

Groton Daily Independent

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The Groton Transit Bus will be going to Madison on Sunday, April 27 for baseball games.

For more information contact the Transit at 605-397-8661.

Sunday, April 20

RESURRECTION DAY!

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion, 7 a.m.; Breakfast by league; Worship with communion, 9:30 a.m.; 1st communion for fifth graders.

United Methodist: Worship at Conde, 8:15 a.m.; at Groton, 9:30 a.m.; at Britton, 11:15 a.m.; No Sunday School; Coffee Hour, 10:30 a.m.

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

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

Groton CM&A: Easter Breakfast, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 10:30 a.m. (No Sunday School)

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

St. John's Lutheran: Sunrise service at St. John's, 7 a.m.; Worship with communion at St. John's, 9 a.m.; and at Zion, 11 a.m.; No Sunday School.

Monday, April 21

Senior Menu: Chicken and rice casserole, broccoli, fruit cocktail, whole wheat bread.

NO SCHOOL - Easter Break

Groton Senior Citizens Meet, 1 p.m., Groton Community Center

Baseball at Miller, Varsity at 6 p.m.; JV at 8 p.m.

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

St. John's Lutheran: Christian Literature Circle, 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, April 22

Senior Menu: Swiss steak, mashed potatoes with gravy, baby carrots, waldorf salad, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Egg omelets.

School Lunch: Pasta with meat sauce.

Smarter Balance Testing. Grades 3-5 (ELA and Math)

Girls Golf at Milbank, 10 a.m.

Track at Britton-Hecla, 2 p.m.

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

United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

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We the People

The South Dakota Humanities Council is making available a weekly column -- "We the People" -- that focuses on the U.S. Constitution. It is written by David Adler, who is president of The Alturas Institute, a non-profit organization created to promote the Constitution, gender equality, and civic education.



By David Adler

When Presidential Claims Collide with the Court, Due Process and the Rule of Law

Last week, the U.S. Supreme Court instructed the Trump Administration to "facilitate" the return of Kilmar Abrego Garcia from an infamous torture prison in El Salvador, to which he was illegally deported without any semblance of due process of law. Citing an "administrative error," the Administration acknowledged that this deportation of a Maryland man, who has never been charged with a crime, had been a mistake. Yet, Trump officials have made no effort to facilitate Garcia's return to the United States, and to his wife and child.

On April 16, U. S. District Judge Paula Xinis, the presiding judge whose ruling that the Administration has an obligation to facilitate Garcia's return was unanimously affirmed by the Supreme Court, ordered Trump officials to produce records and sworn answers about the efforts, or lack thereof, to return Garcia, or face a contempt ruling. For readers whose busy lives have precluded attention to this growing standoff between the executive and the judiciary, here's why it is important for you to pay attention. President Donald Trump has informed the Salvadoran President, Nayib Bukele, in an exchange posted on Bukele's X feed, that "Homegrowns are next. The homegrowns. You gotta build about five more places."

Trump's threat to deport "homegrowns," those whom he sometimes refers to as the "worst of the worse," includes all Americans, citizens from coast-to-coast. In the Supreme Court's unanimous ruling last week, Justice Sonia Sotomayor penned a statement, joined by Justices Kentanji Brown Jackson and Elena Kagan, that warned of Trump's claim of unlimited authority: "The Government's argument, moreover, implies that that it could deport and incarcerate any person, including U.S. citizens, without legal consequence, so long as it does so before a court can intervene."

The Administration had argued that the courts could not intervene in the president's conduct of foreign policy, an overly broad contention that flies in the face of two centuries of Supreme Court rulings that declare boundaries on the scope of executive power in foreign relations. The most alarming assertion advanced by the Trump Administration is its authority to dispatch armed officials to grab people from the streets and ship them off to a prison in another country—without a shred of due process. The threat of deportation and incarceration, "before a court can intervene," is a reference to executive contempt for due process and the rule of law.

Indeed, the Court's prescription for the return of Garcia, which embraced the core of Judge Xinix's ruling, trumpeted the obligation to adhere to due process: "The order properly requires the Government to 'facilitate' Abrego Garcia's release from custody in El Salvador and to ensure that his case is handled as it would have been had he not been improperly sent to El Salvador."

Adherence to due process of law is the foundational principle of American jurisprudence, without which the premise and promise of the rule of law and American Constitutionalism, itself, vanish. Due process emerges from the mists of antiquity in Magna Carta, signed by King John at Runnymede 1,100 years ago, on June 15, 1215. America's founders believed with Sir Edward Coke, the parliamentarian and champion of

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the rule of law whom they idolized, that Magna Carta has no peer-- "no sovereign"--for it was incontestable that its proclamation in Chapter 39 that the "law of the land," a majestic phrase that soon after its appearance was popularized as "due process of law," represented the bone marrow of the agreement between the barons and the King John at Runnymede. What the "law of the land" meant to the barons was that the king could no longer take the law into his own hands: the deliberate judgment of a competent court of law must precede any punitive measures. In modern terms, the barons demanded that they could not be imprisoned, except after a trial."

The baron's conclusion that in England, the king's will had become law, was an intolerable condition. They sought legal curtailment of the king's royal powers and protection for their individual rights. The treaty signed at Runnymede eased the development of legal and political institutions in England, and influenced America's founders in their creation of the rule of law, separation of powers and rights and liberties. As John Adams wrote, the recurrence to fundamental principles is crucial to the protection of our liberties.

David Adler is president of The Alturas Institute, a non-profit organization created to promote the Constitution, gender equality and civic education. This column is made possible with the support of the South Dakota Humanities Council, South Dakota NewsMedia Association and this newspaper.

Groton Citywide 2025 Spring Cleanup

April 28-May 2

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



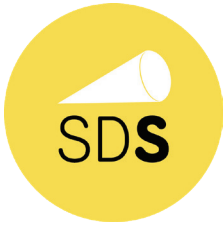
Bring anything you wish to dispose of to the City Shop-10 E Railroad Ave starting April 28th.

Please place items in the appropriate pile.

RESIDENTIAL ONLY!!

Keep Metal, Tires, Paint, Batteries & Chemicals Separate

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



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

U.S. Supreme Court pauses deportations under wartime law

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY - APRIL 19, 2025 1:41 PM

The U.S. Supreme Court early Saturday temporarily blocked a new round of deportations under the wartime Alien Enemies Act until the high court considers the case of several migrants in Texas whose lawyers say are at risk for "imminent removal."

The justices issued the one-page order just after 1 a.m. Eastern, directing the government "not to remove any member of the putative class of detainees from the United States until further order of this Court."

The order was unsigned and noted conservative Justices Clarence Thomas and Samuel Alito dissented.

The rare overnight order followed a flurry of activity Friday after the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals denied the migrants' appeal for a temporary restraining order.

A federal judge in the Northern District of Texas on Thursday denied the petitioners were at "imminent risk of summary removal" because immigration officials said in a previous court filing they would not deport the migrants until the district court resolved allegations that the removals are illegal.

The American Civil Liberties Union asked the Supreme Court to take up the matter Friday after the group said their clients were "loaded on to buses, presumably headed to the airport," violating an earlier ruling from the justices.

The attorneys for Venezuelan men held at the Bluebonnet Detention Center in Anson, Texas, "learned that officers at Bluebonnet have distributed notices under the Alien Enemies Act, in English only, that designate Venezuelan men for removal under the AEA, and have told the men that the removals are imminent and will happen today."

"These removals could therefore occur at any moment," the ACLU wrote in its application.

President Donald Trump invoked the Alien Enemies Act of 1798 in mid-March to trigger the removals of the Venezuelans age 14 and up whom the administration suspected had ties to the Tren de Aragua gang.

The deportation flights sparked a legal challenge separately winding through the federal courts. Family members of many of the Venezuelan men say they have no gang ties and have been illegally deported without due process.

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

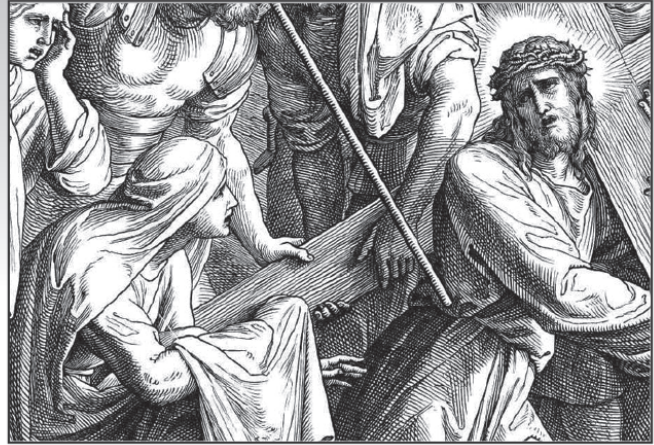
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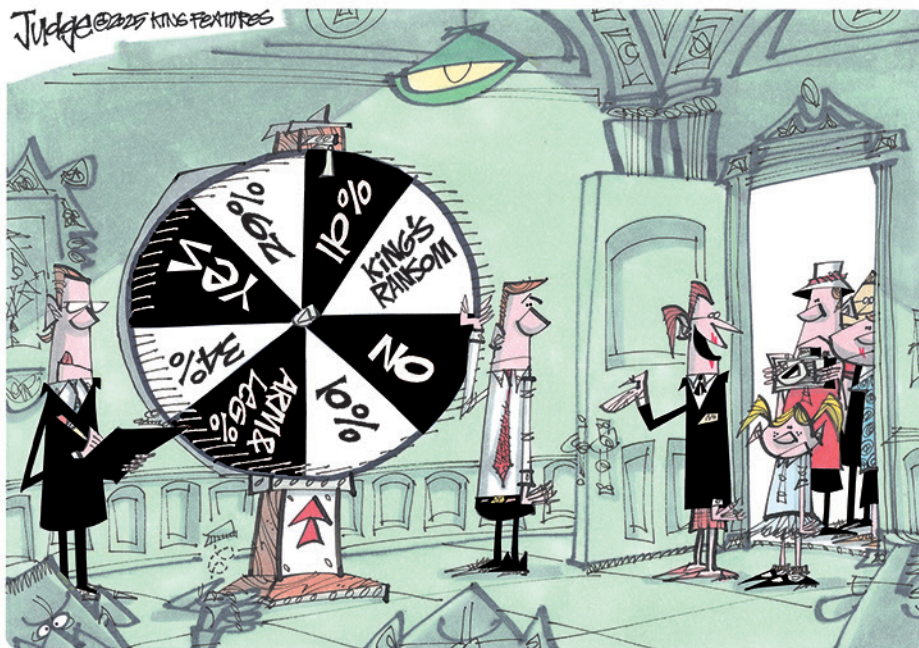
THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

And He, bearing His cross, went out to a place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha, where they crucified Him, and two others with Him, one on either side, and Jesus in the center.



Detail of "Christ Carrying the Cross"
by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1860)

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"AND OUR NEXT STOP ON THE WHITE HOUSE TOUR IS THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION TARIFF DECISION-MAKING CENTER."

BIBLE

TRIVIA

by Wilson Casey

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

2. At the Last Supper, which disciple protested against having his feet washed by Jesus? *Peter, Andrew, Bartholomew, Judas*

3. What golden graven image did the Israelites dance in front of? *Calf, Ox, Horse, Camel*

4. Who primarily made the golden graven image in the above question? *Joseph, Michal, Lot, Aaron*

5. From Revelations 13:18, what's the number of the beast? *7, 13, 666, 777*

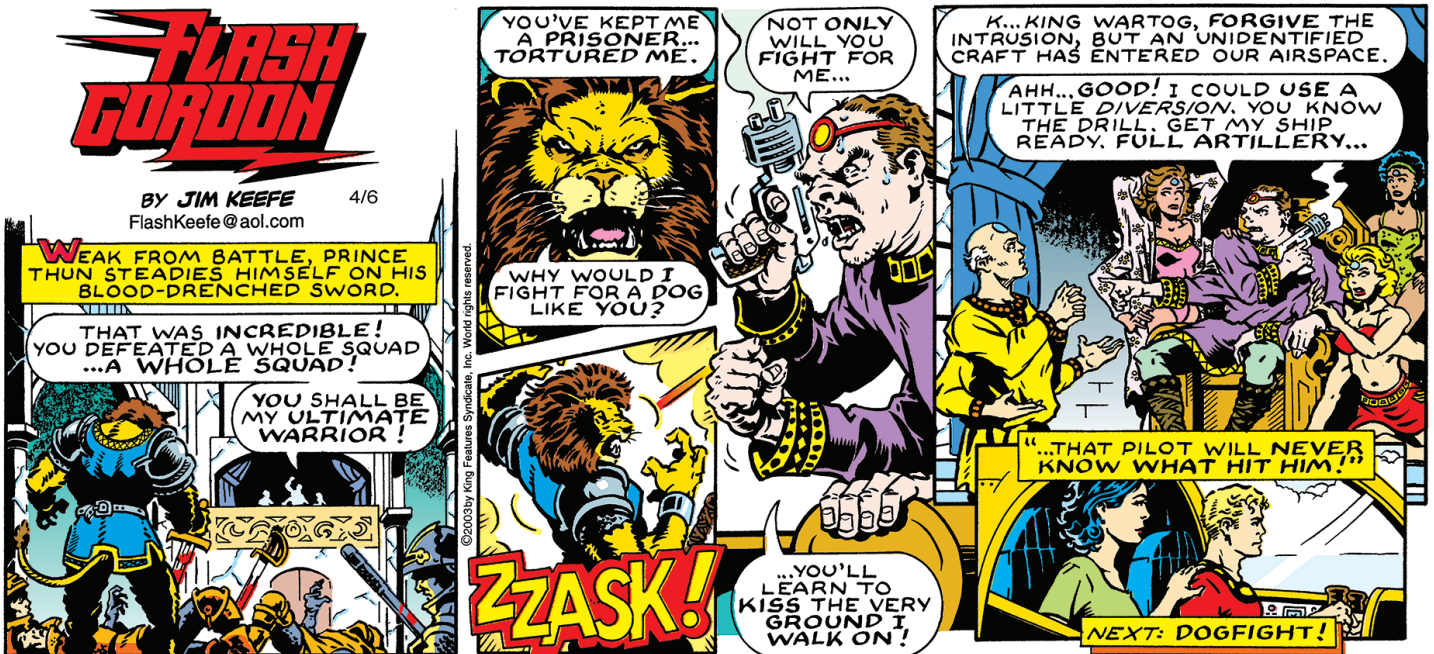
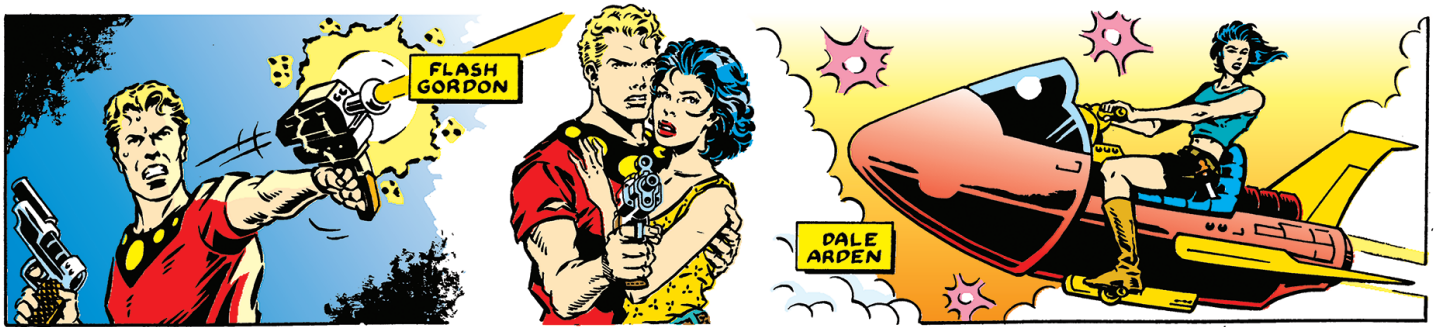
6. In John 18:38, who asked, "What is truth"? *Pilate, Martha, Joel, Eve*

ANSWERS: 1) Neither, 2) Peter, 3) Calf, 4) Aaron, 5) 666, 6) Pilate

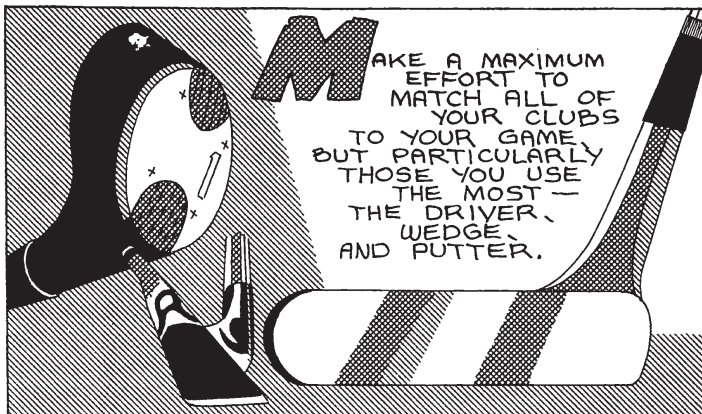
"Test Your Bible Knowledge," a book with 1,206 multiple-choice questions by columnist Wilson Casey, is available in stores and online.

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Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS





Tilapia That Wasn't Stored Properly Causes Scombroid Poisoning

DEAR DR. ROACH: I ate some tilapia last night, and within an hour, I had nausea and a headache, then vomiting a few hours later, and now diarrhea. What do you think is going on? -- V.P.

ANSWER: I would be interested if you felt any sensation of warmth on your face or neck or any flushing, as your symptoms are highly suggestive of a foodborne illness called scombroid poisoning. It most commonly happens after eating tuna, mackerel or bonito but can come on after eating other fish as well, including tilapia. The fact that it began so soon after eating a compatible fish is suggestive of the diagnosis.

Scombroid is the most common foodborne illness from seafood. Scombroid happens if the fish is not stored at a cold-enough temperature (at any time) after being caught. This is why you should refrigerate cans of tuna after opening them.

In addition to the flushing sensation, headaches, nausea, and vomiting, people with a scombroid toxicity can get rashes on their face, neck and upper chest. Sometimes they get burning or itching around their mouth.

If the symptoms aren't gone before the condition is suspected, then an antihistamine tablet, such as diphenhydramine (Benadryl), can help relieve symptoms. If there are stomach or intestinal troubles, a different type of antihistamine, such as famotidine (Pepcid), can have an added benefit.

If the vomiting and diarrhea are severe, intravenous fluids may be necessary, although my experience is that most cases are milder than this.

Physicians who make the presumptive diagnosis of scombroid poisoning should contact their local public health authorities to identify where the contamination occurred and help prevent other cases. Scombroid poisoning is vastly underreported.

DEAR DR. ROACH: I was recently in the hospital for a hip fracture and was discharged with oxycodone. I've been taking it for about two weeks after stopping morphine in the hospital (the dosage being 2.5 mg twice daily), but I am worried about withdrawal. I know two people who got very ill after suddenly stopping pain medication. -- J.S.B.

ANSWER: Withdrawal from opiates happens when people who are physiologically dependent on opioids suddenly stop taking them. A person can become physiologically dependent in as little as three weeks, or even shorter if they had been taking opioids in the past. Opioid withdrawal is very unpleasant, with abdominal symptoms (nausea, cramps, diarrhea, vomiting, etc.) and agitation being the most common symptoms.

The main way of avoiding withdrawal is to avoid staying on opioids too long. Changing from a long-acting opiate like oxycodone to a shorter-acting one may help. Using non-opioid pain relievers to minimize the need for opioids can also help. I have sometimes tapered down the dose slowly to try to prevent withdrawal; however, the dose you are on is already quite low, so the likelihood of withdrawal is small.

I do want to emphasize that it's important to get off these drugs. Recent studies have shown that 25% or more of people who start chronically taking opioids after a hip fracture continue to take them for months or years, but opioids are not good long-term pain medications for most people.

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

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Tom Hardy stars in "Havoc." (Courtesy of Netflix)

"Black Bag" (R) -- Out now to rent, this spy thriller film stars Cate Blanchett ("Borderlands") and Michael Fassbender ("The Killer") as two suave and sexy British intelligence officers who are also married to each other. For his latest mission, George (Fassbender) is given a week to

figure out where a breach leaked from within their organization, but his wife, Kathryn (Blanchett), is one of five suspects in the case. Torn between his duty to his work and his marriage, George must be cautious and resourceful when solving this case, but the price is steep. Will he lose his career or his wife? Naomi Harris ("Moonlight"), Rege-Jean Page ("Bridgerton"), and Pierce Brosnan ("MobLand") co-star. (Apple TV+)

"Havoc" (R) -- If anyone should lead a new gritty crime drama full of gory action, a misunderstood antihero, and potent one-liners, it's Mr. Tom Hardy ("Venom: The Last Dance," "The Bikeriders," "Peaky Blinders"). He stars as Walker, a detective in a city with a brutal criminal underworld and lots of corruption. When a politician's son gets caught in the middle of a drug deal gone awry, Walker plans to rescue him. But with so many people -- both criminals and not -- hot on his tail, Walker is at the precipice of unraveling something much bigger than he knows. Look out for familiar faces like Timothy Olyphant ("Justified: City Primeval") and Forest Whitaker ("Big George Foreman") in this film premiering April 25. (Netflix)

"Azrael" (R) -- If you like your horror movies with a religious or cultish touch, look no further than this film led by scream queen Samara Weaving ("Borderline"). Taking place years after the Rapture, the only people still surviving on Earth must spend their days outrunning "the Burned Ones," who are demons that feast on humans. Azrael (Weaving) and her boyfriend, Kenan, are powering through with a cult in the forest, but when the cultists soon decide to turn on them, a traumatic battle for survival begins against demons and non-demons alike. Although this film went under the radar after its release, it should still satisfy you if you're looking for a good spook. Premieres April 25. (Hulu)

In Case You Missed It

"The Holdovers" (R) -- "Downsizing" director Alexander Payne spearheaded this comedy-drama that received recognition during last year's award season, specifically for Paul Giamatti ("Downton Abbey") and Da'Vine Joy Randolph's ("Only Murders in the Building") palpable performances. Taking place in 1970, the film spans the lonely days of a Christmas break at a boarding school, where teacher Paul Hunham (Giamatti) is required to chaperone a group of students who can't go home for the holidays. Of these students, a cynical boy named Angus (Dominic Sessa) gives Paul an incredibly hard time, but the impact he leaves on Paul after just a few weeks can make anyone's eyes water. If films like "Dead Poets Society" tickle your fancy, this one's right up your alley! (Peacock)

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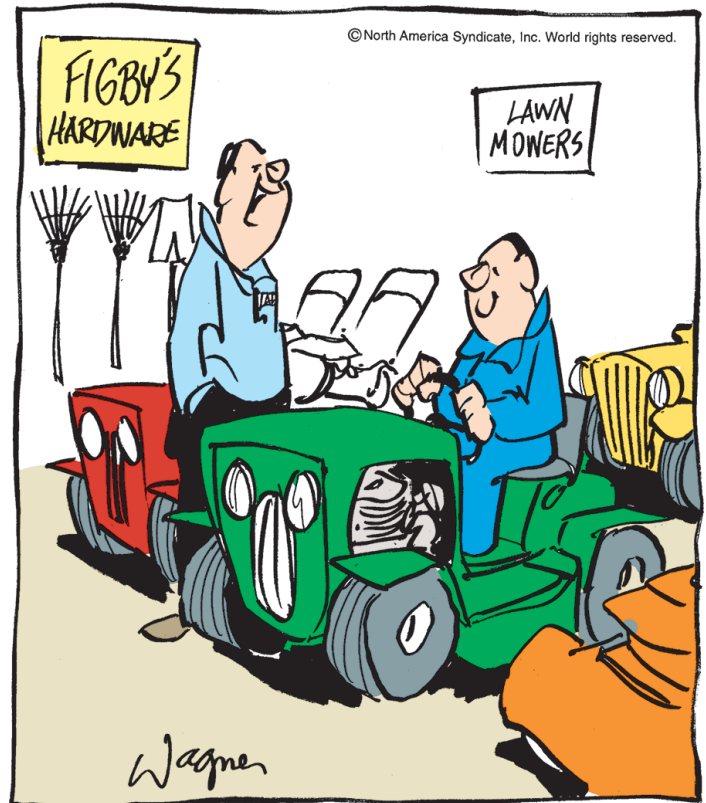
1. Which artist released "Jimmy Lee"?
2. Name the duo who released "To All the Girls I've Loved Before."
3. Who were Lola, Rico and Tony in Barry Manilow's "Copacabana" in 1978?
4. Which group had a hit with "United We Stand"?
5. Name the 1980 song that contains this lyric: "Whenever dark has fallen, you know the spirit of the party starts to come alive."

Answers

1. Aretha Franklin in 1986. The song was released on her "Aretha" album and rose nearly to the top of the R&B chart.
2. Willie Nelson and Julio Iglesias in 1984. It was a first for Iglesias with an English language song and a big hit for Nelson in Europe, successes that netted them Duo of the Year by the Country Music Association.
3. Lola was a showgirl who was approached by a mobster named Rico. Tony was the bartender, Lola's jealous boyfriend, who was killed by Rico.
4. Brotherhood of Man, in 1970.
5. "Give Me the Night," by George Benson, in 1980. The song was Benson's first No. 1 hit on the Soul Singles chart. It also climbed the charts in Switzerland, South Africa, Netherlands, Norway, France, Australia and others.

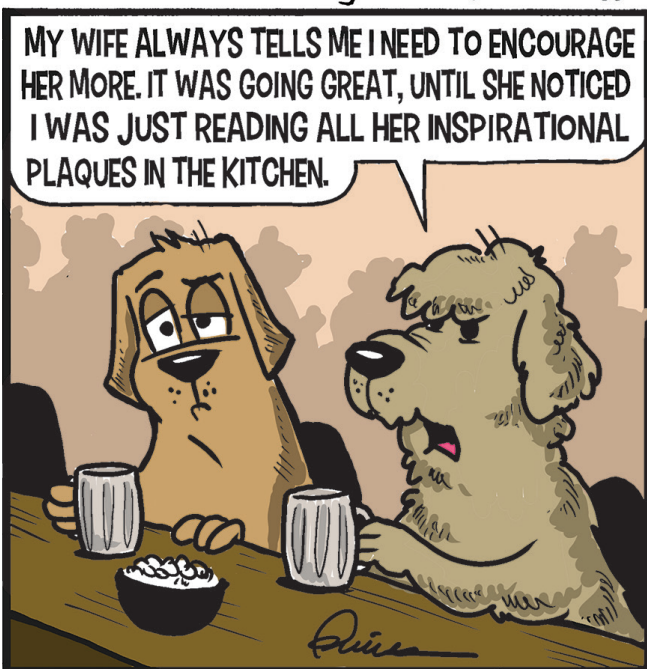
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GRIN and BEAR IT 



"Would you like to take it for a test mow?"

