

# Groton Daily Independent

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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.**

## 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.  
**Postponed:** Junior High Track at Sisseton, 2 p.m.

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

**“It is our attitude  
at the beginning of  
a difficult task  
which, more than  
anything else, will  
affect its successful  
outcome.”**

**WILLIAM JAMES**

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.

## Friday, April 18

GOOD FRIDAY  
Groton C&MA: Service, 7 p.m.  
NO SCHOOL - Easter Break  
Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 7 p.m.  
St. John's Lutheran: Good Friday Service at St. John's, 7 p.m.  
United Methodist: Good Friday service at Britton, 6 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.**

## Sudan's Rival Government

The paramilitary group opposing Sudan's military in its civil war announced the formation of a rival government this week as the conflict reached its two-year mark. The move came amid reports the group overran the nation's largest refugee camp in Darfur, killing at least 300 people and displacing hundreds of thousands.

In an announcement via the messaging app Telegram, Rapid Support Forces leader Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo described the new state as an inclusive, secular, decentralized government with a transitional constitution, claiming it would issue new currency and administer broad administrative services. The RSF controls much of western and southern Sudan, while the Sudanese military holds the northern and eastern regions, including the capital, Khartoum. Both sides in the conflict are accused of atrocities in a war that has prompted the world's largest humanitarian crisis.

Separately, Sudan's current government sued the United Arab Emirates at the International Court of Justice for supporting the rebels; that trial began last week. The events came as world leaders gathered in London to seek a resolution to the conflict.

## Winner Winner, Lab Dinner

Researchers in Japan have produced nugget-sized chunks of chicken using animal cells, signaling a breakthrough in lab-grown food production.

Lab-grown or cell-cultivated meat has been around for over a decade, offering an animal-based protein option that does not derive from slaughtered animals. Previous attempts at lab-grown chicken have been made with cells taken from living animals to create chicken strips less than 1 millimeter thick that are then bound together. Creating thicker portions of meat is difficult without blood vessels, which help oxygen and nutrients keep tissue alive and healthy.

Scientists at the University of Tokyo invented a process that mimics blood vessels, therefore enabling tissues to grow stronger, and produced a bite-sized chunk of chicken at 10 grams that indicates improved texture. The team believes they could build larger chunks of meat using the same process—and even create functional organs.

Lab-grown meat is estimated to be on the market in five to 10 years, with the potential to reduce the environmental impact of the meat industry.

## Thinking With Images

Artificial intelligence startup OpenAI released two advanced models yesterday, OpenAI o3 and OpenAI o4-mini, that can "think with images" for the first time by integrating visual data directly into their reasoning processes. Both models are available to paying users.

OpenAI o3 and o4-mini can analyze and reason about user-uploaded sketches, diagrams, and other visuals—even low-quality ones—similar to solving math, coding, and science problems. For example, they can explain economics problems from photos or solve puzzles from drawings. The new models take more time to deliberate before responding, reportedly resulting in more accurate and thorough answers to complex, multistep questions involving text and images. They also include web browsing and image generation and were trained through reinforcement learning, which teaches the system via rewards and penalties.

OpenAI is also in talks to acquire AI-powered coding assistant Windsurf for nearly \$3B, which would be its largest acquisition. OpenAI seeks to strengthen its position in the AI coding market and compete more directly with rivals like Anthropic.

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## Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

NHL regular season wraps up tonight; see latest playoff scenarios and schedule.

Trump administration files lawsuit against Maine's education department over failure to comply with ban on transgender athletes in girls' sports.

Wink Martindale, iconic radio personality and TV game show host, dies at age 91.

Former MLS player Aaron Boupendza dies at age 28 after falling from his apartment building in China.

"Gossip Girl" actress Michelle Trachtenberg's cause of death determined to be complications from diabetes.

The 2025 Tribeca Film Festival (June 4-15) lineup revealed; includes 118 feature films from filmmakers across 36 countries.

Comedian Nate Bargatze tapped to host 2025 Emmy Awards.

## Science & Technology

James Webb telescope identifies Zhúlóng, a candidate for the universe's most distant spiral galaxy, which closely resembles the Milky Way from a billion years after the Big Bang; challenges theories about how quickly large galaxies can form.

Study of rare meteorite suggests Earth's water originated from hydrogen-rich materials present during the planet's formation, upending theory that water was delivered later by asteroids.

New research on genetic and archaeological data suggests domestic cats spread from Tunisia to Europe in two waves, driven by cultural practices and trade, beginning thousands of years later than previously thought.

## Business & Markets

US stock markets close lower (S&P 500 -2.2%, Dow -1.7%, Nasdaq -3.1%), dragged down by chip stocks, including Nvidia (-6.9%) and AMD (-7.4%), as Fed Chair Jerome Powell warns tariffs could raise inflation.

Nvidia faces \$5.5B charge as US restricts chip sales to China ... and chipmaker AMD flags \$800M hit.

Hertz Global shares jump 56% after billionaire hedge fund manager Bill Ackman's firm discloses 4.1% stake, valued at roughly \$46M, in the car rental company.

US retail sales rose 1.4% in March to a 26-month high as consumers rushed to buy big-ticket items, particularly cars, ahead of US tariffs on imports.

## Politics & World Affairs

Federal judge finds probable cause to hold Trump administration in criminal contempt for violating order by deporting Venezuelan men to El Salvador under the Alien Enemies Act without allowing them to challenge their removal.

Israeli defense minister says troops will remain in so-called security zones in Gaza, Lebanon, and Syria indefinitely, potentially complicating ceasefire and hostage release talks with Hamas.

UK top court rules in landmark case the legal definition of a "woman" refers to biological sex and excludes transgender people under equality laws; court further states laws still protect transgender people from discrimination.

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## Newsweek

The  
**Bulletin**

YOUR DAILY BRIEFING OF  
EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW

### WORLD IN BRIEF

China now faces 245% tariff: The White House said China is now facing up to a 245 percent tariff on imports to the U.S. "as a result of its retaliatory actions," another escalation in a trade war between the world's two largest economies.

US toughens stance on Iran: U.S. demands on Iran's nuclear program are hardening ahead of renewed talks, with Washington now seeking the full elimination of uranium enrichment above what is needed for power generation and verification of missile stockpiles.

Hong Kong suspends post to the US: Hong Kong has announced it will suspend goods mail services to the U.S. with immediate effect due to Donald Trump's tariffs.

Service members killed in crash: Three service members were involved in a vehicle crash along the southern border Tuesday morning in which two of them were killed.

Biden on Social Security: In his first speech since leaving the White House, Joe Biden took aim at cuts to Social Security put in place by Trump administration and Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency.

ICE agents arrest wrong teen: Federal immigration authorities apprehended a 19-year-old in New York despite realizing he was not the intended target.

Mass deportations: A new app is enabling American citizens to earn crypto rewards for reporting criminals, including illegal immigrants — with a twist.

Trump's height, weight debate reignites: A debate about President Donald Trump's real height and weight has reignited on social media following his recent medical.

### Trump Could Spark a Housing Revolution in Nevada

The rundown: President Donald Trump's plan to develop affordable housing on millions of unused acres of federal land across the United States could have a huge impact on Nevada where local homebuilders, residents and lawmakers on both sides of the political spectrum have long been calling for a similar solution to solve the state's deepening crisis.

Why it matters: Governor Joe Lombardo and bipartisan lawmakers support the idea, emphasizing that cities like Reno and Las Vegas are running out of developable land. Housing costs have soared due to a supply-demand imbalance, worsened by wealthier Californians moving in. Nevada is short over 100,000 housing units. Fifty-eight percent of all renters in Nevada spend at least 35 percent of their gross monthly income on housing, researchers found, while 24.4 percent of mortgage holders reach that level. A recent agreement between Nevada and the Bureau of Land Management aims to identify suitable land for development, but federal red tape slows progress. Although some environmental and legal safeguards exist, critics argue they hinder necessary growth.

TL/DR: "Nevada would tremendously benefit from the release of federal land for housing," Governor Joe Lombardo, a Republican, told Newsweek, mentioning the state's severe lack of inventory and available land to build new homes on.

What happens now? If implemented efficiently, the plan could provide millions of acres for new housing—potentially transforming Nevada's housing landscape while preserving its natural resources.



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## 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 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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## Enrich packs Easter food deliveries

Volunteers from Enrich Groton SoDak Inc. teamed up with members of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church, along with employees from Dacotah Bank and Groton Ag Partners, to pack 58 Easter food delivery bags for families in the Groton SD Community. Deliveries were made with the help of employees from the City of Groton and the Groton Police Department. Pictured in back, left to right, are April Abeln, Diane Warrington, Lindsey Lesnar and Topper Tastad; in front, left to right, are Kari Bartling, Sue Stevenson, Pam Heiser, Ruby Larson, Heidi Locke and Tom Woods. (Courtesy Photo April Abeln)



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**Volunteers work together unboxing meat products to be included in the Easter food bags. Packaged food bags were delivered by GPD Officer Cleveland and City of Groton employee Paul Kosel.** (Courtesy Photo April Abeln)



**Topper Tastad and Tom Woods work together to pack Easter food bags, with each bag tailored to the number of family members. The packing process was made possible through careful pre-planning by Enrich Groton SoDak Inc. board members Diane Warrington, Nancy Larsen and April Abeln.**

(Courtesy Photo April Abeln)



**Enrich volunteers Diane Warrington, Kari Bartling, Pam Heiser, and Topper Tastad organize food for Easter deliveries. Pictured in the back are Tom Woods and Lindsey Lesnar, employees of Groton Ag Partners. Tom, who is also a member of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church, has generously brought along several fellow parishioners to help with past food deliveries.**

(Courtesy Photo April Abeln)

## U.S. Senate Majority Leader John Thune Visits Northern State University

ABERDEEN, S.D. – U.S. Senate Majority Leader John Thune visited Northern State University on Tuesday, April 15, to meet with students, faculty and staff.

The visit began with a campus tour alongside Northern State University President Neal Schnoor and Vice President for Finance and Administration Veronica Paulson, including a stop at the Cecil Harris statue. The statue holds personal significance for the senator, as Harris flew alongside Thune's late father, Harold Thune, during World War II.

Thune then held a student-focused discussion in JFAC Room 117. Students received priority seating, and faculty and staff were also invited to attend. A photo opportunity with attendees followed the session.

NSU student Jorja Whempner, a history, secondary education and government major, said it was a memorable experience to welcome the Senate Majority Leader to campus.

"It was surreal being able to host the U.S. Senate Majority Leader here at Northern," Whempner said. "A lot of students don't realize Senator Thune is currently the most powerful person in the Senate. The fact that he came to Aberdeen to speak to us is incredible. You can tell how committed he is to South Dakota when you hear him speak and see him take time to connect with students."

Michael Grebner, a junior biochemistry major, said the discussion helped him better understand national issues.

"It's not every day that the Senate Majority Leader visits campus, and it was remarkable how open Senator Thune was in answering students' questions," Grebner said. "Hearing him talk about policy and economic priorities helped me better understand the Senate and the issues our country is facing. This experience gave me even more respect and admiration for Senator Thune and made me want to stay informed and involved in what is happening in our country."

The senator concluded his visit with additional campus stops and conversations with athletics staff and student-athletes.



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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 Living Stations

Members of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church parish presented the Living Stations Wednesday evening at the church. Pictured left to right are Ashley Johnson, Nick Groeblinghoff, Addison Hoffman, Logan Warrington, Libby Cole, Carter Simon, Ashlynn Warrington, Charlie Frost, Rylen Ekern, Blake Lord, Teagan Hanten, Taryn Traphagen, Corbin Weismantel, Talli Wright, Faith Traphagen, Brevin Flihs, Brody Lord, Walker Zoellner and Liam Lord.

(Courtesy Photo)



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

**Cow basket - \$20**



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

**Rainbow basket - \$25**



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



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Pink basket - \$20



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





## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### Plaster cracks, goose droppings, and an un-Flaming Fountain: the SD Capitol conundrum

**Board green lights \$3 million spending plan on building projects while state bureau is in a holding pattern on \$9 million in lake improvements**

**BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - APRIL 16, 2025 4:24 PM**

Majority Leader Scott Odenbach waved his hand behind him, gesturing to the lawmakers' lobby just a few paces beyond his desk on the House floor.

"I would ask anyone in this room to walk right out the doors here and see the plaster crumbling and running down the walls," the Spearfish Republican said in late February.

He was speaking in support of a bill to restore, maintain and repair South Dakota's Capitol building. Lawmakers approved \$3 million, growing the pool of funds set aside during the past six years for Capitol building and grounds projects to nearly \$12 million. About \$9 million remains unspent.

Signs of disrepair from age and neglect are scattered throughout the 115-year-old building, from that chipping plaster to cracked paint and water damage. There are also concerns about Capitol Lake, fed by a well once thought to be a sinkhole risk and adorned with a Flaming Fountain that no longer flames.

As the list of projects grows, the state official in charge of maintaining the complex is considering a full renovation of the building and trying to solve the puzzle of the lake's future.



**A 2022 view looking up into the South Dakota Capitol dome in Pierre.** (Joshua Haiar/South Dakota Searchlight)

#### **Board approves \$1.2 million restoration and renovation study**

The citizen board that oversees Capitol restoration projects approved a plan Wednesday to divide \$3 million among three projects:

- Up to \$500,000 on plaster repair and paint in public spaces.

- \$1.3 million to restore the Capitol dome.

- \$1.2 million to map out a plan for a full restoration and renovation of the rest of the Capitol building.

The plaster and paint needs are immediate, but Commissioner of the Bureau of Human Resources and Administration Darin Seeley said walls torn down to address potential infrastructure repairs might make

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painting more than necessary now a waste of taxpayer dollars.

A 2023 study by the bureau found plumbing, heating and cooling, and electrical code violations throughout the building due to its age — some piping is original to the building's 1910 construction. The estimated cost to fix those issues at the time was \$75 million.

"As appreciative as I am of the \$3 million appropriation, it's really important we don't spend \$3 million just to spend \$3 million and then tear it back apart," Seeley told members of the Capitol Complex Restoration and Beautification Commission.

The bureau wants to restore the Capitol dome to give South Dakotans an "introduction" to what a full restoration would look like, Seeley said. That could help with fundraising efforts if the state decides to pursue a full restoration and renovation.

The structural changes and further renovations Seeley envisions will likely require private sector dollars, Fort Pierre Republican Rep. Will Mortenson told South Dakota Searchlight, which is "an entirely different conversation."

The \$3 million Mortenson pushed for this year is intended to fix the "glaring needs" inside the Capitol.

The dome work will include repairing damaged plaster, repainting the walls, replacing lights on an arch near the grand staircase and installing lights on the dome ledges to highlight the decoration and detail inside.

The legislative budget committee sent a letter of intent to Seeley in March, requesting an annual report until the newly appropriated \$3 million is spent. The report will detail each project, its rationale, cost and timeline.

Plaster repair will begin this year, while dome restoration work on site will begin next April after the end of legislative session.

## Capitol Lake improvements no longer an 'emergency'

Doubt surfaced among some lawmakers this session about the need for more money when taxpayers have yet to see many results from past funding.

About three-fourths of the \$12 million in funding is devoted to the grounds, and for Capitol Lake, which is fed by an uncapped, free-flowing well more than 1,300 feet deep. The well was drilled in 1910 by Peter Norbeck, who led the Norbeck Drilling Company before serving as South Dakota governor and a U.S. senator. The well produces not only water around 95 degrees Fahrenheit for the lake but also natural gas, which was diverted to light and heat the Capitol for decades before it caused an explosion in 1958.

The gas flowed reliably enough for years afterward to light a flame atop the flowing water that came to be known as the Flaming Fountain. But by 2008, the gas sputtered. A 2019 report by a team from South Dakota Mines said the underground pocket of natural gas was probably almost depleted, and that the well's steel casing could be corroded and in danger of a sinkhole-inducing collapse that would make it difficult to stem the flow of water.

After that, state officials began planning to replace the lake's water source.

Seeley told South Dakota Searchlight the state has until July 2027 to spend about \$3.9 million in legislatively appropriated funds on lake improvements, due to a spending deadline in state law. A \$2 million lake grant from the state Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources remains unspent as well. The grant is intended to help establish an alternative water source for the lake, and to conserve water by pumping it from the lake to water the Capitol complex green space. The plan would conserve more than 8 million gallons to water 40 acres.

About \$3 million has been spent on the lake so far. The money was used to study the well, plan an alternative water source and dredge the lake. The dredging cost about \$2.6 million, according to a contract with Morris Construction Enterprise.

The bureau is waiting to spend the remaining lake funds because it discovered that the situation with the well isn't as urgent as feared, Seeley said. Engineering and design firm Snyder and Associates tested the water quality and inspected the bottom of the well via camera last year.

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"We don't have an emergency," Seeley said. "I don't want to waste money, so we're stepping back to consider the bigger picture."

The well as it currently stands is not a viable long-term water source for the lake, Seeley said. The report said that although the well is in "relatively good condition," it is constructed of "unverified and obsolete materials," isn't in compliance with modern design standards and "likely surpassed its expected design life."

Replacement options include restoring the existing well and controlling the water flow, drilling a new well on the site and using a reverse osmosis system to improve the lake's water quality, or piping water from the nearby Missouri River.

Because the warm well water keeps the lake from freezing over, thousands of Canada geese — the unofficial Capitol mascot — inhabit and leave droppings in and around the lake year-round, leading to poor water quality. Stormwater runoff compounds the problem, according to Snyder and Associates, which helped dredge the lake in 2023. Some new water sources, such as transporting Missouri River water, would allow the lake to freeze over in the winter, removing the geese and droppings for part of the year.

The return of a Flaming Fountain is questionable. The options to replace the lake's water source don't involve finding a new source of natural gas in the old location. While a new Flaming Fountain of some form is proposed for the Capitol Lake conceptual design, "the flame as it was known cannot return," a bureau spokesman said in an email.

## **Lakota Code Talker Memorial has a 'whole bunch' of fundraising left**

Mortenson carried bills to improve the Capitol Lake and the Capitol building during the 2023 and 2025 legislative sessions. He expected the 2023 funding would not only go toward replacing the lake's water source but toward sitework for a Sioux Code Talker Memorial to honor "some of South Dakota's most worthy heroes."

The Sioux Code Talker Memorial is a planned site at Capitol Lake to honor Lakota, Dakota and Nakota code talkers who served in World Wars I and II. More than two hundred tribal members from South Dakota served in the military, using their native language to communicate during battle without enemy forces cracking the code.

The memorial will include a wall of names for Oceti Sakowin code talkers and two bronze sculptures created by Sioux Falls-based sculptor Darwin Wolf. The memorial's donation drive is open on the South Dakota Community Foundation website. Robert Dunsmore, tribal service officer for the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and a member of the code talker fundraising committee, said the group has "a whole bunch" of fundraising left.

The Bureau of Human Resources and Administration will "have a role to play" in ensuring "access to the approved site" when the fundraising is ready, a department spokesman said in a statement.

## **Money for Capitol projects**

2019: The Legislature allowed the Bureau of Administration to spend \$200,000 in private funding to study the Flaming Fountain (which no longer burns) at Capitol Lake.

2022: The Legislature appropriated \$500,000 in general funds and \$3 million in federal funding from the American Rescue Plan Act to the Bureau of Administration to develop a master plan for Capitol Lake, to plug the existing well and improve the lake water quality.

2023: The Legislature appropriated \$3.2 million in general funds and \$2 million in "other fund" expenditure authority to the Bureau of Administration to secure the existing well, replace the Capitol Lake water source, preserve existing memorials and accommodate "additional memorials and improvements." The "other fund" authority was to secure a \$2 million state Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources grant for Capitol Lake improvements.

2025: The Legislature appropriated \$3 million in general funds to the Bureau of Human Resources and Administration for the restoration, maintenance and repair of the state Capitol, focusing on public areas and legislative chambers.



*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.*

## Rhoden alters expectations for 2026 governor's race while Johnson builds a strong financial position

**House Speaker with grassroots support and Attorney General among other potential candidates for the Republican nomination**

**BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - APRIL 16, 2025 8:52 AM**

Republican Gov. Larry Rhoden hasn't said whether he's running to keep his office next year, but his actions during the first few months of his administration suggest he could reshuffle expectations for the race if he decides to join it.

"Whether we can win is certainly a consideration, and truth be told, I've been receiving encouragement from people all across South Dakota to run," Rhoden told South Dakota Searchlight.

Since succeeding Kristi Noem a few months ago, Rhoden's put a contentious pipeline debate partially to rest, sought to smooth out Noem's contentious relationships with Native American tribes and the media, convinced the Legislature to pass a property tax relief bill and launched an "Open for Opportunity" tour that has him meeting with the state's business leaders and shaking hands across South Dakota.

"I'm humbled by all the support, but we are not ready to make an announcement until this tour is over," he said.

Rhoden, who's serving out the remainder of Noem's second term, is off to a "good start" if he hopes to win the Republican Party's 2026 gubernatorial nomination, according to Mike Card, professor emeritus of political science at the University of South Dakota.

But Rhoden is not the only hopeful with a tailwind.

Republican U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson, long rumored as a candidate for governor, raised more than \$1 million in the first quarter of this year. That leaves him with \$6.8 million in his various campaign accounts. Rhoden had about \$90,000 in his committee account at the end of 2024.

Johnson has a few other important things going for him, said Pat Powers, who writes the right-leaning South Dakota War College blog.

"You will not outwork Dusty on the campaign trail," Powers said. "And I'm not kidding when I say that he's got an unmatched campaign team."

Powers said Johnson is likely running for governor. Johnson's office acknowledged his interest.

"He's committed to his day job representing South Dakota in the U.S. House, but is considering a run for governor," a Johnson campaign spokesperson said. "He expects to make that decision over the sum-



**From left: Gov. Larry Rhoden and U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson** (Joshua Haiar/South Dakota Searchlight)



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mer or fall.”

