

# 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.**

## Friday, April 25

Senior Menu: Chicken caccalatore, rice pilaf, Italian belnd, apple sauce, whole wheat bread.  
School Breakfast: Egg bake.  
School Lunch: Beef vegetable soup, sandwich.  
Smarter Balance Testing. Grades 3-5 (ELA and Math)

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



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.

## Sunday, April 27

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.  
United Methodist: Worship at Conde, 8:15 a.m.;  
at Groton, 9:30 a.m.; at Britton, 11:15 a.m.; Sunday  
School, 9:30 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 10:30 a.m.  
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m.; SEAS  
Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45  
a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.  
First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.;  
Worship, 11 a.m.  
Groton CM&A: Sunday School, 9:15 a.m.; worship,  
10:30 a.m.  
St. John's Lutheran: Worship at St. John's, 9 a.m.;  
at Zion, 11 a.m.; Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.  
Baseball at Canova, 2 p.m.  
JV Baseball hosts Sioux Valley, 2 p.m. (DH)

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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.**

## **'Vladimir, STOP!'**

At least 12 people were killed and 90 others wounded following a Russian missile and drone barrage on the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv early yesterday, the deadliest attack on the city since last summer. The strike came as prospects of a US-led ceasefire became increasingly tenuous and prompted President Donald Trump to call on Russian President Vladimir Putin to end fighting via social media.

More than three years after Russia launched a full-scale invasion, its forces control about 20% of Ukraine, covering an area in the east that includes around 3.5 million residents (depending on current displacement). The most recent proposal from US officials floated concessions from Ukraine, including freezing current battle lines, recognizing Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea, and taking NATO membership off the table. Top US officials—including Secretary of State Marco Rubio—pulled out of a Wednesday meeting at the last minute over pushback from Ukraine and Western allies.

## **Wildfire Teen Arrested**

A teenager was arrested for arson yesterday, accused of starting this week's Jones Road Wildfire in New Jersey. The fire is on track to be the state's largest in almost 20 years, burning at least 15,000 acres in three days. It is 50% contained as of this writing.

The wildfire broke out Tuesday morning in southern New Jersey, near 19-year-old Joseph Kling's home. Prosecutors say he lit a bonfire in the Pine Barrens and abandoned the site after only partially extinguishing it. The fire has since caused power outages and evacuations, even temporarily shutting down the Garden State Parkway. New York City is under an air quality alert.

April is the middle of New Jersey's wildfire season, with long-term drought, warm weather, and high winds contributing to the spread. Firefighters have contained much of the Jones Road fire through controlled burns—removing dry vegetation that might otherwise fuel it.

## **'Monty Python' Turns 50**

This month marks the 50th anniversary of "Monty Python and the Holy Grail," the 1975 cult classic that satirized the legend of King Arthur and helped define "Pythonesque" comedy—characterized by abrupt cuts, silly punchlines, and deliberately low-budget effects. Produced for around \$400K, the film has since grossed over \$5.7M and is widely considered one of the greatest comedies ever made.

The story follows King Arthur and his eccentric knights on a purposefully absurd quest for the Holy Grail, crossing paths with killer rabbits, taunting French soldiers, and a deity depicted as a photo of Victorian cricketer WG Grace. Memorable gags include the use of coconut shells to mimic horse hooves and the Black Knight, who insists "it's just a flesh wound" despite losing all his limbs.

The six-man British comedy troupe Monty Python was best known for their BBC sketch series "Monty Python's Flying Circus" (1969-74). The film later inspired several stage adaptations and earned multiple honors, including a European Film Award for Lifetime Achievement and a Tony Award for the film-inspired "Spamalot."

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## Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Tennessee Titans take former Miami star QB Cam Ward with the No. 1 pick in the NFL Draft; Jacksonville Jaguars trade up to select two-way star Travis Hunter (WR/CB, Colorado), see full picks.

Rounds two and three begin tonight (7 pm ET, ABC/ESPN).

The 83rd Golden Globes set for Jan. 11 with Nikki Glaser tapped to host again.

Shannon Sharpe to temporarily step aside from ESPN commentating duties amid rape allegations.

NBA playoffs first round action continues this weekend; see latest scores and updates ... and NHL Stanley Cup playoffs are also underway; see latest playoff bracket.

## Science & Technology

Volkswagen and Uber unveil plan to roll out robotaxi service using the car company's electric micro-buses; Los Angeles to be first market, starting late 2026.

Artificial leaf uses sunlight to convert carbon dioxide into carbon-carbon molecules, the building blocks of useful chemicals, including liquid fuel and plastics.

Seafloor study suggests massive icebergs drifted across the North Sea about 90 miles from the UK coast, roughly 18,000 to 20,000 years ago; researchers discovered miles-wide grooves along the ocean bed.

## Business & Markets

US stock markets close higher (S&P 500 +2.0%, Dow +1.2%, Nasdaq +2.7%) for third straight day, fueled by tech gains as investors weigh tariff talks.

Alphabet reports stronger-than-expected Q1 revenue and earnings, with overall revenue growing 12% year-over-year.

Intel shares fall more than 5% in after-hours trading after posting weaker-than-expected Q2 revenue forecast.

US existing home sales fell 5.9% month-over-month in March, marking the slowest March sales pace since 2009; median home price of \$403,700 is up 2.7% from a year ago and the highest median home price for any March.

## Politics & World Affairs

Gunman who killed seven people and wounded nearly 50 others in a mass shooting during 2022 Independence Day parade in Highland Park, Illinois, receives seven life sentences in prison without parole.

Federal judge temporarily blocks Trump administration's ability to withhold funding from public universities and K-12 schools with diversity, equity, and inclusion programs.

Judge halts parts of administration's overhaul of US elections, including proof-of-citizenship requirement.

India and Pakistan cancel visas for each other's nationals, Pakistan closes airspace for Indian airlines; reciprocal measures come after India blamed Pakistan for attacks in Indian-controlled region of Kashmir, which killed 26 people.

## Football officials may get raises, paid for riding time to games

By Dana Hess

For the S.D. NewsMedia Association

PIERRE — The South Dakota High School Activities Association board of directors worked through 43 proposed changes to the organization's Athletics Handbook at its April meeting on Wednesday, April 23. The changes were originally proposed by a meeting of the state's high school athletics directors.

Wednesday's meeting served as a first reading for the changes that were approved. The changes are due for a second reading at the SDHSAA June meeting. A sampling of those changes includes:

### Football

Two proposals approved by the board deal with pay for officials. The board approved the first reading of an increase in football officials' pay from \$125 per game, per official to \$150 per game, per official. Officials have been paid \$125 per game for the past six years.

They also approved making it mandatory for school districts to pay football officials for the time it takes for them to ride to a game. According to SDHSAA, many schools already include riding time in officials' compensation. This change would ensure that all schools pay for riding time.

A proposal to move football playoff games to Friday nights died for a lack of a motion. Class A and AAA schools were in favor of the change, but other classes were not. SDHSAA Executive Director Dan Swartos said the proposal may be revived if only the larger schools wanted to move their playoff games to Friday night.

Swartos noted that moving the games to Friday nights would create some conflicts for students who are also in chorus and orchestra and football cheerleaders who also compete in cheer and dance.

### Golf

A proposal to require host courses to provide pin sheets at SDHSAA state events was the topic of a lengthy discussion. The pin sheet shows golfers where each hole will be placed during a tournament.

SDHSAA Assistant Executive Director Randy Soma said the rationale was to provide an equal footing for all teams, even though one of the teams may be playing the tournament on their home course.

Some board members were skeptical about requiring host courses to provide the pin sheets.

"We're having a hard enough time finding courses to play on," said board member Adam Shaw of Madison. SDHSAA has found that some golf course officials don't want to give up their regular revenue to host state events.

The board passed a first reading of the proposal. Soma said he would call course officials that host state tournaments before the second reading of the proposal and report what they said about providing pin sheets.

### Softball

The board approved the first reading of a five-run per inning rule in junior varsity games. The rule would not be mandatory. Teams would agree on its implementation prior to the start of the game.

SDHSAA Assistant Executive Director Kristina Sage said teams don't currently have that option because it's not in the handbook.

"We want the JV games to have a positive atmosphere," Sage said.

The proposal was approved on a 7-2 vote with board members Ryan Rollinger of Harrisburg and Jeff Danielsen of Watertown casting the dissenting votes.

### Wrestling

Though questions remain about who would host it and when it would be held, the board approved a first reading of a proposal to have a girls' wrestling dual team tournament.

Swartos proposed a committee that would consider the feasibility of implementing the girls' dual team tournament. Danielsen said it was a given that coaches and athletic directors would be for it because they want to "just keep adding stuff."

The board also approved a proposal to eliminate female wrestlers from male dual events.

With the advent of girls' wrestling, females aren't competing in boys' wrestling tournaments, Swartos said. He explained that the proposal was needed because during duals, some coaches will sub in a female wrestler if they see that the opposing team does not have a wrestler in that weight class. In that way, the inclusion of the girl earns the team a forfeit at that weight.

### **Medical advisory committee**

The board approved a proposal from the medical advisory committee requiring school districts to have an emergency action plan in place to care for athletes who overheat during outdoor practices.

Swartos explained that the best way to treat an athlete suffering from heat stroke is to quickly bring down the body temperature through immersion. This could be done in a tub or tarp Swartos said.

"It's more of a logistics thing than a cost thing," Swartos said as schools may already have the required equipment. The plan would list where the equipment is and how it will be used. He said it was no different than a school's plan for a tornado drill or an active shooter drill.

—30—

## **Activities association to elect four new board members**

**By Dana Hess**

**For the S.D. NewsMedia Association**

PIERRE — At its annual meeting on Wednesday, April 23, representatives of schools belonging to the South Dakota High School Activities Association nominated candidates for four positions on the SDHSAA board of directors.

Leaving the board will be chairman Marty Weismantel of Groton, the small school board of education board member; Trent Osborne of Ipswich, the East River at-large board member; Ryan Rollinger of Harrisburg, the Division I board member; and Adam Shaw of Madison, the Division III board member.

Three of the new board members will be elected to five-year terms. The new Division III board member will serve out the remaining three years of Shaw's term. Currently the Division III slot on the board must be filled by a high school principal. Shaw has a new job in which he will serve as a superintendent.

There was only one nominee for small school board of education member. That position will go to Billy Clanton of Harding County.

Nominees for the East River at-large member include Brittney Eide of Corsica-Stickney, Tim Leibel of Hitchcock-Tulare, Shelby Edwards of Groton and Ryan Rollinger of Harrisburg. Rollinger, currently the board's Division I member, was able to run for another position on the board because the term he served was less than two years.

Nominees for the Division I board member include Jordan Bauer of Rapid City Central and Steve Moore of Sioux Falls Roosevelt.

Nominees for the Division III board member include Jeff Sheehan of Hamlin and Chad Allison of Lennox.

All member schools are allowed to vote on each board opening. Votes must be returned to the association office by May 31. To be elected to the board, a candidate must receive a majority of the votes cast. In the event no candidate receives a majority of the votes, a run-off election will be held between the two candidates with the most votes.

Member schools will also vote on five amendments to the SDHSAA constitution. All of the amendments deal with transfer rules and determining the eligibility of an athlete who transfers from one district to another. To be enacted, amendments must receive 60% of the votes cast.

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## Johnson places fifth at Milbank Golf Meet

Carlee Johnson finished in fifth place at the Milbank invitational meet held Thursday. She shot an 86, six strokes behind the Madi Rummel of Madison who won the meet. Claire Schuelke finished 14th with a 104, Hallee Harder was 18th with a 110 and Rylie Rose was 20th with a 112.

Madison won the meet with 346 points followed by Roncalli with 348, Groton Area with 412 and Aberdeen Central with 460.



The middle school spring concert was held Thursday evening. The choir sang, "Go the Distance" and "Didn't My Lord Deliver Daniel." The choir was directed by Landon Brown with Desiree Yeigh being the accompanist. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



The middle school band played, "Jungle Dance," "Honor March" and "The Avengers." The band was directed by Desiree Yeigh. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

## GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT #06-6

### School Board Meeting

April 28, 2025 – 7:00 PM – GHS Conference Room

#### AGENDA:

1. Call to Order with members present. Approve agenda as proposed or amended.

#### POTENTIAL CONFLICTS DISCLOSURE PURSUANT SDCL 23-3

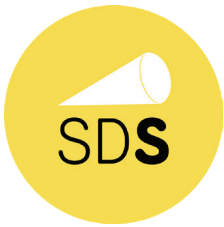
#### OLD/CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. Open Forum for Public Participation...in accordance with Board Policy & Guidelines.
2. Program Overview Presentations
  - a. Destination Imagination...J. Groeblichhoff, J. Milbrandt
  - b. CTE...D. Donley, L. Tietz, B. Hubbart, L. VanderWal
3. Second reading and approval of recommended policy amendments: GDBE Support Staff Vacations and Holidays and GCBE Professional Staff Vacations and Holidays.
4. Administrative Reports: (a) Superintendent's Report; (b) Principal's Reports; (c) Business Manager Report

#### NEW BUSINESS:

1. First reading of recommended policy changes: Elementary Student Handbook.
2. Approve hiring Boston Marlow, full-time Maintenance Team Member.
3. Approve hiring Joshua Friez, 5-12 Instrumental Music Teacher.
4. Approve lane change for Chantel Duerre from BS+15 to MS.
5. Approve resignation from Brian Dolan, Head Boys Basketball Coach.
6. Approve off-staff coach agreements.
7. Approve Employment Agreements for Auxiliary Administrative Staff.
8. Approve Administrative Negotiated Agreement and Signed Administrative Contracts.

#### ADJOURN



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### **This year's federal funding for State Library on the way after 'emotional ride' for organization**

**State librarian tells advisory board, in its final meeting before dissolving, he's confident  
South Dakota will get all its grant dollars for 2025**

**BY: JOHN HULT - APRIL 24, 2025 4:00 PM**

A few months ago, South Dakota State Librarian George Seamon got an invite to a Pizza Ranch lunch with members of the South Dakota Library Association.

The invite had come at a trying time.

Weeks earlier, former Gov. Kristi Noem had released a budget that would've slashed the State Library to a bare-bones operation. Were lawmakers to go along with the cuts, the lion's share of the services that flow from the State Library to the association's member libraries — interlibrary loans, summer reading program assistance, professional development and access to dozens of paid database services for use by local patrons border to border — would have disappeared.

But something else happened between the budget address and the Pizza Ranch meet-up: Seamon's organization benefited from a groundswell of support.

Dozens of libraries had shared news stories of the cuts' potential impact on social media. Librarians had peppered legislators with letters and calls. Members of the public had done the same.

On Thursday, Seamon held back tears recounting to the State Library Board what had happened when he showed up at the restaurant to connect with some of those supporters.

"As soon as I walked in, everybody stood and clapped," Seamon recalled about the meeting, which took place after the first legislative hearing on State Library funding. "And that wasn't for me. That was for the State Library."

By the end of the legislative session, lawmakers had reached a compromise to spare the library. Four employees would depart, and some services would be pared back. The library board — which had its final meeting Thursday in Pierre — would dissolve. But most of the organization's services would survive.

Joe Graves, secretary for the state's Department of Education and overseer of the State Library, worked hard to find that compromise, Seamon told the board. Lawmakers stepped in to back Graves' plan.



**A January 2025 view of the South Dakota State Capitol in Pierre.** (Makenzie Huber/South Dakota Searchlight)

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There was a sigh of relief in the library community, but it didn't last.

The path forward had protected enough state funding to preserve about a million dollars in federal matching funds from the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS). But shortly after the legislative session's end, President Trump issued an executive order designed to pare down IMLS to the greatest extent possible under the law.

Congress had authorized funding for IMLS grants, with enough money to extend the grant the State Library expected for this year. But some opponents of the executive order were concerned that staffing cuts at IMLS would make it impossible for the institute to process grant requests.

"We saw that light at the end of the tunnel, then we were let back down," Seamon said Thursday.

But this week, Seamon got notice that South Dakota's grant funding was on the way. The librarian told the board that IMLS had released half the money, and asked for documentation of the library's operational plans to release the other half.

"Based on those assurances, I strongly believe that we will receive the second half of our grant," Seamons told the board.

It hasn't been easy to see State Library staff go, Seamon said, but he reported that each staff member has secured new employment. One will work closely with the library, as she's taken a position with a nonprofit organization that creates summer reading program materials and helps disseminate them, often through state libraries. Another will work for the public library in Pierre. A digitization specialist took a job at a bank.

One of the State Library's longer-term employees will retire.

"I'm jealous, because I'm a lot farther away in life from retirement," Seamon said.

He didn't get a standing ovation from the dissolving board of citizen advisers to whom he reported those details, and details on the library's current culling of its non-fiction collection, much of which will become the property of the State Historical Society.

Seamon and his organization weren't spared from gratitude and compliments, though.

Board President Tom Nelson said the state should've thought more carefully before targeting an organization that runs "as quietly and efficiently" as the State Library. Board member Kim Borsch, a 20-year member of the local library board in Lead, thanked Nelson for helping her get onto the state board, then thanked Seamon and the State Library staff for the opportunity to peer under the hood of an organization whose work she admires.

Jane Norling of Beresford, the board's vice president, lamented the loss of the board and reiterated Nelson's hope that lawmakers consider renewing a smaller version of it to serve as a voice for rural library patrons.

Seamon thanked the board members for their kind words and reiterated his gratitude to Graves and the other departments that showed support to the State Library through the "emotional ride" of the past five months.

He added, "It's definitely something I don't want to go through again."

The future of the State Library is not assured, however. In 2018, during Trump's first term in office, Congress authorized grant funding for IMLS through the end of September 2025. Its members will soon need to decide whether to authorize another round of the grant funding that props up state libraries across the U.S.

*John is the senior reporter for South Dakota Searchlight. He has more than 15 years experience covering criminal justice, the environment and public affairs in South Dakota, including more than a decade at the Sioux Falls Argus Leader.*

## Two state officials follow Noem to Homeland Security; Rhoden names new tribal relations head

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - APRIL 24, 2025 3:07 PM

Two high-ranking state government officials are leaving to serve in the federal Department of Homeland Security under former South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem, and Noem's successor has chosen a replacement for one of them.

State Department of Tribal Relations Secretary David Flute will serve as senior tribal adviser on Indian affairs for Noem, who now leads Homeland Security. Bureau of Information and Technology Commissioner Madhu Gottumukkala will serve as the deputy director of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency.

Gov. Larry Rhoden said the two played key roles in state government, saying they'll "add tremendous value" to the federal department.

Flute is an enrolled member of the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate and served as tribal chairman before he was appointed tribal relations secretary by Noem in 2018. The department works to foster relationships with the nine tribal nations in the state.

Algin Young, who was appointed as the state's tribal law enforcement liaison last year, will assume the role of secretary for the Department of Tribal Relations on Friday.

Young served in the Marines before working in law enforcement for 23 years with the Oglala Sioux Tribe. He was appointed to the liaison position by Noem, who alleged he "found himself without a job" for speaking up about drug cartels on the Pine Ridge Reservation.

Young said he's keen to build relationships between South Dakota and tribal communities.

"As Governor Rhoden so often says, we must focus on turning challenges into opportunities," Young said in a news release.

The current salary for the tribal relations job is \$138,911.98.

Gottumukkala will remain BIT commissioner until May 16. The Dakota State University graduate was appointed to the position in September after working with Sanford Health. The bureau manages information and technology-related needs in state government.

"I look forward to continuing to protect and strengthen the nation's digital and physical infrastructure at a time when it matters most," Gottumukkala said in the release.

Interested applicants for the commissioner position can apply online. The job's current salary is



**Department of Tribal Relations Secretary David Flute (left) and Bureau of Information and Technology Commissioner Madhu Gottumukkala (right).** (Makenzie Huber/South Dakota Searchlight)

\$184,805.29.

*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.*

## Thune faces test as tax policy and Medicaid cuts could scuttle Republicans' 'big, beautiful bill'

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT AND ASHLEY MURRAY - APRIL 24, 2025 12:41 PM

WASHINGTON — Republicans in Congress have a difficult few months ahead of them as they look to broker agreement within their exceptionally narrow majority on policy issues that have already begun to divide centrists from far-right members of the party.

The negotiations will be the first test of the sort for Speaker Mike Johnson and Senate Majority Leader John Thune, who weren't in the top posts eight years ago when the GOP passed its last reconciliation package.

Tax law and funding cuts to Medicaid are the issues most likely to prevent one "big, beautiful bill" from moving through both chambers and reaching President Donald Trump's desk.

Republican leaders will also need to be cautious as the package takes shape about what types of proposals their more vulnerable members vote on, especially if they hope to hold onto at least one chamber of Congress following next year's midterm elections.

"The swing-district Republicans are in a tougher spot because their voters do want to see some of those tax cuts extended, but they don't want to see it at the expense of programs like Medicaid," said Dr. Ben Sommers, Huntley Quelch professor of health care economics at Harvard.

"And so they're walking a tightrope," he said. "And at least until there's a final bill on the floor, a lot of them are going to just keep pushing that final decision down the road and hope that something else happens and that they don't have to make that tough call."

The decision to bundle together a permanent extension of the 2017 tax law, hundreds of billions in new spending on border security and defense, a rewrite of the nation's energy policy and spending cuts means that centrist Republicans will have to cast one take-it-or-leave-it vote.

Breaking up the sweeping package into two or more bills would have given at-risk Republicans the opportunity for more tailored votes, but GOP leaders ultimately rejected that idea — a choice that will put



**U.S. Senate Majority Leader John Thune and U.S. House Speaker Mike Johnson hold a press conference on the Republican budget resolution at the U.S. Capitol on April 10, 2025. The Republican leaders each face a challenge in uniting their divided conferences to pass a massive tax and spending plan supported by President Donald Trump.** (Photo

by Kayla Bartkowski/Getty Images)

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moderates under increasing pressure as the legislation takes shape in the coming weeks.

Democrats in both chambers are expected to unanimously oppose the package.

Normally that would present a challenge in the Senate, where 60 votes are usually needed to limit debate on a bill and move onto final passage. But GOP leaders are using the reconciliation process to pass their bill, meaning they only need the support of a simple majority in the Senate.

## **Slim margins**

House committee chairs are expected to release and mark up 11 bills after the chamber returns from a two-week break in late April, though that's only the first step.

Once the pieces are all bundled into one package, it will need to get across the House floor without losing more than three Republican votes, a much narrower threshold than the dozen GOP lawmakers in that chamber who voted against the final version of the 2017 tax law.

Republican leaders will then need to keep the party from making significant changes to the package in the Senate, where lawmakers will be able to offer as many amendments as they want when the bill comes to the floor.

That vote-a-rama will test party unity, with Democrats likely to propose amendments re-writing or eliminating specific sections of the bill — especially those addressing tax provisions benefiting the wealthy or corporations, and Medicaid spending cuts.

If more than three Senate Republicans break from the party to alter various elements, it could endanger final approval. However, if GOP senators from swing states vote to keep unpopular provisions in the bill, it could lead to them losing their next reelection bid to a Democrat.

## **Difference of opinion on Medicaid**

The disagreement between centrist Republicans and far-right lawmakers over potential spending cuts to Medicaid is already on full display.

During floor debate on the budget resolution that cleared the way for Republicans to write the massive reconciliation package, Texas Rep. Chip Roy excoriated the state-federal health program for lower income Americans and some people with disabilities.

"Medicaid is debilitating the vulnerable, not helping them," Roy said. "We are shoveling money out to the able-bodied on the back of expansion of Obamacare."

On the other ideological side of the conference, a group of 14 centrist House Republicans sent a letter to GOP leaders a few days after voting to adopt the budget resolution to announce they "cannot and will not support a final reconciliation bill that includes any reduction in Medicaid coverage for vulnerable populations."

"Cuts to Medicaid also threaten the viability of hospitals, nursing homes, and safety-net providers nationwide," they wrote. "Many hospitals — particularly in rural and underserved areas — rely heavily on Medicaid funding, with some receiving over half their revenue from the program alone."

"Providers in these areas are especially at risk of closure, with many unable to recover. When hospitals close, it affects all constituents, regardless of healthcare coverage."

## **Failed Obamacare repeal**

Republican leaders in Congress will want to avoid a repeat of the last time the party tried to overhaul health care in a reconciliation package.

During Trump's first term, following years of GOP politicians pledging to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare, they sought to do just that through the same complex reconciliation process they're using now.

Ultimately, twenty Republicans voted against the bill in the House and three GOP senators — Alaska's Lisa Murkowski, Arizona's John McCain and Maine's Susan Collins — blocked that chamber's repeal-and-replace bill.

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Collins said in a floor speech at the time she voted against the House's version of the bill for several reasons, including that it would have made "sweeping changes to the Medicaid program — an important safety net that for more than 50 years has helped poor and disabled individuals, including children and low-income seniors, receive health care."

Murkowski wrote in a statement that she voted against the Senate's so-called "skinny" repeal bill because "both sides must do better on process and substance."

"I know that access to affordable care is a challenge for so many. I hear from fishermen who can't afford the coverage that they have, small business owners who can't afford insurance at all, and those who have gained coverage for the first time in their life," Murkowski wrote. "These Alaskans have shared their anxiety that their personal situation may be made worse under the legislation considered this week."