Just Like Cats & Dogs by Dave T. Phipps



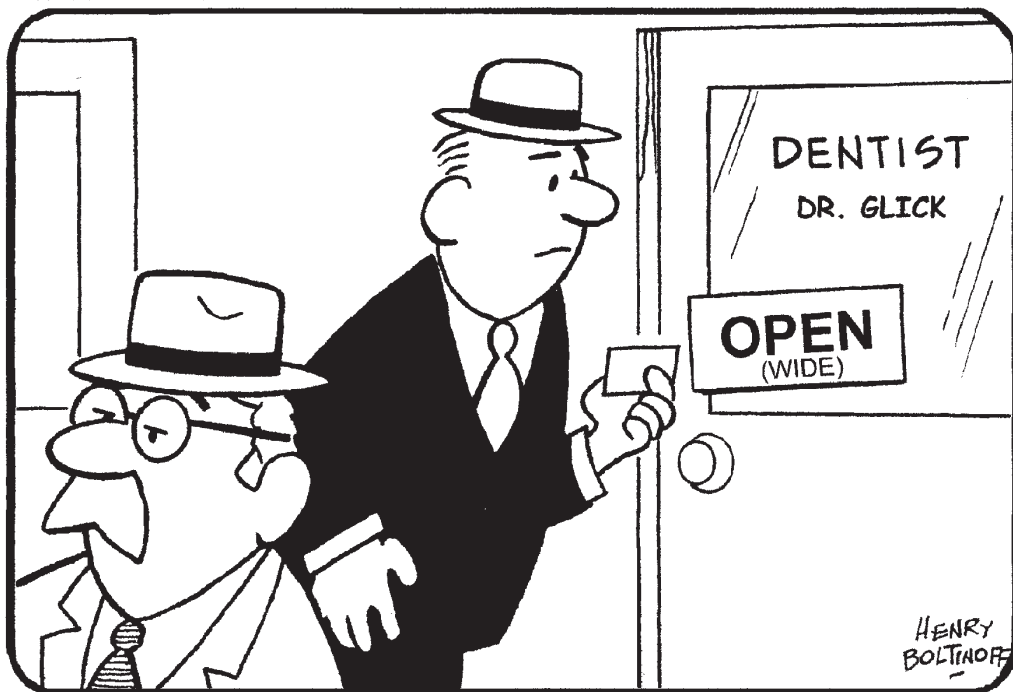
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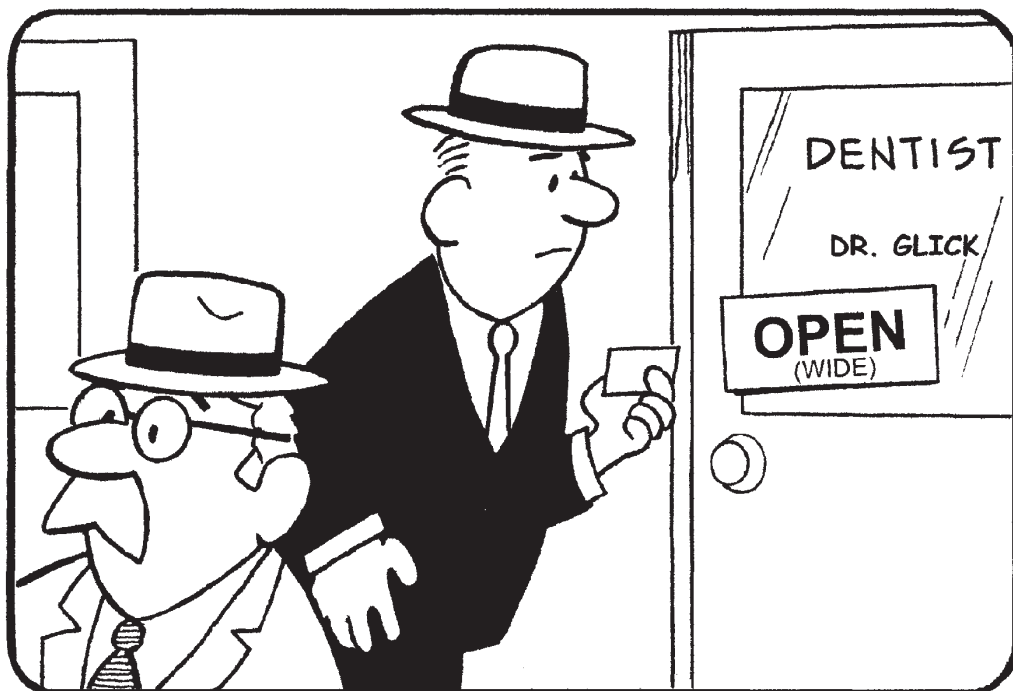
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HOCUS-FOCUS

BY
HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



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Differences: 1. Eyes are different. 2. Hat is larger. 3. Lapel is different. 4. Door is not as wide. 5. Name on door is lower. 6. Tie is thinner.

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* Spring planting supplies are on sale now in home-improvement stores, and here is a handy and fun twine keeper that you can make with your kids using two repurposed clay flowerpots with drain holes. Choose a size that can easily fit a ball of twine or thin rope. Set the ball inside and invert one pot on top of the other, threading the line through the drain hole of the top pot. Secure with tape or even hot glue. Pull twine through the hole, and the ball doesn't get tangled up.

* "If you have a poster that has been rolled up and you want to hang it up, try rolling it the opposite way overnight. When you unroll it, there will be less bumps and the edges won't curl so bad." -- R.L. in Idaho

* The best way to cool canned and bottled drinks down fast is in a mix of ice and water. The water is a better conductor of the cool. Then make your ice last longer and stay colder by sprinkling a little salt on the ice/water mixture.

* "After too many mornings of rushing to find uniform pieces before a game, we decided to get smart. Now, sports uniforms get hung up with all accessories in the coat closet right after washing. They're ready as soon as it's game night -- no looking under beds or in the back of overstuffed teenager closets!" -- P.P. in Texas

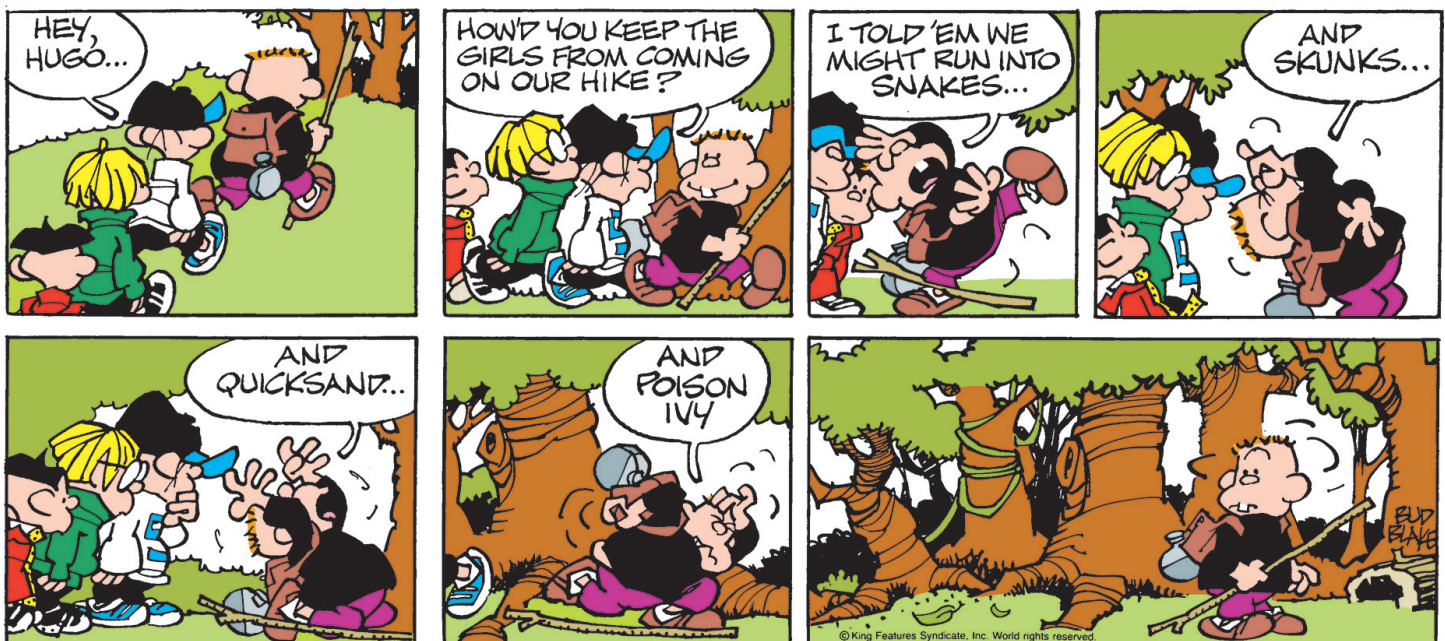
* "To hold all my daughter's bobby pins, I mounted a plastic cup with double-stick tape right to her vanity mirror. I used to vacuum them up all the time, but now that she has a place to put them, it's better." -- L.E. in New Hampshire

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

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TIGER

by BUD BLAKE



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King Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Persian Gulf emirate
6 Little lie
9 Chances, for short
12 Winner's gesture
13 "All bets — off"
14 Haw preceder
15 Thesaurus compiler
16 Bach's "Coffee —"
18 Deserves
20 Legal document
21 Salonga of "Miss Saigon"
23 Commotion
24 Deli array
25 Arsenal supply
27 Wear down
29 "Othello" character
31 Indian instruments
35 Mea —
37 Coin aperture
38 Be buoyant
41 — out a living
43 Glacial
44 Hoops great Monroe
45 Ornamental beetle
47 Cheery refrain
49 Arcade pioneer
52 Revue segment

1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8		9	10	11
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55				56				57				

- 53 Prohibit
54 Serious
55 That lady
56 Walgreens alternative
57 On mom's side
8 London's Big —
9 Butler's love
10 — four (small cake)
11 Plane assignments
17 Chirps
19 Perfect
21 Science room
22 Brit. record label
24 1501, in Roman numerals
26 Available for work
28 Japanese seaport
30 Snip
32 "Open sesame" speaker
33 Sinbad's bird
34 Pigs' digs
36 Praline nuts
38 Greek cheeses
39 Coniferous tree
40 Emulate Douglass
42 Obliterate
45 Serb or Croat
46 Heaps
48 "Shark Tank" network
50 Emeritus, briefly
51 Hot temper

DOWN

- 1 TiVo, for example
2 Mil. morale booster
3 "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof" role
4 Baseball's Tommie
5 Office leader?
6 Element
7 401(k) relatives

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King Crossword

Answers

Solution time: 26 mins.

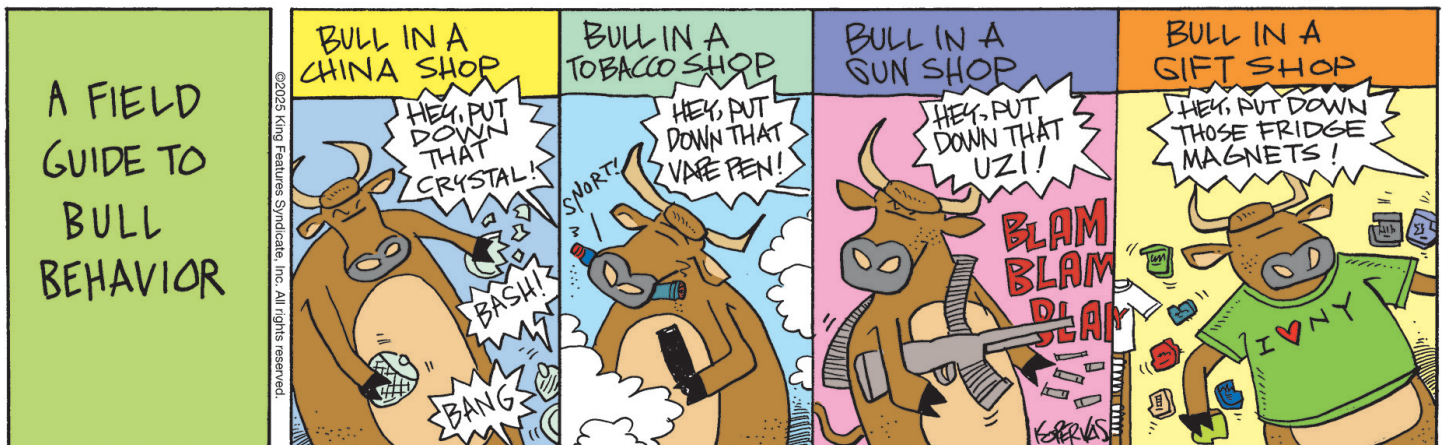
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			C	U	L	P	A		S	L	O	T	
F	L	O	A	T		E	K	E		I	C	Y	
E	A	R	L		S	C	A	R	A	B			
T	R	A	L	A	L	A		A	T	A	R	I	
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Olive



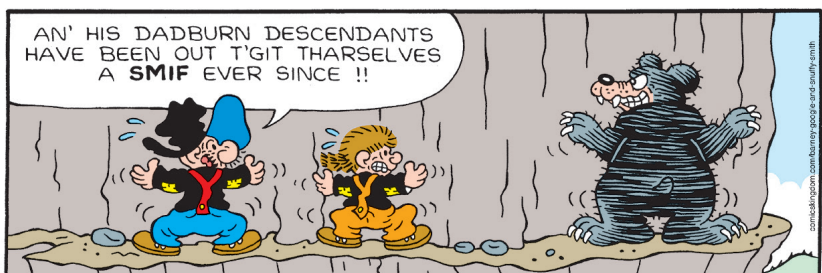
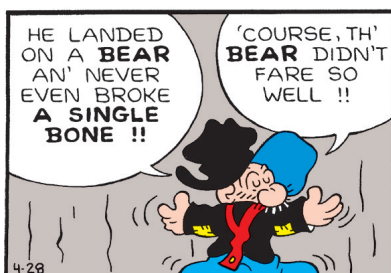
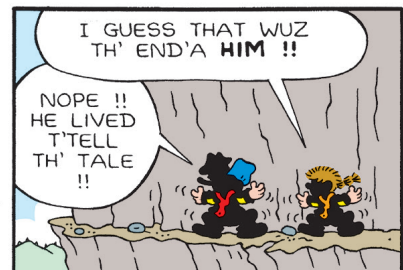
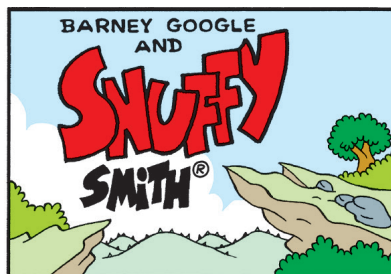
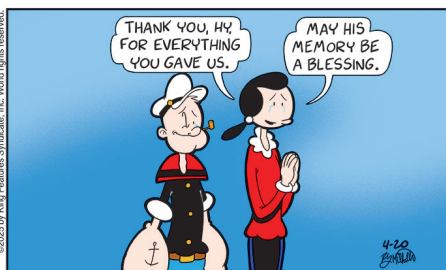
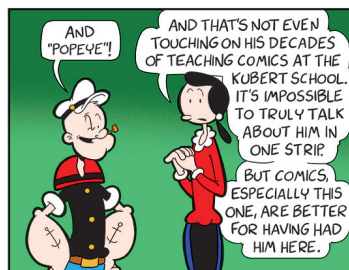
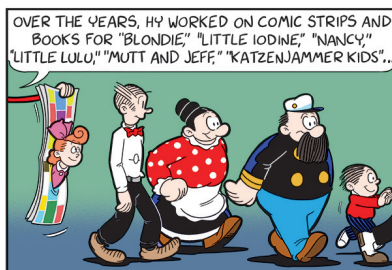
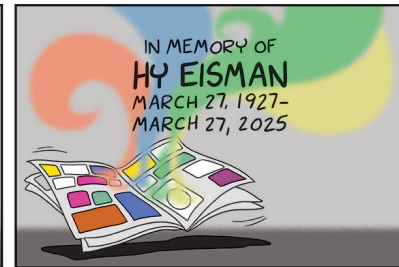
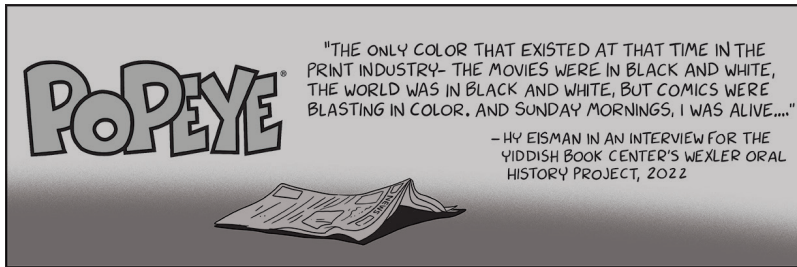
Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas



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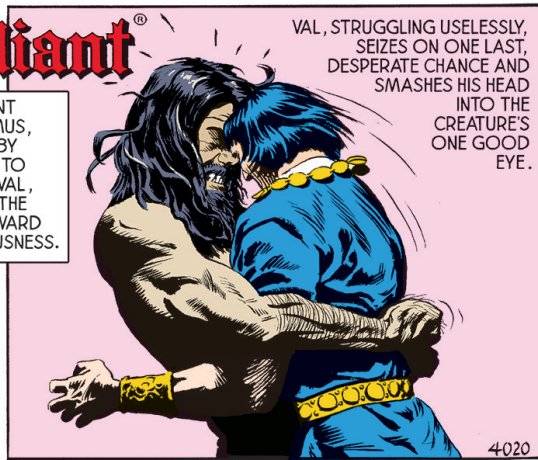
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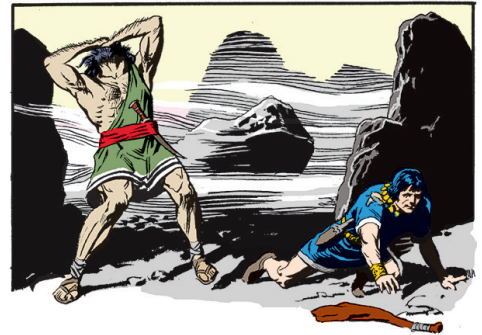
Hal Foster's Prince Valiant® BY SCHULTZ AND YEATES



THE GIANT POLYPHEMUS, CALLED BY CALYPSO TO CAPTURE VAL, CRUSHES THE PRINCE TOWARD UNCONSCIOUSNESS.



VAL, STRUGGLING USELESSLY, SEIZES ON ONE LAST, DESPERATE CHANCE AND SMASHES HIS HEAD INTO THE CREATURE'S ONE GOOD EYE.

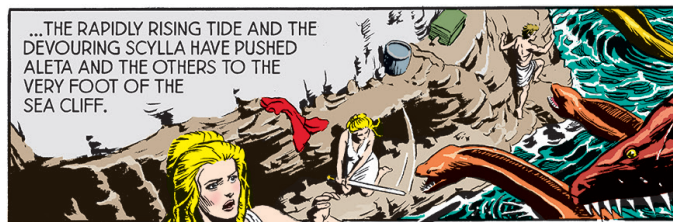


POLYPHEMUS HOWLS IN PAIN AND CLUTCHES AT HIS EYE! VAL FALLS FREE AND REACHES FOR THE MONSTER'S CLUB...

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...IN TIME TO KEEP THE FURIOUS GIANT AT BAY. FOR A MOMENT, THEY ARE AT A STALEMATE; ALTHOUGH VAL KNOWS THAT HIS OPPONENT'S SUPERIOR REACH WILL SOON END THAT. AND ON THE BEACH BELOW...



...THE RAPIDLY RISING TIDE AND THE DEVOURING SCYLLA HAVE PUSHED ALETA AND THE OTHERS TO THE VERY FOOT OF THE SEA CLIFF.

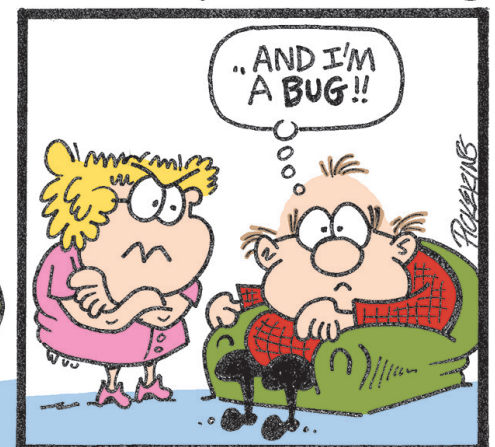
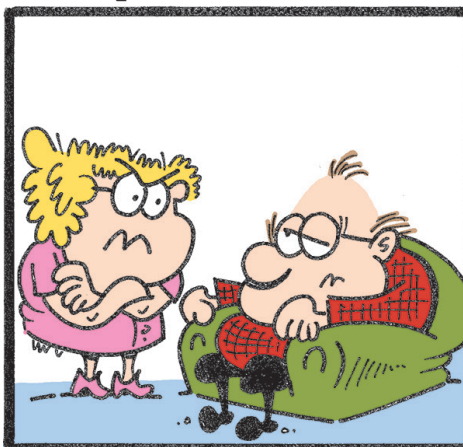


ALETA IS A FIERCE WARRIOR, BUT THE SINGING SWORD IS HEAVY AND SHE IS EXHAUSTED. THIS, THEN, WILL BE HER END. NEXT: **A flying tackle**

YEATES
2/23/14

The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



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SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

The list of food recalls keeps growing

It seems that there's one recall after the other lately, mostly for our foods. To stay safe with what we eat, we need to keep an eye on those recalls.

Some of them have been scarily bizarre. The latest ones include pieces of plastic in sausages, wood in frozen meals, stones in chocolate bars, botulism in juice and tree nuts in cheesecake.

Then there are the undeclared allergens, like the milk that was in tortilla chips and chicken salad, which can affect people who have a dairy allergy.

And we have the hot sauce with undeclared sulfites, which can seriously affect people who have an allergy to sulfites.

Then, in a potentially very dangerous mistake for those with heart and blood pressure problems, ground coffee was labeled as decaffeinated when it actually had caffeine.

And when you thought you'd recover from an illness with some over-the-counter help, we had a cough and cold medication recalled for being contaminated.

Humans aren't the only ones to be affected by the wrong ingredients in our foods. A recent recall was for a dog snack that was contaminated with salmonella.

Nobody likes extra email to wade through, but in the case of recalls, we really do need to pay attention.

Signing up for email notifications is the best thing we can do right now, especially with the increase in the number of recalls. Go to www.recalls.gov/food.html, www.fsis.usda.gov/recalls and www.foodsafety.gov to sign up for email alerts. Or if you really don't want extra emails in your inbox, make a point of going to those sites once a week and scrolling through the list of new recalls.

Even if you think you probably don't have a recalled item, if you've ever bought it in the past, check your freezer and cabinets. That item might still be there.

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1. Driver Scott Dixon, winner of six IndyCar season championships from 2003-2020, represents what country?

2. Name the sportswriter and TV journalist who served as a commentator for HBO Sports' boxing coverage from 1978-2012.

3. John John Florence, Filipe Toledo, Caroline Marks and Caitlin Simmers are elite athletes in what sport?

4. Auricular hematoma, a condition often affecting wrestlers, boxers, rugby players and mixed martial artists, is better known by what name?

5. The Philadelphia Bell, Memphis Southmen, Southern California Sun and the Hawaiians were among the teams in what professional football league that operated from 1974-75?

6. Name the musician and TV/radio personality who composed the "Roundball Rock" theme song for NBC's coverage of the NBA beginning in 1990.

7. In 1959, infielder Pumpsie Green became the first Black player to appear in a game for what American League team?



by Ryan A. Berenz

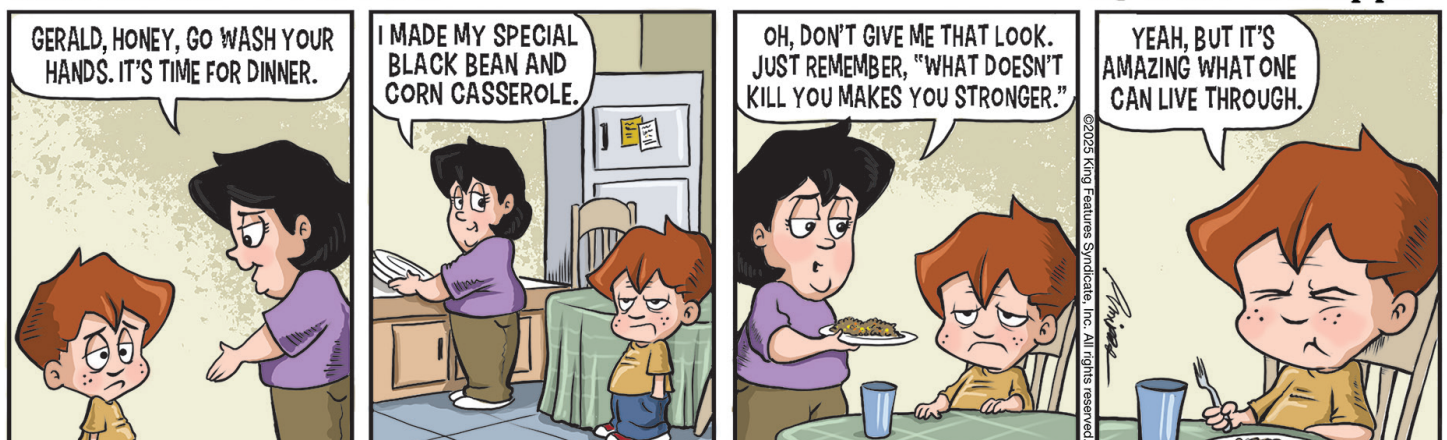
Answers

1. New Zealand.
2. Larry Merchant.
3. Surfing.
4. Cauliflower ear.
5. The World Football League (WFL).
6. John Tesh.
7. The Boston Red Sox.

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Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps





Is this puppy ready for a long hike?

