

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 1 of 81

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- Newsweek Bulletin](#)
- [4- 1440 News Headlines](#)
- [5- GHS School Internship: Emma Bahr](#)
- [7- Tracy is triple winner at Ipswich; Pauli is winner in two events](#)
- [8- Brown County Commission Agenda](#)
- [9- South Dakota Agricultural and Rural Leaders Graduate from 18-month Program](#)
- [10- Scooter for Sale](#)
- [11- Tina's Baskets](#)
- [13- Groton American Legion holds grand reopening event](#)
- [14- Calvary's Love Story Ad](#)
- [15- SD SearchLight: While criticizing absent Republicans, Democrats should look for their own candidates](#)
- [16- SD SearchLight: Drugmaker sues SD over law preserving broad access to discounts for hospitals, pharmacies](#)
- [18- SD SearchLight: Noem cheers court order requiring immigrants without legal status to register and carry documents](#)
- [19- SD SearchLight: A nation that can't protect its health can't protect its future](#)
- [20- SD SearchLight: Trump authorizes U.S. military to begin occupation of federal land along southern border](#)
- [22- Weather Pages](#)
- [26- Daily Devotional](#)
- [27- Subscription Form](#)
- [28- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [29- Upcoming Groton Events](#)
- [30- News from the Associated Press](#)

Saturday, April 12

Prom, Grand March at 7 p.m.
Lions Easter Egg Hunt, 10 a.m., city park
Firemen's Spring Social, 7 p.m., Groton Fire Hall

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



Sunday, April 13 ~ PALM SUNDAY

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m. (Procession of the Palms by youth)

United Methodist: Worship at Conde, 8:15 a.m.; at Groton, 9:30 a.m.; at Britton, 11:15 a.m.; Sunday School sing in church, 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.; Easter Cantata with Aberdeen Alliance joining Groton in Groton, 6:30 p.m. Title is "Calvary's Love Story."

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

Sisseton-Britton-Webster JV baseball in Groton, doubleheader, 2 p.m.

© 2025 Groton Daily Independent

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 2 of 81

Newsweek

The Bulletin

YOUR DAILY BRIEFING OF
EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW

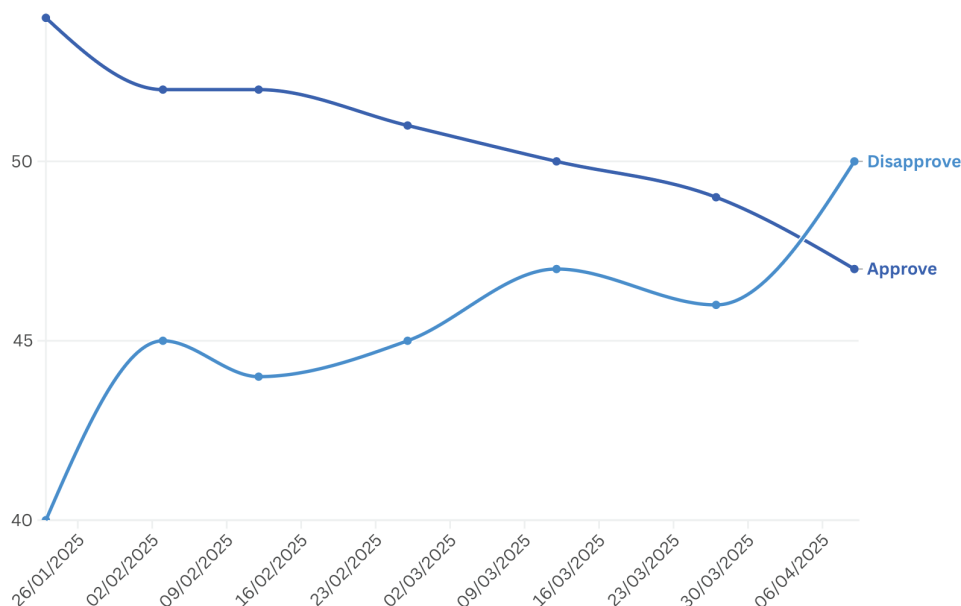
WORLD IN BRIEF

- Mahmoud Khalil faces major blow: A federal immigration judge in Louisiana ruled Friday that Columbia University graduate student Mahmoud Khalil's deportation case can move forward.
- Trump and Musk assassination threats: Federal authorities have charged a man with making online threats to assassinate President Donald Trump and tech billionaire Elon Musk.
- Trump hit by legal setback: The Trump administration suffered a blow on Friday after a judge issued a temporary injunction preventing it from slashing Maine's federal school lunch funding in a bid to force the state to ban transgender students from competing in girls' sports.
- Menendez brothers' resentencing: A judge on Friday ruled that Erik and Lyle Menendez's resentencing hearings can proceed, despite opposition from the Los Angeles County district attorney.
- Does SAVE Act stop married women from voting? The Safeguarding American Voter Eligibility (SAVE) Act will require all people registering to vote to bring proof of citizenship in person to a voter registration site.
- DOJ arrests Democratic lawmaker: Massachusetts state Representative Christopher Flanagan, a Democrat for the First Barnstable District, was indicted by the Department of Justice in an alleged fraud and cover-up scheme.
- Marjorie Taylor Greene faces probe: Democrats are calling for an investigation into Marjorie Taylor Greene's purchase of stocks during the recent market dip.

How Trump's Approval Rating Has Sunk, in Charts

The rundown: President Donald Trump has seen his approval rating steadily decline in his second term. Newsweek breaks down the numbers behind Trump's polling decline.

How Trump's Approval Rating Has Changed Since January



Source: Quantus Insights

* A Flourish chart

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 3 of 81

Why it matters: The president began his second White House term more popular than ever. Polling by Quantus Insights from January showed that Trump's approval rating stood at 54 percent in the days following his inauguration. Since then, the approval rating has steadily been on the decline, with 50 percent now saying they disapprove and 47 percent approving, according to a Quantus poll. The ratings signal that Trump's honeymoon period could be over. Despite Trump's partial pause, the tariffs have driven fears of a potential recession, which has taken a hit on the president's approval ratings. Thomas Gift, an associate professor of political science and director of the Centre on U.S. Politics at University College London, told Newsweek that Trump's handling of the tariff situation has alienated many voters.

TL/DR: The trend comes as Trump has struggled in the polls on the economy, once a strong topic for the president.

What happens now? Polls have shown negative sentiment around Trump's handling of the economy grow. The latest Harris X poll revealed a sharp decline in public support for Trump's handling of the economy and inflation.

Americans Brace for Summer of Layoffs

The rundown: The vast majority of Americans are concerned about the prospect of losing their job this year, a new survey found. Find out who can be impacted.

Why it matters: According to the survey of 1,115 workers by My Perfect Resume, 81 percent fear job loss this year, with 20 percent feeling "much more worried" about finding themselves unemployed in 2025 than they did in 2024. In fact, 76 percent of workers predict an increase in layoffs this year, while an overwhelming 92 percent are bracing for a possible recession. U.S.-based employers announced 275,240 job cuts in March—more than five years ago when the coronavirus pandemic hit, according to a report from job placement firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas. Over the past two months, 280,253 layoffs across 27 agencies have been attributed to the Department of Government Efficiency. Patrice Williams Lindo, CEO at Career Nomad, said that workers are not being "dramatic" with their worries. Instead, they're "paying attention."

TL/DR: The report underscores a workforce increasingly hesitant to make career moves, driven by concerns over layoffs and economic downturns.

What happens now? Adriana L. Cowdin, entrepreneur and coach at Be Bold Executive Coaching, told Newsweek that while the job market currently inspires fear, it could still be "a temporary wave that stabilizes later in the year."

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 4 of 81

1440

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

US-Mexico Water Deal

Mexico is set to deliver an immediate shipment of water to Texas farmers to comply with pending obligations under an 81-year-old US-Mexico treaty, which outlines how water from the Rio Grande and Colorado River should be divided between the two allies. Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum announced the delivery yesterday in response to US tariff threats and after the US, for the first time, denied Mexico's request for water delivery to Tijuana.

Under the 1944 treaty, Mexico must send 1.75 million acre-feet of water to the US from the Rio Grande every five years, with the current five-year cycle ending in October. Mexico owes roughly 1.3 million acre-feet of water to Texas—enough to supply a mid-sized city for roughly 30 years. An acre-foot of water is about 326,000 gallons and is enough to cover an acre of land that is about 1 foot deep or fill roughly half an Olympic-sized swimming pool. [View water delivery data here.](#)

However, Mexico, especially its capital, has been facing a multiyear drought fueled by the warming climate. While the treaty allows flexibility during droughts, US officials argue Mexico's deliveries remain critically low.

China raises retaliatory tariff on American goods to 125% from 84%.

The new tariff is set to go into effect today and comes after the US raised its cumulative tariff on Chinese imports to 145%. The world's two biggest economies haven't signaled any immediate plans for trade negotiations. China is expected to file another lawsuit with the World Trade Organization against the US tariffs. Trade between China and the US reached \$583B last year, with a \$295B US deficit. See an explainer on how tariffs could impact the US and global economy [here](#).

Spanish Siemens executive and family killed in Hudson River crash.

Agustín Escobar, his wife, Mercè Camprubí Montal, and their three young children (all under the age of 11) were aboard the helicopter, along with the pilot, when it broke apart midair and crashed in the Hudson River Thursday. The family had been flying along a popular route showcasing the New York City skyline as part of a birthday trip for Camprubí Montal. See video of the crash [here](#) (warning—sensitive).

Separately, all three people aboard a small plane were killed Friday when the aircraft crashed in Boca Raton, Florida, due to mechanical issues.

Blue Origin's upcoming all-female spaceflight to launch Monday.

Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin NS-31 mission is set to be the first all-female spaceflight since 1963, when the Soviet Union's Valentina Tereshkova became the first woman in space during a three-day solo mission. The crew will launch from West Texas and includes aerospace engineer Aisha Bowe, film producer Kerianne Flynn, activist Amanda Nguyễn, CBS Mornings host Gayle King, pop singer Katy Perry, and former TV host and Bezos' fiancée Lauren Sánchez.

Ancient jawbone found in sea linked to mysterious human ancestors.

A fossilized jawbone discovered off Taiwan's coast has been identified as belonging to a Denisovan, marking the first confirmed presence of this ancient human relative in Southeast Asia. The finding, based on protein analysis, expands the Denisovans' known habitat range from Siberia and Tibet to subtropical regions, highlighting their adaptability. Explore the human family tree [here](#).

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 5 of 81

Epstein accomplice Ghislaine Maxwell appeals case to Supreme Court.

Maxwell, currently serving a 20-year sentence for aiding Jeffrey Epstein in the sexual abuse of under-age girls, has petitioned the US Supreme Court to overturn her conviction, arguing she was protected by Epstein's 2007 nonprosecution agreement. Her appeal follows repeated rejections by lower courts, which ruled the deal applied only within Florida and didn't shield her from prosecution in New York.

Humankind(ness)

Today, we're sharing a story from reader Ward V. in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

"Our grandson celebrated his 10th birthday on April 1. The Saturday before his birthday, Mom & Dad hosted a pre-party for friends at a local bowling lane. After bowling, there was dinner at a local restaurant. The guest of honor got gifts, cards, etc. One of the cards had \$5 in it, which he gave to Mom for safekeeping. A bit later, he asked Mom if he could have it back. When asked why, he responded, 'I want to give it to our waiter guy cause he's doing such an awesome job of caring for us.'"

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 6 of 81

GHS School Internship

by Dorene Nelson

Groton Area High School offers a variety of business classes. One of these classes, School Internship, offers seniors the opportunity to work in various local businesses of their choice.

The purpose of this internship is to teach students responsibility by working for someone other than their family. It helps them learn how to work with the public and with customers who might not be all that agreeable at times.

Internships could also help students decide on a part-time job while they are in college or maybe even help them choose a future occupation.

Brittany Hubbard, a Science and Health Science teacher, organized this experience for the 15 students enrolled in her School Internship class.

Local business owners, farmers, and day care providers welcome the students' help. The Internship class is open only to seniors who have to find their own sponsor for their workplace.

All students must be at their chosen place of work during the last period of the school day. The student interns must contact the place they would like to work and have their own personal transportation. The following brief articles are from five of the intern students in her class.

Emma Bahr

Emma Bahr, daughter of Brian Bahr, Sioux Falls, and Rachel Bahr, Bristol, is an intern at Just Kidding Daycare in Aberdeen. This large daycare is located in the Freedom Church.

"I chose to do my internship here because it is a top-notch facility which offers a wide variety of activities and excellent supervision for all of the children," Emma explained. "This also is providing me with the experience and knowledge that I'll need in order to have my own daycare someday."

"Just Kidding is both a daycare facility and a pre-school to anyone interested in participating," she stated. "I'm working here as a helper with babies and children from four weeks to eight years old."

"Just Kidding is open from 6 A.M. to 6 P.M. five days a week," Emma said. "I worked at a pre-school in Groton to see if I'd like the work and what was expected of me."

"The best part of this job is to see how the kids grow and learn while in school here," she smiled. "The hardest part is just getting the kids to really listen to you as you explain things to them."

"I participate in Special Olympics in bowling, cheerleading, track, and bocce ball," Emma listed. "Since I've really enjoyed my time here at Just Kidding, I've decided to work in a daycare after I graduate from high school."



Emma Bahr

This is the final in the series of students who submitted their experiences to the Independent.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 7 of 81

Tracy is triple winner at Ipswich; Pauli is winner in two events

The Groton Area boys track team won five events at the Ipswich Early Bird Track meet held Friday. The boys team placed third behind North Central with 105 points, Ipswich with 91 and Groton Area with 85.

Keegen Tracy won the 100m dash, the 200m dash and the 400m dash. Blake Pauli won the 800m run and was also on the winning 4x800m relay team with teammates Jayden Schwan, Jace Johnson and Tristin McGannon.

Laila Roberts placed second the 400m dash and Jayden Schwan placed second in the 1600m run.

Boys Results

100 Meters: 1. Keegen Tracy, 11.25; 13. Brevin Fliehs, 12.07; 46. Ryder Schelle, 14.88

200 Meters: 1. Keegen Tracy, 23.86

400 Meters: 1. Keegen Tracy, 52.42; 8. Jordan Schwan, 1:00.74

800 Meters: 1. Blake Pauli, 2:07.87

1600 Meters: 2. Jayden Schwan, 4:59.74; 8. Jace Johnson, 5:24.46

3200 Meters: 2. Jayden Schwan, 11:36.70

300m Hurdles - 36": 9. Tristin McGannon, 50.12

4x100 Relay: 4. (Brevin Fliehs, Ryder Schelle, Jordan Schwan, Ethan Kroll), 47.99

4x200 Relay: 4. (Ryder Schelle, Jordan Schwan, Brevin Fliehs, Keegen Tracy), 1:41.92.

4x800 Relay: 1. (Blake Pauli, Jayden Schwan, Jace Johnson, Tristin McGannon), 8:49.17

Shot Put - 12lb: 10. Karter Moody, 38-07.00

Discus - 1.6kg: 18. Karter Moody, 98-07

Javelin - 800g: 21. Karter Moody, 92-04

Long Jump: 5. Ethan Kroll, 18-11.75

Triple Jump: 6. Ethan Kroll, 35-05.50; 9. Tristin McGannon, 31-01.75

Girl's Results

100 Meters: 5. Laila Roberts, 13.49

400 Meters: 2. Laila Roberts, 1:04.50

100m Hurdles - 33": 12. Hannah Sandness, 20.46

300m Hurdles - 30": 8. Hannah Sandness, 1:02.30

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 8 of 81

**BROWN COUNTY
BROWN COUNTY COMMISSION AGENDA
REGULAR MEETING TUESDAY**

April 15, 2025, 8:45 A.M.

COMMISSIONER'S CHAMBERS, COURTHOUSE ANNEX - 25 MARKET STREET, ABERDEEN SD

1. Call To Order - Pledge of Allegiance
2. Approval of the Agenda
3. Opportunity for Public Comment
4. Resolution #2025-18 Proclamation for National Public Safety Telecommunications Week
5. First Reading of the following Ordinances:
 - a. Ord. # 292 – Rezone for Donald & Jolene Bonn
 - b. Ord. # 293 – Rezone for Donald & Becky Wegleitner
6. Dirk Rogers, Highway Superintendent
 - a. R-O-W for Travis Mulder
 - b. Department Update
7. Scott Meints, Emergency Management Director
 - a. Local Emergency Management Performance Grant (LEMPG) Update
 - b. Discuss Burn Ban
8. Approve & Authorize Chairman to sign the following Fair Contracts:
 - a. NSU Swim Team – Stagehand Services
 - b. Aberdeen Security & Investigations – Provide Security
9. Consent Calendar
 - a. Approval of Meeting Minutes for April 8, 2025:
 - i. General Meeting
 - ii. Brown County Board of Equalization
 - iii. Consolidated Board of Equalization
 - b. Claims
 - c. HR Report
 - d. Disinterment Permit
 - e. Lease Agreement
 - f. Travel Requests
 - g. Lottery Permit for Elm Lake Action Committee
 - h. Approve Sponsorship Agreement
10. Other Business
11. Executive Session (if requested per SDCL 1-25-2)
12. Adjourn

Brown County Commission Meeting

Please join my meeting from your computer, tablet, or smartphone.

<https://meet.goto.com/BrCoCommission>

You can also dial in using your phone. United States: +1 (872) 240-3311

Access Code: 601-168-909 #

Get the app now and be ready when your first meeting starts: <https://meet.goto.com/install>

Public comment provides an opportunity for the public to address the county commission.

Presentations may not exceed 3 minutes.

Public comment will be limited to 10 minutes (or at the discretion of the board) - Public comment will be accepted virtually when the virtual attendance option is available.

Official Recordings of Commission Meetings along with the Minutes can be found at <https://www.brown.sd.us/node/454>

EQUALIZATION BOARDS

11:00 AM - BROWN COUNTY BOARD OF EQUALIZATION

- Contested Appeals

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 9 of 81



Graduates of the 12th class of the South Dakota Agricultural and Rural Leadership Program include, (left to right): Mariah Kessler, Sioux Falls; Carson Stange, Stratford; Hailey Bies, Fairburn; Russell Samson, Aberdeen; Taylor Sumption, Frederick; Frank Kralicek Jr., Yankton; Justin Boerboom, Whitewood; Luke Henrich, Milbank; Kevin Blagg, Salem; Elliot Kinnander, Watertown; Rhett Miller, Sioux Falls; Lane LeBrun, Dell Rapids; Erick Roskens, Emery; Jenna Adamson, Chamberlain; Tyler Samuelson, Platte; Melisa Goss, Hartford; Willie Hinker, Canton; Kiera Leddy, Aberdeen; Johnathon Noonan, Howard; Tina Erickson, Sioux Falls; Tami Biskeborn, Mitchell; Kaleb Bowman, Aberdeen; Dani Herring, Rapid City; Nicolas Passone, Brookings; Kim McGraw, Clark; Sienna Mayer, Sioux Falls; Philip De Groot, Sioux Falls; Andrew Wiebenga, Yankton. (Courtesy Photo)

South Dakota Agricultural and Rural Leaders Graduate from 18-month Program

The South Dakota Agricultural and Rural Leadership Program (SDARL) graduated 29 leaders in Class XII during a ceremony held in Baltic, SD, on March 30. The event was the culmination of an 18-month leadership development journey that began in November 2023.

"We're confident that these new graduates will continue the tradition of leadership in their communities and throughout the state," noted SDARL Program Director Jennifer Henrie. "They have demonstrated solid personal and professional growth through the program."

The SDARL leadership program is a series of educational seminars that includes meetings in communities across South Dakota, one week in Washington, D.C., and an international study seminar. Class XII studied agriculture and rural issues in Argentina. Participants develop the skills, knowledge, and character necessary to serve in leadership roles in their communities. The seminar content includes improving public speaking, networking, broadening understanding of diverse cultures, studying local economic development, and increasing knowledge of state, local, national, and international issues affecting the state's most essential industry – agriculture.

"The program is made possible through a funding structure that includes a fee paid by participants, and investments from our alumni, corporations, and associations who share our passion for strong leadership in the state," said Janelle Booth, SDARL CEO. "Because we receive no direct state or federal funding, we're grateful to our funding partners who make this experience possible."

SDARL graduates serve as leaders in many capacities, including past Secretaries of Agriculture, presidents and executive officers of statewide commodity groups, legislators, county commissioners, and in numerous local, state, and national association and business positions. Every day the 355 graduates of the SDARL program have a positive and profound impact on agriculture and rural communities throughout the state.

The SDARL Foundation, a non-profit 501(c)3 corporation, is the management and funding organization for the program. SDARL is currently accepting applications for the next leadership class through May 2, and participants will be selected in July 2025. For more information, visit the SDARL website at www.sdagleadership.com.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 10 of 81



Scooter for Sale

For sale a Kymco scooter super 8 for sale. In good shape. Asking \$1,000 for it. Contact Tina at 605-397-7285. Cash only

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 11 of 81

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

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

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 12 of 81

Pink basket - \$20



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

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 13 of 81

Groton American Legion holds grand reopening event



Legion Post member Ben Smith, with a warm smile, greets customers at the door as they arrive at the door prize table. (Photo by Bruce Babcock)



The Groton American Legion Lounge hosted a grand reopening celebration with a large turnout. The Legion had recently completed a successful remodel of the lounge. (Photos by Bruce Babcock)



Auxiliary members L-R Jan Seibel and Meri Erickson pose with Legion member Brent Wienk. The auxiliary was in charge of the great food that was served. (Photo by Bruce Babcock)



CALVARY'S LOVE STORY

*Easter Cantata presented by
Aberdeen Alliance Church and
Groton C&MA Church*

**APRIL
13
2025**

**GROTON C&MA
CHURCH**

**6:30 PM
706 N MAIN ST.
GROTON, SD**

**APRIL
16
2025**

**ABERDEEN
ALLIANCE CHURCH**

**7:00 PM
1106 S. ROOSEVELT ST.
ABERDEEN, SD**



COMMENTARY

While criticizing absent Republicans, Democrats should look for their own candidates

by Dana Hess

As the editor of the daily newspaper in Pierre, I operated under the rule that editors should edit and reporters should write. This was back in the day when newspapers still had staffs. I had three reporters and they kept me busy at my desk, so it was rare that I would write a news story.

I can't remember the exact circumstances but for some reason, one day during Bill Janklow's second tenure as governor, I was filling in for a reporter at the Capitol and happened to ask a prominent Democrat why his party had such a hard time getting enough candidates for legislative offices. He blamed Janklow, a Republican.

It was impossible to get candidates to run for office, the Democrat said, because they didn't want to come to Pierre to be bullied by Janklow.

In the next century, as a freelance writer, I was once again in Pierre, this time to cover the impeachment proceedings for Attorney General Jason Ravnsborg. During a break in the action, I asked another legislative Democrat why his party failed to field enough candidates for office. He either didn't understand the question or didn't want to answer it. He gave a rambling discourse about overcoming the long distances it took to get Native Americans to polling places and how voters had a tough time distinguishing between the values of South Dakota Democrats and the values of those raging liberals in Washington, D.C.

In the most recent election, I used some of this space to praise the state Democratic Party for its efforts to find more legislative candidates than usual. This was a hollow effort, as it turned out that some of the candidates were just ballot placeholders waiting for real candidates to come along, or they simply lost interest. In any case, some of them dropped off the ballot. Democrats, as they traditionally do in this state, ceded majorities in the House and Senate before a single vote was cast in the 2024 election.

After the 2024 election, the future didn't seem bright for Democrats in South Dakota. They had just three of 35 seats in the Senate and six of 70 seats in the House. They don't hold any of the statewide elected offices. But now, in the spring of 2025, they have been gifted with a first-rate recruiting tool and his name is Donald J. Trump.

During the first months of his second term, Trump and his buddy Elon Musk have done their best to push the federal government into disarray. They've fired thousands of federal workers, shuttered federal



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

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 16 of 81

offices, disrupted services to taxpayers and cut congressionally approved funding. Even usually staid South Dakotans have taken to the streets in protest.

Now the state's Democratic Party wants part of the action, promising a series of town hall meetings. These will be held in protest of the state's Republican congressional delegation's decision to follow the advice of their party leaders and stay away from the public that they serve. It seems that discretion is not only the better part of valor, it's also a way to avoid screaming protesters upset about the future of Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, federal grant cuts and any number of other Trump/Musk shenanigans that have made it look like the country is run by Keystone Kops.

Of course people will be at these Democratic town halls to vent and organizers should let them. But they would do well to quietly take some names. Not necessarily the names of the people who complain the loudest or are the most emotional. It would be best to be on the lookout for those who are well-spoken. Perhaps even get the names of some disenchanted Republicans.

It will be easy for Democrats to appear as the party of reason at these town halls. It should also be easy for them to use these meetings to recruit a roster of candidates to run for office as Democrats.

The town halls are organized to ask where the state's Republican congressional delegation has been hiding. If South Dakota Democrats turn in the same woeful effort at candidate recruitment in the next election, it wouldn't be a bad idea to organize similar town halls to find out where their party has been hiding all these years.

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

Drugmaker sues SD over law preserving broad access to discounts for hospitals, pharmacies

Maker of Botox, Humira says state puts 'thumb on the scale' of pharmaceutical market

BY: JOHN HULT - APRIL 11, 2025 4:59 PM

A drugmaker is suing South Dakota over a law that bars the company from limiting drug discounts used to prop up providers who serve Medicaid patients.

The lawsuit is from Chicago-based AbbVie Inc., which sells the wrinkle-remover Botox and the arthritis drug Humira, among other products. The litigation challenges the legality of a bill signed into law by South Dakota Gov. Larry Rhoden on March 11.

Senate Bill 154 bars drug companies from limiting the number of pharmacies that hospitals and clinics can contract with to distribute drugs through the federal 340B program.

The bill's supporters called 340B a lifeline for rural health care providers and pharmacies. Those providers are kneecapped by Medicare and Medicaid reimbursements too low to keep the lights on, they said, and they need the supplemental income.

The bill's opponents, however, argued that the way providers use 340B to recoup their expenses — by getting drugs on the cheap and marking them



The federal courthouse in Sioux Falls. (John Hult/
South Dakota Searchlight)

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 17 of 81

up — is unsustainable, harmful to patients and interferes in the free market.

The Legislature sided with providers.

In its lawsuit, AbbVie Inc. alleges that South Dakota's new law amounts to an illegal "taking" of the company's products by forcing it to provide them at a discount through contract pharmacies without any say in which or how many pharmacies are involved.

The company also argues that SB 154 alters the terms of a federal law South Dakota legislators did not write and cannot legally modify, and that it seeks to regulate interstate commerce in a way only Congress has the power to do.

The bill "places an improper thumb on the scale and tilts the bargaining power in favor of in-state pharmacies and covered entities at the expense of out-of-state manufacturers," the lawsuit says.