## Medicaid cuts could hurt state budgets

GOP lawmakers in Congress won't be the only members of the party that leaders need to keep in the fold. Republican governors may not have a vote in either chamber, but they do have considerable sway with their congressional delegations and many red states have a substantial percentage of their Medicaid programs covered by federal dollars.

Nevada Gov. Joe Lombardo released a letter last month seeking to assuage fears about potential federal cuts to Medicaid, writing that he was "actively engaged in conversations with the White House and others in the federal government to relay our state's concerns."

"An abrupt reduction in federal funding would not only disrupt care for those who rely on Medicaid, but would also destabilize public and private healthcare providers, leading to workforce reductions, service limitations, and financial strain on already overburdened health care facilities," Lombardo wrote.

National Governors Association Chair Jared Polis, a Colorado Democrat, and Vice Chair Kevin Stitt, an Oklahoma Republican, wrote in a joint statement released in March that the organization is "committed to advocating for a robust and efficient health and human services system, including Medicaid."

"Without consultation and proper planning, Congressionally proposed reductions to Medicaid would impact state budgets, rural hospitals and health care service providers," they wrote. "It is necessary for Governors to have a seat at the table when discussing any reforms and cuts to Medicaid funding."

Federal spending cuts to Medicaid could lead some of the 40 states that have expanded the program under Obamacare to roll it back, though Missouri, Oklahoma and South Dakota have the expansion in their constitutions, making the impact of congressional action more complicated for their budgets and residents.

Leighton Ku, professor of health policy and management at The George Washington University, said during an interview that even though GOP governors aren't members of Congress, they still hold "powerful influence."

"We're talking about deep cuts in federal spending that will have profound effects on state economies and state employment," Ku said. "Governors, particularly those who expanded Medicaid, should feel fairly nervous about: What are the implications for their states in terms of both their political futures as well as what it will do to their state economies?"

"Again, we're talking about the possibility of maybe somewhere on the order of a million jobs being lost simply because of the Medicaid cuts," he added. "And that should cause some trepidation among governors."

Republicans in Congress, Ku said, are trying to reduce spending. But when it comes to Medicaid, where the cost of administering the program is split between states and the federal government, any change to the federal share will come at the expense of the states.

"So the states end up being losers," he said. "And this will cause states' governors some unease. Again, it depends on where they lie politically: They may still be willing to accept cuts if it fits in with their ideologies."

## State and local taxes

Republicans also find themselves in a sticky situation when it comes to a major tax provision set to expire at the end of 2025: a limit on the amount of state and local taxes a taxpayer can deduct on their

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federal tax return. The limit is often simply referred to as the SALT cap.

Like proposed Medicaid cuts, the SALT debate has potential to change the calculus of Republicans willing to vote for the one large reconciliation bill.

For many years prior to the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, taxpayers were able to take full advantage of deducting state and local taxes from their federal taxable income. But in that law, GOP lawmakers changed course and enacted a \$10,000 cap on the SALT deduction to raise revenue to cover some of the law's massive tax breaks.

The ability to deduct all eligible state and local taxes on federal tax returns was a win for wealthy households located in states and municipalities with steeper taxes.

At the time, Democrats, who wholesale opposed Trump's tax agenda, saw the SALT cap as an attack on high-earning, high-tax blue states. But the SALT cap drew ire from across the aisle as well, said Kyle Pomerleau, senior fellow and federal tax policy expert for the American Enterprise Institute, a conservative think tank.

"The original bill also had a few Republicans that didn't vote for it because of the cap. So this has been controversial to some degree from the very beginning," Pomerleau said.

With such a narrow majority in the House, Republicans from high-tax areas, including those representing New York's Long Island and Staten Island and California's wealthy suburbs, will have leverage in the coming debate.

"Republicans generally don't come from those states. There's only a handful of them. But that brings us back to the vote margin that Republicans have," Pomerleau said. "They have a lot of power this time around to really get what they want. These lawmakers who represent people that are concerned about this cap are going to want that cap raised."

The issue is one of the few tax topics not polarized by party because it is defined by location, said Garrett Watson, director of policy analysis at the Tax Foundation, a think tank that generally supports lower taxes.

"It's an interesting sort of debate, just because a lot of tax policy debates have political, partisan, ideological components, right? That's somewhat predictable," Watson said. "What's interesting about SALT is actually it's also a strong geographic story."

Watson published the Tax Foundation's 2023 county-by-county maps of state and local taxes paid as well as deducted from federal taxes in 2020. The data showed the top reporting counties were concentrated in California and New York.

## **Raising cap would cost federal government**

But many Republicans would be happy if the cap on SALT deductions stayed in place to offset the cost of extending the 2017 tax cuts.

Raising the cap beyond the current \$10,000 limit could reduce federal revenue between \$200 billion to \$1.2 trillion over the next decade, depending on what level Congress decides, according to a January analysis from the Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center, a nonpartisan think tank that leans center-left.

In other words, households deducting more from their federal taxable income means the federal government reaping less revenue.

"Just to give you some order of magnitude, we looked at what would happen if you raised the cap from \$10,000 to \$20,000. That would cost (the federal government) \$250 billion over 10 years. That's a big number," said Howard Gleckman, a senior fellow at the Tax Policy Center.

Deficit hawks, like Roy of Texas and Rep. Thomas Massie of Kentucky, have spoken out in recent months against raising the cap.

And while more federal revenue is lost with each dollar the cap increases, the benefit mainly goes to high-income earners, according to another Tax Policy Center analysis.

"We estimated when you raise the (SALT cap) from \$10,000 to \$20,000, 93% of the benefit goes to the top ...20% , which are people making more than \$200,000," Gleckman said. "And half of it goes to people in the top 5% who are people who make more than \$400,000."

Most taxpayers take the standard deduction, which in 2025 sits at \$15,000 for single taxpayers or \$30,000 for married taxpayers filing jointly.

"That's why the vast majority of people get no benefit from this. It's only people who make a lot of money, who itemize, and who pay a lot of tax who get caught up in the cap," Gleckman said.

But they may have an outsized voice as Congress hammers out its reconciliation bill in the coming months. Johnson, a Louisiana Republican whose constituents would not benefit from raising the SALT cap, will have a "tough balancing act," Gleckman said.

"Mike Johnson looks at the narrow majority he has in the House, and he sees if he loses half a dozen seats from places like New York and California because he doesn't fix the cap then he could not be speaker anymore," he said.

Republicans in the bipartisan SALT caucus include Reps. Mike Lawler, Nick LaLota, Andrew Garbarino and Nicole Malliotakis, all representing New York, as well as Tom Kean Jr. of New Jersey, and Young Kim of California.

Rachel Snyderman, managing director of economic policy at the Bipartisan Policy Center, said "complicated political tetris" is likely to emerge as lawmakers negotiate the reconciliation bill.

"The caucus that has called for (the cap's) elimination over the past years has only gotten louder and more vocal and see this year as the opportunity to flex their muscle," Snyderman said.

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

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

## Federal judges pause U.S. Education Department enforcement of DEI ban

BY: SHAUNEEN MIRANDA - APRIL 24, 2025 3:57 PM



**Education Secretary Linda McMahon testifies during her Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee confirmation hearing on Feb. 13, 2025.**

(Photo by Win McNamee/Getty Images)

A federal judge in Maryland ordered the Trump administration Thursday to pause enforcement of a new U.S. Education Department ban on diversity, equity and inclusion practices.

The order came as another federal judge in New Hampshire issued a preliminary injunction temporarily blocking the Trump administration from yanking federal funding from many schools.

The New Hampshire order, though, only applied to schools that employ members of the National Education Association — the country's largest labor union, which brought the case challenging the ban — or the Center for Black Educator Development.

The rulings used different legal logic but arrived at the same conclusion: The administration's ban on race-conscious practices is not valid.

In Maryland, U.S. District Judge Stephanie

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A. Gallagher said she ruled not on the merits of the policy, but the way the Trump administration developed it.

"This Court takes no view as to whether the policies at issue here are good or bad, prudent or foolish, fair or unfair. But this Court is constitutionally required to closely scrutinize whether the government went about creating and implementing them in the manner the law requires," she wrote. "The government did not."

Gallagher's order pauses the enforcement of a Feb. 14 letter to school districts from Craig Trainor, the department's acting assistant secretary for civil rights, that threatened to rescind federal funds for schools that use race-conscious practices in programming, admissions, scholarships and other aspects of student life.

In New Hampshire, U.S. District Judge Landya McCafferty wrote that "the loss of federal funding would cripple the operations of many educational institutions."

McCafferty's order has a nationwide effect, but McCafferty limited it to schools that employ NEA members, rejecting the union's attempt to completely halt the policies outlined in the letter.

## Teachers unions sued

The Feb. 14 letter drew swift legal action, and the National Education Association brought the suit in New Hampshire against the administration alongside the Center for Black Educator Development.

The American Federation of Teachers — one of the largest teachers unions in the country — filed a complaint in February alongside its affiliate, AFT-Maryland. The American Sociological Association and a public school district in Oregon also sued over the letter.

"Today the court confirmed the importance of our job as educators to foster opportunity, dignity, and engagement," Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers, said in a statement after the Maryland ruling.

"The court agreed that this vague and clearly unconstitutional requirement is a grave attack on students, our profession, honest history, and knowledge itself," she added. "It would hamper efforts to extend access to education, and dash the promise of equal opportunity for all, a central tenet of the United States since its founding."

NEA also celebrated the preliminary injunction granted in its case Thursday, and the union's president, Becky Pringle, said in a statement "today's ruling allows educators and schools to continue to be guided by what's best for students, not by the threat of illegal restrictions and punishment."

The statement said President Donald Trump, billionaire head of the U.S. DOGE Service Elon Musk and Education Secretary Linda McMahon were responsible for an "attack" on public education.

"The fact is that Donald Trump, Elon Musk, and Linda McMahon are using politically motivated attacks and harmful and vague directives to stifle speech and erase critical lessons to attack public education, as they work to dismantle public schools," Pringle said. "This is why educators, parents, and community leaders are organizing, mobilizing, and using every tool available to protect our students and their futures."

The Education Department did not immediately respond to a request for comment Thursday.

## Letter raised questions

In the February letter, Trainor offered a wide-ranging interpretation of a U.S. Supreme Court ruling in 2023 involving Harvard University and the University of North Carolina, which struck down the use of affirmative action in college admissions.

Trainor wrote that though the ruling "addressed admissions decisions, the Supreme Court's holding applies more broadly."

The four-page letter raised a slew of questions for schools across pre-K through college over what fell within the requirements, and the department later released a Frequently Asked Questions document on the letter in an attempt to provide more guidance.

Earlier this month, the Education Department gave state education leaders just days to certify all K-12

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schools in their states were complying with the letter in order to keep receiving federal financial assistance. The department and the groups suing in the New Hampshire case later reached an agreement that paused enforcement.

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

## National Dems to deliver more than \$1M a month to state parties

**BY: SHAUNEEN MIRANDA - APRIL 24, 2025 9:42 AM**

The Democratic National Committee will transfer more than \$1 million per month to its state and territorial parties over the next four years in an effort to build state-level infrastructure and operations, the DNC announced Thursday.

The agreement marks the DNC's largest total investment in Democratic state parties to date and comes as Democrats try to rebound from significant losses in the 2024 election cycle.

Each state party is set to receive a minimum of \$17,500 per month, a \$5,000 increase from the current baseline, the DNC said in materials provided to States Newsroom ahead of the wider announcement.

Republican-controlled states will get an additional \$5,000 a month, bringing their monthly total to \$22,500. The GOP-controlled states will get that additional investment through the DNC's Red State Fund.

The DNC's definition for a GOP-controlled state is one that meets at least two of the three criteria: no Democratic governor or Democratic U.S. Senator; one-quarter or less of the congressional delegation is made up of Democrats; and Republicans hold supermajorities in both state legislative chambers.

As part of the agreement, the DNC said it will host six regional training "bootcamps" for state parties per two-year cycle and will also hire new staff to the Association of State Democratic Committees.

The DNC said the initiative also aims to help Democratic state parties with their infrastructure, staffing, data and tech operations as well as with organizing programs and preparation for future election cycles.

DNC Chair Ken Martin, the former Minnesota party chair who was elected to lead the national party in February, called the initiative "a historic political investment unlike anything Democrats have done in modern times" and said in a statement it is part of a long-term strategy.

"We're putting our money where our mouth is to equip state parties with what they need to reach working families who deserve better, build long-term success all across the ballot, and gain electoral ground for years to come," Martin said in the statement.

"Elections are won in states — and that's exactly where we will be investing our resources," said Martin.

Last week, Martin laid out the leadership board's organizing principles, which centered on "organizing early, organizing always, organizing everywhere, and winning everywhere."

"You're going to continue to witness a level of aggressive investment and organizing from this DNC that's unlike anything we've done before," Martin wrote in that memo.

In a Thursday statement, Jane Kleeb, president of the Association of State Democratic Committees and chair of the Nebraska Democratic Party, said "state parties are the backbone of the Democratic Party, and through this investment, our state parties will receive the support they need to show voters that, no matter where they live, there is a strong Democratic Party in their corner, protecting their rights and economic opportunity against Republican attacks."

### 20 years later

The strategy bears some resemblance to the 50-state strategy pioneered by former Vermont Gov. Howard Dean, who led the DNC from 2005 to 2009 and appeared on a DNC press call Thursday.

"This is a really critical move that's being made here," Dean said. "We have not been anything but a Washington, D.C.-centric party since 2008, and the reason that the Democrats have had a tough time is because if you're not out there doing the grassroots politics, you don't win. Period."

Critics during Dean's tenure argued that spending in deep-red areas pulled resources away from win-

nable races in more moderate states and congressional districts.

Asked on the press call whether the push to spread money to more states could lead to a decline in financial support to swing states, Martin said, "No, not at all."

"I mean, as I said, there's no such thing as a perpetual blue state or a perpetual red state, and over the years, because there's been a lack of investment in blue states, as an example, by other partners in the ecosystem, not necessarily the DNC, it's meant we've seen actually our vote share in some of the bluest parts of the country actually starting to decrease," he said.

"I believe you have to invest everywhere and organize everywhere if you want to win everywhere, and so, that's what this will do."

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

## Judge blasts Army Corps for pipeline protests, orders \$28M in damages to North Dakota

BY: MARY STEURER - APRIL 24, 2025 9:04 AM

A federal judge has ordered the United States government to pay North Dakota nearly \$28 million, finding that the executive branch "abandoned the rule of law" in its response to the Dakota Access Pipeline protests of 2016 and 2017.

In the lawsuit, filed in 2019, North Dakota requested \$38 million in damages from the United States government — the total sum it claims it paid for policing and cleaning up the demonstrations.

In a long-awaited decision filed Wednesday, U.S. District Court Judge Daniel Traynor sided with the state, finding the Corps at fault for negligence, public nuisance and civil trespass claims.

"While North Dakota was drowning in the chaos of the protests, the United States

dropped an anvil into the pool and turned up the turmoil," he wrote in a nearly 120-page order.

Thousands came to south-central North Dakota to protest the construction of the crude oil pipeline in solidarity with the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, which views the project as a looming environmental hazard and an encroachment upon Native territory. It has also accused the pipeline of disrupting sacred cultural sites.

Demonstrators set up camp near where the pipeline crosses beneath Lake Oahe — a reservoir on the Missouri River managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers less than a half-mile upstream from the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation. Opponents urged the Army Corps of Engineers — and later, the federal



**People move about the Guilford County Democratic Party headquarters in Greensboro, North Carolina, on Nov. 7, 2022.**

(Photo by Sean Rayford/Getty Images)

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courts — to deny the pipeline's developer, Energy Transfer, the land easement necessary to cross Lake Oahe.

The largest demonstration camp was located on land managed by the Corps.

The protests lasted from spring of 2016 to February of 2017, when former Gov. Doug Burgum ordered protesters to evacuate the land.

Traynor wrote the Army Corps was legally required to enforce its property rights as soon as it became aware of the protests — either by requiring the demonstrators to obtain a permit to use its land or forcing the protesters to leave.

Early on in the demonstrations, the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe was in talks with the Army Corps about obtaining a special use permit, but those negotiations fell through, witnesses testified during the trial last year.

In September 2016, the Corps published a press release stating the permit had been granted, despite that the tribe never completed the application process.

Had the Corps followed through with the permit, the agency could have prevented millions in damages to the state, Traynor continued. Such a permit could have required demonstrators to handle cleanup, incentivized protest leaders to prevent damage to the land and prohibited protesters from establishing permanent structures at the campsites, he reasoned. He said the agency could have closed its land if protesters refused to comply with these requirements.

The Wednesday ruling expands on a prior order published in December 2023, in which Traynor held that the Army Corps had violated its own permitting procedures by not requiring protesters to obtain the permit.

Traynor found that the Corps' decision to allow protesters to use its land — coupled with the press release, which he characterized as an endorsement of the demonstrations — prolonged and intensified the movement.

The United States argued other factors were responsible for the protest's rise in popularity, like the Corps' pending decision on the pipeline easement, the tribe's historic claims to the land and national media attention. Winona LaDuke, an Indigenous environmental activist, testified during the trial that the Corps' actions surrounding the permit and press release did not affect her decision to be at the camp, for example.

Traynor in his Wednesday order called these elements "red herrings" and "immaterial" to the Corps' fault in the protests.

"Certainly, protesters had their own independent incentives for why they protested," Traynor wrote, "but as discussed above, the facts as adduced at trial show protesters were supported, enabled, and encouraged by the Corps' granting of the de facto special use permit that gave protesters a refuge from which they could conduct repeated illegal and illicit activities."

The United States has argued that the Corps responded the best it could in an extraordinary situation, and that it did not know the protests would unfold the way they did.

Traynor in his decision rejected this claim, finding that evidence presented at trial showed that the U.S. government knew early on that the demonstrations could balloon in size and become unruly.

North Dakota on multiple occasions asked for federal law enforcement to assist with managing the demonstrations, which Traynor said indicates the United States was aware that the protests posed a safety threat.

The United States also said that it cannot be held liable for the damages because the protests were protected speech.

Traynor said that while some protesters engaged in protected speech, the damages at issue in the lawsuit are not covered by the First Amendment since they resulted from violent behavior. He also noted the United States cannot use the First Amendment protections as a defense when no protesters are party to the case.

"The damages here were caused by tumultuous, unsanitary, and otherwise horrific conditions that caused significant violence to the land and responding law enforcement officers," he wrote.

Participants in the protest, including those who testified during the trial, emphasized that not all were violent. Demonstrators also objected to the response of law enforcement in riot gear and tactics of private security personnel.

Traynor reduced the award to North Dakota by \$10 million, since the U.S. government had already awarded

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the state a grant of that size to offset the cost of its emergency response to the protests.

The state also received a \$15 million donation from pipeline company Energy Transfer Partners in connection to the protests.

Traynor's decision comes more than a year after the case went to trial.

During the four-week trial, which kicked off in February 2024, the court heard from a wide-ranging cast of witnesses — including Burgum and former Gov. Jack Dalrymple, Native activists, federal officials and law enforcement.

It was not immediately clear whether the United States government would appeal Traynor's decision. The Corps did not immediately respond to a request for comment Wednesday.

North Dakota Gov. Kelly Armstrong and Attorney General Drew Wrigley called the decision "a major win for North Dakota taxpayers and the rule of law."

"As outlined in trial testimony and Judge Traynor's ruling, decisions made by the Obama administration emboldened protesters and ultimately caused millions of dollars in damage to North Dakota, while endangering the health and safety of North Dakota communities, families and law enforcement officers who responded to the protests," Armstrong and Wrigley said in a joint statement.

Lake Oahe is the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe's primary source of water. The pipeline's path also includes unceded land recognized as belonging to the Sioux Nation under an 1851 treaty with the U.S. government.

The Dakota Access Pipeline has been in operation since 2017. In a lawsuit brought against the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers by Standing Rock in 2016, a federal judge found that the Army Corps had violated the law by granting DAPL an easement without first conducting a full environmental review of the pipeline, which is required under the National Environmental Policy Act.

The judge vacated the easement and ordered the pipeline to be drained of oil until the Army Corps could complete an environmental impact study. A higher court in 2021 upheld the decision to pull the easement but ruled that DAPL could remain in operation, concluding that Standing Rock had not shown it is likely to suffer irreparable harm if the pipeline is not shuttered.

The environmental impact study is still in progress.

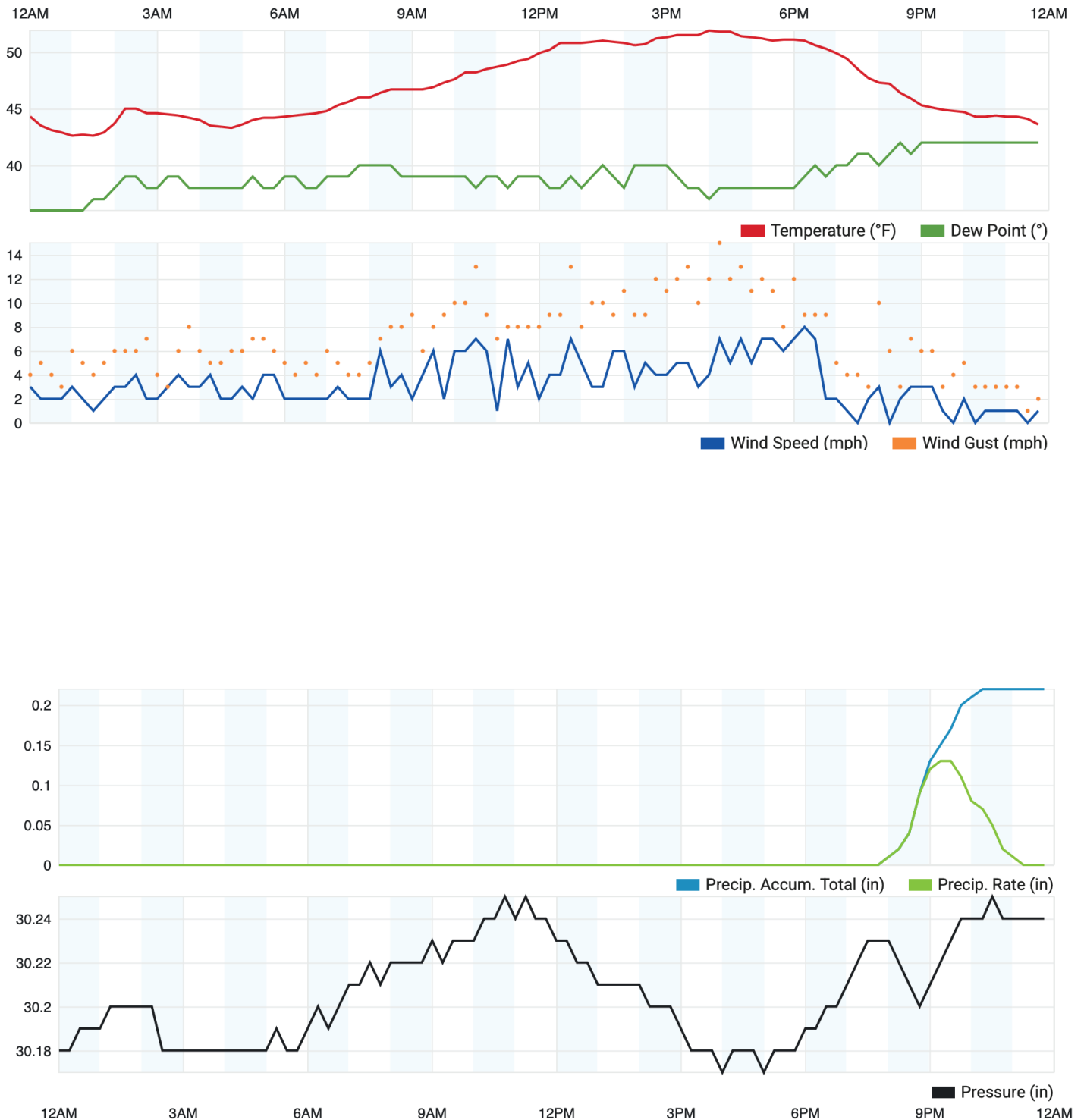
A separate legal challenge brought by Energy Transfer against environmental group Greenpeace related to the DAPL protests went to trial in February. A nine-person jury of Morton County residents found Greenpeace liable for more than \$660 million in damages.

*Mary Steurer is a reporter based in Bismarck for the North Dakota Monitor. A native of St. Louis, Steurer previously worked as the local government reporter for the Casper Star-Tribune newspaper in Wyoming.*

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



**High: 65 °F**

Decreasing  
Clouds

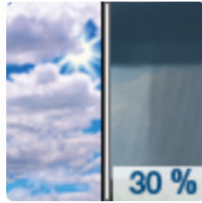
Tonight



**Low: 37 °F**

Partly Cloudy

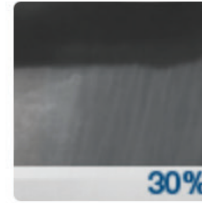
Saturday



**High: 63 °F**

Partly Sunny  
then Chance  
Showers and  
Breezy

Saturday Night



**Low: 48 °F**

Chance  
Showers

Sunday



**High: 71 °F**

Slight Chance  
Showers and  
Breezy

## Weekend Outlook

Friday



Highs: 56-65°  
Lows: 35-41°

Possible patchy  
morning fog

Saturday



Highs: 57-65°  
Lows: 45-49°

Chance rain  
showers

Sunday



Highs: 66-78°  
Lows: 49-57°

Chance rain  
showers throughout  
the day, storms  
possible west  
river



April 25, 2025 1:23 AM

Today will feature clearing skies north to south and highs in the mid 50s to mid 60s. Saturday will have similar highs with cloudy skies and a chance for some rain showers (20-40%). These chances for showers continue into Sunday, but some storms could develop west river Sunday afternoon/evening.

