

# Groton Daily Independent

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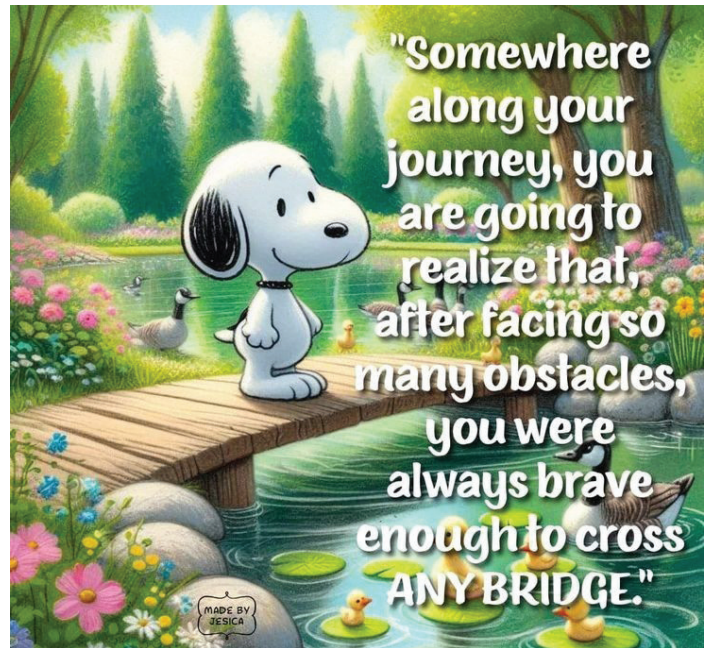
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**The Groton Transit Bus will be going to Madison on Friday, April 18, and Sunday, April 27 for baseball games. For more information contact the Transit at 605-397-8661.**

## **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,

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



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.

## **Thursday, April 17**

Senior Menu: Breaded chicken sandwich, tri-taters, mixed vegetables, cake with strawberries.  
School Breakfast: Breakfast pizza.  
School Lunch: Lasagna bake, garlic toast, corn.  
Smarter Balance Testing for grades 5, 8 11 (Science)  
Track at Milbank, 3:30 p.m.  
Junior High Track at Sisseton, 2 p.m.  
Girls Golf at Mobridge-Pollock, 10 a.m.  
Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion, 7 p.m.  
St. John's Lutheran: Maundy Thursday service at St. John's, 9 a.m.  
United Methodist: Maundy Thursday service at Conde, 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.**

## Pressure on Harvard

President Donald Trump yesterday suggested he could revoke Harvard's tax-exempt status and classify it as a political entity after the university said it wouldn't comply with requests to overhaul its policies and programs. Trump's comments came a day after his administration said it would freeze \$2.26B of Harvard's multiyear funding, highlighting a broader conflict over academic independence and federal oversight.

On Monday, Harvard—America's oldest and wealthiest university—became the first institution to openly reject a series of changes from the Trump administration, which claims such measures are necessary to combat antisemitism on campuses. The changes include removing diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, adopting merit-based admissions and hiring practices, and banning identity-covering masks during student protests. Harvard said the requests infringed upon its independence.

The Trump administration has similarly pressured at least six other universities, including Columbia University, which conceded to a list of reforms last month. Harvard has the largest endowment in the nation at \$53B—about 20% of which can be spent at the school's discretion.

## Pig Liver Trial

The US Food and Drug Administration has approved the first clinical trial to test whether gene-edited pig livers can temporarily support people with sudden liver failure who are ineligible for human organ transplants. Instead of receiving a new liver, the patients will be connected to an external device that filters their blood through a pig liver for 72 hours, giving their own liver time to recover and hopefully regenerate.

The trial, led by biotech firm eGenesis and medical device maker OrganOx, will enroll up to 20 patients between the ages of 10 and 70 with acute-on-chronic liver failure (a sudden worsening of liver disease) or hepatic encephalopathy (a brain disorder caused by reduced liver function). Participants will be monitored for a year to assess safety and liver function changes. Earlier tests in the US using deceased patients showed the pig livers could function for two to three days.

Roughly 35,000 patients are hospitalized each year in the US for acute or acute-on-chronic liver failure, many of whom can't get a timely human transplant.

## Sandstorm in Iraq

At least 3,700 people were hospitalized with respiratory issues in Iraq this week after a large sandstorm swept across the region from Saudi Arabia, filling the skies with an orange haze and reducing visibility to only half a mile. Much of Baghdad, including airports and highways, has been shut down since Sunday as the tiny particles forced people indoors.

Sand or dust storms occur in dry or drought-ridden regions like deserts or plains and valleys with substantial clay and silt deposit. High wind speeds lift the particles and move them potentially hundreds of miles, reducing the sun's light and heat. When inhaled, the fine particles can irritate the lungs, potentially leading to infections. Mechanical equipment is also vulnerable to corrosion and clogs from the dust.

Sandstorms have been common in Iraq for millennia, occurring weekly on average during peak seasons, though this week's event is relatively severe.

Editor's note: Based on reader feedback we received yesterday on our report about Kilmar Abrego Garcia's deportation to El Salvador, we wanted to note there are conflicting reports about his alleged membership in the MS-13 gang and his legal status in the US.

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## Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

"Good Night, and Good Luck," starring George Clooney, hauls in \$3.7M to break its own weekly box office record for a Broadway play.

Los Angeles' Dodger Stadium tapped as baseball venue for 2028 Summer Olympics as LA28 organizers unveil complete venue plan for Olympic Games.

Backstreet Boys' Nick Carter accused in lawsuit of sexual assault; Carter has now been accused by four women of sexual assault.

## Science & Technology

OpenAI reportedly considering its own social media platform to compete with Elon Musk's X, tied to its newest image-generation feature.

AI startup Anthropic's premium Claude chatbot now integrates with Google Workspace, enabling it to reference emails in Gmail, search documents in Google Docs, and schedule events in Google Calendar.

Brain imaging study reveals dogs with elongated brains exhibit stronger connections in olfactory brain regions than dogs with rounder-shaped brains, impacting their sense of smell.

## Business & Markets

US stock markets close lower (S&P 500 -0.2%, Dow -0.4%, Nasdaq -0.0%).

Hewlett Packard Enterprise shares rise 5% after activist Elliott Investment Management takes \$1.5B stake.

Johnson & Johnson says it expects \$400M in tariff-related costs this year, mostly related to China.

Apple airlifted iPhones worth a record \$2B from India last month as US tariffs loomed ... and China is reportedly ordering its airlines to stop accepting deliveries of Boeing jets in response to US import tariffs.

Federal judge scraps US Consumer Financial Protection Bureau rule capping credit card late fees at \$8, says rule prevents card issuers from imposing fees that are proportionate to violations.

## Politics & World Affairs

Measles cases linked to Texas outbreak rise to 561, with 20 new infections confirmed over the last five days and at least 58 people hospitalized so far, per new data from Texas health officials.

Singapore dissolves Parliament, sets general elections for May 3; the People's Action Party, which has ruled Singapore since the country's independence from Malaysia in 1965, is expected to maintain control.

US Justice Department unseals drug trafficking charges against two leaders of Mexican drug cartel La Nueva Familia Michoacana Organization, offering up to \$8M for information leading to their arrest.

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## Newsweek

The  
**Bulletin**

YOUR DAILY BRIEFING OF  
EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW

### WORLD IN BRIEF

IRS tax deadline extended: While Tax Day looms over millions of Americans, taxpayers in at least nine states have been allowed by the Internal Revenue Service to file their individual income tax returns for tax year 2024 a little later, ditching the April 15 deadline.

Ohio State trophy falls apart in JD Vance's hands: Ohio State University's College Football National Championship trophy seemed to fall off its stand just as Vice President JD Vance lifted the hardware up for photo opportunities outside the White House on Monday.

Nuclear deal with Saudi Arabia: As the United States negotiates with Iran to try to curb its nuclear program, it is also advancing towards a preliminary agreement on a civilian nuclear program with one of Iran's main rivals, Saudi Arabia.

Trump health update raises eyebrow: President Trump's annual physical examination results have raised eyebrows after his physician mentioned his "frequent victories in golf events."

F-16 jet fleets on China's doorstep: A Newsweek map shows at least six countries in the Western Pacific region are operating or have placed orders for F-16 fighter jets from the United States, including Taiwan and the Philippines, as they face threats posed by their powerful neighbor, China.

Trump responds to Josh Shapiro arson attack: President Trump said the alleged arsonist who attacked Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro's home was "probably just a whack job."

### Trump Admin Hits Back at Harvard by Freezing \$2.2 Billion in Funding

The rundown: A federal task force under President Donald Trump froze \$2.2 billion in funding for Harvard University on Monday, after the school said it would not abide by the Trump administration's list of demands.

Why it matters: Trump and his administration have ripped into Ivy League institutions like Harvard and Columbia in the wake of nationwide demonstrations and protests related to Israel's war with Hamas in the Gaza Strip. The White House has accused Ivy League universities of allowing antisemitism on campus grounds. In a letter dated Monday, written by Harvard's legal team, the school said it would not give in to the list of the administration's demands, including getting rid of its diversity, equity and inclusion programs. The lawyers noted that they are willing, however, to discuss with the administration current plans to "improve the experience of every member of its community."

TL/DR: Political analyst Craig Agranoff told Newsweek via text that the administration's move to freeze the funding is "complex" and "invites broader questions about government's role in higher education."

What happens now? It's not immediately clear if Harvard will attempt to fight the federal task force in court over its decision to freeze funding.



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## Groton Prairie Mixed Bowling League Week #21 Results

Team Standings: Cheetahs 18, Chipmunks 18, Shihtzus 15, Coyotes 15, Jackelopes 11, Foxes 7

Men's High Games: John Sippel 216 & 199, Brad Larson 199, Ron Belden 196

Women's High Games: Dar Larson 184, Michelle Johnson 172, Vicki Walter 160

Men's High Series: John Sippel 570, Brad Larson 508, Ron Belden 481

Women's High Series: Michelle Johnson 439, Nancy Radke 437, Vicki Walter 429

1st Third Winners: Jackelopes - Hayley Johnson, Brenda Waage, Tony Waage, Brad Waage

2nd Third Winners: Chipmunks - Lori Giedt, Jen Dirks, Charlie Dirks, Butch Farmen

3rd Third Winners: Cheetahs - Brenda Madsen, Dar Larson, Brad Larson, Tony Madsen

Bowl-off Results: Cheetahs won by 22 pins and are our 2025 Champions!!

## Toby Erickson Celebration

Celebration of life for Toby Erickson at Olive Grove Golf Course Clubhouse, Groton, SD

Saturday, April 19 from 1-4 PM.

Come prepared to share stories, laugh and reminisce with Toby's family.



Groton  
Area  
Tigers  
Groton, SD

# GDILIVE

The Living Stations  
Wed, April 16, 7 p.m.  
SEAS Church



A production of the  
**Groton Daily Independent**

For more info: [GDILIVE.COM](http://GDILIVE.COM)

## City Council reviews 2024 finances, holds off on \$1M+ engineering service contract

By Elizabeth Varin

The city of Groton saw a boost in general sales and use tax revenue in 2024, according to the annual report reviewed during Tuesday evening's city council meeting.

While much of the yearly financial summary for the city was similar to years past, there was a notable jump in the general sales and use tax revenue, said city Finance Officer Douglas Heinrich. The 2024 total was \$930,815, compared to \$812,651 in 2023.

"Much of that is likely due to that large baseball tournament we had last year" he said. "That was when we saw a pretty good uptick in concession sales and things like that."

Many of the rest of the financials stayed consistent with previous years, Heinrich said.

In 2024, the city brought in \$2,127,199 in general fund revenue, according to the report. The largest funding source was the general sales and use tax, followed by property taxes (\$772,129), culture and recreation (\$147,000), and shared state revenue (\$105,318).

The city spent \$1,966,362 in general fund expenses, with the top spending categories including highways and streets (\$556,492), police (\$475,828), financial administration (\$411,051), and recreation (\$377,409).

The city ended the year with a surplus of about \$109,000 in its checking account.

In other business, the council reviewed the projected engineering and management costs for the upcoming sewer system improvement project.

The city plans to replace a lift station, increase the force main size and create a new wastewater collection system in the projected \$6.587 million project.

The engineering proposal from IMEG Corp. included a \$490,000 fixed fee for work during the survey, design and bidding phase, and a \$645,000 fixed fee for construction administration and observation.

The engineering fees were included in the funding request for the sewer system improvement project, said April Buller, project manager at IMEG.

The city was notified earlier this month that the South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources had recommended funding the Groton project through a \$4.587 million loan from the Clean Water State Revolving Fund at 3.75 percent for 30 years and an up to \$2 million grant.

Council members hesitated with the large total presented Tuesday.

"It's a large sum of money," commented Councilman Brian Bahr.

No decision was made Tuesday, as the council plans to have a vote about the engineering contract at its May 6 meeting, scheduled to take place at the community center to answer any questions residents may have about the project.

"Maybe we'll wait until then to sign it (the engineering agreement)," said Mayor Scott Hanlon. "But it is what it's going to be."

Council members also discussed the city's dual fuel ordinance.

Dual fuel refers to residences where heat is primarily from electric sources with a fossil fuel backup.

With a recent ordinance change, the minimum charge for those with the dual fuel meters will increase from \$10 per month to \$25 per month. Technology Specialist Paul Kosel told the council he plans to start letting those customers with the dual meters know that the rate will go up in the fall, but that increase could be avoided if the residents hire an electrician to redirect the electric lines to the residents' other electric meter.

The more than 125 homes with the dual fuel meters could decide to keep with the current system. However, Kosel said, the base fee will be increasing.

Councilman Kevin Nehls asked for more time to review the ordinance and dual fuel system. It could be a headache for those who would see a bill increase. Additionally, local electricians would be swamped with that work.

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- The council approved hiring three more seasonal summer staff.
- o Rylen Ekern was hired as a gatekeeper with no previous experience listed.
- o Tenley Frost was hired as a gatekeeper with no previous experience listed.
- o Sydney Kurtz was hired as the day softball coach with no previous experience listed.
- Rylen Ekern had previously been hired as a lifeguard, but was not old enough for that position. Ekern then reapplied for the gatekeeper position and was hired Tuesday night.
- The Groton City Wide Cleanup is scheduled for April 28 through May 2.
- The council approved a resolution to increase rates for its garbage removal services. Heartland Waste's bid increased from its previous contract, which prompted the solid waste rate to go up.

## 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





## The Life of Victoria Lynn Sippel



Victoria "Vickie" Lynn Sippel, a beacon of love and friendship, passed away peacefully, surrounded by her children on April 13, 2025, in Mankato, Minnesota, at the age of 63. Born on March 30, 1962, in Aberdeen, South Dakota, to John "Francis" Luce Sr. and Vivian (Klapperich) Luce, Vickie was a woman whose warmth and thoughtfulness touched all who knew her.

Visitation will be held at Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel on Monday from 5-7 p.m. with a prayer service at 7:00 p.m. Family encourages attendees to wear Disney apparel in memory of Vickie and her love of Disney.

Services will be 2:00 p.m., Tuesday, April 22nd at St. John's Lutheran Church, Groton. Pastor Matt Moldstad of Mankato, MN will officiate. Burial will follow in Union Cemetery, Groton under the direction of Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton. Services will be live streamed at GDILIVE.com

Vickie's journey began in Groton, South Dakota, where she graduated from Groton High School in 1980. On April 12, 1980, Vickie was united in marriage to her forever love, Bruce Sippel, and together they welcomed four children into the world. Their life was one of unity and joy and grew amongst

many trials and tribulations, raising their family on Bruce's childhood homestead. Vickie relished in the many hours spent diving into her family genealogy, connecting with her roots and sharing the stories she uncovered. She was an avid reader, often losing herself in the pages of her favorite romance and mystery novels, and she found tranquility in her intricate tatting projects.

Her professional path led her to a fulfilling career that started at Dakotah Quilt Industries in Webster, SD, later working for Groton Dairy Queen. She continued on with the Groton Independent, cooking for Burger Night at the Groton Legion, running the Groton Youth Center, and was a dealer in Tupperware and Creative Memories. Vickie culminated her career with Wal-Mart and Ken's in Groton, from which she retired on October 1, 2023. Vickie's work ethic and dedication to her profession were matched only by the love and devotion she had for her family and friends.

Vickie's legacy is celebrated by her children: Emily (Jesse) Wolff of Mankato, MN, Felicia (James) Ethridge of Redfield, SD, and Adam (Bailey) Sippel of Groton, SD. She was the proud grandmother of six grandchildren: Michael, Kaylee, and Claire Wolff, Jaxon, Haven, and Natalie Ethridge, and a loving figure to several fur-grandbabies. Her memory will also be cherished by her brother, Steve (Teresa) Luce of Powder Springs, GA, sister Kathy (Bryan) Evjen of Strandburg, SD, sister, Sherrie (Dean) Van Zee of St. Lawrence, SD, many nieces, nephews, great-nieces and nephews, great-great nieces and nephews and a host of close friends and relatives.

Waiting for her in Heaven are her parents, Francis (1993) and Vivian Luce (2015), her beloved husband Bruce (2023), her daughter Lisa Sippel (1999), her brother John F. Luce Jr. (2005) and her in-laws, Harry (1991) and Lorraine Sippel (2018).

Casketbearers will be Adam Sippel, James Ethridge, Jesse Wolff, Jaxon Ethridge, Haven Ethridge and Michael Wolff.

Honorary Casketbearers will be Dean Van Zee, Bryan Evjen, Kaylee Wolff, Natalie Ethridge, Claire Wolff, Marcia Olson and Shaun Rickett.

Memorials may be directed to Storybook Land, 225 3rd Ave. SE Aberdeen, SD 57401



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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, playdough, 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



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### 'After all our hard work': Federal fallout leads to suspension of interlibrary loan courier service

**Book sharing between libraries could be limited, or come with a cost to patrons**

**BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - APRIL 15, 2025 1:54 PM**

Checking out some books through local libraries could soon cost more than a standard library card fee.

Libraries were instructed Monday to immediately suspend use of the state's interlibrary loan courier program.

The courier service transports books and other library materials across South Dakota from the libraries that have them to those that don't, typically faster and more efficiently than would be possible through the U.S. Postal Service.

The State Library relies on federal funding from the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS) to pay for the program.

President Donald Trump signed an executive order in March directing the head of that federal agency — which provides a federal grant that funds around half of the South Dakota State Library's services — to cut its operations to the "maximum extent allowable by law."

Former Gov. Kristi Noem sought to cut state library funding in her proposed budget to a level too low for the state to continue receiving federal matching funds. The state Legislature, however, approved a pared-back library budget large enough for the state to maintain access to about \$1.4 million in IMLS funding.

While South Dakota hasn't gotten confirmation its funding is cut, Department Secretary Joe Graves told the state Board of Education Standards on Monday, the federal government notified other states they're receiving cuts.

"South Dakota, at least to my knowledge as of 8 a.m. this morning, hasn't heard. So we don't know what's going on with that," Graves said Monday.

#### **Email to librarians signals service loss**

The State Library cannot renew the contract with its interlibrary loan courier service at the end of April because of "uncertainty" about funding, according to an email sent to librarians that same day, which was reviewed by South Dakota Searchlight. Department of Education Spokeswoman Nancy Van Der Weide confirmed the suspension.

"The South Dakota State Library will not be renewing the contract until it is certain that the funding to support this service is in place," she said.



**The downtown library in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.**

(John Hult/South Dakota Searchlight)



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Van Der Weide did not answer questions about any other impacts to the State Library expected as a result of the Trump executive order. She told South Dakota Searchlight recently that “we do not have a clear indication” of what might happen with future grant funding.

Congress authorized grant funding through federal fiscal year 2025. The department “is waiting on a grant award” for 2025, Van Der Weide wrote in an email last month.

## **Libraries could charge for, limit service**

About 70% of South Dakota libraries share books with each other through interlibrary loan, according to the State Library website. Without the courier service, local libraries and governments will need to pay to ship books to other libraries across the state, according to South Dakota Library Association President Elizabeth Fox. That costs an average of \$5 an item each way, she said.

To pick up the new cost, local libraries could limit how many interlibrary loans an individual can make, or charge a fee when someone requests an interlibrary loan.

“Each library will have to determine how they deal with this,” Fox said.

Hill City Public Library Director Tammy Alexander plans to discuss the impact with members of her library’s board of directors next week. She sent requested books through the mail yesterday to Brookings and Chamberlain libraries.

“Like all budgets right now, even our small city budget will have cuts for 2026,” Alexander said. “My board will have to decide if they’ll allow me to include that.”

The State Library also pays for subscription-based academic databases, accessible at no cost through any public library in the state. It also provides support for summer reading programs, organizes professional development workshops, and offers Braille and talking book services for readers with disabilities.

Noem’s proposed cut would have pared down services to those last two items.

## **‘This is disheartening,’ lawmaker says**

Lawmakers softened budget cuts this winter with the expectation they’d budgeted enough money to preserve the IMLS federal grant funding. The plan spared the jobs of all but 3.5 State Library employees, but dissolved the board that oversees the State Library.

Rep. Terri Jorgenson, R-Piedmont, worked closely with the Education Department on the compromise.

“After all our hard work we put into this to restructure and save this program, this is disheartening,” Jorgenson said.

Interlibrary loans are crucial for homeschool students as well as students in public and private schools, she told South Dakota Searchlight on Tuesday. Burdening local governments with shipping costs and potentially passing the cost onto families will add up quickly.

Jorgenson and other lawmakers will need to explore funding options for library programming in the wake of the news, she said.

“Ultimately, this means we’re going to have to get creative,” Jorgenson said, “to save money and work to still provide this important service.”

*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.*

## Marijuana legalization hits roadblocks after years of expansion Moves to expand access, including in South Dakota, no longer an easy sell for voters, lawmakers

BY: KEVIN HARDY, STATELINE - APRIL 15, 2025 9:44 AM

As every state surrounding Idaho legalized marijuana, state Rep. Bruce Skaug started to view it as inevitable that the Gem State would follow suit.

Not anymore.

Skaug, a Republican, supported two bills this legislative session taking aim at marijuana use: one to impose a mandatory minimum \$300 fine for possession and another that would take away the right of voters to legalize pot at the ballot box.

He believes other states are starting to regret liberalizing marijuana use, because of potential health concerns and lackluster revenues from marijuana sales.

"Looking around at other states that have legalized marijuana, it's not improved their states as a place to raise a family, to do business," he said.

"It just hasn't come through with the promises that we heard years ago for those states."

Idaho's not alone. After years of expanding legal access, lawmakers in several states this year have targeted marijuana in various ways.

To help close budget gaps, officials in Maryland, Michigan and New Jersey have proposed raising marijuana taxes. Health concerns have pushed lawmakers in states including Colorado and Montana to attempt to cap the level of tetrahydrocannabinol, or THC, the primary psychoactive component in cannabis, in marijuana products sold at dispensaries. And some lawmakers have even tried to roll back voter-approved medical marijuana programs.

"This year in particular, we're playing defense a lot more than we have in the past," said Morgan Fox, political director at the advocacy group National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws, or NORML.

To some extent, he said, the pendulum on marijuana liberalization is swinging back. But Fox said recent legislative efforts are not indicative of waning public support for legalization. He said prohibitionist politicians have been emboldened to act against the will of voters.

Polling from the Pew Research Center has found little change in support for legalization in recent years: 57% of U.S. adults say that marijuana should be legal for medical and recreational purposes.

Colorado and Washington state began allowing recreational marijuana sales in 2014. Today, 24 states and the District of Columbia allow recreational sales, and 39 states and the district have sanctioned medical marijuana.

"There's been this air of inevitability for a while," said Daniel Mallinson, an associate professor of public



**A marijuana plant at the Dakota Herb grow operation near Tea, South Dakota.** (John Hult/South Dakota Searchlight)

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policy at Penn State Harrisburg who researches marijuana legalization.

With medical marijuana programs operational in most states, Mallinson said there is pressure to expand recreational marijuana, especially given uncertainty over whether the federal government will act on the issue.

"Recreational is still in its takeoff period," he said.

But he acknowledged that new medical research has raised concerns among some lawmakers. One study published in January found a link between heavy marijuana use and memory function. Other studies have found a higher risk of heart attacks among people who use cannabis.

Mallinson said the research on marijuana is "very young," as many institutions are wary of conducting clinical trials because of federal drug laws. The federal government classifies marijuana as a Schedule I drug — the same classification as drugs such as heroin and ecstasy.

"There's a mixture of science and politics in this area," he said. "... I could imagine seeing in these really conservative states like Idaho, you know, this kind of a backlash, like, we don't want this here at all, so we're going to try to put up barriers to even considering it."

## A debate headed for the ballot

In Idaho, Skaug said he pursued the state's new mandatory \$300 fine for marijuana possession to bring more consistency to how the state handles marijuana cases.

