene and downed trees could fuel wildfires.

Last month, the Appalachian Trail turned 100 years old. The footpath stretches 2,193 miles (3,530 kilometers) between Georgia's Springer Mountain and Maine's Mount Katahdin.

Its founder, the late forest scientist Benton MacKaye, saw a need for a place to escape stress following the end of World War I and the 1918 flu epidemic.

The Appalachian Trail and Pacific Crest Trail officially became the country's first National Scenic Trails under the 1968 National Trails System Act. Completing them has come to symbolize the strength of the human spirit, inspiring books and movies. Only a fraction are thru-hikers, a term for those who walk the trails from end to end. Many don't succeed and several people have died trying. Most users hike for a day or two to enjoy the breathtaking beauty.

"I am so concerned with what seems to be a general lack of appreciation for what these protected outdoor spaces can bring to not just our physical well-being but to our souls," said Sandi Marra, head of

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the Appalachian Trail Conservancy. "If we lose these things, we are really going to be lost as a species, and definitely as a country."

The Pacific Crest Trail Association said it is operating with a third less federal grant money than anticipated. The Appalachian Trail Conservancy said at least \$1.5 million is at risk from federal downsizing.

The National Park Service said its funding has continued for the Appalachian Trail as it works to "address challenges collaboratively and seek solutions" to support the footpath's "enduring legacy."

Both trails already had a backlog of projects. Wildfires have scorched nearly 250 miles (400 kilometers) of the Pacific Crest Trail in recent years.

The disruption exacerbates the deteriorating conditions and the spread of invasive plant species, which will ultimately increase costs, said Megan Wargo, head of the Pacific Crest Trail Association.

Cutting back

The Pacific Crest Trail crosses searing desert and traverses forests of giant sequoias, the world's largest trees, before climbing by snow-covered peaks in the rugged Sierra Nevada. After snaking over 50 mountain passes, it ends in Washington's remote Pasayten Wilderness at the Canadian border.

As the trail's popularity grew through social media and the bestselling memoir "Wild" that inspired a Hollywood film, drawing less experienced backpackers, the association hired what they call "crest runners."

Kipperman is one of two at the southern end. Their duties include greeting hikers at the Mexican border, checking their permits and providing safety tips before they set off. The crest runners normally work from March until August, covering the hottest, riskiest months for that section.

Last year, a crest runner also worked the northern end at the Canadian border. But this year they only will be at the southern end until mid-May unless more federal funds are unfrozen.

Kipperman, whose trail name is "Pure Stoke," is infectiously cheery as he rattles off the dangers from rattlesnakes to dehydration and distributes bags for discarded toilet paper. He steers clear of discussing politics and instead talks about protecting water quality, burying human waste, packing out trash and building safe campfires.

"Remove the ego. Address the situation. See if going forward is really the right thing for you," Kipperman said, warning hikers to beware that Mile 225 or so is washed out.

Plowing ahead

After hearing Kipperman's spiel, backpacker Joshua Suran said he planned to try helping restore the trail where possible.

Marias Michel of Germany trudged over, concerned about the weight of his backpack draped with gear, water bottles and a pair of Crocs. After quitting his job, he said he needed to do the trail, calling it "a resetting, a big detox."

He was aware of the federal cuts but said he couldn't worry about that.

"I'm just going to be learning by doing because I don't want to be too much up here," Michel said, pointing to his head. "I want to test myself. No expectations. It's an attempt until you make it."

## Foreign journalists at US-backed media fear being sent to repressive homelands after Trump's cuts

By DIDI TANG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — After hiding in Thailand for seven years, two Cambodian journalists arrived in the United States last year on work visas, aiming to keep providing people in their Southeast Asian homeland with objective, factual news through Radio Free Asia.

But Vuthy Tha and Hour Hum now say their jobs and legal status in the U.S. are at risk after President Donald Trump recently signed an executive order gutting the government-run U.S. Agency for Global Media. The agency funds Radio Free Asia and other outlets tasked with delivering uncensored information to parts of the world under authoritarian rule and often without a free press of their own.

"It fell out of sky," Vuthy, a single father of two small children, said through a translator about the Trump



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administration's decision, which he says threatens to upend his life.

"I am very regretful that our listeners cannot receive the accurate news," Hour said, also through a translator.

Both men said they're worried about providing for their families and being allowed to stay in the U.S. They say it's impossible to return to Cambodia, a single-party state hostile to independent media where they fear being persecuted for their journalistic work.

The administration has been dismantling or slashing the size of federal agencies, leading tens of thousands of government workers and contractors to be fired or put on leave. But the targeting of the U.S. Agency for Global Media, whose decades-old networks aim to extend American influence abroad, means journalists who have defied authoritarian regimes to help fulfill a U.S. mission of delivering pro-democracy programming could be deported and face harassment and persecution in their homelands.

Eleven journalists associated with the U.S.-funded media outlets are behind bars overseas, including RFA's Shin Daewe, who is serving 15 years in Myanmar on a charge of supporting terrorism.

At least 84 U.S. Agency for Global Media, or USAGM, journalists in the United States on work visas could face deportation, including at least 23 "at serious risk of being immediately arrested upon arrival and potentially imprisoned," according to the advocacy group Reporters Without Borders and a coalition of 36 human rights organizations.

"It is outrageous that these journalists, who risk their lives to expose the extent of repression in their home countries, might be completely abandoned," said Thibaut Bruttin, director general of Reporters Without Borders.

"The U.S. Congress must take responsibility for protecting these reporters and all USAGM-funded outlets, funded by Congress itself," Bruttin said. "This responsibility is not just moral — it stems from the United States' commitment to defending the principles of democracy and press freedom."

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the House Foreign Affairs Committee did not respond to requests for comment. The White House did not comment.

The State Department said it is coordinating with USAGM on imprisoned journalists and that it condemns unjust detentions of journalists for exercising their freedom of expression.

**Journalists sue over Trump's order**

A number of journalists for Voice of America, a news service also overseen by USAGM, have sued in a federal court. That includes two unnamed foreign journalists on temporary visas.

If deported, one could risk imprisonment for 10 years for his work for VOA, and the other, a member of a persecuted minority in his home country, could be in "physical danger," the lawsuit said.

The court has temporarily halted contract terminations, preventing the visa holders from being forced to leave for now.

Both RFA and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, another USAGM-funded media outlet, also have sued seeking restoration of funding.

Trump's cuts come after the U.S. last year helped free Alsu Kurmasheva — a dual U.S.-Russian citizen and journalist with RFE/RL — in a high-profile prisoner swap that included Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich.

In February, the Trump administration announced the release of Andrey Kuznechyk, a Belarusian journalist with RFE/RL's Belarus service. The network still has four journalists jailed — one each in Azerbaijan, Belarus, Russia and Russia-occupied Crimea.

Voice of America has a contributor jailed in Myanmar and another in Vietnam, said Jessica Jerreat, VOA's press freedom editor.

In Vietnam, four RFA reporters are in jail and another is under house arrest, according to Tamara Bralo, the outlet's head of journalist security. She said she's concerned that American support in seeking their release could diminish if RFA folds.

Vietnam consistently ranks near the bottom in the Press Freedom Index by Reporters Without Borders, which says about 40 journalists are held in Vietnam's prisons where mistreatment is widespread.

**Reporters fear being sent back**

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Khoa Lai, a Vietnamese journalist who joined RFA in Washington on a work visa only days before Trump took office, said returning to Vietnam is risky for him.

"I could face prosecution or be in prison," said Lai, who produces video stories on freedom of speech, freedom of religion and political corruption for RFA's Vietnamese service. "I don't know for sure, but it won't be good."

Both Vuthy and Hour began working for RFA in Cambodia but had to leave in 2017 when Cambodia's top court dissolved the main opposition CNRP party, authorities arrested their colleagues and RFA closed its office.

In neighboring Thailand as refugees, both continued to report for RFA, but with their identities hidden. They still risked getting sent back to Cambodia until RFA brought them to the U.S. on work visas last year. They have reported on issues ranging from politics, corruption and human rights to climate change and environment.

Cambodia's autocratic former Prime Minister Hun Sen, who ruled his country for nearly four decades and passed power to his son Hun Manet, praised Trump in a Facebook post for "having the courage to lead the world to combat fake news" by cutting funding to USAGM.

Vuthy says he's still hopeful that RFA might survive, adding that it "is fighting for its existence."

## **Canadian police say arrest made after man barricaded himself inside Parliament's east block**

OTTAWA, Ontario (AP) — Police said a man was arrested late Saturday after an hours-long lockdown on Parliament Hill in Canada's capital.

Investigators said the man gained unauthorized access to the east block of Canada's parliament on Saturday afternoon and barricaded himself inside the building.

In a post on social media hours later, police said the man had been taken into custody without incident. There was no immediate word on charges or motive.

Police initially released a warning Saturday afternoon telling anyone in east block, which houses parliamentary offices, to seek shelter in the nearest room, close and lock all doors and hide.

People were evacuated from the building and police shut down a significant stretch of Wellington Street in front of Parliament Hill, blocking traffic and pedestrians.

More than three hours after the lockdown began, police extended the exclusion zone from Wellington Street one block back to Sparks Street.

Ottawa police Insp. Mark Bouwmeester told reporters that the circumstances of this incident were "suspicious," but gave few details about what was happening inside.

Police did not say whether the man had been armed or made threats.

Ottawa police brought in specialized units, including at least one canine unit and explosives units..

A government web page says East Block houses the offices of Senators and their staff, but Parliament Hill is mostly quiet this month due to the federal election. Parliament has been dissolved since the election was called on March 23.

## **Angry protesters from New York to Alaska assail Trump and Musk in 'Hands Off!' rallies**

By DAVE COLLINS Associated Press

Crowds of people angry about the way President Donald Trump is running the country marched and rallied in scores of American cities Saturday in the biggest day of demonstrations yet by an opposition movement trying to regain its momentum after the shock of the Republican's first weeks in office.

So-called Hands Off! demonstrations were organized for more than 1,200 locations in all 50 states by more than 150 groups, including civil rights organizations, labor unions, LGBTQ+ advocates, veterans and elections activists. The rallies appeared peaceful, with no immediate reports of arrests.

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Thousands of protesters in cities dotting the nation from Midtown Manhattan to Anchorage, Alaska, including at multiple state capitols, assailed Trump and billionaire Elon Musk's actions on government downsizing, the economy, immigration and human rights. On the West Coast, in the shadow of Seattle's iconic Space Needle, protesters held signs with slogans like "Fight the oligarchy." Protesters chanted as they took to the streets in Portland, Oregon, and Los Angeles, where they marched from Pershing Square to City Hall.

Demonstrators voiced anger over the administration's moves to fire thousands of federal workers, close Social Security Administration field offices, effectively shutter entire agencies, deport immigrants, scale back protections for transgender people and cut funding for health programs.

Musk, a Trump adviser who runs Tesla, SpaceX and the social media platform X, has played a key role in the downsizing as the head of the newly created Department of Government Efficiency. He says he is saving taxpayers billions of dollars.

Asked about the protests, the White House said in a statement that "President Trump's position is clear: he will always protect Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid for eligible beneficiaries. Meanwhile, the Democrats' stance is giving Social Security, Medicaid, and Medicare benefits to illegal aliens, which will bankrupt these programs and crush American seniors."

