

# Groton Daily Independent

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## **Tuesday, April 15**

Senior Menu: Ham rotini bake, peas and carrots, five cup salad, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Waffles.

School Lunch: Sloppy joes, baked beans.

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

God, please heal  
those with  
cancer,  
Find a home for  
the  
homeless,  
A job for the  
jobless,  
Financial  
well-being for  
those struggling.  
Amen



Smarter Balance Testing for grades 5, 8 11 (Science)

Track at Clear Lake, 2 p.m.

Junior High Track at Milbank, 4 p.m.

City Council Meeting, 7 p.m.

United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

## **Wednesday, April 16**

Senior Menu: Ranch chicken, wild rice, catalina blend, fruit, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Muffins.

School Lunch: Chicken pot pie, biscuits.

Smarter Balance Testing for grades 5, 8 11 (Science)

Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 4 p.m.; League, 6:30 p.m.; Stations of the Cross at Catholic Church)

Groton United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Groton Ad Council, 7 p.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Confirmation, 3:45 p.m.

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

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# 1440

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

## El Salvador Deportation

El Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele said yesterday he would not return to the US a Maryland man with protected legal status who was mistakenly deported—raising concerns about due process.

Kilmar Abrego Garcia, 29, fled to the US as a teenager after facing gang threats in El Salvador. In 2019, a US immigration judge issued a court order barring his deportation to protect him from harm. However, the Trump administration expelled Garcia to a Salvadoran mega-prison last month despite no criminal charges against him, later acknowledging the move was a clerical error. Garcia's case is one of more than 200 migrants who have been deported after Trump invoked the 1798 Alien Enemies Act. The Trump administration is paying the Salvadoran government \$6M to host deportees.

Bukele's comments came after the US Supreme Court ordered the administration to facilitate Garcia's return last week. US officials have stated they cannot force El Salvador to return him, but legal experts say judges can order the US to have Garcia returned and note the US has previously assisted in returning mistakenly deported individuals.

## Ankylosaur Footprints

Paleontologists have discovered 100-million-year-old fossilized footprints in the Canadian Rockies that reveal the first known tracks of three-toed, clubbed-tail armored dinosaurs, filling a gap in the fossil record.

The footprints belong to an ankylosaurid, part of a larger group of ankylosaur dinosaurs that were heavily armored herbivores from the Late Jurassic to Cretaceous periods, known for their bony plates (even on their eyelids) and spikes. The ankylosaurs have two main subgroups: the nodosaurids, which have a flexible tail and four toes and whose footprints are well known, and the ankylosaurids, which have sledgehammer-like tails and three toes. Ankylosaurs are estimated to have been up to 30 feet long and weighed over 10,000 pounds.

The footprints from the middle of the Cretaceous period, roughly 100 to 94 million years ago, indicate ankylosaurids were present in North America despite the absence of skeletal remains. The discovery suggests both nodosaurids and ankylosaurids coexisted in the same region during the same period.

## Redo of #MeToo

Harvey Weinstein's retrial on sex crime charges begins with jury selection today in Manhattan. The 73-year-old faces accusations of sexually assaulting former production assistant Mimi Haley (2006), raping aspiring actress Jessica Mann (2013), and a new allegation of forced oral sex at a Manhattan hotel (2006). Opening statements could begin as early as April 22, with the trial expected to last up to six weeks.

Weinstein's 2020 conviction, which included guilty verdicts for assaulting Haley and raping Mann, was overturned in April 2024 by a New York appeals court. The court found the jury had been unfairly influenced by testimony from women whose allegations were not part of the formal charges. The retrial will feature fewer witnesses and tighter rules on testimony language.

Weinstein is serving a 16-year sentence in California following a separate 2023 conviction for rape and assault. He has denied all allegations and maintains that all sexual encounters were consensual.

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## **Sports, Entertainment, & Culture**

NBA postseason kicks off tonight with the Play-In Tournament; see full play-in schedule.

Dallas Wings take former UConn star Paige Bueckers with the top pick in the WNBA Draft; see complete draft results.

Mario Vargas Llosa, Nobel Prize-winning Peruvian author, academic, and Latin American political leader, dies at age 89.

HBO reveals first actors cast for upcoming "Harry Potter" TV series.

Tony Award winner Leslie Odom Jr. to reprise role of Aaron Burr in Broadway's "Hamilton" this fall.

## **Science & Technology**

OpenAI releases GPT-4.1, GPT-4.1 mini, and GPT-4.1 nano, which can code and follow instructions; OpenAI claims the latest model, available via its API rather than through ChatGPT, outperforms other models.

Google launches new AI model to help researchers decode dolphin communication.

Study finds Earth's atmosphere and the sun filter out fragile, carbon-rich meteoroids before they can reach the ground; answers long-running question about why carbon-rich meteorites, which are abundant in space, rarely reach Earth.

Wearable AI system uses visual, audio, and haptic signals to help blind and partially sighted people navigate obstacles; walking distance and navigation time improved by 25% compared to using a cane.

## **Business & Markets**

US stock markets close higher (S&P 500 +0.8%, Dow +0.8%, Nasdaq +0.6%) as tech shares rise after the US exempts electronics from import tariffs.

Nvidia to mass-produce artificial intelligence supercomputer chips in the US for the first time; announces up to \$500B investment in the US over the next four years, including in Texas and Arizona.

Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg takes the witness stand on first day of antitrust trial; federal regulators argue Meta—the parent company of Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp—monopolized personal social networking services.

## **Politics & World Affairs**

Trump administration freezes over \$2.2B in funding to Harvard after the university rejected the administration's requests to overhaul its policies and processes, becoming first university to refuse to comply with such requests.

Suspect charged with attempted murder, arson, and more after setting fire to Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro's (D) home; the 38-year-old man told investigators he would have beaten Shapiro with a hammer.

Jury selected in retrial of former Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin's (R) libel suit against The New York Times.

Hungary approves constitutional amendment to ban LGBTQ+ public gatherings; legislation was first proposed by the ruling Fidesz-KDNP coalition led by populist Prime Minister Viktor Orbán.

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## Newsweek

The Bulletin

YOUR DAILY BRIEFING OF  
EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW

### WORLD IN BRIEF

Japan refuses quick trade concessions: Japan's Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba said he will not make "big concessions" to President Trump in order to get a U.S. trade deal wrapped up quickly ahead of talks due to start on April 17 in Washington.

China expands Pacific military influence: China has quietly extended its military reach far across the Pacific by building dozens of ports, airports, and communications projects at key points in a vast region that could shut out the United States and its allies in the event of war, a new report says.

Russia's birth rate nears record low: Russia's birth rate has fallen to a historic low, reaching levels not seen since the late 18th to early 19th century, according to a leading Russian demographer.

Helicopter Tour company shuts down: The Federal Aviation Administration announced Sunday that New York Helicopter Tours (also known as New York Helicopter Charter) is shutting down operations immediately following a fatal crash that killed six people.

Trump booed at Coachella during Bernie Sanders speech: Sen. Bernie Sanders made a surprise appearance at the Coachella festival in California on Saturday night. When the Vermont independent mentioned Trump, the crowd booed, and he quickly told them, "I agree," in response.

Texas faces a pileup of unsold homes: An ongoing construction boom has combined with slowing demand to create a pileup of unsold homes in the once-booming Texas housing market, where prices are now starting to "correct" after years of overheating, experts told Newsweek.

### Cody Balmer's Social Media Reveals Anti-Joe Biden Posts

The rundown: The man arrested on suspicion of setting fire to Democratic Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro's residence appears to have posted several social media posts criticizing former president Joe Biden.

Why it matters: Cody Balmer, 38, of Harrisburg, will face charges of attempted murder, terrorism, aggravated arson and aggravated assault, authorities said. A Facebook page that appears to belong to Balmer does not have any recent posts, but featured several critical of Biden during his presidency. In September 2021, Balmer appears to have posted a meme about the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan. It shows Biden in a car with text reading: "Get in, loser. We're leaving Afghanistan." A second picture of Biden is captioned: "Drives off without you." In a March 2021 post, Balmer also appears to have written: "Five dollars was gas money when Trump was president."

TL/DR: No one was harmed during the incident, and the suspect escaped.

What happens now? Authorities will conduct a thorough review of security measures around the Governor's Residence, and Shapiro said his family will celebrate the second night of Passover.



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## Princess Prom

(Photos lifted from GDILIVE.COM video)



Groton Junior Snow Queen McKenna Tietz and Senior Snow Queen Gretchen Dinger were on hand for the Princess Prom.



Kate Tarpein escorted by Ryan Tarpein.



Avery Roettle escorted by Cody Roettle.



Molly Swisher escorted by Travis Swisher.



Ivy Cole escorted by Chuck Cole.



Emery and Regan Lemke escorted by Jon Lemke.



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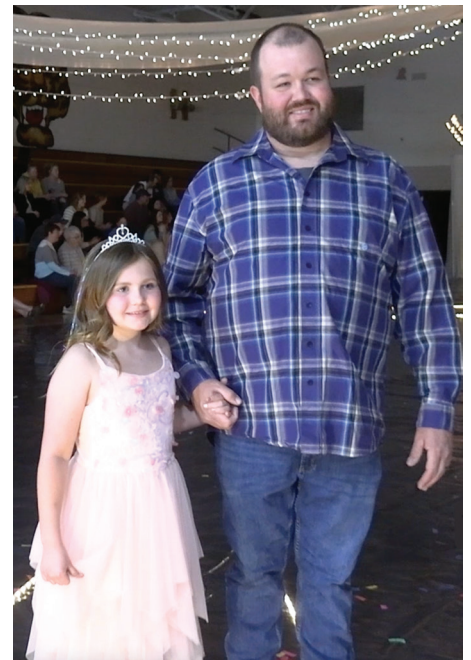
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**Annie & Harper Harry escorted by Kris Harry.**



**Harper Cleveland escorted by Justin Cleveland.**



**Ellie Lasse escorted by Jake Lasse.**



**Layla Feist escorted by Michael Feist.**



**Veda & Blakely Stiegelmeier escorted by Jordan Stiegelmeier.**



**Preslee, Emersyn, Hazel and Wrenley Giedt escorted by Heath Giedt.**



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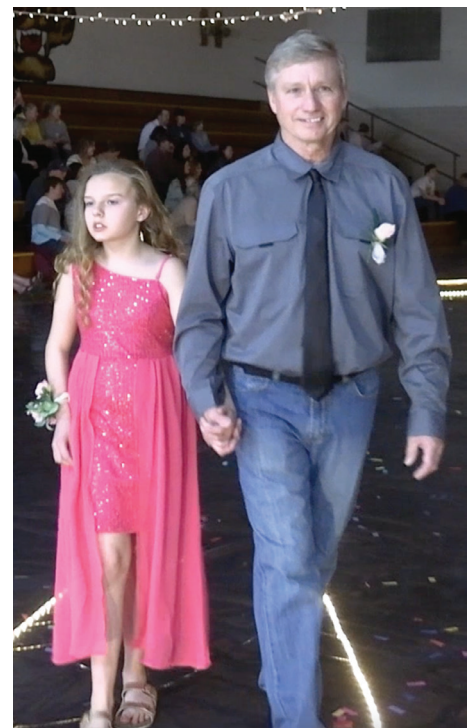
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**Laker Hanson escorted by Justin Hanson.**



**Magdaline Miller escorted by Jordan Miller.**



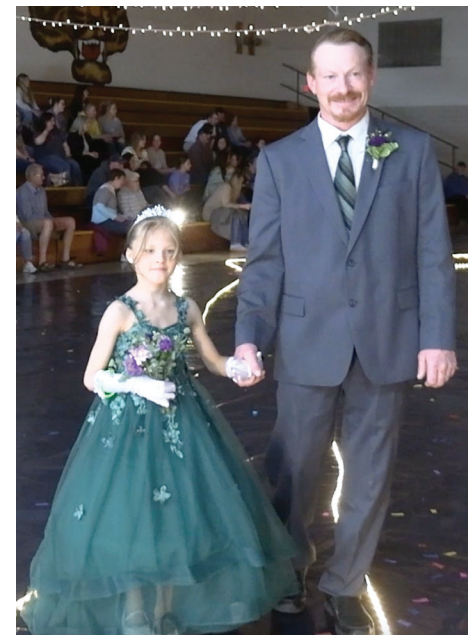
**Kaylee Sippel escorted by John Sippel.**



**Olivia Merkel escorted by Brett Merkel.**



**Hadlee Ronning escorted by Blake Ronning.**

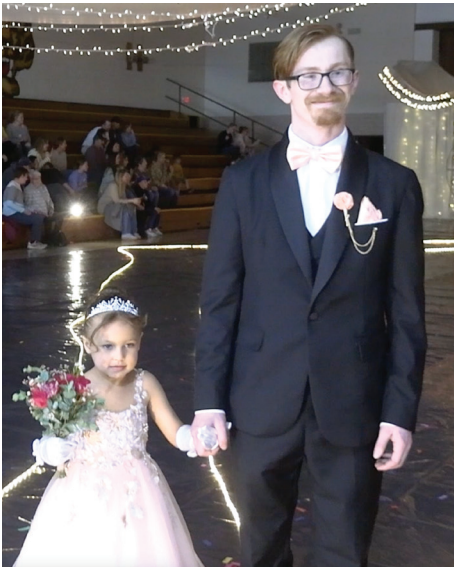


**Emma Petty escorted by Adam Jorgenson.**



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**Adaline Petty escorted by Mason Jorgenson.**



**Kinsley & Kayleigh Raba escorted by Chris Raba.**



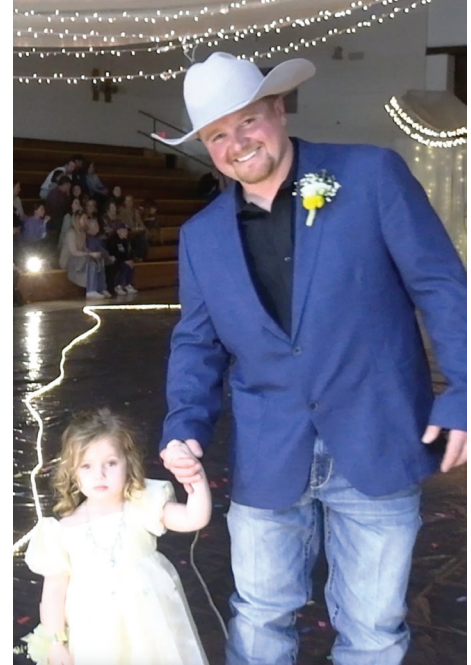
**Peyton & Arya Guthmiller escorted by Dustin Guthmiller.**



**Lexie & Lennox Locke escorted by Spencer Locke.**



**Paxtyn Menzia escorted by Matt Menzia.**



**Cicily Duerre escorted by Nathan Duerre.**



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**Elizabeth Haskell escorted by Lance Haskell.**



**Kinley Haskell escorted by Curtis Haskell.**



**Vee Fliehs escorted by Tigh Fliehs.**



**Kinsey Frost escorted by Chris Frost.**



**Alex Clark escorted by AJ Clark.**



**Reagen & Madison Harry escorted by Jeff Harry.**



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**Kaelee & Jaeden Morehouse escorted by Justin Morehouse.**



**Alli Iverson escorted by Jeremy Iverson.**



**Taylor Fliehs escorted by Lonnie Hoffman.**



**Mya and Emme Fliehs escorted by Trey Fliehs.**



**Harley & Mace Furman escorted by Derick Furman.**



**Maya Anderson escorted by Ron Anderson.**



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**River Anderson escorted by Taylor Anderson.**



**Aubrie and Collins Traphagen escorted by Trent Traphagen.**



**KayLynn Furman escorted by Sam Furman.**



**Hazel Nei escorted by Codi Nei.**



**Emery Blackwood escorted by Bruce Babcock.**



**Raven Bahr escorted by Brian Bahr.**



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**River Wipf escorted by Keith Wipf.**



**Collyns & Brielle Dunbar escorted by Michael Dunbar.**



**Miakoda & Destry Neigel escorted by Tyler Neigel.**



**Nova & Sunny Washenberger escorted by Dan Washenberger.**



**Ella Clocksene escorted by BJ Clocksene.**



**Madilyn Stahl escorted by Dustin Stahl.**



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**Cora Kotzer escorted by Kevin Kotzer.**



**Jorie Locken escorted by Chad Locken.**



**Willow & Aspen Cowan escorted by Joshua Cowan.**



**Parker Bierman escorted by Quintin Bierman.**



**Rylee Tunby escorted by Kris Tunby.**



**Sawyer Kappes escorted by Andrew Kappes.**

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Ava Rose escorted by Ian Rose.



Morgan & Makenna Sternhagen escorted by Tom Sternhagen.

## Groton Citywide 2025 Spring Cleanup

### April 28-May 2

**ALL ITEMS NEED TO BE DROPPED OFF  
BEFORE 10AM ON 5/2/25!!**



Bring anything you wish to dispose of to the City Shop-10 E Railroad Ave starting April 28<sup>th</sup>.

Please place items in the appropriate pile.

**RESIDENTIAL ONLY!!**

Keep Metal, Tires, Paint, Batteries & Chemicals Separate

**Pickup can be arranged for  
Monday, April 28<sup>th</sup> to Friday, May 2<sup>nd</sup> ENDING AT 10AM  
by calling City Hall 605-397-8422.**



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## 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





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## Girl Scouts donate to The Pantry

On Monday, Groton Girl Scout Troop #40249 generously donated several boxes of Girl Scout cookies to The Pantry - Groton, SD, spreading a little sweetness. The team at Enrich Groton SoDak Inc. is incredibly grateful for this thoughtful gesture.

Pictured L to R: Senior Citizen member Dave Kleinsasser, Enrich volunteers Steve and Sandy Dresbach, Enrich board members Nancy Larsen, Diane Warrington, April Abeln, and Topper Tastad, Girl Scout members Rosalyn Block, Isabella Daly and Hallie Perkin. (Courtesy Photo April Abeln)



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## **Groton City Council Meeting Agenda**

April 15, 2025 – 7:00pm  
City Hall – 120 N Main Street

(IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CALL IN TO THIS MEETING, PLEASE MAKE PRIOR ARRANGEMENTS TO DO SO BY CALLING CITY HALL 605-397-8422)

1. Approval of Agenda
2. Public Comments - pursuant to SDCL 1-25-1  
(Public Comments will offer the opportunity for anyone not listed on the agenda to speak to the council. Speaking time will be limited to 3 minutes. No action will be taken on questions or items not on the agenda.)
3. Review of Dual Fuel Ordinance – Paul Kosel
4. Draft Engineering Proposal for Sewer Project – IMEG
5. First Reading of Ordinance No. 788 – Amending Solid Waste Rates for Municipal Utility Customers
6. First Reading of Ordinance No. 789 – Amending Language of Chapter 8-1 of Groton City Ordinances
7. 2024 Annual Report
8. March Finance Report
9. Minutes
10. Bills
11. Reminder: 2025 Spring City Wide Cleanup – April 28<sup>th</sup> to May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2025
12. Executive session personnel & legal 1-25-2 (1) & (3)
13. Hire Summer Recreational Employees
14. Adjournment

## **Death Notice: Victoria “Vickie” Sippel**

Victoria “Vickie” Sippel, 63, of Groton passed away April 13, 2025 at Mayo Clinic Health System in Mankato, MN. Services are pending with Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton.

## School board considers shift from show choir to musical production

By Elizabeth Varin

The Groton Area High School show choir team may be taking its curtain call, but if so, a new opportunity for students is waiting in the wings.

At Monday night's school board meeting, members discussed the possibility of replacing the high school show choir team with a musical production. The change is being considered as a way to involve more students, offering a shorter time commitment and a wider variety of roles both on and off the stage.

This year's group included 14 members (one sixth grader, one seventh grader, three eighth graders, one freshman, one sophomore, two juniors and five seniors), said Landon Brown, K-12 vocal music teacher and show choir director. More than a third of the group is graduating, which would make it more of a small group rather than a choir.

Students have expressed concern about how much of a time commitment the show choir is, as practices begin in the fall and performances takes place in the spring. There are also not a lot of performances possible. This year's group performed at a competition in Aberdeen and during the Pops Concert.

Brown proposed putting on a musical next year as an alternative. Not only would a musical be less of a time commitment for students, but the show could also be tailored to those interested, he said. If more students are interested in dancing, the show could include more of that. If there are more girls interested than boys, there are shows that would feature those interested.

"I want to get as many people involved to make it a productive experience," he said. "I just want to do what will benefit the most students."

Board members recalled the strong show choir program at Groton about a decade ago. Groton was named Class A champions at the first South Dakota High School Activities Association State Show Choir Competition in 2016. Back then, there were about 40 students involved in two school show choirs, said board member Marty Weismantel. Since then, though, interest has died down.

"This isn't something new for people who have followed show choir," he said. "It's been on life support."

Board member Heather Lerseth-Fliehs asked if talks about expanding the district cooperative agreement with Langford could include show choir. Superintendent Joe Schwan said talks about the co-op expanding have stalled for now. He added, though, that programs that are discontinued can be very hard to bring back.

Board members asked Brown to put out a sign-up sheet to see how many students would be interested in being involved in a musical. However, most indicated support of having an activity that would involve not only singers, but a wide variety of students.

"I think it would be a good idea to try something different," said Tigh Fliehs.

A final decision on the future of the show choir was not reached, as the board waits to see if students would want to participate in a musical show instead.

### Negotiated contracts approved

In other business, the board approved negotiated contracts for teachers and staff. The teacher contract includes a 2.5 percent salary increase for returning teachers, as well as a base salary increase for new hires of 1.25 percent, bringing it to \$47,385.

The negotiated agreements also included changes to some potentially paid coaching/advising positions. A prom advisor and robotics advisor were added to Activity Schedule, which allows for stipends for the person leading those activities. The senior advisor position received an increase stipend amount.

Some additions to the list include a head softball coach, assistant softball coach, E-Sports head coach and Educators Rising Advisor position. That doesn't mean the district is pushing forward with any of those programs, said Superintendent Joe Schwan. Instead, it adds those as possibilities if the board decides to

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move forward with any of them. The district only negotiates the contracts once a year, so this would allow the board to consider whether they want to move forward with any of those programs.

The head debate coach and assistant debate coach positions were removed from the Activity Schedule.

## **New first grade teacher hired**

The board also approved hiring a new first grade teacher, though she is a familiar face in Groton.

Jessica Maurer was hired to replace McKayla Hanson, who submitted her resignation in March. The district received 18 applicants for the first grade teaching position, said Superintendent Joe Schwan. Maurer has been persistent in applying for positions before, he said, adding that she is a rock star.

Maurer nee Adler graduated from Groton Area High School in 2017. She attended Northern State University where she graduated with her bachelor's degree in elementary education in spring 2021. She has taught first grade at Webster Area School since 2021. She is finishing her master's degree at Northern State University.

- The board approved pushing the last day of school due to recent weather impacts. The last day for students will be May 15. Teachers will have an in-service day on May 16.
- Elementary school Principal Brett Schwan told the board about a higher-than-anticipated turnout for the kindergarten roundup, held earlier this month. While the numbers are tentative, it looks like next year's kindergarten classes could total more than 40 students, which brings it back in line with previous years.
- Head cross country coach Brooke Torrence is taking a yearlong sabbatical from the coaching role. Torrence will be on maternity leave for the beginning half of the cross country season and requested to be free from the coaching role for the 2025-2026 season. The coaching role, though, will remain on her contract for the following year.
- The board authorized the district to continue its member in the South Dakota High School Activities Association for the 2025-2026 school year, a decision the board has to approve each year.
- The board accepted the resignation of Duane Fliehs, a part-time maintenance team member, effective immediately.

## School Board Meeting Principal Report

MS/HS- Shelby Edwards

04/14/2025

### Class Counts-

6th- 54

7th- 38

8th- 42

9th- 45

10th- 37

11th- 44

12th- 44

**New Total- 303 Students**

- State testing schedule changed. Middle school tested last week. Juniors are testing Mon-Thur this week. Science will be next week.
- Prom was a success! Thank you to Mrs. Tietz, Mrs. Duerre, and Mrs. Johnson, along with PAC and all of the parent support
- Congratulations to our **NINE** students who qualified for Nationals in HOSA this past week at the state competition. Nationals is in Nashville, TN, June 18-21
- All formal teacher observations have been scheduled



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Brett Schwan

Elementary Board Report

April 14, 2025

**School Improvement Progress Report:** Our CNA team will meet tomorrow morning to complete the form. This particularly will discuss what we did this year to improve our student enrollment through improved student engagement.

**Track and Field Day:** Track and field day will be on Thursday, May 8<sup>th</sup> from 12:30 – 3:00. Families are invited and encouraged to eat with their children:

KG and 1<sup>st</sup> – 11:00-11:25

2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> – 11:25-11:50

4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> – 11:50-12:15.

**South Dakota State Assessment:**

- 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Science
  - April 15
- ELA and Math
  - April 22-25
- Make-up testing
  - April 28-May 2

**KG Rounded:** Our annual KG Roundup was on April 4. We had a total of 35 students attend. Based on the current number, we plan to have at least 39 KG students and 7 JK students. We have 6 students/families who are undecided at this time.

**Elementary Spring Concert** is on April 29<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 in the high school gymnasium.

**Spring Field Trips:**

JK:

- Date: Friday, May 2, 2025
- Location: Dacotah Prairie Museum
- Time: Leave at 12:30, Return at 2:40

KG:

- Date Wednesday, Apr 30, 2025
- Location-Domino's and Parkview Nursery
- Time-Leave at 9 am -return around 3pm

1st:

- Date: May 2, 2025
- Location - Storybook Land
- Time: 9:00-2:00

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2nd:

- Date: Friday, May 9th, 2025
- Location: Bramble Park Zoo, Watertown SD
- Time: leave at 8:35 - return at 2:45

3rd:

- Date: May 7, 2025
- Location DeSmet (Laura Ingalls Wilder Homestead)
- Time 8:30 (leave) Return end of day

4th:

- Date: April 29, 2025
- Location: Aberdeen Agriculture Fair
- Time: 11:45 - End of day
- Date: May 7, 2025
- Location: Valley Queen - Milbank, SD
- Time: 8:30-3:00

5th:

- Date: May 13, 2025
- Location: Fort Sisseton
- Time 8:30 leave, return end of day



**Officer Tommy Strickland pictures with a few kiddos after the Easter Egg Hunt.** (Photo by April Abeln)



**Groton Lions Club decorates the City Park on Saturday morning, April 12th.** (Photo by Karyn Babcock)



**Many were lined up moments before 10am in the City Park for the Lions Easter Egg Hunt.** (Photo by April Abeln)



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**Volunteers Topper Tastad, Travis McGannon and Bruce Babcock before the annual Easter Egg Hunt started.** (Photo by April Abeln)



**Sawyer Kappes was the winner of the bike giveaway, sponsored by the Groton Chamber.** (Photo by April Abeln)



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

**Cow basket - \$20**



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

**Rainbow basket - \$25**



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



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Pink basket - \$20



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



## Groton Area Tigers JV Secure Win Against SBW JV Baseball

By GameChanger Media

Groton Area Tigers JV were triumphant over SBW JV Baseball 5-0 on Sunday.

An error put Groton Area Tigers JV on the board in the bottom of the second.

Groton Area Tigers JV added to their early lead in the bottom of the third inning after Isaiah Scepaniak grounded out, and SBW JV Baseball committed an error, each scoring one run.

TC Schuster earned the win for Groton Area Tigers JV. The pitcher gave up one hit and zero runs over five innings, striking out eight and walking none. Emmett Symens took the loss for SBW JV Baseball. The starter went two innings, giving up two runs (zero earned) on one hit, striking out five and walking three.

Braden Fliehs and Alex Abeln each collected one hit for Groton Area Tigers JV. Kason Oswald and Scepaniak were tough to handle back-to-back in the lineup, as each drove in one run for Groton Area Tigers JV. Groton Area Tigers JV were sure-handed in the field and didn't commit a single error. Oswald had the most chances in the field with nine.

Symens led SBW JV Baseball with one hit in two at bats.

## Walk-Off Seals The Deal In Groton Area Tigers JV Victory Over SBW JV Baseball

By GameChanger Media

Groton Area Tigers JV took Sunday's game in dramatic fashion, with a 12-11 walk-off victory over SBW JV Baseball. The game was tied at 11 in the bottom of the fifth when Kolton Antonsen drew a walk, scoring one run.

Both offenses were strong at the plate as Groton Area Tigers JV collected 10 hits and SBW JV Baseball eight in the high-scoring affair.

SBW JV Baseball got on the board in the top of the first inning after Groton Area Tigers JV committed an error, Bryson Hanson walked, and Justin Muehler singled to left field, each scoring one run.

Groton Area Tigers JV tied the game in the bottom of the second thanks to an error, a walk by Noah Scepaniak, and a hit by a pitch.

In the top of the third, SBW JV Baseball broke up the tie when an error scored one run. Then a ground out by Hanson followed to extend the lead to 6-3.

Groton Area Tigers JV tied the game in the bottom of the third thanks to a triple by TC Schuster, a single by Jordan Schwan, and an error.

SBW JV Baseball jumped back into the lead in the top of the fourth inning after Carter Grobe singled down the left field line, Karter Deutsch singled down the left field line, and , each scoring one run.

In the bottom of the fifth inning, Groton Area Tigers JV went back into the lead after Schuster tripled to center field, Schwan tripled down the right field line, Zach Fliehs singled to center field, Wesley Borg walked, and Antonsen walked, each scoring one run.