While Idaho law previously allowed fines of up to \$1,000, he said judges had issued fines as low as \$2.50.

"So that wasn't the right message. That's not even worth the time to write the ticket," he said. "So it's not that we're going to arrest more people for misdemeanor possession of marijuana, but there will be more citations in the amount of \$300."

Skaug also backed a proposed constitutional amendment that would give only the legislature the power to legalize marijuana and other drugs. That question will go to voters next year.

Skaug said he's worried outside groups would influence a public vote to legalize marijuana by pouring millions into a ballot initiative campaign. If the amendment he supports passes, it wouldn't ban pot — it would leave legalization up to lawmakers.

"If the evidence comes back that says marijuana or some other drug is positive in the medical community and a good thing, then the legislature can legalize that," he said. "But we're going to leave it with the legislature."

Advocates have been trying without success to get enough signatures to put a medical marijuana question on the ballot for more than a decade in Idaho, said Democratic state Rep. Ilana Rubel. The House minority leader, Rubel said she hit "a firm brick wall" in pitching medical marijuana legislation in Boise, where GOP lawmakers privately tell her they don't want to look soft on crime.

She views the proposed amendment as another example of the GOP-controlled statehouse being out of touch with regular Idahoans. She said the state's closed Republican primaries have led to more conservative stances from lawmakers.

"I think this is one of those issues where there is just a huge, huge gap between what the people of Idaho want and what they're going to get from their legislature," she said.

A 2022 poll commissioned by the Idaho Statesman found that nearly 70% of Idahoans supported legalizing medical marijuana.

But even discussions about medical marijuana are shut down in Idaho because of concerns about problems with drugs in liberal cities such as Portland, Oregon, and Seattle, Rubel said.

"A very large number of red states have legalized medical marijuana, and they haven't seen any of the parade of horrors that has been presented whenever we introduce this idea," she said. "There's just a lot of hysteria and paranoia about where this is going to lead that is really not tied to reality."

## Targeting marijuana potency, revenues

In several states, lawmakers have aimed to restrict the potency of marijuana products.



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Montana state Sen. Greg Hertz, a Republican, said he doesn't want to end recreational marijuana sales, which voters approved in 2020. But he said today's products are much stronger than people may realize. "People were voting for Woodstock weed, not this new high-THC marijuana," he said.

A bill he sponsored this year would have banned sales of recreational marijuana products, including flower and edibles, exceeding THC levels of 15%. Montana currently allows up to 35% THC in flower, with no limit on other products.

That legislation stalled, but Hertz said he plans to pitch a similar measure during Montana's next legislative session in 2027.

A separate bill reducing the state's dosage of THC for edibles just passed the legislature last week. The measure, which now heads to Republican Gov. Greg Gianforte, would change the individual dosage limit on edibles such as gummies from 10 milligrams to 5 milligrams.

Hertz said the state rushed into its liberalization of marijuana without fully understanding the consequences.

He pointed to state health department data showing rising emergency room visits related to marijuana and dozens of cannabis poisoning cases in recent years — including 36 involving children 10 years or younger.

"We probably opened up the barn door too wide," he said. "I'm just trying to slow this down a little bit."

With many states facing gaping budget holes this year, marijuana has proven a popular target from Democrats and Republicans looking to raise revenues without across-the-board tax increases.

Maryland Democratic Gov. Wes Moore in January proposed hiking the cannabis tax from 9% to 15% to help close the state's \$3 billion budget hole. In March, lawmakers agreed to a budget framework that would raise the state marijuana tax to 12%.

Ohio Republican Gov. Mike DeWine proposed doubling marijuana taxes from 10% to 20% — a notion that has so far faced opposition in the legislature.

In Michigan, Democratic Gov. Gretchen Whitmer proposed a new 32% wholesale tax on marijuana growers to help fund road improvements. That tax would be on top of the 10% excise tax on recreational marijuana and the state's 6% sales tax.

Whitmer said it would close a loophole that has exempted the marijuana industry from wholesale tax, which is applied to cigarettes and other tobacco products. Michigan lawmakers, split sharply along partisan lines, have until Sept. 30 to approve a state budget.

Lawmakers in some states have even taken aim at voter-approved medical marijuana programs this year.

In South Dakota, a bill that failed in committee would have gutted the medical marijuana program overwhelmingly approved by voters in 2020.

In November, Nebraska voters widely supported ballot measures to roll out a medical marijuana program — winning majority support in each of the state's 49 legislative districts.

But setting up the regulatory scheme has proven controversial, the Nebraska Examiner reported. Lawmakers are pursuing legislation that would define which medical conditions and forms of cannabis would qualify.

Medical marijuana advocates say overly strict rules would hamper the program and undermine the will of voters. But some legislators insist on limitations to prevent widespread access to marijuana.

"We make it legal for anything and everything, it's essentially recreational marijuana at that point," state Sen. Rick Holdcroft, a Republican, told the Nebraska Examiner this month.

*Kevin Hardy covers business, labor and rural issues for Stateline from the Midwest.*



## Judge: 'Nothing has been done' by Trump officials to return wrongly deported Maryland man

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY - APRIL 15, 2025 7:39 PM

GREENBELT, MARYLAND — A federal judge in Maryland on Tuesday ordered a defendant Trump administration to provide evidence about how it has tried to secure the release of an immigrant mistakenly deported to a brutal mega-prison in El Salvador, saying that to date, the record shows "nothing has been done."

District Judge Paula Xinis laid out a two-week timeline for the government to produce sworn statements on whether and how immigration officials are complying with her previous court order to return Kilmar Abrego Garcia.

"Discovery will bear out whether you have," Xinis said, referring to the process through which information is disclosed in court. "And if you haven't, whether it's a choice or on justified ground."

"Cancel vacation, cancel other appointments. I'm usually very good about things like that in my courtroom, but not this time," she said during a hearing in Greenbelt, Maryland.

Xinis, who was appointed by former President Barack Obama, had ordered the administration to bring Abrego Garcia back to the U.S. by April 7.

A federal appeals court swiftly upheld Xinis' order. The Trump administration appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, and the justices ruled 9-0 Thursday that the administration must "facilitate" Abrego Garcia's return — though they stopped short of requiring it — and provide the El Salvadoran due process through the U.S. immigration courts.

The Supreme Court "could not have been clearer," Xinis said to Drew Ensign, the deputy assistant attorney general who represented the government Tuesday.

Abrego Garcia, a native of El Salvador, who lived with his wife Jennifer Vasquez Sura, a U.S. citizen, and their 5-year-old child, was apprehended by immigration officials in mid-March.

He was among roughly 260 Venezuelan men the U.S. flew on commercial jets, without due process, to Centro de Confinamiento del Terrorismo, or CECOT.



**A crowd gathered outside U.S. District Court in Greenbelt, Maryland, on Tuesday, April 10, 2025, to protest the government's erroneous deportation of Kilmar Armando Abrego Garcia, an El Salvadoran national, to a mega-prison in the Central American country.** (Photo by Ashley Murray/States Newsroom)

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Garcia has no criminal history in the U.S., El Salvador or any other country, according to court filings in the lawsuit Vasquez Sura brought against the government last month.

An immigration judge issued a protective order in 2019 shielding his return to El Salvador because of near certainty he would face violence and persecution.

## **White House echoes Bukele**

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement admitted in court documents that Abrego Garcia's removal on March 15 was an "administrative error."

The White House maintains it has no power to ask El Salvador to release Abrego Garcia from CECOT, and that Xinis overstepped her authority in ordering the administration to conduct foreign affairs.

The White House also asserts Abrego Garcia is a "foreign terrorist" and a member of the El Salvadoran gang MS-13, which the administration designated a foreign terrorist organization in February.

"Deporting him was always going to be the end result," White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt told reporters Tuesday at the daily press briefing.

"There is never going to be a world in which this is an individual who's going to live a peaceful life in Maryland," she said.

El Salvador President Nayib Bukele told journalists Monday during a visit to the Oval Office, "I don't have the power to return him to the United States," labeling Abrego Garcia as a "terrorist."

The government echoed Bukele's comments in its daily status report.

"DHS does not have the authority to forcibly extract an alien from the domestic custody of a foreign sovereign nation," Joseph Mazarra, acting general counsel for DHS, wrote in Monday's report.

Following a tense hearing Friday, where the government refused to provide the whereabouts of Abrego Garcia, Xinis ordered the administration to provide the daily updates.

On Tuesday, Xinis told Ensign that the government has provided "very little information of any value" in the reports.

"As a factual matter, I do need evidence in this record because to date what the record shows is nothing has been done," Xinis said.

## **Ruling requested on contempt**

Prior to Tuesday's hearing, Vasquez Sura asked the court to order immigration officials to arrange for her husband's return by the end of April 14.

She also asked the court to mandate government officials provide documents and depositions related to Abrego Garcia's release, and to show cause as to why Xinis should not hold the government in contempt of court for not complying with orders to bring Abrego Garcia back.

Xinis said she will not make a decision on contempt until she reviews a record of evidence.

The government maintains the Supreme Court's decision does not mean they must work with El Salvador to release Abrego Garcia because the president, not federal courts, has jurisdiction over foreign affairs.

The administration also contends that the Supreme Court's use of the term "facilitate" only means that they need to remove "domestic" barriers to bringing Abrego back to the U.S. — not that they would have to work with El Salvador to secure his release.

"Indeed, no other reading of 'facilitate' is tenable — or constitutional — here," they wrote in a response to Vasquez Sura's request.

In the Oval Office Monday, Attorney General Pam Bondi said the U.S. would provide a plane, but cannot force Bukele to release Abrego Garcia.

Ensign provided a transcript of the Oval Office meeting to the court 15 minutes prior to Tuesday's hearing, according to Xinis.

"I don't consider what happened yesterday as evidence before this court yet," Xinis said.

Ensign pushed back on Xinis' order for expedited discovery, saying that the issue is a "narrow interpretative dispute" of what the word facilitate means that "does not require discovery."



After pushing back again, Xinis responded, "I just don't think it's that difficult. I think you want to make it that difficult because getting to the facts may not be that favorable."

## Seized while looking for work

Abrego Garcia came to the U.S. without legal authorization in 2011, fleeing violence in his home country of El Salvador, according to court records.

Six years later while he was looking for work at a Home Depot in Hyattsville, Maryland, he was taken into custody by Prince George's County Police Department.

While there, he was questioned about gang affiliation and law enforcement did not believe he was not a member of the MS-13 gang, according to court records.

The evidence officers submitted included Abrego Garcia wearing a Chicago Bulls hat, a hoodie and a statement from a confidential informant that stated he was a member of MS-13, according to court documents.

While he was never charged with, or convicted of being, in a gang, he was kept in ICE detention while his case proceeded before an immigration judge.

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

## In first post-White House address, Biden pans Trump on Social Security

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - APRIL 15, 2025 7:25 PM



**Former President Biden speaks about Social Security at a disability conference in Chicago on April 15, 2025. The remarks were his first in public since leaving office in January.** (Image via C-

SPAN livestream)

Former President Joe Biden on Tuesday used his first public address since leaving office to criticize the current administration for cutting thousands of employees at the Social Security Administration and to rebut those who have questioned the program's relevance.

"In fewer than 100 days, this new administration has done so much damage and so much destruction. It's kind of breathtaking it could happen that soon," Biden said. "They've taken a hatchet to the Social Security Administration, pushing 7,000 employees — 7,000 — out the door in that time, including the most seasoned career officials."

The Social Security Administration announced earlier this

year it would cut staffing from 57,000 to 50,000 employees and reduce the number of regional offices from 10 to four.

Biden urged Republicans to preserve Social Security for future generations, arguing during his 30-minute speech to the national conference of Advocates, Counselors, and Representatives for the Disabled in Chicago that people have been able to rely on it throughout wars, recessions and the pandemic.

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"Social Security is about more than retirement accounts. It's about honoring a fundamental trust between government and people," Biden said. "It's about peace of mind for those who work their whole lives, so they can rest assured they'll have a chance to get back some of what they earned and what they deserve."

Biden, who accepted the organization's Beacon of Hope award, said protecting Social Security and the federal workers who administer the program is about defending core principles.

"Who are we? What makes us distinct from the rest of the world?" Biden asked. "It comes down to basic, in my view, fundamental American values — nobody's king, nobody's the boss. Everybody has a shot."

Biden criticized members of President Donald Trump's Cabinet for making harsh comments about the program. He noted Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick said his mother-in-law wouldn't complain if she missed a Social Security payment and that "the easiest way to find the fraudster is to stop payments and listen because whoever screams is the one stealing."

Biden also called out billionaire and head of U.S. DOGE Service Elon Musk for calling Social Security a "Ponzi scheme."

"What the hell are they talking about?" Biden said. "People earn these benefits. They paid into that benefit. They rely on that benefit."

## White House pledges to maintain program

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said during a briefing several hours before Biden's speech the Trump administration doesn't plan to cut off Americans' Social Security benefits.

"Let me make it very clear ahead of former President Biden's remarks: The president, this president, President Trump is absolutely certain about protecting Social Security benefits for law-abiding, tax-paying American citizens and seniors who have paid into this program," she said. "He will always protect that program. He campaigned on it. He protected it in his first term."

Leavitt also took a swipe at Biden's age, saying she didn't expect him to give a speech during the evening.

"My first reaction when seeing former President Biden was speaking tonight was, I'm shocked that he was speaking at nighttime. I had thought his bedtime was much earlier than his speech tonight," she said.

Biden, 82, last year dropped his reelection bid in a rematch against Trump, 78, amid concerns about his age and mental acuity.

## Administrator nominee to target errors

Democrats have raised concerns for months that staffing cuts at the Social Security Administration will impact Americans' ability to get their questions about the program answered or their issues resolved quickly.

Social Security Commissioner nominee Frank Bisignano testified during his hearing in March that, if confirmed, he would try to "ensure that every beneficiary receives their payments on time, that disability claims are processed in the manner they should be."

Bisignano said he hoped to ensure Social Security recipients could visit an office, use the website, or speak to a real person after calling the 1-800 number.

"On the phone, I'm committed to reducing wait times and providing beneficiaries with a better experience; waiting 20 minutes-plus to get an answer will be of yesteryear," Bisignano said. "I also believe we can significantly improve the length of the disability claim process."

Bisignano promised lawmakers he would reduce the 1% error rate in payments, which he said was "five decimal places too high." And he said repeatedly that personally identifiable information will be "protected."

The Senate Finance Committee voted along party lines in early April to send Bisignano's nomination to the floor, but he hasn't yet been confirmed.

*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.*



## Trump registration requirement carries danger for immigrants who comply, groups warn

BY: JACOB FISCHLER - APRIL 15, 2025 7:16 PM

Immigrant rights groups are cautioning migrants without legal status about the dangers of obeying the Department of Homeland Security's directive to register with authorities, group leaders told reporters during a virtual press conference Tuesday.

Representatives from immigrant groups across the country said the requirement, which a federal judge upheld last week, is an enforcement tool for President Donald Trump's administration and that following the directive to register could lead to unlawful detention and deportation.

Participants on the call did not explicitly say

they were counseling migrants without legal status against complying with the directive, but said people affected should seek legal counsel first.

"This tool is to identify individuals for detention, deportation and to threaten with imprisonment if they do not comply," Angelica Salas, the executive director of the advocacy group the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights, said.

"These actions are abhorrent to the values of this country, and we will not stand silent to see cruelty as the official immigration policy of this administration. To our community, our message is that you're not alone, you have rights, seek legal guidance, and you're not obligated to provide information that can hurt you or your family."

Under Trump and DHS Secretary Kristi Noem, the administration has sent "innocent people" to detention facilities at the U.S. Navy base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and the notorious mega-prison in El Salvador known as Centro de Confinamiento del Terrorismo, or CECOT, Salas said.

The administration has detained immigrants of all legal statuses without due process, and ignored court orders to reverse those actions. Advocates on the press call Tuesday said that defies the law.

Immigrants, even without legal status in the country, are "entitled to their day in immigration court," Nicole Melaku, the executive director of National Partnership for New Americans, said.

The directive, which requires immigrants who have registered with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services to always carry with them proof of their registration, would also lead to racial profiling of U.S.



**Deported migrants queue to receive an essential items bag during the arrival of a group of deported Salvadorans at Gerencia de Atención al Migrante on Feb. 12, 2025, in San Salvador, El Salvador.** (Photo by Alex

Peña/Getty Images)

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citizens, advocates have said.

## No reported registrants

Salas said her organization, which is based in Southern California, does not know of anyone who has completed the registration.

The people who are required to register are unclear about whether it is in their interest to comply, and distrust of Trump – who campaigned on an anti-immigration platform and has routinely flouted due process for immigrants – is a major obstacle.

“We don’t have anybody who has – that we know – yet registered,” she said. “There’s a lot of confusion in our community as to whether to do this or not. What does it mean? What are the risks? And I also want to say that ... everything that has come from this administration has actually been harmful, so people are taking that into account.”

## Legal fight continuing

U.S. Judge Trevor Neil McFadden, whom Trump appointed to the federal bench in 2017, rejected advocacy groups’ attempt to block the directive, saying in an order last week that the groups hadn’t shown they’d been harmed by it.

But the legal fight against the directive will continue, George Escobar, the chief of programs and services at the immigrant services organization CASA, said.

In addition to a possible appeal of McFadden’s ruling, Escobar said his organizations would watch “very, very closely” how the administration conducts the operation, with special attention to racial profiling, and would not hesitate to bring court challenges.

“We will do everything possible to fight this,” he said. “This may be a show-me-your-papers type of situation where people may be racially profiled, stopped on the street just because they’re speaking in other languages, because they look like an immigrant, and has to be asked to show this registration compliance.”

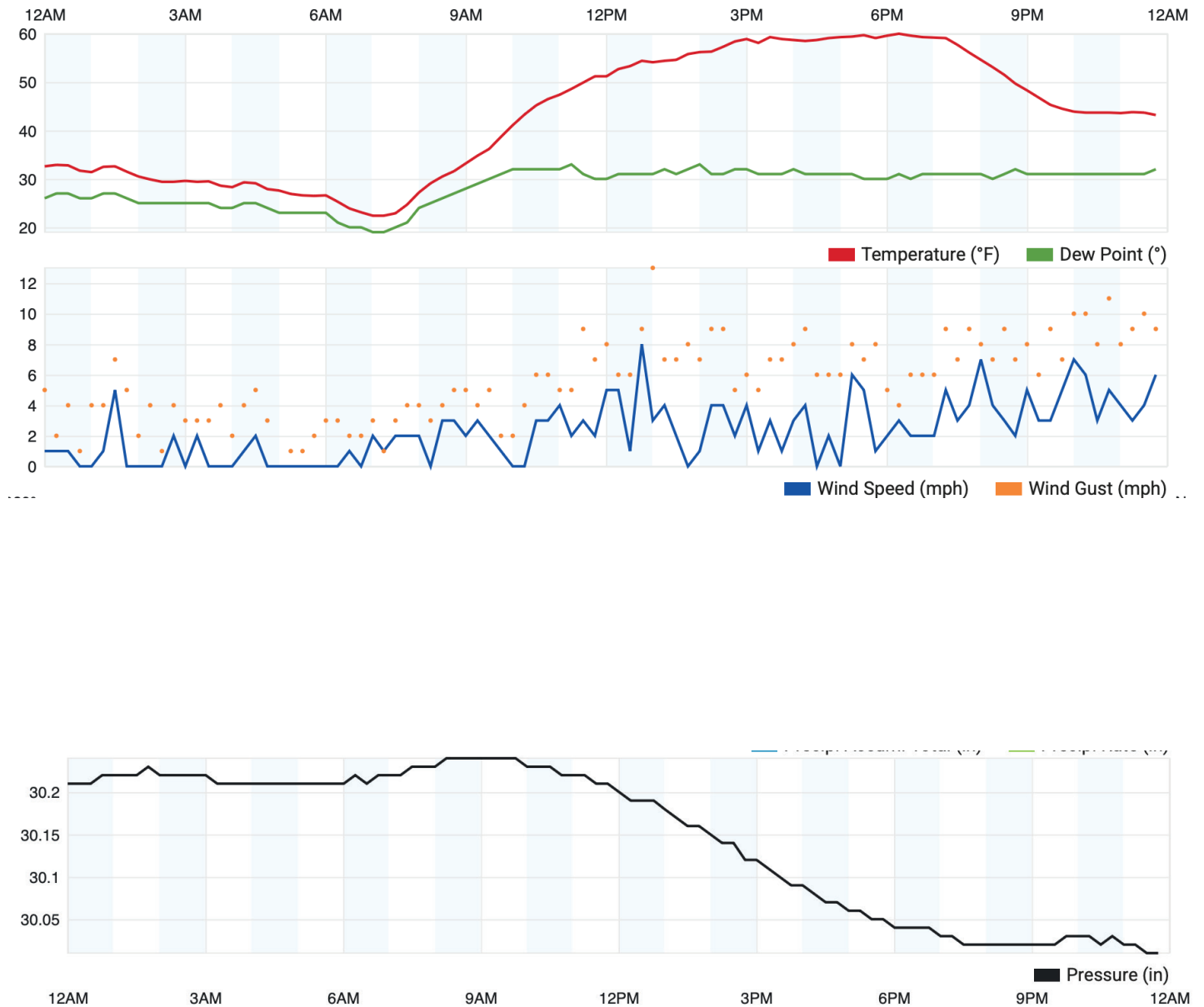
Representatives for the Department of Homeland Security did not respond to a message seeking comment Tuesday.

*Jacob covers federal policy as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Based in Oregon, he focuses on Western issues. His coverage areas include climate, energy development, public lands and infrastructure.*

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs





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Today



High: 73 °F

Mostly Sunny

Tonight



Low: 41 °F

Partly Cloudy  
then Slight  
Chance  
Showers

Thursday



High: 54 °F

Chance  
Showers and  
Breezy

Thursday  
Night



Low: 34 °F

Slight Chance  
Showers and  
Breezy

Friday



High: 50 °F

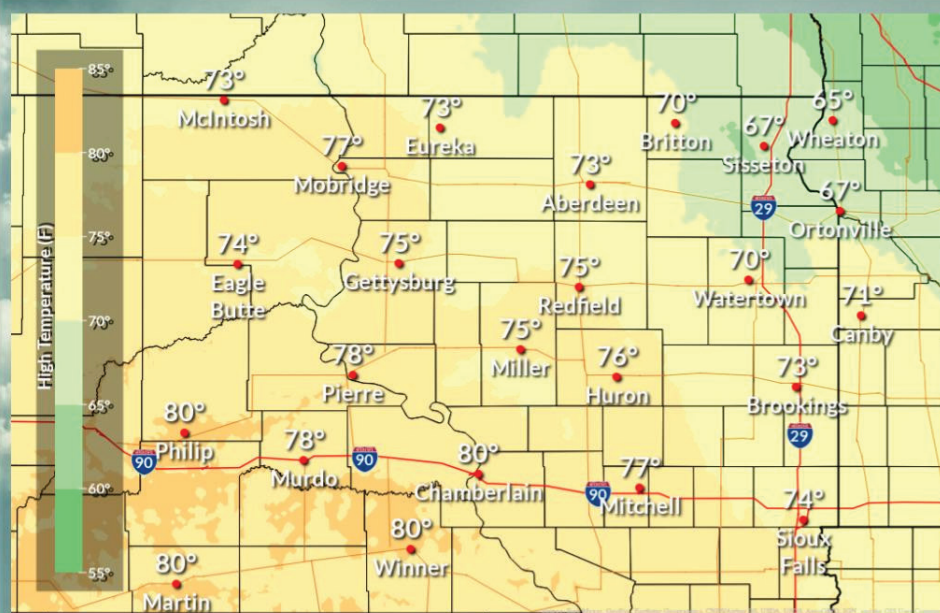
Mostly Cloudy  
and Breezy



## Much Above Normal Temperatures Today

April 16, 2025  
4:45 AM

10 To 20 Degrees Above Normal



**Elevated Fire Danger Today**  
(Low RH's Missouri River Valley westward / Gusts 25 to 30 mph James River Valley eastward)

**Rain Chances Thursday**  
(30-60%) And Sunday night  
(15-30%)

**Friday's The Coldest Day Of**  
**The 7-Day Forecast** (upper  
40s to low 50s)

**Slow Warm Up Heading Into**  
**Next Week**



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

Today is likely the warmest day of the forecast, with highs expected in the 60s and 70s, possibly warmer across south central and southwest South Dakota. Contrast that with Friday's expected high temperatures only in the upper 40s to low 50s. Spring-time temperature swings, right? There are also some chances for precipitation anchored, mainly, on Thursday into Thursday night and then again Sunday afternoon through mid-day Monday.