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 52 °F at 4:03 PM**

**Low Temp: 42 °F at 1:00 AM**

**Wind: 15 mph at 4:07 PM**

**Precip: : 0.22**

Day length: 14 hours, 05 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 97 in 1962

Record Low: 19 in 2013

Average High: 62

Average Low: 35

Average Precip in April.: 1.45

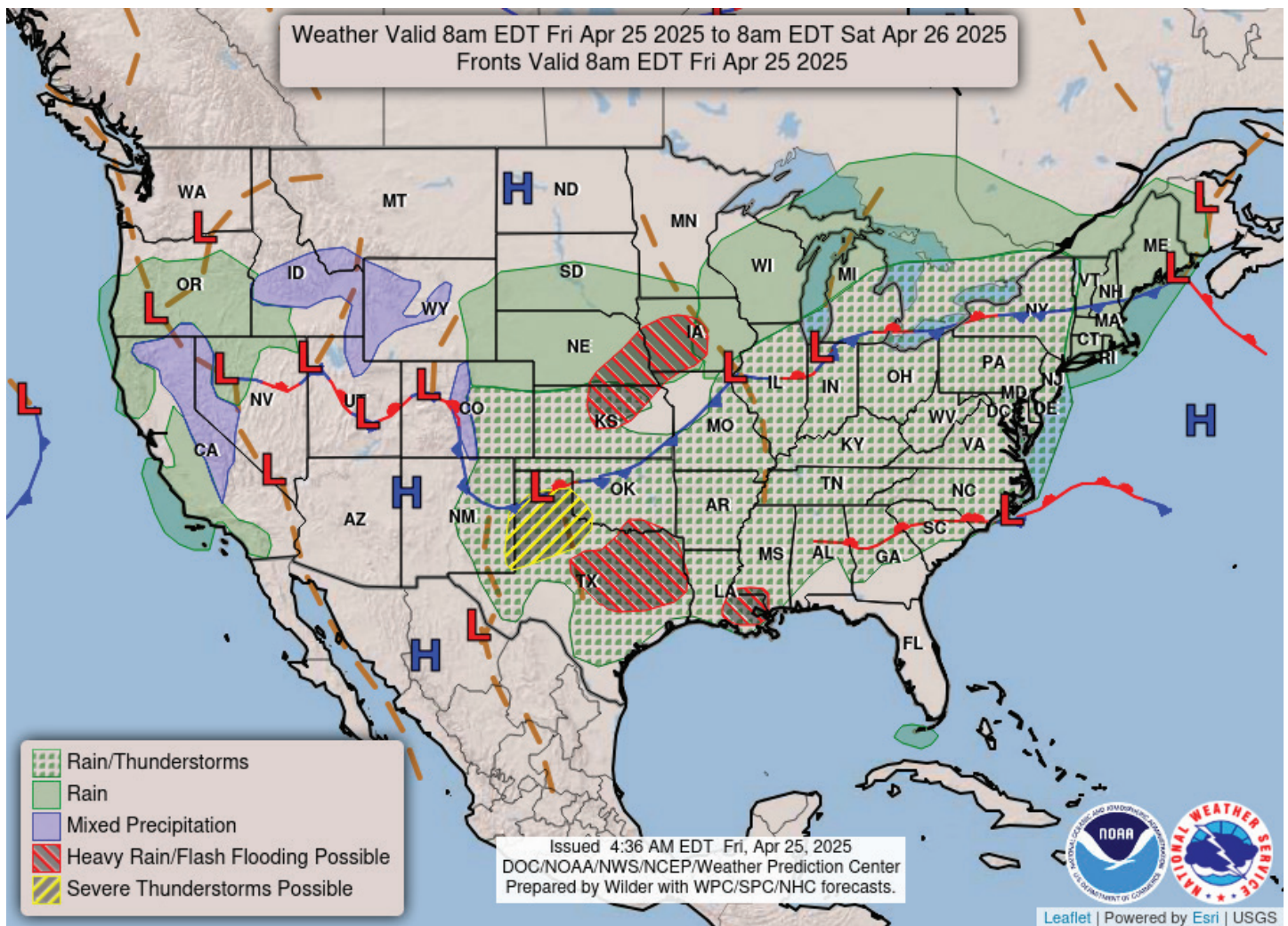
Precip to date in April.: 1.58

Average Precip to date: 3.51

Precip Year to Date: 2.21

Sunset Tonight: 8:33:12 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:25:44 am



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## Today in Weather History

April 25th, 1994: Lightning from a thunderstorm 4 miles W of Aberdeen struck two houses, causing structural damage and starting a fire, which caused further damage to one home. The second house suffered damage only to a surge protector.

April 25th, 1996: An intense area of low pressure brought high winds of 30 to 50 mph with isolated gusts to 80 mph to central and north-central South Dakota from the morning to the evening of the 25th. The high winds picked up the dry April soil, lowering visibilities in blowing dust. Some places experienced dust storm conditions with low visibility and drifting dust. Many roofs lost shingles due to the strong winds. In Eagle Butte, the Vietnam Veterans Center roof was blown off. Other buildings were also damaged across the area, along with some broken windows. Some power poles and lines were downed west of Fort Pierre. Some trees and branches were also downed. Near Isabel, a cattle trailer was tipped over, and two calf shelters were destroyed. Also, a twenty-foot Conoco sign was blown down near Isabel, along with other signs damaged across the area. The dust storm reminded many of the 1930s. Some wind gusts include 60 mph at Mobridge and Selby, 70 mph at Miller, Pierre, and Murdo, and 80 mph at Isabel and Eagle Butte.

1875 - New York City received three inches of snow, the latest measurable snow of record for that location. (David Ludlum)

1898 - The temperature at Volcano Springs CA hit 118 degrees to establish a U.S. record for the month of April. (The Weather Channel)

1910 - Chicago, IL, was blanketed with 2.5 inches of snow, and a total of 6.5 inches between the 22nd and the 26th. It was the latest significant snow of record for the city. (The Weather Channel)

1920 - Atlanta, GA, received 1.5 inches of snow, and experienced their latest freeze of record with a morning low of 32 degrees. The high of just 39 degrees was only their second daily high colder than 40 degrees in April. (The Weather Channel)

1984 - A late season snowstorm struck the Northern Rockies and the Northern Plains. The storm produced some unusually high snowfall totals. The town of Lead, located in the Black Hills of western South Dakota, was buried under 67 inches of snow. Red Lodge, located in the mountains of southern Montana, reported 72 inches of snow. Up to 60 inches blanketed the mountains of northern Wyoming. It was rated the worst late season storm of record for much of the affected area. (25th-28th) (Storm Data) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Low pressure off the coast of North Carolina produced heavy rain flooding creeks in the foothills and the piedmont area, before moving out to sea. The low pressure system also produced wind gusts to 50 mph in Virginia. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thunderstorms racing at 65 mph produced large hail in Alabama and Georgia. Hail damage in Alabama was estimated at fifty million dollars, making it their worst weather disaster since Hurricane Frederick in 1979. Hail three inches in diameter accompanied a tornado near Valdosta GA. Hail four and a half inches in diameter was reported south of Atlanta GA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thunderstorms developing along a stationary front produced severe weather from North Carolina to Indiana and Ohio, with more than 70 reports of large hail and damaging winds. A strong (F-2) tornado hit Xenia OH injuring 16 persons and causing more than a million dollars damage. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from Texas to Nebraska. Thunderstorms spawned fifteen tornadoes, including a powerful (F-4) tornado near Weatherford TX. Between 3 PM and 8 PM, a storm complex tracking northeastward across central Kansas spawned four tornadoes along a 119-mile path from Ness to Smith Center, with the last tornado on the ground for 55 miles. Del Rio TX was raked with hail two inches in diameter, and wind gusts to 112 mph. Brown County and Commanche County in Texas were deluged with up to 18 inches of rain, and flooding caused more than 65 million dollars damage. Two dozen cities in the north central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Highs of 87 degrees at Flint MI and 90 degrees at Alpena MI were records for April. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

2008 - Anchorage, AK, receives a record 17.2 inches at the airport and 22 inches in northeast Anchorage from the 25th to 26th. The 15.5 inches on the 25th makes it the third most received on any one day in Anchorage.



## When We Feel Helpless

**When you feel trapped, call on the Lord for rescue and wait for His deliverance.**

Psalm 50:14-15 English Standard Version

14 Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving,  
and perform your vows to the Most High,  
15 and call upon me in the day of trouble;  
I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me."

In adventure movies, we often see people trapped and helpless, frantically looking for an escape. Real life can sometimes feel that way too, and as we begin to look for a way out, our prayers become filled with requests for deliverance—in the form of physical healing, changed circumstances, or additional provision.

Did you ever consider that even more important than physical rescue is spiritual liberation? (See Eph. 6:12.) First and foremost, Jesus Christ delivered us from the power and penalty of sin. He knows we're helpless in the face of sinful habits, uncontrolled emotions, and ungodly thoughts. He wants to free us from these sins.

May we follow the example of the psalmist, who encouraged crying out to God for rescue (Ps. 50:15). Admit your helplessness to Him and to yourself. Confess any fears, self-reliance, or unbelief in your life. Then turn your gaze toward the Lord.

Let the Holy Spirit fill your spirit with the truth of Scripture. Meditate on it and commit yourself to following His way. Then trust God and wait on Him to change you from the inside out. A day will come when the helpless feeling is replaced by the joy of being free. When it does, give God the glory.

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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: 17 Hrs 35 Mins 47 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.23.25

18 24 34 40 42 8

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$31,550,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 50 Mins 46 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.24.25

13 15 20 31 38 14

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 5 Mins 47 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.23.25

1 23 26 27 28

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$124,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 5 Mins 46 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.23.25

37 42 49 54 66 26

TOP PRIZE:

**\$10,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 34 Mins 46 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.23.25

15 44 63 66 69 20

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$168,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 34 Mins 46 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

### **Detours and delays are part of year 2 of Black Hills roadwork**

By BART PFANKUCH/South Dakota News Watch South Dakota News Watch

SHERIDAN LAKE, S.D. (AP) — The typically serene setting along U.S. Highway 385 in South Dakota as it winds peacefully past the western shore of Sheridan Lake in the central Black Hills is now a busy work zone with a rocky roadway, construction equipment grinding on the hillside and a flagger stopping all traffic.

For the second consecutive tourism season, visitors and local residents will see detours, delays and occasional road closures as they try to navigate this beautiful section of the Black Hills between Hill City and Deadwood.

The second year of a three-year, \$72 million effort to widen and straighten a 15-mile stretch of U.S. 385, the only north-south route through the region, is now fully underway. Most trips through the area will endure delays due to flaggers and pilot cars that allow only one-way traffic on gravel and rock surfaces.

During three planned closures this year, drivers will be required to follow a roughly 50-mile detour that takes them back to Rapid City. A state Department of Transportation website provides detailed information about the project and offers a texting option to receive frequent updates.

The two-lane highway provides access to Pactola Reservoir and Sheridan Lake and is the only highway connecting the gambling city of Deadwood on the north to Mount Rushmore National Memorial, Crazy Horse Memorial and Custer State Park on the south. The highway is a critical conduit for a regional tourism industry that delivers an estimated \$2 billion in revenue to South Dakota each year.

The project's main goal is to improve safety on the highway, which in spots has narrow or no shoulder and is flanked in spots by deep canyons or unforgiving stands of tall pines.

State transportation officials said 187 crashes with four fatalities and 57 injuries were reported on the stretch of U.S. 385 from 2018 to 2022. A third of those wrecks and most of the deaths occurred when motorists left the roadway.

The construction will include widening road shoulders, smoothing out sharp curves and adding turn lanes to make the road safer for travel. Contractors are clearing trees and blasting rock surfaces to make extra room for the roadway.

First full closure on US 385 in late April

The first full closure of the highway is set for Monday, April 28, and will last for about six weeks on the stretch from Be Still Road to Calumet Road, the section that borders Sheridan Lake.

Two other road closures are planned in 2025 – another from Sheridan Lake Road to Be Still Road from August to September and a third south of the Pactola Dam to Taylor Ranch Road from October to March 2026.

The highway will be open during the annual Sturgis motorcycle rally.

"The contractor will open all lanes to unimpeded traffic and the department will not allow work on the project from July 30, 2025 to Aug. 11, 2025 due to the Sturgis motorcycle rally," the DOT said in an email to News Watch. "All driving surfaces must be existing asphalt surface or blotter surface by July 23."

Access to some of the recreational sites in the Black Hills National Forest will be affected during the project this year, according to a news release from the U.S. Forest Service.

The Pactola Visitor Center will be closed the entire summer, and the popular fishing pier on the west end of Sheridan Lake will be inaccessible when U.S. 385 is closed in that section from April 21 to June 13, the agency said.

The planned road closures will also make it harder to access Pactola and Sheridan in general, the agency said.

"It's important to plan your route before you go," said Scott Jacobson, spokesperson for the agency. "For example, if you are planning to recreate on the north side of Sheridan Lake, you must come from the north. If you are planning to recreate on the south side of Sheridan Lake, you must come from the south."

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Access to businesses will be affected

While motorists will certainly be affected, the biggest impacts will likely be felt by the dozens of business owners who will see reduced visitor access at various points during the 2025 tourism season.

"We just need people to know that we're open during all this," said Angie Weaver, co-owner of Pactola Marina, located off U.S. 385. "The road may be closed, but we aren't closed."

Weaver said her business, which includes a general store and rentals of boats and supplies, fared relatively well during the summer of 2024, when the construction was focused on the north end of the project, closer to her business. She said some customers grumbled about the delays but mostly kept coming even if it took longer to arrive.

"We had only a handful of complaints," she said. "Some would say, 'Well, that stunk, but we made it.' And once they're on the water having fun, they realize it was all worth it."

Weaver said she felt the project could have had better signage to let tourists know they could still access the marina and how to get there. She said state DOT officials, who have met with local business owners to get input, have promised to improve signage this summer.

Weaver said she is keeping a positive attitude during the three-year project, and is confident the end result of a smoother, safer highway will be worth it. As she plans for her official opening on May 1, Weaver said she is more concerned about the current low water level in the reservoir than she is about construction hassles.

"The road is going to be great, and the section they did last year, even though it's not fully paved yet, looks very nice," she said.

Black Hills tourism industry thrives despite roadwork

Despite all the hassles and concerns over access to businesses, the region saw a 2.8% increase in overall spending in 2024 compared to the year prior, according to Michelle Thompson, CEO of the Black Hills & Badlands Tourism Association.

Thompson heard anecdotal reports from some association members that were hurt by the construction but said that overall, the region endured the first year of the U.S. 385 construction project quite well.

"I did have a business (in Hill City) tell me that when the construction closure reopened, it was like turning on a faucet and people started traveling to their community again," Thompson said. "But we don't have any data showing lower revenues or reduced visits due to the project."

Thompson said her association, the DOT and the media have done a good job of informing the public and potential visitors about the construction project and how to navigate it. She said one message she is sharing with tourists is to plan ahead but also consider that there is joy in finding new ways to travel around and experience all the Black Hills region has to offer.

"While it may cause delays or some rerouting, there are so many beautiful routes to get you from point A to point B through the Black Hills," she said. "We ask people to pack their patience and do some planning so they can still have a great experience."

## **A Mexican musician uses a contentious genre to sing of women imprisoned for killing their abusers**

By MEGAN JANETSKY and FERNANDA PESCE Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Two days before her new album was launched, musical icon Vivir Quintana was behind barbed wire at a women's prison in Mexico. The singer had spent the past 10 years visiting women incarcerated after defending themselves and, in doing so, killing their abusers.

Their stories became part of "Cosas que Sorprenden a la Audiencia" (Things that Surprise the Audience), Quintana's latest album, released Thursday.

It tells the story of 10 such women but in a first, Quintana does it through "corridos," a typically male-dominated and controversial Mexican music genre that's soared into the spotlight in recent years.

The album, Quintana explained, was born out of her desire to dive into the more complicated aspects of gender-based violence.

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"This album has a different heart," Quintana, 40, said in an interview, donning bright red boots, her signature streak of gray slicing through her black hair. "This album wasn't made to sell, it's to change minds." "So many times I didn't defend myself"

The songs are meant to raise awareness about soaring levels of violence against women across Latin America — human rights groups estimate that an average of 10 women are killed in Mexico every day — and a justice system that many believe protects abusers and silences women's voices.

In many cases, women like the ones in Quintana's corridos are charged with "excessive legitimate self-defense," charges that have fueled outrage among many in Mexico.

"So many times I feared for my life. So many times I didn't defend myself," Quintana crooned, cradling her guitar as her booming voice echoed through the halls of her record label building on Wednesday. "Now I live locked up in a prison, and I feel more free than I did in my own home."

Amplifying women's voices has been a hallmark of Quintana's career, and rocketed her to fame in Mexico and beyond.

In 2020, her "Canción Sin Miedo" (Song Without Fear) became an anthem for Mexico's Women's Day march and the feminist movement in Latin America.

In 2022, she co-wrote a melancholy hymn about healing and freedom for the album of the Black Panther sequel. And last year, she was recognized at the Latin Grammys as one of four Leading Ladies of Entertainment.

A cultural reckoning

Quintana's new music goes further. She uses "corridos," a type of northern Mexican ballads that has seen both an international renaissance and a backlash, with critics claiming that "narco corridos" — songs that glorify cartel violence and use misogynistic lyrics — have dominated the form.

The topic has grown so heated that the United States even revoked the visas of members of one band who projected the face of a drug cartel boss onto a large screen during a performance.

Instead of banning the corridos as a growing number of Mexican states have done, the country's first woman president, Claudia Sheinbaum, has proposed that the government promote a new style of corridos that avoid glorifying violence and discrimination against women.

"We're not banning a musical genre; that would be absurd," Sheinbaum said recently. "What we're proposing is that the lyrics not glorify drugs, violence, violence against women or viewing women as a sexual object."

'I didn't want to die by his hands'

Quintana's corridos turn the genre on its head, paying tribute not to violence or criminals, but to women who have been criminalized for defending themselves.

The first song on her album, "Era Él o Era Yo (It Was Either Him or Me) tells the story of Roxana Ruiz, a Mexican woman sentenced to six years for killing a man who was raping her and threatened to kill her in 2021.

"This isn't justice," Ruiz said after the court ruling. "Remember, I am the one who was sexually assaulted by that man, and after he died because I defended myself ... because I didn't want to die by his hands."

Mexican prosecutors later withdrew the case against her after a countrywide outcry.

One song tells of a 14-year-old girl in the southern state of Tabasco who killed her father when he was abusing her mother. Another tells of Yakiri Rubio, who was kidnapped by two men, taken to a hotel and raped. After killing one of the men, she was taken to prison and charged with "homicide by excessive legitimate self-defense."

With each song, Quintana would follow local news reports, interview the women in prisons and spend time with their families, hoping to capture their personalities — and not just the violent act that transformed their lives.

"It's something painful that the state tells you that if you defend yourself, we're going to punish you," Quintana said. "It's like up until what point do we care about women's life?"

Shifting the conversation

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Quintana's inspiration stemmed from a childhood memory of a classic corrido she first heard at the age of 5, played at parties and on the radio in her native northern Mexican state of Coahuila.

The ballad is about a woman named Rosita Álvarez, violently killed when she tried to go out to dance. Later, when she was 15, Quintana's best friend was murdered in a femicide, the slaying of women because of their gender. It was then that the brutality of the lyrics sank in.

Quintana's album seeks to shift the tone of the corridos to capture the harsh realities Mexican women face, she said, and explore ongoing violence against women and other kinds of "machismo" with nuance.

Her purpose, she added, is to lift up survivors of gender violence and to provide a point of connection for incarcerated women like those in her ballads.

"They tell these women, you defended yourself, you killed someone and you're in prison, you don't have the right to feel joy, enjoy life, you don't have the right to anything," Quintana said.

"But it's important to dance to these things, no?" she added. "Because people have to understand that they have the right to music, the right to art, and more than anything, the right to beauty."

## Man charged with arson after authorities say he sparked New Jersey Pine Barrens fire

By MIKE CATALINI Associated Press

A man set a bonfire using wooden pallets in New Jersey's Pine Barrens and left them without fully extinguishing the blaze, sparking a quick-moving wildfire with smoke affecting air quality in the New York City area, authorities said Thursday.

Authorities arrested Joseph Kling, 19, of Waretown, New Jersey, and charged him with arson and aggravated arson in the fire that's still burning in southern New Jersey. The wildfire was described as starting with "an improperly extinguished bonfire."

Judge James Gluck told Kling during a brief court appearance Thursday the state sought to have him detained pending trial and he wouldn't be released. Kling spoke briefly, only to clarify that his next court appearance was set for Tuesday. "Thank you. Have a good day," he said when the judge dismissed him.

A public defender representing Kling during the hearing told the judge she had "nothing further" when he asked.

Emails from the public defender's office said Thursday it could not comment on a pending case so early in the process. A voice message was left at a possible phone number for Kling.

Authorities first spotted the blaze Tuesday morning from a fire tower when a smoke column appeared amid the pines. Law enforcement said they used a GPS to plot the origin of the fire and determined the cause was a bonfire that hadn't been put out.

Speaking Thursday afternoon at a news conference, Ocean County Prosecutor Bradley D. Billhimer said "we can confidently say that we think the fire was set intentionally." He declined further comment on why authorities believe Kling was responsible and other matters related to the investigation since it remains ongoing.

It's peak forest fire season in the vast pine wilderness that covers more than 1 million acres (405,000 hectares) — an area roughly as large as the Grand Canyon — and firefighters are contending with low humidity and the aftermath of a monthslong drought in the region.

Though large tracts of the Pine Barrens are uninhabited, New Jersey is the nation's most densely populated state and officials have warned the fire could threaten developments nearby. The fire had grown to more than 23.8 square miles (61.6 square kilometers) on Thursday, approaching what officials believe to have been the largest wildfire in the state in the last two decades.

Authorities had said there were no injuries or deaths in the fire, but a commercial building and some vehicles were destroyed. About 5,000 people had been evacuated but were permitted to return home on Wednesday, officials said.

"This is still a very active fire," LaTourette said Wednesday. "As we continue to get this under full control the expectation is that the number of acres will grow and will grow in a place that is unpopulated."

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Jim and Lenore Thoms, who own a business in an industrial park near the blaze, called the fire "a very scary experience" and praised the efforts of firefighters.

"The firefighters were phenomenal, they saved this whole park," Jim Thoms said. "If they weren't around, the way things were going on, you might not have seen any buildings at all."

The effects of the fire are beginning to be seen beyond the state.

Higher-than-normal pollution levels were forecast Thursday in New York City, Rockland and Westchester counties, and in Long Island's Nassau and Suffolk counties, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation said. The fire is roughly 54 miles (87 kilometers) south of New York City.

It said "going indoors may reduce exposure" to problems such as eye, nose and throat irritation, coughing, sneezing and shortness of breath.

In New York, dry conditions across the state are resulting in a high fire danger rating in several regions including New York City, Long Island, the Hudson Valley, Capital Region, and portions of the North Country, according to the advisory. The rest of the state is at a moderate or low level of fire danger.

Officials said the fire is believed to be the second-worst in recent years, smaller only than a 2007 blaze that burned 26 square miles (67 square kilometers).

Acting New Jersey Gov. Tahesha Way declared a state of emergency Wednesday, and officials said Thursday that they've contained about 50% of the wildfire. Gov. Phil Murphy is on an official visit in Poland for a Holocaust memorial. He's due to fly back home Friday.

Video released by the state agency overseeing the fire service showed billowing white and black clouds of smoke, intense flames engulfing pines and firefighters dousing a charred structure.

The Pine Barrens sit between Philadelphia to the west and the Atlantic coast to the east. In the region with quick-draining sandy soil and trees with still-developing leaves, humidity remains low and winds can kick up, drying out the forest floor.

## Indian officials say troops exchanged fire with Pakistani soldiers in disputed Kashmir

By AIJAZ HUSSAIN and RAJESH ROY Associated Press

SRINAGAR, India (AP) — Indian officials said the army had a brief exchange of fire with Pakistani soldiers along their highly militarized frontier in the disputed Himalayan region of Kashmir, as the nuclear-armed rivals ramped up tit-for-tat diplomatic offensive following a deadly attack on tourists.

The report of a gunfight comes amid soaring tensions between New Delhi and Islamabad after gunmen killed 26 people near the resort town of Pahalgam in Kashmir on Tuesday. India immediately described the massacre a "terror attack" and said it had "cross border" links, blaming Pakistan for backing it.

Pakistan denied any connection to the attack, which was claimed by a previously unknown militant group calling itself the Kashmir Resistance.

Three Indian army officials said that Pakistani soldiers used small arms to fire at an Indian position in Kashmir late Thursday. The officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity in keeping with departmental policy, said Indian soldiers retaliated and no casualties were reported.