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: I adopted a beautiful pup at about 3 months old this winter. Now that the weather is warming up and "Blondie" is about 6 months old, I can't wait to start going on hikes with her. How far can a puppy that age walk? Do you have any safety tips? -- Carl J., via email

DEAR CARL: Blondie sounds like an amazing pup! With the correct training, she will eventually be able to accompany you on some hikes -- but not this season.

Puppies at 6 months of age should only take limited walks, ranging from five to 10 minutes max, on level ground. Don't take them farther -- pushing them too

soon can cause a host of physical problems because their growth plates haven't fused.

Most experts recommend lengthening walks gradually starting from about 9 months. For longer distances over uneven ground, and when training dogs to carry their own panniers, wait until they are 12 to 18 months old.

So, you won't be able to take Blondie with you on day hikes this year -- unless you carry her. There are special "sport sacks" just for carrying small- to medium-size dogs. Think of it as a fitness challenge for you, and a way for your pup to learn to love the outdoors.

In the meantime, you can work on Blondie's obedience training. It's critical that she respond immediately when you call her, especially out on hikes. She should also be well socialized to people and other dogs -- this prevents a lot of grief on the trail. Right now is the perfect time to do that, and to bond with your dog so that you have fun whether you're outdoors or not.

Send your tips, comments or questions to ask@pawscorner.com.

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Strange BUT TRUE

* Over the course of her 63-year reign, Britain's Queen Victoria survived no fewer than eight assassination attempts.

* Like humans, male kangaroos flex their biceps to impress females.

* The word "sock" comes from the Latin word "soccus" -- a loose-fitting slipper worn by Roman comic actors.

* In Europe, nickel is banned in all alloys for widespread allergy reasons.

* Studies have suggested that gifted people often have bad handwriting because their brains work faster than their hands.

* The New York Times predicted that humans wouldn't be able to fly for at least a million years ... in 1903, the same year as the Wright brothers' first manned flight.

* Alexandre Dumas used a particular shade of blue paper on which to write his fiction. For poetry, he used yellow paper, and his articles were penned on pink paper. Once, he ran out of blue paper and had to use a cream-colored pad instead, which he believed had a negative impact on that work of fiction.

* The first American alarm clock was invented in Concord, New Hampshire, in 1787 by Levi Hutchins. It was never patented and rang only at one time, 4 a.m., to rouse him for work.

* Raspberries are a member of the rose family.

* Despite creating some of the most legendary guitars in the world, LEO Fender, the founder of Fender, Music Man and G&L Guitars, couldn't actually play the instrument.

* The pressure in a champagne bottle is three times higher than that of a car tire.

* When in danger, a hairy frog will break its own bones in order to create claws that it pushes through its skin to scratch a predator.

Thought for the Day: "The service you do for others is the rent you pay for your room here on earth."
-- Muhammad Ali

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The dogwood legend

The ancient stories say that the dogwood tree was tall and straight-limbed in the days of Jesus, and its wood was chosen to build the cross for His crucifixion. Afterwards, the dogwood was cursed to grow gnarled and short, so it would never again be used to crucify, and the bracts of its flowers were given the mark of a driven nail and seeping blood. The center was given the likeness of a bowed head bearing a crown of thorns.



Sources: hgic.clemson.edu, plantmegreen.com, wikipedia.org

— Brenda Weaver

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by Freddy Groves

QL means Quality of Life

Injured or disabled veterans have a friend in QL Plus, or more specifically, the engineering students and their mentors who create the QL Plus projects for veterans.

The purpose of QL Plus is to create the gear and adaptive devices that will make injured veterans more independent and mobile, able to manage their daily lives or participate in sports and hobbies. The students come from 25 colleges and engineering schools across the country, and they work with mentors and experts to create the personalized devices that injured veterans need.

Some of the projects are ingenious -- wheelchair tire cleaners for a veteran's garage, kayak and bike lifts and hiking prosthetics are just a few of the devices created by the students. Then there was the weightlifting hook so a veteran could complete his workout routine, and the one-handed bobsled for the U.S. Para Bobsled team. One veteran was able to play his guitar again after losing his arm when the QL Plus team created an adaptive guitar pick that attaches to his prosthetic arm. To read about these and more, see the "View Featured Projects" link at the website [www.qlplus.org](http://www qlplus.org).

And check YouTube for some of the group's previous projects (www.youtube.com/@qlplusprogram) as well as Instagram (www.instagram.com/ql.plus).

Veterans with a disability (not necessarily service-related) are encouraged to apply to have devices made for them at no cost whatsoever. Each project takes a full year, with design of the device done in the fall semester and the actual building of it in the spring, with completion in May.

If there is a device you need to make your life easier, QL Plus wants to hear from you (www.qlplus.org). Click on "Request A Project." They're now taking applications for the 2025-2026 academic year.

If you don't need a device but you'd like to donate to QL Plus (it's a nonprofit rated three stars by Charity Navigator), you can mail a check to 1544 Spring Hill Road #9927, McLean, VA 22102.

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Wishing Well®

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G	O	I	D	O	A	E	Y	N	S	S	O	Y

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

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1. MOVIES: Which animated movie was the first to be nominated for a Best Picture Academy Award?

2. GEOGRAPHY: Interior and exterior film shots of Alnwick Castle in England are featured in the first two movies of which film series?

3. TELEVISION: What was the last name of the family in the sitcom "Married ... With Children"?

4. LITERATURE: For which category is the Caldecott Medal awarded?

5. GENERAL KNOWLEDGE: Also known as a double eagle, what is the golf term for scoring three under par on a hole?

6. ANATOMY: What is the protein that carries oxygen in the blood?

7. U.S. PRESIDENTS: Which president was the first to name a woman as a Cabinet member?

8. ANIMAL KINGDOM: What is a baby toad called?

9. FOOD & DRINK: Which fast-food chain's secret ingredient is 11 herbs and spices?

10. ASTRONOMY: How many moons does Mars have?

Answers

1. "Beauty and the Beast."
2. "Harry Potter."
3. Bundy.
4. Outstanding children's picture books.
5. Albatross.
6. Hemoglobin.
7. Franklin D. Roosevelt named Frances Perkins as Labor Secretary.
8. Tadpole.
9. Kentucky Fried Chicken.
10. Two: Phobos and Deimos.

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South Dakota Governor



Larry Rhoden



South Dakota: *Under God, the People Rule*

A Prayer for Our State and Nation

We're at the Easter holiday. It's a great holiday to celebrate traditions with family and loved ones. I remember when I was a child, the day before Easter we would dye eggs that we'd just gathered from the chicken coop. You rarely see real eggs at Easter egg hunts anymore! To this day, my wife Sandy hides Easter baskets outside for everyone to find – adults included.

But Easter is about far more than just egg hunts, good food, and time with loved ones. As I write this column, it's Good Friday, the day that we reflect on our Savior's sacrifice for the entire world. Easter comes in a few days to reflect on our Savior's resurrection.

I'd like to take this opportunity to offer a prayer for our state and nation, particularly for the leaders who serve in positions of public service. If you'll join me in prayer:

Dear Savior Jesus Christ,

About 2,000 years ago, the government of one of the most powerful empires in history sent you to the cross.

Today, Christians across the world reflect on your sacrifice for us that day: Good Friday. And we celebrate that which is to come this Sunday: Easter, when you rose from the grave and conquered death.

Lord, you bestow an incredible trust on those of us who serve our people in Government.

In 1 Peter 2:13, you tell us to "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority."

You also share countless examples in your Scriptures of what it means to be a good ruler – or a bad one. Give us the wisdom to know the difference.

Give us the insight to follow that path that will make us good leaders of your people. Give us the knowledge to make the best possible decisions for those that we lead. And when these gifts fail – give us the humility to trust in your will – not our own.

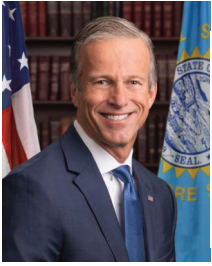
Be with President Donald J. Trump, our congressional delegation, and our state legislators. Be with the leaders in our cities, counties, and communities. And Lord, I ask that you be with me, with Lieutenant Governor Venhuizen, and with our whole administration.

All authority comes from you. So help us to exercise our authority as you would – for the good of your people.

In your name we pray – Amen.

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JOHN THUNE
U.S. SENATOR FOR SOUTH DAKOTA

Republicans Are Working to Make the Tax Cuts Permanent

It's that time of year again: Tax Day. I don't know anyone who looks forward to April 15th. Whether you're getting a refund or you owe money to the IRS, I think most South Dakotans would rather they were keeping more of their money and sending less to Uncle Sam.

Republicans agree, which is why we worked so hard to pass the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA) in 2017. As a result of these tax cuts, most Americans had a smaller tax bill. And while most Americans paid less in taxes, revenue was actually greater than expected, because our economy grew, businesses created jobs, and poverty decreased.

These are significant gains, but they're at risk next year if TCJA is allowed to expire. If these tax cuts aren't extended, it would mean a \$4 trillion tax hike on American families and small businesses, including farms and ranches. Republicans won't let that happen. We're working hard to make these tax cuts permanent and protect hardworking families from a bigger tax bill next year.

Without extending the tax cuts, a typical family of four would see a \$1,700 tax hike next year. The child tax credit would go from \$2,000 to \$1,000 per child. The standard deduction, which is used by most tax filers, would drop from about \$30,000 for a married couple to about \$16,000. So it's critical that these tax policies be extended to ensure South Dakota families don't face smaller paychecks and bigger tax bills next year.

Extending the tax cuts is also critical for small businesses that would otherwise face a \$600 billion tax hike. Most small businesses benefit from a 20 percent small business deduction that was included in TCJA. This deduction helped business owners invest in their operations and create jobs, and extending this tax policy will ensure they can continue to be an engine for growth.

Making TCJA permanent will also be good for our economy. In the years after the law first passed, the economy grew faster than expected. We saw a 50-year low in unemployment. Poverty fell to a record low. And there was a narrowing of the income disparity in our country. And by extending this tax policy we can bring in more revenue the right way: by growing the economy.

Of course, we can't deny that our country has a deficit problem, a problem driven chiefly by out-of-control spending. Unfortunately, we saw an incredible growth in government spending under the Biden administration. Federal spending in 2024 was 54 percent higher than it was in 2019. And as part of our agenda, Republicans are going to take a good, hard look at how taxpayer dollars are being spent and work to return the nation to a more sustainable spending and fiscal trajectory.

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act was a major success in President Trump's first term. It delivered on its promise of lower taxes, greater growth, and a stronger America. We have an opportunity to make those gains permanent and to set our country on a course for a healthy economy for years to come. We plan to seize that opportunity and deliver permanent tax relief for the American people.

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Guest Column: A message from the interns By Jolene and Mark, Washington, D.C. Interns

Jolene

Yá'át'ééh shik'éeí dóó shidine'ée, shi éí Jolene Anderson yínishyé. Hello! My name is Jolene Anderson, and I had the privilege of interning in Dusty Johnson's office as his Ben Reifel intern this semester. The Ben Reifel Internship is an ode to the legacy of Congressman Ben Reifel, the first Lakota member of Congress who represented South Dakota in the 1960s.

When I began this internship, I had no idea what to expect, but my goal was clear: I wanted to advocate for tribal communities. Looking back, I am happy to say that I've met that goal and gained a clearer understanding of what I want to do in the future.

During my internship, I answered constituent calls, wrote memos, attended meetings, and more. As a Ben Reifel intern, my responsibilities were more specialized to tribal affairs. A highlight of my internship was attending a hearing with Dusty entitled, "Leaving Indian Children Behind: Reviewing the State of Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) Schools."

I was encouraged to research the Missing and Murdered Indigenous People (MMIP) crisis. This issue is close to my heart, and it was both challenging and motivating to explore gaps in current legislation. This experience has taught me the importance of well-crafted legislation and maintaining strong partnerships with tribes.

I am extremely grateful for this opportunity and will carry this experience with me as I navigate my future career.

Mark

When I applied for an internship in Dusty's office, I never imagined how impactful it would be. As a first-generation American from Huron and a member of the Karen community, this experience has been a powerful reminder of the American Dream. Through hard work, faith, and perseverance, I've seen how anyone—regardless of where they come from—can contribute meaningfully to this country.

Growing up in a refugee family, I witnessed the challenges of starting over—language barriers, cultural differences, and limited opportunity. But I also saw the importance of personal responsibility, education, and strong family values. My parents taught me that freedom must be earned through hard work and giving back. That principle has shaped my journey at the University of South Dakota, where I'm studying criminal justice.

Interning in Dusty's office has been an incredible privilege. I've attended briefings, drafted memos, and assisted constituents, gaining a firsthand understanding of public service. I've been surrounded by principled leaders who believe in limited government, fiscal responsibility, and putting South Dakota values first.

A defining moment came when I became a U.S. citizen this February. Taking the oath of allegiance, while interning in Congress, was one of the proudest moments of my life. Throughout this internship, I've worked on issues that matter to me: education, family, and economic opportunity.

From arriving in the U.S. without knowing a word of English to working on Capitol Hill, this internship has strengthened my resolve to serve others and protect the freedoms that make America a beacon of hope. I am proud to have represented South Dakota and leave this experience with a deepened commitment to faith, family, and freedom.

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APRIL 7-13, 2025



Welcome back to another edition of the Weekly Round[s] Up. We had a big week out in DC! Several South Dakota groups were in town to talk about issues that are important to them, everything from clinical oncology to the banking industry to issues impacting tribal members. The

Senate recently completed our longest continuous working period in over 15 years thanks to the leadership of Leader John Thune, so I'm especially grateful for all of the South Dakotans who are able to make the trip to DC to visit with us. In addition, I reintroduced the Returning Education to Our States Act, legislation which would eliminate the federal Department of Education and move the most critical federal programs to other departments. More on that legislation and the rest of my week in my Weekly Round[s] Up:

South Dakota groups I met with: Members of the Coalition of Large Tribes, which included several leaders from tribes located in South Dakota; representatives from the South Dakota Section of the American Water Works Association; South Dakota members of the American Society of Clinical Oncology; members of the South Dakota Beer Distributors; members of the South Dakota Bankers Association; members of the South Dakota State Bar; South Dakota State Senator Tim Reed; South Dakota Pork Producers; South Dakota members of the Military Officers Association of America; South Dakota members of the Federation of Exchange Accommodators; students from Bowdle High School; Tom Walsh of Riverview LLP, which has South Dakota locations in Bryant and Veblen; and students from Marty Indian School.

South Dakota towns represented: Aberdeen, Bath, Bowdle, Brookings, Bruce, Burke, Eagle Butte, Ft. Thompson, Mitchell, Mount Vernon, New Underwood, Pierre, Pine Ridge, Rapid City, Rosebud, Scotland, Sioux Falls, Spearfish, Volga and Yankton.

Other meetings: Michelle Bowman, member of the Federal Reserve Board of Governors; members of the National Shooting Sports Foundation; and members of the Barona Band of Mission Indians.

The Returning Education to Our States Act: This past week, I reintroduced legislation to eliminate the federal Department of Education and redistribute all critical federal programs to other departments. This legislation does not cut a dollar of education funding. Rather, funds will continue to flow directly to states in the form of block grants with other critical programs funded through the appropriate federal agencies. Eliminating the bureaucracy at the Department of Education will save approximately \$2.2 billion per year in taxpayer dollars. You can read more about this legislation here as well as look at the list of where each program will end up.

Hearings: I attended four hearings this past week. Two hearings were in the Select Committee on Intelligence. The other two were part of my work on the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC). In a hearing of SASC's Subcommittee on Cybersecurity, which I chair, I introduced Lieutenant General William Hartman, Acting Commander of U.S. Cyber Command. Watch that clip here.

Classified briefings: I attended two classified briefings this past week: one as part of my work on SASC, and one as part of my work on SASC's Subcommittee on Strategic Forces.

Votes taken: 21 – as I've said in past weeks, we continue working to confirm more of President Trump's nominees to executive positions. One nomination confirmed this past week that I'm particularly pleased

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about is my friend Mike Huckabee, who was sworn in to serve as the United States' Ambassador to Israel. Mike served as Governor of Arkansas while I was serving as Governor of South Dakota, and we worked together a lot during this time. I know he will do a great job serving as America's liaison to our ally Israel, and I was happy to vote to confirm him.

Legislation introduced: This past week, I reintroduced the Rural Housing Service Reform Act, legislation to improve federal rural housing programs and strengthen the supply of affordable housing in rural America. You can read more about this bill [here](#).

I introduced the Health Tech Investment Act, legislation aimed at improving health outcomes for Medicare patients by encouraging the use of cutting-edge, artificial intelligence (AI)-enabled medical devices. This bill would establish a consistent and predictable Medicare payment pathway for these technologies, providing patients with earlier and more accurate diagnoses. Read more [here](#).

I also introduced legislation to prevent the smuggling of American-made AI chips into China. The Stop Stealing our Chips Act would amend the Export Control Reform Act to create a whistleblower incentive program at the Bureau of Industry and Security. The program is designed to increase reporting of illegal exports. Read more about this [here](#).

My staff in South Dakota visited: Aberdeen, Hot Springs, Huron, Meckling, Vermillion and Wakonda.

Steps taken: 46,712 steps or 23.46 miles

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Dr. James L. Snyder Ministries

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How Much Sleep Is Too Much?

I have noticed recently that sleeping has become a very important part of my life. This just snuck up on me overnight.

When I was young and living at home, I tried to come up with excuses and reasons for not going to bed at night. My parents had an early bedtime schedule that they enforced rather strictly. Try as I might, I was never successful in beating that schedule.

Lately, I have noticed a completely different attitude about sleeping. I'm not sure where it came from, and I'll have to ponder it for a while to find out.

It's not just my problem but also the problem I share with The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage. Maybe I got it from her, I just don't know.

When the sun goes down, so does my interest in staying awake.

After we finish the day, we watch a little bit of television before we go to bed. If there's anything more boring than television, I haven't found it yet.

Usually around 9 o'clock, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage will look at me and say, "Is it time to go to bed yet?"

I have been married long enough to realize that when your wife asks a question, she may not be asking the question she's asking, but setting a trap for something else. I never know what else it might be.

When she asked that question, I looked at her seriously and asked, "Are you ready to go to bed yet?" Then, looking at my watch, I said, "It's not quite 9 o'clock yet."

She clears her throat and then says, "I was just wondering if you were ready to go to bed."

I'm not going to fall into that trap because I know she's trying to set it up, so I became the reason we went to bed this early. Every once in a while, I noticed that her eyes were shut and I asked her, "You're not sleeping are you?"

"Oh no," she will say.

Then it goes around the other way, and she sees my eyes are closed and asks me, "Are you sleeping?"

"Oh no," I will say, "I've just been praying for the day."

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She will smile and say, "I thought so because I heard you snore."

As we age, our time schedule begins to change a bit, and it seems healthier to go to bed earlier and get more sleep.

I don't want to be the first one to go to bed because I don't want her to know that I am tired. I want to ensure she realizes I have my old energy, which is actually getting out of date.

Being retired has redefined our schedule. Our doctor's appointments are the only things on our schedule during the week. We have so many doctor appointments that we might have to hire a secretary to help us keep up with our schedule.

Lately, I've been trying to stay awake until 10 o'clock, and then go to bed. I'm not sure why I stay up until 10 o'clock, but I'm trying to convince myself that I'm not as old as I think I am.

The next thing about sleep is getting up in the morning. It is funny that I can be awake just about all night and then fall into a sleep that lasts several hours by 4 o'clock in the morning. I know I should have an alarm clock to get me up, but what do I need to get up for?

The only reason to get up in the morning is for breakfast. I can't think of anything else to schedule my early rising from La-la land.

The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage needs to get up when the great-grandchild comes for the day. She babysits for the granddaughter throughout the week, so she has a reason to get up at a certain time.

When I am on the other side of the bed, I do not have any reason to get up at a certain time in the morning. When I get out, I get up.

Sometimes, I wake up around 5 o'clock and enjoy the silence in our neighborhood. I think I should be getting up very soon, but then I fall back into such a sound sleep that I don't get awake until 7:30. I wake up, look at my clock, and wonder where in the world the time went.

I stare at the clock and wonder how in the world I could have slept for 9 ½ hours. That doesn't seem possible at all. And yet it happens more than I like to admit.

The question I have is, how much sleep is too much? What is the right amount of sleep for a person my age?

Another aspect of this sleep problem is that I usually nap in the afternoon. I think I sleep more than I'm awake, which may be suitable for the people around me.

In all of my considerations about this, I must confess that I really enjoy sleeping. I'm not sure of any activity I enjoy more than this.

Thinking about this, I was reminded of what David said. "It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep." (Psalms 127:2).

Sleeping is a blessing from God.

Dr. James L. Snyder lives in Ocala, FL with the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage. Telephone 1-352-216-3025, e-mail jamessnyder51@gmail.com, website www.jamessnyderministries.com

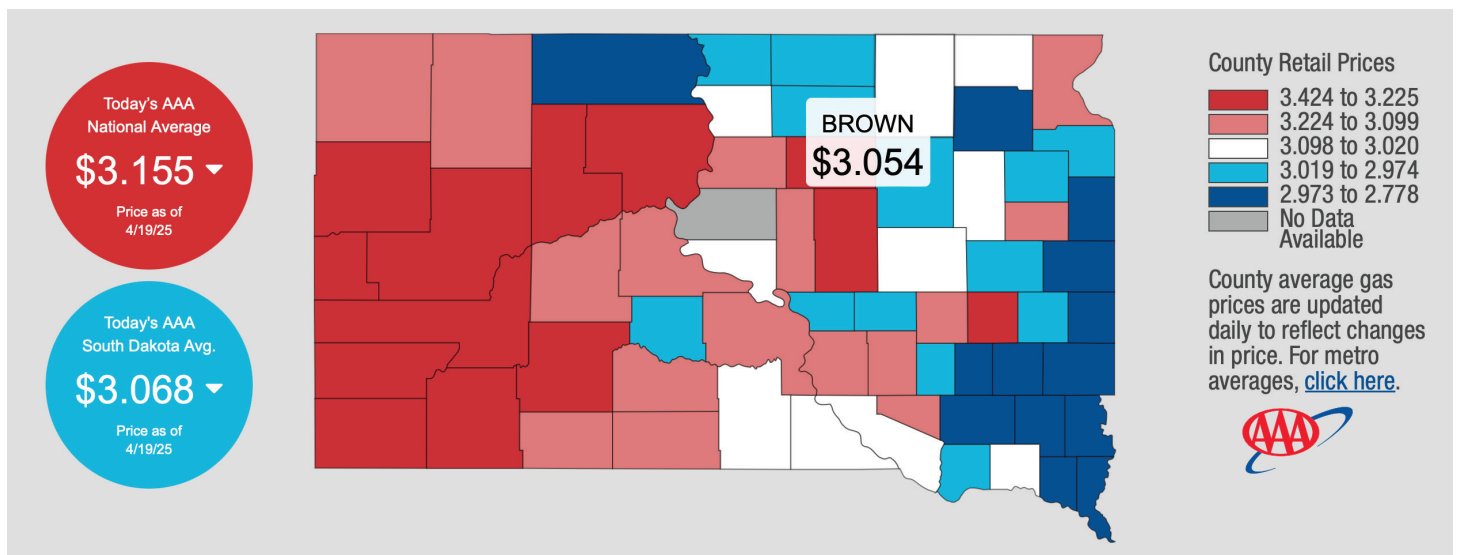
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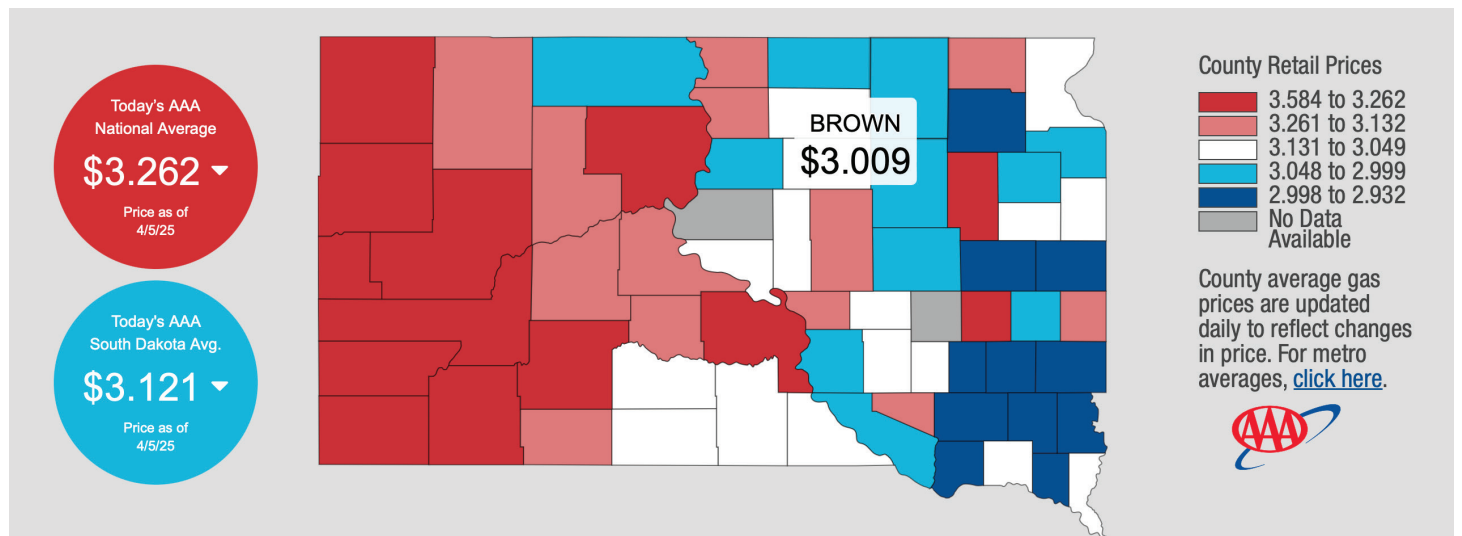
South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Current Avg.	\$3.068	\$3.262	\$3.684	\$3.252
Yesterday Avg.	\$3.074	\$3.264	\$3.693	\$3.258
Week Ago Avg.	\$3.095	\$3.291	\$3.701	\$3.289
Month Ago Avg.	\$3.016	\$3.192	\$3.648	\$3.290
Year Ago Avg.	\$3.403	\$3.544	\$3.974	\$3.710

This Week



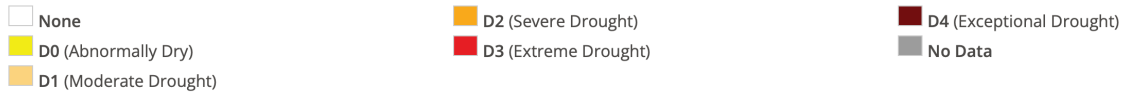
Last Week



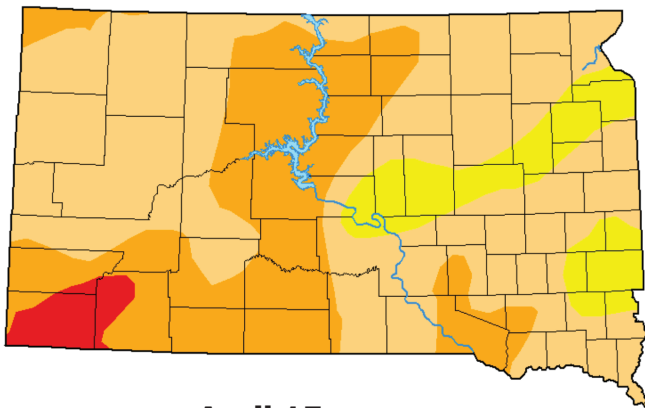
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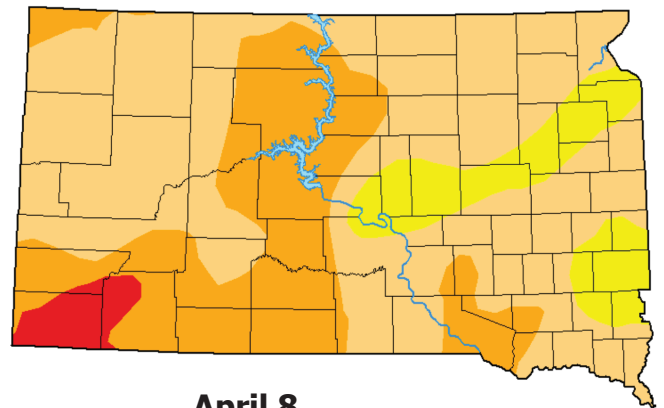
Drought Classification



Drought Monitor



April 15



April 8

Across the High Plains, ongoing drought or abnormal dryness mostly stayed the same or worsened after dry weather occurred across the region (excluding North Dakota) and warmer-than-normal temperatures overspread the Great Plains and central Rocky Mountains. Temperatures from 3-12 degrees above normal occurred across the region, with the warmest readings occurring in the western Great Plains and in the Colorado Front Range area. Widespread degradation in drought conditions, due to low snowpack and short- and long-term precipitation deficits, occurred in the central and southern Rocky Mountains in Colorado. Moderate drought expanded in western and east-central Kansas this week, where streamflow and soil moisture dropped amid growing precipitation deficits. Similar conditions existed from south-central into eastern Nebraska, where moderate drought became re-established. Localized degradations to drought conditions occurred in north-central South Dakota amid growing precipitation deficits, though conditions across most of the Dakotas remained unchanged this week. Moderate drought coverage decreased slightly southwest of the Bighorn Mountains in Wyoming, where precipitation deficits lessened and soil moisture conditions improved.

