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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)

Monday, April 28

Senior Menu: Goulash, green beans, fruit, cookie, breadstick.

School Breakfast: French toast.

School Lunch: Corn dogs, baked beans.

School Board Meeting, 7 p.m.

Groton Daily Independent

PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445

Paul's Cell/Text: 605-397-7460

Heavenly Father,

**For every mountain
You brought me over
For every trial you've
seen me through
For every blessing
Hallelujah, for this I
give You praise!**



Junior High Track at Britton-Hecla, 3:30 p.m.
Groton Senior Citizens Meet, Noon Potluck, Groton Community Center
Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.

Tuesday, April 29

Senior Menu: Scalloped potato with ham, mixed vegetables, mandarin orange salad, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Scones.

School Lunch: Chicken strips, fries.

Track at Groton Area, 11 a.m.

Elementary Spring Concert, 7 p.m.

United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

Wednesday, April 30

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We the People

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



By David Adler

The Premise of Judicial Finality Requires Presidential Compliance with Judicial Rulings

President Trump's continued defiance of a federal court order, embraced by the U.S. Supreme Court, to "facilitate" the return of Kilmar Abrego Garcia, in conjunction with the Court's ruling instructing Trump to halt removal of Venezuelan migrants under the Alien Enemies Act of 1798, "until further order from this Court," raise anew the meaning of the Framers' conception of "judicial finality." Did delegates to the Constitutional Convention vest federal courts with the power of judicial review to say what the law is, only to contradict that historic authority by subscribing to a theory that Congress and the president may defy judicial rulings? By what manner of "Alice in Wonderland" logic may judicial finality be set at naught by the president, resulting in an interminable constitutional tug-of-war that vitiates the premise and promise of the rule of law?

The Framers of the Constitution, we may safely say, spared the embryonic republic from such a calamity. As Alexander Hamilton wrote in Federalist No. 78, the courts were intended to serve as the "bulwarks of a limited Constitution" against governmental encroachments, which posits that Congress and the president are bound by adjudication. He labeled as "absurd" the assertion that judicial interpretation of the Constitution could be revised by the political departments.

In 1788, speaking to colleagues in the Virginia Ratifying Convention, John Marshall, soon to become Chief Justice Marshall, did not ask, "To what quarter will you look for protection from an infringement of the Constitution, if you will not give the power to the judiciary?", and James Wilson, a leading architect of the Constitution, did not proclaim the judiciary, in his seminal lectures in 1791, "a noble guard against legislative despotism," only to secure executive and legislative reinterpretation in defiance of the judicial interpretation.

At the founding, proponents and critics of judicial review acknowledged that the courts would have the "final" word on constitutional limitations. James Iredell, a member of the first Supreme Court, stated that, "if the power of judging rests with the courts, their decision is final." Shortly before the gathering of delegates to the Virginia Ratifying Convention, R.H. Lee, author of "Letters of a Federal Farmer," declared: "It is proper that the federal judiciary should have the power of deciding finally on the laws of the nation." Robert Yates, one of the leading critics of the proposed Constitution, complained that "the opinions of the Supreme Court would have the force of law" that would be binding and final. Judicial authority to prescribe boundaries for the political departments would have been ineffective if the president and Congress were free to disregard the rulings of courts.

Yates' observation that judicial rulings have the "force of law," echoed by other delegates in both the Constitutional Convention and the various state ratifying conventions, carried special import for the president, who has the solemn duty, under the "Take Care Clause" of Article II, to "faithfully execute the laws." A duty to enforce the laws does not imply the authority to defy the laws. There is no implication to be drawn from the debates that the president was not bound by a judicial ruling.

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America's constitutional history reflects suspenseful moments when doubts arose about presidential compliance with judicial decisions that would undermine assertions of executive authority but, in each instance, concerns were allayed when the president obeyed the rulings. In 1974, amid the Watergate scandal, the nation held its breath in anticipation of a Supreme Court decision in *U.S. v. Nixon*, on the question of whether Nixon was required to turn over the "Watergate Tapes," and whether Nixon, who had asserted an absolute executive privilege to withhold documents, the release of which would doom his presidency. In 1952, The Supreme Court, in the Steel Seizure Case, ruled against President Harry Truman's assertion of authority, in the face of a nationwide steel strike, to seize the steel industry to keep it open and operating to support the Korean War and the Marshall Plan.

We should assume that President Trump, like his predecessors who pressed executive authority, will comply with court orders to retrieve Garcia from a notorious Salvadoran penal colony, to which his administration mistakenly deported him. The lesson is clear, as the Court held in *Cooper v. Aaron* (1958): "The federal judiciary is supreme in the exposition of the law of the Constitution."

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

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Groton Area places first in five events at Ipswich

The Ipswich Invitational Track meet was held Saturday with the Groton Area boys taking third place in a field of 12 teams while the girls placed fifth in a field of 13 teams.

Keegen Tracy won the 400m dash, Blake Pauli won the 800m run and the boys 4x800m relay team was also a winner. In the girl's division, Kella Tracy took first in the 400m dash and the sprint medley relay team also placed first.

Boy's Division

Team Standings: 1. North Central 134, 2. Ipswich 129, 3. Groton Area 85, 4. Leola 69, 5. Warner 60, 6. Herreid/Selby Area 54, 7. Faulkton Area 48, 8. Potter County 45, 9. Webster Area 37, 10. Aberdeen Christian 29, 11. Highmore-Harrold 16, 12. Langford Area 12

100 Meters: 2. Keegen Tracy, 11.23; 8. Lincoln Krause, 11.75; 17. Ryder Schelle, 12.13

200 Meters: 2. Keegen Tracy, 23.09

400 Meters: 1. Keegen Tracy, 52.90

800 Meters: 1. Blake Pauli, 2:08.38

1600 Meters: 5. Jayden Schwan, 5:06.71; 9. Jace Johnson, 5:38.44

3200 Meters: 2. Jayden Schwan, 11:14.33

300m Hurdles - 36": 5. Tristin McGannon, 55.77

4x100 Relay: 4. (Brevin Fliehs, Blake Pauli, Lincoln Krause, Keegen Tracy), 48.73

4x200 Relay: 4. (Brevin Fliehs, Ryder Schelle, Lincoln Krause, Tristin McGannon), 1:44.94.

4x800 Relay: 1. (Jayden Schwan, Jace Johnson, Tristin McGannon, Blake Pauli), 9:07.44.

Shot Put - 12lb: 3. Karter Moody, 40' 10.5"

Discus - 1.6kg: 18. Karter Moody, 87' 4"

Javelin - 800g: 12. Karter Moody, 96' 3"; 17. TC Schuster, 91' 10"

High Jump: 3. Kason Oswald, 4' 10"

Long Jump: 20. Kason Oswald, 15' 2.5"

Girl's Division

Team Standings: 1. Ipswich 131, 2. Warner 128, 3. Webster Area 86, 4. Potter County 71, 5. Groton Area 64.5, 6. Faulkton Area 52.5, 7. North Central 45, 7. Herreid/Selby Area 45, 9. Aberdeen Christian 29, 10. Highmore-Harrold 27, 11. Sully Buttes 17, 12. Langford Area 16, 13. Tiospaye Topa 2

100 Meters: 4. MaKenna Krause, 12.99

200 Meters: 2. Kella Tracy, 27.84; 4. Laila Roberts, 28.46

400 Meters: 1. Kella Tracy, 1:03.01

800 Meters: 7. Ryelle Gilbert, 2:46.58; 9. Ashlynn Warrington, 2:54.32

1600 Meters: 4. Ashlynn Warrington, 6:18.37; 6. Ryelle Gilbert, 6:26.73.

100m Hurdles - 33": 12. Ella Kettner, 19.58; 16. Hannah Sandness, 20.52; 17. Teagan Hanten, 20.68

300m Hurdles - 30": 9. Ella Kettner, 59.08; 12. Hannah Sandness, 1:02.71; 13. Teagan Hanten, 1:05.24.