Kelley Robinson, president of the Human Rights Campaign advocacy group, criticized the administration's treatment of the LGBTQ+ community at the rally at the National Mall in Washington, D.C., where Democratic members of Congress also took the stage.

"The attacks that we're seeing, they're not just political. They are personal, y'all," Robinson said. "They're trying to ban our books, they're slashing HIV prevention funding, they're criminalizing our doctors, our teachers, our families and our lives."

"We don't want this America, y'all," Robinson added. "We want the America we deserve, where dignity, safety and freedom belong not to some of us, but to all of us."

In Boston, demonstrators brandished signs such as "Hands off our democracy" and "Hands off our Social Security."

Mayor Michelle Wu said she does not want her children and others' to live in a world in which threats and intimidation are government tactics and values like diversity and equality are under attack.

"I refuse to accept that they could grow up in a world where immigrants like their grandma and grandpa are automatically presumed to be criminals," Wu said.

Roger Broom, 66, a retiree from Delaware County, Ohio, was one of hundreds who rallied at the Statehouse in Columbus. He said he used to be a Reagan Republican but has been turned off by Trump.

"He's tearing this country apart," Broom said. "It's just an administration of grievances."

Hundreds of people also demonstrated in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, a few miles from Trump's golf course in Jupiter, where he spent the morning at the club's Senior Club Championship. People lined both sides of PGA Drive, encouraging cars to honk and chanting slogans against Trump.

"They need to keep their hands off of our Social Security," said Archer Moran of Port St. Lucie, Florida.

"The list of what they need to keep their hands off of is too long," Moran said. "And it's amazing how soon these protests are happening since he's taken office."

The president golfed in Florida Saturday and planned to do so again Sunday, the White House said.

Activists have staged nationwide demonstrations against Trump and Musk multiple times since Trump returned to office. But before Saturday the opposition movement had yet to produce a mass mobilization like the Women's March in 2017, which brought thousands of women to Washington after Trump's first inauguration, or the Black Lives Matter demonstrations that erupted in multiple cities after George Floyd's killing by police in Minneapolis in 2020.

In Charlotte, North Carolina, protesters said they were supporting a variety of causes, from Social Security and education to immigration and women's reproductive rights.

"Regardless of your party, regardless of who you voted for, what's going on today, what's happening today is abhorrent," said Britt Castillo, 35, of Charlotte. "It's disgusting, and as broken as our current system



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might be, the way that the current administration is going about trying to fix things — it is not the way to do it. They're not listening to the people."

Among thousands marching through downtown San Jose, California, were Deborah and Douglas Doherty.

Deborah, a graphic designer, is a veteran of the 2017 Women's March and was nervous that fewer people have turned out against Trump this time. "All the cities need to show up," she said. "Now people are kind of numb to it, which is itself frightening."

## Alex Ovechkin ties Wayne Gretzky's NHL record with his 894th goal

By STEPHEN WHYNO AP Hockey Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Alex Ovechkin skated over to his son Sergei at the glass. He bowed to Wayne Gretzky standing in a suite. He blew kisses to his wife, mother and family on the other side of the arena.

In signature dramatic fashion, Ovechkin scored the 894th goal of his career — and second of the game — to tie Gretzky's NHL record and set off a wild celebration among his Washington Capitals teammates on the ice and in the stands of the only building he has called home for the past two decades.

"I'm still a little shaking and still can't believe it," Ovechkin said with Gretzky sitting beside him after Washington's 5-3 win over Chicago on Friday night. "It's history. It's great for the game. It's great to do it here. It's special."

Another special moment awaits if and when Ovechkin scores his 895th goal to break one of hockey's records that looked unbreakable. But the chance to celebrate at home with Capitals players past and present and match Gretzky made it a moment Ovechkin will never forget.

Neither will Gretzky, who along with Ovechkin is the league's co-leading goal-scorer for the time being.

"I can live with that for 24 more hours," Gretzky said. "I can still say I'm tied for the most."

Ovechkin scored No. 894 from his spot in the left faceoff circle on the power play on a pass from long-time teammate John Carlson with 13:47 left in the third period. The goal — his 41st of the season and record-setting 136th game-winner to break a tie with Jaromir Jagr — caused teammates to spill off the bench and mob Ovechkin in the corner of the rink.

"We kind of looked at each other just and said, 'Screw it, I'm going,'" winger Tom Wilson said. "It was just so cool to be a part of it as a group."

Ovechkin's goal song, "Shake, Rattle & Roll" by Big Joe Turner, blared from the speakers, and mascot Slapshot flipped the counter in one corner from 893 to 894 as fans rose to their feet and stayed there to applaud the accomplishment. The 39-year-old who has spent his entire career with Washington skated circles around center ice to implore for more, in between his emotional moments paying tribute to Gretzky and his family.

"That was awesome," said center Dylan Strome, who set up Ovechkin's 893rd goal. "Like, you're left speechless and they still got to play the game and try to find him for one more."

Amazingly, Ovechkin almost got another one. He had chances in the final 10 minutes and either missed the net or was denied by Spencer Knight, one of a record 182 different goaltenders he has scored on during his career.

"I just guess I'm glad he didn't get the last one," Knight said. "But, yeah, it's cool to see, it's great for the sport."

One way Ovechkin refused to get No. 895 was into an empty net. He told coach Spencer Carbery and others he wanted no part of passing Gretzky like that.

"He wants to break the record with a goaltender in the crease, which I appreciate," Carbery said. "He told me that on the bench, and I just wanted to confirm that he didn't want to go out. And it's hard for us as coaches because I just wanted to make sure in that moment: hat trick, at home. And he didn't want to go out and score on an empty net to break the record. We have six games left, and he wants to break the record and have that moment where he's shooting the puck past a goalie."

Afterward, Blackhawks players stayed on the ice to do a handshake line with Ovechkin, who gets his next chance to break the record Sunday at the New York Islanders.

"Obviously very classy by the Hawks organization what they did tonight for 'O' and it's as good as it gets," Wilson said. "We have more to look forward to hopefully, but this was an incredible night."

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## Trump goes all in with bet that the heavy price of tariffs will pay off for Americans

By ZEKE MILLER and STEVE PEOPLES Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Not even 24 hours after his party lost a key Wisconsin race and underperformed in Florida, President Donald Trump followed the playbook that has defined his political career: He doubled down.

Trump's move Wednesday to place stiff new tariffs on imports from nearly all U.S. trading partners marks an all-in bet by the Republican that his once-fringe economic vision will pay off for Americans. It was the realization of his four decades of advocacy for a protectionist foreign policy and the belief that free trade was forcing the United States into decline as its economy shifted from manufacturing to services.

The tariff announcement was the latest and perhaps boldest manifestation of Trump's second-term freedom to lead with his instincts after feeling his first turn in the Oval Office was restrained by aides who did not share his worldview. How it shakes out could be a defining judgment on his presidency.

The early reviews have been worrisome.

Financial markets had their worst week since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, foreign trade partners retaliated and economists warned that the import taxes may boost inflation and potentially send the U.S. into a recession. It's now Republican lawmakers who are fretting about their party's future while Democrats feel newly buoyant over what they see as Trump's overreach.

Democratic activists participated in rallies across the country Saturday in the largest demonstrations since Trump returned to office in January. "The winds are changing," said Rahna Epting, who leads MoveOn, one of many organizing groups.

Trump is unbowed.

He has promised that the taxes on imports will bring about a domestic manufacturing renaissance and help fund an extension of his 2017 tax cuts. He insisted Thursday as the Dow Jones fell by 1,600 points that things were "going very well" and the economy would "boom," then spent Friday at the golf course as the index plunged 2,200 more points.

The White House stayed the course Saturday. "This past November, America resoundingly rejected the business-as-usual policies coming out of D.C.," said White House spokesman Kush Desai, adding, "The entire Trump administration is aligned on delivering on President Trump's mandate to reject the status quo."

In his first term, Trump's tariff threats brought world leaders to his door to cut deals. This time, his actions so far have led to steep retaliation from China and promises from European allies to push back.

Even some Trump supporters are having their doubts.

Frank Amoroso, a 78-year-old resident of Dewitt, Michigan, said he is concerned about short-term rising interest rates and inflation, although he believes the tariffs will be good for the country in the long run.

Amoroso, a retired automotive engineer who voted for Trump, said he would give the president's second-term performance a C-plus or B-minus. "I think he's doing things too fast," he said. "But hopefully things will get done in a prudent way, and the economy will survive a little downfall."

Rep. French Hill, R-Ark., in a telephone town hall with constituents Thursday night, expressed reservations about the broad nature of the tariffs.

Hill, who represents a district that includes Little Rock, said he does not back tariffs on Canada and Mexico. He said the administration should instead focus on renegotiating a U.S. trade agreement with its two neighbors.

"I don't support across-the-board tariffs as a general matter, and so I don't support those, and I will be urging changes there because I don't think they will end up raising a bunch of revenue that's been asserted," Hill said. "I wish I thought they did, but personally I don't think they will. But I do support trade diplomacy."

Still, much of Trump's "Make America Great Again" coalition remains publicly supportive.

Doug Deason, a prominent Texas-based Republican donor, said he loves the president's tariff plan, even if it causes some economic disruption.

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"He told us during the election there would be pain for every American to get this ship turned around," Deason said. "It is hard to watch our portfolios deteriorate so much, but we get it. We hope he holds course."

As Trump struggles with the economy, Democrats are beginning to emerge from the cloud of doom that has consumed their party ever since their election drubbing in November.

They scored a decisive victory in Wisconsin's high-profile state Supreme Court election on Tuesday, even after Elon Musk and his affiliated groups poured more than \$20 million into the contest. New Jersey Sen. Cory Booker then breathed new life into the Democratic resistance by delivering a record 25-hour-long speech on the Senate floor that centered on a call for his party to find its resolve.

Booker told The Associated Press afterward that a significant political shift has begun even as his party tries to learn from its mistakes in the 2024 presidential election.

"I think you're seeing a lot more energy, a lot more determination, a lot more feeling like we've got to fight," Booker said. "You can't sit back any more. You can't sit on the sidelines. There's a larger, growing movement."

Booker, a 2020 presidential candidate, acknowledged he is not ruling out a 2028 run, although he said he is focused on his 2026 Senate reelection for now.

There is broad agreement among Democrats — and even some Republicans, privately at least — that what Trump has unleashed on the global economy could help accelerate the Democratic comeback.

Ezra Levin, co-founder of the progressive resistance group known as Indivisible, has been critical of Democratic officials' response in recent weeks to Trump's leadership. But on Friday, he was somewhat giddy about the political consequences for Trump's GOP after the tariffs announcement.

"Raising prices across the board for your constituents is not popular," Levin said. "It's the kind of thing that can lead to a 1932-style total generational wipe out of a party."

## **The Latest: Elon Musk says he hopes for zero tariffs with Europe someday**

By The Associated Press undefined

U.S. President Donald Trump's big raise in tariffs has triggered an escalating trade war and sent global markets plummeting.

The S&P 500 fell 6% Friday, the Dow Jones Industrial Average plunged 5.5% and the Nasdaq composite dropped 5.8%.

China announced Friday that it will impose a 34% tax on all U.S. imports next week, part of a flurry of retaliatory measures to Trump's new tariffs.