The race could include other competition. Powers mentioned Aberdeen businessman and boldly pro-Trump Republican Toby Doeden and Republican state House Speaker Rep. Jon Hansen, of Dell Rapids as potential entrants in the 2026 race. Attorney General Marty Jackley is another name in the mix. Jackley ran unsuccessfully against Noem for the Republican nomination for governor in 2018.

Powers said Rhoden’s West River appeal — he’s a boots-and-hat-wearing rancher from Union Center — “makes it tougher for Marty,” who grew up in Sturgis and has farm and ranch land near Vale and Pierre. Without Rhoden, Jackley could’ve staked out a position as the only West River bona fide candidate, Powers said.

Republican Jake Schoenbeck, co-host of the Dakota Town Hall political podcast, said Rhoden’s West River appeal could be enough to box out Jackley.

“I just don’t see a path for Marty when Rhoden is already the governor,” Schoenbeck said.

Jackley told South Dakota Searchlight he is receiving encouragement to run for governor “from people who want a conservative in the race.”

“But right now I’m focused on keeping our streets safe and protecting tax payer dollars,” Jackley said.

Because Rhoden’s actions as the state’s chief executive are covered consistently by the media, Schoenbeck said, Rhoden’s name recognition will only grow from now until the election. That could be the equivalent of millions of dollars in free advertising.

“And people will see him as governor,” Schoenbeck said. “They will be able to picture him in the office, and see him addressing South Dakota issues.”

Both Powers and Schoenbeck said Johnson looms large east of the Missouri River, particularly in the state’s most populous city of Sioux Falls.

Rhoden’s lieutenant governor, Tony Venhuizen, grew up in the small East River town of Armour and lives in Sioux Falls, where he’s well-connected and could help Rhoden raise campaign funds.

Powers said Venhuizen was instrumental in the campaigns and the fundraising for his father-in-law, former Gov. Dennis Daugaard.

“But you know, Dusty also has a long relationship with many of those top donors,” Powers said.

Daugaard, Johnson’s former boss, endorsed Johnson for governor in Oct. 2024.

“I think he plans to run for governor, and I’m four-square behind him,” Daugaard told South Dakota Searchlight at the time. That was prior to Noem joining the Trump administration and Venhuizen becoming lieutenant governor.

State Rep. Will Mortenson, R-Fort Pierre, is a friend of both Johnson and Venhuizen. He also worked on Johnson’s first campaign for a seat on South Dakota’s commission of utility regulators. Mortenson sees Johnson as the candidate best positioned to run for governor.

“It’s not just the millions he raised,” Mortenson said. “It’s the thousands of South Dakotans who gave him the funds and support him strongly. There is a big sense out there that we need to get South Dakota moving again, and no one has a better track record of getting things done than Dusty.”

## Johnson’s political brand

In 2022, Johnson bested Taffy Howard, now a state senator from Rapid City, when she challenged him in a primary for U.S. Representative and earned 41% support.

Howard is still no fan of Johnson’s. His politics, she said, will adjust to “whichever way the wind is blowing” so he can stay in office.

“And right now, that means going along to get along with Trump,” Howard said.

Card, the USD political scientist, said Johnson wants to appear further to the right on the political spectrum, to thwart a right-wing primary challenger.

“He has gone MAGA,” Card said, pointing to Johnson’s introduction of legislation authorizing the president to buy back the Panama Canal, shortly after Trump brought up the idea.

Card said Johnson may be coming off as inauthentic not only to Trump supporters, but also to the people

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who previously understood him to be a bipartisan, moderate Republican. It's a point Shoenbeck echoed. "That's not something I would have expected two years ago – not something I would have expected of him," Schoenbeck said.

Rhoden does not have the same kind of problems as Johnson regarding perceptions of his political identity, Schoenbeck said.

Johnson disagrees with Card's and Schoenbeck's assessments.

"When you actually look at the legislation that we've introduced, and when you look at the legislative successes we've had, which, again, by the numbers, are substantial, you see that that is the profile of a serious lawmaker," Johnson said.

Johnson ranked 14th most effective among 222 Republican U.S. House members during the 117th Congress, and 58th of 228 during the 118th, according to the Center for Effective Lawmaking, which is a project of the University of Virginia and Vanderbilt University.

## The Trump card

Trump's endorsement, should it come, could determine the outcome of the primary election. The president, who now employs Noem in his cabinet, endorsed Noem after the 2018 primary and ahead of the 2022 primary.

The endorsement is Rhoden's to lose given he loyally served as Noem's lieutenant governor, Schoenbeck said.

"Trump supporters listen to Trump. And if Noem goes to Trump and asks him to endorse Rhoden, why wouldn't he do it?" he said. "And why wouldn't she do that for Rhoden?"

Johnson is cultivating a relationship with Trump, including with a meeting at Mar-a-Lago in January. But he could have a tougher time winning Trump's endorsement. He voted to certify the results of the 2020 presidential election. He also voted to create an independent, bipartisan commission to investigate the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection in the U.S. Capitol, though he later voted against creating the House select committee that ultimately did the investigation. Johnson voted against ejecting Wyoming Republican Rep. Liz Cheney – a Trump target of scorn – from House leadership.

Toby Doeden identifies as a pro-Trump Republican. He formed an exploratory committee to consider a Republican U.S. House primary challenge against Johnson last year, while criticizing Johnson as a "career politician" and a liberal. Doeden later decided against running and instead focused on influencing state politics through his political action committee, Dakota First Action.

Doeden told South Dakota Searchlight he and his family are praying about whether he should enter the governor's race. He said Rhoden is another establishment candidate not delivering Trump's agenda. Doeden "cannot imagine a situation where the political donors allow both Dusty and Larry to run."

"President Trump likes winners and leaders who can deliver, something Rhoden clearly lacks the ability to do," Doeden said.

That stands in contrast to Rhoden's record since becoming governor, which includes delivering on numerous Republican priorities. During the 2025 legislative session, Rhoden signed bills holding down property tax increases, allowing concealed pistols in bars and on public college campuses, restricting transgender people's access to restrooms in schools and state buildings, requiring age verification for adult websites, and mandating appeal processes for obscenity decisions by libraries. He also tightened residency rules for voting and signed a bill banning eminent domain for carbon dioxide pipelines.

## The new grassroots

South Dakota Republican Party Chairman Jim Eschenbaum said he was surprised when Rhoden signed the bill banning carbon sequestration pipelines from using eminent domain. Doing so was a top priority for a faction of the party.

The pipeline ban followed strong grassroots opposition to Summit Carbon Solutions' \$9 billion CO2 transport project.

"I think Governor Rhoden did very well this legislative session," Eschenbaum said. But he said there is still plenty of time between now and the primary election on June 2, 2026.

Eschenbaum told South Dakota Searchlight that many Republicans he speaks with are critical of Johnson. A name they like is state House Speaker Jon Hansen.

Hansen would sometimes be introduced as "our governor" during rallies in opposition of Summit's pipeline. He told South Dakota Searchlight that he plans to "make an announcement sometime in the near future."

"I, together with a lot of great conservatives, have been fighting for an even better South Dakota where you and your family come first – not big money special interests and corporate welfare lobbyists," Hansen said in a statement.

Amanda Radke is farmer, rancher, and influencer amongst the state party's grassroots. She hosts The Heart of Rural America podcast and writes The Radke Report blog. Hansen's efforts to defeat the 2024 abortion-rights ballot measure and ban carbon pipelines from using eminent domain, she said, have made him "a powerhouse and in the trenches of the conservative grassroots movement."

"Should he decide to run and enter this arena, he would bring a powerful coalition of everyday South Dakota citizens," Radke said.

Dan Ahlers is the executive director of the Democratic Party in the state. He said South Dakota can expect a contested primary election for Democrats as well, but did not divulge any names.

"We have a couple people that are looking at the governor's race," Ahlers said. "We could have contested races for all three of those top statewide races."

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

## East River South Dakotans vent, call for action at Sioux Falls political town hall

**BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - APRIL 15, 2025 11:04 PM**

SIOUX FALLS – Attendees of a Tuesday evening town hall focused on the impact of Trump administration policies voiced worries about federal funding cuts, the impact of tariffs and a lack of communication from elected officials.

The event, the second of four sessions held across South Dakota and led by prominent South Dakota Democrats, took place at Augustana University's Hamre Recital Hall.

Nikki Gronli, former U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development director, said she wanted to organize the sessions to listen to people and offer resources to those who feel ignored by South Dakota's congressional delegation as they face fallout from federal funding cuts by President Donald Trump's administration.

"We know that people are concerned, afraid and have seen impacts in their lives already from grants and loans and things that have been paused," Gronli said.

Attendees rallied around calls to unseat South Dakota's U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson and Sens. Mike Rounds and John Thune, all Republicans.

The state's U.S. senators are in South Dakota this week, but not for town halls. Sen. Rounds spoke to the group Americans for Prosperity on Monday in Rapid City. Thune will be on hand for a ribbon-cutting at an Amazon delivery station in Box Elder Wednesday morning, and speak at a Pennington County Republican Women's monthly luncheon in Rapid City shortly thereafter. A group called Indivisible Rapid City is planning a silent protest to coincide with the luncheon.

Gronli described the Sioux Falls event as bipartisan, but it was organized by the South Dakota Democratic

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Party. Many attendees identified themselves as Democrats when they rose to voice their concerns in the packed auditorium.

Brandon resident Michael Nitz said he changed his party registration from Republican to Independent shortly after President Trump took office this year. There are efficiencies to be found in federal government, he said, but he doesn't like the approach of the Trump administration or the so-called Department of Government Efficiency, led by Tesla founder Elon Musk.

Nitz voiced frustration over a lack of public events with the state's Congressional delegation.

"You're the only people who are answering my questions," Nitz told the speakers, a group that included Gronli, as well as former South Dakota state Sen. Reynold Nesiba and 2026 Democratic U.S. Senate candidate Julian Beaudion. "I fired off emails and phone calls like you're supposed to do to Rounds, Johnson and Thune. I've not gotten any response for that, so I'm getting tired."

Johnson's spokeswoman Kristen Blakely told South Dakota Searchlight Wednesday they received Nitz's messages and sent five responses since Feb. 7.

"Dusty has a record in Congress of being responsive and accessible and our team works hard to get responses to South Dakotans in a timely manner," Blakely said in an emailed statement.

Tim Sundet, from Lake Preston, was visibly angry as he took the microphone and held up a copy of the U.S. Constitution. He took issue with Homeland Security Secretary Noem's plan to monitor immigrants' social media activity for "antisemitism" and college students and faculty across the country being detained for participating in pro-Palestinian protests.

"You have the right to assemble. It is in the Constitution and yet they don't care. Where are our members of Congress? What are they doing about it?" Sundet said.

Attendees also expressed discontent with Trump's cabinet picks, including Noem, the former South Dakota governor, spoke of what they see as an uncertain future for Medicaid and other federal programs, and about Trump's unstable tariff policies.

Nesiba said tariffs will hurt South Dakota farmers.

Soybeans are China's top agricultural import from the U.S., totaling \$12.8 billion in 2024, according to the USDA. Soybeans are South Dakota's top agricultural export, valued at \$1.6 billion in 2022.

"What I worry about is that this might not be temporary. When a country starts to have relationships with somebody else – that they're getting their soybeans from Brazil and their beef from Australia – then it's harder for us to get those markets back," Nesiba said. "We spent a lot of money building those trade relationships over time, and in a matter of 100 days we've burned a lot of goodwill around the world in those relationships."

Beaudion, Gronli and Nesiba encouraged attendees to engage respectfully with elected officials at all levels, as well as with family members and neighbors supportive of Trump administration policy.

"If we put a lot of pressure on those local officials, then I promise you our state Legislature will hear it because they'll be pressured," Beaudion said, "and then our federal officials will hear it because our legislators and the state will be pressured."



**From left, 2026 Democratic candidate for U.S. Senate Julian Beaudion, former USDA Rural Development Director Nikki Gronli, and former South Dakota state Sen. Reynold Nesiba participate in a town hall at Augustana University in Sioux Falls on April 15, 2025.**

(Makenzie Huber/South Dakota Searchlight)



Beaudion also suggested that attendees could run for state and local office.

Gronli said stories collected from the sessions and through online forms will be compiled into a report that'll be sent to Johnson, Rounds and Thune's offices.

Town halls will also be held in Vermillion on April 24 and in Aberdeen on April 28.

*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.*

## Maryland senator denied visitation with wrongly deported man in El Salvador

BY: SHAUNEEN MIRANDA - APRIL 16, 2025 6:45 PM

WASHINGTON — U.S. Sen Chris Van Hollen said Wednesday he was denied a meeting with Kilmar Armando Abrego Garcia, an El Salvador-born Maryland resident who was mistakenly deported to a mega-prison in his home country notorious for human rights abuses.

The Maryland Democrat met with El Salvador Vice President Félix Ulloa in the Central American country in an effort to help bring Abrego Garcia back to the United States. Abrego Garcia is a citizen of El Salvador, but a U.S. immigration judge issued a protective order in 2019 finding that sending him back to his home country would put him in grave danger.

After meeting with Ulloa, Van Hollen briefed reporters on the visit and said the Salvadoran vice president rebuffed his requests for contact with Abrego Garcia.

"I asked the vice president if I could meet with Mr. Abrego Garcia and he said, 'Well, you need to make earlier provisions to go visit CECOT (Centro de Confinamiento del Terrorismo),' " Van Hollen told reporters in El Salvador, referring to the mega-prison.

"I said, 'I'm not interested, at this moment, in taking a tour of CECOT, I just want to meet with Mr. Abrego Garcia,'" Van Hollen said.

"He said he was not able to make that happen. He said he'd need a little more time. I asked him if I came back next week, whether I'd be able to see Mr. Abrego Garcia. He said he couldn't promise that either," the senator added.

Van Hollen said he was also denied a phone or video call with Abrego Garcia to ask how he was doing and report that information to his family.

The senator said he would contact the U.S. Embassy in El Salvador and request they ask the government of El Salvador to connect the two of them via phone, following a suggestion from Ulloa.

Van Hollen's visit came a day after a federal judge in Maryland ordered the Trump administration to offer



**Protesters outside the U.S. District Court for the District of Maryland in Greenbelt rally on April 4, 2025, in support of Kilmar Armando Abrego Garcia, a Maryland father who was deported to El Salvador in an "administrative error," calling for him to be returned to the U.S.** (Photo by Ariana Figueroa/States Newsroom)

evidence on how it has sought to help with Abrego Garcia's release from CECOT.

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled last week that the Trump administration must "facilitate" — but did not require — his return to the United States. El Salvador President Nayib Bukele also said Monday that he would not bring Abrego Garcia back to the United States.

The Trump administration has acknowledged in court that Abrego Garcia was deported due to an "administrative error."

The administration accused him of being a member of the gang MS-13. He has not been charged or convicted of any criminal offenses, including gang-related crimes.

Van Hollen, noting that the Trump administration "illegally abducted" Abrego Garcia, said he "won't stop trying" to get the wrongly deported man out of the prison and back to Maryland and predicted others would follow.

"I can assure the president, the vice president that I may be the first United States senator to visit El Salvador on this issue, but there will be more, and there will be more members of Congress coming," he said.

## Administration responds

Meanwhile, the Department of Homeland Security posted on social media Wednesday a copy of a restraining order Abrego Garcia's wife sought against him in 2021 "claiming he punched, scratched, and ripped off her shirt, among other harm."

In response, Abrego Garcia's wife, Jennifer Vasquez Sura, told Newsweek she had a disagreement with him, but that things did not escalate and she did not continue with the civil court process.

Late Wednesday afternoon, White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt made a statement on the case, displaying the restraining order, repeating the accusation Abrego Garcia is a gang member and objecting to media references to him as a "Maryland father."

"There is no Maryland father," she said.

Patty Morin, the mother of a Maryland woman slain by a Salvadoran immigrant in the country without legal status, also appeared at the briefing and spoke in favor of the Trump administration's aggressive deportation actions.

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

## RFK Jr. to refocus federal autism research on environmental factors

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - APRIL 16, 2025 6:29 PM

WASHINGTON — U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. announced Wednesday the department will shift its research into autism toward potential environmental causes, though he declined to say exactly what the Trump administration would do if certain industries or pollutants were found responsible.

Kennedy, an environmental lawyer with no medical or research training, declared that autism is a preventable disease, argued research into genetic causes is a "dead end" and asserted that "we know it's environmental exposure," before saying HHS would fund "a series of new studies to identify precisely what the environmental toxins are that are causing it."

"This has not been done before," Kennedy said. "We're going to do it in a thorough and comprehensive way and we're going to get back with an answer to the American people very, very quickly."

Kennedy said during his first press conference since receiving Senate confirmation that he wanted



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researchers to look into numerous potential factors, including mold, food additives, pesticides, air, water, medicines, ultrasound, age of parents, obesity in parents and diabetes in parents.

He pledged to have "some of the answers by September," though he added the research will "be an evolving process."

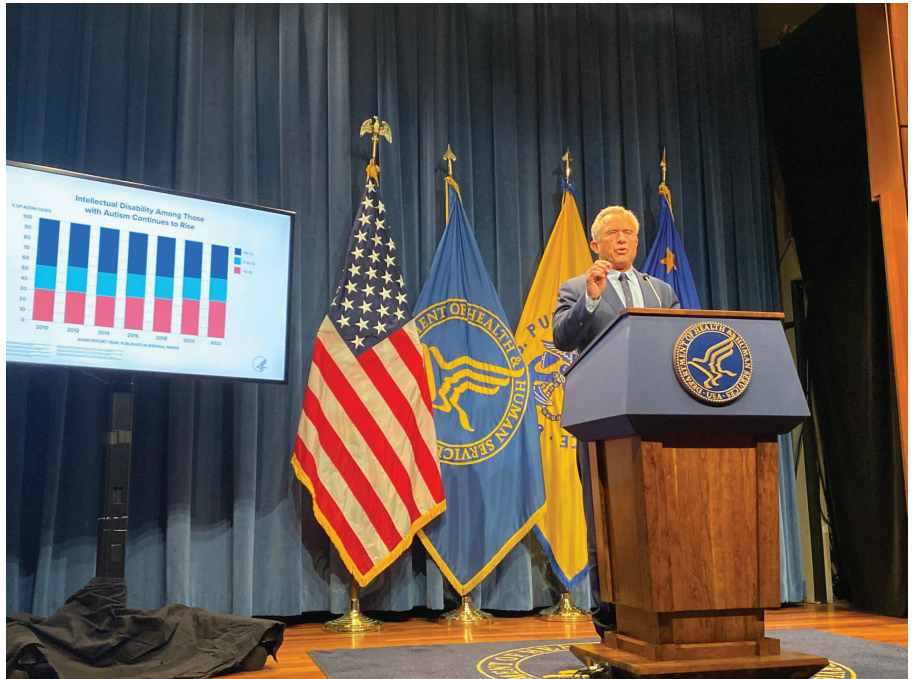
Kennedy appeared confident in his personal assessment that environmental factors lead to autism, without attributing that belief to any one industry or contaminant.

"This is coming from an environmental toxin and somebody made a profit by putting that environmental toxin into our air, our water, our medicines, our food," Kennedy said. "And it's to their benefit to normalize it, to say, 'This is all normal. It has always been here.' But that's not good for our country."

Autism experts, however, cast doubt on Kennedy's assertion that environmental factors lead to autism and questioned his proposed timeline to prove such a link.

When asked by a reporter what exactly the Trump administration would do if research found conclusive evidence that one specific industry or pollutant was causing autism, Kennedy didn't say whether HHS would push to ban it or close down any businesses.

"I think we're going to figure out a way to make pressure on them to remove it," he said. "I think also there will be market forces that also exert pressure on them to remove it."



**U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. speaks during a press conference at the department's headquarters in Washington, D.C., on Wednesday, April 16, 2025.** (Photo by Jennifer Shutt/States Newsroom)

## Research difficult

Catherine Lord, professor of psychiatry with the school of medicine at the University of California, Los Angeles, said during an interview with States Newsroom following Kennedy's remarks that trying to reach a definitive cause of autism before September was an "utterly ridiculous" timeline.

Lord said "the most likely hypothesis is that there may be interactions between genetics and, for example, environmental exposures, or even experiences like extreme prematurity."

But she noted that studying the impact of environmental contaminants on people's health, or a complex diagnosis like autism, is challenging because scientists obviously cannot expose people to toxins.

"It's so difficult to do that work well, and people do it, but they can't do it quickly," Lord said. "And so I think that we do need work in that area, and I think it has been funded in the last few years. It just hasn't come out with anything that is earth-shattering. It's more the same thing, which is that if you're exposed to something bad, your chances of having a child with any kind of neurodevelopmental disorder is going to go up."

Lord expressed concern about moving funding and research away from genetic factors, saying "we do know that autism is genetic, so I think that is not under question."

"I think the genetic work was moving forward," she said. "It's a slow pace, again, because they're addressing so many different genetic patterns. But I think that at least there's clear progress within this science."

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## Limits funding for genetic research

Eric Fombonne, professor emeritus of psychiatry at Oregon Health and Sciences University, said during an interview that it was unwise for Kennedy to say there would be some answers about autism within a few months.

"It's ridiculous to say that he's going to unravel the etiology of autism in six months," Fombonne said. "I mean, he could give, like, all the money of the world to any lab or any person. They could never report any results before several years from now, at the minimum."

The pace of medical research, he said, is slow and Kennedy's comments show "a complete ignorance and disregard for science and what we do and how complicated it is and the time it takes."

Directing research dollars toward possible environmental contributors to autism will also limit the amount of funding available for genetic research, which Fombonne said "has been incredibly productive."