4x100 Relay: 6. (Ryelle Gilbert, Faith Traphagen, Ashlynn Warrington, MaKenna Krause), 56.90.

SMR 1600m - [200-200-400-800]: 1. (Laila Roberts, MaKenna Krause, Kella Tracy, Faith Traphagen), 4:39.68.

Shot Put - 4kg: 4. Emma Kutter, 32' 3.5"; 14. Libby Cole, 26' 11"; 22. Avery Crank, 24' 8.5"

Discus - 1kg: 10. Avery Crank, 84' 6"; 13. Libby Cole, 75' 3"

Javelin - 600g: 6. Avery Crank, 76' 6"; 13. Emma Kutter, 68' 9"

Long Jump: 3. MaKenna Krause, 15' 4.5"; 15. Teagan Hanten, 12' 1.5"; 16. Addison Hoffman, 11' 8.5"

Triple Jump: 9. Teagan Hanten, 28' 6.5"

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Groton sophomore Kella Tracy runs the 400m leg of the winning girls SMR 3200m relay. She also won the 400m race. She excelled in competition with her new 400m personal record considering the cool windy conditions during the meet. (Photo Courtesy Bruce

Babcock)



Groton Area long distance standout Jayden Schwan places 2nd in the 3200m (2 mile) race. (Photo Courtesy Bruce Babcock)

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Lead off runner Ashlynn Warrington hands off to Faith Traphagen in the girls 4x100m relay.

(Photo Courtesy Bruce Babcock)

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Talented senior Faith Traphagen anchors the 1st place finish in the SMR 1600m relay.

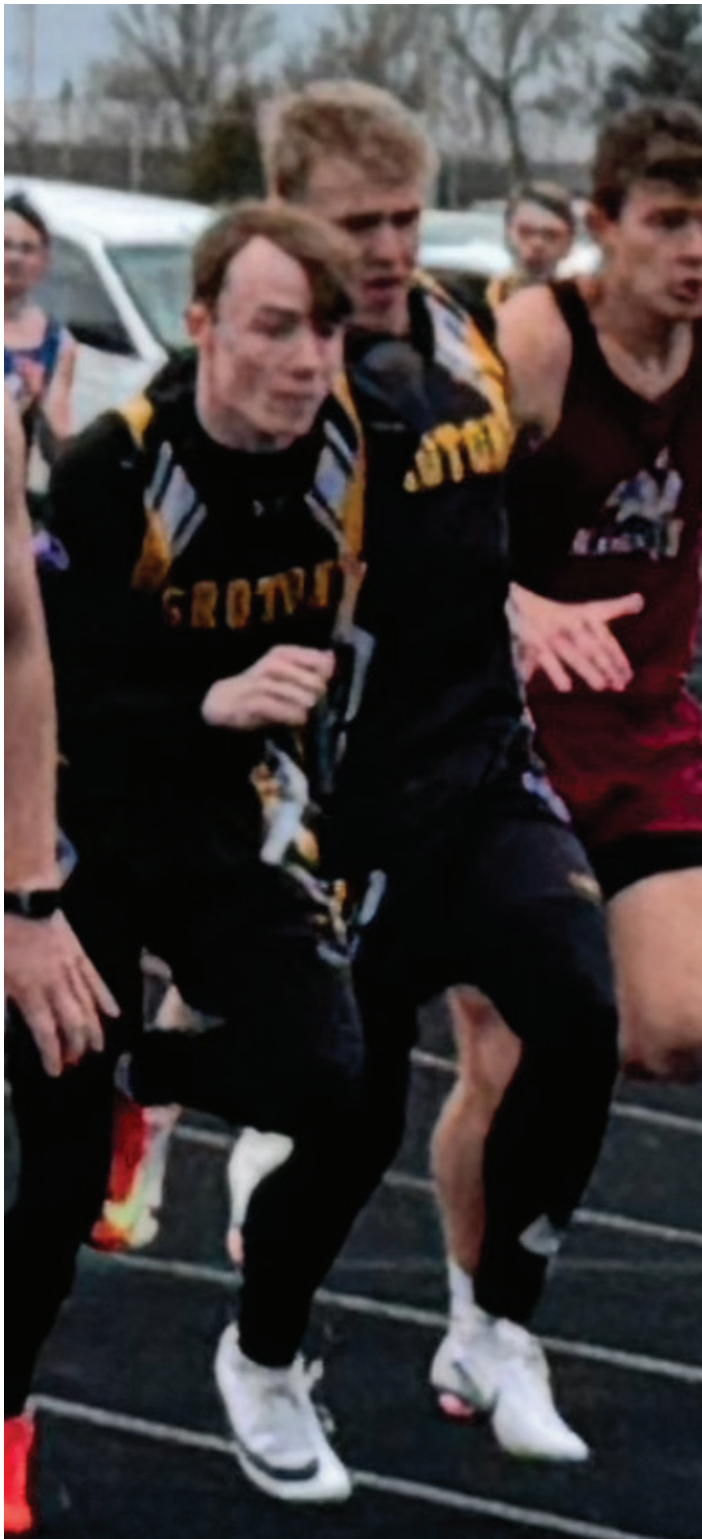
(Photo Courtesy Bruce Babcock)



Groton Junior standout Keegae Tracy mid race in the 100m. (Photo Courtesy Bruce Babcock)

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Sprinter Brevin Fliehs hands off to Lincoln Krause in the 4x100 relay. (Photo Courtesy Bruce Babcock)



Field event standout Emma Kutter throws the shot put. (Photo Courtesy Bruce Babcock)

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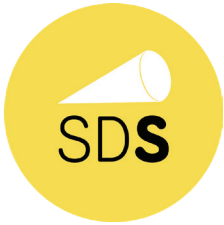
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Junior Carter Moody runs down the runway prior to throwing the javelin. (Photo Courtesy Bruce Babcock)



The Groton Area Tigers track team was back in competition this Saturday at the Ipswich Tiger Relays. Makenna Krause hands off to Laila Roberts in the 1st place finish in the SMR 1600m relay. (Photo Courtesy Bruce Babcock)



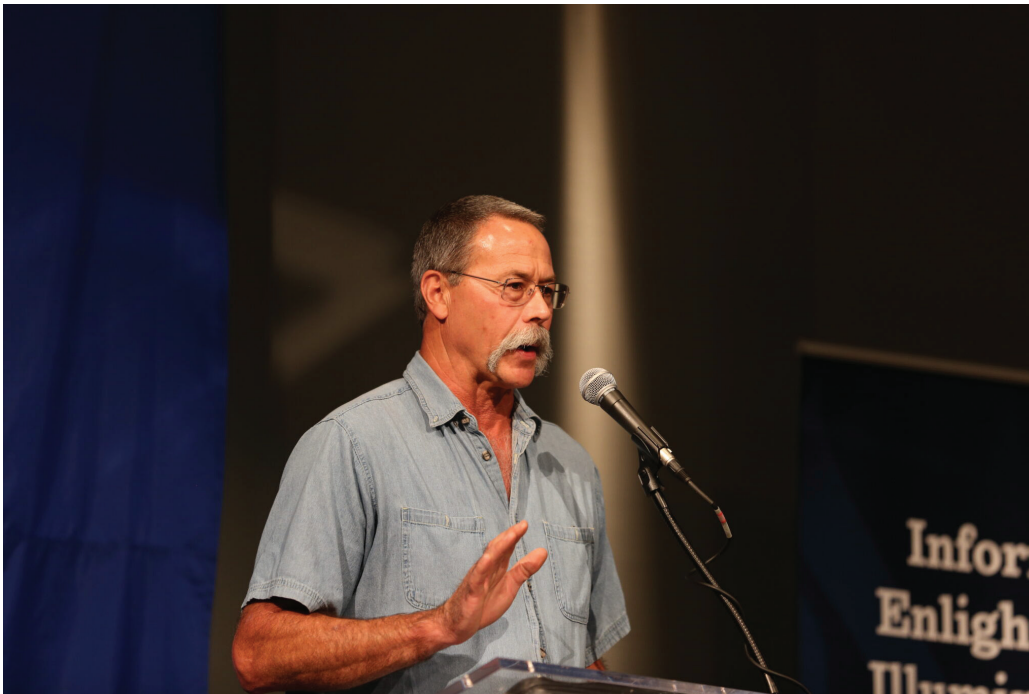
SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

COMMENTARY

Instead of bipartisanship and courage, new GOP chairman wants purity test

by Dana Hess



Jim Eschenbaum, representing the South Dakota Property Rights and Local Control Alliance, participates in an election forum on Sept. 19, 2024, at Dakota Wesleyan University in Mitchell. (Joshua Haiar/

South Dakota Searchlight)

One of the toughest jobs in the South Dakota Legislature has to belong to Republican Party whips. Four legislators in each chamber are tasked with keeping their fellow GOP lawmakers in line. They're supposed to ensure that the will of the majority leaders in both chambers is carried out by the party faithful.