Trump has doubled down on his commitment to tariffs, maintaining that his new levies will bring trillions of dollars of investment to the U.S. while also criticizing other countries' retaliatory measures.

Here's the latest:

Elon Musk says he hopes for zero tariffs with Europe someday

Billionaire Elon Musk told Italy League leader Matteo Salvini on Saturday that he hoped in the future the U.S. and Europe could create "a very close, stronger partnership" and reach a "zero-tariff zone."

Musk spoke to Salvini in a video conference during the League's congress in Florence. Salvini is the leader of the far-right, anti-migrant League party and vice premier of the Italian conservative government led by Premier Giorgia Meloni.

He said that, ideally, there will be a "zero-tariff zone in the future with a free trade zone between Europe and North America."

Musk, an adviser to President Donald Trump who owns Tesla, SpaceX and the social media platform X, has played a key role in government downsizing as the head of the newly created Department of Government Efficiency.

British and French leaders discuss fallout from Trump's tariffs



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Prime Minister Keir Starmer and French President Emmanuel Macron agreed Saturday that a trade war was in no one's interest as they discussed the fallout from the sweeping tariffs announced earlier this week by President Donald Trump.

Starmer and Macron discussed the global economic and security impact of the tariffs, particularly in Southeast Asia, Starmer's office said in a statement released after a phone call between the two leaders.

"They agreed that a trade war was in nobody's interests, but nothing should be off the table and that it was important to keep business updated on developments," the statement said.

The leaders also discussed efforts to build a coalition of countries willing to support Ukraine in its war against Russia and provide peacekeeping forces in the event a ceasefire is reached.

"Following discussions between military planners in Ukraine this week, they discussed the good progress that has been made on the Coalition of the Willing," the statement said.

Some of Trump's new tariffs have taken effect

The baseline 10% levy announced by Trump this week kicked in at 12:01 a.m. Saturday ET (0401 GMT), triggering customs agents' collections at ports of entry across the U.S.

Countries targeted by Trump for higher tariffs are due to go in effect on Wednesday. Those include assessments as high as 50% for Lesotho, 49% for Cambodia and 47% for Madagascar.

In an all-caps social media post Saturday, Trump insisted: "THIS IS AN ECONOMIC REVOLUTION, AND WE WILL WIN."

Public reaction hasn't been so confident, with stock markets slumping since the tariff announcement.

China spokesman takes a jab at Trump administration

China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun posted on his Facebook page a screen saving showing the Dow Jones, S&P 500 and Nasdaq all declining by more than 5% on Friday, with the commentary, "The market has spoken."

"The trade and tariff war started by the U.S. against the world is unprovoked and unjustified," Guo wrote. "Now is the time for the U.S. to stop doing the wrong things and resolve the differences with trading partners through equal-footed consultation."

China lashes out at US over tariffs, calling it a weapon to seek private interests

China on Saturday night heaped more criticism on the U.S. tariffs, saying they had "seriously infringed upon the legitimate rights and interests of all countries, seriously violated the rules of the World Trade Organization, seriously damaged the rules-based multilateral trading system, and severely impacted the stability of the global economic order."

The U.S. "uses tariffs as a weapon to exert extreme pressure and seek private interests. This is a typical act of unilateralism, protectionism and economic bullying," said the statement, attributed to the Chinese government and carried by the official Xinhua News Agency.

"The Chinese people believe in treating others with sincerity and taking trust as the basis. We do not provoke trouble, but we are not afraid of trouble. Pressure and threats are not the right way to deal with China. China has and will continue to take firm measures to safeguard its sovereignty, security and development interests," the statement said.

It said China would continue to promote "high-level opening-up" rather than closing its economy with even higher tariffs.

"Economic globalization is the inevitable path for the development of human society," it said. "The world needs justice, not tyranny!"

Jaguar and Land Rover pause shipments to US

The British maker of Jaguar and Land Rover cars is pausing shipments to the U.S. as it works to mitigate the impact of a 25% tax on vehicle imports imposed by the Trump administration.

Jaguar Land Rover Automotive, one of Britain's biggest carmakers, said Saturday that the pause would take place this month.

"The USA is an important market for JLR's luxury brands," the company said in a statement. "As we work to address the new trading terms with our business partners, we are taking some short-term actions

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including a shipment pause in April, as we develop our mid-to-longer term plans.”

The U.K. automotive industry is expected to be hard hit by the new tariffs, which come at a time when British carmakers are struggling with declining demand at home and the need to retool their plants for the transition to electric vehicles.

Trump says China has been hit harder by tariffs

President Donald Trump on Saturday morning posted on his Truth Social media site that China has been negatively impacted by tariffs “much harder than the USA, not even close.”

Newly announced U.S. tariffs on nations around the world, including 34% tariffs on China, have sent stock markets reeling for days. China has vowed to match the rate that Trump imposed.

On Saturday Trump was at his golf course in Jupiter, Florida. It’s his first time visiting the club since his second term started. Spotted in his motorcade, in his signature red MAGA hat and white polo shirt, Trump was reading a tabloid article about China’s response to U.S. tariffs.

“They, and many other nations, have treated us unsustainably badly,” Trump said on Truth Social. “We have been the dumb and helpless “whipping post,” but not any longer.”

Italy’s economy minister cautions against retaliatory tariffs

Italian Economy Minister Giancarlo Giorgetti warned that imposing retaliatory tariffs on the United States would be damaging for both Italy and Europe.

Speaking at a business forum in Cernobbio, near Milan, Giorgetti said Saturday that Italy is working for a “de-escalation” with the U.S. following Trump’s announcement of a general tariff of 20% on European Union countries.

“We should avoid launching a policy of counter-tariffs that could be damaging for everyone and especially for us,” Giorgetti said. “Our message is that we need to avoid pushing the panic button. ... We are following a pragmatic and rational approach.”

Giorgetti proposed the EU allow member states to raise spending by relaxing the bloc’s fiscal rules.

Italy has a very limited budget leeway, as the government forecast its giant debt rising through 2026 to almost 138% of GDP.

“The Italian public debt means reduced budget room for our country, a constraint that must be taken into account in any decisions we make,” Giorgetti said, also referring to EU plans to increase defense spending.

Taiwan will provide support for industries hit by tariffs

Taiwan’s says it will provide a \$2.65 billion fund to aid industries most affected by U.S. tariffs.

Taiwan has a trade surplus with the U.S., but much of it comes from Taiwanese industries trying to fulfill the U.S. demand for Taiwan’s information technology products. Officials say Taiwan plans to negotiate with the U.S. on how the new tariff rate of 32% was determined and try to get a better deal.

Premier Cho Jung-tai has been charged with working closely with industries that are impacted and to communicate the public about their plans to stabilize the economy. Cho said Friday that electronics and information technology, steel and metal, machinery, auto parts, construction materials and home appliances will feel “significant impacts.”

In the agricultural field, moth orchids, edamame and such fish as tilapia, common dolphinfish and bass will be hit the hardest, he said.

## **Trump and Netanyahu will meet again Monday on Gaza, tariffs and more**

By FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

PALM BEACH GARDENS, Fla. (AP) — President Donald Trump plans to meet with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday in what would be their second White House sit-down since Trump’s return to office.

The visit, confirmed by a White House official and Netanyahu’s office Saturday, comes as Israel deploys troops in a new security corridor across Gaza to pressure the Hamas militant group. Netanyahu’s defense minister has said Israel will seize large areas of the territory and add them to its so-called security zones.

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Last month, Israel shattered the ceasefire with a surprise bombardment in Gaza after trying to pressure Hamas to accept proposed new terms for the ceasefire, a move supported by the White House. Hundreds of Palestinians have since been killed.

Israel has pledged to escalate the war in Gaza until Hamas returns the remaining hostages seized in the Oct. 7, 2023, attack that sparked the war, disarms and leaves the territory. Israel also has halted all supplies of food, fuel and humanitarian aid into Gaza.

Netanyahu's office in a statement on social media said he and Trump would discuss "the tariff issue, the efforts to return our hostages, Israel-Turkey relations, the Iranian threat and the battle against the International Criminal Court." Israel faces a 17% tariff.

Netanyahu is wanted by the court for alleged crimes against humanity in Gaza. The U.S. is not a member of the court.

In February, Netanyahu became the first foreign leader invited to the White House during Trump's second term. Their meeting focused on Israel's war with Hamas and the next steps as a ceasefire deal took hold.

At a joint news conference afterward, Trump made the surprise proposal that displaced Palestinians in Gaza be permanently resettled outside the territory and the United States take "ownership" in redeveloping the area into "the Riviera of the Middle East." Palestinians objected to leaving their homeland, and Arab nations and rights groups sharply criticized the idea.

That February meeting gave Netanyahu a chance to remind the world of the Trump administration's support for Israel, defend the conduct of the war and distract from political pressures back home.

Those pressures have only grown as Israelis protest both the lack of a deal to bring remaining hostages home from Gaza and Netanyahu's moves to fire the head of the country's domestic security agency and its attorney general. He also faces calls to accept responsibility for his role in failing to prevent the Oct. 7. attack.

In a statement Saturday, relatives of hostages held in Gaza pleaded with Trump to "please use all your power to pressure Netanyahu to end this war and bring our hostages back now."

"We are addressing President Trump: Netanyahu is lying when he says that military pressure will bring back the abductees. The only way to quickly return all the abductees is to end the war and return them all in one fell swoop," Ifat Calderon, aunt of hostage Ofer Calderon, said in Tel Aviv, Israel.

Hamas says 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 from Gaza.

The Oct. 7 attack on southern Israel killed about 1,200 people, mostly civilians. Some 251 hostages were taken, most of them since released in ceasefire agreements and other deals.

More than 50,000 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza as part of Israel's offensive, 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.

Meanwhile, police arrested two of Netanyahu's close associates this week on suspicion of accepting money from Qatar to promote a positive image of the Gulf Arab state in Israel. Qatar is a key mediator for Hamas in its negotiations with Israel but denies backing the militant group. Netanyahu says the case is baseless.

The prime minister is also the subject of a long-running corruption trial and regularly rails against a "deep state" that he alleges is out to get him.

Trump says the first foreign trip of his second administration will include stops in Saudi Arabia, Qatar and possibly the United Arab Emirates, and "other places." The trip could come as soon as May. Trump has said he wants to reward Saudi Arabia for its investment in the U.S. and that all three Gulf countries would be making commitments to creating jobs in the U.S. during his trip.

## **Judge awards \$6.6 million to whistleblowers who reported Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton to FBI**

By NADIA LATHAN Associated Press/Report for America

A district court judge on Friday awarded more than \$6 million combined to four whistleblowers in their



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lawsuit against Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton who were fired shortly after they reported him to the FBI.

"By a preponderance of the evidence," Travis County Judge Catherine Mauzy says in her judgment, the plaintiffs proved liability, damages and attorney's fees in their complaint against the attorney general's office.

"Because the Office of the Attorney General violated the Texas Whistleblower Act by firing and otherwise retaliating against the plaintiff for in good faith reporting violations of law by Ken Paxton and OAG, the court hereby renders judgment for plaintiffs," Mauzy states.

The court found that the four Paxton aides were fired in retaliation for reporting allegations that he was using his office to accept bribes from an Austin real estate developer who employed a woman with whom he was having an extramarital affair. Paxton has denied accepting bribes or misusing his office to help Nate Paul, the real estate developer.