Kason Oswald started on the bump for Groton Area Tigers JV. The hurler allowed five hits and eight runs (three earned) over two and one-third innings, striking out one and walking three. Luke Nielsen stepped on the bump first for SBW JV Baseball. The right-handed pitcher gave up one hit and three runs (two earned) over one and one-third innings, striking out two and walking four. Borg appeared in relief for Groton Area Tigers JV.

Groton Area Tigers JV piled up 10 hits in the game. Schuster, Fliehs, and Schwan each collected two hits for Groton Area Tigers JV. Schuster, Antonsen, and Fliehs each drove in two runs for Groton Area Tigers JV. Scepaniak paced Groton Area Tigers JV with three walks. Overall, the team had patience at the plate, amassing nine walks for the game. Groton Area Tigers JV turned one double play in the game.

Nielsen and Muehler each collected two hits for SBW JV Baseball. Deutsch, Hanson, Grobe, Emmett Symens, and Muehler each drove in one run for SBW JV Baseball. Deutsch stole two bases.

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## SBW JV Baseball 11 - 12 Groton Area Tigers JV

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	1	2	3	4	5	R	H	E
SBWJ	3	0	3	3	2	11	8	5
GRTN	0	3	3	1	5	12	10	4

### BATTING

SBW JV Baseball	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
L Kilker #6 (SS)	3	1	0	0	0	0
L Nielsen #22 (P)	2	3	2	0	1	0
R Anderson #10 (C)	3	1	1	0	0	0
E Symens #14 (LF)	2	2	0	1	1	0
B Hanson #17 (3B)	2	1	0	1	1	0
J Hamm #11	1	1	1	0	1	0
Z Finch #13 (2B)	0	1	0	0	1	0
J Muehler #50 (CF)	2	1	2	1	0	0
C Grobe #0 (1B)	2	0	1	1	0	0
K Deutsch #20 (RF)	1	0	1	1	0	0
P Sichmiller #4 (P)	2	0	0	0	0	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>

**2B:** L Nielsen, **TB:** C Grobe, R Anderson, J Hamm, J Muehler 2, L Nielsen 3, K Deutsch, **HBP:** K Deutsch, Z Finch, **SB:** J Hamm, L Nielsen, K Deutsch 2, **LOB:** 3

### PITCHING

SBW JV Baseball	P	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
L Nielsen #22	1.1	1	3	2	4	2	0
L Kilker #6	1.0	8	7	5	2	1	0
<b>P Sichmiller #40.2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Totals</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>

**P-S:** L Kilker 50-27, L Nielsen 44-20, P Sichmiller 25-10, **WP:** L Kilker, P Sichmiller, **HBP:** L Nielsen, **BF:** L Kilker 14, L Nielsen 11, P Sichmiller 7

Groton Area Tigers JV	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
A Abeln #5 (SS)	1	0	0	0	0	0
T Schuster #21 (LF)	2	2	2	2	1	0
J Schwan #11 (CF)	3	2	2	1	0	1
I Scean... #25 (3B)	3	1	1	0	0	0
K Oswald #24 (P)	1	1	0	0	2	1
Z Fliehs #23 (1B)	3	1	2	2	0	0
J Bisbee #15 (C)	2	2	1	0	1	1
W Borg #12 (2B)	2	0	0	0	1	1
N Scepiani... #1 (RF)	0	0	0	0	3	0
K Antonsen #3 (LF)	2	0	1	2	1	1
S Crank #20 (3B)	1	0	0	1	0	0
L Shilhanek #22	2	2	1	0	0	0
G Kroll #14	0	0	0	0	0	0
CR: B Fliehs #19	0	1	0	0	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>

**2B:** L Shilhanek, K Antonsen, **3B:** T Schuster 2, J Schwan, **TB:** L Shilhanek 2, Z Fliehs 2, K Antonsen 2, T Schuster 6, I Scepianiak, J Schwan 4, J Bisbee, **CS:** N Scepianiak, **HBP:** S Crank, **SB:** W Borg, Z Fliehs, T Schuster, I Scepianiak, J Schwan, **LOB:** 2

Groton Area Tigers JV	P	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
K Oswald #24	2.1	5	8	3	3	1	0
W Borg #12	1.0	3	3	1	2	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>

**P-S:** W Borg 29-15, K Oswald 64-34, **WP:** K Oswald 4, **HBP:** K Oswald 2, **BF:** W Borg 9, K Oswald 18



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## SBW JV Baseball 11 - 12 Groton Area Tigers JV

📍 Home 📅 Sunday April 13, 2025

	1	2	3	4	5	R	H	E
SBWJ	3	0	3	3	2	11	8	5
GRTN	0	3	3	1	5	12	10	4

### BATTING

SBW JV Baseball	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
L Kilker #6 (SS)	3	1	0	0	0	0
L Nielsen #22 (P)	2	3	2	0	1	0
R Anderson #10 (C)	3	1	1	0	0	0
E Symens #14 (LF)	2	2	0	1	1	0
B Hanson #17 (3B)	2	1	0	1	1	0
J Hamm #11	1	1	1	0	1	0
Z Finch #13 (2B)	0	1	0	0	1	0
J Muehler #50 (CF)	2	1	2	1	0	0
C Grobe #0 (1B)	2	0	1	1	0	0
K Deutsch #20 (RF)	1	0	1	1	0	0
P Sichmiller #4 (P)	2	0	0	0	0	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>

**2B:** L Nielsen, **TB:** C Grobe, R Anderson, J Hamm, J Muehler 2, L Nielsen 3, K Deutsch, **HBP:** K Deutsch, Z Finch, **SB:** J Hamm, L Nielsen, K Deutsch 2, **LOB:** 3

### PITCHING

SBW JV Baseball	P	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
L Nielsen #22	1.1	1	3	2	4	2	0
L Kilker #6	1.0	8	7	5	2	1	0
<b>P Sichmiller #40.2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Totals</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>

**P-S:** L Kilker 50-27, L Nielsen 44-20, P Sichmiller 25-10, **WP:** L Kilker, P Sichmiller, **HBP:** L Nielsen, **BF:** L Kilker 14, L Nielsen 11, P Sichmiller 7

Groton Area Tigers JV	B	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
A Abeln #5 (SS)	1	0	0	0	0	0
T Schuster #21 (LF)	2	2	2	2	1	0
J Schwan #11 (CF)	3	2	2	1	0	1
I Scepan... #25 (3B)	3	1	1	0	0	0
K Oswald #24 (P)	1	1	0	0	2	1
Z Fliehs #23 (1B)	3	1	2	2	0	0
J Bisbee #15 (C)	2	2	1	0	1	1
W Borg #12 (2B)	2	0	0	0	1	1
N Scepani... #1 (RF)	0	0	0	0	3	0
K Antonsen #3 (LF)	2	0	1	2	1	1
S Crank #20 (3B)	1	0	0	1	0	0
L Shilhanek #22	2	2	1	0	0	0
G Kroll #14	0	0	0	0	0	0
CR: B Fliehs #19	0	1	0	0	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>

**2B:** L Shilhanek, K Antonsen, **3B:** T Schuster 2, J Schwan, **TB:** L Shilhanek 2, Z Fliehs 2, K Antonsen 2, T Schuster 6, I Scepaniak, J Schwan 4, J Bisbee, **CS:** N Scepaniak, **HBP:** S Crank, **SB:** W Borg, Z Fliehs, T Schuster, I Scepaniak, J Schwan, **LOB:** 2

Groton Area Tigers JV	B	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
K Oswald #24	2.1	5	8	3	3	1
W Borg #12	1.0	3	3	1	2	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>

**P-S:** W Borg 29-15, K Oswald 64-34, **WP:** K Oswald 4, **HBP:** K Oswald 2, **BF:** W Borg 9, K Oswald 18



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### COMMENTARY

## Some South Dakota lawmakers want to subject ballot questions to a tyranny of the minority

by Dana Hess



**State Rep. Rebecca Reimer, R-Chamberlain, speaks on the South Dakota House floor on March 6, 2025.** (Makenzie Huber/South Dakota Searchlight)

Getting an initiated constitutional amendment on the ballot in South Dakota is plenty tough for citizens. House Bill 1169 would have made it almost impossible.

HB 1169 required that signatures representing 5% of the votes cast for governor in the most recent election be collected from each of the state's 35 Senate districts to get an initiated constitutional amendment on the ballot. Current law calls for collecting signatures totaling 10% of the votes cast for governor in the last election. Those signatures can come from anywhere in the state.

HB 1169 would have been something of a jobs program for accountants. Not only would petition carriers have needed to figure out 5% of the votes cast for governor in each Senate district, but they

would also have had to make sure that their overall total of signatures equaled 10% of the vote total for governor.

The good news about HB 1169 is that it was vetoed by Gov. Larry Rhoden. In his veto message to the Legislature, Rhoden said he feared that the geographic requirement for the collection of signatures would be workable only for big-money groups that have the resources to canvass the entire state.

To override a veto, a two-thirds vote is needed in both chambers in the Legislature. That's 24 votes in the 35-member Senate and 47 votes in the 70-member House. Fortunately, the Senate vote of 16-16 was not enough to override the veto. The governor's veto stands, and that's the good news. However, there's plenty of bad news to go around.

Part of the bad news is the wide-ranging support that such an onerous change had in the Legislature. Bills with such success are usually destined to become law. HB 1169 flew through the House State Affairs Committee on a vote of 10-1 and through the House on a vote of 60-9. In the Senate State Affairs Committee, it fared just as well, earning passage on a 7-1 vote. It was only in the Senate where the bill met some resistance, but still passed, 19-15.



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There was more bad news on the last day of the legislative session as the House voted 50-18 to override the veto. Fortunately, both chambers need to override the veto for the bill to become law.

Clearly, HB 1169 has plenty of backers in the Legislature. The bill's main sponsor, Rep. Rebecca Reimer, a Chamberlain Republican, recognizes that and said in a South Dakota Searchlight story that she would work on the language in the legislation and bring it back next year.

In her testimony to the House State Affairs Committee, Reimer said passage of HB 1169 would ensure that rural voices are heard rather than letting petitioners set up shop in only Rapid City or Sioux Falls to collect signatures. She said the bill "ensures fairness, strengthens voter representation, protects the integrity of our constitutional amendment process."

Maybe that's one way to describe the bill. Another would be to say that it's a cynical, bordering on sinister, attempt to cut citizens out of the initiated amendment process.

This isn't the Legislature's only accomplishment when it came to making it tougher for citizens to get their measures on the ballot. Already the subject of a lawsuit, legislators endorsed a bill that would cut the amount of time for gathering signatures by three months. Another measure they placed on the 2026 ballot would raise the threshold for approving a constitutional amendment to 60% rather than relying on a simple majority of voters.

It's easier for lawmakers to get something on the ballot. They only have to convince a majority of their colleagues. If you're not lucky enough to be in the Legislature, you have to collect 17,508 signatures for an initiated measure or referred law, or 35,017 signatures for an initiated constitutional amendment.

The bill that was so popular with lawmakers didn't take into consideration the eccentric nature of legislative districts, the borders of which can veer off in odd directions. It would take a cavalry scout and a GPS for petitioners to figure out if they're collecting their signatures in the right Senate district.

If one legislative district is stingy with its signatures, the entire effort fails. The state Supreme Court in Idaho struck down a similar law, saying it amounted to giving each legislative district veto power and calling it "tyranny of the minority."

If Reimer has her way, that tyranny will make its way back to the Legislature in the next legislative session. Here's hoping the governor has his veto pen ready.

*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.*

## Education board votes to finalize embrace of phonics-based reading instruction for South Dakota

**Douglas School District touts improved literacy through 'science of reading' strategy**

**BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - APRIL 14, 2025 5:24 PM**

It's out with the new and in with the old again for students in South Dakota's English and Language Arts classrooms.

The South Dakota Board of Education Standards approved revisions to the English and language arts state standards Monday in Rapid City, aligning them with a once-abandoned instructional approach in hopes of improving students' reading comprehension.

The revision follows a global debate — often called the "reading wars" — about how best to teach children to read. One camp advocates for phonics, which focuses on the relationship between sounds and letters. The other prefers a "whole language" approach that puts a stronger emphasis on meaning, with some phonics mixed in. A phonics-based approach was widely used in the 20th century until a "balanced literacy" approach that includes phonics but favors whole language gained favor in the 2000s.

Low reading scores in recent years led to a push to reconsider the merits of the phonics-based "science of reading" methodology.

Just under 50% of South Dakota students didn't meet English and language arts standards last year,

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according to the state report card.

## School district credits science of reading for 50-point jump in proficiency

Studies in recent years have re-ignited interest in phonics as a learning tool, and one South Dakota school district presented results Monday that suggest it can work.

Douglas School District leaders presented the district's increased literacy rates since implementing science of reading curriculum district-wide in 2021.

Fifty-five percent of Douglas elementary students in the spring of 2019 did not meet expected standards for reading ability, according to district student assessments. The district made systemic changes, such as hiring instructional coaches and allowing all students to apply for Title I interventions, in addition to implementing science of reading methodology.

In the same year the district implemented the science of reading strategy, rates above expected standards increased to 64% of students. That grew to 72% district-wide by the spring of 2024.

"Our teachers are working tirelessly to meet the needs of all students, and this success doesn't happen overnight," said Ann Pettit, Douglas executive director of elementary curriculum and instruction.

Board of Education Standards Board President Steve Perkins said the data shows "things can be done" to address English and language arts proficiencies in the state.

The state put \$6 million toward training teachers in phonics during the 2024 state legislative session. Part of the funding will go toward courses to train teachers in phonics-based teaching methods, and some will be used to pay for a literacy conference on Science of Reading strategies.

A \$54 million Comprehensive Literacy State Development federal grant awarded, meanwhile, is set to help local school districts implement a phonics-based approach over the next five years. The grants will be awarded based on the number of low-income students in a district, and can be used for literacy coach salaries, teacher training or curriculum reviews.

On Monday, Perkins said the changed standards are a "big deal."

"If kids can't read — or don't read to standard is a better way to put it — then we're shortchanging them," Perkins said.

The unanimous vote came after a fourth public hearing on the standards.

## Board approved Indigenous content standards despite opposition

Board members also approved optional content standards for computer science and the Oceti Sakowin Essential Understandings, which educate students on the culture and traditions of Indigenous South Dakotans.

Several opponents with connections to South Dakota's tribal nations borders spoke against the Oceti Sakowin Essential Understandings revisions.



**Students work on schoolwork at Harrisburg School District's Journey Elementary School in Sioux Falls on Dec. 5, 2024.** (Makenzie Huber/South Dakota Searchlight)



Opponents criticized the underrepresentation of Dakota and Nakota tribes in the revised standards, and said there should be a more concerted effort to involve tribes.

"The problem with this process is it was conducted without meaningful, reciprocal, formal tribal consultation," said Sarah White, founder and executive director of the South Dakota Education Equity Coalition.

White and others asked the board to hold off and reach out to tribal government leaders. But board members unanimously approved the revisions.

South Dakota Department of Education Secretary Joe Graves told board members the revision "was not a rushed process," and incorporated opinions from a 34-member review committee, as well as tribal education leaders on the Indian Education Advisory Committee.

Perkins told opponents before casting his vote that the changes move the state in the "right direction." He added that he takes direction from Gov. Larry Rhoden to press "reset" on tribal-state communications.

"What I hear is that what we may have isn't perfect, and we clearly need to work harder on communication," Perkins said.

The standards will be available for use by the South Dakota teachers who choose to teach them in fall 2026.

*Makenzie Huber is a lifelong South Dakotan who regularly reports on the intersection of politics and policy with health, education, social services and Indigenous affairs. Her work with South Dakota Searchlight earned her the title of South Dakota's Outstanding Young Journalist in 2024, and she was a 2024 finalist for the national Livingston Awards.*

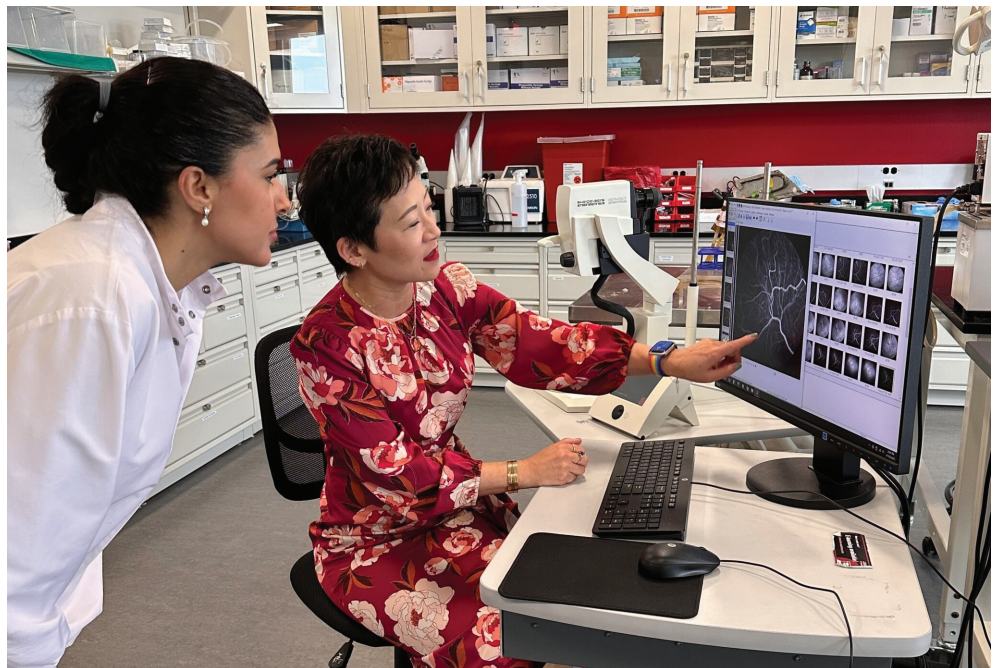
## AI holds promise in scientific research, but can't substitute for humans, experts say

BY: PAIGE GROSS - APRIL 14, 2025 8:00 AM

With the Trump administration making sweeping cuts to staff and research grants at science-related agencies, artificial intelligence could offer a tempting way to keep labs going, but scientists say there are limits to the technology's uses.

The Trump-appointed leaders of The National Institutes of Health, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and the Department of Health and Human Services have moved to cut thousands of jobs and billions in federal grants that fund university research and laboratory needs in the last few months.

The federal government may be eyeing artificial intelligence to bridge a gap created by these cuts. In February, the U.S. Department of Energy's national labs partnered with



**Jennifer Kang-Mieler, right, and PhD student Chaimae Gouya review images they're using to train an AI model to detect an eye disorder in premature infants.** (Photo by Ashley Muliawan/Stevens Institute of Technology)

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AI companies OpenAI and Anthropic for an "AI Jam Session," a day for 1,000 scientists across various disciplines to test the companies' AI models and share feedback. Some figures in Trump's cabinet have suggested that artificial intelligence models may be a good substitute for human physicians.

But scientists and builders of AI say it's not that simple.

AI is playing a major role in scientific discovery — last year's Nobel Prize in Chemistry was awarded to three scientists for discoveries that used AI to predict the shape of proteins and to invent new ones.

But we aren't looking at a future where we can substitute researchers and doctors with algorithms, said Jennifer Kang-Mieler, department chair and professor of biomedical engineering at Stevens Institute of Technology in New Jersey.

"It's a tool they may use to enhance clinical decision-making," she said. "But I think that clinical expertise is not going to be something that we can completely match with AI."

Kang-Mieler and other researchers say AI has its limitations, but is playing an increasingly important role in analyzing data, speeding up lab work, assisting in diagnostics, making personalized treatment plans and in cutting some costs related to research.

## **AI uses in scientific labs and healthcare**

Artificial intelligence technologies have been a part of some healthcare and laboratory settings, like image recognition in radiology, for at least a decade, said Bradley Bostic, chairman and CEO of healthcare software company hc1, based in Indiana. But Bostic said the industry is still early in exploring its uses.

"It feels to me similar to 1999, with the World Wide Web," Bostic said. "We didn't realize how early days it was. I think that's where we are right now with AI and specifically in healthcare."

While AI's potential is nearly endless, AI's best uses in scientific and healthcare settings are for tasks that are repetitive and operational, Bostic said. Ideally, AI makes processes more efficient, and frees up humans' time to focus on more important tasks.

Stephen Wong, the John S. Dunn Presidential Distinguished Chair in Biomedical Engineering at Houston Methodist uses machine learning, deep learning, and large language models every day in his lab, which researches cost-effective strategies for disease management.

He said he uses AI models for image analysis, medical imaging, processing massive datasets in genomics, the study of proteins, known as proteomics, and drug screening, as well as sifting through existing research and lab data. His goal is to cut down on tedious tasks, and make sense of large-scale data.

"Even tasks like locating crucial information buried in lab notebooks, scientific publications and patents become far more efficient," he said.

Efficiency is also the goal of Kang-Mieler's research, which was funded last fall by an NIH grant. Kang-Mieler and colleague Yu Gan are developing an AI-powered diagnostic tool for retinopathy of prematurity (ROP) — an eye disorder and loss of vision — in premature infants.

There was a lack of quality images for AI models to train on, Kang-Mieler said, so they are using images of animal eyes that feature ROP, to create "synthetic" images of what the condition would look like in humans. The neural networks in the AI model will learn how to categorize those synthetic images, and eventually assist eye doctors in spotting ROP. Before AI tools, this process would have been done by the human eye, and take much longer, Kang-Mieler said.

"The way I saw it was also that if we can be really successful in developing and doing this, we can actually take this into other types of diseases, rare diseases, that are hard to diagnose," she said.

## **Automation and human capital**

Many scientific labs require a lot of physical tasks, like handling liquids, following steps at specific times and sometimes handling hazardous materials. With AI algorithms and hardware, much of that work can be done without humans physically present, researchers at the University of North Carolina are finding.

Ron Alterovitz, the Lawrence Grossberg Distinguished Professor in the Department of Computer Science, has worked with Jim Cahoon, chair of the Department of Chemistry, on an approach to make lab



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work more autonomous. The pair have studied how an AI model could instruct an autonomous robot to execute lab processes, and then how AI models could analyze experiment results into findings. Alterovitz called it a "make and test" model.

"So once people can set it in motion, the AI comes up with a design, the robotic automation will make and test it, and the AI will analyze the results and come up with a new design," he said. "And this whole loop can essentially run autonomously."

The pair published their findings last fall, saying there are several levels of automation a lab could deploy, from assistive automation, where tasks like liquid handling are automated and humans do everything else, all the way up to the fully automated loop Alterovitz described.

Alterovitz sees many benefits to automated labs. Robots offer a safer method of handling hazardous materials, and allow researchers to conduct experiments 24 hours a day, instead of just when lab techs are clocked in. The robots also provide high accuracy and precision, and can replicate experiments easily, he said.

"If you ask two different people to do the same synthesis process, there'll be subtle differences in how they do some of the details that can lead to some variance in the results sometimes," Alterovitz said. "With robots, it's just done the same way every time, very repeatedly."

While there are fears that AI and automation will cut jobs in science, Alterovitz said it allows humans to do higher-level tasks. Many labs are already facing a shortage of trained technicians who do a majority of the physical tasks involved.

AI-assisted labs will likely heighten the need for other types of jobs, like data scientists, AI specialists and interdisciplinary experts who can bridge technology with real-world scientific applications, Wong said.

In order to continue innovating and learning new things, labs will still need the "chemical intuition" and problem-solving skills that trained scientists have, Alterovitz said.

## AI's limitations

Kang-Mieler says that AI's current limitations are a factor that keeps the industry from rushing to apply the technology to everything. AI models are only as good as the data sets they're trained on, and can contain data bias, or incomplete information that won't paint a full picture.

And AI models can't do an essential function of researchers, Kang-Mieler said — discover new information.

"I suppose that AI models can help formulate new hypotheses, but I don't think that capability is the same as discovery," Kang-Mieler said. "Current AI models are not developed to make independent discoveries or have original thoughts."

Bostic has built other technology companies in his career, but said the stakes in scientific research and healthcare are much higher. Inaccurate data in an AI model could lead to a missed diagnosis or another huge problem for a patient. He said the best approach is what he calls "reinforcement learning through human feedback."

"This is where you don't have models that are just running independent of people," Bostic said. "You have the models that are complementing the people and actually being informed by the people."

Bostic said as the tech industry evolves, AI will play a role in shortening drug trials, providing patients more specialized care and helping research teams make due with fewer skilled workers, he said. But it's not a fix-all, set-it-and-forget-it solution.

"I don't see a scenario where clinical decisions are being independently made by machines and there aren't the experts — who are trained and seeing the total picture of what's going on with the patient — involved with those decisions anytime soon," he said.

*Paige Gross is a Philadelphia-based reporter covering the evolving technology industry for States Newsroom. Her coverage involves how congress and individual states are regulating new and growing technologies, how technology plays a role in our everyday lives and what people ought to know to interact with technology.*

## Lawsuit filed after Trump's budget office shuts down public information about spending

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - APRIL 14, 2025 6:58 PM

WASHINGTON — A nonprofit organization filed suit against the Trump administration on Monday, alleging its decision to stop posting budget documents in late March violates federal law.

Protect Democracy Project's case is the second lawsuit challenging the Office of Management and Budget's choice to pull down a webpage with apportionment information that detailed when and how the administration was spending money appropriated by Congress.

The case, as well as the one brought by Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington last week, asks a federal judge to require OMB to restore the website that publicly shared the data for years.

OMB Director Russ Vought told Congress late last month that the budget office would no longer publicly post apportionment information, writing in a letter that to do so would disclose "sensitive, predecisional, and deliberative information."

"Such disclosures have a chilling effect on the deliberations within the Executive Branch," Vought wrote. "Indeed, these disclosure provisions have already adversely impacted the candor contained in OMB's communications with agencies and have undermined OMB's effectiveness in supervising agency spending."

"Moreover, apportionments may contain sensitive information, the automatic public disclosure of which may pose a danger to national security and foreign policy."

### A 'brazen move'

Democrats in Congress sharply criticized the decision, with a few calling on the Government Accountability Office, a watchdog agency, to investigate.

House Appropriations Committee ranking member Rosa DeLauro, D-Conn., and Senate Appropriations Committee ranking member Patty Murray, D-Wash., issued a joint statement in late March urging Vought to reverse course.

"Congress enacted these requirements over a Democratic President's objections on a bipartisan basis because our constituents, and all American taxpayers, deserve transparency and accountability for how their money is being spent," DeLauro and Murray wrote. "Taking down this website is not just illegal it is a brazen move to hide this administration's spending from the American people and from Congress."

Oregon Sen. Jeff Merkley and Pennsylvania Rep. Brendan Boyle, the top Democrats on the Budget committees, urged the Government Accountability Office to look into the matter.

GAO General Counsel Edda Emmanuelli Perez did and wrote in a letter released earlier this month that OMB's decision to withhold publicly sharing the apportionment information was "very concerning."



**OMB Director Russ Vought testifies before the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee on Jan. 15, 2025.** (Screenshot from committee webcast)



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"We understand that OMB took down the website taking the position that it requires the disclosure of predecisional, and deliberative information," he wrote. "We disagree."

Perez rejected OMB's argument that all of the information had to be removed since "apportionments may contain sensitive information which, if disclosed publicly automatically, may pose a danger to national security and foreign policy."

"While there may be some information that is sensitive if disclosed publicly, it is certainly not the case that all apportionment data meets that standard," he wrote. "Where there is such sensitive data that should be protected from public disclosure, those would be the exception and should not serve to take down the entire database."

## Lawsuits want public info restored

The two lawsuits — Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington v. Office of Management and Budget and Protect Democracy Project v. U.S. Office of Management and Budget — ask federal judges to require OMB to post the information online once again.

CREW wrote in its filing that OMB posted a public version of the database in July 2022, after Congress required it to do so in a government funding bill.

The Trump administration removed that webpage on March 24, though OMB "provided no notice or explanation prior to its removal," according to the lawsuit.

The CREW lawsuit was filed in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia and assigned to Judge Emmet G. Sullivan, who was nominated by former President Bill Clinton.

Protect Democracy Project wrote in its lawsuit that the "laws requiring transparency for apportionments make it more difficult for the executive branch to impound funds unlawfully outside the view of Congress and the public."

The Trump administration faces numerous lawsuits stemming from its efforts to block several departments and agencies from spending money appropriated by Congress, also known as impoundment.

The Impoundment Control Act of 1974 bars the executive branch from holding onto money instead of spending it as directed by Congress. But Vought has said several times he believes the law is unconstitutional.

Protect Democracy Project's lawsuit was also filed in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, though it hadn't been assigned to a judge as of Monday afternoon.

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

## President of El Salvador refuses to return wrongly deported Maryland man to the U.S.

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY - APRIL 14, 2025 6:45 PM

WASHINGTON — El Salvador President Nayib Bukele won't return a Maryland man the United States erroneously deported to a mega-prison in his Central American country, he said Monday during a visit to the Oval Office.

Sitting beside President Donald Trump, Bukele told reporters, "Of course I'm not going to do it."

Administration officials present for the meeting defended the deportation of Kilmar Armando Abrego Garcia, a native of El Salvador who had a protective order from a U.S. immigration court shielding him from being sent back to his country because of risks to his life.

The administration admitted in court filings that it deported Abrego Garcia, of Beltsville, Maryland, by mistake.

"That's up to El Salvador if they want to return him, that's not up to us," said Attorney General Pam Bondi.

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"If they wanted to return him, we would facilitate it, meaning, provide a plane," she added.

The Supreme Court issued a 9-0 decision Thursday stating the Trump administration must "facilitate" the return of Abrego Garcia.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement deported Abrego Garcia on March 15 among roughly 260 Venezuelan men the U.S. flew on commercial jets without due process to Centro de Confinamiento del Terrorismo, or CECOT.