Whipping has to be a tough job in the Republican Party because there are so many members — 64 in the 70-member House and 32 in the 35-member Senate. It's also a tough job because the Republican Party has been suffering from some growing pains, casting aside seasoned, traditional members in favor of a new breed with a different set of goals.

There are plenty of new Republican faces in the Legislature and they bring with them a new set of issues. They're keen on election integrity even though South Dakota elections are squeaky clean. They're big on property rights, with many of the new batch winning primaries against incumbents who had the bad luck to vote for the Landowner Bill of Rights. They have a penchant for wanting to mix religious symbols with public education. Like traditional Republicans, they like to stretch the limits of the Second Amendment, this time going to the point where college students can be armed on campus and then don't have to disarm themselves when they head to their favorite bar.

Keeping a watchful eye on the work of legislators is Jim Eschenbaum, the new chairman of South Da-

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kota's Republican Party. A former Democrat, Eschenbaum earned his GOP bona fides by helping to recall the Landowner Bill of Rights and then defeating it at the ballot box.

For those who pay attention to such things, the dust-ups between traditional Republicans and the new breed have been fun to watch. Eschenbaum seems intent on draining away that enjoyment. It looks like he wants what the Old Guard once had: everyone in the party voting in lockstep with leadership.

If that's the case, Eschenbaum had to be less than happy with a recent South Dakota Searchlight story that told how Republicans and Democrats worked together to soften a bill that, in its original form, would have caused librarians to be led away in handcuffs if a child was somehow allowed to check out obscene material.

The path that House Bill 1239 took through the Legislature doesn't reflect well on the Republican Party whips or party unity. The bill went through the House Education Committee on a 10-5 vote with four Republicans voting against the bill. In the full House, where a party-line vote would be 64-6, the bill passed 38-32 with 27 GOP members seeking its defeat.

Over in the Senate, HB 1239 was endorsed 5-2 in the Senate Judiciary Committee with both no votes coming from Republicans. It was in the full Senate that the bill was amended to dispense with criminal penalties and instead require an appeals process for challenging materials in school and public libraries. That wasn't easy-going, either, as the 18-16 vote included 16 votes to amend coming from Republicans. The amended bill sailed through the Senate 32-2.

Back in the House, the amended bill was accepted, but not without a fight. The vote was 36-34 with 31 Republicans voting in favor of the amendment. That kind of split in the party will be grounds for a primary challenge if Eschenbaum has his way.

In an interview with South Dakota Searchlight, Eschenbaum said a Republican should be a constitutional conservative, voting to represent the South Dakota Constitution, the U.S. Constitution and the conservative values reflected in the party platform.

To make sure lawmakers are toeing the party line, Eschenbaum has proposed a South Dakota GOP scorecard to keep track of how legislators vote. "I don't know if the state central committee will decide to do it," Eschenbaum said, "but it would be based on those three principles, the two constitutions and the party platform."

Just as lawmakers who voted for the Landowner Bill of Rights were targeted in the last primary, it's not hard to imagine Eschenbaum's scorecard being used to drum up primary opponents for Republican lawmakers who insist on going their own way. "Just because you're elected to office currently does not guarantee you're going to get reelected to office again," Eschenbaum said. "It just doesn't."

Some people may take heart when they see Republicans and Democrats working together in the Legislature so that librarians won't be led away in chains. Others may think it's refreshing when lawmakers have the courage to vote their conscience rather than toe the party line. It's obvious that the new chairman of the Republican Party doesn't see it that way.

Dana Hess spent more than 25 years in South Dakota journalism, editing newspapers in Redfield, Milbank and Pierre. He's retired and lives in Brookings, working occasionally as a freelance writer.

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THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

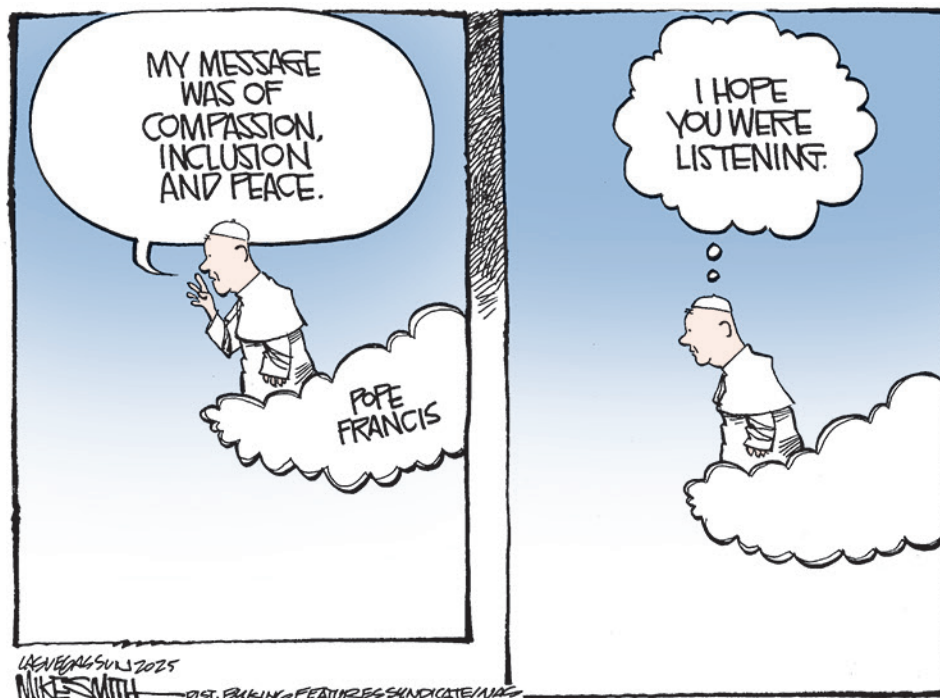
*He who finds a wife
finds a good thing,
and obtains favor
from the Lord.*