In Pakistan, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Friday decline to confirm or deny the report. Ministry spokesperson Shafqat Ali Khan told a news conference that "I will wait for a formal confirmation from the military before I make any comment."

He added there had been no effort yet from any other country to mediate.

In the past, each side has accused the other of starting border skirmishes in Kashmir, which both claim in its entirety.

The United Nations has urged India and Pakistan "to exercise maximum restraint and to ensure that the situation and the developments we've seen do not deteriorate any further."

"Any issues between Pakistan and India, we believe can be and should be resolved peacefully, through meaningful, mutual engagement," the statement said Friday.

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Following the attack, India announced a series of diplomatic actions against Pakistan.

New Delhi on Wednesday suspended a crucial water-sharing treaty that has withstood two wars between the two countries and closed the only functional land border crossing between the countries while also cutting the number of diplomatic staff. A day later, India revoked all visas issued to Pakistani nationals with effect from Sunday.

In retaliation, Pakistan on Thursday responded angrily that it has nothing to do with the attack, and canceled visas issued to Indian nationals, closed its airspace for all Indian-owned or Indian-operated airlines and suspended all trade with India, including to and from any third country.

It also warned that any Indian attempt to stop or divert flow of water would be considered an "act of war" and met with "full force across the complete spectrum" of Pakistan's national power.

Tuesday's attack in Kashmir was the worst assault in years, targeting civilians in the restive region that has seen an anti-India rebellion for more than three decades.

India and Pakistan each administer a part of Kashmir. New Delhi describes all militancy in Kashmir as Pakistan-backed terrorism. Pakistan denies this, and many Muslim Kashmiris consider the militants to be part of a home-grown freedom struggle.

## Australians and New Zealanders commemorate war dead on Anzac Day

By ROD McGUIRK Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — Hundreds of thousands of people gathered across Australia and New Zealand on Friday for dawn services and street marches to commemorate their war dead on Anzac Day. At least two Australian services were disrupted by protests.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and opposition leader Peter Dutton took a day off campaigning ahead of general elections on May 3 as a mark of respect.

April 25 is the date in 1915 when the newly formed Australia and New Zealand Army Corps landed on the beaches of Gallipoli, in northwest Turkey, in an ill-fated campaign that was the soldiers' first combat of World War I.

New Zealand prime minister commemorates Anzac Day in Turkey

New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon traveled to Gallipoli to commemorate the 110th anniversary of the landing day.

He told a dawn service at Anzac Cove that New Zealand's contribution of 16,000 soldiers to the Gallipoli campaign was disproportionately large from a national population that was then only 1 million people.

"What happened here scarred generations of New Zealanders. While we remain proud of those who serve, we do not glorify what happened here. We know too much to do that," Luxon said.

"Instead, we acknowledge the courage and tenacity of the Anzacs and we respect the valor of the Ottoman Turks who resisted them," he added.

The service was also attended King Charles III's sister Princess Anne, who represented the British royal family, and the king's representative in Australia, Governor-General Sam Mostyn.

Charles, who is the head of state of New Zealand, sent a message thanking that country's World War II veterans for their service as the 80th anniversary of the end of that conflict nears. The New Zealand government was aware of 81 surviving veterans in that country, the news website Stuff said.

Albanese attended a dawn service at the Australian War Memorial in the national capital Canberra.

"Each year, we renew our vow to keep the flame of memory burning so brightly that its glow touches the next generation and the generation after that," Albanese told a gathering of 25,000 people.

Dutton laid a wreath at a dawn service in his hometown Brisbane.

Hecklers disrupt dawn services in Melbourne and Perth

A small group of hecklers disrupted a dawn service attended by 50,000 people at the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne with boos and jeers.

The booing began when a local Indigenous man Mark Brown started the service with a so-called Wel-

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come to Country — a ceremony in which Indigenous Australians welcome visitors to their traditional land.

The interruptions continued at any mention of Indigenous soldiers.

Hecklers yelled “this is our country” and “we don’t have to be welcomed,” echoing a slogan of the minor party Trumpet of Patriots. The party’s extensive advertising is funded by mining magnate Clive Palmer and is inspired by U.S. President Donald Trump’s policies.

The hecklers were drowned out by the applause of others who urged Brown to continue.

Veteran Affairs Minister Matt Keogh said the “booing was led by someone who’s a known neo-Nazi.”

“We’re commemorating some of those soldiers who fell in a war that was fought against that sort of hateful ideology and so it was completely disrespectful and it’s not something that is welcome at Anzac Day commemorations ever,” Keogh said.

Police said a 26-year-old man had been directed to leave the service.

The man had been interviewed over an allegation of offensive behavior and would be issued a summons to appear in court, a police statement said.

A heckler also disrupted the Welcome to Country at the main dawn service in the Western Australia state capital Perth.

Western Australia Premier Roger Cook condemned the interruption as “totally disrespectful” and “disgusting.”

“This is a solemn occasion. It’s one where we should come together as a community and for someone to use it to make a political point and in that disrespectful way is really quite unacceptable,” Cook said.

## Trump and Zelenskyy among dignitaries converging on Rome for funeral of Pope Francis

By COLLEEN BARRY Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Heads of state and royalty will start converging on Rome on Friday for the funeral of Pope Francis in the Vatican’s St. Peter’s Square, but the group of poor people who will meet his casket in a small crosstown basilica are more in keeping with Francis’ humble persona and disdain for pomp.

U.S. President Donald Trump and Argentine President Javier Milei are among the leaders arriving Friday, the last day Argentine pope will lie in state in St. Peter’s Basilica before his coffin is sealed in the evening in preparation for his funeral Saturday.

The Vatican said 130 delegations are confirmed, including 50 heads of state and 10 reigning sovereigns.

Paying respects

Tens of thousands of mourners have waited hours in line to bid farewell to Francis, who died Monday after suffering a stroke at the age of 88. A higher-than-expected turnout prompted the Vatican to extend the basilica’s opening hours overnight.

By Thursday evening, more than 90,000 mourners had filed past Francis’ open coffin placed in front of the basilica’s main altar — at times praying, at times holding smart phones aloft for a photo of the late pontiff laid out in red robes, a bishop’s pointed miter and a rosary entwined in his hands.

St. Peter’s Basilica remained open until around 3 a.m. Friday and closed for just a few hours before reopening for mourners who started arriving before dawn. The public viewing is scheduled to end at 7 p.m., after which Francis’ simple wooden coffin will be sealed.

Emanuela Bisco took the day off work to pay her last respects to Francis, as she had 20 years ago for St. John Paul II.

Francis “was the pope of the forgotten, who was close to the simplest people, the homeless who were not pushed away,” Bisco said. “I hope that the next pope will be at his level, and continue his struggles, his openness, everything that he did.”

Cardinals meet

The work of the conclave to choose a new pope won’t start until at least May 5, after nine days of public mourning.

Cardinals have been also been arriving in Rome, with 113 meeting Thursday morning to discuss church

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business. They will meet again Friday before taking a break for the weekend.

"We are getting ready, but we still have not entered into the more intense phase. We are in the organizational phase," Italian Cardinal Fernando Filoni said Thursday.

## Papal burial

In keeping with Francis' embrace of the marginalized, the Vatican said a group of poor and needy people will meet the pope's coffin to pay homage to him when it arrives at St. Mary Major basilica for burial on Saturday.

The tomb is being prepared behind a wooden barrier within the basilica that he chose to be near an icon of the Madonna that he revered and often prayed before.

Photos released by the Vatican on Friday show the marble tombstone flat against the pavement, with the simple engraving in Latin that he requested in his last testament: "Franciscus"

## Delegations

Trump, who is traveling with first lady Melania Trump, is scheduled to arrive Friday, after Francis' coffin has been sealed.

Among the other foreign dignitaries confirmed for the papal funeral are:

- Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and first lady Olena Zelenska
- French President Emmanuel Macron
- British Prime Minister Keir Starmer
- Prince William
- Spain's King Felipe VI and Queen Letizia
- Hungarian President Viktor Orbán
- Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva

## While the world watches Gaza, here is what's happening in the West Bank

By The Associated Press undefined

After the Hamas attack on Oct. 7, 2023, ignited the devastating war in Gaza, a deadly new reality also took hold for Palestinians in the occupied West Bank.

With the world's attention focused on Gaza, Israeli military operations in the West Bank grew in size, frequency and intensity. The army launched the stepped-up campaign to counter what it says is a growing militant threat.

Here's a look at where things stand, with data collected by the U.N.'s humanitarian office and Peace Now, an Israeli anti-settlement tracking group.

Palestinian deaths by Israeli fire have surged

Since the war in Gaza erupted, the majority of Palestinians killed by Israeli fire in the West Bank have been shot during military raids in villages and towns.

Israel says the operations are needed to stamp out militancy. Many of the dead were militants killed in clashes, or youths throwing stones or firebombs.

But Palestinians and rights groups say scores of uninvolved civilians have been caught in the crossfire. Of those killed since the Hamas attack, at least 182 have been children under 18, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry, some of whom Israel says were involved in stone-throwing and militancy. Rights groups accuse Israel of using excessive force.

Israeli offensives evicted 40,000 from refugee camps

Israel is staging a massive offensive across four major refugee camps in the north of the West Bank. The raids, at their height, pushed 40,000 people from their homes. Many are now sheltering with relatives in neighboring villages, others racking up debt renting apartments while they wait to return.

Israeli officials, meanwhile, have said those displaced will not be allowed to go back for at least a year.

Forces have ripped up roads, destroyed infrastructure and demolished hundreds of homes. Israel says it is dismantling terrorist infrastructure. But civilian homes have also been destroyed.

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In another escalation, the military has resumed previously rare tactics, like drone strikes, in these densely populated areas.

Settler attacks on Palestinians occur almost daily

Settler attacks causing injury or death to Palestinians surged in the wake of the Hamas attack. For Palestinians living in small Bedouin villages in areas under full Israeli control, the attacks have become a near-daily occurrence as settlers — emboldened by Israel's pro-settler government— build new unauthorized outposts on nearby hilltops.

Israel says it opposes settler violence and blames it all on a small, extremist fringe. Palestinians say that the Israeli army does little to protect them, and that the attacks are part of a systematic attempt to expel them from their land.

Israeli outposts spring up across territory

Settlers have established about 80 new outposts since the war began. Rights groups say the outposts, often populated by extremist activists, are the main drivers of violence against Palestinians. The tiny unauthorized land grabs are tolerated and even encouraged by Israel, which over the years has converted many outposts into authorized settlements as it cements its hold on the territory and moves to prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state.

Israel's government, dominated by settler leaders and supporters, has established 13 new settlements since the war began, at least five of which originally sprung up as outposts. That brings the total number of settlements to 140.

Most of the international community considers settlements illegal, though U.S. President Donald Trump has supported them.

Checkpoints choke Palestinian movement

Meanwhile, movement between Palestinian towns and cities has only grown more difficult. New checkpoints have further divided the territory and created choke points the Israeli army can shut off on a whim.

Crossings that had been open 24/7 started closing during morning and evening rush hours, disrupting the lives of hundreds of thousands of people and turning once-routine commutes into hours-long journeys.

As the war in Gaza continues and the West Bank seethes, Palestinians say life is only growing more difficult.

## Canadians put off by Trump's bluster and border arrests are booking far fewer US visits

By ROB GILLIES and JIM MORRIS Associated Press

VANCOUVER, British Columbia (AP) — Diana and Rick Bellamy initially planned to take a Caribbean cruise out of Houston before heading to Laurel, Mississippi, to visit the home of one of their favorite HGTV shows, "Home Town."

The Calgary couple scrapped those plans and vacationed last month along Mexico's Pacific coast instead, put off by U.S. President Donald Trump's trade war with Canada, the insults he's hurled at their homeland, and stories about American border agents searching people's phones and detaining foreigners for minor reasons.

She found it ironic that she felt more comfortable traveling to Mexico than the U.S.

"I never thought I would hear myself say that," Diane Bellamy said.

Trump's attacks on Canada's economy and threats to make it the 51st state have infuriated Canadians, who are canceling trips to the U.S. in big numbers. They also seem to have also flipped the narrative heading into Canada's parliamentary elections on Monday, with Prime Minister Mark Carney's Liberal Party surging after trailing far behind in the polls just a few months ago.

A steep decline

The U.S. gets more visitors from Canada each year than from any other country, according to the U.S. Travel Association, an industry trade group, which said the 20.4 million visits from Canada last year gener-

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ated \$20.5 billion in spending.

But there has been a big drop in foreigners traveling to the U.S. since Trump took office, and Canadians are no exception. There were more than 910,000 fewer land border crossings from Canada into the U.S. last month than in March of 2024 — a more than 22% drop — according to U.S. Customs and Border Protection data. An Air Canada spokesman, meanwhile, said Canada-U.S. flight bookings for April through September are down about 10%.

Trump brushed aside the decline in tourism to the United States on Wednesday, saying, "There's a little nationalism there I guess, perhaps. It's not a big deal."

## Traveler worries

Since Trump started his second term, there have been well-publicized reports of tourists being stopped at U.S. border crossings and held for weeks at immigration detention facilities before being allowed to fly home at their own expense.

On March 3, Canadian Jasmine Mooney, an actor and entrepreneur on a U.S. work visa, was detained by U.S. border agents in San Diego. She was released after 12 days detention.

Before Mooney's release, British Columbia Premier David Eby expressed concern, saying: "It certainly reinforces anxiety that ... many Canadians have about our relationship with the U.S. right now, and the unpredictability of this administration and its actions."

The Canadian Association of University Teachers, which represents faculty and staff at Canadian universities, warned its members against nonessential travel to the U.S. due to the "political landscape" under Trump and reports of Canadians encountering difficulties crossing the border.

Academics who have expressed negative views about the Trump administration should be particularly cautious about traveling to the U.S., said the group.

"People are scared to cross the border. I don't know what Americans are thinking, quite frankly. Are they that oblivious?" said former Quebec Premier Jean Charest, who has family in Florida.

Mike Sauer, who runs a community policing center in Vancouver, said he and his partner have no interest in traveling to the U.S. now because of Trump's politics and border fears. One of Sauer's concerns is that if a border guard were to check his cellphone, the guard might see his past purchases of marijuana, which is legal to buy in Canada and about half the 50 states but is still illegal under U.S. federal law.

"The States have a different view on drugs. They could certainly look at my phone and see I'm 420-friendly," he said, meaning he's marijuana-friendly. "I think it kind of depends on which border guard would have a problem with that and which ones wouldn't."

Dietra Wilson, 32, said when she was younger, she often visited Detroit, which is just across the border from Windsor, Ontario, where she and her husband, Ben, own a secondhand shop. She hasn't visited much in recent years, though, and she said she's heard of people's worries about crossing the border since Trump moved back into the White House.

"It's worrisome," she said.

Ben Wilson, 37, also has qualms about trying to cross.

"Why would I want to?" he said. "Regardless of the tariffs, if I'm going to be stopped at the border for my phone or something somebody texted me, why go?"

## Industry worries

The drop in Canadian tourism to the U.S. led California Gov. Gavin Newsom, a frequent target of Trump, to announce an ad campaign this month meant to lure Canadians back to his state, citing a 12% year-on-year drop in February.

McKenzie McMillan, a consultant with a Vancouver-based travel agency, The Travel Group, said the company's bookings to the U.S. have dried up. "We have seen a near-total collapse of U.S. business," he said. "Probably about a 90% drop since February."

Lesley Keyter, the CEO and founder of the Travel Lady agency in Calgary, said she's seen people actually forfeit money to cancel their U.S. trips.

"Even if they're going on a Caribbean cruise, they don't want to go down to Fort Lauderdale to get on the cruise ship," she said.

## Negotiations between Iran and the US over Tehran's nuclear program return to secluded Oman

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

MUSCAT, Oman (AP) — Negotiations between Iran and the United States over Tehran's rapidly advancing nuclear program will return Saturday to the secluded sultanate of Oman, where experts on both sides will start hammering the technical details of any possible deal.

The talks seek to limit Iran's nuclear program in exchange for the lifting of some of the crushing economic sanctions the U.S. has imposed on the Islamic Republic closing in on half a century of enmity. Trump repeatedly has threatened to unleash airstrikes targeting Iran's program if a deal isn't reached. Iranian officials increasingly warn that they could pursue a nuclear weapon with their stockpile of uranium enriched to near weapons-grade levels.

Neither Iran nor the U.S. have offered any explanation on why the talks will return to the Omani capital of Muscat, nestled in the Hajar Mountains. Oman has been a mediator between the countries. Last weekend's talks in Rome offered a more-equal flight distance between Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and U.S. Mideast envoy Steve Witkoff, who are leading the negotiations.

But Rome remains in mourning after the death of Pope Francis, whose funeral will be Saturday. And Iranian state television, in covering last weekend's talks, complained at length on air about the "paparazzi" gathered across the street from the Omani Embassy in Rome's Camilluccia neighborhood.

"As you can see, unlike the first round of talks where the presence of journalists was limited and the Omanis had special management in place to prevent a large and chaotic media presence from disrupting the negotiations, this time in Rome, Italy, that kind of control hasn't been applied," said Hosnieh Sadat Shobeiri, an Iranian state TV journalist in gray, all-encompassing chador.

"Because of the crowd we're seeing here, with media outlets from various countries — including some that are anti-Iran — it's possible that we'll hear more conflicting reports and news aimed at disrupting the talks coming out of Rome compared to Oman."

Expert talks come as Iran lines up Chinese and Russian support

The Muscat talks come as Iran appears to have lined up Chinese and Russian support. Araghchi traveled to Moscow last week and this week visited Beijing.

On Thursday, Chinese, Iran and Russian representatives met the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, the United Nations' nuclear watchdog that likely will verify compliance with any accord like it did with Tehran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers. That deal included China and Russia, as well as France, Germany and the United Kingdom.

However, Iran has greatly restricted the IAEA's inspections — leading to fears internationally that centrifuges and other nuclear material could be diverted.

The IAEA offered no readout from the talks, but China's state-run Xinhua news agency on Friday described the three nations as saying the agency has "the necessary potential and expertise to contribute constructively to this process."

"China, Russia and Iran emphasized that political and diplomatic engagement based on mutual respect remains the only viable and practical path for resolving the Iran nuclear issue," the report said. It added that China respects Iran's "right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy."

The Trump administration has kept France, Germany and the U.K. out of its direct negotiations with Iran, something similarly reflected in Witkoff's negotiations with Russia over ending its war on Ukraine.

Araghchi meanwhile has said he's open to visiting Berlin, London and Paris to discuss the negotiations.

"The ball is now in the E3's court," Araghchi wrote on the social platform X on Thursday, using an acronym for the countries. "They have an opportunity to do away with the grip of Special Interest groups and forge a different path. How we act at this critical junction is likely to define the foreseeable future."

U.S. hardens its stance on enrichment

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The U.S. technical team was expected to arrive in Oman on Friday ahead of the talks Saturday. They'll be led by Michael Anton, the director of U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio's policy planning staff. Anton does not have the nuclear policy experience of those who led America's efforts in the 2015 talks. However, he was an early supporter of Trump, describing the 2016 election as a "charge the cockpit or you die" vote.

"A Hillary Clinton presidency is Russian Roulette with a semi-auto," Anton wrote. "With Trump, at least you can spin the cylinder and take your chances."

He also criticized "Iran sycophancy" in the same essay.

Rubio, speaking on a podcast released this week, also kept up a Trump line that Iran needed to stop its enrichment of uranium entirely.

"If Iran wants a civil nuclear program, they can have one just like many other countries can have one, and that is they import enriched material," Rubio said.

But Iran has insisted that keeping its enrichment is key. Witkoff also has muddied the issue by first suggesting in a television interview that Iran could enrich uranium at 3.67%, then later saying that all enrichment must stop.

Meanwhile, one more wildcard is Israel, whose devastating war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip grinds on. Trump initially announced the Iran talks with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at his side. But Israel, which for years has targeted Iran's nuclear program with attacks on its facilities and scientists, has kept open the possibility of airstrikes to destroy Tehran's enrichment sites.

On Monday, Israel's military conducted drills preparing for possible new Iranian missile attacks, the country's public broadcaster KAN reported.

"Our security services are on high alert given past instances of attempted sabotage and assassination operations designed to provoke a legitimate response," Araghchi wrote Wednesday on X.

## **Pope Francis bestowed a special nickname on AP's Vatican reporter for her often-tough questions**

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — He called me "la prima della classe," or "the first in class." It wasn't necessarily a compliment.

I had earned the nickname from Pope Francis in 2018, a year that marked a low point in his papacy, and a turning point in how he handled cases of priests who sexually abused children.

The pope had just bungled a big abuse case in Chile and I, like many in the Vatican press corps, reported the scandal during Francis' problematic trip to the South American country. Francis had discredited abuse victims, defended a bishop implicated in covering up their case and showed himself to be insensitive to their trauma.

A turbulent news conference

Returning to Rome, Francis was inundated with questions about the Chile scandal during the traditional in-flight news conference. Turbulence temporarily halted the session, but when it resumed, I picked up where others had left off, pressing the issue and incredulous that he seemed so unaware of the victims' pain.

Francis insisted no victims had come forward to accuse Bishop Juan Barros of protecting the abuser priest, Fernando Karadima. I knew otherwise, and told Francis as much in a tone of voice that still shocks me today.

"It's the victims who are saying this," I told him.

"I haven't heard from any victim of Barros," Francis responded.

"There are! There are!" I insisted. The pope interrupted, but I cut him off, my voice rising. "No! There are victims of Karadima who say that Barros was there!"

"But they didn't come forward," Francis replied. "They didn't give evidence for a judgment. You, with good intentions, tell me that there are victims, but I haven't seen them because they didn't present themselves."

By the genteel standards of Vatican protocol, it was a stunningly sharp exchange. Francis could have

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dug in or retaliated against me and other journalists who challenged him so publicly.

But he didn't. His response — commissioning an investigation and, once finished, apologizing to the victims for discrediting them — underscored what friends and foes alike saw as one of Francis' most remarkable attributes: a willingness to admit mistakes and change course.

In a 2023 interview with The Associated Press, Francis acknowledged the 2018 airborne news conference was a turning point — the moment he understood the depths of the abuse scandal.

"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 me.

"That's when the bomb went off, when I saw the corruption of many bishops in this," he said, making a gesture indicating his head had exploded.

A nickname emerges

By then, Francis already had bestowed the nickname on me, coming up with it in August 2018, while the Chilean scandal was still fresh.

AP colleague Eva Vergara and I had followed up with a story that Francis had indeed received a letter from a Chilean victim detailing the abuse and cover-up he endured.

Again aboard Air Pope One heading to Ireland, Francis came back to greet journalists. When he got to my row, Francis smiled, shook my hand and said, "Ahh, la prima della classe. La prima della classe."

I wondered what he meant. In Italian it can be translated as "the first in class." But it can also carry a negative connotation: a know-it-all, goody-goody or teacher's pet.

I saw the nickname as Francis' grudging acknowledgement that AP and I had accurately called him out and corrected him.

As reporters, we had to keep a professional distance, covering him in the tough but fair way that met our standards and which was perhaps behind his respect for our work.

An evolving relationship with the press

The nickname stuck, and Francis used it whenever we met. In many ways, it showed how his relationship with the press evolved over time.

When he was elected, Francis made clear his discomfort with journalists. He had had negative experiences in Argentina, where his record as head of the Jesuits in the 1970s during the military dictatorship and his tenure as Buenos Aires archbishop had put him in the media crosshairs.

"Truly, I don't give interviews. Why, I don't know, it's just that way," Francis told reporters traveling to Brazil in 2013 for his first foreign trip as pope.

Over time, Francis loosened up and his airborne news conferences became a new chapter in papal communication. His comments sometimes required official clarifications, but they pushed the envelope in ways he couldn't in speeches or documents on issues like LGBTQ+ outreach or the role of women in the church.

Francis granted more interviews than his two predecessors combined, using the media to speak to his flock in the informal, personal style that characterized his papacy.

A work-life dilemma arises

Our last substantive encounter came in January 2024, when reporters met with him in the Apostolic Palace. At the time, I was concerned with an impending work-life conflict: My daughter would be starting college in late August and our family was planning to be in New England to attend orientation and move her into her dorm.

At the same time, rumors were circulating that Francis would embark on his longest, most ambitious trip: a four-nation tour of Asia that, in all likelihood, would occur in late August.

I couldn't miss either.

At the end of the audience, Francis greeted the journalists individually. To this day, I cannot believe what I said, but I laid out my dilemma, summoning both maternal desperation and nothing-to-losechutzpah. Ever polite, Francis listened intently — he often asked about my children — as I suggested, somewhat cheekily, that delaying the Asia trip would enable me to cover it.

Francis didn't dismiss it outright, and I figured I could at least tell my daughter I had tried, knowing I'd

inevitably have to tell her the Asia trip would take precedence.

A final surprise

Months later, to my astonishment, the date of the trip was announced: Sept. 2-13. I could do both.

I didn't dare think my impromptu conversation as Francis met scores of journalists could have entered into the complicated calculations of organizing a papal trip.

But I later received a breathless voicemail from someone close to Francis who had just met with him. "You will not believe what he told me," he said. The pope said he changed the dates of the trip to ensure I could come, he said.

I still don't know if other factors affected what became the last major foreign journey of Francis' life.