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EARTHTALK

Dear EarthTalk: What does the U.N. hope to accomplish by declaring 2025 the International Year of Glaciers' Preservation and what kinds of activities are in the works? – R. Holmes, Anchorage, AK

The United Nations has declared 2025 the "International Year of Glaciers' Preservation," a significant step towards preserving glaciers as vital resources. Sulagna Mishra from the World Meteorological Organization stresses the importance of this action to create awareness, change policies and mobilize resources to make sure we have good research that can help us mitigate and adapt to these new changes.



The UN hopes to raise awareness about global warming's effect on glaciers in 2025. Credit: Pexels.com.

Glaciers are typically located in elevated, cold environments like the Arctic and Greenland. They attract millions of tourists every year, and are also crucial to marine ecosystems and our communities. Many regions of Asia and South America rely on glacial melt to maintain water supply during the year. But climate change is causing rapid glacier melting. According to NASA, Greenland's glaciers are melting at a rate of 267 billion tons per year, increasing sea level rise and the threat of extreme weather. Pema Gyamtsho, Director General of the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, says that alpine glaciers are among "the most sensitive components of the Earth's systems to global climate change." This increased melting could cause outburst floods from pools of water beneath glaciers called subglacial lakes, a disaster that has killed over 12,000 people according to an article from The Hill.

The U.N.'s decision to establish 2025 as a year for glacier preservation aims to raise global awareness about the key role of glaciers in our climate and communities. Additionally, the U.N. wants to ensure that those impacted by glacial melting receive the correct services. According to the U.N. General Assembly Resolutions from the 77th session, the U.N. is inviting member states, NGOs, civil societies, and different U.N. organizations to promote public awareness of glaciers through events and educational programs.

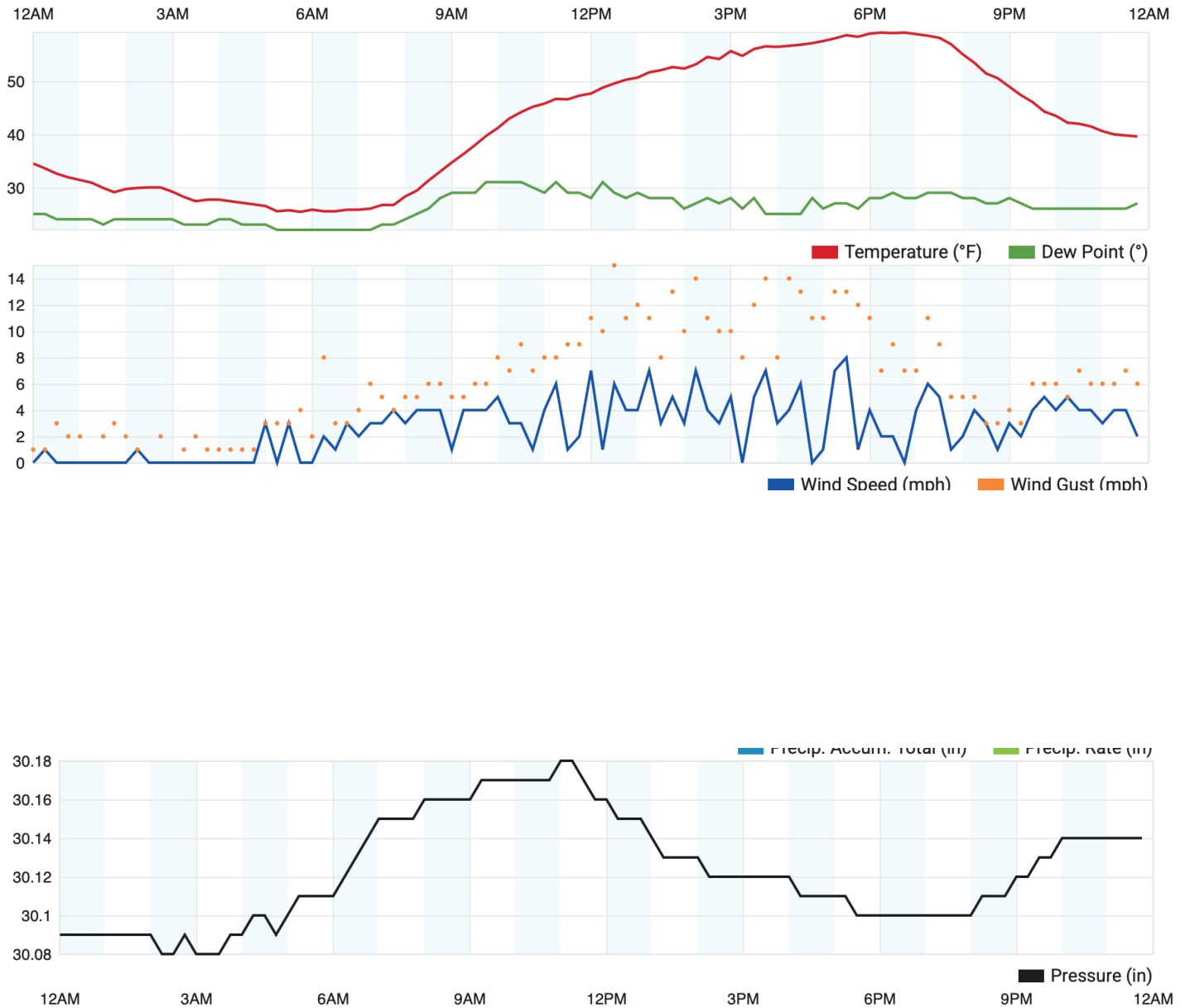
The government of Tajikistan decided to host an international conference in 2025 for glacier preservation. Furthermore, the U.N. campaign will develop a trust fund to support research for countries suffering from glacial melt. The fund will receive investments from member states, international organizations, the private sector and NGO's. The money will help develop monitoring programs and AI management, among other projects. As this issue significantly affects indigenous communities, the U.N. will work with affected groups to better understand and target the issues.

Practicing sustainable actions such as taking public transport, consuming less, and recycling, are all effective in lessening your carbon footprint, and therefore glacial melt. You can also get involved with citizen science, where it is possible to work with local groups to study glacial melts. The U.N. has also made it accessible to plan your own community event or easily attend others. These efforts can make a significant difference!

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



High: 65 °F

Sunny and
Breezy

Tonight



Low: 33 °F

Mostly Clear

Monday



High: 69 °F

Sunny

Monday Night



Low: 42 °F

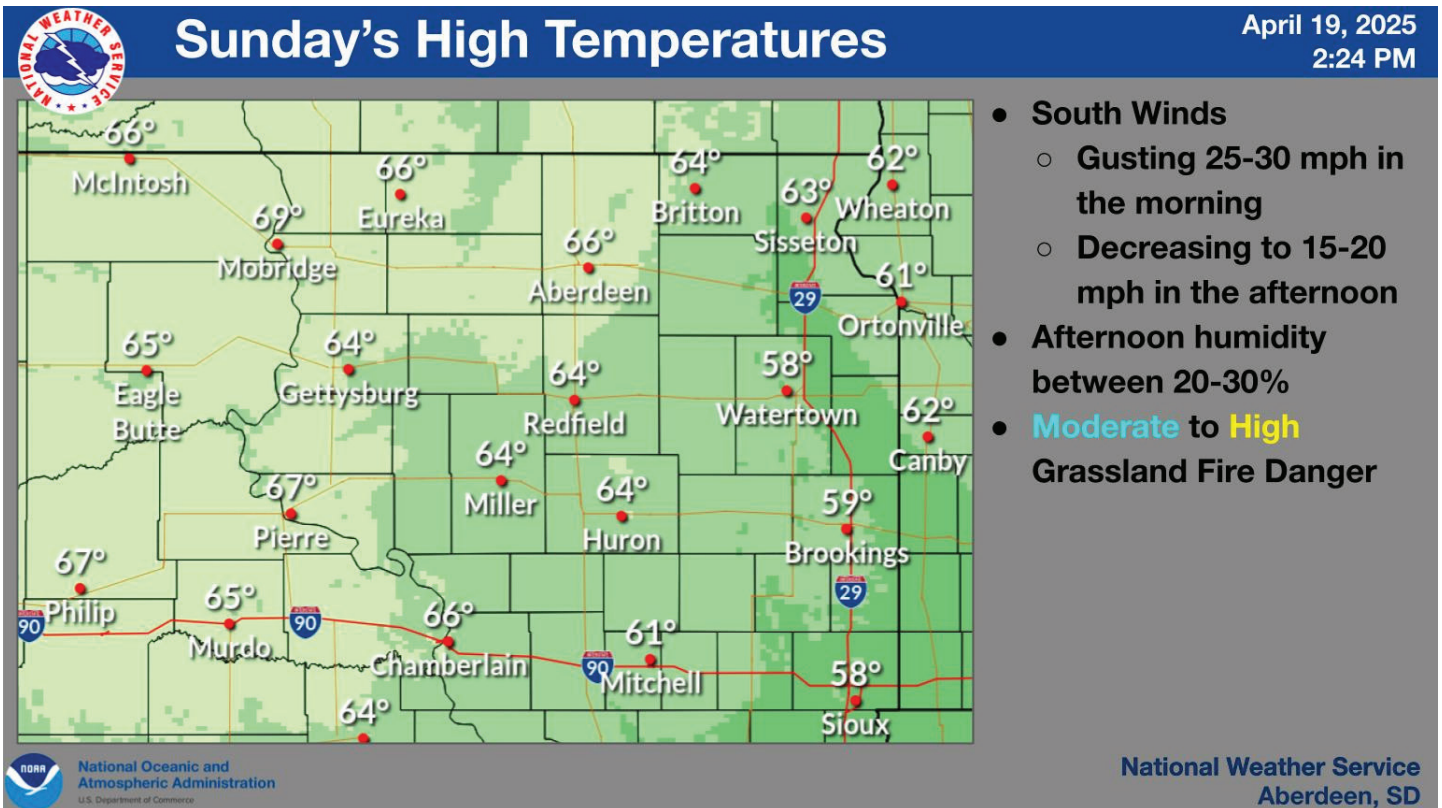
Showers

Tuesday



High: 67 °F

Slight Chance
Showers and
Breezy



Sunday will feature a breezy start but lighter winds in the afternoon with low humidity with highs from near normal to as much as 10 degrees above normal.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 60 °F at 6:46 PM

Low Temp: 25 °F at 5:34 AM

Wind: 15 mph at 12:23 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 13 hours, 51 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 93 in 1980

Record Low: 11 in 2013

Average High: 60

Average Low: 33

Average Precip in April.: 1.04

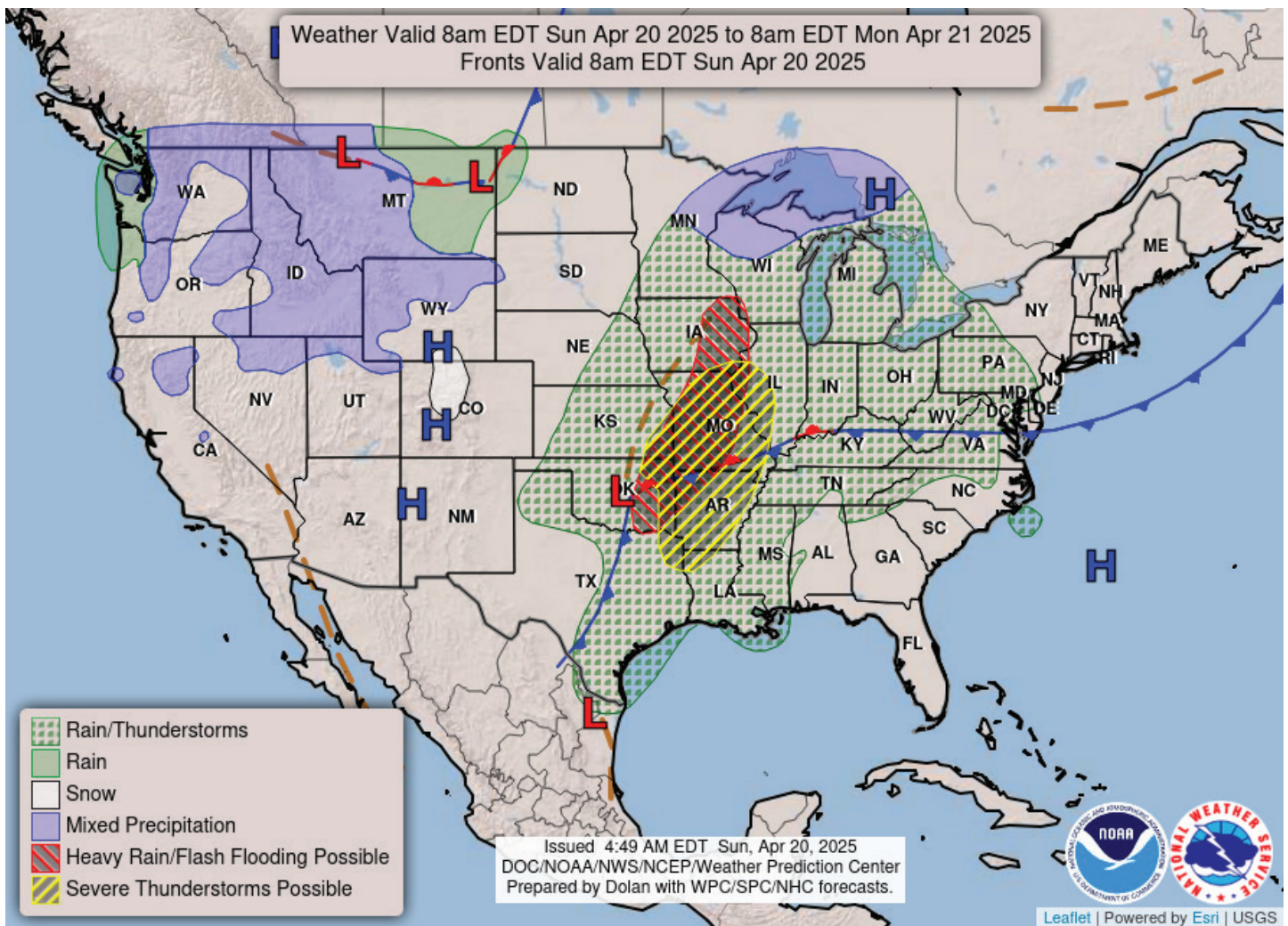
Precip to date in April.: 1.09

Average Precip to date: 3.10

Precip Year to Date: 1.72

Sunset Tonight: 8:26:45 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:33:57 am



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Today in Weather History

April 20th, 1966: Canadian high pressure brought frigid air to the Rockies and northern Plains. Record lows included three below in Scottsbluff, Nebraska, two below in Cheyenne and Casper, Wyoming, two above in Rapid City, 11 above in Fargo, Williston, and Aberdeen, and 15 in Huron.

April 20th, 2007: Severe thunderstorms moved through parts of central and northeast South Dakota during the afternoon and evening, producing large hail. The most significant hail measured 1.75 inches in diameter and fell 3 miles east of Westport in Brown County.

1901 - A spring storm produced unusually heavy snow in northeast Ohio. Warren received 35.5 inches in thirty-six hours, and 28 inches fell at Green Hill. Akron OH established April records of 15.6 inches in 24 hours, and 26.6 inches for the month. Pittsburgh PA established April records of 12.7 inches in 24 hours, and 13.5 inches for the month. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1920 - Tornadoes in Mississippi and Alabama killed 219 persons. (David Ludlum)

1952 - The tankers Esso Suez and Esso Greensboro crashed in a thick fog off the coast of Morgan City LA. Only five of the Greensboro's crew survived after the ship bursts into flame. (David Ludlum)

1987 - Fifty-two cities in the central and eastern U.S. reported new record high temperatures for the date. The high of 92 degrees at Memphis TN was a record for April, and the high of 94 at Little Rock AR equalled their April record. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - A storm in the western U.S. brought heavy rain to parts of California. Mount Wilson was soaked with 4.15 inches of rain in 24 hours. The heavy rain caused some flooding and mudslides in the Los Angeles area, and a chain reaction collision of vehicles along the Pomona Freeway which resulted in 26 injuries. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Hot weather spread from the southwestern U.S. into the Great Plains Region. Twenty-three cities reported new record high temperatures for the date. The afternoon high of 104 degrees at Tucson AZ was an April record, and highs of 87 at Provo UT, 90 at Pueblo CO, and 85 at Salt Lake City UT, equalled April records. (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - A fast moving Pacific storm produced heavy snow in the central mountains and the Upper Arkansas Valley of Colorado, with a foot of snow reported at Leadville. Thunderstorms in the south central U.S. produced wind gusts to 76 mph at Tulsa OK, and heavy rain which caused flooding of Cat Claw Creek in the Abilene TX area. Lightning struck the building housing a fish farm in Scott AR killing 10,000 pounds of fish. Many of the fish died from the heat of the fire. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2006 - Up to five feet of snow falls in the Dakotas. I-94 and other highways were closed, power was out for thousands and caused at least four deaths.

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Daily Devotion

Why Today Matters

Today, as you celebrate the resurrection of Christ, rejoice in the certainty of an eternal home with Him.

1 Corinthians 15:13-23 English Standard Version

¹³ But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁴ And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. ¹⁵ We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. ¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If in Christ we have hope[a] in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

²⁰ But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. ²³ But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.

Many people look at Easter as an occasion for buying new clothes and going to church. But it's not just a day to celebrate the empty tomb and move on as if nothing has changed. We didn't witness the risen Christ after His burial, so imagining the first Easter morning is difficult. Not only that, but our familiarity with the story can make it easy to overlook the stunning magnitude of what transpired.

In today's passage, Paul gives us a glimpse of the resurrection's importance by describing what would have happened if Jesus hadn't been raised. Our celebrations would be a lie, and our faith would be worthless. We'd still bear the guilt of our sin—with no hope of forgiveness, salvation, or eternal life. If Jesus hadn't been raised, His death would have accomplished nothing.

That's why Easter is an awesome reason for celebration. Jesus died in our place to satisfy the requirement for our atonement—a price too high for us to pay. The resurrection proves that God was satisfied with the Savior's sacrifice (Rom. 3:25) and counted it sufficient for the forgiveness of all our sins (1 Cor. 15:20-23). And because of Christ's victory over death, we too will be resurrected and receive an imperishable inheritance reserved for us in heaven. This hope enables us to rejoice every day.

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.18.25

5 13 15 17 28 1

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$50,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.19.25

4 11 23 29 36 9

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$31,450,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.19.25

3 22 39 41 43 11

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 3 Mins 55 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.19.25

4 14 21 28 35

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$118,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.19.25

2 3 21 55 63 12

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.19.25

7 25 37 39 63 1

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$139,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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Upcoming Groton Events

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

News from the **AP** Associated Press

Zelenskyy says Russia is trying to create an 'impression of a ceasefire' as attacks continue

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy accused Russia on Sunday of creating a false appearance of honoring an Easter ceasefire, saying Moscow continued to launch attacks overnight after Russian President Vladimir Putin announced a unilateral temporary truce in Ukraine.

"As of Easter morning, we can say that the Russian army is trying to create a general impression of a ceasefire, but in some places, it does not abandon individual attempts to advance and inflict losses on Ukraine," Zelenskyy said in a post on X.

Despite Putin's declaration of an Easter ceasefire on Saturday, Zelenskyy said Ukrainian forces had recorded 59 instances of Russian shelling and five assaults by units across various areas along the front line, as well as dozens of drone strikes.

Zelenskyy said that Russia must fully adhere to the ceasefire conditions and reiterated Ukraine's offer to extend the truce for 30 days, starting midnight Sunday.

He said the proposal "remains on the table" and added: "We will act in accordance with the actual situation on the ground."

Zelenskyy said Saturday night that some areas were quieter since the ceasefire was announced, which he claimed showed Putin to be the "true cause" of the war.

"As soon as Putin gave an order to scale back the attacks, the intensity of strikes and killings dropped. The only source of this war and its prolongation is in Russia," he wrote on X.

Russia-installed officials in the partially occupied Ukrainian region of Kherson said that Ukrainian forces continued their attacks.

Just hours after announcing the ceasefire, Putin attended an Easter service late Saturday at Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Saviour led by Patriarch Kirill, head of the Russian Orthodox Church and a vocal supporter of Putin and the war in Ukraine.

According to the Kremlin, the ceasefire will last from 6 p.m. Moscow time (1500 GMT) on Saturday to midnight (2100 GMT) following Easter Sunday.

Putin offered no details on how the ceasefire would be monitored or whether it would cover airstrikes or ongoing ground battles that rage around the clock.

His announcement came after U.S. President Donald Trump said Friday that negotiations between Ukraine and Russia are "coming to a head" and insisted that neither side is "playing" him in his push to end the grinding three-year war.

Netanyahu says Israel has 'no choice' but to continue fighting in Gaza

By WAFAA SHURAF, JOSEF FEDERMAN and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said again Saturday that Israel has "no choice" but to continue fighting in Gaza and will not end the war before destroying Hamas, freeing the hostages and ensuring that the territory won't present a threat to Israel.

The prime minister also repeated his vow to make sure Iran never gets a nuclear weapon.

Netanyahu is under growing pressure at home not only from families of hostages and their supporters but also from reservist and retired Israeli soldiers who question the continuation of the war after Israel shattered a ceasefire last month.

In his statement, he said Hamas has rejected Israel's latest proposal to free half the hostages in return for another temporary truce. Hamas has said it will only free the remaining hostages in return for an Israeli withdrawal and a lasting ceasefire, as called for in the agreement that Israel ended.

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Israeli strikes meanwhile killed more than 90 people in 48 hours, Gaza's Health Ministry said Saturday. Israeli troops have been increasing their attacks to pressure Hamas to release the hostages and disarm.

Children and women were among the 15 people killed overnight, according to hospital staff. At least 11 dead were in the southern city of Khan Younis, several of them in a tent in the Muwasi area where hundreds of thousands of displaced people stay, hospital workers said. Israel has designated it as a humanitarian zone.

Mourners cradled and kissed the faces of the dead. A man stroked a child's forehead with his finger before body bags were closed.

"Omar is gone ... I wish it was me," one brother cried out.

Four other people were killed in strikes in Rafah city, including a mother and her daughter, according to the European Hospital, where the bodies were taken.

Later on Saturday, an Israeli airstrike on a group of civilians west of Nuseirat in central Gaza killed one person, according to Al-Awda Hospital.

Israel's military in a statement said it killed more than 40 militants over the weekend.

Separately, the military said a soldier was killed Saturday in northern Gaza and confirmed it was the first soldier death since Israel resumed the war on March 18. Hamas' armed wing, the Qassam Brigades, said it ambushed Israeli forces operating east of Gaza City's al-Tuffah neighborhood.

Israel has vowed to intensify attacks across Gaza and occupy indefinitely large "security zones" inside the small coastal strip of over 2 million people.

Israel also has blockaded Gaza for the past six weeks, again barring the entry of food and other goods.

This week, aid groups raised the alarm, saying thousands of children have become malnourished and most people are barely eating one meal a day as stocks dwindle, according to the United Nations.

The head of the World Health Organization's eastern Mediterranean office, Dr. Hanan Balkhy, on Friday urged the new U.S. ambassador in Israel, Mike Huckabee, to push the country to lift Gaza's blockade so medicines and other aid can enter.

"I would wish for him to go in and see the situation firsthand," she said.