"The pie is limited," Fombonne said. "So if you move funds from genetic research to environmental research, you're going to slow down the pace of genetic research."

Fombonne explained that research into genetics and autism is "quite complicated" and has shown that not all genetic mechanisms are "the same across different families."

"So it's a very complex puzzle. And as you know, the brain is a very hard organ to study. So understanding the pathophysiology, which is associated with these gene variants, is a very hard process," he said. "But we are doing that and we are progressing. And this has been paying off enormously over the last 20 or 30 years."

Fombonne wouldn't make the same assessment of potential environmental factors, saying there are no signs of higher rates of autism in certain areas or certain time periods, like scientists have found for some other conditions.

"There is no evidence that there is a cluster of cases of kids who have been living in a polluted area, or exposed to particular environmental circumstances," Fombonne said. "There is no starting point, which is strong, to start environmental research somewhere we can say is going to pay off."

"So it's going to be very exploratory initially, which may be a good thing to do. But at least, let's do it well, and most of the studies so far are short."

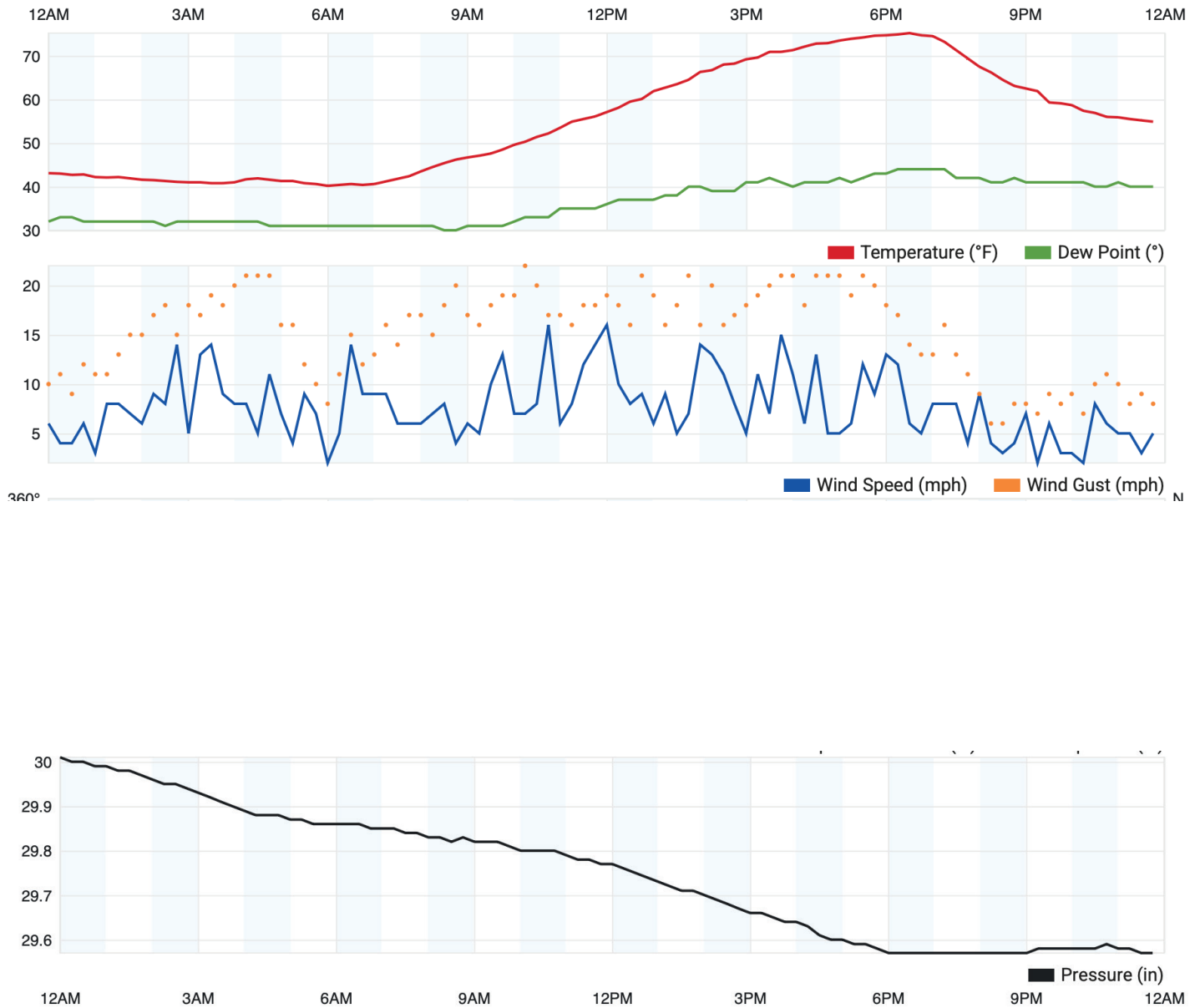
*Jennifer covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include congressional policy, politics and legal challenges with a focus on health care, unemployment, housing and aid to families.*



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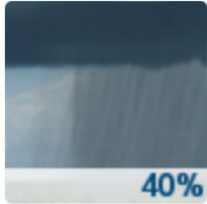
## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



40%

High: 56 °F

Chance  
Showers and  
Breezy

Tonight



30%

Low: 36 °F

Chance  
Showers and  
Breezy

Friday



10%

High: 51 °F

Breezy.  
Slight Chance  
Showers then  
Mostly Cloudy

Friday Night



Low: 25 °F

Decreasing  
Clouds

Saturday



High: 57 °F

Sunny

## Into the Weekend

Thursday



Highs: 51-61°F  
Lows: 32-38°F

20-40% chance of  
rain  
30-35 mph wind  
gusts

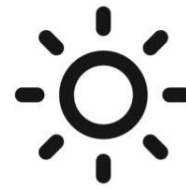
Friday



Highs: 47-52°F  
Lows: 24-29°F

20-30% chance of  
AM rain/snow

Saturday



Highs: 51-60°F  
Lows: 30-35°F

After above average temperatures today, much of the weekend will see average to below average temperatures. There is also a 20-40% chance of rain Thursday evening continuing into Friday morning. Get outside today while its nice!



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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 75 °F at 6:23 PM**

**Low Temp: 40 °F at 5:51 AM**

**Wind: 23 mph at 4:18 PM**

**Precip: : 0.00**

Day length: 13 hours, 42 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 92 in 1913

Record Low: 10 in 1953

Average High: 59

Average Low: 32

Average Precip in April.: 0.85

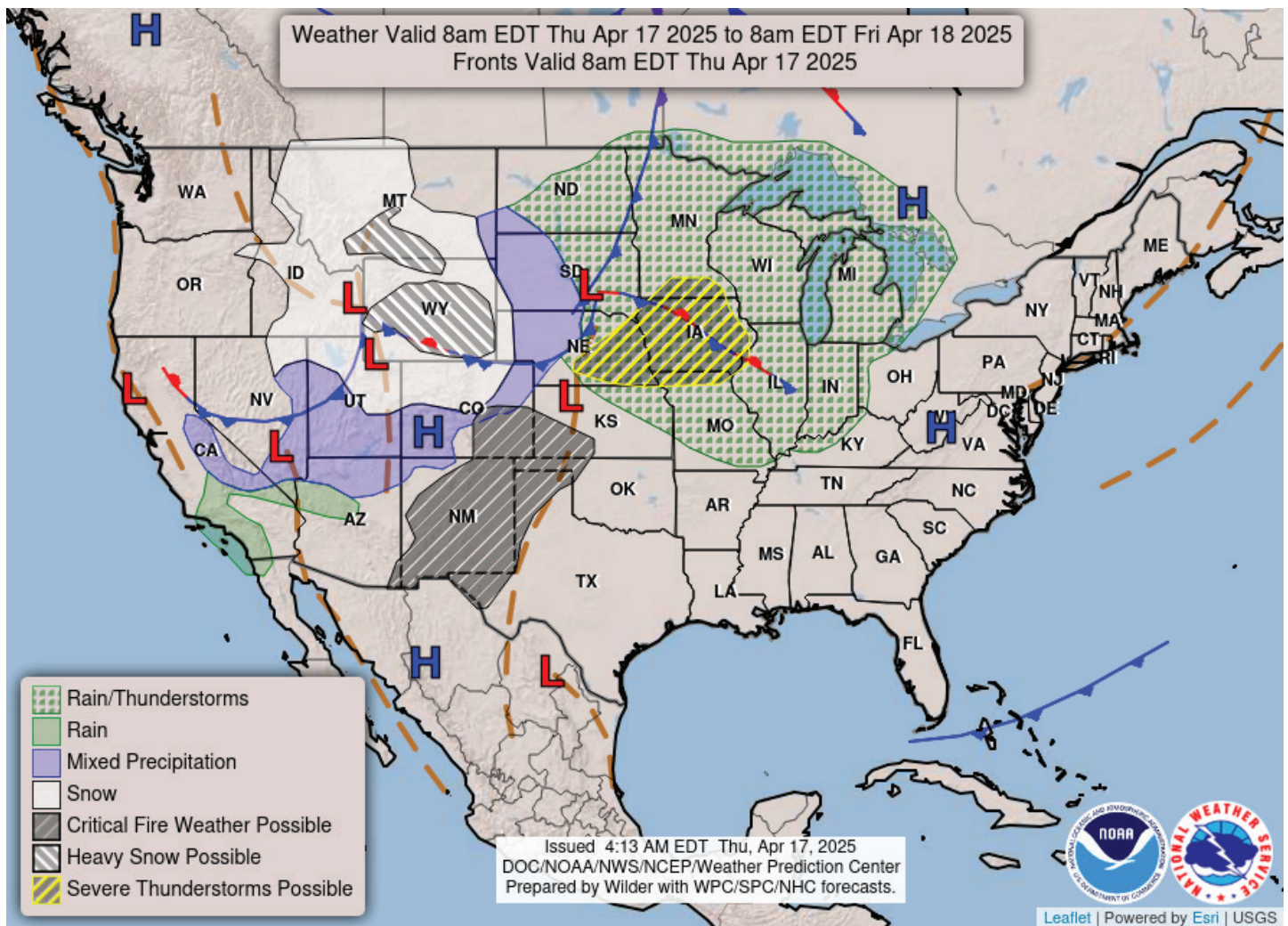
Precip to date in April.: 1.07

Average Precip to date: 2.91

Precip Year to Date: 1.70

Sunset Tonight: 88:22:53 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:39:03 am



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## Today in Weather History

April 17th, 2006: A strong spring storm moved across the northern and central plains, bringing precipitation and stiff northwest winds. Sustained winds of 30 to 50 mph, with gusts around 70 mph, were felt across a good portion of western South Dakota for more than 24 hours as the storm slowly crossed the region.

1922 - A family of at least six tornadoes caused death and destruction along parts of a 210 mile path from north of Ogden IL to Allen County OH, killing sixteen persons. A post card, picked up in Madison County IN, was found 124 miles away near Mount Cory OH. (The Weather Channel)

1953 - One of the few severe hailstorms accompanied by snow, sleet, glaze, and rain, pelted parts of Kay, Osage, Creek, Tulsa, Washington, and Rogers Counties in northeastern Oklahoma late in the day. Nearly 10,000 insurance claims were filed. (The Weather Channel)

1965 - The Mississippi River reached a flood crest at Saint Paul MN four feet higher than any previous mark. During the next two weeks record levels were reached along the Mississippi between Saint Paul and Hannibal MO. Flooding caused more than 100 million dollars damage, but timely warnings kept the death toll down to just twelve persons. (David Ludlum)

1987 - Twenty-two cities in the central U.S. reported new record high temperatures for the date. Temperatures warmed into the 70s and 80s from the High Plains Region to the Mississippi Valley, with readings in the low 90s reported in the Southern Plains Region. Tulsa OK hit 92 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Heavy snow blanketed northern Arizona. Snowfall totals ranged up to 16 inches at Pinetop, with 10 inches reported at Flagstaff. Afternoon thunderstorms spawned a couple of tornadoes in Idaho. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Arctic cold invaded the north central U.S. Missoula MT was blanketed with four inches of snow, and Glasgow MT reported a record cold morning low of 14 degrees above zero. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - High winds in northern Utah, gusting to 90 mph in Weber County, blew a trampoline through a living room window, and strong winds associated with a cold front crossing the Middle Atlantic Coast Region gusted to 75 mph in the Chesapeake Bay area of Virginia. Unseasonably cold weather prevailed in the north central U.S. Valentine NE was the cold spot in the nation with a record low of 10 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

## Destined for the Cross

**When we trust God with all that we love and value, He provides all that we truly need.**

### Romans 8:6-11: English Standard Version

<sup>6</sup> For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. <sup>7</sup> For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. <sup>8</sup> Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

<sup>9</sup> You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. <sup>10</sup> But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup> If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

"Death to self" happens at salvation, when we are crucified with Christ (Rom. 6:6). The old self dies, and we are given a new nature as the Holy Spirit comes to live within us (John 14:17). At times, however, it takes a bit longer to willingly make a sacrifice—to hand over to the Lord something we love and value.

Once God has given us a new nature, we can experience freedom because Jesus triumphed over sin. But our Father doesn't stop with our salvation; His purpose is to conform believers to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29). To live as God intends, however, we must be willing to give Christ the predominant position in our life. As a result, the Lord calls us to the cross on a daily basis—to lay down anything that might distract us from our purpose of serving and following Him.

Don't misunderstand what this means. God isn't going to take away everything so we see ourselves as lonely paupers. Instead, leaving our valuables—whether possessions, people, or dreams—at the foot of the cross frees us from the attachments of this world.

When we lay down these treasures, our self-esteem will no longer be tied to "stuff" and our sense of acceptance won't come from people. Then we are complete in the Lord. Or, as Paul said, we are "alive to God in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 6:11).



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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: 1 Days 17 Hrs 27 Mins 3 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.16.25

2 5 45 47 48 8

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$31,400,000**

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 42 Mins 2 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.16.25

1 34 38 43 47 3

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 57 Mins 2 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.16.25

5 9 11 18 30

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$113,000**

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 57 Mins 2 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.16.25

7 36 40 47 59 9

TOP PRIZE:

**\$10,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 26 Mins 2 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.16.25

20 24 42 43 49 19

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$131,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 26 Mins 3 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

### China's leader Xi Jinping arrives in Cambodia to wrap up 3-nation Southeast Asia tour

By GRANT PECK and SOPHENG CHEANG Associated Press

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia (AP) — Chinese President Xi Jinping arrived in Cambodia on Thursday for a two-day state visit that serves as an opportunity to further strengthen already robust relations.

The visit, Xi's first since 2016, will conclude a three-nation Southeast Asian tour that included stops in Vietnam and Malaysia. China has been increasing its influence in the region over the past decade, largely by exercising its substantial economic leverage.

Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet recently described Beijing as "an important and indispensable friend of Cambodia that has helped support the country's economic and social development."

Xi was formally greeted at the airport in Cambodia's capital Phnom Penh by head of state King Norodom Sihamoni. During his visit, Xi is also scheduled to meet Prime Minister Hun Manet and Senate President Hun Sen, who is Hun Manet's father and predecessor as prime minister.

In a statement at Phnom Penh International Airport after his arrival on his presidential aircraft, an American-made Air China Boeing 747, Xi said he was "delighted" to visit again.

"Cambodia is a priority in China's neighborhood diplomacy. China will unswervingly support Cambodia in upholding strategic autonomy and in pursuing a development path suited to its national conditions," he said according to a transcript of his remarks distributed by the Chinese embassy.

Trade will likely be a major topic of Xi's discussions in Cambodia, which faces among the highest tariff rates proposed by Washington. In addition to Trump's universal 10% tariff, the country faces the threat of a 49% tax on exports to the U.S. once his 90-day pause expires.

In addition to discussions on strengthening bilateral ties and regional and international issues, several agreements are expected to be signed on cooperation in various sectors.

In both countries, Xi emphasized strengthening ties, particularly in trade and investment, amid global economic uncertainties and the backdrop of trade tensions with the United States. He underscored the need to oppose unilateralism and protectionism and uphold the multilateral trading system.

China is presenting itself as a source of stability and certainty as Southeast Asia scrambles to respond to tariffs imposed by U.S. President Donald Trump, which threaten the region export-oriented economies whose largest markets are generally the United States.

The visit comes on the 50th anniversary of the April 17, 1975 takeover of Cambodia by the communist Khmer Rouge, which imposed a reign of terror with Maoist-inspired policies that saw an estimated 1.7 million Cambodians die of starvation, overwork or executions.

Beijing was the main foreign backer of the Khmer Rouge and supported the group in carrying on a guerrilla war after it was ousted from power in 1979 by an invasion from Vietnam, though such history is rarely discussed by either country.

Cambodia's rapid growth in recent decades has been fueled largely by Beijing.

In Hun Manet's remarks earlier this month at the inauguration of a Chinese-funded road, he called China "a first-class partner country," pointing to achievements like the inauguration of the Chinese-named Angkor Siem Reap Airport and a Phnom Penh ring road named after Xi as evidence of continued strong relations and gratitude, and noted China's continued ranking as the top investor in Cambodia in 2024.

China is Cambodia's largest trading partner, surpassing \$15 billion in 2024 and representing nearly 30% of Cambodia's total trade volume, though greatly in Beijing's favor.

Beijing also helped fund an expansion of the Ream Naval Base on Cambodia's southern coast, raising worries it could become a strategic outpost for the Chinese navy in the Gulf of Thailand. Cambodia has repeatedly denied any agreement granting China special privileges or the establishment of a foreign military base.

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Cambodia has stated that warships from all friendly countries are welcome to dock at its new pier, provided they comply with certain conditions. Japan announced on Tuesday that two of its minesweepers will visit the Ream base this weekend in the first foreign navy visit since the expansion project was completed.

## **Ukraine's future is at the center of talks in Paris with Rubio, Witkoff and top European officials**

PARIS (AP) — Paris is hosting a series of talks Thursday about Ukraine and its security, including U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio and presidential envoy Steve Witkoff, French President Emmanuel Macron and top Ukrainian officials.

Rubio arrived in Paris on Thursday morning. Rubio and Witkoff will have "talks with European counterparts to advance President Trump's goal to end the Russia-Ukraine war and stop the bloodshed," State Department spokeswoman Tammy Bruce said.

The meetings come as concerns grow about Trump's readiness to draw closer to Russia as he seeks to broker a ceasefire in Ukraine and his administration's other moves, from tariffs on some of its closest partners to rhetoric about NATO and Greenland.

Ukrainian presidential adviser Andrii Yermak, Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha and Defense Minister Rustem Umerov also arrived in Paris on Thursday to take part in the talks.

Yermak described them as "a series of bilateral and multilateral meetings with representatives of the states of the coalition of the willing that are able to guarantee security." The Ukrainian delegation is also to meet with U.S. officials, Yermak said.

Around 30 countries led by Britain and France have been discussing a possible coalition to police any future peace agreement with Russia. The success of the coalition's operation hinges on U.S. backup with airpower or other military assistance, but the Trump administration has made no public commitment to provide support.

British Foreign Secretary David Lammy is also taking part in the Ukraine discussions, along with the German government's foreign policy adviser and the Foreign Ministry's political director.

Macron will hold separate meetings with Rubio and Witkoff. Macron also plans to discuss the impact of Trump's tariff policies and the conflicts in the Mideast, "in a logic of de-escalation in the region," Macron's office said.

In Ukraine, a massive drone attack hit the city of Dnipro on Wednesday night, killing three people including a child, the regional leader said. Ukrainian government officials and military analysts have said that Russian forces are preparing to launch a fresh military offensive in the coming weeks to maximize pressure on Kyiv and strengthen the Kremlin's negotiating position in ceasefire talks.

Rubio and Witkoff have helped lead U.S. efforts to seek peace more than three years after Russia launched the war. Several rounds of negotiations have been held in Saudi Arabia, and Witkoff met last week with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Moscow has effectively refused to accept a comprehensive ceasefire that Trump has pushed and Ukraine has endorsed. Russia has made it conditional on a halt in Ukraine's mobilization efforts and Western arms supplies, which are demands rejected by Ukraine.

## **Israeli strike kills family of 10 in Gaza as UN raises alarm over food cutoff**

By WAFAA SHURAF, FATMA KHALED and LEE KEATH Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israeli strikes on the Gaza Strip overnight into Thursday killed at least 23 people, including a family of 10, local health officials said. The United Nations meanwhile raised alarm over the mounting impact of Israel's six-week-old blockade preventing all food and other supplies from entering the territory.

Israel ended its ceasefire with Hamas last month and renewed its bombardment, killing hundreds of

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people and seizing large parts of the territory to pressure the militants to accept changes to the agreement.

A strike in the southern city of Khan Younis killed five children, four women and a man from the same family, all of whom suffered severe burns, according to Nasser Hospital, which received the bodies. Strikes in northern Gaza killed 13 people, including nine children, according to the Indonesian Hospital.

The Israeli military says it tries to avoid harming civilians and blames their deaths on Hamas because it operates in residential areas. There was no immediate comment on the latest strikes.

The U.N. humanitarian office, known as OCHA, said that almost all of Gaza's more than 2 million people now rely for food on the only 1 million prepared meals produced daily by charity kitchens supported by aid groups.

Other food distribution programs have shut down for lack of supplies, and the U.N. and other aid groups have been sending their remaining stocks to the charity kitchens.

The only other way to get food in Gaza is from markets. But most cannot afford to buy there because of spiraling prices and widespread shortages, meaning humanitarian aid is the primary food source for 80% of the population, the World Food Program said in its monthly report for April on Gaza's markets.

"The Gaza Strip is now likely facing the worst humanitarian crisis in the 18 months since the escalation of hostilities in October 2023," OCHA said.

Most people in Gaza are now down to one meal a day, said Shaina Low, a spokesperson for the Norwegian Refugee Council. "It's far lower than what is needed," she said.