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 60 °F at 3:37 PM**

**Low Temp: 22 °F at 7:02 AM**

**Wind: 13 mph at 12:53 PM**

**Precip: : 0.00**

Day length: 13 hours, 39 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 91 in 1913

Record Low: 14 in 1953

Average High: 58

Average Low: 32

Average Precip in April.: 0.79

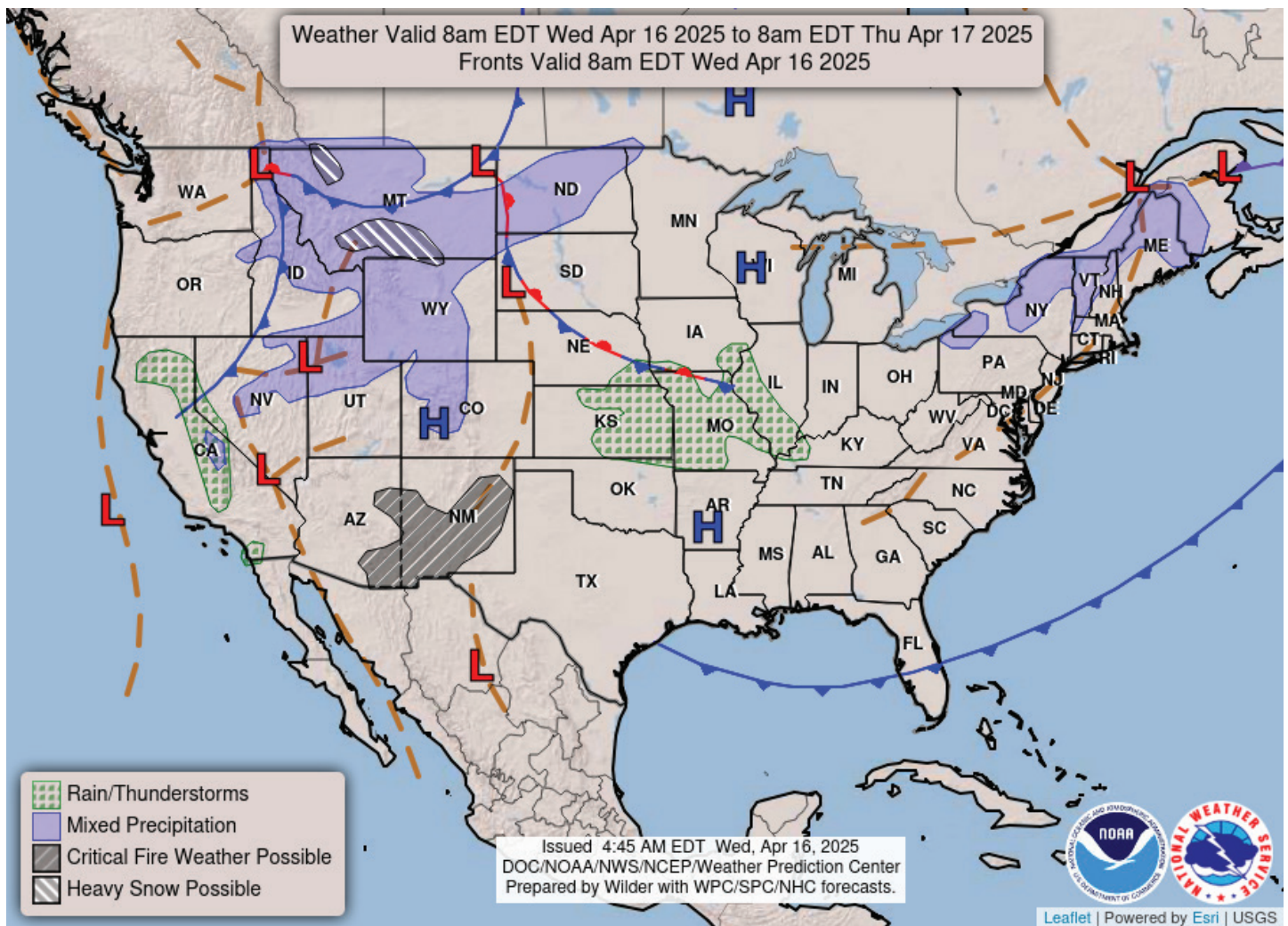
Precip to date in April.: 1.07

Average Precip to date: 2.85

Precip Year to Date: 1.70

Sunset Tonight: 8:21:35 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:40:47 am





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## Today in Weather History

April 16th, 1967: Severe thunderstorms moved through central and eastern South Dakota areas, producing large hail, damaging winds, and even a few tornadoes. The event began in the mid-afternoon hours and lasted into the evening. One of the tornadoes, an F1, formed over Lake Poinsette in Hamlin County. From there, it moved from southwest to northeast, toward the northern shore, then made a loop and traveled toward the southeast. Two trailer houses and a few small buildings were damaged. Eleven people were injured when a trailer house was turned over to one side and then turned over on the other side. In Brown County, the storms produced hail 1.75 inches in diameter and 61mph winds.

April 16th, 1976: A deepening low-pressure system moved northward out of Nebraska and across western South Dakota. Winds of 60 to 80 mph were reported across the area, with gusts of over 90 mph in southwest Minnesota. Some recorded wind speeds included 62 mph at Sioux Falls, 70 mph at Brookings, and 82 mph at Watertown. Many buildings were damaged, roofs were blown off, and planes were overturned at Sioux Falls and Huron airports. Across southwest Minnesota, many trees were uprooted, and several trucks were blown off of the highway. Across the area, many barns, outbuildings, sheds, and older structures were demolished.

April 16th, 2000: Heavy snow of 6 to 9 inches fell across parts of central and northeast South Dakota during the morning hours. The snow made many roads slushy and difficult to travel, and some tree branches were downed. Some snowfall amounts included 6 inches at Ferney, Miller, and Webster, 7 inches at Agar, Mellette, and Twin Brooks, 8 inches at Gettysburg, and 9 inches at Faulkton.

1851 - The famous "Lighthouse Storm" raged near Boston Harbor. Whole gales and gigantic waves destroyed Minot Light with its two keepers still inside. The storm resulted in great shipping losses and coastal erosion. (David Ludlum)

1880 - A tornado near Marshall, MO, carried the heavy timbers of an entire home a distance of twelve miles. (The Weather Channel)

1933 - Franklin Lake, NH, was buried under 35 inches of snow. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1960 - A wind gust of 70 mph was measured at the Stapleton International Airport in Denver CO, their highest wind gust of record. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A slow moving storm system produced heavy rain over North Carolina and the Middle Atlantic Coast States. More than six inches of rain drenched parts of Virginia, and flooding in Virginia claimed three lives. Floodwaters along the James River inundated parts of Richmond VA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - A storm in the northeastern U.S. produced a foot of snow at Pittsburg VT. Severe thunderstorms produced baseball size hail and spawned five tornadoes in the Southern High Plains Region. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - A cold front, ushering sharply colder air into the north central U.S., brought snow to parts of Montana and North Dakota. At midday the temperature at Cutbank MT was just 22 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Thunderstorms developing along a stationary front produced large hail and damaging winds across Oklahoma, with 99 reports of large hail and damaging winds during the evening and early nighttime hours. Thunderstorms produced baseball size hail south of Carney, and wind gusts to 100 mph in the Oklahoma City area which swept away many Federal tax returns being transported from a mail cart to a waiting truck about the time of the midnight deadline. Will Rogers Airport in Oklahoma City reported a record wind gust of 92 mph. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)



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## HOW TO RECOGNIZE A FOOL

No one that I know wants to be called a "fool." But, this term is used fifty times in Proverbs. Obviously, God must want us to know who qualifies for this title, and how those who are "fools" can develop a new identity.

To begin with, the word used here for "fool" has nothing to do with one's mental capacity. It would not be God-like to call someone a "fool" if they had no control over their thoughts and behavior. Instead, it has to do with a person's chosen outlook on life. This person's view is set, and nothing or no one will ever be able to change it.

This "fool" is one who has no desire to invest any time in searching for wisdom. It's thought to be a product that can be purchased online or in a bookstore. Solomon clarified this when he wrote, "Why does a fool offer the sage a fee, when he has no mind to learn." We can't buy wisdom!

Since this is true, only reliable and dependable wisdom comes from God. Therefore, it must then be spiritual and not mental. A fool has no reverence or respect for truth. Unfortunately, the "fool" is very comfortable with things as they are. This person refuses to "fear the Lord" and rejects His counsel. The "fool" is satisfied to live life without God.

Whatever we know of God, think of God, understand about God, and believe about God, comes to us from God as He reveals Himself to us. Atheists deny God, and agnostics say they are searching for proof of God. Until a person is willing and open to see God as He has revealed Himself in His world, His Word, and His Son, he will remain a fool.

Prayer: Lord, open the eyes of those who refuse to see, and the ears of those who refuse to hear Your Wisdom. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction. Proverbs 1:7

*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: 04.15.25

6 10 13 24 63 2

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$112,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 20  
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: 16 Hrs 15 Mins 20  
Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.15.25

10 19 26 30 48 11

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 30 Mins 20  
Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.12.25

3 7 21 28 29

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$107,000**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 30 Mins 20  
Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.14.25

9 18 41 42 63 4

TOP PRIZE:

**\$10,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 59 Mins 20  
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: 16 Hrs 59 Mins 20  
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

### **EMERGENCY HEALTH WORKERS JOIN TEAMSTERS LOCAL 120**

#### **South Dakota Health Care Professionals Choose Strong Union Representation**

STURGIS, S.D., April 15, 2025 /PRNewswire/ -- A group of 15 paramedics, EMTs, and other emergency health professionals who work for the City of Sturgis, South Dakota, have voted to unionize with Teamsters Local 120.

"We're proud and excited to officially become Teamsters," said Casey Baker, a paramedic and new member of Local 120. "Standing together with Local 120, we're ready to negotiate a strong first contract. We know we're backed by the strongest labor union in the country — and we're just getting started."

These new Teamsters wanted to form a union so they can have strong representation on the job that guarantees they are compensated fairly and have a real voice over their working conditions.

"It's an honor to welcome these hardworking men and women to our union," said James Heeren, a business agent at Local 120. "Emergency health providers do some of the toughest and most important work in America, and I know they will bring that same energy as we work together to bargain a lucrative first contract."

Teamsters Local 120 proudly represents over 15,000 workers in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, North Dakota, and South Dakota. For more information, go to [local120.org](http://local120.org).

### **Ranchers hope Trump's tariffs boost demand for cattle but some fear market uncertainty**

By JOSH FUNK AP Business Writer

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Rancher Brett Kenzy hopes President Donald Trump's tariffs will make imported beef expensive enough that Americans will turn to cattle raised at home for all their hamburgers and steaks.

That might raise prices enough to give Kenzy and others the incentive they need to expand their herds for the first time in decades. But doing that would take at least two years, and it's not clear if Trump's tariffs on most of the world besides China are high enough to make that worth the investment.

"If we can just fix a few key things, I think that we can reinvigorate rural America," said the South Dakota rancher. "Just get these imports under control, get them to a level that we can understand and plan on, and then let us fill the void. And I think that the American rancher can do that."

Trump has enjoyed overwhelming support in rural parts of the country in his three campaigns for president. Still, the uncertainty created by the trade war he instigated has given some ranchers pause as they've watched cattle prices drop after the tariffs were announced.

"I just don't like manipulated markets because somebody is going to artificially win and somebody is going to artificially lose," said Bryant Kagay, who raises and feeds cattle as well as growing crops on his farm in northwest Missouri. "And how do I know it's not going to be me?"

Ranchers cautiously optimistic

Ranchers hope the tariffs might create an incentive for them to raise more cattle, and the National Cattlemen trade group is salivating at the idea of selling more cuts of meat overseas if the tariffs lead to new trade deals with countries that don't buy much U.S. beef.

That's a big if — Trump has said dozens of countries have reached out to negotiate new trade deals, but no agreements have been reached.

About the only thing clear so far is that American ranchers will likely lose one of their biggest markets as a result of the 125% tariffs imposed by China in response to Trump. They sold \$1.6 billion worth of beef there last year, and since many ranchers also raise crops, they are reeling about the prospect of losing China as a market for those, too.

Most beef exports to China are already on hold because the certificates from that country that meat

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plants need weren't renewed at most beef plants in the United States after they expired in March. So the U.S. Meat Export Federation said few American beef plants are even eligible to ship to China right now.

Kenzy hopes Trump's tariffs represent a lasting change in U.S. trade policy. So far the tariffs have been changing so much since they were announced that ranchers can't count on them yet.

"If this is just a short-term negotiating tactic — Tarzan beating his chest — then I would say that that would be an epic failure because that will not result in reshoring industry," Kenzy said.

The problem, as Kenzy and other members of the Ranchers-Cattlemen Action Legal Fund United Stockgrowers of America see it, is that the more than 4 billion pounds of beef that's imported every year — along with cattle brought in from other countries to be slaughtered here — keeps cattle prices lower.

Much of what is imported is lean beef trimmings that meatpackers mix with fattier beef produced here in the United States to produce the varieties of ground beef that domestic consumers want. Even though Trump placed most of his proposed tariffs on hold, the across-the-board 10% tariffs he imposed for 90 days will make imported beef more expensive, so consumers are likely to see the price of hamburger increase.

Even if ranchers decided to raise more cattle to help replace those imports, it would take at least two years to breed and raise them. That means meat processors will likely pay higher prices for that imported beef for at least that long. And the ongoing drought across most of the West will continue to make it difficult to raise more cattle.

Plus, if American ranchers want to produce more of that lean beef they might have to change the way they raise their animals because the entire system in this country is designed to produce fattier meat to get deliciously marbled and tender steaks that help ranchers make the most money. Kansas State University agricultural economist Glynn Tonsor said most of the lean beef America buys comes from Australia and New Zealand where cattle are fed grass — not grain — their entire lives, and that's an entirely different system.

US ranchers hope tariffs level playing field but uncertainty remains

The number of cattle being raised across the country has been shrinking for decades to reach the current historic lows of around 28 million, but Texas A&M livestock economist David Anderson said even though that's less than two-thirds of the number of cattle there were in 1975, more beef — some 26.7 billion pounds — was actually produced last year. That's because the American beef industry has become so good at feeding cattle and breeding larger animals that now every head of cattle produces more meat. Anderson said that means there's less incentive to expand the herd.

Casey Maher, owner of the Maher Angus Ranch in Morristown, S.D., said he hopes Trump's tariffs will level the playing field for American beef producers.

"We're optimistic and we're going to stay the course," said Maher, a third-generation rancher. "We've gone through tough times, and if it's for the greater good, I think ranchers are all in."

Not all of them, though. Kagay, the Missouri farmer, said uncertainty causes problems of its own.

"I'm not real confident about these tariffs," he said. "Will they stick around? Will they not stick around? Can I count on them? What exactly is going to happen? You know, nobody knows. So it makes it hard for me to plan my business. I just don't like it."

That uncertainty could extend well beyond farming and ranching if it creates new fears about the economy as a whole. If consumers buy less beef because they are worried about their grocery budgets, it won't matter how much beef is imported.

"You're less likely to pay up for a ribeye steak if you're worried about losing your job," Tonsor said.

## China's economy grew 5.4% in the first quarter as exporters rushed to beat Trump's tariffs

By ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

BANGKOK (AP) — China's economy expanded at a 5.4% annual pace in January-March, the government said Wednesday, supported by strong exports ahead of U.S. President Donald Trump's rapid increases in tariffs on Chinese products.

With the trade war clouding the outlook, analysts are forecasting that the world's second largest economy



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will slow significantly in coming months, however, as tariffs as high as 145% on U.S. imports from China take effect. Beijing has hit back at the U.S. with 125% tariffs on American exports, while also stressing its determination to keep its own markets open to trade and investment.

Chinese leader Xi Jinping's visits is visiting several other Asian countries this week as he makes a case for free trade, presenting China as a source of "stability and certainty" in uncertain times.

Xi was visiting Vietnam, Malaysia, and Cambodia, while the U.S. announced that a senior State Department official, Sean O'Neill, would be traveling this week to Vietnam's capital Hanoi and to Ho Chi Minh City, to Cambodia's Siem Reap and to Tokyo.

China also has been highlighting its focus on trade with countries other than the United States at various trade fairs that are showcasing its vast market and competitiveness as a manufacturing giant.

At China's Canton trade fair, in the southern city of Guangzhou, exporters were emphatic about the need to look beyond selling to Americans.

"We need to diversify our market. When the West is dark, the East is bright. The global market is huge," said Wallace Huang, the export business director of Guangdong Weiking Group, which makes rice cookers. "In recent years, our exports to the U.S. have slowly been declining."

The trade factor

Exports helped China's economy expand at a 5% annual rate in 2024 and this year's official target is about 5%.

In the near term, the tariffs will put pressure on China's economy, but they won't derail long-run growth, Sheng Laiyun, a spokesperson for the National Bureau of Statistics, told reporters. He noted that China's exports to the United States have fallen to less than 15% of total exports from more than 19% five years ago.

"China's economic foundation is stable, resilient and has great potential. We have the confidence, ability and confidence to cope with external challenges and achieve our established development goals," Sheng said.

In quarterly terms the economy grew 1.2% in January-March, slowing from 1.6% in the last quarter of 2024.

Chinese exports surged more than 12% from a year earlier in March and nearly 6% in U.S. dollar terms in the first quarter, as companies rushed to beat Trump's tariffs. That has supported robust manufacturing activity in the past several months.

China's industrial production rose 6.5% from a year earlier in the last quarter, led by a nearly 11% increase in output of equipment manufacturing.

The strongest growth was in advanced technologies, such as production of battery electric and hybrid vehicles, which jumped 45.4% year-on-year. Output of 3D printers soared almost 45% and of industrial robots surged 26%.

Weaker property investment and consumer prices

Despite relatively fast growth by global standards, the Chinese economy has struggled to regain momentum since the COVID-19 pandemic as downturn in the property market has pushed unemployment higher, leaving families wary about spending.

Consumer prices fell 0.1% in the first quarter, suggesting that demand is not keeping up with supply for many industries. Investment in real estate also remained weak, falling nearly 10% from a year earlier despite government efforts to spur more lending for housing purchases.

The tariffs crisis looms as another massive blow at a time when Beijing is striving to get businesses to invest and hire more workers and to persuade Chinese consumers to spend more.

The outlook

Both private and public sector economists have remained cautious about what to expect, given how Trump has kept switching his stance on the details of his trade war.

"Given the events over the past two weeks, it is extremely difficult to predict how the U.S. and China tariffs on each other might evolve," Tao Wang and other UBS economists said in a report.

The International Monetary Fund and Asian Development Bank have stuck with more optimistic forecasts of about 4.6% growth this year.

After taking office, Trump first ordered a 10% increase in tariffs on imports from China. He later raised that to 20%. Now, China is facing 145% tariffs on most of its exports to the United States.

UBS estimates that the tariffs, if they remain roughly as they are, could cause China's exports to the United States to fall by two-thirds in coming months and that its global exports could fall by 10% in dollar value. It cut its forecast for economic growth this year to 3.4% from an earlier 4%. It expects growth to slow to 3% in 2026.

China has stepped up efforts to spur more consumer spending and private sector investment over the past seven months, doubling down on subsidies for auto and appliance trade-ins and channeling more funding for housing and other cash strapped industries.

## **UK Supreme Court rules that equalities law defines a woman as someone born biologically female**

By SYLVIA HUI and BRIAN MELLEY Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The Supreme Court ruled Wednesday that the U.K. equalities law defines a woman as someone born biologically female.

Justice Patrick Hodge said five judges at the court had ruled unanimously that "the terms 'woman' and 'sex' in the Equality Act refer to a biological woman and biological sex."

The ruling means that a transgender person with a certificate that recognizes them as female should not be considered a woman for equality purposes.

But the court added that its ruling "does not remove protection from trans people," who are "protected from discrimination on the ground of gender reassignment."

The case stems from a 2018 law passed by the Scottish Parliament stating that there should be a 50% female representation on the boards of Scottish public bodies. That law included transgender women in its definition of women.

For Women Scotland (FWS), a women's rights group, had challenged that law, arguing that its redefinition of woman went beyond parliament's powers. But Scottish officials then issued new guidance stating that the definition of woman included someone with a gender recognition certificate.

FWS successfully sought to overturn that.

The group had said the outcome of the case could have consequences in Scotland, England and Wales for sex-based rights as well as single-sex facilities such as toilets, hospital wards and prisons.

"Not tying the definition of sex to its ordinary meaning means that public boards could conceivably comprise of 50% men, and 50% men with certificates, yet still lawfully meet the targets for female representation," the group's director Trina Budge said previously.

The challenge was rejected by a court in 2022, but the group was granted permission last year to take its case to the Supreme Court.

Aidan O'Neill, a lawyer for FWS, told the Supreme Court judges — three men and two women — that under the Equality Act "sex" should refer to biological sex and as understood "in ordinary, everyday language."

"Our position is your sex, whether you are a man or a woman or a girl or a boy is determined from conception in utero, even before one's birth, by one's body," he said. "It is an expression of one's bodily reality. It is an immutable biological state."

The women's right group counted among its supporters author J.K. Rowling, who reportedly donated tens of thousands of pounds to back its work. The "Harry Potter" writer has been vocal in arguing that the rights for trans women should not come at the expense of those who are born biologically female.

Opponents, including Amnesty International, said excluding transgender people from sex discrimination protections conflicted with human rights laws.

Amnesty submitted a brief in court saying it was concerned about the deterioration of the rights for trans people in the U.K. and abroad.

"A blanket policy of barring trans women from single-sex services is not a proportionate means to achieve a legitimate aim," the human rights group said.

## Israeli defense minister says troops will remain in Gaza, Lebanon and Syria indefinitely

By ISAAC SCHARF and WAFAA SHURAFI Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel's defense minister said Wednesday that troops will remain in so-called security zones in the Gaza Strip, Lebanon and Syria indefinitely, remarks that could further complicate talks with Hamas over a ceasefire and hostage release.

Israeli forces have taken over more than half of Gaza in a renewed campaign to pressure Hamas to release hostages after Israel ended their ceasefire last month. Israel has also refused to withdraw from some areas in Lebanon following a ceasefire with the Hezbollah militant group last year, and it seized a buffer zone in southern Syria after rebels overthrew President Bashar Assad in December.

"Unlike in the past, the (Israeli military) is not evacuating areas that have been cleared and seized," Defense Minister Israel Katz said in a statement. The military "will remain in the security zones as a buffer between the enemy and (Israeli) communities in any temporary or permanent situation in Gaza — as in Lebanon and Syria."

The Palestinians and both neighboring countries view the presence of Israeli troops as military occupation in violation of international law. Hamas has said it will not release dozens of remaining hostages without a complete Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and a lasting ceasefire.

"They promised that the hostages come first. In practice, Israel is choosing to seize territory before the hostages," the main organization representing families of the hostages said in a statement.

"There is one solution that is desirable and feasible, and that is the release of all the hostages at once as part of an agreement, even at the cost of ending the war," it said.

Israel says it must maintain control of what it refers to as security zones to prevent a repeat of Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023 attack, in which thousands of militants stormed into southern Israel from Gaza, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting 251.

Israel's offensive has killed over 51,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not say how many were civilians or combatants but says women and children make up more than half of the dead. Israel says it has killed some 20,000 militants, without providing evidence.

Israel's bombardment and ground operations have left vast areas of the territory uninhabitable and have displaced around 90% of the population of roughly 2 million Palestinians. Many have been displaced multiple times, and hundreds of thousands are crammed into squalid tent camps with dwindling food after Israel sealed off the territory from all imports more than a month ago.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to annihilate Hamas and return the 59 hostages still in Gaza — 24 of whom are believed to be alive. He has said that Israel will then implement U.S. President Donald Trump's proposal for the resettlement of much of Gaza's population in other countries through what Netanyahu refers to as "voluntary emigration."

Palestinians and Arab countries have universally rejected Trump's proposal, which human rights experts say would likely violate international law. Palestinians in Gaza say they don't want to leave, and fear another mass expulsion like the one that occurred during the war surrounding Israel's creation in 1948.

The Trump administration, which took credit for helping to broker the ceasefire that took hold in January, has since expressed full support for Israel's decision to end it and to cut off all humanitarian aid. Trump's Mideast envoy, Steve Witkoff, has been trying to broker a new ceasefire agreement more favorable to Israel but those efforts appear to have made little progress.

Netanyahu helms the most nationalist and religious government in Israel's history, and his coalition partners have called for the reestablishment of Jewish settlements in Gaza.

Israel withdrew its forces from Gaza and dismantled its settlements there in 2005, but it maintained



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control of most of Gaza's land border, coastline and airspace, and joined Egypt in imposing a blockade on the territory after Hamas seized power in 2007.

Israel seized Gaza, east Jerusalem and the West Bank — territories the Palestinians want for a future state — in the 1967 Mideast war. It also captured the Golan Heights from Syria in that conflict and annexed it in a move not recognized by any country except for the United States.