I'm grateful I was able to go. I was a witness as Francis, hobbled and in a wheelchair, ministered to his flock in Indonesia and Singapore, the jungles of Papua New Guinea and steamy East Timor, where half the population attended his final Mass in Dili.

On the long plane ride home, I wrote about his resilience.

"There was Francis, defying the doubters who had questioned if he could, would or should make such an arduous trip to Asia given everything that could go wrong," my story said. "The moment seemed to serve as proof that, despite his age, ailments and seven hours of jet lag, Pope Francis still could pope, still likes to pope and has it in him to pope like he used to at the start of his pontificate."

I'd like to think he might have read it, knowing it came from "la prima della classe."

## **As immigrant arrests surge, complaints of abuse mount at America's oldest detention center in Miami**

By JOSHUA GOODMAN and GISELA SALOMON Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — As hundreds of migrants crowded into the Krome Detention Center in Miami on the edge of the Florida Everglades, a palpable fear of an uprising set in among its staff.

As President Donald J. Trump sought to make good on his campaign pledge of mass arrests and removals of migrants, Krome, the United States' oldest immigration detention facility and one with a long history of abuse, saw its prisoner population recently swell to nearly three times its capacity of 600.

"There are 1700 people here at Krome!!!!," one U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement employee texted a co-worker last month, adding that even though it felt unsafe to walk around the facility nobody was willing to speak out.

That tension — fearing reprisal for trying to ensure more humane conditions — comes amid a battle in federal courts and the halls of Congress over whether the president's immigration crackdown has gone too far, too fast at the expense of fundamental rights.

At Krome, reports have poured in about a lack of water and food, unsanitary confinement and medical neglect. With the surge of complaints, the Trump administration shut down three Department of Homeland Security oversight offices charged with investigating such claims.

A copy of the text exchange and several other documents were shared with The Associated Press by a federal employee on the condition of anonymity for fear of retaliation. Other documents include detainee complaints as well as an account of the arrival of 40 women at Krome, an all-male facility, in possible violation of a federal law to reduce the risk of prison rape.

There is a critical shortage of beds in detention facilities

Krome is hardly alone in a core challenge faced by other facilities: a lack of bed space. Nationwide, detentions have surged to nearly 48,000 as of March 23, a 21% increase from the already elevated levels at the end of the Biden administration. In recent weeks, they have mostly flatlined as efforts to deport many of those same migrants have been blocked by several lawsuits.

To address the shortage, ICE this month published a request for bids to operate detention centers for up to \$45 billion as it seeks to expand to 100,000 beds from its current budget for about 41,000. As part of the build out, the federal government for the first time is looking to hold migrants on U.S. Army bases

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— testing the limits of a more than century-old ban on military involvement in civilian law enforcement. By some measures, Trumps' controversial approach is working. Barely 11,000 migrants were encountered at the U.S.-Mexican border in March, their lowest level in at least a decade and down from 96,035 in December 2024, according to U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

Other facilities have caps on the number of detainees

Krome is just one of five facilities that ICE directly runs — the others are in Buffalo, Arizona and two in Texas — and can house detainees for more than 16 hours. After Trump took office, ICE had orders to round up migrants with few options on where to send them. The vast majority of bed space is leased from local prisons, jails or privately run facilities that have strict limits on how many detainees they are contractually obligated to accept.

As its concrete cellblocks began filling up, federal workers started documenting the worsening conditions in weekly reports for the Department of Homeland Security's leadership. They worked their way up the chain through DHS' Office of Immigration & Detention Ombudsman, an independent watchdog established by Congress during the first Trump administration to blunt the fallout from a string of scandals about treatment at detention facilities.

The office went through four ombudsmen in two months as Trump officials surged arrests with no apparent plan on where to send them. The situation worsened in mid-March, when the office's 100 staffers — including a case manager at Krome — were placed on administrative leave in what officials described as an effort to remove roadblocks to enforcement.

"Rather than supporting law enforcement efforts, they often function as internal adversaries that slow down operations," DHS spokeswoman Tricia McLaughlin said.

Around the same time, Krome's chaos spilled into public view. Images secretly shot on a cellphone and posted on TikTok showed a group of men sleeping on concrete floors and under tables with little more than their shoes as pillows.

"We are practically kidnapped," Osiris Vázquez, his eyes bloodshot due to a lack of sleep, said in the grainy video, which garnered 4.4 million views. "We don't want likes. We want help. Please!"

Vázquez, who was detained while driving home from a construction job near Miami, said he shared for two weeks a small room with some 80 men. Showers and phone calls weren't allowed, the fetid-smelling bathrooms were left unattended and food was restricted to peanut butter sandwiches.

"There was no clock, no window, no natural light," recalled Vázquez in an interview. "You lost all notion of time, whether it's day or night."

Eventually, Vázquez decided to self-deport. But his nightmare didn't end. Once back in his hometown of Morelia, Mexico, where he hadn't set foot in almost a decade, he had to be hospitalized twice for a respiratory infection he says he caught at Krome.

"Everyone I know got sick. We were so close together," said Vázquez.

It could've been worse. Since Trump returned to the White House, three detainees have died while in ICE custody — two of them at Krome.

The latest, Maksym Chernyak, died after complaining to his wife about overcrowding and freezing conditions. The 44-year-old Ukrainian entered the U.S. legally with his wife in August under a humanitarian program for people fleeing the country's war with Russia.

He was sent to Krome after an arrest in south Florida for domestic violence and immediately got sick with a chest cold. After being monitored for a week with high blood pressure, on Feb. 18, at 2:33 a.m., he was taken to a hospital for seizure-like vomiting and shaking. An ICE report said he appeared intoxicated and unresponsive at times. Two days later, he died.

Other than acetaminophen, he received no medication to treat the blood pressure, according to a two-page ICE report about Chernyak's death. An autopsy listed the cause of death as complications from a stroke aggravated by obesity.

Chernyak's widow said that before her husband's detention he was a "strong, healthy man." Without a translator, she said, her husband struggled to communicate with guards about his deteriorating health.

"They saw his condition, but they ignored him," said Oksana Tarasiuk in an interview. "If he wasn't put

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in Krome, I'm sure that he would still be alive."

ICE, in a statement, didn't comment on specific allegations of mistreatment but said it adjusts its operations as needed to uphold its duty to treat individuals with dignity and respect.

"These allegations are not in keeping with ICE policies, practices and standards of care," the agency said. "ICE takes its commitment to promoting safe, secure, humane environments for those in our custody very seriously."

Attorneys said that in recent days, Krome has transferred out a number of detainees and conditions have improved. But that could just be shifting problems elsewhere in the migration detention system, immigration attorneys and advocates say.

Some 20 miles east of Krome, at the Federal Detention Center in downtown Miami, correctional officers last week had to deploy flash bang grenades, pepper spray paint balls and stun rounds to quell an uprising by detainees, two people familiar with the matter told the AP.

The incident occurred as a group of some 40 detainees waited almost eight hours to be admitted into the facility as jail officers miscounted the number of individuals handed over by ICE, according to the people, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they are not authorized to speak publicly. As confusion reigned, the arriving detainees, some from Jamaica, ripped a fire sprinkler from a ceiling, flooding a holding cell, and took correctional officers' batons, according to the people.

The federal Bureau of Prisons, which runs the facility, would not confirm details of the incident but said that at no time was the public at risk.

"That has put a massive strain over our staff," said Kenny X. Castillo, the president of the union representing workers at FDC Miami. "We are doing the job of two agencies in one building."

Detentions drive profits

Trump's administration has yet to reveal his plans for mass deportations even as he seeks to eliminate legal status for 1 million migrants previously granted humanitarian parole or some other form of temporary protection. The latest ICE data suggests so-called removal of migrants is actually below levels at the end of the Biden administration.

That means detentions are likely to rise and, with facilities at capacity, the need to house all the detainees will get more urgent. Spending on new facilities is a boon for federal contractors, whose stock prices have surged since Trump's election. But finding workers willing to carry out Trump's policy remains a major challenge.

Only a handful of applicants showed up at a recent hiring fair in Miami organized by Akima Global Services, a \$2 billion federal contractor that staffs several immigrant detention centers, including Krome.

"Many of these facilities have been chronically understaffed for years," said Michelle Brané, an immigration attorney and the last ombudsman during the Biden administration. "These are not easy jobs and they aren't pleasant places to work."

On Thursday, advocates led by the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights organization filed a lawsuit against DHS seeking to challenge the Trump administration's decision to shutter the oversight offices.

Krome has a history of substandard conditions

Allegations of substandard conditions are nothing new at Krome.

The facility was set up as essentially the nation's first migrant detention center in the 1970s to process the large number of boat refugees fleeing Haiti. Before that, almost no migrants were detained for more than a few days.

In the early 2000s, the facility was wracked by harrowing accounts of guards sexually assaulting or coercing sexual favors from female prisoners. Several guards were criminally charged.

But more recently, the facility appeared to have turned a corner, with ICE even inviting the media to tour a first-of-its-kind mental health facility.

Then it changed abruptly.

The facility housed 740 men and one woman on March 31, according to the latest ICE data, which reflects only the midnight count on the last day of the month. That's up 31% from just before Trump took office. ICE refused to disclose Krome's current capacity because of security concerns.

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So far this year, the ombudsman's office has received more than 2,000 inmate complaints, according to the federal employee.

Brané said she worries that detainee deaths, which started to rise during the Biden administration as arrests surged, could spike without anyone on the ground to investigate complaints of mistreatment.

"To my knowledge, everything was just frozen and people were told to go home," said Brané. "If you're ramping up, you're taking away the oversight and you're increasing the number of people you're detaining, it's a recipe for disaster."

Following Chernyak's death, a grassroots coalition of immigration activists and far-left groups organized a demonstration on the highway leading to Krome's entrance calling for the closure of the center. A few hundred protesters showed up, some holding pictures of migrants "kidnapped" by ICE and signs that read "American Gulag, American Shame" and "Immigrants Make America Great."

This month, Miami Mayor Daniella Levine Cava, a Democrat, wrote Homeland Secretary Kristi Noem requesting a tour of the facility. The DHS media office didn't reply to an email asking whether Noem had granted her request. In addition, 49 Democrats in Congress have also written Noem demanding to know how the agency intends to ease overcrowding at ICE facilities.

Huber Argueta-Perez said he saw many of those same conditions during his detention at Krome last month. The 35-year-old Guatemalan, who has lived in the U.S. for almost two decades, was detained March 10 after dropping off his two American daughters at school in Miami. He spent nine days sleeping on the concrete floor of a small, overcrowded room. He said he got feverishly sick from the cold but was repeatedly denied a sweater and medicines.

"We didn't fit," Argueta-Perez, who was deported March 19, said in an interview from Guatemala. "But the more we complained, the worse was the punishment."

## Donald Trump's trip to Pope Francis' funeral puts a sharper focus on their clashes over the years

By PETER SMITH and MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The day before he died, in his final public address, Pope Francis expressed an Easter Sunday message of unity and an appeal for the marginalized and migrants. "All of us," he proclaimed, "are children of God!"

In a dramatically different message Sunday, President Donald Trump issued an insult-laced post wishing a happy Easter to his opponents, including "Radical Left Lunatics," "WEAK and INEFFECTIVE Judges and Law Enforcement Officials," and former President Joe Biden, "our WORST and most Incompetent President."

Some of the fundamental differences between the U.S. president and the late pope — not only their divergent styles but their positions on migration, the environment and poverty — will come into sharper focus as Trump travels to Rome on Friday for Francis' funeral, to be held Saturday morning in St. Peter's Square.

David Gibson, director of the Center on Religion and Culture at Fordham University in New York, put it this way: "Obviously, it's been a fraught relationship."

The relationship eroded

Things weren't great between Trump and the pope during Trump's first term, from 2017 to 2021. But, says Gibson, "Trump II was even worse with the Vatican because of how much more aggressive it has been on every level, against migrants, against international aid."

The Argentine pontiff and the American president sparred early on over immigration. In 2016, Francis, alluding to then-candidate Trump, called anyone who builds a wall to keep out migrants "not Christian." Trump called the comment "disgraceful."

Despite the billionaire former reality star's divergences over the years with Francis, who was known for a humble style, Trump's support has gradually risen among American Catholics. He courted them in his last presidential campaign, and many influential bishops are among his supporters.

Trump, who has identified himself as a "non-denominational Christian," has long counted Christians,

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especially evangelical Christians, among his key blocs of support. His policies on abortion, including his role in appointing three of the five U.S. Supreme Court justices who overturned national abortion rights, deepened his support among Christians, including many conservative Catholics.

His politics are also closely aligned with many conservative U.S. Catholic bishops, who were often at odds with Francis' more progressive approach to leading the church.

The Republican president implored Catholics last year to vote for him. In October, when he addressed the Al Smith charity dinner in New York, which raises millions of dollars for Catholic charities, Trump said: "You gotta get out and vote. And Catholics, you gotta vote for me."

Many Catholics did. In the 2024 election, Trump won the Catholic vote, according to AP VoteCast, a survey of more than 120,000 voters. In 2020, the Catholic vote was evenly split between Joe Biden, but in 2024, 54% of Catholic voters supported Trump and 44% supported Kamala Harris.

For Trump, Catholics' support didn't earn Francis'

But while Trump may have won the Catholic vote, he never won over Francis.

Vice President JD Vance, a Catholic who met briefly with Francis the day before he died, dismissed the pontiff's disagreements with the administration, telling reporters this week that the pope was "a much broader figure" than American politics — a man who led a church with 1.4 billion members worldwide.

"I'm aware that he had some disagreements with some of the policies of our administration," Vance said. "He also had a lot of agreements with some of the policies of our administration. I'm not going to soil the man's legacy by talking about politics."

Trump, too, met once with Francis, in a largely cordial meeting at the Vatican in 2017. But their differences persisted.

In February of this year, Francis sent a letter to U.S. bishops that was similar in tone to his comments on immigration almost a decade earlier. He denounced the Trump administration's embarking on plans for mass deportations and noted that in the Bible, the infant Jesus and his family were themselves refugees in Egypt, fleeing a threat to their lives.

Some leading bishops did applaud some of the new Trump administration initiatives on "school choice" and policies defining gender as determined at birth. Francis, while upholding church teachings on sexuality, took a more tolerant stance toward LGBTQ+ people.

Other prominent bishops, appointed by Francis, are more sympathetic with his priorities. They include the new archbishop of Washington, Cardinal Robert McElroy.

Catholics are a diverse group and act accordingly

But the Catholic vote is not monolithic. John Fea, a professor of history at Messiah University in Pennsylvania, said many conservative Catholics, even if they respect the office of the pope, "don't like his progressive views" on immigrants and his authorizing of blessings for same-sex couples.

"The views of many conservative American Catholics line-up with Trump's brand of populism: strong borders, pro-life on abortion, concern about critical race theory in schools, etc.," Fea, author of "Believe Me: The Evangelical Road to Donald Trump," said via email.

In contrast, he speculated that many progressive Catholics who do share Pope Francis' social justice concerns probably did not vote for Trump.

In addition to migration, Francis also differed with Trump on the environment, writing an encyclical calling for climate action, in contrast to the president's push to bring back fossil fuels. Francis also staunchly opposed the death penalty, something Trump supports.

Stylistically, Trump's big personality also contrasted with Francis' more self-deprecating and welcoming tone, immortalized by his "Who am I to judge?" response to a question about gay priests.

Trump and Francis did share some policy goals on issues such as abortion and religious freedom, and U.S.-Vatican relations involve more than two people, said Steven Millies, director of the Bernadin Center at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago.

"But the alignments were at the diplomatic level more than at the personal or political level, of course," said Millies, a professor of public theology.

"They were profoundly different people — one who'd been formed by Jesuit spirituality and lived his life

in deepening faith that he shared with the world, the other who mangles Scripture quotations, sells Bibles for personal profit, and uses Christian faith like a brand identity in a market competition."

## India and Pakistan again teeter on the brink of conflict over Kashmir. Here's why

By RAJESH ROY Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — A deadly attack on tourists in Indian-controlled Kashmir has again moved India and Pakistan closer to war as the two rivals downgraded diplomatic and trade ties, closed the main border crossing and revoked visas for each other's nationals.

Pakistan has denied it was behind Tuesday's attack that killed 26 mostly Indian tourists at a scenic spot in the Himalayan region, where India claimed it restored a sense of calm despite a decadeslong rebellion. A previously unknown militant group calling itself Kashmir Resistance has claimed responsibility for the attack.

India and Pakistan have fought two of their three wars over Kashmir, which is split between them and claimed by both in its entirety. Here's what to know about an escalation in tensions between the two nuclear-armed rivals.

What's at the heart of the dispute?

Ties between India and Pakistan have been shaped by conflict, aggressive diplomacy and mutual suspicion, most notably in their competing claims over the stunning Himalayan region of Kashmir.

Armed insurgents in Kashmir have resisted New Delhi for decades, with many Muslim Kashmiris supporting the rebels' goal of uniting the territory either under Pakistani rule or as an independent country. India accuses Pakistan of fomenting violence, a charge denied by Islamabad. Tens of thousands of civilians, rebels and government forces have been killed in the conflict over the years.

How has Pakistan responded to India's reprisals?

On Tuesday, gunmen fatally shot 26 people, mostly Indian tourists, in an attack near the picturesque town of Pahalgam. New Delhi immediately linked Pakistan to the attack, although it did not publicly produce any evidence.

India announced a string of punitive measures. It downgraded diplomatic ties, suspended a crucial water-sharing treaty and revoked all visas issued to Pakistani nationals. India also said it will reduce its staff in its high commission in Pakistan and bring down the number of Pakistani diplomats in New Delhi to 30 from 55 from May 1.

Pakistan called India's actions "irresponsible" and canceled visas for Indian nationals, suspended all trade with India including via third countries and closed its airspace to Indian aircraft.

Islamabad warns dispute over water could lead to war

India's decision to suspend the water treaty could potentially mark a major turning point in how the two neighbors manage an essential shared resource between them. Pakistan warned Thursday that any Indian attempt to stop or divert the flow of water between them would be considered an "act of war."

The Indus Water Treaty, brokered by the World Bank in 1960, allows for sharing the waters of a river system that is a lifeline for both countries. The treaty has survived two wars between the countries, in 1965 and 1971, and a major border skirmish in 1999.

It governs sharing of the water supply from the Indus River system and its distributaries. Under the treaty, India has control over the eastern rivers of Ravi, Sutlej, and Beas, and Pakistan controls the western rivers of Jhelum, Chenab, and Indus that follow through Kashmir region.

Pakistan said the treaty was binding and contained no provision for unilateral suspension.

Pakistan described it as a "vital national interest." The treaty is essential for supporting agriculture and hydropower in the country with 240 million people. Suspending it could lead to water shortages at a time when parts of Pakistan are already struggling with drought and declining rainfall.

Pakistan warns it could suspend a peace treaty

Islamabad, meanwhile, has warned it could suspend the Simla Agreement, a significant peace treaty

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signed after the 1971 India-Pakistan war that ended in Bangladesh splitting from Pakistan.

Under the agreement, India and Pakistan established the Line of Control, previously called the Ceasefire Line, a highly militarized de facto border that divides disputed Kashmir between the countries. They also committed to settle their differences through bilateral negotiations.

Militant attacks scale back peace efforts

Despite largely strained relations, the neighbors have intermittently made efforts for peace. However, regular border flare-ups and multiple militant attacks in Kashmir and India have marred peace overtures as New Delhi has taken tough position on Islamabad, accusing it of "terrorism."

In 1999, Pakistan-backed rebels and Pakistani soldiers seized Indian military posts in the icy heights of Kargil region. Indian troops responded and a 10-week conflict killed at least 1,000 combatants on both sides. The fighting stopped after a U.S. intervention.

In 2008, a group of heavily armed assailants of the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba militant group went on a rampage in India's financial capital Mumbai, killing 166 people. New Delhi blamed Pakistan's intelligence service for the assault, an accusation denied by Islamabad.

In 2019, a suicide car bombing killed 40 Indian soldiers in Kashmir and brought the countries closer to war. In response, India said its air force struck a militant training camp inside Pakistan. Pakistan responded by aerial raids, downed an Indian military aircraft and captured an Indian pilot, who was later released.

Months later, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government revoked Kashmir's semi-autonomous status and imposed sweeping security measures. Since then, India has kept order in the region with a huge security presence and drastically curbed dissent, civil liberties and media freedoms.

Worries of nuclear confrontation

India and Pakistan have built up their armies and nuclear arsenals over the years. India was the first to conduct a nuclear test in 1974, followed by another in 1998. Pakistan followed with its own nuclear tests just a few weeks later. The sides have since armed themselves with hundreds of nuclear warheads, missile delivery systems, advanced fighter jets and modern weapons to take on each other.

## Houthi rebels have shot down 7 US Reaper drones worth \$200 million in recent weeks

By LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Houthi rebels in Yemen have shot down seven U.S. Reaper drones in less than six weeks, a loss of aircraft worth more than \$200 million in what is becoming the most dramatic cost to the Pentagon of the military campaign against the Iran-backed militants.

According to defense officials, three of the drones were shot down in the past week — suggesting the militants' targeting of the unmanned aircraft flying over Yemen has improved. The drones were doing attack runs or conducting surveillance, and they crashed both into the water and onto land, said the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss military operations.

The U.S. has increased its attacks on the Houthis, launching daily strikes since March 15, when President Donald Trump ordered a new, expanded campaign. He promised to use "overwhelming lethal force" until the Houthis cease their attacks on shipping along a vital maritime corridor.

Central Command spokesman Dave Eastburn said Thursday night that the U.S. has struck more than 800 Houthi targets. "These strikes have destroyed multiple command-and-control facilities, air defense systems, advanced weapons manufacturing facilities, advanced weapons storage locations, and killed hundreds of Houthi fighters and numerous Houthi leaders," Eastburn said.

Another defense official said that although hostile fire is likely the cause of the drone losses, the incidents are still under investigation. The official noted that the increase in U.S. strikes can add to the risk to aircraft, but said the U.S. will take every measure possible to protect troops, equipment and interests in the region. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to comment on sensitive military issues.

The sophisticated drones, built by General Atomics, cost about \$30 million each, and generally fly at

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altitudes of more than 40,000 feet (12,100 meters). Houthis leaders have consistently touted the strikes in public statements. One of the defense officials said the U.S. lost Reaper drones on March 31 and on April 3, 9, 13, 18, 19 and 22.

U.S. senators, meanwhile, are raising concerns about civilian casualties caused by the American strikes in Yemen. Democratic Sens. Chris Van Hollen of Maryland, Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts and Tim Kaine of Virginia wrote to Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth on Thursday questioning whether the Trump administration is "abandoning the measures necessary to meet its obligations to reducing civilian harm."

Specifically, they questioned reports that U.S. strikes at the Ras Isa fuel terminal in Yemen last week potentially killed more than 70 civilians.

"Military leaders agree that ingraining civilian harm mitigation practices within U.S. operations leads to better outcomes and that civilian casualties actually undermine the mission that the military has been sent in to do," their letter said.

In addition to downing the drones, the Houthis have been persistently firing missiles and one-way attack drones at U.S. military ships in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. They haven't hit any.

The U.S. has been using an array of warships, fighter jets, bombers and drones to strike the Houthis, and aircraft can now launch from two Navy carriers in the region.

Hegseth decided in March to beef up the Navy warship presence in the Middle East, ordering the USS Harry S. Truman to extend its deployment there, as the USS Carl Vinson steamed toward the area.

The Truman, along with two of the destroyers and a cruiser in its strike group, is now in the Red Sea. And the Vinson, along with two destroyers and a cruiser, is in the Gulf of Aden.

The third destroyer assigned to the Truman is in the Mediterranean Sea. And two other U.S. Navy destroyers are in the Red Sea, but aren't part of the Truman's group.

Hegseth is weighing whether to grant a request by U.S. Central Command to once again extend the Truman's deployment. A decision to do that could keep the Truman and at least some of its strike group in the region for several more weeks.

It has been rare in recent years for the U.S. to have two aircraft carriers in the Middle East at the same time. Navy leaders have generally been opposed to the idea because it disrupts ship maintenance schedules and delays time at home for sailors strained by the unusually high combat tempo.

Last year, the Biden administration ordered the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower aircraft carrier to remain in the Red Sea for an extended time, as U.S. warships waged the most intense running sea battle since World War II.

Prior to that it had been years since the U.S. had committed that much warship power to the Middle East.

The Houthis have been waging persistent missile and drone attacks against commercial and military ships in the region in what the group's leadership has described as an effort to end the Israeli war against Hamas in 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.

## **Automakers focus on the global market, chide the US over tariffs at Shanghai's auto show**

By ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

SHANGHAI (AP) — Booths of big Chinese, German and Japanese automakers were bustling at Shanghai's auto show this week as the industry kept its focus on a wider global market not subject to steep U.S. tariffs on imports of cars and auto parts.

Signs are that U.S. President Donald Trump's 25% tariffs on auto imports is causing companies to recalibrate their strategies, and in some cases find new opportunities.

"When governments up above are at odds, it's going to impact the businesses down below," Ma Lihua, general manager at Soling, a Chinese maker of domain control units and other electronics used in such

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things as rearview camera displays.

Soling, headquartered in Shanghai, counts Ford Motor Co., Toyota Motor Corp. and many other top tier global and Chinese automakers among its customers. It's also setting up a manufacturing base in Vietnam, whose local EV maker VinFast has ambitions to become Southeast Asia's leading automaker.

