

# 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.**

## **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.



## **Wednesday, April 23**

Senior Menu: Lasagna bake, tossed salad, fresh fruit, garlic toast.

School Breakfast: Cereal.

School Lunch: Cheese pizza, green beans.

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

FCCLA Banquet, 6 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 4 p.m.

Groton United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.

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

**Groton Daily Independent**  
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**Paul's Cell/Text: 605-397-7460**

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# 1440

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

## Pope Francis Dies

Pope Francis died at the age of 88 of a stroke and irreversible heart failure, the Vatican announced yesterday. The Argentine-born pontiff had returned to work following a battle with double pneumonia and related health complications in late March after a five-week hospital stay. He made his last public appearance at St. Peter's Basilica on Easter Sunday, offering a final blessing for the world's 1.3 billion Catholics.

Born Jorge Mario Bergoglio, he was the first Jesuit pope, the first from the Americas, and the 266th leader of the Catholic Church. His papacy, which began in 2013, was marked by reforms addressing climate change, Vatican finances, a focus on synodality—where all members of the church participate in its mission—and efforts to tackle clerical abuse and promote social justice. Pope Francis lived simply in a small Vatican apartment rather than in the Apostolic Palace.

The church now enters the "sede vacante" period with Irish American Cardinal Kevin Farrell acting as the camerlengo, or acting head of the Vatican until a new pontiff is elected. Cardinals under the age of 80 will convene within 15 to 20 days to elect a new pope through a secret ballot conclave.

## Defaulted Student Loans

The US Education Department announced yesterday it will resume involuntary collections on defaulted federal student loans for the first time starting May 5, ending a pause that began five years ago during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Under a Treasury Department program, the government will deduct overdue loan payments from tax refunds, federal salaries, and benefits. Wage garnishment—where a portion of wages are withheld and sent to loan holders—will resume after a 30-day notice period. Impacted borrowers will receive notifications within two weeks. More than 5 million borrowers are currently in default, while an additional 4 million have made late payments. Roughly one-third of 38 million borrowers are making payments on their student loans, per government data.

Separately, Harvard sued the Trump administration yesterday after the government withheld more than \$2.2B in grants and \$60M in contracts to pressure the university into complying with a list of policy and program reforms.

## Boston Marathon Winners

Kenya's John Korir won yesterday's Boston Marathon, finishing the race in 2 hours, 4 minutes, and 45 seconds on the men's side. Kenya's Sharon Lokedi won on the women's side with a time of 2:17:22—a new women's course record.

Korir's winning time falls less than 5 minutes shy of the marathon world record set in 2023 by Kenyan runner the late Kelvin Kiptum at 2:00:35. Korir joins his older brother Wesley (who won the Boston Marathon in 2012) as the first siblings to have won the race. Kenyans have historically dominated some of the top marathon times, a trend that may be attributable in part to the Rift Valley's high elevations serving as a natural training ground for young athletes.

The Boston Marathon is the world's oldest, dating back to 1897, and is widely considered the most prestigious. Over 30,000 runners competed in this year's 26.2-mile course, beginning in the town of Hopkinton and ending in Boston's Copley Square.

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## Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Pro Football Hall of Famer and podcaster Shannon Sharpe accused in \$50M civil lawsuit of sexual assault and battery.

Duke star freshman Cooper Flagg confirms he will enter NBA Draft, is widely projected to be top pick ... and NBA playoffs are ongoing; see latest bracket ... as are the NHL's Stanley Cup playoffs.

Ill-fated 2017 Fyre Festival to be turned into music streaming service that includes a subscription video-on-demand platform; Fyre Festival 2 was recently postponed indefinitely.

## Science & Technology

NASA's Lucy mission makes flyby of 150-million-year-old asteroid fragment; images expected to shed light on the collision processes during the early formation of the solar system.

Engineers develop hyper-resilient lithium-ion battery that can be stretched and twisted and can continue to power devices after being cut in half.

Lemur study reveals evolutionary changes to the way their brains respond to oxytocin determine whether females are highly aggressive or amiable; results shed light on how hormones influence behavior in humans.

## Business & Markets

US stock markets close lower (S&P 500 -2.4%, Dow -2.5%, Nasdaq -2.6%) as US dollar drops to three-year low after President Donald Trump pressures Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell to lower interest rates immediately.

FTC sues Uber for alleged deceptive billing and cancellation practices tied to its Uber One subscription service.

Justice Department asks federal judge to address Google's monopoly in internet search by forcing the \$1.8T tech giant to sell Chrome, among other measures, as three-week hearing on remedy kicks off.

Walgreens to pay up to \$350M to settle federal claims over allegedly filling millions of invalid prescriptions for opioids and other controlled substances from August 2012 to March 2023.

## Politics & World Affairs

White House expresses support for Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, who reportedly shared sensitive information about US strikes in Yemen in another Signal group chat, which included his wife, brother, and personal lawyer.

Nadine Menendez, wife of former US Sen. Bob Menendez (D), convicted of joining her husband in yearslong bribery scheme tied to Egypt.

Man pleads guilty to killing 23 people and wounding 22 others in a mass shooting at an El Paso, Texas, Walmart in 2019, receives life sentence without parole.

US Supreme Court hears challenge to the Affordable Care Act's requirement that insurers provide certain preventive health services at no cost.

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Newsweek

The Bulletin

YOUR DAILY BRIEFING OF  
EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW

## WORLD IN BRIEF

- Pope Francis funeral update: The list of celebrities and world leaders who will be attending the funeral for Pope Francis is currently short but expected to grow as more details emerge.
- China encounter with US aircraft carrier: Footage recently released by Chinese state media appears to show a close encounter between Chinese and American carrier-based fighter jets over an undisclosed location in waters.
- Home sale cancellations surge nationwide: Tens of thousands of pending home sales across the U.S. fell through in March, according to a new report by Redfin, as growing economic uncertainty is leading many aspiring buyers to double-guess whether they should be making such an important investment.
- Trump Tower project in Moscow: The Kremlin is weighing offering President Trump an opportunity to resurrect plans for a Trump Tower in Moscow—reviving a dream that fizzled out nearly a decade ago—according to an independent Russian newspaper.
- German tourists deported from US: Two German teenage girls were detained and deported from the United States after arriving in Hawaii without a hotel reservation.
- FDA to suspend milk quality tests: A quality control program for testing fluid milk and other dairy products at the Food and Drug Administration is reportedly suspended as the agency faces capacity issues following recent cuts.

## Pope Francis Death Update: Seals Placed on Pope's Residence

The rundown: Seals have been placed on the apartment where Pope Francis had resided as cardinals meet to decide on the arrangements for the funeral of the pontiff.

Why it matters: The Vatican News reported that the rite confirming the death and the placement of Pope Francis's body in the coffin took place on Monday in the chapel of the Casa Santa Marta in Vatican City. The Vatican's top doctor Andrea Arcangeli said that Pope Francis had died from a stroke, followed by a coma and irreversible cardiocirculatory collapse. The Vatican has released images of Pope Francis in an open coffin in the chapel of Casa Santa Marta during which the declaration of death was read aloud. Cardinals were meeting Tuesday morning in the Vatican to decide on arrangements including the date for Francis' funeral and when his body will be moved into St Peter's Basilica before burial so the public can pay their respects.

TL/DR: Italian media citing Vatican sources have reported that the funeral is likely to take place on Saturday, April 26.

What happens now? Mourners from around the world have been queueing to visit St Peter's Square in Vatican City on Tuesday. The funeral is likely to take place this weekend and will be attended by world leaders, including French President Emmanuel Macron and U.S. President Trump, whose Vice President JD Vance spoke with the pontiff just before he died.



## Groton Area Tigers JV Firing On All Cylinders Against Miller JV

By GameChanger Media

Groton Area Tigers JV easily dispatched Miller JV on Monday, 7-0.

Groton Area Tigers JV got on the board in the top of the first inning after Jordan Schwan singled to left field, Braden Fliehs grounded out, and Miller JV committed an error, each scoring one run.

Groton Area Tigers JV added three runs in the second after Schwan singled down the left field line.

Groton Area Tigers JV added one run in the third after Kolton Antonsen walked.

Schwan earned the win for Groton Area Tigers JV. The righty gave up zero hits and zero runs over two innings, striking out six and walking one. Cody Fanning took the loss for Miller JV. The hurler went two innings, surrendering seven runs (two earned) on six hits, striking out five and walking three.

Schwan led Groton Area Tigers JV with two hits in two at bats. Antonsen and Schwan each drove in one run for Groton Area Tigers JV. Groton Area Tigers JV didn't commit a single error in the field. Kason Oswald had the most chances in the field with six.

Groton Area Tigers JV welcome Sioux Valley Junior Varsity Cossacks on Sunday for their next game.

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## Groton Area Tigers JV 6 - 0 Miller JV

📍 Away 📅 Monday April 21, 2025

	1	2	R	H	E
GRTN	3	3	6	5	0
MLLR	0	0	0	0	5

### BATTING

Groton Area Tigers JV	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
A Abeln #5 (2B)	1	1	1	0	0	0
W Borg #12 (2B)	1	1	1	0	0	0
T Schust... #21 (SS)	1	0	0	0	0	1
S Crank #20 (SS)	0	1	0	0	1	0
J Schwan #11 (P)	2	1	2	1	0	0
I Scepan... #25 (3B)	1	1	1	0	0	0
Z Fliehs #23 (3B)	0	0	0	0	0	0
B Fliehs #19 (1B)	1	0	0	0	0	0
K Oswald #24 (C)	1	0	0	0	0	0
J Bisbee #15 (RF)	1	0	0	0	0	1
N Scepa... #1 (RF)	0	0	0	0	0	0
L Shilha... #22 (CF)	1	0	0	0	0	1
X Ellen... #14 (CF)	0	0	0	0	0	0
G Kroll #14 (LF)	1	1	0	0	0	0
K Antons... #3 (LF)	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>

**TB:** W Borg, I Scepaniak, A Abeln, J Schwan 2

### PITCHING

Groton Area Tigers JV	IP	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
J Schwan #11	1.2	0	0	1	4	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>

**P-S:** J Schwan 26-14, **BF:** J Schwan 5

Miller JV	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
H Maul #17 (SS)	1	0	0	0	0	1
D Runge #6 (CF)	0	0	0	0	1	0
E Fritzc... #24 (2B)	1	0	0	0	0	1
S Roseland #14 (C)	1	0	0	0	0	1
H Fawcett #11 (1B)	1	0	0	0	0	1
G Runge #13 (LF)	0	0	0	0	0	0
C Cavenee #7	0	0	0	0	0	0
D Otto #9 (RF)	0	0	0	0	0	0
C Kruml #0	0	0	0	0	0	0
J Keanow #33 (3B)	0	0	0	0	0	0
C Fanning #8 (P)	0	0	0	0	0	0
C Hurd #12	0	0	0	0	0	0
T Bray #12	0	0	0	0	0	0
W Hosman #7	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>

**CS:** D Runge

Miller JV	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
C Fanning #8	1.1	5	6	2	1	3	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>

**P-S:** C Fanning 46-29, **WP:** C Fanning 3, **BF:** C Fanning 12

## Groton Area Tigers Varsity Victorious Over Miller Varsity Outlaws

By GameChanger Media

Groton Area Tigers Varsity were victorious against Miller Varsity Outlaws 10-6 on Monday.

Groton Area Tigers Varsity got on the board in the second inning after an error scored one run.

Miller Varsity Outlaws captured the lead, 3-1, in the bottom of the second when Tate Bray doubled, scoring two runs, and Branden Flowers singled, scoring one run.

Groton Area Tigers Varsity tied the game in the top of the third thanks to an inside the park home run by Brevin Fliehs, and a ground out by Nick Groeblichhoff.

A single by Fliehs gave Groton Area Tigers Varsity the lead, 5-3, in the top of the fourth.

Miller Varsity Outlaws tied the game in the bottom of the fifth thanks to an error, a triple by Kellan Hurd, and a passed ball.

Groton Area Tigers Varsity jumped back into the lead in the top of the eighth inning after Groeblichhoff singled down the right field line, Jarrett Erdmann singled down the right field line, Kellen Antonsen was struck by a pitch, and Lincoln Krause walked, each scoring one run.

Fliehs earned the win for Groton Area Tigers Varsity. The reliever gave up one hit and zero runs over two and one-third innings, striking out six and walking two. Jayson Lacombe took the loss for Miller Varsity Outlaws. The right-handed pitcher went three and one-third innings, giving up four runs on three hits, striking out four and walking three. Gavin Englund began the game for Groton Area Tigers Varsity. The starter surrendered seven hits and six runs (four earned) over five and two-thirds innings, striking out nine and walking two. Jett Kleinsausser started the game for Miller Varsity Outlaws. The right-handed pitcher surrendered six hits and six runs (two earned) over four and one-third innings, striking out eight and walking two.

Groton Area Tigers Varsity tallied nine hits in the game. Fliehs, Erdmann, and Antonsen each collected two hits for Groton Area Tigers Varsity. Groeblichhoff and Antonsen each drove in two runs for Groton Area Tigers Varsity. Carter Simon paced Groton Area Tigers Varsity with two walks. Overall, the team had patience at the plate, tallying six walks for the game.

Bray, the number seven hitter for Miller Varsity Outlaws, led the way with two runs batted in. The left-handed hitter went 1-for-3 on the day. Hurd went 3-for-4 at the plate to lead Miller Varsity Outlaws in hits. Hurd stole two bases. Miller Varsity Outlaws ran wild on the base paths, collecting four stolen bases for the game.

Groton Area Tigers Varsity will travel to Madison/Chester Varsity 2024 for their next game on Wednesday.

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## Groton Area Tigers Varsity 10 - 6 Miller Varsity Outlaws

📍 Away 📅 Monday April 21, 2025

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	R	H	E
GRTN	0	1	2	2	1	0	0	4	10	9	2
MLLR	0	3	0	0	3	0	0	0	6	8	5

### BATTING

Groton Area Tigers Varsity	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
B Fliehs #6 (SS)	6	2	2	1	0	1
K Fliehs #10 (C)	4	0	0	0	1	2
G Englund #18 (P)	3	1	0	0	1	2
C Simon #4 (1B)	3	2	1	0	2	1
N Groebl... #13 (3B)	3	2	1	2	0	0
J Erdma... #00 (CF)	5	1	2	1	0	2
T Schust... #21 (RF)	3	0	0	0	0	1
A Abeln #5 (SS)	1	0	0	0	1	0
K Antonsen #7 (2B)	4	0	2	2	0	1
L Krause #2 (LF)	4	1	1	1	1	2
CR: J Schwan #11	0	1	0	0	0	0
Totals	36	10	9	7	6	12

**2B:** C Simon, **HR:** B Fliehs, **TB:** J Erdmann 2, B Fliehs 5, K Antonsen 2, N Groeblinghoff, C Simon 2, L Krause, **HBP:** K Antonsen, G Englund, N Groeblinghoff 2, **SB:** G Englund, J Schwan 2, **LOB:** 12

### PITCHING

Groton Area Tigers Varsity	R	ER	BB	SO	HR		
G Englu... #18	5.2	7	6	4	2	9	0
B Fliehs #6	2.1	1	0	0	2	6	0
Totals	8.0	8	6	4	4	15	0

**W:** B Fliehs, **P-S:** B Fliehs 54-35, G Englund 111-76, **WP:** G Englund 2, **BF:** B Fliehs 10, G Englund 27

Miller Varsity OutlawAB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO	
C Fanning #1 (CF)	5	0	1	0	0	4
J Lacombe #16 (3B)	4	1	1	0	0	2
J Kleinsaus... #3 (P)	4	1	0	0	0	2
K Hurd #5 (LF)	4	1	3	1	0	0
N Adams #2 (C)	2	1	0	0	2	2
C Hurd #15	4	1	1	0	0	1
T Bray #12 (1B)	3	1	1	2	1	0
C Fanning #8 (RF)	3	0	0	0	1	2
B Flowers #4 (SS)	4	0	1	1	0	2
Totals	33	6	8	4	4	15

**2B:** T Bray, **3B:** K Hurd, **TB:** K Hurd 5, B Flowers, C Hurd, C Fanning, T Bray 2, J Lacombe, **SB:** K Hurd 2, C Fanning, C Fanning, **LOB:** 7

Miller Varsity Outlaws	W	L	T	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
J Kleins... #3	4.1	6	6	2	2	8	1	
J Laco... #16	3.1	3	4	4	3	4	0	
B Flowers #4	0.1	0	0	0	1	0	0	
Totals	8.0	9	10	6	6	12	1	

**L:** J Lacombe, **P-S:** B Flowers 10-3, J Kleinsausser 93-59, J Lacombe 59-31, **WP:** J Kleinsausser, J Lacombe, **HBP:** J Kleinsausser 2, J Lacombe 2, **BF:** B Flowers 2, J Kleinsausser 26, J Lacombe 18



## Libraries evolve and thrive despite threats of funding cuts

Bart Pfankuch

South Dakota News Watch

REDFIELD, S.D. – On five occasions this year, librarian Sarah Jones-Lutter has left the quiet, comfortable confines of the historic Redfield Carnegie Library and made her voice heard in the uncertain world of politics.

Jones-Lutter made four trips to the Capitol in Pierre and recently flew to Washington to lobby state and federal lawmakers against proposed funding cuts that could hurt libraries in her hometown and across the state.

One of her trips to the Legislature was to testify against a bill, which ultimately failed, that would have imposed criminal penalties on South Dakota librarians who allowed children to view materials deemed harmful to minors.

Jones-Lutter said she's puzzled why former Gov. Kristi Noem proposed massive cuts to the state library system, which were softened somewhat by lawmakers, and why President Donald Trump signed an executive order gutting the Institute for Museum and Library Services, or IMLS.

"Maybe they think it's a waste of funds, maybe they don't see the importance or they say, 'People don't use the library anymore,'" she said. "I just assume they haven't been to a library in a long time so they don't know what's actually going on here."

Trump said that the order "continues the reduction in the elements of the federal bureaucracy that the President has determined are unnecessary."

The State Library Association has advised its members that the status of current grants remains unclear. If the administration follows the same playbook it has in targeting other small agencies for closure, IMLS could be shut down.

The agency provides more than \$200 million a year to library systems across the country, including \$1.3 million to South Dakota.

Jones-Lutter said the modern library in a small city like Redfield, population 2,200, has morphed from a quiet, solemn place existing mainly to check out books into what she said is more of a "community center." People of all ages and all walks of life can have a no-cost or low-cost, safe place to spend time and access materials while learning, growing and interacting with other members of their community.

"We talk about the so-called third place, which is important," she said. "It's when you have a home and



**Sarah Jones-Lutter, librarian at the Carnegie public library in Redfield, S.D., on April 10, 2025, has become an outspoken advocate against proposed funding and program cuts at South Dakota libraries.** (Photo: Bart Pfankuch / South Dakota News Watch)

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**Library patrons attend a monthly book club on April 10, 2025, called Sweet Reads that combines love of books and homemade treats at the Redfield, S.D., library. Participant Sharon Eldeen, in pink at top right, has used the local library for more than 50 years.** (Photo: Bart Pfankuch / South Dakota News Watch)

your work or school, but you need a third place to go and experience things. And the library can be that place."

## State library limits access as federal cuts loom

The South Dakota State Library falls within the purview of the state Department of Education, and both are located in the McKay office building in Pierre.

In an interview with News Watch on April 11, state Education Secretary Joseph Graves said he is monitoring the possible federal cuts to the state library, but he added that "we don't really know what's going to happen."

On April 14, the state library closed its doors to the public, except for pre-arranged appointments, DOE spokeswoman Nancy Van Der Weide told News Watch in an email, citing state

cuts, not those proposed by Trump.

While lawmakers held back from enacting all of Noem's proposed cuts, they did ultimately reduce funding of the state library by about \$800,000 and eliminated four staff positions.

"The culling and review of collections and materials is not related to federal funding concerns, it is a result of changes made during this year's legislative session," Van Der Weide wrote. "We are aware of no decision on IMLS funding for next year. Given that funding cuts are possible, we are holding off on approving contracts for services typically funded by IMLS dollars."

Federal archival documents housed by the state library are being transferred to the University of Minnesota, which made a request to hold the materials, she said. Other materials will be held in the McKay Building, transferred to the state archives or shipped to local, school or university libraries that will accept them.

Van Der Weide added, "The State Library will continue to provide services such as the summer reading program, Braille and talking book activities, and technical assistance to public libraries and schools."

Graves said his understanding was that the federal IMLS office had lost all its employees to the ongoing federal job and program cuts. And yet, despite the proposed state and federal funding cuts, Graves said he does not think libraries in South Dakota and the U.S. are being targeted by state or federal officials.

"It's not an attack, it's just the latest challenge facing us all," Graves said. "Everything with libraries is changing, and so many resources are now online, so libraries are changing their mission and asking, 'How do we move forward in this new world?'"

## Bringing people together in Redfield

Jones-Lutter, 34, has a degree in library science and is the only full-time employee at the Redfield library. The library's roughly \$220,000 annual budget is funded by local taxpayers, but she said that like almost all public libraries, programs and materials in Redfield are supported by a hodgepodge of donations, in-kind services and help from the South Dakota State Library.



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Any cuts to the state system will hurt local libraries that rely on state offerings of information services or material sharing systems, she said.

"We're talking about cuts to summer reading, inter-library loan and the databases used by libraries and schools," she said. "I mean, you can't balance the state or federal budget by cutting libraries."

The Redfield library, located in a historic brick building, has been in operation since 1902 and is one of the few remaining South Dakota libraries first launched by industrialist Andrew Carnegie.

In addition to lending out books, offering free Wi-Fi and access to public computers, the Redfield library offers a long list of programs for children and adults.

More than 100 children attend preschool learning programs, summer reading programs or a Lego-based construction club to learn mechanics.

"A lot of these are free activities your child can come to," she said. "How many free things are out there where your children can come on their own to read and learn and have a lot of fun?"

Adults can attend a book club, and homebound individuals can get materials delivered to them on a weekly basis.

Jones-Lutter uses her own money to buy coffee and "blondie" bars or cookies to serve to adult patrons who attend a monthly book club called "Sweet Reads."

Sharon Eldeen, 81, has been a regular user of the Redfield library since she moved to town in 1968 and calls the library a "stupendous resource." She takes pride also in the fact that some of her watercolor paintings are displayed on the library walls.

Eldeen and a handful of other women sat at a rectangular oak table in the library on April 10 and talked about books and other topics during the most recent "Sweet Reads" gathering.

Eldeen said it would be heartbreaking if the library in Redfield or in other South Dakota cities and towns were to lose funding that helps support activities and personnel. "We'd be lost without our local library," she said.

## Library like a local 'coffee shop'

On a recent weekday, Cynthia Charest, 65, used a computer in the Mitchell Public Library to gain free access to the internet to catch up on the news. Charest said she would "grieve" if her local library or



**Mitchell Public Library director Kevin Kenkel, shown on April 8, 2025, in Mitchell, S.D., is concerned about how federal cuts could affect his library's offerings.** (Photo: Bart Pfankuch / South Dakota News Watch)



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others across the state underwent budget cuts that led to reduced services or limited access to books and technology.

Charest said she started visiting her local library as a child and has made it a part of her life wherever she has lived. "It really increased my love for reading and it got me into writing," she said.

Charest said she has watched as public libraries have evolved over the years from quiet places to read and check out books to vibrant settings where people can chat, learn, expand their minds and find new friends.

"It's great for parents with children. And for elderly people, we can become isolated, so this provides a place to be part of a community," she said. "Really, the library for me has become more of a coffee shop these days."



**The South Dakota State Library in Pierre, S.D., shown here on April 11, 2025, is home to numerous official books and documents.**

(Photo: Bart Pfankuch / South Dakota News Watch)

## Responding to community needs

Kevin Kenkel has served as director of the Mitchell Public Library for the past five years. Patron activity has increased over that time, except during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, he said. Circulation of materials and visitor counts have surpassed pre-pandemic levels during the past two years.

Library story time events that include reading aloud and a crafting session attract up to 50 people every Thursday and on alternating Saturdays. That high level of attendance, Kenkel said, is evidence that reading remains important to local families and that the library is still seen as a place where that skill can be developed.

"It helps with literacy and language acquisition," he said. "It's a critical part of language development in children, and adults for that matter."

But Kenkel notes that the library in Mitchell has become more responsive to the needs of the community. After hearing from patrons, the library purchased dozens of board games that can be checked out and now lends out a telescope for home use. Some libraries have begun offering power tools to be checked out for home improvement projects, Kenkel said.

Local taxpayers provide the Mitchell library with almost all of its \$900,000 annual budget that supports seven full-time and six part-time employees, he said.

Kenkel publishes a quarterly report called "Between the Pages" to update the community on library happenings, new arrivals and other news. In the spring 2025 edition, he informed the public about the proposed federal cuts and listed 10 ways that reductions in IMLS funding would restrict services.

Dozens of online databases would no longer be available to schools and libraries, he said, and cuts could reduce offerings of inter-library lending services, summer reading program offerings and the ability to bring



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in speakers to share important information with the community.

Kenkel also is concerned that the full state library funding cuts proposed by Noem this year could be revived during next year's legislative session.

Any funding cut at the state or federal level to the state library would require local libraries to ask for more taxpayer money or to reduce offerings if local replacement money isn't available, Kenkel said.

"All libraries in South Dakota benefit from the state library receiving federal funds, so we would lose out on access to those databases and other services," he said.

*The Associated Press contributed to this story that was produced by South Dakota News Watch, an independent, nonprofit organization. Read more stories and donate at [sdnewswatch.org](http://sdnewswatch.org) and sign up for an email to get stories when they're published. Contact Bart Pfankuch at [bart.pfankuch@sdnewswatch.org](mailto:bart.pfankuch@sdnewswatch.org).*

## Groton Citywide 2025 Spring Cleanup

### April 28-May 2

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



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

Please place items in the appropriate pile.

**RESIDENTIAL ONLY!!**

Keep Metal, Tires, Paint, Batteries & Chemicals Separate

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

## Pennington County Fatal Crash

What: Two vehicle fatal crash  
Where: Interstate 90, mile marker 121, 10 miles east of Wall, SD  
When: 1:36 p.m., Monday, April 21, 2025  
Driver 1: 21-year-old male from Rapid City, SD, fatal injuries  
Vehicle 1: 2009 Ford Focus  
Seat belt Used: No  
Driver 2: 60-year-old male from Sioux Falls, SD, no injuries  
Vehicle 2: 2002 GMC Sierra 1500  
Seat belt Used: Yes  
Passenger 2a: 59-year-old female from Sioux Falls, SD, no injuries  
Seat belt Used: Yes  
Passenger 2b: 12-year-old female from Sioux Falls, SD, no injuries  
Seat belt Used: Yes  
Passenger 2c: 8-year-old female from Sioux Falls, SD, no injuries  
Seat belt Used: Yes

Pennington County, S.D.- A Rapid City man died in a two-vehicle crash on Interstate 90 Monday afternoon, 10 miles east of Wall, SD.

The names of the persons involved have not been released pending notification of family members.