The war began when Hamas-led militants attacked southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killing about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting 251. Most of the hostages have been released in ceasefire agreements or other deals. Hamas currently holds 59 hostages, 24 of them believed to be alive.

Israel's offensive has since killed over 51,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between civilians and combatants.

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

Frustration has been growing on both sides, with rare public protests against Hamas in Gaza and continued weekly rallies in Israel pressing the government to reach a deal to bring all hostages home.

Thousands of Israelis joined protests Saturday night pressing for a deal.

"Do what you should have done a long time ago. Bring them all back now! And in one deal. And if this means to stop the war, then stop the war," former hostage Omer Shem Tov told a rally in Tel Aviv.

Zimbabwe's stone carvers seek a revival as an Oxford exhibition confronts a British colonial legacy

By FARAI MUTSAKA Associated Press

CHITUNGWIZA, Zimbabwe (AP) — A pair of white hands blinding a Black face. A smiling colonizer with a Bible, crushing the skull of a screaming native with his boot. Chained men in gold mines, and a pregnant woman.

These stone sculptures from Zimbabwe will take center stage at an upcoming exhibition at Oxford University in Britain, aiming to "contextualize" the legacy of British imperialist Cecil John Rhodes with depictions of religious deception, forced labor and sexual abuse.

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Rhodes conquered large parts of southern Africa in the late 19th century. He made a fortune in gold and diamond mining and grabbed land from the local population. His grave lies under a slab of stone atop a hill in Zimbabwe.

Oxford's Oriel College, where the exhibition will be held in September, is a symbolic setting. A statue of Rhodes stands there despite protests against it since 2015. Rhodes, who died in 1902, was an Oriel student who left 100,000 pounds (now valued at about 10.5 million pounds, or \$13.5 million) to the school. His influence endures through a scholarship for students from southern African countries.

For Zimbabwean stone carvers at Chitungwiza Arts Center near the capital, Harare, the exhibition is more than an opportunity for Western audiences to glimpse a dark history. It is also a chance to revive an ancient but struggling art form.

Stone sculpture, once a thriving local industry, has suffered due to vast economic challenges and declining tourism.

"This will boost business. Buyers abroad will now see our work and buy directly from the artists," said sculptor Wallace Mkanka. His piece, depicting the blinded Black face, was selected as the best of 110 entries and will be one of four winning sculptures on display at Oxford.

Zimbabwe, meaning "House of Stone," derives its identity from the Great Zimbabwe ruins, a 1,800-acre Iron Age city built with precision-cut stones delicately stacked without mortar. It is a UNESCO World heritage site.

The southern African country has long used stone sculpture as a form of storytelling to immortalize history. The craft survived close to a century of colonial rule that sought to erase local traditions, religion and art forms.

It thrived internationally instead. Thousands of pieces were plundered from Africa. Some later became subjects of repatriation campaigns. Others became prized by tourists and collectors. A permanent collection of 20 Zimbabwean stone sculptures is displayed in a pedestrian tunnel at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, one of the world's busiest.

At its peak following independence, Zimbabwe's stone sculpture industry thrived, with local white farmers purchasing pieces for their homes and facilitating international sales.

"Customers were everywhere. They would pay up front, and I always had a queue of clients," recalled Tafadzwa Tandii, a 45-year-old sculptor whose work will feature in the Oxford exhibition.

However, the industry has struggled over the past two decades.

Zimbabwe's global image suffered after controversial land reforms more than two decades ago displaced over 4,000 white farmers to redistribute land to about 300,000 Black families, according to government figures. Late ruler Robert Mugabe defended the reforms as necessary to address colonial-era inequities, but they had unintended economic consequences.

"Many of our customers were friends of the farmers. That is where the problem originated from," said Tendai Gwaravaza, chairman of Chitungwiza Arts Center.

At the center, the sound of grinders filled the air as sculptors carved. Hundreds of finished pieces, ranging from small carvings to life-sized sculptures, waited for buyers.

"The only solution now is to get out there to the markets ourselves. If we don't, no one will," Gwaravaza said.

The Oxford exhibition represents such an opportunity for exposure, he said.

It is the brainchild of the Oxford Zimbabwe Arts Partnership, formed in response to the "Rhodes Must Fall" campaign during the Black Lives Matter protests in the U.S.

The group, consisting of Zimbabwean artists, an Oxford alumnus and a professor of African history, initially envisioned a larger project titled "Oxford and Rhodes: Past, Present, and Future." It included enclosing Rhodes' statue in glass, installing 100 life-size bronze statues of African liberation fighters and creating a collaborative sculpture using recycled materials to represent the future.

However, the project required an estimated 200,000 pounds, far beyond available resources. Eventually, Oriel College provided 10,000 pounds for a scaled-down exhibition.

"It's still my hope that one day it could happen, but for now we have just accepted something very small to make a start and to do something," said Richard Pantlin, the Oxford alumnus and OZAP co-founder.

15 years after Deepwater Horizon oil spill, lawsuits stall and restoration is incomplete

By JACK BROOK Associated Press/Report for America

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Fifteen years after the Deepwater Horizon oil rig exploded off the Gulf Coast, killing 11 and sending 134 million gallons (507.2 million liters) of crude gushing into the ocean, the effects of the nation's worst offshore oil spill are still being felt.

Oil company BP paid billions of dollars in damages, propelling ambitious coastal restoration projects across five states. Yet cleanup workers and local residents who suffered health impacts they attribute to the oil spill have struggled to have their cases heard in court and few have received significant compensation.

Conservation groups say the spill catalyzed innovative restoration work across the Gulf Coast, but are alarmed at the recent halt of a flagship land-creation project in Louisiana. As the Trump administration expands offshore oil and gas, they are concerned the best opportunities for rebuilding the Gulf Coast are slipping away.

Tying health problems to the spill remains hard to prove in court

In the coastal community of Lafitte in southeast Louisiana, Tammy Gremillion is celebrating Easter Sunday, the anniversary of the April 20 spill, without her daughter. She remembers warning Jennifer against joining a cleanup crew tasked with containing the spill for BP.

"But I couldn't stop her — they were offering these kids lots of money," Gremillion said. "They didn't know the dangers. They didn't do what they should have to protect these young people."

Jennifer worked knee-deep in oil for months, returning home reeking of fumes, covered in black splotches and breaking out in rashes and suffering headaches. She also was exposed to Corexit, an EPA-approved chemical applied on and below the water to disperse oil, which has been linked to health problems.

In 2020, Jennifer died of leukemia, a blood cancer that can be caused by exposure to oil.

Gremillion, who broke down in tears as she recounted her daughter's death, is "1,000% confident" that exposure to toxins during the cleanup caused the cancer.

She filed a lawsuit against BP in 2022, although the allegations have been difficult to establish in court. Gremillion's suit is one of a small number of cases still pending.

An investigation by The Associated Press previously found all but a handful of roughly 4,800 lawsuits seeking compensation for health problems linked to the oil spill have been dismissed and only one has been settled.

In a 2012 settlement, BP paid ill workers and coastal residents \$67 million, but this amounted to no more than \$1,300 each for nearly 80% of those seeking compensation.

Attorneys from the Downs Law Group, representing Gremillion and around 100 others in cases against BP, say the company leveraged procedural technicalities to block victims from getting their day in court.

BP declined to comment on pending litigation. In court filings, BP denied allegations that oil exposure caused health problems and attacked the credibility of medical experts brought by plaintiffs.

Controversy over coastal restoration

The environmental impact was devastating, recalled PJ Hahn, who served on the frontlines as a southeast Louisiana coastal management official. He watched the oil eat away at barrier islands and marsh around his community in Plaquemines Parish until "it would just crumble like a cookie in hot coffee, just break apart."

Oyster beds suffocated, reefs were blanketed in chemicals and the fishing industry tanked. Pelicans diving for dead fish emerged from the contaminated waters smeared in a black sheen. Tens of thousands of seabirds and sea turtles were killed, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Since then, "significant progress" has been made restoring Gulf habitats and ecosystems, according to The Natural Resource Damage Assessment Trustee Council, a group of state and federal agencies tasked with managing restoration funded by penalties levied against BP.

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The council says more than 300 restoration projects worth \$5.38 billion have been approved in the Gulf of Mexico, which President Donald Trump renamed the Gulf of America. The projects include acquiring wetlands in Mississippi to protect nesting areas for birds, rebuilding reefs along Pensacola Bay in Florida and restoring around 4 square miles (11 square kilometers) of marsh in Lake Borgne near New Orleans.

While a tragedy, the spill “galvanized a movement — one that continues to push for a healthier, more resilient coast,” said Simone Maloz, campaign director for Restore the Mississippi River Delta, a conservation coalition.

The influx of billions of dollars in penalties paid by BP “allowed us to think bigger, act faster and rely on science to guide large-scale solutions,” she added.

Yet what many conservationists see as the flagship of the restoration projects funded by the Deepwater Horizon disaster payout — an approximately \$3 billion effort to divert sediment from the Mississippi River to rebuild 21 square miles (54 square kilometers) of land in southeast Louisiana — has stalled over concerns of its impact on the livelihoods of local communities and dolphin populations.

Louisiana Gov. Jeff Landry has said the project would “break our culture” by harming local oyster and shrimp fisheries due to the influx of freshwater. Earlier this month, his administration paused the project for 90 days, citing its high costs, and its future remains uncertain.

More offshore drilling planned for Gulf

The Trump administration is seeking to sell more offshore oil and gas leases, which the industry trade group American Petroleum Institute called “a big step forward for American energy dominance.”

BP announced an oil discovery in the Gulf last week and plans more than 40 new wells in the next three years. The company told the AP it has improved safety standards and oversight.

“We remain keenly aware that we must always put safety first,” BP said in an emailed statement. “We have made many changes so that such an event should never happen again.”

Still, Joseph Gordon, climate and energy director for the nonprofit Oceana, warned Deepwater Horizon’s legacy should be “an alarm bell” against the expansion of offshore drilling.

‘I thought I’d died.’ How landmines are continuing to claim lives in post-Assad Syria

By GHAITH ALSAYED and SALLY ABOU ALJOUD Associated Press

IDLIB, Syria (AP) — Suleiman Khalil was harvesting olives in a Syrian orchard with two friends four months ago, unaware the soil beneath them still hid deadly remnants of war.

The trio suddenly noticed a visible mine lying on the ground. Panicked, Khalil and his friends tried to leave, but he stepped on a land mine and it exploded. His friends, terrified, ran to find an ambulance, but Khalil, 21, thought they had abandoned him.

“I started crawling, then the second land mine exploded,” Khalil told The Associated Press. “At first, I thought I’d died. I didn’t think I would survive this.”

Khalil’s left leg was badly wounded in the first explosion, while his right leg was blown off from above the knee in the second. He used his shirt to tourniquet the stump and screamed for help until a soldier nearby heard him and rushed for his aid.

“There were days I didn’t want to live anymore,” Khalil said, sitting on a thin mattress, his amputated leg still wrapped in a white cloth four months after the incident. Khalil, who is from the village of Qaminas, in the southern part of Syria’s Idlib province, is engaged and dreams of a prosthetic limb so he can return to work and support his family again.

While the nearly 14-year Syrian civil war came to an end with the fall of Bashar Assad on Dec. 8, war remnants continue to kill and maim. Contamination from land mines and explosive remnants has killed at least 249 people, including 60 children, and injured another 379 since Dec. 8, according to INSO, an international organization which coordinates safety for aid workers.

Mines and explosive remnants — widely used since 2011 by Syrian government forces, its allies, and

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armed opposition groups — have contaminated vast areas, many of which only became accessible after the Assad government's collapse, leading to a surge in the number of land mine casualties, according to a recent Human Rights Watch (HRW) report.

'It will take ages to clear them all'

Prior to Dec. 8, land mines and explosive remnants of war also frequently injured or killed civilians returning home and accessing agricultural land.

"Without urgent, nationwide clearance efforts, more civilians returning home to reclaim critical rights, lives, livelihoods, and land will be injured and killed," said Richard Weir, a senior crisis and conflict researcher at HRW.

Experts estimate that tens of thousands of land mines remain buried across Syria, particularly in former front-line regions like rural Idlib.

"We don't even have an exact number," said Ahmad Jomaa, a member of a demining unit under Syria's defense ministry. "It will take ages to clear them all."

Jomaa spoke while scanning farmland in a rural area east of Maarrat al-Numan with a handheld detector, pointing at a visible anti-personnel mine nestled in dry soil.

"This one can take off a leg," he said. "We have to detonate it manually."

Psychological trauma and broader harm

Farming remains the main source of income for residents in rural Idlib, making the presence of mines a daily hazard. Days earlier a tractor exploded nearby, severely injuring several farm workers, Jomaa said. "Most of the mines here are meant for individuals and light vehicles, like the ones used by farmers," he said.

Jomaa's demining team began dismantling the mines immediately after the previous government was ousted. But their work comes at a steep cost.

"We've had 15 to 20 (deminers) lose limbs, and around a dozen of our brothers were killed doing this job," he said. Advanced scanners, needed to detect buried or improvised devices, are in short supply, he said. Many land mines are still visible to the naked eye, but others are more sophisticated and harder to detect.

Land mines not only kill and maim but also cause long-term psychological trauma and broader harm, such as displacement, loss of property, and reduced access to essential services, HRW says.

The rights group has urged the transitional government to establish a civilian-led mine action authority in coordination with the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) to streamline and expand demining efforts.

Syria's military under the Assad government laid explosives years ago to deter opposition fighters. Even after the government seized nearby territories, it made little effort to clear the mines it left behind.

'Every day someone is dying'

Standing before his brother's grave, Salah Sweid holds up a photo on his phone of Mohammad, smiling behind a pile of dismantled mines. "My mother, like any other mother would do, warned him against going," Salah said. "But he told them, 'If I don't go and others don't go, who will? Every day someone is dying.'"

Mohammad was 39 when he died on Jan. 12 while demining in a village in Idlib. A former Syrian Republican Guard member trained in planting and dismantling mines, he later joined the opposition during the uprising, scavenging weapon debris to make arms.

He worked with Turkish units in Azaz, a city in northwest Syria, using advanced equipment, but on the day he died, he was on his own. As he defused one mine, another hidden beneath it detonated. After Assad's ouster, mines littered his village in rural Idlib. He had begun volunteering to clear them — often without proper equipment — responding to residents' pleas for help, even on holidays when his demining team was off duty, his brother said.

For every mine cleared by people like Mohammad, many more remain.

In a nearby village, Jalal al-Maarouf, 22, was tending to his goats three days after the Assad government's collapse when he stepped on a mine. Fellow shepherds rushed him to a hospital, where doctors amputated his left leg.

He has added his name to a waiting list for a prosthetic, "but there's nothing so far," he said from his home, gently running a hand over the smooth edge of his stump. "As you can see, I can't walk." The cost of a prosthetic limb is in excess of \$3,000 and far beyond his means.

Marijuana holiday 4/20 coincides with Easter and Passover this year. Here's what to know

By GENE JOHNSON Associated Press

Marijuana culture's high holiday, known as 4/20, falls this year on Easter Sunday, as well as the last day of Passover, meaning cannabis fans can celebrate in some unusual ways, including an "Easter nug hunt" in Los Angeles, kosher-style THC gummies in New York and a "blaze and praise" drag brunch in Portland, Oregon.

"It seemed appropriate with egg prices today that we'd be searching for something else," said Brett Davis, who runs the marijuana tour company Weed Bus Los Angeles and organized the "Easter nug hunt."

Here's a look at 4/20's history and how it's being celebrated this year:

Why 4/20?

The origins of the date, and the term "420" generally, were long murky.

Some claimed it referred to a police code for marijuana possession or was derived from Bob Dylan's "Rainy Day Women No. 12 & 35," with its refrain of "Everybody must get stoned," 420 being the product of 12 times 35.

But the prevailing explanation is that it started in the 1970s with a group of bell-bottomed buddies from San Rafael High School, in California's Marin County north of San Francisco, who called themselves "the Waldos."

A friend's brother was afraid of getting busted for a patch of cannabis he was growing in the woods at nearby Point Reyes, so he drew a map and gave the teens permission to harvest the crop, the story goes.

During fall 1971, at 4:20 p.m., just after classes and football practice, the group would meet up at the school's statue of chemist Louis Pasteur, smoke a joint and head out to search for the weed patch. They never did find it, but their private lexicon — "420 Louie" and later just "420" — would take on a life of its own.

The Waldos saved postmarked letters and other artifacts from the 1970s referencing "420," which they now keep in a bank vault, and when the Oxford English Dictionary added the term in 2017, it cited some of those documents as the earliest recorded uses.

How did 4/20 spread?

A brother of one of the Waldos was a close friend of Grateful Dead bassist Phil Lesh, as Lesh once confirmed in an interview with the Huffington Post, now HuffPost. The Waldos began hanging out in the band's circle, and the slang term spread.

Fast-forward to the early 1990s: Steve Bloom, a reporter for the cannabis magazine High Times, was at a Dead show when he was handed a flyer urging people to "meet at 4:20 on 4/20 for 420-ing in Marin County at the Bolinas Ridge sunset spot on Mt. Tamalpais." High Times published it.

"It's a phenomenon," one of the Waldos, Steve Capper, now 69, once told The Associated Press. "Most things die within a couple years, but this just goes on and on. It's not like someday somebody's going to say, 'OK, Cannabis New Year's is on June 23rd now.'"

While the Waldos came up with the term, the people who made the flier that was distributed at the Dead show — effectively turning 4/20 into a holiday — remain unknown.

How is it celebrated?

With weed, naturally.

In New York City, the cannabis brand Tokin' Jew is advertising a kosher-style THC gummy line, "Tokin' Chews," designed to meet dietary restrictions for Passover.

Davis said he expected 300 people to partake in the West Hollywood Easter nug scavenger hunt this weekend, aided by a mobile app leading them through participating dispensaries, trivia challenges and "stoner activities." There is a \$500 cash prize.

In Portland, Bar Carlo is hosting the "blaze and praise" drag brunch. Cannabis consumption isn't allowed onsite — "Please blaze before you arrive or go for a walk in the neighborhood in between performances,"

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the event listing reads — but there will be a door-prize gift basket from a local dispensary.

Bar owner Melinda Archuleta said the brunch is a dry run for hosting Pride month events in June. She herself doesn't care much for marijuana, but as a Mexican American who has been influenced by Catholicism, she is interested in seeing the two cultures melded "in a cheeky way."

"I'm really looking forward to seeing how the queens do it," Archuleta said. "We've obviously given them carte blanche to do whatever they want — it's 21 and up — so it doesn't matter if it's sacrilegious or borderline offensive."

There are bigger celebrations, too, including the Mile High 420 Festival in Denver and one put on by SweetWater Brewing in Atlanta. Hippie Hill in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park historically has attracted massive crowds, but the gathering was canceled for a second straight year, with organizers citing a lack of financial sponsorship and city budget cuts.

Just north of the Bay Area, Lagunitas Brewing in Petaluma, California, releases its "Waldos' Special Ale" every year on 4/20 in partnership with the term's coiners.

4/20 also has become a big industry event, with vendors gathering to try each other's wares.

What about the politics?

There are 24 states that allow recreational marijuana and 14 others allowing it for medical purposes. But the movement recently has suffered some setbacks, with voters in Florida, North Dakota and South Dakota deciding not to adopt legalization measures last November.

Several states also have cracked down on intoxicating products derived from hemp, which have been widely sold even in prohibition states thanks to a loophole in the federal Farm Bill.

Marijuana remains illegal under federal law. As a candidate, President Donald Trump said he would vote for Florida's amendment and signaled support for reclassifying marijuana as a less dangerous drug, a process started by the Biden administration.

But his administration has not indicated cannabis policy is a priority. A fact sheet released by the White House last month complained that marijuana decriminalization in Washington, D.C., was an example of "failed policies" that "opened the door to disorder."

A bipartisan group of senators last week reintroduced legislation that would ensure states can adopt their own cannabis policies and remove certain financial hurdles for the industry, such as letting entities deduct business expenses on their taxes.

Charles Aloviseti, a lawyer with the cannabis industry law firm Vicente LLP, said he hopes the administration will push forward with marijuana reform at the federal level, saying "it does align with some of their policy objectives — namely reducing criminal activity, or cartel activity."

He also encouraged advocates to keep pushing, noting some measures such as improving banking access for marijuana businesses might pass as part of larger legislative packages.

"You continue speaking up, even if the political momentum isn't there," Aloviseti said. "It's only possible if you stay in everyone's ear."

Vance set to visit India for bilateral talks on economic, trade and geopolitical ties

By SHEIKH SAALIQ Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — U.S. Vice President JD Vance will embark on a four-day visit to India on Monday as the two countries seek to unlock economic opportunities and negotiate a bilateral trade deal.

Vance will meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi for talks on the economy, trade and geopolitical ties. Vance's visit is seen as an important diplomatic mission by President Donald Trump's administration, and it coincides with a rapidly intensifying trade war between Washington and Beijing, which is New Delhi's main rival in the region.

A trade deal between India and the U.S. could significantly enhance economic ties between the two countries and potentially strengthen diplomatic ties.

The U.S. is also India's largest trading partner, with bilateral trade valued at \$190 billion until recently.

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India's foreign ministry has said the visit will "provide an opportunity for both sides to review the progress in bilateral relations" and two leaders will "exchange views on regional and global developments of mutual interest."

Here's what to know more about Vance's visit:

Bilateral trade agreement

Vance's arrival in India comes weeks after Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard was in India for a geopolitical conference and two months after Modi met Trump in Washington.

Modi was among the first leaders to visit the U.S. and hold talks with Trump after he returned to the White House. During his visit, Modi hailed a "mega partnership" with the U.S. and kickstarted a negotiation process to minimise the possible fallout of Trump's tariffs after it had already cut tariffs on a range of U.S. goods.

Regardless, Trump targeted India with a 26% levy as part of his now-paused tariff programme, which has provided temporary relief for Indian exporters.

During his visit, Modi sought to soften impending trade barriers by saying he was open to reducing more tariffs on U.S. goods, repatriating undocumented Indian nationals and buying military gear. The two countries also agreed to start talks towards clinching the bilateral trade agreement.

Modi on Friday said he spoke with Elon Musk and said he and the SpaceX CEO "discussed the immense potential for collaboration in the areas of technology and innovation," saying "India remains committed to advancing our partnerships with the U.S. in these domains."

India's deep ties to US business

India is a close partner of the U.S. for bilateral trade, foreign direct investments, defence cooperation, and an important strategic ally in combating the rising influence of China in the Indo-Pacific region.

It is also part of the Quad, which is made up of the United States plus India, Japan and Australia and seen as a counter-balance to China's expansion in the region.

Leading U.S. companies such as Apple Inc. and Google have expanded operations in India in recent years. Last month, Musk's Starlink entered into agreements with two of India's top telecom operators to provide satellite-based internet services.

To further boost trade ties, the U.S. and India have set an ambitious target of more than doubling their bilateral trade to \$500 billion by 2030 under the expected trade deal agreement.

The negotiations are especially urgent for New Delhi as it could be hit hard by Trump's reciprocal tariffs, particularly in sectors of agriculture, processed food, auto components, high-end machinery, medical equipment and jewelry. This poses a significant challenge for Modi government as it hopes to spruce up the country's economy and generate jobs with an export-led recovery.

Modi and Trump already share rapport

Modi established a good working relationship with Trump during his first term in office. It now appears that the two leaders are likely to further boost cooperation between their countries, particularly in trade as Chinese President Xi Jinping is aiming to position Beijing as a reliable trade partner in the Asia-Pacific region amid rising tensions with Washington.

India has also already taken a number of steps to win over Trump. It will purchase more oil, energy and defence equipment, including the fifth-generation stealth fighter jets, from the U.S.

The U.S., however, wants greater market access for its agricultural and dairy products in India, but New Delhi has been reluctant so far as the farm sector employs bulk of the country's workforce.

Family trip for Vance

Vance's visit to India marks his first official trip to the country, which has added significance for the second family. His wife Usha Vance — a practising Hindu — is the daughter of immigrants from South India.

In his memoir "Hillbilly Elegy," Vance described his wife a "supersmart daughter of Indian immigrants" whom he met at Yale Law School. Usha's parents moved to the U.S. in the late 1970s.

Vance will be accompanied by Usha, their children and other senior members of the U.S. administration, and the couple will visit Indian cities of Jaipur and Agra and participate in engagements at cultural sites,

a readout from the White House said.

Everglades restoration would protect Florida Keys while scientists watch drought conditions

By DAVID FISCHER Associated Press

ISLAMORADA, Fla. (AP) — The Everglades is more than just swamps, fan boats and alligators and restoration efforts impact more than the land between Florida's east and west coasts.

Florida Bay, a body of water located between the southern end of mainland Florida and the Florida Keys, makes up about a third of Everglades National Park.

High salt levels during dry periods can have fatal consequences for the plants and animals living in the region, though experts are hopeful an early rain season this year will prevent a massive sea grass die-off like those experienced in the past.

Estuary of the Everglades

Steve Davis, chief science officer with The Everglades Foundation, called Florida Bay the estuary of the Everglades, which is actually a giant, slow-moving river starting around Orlando and running toward the southern end of the Florida peninsula.

"What that meant for Florida Bay was that during wet years, there's enough water getting into the bay to keep the salinities within that optimal salinity range," Davis said. "But when we run into an average-to-dry year or a drought year, it meant that salinity levels in the bay would get so high that it could be detrimental to the health of the seagrasses and the other species that depend on that habitat."

Florida Bay doesn't have particularly strong tides, meaning water can sit in the bay for up to a year. When evaporating seawater isn't replaced by water from the Everglades, bay salinity levels can double normal ocean salinity, Davis explained.

"And that's when we really run into some problems with the health of the habitats down here in the bay," he said.

The last major sea grass die-off occurred in 2015. Xavier Figueredo, a recreational boat captain with Bay and Reef Company, said he was working in the area when the massive die-off hit about 40,000 acres (16,000 hectares).

"You can't see the water. All you see is dead grass floating on top," Figueredo said. "And it smells like sulfur, like rotting eggs. As the die-off continued, more of the ecosystem was affected, the fish were affected."

Avoiding Another Sea-Grass Die-Off

Even with more than 40% of Florida under drought conditions, Davis said he is not especially worried yet about another sea-grass die-off. Salt levels in the bay are already comparatively lower this year than they were in 2015.

Davis said that is at least partially thanks to a massive project that elevated more than 3.5 miles (5.6 kilometers) of the Tamiami Trail, a roadway built in 1928 that runs through the Everglades from Miami to Naples before heading north to Tampa.