❧ PROVERBS 18:22 ❧

*Detail of "Queens of Persia at the Feet of Alexander"
by Gerard Edelinck, 1675*



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BIBLE

TRIVIA

by Wilson Casey

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

2. Which Babylon king went insane living in the fields eating grass? *Nebuchadnezzar, Solomon, Daniel, Herod*

3. From Genesis 23, what was the first land purchase in the Bible? *Garden, Hilltop, Cave, River shore*

4. Which apostle was foreordained to minister to the Gentiles? *Thomas, Paul, Andrew, John*

5. According to Song of Solomon 1:2, what is love better than? *Food, Wine, Money, Song*

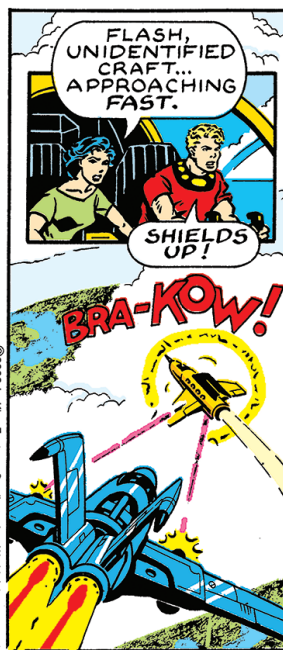
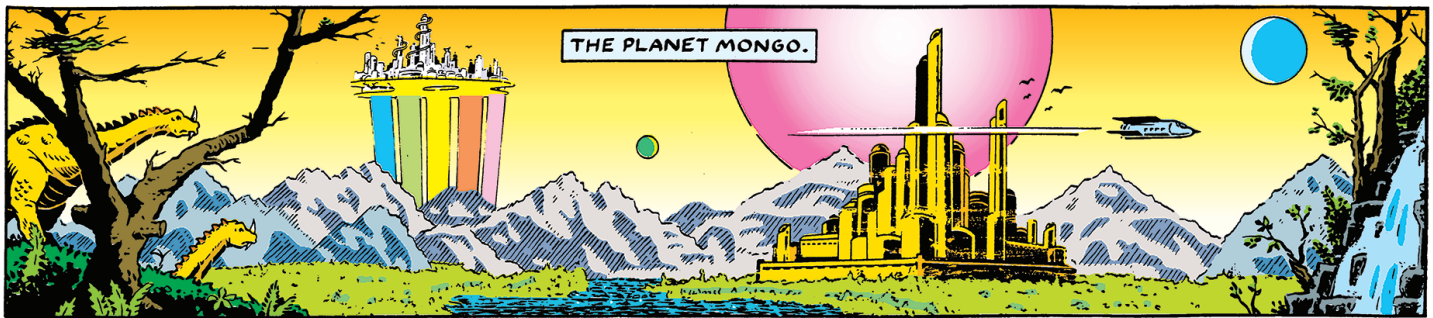
6. Which son of the dying Jacob did he compare to a vicious lion? *Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah*

ANSWERS: 1) Old, 2) Nebuchadnezzar, 3) Cave, 4) Paul, 5) Wine, 6) Judah

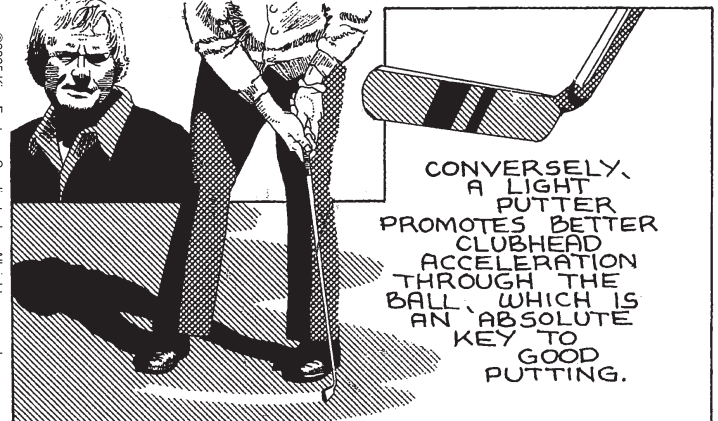
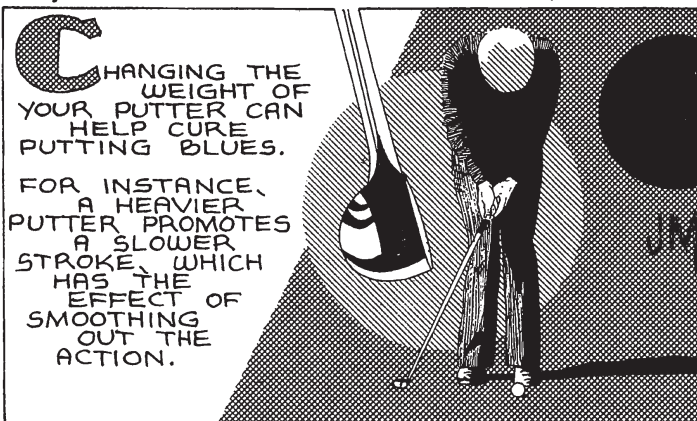
Hardcore trivia fan? Visit Wilson Casey's subscribersite at www.patreon.com/triviaguy.

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Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS



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Raising Magnesium Intake Helps With Bigeminy Heartbeat

DEAR DR. ROACH: Several months ago, I developed a case of a bigeminy heartbeat, so my cardiologist prescribed metoprolol. At about the same time, I had reduced my intake of magnesium from about 50% of the daily value (DV) to 35%. (This may have preceded the bigeminy onset.)

Quite by accident, I read an article recommending magnesium for a heart arrhythmia. Within a week or so of reading the article, I started magnesium gluconate at 100% of the DV. I have been taking this and metoprolol for about a month, and my condition has improved about 95%.

The question is: How can we tell if shorting down the magnesium to 35% was actually the cause and increasing it to 100% was the cure? -- L.R.

ANSWER: Bigeminy, more precisely ventricular bigeminy, is a term most people probably haven't heard of, but most people have heard of a prema-

ture ventricular contraction (PVC). Ventricular bigeminy is when every other beat is a PVC and alternates with regular beats.

While this rhythm can happen in people without any heart disease or risk factors, your cardiologist will have considered many underlying causes such as excess alcohol use, anemia, low oxygen levels, and thyroid disease. A beta blocker like metoprolol is usually the first drug that is used as beta blockers reduce adrenalin levels, reduce the oxygen needs of the heart, and are proven to be effective at reducing the number of PVCs.

A low magnesium level is another risk factor for PVCs and ventricular bigeminy, and there are case reports of the rhythm going away completely with magnesium. So, while we can't be sure whether your bigeminy was caused by a low magnesium level, the story is suggestive that it's a real possibility.

I don't recommend taking magnesium except in people who have low levels, but 100% of the DV of magnesium is quite safe to take.

DEAR DR. ROACH: I am a 76-year-old female who weighs 112 pounds. I am 5 feet, 4 inches tall, and in good health. I walk 40 minutes to 1 hour over a very hilly course five days a week and do strength training two days a week. I was just diagnosed with osteoporosis, with my risk of a major osteoporosis fracture being 12.6% and my risk of a hip fracture being 3.8%, according to FRAX.

I have Barrett's esophagus that is monitored every three years and take 20 mg of omeprazole for it. I also take 2,000 IU of vitamin D daily and try to eat a high-calcium diet. My only other medication is 50 mg of trazodone for sleep. I have no other medical problems.

My primary doctor wants to put me on medication for osteoporosis. Given my situation, which medication would you recommend? -- P.C.

ANSWER: The FRAX score is a way of combining a person's measured bone density with clinical risk factors like age, sex and weight to provide an estimate of the fracture risk. Most authorities recommend treatment when the risk of a major osteoporotic fracture is greater than 20% or the risk of a hip fracture is greater than 3%. Your primary doctor is following the published literature. (I will note that a revised calculator called the FRAXplus includes additional risk factors and can be found at [FRAXplus.org/calculation-tool/](https://fraxplus.org/calculation-tool/).)

Omeprazole, the medicine you take for Barrett's, protects your esophagus but can cause poor absorption of calcium, which may be an additional risk factor for you. Because of your Barrett's, the normal first-line treatments (oral bisphosphonates) are not recommended. Instead, intravenous bisphosphonates such as zoledronic acid once a year are the standard recommendation.

Denosumab is another option, but people need to stay on this medication long-term because, unlike bisphosphonates, bone loss occurs rapidly after stopping it.