Many of the dozens of auto parts and components companies exhibiting at the Shanghai auto show have operations spanning both the Chinese and world markets.

Metal components maker Gestamp, a supplier of chassis, battery boxes and other key auto parts, has suffered from a slowdown in the U.S. and western European markets but is expanding in Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe.

The tariffs are now an added complication, as automakers watch to see what comes.

"In the past, supply chains usually would run like Swiss clockwork, but now it's the opposite," said Ernesto Barcelo, chief ESG officer for metal components maker Gestamp, said of the uncertainty now dominating the market.

"The lack of stability now, it's something very ... fluffy," Barcelo said.

A fundamental criteria for investing in any market is political stability, Wei Jianjun, chairman of Great Wall Motor Co., told reporters when asked about his company's plans to expand manufacturing overseas. That applies to countries like Hungary, where the company has not yet decided on whether to build a factory, he said, but also to the United States under Trump.

"If a country is not politically stable, it's very risky," said Wei, who also goes by the name Jack Wey.

With U.S. tariffs so high, Great Wall can focus elsewhere, such as on trade between China and Europe, which is bound to grow, he said. He didn't address the issue of the tariffs of up to 45.3% that the EU has imposed on electric vehicles made in China.

Tianshu Xin, CEO of Leapmotor International, a joint venture of Stellantis and China's Leapmotor, said the U.S. market wasn't its first focus.

Now, "we want to monitor the regulatory environment, and also customer preferences are slightly different compared with other markets," Xin said.

Japan's Nissan plans to launch 10 new EVs in China by 2027, nine of them its own brand, and to spend an extra \$1.4 billion by the end of 2026 on its expansion there. In the U.S. it has the option to ramp up its spare capacity to make up for reduced imports due to the tariffs.

"Some doors have been shut, but others have been opened," Ma said. "But any plan you make you will change it very quickly. The market changes very quickly."

Apart from higher tariffs, automakers and suppliers also must contend with national security restrictions that are an increasingly important factor in auto electronics.

Wuhan Kotei Informatics, which provides software for autonomous driving, adapted its business model to cope with sanctions. Now the company based in central China's Wuhan acts as a consultant and allows foreign customers to adapt software to local requirements, said Ye Xiongfei, general manager for the company's autonomous driving division.

"It's like I teach you how to walk if you don't know how to walk, and I will help you walk if you aren't able to walk," Ye said.

Some restrictions on technology are understandable, but too many "will hurt the innovation of the U.S. itself, hindering the speed of the development of their supply chains if it tries to only use local companies," he said.

Some attending the show said they believe that ultimately Trump will end up softening his stance.

"Trump is a businessman and he hopes to boost the U.S. economy by imposing tariffs on other countries, but I do believe those measures are temporary," said Yang Jingdi, assistant to the CEO of LvXiang Automobile Parts Co., which makes electronics including rearview mirrors and pumps.

"We'll wait and see," he said. "China has full and abundant supply chains and it is the U.S. that won't hold on if the tariff measures from both sides remain unchanged."

AOD Technology, which makes domain control units that process various commands such as opening

doors and controlling running boards on SUVs, was displaying a bare-bones version of Tesla's Cybertruck equipped with its devices — evidence of its ambition to eventually sell to the EV maker.

It might not be the best time to be planning on selling such components to a U.S. automaker for production in America, Claire Deng, a senior sales manager, conceded.

But she said AOD, based in south China's Zhongshan, had bought the Cybertruck as part of a process that can take years, developing what's needed to become a supplier.

"Who knows what will happen," she said. "We want to be ready."

## Venezuelans subject to removal under wartime act have 12 hours to decide on contesting, docs show

By VALERIE GONZALEZ Associated Press

BROWNSVILLE, Texas (AP) — Migrants subject to removal from the U.S. under the contested Alien Enemies Act are getting about 12 hours to decide if they want to contest their removal, according to court documents unsealed Thursday — a window the government contends complies with a Supreme Court decision giving those detained under the act a "reasonable" time to appeal.

Lawyers for people subject to removal say that's far too short a period.

"This is a dramatic turn in these cases," said Lee Gelernt, an attorney for the American Civil Liberties Union representing migrants. "They're not giving any information about how they should do it, how much time they would have to do it, and 12 hours is clearly insufficient for them to reach an attorney and decide what they want to do and how they should do it."

Under the wartime act, the government has sent Venezuelans accused of belonging to the Tren de Aragua from the U.S. to El Salvador's prison known as CECOT.

An Immigration and Customs Enforcement official said in court documents that people are considered subject to deportation if they don't say they want to challenge their removal within 12 hours after being served with a form about their legal rights. They then have 24 hours to file documents in court.

The form is only available in English, though ICE said it's read to people in a language they understand. It tells them they can make a phone call, but doesn't explicitly say they can challenge their removal under the 18th century law.

The government had wanted to file the document under seal, claiming the information was law enforcement sensitive, but a judge ordered it be made public. The ACLU says the time period violates the Supreme Court order that allowed the Trump administration to continue deportations under the Alien Enemies Act but required the government to give detainees a "reasonable time" to argue to a judge that they should not be removed.

That high court order has led to multiple new lawsuits across the country, including the Texas one, over the invocation of the act, which has only been used three times before in U.S. history, most recently during World War II. Then, the ACLU says, suspected Nazis were given 30 days to challenge their designation in court.

A judge in Colorado on Tuesday ruled that the government had to give at least 21 days notice. In appealing that decision, the Trump administration argued it was providing constitutional due process under the current timeline. "The notice will allow the noncitizen a reasonable time to indicate and then file a petition for a writ of habeas corpus as well as telephone access," the Justice Department's Tim Ramnitz wrote.

Government attorneys previously told a federal judge in Washington that detainees were given a 24-hour notice. The official also explained in his Texas declaration that detainees subject to the Alien Enemies Act are often held for several days before removal, allowing them more time to express intention to file and contest their removal.

An earlier version of the form filed in federal court in Washington explicitly said there was no opportunity to ask a judge to intervene. But that was before the Supreme Court intervened.

## Weinstein accuser had 'zero interest' in sex with him, friend testifies

By JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Friends of one of Harvey Weinstein's accusers testified Thursday that the woman told them long ago that Weinstein sexually assaulted her.

Adding a new perspective to the ex-movie mogul's retrial, one witness said she'd once suggested that accuser Miriam Haley date the movie mogul, but Haley balked.

"She had zero interest in dating him or sleeping with him," witness Christine Pressman said, describing Haley as "distracted" when she later disclosed the alleged sexual assault.

Some of the emerging details show how this trial is a reprise — but not an exact repeat — of the 2020 trial in which Weinstein was initially convicted of rape and sexual assault. That conviction has since been overturned.

Pressman didn't testify at the original trial. Prosecutors brought her in this time to support Haley's allegations, but Weinstein's lawyers quizzed her about whether Haley in fact had a willing sexual relationship with the Oscar-winning studio boss.

"Never," Pressman insisted.

Haley is a former production assistant on the Weinstein-produced television show "Project Runway."

Weinstein, 73, maintains that he has never sexually assaulted or raped anyone. His lawyers argue that his accusers agreed to sexual encounters with the Oscar-winning producer in hopes of getting ahead in the entertainment business.

Weinstein was transformed in 2017 from a Hollywood tycoon into a #MeToo movement villain after a series of sexual misconduct allegations against him became public.

He was convicted in 2020 of raping Jessica Mann, who was once an aspiring actor, and forcing oral sex on Haley. New York's highest court threw out the conviction last year, finding that the original trial judge had allowed prejudicial testimony.

The retrial includes an additional allegation of forcible oral sex on a different woman, former model Kaja Sokola. Weinstein has pleaded not guilty to all the charges.

None of the accusers has testified yet, but two of Haley's friends took the stand Thursday to attest that she told them about the alleged July 2006 sexual assault around that time.

Elizabeth Entin, Haley's former roommate, said a shaken Haley told her that month that Weinstein had forcibly performed oral sex on her. Echoing her testimony at the first trial, Entin said she suggested Haley call a lawyer, but her friend seemed disinclined.

Pressman, however, said she advised against turning to police when the Finnish-born Haley made a similar disclosure to her in August or September of 2006.

"I said, 'Harvey Weinstein is the king of New York. He's extremely powerful. You are not. You're here on a tourist visa. Just let it go,'" the former model, musician and actor recalled. She teared up as she added that she now knows her guidance "was wrong."

Under questioning from Weinstein lawyer Jennifer Bonjean, Pressman acknowledged that at some point before the alleged assault, she suggested Haley date Weinstein. Pressman later explained that she'd been frustrated by her friend's taste in men — guys who were lanky, cerebral "and broke," as Pressman put it.

Haley rejected the notion of dating Weinstein, she said. But Bonjean went on to ask whether Pressman knew that Haley "had consensual sex with Mr. Weinstein." Pressman said her friend did no such thing.

Haley testified at the original trial that she said "no, no, no" during the alleged assault. A few weeks later, she didn't protest when Weinstein pulled her toward a bed and had sex with her, she said, explaining that she simply "went numb."

After jurors left for the day, Weinstein's lawyers sought a mistrial, saying Pressman's testimony was prejudicial. They were turned down by Judge Curtis Farber, who's now overseeing the case.

While there are many similarities to the first trial, there also stand to be plenty of changes.

Entin found herself answering questions about what she has said and written about the first trial itself,

such as describing her participation as her "15 minutes of fame." Entin said it was a joke.

And she wasn't asked about a recollection that made for a memorable and rare light moment at the first trial — a time when she said Weinstein showed up uninvited to the apartment she shared with Haley and was chased around by Entin's pet Chihuahua.

Farber had indicated he didn't think having Entin describe the purported episode was fair game for the trial.

The Associated Press does not identify people who allege they have been sexually assaulted unless they agree to be named. Haley, Mann and Sokola have done so.

## Cleveland's Evan Mobley wins NBA Defensive Player of the Year award

By TIM REYNOLDS AP Basketball Writer

Evan Mobley said his goal coming into the season with the Cleveland Cavaliers was to win the NBA Defensive Player of the Year award.

He got it done.

The Cavs consider Mobley to be their best defensive player, and the league thought even more highly of him. Mobley held off fellow finalists Dyson Daniels of Atlanta and Draymond Green of Golden State for the award, the results being announced Thursday night in a broadcast on TNT.

"It just feels great to finally get this award," Mobley said.

Saying "finally" might be a bit of a stretch. Mobley is only 23 — the fifth-youngest player to win the award, joining fellow 23-year-olds Dwight Howard, Jaren Jackson Jr., Alvin Robertson and Kawhi Leonard as winners of the Hakeem Olajuwon Trophy.

Mobley won the award in a season where he was an All-Star for the first time and set a career high for scoring.

"That was going hand-in-hand all year," Mobley said. "I was trying to figure out how I could be more offensively productive and still maintain my defensive style and prowess. So, I feel like I did a good job this year and it clearly shows."

But the case Cleveland coach Kenny Atkinson made for Mobley was how different the Cavaliers' defensive numbers were with Mobley on the court and without. Put simply, with him on the court, they were airtight.

"It's a huge dip, like 12 places or something," Atkinson said. "That really screams out, to me. Probably the No. 1 stat that I look at."

It was a wide-open race with seven players getting at least one first-place vote and Mobley getting the top spot on only 35% of the ballots. There was a consensus, however, that he was a top-three player — Mobley was listed somewhere on 85% of ballots, by far the most of anyone in the DPOY chase.

Green won the award in 2017, was a top-three finisher for the fifth time, and was bidding to become the 11th player in NBA history to win it at least twice. Mobley won it for the first time, after finishing third in the voting in 2023. Daniels was a finalist for the first time.

Daniels was second in the voting, with Green third.

Daniels had 229 steals this season, the most in the NBA since Gary Payton had 231 for the Seattle SuperSonics in 1995-96. Daniels was also the first player to average more than 3.00 steals per game since Robertson for the Milwaukee Bucks in 1990-91. Nate McMillan averaged 2.959 in 1993-94 for Seattle; John Stockton averaged 2.976 in 1991-92 for the Utah Jazz.

"Clearly, in my mind, he's the defensive player of the year," Hawks coach Quin Snyder told reporters last month. "I think in a lot of people's minds, the things that he's doing, even offensively the double-doubles. I think maybe the conversation should go to his character, because, as I've thought about and answered those questions about his balance, his anticipation, a lot of the attributes that allow him to do are usually focused on what he does on the court. And I think the correlation between who he is as a player and who he is as a person is very high."

Based on Daniels, Green and Mobley all being finalists, it's reasonable to think that they will be on the

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All-Defensive team when it is released by the NBA later this spring. It would be the ninth All-Defensive selection for Green, the second for Mobley and the first for Daniels.

Minnesota's Rudy Gobert won the award last season, his record-tying fourth DPOY trophy.

The award was voted on earlier this month by a global panel of 100 writers and broadcasters who cover the league. The NBA releases a list of three finalists for its seven major individual awards — MVP, Most Improved Player, Coach of the Year, Clutch Player of the Year, Rookie of the Year, Sixth Man of the Year and Defensive Player of the Year — after the votes are counted but keeps the order of finish a secret until the results are broadcast.

Daniels got 25 first-place votes and Green received 15. Oklahoma City's Lu Dort got 11 to finish fourth, Houston's Amen Thompson was fifth and had nine first-place votes, and Ivica Zubac of the Los Angeles Clippers got four first-place votes and was sixth.

Jackson was seventh, Milwaukee's Giannis Antetokounmpo got a first-place vote and was eighth, Portland's Toumani Camara was ninth, and three players — Miami's Bam Adebayo, Oklahoma City's Shai Gilgeous-Alexander and Boston's Derrick White — tied for 10th.

Gobert got one third-place vote and was 13th.

Earlier this week, Boston's Payton Pritchard won sixth man of the year and New York's Jalen Brunson won clutch player of the year.

## Tens of thousands file into St. Peter's Basilica to pay final respects to Pope Francis

By COLLEEN BARRY Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — So many mourners lined up to see Pope Francis lying in state in a simple wooden coffin inside St. Peter's Basilica that the Vatican kept the doors open all night due to higher-than-expected turnout, closing the basilica for just an hour and a half Thursday morning for cleaning.

The basilica was bathed in a hushed silence as mourners from across the globe made a slow, shuffling procession up the main aisle to pay their last respects to Francis, who died Monday at age 88 after a stroke.

The Vatican said more than 90,000 people had paid their respects by Thursday evening, a day and a half after opening. The basilica closed for just a short time Thursday morning, and will stay open Thursday night as long as there are mourners, the Vatican said.

The hours spent on line up the stately via della Conciliazione through St. Peter's Square and through the Holy Door into the basilica has allowed mourners to find community around the Argentine pontiff's legacy of inclusion and humble persona.

Emiliano Fernandez, a Catholic from Mexico, was waiting in line around midnight, and after two hours still had not reached the basilica.

"I don't even care how much time I wait here. It's just the opportunity to (show) how I admired Francisco in his life," said Fernandez, whose admiration for the pope grew during his 2016 visit to Mexico.

Robert Healy, a pilgrim from Ireland, flew on the spur of the moment from Dublin just to pay his respects.

"I think it's just really important to be here, to show our respect to the Holy Father," he said. "We flew from Dublin last night, we're staying for one day, home tonight then. We just felt it was really important to be here."

Among the first-day mourners was a church group of 14-year-olds from near Milan who arrived for the now-suspended canonization of the first millennial saint, as well as a woman who prayed to the pope for a successful operation and an Italian family who brought their small children to see the pope's body.

"We came because we didn't bring them when he was alive, so we thought we would bring them for a final farewell," said Rosa Scorpati, who was exiting the basilica Wednesday with her three children in strollers. "They were good, but I don't think they really understood because they haven't yet had to deal with death."

Like many others, the Scorpati family from Calabria was in Rome on an Easter vacation, only to be met with the news of Francis' death on Easter Monday.

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Out of devotion to the pope and his message of inclusion, the grieving faithful joined the procession of mourners that wended from St. Peter's Square through the basilica's Holy Door, with the repentant among them winning an indulgence, a form of atonement granted during the Jubilee Holy Year. From there, the line extended down the basilica's central aisle to the pope's simple wooden casket.

After three days of public viewing, a funeral Mass including heads of state will be held Saturday in St. Peter's Square. The pope will then be buried in a niche within the St. Mary Major Basilica, near his favorite Madonna icon.

## Security

Italian authorities have tightened security around the Vatican, adding drones to foot and horse patrols to their controls along the Tiber River and Via della Conciliazione, which leads to St. Peter's Square, to secure the area for mourners and foreign delegation expected for the funeral.

The Vatican said 130 delegations are confirmed, including 50 heads of state and 10 reigning sovereigns. Among those confirming their attendance are U.S. President Donald Trump with the First Lady Melania Trump, and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

The prefect of Rome, Lamberto Giannini, told a news conference on Thursday that "I believe that the 'security machine' is ready," but will remain flexible and "ready to reshape and above all transmit a sense of serenity."

## Paying respects

The death of Francis capped a 12-year pontificate characterized by his concern for the poor and his message of inclusion, but he was also criticized by some conservatives who felt alienated by his progressive outlook.

A procession of priests, bishops and cardinals accompanied Francis' body Wednesday on its journey from a private viewing inside the Vatican to St. Peter's Square. The pageantry contrasted with the human interactions of rank-and-file mourners at the public viewing.

Francis lay in state in an open casket, perched on a ramp facing mourners, with four Swiss Guards standing at attention. As the crowd reached the casket, many lifted their smartphones to snap a photo.

One nun accompanying an elderly woman with a cane walked away sobbing, "My pope is gone."

Such despair was rare. The mood was more one of gratitude for a pope who had, by example, taught many people to open their minds.

"I am very devoted to the pope," said Ivenes Bianco, who was in Rome from Brindisi, Italy, for an operation. "He was important to me because he brought many people together by encouraging coexistence." She cited Francis' acceptance of the gay community and his insistence on helping the poor.

Humbeline Coroy came to Rome from Perpignan, France, for the planned canonization Sunday of 15-year-old Carlo Acutis, which was suspended after the pope's death. She stayed to pay respects to Francis, enjoying exchanges with Japanese mourners they met as they waited under the sun in St. Peter's Square.

"For me, it is a lot of things. In my job, I work with disabled children, and I traveled to Madagascar to work with poor people. Being here, and close to the pope, is a way of integrating these experiences, and make them concrete," she said.

## Cardinals convene

Cardinals continued to arrive in Rome for Saturday's funeral, and numbered 113 by Thursday. During a morning session "the cardinals started a conversation on the church and the world," the details of which remain private.

No sooner than May 5, after nine days of official mourning, cardinals under 80 years of age will meet in a conclave to choose a new pope. That number is expected to be 134, after Spanish Cardinal Antonio Cañizares said he would not make it to Rome for health reasons. Bosnian Cardinal Vinko Puljic, meanwhile, confirmed his participation after getting cleared by doctors, the Sarajevo diocese said.

"We have not yet opened the Conclave, and one feels that," said French Cardinal Jean-Paul Vesco, arriving for the cardinals' meeting. "For the moment I do not believe the cardinals are saying 'who will be the next?' For the moment we are here completely for Francis."

## Judges blocks Trump push to cut funding to public schools over diversity programs

By HOLLY RAMER and COLLIN BINKLEY Associated Press

CONCORD, N.H. (AP) — A federal judge on Thursday blocked Trump administration directives that threatened to cut federal funding for public schools with diversity, equity and inclusion programs.

The ruling came in a lawsuit brought by the National Education Association and the American Civil Liberties Union, which accused the Republican administration of giving “unconstitutionally vague” guidance and violating teachers’ First Amendment rights.

A second judge in Maryland on Thursday postponed the effective date of some U.S. Education Department anti-DEI guidance, and a third judge in Washington, D.C., blocked another provision from taking effect.

In February, the department told schools and colleges they needed to end any practice that differentiates people based on their race. Earlier this month, it ordered states to gather signatures from local school systems certifying compliance with civil rights laws, including the rejection of what the federal government calls “illegal DEI practices.”

The directives do not carry the force of law but threaten to use civil rights enforcement to rid schools of DEI practices. Schools were warned that continuing such practices “in violation of federal law” could lead to U.S. Justice Department litigation and a termination of federal grants and contracts.

U.S. District Court Judge Landya McCafferty in New Hampshire said the April letter does not make clear what the department believes a DEI program entails or when it believes such programs cross the line into violating civil rights law. “The Letter does not even define what a ‘DEI program’ is,” McCafferty wrote.

The judge also said there is reason to believe the department’s actions amount to a violation of teachers’ free speech rights.

“A professor runs afoul of the 2025 Letter if she expresses the view in her teaching that structural racism exists in America, but does not do so if she denies structural racism’s existence. That is textbook viewpoint discrimination,” McCafferty wrote.

An Education Department spokesperson did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

States were given until the end of Thursday to submit certification of their schools’ compliance, but some have indicated they would not comply with the order. Education officials in some Democratic-led states have said the administration is overstepping its authority and that there is nothing illegal about DEI.

The Feb. 14 memo from the department, formally known as a “Dear Colleague” letter, said schools have promoted DEI efforts at the expense of white and Asian American students. It dramatically expands the interpretation of a 2023 Supreme Court decision barring the use of race in college admissions to all aspects of education, including, hiring, promotion, scholarships, housing, graduation ceremonies and campus life.

In the ruling in Maryland, U.S. District Judge Stephanie Gallagher postponed that memo. She found it was improperly issued and forces teachers to choose between “being injured through suppressing their speech or through facing enforcement for exercising their constitutional rights.” That suit was filed by the American Federation of Teachers, one of the nation’s largest teachers’ unions.

“The court agreed that this vague and clearly unconstitutional requirement is a grave attack on students, our profession, honest history and knowledge itself,” Randi Weingarten, president of the AFT, said in a statement.

A judge in Washington, D.C., granted a preliminary injunction against the certification letter after the NAACP argued it failed to identify specific DEI practices that would run afoul of the law.

All three lawsuits argue that the guidance limits academic freedom and is so vague it leaves schools and educators in limbo about what they may do, such as whether voluntary student groups for minority students are still allowed.

The April directive asked states to collect the certification form from local school districts and also sign it on behalf of the state, giving assurance that schools are in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

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President Donald Trump's education secretary, Linda McMahon, has warned of potential funding cuts if states do not return the form by Friday.

In a Tuesday interview on the Fox Business Network, McMahon said states that refuse to sign could "risk some defunding in their districts." The purpose of the form is "to make sure there's no discrimination that's happening in any of the schools," she said.

Schools and states are already required to give assurances to that effect in separate paperwork, but the new form adds language on DEI, warning that using diversity programs to discriminate can bring funding cuts, fines and other penalties.

The form threatens schools' access to Title I, the largest source of federal revenue for K-12 education and a lifeline for schools in low-income areas. \_\_\_\_

Binkley reported from Washington.

## Judge halts parts of Trump's overhaul of US elections, including proof-of-citizenship requirement

By ALI SWENSON Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A judge on Thursday blocked the Trump administration from immediately enacting certain changes to how federal elections are run, including adding a proof-of-citizenship requirement to the federal voter registration form.

The decision is a setback for President Donald Trump, who has argued the requirement is needed to restore public confidence in elections. But the judge allowed other parts of Trump's sweeping executive order on U.S. elections to go forward for now, including a directive to tighten mail ballot deadlines around the country.

Trump's March executive order overhauling how U.S. elections are run prompted swift lawsuits from the League of United Latin American Citizens, the League of Women Voters Education Fund, the Democratic National Committee and others, who called it unconstitutional.

U.S. District Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly in Washington sided with voting rights groups and Democrats, saying that the Constitution gives the power to regulate federal elections to states and Congress — not the president. She noted federal lawmakers are currently working on their own legislation to require proof of citizenship to vote.

In a 120-page decision on Thursday, she said the plaintiffs had proven that the proof-of-citizenship requirement would cause their clients irreparable harm and go against the public interest, while the government had offered "almost no defense of the President's order on the merits."

Accordingly, she granted a preliminary injunction to stop the citizenship requirement from moving forward while the lawsuit plays out.

The judge also blocked part of the Republican president's order requiring public assistance enrollees to have their citizenship assessed before getting access to the federal voter registration form.

But she denied other requests from a group of Democratic plaintiffs, including refusing to block Trump's order to require all mailed ballots to be received by Election Day nationwide. She also did not touch Trump's order to open certain databases to billionaire Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency to allow it to review state voter lists to search for noncitizens. The judge said those arguments brought by Democrats were either premature or should be brought by states instead.

The plaintiffs had argued Trump's proof-of-citizenship requirement violated the Constitution's so-called Elections Clause, which gives states and Congress the authority to determine how elections are run.

They also argued that Trump's order asserts power that he does not have over an independent agency. That agency, the U.S. Election Assistance Commission, sets voluntary voting system guidelines and maintains the federal voter registration form.

During an April 17 hearing, attorneys for the plaintiffs had said requiring proof of citizenship on the federal voter registration form would complicate their clients' voter registration drives at grocery stores and other public places.

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Aria Branch, counsel for the Democratic National Committee and other Democratic plaintiffs, also argued the executive order's effort to tighten mail ballot deadlines would irreparably harm her clients by forcing them to reallocate resources to help voters navigate the changes.