## Tech shares fall after Nvidia says new US controls on exports of AI chip will cost it \$5.5 billion

By ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

BANGKOK (AP) — Shares in computer chip makers slumped early Wednesday after Nvidia said tighter U.S. government controls on exports of computer chips used for artificial intelligence will cost it an extra \$5.5 billion.

The company, which announced Monday that it will produce its artificial intelligence super computers in the United States for the first time, said the government told it that its H20 integrated circuits and others of a similar bandwidth would be subject to the licensing requirements for the "indefinite future."

In a regulatory filing, it said the government said the controls addressed risks that the products "may be used in or diverted to, a supercomputer in China."

Nvidia's shares fell 5.8% in pre-market trading. Shares in rival chip maker AMD dropped 6.5%.

Asian technology giants also saw big declines. Testing equipment maker Advantest's shares fell 6.7% in Tokyo, Disco Corp. lost 7.6% and Taiwan's TSMC dropped 2.4%.

The news of the new controls came after Sen. Elizabeth Warren urged Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick to impose restrictions on exports of Nvidia's H20 and other advanced AI chips to China.

"I write with great concern regarding reports that the Commerce Department has paused its plan to restrict the export of powerful advanced AI chips like Nvidia's H20 to the People's Republic of China (PRC)," Warren wrote in a letter posted on the website of the U.S. Senate's Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs.

It said former President Joe Biden had not included the H20 chips in controls his administration placed on exports of advanced AI chips.

The emergence of China's DeepSeek AI chatbot in January renewed concerns over how China might use the advanced chips to help develop its own AI capabilities.

Commerce Department officials were not immediately available for comment early Wednesday.

Nvidia said Monday it has commissioned more than one million square feet of manufacturing space to build and test its specialized Blackwell chips in Arizona and AI supercomputers in Texas — part of an investment the company said will produce up to half a trillion dollars of AI infrastructure in the next four years.

The announcement came after President Donald Trump and other officials said tariff exemptions on electronics like smartphones and laptops were only a temporary reprieve until officials develop a new tariff approach specific to the semiconductor industry.

Trump claimed Nvidia's decision as a victory for his effort to expand manufacturing in the U.S.

## A jungle route once carried hundreds of thousands of migrants. Now the local economy has crashed

By MEGAN JANETSKY and MATÍAS DELACROIX Associated Press

VILLA CALETA, Panama (AP) — The face of U.S. President Donald Trump flashes on the flat-screen TV that Luis Olea bought with the money he earned ferrying migrants through the remote Panamanian jungle during an unprecedented crush of migration.

The Darien Gap, a stretch of nearly impenetrable rain forest along the border with Colombia, was transformed into a migratory highway in recent years as more than 1.2 million people from around the world traveled north toward the United States.

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They brought an economic boom to areas that are hours, even days, from towns or mobile phone signal. Migrants paid for boat rides, clothing, meals and water after grueling and often deadly treks.

With that burst of wealth, many in towns like Olea's Villa Caleta, in the Comarca Indigenous lands, abandoned their plantain and rice crops to carry migrants down the winding rivers.

Olea installed electricity in his one-room wooden home in the heart of the jungle. Families invested in children's education. People built homes and more hopeful lives.

Then the money vanished. After Trump took office in January and slashed access to asylum in the U.S., migration through the Darien Gap virtually disappeared. The new economy bottomed out, and residents newly dependent on it scrambled for options.

"Before, we lived off of the migration," 63-year-old Olea said. "But now that's all gone."

'Like you've discovered a gold mine'

Migration through the Darien Gap soared around 2021 as people fleeing economic crises, war and repressive governments increasingly braved the days-long journey.

While criminal groups raked in money controlling migratory routes and extorting vulnerable people, the mass movement also injected cash into historically underdeveloped regions, said Manuel Orozco, director of the migration, remittances and development program at the Inter-American Dialogue.

"It became a business opportunity for a lot of people," Orozco said. "It's like you've discovered a gold mine, but once it dries up ... you either leave the area and go to the city or stay living in poverty."

Olea, like many of the Comarca, once survived by growing plantains in the jungle next to Villa Caleta, near the Turquesa river flowing near the Colombia border.

When migrants began to move through the region, Olea and others invested in boats to pick up people in the town of Bajo Chiquito, where migrants arrived after their brutal trek.

The boat pilots known as *lancheros* would transport migrants to a port, Lajas Blancas, where they would take buses north.

Pilots like Olea, known as *lancheros*, would earn up to \$300 a day, far above the \$150 a month many had made from crops. The work grew so lucrative that towns along the river struck a deal to take turns transporting migrants, so each community would have their share.

Olea installed solar panels on his tin roof. He elevated his house to protect belongings from floods, and bought a water pump and a television. He now watches Trump talk about tariffs on CNN en Español.

The money connected him, and Darien communities, to the world in a way that had not existed before. 'There's no market anymore'

While some residents saved their cash, many more were left reeling from the abrupt drop in migration, said Cholino de Gracia, a community leader.

"The worst part is that some people struggle to eat, because without any income and no supermarkets here, what can people buy?" de Gracia said.

Olea has started growing plantains again, but said it will take at least nine months to yield anything. He could sell his boat, which now sits unused, but conceded: "Who's going to buy it? There's no market anymore."

Pedro Chami, 56, another former boat pilot, gave up on his crops. Now he sits outside his home carving wooden pans. He hopes to try his luck sifting through river sand for flecks of gold.

"I'm trying this to see if things get better, see if I can buy some food," Chami said. "Before, I would always have my \$200 a day without fail. Now, I don't even have a cent."

At the height of the migration, Panamanian authorities estimated that between 2,500 and 3,000 people crossed the Darien Gap every day. Now, they estimate around 10 cross weekly.

Many more migrants, mainly Venezuelans, have started to travel south along Panama's Caribbean coast in a "reverse flow" back home.

The Gulf Clan, the criminal group that profited from the northward migration, now scouts the coast to see if it can make money off migrants going the other way, said Elizabeth Dickinson, a senior analyst for International Crisis Group.

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Lajas Blancas, the river port where boats dropped off migrants after their jungle journey, has been transformed. It once bustled with crowds browsing stalls selling food, SIM cards, blankets and access to power banks for charging phones.

Now the port and makeshift migrant camp are a ghost town, lined with signs advertising "American clothes" written in red, white and blue.

Zobeida Concepción's family, living on their land, is one of three that haven't abandoned Lajas Blancas. The 55-year-old said most who sold goods to migrants have packed up and headed to Panama City to look for work.

"When Donald Trump won, everything came to a screeching halt," she said.

Concepción's family sold water, soda and snacks and even temporarily opened a restaurant. With the earnings, she bought a new bed, washing machine, refrigerator and three big freezers to store goods sold to migrants. She started to build a house with her husband.

She said she's unsure what to do next, but has some savings. She'll keep the freezers, too.

"I'm going to save them for whatever comes," she said, with future U.S. administrations in mind. "When another government enters, you never know what opportunities there will be."

## **Israeli raids displaced tens of thousands in the West Bank. Now few places to shelter remain**

By SAM MEDNICK Associated Press

TULKAREM, West Bank (AP) — For weeks, the family had been on the move. Israeli troops had forced them from home during a military operation that has displaced tens of thousands of Palestinians across the occupied West Bank. After finding shelter in a wedding hall, they were told to leave again.

"We don't know where we'll go," said the family's 52-year-old matriarch, who did not want to be identified for fear of reprisal. She buried her face in her hands.

The grandmother is one of more than 1,500 displaced people in and around the northern city of Tulkarem who are being pushed from schools, youth centers and other venues because the people who run them need them back. It was not clear how many displaced in other areas like Jenin face the same pressure.

Many say they have nowhere else to go. Israeli forces destroyed some homes.

The cash-strapped Palestinian Authority, which administers parts of the West Bank, has little to offer. The U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees, the largest aid provider in the occupied territories, struggles to meet greater needs in the Gaza Strip while facing Israeli restrictions on its operations.

Approximately 40,000 Palestinians were driven from their homes in January and February in the largest displacement in the West Bank since Israel captured the territory in the 1967 Mideast war.

Israel says the operations are needed to stamp out militancy as violence by all sides has surged since Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack ignited the war in Gaza.

Fears of long-term displacement

Israel's raids have emptied out and largely destroyed several urban refugee camps in the northern West Bank, like Tulkarem and nearby Nur Shams, that housed the descendants of Palestinians who fled or were driven from their homes in previous wars.

Israel says troops will stay in some camps for a year.

People with means are living with relatives or renting apartments, while the impoverished have sought refuge in public buildings. Now that the Muslim holy month of Ramadan has ended, many are being told to leave.

"This is a big problem for us, as the schools cannot be used for the displaced because there are students in them, and at the same time, we have a shortage of financial resources," said Abdallah Kmeil, the governor of Tulkarem.

He said the Palestinian Authority is looking for empty homes to rent to families and plans to bring pre-fabricated containers for some 20,000 displaced. But it's unclear when they will arrive.

Seven minutes to pack



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The matriarch said Israeli troops gave the family seven minutes to pack when they evicted them from the Nur Shams camp in early February. They left with backpacks and a white flag to signal they weren't a threat.

Shelters were overcrowded. People slept on floor mats with little privacy, and dozens at times shared a few toilets and a shower.

The family tried to return home when soldiers allowed people to go back and get their belongings. Days later, they were forced to leave again, and soldiers warned that their house would be burned if they didn't, the woman said.

The family found a charity center that doubles as a wedding hall in a nearby town. Now, with the onset of wedding season, they have had to leave.

When the family feels homesick, they walk to a hilltop overlooking Nur Shams.

Palestinians sheltering in and around Tulkarem say they feel abandoned. Much of the aid they were receiving, such as food and clothes, came from the community during Ramadan, a time of increased charity. Now that has dried up.

Israel's crackdown in the West Bank has also left tens of thousands unemployed. They can no longer work the mostly menial jobs in Israel that paid higher wages, making it harder to rent scarce places to stay.

Iman Basher used to work on a Palestinian farm near her house in Nur Shams. Since fleeing, the day's walk there is too far to travel, she said. The 64-year-old was among dozens of people recently forced from another wedding hall. She now sleeps on a mat in another packed building.

Basher said soldiers raiding her house stole about \$2,000, money she had been saving for more than a decade for her children's education.

An Israeli military spokesperson said the army prohibits the theft or wanton destruction of civilian property and holds soldiers accountable for what it called "exceptional" violations. The army said militants fight and plant explosives in residential areas, and soldiers sometimes occupy homes to combat them.

'The scale of the displacement is beyond us'

Aid groups said some displaced people are living in unfinished buildings, without proper clothes, hygiene, bedding or access to healthcare.

"It's hard to find where the need is ... The scale of the displacement is beyond us," said Nicholas Papachrysostomou, emergency coordinator in the northern West Bank for Doctors Without Borders.

The charity's mobile clinics provide primary healthcare, but there's a shortage of medicine and it's hard to get supplies because of Israeli restrictions and financial constraints by the West Bank's health ministry, he said.

The U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees, known as UNRWA, plans to disburse \$265 a month to about 30,000 of the most vulnerable displaced people, but there is enough money for only three months, said Hanadi Jaber Abu Taqa, head of UNRWA in the northern West Bank.

The agency's money mostly goes to Gaza. Just over 12% of the funds it seeks from donors for this year will be allocated to the West Bank.

Portable housing for the many displaced would only be a temporary fix. Some Palestinians said they wouldn't accept it, worrying it would feel like giving up their right to return home.

Isam Sadooq had been helping 60 displaced people staying at a youth center in Tulkarem. Last month, he was told, by the people who run the center, that they should consider evacuating so children can resume sports.

"If we cannot find them another place to live, what will be their fate?" he said. "They will find themselves in the street, and this is something we do not accept."

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## AP Was There: A truck bomb rips through a federal building in Oklahoma City in 1995

By SEAN MURPHY Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — EDITORS NOTE: On April 19, 1995, a former U.S. Army soldier parked a rented Ryder truck loaded with a powerful bomb made of fertilizer and fuel oil outside a federal office building in Oklahoma City. The blast at the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building killed 168 people, including 19 children, and injured more than 500 others in what remains the deadliest homegrown attack on American soil.

It was 9:02 a.m. in the Oklahoma City bureau of The Associated Press when a handful of staffers, some just getting to work, were startled by what felt like a small quake rattling the office.

Some guessed it was a nearby gas explosion. Then reports started trickling in.

"It didn't take long at all for the gravity of the event to set in," said Linda Franklin, the AP's Oklahoma City news editor at the time.

She quickly dispatched reporters and photographers to the downtown Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building about 6 miles (10 kilometers) away. They would become among the first journalists on the scene of the deadliest homegrown attack in U.S. history: an explosion that killed 168 people, including 19 children, and left more than 500 others injured.

Judy Gibbs Robinson, then a broadcast editor for the AP whose job was mostly filing brief stories for radio and TV, was the first AP reporter to arrive downtown.

"I still remember the dress shoes I was wearing, because they had fabric on the sides and I was stepping over glass," Gibbs Robinson said. "A lot of people were just pointing and saying: 'It's downtown. It's downtown.'"

In some ways, Gibbs Robinson was prepared for the moment. A broadcast training she had recently attended urged reporters to record all the sights and sounds of a news event. As she made her way closer to the building, the AP veteran put those skills to work.

"I just started talking and watching and listening, describing what I was seeing," she said.

Thirty years later, what Gibbs Robinson witnessed is still seared into her memory. Parents reuniting with their children at a YMCA daycare near the blast site. A man whose suit looked untouched from the front but was shredded in the back because his back was turned to a window when the blast erupted.

Cellphones were not yet commonplace, but Gibbs Robinson needed to call the newsroom. She entered a bank, where employees had stretched a landline telephone out onto a ledge, making it available to anyone. Meanwhile, emergency responders streamed into the area.

"That was how I filed my first report," she said.

Back in the newsroom, Franklin and other staffers pushed a steady stream of copy and photos onto the AP wire for newspapers and broadcasters around the world. The phones rang constantly, with other media outlets inquiring about AP copy or asking for the names of people killed or wounded.

"I remember feeling like an octopus that day. I just didn't have enough arms," said Lindel Hutson, the bureau chief in Oklahoma City.

The newsroom was moving in a blur and, amidst it all, a stranger walked through the door. Hutson recalled almost being too busy to talk to the man, who said he was an amateur photographer and wanted to show the AP pictures he had snapped at the blast site.

Hutson and David Longstreath, an AP staff photographer, took a moment to see what he had. One image jumped out immediately. It showed an Oklahoma City firefighter cradling a fatally wounded baby in his arms.

"I thought, 'Oh my God.' This is it," Hutson recalled.

On the spot, Hutson negotiated a deal with the photographer, Charles Porter, to purchase the image. The photo won Porter the 1996 Pulitzer Prize for spot news photography and remains one of the most defining images of the attack.

"I think that picture probably said more than 1,000 words could about what happened down there,"

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Hutson said.

By the end of the night, the Oklahoma City bureau had become a cramped hotbed of activity. AP reporters, editors and photographers from across the country had descended on the small office for the story that would consume the staff in the months ahead.

For everyone who had a role in the coverage, it was among the most significant event in their professional lives.

"This happened in our backyard," Hutson said. "It took quite a mental toll on everyone."

Following is the story the AP published on the day of the bombing, Wednesday, April 19, 1995, before the true death toll was known.

Car Bombing Kills More Than 20; No Claim of Responsibility

By JUDY GIBBS

Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — A car bomb ripped deep into America's heartland Wednesday, killing more than 20 people and leaving 300 missing in a blast that gouged a nine-story hole in a federal office building. Seventeen of the dead were children whose parents had just dropped them off at a day care center, a doctor said.

"We're sure that that (death toll) will go up because we've seen fatalities in the building," Fire Chief Gary Marrs said.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack, the deadliest U.S. bombing in 75 years.

At least 200 people were injured — 58 critically, Marrs said — and dozens of others were feared trapped in the rubble of the Alfred Murrah Building.

"I dove under that table," said Brian Espe, a state veterinarian who was giving a slide presentation on the fifth floor. "When I came out, I could see daylight if I looked north and daylight if I looked west."

Attorney General Janet Reno refused to comment on who might have been behind the attack. President Clinton called the bombers "evil cowards" and Reno said the government would seek the death penalty against them.

Their clothes torn off, victims covered in glass and plaster emerged bloodied and crying from the building, which looked as if a giant bite had been taken out of it, exposing its floors like a dollhouse.

Cables and other debris dangled from the floors like tangled streamers in a scene that brought to mind car bombings at the U.S. Embassy and the U.S. Marine barracks in Lebanon in 1983.

Mayor Ron Norick said the blast was caused by a car bomb that left a crater 8 feet deep. He said the car had been outside, in front of the building.

"Obviously, no amateur did this," Gov. Frank Keating said. "Whoever did this was an animal."

Paramedic Heather Taylor said 17 children were dead at the scene. The children, all at the day care center, ranged in age from 1 to 7, and some were burned beyond recognition, said Dr. Carl Spengler, who was one of the first doctors at the scene.

Reno said that 300 people were unaccounted for by late afternoon. About 20 of 40 children in the day-care center were missing.

The explosion, similar to the terrorist car bombing that killed six people and injured 1,000 at New York's World Trade Center in 1993, occurred just after 9 a.m., when most of the more than 500 federal employees were in their offices.

The blast could be felt 30 miles away. Black smoke streamed across the skyline, and glass, bricks and other debris were spread over a wide area. The north side of the building was gone. Cars were incinerated on the street.

People frantically searched for loved ones, including parents whose children were in the building's day-care center.

Christopher Wright of the Coast Guard, one of those helping inside the building, said rescuers periodi-



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cally turned off their chainsaws and prying tools to listen for calls of help, ``but we didn't hear anything — just death.”

“You're helpless really, when you see people two feet away, you can't do anything, they're just smashed,” he said.

The building has offices of such federal agencies as the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, Social Security, Veterans Affairs, the Drug Enforcement Administration and Housing and Urban Development, and a federal employee credit union and military recruiting offices.

The office was built in 1974 and includes an underground parking garage.

The bomb was perhaps 1,000 to 1,200 pounds, said John Magaw, ATF director. As for whether his agency suspected terrorists, he told CNN: “I think any time you have this kind of damage, this kind of explosion, you have to look there first.”

More than two hours after the explosion, people were still trapped in the building.

“We have to crawl on our stomachs and feel our way and we're talking to victims who are in there and reassuring them that we're doing everything within the good Lord's power to reach them and get to them,” Assistant Fire Chief Jon Hansen said. “It's going to be a very slow process.”

The explosion heightened U.S. fears of terrorism. Federal buildings in several cities were evacuated because of bomb threats, and the government ordered tightened security at federal buildings throughout the country.

In 1920, a bomb blast in New York's Wall Street area killed 40 people and injured hundreds. Authorities concluded it was the work of “anarchists” and came up with a list of suspects, but all had fled to Russia.

Emergency crews set up a first aid center nearby, and some of the injured sat on the sidewalks, blood on their heads or arms, awaiting aid. St. Anthony Hospital put out a call for more medical help, and at midday, posted a list of more than 200 names of injured so worried relatives could look for loved ones.

“It was like Beirut; everything was burning and flattened,” said Spengler, who arrived minutes after the blast.

Carole Lawton, 62, a HUD secretary, said she was sitting at her desk on the seventh floor when “all of a sudden the windows blew in. It got real dark and the ceiling just started coming down” She then heard “the roar of the whole building crumbling.” She managed to crawl down some stairs and was not injured.

The explosion occurred on the second anniversary of the fiery, fatal ending to the federal siege of the Branch Davidian compound in Waco, Texas. That siege began with a raid by ATF agents a month and a half earlier.

Oklahoma City FBI spokesman Dan Vogel wouldn't speculate if there was a connection. The FBI's offices are about five miles away. Dick DeGuerin, who was cult leader David Koresh's lawyer, said any such link was just speculation.

In the World Trade Center bombing in February 1993, a rented van blew up in a parking garage beneath the twin towers. Four Muslims were convicted.

## **The Oklahoma City bombing was 30 years ago. Some survivors worry America didn't learn the lesson**

By SEAN MURPHY Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — Thirty years after a truck bomb detonated outside a federal building in America's heartland, killing 168 people in the deadliest homegrown attack on U.S. soil, deep scars remain.

From a mother who lost her first-born baby, a son who never got to know his father, and a young man so badly injured that he still struggles to breathe, three decades have not healed the wounds from the Oklahoma City bombing on April 19, 1995.

The bombers were two former U.S. Army buddies, Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols, who shared a deep-seated hatred of the federal government fueled by the bloody raid on the Branch Davidian religious sect near Waco, Texas, and a standoff in the mountains of Ruby Ridge, Idaho, that killed a 14-year-old boy, his mother and a federal agent.

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And while the bombing awakened the nation to the dangers of extremist ideologies, many who suffered directly in the attack still fear anti-government rhetoric in modern-day politics could also lead to violence.

A 30-year anniversary remembrance ceremony is scheduled for April 19 on the grounds of the Oklahoma City National Memorial Museum.

**A baby killed and a mother's anguish**

Little Baylee Almon had just celebrated her first birthday the day before her mother, Aren Almon, dropped her off at the America's Kids Daycare inside the Alfred P. Murrah federal building. It was the last time Aren would see her first child alive.

The next day, Aren saw a photo on the front page of the local newspaper of Baylee's battered and lifeless body cradled in the arms of an Oklahoma City firefighter.

"I said: 'That's Baylee.' I knew it was her," Aren Almon said. She called her pediatrician, who confirmed the news.

In the hauntingly iconic image, which won the amateur photographer who took it the 1996 Pulitzer Prize for spot news photography, firefighter Chris Shields came to symbolize all the first responders who descended on the bomb site, while Baylee represented the innocent victims who were lost that day.

**But for Aren, her daughter was more than a symbol.**

"I get that (the photo) made its mark on the world," Almon said. "But I also realize that Baylee was a real child. She wasn't just a symbol, and I think that gets left out a lot."

**A firefighter thrust into the spotlight**

The Oklahoma City firefighter in the photograph was Chris Fields, who had been on the scene for about an hour when a police officer came "out of nowhere" and handed him Baylee's lifeless body.

Fields swept the infant's airway and checked for any signs of life. He found none.

He said the iconic photograph was snapped as he waited for a paramedic to find room for the baby in a crowded ambulance.

"I was just looking down at Baylee thinking, 'Wow, somebody's world is getting ready to be turned upside down today,'" Fields recalled.

While he tries to focus more on being a grandfather than politics, Fields said he has little doubt an attack motivated by radical political ideology could happen again.

"I don't worry about it, but do I think it could happen again? Without a doubt," he said.

**A badly injured child still scarred**

One of the youngest survivors of the bombing was PJ Allen, who was just 18 months old when his grandmother dropped him off at the second-floor daycare. He still bears the scars from his injuries.

Allen suffered second- and third-degree burns over more than half his body, a collapsed lung, smoke damage to both lungs, head trauma from falling debris and damage to his vocal chords that still affects the sound of his voice.

Now an avionics technician at Tinker Air Force Base in Oklahoma City, Allen said he had to be home-schooled for years and couldn't go out in the sun because of the damage to his skin.

Still, there doesn't seem to be any self pity when he speaks of the impact of the bombing on his life.

"Around this time of year, April, it makes me very appreciative that I wake up every day," he said. "I know some people weren't as fortunate."

**A son who didn't get to know his father**

Austin Allen was 4 years old when his father, Ted L. Allen, a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development employee, died in the bombing. He never truly got to know his dad.

Although he remembers snippets of riding in his dad's truck and eating Cheerios with him in the morning, most of his memories come from friends and family.

"It's just been little anecdotes, little things like that I've heard about him over the years, that have painted a bigger picture of the man he was," Allen said.

Allen, who now has a 4-year-old of his own, acknowledges he's troubled by the anti-government vein in modern-day politics and wonders where it could lead.

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"It's such a similar feeling today, where you have one side versus the other," he said. "There is a parallel to 1995 and the political unrest."

A worker's life changed in an instant

Dennis Purifoy, who was an assistant manager in the Social Security office on the ground floor of the building, lost 16 co-workers in the bombing. Another 24 customers who were waiting in the lobby also perished.

Although he doesn't remember hearing the explosion, a phenomenon he said he shares with other survivors, he remembers thinking the computer he was working on had exploded.

"That's just one of the weird ways that I found out later our minds work in a situation like that," he said.

Purifoy, now 73 and retired, said the bombing and McVeigh's anti-government motives were a reality check for an innocent nation, something he said he sees in our society today.

"I still think that our country is naive, as the way I was before the bombing, naive about the numbers of people in our country who hold far right-wing views, very anti-government views," Purifoy said. "One thing I say to tell people is 'conspiracy theories can kill,' and we saw it here."

## Vermont maple syrup makers face uncertainty amid Canada and China tariff chaos

By AMANDA SWINHART and PATRICK WHITTLE Associated Press

MORGAN, Vt. (AP) — Making maple syrup in New England's fickle spring weather can be an unpredictable business. Now President Donald Trump's ever-changing tariff policies are adding anxiety about an industry that depends on multinational trade.