ICE agents apprehended Abrego Garcia near Baltimore on March 12 when he was driving his 5-year-old son home. Abrego Garcia's wife, Jennifer Vasquez Sura, a U.S. citizen, "was called and instructed to appear at their location within ten minutes to get her five-year old son, A.A.V.; otherwise, the ICE officers threatened that the child would be handed over to Child Protective Services," according to a court filing.

Garcia has no criminal history in the U.S., El Salvador or any other country, according to the filing.

The Trump administration is paying the El Salvador government \$6 million to detain the men, sparking questions over whether the payment violates U.S. human rights law.

Lawyers for many of the Venezuelan men maintain their clients weren't gang members.

Trump triggered the deportations under the Alien Enemies Act of 1798, specifically targeting Venezuelans 14 and older who the administration suspected of having ties to the gang Tren de Aragua.

Trump also told reporters in the Oval Office Monday that he wants to export "homegrown" criminals, as in U.S. citizens, to El Salvador and would be willing to assist Bukele in building more mega prisons.

"I'd like to include them in the group of people to get them out of the country, but you'll have to be looking at the laws on that," said Trump.



**U.S. President Donald Trump meets with President Nayib Bukele of El Salvador in the Oval Office of the White House April 14, 2025 in Washington, D.C..** (Photo by Win McNamee/Getty Images)

## Rubio, Miller defend deportation

The administration maintains that immigration courts connected Abrego Garcia in 2019 to the violent El Salvadoran gang MS-13 but makes no mention of the protective order granted to Abrego Garcia by an immigration judge that same year.

In addition to Bondi, Secretary of State Marco Rubio and White House Deputy Chief of Staff Stephen Miller defended Abrego Garcia's deportation and the administration's refusal to cooperate with a court order to return him to the U.S.

Miller said Friday's unanimous Supreme Court decision squarely landed on the side of the administration.

"This was a 9-0 (decision) in our favor against the district court ruling saying that no district court has the power to compel the foreign policy function of the United States," Miller told reporters in the Oval



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Office Monday.

"The ruling solely stated that if this individual, at El Salvador's sole discretion, was sent back to our country, that we could deport him a second time. No version of this legally ends up with him ever living here because he is a citizen of El Salvador," Miller continued.

Bukele said the idea that El Salvador would return Abrego Garcia is "preposterous."

"How can I smuggle a terrorist into the United States? I don't have the power to return him to the United States," Bukele said.

The Department of State designated MS-13 as a foreign terrorist organization in February.

Rubio said he doesn't understand "what the confusion is."

"This individual is a citizen of El Salvador. He was illegally in the United States and was returned to his country," Rubio said, adding that "foreign policy of the United States is conducted by the President of the United States, not by a court."

Democratic Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer issued a statement Monday calling Bukele's comments "pure nonsense."

"The law is clear, due process was grossly violated, and the Supreme Court has clearly spoken that the Trump administration must facilitate and effectuate the return of Kilmar Abrego Garcia. He should be returned to the U.S. immediately.

"Due process and the rule of law are cornerstones of American society for citizens and noncitizens alike and not to follow that is dangerous and outrageous. A threat to one is a threat to all," Schumer said.

## Daily updates

Abrego Garcia's case is winding through the federal courts.

The administration was ordered Friday, after a standoff in court, to provide daily updates on Abrego Garcia's physical location and status, and what steps the administration has taken or plans to take to facilitate his return.

Abrego Garcia's wife sued Department of Homeland Security Kristi Noem and immigration officials in U.S. District Court for the District of Maryland last month, alleging her husband received no due process and his removal was unlawful.

District Judge Paula Xinis ordered the Trump administration to bring Abrego Garcia back to the U.S. by April 7.

A federal appeals court unanimously upheld the lower court's order on April 7. The Trump administration missed the deadline and immediately appealed to the Supreme Court's emergency docket.

The high court unanimously ruled Thursday that the administration must "facilitate" Abrego Garcia's return but stopped short of requiring his return and did not give a deadline. The court also ordered Xinis to clarify language in the lower court's ruling to test whether the court overreached into foreign affairs.

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

## U.S. human rights law likely violated in \$6M payment for El Salvador prison, experts say

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA - APRIL 14, 2025 10:53 AM

WASHINGTON — The U.S. State Department is paying El Salvador \$6 million to house hundreds of immigrants deported from the United States in an immense and brutal prison there, Centro de Confinamiento del Terrorismo, or CECOT.

But a U.S. law bars State's financial support of "units of foreign security forces" — which can include military and law enforcement staff in prisons — facing credible allegations of gross human rights violations. That has led those who wrote what's known as the Leahy Law and enforced it for years to question the legality of the \$6 million payment made as President Donald Trump carries out his campaign of mass deportation.

The Trump administration on March 15 sent 261 men to CECOT, after invoking the Alien Enemies Act of 1798 to apply to Venezuelan nationals 14 and older who are suspected members of the gang Tren de Aragua.

On March 30, Secretary of State Marco Rubio said another 17 nationals from El Salvador were sent to CECOT, again alleging gang ties. On Sunday, Rubio said 10 more men were sent to the prison in El Salvador, and noted how "the alliance between" the U.S. and El Salvador "has become an example for security and prosperity in our hemisphere."

Tim Rieser, the main author of the Leahy Law while a longtime foreign policy aide to former U.S. Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., said the \$6 million payment for those migrants' incarceration for up to a year is likely a violation of the law.

"Sending migrants who have not been charged or convicted of any crime to the maximum-security terrorism prison in El Salvador, where they have no access to lawyers or their families, where they have no rights of due process, and with no idea if they will ever be released, held in cruel and shockingly degrading conditions, would certainly appear to violate the Leahy Law," Rieser told States Newsroom.

"I don't think the Trump administration is upholding the Leahy Law or other laws that protect human rights," he said.

Also deeply concerned is Charles Blaha, a former State Department official for 32 years who led the



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



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office responsible for vetting the Leahy Law worldwide, the Office of Security and Human Rights, from 2016 to 2023.

"CECOT is a facility that exposes prisoners to torture, and cruel, degrading, and inhumane treatment and punishment," Blaha said in an interview. "Under the Leahy Law, this should disqualify CECOT from receiving U.S. assistance."

Trump has also expressed that he is open to sending U.S. citizens to CECOT.

"I love that," he said. "I don't know what the law says on that."

El Salvador's President Nayib Bukele is scheduled to visit with Trump at the White House on Monday.

## **Trump administration says law followed**

The Trump administration plans to keep using the mega-prison as deportations continue under the Alien Enemies Act, top officials such as U.S. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem have pledged. Noem visited the prison in March.

"This facility is one of the tools in our toolkits that we will use," Noem said during her tour of CECOT.

The State Department has denied any potential violations.

"The Department is following all applicable laws related to foreign assistance, including the State Leahy Law," a State Department spokesperson wrote in a statement to States Newsroom.

The spokesperson said the U.S. is engaged with El Salvador through foreign assistance to address unauthorized migration and human trafficking.

"As these countries continue to work with us in securing our borders and addressing illegal immigration, we will provide assistance as necessary in support of these collaborative efforts," the spokesperson said. "Our goal is to ensure that our partners are well-equipped to handle the challenges they face, ultimately contributing to a more stable and secure region."

The 1997 Leahy Law refers to two statutes – one applying to the State Department and one covering the Department of Defense – that prevent U.S. funds from being used for assistance to foreign security forces that have credible allegations of gross violations of human rights such as torture, extrajudicial killing, enforced disappearance or rape.

## **Payment origin**

The exact agency within the State Department that is paying out the \$6 million in funding to CECOT is unclear and is a source of interest among Democrats in Congress.

It is likely coming out of the State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, said Adam Isacson, director of defense oversight at the Washington Office of Latin America, a research and advocacy group that aims to advance human rights in North and South America.

INL, among other things, gives financial assistance to security forces and is subject to the Leahy Law, Isacson said.

The State Department did not answer detailed questions from States Newsroom as to whether the funds were coming from INL.

"And even if Leahy doesn't apply, the State Department has a duty to make sure that we're not turning over people, even if they're not our citizens, to places where they'll be mistreated or tortured," Blaha said.

The State Department's Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor oversees an office that vets recipients of proposed foreign aid for potential gross human rights violations.

Fewer than 1% of requests are blocked after going through vetting through the Leahy Law compliance database. Those units that are blocked from funding are publicly posted on a case-by-case basis.

The most recent listing of publicly rejected units is from 2022, so there is no publicly available record of CECOT or the security units in charge of El Salvador's prisons being vetted because the prison was built in 2023. However, experts say the country's record of prison management and publicly available details about the mega-prison mean it should be on the latest version of the list.

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## Beatings, use of electric shocks

The State Department's 2023 Human Rights Report on El Salvador noted there were credible reports from human rights organizations "of abuse and mistreatment of detainees by prison guards."

Groups cited in the report interviewed people who were released from prisons in El Salvador and "reported systemic abuse in the prison system, including beatings by guards and the use of electric shocks."

"The coalition alleged the treatment of prisoners constituted torture," according to the report.

The State Department in its report raised concerns about abusive physical conditions in El Salvador's prisons, such as overcrowding.

While CECOT is not mentioned in the report by name, the report noted that El Salvador's government opened a new facility in January 2023 to hold up to 40,000 detainees, which apparently is now CECOT.

## No access to CECOT

No human rights group has had access to investigate the conditions of the CECOT prison, said Juanita Goebertus Estrada, the director of the Americas Division of Human Rights Watch.

Goebertus Estrada has studied El Salvador's prison system since the country's Congress allowed President Bukele to issue a state of emergency in 2022 that suspended due process. It's led to 1.4% of the population, about 84,000 people, being incarcerated.

"We have no reason to believe that the (CECOT) conditions are not similar to those in the rest of the El Salvadorian prison system," she said. "It's administered by the same institution and the training of the guards is the same."

She added that Human Rights Watch and other organizations have not documented anyone who is imprisoned at CECOT ever leaving. Additionally, attorneys and families are not allowed to visit.

"The government has explicitly said that this is a prison for the most reprehensible members of gangs, and that they're going to rot there," Goebertus Estrada said.

More than 300 people have died in prisons across El Salvador in the last three years, Goebertus Estrada said.

That kind of record, WOLA's Isacson said, is something that should trigger the Leahy Law.

"The Salvadoran units in charge of the prison system... you think would come up because of extraordinarily credible allegations of about 300 people dying in the prison system in the last three years," Isacson said.

## Enforcement up to Congress

Isacson said if the State Department's Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor is not enforcing the Leahy Law, then "it would be up to members of Congress to raise this" concern and potentially pull funding for the bureau in a future appropriations bill.

The most recent warnings about violations of the Leahy Law have been tied to the start of the 2023 war in Gaza and the role of U.S. security assistance to Israel units. Thousands of Palestinians have died in the Israel-Hamas war.

"You had Israeli units, who would not have qualified, getting aid, and Democrats not really making any noise about it," Isacson said. "The (Leahy) Law is mortally wounded."

Democratic senators pressed DHS on April 8 to provide a copy of the contract between the U.S. and El Salvador. And House Democratic members, such as the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, are pushing for a congressional delegation to visit CECOT.

Former Rep. Matt Gaetz, Republican of Florida, visited the prison in July 2024, calling CECOT "the solution" and adding "the good ideas in El Salvador actually have legs and can go to other places and help other people be safe and secure and hopeful and prosperous."



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## U.S. citizens at CECOT?

El Salvador's Bukele has become a key ally in Trump's plans for mass deportations.

One of Rubio's first visits to Latin America as secretary of State was to El Salvador. During that February trip, Rubio and Bukele talked about the possibility of detaining immigrants removed from the U.S. in El Salvador. Bukele also offered to imprison U.S. citizens.

"And in an extraordinary gesture never before extended by any country, President Bukele offered to house in his jails dangerous American criminals, including U.S. citizens and legal residents," according to the State Department's readout of the trip.

Noem said during an April 9 border security conference that the Trump administration will continue to carry out deportations under the Alien Enemies Act of 1798 and maintain a strong partnership with El Salvador.

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled April 7 that, for now, the Trump administration can continue use of the Alien Enemies Act, but said those subject to the proclamation must have due process, including court hearings.

The high court did not rule on the merits of using the Alien Enemies Act, a wartime law, when the U.S. is not at war with Venezuela. Until now, the Alien Enemies Act has only been used during the War of 1812, World War I and World War II.

The Venezuelan men who were sent to CECOT on March 15 under the wartime act, were not notified and or given due process, federal trial and appellate judges have noted. Lawyers for many of the Venezuelan men sent to El Salvador said their clients were not involved in gangs and instead either had no criminal record or were in the middle of asylum hearings before an immigration judge.

## 'Cruelty is the point'

During the April 9 conference, Noem touted her meeting with Bukele and said the kind of partnership exemplified by the use of the prison would continue.

However, the Trump administration has taken the position that those at the CECOT prison are no longer in U.S. custody. In a high-profile case, the Supreme Court April 10 ruled that the Trump administration must "facilitate" the return of a wrongly deported Maryland man to the prison back to the U.S., but stopped short of requiring it.

"The idea of paying someone else to be your (Guantanamo Bay), is brand new," Isacson said, referring to the U.S. Navy base in Cuba that houses foreign nationals accused of terrorism.

Noem visited CECOT after the Trump administration invoked the wartime law to send deportation flights to El Salvador. On camera Noem pointed behind her and warned the same would happen to immigrants who "commit crimes against the American people."

Behind her were dozens of men who were stripped from the waist up, their tattoos visible behind bars.

Blaha was highly critical of Noem's visit, where she took videos and pictures of the incarcerated men.

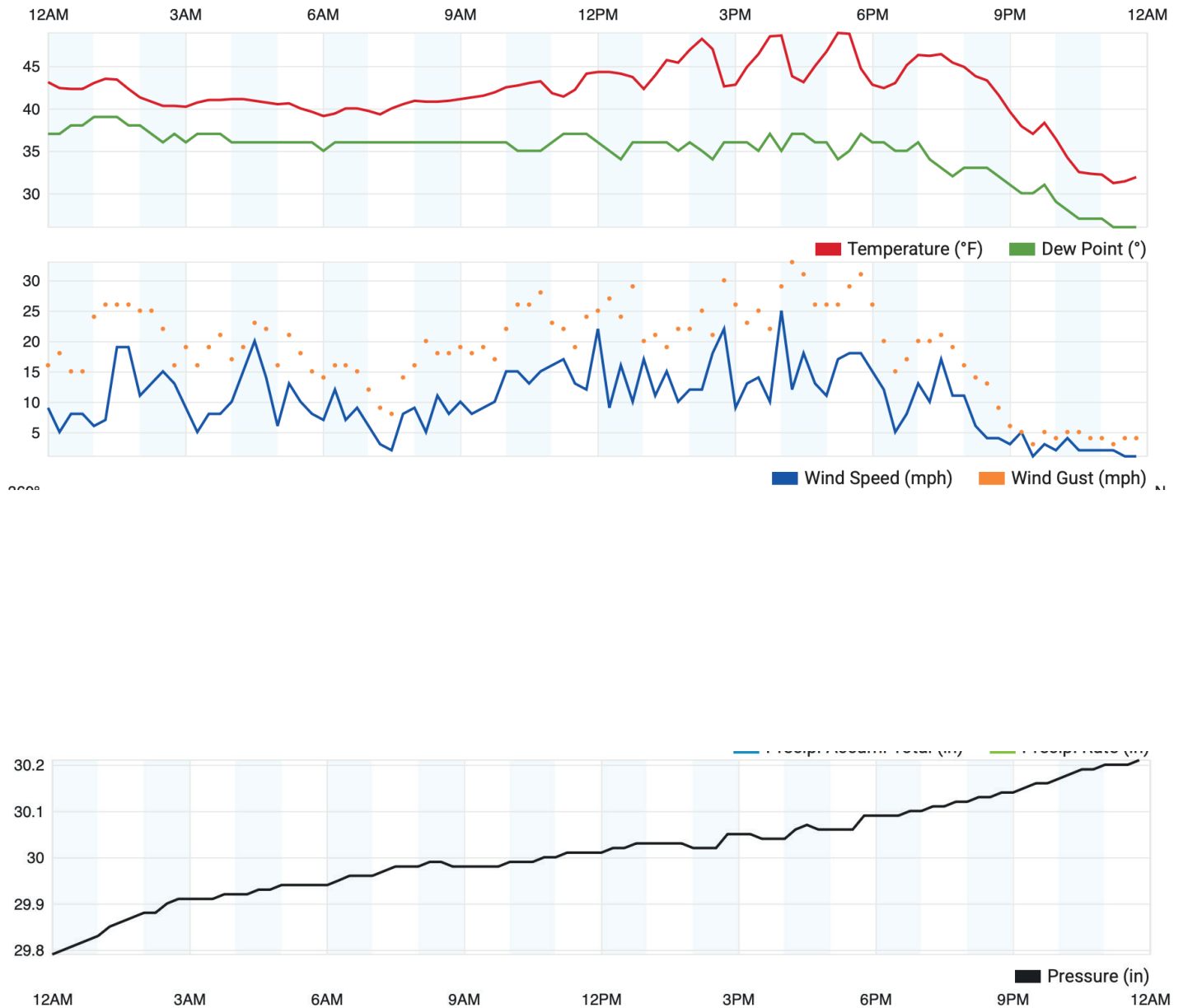
"Noem's stunt epitomizes cruel, degrading, and inhumane treatment, which is why the administration loves it so much," he said. "Sadly, the cruelty is the point with these guys."

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

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs





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Today



High: 61 °F

Sunny

Tonight



Low: 36 °F

Mostly Clear

Wednesday



High: 72 °F

Mostly Sunny

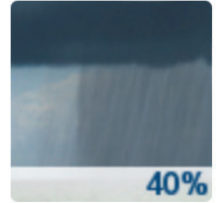
Wednesday  
Night



Low: 44 °F

Partly Cloudy  
then Slight  
Chance  
Showers

Thursday



High: 63 °F

Chance  
Showers and  
Breezy



## Two-Day Outlook

### Tuesday



Highs: 53 - 68°F

Lows: 33 - 40°F

### Wednesday



Highs: 64 - 80°F

Lows: 36 - 49°F

Dry weather with considerably less wind over the next couple of days. Temperatures warming each of the next couple of days.

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 50 °F at 3:53 PM**

**Low Temp: 31 °F at 11:18 PM**

**Wind: 33 mph at 4:07 PM**

**Precip: : 0.00**

Day length: 13 hours, 36 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 91 in 1926

Record Low: 8 in 1914

Average High: 58

Average Low: 31

Average Precip in April.: 0.73

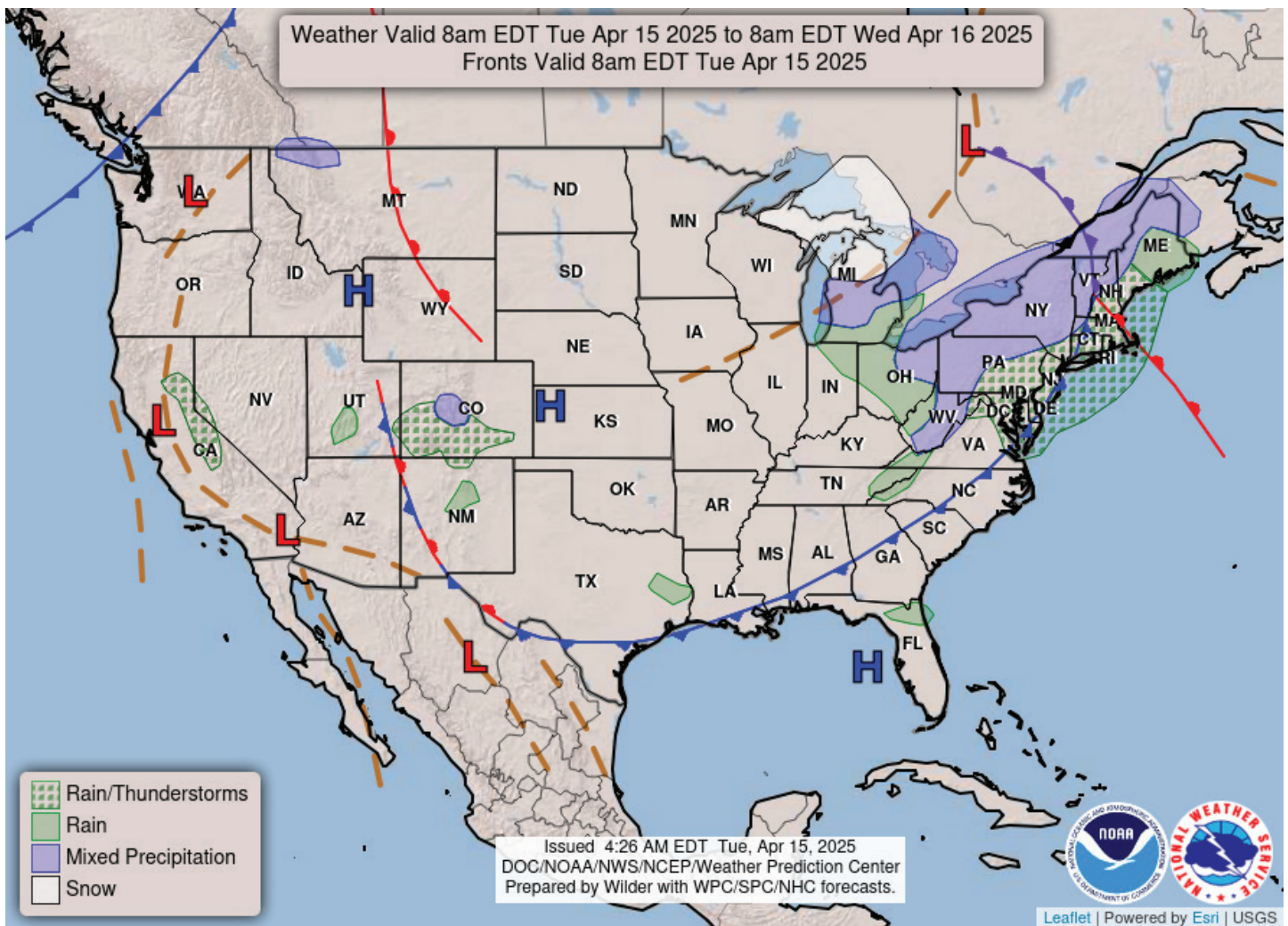
Precip to date in April.: 1.07

Average Precip to date: 2.79

Precip Year to Date: 1.70

Sunset Tonight: 8:20:18 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:42:32 am





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## Today in Weather History

April 15th, 1896: A tornado, possibly an F3, moved northeast from Burkmere, 10 miles west of Faulkton. About half a dozen farms were torn apart. Two children were killed, and the rest of the family was critically injured as a home was leveled. 6 miles northwest of Faulkton, near Millard.

April 15th, 2011: A strong upper-level low-pressure area brought widespread heavy snowfall to central and parts of northeast South Dakota. This early spring storm brought 6 to 14 inches of heavy snow to the area. The heavy wet snow caused many travel problems and a few accidents. Locations with a foot or more of snowfall included 12 inches 12 SSW Harrold, 23 N Highmore, and Orient; 13 inches 14 NNE Isabel and Eureka, with 14 inches at Eagle Butte.

1921 - Two mile high Silver Lake, CO, received 76 inches of snow in 24 hours, the heaviest 24 hour total of record for North America. The storm left a total of 87 inches in twenty-seven and a half hours. (David Ludlum)

1927 - New Orleans LA was drenched with 14.01 inches of rain, which established a 24 hour rainfall record for the state. (The Weather Channel)

1949 - A hailstone five inches by five and a half inches in size, and weighing four pounds, was measured at Troy NY. (The Weather Channel)

1958 - A tornado 300 yards in width skipped along a five mile path near Frostproof FL. A 2500 gallon water tank was found one mile from its original position (it is not known how much water was in the tank at the time). (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Thunderstorms developing along a cold front produced severe weather in the Southern Atlantic Coast Region. A tornado killed one person and injured seven others near Mount Dora FL. Drifts of hail up to two feet deep were reported in Davidson and Rowan counties in North Carolina. Myrtle Beach SC was deluged with seven inches of rain in three hours. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Death Valley, CA, was soaked with 1.53 inches of rain in 24 hours. Snow fell in the mountains of southern California. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Showers and thunderstorms soaked the eastern U.S. with heavy rain, pushing the rainfall total for the month at Cape Hatteras NC past their previous April record of 7.10 inches. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - Thunderstorms developing along a stationary front produced severe weather from west central Texas to west central Arkansas during the late afternoon and evening. Thunderstorms spawned a tornado which caused more than half a million dollars damage at Fort Stockton TX, produced wind gusts to 65 mph at Dennison TX, produced baseball size hail at Silo OK and near Capps Corner TX, and drenched southeastern Oklahoma with up to 4 inches of rain in two hours. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)



## THE IMPORTANCE OF WORDS

"What's a nanosecond, Keller?" I asked my ten-year-old grandson.

"Papa, everyone knows what a nanosecond is," he replied with a wry smile across his lips as if teasing me.

"Well, not quite everyone. If I knew, I wouldn't ask." I felt like I needed to go back to school. Immediately!

"It means one, one billionth of a second. It's used to measure the speed of light and other stuff," he replied casually. Not having any need to measure the speed of light, I thought it was a good time to end the conversation. I realized how little I knew about some things.

But there is one thing I do know without any doubt: God took great care to choose the exact words He needed to explain His message of redemption. No second guessing about what He wanted us to understand. No hidden meanings for a special class of people.

Nothing is left to the imagination that could cause us to make an error in knowing God's message or direction for our lives.

This is very obvious in Proverbs 1:2-4. God, through Solomon, let us know that there is a right way and a wrong way to "live life." Each of us has choices to make about the way we will live: either a life of righteousness with God's power that will honor and glorify Him or a life that is sinful, self-centered and leads to our death and damages others.

Ten of the approximately forty words in Proverbs 1:2-4 provide different aspects on ways to understand, see and apply God's wisdom for daily, God-centered, living. Check them out!

God leaves nothing to "chance." He wants us to succeed!

Prayer: Thank You, Father, for the "God is My Helper" successful living guide-book – the Book of Proverbs. May we follow it carefully. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: For gaining wisdom and instruction; for understanding words of insight; for receiving instruction in prudent behavior, doing what is right and just and fair; for giving prudence to those who are simple, knowledge and discretion to the young. Proverbs 1:2-4

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



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## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.11.25

15 37 38 56 58 19

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$96,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 20 Mins 5 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.14.25

7 10 13 21 42 10

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$31,070,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 35 Mins 5 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.14.25

10 11 23 35 40 13

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 50 Mins 5 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.12.25

3 7 21 28 29

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$107,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 50 Mins 5 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.14.25

9 18 41 42 63 4

TOP PRIZE:

**\$10,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 19 Mins 5 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.14.25

3 20 30 52 62 1

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$113,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 19 Mins 5 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)



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## **Upcoming Groton Events**

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

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

### Majority Leader John Thune's 'old-fashioned' approach to the Senate has kept Trump on board so far

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate, once again, was working into the early morning hours Friday with its new majority leader, Republican John Thune, setting the pace.

It wasn't until just after 2 a.m. that the last of the senators had straggled into the chamber to cast their vote on the confirmation of retired Air Force Lt. Gen. Dan "Razin" Caine for chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The vote capped a grinding start to the year for the Senate that included several all-night floor sessions and — importantly for Thune — the quickest top-level Cabinet confirmation process in the past 20 years.

At the outset, however, such an outcome was far from assured. President Donald Trump was making demands that the new Senate leader be ready to put the chamber into recess so he could skip over the Senate confirmation process altogether. Faced with that prospect, Thune, a South Dakota Republican, said his message in conversations with the president was, "Let us do this the old-fashioned way and just use the clock and grind it out, and then we'll see where we go from there."

That approach has been successful at allowing Thune to show Trump the Senate's worth while also preserving its constitutional role in installing a president's Cabinet. But the decision to push forward on even Trump's most unconventional Cabinet nominees has also come at a cost.

Several Cabinet officials have been intimately involved in the early controversies of Trump's second term, from discussing military plans on an unclassified Signal app chat to encouraging the Republican president to follow through with steep tariffs on trading partners.

GOP senators, many of whom still hold traditional Republican ideas, have often had to mount a response. The Republican chair of the Senate Armed Services Committee, Sen. Roger Wicker of Mississippi, last month initiated an investigation by the Pentagon's inspector general into whether classified information was shared on Signal by Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth. And GOP senators more recently made a concerted effort to encourage Trump to negotiate trade deals with other nations rather than listen to advisers like Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick, who was adamant that tariffs were there to stay.

In an interview with The Associated Press shortly after Trump announced a pause on tariffs to most nations, Thune said the announcement showed the president is "responding to the feedback he's given."

"I think everybody wants to see him succeed with this, wants to see the country succeed and wants to make sure that we're gauging and calibrating — as some of these major policy shifts are being made — the impacts that they have," Thune added.

That balance — Thune's supportive yet still cautious approach — has marked his early months working with a president with whom, until last year, he had a fraught relationship. So far, Trump and Thune have stayed on upbeat terms, but the stakes will only rise for Republicans in the coming months as they try to lift through Congress a massive package of tax breaks and spending cuts on party-line votes.

During Trump's first term, it took barely a year — and some setbacks in Congress — before Trump began openly feuding with then Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell.

Discussing the reconciliation package as he sat in McConnell's old leadership office, Thune stressed that for the GOP's marquee legislation to work, "Everybody's got to be rolling in the same direction. It takes a lot of teamwork."

A check and balance

As Trump has entered office with practically total command of the Republican Party and an agenda to upend the federal government and its role in society, Thune acknowledged that Trump has been aggressive in his use of executive power. But he argued that it was no different from how previous presidents wanted to "take as much power as they possibly can," pointing to President Joe Biden's moves to cancel



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student debt and boost government food assistance.

