

# 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.**

## 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.

## Thursday, April 24

Senior Menu: Bratwurst on bun, sauerkraut, corn, fruited Jell-O.

School Breakfast: Pancake on a stick.

School Lunch: Chicken and noodles, mixed vegetables.

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

Track at Redfield, 10 a.m.

Middle School Spring Concert, 7 p.m.

## Friday, April 25

Senior Menu: Chicken cacciatore, rice pilaf, Italian bread, apple sauce, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Egg bake.

School Lunch: Beef vegetable soup, sandwich.

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

Junior High Track at Groton Area, 2 p.m.

Baseball hosts. Warner/Ipswich/Northwestern/Frederick, 5:30 p.m.

## Saturday, April 26

Track at Ipswich, 10 a.m.

**Groton Daily Independent**  
**PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445**  
**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.**

## State Department Overhaul

Secretary of State Marco Rubio announced a reorganization of the State Department yesterday, calling for a 15% reduction in force across the US (roughly 2,000 positions) and consolidation of more than 100 offices worldwide. An internal working group is tasked with executing the plan by July 1.

The 132 offices slated to be cut represent roughly 18% of the State Department's offices. They include offices related to women's issues, criminal justice, and promoting democracy. Two offices will be added: one focusing on cybersecurity and artificial intelligence, and another to coordinate aid programs that remain following the dismantling of the US Agency for International Development. Regional bureaus will not be affected, including the Bureau of African Affairs, despite an earlier report.

The overhaul is part of the Trump administration's aim to downsize the federal government and reduce the national debt. The State Department is the oldest executive agency, with a \$63.5B budget for FY2025.

## Mahmoud v. Taylor

The Supreme Court heard arguments yesterday in a case that will determine whether parents of public schoolchildren have a constitutional right to opt their kids out of lessons featuring LGBTQ characters and themes.

The challenge comes from a group of Muslim, Catholic, and Ukrainian Orthodox parents who say Maryland's Montgomery County Public Schools violated their First Amendment rights by refusing to allow exemptions from lessons they believe conflict with their religious views. The district—the most religiously diverse in the US—introduced the books in 2022 to reflect its diverse student body, initially allowing opt-outs but later ending the policy, citing disruptions to classroom instruction.

Lower courts ruled in favor of the district, finding exposure to the books does not coerce children to abandon their religious beliefs and that parents remain free to teach their values at home. The Supreme Court's decision is expected later this year.

Separately, a federal appeals court is weighing the Pentagon's ban on transgender individuals from serving openly in the military.

## Global Growth Slowdown

The International Monetary Fund yesterday lowered its 2025 growth outlook for the US and the global economy, citing heightened uncertainty and economic disruption caused by President Donald Trump's sweeping new tariffs.

The IMF trimmed the 2025 US growth estimate to 1.8% from 2.7%, the largest reduction among the world's advanced economies, and cut the global growth forecast to 2.8% from 3.3%. The fund cautioned the trade policy climate and ongoing conflicts between the US and other tariff-hit countries are discouraging investment and spending. US inflation is now predicted to reach 3% this year, one percentage point higher than the IMF's January projection, while the risk of a US recession has increased to 40%, up from 25% in October.

Separately, the White House signaled trade tensions with China could cool, while businesses continued to announce investments in the US, including yogurt maker Chobani, which plans to invest at least \$1.2B in New York, and Swiss pharma giant Roche, which aims to invest \$50B over the next five years.

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## Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

WWE's WrestleMania 41, which was broadcast on Peacock and Netflix over two nights, saw 114% increase in viewership over 2024's event.

Mike Patrick, play-by-play commentator and voice of ESPN's "Sunday Night Football" for 18 seasons, dies at age 80.

NCAA conditionally approves rule to allow direct payment to athletes, pending House of Representatives settlement.

"60 Minutes" executive producer Bill Owens resigns after 37 years with CBS News, citing inability to make "independent decisions" about the show's programming.

Former Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin (R) loses retrial of defamation lawsuit against The New York Times.

## Science & Technology

Astronomers discover rapidly disintegrating planet, producing a comet-like tail as it orbits; Mercury-sized planet loses amount of material equivalent to Mount Everest roughly every 30 hours.

Genomic analysis reveals 60-million-year evolutionary history of domesticated and wild apples; results may lead to more resilient and flavorful varieties.

Study of 2016 bird flu strain reveals the virus was a single mutation from being able to bind to receptors in human cells, becoming much more transmissible; variant is no longer in circulation

## Business & Markets

US stock markets close higher (S&P 500 +2.5%, Dow +2.7%, Nasdaq +2.7%) after US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said trade talks with China will likely lead to de-escalation.

Tesla reports 20% drop in auto revenue as Q1 results miss estimates; company reports \$409M in net income on \$19.3B in revenue, a 71% drop in profit from same period last year.

Elon Musk says he will scale back DOGE work starting in May.

Boeing to sell parts of its digital aviation business to private equity firm Thoma Bravo in all-cash deal valued at over \$10B.

RTX and GE Aerospace expect estimated \$850M and \$500M losses from US import tariffs, respectively.

## Politics & World Affairs

Food and Drug Administration to phase out the use of eight petroleum-based artificial dyes from US food supplies and medications by end of 2026; comes three months after the FDA ordered a ban on Red Dye No. 3 by January 2027.

Three federal prosecutors who worked on now-dropped criminal corruption case against New York City Mayor Eric Adams (D) resign, say they won't admit to any wrongdoing as a condition for their reinstatement from administrative leave.

At least 26 tourists at a resort in Indian-controlled Kashmir killed after gunmen open fire in region known for separatist violence; India and Pakistan divided control of the Kashmir region in 1947, but both claim the entire territory.

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Newsweek

The  
**Bulletin**

YOUR DAILY BRIEFING OF  
EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW

## WORLD IN BRIEF

- Pope Francis: The public has now been given access to Pope Francis's casket as he lies in state in St. Peter's Basilica for three days of mourning ahead of his funeral on Saturday, April 26.
- Kashmir massacre: A leisurely afternoon at the Baisaran meadows near Pahalgam—a postcard-perfect alpine pasture in Jammu and Kashmir—turned into carnage on April 22.
- Russian economy dealt blow: Russia's government has predicted the price of its oil will plummet to its lowest level in half a decade, posing a challenge to the country's sanction-hit economy.
- Social Security benefits to be interrupted? Former Social Security Commissioner Martin O'Malley is warning that benefit payments could soon be delayed for millions of Americans, citing deep staffing cuts and internal chaos at the Social Security Administration under the Trump administration.
- World's biggest construction site: Work on the Line, the cornerstone of Saudi Arabia's Neom construction project, has been announced in new images from one of the project's top executives. See the images [here](#).
- DOGE's future: Tesla CEO Elon Musk said Tuesday he plans to have a reduced role as the leader of the Department of Government Efficiency beginning in May.

## China Responds to Trump's Softening Tone on Trade

The rundown: China said "our doors are wide open" for talks after President Donald Trump softened his tone on the unfolding trade war between the world's two largest economies.

Why it matters: Guo Jiakun, China's foreign ministry spokesperson, made the comments at a press briefing on Wednesday, according to Chinese state media. The day before, Trump had expressed optimism about making a deal with China and said he had a good relationship with the Chinese president, Xi Jinping. He also said he expected "very high" tariffs on Chinese imports will "come down substantially, but it won't be zero." Separately, U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent told private investors that the trade war with China was unsustainable and he expected a de-escalation soon, according to The Associated Press.

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.



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## Tietz is double winner as girls take second at Britton-Hecla Track Meet

The girls track team took second place at the Britton-Hecla Invitational Meet held Tuesday while the boys team took fifth.

Winners were Keegen Tracy in the 100m dash, Jayden Schwan in the 3200m run, the boys and girls 4x100 relay team, the boys and girls SMR 1600m relay team, MaKenna Krause in the 100m dash, McKenna Tietz won both hurdle events, the girls 4x400m relay team and the girls 4x800m relay team.

### Boy's Division

**Team Scores:** 1. Aberdeen Roncalli 116.5, 2. Wilmot 76, 3. Warner 72, 3. Leola 72, 5. Groton Area 69, 6. Britton-Hecla 64.5, 7. Ellendale 64, 8. Northwestern 46, 9. Tri-State 45, 10. Webster Area 44, 11. Florence/Henry 37, 12. Frederick Area 31, 13. Aberdeen Christian 19, 14. Waubay/Summit 17,

**100 Meters:** 1. Keegen Tracy, 11.53; 14. Ryder Schelle, 12.54

**200 Meters:** 26. Jordan Schwan, 26.61; 33. Ryder Schelle, 27.49

**400 Meters:** 14. Jordan Schwan, 1:00.34; 26. Ryder Schelle, 1:03.64

**800 Meters:** 4. Jayden Schwan, 2:13.25; 15. Kason Oswald, 2:28.01

**1600 Meters:** 2. Jayden Schwan, 4:54.86; 14. Jace Johnson, 5:24.87

**3200 Meters:** 1. Jayden Schwan, 11:09.86

**300m Hurdles - 36":** 8. Tristin McGannon, 49.80

**4x100 Relay:** 1. (Brevin Fliehs, Jordan Schwan, Ethan Kroll, Lincoln Krause), 47.17

**4x200 Relay:** 4. (Brevin Fliehs, Jordan Schwan, Ethan Kroll, Lincoln Krause), 1:39.46.

**4x800 Relay:** 2. (Jayden Schwan, Jace Johnson, Tristin McGannon, Blake Pauli), 8:41.74.

**SMR 1600m - [200-200-400-800]:** 1. (Brevin Fliehs, Lincoln Krause, Keegen Tracy, Blake Pauli), 3:48.32.

**Long Jump:** 8. Ethan Kroll, 18' 1.75"; 26. Kason Oswald, 14' 11.75"

**Triple Jump:** 8. Ethan Kroll, 35' 5"

### Girl's Division

**Team Scores:** 1. Warner 149.5, 2. Groton Area 132.5, 3. Webster Area 107.25, 4. Britton-Hecla 69, 5. Northwestern 67.5, 6. Aberdeen Roncalli 57, 7. Florence/Henry 47.25, 8. Aberdeen Christian 45, 9. Tri-State 31, 10. Ellendale 14, 11. Langford Area 12, 12. Frederick Area 7, 13. Leola 6, 14. Wilmot 2, 14. Waubay/Summit 2

**100 Meters:** 1. MaKenna Krause, 13.32; 6. Laila Roberts, 13.87; 23. Elizabeth Fliehs, 15.15

**200 Meters:** 3. MaKenna Krause, 28.28; 24. Elizabeth Fliehs, 31.72

**800 Meters:** 2. Ryelle Gilbert, 2:35.20; 5. Ashlynn Warrington, 2:40.59

**1600 Meters:** 5. Ryelle Gilbert, 5:56.65; 6. Ashlynn Warrington, 5:58.78

**100m Hurdles - 33":** 1. McKenna Tietz, 17.56; 5. Emerlee Jones, 19.10; 7. Ella Kettner, 19.73; 8. Talli Wright, 19.76; 12. Hannah Sandness, 20.32; 15. Teagan Hanten, 21.18

**300m Hurdles - 30":** 1. McKenna Tietz, 51.40; 2. Emerlee Jones, 54.96; 4. Talli Wright, 58.11; 9. Ella Kettner, 59.99; 10. Teagan Hanten, 1:00.27; 11. Hannah Sandness, 1:03.46

**4x100 Relay:** 1. (Laila Roberts, Kella Tracy, McKenna Tietz, MaKenna Krause), 51.94.

**4x400 Relay:** 1. (Laila Roberts, Taryn Traphagen, Kella Tracy, McKenna Tietz), 4:12.87.

**4x800 Relay:** 1. (Faith Traphagen, Taryn Traphagen, Kella Tracy, Ryelle Gilbert), 10:10.42.

**SMR 1600m - [200-200-400-800]:** 1. (Laila Roberts, Kella Tracy, Taryn Traphagen, Faith Traphagen), 4:35.34.

**Shot Put - 4kg:** 4. Emma Kutter, 33' 5"; 17. Libby Cole, 27' 1"; 20. Avery Crank, 26' 1"; 31. Ashley Johnson, 23' 7"; 33. Audrey Davis, 23' 5.5"

**Discus - 1kg:** 10. Avery Crank, 80' 9"; 14. Emma Kutter, 73' 5"; 20. Ashley Johnson, 68' 1"; 31. Libby Cole, 62' 0"; 37. Kyleigh Kroll, 56' 0"

**High Jump:** 3. Emerlee Jones, 4' 6"

**Long Jump:** 5. MaKenna Krause, 14' 2"; 18. Teagan Hanten, 12' 7"; 30. Rylie Rose, 10' 11"; 31. Addison Hoffman, 10' 9.5"

**Triple Jump:** 12. Emerlee Jones, 27' 11.75"; 14. Teagan Hanten, 27' 8"PR

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**Groton Freshman Kason Oswald running in the highly competitive 800m run.** (Photo by Bruce Babcock)



**Groton Sophomore standout McKenna Tietz placed first in all of her four races Wednesday in Britton. Shown here anchoring the 1st place 4x400m (mile) relay. She also had 1st place finishes in the 4x100m relay, 100m Hurdles, and 300m I hurdles.** (Photo by Bruce Babcock)



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**Lincoln Krause hands off to Keegan Tracy in the 1st place finish in the SMR 1600m relay.** (Photo by Bruce Babcock)



**Jaydon Schwan had a great afternoon at the Orville Pfitzer Relays in Britton Tuesday. Jaydon placed first in the 3200m, second in the 1600m, and started the first leg of the second finishing 4x800m relay.** (Photo by Bruce Babcock)



**Keegan Tracy hands off to Blake Pauli for the last leg of the winning SMR 1600m relay.**

(Photo by Bruce Babcock)



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**Three of the six Groton girl hurdlers in the 300m intermediates race. L-R Teagan Hanson, Ella Kettner, and Talli Wright.** (Photo by Bruce Babcock)



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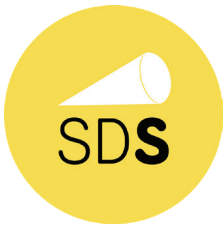
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**Long distance standout Ryelle Gilbert placing second in the 800m race.** (Photo by Bruce Babcock)



**Faith Traphagen running the lead leg of the winning girls 4x800m relay.** (Photo by Bruce Babcock)



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### South Dakota regulators deny carbon pipeline permit again, but company vows to reapply

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - APRIL 22, 2025 5:12 PM

Summit Carbon Solutions' pipeline route as proposed in its permit application is "not viable," South Dakota regulators determined Tuesday in Pierre. The Public Utilities Commission voted 2-1 to deny the company's application, but Summit immediately pledged to reapply with a "reduced scope."

It was the second South Dakota denial for Summit, which has been seeking a permit to build a portion of its proposed \$9 billion pipeline through South Dakota since 2022. The commission denied the company's first application in 2023, after which the company modified its route and reapplied.

The pipeline would carry carbon dioxide emissions captured from ethanol plants in five states to an underground storage site in North Dakota, where a Summit official has acknowledged some carbon could

also be used to extract oil from old wells. The project seeks to capitalize on a broader federal push to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and could qualify for federal tax credits tied to carbon sequestration.

Its path forward was complicated by the South Dakota Legislature's passage of a carbon pipeline eminent domain ban, which was signed into law by Gov. Larry Rhoden in March. Eminent domain is a legal process that allows qualifying entities to acquire access to private land for projects in the public interest, with compensation for landowners determined by a court.

Summit had relied on that authority to survey land and secure access from property owners unwilling to sign voluntary easements.

A spokeswoman with the company vowed Tuesday in a prepared statement to refile an application for the project that "reflects a reduced scope and continued engagement with landowners and plant partners."



**From left, South Dakota Public Utilities Commissioners Kristie Fiegen, Gary Hanson and Chris Nelson wait for a hearing to begin on Jan. 15, 2025, in Sioux Falls.** (Makenzie Huber/

South Dakota Searchlight)

### Opposing landowners celebrate

Too many landowners at key points along the proposed route vowed to never sign an easement agreement for the project, rendering the application incomplete and ill prepared for the permitting process to



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continue, said Commissioner Kristie Fiegen during the meeting.

"Summit's route is uncertain at this point," Fiegen said. "We really don't know the route. We don't know the timeframes. We don't know their plan."

PUC staff said the permit could be denied because "substantive changes" will be needed to the application if the company can't move forward with the route it has on file. Denying the application would then be "the cleanest path forward," according to the staff's filed recommendation.

Attorney Brian Jorde, representing landowners opposed to the project, said the application is impossible because "there's nothing they can do to change these folks' minds." Seventy-nine South Dakota landowners declared they would never sign an easement, according to one of the commissioners.

"Is there another route?" Jorde said. "Yes, but not in this application."

Property owners opposed to the pipeline applauded the commission's decision. Ed Fischbach, a vocal critic of the project, said in a news release that the decision acknowledges "the company has run out of road to build" and frees landowners "to get on with their lives and businesses."

But Canton Republican Rep. Karla Lems, who carried the successful eminent domain ban during the legislative session, said she has "a hard time believing" the project is over, especially if federal tax credits remain available.

The decision affirms that South Dakota is "open for business, but not for sale," she said.

"If you have a great project and want to get it done in South Dakota, you should come in and do it the South Dakota way and people should be able to say yes or no to your project," Lems said.

## Summit officials 'remain committed' to state

The Public Utilities Commission instructed Summit earlier this month to present a plan to illustrate how the company can move forward – or not – under the new state law barring its use of eminent domain. At its previous meeting, the commission denied Summit's request for a pause in permit proceedings.

Summit has permits in North Dakota, Minnesota and Iowa, but some of the permits are being challenged in court. Nebraska does not have a permitting process for the project. A bill to ban eminent domain for carbon dioxide pipelines is being considered in the Iowa statehouse.

Summit attorney Brett Koenecke opposed South Dakota regulators' decision Tuesday, calling it "a prejudice" to the company pushed by opponents.

"You should ask yourselves why they're fighting so hard to have this application denied and sent back," Koenecke told commissioners. "I'd submit to you that the answer is likely they know it's harder to restart."

Commissioner Chris Nelson dissented from his colleagues Fiegen and Gary Hanson, arguing that Summit's declaration that "they're not going to challenge" the eminent domain ban, in addition to minor changes to the pipeline's planned route, are enough for the project to move forward.

Summit filed paperwork with the commission this month stating that it would rather work with its current application and route than seek court orders or refer the ban to the voters, adding that "threatening legal action is counter-productive to attempting to do business in good faith in the state."

In a prepared statement, the Summit spokeswoman said company officials are "disappointed" in the commission's decision but "remain committed" to South Dakota and the project.

"Without it the ethanol industry, farmers and land values in the state will all suffer," she said.

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

## Thieves steal campaign funds from political committees and politicians, including Thune

BY: DAVE LEVINTHAL - APRIL 22, 2025 11:56 AM

Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-South Dakota, is one of the most powerful members of Congress. But even he is not immune from thieves who've been raiding the accounts of politicians and political committees with near-impunity.

Thune's leadership political action committee, Heartland Values PAC, lost \$5,949 in a "check fraud" incident on Nov. 1, according to Federal Election Commission records.

Thune's office did not respond to a series of questions, but a source familiar with the theft confirmed the incident to OpenSecrets, adding: "The activity was quickly identified and reported, and it remains under investigation."

Meanwhile, two-term Rep. Brittany Pettersen, D-Colorado, had a rough December. Her campaign disclosed 14 separate "fraudulent" debit card charges between Dec. 3 and Dec. 9, involving payments to Uber Eats and Facebook.

Total damage: about \$600.

Pettersen's congressional office did not respond to several emails and phone calls, but in a filing with the FEC, the Brittany Pettersen for Colorado campaign committee indicated that its bank refunded the charges.

Thune and Pettersen are among more than a dozen elected leaders and federal political committees — conservative and liberal — that have lost three-, four- or five-figure sums from their campaign accounts because of theft, fraud, embezzlement, unauthorized charges or other financial shenanigans, according to an OpenSecrets analysis of federal campaign finance records filed since the November election.

These incidents add to dozens of other thefts this decade from political committees small and large, including those led by national parties, notable corporations, powerful lawmakers and even a president.

The stolen money — sometimes recovered, often not — has collectively soared into the millions of dollars.

And while that represents just a small fraction of the overall amount spent on federal elections — the 2024 federal election cost more than \$15.9 billion, according to an OpenSecrets analysis — the thefts hurt both the political committees themselves as well as donors, whose contributions ultimately pay for pilfered items ranging from luxury goods to Uber rides, not political advocacy.

Rep. Neal Dunn, R-Florida, has long crusaded for improved U.S. Postal Service delivery standards, including defending against a rash of check thefts from mail boxes and facilities.



**U.S. Sen. John Thune, R-South Dakota, speaks to the Brandon Valley Area Chamber of Commerce on Nov. 26, 2024, in Brandon.** (Makenzie

Huber/South Dakota Searchlight)



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"This is a growing issue nationwide and it must be fixed," Dunn told the Tallahassee Democrat last year. The lawmaker later blasted the "substandard safety, security, and maintenance" of postal facilities in his Florida Panhandle district.

But Dunn's own congressional campaign reported losing \$12,090 across three different check theft incidents during late October and early November — after having lost nearly \$11,000 in a separate theft incident in late 2022.

Friends of Neal Dunn "was victimized by an external check fraud situation" and "the committee immediately notified the bank of the fraud and froze the account," treasurer Caleb Crosby acknowledged in a letter to the FEC on Feb. 6.

Some, but not all of the funds have been recovered, Dunn's committee told the FEC. His congressional office declined to comment, and Crosby did not return requests for comment.

Check fraud also caused the Tarrant County (Texas) Republican Victory Fund PAC to lose \$6,980 in late November, federal records indicate.

Fred Tate, treasurer for the county GOP, described the incident as "old school" check swiping via the U.S. mail, where an unknown "bad actor" changed the recipient's name, altered the \$980 check to read \$6,980 — and then cashed it.

The committee reported the incident to police in Fort Worth, Texas, but an "officer called me after the report was filed and advised they had no suspects, and they said it would be hard to find the perpetrator," Tate told OpenSecrets. The committee did get its money back, however, as its bank refunded the lost money from the altered check, "as they never should have cashed it," Tate said.

U.S. Postal Service spokesperson Martha Johnson acknowledged OpenSecrets' request for comment, but the Postal Service did not otherwise respond to questions sent by email.

## A crime wave

Over at the National Republican Congressional Committee, someone used the committee's credit card late last year for a luxury shopping spree, spending \$1,475 at Canada Goose and \$950 at Fendi. An NRCC official confirmed the committee disputed the charges with its credit card company and received a refund.