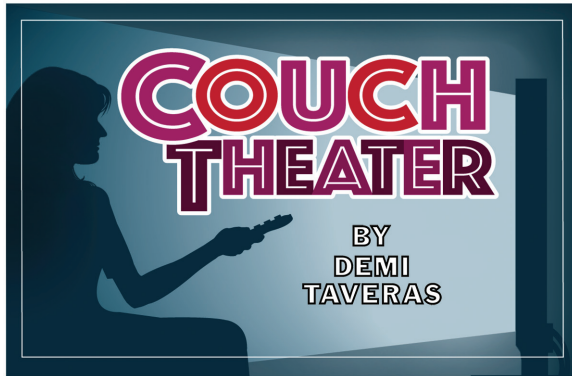
Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual questions, but will incorporate them in the column whenever possible. Readers may email questions to ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu.

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"The Narrow Road to the Deep North" (TV-MA)
-- Based on the novel of the same name by Richard Flanagan, this Australian war-drama miniseries is led by the talented Jacob Elordi ("Saltburn"). Starring as the young version of Dorrigo Evans, an Australian doctor and prisoner of war, Elordi



Jacob Elordi stars in "The Narrow Road to the Deep North." (Courtesy of MovieStillsDB)

lost all the weight that made him into a convincing high school football player in "Euphoria" to become a bone-thin soldier who gets captured in the Pacific during World War II. Ciaran Hinds ("Game of Thrones") plays the older version of Dorrigo, and Hinds' scenes recount his war experiences while Elordi acts them out for us. All five episodes are out now! (Amazon Prime Video)

In Case You Missed It

"Stanley Tucci: Searching for Italy" (TV-PG) -- Italian-American actor Stanley Tucci ("Conclave," "The Devil Wears Prada," "Spotlight") wanted to go back to his roots for his travel and food show, and this included heading overseas to Italy to explore each region that the beautiful country has to offer. Beginning in Naples and the Amalfi Coast, the first season highlighted some of the food and culture we've come to love from popular cities like Rome, Milan and Tuscany. But as the second season takes off, less-popular regions like Puglia, Liguria and Umbria take the stage, and the culture that gets discovered there might delightfully surprise you. While this lifestyle show only lasted for two seasons, both of which are available to watch now, Tucci filmed more episodes of a similar show that will eventually come out, called "Tucci: The Heart of Italy." (Netflix)

"The Florida Project" (R) -- Before Sean Baker scored big at this year's Academy Awards with "Anora," he wrote and directed this tragic coming-of-age drama taking place in a budget motel in Kissimmee, Florida, near Disney World. The film logs the treks of a 6-year-old girl named Moonee, who spends most of her days getting into shenanigans with her fellow kids who live in the motel. While her young and lost mother, Halley (Bria Vinaite), grasps at straws to find any way of income after losing her job as a stripper, Moonee is left unsupervised around the motel, causing its manager Bobby (Willem Dafoe) to step in and save them from disaster. This one's not an easy watch but has an exhilarating ending that will stay with you well after the credits roll. Out now. (Max)

"The Worst Person in the World" (R) -- This Norwegian romantic-drama film led by Renate Reinsve ("A Different Man") landed her an award for Best Actress at the Cannes Film Festival in 2021 -- an amazing feat for what would be considered her breakout role. The film follows Julie (Reinsve), a young woman in her late 20s as she tries to find her footing in the world. At a loss for what to do in her professional life, Julie bounces from medicine to psychology to photography, never landing on one for good. This is a theme that is mirrored in her romantic life as well; Julie jumps from relationship to relationship, hoping to find the one man who doesn't make her feel uncertain. But only through more experience and more time in life will Julie truly find the answers that she's looking for. Out now. (Hulu)

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1. Which artist wrote and released "You Are the Sunshine of My Life"?
2. Name the artist who was born Reginald Kenneth Dwight.
3. Who released the 1962 cover of "Ruby Baby"?
4. Which artist co-wrote and released "Running Scared"?
5. Name the song that contains this lyric: "I thought I could live without romance until you came to me, But now I know that I will go on loving you eternally."

Answers

1. Stevie Wonder, in 1973. The song won a Grammy Award for Best Male Pop Vocal Performance and was entered into

the Grammy Hall of Fame in 2002.

2. Elton John, now known as Sir Elton Hercules John after receiving a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) in 1995. He was also knighted in 1998 for services to music.
3. Dion. The song reached No. 2 on the Hot 100 chart.
4. Roy Orbison, in 1961.
5. "I Want You, I Need You, I Love You," by Elvis Presley, in 1956. After 17 takes with no perfect version and being on deadline, the record company producer ended up splicing pieces of version 14 to pieces of version 17. No one could tell he'd done that.

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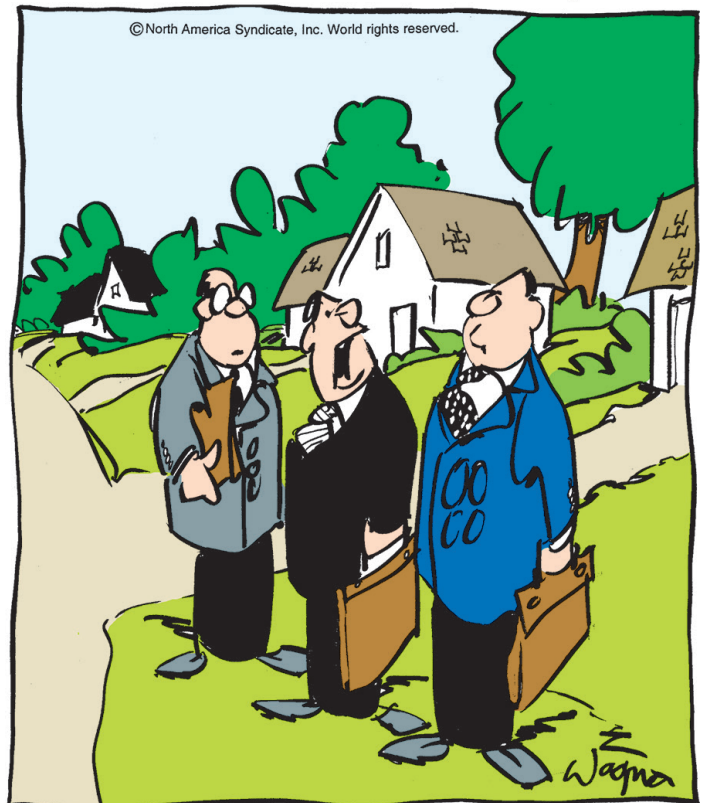
Just Like Cats & Dogs

by Dave T. Phipps



GRIN and BEAR IT [©] Wagner

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“When we formed this carpool, I assumed one of us had a car!”

HOCUS-FOCUS

BY
HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



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Differences: 1. Arm is longer. 2. Hat is different. 3. Car is moved.
4. Line is added to sidewalk. 5. Tie is different. 6. Purse is
different.

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* There's been a lot of talk at my house about kitchen gadgets that do double duty, especially since I have made whipped cream for the first time -- in my coffeemaker! I have a French press that I rarely use, until now. Add heavy whipping cream and a bit of sugar to the pot, and use the screen to whip the cream by rapidly bringing it up and down. Magic!

* "I love to eat pancakes, but I don't have time to make them every morning. I make a very large batch on Sundays and reheat them through the week. In order to re-create that fresh from the pan crisp (which you don't get if you microwave them), I use my toaster." -- P.E. in Ohio

* "I have an extra coffeepot, which I brew a pot of hot water in. I use the water for both tea and instant oatmeal packets in

the morning." -- M.S. in Nevada

* Ice-cube trays can be handy for freezing portions of foods. Try freezing individual servings of baby food. Or clean and snip fresh herbs from your garden. Fill the ice-cube tray with tablespoons of olive oil and tuck the herb snippings into the oil. Then freeze. Whatever you freeze can be popped out and stored in a zipper-top bag for quick access.