"Any kind of disruption with our cross border enterprise, we feel it," said Jim Judd, a fourth-generation sugarer who owns Judd's Wayeeses Farms in Morgan, Vermont. "It's uncertain enough making maple syrup."

Judd, who has been making Vermont's signature product since the 1970s, says multiple countries contribute to each container of the sticky sweetener. Stainless steel fixtures used connect sap lines and boil the liquid into syrup can originate in China. Packaging often comes from Italy. And the vast majority of equipment is sold by Canada, which produces about four-fifths of the planet's maple syrup — and sells nearly two-thirds of it to U.S. consumers.

That's why this spring's whiplash is so concerning to Judd and many other U.S. producers in Vermont as well as New York, Maine and Wisconsin.

Trump backed off the stiffest tariffs on most nations for 90 days earlier this month while increasing the taxes on Chinese imports to 145% and engaging in a lengthy back and forth with Canada and Mexico about tariffs on their countries' goods.

Allison Hope, executive director of the Vermont Maple Sugar Makers' Association, said they're assuming that Trump's latest position means there is no tariff on finished maple products for now — but the situation gets murkier when considering that necessary packaging, equipment and materials may originate in China.

"It's like the weather in New England. You wait five minutes and it might change," Hope said. "Now it matters how Canada makes its equipment and gets its materials. ... It's hard for businesses to run on a growth mentality when there's no sense of what the industry is going to look like in a way, in a year."

The uncertainty is arriving in a time of relative growth for syrup producers in the U.S. as well as Canada. Vermont has seen an increase in production of nearly 500% over the last 20 years as producers scaled up, new businesses formed and U.S. consumers sought local and natural alternatives to refined sugars, Hope said.

But disrupting trade with Canada, the maple syrup powerhouse, could be devastating. Judd, for one, said he has spent "countless amounts of hours and lots and lots of money" buying equipment in Canada over the decades. Import taxes could sharply increase his costs, and since syrup is, at essence, a luxury good, he thinks he can't raise prices.

"We can't do this without Canadian help. We can't buy what we need at another outlet because it's all



in Canada," Judd said. "We've been crossing this border all my life. The recent changes we see being imposed on the people here — we're not sure that they're all necessary."

## **RFK Jr.'s mixed message about the measles outbreaks draws criticism from health officials**

By AMANDA SEITZ Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As measles outbreaks popped up across the U.S. this winter, pediatricians waited for the nation's public health agency to send a routine, but important, letter that outlines how they could help stop the spread of the illness.

It wasn't until last week — after the number of cases grew to more than 700, and a second young child in Texas had died from a measles infection — that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention finally issued its correspondence.

The delay of that letter may seem minor. But it is one in a string of missteps that more than a dozen doctors, nurses and public health officials interviewed by The Associated Press identified in the Trump administration's response to the outbreak.

Health secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s efforts to contain an epidemic in a tight-knit, religious community in West Texas have run counter to established public health strategies deployed to end past epidemics.

"What we are lacking now is one, clear strong voice — from the federal to the state to the local — saying that the vaccine is the only thing that will prevent measles," said Patricia Stinchfield, a nurse and infectious disease expert who helped stop a 2017 measles outbreak in Minnesota's Somali community.

An 'extremely unusual' approach to the outbreak

Behind the scenes, Kennedy has not been regularly briefed in person on the outbreak by his own infectious disease experts at the CDC at least through March 21, according to Kevin Griffis, a career staffer who worked as the agency's communications director until he resigned that day.

Even after the measles claimed its first young Texas victim in late February, Kennedy had still not been briefed by CDC staff, Griffis said. His account was confirmed by a second former federal health official, who resigned at the end of February.

A spokesperson for Kennedy did not answer specific written questions about how he had been briefed or his communications with CDC staff.

The spokesperson said the CDC activated an Atlanta-based response in early February to provide overall guidance on measles testing and vaccination strategy. An on-the-ground team was deployed to West Texas throughout most of March and withdrawn on April 1.

It was a "joint decision" between state and federal officials to send the team home, CDC spokesman Jason McDonald said. Another team of seven was dispatched back to the region this week.

In previous administrations, health secretaries held weekly briefings with CDC staff, lasting between 25 and 30 minutes, during infectious disease outbreaks, both former HHS officials said. Kennedy, instead, received updates on paper or through email, Griffis said.

"That is extremely unusual," said Griffis, who sat in on such briefings with the previous health secretary and said that none were held for Kennedy during his first month on the job. "I've never seen that before."

In another irregularity, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the nation's largest network of pediatricians, has not been tapped to work with the CDC on the outbreak, according to the organization's officials. Historically, the CDC and AAP have convened for monthly or biweekly briefings during outbreaks to share updates, which include details about what doctors are seeing and questions they're fielding from parents in exam rooms. The officials spoke on the condition of anonymity to freely discuss the health department's response.

The only updates provided widely to pediatricians by the CDC have come from a health alert network update sent on March 7, a week after the first U.S. measles death in a decade, and the letter sent to providers last week, which, according to the pediatric academy officials, was late in the outbreak.

Kennedy praised the CDC on Tuesday during an event in Indianapolis, saying it "had done a very good

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job controlling the measles outbreak.”

Kennedy endorses vaccines, but still raises safety doubts

Kennedy’s inconsistent and unclear message on the measles vaccines has also made the outbreaks difficult to contain, experts say.

He has occasionally endorsed the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine as “effective,” but also continues to raise safety concerns about the shots in other statements. In a CBS interview last week, he claimed the vaccines were “not safety tested.”

That approach has been the biggest flaw of the government’s response, said Dr. Carlos del Rio, the president of the Infectious Disease Society of America.

“Imagine if the captain of the Titanic had told you that you need to be careful about lifeboats and think about other opportunities,” del Rio said.

Trials were conducted on thousands of children before the vaccine was approved for use in the 1960s. The federal government has since used medical records to continue to monitor for side effects from use in millions of people since.

Health secretaries have typically delivered a clear message urging the public to get vaccinated during outbreaks, said Dr. Anne Schuchat, a former deputy director at the CDC who retired after 33 years at the agency in 2021.

President Donald Trump and his first-term health secretary, Alex Azar, urged people to get shots during news conferences in 2019, when measles ripped through Brooklyn and infected more than 1,200 nationwide.

“You don’t necessarily need the secretary of health to attend a funeral, OK, but you don’t want to have mixed messages on vaccines,” Schuchat said. “Someone in a federal building in Washington can do a lot of harm from the way that they are messaging.”

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott also quiet on vaccines

Local leaders have largely been left alone to urge the public to take up vaccinations.

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, a Republican, has not urged the public to get vaccinated, either. He has not held any news conferences about the outbreak and posted just once on social media about measles since January. Any statements about the illnesses, which have also put 56 people in the hospital at some point, have been left to his aides.

Abbott’s office did not respond to questions about his response to the outbreak.

Governors in other states have responded more forcefully to the growing measles case count. Hawaii Gov. Josh Green, a Democrat and a doctor, made front page news last week after urging Hawaiians to take up vaccines when the state recorded its first measles case in a year.

Ahead of a busy travel week for the Easter holiday, Nebraska Gov. Jim Pillen, a Republican, unequivocally called on people to vaccinate themselves and their children. There are no known measles cases in Nebraska, but an outbreak is active in neighboring Kansas.

“If you’re not vaccinated, you’re going to get measles,” Pillen said last week.

Those types of statements are important for the public to hear leaders say from the top down, said Dr. Oxiris Barbot, who was New York City’s health commissioner during the 2019 measles outbreak.

Barbot worked with local rabbis, as well as doctors and nurses in the Jewish community, to send messages that encouraged vaccine uptake. Calls from Trump and Azar, who urged the public to vaccinate, helped her make the case, too.

When national leaders distance themselves from that message, she said it “starts to erode the effectiveness of people who are trying to convey those messages at the local level.”

## In the Ukrainian city of Sumy, life goes on despite the constant threat of attack

By SAMYA KULLAB and YEHOR KONOVALOV Associated Press

SUMY, Ukraine (AP) — The humdrum of daily life in Sumy belies the constant threat of death its people have lived with since Russia invaded Ukraine three years ago.

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Days after Russia targeted the city's center in back-to-back missile strikes, killing 35 people and injuring more than 100 others in the deadliest attack on Ukrainian civilians this year, neighbors gossiped in front of their apartment block as children played soccer in the courtyard. They paused to look up only when hearing the buzzing of attack drones and familiar thud of Ukrainian air defenses before resuming what they were doing.

Sumy is only about 30 kilometers (18 miles) from the border of Russia's Kursk region, where Ukrainian soldiers are defending the last sliver of territory they took in a surprise offensive last summer. Residents say there has been an uptick in attacks on Sumy in recent weeks, though none as bloody as Sunday's airstrike, which targeted a busy intersection.

The attack in Sumy, which had a prewar population of about 250,000, came just over a week after a Russian missile strike killed about 20 people, including nine children, in the central Ukrainian city of Kryvyi Rih. Russia said it was targeting a meeting of soldiers, but there is no evidence to support the claim.

The attacks on their cities has left many Ukrainians wondering where the next will occur and cast a shadow over the ongoing ceasefire talks being brokered by the United States. The talks have produced only muted results, as Russia insists on conditions Ukraine deems impossible and Kyiv believes Moscow's forces are gearing up for a fresh offensive.

The attack ended some lives and shattered others

To the people of Sumy, the talks seem far-removed from their daily struggles.

As some of the victims of Sunday's attack were laid to rest on Tuesday, Viktor Voitenko, 56, described how he ended up paralyzed in a hospital bed. He was working as a security guard when the second missile hit and shattered his spine. As he spoke, his wife Hanna, 40, lovingly applied his deodorant — a simple act he could no longer perform.

Mention of the ceasefire negotiations conjured a weary smile from her. "It's empty talks. They don't move anywhere. It seems to be public relations to me," Hanna Voitenko said. "Nothing happens to bring comfort to regular people."

Her husband offered his own take: "They are stalling for time."

Work, errands and planned family visits brought the victims of Sunday's attack to the intersection of Petropavlivska Street and the state university on Sunday morning.

Asia Pohorila, 20, was working at a cafe and thinking about whether to buy pastries after her shift when the first missile strike left her in shock and bleeding profusely from her legs. On Tuesday, the times "10:20" and "10:23" were still scrawled in marker on her thighs, noting when medics applied tourniquets to them.

A teen springs into action

Maryna Illiashenko and her 13-year old son, Kyrylo, heard the sound of that first blast ricochet across the center city as they waited for a bus.

They were headed to visit his grandmother, but the teenager was more excited about wrestling practice later that afternoon. Undeterred, they boarded the bus when it arrived a few minutes later. One stop later, the second missile crashed a few feet from the vehicle, scorching nearby cars, burning passengers alive, killing the bus driver and causing shrapnel to rain down. Three fragments tore through Kyrylo's scalp and scratched Maryna's face.

Enveloped in smoke and debris, the teen leaped out of the shattered bus window and pried open the locked door from outside, saving half a dozen trapped passengers, witnesses said.

"I don't want to think about this as a new type of reality for Sumy city. We can clearly see that our frontline cities are being erased," Oleh Strilka, a spokesperson for the city's State Emergency Service, said while standing outside the collapsed facade of the university building, where the second missile struck.

"The most painful thing for me is our children. Why do they need to suffer?" he asked. "I don't want our 13-year-old kids becoming heroes."

Liudmyla Shelukhina, 70, was waiting in a neighbor's house for a haircut. She was standing in line in the kitchen when the windows suddenly shattered.

She said the fridge she was next to saved her life. "I would have been decapitated."



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"Don't be so dramatic," joked her husband, Viktor, a former soldier. Their son was hospitalized in the attack.

No relief for first responders

Rescue workers like Dmytro Shevchenko, 31, have to be prepared to head to the scene of the next attack at all times. He was among the first to arrive at the university grounds on Sunday. Most people he found were too badly injured to help, he said, wiping away tears.

He holds on to little hope that ceasefire talks will bear fruit. "I just don't believe in it," he said.

The children's hospital where Kyrylo Illiashenko is recovering bears the scars of repeated drone attacks. More than 100 windows were shattered only two weeks ago when a massive drone attack struck nearby, said Chief Dr. Ihor Zmislya.

As workers cleared rubble from the sites of the missile strikes Tuesday and Kyrylo expounded on his favorite computer games, an explosion sounded in the distance. From the teen's hospital window, plumes of smoke could be seen rising from a nearby railway line.

"This is our reality," said Zmislya. "It happens all the time."

## **Wink Martindale, the genial game show host and an early TV interviewer of Elvis Presley, dies at 91**

By BETH HARRIS Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Wink Martindale, the genial host of such hit game shows as "Gambit" and "Tic-Tac-Dough" who also did one of the first recorded television interviews with a young Elvis Presley, has died. He was 91.

Martindale died Tuesday at Eisenhower Health in Rancho Mirage, California, according to his publicist Brian Mayes. Martindale had been battling lymphoma for a year.

"He was doing pretty well up until a couple weeks ago," Mayes said by phone from Nashville.

"Gambit" debuted on the same day in September 1972 as "The Price is Right" with Bob Barker and "The Joker's Wild" with Jack Barry.

"From the day it hit the air, 'Gambit' spelled winner, and it taught me a basic tenant of any truly successful game show: KISS! Keep It Simple Stupid," Martindale wrote in his 2000 memoir "Winking at Life." "Like playing Old Maids as a kid, everybody knows how to play 21, i.e. blackjack."

"Gambit" had been beating its competition on NBC and ABC for over two years. But a new show debuted in 1975 on NBC called "Wheel of Fortune." By December 1976, "Gambit" was off the air and "Wheel of Fortune" became an institution that is still going strong today.

Martindale bounced back in 1978 with "Tic-Tac-Dough," the classic X's and O's game on CBS that ran until 1985.

"Overnight I had gone from the outhouse to the penthouse," he wrote.

He presided over the 88-game winning streak of Navy Lt. Thom McKee, who earned over \$300,000 in cash and prizes that included eight cars, three sailboats and 16 vacation trips. At the time, McKee's winnings were a record for a game show contestant.

"I love working with contestants, interacting with the audience and to a degree, watching lives change," Martindale wrote. "Winning a lot of cash can cause that to happen."

Martindale wrote that producer Dan Enright once told him that in the seven years he hosted "Tic-Tac-Dough" he gave away over \$7 million in cash and prizes.

Martindale said his many years as a radio DJ were helpful to him as a game show host because radio calls for constant ad-libs and he learned to handle almost any situation in the spur of the moment. He estimated that he hosted nearly two dozen game shows during his career.

Martindale wrote in his memoir that the question he got asked most often was "Is Wink your real name?" The second was "How did you get into game shows?"

He got his nickname from a childhood friend. Martindale is no relation to University of Michigan defensive coordinator Don Martindale, whose college teammates nicknamed him Wink because of their shared last

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name.

Born Winston Conrad Martindale on Dec. 4, 1933, in Jackson, Tennessee, he loved radio since childhood and at age 6 would read aloud the contents of advertisements in Life magazine.

He began his career as a disc jockey at age 17 at WPLI in his hometown, earning \$25 a week.

After moving to WTJS, he was hired away for double the salary by Jackson's only other station, WDXI. He next hosted mornings at WHBQ in Memphis while attending Memphis State. He was married and the father of two girls when he graduated in 1957.

Martindale was in the studio, although not working on-air that night, when the first Presley record "That's All Right" was played on WHBQ on July 8, 1954.

Martindale approached fellow DJ Dewey Phillips, who had given Presley an early break by playing his song, to ask him and Presley to do a joint interview on Martindale's TV show "Top Ten Dance Party" in 1956. By then, Presley had become a major star and agreed to the appearance.

Martindale and Presley stayed in touch on occasion through the years, and in 1959 he did a trans-Atlantic telephone interview with Presley, who was in the Army in Germany. Martindale's second wife, Sandy, briefly dated Presley after meeting him on the set of "G.I. Blues" in 1960.

In 1959, Martindale moved to Los Angeles to host a morning show on KHJ. That same year he reached No. 7 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart with a cover version of "Deck of Cards," which sold over 1 million copies. He performed the spoken word wartime story with religious overtones on "The Ed Sullivan Show."

"I could easily have thought, 'Wow, this is easy! I come out here, go on radio and TV, make a record and everybody wants to buy it!'" he wrote. "Even if I entertained such thoughts, they soon dissipated. I learned in due time that what had happened to me was far from the ordinary."

A year later he moved to the morning show at KRLA and to KFWB in 1962. Among his many other radio gigs were two separate stints at KMPC, owned by actor Gene Autry.

His first network hosting job was on NBC's "What's This Song?" where he was credited as Win Martindale from 1964-65.

He later hosted two Chuck Barris-produced shows on ABC: "Dream Girl '67" and "How's Your Mother-in-Law?" The latter lasted just 13 weeks before being canceled.

"I've jokingly said it came and went so fast, it seemed more like 13 minutes!" Martindale wrote, explaining that it was the worst show of his career.

Martindale later hosted a Las Vegas-based revival of "Gambit" from 1980-81.

He formed his own production company, Wink Martindale Enterprises, to develop and produce his own game shows. His first venture was "Headline Chasers," a coproduction with Merv Griffin that debuted in 1985 and was canceled after one season. His next show, "Bumper Stumpers," ran on U.S. and Canadian television from 1987-1990.

He hosted "Debt" from 1996-98 on Lifetime cable and "Instant Recall" on GSN in 2010.

Martindale returned to his radio roots in 2012 as host of the nationally syndicated "The 100 Greatest Christmas Hits of All Time." In 2021, he hosted syndicated program "The History of Rock 'n' Roll."

In 2017, Martindale appeared in a KFC ad campaign with actor Rob Lowe.

He is survived by Sandy, his second wife of 49 years, and children Lisa, Madelyn and Laura and numerous grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his son, Wink Jr. Martindale's children are from his first marriage which ended in divorce in 1972.

## Border deployment vehicle accident kills two service members, third in critical condition

By TARA COPP Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Two service members deployed to the U.S. Southern border were killed and a third is in serious condition after a vehicle accident near Santa Teresa, New Mexico, the military announced late Tuesday.

The region where the accident took place is just over the state line and west of Fort Bliss, a major Army

installation in West Texas that has played a critical role in dispatching military deportation flights and served as a touchpoint for thousands of soldiers and pieces of equipment now deployed along the border.

The troops are deployed there in support of President Donald Trump's executive order to secure the U.S.-Mexico border.

A defense official speaking on the condition of anonymity to provide additional details not yet made public said the accident occurred in a civilian vehicle, but no civilians were harmed in the incident.

The incident did not involve any of the scores of Stryker vehicles the Pentagon has sent down to the border to perform patrols, the official said.

The accident occurred around 8:50 a.m. MDT Tuesday; the names of the deceased will not be released until the next of kin are notified.

## **NATO chief reaffirms support for Ukraine during a visit to the port city of Odesa**

ODESA, Ukraine (AP) — NATO's support for Ukraine remains "unwavering," the alliance's secretary-general said Tuesday, emphasizing that more than 20 billion euros — over \$22 billion — in security assistance has already been pledged by NATO allies in the first three months of the year.

Mark Rutte spoke on Tuesday in Ukraine's port city of Odesa, where he met with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

His visit came days after two Russian ballistic missiles struck the city of Sumy on Palm Sunday morning, killing at least 35 people, including two children, and injuring 119.

The attack on the northeastern city, about 30 kilometers (20 miles) from Ukraine's border with Russia, marked the second large-scale attack in just over a week to result in significant civilian casualties. Earlier this month, about 20 people were killed, including nine children, after a Russian ballistic missile struck Zelenskyy's hometown of Kryvyi Rih on April 4.

"I'm here today because I believe Ukraine's people deserve real peace, real safety and security in their country, in their homes," Rutte said during a joint news conference with Zelenskyy. The two met with wounded Ukrainian soldiers at a hospital in Odesa.

This is Rutte's first trip to Ukraine since U.S. President Donald Trump assumed the lead in ceasefire negotiations between Kyiv and Moscow, which have included several rounds of talks in Saudi Arabia.

"These discussions are not easy, not least in the wake of this horrific violence," Rutte said, referring to the recent strikes. "But we all support President Trump's push for peace."

Ukraine has endorsed the broader U.S.-proposed cease-fire deal, though Russia has effectively stalled the process by attaching far-reaching conditions.

A 'coalition of the willing'

Meanwhile, Ukraine and its European partners are continuing to develop the infrastructure for the "coalition of the willing," which is expected to act as a long-term security guarantee aimed at deterring future Russian aggression after a ceasefire is in place.

Amid that uncertainty and U.S. warnings that Europe must take care of its own security and that of Ukraine in the future, the multinational force is seen as a first test of the continent's willingness to defend itself and its interests.

Zelenskyy said Turkey could play a significant role in providing future Black Sea security guarantees for Ukraine.

"This is not about ending the war, unfortunately," Zelenskyy said, commenting on the security meeting being hosted by Turkey on Tuesday and Wednesday. "It's about what comes after — the security guarantees for Ukraine following a ceasefire."

He said military representatives from Ukraine, France, the United Kingdom and Turkey are discussing the presence of a military contingent in the Black Sea as part of those guarantees.

"The fact that these talks are ongoing, that we are preparing for this hopeful, soon-to-be achieved



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eventuality — NATO tries to steer that in the direction we think would be advisable,” Rutte said.

The meeting in Turkey comes less than a month after the United States announced that Russia and Ukraine had agreed to “eliminate the use of force” in the Black Sea. However, key details remained unresolved, and the Kremlin has tied the deal to the lifting of certain Western sanctions.

Commenting on ongoing negotiations with the U.S. over a revised draft of an agreement that would give the U.S. access to Ukraine’s valuable mineral resources, Zelenskyy described last week’s technical talks in Washington as positive, with more consultations expected in the coming days.

He said the meeting was a technical session for expert teams and that “both sides concluded the meeting on a positive note.” Zelenskyy added that discussions — both online and in person — will continue throughout the week, and once the teams are ready, they will present the outcomes of their work.

**A city mourns its dead**

Meanwhile, residents of Sumy were still mourning their loved ones killed in Sunday’s attack. Among the dead was Olena Kohut, pianist and a solo organist at the regional philharmonic, and a farewell ceremony was held in the local theatre where she often played.

Dozens came to say goodbye to the gifted musician and piano teacher, who was killed while on her way to rehearsals. Mourners wept, holding red roses, as they approached her coffin at the local theatre where she taught piano and mentored young musicians. The crowd then clapped in respect as her coffin was driven away and out of sight.

“The Sumy region lost a lot with her,” said Serhiy Dorofiev, 39, director of the theater where Kohut worked.

## **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 United Nations 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.

Up to 400,000 people have fled the Zamzam camp in recent days, U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric said Tuesday. “Local sources are telling us that armed groups have taken control of the camp and are restricting the movement of those remaining, especially young people.”

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

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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 has 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.

"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.

Huge needs everywhere

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

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province, according to the Health Ministry.

The economy has been decimated, with a 40% drop in GDP, according to the United Nations Development Program. 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 twin 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."

## **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 hospital spokesman 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.

On Tuesday, a spokesman for Hamas said that strikes had caused them to lose contact with the unit guarding Israeli-American hostage Edan Alexander. Hamas released a video of the 21-year-old soldier days earlier, likely speaking under duress.

Hamas said a direct strike hit the location where Alexander was being held and they were trying to reach them.

In a separate development, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reiterated his opposition to Palestinian statehood in a phone call with French President Emmanuel Macron, who had said France aimed to recognize a Palestinian state later this year.

Strikes on hospitals

The military has struck and raided 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 Gaza'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.

Netanyahu visits Gaza

In the call with Macron, Netanyahu said the creation of a Palestinian state would be "a huge reward for terrorism" and result in a militant-run entity just miles from Israeli cities.



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In his own statement posted on X, Macron called for another ceasefire, the release of hostages and renewing the delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza, which Israel has blocked for over a month. He did not mention recognition of a Palestinian state.

Macron said last week that France should aim to recognize a Palestinian state by June when it joins Saudi Arabia in hosting an international conference on implementing a two-state solution.

Later on Tuesday, Netanyahu's office said he visited northern Gaza. He's previously entered Gaza a handful of times during the war.

## Population displaced

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.

The creation of a Palestinian state alongside Israel is widely seen internationally as the only realistic way to resolve the decades-old conflict. Israel captured Gaza, the West Bank and east Jerusalem in the 1967 Mideast war, and the Palestinians want all three for a future state. The last serious and substantive peace talks broke down after Netanyahu returned to power in 2009.

A number of European states have recently recognized a Palestinian state in what is largely a symbolic move aimed at reviving the peace process.