"The NRCC takes pride in being a responsible steward of donor support. This incident proves that our systems work, and we'll continue to ensure every dollar is spent wisely, securely and with purpose," NRCC spokesperson Emily Tuttle said in a statement to OpenSecrets.

Indiana Republican state Sen. Andy Zay, who lost a 2024 U.S. House primary, reported losing \$297 on Dec. 30 through "fraudulent" charges, with the money being spent on TikTok-related purchases, according to federal records. Zay's committee did not respond to requests for comment.

Other federal political committees that have recently reported incidents of theft and fraud to the FEC included CNX Resources Corporation Political Action Committee (\$2,398.99 stolen), the Washington State Republican Party (\$999 stolen), the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades Political Action Together Political Committee (\$300 stolen).

The Mason Tenders District Council of New York and Long Island PAC reported several "fraudulent" charges in February from a "stolen" American Express card that totaled \$871.68. The thief used the stolen money to make Amazon purchases, as well as a \$199 purchase from Clear — the airport security identification company — and a \$180.08 purchase at a Japanese restaurant.

The same labor PAC also lost \$4,308.84 when someone made 29 fraudulent Venmo and Uber transactions over a seven-week period in 2023, Raw Story reported.

None of these committees responded to requests for comment.

During the past several years, numerous other high-profile politicians and political committees have grappled with campaign account theft and misappropriations.

They include former President Joe Biden, rapper and former presidential candidate Kanye West, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-New York, Virginia Democratic Sens. Tim Kaine and Mark Warner, former Speaker Kevin McCarthy, former Rep. Matt Gaetz, R-Florida, Democratic House member turned

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Trump Cabinet official Tulsi Gabbard and Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-New York.

Also hit by the financial crime wave: The Republican National Committee, Wisconsin Republican Party, Oregon Republican Party, anti-Donald Trump super PAC Lincoln Project and the pro-Democrat Retired Americans PAC.

Other theft victims include the PACs of Google, Goldman Sachs, Morgan Stanley, Humane Society, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, National Corn Growers Association and State Farm Insurance.

## How to play defense

What is a political committee to do to defend against fraud?

Some political committees materialize quickly and lack proper internal controls, quality financial safety practices and experienced accounting staffers, said Morris Pearl, chairman of Patriotic Millionaires, a coalition of wealthy Americans that advocates for campaign finance reforms.

"It probably makes them an attractive opportunity for thieves," Pearl said.

The Department of Homeland Security provides campaigns with a cybersecurity checklist, as "political campaigns are facing cyber-attacks of varied sophistication."

The FEC also provides guidance on what to do if a theft, misappropriation or embezzlement is discovered.

FEC spokesman Myles Martin noted that the commission has for years maintained a "safe harbor provision" that shields political committees from civil penalties if they misreport their campaign finance income and spending after they experience a theft or internal misappropriation by staffers.

Dunn's committee, for one, decided to enroll in a "positive pay" program with its bank, "allowing the committee to proactively monitor and verify the legitimacy of checks issued," Crosby told the FEC.

Tate, of the Tarrant County Republican Party, said his committee's existing accounting procedures "were validated as the fraud was discovered fast and actioned accordingly."

In at least one recent case, an apparent theft didn't turn out to be quite what it seemed.

The Democratic State Central Committee of Maryland spotted an "unauthorized transaction" in January for \$224.32.

But it turned out to be an errant charge from the committee's cable internet provider, Comcast, not a case of fraud. Comcast quickly reversed the charge when the committee contacted customer service, said Joe Francaviglia, the party's deputy executive director.

"In the end," Francaviglia told OpenSecrets, "all was well."

*Dave Levinthal is a Washington, D.C.-based investigative journalist. He served as OpenSecrets' editorial and communications director from 2009 to 2011.*

## COMMENTARY

### United efforts are key to protect rural America from funding-freeze damage

by Travis Entenman

My recent trip to Washington, D.C., sponsored by United Today, Stronger Tomorrow (UTST), was a powerful reminder of what can be achieved when community members unite to educate decisionmakers about the priorities they've identified as most important back at home.

Alongside 40 mostly rural and remote leaders from a broad range of organizations, sectors, and elected offices across eight states, we brought critical issues to the forefront by sharing specific, data-supported, real-world impacts of freezing, cutting, or clawing back federal investments in our communities. Together, we were able to lift up rural and remote voices in the halls of power.

Northern Prairies Land Trust (NPLT) has long championed conservation efforts across South Dakota. Our work preserving grasslands and advocating for farmers and ranchers aligns perfectly with UTST's own com-



mitment to developing grassroots leaders to advocate on their own behalf for priorities that they've identified. In half-a-dozen meetings, we emphasized the urgent need to address the U.S. Department of Agriculture funding freeze, which is jeopardizing vital conservation programs and leaving producers without promised resources.

The USDA funding freeze has placed farmers in an untenable position, with many struggling to cover costs for projects initiated under programs like the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP). As I've noted in recent writings, this freeze undermines an already fragile trust between producers and government agencies. Farmers and ranchers who have invested in fencing, cover crops, and renewable energy systems are now left uncertain about their financial futures. Our advocacy aimed to restore that trust by educating policymakers about the dire consequences of interrupting these federal investments, choosing not to honor existing contracts, or refusing to release funds critical to sustaining rural and remote economies.

While streamlining the federal government is a valid goal, it should not come at the expense of rural and remote communities and the environment. We need targeted solutions that address inefficiencies without jeopardizing vital conservation programs. During my meetings with our members of Congress, I emphasized the need for a more nuanced approach that considers the unique needs of agricultural communities. Their reactions, both positive and surprised, emphasized the importance of flying "experts from the field" to Washington, D.C., to share, face-to-face, the fruits of our experiences "on the ground."

The USDA's actions threaten the progress we have made in promoting regenerative agriculture and conservation. It is imperative that we reverse these harmful cuts and ensure that farmers have the resources they need to protect our land and water. My conversations in Washington underscored the urgency of this issue, and I urge policymakers to prioritize the needs of our agricultural communities.

Despite these challenges, our meetings with lawmakers were encouraging. Our members of Congress expressed a willingness to explore solutions that would restore funding and support farmers who have already invested in conservation projects. The discussions highlighted the importance of organizations like NPLT and UTST in bridging the gap between local needs and federal policy. These moments of collaboration underscored a shared commitment to protecting both agricultural livelihoods and natural resources.

As we move forward, it is clear that unity, education, and advocacy are key to overcoming challenges



**Participants in a Washington, D.C., fly-in sponsored by United Today, Stronger Tomorrow included, from left, Liz Tiger and Rick Bell, of Dakota Rural Action, Travis Entenman and Ross Wright, of Northern Prairies Land Trust, and Micayla Ter Wee, of United Today, Stronger Tomorrow.**

(Courtesy of Travis Entenman)

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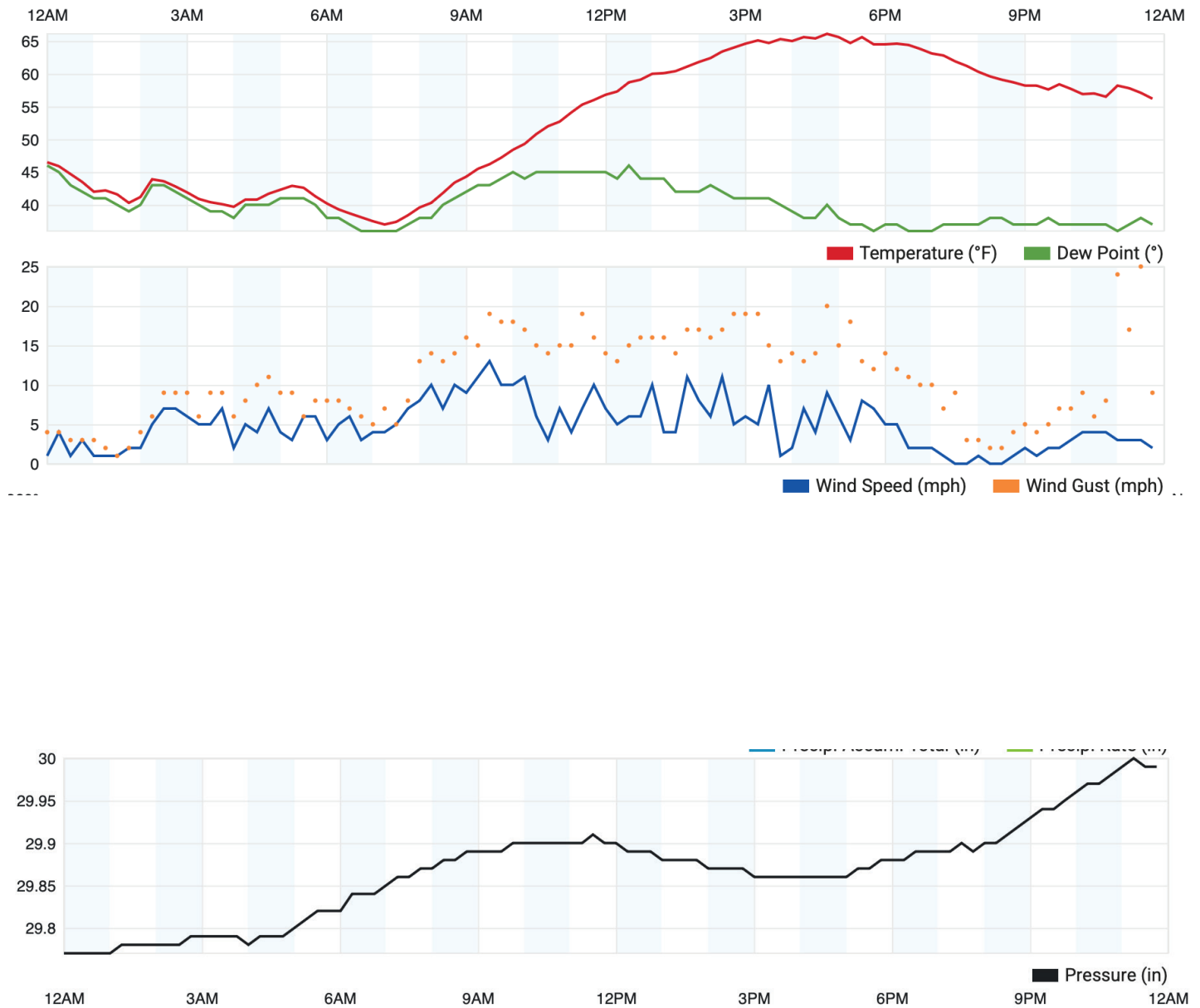
like the USDA funding freeze. The positivity and progress from our meetings in Washington give hope that solutions are within reach. In fact, this week, UTST will join local farmers, community organizations, and health centers for the South Dakota Stronger Tomorrow Rural Bus Tour with members of Congress who are home on recess. This time, the policymakers will be on our turf, and I anticipate it will result in an even deeper understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities federal investments can manifest in South Dakota. What's certain is that together with partners like UTST, we will continue to champion producers, conservationists, and rural and remote communities — proving that united efforts today truly lead to a stronger tomorrow.

*Travis Entenman is the executive director for Friends of the Big Sioux River, executive director of Northern Prairies Land Trust, and sits on the board of supervisors at the Minnehaha Conservation District. He received his bachelor's degree in journalism from South Dakota State University and his master's in environmental law and policy from Vermont Law School.*

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs





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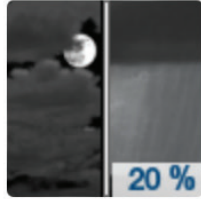
Today



High: 61 °F

Mostly Sunny

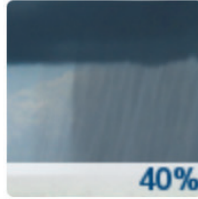
Tonight



Low: 39 °F

Mostly Cloudy  
then Slight  
Chance  
Showers

Thursday



High: 55 °F

Chance  
Showers

Thursday  
Night



Low: 38 °F

Chance  
Showers

Friday



High: 64 °F

Mostly Sunny



NWS Aberdeen, SD

Today



A blend of clouds and sun then  
increasing clouds west to east

25 to 40% chance of rain over  
south central SD

Highs: 56 to 62°F

Tonight



Mostly Cloudy

40 to 85% chance of rain  
- Highest over central SD

Lows: 38 to 43°F

Rainfall chances will increase this evening and tonight (40 to 85%) with rain continuing through Thursday. Rainfall amounts generally between 0.25 to 0.75", highest over south central SD with amounts diminishing around Highway 12 and eastward

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 66 °F at 4:43 PM**

**Low Temp: 37 °F at 7:06 AM**

**Wind: 24 mph at 10:56 PM**

**Precip: : 0.01**

Day length: 14 hours, 00 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 90 in 2009

Record Low: 14 in 1956

Average High: 61

Average Low: 34

Average Precip in April.: 1.27

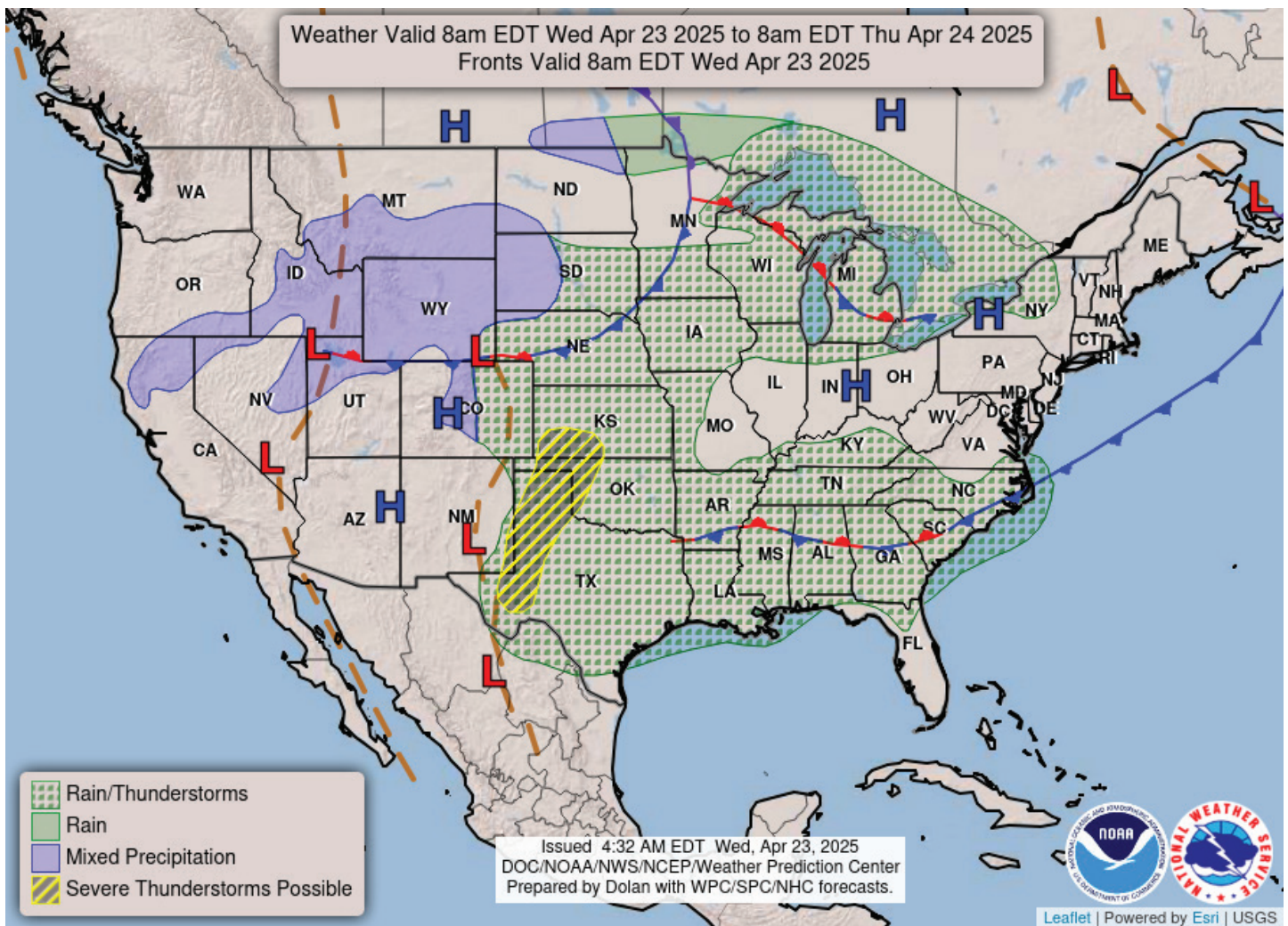
Precip to date in April.: 1.36

Average Precip to date: 3.33

Precip Year to Date: 1.99

Sunset Tonight: 8:30:37 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:28:58 am



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## **Today in Weather History**

April 23rd, 2002: High winds of 35 to 50 mph, gusting to over 70 mph, occurred across much of central and northeast South Dakota. The high winds caused some spotty damage to property and trees. With the dry conditions, the winds stirred up dust, reducing visibility at many locations. The highest wind gust was 72 mph at Onida.

1885 - The city of Denver, CO, was in the midst of a storm which produced 23 inches of snow in 24 hours, and at Idaho Springs CO produced 32 inches of snow. (David Ludlum)

1910 - The temperature at the Civic Center in Los Angeles, CA, hit 100 degrees to establish an April record for the city. (The Weather Channel)

1983 - A mini-blizzard produced sixteen inches of snow at Laramie, WY, including a foot of snow in just eight hours during the night. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Thunderstorms in the Atlantic Coast Region produced golf ball size hail and wind gusts to 67 mph at Anderson SC. The high winds destroyed two planes at the airport, and the large hail damaged fifty other planes, and severely damaged twenty-three greenhouses. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - An intense winter-like storm brought thunderstorms to southern California, and produced snow in some of the higher elevations. Nine girls at Tustin CA were injured when lightning struck the tree under which their softball team had taken shelter from the rain. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Salina, KS, was the hot spot in the nation with a high of 105 degrees. The high of 105 degrees established an April record for the state of Kansas. A total of eighteen cities in the central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data) (The Weather Channel)

1990 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather in West Texas and western Oklahoma. Thunderstorms produced tennis ball size hail at Lake McKenzie TX and at Garden City TX, and produced wind gusts to 90 mph at Gage OK. Thunderstorms drenched southeast Minnesota with heavy rain, with 6.6 inches reported northwest of Browndale. High temperatures were mostly in the 80s across the central U.S. The morning low of 67 degrees at Fargo ND and afternoon high of 91 degrees were both records for the date. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)



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Daily Devotion

## God's Grand Plan

**When we accept the gift of salvation, God begins the process of healing all that is broken within us.**

1 Peter 1:13-16: English Standard Version  
Called to Be Holy

<sup>13</sup> Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. <sup>14</sup> As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, <sup>15</sup> but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, <sup>16</sup> since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

First Peter 1:16 says, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." What an overwhelming command! But that is exactly what the Lord is committed to do in our life—make us holy. His grand plan can be summed up in one word: sanctification. This is the three-stage process by which He sets us apart for His purposes.

Stage one occurs at salvation. When God declares us righteous, we are positionally holy. The second stage is a progression of growth as we become more and more holy in practice. This process will continue as long as we are alive on this earth. Desiring that we be conformed to the image of His Son, the Father is continually working to shape our character, conduct, and conversation (2 Corinthians 3:17-18).

The third stage of sanctification is our ultimate perfection when we will possess absolute holiness. Upon our physical death, we are freed from sin, and in the resurrection, our bodies will be made perfect. We will stand faultless and spotless before Christ.

If we could just get a glimpse of what the third stage will be like, we would never moan and groan about the difficult sanctification process we endure now. Our eyes would be fixed on the goal, and our greatest motivation would be to glorify God by submitting to His transformation.

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## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.22.25

25 39 49 52 65 22

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$60,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 54 Mins 19 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: 16 Hrs 9 Mins 19 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.22.25

14 31 36 39 44 8

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 24 Mins 19 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.19.25

4 14 21 28 35

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$118,000**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 24 Mins 19 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.21.25

18 23 34 35 67 13

TOP PRIZE:

**\$10,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 53 Mins 19 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: 16 Hrs 53 Mins 18 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

### **South Dakota panel rejects permit for an \$8.9 billion carbon capture Midwest pipeline**

By SARAH RAZA Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The massive carbon capture pipeline in the Midwest was thrown into uncertainty Tuesday after South Dakota's Public Utility Commission denied its route permit application.

The commission voted 2-1 to deny the application by Iowa-based Summit Carbon Solutions, with Commissioner Kristie Fiegen saying it was "not ready to go forward" and lacked "the form and content required."

"The PUC's duty is to make a decision based on a route — one route," said Fiegen, who initiated the motion to deny. "The current route, in my view, is not viable."

South Dakota lawmakers passed an eminent domain ban for carbon capture pipelines in March that made Summit's planned route difficult, commissioners agreed. After Tuesday's decision, Summit said it will refile its application with a reduced route in South Dakota to satisfy landowners and ethanol plant partners.

"While we are disappointed in today's decision, we remain committed to South Dakota as without it the ethanol industry, farmers, and land values in the state will all suffer," the company said in a statement.

South Dakota is a crucial part of the 2,500-mile pipeline, estimated to cost \$8.9 billion. The pipeline would transport carbon emissions from ethanol plants in Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota to be stored underground permanently in North Dakota. The project already has approvals in Iowa, Minnesota and North Dakota, and Summit has invested more than \$150 million into its route in South Dakota.

Landowners rejoiced over the Tuesday decision.

"Today is a victory for South Dakota landowners and local control," Dakota Rural Action board member Ed Fischbach said in a statement. "We are grateful the PUC has made this common sense decision and freed landowners to get on with their lives and businesses."

Summit had previously requested a timeline extension on its permit application to rework its route in a way that would satisfy landowners.

Questions about the pipeline arose after South Dakota lawmakers approved a ban on eminent domain for carbon capture projects, in which the government can seize private property with compensation. Without that power, Summit would need to secure voluntary agreements with landowners along the South Dakota route.

In its filing for an extension, Summit said it would work with landowners and the state in "good faith" rather than challenge the eminent domain ban. That statement convinced commissioners that there was no path forward for Summit given the amount of landowner opposition along the current route.

Instead of pursuing legal action against the state, Summit said in its filing that additional time would allow it to "roll out new offers to landowners" and identify which branches to ethanol plants it can eliminate that face significant landowner opposition.