Preliminary crash information indicates the driver of a 2009 Ford Focus was traveling eastbound on Interstate 90 near mile marker 121 and in the process of passing a 2002 GMC Sierra. As the Ford was changing lanes back to the driving lane, it came in contact with the front bumper of the GMC and began traveling sideways and both vehicles left the roadway and entered the south ditch. The Ford began to rollover, ejecting the driver from the vehicle.

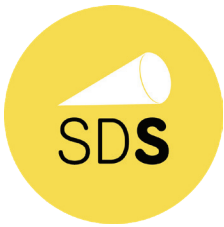
The driver of the Ford died from his injuries. The driver and three passengers in the GMC were not injured.

The South Dakota Highway Patrol is investigating the crash. All information released so far is only preliminary.

The Highway Patrol is an agency of the South Dakota Department of Public Safety.

###

Note: Records of state-reportable crashes are now available at <http://www.safesd.gov/> . Records should be available about 10 days after the investigation is complete.



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### **States that enshrined Medicaid expansion in their constitutions, including SD, could be in a bind** **Missouri, Oklahoma will also have to pick up the slack if the feds cut funding for the program**

**BY: SHALINA CHATLANI - APRIL 21, 2025 2:00 PM**

As Republicans in Congress consider cutting the federal share of Medicaid funding, states are weighing numerous options to scale back their programs. But voters in three states have significantly limited those options by enshrining Medicaid expansion in their constitutions — creating a potential budget disaster and a political challenge for the GOP.

Over the past several years, voters in conservative Missouri, Oklahoma and South Dakota have amended their state constitutions to require their Medicaid programs to cover all adults below the age of 65 who earn equal to or less than 138% of the federal poverty level (\$21,597 for an individual in 2025). Those states are among the 40 plus the District of Columbia that expanded Medicaid eligibility under the 2010 Affordable Care Act, with the federal government picking up 90% of the cost.

But much of that federal funding could soon vanish. Republicans in Congress are debating several options to achieve \$880 billion in Medicaid cuts. One proposal would slash the 90% rate to the lower match rates states get for the traditional Medicaid population, mainly children and their caregivers, people with disabilities and pregnant women. Those percentages range from 50% for the wealthiest states to 77% for the poorest ones.

If Congress goes that route, states would have to come up with \$626 billion over the next decade to keep the roughly 20 million people in the expansion population on the rolls.

Nine states (Arizona, Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Montana, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Utah and Virginia) already have laws on the books that would automatically roll back Medicaid expansion if the federal funds dip. Some states are considering requiring people to work, go to school or volunteer in order to receive Medicaid benefits, a condition that would trim the rolls and save money.

But because Missouri, Oklahoma and South Dakota have put Medicaid expansion in their constitutions,



**Brock Willis receives a COVID vaccine on Aug. 5, 2021, at a clinic in Springfield, Missouri.** (Spencer Platt/Getty Images)

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they can't easily take those steps.

"Legislators cannot change that law without going back to voters for a whole other campaign to change the constitution," said Kelly Hall, the executive director of the Fairness Project, a nonprofit that helped put the constitutional amendments on the ballot in all three states.

"Even if the federal government cuts their contribution towards funding Medicaid expansion, those three states do not have the option to reduce eligibility or benefits for the Medicaid expansion population," she told Stateline. "They will have to find those resources."

Medicaid is a huge component of state budgets. Including the federal matching money, states spend an average of nearly a third of their budgets on Medicaid. And the program is also the single largest source of federal funds for states.

Missourians voted in favor of a constitutional amendment to expand Medicaid in August 2020. When state lawmakers refused to fund the expansion, residents sued the state's Department of Social Services. In 2021, the state Supreme Court ruled that the legislature had to find the resources for Medicaid expansion — a huge win for progressives.

For 2025, Missouri allotted \$18.2 billion for Medicaid, with the federal government covering \$12.7 billion of that, or about 70%. If Congress cuts the federal share of Medicaid funding by \$880 billion over the next decade, it would leave Missouri with a budget hole of around \$1.7 billion next year, according to research from nonprofit group the Commonwealth Fund. That would force the state to come up with some options to avoid fiscal disaster.

Timothy McBride, a health policy analyst and co-director of a program at the Institute for Public Health at Washington University in St. Louis, told Stateline that these include raising taxes, cutting enrollment for other Medicaid populations, diminishing reimbursements to providers, getting rid of optional medical services such as dental care or ceasing payments for equipment like wheelchairs.

Raising taxes is not a likely or popular choice in Republican-leaning Missouri, McBride noted, while adding that cuts to providers would further endanger struggling hospitals.

"We lost 10 hospitals in Missouri in the last few years. And if you start cutting their payment rates, that's going to just put them at risk," McBride said. "The real money is in the disabled and the elderly populations. And so if you really wanted to quote-unquote save money, that's probably where you'd have to look. But that's really controversial."

The state budgetary implications of a potentially sharp decline in federal Medicaid funding have influenced some prominent opponents of Medicaid expansion to have a change of heart. U.S. Republican Sen. Josh Hawley supported efforts to repeal the Affordable Care Act in 2018 when he was Missouri's attorney general. Now, Hawley has said he would refuse to vote for any Medicaid cuts.

"I'm not going to vote for Medicaid cuts, benefit cuts. Work requirements are fine. But 21% of the residents in my state receive Medicaid or [the Children's Health Insurance Program]. That's a lot of people," he told reporters on Capitol Hill in February.

Republicans in the closely divided U.S. Congress might have trouble pushing through Medicaid cuts if other conservative lawmakers from Missouri, Oklahoma and South Dakota follow Hawley's lead.

Oklahoma voters expanded Medicaid via a constitutional amendment in 2020. South Dakota followed suit in 2022. Republicans in all three states want to impose work requirements on able-bodied Medicaid recipients, but doing so would not save enough money to make up for the loss of federal dollars.

South Dakota Republican state Rep. Will Mortenson said he respects that voters chose to expand Medicaid, and added that the state has "faithfully" implemented it. But the decision to amend the state constitution "can only be described as a foolish decision," he said in an interview.

"A constitution is not meant to be a flexible document that you change annually or even every other year," Mortenson said. "And so now, as we're staring down the barrel of the federal government contemplating changes to Medicaid, including for the expansion population, our state is hamstrung in that we cannot effectively respond to those changes."

Mortenson was one of the lead sponsors of a bill adopted by the Legislature that will ask voters to con-



sider a ballot measure in the next general election to amend the constitution again, this time conditioning Medicaid expansion on the level of federal assistance.

But some of the supporters of the original constitutional amendment say they will fight any attempt to change it. Any restrictions, including work requirements, would severely harm working-class people, said Doug Sombke, head of the South Dakota Farmers Union. Sombke told Stateline that most farmers in the state struggle to make ends meet and certainly cannot offer high wages or health care benefits to their workers.

"There's just no extra income," Sombke said. "And, in South Dakota, we're a right-to-work state, so you can get fired for any reason. As a worker, you really don't have a lot of choice."

Hall, of the Fairness Project, said amending the constitution is the most effective way to expand Medicaid in states where conservative-leaning lawmakers have been reluctant to do so. She said she suspects that voters in other states might pursue the constitutional amendment strategy if their state lawmakers try to roll back expansion.

"I do think that it's possible that if we see these cuts move forward in D.C., and states are making highly unpopular choices to cut benefits for people, that we will see this issue back at the ballot box," Hall said. "But for right now, I would say we're seeing the power of constitutional amendments to protect benefits in action in real time."

*Stateline reporter Shalina Chatlani can be reached at [schatlani@stateline.org](mailto:schatlani@stateline.org).*

*Shalina Chatlani covers health care and environmental justice for Stateline.*

## **At least \$134 million in federal money for conservation across South Dakota still in limbo** **Federal judge orders money released, but organizations behind lawsuit said money 'remains inaccessible'**

**BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - APRIL 21, 2025 8:00 AM**

At least \$134 million in federal conservation funds approved by Congress and awarded for conservation-related projects across South Dakota were frozen in the early days of the Trump administration.

A recent court order could put the money back in circulation, but the administration has yet to signal if it will fully comply. U.S. District Judge Mary McElroy of Rhode Island, who was nominated by President Donald Trump in 2019 during his first term in office, ordered the administration to release the funding last week.

The following day, the administration filed notice that it intends to comply with the nationwide order. On Sunday, however, the organizations that sued over the funding freeze filed their own notice, saying that the grant funds "remain inaccessible" even after McElroy's order.



**Grouse.** (Courtesy of USDA Forest Service)

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Angela Ehlers is the executive director of the South Dakota Association of Conservation Districts. Her organization is not a party to the lawsuit, but has been awarded some of the funds now in dispute and works closely with other grantees affected by the executive order.

The money flowed through the Inflation Reduction Act, and were paused under direction from the U.S. Department of Agriculture after a Jan. 20 executive order from President Trump. The Inflation Reduction Act was authorized by Congress and signed into law under former President Joe Biden in 2022.

Ehlers said there's been no clear sign of if or when they'll be restored since the Jan. 20 Order, which has been a frustration for those relying on them.

"These aren't regulatory programs," Ehlers emphasized. "They're voluntary, and the fact that they've been frozen without explanation creates a chilling effect across the entire landscape."

The pause impacted billions in conservation spending nationwide and sparked the lawsuit that led to last week's order from Judge McElroy. Projects designed to support beginning farmers have also stalled.

Ehlers said her association had partnered with South Dakota State University to support young producers entering agriculture through sheep and goat production. The grant-funded effort is meant to offer a way into agriculture for young producers but doubles as a conservation measure, because sheep and goat production requires less land and capital than cattle or grain farming.

"There's a real opportunity here," Ehlers said, but added "we just don't know" if the grant funding will continue.

Leaders in water quality and habitat restoration programming along the Big Sioux River are in a similar wait-and-see scenario.

Most watershed project funding remains available, according to Jay Gilbertson, manager of the East Dakota Water Development District. But staff losses and hiring freezes have undercut the delivery of on-the-ground support.

"Even if you don't reduce the program funding, who's going to do the work?" Gilbertson said. "If you fire someone who's approving payments or working directly with farmers, it creates a massive gap in capacity."

Travis Entenman, director of Northern Prairies Land Trust and Friends of the Big Sioux River, said the downstream impacts of federal uncertainty are already reaching local landowners. The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), which helps farmers and ranchers integrate conservation into their operations, has seen funding pauses, he said. That's left some landowners without reimbursement for practices they installed on the promise of repayment.

"Some of it's open, but there's still money frozen," Entenman said. "And these programs are often receipt-based, meaning landowners put their own money on the line expecting reimbursement."

## **Frozen conservation funds in limbo:**

\$51 million in climate-smart agriculture projects:

\$25 million to Ducks Unlimited to restore 25,000 acres of grassland and help ranchers better manage grazing.

\$18.3 million to South Dakota Agricultural Land Trust to offer easement payments to conserve 8,000 acres of ranchland near the Black Hills.

\$8 million to South Dakota State University to help farmers identify unprofitable acres and suggest better land uses.

\$83 million in grassland and conservation grants:

\$24 million to Pheasants Forever & Quail Forever to use prescribed fire to remove invasive Eastern red cedar trees and restore prairie grasses on up to 125,000 acres.

\$21 million to InterTribal Buffalo Council to restore native grassland ecosystems using sustainable buffalo grazing practices across tribal lands.

\$20 million to The Nature Conservancy to purchase voluntary conservation easements on 20,000 acres in western South Dakota to prevent development.

\$11 million to South Dakota Second Century Habitat Fund to convert low-quality cropland into grasslands

suitable for grazing and haying.

\$5 million to The Buffalo Nations Grasslands Alliance to identify and restore marginal croplands across 16 tribal nations.

\$1.2 million to The Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate to create a tool to measure the environmental impact of agriculture on the reservation.

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

## U.S. Education Department to restart defaulted student loan collections

BY: SHAUNEEN MIRANDA - APRIL 21, 2025 4:24 PM

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Education said Monday that it will resume collections May 5 for defaulted federal student loans.

After pausing during the early weeks of the COVID-19 pandemic, the agency has not collected on defaulted loans in over five years. More than 5 million borrowers sit in default on their federal student loans, and just 38% of borrowers are current on their payments, the department said.

"American taxpayers will no longer be forced to serve as collateral for irresponsible student loan policies," U.S. Secretary of Education Linda McMahon said in a statement Monday.

During last year's presidential campaign, President Donald Trump criticized his predecessor and successor, President Joe Biden, for his efforts to erase student debt. McMahon resumed that line of attack Monday, blaming Biden's administration for unreasonably raising borrowers' expectations of forgiveness.

"The Biden Administration misled borrowers: the executive branch does not have the constitutional authority to wipe debt away, nor do the loan balances simply disappear. Hundreds of billions have already been transferred to taxpayers," McMahon said.

She added that "going forward, the Department of Education, in conjunction with the Department of Treasury, will shepherd the student loan program responsibly and according to the law, which means helping borrowers return to repayment — both for the sake of their own financial health and our nation's economic outlook."

The department said the Office of Federal Student Aid will restart the Treasury Offset Program, which the U.S. Treasury Department administers, on May 5.



**U.S. Education Secretary Linda McMahon speaks at a press conference organized by House Democrats outside the U.S. Department of Education headquarters in Washington, D.C., on April 2, 2025.** (Photo by Shauneen Miranda/

States Newsroom)



The Education Department statement said all borrowers who are in default will get emails over the next two weeks "making them aware of these developments and urging them to contact the Default Resolution Group to make a monthly payment, enroll in an income-driven repayment plan, or sign up for loan rehabilitation."

The department said the Office of Federal Student Aid will "send required notices beginning administrative wage garnishment" later this summer.

More than 42.7 million borrowers owe more than \$1.6 trillion in student debt, according to the department.

The administration claims that "instead of protecting responsible taxpayers, the Biden-Harris Administration put them on the hook for irresponsible lending, pushing the federal student loan portfolio toward a fiscal cliff."

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

## Trump backs Hegseth after second group chat revelation

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - APRIL 21, 2025 2:20 PM

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump said Monday he fully supports the secretary of Defense, despite The New York Times reporting over the weekend that Pete Hegseth shared details of a bombing campaign in Yemen in a second group chat, this time with his wife and brother.

"Ask the Houthis how much dysfunction there is?" Trump said, referring to the Iranian-backed terrorist organization that operates in Yemen. "There's none. Pete's doing a great job. Everybody's happy with him."

The New York Times published an article Sunday detailing a second group chat on the encrypted, commercial messaging app Signal, where Hegseth shared information about U.S. military plans.

Hegseth, asked during the White House Easter Egg roll on Monday about the latest New York Times report, didn't deny that he sent messages in another group chat.

"What a big surprise that a few leakers get fired and suddenly a bunch of hit pieces come out from the same media that peddled the Russia hoax, won't give back their Pulitzers, they got Pulitzers for a bunch of lies," Hegseth said. "As they peddle those lies no one ever calls them on it. See, this is what the media does. They take anonymous sources from disgruntled former employees and then they try to slash and burn people and ruin their reputations."

The New York Times report was the second time in less than a month that Hegseth's discussion of military operations on the app came to light.

Someone on a chat meant to comprise only high-level administration officials accidentally included Jeffrey Goldberg, editor-in-chief of The Atlantic, who published an article in late March on the experience.

That group chat included Vice President J.D. Vance, Hegseth, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard, CIA Director John Ratcliffe, National Security Advisor Michael Waltz and others. In that chat, Hegseth shared a precise timeline of U.S. bombing of Houthi targets in Yemen.



**Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth speaks during his Senate Armed Services Committee confirmation hearing on Jan. 14, 2025.** (Photo by Andrew Harnik/Getty Images)

Harnik/Getty Images)



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The Defense Department's Office of the Inspector General opened an investigation earlier this month "to determine the extent to which the Secretary of Defense and other DoD personnel complied with DoD policies and procedures for the use of a commercial messaging application for official business. Additionally, we will review compliance with classification and records retention requirements."

The OIG investigation came after U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Roger Wicker, R-Miss., and ranking member Jack Reed, D-R.I., sent a letter to the acting inspector general asking the independent watchdog agency to look into the issue.

While Trump and most congressional Republicans continued to back Hegseth, Nebraska Republican Rep. Don Bacon raised concerns Monday about the operational security risk of communicating on "perceived secure applications" like Signal.

In a social media post that did not name Hegseth or specifically reference Signal, Bacon wrote that "admin officials must assume their phones are closely monitored by China & Russia."

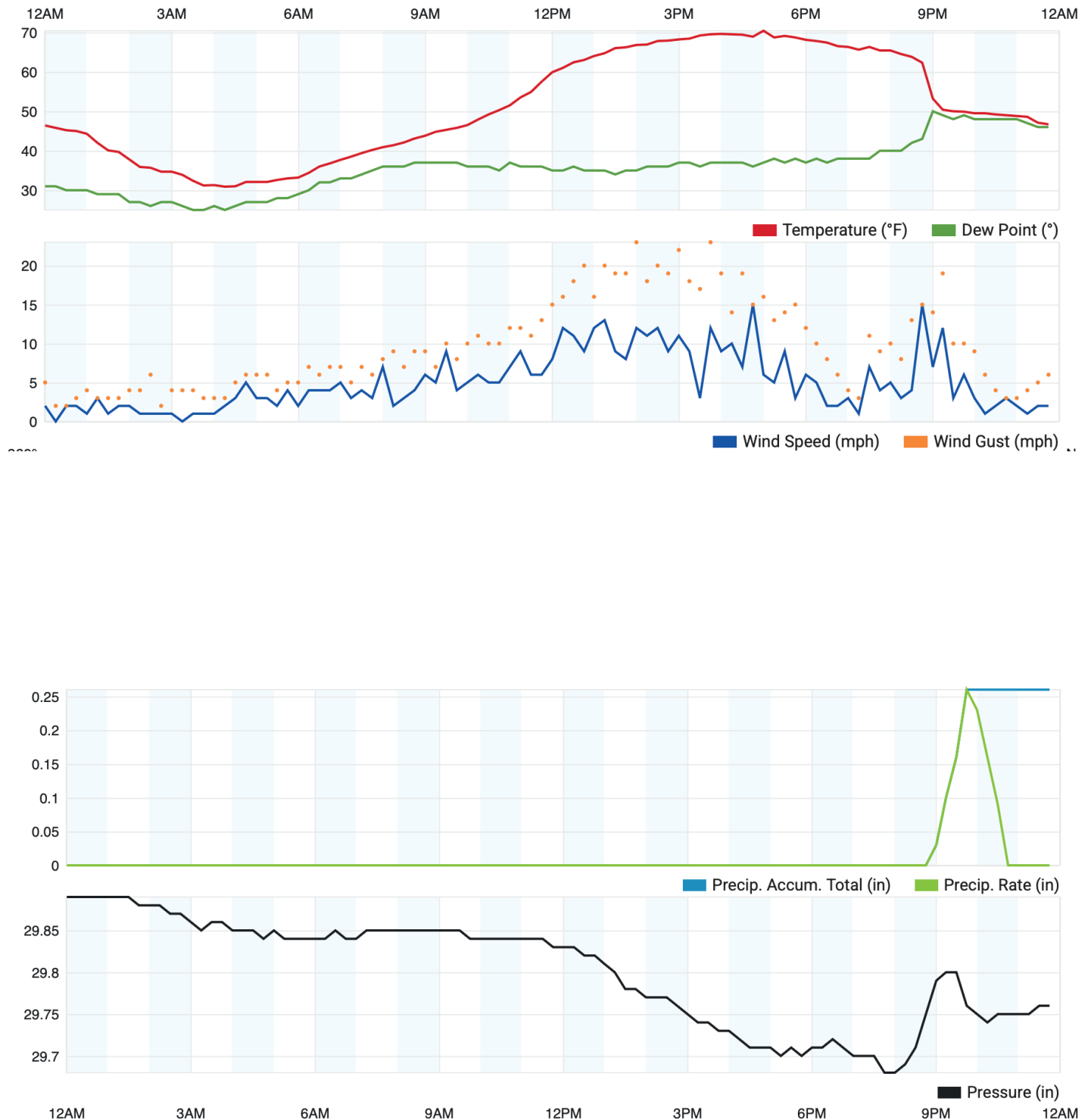
"They're top priority targets. Our adversaries can put thousands of people in position just to monitor their phones & to penetrate perceived secure applications on non-secure phones," Bacon wrote. "I've assumed my phones were monitored since I was a Colonel in Iraq & as Commander at Ramstein."

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

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



High: 69 °F

Sunny and  
Breezy

Tonight



Low: 34 °F

Partly Cloudy

Wednesday



High: 61 °F

Mostly Sunny

Wednesday  
Night



Low: 37 °F

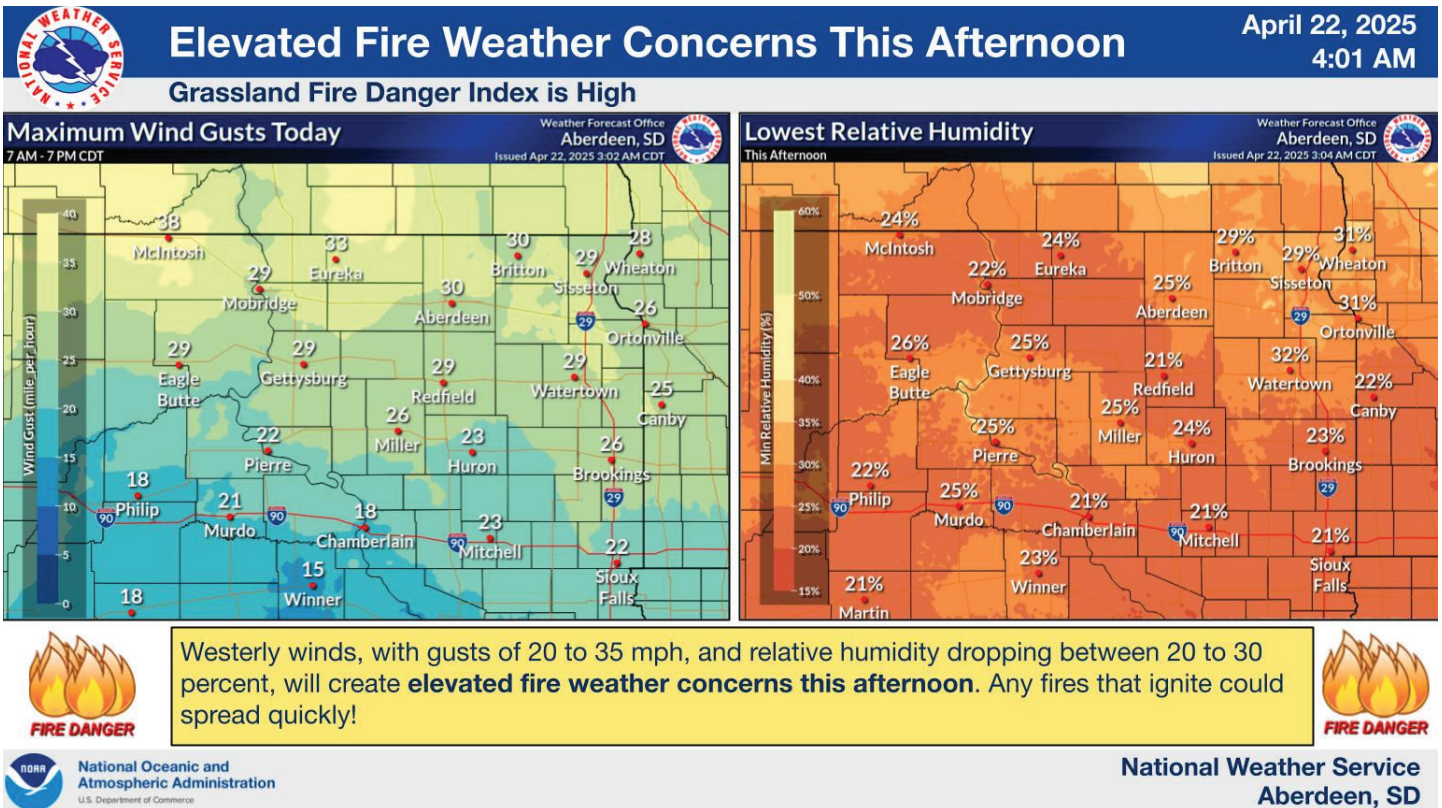
Slight Chance  
Showers

Thursday



High: 53 °F

Chance  
Showers



Westerly winds, with gusts of 20 to 35 mph, and relative humidity dropping between 20 to 30 percent, will create elevated fire weather concerns this afternoon. Any fires that ignite could spread quickly!