## **Biden alleges Trump has 'taken a hatchet' to Social Security in his first post-presidency speech**

By STEVE PEOPLES and FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Former President Joe Biden warned on Tuesday that President Donald Trump has "taken a hatchet" to Social Security, weighing in on a critical issue for millions of Americans as the 82-year-old Democrat briefly returned to the national stage.

Biden, who has largely avoided speaking publicly since leaving the White House in January, gave an evening speech at the national conference of Advocates, Counselors and Representatives for the Disabled in Chicago. The former president was speaking as Democrats across the nation offered similar warnings for what they described as a Social Security Day of Action.

"In fewer than 100 days, this new administration has done so much damage and so much destruction. It's kind of breathtaking," Biden charged during a speech that spanned just under a half-hour. "They've taken a hatchet to the Social Security Administration."

It was no coincidence that Tuesday's appearance, which marked Biden's first major event since leaving office, was focused on Social Security. Democrats have increasingly focused on Trump's turbulent leadership over the popular government agency that provides benefits to more than 70 million Americans.

Both parties expect Social Security to emerge as a key issue in next year's midterm elections.

Speaking before a crowd of roughly 200 people, Biden largely stuck to his prepared remarks but also rambled at times as he told stories about growing up with working-class people.

He referred to the Republican president only as "this guy." Trump, by contrast, continues to blame Biden for many of the nation's problems and often attacks his predecessor by name.

Conservatives immediately seized upon a Biden reference to the country's political divisions as an attack

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on Trump supporters.

"We can't go on like this as a divided nation, as divided as we are," Biden said. "As I said, I've been doing this a long time. It's never been this divided. Granted, it's roughly 30%, but it's a 30% that has no heart."

A Biden spokesperson did not immediately respond to a request for clarification about whom Biden was referencing.

Earlier in the day, White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt took a shot at the former president's age and fitness when asked about Biden's appearance.

"I'm shocked that he is speaking at nighttime," Leavitt said during Tuesday's White House press briefing. "I thought his bedtime was much earlier than his speech tonight."

She said that Trump, who is 78 years old, would sign a presidential memorandum Tuesday afternoon "aimed at stopping illegal aliens, and other ineligible people, from obtaining" Social Security benefits. The memorandum will expand the Social Security Administration's fraud prosecutor program to at least 50 U.S. attorney offices, and establish Medicare and Medicaid fraud prosecution programs in 15 U.S. attorney offices, Leavitt said.

The Social Security Administration pushed back against Biden's remarks using its official X account.

"Former President Joe Biden is lying to Americans," the agency wrote.

Trump's moves on Social Security have stirred controversy

The Republican president 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 contentious plans to impose tighter identity-proofing measures for recipients, the SSA has been sued over a decision to allow Trump adviser 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.

"They're shooting first and aiming later," Biden alleged. "They want to wreck it so they can rob it. Why do they want to rob it? In order to give tax cuts to billionaires and big corporations."

Among the conference attendees was Michigan-based attorney Jason Turkish, who leads one of the country's largest disability law firms. He said Trump's presidency has caused anxiety for many of his 32,000 clients nationwide, who are worried about diminished benefits and uncertainty over agency changes.

"We go from Republican to Democrat, Democrat to Republican and there's always been a belief that Social Security is just something we do not touch," he said.

Still, he said there are signs that Social Security Administration officials are open to change. He cited how the agency partly backtracked on plans to require beneficiaries to go to a field office to verify their identity. Turkish is also optimistic about agency modernization efforts.

A return to the stage for Biden

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

"This is an all hands on deck moment, which is why President Biden's voice in this moment is so important," Democratic House leader Hakeem Jeffries said in a call with reporters ahead of Biden's address.

While Biden may be in a position to help his party with fundraising and messaging moving forward, 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.

Indeed, while some Democratic leaders welcomed Biden's return this week, others were not pleased to see him.

"The best role that Biden could play going forward would be to stay off the public stage," said progressive activist Norman Solomon. "That might sound harsh, but frankly, his self-centered mentality has already done so much damage to the Democratic Party and the country that he certainly owes us some belated humility."

## **Gambian ex-soldier convicted at US trial of torturing suspected backers of a failed 2006 coup**

By COLLEEN SLEVIN Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — A former member of Gambia's military was convicted in federal court Tuesday of torturing five people accused of involvement in a failed coup against the West African country's longtime dictator nearly 20 years ago, capping a rare prosecution in the United States for torture committed abroad.

Jurors at the weeklong trial in Denver also found Michael Sang Correa guilty of being part of a conspiracy to commit torture against suspected opponents while serving in a military unit known as the "Junglers," which reported directly to Yahya Jammeh.

Correa came to the U.S. in 2016 to work as a bodyguard for Jammeh, eventually settling in Denver, where prosecutors said he worked as a day laborer.

Correa, who prosecutors say overstayed his visa, was arrested by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement in 2019 and then indicted the following year under a seldom-used law that allows people to be tried in the U.S. judicial system for torture allegedly committed abroad.

The law has only been used twice since 1994 but both of the previous cases were brought against U.S. citizens. The U.S. Department of Justice said the verdict was "the first conviction of a non-U.S. citizen on torture charges in a federal district court."

"If you commit these atrocities in your country, don't come to the United States and seek refuge," said Steve Cagen, the head of ICE's Homeland Security Investigations' Denver office.

Demba Dem, a former member of the Gambian parliament who testified to being tortured by Correa and others, was among those in the packed courtroom to hear the verdict.

"It was a victory of democracy, a victory of all the victims," he said. "Those alive and those who passed away."

1. Dem and other survivors traveled from Gambia, Europe and elsewhere in the U.S. to testify, telling the jury they were tortured by methods such as being electrocuted and hung upside down while being beaten. Some had plastic bags put over their heads.

Prosecutors showed the jury photos of victims with scars left by a bayonet, a burning cigarette, ropes and other objects. The men were asked to circle scars on photos and explain how they received them.

Members of the media from Gambia covered the trial in Denver and immigrants now living in the U.S. attended proceedings, including sisters Dr. Jaye Ceesay and Olay Jabbi. They said their brother was killed by Junglers after returning to Gambia in 2013 to start a computer school for children there and they wanted to support others victimized by the regime.

The defense had argued Correa was a low-ranking private who risked torture and death himself if he disobeyed superiors and that he did not have a choice about whether to participate, let alone a decision



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to make about whether to join a conspiracy. One of his lawyers declined to comment after the verdict.

But while the U.S. government agreed that there's evidence that the Junglers lived in "constant fear," prosecutors said at trial that some Junglers refused to participate in the torture.

Jammeh, a member of the military, seized power in a coup from the country's first president in 1994, and survived three significant coup attempts, making him suspicious of the very military he depended on to stay in power, according to testimony.

Jammeh has been accused of ordering opponents tortured, jailed and killed during his more than 22-year rule of Gambia, a country surrounded by Senegal except for a small Atlantic coastline. He lost the 2016 presidential election and went into exile in Equatorial Guinea in 2017 after initially refusing to step down.

In 2021, a truth commission in Gambia urged that the perpetrators of crimes committed under Jammeh's regime be prosecuted by the government. Other countries have also tried people connected with his rule.

Last year, Jammeh's former interior minister was sentenced to 20 years behind bars by a Swiss court for crimes against humanity. In 2023, a German court convicted a Gambian man who was also a member of the Junglers of murder and crimes against humanity for involvement in the killing of government critics in Gambia.

Human rights activists in Gambia hope those who committed torture under Jammeh's regime will also be held accountable at home.

"Correa's conviction is very significant in the quest for justice for victims of human rights violations, but many Junglers and other human rights abusers continue living in impunity. Some are even living freely in Banjul," said Kadijatou Kuyateh, spokesperson for the Alliance of Victim-Led Organisations, referring to Gambia's capital.

Correa faces up to 20 years for each of the six counts he was convicted of. A sentencing hearing will be scheduled after lawyers determine when survivors can return to Denver to speak about the impact of his actions.

## **Records show Gene Hackman's wife researched symptoms of illness days before her death**

By SUSAN MONTTOYA BRYAN Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) — Authorities on Tuesday released a trove of records related to the deaths of Gene Hackman and his wife, including a lengthy investigation report detailing some of the last emails, phone calls and internet searches by Hackman's wife indicating that she had been scouring for information on flu-like symptoms and breathing techniques.

Betsy Arakawa died in February of hantavirus pulmonary syndrome — a rare, rodent-borne disease that can lead to a range of symptoms that include flu-like illness, headaches, dizziness and severe respiratory distress, investigators have said. Hackman is believed to have died about a week later of heart disease with complications from Alzheimer's disease.

The partially mummified remains of Hackman, 95, and Arakawa, 65, were found in their Santa Fe home Feb. 26, when maintenance and security workers showed up at the home and alerted police.

Photos, hours of footage and other documents were made public Tuesday after a recent court order that mandated any depictions of the deceased couple would be blocked from view. Authorities said additional records including dashboard camera footage could later be released.

The records had been restricted from release by an earlier, temporary court order. The Hackman estate and family members had sought to keep the records sealed to protect the family's privacy.

According to the lengthy investigation report, a review of Arakawa's computer showed she was actively researching medical conditions related to COVID-19 and flu-like symptoms between Feb. 8 and the morning of Feb. 12. The searches included questions about whether COVID-19 could cause dizziness or nosebleeds.

She also had mentioned in an email to her massage therapist that Hackman had woken up Feb. 11 with flu or cold-like symptoms but that a COVID-19 test was negative and she would have to reschedule her appointment for the next day "out of an abundance of caution."

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Arakawa's search history also showed a query for a concierge medical service in Santa Fe the morning of Feb. 12. A review of her phone records by investigators showed she had a call with the service that lasted less than two minutes and missed a return call later that afternoon.

Investigators reviewed a call history to the home phone along with voicemails and security footage from stores that Arakawa had visited Feb. 11.

The redacted police body camera footage showed investigators working inside the home as they tried to piece together what had happened to the couple.

Investigators found one of the couple's dogs sitting in the bathroom near Arakawa's body. They then walked to the other side of the house, where Hackman was found dead.

"Two totally separate areas of the house," an officer comments.

"Mhm, it's strange," another responds.

The officers, worried about a possible gas leak or carbon monoxide poisoning, opened doors and windows around the house. Subsequent testing showed there were no leaks.

The footage showed them going through rooms of the home and finding nothing out of the ordinary and no signs of forced entry, with the couple's art collection still adorning shelves and walls throughout. The investigators also can be seen counting cash that was found around the home and looking at the prescription medication on the bathroom counter as one of the couple's dog barked in the background.

An environmental assessment of the Hackman property by state health personnel found rodent feces in several outbuildings along with live traps on the property. There was no evidence of rodent activity inside the home.

Nestled among the piñon and juniper hills overlooking Santa Fe, the Hackman home is not unlike others in the area as mice are common within the surrounding landscape.

One of the couple's three dogs also was found dead in a crate in a bathroom closet near Arakawa, while two other dogs were found alive. A state veterinary lab tied the dog's death to dehydration and starvation.

An attorney for the estate, Kurt Sommer, argued during a hearing last month that the couple had taken great pains to stay out of the public light during their lifetimes and that the right to control the use of their names and likenesses should extend to their estate in death.

The Associated Press, CBS News and CBS Studios intervened in the matter, saying in court filings that they would not disseminate images of the couple's bodies and would blur images to obscure them from other records.

## **Pupy the elephant heads to a vast Brazilian sanctuary after 30 years in an Argentine zoo**

By ALMUDENA CALATRAVA Associated Press

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP) — An unusual convoy neared Argentina's lush border with Brazil on Tuesday, after snaking through traffic-snarled roads for hours. Inside the specialized iron crate strapped to a truck and flanked by vans full of caretakers and veterinarians was Pupy, a female African elephant.

She is heading to a better life after spending more than 30 years in captivity as the last elephant of a Buenos Aires zoo that was often criticized for its conditions before it was turned into a nature preserve nine years ago.

Pupy (pronounced POOH'-pee in Spanish) embarked on her arduous 2,700-kilometer (1,670-mile) journey on Monday, from the trendy neighborhood of Palermo in Argentina's capital of Buenos Aires to the Amazon rainforest of Mato Grosso state in Brazil.

The 3.5-ton pachyderm is expected to arrive at her new home at Elephant Sanctuary Brazil, the first refuge for elephants in Latin America, later this week — a voyage dependent on traffic, weather conditions and customs stops.

As of late Tuesday, Pupy was traversing the verdant northern Argentine province of Misiones, near the border with Brazil.

Standing upright in her crate during the rough road trip, Pupy sleeps and feeds on vegetables, fruit,

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grass and vitamin supplements. Brazilian park personnel and Argentine handlers monitor her condition during pre-scheduled breaks and through cameras inside the crate.

It took months to prepare Pupy for so many hours of confinement.

"She is making the journey flawlessly," said María José Catanzariti, a veterinarian and operational manager at the Buenos Aires preserve. "Sometimes in the first 24 hours these animals don't want to eat, but Pupy keeps eating."

Pupy is just the latest in a series of over 1,000 wild animals — elephants, as well as lions, tigers, bears and apes — that the Buenos Aires "ecopark" has sent to sanctuaries abroad since its 2016 conversion from a ramshackle city zoo into a species conservation site.

Free from confinement, the animals build new lives in greener pastures. An orangutan named Sandra traded her limited, lonely existence in the Argentine preserve in 2019 for more roaming space and 22 new friends from her own species at the Center for Great Apes in Wauchula, Florida.

Already enjoying the Brazil Elephant Sanctuary are five Asian elephants — including Mara, a former circus elephant that also ended up in the Argentine preserve's enclosure and five years ago made the same highway trip to the refuge, where she now trudges at least 10 kilometers (6 miles) a day.

The Brazilian elephant sanctuary offers newcomers space to adjust to life in the wild, regain behaviors intrinsic to their species and socialize with others after so many years often spent isolated and alone.

Because Pupy can only fraternize with other African elephants, she will be alone adapting to her new habitat before the expected arrival of a fellow African elephant named Kenia.

From a zoo in the city of Mendoza, western Argentina, with a history of similarly poor conditions, Kenia is now undergoing training before making the trip to the sprawling multi-acre refuge, which evokes an elephant's natural home.

## US judge presses Trump administration on its refusal to return Kilmar Abrego Garcia

By MICHAEL KUNZELMAN and BEN FINLEY Associated Press

GREENBELT, Md. (AP) — A federal judge said Tuesday that she will order sworn testimony by Trump administration officials to determine if they complied with her orders to facilitate the return of Kilmar Abrego Garcia, who was mistakenly deported to a notorious El Salvador prison.

U.S. District Judge Paula Xinis in Maryland issued her order after Trump officials continually refused to retrieve Abrego Garcia. She said they defied a "clear" Supreme Court order.

She also downplayed Monday's comments by White House officials and El Salvador's president that they were unable to bring back Abrego Garcia, describing their statements as "two very misguided ships passing in the night."

"The Supreme Court has spoken," Xinis said, adding that what was said in the Oval Office on Monday "is not before the court."

In her written order published Tuesday evening, Xinis called for the testimony of four Trump administration officials who work for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Department of Homeland Security and the State Department.

She expects the process to last about two weeks. Xinis wrote that Trump administration officials "have done nothing at all" toward returning Abrego Garcia. But, she wrote, they "remain obligated, at a minimum, to take the steps available to them toward aiding, assisting, or making easier Abrego Garcia's release."

The hearing came a day after White House advisers repeated the claim that they lack the authority to bring back the Salvadoran national from his native country. The president of El Salvador also said Monday that he would not return Abrego Garcia, likening it to smuggling "a terrorist into the United States."

Abrego Garcia's deportation has become a flashpoint as President Donald Trump follows up on campaign promises of mass deportations, including to an El Salvador prison. Following Tuesday's hearing, a crowd outside the federal court house in Maryland chanted, "What do we want? Due process. When do we want it? Now!"



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An attorney for Abrego Garcia said contempt proceedings could be the logical next step after the fact-finding phase. "This is still a win, and this is still progress," Rina Ghandi said. "We're not done yet, though."

Abrego Garcia's wife, Jennifer Vasquez Sura, said shortly before Tuesday's hearing that he was working hard to achieve the American dream for his family.

"That dream was shattered on March 12th when he was abducted and disappeared by the United States government in front of our 5-year-old-child," she said. "Today is 34 days after his disappearance ... I will not stop fighting until I see my husband alive."

Meanwhile, Democratic U.S. Sen. Chris Van Hollen of Maryland said he'll travel to El Salvador on Wednesday.

"My hope is to visit Kilmar and check on his wellbeing and to hold constructive conversations with government officials around his release," Van Hollen said.

Abrego Garcia, 29, lived in the U.S. for roughly 14 years, during which he worked construction, got married and was raising three children with disabilities, according to court records.

A U.S. immigration judge had shielded Abrego Garcia from deportation to El Salvador in 2019, ruling that he would likely face persecution there by local gangs that had terrorized his family. He also was given a federal permit to work in the United States, where he was a metal worker and union member, according to Abrego Garcia's lawyers.

But the Trump administration expelled Abrego Garcia to El Salvador last month anyway. Administration officials later described the mistake as "an administrative error" but insisted that Abrego Garcia was a member of the MS-13 gang.

Abrego Garcia was never charged with a crime and has denied the allegations. His attorneys have pointed out that the criminal informant claimed he was a member of MS-13 in Long Island, New York, where he has never lived.

Xinis had ordered the Trump administration in early April to bring Abrego Garcia back. And the U.S. Supreme Court agreed last week that the U.S. government must "facilitate" Abrego Garcia's release.

But the White House has balked at trying to broker his return, arguing the courts can't intrude on the president's diplomacy powers.

Xinis ordered the U.S. on Friday to provide daily status updates on plans to return Abrego Garcia. The Trump administration responded the next day, saying he was alive in the El Salvador prison. But it has only doubled down on its decision not to tell a federal court whether it has any plans to repatriate Abrego Garcia.

In a filing Tuesday afternoon, Trump administration attorneys said the government is prepared to facilitate his return. But they said that his protection from being deported to El Salvador would be removed, and that he could be deported back to El Salvador or to a third country, they said.

In a court filing Tuesday, Abrego Garcia's lawyers rejected the idea that the U.S. lacks the authority to retrieve him. They noted that the U.S. is paying El Salvador to hold prisoners, including Abrego Garcia, and "can exercise those same contractual rights to request their release."

Bukele struck a deal under which the U.S. will pay about \$6 million for El Salvador to imprison Venezuelan immigrants for a year. Trump has said openly that he would also favor El Salvador taking custody of American citizens who have committed violent crimes, which is likely illegal.

## **Harvard's challenge to Trump administration could test limits of government power**

By COLLIN BINKLEY Associated Press

On one side is Harvard, the nation's oldest and wealthiest university, with a brand so powerful that its name is synonymous with prestige. On the other side is the Trump administration, determined to go further than any other White House to reshape American higher education.

Both sides are digging in for a clash that could test the limits of the government's power and the independence that has made U.S. universities a destination for scholars around the world.

On Monday, Harvard became the first university to openly defy the Trump administration as it demands

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sweeping changes to limit activism on campus. The university frames the government's demands as a threat not only to the Ivy League school but to the autonomy that the Supreme Court has long granted American universities.

"The university will not surrender its independence or relinquish its constitutional rights," the university's lawyers wrote Monday to the government. "Neither Harvard nor any other private university can allow itself to be taken over by the federal government."

The federal government says it's freezing more than \$2.2 billion in grants and \$60 million in contracts to Harvard. The hold on funding marks the seventh time the Trump administration has taken such a 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.

Harvard is uniquely equipped to push back

No university is better positioned to put up a fight than Harvard, whose \$53 billion endowment is the largest in the nation. But like other major universities, Harvard also depends on the federal funding that fuels its scientific and medical research. It's unclear how long Harvard could continue without the frozen money.

Already, Harvard's refusal appears to be emboldening other institutions.

After initially agreeing to several demands from the Trump administration, Columbia University's acting president took a more defiant tone in a campus message Monday, saying some of the demands "are not subject to negotiation."

In her statement, Claire Shipman said she read of Harvard's rejection with "great interest." Columbia was previously seen as a prime candidate to challenge the administration's demands and faced blowback from faculty and free speech groups when it agreed to make concessions instead.

"Harvard is obviously a particularly powerful institution. And its decision has potential to galvanize other universities into some kind of collective pushback," said David Pozen, a Columbia law professor who argued that the government's demands are unlawful.

Trump threatened Tuesday to escalate the dispute, suggesting on social media that Harvard should lose its tax-exempt status "if it keeps pushing political, ideological, and terrorist inspired/supporting 'Sickness?'"

The impasse raises questions about how far the administration is willing to go. However it plays out, a legal battle is likely. A faculty group has already brought a court challenge against the demands, and many in academia expect Harvard to bring its own lawsuit.

In its refusal letter, Harvard said the government's demands violate the school's First Amendment rights and other civil rights laws.

University poses first big obstacle in administration's push for change

For the Trump administration, Harvard presents the first major hurdle in its attempt to force change at universities that Republicans say have become hotbeds of liberalism and antisemitism.

The conflict is straining the longstanding relationship between the federal government and universities that use federal money to fuel scientific breakthroughs. Long seen as a benefit to the greater good, that money has become an easy source of leverage for the Trump administration.

Federal money is an investment and not an entitlement, federal officials wrote in a letter to Harvard last week, accusing the school of failing to meet civil rights obligations that are a condition for federal aid. They argued that Harvard has allowed political ideology to stifle intellectual creativity.

Trump's campaign has targeted schools accused of tolerating antisemitism amid a wave of pro-Palestinian protests on U.S. campuses. Some of the government's demands touch directly on that activism, calling on Harvard to impose tougher discipline on protesters and to screen international students for those who are "hostile to the American values."

Other demands order Harvard to cease all diversity, equity and inclusion programs and to end admissions or hiring practices that consider "race, color, national origin, or proxies thereof."

Many of the same White House officials who are relishing the political attacks on the elite institutions are products of such schools themselves. Trump is a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, while Vice President JD Vance has a degree from Yale Law School.

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At least two Cabinet members — Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth and Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy — earned degrees from Harvard. Hegseth scribbled “return to sender” on his Harvard diploma on live television as part of his crusade against so-called leftist causes at colleges and universities.

Harvard president says demands exceed the government’s authority

Harvard President Alan Garber said the demands go beyond the government’s authority. In a campus message, he wrote that “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.”

Some conservatives have suggested that if Harvard wants independence, it should follow the example of colleges that forgo federal funding to be free of government influence. Hillsdale College, a small conservative school in Michigan that’s among the most prominent examples, quipped on social media that Harvard could become the “Hillsdale of the East.”

“Not taking taxpayer money should be Harvard’s next step,” the school said.

That’s an unlikely scenario, but Harvard may have to find other ways to weather the government’s funding cuts. Harvard generally steers about 5% of its endowment value toward university operations every year, accounting for about a third of its total budget, according to university documents.

The university could draw more from its endowment, but colleges generally try to avoid spending more than 5% to protect investment gains. Like other schools, Harvard is limited in how it spends endowment money, much of which comes from donors who specify how they want it to be used.

The government hasn’t publicly said which grants and contracts are being frozen, but if the university has to survive with little federal funding for an extended period, it would likely require cuts.

“All universities need to be planning for this situation and thinking about how they can survive in a leaner form through the coming years, if it comes to that,” Pozen said.

Among those applauding Harvard’s decision was former President Barack Obama, who called it a rejection of the government’s “ham-handed attempt to stifle academic freedom.”

“Let’s hope other institutions follow suit,” he said on social media.

A statement from Harvard’s Republican Club implored the university to reach a resolution with the government and “return to the American principles that formed the great men of this nation.”

## Visa cancellations sow panic for international students, with hundreds fearing deportation

By ANNIE MA, MAKIYA SEMINERA and CHRISTOPHER L. KELLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — At first, the bar association for immigration attorneys began receiving inquiries from a couple students a day. These were foreigners studying in the U.S., and they’d discovered in early April their legal status had been terminated with little notice. To their knowledge, none of the students had committed a deportable offense.

In recent days, the calls have begun flooding in. Hundreds of students have been calling to say they have lost legal status, seeking advice on what to do next.

“We thought it was going to be something that was unusual,” said Matthew Maiona, a Boston-based immigration attorney who is getting about six calls a day from panicked international students. “But it seems now like it’s coming pretty fast and furious.”

The speed and scope of the federal government’s efforts to terminate the legal status of international students have stunned colleges across the country. Few corners of higher education have been untouched, as schools ranging from prestigious private universities, large public research institutions and tiny liberal arts colleges discover status terminations one after another among their students.

At least 790 students at more than 120 colleges and universities have had their visas revoked or their legal status terminated in recent weeks, according to an Associated Press review of university statements



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and correspondence with school officials. Advocacy groups collecting reports from colleges say hundreds more students could be caught up in the crackdown.