The judgment also stated that the employees made their reports to law enforcement "in good faith" and that Paxton's office did not dispute any claims or damages in the lawsuit.

"It should shock all Texans that their chief law enforcement officer, Ken Paxton, admitted to violating the law, but that is exactly what happened in this case," said Tom Nesbitt, an attorney for Blake Brickman, and TJ Turner, an attorney for David Maxwell, in a joint statement Friday evening.

In a statement to the media that night, Paxton called the ruling "ridiculous" and "not based on the facts or the law." He also said that his office intends to appeal the ruling.

Paxton was at the center of a federal investigation after eight employees reported his office to the FBI in 2020 for bribery allegations. He agreed to settle the lawsuit for \$3.3 million that would be paid by the Legislature. However, the House rejected his request and conducted its own investigation and impeached Paxton in 2023. He was later acquitted in the Senate.

In November, the Texas Supreme Court overturned a lower-court ruling that Paxton testify in the lawsuit.

The U.S. Justice Department decided not to pursue its investigation into Paxton in the final weeks of the Biden administration, according to two people familiar with the matter who spoke to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations.

## Phone footage appears to contradict Israel's account in troops' killing of 15 Palestinian medics

By EDITH M. LEDERER, WAFAA SHURAFU and LEE KEATH Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Phone video from one of 15 Palestinian medics killed by Israeli forces last month appears to contradict Israeli claims that the medics' vehicles did not have emergency signals on when troops opened fire on them in southern Gaza.

The footage shows the Red Crescent and Civil Defense teams driving slowly with their emergency vehicles' lights flashing, logos visible, as they pulled up to help an ambulance that had come under fire earlier. The teams do not appear to be acting unusually or in a threatening manner as three medics emerge and head toward the stricken ambulance.

Their vehicles immediately come under a barrage of gunfire, which goes on for more than five minutes with brief pauses. The owner of the phone can be heard praying.

"Forgive me, mother. This is the path I chose, mother, to help people," he cries, his voice weak.

Eight Red Crescent personnel, six Civil Defense workers and a U.N. staffer were killed in the shooting before dawn on March 23 by Israeli troops conducting operations in Tel al-Sultan, a district of the southern Gaza city of Rafah. Troops then bulldozed over the bodies along with their mangled vehicles, burying them in a mass grave. U.N. and rescue workers were only able to reach the site a week later to dig out the bodies.

The Palestinian Red Crescent Society's vice president, Marwan Jilani, said the phone with the footage was found in the pocket of one of its slain staffers. The Palestinian ambassador to the United Nations distributed the video to the U.N. Security Council. The Associated Press obtained the video from a U.N. diplomat on condition of anonymity because it has not been made public.

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One paramedic who survived, Munzer Abed, confirmed the veracity of the video to the AP. Two block-shaped concrete structures visible in the video are also seen in a U.N. video released Sunday showing the recovery of the bodies from the site — a sign they are in the same location.

Asked about the video, the Israeli military said Saturday that the incident was “under thorough examination.”

One medic remains missing

The Israeli military earlier said it opened fire on the vehicles because they were “advancing suspiciously” on nearby troops without headlights or emergency signals.

The initial account of the vehicles not having emergency lights on was mistaken, an Israeli military official told journalists Saturday evening. The official spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations.

The head of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society, Younes Al-Khatib, called for an independent investigation. “We don’t trust any of the army investigations,” he told a briefing at the U.N. on Friday.

One medic, Assaad al-Nassasra, is still missing, the Red Crescent says. Abed said he saw al-Nassasra being led away blindfolded by Israeli troops. Al-Khatib said the organization has asked the military where it is holding the staffer.

Al-Khatib said the slain men had been “targeted at close range” and that a forensic autopsy report would be released soon.

Israel has accused Hamas of moving and hiding its fighters inside ambulances and emergency vehicles, as well as in hospitals and other civilian infrastructure, arguing that justifies strikes on them. Medical personnel largely deny the accusations.

Israeli strikes have killed more than 150 emergency responders from the Red Crescent and Civil Defense, most of them while on duty, as well as over 1,000 health workers, according to the U.N. The Israeli military rarely investigates such incidents.

Ambulances under a barrage of Israeli fire

Ambulances started heading to Tel al-Sultan at around 3:50 a.m. on March 23, responding to reports of wounded, Jilani said. The first ambulance returned safely with at least one casualty, he said. But, he said, subsequent ambulances came under fire.

His hands trembling, Abed told the AP on Saturday that as his ambulance entered the area, its siren lights were on. “All of a sudden, I am telling you, there was direct shooting at us,” so intense that the vehicle ground to a stop, he said.

A 10-year veteran of the Red Crescent, Abed said he was sitting in the back seat and ducked to the floor. He said he could hear nothing from his two colleagues in the front seat — the only others in the vehicle. They appear to have been killed instantly.

Israeli troops, some with night goggles, dragged Abed out of the ambulance and onto the ground, he said. They made him strip to his underwear, beat him all over his body with their rifle butts, then tied his hands behind his back, he said.

They interrogated him, asking him about his paramedic training and how many people were in the ambulance with him, he said. One soldier pressed the muzzle of his automatic rifle into his neck. Another pressed his knife blade into Abed’s palm, almost cutting it, until a third soldier pulled them away and warned Abed, “They’re crazy.”

Abed said he witnessed them opening fire on the next vehicles to arrive. Soldiers forced him onto his stomach and pressed a gun into his back, he said, and amid the shooting in the darkness, so he could only see two Civil Defense vehicles.

Video shows medic’s terror

The phone video shows a rescue convoy of Red Crescent and Civil Defense vehicles that was sent out after contact was lost with the stricken ambulance. Taken from the dashboard of one vehicle, it shows several ambulances and a fire truck moving down a road through a barren area in the darkness. The emergency lights on their roofs are flashing the entire way.

They arrive at an ambulance on the side of the road and stop next to it, their lights still flashing. No

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Israeli troops are visible.

"Lord, let them be OK," a man in the car says. Then he cries out, "They're tossed around on the ground!" — apparently referring to bodies. Three men in orange Civil Defense clothing can be seen getting out of the vehicles and walking toward the stopped ambulance.

A shot rings out and one of the men appears to fall. Gunfire erupts.

The man holding the phone appears to scramble out of the car and onto the ground, but the screen goes black, though the audio continues. The gunfire goes on for nearly five and a half minutes, with long, heavy barrages followed by silences punctuated by individual shots and shouts and screams.

Throughout, the man with the phone says over and over, "There is no God but God and Muhammad is God's prophet" — the profession of faith that Muslims say when they fear they are about to die. Near the end of the six-minute, 40-second video, voices can be heard shouting in Hebrew. "The Jews are coming," the man said, referring to Israeli soldiers, before the video cuts off.

The Israeli military official asserted there was "no mistreatment," and said he didn't know why the vehicles had been buried. He had no information about the medic who remained missing.

Israel claims they found militants afterward

The Israeli military says that after the shooting, troops determined they had killed a Hamas figure named Mohammed Amin Shobaki and eight other militants. However, none of the 15 slain medics has that name, and no other bodies are known to have been found at the site.

The military has not said what happened to Shobaki's body or released the names of the other alleged militants. The Israeli military official said Israel was "working to bring evidence" that Hamas operatives were killed.

Jonathan Whittall, interim head in Gaza of the U.N. humanitarian office OCHA, dismissed allegations that the slain medics were Hamas militants, saying staff had worked with the same medics previously in evacuating patients from hospitals and other tasks.

"These are paramedic crews that I personally have met before," he said. "They were buried in their uniforms with their gloves on. They were ready to save lives."

## Israeli troops deploy to a new security corridor across southern Gaza

By NATALIE MELZER Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Israeli troops deployed to a newly established security corridor across southern Gaza, the military announced Saturday, as pressure on the Hamas militant group increased weeks into the renewed war.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Wednesday announced the new Morag Corridor and suggested it would cut off the southern city of Rafah, which Israel had ordered evacuated, from the rest of Gaza.

A military statement said troops with the 36th Division had been deployed. It was not immediately clear how many, or where exactly the new corridor was located. Morag is the name of a Jewish settlement that once stood between Rafah and Khan Younis, and Netanyahu had suggested it would run between the cities.

Maps published by Israeli media showed the corridor running the width of the narrow coastal strip from east to west.

Netanyahu had said it would be "a second Philadelphi corridor," referring to the Gaza side of the border with Egypt farther south, which has been under Israeli control since last May.

Last month, Israel shattered a ceasefire in Gaza with a surprise bombardment after trying to pressure Hamas to accept proposed new terms for the truce that had taken hold in January. Hundreds of Palestinians have been killed.

Israel quickly reasserted control over the Netzarim corridor that cuts off the northern third of Gaza, including Gaza City, from the rest of the strip. The Philadelphi and Netzarim 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



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our hostages," Netanyahu said Wednesday. His defense minister has said Israel would seize large areas of Gaza and add them to its so-called security zones.

Saturday's announcement came shortly after a White House official confirmed that Netanyahu on Monday would again meet with President Donald Trump, their second meeting at the White House since Trump took office in January. The U.S. has been a mediator in ceasefire talks, along with Egypt and Qatar, but also supported Israel's resumption of fighting.

Following his previous meeting with Netanyahu, Trump made the surprise proposal that displaced Palestinians in Gaza be permanently resettled outside the territory and he suggested that the United States take "ownership" in redeveloping the area. Palestinians, Arab nations and rights groups sharply criticized the idea.

Israel has pledged to escalate the fighting with Hamas until the militant group returns the remaining hostages taken in the Oct. 7, 2023, attack that sparked the war, disarms and leaves the territory.

Israel last month again halted all supplies of food, fuel and humanitarian aid to Gaza in another application of pressure on the militant group and the territory's over 2 million Palestinians. Rights groups say the tactic is a war crime. Gaza relies largely on humanitarian aid, and its residents cannot easily leave.

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

The Oct. 7 attack on southern Israel killed about 1,200 people, mostly civilians. Some 251 hostages were taken, most of them released in ceasefire agreements and other deals.

More than 50,000 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza during Israel's offensive, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. It doesn't say whether they are civilians or combatants but says the majority have been women and children. Israel says it has killed around 20,000 militants, without providing evidence.

Among Gaza's dead are 15 Palestinian medics killed last month by Israeli forces, who then bulldozed over the bodies along with their mangled vehicles, burying them in a mass grave.

The war is the deadliest and most destructive fighting ever between Israel and Hamas. It has left much of Gaza devastated and most of its residents displaced, often multiple times.

Families of hostages at their weekly rally again pleaded for a ceasefire deal to bring everyone home from Gaza, alive or dead.

"Netanyahu is working hard to ensure our hostages die, rather than working hard to save their lives," said Efrat Machikawa, niece of hostage Gadi Moses.

## **NY public schools tell Trump administration they won't comply with DEI order**

By DAVE COLLINS Associated Press

New York state officials have told the Trump administration that they will not comply with its demands to end diversity, equity and inclusion practices in public schools, despite the administration's threats to terminate federal education funding.

Daniel Morton-Bentley, counsel and deputy commissioner of the state Department of Education, said in a letter dated Friday to the federal Education Department that state officials do not believe the federal agency has the authority to make such demands.