"Our job is to do what we can to support the president and his agenda," Thune said. "But, you know, be that important check and balance, too, that the Founders intended."

Still, as Trump has blazed through constitutional norms with sweeping orders that endanger civil rights, government programs, the federal workforce and America's relationship with allies, Republicans in Congress have stood by.

"We need Republicans to get off the sidelines, including the majority leader, and say, 'This is unacceptable behavior by any president,'" said Sen. Mark Kelly, an Arizona Democrat.

Kelly cited Trump's disparagement of NATO and comments about taking over countries like Canada and Greenland and the Panama Canal. "The damage that Donald Trump is doing to our international reputation is not something we easily recover from," he said.

Still, Kelly added that Thune "deserves some credit" for making the "mechanics of the Senate function well."

Thune has been aggressive in trying to get the Senate to move faster through its votes. He noted that he had allowed one recent vote session to close before he had even had a chance to cast his vote because he was at the White House for a meeting.

It's an incremental change in the Senate's timing, but one that Thune, a former runner, hopes will contribute to the chamber becoming more active and deliberative in shaping the law. He won the leadership contest in part by pledging to allow individual senators to have more of a say in crafting and amending legislation.

So far, the Senate has also gained bipartisan support to pass bills that will increase prison penalties for fentanyl traffickers as well as mandate the detainment of immigrants who are in the U.S. illegally and are accused of theft and violent crimes.

Sen. Eric Schmitt, a Missouri Republican who has been vocal about changes to the way legislation advances, said Thune has "done a great job," although the Senate hasn't had much of a chance to work on legislation.

"The truth of the matter," he added, "is we've been consumed by confirmations."

## **Israeli airstrike hits hospital entrance in Gaza, killing medic and wounding 9 other people**

By WAFAA SHURAF and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — An Israeli airstrike hit the northern gate of a field hospital in the Gaza Strip on Tuesday, killing a medic and wounding nine other people, a spokesman for the hospital said.

The strike hit the Kuwaiti Field Hospital in the Muwasi area, where hundreds of thousands have sought shelter in sprawling tent camps. The wounded were all patients and medics, and two of the patients were in critical condition after the strike, said Saber Mohammed, a hospital spokesman.

There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military.

The military has struck hospitals on several occasions during the 18-month war, accusing Hamas militants of hiding out in them or using them for military purposes. Hospital staff have denied the allegations and accused Israel of recklessly endangering civilians and gutting the territory's health system.

On Sunday, Israel struck the last major hospital providing critical care in northern Gaza after ordering an evacuation. A patient died during the evacuation, and the strike severely damaged the emergency room, pharmacy and surrounding buildings, according to Al-Ahli Hospital.

The Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem, which runs the hospital, condemned the strike.

Israel said it targeted a Hamas command and control center within the facility, without providing evidence. Hamas denied the allegations.

The war began when Hamas-led militants attacked southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting 251. Fifty-nine hostages are still inside Gaza, 24 of whom are believed to be alive, after most of the rest were released in ceasefire agreements or other deals.

Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed over 51,000 people, according to an updated toll released by Gaza's Health Ministry on Tuesday. That includes more than 1,600 people killed since Israel ended a ceasefire and resumed its offensive last month to pressure Hamas to accept changes to the agreement.

The ministry is led by medical professionals but reports to the Hamas-run government. Its toll is seen as generally reliable by U.N. agencies and independent experts, though Israel has challenged its numbers. Israel says it has killed some 20,000 militants, without providing evidence.

The ministry does not say how many were civilians or combatants but says women and children make up more than half of the dead. The offensive has destroyed much of the territory and displaced around 90% of its population of roughly 2 million Palestinians.

## People detained in Myanmar after release from scam compounds attempt an escape

By HUIZHONG WU Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — They walked out of the compound in Myanmar not knowing where they would go. Though they were aiming for the river that separated them from Thailand and freedom, they didn't know if they would make it across.

A group of more than 270 some men and women, who were rescued from forced labor in scam compounds two months ago but remain in detention in Myanmar, attempted a mass escape Sunday out of fear that they may end up being sent back to prison-like compounds where they face beatings, torture and potentially even death.

"We will kill ourselves instead of going back to them," said one woman, who has been waiting to go home to Ethiopia for more than two months. She came to Myanmar for what she thought was a job in customer service more than a year ago, only to realize she had been trafficked. She was forced to work in online scams targeting people across the world.

Facing pressure from China, Thailand and Myanmar's governments launched a massive operation in February in which they released thousands of trafficked people from scam compounds, working with the ethnic armed groups that rule Myanmar's border areas.

Some 7,200 — overwhelmingly from China — have returned home, according to Thailand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but around 1,700 are still stuck in Myanmar, many detained in locked compounds not much different to those they were released from.

That includes this group of 270, most from Ethiopia and other African countries, who attempted to escape after a meeting in which guards suggested they could be returned to scam compounds. Their attempt underscores the ongoing humanitarian situation left by one of the biggest releases of forced laborers in modern history.

Multiple members of the group described the escape attempt to The Associated Press by telephone. All asked not to be identified out of fear of retribution from the armed groups holding them.

"The delay in assistance has caused severe physical and psychological suffering," said Jay Kritiya in a statement, the coordinator of the Civil Society Network for Victim Assistance in Human Trafficking, an alliance of groups, who assists people who had been trafficked into scam compounds.

Working in the scam compounds means a minimum 12 to 16-hour days of in front of computers where they are forced to contact targets from around the world online and manipulate them into handing over money. Survivors said if they don't meet targets, they are beaten or physically punished in other ways.

Most of the 1,700 people still in Myanmar are being held in army camps or repurposed scam compounds controlled by the Kayin Border Guard Force, an ethnic militia that rules this part of Myanmar.

But the most desperate were a group of 270 held by a neighboring ethnic militia group called the Democratic Kayin Buddhist Army, which rules an area south of the Border Guard Force.

Non-profit organizations based at the border have been fundraising to help get these men and women home, but as the wait dragged on their embassies told some of them that they were not on Myanmar's official list of people waiting for repatriation. That could stop them from being sent home even if they had



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plane tickets.

In recent weeks, people from the group said, they saw visitors who appeared to be from the compounds come to talk to the DKBA militia soldiers.

After one of these meetings, the DKBA soldiers came to the detained people and offered them a chance to go back to the compounds. They told them: "Whoever wants to go back to work, can go back easily," said one man. "There will not be punishment. There will be (a) salary."

The men and women grew scared, and on Sunday, they took things into their own hands. They all packed up their suitcases and decided to head for the compound's exit. "We are tired and we want to go," said one man. "There's no proper food. We are sleeping on the floor."

They walked out slowly in a loose group, pulling all their personal belongings with them. Although they made it out the compound, they were met by soldiers with guns on the street, according to three people who tried to leave and videos of the confrontation viewed by the AP. Eventually, one of the soldiers said they were open to discussion, and the group agreed to turn back.

Kritiya, the activist, said that the DKBA had agreed to send the men and women to Myawaddy, which is under the control of the Kayin Border Guard Force, where they could then be taken to Thailand and then their home countries. The DKBA could not be reached for comment.

Thailand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said Monday it was aware of the escape attempt and the men and women's names were being added to the official repatriation list. Amy Miller, Southeast Asia director at Acts of Mercy International, said her group, alongside an airline and partner groups, had raised enough money for the 270-plus group to go home.

Ethiopia said it had repatriated 130 citizens from an earlier batch and further rounds will begin in the next 10 days, Ambassador Nebiat Getachew, spokesperson of the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

For now, the men and women are waiting. "It's really, really hard to trust," said one man. "You're not 100% sure it will happen."

## **Another US aircraft carrier in Mideast waters ahead of second round of Iran-US nuclear talks**

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — A second U.S. aircraft carrier is operating in Mideast waters ahead of the next round of talks between Iran and the United States over Tehran's rapidly advancing nuclear program, satellite photos analyzed Tuesday by The Associated Press showed.

The operation of the USS Carl Vinson and its strike group in the Arabian Sea comes as suspected U.S. airstrikes pounded parts of Yemen controlled by the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels overnight into Tuesday. American officials repeatedly have linked the U.S.' monthlong campaign against the Houthis under President Donald Trump as a means to pressure Iran in the negotiations.

Questions remain over where the weekend talks between the countries will be held after officials initially identified Rome as hosting the negotiations, only for Iran to insist early Tuesday they would return to Oman. American officials so far haven't said where the talks will be held.

The stakes of the negotiations couldn't be higher for the 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.

U.S. Mideast envoy Steve Witkoff, who represented America in last weekend's talks in Oman, separately signaled that the Trump administration may be looking at terms of the 2015 nuclear deal that the president unilaterally withdrew from in 2018 as a basis for these negotiations. He described the talks last weekend as "positive, constructive, compelling."

"This is going to be much about verification on the enrichment program, and then ultimately verification on weaponization," Witkoff told Fox News on Monday night. "That includes missiles, the type of missiles that they have stockpiled there. And it includes the trigger for a bomb."

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He added: "We're here to see if we can solve this situation diplomatically and with dialogue."

Vinson joins Truman as second US aircraft carrier in Mideast

Satellite photos taken Monday by the European Union's Copernicus program showed the Vinson, which is based out of San Diego, California, operating northeast of Socotra, an island off Yemen that sits near the mouth of the Gulf of Aden. The Vinson is accompanied by the Ticonderoga-class guided missile cruiser USS Princeton and two Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyers, the USS Sterett and the USS William P. Lawrence.

The U.S. ordered the Vinson to the Mideast to back up the USS Harry S. Truman, which has been launching airstrikes against the Houthis since the American campaign started March 15. Footage released by the Navy showed the Vinson preparing ordinance and launching F-35 and F/A-18 fighter jets off its deck in recent days.

The U.S. Navy's Bahrain-based 5th Fleet, which oversees the Mideast, declined to discuss details of the Vinson's operations.

Witkoff suggests 3.67% uranium enrichment for Iran

Meanwhile, Witkoff offered for the first time a specific enrichment level he'd like to see for Iran's nuclear program. Today, Tehran enriches uranium to up to 60% — a short, technical step from weapons-grade levels of 90%.

"They do not need to enrich past 3.67%," Witkoff told Fox News. "In some circumstances, they're at 60%, in other circumstances, 20%. That cannot be.

"And you do not need to run, as they claim, a civil nuclear program where you're enriching past 3.67%. So this is going to be much about verification on the enrichment program, and then ultimately verification on weaponization."

The 2015 nuclear deal Iran agreed to with world powers under President Barack Obama saw Tehran agree to drastically reduce its stockpile of uranium and only enrich up to 3.67% — enough for its nuclear power plant at Bushehr. Iran in exchange received access to frozen funds around the world, and sanctions were lifted on its crucial oil industry and other sectors.

Iran's Javan newspaper, which is believed to be close to its paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, suggested in an editorial Tuesday that Tehran would be open to reducing its enrichment.

"Something that we have done before, why should we not carry it again and reach a deal?" the editorial asked. "This is not called a withdrawal by Islamic Republic from its ideals anywhere in the world."

When Trump withdrew from the deal in 2018, however, he pointed at Iran's ballistic missile stockpile as one reason to leave the deal. Witkoff said any deal with Iran would have to include "missiles, the type of missiles that they have stockpiled there and it includes the trigger for a bomb."

Iran relies on its ballistic missiles as a hedge against regional nations armed with advanced fighter jets and other American weaponry. Getting it to abandon its missile program likely will be difficult in negotiations.

## **US moves ahead on tariffs with investigations into computer chips and pharmaceuticals**

By ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

BANGKOK (AP) — The Trump administration has taken its next steps toward imposing more tariffs on key imports, launching investigations into imports of computer chips, chip making equipment and pharmaceuticals.

The Department of Commerce posted notices about the probes late Monday on the Federal Register, seeking public comment within three weeks. It had not formally announced them earlier.

Although President Donald Trump paused most of his biggest tariff hikes last week for 90 days, apart from those for imports from China, he has said he still plans tariffs on pharmaceutical drugs, lumber, copper and computer chips.

The Commerce Department said it is investigating how imports of computer chips, equipment to make



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them and products that contain them — which include many daily necessities such as cars, refrigerators, smart phones and other items — affect national security. Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962 permits the president to order tariffs for the sake of national security.

The probe includes assessing the potential for U.S. domestic production of computer chips to meet U.S. demand and the role of foreign manufacturing and assembly, testing and packaging in meeting those needs.

Among other aspects of the entire computer chip supply chain, the government intends to also study the risks of having computer chip production concentrated in other places and the impact on U.S. competitiveness from foreign government subsidies, “foreign unfair trade practices and state-sponsored overcapacity.”

After Trump said electronics would not be included in what his administration calls “reciprocal” tariffs of up to 50% on some nations, U.S. Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick explained in an interview on ABC News that pharmaceuticals, semiconductors and autos will be handled with “sector specific” tariffs.

“And those are not available for negotiation,” Lutnick said. “They are just going to be part of making sure we reshore the core national security items that need to be made in this country. We need to make medicine in this country,” he said. “We need to make semiconductors.”

The investigation into pharmaceutical imports includes ingredients used to make such drugs and touches on many of the same aspects of relying on imports to make them.

Asked about his plans for more tariffs on pharmaceuticals, Trump said Monday, “Yeah, we’re going to be doing that.”

He said it would be in the “not too distant future.”

“We’re doing it because we want to make our own drugs,” he said.

More than 70% of the materials, or active pharmaceutical ingredients, used to make medicines made in the United States are produced in other countries, with India, the European Union and China leading suppliers. The U.S. produces about a fifth of all pharmaceuticals made worldwide, but consumes about 45%, far more than any other country.

The U.S. also is a major producer of semiconductors, but only in some areas. It relies heavily on imports from Taiwan and South Korea for certain kinds of advanced chips. In particular, Taiwan dominates advanced logic chip production at 92% of all fabrication capacity according to the International Trade Administration, with South Korea making 8%.

Products like laptops, smartphones and the components needed to make them accounted for nearly \$174 billion in U.S. imports from China last year. The administration’s plans suggest that such electronics will still be taxed by previous (non-“reciprocal”) tariffs — and potentially under additional, sector-specific levies.

Although major computer chip makers like Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Corp. are investing heavily in U.S. manufacturing facilities, partly due to incentives put in place during former President Joe Biden’s time in office, the costly process of changing entire supply chains would take years.

Separately, the Commerce Department said Monday that it was withdrawing from a 2019 agreement that had suspended an antidumping investigation into imports of fresh tomatoes from Mexico, effective in 90 days. It said the current arrangement failed to protect U.S. growers from “unfairly priced” imports of tomatoes. Most tomatoes from Mexico will be subject to a 20.91% tariff, it said.

## **Hamas says it’s sending a delegation to Qatar to continue Gaza ceasefire talks**

By WAFAA SHURAF and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — A Hamas official said Monday that the Palestinian militant group is sending a delegation to the Gulf state of Qatar to continue indirect ceasefire talks with Israel over the war in Gaza, as the territory’s Health Ministry said that 38 people were confirmed dead over the past day.

The Hamas official said teams have been discussing terms for a new ceasefire agreement over recent days in Cairo, including a proposal that Hamas free eight to 10 hostages held in Gaza. But the Hamas official said a major sticking point remained over whether the war would end as part of any new deal.

The talks in Qatar are meant to take place later this week or next, the official said.

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The Hamas official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss the sensitive talks with the media. Officials from Israel and Qatar had no immediate comment.

Israel and Hamas agreed to a ceasefire in January that lasted eight weeks before Israel resumed the war last month. The initial ceasefire agreement was meant to bring the sides toward negotiating an end to the war, something Israel has resisted doing because it wants to defeat Hamas first.

Hundreds have been killed in Gaza since the ceasefire collapsed

Since the ceasefire fell apart last month, Israel has blocked aid from entering Gaza and forces have also seized swaths of the coastal enclave in a bid to ratchet up pressure on Hamas to agree to a deal more aligned with Israel's terms.

On Monday, the United Nations humanitarian office warned that the humanitarian situation in Gaza is now likely to be "the worst" since Israel launched its retaliation to Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack, pointing to the Israeli ban on all supplies entering the Gaza Strip since March 2.

U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric told reporters: "No fuel has come in, no food has come in, no medicine has come in."

The war started when Hamas-led militants killed 1,200 people, mostly civilians, during the attack on southern Israel and took 251 people captive. Most have since been freed in ceasefire agreements and other deals. Fifty-nine remain in Gaza, 24 of whom are believed to still be alive.

Nearly 51,000 Palestinians have been killed in Israel's retaliatory offensive, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not differentiate between combatants and civilians in its count but says more than half of the dead have been women and children.

The Health Ministry said Monday that the bodies of 38 people killed in Israeli strikes were brought to hospitals across the territory over the past 24 hours. It said more than 1,600 people have been killed since the ceasefire collapsed.

The Red Cross says Israel has detained a Palestinian medic

Also Monday, the International Committee of the Red Cross confirmed that a Palestinian medic was detained during an Israeli military operation in which troops killed 15 first responders in the Gaza Strip. It was the first confirmation of the medic's whereabouts since the March 23 attack in southern Gaza.

A statement from the Red Cross said it has not been granted access to visit him and did not say how it had received confirmation of his detention. The Israeli military had no immediate comment.

The Israeli military initially said troops had opened fire on vehicles that raised suspicion because they were traveling without lights on. It later backtracked after a cellphone video emerged showing clearly marked ambulances traveling with their sirens flashing before the shooting.

The military also said it killed nine militants traveling in the ambulances, without providing evidence. It named one of the militants, but the name did not match those of any of the paramedics, and no other bodies are known to have been recovered.

The military says it is investigating further.

## **Syria's Alawites still face targeted attacks a month after brutal counteroffensive**

By BASSEM MROUE and KAREEM CHEHAYEB Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — A month after a wave of revenge attacks left hundreds of Alawite civilians dead, members of the Syrian religious minority are still living in fear, with dozens killed in smaller attacks since the start of April.

The Muslim minority group was seen as a privileged minority under the rule of the Alawite Assad family, but since Bashar Assad's government fell late last year members have feared revenge from the country's Sunni majority.

The new government promised to protect minority groups, but when a group of Assad loyalists attacked security forces near the coastal city of Latakia last month, it sparked a counteroffensive that took a brutal toll on the coastal region's largely Alawite population.

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Britain-based war monitor the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights estimates that more than 1,700 people, most of them civilians, were killed in March. While no official figures have been released by the government, other human rights groups have given similar estimates. It was the worst violence since an insurgency led by Islamist group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham overthrew Assad last December.

## Militias target Alawites

Rights groups reported widespread revenge killings as militants from Syria's Sunni majority targeted Alawites, regardless of whether they were involved in the insurgency.

"Several people told me that when these militia members entered their home, in addition to asking if they were Alawite or Sunni, they blamed them for what happened to them under the former Assad government," said Diana Semaan, Amnesty International's Syria researcher who investigated dozens of killings that took place in Baniyas and spoke to eyewitnesses and survivors.

While there has not been another outbreak of violence on the same scale, Alawites continue to report incidents of harassment, shakedowns and sometimes worse.

An Alawite who lives in the Latakia area said there are still regular attacks targeting Alawites, most of whom had nothing to do with the Assad government or security forces.

"Everyone from the regime or close to it fled a long time ago," he told The Associated Press, speaking on condition of anonymity out of fear for his life.

He said a 20-year-old factory worker who was the breadwinner of his family was shot by guards at a local checkpoint, even though he had not served in the army under Assad.

"He would pass the checkpoints on his motorcycle every day. He and the guards would even greet each other," he said.

## Attacks spread along the coast

Attacks on Alawites spread from Latakia into the nearby province of Tartus, with some later hitting the major city of Homs inland.

Rami Abdurrahman, who heads the Observatory, said 42 people have died in sectarian killings since the Muslim feast of Eid el-Fitr that marks the end of Ramadan on March 30.

"The killings, did not stop but now they are individual acts," Abdurrahman said.

Mohammed Saleh, an activist from the central city of Homs who spent 17 years imprisoned during the rule of Bashar Assad and his father because of his opposition to the government, said victims of the attacks included Alawites who opposed Assad's rule. Saleh said 18 people he knew personally who had previously been detained by Assad's forces were killed in last month's attacks.

Saleh said he is worried that Syria is turning from one dictatorship to another.

"What we want is to have serious national army and security agencies whose job is to protect everyone and that they include everyone and not be made up of one sect or one religion," Saleh said. "There cannot be a state for everyone when security agencies belong to one sect."

One high school in the city of Baniyas in Tartus province, posted a list on Facebook of almost 80 teachers, students and relatives and alumni who were killed in attacks over the past month.

A video widely shared on social media showed the bodies of two young men with their mother standing by them, as the person filming scolded her and said her sons deserved to die because they were Alawite.

## Tens of thousands of Alawites flee to Lebanon

Alawites and other Syrians from coastal areas are fleeing into Lebanon through unofficial border crossings, some carrying babies and helping tired elderly people and pregnant women as they cross over a river dividing the two countries.

Some 30,000 Alawite Syrians have fled to Lebanon over the past month, the United Nations refugee agency says, scattered in some 30 towns and villages in northern Lebanon. While there is little assistance for them in Lebanon, many don't feel safe enough to go back.

## Attacks test the interim government's promises

Ongoing attacks have been a major letdown for Syrians who hoped that Assad's sudden fall would spell an end to violence against the country's many religious and ethnic groups after over a decade a war that killed hundreds of thousands of people.



The new government has promised to create an inclusive state that holds perpetrators of crimes to account, and interim President Ahmad al-Sharaa has vowed to hold the perpetrators of recent attacks to justice and set up a committee to investigate the attacks.

A few arrests have been reported, and the committee has said it is continuing its investigation in the coastal province, though they have not yet disclosed their findings.

Right groups say the interim government faces a test.

"What happens now is extremely important because it will literally set the path towards justice. We're no longer talking about addressing past violations and holding those perpetrators accountable, which is already a huge endeavor," said Amnesty International's Semaan. "Now we're looking at how the government at how it will set paths towards justice for the violations that it (has) committed."

## Famine and atrocities mount as Sudan's civil war enters its third year

By SAMY MAGDY and FATMA KHALED Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — As Sudan marks two years of civil war on Tuesday, atrocities and famine are only mounting in what the U.N. says is the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

Last month, the Sudanese military secured a major victory by recapturing the capital of Khartoum from its rival, the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces. But that has only moved the war into a new phase that could end up with a de facto partition of the country.

On Friday and Saturday, RSF fighters and their allies rampaged in two refugee camps in the western Darfur region, killing at least 300 people. The Zamzam and Abu Shouk camps, which shelter some 700,000 Sudanese who fled their homes, have both been stricken with famine, and aid workers cannot reach them because of the fighting.

Half the population of 50 million faces hunger. The World Food Program has confirmed famine in 10 locations and says it could spread, putting millions in danger of starvation.

"This abominable conflict has continued for two years too long," said Kashif Shafique, country director for Relief International Sudan, the last aid group still working in the Zamzam camp. Nine of its workers were killed in the RSF attack.

He said the world needs to press for a ceasefire. "Every moment we wait, more lives hang in the balance," he said. "Humanity must prevail."

Here is what is happening as the war enters its third year:

Carving up Sudan

The war erupted on April 15, 2023, with pitched battles between the military and the RSF in the streets of Khartoum that quickly spread to other parts of the country.

It was the culmination of months of tension between the head of the military, Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan, and the RSF's commander, Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo. The two were once allies in suppressing Sudan's movement for democracy and civilian rule but turned on each other in a struggle for power.

The fighting has been brutal. Large parts of Khartoum have been wrecked. Nearly 13 million people have fled their homes, 4 million of them streaming into neighboring countries. At least 20,000 people have been recorded killed, but the true toll is probably far higher.

Both sides have been accused of atrocities, and the RSF fighters have been notorious for attacking villages in Darfur, carrying out mass killings of civilians and rapes of women.

The military's recapture of Khartoum in late March was a major symbolic victory. It allowed Burhan to return to the capital for the first time since the war started and declare a new government, boosting his standing.

But experts say the RSF consolidated its hold on the areas it still controls — a vast stretch of western and southern Sudan, including the Darfur and Kordofan regions. The military holds much of the north, east and center.

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"The reality on the ground already resembles a de facto partition," said Federico Donelli, an assistant professor of international relations at Università di Trieste in Italy.

Donelli said it's possible the two sides could seek a ceasefire now. But more likely, he said, the military will keep trying to move on RSF-held territory.

Neither side appears able to defeat the other.

"Both parties are suffering from combat fatigue," said Suliman Baldo, director of the Sudan Transparency and Policy Tracker.

The RSF is weakened by internal fissures and "lacks political legitimacy within the country," said Sharath Srinivasan, professor of international politics at Cambridge University.

But it has strong access to weapons and resources, bolstered by support from the United Arab Emirates, Chad, Uganda, Kenya, South Sudan and Ethiopia, he said.

"Without understanding the complex regional geopolitics of this war, it is easy to underplay the RSF's resilience and ability to strike back," said Srinivasan, author of "When Peace Kills Politics: International Intervention and Unending Wars in the Sudans."

Famine is deepening

Hundreds of thousands of people trapped by the fighting face hunger and starvation. So far, the epicenter of famine has been in the North Darfur province and particularly the Zamzam camp. The RSF has been besieging the camp as it wages an offensive on El Fasher, the regional capital and the last main position of the military in the Darfur region.

Amna Suliman, a mother of four living in the camp, said people have resorted to eating grass and tree leaves.

"We have no choice," she said in a recent phone interview. "We live in fear, with no communication, no food, and no hope."

Since famine was first declared in Zamzam in August, it has spread to other parts of the province and nearby South Kordofan province.

The WFP warned this week that 17 other locations will also soon fall into famine — including other parts of the Darfur region but also places in central and south Sudan — because aid workers cannot reach them.

"The situation is very dire," said Adam Yao, deputy representative of the U.N. Food and Agricultural Agency in Sudan.

Already, at least 25 million people, more than half of the country's population, face acute hunger, including 638,000 who face catastrophic hunger, the most dire rating used by aid agencies, according to the WFP. Some 3.6 million children are acutely malnourished.

The needs everywhere are huge

In other areas, the military's capture of territory allowed aid groups to reach refugees and displaced people who have been largely cut off from aid for two years.

Sudan has been hit by multiple outbreaks of cholera, malaria and dengue in the past two years. The latest cholera outbreak in March killed about 100 people and sickened over 2,700 others in the White Nile province, according to the Health Ministry.

The economy has been decimated, with a 40% drop in GDP, according to the United Nations' Development Program, UNDP. Full-time employment has been halved and almost 20% of urban households reported that they have no income at all, it said.

At the same time, U.N. agencies and aid groups have faced funding cuts from major donors, including the United States. Only 6.3% of the \$4.2 billion required for humanitarian assistance in Sudan this year has been received as of March, said Clementine Nkweta-Salami, the U.N. humanitarian coordinator in Sudan.

"The reductions come at a time when the needs in Sudan have never been greater, with more than half of the population hungry and famine spreading," she said.

About 400,000 people managed to return to their hometowns in areas retaken by the military around Khartoum and nearby Gezira province, according to the U.N. migration agency.

Many found their homes destroyed and looted. They depend largely on local charities for food.

Abdel-Raham Tajel-Ser, a father of three children, returned in February to his neighborhood in Khartoum's

sister city of Omdurman after 22 months of displacement.

The 46-year-old civil servant said he found his house, which had been occupied by the RSF, severely damaged and looted.

"It was a dream," he said of his return, adding that his life in the largely destroyed neighborhood with almost no electricity or communications is "much better than living as a refugee or a displaced person."

## Joe Biden will speak about Social Security in his return to national stage

By STEVE PEOPLES and FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Former President Joe Biden returns to the national stage Tuesday to elevate liberal concerns that President Donald Trump's agenda is threatening the health of Social Security.

The 82-year-old Democrat has largely avoided speaking publicly since leaving the White House in January. That's even as Trump frequently blames Biden for many of the nation's problems, often attacking his predecessor by name.

Biden is expected to fight back in an early evening speech to the national conference of Advocates, Counselors and Representatives for the Disabled in Chicago. While Biden has made a handful of public appearances in recent weeks, Tuesday's high-profile address focuses on a critical issue for tens of millions of Americans that could define next year's midterm elections.

"As bipartisan leaders have long agreed, Americans who retire after paying into Social Security their whole lives deserve the vital support and caring services they receive," said Rachel Buck, executive director of the ACRD. "We are thrilled the president will be joining us to discuss how we can work together for a stable and successful future for Social Security."

Trump almost immediately began slashing the government workforce upon his return to the White House, including thousands of employees at the Social Security Administration.

Along with a planned layoff of 7,000 workers and controversial plans to impose tighter identity-proofing measures for recipients, the SSA has been sued over a decision to allow Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency to access individuals' Social Security numbers and other personally identifiable information.

Musk, the world's richest man and one of Trump's most influential advisers, has called Social Security "the biggest Ponzi scheme of all time."

At the same time, Social Security recipients have complained about long call wait times as the agency's "my Social Security" benefits portal has seen an increase in outages. Individuals who receive Supplemental Security Income, including disabled seniors and low-income adults and children, also reported receiving a notice that said they were "not receiving benefits."

The agency said the notice was a mistake. And the White House has vowed that it would not cut Social Security benefits, saying any changes are intended to reduce waste and fraud.

Biden will be joined in Chicago by a bipartisan group of former elected officials, including former Sen. Roy Blunt, R-Mo., former Sen. Debbie Stabenow, D-Mich., and former Social Security Administrator Martin O'Malley.