* "Here's my tip: Use a muffin pan to make big ice cubes for drinks." -- A.L. in Missouri

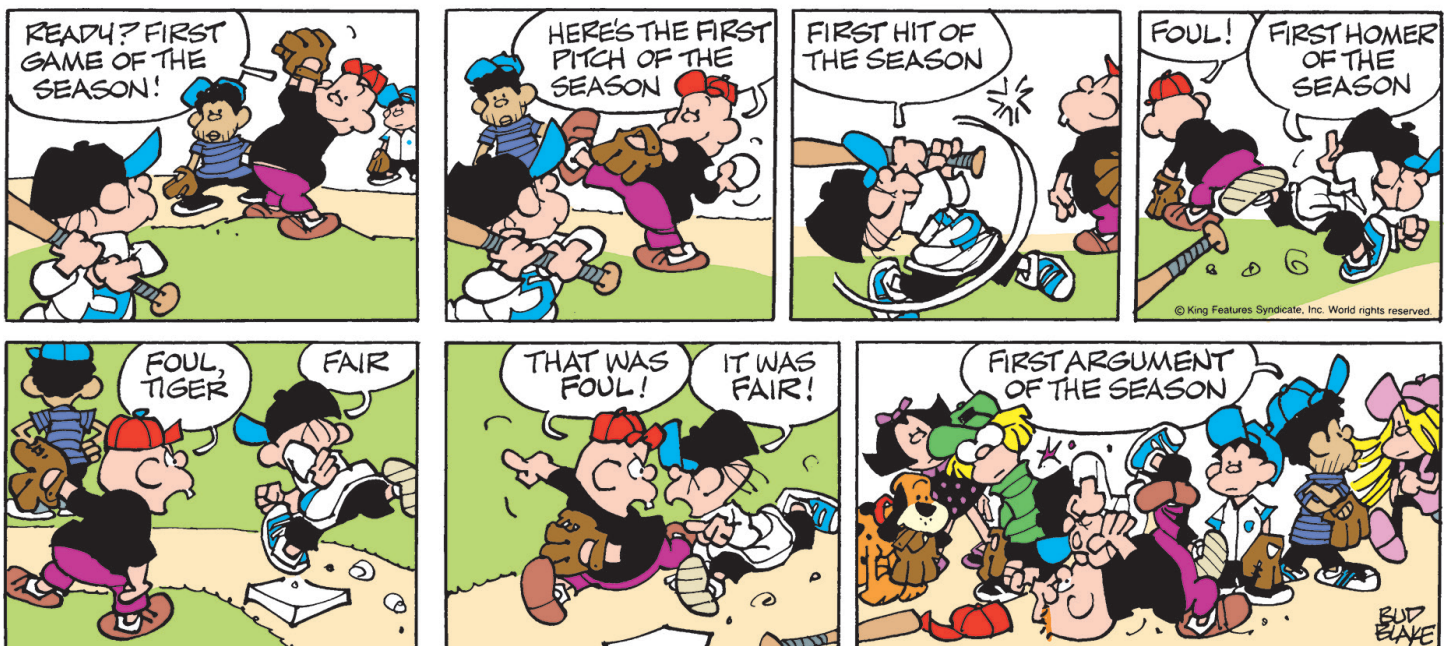
* Hashbrowns can be made on a waffle iron. Coat liberally with canola oil or butter-flavored nonstick spray, and add shredded potatoes and finely diced onion. Allow the iron to cook the potatoes to your desired level of crispness, and flip out both sides onto a plate. They will be both crisp and soft!

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

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TIGER

by **BUD BLAKE**



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King Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 German sausage
6 Hoops great Curry
11 More minuscule
12 Succeed
14 Ridiculous
15 Eventually
16 Bygone bird
17 Valleys
19 Pensioned (Abbr.)
20 Taking action
22 Label
23 Corrida bull
24 Tennis star Rafael
26 Dessert that jiggles
28 Violin tuner
30 Novelist Deighton
31 "The Peasant Dance" painter
35 Everglades wader
39 Give temporarily
40 Lumber unit
42 Wrestling style
43 "Nasty!"
44 Thread holder
46 Damage
47 South Carolina river

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47			48				49		50			
51							52					
	53						54					

- 49 La Brea attraction
51 Oral
52 Moving vehicles?
53 Ceases
54 Garlic crusher
7 Catches some rays
8 Tolkien creature
9 Christie sleuth
10 Arm bones
11 Shakespeare's "— of Athens"
13 Rockies range
18 Trail the pack
21 Recorded
23 Zesty flavors
25 Pants part
27 Director Spike
29 Smooth writing implements
31 Ecstasy
32 Summaries
33 Detangle
34 Brit's restroom
36 Ado
37 Inbox fillers
38 Civil wrongs
41 Arose
44 Ooze
45 Cowardly Lion portrayer
48 Ring decision
50 Arctic explorer John

DOWN

- 1 Actress Ryder
2 Tacit
3 Estuary
4 Dispatch
5 Pick up the tab
6 Classic catalog giant

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King Crossword

Answers

Solution time: 21 mins.

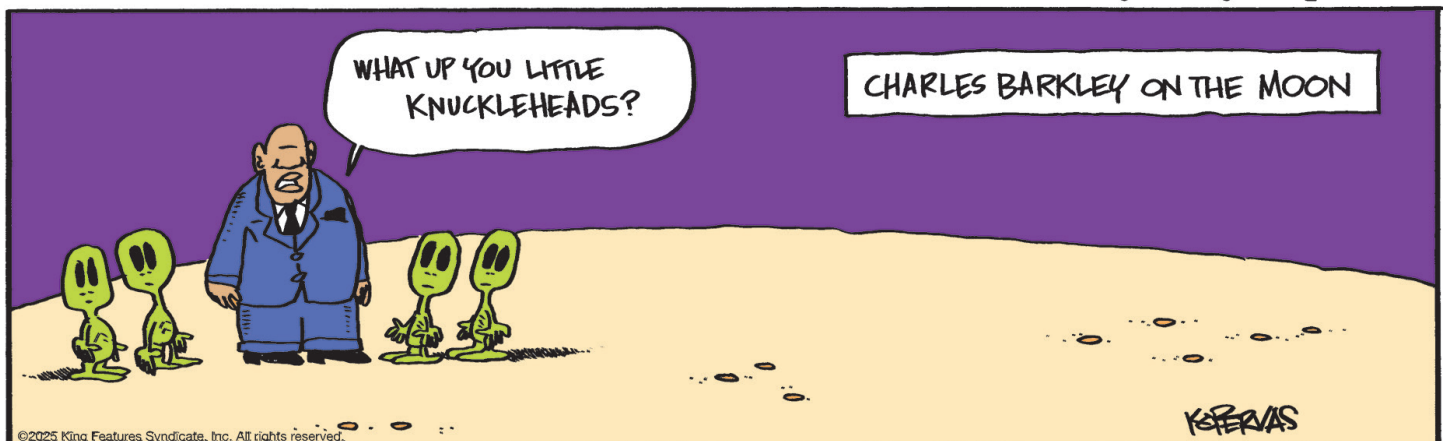
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O	N	I	T		T	A	G		T	O	R	O
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I	C	K		S	P	O	O	L		M	A	R
S	A	N	T	E	E		T	A	R	P	I	T
S	P	O	K	E	N		U	H	A	U	L	S
	S	T	O	P	S		P	R	E	S	S	