"We understand that the current administration seeks to censor anything it deems 'diversity, equity & inclusion,'" he wrote. "But there are no federal or State laws prohibiting the principles of DEI."

Morton-Bentley also wrote state officials were "unaware" of any authority the federal Department of Education has to demand that states agree with its interpretation of court decisions or to terminate funding without a formal administrative process.

The U.S. Department of Education did not immediately respond to emailed requests for comment.

The Trump administration on Thursday ordered K-12 schools nationwide to certify within 10 days that they are following federal civil rights laws and ending any discriminatory DEI practices, as a condition for receiv-

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ing federal money. Federal funding comprises about 6% of the total funding for New York K-12 schools. "Federal financial assistance is a privilege, not a right," Craig Trainor, acting assistant secretary for civil rights, said in a statement when the demand was made. He said many schools have flouted their legal obligations, "including by using DEI programs to discriminate against one group of Americans to favor another."

The certification demand asked state and school leaders to sign a "reminder of legal obligations" acknowledging their federal money is conditioned on compliance with federal civil rights laws. It also demands compliance with several pages of legal analysis written by the administration.

The demand specifically threatens Title I funding, which sends billions of dollars a year to America's schools and targets low-income areas.

Morton-Bentley wrote that the state Education Department has already certified to the federal government on multiple occasions that it is complying with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, most recently in January. He said the federal department is basing its demands to end DEI programs on a faulty legal interpretation.

"Given the fact that you are already in possession of guarantees by NYSED that it has and will comply with Title VI, no further certification will be forthcoming," he wrote.

He also said the administration's stance is an "abrupt shift" from the one taken by the first Trump administration, citing comments in 2020 made by then-U.S. Education Secretary Betsy DeVos that diversity and inclusion were "cornerstones of high organizational performance." He wrote the administration has provided no explanation of why it changed positions.

Critics of the certification demand said it conflicted with Trump's promise to return education to schools and states.

The threat of financial sanctions is similar to ones the Trump administration has been leveraging against colleges in its effort to crack down on protests against Israel that it deems antisemitic.

New York state has similarly refused to comply with a demand by the Trump administration to shut down a program to fund mass transit in New York City with high tolls on cars that drive into Manhattan.

## **Zelenskyy meets European military leaders to plan for a peacekeeping force**

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy met the leaders of the British and French armed forces in Kyiv Saturday to discuss the potential deployment of a multinational peacekeeping force to Ukraine, despite the reluctance of U.S. President Donald Trump to provide security guarantees.

The U.K. Ministry of Defense said that officials addressed the structure, size and composition of any future "reassurance force," while the chief of the defense staff, Adm. Antony Radakin, emphasized that the U.K. would look to "build on the formidable capabilities of the Ukrainian army and put them in the strongest possible position to deter Russian aggression."

The weekend discussions are planned to set the ground for a further meeting between defense ministers in Brussels and the Ukraine Defense Contact Group on Friday.

Britain has been promoting the idea of a European-led peacekeeping force for Ukraine in the event of a ceasefire but it has said such a force needed a U.S. "backstop" to make it credible in the face of possible Russian reprisals.

Building a force big enough to act as a credible deterrent — U.K. officials have talked about possibly 10,000 to 30,000 troops — would be a considerable effort for nations that shrank their militaries after the Cold War but are now rearming.

Trump, who has been pushing for a ceasefire in the war in Ukraine, temporarily paused military aid to Kyiv and has repeatedly said that the country will never join the NATO military alliance.

Death toll from Friday's strike rises to 18

The death toll from a Russian missile strike in the central Ukrainian city of Kryvyi Rih has risen to 18, including nine children, regional Governor Serhii Lysak said Saturday.

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A further 72 people were injured in Friday's attack, the youngest a 3-month-old. About half of them remained in the hospital, with 17 in serious condition.

"There can never be forgiveness for this," said Oleksandr Vilkul, head of the city's defense council. "Eternal memory to the victims."

Kyryvi Rih is Zelenskyy's hometown.

"The missile struck an area right next to residential buildings — hitting a playground and ordinary streets," Zelenskyy wrote on Telegram.

Local authorities said the strike damaged about 20 apartment buildings, more than 30 vehicles, an educational building and a restaurant.

The Russian Defense Ministry claimed Friday that it had carried out a high-precision missile strike with a high explosive warhead on a restaurant where a meeting with unit commanders and Western instructors was taking place.

Russian military claimed that the strike killed 85 military personnel and foreign officers and destroyed 20 vehicles. The military's claims could not be independently verified. The Ukrainian General Staff rejected the claims.

A later drone strike on Kyryvi Rih killed one woman and wounded seven other people.

Russian forces launched 92 drones into Ukraine overnight, with 51 shot down by air defenses, the Ukrainian air force wrote on social media Saturday. A further 31 decoy drones also failed to reach their targets, it said.

Elsewhere, one person died Saturday in the Russian-occupied town of Horlivka in Ukraine's Donetsk region due to shelling, Moscow-installed Gov. Denis Pushilin said. Security officials told Russian state news channels that they had destroyed 28 Ukrainian drones over the Donetsk region overnight, marking the first time that the occupied territory had been targeted by such long-range strikes.

Zelenskyy criticizes US ambassador's response

Zelenskyy blamed the daily strikes on Russia's unwillingness to end the war: "Every missile, every drone strike proves Russia wants only war," he said, urging Ukraine's allies to increase pressure on Moscow and bolster Ukraine's air defenses.

He also criticized the response of the U.S. Embassy in Kyiv to the strike. Ambassador Bridget A. Brink posted on social media Friday that she was "horrified" by the strike in Kyryvi Rih. "More than 50 people injured and 16 killed, including 6 children. This is why the war must end," the post said.

Zelenskyy, who has so far had a strained relationship with U.S. President Donald Trump, described the post as "unpleasantly surprising" for not directly naming Russia as the perpetrator of the attack.

"Such a strong country, such a strong people — and such a weak reaction. They are even afraid to say the word 'Russian' when talking about the missile that killed children," he said in a post that also praised countries including Japan, Britain, Switzerland and Germany for their "principled statements."

"Yes, the war must end. But in order to end it, we must not be afraid to call a spade a spade," he said.

## **Senate GOP approves framework for Trump's tax breaks and spending cuts after late-night session**

By LISA MASCARO, LEAH ASKARINAM and KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senate Republicans plugged away overnight and into early Saturday morning to approve their multitrillion-dollar tax breaks and spending cuts framework, hurtling past Democratic opposition toward what President Donald Trump calls the "big, beautiful bill" that's central to his agenda.

The vote, 51-48, fell along mostly party lines, but with sharp dissent from two prominent Republicans. It could not have come at a more difficult political moment, with the economy churning after Trump's new tariffs sent stocks plummeting and experts warning of soaring costs for consumers and threats of a potential recession. Republican Sens. Susan Collins of Maine and Rand Paul of Kentucky both voted against the measure.

But with a nod from Trump, GOP leaders held on. Approval paves the way for Republicans in the months



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ahead to try to power a tax cut bill through both chambers of Congress over the objections of Democrats, just as they did in Trump's first term with unified party control in Washington.

"Let the voting begin," Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., said Friday night.

Democrats were intent on making the effort as politically painful as possible, with action on some two dozen amendments to the package that GOP senators will have to defend before next year's midterm elections.

Among them were proposals to ban tax breaks for the super-wealthy, end Trump's tariffs, clip his efforts to shrink the federal government, and protect Medicaid, Social Security and other services. One, in response to the Trump national security team's use of Signal, sought to prohibit military officials from using any commercial messaging application to transmit war plans. They all failed, though a GOP amendment to protect Medicare and Medicaid was accepted.

Democrats accused Republicans of laying the groundwork for cutting key safety net programs to help pay for more than \$5 trillion tax cuts they say disproportionately benefit the rich.

"Trump's policies are a disaster," said Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer of New York, as is Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency, he added. "Republicans could snuff it out tonight, if they wanted."

The Republicans framed their work as preventing a tax increase for most American families, arguing that unless Congress acts, the individual and estate tax cuts that GOP lawmakers passed in 2017 will expire at the end of this year.

The Senate package pulls in other GOP priorities, including \$175 billion to bolster Trump's mass deportation effort, which is running short of cash, and an additional \$175 billion for the Pentagon to build up the military, from an earlier budget effort.

Wyoming Sen. John Barrasso, the No. 2 ranking Republican, said voters gave his party a mission in November, and the Senate's budget plan delivers.

"It fulfills our promises to secure the border, to rebuild our economy and to restore peace through strength," Barrasso said.

The framework now goes to the House, where Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., could bring it up for a vote as soon as next week as he works toward a final product by Memorial Day.

The House and Senate need to resolve their differences. The House's version has \$4.5 trillion in tax breaks over 10 years and some \$2 trillion in budget cuts, and pointed at changes to Medicaid, food stamps and other programs. Some House Republicans have panned the Senate's approach.

Republican senators used their majority to swat back Democratic amendments, often in rambunctious voice votes.

Among the more than two dozen amendments offered were several to protect safety net programs. Several Republicans, including Sen. Josh Hawley of Missouri, joined Democrats in voting to preserve some of those programs, particularly regarding health care. Collins opposed the entire package in a warning against steep Medicaid cuts.

Collins said the potential reductions for that health program in the House bill "would be very detrimental to a lot of families and disabled individuals and seniors in my state."

Paul questioned the math being used by his colleagues that he said would pile on the debt load. "Something's fishy," he said.

One Republican, Sen. Bill Cassidy of Louisiana, expressed his own misgivings about tax breaks adding to the federal deficits and said he has assurances that Trump officials would seek the cuts elsewhere.

"This vote isn't taking place in a vacuum," he said, a nod to the turmoil over Trump's tariffs.

One crucial challenge ahead will be for the House to accept the way the Senate's budget plan allows for extending the tax cuts under a scoring method that treats them as not adding to future deficits, something many House Republicans reject. A new estimate from the Joint Committee on Taxation projects the tax breaks will add \$5.5 trillion over the next decade when including interest, and \$4.6 trillion not including interest.

On top of that, the senators added an additional \$1.5 trillion that would allow some of Trump's campaign

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promises, such as no taxes on tips, Social Security benefits and overtime, swelling the overall the price tag to \$7 trillion.

Republicans are also looking to increase the \$10,000 deduction for state and local taxes, something that lawmakers from states such as New York, California and New Jersey say is necessary for their support.

The House and Senate are also at odds over increasing the debt limit to allow more borrowing. The House had boosted the debt limit by \$4 trillion in its plan, but the Senate upped it to \$5 trillion to push any further votes on the matter until after next year's midterm elections.

The Senate calls for just \$4 billion in spending cuts, but GOP leadership emphasizes that's a low floor and that committees will be on the hunt for far more.

Already, the GOP leaders are confronting concerns from fiscal hawks who want trillions of dollars in spending cuts to help pay for the tax breaks. At the same time, dozens of lawmakers in swing districts and states are worried about what those cuts will mean for their constituents, and for their reelection chances.

The GOP leadership has encouraged members to just get a budget plan over the finish line, saying they have time to work out the tough questions of which tax breaks and spending cuts to include.

Extending the the 2017 breaks would cut taxes for about three-quarters of households but raise them for about 10%. In 2027, about 45% of the benefit of all the tax cuts would go to those making roughly \$450,000 or more, according to the Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center, which analyzes tax issues.