Other states have passed similar laws and faced similar lawsuits.

AbbVie filed its lawsuit Thursday in U.S. District Court in South Dakota. Six days ago, a federal judge in Minnesota dismissed a similar case challenging the legality of a similar law in that state.

The Eighth Circuit of Appeals ruled in favor of Arkansas for its version of the law.

The pharmaceutical industry has also won some victories, though. Last summer, in a case filed by United Therapeutics Corporation in Washington, D.C., a three-judge panel upheld a lower court's ruling that the law behind the 340B program doesn't bar drugmakers from imposing limitations on how it distributes drugs through the program.

Attorney General Marty Jackley is a named defendant in the South Dakota case, as is Larry Deiter, director of the state Division of Insurance.

Jackley's office defends state law in court, regardless of Jackley's status as a named defendant in a case. His spokesman, Tony Mangan, told South Dakota Searchlight on Friday that the state had not yet been served with a copy of the lawsuit.

History, changes to program

The 340B program requires drugmakers who want to participate in Medicaid and Medicare to discount their prices for hospitals, clinics and other providers that serve low-income patients. Those "covered entities" can then sell those drugs at a higher price and use the difference to help fill budget gaps and keep the doors open for patients.

When it became law in 1992, 340B was limited to a small subset of hospitals and clinics, like those serving mostly Medicaid patients. The Affordable Care Act of 2010 expanded 340B to a wider range of providers, roping in places that act as "sole community hospitals" for Medicaid patients who reside in rural geographies. Since then, according to a report from the American Hospital Association, the number of rural providers using it has more than doubled.

What's also happened, according to the lawsuit from AbbVie, is an expansion of access to lower prices by contract pharmacies.

Commercial pharmacies don't qualify as "covered entities" under 340B, meaning they don't have access to discounted drugs unless they contract with a health care provider who does.

The lawsuit paints the agreements between Medicaid-serving providers and their contracted pharmacies as a way to make money on the backs of drugmakers and low-income patients.

"Instead of serving the covered entities' uninsured and low-income patients, the for-profit contract pharmacies acquire manufacturers' drugs at the federally discounted price, sell them to patients (including indigent patients) at full price, and pocket the difference," the lawsuit says.

South Dakota providers: Program keeps us afloat

Lobbyists for South Dakota's health care systems, rural hospitals and pharmacists offered a different perspective on the arrangements.

Mobridge Regional Hospital Director John Ayoub told lawmakers in February that his nonprofit system serves clients across North and South Dakota.

"We are the only hospital providing obstetrical services and delivering babies, as well as the only hospital providing general and trauma surgery services in at least a 100 mile radius in every direction," Ayoub said.

Many of its patients qualify for Medicaid, Ayoub said, and low reimbursement rates mean the Mobridge system often operates in the red. It lost \$600,000 last year, he said, and \$1 million the year before.

Without the financial prop-up of 340B — funded by drugmakers, not taxpayers — some services might have to end and "people will die."

"This is not hyperbole," he said. "It's just a fact."

Dillon Kjerstad operates independent pharmacies in Philp and Custer. He said the ability to collect a "reasonable fee" through 340B helps him keep the doors open. If drug companies were able to limit contract pharmacies, it might make it impossible for him to continue offering drugs to Medicaid patients.

"Driving 90 miles to Rapid City in the dead of winter just isn't an option for my pharmacy's senior diabetic patient who needs medications now," Kjerstad said Feb. 19.

Drug company lobbyists and the lobbyist for a free-market political organization told lawmakers that the bill seeks to solve a problem that ought to be solved by Congress.

Sen. Sydney Davis, R-Burbank, voted in favor of SB 154. Before casting her vote, though, she offered a nod to the notion that 340B fills a gap created by low federal reimbursement rates.

"Hospitals and clinics and pharmacies are playing the cards that they've been dealt," Davis said. "And Congress needs to take action."

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

Noem cheers court order requiring immigrants without legal status to register and carry documents

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA - APRIL 11, 2025 11:59 AM

WASHINGTON — Millions of immigrants in the country without legal authorization are required as of Friday to register with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security after a federal judge rejected advocacy groups' request to pause the requirement.

They'll also have to carry documents proving their registration.

The Thursday decision from U.S. District Court Judge Trevor Neil McFadden of the District of Columbia allows the Trump administration to issue hefty fines and potential prison sentences if those subject to the registration requirement do not comply.

McFadden, who was appointed by President Donald Trump in 2017, said in his ruling that the advocacy groups lacked legal standing — meaning they had not shown how they would be harmed by the requirement — to bring the suit.

"As organizations, many of their harms are too speculative, and they have failed to show that the Rule will erode their core missions," McFadden wrote in his order.

In a statement, DHS Secretary Kristi Noem cheered the order.

"President Trump and I have a clear message for those in our country illegally: leave now. If you leave now, you may have the opportunity to return and enjoy our freedom and live the American dream," Noem said.

The Migration Policy Institute, an immigration think tank, estimates that between 2.2 million and 3.2 million immigrants will have to register. The registration requirement could be a powerful tool in the Trump administration's efforts to carry out mass deportations.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 19 of 81

Registration requirements

DHS announced the new requirement in February. Under the rule, immigrants aged 14 and older who are required to register will need to carry registration documents at all times or risk potential prison terms or fines of up to \$5,000.

Immigrants covered by the requirement must submit fingerprints and other biometric and personal information through an online application handled by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. Once an application is approved, the agency will provide documentation that immigrants must carry at all times.

The suit, brought by immigration advocacy groups, argued the Trump administration violated proper rulemaking procedures in creating the application. The groups also warned in court documents that use of the application "will lead to racial profiling and the mistaken targeting of U.S. citizens."

The registration requirement is authorized under a wartime act known as the Alien Registration Act of 1940 that was first used in World War II.

The requirement was rarely used until the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. During that time, any noncitizen males older than 16 who hailed from 25 Muslim-majority countries had to register with the U.S. government.

The program, the National Security Entry-Exit Registration System, led to no terrorism convictions and was dissolved in 2016.

Under the requirement in place Friday, those who are required to register include immigrants who entered the U.S. without legal authority and Canadian visitors in the U.S. for more than 30 days.

Those who do not have to register include lawful permanent residents, immigrants with work visas or certain other visas and those in removal proceedings.

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



Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem walks past reporters after doing a TV interview outside of the White House on March 10, 2025. (Photo by Anna Money-

maker/Getty Images)

COMMENTARY

A nation that can't protect its health can't protect its future

by Jennifer Folliard

Public health should never be a partisan punching bag. Here in South Dakota, our values — protecting life, ensuring security and investing wisely — aren't just slogans. They are commitments. They're the promises we make to our children, to our neighbors and to ourselves. And now, more than ever, we must live up to them.

Every single day, often without recognition, public health professionals across our state and nation are working to keep us safe. They make sure the water flowing from our taps is clean. That the air we breathe is safe. That the food on our tables won't make our families sick. Their work is quiet, often invisible — but it is absolutely essential.

And yet, this vital system is under attack.

The recent layoffs at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, combined with ongoing threats

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 20 of 81

to eliminate life-saving grants and delay critical services, are more than just bureaucratic reshuffling. It's dismantling our first line of defense. These aren't just numbers on a spreadsheet. They're the people who ensure vaccines reach our communities, prevent disease outbreaks, and help us weather crises with strength and resilience. Here in South Dakota, we will feel the impact. When federal support is gutted, it means fewer resources to prevent disease, less capacity to respond to emergencies and more South Dakotans left behind.

And this is just the beginning. Looming on the horizon are deeper cuts — cuts that would tear at the very fabric of our public health safety net. Congress will decide whether to cut basic needs like health care and food. The ripple effects of those cuts will be felt in rural community grocery stores and across health care systems, two anchors keeping our communities alive and vibrant. These cuts threaten not only individual well-being but the strength of our workforce, the stability of our economy and the security of our communities.

Because here's the truth: Public health is not just about preventing illness. It's about building a society where everyone has the opportunity to thrive. When one person is sick, struggling or unable to work, we all feel the ripple effects. Public health is the quiet force that keeps us connected, protected and strong.

And when it's working well, you barely notice it. That's the paradox. The fewer headlines we make, the better we're doing. But that quiet success has come at a cost — we've failed to tell our story. We haven't always shown the true value of our work. That's on us. And we're ready to do better.

As someone who has spent nearly two decades in this field, I can no longer stay silent. I'm raising the alarm, but I'm also raising a call to action. We must stand together to protect and strengthen our public health systems — not just for the crises we can see, but for the ones we don't yet know are coming.

Because a nation that can't protect its health cannot protect its future. But together, with courage and commitment, we can choose a better path. Let's build it — together.

Jennifer Folliard, MPH, RDN, is a registered dietitian with a wealth of experience in public health systems and policies. In 2023, Jennifer founded Health + Nutrition First, a public health consulting firm focusing on maternal and child health and nutrition security. Before her work in South Dakota, she spent a decade in Washington, D.C., conducting research on state and federal policy and advocating for these policies to build effective public health systems.

Trump authorizes U.S. military to begin occupation of federal land along southern border

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA - APRIL 11, 2025 7:15 PM

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump late Friday signed a memorandum directing several agencies to start militarizing a stretch of the southern border, an escalation of the administration's use of the U.S. military amid its immigration crackdown.

The move, which The Washington Post first reported last month, could potentially put U.S. military members in direct contact with migrants, a possible violation of federal law.

The memo directs the Interior Department to allow the Defense Department to have jurisdiction over portions of federal land known as the Roosevelt Reservation, excluding any Native American reservations.

By creating a military buffer zone that stretches across the U.S.-Mexico border in Arizona, California and New Mexico, it means any migrant crossing into the United States would be trespassing on a military base, therefore allowing active-duty troops to hold them until U.S. Border Patrol agents arrive.

National and military experts have raised concerns that giving control over the land to the military could violate the Posse Comitatus Act, an 1878 law that generally prohibits the military from being used in domestic law enforcement.

The Friday memo instructs its "phased" implementation within 45 days, and says it could be expanded over time.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 21 of 81

The memo is directed at the secretaries of the departments of Defense, Interior, Agriculture and Homeland Security.

"The complexity of the current situation requires that our military take a more direct role in securing our southern border than in the recent past," according to the memo.

Friday's announcement comes ahead of a report that is due to Trump by April 20 from the secretaries of Defense and Homeland Security with recommendations on whether or not to use the Insurrection Act of 1807 to aid in mass deportations.

The memo states: "At any time, the Secretary of Defense may extend activities under this memorandum to additional Federal lands along the southern border in coordination with the Secretary of Homeland Security, the Assistant to the President and Homeland Security Advisor, and other executive departments and agencies as appropriate."

The memo also says that it's part of an executive order Trump earlier this year signed, "Clarifying the Military's Role in Protecting the Territorial Integrity of the United States."

That executive order is one of five that lay out the use of military forces within the U.S. borders and extend other executive powers to speed up the president's immigration crackdown.

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

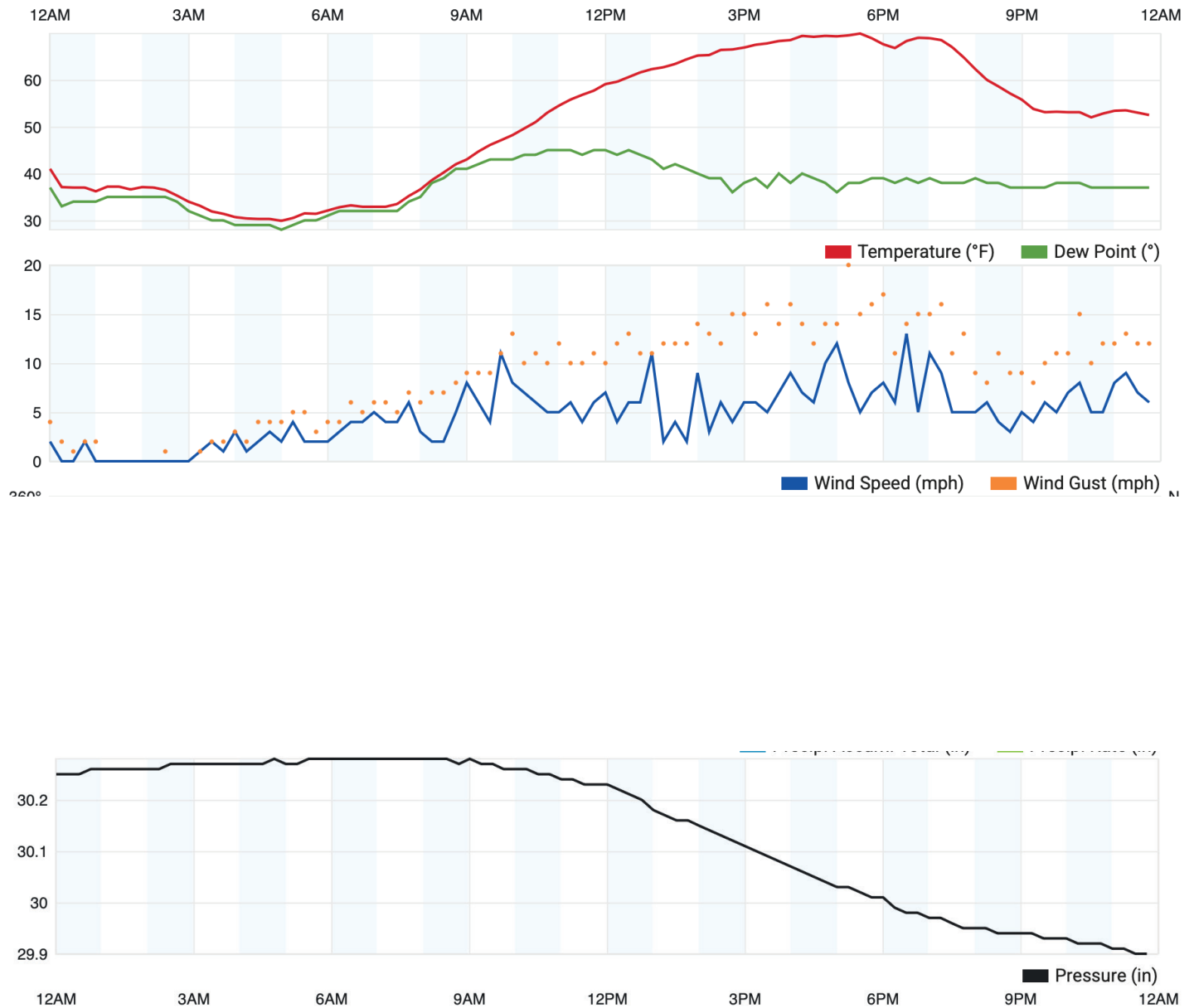


A section of the U.S.-Mexico border wall near El Paso, Texas, on June 6, 2024. (Photo by Ariana Figueroa/
States Newsroom)

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 22 of 81

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 23 of 81

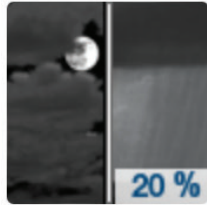
Today



High: 72 °F

Partly Sunny

Tonight



Low: 44 °F

Mostly Cloudy
then Slight
Chance
Showers

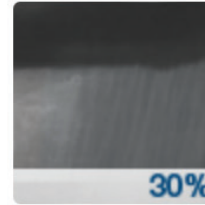
Sunday



High: 63 °F

Breezy.
Partly Sunny
then Slight
Chance

Sunday Night



Low: 36 °F

Chance
Showers and
Breezy

Monday



High: 52 °F

Breezy.
Mostly Cloudy
then Chance
Showers



High Wind Watch on Sunday

April 12, 2025
5:54 AM

Key Messages

- A **High Wind Watch** has been issued for Sunday afternoon through late Sunday night
 - ◆ Potential for **sustained winds up to 40 mph and gusts up to 60 mph** in areas
- Dry grasses and strong winds will create very high grassland fire danger across central South Dakota Sunday
 - ◆ Any fires that ignite will spread rapidly & become difficult to control or suppress



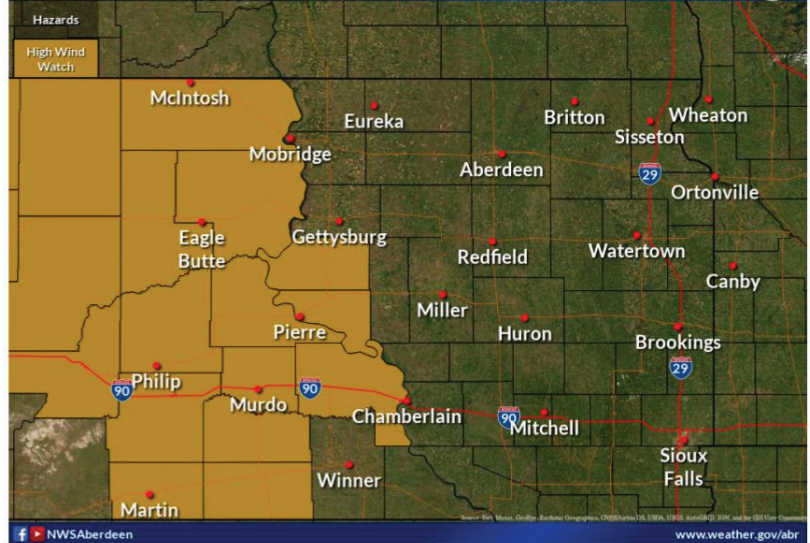
High Wind Watch On Sunday

In Effect From 1 PM CDT Sunday To 4 AM CDT Monday

Weather Forecast Office

Aberdeen, SD

Issued Apr 12, 2025 4:46 AM CDT



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Very strong northwest winds up to 40 mph with gusts potentially up to 60 mph are possible on Sunday into Sunday night.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 24 of 81

Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 70 °F at 5:31 PM

Low Temp: 30 °F at 4:57 AM

Wind: 20 mph at 5:09 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 13 hours, 26 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 85 in 1931

Record Low: 9 in 1961

Average High: 56

Average Low: 30

Average Precip in April.: 0.56

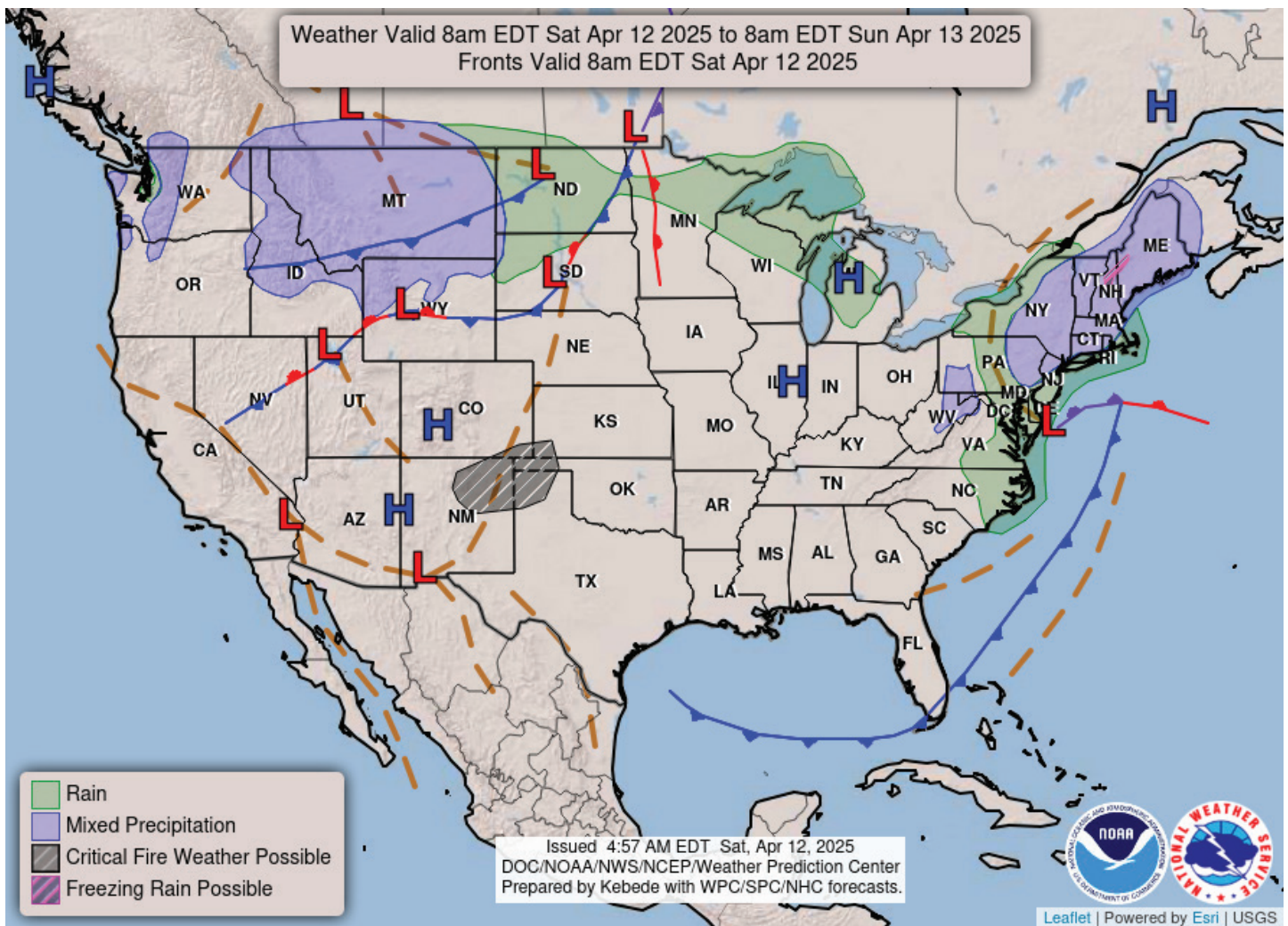
Precip to date in April.: 1.07

Average Precip to date: 2.62

Precip Year to Date: 1.70

Sunset Tonight: 8:16:26 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:47:51 am



Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 25 of 81

Today in Weather History

April 12th, 1970: A strong spring storm affected the northern and western two-thirds of South Dakota. Heavy snow fell throughout the morning, dumping over a foot of snow over a large area of the state. Winds whipped the snow into 2 to 4-foot drifts across much of northern South Dakota. The Aberdeen area was the hardest hit, with around 17 inches reported. While southeast South Dakota, southwest Minnesota, and northwest Iowa did not feel the storm's effects, east-central South Dakota was not as fortunate. Freezing drizzle and freezing rain resulted in heavy icing in east central South Dakota, causing extensive damage. The ice storm caused power outages to 20 to 80% of the rural electric service in the area.

1927 - A tornado wiped out the town of Rock Springs, TX, killing 72 persons and causing 1.2 million dollars damage. The tornado, more than one mile in width, destroyed 235 of 247 buildings, leaving no trace of lumber or contents in many cases. Many survivors were bruised by large hail which fell after the passage of the tornado. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1934 - Winds atop Mount Washington, NH, averaged 186 mph for five minutes, with a peak gust of 231 mph, the highest wind speed ever clocked in the world. (David Ludlum)

1987 - A cold front crossing the central U.S. produced heavy snow in the Central Rockies, and severe thunderstorms over Kansas and Oklahoma. Snowfall totals ranged up to 16 inches at Red Mountain Pass CO. Thunderstorm winds gusted to 87 mph at Ponca City OK. Winds associated with the cold front itself gusted to 69 mph at Tucumcari NM. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Snow blanketed the Southern Appalachians. Totals in North Carolina ranged up to 17 inches at Mitchell. Winds at Flat Top Mountain gusted to 80 mph. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Twenty-two cities in the south central and eastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date, including Elkins WV with a low of 15 degrees, and Baton Rouge LA with a reading of 37 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - Arctic air invaded the central U.S. Lincoln, NE, reported a record low of 17 degrees. Thunderstorms developing along the arctic cold front produced heavy snow in north central Kansas, wind gusts to 61 mph at Midland TX, and wind gusts to 69 mph at Rawlins WY. Warm weather prevailed in the southwestern U.S. Las Vegas NV reported a record high of 91 degrees, and on the 13th, Sacramento CA reported a record high of 95 degrees. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

2010 - One-inch diameter hail falls in Fresno, CA. Two condominiums are destroyed by thunderstorms in California's San Joaquin Valley. Up to three funnel clouds were also seen in the region.



Judgment for Believers

In Christ, we receive not only the blessed assurance of heaven but also opportunities to honor Him now.

2 Corinthians 5:1-10: English Standard Version

Our Heavenly Dwelling

¹ For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. ² For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, ³ if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. ⁴ For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. ⁵ He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

⁶ So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, ⁷ for we walk by faith, not by sight. ⁸ Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹ So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

As believers in Jesus Christ, we are assured of our salvation. We need not fear eternity, because we know that we will dwell with the heavenly Father forever in paradise. What blessed assurance!

But salvation is about more than simply getting into heaven. It's about the process of becoming increasingly like Jesus while we're living on earth. In fact, we will someday be asked to account for the way we used our opportunities, abilities, and resources here.

In His parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30), Jesus shared the importance of wisely investing all that our Father has bestowed on us. God gives His children different types and amounts of wealth, gifts, blessings, and talents. What matters to the Lord is the way we make use of them, not how much we have. Do we take what He has given and selfishly utilize it all for our own good and protection? Or do we generously and cheerfully use those gifts and skills to serve the Lord?

Stop to consider your blessings. How do you utilize all that the heavenly Father has bestowed upon you? Each one of us must choose how we are going to live. It is our responsibility to be faithful servants of the living God, doing whatever He calls us to do.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 27 of 81

The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition Subscription Form

All prices listed include 6.5% Sales Tax

- ☐ Black & White \$48.99/year
- ☐ Colored \$79.88/year
- ☐ Colored \$42.60/6 months
- ☐ E-Weekly* \$31.95/year

* The E-Weekly is a PDF file emailed to you each week. It does not grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City _____

State, Zip Code _____

E-mail _____

Phone Number _____

Mail Completed Form to:

Groton Independent

P.O. Box 34

Groton, SD 57445-0034

or scan and email to paperpaul@grotonsd.net

Groton Daily Independent www.397news.com Subscription Form

This option will grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

- ☐ 1 Month \$15.98
- ☐ 3 Months \$26.63
- ☐ 6 Months \$31.95
- ☐ 9 Months \$42.60
- ☐ 12 Months \$53.25

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City _____

State, Zip Code _____

Phone Number _____

The following will be used for your log-in information.