Students apparently targeted over minor infractions

Around 1.1 million international students were in the United States last year — a source of essential revenue for tuition-driven colleges. International students are not eligible for federal financial aid, and their ability to pay tuition often factors into whether they will be admitted to American schools. Often, they pay full price.

Many of the students losing their legal status are from India and China, which together account for more than half the international students at American colleges. But the terminations have not been limited to those from any one part of the world, lawyers said.

Four students from two Michigan universities are suing Trump administration officials after their F-1 student status was terminated last week. Their attorney with the American Civil Liberties Union, Ramis Wadood, said the students never received a clear reason why.

"We don't know, and that's the scary part," he said.

The students were informed of the status terminations by their universities via email, which came as a shock, Wadood said. The reason given was that there was a "criminal records check and/or that their visa was revoked," Wadood said, but none of them were charged or convicted of crimes. Some had either speeding or parking tickets, but one didn't have any, he said. Only one of the students had known their entry visa was revoked, Wadood said.

Last month, Secretary of State Marco Rubio said the State Department was revoking visas held by visitors who were acting counter to national interests, including some who protested Israel's war in Gaza and those who face criminal charges.

But many students say they don't fall under those categories. Students have filed lawsuits in several states, arguing they were denied due process.

In New Hampshire, a federal judge last week granted a temporary restraining order to restore the status of a Ph.D. student at Dartmouth College, Xiaotian Liu. On Tuesday, a federal judge in Wisconsin issued a similar order, ruling the government could not take steps to detain or revoke the visa of a University of Wisconsin-Madison graduate student.

In a break from past, feds cancel students' status directly

At many colleges, officials learned the legal immigration status of some international students had been terminated when staff checked a database managed by the Department of Homeland Security. In the past, college officials say, legal statuses typically were updated after colleges told the government the students were no longer studying at the school.

The system to track enrollment and movements of international students came under the control of Immigration and Customs Enforcement after 9/11, said Fanta Aw, CEO of NAFSA, an association of international educators. She said recent developments have left students fearful of how quickly they can be on the wrong side of enforcement.

"You don't need more than a small number to create fear," Aw said. "There's no clarity of what are the reasons and how far the reach of this is."

Her group says as many as 1,300 students have lost visas or had their status terminated, based on reports from colleges.

The Department of Homeland Security and State Department did not respond to messages seeking comment.

Foreigners who are subject to removal proceedings are usually sent a notice to appear in immigration court on a certain date, but lawyers say affected students have not received any notices, leaving them unsure of next steps to take.

Some schools have told students to leave the country to avoid the risk of being detained or deported. But some students have appealed the terminations and stayed in the United States while those are processed.

Still others caught in legal limbo aren't students at all. They had remained in the U.S. post-graduation

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on "optional practical training," a one-year period — or up to three for science and technology graduates — that allows employment in the U.S. after completing an academic degree. During that time, a graduate works in their field and waits to receive their H-1B or other employment visas if they wish to keep working in the U.S.

Around 242,000 foreigners in the U.S. are employed through this "optional practical training." About 500,000 are pursuing graduate degrees, and another 342,000 are undergraduate students.

Among the students who have filed lawsuits is a Georgia Tech Ph.D. student who is supposed to graduate on May 5, with a job offer to join the faculty. His attorney Charles Kuck said the student was likely targeted for termination because of an unpaid traffic fine from when the student lent his car to a friend. Ultimately, the violation was dismissed.

"We have case after case after case exactly like that, where there is no underlying crime," said Kuck, who is representing 17 students in the federal lawsuit. He said his law firm has heard from hundreds of students.

"These are kids who now, under the Trump administration, realize their position is fragile," he said. "They've preyed on a very vulnerable population. These kids aren't hiding. They're in school."

Some international students have been adapting their daily routines.

A Ph.D. student from China at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill said she has begun carrying around her passport and immigration paperwork at the advice of the university's international student office. The student, who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of being targeted by authorities, said she has been distressed to see the terminations even for students like her without criminal records.

"That is the most scary part because you don't know whether you're going to be the next person," she said. \_\_\_\_

Seminera reported from Raleigh, N.C., and Keller reported from Albuquerque, N.M.

## DOGE trumpets unemployment fraud that the government already found years ago

By MATT SEDENSKY AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The latest government waste touted by billionaire Elon Musk's cost-cutting Department of Government Efficiency is hundreds of millions of dollars in fraudulent unemployment claims it purportedly uncovered.

One problem: Federal investigators already found what appears to be the same fraud, years earlier and on a far greater scale.

In a post last week on X, the social media site Musk owns, DOGE announced "an initial survey of unemployment insurance claims since 2020" found 24,500 people over the age of 115 had claimed \$59 million in benefits; 28,000 people between the ages of 1 and 5 collected \$254 million; and 9,700 people with birthdates more than 15 years in the future garnered \$69 million from the government.

The tweet drew a predictable party-line reaction of either skepticism or cheers, including from Musk himself, who said what his team found was "so crazy" he re-read it several times before it sank in.

"Another incredible discovery," marveled Labor Secretary Lori Chavez-DeRemer, who repeated DOGE's findings to President Donald Trump in a Cabinet meeting last week.

Chavez-DeRemer's recounting of the alleged fraud, including claims of benefits filed by unborn children, drew laughter in the Cabinet room and a reaction from Trump himself.

"Those numbers are really bad," he said.

But Chavez-DeRemer needn't look further than her own department's Office of the Inspector General to find such fraud had already been reported by the type of federal workers DOGE has demonized.

"They're trying to spin this narrative of, 'Oh, government is inefficient and government is stupid and they're catching these things that the government didn't catch,'" says Michele Evermore, who worked on unemployment issues at the U.S. Department of Labor during the administration of former President Joe Biden. "They're finding fraud that was marked as fraud and saying they found out it was fraud."

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The Social Security Act of 1935 enshrined unemployment benefits in federal law but left it to individual states to set up systems to collect unemployment taxes, process applications and mete out support.

Though states have almost complete control over their own unemployment systems, special relief programs — most notably widely expanded benefits enacted by the first Trump administration at the outset of the COVID pandemic — inject more direct federal involvement and a flood of new beneficiaries into the system.

In regular times, state unemployment systems perform “very well, not so well and terribly,” according to Stephen Wandner, an economist at the National Academy of Social Insurance who authored the book “Unemployment Insurance Reform: Fixing a Broken System.” With COVID slamming the economy and creating a flood of new claims that states couldn’t handle, Wandner says many more were “quite terrible.”

Trump signed the COVID unemployment relief into law on March 27, 2020, and from the very start it became a magnet for fraud. In a memo to state officials about two weeks later, the Department of Labor warned that the expanded benefits had made unemployment programs “a target for fraud with significant numbers of imposter claims being filed with stolen or synthetic identities.”

That same memo offered an option for states trying to protect a person whose identity was stolen to fraudulently collect unemployment benefits. To preserve a record of the fraud but keep innocent people from being linked to it, states could create a “pseudo claim,” the memo advises.

Those “pseudo claims” led to records of toddlers and centenarians getting checks. The Labor Department’s inspector general tallied some 4,895 unemployment claims from people over the age of 100 between March 2020 and April 2022, but another departmental memo explained that the filings stemmed from states changing dates of birth to protect people whose identities were used.

“Many of the claims identified ... were not payments to individuals over 100 years of age, but rather ‘pseudo records’ of previously identified fraudulent claims,” the 2023 memo says.

A Labor Department spokeswoman did not respond to questions about Musk’s findings and DOGE gave no details on how it came to find the supposed fraud or whether it duplicates what was already found.

Though DOGE ostensibly looked at longer timeframe than federal investigators previously had, it tallied just \$382 million in fake unemployment claims, a tiny fraction of what investigators were already aware.

In 2022, the Labor Department said suspected COVID-era unemployment fraud totaled more than \$45 billion. The Government Accountability Office later said it was far worse, likely \$100 billion to \$135 billion.

“I don’t think it’s news to anyone,” says Amy Traub, an expert on unemployment at the National Employment Law Project. “It’s been widely reported. There’ve been multiple congressional hearings.”

If DOGE’s newest allegations have an air of familiarity, it’s because they echo its prior findings of about Social Security payments to the dead and the unbelievably old. Those were false claims.

That makes DOGE an imperfect messenger even when fraud has occurred, as with unemployment claims.

Jessica Reidl, a senior fellow at the conservative think tank The Manhattan Institute, is a fiscal conservative who so champions rooting out federal waste she has written 600 articles on the subject. Though she believes unemployment insurance fraud is rife, she has trouble accepting any findings from DOGE, which she says has acted ineffectively and possibly illegally.

“When DOGE says impossibly old dead people are collecting unemployment in huge numbers, I become skeptical,” Reidl says. “DOGE does not have a good track record in that area.”

Traub said the burst of pandemic-era unemployment fraud led states to implement new security measures. She questioned why Musk’s team was trumpeting old fraud as if it’s new.

“Business leaders and economists are warning about a national recession, so it’s natural to think about unemployment,” says Traub. “It’s an attack on the image of a critically important program and perhaps an attempt to undermine public support on unemployment insurance when it couldn’t be more important.”



## What to know about Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro and the arson at his official residence

By BRUCE SHIPKOWSKI and MARK SCOLFORO Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — A family member says the man charged with setting fire to Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro's mansion has struggled with mental illness and was treated at a psychiatric hospital twice in recent years.

The fire left significant damage and forced Shapiro, his family and guests to evacuate the building early Sunday during the Jewish holiday of Passover. No injuries were reported, but authorities were still working Tuesday to determine a possible motive, including whether it had anything to do with Shapiro's politics or religious beliefs.

The suspect, identified as Cody Balmer, 38, was arrested nearby later in the day, police said. Court records and interviews with family members show his life unraveled dramatically in recent years before authorities say he scaled an iron security fence in the middle of the night, eluded police and set the Democratic governor's mansion ablaze.

Suspect exhibited disturbing behavior, his brother says

Dan Balmer, an electrical engineer who lives in the Harrisburg suburbs, told The Associated Press on Tuesday that he had given Cody Balmer a place to live a couple years ago. He was involved in getting his brother treatment at the Pennsylvania Psychiatric Institute twice, saying Cody Balmer exhibited disturbing behavior.

"He's had ups and downs his whole life with the bipolar," Dan Balmer said. "He doesn't believe he's bipolar, so he doesn't take his medicine."

Police call arson a planned attack

Cody Balmer allegedly scaled an iron security fence that stands about 7 feet (2.1 meters) tall and is monitored by security cameras, police said.

Police became aware someone had climbed over the fence and began a pursuit on the grounds but initially didn't locate anyone.

Police allege Balmer broke into the southern wing of the residence, entering a room often used to entertain crowds and display art, and set a fire using a homemade incendiary device. Police said two broken glass beer bottles containing gasoline were found. The fire left significant damage to the room, charring walls, tables, buffet serving dishes, plates and a piano. Window panes and brick around doors and windows were blackened.

Balmer was inside for about a minute before he left and escaped the premises, authorities said.

The home, built in 1968, did not have sprinklers, Harrisburg Fire Chief Brian Enterline said. He said the damage could be in the millions of dollars.

Suspect faces charges

Authorities said Balmer turned himself in after police received a call from his former partner, who said he confessed.

Balmer, who had walked about an hour from his home to the governor's residence, "admitted to harboring hatred towards Governor Shapiro," according to a police affidavit. No reason was given.

Balmer has faced criminal charges over the past decade including simple assault, theft and forgery, according to online court records. He drew a sentence of probation after guilty pleas to theft and forgery counts. Simple assault charges from 2023 appeared unresolved.

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.

Balmer's mother said Monday that she had tried in recent days to get him assistance for mental health issues, but "nobody would help." She said her son had bipolar disorder and schizophrenia. The AP was not able to verify that information.

"He wasn't taking his medicine, and that's all I want to say," Christie Balmer said, speaking at the family home in Harrisburg.

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However, in court Monday, Cody Balmer politely told a judge he did not suffer from any mental illness. Governor is a rising Democratic star

Shapiro, 51, is the first-term governor of the nation's fifth most populous state, a presidential battleground that has helped make him a rising star in the Democratic Party and viewed as a potential White House contender in 2028.

Shapiro said he, his wife, their four children, two dogs and another family had celebrated Passover at the residence Saturday and were awakened by state troopers pounding on their doors about 2 a.m. Sunday.

Shapiro has been outspoken about his Jewish faith.

He used his first ad in his campaign for governor in 2022 to tell family stories and describe his commitment to making "it home Friday night for Sabbath dinner," complete with footage of him and his children at the table.

"Family and faith ground me," he said.

In stump speeches and his election-night victory speech, Shapiro regularly quoted an ancient rabbinic maxim: "No one is required to complete the task, but neither are we free to refrain from it."

Attack happened during Passover

The attack happened on the Jewish holiday of Passover, which began at sundown Saturday.

The holiday commemorates the Israelites' liberation from slavery in ancient Egypt, including their 40-year journey through the desert. It is one of the holiest days of the year for Jews and is celebrated with a special meal called a Seder, which includes the eating of matzah, a type of unleavened bread, and the retelling of the Exodus story.

Shapiro had celebrated with a Seder at the official residence with his family and members of the Jewish community in the same room where authorities said the fire was set.

## In a bid to corral the anti-Trump resistance, Bernie Sanders, AOC visit red states

By JONATHAN J. COOPER and REBECCA BOONE Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Stephanie and Ryan Burnett were perplexed. The crowd was enormous. The line snaked endlessly between buildings. Were they in the right place?

As the mother and son approached an aging college basketball arena in Salt Lake City, the mass of people seemed way too big for the Bernie Sanders rally they were planning to attend in one of the most conservative states in the country.

"We're not used to that in a place like Utah," said Ryan, a 28-year-old server and retail manager from South Weber, about 20 miles north of the arena.

Sanders, alongside his fellow progressive champion Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, took his "Fighting Oligarchy" tour deep into Trump territory this week and drew the same types of large crowds they got in liberal and battleground states.

Outside Boise on Monday, the Ford Idaho Center arena was filled to capacity, with staff forced to close the doors after admitting 12,500 people. There are just 11,902 registered Democratic Party voters in Canyon County, where the arena is located, according to the Idaho Secretary of State's office.

While Utah, Idaho and Montana will almost certainly remain Republican strongholds for the near future, the events offer a glimpse of widespread Democratic anger over the direction of President Donald Trump's administration and a dose of hope to progressives living in the places where they're most outnumbered.

Sanders and Ocasio-Cortez are among a cadre of Trump critics venturing into potentially hostile territory as Democrats are thinking about how to reverse their fortunes in next year's midterms and the following presidential election. Ocasio-Cortez, 35, is seen as a potential successor to Sanders' mantle — the 83-year-old Vermont senator jokingly called her his "daughter" in Salt Lake City — and a contender for the Democratic nomination in 2028.

Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, the Democrats' vice presidential nominee last year, toured Ohio last week to better understand working-class voters in a state that has moved sharply to the right after backing Barack

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Obama's two presidential campaigns. Rep. Ro Khanna, a Democrat from Silicon Valley, also went to Ohio, hoping to put a spotlight on Vice President JD Vance in Cleveland.

"Democrats have got to make a fundamental choice," Sanders told The Associated Press after his Salt Lake City rally that filled the 15,000-seat University of Utah basketball arena, with thousands more unable to get in. "Do they want these folks to be in the Democratic Party, or do they want to be funded by billionaires?"

Trump won Utah 60% to 38% and Idaho 67% to 30%. Neither state sends any Democrats to Congress. Republicans control all of the statewide offices and dominate the legislatures.

"Utah, I know that it can look or feel impossible sometimes out here for the Republicans to be defeated, but that is not true," Ocasio-Cortez said.

Then she evoked her own improbable victory over a powerful member of the Democratic leadership in a 2018 primary: "From the waitress who is now speaking to you today, I can tell you: impossible is nothing."

Idaho Gov. Brad Little mocked progressive ambitions on Monday, the day Sanders and Ocasio-Cortez rallied outside Boise. Little posted on his X account a famous meme of Sanders in a winter coat with the caption: "I am once again asking for you to not bring your failed policies to Idaho."

Pockets of Salt Lake City and Boise have strong counter-culture scenes; but elsewhere, being liberal can be isolating.

"Being progressive in a place like this, people are almost masked or something, kind of seem like the quiet minority," Ryan Burnett said as he waited to enter the Utah rally. "But this is a space where it's the opposite of that. This kind of event is especially meaningful right now."

His mother, a 52-year-old caregiver with an online reselling business, said it was refreshing to be around like-minded people. She's feeling increasingly like an "outcast" at her congregation of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, where the parking lot is filled with Trump bumper stickers.

"I went to our church this morning. I'm coming to this now because I feel more accepted here," Stephanie Burnett said.

Democrats need to project a kinder, less judgmental image to make progress in red America, said Owen Reeder, 63, an accountant from Bountiful, Utah.

"You're never going to make a friend by lecturing and pounding somebody on the head with a sledgehammer," Reeder said. "You've got to be nice to everybody."

Meghan Nadoroff, 36, and their mother, Kathy Franckiewicz, 59, went to the Idaho event Monday. They both live in the small farming community of Kuna about 17 miles southwest of Boise.

They've felt disenfranchised by both parties – bullied by some of the far-right policies of the Idaho's GOP supermajority, and ignored by the national Democratic Party because Idaho has been written off as a lost cause, said Franckiewicz.

"We have so little presence in Idaho overall," Nadoroff said of Democrats. "It's easy to just kind of give up, politically."

In what feels to many Democrats like dark times, hope and camaraderie are especially valuable.

"It feels safe, to know that there are more of us out there and we're not just a blue dot in a red state," said Jaxon Pond, 20, of Meridian, Idaho.

That's a sharp contrast to everyday life, Pond said.

"Especially as a gay man, I feel like I have to walk on extra eggshells about what I say because Idaho's not necessarily the safest place to be gay," he said.

## As Trump considers auto tariffs pause, parts exemptions could be key for US industry

By ALEXA ST. JOHN Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — President Donald Trump hinted that he might temporarily relieve the auto industry from "permanent" tariffs he previously imposed on the business. The president didn't specify how long the potential pause would be or what it would entail, but the auto sector is awaiting how rules might change

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on 25% tariffs based on U.S. parts, if duties remain on assembled vehicles.

Experts have said short pauses aren't likely to give carmakers enough of an opportunity to adjust their vast global supply chains, though parts exemptions would certainly bolster the industry amid Trump's trade war whirlwind.

Trump told reporters Monday that automakers "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," referring to relocating production from Canada, Mexico and elsewhere. The news drove global auto stocks up Tuesday.

Matt Blunt, president of the American Automotive Policy Council, which represents domestic auto companies Ford, General Motors and Stellantis, said in a statement: "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."

Trump first announced 25% automotive tariffs late March; the tariffs for completed vehicles took effect on April 3, while the parts tariffs were set to start 30 days later.

"The one-month delay is intended to give the U.S. government time to work out rules to exempt the value of automotive parts that contains U.S.-made materials, which will not be subject to the tariffs," according to insights from law firm Foley & Lardner, noting a "carveout" for parts certified under regional trade pact, the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement. The Department of Commerce is expected to determine "a system to calculate non-U.S. content" by May 3.

At the same time, automakers are navigating steel and aluminum imports levies of at least 25%; 25% duties on all goods from Canada and Mexico; 10% global tariffs and reciprocal tariffs around the world — paused for 90 days, and both of which automotive is exempt from; and tariffs on China at 145%.

Autos Drive America, which represents foreign automakers, said in a statement that "hitting pause on auto tariffs would be a step in the right direction and would allow automakers to deliver more choices at better prices for consumers."

"Tariffs raise costs across the board — making it more expensive to build cars in America and harder for families to find the vehicle that fits their needs," the group added. "A pause on auto parts allows automakers to continue production in the U.S. without disruption while a pause on finished vehicles allows automakers to sell vehicles and keep investing in U.S. plants and jobs."

The United Auto Workers labor union did not respond to a request for comment.

The on-again, off-again tariffs have already wrought havoc for any number of global sectors but especially the auto industry, which relies on a complex network of parts from around the world.

Despite his close proximity to Trump through the so-called Department of Government Efficiency, Tesla CEO Elon Musk has strayed from the president's views on tariffs.

"Important to note that Tesla is NOT unscathed here," Musk himself posted on his social media platform X. "The tariff impact on Tesla is still significant."

Tesla's sold in the U.S. have a great deal of parts supplied and vehicles assembled here, and the company claims it has the "most American-made cars." Varying trims of the Tesla Model Y and 3 are at least 85% domestic content, according to an annual Made in America auto index.

For comparison, Ford builds about 80% of the vehicles it sells in the U.S. domestically.

The American and European car industries are "severely affected by tariffs. On top of the 25% tariff imposed on vehicles, we are impacted by layer upon layer of additional compounding tariffs including those on aluminum, steel, and parts," Stellantis Chairman John Elkann said in the company's annual general meeting Tuesday, noting at the same time, the Chinese auto market's potential for growth this year.

"But it's not too late if the U.S. and Europe take the necessary urgent actions to promote an orderly transition," Elkann added. "We are encouraged by what President Trump indicated yesterday on tariffs for the car industry."

Though Trump says his tariffs are intended to bolster U.S. auto manufacturing, automakers aren't able to reconfigure their sourcing in short periods of time, experts say.

Because of the nature of the business and the length of time it takes to design product and get manufacturing up and running, it could take years to reevaluate sources of supply and establish new assembly



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operations.

"Flipping upside down a global supply chain that has been in place for decades cannot happen overnight for the auto industry," Wedbush Securities analyst Dan Ives said in a research note, "and we strongly believe the clear right move would be to focus on finished cars made in the U.S." versus auto parts.

The tariffs as they currently stand are sure to cost automakers billions of dollars, impact new and used vehicle supply and raise prices for car buyers at dealerships by thousands of dollars.

Already, some auto manufacturers have paused operations in Canada and Mexico and temporarily laid off workers in the U.S.

Some have also attempted to get ahead of the impact of tariffs through appeals to customers. In rare moves, Ford and Jeep-maker Stellantis began offering employee pricing programs for a limited time to reach buyers before what will most likely be steep price hikes. Hyundai and Genesis vowed to hold prices steady for the coming two months.

Car buyers might be better positioned for an extra few weeks, depending on the latest policy change.

A tariff exemption for the auto industry would be welcome relief to automakers and shoppers, said Joseph Yoon, consumer insights analyst at car buying firm Edmunds. But as tariff policy fluctuates, it is difficult to know if exemptions will happen.

"The best course of action for consumers actively shopping for their next car is to seek out any incentive programs or 'protected pricing' programs while they are available," Yoon said. "If your purchase timeline is a little further in the horizon, it may be prudent to await further clarification on tariff details and outcomes of potential exemptions instead of rushing into a purchase you may later regret."

## **A look at the universities with federal funding targeted by the Trump administration**

By MAKIYA SEMINERA Associated Press

Harvard University is the latest in a growing list of higher education institutions that had its federal funding targeted by the government in order to comply with the Trump administration's political agenda.

The series of threats — and subsequent pauses in funding — to some of the top U.S. universities have become an unprecedented tool for the administration to exert influence on college campuses. Six of the seven universities impacted are Ivy League schools.

President Donald Trump vowed to pursue these federal cuts on the campaign trail last year, saying he would focus on schools that push "critical race theory, transgender insanity, and other inappropriate racial, sexual, or political content." Public school systems are targets for cuts too.

Here's a look at which universities have been pressured by the administration's funding cuts so far.

Harvard University

The administration announced its antisemitism task force would conduct a "comprehensive review" of the Massachusetts university on March 31. The government was set to review nearly \$9 billion of federal grants and contracts.

Harvard is among universities across the country where pro-Palestinian protests erupted on campus amid the war in Gaza last year. Republican officials have since heavily scrutinized those universities, and several Ivy League presidents testified before Congress to discuss antisemitism allegations.

The administration issued its list of demands to Harvard in a letter on April 3. The demands included a ban on face masks, limitations on campus protests and a review of academic departments' biases.

About a week later, those demands were expanded to include leadership reforms, admission policy changes and stopping the university's recognition of certain student organizations.

Then, on Monday, Harvard President Alan Gerber refused to comply, saying in a letter that the university "will not surrender its independence or relinquish its constitutional rights."

Hours later, the administration announced it froze more than \$2.2 billion in grants and \$60 million in contracts to the university.

Cornell University

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The White House announced last week that it froze more than \$1 billion of Cornell's federal funding. The administration said the freeze came as it investigated alleged civil rights violations at the university.

The New York university was among a group of more than 60 universities that received a letter from the Education Department on March 10 urging them to take steps to protect Jewish students or else face "potential enforcement actions."

The Defense Department issued more than 75 stop-work orders for research, Cornell said in a statement, but that the federal government hadn't confirmed if the total funding freeze totaled \$1 billion.

Northwestern University

Like Cornell, Northwestern also saw a halt in some of its federal funding last week. The amount was about \$790 million, according to the Trump administration.