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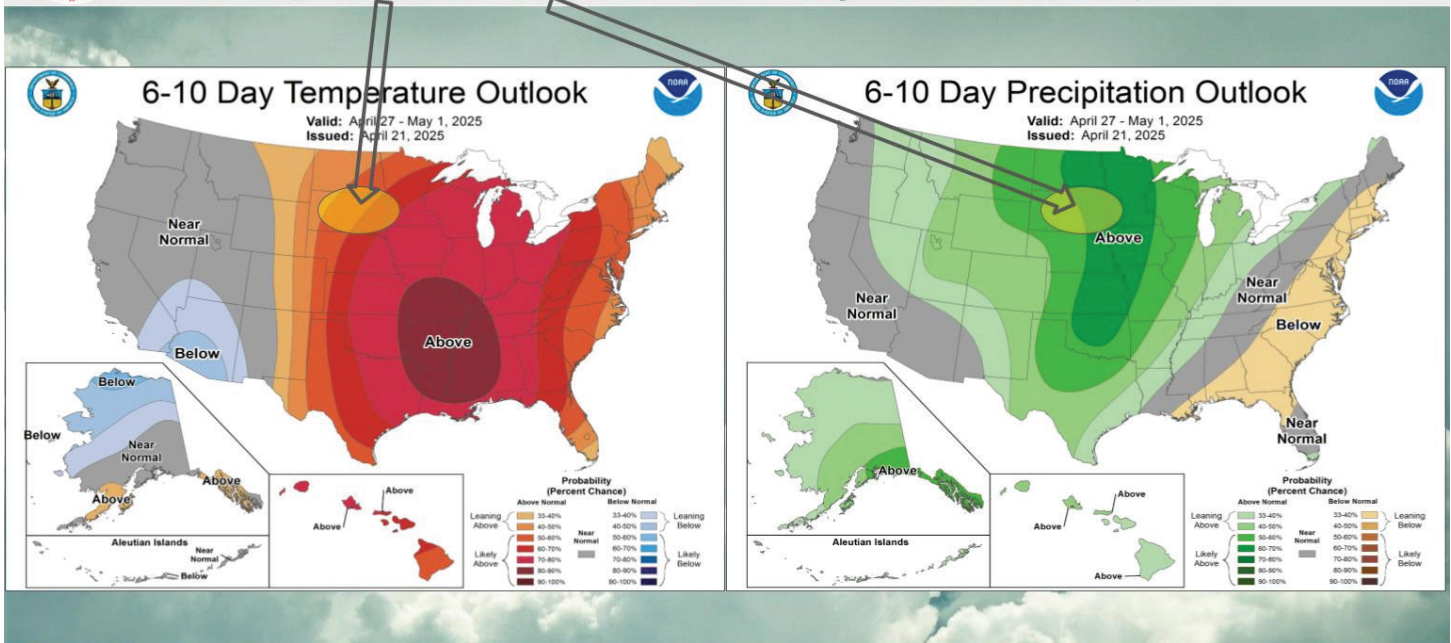


## Rounding Out The Month Of April...

April 21, 2025

11:15 PM

Potentially Warmer And Wetter Than Normal Through The Final Week In April



National Oceanic and  
Atmospheric Administration  
U.S. Department of Commerce

National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD



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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 70 °F at 4:55 PM**

**Low Temp: 31 °F at 4:21 AM**

**Wind: 33 mph at 8:44 PM**

**Precip: : 0.26**

Day length: 13 hours, 57 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 90 in 1990

Record Low: 15 in 2015

Average High: 61

Average Low: 34

Average Precip in April.: 1.19

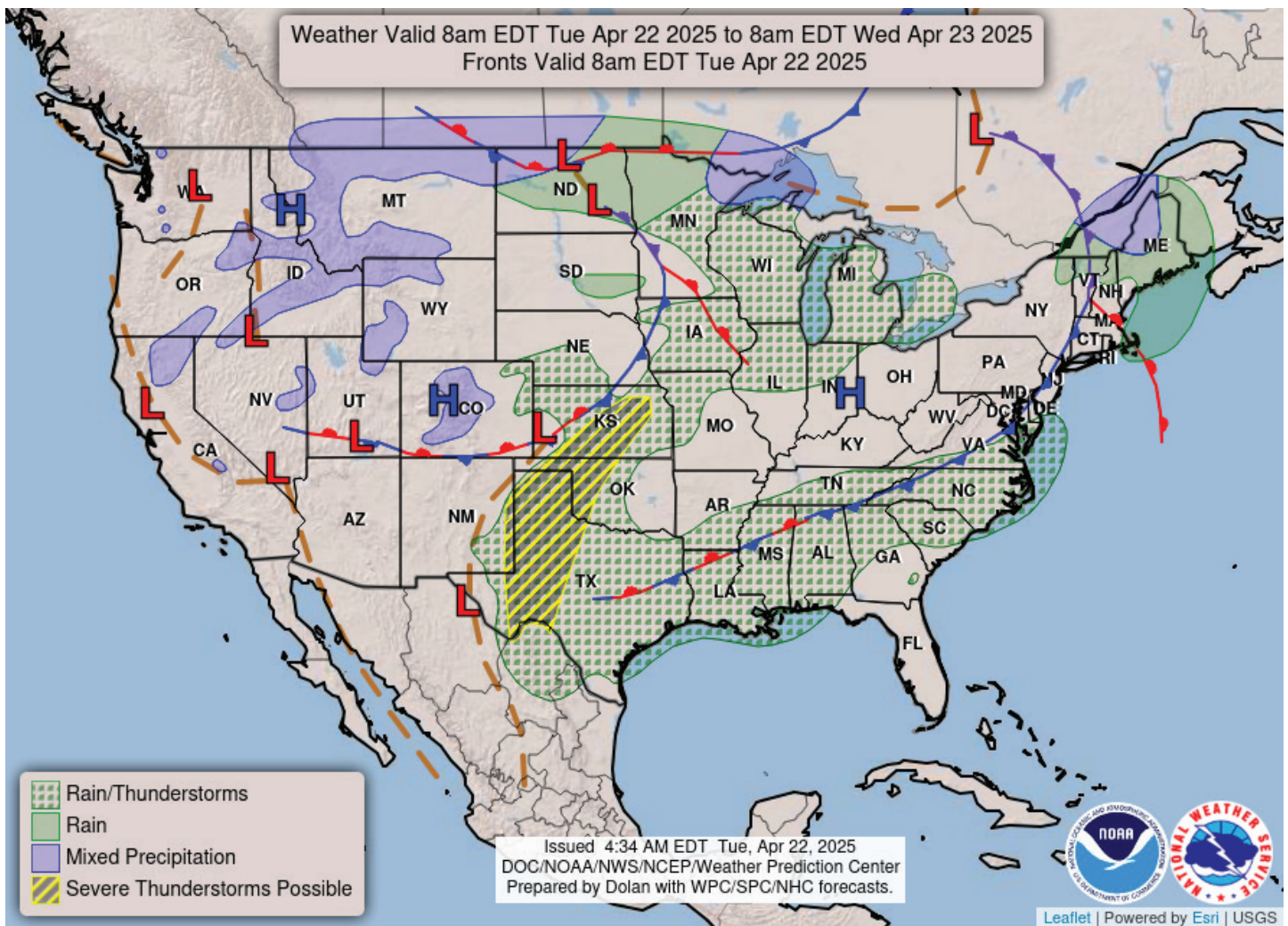
Precip to date in April.: 1.35

Average Precip to date: 3.25

Precip Year to Date: 1.98

Sunset Tonight: 8:29:20 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:30:37 am



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## **Today in Weather History**

April 22nd, 1968: A late-season snowstorm affected most of South Dakota, with the heaviest snowfall measuring 18 inches at Eagle Butte. Localized icing damaged utility lines, and 40 mph winds caused localized blizzard conditions. Some calf losses were reported.

April 22nd, 2001: Heavy snow of 7 to 15 inches fell across much of central and northeast South Dakota from early on the 22nd to early on the 23rd. Some freezing rain also brought heavy icing in Buffalo, Eastern Lyman, and far southern Roberts counties, resulting in downed trees and branches and downed power lines. This late-season snowstorm caused many travel problems along with some accidents. There were many vehicles in the ditch along Interstate 29 in Roberts County. Many schools and events were canceled or delayed on the 22nd and 23rd. The heavy snow also caused problems with ranchers and their livestock, with some calves lost in the storm. Around 9:30 am on the 23rd in Kennebec, the heavy snow resulted in the roof of the 40 by 64-foot feed and seed warehouse to collapse. Late-season record snowfalls were set at Aberdeen and Pierre. Some snowfall amounts included 7 inches at Timber Lake and Leola, 8 inches at Eagle Butte, Mobridge, and Aberdeen, 9 inches at Kennebec and Pollock, 10 inches at Gettysburg, Selby, Redfield, and Webster, and 11 inches at Onida, Mission Ridge, Hosmer, and Columbia. Locations with snowfall amounts of a foot or more included 12 inches at Britton, Ree Heights, Highmore, Blunt, Seneca, and Pierre, 13 inches at Murdo, Presho, Miller, and Wilmot, 14 inches at Roy Lake and southwest of Harold, and 15 inches at Saint Lawrence.

1883 - An outbreak of tornadoes from Louisiana to Kansas claimed the lives to 200 persons. One of the tornadoes destroyed the town of Beauregard MS. (David Ludlum)

1980 - A record April heat wave sent the mercury up to the 100 degree mark in Iowa. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Fifteen cities in the southeastern U.S. reported new record high temperatures for the date. The afternoon high of 96 degrees at Pensacola FL established a record for the month of April. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Heavy snow fell over northern Nebraska, with 15 inches reported at Mullen. Heavy snow also blanketed the mountains of northern Arizona, with 16 inches reported at Munds Park. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Twenty-seven cities in the central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. The high of 96 degrees at Omaha was an April record, and the high of 100 degrees at Lubbock TX equalled their record for April. Hill City KS and Liberal KS tied for honors as the hot spot in the nation with afternoon highs of 103 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from the Southern and Central High Plains to north-west Florida during the afternoon and evening. Thunderstorms produced wind gusts to 67 mph at Gillette WY, hail two inches in diameter west of Roswell NM, and deluged Cheyenne OK with 8.68 inches of rain leaving some parts of the town under five feet of water. Temperatures reached the low 90s in the north central U.S. Chamberlain SD and Pickstown SD tied Presidio TX for honors as the hot spot in the nation with afternoon highs of 94 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2011 - Lambert International Airport in St. Louis experiences extensive damage as it is hit by a group of tornados, blowing out windows in the main terminal and tearing the roof off Concourse C. Five people were taken to the hospital with minor injuries from shattered glass and flying debris.



## Qualifications for Sainthood

**When we trust Christ as our Savior, His righteousness is gifted to us.**

1 Corinthians 1:1-9: English Standard Version

Greeting

1 Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and our brother Sosthenes,  
2 To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours:  
3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thanksgiving

4 I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus,  
5 that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge— 6 even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you— 7 so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, 8 who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Have you ever wondered what it takes to be called a saint? The Corinthian church struggled with all sorts of ungodly behaviors, yet Paul describes them as “those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling” (1 Cor. 1:2).

Sanctify means to set apart from common use to a sacred use. Throughout the Bible, God has sanctified days (such as the Sabbath), places (the tabernacle), things (the ark of the covenant), and people. A saint is simply a person whom God has set apart for His purposes. This means that every believer is a saint.

Before you were saved, your position relative to God was one of enmity (Rom. 5:10). The moment you trusted Jesus as Savior, the Lord changed your position and set you apart for Himself. You were born again and are now His child. He forgave your sins and declared you righteous. A saint is not a perfect person but one who is in a right relationship with the heavenly Father. Although our sanctification is not predicated on good behavior, the Lord expects us to live in a manner that honors Him.

Just think—God set us apart for a sacred purpose. That means we are here to bring glory to Him. And He now calls us to live according to our new position in Christ.

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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: 15 Hrs 46 Mins 28 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.21.25

2 4 13 21 44 8

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$31,500,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 15 Hrs 1 Mins 28 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.21.25

12 25 29 36 47 3

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 16 Mins 29 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.19.25

4 14 21 28 35

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$118,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 15 Hrs 16 Mins 29 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.21.25

18 23 34 35 67 13

TOP PRIZE:

**\$10,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 15 Hrs 45 Mins 28 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.21.25

4 33 45 46 51 25

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$151,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 15 Hrs 45 Mins 28 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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## **Upcoming Groton Events**

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

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

### **Some GOP states are targeting driver's licenses issued to immigrants illegally in the US**

By DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

As drivers on U.S. highways cross from one state to another, they often are greeted by a large "Welcome to ...." sign.

But not all drivers are welcome in every state.

In Florida, motorists with special out-of-state driver's licenses issued to those in the U.S. illegally are not welcome to drive. Wyoming's governor enacted a comparable ban this year. And Tennessee's governor said he will sign similar legislation sent to his desk recently.

The message, though not literally printed on metal, is clear: "The sign says, 'Welcome to Tennessee, illegal immigrants are not welcome,'" Tennessee House Majority Leader William Lamberth declared during debate.

As President Donald Trump cracks down on illegal immigration, Republican lawmakers in many states are pushing new laws targeting people lacking legal status to live in the U.S. The measures contrast with policies in 19 other states and Washington, D.C., which issue driver's licenses regardless of whether residents can prove their legal presence.

The Justice Department is seeking to strike down one such law in New York, which shields its driver's license data from federal immigration authorities.

States take separate roads on driver's licenses

States are taking drastically different approaches to licensing drivers even as the federal government attempts to standardize the process.

On May 7, the U.S. will start enforcing a law passed 20 years ago that sets national standards for state driver's licenses to be accepted as proof of identity for adults entering certain federal facilities or traveling on domestic commercial flights. Licenses compliant with the REAL ID Act are marked with a star and require applicants to provide a Social Security number and proof of U.S. citizenship or legal residency.

But states remain free to issue driver's licenses to residents who don't provide documentation for a REAL ID, so long as they meet other state requirements such as passing a vision exam or a driving laws test. In most states that issue licenses to people illegally in the U.S., there is no way currently to know from looking at the license whether the person is unlawfully present or simply chose not to apply for a REAL ID.

But at least some states do make a distinction. Connecticut and Delaware place special markings on driver's licenses issued to immigrants in the U.S. illegally.

Florida limits licenses from some states

In 2023, Florida became the first state to invalidate some other states' licenses. A law signed by Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis made it a misdemeanor punishable by a fine and potential jail time to drive in Florida with a type of license "issued exclusively to undocumented immigrants" or with markings indicating the driver didn't provide proof of lawful presence.

As applied, the law has a limited scope. Only specially marked licenses from Connecticut and Delaware are deemed invalid, according to the website of the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles.

Connecticut has issued nearly 60,700 "drive-only" licenses to immigrants unable to prove lawful presence. Delaware has not responded to an Associated Press request for such data.

Bidding to avoid Florida's ban, Democratic Connecticut Gov. Ned Lamont last year proposed to end the special license designation for immigrants in the U.S. illegally and instead give them the same type of license as others not receiving a REAL ID. But the legislation never came to a vote.

Alabama proposes an unwelcome sign

In addition to Wyoming and Tennessee, at least a half-dozen other Republican-led states have considered legislation this year to invalidate certain types of out-of-state driver's licenses issued to immigrants illegally



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in the U.S. Such legislation passed at least one chamber in Alabama, Montana and New Hampshire and was proposed in North Dakota, Oklahoma and South Carolina.

"We want to discourage illegal immigrants from coming to or staying in Alabama," said state Sen. Chris Elliott, sponsor of the Alabama bill that awaits House consideration. If someone illegally in the U.S. drives to Alabama, "they should turn around and go somewhere else."

Frustrated about the legislation, Democratic Alabama state Sen. Linda Coleman-Madison added an amendment requiring highway welcome signs to contain a notice about the prohibited driver's licenses.

"We have people that come here for a lot of events — tourists, vacation, what have you — that could be caught in this. So we need to let people know," she told AP. "I think some of our laws are mean-spirited, and sometimes I think we just have to call it like it is."

A balance of symbolism and substance

The legislation targeting driver's licenses is part of a "trend of states getting involved in federal immigration enforcement issues," said Kathleen Campbell Walker, an immigration attorney in El Paso, Texas.

It's unclear if the laws carry much substance. Some Florida advocates for immigrants said they are unaware of specific instances where the driver's license ban has been enforced.

But "it is a concern," said Jeannie Economos, of the Farmworker Association of Florida, "because some people who are undocumented have specifically gone to other states where driver's licenses are legal to get driver's licenses to have them here."

California is among the states where immigrants unlawfully in the U.S. can get driver's licenses. Trump's immigration policies have created "anxiety and fear," said Robert Perkins, a Los Angeles area attorney who helps immigrants gain legal status.

"Even the ones that might have a California driver's license, they're terrified to go anywhere," Perkins said.

## **Women's flag football grows on college campuses, from startup clubs to varsity teams with NFL boost**

By DAVE CAMPBELL AP Sports Writer

ROSEVILLE, Minn. (AP) — The flyers started appearing around the Augustana University campus earlier this year, followed by the all-student email blast. A club team was forming for women's flag football, with room for all comers.

Kiley Coyne, an assistant director of admission for the music department who just happens to play on a women's tackle football team in her spare time, eagerly added coaching to her duties at the school of 2,000 undergraduates in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

"I remember saying, 'I just need 10.' If we can have an offense and a defense, let's go," Coyne said. "Now we have 23 people who've gone out for it."

With the sport's inclusion in the Summer Olympics lineup for Los Angeles in 2028 serving as the most recent bump, flag football participation by girls has continued to spike across the country. The NFL has been a staunch supporter.

"I think one of the beauties of flag football is how accessible it is," said Stephanie Kwok, the league's vice president of flag football. "It's adding to the opportunities for girls to play sports."

The college level is the natural place for the next surge of growth. Augustana is one of seven NCAA schools fielding a club team this spring in a league launched with \$140,000 and logistical support from the Minnesota Vikings. With five institutions in Minnesota and one in Wisconsin, a schedule was arranged for each team to assemble for multiple games at the same site on three Saturdays this month, including a championship tournament this weekend.

When Brooklyn Sturm first arrived on the Augustana campus as a freshman last fall, the former high school volleyball, basketball and softball standout wasn't planning any athletic commitments beyond intramurals.

Now she's a quarterback.

"I thought I needed to focus on academics, but when I got here it felt like a part of me was missing," said Sturm, whose team made the four-hour drive to Northwestern University in Roseville, Minnesota, for

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the inaugural round of games on April 6. "If we had this opportunity in high school, I probably would've taken it."

According to National Federation of High Schools data, 14 states have girls' flag football as a sanctioned sport with 42,955 players nationwide during the 2023-24 school year. That figure doesn't include club or intramural participation, of course. About half a million girls ages 6 to 17 play the sport in some organized form. In Minnesota, the Vikings helped launch a four-team pilot at the high school club level last spring. This year, there are 51 schools in the league.

More than 100 higher-educational institutions, either in the NCAA, the NAIA or the junior college level, are now offering women's flag football as a varsity or club sport, according to the NFL. The NAIA was on board first with sanctioned competition that began in 2021. There are 16 schools currently supporting an NCAA varsity program, with at least 20 more teams expected to start in 2026. Earlier this year, the NCAA recommended women's flag football be designated an emerging sport.

One of the most intriguing developments in Minnesota has been the turnout from women who had never played an organized team sport before.

"Why am I doing this? It's for those women who've never worn a uniform, who've never been part of the school spirit of being part of a team," said Melissa Lee, an associate athletic director at Augsburg University in Minneapolis who agreed to coach the school's team.

The obvious first question at the first gathering was about previous experience in the sport.

"What's their token answer? We played powderpuff at homecoming our junior and senior year," said Lee, who had 24 women sign up at the school of about 2,400 undergrads. "That was all it took for me. I said, 'You're on the team.'"

Even for the coaches on men's tackle teams who've crossed over this spring to help lead the women's flag startups, there has been a lot to learn.

The standard rules of flag football differ more than simply the absence of tackling, with plenty of variance from league to league and level to level. The fields are half as wide and half as long, and play is typically 5-on-5. The offense has four downs to cross midfield, then another four to score. Punts are verbally declared and not kicked, like an intentional walk in baseball, before the opponent takes possession at its own 5-yard line. The defense can rush the passer, but only from 7 yards behind the line of scrimmage. Running plays aren't allowed inside the defense's 5-yard line. After a touchdown, the scoring team chooses a 1-point conversion play from the 5 or a 2-point play from the 10.

Next season, Coyne said, the hope is to move to 7-on-7 play to increase playing time. Enough schools have expressed interest that the seven-team league could double in size. Then, ideally, varsity status would follow if a sustainable way to fund it can be figured out.

"I just love taking new opportunities," Sturm said, recalling the surprise by her family members at her initial decision to not play a college sport. "Now that they know I'm getting back into it, they're like, 'This is you. This is what you're supposed to do.'"

## **The Latest: Pope Francis' funeral will be held Saturday**

By The Associated Press undefined

Pope Francis' funeral has been set for Saturday at 10 a.m. in St. Peter's Square, and a viewing of his body will begin on Wednesday in St. Peter's Basilica, days after the popular pontiff died at age 88.

History's first Latin American pontiff charmed the world with his humble style and concern for the poor but alienated many conservatives with critiques of capitalism and climate change. He last appeared in public on Sunday with an Easter blessing and popemobile tour through a cheering crowd in St. Peter's Square.

Cardinals met at the Vatican on Tuesday to plan the conclave to elect his successor and to make other decisions about running the Catholic Church.

Here's the latest:

Cardinals suspend all upcoming beatifications

The cardinals planning the next steps for the Catholic Church following the death of Pope Francis have

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decided to suspend all upcoming beatifications, pending the election of a new pope.

The decision was taken during the first meeting of the College of Cardinals on Tuesday.

The Vatican had already announced that Sunday's planned canonization of the first millennial saint, Carlo Acutis, was suspended. But the decision from the cardinals means all other celebrations are on hold until a new pope is elected.

The decision is in keeping with Vatican norms governing the "interregnum" period between the death of one pope and the election of another. Among other things, those norms call for most top Vatican officials to officially lose their jobs until they are reconfirmed or replaced by a new pope.

Crowds wait in line to offer condolences in Jakarta

At Jakarta's Apostolic Nunciature, the official diplomatic mission of the Holy See in Indonesia, crowds gathered in the rain on Tuesday to offer their condolences over the death of the pope.

A somber atmosphere filled the Nunciature as Catholics quietly recited prayers and waited in line to write their condolence messages and meet the Apostolic Nuncio, the Vatican's permanent diplomatic representative.

"I would like to express my condolences to the Nuncio and pray from this place since we are experiencing limitations in coming to the Vatican," Heri Wibowo, a Catholic priest from the Archdiocese of Jakarta, said.

He remembered Pope Francis as a humble figure, a quality the pontiff exemplified during his visit in September 2024 to Indonesia, home to the world's largest Muslim population.

One worshipper, Claudia, 23, who attended the Nunciature with her relatives, said Pope Francis was a father who offered inspiration.

"I am honestly very surprised since he still gave blessings on Easter to us, people all over the world. When I heard the news (of his death) I felt very sad," Claudia said.

Cardinals meet in wake of pope's death

The Vatican says around 60 cardinals participated in the first meeting to decide next steps following the death of Pope Francis.

They decided that ordinary faithful can pay their respects starting when the casket is moved into St. Peter's Basilica on Wednesday, and set Saturday for the funeral and burial.

The cardinals haven't set a date for the conclave to elect Francis' successor, but the current norms suggest it couldn't begin before May 5.

Three cardinals were chosen to help the camerlengo, Cardinal Kevin Farrell, administer the Vatican during the "interregnum" period before the election of a new pope.

Those cardinals are the secretary of state, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Polish Cardinal Stanisław Ryłko, archpriest of the St. Mary Major basilica where Francis will be buried, and Cardinal Fabbio Baggio, a top official in the Vatican's development and migrants office.

They will be replaced after three days with another three cardinals to help the interim Vatican administrator.

China expresses condolences for pope who made effort to mend Beijing-Vatican rift

China expressed condolences over the passing of Pope Francis, who reached out to Beijing in an effort to improve relations and mend a seven-decade rift between a state-recognized Catholic church and an underground church loyal to Rome.

Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Guo Jiakun said: "China is ready to work with the Vatican side to continue the improvement of China-Vatican ties."

The country's Catholic community was divided when the Communist Party came to power and claimed the right to name bishops without consulting the Vatican.

In 2018, Francis's Vatican brokered a deal with China that granted Rome's approval to the bishops Beijing had picked. The provisional agreement was renewed in October 2024.

Vatican announces funeral plans

Pope Francis' funeral has been set for Saturday at 10 a.m. in St. Peter's Square, to be celebrated by the dean of the College of Cardinals.

The cardinals have also decided that the public viewing of Pope Francis will begin Wednesday in St.



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Peter's Basilica, after his casket is taken by procession from the Vatican hotel where he lived.

The master of liturgical ceremonies, Archbishop Diego Ravelli, issued the rubrics for the procession by mandate of the College of Cardinals, which met Tuesday to take the first decisions following Francis' death. Presiding over the procession and the ritual transfer will be the camerlengo, or interim administrator of the Vatican, Cardinal Kevin Farrell.

Filipinos remember a pope who cared for the sick and survivors of natural disasters

Hundreds of Filipinos, some openly weeping, gathered for a mass at the Manila Cathedral on Tuesday to bid goodbye to the late pope, whom they remember for his outreach to the poor and survivors of natural disasters, which often devastate their country.

"He's a rare progressive pope, who took up a lot of causes and showed a deep concern for the poor," said Cynthia Esquilona, a 50-year-old mother of two who lit a candle and prayed before a portrait of Francis at the cathedral.

Another worshipper, Conchita Mil, quietly wept as she sat in a pew and thanked Francis for dedicating his papacy to the needy and the sick. Mil, 69, said she has breast cancer.

Francis visited the Philippines, a Catholic bastion in Asia, in early 2015 to console survivors of Typhoon Haiyan, which left thousands of people dead. Pictures showing him rain-soaked in stormy weather but constantly waving and blowing kisses to crowds of typhoon survivors have left a lasting impression.

First images of pope's body released

They showed him in a wooden casket, in red vestments and his bishop's miter, with the Vatican secretary of state praying over him in the chapel of the Domus Santa Marta hotel where he lived.

The images were taken during a ritual to confirm the death, presided over by the camerlengo, or interim administrator of the Vatican, Cardinal Kevin Farrell.

Two Swiss Guards stood at attention as Farrell blessed Francis with holy water, the pope's hands clasped around a rosary.

Australian candidates cancel campaign events

Both Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and opposition leader Peter Dutton cancelled campaign events planned for Tuesday out of respect for the late pontiff, as early voting began for a May 3 general election.

Flags were flown at half staff from government buildings across the country where a 2021 census found 20% of the population were Catholics.

Albanese was raised as a Catholic but chose to be sworn in as prime minister when he was elected in 2022 by making a secular affirmation rather than by taking an oath on a Bible.

Albanese attended a Mass in honor of the pope in Melbourne's St. Patrick's Cathedral on Tuesday morning.

"I try not to talk about my faith in public," Albanese told reporters, but added "At times like this, I think what people do is they draw on who they are and certainly my Catholicism is just a part of me."

Dutton, who was raised by a Catholic father and Protestant mother and attended an Anglican school, planned to go to a church service in Sydney.

"I don't think it's a day for overt politicking at all. I think that the day is best spent reflecting," Dutton told Australian Broadcasting Corp.

India declares 3 days of mourning

The Indian flag flew at half-staff on Tuesday at all government buildings as the country observed three days of mourning as a mark of the respect for Pope Francis.

The Indian flag will be flown half-staff on government buildings across the country for the next two days, as well as on the day of the pontiff's funeral, the Home Ministry said in a statement.

Taiwan's Catholics remember Francis

Members of Taiwan's Catholic community gathered at a church in the capital Taipei for a somber mass as believers prayed and reflected on Francis' spiritual legacy.

Former Premier Chen Chien-jen, a devout Catholic who visited the Vatican multiple times at the invitation of Francis and previous popes, spoke of the deep loss felt by the faithful.

Chen said "Pope Francis has led all of our churches to thrive over the past 12 years, making significant

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contributions to world peace and environmental sustainability," Chen added. "We will remember the teachings he gave us: that we are all brothers and that loving one another makes the world a more peaceful place."

Bernard Li, former president of Fu Jen Catholic University, highlighted the pope's compassion and dedication to humanitarian causes.

"He was a compassionate pope who has consistently advocated for world peace and racial equality," Li said.

President Lai Ching-te ordered flags to fly at half-staff on Tuesday in a show of mourning and respect.

## **Pope Francis' funeral to be held Saturday, with public viewing starting Wednesday**

By NICOLE WINFIELD and COLLEEN BARRY Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Pope Francis will be laid to rest Saturday after lying in state for three days in St. Peter's Basilica, where the faithful are expected to flock to pay their respects to history's first Latin American pontiff.

The cardinals met Tuesday in the Vatican's synod hall to chart the next steps before a conclave begins to choose Francis' successor, as condolences poured in from around the world. According to current norms, the conclave must begin between May 5 and 10.

The cardinals set the funeral for Saturday at 10 a.m. in St. Peter's Square, to be celebrated by the dean of the College of Cardinals, Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re. U.S. President Donald Trump said he and first lady Melania Trump plan to attend, and Argentine President Javier Milei is also expected.

The Argentine pope died Monday at age 88 after a stroke put him in a coma and led his heart to fail. He had been recovering in his apartment after being hospitalized for five weeks with pneumonia. He made his last public appearance Sunday, delivering an Easter blessing and greeting followers from his popemobile, looping around St. Peter's Square.