E-mail _____

Password _____

Pay with Paypal. Type the following into your browser window:

paypal.me/paperpaul

Pay with Venmo: @paperpaul Phone Number to Confirm: 7460

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 28 of 81



WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.11.25

15 37 38 56 58 19

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$96,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.09.25

12 19 30 42 46 7

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$28,870,000

NEXT DRAW: 13 Hrs 44 Mins 42 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.11.25

7 9 10 31 34 10

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 13 Hrs 59 Mins 43 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.09.25

1 14 23 30 32

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$101,000

NEXT DRAW: 13 Hrs 59 Mins 43 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.09.25

2 15 44 60 68 23

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 28 Mins 43 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.09.25

4 29 37 55 67 10

Power Play: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$82,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 28 Mins 43 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 29 of 81

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

UK Parliament meets in emergency Saturday session to approve rescue of British Steel

By PAN PYLAS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — U.K. lawmakers returned to Parliament from their Easter break on Saturday to approve an emergency rescue of the country's last remaining factory that makes steel from scratch.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer summoned lawmakers for the highly unusual Saturday sitting to debate a bill aimed at blocking British Steel's Chinese owners, Jingye Group, from closing the two massive blast furnaces at its Scunthorpe plant in the north of England that are key in the steelmaking process.

If the bill passes, which is expected, Business Secretary Jonathan Reynolds will have the power to direct the company's board and work force, ensure its 2,700 workers get paid and order the raw materials necessary to keep the blast furnaces running.

The decision to introduce the emergency legislation was given added urgency by the recent move by Jingye to cancel orders for the iron pellets used in the blast furnaces. Without the pellets and other raw materials, such as coking coal, they would likely have to shut for good, potentially within days, as the furnaces are extremely difficult and expensive to restart once they have cooled.

That would mean the U.K. would be the only country in the Group of Seven industrial nations without the capacity to make its own steel from scratch rather than from scrap. The repercussions would be huge for industries like construction, defense and rail.

"In this situation, with the clock being run down, doing nothing was not an option," Reynolds told lawmakers. "We could not, will not and never will stand idly by while heat seeps from the U.K.'s remaining blast furnaces without any planning, any due process or any respect for the consequences, and that is why I needed colleagues here today."

Reynolds said the legislation does not transfer ownership of the plant to the state, but conceded that was a potential discussion for a future date and possibly the "likely" option. He also confirmed that given the steelwork's financial difficulties, its current market value was effectively zero.

It's unclear what role Jingye, owner of British Steel since 2020, will have in the day-to-day running of the steelworks once the legislation passes. But should it fail to abide by the new laws, the company and its executives would face legal sanction.

Jingye, which has said the Scunthorpe plant is financially unsustainable due to "challenging market conditions" and increased environmental costs, has for months sought a government rescue but discussions have failed to reach a successful outcome. Last month's decision by U.S. President Donald Trump to impose a 25% tariffs on imported steel was another blow.

At its height in the postwar period, British steelmaking was a global leader, employing more than 300,000 people, before cheaper offerings from China and other countries hit production. It now employs about 40,000 directly, with the industry accounting for just 0.1% of the British economy.

Britain's remaining steelmakers are under pressure to reduce carbon emissions. Most have shifted to electric arc furnaces that make steel from recycled material. That has left Scunthorpe as the only factory with blast furnaces to make so-called virgin steel.

The last time lawmakers were called back from their recess to sit on a Saturday was in 1982, in the aftermath of Argentina's invasion of the Falkland Islands in the south Atlantic.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 31 of 81

Take a trip to Ohio to learn about William McKinley, Trump's much-admired Gilded Age president

By JULIE CARR SMYTH Associated Press

CANTON, Ohio (AP) — If you've been intrigued by President Donald Trump's praise of his long-ago White House predecessor William McKinley and yearn to know more, it's time you head to Ohio.

America's 25th president was born and is buried in the Buckeye State, where museums and monuments to him abound. Websites promoting the state's McKinley attractions have seen a surge in page views since Trump began highlighting McKinley's Gilded Age presidency, which ran from 1897 until his assassination in 1901. Officials hope a bump in summer tourism will follow.

"I don't think there has been as much interest in William McKinley in at least a century, in terms of kind of the public consciousness," said Kevin Kern, an associate professor of history at the University of Akron. The last time was in 1928, when McKinley's face was printed on the \$500 bill.

While Trump has attached himself to McKinley, Kern says the two Republicans' political positions are, in many respects, "really apples and oranges."

In McKinley's day, the United States was just becoming the world's foremost manufacturing power. Tariffs were viewed as a way to protect that momentum. Today, the economy is global.

Kern also noted that Republicans took huge losses in the 1890 election after the imposition of the McKinley Tariff, and that McKinley appeared to change his tune on tariffs in a speech delivered the day before he was assassinated in 1901.

Within an easy drive of Cleveland, you can find a host of sites for learning more about McKinley's politics and personal life. Here's a closer look:

A monument to McKinley's birth

McKinley was born in 1843 in Niles, a Youngstown suburb about 70 miles (112.65 kilometers) east of Cleveland. Here, you'll find the National McKinley Birthplace Memorial, a classical Greek marble monument that sits on the site of McKinley's former one-room schoolhouse. A McKinley statue stands at the center of the well-manicured Court of Honor, which is flanked by a small museum and the community's library. The McKinley birthplace home and research center sits nearby.

Tackling McKinley's legacy in Canton

Canton is perhaps best known for the Pro Football Hall of Fame. The city, about 60 miles (96.56 kilometers) from either Cleveland or Niles, is where the kindly and mild-mannered McKinley spent most of his adult life. A young McKinley settled here after serving in the Civil War, began his law career and married Ida Saxton McKinley.

The McKinley Presidential Library and Museum is a great place to dig into the shared policy goals — especially tariffs and territorial expansion — that attract Trump to McKinley.

An animatronic William and Ida McKinley greet visitors to the museum's McKinley Gallery, which features interactive opportunities as well as historical furnishings, clothing, jewelry and campaign memorabilia. The building also houses a presidential archive and a science center complete with dinosaurs and a planetarium. The site's dominant feature, however, is the imposing McKinley Monument, which looms on a hill atop 108 stone steps. It houses the mausoleum where the McKinleys and their two young daughters are buried.

More McKinley memorabilia is on display at the Canton Classic Car Museum.

A McKinley statue buffeted by history

The residents of Arcata, California, were not so enamored of McKinley's imperialist legacy.

In 2018, amid national soul-searching over historical monuments, the liberal college town decided to remove an 8-foot sculpture of McKinley, the annexation treaty for Hawaii in his hand, from their town square. Over a century old, the statue had been moved to Arcata from San Francisco, where it was toppled in the 1906 earthquake.

It now stands at the stately Stark County Courthouse in downtown Canton, where McKinley worked as a county prosecutor before being elected a congressman and Ohio governor. It was placed there in 2023 after being bought back from Arcata by a Canton foundation and restored.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 32 of 81

Glimpsing the McKinleys' home life

A three-block walk from the courthouse is the Saxton-McKinley House, part of the National First Ladies Historic Site operated in partnership with the National Park Service. Originally Ida's home, the elegant Victorian mansion was the couple's residence at different times during their marriage. It's not the house from which McKinley conducted his fabled "front porch campaign" of 1896; that was demolished in the 1930s.

A replica of the porch and the actual chair McKinley sat in can be found at the McKinley museum, however, and a tabletop replica of his "campaign house" is on view at the Stark County District Library, which now sits on the site.

If you'd like to see the porch where another Ohio president carried out his front porch campaign, try the James A. Garfield Historic Site in Mentor, about 30 miles (48.28 kilometers) northwest of Cleveland.

Tale of two churches

The granddaughter of John Saxton, a city pioneer and founder of the Canton Repository newspaper, Ida Saxton attended Canton's First Presbyterian Church, a few blocks from their home. Now known as Christ Presbyterian Church, this is where the McKinleys were married in 1871, the "new" stone building's tower yet uncompleted. William's church was the nearby Crossroads United Methodist. Ida had a series of stained glass panels depicting the phases of her husband's life installed there after this death.

For the hardy traveler

If you're willing to travel a bit farther afield, several other sites could add to your McKinley experience. '

First is the Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Library and Museums, located about 85 miles (136.79 kilometers) east of Cleveland in Fremont. Known as Spiegel Grove, the site established in 1916 is home of the nation's first presidential library. Its museum explores Hayes' service in the Civil War, when he was McKinley's commander.

In Columbus, about 150 miles (241.40 kilometers) southwest of Cleveland, a McKinley statue in front of the Ohio Statehouse faces west. This was where McKinley, then governor, would stand to doff his hat to Ida as she looked out the window of their apartment at the Neil House. The legendary hotel was torn down in 1980 to make way for the Huntington Center now dominating that block.

Rounding out the timeline of McKinley's life, a 96-foot tall obelisk memorializing him sits on Niagara Square in Buffalo, New York. He was assassinated by an anarchist while appearing at the Pan-American Exposition there in 1901.

Vultures are among the least loved animals.

African conservationists are trying to change that

By GERALD IMRAY Associated Press

CAPE TOWN, South Africa (AP) — Vultures have an image problem. Seen as ugly and associated with death, they are among the least loved animals in the world. But conservationists in Africa are trying to change that.

They've launched an effort to save endangered vultures by trying to put a dollar figure on their incredible value.

A recent report by the BirdLife International conservation organization estimated that vultures are worth \$1.8 billion a year to certain ecosystems in southern Africa, which might surprise anyone not familiar with the clean-up, pest control and anti-poaching work performed by one of the most efficient scavengers on the planet.

"They are not up there on the pretty scale. And they are not popular. But we know they are very useful," said Fadzai Matsvimbo, an extinction prevention coordinator at BirdLife International.

The report comes at an important time for Africa's vultures; six of the 11 species found on the continent are listed as endangered or critically endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, which says vultures are highly threatened in many parts of the world. In Africa, some species have declined by nearly 90%, Matsvimbo said.

Conservationists hope the report will make authorities and the public more aware of the positive impact

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 33 of 81

of vultures.

It focused on research in Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe and shows how a wake of vultures — the term for a group of feeding vultures — can strip a decomposing carcass in hours, cleaning up ecosystems, reducing the chance of disease spreading and the presence of pests like rats and feral dogs, which has great benefits to communities.

Vultures also have extremely strong stomach acid, don't get food poisoning and are able to consume and neutralize anthrax, botulism and other bacteria and toxins in carcasses that would kill other animals, removing deadly threats from the environment. Just this week, more than 50 hippos died from suspected anthrax poisoning in a reserve in Congo.

Vultures are nature's "best sanitation services," said Matsvimbo. Conservationists have raised the case of the drastic loss of vultures in India over the last 30 years and how that led to a health crisis. A study published last year said half a million people died in India because of the spread of bacteria and infections in the absence of vultures.

Matsvimbo said vultures in Africa are also used as "sentinels" by game rangers because they are often the first to spot a dead animal and can lead rangers to where poachers might be active. They have even proven useful in helping farmers locate dead or injured livestock.

Vultures are unique among land vertebrates in that they only feed on carrion — dead animals. That makes them especially susceptible to poisoning by humans, either intentionally by poachers and others who want to get rid of them, or by mistake when pests are the target. Hundreds of vultures can die from a single poisoned carcass.

Vultures are also regularly killed or maimed in collisions with powerlines in Africa. And they are increasingly being killed for belief-based reasons, said Kerri Wolter, the CEO of the Vulpro vulture rehabilitation center in South Africa, which treats sick and injured vultures to be released back into the wild.

She said because vultures have such outstanding eyesight and instincts when it comes to finding a dead animal they are viewed by some as being clairvoyant and able to foresee death. Their body parts, and especially their head, are used in potions or as charms to predict the future.

"Our work is to change the mindsets of people," Wolter said. "For them to see vultures and think, wow that is amazing."

Matsvimbo and Wolter both said vultures have been given a raw deal by moviemakers in Hollywood, where they are almost always shown as evil and sinister. Movies have done for vultures what "Jaws" did for sharks, Wolter said.

"I love watching 'The Lion King,' but every time they do the vulture part, my heart breaks," said Matsvimbo. "Vultures are never portrayed in a positive way. I have a bone to chew with these moviemakers. Or should that be bone to pick?"

Trump's China tariff shocks US importers. One CEO calls it 'end of days'

By PAUL WISEMAN and ANNE D'INNOCENZIO AP Business Writers

WASHINGTON (AP) — Rick Woldenberg thought he had come up with a sure-fire plan to protect his Chicago-area educational toy company from President Donald Trump's massive new taxes on Chinese imports.

"When he announced a 20% tariff, I made a plan to survive 40%, and I thought I was being very clever," said Woldenberg, CEO of Learning Resources, a third-generation family business that has been manufacturing in China for four decades. "I had worked out that for a very modest price increase, we could withstand 40% tariffs, which was an unthinkable increase in costs."

His worst-case scenario wasn't worst-case enough. Not even close.

The American president quickly upped the ante with China, raising the levy to 54% to offset what he said were China's unfair trade practices. Then, enraged when China retaliated with tariffs of its own, he upped the levies to a staggering 145%.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 34 of 81

Woldenberg reckons that will push Learning Resource's tariff bill from \$2.3 million last year to \$100.2 million in 2025. "I wish I had \$100 million," he said. "Honest to God, no exaggeration: It feels like the end of days."

'Addicted' to low-price Chinese goods

It might at least be the end of an era of inexpensive consumer goods in America. For four decades, and especially since China joined the World Trade Organization in 2001, Americans have relied on Chinese factories for everything from smartphones to Christmas ornaments.

As tensions between the world's two biggest economies — and geopolitical rivals — have risen over the past decade, Mexico and Canada have supplanted China as America's top source of imported goods and services. But China is still No. 3 — and second behind Mexico in goods alone — and continues to dominate in many categories.

China produces 97% of America's imported baby carriages, 96% of its artificial flowers and umbrellas, 95% of its fireworks, 93% of its children's coloring books and 90% of its combs, according to a report from the Macquarie investment bank.

Over the years, American companies have set up supply chains that depend on thousands of Chinese factories. Low tariffs greased the system. As recently as January 2018, U.S. tariffs on China averaged just over 3%, according to Chad Bown of the Peterson Institute for International Economics.

"American consumers created China," said Joe Jurken, founder of the ABC Group in Milwaukee, which helps U.S. businesses manage supply chains in Asia. "American buyers, the consumers, got addicted to cheap pricing. And the brands and the retailers got addicted to the ease of buying from China."

Slower growth and higher prices

Now Trump, demanding that manufacturers return production to America, is swinging a tariff sledgehammer at the American importers and the Chinese factories they rely on.

"The consequences of tariffs at this scale could be apocalyptic at many levels," said David French, senior vice president of government affairs at the National Retail Foundation.

The Yale University Budget Lab estimates that the tariffs that Trump has announced globally since taking office would lower U.S. economic growth by 1.1 percentage points in 2025.

The tariffs are also likely to push up prices. The University of Michigan's survey of consumer sentiment, out Friday, found that Americans expect long-term inflation to reach 4.4%, up from 4.1% last month.

"Inflation's going up in the United States," said Stephen Roach, former chairman of Morgan Stanley Asia and now at Yale Law School's China Center. "Consumers have figured this out as well."

"No business can run on uncertainty"

It's not just the size of Trump's tariffs that has businesses bewildered and scrambling; it's the speed and the unpredictability with which the president is rolling them out.

On Wednesday, the White House said the tariffs on China would hit 125%. A day later, it corrected that: No, the tariffs would be 145%, including a previously announced 20% to pressure China to do more to stop the flow of fentanyl into the United States.

China in turn has imposed a 125% tariff on the U.S. effective Saturday.

"There is so much uncertainty," said Isaac Larian, the founder of MGA Entertainment, which makes L.O.L. and Bratz dolls, among other toys. "And no business can run on uncertainty."

His company gets 65% of its product from Chinese factories, a share he is trying to winnow down to 40% by the end of the year. MGA also manufactures in India, Vietnam and Cambodia, but Trump is threatening to levy heavy tariffs on those countries, too, after delaying them for 90 days.

Larian estimates that the price of Bratz dolls could go from \$15 to \$40 and that of L.O.L. dolls could double to \$20 by this year's holiday season.

Even his Little Tikes brand, which is made in Ohio, is not immune. Little Tikes depends on screws and other parts from China. Larian figures the price for its toy cars could rise to \$90 from a suggested retail price of \$65.

He said MGA would likely cut orders for the fourth quarter because he is worried that higher prices will

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 35 of 81

scare off consumers.

Calling off China production plans

Marc Rosenberg, founder and CEO of The Edge Desk in Deerfield, Illinois, invested millions of dollars of his own money to develop \$1,000 ergonomic chairs, which were to start production in China next month.

Now's he's delaying production while exploring markets outside the U.S., including Germany and Italy, where his chairs wouldn't face Trump's triple-digit tariffs. He said he wants to see how the situation plays out.

He had looked for ways to make the chairs in the United States and had discussions with potential suppliers in Michigan, but the costs would have been 25% to 30% higher.

"They didn't have the skilled labor to do this stuff, and they didn't have the desire to do it," Rosenberg said.

Making Chinese imports go 'kaput'

Woldenberg's company in Vernon Hills, Illinois, has been in the family since 1916. It was started by his grandfather as a laboratory supply company and evolved over the years into Learning Resources.

The company specializes in educational toys such as Botley: The Coding Robot and the brainteaser Kanoodle. It employs about 500 people — 90% in the United States — and makes about 2,400 products in China.

Woldenberg is reeling from the size and suddenness of Trump's tariffs.

"The products I make in China, about 60% of what I do, become economically unviable overnight," he said. "In an instant, snap of a finger, they're kaput."

He described Trump's call for factories to return to the United States as "a joke."

"I have been looking for American manufacturers for a long time ... and I have come up with zero companies to partner with," he said.

The tariffs, unless they're reduced or eliminated, will wipe out thousands of small Chinese suppliers, Woldenberg predicted.

That would spell disaster for companies like his that have installed expensive tools and molds in Chinese factories, he said. The stand to lose not only their manufacturing base but also possibly their tools, which could get caught up in bankruptcies in China.

Learning Resources has about 10,000 molds, weighing collectively more than 5 million pounds, in China.

"It's not like you just bring in a canvas bag, zip it up and walk out," Woldenberg said. "There is no idle manufacturing hub standing fully equipped, full of engineers and qualified people waiting for me to show up with 10,000 molds to make 2,000 products."

Democrats dislike the 'chaos' of Trump's trade war but are OK with some tariffs

By JOSH BOAK and MATT BROWN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democrats are quick to say that President Donald Trump's tariffs are horrible, awful, terrible. But Democrats are also stressing that they are not inherently anti-tariff.

What Trump's political opponents say they really dislike is the "chaos" he has unleashed.

"Tariffs are an important tool in our economic toolbox," said Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass. "Trump is creating chaos, and that chaos undercuts our economy and our families, both in the short term and the long term. ... He's just created a worldwide hurricane, and that's not good for anyone."

Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Va., said Democrats have a consensus around "a unified concept, which is targeted tariffs can work, across the board tariffs are bad."

"The right targeting is in the eye of the beholder, but nobody on our side thinks zero tariffs ever," Kaine said.

The Democrats' message is meant to convey that they are reasonable, focused on capable governance and attuned to financial market distress. It's a pitch toward swing voters who would like to see more manufacturing yet are uncomfortable with the consequences of Trump's approach to tariffs. The risk is that it also is a nuanced argument at a time when pithy critiques travel faster and spread wider on social media than do measured policy analyses.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 36 of 81

To the Trump White House, that message is nothing but hypocrisy.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt on Tuesday noted that Rep. Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., who would later become House speaker, was warning in June 1996 that trade with China meant higher trade deficits and job losses.

"It is about nothing less than our economic future, our national security and our democratic principles," said Pelosi before the House voted to not overturn then Democratic President Bill Clinton's decision to extend most-favored-nation trade status for China for another year.

The Trump administration views those remarks as evidence that Democrats actually back what Trump is doing, despite their stated opposition.

"Everyone in Washington, whether they want to admit it or not, knows that this president is right when it comes to tariffs and when it comes to trade," Leavitt told reporters. "Nancy Pelosi can thank President Trump today."

Not all Democrats have threaded the needle cleanly.

Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer gave a speech in Washington on Wednesday calling for tariffs to be used like a "scalpel." Hours later, she was in the Oval Office with Trump — in a moment caught on video — as the president signed directives for the Justice Department to investigate two of his public critics and gave noncommittal musings on tariff negotiations.

Whitmer's office later said in a statement that she was "surprised" that she was brought in for the event after a meeting with Trump and that "her presence is not an endorsement of the actions taken or statements made at that event."

Trump this month unilaterally imposed sweeping tariffs on China, the European Union, Mexico, Canada, Japan and South Korea, among dozens of other nations.

But on Wednesday, he suspended most of the tariffs for 90 days while applying a baseline import tax of 10% to most nations, a 145% tariff on Chinese goods and a tariff of as much as 25% on Mexico and Canada. There are also tariffs on autos, steel and aluminum, with more planned on specific products.

The tariffs are expected to generate hundreds of billions of dollars annually in new revenues, but an average U.S. household could see disposable income fall by more than \$4,000 as importers and companies pass along the costs of the levies.

Interest rates on the U.S. debt are rising as investors worry about the soundness of Trump's policies. Major stock indexes are down and consumer sentiment is at its second lowest level in the history of the University of Michigan survey.

Some Democrats are trying to keep the focus on their constituents, resurrecting talking points from Trump's tariff battles during his first term.

"Farmers, in particular, who were hit very hard by Trump's last trade wars, are terrified that this may be existential to their businesses," said Sen. Tammy Baldwin, D-Wis. "These are mostly small and medium-sized family farms. Their input costs are going to go up and their export markets are going to close down."

Rep. Gwen Moore, D-Wis., said the tariffs would be "catastrophic" for urban and rural communities alike in her state. But Moore added that Democrats should still advocate for raising labor and product standards to keep American goods and services competitive in global markets.

"I know that many of our autoworkers were lured into voting for Donald Trump because they thought perhaps he was going to give them some relief," said Moore. "But the prices of cars are going to go up because the component parts are everywhere. There's no strategy for it."

But not all Democrats want to hedge their response to Trump's trade tools.

"I'm a little uninterested in what the Democratic response should be like," said Sen. Brian Schatz of Hawaii. "Trump is intentionally destroying the American economy, and I think we should just say that and not make it very complicated."

Iran says 'indirect talks' begin with a US envoy over Tehran's rapidly advancing nuclear program

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

MUSCAT, Oman (AP) — Envoys from Iran and the United States began negotiations Saturday in Oman over Tehran's rapidly advancing nuclear program since President Donald Trump returned to the White House.

No overall agreement is immediately likely, but the stakes of the negotiations couldn't be higher for these two nations closing in on half a century of enmity. Trump repeatedly has threatened to unleash airstrikes targeting Iran's nuclear program if a deal isn't reached. Iranian officials increasingly warn that they could pursue a nuclear weapon with their stockpile of uranium enriched to near weapons-grade levels.

Flight-tracking data analyzed by The Associated Press showed a private jet from Pulkovo Airport in St. Petersburg, Russia, arrived in Oman on Saturday morning. U.S. Mideast envoy Steve Witkoff had just met Russian President Vladimir Putin on Friday there.

Meanwhile, Iran's Foreign Ministry released footage of Tehran's top diplomat, Abbas Araghchi, meeting with Omani Foreign Minister Badr al-Busaidi. Iran's state-run IRNA news agency reported that Araghchi provided Iran's "stance and key points for the talks to be conveyed to the U.S. side."

IRNA's report suggested the meeting would be held later Saturday.

Associated Press journalists saw a convoy believed to be carrying Witkoff leaving the Omani Foreign Ministry and then speed off into the outskirts of Muscat. The convoy went into a compound and a few minutes later, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei wrote on the social platform X that the "indirect talks" had begun.

"These talks will be held at a location planned by the Omani host, with representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United States seated in the halls and sides, conveying their points of view and positions to each other through the Omani Foreign Minister," Baghaei wrote.

Araghchi earlier spoke to Iranian journalists.

"If there is sufficient will on both sides, we will decide on a timetable. But it is still too early to talk about that," Araghchi said, in an audio clip published by IRNA. "What is clear now is that the negotiations are indirect, and in our view only on the nuclear issue, and will be conducted with the necessary will to reach an agreement that is on an equal footing and leads to securing the national interests of the Iranian people."

Trump and Witkoff both have described the talks as being "direct."

"I think our position begins with dismantlement of your program. That is our position today," Witkoff told The Wall Street Journal before his trip. "That doesn't mean, by the way, that at the margin we're not going to find other ways to find compromise between the two countries."

He added: "Where our red line will be, there can't be weaponization of your nuclear capability,"

While the U.S. side can offer sanctions relief for Iran's beleaguered economy, it remains unclear just how much Iran will be willing to concede. Under the 2015 nuclear deal, Iran could only maintain a small stockpile of uranium enriched to 3.67%. Today, Tehran's stockpile could allow it to build multiple nuclear weapons if it so chooses and it has some material enriched up to 60%, a short, technical step away from weapons-grade levels. Judging from negotiations since Trump unilaterally withdrew America from the deal in 2018, Iran will likely ask to keep enriching uranium up to at least 20%.

One thing it won't do is give up its program entirely. That makes the proposal of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of a so-called Libyan solution — "you go in, blow up the facilities, dismantle all the equipment, under American supervision, American execution" — unworkable.

Iranians including Ayatollah Ali Khamenei have held up what ultimately happened to the late Libyan dictator Moammar Gadhafi, who was killed with his own gun by rebels in the country's 2011 Arab Spring uprising, as a warning about what can happen when you trust the United States. ____

Associated Press writer Amir Vahdat in Tehran, Iran, contributed to this report. ____

The Associated Press receives support for nuclear security coverage from the Carnegie Corporation of New York and Outrider Foundation. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

Voters in Gabon choose a new president in the first election since the 2023 coup

By MONIKA PRONCZUK and YVES LAURENT GOMA Associated Press

LIBREVILLE, Gabon (AP) — Voters in the oil-rich Gabon headed to the polls on Saturday in a presidential election that the country's military rulers hoped would legitimize their grip on power.

It's the first election since a 2023 military coup ended a political dynasty that lasted over 50 years. Analysts have predicted an overwhelming victory for the interim president who led the coup.

Some 920,000 voters, including over 28,000 overseas, are registered across more than 3,000 polling stations. A third of the country's 2.3 million people live in poverty despite its vast oil wealth.

The interim president, Gen. Brice Clotaire Oligui Nguema, 50, the former head of the republican guard, toppled President Ali Bongo Ondimba nearly two years ago. He hopes to consolidate his grip on power for a seven-year term in office.

Bongo was placed under house arrest after the coup but freed a week later due to health concerns. His wife and son were detained and charged with corruption and embezzlement of public funds. Bongo himself was not charged.

Following the coup, Oligui Nguema promised to "return power to civilians" through "credible elections." But he proclaimed himself the interim president and then a presidential candidate, following the adoption by the parliament of a new contentious electoral code allowing military personnel to run.

He has touted himself as a leader who wants to unify the Gabonese and give them hope, running his presidential campaign under the slogan: "We Build Together."

The country's new constitution, adopted in a referendum in November, has also set the presidential term at seven years, renewable once, instead of the unlimited five-year term. It also states family members can't succeed a president and has abolished the position of prime minister.