The route was essentially a giant dam preventing water from flowing south, but replacing the roadway with two long bridges, completed in 2013 and 2019, unblocked the so-called river of grass.

"Months of inflow across Tamiami Trail have helped to moderate salinities," Davis said.

The other significant advantage Florida Bay has this year compared to 2015 is the forecast of an early wet season rather than a delayed wet season, Davis said.

Future of Restoration

While elevating Tamiami Trail already has created significant benefit for the Everglades and Florida Bay, scientists are counting on a massive restoration project, the Everglades Agricultural Area Reservoir, to address decades-old water problems throughout Florida.

The \$3.9 billion project will create a reservoir and wetland to store and clean polluted water from Lake Okeechobee in central Florida before it's discharged into the southern Everglades. This also should decrease the amount of polluted water being sent to Florida's east and west coasts.

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Davis called the Everglades Agricultural Area Reservoir “the game changer for freshwater flow restoration.” “What we’re seeing right now are just the benefits of the plumbing, the infrastructure that helps to get all that water into the park,” he said. “But once we’re able to flow those larger volumes of water south, we’re going to see system-wide improvement all the way down into Florida Bay.”

Protecting the Economy

Everglades restoration is not only tied to Florida’s ecological future but its economic future, said Paul Hindsley, the Everglades Foundation chief economist.

“For every dollar of investment in restoration, we’re receiving \$4 in economic benefits,” Hindsley said.

Economic benefits include adding to the residential and industrial water supply, reducing extreme events from drought such as fires and reducing the risk of flooding from heavy precipitation, Hindsley said.

The Everglades also provide over \$5 billion a year in reduced risk for costs associated with National Flood Insurance Program claims. Meanwhile, South Florida’s mangroves and reefs play an important role in reducing the impacts of storm surge.

“Protecting the environment is protecting the wealth of Floridians,” Hindsley said.

An incessant crackdown in Belarus hurls dozens of independent journalists into harsh prisons

By YURAS KARMANAU Associated Press

TALLINN, Estonia (AP) — Journalist Ksenia Lutskina served only half of her eight-year prison sentence in Belarus after being convicted of conspiracy to overthrow the government. She was pardoned after she kept fainting in her cell from a brain tumor diagnosed during pretrial detention.

“I was literally brought to the penal colony in a wheelchair, and I realized that journalism has really turned into a life-threatening profession in Belarus,” she told The Associated Press in Vilnius, Lithuania, where she lives.

Lutskina was one of dozens of journalists imprisoned in Belarus, where many face beatings, poor medical care and the inability to contact lawyers or relatives, according to activists and former inmates. She compared the prisons to those from the Soviet era.

The group Reporters Without Borders says Belarus is Europe’s leading jailer of journalists. At least 40 are serving long prison sentences, according to the Belarusian Association of Journalists.

Lutskina had quit her job making documentaries for Belarus’ state broadcaster in 2020 when mass protests broke out after an election — widely denounced as fraudulent — kept authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko in power. Trying to set up an alternative TV channel to fact-check government officials, she was arrested that year, put on trial and later convicted.

Other journalists fled the country of 9.5 million and operate from abroad. But many have had to curtail their work after U.S. President Donald Trump’s administration cut off foreign aid, a vital source of funding for many independent media.

“Journalists are forced to face not only repressions within the country, but also the sudden withdrawal of U.S. aid, which puts many editorial offices on the brink of survival,” BAJ chair Andrei Bastunets told AP.

The 2020 crackdown

Lukashenko’s brutal crackdown after the disputed election led to over 65,000 arrests between 2020-25. Thousands told of being beaten by police, opposition figures were jailed or forced into exile, and hundreds of thousands fled abroad in fear.

More than 1,200 people behind bars in the nation of 9.5 million are recognized as political prisoners by Belarus’ leading rights group, Viasna. Its founder, Nobel Prize Peace laureate Ales Bialiatski, is among them.

Independent journalists have been swept up too, with outlets closed or outlawed. Lukashenko, in power for over three decades, routinely calls them “enemies of our state,” and vows that those who fled won’t be allowed to return.

“The raids, arrests and abuse of journalists have been unceasing for five years, but now they have

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reached the point of absurdity," Bastunets said, noting that families of journalists are being threatened. Families of some targeted journalists have asked rights groups not to talk publicly about their cases for fear of further reprisal.

Every month brings new arrests and searches, with almost all independent media leaving Belarus. The crackdown even hits those who switch their focus to nonpolitical content.

In December, authorities arrested the entire editorial staff of the popular regional publication Intexpress, which covers local news in the city of Baranavichy. Seven journalists were charged with "assisting extremist activity."

Extremism is the most common charge used to detain, fine and jail critically minded citizens. Even reading independent media that's been declared extremist can result in short-term arrest. Working with or subscribing to banned media is seen as "assisting extremism," punishable by up to seven years in prison. Websites of such outlets are blocked.

According to Reporters Without Borders, 397 Belarusian journalists have been victims of what the group deems unjust arrests since 2020, with some detained multiple times.

At least 600 moved abroad, the group said. Even then, many still face pressure from authorities who can open cases against them in absentia, put them on international wanted lists, seize their property inside Belarus and target relatives in raids.

Reporters Without Borders filed a lawsuit with the International Criminal Court in January, accusing Belarusian authorities of "crimes against humanity," citing torture, beatings, imprisonment, persecution and forced displacement of journalists.

Beatings and isolation behind bars

Katsiaryna Bakhvalava, a journalist for Belsat, a Polish-Belarusian independent TV channel, was arrested while covering the 2020 protests. Initially convicted of disrupting public order and sentenced to two years, she was put on trial for treason while in a penal colony and convicted, with her sentence extended to eight years and three months.

Her husband, political analyst Ihar Iliyash, was arrested in October 2024 on charges of "discrediting Belarus" and is jailed while awaiting trial.

Now 31, Bakhvalava, has been placed in a "punishment isolation" cell several times and in 2022 was beaten, according to a former inmate.

Palina Sharenda-Panasiuk, a former political prisoner who fled to Lithuania, told reporters she heard that four prison guards had beaten Bakhvalava, who was crying and asking for a doctor.

Andrzej Poczobut, a correspondent for the influential Polish newspaper Gazeta Wyborcza and a prominent figure in the Union of Poles in Belarus, was convicted of "harming Belarus' national security" and sentenced to eight years, which he is serving in the Novopolotsk penal colony.

Poczobut, 52, suffers from a serious heart condition and was placed in solitary confinement several times, sometimes for stretches of up to six months, human rights activists said.

At the end of March, his stay in a punitive cell unit — the harshest form of incarceration — was extended for six months. Attempts by Warsaw to intervene have failed and Poczobut has refused to ask Lukashenko for a pardon.

Also imprisoned is Maryna Zolatava, editor of Tut.By — once the most popular online news outlet in Belarus but shut down by authorities in 2021. Zolatava was convicted in 2023 of incitement and distributing materials urging actions aimed at harming national security, and sentenced to 12 years.

Parallels with '1984'

Lukashenko extended his rule for a seventh term in a January election that the opposition called a farce. Since July, he has pardoned over 250 people, seeking to improve ties with the West.

Belarusian analyst Valery Karbalevich said Lukashenko "views political prisoners as a commodity. He is cynically willing to sell journalists and activists to Europe and the United States in exchange for easing economic sanctions and thawing relations. And this process has already begun."

Shortly after Trump began his second term, Lukashenko released two U.S. citizens and a journalist from the Belarusian service of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, a U.S. government-funded news outlet.

Two more RFE/RL journalists, Ihar Losik and Ihar Karnei, remain imprisoned and were forced to record repentant videos.

Freed journalist Andrey Kuznechyk, who spent three years in prison, left Belarus for Lithuania.

"The first day after my release, I looked at the list of journalists behind bars and I was shocked by how much it had grown during my imprisonment," he told AP.

Lutskina, the journalist who also fled to Lithuania, brought her 14-year-old son with her, saying he "must learn to distinguish truth from lies." They both have read George Orwell's dystopian novel "1984," which was banned in Belarus, and are finding "surprising parallels" with her homeland.

"Belarus has turned into a gray country under a gray sky, where people are afraid of everything and speak in whispers," she said.

Lutskina, who is being treated for the tumor that caused her fainting spells, said she actually felt less fear in prison than her fellow Belarusians outside it.

They walk around with their heads down, she said, "afraid to raise their eyes and see the nightmare happening around them," she added.

Man who fatally shot 23 at El Paso Walmart set to plead guilty to murder nearly 6 years on

By JAMIE STENGLE Associated Press

DALLAS (AP) — The long-running criminal case against a Texas gunman who killed 23 people in a racist attack targeting Hispanic shoppers at a Walmart in El Paso in 2019 is on the verge of coming to a close.

Patrick Crusius, 26, is expected to plead guilty Monday to capital murder and receive a sentence of life in prison with no possibility of parole for the massacre near the U.S.-Mexico border. El Paso County District Attorney James Montoya said last month he was offering Crusius a plea deal and that he wouldn't face the death penalty on the state charge.

Crusius has already been sentenced to 90 consecutive life sentences in federal court after pleading guilty in 2023 to hate crime and weapons charges. Under the Biden administration, federal prosecutors also took the death penalty off the table.

Crusius is expected to serve his time in a state prison. Crusius initially was arrested by local authorities and will enter the custody of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice if he is sentenced on the state charges, a spokesperson for the Federal Bureau of Prisons said.

Here's what to know about the deadly attack on Aug. 3, 2019, and its aftermath:

The attack

Crusius was 21 years old when authorities say he drove for more than 10 hours from his home in suburban Dallas to El Paso and opened fire at the Walmart, which is popular with shoppers from Mexico and the U.S.

Prosecutors have said Crusius was wearing earmuffs that muted the sound of gunfire when he began shooting people in the parking lot.

He then moved inside the store and continued firing an AK-style rifle, cornering shoppers at a bank near the entrance where nine were killed before shooting at the checkout area and people in aisles.

Exiting Walmart, he fired on a passing car, killing an elderly man and wounding his wife.

Crusius was apprehended shortly after and confessed to officers who stopped him at an intersection, according to police.

Targeting Hispanic shoppers

In a posting to an online message board just before the massacre, Crusius, a white, community-college dropout, said the shooting was "in response to the Hispanic invasion of Texas." He said Hispanics were going to take over the government and economy.

On social media, he appeared consumed by the nation's immigration debate, tweeting #BuildtheWall and posts praising the hard-line border policies of Republican President Donald Trump, who was in his first term at the time.

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After the shooting, Crusius told officers that he had targeted Mexicans.

Joe Spencer, one of Crusius' attorneys, on Thursday described Crusius as "an individual with a broken brain." Spencer said Crusius has been diagnosed with schizoaffective disorder, which can be marked by hallucinations, delusions and mood swings.

The victims

The people who were killed ranged in age from a 15-year-old high school athlete to grandparents. They included immigrants and Mexican nationals who had crossed the U.S. border on routine shopping trips.

They included Jordan Anchondo and Andre Anchondo, who were killed while shopping with their 2-month-old child, Paul, who survived. Authorities have said Jordan Anchondo shielded the baby from gunfire while her husband shielded them both.

Guillermo "Memo" Garcia and his wife Jessica Coca Garcia were fundraising for their daughter's soccer team in the parking lot when they were both shot. She suffered leg wounds but recovered. He died from his injuries nearly nine months after the shooting, raising the death toll to 23.

A week after the shooting, Coca Garcia rose from her wheelchair to give a speech across the road from the county jail where Crusius was being held.

"Racism is something I always wanted to think didn't exist," she said. "Obviously, it does."

A long-running court case

Montoya said he decided to offer the plea deal because a majority of victims' relatives were eager for the case to be resolved. He acknowledged not all the families agreed.

Montoya, a Democrat, said he supports the death penalty and believes Crusius deserves it, but the case might not have gone to trial until 2028 if his office had continued seeking the death penalty.

When Montoya took office in January, he became the fourth district attorney to oversee the case in nearly six years. One of his predecessors resigned in 2022 under pressure over her handling of the case. He said the pandemic also caused delays.

Stephanie Melendez, whose father, David Johnson, died shielding his wife and granddaughter, said she initially wanted Crusius to get the death penalty but as the case dragged on she wanted it to end.

"I just wanted it to be over," Melendez said. "I was done reliving everything. I was done going to court for hours. I was done with the briefings that happened after that would last hours and it was just the same talk over and over again. We were just ready to be done with it all because, honestly, it's like reliving the trauma over and over again."

Former President Clinton returns to Oklahoma City 30 years after bombing of federal building

By SEAN MURPHY Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — Thirty years after the deadliest homegrown attack in U.S. history, former President Bill Clinton returned to Oklahoma City on Saturday to remember the people who were killed and comfort those affected by the bombing.

Clinton was president on April 19, 1995, when a truck bomb exploded, destroying a nine-story federal building in downtown Oklahoma City. He delivered the keynote address at a remembrance ceremony near the Oklahoma City National Memorial Museum.

Clinton, now 78, was widely praised for how he helped the city grapple with its grief in the wake of the bombing, which killed 168 people, including 19 children. He says it was a day in his presidency that he will never forget.

"I still remember as if it were 30 minutes ago, coming here with Hillary to that memorial service and saying: 'You have lost too much, but you have not lost everything. You have certainly not lost America, and we will be with you for as many tomorrows as it takes,'" Clinton said, recalling his first visit to Oklahoma City just days after the bombing, when he spoke at a memorial service for the victims. "I do think we've kept that commitment."

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Clinton has visited the Oklahoma City National Memorial Museum numerous times in the years since the bombing and delivered speeches on major anniversaries.

On Saturday, Clinton also cautioned about the polarizing nature of modern-day politics and how such divisiveness can lead to violence, as it did 30 years ago. He said there is much the nation can learn from the "Oklahoma Standard," a term coined to reference the city's response to the bombing by uniting in service, honor and kindness.

"Today, Oklahoma City, America needs you," he said. "I wish to goodness every American could just see life unfold here, hearing these stories."

Other speakers included former Oklahoma Gov. Frank Keating and former Oklahoma City Mayor Ron Norick, who were in office when the bombing occurred. Family members of some of those killed in the bombing read the 168 names of those killed in the attack.

Saturday's ceremony was originally scheduled to take place on the grounds of the memorial but was moved inside an adjacent church because of heavy rains.

After the ceremony, a procession of bagpipe players from the Oklahoma City Fire Department led many of those in attendance across the street to the outdoor memorial built on the grounds where the federal building once stood. The memorial includes a museum, a reflecting pool and 168 empty chairs of glass, bronze and stone etched with the names of those killed. Nineteen of the chairs are smaller than the others to represent the children killed.

Among the memorial's top missions is to help people understand the senselessness of political violence and teach a new generation about the impact of the bombing, said Kari Watkins, the memorial's president and CEO.

"We knew when we built this place we would some day reach a generation of people who weren't born or who didn't remember the story," Watkins said. "I think now, not just kids are coming through more and more, but teachers who are teaching those kids."

Supreme Court blocks, for now, new deportations under 18th-century wartime law

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI and MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

The Supreme Court on Saturday blocked, for now, the deportations of any Venezuelans held in northern Texas under an 18th-century wartime law.

In a brief order, the court directed the Trump administration not to remove Venezuelans held in the Bluebonnet Detention Center "until further order of this court."

Justices Clarence Thomas and Samuel Alito dissented.

The high court acted in an emergency appeal from the American Civil Liberties Union contending that immigration authorities appeared to be moving to restart removals under the Alien Enemies Act of 1798. The Supreme Court had said earlier in April that deportations could proceed only if those about to be removed had a chance to argue their case in court and were given "a reasonable time" to contest their pending removals.

"We are deeply relieved that the Court has temporarily blocked the removals. These individuals were in imminent danger of spending the rest of their lives in a brutal Salvadoran prison without ever having had any due process," ACLU lawyer Lee Gelernt said in an email.

The Trump administration later Saturday filed paperwork urging the high court to reconsider its hold. Press secretary Karoline Leavitt said Saturday in a post on X: "We are confident we will ultimately prevail against the onslaught of meritless litigation brought by radical activists."

On Friday, two federal judges refused to step in as lawyers for the men launched a desperate legal campaign to prevent their deportation, even as one judge said the case raised legitimate concerns. Early Saturday, the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals also refused to issue an order protecting the detainees from being deported.

The ACLU had already sued to block deportations of two Venezuelans held in the Bluebonnet facility and

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sought an order barring removals of any immigrants in the region under the Alien Enemies Act.

In an emergency filing early Friday, the ACLU warned that immigration authorities were accusing other Venezuelan men held there of being members of the Tren de Aragua gang, which would make them subject to President Donald Trump's use of the act.

The act has only been invoked three previous times in U.S. history, most recently during World War II to hold Japanese-American civilians in internment camps. The Trump administration contended it gave them power to swiftly remove immigrants they identified as members of the gang, regardless of their immigration status.

Following the unanimous high court order on April 9, federal judges in Colorado, New York and southern Texas promptly issued orders barring removal of detainees under the AEA until the administration provides a process for them to make claims in court.

But there had been no such order issued in the area of Texas that covers Bluebonnet, which is 24 miles north of Abilene in the far northern end of the state.

U.S. District Judge James Wesley Hendrix, a Trump appointee, this week declined to bar the administration from removing the two men identified in the ACLU lawsuit because Immigration and Customs Enforcement filed sworn declarations that they would not be immediately deported. He also balked at issuing a broader order prohibiting removal of all Venezuelans in the area under the act because he said removals hadn't started yet.

But the ACLU's Friday filing included sworn declarations from three separate immigration lawyers who said their clients in Bluebonnet were given paperwork indicating they were members of Tren de Aragua and could be deported by Saturday. In one case, immigration lawyer Karene Brown said her client, identified by initials, was told to sign papers in English even though the client only spoke Spanish.

"ICE informed F.G.M. that these papers were coming from the President, and that he will be deported even if he did not sign it," Brown wrote.

Gelernt said in a Friday evening hearing before District Judge James E. Boasberg in Washington, D.C., that the administration initially moved Venezuelans to its south Texas immigration facility for deportation. But since a judge banned deportations in that area, it has funneled them to the Bluebonnet facility, where no such order exists. He said witnesses reported the men were being loaded on buses Friday evening to be taken to the airport.

With Hendrix not agreeing to the ACLU's request for an emergency order, the group turned to Boasberg, who initially halted deportations in March. The Supreme Court ruled the orders against deportation could only come from judges in jurisdictions where immigrants were held, which Boasberg said made him powerless Friday.

"I'm sympathetic to everything you're saying," Boasberg told Gelernt. "I just don't think I have the power to do anything about it."

Boasberg this week found there's probable cause that the Trump administration committed criminal contempt by disobeying his initial deportation ban. He was concerned that the paper that ICE was giving those held did not make clear they had a right to challenge their removal in court, which he believed the Supreme Court mandated.

Drew Ensign, an attorney for the Justice Department, disagreed, saying that people slated for deportation would have a "minimum" of 24 hours to challenge their removal in court. He said no flights were scheduled for Friday night and he was unaware of any Saturday, but the Department of Homeland Security said it reserved the right to remove people then.

ICE said it would not comment on the litigation.

Also Friday, a Massachusetts judge made permanent his temporary ban on the administration deporting immigrants who have exhausted their appeals to countries other than their home countries unless they are informed of their destination and given a chance to object if they'd face torture or death there.

Some Venezuelans subject to Trump's Alien Enemies Act have been sent to El Salvador and housed in its notorious main prison.

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Anti-Trump protesters rally in New York, Washington and elsewhere across the country

By PHILIP MARCELO Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Opponents of President Donald Trump's administration took to the streets of communities large and small across the U.S. on Saturday, decrying what they see as threats to the nation's democratic ideals.

The disparate events ranged from a march through midtown Manhattan and a rally in front of the White House to a demonstration at a Massachusetts commemoration of "the shot heard 'round the world" on April 19, 1775, marking the start of the Revolutionary War 250 years ago.

Thomas Bassford was among the demonstrators at the reenactment of the Battles of Lexington and Concord outside Boston. The 80-year-old retired mason from Maine said he believes Americans are under attack from their own government and need to stand up against it.

"This is a very perilous time in America for liberty," said Bassford, who was with his partner, daughter and two grandsons. "I wanted the boys to learn about the origins of this country and that sometimes we have to fight for freedom."

In Denver, hundreds of protesters gathered at the Colorado State Capitol with banners expressing solidarity with immigrants and telling the Trump administration: "Hands Off!" People waved U.S. flags, some of them held upside down to signal distress.

Thousands of people also marched through downtown Portland, Oregon, while in San Francisco, hundreds spelled out the words "Impeach & Remove" on a sandy beach along the Pacific Ocean, also with an inverted U.S. flag. People walked through downtown Anchorage, Alaska, with handmade signs listing reasons why they were demonstrating, including one that read: "No sign is BIG enough to list ALL of the reasons I'm here!"

Elsewhere protests were planned outside Tesla car dealerships against billionaire Trump adviser Elon Musk and his role in downsizing the federal government. Others organized more community service-oriented events such as food drives, teach-ins and volunteering at local shelters.

The protests come just two weeks after similar nationwide demonstrations.

Organizers say they oppose what they call Trump's civil rights violations and constitutional violations, including efforts to deport scores of immigrants and to scale back the federal government by firing thousands of government workers and effectively shuttering entire agencies.

Some of the events drew on the spirit of the Revolutionary War, calling for "no kings" and resistance to tyranny.

In Anchorage, a colonial reenactor in colonial garb held up a "No Kings" sign while the person next to him hoisted cardboard that read in part: "The Feudal Age is OVER."

Boston resident George Bryant, who was among those at the Concord protest, said he is concerned that the president is creating a "police state." He held a sign saying, "Trump fascist regime must go now!"

"He's defying the courts. He's kidnapping students. He's eviscerating the checks and balances," Bryant said. "This is fascism."

In Washington, Bob Fasick, a 76-year-old retired federal employee from Springfield, Virginia, said he came out to the rally near the White House out of concern over threats to constitutionally protected due process rights, Social Security and other federal safety-net programs.

The Trump administration, among other things, has moved to shutter Social Security Administration field offices, cut funding for government health programs and scale back protections for transgender people.

"I cannot sit still knowing that if I don't do anything and everybody doesn't do something to change this, that the world that we collectively are leaving for the little children, for our neighbors is simply not one that I would want to live," Fasick said.

In Columbia, South Carolina, several hundred people protested at the statehouse holding signs with slogans such as "Fight Fiercely, Harvard, Fight."

And in Manhattan, protesters rallied against continued deportations of immigrants as they marched from

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the New York Public Library north toward Central Park and past Trump Tower.

"No fear, no hate, no ICE in our state," they chanted to a steady drumbeat, referring to the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Marshall Green said he is most concerned that Trump invoked the wartime Alien Enemies Act of 1798 by claiming the country is at war with Venezuelan gangs linked to the South American nation's government, even though a recent U.S. intelligence assessment found no coordination between them.

"Congress should be stepping up and saying no, we are not at war. You cannot use that," said the 61-year-old from Morristown, New Jersey. "You cannot deport people without due process, and everyone in this country has the right to due process no matter what."

Meanwhile Melinda Charles, of Connecticut, said she worries about "executive overreach," citing clashes with the federal courts, Harvard University and other elite colleges.

"We're supposed to have three equal branches of government," she said, "and to have the executive branch become so strong, I mean it's just unbelievable."

Three Hegseth aides ousted in leak investigation decry 'baseless attacks'

By TARA COPP Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Three former senior advisers to Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth decried on Saturday what they called "baseless attacks" after each was escorted from the Pentagon in an expanding probe on information leaks.

Dan Caldwell, a Hegseth aide; Colin Carroll, chief of staff to Deputy Defense Secretary Stephen Feinberg; and Darin Selnick, Hegseth's deputy chief of staff were among four officials in Hegseth's inner circle who were ousted this past week.

While the three initially had been placed on leave pending the investigation, a joint statement shared by Caldwell on X said the three were "incredibly disappointed by the manner in which our service at the Department of Defense ended. Unnamed Pentagon officials have slandered our character with baseless attacks on our way out the door."

"At this time, we still have not been told what exactly we were investigated for, if there is still an active investigation, or if there was even a real investigation of 'leaks' to begin with," the post said.

Former Pentagon spokesman John Ulliyot also announced he was resigning this week. The Pentagon said, however, that Ulliyot was asked to resign.

The upheaval comes less than 100 days into the Trump administration where the Pentagon has found itself frequently in the epicenter of controversial moves — from firings of senior military and civilian staff to broad edicts to purge content that promoted diversity, equity or inclusion. That led to images or other online content of heroes like the Tuskegee Airmen and Jackie Robinson being temporarily removed from the military's websites, causing public uproar.

Last month, Hegseth announced that the Pentagon's intelligence and law enforcement arms were investigating what it says are leaks of national security information following reports that Elon Musk was set to receive a classified briefing on potential war plans with China.

In the announcement by Hegseth's chief of staff, Joe Kasper, the office warned that Defense Department personnel could face polygraphs in the probe.

The departures also follow the firings of senior military officers, including Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. CQ Brown; Chief of Naval Operations Lisa Franchetti; National Security Agency and U.S. Cyber Command director Gen. Tim Haugh; and Vice Adm. Shoshana Chatfield, the U.S. military representative to the NATO Military Committee.

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Si Woo Kim leads by 1 at Hilton Head with Justin Thomas lurking

By DOUG FERGUSON AP Golf Writer

HILTON HEAD ISLAND, S.C. (AP) — The vibe at Hilton Head Island is all about ease and relaxation. It felt like anything but that to Justin Thomas on Saturday in the RBC Heritage.

His two-shot lead was gone in two holes, partly because he of a one-shot penalty on the par-5 second hole when he informed the rules official his golf ball might have moved a little more than a dimple (it did).

His worst swing of the day on the 11th hole put him in shallow water inside a red hazard line. He tried to play the shot and barely moved it 15 yards, but not before the mud and muck splashed into his face and led his caddie to tell him he smelled like a wet dog (he did).

"That didn't seem worth it," Thomas said, loud enough for the gallery to hear and to laugh.

Thomas at least ended the day on a high note, rolling in a 15-foot birdie putt on the 18th to make up ground on Si Woo Kim, who played bogey-free until the final hole at Harbour Town.

By then, Kim had done enough to still post a 5-under 66 and take a one-shot lead over Thomas (69) and Andrew Novak (66).