His Easter appearance from the same loggia where he was introduced to the world as the first pope from the Americas on March 13, 2013, was a fitting bookend to a 12-year papacy that sought to shake up the church and return it to its Gospel-mandated mission of caring for the poorest.

Vatican officials remember Francis

"He truly gave everything he had, up to the end," said Sister Nathalie Becquart, one of the highest-ranking women at the Vatican.

While the ordinary faithful will have an opportunity to pay their respects beginning Wednesday, Vatican officials were allowed to say their goodbyes starting Monday evening. Speaking to reporters after she paid her respects, Becquart marveled at Francis' final Easter salute to his flock. "He really walked with his people," she said.

Italian Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi said it was specifically Francis' effort to promote the role of women in the church that will be one of his greatest legacies. Ravasi noted that Francis chose to be buried near his favorite icon of the Madonna, in a basilica across town, and not in the grottoes underneath St. Peter's, as is typical for popes.

"He wanted to be buried under the shadow of a woman, in this case Maria," said Ravasi, the Vatican's former culture minister as he arrived for Tuesday's first meeting of cardinals. "That is significant, his desire for the church to do more for women."

The first images of Francis' body were released Tuesday, showing him in red vestments and his bishop's miter in a wooden casket, with the Vatican secretary of state praying over him in the chapel of the Domus Santa Marta hotel where he lived and died.

In his final will, Francis said he wanted to be buried at St. Mary Major Basilica, which is home to the Salus Populi Romani icon of Mary. Before and after every foreign trip, Francis would go to the basilica to pray before the Byzantine-style painting that features an image of Mary, draped in a blue robe, holding the infant Jesus, who in turn holds a jeweled golden book.

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Francis stopped by the basilica on his way home from the Gemelli hospital on March 23, after his 38-day stay, to deliver flowers to be placed before the icon. He returned April 12 to pray before it one last time.

## The world reacts

Bells tolled in chapels, churches and cathedrals around the world and flags flew at half-staff in Italy, India, Taiwan and the U.S. after Francis' death was announced by the camerlengo, who takes charge of the Vatican after a pope's death. Soccer matches in Italy and Argentina were suspended in honor of the pope who was a lifelong fan of the San Lorenzo soccer club.

World leaders praised Francis for his moral leadership and compassion, while ordinary faithful remembered his simplicity and humanity.

"Like every Argentine, I think he was a rebel," said 23-year-old Catalina Favaro, who had come to pay her respects in the Buenos Aires church where Francis discovered his priestly vocation. "He may have been contradictory, but that was nice, too."

In East Timor, where Francis' final outdoor Mass drew nearly half of the population last September, President Jose Ramos-Horta praised Francis' courage. "Pope Francis was a brave man who was not afraid to speak out against the rulers of the world who seek war, but do not want to seek peace," Ramos-Horta said.

"He challenged the powerful to act with justice, called nations to welcome the stranger, and reminded us that our common home — this Earth — is a gift we must protect for future generations," said Nigerian President Bola Tinubu, who is Muslim. Nigeria is Africa's most populous country and has around 30 million Catholics, representing about 14% of the population.

## Viewing the pope's coffin

The pope's formal apartments in the Apostolic Palace and in the Santa Marta hotel were sealed Monday evening, following a centuries-old ritual. Cardinal Kevin Farrell, who as camerlengo had the task of announcing the death and confirming it once the cause was determined, presided over the rituals.

Francis chose not to live in the palace, but in a two-room suite in Santa Marta on the other side of Vatican City. He died there and his body was transferred to the hotel chapel in the lobby, where the private viewing was underway Tuesday for Vatican officials and members of the pontifical household.

In changes made by Francis last year, his body was not placed in three wooden coffins, as it had been for previous popes. Rather, Francis was placed in a simplified wooden coffin with a zinc coffin inside.

Once in St. Peter's, his casket will not be put on an elevated bier — as was the case with past popes — but will just be placed simply facing the pews, with the Paschal candle nearby.

"He was a pope who didn't change his path when it came to getting (his hands) dirty," Francis' vicar for Rome, Cardinal Baldassarre Reina, said in a Mass in his honor. "For him, poor people and migrants were the sacrament of Jesus."

## Choosing the next pope

After the funeral, there are nine days of official mourning, known as the "novendiali." During this period, cardinals arrive in Rome and meet privately before the conclave.

To give everyone time to assemble, the conclave must begin 15 to 20 days after the "sede vacante" — the "vacant See" — is declared, although it can start sooner if the cardinals agree.

Once the conclave begins, cardinals vote in secret sessions in the Sistine Chapel. After voting sessions, the ballots are burned in a special stove. Black smoke indicates that no pope has been elected, while white smoke indicates that the cardinals have chosen the next head of the Catholic Church.

The one who has secured two-thirds of the votes wins. If he accepts, his election is announced by a cardinal from the loggia of St. Peter's Basilica who tells the world: "Habemus Papam" — Latin for "We have a pope."

## For Iraqi Christians, Pope Francis' visit was a rare moment of hope

By QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA and STELLA MARTANY Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — The death of Pope Francis has sent shockwaves through Iraq's Christian community, where his presence once brought hope after one of the darkest chapters in the country's recent history.



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His 2021 visit to Iraq, the first ever by a pope, came after years of conflict and displacement. Just a few years before that, many Iraqi Christians had fled their homes as Islamic State militants swept across the country.

Christian communities in Iraq, once numbering over a million, had already been reduced to a fraction of their former number by decades of conflict and mass emigration.

In Mosul, the site of some of the fiercest battles between Iraqi security forces and the Islamic State, Chaldean Archbishop Najeeb Moussa Michael recalled the pope's visit to the battle-scarred city at a time when many visitors were still afraid to come as a moment of joy, "like a wedding for the people of Mosul."

"He broke this barrier and stood firm in the devastated city of Mosul, proclaiming a message of love, brotherhood, and peaceful coexistence," Michael said.

As Francis delivered a speech in the city's al-Midan area, which had been almost completely reduced to rubble, the archbishop said, he saw tears falling from the pope's eyes.

Sa'dullah Rassam, who was among the Christians who fled from Mosul in 2014 in the face of the IS offensive, was also crying as he watched the pope leave the church in Midan that day.

Rassam had spent years displaced in Irbil, the seat of northern Iraq's semiautonomous Kurdish region, but was among the first Christians to return to Mosul, where he lives in a small house next to the church that Francis had visited.

As the pope's convoy was leaving the church, Rassam stood outside watching, tears streaming down his face. Suddenly the car stopped, and Francis got out to greet him.

"It was the best day of my life," Rassam said. The pope's visit "made us feel loved and heard, and it helped heal our wounds after everything that happened here," he said.

The visit also helped to spur a drive to rebuild the city's destroyed sites, including both Muslim and Christian places of worship.

"After the wide international media coverage of his visit, many parties began to invest again in the city. Today, Mosul is beginning to rise again," Michael said. "You can see our heritage reappear in the sculptures, the churches and the streets."

**Building ties across communities**

Chaldean Patriarch Cardinal Louis Raphael Sako told The Associated Press that Francis had built strong relationships with the Eastern rite churches — which are often forgotten by their Latin rite counterparts — and with Muslim communities.

The patriarch recalled urging Francis early in his papacy to highlight the importance of Muslim-Christian coexistence.

After the pope's inaugural speech, in which he thanked representatives of the Jewish community for their presence, Sako said, "I asked him, 'Why didn't you mention Muslims?'... He said, 'Tomorrow I will speak about Muslims,' and indeed he did issue a statement the next day."

Francis went on to take "concrete steps to strengthen relationships" between Christians and Muslims through visits to Muslim-majority countries — including Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Jordan as well as Iraq — Sako said. "He brought Muslims and Christians together around shared values."

His three-day visit to Iraq "changed Iraq's face — it opened Iraq to the outside world," Sako said, while "the people loved him for his simplicity and sincerity."

The patriarch said that three months before the pope's death, he had given him a gift of dates from Iraq, and Francis responded that he "would never forget Iraq and that it was in his heart and in his prayers."

During his visit to Iraq, Francis held a historic meeting with the country's top Shiite cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, at the latter's home in Najaf.

Sistani's office in a statement Monday expressed "deep sorrow" at the pope's death, saying he was "greatly respected by all for his distinguished role in serving the causes of peace and tolerance, and for expressing solidarity with the oppressed and persecuted across the globe."

The meeting between the two religious leaders had helped to "promote a culture of peaceful coexistence, reject violence and hatred, and uphold values of harmony based on safeguarding rights and mutual respect among followers of different religions and intellectual traditions," it said.

"Our favorite pope"

In Irbil, Marvel Rassam recalled joining the crowds who packed into a stadium to catch a glimpse of the pope.

The visit brought a sense of unity, Rassam said, "as everyone attended to see him, and not only the Catholics."

"He was our favorite pope, not only because he was the first to visit Iraq, but he was also very special and unique for his humility and inclusivity," he said.

At St. Joseph Chaldean Cathedral in Baghdad, where Francis led a Mass during his 2021 visit, church pastor Nadhir Dako said the pope's visit had carried special weight because it came at a time when Christians in Iraq were still processing the trauma of the IS attacks.

"We, the Christians, were in very difficult situation. There was frustration due to the forcible migration and the killing that occurred," Dako said. "The visit by the pope created a sort of determination for all Iraqis to support their Christian brothers."

## **70% of Jewish Holocaust survivors will be gone in the next 10 years, a report shows**

By KIRSTEN GRIESHABER Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Eighty years after the Holocaust, more than 200,000 Jewish survivors are still alive but 70% of them will be gone within the next 10 years — meaning time is running out to hear the voices of the last generation who suffered through one of the worst atrocities in history.

Currently, the survivors' median age is 87, and more than 1,400 of them are over 100 years old, a new report said Tuesday.

"We have known that this population of survivors would be the last, our final opportunity to hear their first-hand testimonies, to spend time with them, our last chance to meet a survivor," said Greg Schneider, the executive vice president of the New York-based Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, also referred to as the Claims Conference, which published the study.

The report's analysis of population projections and mortality rates provides details through 2040. It is based on the extensive data collected since 1952 by the Claims Conference, which includes survivors who receive direct payments or social welfare services funded by the organization as a result of ongoing negotiations with Germany.

90% of Holocaust survivors will pass away in the next 15 years

Notably, nearly 50% of all Holocaust survivors will pass away within the next six years, while 70% will die within 10 years and 90% within 15 years, according to the report titled "Vanishing Witnesses."

Those still alive are often of frail health and suffer from ailments that come with age and have been amplified by traumas in their youth.

Six million European Jews were murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators during the Holocaust.

It is not clear exactly how many Jews survived the death camps, the ghettos or somewhere in hiding across Nazi-occupied Europe, but their numbers were a far cry from the pre-war Jewish population in Europe.

In Poland, of the 3.3 million Jews living there in 1939, only about 300,000 survived.

Around 560,000 Jews lived in Germany in 1933, the year Adolf Hitler came to power. After the Holocaust, their numbers had diminished to about 15,000 through emigration and extermination.

After the end of World War II, survivors settled all over the globe and even today they are still living in 90 different countries.

Mortality rates vary across locations

The "Vanishing Witnesses" report shows that mortality rates for survivors vary greatly across locations depending on access to health care and economic stability.

For example, Israel, which is home to about half of all Holocaust survivors, had 110,100 survivors as of

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October 2024 and is estimated to see their population decline to 62,900 by 2030, a drop of 43%.

The United States had 34,600 in the fall of 2024, but is projected to lose 39% over that same time, dropping to 21,100 survivors. Countries in the former Soviet Union had 25,500 survivors in October 2024, but are expected to be at 11,800 in five years, down 54 % by the start of 2030.

"This report is a stark reminder that our time is almost up, our survivors are leaving us and this is the moment to hear their voices," said Gideon Taylor, the president of the Claims Conference.

Many survivors worry who will keep alive their memories

Albrecht Weinberg, a 100-year-old survivor from Germany who lost almost his entire family in the Holocaust, said that even today the horrendous memories are haunting him. "I sleep with it, I wake up with it, I sweat, I have nightmares; that is my present."

Weinberg survived the concentration and death camps Auschwitz, Mittelbau-Dora, Bergen-Belsen and three death marches at the end of the war. He spent many years teaching high school students and others about the atrocities he had to live through. Still, he worries what will happen when he is no longer around to bear witness.

"When my generation is not in this world anymore, when we disappear from the world, then the next generation can only read it out of the book."

## **What do 'expert level' talks signal for the progress of the Iran-US nuclear negotiations?**

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Negotiations between Iran and the United States over Tehran's rapidly advancing nuclear program will move Wednesday to what's known as the "expert level" — a sign analysts say shows that the talks are moving forward rapidly.

However, experts not involved in the talks who spoke with The Associated Press warn that this doesn't necessarily signal a deal is imminent. Instead, it means that the talks between Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and U.S. Mideast envoy Steve Witkoff haven't broken down at what likely is the top-level trade — Tehran limiting its atomic program in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions.

"Agreeing to technical talks suggests both sides are expressing pragmatic, realistic objectives for the negotiations and want to explore the details," said Kelsey Davenport, the director for nonproliferation policy at the Arms Control Association who long has studied Iran's nuclear program.

"If Witkoff was making maximalist demands during his talks with Araghchi, such as dismantlement of the enrichment program, Iran would have no incentive to meet at the technical level."

That technical level, however, remains filled with possible landmines. Just how much enrichment by Iran would be comfortable for the United States? What about Tehran's ballistic missile program, which U.S. President Donald Trump first cited in pulling America unilaterally out of the accord in 2018? Which sanctions could be lifted and which would be remain in place on the Islamic Republic?

"The most important determinant of expert talks' value lies in whether there is a political commitment to do something and experts just need to figure out what," said Richard Nephew, an adjunct fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy who worked on Iran sanctions while at the U.S. State Department during negotiations over what became the 2015 nuclear deal.

"If the experts also have to discuss big concepts, without political agreement, it can just result in spun wheels."

Experts and the 2015 nuclear deal

The 2015 nuclear deal saw senior experts involved in both sides of the deal. For the U.S. under President Barack Obama, Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz reached an understanding working with Ali Akbar Salehi, then the leader of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran. Both men's technical background proved key to nailing down the specifics of the deal.

Under the 2015 agreement, Iran agreed to enrich uranium only to 3.67% purity and keep a stockpile of only 300 kilograms (661 pounds). Today, Iran enriches some uranium up to 60% purity — a short, technical



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step away from weapons-grade levels of 90%. The last report by the International Atomic Energy Agency put Iran's overall uranium stockpile in February at 8,294.4 kilograms (18,286 pounds).

The deal also limited the types of centrifuges Iran could spin, further slowing Tehran's ability to rush for a bomb, if it chose to do so. It also set out the provisions of how and when sanctions would be lifted, as well as time limits for the accord itself.

Reaching limits, relief and timelines require the knowledge of experts, analysts say.

"A nonproliferation agreement is meaningless if it cannot be effectively implemented and verified," Davenport said. "The United States needs a strong technical team to negotiate the detailed restrictions and intrusive monitoring that will be necessary to ensure any move by Iran toward nuclear weapons is quickly detected and there is sufficient time to respond."

It remains unclear who the two sides will be sending for those negotiations.

Hiccups already heard in these negotiations

Both the Americans and the Iranians have been tightlipped over exactly what's been discussed so far, though both sides have expressed optimism about the pace. However, there has been one noticeable dispute stemming from comments Witkoff made in a television interview, suggesting Tehran could be able to enrich up to 3.67% purity. However, analysts noted that was the level set by the 2015 deal under Obama.

Witkoff hours later issued a statement suggesting that comparison struck a nerve: "A deal with Iran will only be completed if it is a Trump deal."

"Iran must stop and eliminate its nuclear enrichment and weaponization program," Witkoff added.

Araghchi responded by warning that Iran must be able to enrich.

"The core issue of enrichment itself is not negotiable," he said.

Despite that, experts who spoke to the AP said they remained positive about the talks' trajectory so far.

"Although still early stages, I'm encouraged so far," said Alan Eyre, a former U.S. diplomat once involved in past nuclear negotiations with Tehran. "The pace of negotiations — to include starting expert level meetings this Wednesday — is good."

He added that so far, there didn't appear to be any "mutually exclusive red lines" for the talks as well — signaling there likely wasn't immediately any roadblocks to reaching a deal.

Nephew similarly described reaching the expert level as a "positive sign." However, he cautioned that the hard work potentially was just beginning for the negotiations.

"They imply the need to get into real details, to discuss concepts that senior (officials) might not understand and to answer questions. I also think too much can be read into them starting," Nephew said. "Expert talks can sometimes be a fudge for seniors to avoid working on tough issues — 'let's have experts discuss it while we move on to other things' — or to sidestep big political decisions."

Corey Hinderstein, the vice president for studies at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and a former U.S. government nuclear expert, described herself as feeling "cautious optimism" over the expert talks beginning.

"Heads of delegation are responsible for setting strategic goals and defining success," she said. "But if there is a deal to be made, the technical experts are the ones who will get it done."

## JD Vance was one of the last leaders to meet with Pope Francis

By CHRIS MEGERIAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — One of Pope Francis' final encounters before his death was with U.S. Vice President JD Vance, who visited the Vatican over the weekend.

The meeting took place on Easter Sunday. Vance, a Catholic convert, entered the room and reached down for the pope's hand. "Hello," the vice president said. "So good to see you."

Francis was sitting in a wheelchair, and his words were inaudible in a video released by the Vatican.

"I know you've not been feeling great, but it's good see you in better health," Vance said.

A priest serving as a translator spoke for the pope.

"These are for your children," the priest said as someone presented Vance with chocolate eggs. Next

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came a tray of additional gifts, including rosaries and a Vatican tie.

"Thank you," Vance said as he held the dark tie. "So beautiful."

They posed for a photo, Vance standing to the pope's right before bidding him farewell.

"I pray for you every day," Vance said. "God bless you."

Vance's visit was not without political sensitivities, and he met with Cardinal Pietro Parolin on Saturday for what the Vatican described as "an exchange of opinions." The Catholic Church, under Francis' leadership, has championed the rights of migrants, while Vance and President Donald Trump have advocated for crackdowns.

Vance's office said the vice president and the cardinal "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."

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt told reporters that she had spoken to members of Vance's team on Monday morning after Francis' death.

"They expressed how excited and grateful they were for the opportunity to have met with the pope just yesterday," she said.

Leavitt added that Francis "touched millions of lives throughout his tenure as the head of the Catholic Church and so it's a solemn day for Catholics around the world and we are praying for all those who loved the pope and believed in him."

Trump issued a statement on Truth Social: "Rest in Peace Pope Francis! May God Bless him and all who loved him!"

At the White House Easter Egg Roll on Monday, Trump said he signed an executive order for U.S. flags to fly at half-staff in the pope's honor.

"He was a good man," the president told reporters. "He loved the world and it's an honor to do that."

Vance, who continued on to India after Italy, posted additional thoughts on social media.

"I just learned of the passing of Pope Francis. My heart goes out to the millions of Christians all over the world who loved him," he wrote on X. "I was happy to see him yesterday, though he was obviously very ill."

Vance shared a link to remarks that Francis gave on March 27, 2020, as COVID-19 was spreading around the globe.

"I'll always remember him for the below homily he gave in the very early days of COVID," Vance wrote. "It was really quite beautiful."

Francis had spoken from St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.

"Thick darkness has gathered over our squares, our streets and our cities," he said. "It has taken over our lives, filling everything with a deafening silence and a distressing void."

He encouraged people to rely on their faith to help them endure "because with God life never dies."

## An Irish-born American cardinal is entrusted as the 'camerlengo,' running the Holy See between popes

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Cardinal Kevin Farrell remembers the day Pope Francis asked him to be the camerlengo, the Vatican official who runs the Holy See after the death of one pope and before the election of another. They were flying back to Rome from the 2019 World Youth Day in Panama, and Francis popped the question in business class.

Farrell, 77, had been in Rome only a few years, summoned out of the blue from his job as bishop of Dallas, to reorganize the Vatican's laity office, a key part of Francis' reforms. Three years into the job, Francis asked him to take on another role that is steeped in myth and mystery but also has real-world responsibilities: managing the Vatican as "camerlengo" — or chamberlain — during the often traumatic "interregnum" between papacies and helping to organize the conclave to elect the next pontiff.

"I said to him I would accept the position but on one condition," Farrell recalled in a 2022 interview, smiling as he remembered their airborne conversation. The condition was that the pope would have to

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preach at Farrell's own funeral, reflecting Farrell's hope that he would die before Francis and never have to act as a camerlengo.

The joke was twofold: Farrell didn't particularly want the heavy responsibility. But more personally, he didn't want to entertain the possibility of outliving Francis, whom he credited with having set the Catholic Church on a crucial path of renewal, redirecting it away from culture war defensiveness and back to its Gospel-driven essence of inclusion.

"We were defending ourselves always: Self-preservation was the theme of the church," Farrell said. "And Pope Francis moved us beyond self-preservation" to a message of welcome and accompaniment.

The camerlengo's role

With Francis' death, though, Farrell is in the spotlight, albeit only until a new pope is elected. Farrell on Monday morning announced the death from the chapel of the Domus Santa Marta hotel where Francis lived and died. In a short statement read live on Vatican television, he said Francis' "entire life was dedicated to the service of the Lord and of his church."

According to tradition, the camerlengo certifies the pope's death, seals the papal apartment and breaks the pope's fisherman's ring, as a symbol of a vacancy at the Holy See. He leads the procession accompanying the coffin into St. Peter's Basilica and presides over the burial.

The camerlengo also gets written reports from Vatican offices about their current assets; a copy of the current and projected budget for the Holy See; and any other information from the Vatican's economic ministry that would be useful for cardinals and the future pope. He and the dean of the College of Cardinals, Italian Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, then play key roles organizing the meetings of cardinals preceding the conclave.

Farrell, a no-nonsense Irish-born American, said the financial duties are far more important than the ceremonial ones and the ones for which he is more qualified. Farrell already heads top Vatican committees on finances, investments and confidential matters, as well as its supreme court, making him particularly well-suited to deliver a financial prospectus to the new pope.

From Ireland to the U.S.

The man Francis chose to bridge his papacy was born in Dublin on Sept. 2, 1947. He entered the Legionaries of Christ religious order in 1966 and was ordained a priest for the Mexican-based order in 1978. He left six years later — long before revelations that its founder was a pedophile who sexually abused his young seminarians — and became a diocesan priest in the Washington Archdiocese.

He worked in a series of parishes but also took on increasing charge of the books in the archdiocese — he has a keen mind for finances but says he never finished his MBA. He became auxiliary bishop of Washington in 2001 and served under the ex-Cardinal Theodore McCarrick before being made bishop of Dallas in 2007.

Farrell has said repeatedly that during his years in Washington, he never heard the rumors that McCarrick had behaved inappropriately with seminarians, sleeping with them in his bed while he was a bishop in New Jersey. McCarrick, who died earlier this month, was defrocked after a Vatican investigation in 2019 found he sexually abused children as well as adults.

Farrell said he was happy and "very comfortable" as bishop in Dallas when his secretary came to him in May 2016 to tell him the pope was on the phone.

"And I said 'the pope's not on the phone. Popes don't use telephones,'" Farrell said, assuming another bishop was playing a prank. "And so I picked up the phone. I was about to tell him where to go," when all of a sudden the voice on the line said quietly in Spanish: "Soy Francisco" — "This is Francis."

The two had never met, but Francis knew Farrell spoke Spanish fluently, given his years in the Mexican-based Legion.

A Vatican assignment

Francis also knew that Farrell had made it a policy in both Washington and Dallas to put qualified lay experts, rather than priests, in positions of authority in running the dioceses.

Farrell said Francis asked him to do the same with the Holy See's laity office, which the pontiff wanted



to rebuild by merging it with the Vatican's family and life departments and serve as a model of lay-led governance of church management.

"I was trying to come up with every reason why I should not do it. And he said, 'Well, you think about it for three days and I'll call you back,'" Farrell recalled. "Three days later, at the same time, I get a telephone call and then I gave him all my reasons that I had formulated. And he said, 'Well, why don't you come on over and talk to me?'"

"Well, that was the end," Farrell said.

He moved to Rome in October 2016 to head the laity office. Within hours of his arrival, Francis announced that Farrell would be made a cardinal.

It was a sign, later confirmed with his nomination as camerlengo, that Francis fully intended to entrust Farrell with some of the most important responsibilities of the church, including after he was gone.

## **From 'conclave' to 'white smoke,' a glossary of terms used in a papal transition**

By The Associated Press undefined

A change in popes — through death or resignation — is a complicated process, with centuries-old rituals involving the transition in leadership for both the spiritual head of the global Catholic Church and the Vatican's head of state.

These are the need-to-know terms — some of them in Latin — to help make sense of news in the coming days:

Who is the Vatican camerlengo?

This is the "chamberlain" — the cardinal in charge of formally verifying the pope's death — and then sealing his room and study. Between then and the election of the new pope, the camerlengo administers the "goods and temporal rights" of the Holy See. The current one is the Irish-born American Cardinal Kevin Farrell.

Who is in the College of Cardinals?

There are 252 cardinals worldwide, and as a body, they are in charge of the Holy See's affairs in-between popes, albeit with limits. Of them, 135 are "cardinal electors," who gather in the Vatican to choose the new pope. For centuries, they have chosen one of their own. The vast majority of the electors — 108 — were made cardinals by Pope Francis, according to Vatican statistics.

What is the conclave?

This is the closed-door meeting of the cardinal electors to choose the new pope in the Sistine Chapel. Its name, literally "with a key," was used in the 13th century to describe the process of locking up the cardinals until the election is completed. It must begin no more than 20 days after the death or resignation of a pope. The electors are sequestered from all outsiders for the duration; the last three popes were chosen within days.

Who is the dean of the College of Cardinals?

The current dean is Italian Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re. He is the head of the College of Cardinals who informs the rest of the cardinals and the ambassadors to the Holy See of the pope's death once he learns of it from the camerlengo. He convenes the conclave and presides as the electors take their oaths. Once a new pope is chosen, the dean asks him if he accepts and what name he wants to be called.

What is the Domus Santa Marta?

This Vatican guesthouse, built in 1996, specifically houses cardinals during a conclave and is used at other times as a hotel for visiting priests and Vatican officials. Pope Francis never moved out after he was elected pope, choosing to live in suite 201, rather than the papal apartments in the Apostolic Palace.

What does 'extra omnes' mean?

A Latin phrase for "all out," it's spoken by the master for papal liturgical celebrations, currently Italian Archbishop Diego Ravelli, to ask all those present except the cardinal electors to leave the Sistine Chapel

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to begin the voting process during the conclave.

Why is the pope's ring called the fisherman's ring?

Each pope gets this ring at the Mass marking the beginning of his pontificate. It bears this name because Jesus told St. Peter, the first pope, that he would be "a fisher of men." Until the 1990s, it was destroyed upon a pope's death. Now, it's "annulled," or marked in such a way that it can't be used as a seal.

What are the General Congregations?