A challenger with an anti-colonial approach

A total of eight candidates are running for president. However, Oligui Nguema's main challenger is Bongo's former Prime Minister Alain Claude Bilie-By-Nze, who in a recent interview with The Associated Press pledged "a break with the old system and a new independence. Political, diplomatic and economic independence."

In a region where France is losing longstanding allies in many of its former colonies, Gabon stands out as one of only a few where that partnership has not been threatened. It still has more than 300 French troops present, one of only two African countries still hosting them.

Oligui Nguema has not signaled an end to the French military presence, but Bilie-By-Nze has said "no subject is off limits" in renegotiating the ties between the two countries.

Bilie-By-Nze also said during the interview with AP that he didn't expect the election to be fair or transparent. "Everything has been done to lock down the vote," he said.

However, earlier this week, Laurence Ndong, spokeswoman for Oligui Nguema, denied the allegations, saying: "For the first time, Gabon will have a free and transparent election."

Voters cast their ballots

Voters lined up early Saturday in the capital, Libreville, as the election progressed peacefully.

Jonas Obiang told the AP while waiting to cast his ballot in the working-class district of Damas that he would choose Bilie-By-Nze because he viewed the 2023 coup as a continuation of the malpractice.

"General Oligui Nguema led the country with the same people who plundered the country, the former members of the Bongo regime. I will not vote for him," he said.

His views were echoed by Antoine Nkili, a 27-year-old unemployed man with a master's degree in law.

"The choice is personal, but I'm telling you that for me, the military has failed," Nkili said. "They promised to reform the institutions, but they haven't. Instead, they've enriched themselves."

Jean Bie, 57, who works in the construction sector, said the military rule has benefited the population.

"In 19 months, General Oligui Nguéma has completed several projects expected of the former regime. I'm voting for him, hoping he'll do more over the next seven years," he said.

Tragic New York City helicopter crash hits home in Barcelona where victims were well known

By JOSEPH WILSON Associated Press

BARCELONA, Spain (AP) — As they sat inside a helicopter shortly before a flight over the towering skyscrapers of New York City, Agustin Escobar flashed a thumbs up while his wife and children beamed big smiles.

A trip that was intended to celebrate their middle child's upcoming birthday ended up being the final moments for the family of five from Spain. Moments later, their sightseeing helicopter broke apart in midair and crashed into the Hudson River between New York City and New Jersey, killing them and the pilot.

Condolences poured in Friday for the Barcelona family, including Spain's prime minister, the company where the parents worked and the school where their children studied.

Escobar was global CEO of rail infrastructure at Siemens Mobility, while his wife, Mercè Camprubí Montal worked for Siemens Energy, a separate company. Camprubí Montal's grandfather was a former president of the famous Barcelona FC soccer club.

The children were 4, 8 and 10 years old, and the middle child's 9th birthday would have been Friday, according to New York City Mayor Eric Adams.

"Unimaginable," was how Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez described the tragedy.

"The news that has reached us about a helicopter accident in the Hudson River is devastating," Sánchez said on X during a state visit to China. "Five members of a Spanish family, including three children, have lost their lives. It is an unimaginable tragedy. I feel for the loss of their loved ones."

Classmates shocked

Students at the Jesuits of Sant Ignasi school in Barcelona's upscale Sarria neighborhood wept and embraced their parents Friday afternoon, after learning of the deaths of their friends and classmates, as seen by an Associated Press reporter.

The school held a minute of silence in the morning, Oleguer Bertran, an 18-year-old student, told the AP.

A father at the school's entrance said his son had been friends with one of children who perished, and is completely devastated. The man declined to be named.

The school published a statement on Instagram saying it was "devastated by the death of a family of our community." It declined to comment when contacted by the AP.

'My endless source of energy and happiness'

Escobar was originally from Puertollano, a small city in central Spain's Castilla La Mancha region.

"I want to express my sorrow for the traffic helicopter accident in New York that claimed the lives of Agustín Escobar and his family," regional president Emiliano García-Page wrote on X. "In 2023, we named him a Favorite Son of Castilla La Mancha."

Escobar worked for the tech company Siemens for more than 27 years, most recently as global CEO for rail infrastructure at Siemens Mobility, according to his LinkedIn account. In late 2022, he briefly became president and CEO of Siemens Spain.

He regularly posted about the importance of sustainability in the rail industry and often traveled internationally for work, including to India and the United Kingdom in the past month. He also was vice president of the German Chamber of Commerce for Spain since 2023.

In a LinkedIn post in 2022, he thanked his family, "my endless source of energy and happiness, for their unconditional support, love ... and patience."

Soccer club connection

Camprubí Montal hailed from northeast Catalonia, where Barcelona is located. She had worked for Siemens Energy for about seven years, including as its global commercialization manager and as a digitalization manager, according to her LinkedIn account.

She was also closely tied to the history of the famous Barcelona soccer club. Her grandfather, Agustí Montal i Costa, was president of the club from 1969 to 1977, and her great-grandfather Agustí Montal i Galobart, presided over the club from 1946-1952.

The club has not commented on her death.

"We are deeply saddened by the tragic helicopter crash in which Agustin Escobar and his family lost

their lives. Our heartfelt condolences go out to all their loved ones," Siemens said in a statement Friday. Doomed flight

Escobar had traveled to the New York area on business and his family flew in to extend the trip by a few days, said Steven Fulop, mayor of Jersey City. Photos the tour company posted on its website show the family smiling in the helicopter before takeoff.

Jersey City's Mayor Fulop said a relative was expected to arrive Friday and officials were working with the medical examiner to release the bodies for transport back to Spain.

A bomb strikes near the Athens offices of the Greek railway company. No injuries reported

By DEREK GATOPOULOS and ELENA BECATOROS Associated Press

ATHENS, Greece (AP) — A bomb planted near the offices of Hellenic Train, Greece's main railway company, exploded Friday night in a busy district of central Athens, authorities said. There were no reports of injuries.

The explosion comes amid widespread public anger over a 2023 railway disaster, Greece's worst, in which 57 people were killed and dozens more injured when a freight train and a passenger train heading in opposite directions were accidentally put on the same track.

Local media said a newspaper and a news website had received an anonymous call shortly before Friday's blast, with the caller warning that a bomb had been planted outside the railway company offices and would explode within about 40 minutes.

In a statement, Hellenic Train said the explosion had occurred "very close to its central offices" and said the blast had caused limited damage and no injuries to any employees or passers-by.

It said authorities had acted immediately upon receiving information about the warning call, and that the company was cooperating fully with authorities and ensuring the safety of its staff.

Police cordoned off the site along a major avenue in the Greek capital, keeping residents and tourists away from the building in an area with several bars and restaurants. Officers at the scene said a bag containing an explosive device had been placed near the Hellenic Train building on Syngrou Avenue.

Police forensics experts wearing white coveralls were collecting evidence at the scene.

Criticism over the government's handling of the Feb. 28, 2023 collision at Tempe in northern Greece has mounted over the last few weeks in the wake of the second anniversary of the disaster, which killed mostly young people who had been returning to university classes after a public holiday.

The crash exposed severe deficiencies in Greece's railway system, including in safety systems, and has triggered mass protests - led by relatives of the victims - against the country's conservative government. Critics accused authorities of failing to take political responsibility for the disaster or holding senior officials accountable.

So far, only rail officials have been charged with any crimes. Several protests in recent weeks have turned violent, with demonstrators clashing with police.

Earlier Friday, a heated debate in Parliament on the rail crash led to lawmakers voting to refer a former Cabinet minister to judicial authorities to be investigated over alleged violation of duty over his handling of the immediate aftermath of the accident.

Hellenic Train said it "unreservedly condemns every form of violence and tension which are triggering a climate of toxicity that is undermining all progress."

Greece has a long history of politically-motivated violence dating back to the 1970s, with domestic extremist groups carrying out small-scale bombings which usually cause damage but rarely lead to injuries.

While the groups most active in the 1980s and 1990s have been dismantled, new small groups have emerged. Last year, a man believed to have been trying to assemble a bomb was killed when the explosive device he was making exploded in a central Athens apartment. A woman inside the apartment was severely injured. The blast had prompted Minister of Citizen Protection Michalis Chrisochoidis to warn of an emerging new generation of domestic extremists.

In key milestones for President Milei, Argentina secures IMF deal and ends most capital controls

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP) — President Javier Milei on Friday announced that he would lift most of the country's strict capital and currency controls next week, a high-stakes gamble made possible by a new loan from the International Monetary Fund. It marked a major step forward in the libertarian's program to normalize Argentina's economy after decades of unbridled spending.

The IMF's executive board late Friday green-lit the \$20 billion bailout package, which offers a lifeline to Argentina's dangerously depleting foreign currency reserves over the next four years. The fund praised President Milei's tough austerity program and zero-deficit fiscal policy, saying the program sought to "consolidate impressive initial gains" and address "remaining macroeconomic vulnerabilities."

"Against this backdrop, the authorities are embarking on a new phase of their stabilization plan," said IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva, adding that Argentina has committed to doubling down on spending cuts and economic deregulation and transitioning toward a new foreign currency exchange regime.

Shortly afterward, Milei, flanked by his ministers, addressed his nation on television.

"Today we are breaking the cycle of disillusionment and disenchantment and are beginning to move forward for the first time," he said. "We have eliminated the exchange rate controls on the Argentine economy for good."

A tangle of regulations

The capital controls, known here as "el cepo," or "the clamp," are a tangle of regulations that help to stabilize the peso at an official rate and prevent capital flight from Argentina.

Imposed by a previous administration in 2019, the restrictions clamp down on individuals' and companies' access to dollars, discouraging the foreign investment that Milei needs to achieve his goal of transforming heavily regulated Argentina into a free economy.

The restrictions made it almost impossible for ordinary Argentines to purchase dollars, giving rise to a black market that is technically illegal but that almost every Argentine uses to sell their depreciating pesos anyway. Their removal takes effect on Monday.

The bank said it would receive the first \$12 billion from the IMF Tuesday — a bigger-than-expected upfront sum that gives Argentina's reserves breathing room to make the major change and reflects the fund's confidence in Milei's radical reforms.

"The program is unprecedented in supporting an economic plan that has already yielded results," Milei said.

Letting the Argentine peso float — kind of

The new policy also involves cutting the Argentine peso free from its peg to the dollar. But instead of a risky free float, Argentina is allowing the peso to trade within a so-called currency band that ranges from 1,000 to 1,400 pesos per dollar. The band will expand 1% each month, the bank said.

This breaks from Milei's current policy of letting the peso weaken at a pace of 1% against the dollar each month.

That crawling peg had drawn backlash from investors worried about the central bank burning through its reserves to prop up the peso. It was forced to spend \$2.5 billion to defend the official exchange rate in just the past few weeks.

When announcing the removal of exchange controls Economy Minister Luis Caputo insisted it was "not a devaluation."

"The truth is, we don't know where the dollar will end up," he said.

Milei's team has sought to fend off a politically costly official devaluation of the peso that could push inflation much higher. Keeping a lid on rising prices — a flagship campaign promise — has helped the political outsider hold up approval ratings despite his brutal cuts to state spending that might otherwise trigger social unrest.

But it was clear that the peso would have to depreciate to some extent, with economists guessing that it would fall to close to its black-market rate. On Friday, that rate was 1,375 pesos to the dollar, compared

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 42 of 81

with the official exchange rate of 1,097 pesos.

Marcelo J. García, director for the Americas at New York-based geopolitical risk consultancy Horizon Engage, said he expected an initial devaluation of around 20-25%.

"A big question mark is inflation in the second quarter of the year. It's very likely there will be a shock," said Leonardo Piazza, chief economist at Argentine consulting firm LP Consulting.

Argentina, a serial defaulter

Before Milei took office in December 2023, the previous left-wing Peronist administration ran up massive budget deficits, leading to sky-high inflation and a chronically weakening peso.

By scrapping subsidies and price controls, firing tens of thousands of state workers and halting the central bank's overreliance on printing pesos to pay the government's bills, Milei has delivered Argentina's first fiscal surplus in almost two decades and largely stabilized its macroeconomic imbalances, thrilling markets even as his overhaul hits the population hard.

Yet for all the changes and the financial pain, there have been scant signs of a sustainable recovery. Analysts say that a long-term economic revival involves the removal of capital controls, the amassing of currency reserves and access to international capital markets.

As a result, foreign investors have waited on the sidelines, wary of pouring their cash into a country infamous for defaulting on its debt.

The South American nation is already the IMF's biggest debtor, owing some \$43 billion. This new \$20 billion loan represents the 23rd rescue package in the nation's long and tumultuous history.

A 'tsunami of money out'

Milei has rejected pressure from investors over the past year to lift the capital controls, insisting that the economic conditions needed to be right. Now, he said, it was finally time.

After the first \$12 billion disbursement from the IMF, another \$2 billion will hit Argentina's central bank in the next two months, the fund said.

International organizations will also pitch in, with the Inter-American Development Bank announcing later Friday \$10 billion disbursed over the next three years.

"With this level of reserves, we can back up all the existing pesos in our economy, providing monetary security to our citizens," Milei said. "These are the foundations for sustained, long-term growth."

It's a high-risk mission, as scrapping the "cepo" could unleash years of pent-up demand for U.S. dollars and spark a currency run as companies try to send their long-trapped profits home.

"It could be a tsunami of money out," said Christopher Ecclestone, a strategist with investment bank Hallgarten & Company. "It's a total guessing game as to what people will do."

The central bank said that while it was lifting restrictions for the public, it would retain taxes on card purchases abroad and some regulations on companies. For instance, from 2025 on, multinational firms will be able to repatriate their earnings. But to get their already trapped holdings out of the country, they'll need to exchange the debt for dollar-denominated security bonds.

It's an effort to insure against capital flight, which would imperil Milei's primary accomplishment of lowering inflation ahead of midterm elections in October that are crucial for his libertarian party to expand its small congressional minority.

"The announcement is more audacious than expected. The government is making a bit of a leap of faith by lifting the cepo," said García.

It's also bold timing, analysts say, considering the local market turmoil sparked by U.S. President Donald Trump's tariffs. In recent days, Argentine stocks and bonds have plunged.

Meanwhile, with traders nervous about a possible peso devaluation under Argentina's IMF deal, the closely watched gap between Argentina's currency exchange rates has grown by over 20% in recent weeks. The gap is a key indicator of confidence in the government and can fuel inflation, which already accelerated in March to its fastest pace in seven months.

On Friday, Argentina's National Statistics Institute reported that consumer prices ticked up 3.7% last month compared to 2.4% in February, mainly as a result of rising food prices.

Milei was unruffled. "Inflation will disappear," he promised.

How a fight over proxy voting for new parents upended the US House

By LEAH ASKARINAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Anna Paulina Luna was at her Florida home in fall 2023, caring for her newborn son and turning over a question in her mind as a member of Congress:

“How do I change this?”

Luna, then a first-time mom and first-term lawmaker, could no longer fly to Washington to cast votes in the U.S. House, a crucial part of the job, due to complications from childbirth — which she blamed at least partially on her hectic schedule, having flown to and from the capital during most of her pregnancy.

Luna began reading House rules and found what seemed like a simple solution: allowing proxy voting for new moms.

What Luna considered a minor rule change, affecting just a few — only about a dozen women had given birth while serving in Congress — over time escalated into a standoff against her own Republican leadership and her allies in the hard-right Freedom Caucus.

In a matter of months, it became a highly charged debate that crossed party lines, united a younger generation of lawmakers and raised fresh questions about how a more than 200-year-old institution accommodates working parents in the 21st century. The conflict turned on weighty history and thorny procedures, highlighting the difficulties of abiding by documents and rules written long before air travel and Zoom screens — and long before women served in Congress.

“When the Constitution was written, this was not really a topic,” Luna said.

How GOP leaders came to loathe proxy voting

When Luna was about to become a new mom, planning for the big change ahead, she asked then-Speaker Kevin McCarthy how she would be able to vote in the days after giving birth. That was 2023, and she didn’t realize she was stepping on a political landmine.

At the start of the pandemic, more than two years before Luna was elected, Democrats in the majority had created a proxy voting system to contain COVID-19 and avoid overcrowding in the chamber.

McCarthy had called the practice “a dereliction of duty,” an excuse for members to skip out on work, and the resolution creating the system passed without a single Republican vote.

When Republicans won the House majority in 2022, McCarthy abandoned proxy voting — and for a time, there was no talk of bringing it back.

Rep. Luna returns and begins her push

Once Luna was cleared to fly and returned to Washington, she kept the proxy voting proposal to herself. It wasn’t the right time: The House was in turmoil, having just ousted McCarthy from the speaker’s job and choosing Rep. Mike Johnson of Louisiana as his replacement.

But a few months later, Luna made her move.

She introduced a bill in January 2024 that would allow a mother to designate a proxy for six weeks, but by autumn, her legislation had gone nowhere, languishing in committee. Luna decided to launch a discharge petition — a workaround that allows legislation with 218 supporters to force a vote on the House floor. But she got just a handful of signatures.

“I went through every and exhausted every avenue,” Luna said.

Then she turned to Democrats, drafting a new proposal this year with Reps. Brittany Pettersen of Colorado and Sara Jacobs of California that would extend proxy voting to not just moms but all new parents for 12 weeks, double the time Luna had initially proposed.

Pettersen, who was previously the first member of the Colorado legislature to give birth and take leave, said she “came to Congress wanting to work on this.”

In a matter of months, Republican Rep. Mike Lawler of New York, a father to two young girls, became the 218th member to sign the discharge petition, the tally needed to force a vote.

But only a dozen signatures came from Republicans.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 44 of 81

A standoff with the GOP leaders and the House Freedom Caucus

Pushback was fierce, from members of the Freedom Caucus and from the speaker himself. Johnson repeatedly called proxy voting "unconstitutional." Herself among the more far-right conservatives in the House, her desk adorned with a model of President Donald Trump on Mount Rushmore, Luna resigned from the Freedom Caucus, accusing them of working against her.

Luna felt that she had done everything she could to address Johnson's concerns. She agreed that members had abused the practice in the past, but said her proposal included "guard rails."

Johnson tried to snuff out Luna's discharge petition with a rare legislative maneuver, linking it to a vote that was needed to advance one of the GOP priorities, a voter ID bill.

The aggressive move angered several Republicans, including some who didn't even support Luna's proposal. Johnson's gambit failed on the floor.

Johnson called the outcome "unfortunate" and reiterated the argument that proxy voting for moms was a "Pandora's box" that would open the door for members who'd rather not show up to work. Then he sent lawmakers home for the week.

That's when Luna had a talk with Trump.

"I think she's great, Anna," Trump said aboard Air Force One.

The president recalled that he had spoken to her the previous day. When it came to proxy voting, Trump wondered why the idea was "controversial."

Johnson sprang into action and quickly posted on social media that he had also spoken with Trump, quoting him saying, "Mike, you have my proxy on proxy voting."

Meanwhile, a political storm was brewing against Luna. Right-wing influencers flooded Twitter to accuse Luna of holding up Trump's agenda as House floor action stalled. She faced attacks from fellow Republicans.

Luna reaches a deal — to mixed reviews

On a Sunday afternoon this month, Luna announced that she and leadership had reached an agreement.

They would resurrect a well-worn congressional procedure that "pairs" two members of Congress who plan to vote on opposite sides of an issue, canceling out their votes — a way to accommodate the absent member.

"If we truly want a pro-family Congress, these are the changes that need to happen," Luna posted on X.

The plan was quickly tucked into an upcoming procedural vote. This time, it succeeded.

Reviews were mixed.

Rep. Jeff Van Drew, R-N.J., called the solution "bizarre" and said it was unlikely any member would voluntarily participate, essentially nulling their own vote, when the margins were so narrow in Congress.

But GOP Rep. Chip Roy of Texas, a member of the Freedom Caucus who opposes all proxy voting, said he would consider participating in pairing.

"We want to make it to where people can, you know, deal with whatever life curveballs they get," Roy said.

Not everyone, though, is satisfied.

The day that Congress voted on vote-pairing, Pettersen stood outside the House chamber, cradling her son in her arms. "What Republican would be willing to vote present for me this week?" she asked. "Nobody."

Blowout Friday: NBA breaks record with 5 games decided by 30 or more points on the same day

By TIM REYNOLDS AP Basketball Writer

For New Orleans, Charlotte, Washington and Utah, the seasons will end Sunday.

That might not be soon enough.

The Pelicans, Hornets, Wizards and Jazz — all playing out the string of dismal seasons — along with the playoff-bound Houston Rockets combined to make the wrong kind of NBA history on Friday night. All five of those teams lost by at least 30 points, marking the first time that the league saw that many blowouts of that size on the same day.

Miami beat New Orleans by 49, 153-104. Boston beat Charlotte by 36, 130-94. Oklahoma City beat Utah

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 45 of 81

by 34, 145-111. The Los Angeles Lakers topped Houston by 31, 140-109. And Chicago beat Washington by 30, 119-89.

Those five games pushed the NBA's total of games decided by 30 or more points this season to 79 — tying the league mark for such games, set in the 2021-22 season.

"It's challenging. For sure, it's tough," Pelicans coach Willie Green said, after a game where his team trailed the Heat by as many as 52 points. "You feel for your guys. They're out there fighting and we're undermanned, but at the same time, you've got to be able to go through some adversity. It builds you. It makes you stronger."

It was a night filled with lopsided scoreboards, and plenty of other games seemed poised to join the 30-point blowout trend before the margins got smaller by the final buzzer.

Minnesota beat Brooklyn by 26, Dallas led Toronto by 38 before winning by 22, Phoenix led San Antonio by 31 early in the fourth before winning by 19, Golden State led Portland by 27 before winning by 17, and Orlando had a 35-point lead on Indiana before winning by 15.

The three other days before Friday that the NBA saw four games decided by at least 30 points:

Dec. 7, 2016 — Sacramento 120, Dallas 89; Cleveland 126, New York 94; Houston 134, L.A. Lakers 95; Boston 117, Orlando 87.

Jan. 15, 2019 — Golden State 142, Denver 111; Milwaukee 124, Miami 86; Philadelphia 149, Minnesota 107; Indiana 131, Phoenix 97.

May 5, 2021 — Utah 126, San Antonio 94; Atlanta 135, Phoenix 103; Portland 141, Cleveland 105; Boston 132, Orlando 96.

Worker rescued from collapsed subway construction site in South Korea

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korean rescue workers on Saturday pulled a man from a collapsed subway construction site near the capital of Seoul and continued searching for another believed to be trapped inside.

Im Gwang-sik, an official with Gwangmyeong city's fire department, said the survivor was trapped about 30 meters (98 feet) underground in the rubble for approximately 13 hours, and was conscious when found and taken to a nearby hospital.

Gwangmyeong city authorities had earlier withdrawn workers from the construction site and halted traffic in the area after receiving reports that a ventilation shaft was at risk of collapsing.

Authorities were deploying dozens of rescue workers and vehicles and three cranes to search for the other worker who remains unaccounted for.

Deadly crash raises new questions about safety of New York's helicopter tours

By PHILIP MARCELO Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A helicopter ride giving a thrilling sweep of Manhattan's iconic skyline has long been on the to-do list for New York City tourists of means.

For several hundred dollars, tour companies fly passengers high above the rivers that encircle the city, showcasing a stunning, bird's-eye view of the Statue of Liberty, One World Trade Center and other monumental landmarks.

But Thursday's crash that killed a family of five visiting from Spain and the helicopter's pilot, a Navy SEAL veteran, has renewed concerns about the safety of the popular sightseeing excursions.

Since 2005, five helicopters on commercial sightseeing flights have fallen into the Hudson and East rivers as a result of mechanical failures, pilot errors or collisions, killing 20 people.

Longtime opponents have revived calls to ban or limit "nonessential" helicopter flights, including the roughly 30,000 sightseeing rides over the city each year.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 46 of 81

Mayor against more restrictions

Mayor Eric Adams on Friday said he doesn't support further restrictions on the aircraft, saying they're crucial for everything from transporting Wall Street executives to police work, and that tens of thousands of tourist flights happen each year with no problems.

"People want to see the city from the sky," he said on WINS radio, though he added that "it must be done right."

The Democrat said the city's airspace is highly regulated, pilots are well-trained and the aircraft are well maintained.

Not everyone has his level of comfort.

"Personally, I don't go on them," Al Yurman, a former investigator with the National Transportation Safety Board, said of helicopter tours. "I feel like the industry doesn't look after itself the way it should."

Previous crashes led to new rules

Tourist flights seemed like they might be in jeopardy after a disaster in 2009, when a Liberty Helicopters sightseeing flight carrying Italian visitors collided with a private plane over the Hudson River, killing nine.

After that crash, which involved missed radio communications, a distracted air traffic controller and two pilots who didn't see each other until it was too late, the Federal Aviation Administration created new safety rules for the congested airspace over the city's rivers.

A few years later, New York City cut the number of flights allowed at Manhattan's downtown heliport in half, capping them at just under 30,000 a year.

Then, in 2018, five people died when a helicopter offering "open door" flights crashed in the East River after a passenger's restraint tether snagged on a fuel switch, stopping the engine. The pilot escaped but the passengers couldn't get out of their safety harnesses and drowned.

That crash prompted more industry scrutiny.

Late last month, the company that arranged that flight, FlyNYON, settled a lawsuit over the crash for \$90 million. FlyNYON's chief executive, Patrick Day, said it had made numerous changes to improve safety, including changing its passenger restraint system, switching to a different model of helicopter, adding training for pilots and hiring a safety officer.

"The introspection and self-critical analysis we have undertaken in the last six-and-a-half years have shaped our view of what it means to be an industry leader, and we're a safer, smarter, and stronger company for it," Day said.

Fewest crashes in 25 years

The cause of Thursday's crash is still undetermined.

Videos taken by bystanders showed the Bell 206 helicopter breaking apart mid-flight. The cabin plummeted into the water without its severed tail boom or main rotor, which spun off into a different part of the river and hasn't been recovered.

Nationwide, there were 88 helicopter accidents last year across all sectors — the lowest in 25 years, according to Jeff Smith, chairman of the Eastern Region Helicopter Council, a trade group for helicopter operators based in Kearny, New Jersey, where many Manhattan tour companies depart.

Helicopter tours, he added, accounted for a small fraction of all those accidents.

"We shoot for vision zero, which means no fatalities," Smith said. "We train for that. We preach it. It is a cornerstone of our industry."

Justin Green, an aviation lawyer and former Marine helicopter pilot, agreed there's nothing especially problematic about New York's helicopter tour industry, despite the crashes that seem to happen every few years.

At the same time, he said, tour operators should be required to equip their aircraft with modern safety measures, such as terrain awareness technology.

Steve Cowell, a Colorado-based aviation expert, suggested the FAA should take a more active role in scrutinizing smaller operators with known financial difficulties.

"Unfortunately, when people fly, they oftentimes do not check into the safety records or financial vi-

ability of the company," Cowell said. "They're placing their trust and confidence in the abilities of not only the pilots but the maintainers."