Water is also growing scarce, with Palestinians standing in long lines to fill jerry cans from trucks. Omar Shatat, an official with a local water utility, said people are down to six or seven liters per day, well below the amount the U.N. estimates is needed to meet basic needs.

Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz said Wednesday that preventing humanitarian aid is one of the "central pressure tactics" used against Hamas, which Israel accuses of siphoning off aid to maintain its rule.

Israel is demanding that Hamas release more hostages at the start of any new ceasefire and ultimately agree to disarm and leave the territory. Katz said that even afterward Israel will continue to occupy large "security zones" inside Gaza.

Hamas is currently holding 59 hostages, 24 of whom are believed to be alive. It says it will only return them in exchange for the release of more Palestinian prisoners, a full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and a lasting truce, as called for in the now-defunct ceasefire agreement reached earlier this year.

Hani Almadhoun, co-founder of Gaza Soup Kitchen, said his kitchen has food for about three more weeks.

"But food is loosely defined. We have pasta and rice but nothing much beyond that. No fresh produce. There is no chicken or beef. The only thing we have is canned meat," he said. He said 15-20% of the people who come to his kitchen for food leave empty-handed.

The war began when Hamas-led militants attacked southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting 251. Most of the hostages have since been released in ceasefire agreements or other deals. Israel has rescued eight and recovered dozens of bodies.

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

The war has destroyed vast parts of Gaza and most of its food production capabilities. The war has displaced around 90% of the population, with hundreds of thousands of people living in tent camps and bombed-out buildings.

## Myanmar frees around 4,900 prisoners including some political detainees

BANGKOK (AP) — The head of Myanmar's military government granted amnesty to around 4,900 prisoners to mark the country's traditional new year, state-run media reported Thursday, and an independent watchdog said they included at least 22 political detainees.

At least 19 buses with prisoners aboard left Yangon's Insein prison and were welcomed outside the gate



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by excited family members and friends who had been waiting since early morning.

The Political Prisoners Network — Myanmar, an independent watchdog group that records violations of human rights in Myanmar's prisons, said in a statement that by its initial count, 22 political prisoners had been freed.

Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, the head of the ruling military council, pardoned 4,893 prisoners, MRTV reported. Thirteen foreigners will also be released and deported from Myanmar, it said in a separate statement.

Other prisoners received reduced sentences, except for those convicted of serious charges such as murder and rape, or those jailed on charges under various other security acts.

If the freed detainees violate the law again, they will have to serve the remainder of their original sentences in addition to any new sentence, according to the terms of their release. Mass amnesties on the holiday are not unusual in Myanmar.

Myanmar has been under military rule since Feb. 1, 2021, when its army ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi's elected government. The takeover was met with massive nonviolent resistance, which has since become a widespread armed struggle. The country is now in civil war.

Some 22,197 political detainees, including Suu Kyi, were in detention as of last Friday, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, an independent organization that keeps detailed tallies of arrests and casualties linked to the nation's political conflicts.

Many political detainees had been held on a charge of incitement, a catch-all offense widely used to arrest critics of the government or military and punishable by up to three years in prison.

Among those imprisoned for incitement who were freed Thursday was the film director who works under the name of Steel and is also known as Dwe Myittar. He was arrested in March 2023 and had been held in Insein Prison.

This year's celebrations of Thingyan, the new year's holiday, were more reserved than usual due to a nationwide grieving period following a devastating March 28 earthquake that killed about 3,725 people and leveled structures from new condos to ancient pagodas.

In a new year's speech, Min Aung Hlaing said his government will carry out reconstruction and rehabilitation measures in the quake-affected areas as quickly as possible. He also reaffirmed plans to hold a general election by the end of the year and called on opposition groups fighting the army to resolve the conflicts in political ways.

During the holiday, the violent struggle between the army and pro-democracy forces continued with reports of clashes in the countryside but the number of casualties was unclear.

## Japan reports a \$63 billion trade surplus with the US as it talks with Trump on tariffs

By YURI KAGEYAMA AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Japan recorded a trade deficit in its March-April fiscal year but racked up a surplus with the U.S., the Finance Ministry reported Thursday.

Japan's global trade deficit totaled 5.2 trillion yen (\$37 billion) for the fiscal year through March, for the fourth straight year of deficits, according to the provisional statistics.

The surplus with the U.S. ballooned to 9 trillion yen (\$63 billion).

Exports to the U.S. are a contentious issue for U.S. President Donald Trump and Japanese negotiators are in Washington to argue their case against higher U.S. tariffs. Japan is a key longtime U.S. ally and major investor in the U.S., employing hundreds of thousands of Americans.

Trump said on April 2 that he planned to impose a 24% tariff on imports from Japan as part of an announcement of higher tariffs on dozens of countries. After financial markets panicked, he put a partial 90-day hold on the import taxes, while increasing his already steep tariffs on Chinese goods to as much as 145%.

Japan still faces a 10% baseline tariff and a 25% tax on imported cars, auto parts, steel and aluminum

exports. Most of those duties took effect recently, but they pose a grave challenge for embattled Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba.

Some analysts say Tokyo could at some point announce surprise concessions, like importing more American rice. Rice holds a special place in the Japanese psyche as the nation's staple and has long been a protected sector in Japan. But recently a rice shortage has been pushing up prices.

Japan's annual exports climbed 5.9% from a year earlier, helped by strong shipments of goods like computer chips and vehicles. Imports rose 4.7%. But a weaker Japanese yen made imports more costly.

A recent influx of foreign tourists to Japan has pushed exports higher, since such spending counts as exports.

For the month of March, Japan recorded a trade surplus of 544 billion yen (\$4 billion). Exports climbed nearly 4% from a year earlier, for the sixth straight month of gains, although the surge was slower than in February.

Exports to the U.S. rose 3%, while shipments to the rest of Asia grew 5.5%. Exports to China fell, while shipments to Hong Kong, Taiwan and South Korea surged.

"This is likely due to the rerouting of exports within Asia to avoid tariff conflicts with the U.S.," Min Joo Kang, a senior economist at ING, said in a report.

## Officials demand answers as crews work to restore power after another Puerto Rico blackout

By DÁNICA COTO Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — Crews worked early Thursday to restore power to Puerto Rico after a blackout across the entire island that affected the main international airport, several hospitals and hotels filled with Easter vacationers

The outage that began past noon Wednesday left 1.4 million customers without electricity and 328,000 without water. At least 175,000 customers, or 12%, had power back at the end of the day. Officials expected 90% of customers to have power back within 48 to 72 hours after the outage.

"This is a shame for the people of Puerto Rico that we have a problem of this magnitude," said Gov. Jennifer González, who cut her weeklong vacation short and returned to Puerto Rico on Wednesday evening.

The blackout snarled traffic, forced hundreds of businesses to close and left those unable to afford generators scrambling to buy ice and candles.

It's the second islandwide blackout to hit Puerto Rico in less than four months, with the previous one occurring on New Year's Eve.

"Why on holidays?" griped José Luis Richardson, who did not have a generator and kept cool by splashing water on himself every couple of hours.

The roar of generators and smell of fumes filled the air as a growing number of Puerto Ricans renewed calls for the government to cancel the contracts with Luma Energy, which oversees the transmission and distribution of power, and Genera PR, which oversees generation.

González promised to heed those calls.

"That is not under doubt or question," she said, but added that it's not a quick process. "It is unacceptable that we have failures of this kind."

González said a major outage like the one that occurred Wednesday leads to an estimated \$230 million revenue loss daily.

Ramón C. Barquín III, president of the United Retail Center, a nonprofit that represents small- and medium-sized businesses, warned that ongoing outages would spook potential investors at a time that Puerto Rico urgently needs economic development.

"We cannot continue to repeat this cycle of blackouts without taking concrete measures to strengthen our energy infrastructure," he said.

Many also were concerned about Puerto Rico's elderly population, with the mayor of Canóvanas deploy-

ing brigades to visit the bedridden and those who depend on electronic medical equipment.

Meanwhile, the mayor of Vega Alta opened a center to provide power to those with lifesaving medical equipment.

It was not immediately clear what caused the shutdown, the latest in a string of major blackouts on the island in recent years.

Daniel Hernández, vice president of operations at Genera PR, said Wednesday that a disturbance hit the transmission system shortly after noon, a time when the grid is vulnerable because there are few machines regulating frequency at that hour.

Puerto Rico has struggled with chronic outages since September 2017 when Hurricane Maria pummeled the island as a powerful Category 4 storm, razing a power grid that crews are still struggling to rebuild.

The grid already had been deteriorating as a result of decades of a lack of maintenance and investment.

## Struggling Ivory Coast cocoa farmers are worried about US tariff plans

By HILAIRE ZON Associated Press

N'GATTAKRO, Ivory Coast (AP) — Jean Mari Konan Yao says he's struggling as a cocoa farmer in the west African nation of Ivory Coast, which produces almost half the world's cocoa supply of the raw ingredient used in chocolate.

Like many in Ivory Coast — the world's biggest cocoa producer — Konan Yao says cocoa has long provided a lifeline for him, but adverse weather and plant diseases have hurt harvests in recent years.

Now, cocoa farmers worry even more over President Donald Trump's plans to impose a 21% tariff on products from Ivory Coast — the highest among West African nations.

Although Trump has suspended the tariff plans for 90 days pending further review, authorities in Ivory Coast have warned that such tariffs could send the price of cocoa even higher and destabilize the local market by slowing their sales.

Ivory Coast produces between 2 million and 2.5 million metric tons of cocoa annually, with around 200,000 to 300,000 metric tons exported to the United States, according to the Coffee and Cocoa Council.

In 2023, Ivory Coast exported \$3.68 billion worth of cocoa beans, its second biggest export after gold. The U.S. was its fourth-largest importer of cocoa beans, after the Netherlands, Malaysia and Belgium, according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

For most local cocoa growers, any U.S. tariff could further shake a market already struggling with decreasing yields and shrinking funding that has limited farmers' ability to meet global demands for chocolate.

"If we hear the American president is going to put a tax on the price of cocoa, it's really not good for us, it doesn't help us," said another cocoa farmer, Salif Traoré.

Already, cocoa prices were rising in the country, in part because of insufficient and irregular rainfall in Ivory Coast.

The U.K.-based Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit research firm has noted a 32% rise in the price of cocoa imported into the United Kingdom over the last three years, partially due to extreme weather conditions in parts of Africa where it's mainly grown. Together, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Nigeria and Cameroon produce about three-quarters of the world's cocoa.

Cocoa is traded on a regulated, global market. In Ivory Coast, the government usually sets cocoa prices at the onset of each season, with prices reflecting market trends and global prices. The local prices are, however, lower than the global market rates, thereby limiting the farmers' profit from high global prices.

Authorities say they are already considering cocoa price increases if the U.S. tariff comes into effect.

"Donald Trump's customs tax is causing us problems. We are already feeling the effects," said Boss Diarra, coordinator of the local cocoa farmers' union in Bouaflé in central Ivory Coast. He pointed to bags of cocoa that he said farmers have been unable to sell.

Meanwhile, a U.S. tariff could mean more cocoa for European markets, said Bruno Marcel Iritié, researcher at the Ivorian Félix Houphouët-Boigny Polytechnic Institute. Some of the top importers of Ivory Coast



cocoa are in Europe, market data show.

European customers "will inevitably buy cheaper because when there is too much, the customer is king," Iritié said.

## Italy's Meloni will test her mettle as EU-US bridge when she meets Trump in Washington

By COLLEEN BARRY Associated Press

MILAN (AP) — Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni will test her mettle as a bridge between the EU and the United States when she meets with U.S. President Donald Trump in the White House on Thursday, the first European leader to have a face-to-face with Trump since he announced, and then suspended, 20% tariffs on European exports.

Meloni secured the meeting at a critical juncture in the trade war as Italy's leader, but she also has, in a sense, been "knighted" to represent the European Union. She has been in close contact with EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen ahead of the trip, and "the outreach is ... closely coordinated," a commission spokeswoman said this week.

"We know we are in a difficult moment," Meloni said this week in Rome. "Most certainly, I am well aware of what I represent, and what I am defending."

The European Union is defending what it calls "the most important commercial relationship in the world," with annual trade reaching 1.6 trillion euros (\$1.8 trillion).

Trade negotiations fall under the European Commission's authority, which is pushing for a zero-for-zero tariff deal with the U.S. However, Trump administration officials in talks with the EU have yet to publicly show signs of relenting on Trump's insistence that a baseline 10% tariff be charged on all foreign imports. He paused for 90 days a retaliatory increase to 20%.

The pause has raised some hopes for negotiations, and Meloni's margins for progress are more in gaining clarity on Trump's goals rather than outright concessions, experts say.

"It is a very delicate mission," said Fabian Zuleeg, chief economist at the European Policy Center think tank in Brussels. "There is the whole trade agenda, and while she's not officially negotiating, we know that Trump likes to have this kind of informal exchange, which in a sense is a negotiation. So it's a lot on her plate."

As the leader of a far-right party, Meloni is ideologically aligned with Trump on issues including curbing migration, promoting traditional values and skepticism toward multilateral institutions. But stark differences have emerged in Meloni's unwavering support for Ukraine.

After being the only European leader to attend the Jan. 20 inauguration, Meloni has responded with studied restraint as abrupt shifts in U.S. policy under Trump have frayed the trans-Atlantic alliance. She has denounced the tariffs as "wrong" and warned that "dividing the West would be disastrous for everyone," after Trump's heated White House exchange with Ukraine's president.

"She has been very cautious," said Wolfango Piccoli, an analyst at the London-based Teneo consultancy. "It is what we need when we have a counterpart that is changing every day."

Italy maintains a 40 billion euro trade surplus with the United States, its largest with any country, fueled by Americans' appetite for Italian sparkling wine, foodstuffs like Parmigiano Reggiano hard cheese and Parma ham, and Italian luxury fashion. These are all sectors critical to the Italian economy, and mostly supported by small- and medium-sized producers who are core center-right voters.

"All in all, I think she will focus on the very strong economic and trade relations that Italy has with the United States, not just in terms of exports, but also services and energy," said Antonio Villafranca, vice president of the ISPI think tank in Milan. "For example, Italy could even consider importing more gas from the U.S."

The meeting comes against the backdrop of growing concerns over global uncertainty generated by the escalating tariff wars. Italy's growth forecast for this year has already been slashed from 1% to 0.5% as a result.

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Meloni is also expected to address Trump's demand for NATO partners to increase military spending to 2% of gross domestic product. Italy's spending, at 1.49% of GDP, is among the lowest in Europe.

Experts cautioned, however, against raising expectations over any concrete progress.

"The best strategy has been to be very circumspect: Get there, get the meeting, get the photo opportunity," Piccoli said. "If she is able to come back, and give a sense of how Washington wants to frame future relations on trade, defense and Ukraine policy, that would be a huge win."

## Trump joins tariff talks with Japan as US seeks deals amid trade wars

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE, MARI YAMAGUCHI and JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Wednesday inserted himself directly into trade talks with Japanese officials, a sign of the high stakes for the United States after its tariffs rattled the economy and caused the administration to assure the public that it would quickly reach deals.

The Republican president attended the meeting alongside Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick, top economic advisers with a central role in his trade and tariff policies.

"Hopefully something can be worked out which is good (GREAT!) for Japan and the USA!" Trump wrote in a social media post ahead of the meeting.

Afterward, he posted: "A Great Honor to have just met with the Japanese Delegation on Trade. Big Progress!"

Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba told reporters Thursday in Tokyo that his chief trade negotiator, Ryosei Akazawa, told him from Washington that the talks were "very candid and constructive."

"Of course the talks are not easy, but President Trump stated his intention to make this negotiation a top priority," Ishiba said. "I believe we had talks that lead to a next step."

Ishiba said he will closely watch how ministerial talks go and plans to visit Washington to meet with Trump at an appropriate time.

Trump's choice to get directly involved in negotiations points to his desire to quickly finalize a slew of trade deals as China is pursuing its own set of agreements. It's an open test of Trump's reputation as a dealmaker as countries around the world seek to limit the potential damage unleashed by his import taxes.

The sweeping tariffs that Trump announced on April 2 triggered panic in the financial markets and generated recession fears, causing the U.S. president to quickly put a partial 90-day hold on the import taxes and increase his already steep tariffs against China to as much as 145%.

The pause temporarily spared Japan from 24% across-the-board tariffs, but there continues to be a 10% baseline tariff and a 25% tax on imported cars, auto parts, steel and aluminum exports.

With Japan charging an average tax rate of 1.9% on other countries' goods and having a longstanding alliance with the U.S., the talks on Wednesday are a crucial indicator of whether the Trump administration can achieve a meaningful deal that reassures the markets, American voters and foreign allies.

U.S. economic rival China, meanwhile, is trying to capitalize on the turmoil around Trump's announcements, with its leader, President Xi Jinping, touring nations of Southeast Asia and promoting his country as a more reliable trade partner.

Japan is among the first countries to start open negotiations with the U.S. Trump and other administration officials have said the phones have been "ringing off the hook" with dozens of countries calling, eager to strike deals with a president who views himself as a master negotiator to avoid tariffs when the 90-day pause ends. Israel and Vietnam have offered to zero out their tariff rates, but Trump has been noncommittal as to whether that would be sufficient.

On Thursday, Trump is scheduled to meet with Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, who will likely be carrying messages on behalf of the European Union about how to resolve the tariffs Trump placed on the 27-state group.

Still, the U.S. president may also be feeling increased domestic pressures to settle any tariffs as many voters say they returned Trump to the White House with the specific goal of improving the economy. Cali-

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California Gov. Gavin Newsom filed a lawsuit Wednesday that argues that Trump overstepped his authority by declaring an economic emergency to levy his tariffs, with the Democrat saying in a statement that the tariffs have caused economic chaos.

Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell said Wednesday that Trump's tariff policies would hurt the U.S. economy, a direct warning to a White House trying to sell the import taxes as a long-term positive for the country.

"The level of tariff increases announced so far is significantly larger than anticipated, and the same is likely to be true of the economic effects which will include higher inflation and slower growth," Powell said at the Economic Club of Chicago.

Japan, like many other nations trying to minimize the possible economic fallout from Trump's tariffs, has been scrambling to respond. It has set up a special task force to assess the impact of the tariffs and offer loans to anxious companies.

Although Ishiba has been working hard to coax exemptions out of Trump, the government has said little officially on what concessions it might offer during these talks.

Nor has the administration been transparent about its asks. The Trump administration is seeking to close the \$68.5 billion trade deficit with Japan and seeking greater access for U.S. goods in foreign markets, yet the president has also insisted that tariff revenues can be used to pay down the federal budget deficit.

"Japan is coming in today to negotiate Tariffs, the cost of military support, and 'TRADE FAIRNESS,'" Trump posted Wednesday.

Japan has contended that Trump's tariff measures are likely to violate bilateral trade agreements or World Trade Organization rules. While Ishiba has said he opposes retaliatory tariffs, he also has said he is in no rush to push for a settlement because he doesn't want concessions.

Xi, meanwhile, stopped in Malaysia on Wednesday and told its leader that China will be a collaborative partner and stand with its Southeast Asian neighbors after the global economic shocks.

Xi is touring Vietnam, Malaysia and Cambodia this week on a trip that likely was planned before the tariffs' uncertainty but that he's also using to promote Beijing as a source of stability in the region and shore up relationships in that part of the world as he looks for ways to mitigate the 145% tariffs that Trump is keeping on China.

"In the face of shocks to global order and economic globalization, China and Malaysia will stand with countries in the region to combat the undercurrents of geopolitical ... confrontation, as well as the counter-currents of unilateralism and protectionism," Xi said in remarks at a dinner with Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim.

"Together, we will safeguard the bright prospects of our Asian family," he added.

Xi has promised Malaysia and Vietnam greater access to Chinese markets on his visits, although few details were shared.

In Washington, Trump has indicated that he also wants to discuss how much the Japanese contribute to the cost of U.S. troops stationed there, largely as a deterrent to China.

Trump's demand for more defense spending concerns the Japanese government.

Under its national security strategy, Japan aims to double annual defense spending to nearly \$10 trillion, or 2% of GDP, in 2027, while there is a concern that Trump may ask for that to be increased to 3% of GDP. Japanese Defense Minister Gen Nakatani said Tuesday that the military budget for this year is about 1.8% of Japan's GDP.

## Carney says Trump key issue in Canada's election, while Conservative rival says country needs change

By ROB GILLIES Associated Press

TORONTO (AP) — Prime Minister Mark Carney said Wednesday the key question in Canada's election is who is best to deal with U.S. President Donald Trump while his Conservative rival argued that Carney



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doesn't represent change after a decade of Liberal Party rule.

Opposition Conservative Pierre Poilievre said during the French-language leaders' debate Canada needs change and Carney is just like his predecessor Justin Trudeau.

"Mr. Poilievre is not Justin Trudeau. I'm not Justin Trudeau either. In this election the question is who is going to face Mr. Trump," Carney said.

Trump's trade war and threats to make Canada the 51st state have infuriated Canadians and led to a surge in Canadian nationalism that has bolstered Liberal Party poll numbers ahead of the April 28 vote.

Poilievre is imploring Canadians not to give the Liberals a fourth term. He hoped to make the election a referendum on Trudeau, whose popularity declined toward the end of his decade in power as food and housing prices rose and immigration surged.

But Trump attacked, Trudeau resigned and Carney, a two-time central banker, became Liberal party leader and prime minister after a party leadership race.

"One of the differences, there are many, but one of the differences between the two of us is that I put much more emphasis on the economy, on growing the economy," Carney said when asked about Trudeau at a news conference after the debate. "In fact in this circumstance that we are in, given the scale of the crisis, I would say relentless focus on growing the economy."

During the debate Carney said he has only been prime minister for a month.

"We need change. You do not embody change," Poilievre said to Carney.