This is the name given to the gathering of all members of the College of Cardinals after the pope's death and before the start of the conclave to discuss major church affairs. All cardinals who aren't infirm take part in this meeting in the Vatican's Apostolic Palace. They also discuss preparations for the conclave, under oath and in secret.

What does it mean when they say, 'Habemus Papam'?

This Latin phrase translates to "We have a pope." These are the words used by the "protodeacon" of the College of Cardinals to announce from the loggia of St. Peter's Basilica that a new pope has been elected. He then says the new pope's birth name and the name he has chosen to use as pope, also in Latin. The current protodeacon is French Cardinal Dominique Mamberti.

Who are the infirmarii?

These are the three cardinals, chosen by a random drawing from the electors, who are charged with gathering the ballots of any electors who are ill during the conclave.

What does Pope Francis' motto 'miserando atque eligendo' mean?

This is Latin for "having had mercy and choosing him" — a phrase that Francis chose as his motto when he was elevated to bishop and kept as his papal seal. It was drawn from the homilies of St. Bede the Venerable, an 8th century monk. It comes from the Gospel narrative of St. Matthew, a tax collector whom Jesus called to follow him.

Who are the revisers?

These are the three cardinals, chosen by random drawing from the electors, who are charged with reviewing the ballots during the conclave.

What is a rogito?

This is the document, or "deed," listing key details of the pope's life and papacy that is placed in his coffin. It's written in Latin by the master for papal liturgical celebrations. A copy is kept in the Vatican archives.

Who are the scrutineers?

These are the three cardinals, chosen by random drawing from the electors, who are charged with reviewing each ballot and announcing it to the assembled conclave after each round of voting. They then tally the votes — to win the election, two-thirds of the votes are necessary — and they also burn the ballots.

What does the saying 'sede vacante' mean?

This is Latin for "vacant seat," the period between the pope's death or resignation and the election of a new one.

What is St. Mary Major?

This is the basilica in Rome where Pope Francis said he wants to be buried. Francis is breaking with the tradition of his predecessors who are buried inside the Vatican, saying he wanted to be near his favorite icon of the Virgin Mary, the Salus Populi Romani, a Byzantine-style painting of the Madonna draped in a blue robe, holding the infant Jesus who in turn is holding a jeweled golden book. The icon is located in the church first built in the 5th century and devoted to the Virgin Mary. In his will, Francis said he wanted a simple underground tomb with only "Franciscus" written on it.

What does the text 'Universi Dominici Gregis' contain?

This Latin phrase means "the Lord's whole flock." It's the Vatican constitution that regulates the processes from a pope's death until a new one is elected. St. John Paul II issued it in 1996 during his papacy, and Pope Benedict XVI twice amended it, most significantly by removing John Paul's provision that after about 12 days of balloting a simple majority could elect a new pope rather than a two-thirds majority. If the conclave lasts that long, the top two vote-getters go to a runoff, with a two-thirds majority required to win. Neither of the top two candidates casts a ballot in the runoff.

What does white or black smoke mean during a papal transition?

After each round of voting in the Sistine Chapel, the ballots are burned in a special furnace to indicate the outcome to the outside world. If no pope is chosen, the ballots are mixed with cartridges containing potassium perchlorate, anthracene (a component of coal tar), and sulfur to produce black smoke. But if there is a winner, the burning ballots are mixed with potassium chlorate, lactose and chloroform resin to produce the white smoke. Bells also are rung to further signal there is a new pope.

## **Pope Francis's many critics included a one-time aide and the Vatican's ex-ambassador to the US**

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Pope Francis probably expected that he would face opposition to his reform agenda after Catholics for two generations grew used to more conservative, doctrine-minded pontiffs.

But his critics — most of them emanating from the church's conservative wing — were unique in that at least for the first years of his pontificate, they had a living alternate as a point of reference: Pope Benedict XVI.

Some of the critics who made their mark during Francis' pontificate:

Benedict's camp

Benedict's longtime secretary, Archbishop Georg Gaenswein, was a bridge between the reigning and retired popes. After Benedict retired in 2013, Gaenswein remained as his secretary while also serving Francis as the head of the papal household.

Gaenswein was widely seen as the key figure behind one of the most visible signs of the break between the two pontificates. In 2020, Guinean Cardinal Robert Sarah, the Vatican's retired liturgy chief, wrote a book with Benedict reaffirming priestly celibacy at a time when Francis was considering ordaining married men to address a clergy shortage in the Amazon.

The book, and the prospect of a retired pope trying to influence a reigning one, created the scenario that canon lawyers and theologians had warned of in 2013, when Benedict decided to retain the white cassock of the papacy in retirement as "Emeritus Pope." The scandal died down after Benedict removed himself as a co-author and Francis fired Gaenswein from his papal household job.

But the bad blood didn't end there. Just days after Benedict's 2023 funeral, Gaenswein published a tell-all memoir that was highly critical of Francis. He was exiled from the Vatican by Francis and, after a time without a job in his native Germany, was made an ambassador.

The 'Dubia' cardinals

Conservative and traditionalist Catholics were wary of Francis from his 2013 election, when he first addressed the crowd without the ermine-rimmed, red velvet cape of his predecessors.

Significantly, Francis reimposed restrictions on celebrating the old Latin Mass that Benedict had relaxed. Francis insisted his aim was church unity. Critics accused him of being divisive, and the outrage wasn't limited to U.S.-based conservative Catholic media or fringe right-wing bloggers.

One breaking point came in 2016, when Francis opened the door to letting divorced and civilly remarried Catholics receive Communion. Some accused him of heresy.

Four conservative cardinals formally asked him to clarify himself, issuing "dubia" or questions to him. They argued church doctrine held that Catholics who remarried without a church annulment were living in sin and couldn't receive the sacraments. He never replied.

One of them, Cardinal Raymond Burke, had been sidelined by Francis early in his pontificate, removing him as the Vatican's supreme court judge. Then he pushed him aside as the prelate to the Knights of Malta. After Burke joined a bigger group of cardinals questioning Francis' 2023 synod on the church's future, Francis cut him off financially.

Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano

Francis' biggest conservative critic was the Vatican's former ambassador to the U.S., Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano. In 2018, he said Francis had covered up accusations that then-Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, an American, had slept with his seminarians.



Vigano demanded Francis resign for allegedly rehabilitating McCarrick from sanctions imposed by Benedict. The furor faded after Francis defrocked McCarrick and Vigano was discredited with conspiracy theories about COVID-19. McCarrick died earlier this month.

In 2024, Francis excommunicated Vigano after finding him guilty of schism.

## **Pope Francis' conservative critics had a unique way to oppose him: a retired pontiff**

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — As Amazonian bishops gathered at the Vatican on Oct. 21, 2019, a man entered a nearby church after dawn and stole three Indigenous statues brought to Rome for the occasion. He threw them into the Tiber River in a videotaped protest to denounce what he called the “pagan idolatry” taking place on Pope Francis’ watch.

The incident underscored the lengths to which Pope Francis’ traditionalist critics were willing to go to vent their opposition to history’s first Latin American pope. From individual protests to social media campaigns, conferences and petitions, conservatives made clear they believed themselves to be more Catholic than the pope and forged unusually vocal resistance to his authority.

Their token leaders in the College of Cardinals will likely be maneuvering to ensure someone more sympathetic to their sensibilities will be elected to replace Francis, who died Monday at 88.

‘Some wanted me dead’

Every pope has his critics. And Francis probably expected he would face opposition to his radical reform agenda after Catholics for two generations grew used to more conservative popes.

“Some wanted me dead,” he quipped once after he heard some prelates in Rome had started plotting a future conclave while he was in the hospital.

Francis’ critics were unique in having a living alternate as a point of reference, Pope Benedict XVI, who resided as pope emeritus in the Vatican Gardens for the first decade of Francis’ pontificate.

Such an anomaly made the dynamics of the Francis opposition a historical first. It exacerbated divisions that experts say must be addressed before another pope decides to step down. They say norms are necessary to prevent a retired pope from being an inspiration for the faithful in ways that discredit his successor or impact his leadership.

Francis tolerated the right-wing opposition for a while, often responding to their attacks with silence.

At times, he even seemed to relish in the criticism as evidence of how far a church “obsessed” with rules and regulations had strayed from Jesus’ Gospel-mandated call to welcome the stranger, feed the poor and show mercy to all.

“It’s an honor if the Americans attack me,” he once said, referring to the U.S.-based nexus of opposition.

After Benedict’s death in 2022, Francis tried to blunt the opposition and consolidate his progressive reforms, even though it seemed the right-wing knives were out for him.

Within days of Benedict’s funeral, his longtime secretary published a tell-all memoir highly critical of Francis. It also emerged posthumously that Cardinal George Pell wrote a devastating memo that circulated anonymously, calling Francis’ pontificate a “catastrophe.”

While saying he welcomed criticism, Francis tried to neutralize the opposition through key appointments and targeted removals, even while trying to make the church a welcoming “field hospital for wounded souls,” especially LGBTQ+ Catholics.

After one gesture of outreach — Francis approved blessings for same-sex couples — African bishops united in disapproval in a remarkable continent-wide dissent to a papal directive.

“If you look at all the history of the reform of the church, where you have the strongest resistance or debated points, it’s really usually a very important point,” said Sister Nathalie Becquart, who helped spearhead one of Francis’ progressive agenda items to make the church more responsive to the needs of laypeople.

Wary of Francis from the start

Conservative and traditionalist Catholics were wary of Francis after their beloved Benedict became the

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first pope in 600 years to resign.

They grimaced when Francis emerged on the loggia of St. Peter's Basilica after his 2013 election without the ermine-rimmed, red velvet cape of his predecessors. They gasped a few weeks later when he washed the feet of women and Muslims on Holy Thursday, a ritual previously restricted to men.

"We don't like this pope," headlined Italy's conservative daily *Il Foglio* a few months into his papacy. "The Dictator Pope" was the title of book by a British traditionalist published a few years later.

Over time, the critics' worst fears came true.

One breaking point came in 2016, when Francis opened the door to letting divorced and civilly remarried Catholics receive Communion. Some accused Francis of heresy.

Four conservative cardinals formally asked him to clarify himself, issuing "dubia" or questions to him. They argued church doctrine held that Catholics who remarried without a church annulment were living in sin and couldn't receive the sacraments.

He never replied.

Reversing Benedict on the Latin Mass

Conservatives could not have known that Francis would take one of the most controversial steps of his pontificate by reimposing restrictions on celebrating the old Latin Mass that Benedict had relaxed.

The reversal of Benedict's signature liturgical legacy was evidence that Francis had essentially declared war on traditionalists, the ancient liturgy and Benedict's papacy itself.

"Francis HATES US. Francis HATES Tradition. Francis HATES all that is good and beautiful," the traditionalist blog *Rorate Caeli* tweeted. But it concluded: "FRANCIS WILL DIE, THE LATIN MASS WILL LIVE FOREVER."

Francis insisted his aim was to preserve church unity. Critics accused him of the opposite, of driving a wedge, and the outrage wasn't limited to U.S.-based conservative Catholic media or fringe right-wing bloggers who had popularized Francis-bashing.

Cardinal Raymond Burke, one of the "dubia" prelates whom Francis sacked early on as the Vatican's supreme court justice, blasted the "severity" of the papal crackdown.

Guinean Cardinal Robert Sarah, the Vatican's retired liturgy chief, responded with tweets quoting Benedict's original 2007 law to relax the restrictions that Francis had overturned. They were accompanied by a photo of Benedict wearing the red cape that Francis had eschewed the night of his election.

A year earlier, Sarah orchestrated a media firestorm by persuading Benedict to co-author a book reaffirming priestly celibacy at a time when Francis was considering ordaining married men to address a clergy shortage in the Amazon.

The book, and the prospect of a retired pope trying to influence a reigning one, created the nightmare scenario that canon lawyers and theologians had warned of in 2013, when Benedict decided to retain the white cassock of the papacy in retirement and call himself "Emeritus Pope," rather than revert to his birth name.

The scandal died down after Benedict removed himself as a co-author and Francis fired his secretary, Archbishop Georg Gaenswein, believed to have been behind it.

After Benedict died and Gaenswein penned his highly critical, tell-all memoir "Nothing But the Truth," Francis exiled him from the Vatican. Then, after a time in his native Germany, made him an ambassador.

After Burke joined a bigger group of cardinals questioning Francis' 2023 synod on the church's future, Francis cut him off financially.

Francis was more tolerant with another critic, the retired archbishop of Hong Kong, Cardinal Joseph Zen. He excoriated the pope for agreeing in 2018 to a deal with China over the nomination of bishops, accusing Francis of selling out China's underground Catholics who stayed loyal to the Holy See during decades of persecution.

Francis received Zen at the Vatican and later called him a "tender soul."

Francis won few friends with his frequent denunciations of "clericalism" — the idea that priests should be put on a pedestal. He made it a tradition to use his Christmas greeting to publicly shame Vatican bureaucrats, accusing them of being careerist, money-grubbing gossips with "spiritual Alzheimer's."

German Cardinal Gerhard Mueller complained that Francis treated Vatican Monsignors like "uneducated

children.”

A major U.S. critic emerges

Francis’ biggest conservative critic was the Vatican’s former ambassador to the U.S., Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò. In 2018, he said Francis had covered up accusations that then-Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, an American, had slept with his seminarians.

Viganò demanded Francis resign for allegedly rehabilitating McCarrick from sanctions imposed by Benedict. The furor faded after Francis defrocked McCarrick and Viganò was discredited with conspiracy theories about COVID-19. McCarrick died earlier this month.

In 2024, Francis excommunicated Viganò after finding him guilty of schism.

Papal biographer Austen Ivereigh said Francis dismantled much of the resistance. He lists the Amazonian synod as a defining positive moment of his pontificate -- not because of the incident with the statues but because the meeting emphasized his key pastoral priority of accompanying the faithful.

“The native peoples of Amazonia were right here in St. Peter’s Square, and Francis walked across to the synod with them,” Ivereigh said, recalling the feathered headdresses and Indigenous statues that were on display.

“The pastor among his people, walking together. And I thought, ‘That is him. That sums him up,’” he said.

## **A sequoia forest in Detroit? Plantings to improve air quality and mark Earth Day**

By COREY WILLIAMS Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — Arborists are turning vacant land on Detroit’s eastside into a small urban forest, not of elms, oaks and red maples indigenous to the city but giant sequoias, the world’s largest trees that can live for thousands of years.

The project on four lots will not only replace long-standing blight with majestic trees, but could also improve air quality and help preserve the trees that are native to California’s Sierra Nevada, where they are threatened by ever-hotter wildfires.

Detroit is the pilot city for the Giant Sequoia Filter Forest. The nonprofit Archangel Ancient Tree Archive is donating dozens of sequoia saplings that will be planted by staff and volunteers from Arboretum Detroit, another nonprofit, to mark Earth Day on April 22.

Co-founder David Milarch says Archangel also plans to plant sequoias in Los Angeles, Oakland, California, and London.

What are giant sequoias?

The massive conifers can grow to more than 300 feet (90 meters) tall with a more than 30-foot (9-meter) circumference at the base. They can live for more than 3,000 years.

“Here’s a tree that is bigger than your house when it’s mature, taller than your buildings, and lives longer than you can comprehend,” said Andrew “Birch” Kemp, Arboretum Detroit’s executive director.

The sequoias will eventually provide a full canopy that protects everything beneath, he said.

“It may be sad to call these .5- and 1-acre treescape forests,” Kemp said. “We are expanding on this and shading our neighborhood in the only way possible, planting lots of trees.”

Giant sequoias are resilient against disease and insects, and are usually well-adapted to fire. Thick bark protects their trunks and their canopies tend to be too high for flames to reach. But climate change is making the big trees more vulnerable to wildfires out West, Kemp said.

“The fires are getting so hot that it’s even threatening them,” he said.

Descendants of Stagg and Waterfall

Archangel, based in Copemish, Michigan, preserves the genetics of old-growth trees for research and reforestation.

The sequoia saplings destined for Detroit are clones of two giants known as Stagg — the world’s fifth-largest tree — and Waterfall, of the Alder Creek grove, about 150 miles (240 kilometers) north of Los Angeles.

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In 2010, Archangel began gathering cones and climbers scaled high into the trees to gather new-growth clippings from which they were able to develop and grow saplings.

A decade later, a wildfire burned through the grove. Waterfall was destroyed but Stagg survived. They will both live on in the Motor City.

Why Detroit?

Sequoias need space, and metropolitan Detroit has plenty of it.

In the 1950s, 1.8 million people called Detroit home, but the city's population has since shrunk to about one-third of that number. Tens of thousands of homes were left empty and neglected.

While the city has demolished at least 24,000 vacant structures since it emerged from bankruptcy in 2014, thousands of empty lots remain. Kemp estimates that only about 10-15% of the original houses remain in the neighborhood where the sequoias will grow.

"There's not another urban area I know of that has the kind of potential that we do to reforest," he said. "We could all live in shady, fresh air beauty. It's like no reason we can't be the greenest city in the world."

Within the last decade, 11 sequoias were planted on vacant lots owned by Arboretum Detroit and nine others were planted on private properties around the neighborhood. Each now reaches 12 to 15 feet (3.6 to 4.5 meters) tall. Arboretum Detroit has another 200 in its nursery. Kemp believes the trees will thrive in Detroit.

"They're safer here ... we don't have wildfires like (California). The soil stays pretty moist, even in the summer," he said. "They like to have that winter irrigation, so when the snow melts they can get a good drink."

How will the sequoias impact Detroit?

Caring for the sequoias will fall to future generations, so Milarch has instigated what he calls "tree school" to teach Detroit's youth how and why to look after the new trees.

"We empower our kids to teach them how to do this and give them the materials and the way to do this themselves," Milarch said. "They take ownership. They grow them in the classrooms and plant them around the schools. They know we're in environmental trouble."

Some of them may never have even walked in a forest, Kemp said.

"How can we expect children who have never seen a forest to care about deforestation on the other side of the world?" Kemp said. "It is our responsibility to offer them their birthright."

City residents are exposed to extreme air pollution and have high rates of asthma. The Detroit sequoias will grow near a heavily industrial area, a former incinerator and two interstates, he said.

Kemp's nonprofit has already planted about 650 trees — comprising around 80 species — in some 40 lots in the area. But he believes the sequoias will have the greatest impact.

"Because these trees grow so fast, so large and they're evergreen they'll do amazing work filtering the air here," Kemp said. "We live in pretty much a pollution hot spot. We're trying to combat that. We're trying to breathe clean air. We're trying to create shade. We're trying to soak up the stormwater, and I think sequoias — among all the trees we plant — may be the strongest, best candidates for that."

## Student loans in default to be referred to debt collection, Education Department says

By ANNIE MA AP Education Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Education Department will begin collection next month on student loans that are in default, including the garnishing of wages for potentially millions of borrowers, officials said Monday.

Currently, roughly 5.3 million borrowers are in default on their federal student loans.

The Trump administration's announcement marks an end to a period of leniency that began during the COVID-19 pandemic. No federal student loans have been referred for collection since March 2020, including those in default. Under President Joe Biden, the Education Department tried multiple times to give broad forgiveness of student loans, only to be stopped by courts.



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"American taxpayers will no longer be forced to serve as collateral for irresponsible student loan policies," Education Secretary Linda McMahon said.

Beginning May 5, the department will begin involuntary collection through the Treasury Department's offset program, which withholds government payments — including tax refunds, federal salaries and other benefits — from people with past-due debts to the government. After a 30-day notice, the department also will begin garnishing wages for borrowers in default.

The decision to send debt to collections drew criticism from advocates, who said borrowers had experienced whiplash and confusion with the changing student loan policies between the Biden and Trump administrations.

"This is cruel, unnecessary and will further fan the flames of economic chaos for working families across this country," said Mike Pierce, executive director of the Student Borrower Protection Center.

Already, many borrowers have been bracing for obligations coming due.

In 2020, President Donald Trump paused federal student loan payments and interest accrual as a temporary relief measure for student borrowers. The pause in payments was extended multiple times by the Biden administration through 2023, and a final grace period for loan repayments ended in October 2024. That meant tens of millions of Americans had to start making payments again.

Borrowers who don't make payments for nine months go into default, which is reported on their credit scores and can go to collections.

Along with the borrowers already in default, around another 4 million are 91 to 180 days late on their loan payments. Less than 40% of all borrowers are current on their student loans, department officials said.

Layoffs at the Federal Student Aid office at the Education Department have made it harder for students to get their questions answered, even if they wanted to pay their loans, said Kristin McGuire, executive director for Young Invincibles, a group that focuses on economic security for younger adults.

And questions are swirling about certain income-driven repayment programs after a February court ruling blocked some of the payment plans. Borrowers in the more lenient, Biden-era SAVE Plan were placed in forbearance, in which borrowers receive relief from payments but still accrue interest. The Education Department in February took down applications for income-driven repayment programs — which tie a monthly payment to a person's income level — only to bring them back online a month later.

"Things are really difficult to understand right now. Things are changing every day," McGuire said. "We can't assume that people are in default because they don't want to pay their loans. People are in default because they can't pay their loans and because they don't know how to pay their loans."

For borrowers in default, one step to avoid wage garnishment is to get into loan rehabilitation, said Betsy Mayotte, president of The Institute for Student Loan Advisors.

Borrowers must ask their loan servicer to be placed into such a program. Typically, servicers ask for proof of income and expenses to calculate a payment amount. Once a borrower has paid on time for nine months in a row, they are taken out of default, Mayotte said. A loan rehabilitation can only be done once.

Biden oversaw the cancellation of student loans for more than 5 million borrowers. Despite the Supreme Court's rejection of his signature proposal for broad relief, he waived more than \$183.6 billion in student loans through expanded forgiveness programs.

In her statement Monday, McMahon said Biden had gone too far.

"Going forward, the Department of Education, in conjunction with the Department of Treasury, will shepherd the student loan program responsibly and according to the law, which means helping borrowers return to repayment — both for the sake of their own financial health and our nation's economic outlook," she said.

## More Democratic lawmakers are visiting El Salvador on Abrego Garcia's behalf

By MARCOS ALEMAN and MATT BROWN Associated Press

SAN SALVADOR, El Salvador (AP) — Four House Democrats have traveled to El Salvador to call attention to the plight of a man the Trump administration deported to a Salvadoran prison and has refused to help return — even after the Supreme Court ruled that it was the government's duty to do so.

Reps. Yassamin Ansari of Arizona, Maxine Dexter of Oregon, Maxwell Frost of Florida and Robert Garcia of California arrived Sunday in the Central American nation to investigate the condition of Kilmar Abrego Garcia, who had lived in the United States for more than a decade. The Trump administration deported him, a move that administration officials have said in court filings was done in error.

But despite a Supreme Court ruling that ordered the Trump administration to help facilitate Abrego Garcia's return, the administration has said it has no power to bring him back, a position being scrutinized by federal courts as potentially in violation of judicial rulings.

In a news conference Monday in El Salvador's capital, the Democratic representatives and Abrego Garcia's lawyer said they were in El Salvador "demanding his safe return home." The group said they hoped to continue to pressure authorities for his release, and that their petition to meet with Abrego Garcia was denied.

"Part of what the Trump administration does is they do so much that they try to make sure people forget — forget about them breaking the law, forget about them completely ignoring the Supreme Court," Frost said. "We're not going to be the last members of Congress and senators that are here to make sure that he's released and that our country is following our laws."

The trip comes after one last week

The quartet's trip comes after Sen. Chris Van Hollen of Maryland traveled to El Salvador last week and met with Abrego Garcia and Salvadoran officials. Abrego Garcia lived in Maryland with his wife and three children, who are American citizens, before he was deported on March 15.

Abrego Garcia's protected legal status prohibited him from being deported to El Salvador. He was deported on one of three planes filled with migrants accused of being gang members.

Frost said the four representatives were in El Salvador to "build off the work" of Van Hollen and that they were inquiring about where Abrego Garcia was being held and under what conditions.

Chris Newman, a lawyer representing the deportee, added that his primary concerns was Abrego Garcia's access to counsel.

"We know nothing of Mr. Abrego Garcia's whereabouts since the staged photo op on Thursday with Senator Van Hollen," Newman said. "We demand to immediately know where he is and to have access to him."

The White House press office issued a statement Monday that said the past week "has shown Americans everything they need to know about Democrats' priorities."

The White House accused the representatives of "picking up their party's mantle of prioritizing a deported illegal immigrant MS-13 gang member over the Americans they represent."

Rep. Garcia said he and Frost sent a letter last week to House Oversight Committee Chairman James Comer, R-Ky., requesting that an official delegation go to El Salvador to investigate Abrego Garcia's condition and push for his return, but received no response. Ansari said more Democrats would be traveling to El Salvador in the coming days and weeks.

Justice Department lawyers said in court last week that they have no power to advance Abrego Garcia's return because he is in a foreign country's custody. Administration officials also claimed in public comments that Abrego Garcia was engaged in human trafficking and terrorism and therefore correctly deported. White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said that if Abrego Garcia were to return to the U.S., "he would immediately be deported again."

Van Hollen unsuccessfully lobbied the Salvadoran government for Abrego Garcia's return. He told NBC's "Meet the Press" on Sunday that the United States is facing a constitutional crisis if the Trump administration does not follow the Supreme Court's order to push to bring Abrego Garcia back.

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It's a warning Democrats are increasingly amplifying. Rather than debate President Donald Trump's hard-line immigration policy or the merits of the administration's invocation of national security to carry out deportations, Democratic lawmakers are zeroing in on the issue of due process, with some noting that the Supreme Court and lower court federal judges found Abrego Garcia was deported without a proper hearing.

Ansari said she finds it "extremely alarming" that Trump officials seem to have no regard for due process. "Even with all of the illegal actions we've seen over the last couple of months, I think this is the one that terrifies me the most when it comes to the future of our democracy," she said in an interview.

Similar concerns were echoed by Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor, who wrote in the court's ruling in Abrego Garcia's case: "The government's argument, moreover, implies 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."

Republicans have been going, too — for a different reason

Several House Republicans have visited El Salvador's Terrorism Confinement Center, the prison where Abrego Garcia is being held, and lauded the facility for what they view as El Salvador's tough-on-crime policies. Republican senators and governors have defended Abrego Garcia's detention as part of a broader crackdown on illegal immigration. But at least one Republican senator called his deportation a mistake.

"The administration won't admit it. But this was a screw-up," said Sen. John Kennedy, a Louisiana Republican, on NBC's "Meet the Press."

During a meeting with Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele in the Oval Office, Trump remarked that "home-grown" lawbreakers should be deported to prisons in the Central American country and urged Bukele to "build about five more places" like the notorious penitentiary where Abrego Garcia is being held.

Congressional Republicans have so far shown little interest in negotiating the dispute between the president and the judiciary. Democrats, who are in the minority in both chambers of Congress, have little leverage to pressure the White House. But Abrego Garcia's case has become both an alarming and galvanizing case inside the party.

Democrats "have the power to draw attention to this issue, to keep the pressure up," Ansari said. "That's why you know some of us are going, and so many members will be going. Because this is about the future of our democracy and the future of due process as American citizens."