"When you win golf tournaments, you need to salvage under-par rounds when you don't have your best stuff," Thomas said. "I just fought and tried to stay patient and then was able to salvage a score to where I'm right there tomorrow."

Kim didn't exactly have that peaceful feeling when he headed to the first tee, two behind Thomas and without a win in two years.

"It's been a while to play in the final group, so it feels weird. Then a little bit of maybe pressure," Kim said. "Not the pressure, a little bit like feel weird at the start."

He started birdie-birdie to catch Thomas. He took the lead when Thomas had his mud-filled adventures on the 11th and made bogey. Kim stretched the lead to as many as three shots until it suddenly got tight again.

Novak birdied the par-3 17th to complete his bogey-free round. And there was a two-shot swing from the final group when Kim came up short of the 18th green and just into the hazard, from here we chopped out of mangled grass and missed the par putt.

"I played great — only missed the last hole, so that's not a big deal," Kim said. "So I play pretty much 35 holes really decent. So I'm not going to worry about the last hole for tomorrow. I'm in good position. I've been playing good."

And Thomas made his birdie.

"It was huge," he said. "I played really well today, really solid. Just didn't have much to show. The course is getting very difficult, very firm and fast. ... Yeah, it was nice to see an iron shot get up there pin-high and roll that putt in there. It's nice to finish off like that and ride that momentum into tomorrow."

Kim was at 15-under 198.

Maverick McNealy shot 64 and was alone in fourth, two shots behind. He was followed by former British Open champion Brian Harman (66) and Tommy Fleetwood, who had three birdies over his last six holes for a 68.

Defending champion Scottie Scheffler had a rough stretch early on the back nine that derailed his momentum, though he still managed a 68 and was very much in the game at only four shots out of the lead.

Scheffler hit a brilliant escape from the trees, the ball never gaining more than 10 feet of altitude from 160 yards away, but it was too strong and rolled against the lip of a bunker, leaving him no shot. He had to make an 8-foot putt to salvage bogey.

He went long of the green on No. 12 and left himself a fast pitch (bogey) and then hit a demanding lob wedge over the bunker to 3 feet on No. 13 and missed the putt.

The weather has been getting warmer and windier by the day, enough to make the course fast and crispy and enough movement in the trees to cause some second-guessing. There are low scores available. It doesn't take much for players to lose momentum.

This is a signature event with no cut and the scoring average has been roughly the same all three days. It's a matter of gets on a roll, who holes putts and who limits mistakes.

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For so much of Saturday, that was Kim.

He opened with a pair of 6-foot birdie putts. He handled the par 5s. His longest birdie putt was on the par-5 15th when he got out of position and had to make an 18-footer.

Thomas says he is capable of ending his three-year drought and simply needs the tournament to unfold instead of forcing the issue. This was only a 69 but important to him because he managed a round under par when it felt like nothing was going right, except at the end.

It's a girl! 2-way star Shohei Ohtani of the Dodgers is now a father

ARLINGTON, Texas (AP) — Two-way star Shohei Ohtani is now a father.

The Los Angeles Dodgers slugger posted on Instagram on Saturday that his wife gave birth to a girl. Manager Dave Roberts also acknowledged the news in an in-game interview during LA's 4-3 loss at the Texas Rangers on Saturday.

"Congratulations Sho!" Roberts proclaimed while saying he wasn't sure what the baby's name was.

The 30-year-old Ohtani missed the first two games of the series matching the past two World Series champions. Before the game Saturday, Roberts said he didn't have an update on the baby, but was hopeful Ohtani would rejoin the club for the series finale Sunday.

The Japanese star had said he and his wife, 28-year-old former professional basketball player Mamiko Tanaka, were expecting a baby in 2025.

"I am so grateful to my loving wife who gave birth to our healthy, beautiful daughter," Ohtani wrote on Instagram. "To my daughter, thank you for making us very nervous yet super anxious parents."

Questions emerge about how a deputy's stepson became the accused gunman in deadly FSU shooting

By KATE PAYNE and HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH Associated Press

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) — Amid the abandoned chemistry notes and other debris left behind after a deadly shooting at Florida State University are lingering questions about how the stepson of a beloved sheriff's deputy tasked with school safety at a middle school became the accused gunman.

Political science student Phoenix Ikner was a long-standing member of a sheriff's office youth advisory council and was steeped in the family-like culture of the agency. When officers rushed to the university's student union on reports of gunfire, authorities say it was the 20-year-old who used his stepmother's former service weapon to open fire, killing two men and wounding six others.

As people fled in terror, Ikner was shot and taken into custody. He invoked his right not to speak to investigators, and his motive remains unknown as he lies in a hospital bed.

The prosecutor's office is weighing possible charges as stories emerge about a darker side. One classmate recalled him being kicked out of a student club over comments that other members found troubling.

"This is horrific," Jimmy Williams, the chief of safety for Leon County Schools, said of the shooting. "This is a horrible, horrible event."

Williams, who has known Ikner's stepmother, Jessica Ikner, for a decade, said the allegations underscore that "none of us are immune to tragedy."

Classes and business operations will resume Monday, Florida State announced over the weekend.

"I know it won't feel like a normal week," FSU President Richard McCullough said in message to students and employees Saturday. "It's the last one before finals, and many of you are still processing what happened. Please take care of yourself."

Suspect is the stepson of a beloved deputy

His stepmother, whose own alma mater is Florida State, was reassigned from her position as a school resource officer Friday and granted the personal leave she requested, a sheriff's office spokesperson told The Associated Press.

When the alert went out of an active shooter at Florida State University, Jessica Ikner was on duty

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around 2 miles (3.2 kilometers) away at Raa Middle School. A sheriff's office spokesperson said Jessica Ikner worked to secure the campus to prevent anyone from entering as Raa went into "lockout mode," along with all of the county's public schools. She was practiced at this work.

Last year, she was named an "employee of the month" by the sheriff's office, where she has worked for 18 years.

Police said they believed Phoenix Ikner shot the victims using his stepmother's former service handgun, which she had kept for personal use after the force upgraded its weapons.

Leon County Sheriff Walter McNeil described Phoenix Ikner on Thursday as having been "steeped in the Leon County Sheriff's Office family" and engaged in a number of sheriff's office training programs, adding that it wasn't a surprise that he would have access to guns.

There was no record of him having a criminal record. And in Florida, training and a background check are not required to carry concealed guns in public.

Custody disputes and name change in his childhood

When Ikner was a child, his parents were involved in several custody disputes with his biological mother, court records show.

In 2015, when he was 10, his biological mother, Anne-Mari Eriksen, said she was taking him to South Florida for spring break in 2015 but instead traveled to Norway. After returning to the U.S., she pleaded no contest to removing a minor from the state against a court order and was sentenced to 200 days in jail. She later moved to vacate her plea, but that was denied.

In the fall of that same year, Eriksen filed a civil libel-slander complaint against Jessica Ikner, along with several other family members. The complaint, which was later dismissed, accused them of harassing Eriksen and abusing Ikner's position at the sheriff's office.

In 2020, at age 15, the suspect received court approval to change his name from Christian Eriksen to Phoenix Ikner, court documents show. His old name was a constant reminder of a "tragedy" he suffered, in the words of administrative magistrate James Banks, who approved the request, NBC News reported.

Banks observed that Ikner was a "mentally, emotionally and physically mature young adult who is very articulate" and "very polite" said he chose the new name as a representation of "rising from the ashes anew."

Classmate says there were concerns about the accused shooter

Reid Seybold and his classmates were working on a group project in a building located a short, three-minute walk from the student union when someone ran in and warned them about the gunfire. They huddled together, the 22-year-old said, frantically firing off what they thought might be their final text messages to loved ones.

When Seybold found out who the suspect in the shooting was — that it was someone he knows — he was overcome with anger. Seybold was the president of a club that Phoenix Ikner joined when they were both studying at the local community college, now called Tallahassee State College.

"He would complain about Black people pretty regularly, especially when conversations of police brutality would come up," Seybold said.

Seybold said Ikner was known for espousing racist and white supremacist views that so alienated other members that the club asked him to leave the group.

"He made people that uncomfortable," said Seybold, who now also is studying political science at Florida State. "I personally know him to have complained about how multiculturalism and communism are ruining America."

'Pathway to violence'

A key part of the investigation will likely focus on what might have led to what experts call the "pathway to violence," said Kenneth Trump, president of National School Safety and Security Services, a Cleveland-based consulting firm.

"The question is, what was the motivation, what was the grievance?" said Trump, who wrote the book "Practical School Security: Basic Guidelines for Safe and Secure Schools." (He's not related to the U.S.

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president).

"Usually, they build up over time through some type of grievance against people," Trump said. "The questions in the upcoming days are, were there warning signs, what were those warnings signs, and if they were there, who knew?"

Accused shooter transferred to Florida State from community college

Ikner transferred to Florida State after earning an associate degree at the community college, school officials said.

He didn't attract the attention of the school paper, other than commenting in a FSU story about a rally on campus against President Donald Trump.

Ikner, a registered Republican, described the protesters as "entertaining" because Trump was already set to be inaugurated. The comments have since been removed from the story, an editor's note saying the move was to "avoid amplifying the voice of an individual responsible for violence."

Before Ikner's Instagram was taken down, his bio quoted a verse from the Old Testament book of Jeremiah. "Thou art my battle ax and weapons of war: for with thee will I break in pieces the nations, and with thee will I destroy kingdoms," reads Jeremiah 51:20, which scholars have interpreted to depict God's judgment on Babylon. The empire is a symbol in the Bible of sinfulness and immorality.

Deputy's family has stayed quiet for now

A Tallahassee Police Department patrol car was stationed Thursday evening near the street where the family lives, blocking reporters from approaching the family's home in a well-kept suburban neighborhood on the city's east side.

Phone messages left for Jessica Ikner at a number listed for her on a school resource website and another phone connected to her through public records were not immediately returned Friday. And a sheriff's office spokeswoman said she is not aware of the family putting out a statement or having a family spokesperson.

The only insight comes from the past statements. Nearly a decade ago, Jessica Ikner wrote a story posted on the Tallahassee Family Magazine website about children's safety while surfing the internet, including tips to strengthen family bonds.

"Build a trusting relationship with your child," she wrote. "Let them know that if they do make a mistake they can still come to you about anything."

Yemen's Houthi rebels report US strikes in the capital and a coastal city

By SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — Yemen's Houthi rebels said Saturday that the U.S. military launched a series of airstrikes on the capital, Sanaa, and the Houthi-held coastal city of Hodeida, less than two days after a U.S. strike wrecked a Red Sea port and killed more than 70 people.

The Houthis' media office said 13 U.S. airstrikes hit an airport and a port in Hodeida, on the Red Sea. The office also reported U.S. strikes in the capital, Sanaa.

There were no immediate reports of casualties.

The U.S. military's Central Command, which oversees American military operations in the Middle East, said it continues to conduct strikes against the Houthis in Yemen.

Thursday's strike hit the port of Ras Isa, also in Hodeida province, killing 74 people and wounding 171 others, according to the Houthi-run health ministry. It was the deadliest strike in the U.S. ongoing bombing campaign on the Iranian-backed rebels.

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres on Saturday said he was "gravely concerned" about the attack on Ras Isa, as well as the Houthi missile and drone attacks on Israel and the shipping routes, his spokesman Stéphane Dujarric said Saturday.

"The secretary-general recalls that international law, including international humanitarian law as applicable, must be respected at all times, and he appeals to all to respect and protect civilians as well as civilian infrastructure," Dujarric said.

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U.S. Central Command declined to answer any questions about possible civilian casualties. It referred to a statement in which it said "this strike was not intended to harm the people of Yemen."

The strikes on Hodeida have been part of a month-long U.S. bombing campaign, which the Trump administration said came about because of the Houthi attacks on shipping in the Red Sea, a crucial global trade route, and on its close ally, Israel.

About 200 people have been killed in the U.S. campaign since March 16, according to the Houthis' health ministry.

US and Iran say talks over Tehran's nuclear program make progress and set plans for more

By MATTHEW LEE and JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Iran and the United States plan to meet over Tehran's rapidly advancing nuclear program again next week, after both sides said they made progress in their talks Saturday in Rome.

A U.S. official confirmed that at a point during the negotiations in Rome, President Donald Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff and Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi spoke face to face.

Before they meet again in Oman on April 26, Araghchi said technical-level talks would be held in the coming days. That experts would be discussing details of a possible deal suggests movement in the talks and comes as Trump has pushed for a rapid agreement while threatening military action against Iran.

The sides "made very good progress in our direct and indirect discussions," according to a senior Trump administration official who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss a private diplomatic meeting.

In a post on X, Araghchi similarly said they made "progress on principles and objectives of a possible deal." He added, however, that "optimism may be warranted but only with a great deal of caution."

He told Iranian state television earlier that "I hope that we will be in a better position after the technical talks."

While the U.S. said both direct and indirect discussions were held, Iranian officials described them as indirect, like those last weekend in Muscat, Oman, with Omani Foreign Minister Badr al-Busaidi shuttling between them in different rooms.

"These talks are gaining momentum and now even the unlikely is possible," al-Busaidi said on X.

In a separate post, Oman's Foreign Ministry said the sides agreed to keep talking to seek a deal that ensures Iran is "completely free of nuclear weapons and sanctions, and maintaining its ability to develop peaceful nuclear energy."

That talks are even happening represents a historic moment, given the decades of enmity between the two countries since the 1979 Islamic Revolution and the U.S. Embassy hostage crisis. Trump, in his first term, unilaterally withdrew from Iran's nuclear deal with world powers in 2018, setting off years of attacks and negotiations that failed to restore the accord that drastically limited Tehran's enrichment of uranium in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions.

Talks come as tensions rise in the Mideast

At risk is a possible American or Israeli military strike on Iran's nuclear sites, or the Iranians following through on their threats to pursue an atomic weapon. Meanwhile, tensions in the Middle East have spiked over the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza and after U.S. airstrikes targeting Yemen's Iranian-backed Houthi rebels killed more than 70 people and wounded dozens more.

"I'm for stopping Iran, very simply, from having a nuclear weapon," Trump said Friday. "I want Iran to be great and prosperous and terrific."

Before the Iran talks started, Witkoff met in Rome with Rafael Mariano Grossi, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, according to a person familiar with the meeting who spoke on condition of anonymity to share details that were not made public.

The U.N. nuclear watchdog agency would likely be key in verifying compliance by Iran should a deal be reached, as it did with the 2015 accord Iran reached with world powers.

In a flurry of gatherings, Grossi also met with Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani, who sat down with

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Araghchi before the U.S.-Iran talks.

A diplomatic deal "is built patiently, day after day, with dialogue and mutual respect," Tajani said in a statement.

Araghchi, Witkoff traveled ahead of the talks

Witkoff had been in Paris for talks about Ukraine as Russia's full-scale war there grinds on. He also met in the French capital with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's strategic affairs minister, Ron Dermer, and Mossad chief David Barnea.

Dermer was in Rome on Saturday and spotted at the same hotel where Witkoff was staying. It was unclear if that was a coincidence, and there was no indication Dermer was part of the Iran talks.

Araghchi in recent days paid a visit to Moscow, where he met with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Russia, one of the world powers involved in Tehran's 2015 nuclear deal, could be a key participant in any future deal reached between Tehran and Washington. Analysts suggest Moscow could potentially take custody of Iran's uranium enriched to 60% purity — a short, technical step away from weapons-grade levels of 90%.

Oman's capital hosted the first round of negotiations last weekend, which saw Araghchi and Witkoff meet face to face after indirect talks. Oman, a sultanate on the eastern edge of the Arabian Peninsula, has long served as an interlocutor between Iran and the West.

Ahead of the talks, however, Iran seized on comments by Witkoff first suggesting Iran could enrich uranium at 3.67%, then later saying that all enrichment must stop.

Ali Shamkhani, an adviser to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, wrote on X before the talks that Iran would not accept giving up its enrichment program like Libya or agreeing to using uranium enriched abroad for its nuclear program.

"Iran has come for a balanced agreement, not a surrender," he wrote.

Iran seeks a deal to steady a troubled economy

Iran's internal politics are still inflamed over the mandatory hijab, or headscarf, with women still ignoring the law on the streets of Tehran. Rumors also persist over the government potentially increasing the cost of subsidized gasoline in the country, which has sparked nationwide protests in the past

Iran's rial currency plunged to over 1 million to a U.S. dollar earlier this month. The currency has improved with the talks, however, something Tehran hopes will continue.

Meanwhile, two used Airbus A330-200 long sought by Iran's flag carrier, Iran Air, arrived at Tehran's Mehrabad International Airport on Thursday, flight-tracking data analyzed by The Associated Press showed. The planes, formerly of China's Hainan Airlines, had been in Muscat and re-registered to Iran.

The aircraft have Rolls-Royce engines, which include significant American parts and servicing. Such a transaction would need approval from the U.S. Treasury given sanctions on Iran. The State Department and Treasury did not respond to requests for comment.

Under the 2015 deal, Iran could purchase new aircraft and had lined up tens of billions of dollars in deals with Airbus and Boeing Co. However, the manufacturers backed away from the deals over Trump's threats to the nuclear accord.

Ukraine wary of Putin's Easter truce and says it will reciprocate only a genuine ceasefire

By HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

CHERNIHIV REGION, Ukraine (AP) — Ukraine said it would reciprocate any genuine ceasefire by Moscow, but voiced skepticism after Russian President Vladimir Putin announced a temporary Easter truce in Ukraine starting Saturday.

The announcement from Kyiv came as Russia and Ukraine conducted their largest prisoner exchange since Moscow's full-scale invasion started over three years ago. Putin announced a temporary Easter ceasefire in Ukraine starting Saturday, citing humanitarian reasons. According to the Kremlin, the ceasefire will last from 6 p.m. Moscow time (1500 GMT) on Saturday to midnight (2100 GMT) following Easter Sunday.

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Putin offered no details on how the ceasefire would be monitored or whether it would cover airstrikes or ongoing ground battles that rage around the clock.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said if Russia is genuinely ready to observe a full and unconditional ceasefire, Ukraine will mirror that approach and strike only in defense.

He said such a gesture, particularly over the Easter weekend, could reveal Moscow's true intentions.

"If a full ceasefire truly takes hold, Ukraine proposes extending it beyond Easter Day on April 20," Zelenskyy said on Telegram. "That will reveal Russia's true intentions, as 30 hours are enough for headlines, but not for genuine confidence-building measures."

Zelenskyy added that, according to military reports, Russian assaults and artillery fire continued along parts of the 1,000-kilometer (600-mile) long front line.

In response to the ceasefire announcement, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha said that Kyiv had in March "agreed unconditionally to the U.S. proposal of a full interim ceasefire for 30 days," which Russia rejected.

"Putin has now made statements about his alleged readiness for a ceasefire. 30 hours instead of 30 days," Sybiha continued, writing on X. "Unfortunately, we have had a long history of his statements not matching his actions."

Putin's ceasefire announcement came after U.S. President Donald Trump on Friday said negotiations between Ukraine and Russia are "coming to a head" and insisted that neither side is "playing" him in his push to end the grinding three-year war.

Largest POW exchange so far

The two sides meanwhile exchanged hundreds of POWs on Saturday. Russia's Ministry of Defense said that 246 Russian service members were returned from Ukraine, and 31 wounded Ukrainian POWs were transferred in exchange for 15 wounded Russian soldiers in need of urgent medical care.

Zelenskyy said that 277 Ukrainian "warriors" have returned home from Russian captivity.

Both sides thanked the United Arab Emirates for their mediation.

Most of the Ukrainians freed in the latest prisoner exchange are young people born after 2000, Ukraine's Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War said Friday.

Outside a hospital in Ukraine's Northern Chernihiv region, where recently freed POWs were brought after the exchange at the border, dozens of relatives stood waiting.

Among them was 48-year-old Nataliia Lohvynchuk, who rushed toward the bus the moment it arrived. She hadn't seen her son in three years, since he was captured during the battle for Mariupol in the spring of 2022.

Her son, 23-year-old Ihor Lohvynchuk, lost about 40 kilograms (88 pounds) in captivity. "It still doesn't feel real," he said softly. "We're not really here yet. We all made it back, but we're still not here."

His mother, overcome with emotion and embracing her son, issued a plea: "We call on the entire world, on every country — help us bring all our boys home."

Thousands of POWs remain in captivity. The exchange is the fourth this year and the 63rd since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion.

Since the outbreak of the war, a total of 4,552 Ukrainians, both military and civilians, have been returned from captivity.

Russia says its forces have retaken nearly all of Kursk

Russia's Defense Ministry said Saturday its forces pushed Ukrainian troops from the village of Oleshnya, one of their last remaining footholds in Russia's Kursk region, where the Ukrainians staged a surprise incursion last year.

Gerasimov said Saturday in a report to Putin, quoted by Russian state media, that Russia had retaken nearly all of the territory from Ukrainian forces.

"The main part of the region's territory, where the invasion took place, has now been liberated. This is 1,260 square kilometers, 99.5%," Gerasimov said.

Zelenskyy wrote on X that Ukrainian forces "continued their activity on the territory of the Kursk region

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and are holding their positions." Ukraine also claimed that it holds a presence beyond the Kursk region in Russian territory with an aim of preventing the offensive on the Sumy region and to fight on enemy's soil.

The Associated Press was unable to verify the claim immediately from Russia.

According to the Russian state news agency Tass, Russia is still fighting to push Ukrainian forces out of the village of Gornal, some 7 miles (11 kilometers) south of Oleshnya.

In other developments, the Ukrainian air force reported that Russia fired 87 exploding drones and decoys in the latest wave of attacks overnight into Saturday. It said 33 of them were intercepted and another 36 were lost, likely having been electronically jammed.

Russian attacks damaged farms in the Odesa region and sparked fires in the Sumy region overnight, Ukraine's State Emergency Service said Saturday. Fires were contained, and no casualties were reported.

Russia's Ministry of Defense, meanwhile, said its air defense systems shot down two Ukrainian drones overnight into Saturday.

Vatican notes 'exchange of opinions' over migrants, prisoners in meeting with Vance

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — U.S. Vice President JD Vance met Saturday with the Vatican's No. 2 official amid tensions over the U.S. crackdown on migrants, with the Holy See reaffirming good relations but noting "an exchange of opinions" over current international conflicts, migrants and prisoners.

Vance, a Catholic convert, met with the secretary of state, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, and the foreign minister, Archbishop Paul Gallagher, in the Apostolic Palace. There was no indication he met with Pope Francis, who has sharply cut back official duties during his recovery from pneumonia.

Vance's office said he and Parolin "discussed their shared religious faith, Catholicism in the United States, the plight of persecuted Christian communities around the world, and President Trump's commitment to restoring world peace."

The Holy See has responded cautiously to the Trump administration while seeking to continue productive relations in keeping with its tradition of diplomatic neutrality.

It has expressed alarm over the administration's crackdown on migrants and cuts in international aid while insisting on peaceful resolutions to the wars in Ukraine and Gaza.

Those concerns were reflected in the Vatican statement, which said the talks were cordial and that the Vatican expressed satisfaction with the administration's commitment to protecting freedom of religion and conscience.

"There was an exchange of opinions on the international situation, especially regarding countries affected by war, political tensions and difficult humanitarian situations, with particular attention to migrants, refugees, and prisoners," the statement said. "Finally, hope was expressed for serene collaboration between the state and the Catholic Church in the United States, whose valuable service to the most vulnerable people was acknowledged."

The reference to "serene collaboration" appeared to refer to Vance's assertion that the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops was resettling "illegal immigrants" in order to get federal funding. Top U.S. cardinals have pushed back strongly against the claim.

"It is clear that the approach of the current U.S. administration is very different from what we are used to and, especially in the West, from what we have relied on for many years," Parolin told La Repubblica daily on the eve of Vance's visit.

As the U.S. pushes to end the war in Ukraine, Parolin reaffirmed Kyiv's right to its territorial integrity and insisted that any peace deal must not be "imposed" on Ukraine but "is built patiently, day by day, with dialogue and mutual respect."

Vance was spending Easter weekend in Rome with his family and attended Good Friday services in St. Peter's Basilica after meeting with Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni. On Saturday, after introducing his family to Parolin, the Vances got a private tour of the Sistine Chapel and later visited Rome's botanic garden,

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where one of his sons was seen in a plastic gladiator costume that is popular among Italian kids.

It wasn't immediately clear where they would celebrate Easter. Francis, for his part, indicated he hoped to attend Easter Mass that usually draws thousands to St. Peter's Square, according to the official Mass booklet and liturgical plans released Saturday.

Papal rebuke on migration, appeal for prisoners

Francis and Vance have tangled sharply over migration and the Trump administration's plans to deport migrants en masse. Francis has made caring for migrants a hallmark of his papacy and his progressive views on social justice issues have often put him at odds with members of the more conservative U.S. Catholic Church.

Francis also changed church teaching to say that capital punishment is inadmissible in all cases. After a public appeal from Francis just weeks before Trump took office, President Joe Biden commuted the sentences of 37 of the 40 people on federal death row. Trump is an outspoken proponent of expanding capital punishment.

Vance, who converted to Catholicism in 2019, identifies with a small Catholic intellectual movement, viewed by some critics as having reactionary or authoritarian leanings, that is often called "postliberal."

Postliberals share some longstanding Catholic conservative views, such as opposition to abortion and LGBTQ+ rights. They envision a counterrevolution in which they take over government bureaucracy and institutions like universities from within, replacing entrenched "elites" with their own and acting upon their vision of the "common good."

Just days before he was hospitalized in February, Francis blasted the Trump administration's deportation plans, warning that they would deprive migrants of their inherent dignity. In a letter to U.S. bishops, Francis also appeared to respond to Vance directly for having claimed that Catholic doctrine justified such policies.

A Latin concept of love

Vance had defended the administration's America-first crackdown by citing a concept from medieval Catholic theology known in Latin as "ordo amoris." He has said the concept delineates a hierarchy of care — to family first, followed by neighbor, community, fellow citizens and lastly those elsewhere.

In his Feb. 10 letter, Francis appeared to correct Vance's understanding of the concept.

"Christian love is not a concentric expansion of interests that little by little extends to other persons and groups," he wrote. "The true ordo amoris that must be promoted is that which we discover by meditating constantly on the parable of the 'Good Samaritan,' that is, by meditating on the love that builds a fraternity open to all, without exception."

Vance has acknowledged Francis' criticism but has said he would continue to defend his views. During a Feb. 28 appearance at the National Catholic Prayer Breakfast in Washington, Vance didn't address the issue specifically but called himself a "baby Catholic" and acknowledged there are "things about the faith that I don't know."