New York Helicopter, operator of the aircraft that crashed Thursday, had gone through a bankruptcy and been sued twice by creditors in recent months, an AP review found.

The company declined to answer questions, but released a statement saying it was "profoundly saddened" by the deaths of its passengers and pilot.

"The safety and well-being of our passengers and crew has always been the cornerstone of our operations," it said.

What to know about activist Mahmoud Khalil and his attorneys' plan to appeal his deportation ruling

JENA, La. (AP) — An immigration judge has ruled that a Palestinian Columbia University graduate student who participated in protests against Israel can be deported.

Mahmoud Khalil's attorneys said they will appeal Friday's ruling.

Federal immigration agents detained Khalil last month, the first arrest under President Donald Trump's crackdown on students who joined campus protests against the war in Gaza.

Khalil, a legal U.S. resident, was taken to an immigration detention center in Jena, Louisiana, thousands of miles from his attorneys and wife, a U.S. citizen who is due to give birth soon.

Here's a look at what has happened so far in Khalil's legal battle and what happens next:

The arrest

Khalil, a 30-year-old international affairs graduate student, had served as a negotiator and spokesperson for student activists at Columbia University who took over a campus lawn last spring to protest Israel's military campaign in Gaza.

The university brought police in to dismantle the encampment after a small group of protesters seized an administration building. Khalil is not accused of participating in the building occupation and wasn't among the people arrested in connection with the demonstrations.

But images of his maskless face at protests, along with his willingness to share his name with reporters, have made him an object of scorn among those who saw the protesters and their demands as antisemitic. The White House accused Khalil of "siding with terrorists" but has yet to cite any support for the claim.

He was detained March 8 in the lobby of his university-owned apartment.

The legal fight

Khalil isn't accused of breaking any laws during the protests at Columbia. The government has said non-citizens who participate in such demonstrations should be expelled from the country for expressing views that the administration considers to be antisemitic and "pro-Hamas," referring to the Palestinian militant group that attacked Israel on Oct. 7, 2023.

Khalil's lawyers have challenged the legality of his detention, saying the Trump administration is trying to deport him for an activity that is protected by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio has cited a rarely used statute to justify Khalil's deportation, which gives him power to deport those who pose "potentially serious adverse foreign policy consequences for the United States."

The ruling

Immigration Judge Jamee E. Comans ruled Friday the government's contention that Khalil's presence in the U.S. posed "potentially serious foreign policy consequences" was enough to satisfy requirements for his deportation.

Comans said the government had "established by clear and convincing evidence that he is removable."

Federal judges in New York and New Jersey previously ordered the government not to deport Khalil while his case plays out in court.

Next steps

Khalil's attorneys said they will keep fighting. They plan to appeal to the Board of Immigration Appeals.

They can also pursue an asylum case on his behalf.

Even though the judge found Khalil removable on foreign policy grounds, nothing will happen quickly in the immigration proceeding, his attorney, Marc Van Der Hout, said.

The judge gave them until April 23 to seek a waiver.

"Today, we saw our worst fears play out: Mahmoud was subject to a charade of due process, a flagrant violation of his right to a fair hearing, and a weaponization of immigration law to suppress dissent," Van Der Hout said in a statement.

Immigration authorities have cracked down on other critics of Israel on college campuses, arresting a Georgetown University scholar who had spoken out on social media about the Israel-Gaza war, canceling the student visas of some protesters and deporting a Brown University professor who they said had attended the Lebanon funeral of a leader of Hezbollah, another militant group that has fought with Israel.

Trump proclaims himself 'in good shape,' but the results of his physical aren't immediately released

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump had an annual physical Friday and concluded, "I did well," praising his own heart, soul and cognitive ability while noting medical reports from White House doctors may not be ready until the weekend.

The 78-year-old, who in January became the oldest in U.S. history to be sworn in as president, spent nearly five hours at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center undergoing what he called "every test you can imagine."

"I was there for a long time," Trump said. "I think I did very well."

Despite long questioning predecessor Joe Biden's physical and mental capacity, Trump has routinely kept basic facts about his own health shrouded in secrecy — shying away from traditional presidential transparency on medical issues. He said he believes the doctor's report on his latest physical would be ready on Sunday — though, if history is any indication, that may offer little more than flattery with scarce detail.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said while Trump was still being examined that a "readout from the White House physician" on his health that would be released "as soon as we possibly can" and suggested it'd be comprehensive.

Trump went straight from the examination to Air Force One to fly to Florida for the weekend. Speaking to reporters midflight, he said doctors offered him "a little bit" of advice on lifestyle changes that could improve his health, though he didn't elaborate on what that was.

"Overall, I felt I was in very good shape. A good heart, a good soul, a very good soul," Trump said. He also noted that he took a cognitive test. "I don't know what to tell you other than I got every answer right," he said.

He said undergoing mental acuity screening was "what the American people want" and took another shot at his predecessor, saying, "Biden refused to take it."

The finished medical report would be the first public information on Trump's health since an assassination attempt against him in Butler, Pennsylvania, in July.

Rather than release medical records at that time, Texas Rep. Ronny Jackson — a staunch supporter who served as his White House physician and once joked in the White House briefing room that Trump could live to be 200 if he had a healthier diet — wrote a memo describing a gunshot wound to Trump's right ear.

In a subsequent interview with CBS last August, Trump said he'd "very gladly" release his medical records, but never did.

Trump is three years younger than Biden. But on Inauguration Day of his second term in January, Trump was five months older than Biden was during his 2021 inauguration — making Trump the nation's oldest president to be sworn into office.

Presidents have privacy rights protecting their medical records just like ordinary citizens, and that means they have leeway over what details are released. Modern annual physicals, though, have often played key

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 49 of 81

roles in offering the public a sense of the commander-in-chief's health.

Trump has long opted for offering few substantive details about his health. Before Jackson's memo, the public hadn't seen key details since November 2023, when Dr. Bruce A. Aronwald released a letter to coincide with Biden's 81st birthday, saying Trump was in "excellent" physical and mental health.

The letter, posted on Trump's social media platform, lacks the basics — such as the Republican's weight, blood pressure and cholesterol levels, or the results of any test. Instead, Aronwald wrote that he'd examined Trump that fall and found his "physical exams were well within the normal range and his cognitive exams were exceptional," while also noting that Trump had "reduced his weight."

Trump was treated at Walter Reed, located in Bethesda, Maryland, outside Washington, for his serious bout with the coronavirus in 2020. During that time, Trump's physician offered a rosy prognosis on his condition, though White House chief of staff Mark Meadows said some of Trump's vital signs were "very concerning."

After Trump recovered, more details emerged that he had been sicker than he'd let on.

In November 2019, meanwhile, Trump's trip to Walter Reed for a physical was omitted from his public schedule, breaking the White House protocol of giving advance public notice of them.

The visit was revealed three days later, with Trump disclosing that he'd had a "very routine physical." The White House released a subsequent statement from the president's then-personal physician, U.S. Navy Cmdr. Sean Conley, saying it had been a "planned interim checkup" kept "off the record" due to scheduling uncertainties.

Arguably, Trump's most famous past comments about his own health came during a television interview in July 2020, when he listed off "Person. Woman. Man. Camera. TV" while attempting to demonstrate his cognitive abilities.

Trump said that a collection of those five nouns, or ones like them, stated in order, demonstrated mental fitness and were part of a cognitive test he had aced. The president was asked about that test again on Air Force One on Friday and responded, "It's a pretty well known test."

"Whatever it is, I got every one — I got it all right," he said.

RFK Jr. wants to target chronic disease in US tribes.

A key program to do that was gutted

By DEVNA BOSE, GRAHAM LEE BREWER and BECKY BOHRER Associated Press

CHANDLER, Ariz. (AP) — Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. spent time in tribal communities in Arizona and New Mexico this week highlighting ways they are trying to prevent chronic disease among Native Americans and Alaska Natives, something he has said is one of his top priorities.

But Kennedy didn't appear to publicly address a Native health program using traditional medicine and foods to tackle disproportionate rates of conditions like diabetes and liver disease. The program, called Healthy Tribes, was gutted in this month's federal health layoffs.

Some Native leaders say they are having trouble grasping the dissonance between Kennedy's words and his actions. With little information, they wonder if Healthy Tribes is part of the Trump administration's push to end diversity, equity and inclusion efforts. There also is confusion about what and who is left at the 11-year-old program, which was part of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, under Kennedy's agency, and doled out \$32.5 million a year.

Tribal leaders and health officials told The Associated Press that cuts to the Healthy Tribes program are another violation of the federal government's legal obligation, or trust responsibility, to tribal nations under treaties, law and other acts. That includes funding for health care through the Indian Health Service, as well as education and public safety for citizens of the 574 federally recognized tribes.

But federal funding has long fallen short of meeting those needs, leaving tribal governments to rely on additional grants and programs like Healthy Tribes.

"So many layers of communications of collaboration and partnerships have just been turned off," said

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 50 of 81

Onawa Miller, a Quechan Indian Nation citizen and director of tribal public health for United South and Eastern Tribes, which serves 33 tribes in those regions of the U.S. She said her organization already has received its annual \$2 million in Healthy Tribes funding.

Several tribal facilities received an email from a CDC employee April 1 notifying them that the positions of many people who staffed the Healthy Tribes program had been eliminated "as part of the reduction in force efforts at CDC."

The American Federation of Government Employees union, which represents thousands of workers at the CDC in Atlanta, said more than 30 civil servant jobs were or are being eliminated. That includes 11 positions in the Healthy Tribes program and others in the larger Division of Population Health.

An email sent to the account of Healthy Tribes director Dr. Julianna Reece, an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation, was met with an automated reply: "Due to the recent HHS reduction in force, I have been placed on administrative leave and will be separated from the agency on June 2nd." Reece did not respond to requests for comment sent to her federal and personal email accounts.

Native leaders call change 'a violation of trust'

Part of the government upheaval in the past several weeks includes top officials at the National Institutes of Health being offered transfers to Indian Health Service offices far from Washington, D.C. The National Indian Health Board also has said the government eliminated key staff and programs at the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health's Center for Indigenous Innovation and Health.

The government is required to consult with tribes on decisions impacting them, like mass layoffs in February at the Indian Health Service that were rescinded hours later, and tribal leaders have warned the Trump administration that such consultations are not happening. In some cases tribes can take legal action against the U.S. for failing to meet its trust responsibilities.

"It is a violation of trust, without a doubt," said W. Ron Allen, chairman of the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe in Washington state.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services did not answer questions related to the Healthy Tribes cuts but told the AP in an email that the Indian Health Service was not impacted by this month's workforce reductions and there are no plans to consolidate any of its offices.

Kennedy's swing through the Southwest included a visit to a community health center in metro Phoenix that provides physical and mental health care to Native people and a hike with the Navajo Nation president. He also moderated a panel at the Tribal Self-Governance Conference, held on the Gila River Indian Reservation in Arizona, but didn't take questions from the audience, tribal leaders on stage or journalists.

Allen said he had a constructive conversation with Kennedy, reminding him IHS is already underfunded and understaffed and that tribes rely on additional federal grants and programs.

"Your issue is to reduce the central office, and so we're OK with that, but move the functions that serve the tribes out to the tribes," Allen said he told Kennedy. "Because if we don't have those resources, how are we gonna make our communities healthy? He agrees."

Grants fund traditional medicine practices

Research shows Native Americans have shorter life expectancies than other ethnic groups, and the Indian Health Service says they face higher mortality rates from chronic conditions like diabetes and liver disease.

In Seattle, Healthy Tribes money pays for a program called GATHER, which focuses on integrating traditional tribal medicine practices into health care. Providers at the Seattle Indian Health Board can use medicine made from plants grown in a community garden. A traditional Native medicine apprentice or healer is a part of a patient's care team.

Seattle Indian Health Board President Esther Lucero, a descendant of the Navajo Nation, said her staff meets with people from the CDC and other Healthy Tribes grantees bimonthly to discuss project updates and ensure compliance with grants. But after last week's layoffs, they are having trouble contacting anyone.

"If you can't actually administer the dollars, how are you going to actually get them out to the programs?" she said. "With this current administration, it's almost like every day we receive an unexpected notice, and then we will get a follow-up notice that says ... you need to move forward as usual."

Lycia Ortega, interim CEO of Los Angeles-based United American Indian Involvement, echoed concerns about the ambiguous and somewhat confusing messages. Her organization uses Healthy Tribes money to foster connections between younger people and elders in Native American and Alaska Native communities.

Native communities have had to push back against the Trump administration's efforts to cut programs that might be considered DEI initiatives, she said, with the help of lawyers, policy experts and watchdogs who point out areas where the government might not be honoring the trust responsibility.

Native people "have a distinct political power," said Ortega, a citizen of the Fort Yuma Quechan Indian Tribe, but "there are policymakers who see tribes as a threat rather than a partner."

Stephen Roe Lewis, governor of the Gila River Indian Community, said he told Kennedy privately that consulting with and engaging in respectful partnerships with tribes is key to fulfilling the federal government's trust responsibilities.

Since the Trump administration began making massive cuts to the federal workforce, many tribal leaders have had to clarify with newly appointed federal officials that services to tribes are not based on race but rather on the political status of tribal nations.

"I made it very clear, we are not DEI — as tribal nations, as a political entity," he said.

Hong Kong's biggest pro-democracy party moves to disband as freedoms dwindle

By KANIS LEUNG Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — When Yeung Sum co-founded the city's largest pro-democracy party more than 30 years ago, he knew building a democratic Hong Kong would be a "difficult dream." Still, it was not impossible.

Today, his Democratic Party is moving toward dissolution, a symbolic marker of the diminishing Western-style civil liberties and high degree of autonomy that the ruling Communist Party in Beijing promised to keep intact in the former British colony for at least 50 years when it returned to China in 1997.

Pro-democracy protests that paralyzed Hong Kong in 2019 led to a crackdown that has all but silenced dissent through restricted elections, media censorship and a China-imposed national security law that saw some of Yeung's party members jailed. Dozens of civil society groups closed down.

Former chairperson Yeung said in an interview with The Associated Press that Chinese officials told him the party needed to disband. He urged his members to support the motion to give the leadership mandate to handle the process.

"I'm not very happy about it," said Yeung. "But I can see if we refuse the call to disband, we may pay a very huge price for it."

Others received similar messages. Party veteran Fred Li said Chinese officials implied the party wouldn't survive through this year's legislative election when he asked about the possibility of its members running. Another founding member, Sin Chung-kai, said some Hong Kong-based members were warned in early February of consequences if the party continued to exist.

Promising early years

The Democratic Party was formed in 1994 through a merger of two pro-democracy groups. According to its manifesto, it supports Hong Kong's return to China.

In its early years, it won the most seats in the legislative council. Before Beijing changed electoral rules in 2021 to ensure only "patriots" can run, the party was a major pro-democracy voice in the legislature even after it no longer held the largest number of seats. Back then, Yeung said, the pro-democracy camp generally won about 60% of the popular vote.

Yeung was encouraged to see that the experiment in democracy, the rule of law, an independent judiciary and a merit-based administration could work in the city.

"The entire social system has been demonstrated to be quite, quite, quite promising over the years," he recalled.

Negotiations with Beijing drew backlash

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 52 of 81

In 2010, the party came under fire after it supported the government's political reform package in negotiations with Chinese officials that allowed millions of voters to directly elect five lawmakers from their district councils. Some members who hoped for broader democratic reform quit in protest and the party lost two seats in the 2012 legislative election. It also drew backlash from advocates within the pro-democracy camp.

Looking back, former chairperson Emily Lau, who was involved in the talks with Beijing, insists many people supported the outcome because it was a step forward. She said they asked Beijing to continue to have dialogue with others to find a way for universal suffrage, but it never did.

"Maybe the only thing I would have done a bit differently is not to go into the (Beijing's) liaison office (in Hong Kong). I guess we underestimated how many Hong Kong people hated them," she said.

As new pro-democracy groups were on the rise, the party's influence dwindled. That became more obvious after the emergence of younger politicians, including pro-Hong Kong independence activists, following the 2014 massive protests calling for universal suffrage. Still, five years later, when the 2019 protests swept Hong Kong, the party's activism won widespread support once again.

After crackdown

China's crackdown including the 2020 sweeping security law changed the political landscape. Some former lawmakers, including party ex-chairmen Albert Ho and Wu Chi-wai, are now in prison in prominent national security cases.

The Democratic Party has become absent in elections due to the new legal framework for polls. Some observers believe Beijing may no longer consider the party worth cultivating ties with, especially after it did not run in the 2021 legislative election after the electoral overhaul.

Other pro-democracy groups have disbanded, including the Civic Party, the second-largest pro-democracy political party, and a decades-old group that organized the annual vigil to commemorate Beijing's Tiananmen crackdown in 1989. Some activists chose self-exile or ceased their work.

The Democratic Party pressed on by holding news conferences on livelihood issues. It even submitted opinions on the new national security legislation before it was enacted in March 2024.

Ramon Yuen, who had served as a policy spokesperson before and after the security law took effect, admitted the party has become like a pressure group.

"Unfortunately, this pressure group is also under pressure," said Yuen.

Moving toward disbandment

In February, the party's central committee decided to set up a task force to look into the procedures for dissolving itself. Current chairperson Lo Kin-hei said it was based on the current political situation and social climate. He declined an interview request.

A meeting on Sunday will decide whether to mandate the leadership to proceed. A final vote for dissolution is expected at a later date.

Yuen, 38, joined the party in 2009. If it's shuttered, the city will lose a voice advocating for issues ranging from livelihood concerns to democracy, human rights and the rule of law, he said.

"It's not easy for the central committee to make this decision," he said. "I accept it. I can only say, every era will come to an end."

For party veteran Yeung, the disbandment would be a "very huge setback" for the city, adding that the party's disappearance would make it difficult for people outside to believe in the "one country, two systems" principle.

But he believes it will not be the end of fighting for democracy for Hong Kongers, especially for the young people who tasted a free society. People are quiet because they worry about potential penalties if they openly criticize the government, said Yeung, who was sentenced to 14 months in prison for his role in the 2019 protests.

"So maybe no more democratic formation of party. But I think people's hearts for democracy, they will not fade out. They still keep it, maybe in different form."

Mideast mediator Oman at the center of a key first Iran-US meeting over Tehran's nuclear program

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

MUSCAT, Oman (AP) — Once again, some of the highest stakes in Middle East geopolitics will be discussed in this quiet coastal city without skyscrapers.

Here in Muscat, the capital of Oman nestled against the sheer stone heights of the Hajar Mountains, Iran and the United States will meet for talks over Tehran's rapidly advancing nuclear program for the first time since President Donald Trump began his second term.

No agreement is immediately likely, but the stakes of the negotiations couldn't be higher for these two nations closing in on half a century of enmity. Trump repeatedly has threatened to unleash airstrikes targeting Iran's nuclear program if a deal isn't reached. Iranian officials increasingly warn that they could pursue a nuclear weapon with their stockpile of uranium enriched to near weapons-grade levels.

And at the center is Oman, one of the world's last sultanates on the eastern edge of the Arabian Peninsula. Its unique history, people and proximity to Iran have made it indispensable for the West as it has held discussion after discussion for Iran. But these latest talks — suddenly announced by Trump in the Oval Office just days earlier — have put Oman firmly into a spotlight it otherwise seeks to avoid.

"The Omanis have a lot of experience when it comes to playing this back-channel role," said Giorgio Cafiero, the CEO and founder of the Washington-based risk analysis firm Gulf State Analytics. "I think that right now in this day and age of Trump 2.0, the stakes are really high and it's important for us to understand the value of Oman being a diplomatic bridge."

'Omanibalancing' in an unsettled Mideast

Oman, home to 5.2 million people across an arid country just larger than Italy, stands out among the Gulf Arab states. Its oil and gas wealth is marginal by comparison, and its citizens outnumber its population of foreign workers. Omanis can be found working normal jobs from taxi cabs to offices. And its people are Ibadi Muslims, a more liberal offshoot of Islam predating the Sunni-Shiite split.

They occupy a strategic location along the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf through which a fifth of all oil passes.

And Oman is a former empire whose seafaring rule once stretched all the way down to the island of Zanzibar off Africa. That history extends into how it deals with the wider world, said Marc J. O'Reilly, a history professor at Heidelberg University in Ohio.

It is a path O'Reilly referred to as "Omanibalancing" over 25 years ago — and one that still works today for the sultanate after the 2020 death of its longtime ruler Sultan Qaboos bin Said and the installation of Sultan Haitham bin Tariq.

Oman is "the master of quiet diplomacy," O'Reilly said. "I think they are proud of that, the Omanis, they know that's their reputation."

That has been tested in recent years, however. Oman maintains diplomatic ties to Yemen's Houthi rebels, now being bombed in an intense airstrike campaign by the Trump administration. Oman's ties to Iran, cemented when Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi sent troops in the 1970s to help put down the Dhofar Rebellion in the country, have been maintained since the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

America has relied on Oman for years to negotiate with Iran, including secret talks under President Barack Obama that led to the 2015 nuclear deal Iran had with world powers.

"Certainly, I think they are, I think on the whole, very easy to deal with in a region where that is not the norm," O'Reilly said.

The challenge ahead

This round of talks is unlike those that came before. The first challenge Oman faces is just how public they are. Muscat typically relies on discretion in how they handle diplomatic relations, a holdover from an earlier age of Gulf Arab rule.

Their neighbors today in comparison go relatively public with their diplomacy — like Qatar's role in negotiations with Afghanistan's Taliban, Saudi Arabia hosting the Russia-U.S. talks and the United Arab

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 54 of 81

Emirates just mediating a Russia-U.S. prisoner swap. So far, Oman's state-run media, which dominates the sultanate, has remained silent about Saturday's talks.

"Oman typically prefers not making too many headlines," Cafiero said. "Oman prefers diplomacy that's not at the forefront of the news but is still effective."

Then there's the expectations of the two sides. Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi maintains the negotiations will begin as indirect talks, likely with Omani Foreign Minister Badr bin Hamad al-Busaidi passing messages between Tehran and U.S. Mideast envoy Steve Witkoff. Trump has maintained the talks will be direct. While not a major roadblock, it signals the challenge the negotiations face — particularly after years of indirect talks during the Biden administration went nowhere.

And while the U.S. side can offer sanctions relief for Iran's beleaguered economy, it remains unclear just how much Iran will be willing to concede. Under the 2015 nuclear deal, Iran could only maintain a small stockpile of uranium enriched to 3.67%. Today, Tehran's stockpile could allow it to build multiple nuclear weapons if it so chooses and it has some material enriched up to 60%, a short, technical step away from weapons-grade levels. Judging from negotiations since Trump unilaterally withdrew America from the deal in 2018, Iran will likely ask to keep enriching uranium up to at least 20%.

One thing it won't do is give up its program entirely. That makes the proposal of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of a so-called Libyan solution — "you go in, blow up the facilities, dismantle all the equipment, under American supervision, American execution" — unworkable.

Iranians including Ayatollah Ali Khamenei have held up what ultimately happened to the late Libyan dictator Moammar Gadhafi, who was killed with his own gun by rebels in the country's 2011 Arab Spring uprising, as a warning about what can happen when you trust the United States.

Already, a top adviser for Khamenei, Ali Shamkhani, has warned what could happen if the U.S. continues to threaten Tehran, including Iran expelling inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency and ending cooperation with the U.N. watchdog.

"The transfer of enriched material to a secure location could also be considered," he added, opening the door again to Iran having secret, undeclared nuclear sites as it did when the crisis over its program began over 20 years ago.

But Majid Takht-e Ravanch, a deputy Iranian foreign minister, offered a more positive note Friday.

"If the American side refrains from raising unrelated issues and demands — and abandons threats and intimidation — there is a good opportunity to reach an agreement," Takht-e Ravanch said, according to the state-run IRNA news agency.

53 frantic hours of searching for survivors after the roof collapses at an iconic Dominican club

By DÁNICA COTO Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — A roof collapse at the legendary Jet Set nightclub in Santo Domingo has plunged the Dominican Republic into mourning.

Authorities say the disaster early Tuesday killed 222 people and injured more than 200 others. Nearly two dozen people remain hospitalized, with several in critical condition.

The biggest tragedy to strike the Dominican Republic in recent history has raised questions about the safety of infrastructure in the capital and beyond. While authorities have said it's too early to determine why the roof fell, the government has created a technical team to investigate the case.

Here's a timeline of what happened:

Monday, April 7

It was a "Jet Set Monday," the day merengue musicians would play at the legendary club every week.

That day, acclaimed singer Rubby Pérez was to take the stage at 9 p.m. In typical Latino fashion, the music didn't start until 11:50 p.m., according to his manager, Enrique Paulino.

As the music began, more than 400 people inside the club applauded the singer known for hits including "Volveré" and "El Africano."

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 55 of 81

Tuesday, April 8

Halfway through Pérez's set, dust from the ceiling began falling into people drinks. Minutes later, the concrete ceiling collapsed onto the crowd.

At 12:44 am, the country's 911 system received the first of 102 calls that day, according to Randolph Rijo Gómez, the system's director.

Two minutes later, at 12:46 a.m., Nelsy Cruz, the governor of Montecristi and sister of seven-time Major League Baseball All-Star Nelson Cruz, called President Luis Abinader.

"She told me, 'Send everyone over here, send all the ambulances,'" Abinader told reporters.

Cruz was rescued but died of injuries at the hospital.

Ninety seconds after the first 911 call was received, police arrived. Eight minutes after that call, the first rescue units arrived.

In less than 25 minutes, authorities activated 25 soldiers, seven firefighting brigades and 77 ambulances, Gómez said.

They deployed dogs, thermal cameras and dozens of specialized equipment.

In his first press conference about the disaster, emergency operations director Juan Manuel Méndez said that at least 13 people had died and more than 70 were injured.

By that afternoon, the number of victims rose to 58 as more than 100 people donated blood at different centers across the capital.

Meanwhile, a crowd of anxious people looking for their loved ones pressed around the remains of the club, forcing authorities to grab a megaphone and ask that they make room for the dozens of ambulances.

The victims identified that day included former MLB players Octavio Dotel and Tony Enrique Blanco Cabrera; Luis Solís, the saxophonist who was playing onstage when the roof collapsed; and the son of the public works minister.

By the end of the day, authorities announced that the number of victims had surged to 98, with the last survivor found early that afternoon.

Wednesday, April 9

In the predawn hours, rescue crews from Puerto Rico and Israel arrived to help local officials search for survivors and victims.

A collective cry was heard when Méndez, the emergency operations director, confirmed they had found the body of Rubby Pérez.

The number of victims soared to 184 as dozens of people began gathering at hospitals and the country's forensic institute in search of their loved ones.

Wakes were held for Dotel and Pérez in the afternoon, with hundreds of people paying their respects, including MLB Hall of Fame pitcher Pedro Martínez, who said he knew some 50 people who died at Jet Set.