The ethanol industry is concentrated in the Midwest, with nearly 40% of the nation's corn used to brew ethanol. By sequestering carbon in North Dakota, Summit's pipeline promises to lower the carbon intensity of ethanol and make it more competitive as a sustainable product.

### **Immigrants in the US unlawfully can drive legally in 19 states.**

#### **Now some states want to stop them**

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.

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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 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 in the U.S., according to an AP analysis using the bill-tracking software Plural. 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.

## **S Dakota St. transfer Mark Gronowski gives Iowa’s offense hope. He was among top FCS QBs for 3 years**

By JOHN BOHNENKAMP Associated Press

IOWA CITY, Iowa (AP) — Mark Gronowski was on the losing side of what he jokingly calls “the greatest offensive game of all time.”

Gronowski was South Dakota State’s quarterback when the Jackrabbits lost 7-3 at Iowa in the 2022 season opener, when the Hawkeyes’ points came from two safeties and a field goal.

Now Gronowski’s job is to lead Iowa’s offense, which has been the butt of more than a few jokes for the way it has lumbered through recent seasons.

Iowa ranked 72nd in scoring and 117th in total offense under new offensive coordinator Tim Lester last season, an improvement over the previous two years when the Hawkeyes were at or near the bottom of the FBS rankings in both categories.

But Iowa still ranked 129th in passing, so the need for a quarterback out of the NCAA transfer portal was an offseason necessity.

Gronowski likes having the chance to help the Hawkeyes.

“Talking with Lester and kind of seeing the progression of the offense from the prior year to this last year was really cool to see, and he wants to continue to grow (the passing) offense as well,” Gronowski said.

Gronowski threw for 10,308 yards and won 49 games in his four seasons at South Dakota State, leading the Jackrabbits to FCS national championships in 2022 and 2023. He was the winner of the Walter Payton Award in 2023, given to the top offensive player in the Football Championship Subdivision.

The native of Naperville, Illinois, went into the transfer portal after last season and considered entering the NFL draft, but decided to stay in college because of a shoulder injury that required offseason surgery.

“That whole process, the transfer portal itself, is a crazy deal,” said Gronowski, who estimated at one point early in the process he had 100 missed calls and another 100 missed texts from recruiters. “Definitely talked to a lot of different scouts about my opportunities in the NFL, and we kind of decided — me and my parents and my agent — that it was going to be best to come back for another year.

“And after talking with Iowa and just the culture here, having a Hall of Fame coach like Coach (Kirk) Ferentz, and also being very similar to what I had at South Dakota State team-wise with a winning culture, that’s why I ended up choosing Iowa.”

Ferentz hasn’t had much luck with transfer quarterbacks. Cade McNamara was injured much of his two seasons with the Hawkeyes and Brendan Sullivan, who transferred from Northwestern before last season, started the last three games and went back into the portal.

Iowa brought in quarterback Hank Brown from Auburn in addition to Gronowski, who turns 24 in October and four years’ experience as a starter.

“We got to see him on film, and that speaks for itself, whether it was how he played but more importantly

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what I think quarterback is all about — it's a leadership position," Ferentz said. "There's no avoiding that. He clearly did that. He delivered his team to victory a lot, and that's really impressive."

Gronowski hasn't done much in spring practice as he rehabilitates the injured shoulder, but he said his recovery is ahead of schedule.

"The training staff here has been awesome throughout the entire process, and the doctors have been great," Gronowski said. "Right now, as spring ball is progressing, I'm just continuing to get mental reps and trying to learn as much as I can."

Ferentz likes how Gronowski fits within the program.

"Mark is a proven player," Ferentz said. "He's done it on film. Hasn't done it at the Big Ten level necessarily, but good players are good players in my mind. The thing I'm more impressed with is the kind of person he is and his demeanor. I would call him fairly quiet, but he has a humbleness to him and a confidence to him that's very genuine."

## **The Latest: The Vatican opens St. Peter's Basilica to public to pay final respects to Pope Francis**

By The Associated Press undefined

The body of Pope Francis will be moved Wednesday morning to St. Peter's Basilica for three days of public mourning for an Argentine pontiff remembered for his humble style, concern for the poor and insistent prayers for peace.

Heads of state are expected for the funeral Saturday in St. Peter's Square, but the public viewing is largely for ordinary Catholics to grieve the 88-year-old pope, who died Monday after suffering a stroke.

The basilica will be kept open until midnight on Wednesday and Thursday to allow the faithful to mourn. The public mourning period will end on Friday at 7 p.m. local time.

Cardinals met at the Vatican on Tuesday to schedule Francis' funeral and burial, plan the conclave to elect his successor and make other decisions about running the Catholic Church.

Here's the latest:

Papua New Guinea's 1st and only cardinal will attend funeral

John Ribat is preparing to leave the poor South Pacific island on Wednesday.

"The important thing is that ... Papua New Guinea is part of the church, the global church. And to be able to have a representative from here to be in the conclave, it is a big thing," the 68-year-old Archbishop of Port Moresby told Australian Broadcasting Corp.

Francis appointed Ribat a cardinal in 2016. The pope last year visited the diverse nation with an estimated population of 12 million people and more than 800 languages.

The Vatican opens St. Peter's Basilica to general public

This will allow the faithful to pay their final respects to Pope Francis, as thousands filled the central aisle.

Taiwan will send former top official to funeral

Chen Chien-jen, a devout Catholic, will represent the island democracy, the government said Wednesday.

Relations with the Vatican are especially important to Taiwan because the Holy See is the only European state to recognize the island's sovereignty in defiance of China, which claims Taiwan as part of its territory to be annexed by force if necessary.

Chen is a former vice president and premier and recipient of several of the Vatican's highest honors. Though less than 5% of Taiwan's population is Catholic, the church has roots on the island dating back to 17th-century Spanish explorers.

Israeli Foreign Ministry deletes pope condolences post

The ministry refused to comment on its decision to post and then quickly delete the post on X, which said: "Rest in peace, Pope Francis. May his memory be a blessing."

According to Israeli media, Israeli ambassadors, especially those serving in predominantly Catholic countries, were furious over the deleted post.

Pope Francis was critical of Israel's war in Gaza, and exceptionally close to the Catholic church there, but

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had also called on Hamas to release the hostages and condemned the rise in antisemitism.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has not made any public comment on the pope's passing.

Mourners watch Francis' casket being moved

The casket passed them by along the same path the pope had travelled just days before, on Easter Sunday, in what became his final popemobile tour through the faithful.

It was a surprise salute, which Francis decided at the last minute after being assured he could do it despite his continued frail health from pneumonia.

The bells of St. Peter's toll as the body of the pope is transferred

The procession included solemn cardinals, prelates and Swiss Guards escorting the pontiff to where he will lie in state.

A choir chanted as the cardinals processed slowly through the archway gates leading out into the piazza.

JD Vance says he won't attend the pope's funeral

The U.S. vice president is currently on a four-day visit to India.

He said Wednesday that while he was able to see Pope Francis on Easter Sunday during his Vatican visit over the weekend, he didn't "realize how sick he was" and that he would always remember the pontiff as a "great pastor."

Ceremony to transfer Pope Francis' body begins

His body will be transferred from his home in the Vatican hotel to St. Peter's Basilica for three days of public viewing.

Filipino community in Taiwan gathers to mourn

Filipinos in Taiwan began gradually gathering at St. Christopher's Church, a center for a community whose members have migrated to the island to work mainly in factories and as caregivers.

"This is a church for migrants, for people who have to live away from their loved ones, and Pope Francis had a deep concern for those people," said Luz Fernandez, a housekeeper whose employer gave her time off to light a candle at the church. "He will be missed."

Philippines' Marcos remembers Francis as 'best pope in my lifetime'

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., the leader of the largest Roman Catholic nation in Asia, will attend the funeral in Rome of Pope Francis, whom he described as "the best pope in my lifetime."

Marcos, 67, will be joined by his wife, Louise Araneta-Marcos, in the trip to Rome, Communications Undersecretary Claire Castro said on Wednesday.

The Philippine leader extolled Francis as "a man of profound faith and humility."

Churches across the Philippines rang their bells Monday to mourn the death of Francis, who visited the country in 2015 to console survivors of Typhoon Haiyan.

Trump will head to Rome for funeral

Trump is planning to leave Washington on Friday morning to fly to Rome for Pope Francis' funeral services.

He'll return Saturday evening, once services are over.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt announced the president's travel plans during her briefing with reporters on Tuesday. She did not provide details on whether Trump will meet with foreign leaders during the trip, or who might travel with him as part of a U.S. delegation.

## India troops beef up security in Kashmir following attack on tourists

By AIJAZ HUSSAIN Associated Press

SRINAGAR, India (AP) — Security has been beefed up across Indian-controlled Kashmir a day after an attack killed at least 26 people, most of them tourists, as Indian forces launched a manhunt for the perpetrators of one of the deadliest attacks in the restive Himalayan region.

As investigators began probing the attack, many shops and businesses in Kashmir closed to protest the killings following a call from the region's religious and political parties.



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Tens of thousands of armed police and soldiers fanned out across the region and erected additional checkpoints. They searched cars and in some areas summoned former militants to police stations for questioning, reports said.

Police called the incident a "terror attack" and blamed militants fighting against Indian rule. There was no immediate claim of responsibility.

Pakistan offers condolences and expresses concern

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi cut short his two-day visit to Saudi Arabia and returned to New Delhi early Wednesday.

Some Indian media and some commentators immediately blamed Islamabad for directing such attacks, while Pakistan extended condolences to the victims' families.

"We are concerned at the loss of tourists' lives," Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement while wishing the injured a speedy recovery.

Officials said 24 of the people killed were Indian tourists, one was from Nepal and one was a local tourist guide. At least 17 others were injured.

Separately, soldiers killed two suspected militants in a gunfight after they tried to cross into Indian side from Pakistan-controlled Kashmir in northwestern Baramulla district along the heavily militarized Line of Control dividing the region, the Indian army said in a statement on Wednesday. There was no independent confirmation of the incident.

Kashmir has seen tourism boom despite spate of attacks

Kashmir has seen a spate of deadly attacks on Hindus, including immigrant workers from Indian states, since New Delhi ended the region's semi-autonomy in 2019 and drastically curbed dissent, civil liberties and media freedoms.

New Delhi has vigorously pushed tourism and the region has drawn millions of visitors to its Himalayan foothills and exquisitely decorated houseboats. Officials have claimed that as a sign of normalcy returning, despite the presence of ubiquitous security checkpoints, armored vehicles and patrolling soldiers. Until Tuesday, tourists were not targeted.

Following the attack, panicked tourists started to leave Kashmir.

Monojit Debnath, from the Indian city of Kolkata, said Kashmir was undoubtedly beautiful but his family did not feel secure anymore.

"We are tourists, and we should think about what safety we have here for us," Debnath told the Press Trust of India news agency as he was leaving Srinagar, the region's main city, with his family.

"It's heartbreaking to see the exodus of our guests from the valley after yesterday's tragic terror attack," Omar Abdullah, the region's top elected official, wrote on social media. "But at the same time we totally understand why people would want to leave."

Indian home minister visits

On Wednesday, India's powerful home minister Amit Shah attended a ceremony at a police control room in Srinagar, where the slain tourists were paid floral tributes. He also met families of several victims.

Shah vowed to "come down heavily on the perpetrators with the harshest consequences."

Later, Shah visited the site of the killing at Baisaran meadow, some 5 kilometers (3 miles) from the resort town of Pahalgam.

The meadow in Pahalgam is a popular destination, surrounded by snow-capped mountains and dotted with pine forests. It is visited by hundreds of tourists every day.

Meanwhile, security officials intensified operations to search for the attackers and the Indian army said in a statement that its efforts "focused on bringing the attackers to justice."

The military used helicopters to search the forested mountains for signs of the attackers.

Kashmir has been divided for decades

Nuclear-armed rivals India and Pakistan each administer a part of Kashmir but both claim the territory in its entirety.

Militants in the Indian-controlled portion of Kashmir have been fighting New Delhi's rule since 1989. Many Muslim Kashmiris support the rebels' goal of uniting the territory, either under Pakistani rule or as

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an independent country.

India describes militancy in Kashmir as Pakistan-backed terrorism. Pakistan denies the charge, and many Kashmiris consider it a legitimate freedom struggle. Tens of thousands of civilians, rebels and government forces have been killed in the conflict.

India has used heavy-handed tactics to maintain its control over the region, including giving the armed forces widespread powers to arrest, torture and summarily execute suspects, human rights groups say.

In March 2000, at least 35 civilians were shot and killed in a southern village in Kashmir shortly before a visit to India by then-President Bill Clinton.

In 2019, months before New Delhi revoked the region's autonomy, a car bomb attack by militants in southern Pulwama district killed at least 40 paramilitary soldiers and wounded dozens more, bringing India and Pakistan close to war.

Violence has ebbed in recent times in the Kashmir Valley, the heart of anti-India rebellion. Fighting between government forces and rebels has largely shifted to remote areas of Jammu region, including Rajouri, Poonch and Kathua, where Indian troops have faced deadly attacks.

## London talks on ending Russia-Ukraine war pared down as Russian drone attack on bus kills 9

By ILLIA NOVIKOV, AAMER MADHANI and JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — A planned meeting Wednesday between top U.S., British, French and Ukrainian diplomats to push for a peace deal between Russia and Ukraine was scrapped at the last minute amid little sign of progress in international efforts to end the more than three-year war.

U.K. Foreign Secretary David Lammy announced the talks in London would involve only lower-ranking officials after the U.S. State Department said Tuesday that Secretary of State Marco Rubio was unable to attend because of a scheduling issue.

Rubio's abrupt cancelation raised doubts about the direction of the negotiations. It came as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy ruled out ceding territory to Russia as part of any potential peace agreement, calling it a nonstarter. The Ukrainian leader spoke Tuesday in response to reports the Trump administration was proposing a deal that would allow Russia to keep occupied Ukrainian territory as part of a potential peace agreement.

Even achieving a limited, 30-day ceasefire has been beyond the reach of negotiators, as both sides have continued to attack each other in a grinding war of attrition along the 1,000-kilometer (620-mile) front line and launch long-range strikes.

A Russian drone struck a bus carrying workers in Marganets, in eastern Ukraine's Dnipropetrovsk region on Wednesday morning, killing seven women and two men, regional head Serhii Lysak wrote on his Telegram channel. More than 40 people were injured, he said.

Lysak published photos of a bus with its windows blown out and shards of glass mixed with blood spattered on the bus floor.

Ukrainian delegation arrives in London despite change in U.S. plans

President Donald Trump has pushed for an end to the war and said last week that negotiations were "coming to a head." That comment came after Rubio suggested that the U.S. might soon back away from negotiations if they don't progress.

Rubio had indicated that Wednesday's meeting could be decisive in determining whether the Trump administration remains engaged.

Those still attending the meeting included retired Lt. Gen. Keith Kellogg, Trump's envoy for Ukraine and Russia.

Andrii Yermak, the head of Ukraine's presidential office, said on X that a delegation including him, Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha and Defense Minister Rustem Umerov had arrived in London for the talks despite the alterations.

"The path to peace is not easy, but Ukraine has been and remains committed to peaceful efforts," Yermak

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said. Officials would "discuss ways to achieve a full and unconditional ceasefire as the first step toward a comprehensive settlement and the achievement of a just and lasting peace."

U.S. special envoy Steve Witkoff was expected to visit Moscow again later this week, according to Russian officials.

Zelenskyy rejects ceding territory to Moscow

The abrupt change of plans in London came amid growing speculation that the U.S. will press Ukraine to cede territory to Russia as part of a potential peace agreement — a possibility that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Tuesday again ruled out.

During similar talks last week in Paris, U.S. officials presented a proposal that included allowing Russia to keep control of occupied Ukrainian territory as part of a deal, according to a European official familiar with the matter.

Zelenskyy pushed back against that during an appearance in Kyiv, saying: "There is nothing to talk about — it is our land, the land of the Ukrainian people."

Russia, meanwhile, has effectively rejected a U.S. proposal for an immediate and full 30-day halt in the fighting by imposing far-reaching conditions.

Trump said repeatedly during his election campaign last year that he would be able to end the war "in 24 hours" upon taking office. But he has expressed frustration with Zelenskyy and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Some European allies are wary of the American proposal for Ukraine to exchange land for peace. But an official said there's also acknowledgment by some allies that Russia is firmly entrenched wholly or partially in five regions of Ukraine — Crimea, Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson.

If the goal is to obtain a ceasefire immediately, "it should be based on the line of contact as it is," said a senior French official. The official was not authorized to be publicly named and spoke on the condition of anonymity according to French presidential policy.

Moscow holds advantage on the battlefield

Still, Ukraine's territorial integrity and aspirations to strengthen ties with the rest of the continent are a top priority for the Europeans, the European official said.

Britain had downplayed expectations of a breakthrough in London, but says this is an important week for diplomatic efforts to stop the fighting.

Western analysts say Moscow is in no rush to conclude peace talks, because it has battlefield momentum and wants to capture more Ukrainian land.

Zelenskyy said Tuesday that Ukraine's delegation heading to the U.K. had a mandate to discuss only an unconditional or partial ceasefire with Russia. He said that "after a ceasefire, we're prepared to sit down for talks in any format."

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov cautioned that reaching a settlement could be a drawn-out process.

Putin declared a 30-hour unilateral ceasefire on Saturday, but Ukraine and British officials said Russian attacks continued during the alleged pause. The Associated Press was unable to verify whether a ceasefire was in place along the roughly 1,000-kilometer (620-mile) front line.

Meanwhile, both Russia and Ukraine are preparing for the spring-summer military campaign, Ukrainian and Western officials say.

## St. Peter's Basilica opens to the public to pay their respects to Pope Francis before his funeral

By COLLEEN BARRY and NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — The Vatican opened St. Peter's Basilica to the general public Wednesday to pay their final respects to Pope Francis, with thousands of people filling the central aisle and Swiss Guards standing at attention.

Francis' body will lie in state in the basilica until Saturday's funeral and burial.

Francis died on Monday at age 88.



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Earlier, the bells of St. Peter's tolled as his body was transferred from the Vatican hotel where he lived into the basilica, escorted by a procession of solemn cardinals and Swiss Guards through the same piazza where the pontiff had greeted the faithful from his popemobile just days before in what became his final good-bye.

Pallbearers carried the simple wooden coffin on their shoulders through the Vatican's archway gates, out into St. Peter's Square and into the basilica, the cardinals in their scarlet cassocks, bishops in their purple robes and the Swiss Guards in their golden and blue uniforms processing slowly behind.

Cardinal Kevin Farrell, who is running the Vatican temporarily until a new pope is elected, led the procession, with clouds of incense preceding him as the church choir began chanting the Litany of Saints hymn. In pairs, the cardinals approached the casket, bowed and made a sign of the cross, followed by small groups of bishops, ushers, priests and nuns.

Heads of state are expected for Francis' funeral Saturday, but the three days of public viewing in the basilica will allow ordinary Catholics to grieve the 88-year-old pope, who died Monday after suffering a stroke. The basilica was being kept open until midnight to accommodate the crowds, a mourning period that will end on Friday at 7 p.m., when Francis' casket is closed and sealed.

Mourners in the piazza watched as Francis' casket passed them by, along the same path the pope had travelled just days before, on Easter Sunday, in what became his final popemobile tour through the faithful. It was a surprise salute, which Francis decided at the last minute after being assured by his nurse he could do it despite his continued frail health from pneumonia.

Simplified rituals reflect Francis' wishes

Francis' death and funeral inaugurates a carefully orchestrated period of transition in the 1.4-billion strong Catholic Church, with cardinals gathering over the coming week before entering into a conclave, the secretive ritual voting in the Sistine Chapel to elect a new pope. There are 135 cardinals under age 80 and eligible to vote in the conclave, and the new pontiff will likely come from within their ranks. The conclave is not expected to begin before May 5.

Francis first lay in state in the Domus Santa Marta hotel in a private viewing for Vatican residents and the papal household. Images released by the Vatican on Tuesday showed Francis lying in an open casket, wearing the traditional pointed headdress of bishops and red robes, his hands folded over a rosary. The Vatican's No. 2, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, was pictured praying by Francis.

Once inside the basilica, Francis' casket wasn't put on an elevated bier — as was the case with past popes — but was just placed on an inclined ramp the main altar of the 16th-century basilica, facing the pews, with four Swiss Guards standing at attention by its side. It was in keeping with Francis' own wishes for all the rituals surrounding a papal funeral to be simplified and reflect the pope's role as a simple pastor, not a world leader.

"Look kindly, Lord, on the life and works of your servant, our Pope Francis," Farrell said from the altar. "Welcome him into the dwelling of perpetual light and peace and grant that your faithful people may follow fervently in his footsteps, bearing witness to the Gospel of Jesus."

Italian police have tightened security for the viewing and the funeral, carrying out foot and horse patrols around the Vatican, where pilgrims continued to arrive for the Holy Year celebrations that Francis opened in December. The faithful who walk through St. Peter's Holy Door are granted indulgences, a way to help atone for sins.

"For me, Pope Francis represents a great pastor, as well as a great friend to all of us," said Micael Sales, visiting St. Peter's Basilica from Brazil.

"I think he spread a positive message around the world, saying there shouldn't be any violence, there should be peace around the world," said Amit Kukreja, from Australia.

Planning for the conclave is now underway

The funeral has been set for Saturday at 10 a.m. in St. Peter's Square, and will be attended by leaders including U.S. President Donald Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Cardinals are continuing their meetings this week to plan the conclave to elect Francis' successor, make

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other decisions about running the Catholic Church as world leaders and the ordinary faithful grieve the pontiff's death.

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.

He had some reservations about looping through the square packed with 50,000 faithful, Vatican News reported on Tuesday, but overcame them — and was thankful that he had greeted the crowd. He died the next morning.

"The death of a pope is not a small thing, because we've lost our leader," said Julio Henrique from Brazil. "But still, in a few days, we will have a new leader. So ... the thing of hope remains. Who will assume Peter's throne?"

## Disputed Kashmir has witnessed worst attack on civilians in years, sparking fear of rising tensions

By SHEIKH SAALIQ Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — At least 26 people were killed and 17 others wounded after gunmen opened fire on a group of tourists in Indian-controlled Kashmir, the worst assault in years targeting civilians in the restive region that has seen an anti-India rebellion for more than three decades.

Tuesday's attack took place in the picturesque town of Pahalgam in the Himalayan mountains, popular with Indian visitors.

Police accused rebels of masterminding the attack, which sparked outrage and drew international condemnation, including from U.S. President Donald Trump.