## **Carmelo Anthony, Dwight Howard and Sue Bird highlight Basketball Hall of Fame class**

By TIM REYNOLDS AP Basketball Writer

Carmelo Anthony and Dwight Howard are going into the Basketball Hall of Fame later this year, not once but twice. And LeBron James and Chris Paul are part of the group that's headed to the Hall as well, even before their playing careers end.

Anthony and Howard were announced Saturday as members of the Class of 2025, as was the 2008 U.S. Olympic men's basketball team that they played on — dubbed the "Redeem Team," the one that captured gold at the Beijing Games and started a still-going run of five consecutive Olympic titles and counting for USA Basketball's men's program.

Also selected for enshrinement: WNBA greats Sue Bird, Maya Moore and Sylvia Fowles, Chicago Bulls coach and two-time NCAA champion Billy Donovan, Miami Heat managing general partner Micky Arison and longtime NBA referee Danny Crawford.

"I made it to the real basketball heaven," Howard said. "It's crazy."

Enshrinement weekend is Sept. 5-6 at the Mohegan Sun in Uncasville, Connecticut, and the Hall of Fame in Springfield, Massachusetts.

"When the call comes and in my case, I saw Springfield on the phone," Anthony said on the televised announcement. "You know what time it is Springfield is on the phone. You know who it is. You get the phone call and you hear, 'You're in.' And I think for me, it was a burden off of my shoulders."

Donovan won back-to-back titles as a college coach with Florida. Arison oversaw Miami's path to NBA titles in 2006, 2012 and 2013. Crawford worked NBA games for 32 seasons and was picked to work the NBA Finals in 23 of those years.

"For some, this is an individual honor," Arison said. "But for me, this speaks to what our entire Heat family — players, coaches, staff and fans — have built together."

Combined, the five players selected as individuals — Bird, Moore, Fowles, Howard and Anthony — were part of 11 WNBA or NBA championship teams, won 15 Olympic gold medals, made 37 All-NBA or All-WNBA appearances and were named as All-Stars 45 times in their careers.

"Surreal," Bird said of her selection. "I don't think there's any way to really wrap your head around it."

Added Fowles: "I don't think (any) one of us go into this thinking that we're going to be Hall of Famers. You just do your job ... and when it's all said and done, the job is complete and here we are."

The Redeem Team's selection means that Dwyane Wade, Chris Bosh, Jason Kidd and Kobe Bryant —

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already enshrined as Hall of Famers — essentially now go in for a second time. James and Paul, who are obviously both locks to get into the Hall after they retire, also played for that Olympic team, as did Anthony, Howard, Michael Redd, Carlos Boozer, Deron Williams and Tayshaun Prince.

That team's managing director was Jerry Colangelo, who now chairs the Hall of Fame.

"We developed a set of standards where all the guys lived by those standards," said former Duke coach and 2001 Hall of Fame inductee Mike Krzyzewski, who coached that 2008 Olympic team. "They were the best group of guys. I wish like crazy that Kobe was here. He was really the key guy, I think. As many great players as we had at that point, he was the greatest and everyone looked up to him."

Bryant, his daughter Gianna and seven others were killed in a 2020 helicopter crash. Bryant was enshrined posthumously into the Hall later that year.

The Redeem Team had that moniker because it was the team tasked with restoring USA Basketball's place atop the world stage, after the 2004 Olympic team only managed a bronze medal at the Athens Games. The Redeem Team went 8-0 in Beijing, winning those games by an average of 27.9 points.

"USA Basketball is thrilled to see the 2008 U.S. Men's Olympic Team elected to the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame," USA Basketball CEO Jim Tooley said. "The Redeem Team's celebrated run in Beijing marks a pivotal moment in U.S. men's Olympic basketball history and has propelled us to five straight gold medals.

"Carmelo Anthony and Dwight Howard, members of that team and individual inductees, are two of the many legends in this Class who have contributed to our organization's success over the last 20-plus years, including Sue Bird, Billy Donovan, Maya Moore and Sylvia Fowles," Tooley added.

UConn's women's program already had coach Geno Auriemma, Swin Cash (enshrined as a player) and Rebecca Lobo (enshrined as a contributor) in the Hall of Fame, and Bird and Moore going in together will obviously add to what's always a huge weekend in New England.

"They're hall of famers for me, they're hall of famers for their family, they're hall of famers for everybody — they're even hall of famers for UConn haters," Auriemma said. "That's one thing they can all agree on."

## Iran's currency falls to a record low against the dollar as tensions run high

By NASSER KARIMI and JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Iran's rial currency traded Saturday at a record low against the U.S. dollar as the country returned to work after a long holiday, costing over 1 million rials for a single greenback as tensions between Tehran and Washington likely will push it even lower.

The exchange rate had plunged to over 1 million rials during the Persian New Year, Nowruz, as currency shops closed and only informal trading took place on the streets, creating additional pressure on the market. But as traders resumed work Saturday, the rate fell even further to 1,043,000 to the dollar, signaling the new low appeared here to stay.

On Ferdowsi Street in Iran's capital, Tehran, the heart of the country's money exchanges, some traders even switched off their electronic signs showing the going rate as uncertainty loomed over how much further the rial could drop.

"We turn it off since we are not sure about the successive changes of the rate," said Reza Sharifi, who works at one exchange.

Tensions with US squeeze the rial

Iran's economy has been severely affected by international sanctions, particularly after U.S. President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew America from Tehran's nuclear deal with world powers in 2018. At the time of the 2015 deal, which saw Iran drastically limit its enrichment and stockpiling of uranium in exchange for lifting of international sanctions, the rial traded at 32,000 to the dollar.

After Trump returned to the White House for his second term in January, he restarted his so-called "maximum pressure" campaign targeting Tehran with sanctions. He again went after firms trading Iranian crude oil, including those selling at a discount in China.



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Trump meanwhile has written to Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, trying to jumpstart direct talks between Tehran and Washington. So far, Iran has maintained it is willing for indirect talks, but such discussions under the Biden administration failed to make headway.

Meanwhile, Trump is continuing an intense airstrike campaign targeting the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen, the last force in Tehran's self-described "Axis of Resistance" able to attack Israel after other militant groups were mauled by Israel during its war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

Mehdi Darabi, a market analyst, said he believed that foreign pressures in recent months caused "expectations for the possibility of a decrease in oil sales and more inflation, and it caused a higher rate for hard currencies," according to Tehran's Donay-e-Eqtasad economic newspaper.

A pensioner who gave only his first name, Saeed, for fear of reprisals, said if Iran stopped its hostile policy toward the outside, financial relief could be possible.

"If we want to live a comfortable life, we should maintain good ties with our neighbors," he said. "We shouldn't bare our teeth at them. They will do the same."

Economic pressure inflames Iranian public and politics

Economic upheavals have evaporated the public's savings, pushing average Iranians into holding onto hard currencies, gold, cars and other tangible wealth. Others pursue cryptocurrencies or fall into get-rich-quick schemes.

Meanwhile, internal political pressure remains inflamed still over the mandatory hijab, or headscarf, with women still ignoring the law on the streets of Tehran. Rumors also persist over the government potentially increasing the cost of subsidized gasoline in the country, which has sparked nationwide protests in the past.

Iran's theocracy has responded by dialing broadly back hijab enforcement and easing restrictions on at least one political figure.

On Saturday, the state-run IRNA news agency even quoted a portions of a statement from Mehdi Karroubi, a Shiite cleric, parliament speaker and two-time presidential candidate who has been held in his home since the 2011 Arab Spring protests. Karroubi, who also was one of the leaders of Iran's 2009 Green Movement protests, is in the process of being released from house arrest.

"The end of my house arrest has coincided with a super-crisis that has ... put the country at the verge of devastating war," his statement said.

The falling rial has put more pressure as well on Iranian reformist President Masoud Pezeshkian. In March, when the rate was 930,000 rials to the dollar, Iran's parliament impeached his finance minister, Abdolnasser Hemmati over the crashing rial and accusations of mismanagement.

Anger over government spending also saw Pezeshkian fire his vice president in charge of parliamentary affairs, Shahram Dabiri, for taking a luxury cruise to Antarctica, state media reported. Though Dabiri reportedly used his own money for the trip with his wife, the Instagram photos posted of his trip angered an Iranian public scrapping by to survive.

"In a situation where the economic pressures on people are huge and the number of deprived people is massive, expensive recreational trip by officials even by their own personal fund is not defensible and reasonable," Pezeshkian said in firing Dabiri, who so far hasn't offered any public explanation for his trip.

Pezeshkian separately said Saturday that Iran wanted a "dialogue from an equal position" with the U.S.

"If you want negotiations, what is the point of threatening?" Pezeshkian asked, according to IRNA. "America today is not only humiliating Iran, but the world, and this behavior contradicts the call for negotiations."

## The frenzied 24 hours when Venezuelan migrants in the US were shipped to an El Salvador prison

By TIM SULLIVAN Associated Press

It was just a few sentences in a meandering, hourlong presidential speech on a Friday afternoon.

Along with talk about falling egg prices and a vow to expel "corrupt forces" from the U.S. government, President Donald Trump noted that hundreds of members of the Venezuelan gang Tren de Aragua had

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been arrested.

"You'll be reading a lot of stories tomorrow about what we've done with them," he said at the Justice Department on March 14. "These are tough people and bad people and we're getting them out of our country."

"You'll be very impressed," he added.

Trump was previewing drama to come that would involve clandestine flights to another continent, a notorious prison, innocents among criminals and a dramatic confrontation between his assertions of presidential power and a federal judge who Trump said had overreached.

The president's invocation of the Alien Enemies Act of 1798 to justify deporting more than 130 Venezuelan men, some of them gang members and others who claim to have been in the United States legally and were seemingly expelled because of their ordinary tattoos, played out over a frenetic 24 hours.

By the time Trump had spoken, hundreds of detained immigrants had been quietly shuttled from across the U.S. to South Texas. Planes had been chartered to take them to their ultimate destination, El Salvador, under a deal with President Nayib Bukele, who proudly calls himself "world's coolest dictator."

The men were herded into a maximum security mega prison in El Salvador, where officials quickly made a show of the new inmates having their heads shaved, then standing shoulder to shoulder in cells so crowded that some prisoners do not have beds.

But soon, stories began to surface that the scene was not quite as it appeared. Some of them men had long insisted they had no gang ties, and their families had produced documents showing they had no criminal records.

"I've been doing this for a long time, and I've seen some pretty weird stuff," said Texas attorney John Dutton, who represented a man who disappeared into the Salvadoran prison. "But to do this in the middle of the night, to send people to another country, and straight to a prison when they haven't been convicted of a crime?"

"It makes no sense."

Trump fulfilled a long-standing pledge on migrants

It made sense in the White House.

Trump has been promising for years that he would invoke the Alien Enemies Act to combat illegal immigration. He repeatedly insisted, falsely, that the U.S. was facing an invasion of criminal immigrants.

Tren de Aragua became the face of that threat, and the first target of that law in decades.

Crafted during the presidency of John Adams, the law gives the president broad powers to imprison and deport noncitizens in times of war. It has been used just three times: during the War of 1812 and the two world wars.

The Trump administration had begun edging closer to calling the criminal migrant issue a war, most notably by designating eight Latin American criminal groups, including Tren de Aragua, as "foreign terrorist organizations."