More than 20 victims were identified as being from Haina, the hometown of Pérez located just southwest of Santo Domingo. Its mayor said officials would offer the families free funeral services.

In the evening, the government announced that it was moving to a recovery phase focused on finding bodies.

Thursday, April 10

The government held a memorial for Pérez at Santo Domingo's National Theater that hundreds attended, including the country's president and merengue superstar Juan Luis Guerra.

As the coffin was carried out to the hearse, the crowd released white balloons and spontaneously sang "Volveré."

Meanwhile, officials in Haina held a wake for at least 10 victims, with mourners crowding around each coffin to say their final farewells.

By late morning, the emergency operations director announced that crews had finished searching for victims and potential survivors after working for 53 continuous hours. Méndez broke down as he spoke, calling it "the most difficult task I've had in 20 years."

Officials removed heavy machinery, packed their equipment and evicted people from the area as they fumigated the building.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 56 of 81

Crews had rescued 189 people alive from the rubble.

That afternoon, the president's spokesman, Homero Figueroa, announced that a technical team would be created to determine what caused the roof to collapse, and that national and international experts would be part of it.

Friday, April 11

Heavy rain fell as dozens of people remained outside the country's forensics institute, still wearing face masks as they complained about the odor and demanded the bodies of their loved ones.

A screen set up nearby showed the names of victims in different colors. Those in black meant that the bodies were ready but that no one had picked them up, while those in green meant the relatives had identified them.

Under a tarp, government officials met with family members who presented official documents of their loved ones in order to pick up their remains.

Among those waiting at the forensics institute was Carlos Severino, who lost all three of his children: Dianny Escarlet Severino 31; Diego Armando Severino, 27; and Mariani Escarlet Severino, 23.

In a phone interview, Severino described them as hardworking, honest and serious.

"To describe Dianny is to describe an angel. Mariani was the joy of the home. Diego was tenacious, a worker," he said as he began sobbing.

Doctors treating the injured at public hospitals said several of them remain in critical condition.

Dr. Julio Landrón said "a lot of them" will have permanent injuries, ranging from paralysis to a damaged finger.

Judge rules Menendez brothers' bid for freedom through resentencing can continue

By JAIMIE DING Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Erik and Lyle Menendez's resentencing hearings can continue despite opposition from the Los Angeles County district attorney, a judge ruled Friday.

They were sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole at ages 18 and 21 after being convicted of murdering their parents, Jose and Kitty Menendez, in their Beverly Hills home in 1989.

While defense attorneys argued the brothers acted out of self-defense after years of sexual abuse by their father, prosecutors said the brothers killed their parents for a multimillion-dollar inheritance.

The case has captured the public's attention for decades, and the Netflix drama "Monsters: The Lyle and Erik Menendez Story" and the documentary "The Menendez Brothers," released in the fall of 2024, have been credited for bringing new attention to the case. Supporters of the brothers have flown in from across the country to attend rallies and hearings in the past few months.

Former Los Angeles District Attorney George Gascón asked a judge last year to change the brothers' sentence from life without the possibility of parole to 50 years to life. That would make them immediately eligible for parole because they committed the crime when they were younger than 26.

But Gascón's successor reversed course. Nathan Hochman submitted a motion last month to withdraw the resentencing request.

Deputy District Attorney Habib Balian said during Friday's hearing they could not support the brothers' resentencing because the brothers had not admitted to lies told during their trial about why they killed their parents nor have they taken complete responsibility for their crime.

"They are the same people they were," Balian said. "They have not changed."

Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge Michael Jesic that argument is "fair game" for prosecutors to make during the resentencing hearing.

The brothers appeared in court over Zoom but didn't make any public statements.

"They've waited a long time to get some justice," the brothers' attorney, Mark Geragos, said of the family.

Balian said that the key issue with Gascón's resentencing petition was that it did not fully address rehabilitation and missed key elements of the original crime committed.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 57 of 81

"What does it (rehabilitation) mean? To learn from your mistakes and truly understand that you were wrong," Balian said.

Balian presented evidence and video clips of the brothers' testimony from the first trial to demonstrate instances where they "hunkered down in their bunker of deceit, lies, and deception."

He said the brothers killed their parents out of greed when they learned they would be taken out of the will, citing psychiatrist's notes that he said showed "this was not self-defense."

Geragos called the presentation a "dog and pony show" and said it was "nothing more than political cover" as a result of Hochman defeating Gascón in the district attorney's race.

"They have authorized the denial of sexual abuse," Geragos said of the prosecution's presentation.

Geragos argued the judge had full authority to proceed with resentencing under a California law passed in 2023 that allows a court to recall a sentence and initiate resentencing at any point in time.

Geragos also objected to Balian including a photo of the deceased and bloody Menendez parents in his presentation, which he said "retraumatized" family members and victims.

The family's relationship with Hochman has soured since he took office. Most of the brothers' extended family supports their resentencing.

Tamara Goodall, a cousin of the brothers, submitted a complaint with the state asking that Hochman be removed from the case. She wrote that Hochman had a "hostile, dismissive and patronizing tone" in meetings with the family and created an "intimidating and bullying atmosphere."

Geragos pointed out that Hochman demoted Nancy Theberge and Brock Lunsford, the two deputy district attorneys who filed the original resentencing motion. Theberge and Lunsford have since filed lawsuits against Hochman alleging harassment, discrimination and retaliation for their work on the Menendez brothers case.

"We look forward to a full, fair presentation of who Eric and Lyle are today, not just a version frozen in time in a time of pain and fear, but the whole truth — the growth, the humanity and the men they've become," said Anamaria Baralt, a cousin of the brothers, after the hearing concluded.

Without resentencing, the brothers would still have two other pathways to freedom. They have submitted a clemency plea to California Gov. Gavin Newsom, who has ordered the state parole board to assess whether the brothers could pose a public risk if released.

The brothers also submitted a petition for habeas corpus in May 2023 asking the court to grant them a new trial in light of new evidence presented. Hochman's office also filed a motion opposing the petition.

Columbia University activist Mahmoud Khalil can be deported, immigration judge rules

By SARA CLINE and KATE BRUMBACK Associated Press

JENA, La. (AP) — Columbia University graduate student Mahmoud Khalil can be forced out of the country as a national security risk, an immigration judge in Louisiana ruled Friday after lawyers argued the legality of deporting the activist who participated in pro-Palestinian demonstrations.

The government's contention that Khalil's presence in the U.S. posed "potentially serious foreign policy consequences" satisfied requirements for deportation, Immigration Judge Jamee E. Comans said at a hearing in Jena.

Comans said the government had "established by clear and convincing evidence that he is removable."

After the immigration court hearing, Khalil attorney Marc Van Der Hout told a New Jersey federal judge that Khalil will appeal to the Board of Immigration Appeals within weeks.

"So nothing is going to happen quickly," he said.

Addressing the judge at the end of the immigration hearing, Khalil recalled her saying at a hearing earlier in the week that "there's nothing more important to this court than due process rights and fundamental fairness."

"Clearly what we witnessed today, neither of these principles were present today or in this whole process," he added. "This is exactly why the Trump administration has sent me to the court, 1,000 miles

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 58 of 81

away from my family.”

Van Der Hout, also criticized the hearing’s fairness.

“Today, we saw our worst fears play out: Mahmoud was subject to a charade of due process, a flagrant violation of his right to a fair hearing, and a weaponization of immigration law to suppress dissent,” Van Der Hout said in a statement.

Khalil, a legal U.S. resident, was detained by federal immigration agents March 8 in the lobby of his university-owned apartment, the first arrest under President Donald Trump’s promised crackdown on students who joined campus protests against the war in Gaza.

Within a day, he was flown across the country to an immigration detention center in Jena, far from his attorneys and wife, a U.S. citizen due to give birth soon.

Khalil’s lawyers have challenged the legality of his detention, saying the Trump administration is trying to block free speech protected by the First Amendment.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio has cited a rarely used statute to justify Khalil’s deportation, which gives him power to deport those who pose “potentially serious adverse foreign policy consequences for the United States.”

At Friday’s hearing, Van Der Hout told the judge that the government’s submissions to the court prove the attempt to deport his client “has nothing to do with foreign policy” and said the government is trying to deport him for protected speech.

Khalil, a Palestinian born and raised in Syria after his grandparents were forcibly removed from their ancestral home in Tiberias, isn’t accused of breaking any laws during the protests at Columbia.

The government, however, has said noncitizens who participate in such demonstrations should be expelled from the country for expressing views that the administration considers to be antisemitic and “pro-Hamas,” referring to the Palestinian militant group that attacked Israel on Oct. 7, 2023.

Khalil, a 30-year-old international affairs graduate student, had served as a negotiator and spokesperson for student activists at Columbia University who took over a campus lawn last spring to protest Israel’s military campaign in Gaza.

The university summoned police to dismantle the encampment after a small group of protesters seized an administration building. Khalil is not accused of participating in the building occupation and wasn’t among those arrested.

But images of his maskless face at protests and his willingness to share his name with reporters have drawn scorn from those who viewed the protesters and their demands as antisemitic. The White House accused Khalil of “siding with terrorists” but has yet to cite any support for the claim.

Federal judges in New York and New Jersey have ordered the government not to deport Khalil while his case plays out in multiple courts.

The Trump administration has said it is taking at least \$400 million in federal funding away from research programs at Columbia and its medical center to punish it for not adequately fighting what it considers to be antisemitism on campus.

Some Jewish students and faculty complained about being harassed during the demonstrations or ostracized because of their faith or their support of Israel.

Immigration authorities have cracked down on other critics of Israel on college campuses, arresting a Georgetown University scholar who had spoken out on social media about the Israel-Gaza war, canceling the student visas of some protesters and deporting a Brown University professor who they said had attended the Lebanon funeral of a leader of Hezbollah, another militant group that has fought with Israel.

Divers search for parts after NYC helicopter crash killed a family of five and the pilot, a Navy vet

By MICHAEL R. SISAK, DAVE COLLINS and TED SHAFFREY Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Divers using sonar searched Friday for key pieces of a sightseeing helicopter that broke apart in midair and plunged into the Hudson River between Manhattan and New Jersey. All six

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 59 of 81

people aboard were killed — a family of five from Spain and the pilot, a 36-year-old U.S. Navy veteran.

The main and rear rotors, main transmission, roof structure and tail structure were still missing a day after Thursday's crash, National Transportation Safety Board Chairwoman Jennifer Homendy said. Witnesses said they saw the main rotor detach and spin away, and bystander video showed parts of the aircraft tumbling through the air.

Homendy said investigators had only just begun looking at the wreckage, flight logs and other material and would not speculate on the cause. The agency, which has been spared from the Trump administration's job-cutting measures, deployed 17 people to the crash scene, including 10 investigators.

"Everything is on the table. We don't rule anything out," Homendy said. "We take a very detailed and comprehensive view, and it's way too early in the investigation."

The helicopter crashed around 3:15 p.m. Thursday, about 15 minutes after departing from a lower Manhattan heliport. It flew up the west side of Manhattan, turned around near the George Washington Bridge and was heading south when it plummeted upside down into a shallow stretch of the river near Jersey City, New Jersey.

The crash, the latest in a string of deadly incidents, has renewed debate about the safety and practicality of helicopter tours in New York City's busy airspace.

Victims include a family and a Navy vet

Just before takeoff, Agustin Escobar, his wife, Mercè Camprubí Montal, and their three children — Victor, 4, Mercedes, 8, and Agustin, 10 — smiled in front of the helicopter in souvenir photos posted to the tour operator's website.

Escobar, a 49-year-old executive with the German conglomerate Siemens, had extended a business trip to the U.S. to sightsee in New York City and celebrate two family milestones: Mercedes' 9th birthday, which would have been Friday, and his wife's upcoming 40th birthday. Montal was an executive at Siemens Energy, a company that had been a part of the conglomerate before being spun off as a separate entity.

In a statement posted on the social platform X Friday night by Montal's brother, Joan Camprubí Montal, family members expressed gratitude for the "massive expressions of condolences and support," adding, "There are no words to describe what we are experiencing, nor to thank the warmth received."

Writing in Spanish and in Catalan, Montal said family members had traveled to New York to handle arrangements and asked people to respect their privacy.

"These are very difficult times, but optimism and joy have always characterized our family. We want to keep the memory of a happy and united family, in the sweetest moment of their lives," he said. "They have departed together, leaving an indelible mark among all their relatives, friends, and acquaintances."

The pilot, Seankese Johnson, received his commercial pilot's license in 2023, according to the Federal Aviation Administration, and had logged about 800 hours of flight time as of March, Homendy said. Recently, he posted a photo on Facebook of him piloting a helicopter with Manhattan in the background. In 2023, he posted that he was flying a firefighting helicopter.

"Long hours and painstaking work to get to this moment. Thank you for all the love and support from those who've helped me get here," Johnson wrote.

Johnson transitioned to aviation after a career in the Navy.

He enlisted in 2006 and served until 2018, achieving the rank of Gunner's Mate 2nd Class, Defense Department records show. He was stationed on the aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan from 2007 to 2011 and in San Diego from 2011 to 2018, serving in the Special Warfare Unit, the Special Warfare Logistics Support Unit and the Coastal Riverine Squadron.

Officials call for air traffic restrictions

Thursday's crash amplified calls from some community activists and public officials to ban or restrict helicopter traffic around Manhattan. More than three dozen people have been killed in helicopter crashes in New York City since 1977.

New York State Sen. Brad Hoylman-Sigal, a Manhattan Democrat, called the crash a "reminder of our worst fears" and said "having nonessential flights over densely populated areas is a recipe for disaster."

Jersey City Mayor Steven Fulop, a Democrat running for governor of New Jersey, called on the FAA to

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 60 of 81

restrict tourist flights. Had the helicopter veered a few hundred feet inland, it might have crashed into a walkway, a playground or apartment buildings, he said.

"It's a very dangerous situation, and I think we need to be practical about it," Fulop said.

New York City Mayor Eric Adams, however, said he doesn't want to restrict any flights until the investigation is complete. He told 1010 WINS radio: "People want to see the city from the sky. At the heart of this is safety. It must be done right."

A helicopter industry group also urged caution.

"Unfortunately, some well-meaning but misguided leaders are using this tragedy to exploit and push their decades-old agenda to ban all helicopters," Eastern Region Helicopter Council Chairman Jeff Smith said in a statement.

A collision between a plane and a tourist helicopter over the Hudson in 2009 killed nine people, and five died in 2018 when a charter helicopter offering "open door" flights went down into the East River.

Tour company is 'profoundly saddened'

The flight's operator, New York Helicopter, said in a statement Friday that it is "profoundly saddened by the tragic accident and loss of life," adding that the safety and well-being of passengers and crew "has always been the cornerstone of our operations."

The company, one of a handful offering sightseeing flights in the Big Apple, had been beset by financial problems in recent years. It emerged from bankruptcy in 2022 and has faced lawsuits for allegedly failing to pay its bills.

The company's owner, Michael Roth, told the New York Post he was devastated and had "no clue" what happened.

"The only thing I know by watching a video of the helicopter falling down, that the main rotor blades weren't on the helicopter," the Post quoted him as saying. He added that he had not seen anything like this during his 30 years in the helicopter business, but noted: "These are machines, and they break."

Helicopter had maintenance issue last fall

The helicopter, a Bell 206 LongRanger IV, was built in 2004.

According to FAA records, it had a maintenance issue last September involving its transmission assembly.

An entry in the agency's Service Difficulty Reporting System shows the transmission assembly had metal in oil, a sign of wear, and a bearing in the transmission was found to be flaking.

The helicopter had logged 12,728 total flight hours at the time, according to the records.

Justin Rose stays in the Masters lead with some all-star company

By DOUG FERGUSON AP Golf Writer

AUGUSTA, Ga. (AP) — The end of a long Friday that reshaped the Masters had Scottie Scheffler sitting in the pine straw under a magnolia tree left of the 18th fairway, waiting for a rules official but looking very much like someone who simply needed to catch his breath.

Rest up for a weekend at Augusta National that doesn't figure to lack for drama.

It starts with Justin Rose, who did just enough in his round of 1-under 71 to be the 36-hole leader for the third time in his career as the 44-year-old from England tries to become the second-oldest Masters champion behind Jack Nicklaus (46).

The leading role returns to Rory McIlroy, who came to life with a birdie-birdie-par-eagle start to the back nine. Maybe that's where his Masters started, because he roared into contention with a bogey-free 66 that renewed hopes of a green jacket to complete the career Grand Slam.

U.S. Open champion Bryson DeChambeau might have learned to putt the Augusta National greens, a scary proposition for someone who already knows how to bash the golf ball. He shot 68 and was a shot behind Rose in his best start ever at the Masters.

And Scheffler?

The defending Masters champion did his best to survive the worst of the conditions, mainly wind that caused a little discomfort and a lot of uncertainty. He made five bogeys over his last 12 holes, the last

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 61 of 81

one by going from under the magnolia, back to the fairway, over the green and then hitting a superb chip to limit the damage.

All that and he was only three behind after a 71.

"We've got a great golf course, conditions should be really good, challenging, and we've got some great guys on top of the leaderboard," Scheffler said. "So it should be a fun weekend."

Indeed.

Sixteen players were separated by five shots at the halfway point, nine of them major champions, three of them with experience winning at Augusta National.

"The leaderboard is stacking up very favorably for what looks like world-class players right up there," Rose said after a round that featured birdies on the par 5s on the front nine and on the par 3s on the back nine.

Rose took a three-shot lead into the second round and had the advantage of playing early, before the wind became strong enough to make flags snap and create just enough indecision. He hit a 9-iron over Rae's Creek to 4 feet for birdie on the par-3 12th, and he stuffed his tee shot on the par-3 16th for another birdie. That allowed him to atone for a few mistakes.

He was at 8-under 136, the third time he has had the 36-hole lead at the Masters.

The buzz came from behind him.

DeChambeau picked up an unlikely birdie by holing a bunker shot on the par-3 fourth hole on his way to a 32 on the front nine that kept him on Rose's heels the rest of the way.

"This is what golf is about," DeChambeau said. "Got a lot of great names up there, and looking forward to an unbelievable test of golf."

And then there was McIlroy, who had two double bogeys over the last four holes Thursday, the latest frustrating chapter for him at the Masters. This time, he managed to forget about it and move on. He went birdie-birdie-par-eagle to start the back nine and was on his way to a bogey-free 66.

"I had to remind myself I was playing well," McIlroy said. "I couldn't let two bad holes dictate the narrative of the 16 good ones. I also had to remind myself this morning not to push too hard too early."

Corey Connors of Canada quietly put together a 70 and joined McIlroy at 6-under 138.

The group three shots back included Scheffler (71), former British Open champion Shane Lowry (68) and Tyrrell Hatton, who got within one shot of Rose until a pair of three-putts. One of them did a U-turn down the hill at the 16th. The other was a sleepy tap-in that lipped out.

It shapes up for a wide-open weekend, led by a 44-year-old from England who has gone a dozen years since winning his only major at the 2013 U.S. Open. Rose spoke last year about finding another stretch of magic in his career, and opportunity awaits.

"This is nice to be back in that mix."

McIlroy was thrilled, too. There was plenty of temptation to come out firing, but that's what he did in 2023 when he played Friday afternoon and saw he faced a 10-shot deficit. He tried to charge and wound up charging right out of the parking lot after missing the cut.

This time, he played the front nine with one birdie and eight pars. But he came to life quickly, stuffing a three-quarter 8-iron to a foot on No. 10 and a similar play with a 9-iron to about 4 feet on No. 11. Best of all was hitting 4-iron off the pine straw on the par-5 13th that narrowly cleared the tributary of Rae's Creek and set up a 10-foot eagle.

"Things sort of clicked into gear on the back nine," McIlroy said.

Scheffler and Tyrrell Hatton faced the worst of the wind. Scheffler's tee shot on the par-3 12th sailed into the azaleas over the green, bounced out and he chipped in for birdie. He played with limited stress one day, and it felt like chaos the next.

"Golf is a funny game. It's a day-to-day thing. Yesterday I felt really sharp. Today not as sharp," Scheffler said. "Could the conditions have contributed to that? I'm sure a little bit. It was definitely much harder to hit the ball where you were looking today just because the wind was blowing from everywhere."

The cut was at 2-over 146, marking the end of 67-year-old Bernhard Langer's career at the Masters. He needed to make a 10-foot par putt on the last hole, only for it to tickle the right side of the cup.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 62 of 81

Five-time major champion Brooks Koepka might have had the most shocking departure. He was in good shape, needing a bogey on the 18th. He made a quadruple bogey, starting with a tee shot into the trees and ending with a three-putt from 10 feet.

Now the attentions shifts back to the top.

"You're going to have to play great golf, and you're going to have to go out there and want it and go for it and get after it," Rose said. "It's as simple as that, really."

'Extremely troubling' that US can't provide details on mistakenly deported man, judge says

By MICHAEL KUNZELMAN, REBECCA SANTANA and BEN FINLEY Associated Press

GREENBELT, Md. (AP) — A federal judge on Friday lambasted a government lawyer who couldn't explain what, if anything, the Trump administration has done to arrange for the return of a Maryland man who was mistakenly deported last month to a notorious prison in El Salvador.

The U.S. government attorney also struggled to provide any information about the whereabouts of Kilmar Abrego Garcia, despite Thursday's ruling from the U.S. Supreme Court that the Trump administration must bring him back.

"Where is he and under whose authority?" U.S. District Judge Paula Xinis asked in a Maryland courtroom.

"I'm not asking for state secrets," she said. "All I know is that he's not here. The government was prohibited from sending him to El Salvador, and now I'm asking a very simple question: Where is he?"

Drew Ensign, a deputy assistant attorney general, said the government doesn't have evidence to contradict the belief that Abrego Garcia is still in El Salvador.

Xinis sounded exasperated that Ensign couldn't tell her where Abrego Garcia is, what the government has done to arrange for his return or what more it plans to do to get him back to the U.S.

"That is extremely troubling," she said.

The judge repeatedly asked Ensign about what has been done, asking pointedly: "Have they done anything?" — to which Ensign said he didn't have personal knowledge of what had been done.

"So that means they've done nothing," the judge said, adding later: "Despite this court's clear directive, your clients have done nothing to facilitate the return of Mr. Abrego Garcia."

For his part, Ensign stressed that the government was "actively considering what could be done" and said that Abrego Garcia's case involved three Cabinet agencies and significant coordination.

Before the hearing ended, Xinis ordered the U.S. to provide daily status updates on plans to return Abrego Garcia.

"I guess my message, for what it's worth, is: if you can do it, do it tomorrow," she said.

In a brief filed before the hearing, Trump administration attorneys told Xinis that her deadline for information was "impractical" and that they lacked enough time to review Thursday's Supreme Court's ruling.

The U.S. attorneys also wrote that it was "unreasonable" for the U.S. government "to reveal potential steps before those steps are reviewed, agreed upon, and vetted."

"Foreign affairs cannot operate on judicial timelines, in part because it involves sensitive country-specific considerations wholly inappropriate for judicial review," the attorneys wrote.

After the hearing, Abrego Garcia's lawyer told reporters that "he should be here in the United States."

Flanked by Abrego Garcia's wife and backed by supporters, attorney Simon Sandoval-Moshenberg said he's hoping for a "meaningful" government update on Saturday.

"If they don't take today's order seriously, we'll respond," he said.

President Donald Trump indicated Friday evening that he would return Abrego Garcia to the U.S. If the high court's justices said to bring him back, "I would do that," the president said.

"I have great respect for the Supreme Court," Trump told reporters traveling on Air Force One.

Meanwhile, El Salvador President Nayib Bukele is expected to visit Washington on Monday. White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt was asked Friday if Trump wanted Bukele to bring Abrego Garcia.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 63 of 81

But Leavitt said Bukele is visiting to speak about the cooperation between the two countries "that is at an all-time high."

Abrego Garcia's wife, Jennifer Vasquez Sura, said Thursday that the ordeal has been an "emotional roller coaster."

"I am anxiously waiting for Kilmar to be here in my arms, and in our home putting our children to bed, knowing this nightmare is almost at its end. I will continue fighting until my husband is home," she said.

Abrego Garcia fled El Salvador because of persecution by local gangs, according to his immigration court records. He lived in Maryland for roughly 14 years, during which he worked in construction, married a U.S. citizen and was raising three children with disabilities.

In 2019, he was accused by local police of being in the MS-13 gang, court records state. He denied the allegation and was never charged with a crime.

A U.S. immigration judge subsequently shielded him from deportation to El Salvador because of likely gang persecution in his native country, records say. He had a federal permit to work in the U.S. and was a sheet metal apprentice, his attorney said.

The Trump administration deported Abrego Garcia to an El Salvador prison anyway, later describing the mistake as "an administrative error" but insisting that he was in MS-13. The administration also argued that the U.S. lacked the power to retrieve the Salvadoran national because he's no longer in the U.S.

But Xinis, the federal judge in Maryland, ordered the U.S. to return him, writing that his deportation appeared to be "wholly lawless."

"There is little to no evidence to support a 'vague, uncorroborated' allegation that Abrego Garcia was once in the MS-13 street gang," Xinis wrote April 4.

In its ruling on Thursday, the Supreme Court rejected the administration's emergency appeal of Xinis' order.

"The order properly requires the Government to 'facilitate' Abrego Garcia's release from custody in El Salvador and to ensure that his case is handled as it would have been had he not been improperly sent to El Salvador," the court said in an unsigned order with no noted dissents.

The court's liberal justices said the administration should have hastened to correct "its egregious error" and was "plainly wrong" to suggest it could not bring him home.

The Supreme Court has issued a string of rulings on its emergency docket, where the conservative majority has at least partially sided with Trump amid a wave of lower court orders slowing the president's sweeping agenda.

In Thursday's case, the court said Xinis' order must be clarified to make sure it doesn't intrude into executive branch power over foreign affairs, since Abrego Garcia is being held abroad.

South Carolina executes second man by firing squad in 5 weeks

By JEFFREY COLLINS Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — A firing squad on Friday executed a South Carolina man who killed an off-duty police officer, the second time the rare execution method has been used by the state in the past five weeks.

Mikal Mahdi gave no final statement and did not look to his right toward the nine witnesses in the room behind bulletproof glass and bars once the curtain opened.

He took a few deep breaths during the 45 seconds between when the hood was put over his head and when the shots rang out, fired by three volunteers who are prison employees at a distance of about 15 feet (4.6 meters).

Mahdi, 42, cried out as the bullets hit him, and his arms flexed. A white target with the red bull's-eye over his heart was pushed into the wound in his chest.

Mahdi groaned two more times about 45 seconds after that. His breaths continued for about 80 seconds before he appeared to take one final gasp.

A doctor checked him for a little over a minute, and he was declared dead at 6:05 p.m., less than four minutes after the shots were fired.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 64 of 81

Firing squad executions resume

Mahdi's execution came a little over a month after Brad Sigmon was put to death March 7, in the first U.S. firing squad death in 15 years and the fourth since 1976. The others all occurred in Utah.