## **Pope Francis led the church with humility and simplicity**

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — He was a pope who understood the power of a simple touch: caressing the deformed head of a man in St. Peter's Square, washing the feet of a Muslim prisoner, sinking to his hands and knees to implore South Sudan's rival leaders to make peace.

Pope Francis charmed the world with those poignant acts of love, humility and informality, starting with his first appearance as pontiff on the loggia of St. Peter's Basilica with a remarkably normal, "Buonasera" ("Good evening") to his cheering flock below.

Francis, the first Latin American pope, died Monday at age 88. It was just a day after Francis imparted what would become his final public blessing from that very same loggia on Easter. "Brothers and sisters, Happy Easter," he said, before embarking on what would become a final farewell to the faithful with a ride in his popemobile through St. Peter's Square.

The Vatican said Francis suffered a stroke which led to a coma and his heart to fail, as he recovered from a five-week hospitalization for double pneumonia. His funeral and burial at St. Mary Major basilica across town are expected over the weekend.

After that first rainy night of his election on March 13, 2013, Francis made even greater gestures, like bringing a dozen Syrian refugees home with him from a Greek refugee camp. Such actions won him wild popularity among progressives and signaled new priorities for the Vatican after the sometimes-troubled papacy of Pope Benedict XVI.

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But Francis soon invited troubles of his own and conservatives grew increasingly upset with his focus on the poor and the environment, and his outreach to LGBTQ+ Catholics, at the expense of preaching Catholic doctrine. Some accused him of heresy.

His greatest test came when he botched a notorious case of clergy sexual abuse in Chile in 2018. Suddenly, the scandal that festered under his predecessors erupted anew on his watch and was used by critics to try to weaken him.

And then the crowd-loving, globe-trotting pope of the peripheries had to navigate the unprecedented reality of leading a universal religion through the coronavirus pandemic from a locked-down Vatican City.

He implored the world to use COVID-19 as an opportunity to rethink the economic and political framework that he said had turned rich against poor and rendered the Earth an "immense pile of filth."

"We have realized that we are on the same boat, all of us fragile and disoriented ... all of us called to row together, each of us in need of comforting the other," Francis told an empty St. Peter's Square at the height of the outbreak in March 2020.

Shaking up the church without changing core doctrines

After Benedict's surprise resignation and retirement, Francis was elected on a mandate to reform the outdated Vatican bureaucracy and its finances, but he went much further in shaking up the church itself without ever changing its core doctrine.

When asked about a purportedly gay priest, he replied: "Who am I to judge?"

The comment sent a message of welcome to the LGBTQ+ community and those who felt shunned by a church that had stressed conditions, rules and sexual propriety over unconditional love.

"Being homosexual is not a crime," he told The Associated Press in 2023, calling for an end to civil laws that criminalize it. A year later, he approved church blessings for same-sex couples.

In a similar, merciful line, Francis changed the church's position on the death penalty, declaring it inadmissible in all circumstances. And he modified its stand by saying the mere possession of nuclear weapons, not just their use, was "immoral."

In other firsts, he approved an agreement with China over bishop nominations that had vexed the Vatican for a half-century, met with a Russian patriarch, and charted new relations with the Muslim world by visiting the Arabian Peninsula and Iraq.

South Sudan President Salva Kiir Mayardit said Monday that Francis would be remembered "as a beacon of hope, compassion and unity," particularly for his remarkable gesture in 2019 when the pope kissed Kiir's feet and those of his rival in begging them to make peace during a meeting at the Vatican.

Francis reaffirmed the all-male, celibate priesthood and strongly upheld the church's opposition to abortion, equating it to "hiring a hit man to solve a problem."

But he added women to important decision-making roles in the Vatican and formally allowed them to serve as lectors and acolytes in parishes. He allowed women to vote alongside bishops in periodic Vatican meetings, following longstanding complaints that women do most of the church's work but are barred from its top echelons.

Sister Nathalie Becquart, named by Francis to a high Vatican job, said his legacy was a church where men and women exist in a relationship of reciprocity and respect.

"It was about shifting a pattern of domination — from human being to the creation, from men to women — to a pattern of cooperation," said Becquart, the first woman to hold a voting position in a Vatican synod.

A refuge for 'everyone'

While Francis stopped short of allowing women to be ordained, the voting reform was part of a revolutionary change in his emphasis of what the Catholic Church should be: a refuge for everyone — "todos, todos, todos" ("everyone, everyone, everyone") — not just the privileged few. Migrants, the poor, prisoners and outcasts were at his table far more than presidents or CEOs.

"For Pope Francis, it was always to extend the arms of the church to embrace all people, not to exclude anyone," said Cardinal Kevin Farrell, whom Francis made camerlengo, the official taking charge after a pontiff's death.



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Francis demanded bishops apply mercy and charity to their flocks, pressed leaders to protect God's creation from climate disaster, and challenged countries to welcome those fleeing war, poverty and oppression.

After visiting Mexico in 2016, Francis said of then-U.S. presidential candidate Donald Trump that anyone building a wall to keep migrants out "is not Christian."

While progressives were thrilled by Francis' focus on the core of Jesus' message of mercy and welcome for marginalized souls, it troubled conservatives who feared he watered down Catholic teaching and threatened the very Christian identity of Europe and the U.S. A few cardinals openly challenged him.

Francis usually responded to conflict with his typical answer: silence.

He made it easier for Catholics to get a marriage annulment and allowed priests to absolve women who had abortions. He divided the church by opening debate on issues such as homosexuality and divorce, giving pastors wiggle room to discern how to accompany their flocks rather than handing them strict rules.

"I see clearly that the thing the church needs most today is the ability to heal wounds and to warm the hearts of the faithful," he told a Jesuit journal in 2013. "I see the church as a field hospital after battle."

A nod to St. Francis of Assisi

Francis lived in the Vatican hotel instead of the Apostolic Palace, wore his old orthotic shoes and not the red loafers of the papacy, and set an example to the clerical classes by using compact cars. It wasn't a gimmick.

If his election as the first Latin American and first Jesuit pope wasn't enough, Francis also was the first to name himself after St. Francis of Assisi, the 13th century friar known for personal simplicity, a message of peace, and care for society's outcasts and nature.

Francis sought out those who suffer: the unemployed and sick, the disabled and homeless, the elderly and imprisoned. Those encounters provided poignant images of his papacy, such as in 2013, when he embraced a man with neurofibromatosis, the condition associated with the "Elephant Man," Joseph Carey Merrick.

"We have always been marginalized, but Pope Francis always helped us," said Coqui Vargas, a transgender woman whose Roman community forged a unique relationship with Francis during the pandemic.

And he himself suffered: Part of his colon was removed in 2021 and he needed more surgery in 2023 to repair a painful hernia and remove intestinal scar tissue. By 2022, he regularly used a wheelchair and cane because of bad knees and bouts of bronchitis.

His priorities also informed his travel: His first trip outside Rome as pope was to the Italian island of Lampedusa, then the epicenter of Europe's migration crisis. He consistently visited poor countries where Christians were often-persecuted minorities, rather than centers of global Catholicism.

Francis' friend and fellow Argentine, Bishop Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo, said concern for the poor and disenfranchised formed the core of his pontificate, based on the Beatitudes -- the biblical blessings that Jesus delivered in the Sermon on the Mount for the meek, the merciful, the poor in spirit and others.

"Why are the Beatitudes the program of this pontificate? Because they were the basis of Jesus Christ's own program," Sánchez said.

Missteps on priestly sexual abuse

But over a year passed before Francis met with some of the church's most wounded souls -- survivors of priestly sexual abuse -- and victims' groups questioned whether he understood the scope of the problem.

Francis created a sex abuse commission to advise the church, but it later lost its influence and its recommendation for a tribunal to judge bishops who covered for predator priests went nowhere.

He made up for it with new legal provisions to hold the hierarchy accountable after he endured the greatest crisis of his papacy in 2018, when he discredited Chilean victims of abuse and stood by a controversial bishop linked to their abuser, Chile's most notorious pedophile. After Francis realized his error, he invited the victims to the Vatican for a personal mea culpa and had the leadership of the Chilean church resign en masse.

Another crisis erupted surrounding ex-Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, the retired archbishop of Washington and counselor to three popes.

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Francis actually had sidelined McCarrick after the church received an accusation he had molested a teenage altar boy in the 1970s. But Francis nevertheless was accused by the Vatican's onetime U.S. ambassador of having rehabilitated McCarrick early in his papacy.

Francis eventually defrocked McCarrick after the Vatican determined he sexually abused adults as well as minors.

The two popes

Francis' 2013 election was paved by Benedict XVI's decision to resign and retire -- the first in 600 years. It created the unprecedented reality of two popes living in the Vatican until Benedict's death on Dec. 31, 2022.

Francis didn't shy from that potentially uncomfortable shadow but embraced Benedict as an elder statesman and adviser whom he coaxed out of his cloistered retirement to participate in the public life of the church.

"It's like having your grandfather in the house, a wise grandfather," Francis said.

Francis praised Benedict's decision to retire, saying he "opened the door" for others. That fueled speculation that he, too, might retire, but after Benedict's death, he made clear the papacy is generally a job for life.

Francis' looser liturgical style and pastoral priorities made clear he and the German-born theologian came from very different religious traditions, and Francis overturned several of Benedict's decisions.

He made sure that Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero, a hero to the Latin American liberation theology movement, was canonized after his case languished under Benedict over concerns about the credo's Marxist bent.

In a controversial move, Francis reimposed restrictions on celebrating the Latin Mass that Benedict had relaxed, arguing the spread of the Tridentine Rite was divisive. That riled Francis' traditionalist critics and opened what became sustained conflict between right-wing Catholics, particularly in the U.S., and the Argentine pope.

Conservatives 'don't like this pope'

By then, conservatives had turned away from Francis after he opened debate on allowing remarried Catholics to receive the sacraments if they didn't get an annulment -- a church ruling that their first marriage was invalid.

"We don't like this pope," headlined Italy's conservative daily *Il Foglio* a few months into his papacy, reflecting the unease of the small but vocal traditionalist movement that was coddled under Benedict.

Those same critics amplified their complaints after Francis' approved church blessings for same-sex couples, and an accord with China over nominating bishops. The details were never released, but conservative critics bashed it as a sellout to communist China, while the Vatican defended it as the best deal it could get.

U.S. Cardinal Raymond Burke, a figurehead in the anti-Francis opposition, said the church had become "like a ship without a rudder."

Burke waged his campaign for years, starting when Francis fired him as the Vatican's supreme court justice and culminating with his opposition to Francis' 2023 synod on the church's future.

He twice joined conservative cardinals in asking Francis to explain himself on doctrine issues where the pope had showed a more progressive bent, including on same-sex blessings and his outreach to divorced and civilly remarried Catholics.

Francis eventually sanctioned Burke financially, accusing him of sowing "disunity." It was one of several moves to shift power away from doctrinaire leaders to more pastoral ones.

Reprimanding bureaucrats with 'spiritual Alzheimer's'

Francis insisted his bishops and cardinals imbue themselves with the "odor of their flock" and minister to the faithful. When they didn't, he expressed his displeasure.

His 2014 Christmas address to the Vatican Curia was one of the greatest public reprimands of bureaucrats: Standing in the marbled Sala Clementina of the Apostolic Palace, Francis listed 15 ailments he said can afflict his closest collaborators, including "spiritual Alzheimer's," lusting for power and the "terrorism

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of gossip."

Francis oversaw reforms of the scandal-marred Vatican bank, and took bold steps to wrestle bureaucrats into financial line, limiting their compensation and ability to receive gifts or award public contracts.

He authorized Vatican police to raid his own secretariat of state and the Vatican's financial watchdog agency after suspicions were raised about the secretariat's 350 million euro investment in a London real estate venture. After a 2 1/2-year trial, the tribunal convicted a once-powerful cardinal, Angelo Becciu, of embezzlement and returned mixed verdicts to nine others, acquitting one.

The trial, though, became a reputational boomerang, showing deficiencies in the Vatican's legal system, turf battles among monsignors and the ways the pope had intervened in the case.

While earning praise for trying to turn Vatican finances around, Francis angered U.S. conservatives for his excoriation of global markets favoring the rich over the poor.

Economic justice was an important theme for Francis, saying in his first meeting with journalists that he wanted a "poor church that is for the poor."

His first major teaching document, "The Joy of the Gospel," denounced trickle-down economics as unproven and naive, based on a mentality "where the powerful feed upon the powerless" with no regard for ethics, the environment or even God.

"Money must serve, not rule!" he said.

He elaborated on that in his major eco-encyclical "Praised Be," denouncing the "structurally perverse" global economic system that he said exploited the poor and risked turning Earth into "an immense pile of filth."

A childhood of prayer, soccer and opera

Jorge Mario Bergoglio was born Dec. 17, 1936, in Buenos Aires, the eldest of five children of Italian immigrants.

He credited his grandmother Rosa with teaching him how to pray. Even as pope, he carried in his worn prayer book a Catholic creed she composed. Weekends in the Bergoglio home were spent listening to opera on the radio, going to Mass and attending matches of the family's beloved San Lorenzo soccer club.

His love of soccer continued into adulthood, and he amassed a huge collection of jerseys as pope from visitors.

He said he received his religious calling at 17 while going to confession at his parish church, San Jose de Flores. "Something strange happened to me in that confession," he recounted in a 2010 authorized biography. "I don't know what it was, but it changed my life. ... I realized that they were waiting for me."

He entered the diocesan seminary and in 1958 switched to the Jesuit order, attracted to its missionary tradition and militancy, being on "the front lines of the church, grounded in obedience and discipline."

Around this time, he suffered severe pneumonia and the upper part of his right lung was removed. His frail health prevented his becoming a missionary as he had hoped, and his less-than-robust lung capacity was perhaps responsible for his whisper of a voice and reluctance to sing at Mass.

On Dec. 13, 1969, he was ordained a priest, and began teaching. In 1973, he became head of the Jesuits in Argentina, an appointment he later acknowledged was "crazy" at age 36. "My authoritarian and quick manner of making decisions led me to have serious problems and to be accused of being ultraconservative," he said.

A clergyman amid dictatorship

His six-year tenure as provincial coincided with the start of Argentina's 1976-83 dictatorship, when the military launched a murderous campaign against left-wing guerrillas and other regime opponents.

Like many, Bergoglio didn't outwardly confront the junta, and he was accused of effectively allowing two slum priests to be kidnapped and tortured by not publicly endorsing their work. Bergoglio refused to counter that version for decades.

Only in a 2010 authorized biography did he finally recount his extraordinary, behind-the-scene effort to save them, persuading the family priest of feared dictator Jorge Videla to call in sick so that he could say Mass instead. Once inside the junta leader's home, Bergoglio appealed for mercy. Both priests were

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eventually released, two of the few surviving prisoners.

In 1986, Bergoglio went to Germany to research a never-finished thesis. Upon returning to Argentina, he essentially went into internal exile within the Jesuits, stationed in Cordoba during a period he called a time of "great interior crisis."

Out of favor with the more progressive leadership of Argentina's Jesuits, Bergoglio was eventually rescued from obscurity by St. John Paul II, who in 1992 named him an auxiliary bishop of Buenos Aires. Six years later, he became archbishop, and then cardinal in 2001.

A humble man who denied himself the luxuries that previous archbishops enjoyed, Bergoglio rode the bus, cooked his own meals and regularly visited slums.

He came close to becoming pope in 2005 when Benedict was elected, gaining the second-most votes in several rounds of balloting before bowing out.

After becoming pope, accounts began emerging more widely of the many priests, seminarians and dissidents he saved in the "dirty war," letting them stay incognito at the seminary or helping them escape the country.

"He made me wonder if he really understood the trouble he was getting into. If they grabbed us together, they would have marched us both off," onetime radical Gonzalo Mosca told AP in 2014, recounting how Bergoglio let him stay at the seminary and bought his plane ticket to Brazil.

It was a gesture typical of the pope.

## **Wife of former US Sen. Bob Menendez convicted in bribery scheme**

By LARRY NEUMEISTER and MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Nadine Menendez, the wife of former U.S. Sen. Bob Menendez, was convicted Monday of teaming up with her husband to accept bribes of cash, gold bars and a luxury car from three New Jersey men looking for help with their business dealings or legal troubles.

The jury returned a verdict of guilty on all counts in the same federal courthouse in Manhattan where a different jury convicted Bob Menendez of many of the same charges last year. The Democrat is supposed to begin serving an 11-year prison term in June.

Nadine Menendez, who stood but did not appear to react as the verdict was delivered by the jury foreperson, was scheduled to be sentenced on June 12, six days after her husband is expected to report to prison.

Outside the courthouse, she wore a pink mask as she stood next to her lawyer, Barry Coburn, said he was "devastated by the verdict."

"We fought hard and it hurts," he said. "This is a very rough day for us."

The evidence shown to jurors over a three-week trial followed the timeline of the whirlwind romance between the couple that began in early 2018 and continued after criminal charges were brought against them in September 2023. Repeatedly during the trial, prosecutors said they were "partners in crime."

During a 2022 raid on the couple's Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, home, FBI agents found nearly \$150,000 worth of gold bars and \$480,000 in cash stuffed in boots, shoeboxes and jackets. In the garage was a Mercedes-Benz convertible, also an alleged bribe.

Both Nadine and Bob Menendez said they are innocent and never took bribes.

Initially, they were to be tried together, along with the three businessmen, but Nadine Menendez's trial was postponed a year ago after she was diagnosed with breast cancer and underwent surgery.

Bob Menendez, 71, resigned from the Senate last August following his conviction. Before the charges were brought he had been chairman of the powerful Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Prosecutors accused Nadine Menendez of starting to facilitating bribes to the senator around the time that they began dating, before they married in the fall of 2020.

At the time, she was in danger of losing her home in Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, after missing nearly \$20,000 in mortgage payments, trial testimony showed. A longtime friend, Wael Hana, provided cash to save the home — and prosecutors said that in return, the senator began helping Hana preserve a business monopoly he had arranged with the Egyptian government to certify that imported meat met religious



requirements.

Nadine Menendez also needed a new car after her old one was destroyed when she struck and killed a man crossing a street. (She did not face charges in the crash). Prosecutors said a businessman, Jose Uribe, gave her a Mercedes-Benz, and in return Bob Menendez used his clout to pressure the New Jersey attorney general's office to stop investigating some of Uribe's associates.

Prosecutor said more cash and gold bribes were paid to the couple by Fred Daibes, a prominent real estate developer who prosecutors said wanted the senator to protect him from a criminal case he was facing in New Jersey. Prosecutors said Bob Menendez also helped Daibes secure a \$95 million investment from a Qatari investment fund.

Nadine Menendez, 58, was described by prosecutors at her trial as crucial to the scheme, enabling the senator to communicate with the businessmen and Egyptian government officials.

Besides his conviction on bribery charges, Bob Menendez also was convicted of acting as an agent for the Egyptian government. Prosecutors said that in return for some of the bribes, he ghostwrote a letter for Egyptian officials to give to his fellow senators to calm their concerns about human rights abuses and encourage them to lift a hold on \$300 million in military aid.

Coburn had argued during his closing arguments to the jury that the evidence was insufficient for a conviction.

"These things we're talking about here are unproven," he said.

He said the dealings the senator had with the businessmen were just what a politician is supposed to do for his constituents.

In a rebuttal argument, Assistant U.S. Attorney Daniel Richenthal urged the jury to convict Nadine Menendez, calling the evidence against her "consistent and overwhelming."

Uribe pleaded guilty and testified against the others. Hana and Dabies were convicted along with the senator. Hana has been sentenced to eight years in prison while Daibes got seven years behind bars.

Acting U.S. Attorney Matthew Podolsky said in a statement that the verdict "sends the clear message that the power of government officials may not be put up for sale and that all those who facilitate corruption will be held accountable for their actions."

## **Pope Francis, first Latin American pontiff who ministered with a charming, humble style, dies at 88**

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Pope Francis, history's first Latin American pontiff who charmed the world with his humble style and concern for the poor but alienated conservatives with critiques of capitalism and climate change, died Monday. He was 88.

The Vatican said Francis died of a stroke that put him into a coma and led his heart to fail.

Bells tolled in Catholic churches from his native Argentina to the Philippines and across Rome as news spread around the world.

"At 7:35 this morning, the Bishop of Rome, Francis, returned to the home of the Father. His entire life was dedicated to the service of the Lord and of his Church," Cardinal Kevin Farrell said from the chapel of the Domus Santa Marta, where Francis lived.

Francis, who suffered from chronic lung disease and had part of one lung removed as a young man, was admitted to Gemelli hospital on Feb. 14, 2025, for a respiratory crisis that developed into double pneumonia. He spent 38 days there, the longest hospitalization of his 12-year papacy.

He made his last public appearance on Easter Sunday — a day before his death — to bless thousands of people in St. Peter's Square, drawing wild cheers and applause. Beforehand, he met U.S. Vice President JD Vance.

Francis performed the blessing from the same loggia where he was introduced on March 13, 2013, as the 266th pope.

From his first greeting that night — a remarkably normal "Buonasera" ("Good evening") — to his embrace

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of refugees and the downtrodden, Francis signaled a very different tone for the papacy, stressing humility over hubris for a Catholic Church beset by scandal and accusations of indifference.

The Argentine-born Jorge Mario Bergoglio brought a breath of fresh air into a 2,000-year-old institution that had seen its influence wane during the troubled tenure of Pope Benedict XVI, whose surprise resignation led to Francis' election.

But Francis soon invited troubles of his own, and conservatives grew increasingly upset with his progressive bent, outreach to LGBTQ+ Catholics and crackdown on traditionalists. His greatest test came in 2018 when he botched a notorious case of clergy sexual abuse in Chile, and the scandal that festered under his predecessors erupted anew.

And then Francis, the crowd-loving, globe-trotting pope of the peripheries, navigated the unprecedented reality of leading a universal religion through the coronavirus pandemic from a locked-down Vatican City.

"We have realized that we are on the same boat, all of us fragile and disoriented," Francis told an empty St. Peter's Square in March 2020. Calling for a rethink of the global economic framework, he said the pandemic showed the need for "all of us to row together, each of us in need of comforting the other."

World leaders on Monday extolled Francis' commitment to the marginalized. French President Emmanuel Macron, whose country is largely Catholic, wrote on X: "From Buenos Aires to Rome, Pope Francis wanted the church to bring joy and hope to the poorest. ... May this hope forever outlast him."

Flags flew at half-staff in Italy, and crowds gathered in St. Peter's Square. When the great bells of St. Peter's Basilica began tolling, tourists stopped in their tracks to record the moment on their phones.

Johann Xavier, who traveled from Australia, hoped to see the pope during his visit. "But then we heard about it when we came in here. It pretty much devastated all of us," he said.

Francis' death sets off a weeklong process of allowing the faithful to pay their final respects, first for Vatican officials in the Santa Marta chapel and then in St. Peter's for the general public, followed by a funeral and a conclave to elect a new pope.

As the sun was setting on Monday evening, the Vatican held a Rosary prayer in St. Peter's Square in its first public commemoration.

In his final will, Francis confirmed he will be buried in St. Mary Major Basilica in a simple underground tomb with only "Franciscus" written on it. The basilica, which sits outside the Vatican, is home to Francis' favorite icon of the Virgin Mary, to whom Francis was particularly devoted.

## Reforming the Vatican

Francis was elected on a mandate to reform the Vatican bureaucracy and finances but went further in shaking up the church without changing its core doctrine. "Who am I to judge?" he replied when asked about a purportedly gay priest.

The comment sent a message of welcome to the LGBTQ+ community and those who felt shunned by a church that had stressed sexual propriety over unconditional love. "Being homosexual is not a crime," he told The Associated Press in 2023, urging an end to civil laws that criminalize it.

Stressing mercy, Francis changed the church's position on the death penalty, calling it inadmissible in all circumstances. He also declared the possession of nuclear weapons, not just their use, was "immoral."

In other firsts, he approved an agreement with China over bishop nominations that had vexed the Vatican for decades, met the Russian patriarch and charted new relations with the Muslim world by visiting the Arabian Peninsula and Iraq.

He reaffirmed the all-male, celibate priesthood and upheld the church's opposition to abortion, equating it to "hiring a hit man to solve a problem."

## Roles for women

But he added women to important decision-making roles and allowed them to serve as lectors and acolytes in parishes. He let women vote alongside bishops in periodic Vatican meetings, following long-standing complaints that women do much of the church's work but are barred from power.

Sister Nathalie Becquart, whom Francis named to one of the highest Vatican jobs, said his legacy was a vision of a church where men and women existed in a relationship of reciprocity and respect.

"It was about shifting a pattern of domination — from human being to the creation, from men to women

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— to a pattern of cooperation,” said Becquart, the first woman to hold a voting position in a Vatican synod. Still, a note of criticism came Monday from the Women’s Ordination Conference, which had been frustrated by Francis’ unwillingness to push for the ordination of women.

“This made him a complicated, frustrating, and sometimes heart-breaking figure for many women,” the statement said.

The church as refuge

While Francis did not allow women to be ordained, the voting reform was part of a revolutionary change in emphasizing what the church should be: a refuge for everyone — “todos, todos, todos” (“everyone, everyone, everyone”). Migrants, the poor, prisoners and outcasts were invited to his table far more than presidents or powerful CEOs.

“For Pope Francis, (the goal) was always to extend the arms of the church to embrace all people, not to exclude anyone,” said Farrell, the Vatican camerlengo, who takes charge after a pontiff’s death.

Francis demanded his bishops apply mercy and charity to their flocks, pressed the world to protect God’s creation from climate disaster, and challenged countries to welcome those fleeing war, poverty and oppression.

After visiting Mexico in 2016, Francis said of then-U.S. presidential candidate Donald Trump that anyone building a wall to keep migrants out “is not Christian.”

While progressives were thrilled with Francis’ radical focus on Jesus’ message of mercy and inclusion, it troubled conservatives who feared he watered down Catholic teaching and threatened the very Christian identity of the West. Some even called him a heretic.

A few cardinals openly challenged him. Francis usually responded with his typical answer to conflict: silence.

He made it easier for married Catholics to get an annulment, allowed priests to absolve women who had had abortions and decreed that priests could bless same-sex couples. He opened debate on issues like homosexuality and divorce, giving pastors wiggle room to discern how to accompany their flocks, rather than handing them strict rules to apply.

St. Francis of Assisi as a model

Francis lived in the Vatican hotel instead of the Apostolic Palace, wore his old orthotic shoes and not the red loafers of the papacy, and rode in compact cars. It wasn’t a gimmick.

“I see clearly that the thing the church needs most today is the ability to heal wounds and to warm the hearts of the faithful,” he told a Jesuit journal in 2013. “I see the church as a field hospital after battle.”

If becoming the first Latin American and first Jesuit pope wasn’t enough, Francis was also the first to name himself after St. Francis of Assisi, the 13th century friar known for personal simplicity and care for society’s outcasts.

Francis formally apologized to Indigenous peoples for the crimes of the church from colonial times onward. And he went to society’s fringes to minister with mercy: caressing the deformed head of a man in St. Peter’s Square, kissing the tattoo of a Holocaust survivor, or inviting Argentina’s garbage scavengers to join him onstage in Rio de Janeiro.