Fear of escalating tensions

Pahalgam is in the Baisaran meadow, locally known as "mini Switzerland" and is accessible only on foot or horseback. The town is a major tourist destination because of its alpine meadows, pine forests, snow-clad slopes and trekking routes.

It also lies on a major annual Hindu pilgrimage route, the Amarnath Yatra, and serves as one of its largest base camps, drawing hundreds of thousands of pilgrims. This year's pilgrimage starts on July 3 and ends on August 9.

The attack on Tuesday hasn't been claimed by any group so far, and on Wednesday, Indian soldiers were still searching for the attackers.

Many fear the tourism industry, which employs thousands of people, will be negatively affected.

This also comes as Prime Minister Narendra Modi is soon expected to inaugurate a multibillion-dollar railway line to Kashmir Valley, which his government says will help tourism and economic development in the region.

Modi has decried the "heinous act" and pledged the militants "will be brought to justice."

India's powerful home minister, Amit Shah, visited the attack site on Wednesday.

The India-Pakistan dispute over Kashmir

India and Pakistan have each laid claim to Kashmir since war broke out following the British partition of the subcontinent in 1947. Border skirmishes have long created instability in the region.

The two arch rivals have also fought three wars over Kashmir, where armed insurgents have resisted Indian rule for decades, with many Muslim Kashmiris supporting the rebels' goal of uniting the territory, either under Pakistani rule or as an independent country.

India has accused Pakistan of fomenting violence in the Muslim-majority region. Islamabad denies the charge and many Kashmiris consider it a legitimate freedom struggle. Tens of thousands of civilians, rebels and government forces have been killed in the conflict.

In 2019, Modi's government revoked Kashmir's semiautonomous status and imposed sweeping security measures. Since then, his government has kept order in the region with a huge security presence and drastically curbed dissent, civil liberties and media freedoms.

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Attacks on tourists in Kashmir are rare

Militants had attacked civilians before, but the last major attack was in 2000. And though the region has seen a spate of targeted killings in remote mountains in recent years, violence has largely declined in the Kashmir Valley, the heart of anti-India rebellion.

Indian tourism has flourished in Kashmir after the Modi government promoted visits to the region with the hope of showing rising tourism numbers as a sign of renewed stability there, albeit under heavy security presence, checkpoints, armored vehicles and patrolling soldiers.

Millions of visitors now arrive in Kashmir every year to see its Himalayan foothills and exquisitely decorated houseboats, as the fighting between government forces and rebels has largely shifted to the region of Jammu's remote areas, where Indian troops have faced deadly attacks.

The attack coincides with Vance's India visit

Tuesday's attack came as U.S. vice-president JD Vance was on a sightseeing trip to the Indian city of Jaipur on Tuesday, a day after meeting with Modi in New Delhi.

Vance condemned the killings, saying: "Over the past few days, we have been overcome with the beauty of this country and its people. Our thoughts and prayers are with them as they mourn this horrific attack."

He will be in the Indian city of Agra on Wednesday to visit the iconic Taj Mahal monument, which is some 1,000 kilometres (621 miles) away from the attack site.

Trump also denounced the attack and expressed solidarity "with India against terrorism" and called Modi to convey his sympathies, according to Indian authorities.

Other leaders from Russia, Ukraine, Israel, Iran, France, Italy and the United Arab Emirates also expressed condemnation.

Militants had previously planned attacks to coincide with high-profile visits.

One of the most notorious attacks was the killing of at least 35 civilians in a village in Kashmir shortly before a visit to India by then-President Bill Clinton.

## Global shares jump on hopes tariff war may subside

By YURI KAGEYAMA AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Global shares mostly rose Wednesday, with markets showing relief after President Donald Trump indicated he won't dismiss the head of the U.S. Federal Reserve.

France's CAC 40 jumped 2.1% in early trading to 7,480.99, while Germany's DAX rose 2.5% to 21,820.14. Britain's FTSE 100 gained 1.6% to 8,461.24. U.S. shares were set to drift higher with Dow futures up 1.5% at 39,960.00. S&P 500 futures rose 2.0% to 5,421.75.

In Asia, Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 gained 1.9% to finish at 34,868.63. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 surged 1.3% to 7,920.50. South Korea's Kospi gained 1.6% to 2,525.56. Hong Kong's Hang Seng added 2.4% to 22,072.62, while the Shanghai Composite edged down 0.1% to 3,296.36.

Trump had previously said he could fire Fed chair Jerome Powell after the Fed paused cuts to short-term interest rates. But Trump told reporters Tuesday, "I have no intention of firing him."

Investors were also cheered by comments from U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent in a Tuesday speech. He said the ongoing tariffs showdown with China is unsustainable and he expects a "de-escalation" in the trade war.

"Of course, markets will continue to listen out for the latest White House rhetoric on tariffs and any hints of upcoming trade deals. As such, market direction will more likely than not continue to be dictated by Trump's latest whims regarding tariffs and trade," said Tim Waterer, chief market analyst at KCM Trade.

The only prediction many Wall Street strategists are willing to make is that financial markets will likely continue to veer up and down as hopes rise and fall that Trump may negotiate deals with other countries to lower his tariffs. If no such deals come quickly enough, many investors expect the economy to fall into a recession.

The International Monetary Fund on Tuesday slashed its forecast for global economic growth this year to 2.8%, down from 3.3%. A suite of better-than-expected profit reports from big U.S. companies, mean-



while, helped drive U.S. stocks higher.

Also helping market sentiment was the announcement from Elon Musk that he will spend less time in Washington and more time running Tesla after his electric vehicle company reported a big drop in profits. Its results have been hurt by vandalism, widespread protests and calls for a consumer boycott amid a backlash to Musk's oversight of cost-cutting efforts for the U.S. government.

Tesla reported earnings after U.S. trading closed. Tesla's quarterly profits fell from \$1.39 billion to \$409 million, far below analyst estimates.

In energy trading, benchmark U.S. crude added 80 cents to \$64.47 a barrel. Brent crude, the international standard added 81 cents to \$68.25 a barrel.

In currency trading, the U.S. dollar declined to 141.87 Japanese yen from 142.37 yen. The euro cost \$1.1390, up from \$1.1379. \_\_\_\_

AP Business Writer Stan Choe contributed.

## **Dialysis patients struggle to get treatment in blockaded Gaza. Officials say hundreds have died**

By WAFAA SHURAF and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Twice a week, Mohamed Attiya's wheelchair rattles over Gaza's scarred roads so he can visit the machine that is keeping him alive.

The 54-year-old makes the journey from a temporary shelter west of Gaza City to Shifa Hospital in the city's north. There, he receives dialysis for the kidney failure he was diagnosed with nearly 15 years ago. But the treatment, limited by the war's destruction and lack of supplies, is not enough to remove all the waste products from his blood.

"It just brings you back from death," the father of six said.

Many others like him have not made it. They are some of Gaza's quieter deaths from the war, with no explosion, no debris. But the toll is striking: Over 400 patients, representing around 40% of all dialysis cases in the territory, have died during the 18-month conflict because of lack of proper treatment, according to Gaza's Health Ministry.

That includes 11 patients who have died since the beginning of March, when Israel sealed the territory's 2 million Palestinians off from all imports, including food, medical supplies and fuel. Israeli officials say the aim is to pressure Hamas to release more hostages after Israel ended their ceasefire.

COGAT, the Israeli military body in charge of coordinating aid, declined to comment on the current blockade. It has said in the past that all medical aid is approved for entry when the crossings are open, and that around 45,400 tons of medical equipment have entered Gaza since the start of the war.

Hardships mount for Gaza patients

Attiya said he needs at least three dialysis sessions every week, at least four hours each time. Now, his two sessions last two or three hours at most.

Israel's blockade, and its numerous evacuation orders across much of the territory, have challenged his ability to reach regular care.

He has been displaced at least six times since fleeing his home near the northern town of Beit Hanoun in the first weeks of the war. He first stayed in Rafah in the south, then the central city of Deir al-Balah. When the latest ceasefire took effect in January, he moved again to another school in western Gaza City.

Until recently, Attiya walked to the hospital for dialysis. But he says the limited treatment, and soaring prices for the mineral water he should be drinking, have left him in a wheelchair.

His family wheels him through a Gaza that many find difficult to recognize. Much of the territory has been destroyed.

"There is no transportation. Streets are damaged," Attiya said. "Life is difficult and expensive."

He said he now has hallucinations because of the high levels of toxins in his blood.

"The occupation does not care about the suffering or the sick," he said, referring to Israel and its soldiers.

A health system gutted by war

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Six of the seven dialysis centers in Gaza have been destroyed during the war, the World Health Organization said earlier this year, citing the territory's Health Ministry. The territory had 182 dialysis machines before the war and now has 102. Twenty-seven of them are in northern Gaza, where hundreds of thousands of people rushed home during the two-month ceasefire.

"These equipment shortages are exacerbated by zero stock levels of kidney medications," the WHO said. Israel has raided hospitals on several occasions during the war, accusing Hamas of using them for military purposes. Hospital staff deny the allegations and say the raids have gutted the territory's health care system as it struggles to cope with mass casualties from the war.

The Health Ministry says over 51,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, have been killed in Israel's offensive, without saying how many were civilians or combatants. Hamas-led militants killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducted 251 in the Oct. 7, 2023 attack that triggered the war.

Officials say hundreds of patients have died

At Shifa Hospital, the head of the nephrology and dialysis department, Dr. Ghazi al-Yazigi, said at least 417 patients with kidney failure have died in Gaza during the war because of lack of proper treatment.

That's from among the 1,100 patients when the war began.

Like Attiya, hundreds of dialysis patients across Gaza are now forced to settle for fewer and shorter sessions each week.

"This leads to complications such as increased levels of toxins and fluid accumulation ... which could lead to death," al-Yazigi said.

Mohamed Kamel of Gaza City is a new dialysis patient at the hospital after being diagnosed with kidney failure during the war and beginning treatment this year.

These days, "I feel no improvement after each session," he said during one of his weekly visits.

The father of six children said he no longer has access to filtered water to drink, and even basic running water is scarce. Israel last month cut off the electricity supply to Gaza, affecting a desalination plant producing drinking water for part of the arid territory.

Kamel said he has missed many dialysis sessions. Last year, while sheltering in central Gaza, he missed one because of an Israeli bombing in the area. His condition deteriorated, and the next day he was taken by ambulance to Al-Aqsa Martyrs hospital.

"The displacement has had consequences," Kamel said. "I am tired."

## 84% of the world's coral reefs hit by worst bleaching event on record

By ISABELLA O'MALLEY Associated Press

Harmful bleaching of the world's coral has grown to include 84% of the ocean's reefs in the most intense event of its kind in recorded history, the International Coral Reef Initiative announced Wednesday.

It's the fourth global bleaching event since 1998, and has now surpassed bleaching from 2014-17 that hit some two-thirds of reefs, said the ICRI, a mix of more than 100 governments, non-governmental organizations and others. And it's not clear when the current crisis, which began in 2023 and is blamed on warming oceans, will end.

"We may never see the heat stress that causes bleaching dropping below the threshold that triggers a global event," said Mark Eakin, executive secretary for the International Coral Reef Society and retired coral monitoring chief for the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

"We're looking at something that's completely changing the face of our planet and the ability of our oceans to sustain lives and livelihoods," Eakin said.

Last year was Earth's hottest year on record, and much of that is going into oceans. The average annual sea surface temperature of oceans away from the poles was a record 20.87 degrees Celsius (69.57 degrees Fahrenheit).

That's deadly to corals, which are key to seafood production, tourism and protecting coastlines from

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erosion and storms. Coral reefs are sometimes dubbed “rainforests of the sea” because they support high levels of biodiversity — approximately 25% of all marine species can be found in, on and around coral reefs.

Coral get their bright colors from the colorful algae that live inside them and are a food source for the corals. Prolonged warmth causes the algae to release toxic compounds, and the coral eject them. A stark white skeleton is left behind, and the weakened coral is at heightened risk of dying.

The bleaching event has been so severe that NOAA’s Coral Reef Watch program has had to add levels to its bleaching alert scale to account for the growing risk of coral death.

Efforts are underway to conserve and restore coral. One Dutch lab has worked with coral fragments, including some taken from off the coast of the Seychelles, to propagate them in a zoo so that they might be used someday to repopulate wild coral reefs if needed. Other projects, including one off Florida, have worked to rescue corals endangered by high heat and nurse them back to health before returning them to the ocean.

But scientists say it’s essential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions that warm the planet, such as carbon dioxide and methane.

“The best way to protect coral reefs is to address the root cause of climate change. And that means reducing the human emissions that are mostly from burning of fossil fuels ... everything else is looking more like a Band-Aid rather than a solution,” Eakin said.

“I think people really need to recognize what they’re doing ... inaction is the kiss of death for coral reefs,” said Melanie McField, co-chair of the Caribbean Steering Committee for the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network, a network of scientists that monitors reefs throughout the world.

The group’s update comes as President Donald Trump has moved aggressively in his second term to boost fossil fuels and roll back clean energy programs, which he says is necessary for economic growth.

“We’ve got a government right now that is working very hard to destroy all of these ecosystems ... removing these protections is going to have devastating consequences,” Eakin said.

## **New Jersey forest fire prompts thousands of evacuations and closes a major highway**

BARNEGAT TOWNSHIP, N.J. (AP) — A fast-moving wildfire burning in New Jersey on Tuesday forced thousands of people to evacuate and closed a stretch of a major highway.

The Garden State Parkway, one of New Jersey’s busiest highways, was closed between Barnegat and Lacey townships, according to the New Jersey Fire Service.

More than 1,300 structures were threatened and about 3,000 residents were evacuated, the fire service said. Shelters were open at two high schools, according to the Barnegat Police Department.

The Jersey Central Power and Light Company cut power to about 25,000 customers at the request of the Forest Fire Service and the wildfire’s command post Tuesday evening, including thousands in Barnegat Township. The company said on X that it doesn’t expect to restore the power before Wednesday.

“This is for the safety of crews battling the fire,” the company said.

The fire in the Greenwood Forest Wildlife Management Area burned more than 13.2 square miles (34.2 square kilometers) of land, fire officials said.

The blaze, burning in Ocean and Lacey Townships in Ocean County, was only about 10% contained Tuesday night, the New Jersey Fire Service said. The cause of the fire was under investigation.

There were no immediate reports of injuries.

Debi Schaffer was caught in gridlocked traffic after evacuating with her two dogs while her husband agreed to stay with their 22 chickens, The Press of Atlantic City reported.

“I wanted to take them in the car with me; can you imagine 22 chickens in a car?” she told the newspaper.

Around her Waretown house it was “like a war zone,” she said, describing smoke, sirens and the buzz of helicopters.

The site of the fire is near an alpaca farm. The farm said in a Facebook post that the property wasn’t



threatened and all of the animals were safe.

The blaze is the second major forest fire in the region in less than a week.

## Pope Francis had a troubled course on dealing with clergy sexual abuse

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Few could have predicted that a comment Pope Francis made during a 2018 visit to Chile would blow up into the biggest crisis of his papacy, and one that eventually set the Catholic Church on a new path of accountability for clergy sexual abuse.

Francis was asked by a TV reporter about a Chilean bishop who had been accused by victims of having covered up the crimes of Chile's most notorious pedophile. Francis had been defending the bishop for years and shot back that there was "not one shred of proof against him. It's all slander. Is that clear?"

His irate response struck a nerve in Chile, which was just beginning to come to terms with a horrific legacy of clergy abuse, and it prompted Francis' top child protection adviser to sternly rebuke the pope for his harmful words.

But then something remarkable happened: Rather than dig in, Francis commissioned an investigation, realized he was wrong, apologized to the victims he discredited, and got the entire Chilean hierarchy to offer to resign. It was one of the greatest midcourse corrections of the modern papacy.

"He recognized his mistakes," said papal biographer Austen Ivereigh. "He learned from them. He said 'sorry.' And he put it right."

Initial questions on abuse. Then came Chile

When Francis was elected history's first Latin American pontiff in 2013, abuse survivors and their advocates initially questioned whether he "got it" about abuse, because he freely admitted he had never handled cases of accused priests as archbishop of Buenos Aires.

Francis did create a sex abuse commission early on to advise the church on best practices and placed a trusted official, Boston's Cardinal Sean O'Malley, in charge. But the commission lost its influence after a few years and its crowning recommendation — the creation of a tribunal to judge bishops who covered up for predator priests — went nowhere.

And then came Chile.

During the now-infamous visit to Iquique, Chile, Francis was asked about Bishop Juan Barros, whom he had transferred to a southern diocese over the objections of the local faithful. Their complaint? Barros had been a priest under the sanctioned Rev. Fernando Karadima, and was accused by Karadima's victims of having witnessed and covered up the crimes.

Francis had defended Barros because one of his friends and advisers, Chilean Cardinal Javier Errazuriz, also had defended the bishop.

After being pressed on the plane home by journalists about his Barros defense, Francis commissioned an investigation into the Chilean church and realized he had been misled by Errazuriz and others.

Juan Carlos Cruz, one of Karadima's victims who received the pope's personal apology that year, later developed a personal friendship with the pontiff.

"He sincerely wanted to do something and he transmitted that," Cruz said.

A turning point for Francis in 2018

Years later, Francis acknowledged 2018 was the turning point, or "conversion," in his understanding about abuse, and he credited journalists, including The Associated Press, with enlightening him.

"I couldn't believe it. You were the one on the plane who told me, 'No, that's not the way it is, Father,'" Francis told AP in a 2023 interview. Making a gesture that indicated his head had exploded, the pope continued: "That's when the bomb went off, when I saw the corruption of many bishops in this."

By mid-2018, Francis had largely atoned for the Chile scandal. But then the next crisis hit.

A U.S. cardinal is enveloped in scandal

In July of that year, Francis removed once-influential American Cardinal Theodore McCarrick after church

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investigators said an allegation that he groped a teenage altar boy in the 1970s was credible. Subsequently, several former seminarians and priests reported that they had been abused or harassed by McCarrick as adults.

It was apparently common knowledge in the U.S. and Vatican leadership that "Uncle Ted," as McCarrick was known, slept with seminarians, but he still rose steadily in the church's ranks.

Having removed McCarrick and approved a canonical trial against him, Francis should have emerged as the hero in the saga since he righted the wrong of St. John Paul II, who had promoted McCarrick despite his reputation.

But Francis' get-tough victory lap was cut short when a former Vatican ambassador to the U.S. accused the pope himself of participating in the McCarrick cover-up.

In an 11-page denunciation in August 2018, Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano claimed he had told Francis in 2013, at the start of his pontificate, that McCarrick had "corrupted a generation" of seminarians and priests and that Pope Benedict XVI had eventually sanctioned McCarrick for his sexual misconduct. Vigano claimed Francis disregarded his 2013 warning and rehabilitated McCarrick. He called on Francis to resign.

Francis didn't initially respond. But he authorized a two-year investigation into McCarrick, finding that bishops, cardinals and popes over three decades played down or dismissed multiple reports of sexual misconduct against him. The report largely spared Francis and instead found that Vigano had failed in monitoring McCarrick while he was U.S. ambassador.

McCarrick died earlier this month; Francis excommunicated Vigano last year for schism.

Francis holds the hierarchy accountable

The crisis prompted Francis to take even bolder action to hold the hierarchy accountable for covering up abuse. In 2019, he summoned the heads of bishops' conferences from around the world to the Vatican to impress on them the need to act to prevent abuse and punish offending priests.

He changed church law to remove the "pontifical secret" covering abuse cases and passed a law requiring church personnel to report allegations in-house, although not to police. He approved procedures to investigate bishops who abused or covered up for their pedophile priests, seeking to end the tradition of impunity for the hierarchy.

Ivereigh, the papal biographer, said those reforms were the result of Francis' learning curve on abuse.

"I think he understood that at the root of the sex abuse crisis was a culture and a mindset which he constantly called clericalism, a sense of entitlement, and which led not only to ultimately to abuse of power and sexual abuse, but its cover up," Ivereigh said.

More questions on abuse remain

But questions continued to dog Francis even after the scandal passed.

One case that haunted him for years was that of Argentine Bishop Gustavo Zanchetta, who was accused, and eventually convicted, in an Argentine court of abusing his seminarians. Francis had created a job for Zanchetta at the Vatican after he had been accused of misconduct, spiriting him out of Argentina for purported "health" reasons.

Francis never responded to questions about the Rev. Julio Grassi, who was Argentina's most notorious clerical sexual abuser. While Francis was archbishop of Buenos Aires, he commissioned a study into Grassi's conviction that concluded he was innocent, that his victims were lying, and that the case never should have gone to trial. Argentina's supreme court upheld the conviction.

"Before Pope Francis can enact accountability for bishops and other church leaders, he has to own up to the harm he himself caused victims in Argentina," said Anne Barrett Doyle of the online resource Bishop Accountability, which pressed Francis to get even tougher about abuse and cover-ups throughout his pontificate.

## Orders to leave the country -- some for US citizens -- sow confusion among immigrants

By VALERIE GONZALEZ and GISELA SALOMON Associated Press

McALLEN, Texas (AP) — Hubert Montoya burst out laughing when the U.S. Department of Homeland Security emailed to say he should leave the country immediately or risk consequences of being deported. He is a U.S. citizen.

"I just thought it was absurd," the Austin, Texas, immigration attorney said.

It was an apparent glitch in the Trump administration's dismantling of another Biden-era policy that allowed people to live and work in the country temporarily. U.S. Customs and Border Protection is quietly revoking two-year permits of people who used an online appointment app at U.S. border crossings with Mexico called CBP One, which brought in more than 900,000 people starting in January 2023.

The revocation of CBP One permits has lacked the fanfare and formality of canceling Temporary Protected Status for hundreds of thousands whose homelands were previously deemed unsafe for return and humanitarian parole for others from Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua and Venezuela who came with financial sponsors. Those moves came with official notices in the Federal Register and press releases. Judges halted them from taking effect after advocacy groups sued.

CBP One cancellation notices began landing in inboxes in late March without warning, some telling recipients to leave immediately and others giving them seven days. Targets included U.S. citizens.

Timothy J. Brenner, a Connecticut-born lawyer in Houston, was told April 11 to leave the U.S. "I became concerned that the administration has a list of immigration attorneys or a database that they're trying to target to harass," he said.

CBP confirmed in a statement that it issued notices terminating temporary legal status under CBP One. It did not say how many, just that they weren't sent to all beneficiaries, which totaled 936,000 at the end of December.

CBP said notices may have been sent to unintended recipients, including attorneys, if beneficiaries provided contact information for U.S. citizens. It is addressing those situations case-by-case.