Olive



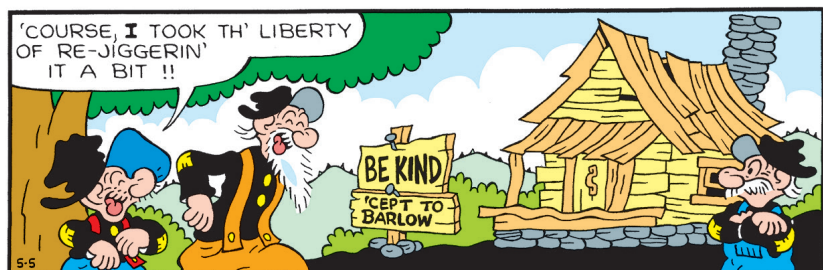
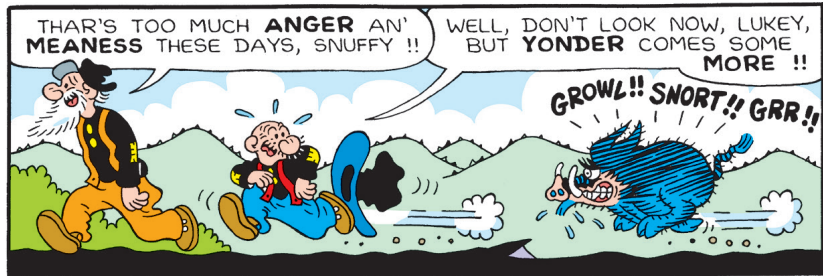
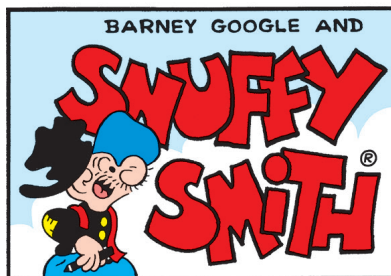
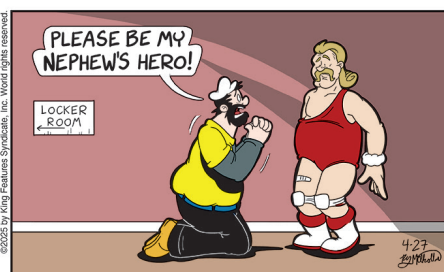
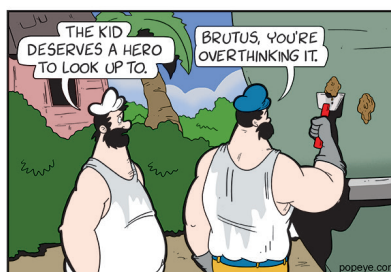
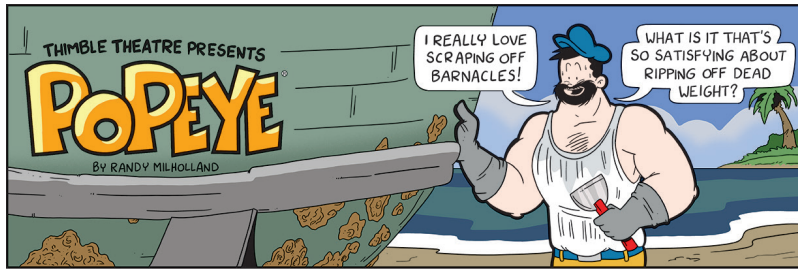
Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas



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HAL FOSTER'S Prince Valiant

BY SCHULTZ
AND YEATES



POLYPHEMUS HAS KEPT VAL FROM COMING TO HIS BELEAGUERED FAMILY'S AID, BUT VAL HAS HURT THE MONSTER. ENRAGED, THE GIANT LOSES PATIENCE AND LUNGES AWKWARDLY...

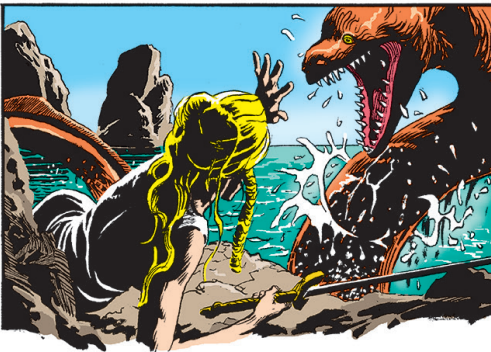


... AND GIVES VAL AN OPPORTUNITY, UNDERNEATH. HIS CLUB SMASHES INTO THE GIANT'S KNEE. IT IS A CRIPPLING BLOW...



... AND LEAVES POLYPHEMUS PARALYZED, HOWLING IN PAIN. THEN VAL SEES WHERE HIS OPPONENT TEETERS - ON THE BRINK OF THE SEA CLIFF ITSELF!

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AND AS AN EXHAUSTED ALETA, BELOW, WATCHES IN HORRIBLE FASCINATION AS THE GIANT EEL CREATURE BEFORE HER COILS TO STRIKE...



...VAL THROWS HIS FULL WEIGHT AGAINST THE REELING POLYPHEMUS AND SENDS THEM BOTH INTO SPACE!

NEXT: *Mayhem*

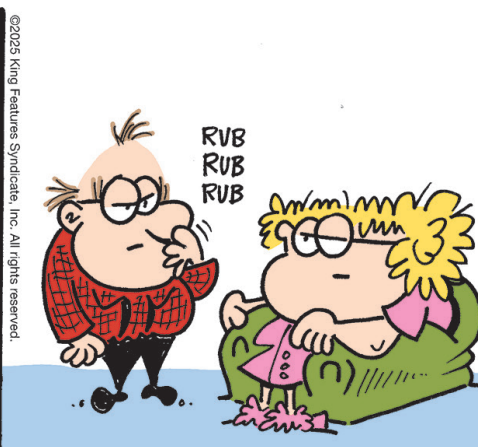
YEATES 3/2/14

The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



DO YOU KNOW ANY GOOD "TREE" PUNS?



RUB
RUB
RUB



NO... I'M "STUMPED."

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PICKERING

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SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

What shall they call us?

Several years ago a big university decided that we should no longer be called seniors or elderly. Instead, we should be called "a person over 65" or maybe "older adult." They went so far as to direct students at the university to follow "various guidelines" to ensure that ... well, what? That we're not insulted by being called seniors? That they're not inviting bias by calling us elderly?

What hooley.

The problem is that those guidelines don't all agree. While one says to avoid the label "elderly," another says it is "permitted in headlines due to space constraints." In other words, it's OK to use the offending word when it's more convenient?

Again, what hooley.

Scrolling around the internet I see that universities, institutes, corporations and others are all copying off each other's paper and deciding that certain words ought to be banned when it comes to age. Instead of saying "a group of seniors," they want writers to insert a specific number, such as "persons 65 years and older."

Many of the style guides seem to be fixated on age 65, yet others suggest leaving the actual number out altogether if possible. It's safer that way.

I don't care if someone wants to call me a senior as long as they're willing to help me by reaching for the item on the high shelf at the grocery store. I do care that nobody at the dealership tries to sell me an unnecessary service for my car just because I'm an older female. I do care that the guy at the cellphone store doesn't doubt me when I say that my phone battery is defective. I do care that my Social Security check is deposited on time.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary, bless their hearts, lists several definitions for "senior." I like the second one: a person with higher standing or rank.

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1. Name the racehorse who won the American Triple Crown in 1977.

2. What motorsports facility near Wendover, Utah, has been used to set several land speed records and is on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places?

3. Benfica, Sporting CP, Boavista, Estoril and Vizeira are soccer clubs competing in what European country?

4. Name the two clubs from the World Hockey Association (WHA) that did not join the NHL in the 1979 merger.

5. From 1995-2000 and 2002-2004, the Oakland Raiders had players with the first name of Napoleon. Who were they?

6. What basketball player has his No. 32 jersey retired by both the University of Connecticut Huskies and the Detroit Pistons?