"Social Security is a sacred promise between generations," O'Malley said. "We are deeply grateful to the President for joining us at ACRD to discuss how we can keep that promise for all Americans."

Biden is not expected to make frequent public appearances as he transitions into his post-presidency. He still maintains an office in Washington, but has returned to Delaware as his regular home base. Trump has revoked his security clearances.

While Biden may be in position to help his party with fundraising and messaging, he left the White House with weak approval ratings. Biden also faces blame from some progressives who argue he shouldn't have sought a second term. Biden ended his reelection bid after his disastrous debate performance against Trump and made way for then-Vice President Kamala Harris, who lost to Trump in the fall.

Just 39% of Americans had a favorable opinion of Biden in January, according to a Gallup poll taken



shortly after Trump's inauguration.

Views of the Democratic former president were essentially unchanged from a Gallup poll taken shortly after the November election. They broadly track with the steadily low favorability ratings that Biden experienced throughout the second half of his presidential term.

## Jury selection to begin in Harvey Weinstein's retrial

By MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The last time a New York City jury sat in judgment of Harvey Weinstein, the ex-movie studio boss was convicted of rape and sentenced to 23 years in prison.

Five years later, that landmark #MeToo verdict is gone — wiped away on appeal — and Weinstein is set to go on trial again, beginning Tuesday with jury selection.

New York's highest court, the Court of Appeals, overturned Weinstein's conviction and ordered a new trial, finding that his original one in 2020 was tainted by improper rulings and prejudicial testimony. That ruling gave Weinstein a second chance to fight the charges, and do so in a different atmosphere than his first trial, which was held in the middle of a global reckoning over sexual misconduct.

Weinstein, who has pleaded not guilty and denies that he raped or sexually assaulted anyone, is older and more frail, in and out of the hospital regularly for a variety of health problems. He's now far removed from the time when he was among the most powerful men in the movie business.

And even if he is acquitted, he will not walk free.

Weinstein is also appealing a 2022 rape conviction in Los Angeles. His 16-year prison sentence in that case still stands, though his lawyers said he needs to be resentenced because the since-vacated New York conviction was a factor in how his punishment was calculated.

In the New York retrial, Judge Curtis Farber has set aside at least four days for jury selection and expects opening statements and the start of testimony next week.

The judge, prosecution and defense will work to whittle a massive pool of potential jurors down to the 18 people — 12 jurors and six alternates — needed for the trial by asking questions and seeking to eliminate anyone they feel can't judge the case fairly.

Weinstein, 73, is being retried on two charges from his original trial. He is accused of raping an aspiring actor in a Manhattan hotel room in 2013 and performing a criminal sex act by forcing oral sex on a movie and TV production assistant in 2006. He is also charged with one count of criminal sex act based on an allegation from a woman who was not a part of the original trial. That woman, who has not been named publicly, alleges Weinstein forced oral sex on her at a Manhattan hotel.

Selecting a jury will involve bringing in around 80 potential jurors at a time for two basic screening questions.

First, the judge will ask for a show of hands from anyone who has work, family or other obligations that will prevent them from serving. Then, he'll ask for a show of hands from anyone who feels they can't be impartial based on the nature of the charges or news coverage.

Anyone who raises a hand will be sent home, Farber has said.

Those who remain will be seated in or near the jury box, 24 at a time, and asked additional questions about things like their education, work, and whether anyone they know is in law enforcement or has been a victim of a crime.

Prosecutors and Weinstein's lawyers will then each have 40 minutes to ask questions to each subset of 24 potential jurors. Often, lawyers will use that time to follow up on things raised in earlier questioning or to zero in on concerns about potential biases.

Either side can ask the judge to dismiss a potential juror. If too many jurors are dismissed, another group will be brought in and the process will repeat until the full jury is seated.

## Study finds more people are obtaining abortions but fewer are traveling to other states for it

By GEOFF MULVIHILL Associated Press

Fewer people crossed state lines to obtain abortions in 2024 than a year earlier, a new survey has found. The Guttmacher Institute, a research organization that supports abortion rights, estimates in a report released Tuesday that the overall number of clinician-provided abortions in states where it's legal rose by less than 1% from 2023 to 2024.

But the number of people crossing state lines for abortions dropped by about 9%.

The report, based on a monthly survey of providers, is the latest look at how the abortion landscape in the U.S. has evolved since the Supreme Court reversed *Roe v. Wade* in 2022 in a ruling that eliminated a national constitutional right to abortion and opened the door to state bans and restrictions.

The total number of abortions continued to rise

Guttmacher estimates there were 1.04 million abortions in 2024, up about 1% from its total the previous year.

Multiple studies have found that the total number of abortions in the U.S. has risen since *Dobbs*, despite some states implementing bans.

Twelve states currently enforce abortion bans with limited exceptions at all stages of pregnancy. Four more have bans that kick in after about six weeks, which is before many women know they're pregnant.

Guttmacher's tally does not capture self-managed abortions such as people obtaining abortion pills from community networks, foreign pharmacies or through telehealth from medical providers in states that have laws intended to protect those who send pills into places with bans. There's a court battle over the constitutionality of such laws. But another survey found that the number of telehealth pills being sent into states with bans has been growing and accounted for about 1 in 10 abortions in the U.S. by the summer of 2024.

Isaac Maddow-Zimet, a data scientist at Guttmacher, said even though the number of abortions is up, it's likely some people who would like to end their pregnancies are not able to.

"We know that some people are accessing abortion through telehealth," he said. "And we know it's not an option for everybody."

Travel for abortions declined

The number of people crossing state lines for abortions dropped to about 155,000 from nearly 170,000.

The year-to-year impact varies by state.

For instance, about 1 in 8 abortions in Florida in the first half of 2023 were provided to people coming from out of state. By the second half of 2024 — when a ban on abortions after the first six weeks of pregnancy took effect — only about 1 in 50 were for people from another state.

More people traveled to states including Virginia and New York after the Florida law took hold.

A drop in people traveling to Minnesota could be linked to abortions being offered again in clinics in Wisconsin.

Most abortions in Kansas are provided to people from elsewhere and the number grew as clinic capacity expanded.

Obstacles under bans affect some women more than others

A working paper released in March provided different insight into the impact of the bans.

It found that birth rates rose from 2020 to 2023 in counties farther from abortion clinics. Rates rose faster for Black and Hispanic women, those with lower education levels, and people who are unmarried.

"The takeaway is that distance still matters," said Caitlin Myers, a Middlebury College economic professor and one of the authors of the working paper published by the National Bureau of Economic Research. "It really wasn't obvious that that would be the case."

"These bans are more than just policies; these are direct attacks on bodily autonomy," said Regina Davis Moss, president and CEO of In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda.

The bans also exacerbate the huge disparities in maternal mortality for Black women in the U.S., she said. Black women died around the time of childbirth at a rate nearly 3.5 times higher than white women in 2023.

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"We're going to be faced with increasing numbers of births, which is going to increase the maternal mortality rate, the infant mortality rate and inequities in care," she said. "It's very upsetting and sad."

Bree Wallace, director of case management at the Tampa Bay Abortion Fund in Florida, which helps with the logistics and costs of abortions, said people who consider getting an abortion don't always know their options.

"Many people don't know their choices or think that it's just not possible to go out of state," she said. "A lot of people hear 'ban' or 'six-week ban' in their state and that's it."

## **Core Democratic groups are preparing to be targeted by the Trump administration**

By STEVE PEOPLES AP National Politics Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — As President Donald Trump pushes the historical boundaries of executive power, some of the Democratic Party's core political institutions are preparing for the possibility that the federal government may soon launch criminal investigations against them.

The Democrats' dominant national fundraising platform, ActBlue, and the party's largest protest group, Indivisible, are working with their attorneys for just such a scenario, according to officials within both organizations. Trump's top political allies have suggested both groups should face prosecution.

Other Democratic allies are planning for Trump-backed legal crackdowns as well. Wary of antagonizing the president, most prefer to stay anonymous for now.

"Every one of our clients is concerned about being arbitrarily targeted by the Trump administration. We are going to great lengths to help clients prepare for or defend themselves," said Ezra Reese, political law chair at Elias Law Group, which represents Democratic groups and candidates and is chaired by Marc Elias, the lawyer who has himself been a Trump target.

An FBI spokesperson declined to comment when asked about potential investigations into ActBlue and Indivisible. But White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt did not downplay the threat of a potential criminal probe when asked specifically whether Trump wants the FBI, the Treasury Department or any other federal agency to investigate Democratic groups.

"Anyone who has (not) broken the law should not be worried," Leavitt told The Associated Press. "If you have broken the law and engaged in the weaponization of justice, then you should be worried. It's that simple."

Indeed, far from distancing themselves from talk of retribution, many key Republicans are embracing it.

Trump's allies argue they are justified in seeking vengeance due to the four criminal prosecutions against Trump, one of which led to multiple felony convictions in New York. There's no evidence former President Joe Biden influenced the Trump prosecutions in any way.

Matt Schlapp, president of the American Conservative Union, said Democrats needed to be taught not to touch a hot stove.

"Someone needs to get burned for all this activity or they're just gonna do it again," he said. "And that's not hypocrisy; that's justice."

Trump has made no secret of his plans to use the power of the federal government to target domestic political adversaries.

During a norm-breaking speech at the Department of Justice last month, Trump cast himself as the country's "chief law enforcement officer," a title ordinarily reserved for the attorney general.

On Wednesday, Trump signed an executive order instructing the Justice Department to investigate Miles Taylor, a former Department of Homeland Security official who anonymously penned a book highly critical of his first presidency. Trump said that Taylor was likely guilty of treason, a crime that can carry the death penalty.

Musk calls Indivisible 'criminals'

Indivisible has been perhaps the most important group in the Democratic resistance since Trump re-



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turned to the White House. The group's leadership in Washington holds regular calls with state-based activists and recently released a detailed protest guide, which offers specific guidance to hundreds of local chapters across the country.

This year alone, Indivisible groups have hosted more than 1,000 protests covering every state in the nation. The group was a key organizer in the recent Hands Off! protests that attracted hundreds of thousands of people across the country.

Trump top adviser and billionaire Elon Musk has publicly condemned Indivisible as "criminals."

The statement was an apparent reference to violent attacks against Tesla dealerships and vehicles, which have spiked in recent weeks. Indivisible's leadership released a guide earlier in the year encouraging protests outside Tesla dealerships, although the guide instructs protesters to remain peaceful and stay off private property.

No charges are known to have been filed against Indivisible or its leaders. But Indivisible co-founder Ezra Levin says it's critical that Democratic institutions work together to speak out against the threats posed by the Trump administration. His organization has been discussing contingency plans with attorneys and other activists in the event that he or other Indivisible leaders face criminal charges.

"They may try to come at us directly, or it's as likely that their non-state actors are inspired by their lies and propaganda, and try to come at us individually," Levin said. "And that is a risk in a moment where you're facing anti-democratic threats like we are."

"Our choice is, we can be quiet and hope that they won't target us, or we can try to work as a mass opposition," he continued. "If you're not willing to do that, what are you doing here?"

Democrats' fundraising at risk

Musk, backed by several Republican members of Congress, has also called on the FBI to investigate ActBlue, alleging that the Democratic Party's main fundraising platform has skirted campaign finance laws and allowed foreign nationals to make illegal contributions to Democratic candidates.

"I think the FBI's going to do something on ActBlue soon," Charlie Kirk, a key Trump ally who founded the conservative group Turning Point USA, said at a political event last month in Wisconsin.

ActBlue officials this week told the AP that they would continue to cooperate with a congressional investigation led by House Republicans into allegations of fraud within the organization. ActBlue is preparing a second batch of documents to comply with a new request by House Republicans. Additionally, two ActBlue staffers are expected to testify before a House panel behind closed doors later this month.

Multiple House Republicans in recent weeks have encouraged federal law enforcement agencies to pursue requested criminal investigations into ActBlue.

Rep. Darrell Issa, R-Calif., has asked the Treasury Department to investigate allegations that the nonprofit processed payments to "terror-linked organizations." Separately, Rep. Andy Biggs, R-Ariz., sent a letter to the FBI last month claiming that ActBlue is being used to "to skirt the integrity of federal campaign finance laws" by allowing foreign nationals to contribute to campaigns, among other allegations of criminal wrongdoing.

"It must be emphasized that these allegations, were they to prove true, would indicate a serious threat to the integrity of our elections, besides the victimization of American citizens," Biggs wrote.

ActBlue said it is preparing for the possibility of "many different attacks on various fronts," including investigations by the FBI or the Treasury Department.

Meanwhile, Democratic candidates are relying on ActBlue to fund their campaigns as never before.

Donors have given more than \$400 million to Democratic candidates through ActBlue over the first three months of the year, the organization told the AP. The fundraising haul represents the most money raised in any first quarter in ActBlue's two-decade history.

While Republicans accuse the group of being funded by wealthy donors, ActBlue acts as a passthrough between donors and candidates that's funded by a 3.95% processing fee on each donation.

"These unfounded attacks haven't shaken us — they've sharpened our resolve to fuel Democratic wins," ActBlue spokesperson Megan Hughes said. "As our first-quarter fundraising demonstrates, Democratic grassroots donors are engaged, undeterred and ready to meet this moment."

Leavitt is one of three administration officials who face a lawsuit from the AP on First- and Fifth Amendment grounds. The AP says the three are punishing the news agency for editorial decisions they oppose. The White House says the AP is not following an executive order to refer to the Gulf of Mexico as the Gulf of America.

## Officials work to uncover the motive for fire set at Pennsylvania governor's residence

By MARK SCOLFORO and MARC LEVY Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — Investigators worked Tuesday to uncover the motive behind an arson fire over the weekend at Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro's mansion, the latest act of political violence in the U.S.

They dug into Cody Balmer's background after, authorities say, he scaled an iron security fence in the middle of the night, eluded police and set fire to the Pennsylvania governor's mansion.

Balmer, 38, of Harrisburg was denied bail Monday as he faced charges including attempted homicide, terrorism and arson. He did not enter a plea to the charges.

He had told police he planned to beat Gov. Josh Shapiro with a small sledgehammer if he encountered him after breaking into the building, according to court documents. A motive for the attack, including whether it had anything to do with Shapiro's politics or religious beliefs, wasn't immediately clear.

Balmer's mother told The Associated Press on Monday that she had made calls in recent days about his mental health issues, but "nobody would help." Christie Balmer said her son was not taking his medicine.

However, in court, Balmer politely told a judge he did not suffer from any mental illness.

The fire caused significant damage and forced Shapiro, his family and guests, including other relatives, to evacuate the building early Sunday. The residence, built in 1968, did not have sprinklers, and the damage could be in the millions of dollars, Harrisburg Fire Chief Brian Enterline said.

Shapiro said he, his wife, their four children, two dogs and another family had celebrated the Jewish holiday of Passover in the same room Saturday night along with members of Harrisburg's Jewish community. They were awakened by state troopers pounding on their doors at about 2 a.m. Sunday. They fled and firefighters extinguished the fire, officials said. No one was injured.

Balmer had walked an hour from his home to the governor's residence, and during a police interview "admitted to harboring hatred towards Governor Shapiro," according to a police affidavit that did not expand on that point. Afterward, he returned home, where police said they later found clothing he wore at the time and a small sledgehammer.

Balmer turned himself in at state police headquarters after confessing to his former partner and asking her to call police, which she did, the affidavit said. Authorities did not say whether he has a lawyer.

Balmer, who said he was an unemployed welder with no income or savings, had been due in court later this week in an assault case in which he was accused of punching two relatives and stepping on a child's already broken leg in 2023. In court Monday, he told the judge he did not have any drug or alcohol problems, but acknowledged missing a few court dates in the past.

Hours after the fire, an emotional Shapiro, who is viewed as a potential White House contender for the Democratic Party in 2028, said the intruder could not deter him from doing his job or observing his faith.

"I refuse to be trapped by the bondage that someone attempts to put on me by attacking us as they did here last night," Shapiro said Sunday. "I refuse to let anyone who had evil intentions like that stop me from doing the work that I love."

Balmer, who is registered as an unaffiliated voter, appeared to have carefully planned the attack, police said. He was inside the residence for about a minute before he escaped and was later arrested in the area, Pennsylvania State Police Lt. Col. George Bivens said.

He hopped over a nearly 7-foot-high (2-meter-high) iron security fence surrounding the property, eluded officers who became aware of the breach and forcibly entered the residence before setting it on fire, authorities said. He used beer bottles filled with gasoline to make Molotov cocktails, documents say.

Balmer has faced criminal charges over the past decade including simple assault, theft and forgery,

according to online court records. He also had financial problems in recent years, including a lender filing for foreclosure on a modest Harrisburg house he owned in 2022 over missed mortgage payments, court records show. A deed transfer shows Balmer sold the house for \$60,000 last September to settle the debt.

He is the father of at least three children, with two women filing court complaints seeking child custody agreements in 2012 and 2023.

The fire badly damaged the large room that is often used for entertaining crowds and for art displays. Large west- and south-facing windows were missing their glass panes and shattered glass littered pathways. A charred piano, tables, walls, metal buffet serving dishes and more could be seen through broken windows and fire-blackened doors.

## **UN: Civilian death toll in Sudan's Darfur attacks tops 300 in 2 days as war nears 2-year mark**

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — More than 300 civilians were killed in two days of intense fighting in Sudan's conflict-wracked Darfur region, the U.N. humanitarian agency reported Monday, as the African country's brutal civil war nears the two-year mark.

The attacks launched by Sudan's notorious paramilitary group on two famine-hit camps for displaced people in North Darfur and its nearby capital on Friday and Saturday were initially reported to have left more than 100 dead, including 20 children and nine aid workers, according to a U.N. official.

But the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, known as OCHA, reported the much higher death toll Monday, citing local sources that were not identified. The Associated Press could not independently verify the numbers due to the conditions and communications on the ground.

Sudan plunged into conflict on April 15, 2023, when long-simmering tensions between its military and paramilitary leaders broke out in the capital, Khartoum, and spread to other regions, including the vast western Darfur region. Since then, at least 24,000 people have been tallied as being killed, according to the United Nations, though activists say the number is far higher.

The paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, known as the RSF, carried out the recent attacks after the Sudanese military late last month regained control over Khartoum, a major symbolic victory in the war.

The war has created the world's largest humanitarian crisis and worst displacement crisis, and it has led to Sudan becoming the only country in the world experiencing famine.

U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric said OCHA has received reports of mass casualties and large-scale displacement following the recent fighting in and around the Zamzam and Abu Shorouk displacement camps, as well as North Darfur's capital, El Fasher, the only capital in Darfur that the RSF doesn't control. North Darfur is one of five states in the Darfur region.

"Preliminary figures from local sources indicate that more than 300 civilians have been killed, including 10 humanitarian personnel from the NGO Relief International who lost their lives while operating one of the last functioning health centers in Zamzam camp," Dujarric said.

The escalation in the fighting came ahead of a conference in London to spotlight the war's anniversary on Tuesday organized by Britain, the European Union, Germany and France, where more than 20 foreign ministers are expected along with representatives of global organizations.

Dujarric said the United Nations wants the conference to see Sudan's "neighbors and the international community move in unity of purpose towards peace instead of fueling the conflict."

Also Tuesday, the U.N. Security Council has scheduled emergency closed consultations on Sudan.

The U.N. migration agency said Monday the RSF attacks in Zamzam camp have displaced between 60,000 to 80,000 families in the past two days. The majority of the families remain within El Fasher, which is under military control but has been besieged by the RSF for over a year.

Mamadou Dian Balde, the U.N. refugee office's regional director, said in a video press conference with U.N. correspondents that "massive violations of human rights" have forced almost 13 million Sudanese to flee their homes, including 4 million who fled to other countries. Most fled to Sudan's immediate neighbors,



but more than 200,000 have gone to Libya and about 70,000 to Uganda, he said.

Balde said the U.N. refugee agency's appeal for \$1.8 billion to help the millions of refugees and their host nations is only 10% funded. He warned that if it doesn't get more money, people will move toward southern Africa, east Africa, the Gulf countries and Europe.

"We really hope that tomorrow's event in London will also show greater support for the Sudanese brothers and sisters who have been displaced," Balde said.

## **Trump administration freezes \$2.2 billion in grants to Harvard over campus activism**

By MICHAEL CASEY Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — The federal government says it's freezing more than \$2.2 billion in grants and \$60 million in contracts to Harvard University, after the institution said it would defy the Trump administration's demands to limit activism on campus.

The hold on Harvard's funding marks the seventh time President Donald Trump's administration has taken the step at one of the nation's most elite colleges, in an attempt to force compliance with Trump's political agenda. Six of the seven schools are in the Ivy League.

In a letter to Harvard Friday, Trump's administration had called for broad government and leadership reforms at the university, as well as changes to its admissions policies. It also demanded the university audit views of diversity on campus, and stop recognizing some student clubs.

The federal government said almost \$9 billion in grants and contracts in total were at risk if Harvard did not comply.

On Monday, Harvard President Alan Garber said the university would not bend to the government's demands.

"The University will not surrender its independence or relinquish its constitutional rights," Garber said in a letter to the Harvard community. "No government — regardless of which party is in power — should dictate what private universities can teach, whom they can admit and hire, and which areas of study and inquiry they can pursue."

Hours later, the government froze billions in Harvard's federal funding.

The first university targeted by the Trump administration was Columbia, which acquiesced to the government's demands under the threat of billions of dollars in cuts. The administration also has paused federal funding for the University of Pennsylvania, Brown, Princeton, Cornell and Northwestern.

Trump's administration has normalized the extraordinary step of withholding federal money to pressure major academic institutions to comply with the president's political agenda and to influence campus policy. The administration has argued universities allowed antisemitism to go unchecked at campus protests last year against Israel's war in Gaza.

Harvard, Garber said, already has made extensive reforms to address antisemitism. He said many of the government's demands don't relate to antisemitism, but instead are an attempt to regulate the "intellectual conditions" at Harvard.

Withholding federal funding from Harvard, one of the nation's top research universities in science and medicine, "risks not only the health and well-being of millions of individuals but also the economic security and vitality of our nation." It also violates the university's First Amendment rights and exceeds the government's authority under Title VI, which prohibits discrimination against students based on their race, color or national origin, Garber said.

The government's demands included that Harvard institute what it called "merit-based" admissions and hiring policies and conduct an audit of the study body, faculty and leadership on their views about diversity. The administration also called for a ban on face masks at Harvard — an apparent target of pro-Palestinian campus protesters — and pressured the university to stop recognizing or funding "any student group or club that endorses or promotes criminal activity, illegal violence, or illegal harassment."

Harvard's defiance, the federal antisemitism task force said Monday, "reinforces the troubling entitlement

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mindset that is endemic in our nation's most prestigious universities and colleges — that federal investment does not come with the responsibility to uphold civil rights laws.

"The disruption of learning that has plagued campuses in recent years is unacceptable. The harassment of Jewish students is intolerable."

Trump has promised a more aggressive approach against antisemitism on campus, accusing former President Joe Biden of letting schools off the hook. Trump's administration has opened new investigations at colleges and detained and deported several foreign students with ties to pro-Palestinian protests.

The demands from the Trump administration had prompted a group of Harvard alumni to write to university leaders calling for it to "legally contest and refuse to comply with unlawful demands that threaten academic freedom and university self-governance."

"Harvard stood up today for the integrity, values, and freedoms that serve as the foundation of higher education," said Anurima Bhargava, one of the alumni behind the letter. "Harvard reminded the world that learning, innovation and transformative growth will not yield to bullying and authoritarian whims."

The government's pressure on Harvard also sparked a protest over the weekend from the campus community and residents of Cambridge and a lawsuit from the American Association of University Professors on Friday challenging the cuts.

In their lawsuit, plaintiffs argue that the Trump administration has failed to follow steps required under Title VI before it starts cutting funds, including giving notice of the cuts to both the university and Congress.

"These sweeping yet indeterminate demands are not remedies targeting the causes of any determination of noncompliance with federal law. Instead, they overtly seek to impose on Harvard University political views and policy preferences advanced by the Trump administration and commit the University to punishing disfavored speech," plaintiffs wrote.

## **A Palestinian activist expecting a US citizenship interview is arrested instead by ICE in Vermont**

By PATRICK WHITTLE and HOLLY RAMER Associated Press

A Palestinian man who led protests against the war in Gaza as a student at Columbia University was arrested Monday at a Vermont immigration office where he expected to be interviewed about finalizing his U.S. citizenship, his attorneys said.

Mohsen Mahdawi, a legal permanent resident who has held a green card since 2015, was detained at the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services office in Colchester by Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents, his lawyers said.

The attorneys said they do not know where he is. They filed a petition in federal court seeking an order barring the government from removing him from the state or country.

"The Trump administration detained Mohsen Mahdawi in direct retaliation for his advocacy on behalf of Palestinians and because of his identity as a Palestinian. His detention is an attempt to silence those who speak out against the atrocities in Gaza. It is also unconstitutional," attorney Luna Droubi said in an email.

According to the court filing, Mahdawi was born in a refugee camp in the West Bank and moved to the United States in 2014. He recently completed coursework at Columbia and was expected to graduate in May before beginning a master's degree program there in the fall.

The petition describes him as a committed Buddhist who believes in "non-violence and empathy as a central tenet of his religion."

As a student, Mahdawi was an outspoken critic of Israel's military campaign in Gaza and organized campus protests until March 2024. He co-founded the Palestinian Student Union at Columbia with Mahmoud Khalil, another Palestinian permanent resident of the U.S. and graduate student who recently was detained by ICE.

Khalil was the first person arrested under President Donald Trump's promised crackdown on students who joined campus protests against the war in Gaza. On Friday, an immigration judge in Louisiana ruled that Khalil can be deported as a national security risk.

Christopher Helali, a friend of Mahdawi who lives near him in Vermont, was present outside the immigra-

tion office when Mahdawi was detained and recorded a video of Mahdawi being led away by authorities. In the video, which Helali released on social media Monday, Mahdawi is shown giving a peace sign with his hands and being led away to a car.

Helali described Mahdawi as a peaceful demonstrator who has worked to foster dialogue about the struggle of Palestinians in his homeland. Helali said he and Mahdawi were aware that Mahdawi could be detained today and that his friend went forward with the appointment anyway.

"And rightfully so, he was nervous for what was going on around him. But he was very much resolute in coming to this interview and coming today because he didn't do anything wrong and was a law-abiding citizen, or soon-to-be citizen," Helali said.

Vermont's congressional delegation issued a statement condemning Mahdawi's arrest, saying that instead of taking one of the final steps in his citizenship process, he was handcuffed by armed officers with their faces covered.

"This is immoral, inhumane, and illegal. Mr. Mahdawi, a legal resident of the United States, must be afforded due process under the law and immediately released from detention," said the statement from Sen. Bernie Sanders, Sen. Peter Welch and Rep. Becca Balint.

## **FAA emergency order grounds NYC helicopter tour company involved in deadly crash**

NEW YORK (AP) — Federal aviation regulators issued an emergency order Monday grounding the helicopter tour company involved in a deadly New York crash after learning it had fired its operations director minutes after he had agreed to suspend flights during the investigation.

The Federal Aviation Administration said it suspected the firing was retaliation for a safety decision.

"The FAA is taking this action in part because after the company's director of operations voluntarily shut down flights, he was fired," acting Administrator Chris Rocheleau said on X.

New York Helicopter Tours' sightseeing helicopter broke apart in midair and plunged into the Hudson River Thursday, killing five tourists from Spain and the pilot.

Rocheleau said the agency also began a comprehensive review of the company's operations. The review is designed to determine whether an operator complies with regulations and effectively manages safety, and identifies hazards and risks.

The victims included passengers Agustin Escobar, 49, his wife, Mercè Camprubí Montal, 39, and their three children, Victor, 4, Mercedes, 8, and Agustin, 10. The pilot was Seankese Johnson, 36, a U.S. Navy veteran who received his commercial pilot's license in 2023. The crash has renewed safety concerns about the popular sightseeing flights.

The company's director of operations, Jason Costello, agreed on Sunday to voluntarily halt flights while the crash was being investigated. But 16 minutes after Costello sent an email to the FAA, the company's chief executive officer sent a separate email to the agency saying he did not authorize the halt. The CEO, Michael Roth, also said Costello was no longer an employee, according to the FAA order.

"The immediate firing of the Director of Operations raises serious safety concerns because it appears Mr. Roth retaliated against Mr. Costello for making the safety decision to cease operations during the investigation," read the document.

The FAA in its order said the company now lacks a required director of operations.

An email seeking comment was sent to Roth.

Also Monday, the National Transportation Safety Board said divers found key components of the Bell 206 L-4 helicopter as they wrapped up recovery efforts in the river. New York City police divers working with the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers and Jersey City's Office of Emergency Management recovered and secured the main rotor system and the tail rotor system, which are expected to provide clues about the crash.



## Paige Bueckers is No. 1 pick in WNBA draft, going to the Dallas Wings

By DOUG FEINBERG AP Basketball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Paige Bueckers is ready for her next chapter after a whirlwind week that started with her helping UConn win its 12th national championship and ended with her becoming the WNBA's No. 1 draft pick by the Dallas Wings.

"I'm just extremely excited to be there. I've only heard great things about the city," Bueckers said of Dallas. "So excited to start that new chapter and be in a new city and explore that and give everything I have to the Wings organization. I know we're going to do great things, and it's a fresh start, and I think we're all ready to do something special."

The versatile UConn star is the latest Huskies standout to go No. 1, joining former greats Sue Bird, Diana Taurasi, Tina Charles, Maya Moore and Breanna Stewart.

Bueckers has had a busy time since helping UConn win the title on April 6. She has split her time between New York and Connecticut doing morning and nighttime talk shows. On Sunday, she took part in the Huskies' championship parade.