"That's time, money and organizational resources and strategy that can't be recouped," she said.

Michael Gates, counsel for the Trump administration, said in the hearing a preliminary injunction wasn't warranted because the order hadn't been implemented and a citizenship requirement would not be on the federal voter registration form for many months.

Roman Palomares, president of the League of United Latin American Citizens, a nonpartisan plaintiff, said Thursday the judge's decision was a "victory for voters."

"Efforts to silence the voice and votes of the U.S. electorate must not stand because our democracy depends on all voters feeling confident that they can vote freely and that their vote will be counted accurately," he said in a statement.

Representing the Democratic plaintiffs, Branch said in a Thursday statement that "this fight is far from over" but called the ruling a "victory for democracy and the rule of law over presidential overreach."

The chairs of the DNC, Democratic Governors Association and Democratic committees in Congress said if the judge hadn't ruled in their favor on citizenship proof, "Americans across the country — including married women who changed their last name and low-income individuals — could have been unable to register to vote."

The Justice Department's Civil Rights Division said it was disappointed by the ruling.

"Few things are more sacred to a free society or more essential to democracy than the protection of its election systems," said Harmeet Dhillon, assistant attorney general for civil rights.

Donald Palmer, chair of the EAC, a defendant in the case, said his office was still reviewing the ruling and opinion "but we will comply with the Judge's decision."

The judge's decision comes as state and local election officials from across the country are meeting to consider the implications of Trump's executive order on their work.

The U.S. Election Assistance Commission's Standards Board, which was holding a public hearing in North Carolina on Thursday, is a bipartisan advisory group of election officials from every state that meets annually.

Meanwhile, other lawsuits against Trump's order are still pending.

In early April, 19 Democratic attorneys general asked the court to reject Trump's executive order. Washington and Oregon, which both hold all-mail elections, followed with their own lawsuit against the order.

The U.S. differs from many other countries in that it does not hold national elections run by the federal government. Instead, elections are decentralized — overseen by the states and run by thousands of local jurisdictions.

## **RFK Jr. recounts heroin addiction and spiritual awakening, urges focus on prevention and community**

By TRAVIS LOLLER Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — U.S. Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. told a personal story of his own heroin addiction, spiritual awakening and recovery at a conference on drug addiction Thursday and emphasized that young people need a sense of purpose in their lives to prevent them from turning to drugs.

Kennedy called addiction "a source of misery, but also a symptom of misery." In a speech that mentioned God more than 20 times, he pointed to his own experience feeling as though he had been born with a hole inside of himself that he needed to fill.

"Every addict feels that way in one way or another — that they have to fix what's wrong with them, and the only thing that works are drugs. And so threats that you might die, that you're going to ruin your life are completely meaningless," he said.

Speaking to about 3,000 people at the Rx and Illicit Drug Summit in Nashville, Tennessee, Kennedy did not address recent budget and personnel cuts or agency reorganizations that many experts believe could jeopardize public health, including recent progress on overdose deaths.

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Kennedy drew cheers when he said that we need to do "practical things" to help people with addictions, like providing them with Suboxone and methadone. He also said there should be rehabilitation facilities available for anyone who is ready to seek help. But he focused on the idea of prevention, signaling his view of addiction as a problem fueled by deteriorating family, community and spiritual life.

"We have this whole generation of kids who've lost hope in their future," he said. "They've lost their ties to the community."

Kennedy said policy changes could help reestablish both of those things. Though Kennedy offered few concrete ideas, he recommended educating parents on the value of having meals without cellphones and providing opportunities for service for their children.

The best way to overcome depression and hopelessness, he said, is to wake up each morning and pray "please make me useful to another human being today."

He suggested that cellphones are a pernicious influence on young people and that banning them in schools could help decrease drug addiction. He cited a recent visit to a Virginia school that had banned cellphones, saying that grades were up, violence was down and kids were talking to one another in the cafeteria.

Kennedy told attendees that he was addicted to heroin for 14 years, beginning when he was a teenager. During those years, he was constantly making promises to quit, both to himself and to his family.

"I didn't want to be someone who woke up every morning thinking about drugs," he said, noting that one of the worst parts of addiction was his total "incapacity to keep contracts with myself."

Kennedy said he eventually stumbled upon a book by Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung that claimed people who believed in God got better faster and had more enduring recoveries, so he worked to rekindle his faith and started attending 12-step meetings.

Kennedy was interrupted several times by hecklers shouting things like, "Believe science!" He has been heavily criticized by scientists and public health experts for pushing fringe theories about diet, vaccines, measles and autism, among other things.

One heckler was escorted out of the ballroom with a raised middle finger. Without responding directly to the hecklers, Kennedy said that he tries to learn from every interaction, even with people who give him the finger because they don't like his driving.

"God talks to me most through those people," he told the group.

University of Washington researcher Caleb Banta-Green was among those escorted out after he stood up and shouted, "Believe science! Respect spirituality! Respect choice! Respect government workers!"

"Spirituality is an essential part of recovery for some people; 12 step works great for the people it works for, however, it should never be mandated," Banta-Green said in an email after the program.

He added, "We have decades of science-based interventions that are proven effective for supporting recovery and reducing death from substance use disorder. The problem we have is massive underfunding."

## Judge bars Trump from denying federal funds to 'sanctuary' cities that limit immigration cooperation

By JANIE HAR Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — A federal judge in California on Thursday barred the Trump administration from denying or conditioning the use of federal funds to "sanctuary" jurisdictions, saying that portions of President Donald Trump's executive orders were unconstitutional.

U.S. District Judge William Orrick issued the injunction sought by San Francisco and more than a dozen other municipalities that limit cooperation with federal immigration efforts.

Orrick wrote that defendants are prohibited "from directly or indirectly taking any action to withhold, freeze, or condition federal funds" and the administration must provide written notice of his order to all federal departments and agencies by Monday.

One executive order issued by Trump directs Attorney General Pam Bondi and Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem to withhold federal money from sanctuary jurisdictions. The second order directs every

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federal agency to ensure that payments to state and local governments do not “abet so-called ‘sanctuary’ policies that seek to shield illegal aliens from deportation.”

At a hearing Wednesday, Justice Department lawyers argued that it was much too early for the judge to grant an injunction when the government had not taken any action to withhold specific amounts or to lay out conditions on specific grants.

But Orrick, who was nominated by President Barack Obama, said this was essentially what government lawyers argued during Trump’s first term when the Republican issued a similar order.

“Their well-founded fear of enforcement is even stronger than it was in 2017,” Orrick wrote, citing the executive orders as well as directives from Bondi, other federal agencies and Justice Department lawsuits filed against Chicago and New York.

San Francisco successfully challenged the 2017 Trump order and the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals agreed with the lower court that the president exceeded his authority when he signed an executive order threatening to cut funding for “sanctuary cities.”

Plaintiffs were pleased with the judge’s order.

“At a time when we continue to see tremendous federal overreach, the Court’s ruling affirms that local governments can serve their mission and maintain trust with the communities they care for,” said Tony LoPresti, counsel for Santa Clara County, in a statement.

It’s unclear if federal agencies will abide by the order. On Thursday, U.S. Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy issued a reminder to recipients of federal transportation funding that they are expected to follow federal law, including on immigration enforcement, or face potential consequences.

The department did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment.

There is no strict definition for sanctuary policies or sanctuary cities, but the terms generally describe limited cooperation with Immigration and Customs Enforcement. ICE enforces immigration laws nationwide but seeks state and local help in alerting federal authorities of immigrants wanted for deportation and holding that person until federal officers take custody.

Leaders of sanctuary jurisdictions say their communities are safer because immigrants feel they can communicate with local police without fear of deportation. It is also a way for municipalities to focus their dollars on crime locally, they say.

Besides San Francisco and Santa Clara County, which includes a third plaintiff, the city of San José, there are 13 other plaintiffs in the lawsuit, which include Seattle and King County, Washington; Portland, Oregon; Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota; New Haven, Connecticut; and Santa Fe, New Mexico.

## In rare rebuke of Putin, Trump urges Russia to ‘STOP!’ after deadly attack on Kyiv

By AAMER MADHANI and SAMUEL PETREQUIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Thursday offered rare criticism of Vladimir Putin, urging the Russian leader to “STOP!” after a deadly barrage of attacks on Kyiv, Ukraine’s capital.

“I am not happy with the Russian strikes on KYIV. Not necessary, and very bad timing. Vladimir, STOP! 5000 soldiers a week are dying.” Trump said in a post on his Truth Social platform. “Lets get the Peace Deal DONE!”

Russia struck Kyiv with an hourslong barrage of missiles and drones. At least 12 people were killed and 90 were injured in the deadliest assault on the city since last July.

Trump’s frustration is growing as a U.S.-led effort to get a peace agreement between Ukraine and Russia has not made progress.

The comments about Putin came after Trump lashed out at Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Wednesday and accused him of prolonging the “killing field” by refusing to surrender the Russia-occupied Crimean Peninsula as part of a possible deal. Russia illegally annexed that area in 2014.

With his assertion that Putin demonstrated “very bad timing” with the massive attack, Trump appeared

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to suggest that the Russian leader was doing himself no favors toward achieving the Kremlin's demand that any peace agreement include Russia keeping control of Crimea as well as Ukrainian territory in the Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions it has seized since invading in February 2022.

Later Thursday during an Oval Office meeting with Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre, Trump said that Crimea was taken from Ukraine without a fight. He also noted that annexation of the Black Sea peninsula happened under President Barack Obama's watch.

Asked what Putin is doing now to help forge a peace deal, Trump responded, "stopping taking the whole country, pretty big concession."

But the notion is one that Ukraine and much of Europe have fiercely pushed back against, arguing that Russia pausing a land grab is hardly a concession.

Zelenskyy has repeated many times that recognizing occupied territory as Russia's is a red line for Ukraine. He noted Thursday that Ukraine had agreed to a U.S. ceasefire proposal 44 days ago as a first step to a negotiated peace, but that Moscow's attacks had continued.

Trump's criticism of Putin is notable because Trump has repeatedly said Russia is more willing than Ukraine to get a deal done.

"I didn't like last night," Trump said of Russia's massive attack on Kyiv. "I wasn't happy with it."

In his dealings with Zelenskyy and Putin, Trump has focused on which leader has leverage. Putin has "the cards" and Zelenskyy does not, Trump has said repeatedly. At the same time, the new Republican administration has taken steps toward a more cooperative line with Putin, for whom Trump has long shown admiration.

Trump in his meeting with Norway's Gahr Støre discussed the war in Ukraine, U.S. tariffs and other issues.

Norway, a member of NATO and strong supporter of Ukraine, shares a roughly 123-mile (198-kilometer) border with Russia.

Gahr Støre said "both parties have to know that they have to deliver." He also suggested that Trump is pushing the two sides to come to an agreement.

"To move towards an end of this war, U.S. engagement is critical, and President Trump made that possible," he said. "That is clear"

Meanwhile, French President Emmanuel Macron said Putin should "stop lying" when he claims to want "peace" while continuing to bomb Ukraine.

"There is only one answer we are waiting for: Does President Putin agree to an unconditional ceasefire?" said Macron during a visit to Madagascar. Macron added that "the Americans' anger should focus on just one person: President Putin."

The French Foreign Ministry also offered measured pushback on Trump's criticism of Zelenskyy over the Ukrainian's stance on Crimea.

During 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. The proposal was discussed again Wednesday during talks with U.S., European, and Ukrainian officials.

"The principle of Ukraine's territorial integrity is not something that can be negotiated," Foreign Ministry spokesman Christophe Lemoine said. "This was the position taken last week and reiterated yesterday in London in a meeting of a similar format."

Asked whether France agreed with Trump's comments that Ukraine's position was to blame for prolonging the war, Lemoine said Ukrainians showed they are open to negotiations while Russia continues its strikes.

"We rather have the impression that it is the Russians who are slowing down the discussions," he said.

The White House announced Tuesday that Trump's special envoy, Steve Witkoff, would visit Moscow this week for a new round of talks with Putin about the war. It would be their fourth meeting since Trump took office in January.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth met on Thursday with NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte, who also held talks with Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Trump's national security adviser, Michael Waltz.

Leaders from the 32-member alliance are set to meet in the Netherlands in two months. Trump has pushed them to significantly step up defense spending.

In 2023, as Russia's invasion of Ukraine entered its second year, they agreed that all allies should spend at least 2% of gross domestic product on their military budgets. Estimates in NATO's annual report released Thursday showed that 22 allies had reached that goal last year, compared with a previous forecast of 23.

"But clearly with 2%, we cannot defend NATO territory," Rutte told reporters at the White House following the meeting. "It has to be considerably higher."

## One Tech Tip: Thinking of buying a secondhand phone? Some tips on what to look for

By KELVIN CHAN AP Business Writer

LONDON (AP) — New smartphones aren't cheap and prices could reach even higher as globe trade tensions fueled by U.S. President Donald Trump's tariff threats throw Asian exports into turmoil.

To save money, consider buying a secondhand device.

The market for used cell phones is booming. It's now growing faster than the market for new devices, according to CCS Insight, a U.K.-based tech research firm.

As each new model release sends consumers rushing to upgrade, they'll also be selling or trading in their existing devices, which usually have lots of life left.

If you're on a budget, a refurbished secondhand phone can be up to 50% cheaper than new, and they now come with warranties, flexible financing and after-sales service, CCS said in a recent report.

Meanwhile, the starting price of a new top of the line iPhone Pro Max could potentially rise 29% from \$1,550 to \$1,200, according to a UBS estimate.

But buying a secondhand device is less straightforward than buying a new one. Here are some pointers:

Which phones are the most popular?

Apple fans will have the most choice because iPhones make up about 60% of the global market for secondhand phones, according to CCS insight. Samsung Android devices are second with about 17%. The rest is made up of lesser known Chinese brands like Xiaomi.

Where can I buy them?

There are numerous places online to buy secondhand phones, but like much of the internet, there are many scammers. The usual advice applies: check reviews, look for trusted sellers and guarantees, and avoid deals that seem too good to be true.

Try platforms that specialize in selling secondhand electronics and other goods such as Gazelle and Backmarket. Refurbished phones are also available from retailers like BestBuy and Amazon. Phone companies also sell them, so check with your wireless carrier.

Even Apple and Samsung sell secondhand devices on their websites. The advantage there is that they've been refurbished by their in-house technicians, so you'll know they'll be reliable. The downside is that discounts aren't as significant and selection can be limited. Apple's website currently only lists refurbished iPhone 13 and 14 models, for example.

When a phone is refurbished, it normally means that the data has been wiped and it has been tested and inspected for any problems. Any defective or faulty components are normally replaced.

A used phone, however, could refer to any secondhand device, including those sold by individuals through online classifieds like Facebook Marketplace. Prices could be cheaper but it's buyer beware because used phones are often sold as-is and usually without any repairs or guarantees.

"You will get the best price if you're prepared to handle that risk," Simon Bryant, vice president of research at CCS Insight.

Lots of used phones are also sold on marketplaces for so-called peer-to-peer transactions that also offer better protections for buyers, like eBay or Swappa, which have policies for refunds if a phone isn't as it was advertised.

What about the battery?

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Just because a phone is refurbished doesn't mean that critical components — especially the battery — have been automatically replaced. It depends on a vendor's seller's policies.

Apple and Samsung say their secondhand phones come with new batteries and, in Apple's case, a new shell. Both companies also include a cable, a one-year warranty and a new box.

Meanwhile, other platforms might merely guarantee that a battery has a certain level of its original capacity, usually 80%.

How do I judge the quality?

There are ratings, but be cautious with the terminology.

Each secondhand platform will usually have its own system of grading the quality of the devices it's selling. It's a useful gauge for comparing various phones that the vendor has for sale.

But keep in mind there's no universal system of grading. One platform's rankings might, for example, read "Good, Very Good, Pristine and Like New," while another will run from "Fair and Good to Excellent and Premium."

Grading is "all over the place," said Bryant, and it makes it difficult for consumers to compare, say, a \$300 phone rated "Grade A" on one site with the same device on another site rated "like new" and priced at \$280.

"It makes it difficult to shop around," he said.

How old is too old?

Bryant advises buyers to look for a phone that's about three generations old, and avoid anything that dates back more than five or six generations because that's getting to the point where its Android or iOS operating systems may not be supported anymore.

Three generations is "the sweet spot," said Bryant. "You know it's going to work. It's going to have relatively new features and it's not going to be used so much. So the wear and tear on the device will be less."

What about the risk that a phone is stolen?

Most online marketplaces have safeguards to prevent stolen phones from being sold to consumers, but check the policies to be sure.

If a phone is reported stolen, the carrier will usually blacklist the serial number, known as the IMEI number.

Swappa requires sellers to run their device's serial number through its online checker before it can be listed for sale. The number can be found by dialing (asterisk)#06#. Some phones have two IMEI numbers, so Swappa advises checking both.

BackMarket says it works with the certified sellers that use its platform to make sure there are no black-listed phones but sometimes "a bad apple" slips through. If that happens, it will work with buyers to return it immediately.

Can I check for water damage?

Most newer phones are water resistant and can withstand being dunked for a limited amount of time. But that doesn't mean they're totally waterproof. Any moisture that has gotten inside could damage components even if the phone looks fine from the outside.

If you're buying a used phone in person, you can check if it has been exposed to liquid. Apple has a guide to finding the liquid contact indicator that every iPhone since 2006 has. Samsung has a similar page for Android devices.

What about accessories?

Charging cables or earphones might not be included. Don't forget to budget for these.

## Russian strike on Kyiv kills at least 12 in biggest attack on Ukrainian capital since last summer

By VASILISA STEPANENKO and SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia pounded Kyiv with an hourslong barrage of missiles and drones Thursday, killing at least 12 people in its deadliest assault on the Ukrainian capital since July and drawing a rare

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rebuke of Moscow from U.S. President Donald Trump just as peace efforts were coming to a head.

The attack kept residents on edge for about 11 hours, with many staying awake all night while loud explosions reverberated around the city and flashes of light punctuated the sky. Families gathered in public air-raid shelters, some of them bringing cats and dogs. The strikes that began around 1 a.m. hit at least five neighborhoods and heavily damaged multiple residential buildings. Around 90 people were wounded.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said he would cut short his official trip to South Africa and return home as the city reeled. The bombardment appeared to be Russia's biggest attack on Kyiv in nine months, and Zelenskyy called it one of Russia's "most outrageous."

Trump, who has long been reluctant to criticize the Kremlin, said he was "not happy" with the assault. He implored Russian President Vladimir Putin to cease the devastating strikes.

"Not necessary, and very bad timing. Vladimir, STOP!" Trump wrote on his Truth Social media platform, adding "Lets get the Peace Deal DONE!"

Senior U.S. officials have warned that the Trump administration could soon give up its efforts to stop the war if the two sides do not come to agreement to halt the fighting.

The Ukrainian air force said Russia fired 66 ballistic and cruise missiles, four plane-launched air-to-surface missiles and 145 Shahed and decoy drones at Kyiv and four other regions of Ukraine. Rescue workers with flashlights searched the charred rubble of partly collapsed homes as the blue lights of emergency vehicles lit up the dark city streets.

The attack came as weeks of peace negotiations appeared to be culminating without an agreement in sight and hours after Trump lashed out at Zelenskyy. Trump accused him of prolonging the "killing field" by refusing to surrender the Russia-occupied Crimea Peninsula as part of a possible deal.

Later Thursday during an Oval Office meeting with Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre, Trump said that Crimea was taken from Ukraine without a fight. He also noted that the annexation of the Ukrainian peninsula happened under President Barack Obama's watch.

Asked what Putin is doing now to help forge a peace deal, Trump responded, "stopping taking the whole country, pretty big concession."

Zelenskyy says future of negotiations depends on Moscow

Zelenskyy has repeated many times during the war, now in its fourth year, that recognizing occupied territory as Russian is a red line for his country. He noted Thursday that Ukraine agreed to a U.S. ceasefire proposal 44 days ago, as a first step to a negotiated peace, but that Russian attacks continued.

He said in South Africa that the latest attack meant the future of negotiations "depends on Russia's intention because it is in Moscow where they have to make a decision."

During recent talks, Russia hit the city of Sumy, killing more than 30 civilians gathered to celebrate Palm Sunday, battered Odesa with drones and blasted Zaporizhzhia with powerful glide bombs.

The European Union's foreign policy chief, Kaja Kallas, said the latest attack underscored that the main obstacle to ending the war is Russia.

"While claiming to seek peace, Russia launched a deadly airstrike on Kyiv," she wrote on social media. "This isn't a pursuit of peace, it's a mockery of it."

French President Emmanuel Macron said Putin should "stop lying" when he claims to want peace while continuing to bomb Ukraine.

"There is only one answer we are waiting for: Does President Putin agree to an unconditional ceasefire?" Macron said during a visit to Madagascar. He added that American "anger should focus on just one person: President Putin."

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha said the attack showed that Putin is determined to press his bigger army's advantage on the roughly 1,000-kilometer (620-mile) front line, where it currently holds the momentum.

"Putin demonstrates through his actions, not words, that he does not respect any peace efforts and only wants to continue the war," Sybiha said on X. "Weakness and concessions will not stop his terror and aggression. Only strength and pressure will."

Since Russia's February 2022 full-scale invasion of its neighbor, Russian attacks have killed some 13,000

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civilians, including 618 children, Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal noted.

Kyiv residents spent the night in shelters

At least 42 people were hospitalized following the attack on residential suburbs of Kyiv, Ukraine's State Emergency Service said.

The dead included a brother and sister, ages 21 and 19, according to Zelenskyy.

At a Kyiv residential building that was almost entirely destroyed, emergency workers removed rubble with their hands, rescuing a trapped woman who emerged from the wreckage covered in white dust and moaning in pain.

An elderly woman sat against a brick wall, her face smeared with blood and her eyes fixed on the ground in shock as medics tended to her wounds.

Fires were reported in several residential buildings, said Tymur Tkachenko, the head of the city military administration.

Oksana Bilozir, a student, suffered a head injury in the attack. With blood seeping from her bandaged head, she said that she heard a loud explosion after the air alarm blared and began to grab her things to flee to a shelter when another blast caused her home's walls to crumble and the lights to go off.

"I honestly don't even know how this will all end, it's very scary," Bilozir said, referring to the war. "I only believe that if we can stop them on the battlefield, then that's it. No diplomacy works here."

Zelenskyy to return from South Africa

Zelenskyy said in a Telegram post that he would fly back to Kyiv after meeting with South African President Cyril Ramaphosa.

The Ukrainian leader had hoped to recruit further South African support in efforts to end the war with Russia.

Anastasiia Zhuravlova, 33, a mother of two, was sheltering in a basement after multiple blasts damaged her home. Her family was sleeping when the first explosion shattered their windows and sent kitchen appliances flying in the air. Shards of glass rained down on them as they rushed to take cover in a corridor.

"After that, we came to the shelter because it was scary and dangerous at home," she said.

In Kyiv's Sviatoshynskiy district, the attack flattened a two-story residential building and heavily damaged nearby multistory buildings.

At a nearby school-turned-relief center, children helped parents cover blown-out windows with plastic while others queued for government compensation. Many stood in blood-stained clothes, still shaken.

## A carnivorous 'bone collector' caterpillar dresses in the remains of its prey

By ADITHI RAMAKRISHNAN AP Science Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — A new carnivorous caterpillar that wears the remains of its prey has been dubbed the "bone collector."

The odd insect is only found on the Hawaiian island of Oahu. It creeps along spiderwebs, feeding on trapped insects and decorating its silk case with their body parts.

There are other meat-eating caterpillars that "do lots of crazy things, but this takes the cake," said study author Dan Rubinoff with the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

Scientists think the case might act as camouflage, allowing the caterpillar to feast on the spider's ensnared meals without getting caught.

A host of caterpillars native to Hawaii use silk glands to spin protective cases studded with lichen, sand and other materials. This one is the first to use ant heads and fly wings.

"It really is an astonishing type of case," said Steven Montgomery, an entomology consultant in Hawaii who was not involved with the new study.

Findings were published Thursday in the journal Science. Scientists found just 62 of the carnivorous caterpillars in over 20 years of observing.

Predatory caterpillars are extremely rare and the bone collectors found in Hawaii will even eat each

other, researchers said.

The bone collector's origins date back at least 6 million years, making the caterpillars more ancient than the Hawaiian islands themselves. Today, they dwell on an isolated patch of mountain forest alongside invasive species.

"There is really a concern that we need to do better with conservation," said Rubinoff.

## Trade war and leery travelers have airlines trimming flights and withdrawing financial guidance

By MICHELLE CHAPMAN AP Business Writer

Major U.S. airlines are reducing their flight schedules and revising or withdrawing their profit outlooks for the year due to less domestic travel demand as sentiment about the national and global economies sours.

American Airlines pulled its financial guidance for 2025 on Thursday, joining rivals Southwest and Delta in declaring the economic outlook too uncertain to provide full-year forecasts. All three airlines cited weakening sales among economy class leisure travelers.

"We came off a strong fourth quarter, saw decent business in January, and really domestic leisure travel fell off considerably as we went into the February time frame," American Airlines CEO Robert Isom told CNBC.

Consumer reluctance to book vacations would correspond with a new poll that showed many people fear the U.S. is being steered into a recession and that President Donald Trump's broad and haphazardly enforced tariffs will cause prices to rise.