Bloc Québécois Yves-François Blanche, whose party is losing support to Carney's Liberals in Quebec, agreed, saying the Liberals are the same party, the same ministers and the same lawmakers and a new leader does not change that.

But public opinion has changed. In a mid-January poll by Nanos, Liberals trailed the Conservative Party by 47% to 20%. In the latest Nanos poll released Wednesday, the Liberals led by 8 percentage points. The January poll had a margin of error 3.1 points while the latest poll had a 2.7-point margin.

"Carney, who played safe, did not make the kind of big mistakes that could have altered the dynamic of the race in Quebec," said Daniel Béland, a political science professor at McGill University in Montreal. "I don't think the debate will have a major impact on the race in Quebec, which remains dominated by the Liberals."

The French debate was moved up by two hours to minimize a conflict with a Montreal Canadiens hockey game. The NHL team faced off against the Carolina Hurricanes at 7 p.m. ET, and clinched a spot in the Stanley Cup playoffs.

This isn't the first time NHL hockey has elbowed its way onto the campaign trail. During the 2011 election, former Bloc leader Gilles Duceppe asked for a debate to be postponed due to a Canadiens hockey game, and his request was granted.

The English language debate is Thursday evening.

## **GOP Rep. Elise Stefanik is considering a run for governor of New York**

By SEUNG MIN KIM and ANTHONY IZAGUIRRE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Rep. Elise Stefanik, a member of House Republican leadership and onetime nominee for U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, is considering a run for New York governor, according to a person close to her.

The person was granted anonymity to discuss internal deliberations. The state's current governor, Democrat Kathy Hochul, was elected in 2022 and is running for reelection next year.

Stefanik, a close ally and fierce defender of President Donald Trump, had been nominated to represent the U.S. at the United Nations. But her nomination was pulled last month amid concerns about leaving a Republican House seat vacant when the party has such a narrow majority in the chamber.

Trump, in a Wednesday morning post on his social media platform Truth Social, wrote, "Congresswoman Elise Stefanik is GREAT!!!" In recent days, Stefanik has been encouraged to run by major New York donors,

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state Republican officials and White House officials, according to the person close to her. She considered running for governor in 2022 and will make a decision on a candidacy this time around in the coming months.

Stefanik, who represents a sprawling congressional district in northern New York, released a statement Wednesday afternoon that didn't address a potential run for governor but lambasted Hochul as the "Worst Governor in America" and said "we must FIRE Kathy Hochul in 2026 to SAVE NEW YORK."

If Stefanik does enter the race, she might face off in a Republican primary against Rep. Mike Lawler, who has been teasing a run for several months. But Stefanik allies believe her strong name ID in the state, ability to raise cash and ties to the Trump White House would clear the GOP field.

The last Republican governor in New York was former Gov. George Pataki, who served three terms and left office almost two decades ago. Lee Zeldin, current head of the federal Environmental Protection Agency and former congressman from Long Island, mounted a serious challenge to Hochul in the governor's race in 2022, nearly landing what would have been a major upset in the heavily Democratic state.

Asked by reporters about a possible Stefanik candidacy, Hochul said, "No matter the GOP nominee next year that I'll be running against, it's going to be an extreme MAGA Republican, and I look forward to that fight."

Hochul herself is expected to face a contested primary. Her lieutenant governor, Antonio Delgado, earlier this year announced he would not run for reelection alongside the governor next year, hinting instead at his own gubernatorial candidacy. Rep. Ritchie Torres is also rumored to be considering a run and has emerged as one of the governor's most pronounced Democratic critics.

## **NY prison guards beat an inmate to death then tried to cover it up, prosecutors say**

By MICHAEL HILL and DAVE COLLINS Associated Press

UTICA, N.Y. (AP) — Ten New York prison guards were charged Wednesday in connection with the fatal beating of a 22-year-old inmate last month — including two charged with murder. It's the second time a group of correctional officers in the state was indicted for a death behind bars this year.

Messiah Nantwi, a prisoner at the Mid-State Correctional Facility, died March 1 from injuries he sustained in a series of beatings by guards that began in his room and continued even when he was lying handcuffed on the floor of the infirmary, the indictment says.

Six of the officers charged Wednesday were accused of assaulting Nantwi, while the other four were accused of participating in a cover-up that included filing false reports, plotting to plant a makeshift knife and cleaning up blood in Nantwi's room in an effort to destroy evidence. All entered not guilty pleas.

Nantwi's death came several months after Robert Brooks was fatally beaten at the Marcy Correctional Facility just across the street from the Mid-State prison. Six guards have pleaded not guilty to murder charges in Brooks' death and other prison employees have been charged.

The Utica-area facility was one of many state prisons struggling to function during a three-week wildcat strike by guards upset over working conditions, which forced the governor to send in National Guard troops to maintain operations. Incarcerated people and their advocates complained that services and conditions deteriorated during the walkout, while the indictment notes the guards had little training on how to deal with prisoners.

Mid-State guards Jonah Levi and Caleb Blair are charged with second-degree murder. They and three others — Thomas Eck, Craig Klemick and Daniel Burger — also are charged with first-degree manslaughter. Two sergeants, Francis Chandler and David Ferrone, are charged with second-degree manslaughter, accused of doing nothing to stop the assaults while supervising.

Levi and Blair were part of an emergency response team called to Nantwi's room to help National Guard members, the indictment says. At a news conference after the hearing, Onondaga County District Attorney William Fitzpatrick said the inmate drew the Guard members' concern when he interjected into another inmate's effort to obtain medication and was resistant to a prisoner headcount.

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Fitzpatrick said the situation had resolved itself by the time the response team arrived, but the correctional officers spoke with the Guard members for only a few seconds before entering Nantwi's room.

Nantwi's hands were raised when the officers first entered the room but he objected to being handcuffed for no apparent reason and grabbed a guard's vest, the indictment says. Several guards immediately rained blows on his head and body using their fists, batons and boots, the document says. The attack intensified when Nantwi bit Blair and Eck on their hands well after guards began assaulting him, according to Fitzpatrick and the indictment.

Nantwi became unresponsive and guards transported him toward the infirmary, but he was assaulted a second time in a stairwell and "dumped in a holding cell at the infirmary and further assaulted" by Blair, the indictment says.

Fitzpatrick added that guards on the team were not wearing mandated body cameras, while others working there either turned off their cameras or "simply looked the other way."

Guards met a local diner the next morning to develop and coordinate a false narrative, an attempt at an "amateurish and ineffective" cover-up, Fitzpatrick said.

Part of the cover-up involved taking a weapon that had been confiscated in an unrelated incident and planting it in Nantwi's room, the indictment alleges. Ferrone was caught discussing the weapon on a bodycam hanging up in the men's room at the infirmary, it says. When he spotted the camera, he "uttered an expletive."

In addition to the 10 guards, six other correctional officers agreed to cooperate with the investigation, Fitzpatrick said. Two will plead guilty to felonies and four will plead guilty to misdemeanors.

Prison officials said all 10 guards charged Wednesday have either resigned or been suspended without pay.

Gov. Kathy Hochul has ordered the commissioner to begin the termination process for workers involved in Nantwi's death.

Nantwi entered the state prison system last May and had been serving a five-year sentence for second-degree criminal possession of a weapon related to an exchange of gunfire with police officers in 2021. He was shot multiple times, while the officers were uninjured.

Prosecutors in Manhattan say Nantwi shot and killed Jaylen Duncan, 19, on a Harlem street in April 2023. The following evening, they say, he shot and killed Brandon Brunson, 36, at a Harlem smoke shop after an argument.

## Israel says it will keep troops in Gaza, Lebanon and Syria indefinitely. What does that mean?

By JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

The Israeli defense minister says his country's troops will stay in "security zones" in the Gaza Strip, Lebanon and Syria indefinitely, after Israel unilaterally expanded its frontiers in the war unleashed by Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack.

Israel says it needs to hold on to the zones to prevent similar attacks, but the takeovers appear to meet the dictionary definition of military occupation.

The acquisition of territory by force is universally seen as a violation of international law, something Western allies of Israel have repeatedly invoked with regard to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Israel, which has captured territory during wars with its Arab neighbors going back to the country's establishment in 1948, says this is a special case. For decades, Israeli governments said they must hold such lands for self-defense but would return them in peace agreements, as when Israel restored the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt in the Camp David Accords.

Israel has formally annexed east Jerusalem, as well as the Golan Heights captured from Syria. It has occupied the West Bank, home to some 3 million Palestinians, for more than half a century and built settlements there that today house more than 500,000 Jewish settlers.

Israel withdrew soldiers and settlers from Gaza in 2005 but imposed a blockade, along with Egypt, after Hamas took power two years later.



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In a statement Wednesday, Defense Minister Israel Katz said Israeli troops would remain in the so-called security zones in Gaza, Syria and Lebanon "in any temporary or permanent situation."

What are the 'security zones'?

Israel launched a massive offensive after the 2023 attack and carved out a wide buffer zone along the border. Israel ended its ceasefire with Hamas last month and has since expanded the buffer zone, established corridors across the strip and encircled the southern city of Rafah.

Israel now controls over 50% of Gaza, according to experts. Katz did not specify which territories he was referring to.

Israel was supposed to withdraw from Lebanon under the ceasefire it reached with the Hezbollah militant group in November after more than a year of fighting. But troops have remained in five strategic locations along the border and have continued to carry out strikes against what Israel says are militant targets.

When rebels overthrew Syrian President Bashar Assad in December, Israeli forces advanced from the Golan Heights into the Syrian side of a buffer zone established after the 1973 war. Israel has since expanded its zone of control to nearby villages, setting off clashes with residents last month.

Israel has also repeatedly bombed Syrian military bases and other targets, and has said it will not allow Syrian security forces to operate south of Damascus.

How have Israel's neighbors responded?

Lebanon and Syria have condemned Israel's seizure of their territory as a blatant violation of their sovereignty and of international law. But neither country's armed forces are capable of defending their borders against Israel.

Hezbollah, which was established during the early years of Israel's 1982-2000 occupation of southern Lebanon, has threatened to renew hostilities if Israel does not complete its withdrawal, but its military capabilities have been severely depleted by the war and the fall of Assad, who had been a close ally.

While Hezbollah seems unlikely to return to war, an ongoing Israeli occupation could complicate Lebanese efforts to negotiate the group's disarmament.

The Palestinians seek an independent state in east Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza, territories Israel captured in the 1967 Mideast war. A two-state solution is widely seen internationally as the only way to resolve the conflict, but the last serious peace talks broke down more than 15 years ago.

Hamas has said it will only release the remaining 59 hostages held in Gaza — 24 of whom are believed to be alive — in exchange for a full Israeli withdrawal from the territory and a lasting ceasefire. Israel's vow to remain in Gaza could further complicate slow-moving talks on a new ceasefire.

What is the Trump administration's position?

The United States has not yet commented on Katz's remarks.

But the Trump administration has expressed full support for Israel's actions in Gaza, including its decision to end the ceasefire, renew military operations with a surprise bombardment that killed hundreds of people, and seal off the territory from all food, fuel or other supplies.

During his first term, President Donald Trump gave unprecedented support to Israel's acquisition of territory by force, at times upending decades of U.S. foreign policy.

Under Trump, the U.S. became the first and so far only state to recognize Israel's annexation of the Golan Heights. Trump also relocated the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem, lending support to Israel's claims to the entire city. Both policies continued under the Biden administration.

Trump has proposed that the U.S. take ownership of Gaza after the war and redevelop it as a tourist destination. He has called for the Palestinian population to be resettled in other countries, a plan that has been rejected by Palestinians and much of the international community.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to implement the plan after Hamas is defeated, saying Israel supports the "voluntary emigration" of Palestinians from a territory it largely controls, much of which has been rendered uninhabitable by its offensive.

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

By ISAAC SCHARF, WAFAA SHURAF and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel's defense minister said on 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.

Meanwhile, Israeli strikes across Gaza killed another 22 people, according to local health officials, including a girl who was not yet a year old. The girl's mother, who was wounded, embraced her daughter, still wearing a bloodied blue dress, before she was taken for burial.

Israeli forces have taken over more than half of Gaza in a renewed campaign to pressure Hamas militants 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 Syrian 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.

Lebanese president Joseph Aoun said that Israel's continued presence in some areas in Lebanon was "hindering" the Lebanese army's full deployment as required by the ceasefire negotiated with Israel.

Two Israeli drone strikes on Wednesday in southern Lebanon killed two people, the health ministry said. The U.N. said Israeli strikes in Lebanon have killed more than 70 civilians since the ceasefire took effect in November.

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."

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.

'Every day, children'

Ahlam Seiam's family had planned to celebrate her first birthday later this month. Then the Israeli strike hit the building where they had pitched a tent on the roof.

Her grandfather, Nashat, said the family was awakened by a blast overnight. When he raced to the roof, he found his son, Mohammed, sobbing.

"I found her like this," he said as he held the girl's body.

Associated Press footage showed the mother, wrapped in bandages, cradling her daughter one last time in the hospital bed.

Israel says it only targets militants and blames Hamas for civilian deaths because its fighters operate in residential areas. The grandfather said there were no militants in the area of the strike. There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military.

The family had fled to Khan Younis from the southern city of Rafah after Israel renewed its offensive

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last month. "Wherever you go, death will catch up with you. There is no escape," the grandfather said.

Nermin Zughrub, Ahlam's aunt, scrolled through photos of the girl on her phone.

"If the world doesn't wake up today, when will it?" she said. "Every day, massacres. Every day, children."

Much of Gaza is uninhabitable

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.

Hundreds of thousands are crammed into squalid tent camps with dwindling food as an aid blockade in Gaza imposed by Israel entered its seventh week. The U.N. humanitarian office, or OCHA, said Wednesday that humanitarian workers on the ground are reporting a rise in acute malnutrition across the Gaza Strip.

Water has become increasingly scarce, with Palestinians desperately lining up in front of water trucks clutching containers and jerrycans. Omar Shatat, deputy director of Gaza's Coastal Water Utility, told The Associated Press that each person gets six to seven liters of potable water each day, calling it a "water catastrophe."

"Water, it's the simplest thing," said Nevin Al-Dahloul, a displaced woman from Beit Lahiya. "We're not asking for luxury, it's our most basic right."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to annihilate Hamas and return the 59 hostages still in Gaza — 24 of whom are believed to still be alive.

On Wednesday, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad militant group released a video of hostage Rom Braslavski. It was the first sign of life of him, though recently released hostages had said they had seen him in captivity. In the video, which was filmed under duress, Braslavski says he was held in terrible conditions and pleads with Netanyahu to stop the war and allow humanitarian aid into Gaza.

Netanyahu also has said that Israel will 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, has expressed full support for Israel's decision to end the truce and to cut off aid. Trump's Mideast envoy, Steve Witkoff, has been trying to broker a new ceasefire, more favorable to Israel, but those efforts appear to have made little progress.

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

## Dog reunites with Israeli family after disappearing for 18 months in Gaza

By SAM MEDNICK Associated Press

BINYAMINA, Israel (AP) — Rachel Dancyg never thought she would see her dog again after it disappeared in the Hamas attack that sparked the ongoing war with Israel.

Her ex-husband and brother were abducted from Kibbutz Nir Oz in southern Israel and killed. She thought her beloved pet had suffered the same fate. So when a soldier called the family on Tuesday night, telling them that Billie had been found alive in Gaza, it was hard to believe.

"It's a miracle," Dancyg told The Associated Press on Wednesday, hours after being reunited with her now 3 1/2-year old Cavalier King Charles spaniel. "It doesn't make sense ... People didn't survive. How did she?"

The reunion brought a rare touch of joy in Israel after 18 months of devastating war.

The Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas attack killed some 1,200 people and resulted in more than 250 others being kidnapped. Nearly 60 hostages remain in Gaza, more than half of whom are believed to be dead.

An Israeli offensive launched after the attack has killed more than 51,000 Palestinians, more than half of



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them women and children, according to local health authorities, and reduced large parts of Gaza to rubble. U.S.-led efforts to broker a ceasefire and bring home remaining hostages appear to be at a standstill.

Nir Oz was one of the hardest hit communities, with nearly a quarter of the approximately 400 residents killed or captured in the 2023 attack. For Israelis, it stands out as the embodiment of their country's vulnerability that day. Soldiers took hours to respond. Some families have said they saw Hamas militants killing or kidnapping animals.

It's unclear how Billie ended up in Gaza. When Hamas entered Dancyg's home, she hid in the safe room with her family for eight hours, holding the door shut. But she fled so quickly there was no time to find the dog. For months, the community looked everywhere for Billie, but there was no trace of her.

The family later moved to northern Israel.

Then, on Tuesday night, Dancyg's daughter received a phone call from a soldier who had just returned from Gaza. He said he had their dog.

"I couldn't believe it. I asked for a photo. I was really confused," said her daughter, Lee Maor.

The soldier said he found Billie in Gaza's southern city of Rafah — about 9 miles (15 kilometers) from the Kibbutz — days earlier, and she immediately gravitated toward his troops, not leaving their side. It might have been because Billie heard them speaking Hebrew, he told them.

Speaking to Israeli television, reserve soldier Aviad Shapira said he found Billie among the rubble and called out to her. "I said 'shalom' and she jumped on me," he said.

He had a feeling that she didn't belong in Gaza and that there was a story behind her, Shapira said. He brought the dog to a veterinarian and found the family's contact information on a chip inside the animal.

Stroking Billie on her lap, Dancyg says it will take time to see how the odyssey has affected her. Billie appears happy to be home, but she seems disoriented and has lost weight, Dancyg said.

While Israeli media happily reported Billie's return, the Nir Oz community reminded people not to forget what the family went through. In a Facebook post, the kibbutz called the reunion a "little light in a lot of sorrow."

The body of Dancyg's ex-husband, Alex, 76, was recovered by the army and returned in August. The body of her brother Itzhak Elgarat, 68, was returned earlier this year as part of a ceasefire.

For Dancyg, Billie's return gives her some sense of closure. Yet she said it is bittersweet knowing there are hostages still in Gaza.

"I can't get out of this trauma as long as they are there," she said.

## Maryland Sen. Van Hollen meets with El Salvador's vice president in push for Abrego Garcia's release

By YOLANDA MAGAÑA, MARY CLARE JALONICK and MATT BROWN Associated Press

SAN SALVADOR (AP) — Maryland Sen. Chris Van Hollen traveled to El Salvador on Wednesday and met with the country's vice president to push for the release of Kilmar Abrego Garcia, a man who was sent there by the Trump administration in March despite an immigration court order preventing his deportation.

Van Hollen said at a news conference in San Salvador that Vice President Félix Ulloa said his government could not return Abrego Garcia to the United States and declined to allow Van Hollen to visit him in the notorious gang prison where he is being held.

"Why is the government of El Salvador continuing to imprison a man where they have no evidence that he's committed any crime and they have not been provided any evidence from the United States that he has committed any crime?" Van Hollen told reporters after the meeting. "They should just let him go."

Van Hollen's trip became a flashpoint in the U.S. The Trump administration sharply criticized it, while Democrats have rallied around Abrego Garcia.

President Donald Trump and Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele said this week that they have no basis to send him back, even as the U.S. Supreme Court has called on the administration to facilitate his return.

Trump officials have said that Abrego Garcia, a Salvadoran citizen who was living in Maryland, has ties to the MS-13 gang, but his attorneys say the government has provided no evidence of that and Abrego

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Garcia has never been charged with any crime related to such activity.

"We have an unjust situation here," said Van Hollen, a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. "The Trump administration is lying about Abrego Garcia. The American courts have looked at the facts."

Trump officials reiterated Wednesday that he would not be returned to the United States. White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt held a press briefing with the mother of a Maryland woman, Rachel Morin, who was killed by a fugitive from El Salvador in 2023.

"It's appalling and sad that Sen. Van Hollen and the Democrats applauding his trip to El Salvador today are incapable of having any shred of common sense or empathy for their own constituents and our citizens," Leavitt said at the briefing.

Republicans have focused on the victims of crime committed by people in the U.S. illegally in arguing for Trump's promised immigration crackdown and mass deportations.

Democrats, meanwhile, have seized on the case to highlight what they say is Trump's disrespect for the courts and as base voters have encouraged them to fight harder against Trump's policies. New Jersey Sen. Cory Booker, D-N.J., is also considering a trip to El Salvador, as are some House Democrats.

"This is a constitutional crisis," said Rep. Robert Garcia, D-Calif., one of the Democrats who is considering a trip. "This is not just about a deportation policy. This is about defying the Constitution and the Supreme Court."

Garcia sent a joint letter with Rep. Maxwell Frost, D-Fla., to House Oversight Committee Chair James Comer, R-Ky., requesting a congressional delegation to travel to El Salvador to investigate Abrego Garcia's condition. Garcia said if the trip isn't approved, some Democrats still plan to travel to the Central American nation.

"We need to bring attention to this case. We need to be in El Salvador. We need to work with the family. We need to work with the Salvadoran government. We need to pressure the White House to do the right thing," Garcia said.

Rep. Yassamin Ansari, an Arizona Democrat, wrote in a Wednesday statement that she plans to travel to El Salvador to support Abrego Garcia's return.

"My parents fled an authoritarian regime in Iran where people 'disappeared' — I refuse to sit back and watch it happen here, too," wrote Ansari, who is Iranian American and the youngest woman in Congress.

Trump officials renewed their claims that Abrego Garcia was a gang member.

Tom Homan, Trump's border czar, said on Fox News' "Fox & Friends" that he is "disgusted that any congressional representative is going to run to El Salvador."

"We got rid of a dangerous person, an El Salvadoran national was returned to the country of El Salvador, so he is home," Homan said.

Some Republicans have visited the prison as well in support of the Trump administration's efforts. Rep. Riley Moore, a West Virginia Republican, posted Tuesday evening that he'd visited the prison where Abrego Garcia is being held. He did not mention Abrego Garcia but said the facility "houses the country's most brutal criminals."