"I'm glad New York and Storrs are pretty close to each other because there's been a lot of back and forth," Bueckers said. "Part of me wants to stay at school, celebrate with the team, be with them, enjoy the last moments of being in Storrs, and the other part of me has to get ready for the next chapter."

Bueckers got to enjoy the moment Monday night with her UConn teammates and coach Geno Auriemma who were in the audience at the draft, which was held at The Shed in New York. Bueckers choked up when talking about her former Huskies teammates.

"They mean everything to me. They helped me get through highs and lows," Bueckers said.

Seattle followed Dallas' selection by taking 19-year-old French star Dominique Malonga with the No. 2 pick. The 6-foot-6 Malonga was part of the silver medal winning French Olympic basketball team. She's the first French player to be drafted this high since 1997, when Isabelle Fijalkowski went second.

"I was so proud to achieve that goal," Malonga said. "It showed that French basketball has evolved as we've seen the past few years on the NBA side. We see Wemby (Victor Wembanyama) and Zaccharie (Risacher) show that French basketball is great."

The Washington Mystics, with a new coach and general manager, then took Notre Dame's Sonia Citron with the third pick, and Southern Cal's Kiki Iriafen with No. 4. They also took Kentucky guard Georgia Amoore with the sixth pick. Amoore was dressed on the WNBA's orange carpet by NBA star Russell Westbrook, who has a clothing brand called Honor The Gift. Amoore said Westbrook designed her outfit and was amazing to work with since they first got together on a Zoom session last November.

"It's phenomenal. He did such a good job," Amoore said of Westbrook. "It wasn't just to put his name on something. He spent hours at the hotel fitting it ... He's been very active in the process. To have a contact like that now, someone I can lean on or into is amazing. It's the start. You'll see this happen more often. It's a blessing to be the first one to do this."

The expansion Golden State Valkyries made Juste Jocyte of Lithuania with the first draft choice in franchise history.

Connecticut had consecutive picks and took LSU's Aneesah Morrow seventh and N.C. State's Saniya Rivers eighth.

Los Angeles took Alabama's Sarah Ashlee Barker ninth. Chicago drafted Ajsa Sivka from Slovenia 10th, and then TCU's Hailey Van Lith next.

Dallas closed out the first round drafting Aziah James of N.C. State.

Six teams didn't have picks in the opening round as New York, Indiana, Minnesota, Phoenix and Atlanta traded away their picks. Las Vegas forfeited its pick following an investigation by the league in 2023 that found the franchise violated league rules regarding impermissible player benefits and workplace policies.

## Trump considers pausing his auto tariffs as the world economy endures whiplash

By JOSH BOAK and MICHAEL LIEDTKE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Monday suggested that he might temporarily exempt the auto industry from tariffs he previously imposed on the sector, to give carmakers time to adjust their supply chains.

"I'm looking at something to help some of the car companies with it," Trump told reporters gathered in the Oval Office. The Republican president said automakers needed time to relocate production from Canada, Mexico and other places, "And they need a little bit of time because they're going to make them here, but they need a little bit of time. So I'm talking about things like that."

Matt Blunt, president of American Automotive Policy Council, an association representing Ford, General Motors and Stellantis, said the group shared Trump's goals of increased domestic production.

"There is increasing awareness that broad tariffs on parts could undermine our shared goal of building a thriving and growing American auto industry, and that many of these supply chain transitions will take time," Blunt said.

Trump's statement hinted at yet another round of reversals on tariffs as Trump's onslaught of import taxes has panicked financial markets and raised deep concerns from Wall Street economists about a possible recession.

When Trump announced the 25% auto tariffs on March 27, he described them as "permanent." His hard lines on trade have become increasingly blurred as he has sought to limit the possible economic and political blowback from his policies.

Last week, after a bond market sell-off pushed up interest rates on U.S. debt, Trump announced that for 90 days his broader tariffs against dozens of countries would instead be set at a baseline 10% to give time for negotiations.

At the same time, Trump increased the import taxes on China to 145%, only to temporarily exempt electronics from some of those tariffs by having those goods charged at a 20% rate.

"I don't change my mind, but I'm flexible," Trump said Monday.

Trump's flexibility has also fueled a sense of uncertainty and confusion about his intentions and end goals. The S&P 500 stock index was up 0.8% Monday, but it's still down nearly 8% this year. Interest rates on 10-year U.S. Treasury notes were elevated at roughly 4.4%.

Carl Tannenbaum, chief economist for the Northern Trust global financial firm, said the whiplash had been so great that he might have to "get fitted for a neck brace."

Tannenbaum warned in an analysis: "Damage to consumer, business, and market confidence may already be irreversible."

Maroš Šefčovič, the European commissioner for trade and economic security, posted on X on Monday that on behalf of the European Union he engaged in trade negotiations with Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick and U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer.

"The EU remains constructive and ready for a fair deal — including reciprocity through our 0-for-0 tariff offer on industrial goods and the work on non-tariff barriers," Šefčovič said.

The U.S. president also said that he spoke with Apple CEO Tim Cook and "helped" him recently. Many Apple products, including its popular iPhone, are assembled in China.

Apple didn't respond to a Monday request for comment about the latest swings in the Trump administration's tariff pendulum.

Even if the exemptions granted on electronics last week turn out to be short-lived, the temporary reprieve gives Apple some breathing room to figure out ways to minimize the trade war's impact on its iPhone sales in the U.S.

That prospect helped lift Apple's stock price 2% on Monday. Still, the stock gave up some of its earlier 7% increase as investors processed the possibility that the iPhone could still be jolted by more tariffs on Chinese-made products in the weeks ahead.

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Wedbush Securities analyst Dan Ives said Apple is clearly in a far better position than it was a week ago, but he warned there's still "mass uncertainty, chaos, and confusion about the next steps ahead."

One possible workaround Apple may be examining during the current tariff reprieve is how to shift even more of its iPhone production from its longtime hubs in China to India, where it began expanding its manufacturing while Trump waged a trade war during his first term as president.

The Trump administration has suggested that its tariffs had isolated China as the U.S. engaged in talks with other countries.

But China is also seeking to build tighter relationships in Asia with nations stung by Trump's tariffs. China's leader, Xi Jinping, on Monday met in Hanoi with Vietnam's Communist Party General Secretary To Lam with the message that no one wins in trade wars.

Asked about the meeting, Trump suggested the two nations were conspiring to do economic harm to the U.S. by "trying to figure out how do we screw the United States of America."

## **Former Colorado deputy gets 3 years in prison for fatally shooting man who called for help**

By COLLEEN SLEVIN Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — A former Colorado sheriff's deputy convicted of killing a 22-year-old man in distress who called 911 for help was sentenced Monday to three years in prison, the maximum sentence, by a judge who said the shooting was about power.

Andrew Buen was convicted in February of criminally negligent homicide in the 2022 death of Christian Glass, which drew national attention and prompted calls to reform how authorities respond to people with mental health problems.

Prosecutors alleged that Buen needlessly escalated a standoff with Glass, who showed signs of a mental health crisis and refused orders to get out of his SUV near Silver Plume, a small, former mining town along Interstate 70 in the Rocky Mountains west of Denver.

His parents and the agencies involved reached a \$19 million settlement that included crisis intervention training for officers responding to people in distress.

Judge Catherine Cheroutes said Buen's sentence needed to address both the loss of Glass and the damage done to the community by the shooting.

"I think this was about power. It wasn't a mistake. It was about, 'you need to listen to me because I'm in charge,'" she said. She said she believed Buen's family and supporters that he was a "shirt-off-your-back kind of guy" but said he acted differently when he put on a uniform and had a gun.

Buen, wearing an orange jail uniform, apologized to the Glass family, dabbing his eyes with a tissue with his handcuffed hands as he spoke at a podium.

Glass's family had questioned whether any remorse Buen might show would be sincere. Buen, his voice shaking, said they had every right to feel the way they do. He said his actions had escalated the standoff and told the judge he wasn't "owed" anything.

"There are a million things I should have done better that night," he said before he was sentenced.

Sally Glass told Cheroutes that Buen had acted like a "bully" toward her son, a creative and gentle artist who was born in his father's native New Zealand.

"He met evil that night and there was no compassion," she said.

Simon Glass said his family's grief was compounded at first by authorities initially describing his son as the aggressor in the standoff, which the sheriff's office later apologized for. He said he struggles with anxiety and has trouble referring to his son in the past tense, but takes comfort that his son's name has been cleared, in part because of body camera footage.

Katie Glass said she and her mother try to always drive below the speed limit to avoid being pulled over by the police. She said she regrets watching the body camera footage showing her older brother's final moments.

"He died terrified, in pain and all alone. That is what hurts me the most," she said.



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Buen, a former deputy in Clear Creek County, was convicted after a second trial.

Nearly a year ago, another jury convicted him of a misdemeanor for recklessly putting other officers in danger by opening fire. However, jurors could not agree on a murder charge or a charge of official misconduct.

With the support of Glass' family, prosecutors decided to try Buen again on a second-degree murder charge. Jurors also had the option of convicting him of the less serious charge of criminally negligent homicide.

The defense argued that Glass had a knife and Buen was legally justified in shooting him to protect a fellow officer.

After his SUV got stuck, Glass told a 911 dispatcher he was being followed. He also made other statements suggesting he was paranoid, hallucinating or delusional and experiencing a mental health crisis, according to Buen's indictment.

When Buen and other officers arrived, Glass refused to get out. Video recorded by officers' body cameras showed him making heart shapes with his hands to the officers.

The officers fired bean bag rounds and shocked Glass with a Taser, but that failed to make him exit the car. He then took a knife he had offered to surrender at the beginning of the encounter and flung it out a rear window, which had been broken by a bean bag, toward an officer, according to the indictment. At that point Buen fired five times at him.

"Lord, hear me, Lord, hear me," Glass was heard saying moments before he was shot.

## **What to know about Harvey Weinstein's #MeToo retrial with jury selection set to get underway**

By MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Five years after Harvey Weinstein was convicted of rape and hauled to jail in handcuffs, the former movie mogul returns to a Manhattan courthouse Tuesday for a new trial covering the very same allegations — plus one that hasn't been tried before.

It isn't double jeopardy, but rather a legal redo after a New York appeals court overturned the landmark #MeToo verdict a year ago.

The state's Court of Appeals threw out Weinstein's convictions and 23-year prison sentence and ordered a new trial after finding that the original one was tilted by "egregious" judicial rulings and prejudicial testimony.

Jury selection could take a few days. Opening statements and the start of testimony are expected next week. Judge Curtis Farber said that in addition to 12 jurors, six alternates will be picked. Prosecutors expect the retrial to last a month.

Here's what you need to know about Weinstein's retrial:

How is this trial different from 2020?

In some ways, the new trial will be two trials spliced into one.

Weinstein, 73, faces charges involving two women from his original trial in 2020, Jessica Mann and Miriam Haley, and he's being tried for the first time on an allegation from a woman who wasn't in the first case.

Weinstein has pleaded not guilty and denies that he raped or sexually assaulted anyone. Prosecutors are not allowed to retry Weinstein on certain counts that he was acquitted of during his first trial, including charges of predatory sexual assault and one count of first-degree rape.

The judicial reboot will play out in a different climate than Weinstein's first trial, which drew intense media attention and saw protesters chanting "rapist" outside the courthouse.

The #MeToo movement, spawned by scores of allegations in 2017 against the ex-studio boss, has evolved and ebbed over time, and Weinstein has since been convicted in a separate rape case in Los Angeles — a verdict he is also appealing.

While some stars are still facing a legal reckoning for alleged sexual misconduct — like Sean "Diddy" Combs, who is set to go to trial next month — the drumbeat of allegations against powerful figures has abated from #MeToo's early days.

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What is Weinstein accused of?

Weinstein is being retried on two charges from his original trial: one count of criminal sex act for allegedly forcibly performing oral sex on a movie and TV production assistant in 2006 and one count of third-degree rape for allegedly assaulting an aspiring actor in a Manhattan hotel room in 2013.

Haley, a former production assistant on the Weinstein-produced "Project Runway," testified at the 2020 trial that he pushed her onto a bed at his Manhattan apartment in June 2006 and forced oral sex on her, undeterred by her kicks and pleas of, "No, please don't do this, I don't want it."

Haley, who has also gone by the name Mimi Haley, acknowledged that she kept in touch with Weinstein, exchanged warm messages with him, and accepted an invitation to his hotel room two weeks after the alleged assault, where he pulled her into bed for sex. Under New York law applicable at the time, Weinstein has not been charged with rape in connection with Haley's allegations.

Mann, who said she saw Weinstein as a "pseudo father" figure as she pursued an acting career after a rough upbringing, testified at the 2020 trial that he trapped her in a hotel room in March 2013, ordered her to undress as he loomed over her, and then raped her. She alleges that Weinstein raped her again eight months later at a Beverly Hills hotel, where she worked as a hairdresser.

Mann also kept in touch with Weinstein after the alleged assault, testifying that she sent him flattering emails, because "his ego was so fragile," she said, and it "made me feel safe, worshipping him in this sense."

What is the new charge he faces?

In addition to Haley and Mann, Weinstein is also charged with one count of criminal sex act for allegedly forcing oral sex on a different woman at a Manhattan hotel in 2006.

That woman, who was not part of Weinstein's first trial, has not been named publicly. The Associated Press does not generally identify people alleging sexual assault unless they consent to be named, as Haley and Mann have done.

Prosecutors said that the woman came forward to them just days before the start of Weinstein's first trial but was not part of that case. They said they did not pursue the women's allegations after Weinstein's conviction, but revisited them and secured a new indictment after the first verdict was thrown out.

Weinstein's lawyers contend that prosecutors shouldn't have waited nearly five years to bring the additional charge.

Why is there a new trial?

New York's highest court, the Court of Appeals, threw out Weinstein's conviction in April 2024.

In a 4-3 decision, the court said then-Judge James Burke had denied Weinstein a fully fair trial by letting three women testify about allegations that weren't part of the case and his decision to let prosecutors confront Weinstein, if he had testified, over his history of brutish behavior.

The court labeled the allegations against Weinstein "appalling, shameful, repulsive conduct" but warned that "destroying a defendant's character under the guise of prosecutorial need" did not justify some trial evidence and testimony. Burke's term expired at the end of 2022, and he is no longer a judge.

In a dissenting opinion, Court of Appeals Judge Madeline Singas wrote that her colleagues in the majority were continuing a "disturbing trend of overturning juries' guilty verdicts in cases involving sexual violence."

The ruling came at "the expense and safety of women," she wrote.

## Judge denies bail for man accused of setting fire at Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro's residence

By MARK SCOLFORO and MARC LEVY Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — A man who allegedly scaled an iron security fence in the middle of the night, eluded police and set fire to the Pennsylvania governor's mansion was denied bail Monday as he faced charges including attempted homicide, terrorism and arson.

Cody Balmer spoke with a public defender at times as he appeared in court late Monday afternoon after being released from a hospital, where he had been taken after an unrelated medical event.

Balmer, 38, of Harrisburg, told police he planned to beat Gov. Josh Shapiro with a small sledgehammer if

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he encountered him after breaking into the building, according to court documents. A motive for the attack, including whether it had anything to do with Shapiro's politics or religious beliefs, wasn't immediately clear.

Balmer's mother told The Associated Press on Monday that she had made calls in recent days about his mental health issues, but "nobody would help." Christie Balmer said her son was not taking his medicine. However, in court, Balmer politely told a judge he did not suffer from any mental illness.

"That's the rumor, but no, ma'am," he said.

He said he was an unemployed welder with no income or savings and "a lot of children." He did not enter a plea to the charges, which include aggravated assault.

The fire caused significant damage and forced Shapiro, his family and guests, including other relatives, to evacuate the building early Sunday. The residence, built in 1968, did not have sprinklers, Harrisburg Fire Chief Brian Enterline said. He estimated the damage could be in the millions of dollars.

Shapiro said he, his wife, their four children, two dogs and another family had celebrated the Jewish holiday of Passover in the same room Saturday night along with members of Harrisburg's Jewish community. They were awakened by state troopers pounding on their doors about 2 a.m. Sunday. They fled and firefighters extinguished the fire, officials said. No one was injured.

Balmer had walked an hour from his home to the governor's residence, and during a police interview "admitted to harboring hatred towards Governor Shapiro," according to a police affidavit that did not expand on that point. Afterward, he returned home, where police said they later found clothing he wore at the time and a small sledgehammer.

Balmer turned himself in at state police headquarters after confessing to his former partner and asking her to call police, which she did, the affidavit said. Authorities did not say whether he has a lawyer.

Balmer had been due in court later this week in an assault case in which he was accused of punching two relatives and stepping on a child's already broken leg in 2023. In court Monday, he told the judge he did not have any drug or alcohol problems, but acknowledged missing a few court dates in the past.

Shapiro says he is unbowed

Hours after the fire, an emotional Shapiro, who is viewed as a potential White House contender for the Democratic Party in 2028, said the intruder could not deter him from doing his job or observing his faith.

"When we were in the state dining room last night, we told the story of Passover" and the exodus of the Jews from slavery in Egypt to freedom, Shapiro said Sunday. "I refuse to be trapped by the bondage that someone attempts to put on me by attacking us as they did here last night. I refuse to let anyone who had evil intentions like that stop me from doing the work that I love."

Police say suspect hopped security fence and forcibly entered residence

Balmer, who is registered as an unaffiliated voter, appeared to have carefully planned the attack, police said. He was inside the residence for about a minute before he escaped and was later arrested in the area, Pennsylvania State Police Lt. Col. George Bivens said.

He hopped over a nearly 7-foot-high (2-meter-high) iron security fence surrounding the property, eluded officers who became aware of the breach and forcibly entered the residence before setting it on fire, authorities said. He used beer bottles filled with gasoline to make Molotov cocktails, documents say.

Balmer has faced criminal charges over the past decade including simple assault, theft and forgery, according to online court records. He also had financial problems in recent years, including a lender filing for foreclosure on a modest Harrisburg house he owned in 2022 over missed mortgage payments, court records show. A deed transfer shows Balmer sold the house for \$60,000 last September to settle the debt.

He is the father of at least three children, with two women filing court complaints seeking child custody agreements in 2012 and 2023.

'We have to be better than this,' Shapiro says

The fire badly damaged the large room that is often used for entertaining crowds and art displays. Large west- and south-facing windows were completely missing their glass panes and shattered glass littered pathways. A charred piano, tables, walls, metal buffet serving dishes and more could be seen through broken windows and fire-blackened doors.

"We don't know the person's specific motive yet," Shapiro said at the news conference. "But we do know



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a few truths. First: This type of violence is not OK. This kind of violence is becoming far too common in our society. And I don't give a damn if it's coming from one particular side or the other, directed at one particular party or another or one particular person or another. It is not OK, and it has to stop. We have to be better than this."

President Donald Trump told reporters Monday that Balmer did not appear to be a fan of his, either. "The attacker basically wasn't a fan of anybody," he said. "And certainly, a thing like that cannot be allowed to happen."

## **El Salvador President Bukele says he won't be releasing a Maryland man back to the US**

By SEUNG MIN KIM and MARCOS ALEMÁN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's top advisers and Nayib Bukele, the president of El Salvador, said Monday that they have no basis for the small Central American nation to return a Maryland man who was wrongly deported there last month. Bukele called the idea "preposterous" even though the U.S. Supreme Court has called on the administration to "facilitate" Kilmar Abrego Garcia's return.

Trump administration officials emphasized that Abrego Garcia, who was sent to a notorious gang prison in El Salvador, was a citizen of that country and that the U.S. has no say in his future. And Bukele, who has been a vital partner for the Trump administration in its deportation efforts, said "of course" he would not release him back to U.S. soil.

"The question is preposterous. How can I smuggle a terrorist into the United States?" Bukele, seated alongside Trump, told reporters in the Oval Office Monday. "I don't have the power to return him to the United States."

Should El Salvador want to return Abrego Garcia, the U.S. would "facilitate it, meaning provide a plane," Attorney General Pam Bondi said.

But "first and foremost, he was illegally in our country, and he had been illegally in our country," she said. "That's up to El Salvador if they want to return him. That's not up to us."

In a court filing Monday evening, Joseph Mazzara, the acting general counsel for the Department of Homeland Security, said it "does not have authority to forcibly extract" Abrego Garcia from El Salvador because he is "in the domestic custody of a foreign sovereign nation."

Mazarra also argued that Abrego Garcia is "no longer eligible for withholding of removal" because the U.S. designated MS-13 as a foreign terror organization. Abrego Garcia's attorneys say the government has provided no evidence that he was affiliated with MS-13 or any other gang.

The refusal of both countries to allow the return of Abrego Garcia, who had an immigration court order preventing his deportation over fears of gang persecution, is intensifying the battle over the Maryland resident's future. It has also played out in contentious court filings, with repeated refusals from the government to tell a judge what it plans to do, if anything, to repatriate him.

The judge handling the case, Paula Xinis, is now considering whether to grant a request from the man's legal team to compel the government to explain why it should not be held in contempt.

The fight over Abrego Garcia also underscores how critical El Salvador has been as a linchpin of the U.S. administration's mass deportation operation.

How Bukele is helping with Trump's immigration crackdown

Since March, El Salvador has accepted from the U.S. more than 200 Venezuelan immigrants — whom Trump administration officials have accused of gang activity and violent crimes — and placed them inside the country's maximum-security gang prison just outside of the capital, San Salvador. That prison is part of Bukele's broader effort to crack down on the country's powerful street gangs, which has put 84,000 people behind bars and made Bukele extremely popular at home.

"I want to just say hello to the people of El Salvador and say they have one hell of a president," Trump said as he greeted Bukele, who was wearing a black mock turtleneck sans tie.

Bukele struck a deal under which the U.S. will pay about \$6 million for El Salvador to imprison the Ven-

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ezuelan immigrants for a year.

But Democrats have raised alarm about the treatment of Abrego Garcia and other migrants who may be wrongfully detained in El Salvador. Democratic Sen. Chris Van Hollen of Maryland pushed for a meeting with Bukele while he was in Washington to discuss Abrego Garcia's potential return, and New Hampshire Sen. Jeanne Shaheen, the top Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, urged the administration to release Abrego Garcia and others "with no credible criminal record" who were deported to the maximum-security prison.

"Disregarding the rule of law, ignoring unanimous rulings by the Supreme Court and subjecting individuals to detention and deportation without due process makes us less safe as a country," Shaheen said.

Though other judges had ruled against the Trump administration, this month the Supreme Court cleared the way for Trump to use the Alien Enemies Act, an 18th century wartime law, to deport the immigrants. The justices did insist that the immigrants get a court hearing before being removed from the U.S. Over the weekend, 10 more people who the administration claims are members of the MS-13 and Tren de Aragua gangs arrived in El Salvador, Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Sunday.

Trump wants to expand his deportation plans

The president has said openly that he would also favor El Salvador taking custody of American citizens who have committed violent crimes, a view he repeated Monday.

"We have bad ones too, and I'm all for it because we can do things with the president for less money and have great security," Trump said during the meeting. "And we have a huge prison population." It is unclear how lawful U.S. citizens could be deported elsewhere in the world.

Before the press entered the Oval Office, Trump said in a video posted on social media by Bukele that he wanted to send "homegrown" to be incarcerated in El Salvador, and added that "you've got to build five more places," suggesting Bukele doesn't have enough prison capacity for all of the U.S. citizens that Trump would like to send there.

The high court weighs in, and the administration response

The Supreme Court has called for the Trump administration to "facilitate" the return of Abrego Garcia.

Trump indicated over the weekend that he would return Abrego Garcia to the U.S. if the high court's justices said to bring him back, saying "I have great respect for the Supreme Court." But the tone from top administration officials was sharply different Monday,

"He's a citizen of El Salvador," said Stephen Miller, a White House deputy chief of staff. "So it's very arrogant, even for American media, to suggest that we would even tell El Salvador how to handle their own citizens."

Bondi asserted that two immigration court judges — who are under Justice Department purview — found that Abrego Garcia was a member of MS-13. The allegation is based on a confidential informant's claim in 2019 that Abrego Garcia was a member of a chapter in New York, where he has never lived.

How Bukele is viewed back home

While Bukele's crackdown on gangs has popular support, the country has lived under a state of emergency that suspends some basic rights for three years. He built the massive prison, located just outside San Salvador in the town of Tecoluca, to hold those accused of gang affiliation under his crackdown.

Part of his offer to receive the Venezuelans there was that the U.S. also send back some Salvadoran gang leaders. In February, his ambassador to the U.S., Milena Mayorga, said on a radio program that having gang leaders face justice in El Salvador was "an issue of honor."

Populists who have successfully crafted their images through media, Bukele and Trump are of different generations but display similar tendencies in how they relate to the press, political opposition and justice systems in their respective countries.

Bukele came to power in the middle of Trump's first term and had a straightforward relationship with the U.S. leader. Trump was most concerned with immigration and, under Bukele, the number of Salvadorans heading for the U.S. border declined.

Bukele's relationship with the U.S. grew more complicated at the start of the Biden administration, which was openly critical of some of his antidemocratic actions. Trump has also shown some irritation with Bukele

in the past, accusing El Salvador of lowering its crime rate by sending people to the U.S.

## **Russia claims its deadly attack on Ukraine's Sumy targeted military forces as condemnation grows**

By LORNE COOK Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — Russia on Monday claimed its deadly missile attack on Ukraine's Sumy that killed and wounded scores including children had targeted a gathering of Ukrainian troops, while European leaders condemned the attack as a war crime.

Ukrainian officials have said two ballistic missiles on Palm Sunday morning hit the heart of Sumy, a city about 30 kilometers (20 miles) from Ukraine's border with Russia, killing at least 34 people, including two children, and wounding 119. It was the second large-scale attack to claim civilian lives in Ukraine in just over a week.

Asked about the attack, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Russia's military only strikes military targets. Russia's Defense Ministry said the strike targeted a gathering of senior military officers and accused Kyiv of using civilians as shields by holding military meetings in the city's center.

The ministry claimed to kill over 60 troops. Russia gave no evidence to back its claims.

International condemnation

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has called for a global response to the attack, saying the first strike hit university buildings and the second exploded above street level.

"Only real pressure on Russia can stop this. We need tangible sanctions against those sectors that finance the Russian killing machine," he wrote Monday on social media.

Polish Foreign Minister Radek Sikorski, whose country holds the European Union's rotating presidency, called the attacks "Russia's mocking answer" to Kyiv's agreement to a ceasefire proposed by the United States over a month ago.

Finnish Foreign Minister Elina Valtonen noted that the attack on Sumy came shortly after President Donald Trump's envoy, Steve Witkoff, was in Saint Petersburg for talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin. It demonstrates that "Russia shows full disregard for the peace process, but also that Russia has zero regard for human life," Valtonen said.

"I hope that President Trump, the U.S. administration, see that the leader of Russia is mocking their goodwill, and I hope the right decisions are taken," Sikorski told reporters in Luxembourg, where EU foreign ministers met.

Lithuania's foreign minister, Kestutis Budrys, echoed Ukraine's assertion that the Russian strike used cluster munitions to target civilians, calling it "a war crime by definition." The Associated Press has been unable to verify that claim.

French Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot said the attack shows that Putin has no intention of agreeing to a ceasefire, and called for the European Union to "take the toughest sanctions against Russia to suffocate its economy and prevent it from fueling its war effort."

The EU has imposed 16 rounds of sanctions on Russia and is working on a 17th, but the measures are getting harder to agree on because they also impact European economies.

Germany's chancellor-designate, Friedrich Merz, described the Sumy attack as "a serious war crime" during an appearance on ARD television.

Merz made clear he stands by his past calls to send Taurus long-range cruise missiles to Ukraine, something that outgoing Chancellor Olaf Scholz refused to do. He said the Ukrainian military needs to be able to "get ahead of the situation" and that any delivery of long-range missiles must be done in consultation with European partners.

Asked about Merz's statement, the Kremlin spokesman said such a move would "inevitably lead only to further escalation of the situation around Ukraine," telling reporters that "regrettably, European capitals aren't inclined to search for ways to launch peace talks and are inclined instead to keep provoking the continuation of the war."



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## Relentless attacks

Russian forces this month have dropped 2,800 air bombs on Ukraine and fired more than 1,400 strike drones and nearly 60 missiles of various types.

The attack on Sumy followed a April 4 missile strike on Zelenskyy's hometown of Kryvyi Rih that killed some 20 people, including nine children.

Trump has previously described the strike on Sumy as a "mistake." On Monday, he said the mistake was allowing the war to start in the first place, criticizing former President Joe Biden, Zelenskyy and Putin.

"Biden could've stopped it and Zelenskyy could've stopped it and Putin should've never started it," Trump said in the Oval Office. "Everybody's to blame."

Late Sunday, Russian exploding drones attacked Odesa, injuring eight people. Regional head Oleh Kiper said a medical facility was among the buildings damaged.

Russia fired a total of 62 Shahed drones over Ukraine late Sunday and early Monday, Ukraine's air force said, adding that 40 were destroyed and 11 others jammed.

## Chinese volunteers

Two Chinese nationals, who were captured by Ukrainian forces while fighting on the Russian side, said at a news conference in Kyiv on Monday that they had joined the war voluntarily after seeing recruitment announcements on TikTok. They said they weren't encouraged or supported by Chinese authorities, who had warned them about the danger of participating in the conflict.

One of the men, speaking through an interpreter, said he did not intend to take part directly in combat but was sent to the front lines anyway. Another said that Russian recruiters abused his trust and put him in what he described as a "trap."

They said they were given orders through gestures and hand signals, and Russian personnel constantly accompanied them, leaving no chance for escape. Both said they hope to be included in a future prisoner exchange and return to their families.