There's also increasing concerns about international travelers. Michael Feroli, chief U.S. economist at J.P. Morgan, said in a client note that anti-American sentiment could be spurring a travel dropoff, with data showing that international visitors to the U.S. are running about 5% lower than a year ago.

"In recent weeks there have been numerous news stories about tourists canceling trips to the U.S. in protest of the perceived heavy-handedness of recent trade policies," he wrote. "This points to potentially another channel to consider in assessing the effects of tariffs on economic activity."

Some economic indicators point to expectations of a slowdown. Sales of previously occupied U.S. homes slowed in March, and U.S. consumer sentiment plunged in April, the fourth consecutive month of declines. However, fears of a downturn have not translated into layoffs.

Trump announced sweeping tariffs on April 2 that triggered panic in financial markets and generated recession fears, leading consumers and businesses to start pulling back on spending, which includes travel. The president put a partial 90-day hold on the import taxes but increased his already steep tariffs against China.

Beijing increased its import tax on American goods to 125% in retaliation. On Thursday China denied Trump's assertion that the two sides were involved in active negotiations to end or mitigate their trade war.

American Airlines said it would give an update on its full-year guidance "as the economic outlook becomes clearer." Airline executives said sales among business travelers and for premium seats on long-haul international flights remained solid.

Southwest Airlines reported late Wednesday that it would trim its flight schedule for the second half of the year due to lower demand. The company also said it could not reaffirm its 2025 and 2026 outlooks for earnings before interest and taxes, given "current macroeconomic uncertainty."

United Airlines last week gave two different financial forecasts for how it may perform this year, one if there's a recession and one if not. The airline said it planned to reduce its scheduled domestic flights by 4% starting in July in response to lower-than-expected demand for economy fare tickets.

"We think there is a reasonable chance things can weaken from here," United CEO Scott Kirby said.

Delta Air Lines, the nation's most profitable carrier, predicted as recently as January that the company was on track for the best financial year in its history. Earlier this month, the airline scratched its performance expectations for 2025 and said it was putting a planned flight schedule expansion on hold.

"With broad economic uncertainty around global trade, growth has largely stalled," Delta CEO Ed Bastian

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said at the time. "In this slower-growth environment, we are protecting margins and cash flow by focusing on what we can control. This includes reducing planned capacity growth in the second half of the year."

The parent companies of Frontier Airlines and Alaska Airlines also pulled their 2025 guidance.

## **'SNL' to close out its 50th season with Scarlett Johansson and Bad Bunny**

NEW YORK (AP) — "Saturday Night Live" will close out its epic 50th season with Scarlett Johansson as host and Bad Bunny as musical guest.

NBC announced the lineup for its final three shows on Thursday, with Johansson and Bad Bunny headlining the May 17 show.

The final show has in recent years gotten lots of attention for its final edition of Weekend Update, where cast members Michael Che and Colin Hanks read jokes the other wrote for them. Many of the jokes that Hanks is forced to read are about Johansson, his wife.

The final bloc of three episodes will begin May 3 with "Abbott Elementary" creator and star Quinta Brunson hosting and Benson Boone performing.

Walton Goggins, who has had a major TV spring with roles in "The White Lotus" and "The Righteous Gemstones," will host on May 10. Arcade Fire will make their sixth appearance as musical guest, 18 years after their first.

## **Trump asks Supreme Court to allow ban on transgender members of the military to take effect, for now**

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's administration on Thursday asked the Supreme Court to allow enforcement of a ban on transgender people in the military, while legal challenges proceed.

Without an order from the nation's highest court, the ban could not take effect for many months, Solicitor General D. John Sauer wrote, "a period far too long for the military to be forced to maintain a policy that it has determined, in its professional judgment, to be contrary to military readiness and the nation's interests."

The high court filing follows a brief order from a federal appeals court that kept in place a court order blocking the policy nationwide.

At the least, Sauer wrote, the court should allow the ban to take effect nationwide, except for the seven service members and one aspiring member of the military who sued.

The court gave lawyers for the service members challenging the ban a week to respond.

Just after beginning his second term in January, Trump moved aggressively to roll back the rights of transgender people. Among the Republican president's actions was an executive order that claims the sexual identity of transgender service members "conflicts with a soldier's commitment to an honorable, truthful, and disciplined lifestyle, even in one's personal life" and is harmful to military readiness.

In response, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth issued a policy that presumptively disqualifies transgender people from military service.

But in March, U.S. District Court Judge Benjamin Settle in Tacoma, Washington, ruled for several long-serving transgender military members who say that the ban is insulting and discriminatory and that their firing would cause lasting damage to their careers and reputations.

The Trump administration offered no explanation as to why transgender troops, who have been able to serve openly over the past four years with no evidence of problems, should suddenly be banned, Settle wrote. The judge is an appointee of Republican President George W. Bush and is a former captain in the U.S. Army Judge Advocate General Corps.

In 2016, during Barack Obama's presidency, a Defense Department policy permitted transgender people to serve openly in the military. During Trump's first term in the White House, the Republican issued a direc-

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tive to ban transgender service members, with an exception for some of those who had already started transitioning under more lenient rules that were in effect during Obama's Democratic administration.

The Supreme Court allowed that ban to take effect. President Joe Biden, a Democrat, scrapped it when he took office.

The rules the Defense Department wants to enforce contain no exceptions.

Sauer said the policy during Trump's first term and the one that has been blocked are "materially indistinguishable."

Thousands of transgender people serve in the military, but they represent less than 1% of the total number of active-duty service members.

The policy also has been blocked by a federal judge in the nation's capital, but that ruling has been temporarily halted by a federal appeals court, which heard arguments on Tuesday. The three-judge panel, which includes two judges appointed by Trump during his first term, appeared to be in favor of the administration's position.

In a more limited ruling, a judge in New Jersey also has barred the Air Force from removing two transgender men, saying they showed their separation would cause lasting damage to their careers and reputations that no monetary settlement could repair.

## **Crimea is a focus of discussions to end Russia's war in Ukraine. Here's why it's so coveted**

By The Associated Press undefined

Russia's illegal seizure of Crimea from Ukraine 11 years ago was quick and bloodless. But Kyiv — and most of the world — never recognized Moscow's annexation of the strategic peninsula, which is now a major focus of U.S.-led efforts to end Russia's war in Ukraine.

U.S. President Donald Trump lashed out at Ukraine's president Wednesday, accusing Volodymyr Zelenskyy of prolonging the "killing field" after he insisted he would not give up any Ukrainian territory, including Crimea, to Russia as part of a potential peace plan.

"There is nothing to talk about. It is our land, the land of the Ukrainian people," he said.

Trump called Zelenskyy's pushback "very harmful" to talks.

"Nobody is asking Zelenskyy to recognize Crimea as Russian Territory but, if he wants Crimea, why didn't they fight for it eleven years ago when it was handed over to Russia without a shot being fired?" he wrote on social media.

During Trump's first term, the U.S. said it would never recognize Crimea as Russian.

How did Russia seize Crimea?

In 2013-14, a massive popular uprising gripped Ukraine for weeks, eventually forcing pro-Moscow President Victor Yanukovich from office.

With Ukraine engulfed in turmoil, Russian President Vladimir Putin pounced, sending troops to overrun Crimea, a diamond-shaped peninsula in the Black Sea that Russia has long coveted.

The armed troops appeared in Crimea in uniforms without insignia, and Putin soon called a vote on joining Russia that Ukraine and the West dismissed as illegal.

Russia's relations with the West plummeted to new lows. The United States, the European Union and other countries imposed sanctions on Moscow and its officials.

Moscow's illegal annexation of Crimea on March 18, 2014, was only recognized internationally by countries such as North Korea and Sudan. In Russia, it touched off a wave of patriotism, and "Krym nash!" — "Crimea is ours!" — became a rallying cry.

The move sent Putin's popularity soaring. His approval rating, which had declined to 65% in January 2014, shot to 86% in June, according to the Levada Center, an independent Russian pollster.

Putin has called Crimea "a sacred place," and has prosecuted those who publicly argue it is part of Ukraine — particularly Crimean Tatars, who strongly opposed the annexation.

What happened after the annexation?

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Weeks after the annexation, fighting broke out in eastern Ukraine between pro-Kremlin militias and Kyiv's forces. Moscow threw its weight behind the insurgents, even though the Kremlin denied supporting them with troops and weapons. There was abundant evidence to the contrary, including a Dutch court's finding that a Russia-supplied air defense system shot down a Malaysia Airlines passenger jet over eastern Ukraine in July 2014, killing all 298 people aboard.

Russian hard-liners later criticized Putin for failing to capture all of Ukraine that year, arguing it was easily possible at a time when the government in Kyiv was in disarray and its military in shambles.

The fighting in eastern Ukraine continued, on and off, until February 2022, when Putin launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Why is Crimea important?

Crimea's unique location makes it a strategically important asset, and Russia has spent centuries fighting for it.

The peninsula was home to Turkic-speaking Tatars when the Russian empire first annexed it in the 18th century. It briefly regained independence two centuries later before being swallowed by the Soviet Union.

Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev transferred Crimea from Russia to Ukraine in 1954, when both were part of the USSR, to commemorate the 300th anniversary of the unification of Moscow and Kyiv. In 1991, when the Soviet Union collapsed, the peninsula became part of newly independent Ukraine.

Russia kept a foot in the door, however: Its Black Sea Fleet had a base in the city of Sevastopol, and Crimea — as part of Ukraine — continued to host it.

By the time Russia annexed it in 2014, it had been a part of Ukraine for 60 years and had become part of the country's identity.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has vowed to retake it and said that Russia "won't be able to steal" the peninsula.

For either side, possession of Crimea is key to control over activities in the Black Sea — a critical corridor for the world's grain, among other goods.

What role does Crimea play in Russia's war in Ukraine?

Ahead of its full-scale invasion, Moscow deployed troops and weapons to Crimea, allowing Russian forces to quickly seize large parts of southern Ukraine in the first weeks of the war.

A top Russian military official later said that securing a land corridor from Russia to Crimea by holding the occupied parts of Ukraine's Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions was among the key goals of what the Kremlin insisted on calling its "special military operation" in Ukraine.

Before the invasion, Zelenskyy focused on diplomatic efforts to get Crimea back, but after Russian troops poured across the border, Kyiv started publicly contemplating retaking the peninsula by force.

The peninsula soon became a battleground, with Ukraine launching drone attacks and bombing it to try to dislodge Moscow's hold on the territory.

The attacks targeted the Russian Black Sea Fleet there, as well as ammunition depots, air fields and Putin's prized asset — the Kerch Bridge linking Crimea to Russia, which was struck in October 2022 and again in July 2023.

How does Crimea factor into peace efforts?

U.S. Vice President JD Vance said this week that Washington "issued a very explicit proposal to both the Russians and the Ukrainians, and it's time for them to either say 'yes' or for the United States to walk away from this process."

He told reporters during a visit to India that it was "a very fair proposal" that would "freeze the territorial lines at some level close to where they are today," though both sides would have to give up some territory they currently hold. He did not provide details.

While Trump said that "nobody" is asking Ukraine to recognize Crimea as Russian territory, it's not clear whether the U.S. proposal would see Washington recognize it as such — in what would be a reversal of years of its own foreign policy.

In 2017, Trump's then-Secretary of State Rex Tillerson declared at a meeting also attended by Russia's top diplomat: "We will never accept Russia's occupation and attempted annexation of Crimea." The follow-

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ing year, his successor, Mike Pompeo, reiterated that the U.S. rejected the attempted annexation.

Zelenskyy on Wednesday pointed out Pompeo's statement in a post on X, adding: "We are absolutely sure that our partners in particular the USA will act in line with its strong decisions."

Putin, however, listed Ukraine's recognition of Crimea as part of Russia among Moscow's demands for peace in June 2024. Those also include Ukraine ceding four regions Russia illegally annexed in 2022, dropping its bid to join NATO, keeping the country's nonnuclear status, restricting its military force and protecting the interests of the Russian-speaking population.

Kyiv has rejected ceding territory as a nonstarter.

Russia currently holds roughly 20% of Ukrainian land, including Crimea, so any deal that freezes the lines more or less where they are would benefit Moscow.

## **Bonobos in Congo form girl groups to fend off male aggression, study says**

By ADITHI RAMAKRISHNAN AP Science Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Female bonobos find strength in numbers, teaming up to fend off males in the wild, a new study finds.

Along with chimpanzees, bonobos are among humans' closest relatives. Scientists have long wondered why bonobos live in generally female-dominated societies since the males are physically bigger and stronger.

Three decades of observations in Congo — the only place the endangered bonobos are found in the wild — lend support to the idea of a sisterhood where female bonobos band together to assert their power.

These girl groups chased male bonobos out of trees, securing food for themselves, and females that grouped more ranked higher in their community's social ladder, researchers found.

"It's very clear that you don't want to overstep as a male bonobo," said study author Martin Surbeck from Harvard University.

Findings were published Thursday in the journal *Communications Biology*.

Female bonobos' combined numbers seem to turn the tide against a male's physical strength, Surbeck said. It's one of the rare times such a strategy has allowed females to come out on top in the animal kingdom. Spotted hyenas similarly find power in groups.

Female bonobos linked up even when they didn't have close ties, supporting one another against the males and cementing their social standing. The observations show how female bonobos work together to protect themselves from male violence, said biological anthropologist Laura Lewis with the University of California, Berkeley.

The findings support "the idea that humans and our ancestors have likely used coalitions to build and maintain power for millions of years," Lewis, who was not involved with the research, said in an email.

## **Most Americans expect higher prices as a result of Trump's tariffs, a new AP-NORC poll finds**

By JOSH BOAK and AMELIA THOMSON-DEVEAUX Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Americans' trust in President Donald Trump to bolster the U.S. economy appears to be faltering, with a new poll showing that many people fear the country is being steered into a recession and that the president's broad and haphazardly enforced tariffs will cause prices to rise.

Roughly half of U.S. adults say that Trump's trade policies will increase prices "a lot" and another 3 in 10 think prices could go up "somewhat," according to the poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

About half of Americans are "extremely" or "very" concerned about the possibility of the U.S. economy going into a recession in the next few months.

While skepticism about tariffs is increasing modestly, that doesn't mean the public is automatically rejecting Trump or his approach to trade. However, the wariness could cause problems for a president who

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promised voters he could quickly fix inflation.

Trump shows vulnerability on the economy

Three months into his second term, Trump's handling of the economy and tariffs is showing up as a potential weakness. About 4 in 10 Americans approve of the way the Republican president is handling the economy and trade negotiations. That's roughly in line with an AP-NORC poll conducted in March.

Matthew Wood, 41, said he's waiting to see how the tariffs play out, but he's feeling anxious.

"I'm not a huge fan of it, especially considering China and going back and forth with adjustments on both ends," said Wood, who lives in West Liberty, Kentucky, and is unemployed. "Personally, it hasn't affected me as of yet. But, generally, I don't know how this is going to come to an end, especially with the big countries involved."

Still, Wood said he changed his registration from Republican to independent, having been turned off by Trump's attitude and deference to billionaire adviser Elon Musk. Wood voted for Trump last year and said he's willing to give the president until the end of the year to deliver positive results on tariffs.

About half of U.S. adults, 52%, are against imposing tariffs on all goods brought into the U.S. from other countries. That's up slightly from January, when a poll found that 46% were against tariffs. Driving that small shift largely appears to be adults under age 30 who didn't previously have an opinion on tariffs.

Trump supporter Janice Manis, 63, said her only criticism of Trump on tariffs is that he put in a partial 90-day pause for trade negotiations with other countries.

"Actually, I think he shouldn't have suspended it," said Manis, a retired sheriff's deputy from Del Rio, Texas. "Because now China is trying to manipulate all of these other countries to go against us, whereas if he would have left all the tariffs in play then these countries would be hit hard. But, oh, well, things happen."

Skepticism remains about Trump's tariff approach

Not quite 100 days into Trump's second term in the White House, people around the country are bracing for possible disruptions in how they spend, work and live. The U.S. economy remains solid for the moment with moderating inflation and a healthy 4.2% unemployment rate, yet measures such as consumer confidence have dropped sharply.

Trump has used executive actions to remold the global economy. He's imposed hundreds of billions of dollars a year in new import taxes — albeit partially suspending some of them — launching a full-scale trade war against China and pledging to wrap up deals with dozen of other countries that are temporarily facing tariffs of 10%. Financial markets are swinging with every twist and turn from Trump's tariff pronouncements.

Many Americans are not convinced this is the right approach. About 6 in 10 say Trump has "gone too far" when it comes to imposing new tariffs, according to the poll.

Stocks are down this year, while interest charges on U.S. government bonds have climbed in ways that could make it more costly to repay mortgages, auto loans and student debt. CEOs are scrapping their earnings guidance for investors and seeking exemptions from Trump's tariffs, which hit allies such as Canada and even penguin-inhabited islands.

Trump seemed to recognize the drag from tariffs as he highlighted this week the possibility of a deal with China. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent had also said in a closed-door speech that the situation with China is not "sustainable."

Widespread concern about rising grocery prices

About 6 in 10 U.S. adults are "extremely" or "very" concerned about the cost of groceries in the next few months, while about half are highly concerned about the cost of big purchases, such as a car, cellphone or appliance. Less than half are highly concerned about their ability to purchase the goods they want — a sign of the economy's resilience so far.

Retirement savings are a source of anxiety — about 4 in 10 Americans say their retirement savings are a "major source" of stress in their lives. But fewer — only about 2 in 10 — identify the stock market as a major source of anxiety.

"This whole tariff war is just a losing situation not only for the American people but everybody worldwide," said Nicole Jones, 32. "It's revenge — and everybody's losing on it."

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The Englewood, Florida, resident voted last year for then-Vice President Kamala Harris, who replaced the incumbent president, Joe Biden, as the Democratic nominee. Jones hadn't given much thought to tariffs until recently, and now, as an occupational therapy student, she also worries about losing her financial aid and facing high amounts of educational debt.

"Things are more expensive for us," she said.

And most Americans still think the national economy is in a weak state.

The difference is that Republicans — who largely thought the economy was in bad shape when Biden was president — now feel more optimistic. But Democrats have become much more bleak about the country's financial future.

"It wasn't all sunshine and rainbows, but we were doing fine," Jones, a Democratic voter, said about the economy before Trump's policies went into effect.

## India and Pakistan ramp up tit-for-tat spat as tensions mount over Kashmir attack

By AIJAZ HUSSAIN, SHEIKH SAALIQ and RIAZAT BUTT Associated Press

SRINAGAR, India (AP) — India and Pakistan cancelled visas for their nationals to each other's countries and Islamabad warned New Delhi for suspending a water-sharing treaty Thursday.

The moves came after India blamed Pakistan for a deadly attack by gunmen that killed 26 people in disputed Kashmir.

India said all visas issued to Pakistani nationals will be revoked with effect from Sunday, adding that all Pakistanis currently in India must leave before their visas expire based on the revised timeline. The country also announced other measures, including cutting the number of diplomatic staff, closing the only functional land border crossing between the countries and suspending a crucial water-sharing agreement.

In retaliation, Pakistan closed its airspace for all Indian-owned or Indian-operated airlines, and suspended all trade with India, including to and from any third country.

Tuesday's attack in Kashmir was the worst assault in years, targeting civilians in the restive region that has seen an anti-India rebellion for more than three decades.

The incident shocked and outraged Indians, prompting calls for action against their country's archenemy, Pakistan. The Indian government said the attack had "cross-border" links to Pakistan, without publicly producing any evidence to support that claim. Pakistan has denied any connection to the attack, which was claimed by a previously unknown militant group calling itself the Kashmir Resistance.

Pakistan's National Security Committee condemned India's "belligerent measures." It said that while Pakistan remained committed to peace, it would never allow anyone to "transgress its sovereignty, security, dignity and inalienable rights."

Government ministers on both sides have hinted that the dispute could escalate to military action. Pakistan's Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar told local Dunya News TV channel that "any kinetic step by India will see a tit-for-tat kinetic response."

Indian Defense Minister Rajnath Singh pledged Wednesday to "not only trace those who perpetrated the attack but also trace those who conspired to commit this nefarious act on our soil," and hinted at the possibility of military strikes.

India and Pakistan each administer a part of Kashmir, but both claim the territory in its entirety. New Delhi describes all militancy in Kashmir as Pakistan-backed terrorism. Pakistan denies this, and many Muslim Kashmiris consider the militants to be part of a home-grown freedom struggle.

Domestic pressures on both sides

The killings have put pressure on Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist government to respond aggressively.

"India will identify, track and punish every terrorist, their handlers and their backers," Modi told a rally Thursday. "We will pursue them to the ends of the earth," he warned.

His government announced a series of diplomatic actions against Islamabad while hinting at plans for

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more punishment.

India's Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri announced Wednesday that a number of Pakistani diplomats were asked to leave New Delhi and Indian diplomats were recalled from Pakistan. Diplomatic missions in both countries will reduce their staff from 55 to 30 as of May 1, and the only functional land border crossing between them would be closed.

India's foreign ministry advised Indians citizens not to travel to Pakistan and asked those currently there to return.

India also suspended a landmark water-sharing treaty that has survived two wars between the countries, in 1965 and 1971, and a major border skirmish in 1999.

The Indus Water Treaty, brokered by the World Bank in 1960, allows for sharing the waters of a river system that is a lifeline for both countries, particularly for Pakistan's agriculture.

Pakistan has responded angrily that it has nothing to do with the attack and warned that any Indian attempt to stop or divert flow of water would be considered an "act of war" and met with "full force across the complete spectrum" of Pakistan's national power.

In Pakistan, dozens of demonstrators rallied in some cities, including outside the Indian High Commission in Islamabad, against India's suspension of the treaty, demanding their government to retaliate.

Fears of escalation

Modi overturned the status quo in Kashmir in August 2019, when his government revoked the region's semi-autonomous status and brought it under direct federal control.

That deepened tensions in the region, but things with Pakistan held stable as the two countries in 2021 renewed a previous ceasefire agreement along their border, which has largely held despite militant attacks on Indian forces in the region.

Some experts say India may move beyond diplomatic sanctions as the country's media and leaders from Modi's ruling party call for military action.

Ashok Malik, a former policy advisor in India's foreign ministry, said New Delhi's response reflected a high degree of anger within the administration and India's move on the Indus Water treaty "will impose costs on Pakistan's economy."

Malik added that Indian leaders view military options as viable.

"(India's) military strategists believe there is a space for kinetic conventional action under the nuclear umbrella. The space isn't infinite, but it isn't insignificant either," he said.

Praveen Donthi, senior analyst with the International Crisis Group, said framing the Kashmir conflict as a security crisis of Pakistan's creation, "which can be resolved only through harsh talk and actions," brings political dividends to Modi's government but could also leave it with few options in times of crises.

"The immense public pressure on the Modi government to retaliate strongly and militarily is self-created. Soon, there will be no options left unless New Delhi starts looking to address the roots of political unrest in Kashmir," Donthi said.

Dismay in Kashmir

The killings shocked residents of Kashmir, where militants fighting against Indian rule have rarely targeted tourists and have mainly mounted their attacks against Indian forces.

In a rare show of public outrage, Kashmiris — many of whom have struggled under an intense crackdown by Indian forces and New Delhi's highhanded rule — took part in street protests and candle light marches in protest against the killings. Markets, private schools and businesses were shut Wednesday amid an uneasy calm as people worried that the attacks could drive away tourists and hurt the region's economy.

"The people here are in fear and panic," said hotelier Manzoor Ahmed, adding that tourists would now be skeptical of visiting Kashmir.

Funerals of several of those killed were also held across some Indian cities.

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## Today in History: April 25, Spanish-American War declared

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Friday, April 25, the 115th day of 2025. There are 250 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On April 25, 1898, the United States Congress declared war against Spain. The 16-week Spanish-American War resulted in an American victory, after which the United States took possession of the Philippines, Puerto Rico and Guam.

Also on this date:

In 1507, a world map produced by German cartographer Martin Waldseemüller contained the first recorded use of the term "America," in honor of Italian navigator Amerigo Vespucci (veh-SPOO'-chee).

In 1859, ground was broken in Egypt for construction of the Suez Canal.

In 1915, during World War I, Allied soldiers invaded the Gallipoli (guh-LIH'-puh-lee) Peninsula in an unsuccessful attempt to take the Ottoman Empire out of the war.

In 1945, during World War II, delegates from 50 countries opened a conference in San Francisco to create the Charter of the United Nations.

In 1959, the St. Lawrence Seaway opened to commercial traffic, connecting all five Great Lakes to the Atlantic Ocean.

In 1990, the Hubble Space Telescope was deployed in orbit from the space shuttle Discovery. (It was later discovered that the telescope's primary mirror was flawed, requiring the installation of corrective components to achieve optimal focus.)

In 2014, city officials in Flint, Michigan, changed the source of its water supply to the Flint River in a cost-cutting move. The river water exposed Flint residents to dangerous levels of lead and bacteria, leading to a public health crisis that took five years to resolve.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Al Pacino is 85. Musician-producer Björn Ulvaeus (ABBA) is 80. Actor Talia Shire is 79. NBA Commissioner Adam Silver is 63. Actor Hank Azaria is 61. Sportscaster Joe Buck is 56. Actor Gina Torres is 56. Actor Renée Zellweger is 56. Actor Jason Lee is 55. Basketball Hall of Famer Tim Duncan is 49.