The Illinois university did not receive an official message from the White House on the freeze despite its cooperation with civil rights investigations, according to Northwestern officials at the time.

University spokesperson Jon Yates said Northwestern's scientific research was "at jeopardy" because of the freeze — a widespread issue for universities facing research cuts from the National Institutes of Health.

Brown University

The Trump administration was anticipated to pause federal grants and contracts at Brown University because of the Rhode Island school's response to alleged antisemitism on campus, according to a White House official on April 3.

The total was expected to be about \$510 million in funding, according to the official.

Princeton University

Dozens of research grants were suspended at Princeton University without a clear rationale, according to an April 1 campus message from university president Christopher Eisgruber. The grants came from federal agencies such as the Department of Energy, NASA and the Defense Department.

Before the funding pause, Eisgruber had expressed his opposition to Trump's threatened cuts at Columbia University in an essay in The Atlantic magazine. He called the administration's move a "radical threat to scholarly excellence and to America's leadership in research."

University of Pennsylvania

Unlike the other targeted universities, the University of Pennsylvania saw funding cuts because of a transgender athlete who competed in Penn's swimming program, according to the Trump administration.

After a Feb. 5 executive order barring transgender athletes from participating in women's and girls' sports, the Education Department launched an investigation a day later into athletics programs at Penn and San Jose State University. The Penn investigation centered on Lia Thomas, who is the first openly transgender athlete to win an NCAA Division I title and graduated from the university in 2022.

Over a month later, the White House announced the suspension of about \$175 million in federal funding from the Defense Department and the Department of Health and Human Services. The administration said the halt in funding on March 19 came after a separate discretionary federal money review.

The university said at the time that it wasn't directly notified of the action.

Columbia University

Columbia University was the first major institution that had its funding singled out by the Trump administration.

At first, federal agencies declared they were considering stop-work orders for about \$51 million of contracts with Columbia on March 3. Trump had also said on social media that schools that allow "illegal protests" would see funding cuts.

Last year, Columbia student protesters started a wave of campus demonstrations against Israel's military campaign in Gaza. The protests led to tense faceoffs with police at the New York City university and the arrests of more than 100 demonstrators.

University leadership faced scathing condemnations from Republicans on the protests' proliferation, leading former president Minouche Shafik to step down. Columbia also began investigating pro-Palestinian student activists, such as Mahmoud Khalil, who was later arrested and is at threat of deportation.

On March 7, the Trump administration cancelled about \$400 million of Columbia's federal funding. Colum-

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bia took some action afterward, such as expelling and suspending some student protesters who occupied a campus building during demonstrations.

The university announced March 21 that it had agreed to make even more sweeping policy changes that the Trump administration had demanded.

The changes included placing the Middle East studies department under supervision, hiring new safety personnel who can make arrests, and banning face masks "for the purposes of concealing one's identity." The university also agreed to appoint a senior provost tasked with reviewing several international studies departments' leadership and curriculum.

Armstrong resigned from her post the following week. The decision was met with dissatisfaction among some faculty members and a lawsuit against the cuts.

But following Harvard's defiance of the Trump administration's demands, Columbia's acting president, Claire Shipman, had a new message Monday. She said that while she agrees with some of the administration's requests, the university would reject "heavy-handed orchestration" that would "require us to relinquish our independence and autonomy as an educational institution."

Discussions were still ongoing between the federal government and Columbia as of Monday, according to Shipman's campus letter.

## **Autism rates in US rise again to 1 in 31 kids, CDC says**

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

ATLANTA (AP) — An estimated 1 in 31 U.S. children have autism, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported Tuesday, marking another jump in a long string of increases.

The CDC's data was from 14 states and Puerto Rico in 2022. The previous estimate — from 2020 — was 1 in 36.

Boys continue to be diagnosed more than girls, and the highest rates are among children who are Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaska Native and Black.

To estimate how common autism is, the CDC checked health and school records for 8-year-olds, because most cases are diagnosed by that age. Other researchers have their own estimates, but experts say the CDC's estimate is the most rigorous and the gold standard.

Here's what you need to know about the new numbers, as well as Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s plan to do a "massive testing and research effort" around autism.

What is autism?

Autism is a developmental disability caused by differences in the brain. There are many possible symptoms, many of which overlap with other diagnoses. They can include delays in language and learning, social and emotional withdrawal and an unusual need for routine.

For decades, the diagnosis was rare, given only to kids with severe problems communicating or socializing and those with unusual, repetitive behaviors.

As late as the early 1990s, only 1 in 10,000 children were diagnosed with autism. Around that time, the term became a shorthand for a group of milder, related conditions known as "autism spectrum disorders," and the number of kids labeled as having some form of autism began to balloon.

In the first decade of this century, the estimate rose to 1 in 150. In 2018, it was 1 in 44. In 2020, it was up to 1 in 36.

Why are autism numbers rising?

Health officials largely attribute growing autism numbers to better recognition of cases through wide screening and better diagnosis.

There are no blood or biologic tests for autism. It's diagnosed by making judgments about a child's behavior, and there's been an explosion in autism-related treatment and services for children.

Roughly two decades ago, studies by the CDC and others ruled out childhood vaccines as a cause of autism. Since then, a lot of research has looked at variety of other possible explanations, including genetics, the age of the father, the weight of the mother and whether she had diabetes and exposure to

certain chemicals.

Some researchers have theorized it may be a series of things — perhaps a biological predisposition set off by some sort of toxic exposure.

Vaccines and autism

Kennedy and anti-vaccine advocates have remained fixated on childhood vaccines, pointing at a preservative called thimerosal that is no longer in most childhood vaccines or theorizing that autism may be the cumulative effect of multiple vaccinations. A number of studies, including some with CDC authors, have not found such links.

Last week, Kennedy said HHS was launching “a massive testing and research effort that’s going to involve hundreds of scientists from around the world” and identify what causes autism in less than six months. He also promised “we’ll be able to eliminate those exposures.”

Kennedy and President Donald Trump both referred to the 1-in-31 estimate that CDC released Tuesday during last week’s White House meeting, and Kennedy also repeated the statistic at a meeting with FDA officials on Friday,

Kennedy’s statement followed reports that he had hired David Geier, a man who has repeatedly claimed a link between vaccines and autism, to lead the autism research effort. The hiring of Geier, whom Maryland found was practicing medicine on a child without a doctor’s license, was first reported by The Washington Post.

## Translating what Kennedy’s anti-vaccine allies hear in his response to the measles outbreak

By MICHELLE R. SMITH Associated Press

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (AP) — When the nation’s top health official, Robert F. Kennedy Jr., endorsed the measles vaccine this month after an outbreak in Texas claimed the life of a second child, his comments made waves because he has spent 20 years making false claims that vaccines are unsafe.

Many of Kennedy’s anti-vaccine allies stood by him anyway, trying to tamp down concerns from others who accused Kennedy of abandoning their movement.

That’s because, according to doctors, public health experts and propaganda researchers who know Kennedy’s history well, the health and human services secretary is threading the needle between his agency’s role as a neutral arbiter of science and the rhetoric of anti-vaccine activists. They say his word choices reflect that he is working from the anti-vaccine playbook he has used for much of his career in public life.

Below, The Associated Press examines his comments about the measles outbreak that has infected more than 700 people nationwide and killed three, how his allies have interpreted them, and the facts according to scientists.

A Kennedy spokesperson said the health secretary is not anti-vaccine and had “responded to the measles outbreak with clear guidance that vaccines are the most effective way to prevent measles.” He did not respond to questions about how Kennedy’s comments were being interpreted by his allies in the anti-vaccine movement.

Endorsing vaccines, but then sowing doubt

WHAT KENNEDY SAID: “The federal government’s position, my position, is people should get the measles vaccine, but the government should not be mandating those,” Kennedy told CBS this month after an unvaccinated child in Texas died of measles.

Later, in the same interview, Kennedy raised safety concerns about the measles vaccine, saying testing was inadequate. He also raised safety concerns about the vaccine for pertussis.

WHAT HIS ALLIES HEARD: Charlene Bollinger, who runs a business selling anti-vaccine videos and other products, highlighted in a Substack post how Kennedy had raised safety concerns.

In posts on X, she urged critics of his comments to “Trust him. Trust me. He’s not walked through fire for years to abandon us now,” then added, “Read what he said carefully and with a critical spirit ... pay attention to the things he didn’t say. There are clues.”



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The group American Values, which was set up to support Kennedy's presidential run, posted a thread on X that amplified Kennedy's comments questioning vaccine safety.

**THE FACTS, ACCORDING TO SCIENTISTS:** The measles vaccine is safe and effective, and protecting people from outbreaks requires nearly everyone to be vaccinated. Public schools in the United States generally require children to be vaccinated against measles to attend, though a growing number of parents have been avoiding those mandates for their children, in some cases by getting exemptions. That has fueled low vaccination rates in communities around the U.S., which has left them vulnerable to measles and other infectious diseases. Just 92.7% of kindergartners got their required shots in 2023, below the 95% threshold for preventing outbreaks.

**READING BETWEEN THE LINES:** If Kennedy had truly changed his mind about the benefits of vaccines, he would have explained what he got wrong in the past, said Dr. Amesh Adalja, a senior scholar at Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security. He didn't do that and instead immediately questioned how vaccines are safety tested.

"If someone like RFK Jr. with his record were going to make an about-face on his position on the measles vaccine, you would expect an essay, an articulation of what he got wrong in the past. You're not seeing that," Adalja said. "The fact that he undercuts it almost immediately speaks to that."

Saying people who died of measles were 'already sick'

**WHAT KENNEDY SAID:** Health authorities have said the two children who died were both unvaccinated, that they died as a result of measles and that neither had any reported underlying conditions. But Kennedy suggested those who died during the outbreak were "people who were already sick." He said the second child who died had various other health problems and asserted that "the thing that killed her was not the measles, but it was a bacteriological infection."

"Her death was caused by pneumonia," Kennedy told Fox News. "So, you know, her parents said that she was over measles two weeks before."

Kennedy's spokesperson did not respond to questions asking where he got his information about the child's medical history and to clarify why what he said conflicted with statements from health officials.

**WHAT HIS ALLIES HEARD:** The anti-vaccine group Kennedy led for years, Children's Health Defense, promoted his comments, posting a clip online and saying it shows that Kennedy "confirms the so-called 'measles deaths' are NOT actually measles deaths."

American Values wrote that his comments constituted a "bombshell" because the child "did not pass away from measles, despite what the media claimed."

**THE FACTS, ACCORDING TO SCIENTISTS:** Pneumonia is a complication of measles, and is the most common cause of death from measles in young children, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, a subsidiary of HHS.

**READING BETWEEN THE LINES:** Kennedy's comments suggesting measles didn't kill the child reflect longstanding tactics used to create doubt about vaccines, said Renee DiResta, a professor at Georgetown University who researches propaganda and has studied the anti-vaccine movement. She said Kennedy and Children's Health Defense have spent years telling people that measles is a routine and harmless childhood illness to justify the argument that a safe vaccine is somehow more risky than the disease.

"Reframing these deaths as something other than what they are – deaths from measles, which is not harmless at all – is necessary to prop up the dual pillars of anti-vaccine propaganda in play here," she said.

It reflects a similar narrative that emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic, when people who wanted to minimize its seriousness suggested people were dying "with COVID" rather than from COVID, said Richard Carpiano, a professor of public policy at the University of California, Riverside, who has closely followed Kennedy's anti-vaccine work. It's a way of minimizing the deadly nature of measles.

'Standing with the unvaccinated' and personal choice

**WHAT KENNEDY SAID:** Kennedy attended the funeral of the 8-year-old girl who died, then posted online about meeting with her family and the family of a 6-year-old girl who died in February. In one post about the trip, he wrote that "The most effective way to prevent the spread of measles is the MMR vaccine." He also posted photos of himself with the families.

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WHAT HIS ALLIES HEARD: Kennedy's positive comments about the measles vaccine prompted some criticism from his old group Children's Health Defense. CEO Mary Holland said in a video that Kennedy no longer speaks for the group, and said he had put out what she called "very partial information." She claimed that a vaccination for measles had caused her son's autism. But she went on to praise Kennedy's actions.

"People should not get lost in Bobby Kennedy saying that the vaccine can prevent measles," Holland said, adding, "Bobby went to stand with the unvaccinated. And he has said it's a personal choice."

Children's Health Defense and Bollinger have sued a number of news organizations, among them the AP, accusing them of violating antitrust laws by taking action to identify misinformation, including about the COVID-19 pandemic and vaccines.

THE FACTS, ACCORDING TO SCIENTISTS: Scientists have ruled out any link between vaccines and autism. Vaccines have saved an estimated 154 million lives in the past 50 years, according to the World Health Organization, which says immunization has been the greatest contribution to ensuring babies live until their first birthday.

READING BETWEEN THE LINES: Carpiano said Kennedy helped the anti-vaccine movement pivot to the idea that it is about personal rights, personal freedoms and medical freedom. While there is a libertarian bent to it, that framing leaves out an important piece.

"It's the freedom to do whatever you want. A libertarian would say, 'provided it doesn't hurt other people,'" he said. But when it comes to Kennedy and the anti-vaccine movement, the part about not hurting other people gets left out, Carpiano said. "And so basically becomes a tyranny of the minority," Carpiano said. "It's something that he helps to keep promoting and legitimating."

## Go inside the factory where Peeps are made

By TASSANEE VEJPONGSA and JOHN SEEWER Associated Press

BETHLEHEM, Pa. (AP) — Love them or hate them, those marshmallow Peeps that come in blindingly bright colors and an array of flavors are inescapable around the Easter holiday.

Millions are made daily in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, by Just Born Quality Confections, a family-owned candy manufacturer that also churns out Hot Tamales, Mike and Ike fruit chews and Goldenberg's Peanut Chews.

Peeps is Just Born's most recognizable brand and one of a handful of candies that evoke strong reactions — good and bad. Some say an Easter basket isn't complete without Peeps while others deride them as being indestructible. Some use them in recipes or even artwork.

"Even if you're not usually one to gravitate to eating the Peeps, there's always so many other fun ways to include them in your celebrations," said Caitlin Servian, brand manager for Peeps.

How many Peeps are made each year?

On average, about 5.5 million are made each day.

That adds up to 2 billion a year — or roughly 6 Peeps for every man, woman and child across the U.S.

How many different varieties and colors are there?

First hatched in yellow, the sugary chicks and bunnies come in nine colors for this Easter season, including pink, blue and lavender. And there are even more flavors — 14 for Easter — from cookies and cream, to fruit punch and sour watermelon. The varieties and colors vary throughout the year with different holiday seasons.

How long does it take to make a Peep?

Before the early 1950s, making the candies by hand took 27 hours.

Bob Born, who became known as the "Father of Peeps," came up with a way to speed up the process. He and a company engineer designed a machine to make them in less than six minutes. The same process is used today.

How are they made?

The main ingredients — sugar, corn syrup and gelatin — are cooked and combined to create marshmallows, which are then shaped and sent through a "sugar shower."

A whopping 400 pounds (181 kilograms) of sugar is used per batch for Peeps' colored sugars. Freshly made Peeps — each chick weighs one-third of an ounce — then move along a conveyor so that they can cool before being packaged.

## 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.

"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."

## 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 monthlong U.S. 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, though Trump did call Oman's Sultan Haitham bin Tariq on Tuesday while the ruler was on a trip to the Netherlands.

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.

But even Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei reportedly described the first round of talks as going "well," while still couching his remarks Tuesday.

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."

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.



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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. However, hours after the AP's report, the U.S. military's Central Command posted videos from the two carriers on the social platform X saying there had been "24/7 strikes" on the Houthis by the two carriers.

Khamenei responds

The Vinson's arrival came as Khamenei, while speaking to high-ranking government officials in Tehran on Tuesday, endorsed the progress of the talks.

"We shouldn't be overly optimistic about this dialogue, nor overly pessimistic," the 85-year-old Khamenei said. "The first steps have been taken well and executed properly. From here on, the process should be followed carefully. The red lines are clear — both for the other side and for us. We may or may not reach a result, but either way, it's worth pursuing."

He also urged officials "not to tie the country's affairs" to the talks, which are scheduled to have a second round on Saturday.

"Of course, we don't fully trust them — we know who we're dealing with," Khamenei added. "But we are optimistic about our own capabilities."

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.

Late Tuesday, Witkoff wrote on X that "a deal with Iran will only be completed if it is a Trump deal."

"Iran must stop and eliminate its nuclear enrichment and weaponization program," he wrote. "It is imperative for the world that we create a tough, fair deal that will endure, and that is what President Trump has asked me to do."

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.

## 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.

It sets the stage for a showdown between the federal government and America's oldest and wealthiest university. With an endowment of more than \$50 billion, Harvard is perhaps the best positioned university to push back on the administration's pressure campaign.

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 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.

## As dementia rates increase, experts warn hospital emergency rooms are underprepared

By DEVNA BOSE/Associated Press and BENJAMIN THORP/Side Effects Public Media undefined  
AURORA, Ill. (AP) — At her mother's home in Illinois, Tracy Balhan flips through photos of her dad, Bill Speer. In one picture, he's smiling in front of a bucket of sweating beers and wearing a blue T-shirt that reads, "Pops. The man. The myth. The legend."

Balhan's father died last year after struggling with dementia. During one episode late in his life, he became so agitated that he tried to exit a moving car. Balhan recalls her dad — larger than life, steady and loving — yelling at the top of his lungs.

His geriatric psychiatrist recommended she take him to the emergency room at Endeavor Health's Edward Hospital in the Chicago suburb of Naperville because of its connection to an inpatient behavioral care unit. She hoped it would help get him a quick referral.

But Speer spent 12 hours in the emergency room — at one point restrained by staff — waiting for a psych evaluation. Balhan didn't know it then, but her dad's experience at the hospital is so common it has a name: ER boarding.

One in six visits to the emergency department in 2022 that resulted in hospital admission had a wait of four or more hours, according to an Associated Press and Side Effects Public Media data analysis. Fifty percent of the patients who were boarded for any length of time were 65 and older, the analysis showed.

Some people who aren't in the middle of a life-threatening emergency might even wait weeks, health care experts said.

ER boarding is a symptom of the U.S. health care system's struggles, including shrinking points of entry for patients seeking care outside of ERs and hospitals prioritizing beds for procedures insurance companies often pay more for.

Experts also warn the boarding issue will worsen as the number of people 65 and older in the U.S. with dementia grows in the coming decades. Hospital bed capacity in the U.S. may not keep up. Between 2003 and 2023, the number of staffed hospital beds was static, even as emergency department visits shot up 30% to 40% over that same period.

Number of hospital beds at issue

For older people with dementia, boarding can be especially dangerous, Chicago-based geriatric psychiatrist

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Dr. Shafi Siddiqui said. One research letter published in June 2024 in the Journal of the American Medical Association looked at more than 200,000 patients and found long ER stays could be linked to a higher risk of dementia patients developing delirium — a temporary state of mental confusion and sometimes hallucinations.

"People need to be enraged about (boarding)," said Dr. Vicki Norton, president-elect of the American Academy of Emergency Medicine.

National emergency physician groups have lobbied for years to keep boarding under control. While they've made some progress, nothing substantial has changed, despite concerns that it leads to worse patient outcomes.

Dr. Alison Haddock, president of the American College of Emergency Physicians, said that's because boarding is a failing of the entire health care system that manifests in the ER, so solving it demands a systemic approach.

Federal and state policy decisions made nearly 40 years ago limited the number of hospital beds, said Arjun Venkatesh, who studies emergency medicine at Yale. People are now living longer, he said, resulting in more complicated illnesses.

In 2003, there were 965,000 staffed hospital beds compared to 913,000 in 2023, according to the American Hospital Association. And another JAMA research letter published in February shows there are 16% fewer staffed beds in the U.S. post-pandemic.

The ones available may be prioritized for "scheduled care" patients who need non-urgent procedures, like cancer care or orthopedic surgeries. Insurance companies pay hospitals more for those surgeries, Haddock said, so hospitals aren't likely to move patients into those beds — even as emergency rooms fill up.

Where can people go?

Though long stays in the emergency department are common, there isn't good data that tracks the extremes, emergency medicine experts said.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services recently ended a requirement that hospitals track the "median" wait times in their emergency departments. An advisory group that develops quality measures for CMS recommended that the agency try to more accurately capture long emergency department stays. That measure has recently been submitted to CMS, which can choose to adopt it.

Patients' families worry that long emergency room stays may make things worse for their loved ones, forcing some to search for limited alternatives to turn for support and care.

Nancy Fregeau lives in Kankakee, Illinois, with her husband Michael Reeman, who has dementia.

Last year, she said he visited the Riverside Medical Center emergency department several times, often staying more than four hours and in one case more than 10, before finally getting access to a behavioral care bed. Riverside declined to comment on Reeman's case.

During long waits, Fregeau doesn't know what reassurance she can offer her husband.

"It's hard enough for anyone to be in the ER but I cannot imagine someone with dementia being in there," she said. "He just kept saying 'When am I going? What's happening?'"

Since November, Reeman has been going to the MCA Senior Adult Day Center in Kankakee. Fregeau said Reeman treats the day center like it's his job, offering to vacuum and clean, but comes home happier after having time around other people and away from the house.

In Illinois, there are fewer adult day centers than there are counties, and other resources for people with dementia are shrinking, too. A report from the American Health Care Association and the National Center for Assisted Living found that 1,000 nursing homes in the U.S. closed between 2015 and 2022. At least 15 behavioral health centers, which are facilities that specialize in treating mental health issues, closed in 2023.

With fewer places for patients to go after being discharged, hospital beds are being used for longer, exacerbating the boarding problem. It's becoming more difficult to get a specialty hospital bed, especially when patients' dementia causes aggression.

That was the case for Balhan's father, who became increasingly agitated during his ER stay. Hospital staff told Balhan the behavioral care unit wasn't taking dementia patients, so Speer was stuck in the ER for 24



hours until they found a behavioral health facility, separate from the health system, that would take him.

While the hospital couldn't comment on Speer's specific situation, Endeavor Health spokesperson Spencer Walrath said its behavioral care unit typically admits geriatric psychiatry patients, including those with dementia, but it depends on factors like bed availability and the patient's specific medical needs.

Balhan feels that the U.S. health care system failed to treat her dad as a human being.

"It didn't feel to me like he was being treated with any dignity as a person," she said. "If anything could change, that would be the change that I would want to see."

## 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 plane tickets.

In recent weeks, people from the group said, they saw visitors who appeared to be from the compounds

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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."

## **Today in History: April 16, the Virginia Tech shooting**

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Wednesday, April 16, the 106th day of 2025. There are 259 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On April 16, 2007, Seung-hui Cho, a 23-year-old Virginia Tech student, killed 32 people on the Virginia Tech campus before taking his own life. It remains the deadliest school history in US history.

Also on this date:

In 1945, a Soviet submarine in the Baltic Sea torpedoed the ship MV Goya, which Germany was using to transport civilian refugees and wounded soldiers. As many as 7,000 people died as the ship broke apart and sank minutes after being struck.

In 1947, the French cargo ship Grandcamp, carrying over 2,000 tons of ammonium nitrate, blew up in the harbor in Texas City, Texas. A nearby ship, the High Flyer, which was carrying ammonium nitrate and sulfur, caught fire and exploded the following day. The combined blasts and fires killed nearly 600 people and injured 5,000 in the worst industrial accident in U.S. history.

In 1963, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. wrote his "Letter from Birmingham Jail" in which the civil rights activist responded to a group of local clergymen who had criticized him for leading street protests. King defended his tactics, writing, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

In 1972, Apollo 16 blasted off for the moon with astronauts John Young, Charles Duke and Ken Mattingly on board.

In 2010, the U.S. government accused Wall Street's most powerful firm of fraud, saying Goldman Sachs & Co. had sold mortgage investments without telling buyers the securities were crafted with input from a client who was betting on them to fail. (In July 2010, Goldman agreed to pay \$550 million in a settlement with the Securities and Exchange Commission, but it did not admit wrongdoing.)

In 2012, a trial began in Oslo, Norway, for Anders Breivik (AHN'-durs BRAY'-vihk), charged with killing 77 people in a bomb and gun rampage in July 2011. (Breivik was found guilty of terrorism and premeditated murder and given a 21-year prison sentence.)

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Today's Birthdays: Singer Bobby Vinton is 90. Basketball Hall of Famer Kareem Abdul-Jabbar is 78. Football coach Bill Belichick is 73. Actor Ellen Barkin is 71. Singer Jimmy Osmond is 62. Actor Jon Cryer is 60. Actor-comedian Martin Lawrence is 60. Actor Peter Billingsley is 54. Actor Lukas Haas is 49. Actor-singer Kelli O'Hara is 49. Actor Claire Foy (TV: "The Crown") is 41. Rapper Chance the Rapper is 32. Actor Anya Taylor-Joy is 29. Actor Sadie Sink is 23.