It was impossible for the AP to corroborate their statements or independently verify under what circumstances the two men spoke.

When he first announced the capture of the Chinese nationals last week, Zelensky said there were more than 150 other Chinese fighting for Russia. Beijing responded that it always asks its citizens to avoid participating in any military operations.

While China has provided strong diplomatic support for Russia since it launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, it is not believed to have knowingly provided Russia with troops, weapons or military expertise.

U.S. officials have accused Iran of providing Russia with drones, while American and South Korean officials say North Korea has sent thousands of troops to help Russia on the battlefield.

## **Stocks rally worldwide after Trump eases some of his tariffs on electronics, for now**

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Stocks rose worldwide Monday after President Donald Trump relaxed some of his tariffs, for now at least, and as stress from within the U.S. bond market seems to be easing.

The S&P 500 climbed 0.8%, though trading was still shaky, and it briefly gave back all of its big early gain of 1.8%. The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 312 points, or 0.8%, and the Nasdaq composite added 0.6%.

Apple and other technology companies helped lift Wall Street after Trump said he was exempting smartphones, computers and other electronics from some of his stiff tariffs, which could ultimately more than double prices for U.S. customers of products coming from China. Such an exemption would mean U.S. importers don't have to choose between passing on the higher costs to their customers or taking a hit to their own profits.

Apple climbed 2.2%, and Dell Technologies rose 4%.

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Automakers also rallied after Trump suggested he may announce pauses on tariffs next for the auto industry. General Motors rose 3.5%, and Ford Motor rallied 4.1%.

All told, the S&P 500 rose 42.61 points to 5,405.97. The Dow Jones Industrial Average gained 312.08 to 40,524.79, and the Nasdaq composite climbed 107.03 to 16,831.48.

But such relief may ultimately prove fleeting. Trump's tariff rollout has been full of fits and starts, and officials in his administration said this most recent exemption on electronics is only temporary.

That could keep uncertainty high for companies, which are trying to make long-term plans when conditions seem to change by the day. Such uncertainty sent the U.S. stock market last week to chaotic and historic swings, as investors struggled to catch up with Trump's moves on tariffs, which could ultimately lead to a recession if not reduced.

China's commerce ministry nevertheless welcomed the pause on electronics tariffs in a Sunday statement as a small step even as it called for the U.S. to completely cancel the rest of its tariffs. China's leader Xi Jinping on Monday said no one wins in a trade war as he kicked off a diplomatic tour of Southeast Asia, hoping to present China as a force for stability in contrast with Trump's frenetic moves on tariffs.

Elsewhere on Wall Street, Goldman Sachs rose 1.9% after reporting a stronger profit for the latest quarter than expected. It joined other big banks in doing so, such as JPMorgan Chase and Morgan Stanley.

Perhaps more encouragingly for Wall Street, the bond market also showed signs of increasing calm. Treasury yields eased following their sudden and scary rise last week, which seemed to rattle not only investors but also Trump.

Treasury yields usually drop when fear is high in the market because U.S. government bonds have historically been seen as some of the world's safest investments, if not the safest. But last week, yields rose sharply for Treasury bonds in an usual move. The value of the U.S. dollar also fell against other currencies in another move suggesting investors may no longer see the United States as the best place to keep their cash during moments of stress.

Trump noted the moves in the bond market, which suggested investors "were getting a little queasy," after he announced a 90-day pause on many of his tariffs last week.

That Trump acted only after the bond market made its scary move, but not after U.S. stock market began trembling, "reveals this administration's Achilles' heel," according to Lisa Shalett, chief investment officer at Morgan Stanley Wealth Management.

The yield on the 10-year Treasury eased back to 4.37%. It had jumped to 4.48% on Friday from 4.01% the week before.

Yields sank after the bond market got an encouraging update on expectations for inflation among U.S. consumers. While U.S. households raised their expectations for inflation in the year ahead, their expectations for inflation three and five years in the future were either unchanged or lower, according to a survey by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York.

That's potentially good news for the Federal Reserve, which hates to see fast-rising expectations for longer-term inflation. Such expectations could kick off a feedback loop that drives behavior among consumers that only worsens inflation.

The value of the U.S. dollar, though, remained under pressure. It slipped against the euro and Japanese yen, while inching higher against the Canadian dollar.

In stock markets abroad, indexes climbed 2.4% in France, 2.9% in Germany, 1.2% in Japan and 1% in South Korea.

In China, stock indexes rose 2.4% in Hong Kong and 0.8% in Shanghai after the government reported that China's exports surged 12.4% in March from a year earlier in a last-minute flurry of activity as companies rushed to beat increases in U.S. tariffs.

## Judge in Vermont considers whether he has jurisdiction of detained Tufts University student's case

By KATHY McCORMACK Associated Press

A federal judge in Vermont who is considering whether he has jurisdiction over the case of a Turkish Tufts University student detained by immigration officials in Louisiana raised the possibility Monday of having her brought back to his court for a hearing.

U.S. District Judge William Sessions took under advisement arguments over Rumeysa Ozturk, 30, a doctoral student taken by immigration officials as she walked along a street in the Boston suburb of Somerville on March 25. After being taken to New Hampshire and then Vermont, she was put on a plane the next day and moved to an Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention center in Basile, Louisiana.

Ozturk's lawyers are challenging the legal authority for ICE's detention. They are asking that she be immediately released from custody, or in the alternative, be returned to Vermont for further proceedings.

A lawyer for the Justice Department said her case should be dismissed, saying the immigration court has jurisdiction. But Ozturk's lawyers, who initially didn't know where she was for hours and first petitioned for her release in Massachusetts, argued for her to be released from detention while her immigration case continues.

Lawyers for Ozturk in the immigration proceeding asked Monday that she be released on bond, her legal team in Vermont said.

Sessions brought up the idea of a hearing in his court in May if he were to assume jurisdiction over her petition.

"Why not do that at the same time that the removal proceedings continue on?" he said.

Lawyers on both sides said they would need to consult further to provide details on the amount of time needed for such a hearing.

Ozturk is among several people with ties to American universities whose visas were revoked or have been stopped from entering the U.S. after they were accused of attending demonstrations or publicly expressed support for Palestinians. On Friday, a Louisiana immigration judge ruled that the U.S. can deport Columbia University graduate student Mahmoud Khalil based on the federal government's argument that he poses a national security risk.

Ozturk was one of four students who wrote an op-ed in the campus newspaper, The Tufts Daily, last year criticizing the university's response to student activists demanding that Tufts "acknowledge the Palestinian genocide," disclose its investments and divest from companies with ties to Israel.

Ozturk's lawyers say her detention violates her constitutional rights, including free speech and due process. "Ultimately, unfortunately, the heart of what's happening is that she is stuck in detention for an op-ed," her immigration attorney, Mahsa Khanbabai, said outside the federal building in Burlington after Monday's hearing.

A Department of Homeland Security spokesperson said last month, without providing evidence, that investigations found that Ozturk engaged in activities in support of Hamas, a U.S.-designated terrorist group.

A State Department memorandum showed that Ozturk's student visa was revoked on March 21 following an assessment that she had been involved in associations "that may undermine U.S. foreign policy by creating a hostile environment for Jewish students and indicating support for a designated terrorist organization" including co-authoring an op-ed that found common cause with an organization that was later temporarily banned from campus.

The Washington Post reported Sunday that another memorandum, written by an office within the State Department before Ozturk was detained, determined that there was no evidence showing that she took part in antisemitic activities or made public statements supporting a terrorist organization.

Ozturk's lawyers said Monday that the memorandum has not been supplied to them.

The department generally does not comment on ongoing or pending litigation, a spokesperson said in an email Monday.



## Chicago teachers reach contract deal for the first time in more than a decade without a strike

By SOPHIA TAREEN Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — For the first time in over a decade, Chicago's public school teachers have a new contract without a strike or threat of a walkout. The four-year agreement includes pay hikes, hiring more teachers and class size limits.

While negotiations between the Chicago Teachers Union and the district didn't escalate this time, there was unprecedented turmoil surrounding the unusual yearlong talks. The drama included the school superintendent's firing, the entire board resigning and historic elections that tested the union's power.

Now, Chicago faces uncertainty with Trump administration education cuts and looming questions about how the nation's fourth-largest school district will pay for the contract.

The turmoil

While all parties are celebrating the agreement now, there's been no shortage of turbulence.

Perhaps the main reason negotiations didn't devolve into a strike, as was the case in 2019 and 2012, was union ally Mayor Brandon Johnson. A former teacher and CTU organizer, the union helped elect him in 2023.

He spent months trying to oust Chicago Public Schools CEO Pedro Martinez, an appointee of former Mayor Lori Lightfoot, in a public spat.

"All of that chaos and turmoil there clearly dragged down the bargaining and probably shut it down for a fair amount of time," said Robert Bruno, a University of Illinois professor of labor and employment relations.

Johnson wanted a \$300 million loan to cover the new contract and a pension payment, which Martinez and the board rejected as fiscally irresponsible. District officials and good government groups argue that borrowing would incur high interest rates, but Johnson has pushed back, saying rates are "relatively" low. In October, the board resigned in protest.

The next month, the city held its first school elections. The transitional board — a mix of union-backed candidates, charter school supporters and independents — includes mayoral appointees until it's fully elected in 2027.

In December, the board moved to fire Martinez, though he'll remain until June. At one point, Martinez accused new members of meeting privately with the union and won a judge's restraining order.

The talks

The union started contract talks last year with more than 700 requests, a record for the almost 30,000-member union.

Union leaders say their goal is always equality in the segregated city. Roughly 70% of the 325,000 students in the district are low-income and more than 80% are Black or Latino.

But district officials said those lofty requests would have cost over \$10 billion. The district's annual budget is roughly \$10 billion.

The new agreement's price tag is about \$1.5 billion.

"We stayed true to our values," Martinez said after the deal was announced. "We succeeded in keeping the best interest of our students always at the center."

Both sides touted transparency. For the first time, some bargaining sessions were publicly livestreamed.

It was also the first time in nearly three decades the union was allowed to bargain on issues like class size. In 1995, a Republican-led Illinois legislature passed a law limiting collective bargaining rights largely to pay and benefits. Democratic leaders changed that in 2021.

CTU President Stacy Davis Gates celebrated the contract as a win that protects students, particularly those who are vulnerable under Donald Trump's presidency.

"It's big, it's complex and it is certainly a step in the right direction," she said.

Johnson also took a victory lap, trumpeting his union ties.

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"When I was running for office, they said it would be a liability," he told reporters recently. "But it sounds like to me that no other mayor could have brought Chicago Public Schools, the Board of Education, the mayor's office and the CTU together to the table to make sure that our children get exactly what they deserve, which is a fully funded, well-rounded education."

## The deal

Under the deal, teachers will get 4% retroactive raises as the contract expired last year. Then they'll get 4% or 5% raises each year after.

Starting next year, the median teacher pay will be \$98,000. By the contract's end in 2028, the average teacher will earn around \$110,000, according to the district.

The district, which employs roughly 7,000 teachers, will hire 800 more, and nearly 100 additional librarians. Teachers will get an extra 10 minutes of daily prep time, for 70 minutes total.

Also, class sizes will be limited by grade level. For instance, kindergarten will have the smallest and be capped at 25 students.

Union leaders announced Monday that 97% of members who voted approved the deal. Davis Gates called it "overwhelmingly historic levels" of support for a contract that built on previous years' work, including strikes.

## The future

Experts say what happened in Chicago could give other unions momentum. Los Angeles teachers, who are currently negotiating, noted CTU in a recent newsletter.

"Organizing is how we resist political agendas to dismantle our public schools and public services. And we can Win Our Future in Los Angeles, just like our union siblings in Chicago," the United Teachers Los Angeles newsletter read.

Still, serious funding questions remain.

The district has a roughly \$500 million annual deficit and a pending \$175 million pension reimbursement to the city. The district is also about to enter contract negotiations with the principals' union.

Martinez said the first year of the contract is covered, but there's uncertainty after that.

Where the two sides agree is that the talks took too long.

As Trump took office, union organizers said there was more gravity to their work, even as both sides in the Democratic stronghold are aligned on issues including immigrant rights.

"We had a sense of urgency, we had a sense of responsibility," Davis Gates said. "The district shared the responsibility, but not the urgency."

School officials accused the union of taking their time.

"We should have had this contract months ago," Martinez said.

## **China's Xi Jinping says there are no winners in a tariff war as he visits Southeast Asia**

By HUIZHONG WU and ANIRUDDHA GHOSAL Associated Press

HANOI, Vietnam (AP) — China's leader Xi Jinping said no one wins in a trade war as he kicked off a diplomatic tour of Southeast Asia on Monday, presenting China as a force for stability in contrast with U.S. President Donald Trump's latest moves on tariffs,

Although Trump has paused some tariffs, he has kept in place 145% duties on China, the world's second-largest economy.

"There are no winners in a trade war, or a tariff war," Xi wrote in an editorial jointly published in Vietnamese and Chinese official media. "Our two countries should resolutely safeguard the multilateral trading system, stable global industrial and supply chains, and open and cooperative international environment."

Xi's visit lets China show Southeast Asia it is a "responsible superpower in the way that contrasts with the way the U.S. under President Donald Trump presents to the whole world," said Nguyen Khac Giang, a visiting fellow at Singapore's ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.

While Trump has said he respects Xi, he interpreted the meeting between the two Asian leaders as a

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sign they were attempting to put the U.S. at a disadvantage on trade.

Talking to reporters in the Oval Office, Trump said China and Vietnam were trying “to figure out how do we screw the United States of America.”

Xi was greeted on the tarmac by Vietnam’s President Luong Cuong at the start of his two-day visit, a mark of honor not often given to visitors, said Nguyen Thanh Trung, a professor of Vietnamese studies at Fulbright University Vietnam. Students of a drum art group performed as women waved the red and yellow Chinese and Communist Party flags.

While Xi’s trip likely was planned earlier, it has become significant because of the tariff fight between China and the U.S. The visit offers a path for Beijing to shore up its alliances and find solutions for the high trade barrier that the U.S. has imposed on Chinese exports.

In Hanoi, Xi met with Vietnam’s Communist Party General Secretary To Lam, his counterpart. “In the face of turmoil and disruption in the current global context, China and Vietnam’s commitment to peaceful development, and deepening of friendship and cooperation and has brought the world valuable stability and certainty,” he said.

He also met with Vietnam’s Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh. The two sides signed a series of memorandums in areas including strengthening cooperation in supply chains, railroad development and environmental protection, according to Associated Press footage of the signed documents.

Nhan Dan, the official mouthpiece of Vietnam’s Communist Party, said that China and Vietnam will speed up a \$8 billion railway project connecting the two countries in a deal that was approved in February.

Xi’s visit sends a message to the region

The timing of the visit sends a “strong political message that Southeast Asia is important to China,” said Huong Le-Thu of the International Crisis Group think tank. She said that given the severity of Trump’s tariffs and despite the 90-day pause, Southeast Asian nations were anxious that the tariffs, if implemented, could complicate their development.

Vietnam is experienced at balancing its relations with the U.S and China. It is run under a communist, one-party system like China but has had a strong relationship with the U.S.

In 2023, it was the only country that received both U.S. President Joe Biden and China’s Xi Jinping. That year it also upgraded the U.S. to its highest diplomatic level, the same as China and Russia.

Vietnam was one of the biggest beneficiaries of countries trying to decouple their supply chains from China, as businesses moved here. China is its biggest trading partner, and China-Vietnam trade surged 14.6% year-on-year in 2024, according to Chinese state media.

That trade relationship goes both ways.

“The trip to Vietnam, Malaysia, and Cambodia is all about how China can really insulate itself against the tariffs from Trump,” said Nguyen Khac Giang, an analyst at Singapore’s ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute, noting that Xi visited twice in the decade after he became president in 2013. But he has visited Vietnam twice more in the past two years.

But the intensification of the trade war has put Vietnam in a “very precarious situation” given the impression in the U.S. that Vietnam is serving as a backdoor for Chinese goods, said Giang. Vietnam had been hit with 46% tariffs under Trump’s order before the 90-day pause.

China and Vietnam have real long-term differences, including territorial disputes in the South China Sea, where Vietnam has faced off with China’s coast guard but does not often publicize the confrontations.

After Vietnam, Xi is expected to go to Malaysia next and then Cambodia.

## **Fire set at Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro’s home is the latest in a string of political violence**

By JOHN SEEWER Associated Press

Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro angrily called for an end to rising political violence just hours after a man broke into the governor’s mansion and set it on fire, forcing Shapiro and his family to flee into the night.



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It was the latest in a string of partisan political attacks in the United States.

"This kind of violence is becoming far too common in our society. And I don't give a damn if it's coming from one particular side or the other," Shapiro said. "It has to stop."

While police have not said what might have motivated the attack early Sunday, court documents say the suspect admitted he hated Shapiro and was plotting to beat him with a hammer.

"The attacker basically wasn't a fan of anybody," President Donald Trump told reporters on Monday. "And certainly, a thing like that cannot be allowed to happen."

Here's a look at other outbursts of political violence around the country in recent years:

Elon Musk's Tesla properties set ablaze

In recent months, Elon Musk's electric vehicle company has become a target since President Donald Trump put Musk in charge of slashing government spending. Cybertrucks have been torched, and bullets and Molotov cocktails have been aimed at Tesla showrooms.

Trump assassination attempts

At a Pennsylvania campaign rally in July, Trump was grazed on the ear by one of a hail of bullets fired by a gunman, fatally shooting one Trump supporter and badly wounding two others, before police killed him. Then in September, a man with a rifle apparently plotted to kill Trump but was discovered in some shrubbery near the presidents' golf course in Florida and arrested by Secret Service agents.

New Mexico Republican headquarters torched

In March, a fire damaged the entryway to the New Mexico Republican Party headquarters and was being being investigated as arson. Incendiary materials were found on the scene and spray paint on the side of the building read "ICE=KKK," an apparent reference to the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, which has ramped up deportation efforts against people living in the country illegally.

Democratic National Committee office shot up

A volley of BB pellets and gunshots were fired at the glass front door and a window of a Democratic National Committee office in Arizona on three separate occasions last fall. Authorities said a man later arrested had more than 120 guns and over 250,000 rounds of ammunition in his home.

Nancy Pelosi's husband attacked at home

Then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's husband was bludgeoned with a hammer by a man who broke into their San Francisco home in 2022. The man later admitted during trial testimony that he planned to hold the speaker hostage and that his plan was to end what he viewed as government corruption.

Candidate for Louisville mayor targeted

Current Louisville Mayor Craig Greenberg, a Democrat, was the target of a shooting attempt at his campaign headquarters on Feb. 14, 2022 but was uninjured, although a bullet grazed the sweater he was wearing. The man who shot him was later convicted and sentenced to 17 years and six months in prison.

Capitol stormed on Jan. 6, 2021

Extremist groups carried out an unprecedented assault on the nation's democracy by storming the U.S. Capitol to protest the 2020 presidential election results and Trump's defeat. After winning back the White House, Trump issued a sweeping grant of clemency to all 1,500-plus people charged in the Capitol riot.

Plot to kidnap Michigan's governor

Anti-government extremists were arrested in 2020 in what authorities said was a plot to kidnap Democratic Gov. Gretchen Whitmer at her vacation home and start a civil war. Two men portrayed as the leaders were convicted of conspiracy two years later.

Shooting at Republican baseball practice

An attacker opened fire with a rifle on Republican lawmakers practicing for a charity baseball game in 2017 in northern Virginia, critically wounding U.S. Rep. Steve Scalise of Louisiana. Authorities said the shooter, who was killed by police, was fueled by rage against Trump and GOP legislators.

## Blue Origin launches an all-female celebrity crew with Katy Perry, Gayle King and Lauren Sanchez

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin launched his fiancée Lauren Sanchez into space Monday with an all-female celebrity crew that included Katy Perry and Gayle King.

It was the latest wave in space tourism, where more of the rich and famous than ever before — or lucky and well-connected — can enter the zero-gravity realm traditionally dominated by professional astronauts.

The New Shepard rocket blasted off on the quick up-and-down trip from West Texas. The fringes of space beckoned 66 miles (107 kilometers) up and provided a few precious minutes of weightlessness.

Sanchez, a helicopter pilot and former TV journalist, invited the others along for the 10-minute, fully automated flight, packing on the star power with singer-songwriter Perry and "CBS Mornings" co-host King. Moved by the views of Earth below, Perry said she couldn't resist singing "What a Wonderful World" in space.

Also sharing the ride were film producer Kerianne Flynn; Aisha Bowe, a former NASA engineer who started her own companies to promote science education; and Amanda Nguyen, a scientist who studied planets around other stars and now advocates for survivors of sexual violence.

Blue Origin declined to say how much the flight cost or who paid what. The trip came two months before Sanchez and Bezos marry in Venice.

It was the 11th human spaceflight for the Washington state-based company, founded by Bezos in 2000 after making a fortune with Amazon. Bezos strapped in for Blue Origin's first space tourist flight in 2021 and accompanied the latest crew to the pad.

The celebrity launch was the nation's first spaceflight where women filled each seat. The only other all-female crew in 64 years of human spaceflight was back in 1963. That's when Soviet cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova launched by herself, becoming the first woman in space. Tereshkova spent three days off the planet.

Even after the latest launch, women represent barely 15% of the more than 700 people who have traveled into space. Sanchez said she deliberately chose women to launch with her, each of them eager to inspire both the young and old to dream big, and even commissioned special flight suits.

The launch brought out VIPs to West Texas including Oprah Winfrey; Kris Jenner and other members of the Kardashian family; former NASA astronaut Mae Jemison, who became the first Black woman in space in 1992; and several women who previously have flown on private flights. Winfrey, a close friend of King, wiped away tears when the capsule reached space and the passengers were heard marveling at the moon and shouting with joy.

As the women were buckling up for the ride back, Perry broke into song. Despite urging by her crewmates, she resisted singing "Roar" or her other tunes and instead chose "What a Wonderful World."

"It's not about me. It's not about singing my songs," Perry said following the flight. "It's about a collective energy in there. It's about us." At a news conference later, she stressed, "We weren't just taking up space. We were making space for the future."

Bezos opened the capsule's hatch minutes after touchdown, embracing Sanchez, the first one out. As they emerged, Perry and King knelt and kissed the ground. "Oh my God, that was amazing," said King, who considers herself an anxious airplane flyer.

Three hours later, Sanchez said she was still trying to process everything. "Profound is like the one word I would use," she said.

This wasn't the first Blue Origin launch with marquee names.

"Star Trek" actor William Shatner caught a lift to space with Blue Origin in 2021 at age 90, soon after Bezos' inaugural trip. He was followed by former New York Giants defensive end and TV host Michael Strahan and Laura Shepard Churchley, the eldest daughter of Mercury astronaut Alan Shepard, for whom the rocket is named. Two aviation pioneers who missed out on space when they were younger — Wally Funk and Ed Dwight — also rocketed away at ages 82 and 90, respectively.

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Most of Blue Origin's passengers — 58 counting the latest launch — have been business or science types, TV hosts or YouTubers. Ticket prices are not disclosed.

The Russian Space Agency also has launched its share of space tourists, beginning with a California financier in 2001. Two decades later, a Russian actress filmed aboard the International Space Station.

Elon Musk's SpaceX also sells multi-day trips to private customers. SpaceX's first client to fly, billionaire tech entrepreneur Jared Isaacman already has launched twice and performed the first private spacewalk. He's now set to become NASA's next administrator if confirmed by the Senate.

Chinese-born bitcoin investor Chun Wang just returned from the first spaceflight to carry people over the north and south poles. Wang picked up the whole SpaceX tab for himself and three polar explorers for an undisclosed sum.

"In this exciting new era of commercial spaceflight, the dream of becoming an astronaut is no longer limited to a select few," Wang said via X last week.

## **Brazil's Bolsonaro remains in intensive care after 12-hour surgery**

By MAURICIO SAVARESE Associated Press

SAO PAULO (AP) — Brazilian doctors said Monday that former President Jair Bolsonaro is conscious and remains in intensive care following a 12-hour surgery for a bowel obstruction the day prior. The far-right leader was hospitalized due to problems related to long-term effects of being stabbed in the abdomen in September 2018.

Doctors at the DF Star Hospital said in a press conference in Brasilia that they do not expect to discharge Bolsonaro this week. Cláudio Birolini, the head of the medical team, said the former president has experienced discomfort in his abdomen since Christmas.

"That is a sign that something hasn't been going well," Birolini said. "The beginning of this is the stabbing. After that, all surgeries of reconstruction have a role in the current situation."

Birolini and his team said there were no complications during the procedure.

Cardiologist Leandro Echenique described the procedure as Bolsonaro's "most complex" surgery since the stabbing. The medical team expected the procedure to be as long as it was.

"It is going to be a very delicate and prolonged post-surgery," Echenique said. The former president is expected to stand trial in the next few months at Brazil's Supreme Court for allegedly attempting to stage a coup in January, 2023, with riots led by his supporters in Brasilia.

Bolsonaro was admitted Friday to a hospital in Santa Cruz, a small city in Rio Grande do Norte, and later transferred to a hospital in the state's capital, Natal. On Saturday, his family requested his transfer to Brasilia, doctors said.

Bolsonaro has been in and out of hospitals since the attack at a campaign event before Brazil's 2018 presidential election. He underwent several surgeries during his presidency from 2019-2022.

## **Majority Leader John Thune's 'old-fashioned' approach to the Senate has kept Trump on board so far**

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate, once again, was working into the early morning hours Friday with its new majority leader, Republican John Thune, setting the pace.

It wasn't until just after 2 a.m. that the last of the senators had straggled into the chamber to cast their vote on the confirmation of retired Air Force Lt. Gen. Dan "Razin" Caine for chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The vote capped a grinding start to the year for the Senate that included several all-night floor sessions and — importantly for Thune — the quickest top-level Cabinet confirmation process in the past 20 years.

At the outset, however, such an outcome was far from assured. President Donald Trump was making demands that the new Senate leader be ready to put the chamber into recess so he could skip over the



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Senate confirmation process altogether. Faced with that prospect, Thune, a South Dakota Republican, said his message in conversations with the president was, "Let us do this the old-fashioned way and just use the clock and grind it out, and then we'll see where we go from there."

That approach has been successful at allowing Thune to show Trump the Senate's worth while also preserving its constitutional role in installing a president's Cabinet. But the decision to push forward on even Trump's most unconventional Cabinet nominees has also come at a cost.

Several Cabinet officials have been intimately involved in the early controversies of Trump's second term, from discussing military plans on an unclassified Signal app chat to encouraging the Republican president to follow through with steep tariffs on trading partners.

GOP senators, many of whom still hold traditional Republican ideas, have often had to mount a response. The Republican chair of the Senate Armed Services Committee, Sen. Roger Wicker of Mississippi, last month initiated an investigation by the Pentagon's inspector general into whether classified information was shared on Signal by Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth. And GOP senators more recently made a concerted effort to encourage Trump to negotiate trade deals with other nations rather than listen to advisers like Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick, who was adamant that tariffs were there to stay.

In an interview with The Associated Press shortly after Trump announced a pause on tariffs to most nations, Thune said the announcement showed the president is "responding to the feedback he's given."

"I think everybody wants to see him succeed with this, wants to see the country succeed and wants to make sure that we're gauging and calibrating — as some of these major policy shifts are being made — the impacts that they have," Thune added.

That balance — Thune's supportive yet still cautious approach — has marked his early months working with a president with whom, until last year, he had a fraught relationship. So far, Trump and Thune have stayed on upbeat terms, but the stakes will only rise for Republicans in the coming months as they try to lift through Congress a massive package of tax breaks and spending cuts on party-line votes.

During Trump's first term, it took barely a year — and some setbacks in Congress — before Trump began openly feuding with then Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell.

Discussing the reconciliation package as he sat in McConnell's old leadership office, Thune stressed that for the GOP's marquee legislation to work, "Everybody's got to be rolling in the same direction. It takes a lot of teamwork."

A check and balance

As Trump has entered office with practically total command of the Republican Party and an agenda to upend the federal government and its role in society, Thune acknowledged that Trump has been aggressive in his use of executive power. But he argued that it was no different from how previous presidents wanted to "take as much power as they possibly can," pointing to President Joe Biden's moves to cancel student debt and boost government food assistance.

"Our job is to do what we can to support the president and his agenda," Thune said. "But, you know, be that important check and balance, too, that the Founders intended."

Still, as Trump has blazed through constitutional norms with sweeping orders that endanger civil rights, government programs, the federal workforce and America's relationship with allies, Republicans in Congress have stood by.

"We need Republicans to get off the sidelines, including the majority leader, and say, 'This is unacceptable behavior by any president,'" said Sen. Mark Kelly, an Arizona Democrat.

Kelly cited Trump's disparagement of NATO and comments about taking over countries like Canada and Greenland and the Panama Canal. "The damage that Donald Trump is doing to our international reputation is not something we easily recover from," he said.

Still, Kelly added that Thune "deserves some credit" for making the "mechanics of the Senate function well."

Thune has been aggressive in trying to get the Senate to move faster through its votes. He noted that he had allowed one recent vote session to close before he had even had a chance to cast his vote because he was at the White House for a meeting.

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It's an incremental change in the Senate's timing, but one that Thune, a former runner, hopes will contribute to the chamber becoming more active and deliberative in shaping the law. He won the leadership contest in part by pledging to allow individual senators to have more of a say in crafting and amending legislation.

So far, the Senate has also gained bipartisan support to pass bills that will increase prison penalties for fentanyl traffickers as well as mandate the detainment of immigrants who are in the U.S. illegally and are accused of theft and violent crimes.

Sen. Eric Schmitt, a Missouri Republican who has been vocal about changes to the way legislation advances, said Thune has "done a great job," although the Senate hasn't had much of a chance to work on legislation.