"I leave now even more determined to support President Trump's efforts to secure our homeland," Moore wrote on social media.

Republican Rep. Jason Smith of Missouri, the chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, also visited the prison. He posted on X that "thanks to President Trump" the facility "now includes illegal immigrants who broke into our country and committed violent acts against Americans."

The fight over Abrego Garcia has also played out in contentious court filings, with repeated refusals from the government to tell a judge what it plans to do, if anything, to repatriate him. The Trump administration has called his deportation a mistake but also has argued, essentially, that its conclusion about Abrego Garcia's affiliation makes him ineligible for protection from the courts.

Since March, El Salvador has accepted from the U.S. more than 200 Venezuelan immigrants — whom Trump administration officials have accused of gang activity and violent crimes — and placed them inside the country's maximum-security gang prison just outside of San Salvador. That prison is part of Bukele's

broader effort to crack down on the country's powerful street gangs, which has put 84,000 people behind bars and made Bukele extremely popular at home.

Human rights groups have previously accused Bukele's government of subjecting those jailed to "systematic use of torture and other mistreatment." Officials there deny wrongdoing.

Van Hollen said after his meeting that Abrego Garcia was "illegally abducted from the United States and committed no crime."

"I will keep pressing in my remaining time here and I will keep pressing beyond that," Van Hollen said.

## Judge finds cause to hold Trump administration in criminal contempt for violating deportation order

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and MICHAEL KUNZELMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal judge on Wednesday said he has found probable cause to hold the Trump administration in criminal contempt of court and warned he could seek officials' prosecution for violating his orders last month to turn around planes carrying deportees to an El Salvador prison.

The ruling from U.S. District Judge James E. Boasberg, whom President Donald Trump has said should be impeached, marks a dramatic battle between the judicial and executive branches of government over the president's powers to carry out key White House priorities.

Boasberg accused administration officials of rushing deportees out of the country under the Alien Enemies Act last month before they could challenge their removal in court, and then willfully disregarding his order that planes already in the air should return to the United States.

The judge said he could hold hearings and potentially refer the matter for prosecution if the administration does not act to remedy the violation. If Trump's Justice Department leadership declines to prosecute the matter, Boasberg said he will appoint another attorney to do so.

"The Constitution does not tolerate willful disobedience of judicial orders — especially by officials of a coordinate branch who have sworn an oath to uphold it," wrote Boasberg, the chief judge of Washington's federal court.

The administration said it would appeal.

"The President is 100% committed to ensuring that terrorists and criminal illegal migrants are no longer a threat to Americans and their communities across the country," White House communications director Steven Cheung wrote in a post on X.

The case has become one of the most contentious amid a slew of legal battles being waged against the Republican administration that has put the White House on a collision course with the federal courts.

Administration officials have repeatedly criticized judges for reigning in the president's actions, accusing the courts of improperly impinging on his executive powers. Trump and his allies have called for impeaching Boasberg, prompting a rare statement from Chief Justice John Roberts, who said "impeachment is not an appropriate response to disagreement concerning a judicial decision."

Boasberg wrote that the government's "conduct betrayed a desire to outrun the equitable reach of the Judiciary."

Boasberg said the government could avoid contempt proceedings if it takes custody of the deportees, who were sent to the El Salvador prison in violation of his order, so they have a chance to challenge their removal. It was not clear how that would work because the judge said the government "would not need to release any of those individuals, nor would it need to transport them back to the homeland."

The judge did not say which official or officials could be held in contempt. He is giving the government until April 23 to explain the steps it has taken to remedy the violation, or instead identify the individual or people who made the decision not to turn the planes around.

In a separate case, the administration has acknowledged mistakenly deporting Kilmar Abrego Garcia to the El Salvador prison, but does not intend to return him to the U.S. despite a Supreme Court ruling that the administration must "facilitate" his release. The judge in that case has said she is determining whether to undertake contempt proceedings, saying officials "appear to have done nothing to aid in Abrego Garcia's



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release from custody and return to the United States.”

Boasberg, who was nominated for the federal bench by Democratic President Barack Obama, had ordered the administration last month not to deport anyone in its custody under the Alien Enemies Act after Trump invoked the 1798 wartime law over what he claimed was an invasion by the Venezuelan gang Tren de Aragua.

When Boasberg was told there were already planes in the air headed to El Salvador, which has agreed to house deported migrants in a notorious prison, the judge said the aircraft needed to be returned to the United States. But hours later, El Salvador’s president, Nayib Bukele, announced that the deportees had arrived in his country. In a social media post, he said, “Oopsie...too late” above an article referencing Boasberg’s order.

The administration has argued it did not violate any orders, noted the judge did not include the turn-around directive in his written order and said the planes had already left the U.S. by the time that order came down.

The Supreme Court earlier this month vacated Boasberg’s temporary order blocking the deportations under the Alien Enemies Act, but said the immigrants must be given a chance to fight their removals before they are deported. The conservative majority said the legal challenges must take place in Texas, instead of a Washington courtroom.

Boasberg wrote that even though the Supreme Court found his order “suffered from a legal defect,” that “does not excuse the Government’s violation.” The judge added that the government appeared to have “defied the Court’s order deliberately and gleefully,” noting that Secretary of State Marco Rubio retweeted the post from Bukele after the planes landed in El Salvador despite the judge’s order.

“The Court does not reach such conclusion lightly or hastily; indeed, it has given Defendants ample opportunity to rectify or explain their actions. None of their responses has been satisfactory,” Boasberg wrote.

## **9 jurors picked as Weinstein’s lawyers seek to move him from jail to hospital during #MeToo retrial**

By MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Nine jurors were picked Wednesday on the second day of jury selection in Harvey Weinstein’s #MeToo rape retrial.

At the same time, the disgraced movie mogul’s lawyers asked a judge to allow him to spend his nights at a New York City hospital instead of jail for the duration of the trial, citing his many health issues including cancer and problems walking that require the use of a wheelchair to get in and out of court.

The jurors — five women and four men — were picked from a group of 25 prospective jurors who spent the past two days answering questions from prosecutors and Weinstein’s lawyers to gauge their ability to be impartial. They are the first jurors picked after none were chosen on Tuesday.

Jury selection will resume Thursday with a fresh group of about 80 prospective jurors to begin the screening process anew. Judge Curtis Farber has said a total of 12 jurors and six alternates will be picked.

The prosecution and defense each used seven of their allotted 15 peremptory challenges to reject potential jurors on Wednesday, leaving eight per side.

Two other candidates were removed from consideration by the judge. One had expressed dismay about the justice system and complained that wealthy people avoid culpability for wrongdoing. Another initially indicated he could be fair but then returned to the courtroom and said he didn’t think he could.

“Defense counsel asked my reaction to the defendant’s name and the first word that came in my head was ‘pig,’” said the man, who works as an investment banker. “And I apologize, but I feel a great sense of responsibility as a citizen and I take this stuff seriously.”

Weinstein, 73, has pleaded not guilty and denies raping or sexually assaulting anyone.

He leaned back in his wheelchair, peering at prospective jurors as they answered questions that touched on everything from their impressions of #MeToo — a movement spawned by scores of allegations in 2017 against the ex-studio boss — to what they like to do in their spare time.

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An accounting consultant rejected by the prosecution said he had “negative feelings” about the movement because his high school classmates had been wrongly accused of sexual assault. A lawyer who works in cryptocurrency compliance countered that “not enough has been done” as a result of #MeToo. She was rejected by Weinstein’s side.

In seeking to relocate Weinstein for the trial, his lawyers argued that his stay at the city’s notorious Rikers Island jail complex is exacerbating his health issues and that he’d be better off in the prison ward at Bellevue Hospital in Manhattan. Weinstein has been back and forth numerous times to Bellevue in recent months for treatment of various maladies.

The Oscar-winning producer has numerous health conditions, including chronic myeloid leukemia, heart issues, diabetes, sleep apnea and sciatica. A recent tongue infection was misdiagnosed at Rikers, requiring that Weinstein be hospitalized, and he has gained nearly 20 pounds (9 kilograms) in the past month, his lawyer Imran Ansari said.

Weinstein’s lawyers filed a legal claim against the city in November, alleging he was receiving substandard medical treatment in unhygienic conditions at Rikers. The claim, which seeks \$5 million in damages, argues that Weinstein has been returned to Rikers each time before fully recovering at the hospital.

“Because of this mistreatment, he has been worn down considerably health wise, and now faces the stress of trial in this condition, which may very well lead to serious health complications, even death,” Ansari said Wednesday in a statement.

Rikers has faced growing scrutiny for its mistreatment of detainees and dangerous conditions. Last year, a judge cleared the way for a possible federal takeover, finding inmates were in “unconstitutional danger.”

Farber has yet to rule on the transfer request, and the issue wasn’t discussed in court Wednesday.

Weinstein is being tried again after New York’s highest court last year overturned his 2020 conviction and 23-year prison sentence, finding his trial had been tainted by improper rulings and prejudicial testimony.

He is being retried on two charges. He’s accused of raping an aspiring actor in a Manhattan hotel room in 2013 and a criminal sex act by forcing oral sex on a movie and TV production assistant in 2006.

He is also charged with another count of criminal sex act based on an allegation from a woman who was not a part of the original trial. That woman, who has asked not to be named publicly, alleges that Weinstein forced oral sex on her at a Manhattan hotel.

## What happens next after judge warns of possible contempt prosecution over deportation flights order

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER, MARK SHERMAN and MICHAEL KUNZELMAN undefined

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal judge’s ruling that the Trump administration appears to have willfully violated his order to turn around planes of migrants headed for El Salvador increases the prospect of officials being held in criminal contempt of court and potentially facing possible prosecution.

U.S. District Judge James Boasberg said in his ruling on Wednesday that probable cause exists to hold the administration in contempt over its defiance of his order in the case involving migrants sent to a notorious El Salvador prison. The judge is giving the administration a chance to remedy the violation first before moving forward with such an action.

The White House says it’s planning to appeal.

It’s the latest standoff between the administration and the judiciary, which has blocked a slew of President Donald Trump’s sweeping executive actions around immigration and other matters.

Here’s what to know about the judge’s ruling, contempt of court and what happens next:

The judge’s order and the administration’s violation

The case stems from Trump’s invocation of a 1798 wartime law, the Alien Enemies Act, to deport Venezuelan migrants it accuses of being gang members. During an emergency hearing last month after several migrants sued, Boasberg had ordered the administration not to deport anyone in its custody under the act.

When told there were already planes in the air headed to El Salvador, which has agreed to house de-

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ported migrants in a notorious prison, the judge said the aircraft needed to be returned to the United States. That didn't happen.

Hours later, El Salvador's president, Nayib Bukele, announced that the deportees had arrived in his country. In a social media post, he said, "Oopsie...too late" above an article referencing Boasberg's order.

The Justice Department has argued the judge's order didn't apply to planes that had already left U.S. airspace by the time his command came down.

Boasberg said the government's "actions on that day demonstrate a willful disregard for its Order." Even though the Supreme Court earlier this month vacated Boasberg's ruling that blocked the deportations, the judge said that does not "excuse the government's violation."

Judge warns of possible contempt of court prosecution

Boasberg said the administration can avoid contempt proceedings if it attempts to remedy the violation by retaking custody of the deportees, who were sent to the El Salvador prison in violation of his order, so they have a chance to challenge their removal. The judge wrote that the government "would not need to release any of those individuals, nor would it need to transport them back to the homeland," but it's unclear how that would work.

Boasberg said if the administration chooses not to remedy the violation, he will move forward with trying to identify the official or officials who made the decision not to turn the planes around. The judge said he would start by asking the government to submit written declarations in court, but he could turn to hearings with live witnesses under oath or depositions.

Then, he could refer the matter for prosecution. Since Trump's Justice Department leadership would almost certainly opt not to bring a case, the judge said he would appoint another attorney to prosecute the contempt case should the government decline to do so.

Rory Little, a law professor of constitutional law at UC Law San Francisco, believes the government could easily avoid a contempt finding.

"Boasberg doesn't suggest it, but if they put those 200 people back on a plane and brought them back, that would purge the contempt for sure. It's just that we don't think Trump's going to do that," Little said.

Little said Boasberg suggested a "much less intrusive method" for the administration to comply with his order.

"He is being as careful as he can be to avoid the face-to-face, ugly confrontation that we all think must be coming sooner or later," he said.

The administration could also be facing possible contempt of court in another case involving Kilmar Abrego Garcia, a Maryland man whom the administration has acknowledged was mistakenly sent to the El Salvador prison. The judge in that case has said she is determining whether to undertake contempt proceedings, saying officials "appear to have done nothing to aid in Abrego Garcia's release from custody and return to the United States" despite a Supreme Court ruling that the administration must "facilitate" his release.

Criminal contempt cases are rare

Judges have been willing to hold officials and agencies in contempt for failing to abide by rulings, even occasionally seeking to impose fines and imprisonment. But higher courts have almost always overturned them, Yale law professor Nicholas Parrillo wrote in a 2018 Harvard Law Review article that surveyed thousands of cases and turned up 82 contempt findings by federal judges since the end of World War II.

In a long-running dispute over money, the federal government holds in trust for Native American tribes, U.S. District Judge Royce Lamberth held interior secretaries Gale Norton, a Republican, in 2002, and Bruce Babbitt, a Democrat, in 1999, in contempt and twice ordered the Interior Department to disconnect its computers.

The federal appeals court in Washington overturned the contempt charge against Norton and finally removed Lamberth from the case in 2006.

Even without sanctions, though, contempt findings "have a shaming effect that gives them substantial if imperfect deterrent power," Parrillo wrote. But he acknowledged that the potency of contempt rests on the widely shared view that officials comply with court orders.



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In 1987, a divided Supreme Court ruled that district court judges have the authority to appoint private attorneys to prosecute criminal contempt actions. Justice Antonin Scalia, who disagreed with the majority decision, concluded that the courts don't have the power to appoint attorneys to conduct contempt prosecutions.

Stanford Law School professor Robert Weisberg, who teaches criminal procedure, said Boasberg's claim that the government flagrantly violated his order is "very convincing."

"This looks so sound to me that I think it will be difficult to win a reversal, which means we may have a standoff," he said.

Weisberg said he is concerned that the showdown between the judge and administration could move the government even closer to a constitutional crisis.

"I'm supposed to say, because everybody else does, that we have to be careful about using the term 'constitutional crisis.' It means too many things, it's overused," he said. "That aside, what the country has been waiting for ... some with happy anticipation, is for a flat-out refusal to obey a legal court order. This is pretty close."

## US stocks drop as Nvidia slides and the fog of Trump's trade war thickens

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — U.S. stocks fell Wednesday after Nvidia warned new restrictions on exports to China will chisel billions of dollars off its results, while companies around the world said President Donald Trump's trade war is clouding forecasts for how they and the economy will do this year.

The S&P 500 sank 2.2% after falling as much as 3.3% earlier. Such an amount would have vied for one of its worst losses in years before the historic, chaotic swings that have upended Wall Street in recent weeks.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 699 points, or 1.7%, and the Nasdaq composite sank a market-leading 3.1%.

Losses accelerated after the head of the Federal Reserve said again that Trump's tariffs appear to be bigger than it expected, which could in turn slow the economy and raise inflation more than it had earlier thought. But Jerome Powell also said again that the Fed will need more time before deciding whether to lower interest rates, which could help the economy but make inflation worse, or to do the opposite.

"All of this is highly uncertain," Powell said. "We're thinking now, really before the tariffs have their effects, (about) how they might affect the economy. That's why we're waiting really to see what the policies ultimately are, and then we can make a better assessment of what the economic effects will be."

Some companies are already seeing big effects because of changes from Washington.

Nvidia dropped 6.9% after it said the U.S. government is restricting exports of its H20 chips to China, citing worries that they could be used to build a supercomputer. The restrictions could mean a hit of \$5.5 billion to Nvidia's results for the first quarter, covering charges related to inventory and purchase commitments.

Advanced Micro Devices sank 7.3% after it said U.S. limits on exports to China for its own chips may mean a hit of up to \$800 million for inventory and other charges.

In Amsterdam, ASML's stock sank 5.2%. The Dutch company, whose machinery makes chips, said demand for artificial-intelligence technology is continuing to drive growth. "However, the recent tariff announcements have increased uncertainty in the macro environment and the situation will remain dynamic for a while," CEO Christophe Fouquet said.

The uncertainty around Trump's trade war has been scrambling plans for companies across industries and around the world. It's so dynamic that United Airlines gave two different financial forecasts for how it may perform this year, one if there's a recession and one if not.

The airline said it made the unusual move to give twin forecasts because it believes it's "impossible to predict this year with any degree of confidence."

United's stock finished roughly flat even though it reported a stronger profit for the latest quarter than analysts expected.

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Many investors are bracing for a possible recession because of Trump's tariffs, which he has said he hopes will bring manufacturing jobs back to the United States and trim how much more it imports from other countries than it exports. A survey of global fund managers by Bank of America found expectations for recession are at the fourth-highest level in the last 20 years.

The World Trade Organization said Wednesday it expects tariffs to cause a 0.2% decline in the volume of world merchandise trade for 2025. That's if the tariff situation remains as it was on Monday. Trade could shrink by 1.5% this year if conditions worsen, the WTO said.

The "enduring uncertainty threatens to act as a brake on global growth, with severe negative consequences for the world, the most vulnerable economies in particular," Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala said.

One U.S. company that moves products around the continent, J.B. Hunt Transport Services, tumbled 7.7% for one of Wall Street's sharper losses, even though it reported slightly stronger profit for the latest quarter than analysts expected.

All told, the S&P 500 fell 120.93 points to 5,275.70. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 699.57 to 39,669.39, and the Nasdaq composite sank 516.01 to 16,307.16.

Tariffs could also drive up inflation, at least temporarily, by pushing U.S. importers to pass along the higher costs to their customers.

Fears about such price hikes drove a spending binge last month, and sales at U.S. retailers accelerated by more than economists expected. Economists said much of that was likely because of U.S. shoppers rushing to buy automobiles, electronics and other items before their prices could rise due to possible tariffs.

Recent surveys have shown U.S. households are feeling more pessimistic about the economy because of tariffs, and a fear is that it could lead them to pull back on their spending eventually, which could cause a recession by itself.

Treasury yields eased in the bond market, taking a leg lower following the comments from the Fed's chair. The yield on the 10-year Treasury fell to 4.28% from 4.35% late Tuesday and from 4.48% at the end of last week.

It's another notable move for the bond market and somewhat of a return to form after an unusual rise in yields last week rattled investors and Trump.

Treasury yields typically fall when investors are worried about the economy, and last week's climb raised concerns that the trade war may be causing investors to second-guess the reputation of U.S. government bonds as one of the world's safest possible investments.

In stock markets abroad, indexes fell across much of Asia and were mixed in Europe.

Stocks dropped 1.9% in Hong Kong, 1% in Tokyo, 1.2% in Seoul and 0.1% in Paris.

The FTSE 100 rose 0.3% in London after the government said inflation in the U.K. fell for the second month running in March, largely as a result of lower gas prices.

## Health secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. says US autism cases are climbing at an 'alarming rate'

By AMANDA SEITZ Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Health secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. warned that children in the U.S. are being diagnosed with autism at an "alarming rate," promising on Wednesday to conduct exhaustive studies to identify any environmental factors that may cause the developmental disorder.

His call comes the day after the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released a report that found an estimated 1 in 31 U.S. children have autism, a marked increase from 2020.

Autism experts applaud efforts to further understand the condition, but say the number of reported cases began to balloon as the definition of the condition expanded to include mild cases.

"Autism destroys families," Kennedy said. "More importantly, it destroys our greatest resource, which is our children. These are children who should not be suffering like this."

Kennedy described autism as a "preventable disease," although researchers and scientists have identi-

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fied genetic factors that are associated with it. Autism is not considered a disease, but a complex disorder that affects the brain. Cases range widely in severity, with symptoms that can include delays in language, learning, and social or emotional skills. Some autistic traits can go unnoticed well into adulthood.

Those who have spent decades researching autism have found no single cause. Besides genetics, scientists have identified various possible factors, including the age of a child's father, the mother's weight, and whether she had diabetes or was exposed to certain chemicals.

Kennedy said his wide-ranging plan to determine the cause of autism will look at all of those environmental factors, and others. He had previously set a September deadline for determining what causes autism, but said Wednesday that by then, his department will determine at least "some" of the answers.

The effort will involve issuing grants to universities and researchers, Kennedy said. He said the researchers will be encouraged to "follow the science, no matter what it says."

The Trump administration has recently canceled billions of dollars in grants for health and science research sent to universities.

The CDC's latest autism 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.

On Wednesday, Kennedy criticized theories that the rise in autism cases can be attributed to more awareness about the disorder. Autism researchers have cited heightened awareness, as well as medical advancements and increased diagnoses of mild cases.

"The reasons for increases in autism diagnosis come down to scientific and health care progress," said Annette Estes, director of the autism center at the University of Washington. "It's hard for many people to understand this because the causes of autism are complex."

The Autism Science Foundation said Kennedy's emphasis on environmental factors contradicted the findings in the CDC's report.

"This report is the most convincing evidence yet that changes in factors like access to services and de-stigmatization of (autism spectrum disorders) are leading to the increases in prevalence," said Autism Science Foundation Chief Science Officer Dr. Alycia Halladay.

## Trump administration sues Maine over participation of transgender athletes in girls sports

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER, ERIC TUCKER and PATRICK WHITTLE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration on Wednesday sued Maine for not complying with the government's push to ban transgender athletes in girls and women's sports, escalating a dispute over whether the state is abiding by a federal law that bars discrimination in education based on sex.