While he had criticized Francis on social media in the past, Vance recently has posted prayers for Francis' recovery.

A prince and knight fall in love and the Supreme Court is asked to intervene

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A prince lassos a dragon, saving a knight in shining armor from certain death. But the prince slips and as he falls, the knight and his steed race to return the favor.

Then the two men fall in love.

That story, "Prince and Knight," is one of five children's books featuring LGBTQ characters and aimed at kindergarten through the fifth grade that have roiled a diverse suburban Maryland school district and led to a Supreme Court case that the justices will hear on Tuesday.

Parents in Montgomery County who object for religious reasons want to pull their children from elementary school classes that use the books.

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The county school system has refused and lower courts have so far agreed.

But the outcome could be different at a high court dominated by conservative justices who have repeatedly endorsed claims of religious discrimination in recent years.

The parents argue that public schools cannot force kids to participate in instruction that violates their faith. They point to opt-out provisions in sex education and note that the district originally allowed parents to pull their children when the storybooks were being taught before abruptly reversing course.

"It's labeled as a language arts, you know, reading and writing program, but the content of the material is very sexual," said Billy Moges, a board member of the parents group Kids First that formed in response to the addition of the books to the curriculum. "It is teaching human sexuality and is confusing kids, and parents are not comfortable having their children exposed to these things at such an early age."

Dozens of parents testified at school board hearings about their religious obligations to keep their impressionable young children from lessons on gender and sexuality that conflicted with their beliefs.

Moges said she pulled her three daughters, now 10, 8 and 6, from their public schools as a result. They were initially homeschooled and now attend a private Christian school, she said.

The school system declined to comment, citing the ongoing lawsuit.

But in court papers, lawyers for the schools wrote that the handful of storybooks are not sex-education materials but "rather tell everyday tales of characters who experience adventure, confront new emotions, and struggle to make themselves heard." The books touch on the same themes found in classic stories that include Snow White, Cinderella and Peter Pan, the lawyers wrote.

In "Uncle Bobby's Wedding," a niece worries that her uncle will not have as much time for her after he gets married. His partner is a man. "Love, Violet" deals with a girl's anxiety about giving a valentine to another girl. "Born Ready" is the story of a transgender boy's decision to share his gender identity with his family and the world. "Intersection Allies" describes nine characters of varying backgrounds, including one who is gender-fluid.

The books were chosen "in order to better represent all Montgomery County families" and teachers may not use them "to pressure students to change or to change or disavow religious views," the schools' lawyers said.

The school system abandoned the option of letting parents take their kids out of the lessons because doing so "became unworkably disruptive," the lawyers told the court.

The writers' group Pen America, which reported more than 10,000 books banned in the last school year, said in a court filing what the parents want is "a constitutionally suspect book ban by another name."

The difficulty of providing alternative lessons for some children anytime the books are used probably would force the county to pull the books from the curriculum, said Tasslyn Magnusson, senior adviser with the Freedom to Read program at PEN America.

"I really hope people read these books. They're just lovely examples of experiences that kids have in school and they're perfectly fine storybooks to have as part of an educational curriculum," Magnusson said.

One book that was originally part of the curriculum and then pulled for unexplained reasons is "My Rainbow," co-written by Delaware state Rep. DeShanna Neal and daughter Trinity.

The story tells of Trinity's desire for long hair as a transgender girl and her mother's solution, knitting a rainbow wig.

Neal has grown used to having the book taken out of circulation at libraries, including in Florida, Ohio and Texas.

"School is a place to learn about why the world is different and how it's different," Neal said. "What I had hoped would come out of this book was, listen to your children. They know their own bodies."

Thousands gather in London to support trans rights following UK ruling over definition of woman

By KWIYEON HA and PAN PYLAS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Thousands of trans rights protesters gathered in central London on Saturday, days after the U.K.'s Supreme Court ruled that a woman is someone born biologically female and that transgender women are excluded from that legal definition.

With unease growing over what the ruling means for the rights of transgender people, protesters came together for what was billed as an "emergency demonstration" in Parliament Square. Activists demanded "trans liberation" and "trans rights now," with some waving flags and holding banners.

Trans groups are worried that Wednesday's landmark decision would undermine their rights, even though the U.K.'s highest court said transgender people remain protected from discrimination. The head of Equality and Human Rights Commission said the ruling will mean transgender women will be excluded from women's toilets, hospital wards and sports teams.

"It's a terrifying time to have your rights taken away from you," said 19-year-old transgender woman Sophie Gibbs. "I was disappointed to think that we could live in a society that seems so progressive now but is willing to make such a dangerous and harmful ruling."

The British government has said the unanimous decision by the five judges brought "clarity and confidence" for women and service providers.

Out of some 66 million people in England, Scotland and Wales, about 116,000 identified as trans in the latest census count. About 8,500 gender recognition certificates have been issued.

The ruling stemmed from a 2018 law passed by the Scottish Parliament that required at least 50% women on boards of Scottish public bodies. Transgender women with gender recognition certificates were to be included in meeting the quota.

The Supreme Court said that using a certificate to interpret someone's sex would clash with definitions of man and woman and, therefore, the anti-discrimination provisions of the 2010 Equality Act could "only be interpreted as referring to biological sex."

Scotland's First Minister John Swinney said Saturday that he "understands" the "hurt and anguish" trans people are feeling over the verdict, while accepting that the ruling must be followed.

Many people at Saturday's protest worried that the ruling could be the precursor to other judgments that diminish the rights for transgender people.

"It's a Pandora's box situation where I just think we allow certain things and then we essentially opened up the door to allow way more than we ever thought could be accepted or pushed through," said Zuleha Oshodi, 29.

10 years after Freddie Gray's death, calls for police reform and racial equity persist in Baltimore

By LEA SKENE Associated Press

BALTIMORE (AP) — It was almost instinctual for Ray Kelly to jump into action when he heard about a group of high school students clashing with police. He wanted to help protect the kids and de-escalate things, but instead, he watched his neighborhood burn.

Unrest broke out after Freddie Gray died from spinal injuries sustained during transport in a police van in April 2015. The protesters stormed through majority-Black west Baltimore, setting police cars ablaze and looting businesses. They were fighting the generations of oppression experienced by Black Americans, from racist housing policies and crumbling schools to limited job opportunities, rampant gun violence and poor living conditions.

A community activist from Gray's neighborhood, Kelly had focused on police accountability for years. As federal investigators launched a probe into the Baltimore Police Department and local prosecutors charged the officers involved, he doubled down in calling for stronger oversight at a time of growing national out-

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rage over police brutality.

Ten years later, his ongoing efforts illustrate Baltimore's progress — and lack thereof.

Among the positive changes, Kelly said, there are more mechanisms to address police misconduct and hold officers accountable. Homicides and shootings are trending downward after a prolonged surge that began in the wake of Gray's death. And while west Baltimore still faces widespread poverty and neglect, he said, at least elected officials are paying more attention.

"People have to hear us out, because there is now this possibility that we can organize and elevate our voices," Kelly said. "I think Freddie Gray's death put that in motion."

But progress is often painfully slow and woefully insufficient. Meanwhile city leaders face new obstacles from the Trump administration's escalating attacks on civil rights and diversity initiatives.

For Gray's family, a decade has passed since their private loss played out on national news.

Joined by the mayor and other dignitaries Saturday morning, his twin sister Fredricka laid a wreath of flowers near the site of his arrest, marking the anniversary of when he died in the hospital.

"It's still justice for Freddie Gray," she said, repeating what became a rallying cry in 2015. "Ten years now."

Inching toward reform

Baltimore has a long history of mistreating its Black residents. In 1910, city leaders enacted the country's first residential segregation ordinance restricting African American homeowners to certain blocks.

Kelly grew up during the height of the crack cocaine epidemic of the 1980s and the national war on drugs, when police routinely conducted "street sweeps" or mass arrests in west Baltimore. When he started selling drugs to support himself during high school, the police were just another obstacle in an already uphill battle. He later struggled with addiction and served time in prison.

After coming home in the early 2000s, Kelly started working with a neighborhood advocacy group to improve public safety. That put him in a unique position when the U.S. Department of Justice launched its probe of city police: Knowing residents would be wary about cooperating with federal investigators, Kelly helped make introductions and encouraged people to participate.

"It was a gamble," he said. "It wasn't really what this community does."

But the gamble paid off. The investigation uncovered longstanding patterns of excessive force, unlawful arrests and discriminatory policing practices, especially against Black people.

The findings resulted in a 2017 consent decree mandating a series of reforms for the department, which promised to overhaul its policies and training.

Since then, progress is inching along.

The agency celebrated a milestone this week when a federal judge terminated two of the consent decree's 17 sections after finding full and sustained compliance — including with rules for transporting people in police vans. Gray was handcuffed, shackled and transported without a seatbelt as officers repeatedly ignored his calls for medical attention.

Department leaders say large-scale change is happening, though not overnight. Officers have increased foot patrols, decreased low-level arrests and even undergone training on emotional regulation. They're less likely to use force when taking people into custody, and they've contributed to historic reductions in homicides by partnering with service providers to address the root causes of gun violence.

Police Commissioner Richard Worley said that over the course of his career, he's watched the culture of policing shift from "warriors to guardians."

Nonetheless, many Baltimore residents still don't trust the police to act with compassion and integrity. They don't believe the department has undergone a significant cultural change.

"It's going to take years and years to redefine the police department in the eyes of the community," U.S. District Judge James Bredar said during Thursday's consent decree hearing. "This work is critical, even if it doesn't bear fruit immediately."

Persistent challenges in a historically Black neighborhood

Gray, 25, was arrested near his home in west Baltimore's Sandtown-Winchester neighborhood, a once-thriving community that had fallen into disrepair.

In its heyday, nearby Pennsylvania Avenue was a Black entertainment district with renowned jazz clubs,

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upscale shops and vibrant nightlife. Its cultural artifacts include the childhood home of Thurgood Marshall, the first African American appointed to the Supreme Court, and a bronze statue of jazz legend Billie Holiday, who also had roots in west Baltimore.

A confluence of factors contributed to its decline, including urban flight and chronic disinvestment. Some businesses left after unrest following the 1968 assassination of Martin Luther King Jr.

Open-air drug markets moved in, and over-policing became a common complaint from residents. So when Gray was violently taken into custody after making eye contact with officers and running away, that longstanding frustration boiled over. Officials responded to the 2015 protests by bringing in the Maryland National Guard and imposing a citywide curfew.

Many residents celebrated when prosecutors later announced criminal charges against the six officers involved, but none were convicted.

In the meantime, political leaders visited Sandtown and pledged to invest in housing, youth programs and more. Those big promises have largely failed to materialize.

"It's still the same damn place with the same damn issues," Kelly said, gazing down the street outside the former church rectory that houses his advocacy organization, the Citizens Policing Project. "We've heard a lot of talk, but this is what we see."

When the city closed the neighborhood's recreation center in 2021, Sandtown youth were basically left with nowhere to go, said 17-year-old Ryeheem Watson, whose childhood unfolded in the shadow of Gray's death.

"It was like, nothing good comes for our community," he said. "But when you're starting as an underdog, there's nowhere to go but up."

Politics and progress

The second Trump administration will likely create even more challenges for communities like Sandtown as the White House slashes federal initiatives aimed at advancing racial equity.

Baltimore attorney Billy Murphy, who represented the Gray family, said that while Black people continue fighting for their collective future, a resurgence of white supremacy is infecting national politics.

"Where are we today? That's where we are," Murphy said at a recent event commemorating Gray's death. "We are heading backwards."

But at least on the local level, political discourse now includes more progressive Black voices, said Dayvon Love, director of public policy for the grassroots think tank Leaders of a Beautiful Struggle. In his view, Gray's death was a turning point.

"That has advanced our ability to advocate unapologetically for Black people in ways that before the uprising were shut out," Love said.

Mayor Brandon Scott says his administration is achieving long-awaited progress by investing in historically neglected neighborhoods, including a \$15 million plan to renovate Sandtown's recreation center and upgrades to Gilmor Homes, the public housing complex where Gray was arrested.

However, Scott said in an interview, "We're not celebrating here, because the work is not complete."

For Kelly, discussions of politics and progress often miss the point by failing to acknowledge Gray himself, the young man from west Baltimore who died after a tragic encounter with police a decade ago.

Instead of marking the anniversary of his death, Kelly suggested, perhaps it's his birthday that should be celebrated: Aug. 16, 1989.

Takeaways from AP's report on pardoned Jan. 6 rioters being embraced in Republican politics

By ALI SWENSON Associated Press

JACKSON, Mich. (AP) — Those who rioted, assaulted police officers or broke into congressional offices during the riot at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021 are now being received as honored guest speakers at local Republican events around the country.

Since President Donald Trump pardoned about 1,500 rioters on his first day in office, some of those

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involved in the attack are getting a platform to tell their version of events and are drawing praise in some conservative circles as heroes and martyrs.

Some are considering runs for office, recognizing that at least among a certain segment of the pro-Trump base, they are seen not as criminals, but as patriots.

His arrest roiled his campaign for governor. Now he's back in the political spotlight

Ryan Kelley thought he had a good shot at becoming Michigan's governor in 2022. That is, until he was charged with misdemeanors for participating in the riot. His campaign sputtered and he finished fourth out of five candidates in the Republican primary.

Three years later, Kelley says people ask him all the time to run for governor again. In today's America, his two-month prison sentence for the Capitol riots isn't the obstacle to public life it may once have been.

At a recent county Republican committee event in Jackson, Michigan, the 43-year-old commercial real estate developer was met with hugs and handshakes. Dozens of attendees hollered and clapped when he introduced himself as "your favorite J6er." They gasped and shook their heads as Kelley recalled how his young son thought he was dead while he was in federal prison. They urged him to run for governor in 2026, something he said he is debating.

"I've done much worse and did no jail time," said 58-year-old Todd Gillman, a woodworker and Republican chairman for the local congressional district. "Thank God people like Ryan Kelley are not intimidated by the lawfare that was used against them."

Kelley, who did not commit violence or enter the Capitol on Jan. 6, pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor trespassing charge. He maintains the judge who sentenced him made the decision based on the claims Kelley made about Jan. 6 and the 2020 election during his 2022 gubernatorial campaign — and not his actions at the Capitol.

GOP groups around the country are platforming pardoned rioters

By The Associated Press' count, at least two dozen local Republican groups nationwide in recent months have invited Jan. 6 rioters to speak at regular meetings or special fundraisers.

They include people who only trespassed, but also rioters who were convicted and pardoned for more serious crimes, such as carrying a firearm on Capitol grounds or violently attacking law enforcement.

The Western Wake Republican Club in North Carolina in March featured remarks from James Grant, a pardoned rioter who was among the first to assault police officers and breach a security perimeter during the attack.

A Republican women's club in Lawrence County, Tennessee, earlier this month hosted an event for Ronald Colton McAbee. He was employed as a sheriff's deputy in Tennessee when he went to the Capitol, dragging an officer away from a police line and punching another who tried to stop him.

Some of the local GOP groups welcoming Jan. 6 rioters have faced pushback from their communities, prompting them to relocate or even cancel scheduled events. One such event in California faced so much public backlash that three potential venues canceled, according to TV station KSBW. It was held at a fourth, with protesters outside.

It makes sense that Republicans are featuring Jan. 6 rioters, said Matt Dallek, a historian at George Washington University who studies the conservative movement.

"Those who are pardoned can testify, like no one else can, to the horrific power of the federal government to destroy their lives," Dallek said. "It's a potent rallying cry, and also probably a potent fundraising tool."

But there also is a danger to elevating them, he said. Many of those pardoned used violence to stop the peaceful transfer of power, and juries determined their actions to be criminal.

"It is, I think, a mainstreaming, a growing acceptance on the right of political violence, as long as it's done in the service of Trump and his ongoing election lie," Dallek said.

Some pardoned rioters are running for office

Jake Lang, who was charged with assaulting an officer, civil disorder and other crimes before he was pardoned, recently announced he is running for Secretary of State Marco Rubio's vacant U.S. Senate seat in Florida.

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Enrique Tarrio, the former Proud Boys leader who was sentenced to 22 years in prison before his full pardon, said in an interview with Newsmax that he will take a "serious look at running for office" in 2026 or 2028 and believes his "future is in politics."

In Texas, pardoned rioter Ryan Nichols announced a run for Congress but withdrew days later.

Kelley said he is mulling a 2026 campaign for governor, but is not sure he can commit his young family to the grind of the campaign.

Still, he recognizes that Trump's pardons have opened a window of opportunity.

"Now is kind of the time that I could catapult with that, right?" he said in an interview. "We get a lot of hate, but I'm also going to get a lot of support."

Some Jan. 6 rioters pardoned by Trump are now embraced as heroes and candidates for office

By ALI SWENSON Associated Press

JACKSON, Mich. (AP) — Ryan Kelley thought he had a good shot at becoming Michigan's governor in 2022. That is, until he was charged with misdemeanors for participating in the Jan. 6 riot at the U.S. Capitol. His campaign sputtered and he finished fourth out of five candidates in the Republican primary.

Three years later, Kelley says, people ask him all the time to run for governor again. In today's America, where President Donald Trump returned to the White House and within hours pardoned some 1,500 Jan. 6 rioters, Kelley's two-month prison sentence for his actions that winter day in 2021 isn't the obstacle to public life that it might once have been.

It may even be a ticket to political prominence.

Far from being sidelined, those who rioted, assaulted police officers or broke into congressional offices during the violent attack are now being spotlighted as honored guest speakers at local Republican events around the country. They are getting a platform to tell their version of events and being hailed as heroes and martyrs. Some are considering runs for office, recognizing that at least among a certain segment of the pro-Trump base, they are seen not as criminals but as patriots.

Kelley, a 43-year-old commercial real estate developer, is among those fielding new opportunities in the political arena.

At a recent county Republican committee event in Jackson, Michigan, Kelley was met with hugs and handshakes. Dozens of attendees hollered and clapped when he introduced himself as "your favorite J6er." They gasped and shook their heads as Kelley recalled how his young son thought he was dead while he was in federal prison. They urged him to run for governor again in 2026. It is something he said he is debating.

After Kelley finished speaking, attendees said they were touched by his story.

"I've done much worse and did no jail time," said 58-year-old Todd Gillman, a woodworker and Republican chairman for the local congressional district. "Thank God people like Ryan Kelley are not intimidated by the lawfare that was used against them."

Rioters become symbols of government overreach

It makes sense that Republicans are seizing the chance to showcase Jan. 6 rioters, said Matt Dallek, a historian at George Washington University who studies the conservative movement. Trump has likened those rioters to "political prisoners" and "warriors" for defending him and his false claims that the 2020 election won by Democrat Joe Biden was stolen. There is no credible evidence the 2020 election was tainted or that Trump was the winner — facts backed up by federal and state election officials and Trump's own attorney general. Trump's allegations of fraud were also roundly rejected by courts, including by judges appointed by Trump.

"Those who are pardoned can testify, like no one else can, to the horrific power of the federal government to destroy their lives," Dallek said. "It's a potent rallying cry, and also probably a potent fundraising tool."

But there also is a danger to elevating them, he said. Many of those pardoned by the Republican president used violence to stop the peaceful transfer of power, and juries determined their actions to be criminal.

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"It is, I think, a mainstreaming, a growing acceptance on the right of political violence, as long as it's done in the service of Trump and his ongoing election lie," Dallek said.

Kelley, who did not commit violence or enter the Capitol, pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor trespassing charge. He said he saw some things at the Capitol — people breaking windows, for example — that he did not like. But he also flatly denied an audience member's use of the term "insurrection."

"It was a protest that turned into a little bit of a scuffle later in the day for a couple of minutes, right?" he told the nodding crowd in Jackson, a midsize city west of Detroit that residents say hosted the first official meeting of the Republican Party in 1854.

Extensive video footage and testimony from the events inside the Capitol on Jan. 6 show more than a scuffle as a mob of Trump supporters — some armed with poles, bats and bear spray — overwhelmed law enforcement, shattered windows and sent lawmakers and aides running into hiding. More than 100 police officers were injured, with some dragged into the crowd and beaten or attacked with makeshift weapons.

Kelley said the reason he pleaded guilty was to avoid more serious charges. That differed from his tone in his sentencing hearing in 2023, when he told the judge that his actions outside the Capitol, from crossing the police line to riling up other rioters and ripping a tarp, were wrong. The judge told Kelley: "I think you misused the platform that you had as a candidate for elected office to minimize and, frankly, to lie about what happened."

As he gazed out at an American flag banner while addressing the crowd in Jackson, Kelley said he "was a political prisoner for standing up for what I believe was right."

That resonated with attendee Marilyn Acton, a 68-year-old mental health counselor. She hopes pardoned Jan. 6 rioters such as Kelley become more involved in Republican politics.

"I would like them to totally get involved, because I think people need to know the truth," she said.

Pardoned, platformed and protested

By The Associated Press' count, at least two dozen local Republican groups nationwide in recent months have invited Jan. 6 rioters to speak at regular meetings or special fundraisers, some with titles such as "Insurrection Hoax" and "Patriots Vindicated."

They include people who only trespassed at the Capitol but also rioters who were convicted and pardoned for more serious crimes such as carrying a firearm on Capitol grounds or violently attacking law enforcement.

The Western Wake Republican Club in North Carolina in March featured remarks from James Grant, a pardoned rioter who was among the first to assault police officers and breach a security perimeter during the attack on the Capitol.

Grant, who later climbed into the Capitol through a broken window and entered a senator's office, used the stage to reiterate his belief that the 2020 election was stolen and suggest that the actions on the front line of the riots were led by "undercovers and federal agents." In a video recording of the event, he also decried the conditions in prison and said the experience was traumatic for him.

A Republican women's club in Lawrence County, Tennessee, earlier this month hosted an event for Ronald Colton McAbee. He was employed as a sheriff's deputy in Tennessee when he went to Capitol, dragging an officer away from a police line and punching another officer who tried to stop him.

McAbee told the crowd the jury that convicted him of five felonies was biased and said he had been trying to help the officer in the melee. He encouraged those listening to get involved in politics and said he had considered running for office himself.

"It has been a thought, and we'll see what happens," he said in a video recording of the event.

Some of the local GOP groups welcoming Jan. 6 rioters have faced pushback from their communities, prompting them to relocate or even cancel scheduled events.

In California, the Association of Monterey Bay Conservatives' event featuring six pardoned rioters faced so much public backlash that three potential venues canceled, according to TV station KSBW. When the event was ultimately held at the fourth venue in Salinas, protesters gathered outside the building.

The Monterey Peace and Justice Center, a local nonprofit that condemned the event, said in an emailed statement that "rebranding these rioters as heroes is a dangerous distortion of history."

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Event organizer Karen Weissman told the AP in an email the group believed that it was "important for our community to hear their stories and hear a different perspective."

David Becker, a former Justice Department lawyer and co-author of "The Big Truth," a book about Trump's 2020 election falsehoods, said he is troubled by anyone who would reward or celebrate what happened on Jan. 6.

"We have to agree as a constitutional republic, as a democracy, that elections and the rule of law have meaning," he said. "And if we lose that meaning, if we attack our own institutions, we are going down a path where something even worse could happen in the future."

From conviction to candidacy

Some pardoned rioters are taking things a step beyond speaking at political events and setting their sights on local, state or even federal office.

Jake Lang, who was charged with assaulting an officer, civil disorder and other crimes before he was pardoned by Trump, recently announced he is running for Secretary of State Marco Rubio's vacant U.S. Senate seat in Florida.

Enrique Tarrio, the former Proud Boys leader who was sentenced to 22 years in prison after being convicted of seditious conspiracy and other crimes before his full pardon, said in an interview with Newsmax that he will take a "serious look at running for office" in 2026 or 2028 and believes his "future is in politics."

In Texas, pardoned rioter Ryan Nichols announced a run for Congress but withdrew days later.

Kelley, who has been asked to attend various political events around Michigan in recent months, said he is debating another run for governor in 2026, but is not sure he can commit his young family to the grind of the campaign. He said he wants Michigan to win, whether or not he is the one in office.

Still, he recognizes that Trump's pardons have opened a window of opportunity that may not last forever.

"Now is kind of the time that I could catapult with that, right?" he said in an interview. "We get a lot of hate, but I'm also going to get a lot of support."

Today in History: April 20, the Columbine High School shootings

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Sunday, April 20, the 110th day of 2025. There are 255 days left in the year. Today is Easter.

Today in history:

On April 20, 1999, two students shot and killed 12 classmates and one teacher and injured 23 others before taking their own lives at Columbine High School, near Denver, Colorado.

Also on this date:

In 1812, the fourth vice president of the United States, George Clinton, died in Washington at age 72, becoming the first vice president to die while in office.

In 1912, Boston's Fenway Park, now the oldest active stadium in Major League Baseball, hosted its first official baseball game in front of an estimated 27,000 spectators. (The Red Sox defeated the New York Highlanders 7-6 in 11 innings.)

In 1914, militia and Colorado National Guard members opened fire on an encampment of striking coal miners and their families in Ludlow, Colorado; at least 19 people in the camp, including 12 children, and one National Guard member were killed in the "Ludlow Massacre."

In 1971, the Supreme Court unanimously upheld the use of busing to achieve racial desegregation in schools.

In 1972, Apollo 16's lunar module, carrying astronauts John W. Young and Charles M. Duke Jr., landed on the moon.

In 1986, following an absence of over six decades, Russian-born pianist Vladimir Horowitz returned to the Soviet Union to perform a concert at the Grand Hall of the Tchaikovsky Conservatory in Moscow.

In 2010, an explosion on the Deepwater Horizon oil platform, leased by BP, killed 11 workers and caused a blowout that began spewing an estimated 200 million gallons (757 million liters) of crude oil into the Gulf of Mexico. (The well was finally capped nearly three months later.)

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In 2021, former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin was found guilty of murder and manslaughter charges for the killing of George Floyd; Chauvin was later sentenced to 22 ½ years in prison.

Today's Birthdays: Actor George Takei is 88. Actor Jessica Lange is 76. Actor Clint Howard is 66. Former MLB first baseman Don Mattingly is 64. Actor Crispin Glover is 61. Actor Andy Serkis is 61. Actor Shemar Moore is 55. Actor-model Carmen Electra is 53. Reggae musician Stephen Marley is 53. Rapper Killer Mike is 50. Actor Joey Lawrence is 49. Model Miranda Kerr is 42. Former NFL linebacker Luke Kuechly is 34.