“We have always been marginalized, but Pope Francis always helped us,” said Coqui Vargas, a transgender woman whose Roman community forged a unique relationship with Francis.

His first trip as pope was to the Italian island of Lampedusa, then the epicenter of Europe’s migration crisis. He consistently chose to visit poor countries where Christians were often persecuted minorities, rather than the centers of global Catholicism.

Friend and fellow Argentine, Bishop Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo, said his concern was based on the Beatitudes — the eight blessings Jesus delivered in the Sermon on the Mount for the meek, the merciful, the poor in spirit and others.

“Why are the Beatitudes the program of this pontificate? Because they were the basis of Jesus Christ’s own program,” Sánchez said.

Missteps on sexual abuse scandal

But more than a year passed before Francis met with survivors of priestly sexual abuse, and victims’

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groups initially questioned whether he really understood the scope of the problem.

Francis did create a sex abuse commission to advise the church on best practices, but it lost influence after a few years and its recommendation of a tribunal to judge bishops who covered up for predator priests went nowhere.

And then came the greatest crisis of his papacy, when he discredited Chilean abuse victims in 2018 and stood by a controversial bishop linked to their abuser. Realizing his error, Francis invited the victims to the Vatican for a personal mea culpa and summoned the leadership of the Chilean church to resign en masse.

As that crisis concluded, a new one erupted over ex-Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, the retired archbishop of Washington and a counselor to three popes.

Francis had actually moved swiftly to sideline McCarrick amid an accusation he had molested a teenage altar boy in the 1970s. But Francis nevertheless was accused by the Vatican's one-time U.S. ambassador of having rehabilitated McCarrick early in his papacy.

Francis eventually defrocked McCarrick after a Vatican investigation determined he sexually abused adults as well as minors. He changed church law to remove the pontifical secret surrounding abuse cases and enacted procedures to investigate bishops who abused or covered for their pedophile priests, seeking to end impunity for the hierarchy.

"He sincerely wanted to do something and he transmitted that," said Juan Carlos Cruz, a Chilean abuse survivor Francis discredited who later developed a close friendship with the pontiff.

But groups that advocated for more action on sexual abuse expressed disappointment in Francis' legacy.

"Pope Francis was a beacon of hope to many of the world's most desperate and marginalized people. But what we most needed from this pope was justice for the Church's own wounded, the children and adults sexually abused by Catholic clergy," said Anne Barrett Doyle, co-director of the U.S.-based group BishopAccountability.

A change from Benedict

The road to Francis' 2013 election was paved by Pope Benedict XVI's decision to resign and retire — the first in 600 years.

Francis didn't shy from Benedict's potentially uncomfortable shadow. Francis embraced him as an elder statesman and adviser, coaxing him out of his cloistered retirement to participate in the public life of the church until Benedict's death in 2022.

"It's like having your grandfather in the house, a wise grandfather," Francis said.

Francis' looser liturgical style and pastoral priorities made clear he and the German-born theologian came from very different religious traditions, and Francis directly overturned several decisions of his predecessor.

He made sure Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero, a hero to the liberation theology movement in Latin America, was canonized after his case languished under Benedict over concerns about the credo's Marxist bent.

Francis reimposed restrictions on celebrating the old Latin Mass that Benedict had relaxed, arguing it was divisive. The move riled Francis' traditionalist critics and opened sustained conflict with right-wing Catholics, particularly in the U.S.

Conservatives oppose Francis

By then, conservatives had already turned away from Francis, betrayed after he opened debate on allowing remarried Catholics to receive the sacraments if they didn't get an annulment — a church ruling that their first marriage was invalid.

"We don't like this pope," headlined Italy's conservative daily *Il Foglio* a few months into the papacy, reflecting the unease of the small but vocal traditionalist Catholic movement.

Those same critics amplified their complaints after Francis approved church blessings for same-sex couples, and a controversial accord with China over nominating bishops.

Its details were never released, but conservative critics bashed it as a sellout to communist China, while the Vatican defended it as the best deal it could get.

U.S. Cardinal Raymond Burke, a figurehead in the anti-Francis opposition, said the church had become



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"like a ship without a rudder."

Burke waged his opposition campaign for years, starting when Francis fired him as the Vatican's supreme court justice and culminating with his vocal opposition to Francis' 2023 synod on the church's future.

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The trial, though, proved to be a reputational boomerang for the Holy See, showing deficiencies in the Vatican's legal system, unseemly turf battles among monsignors, and how the pope had intervened on behalf of prosecutors.

While earning praise for trying to turn the Vatican's finances around, Francis angered U.S. conservatives for his frequent excoriation of the global financial market.

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In his first major teaching document, "The Joy of the Gospel," Francis denounced trickle-down economic theories as unproven and naive.

"Money must serve, not rule!" he said in urging political reforms.

Some U.S. conservatives branded Francis a Marxist. He jabbed back by saying he had many friends who were Marxists.

Soccer, opera and prayer

Born Dec. 17, 1936, in Buenos Aires, Jorge Mario Bergoglio was the eldest of five children of Italian immigrants.

He credited his devout grandmother Rosa with teaching him how to pray. Weekends were spent listening to opera on the radio, going to Mass and attending matches of the family's beloved San Lorenzo soccer club. As pope, his love of soccer brought him a huge collection of jerseys from visitors.

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Life under Argentina's dictatorship

His six-year tenure as the head of the order in Argentina coincided with the country's murderous 1976-83 dictatorship, when the military launched a campaign against left-wing guerrillas and other regime opponents.

Bergoglio didn't publicly confront the junta and was accused of effectively allowing two slum priests to be kidnapped and tortured by not publicly endorsing their work.

He refused for decades to counter that version of events. Only in a 2010 authorized biography did he

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finally recount the lengths he used to save them, persuading the family priest of feared dictator Jorge Videla to call in sick so he could celebrate Mass instead. Once in the junta leader's home, Bergoglio privately appealed for mercy. Both priests were eventually released, among the few to have survived prison.

As pope, accounts began to emerge of the many people — priests, seminarians and political dissidents —whom Bergoglio actually saved during the "dirty war," letting them stay incognito at the seminary or helping them escape the country.

Bergoglio went to Germany in 1986 to research a never-finished thesis. Returning to Argentina, he was stationed in Cordoba during a period he described as a time of "great interior crisis." Out of favor with more progressive Jesuit leaders, he was eventually rescued from obscurity in 1992 by St. John Paul II, who named him an auxiliary bishop of Buenos Aires. He became archbishop six years later, and was made a cardinal in 2001.

He came close to becoming pope in 2005 when Benedict was elected, gaining the second-most votes in several rounds before bowing out.

## **Advanced cancers returned to prepandemic levels, according to a reassuring report**

By CARLA K. JOHNSON AP Medical Writer

Many Americans were forced to postpone cancer screenings — colonoscopies, mammograms and lung scans — for several months in 2020 as COVID-19 overwhelmed doctors and hospitals.

But that delay in screening isn't making a huge impact on cancer statistics, at least none that can be seen yet by experts who track the data.

Cancer death rates continue to decline, and there weren't huge shifts in late diagnoses, according to a new report published Monday in the journal *Cancer*. It's the broadest-yet analysis of the pandemic's effect on U.S. cancer data.

In 2020, as the pandemic began, a greater share of U.S. cancers were caught at later stages, when they're harder to treat. But in 2021, these worrisome diagnoses returned to prepandemic levels for most types of cancer.

"It is very reassuring," said lead author Recinda Sherman of the North American Association of Central Cancer Registries. "So far, we haven't seen an excess of late-stage diagnoses," which makes it unlikely that there will be higher cancer death rates tied to the pandemic.

Similarly, the number of new cancer cases dropped in 2020, but then returned to prepandemic levels by 2021. The size of the 2020 decline in new cancers diagnosed was similar across states, despite variations in COVID-19 policy restrictions. The researchers note that human behavior and local hospital policies played more of a role than state policy restrictions.

Late-stage diagnoses of cervical cancer and prostate cancer did increase in 2021, but the shifts weren't large. The data analysis goes only through 2021, so it's not the final word.

"We didn't see any notable shifts," Sherman said. "So it's really unlikely that people with aggressive disease were not diagnosed during that time period."

The report was produced by the North American Association of Central Cancer Registries, the National Cancer Institute, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Cancer Society.

## **How stocks, bonds and other markets have fared so far in 2025**

By WYATTE GRANTHAM-PHILIPS and DAMIAN J. TROISE AP Business Writers

NEW YORK (AP) — Global financial markets have been turned upside down this year by President Donald Trump's burgeoning trade war. Markets are not in full panic, but the double-digit declines in major U.S. stock indexes are testing nerves.

U.S. markets had been on a two-year tear coming into 2025, though many believed that stock prices had become overinflated. Trump's trade war pushed that sentiment into hyperdrive. The S&P 500 has tumbled

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more than 12%, and U.S. markets are being outpaced in Europe, Asia, and just about everywhere else.

Trading in traditional "safe havens" like U.S. Treasuries and the dollar has become erratic and unpredictable. On Monday, the dollar struck a three-year low and U.S. Treasury yields have been soaring. Typically, yields would fall as investors seek a safe place to park their money. U.S. Treasuries no longer appear to provide the shelter they once did.

Only gold, a commodity traded internationally, has maintained its reputation as a safe zone. The price of gold is hitting one record high after another.

Here's a roundup of what is happening in various segments of the financial market:

## Stocks

U.S. stocks have been losing ground in a sharp reversal after two years of stellar gains.

The S&P 500 index, which is considered a benchmark for the broader market's health, is down 12.3% in 2025. It gained more than 20% in both 2023 and 2024.

The benchmark index is already in "correction," having fallen more than 10% from the record it set in February. There have been only five weeks in which it's ended in positive territory this year and with Monday's decline it's moving closer to bear market territory, or a 20% drop from recent highs.

It's worse on the growth-focused Nasdaq composite, which has plunged nearly 18 %.

Overseas markets have largely performed much better than their U.S. counterparts.

## Bonds

Treasuries, typically considered a less risky area of the market, have been volatile throughout the year.

The 10-year Treasury, which influences mortgage rates and other loans, was as high as 4.80% in January but then fell until Trump announced the broad details of his tariff policy in early April. Yields then began to spike this month. The recent jump in bond yields, which happens when bond prices fall, reflects rising anxiety about inflation and a potential recession.

Treasury bonds are essentially IOUs from the U.S. government and they're how Washington pays its bills. Bond prices typically move in the opposite direction of stock prices, but prices for both have fallen in tandem. That raises more significant concerns, namely a loss of faith in the U.S. as a safe place to invest.

## Gold

In all of the economic uncertainty, gold is soaring — setting record after record in 2025.

New York spot gold hit another all-time high Thursday, closing at about \$3,343 per Troy ounce — the standard for measuring precious metals — per FactSet. The price is up nearly 27% this year.

Gold futures rose to more than \$3,432 Monday.

Interest in gold spikes in times of uncertainty as investors seek a safe place for their money, although there can still be some volatility. The price of spot gold fell for three straight trading days following Trump's sweeping "Liberation Day" announcement on April 2, for example, but soon rebounded overall.

## Foreign Exchange

The U.S. dollar, the world's reserve currency, is falling under the weight of uncertainty over tariffs, inflation and the direction of the U.S. economy.

The U.S. dollar is down a steep 9% for the year when measured against a basket of other currencies, including the euro, Japanese yen, Canadian Dollar and Swiss franc.

The dollar began to erode almost immediately in 2025, but those losses have accelerated over the past two months. A weakened dollar means it is more difficult for the U.S. government, businesses and consumers to borrow money at lower rates. It also means less purchasing power for U.S. consumers and the potential for stunted economic growth.

## Oil

There is good news and bad news about energy prices. The average price for a gallon of gasoline in the U.S. on Monday was \$3.15, down sharply from \$3.67 at this time last year. That's the good news.

The bad news is that energy prices fall when people start anticipating an economic slowdown. Factories produce less, families call off vacations and businesses cut travel expenses.

Oil prices hit a four-year low this month with anxiety over the impact of tariffs on global economic growth

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sinking in.

West Texas Intermediate crude, the U.S. benchmark, stood at around \$62.40 per barrel Monday. That's down nearly 14% year to date. And Brent crude, the European standard, was just above \$66 — down nearly 13% since the start of 2025.

Economists are warning that the steep tariffs Trump is pursuing could cause a recession, which could carry significant implications for the supply chain and jobs in the energy sector.

Bitcoin

Bitcoin has continued to undulate.

The world's largest cryptocurrency has been on a rollercoaster since the start of the year — with the volatile asset climbing to more than \$109,000 ahead of Trump's inauguration in January, only to dip under \$75,000 amid wider market sell-offs this month. As of midday Monday, bitcoin's going price was above \$87,000, per CoinMarketCap.

That's more than \$6,000 lower than what bitcoin was trading at the start of 2025 — but still significantly higher than in recent years. At this time last year, bitcoin traded around \$65,000. And in April 2023, months after the November 2022 collapse of FTX crushed crypto, the digital asset went for under \$30,000.

Trump, once a crypto skeptic, became a major promoter of the industry throughout his campaign — and last month, he signed an executive order establishing a government reserve of bitcoin.

## **Wall Street and the dollar tumble as investors retreat further from the United States**

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Wall Street weakened Monday as investors worldwide get more skeptical about U.S. investments because of President Donald Trump's trade war and his criticism of the Federal Reserve, which are shaking the traditional order.

The S&P 500 sank 2.4% in another wipeout. That yanked the index that's at the center of many 401(k) accounts 16% below its record set two months ago.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 971 points, or 2.5%, while losses for Tesla and Nvidia helped drag the Nasdaq composite down 2.6%.

Perhaps more worryingly, U.S. government bonds and the value of the U.S. dollar also sank as prices retreated across U.S. markets. It's an unusual move because Treasuries and the dollar have historically strengthened during episodes of nervousness. This time around, though, it's policies directly from Washington that are causing the fear and potentially weakening their reputations as some of the world's safest investments.

Trump continued his tough talk on global trade as economists and investors continue to say his stiff proposed tariffs could cause a recession if they're not rolled back. U.S. talks last week with Japan failed to reach a quick deal that could lower tariffs and protect the economy, and they're seen as a "test case," according to Thierry Wizman, a strategist at Macquarie.

"The golden rule of negotiating and success: He who has the gold makes the rules," Trump said in all capitalized letters on his Truth Social Network. He also said that "the businessmen who criticize tariffs are bad at business, but really bad at politics," likewise in all caps.

Trump has recently focused more on China, the world's second-largest economy, which has also been keeping up its rhetoric. China on Monday warned other countries against making trade deals with the United States "at the expense of China's interest" as Japan, South Korea and others try to negotiate agreements.

"If this happens, China will never accept it and will resolutely take countermeasures in a reciprocal manner," China's Commerce Ministry said in a statement.

Also hanging over the market are worries about Trump's anger at Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell. Trump last week criticized Powell again for not cutting interest rates sooner to give the economy more juice.

The Fed has been resistant to lowering rates too quickly because it does not want to allow inflation to reaccelerate after slowing nearly all the way down to its 2% goal from more than 9% three years ago.



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Trump talked Monday about a slowdown for the U.S. economy that could be coming unless "Mr. Too Late, a major loser, lowers interest rates, NOW."

A move by Trump to fire Powell would likely send a bolt of fear through financial markets. While Wall Street loves lower rates, largely because they boost stock prices, the bigger worry would be that a less independent Fed would be less effective at keeping inflation under control. Such a move could further weaken, if not kill, the United States' reputation as the world's safest place to keep cash.

All the uncertainty striking pillars at the center of financial markets means some investors say they're having to rethink the fundamentals of how to invest.

"We can no longer extrapolate from past trends or rely on long-term assumptions to anchor portfolios," strategists at BlackRock Investment Institute said in a report. "The distinction between tactical and strategic asset allocation is blurred. Instead, we need to constantly reassess the long-term trajectory and be dynamic with asset allocation as we learn more about the future state of the global system."

That in turn could push investors outside the United States to keep more of their money in their home markets, according to the strategists led by Jean Boivin.

On Wall Street, Big Tech stocks helped lead indexes lower ahead of their latest earnings reports due later this week.

Tesla sank 5.7%. The electric vehicle maker's stock has more than halved from its record set in December on criticism that the stock price had gone too high and that CEO Elon Musk's role in leading the U.S. government's efforts to cut spending is damaging the brand.

Nvidia fell 4.5% for a third straight drop after disclosing that U.S. export limits on chips to China could hurt its first-quarter results by \$5.5 billion.

They led another wipeout on Wall Street, and 92% of the stocks within the S&P 500 fell.

Among the few gainers were Discover Financial Services and Capital One Financial, which climbed after the U.S. government approved their proposed merger. Discover rose 3.6%, while Capital One added 1.5%.

All told, the S&P 500 fell 124.50 points to 5,158.20. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 971.82 to 38,170.41, and the Nasdaq composite tumbled 415.55 to 15,870.90.

Gold also climbed to burnish its reputation as a safe-haven investment, unlike some others.

In the bond market, shorter-term Treasury yields fell as investors expect the Fed to cut its main overnight interest rate later this year to support the economy.

But longer-term yields rose with doubts about the United States' standing in the global economy. The yield on the 10-year Treasury climbed to 4.40%, up from 4.34% at the end of last week and from just about 4% earlier this month. That's a substantial move for the bond market.

The U.S. dollar's value, meanwhile, fell against the euro, Japanese yen, the Swiss franc and other currencies.

## **White House voices support for Hegseth as a new Signal chat revelation stirs fresh Pentagon turmoil**

By TARA COPP and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House expressed support Monday for Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth following media reports that he shared sensitive military details in another Signal messaging chat, this time with his wife and brother.

Neither the White House nor Hegseth denied that he had shared such information in a second chat, instead focusing their responses on what they called the disgruntled workers whom they blamed for leaking to the media and insisting that no classified information had been disclosed.

"It's just fake news. They just bring up stories," President Donald Trump told reporters. "I guess it sounds like disgruntled employees. You know, he was put there to get rid of a lot of bad people, and that's what he's doing. So you don't always have friends when you do that," Trump said.

The administration's posture was meant to hold the line against Democratic demands for Hegseth's firing at a time when the Pentagon is engulfed in turmoil, including the departures of several senior aides and

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an internal investigation over information leaks.

The White House also tried to deflect attention from the national security implications of the latest Signal revelation by framing it as the outgrowth of an institutional power struggle between Hegseth and the career workforce. But some of the recently departed officials the administration appeared to dismiss as disgruntled were part of Hegseth's initial inner circle, brought in when he took the job.

"This is what happens when the entire Pentagon is working against you and working against the monumental change that you are trying to implement," White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said in remarks amplified by a Pentagon social media account.

The latest news added to questions about the judgment of the embattled Pentagon chief, coming on top of last month's disclosure of his participation in a Signal chat with top Trump administration leaders in which details about the military airstrike against Yemen's Houthi militants were shared.

"Pete Hegseth must be fired," Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said.

Latest reports of Hegseth's Signal use

The New York Times reported Sunday that the information shared in a Signal messaging chat with Hegseth's wife, brother and others was similar to what was communicated in the already disclosed chain with Trump administration officials.

A person familiar with the contents and those who received the messages, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive matters, confirmed the second chat to The Associated Press. The person said it included 13 people and was dubbed "Defense ` Team Huddle."

White House officials first learned of the second Signal chat from news reports Sunday, according to an official familiar with the matter who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal conversations.

Hegseth, talking to reporters while attending the White House Easter Egg Roll, didn't address the substance of the allegations or the national security implications they raised but assailed the media.

"They take anonymous sources from disgruntled former employees and then they try to slash and burn people and ruin their reputations," Hegseth said. "Not going to work with me. Because we're changing the Defense Department, putting the Pentagon back in the hands of warfighters. And anonymous smears from disgruntled former employees on old news doesn't matter."

Republican Sen. Tom Cotton, chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, struck a similar tone, writing on Sunday night on X: "Secretary Hegseth is busy implementing President Trump's America First agenda, while these leakers are trying to undermine them both. Shameful."

The Trump administration's response on the use of Signal

The Trump administration has struggled in its public explanations about senior officials' use of Signal, a commercially available app not authorized to be used to communicate sensitive or classified national defense information.

The first chat, set up by national security adviser Mike Waltz, included a number of Cabinet members and came to light because Jeffrey Goldberg, editor-in-chief of The Atlantic, was added to the group.

Officials have repeatedly insisted that the information shared on Signal was not classified, though the contents of that chat, which The Atlantic published, shows that Hegseth listed weapons systems and a timeline for the attack on the Iran-backed Houthis last month.

Multiple current and former military officials say launch times and munitions drop times are classified information and putting those details on an unsecured channel could have put those pilots at risk.

The Trump administration has faced criticism for failing to take action so far against top national security officials who discussed plans for the strike in Signal, and the latest report fueled additional calls for Hegseth's ouster.

"The details keep coming out. We keep learning how Pete Hegseth put lives at risk. But Trump is still too weak to fire him," Schumer posted Sunday on X.

The New York Times reported that the group in the second chat included Hegseth's wife, Jennifer, who is a former Fox News producer, and his brother Phil Hegseth, who was hired at the Pentagon as a Department of Homeland Security liaison and senior adviser.

The Times said the second chat had the same warplane launch times that the first chat included.

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Hegseth's Signal use is under investigation by the Defense Department's acting inspector general at the request of the bipartisan leadership of the Senate Armed Services Committee. The senior Democratic member, Jack Reed of Rhode Island, urged the watchdog Sunday to look into the reported second chat as well.

Wider turmoil inside the Pentagon

The Pentagon has confronted a wave of turbulence stretching beyond Signal. Defense officials have faced scrutiny over a seemingly haphazard and disjointed campaign to purge online content that promoted women and minorities, in some cases scrambling to restore posts after their removals came to light.

Over the past week, five officials in Hegseth's inner circle have departed.

Last week 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 escorted out of the Pentagon as the department hunts down leaks of inside information.

While those three initially had been placed on leave pending the investigation, a joint statement shared by Caldwell on X on Saturday said they "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."

Another close Hegseth aide, chief of staff Joe Kasper, also was leaving, according to two officials. They didn't say why.

Caldwell and Selnick had worked with the defense secretary during his time leading the nonprofit Concerned Veterans for America. Kasper was the one who sent a March memo saying the Pentagon was investigating what it called leaks of national security information and that Defense Department personnel could face polygraphs.

Former Pentagon spokesman John Ulyot announced he was resigning last week, unrelated to the leaks. The Pentagon said, however, that Ulyot was asked to resign.

And on Monday, three U.S. officials said another staff member, Sean Parnell, was shifting temporarily from his job as Hegseth's chief spokesman and instead will spend more time in Hegseth's front office.

The officials all spoke on the condition of anonymity to provide details of personnel moves.

## **Abortions are resuming at a Wyoming clinic after judge suspends laws**

By MEAD GRUVER Associated Press

CHEYENNE, Wyo. (AP) — Wyoming's only abortion clinic is resuming abortions after a judge on Monday suspended two state laws.

One suspended law would require clinics providing surgical abortions to be licensed as outpatient surgical centers. The other would require women to get an ultrasound before a medication abortion.

Wyoming Health Access in Casper had stopped providing abortions Feb. 28, the day after Republican Gov. Mark Gordon signed the licensing requirement into effect.

The result: At least some women seeking abortions had to travel out of state. Now, women will once again be able to get abortions in central Wyoming while the two laws continue to be contested in court, Wellspring Health Access founder and president Julie Burkhart said Monday.

"We are immediately shouting it from the rooftop to make sure our patients know," Burkhart said following the ruling. "We are back to seeing patients the way we were on Feb. 27."

An abortion opponent questioned the need to contest the laws if the clinic was safe.

"The abortion business here in Casper could prove that they are providing safe services by complying with laws. Would that not make their point?" Ross Schriftman, president of Natrona County Right to Life, said in an email statement Monday.

Abortion has remained legal in Wyoming despite bans passed since 2022. The bans include the nation's first explicit ban on abortion pills.

A judge in Jackson blocked the bans then struck them down in November on the grounds that abortion is allowed by a 2012 state constitutional amendment guaranteeing the right of competent adults to make

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their own health care decisions.

The Wyoming Supreme Court heard arguments in that case Wednesday and is unlikely to rule for at least several weeks.

Meanwhile, the same people challenging the bans — Wellspring Health Access, the abortion access advocacy group Chelsea's Fund, and four women, including two obstetricians — have sued to block Wyoming's most recent two abortion laws.

The surgical center licensing requirement would require costly renovations to make Wellspring Health Access compliant, the clinic said in its lawsuit.

Gordon vetoed the requirement for an ultrasound at least 48 hours before a pill abortion, calling it onerous in cases of abuse, rape, or when a woman's health is at risk. State lawmakers voted to override the veto on March 5.

The ultrasound requirement did not significantly affect clinic operations but Wellspring Health Access also suspended offering pill abortions to avoid legal complications. The law stands to add to the cost and complications for women getting pill abortions.

Opponents call laws like Wyoming's requirements "targeted restrictions on abortion providers" because they can regulate clinics and abortion access out of existence even if abortion remains legal.

In blocking the laws while the lawsuit proceeds, District Judge Thomas Campbell in Casper ruled that they too stand to violate the constitution.

Despite the new restrictions, Wellspring Health Access has remained open to consult with patients and provide hormone replacement therapy for transgender patients. The clinic opened in 2023, almost a year late after heavy damage from an arson attack.

## **Boston Marathon no-shows similar to 2024, dispelling concerns that politics would scare runners away**

BOSTON (AP) — The Boston Marathon had about the same number of no-shows as last year, dispelling concerns that international runners would skip the race in the face of increased U.S. border scrutiny.

A total of 28,928 runners started the 129th edition of the marathon on Monday, from a field of 31,778 entrants. That leaves 2,850 who registered but did not cross the starting line in Hopkinton, or less than 9%.

In last year's field, there were 2,838 who failed to start.

To earn a Boston Marathon bib number, most runners need to submit a qualifying time from another 26.2-mile race. Though many treat it as a lifetime goal not to be abandoned lightly, no-shows can occur for reasons ranging from injury to the 2010 Icelandic volcano eruption that shut down flights and prevented hundreds of European runners from traveling to the U.S.

Although the race was full, with entries from 128 countries, scattered reports indicated that some foreign runners might stay away for political reasons or fears of border hassles.

International visits to the U.S. have plummeted, with Canadians among those avoiding U.S. travel in response to President Donald Trump's tariff talk and threats of annexing the country as a 51st state.

Boston Mayor Michelle Wu said last week that everyone should feel welcome.

"Regardless of what's happening at other levels, and particularly now at the federal level, in Boston we welcome everyone," Wu said Friday at a public safety media briefing not far from the finish line. "We seek to be a home for everyone."

## **Hegseth had a second Signal chat where he shared details of Yemen strike, New York Times reports**

By TARA COPP Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth created another Signal messaging chat that included his wife and brother where he shared similar details of a March military airstrike against Yemen's Houthi militants that were sent in another chain with top Trump administration leaders, The New York



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Times reported.

A person familiar with the contents and those who received the messages, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive matters, confirmed the second chat to The Associated Press.