The lawsuit follows weeks of feuding between the Republican administration and Democratic Gov. Janet Mills that has led to threats to cut off crucial federal funding and a clash at the White House when she told President Donald Trump: "We'll see you in court."

The political overtones of the moment were clear, with Attorney General Pam Bondi — and one of the athletes who joined her on stage at the Justice Department — citing the matter as a priority for Trump. Bondi said other states, including Minnesota and California, could be sued as well.

"President Trump, before he was elected, this has been a huge issue for him," Bondi said. "Pretty simple: girls play in girls' sports, boys play in boys' sports. Men play in men's sports, women play in women's sports."

Trump campaigned against the participation of transgender athletes in sports in his 2024 race. As president, he has signed executive orders to prohibit that and to use a rigid definition of the sexes, rather than gender, for federal government purposes. The orders are being challenged in court.



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Trump's departments of Education and Health and Human Services have said Maine's education agency is violating the federal Title IX antidiscrimination law by allowing transgender girls to participate on girls teams. The Justice Department is asking the court to order the state to direct all schools to prohibit the participation of males in athletic competition designated for females.

Maine officials have refused to agree with a settlement that would have banned transgender students from sports, arguing that the law does not prevent schools from letting transgender athletes participate. Mills said Wednesday that the lawsuit was expected and is part of a pressure campaign by Washington to force Maine to ignore its own human rights laws.

"This matter has never been about school sports or the protection of women and girls, as has been claimed, it is about states rights and defending the rule of law against a federal government bent on imposing its will, instead of upholding the law," Mills said in a statement.

Maine's attorney general, Aaron Frey, said Wednesday he is confident Maine is acting in accordance with state and federal law.

"Our position is further bolstered by the complete lack of any legal citation supporting the Administration's position in its own complaint," he said in a statement. "While the President issued an executive order that reflects his own interpretation of the law, anyone with the most basic understanding of American civics understands the president does not create law nor interpret law."

The government's complaint cites as examples the case of a transgender athlete who in February won first place in pole vault at a Maine indoor track and field meet and a transgender athlete who last year began competing in female cross country races in the state and placed first in a girl's 5K run.

The lawsuit reflects a stark philosophical turnabout from the position on gender identity issues taken during Democratic administrations.

Under President Joe Biden, the government tried to extend civil rights policies to protect transgender people. In 2016, the Justice Department, then led by Attorney General Loretta Lynch, sued North Carolina over a law that required transgender people to use public restrooms and showers that corresponded the gender on their birth certificate.

Trump signed an executive order in February, "Keeping Men Out of Women's Sports," that gave federal agencies wide latitude to ensure entities that receive federal funding abide by Title IX in alignment with his administration's interpretation of "sex" as the gender someone was assigned at birth.

Bondi was joined at the news conference by former University of Kentucky swimmer Riley Gaines, who has emerged as a public face of the opposition to transgender athletes. Gaines tied with a transgender athlete for fifth place in a 2022 NCAA championship and has testified before lawmakers across the country on the issue. She and others frame the issue as women's rights.

During a February meeting with governors, Trump threatened to pull federal funding from Maine if the state did not comply with his executive order. Mills responded: "We'll see you in court."

Maine sued the administration this month after the Department of Agriculture said it was pausing some money for the state's educational programs because of what the administration contended was Maine's failure to comply with the Title IX law. A federal judge on Friday ordered the administration to unfreeze funds intended for a Maine child nutrition program.

Questions over the rights of transgender people have become a major political issue in the past five years. Twenty-six states have laws or policies barring transgender girls from girls school sports. GOP-controlled states have also been banning gender-affirming health care for transgender minors and restricting bathroom use in schools and sometimes other public buildings.

## **Nora Aunor, an actor among the Philippines' biggest stars, dies at 71**

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — Nora Aunor, who became one of the biggest stars of Philippine cinema during a career that spanned seven decades, has died.

Aunor died Wednesday, according to social media posts from her children. She was 71. No further details on the cause or place of her death were immediately given.

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Filipina actor Lotlot de León said on Instagram that her mother “touched generations with her unmatched talent, grace, and passion for the craft. Her voice, presence, and artistry shaped a legacy that will never fade.”

De León said funeral plans and other details will be shared later.

Aunor, born Nora Cabaltera Villamayor to an impoverished family in eastern Camarines Sur province, sold water in a train station in her hometown in her youth. She first gained fame in her teens as a singer in the 1960s before moving on to movies. She amassed more than 200 credits in film and television that included many classics of Philippine cinema, and won dozens of acting awards.

Memorable roles included 1976’s “Tatlong Taong Walang Diyos” (“Three Years Without God”), 1984’s “Bulaklak sa City Jail” (“Flowers of the City Jail”) and 1995’s “The Flor Contemplacion Story.”

She swept best actress awards in the country for her performance in 1990’s “Andrea, Paano ba ang Maging Isang Ina?” (“Andrea, What is It Like to be a Mother?”) and won best actress at the Asian Film Awards for her portrayal of a midwife in 2012’s “Thy Womb.”

Aunor was still acting as recently as last year, starring in the film “Mananambal” (“The Healer”) and appearing on the TV series “Lilet Matias, Attorney-at-Law.”

Aunor was named a National Artist for Film and Broadcast Arts — the country’s biggest honor for actors — in 2022. In 2014, then-President Benigno Aquino III had denied her the honor because of a previous drug arrest in the U.S., provoking broad outcry.

Aunor’s lawyer said the 2005 arrest at the Los Angeles airport came because of a pipe found in a bag she did not pack, noting she was traveling with four assistants at the time. The charges were dropped in 2007 after she completed a diversion program, her lawyer said in 2014.

Aunor was married to actor Christopher de León from 1975 until 1996.

She is survived by their children Lotlet, Ian, Matet, Kiko and Kenneth de León.

## Tatooine-like planet outside the solar system may orbit two failed stars, scientists say

By ADITHI RAMAKRISHNAN AP Science Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — A new Tatooine-like planet outside the solar system may orbit two failed stars, scientists reported Wednesday.

Located about 120 light years away, the exoplanet appears to take an unusual path around two brown dwarfs, whipping around at a right angle. Brown dwarfs are sometimes called failed stars because they’re lighter than stars, but heavier than gas giant planets. A light year is nearly 6 trillion miles.

The brown dwarf pair was first spotted years ago. Scientists noticed that the twins eclipse each other so one is always partly blocked when seen from Earth.

In a new analysis, researchers found that the brown dwarfs’ motion was changing — a quirk that’s less likely to happen if they circled each other on their own. The research was published in the journal Science Advances.

Scientists know of over a dozen planets that orbit two stars like the fictional “Star Wars” scorching desert planet Tatooine with double sunsets that Luke Skywalker calls home.

The new planet’s odd orbit sets it apart. But it hasn’t been directly spied, and scientists say more research is needed to be sure it’s out there and figure out its mass and orbit.

“I wouldn’t bet my life that the planet exists yet,” said Simon Albrecht, an astrophysicist with Aarhus University who had no role in the new study.

Probing these wacky celestial bodies can help us understand how conditions beyond our solar system may yield planets vastly different from our own, said study author Thomas Baycroft with the University of Birmingham.

Planets circling twin stars “existed in sci-fi for decades before we knew that they could even really exist in reality,” he said.

## Student accused in Dallas school shooting walked toward group in hall and opened fire, injuring 4

By JAMIE STENGLE Associated Press

DALLAS (AP) — The student accused of injuring four in a shooting at a Dallas high school was let into the building through an unsecured door and then walked down a hallway toward a group of students, opening fire on them and then appearing to take a point-blank shot at one, according to an arrest warrant released Wednesday.

The 17-year-old suspect was being held in Dallas County jail on Wednesday on a charge of aggravated assault mass shooting. He was taken into custody several hours after the shooting, which happened just after 1 p.m. on Tuesday at Wilmer-Hutchins High School.

Four male students were injured in the shooting and taken to hospitals, according to authorities. By Wednesday, two had been discharged and two remained hospitalized for observation but were expected to recover, the Dallas Fire-Rescue Department said.

Three of those injured were between the ages of 15 to 18 and were shot, according to Dallas Fire-Rescue. A fourth person whose age was unknown had an injury that Dallas Fire-Rescue said could only be identified as a "musculoskeletal injury" to the lower body.

Dallas Fire-Rescue said Wednesday that a fifth person — a 14-year-old female — was later taken to the hospital for anxiety-related symptoms. She had not been shot.

The shooting drew a large number of police and other law enforcement agents to the roughly 1,000-student campus.

School surveillance camera footage showed that an unidentified student let the suspect in through an unsecured door prior to the shooting, according to the arrest warrant. The arrest warrant said that after spotting the group of students in the hallway, he displayed a firearm and began firing "indiscriminately" before approaching a student who was not able to run and walking toward that student and appearing to take a point-blank shot.

Christina Smith, assistant police chief for the Dallas Independent School District, said during a Tuesday news conference that she did not have any information on what led to the shooting.

Smith said the gun didn't come into the school during "regular intake time." She said "it was not a failure of our staff, of our protocols, or of the machinery that we have." But she said she could not elaborate on that.

Dallas school district officials did not immediately respond to an email or call from The Associated Press seeking additional information on Wednesday.

Stephanie Elizalde, the school district's superintendent, said at the Tuesday news conference that there would be no school at the high school for the rest of the week. But she added that counselors would be available to students.

The suspect's bond was set at \$600,000. Jail records did not list an attorney for him.

At the same school last April, one student shot another in the leg.

## Powell says Federal Reserve can wait on any interest rate moves

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Federal Reserve can stay patient and wait to see how tariffs and other economic policies of the Trump administration play out before making any changes to interest rates, Chair Jerome Powell said Wednesday.

"As that great Chicagoan Ferris Bueller once noted, 'Life moves pretty fast,'" Powell said in a speech to the Economic Club of Chicago. "For the time being, we are well positioned to wait for greater clarity" on the impact of policy changes in areas such as immigration, taxation, regulation, and tariffs, Powell said.

The sharp volatility in financial markets since President Donald Trump announced sweeping tariffs April 2, only to put most of them on hold a week later, has led to speculation about whether the Fed would



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soon cut its key interest rate or take other steps to calm investors. Yet the Fed is unlikely to intervene unless there is a breakdown in the market for Treasury securities or other malfunctions, economists say.

Stocks fell further after Powell's remarks. The broad S&P 500 index dropped more than 2% in afternoon trading.

In his prepared remarks, Powell reiterated that the Trump administration's tariffs are "significantly larger than anticipated."

"The same is likely to be true of the economic effects, which will include higher inflation and slower growth," he said.

Powell also said that the Fed could face threats to both of the mandates it's been given by Congress: To achieve maximum employment and maintain stable prices. Should both inflation and unemployment rise, that would be a "challenging scenario," he said, because the Fed would essentially have to choose whether to keep interest rates high to fight inflation, or cut them to spur growth and hiring.

"Our tool only does one of those two things at the same time," he said in a question-and-answer session.

Powell and many Fed officials have signaled previously that they are more concerned about tariffs pushing inflation higher than their potential hit to growth. That would mean that even if the economy weakened, the Fed might keep rates elevated to combat inflation.

Powell said the inflation from tariffs will likely be temporary, but "could also be more persistent," echoing a concern expressed by a majority of the Fed's 19-member interest rate-setting committee in the minutes of their meeting last month.

Yet some splits among the Fed's interest rate-setting committee have emerged. On Monday, Fed governor Christopher Waller said that he expects the impact of even a large increase in tariffs to be temporary, even if they are left in place for several years. At the same time, he also expects such large duties would weigh on the economy and even threaten a recession.

Should the economy slow sharply, even if inflation remained elevated, Waller said he would support cutting interest rates "sooner, and to a greater extent than I had previously thought."

But other Fed officials, including Neel Kashkari, president of the Fed's Minneapolis branch, have said they are more focused on fighting the effects of higher tariffs on inflation, suggesting they are less likely to support rate cuts anytime soon.

For now, most recent reports suggest the economy is in solid shape. Hiring has been solid and inflation cooled in March. Yet measures of consumer and business confidence have plunged, raising concerns among economists that spending and business investment could weaken.

Powell said he shared those concerns. He said that the increase in tariffs was so large and there is so much uncertainty surrounding the administration's next moves that it could cause companies to become more cautious about spending.

"These are very fundamental changes in long held ... policies in the United States," he said. "The Smoot-Hawley tariffs were actually not this large and they were 95 years ago. So there isn't a modern experience of how to think about this." The Smoot-Hawley tariff in 1930 has been blamed for worsening the Great Depression.

If the uncertainty persists, Powell said, "that would weigh on ... investment, just in general."

## **A boat catches fire in Congo and capsizes, leaving at least 50 people dead, a local official says**

By JEAN-YVES KAMALE Associated Press

KINSHASA, Congo (AP) — A boat has capsized after catching fire in northwestern Congo, leaving at least 50 people dead and hundreds missing, a local official said on Wednesday.

Dozens were saved following the accident on the Congo River late on Tuesday night, many of them with bad burns. The search for the missing was underway Wednesday with rescue teams supported by the Red Cross and provincial authorities.

The motorized wooden boat with about 400 passengers caught fire near the town of Mbandaka, Com-

pétent Loyoko, the river commissioner, told The Associated Press. The boat, HB Kongolo, had left the port of Matankumu for the Bolomba territory.

About 100 survivors were taken to an improvised shelter at the Mbandaka town hall. Those with burn injuries were taken to local hospitals.

The incident began while a woman was cooking on board, Loyoko said. Several passengers, including women and children, died after jumping into the water without being able to swim.

Deadly boat accidents are common in the central African country, where late-night travels and overcrowded vessels are often blamed. Authorities have struggled to enforce maritime regulations.

Congo's rivers are a major means of transport for its more than 100 million people, especially in remote areas where infrastructure is poor or nonexistent.

Hundreds have been killed in boat accidents in recent years as more people abandon the few available roads for wooden vessels packed with passengers and their goods.

## **UK's top court says definition of a woman is based on biological sex and excludes transgender people**

By BRIAN MELLEY, JILL LAWLESS and SYLVIA HUI Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The U.K. Supreme Court ruled Wednesday that a woman is someone born biologically female, excluding transgender people from the legal definition in a long-running dispute between a feminist group and the Scottish government.

The court said the unanimous ruling shouldn't be seen as victory by one side, but several women's groups that supported the appeal celebrated outside court and hailed it as a major win in their effort to protect spaces designated for women.

"Everyone knows what sex is and you can't change it," said Susan Smith, co-director of For Women Scotland, which brought the case. "It's common sense, basic common sense, and the fact that we have been down a rabbit hole where people have tried to deny science and to deny reality, and hopefully this will now see us back to reality."

A unanimous decision

Five judges ruled that the U.K. Equality Act means trans women can be excluded from some groups and single-sex spaces such as changing rooms, homeless shelters, swimming areas and medical or counseling services provided only to women.

The court said the ruling did not remove rights for trans people still protected from discrimination under U.K. law. But it said certain protections should apply only to biological females and not transgender women.

The ruling brings some clarity in the U.K. to an issue that has polarized politics in some other countries, particularly the United States. Republican-controlled states over the last four years have been banning gender-affirming care for minors, barring transgender women and girls from sports competitions that align with their gender and restricting which public bathrooms transgender people can use.

Since returning to office in January, President Donald Trump has signed orders to define the sexes as only male and female and has tried to kick transgender service members out of the military, block federal spending on gender-affirming care for those under 19 and block their sports participation nationally. His efforts are being challenged in court.

The U.K. case stems from a 2018 law passed by the Scottish Parliament saying 50% of the membership of the boards of Scottish public bodies should be women. Transgender women with gender recognition certificates were to be included in meeting the quota.

"Interpreting 'sex' as certificated sex would cut across the definitions of 'man' and 'woman' ... and, thus, the protected characteristic of sex in an incoherent way," Justice Patrick Hodge said in summarizing the case. "It would create heterogeneous groupings."

Trans rights advocates condemn the judgment

The campaign group Scottish Trans said it was "shocked and disappointed" by the ruling, saying it would undermine legal protections for transgender people enshrined in the 2004 Gender Recognition Act.

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Maggie Chapman, a Green Party lawmaker in the Scottish Parliament, said the ruling was “deeply concerning” for human rights and “a huge blow to some of the most marginalized people in our society.”

“Trans people have been cynically targeted and demonized by politicians and large parts of the media for far too long,” she said. “This has contributed to attacks on longstanding rights and attempts to erase their existence altogether.”

Groups that had challenged the Scottish government uncorked a bottle of champagne outside the court and sang, “Women’s rights are human rights.”

“The court has given us the right answer: the protected characteristic of sex — male and female — refers to reality, not to paperwork,” said Maya Forstater of the group Sex Matters. In 2022, an employment tribunal ruled that she had been the victim of discrimination when she lost out on a job after posting gender-critical views online.

The British government welcomed the latest ruling, saying it would provide clarity and confidence for women.

“Single-sex spaces are protected in law and will always be protected by this government,” it said.

Scotland’s semi-autonomous government said it accepted the judgment.

“We will now engage on the implications of the ruling,” First Minister John Swinney posted on X. “Protecting the rights of all will underpin our actions.”

‘One’s bodily reality’

For Women Scotland had argued that the Scottish officials’ 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 sought to overturn that.

“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 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.”

Harry Potter author backed challenge

The women’s rights 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.

Rowling said she was “so proud” of the “extraordinary, tenacious” For Women Scotland campaigners who took the case on a years-long battle through the courts.

Rowling wrote on X that “in winning, they’ve protected the rights of women and girls across the U.K.”

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.



## **The White House is starting a new media policy that restricts wire services' access to the president**

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

The Associated Press says that a new White House media policy violates a court order by giving the administration sole discretion over who gets to question President Donald Trump, and the news agency asked a federal judge on Wednesday to enforce that order.

The swift move was in response to a policy issued late Tuesday by the White House, which suffered a courtroom loss last week over The Associated Press' ability to cover Trump. The plans, the latest attempt by the new administration to control coverage of its activities, sharply curtail the access of three news agencies that serve billions of readers around the world.

The AP filed Wednesday's motion with U.S. District Judge Trevor N. McFadden, asking for relief "given defendant's refusal to obey" his order last week. McFadden said the White House had violated the AP's free speech by banning it from certain presidential events because Trump disagreed with the outlet's decision not to rename the Gulf of Mexico.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt did not immediately return a message seeking comment on Wednesday. Leavitt is a defendant in the AP's lawsuit, along with White House chief of staff Susan Wiles and her deputy, Taylor Budowich.

The AP's lawsuit claimed that its First Amendment rights were violated by the White House blocking its reporters and photographers from covering Trump. McFadden ordered the administration to treat the AP as it does other news organizations.

Reframing who gets access to the president for questions

For many years, the independent White House Correspondents Association has run the pool for the limited space events, and each time it has included reporters from the wire services AP, Reuters and Bloomberg. One print reporter was also allowed, selected on a rotating basis from more than 30 news outlets.

The White House now says it will lump the three wire services with print reporters for two slots — meaning roughly three dozen reporters will rotate for two regular slots. Wire services typically report and write stories that are used by different media outlets around the world.

Even with the rotation, the White House said Trump's press secretary "shall retain day-to-day discretion to determine composition of the pool." The new policy says reporters will also be allowed in "irrespective of the substantive viewpoint expressed by an outlet."

Seeing their own access cut back along with the AP's, representatives from Bloomberg and Thomson Reuters also protested the new policy.

"For decades, the daily presence of the wire services in the press pool has ensured that investors and voters across the United States and around the world can rely on accurate real-time reporting on what the president says and does," said Bloomberg Editor-in-Chief John Micklethwait. "We deeply regret the decision to remove that permanent level of scrutiny and accountability."

In a statement, the AP's Lauren Easton said the outlet was deeply disappointed that rather than restore the AP's access, the White House instead chose restrictions over all of the wire services.

"The wire services represent thousands of news organizations across the U.S. and the world over," said Easton, an AP spokeswoman. "Our coverage is used by local newspapers and television stations in all 50 states to inform their communities."

"The administration's actions continue to disregard the fundamental American freedom to speak without government control or retaliation," Easton said Tuesday night.

The WHCA said the administration's insistence on retaining control over who covers the president shows that it is unwilling to guarantee that it would not continue viewpoint discrimination. "The government should not be able to control the independent media that covers it," said Eugene Daniels, the association's president.

More access for Trump-friendly media

Under Leavitt, the White House has given greater access to news outlets friendly to Trump. That was

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visible Tuesday, when the first reporter Leavitt addressed during a briefing asked two questions while also praising Trump policy.

At Monday's Oval Office meeting, Trump bristled at questions from CNN's Kaitlan Collins about a man deported to an El Salvador prison, at one point accusing CNN of "hating our country." He made it a point to contrast her questions with a non-pointed one from another reporter.

Despite the occasional fireworks, Trump has made himself accessible to the media more than his predecessor, former President Joe Biden. Cramped-quarters events, particularly in the Oval Office, are some of his favorite places to talk — rendering the new access policy all the more impactful.

The new policy advanced on Tuesday did not address access for photographers. At an earlier court hearing about the AP's case, the outlet's chief White House photographer, Evan Vucci, and correspondent Zeke Miller testified about how the ban has hurt the business of a news agency built to quickly get news and images to its customers.

The dispute stems from AP's decision not to follow the president's executive order to rename the Gulf of Mexico, although AP style does cite Trump's wish that it be called the Gulf of America. McFadden agreed with AP's argument that the government cannot punish the news organization for what it says — for exercising its right to free speech.

The White House has argued that press access to the president is a privilege, not a right, that it should control — much like it decides to whom Trump gives one-on-one interviews. In court papers filed last weekend, his lawyers signaled that even with McFadden's decision, the AP's days of unchallenged access to open presidential events were over.