Online chat groups reflect fear and confusion, which, according to critics, is the administration's intended effect. Brenner said three clients who received the notices chose to return to El Salvador after being told to leave.

"The fact that we don't know how many people got this notice is part of the problem. We're getting reports from attorneys and folks who don't know what to make of the notice," said Hillary Li, counsel for the Justice Action Center, an advocacy group.

President Donald Trump suspended CBP One for new arrivals his first day in office but those already in the U.S. believed they could stay at least until their two-year permits expired. The cancellation notices that some received ended that sense of temporary stability. "It is time for you to leave the United States," the letters began.

"It's really confusing," said Robyn Barnard, senior director for refugee advocacy at Human Rights First. "Imagine how people who entered through that process feel when they're hearing through their different community chats, rumors or screenshots that some friends have received notice and others didn't."

Attorneys say some CBP One beneficiaries may still be within a one-year window to file an asylum claim or seek other relief.

Notices have been sent to others whose removal orders are on hold under other forms of temporary protection. A federal judge in Massachusetts temporarily halted deportations for more than 500,000 Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans and Venezuelans who came since late 2022 after applying online with a financial sponsor and flying to a U.S. airport at their own expense.

Maria, a 48-year-old Nicaraguan woman who cheered Trump's election and arrived via that path, said the notice telling her to leave landed like "a bomb. It paralyzed me."

Maria, who asked to be named only by her middle name for fear of being detained and deported, said in a telephone interview from Florida that she would continue cleaning houses to support herself and file



for asylum.

## Survivors of 2022 July Fourth parade mass shooting to address gunman before his sentencing

By SOPHIA TAREEN Associated Press

WAUKEGAN, Ill. (AP) — Survivors and relatives of people killed in a 2022 mass shooting at an Independence Day parade in suburban Chicago are set to address the gunman Wednesday at his sentencing hearing.

Robert E. Crimo III, 24, pleaded guilty last month to the shooting that left seven people dead and dozens more injured. His plea change, just moments before opening statements at his trial, came as a shock even after years of unpredictable legal proceedings.

Crimo is certain to spend the rest of his life in prison. Each count of first-degree murder carries a maximum natural life sentence in Illinois. Prosecutors and attorneys for survivors say addressing Crimo is an important step.

"They have been patiently waiting for justice to be served," said a statement from Romanucci & Blandin, a Chicago-based law firm that represents nearly 50 victims. They "will tell their personal stories to the court, and they are steadfastly committed to pursuing justice."

Attorneys were unsure how many people might give so-called "victim impact statements," saying some may decide at the last minute. Prosecutors are also expected to lay out evidence during the sentencing hearing at the Lake County Courthouse, roughly 45 miles (70 kilometers) from Chicago.

The case has moved slowly through the court, in part because of Crimo's erratic behavior.

He was expected to accept a plea deal last year but changed his mind once he got to court, shocking even his own attorneys.

Crimo fired his public defenders and said he would represent himself. Then he reversed his decision. He's refused to leave his cell to attend court proceedings at times, including during parts of jury selection. After he pleaded guilty in court, he signed documents waiving his right to trial with both his own name and the name "Donald Trump."

Ashbey Beasley attended the parade with her son in 2022. Though they weren't injured, she said they had to run for their lives and seeing Crimo adds to their trauma.

"Every single time I see him, it's stressful," she told reporters after the guilty plea. "It's upsetting for everyone in our community."

Dozens were wounded in the shooting in the suburb about 30 miles (50 kilometers) north of Chicago. They ranged in age from their 80s down to an 8-year-old boy who was left partially paralyzed.

Authorities said Crimo perched on a roof and fired into the crowds. Witnesses described confusion as the shots began, followed by terror as families bolted from the downtown parade route, leaving lawn chairs and strollers behind.

Prosecutors had reams of evidence, including Crimo's videotaped confession to police.

"We were 1,000% ready to go to trial and prove him guilty to the jury. We have been working for years to prepare our evidence," Lake County State's Attorney Eric Rinehart told reporters after the guilty plea.

Prosecutors initially charged Crimo with 21 counts of first-degree murder — three counts for each person killed — and 48 counts of attempted murder for the injured. Prosecutors later dropped 48 less serious counts of aggravated battery before jury selection.

Residents in the upscale Highland Park community of roughly 30,000 have mourned the shooting deeply. Some potential jurors were excused because of their connections to the high-profile case. Several survivors have also filed lawsuits against Crimo and gunmaker Smith & Wesson.

City leaders canceled the usual parade in 2023, opting instead for a "community walk." The parade was reinstated last year on a different route and included a memorial.

The seven people killed in the shooting were Katherine Goldstein, 64; Jacquelyn Sundheim, 63; Stephen Straus, 88; Nicolas Toledo-Zaragoza, 78; Eduardo Uvaldo, 69; and married couple Kevin McCarthy, 37, and Irina McCarthy, 35.

Crimo's father, Robert Crimo Jr., a former mayoral candidate, was charged in connection with how his son obtained a gun license. He pleaded guilty in 2023 to seven misdemeanor counts of reckless conduct. He served less than two months in jail.

## International students stripped of legal status in the US are piling up wins in court

By KATE BRUMBACK Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Anjan Roy was studying with friends at Missouri State University when he got an email that turned his world upside down. His legal status as an international student had been terminated, and he was suddenly at risk for deportation.

"I was in literal shock, like, what the hell is this?" said Roy, a graduate student in computer science from Bangladesh.

At first, he avoided going out in public, skipping classes and mostly keeping his phone turned off. A court ruling in his favor led to his status being restored this week, and he has returned to his apartment, but he is still asking his roommates to screen visitors.

More than a thousand international students have faced similar disruptions in recent weeks, with their academic careers — and their lives in the U.S. — thrown into doubt in a widespread crackdown by the Trump administration. Some have found a measure of success in court, with federal judges around the country issuing orders to restore students' legal status at least temporarily.

In addition to the case filed in Atlanta, where Roy is among 133 plaintiffs, judges have issued temporary restraining orders in states including New Hampshire, Wisconsin, Montana, Oregon and Washington. Judges have denied similar requests in some other cases, saying it was not clear the loss of status would cause irreparable harm.

International students challenge grounds for their status revocation

Secretary of State Marco Rubio said last month the State Department was revoking visas held by visitors who were acting counter to national interests, including some who protested Israel's war in Gaza and those who face criminal charges. But many affected students said they have been involved only in minor infractions, or it's unclear altogether why they were targeted.

The attorney for Roy and his fellow plaintiffs, Charles Kuck, argued the government did not have legal grounds to terminate the students' status.

He speculated in court last week the government is trying to encourage these students to self-deport, saying "the pressure on these students is overwhelming." He said some asked him if it was safe to leave their homes to get food, and others worried they wouldn't receive a degree after years of work or feared their chances of a career in the U.S. were shot.

"I think the hope is they'll just leave," Kuck said. "The reality is these kids are invested."

An attorney for the government, R. David Powell, argued the students did not suffer significant harm because they could transfer their academic credits or find jobs in another country.

At least 1,100 students at 174 colleges, universities and university systems have had their visas revoked or their legal status terminated since late March, according to an Associated Press review of university statements, correspondence with school officials and court records. The AP is working to confirm reports of hundreds more students who are caught up in the crackdown.

In a lawsuit filed Monday by four people on student visas at the University of Iowa, attorneys detail the "mental and financial suffering" they've experienced. One graduate student, from India, "cannot sleep and is having difficulty breathing and eating," the lawsuit reads. He has stopped going to school, doing research or working as a teaching assistant. Another student, a Chinese undergraduate who expected to graduate this December, said his revoked status has caused his depression to worsen to the point that his doctor increased his medication dosage. The student, the lawsuit says, has not left his apartment out of fear of detention.

Tiny infractions made students targets for the crackdown

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Roy, 23, began his academic career at Missouri State in August 2024 as an undergraduate computer science student. He was active in the chess club and a fraternity and has a broad circle of friends. After graduating in December, he began work on a master's degree in January and expects to finish in May 2026.

When Roy received the university's April 10 email on his status termination, one of his friends offered to skip class to go with him to the school's international services office, even though they had a quiz in 45 minutes. The staff there said a database check showed his student status had been terminated, but they didn't know why.

Roy said his only brush with the law came in 2021, when he was questioned by campus security after someone called in a dispute at a university housing building. But he said an officer determined there was no evidence of any crime and no charges were filed.

Roy also got an email from the U.S. embassy in Bangladesh telling him his visa had been revoked and that he could be detained at any time. It warned that if he was deported, he could be sent to a country other than his own. Roy thought about leaving the U.S. but decided to stay after talking to a lawyer.

Anxious about being in his own apartment, Roy went to stay with his second cousin and her husband nearby.

"They were scared someone was going to pick me up from the street and take me somewhere that they wouldn't even know," Roy said.

He mostly stayed inside, turned off his phone unless he needed to use it, and avoided internet browsers that track user data through cookies. His professors were understanding when he told them he wouldn't be able to come to classes for a while, he said.

New doubts about students' future in the US

After the judge's order Friday, he moved back to his apartment. He learned Tuesday his status had been restored, and he plans to return to class. But he's still nervous. He asked his two roommates, both international students, to let him know before they open the door if someone they don't know knocks.

The judge's restoration of his legal status is temporary. Another hearing scheduled for Thursday will determine whether he keeps that status while the litigation continues.

Roy chose the U.S. over other options in Canada and Australia because of the research opportunities and potential for professional connections, and he ultimately wanted to teach at an American university. But now those plans are up in the air.

His parents, back in Dhaka, have been watching the news and are "freaked out," he said. His father mentioned to him that they have family in Melbourne, Australia, including a cousin who's an assistant professor at a university there. \_\_\_\_

AP reporters Christopher L. Keller in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and Hannah Fingerhut in Des Moines, Iowa, contributed to this story.

## Law firms fighting Trump to ask judges to permanently block executive orders

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Two major law firms are expected to ask separate judges on Wednesday to permanently block President Donald Trump's executive orders that were designed to punish them and hurt their business operations.

The firms — Perkins Coie and WilmerHale — have said the orders imposed in March are unconstitutional assaults on the legal profession that threaten their relationships with clients and retaliate against them based either on their past legal representations or their association with particular attorneys who Trump perceives as his adversaries.

Courts last month temporarily halted enforcement of key provisions of both orders, but the firms are in court Wednesday asking for the edicts to be struck down in their entirety and for judges to issue rulings in their favor. Another firm, Jenner & Block, is expected to make similar arguments next week.



"Although Perkins Coie did not bring this suit lightly, it was compelled to do so to preserve its ability to continue representing the best interests of its clients," lawyers for Perkins Coie wrote in a filing ahead of the hearing. "The Constitution does not permit our elected leaders, from any party, to punish lawyers by fiat for representing clients who oppose their political agendas. It would set a grave precedent for our Republic if the Order were allowed to stand."

The executive orders taking aim at some of the country's most elite and prominent law firms are part of a wide-ranging retribution campaign by Trump designed to reshape civil society and extract concessions from perceived adversaries. The actions have forced targeted entities, whether law firms or universities, to decide whether to push back and risk further incurring the administration's ire or to agree to concessions in hopes of averting sanctions. Some firms have challenged the orders in court, but others have proactively reached settlements.

The orders have generally imposed the same consequences, including directing the suspension of attorney security clearances, restricting lawyers' access to federal buildings and terminating federal contracts.

The first law firm action took place in February when Trump signed a memo suspending the security clearances of attorneys at Covington & Burling who have provided legal services to special counsel Jack Smith, who investigated the president between his first and second terms and secured two indictments that have since been abandoned.

The executive order targeting Perkins Coie singled out the firm's representation of Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton during the 2016 presidential race, and the one against WilmerHale cited the fact that special counsel Robert Mueller — who investigated Trump during his first term over potential ties between Russia and his 2016 campaign — was for years a partner at the firm.

Last month, the firm Paul Weiss cut a deal with the Trump administration that resulted in an executive order against it being rescinded.

Since then, more than a half-dozen other firms have reached agreements with the White House that require them, among other things, to dedicate free legal services to causes the Trump administration says it champions.

They include Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom; Milbank; Willkie, Farr & Gallagher; Kirkland & Ellis; Latham & Watkins LLP; Allen Overy Shearman Sterling US LLP; Simpson Thacher & Bartlett LLP; and Cadwalader, Taft & Wickersham.

## Militants kill at least 26 tourists at a resort in Indian-controlled Kashmir

By AIJAZ HUSSAIN Associated Press

SRINAGAR, India (AP) — Gunmen shot and killed at least 26 tourists Tuesday at a resort in Indian-controlled Kashmir, police said, in what appeared to be a major shift in a regional conflict in which tourists have largely been spared.

Police blamed militants fighting against Indian rule for the attack in Baisaran meadow, some 5 kilometers (3 miles) from the disputed region's resort town of Pahalgam. At least three dozen people were wounded, many of them seriously, according to two senior police officers.

"This attack is much larger than anything we've seen directed at civilians in recent years," Omar Abdullah, the region's top elected official, wrote on social media.

The two officers said at least four militants fired at dozens of tourists from close range. Most of the killed tourists were Indian, they said, speaking on condition of anonymity in keeping with departmental policy.

At least 24 bodies were collected in the aftermath of the attack and two people died while being taken for medical treatment. There was no immediate claim of responsibility. Police and soldiers were searching for the attackers.

"We will come down heavily on the perpetrators with the harshest consequences," India's home minister, Amit Shah, wrote on social media. He arrived in Srinagar, the main city in Indian-controlled Kashmir, and convened a meeting with top security officials.

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Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi was cutting short his two-day visit to Saudi Arabia and returning to New Delhi early Wednesday, the Press Trust of India news agency reported.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres strongly condemned the attack and stressed that "attacks against civilians are unacceptable under any circumstances," U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric said.

Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, Kashmir's top religious cleric, said on social media that "such violence is unacceptable and against the ethos of Kashmir, which welcomes visitors with love and warmth."

U.S. Vice President JD Vance, who was visiting India, called it a "devastating terrorist attack." He added on social media: "Over the past few days, we have been overcome with the beauty of this country and its people. Our thoughts and prayers are with them as they mourn this horrific attack."

U.S. President Donald Trump noted on social media the "deeply disturbing news out of Kashmir. The United States stands strong with India against terrorism." Other global leaders, including Russian President Vladimir Putin and Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, condemned the attack.

"The United States stands with India," U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on X.

Nuclear-armed rivals India and Pakistan each administer a part of Kashmir but both claim the territory in its entirety.

Kashmir has seen a spate of targeted killings of Hindus, including immigrant workers from Indian states, after New Delhi ended the region's semi-autonomy in 2019 and drastically curbed dissent, civil liberties and media freedoms.

Tensions have been simmering as India has intensified its counterinsurgency operations. But despite tourists flocking to Kashmir in huge numbers for its Himalayan foothills and exquisitely decorated houseboats, they have not been targeted.

The region has drawn millions of visitors who enjoy a strange peace kept by ubiquitous security checkpoints, armored vehicles and patrolling soldiers. New Delhi has vigorously pushed tourism and claimed it as a sign of normalcy returning.

The meadow in Pahalgam is a popular destination, surrounded by snow-capped mountains and dotted with pine forests. It is visited by hundreds of tourists every day.

Indian opposition leader Rahul Gandhi, while condemning the attack, said Modi's government should take accountability instead of making "hollow claims on the situation being normal" in the region.

Militants in the Indian-controlled portion of Kashmir have been fighting New Delhi's rule since 1989. Many Muslim Kashmiris support the rebels' goal of uniting the territory, either under Pakistani rule or as an independent country.

India insists the Kashmir militancy is Pakistan-sponsored terrorism. Pakistan denies the charge, and many Kashmiris consider it a legitimate freedom struggle. Tens of thousands of civilians, rebels and government forces have been killed in the conflict.

In March 2000, at least 35 civilians were shot and killed in a southern village in Kashmir while then-U.S. President Bill Clinton was visiting India. It was the region's deadliest attack in the past couple of decades.

Violence has ebbed in recent times in the Kashmir Valley, the heart of anti-India rebellion. Fighting between government forces and rebels has largely shifted to remote areas of Jammu region, including Rajouri, Poonch and Kathua, where Indian troops have faced deadly attacks.

## **Yemen's Houthi rebels fire a missile toward northern Israel, a rare target for the group**

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Yemen's Houthi rebels launched a missile early Wednesday toward northern Israel, a rare target for the group as a monthlong intense U.S. airstrike campaign continues to target them. The Houthis separately claimed shooting down another MQ-9 Reaper drone over Yemen.

Sirens sounded in Haifa, Krayot and other areas west of the Sea of Galilee, the Israeli military said.

"An interceptor was launched toward the missile, and the missile was most likely successfully intercepted," the Israeli military said.

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Those in the area could hear booms in the predawn darkness.

The Houthis did not immediately claim the attack, though it can take them hours or even days to acknowledge their assaults.

American airstrikes, meanwhile, continued targeting the Houthis on Wednesday morning, part of a campaign that began on March 15. The Houthis reported strikes on Hodeida, Marib and Saada governorates. In Marib, the Houthis described a strike hitting telecommunication equipment, which has previously been a target of the Americans.

Houthis claim downing another US drone

The Houthis in response have stepped up their targeting of American drones flying over the country. Late Tuesday, Houthi military spokesman Brig. Gen. Yahya Saree said the rebels shot down an MQ-9 Reaper drone over Yemen's Hajjah governorate.

The U.S. military acknowledged the report of the drone being downed, but said it could not comment further.

Saree said the rebels targeted the drone with "a locally manufactured missile." The Houthis have surface-to-air missiles — such as the Iranian missile known as the 358 — capable of downing aircraft. The Houthis claim they downed 26 MQ-9s over the last decade of the Yemen war.

Iran denies arming the rebels, though Tehran-manufactured weaponry has been found on the battlefield and in sea shipments heading to Yemen for the Shiite Houthi rebels despite a United Nations arms embargo.

General Atomics Reapers, which cost around \$30 million apiece, can fly at altitudes over 40,000 feet (12,100 meters) and remain in the air for over 30 hours. They have been flown by both the U.S. military and the CIA for years over Afghanistan, Iraq and now Yemen.

New US airstrike campaign began March 15

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 President Donald Trump is more extensive than attacks on the group were under President Joe Biden, an AP review found. The new campaign started after the rebels 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 annually. 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.

Last week, a strike on the Ras Isa fuel port killed at least 74 people and wounded 171 others in the deadliest-known attack of the American campaign.

## Judge castigates Trump administration for 'bad faith' in Abrego Garcia's deportation case

By REBECCA BOONE Associated Press

A federal judge said Tuesday that the Trump administration is ignoring court orders, obstructing the legal process and acting in "bad faith" by refusing to provide information about the steps they have taken, if any, to free a mistakenly deported man from an El Salvador prison and return him to the U.S.

"For weeks, Defendants have sought refuge behind vague and unsubstantiated assertions of privilege, using them as a shield to obstruct discovery and evade compliance with this Court's orders," U.S. District Judge Paula Xinis wrote in the order Tuesday. "Defendants have known, at least since last week, that



this Court requires specific legal and factual showings to support any claim of privilege. Yet they have continued to rely on boilerplate assertions. That ends now.”

She gave the administration until 6 p.m. Wednesday to provide those details.

The U.S. Supreme Court ordered the Trump administration nearly two weeks ago to facilitate Kilmar Abrego Garcia’s return to the U.S. from a notorious Salvadoran prison, rejecting the White House’s claim that it couldn’t retrieve him after mistakenly deporting him.

Trump administration officials have pushed back, arguing that it is up to El Salvador — though the president of El Salvador has also said he lacks the power to return Abrego Garcia. The administration has also argued that information about any steps it has taken or could take to return Abrego Garcia is protected by attorney-client privilege laws, state secret laws, general “government privilege” or other secrecy rules.

But Xinis said those claims, without any facts to back them up, reflected a “willful and bad faith refusal to comply with discovery obligations.”

It’s not the first time the Trump administration has faced a scathing order from a federal judge over its approach to deportation cases.

A three-judge panel on the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals scolded the administration last week, saying its claim that it can’t do anything to free Abrego Garcia “should be shocking.” That ruling came one day after a federal judge in Washington, D.C., found probable cause to hold the Trump administration in criminal contempt of court for violating his orders to turn around planes carrying deportees to El Salvador in a different legal case.

Democrats and legal scholars say President Donald Trump is provoking a constitutional crisis in part by ignoring court rulings, while the White House has said it’s the judges who are the problem.

## **Lori Vallow Daybell convicted in Arizona of conspiring to kill her estranged husband in 2019**

By JACQUES BILLEAUD and RIO YAMAT Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — A woman whose doomsday religious beliefs led her to kill her two youngest children and engage in a plot to kill a romantic rival in Idaho was convicted Tuesday in Arizona for conspiring to murder her estranged husband.

Jurors found Lori Vallow Daybell guilty after deliberating for about three hours, and she faces another possible life sentence on top of the three she is already serving in Idaho. She will not be sentenced in Arizona until after she goes on trial in another alleged murder conspiracy.

Prosecutors said Vallow Daybell had help from her brother, Alex Cox, in the July 2019 shooting death of Charles Vallow at her home in the Phoenix suburb of Chandler. They say she was motivated by an opportunity to cash in on Vallow’s life insurance policy and a marriage to then-boyfriend Chad Daybell who wrote several religious novels about prophecies and the end of the world.

Chad Daybell is also serving life sentences for the deaths of Vallow Daybell’s children, 7-year-old Joshua “JJ” Vallow and 16-year-old Tylee Ryan, and his wife, Tammy. Authorities in Idaho said the case included bizarre claims by Chad Daybell and Vallow Daybell that the children were zombies and that Vallow Daybell was a goddess tasked with ushering in an apocalypse.

Vallow Daybell, who isn’t an attorney but chose to defend herself at trial in Arizona, sat mostly still as the verdict was read but glanced occasionally at jurors as they were asked to confirm they found her guilty on the single charge.

One of the jurors, Victoria Lewis, said outside the courthouse that Vallow Daybell didn’t do herself any favors by choosing to represent herself.

“Many days she was just smiling and laughing and didn’t seem to take anything very seriously,” Lewis told reporters.

Vallow Daybell told the jury that Vallow chased her with a bat inside her home, and her brother shot Vallow in self-defense as she left the house. She told jurors the death was a tragedy, not a crime.

Cox died five months later from what medical examiners said was a blood clot in his lungs.

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Vallow's siblings, Kay Woodcock and Gerry Vallow, told reporters outside court that they are grateful for the jury's decision.

"We gotcha, and you're not the smartest person in the room," Woodcock said when asked if she has a message for Vallow Daybell. "Everybody's going to forget about you."