The administration was telegraphing its logical next move. Immigration lawyers prepared to fight back.

Government flights signal deportations to El Salvador

The flights began arriving in the small South Texas city on March 12.

Using jets chartered by a branch of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the ICE Air flights landed in Harlingen from Dallas, Phoenix, El Paso, Texas, and Nashville, Tennessee. At least three came from Alexandria, Louisiana, a hub for that state's network of immigration detention centers.

But it wasn't until Saturday, March 15, that it became clear to a retired financial executive in Ohio that something unusual was happening.

Two flights, Tom Cartwright noticed, were scheduled from Harlingen to El Salvador.

Deportations are fairly rare on Saturdays, as are deportation flights from Harlingen to El Salvador, said Cartwright, a flight data analyst for the advocacy group Witness at the Border, whose social media feeds are closely watched in immigration circles.

"All that came together and said to me: There's something weird here."

Court documents later showed that for at least the previous week, Venezuelan men in immigration de-

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tention centers in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Florida and elsewhere were being moved by bus and plane toward ICE's El Valle Detention Facility, a 40-minute drive from the Harlingen airport.

A makeup artist is caught up in the mass deportations

One of those men was a makeup artist who said he fled Venezuela last summer after his boss at a state-run news channel publicly slapped him.

In a country where political repression and open homophobia are both part of life, it's hard to be a gay man who does not support President Nicolás Maduro.

Walking and traveling by bus and taxi through Central America and Mexico, Andry José Hernández Romero hoped to find a new life in the U.S. He used a U.S. Customs and Border Protection phone app to arrange an appointment at a U.S. border crossing in San Diego.

That's where he was asked about his tattoos, and where his trouble started.

U.S. immigration authorities use a series of "gang identifiers" to help them spot members of Tren de Aragua. Some are obvious, such as trafficking drugs with known Tren members.

Some identifiers are more surprising: Chicago Bulls jerseys, "high-end urban street wear," and tattoos of clocks, stars or crowns, according to government instructional material filed in court by the American Civil Liberties Union.

Tattoos were key to marking many deported men as Tren members, according to documents and lawyers.

Romero, who is in his early 20s, has a crown tattooed on each wrist. One is next to the word "Mom." The other next to "Dad." The crowns, according to his lawyer, also pay homage to his hometown's Christmastime "Three Kings" festival, and to his work in beauty pageants, where crowns are common.

Romero, who insists he has no ties to Tren, was taken into ICE custody and transferred to a California detention center.

And then, around March 7, he was suddenly moved to a facility in Laredo, Texas, a three-hour bus ride from the Harlingen airport.

'The order from the president is to deport them all'

Friday, March 14, was supposed to be quiet for Javier Maldonado.

"I had come in to work late, like 10 in the morning," said Maldonado, a Texas immigration lawyer based in San Antonio. "I was having my coffee, and thought I was going to do admin work and catch up on emails and phone calls."

He was wrong.

The Alien Enemies Act was hours away from being invoked, and more than a day from being announced, but word was starting to filter out from a group of Venezuelan men held at El Valle Detention Center, near Harlingen. Around 3 a.m., roughly 100 had been roused from sleep by guards and told they were being deported. Some were told they would be flown to Mexico, some to Venezuela. Many were told nothing.

Ten hours later, the men were back in their bunks. The flight had been canceled, they were told, and they would leave soon.

But a few men contacted relatives or lawyers.

Within hours, an informal legal network was frantically at work, from a lawyer in Brooklyn to a law school professor in Los Angeles to a University of Florida law student interning with an El Paso immigrant advocacy firm. All were working with Texas lawyers like Maldonado who would file petitions in federal court.

"It's a small circle, relatively, of lawyers that do this sort of work," he said.

Even people who cross illegally into the U.S. have rights. Some of the men the lawyers were defending have Temporary Protected Status, a legal classification that shields roughly 350,000 Venezuelans from deportation.

Communication between lawyers and detainees was often chaotic. Messages sometimes were relayed through relatives in Venezuela.

But guards, said one man, had made something clear.

"The order from the president is to deport them all."

Trump invokes the Alien Enemies Act



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Trump was aboard Air Force One that Friday when he invoked the Alien Enemies Act en route to his Mar-a-Lago club in Florida.

Tren de Aragua, his proclamation said, was attempting "an invasion or predatory incursion" of the United States.

Publicly, though, the administration said nothing.

Still, word was spreading about the planned flights to El Salvador. A Texas lawyer had filmed a bus leaving the El Valle facility under police escort, apparently heading to the airport.

While Trump's use of the law had not yet been announced, two legal advocacy groups, the ACLU and Democracy Forward, felt they had to file preemptively.

"We couldn't take a chance that nothing was going to happen," said Lee Gelernt of the ACLU, the lead attorney.

They spent hours drafting a petition on behalf of five detained Venezuelans who feared being falsely labeled members of Tren and deported. They crafted legal arguments until they felt time was running out.

Finally, they filed the petition with the U.S. District Court in Washington, seeking to halt all deportations under the Alien Enemies Act.

It was 2:16 a.m. Saturday.

Prisoners moved to airport as judge issues temporary restraining order?

Later that day, after Judge James E. Boasberg issued a temporary restraining order in response to the ACLU lawsuit and scheduled a 5 p.m. hearing, things in Texas began to move faster.

Guards gathered prisoners at the El Valle detention center, ordering them onto buses for the airport at about 3:30 p.m.

The flights carried a total of 261 deportees, the White House later said, including 137 Venezuelans deported under the Alien Enemies Act, 101 under other immigration regulations, and 23 El Salvadoran members of the gang MS-13.

About 4 p.m. the White House posted Trump's proclamation.

Judge order the planes to turn back and it doesn't happen

Roughly an hour later Boasberg opened his hearing over Zoom.

"First, apologies for my attire," he began, dressed in a blue sweater. "I went away for the weekend and brought with me neither a robe nor tie nor appropriate shirt."

Things quickly grew more serious. Boasberg asked whether the government planned to deport anyone under the new proclamation "in the next 24 or 48 hours." The ACLU warned that deportation planes were about to take off. Deputy Assistant Attorney General Drew Ensign said he was unsure of the flight details.

Boasberg called a recess so Ensign could get more information. When Ensign came back empty-handed, the judge issued a new order to stop the deportations being carried out under the centuries-old law.

He noted specifically that any planes in the air needed to come back.

"This is something that you need to make sure is complied with immediately," he told Ensign.

It was about 6:45 p.m.

By then, two ICE Air planes were heading across the Gulf of Mexico and toward Central America. Neither turned around.

The airliners stopped in Honduras before making the short final flight to El Salvador.

Fear swept the plane when the doors opened and the prisoners realized where they were. Many knew the reputation of El Salvador's prisons.

"Everyone was scared," a Nicaraguan woman accidentally put on a flight said in a legal declaration after returning to the U.S. "Some people had to forcibly be removed from the plane."

What followed was soon set to music by the El Salvadoran government, which released videos of shackled men struggling to walk as officers forced down their heads and marched them to the immense Terrorism Confinement Center, or CECOT prison.

The next morning, Bukele, El Salvador's president, tweeted a New York Post headline saying Boasberg had ordered the planes turned around.

"Oopsie ... Too late," Bukele wrote, adding a laughing/crying emoji.

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The Trump administration is now urging the Supreme Court for permission to resume deportations of Venezuelan migrants to El Salvador under the Alien Enemies Act. Boasberg soon could rule on whether there are grounds to find anyone in contempt of court for defying his court order.

As for Romero, the makeup artist, he's somewhere in CECOT.

## UN urges relief efforts in Myanmar as earthquake death toll rises

By GRANT PECK Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — The death toll from last week's massive earthquake in Myanmar rose to 3,455, state media said Saturday, as U.N. agencies and foreign aid donors ramped up their emergency relief efforts.

The 7.7 magnitude quake hit a wide swath of the country, causing significant damage to six regions and states including the capital Naypyitaw. The earthquake left many areas without power, telephone or cell connections and damaged roads and bridges, making the full extent of the devastation hard to assess.

It also worsened an already dire humanitarian crisis triggered by the country's civil war that has internally displaced more than 3 million people and left nearly 20 million in need, according to the United Nations.

Myanmar's second most powerful quake in history

The military government's leader, Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, has said the earthquake was the second most powerful in the country's recorded history after a magnitude 8 quake east of Mandalay in May 1912.

Min Aung Hlaing told Cabinet members Saturday that the quake's death toll has reached 3,455, with 4,840 injured and 214 missing, according to a report on state television MRTV.

He said 5,223 buildings, 1,824 schools, 2,752 Buddhist monasterial living quarters, 4,817 pagodas and temples, 167 hospitals and clinics, 169 bridges, 198 dams and 184 sections of the country's main highway were damaged by the earthquake.

A country torn by war

Myanmar's military seized power in 2021 from the democratically elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi, sparking armed resistance that is now believed by analysts to control more territory than the army.

Members of the U.N. Security Council "recognized the need to strengthen rescue, relief and recovery efforts and to scale up immediate and rapid humanitarian assistance in response to the requests to help the people of Myanmar, supported by the international community," its president, Jérôme Bonnafont of France, said in a press statement Friday.

In an apparent reference to the fighting in Myanmar and concerns its military government would block or delay aid to areas under the control of resistance forces, the statement said the council's members "affirmed the importance of a safe and conducive environment to ensure the timely and effective delivery of life-saving humanitarian assistance to all those in need, without disruption or discrimination."

According to state media, Vice Senior Gen. Soe Win, the vice chairman of the ruling military council, said that any international organizations coming to Myanmar to provide assistance are required to seek prior permission from Myanmar's authorities, and their efforts will be permitted only when they cooperate with relevant officials.

Aid sparks an unusual diplomatic flurry

Maj. Gen. Zaw Min Tun, spokesperson for the military government, told media on Saturday, as he arrived back from a regional summit held in Bangkok, that prime ministers and officials from attending countries, including India and Thailand, pledged to provide necessary assistance for relief efforts and rehabilitation in quake-hit areas.

"Everyone helped Myanmar that suffered from the earthquake. Everyone sympathized. Everyone understood. Everyone was willing to help. It can be seen everyone working together practically," Zaw Min Tun said.

He said that 18 countries were providing assistance to affected areas, and more than 60 aircraft had flown in to transport rescuers and relief supplies.

The U.K. allocated a further 10 million pounds (about \$12.8 million) to the ongoing humanitarian response, its embassy in Yangon said in a statement Saturday, bringing its total to up to 25 million pounds

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(about \$32 million) in aid.

There has been an unusual flurry of diplomatic activity in the past few days around Myanmar, usually reluctant to engage with much of the world community.

Min Aung Hlaing and senior members of his government are shunned and sanctioned by many Western countries for their 2021 takeover and human rights abuses. His visit to the meeting in the Thai capital Bangkok was his first to a country other than his government's main backers — China, Russia and Russian ally Belarus — since he attended another regional meeting in Indonesia in 2021.

Back in Myanmar on Saturday, Min Aung Hlaing received Malaysian Foreign Minister Mohamad Hasan, and Thai Foreign Minister Maris Sangiampongsa for discussions about relief assistance from fellow members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and cooperation in health care in quake-affected areas.