The second chat on Signal — which is a commercially available app not authorized to be used to communicate sensitive or classified national defense information — included 13 people, the person said. The person also confirmed the chat was dubbed "Defense ` Team Huddle."

The New York Times reported that the group included Hegseth's wife, Jennifer, who is a former Fox News producer, and his brother Phil Hegseth, who was hired at the Pentagon as a Department of Homeland Security liaison and senior adviser. Both have traveled with the defense secretary and attended high-level meetings.

The White House and Pentagon said late Sunday that disgruntled former employees were spreading false claims.

"No matter how many times the legacy media tries to resurrect the same non-story, they can't change the fact that no classified information was shared," said Anna Kelly, White House deputy press secretary. "Recently-fired 'leakers' are continuing to misrepresent the truth to soothe their shattered egos and undermine the President's agenda, but the administration will continue to hold them accountable."

Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell added in a post on X late Sunday that the report "relied only on the words of people who were fired this week and appear to have a motive to sabotage the Secretary and the President's agenda. There was no classified information in any Signal chat, no matter how many ways they try to write the story."

The revelation of the additional chat group brought new calls for Hegseth to be ousted as President Donald Trump's administration has faced criticism for failing to take action so far against the top national security officials who discussed plans for the military strike in Signal.

"The details keep coming out. We keep learning how Pete Hegseth put lives at risk. But Trump is still too weak to fire him," Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer posted on X. "Pete Hegseth must be fired."

The first chat, set up by national security adviser Mike Waltz, included a number of Cabinet members and came to light because Jeffrey Goldberg, editor-in-chief of The Atlantic, was added to the group.

The contents of that chat, which The Atlantic published, shows that Hegseth listed weapons systems and a timeline for the attack on Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen last month.

Hegseth has previously contended that no classified information or war plans were shared in the chat with the journalist.

The Times reported Sunday that the second chat had the same warplane launch times that the first chat included. Multiple former and current officials have said sharing those operational details before a strike would have certainly been classified and their release could have put pilots in danger.

Hegseth's use of Signal and the sharing of such plans are under investigation by the Defense Department's acting inspector general. It came at the request of the leadership of the Senate Armed Services Committee — Republican Chairman Roger Wicker of Mississippi and ranking Democratic member Jack Reed of Rhode Island.

Reed urged the Pentagon watchdog late Sunday to probe the reported second Signal chat as well, saying that Hegseth "must immediately explain why he reportedly texted classified information that could endanger American servicemembers' lives."

"I have grave concerns about Secretary Hegseth's ability to maintain the trust and confidence of U.S. servicemembers and the Commander-in-Chief," he added.

The new revelations come during further turmoil at the Pentagon. Four officials in Hegseth's inner circle departed last week as the Pentagon conducts a widespread investigation for 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 escorted out of the Pentagon.

While the three initially had been placed on leave pending the investigation, a joint statement shared by Caldwell on X on Saturday said the three "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."

Caldwell was the staff member designated as Hegseth's point person in the Signal chat with Trump Cabinet members.

Former Pentagon spokesman John Ulyot also announced he was resigning last week, unrelated to the leaks. The Pentagon said, however, that Ulyot was asked to resign.

## **Pope's frequent calls to a Catholic church made him a revered figure in war-battered Gaza**

By WAFAA SHURAFI and BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — In the last 18 months of his life, Pope Francis had a frequent evening ritual: He would call the lone Catholic church in the Gaza Strip to see how people huddled inside were coping with a devastating war.

That small act of compassion made a big impression on Gaza's tiny Christian community and was why he was remembered at his death Monday as a beloved father figure in the beleaguered territory.

"I was deeply saddened. He was our biggest supporter after God," said Suheil Abu Dawoud, a 19-year-old Christian in Gaza.

Francis "always healed our wounds and asked us to be strong," he said. "He was always praying for us."

In his last public appearance, Francis called for a ceasefire between Israel and the Hamas militant group. A fervent advocate of interfaith relations, he also urged Hamas to release the dozens of Israeli hostages it is holding and condemned growing global antisemitism.

In his Easter message, Francis expressed his "closeness to the sufferings of Christians in Palestine and Israel and to all the Israeli people and the Palestinian people."

While noting the growing antisemitism, he added: "I think of the people of Gaza and its Christian community in particular, where the terrible conflict continues to cause death and destruction and to create a dramatic and deplorable humanitarian situation."

The war in Gaza began when Hamas-led militants attacked southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killing about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting 251. Some 59 hostages remain in captivity, 24 of them believed to be alive.

Israel's offensive has reduced much of Gaza to rubble and killed over 51,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between civilians and combatants. Most of Gaza's 2.3 million people remain homeless.

Things have worsened over the past month since Israel ended a ceasefire and imposed a closure blocking all humanitarian aid into Gaza. Aid officials say thousands of children have become malnourished and most people have little more than one meal a day.

"I appeal to the warring parties: Call on a ceasefire, release the hostages and come to the aid of starving people that aspires to a future of peace!" Francis said in his final address.

That appeal also went unheeded. On Monday, Israel's airstrikes killed at least 14 people, according to medical officials.

In Israel, the pope left a more complicated legacy. He was widely appreciated for his outreach to the Jewish people and tough stance against antisemitism. He also was an advocate for freeing the hostages, meeting with their families during the war.

Israeli President Isaac Herzog remembered Francis as a man of "deep faith and boundless compassion."

"I truly hope that his prayers for peace in the Middle East and for the safe return of the hostages will soon be answered," Herzog wrote on social media.

In the past year and a half of war, Francis became increasingly outspoken in his criticism of the Israeli military's harsh tactics. A month into the war, he urged an investigation into whether Israel's war amounted to genocide — a charge Israel vehemently denies.

In December, Francis expressed his pain thinking of Gaza, "of such cruelty, to the machine-gunning of children, to the bombing of schools and hospitals. ... How much cruelty!"

The next month, he called the ongoing humanitarian crisis "very serious and shameful."

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Francis was mourned throughout the Arab world and by U.N. officials, including Philippe Lazzarini, head of the agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA. He posted on X that the pope's voice "has contributed to draw the attention to significant dehumanization of the war in Gaza & beyond."

Senior Hamas official Basem Naim said Francis was a "steadfast advocate for the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, particularly in his unwavering stance against the war and acts of genocide perpetrated against our people in Gaza in recent months."

The Holy Land's Christian community has dwindled over the decades through emigration and a low birthrate and makes up just a small percentage of the overall population.

Only 1,000 Christians live in Gaza, an overwhelmingly Muslim territory, according to the U.S. State Department's international religious freedom report for 2024. The report says the majority of Palestinian Christians are Greek Orthodox but they also include other Christians, including Roman Catholics.

Last year, Francis told CBS' "60 Minutes" that he calls a priest daily at 7 p.m. at the Holy Family Church, the only Catholic church in Gaza, to hear what is happening to the nearly 600 people sheltering at the facility.

"The other day, they were happy because they managed to eat some meat. The rest of the time they eat flour, things made of flour," Francis told the program. "Sometimes they go hungry and they tell me things. There is a lot of suffering."

"It's very tough. Very tough. The food arrives, people rush to get it," he said.

The Rev. Gabriele Romanelli, a church official, said Francis' last call came Saturday.

Suhair Anastas, a Palestinian woman who was part of a group that met Francis in 2023 after she fled Gaza, said she felt "great sadness" over his death.

Anastas, who is Greek Orthodox, had sheltered at the church compound in Gaza before she left.

"He did stand by us, by letting us stay at the church and by taking care of everyone in the church," she said. "I know he wasn't able to stop the genocide ... but I don't know who can."

When she met the pope, Anastas had mixed emotions. The experience was "breathtaking," she said, but she added she also felt traumatized, sad and guilty "that you're meeting him and others are still under bombardment."

She said she will remember the pope "for standing with us" to a certain extent, but "I wish he could have done more."

George Antoun, an official at the church, told The Associated Press the pope's interest gave the community hope and inspiration.

Francis was like a father worried for his children and would ask whether there was food, medical care and medicine, he said.

"He was with us step by step and day by day," Antoun said.

"Don't be afraid. I am with you and praying for you and I will protect you," Antoun quoted Francis as saying. "He left a big inheritance in Gaza. He is the saint of Gaza."

## **Google faces off with US government in attempt to break up company in search monopoly case**

By MICHAEL LIEDTKE and ALAN SUDERMAN AP Technology Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Google is confronting an existential threat as the U.S. government tries to break up the company as punishment for turning its revolutionary search engine into an illegal monopoly.

The drama began to unfold Monday in a Washington courtroom as three weeks of hearings kicked off to determine how the company should be penalized for operating a monopoly in search. In its opening arguments, federal antitrust enforcers also urged the court to impose forward-looking remedies to prevent Google from using artificial intelligence to further its dominance.

"This is a moment in time, we're at an inflection point, will we abandon the search market and surrender them to control of the monopolists or will we let competition prevail and give choice to future generations," said Justice Department attorney David Dahlquist.

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The proceedings, known in legal parlance as a "remedy hearing," are set to feature a parade of witnesses that includes Google CEO Sundar Pichai.

The U.S. Department of Justice is asking a federal judge to order a radical shake-up that would ban Google from striking the multibillion dollar deals with Apple and other tech companies that shield its search engine from competition, share its repository of valuable user data with rivals and force a sale of its popular Chrome browser.

Google's attorney, John Schmittlein, said in his opening statement that the court should take a much lighter touch. He said the government's heavy-handed proposed remedies wouldn't boost competition but instead unfairly reward lesser rivals with inferior technology.

"Google won its place in the market fair and square," Schmittlein said.

The moment of reckoning comes four-and-a-half-years after the Justice Department filed a landmark lawsuit alleging Google's search engine had been abusing its power as the internet's main gateway to stifle competition and innovation for more than a decade.

After the case finally went to trial in 2023, a federal judge last year ruled Google had been making anti-competitive deals to lock in its search engine as the go-to place for digital information on the iPhone, personal computers and other widely used devices, including those running on its own Android software.

That landmark ruling by U.S. District Judge Amit Mehta sets up a high-stakes drama that will determine the penalties for Google's misconduct in a search market that it has defined since Larry Page and Sergey Brin founded the company in a Silicon Valley garage in 1998.

Since that austere start, Google has expanded far beyond search to become a powerhouse in email, digital mapping, online video, web browsing, smartphone software and data centers.

Seizing upon its victory in the search case, the Justice Department is now setting out to prove that radical steps must be taken to rein in Google and its corporate parent, Alphabet Inc.

"Google's illegal conduct has created an economic goliath, one that wreaks havoc over the marketplace to ensure that — no matter what occurs — Google always wins," the Justice Department argued in documents outlining its proposed penalties. "The American people thus are forced to accept the unbridled demands and shifting, ideological preferences of an economic leviathan in return for a search engine the public may enjoy."

Although the proposed penalties were originally made under President Joe Biden's term, they are still being embraced by the Justice Department under President Donald Trump, whose first administration filed the case against Google. Since the change in administrations, the Justice Department has also attempted to cast Google's immense power as a threat to freedom, too.

In his opening statement, Dahlquist noted that top officials from the Justice Department were in the room to watch proceedings. He said their presence indicated that the case had the full support of federal antitrust regulators, both past and present.

"The fact that this case was filed in 2020, tried in 2023, under two different administrations, and joined by 49 states demonstrates the non-partisan nature of this case and our proposed remedies," Dahlquist said.

Dahlquist also said that Mehta would be hearing a lot about artificial intelligence and said top executives from AI companies, like ChatGPT maker's OpenAI, would be called to testify. He said the court's remedies should include provisions to make sure that Google's Gemini, a technology build on generative AI, isn't used to strengthen its existing search monopoly.

"We believe that Google can and will attempt to circumvent the court's remedies if it is not included," Dahlquist said. "Gen AI is Google's next evolution to keep their vicious cycle spinning."

The focus on AI during the hearings reflects the potential for the technology to revolutionize the way people plumb the internet for information, just as Google's search engine did more than 20 years ago.

The government's first witness was Greg Durrett, an AI expert and computer science professor from the University of Texas, who said the Google's dominate position in search has been integral in helping the company build high-quality AI products.

Schmittlein, Google's attorney, said in his opening remarks that rival AI companies had seen enormous growth in recent years and were doing "just fine."



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But in a Monday blog post about the remedy hearings, AI search engine Perplexity backed the government's push to forbid the multibillion dollar deals that give Google a favored position on smartphones and PCs.

"The future of search is clear, and it isn't links for Google to sell traffic. It's AI that answers questions, completes tasks, and interacts with applications," Perplexity said.

But Google is also sounding alarms about the proposed requirements to share online search data with rivals and the proposed sale of Chrome posing privacy and security risks.

"The breadth and depth of the proposed remedies risks doing significant damage to a complex ecosystem. Some of the proposed remedies would imperil browser developers and jeopardize the digital security of millions of consumers," Google lawyers said in a filing leading up to hearings.

The showdown over Google's fate marks the climax of the biggest antitrust case in the U.S. since the Justice Department sued Microsoft in the late 1990s for leveraging its Windows software for personal computers to crush potential rivals.

The Microsoft battle culminated in a federal judge declaring the company an illegal monopoly and ordering a partial breakup — a remedy that was eventually overturned by an appeals court.

Google intends to file an appeal of Mehta's ruling from last year that branded its search engine as an illegal monopoly but can't do so until the remedy hearings are completed. After closing arguments are presented in late May, Mehta intends to make his decision on the remedies before Labor Day.

The Justice Department also targeted Google's digital advertising network in a separate antitrust case that resulted last week in another federal judge's decision that found the company was abusing its power in that market, too. That ruling means Google will be heading into another remedy hearing that could once again raise the specter of a breakup later this year or early next year.

## **'The runners are coming': Lokedi breaks Boston Marathon course record, John Korir takes men's race**

By JIMMY GOLEN AP Sports Writer

BOSTON (AP) — A rider dressed as Paul Revere eased his horse up to the Boston Marathon finish line and proclaimed, "The runners are coming."

And down Boylston Street they came.

In record time. With a historic family first. And even "The Star-Spangled Banner" got some air time as the race and the region commemorated the 250th anniversary of the first shots fired in the American Revolution.

Sharon Lokedi of Kenya broke the Boston Marathon course record by more than 2 1/2 minutes on Monday, outkicking two-time defending champion Hellen Obiri a year after losing to her in one of the closest finishes in race history.

Fellow Kenyan John Korir recovered from a starting line fall to join his brother as a race champion — the first relatives to win the world's oldest and most prestigious annual marathon in a history that dates to 1897.

On a day that also marked the 50th anniversary of Bob Hall's pioneering wheelchair race, Marcel Hug of Switzerland claimed his eighth victory and Susannah Scaroni of the United States took the women's title.

"I always feel emotional when the national anthem is played," said Scaroni, who won in 2023 but couldn't defend her title last year because of an injury. "And to have ours played on this amazing, historic anniversary gives me goosebumps."

Lokedi finished in 2 hours, 17 minutes, 22 seconds to claim the \$150,000 first prize and another \$50,000 bonus for breaking the course record of 2:19:59 set by Buzunesh Deba in 2014. A year after sprinting to an 8 second victory, Obiri was 19 seconds back in her attempt to become the first woman to win three straight since Fatuma Roba in 1999.

"Where she passed me last year, I passed her this year," Lokedi said with a laugh. "I didn't even believe. I kept looking back and thinking, 'Where is she?' I'm just so grateful to her for pushing me all the way

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through.”

Six months after winning on Chicago’s flatter course, Korir finished in 2:04:45 — the second-fastest winning time in Boston history as the runners took advantage of perfect marathon weather to conquer the 26.2 miles (42.2 kilometers) from Hopkinton to Boston’s Copley Square.

And he did it despite getting tripped up from behind near the start and falling. He got up to rejoin the lead pack at the rear.

“What came to my mind was should I stay down, or should I (get) up and go?” he said. “Something told me to (get) up and go, and that everything will be OK. ... And everything went away.”

Korir’s race bib fell off and he tucked it into his running tights, pulling it out as he sprinted to the finish line. Waiting to congratulate him: 2012 Boston winner Wesley Korir, his older brother.

Although the race has been won by a pair of unrelated John Kelleys and two different Robert Cheruiyots, the Korirs are the first brothers to have won.

“He explained to be tough and believe in yourself,” said John Korir, who finished fourth and ninth in his two previous Boston attempts. “So I believed in myself and I followed his advice.”

Conner Mantz of Provo, Utah, finished fourth after losing a three-way sprint to the finish with Alphonse Felix Simbu of Tanzania, who finished second, and Cybrian Kotut of Kenya, who was third.

Yalemzerf Yehualaw of Ethiopia was third in the women’s race. Jess McClain of Phoenix was the top American, in seventh place; 2018 winner Des Linden, who had announced she would retire from competitive running, won the masters division and was 17th overall.

When she crossed the finish line, the other American women bowed to her in tribute.

“I had those folks in front of me who paved the way, and I looked up to them. And they always made me feel like I belonged, made me feel like my dreams are valid, helped me along the way,” Linden said. “So I’ve always tried to do that for the folks in this sport as well.”

A field of 30,000 left Hopkinton on Monday morning for Boston’s Back Bay, where riders in Revolutionary War garb — accompanied by a fife and drum playing “Yankee Doodle” — rode down Boylston Street in a reenactment of Paul Revere’s ride.

The ceremony came to a temporary halt when the horses was spooked by the finish line decal on the street and pulled up. The actor portraying the colonial silversmith and patriot had to hop off and walk the last few steps himself as the small early crowd laughed and clapped.

After reading a proclamation, Revere gently tugged the horse the rest of the way before riding off to more ceremonies commemorating the midnight ride on April 19, 1775, that warned the Sons of Liberty that the British were on the march.

Linden, the last American runner to win Boston, read the voice-over that introduced the reenactment.

“I wondered, ‘Are these professional horses?’ Because it seemed like a lot for them,” she said afterward. “It turns out, it was.”

Hug had no such trouble completing the course, zooming into Copley Square in 1:21:34 for his eighth Boston wheelchair title. He beat two-time winner Daniel Romanchuk by more than four minutes.

Scaroni finished in 1:35:20 on a day the Boston Athletic Association celebrated Hall’s push to add a wheelchair division in 1975.

“I am only here today because so many incredible individuals had integrity, tenacity — they knew they belonged as athletes and they allowed us to have what we have today,” she said. “And I’m so beyond grateful.

“I’m not brave like them,” Scaroni said. “I’m only here because of how awesome those people are.”

## Gaza rescue service dismisses Israeli probe into killing of medics as a 'fabricated investigation'

CAIRO (AP) — The main Palestinian rescue service in Gaza on Monday condemned Israel's probe into the killings of 15 medical workers last month, calling it a "fabricated investigation."

The army announced the results of its investigation on Sunday, saying it had found "professional failures" and dismissing a deputy commander in what it described as an accident.

A total of 15 people were killed in the March 23 incident — including eight medics with the Palestinian Red Crescent Society, six members of the Hamas government's Civil Defense unit and a United Nations staffer. Troops bulldozed over the bodies along with their mangled vehicles, burying them in a mass grave. U.N. and rescue workers were only able to reach the site a week later.

In a statement, the Palestinian Red Crescent Society said the investigation underscores "the occupation's persistence in shielding the truth from the world."

It accused Israel of making "fallacious allegations" that medical rescue teams are part of Hamas and asked why Israel continues to detain a paramedic who survived the attack.

"We call on the international community to abstain from validating the results of the occupation's fabricated investigation," it said.

Israel at first claimed the medics' vehicles were acting suspiciously and did not have emergency signals on when troops opened fire. But the army later backtracked after cellphone video recovered from one medic showed the ambulances had lights flashing and logos visible as they pulled up to help another ambulance that earlier came under fire.

The military said six of those killed were Hamas militants, but has given little evidenced to support the claim.

The shootings outraged many in the international community, with some calling the killings a war crime.

## US airstrikes killed 12 people in Yemen's capital, the Houthi rebels say

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — U.S. airstrikes targeting Yemen's capital killed 12 people and wounded 34 others, the Houthi rebels said early Monday.

The deaths mark the latest in America's intensified campaign of strikes targeting the rebels. The U.S. military's Central Command declined to answer questions about the strike or discuss civilian casualties from its campaign.

The Houthis described the strike as hitting the Farwa neighborhood market in Sanaa's Shuub district. That area has been targeted before by the Americans.

Footage aired by the Houthis' al-Masirah satellite news channel showed damage to vehicles and buildings in the area, with screaming onlookers holding what appeared to be a dead child. Others waited on stretchers heading into a hospital.

Strikes overnight into Monday also hit other areas of the country, including Yemen's Amran, Hodeida, Marib and Saada governorates.

The strikes come after U.S. airstrikes hit the Ras Isa fuel port in Yemen last week, killing at least 74 people and wounding 171 others.

The strikes follow the resumption of negotiations in Rome between the U.S. and Iran over Tehran's rapidly advancing nuclear program, which Washington has linked to its attacks in Yemen.

The U.S. is targeting the Houthis because of the group's attacks on shipping in the Red Sea, a crucial global trade route, and on Israel. The Houthis are the last militant group in Iran's self-described "Axis of Resistance" that is capable of regularly attacking Israel.

The new U.S. operation against the Houthis under Trump appears more extensive than attacks on the group were under President Joe Biden, an AP review found. The new campaign started after the rebels

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threatened to begin targeting "Israeli" ships again over Israel blocking aid from entering the Gaza Strip. From November 2023 until this January, the Houthis targeted more than 100 merchant vessels with missiles and drones, sinking two of them and killing four sailors. That has greatly reduced the flow of trade through the Red Sea corridor, which typically sees \$1 trillion of goods move through it. The Houthis also launched attacks targeting American warships without success.

Assessing the toll of the month-old U.S. airstrike campaign has been difficult because the military hasn't released information about the attacks, including what was targeted and how many people were killed. The Houthis, meanwhile, strictly control access to attacked areas and don't publish complete information on the strikes, many of which likely have targeted military and security sites.

## **A green comet likely is breaking apart and won't be visible to the naked eye**

By ADITHI RAMAKRISHNAN AP Science Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — A newly discovered green comet tracked by telescopes has likely broken apart as it swung by the sun, dashing hopes of a naked-eye spectacle.

Comet SWAN, hailing from the Oort Cloud beyond Pluto, has been visible through telescopes and binoculars over the past few weeks with its streaming tail, but experts said it may not have survived its recent trip past the sun and is fading fast.

"We'll soon be left with just a dusty rubble pile," astrophysicist Karl Battams with the U.S. Naval Research Laboratory said in an email.

Comets are balls of frozen gas and dust from billions of years ago. Every so often, a comet passes through the inner solar system.

"These are relics from when the solar system first formed," said Jason Ybarra, director of the West Virginia University Planetarium and Observatory.

The newest comet was discovered by amateur astronomers, who spied it in photos taken by a camera on a spacecraft operated by NASA and the European Space Agency to study the sun.

The comet won't swing close to Earth like Tsuchinshan-Atlas did last year. Other notable flybys included Neowise in 2020 and Hale-Bopp and Hyakutake in the 1990s.

The comet, also designated C/2025 F2, would have been visible just after dark slightly north of where the sun set. Its green color would have been difficult to see with the naked eye.

This might have been the object's first ever trip past the sun, making it particularly vulnerable to breaking apart, Battams said. After its flyby, what's left of the comet will disappear into the outer reaches of the solar system, past where scientists think it came from.

"It's going to go so far out that we have no idea if it's ever going to return," said Battams.

## **China warns countries against making trade deals with the US unfavorable to Beijing**

BEIJING (AP) — China on Monday warned other countries against making trade deals with the United States to China's detriment.

Governments including those of Taiwan, Japan and South Korea have begun negotiations with Washington after President Donald Trump announced sweeping tariffs against almost all of America's trading partners on April 2. The import taxes were quickly paused against most countries after markets panicked, but he increased his already steep tariffs against China.

"China firmly opposes any party reaching a deal at the expense of China's interests," China's Commerce Ministry said in a statement. "If this happens, China will never accept it and will resolutely take counter-measures in a reciprocal manner. China is determined and capable of safeguarding its own rights and interests."

U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said earlier this month the countries currently negotiating trade



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deals with the U.S. should "approach China as a group" together with Washington.

The U.S. tariffs against other countries are economic bullying, the ministry said in the statement attributed to an unnamed spokesperson.

"Appeasement cannot bring peace, and compromise cannot win respect," it added. "For one's own temporary selfish interests, sacrificing the interests of others in exchange for so-called exemptions is like seeking the skin from a tiger. It will ultimately only fail on both ends and harm others without benefiting themselves."

China said it's open to talks with Washington but no meetings have been announced.

Trump made China the target of his steepest tariffs, imposing several rounds of tariffs totaling 145% duties on Chinese imports. Beijing has retaliated with tariffs of 125% on U.S. imports.

The tariffs have spooked exporters and stalled shipments, while threatening to drag on the global economy.

## **Today in History: April 22, the Oklahoma Land Rush of 1889**

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Tuesday, April 22, the 112th day of 2025. There are 253 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On April 22, 1889, the Oklahoma Land Rush began at noon as thousands of homesteaders staked claims to nearly 1.9 million acres of land that was formerly part of Indian Territory. By the end of the day, the cities of Oklahoma City and Guthrie were established with as many as 10,000 settlers each.

Also on this date:

In 1915, German forces unleashed its first full-scale use of chlorine gas against Allied troops at the start of the Second Battle of Ypres (EE'-preh) in Belgium during World War I. Thousands of Allied soldiers are believed to have died from the poison gas attacks.

In 1954, the publicly televised sessions of the Senate Army-McCarthy hearings began.

In 1970, an estimated 20 million Americans participated in gatherings for the first Earth Day, a series of events proposed by Sen. Gaylord Nelson of Wisconsin to promote environmental protections.

In 1994, Richard M. Nixon, the 37th president of the United States and the first to resign from office, died at a New York hospital four days after having a stroke. He was 81.

In 2000, in a dramatic predawn raid, armed immigration agents seized 6-year-old Elian Gonzalez, the Cuban boy at the center of a custody dispute, from his relatives' home in Miami. Elian was reunited with his father at Andrews Air Force Base near Washington.

In 2005, Zacarias Moussaoui (zak-uh-REE'-uhs moo-SOW'-ee) pleaded guilty in a federal courtroom outside Washington, D.C., to conspiring with the Sept. 11 hijackers to kill Americans. (Moussaoui was sentenced to life in prison in May 2006.)

In 2010, the Deepwater Horizon oil platform, operated by BP, sank into the Gulf of Mexico two days after a massive explosion that killed 11 workers.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Jack Nicholson is 88. Singer Mel Carter is 86. Author Janet Evanovich is 82. Filmmaker John Waters is 79. Basketball Hall of Famer Spencer Haywood is 76. Singer Peter Frampton is 75. Actor-comedian Ryan Stiles is 66. Actor Jeffrey Dean Morgan is 59. Actor Sheryl Lee is 58. Actor-talk show host Sherri Shepherd is 58. Actor Eric Mabius is 54. Entrepreneur Sam Altman is 40. Actor Amber Heard is 39. Former NFL running back Marshawn Lynch is 39. Rapper-singer Machine Gun Kelly is 35.