The Associated Press left email messages seeking comment Tuesday from the Maricopa County Attorney's Office, which prosecuted the case, and the lawyers who served as legal advisers to Vallow Daybell during the trial.

Last week Adam Cox, another brother of Vallow Daybell, testified on behalf of the prosecution, telling jurors that he had no doubt that his siblings were behind Vallow's death.

Adam Cox said the killing happened just before he and Vallow were planning an intervention to bring his sister back into the mainstream of their shared faith in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He testified that before Vallow's death, his sister had told people her husband was no longer living and that a zombie was living inside his body.

Four months before he died, Vallow filed for divorce from Vallow Daybell, saying she had become infatuated with near-death experiences and had claimed to have lived numerous lives on other planets. He alleged she threatened to ruin him financially and kill him. He sought a voluntary mental health evaluation of his wife.

Vallow Daybell is scheduled to go on trial again in early June, accused in a plot to kill Brandon Boudreaux, the ex-husband of Vallow Daybell's niece. Boudreaux survived.

## **A woman hugs the man who fatally shot her brother and 22 more in a racist attack at a Texas Walmart**

By JAMIE STENGLE Associated Press

Speaking to the gunman who killed her brother and 22 other people, Yolanda Tinajero did not raise her voice or condemn him for his racist attack at a Walmart in 2019. Instead she told him Tuesday that she forgave him, and wished she could give him a hug.

The judge, in a surprising turn in an El Paso courtroom, allowed her to do just that.

Their brief embrace — while Patrick Crusius was still shackled — was among many emotionally charged moments during two days of impact statements given by victims' family members and survivors.

Some described their pain and devastation while others assured him the community had met his hatred with love and unity. Later, another person also hugged the man who pleaded guilty in one of the deadliest mass shootings in the U.S.

Crusius, a white community college dropout, had posted online a screed about a Hispanic invasion of Texas before opening fire with an AK-style rifle at the store near the U.S.-Mexico border on Aug. 3, 2019. Crusius didn't address the families and survivors at his plea hearing Monday. He will serve multiple life sentences after pleading guilty to capital murder and 22 counts of aggravated assault with a deadly weapon.

"We would have opened our doors to you to share a meal, breakfast lunch or dinner, Mexican-style, so then your ugly thoughts of us that have been instilled in you would have turned around," Tinajero told him.

'Hug you very tight'

Tinajero said her brother, 60-year-old Arturo Benavides, was a "kind, sweet-hearted person," whose wife of over 30 years is broken hearted over her loss.

"Now she lives alone in their home full of memories that she can't forget," she said.

"I feel in my heart, to hug you very tight so you could feel my forgiveness, especially my loss, but I know it's not allowed," Tinajero said. "I want you to see and feel all of us who have been impacted by your actions."

Later, the judge asked her: "Ma'am, would it truly bring you peace and comfort if you could hug him?"

'Yes,' she replied.

Her daughter, Melissa Tinajero, told reporters: "I don't know how she was able to do it. I could not do that. But she showed him something he could not show his victims."

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'A survivor, not a victim'

Stephanie Melendez told Crusius that she did not want to address him but rather read a letter to her father, 63-year-old David Johnson, who was killed when he shielded his wife and 9-year-old granddaughter from the gunfire.

Melendez thanked her father for making her study, giving her a curfew and telling her when she was 16 that she needed to get a job.

"You made me into the strong woman I am today," she said.

Her daughter, Kaitlyn Melendez, now 14, told Crusius: "I am a survivor, not a victim."

"I'm going to walk out these doors and move forward with my life and not let you haunt me anymore."

'A disgrace to humanity'

Dean Reckard, whose 63-year-old mother Margie Reckard was among those killed, expressed anger and forgiveness as he addressed Crusius.

"You're a disgrace to humanity and to your family," Reckard said, adding that he hopes Crusius wakes up each morning wishing he were dead.

But Reckard also said he forgave the gunman who will spend the rest of his life behind bars.

"In order to be forgiving, you have to forgive others," he said. "That's the only reason I forgive you. May God have mercy on your soul."

Thousands of people attended Margie Reckard's funeral after her partner of 22 years, Antonio Basco, invited the public to the service, saying he felt alone after her death.

'Left me sad, bitter'

Liliana Munoz of Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, said in court Monday that she was shopping for snacks when Crusius opened fire, forever changing her life physically, economically and emotionally.

In her statement, she said she used to be a "happy, dancing person," but now is afraid every morning when she awakes. Since she was shot, she has had to use a cane to walk and wears a leg brace to keep her left foot from dragging.

"It left me sad, bitter," said the 41-year-old mother.

She also granted Crusius forgiveness.

'You brought us together'

Javier Rodriguez was 15 and starting his sophomore year in high school when he was shot and killed at a bank in Walmart.

On Tuesday his father Francisco Rodriguez shouted at Crusius: "Look at me, I'm talking to you."

He told Crusius that he and his family have to go to the cemetery to commemorate his son's birthday.

"I wish I could just get five minutes with you — me and you — and get all of this, get it over with," he said.

But Rodriguez also referred to comments made about Crusius' impact on El Paso during his sentencing.

"Like the judge said yesterday, you came down to El Paso with the intention of tearing us apart, but all you did, you brought us together," he said.

## US Treasury secretary says trade war with China is not 'sustainable'

By JOSH BOAK and FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said in a Tuesday speech that the ongoing tariffs showdown against China is unsustainable and he expects a "de-escalation" in the trade war between the world's two largest economies.

But in a private speech in Washington for JPMorgan Chase, Bessent also cautioned that talks between the United States and China had yet to formally start. U.S. President Donald Trump placed import taxes of 145% on China, which has countered with 125% tariffs on U.S. goods. Trump has placed tariffs on several dozen countries, causing the stock market to stumble and interest rates to increase on U.S. debt as investors worry about slower economic growth and higher inflationary pressures.



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Details of the speech were confirmed by two people familiar with the remarks who insisted on anonymity to discuss them.

"I do say China is going to be a slog in terms of the negotiations," Bessent said according to a transcript obtained by The Associated Press. "Neither side thinks the status quo is sustainable."

The S&P 500 stock index rose 2.5% after Bloomberg News initially reported Bessent's remarks.

Trump acknowledged the increase in the stock market in remarks to reporters afterward on Tuesday, but he avoided confirming if he, too, thought the situation with China was unsustainable as Bessent had said behind closed doors.

"We're doing fine with China," Trump said.

Despite his high tariffs, Trump said he would be "very nice" to China and not play hardball with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

"We're going to live together very happily and ideally work together," Trump said.

The U.S. president said that the final tariff rate with China would come down "substantially" from the current 145%.

"It won't be that high, not going to be that high," Trump said.

The Trump administration has met for talks with counterparts from Japan, India, South Korea, the European Union, Canada and Mexico, among other nations. But Trump has shown no public indications that he plans to pullback his baseline 10% tariff, even as he has insisted he's looking for other nations to cut their own import taxes and remove any non-tariff barriers that the administration says have hindered exports from the U.S.

China on Monday warned other countries against making trade deals with the United States that could negatively impact China.

"China firmly opposes any party reaching a deal at the expense of China's interests," China's Commerce Ministry said in a statement.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said the Trump administration has received 18 proposals from other countries for trade deals with the U.S., adding that "everyone involved wants to see a trade deal happen."

The uncertainty over tariffs in the financial markets has also been amplified by Trump calling on the Federal Reserve to cut its benchmark interest rate, with the president saying he could fire Fed Chair Jerome Powell if he wanted to do so.

Leavitt said Trump believes the Fed has by holding rates steady as it awaits the impacts of tariffs "in the name of politics, rather in the name of what's right for the American economy."

Trump later said that he wanted Powell to "be early" in lowering rates and that he has no intention of firing the Fed chair, despite previously suggesting that he would.

## US health officials seek to phase out artificial dyes from the food supply

By JONEL ALECCIA and MATTHEW PERRONE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. health officials on Tuesday said they would urge food makers to phase out petroleum-based artificial colors in the nation's food supply, but stopped short of promising a formal ban and offered few specifics on how they intended to achieve the sweeping change.

Food and Drug Administration Commissioner Marty Makary said at a news conference that the agency would take steps to eliminate the synthetic dyes by the end of 2026, largely by relying on voluntary efforts from the food industry. Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., who joined the gathering, said he had heard from food manufacturers, but had no formal agreements with them.

"We don't have an agreement, we have an understanding," Kennedy said.

The officials said the FDA would establish a standard and timeline for industry to switch to natural alternatives, revoke authorization for dyes not in production within coming weeks and take action to remove remaining dyes on the market.

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"Today, the FDA is asking food companies to substitute petrochemical dyes with natural ingredients for American children as they already do in Europe and Canada," Makary said.

The proposed move is aimed at boosting children's health, he added.

"For the last 50 years we have been running one of the largest uncontrolled scientific experiments in the world on our nation's children without their consent," he said.

The process to revoke approved additives from the food supply typically takes several years and requires public comment, agency review and final rulemaking procedures.

Industry groups said that the chemicals are safe and suggested they would try to negotiate with regulators to keep them available.

"FDA and regulatory bodies around the world have deemed our products and ingredients safe, and we look forward to working with the Trump Administration and Congress on this issue," said Christopher Gindlesperger, spokesman for the National Confectioners Association. "We are in firm agreement that science-based evaluation of food additives will help eliminate consumer confusion and rebuild trust in our national food safety system."

Health advocates have long called for the removal of artificial dyes from foods, citing mixed studies indicating they can cause neurobehavioral problems, including hyperactivity and attention issues, in some children. The FDA has maintained that the approved dyes are safe and that "the totality of scientific evidence shows that most children have no adverse effects when consuming foods containing color additives."

The FDA currently allows 36 food color additives, including eight synthetic dyes. In January, the agency announced that the dye known as Red 3 — used in candies, cakes and some medications — would be banned in food by 2027 because it caused cancer in laboratory rats.

Artificial dyes are used widely in U.S. foods. In Canada and in Europe — where synthetic colors are required to carry warning labels — manufacturers mostly use natural substitutes. Several states, including California and West Virginia, have passed laws restricting the use of artificial colors in foods.

The announcement drew praise from advocates who say the dyes carry health risks and serve no purpose beyond the cosmetic.

"Their only purpose is to make food companies money," said Dr. Peter Lurie, president of the Center for Science in the Public Interest and a former FDA official. "Food dyes help make ultraprocessed foods more attractive, especially to children, often by masking the absence of a colorful ingredient, like fruit."

Removing artificial dyes from foods has long been a goal of so-called MAHA moms, key supporters of Kennedy and his "Make America Healthy Again" initiatives. They were among protesters who signed petitions and rallied outside the Michigan headquarters of WK Kellogg Co. last year, demanding that the company remove artificial dyes from its breakfast cereals in the U.S.

Health officials insisted that food-makers wanted clarity on the issue and were receptive to the changes, but the response from industry groups was mixed.

Consumer Brands Association, a trade group for food manufacturers, said it had long asked FDA to assert its authority to regulate foods at a national level, rather than leaving it to a patchwork of state laws. But, in a statement, the group also urged FDA officials to "prioritize research that is objective, peer-reviewed and relevant to human health and safety."

It added that the ingredients in question have been rigorously studied and demonstrated to be safe.

Hours before the announcement, the International Dairy Foods Association said its members would voluntarily eliminate artificial colors in milk, cheese and yogurt products sold to U.S. school meal programs by July 2026.

Other industry groups didn't pledge any quick changes.

The International Association of Color Manufacturers said requiring reformulation in less than two years "ignores scientific evidence and underestimates the complexity of food production. This process is neither simple nor immediate, and the resulting supply disruptions will limit access to familiar, affordable grocery items."

Removing dyes from the food supply will not address the chief health problems that plague Americans, said Susan Mayne, a Yale University chronic disease expert and former director of the FDA's food center.

"With every one of their announcements, they're focusing in on something that's not going to accomplish what they say it is," Mayne said of Kennedy's initiatives. "Most of these food dyes have been in our food supply for 100 years. ... So why aren't they driving toward reductions in things that do drive chronic disease rates?"

In the past, FDA officials said the threat of legal action from the food industry required the government to have significant scientific evidence before banning additives. Red 3 was banned from cosmetics more than three decades before it was stripped from food and medicine. It took five decades for the FDA to ban brominated vegetable oil because of health concerns.

Some of the state laws banning synthetic dyes in school meals have aggressive timelines. West Virginia's ban, for example, prohibits red, yellow, blue and green artificial dyes in school meals starting Aug. 1. A broader ban will extend the restrictions to all foods sold in the state on Jan. 1, 2028.

Many U.S. food companies are already reformulating their foods, according to Sensient Colors, one of the world's largest producers of food dyes and flavorings. In place of synthetic dyes, food makers can use natural hues made from beets, algae and crushed insects and pigments from purple sweet potatoes, radishes and red cabbage.

## **Karen Read's second murder trial revives debate over who killed her Boston police officer boyfriend**

By MICHAEL CASEY Associated Press

DEDHAM, Mass. (AP) — Karen Read's second murder trial began Tuesday with a prosecutor saying the defendant's own words will bolster evidence that she killed her police officer boyfriend three years ago and a defense attorney calling the case "the definition of reasonable doubt."

Read is accused of striking her boyfriend, John O'Keefe, with her SUV in 2022 and leaving him to die alone in the snow outside of a house party in Canton, a suburb about 20 miles (32 kilometers) south of Boston. She has been charged with second-degree murder, manslaughter while operating a vehicle under the influence and leaving the scene.

Prosecutors say Read intentionally backed into O'Keefe after she dropped him off at the home of a fellow Boston officer Brian Albert and returned hours later to find him dead. The defense says that she was a victim of a vast police conspiracy and that O'Keefe was fatally beaten by another law enforcement officer at the party.

A mistrial was declared last year after jurors said they were at an impasse and deliberating further would be futile. Speaking briefly to reporters Tuesday afternoon, Read said she is innocent and praised her legal team.

"I can't be prouder, and I'm fortunate to have them," Read said. "We've got the truth."

The biggest difference in the current trial is the lead prosecutor, Hank Brennan. Brought in as a special prosecutor after the mistrial, the former defense attorney has represented a number of prominent clients, including notorious Boston gangster James "Whitey" Bulger.

In opening statements Tuesday, Brennan told jurors that "facts and data" will lead them to the truth, and that Read's own statements will confirm it. The first witness he called was paramedic Timothy Nuttall, who testified that when he responded to the scene that morning, a frantic Read said, "I hit him. I hit him. I hit him."

"She admitted what she had done that night," said Brennan, who also played a clip from a television interview in which Read said, "I mean, I didn't think I 'hit him' hit him, but could I have clipped him? Could I have tagged him in the knee and incapacitated him? He didn't look mortally wounded, as far as I could see. Could I have done something that knocked him out, and in his drunkenness and in the cold, he didn't come to again?"

But defense attorney Alan Jackson told jurors that Read never said "I hit him" and that prosecutors are trying to twist her other statements into a confession.

"That's a person trying to make sense of an unexplainable circumstance, a natural concern of a bereaved

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significant other, a woman desperately trying to piece together what could have happened on this tragic night," he said.

Cross-examining the paramedic, Jackson noted that Nuttall testified at the first trial that Read said "I hit him," twice, not three times. But Nuttall insisted Tuesday that she said it three times.

Jackson said in his opening statement that the prosecution's case was based on a "brazen and flawed assertion that is untethered to the facts and the evidence."

"John O'Keefe did not die from being hit by a vehicle," he said. "The facts will show that. The evidence will show that. The data will show that. The science will show that and the experts will tell you that."

Many of the factors that made the first trial must-see television will feature in the second. Most of the same witnesses are back as are Read's aggressive defense team and her supporters camped out near the courthouse. Read, who has been featured in several documentaries about her case, has become a minor celebrity.

On Tuesday, a few dozen of Read's supporters, many holding American flags, stood in front of the courthouse before moving a block away to comply with a court-ordered buffer zone. Those who were reuniting hugged, while others took time to bring newcomers up to speed on the case.

"I'm here for justice," said Ashlyn Wade, a Read supporter from Canton. "The murderer going to jail and Karen being exonerated, that would be justice."

The prosecution, however, stands to benefit from a pretrial ruling from Judge Beverly Cannone barring defense attorneys from mentioning potential third-party culprits in their opening statements. They can develop a case against two law enforcement officers but cannot implicate Albert's nephew, Colin Albert, as they did in the first trial.

"I view it as a blow to the defense strategy but not a knockout punch," Daniel Medwed, a law professor at Northeastern University, said of the ruling. "All the defense needs to do is create reasonable doubt about Karen (Read's) guilt, and that doesn't require pointing to an alternative perpetrator as a matter of law."

Jackson called the prosecution's case "the literal definition of reasonable doubt" in his opening statement and said the heavy burden of proof will not be met given that "every piece of this case was handled by a disgraced investigator with a motive to protect his friends"

"By the end of this trial, you'll conclude that Karen Read is not guilty," he said. "She's the victim of a botched and biased and corrupted investigation that was never about the truth, folks. It was about preserving loyalty."

One of the key witnesses will be former State Trooper Michael Proctor. He led the investigation but has since been fired after a disciplinary board found that he sent sexist and crude texts about Read to his family and colleagues. Jackson called him a "cancer" that infected every step of the investigation and characterized him as both the key to the state's case and its Achilles' heel.

The state's second witness Tuesday was Kerry Roberts, a friend of O'Keefe's who testified that Read called her at 5 a.m. the day after the house party, screamed "Kerry! Kerry! Kerry! John's dead!" and hung up. Roberts then went to O'Keefe's house with Read to search for him and then to the Albert home.

Roberts said she couldn't see anything when they pulled up but that Read said, "there he is," and jumped out of the car.

"She ran right over to the mound of snow," Roberts said. "Once she got to it, you could tell it was a mound of snow the length of a body."

## Trump says he has 'no intention' of firing Federal Reserve chair

By JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump said Tuesday he has no plans to fire Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell, just days after his statement that he would like to terminate the head of the U.S. central bank caused a stock market selloff.

"I have no intention of firing him," Trump told reporters.

The U.S. president had previously insinuated otherwise as he said he could fire Powell if he wanted to,



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having been frustrated by the Fed putting a pause on cuts to short-term interest rates. Powell has said that Trump's tariffs are creating uncertainty about slower growth and higher inflationary pressures, while the president maintains that inflationary worries are essentially non-existent.

The president maintains that energy and grocery prices are falling, so the Fed should cut its benchmark rates because inflation is no longer a threat to the U.S. economy, Trump said. His remarks indicated that he still plans to use the bully pulpit to pressure a U.S. central bank that is committed to resisting political pressure as part of its mandate to stabilize prices and maximize employment.

Trump's frustration led him to post on social media last Thursday: "Powell's termination cannot come fast enough!"

The Fed chair's term ends in May 2026.

On Tuesday, Trump continued to air his grievances about Powell, even though he said the Fed chair would stay on the job despite the president's belief that inflation is no longer a problem.

"It's all coming down," Trump said. "The only thing that hasn't come down, but hasn't gone up much, are interest rates. And we think the Fed should lower the rate. We think that it's a perfect time to lower the rate. And we'd like to see our chairman be early or on time, as opposed to late. Late's not good."

Trump again attacked Powell on Monday on his Truth Social account, saying that "there is virtually No Inflation."

The comment built on a statement by Trump last week that said he believed he could fire Powell, a move that shook financial markets and frightened investors that interest rates might be subject to politics instead of economic fundamentals.

"If I want him out, he'll be out of there real fast, believe me," Trump said in the Oval Office last Thursday. "I'm not happy with him."

The Fed has held off on further reductions to its federal funds rate, which influences the money supply by setting the interest rate that banks can charge each other for overnight loans. That rate is effectively 4.33%, down a full percentage point since last August as inflationary pressures appeared to ease.

The Fed had initially raised that rate because of inflation spiking during Joe Biden's presidency, a byproduct of the global economy recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic and higher energy and food prices after Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022.

But Powell has also been willing to challenge the president's trade policies. He said last week in a Chicago speech that Trump's tariff policies would hurt the U.S. economy, a direct warning to a White House trying to sell the import taxes as a long-term positive for the country.

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

## **The top producer at '60 Minutes' has quit. He says he can no longer run the show as he always has**

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — With his show involved in a bitter dispute with President Donald Trump, the top executive at the storied CBS News show "60 Minutes" abruptly resigned on Tuesday while saying he's losing the freedom to run it independently.

Bill Owens, executive producer of television's most popular and influential newsmagazine since 2019, said in a note to staff that it has "become clear that I would not be allowed to run the show as I have always run it, to make independent decisions based on what was right for '60 Minutes,' right for the audience."

"The show is too important to the country," he wrote. "It has to continue, just not with me as the executive producer."

Trump sued "60 Minutes" for \$20 billion last fall, claiming it deceptively edited an interview with his Democratic election opponent Kamala Harris. CBS denied it had done anything to give an advantage to Harris, and released the full transcript of its interview.

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When Trump took office for his second term, his Federal Communications Commission chairman, Brendan Carr, announced CBS would be investigated for the same issue.

At the same time, CBS parent Paramount Global, run by Shari Redstone, is seeking approval for a merger with Skydance Media, founded by Larry Ellison. They are reportedly in mediation to settle the lawsuit with Trump, a prospect that has been bitterly opposed by Owens and others at "60 Minutes."

With this backdrop, "60 Minutes" has run an extraordinary series of tough stories about the new administration since it took office. The president angrily denounced the show on social media after its April 13 episode featured critical stories about Ukraine and Greenland, saying CBS should "pay a big price" for going after him.

Owens was the third executive producer at the Sunday night newsmagazine, known for its ticking stop-watch. Only Don Hewitt, the show's founder, and Jeff Fager preceded him. Owens did not immediately return a call seeking comment on Tuesday. Owens has worked at CBS News for 37 years, 25 of them at "60 Minutes."

"Having defended this show — and what we stand for — from every angle, over time with everything I could, I am stepping aside so the show can move forward," he said in the memo.

CBS News' top executive, Wendy McMahon, said in a statement that Owens "has led '60 Minutes' with unwavering integrity, curiosity and a deep commitment to the truth. He has championed the kind of journalism that informs, enlightens and often changes the national conversation."

It was not immediately clear if any particular event triggered the decision, or if Owens was told he had to leave.

"60 Minutes" is famously insular, run as an independent fiefdom within CBS News, and Owens said that McMahon agrees that he should be replaced by a current producer there. His top deputy is Tanya Simon, daughter of the late "60 Minutes" correspondent Bob Simon.