Although reports of diplomatic activity focus on earthquake relief, there is awareness that the crisis in Myanmar cannot end until the war there stops, and the country's neighbors have been leading efforts to find a path for peace, even though neither the military nor its foes have shown any serious effort to negotiate.

A fragile temporary ceasefire

However, the military and several key armed resistance groups have all declared temporary ceasefires on Wednesday in the wake of the earthquake to facilitate the flow of humanitarian aid.

The U.N. Human Rights Office on Friday accused the military of continuing attacks, claiming there were more than 60 attacks after the earthquake, including 16 since the ceasefire.

The opposition's shadow National Unity Government, which leads resistance to army rule, accused the military Saturday of carrying out 63 airstrikes and artillery attacks since the earthquake, resulting in the deaths of 68 civilians, including one child and 15 women.

## Takeaways from Trump's move to send Venezuelan migrants in the US to a prison in El Salvador

By TIM SULLIVAN Associated Press

On Friday, March 14, President Donald Trump invoked the Alien Enemies Act, a 1798 law giving him immense powers to deport noncitizens in a time of war.

His use of that law was aimed at Tren de Aragua, a Venezuelan gang that he has repeatedly and falsely claimed as part of an invasion of criminal immigrants. Over the next 24 hours, more than 130 Venezuelans were deported to an El Salvadoran prison even as a U.S. judge ordered the planes carrying them to turn around.

Here's what you need to know about the situation:

An 18th-century law

Trump had long promised to invoke the Alien Enemies Act to combat illegal immigration. The law crafted during the presidency of John Adams had been used just three times: during the War of 1812 and the two world wars.

The Trump administration had begun moving closer to calling the migrant issue a war, most notably by designating eight Latin American criminal groups, including Tren de Aragua, as "foreign terrorist organizations."

Tattoos as gang markers

U.S. immigration authorities use a series of "gang identifiers" to spot members of Tren de Aragua. Some are obvious, such as trafficking drugs with known gang members.

Some are more surprising: Chicago Bulls jerseys, "high-end urban street wear," and tattoos of clocks, stars and crowns, according to government instructional material filed in court by the American Civil Liberties Union.

Ordinary tattoos were key to marking many deported men as Tren members, according to documents and lawyers.

One of those men was a makeup artist who said he fled Venezuela after his boss at a state-run news



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channel publicly slapped him. In a country where political repression and open homophobia are both part of life, it's hard to be a gay man who does not support President Nicolás Maduro.

Hoping to find a new life in America, Andry José Hernández Romero made his way north and arranged an appointment at a U.S. border crossing in San Diego.

There, he was asked about his tattoos. Romero has a crown tattooed on each wrist. One is next to the word "Mom." The other next to "Dad." The crowns, his lawyer says, also pay homage to his hometown's Christmastime "Three Kings" festival, and to his work in beauty pageants.

Romero, who insists he has no ties to Tren, was transferred to a California detention center.

Then, around March 7, he was moved to a facility in Laredo, Texas, a three-hour bus ride from the South Texas city of Harlingen.

Gathering detained Venezuelans for deportation

Two days before the March 14 deportations, jets chartered by a branch of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement began landing in Harlingen from across the U.S., some carrying detained Venezuelans.

Court documents later showed that for at least the previous week, Venezuelan men in many immigration detention centers were being moved by bus and plane toward ICE's El Valle Detention Facility, close to the Harlingen airport.

Then, a flight analyst for the advocacy group Witness at the Border noticed two Saturday flights scheduled from Harlingen to El Salvador. That was unusual. Deportations are fairly rare on Saturdays, as are deportation flights from Harlingen to El Salvador, said the analyst, Tom Cartwright, whose social media feeds are closely watched in immigration circles.

Immigration lawyers push back

On March 14, with the Alien Enemies Act hours from being invoked and more than a day from being announced, word was filtering out from a group of Venezuelan men held at El Valle. Around 3 a.m., roughly 100 had been awakened by guards and told they were being deported. Ten hours later, the men were back in their bunks. The flight had been canceled, they were told, and they would leave soon.

Within hours, an informal legal network was frantically trying to stop those deportations and working with Texas lawyers who would file federal court petitions.

Meanwhile, later that Friday, with signs growing that deportations could be imminent, two legal advocacy groups, the ACLU and Democracy Forward, felt they had to file preemptively.

They spent hours drafting a petition on behalf of five detained Venezuelans who feared being falsely labeled members of Tren and deported.

Finally, early Saturday morning they filed the petition with the U.S. District Court in Washington, seeking to halt all deportations under the Alien Enemies Act.

The judge weighs in

Later that day, Judge James E. Boasberg issued a temporary restraining order in response to the ACLU lawsuit and scheduled a 5 p.m. hearing.

In Texas, though, things began to move faster. Guards gathered prisoners at the El Valle detention center, ordering them onto buses for the airport. The flights carried a total of 261 deportees, the White House later said, including 137 Venezuelans deported under the Alien Enemies Act, 101 under other immigration regulations, and 23 El Salvadoran members of the gang MS-13.

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Roughly an hour later Boasberg opened his hearing over Zoom.

He asked whether the government planned to deport anyone under the proclamation "in the next 24 or 48 hours." The ACLU warned that deportation planes were about to take off. Deputy Assistant Attorney General Drew Ensign said he was unsure of the flight details.

Eventually Boasberg issued a new order to stop deportations being conducted under the Alien Enemies Act. He said any planes in the air needed to come back.

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'Oopsie'

The next morning, El Salvador's president tweeted a New York Post headline saying Boasberg had ordered the planes turned around.

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## **Takeaways from the Senate budget vote: Tariff pressure, debt worries and signs of GOP unease**

By LEAH ASKARINAM and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The political battle lines are drawn for a debate in Washington and beyond over a Republican budget plan that's a cornerstone of President Donald Trump's domestic agenda.

With the plan's approval by the GOP-controlled Senate in a vote that ended early Saturday, Republicans hope to leverage their position of power in Washington to enact as much as \$7 trillion in tax breaks, boost border security for mass deportations and cut government funding — and do so "without one single Democratic vote," said Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., the Senate Budget Committee chairman.

Democrats, as the minority party, were unable to halt the budget plan. But during the late-night session, they offered a preview of the political attacks likely coming not just during the lead-up to the final vote this summer, but through the 2026 campaign.

"We may not have the votes to stop them all by ourselves," Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., told The Associated Press, "but we can use what the Republicans are trying to do with this tax bill to ignite a fire all across this country."

Here's a look at what happened and what comes next:

Tariffs shadow the debate

Trump's tariffs hung over the budget debate, interjecting economic uncertainty in ways unimaginable just days before senators prepared to vote.

Seizing on the moment, Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer of New York put forward an amendment to showcase that unease: He called for an end to those recently announced import taxes, which could result in higher prices for household goods, while keeping tariffs on China, Russia, Iran and other U.S. adversaries.

"President Trump's tariff tax is one of the dumbest things he's ever done as president, and that's saying something," Schumer said.

He repeatedly pointed out that remote islands, including one inhabited by penguins, were hit with tariffs, but not President Vladimir Putin's Russia.

"Penguins not Putin," Schumer said.

The amendment failed. The slogan lives on.

Votes to preserve Medicaid, Social Security draw some Republican support

Democrats say Republicans pose grave threats to the nation's safety net programs as they hunt for cost-savings to help offset the lost revenues from the tax breaks, and as Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency slashes through the federal government.

Among the more than two dozen amendments offered during the debate were several to protect Medicaid, Social Security, food stamps, Head Start child care, Meals on Wheels for older adults, and others. Several Republicans joined Democrats in voting to preserve those programs, including Sen. Josh Hawley of Missouri. Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, opposed the entire package in a warning against steep Medicaid cuts.

Sen. Ed Markey, D-Mass., who offered an amendment to save Social Security's phone service, said Musk and DOGE are "revving up their chainsaw" to come after it.

"They say, 'Get online, Grandma,'" Markey said, scoffing at the notion of older people not being able to pick up the telephone.

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Democrats assail tax cuts as helping the wealthy  
Central to the Republican budget — and Trump's domestic policy agenda — is the effort to preserve the tax breaks approved in 2017 during his first term.

While many of the income tax breaks are popular, including the child tax credit or bolstered standard deduction, Democrats argue that much of the benefit flows to the well-off.

Democrats piled on a series of amendments trying to prohibit tax breaks for the ultra-wealthy, only to be denied by Republicans.

It's a standoff that's expected to carry on through the debate, and the campaign season ahead.

Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-La., shifted the conversation to what Republicans see for them as a more politically favorable direction, focused on federal spending.

"We've heard a lot about, you know, massive tax cuts for billionaires," he said as the evening dragged on. "But the one thing you don't hear a lot about is the run up in federal spending."

Debt worries linger and pose challenges for GOP leaders

The nation's debt load, now \$36 trillion, continues to climb.

At least one Republican deficit hawk, Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky, said no more.

"What is it: Are we cutting spending or are we adding to the debt?" Paul said during debate, before ultimately voting against the bill.

He argued the budget plan would add \$5 trillion to the debt over 10 years, echoing an assessment from the bipartisan Joint Committee on Taxation.

"You scratch your head and say, what's up here?"

But for Sen. Bill Cassidy, R-La., the impact of the tariffs was a factor in his decision to vote for the budget resolution, despite his concerns that the tax breaks would add to the federal deficit.

Cassidy said he did not want to cast a vote that could "increase uncertainty in the economy."

"This vote isn't taking place in a vacuum," he said.

## **Today in History: April 6, United States enters World War I**

Today is Sunday, April 6, the 96th day of 2025. There are 269 days left in the year.

On April 6, 1917, the United States entered World War I as the House joined the Senate in approving a declaration of war against Germany that was then signed by President Woodrow Wilson.

In 1830, Joseph Smith and others met in Fayette, New York, to form the Church of Christ — now known as The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

In 1862, the Civil War Battle of Shiloh began in Tennessee as Confederate forces launched a surprise attack against Union troops, who beat back the Confederates the following day.

In 1896, the first modern Olympic games formally opened in Athens, Greece.

In 1954, Sen. Joseph R. McCarthy, R-Wis., responding to CBS newsman Edward R. Murrow's broadside against him on "See It Now," claimed in remarks filmed for the program that Murrow had, in the past, "engaged in propaganda for Communist causes."

In 1968, 41 people were killed by a pair of explosions spurred by a natural gas leak at a sporting goods store in downtown Richmond, Indiana.

In 1994, Rwandan President Juvénal Habyarimana and Burundian President Cyprien Ntaryamira were killed when the jet they were riding in was shot down by surface-to-air missiles as it attempted to land in Kigali, Rwanda.

In 2012, five Black people were shot, three fatally, in Tulsa, Oklahoma; Jake England and Alvin Watts, who admitted to targeting the victims because of their race, pleaded guilty to murder and were sentenced to life in prison without parole.

Today's Birthdays: Scientist James D. Watson is 97. Actor Billy Dee Williams is 88. Film director Barry Levinson is 83. Actor John Ratzenberger is 78. Baseball Hall of Famer Bert Blyleven is 74. Actor Marilu Henner is 73. Actor Michael Rooker is 70. Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz is 61. Football Hall of Famer Sterling Sharpe is 60. Actor Paul Rudd is 56. Actor Zach Braff is 50. Actor Candace Cameron Bure is 49. Musician Robert Glasper is 47.