The firing squad is an execution method with a long and violent history around the world. It has been used to punish mutinies and desertion in armies, as frontier justice in America's Old West and as a tool of terror and political repression in the former Soviet Union and Nazi Germany.

But South Carolina lawmakers saw it as the quickest and most humane method, especially with the uncertainty in obtaining lethal injection drugs.

In a statement Mahdi's attorney, assistant federal public defender David Weiss, called the execution a "horrific act that belongs in the darkest chapters of history, not in a civilized society."

Mahdi had the choice of dying by firing squad, lethal injection or the electric chair.

"Faced with barbaric and inhumane choices, Mikal Mahdi has chosen the lesser of three evils," Weiss said. "Mikal chose the firing squad instead of being burned and mutilated in the electric chair, or suffering a lingering death on the lethal injection gurney."

Mahdi is the fifth inmate executed by South Carolina in less than eight months as the state makes its way through prisoners who ran out of appeals during an unintended 13-year pause on executions in the state.

Mahdi's is the 12th execution in the U.S. this year. Twenty-five prisoners in nine states were killed in all of 2024. Alabama and Louisiana have killed inmates by nitrogen gas. Florida, Oklahoma, Arizona and Texas have executed men by lethal injection, while South Carolina has used both the firing squad and lethal injection.

Mahdi's last meal was ribeye steak cooked medium, mushroom risotto, broccoli, collard greens, cheese-cake and sweet tea, prison officials said.

The crime

Mahdi admitted killing Orangeburg Public Safety officer James Myers in 2004, shooting him at least eight times before burning his body. Myers' wife found him in the couple's Calhoun County shed, which had been the backdrop to their wedding 15 months earlier.

Myers' shed was a short distance through the woods from a gas station where Mahdi tried but failed to buy gas with a stolen credit card and left behind a vehicle he had carjacked in Columbia. Mahdi was arrested in Florida while driving Myers' unmarked police pickup truck.

Mahdi also admitted to the killing three days earlier of Christopher Boggs, a Winston-Salem, North Carolina, convenience store clerk who was shot twice in the head as he checked Mahdi's ID. Mahdi was sentenced to life in prison for that killing.

Final appeal

Mahdi's final appeal was rejected this week by both the U.S. and South Carolina Supreme Courts. His lawyers said Mahdi's original attorneys put on a shallow case trying to spare his life that did not call on relatives, teachers or others who knew him and ignored the impact of months spent in solitary confinement in prison as a teen.

The defense's case to spare Mahdi's life before a judge lasted only about 30 minutes. It "didn't even span the length of a Law & Order episode, and was just as superficial," Mahdi's lawyers wrote.

Mahdi's earliest memory was his father slamming his mother through a glass table and later lying to his son and saying his mother was dead. Mahdi's father pulled him out of school in fifth grade when officials suggested he needed behavioral help, defense lawyers said.

Prosecutors said Mahdi constantly used brutality to solve his problems. As a death row prisoner, he stabbed a guard and hit another worker with a concrete block. Mahdi was caught three times with tools he could have used to escape, including a piece of sharpened metal that could be used as a knife, according to prison records.

"The nature of the man is violence," prosecutors wrote.

Weiss, Mahdi's attorney, said his client died in full view of a system "that failed him at every turn — from childhood to his final breath."

Busy death chamber

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 65 of 81

Mahdi's death is the end of a busy time in South Carolina's death chamber. He is the fifth inmate killed since September after the state had not had any executions since 2011. No other inmates are out of appeals but several are close.

The state was able to restart executions after lawmakers allowed the firing squad and passed a bill allowing suppliers of the pentobarbital to remain secret, along with the exact procedures used to kill inmates and the names of prison employees on execution teams, including the firing squad shooters.

Along with Sigmon's firing squad death last month, three other South Carolina prisoners have been executed via lethal injection since September.

The state now has 26 inmates on its death row. Just one man has been sentenced to death in the past decade.

From classifying immigrants as dead to deportation: A guide to actions on Trump immigration policies

By The Associated Press undefined

President Donald Trump's immigration agenda is playing out in numerous ways Friday, from hearings in key cases on the government's power to deport people to the start of a registry required for all those who are in the country illegally.

And on Thursday, immigration developments came on multiple fronts as federal officials work on the president's promise to carry out mass deportations and double down on his authority to do so. The Supreme Court ruled in the case of a mistakenly deported man, and the administration's classification of thousands of living immigrants as dead came to light.

Here is a breakdown of some of what has happened so far and what is ahead.

Judge says Mahmoud Khalil, Columbia student arrested over Gaza protests, can be deported

An immigration judge in Louisiana decided Friday that Columbia University graduate student Mahmoud Khalil can be kicked out of the U.S. as a national security risk.

Immigration Judge Jamee E. Comans presided over a hearing over the legality of deporting the activist who participated in pro-Palestinian demonstrations.

The government's contention that Khalil's presence in the United States posed "potentially serious foreign policy consequences" was enough to satisfy requirements for his deportation, Comans said.

Lawyers for Khalil said Khalil will appeal to the Board of Immigration Appeals, and that lawyers can also pursue an asylum case on Khalil's behalf. And a federal judge in New Jersey has temporarily barred Khalil's deportation.

Khalil, a legal U.S. resident, was detained by federal immigration agents on March 8 in the lobby of his university-owned apartment, the first arrest under Trump's promised crackdown on students who joined campus protests against the war in Gaza.

Judge orders daily updates on US plan to return man who was mistakenly deported

The Supreme Court on Thursday said the Trump administration must work to bring back a Maryland man mistakenly deported to a prison in El Salvador.

Kilmar Abrego Garcia is a Salvadoran citizen who had an immigration court order preventing his deportation to his native country over fears he would face persecution from local gangs. But Immigration and Customs Enforcement deported him anyway to El Salvador, where he's been held in a notorious prison.

At a Friday hearing, U.S. District Judge Paula Xinis said it is "extremely troubling" that a government lawyer couldn't explain what, if anything, the Trump administration has done to arrange for Abrego Garcia's return. The U.S. attorneys told Xinis they haven't had enough time to review the Supreme Court ruling and struggled to provide information about Abrego Garcia's exact whereabouts.

"I'm not asking for state secrets," Xinis said. "The government was prohibited from sending him to El Salvador, and now I'm asking a very simple question: Where is he?"

Xinis ordered daily updates on plans to bring Abrego Garcia back.

Judge refuses to block immigration enforcement at places of worship

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 66 of 81

Also Friday, a federal judge sided with the Trump administration in refusing to block immigration agents from conducting enforcement operations at houses of worship.

U.S. District Judge Dabney Friedrich found that there have been only a handful of such enforcement actions and that the plaintiffs — more than two dozen Christian and Jewish groups representing millions of Americans — hadn't shown the kind of legal harm for a preliminary injunction.

The groups argued that the policy violated the right to practice religion. They said attendance has declined significantly since Trump took office.

But Friedrich said they didn't show the drops were linked to the church policy.

'I screamed': Turkish student detained by ICE speaks out

A Tufts University doctoral student from Turkey said she was talking to her mother on her phone at the time she was detained by immigration enforcement officials.

Rumeysa Ozturk said in a document filed Thursday by her lawyers in federal court that she had just left her Massachusetts home on March 25 when she was surrounded by several men, and "I screamed."

Ozturk, 30, has since been moved to a detention center in Louisiana. Her lawyers say detention violates her constitutional rights, including free speech and due process.

Ozturk is among several people with ties to American universities who attended demonstrations or publicly expressed support for Palestinians during the war in Gaza and who recently had visas revoked or have been stopped from entering the U.S.

Temporary reprieve for Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans and Venezuelans?

A federal judge said Thursday that she will prevent the Trump administration from ordering hundreds of thousands of Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans and Venezuelans with temporary legal status to leave the country later this month.

More than 500,000 people came to the country under the Biden-era program. They were facing an April 24 deadline by which their work permits would be terminated, and they could be subject to deportation.

The program was launched as the Biden administration was generally trying to alleviate pressure on the southern border by creating new pathways for people to come to the U.S. and work, usually for two years on humanitarian parole.

The government is likely to appeal.

Temporary restraining orders to stop the removal of Venezuelans under the Alien Enemies Act broadened
Federal judges in New York and Texas ruled Friday that temporary restraining orders to stop the removal of Venezuelans from the U.S. would expand to protect more people in those states.

The rulings come in class-action lawsuits filed to halt the government from removing Venezuelans accused of being gang members under the Alien Enemies Act. The judges granted temporary restraining orders earlier this week that prevented the U.S. government from removing Venezuelans held at a detention facility in Raymondville, Texas, and those held within the federal jurisdiction of the Southern District of New York.

On Friday, Judge Fernando Rodriguez Jr. in Texas broadened his ruling to protect all Venezuelans detained in his judicial district, which includes the cities of Houston and Galveston, among others. Judge Alvin K. Hellerstein in the Manhattan federal court changed his order to include protection for "individuals subject to the Presidential Proclamation who are in state or local custody."

The U.S. Supreme Court on Monday ruled the administration can resume removals under the Alien Enemies Act, but detainees first must be afforded due process, including reasonable time to argue to a judge that they should not be removed.

The start of a registry for people in the country illegally

Friday marks the launch of a requirement for people who are in the country illegally to register with the federal government.

Homeland Security announced Feb. 25 that it was mandating all people in the U.S. illegally register with the federal government, and said those who didn't self-report could face fines or prosecution. People will be required to carry registration documents with them.

Opponents sued to stop the registry from taking effect, saying the government should have gone through

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 67 of 81

the more lengthy public notification process, and that it's enforcing this simply to facilitate Trump's aim of mass deportations.

On Thursday, a federal judge sided with the administration. Officials had argued they were simply enforcing a requirement that already existed for everyone who is in the country but isn't an American citizen and have emphasized that going forward, the registration requirement would be enforced to the fullest.

The Trump administration has said between 2.2 million and 3.2 million people could be affected.

Classifying immigrants as dead?

In an effort to make more migrants voluntarily go home, the Trump administration is classifying more than 6,000 immigrants — who are alive — as dead. Officials are canceling the immigrants' Social Security numbers and effectively wiping out their ability to work or receive benefits in the U.S. That is according to two people familiar with the situation who spoke on the condition of anonymity because the plans had not yet been publicly detailed.

The move will make it much harder for those affected to use banks or other basic services where Social Security numbers are required.

The officials said stripping Social Security numbers will cut the immigrants off from many financial services and encourage them to "self-deport."

It wasn't clear how the immigrants were chosen. But the Trump White House has targeted people in the country temporarily under Biden-era programs.

Earlier this week, the departments of Homeland Security and Treasury signed a deal allowing the IRS to share immigrants' tax data with Immigration and Customs Enforcement to identify and deport people illegally in the U.S.

Trump opens window for a deal with Iran but issues warning if things don't work out

By AAMER MADHANI and MATTHEW LEE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump is betting that a beleaguered Iran is so vulnerable following a tumultuous 18 months in the Middle East that it might finally be ready to abandon its nuclear program.

The renewed push to solve one of the most delicate foreign policy issues facing the White House and the Mideast will begin in earnest Saturday when Trump's Middle East envoy, Steve Witkoff, and Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi gather in Oman.

Trump says he prefers a diplomatic solution, even as he warns that Iran will face "great danger" if talks don't go well. But Iran's nuclear advances since Trump scrapped an Obama-era agreement during his first term make finding a pathway to a deal difficult, and experts warn that the prospects of U.S. military action on Iranian nuclear facilities appear higher than they have been in years.

"I want Iran to be a wonderful, great, happy country, but they can't have a nuclear weapon," Trump said Friday night aboard Air Force One as he flew to Florida for the weekend.

The moment is certainly fraught, but the White House is seeing hopeful signs that the timing might be right. The push comes as Iran has faced a series of enormous setbacks that has ostensibly left Tehran in a weaker negotiating position.

Iran's recent challenges

The military capabilities of Iranian-backed proxy forces Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon have been dramatically degraded by Israeli forces. U.S. airstrikes, meanwhile, targeting Iran-backed Houthi militants in Yemen have hit oil refineries, airports and missile sites.

Israel also carried out strikes against Iran in October that damaged facilities linked to Tehran's nuclear and ballistic missile programs. And in December, Iran saw Syrian leader Bashar Assad — Tehran's closest Mideast ally — ousted after more than two decades in power.

The leaders of the Islamic Republic also face domestic pressure as years of international sanctions have choked the economy. The U.S. Treasury Department announced a new round of sanctions earlier this week targeting five entities and an individual that American officials say play key roles in Iran's nuclear program.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 68 of 81

"All eyes are on Oman by Iranians following this very closely and potentially hoping that this would impact the state of the economy," said Negar Mortazavi, a senior fellow at the Center for International Policy, a Washington-based think tank.

But it remains to be seen if the U.S. can entice Iran with a big enough carrot for it to make concessions to meet Trump's demands that any potential deal go further in ensuring Tehran doesn't develop nuclear weapons than the agreement forged during Democratic President Barack Obama's administration.

Under the 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, Iran could only maintain a small stockpile of uranium enriched to 3.67%. Today, it has enough to build multiple nuclear weapons if it chooses and has some material enriched up to 60%, a short, technical step away from weapons-grade levels.

It's not clear if talks will be face to face

At the meeting Saturday in Oman's capital city of Muscat, Iran will be represented by Araghchi and the United States by Witkoff. It's unclear if the two will speak directly.

Trump has said the two sides will have "direct" negotiations. But Iranian officials have insisted that the plan is for "indirect talks," meaning an intermediary from Oman would shuttle messages between Witkoff's and Araghchi's teams holed up in different rooms.

Either way, the decision for the two sides to talk — announced by Trump in the Oval Office this week alongside Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu — came as a bit of a surprise.

Trump has been calling for direct talks while threatening "consequences" for Iran if it doesn't move to get a deal done.

Iran, meanwhile, has given mixed signals about the utility of the talks, arguing that engaging would be useless under the shadow of threats.

After Trump recently sent a letter to Iran's supreme leader, 85-year-old Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, calling for direct negotiations, Tehran rejected the entreaty while leaving open the possibility of indirect negotiations.

President Masoud Pezeshkian again pledged this week that Iran's "not after a nuclear bomb" and even suggested Tehran could be open to the prospect of direct American investment in the Islamic Republic if the countries can reach a deal.

That was a departure from Iran's stance after its 2015 nuclear deal, in which Tehran sought to buy American airplanes but in effect barred U.S. companies from coming into the country.

How much room is there for negotiation?

National security adviser Mike Waltz has said Trump wants the "full dismantlement" of Iran's nuclear program, adding, "That's enrichment, that is weaponization, and that is its strategic missile program."

But Trump left greater space for negotiations: "The only thing that they can't have is a nuclear weapon," Trump told reporters as he met with his Cabinet secretaries Wednesday.

Witkoff also has signaled that the administration could be amenable to a deal that is less than full nuclear disarmament.

"Where our red line will be, there can't be weaponization of your nuclear capability," Witkoff said in a Wall Street Journal interview published Friday.

Meanwhile, Netanyahu, who met with Trump on Monday, said he would welcome a diplomatic agreement along the lines of Libya's deal with the international community in 2003. The Israeli leader is known for his hawkish views on Iran and in the past has urged Washington to take military action against Iran.

The Libya deal saw late dictator Moammar Gadhafi give up all of his clandestine nuclear program. Iran has insisted its program, acknowledged to the International Atomic Energy Agency, should continue.

But Trump has notably not embraced Netanyahu's push for the Libya model, said Trita Parsi, executive vice president of the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, another Washington-based think tank.

"If it's narrow, if it's focused on the nuclear program, if the goal of the U.S. is to prevent a nuclear weapon, then there is a likelihood for success," Parsi said. "And it's under those circumstances that I suspect that you will see talks, perhaps in rather short order, be elevated."

3 killed and 1 injured when plane crashes in South Florida near a major highway

By STEPHANY MATAT and CURT ANDERSON Associated Press

BOCA RATON, Fla. (AP) — Three people were killed and one was injured when a small plane crashed Friday morning in South Florida near a major interstate highway and pushed a car onto railroad tracks, officials said.

Boca Raton Fire Rescue assistant chief Michael LaSalle said the plane crash that killed all three people on board emitted a fireball when it hit the ground, injuring a person in a nearby car. LaSalle said several roads near the Boca Raton Airport will remain closed near Interstate 95.

The Federal Aviation Administration identified the plane as a Cessna 310 with three people on board. It went down about 10:20 a.m. after departing from Boca Raton Airport bound for Tallahassee, the FAA said in an email.

Fire officials told the South Florida Sun Sentinel that the aircraft appeared to have pushed a car onto the railroad tracks, leading to the tracks' closure.

Josh Orsino, 31, said he was stopped at a red light at a nearby overpass when he heard a loud explosion and saw a huge fireball come toward him.

"We're just sitting there, and I see the palm trees start catching on fire," Orsino said. "I thought it was an oil rig or a car crash type thing."

Orsino said everyone was honking and trying to get off the overpass, not sure if it was going to collapse. "So I didn't know if the fire was going to come towards the vehicles, I mean, my first instinct was like, I got to get off this bridge. I'm getting out of here," Orsino said.

Miguel Coka, 51, who works near the Boca Raton airport, said he is used to seeing planes flying low as they prepare to land. But this time, he and his colleagues noticed something was off.

"There was a rumble and everyone in the building felt it," he said when the plane crashed. "We are all shocked."

He captured the smoke and flames from the crash from his office balcony on video.

Boca Raton Mayor Scott Singer said the investigation was just beginning.

"We are deeply saddened to confirm that a plane crash occurred earlier today within our community. At this time, details are still emerging, and we are working closely with emergency responders and authorities," Singer said in a statement. "Our thoughts are with all those affected by this tragic event. We ask for patience and respect for the families involved as investigations continue."

The FAA and the National Transportation Safety Board are investigating, with the NTSB leading the probe.

NTSB officials arrived at the scene Friday afternoon and began collecting evidence and taking photos as part of their preliminary investigation. The plane wreckage will be taken to a salvage facility in Jacksonville for further investigation. The NTSB will release a preliminary report in 30 days, followed by a final report with the likely cause of the crash in 12 to 24 months.

The small plane crashed in South Florida a day after a New York City sightseeing helicopter broke apart in midair and crashed upside-down into the Hudson River, killing the pilot and a family of five Spanish tourists.

Federal officials have tried to reassure travelers that flying is the safest mode of transportation, and statistics support that. But aircraft collisions and near-misses have been drawing more scrutiny.

A midair collision killed 67 people near Washington in January. An airliner clipped another in February while taxiing at the Seattle airport. In March, an American Airlines plane caught fire after landing in Denver, sending 12 people to the hospital.

Federal judge sides with Trump in allowing immigration enforcement in houses of worship

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST and MICHAEL KUNZELMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal judge on Friday sided with the Trump administration in allowing immigration agents to conduct enforcement operations at houses of worship for now, despite a lawsuit filed by religious groups over the new policy.

U.S. District Judge Dabney Friedrich in Washington refused to grant a preliminary injunction to the plaintiffs, more than two dozen Christian and Jewish groups representing millions of Americans.

She found that the plaintiffs lack standing, or the legal right to sue, since only a handful of immigration enforcement actions have been conducted in or around churches or other houses of worship and that the evidence at this point doesn't show "that places of worship are being singled out as special targets."

The plaintiffs are reviewing the decision and assessing their options, said their lead counsel, Kelsi Corkran. "We remain gravely concerned about the impacts of this policy and are committed to protecting foundational rights enshrined in the First Amendment and the Religious Freedom Restoration Act," said Corkran, the Supreme Court Director at the Institute for Constitutional Advocacy & Protection.

The religious groups argued the policy violated the right to practice their religion. Since President Donald Trump took office in January, attendance has declined significantly, with some areas showing double-digit percentage drops, they said.

The judge, though, found that the groups had not shown their drops were definitively linked to the church policy specifically, as opposed to broader increased actions by Immigration and Customs Enforcement or other agencies.

"That evidence suggests that congregants are staying home to avoid encountering ICE in their own neighborhoods, not because churches or synagogues are locations of elevated risk," wrote Friedrich, who was appointed by the Republican president during his first term.

That means that simply reversing the policy on houses of worship wouldn't necessarily mean immigrants would return to church, she found.

On Jan. 20, his first day back in office, Trump's administration rescinded a Department of Homeland Security policy limiting where migrant arrests could happen. Its new policy said field agents using "common sense" and "discretion" can conduct immigration enforcement operations at houses of worship without a supervisor's approval.

Plaintiffs' attorneys claimed the new Homeland Security directive departs from the government's 30-year-old policy against staging immigration enforcement operations in "protected areas" or "sensitive locations."

The plaintiffs did offer a handful of examples of enforcement or surveillance, according to the judge's ruling. They cited reports of an immigrant arrested at one Georgia church and of an Immigration and Customs Enforcement search at a Georgia church day care center. The plaintiffs also cited four cases of immigration officers appearing to conduct surveillance near faith-based sites, such as photographing people in line for food.

The ruling comes as Trump's immigration crackdown hits courtrooms around the country. On Thursday alone, another judge cleared the way for the administration to require people in the country illegally to register with the government even as the Supreme Court ordered the administration to work to bring back a man mistakenly deported to prison in El Salvador.

There have been at least two other lawsuits over that sensitive locations policy. One Maryland-based judge agreed to block immigration enforcement operations for some religious faiths, including Quakers.

A judge in Colorado, though, sided with the administration in another lawsuit over the reversal of the part of the policy that had limited immigration arrests at schools.

Despite the immediate setback, the plaintiffs can continue to press their case in the lawsuit.

US stocks jump and the bond market swings to cap Wall Street's chaotic and historic week

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — U.S. stocks jumped Friday in another manic day on Wall Street, while the falling value of the U.S. dollar and other swings in financial markets suggested fear is still high about escalations in President Donald Trump's trade war with China.

The S&P 500 rallied 1.8%, after veering repeatedly between gains and losses, to cap a chaotic and historic week full of monstrous swings. The Dow Jones Industrial Average went from an early loss of nearly 340 points to a gain of 810 before settling at a rise of 619 points, or 1.6%, while the Nasdaq composite jumped 2.1%.

Stocks kicked higher as pressure eased a bit from within the U.S. bond market. It's typically the more boring corner of Wall Street, but it's been flashing serious enough signals of worry this week that it's demanded investors' and Trump's attention.

The yield on the 10-year Treasury topped 4.58% in the morning, up from 4.01% a week ago. That's a major move for a market that typically measures things in hundredths of a percentage point. Such jumps can drive up rates for mortgages and other loans going to U.S. households and businesses, which would slow the economy, and they can indicate stress in the financial system.

But Treasury yields eased back as the afternoon progressed, and the 10-year yield regressed to 4.48%. That's still higher than the day before, but not by as eye-wateringly much.

Susan Collins, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, told the Financial Times that the Fed "would absolutely be prepared" if markets become disorderly and "does have tools to address concerns about market functioning or liquidity should they arise."

Several reasons could be behind this week's jump in U.S. Treasury yields, which is unusual because yields typically fall when fear is high.

Investors outside the United States could be selling their U.S. bonds because of the trade war, and hedge funds could be selling whatever's available in order to raise cash to cover other losses. More worryingly, doubts may be rising about the United States' reputation as the world's safest place to keep cash because of Trump's frenetic, on-and-off tariff actions.

The value of the U.S. dollar also fell again Friday against everything from the euro to the Japanese yen to the Canadian dollar.

Gold, however, lived up to its reputation as a safer haven for investors and saw its price rise to another record.

The shaky trading came after China announced Friday that it was boosting its tariffs on U.S. products to 125% in the latest tit-for-tat increase following Trump's escalations on imports from China.

The repeated U.S. tariff increases "on China has become a numbers game, which has no practical economic significance, and will become a joke in the history of the world economy," a Finance Ministry spokesman said in a statement announcing the new tariffs. "However, if the US insists on continuing to substantially infringe on China's interests, China will resolutely counter and fight to the end."

Rising tensions between the world's two largest economies could cause widespread damage and a possible global recession, even after Trump recently announced a 90-day pause on some of his tariffs for other countries, except for China.

All the uncertainty caused by the trade war is eroding confidence among U.S. shoppers, which could affect their spending and translate into damage for the economy, which came into this year running at a solid rate.

A preliminary survey by the University of Michigan suggested sentiment among U.S. consumers is falling even more sharply than economists expected. "This decline was, like the last month's, pervasive and unanimous across age, income, education, geographic region, and political affiliation," according to the survey's director, Joanne Hsu.

"We remain in the early innings of this global trade regime change, and while the 90-day pause on re-

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 72 of 81

ciprocal tariffs temporarily reversed the market selloff, it does prolong uncertainty," according to Darrell Cronk, president of Wells Fargo Investment Institute.

That's why many on Wall Street are prepared for more swings to hit markets. This past week began with huge swings for U.S. stocks within each day as rumors swirled and then got battered down about a possible 90-day pause on Trump's tariffs. Then the U.S. stock market surged to one of its best days in history after Trump did deliver a pause, before swinging to end the week.

All told, the S&P 500 rose 95.31 points Friday to 5,363.36. The Dow Jones Industrial Average climbed 619.05 to 40,212.71, and the Nasdaq composite climbed 337.14 to 16,724.46.

Friday's swings came after a set of stronger-than-expected profit reports from some of the biggest U.S. banks, which traditionally help kick off each earnings reporting season.

JPMorgan Chase, Morgan Stanley and Wells Fargo all reported stronger profit for the first three months of the year than analysts expected. JPMorgan Chase rose 4%, Morgan Stanley added 1.4% and Wells Fargo lost 1%.

Another report on inflation also came in better than expected. That could give the Federal Reserve more leeway to cut interest rates if it feels the need to support the economy.

But Friday's report on inflation at the wholesale level was backward looking, measuring March's price levels. The worry is that inflation will rise in coming months as Trump's tariffs make their way through the economy. And that could tie the Fed's hands.

The University of Michigan's survey suggested U.S. consumers are bracing for inflation of 6.7% in the year ahead. That's the highest forecast since 1981, and such expectations can create a feedback loop that pushes inflation higher.

In stock markets abroad, indexes were scattershot around the world. Germany's DAX lost 0.9%, but the FTSE 100 in London added 0.6% as the government reported the economy, the world's sixth largest, enjoyed a growth spurt in February. Japan's Nikkei 225 dropped 3%, while Hong Kong's Hang Seng climbed 1.1%.

European countries vow billions in military support for Ukraine as US envoy meets Putin

By LORNE COOK Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — European countries vowed Friday to send billions of dollars in further funding to help Ukraine keep fighting Russia's invasion, as a U.S. envoy pursued peace efforts in a trip to meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin amid growing questions about the Kremlin's willingness to stop the more than three-year war.