Trump has battled the press on several levels since taking office again. The FCC is investigating several media companies, the administration is working to shut down Voice of America and other government-run outlets, and The Associated Press has sued the administration for reducing its access to events because it has not renamed the Gulf of Mexico in line with Trump's executive order.

## **Korir brothers hope a Kenyan school they fund will produce a Boston Marathon champion, like them**

By JIMMY GOLEN AP Sports Writer

BOSTON (AP) — John Korir arrived in Hopkinton hoping to join his brother as a Boston Marathon champion. He left Boylston Street with plans to train a future winner.

Korir said he will donate the prize money from his Boston victory to the Transcend Talent Academy, which provides an education for aspiring runners who can't afford one. He has worked with the school in Kenya along with his brother, Wesley, who used the proceeds from his 2012 Boston win to build a hospital in their home region.

"It was in our dream to come here and win, and make history of two brothers winning Boston," Korir said Tuesday, a day after overcoming an early fall to become, with Wesley, the first members of the same family to win the world's oldest and most prestigious annual marathon.

"One day, one time we'll have a child from Transend Academy win Boston," John Korir said. "That's now our next dream: to mentor, to bring up a champion who will come one day, come and win Boston."

The reigning Chicago Marathon champion, who had top 10 finishes in both of his previous Boston attempts, Korir broke away from the pack heading into Heartbreak Hill on Monday and ran alone for much of the last 6 miles to win in 2 hours, 4 minutes, 45 seconds — the second-fastest winning time in course history.

Fellow Kenyan Sharon Lokedi also took advantage of near-perfect marathon weather to win in 2:17:22 — more than 2 1/2 minutes faster than the previous course record. Korir said he, too, might have challenged

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for the course record if he'd had another runner to push him.

"But because I was alone, had to try my best and see how fast I could run," he said.

Korir ran more than 26.19 miles with a scraped up knee and hand after getting tripped in the crowded start on East Main Street in Hopkinton, sending him sprawling headfirst down the double yellow line in the middle of the road.

His race bib was messed up even worse.

Korir quickly popped back up and saw his bib was torn off his shirt in three of its four corners; he detached the last one, folded the bib and tucked it into his shorts as he rejoined the still bunched-up leaders at the rear.

The absence of a bib — the professionals' have their names, not numbers like most of the 30,000 runners in the field — was mostly a curiosity for onlookers. But it posed a potential problem for race organizers: On the back is a timing device that registers when the runner crosses a checkpoint.

The system provide runners with their split times and also proves that someone ran the entire race — something Boston officials didn't have in 1980, when Rosie Ruiz was initially declared the winner before they found she took a shortcut to the finish line.

Ruiz, an unknown before she broke the tape, didn't show up on any pictures or video along the course. Korir — who was running among the leaders, right behind the lead vehicle with the TV camera — was literally front and center.

"It was kind of a nonissue because he was in the main (pack). I mean, the camera was focused on him," Boston Athletic Association President Jack Fleming said, holding up Korir's mangled bib. "This is an identification and a timing and scoring device. So he was clearly identified; we knew who he was. We didn't actually need this to identify him as John Korir. And it just so happened that the timing tag was intact."

Fleming said organizers noticed Korir's missing bib early on and went looking for video to find out what had happened. But they also saw that he was showing up at each checkpoint, as normal. No one knew how until he pulled the bib out of his shorts as he ran down Boylston Street to the finish.

"For him to have the presence of mind, with all of that adrenaline, to grab the bib and to hold on to it, tuck it away, ... it's amazing," Fleming said.

The timing devices have come a long way: Early models were plastic chips tied into the runners' shoe-laces, but now they are a thin metallic sticker on the back of the bib, surrounded by a sponge-like protective guard. The bib itself is a papery plastic similar to the material used to wrap building frames during construction.

It is strong enough to withstand 26.2 miles of pounding in all kinds of weather, but it is not indestructible.

"It's the first thing that's stated on the back of the bid: Do not fold or bend this bib number," Fleming said, reading the warning printed on every bib. "But it worked."

## Rubio unveils a massive overhaul of the State Department that would cut staff and bureaus

By FARNOUSH AMIRI, MATTHEW LEE and ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Secretary of State Marco Rubio unveiled a massive overhaul of the State Department on Tuesday, with plans to reduce staff in the U.S. by 15% while closing and consolidating more than 100 bureaus worldwide as part of the Trump administration's "America First" mandate.

The reorganization plan, announced by Rubio on social media and detailed in documents obtained by The Associated Press, is the latest effort by the White House to reimagine U.S. foreign policy and scale back the size of the federal government. The restructuring was driven in part by the need to find a new home for the remaining functions of the U.S. Agency for International Development, an agency that Trump administration officials and billionaire ally Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency have dismantled.

"We cannot win the battle for the 21st century with bloated bureaucracy that stifles innovation and misallocates scarce resources," Rubio said in a department-wide email obtained by AP. He said the reor-

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ganization aimed to “meet the immense challenges of the 21st Century and put America First.”

State Department spokeswoman Tammy Bruce echoed that sentiment, saying the “sweeping changes will empower our talented diplomats” but would not result in the immediate dismissal of personnel.

“It’s not something where people are being fired today,” Bruce told reporters Tuesday. “They’re not going to be walking out of the building. It’s not that kind of a dynamic. It is a roadmap. It’s a plan.”

It includes consolidating 734 bureaus and offices down to 602, as well as transitioning 137 offices to another location within the department to “increase efficiency,” according to a fact sheet obtained by AP.

There will be a “reimagined” office focused on foreign and humanitarian affairs to coordinate the aid programs overseas that remain at the State Department.

Although the plan will implement major changes in the department’s bureaucracy and personnel, it is far less drastic than an alleged reorganization plan that was circulated by some officials over the weekend. Numerous senior State Department officials, including Rubio himself, denied that the plan was real.

Work that had been believed targeted in that alleged leaked document survived — at least as bureau names on a chart — in the plan that Rubio released Tuesday. That includes offices for Africa affairs, migration and refugee issues, and democracy efforts.

It was not immediately clear whether U.S. embassies were included in the installations slated for closing. The earlier reports of wholesale closings of embassies, especially in Africa, had triggered warnings about shrinking the U.S. diplomatic capacity and influence abroad.

Some of the bureaus that are indeed expected to be cut in the new plan include the Office of Global Women’s Issues and the State Department’s diversity and inclusion efforts, which have been eliminated government-wide under Trump.

An office charged with surging expertise to war zones and other erupting crises will be eliminated, while other bureaus focused on human rights and justice will be scaled back or folded into other sections of the department.

Daryl Grisgraber, a policy lead with humanitarian organization Oxfam America, said this development only creates more “uncertainty” about the United States’ ability to contribute to humanitarian conflicts and will “only make the world a more unstable, unequal place for us all.”

It is unclear if the reorganization would be implemented through an executive order or other means.

The plans came a week after the AP learned that the White House’s Office of Management and Budget proposed gutting the State Department’s budget by almost 50% and eliminating funding for the United Nations and NATO headquarters.

While the budget proposal was still in a highly preliminary phase and not expected to pass muster with Congress, the reorganization plan got an initial nod of approval from Republicans on Capitol Hill.

“Change is not easy, but President Trump and Secretary Rubio have proposed a vision to remake the State Department for this century and the fights that we face today, as well as those that lie ahead of us,” Idaho Sen. Jim Risch, Republican chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said in a statement.

Democrats, meanwhile, blasted the effort as the Trump administration’s latest attempt to gut “vital components of American influence” on the world stage.

“On its face, this new reorganization plan raises grave concerns that the United States will no longer have either the capacity or capability to exert U.S. global leadership, achieve critical national security objectives, stand up to our adversaries, save lives, and promote democratic values,” Hawaii Democratic Sen. Brian Schatz said.

Some lawmakers said the move is a departure from the work Rubio supported as a senator.

“The vital work left on Secretary Rubio’s cutting-room floor represents significant pillars of our foreign policy long supported by Democrats and Republicans alike, including former Senator Rubio — not ‘radical ideologies’ as he now claims,” said New York Rep. Gregory Meeks, the top Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

The proposed changes at the State Department come as the Trump administration has been slashing jobs and funding across agencies, from the Education Department to Health and Human Services.

On foreign policy, beyond the destruction of USAID, the administration also has moved to defund so-



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called other "soft power" institutions like media outlets delivering objective news, often to authoritarian countries, including the Voice of America, the Middle East Broadcasting Networks, Radio Free Asia and Radio/TV Marti, which broadcasts to Cuba.

## Wall Street rallies and recovers Monday's losses as the dollar and US bond market steady

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — U.S. stocks jumped in a widespread rally Tuesday, and other U.S. investments steadied a day after falling sharply on worries about President Donald Trump's trade war and his attacks on the head of the Federal Reserve.

The S&P 500 climbed 2.5%. The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 1,016 points, or 2.7%, and the Nasdaq composite gained 2.7%. All three indexes more than made up their big losses from the start of the week.

The value of the U.S. dollar also stabilized after sliding against the euro and other competitors, while longer-term Treasury yields held steadier as more calm returned to financial markets. Sharp, unusual moves for the dollar and for Treasuries have recently raised worries that Trump's policies are making investors more skeptical about U.S. investments' reputation as the world's safest.

The only prediction many Wall Street strategists are willing to make is that financial markets will likely continue to veer up and down as hopes rise and fall that Trump may negotiate deals with other countries to lower his tariffs. If no such deals come quickly enough, many investors expect the economy to fall into a recession.

The International Monetary Fund on Tuesday slashed its forecast for global economic growth this year to 2.8%, down from 3.3%. But Vice President JD Vance also said he made progress with India's prime minister, Narendra Modi, on trade talks Monday.

A suite of better-than-expected profit reports from big U.S. companies, meanwhile, helped drive U.S. stocks higher.

Equifax jumped 13.8% after reporting a better profit for the first three months of 2025 than analysts expected. It also said it would send more cash to its shareholders by increasing its dividend and buying up to \$3 billion of its stock over the next four years.

3M climbed 8.1% after the maker of Scotch tape and Command strips said it made more in profit from each \$1 of revenue during the start of the year than it expected. The company also stood by its forecast for profit for the full year, though it said tariffs may drag down its earnings per share by up to 40 cents per share.

Homebuilder PulteGroup rose 8.4% after it likewise delivered a stronger profit for the start of 2025 than analysts expected.

It's been benefiting from some of the sharp moves in the bond market. Drops for Treasury yields during the first three months of the year translated into lower mortgage rates for potential customers, though yields have been largely rising since early this month.

CEO Ryan Marshall said buyers "remain caught between a strong desire for homeownership and the affordability challenges of high selling prices and monthly payments that are stretched."

Tesla rose 4.6% ahead of its earnings report, which arrived after trading ended for the day. That trimmed its loss for the year so far to roughly 41%.

Elon Musk's electric car company had already reported its first-quarter car sales dropped by 13% from the year before. It's been hurt by vandalism, widespread protests and calls for a consumer boycott amid a backlash to Musk's oversight of cost-cutting efforts for the U.S. government.

Stocks also showed how Trump's tariffs could create winners and losers as he tries to remake the global economy and trade.

First Solar jumped 10.5% after the U.S. Department of Commerce finalized harsher-than-expected solar tariffs on some southeast Asian communities.

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U.S. defense contractors, meanwhile, had some of the market's sharpest losses after RTX said tariffs on Mexican and Canadian imports, along with other products, could mean an \$850 million hit to its profit this year. RTX, which builds airplane engines and military equipment, fell 9.8% even though it reported a stronger profit for the latest quarter.

Kimberly-Clark lost 1.6% even though the maker of Huggies and Kleenex likewise reported a better-than-expected profit.

CEO Mike Hsu said that "the current environment will now mean greater costs across our global supply chain" versus what it expected at the start of the year, and the company lowered its forecast for an underlying measure of profit this year.

Losers on Wall Street were the exceptions, though, as 99% of the stocks within the S&P 500 index rose. All told, the S&P 500 climbed 129.56 points to 5,287.76. The Dow Jones Industrial Average gained 1,106.57 to 39,186.98, and the Nasdaq composite jumped 429.52 to 16,300.42.

In the bond market, longer-term yields eased following an unsettling run higher the day before. The yield on the 10-year Treasury pulled back to 4.39% from 4.42% late Monday.

In stock markets abroad, indexes rose across much of Europe following modest, mixed moves across Asia. \_\_\_\_

AP Business Writers Yuri Kageyama and Matt Ott contributed.

## Federal judge blocks Trump administration from dismantling Voice of America

By MICHAEL KUNZELMAN and REBECCA BOONE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal judge agreed Tuesday to block the Trump administration from dismantling Voice of America, the 83-year-old international news service created by Congress.

U.S. District Judge Royce Lamberth ruled that the administration illegally required Voice of America to cease operations for the first time since its World War II-era inception.

Attorneys for Voice of America employees and contractors asked the judge to restore its ability to broadcast at the same level before President Donald Trump moved to slash its funding. Lamberth mostly agreed, ordering the administration to restore Voice of America and two of the independent broadcast networks operated by the U.S. Agency for Global Media — Radio Free Asia and Middle East Broadcasting Networks — until the lawsuits are settled.

The judge denied the request for two other independent networks, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and Open Technology Fund.

In a March 26 court filing, plaintiffs' attorneys said nearly all 1,300 of Voice of America's employees were placed on administrative leave, while 500 contractors were told that their contracts would be terminated at the end of last month.

The U.S. Agency for Global Media, which runs Voice of America, has operated other broadcast outlets, including Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia and Radio Free Afghanistan. Congress has appropriated nearly \$860 million for the Agency for Global Media for the current fiscal year.

Voice of America went dark soon after Trump issued an executive order on March 14 that pared funding to the Agency for Global Media and six other unrelated federal entities. It also moved to terminate VOA contracts with news agencies, including The Associated Press.

Voice of America has operated since World War II, beaming news into authoritarian countries that don't have a free press. It began as a counterpoint to Nazi propaganda and played a prominent role in the U.S. government's Cold War efforts to curb the spread of communism.

Trump and his Republican allies have accused Voice of America of having a "leftist bias" and failing to project "pro-American" values to its audience.

Plaintiffs' attorneys say it reports and broadcasts the news "truthfully, impartially, and objectively."

"That simple mission is a powerful one for those living across the globe without access to a free press and without the ability to otherwise discern what is truly happening," they wrote.

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Government attorneys argued that the plaintiffs failed to show how they have been irreparably harmed. "Rather, Plaintiffs take aim at what is best described as a temporary pause on its activities while Global Media determines how to bring Voice of America into compliance with the President's directive," they wrote.

The Agency for Global Media's leadership includes special adviser Kari Lake, a former TV news anchor and political candidate.

In his written ruling, Lamberth noted that the U.S. Agency for Global Media never finalized its grant agreement with Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty for the current fiscal year, and the Open Technology Fund withdrew its legal request for a temporary restraining order earlier this year.

Radio Free Asia and Middle East Broadcasting Networks do have current grant agreements in place, and like Voice of America, are funded by Congressional appropriations.

Lamberth said the funding cuts "reflect a hasty, indiscriminate approach" — particularly since they were made the same day that President Trump signed the congressional appropriation that funded Voice of America and the networks through September of this year.

Not only is there an absence of "reasoned analysis" from the defendants; there is an absence of any analysis whatsoever," Lamberth said.

The labor union that represents workers at the U.S. Agency for Global Media called the ruling a "powerful affirmation of the role that independent journalism plays in advancing democracy and countering disinformation."

"These networks are essential tools of American soft power — trusted sources of truth in places where it is often scarce," said Tom Yazdgerdi, president of the American Foreign Service Association, in a press release Tuesday. "By upholding editorial independence, the court has protected the credibility of USAGM journalists and the global mission they serve."

## Supreme Court signals support for Maryland parents who object to LGBTQ books in public schools

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court's conservative majority on Tuesday signaled support for the religious rights of parents in Maryland who want to remove their children from elementary school classes using storybooks with LGBTQ characters.

The court seemed likely to find that the Montgomery County school system, in suburban Washington, could not require elementary school children to sit through lessons involving the books if parents expressed religious objections to the material.

The case is one of three religious rights cases at the court this term. The justices have repeatedly endorsed claims of religious discrimination in recent years.

The school district introduced the storybooks in 2022, with such titles as "Prince and Knight" and "Uncle Bobby's Wedding," as part of an effort to better reflect the district's diversity.

Parents initially were allowed to opt their children out of the lessons for religious and other reasons, but the school board reversed course a year later, prompting protests and eventually a lawsuit.

The case hit unusually close to home, as three justices live in the county, though none sent their children to public schools.

"I guess I am a bit mystified as a lifelong resident of the county how it came to this," Justice Brett Kavanaugh said. Kavanaugh also expressed surprise that the school system was "not respecting religious liberty," especially because of the county's diverse population and Maryland's history as a haven for Catholics.

Pressed repeatedly about why the school system couldn't reinstitute an opt-out policy, lawyer Alan Schoenfeld said, "It tried that. It failed. It was not able to accommodate the number of opt-outs at issue."

Sex education is the only area of instruction in Montgomery schools that students can be excused from, Schoenfeld said.

Justices referred to several of the books, but none as extensively as "Uncle Bobby's Wedding," in which a niece worries that her uncle will not have as much time for her after he gets married to another man.

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Liberal Justice Sonia Sotomayor and conservative Justice Samuel Alito, who are on opposite sides of most culture-war clashes, offered competing interpretations.

"Is looking at two men getting married, is that the religious objection?" Sotomayor said, noting there's not even any kissing involved.

Alito described the book as an endorsement of same-sex marriage. "The book has a clear message, and a lot of people think it's a good message, and maybe it is a good message, but it's a message that a lot of people who hold on to traditional religious beliefs don't agree with," he said.

In all, five books are at issue in the high court case, touching on the same themes found in classic stories that include Snow White, Cinderella and Peter Pan, the school system's lawyers wrote.

In "Prince and Knight," two men fall in love after they rescue the kingdom, and each other. "Love, Violet" deals with a girl's anxiety about giving a valentine to another girl. "Born Ready" is the story of a transgender boy's decision to share his gender identity with his family and the world. "Intersection Allies" describes nine characters of varying backgrounds, including one who is gender-fluid.

Billy Moges, a board member of the Kids First parents' group that sued over the books, said the content is sexual, confusing and inappropriate for young schoolchildren.

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

A decision in Mahmoud v. Taylor is expected by early summer.

## Inside the investigation, seizure and death of Peanut the social media star squirrel

By MICHAEL HILL Associated Press

New York environmental workers who came with a warrant looking for Peanut the squirrel found the scampering social media star on a bathtub. His housemate, Fred the raccoon, was in a suitcase in a bedroom closet.

Soon after the Oct. 30 seizure, both animals were euthanized and Peanut became a martyr — held up as a symbol of government overreach by political candidates, including Republican vice presidential candidate JD Vance, who invoked Peanut's name during a rally just days before the presidential election. State and Local officials were inundated with angry messages and even bomb threats.

How did events in a sleepy corner of upstate New York snowball so dramatically?

Records recently released under freedom of information requests show complaints about the P'nuts Freedom Farm Animal Sanctuary were initially treated with little urgency by the state Department of Environmental Conservation — but that changed in the weeks leading up to the fateful seizure amid new complaints and the reported arrival of raccoons to the sanctuary.

Government officials laid the groundwork for euthanizing the animals so they could be tested for rabies in the days before the seizure. Yet a state employee also lined up a wildlife rehabilitator to take Peanut, if needed.

A final phone call to discuss Peanut's fate was made after the squirrel bit the gloved thumb of a wildlife biologist, according to records.

Who was Peanut?

Peanut, also known as P'nut, was the star of the sanctuary run by Mark Longo and Daniela Bittner in Southport near the Pennsylvania line. Online videos show the squirrel skittering on Longo's shoulders, holding and eating waffles and wearing a tiny cowboy hat.

Longo said he found Peanut years ago in New York City after the animal's mother was hit by a car. It's against New York state law to possess a wild animal without a license, though Longo and Bittner took steps last year to become wildlife rehabilitators.

Fred the raccoon was dropped off at the sanctuary last summer.

The spirited interactions between the animals and their human companions racked up views — but



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documents show they also drew the attention of critics and state wildlife authorities.

The road to seizure

The DEC knew about the sanctuary since at least January 2024.

"A report came in of a recent news story about this facility," reads an incident report. "There are images of a non-releasable squirrel being referred to as a 'pet' and being dressed up and showcased for publicity reasons."

One self-described wildlife rehabilitator and former neighbor emailed authorities multiple times with complaints about how the animals were being treated.

In May, a conservation officer spoke to Longo and was told that Peanut and another baby squirrel were sent to Connecticut. Longo said in a recent interview that was true, but that Peanut later came back.

When a fresh complaint came in that month, one officer wrote, "no judge will give us a search warrant for a squirrel."

"Unfortunately this isn't a big crime, it is just a violation," a conservation officer wrote in response to a complaint that summer. "Mark won't let me into his house without a search warrant. There is just nothing more I can do at this point. I am sorry."

Views shifted by October amid more complaints and the arrival of Fred the raccoon — a species that can carry and transmit rabies. One correspondent alleged Longo was "keeping a raccoon in a small cage in his house. I follow him on TikTok."

DEC workers viewed videos on Facebook, TikTok and Instagram and reached out to the Chemung County health department.

State environmental officials asked a county health official if they recommend testing animals for rabies "as a precaution for human safety." That would require the animals to be killed so brain tissue could be examined.

The county, in turn, checked with a state health department expert, who advised the animals would need to be tested if there was any potential of rabies exposure. A week before the search, the county emailed the DEC:

"We fully expect that all 'wild' animals in the home will need to be euthanized and sent for rabies testing due to the nature of the human contact."

A judge signed a search warrant authorizing the seizure of illegally possessed wildlife.

Peanut bites the hand that seizes it

A team of about a dozen searchers converged on Longo's property around 10:30 a.m. on the morning of Oct. 30.

Longo said the squirrel was taken to Connecticut, according to the incident report — though he later conceded to The Associated Press that was a lie in a highly stressful moment.

Bittner revealed to searchers the raccoon was in an upstairs closet. Fred was in an open suitcase on the floor, which was zipped closed and moved to give workers room to transfer the raccoon into a carrier.

Peanut's seizure was more dramatic. The squirrel bit the state wildlife biologist through a thick leather glove with a nitrile exam glove underneath. The worker had a bleeding wound, according to a DEC email.

A "visibly upset" Longo pleaded with searchers not to take Peanut and said the squirrel was a large source of income for the farm, according to incident reports.