"No other news organization in the United States receives the level of guaranteed access previously bestowed upon the AP," the administration argued. "The AP may have grown accustomed to its favored status, but the Constitution does not require that such status endure in perpetuity."

The administration has appealed McFadden's ruling, and is scheduled to be in an appeals court on Thursday to argue that ruling should be put on hold until the merits of the case are fully decided, perhaps by the U.S. Supreme Court.

The administration has not curtailed AP access to Leavitt's briefings over the past two months. It has blocked access to events in the East Room to White House-credentialed AP reporters — until Tuesday, when one was allowed into an event that involved the Navy football team.

## 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 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.

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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.

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."

## **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 practitioner 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

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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 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, past president of the Infectious Diseases 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

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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."

## **NFL teams are no longer shying away from older prospects in the draft**

By ROB MAADDI AP Pro Football Writer

Bo Nix has already turned 25. Michael Penix Jr. will get there in May.

Both quarterbacks were first-round picks last year. They were among 56 players age 24 or older drafted in 2024.

That number was up from 54 in 2023, 44 in 2022, 16 in 2021 and 19 in 2020.

There have been more older prospects drafted in recent years because the COVID-19 pandemic gave players an option to stay in school an extra year. Even though the window is ending, the transfer portal and NIL deals might continue to keep some players in school longer.

Teams used to shy away from older prospects. Scouts and general managers once considered the age of 24 a red flag in some cases.

But the success of guys like Nix and Jayden Daniels, who turned 24 during an outstanding rookie season, shows that experience can help players make an immediate impact in the pros.

"I came from BYU, where kids go on missions for a couple years, and so people go: 'Well, they're too old,'" Chiefs coach Andy Reid said. "Well, then they come in and they do a pretty good job. So, and really, if you start taking averages of careers, career length, there's maybe a cutoff somewhere, but the careers aren't very long as it is. But we do look at (age), though."

A majority of the older players selected in the draft last year were Day 3 picks, going in the sixth or seventh round. That indicates teams are more likely to overlook age later in the draft.

"It's just unique to where we're at right now in kind of the football world," Raiders general manager John Spytek said. "You got guys with sixth and seventh years really, and so you've got to talk about a value of are we going to have a problem with the 25- or 26-year-old? Some people have more problems with that. I'm just looking for good football players, and I'm trying to impress that upon our scouts, too. Let's just find good football players. We'll figure it out. So I will say it's been really hard on the area scouts."

"You go into these schools like Georgia and Michigan, Ohio State, and they've got a list of 30 guys that can potentially come out. ... I mean it used to just be like here's these 10 juniors, maybe half of them come out. Now it's like, you got a fourth-year, fifth-year senior, and he might take another year. So it adds a lot more names to it and uncertainty and a lot more work that has to get done in a finite amount of time. And that's why the scouts' jobs are so critical to go through all that in an efficient way and present the players the right way. We're relying on it. It's critical to every organization."

The number of older players drafted will decrease this season. There are 46 players age 23 or older who are draft eligible, including 17 who are 24 or older.

Louisville quarterback Tyler Shough, who turns 26 in September, was the oldest player at the scouting combine. He spent seven years at three colleges, including Oregon, where he backed up Justin Herbert in 2019, and Texas Tech.



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Tennessee wide receiver Bru McCoy, San Jose State wideout Nick Nash and Arkansas receiver Andrew Armstrong were among the 24-year-old draft prospects at the combine.

Teams that stick to the old philosophy of avoiding older players limit their talent pool.

"I think sometimes you have to ask yourself, are you trying to get this guy for 12 years? If you're looking for that, it's a small percentage," 49ers general manager John Lynch said. "Or are you looking for one contract and then hopefully more? It's an interesting topic. It's one we constantly discuss. There are pluses and minuses to both sides. Having a young guy that you think you can develop and is already a good player, and then a guy who's a little more battle-tested ... bent through a little more. It's an interesting conversation."

College experience is most valuable for quarterbacks. Nix and Daniels proved it last year when they led their teams to the playoffs. Meanwhile, Anthony Richardson threw just 393 passes in college before the Colts drafted him No. 4 overall in 2023. He has struggled to adjust at the NFL level.

The oldest player ever selected in the draft was quarterback Chris Weinke. He was 28 years and 264 days old when the Panthers selected him in the fourth round of the 2000 draft. Weinke started just 20 games in the NFL, going 2-18.

Quarterback Brandon Weeden was the oldest player ever drafted in the first round. He was 28 years and 195 days old when the Browns chose him 22nd overall in 2012. Weeden made 25 starts, going 6-19. Both Weinke and Weeden played minor-league baseball before college football.

Depending on the position of a player and the round, age can be a determining factor when a team is choosing between two guys.

"When two players are level, even, same grade, you start weighing what they have," Chargers general manager Joe Hortiz said about age. "OK, he's a three-year starter and he's a four-year starter. Great leader, team captain, those little things give them a bump. It's not intentional but you talk through it and it shakes out that way."

## **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.

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.

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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.

"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."

## **Do you eat a meal in 20 minutes or less? It might be time to slow down**

By MARIA CHENG AP Medical Writer

LONDON (AP) — You can have your cake and eat it too — just do it slowly.

Experts tend to focus on the kinds of foods you can eat to improve your health. But the speed at which you devour your dinner matters just as much. There are risks with eating too fast — think stuck food and the potential to overeat before your brain tells you to stop. (Inhaling your food also risks annoying your slower-paced dining companions or the person who took the time to cook your meal.)

Here are some tips from scientists on how to slow down and take a more mindful approach to consuming your diet.

How fast is too fast?

If you're the kind of person who can regularly polish off breakfast, lunch or dinner in less than 20-30 minutes, you are eating too fast.

"It takes about 20 minutes for the stomach to communicate to the brain via a whole host of hormonal signals that it's full," said Leslie Heinberg, at the Center for Behavioral Health at the Cleveland Clinic. "So when people eat rapidly, they can miss these signals and it's very easy to eat beyond the point of fullness."

Why is that a problem?

People who eat quickly are likely to swallow more air, Heinberg said, which could lead to bloating or indigestion. Not chewing your food properly can also compromise digestion, meaning you won't get all of the nutrients from your food. Unchewed pieces of food also could get stuck in your esophagus.

Some previous studies have suggested that people who eat quickly have the highest risk of obesity, while the slowest eaters were the least likely to be obese.

How can you slow down when eating?

For starters, turn off the TV and put down your phone.

"If you're eating while you watch TV, people tend to eat until there's a commercial or the show is over," Heinberg said, adding that people are less inclined to pay attention to the body's own signals that it's full. "When we do things while we're eating, we're eating less mindfully. And that often causes us to eat more."

She said that when people focus exclusively on eating, they tend to enjoy the meal more and eat less.

Heinberg also acknowledged the pace at which you eat is often an ingrained habit, but said change is still possible. She suggested things like using your non-dominant hand to eat, trying utensils you might not ordinarily use like chopsticks or taking a deliberate break to drink water when your plate is partially empty.

If you have a busy life, it might be unavoidable to eat lunch at a work meeting or snack while running errands. But Sarah Berry, chief scientist at the British nutritional company ZOE, said when possible, "be mindful of what the food tastes and feels like."

"If we're not fully present, it's very easy to eat more quickly and not notice how much we've consumed," Berry said.

Chew your food, just like mom told you to

One of the simplest things to do is to increase the number of bites you take, said Helen McCarthy, a clinical psychologist with the British Psychological Society.

"If you chew each mouthful a little bit longer, that will slow down your eating," she said.

The kind of food you eat may also make a difference, pointing out that it's much easier to eat ultraprocessed or fast foods quicker, because they typically have a softer texture.

"It's hard to eat vegetables and protein at the same rate as something that's highly processed and requires less chewing," McCarthy said.

Some of her patients also reported an unintentional side effect once they began eating more slowly, referencing one woman who often ate a tube of potato chips every evening. When McCarthy told her to slow down and eat every single chip individually, her patient told her "it was like having a mouthful of claggy chemicals."

"She didn't find (the chips) enjoyable anymore," McCarthy said.



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## US tariffs bring stalled shipments and uncertainty for Chinese exporters

By HAN GUAN NG and SIMINA MISTREANU Associated Press

GUANGZHOU, China (AP) — Exporters at China's largest trade fair spoke on Wednesday of stalled shipments and lower sales forecasts due to the ongoing trade war with the United States.

Zhang Haiyun, overseas sales director for Airdog, an air purifier maker based in the eastern Chinese city of Suzhou, said her company has halted shipments to the U.S. since President Donald Trump announced sweeping tariffs of 145% on all products imported from China.

"Basically, there are no freight companies willing to take orders because no one knows what will happen to the tariffs when the goods arrive," Zhang told The Associated Press from her booth at the Canton Fair, which is China's largest and oldest trade event.

Trump's so-called "reciprocal tariffs" on China, and essentially all other U.S. trading partners, loomed heavily at the biannual fair, which has been held since 1957.

While the U.S. has postponed the implementation of most tariffs for three months, the duties on Chinese products remain in place pending a trade deal between the two nations. Beijing has retaliated with tariffs on U.S. goods that total 125%.

Zhang said the reciprocal tariffs were enacted just as her company's business in the U.S. had started growing. Airdog sells various models of air purifiers in the U.S. and more than 90 other countries and regions around the world, with a focus on developing countries that have boosted trade with China under Beijing's Belt and Road initiative.

She said her company was going to wait and see how things develop before moving production to other Southeast Asian countries.

Many Chinese companies have opened factories abroad since Trump's first term in office in an attempt to avoid reciprocal tariffs between China and the U.S. But in his new round of tariff announcements, Trump targeted Southeast Asian nations with high duties, including 49% tariffs on imports from Cambodia and 46% duties on goods from Vietnam.

China's President Xi Jinping is this week touring Vietnam, Cambodia and Malaysia, and making a case for free trade.

Exporters across both China and Southeast Asia have expressed concern about the tariffs' impact on production lines and supply chains.

Wallace Huang, export business director at Weking Group, which makes small appliances such as rice cookers, air fryers and electric kettles, said his company has halted business with the U.S. for the moment.

"We cannot rely on a single market," Huang said, "We need to diversify our market. When the West is dark, the East is bright."

Huang said his company's exports to the U.S. have dropped between 5% and 10% since Trump's first term in office, and that his company is looking to sell more to other developing nations.

Angel Li, a senior sales executive for Great Link, a logistics company focused on the North American market, said clients are calculating their next steps, though exporters of car parts and other hardware have not yet called off shipments to the U.S. and Canada.

"No one knows how the tariffs will change," Li said.

Even exporters who don't produce in China are suffering due to the trade war. Danny Ellassir, export director for Exotica, a company that makes air fresheners in Ohio, said his business is being affected due to other countries imposing tariffs on U.S. goods.

Ellassir said his company has been present at the Canton Fair, in the southern Guangdong province, for more than a decade because it is where it has connected with most of its clients from the Middle East and Latin America.

"Going back to the old duty rates — this is really the only way we see it happening for business to keep growing," he said.

## 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.

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 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."

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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.

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."

## China appoints a new trade negotiator during tariff fight with the US

By CHRISTOPHER BODEEN Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — China appointed a new trade negotiator Wednesday in the midst of its tariff fight with the United States as the world's two largest economies steadily increase tariffs on each other's goods.

China's government said Li Chenggang replaces Wang Shouwen, who participated in negotiations for the countries' 2020 trade deal.

China faces 145% taxes on exports to the U.S., while the Trump administration gave dozens of other countries a 90-day reprieve for most duties. Beijing has hit back at the U.S. with 125% tariffs on American exports, while stressing its determination to keep its own markets open to trade and investment.

Earlier on Wednesday, China announced its economy expanded at a 5.4% annual pace in January-March, supported by strong exports. Analysts are forecasting that the world's second largest economy will slow significantly in coming months, however, as tariffs on U.S. imports from China take effect.

Exports were a strong factor in China's 5% annual growth rate in 2024. The official target for this year is also 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 earlier.

It wasn't clear why China was changing trade negotiators.

The decision comes as Chinese officials say the country has multiple options to respond to U.S. actions, including relying more on its own vast market of 1.4 billion consumers and on Europe and countries in the global south.

But as China's domestic consumption continues to languish, it will be difficult to replace the U.S. consumer.

China has also responded to the U.S. by imposing more export controls on rare earths, which include materials used in high-tech products, aerospace manufacturing and the defense sector.

Both sides are now running out of tariff options, leaving them in a "near-stalemate," said Sun Chenghao, a fellow at the Center for International Security and Strategy at Beijing's Tsinghua University.

China will likely retain its focus on strengthening economic resilience against external shocks, including

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deepening trade ties with neighboring countries and promoting domestic consumption by shifting away from exports, Sun said.

A U.S. concession on fentanyl or ownership of TikTok could prompt a reciprocal move from Beijing, he added.

However, communication remains "far from being smooth," Sun said, pointing out that Trump only recently appointed Jamieson Greer as top trade negotiator, and many other key positions remain empty.

Prior to his appointment as trade negotiator, Li spent about 4 1/2 years as China's ambassador to the World Trade Organization, the body that governs global commerce. Beijing has appealed to it in its tariff dispute with the U.S.

Li was also deputy permanent representative to the Chinese delegation to the U.N. office in Geneva and other international organizations in Switzerland.

Perhaps more so than his predecessor Wang, Li's experience at the Commerce Ministry and his participation in negotiating China's accession to the WTO more than 20 years ago stand him in good stead as China refuses to cave in to U.S. demands, said Tu Xinquan, director of the China Institute for WTO Studies at the University of International Business and Economics.

Still, higher-ranking leaders from President Xi Jinping on down are likely to chart the course, with Li representing their case in any talks with the U.S., Tu said.

"There might be another style of negotiations. Li Chenggang is an open-minded person and supports free trade," Tu added.

Asked about the possibility of talks with the U.S., Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said the U.S. had begun the tariff spat and China was only taking "necessary countermeasures" to defend its rights and interests.

"If the U.S. truly wants to resolve the issue through dialogue and negotiation, it should stop using maximum pressure and stop threats and blackmail. For any dialogue to happen, it must be based on equality, respect and mutual benefit," Lin told a daily briefing.

Xi has been making the case for China as a source of "stability and certainty" in global free trade as he tours Southeast Asia this week — implying that China is a more reliable trade partner than the U.S.

After visiting Vietnam, he arrived in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia's capital, later Tuesday, for a three-day visit and will end with a stop in Cambodia. In Malaysia, Xi is expected to discuss a free trade agreement between China and the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nation, one of several funds and agreements China has led as a means of sidestepping organizations and mechanisms dominated by the U.S. and the West.

## Older Arizona voters are closely watching Trump's tariffs — and their retirement accounts

By JONATHAN J. COOPER Associated Press

SUN CITY, Ariz. (AP) — Susan Hemphill said she's always been frugal with her spending. But the recent volatility in the stock market caused by President Donald Trump's on-again, off-again tariffs and an escalating trade war with China have made her even more cautious.

These days, Hemphill is staying closer to home in Sun City, Arizona, a 55-and-older community near Phoenix. No more day trips to Sedona, the retired union organizer said, fighting tears as she wondered aloud whether she could run out of money.

"I'm so tired of Trump playing with our lives," said Hemphill, who voted for Democrat Kamala Harris in November. "I'm too old for this. I just really want to be retired. I want to enjoy — I don't want to worry."

Trump was elected with a promise to improve the economy, lower taxes and control inflation, addressing voters who said overwhelmingly that the economy was the top issue facing the country. But for retirees like Hemphill, the Republican president's economic stewardship has been defined by the roller coaster of the stock market and fears his tariffs will lead to higher inflation.

"Some are considering curtailing their spending, such as saving their tax refunds instead of spending



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them, while others are adjusting their investment strategies by moving money into more conservative allocations like bonds and gold," said Prudence Zhu, a Phoenix-area financial adviser, in an email. "While this is often an emotional response, it's not necessarily the optimal strategy in most cases."

How all of those issues shake out could have a notable impact on the 2026 midterms and the 2028 presidential election, as the center of political gravity shifts increasingly toward battleground states in the South and the West, places like Arizona that are popular with retirees.

Like other emerging political battlegrounds Nevada, Georgia and North Carolina, Arizona's population has exploded over the past half-century, welcoming newcomers who have transformed its politics.

Though Arizona has moved from reliably Republican to a battleground, Trump enjoys overwhelming support in Sun City, where Hemphill is among the 40,000 residents in a community that sprouted from the desert in the 1960s. Trump won every precinct in Sun City, most of them by double digits.

Trump supporters like Paul Estok said they're confident that the president has a handle on the situation and that things will stabilize with time.

"I'm real happy about what's going on," said Estok, who gets three pensions from the various government agencies where he worked as a union stationary engineer in the Chicago area. He's confident the pensions are secure.

The tariffs Trump announced on much of the world sparked turmoil in the stock market earlier this month, before the president abruptly hit pause on most of them. But the drama isn't over. Trump said the 90-day pause would be used to negotiate over tariffs with other countries, but he increased the tax rate on Chinese imports to 145%.

Estok said he's thrilled to see a president tough enough to impose tariffs despite the economic consequences. Echoing Trump, he said other countries "have been taking so much advantage of us."

"No one's ever stepped up and said, 'Hey, enough's enough,'" Estok said, climbing into his truck after stopping at a grocery store on his way home from the golf course.

Don Welling, an 82-year-old Trump voter, said those alarmed by the tariffs are misguided. He didn't enjoy seeing his portfolio take a dip, but he wasn't worried.

"If people would pay attention to what he said when he was campaigning, things would be better," Welling said as he loaded groceries into his golf cart.

Some retirees said they're worried about the effect Trump's federal cost-cutting is having on Social Security. While Trump insists he will not cut benefits, his administration has eliminated thousands of jobs at the Social Security Administration, leading to complaints about long call wait times.

Karl Feiste winced to see his investments fall 20% in the days after Trump announced his tariffs, but he said, so far, his losses are only on paper.

"If that turns around, then I can still continue to do what I've been doing," said Feiste, a Vietnam War veteran who voted for Harris. "But I'm not planning on buying a car. I'm not planning on moving. I'm not planning on taking extravagant vacations. I'm wondering what's going to happen to the market because that basically dictates what leisure money I have."

He worries his Social Security checks, which make up half his income, could eventually fall victim to Trump's aggressive government cost-cutting.

"That smarts," Feiste said. "Because I can't live if he takes my Social Security."

Trump carried Arizona voters who were age 65 or older, winning 52% of this group compared with Harris' 47%, broadly in line with his national margin among seniors, according to AP VoteCast, an extensive survey of voters and nonvoters that aims to tell the story behind election results.

Older Arizona voters were less likely than voters overall to consider "the economy and jobs" the most important issue facing the country, and they were more likely to consider immigration the top problem. About 3 in 10 seniors said the economy was the biggest problem, compared with about 4 in 10 Arizona voters overall.

Hans Vinge, 62, took a prime golf cart parking spot during a grocery store run one recent morning. A former Republican disillusioned by the party's ideological shift under Trump, he thinks the president is doing too much, too fast, with unrealistic expectations for what his tariffs can accomplish.

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"We're not ready right now. These companies aren't going to come from offshore into America," Vinge said. "It's going to take 10, 15 years to get these companies in to Americanize everything, which is great. But it's just it's too disruptive right now."

Vinge, who is retired from the Air Force and splits his time between North Dakota and Arizona, said it's too stressful to follow the news day to day, but it's hard to avoid. When he last peeked at the balance of his retirement account, it had fallen \$23,000 in one week, he said.

"It's disappointing to see something that's been doing well for you," Vinge said. "I wish I would've invested more in gold."

## Today in History: April 17, the Bay of Pigs Invasion

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Thursday, April 17, the 107th day of 2025. There are 258 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On April 17, 1961, some 1,400 CIA-trained Cuban exiles launched the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in an attempt to topple Fidel Castro, whose forces crushed the incursion within three days.

Also on this date:

In 1964, Jerrie Mock completed the first solo around-the-world flight by a woman, landing her single-engine Cessna plane in Columbus, Ohio after a 29-day journey.

In 1969, a jury in Los Angeles convicted Sirhan Sirhan of assassinating Sen. Robert F. Kennedy. (Sirhan's death sentence would be commuted to life in prison with the possibility of parole. He remains in prison today.)

In 1970, Apollo 13 astronauts James A. Lovell, Fred W. Haise and Jack Swigert splashed down safely in the Pacific, four days after a ruptured oxygen tank crippled their spacecraft while enroute to the moon.

In 1972, the Boston Marathon allowed women to compete for the first time. Nina Kuscsik was the first officially recognized women's champion, with a time of 3:10:26.

In 1975, Cambodia's five-year civil war ended as the capital Phnom Penh fell to the Khmer Rouge, which instituted brutal, radical policies that claimed an estimated 1.7 million lives (nearly one in four Cambodians) until the regime was overthrown in 1979.

In 1991, the Dow Jones industrial average closed above 3,000 for the first time, ending the day at 3,004.46, up 17.58.

In 1993, a federal jury in Los Angeles convicted two former police officers of violating the civil rights of beaten motorist Rodney King. Two other officers were acquitted.

In 2020, President Donald Trump, via Twitter, urged supporters to "LIBERATE" three states led by Democratic governors, apparently encouraging protests against stay-at-home mandates aimed at stopping the coronavirus.

Today's Birthdays: Actor David Bradley is 83. Actor Clarke Peters is 73. Author Nick Hornby is 68. Actor Sean Bean is 66. Rock singer Maynard James Keenan (Tool) is 61. Actor Lela Rochon is 61. Actor Kimberly Elise is 58. Singer-songwriter Liz Phair is 58. Director-producer Adam McKay is 57. Rapper-actor Redman is 55. Football Hall of Famer Tony Boselli is 53. Actor Jennifer Garner is 53. Singer Victoria Beckham is 51. Actor Rooney Mara is 40.