Russian forces hold the advantage in Ukraine, with the war now in its fourth year. Ukraine has endorsed a U.S. ceasefire proposal, but Russia has effectively blocked it by imposing far-reaching conditions. European governments have accused Putin of dragging his feet.

"Russia has to get moving" on the road to ending the war, U.S. President Donald Trump posted on social media. He said the war is "terrible and senseless."

In Russia, the Kremlin said Trump's envoy Steve Witkoff met with Putin in St. Petersburg. Witkoff, who has been pressing the Kremlin to accept a truce, initially met with Putin envoy Kirill Dmitriev, footage released by Russian media showed.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said Witkoff during his visit to Russia was discussing efforts to end the war with Putin and other officials. "This is another step in the negotiating process towards a ceasefire and an ultimate peace deal," she said.

Russian state news agency RIA Novosti said Witkoff's meeting with Putin lasted 4 1/2 hours, and cited the Kremlin as saying that the two discussed "aspects" of ending the war, without providing any details.

After chairing a meeting of Ukraine's Western backers in Brussels, British Defense Secretary John Healey said that new pledges of military aid totaled over 21 billion euros (\$24 billion), "a record boost in military funding for Ukraine, and we are also surging that support to the frontline fight."

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 73 of 81

Healey gave no breakdown of that figure, and Ukraine has in the past complained that some countries repeat old offers at such pledging conferences or fail to deliver real arms and ammunition worth the money they promise.

NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte said last week that Ukraine's backers have provided around \$21 billion so far in the first three months of this year. European Union foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said Friday that more than \$26 billion have been committed.

Ahead of the "contact group" meeting at NATO headquarters, Ukrainian Defense Minister Rustem Umerov said a key issue was strengthening his country's air defenses.

Standing alongside Healey at the end of it, Umerov described the meeting as "productive, effective and efficient," and said that it produced "one of the largest" packages of assistance Ukraine has received. "We're thankful to each nation that has provided this support," he said.

Britain said that in a joint effort with Norway just over \$580 million would be spent to provide hundreds of thousands of military drones, radar systems and anti-tank mines, as well as repair and maintenance contracts to keep Ukrainian armored vehicles on the battlefield.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has renewed his appeals for more Patriot systems since 20 people were killed a week ago, including nine children, when a Russian missile tore through apartment buildings and blasted a playground in his home town.

Zelenskyy joined Friday's meeting by video link.

Russia holds off agreeing to ceasefire

The Russian delay in accepting Washington's proposal has frustrated Trump and fueled doubts about whether Putin really wants to stop the fighting while his bigger army has momentum on the battlefield.

"Russia continues to use bilateral talks with the United States to delay negotiations about the war in Ukraine, suggesting that the Kremlin remains uninterested in serious peace negotiations to end the war," the Institute for the Study of War, a Washington think tank, said in an assessment late Thursday.

Washington remains committed to securing a peace deal, even though four weeks have passed since it made its ceasefire proposals, State Department spokeswoman Tammy Bruce said.

"It is a dynamic that will not be solved militarily. It is a meat grinder," Bruce said Thursday about the war, adding that "nothing else can be discussed ... until the shooting and the killing stops."

Observers expect a new Russian offensive

Ukrainian officials and military analysts believe Russia is preparing to launch a fresh military offensive in coming weeks to ramp up pressure and strengthen the Kremlin's hand in the negotiations.

German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius said that his country would provide Ukraine with four IRIS-T short- to medium-range systems with missiles, as well as 30 missiles for use on Patriot batteries. The Netherlands plans to supply a Hawkeye air defense system, an airborne early warning aircraft.

Estonian Defense Minister Hanno Pevkur said that his country is monitoring the world armaments market and sees opportunities for Ukraine's backers to buy more weapons and ammunition.

Pevkur said he believes Putin might try to reach some kind of settlement with Ukraine by May 9 — the day that Russia marks victory during World War II — making it even more vital to strengthen Kyiv's position now.

"This is why we need to speed up the deliveries as quickly as we can," he said.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth was absent from the forum that the United States created and led for several years, although he spoke via video.

At the last contact group meeting in February, Hegseth warned Ukraine's European backers that the U.S. now has priorities elsewhere — in Asia and on America's own borders — and that they would have to take care of their own security, and that of Ukraine, in future.

Trump wants Congress to end the changing of clocks and keep the country on daylight saving time

By MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Friday urged Congress to “push hard for more Daylight at the end of a day” in his latest dig at the semiannual changing of clocks.

Trump, in a post on his Truth Social media network, said it would be “Very popular and, most importantly, no more changing of the clocks, a big inconvenience and, for our government, A VERY COSTLY EVENT!!!”

The Republican president’s position calling for more daylight would push the schedule forward, keeping the country on daylight saving time. His post came a day after a Senate panel heard testimony examining whether to set one time all year instead of shifting.

There has been growing interest in states to standardize daylight saving time in recent years.

But daylight saving time, when clocks are set from spring to fall one hour ahead of standard time, is still recognized in most parts of the country. It was first adopted as a wartime measure in 1942.

Trump last year called for the Republican Party to eliminate daylight saving time, saying it was “inconvenient, and very costly to our Nation.”

But he backed off that call last month, with another post on social media calling it a “50-50 issue.”

The president said some people would like more light later in the day but some want more light early so they don’t have to take their kids to school in the dark.

“When something’s a 50-50 issue, it’s hard to get excited about it,” he said.

The Senate in 2022 unanimously approved a measure that would make daylight saving time permanent across the United States, but it did not advance.

Doctors remove pig kidney from an Alabama woman after a record 130 days

By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — An Alabama woman who lived with a pig kidney for a record 130 days had the organ removed after her body began rejecting it and is back on dialysis, doctors announced Friday — a disappointment in the ongoing quest for animal-to-human transplants.

Towana Looney is recovering well from the April 4 removal surgery at NYU Langone Health and has returned home to Gadsden, Alabama. In a statement, she thanked her doctors for “the opportunity to be part of this incredible research.”

“Though the outcome is not what anyone wanted, I know a lot was learned from my 130 days with a pig kidney — and that this can help and inspire many others in their journey to overcoming kidney disease,” Looney added.

Scientists are genetically altering pigs so their organs are more humanlike to address a severe shortage of transplantable human organs. More than 100,000 people are on the U.S. transplant list, most who need a kidney, and thousands die waiting.

Before Looney’s transplant only four other Americans had received experimental xenotransplants of gene-edited pig organs — two hearts and two kidneys that lasted no longer than two months. Those recipients, who were severely ill before the surgery, died.

Now researchers are attempting these transplants in slightly less sick patients, like Looney. A New Hampshire man who received a pig kidney in January is faring well and a rigorous study of pig kidney transplants is set to begin this summer. Chinese researchers also recently announced a successful kidney xenotransplant.

Looney had been on dialysis since 2016 and didn’t qualify for a regular transplant — her body was abnormally primed to reject a human kidney. So she sought out a pig kidney and it functioned well — she called herself “superwoman” and lived longer than anyone with a gene-edited pig organ before, from her Nov. 25 transplant until early April when her body began rejecting it.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 75 of 81

NYU xenotransplant pioneer Dr. Robert Montgomery, Looney's surgeon, said what triggered that rejection is being investigated. But he said Looney and her doctors agreed it would be less risky to remove the pig kidney than to try saving it with higher, riskier doses of anti-rejection drugs.

"We did the safe thing," Montgomery told The Associated Press. "She's no worse off than she was before (the xenotransplant) and she would tell you she's better off because she had this 4½ month break from dialysis."

Shortly before the rejection began, Looney had suffered an infection related to her prior time on dialysis and her immune-suppressing anti-rejection drugs were slightly lowered, Montgomery said. At the same time, her immune system was reactivating after the transplant. Those factors may have combined to damage the new kidney, he said.

Rejection is a common threat after transplants of human organs, too, and sometimes cost patients their new organ. Doctors face a balancing act in tamping down patients' immune systems just enough to preserve the new organ while allowing them to fight infection.

It's an even bigger challenge with xenotransplantation. While these pig organs have been altered to help prevent immediate rejection, patients still require immune-suppressing drugs. Which drugs are best to prevent different, later forms of rejection isn't clear, said Dr. Tatsuo Kawai of Massachusetts General Hospital, another xenotransplant pioneer. Different research groups are using different combinations, he said.

"When we have more experience, we'll know what kind of immunosuppression is really necessary for xenotransplant," Kawai said.

Montgomery said Looney's experience offers valuable lessons for the upcoming clinical trial.

Making xenotransplant ultimately work "is going to be won with singles and doubles, not swinging for the fence every time we do one of these," he said.

Global warming isn't funny -- except in the hands of these comedians

By DORANY PINEDA Associated Press

BURBANK, Calif. (AP) — Esteban Gast remembered a feeling of shame he had in high school while calculating how much carbon dioxide, the main driver of climate change, his daily activities created, known as a carbon footprint.

"Have you ever driven a car or flown in an airplane?" were among the long list of questions posed by the calculator.

Unspooling his story in the middle of his set at Flappers Comedy Club in Burbank, Calif., Gast pivoted quickly to describe for the crowd how oil and gas giant BP popularized the idea of tracking individual emissions. That, he said, was aimed at shifting responsibility for climate change from the companies that produce oil, gas and coal, which when burned heat the planet, to people.

"That's like your friend who is addicted to cocaine telling you not to have a latte," he said. The audience roared with laughter.

Gast continued: "BP, famous for spilling oil into the Gulf of Mexico, was like, 'Hey, Esteban, do you ever drive?' And I'm like, 'I don't know, sometimes.' And they're just like pouring oil into a turtle's mouth."

Gast is among a growing group of comedians using humor to raise awareness of climate change. On the stage, online and in classrooms, they tell jokes to tackle topics such as a major U.S. climate law passed in 2022, called the Inflation Reduction Act, fossil fuel industries and convey information about the benefits of plant-based diets that emit less planet-warming emissions. They hope to educate people about the climate crisis, relieve anxiety with laughter and provide hope. And although the impacts of climate change are deadly and devastating, experts say using humor to talk climate is an important part of the larger ecosystem of how it's communicated.

Comedian Brad Einstein thinks of it this way: "How do we look that horror in the eyes and let it look back at us and then give it a little wink?"

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 76 of 81

Raising awareness

In Rasheda Crockett's YouTube comedy series "Might Could," the actor-comedian blends humor with information about climate change. In one video, she quips about the environmental benefits of plant-based diets while begging food scientists to make vegan cheese that actually melts.

"I'm now requesting all vegans who care about the planet to make melting vegan cheese their number one priority," she quipped. "Because that's what's going to make veganism more viable. It's the change we have to cheese."

Her interest in writing climate humor is also deeply personal. As a Black woman, she knows that global warming disproportionately hurts Black and other non-white communities.

"This is just another instance where people of color are going to be adversely impacted first by a disaster," said Crockett, a 2023 fellow in the Climate Comedy Cohort, a program Gast co-founded that brings together climate experts and comedians. "The Earth is warming up like the inside of a Hot Pocket ... and I just want people to care."

Surveys show that many people do. A 2023 poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found that 64% of U.S. adults said they'd recently experienced extreme weather and believed it was caused at least partially by climate change. And about 65% said that climate change will have or already has had a big impact in their lifetime.

Humor can bridge the gap between the technical world of climate science and policy and the average person, Gast said. And he thinks comedians are among the "unlikely" messengers who can do that.

"We need someone talking about science, and then we need someone who doesn't even mention science and just mentions a dope sunset for surfers," he said.

Comedy as a salve

At the University of Colorado in Boulder, climate comedy is a longtime tradition.

For the past 13 years, professors Beth Osnes-Stoedefalke and Maxwell Boykoff have taught a creative climate communication course on how information about climate issues and solutions can be conveyed creatively. Sometimes they work on their own sketch comedy or standup they later perform at the annual "Stand Up for Climate Comedy." It's the kind of event the professors help encourage elsewhere, including the show Gast performed at.

Several years ago, the professors decided to use their students and event attendees as case studies to learn about the effects of merging climate information with comedy. Among their findings were that climate comedy increased people's awareness of and engagement with the issue and reduced their climate anxiety.

Numerous other studies have also shown that humor reduces stress, depression and anxiety. One study from 2021 found that humor helped people remember political information and made it likelier they'd share it with others.

"You can't just stack up all the IPCC reports and hope that people get it," said Boykoff, an environmental studies professor, referencing the United Nations' scientific papers on global climate impacts. "You got to find these creative spaces."

Theater professor Osnes-Stoedefalke said humor also has the power to exploit cracks in bad arguments and draw nuance from them. But perhaps more important, it can give people hope.

Climate comedy "helped give this feeling of constructive hope," she said, "and without hope, action doesn't make sense."

Making sense of the moment

Climate can also be used to reflect on the politics of anything given time.

Bianca Calderon, a master's student in environmental policy and renewable energy, is taking the creative climate communications class, where she's writing a standup bit about grant proposals. In the piece, she realizes she needs to rewrite her grant summary to omit words like "diversity," "community" and "clean energy" to comply with the Trump administration's directives.

But there's a big problem: She's seeking federal funding for research on engaging diverse communities and getting them into the clean energy job market. "At the end of it, it's like, 'Oh, I actually don't have any

words to use because none of them are allowed," she said, adding that the piece is based on her actual experience applying for funding.

Einstein, the comedian and a two-time National Park Service artist-in-residence, is also using humor to talk about the administration's actions. Using a pine cone as a microphone, Einstein has been posting social media videos about the recent mass layoffs of park service employees. The online response is unlike anything he's ever received on the internet, he said.

"We need an informed citizenry that can critique the messaging coming to them," said Osnes-Stoedefalke. "And I think comedy can achieve that in a way that no others can, in a way that holds people's attention."

Senate confirms Trump nominee Caine for chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff in overnight vote

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate confirmed retired Air Force Lt. Gen. Dan "Razin" Caine to become the next chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on Friday, filling the position almost two months after President Donald Trump fired his predecessor.

Trump nominated Caine to become the top U.S. military officer in February after abruptly firing Gen. CQ Brown Jr., the second Black general to serve as chairman, as part of his Republican administration's campaign to rid the military of leaders who support diversity and equity in the ranks. The Senate confirmed Caine 60-25 in an overnight vote before heading home for a two-week recess.

Caine is a decorated F-16 combat pilot who served in leadership in multiple special operations commands, in some of the Pentagon's most classified programs and in the CIA. But he does not meet prerequisites for the job set out in a 1986 law, such as being a combatant commander or service chief. Those requirements can be waived by the president if there is a determination that "such action is necessary in the national interest."

Caine's confirmation in the middle of the night, just before the Senate left town, comes as Republicans have been quickly advancing Trump's nominees and as Democrats have been trying to delay the process and show that they are fighting Trump's policies. Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., set up the early morning vote after Democrats objected to speeding up procedural votes on the nomination.

Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer of New York voted against Caine's confirmation, saying in a statement that "I remain outraged" about Brown's firing and that he is skeptical of Trump's intentions in nominating Caine.

"General Caine has served our nation with distinction in the Air Force and Air National Guard, including over multiple combat deployments," Schumer said. "Now, as our nation's top military advisor, I hope he will continue to fight for the needs of our servicemembers, speak truth to power, and resist Donald Trump when he's wrong."

Still, the vote was bipartisan, with 15 Democrats and independent Sen. Angus King of Maine voting in support of Caine's nomination.

At his confirmation hearing earlier this month, Caine said he would be candid in his advice to Trump and vowed to be apolitical. Caine disputed Trump's story that Caine wore a "Make America Great Again" hat when the two first met.

"I have never worn any political merchandise," he said.

Asked how he would react if ordered to direct the military to do something potentially illegal, such as being used against civilians in domestic law enforcement, he told senators that it is "the duty and the job that I have" to push back.

Trump's relationship with Caine dates to his first administration. They met during a trip to Iraq, as Trump recounted in a 2019 speech. He has said Caine is "a real general, not a television general."

During his first term, Trump's relationship with then-Chairman Gen. Mark Milley soured as Milley pushed

back and took steps to try to prevent what he saw as an attempt to politicize the office. Milley would remind military service members that they took an oath to the Constitution, not to a president.

Within hours of Trump's inauguration in January, Milley's portrait as chairman of the Joint Chiefs was removed from the Pentagon. Milley's security clearance and security detail also were revoked.

China hits back at US and will raise tariffs on American goods from 84% to 125%

BEIJING (AP) — China announced Friday that it will raise tariffs on U.S. goods from 84% to 125% — the latest salvo in an escalating trade war between the world's two largest economies that has rattled markets and raised fears of a global slowdown.

While U.S. President Donald Trump paused import taxes this week for other countries, he raised tariffs on China and they now total 145%. China has denounced the policy as "economic bullying" and promised countermeasures. The new tariffs begin Saturday.

Washington's repeated raising of tariffs "will become a joke in the history of the world economy," a Chinese Finance Ministry spokesman said in a statement announcing the new tariffs. "However, if the U.S. insists on continuing to substantially infringe on China's interests, China will resolutely counter and fight to the end."

China's Commerce Ministry said it would file another lawsuit with the World Trade Organization against the U.S. tariffs.

"There are no winners in a tariff war," Chinese leader Xi Jinping said during a meeting with the Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, according to a readout from state broadcaster CCTV. "For more than 70 years, China has always relied on itself ... and hard work for development, never relying on favors from anyone, and not fearing any unreasonable suppression."

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Friday said China stands firm against Trump's tariffs not only to defend its own rights and interests but also to "safeguard the common interests of the international community to ensure that humanity is not dragged back into a jungle world where might makes right."

Wang made the remarks when he met Rafael Mariano Grossi, director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency in Beijing. Wang said China will "work together with other countries to jointly resist all retrogressive actions in the world."

Trump's on-again, off-again measures have caused alarm in stock and bond markets and led some to warn that the U.S. could be headed for a recession. There was some relief when Trump paused the tariffs for most countries — but concerns remain since the U.S. and China are the world's No. 1 and No. 2 economies, respectively.

"The risk that this escalating trade war tips the world into a recession is rising as the two largest and most powerful countries in the world continue to punch back with higher and higher tariffs," Jennifer Lee, a senior economist at BMO Capital markets, wrote Friday. "No one truly knows when this will end."

Chinese tariffs will affect goods like soybeans, aircrafts and their parts and drugs — all among the country's major imports from the U.S. Beijing, meanwhile, suspended sorghum, poultry and bonemeal imports from some American companies last week, and put more export controls on rare earth minerals, critical for various technologies.

The United States' top imports from China, meanwhile, include electronics, like computers and cell phones, industrial equipment and toys — and consumers and businesses are likely to see prices rise on those products, with tariffs now at 145%.

Trump announced on Wednesday that China would face 125% tariffs, but he did not include a 20% tariff on China tied to its role in fentanyl production.

White House officials hope the import taxes will create more manufacturing jobs by bringing production back to the United States — a politically risky trade-off that could take years to materialize, if at all.

NYC sightseeing helicopter plunges into river, killing 6 including Spanish family and pilot

By MICHAEL R. SISAK, JENNIFER PELTZ and TED SHAFFREY Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A New York City sightseeing helicopter broke apart in midair Thursday and crashed upside-down into the Hudson River, killing the pilot and a family of five Spanish tourists in the latest U.S. aviation disaster, officials said.

The victims included Siemens executive Agustin Escobar, his wife, Mercè Camprubí Montal, a global manager at an energy technology company, and three children, in addition to the pilot, a person briefed on the investigation told The Associated Press. The person could not discuss details of the investigation publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Photos posted on the helicopter company's website showed the couple and their children smiling as they boarded just before the flight took off.

The flight departed a downtown heliport around 3 p.m. and lasted less than 18 minutes. Radar data showed it flew north along the Manhattan skyline and then back south toward the Statue of Liberty.

Video of the crash showed parts of the aircraft tumbling through the air into the water near the shoreline of Jersey City, New Jersey.

Witnesses describe the helicopter's plunge into the Hudson

A witness there, Bruce Wall, said he saw it "falling apart" in midair, with the tail and main rotor coming off. The main rotor was still spinning without the helicopter as it fell.

Dani Horbiak was at her Jersey City home when she heard what sounded like "several gunshots in a row, almost, in the air." She looked out her window and saw the chopper "splash in several pieces into the river."

The helicopter was spinning uncontrollably with "a bunch of smoke coming out" before it slammed into the water, said Lesly Camacho, a hostess at a restaurant along the river in Hoboken, New Jersey.

On air traffic control radio, an NYPD helicopter pilot can be heard saying, "Be advised, you do have an aircraft down. Holland Tunnel. Please keep your eyes open for anybody in the water."

About five minutes after that, someone asks, "Hey Finest," a reference to the NYPD's call sign, "what's going on over there by the Holland Tunnel?"

"The ship went down," someone else responds.

Rescue boats circled the submerged aircraft within minutes of impact near the end of a long maintenance pier for a ventilation tower serving the Holland Tunnel. Recovery crews hoisted the mangled helicopter out of the water just after 8 p.m. using a floating crane.

The bodies were also recovered from the river, Mayor Eric Adams said.

The flight was operated by New York Helicopters, officials said. No one answered the phones at the company's offices in New York and New Jersey.

A person who answered the phone at the home of the company's owner, Michael Roth, said he declined to comment. Roth told the New York Post he was devastated and had "no clue" why the crash happened.

"The only thing I know by watching a video of the helicopter falling down, that the main rotor blades weren't on the helicopter," the Post quoted him as saying. He added that he had not seen such a thing happen during his 30 years in the helicopter business, but noted: "These are machines, and they break."

Emails seeking comment were sent to attorneys who have represented Roth in the past.

The Federal Aviation Administration identified the helicopter as a Bell 206, a model widely used in commercial and government aviation, including by sightseeing companies, TV news stations and police. It was initially developed for the U.S. Army before being adapted for other uses. Thousands have been manufactured over the years.

The National Transportation Safety Board said it would investigate.

Tragedy strikes a family from Spain

Escobar worked for the tech company Siemens for more than 27 years, most recently as global CEO for rail infrastructure at Siemens Mobility, according to his LinkedIn account. In late 2022 he briefly became president and CEO of Siemens Spain. In a post about the position, he thanked his family: "my endless

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 80 of 81

source of energy and happiness, for their unconditional support, love ... and patience."

Escobar regularly posted about the importance of sustainability in the rail industry and often traveled internationally for work, including journeying to India and the UK in the past month. He also was vice president of the German Chamber of Commerce for Spain since 2023.

"We are deeply saddened by the tragic helicopter crash in which Agustin Escobar and his family lost their lives. Our heartfelt condolences go out to all their loved ones," Siemens said in a statement early Friday.

Camprubí Montal worked in Barcelona, Spain, for energy technology company Siemens Energy for about seven years, including as its global commercialization manager and as a digitalization manager, according to her LinkedIn account.

Spanish regional government officials said the family resided in Barcelona.

"(I am) dismayed by the tragic helicopter accident in the Hudson River in New York which cost the lives of six people, five of which were members of a Barcelona family," Catalan regional president Salvador Illa wrote on X.

Another regional official said Agustin Escobar was originally from Puertollano, a town in central Spain.

"I want to express my sorrow for the traffic helicopter accident in New York that claimed the lives of Agustín Escobar and his family," Castilla La Mancha regional president Emiliano García-Page wrote on X. "Agustín is native of Puertollano and in 2023 we named him a Favorite Son of Castilla La Mancha."

What may have caused the crash

Video of the crash suggested that a "catastrophic mechanical failure" left the pilot with no chance to save the helicopter, said Justin Green, an aviation lawyer who was a helicopter pilot in the Marine Corps.

It is possible the helicopter's main rotors struck the tail boom, breaking it apart and causing the cabin to free fall, Green said.

"They were dead as soon as whatever happened happened," Green said. "There's no indication they had any control over the craft. No pilot could have prevented that accident once they lost the lifts. It's like a rock falling to the ground. It's heartbreaking."

The skies over Manhattan are routinely filled with planes and helicopters, both private recreational aircraft and commercial and tourist flights. Manhattan has several helipads from which business executives and others are whisked to destinations throughout the metropolitan area.

At least 38 people have died in helicopter accidents in New York City since 1977. A collision between a plane and a tourist helicopter over the Hudson in 2009 killed nine people, and five died in 2018 when a charter helicopter offering "open door" flights went down into the East River.

New York Helicopters also owned a Bell 206 that lost power and made an emergency landing on the Hudson during a sightseeing tour in June 2013. The pilot managed to land safely and he and the passengers — a family of four Swedes — were uninjured. The National Transportation Safety Board found that a maintenance flub and an engine lubrication anomaly led to the power cutoff.

Thursday's crash was the first for a helicopter in the city since one hit the roof of a skyscraper in 2019, killing the pilot.

The accidents and the noise caused by helicopters have repeatedly led some community activists and officials to propose banning or restricting traffic at Manhattan heliports.

Other recent crashes and close calls have already left some people worried about the safety of flying in the U.S.

Seven people were killed when a medical transport plane plummeted into a Philadelphia neighborhood in January. That happened two days after an American Airlines jet and an Army helicopter collided in midair in Washington in the deadliest U.S. air disaster in a generation.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 12, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 291 ~ 81 of 81

Today in History: April 12

Yuri Gagarin becomes first human in space

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Saturday, April 12, the 102nd day of 2025. There are 263 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On April 12, 1961, Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin became the first human in space, orbiting the earth once before landing safely via parachute after a planned ejection from his space capsule.

Also on this date:

In 1861, the U.S. Civil War began as Confederate forces opened fire on Fort Sumter in South Carolina.

In 1945, President Franklin D. Roosevelt died of a cerebral hemorrhage in Warm Springs, Georgia, at age 63; he was succeeded by Vice President Harry S. Truman.

In 1954, Bill Haley and His Comets recorded "Rock Around the Clock," a song often cited as bringing rock 'n' roll music into the mainstream when it was popularized in the film "The Blackboard Jungle" the following year.

In 1955, the polio vaccine developed by Jonas Salk was declared safe and effective following nearly a year of field trials undertaken by about 1.8 million American child volunteers dubbed "polio pioneers."

In 1963, civil rights leader the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. was arrested and jailed in Birmingham, Alabama, charged with contempt of court and parading without a permit. (During his time behind bars, King wrote his "Letter from Birmingham Jail.")

In 1981, the NASA Space Shuttle program began as Space Shuttle Columbia, the world's first reusable spacecraft, lifted off from the Kennedy Space Center.

Today's Birthdays: Musician Herbie Hancock is 85. Musician John Kay (Steppenwolf) is 81. Actor Ed O'Neill is 79. TV host David Letterman is 78. Author Scott Turow is 76. Actor Andy Garcia is 69. Movie director Walter Salles (SAL'-ihs) is 69. Country musician Vince Gill is 68. Actor-comedian Retta is 55. Actor Claire Danes is 46. Actor Jennifer Morrison is 46. Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard is 44. Model-actor Brooklyn Decker is 38. Actor-comedian Ilana Glazer is 38. Actor Saoirse (SUR'-shuh) Ronan is 31.