"He stated he knew we would be euthanizing it," the report reads.

Did Peanut need to die?

Anger over Peanut's fate revolves around the belief by critics that he was needlessly killed.

Longo believes euthanization was always on the government's agenda, citing the pre-search email indicating that testing on the animals was expected. Longo and Bittner said they did not witness anyone getting medical attention during the seizure.

A DEC report indicates the agency took steps before the raid to place the squirrel with a wildlife rehabilitator, if needed "for temporary holding/rehabbing." The agency also coordinated with local animal control in case animals needed to be euthanized.

The documents suggest Peanut's fate was ultimately sealed at the end of the search, when a call was

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made to a county health department official about the "high profile" case. A state DEC worker recalled in a report that the person on the phone said "both animals should be tested as a precaution as she didn't want to chance it."

That's because both animals were in direct contact with people in the home and the squirrel bit someone. County officials have said they had to follow rabies protocols from the state.

"Sad but it has to be done," a county health official wrote in an email that afternoon. "The poor animals didn't do anything wrong."

The rabies tests were performed quickly, though officials didn't publicly disclose the negative results until almost two weeks later.

By then, Peanut's death had made headlines around the world.

Bomb threats were made to the DEC buildings. Government inboxes filled up with emails containing invective like "BURN IN HELL," "SHAME ON YOU!!!" A caller to the state left a message beginning, "I want to know exactly why you freaks killed Peanut the squirrel. You people are insane."

The DEC conducted an internal investigation after the seizure, eventually promising to add a new deputy commissioner for public protection and to develop a body-camera policy for its officers.

"We have carefully reviewed all the public feedback and we understand the distress caused to communities throughout the state," acting Commissioner Amanda Lefton said in a prepared release last month. "We know that we can do better moving forward."

## **Sharks drew crowds who swam with them off Israel's coast — until one man disappeared**

By ARIEL SCHALIT and TIA GOLDENBERG Associated Press

HADERA, Israel (AP) — Israeli police on Tuesday scoured the Mediterranean coast for a swimmer they fear may have been attacked by a shark in an area that has long seen close encounters between marine predators and beachgoers who sometimes seek them out.

A shiver of endangered dusky and sandbar sharks has been swimming close to the area for years, attracting onlookers who approach the sharks, drawing pleas from conservation groups for authorities to separate people from the wild animal.

Nature groups say those warnings went unheeded. Police and rescue workers launched a search along the coast after reports that a shark attacked a swimmer on a beach near the city of Hadera. Israel's Fire and Rescue Authority announced Tuesday afternoon they had found remains of a body, which was brought to the forensic institute for identification.

On Tuesday, the beach was closed as search teams used boats and underwater equipment to look for the man. His identity was not immediately known, but Israeli media said he had gone to swim with the sharks.

Israelis flocked in large numbers to the beach during a weeklong holiday, sharing the waters with a dozen or more sharks. Some tugged on the sharks' fins, while others threw them fish to eat. Dusky sharks can grow to 4 meters (13 feet) long and weigh about 350 kilograms (750 pounds). Sandbar sharks are smaller, growing to about 2.5 meters (8 feet) and 100 kilograms (220 pounds).

Yigael Ben-Ari, head of marine rangers at the Israel Nature and Parks Authority, said it was not known how the man behaved around the sharks. But he said the public should know not to enter the water when sharks are present and not to touch or play with them.

One video shared by Israeli media showed a shark swimming right up to bathers in thigh-deep water.

"What a huge shark!" the man filming exclaims, as the shark approaches him. "Whoa! He's coming toward us!"

"Don't move!" he implores a boy standing nearby, who replies: "I'm leaving."

The man then asks: "What, are you afraid of the sharks?"

The behavior, some of which was witnessed by an Associated Press photographer two days before the attack, flew in the face of the advice of the parks authority.

"Like every wild animal, the sharks' behavior may be unpredictable," the authority said in a statement.

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This would be just the third recorded shark attack in Israel, according to Ben-Ari. One person was killed in an attack in the 1940s.

The area, where warm water released by a nearby power plant flows into the sea, has for years attracted dozens of sharks between October and May. Ben-Ari said swimming is prohibited in the area, but swimmers enter the water anyway.

"It would have been appropriate to take steps to preserve and regulate public safety, but over the years, chaos has developed in the area," the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel, an environmental group, said in a statement.

It said fishermen, boats, divers, surfers and snorkelers intersected dangerously with a wild animal that "is not accustomed to being around crowds of people."

SPNI said further steps were needed to prevent similar incidents, like designating a safe zone from where people could view the sharks without swimming close to them.

Israeli authorities on Monday closed the beach and others nearby and they remained closed Tuesday.

## **Pope Francis worried about greeting crowd in St. Peter's Square but was thankful he did, report says**

By NICOLE WINFIELD and COLLEEN BARRY Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Pope Francis was thankful that he was able to greet throngs of people in St. Peter's Square on Easter, a day before he died, though he initially had some doubts given his poor health, Vatican News reported Tuesday.

The Argentine pontiff, who had been recovering after being hospitalized for five weeks with pneumonia, died Monday at age 88. He made his last public appearance Sunday, delivering a blessing and looping around Vatican City's famous square in his popemobile.

Francis initially had doubts about the ride, Vatican News reported. "Do you think I can manage it?" the pope asked Massimiliano Strappetti, his personal health care assistant, according to the news agency.

The pope was reassured, and he stopped to reach out to people, especially children, as he was driven through the crowd of 50,000 — the first time since his release from the hospital that he had mixed with the faithful at large. Afterward, Francis told Strappetti, "Thank you for bringing me back to the square," Vatican News said.

The pope showed the first signs of illness round 5:30 a.m. the next day and fell into a coma an hour later, Vatican News reported.

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.

Funeral set for Saturday

Francis' funeral will be held Saturday at 10 a.m. in St. Peter's Square, 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.

He will lie in state starting Wednesday in St. Peter's Basilica, where the faithful are expected to flock to pay their respects to history's first Latin American pontiff.

According to current norms, the conclave to choose Francis' successor must begin between May 5 and 10.

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

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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 charting the next steps. "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.

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.

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."

## Anti-Defamation League says anger at Israel is now the driving force behind antisemitism in the US

By DAVID CRARY AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The Anti-Defamation League says the number of antisemitic incidents in the United States reached a record high last year and notes that 58% of the 9,354 incidents related to Israel, notably chants, speeches and signs at rallies protesting Israeli policies.

In a report released Tuesday, the ADL, which has produced annual tallies for 46 years, said it's the first time Israel-related incidents — 5,422 of them in 2024 — comprised more than half the total. A key reason is the widespread opposition to Israel's military response in Gaza after the Hamas attack on Israel on Oct. 7, 2023.

The ADL's findings add grist to an intense, divisive debate among American Jews — and others — over the extent to which vehement criticism of Israeli policies and of Zionism should be considered antisemitic.

Political backdrop

The debate has broadened as President Donald Trump's administration makes punitive moves against universities it considers too lax in combating antisemitism and seeks to deport some pro-Palestinian campus activists.

The upshot, for numerous Jewish leaders, is a balancing act: Decrying flagrant acts of antisemitism as well as what they consider to be the administration's exploitation of the issue to target individuals and institutions it dislikes.

"The fears of antisemitism are legitimate and real — and we don't want to see those real fears exploited to undermine democracy," said Amy Spitalnick, CEO of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs. "I feel that a majority of American Jews can believe that two things are true at the same time."

The ADL said in its new report it is "careful to not conflate general criticism of Israel or anti-Israel activism with antisemitism." But there are gray areas. For example, the ADL contends that vilification of Zionism — the movement to establish and protect a Jewish state in Israel — is a form of antisemitism, yet some Jews are among the critics of Zionism and of the ADL itself.

Incidents at anti-Israel rallies that counted as antisemitism in the new ADL tally include "justification or glorification of antisemitic violence, promotion of classic antisemitic tropes ... and signage equating Judaism or Zionism with Nazism." Also counted were celebrations of the Hamas attack on Israel and "unapologetic support for terrorism."

"In 2024, hatred toward Israel was a driving force behind antisemitism across the U.S.," said Oren Segal, who leads the ADL's efforts to combat extremism and terrorism.

Keeping Jewish students safe

The report depicted university campuses as common venues for antisemitic incidents, saying many Jewish students "face hostility, exclusion and sometimes physical danger because of their identity or their beliefs."

The experience of those students was evoked by Rabbi Rick Jacobs, president of the Union for Reform Judaism — an umbrella group for more than 800 Reform congregations in North America — as he discussed the complexities arising from current antisemitism-related developments.

"We have an obligation to our students on campus," Jacobs said. "Can they go to Seder? Can they feel safe wearing a yarmulke?"

"At the same time, this current administration has weaponized the fight against antisemitism by weakening core democratic institutions," Jacobs added.

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He referred to the detention and threatened deportation of Mahmoud Khalil, a 30-year-old graduate student who served as a negotiator and spokesperson for pro-Palestinian activists at Columbia University. Khalil has been detained since March 8 despite facing no criminal charges.

"There has to be a legal case — not just you don't like what he says," Jacobs said. "What has kept Jewish people safe is the rule of law, due process. If it is undermined for Palestinians, it will be undermined for all of us."

## Criticism of ADL

The ADL dismayed some progressive Jewish leaders by welcoming Columbia's acquiescence in March to Trump administration demands and by initially commending the campaign targeting pro-Palestinian activists such as Khalil.

Recent critics of the ADL include Michael Roth, the first Jewish president of Wesleyan University; political commentator Peter Beinart; and Columbia professor James Schamus, who has been urging his fellow Jews on the faculty to oppose the university's compliance with administration demands.

Washington Post columnist Matt Bai wrote a scathing column about the ADL on April 1.

"You can't call yourself a civil rights organization in the United States right now — let alone a civil rights organization for a minority that has been brutally evicted all over the world — and not loudly oppose the cruel and unlawful removal of foreigners whose views happen to be out of fashion," Bai wrote.

Two days later, the ADL's CEO, Jonathan Greenblatt, wrote an opinion piece for eJewishPhilanthropy seeking to distance the ADL from aspects of the Trump administration's crackdown on pro-Palestinian activists.

"As an organization that has fought for a minority community for more than 100 years, ADL is incredibly sensitive to the importance of allowing all views to be expressed — even those that we or the majority of Americans disagree with," Greenblatt wrote. "We should be holding people accountable for actual crimes, not Orwellian thoughtcrimes."

"We can protect the civil liberties of Jewish students even as we preserve the civil liberties of those who protest, harass or attack them because they are innocent until proven guilty," he added. "If we sacrifice our constitutional freedoms in the pursuit of security, we undermine the very foundation of the diverse, pluralistic society we seek to defend."

Beyond the Israel-related incidents, these were among the other findings in the new ADL report:

- The total number of antisemitic incidents in 2024 was up by 344% from five years ago.
- 196 incidents, targeting more than 250 people, were categorized as assault; none of these assaults were fatal.
- 2,606 incidents were categorized as vandalism. Swastikas were present in 37% of these cases.
- There were 647 bomb threats, most of them targeting synagogues.
- Antisemitic incidents occurred in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. More than 10% of the incidents occurred in New York City.
- There were 962 "antisemitic propaganda incidents" linked to white supremacist groups. Three groups — Patriot Front, Goyim Defense League, and the White Lives Matter network — were responsible for 94% of this activity.

The ADL says its annual report tallies criminal and noncriminal acts of harassment, vandalism and assault against individuals and groups as reported to the ADL by victims, law enforcement, the media and partner organizations, and then evaluated by ADL experts.

## 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 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

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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."

The expert talks were to start Wednesday. But on Tuesday night, Iranian media cited comments from Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei saying the expert talks had been moved to Saturday, when Araghchi and Witkoff will meet again in Oman. Baghaei described the decision as coming from an Omani suggestion also agreed to by the U.S., though American officials did not immediately acknowledge the change.

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 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 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.

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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 ... 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."

## **In Argentina, debates over Pope Francis' legacy lead to one question: Why didn't he return?**

By ALMUDENA CALATRAVA and ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP) — Jorge Mario Bergoglio, born in Buenos Aires, never set foot in his homeland after becoming Pope Francis in 2013.

That left many of the faithful in Argentina feeling puzzled and snubbed by the world's first Latin American pope. The question of why he never returned quickly dominated airwaves and headlines on Tuesday in Buenos Aires.

Francis, who died Monday, said little about his decision to steer clear of Argentina. But Vatican insiders and interlocutors said the pontiff wanted to avoid getting swept up in the polarizing politics that characterized his country.

"It's sad, because we should have been proud to have an Argentine pope," said Ardyna Aragon, 94, a longtime friend and neighbor from the middle-class neighborhood of Flores where Francis was born in 1936. "I think there were political factors that influenced him."

Francis, a devotee of soccer, tango and other signature aspects of Argentine culture, was known to have tense relationships with some of his country's leaders. His ideological clash with President Javier Milei, who took office in 2023, created even more challenges.

Francis' popularity declined at home

Argentina celebrated Francis' becoming pope with an ecstasy otherwise reserved for the country's three World Cup soccer championships. But that initial excitement over the former archbishop of Buenos Aires faded as the years passed.

A recent Pew Research Center report showed that Francis' popularity had dropped more in Argentina than anywhere else in the region over the last decade. About 64% of respondents said they had a positive view of Francis in September 2024, compared with 91% in 2014.

"There are many among us who think he made mistakes. Not everyone in our community is proud of the association," said Adriana Lombardi, 62, a retired teacher in Buenos Aires, referring to traditionalist Catholics in Argentina and beyond who accused Francis of leading the church astray.

Some in Buenos Aires felt slighted by Francis' avoidance of Argentina.

"Despite his history here, it seems like he doesn't care about us," said Bruno Rentería, 19, who was



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praying in front of an icon of the Virgin Mary at the Basílica de San José de Flores in Buenos Aires. Older churchgoers recalled the very confessional where Bergoglio, at age 16, had first heard the call to the priesthood. "It's odd because it seems like he has time for everyone else."

Political tensions began with the Kirchners

Some trace those tensions to when he was archbishop of Buenos Aires during the leftist tenures of the late former President Néstor Kirchner and his successor and wife, the divisive Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, whose strain of populism dominated Argentine politics for decades.

Francis and Fernández de Kirchner were unfriendly neighbors in Plaza de Mayo, the central square that hosts both the government headquarters and the cathedral where Francis delivered homilies during much of her presidency from 2007-15.

From the pulpit, Francis criticized the "exhibitionism" and autocratic tendencies of Argentina's political class — a subtle dig that the Kirchners interpreted as a direct attack. His support for the Vatican's conservative positions on key social issues deepened rifts with Fernández de Kirchner's progressive government as it expanded sex education and, in 2010, legalized same-sex marriage — a first for Latin America.

Perhaps most significantly, supporters of the Kirchners accused Francis of complicity in Argentina's 1976-83 military dictatorship, when as many as 30,000 people were estimated by human rights groups to have been killed or simply "disappeared." Francis was head of Argentina's Jesuit order during those violent years, when the junta targeted radical clerics and priests who worked with the poor.

Francis rejected the accusations of complicity. In his 2024 memoir, "Life: My Story Through History," he recalled hiding wanted activists and pressing military officials behind the scenes to free two abducted priests from his order.

Eventually, Kirchner's social welfare policies resonated with Bergoglio. The two drew closer after he became pontiff and set about softening the image of an institution that had long appeared forbidding.

"Conservatives in Argentina failed to understand his change of attitude," said Sergio Berensztein, who runs a political consultancy in Buenos Aires.

Branded by critics as a 'Peronist pope'

Unsettled by his critiques of the excesses of capitalism, right-wing critics branded Francis the "Peronist pope" — a reference to the Argentine populist movement founded by three-time President Juan Domingo Perón, who employed an authoritarian hand and powerful state to champion social justice causes.

From that point on, Berensztein said, Francis "felt everything he said or did would lead to fighting on either side of the divide."

Francis' politics came under more scrutiny in 2016, when he wore an unusually grim expression while posing for a photo beside former President Mauricio Macri, Kirchner's conservative successor, whose austerity program battered the poor.

The awkward photo op paled in comparison to Francis' discomfort with what followed.

Milei, a former television pundit and corporate economist, called Francis an "imbecile" and "the representative of the Evil One on Earth" before coming to power in 2023. He lashed out at the pope for promoting social justice, supporting taxes and sympathizing with "murderous communists."

Francis expressed sympathy for the strife of Argentines pulled into poverty as they bore the brunt of Milei's fiscal shock therapy, voicing concern over what he called a "save yourself approach" to doing politics and publicly criticizing Argentine security forces for using pepper spray against Argentine retirees protesting for better pensions.

The Vatican described a meeting between Francis and Milei in 2024 as "cordial," but ideological differences resurfaced with the ascension of Milei's political ally, U.S. President Donald Trump.

Since Trump's reelection, Francis has intensified direct attacks on the administration, criticizing its mass deportation of migrants and other policies.

"Francis cultivated a social doctrine in the church that generated opposition, particularly among conservatives in the United States," said Sergio Rubin, an Argentine journalist and Francis' authorized biographer.

Beloved by followers as a 'pope of the people'

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After a dozen years of papal travel — including to nearly all Argentina's neighbors — Francis referenced a plan to visit his native land last year. Nothing came of it.

"He went to Brazil, Peru, Chile; he passed over our heads," said Lucia Vidal, a retired nurse who attended Bergoglio's Mass when he was archbishop. "That pains me."

In contrast, Pope John Paul II visited his native Poland less than a year after becoming pontiff in 1978. His successor, Pope Benedict XVI, chose his native Germany for his first foreign trip in 2005.

Other Argentines seemed less indignant about the snub and more grateful for his contributions to the impoverished neighborhoods of Buenos Aires, where Bergoglio first earned fame as the "slum bishop," leading processions, creating a cadre of priests who follow in his footsteps and founding shelters for homeless addicts and community centers on violence-scarred streets.

"I can't express what his humility, his open hands, meant to me, my family, my neighborhood," said Angela Cano, 51, at a Mass held in his honor Monday at Villa 21-24, a neglected suburb near the railroad. "We saw up close how he was the pope of the people. He helped us find God."

Back in Flores, Carlos Liva, 66, a retired cab driver, said that he couldn't begrudge the pope for prioritizing the rest of the world after spending most of his years in Argentina.

"It's clear that he felt at ease in Rome," Liva said. "In his own country, people found every reason to question him."

## 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.

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## While Pope Benedict XVI resigned, Francis saw his duty to be 'ad vitam'

By NICOLE WINFIELD and VANESSA GERA Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Pope Benedict XVI stunned the world when he announced his resignation in 2013, the first in 600 years. That led some to wonder if, as he grew increasingly frail and sick, Pope Francis would follow that precedent.

While Francis kept open the possibility, and even had a resignation letter prepared, he said more recently that he believed that the papacy was for life. And he ultimately lived out that belief, serving in his ministry until his death on Monday, at the age of 88.

Benedict, even before his resignation, he had argued that a pontiff should step aside if he got too old or infirm to do the role. It was nonetheless a shock when he announced in Latin that his "strength of mind and body" had diminished and that he couldn't carry on.

His dramatic exit paved the way for Francis' election and created the unprecedented arrangement of two popes living side-by-side, with Benedict in a converted monastery in the Vatican gardens until his death on Dec. 31, 2022.

In his 2024 memoir, "Life: My Story Through History," Francis recounted how, when he was still the archbishop of Buenos Aires, he thought he had misunderstood the news when he first learned about Benedict's resignation.

"For a moment I was paralyzed. I could hardly believe what I was hearing," Francis wrote. "This was news I had never expected to receive in my lifetime: the resignation of a pope was unimaginable, although it was provided for in canon law."

But he said he realized that Benedict would have meditated and prayed for a long time before coming to that "brave and historic decision."

During the decade they lived together in the Vatican as a reigning and "emeritus pope," Francis repeatedly praised Benedict's courage and humility for resigning and said that he had "opened the door" to future popes also stepping down.

But after Benedict died, Francis' changed course. While confirming he had a resignation letter prepared in case he became medically incapacitated, he pointed to the risks that papal resignations might become a "fashion" or the norm.

"Benedict had the courage to do it because he didn't feel like going on because of his health. I, for the moment, do not have that on my agenda," he said, according to closed-door comments with the Jesuit community in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in February 2023, which were reported by the Jesuit journal *La Civiltà Cattolica*.

"I believe that the pope's ministry is *ad vitam* (for life). I see no reason why it shouldn't be so. The ministry of the great patriarchs is always for life. And historical tradition is important."

## Today in History: April 23

### Vietnam veterans stage protest at U.S. Capitol

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Wednesday, April 23, the 113th day of 2025. There are 252 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On April 23, 1971, hundreds of Vietnam War veterans opposed to the conflict protested by tossing their medals and ribbons over a wire fence constructed in front of the U.S. Capitol.

Also on this date:

In 1635, the Boston Latin School, the first public school in what would become the United States, was established.

In 1898, Spain declared war on the United States, which responded in kind two days later.

In 1940, over 200 people trapped inside a dance hall died in the Rhythm Club Fire in Natchez, Mississippi,

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one of the deadliest nightclub fires in U.S. history.

In 1988, a federal ban on smoking during domestic airline flights of two hours or less (accounting for 80% of all U.S. flights) went into effect.

In 1993, labor leader Cesar Chavez died in San Luis, Arizona, at age 66.

In 2005, the recently created video-sharing website YouTube uploaded its first clip, "Me at the Zoo," which showed YouTube co-founder Jawed Karim standing in front of an elephant enclosure at the San Diego Zoo.

In 2007, Boris Yeltsin, Russia's first popularly elected president, died in Moscow at age 76.

In 2018, a man plowed a rental van into crowds of pedestrians in Toronto, killing 10 people and leaving 16 others hurt. (Alek Minassian was later convicted of 10 counts of murder and sentenced to life in prison.)

Today's Birthdays: Actor Lee Majors is 86. Actor Blair Brown is 79. Actor Joyce DeWitt is 76. Filmmaker-author Michael Moore is 71. Actor Judy Davis is 70. Actor Valerie Bertinelli is 65. Actor-comedian George Lopez is 64. Actor Melina Kanakaredes (kah-nah-kah-REE'-deez) is 58. Actor-wrestler John Cena is 48. Retired MLB All-Star Andruw Jones is 48. Comedian-TV host John Oliver is 48. Actor Kal Penn is 48. Actor-model Jaime King is 46. Singer Taio Cruz is 45. Actor Dev Patel is 35. Model Gigi Hadid is 30. Olympic snowboarding gold medalist Chloe Kim is 25. Prince Louis of Wales is 7.