"The truth of the matter," he added, "is we've been consumed by confirmations."

## **Pfizer ends development of potential pill obesity treatment**

By TOM MURPHY AP Health Writer

Pfizer is ending the development of its potential once-daily pill treatment for obesity before venturing into the biggest and most expensive level of clinical testing.

The drugmaker said Tuesday that it would stop studying danuglipron after a participant in one of its trials experienced a possible drug-induced liver injury that ended once the person stopped taking the treatment.

The once-daily version of the pill was in early-stage testing, with researchers trying to figure out the best dose for patients, a spokeswoman said. The company intended to move the drug into late-stage testing, which is generally the last phase of development before a company submits the potential treatment to government regulators for approval.

A company official said in a statement that Pfizer still plans to develop other potential obesity treatments in earlier stages of testing.

Obesity treatments have become one of the more promising and lucrative sectors of drug development for pharmaceutical companies. Eli Lilly and Co.'s Zepbound, for instance, brought in nearly \$5 billion in sales in 2024, its first full year on the market.

But leading treatments like Zepbound and Novo Nordisk's Wegovy are injectable. Drugmakers are eager to develop an easier-to-take pill version for patients who don't want to deal with needles and daily injections.

Lilly researchers expect to see data this year from studies of a couple potential oral treatments it has developed.

While the drugs have become top-sellers, many patients have had a hard time getting them either due to recently concluded shortages or patchy insurance coverage. Both Lilly and Novo have recently announced price cuts, but the treatments can still cost hundreds of dollars a month, putting them out of reach for some people without coverage.

Pfizer said in late 2023 that it would abandon a twice-daily version of danuglipron that had advanced to mid-stage testing after more than half the patients in a clinical trial stopped taking it.

A company spokeswoman said the decision announced Monday meant Pfizer would also stop testing danuglipron in combination with other drugs to treat obesity.

Shares of New York-based Pfizer Inc. advanced 12 cents to \$22.03 in morning trading Monday.

## **Former Malaysian leader Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who extended political freedoms, dies at 85**

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — Former Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, a moderate who extended the country's political freedoms but was criticized for lackluster leadership, has died of heart disease. He was 85.

Affectionately known as "Pak Lah," or uncle Lah, Abdullah was admitted to Kuala Lumpur's State Institute of Heart on Sunday after experiencing breathing difficulties. He was closely monitored by a cardiac

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specialists team, but passed away on Monday at 7:10 p.m. despite all medical efforts, the hospital said in a statement.

Abdullah was first admitted to the hospital in April 2024, after being diagnosed with spontaneous pneumothorax, a collapsed lung that occurs without any apparent cause. In 2022, his son-in-law, Khairy Jamaluddin, disclosed that Abdullah had dementia that was progressively worsening. He said Abdullah had trouble speaking and could not recognize his family.

Abdullah, Malaysia's fifth leader, served from 2003 to 2009, when he was pressured to resign to take responsibility for the governing coalition's dismal results in national elections. He kept a low profile after leaving politics.

Abdullah took office in October 2003, riding a wave of popularity after replacing Mahathir Mohamad, a domineering, sharp-tongued leader known for his semi-authoritarian rule during 22 years in office.

Abdullah opened political space after Mahathir

A seasoned politician who held many Cabinet positions, Abdullah was handpicked by Mahathir, who believed a soft-spoken, unambitious leader would maintain his policies.

Initially, Abdullah won support with promises of institutional reforms and his brand of moderate Islam. He pledged greater political freedoms with more space for critics, and vowed to end corruption after a government minister was hauled to court on graft allegations.

"During his rule, the country transitioned from a very authoritarian rule under Mahathir to a more multifaceted regime. It provided some breathing space for many Malaysians after more than two decades of very suffocating rule," said Oh Ei Sun from Singapore's Institute of International Affairs.

Months after taking office, Abdullah led his National Front governing coalition to a landslide victory in a 2004 general election seen as a stamp of approval of his leadership. That helped him partially step out of Mahathir's shadow, but the euphoria didn't last.

Facing criticism early on

In the following years, Abdullah faced criticism inside and outside his party for generally lackluster and ineffectual leadership. He didn't follow through on promises to eradicate corruption, reform the judiciary and strengthen institutions such as the police and the civil service.

Critics slammed Abdullah for concurrently taking on the finance minister and internal security minister posts. He was often criticized for dozing off during meetings or at public events, which he blamed on a sleep disorder. Khairy, his son-in-law, led a team of advisers in the Prime Minister's Office whom critics said influenced Abdullah's decisions and controlled access to him.

Abdullah also fell out with Mahathir after he axed some of the former leader's projects, including a proposed bridge to Singapore. Mahathir turned into one of his fiercest critics and accused Abdullah of nepotism and inefficiency.

While Abdullah was viewed as a weak leader, he ushered in limited freedom of speech and allowing a more critical media. Conservatives in his party said that was his undoing as it bolstered a newly resurgent opposition led by reformist Anwar Ibrahim. Anwar, Malaysia's current leader, became prime minister after 2022 elections.

Protests followed by electoral loss

In late 2007, Abdullah faced a series of massive street protests on issues including fuel hikes, demands for electoral reforms and fairer treatment for ethnic minorities. The protests shook his administration. Police cracked down on the rallies and Abdullah warned he would sacrifice public freedoms for stability.

In the March 2008 general election, his National Front suffered one of its worst results in a huge blow to Abdullah. It failed to secure a two-thirds legislative majority for the first time in 40 years, yielding 82 seats to the opposition in the 222-member Parliament. It also lost an unprecedented five states.

Abdullah initially refused to step down, but pressure grew. Mahathir quit the United Malays National Organization, the linchpin of the governing coalition, to protest Abdullah's leadership. Dissidents within UMNO openly called on him to resign to take responsibility for the dismal election performance.

Abdullah caved in and handed over power to his deputy, Najib Razak, in April 2009.

A lifetime in civil service and politics



Born in the northern state of Penang on Nov. 26, 1939, Abdullah came from a religious family. His grandfather was the first mufti, or Islamic jurist, of Penang. Abdullah received a bachelor's degree in Islamic Studies from the University of Malaya.

After graduating, he entered the civil service for 14 years before resigning in 1978 to become a member of parliament. During a bitter dispute within UMNO in the 1980s, Abdullah sided with a group that opposed Mahathir. After Mahathir prevailed, Abdullah was sacked as defense minister but was later brought back into the Cabinet as foreign minister in 1991.

In January 1999, Abdullah was appointed deputy prime minister and home affairs minister before succeeding Mahathir as prime minister in 2003.

Abdullah's first wife, Endon Mahmood, died in 2005 after a battle with breast cancer. They have two children and seven grandchildren. He remarried two years later to Jeanne Abdullah, who was earlier married to the brother of Abdullah's first wife. She has two children from her previous marriage.

## **UK police struggled to counter online falsehoods that fueled summer violence, lawmakers say**

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Outdated laws unfit for the social media age hampered police from countering false claims that helped fuel anti-immigrant violence in Britain last summer, an investigation by lawmakers said Monday.

Parliament's Home Affairs Committee said limits on disclosing details of criminal investigations "created an information vacuum that allowed disinformation to flourish" after three children were stabbed to death at a summer dance party in July.

The attack in the northwest England town of Southport shocked the country and triggered days of disorder after far-right activists seized on incorrect reports that the attacker was a Muslim migrant who had recently arrived in the U.K.

Over several nights, crowds attacked housing for asylum-seekers, as well as mosques, libraries and community centers, in the worst street violence Britain had seen since riots in 2011.

Attacker Axel Rudakubana, who was 17 when he carried out the rampage at a Taylor Swift-themed dance class, is the British-born son of Rwandan Christian parents. He is serving a life sentence with no chance of parole for 52 years for killing Alice Da Silva Aguiar, 9, Elsie Dot Stancombe, 7, and Bebe King, 6, and wounding eight other children and two adults.

Longstanding contempt-of-court rules, intended to ensure fair trials, hampered police in correcting online misinformation, and a ban on naming suspects under 18 meant the attacker's identity was withheld from the public for several days.

A tweet falsely identifying the attacker, posted on the day of the stabbings, was retweeted thousands of times and viewed by millions of people, the lawmakers said. Police did not state that the information was false until the next day, and even then did not release the attacker's name.

Conservative lawmaker Karen Bradley, who heads the Home Affairs Committee, said "bad actors sought to exploit the unspeakable tragedy that unfolded in Southport."

"By failing to disclose information to the public, false claims filled the gap and flourished online, further undermining confidence in the police and public authorities," she said. "The criminal justice system will need to ensure its approach to communication is fit for the social media age."

The committee of lawmakers from both government and opposition parties also said police struggled to monitor the sheer volume of content on social media. It called for government support "to monitor and respond to social media at a national level."

The government said it agreed that "social media has put well-established principles around how we communicate after attacks like this under strain, and we must be able to tackle misinformation head on." It has asked the Law Commission to carry out a review into contempt of court rules.

The government also has set up a public inquiry into how the system failed to stop the killer, who had

been referred to the authorities multiple times over his obsession with violence.

The lawmakers' committee, which heard from police, prosecutors and experts during its inquiry, also said there was no evidence to support allegations of "two-tier policing" in Britain. Politicians and activists on the political right have argued that those arrested over the summer disorder were treated more harshly than climate change activists or Black Lives Matter protesters.

More than 1,000 people have faced criminal charges over the violence, which saw 69 police officers treated in hospitals.

"Those participating in disorder were not policed more strongly because of their supposed political views but because they were throwing missiles, assaulting police officers and committing arson," the lawmakers said. "It was disgraceful to see the police officers who bore the brunt of this violence being undermined by baseless claims of 'two-tier policing.'"

## **As legacy of Ford fades in Brazil, China's BYD looks to extend global lead in EV sales**

By FABIANO MAISONNAVE Associated Press

CAMACARI, Brazil (AP) — When Chinese automaker BYD Co. announced plans to build a massive factory in the hardscrabble city of Camacari, in Brazil's northeastern Bahia state, locals saw a new beginning. After years of economic stagnation following Ford Motor Co.'s exit from the region in 2021, there was hope that the global leader in electric vehicles would bring back well-paying jobs and a brighter future.

The timing seemed right. Brazil, the world's sixth-largest auto market, is seeing a surge in EV sales—and BYD is leading the charge. For Camacari, the deal promised to fill the economic vacuum left by the American company, which had once been the city's largest employer.

Then plans went off track.

A December raid led by Brazilian authorities rescued 163 Chinese nationals said to be working in "slavery-like" conditions at the site. A video from the Labor Prosecutor's Office showed dormitories with beds lacking mattresses and makeshift cooking facilities. The company postponed plans to begin its first production line in March and has not established a new timeline, spreading fears among Camacari workers.

"When BYD announced it was coming here, it sparked a lot of hope in us," said Luizmar Santana Pereira, a metalworker and former Ford employee, who has been working as a taxi driver. "We've been waiting for this job opportunity, but so far, we haven't seen it."

After the raid, a spokesperson based at BYD's China headquarters denied wrongdoing, saying in a post on the Weibo social media site that the accusations were an attempt at "smearing" Chinese brands and China. The post also blamed "foreign forces" for the allegation and criticized media reports.

In a statement disseminated in Brazil, the carmaker adopted a more conciliatory tone. The company said it "does not tolerate disrespect for Brazilian law and human dignity" and rescinded the contract with Chinese construction company Jinjiang, which had brought the workers.

In Brazil, ample room for BYD to grow

EVs are spreading fast in Brazil, Latin America's most populous nation. Sales jumped 85% in 2024, reaching over 170,000 units, including fully electric and hybrid vehicles, according to the Brazilian Association of Electric Vehicles. That accounted for about 7% of new car sales in the country.

The growth is spearheaded by BYD. Seven out of 10 EVs sold in the country are from the brand, which also leads hybrid sales. In major cities such as Sao Paulo and Brasilia, imported BYD cars and dealerships have become a common sight. In Brazil's capital, it's the best-selling brand, whether EV or gas-powered.

Another Chinese EV maker, GWM, also recently announced plans to open a factory in Brazil after acquiring a shuttered Mercedes-Benz facility in the industrialized state of Sao Paulo.

BYD's inroads in Brazil are in tandem with the company's global growth. The world's leading EV company logged a record \$107 billion in revenue in 2024 as its sales of electric and hybrid vehicles jumped 40%, surpassing American rival Tesla. This year, plans include the inauguration of its first car factory in Europe, currently under construction in Hungary.

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Brazil's policies are driving EV sales and production, according to Adalberto Maluf, national secretary of Urban Environment and Environmental Quality.

In an interview with The Associated Press in Brasilia, Maluf cited incentives enacted in 2024 that favor electric motors, tax reductions for lower-emission cars and a new air quality program with nationwide monitoring and pollution reduction goals.

Brazil is the one of the top 10 emitters of greenhouse gases, contributing around 3% of global emissions, according to nonprofit Climate Watch. However, pollution from energy does not play a big role, as about half of greenhouse gas emissions come from deforestation, mostly in the Amazon, followed by agriculture. About 85% of the country's electricity comes from renewable sources.

For Maluf, who worked for almost nine years at BYD Brazil, the country is attractive to Chinese electric car makers for reasons ranging from the size of its market to the presence of several auto parts suppliers and the strong political relationship between the two countries.

"Brazilians have no geopolitical issues with China. If you ask, 'Are you against China?' most people won't have a strong opinion about it," he said.

"In the U.S., however, they do, because it's part of the president's rhetoric," he added, referring to President Donald Trump's frequent comments about China "ripping off" America on trade.

It's unclear what is next for BYD factory

Since the raid, BYD has not allowed press visits inside its Camacari premises, citing concerns about trade secrets. It's unclear if BYD is still on track to turn the former Ford site into its largest plant outside China by the end of 2026.

When AP journalists visited in March for several days, they saw only a few construction workers at the large site. And one day, while standing on the street adjoining the premises, three BYD guards, one who kept his hand on his gun, incorrectly accused the journalists of flying a drone inside factory boundaries and demanded to see identification. Minutes later, security guards on motorcycles approached, honking and ordering the journalists to stop filming workers.

BYD said its security guards acted appropriately and declined to answer other questions about its operations in Brazil.

While the future of the factory is unclear, the raid and the presence of Chinese workers have gotten the attention of labor unions.

"The Metalworkers Union will not tolerate Chinese workers on the production line. If that happens even in the beginning of the production, we will call for a work stoppage," Júlio Bonfim, the union president, told AP. Bonfim added that there were no objections with BYD employing Chinese technicians and managers, but the factory floor must employ only Brazilians. It was unclear if BYD had agreed to that.

Despite the raid and seemingly slow pace of construction, in the Camacari region the shift from Ford to BYD is increasingly visible. A three-decades-old dealership for the American brand named Indiana, in tribute to the U.S. state, now shares space with a BYD reseller, Mandarin. A local hotel started distributing instructions specifically to Chinese guests, asking them not to hang washed clothes in common areas. And a state lawmaker introduced a bill to rename the city's Henry Ford Avenue, where the plant is located, to BYD Avenue.

## **A British billionaire funded therapeutic food production amid USAID 'craziness.' It won't be enough**

By JAMES POLLARD Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — This "yo-yo" of a year continues for America's nutritional peanut paste manufacturers, nonprofits that have found their lifesaving food packets disrupted by the U.S. State Department's sudden pause in foreign assistance.

Georgia-based MANA Nutrition and Rhode Island-based Edesia Nutrition are two key links in the global supply chain sending nutritional mixtures of ground peanuts, powdered milk, sugar and oil to malnourished children worldwide. American farmers supply ingredients, shipping companies carry paste overseas



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and NGOs distribute the food throughout countries in need. Any delays complicate the network's delicate logistics, relied upon by millions of children.

Yet the U.S. scrapped all of their upcoming contracts to make peanut butter paste, according to an April 4 email shared with The Associated Press detailing the U.S. Agency for International Development's anticipated summer demand. Enough boxes to treat more than 450,000 children in Yemen were cancelled and more than 800,000 others "will not move forward at this time."

Complicating matters further, MANA Nutrition CEO Mark Moore said USAID didn't pay \$20 million in debts accumulated since December until last week. Neither maker was reimbursed by previous deadlines to expedite debt payments.

Keeping MANA afloat amid the U.S. funding chaos is a longtime partner from across the pond: British billionaire hedge fund manager Chris Hohn.

"The reason I can not be in just complete panic right now," Moore said last month, "is Chris."

But the private support and reopened funding spigot are hardly enough to assure producers they will keep reaching youth in impoverished countries. And they don't expect philanthropy to replace government funding forever.

The ups and downs underscore the pain felt even by the few surviving programs of the Trump administration's USAID purge that recently targeted initiatives keeping millions alive.

Edesia Nutrition is still waiting to be made whole — and its production lines are running slowly. Production couldn't restart until Edesia CEO Navyn Salem saw "at least some sign of payment."

"It honestly represents an entire life," she said, watching a suspended conveyor belt in March. "Every hour that goes by."

How the butter gets made

A simple recipe is behind the revolutionary treatment for the estimated 45 million children younger than 5 who suffer from "wasting."

Ten ready-to-eat pouches are filled every second inside MANA's rural factory. Locally sourced peanuts are roasted and cooled. Rollers separate kernels from skin before the peanuts are ground into paste and blended with powdered sugar. Kettles heat the final product to kill bacterial growth.

The sticky paste gets pumped into sachets resembling oversized McDonald's ketchup packets. They don't need refrigeration and have a two-year shelf life. Each contains 500 calories, providing vitamins and nutrients necessary for early brain development. Malnourished children can be rehabilitated in six weeks by eating three of these energy-packed meal replacements a day.

The usual cost? About \$40 for a 150-packet box.

This "miracle food" became humanitarians' go-to tool for reducing undernutrition, which contributes to nearly half of deaths among children under age 5. NGOs forecast countries' need months in advance. MANA and Edesia compete for government contracts to make the paste. USAID buys their boxes and ships them overseas. Partners such as UNICEF and the World Food Program deliver them.

Salem compares Plumpy'Nut — the popular brand name given by French company Nutriset — to baby formula. When the U.S. experienced a shortage, she said, parents didn't feed cookies to their children instead.

"We don't make a nice-to-have food," she said. "You can't replace it with something else."

'Uncertainty and craziness'

All the grinding and mixing was supposed to halt Jan. 29 when MANA and Edesia received stop-work orders from the U.S. State Department.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio said the administration sought a program-by-program review of which USAID projects, criticized as liberal, make "America safer, stronger or more prosperous." He moved to keep strictly life-saving emergency programs going — but confusion reigned over exemptions.

Moore ignored it nonetheless. "When you have 100,000 pounds of peanut butter surging through a system you can't just really stop," he said.

Welcome news came a week later when the stop orders were rescinded. In late February, however,

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Moore said USAID contracts totaling \$50 million — enough to treat 300,000 children — were cancelled. That included requests for countries high on the Famine Early Warning System Network's list of places expected to most need humanitarian food assistance.

Reinstatements arrived late March 2 and MANA began squeezing ready-to-use therapeutic food the following morning after about one week down.

"We're grateful," Moore said. "But there's been a whole lot of uncertainty and craziness injected into our lives."

Thousands of Plumpy'Nut boxes piled up in Edesia's warehouses after the Trump administration paused contracts for their truckers. Salem said some shippers even had contracts terminated while in transit.

Maersk Line, Limited — a container shipping company that transports ready-to-use therapeutic food, or RUTF — worked with the U.S. government to comply with the foreign aid pause while "minimizing" supply chain disruptions, according to senior communications and media advisor Patrick Fitzgerald.

Salem halted production on two lines for the first time since her nonprofit's 2010 founding. Edesia finally received \$16 million in April for USAID orders shipped last year, she said, but still faces a \$20 million hole that opened when the Trump administration froze humanitarian spending abroad. Lacking payments and clarity, she said she was forced to lay off 10% of Edesia's team.

While this period has been difficult, Salem hopes they emerge "more efficient and end up having more impact on children." But switching production on and off is complicated and takes a toll.

"For sure, the ones who have the most costly price (are) children who will lose their lives as a result of these interruptions," Salem said.

A British philanthropist steps up

Enter Hohn. The London-based investor, who is described as unassuming, has made nutrition a cornerstone of The Children's Investment Fund Foundation.

His charity declined to disclose how much money Hohn has donated to MANA. But neither the nonprofit factory nor Hohn views philanthropy as a sustainable way to fund malnutrition work that already lags behind the immense need.

"Sudden aid cuts have immediate and severe consequences for children, depriving them of life-saving support from products like RUTF," Hohn said in a statement to The Associated Press. "While we are working with partners to minimise the impact, short-term solutions cannot replace stable, long-term government funding."

Hohn — who had previously given more than \$250 million to MANA — called for "urgent action" to bridge the funding gap and "prevent further suffering." The World Food Program has cut food rations and suspended nutrition assistance in recent years amid donor countries' dwindling support.

A federal judge on March 10 ordered Trump officials to begin paying the roughly \$2 billion owed to aid groups and businesses up to mid-February.

Therapeutic food composes such a small fraction of U.S. spending that it amounts to a "rounding error," according to Moore. Nobody thought cuts would meaningfully help balance the federal budget.

"All of a sudden, boom. It's in the crosshairs for the first time ever as a partisan-type conversation," he said. "It does, though, highlight how we are at a unique moment where it could be politicized."

## **Rory McIlroy wins Masters playoff to complete the career Grand Slam**

By DOUG FERGUSON AP Golf Writer

AUGUSTA, Ga. (AP) — The closer Rory McIlroy came to fulfilling his lifetime dream — winning the Masters — the more it kept slipping away. Sunday at Augusta National felt like his last 11 years in the majors, blunders mixed in with sheer brilliance.

A two-shot lead gone in two holes. A four-shot lead gone in three holes with a shocker of a mistake. A 5-foot putt on the final hole to win narrowly missed.

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And then McIlroy turned what could have been another major collapse into his grandest moment of all when he hit wedge to 3 feet for birdie in a sudden-death playoff against Justin Rose to become — finally — a Masters champion and take his place in golf history as the sixth player with the career Grand Slam.

"There were points in my career where I didn't know if I would have this nice garment over my shoulders," McIlroy said, that Masters green jacket looking like a perfect fit. "But I didn't make it easy today. I certainly didn't make it easy. I was nervous.

"It was one of the toughest days I've ever had on the golf course."

The reward was greater than he imagined, and it showed. He rapped in that final putt, raised both arms in the air and let the putter fall behind him. He covered his head, dropped to his knees, and before long his forehead was on the green as his chest heaved with emotion.

That was 11 years of pent-up emotion from his last major, when he began to carry the burden of getting the final leg of the Grand Slam. It was 14 years of remembering the time he wasted a four-shot lead with an 80 on the final day as a 21-year-old.

"I started to wonder if it would ever be my time," he said.

The thought could have easily crossed his mind during the final round.

What could have been a coronation for McIlroy along the back nine turned into a heart-racing, lead-changing, jaw-dropping finish at golf's greatest theater that ended with McIlroy sobbing with joy and disbelief.

It ended with more heartache for Rose, who lost to Sergio Garcia in a playoff in 2017 and forced this one with a clutch 20-foot birdie on the 18th hole for a 6-under 66. He wound up joining Ben Hogan as the only players to lose twice in playoffs at Augusta National.

"It's the kind of putt you dream about as a kid, and to have it and hole it, it was a special feeling," Rose said. "And unfortunately, the playoff, they always end so quickly. If you're not the guy to hit the great shot or hole the great putt, it's over. But not really anything I could have done more today."

The joy on McIlroy's face never left him from the time that putt dropped — on the green, in Butler Cabin when defending champion Scottie Scheffler first helped him into the green jacket, and during the trophy presentation on the 18th green.

"My dreams have been made today," McIlroy said.

Moments later, speaking to 4-year-old daughter Poppy, he told her: "Never give up on your dreams. Never, ever give up on your dreams."

This was shaping up as another horror show for McIlroy, who in 2011 lost a four-shot lead on the final day with a 43 on the back nine, a highlight reel that now can start collecting dust.

"I didn't make it easy today," McIlroy said.

Right when it looked as though he would throw away another major, McIlroy delivered two majestic shots when nothing less would do, two birdies that sent him to the 18th hole with a one-shot lead.

That still wasn't enough. He hit a wedge into the bunker and wound up missing a 5-foot par putt for a 1-over 73 and the first Masters playoff in eight years.

Faced with more failure, McIlroy responded with another booming drive, and this wedge bounced onto the slope of the top shelf with enough spin to trickle down toward the hole, closer and closer, until it stopped 3 feet away.

And when Rose missed from 15 feet, McIlroy finally sealed it.

"I just think all week how I responded to setbacks, that's what I'll take from this week," McIlroy said, though he could have been speaking for the last decade. "Couldn't be more proud I myself for that and being able to back bounce when I needed to."

McIlroy went 11 long years without any major, knowing the Masters green jacket was all that kept him from joining Tiger Woods, Jack Nicklaus, Gary Player, Ben Hogan and Gene Sarazen as the only winners of golf's four professional majors.

Nicklaus and Player spoke on Thursday how they thought this was his time. Woods was among those to congratulate McIlroy and welcome him to the club.



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So wild was this Sunday at Augusta National that McIlroy set a Masters record as the first champion to make four double bogeys — two in the first round that put him seven shots behind, two in the final round that turned this into a thriller.

U.S. Open champion Bryson DeChambeau, who beat McIlroy at Pinehurst No. 2 last June, had the lead after two holes when McIlroy opened with a double bogey. DeChambeau crashed out with a pair of three-putts and two shots into the water on the back nine, closing with a 75.

Ludvig Aberg, a runner-up in his Masters debut a year ago, suddenly had a share of the lead when McIlroy fell apart on the middle of the back nine. He missed a birdie putt from the fringe to take the lead, then finished bogey-triple bogey.

McIlroy and Rose finished at 11-under 277, two shots ahead of former Masters champion Patrick Reed (69). Scheffler, trying to win the Masters for the third time in four years, never got anything going this week and still shot 69 to finish fourth.

Rose had every reason to believe he threw away his chances on Saturday with a 75 that put him seven shots behind, and then two bogeys on the front nine. Even as he steadied himself, he was four shots back and running out of time.

He did his part in a 10-birdie round and that dynamic birdie putt to cap it off.

McIlroy did his part, too.

Nothing was more shocking than the 13th. McIlroy played it safe, leaving himself a big target from 82 yards away and a lob wedge. He missed his mark by some 20 yards, the ball disappearing into the tributary of Rae's Creek and leading to double bogey.

Rose was on the par-3 16th and hit his tee shot to 4 feet for birdie, and suddenly they were tied. Then, McIlroy hit a weak drive to the right and was blocked by pines. He didn't reach the green, didn't make the par putt and no longer had the lead.

But he was resilient as ever — he's been like that his entire career. Seemingly in trouble left of the 15th fairway, McIlroy hit 7-iron around the trees and onto the green to 6 feet.

He missed the eagle putt — the birdie still helped him regain a share of the lead. Two holes later, facing a semi-blind shot, he drilled 8-iron and chased after it, urging it to "Go! Go! Go! Go!" And it did, barely clearing the bunker and rolling out to 2 feet for birdie and a one-shot lead.

Turns out that wasn't enough, either. He was 5 feet away from victory and badly missed the putt, leaving him more work to do — another chance to fail.

Not this time. The 35-year-old from Northern Ireland never wavered in what he came to Augusta National to do. He leaves with a green jacket.

## **Today in History: April 15, the Titanic sinks in the North Atlantic**

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Tuesday, April 15, the 105th day of 2025. There are 260 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On April 15, 1912, the British luxury liner RMS Titanic sunk in the North Atlantic off Newfoundland just over two and a half hours after hitting an iceberg on its maiden voyage. Over 1,500 people died; 710 survived.

Also on this date:

In 1865, Abraham Lincoln died after being shot by John Wilkes Booth at Ford's Theater the previous evening; Andrew Johnson was sworn in as the 17th president hours later.

In 1947, Jackie Robinson, baseball's first Black major league player of the modern era, made his official debut with the Brooklyn Dodgers on opening day at Ebbets Field. (The Dodgers defeated the Boston Braves, 5-3.)

In 1955, Ray Kroc opened the first franchised McDonald's restaurant in Des Plaines, Illinois.

In 1974, members of the Symbionese Liberation Army held up a branch of the Hibernia Bank in San Francisco; a member of the group was SLA kidnap victim Patricia Hearst. (Hearst later said she had been forced to participate in the robbery.)

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In 1989, a crush of soccer fans at Hillsborough Stadium in Sheffield, England, caused 97 deaths and over 760 injuries.

In 2013, two bombs made from pressure cookers exploded at the Boston Marathon finish line, killing two women and an 8-year-old boy and injuring more than 260.

In 2019, fire swept across the top of the Notre-Dame de Paris cathedral during renovation work on the landmark structure; the blaze collapsed the cathedral's spire and spread to one of its iconic rectangular towers. (The cathedral was restored and reopened to the public in December 2024.)

Today's Birthdays: Actor Claudia Cardinale is 87. Basketball Hall of Famer Michael Cooper is 69. Olympic track & field gold medalist Evelyn Ashford is 68. Actor-screenwriter Emma Thompson is 66. Singer Samantha Fox is 59. Olympic swimming gold medalist Dara Torres is 58. Singer Luis Fonsi is 47. Country singer-songwriter Chris Stapleton is 47. Actor Luke Evans is 46. Actor-writer Seth Rogen is 43. Actor Alice Braga is 42. Singer-songwriter Margo Price is 42. Actor Samira Wiley is 38. Actor Emma Watson is 35. Actor Maisie Williams is 28.