7. Name the relief pitcher for the 2003 World Series champion Florida Marlins who was convicted of attempted murder for a 2005 incident in his native Venezuela.



by Ryan A. Berenz

Answers

1. Seattle Slew.

2. Bonneville Speedway (Bonneville Salt Flats Race Track).

3. Portugal.

4. The Birmingham Bulls and the Cincinnati Stingers.

5. Running back Napoleon Kaufman (1995-2000) and linebacker Napoleon Harris (2002-2004).

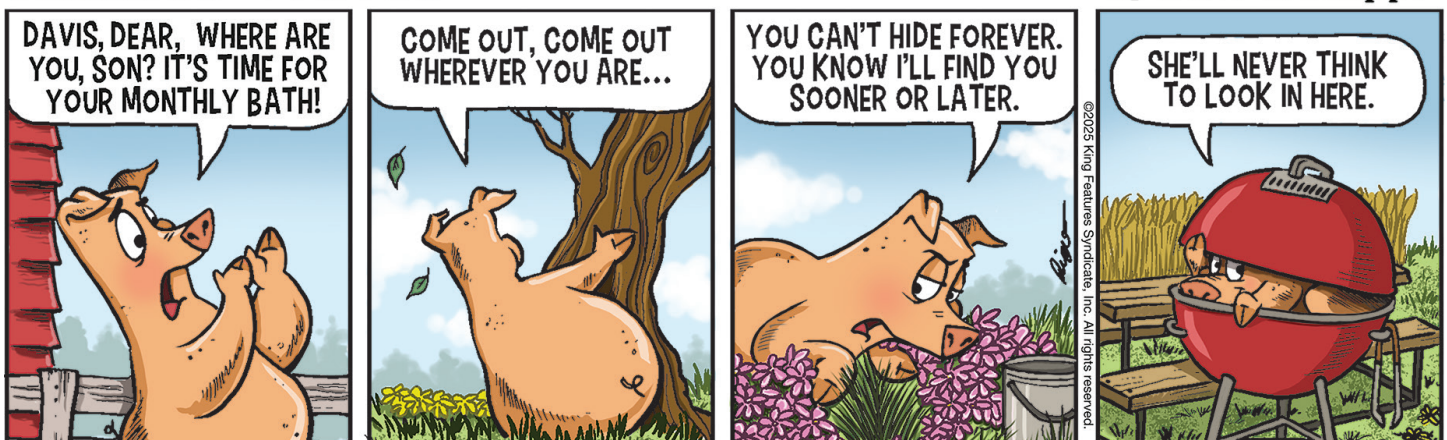
6. Richard "Rip" Hamilton.

7. Ugueth Urbina.

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Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps





Tips for camping safely with your dog

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: My partner and I are first-time campers, planning to go on our first outing in late May at a state park. We have an adult dog, "JayJay," who will come along with us. What tips do you have to keep him safe and having fun all weekend? -- Kerry in Atlanta

DEAR KERRY: Camping with your dog can be a lot of fun if you prepare correctly. Keep some key points in mind:

- Make sure your dog doesn't bother other campers.

- Ensure that your dog is leashed and under control at all times.

- Clean up after your dog.

- Make sure your dog has ample water, food and bedding.

One way to prepare is to set up a test camp in your backyard, if you can. Set up your tent and set out all of the items you'll be using during the outing -- cooler, chairs, stoves, etc. Put JayJay on his leash and walk him all through the mock campsite, and into the tent, so that he gets familiar with all of these things. Then roll out your sleeping mat and bedding inside the tent, including JayJay's bedding, and climb in. Let JayJay roam the tent interior and have him lie down on his bedding. (This is also the perfect time to test all your new gear, put sealer on the tent seams, and shake things down.)

Once at camp, follow the campsite rules about pets. JayJay will need to be on a leash anytime he's outside. It's important that he comes back when you call him, if he gets loose. If you're worried about your dog barking at night, try to book a campsite that is farther away from others.

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

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Strange BUT TRUE

* In 2010, a group of 15 monkeys escaped from a Japanese research institute by using trees to catapult themselves over a 17-foot-high electrical fence.

* Potato aphids will not mate if they detect a drop in air pressure.

* Casting for Quentin Tarantino's "Jackie Brown" was partly done by Jaki Brown, and Lee Daniels' "The Butler" was cast by Leah Daniels-Butler.

* It would only cost you in the neighborhood of \$140 per

year to eat ramen for every meal.

* France is the most visited country in the world.

* Neurologists claim that every time you resist acting on your anger, you are actually rewiring your brain to be calmer and more loving.

* LEOnardo da Vinci was the first person to observe the curvature of the human spine.

* During WWII, Winston Churchill wore a specially designed onesie that he called his "siren suit."


* Don Gorske earned a spot in the Guinness World Records in 2016 for the gastric feat of consuming his 28,788th Big Mac.

* While most parents do what they can to prevent or stop their babies from crying, in Japan a 400-year-old tradition holds that if a sumo wrestler can make your baby cry, it will live a healthy life. During a special ceremony, parents hand over their infants to wrestlers who bounce the tots and sometimes even roar in their faces to get the tears going.

* In 1923, a jockey suffered a fatal heart attack but his horse finished and won the race, making him the first and only jockey to win a race after death.

* Mike Tyson would KO sparring partners quickly so he could get home in time to watch "Tom & Jerry."

Thought for the Day: "Not all paths offer a vista. But every path offers a lesson." -- Toni Sorenson
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Just as the moon influences the tides, it also has a gravitational effect on the moisture within the earth, and the moisture within plants themselves.

From the day the moon is 'new' to the day it is 'full,' plant annual flowers and vegetables that bear crops *above* ground.

From the day after it is 'full' to the day before it is 'new' again, plant flowering bulbs, biennial and perennial flowers, and vegetables that bear crops *below* ground. - Brenda Weaver

Sources: www.almanac.com, themicrogardener.com



by Freddy Groves

Fake deployments and free plane rides

It takes an especially devious mind to come up with some of this stuff. We have to wonder what staff at the Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General (VAOIG) think when they're investigating certain crimes. They probably aren't smiling.

For example, this one: A veteran managed to grab 130 free airline flights while pretending he was on active duty and being sent on military assignments. The guy was an airline baggage handler, but only for one week. Then he showed his airline employer a fistful of fake military documents that said he needed eight months off for deployment.

During that time he jetted around the globe using the free flights benefit of employees, hitting all the hot-spot tourist destinations, from the Caribbean, to South America, to Europe and all points in between -- and documented the trips online. At the end of that period, he gave the airline more fake military documents and managed to extend the whole scam for another two years.

Meanwhile, while still employed by the airline and pretending he was entitled to free unlimited flights, he snagged a job as a federal air marshal.

Also, meanwhile, he took a job at a sporting goods retailer and pulled the same "I have to go do my military service" scam, likely so he could get the store discount.

It didn't help that the fake military orders he created were allegedly signed by someone who didn't exist.

The scammer's undoing began in part because he wanted to take his federal air marshal weapon with him on the plane and there was confusion about why an airline employee baggage handler, which he still claimed to be, would be carrying an air marshal weapon while on personal travel and while he was supposedly still in the military.

Once investigators started digging into it, they unearthed a jaw-dropping 130 flights the scammer had taken.

I hope he enjoyed his vacations in the sun, because he could be looking at 20 years in the slammer.

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Wishing Well®

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Y	T	O	O	J	U	E	O	V	A	E	Y	O
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HERE IS A PLEASANT LITTLE GAME that will give you a message every day. It's a numerical puzzle designed to spell out your fortune. Count the letters in your first name. If the number of letters is 6 or more, subtract 4. If the number is less than 6, add 3. The result is your key number. Start at the upper left-hand corner and check one of your key numbers, left to right. Then read the message the letters under the checked figures give you.

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1. TELEVISION: Which actor was nominated for an Emmy for the same character on three different sitcoms?

2. MOVIES: Who was the first actor to refuse an Oscar award for Best Actor?

3. GEOGRAPHY: Which modern city is in the shadow of the active volcano Mount Vesuvius?

4. FOOD & DRINK: What gas is used to create seltzer water?

5. SCIENCE: What is the center of an atom called?

6. GENERAL KNOWLEDGE: Who are the six men who have made a career Grand Slam in pro golf?

7. ANATOMY: What is the largest artery in the body?

8. LITERATURE: For which category is the O. Henry Award given?

9. ASTRONOMY: Which star system is nearest to our solar system?

10. U.S. PRESIDENTS: How many presidents have died in office?

Answers

1. Kelsey Grammer for "Wings," "Cheers" and "Frasier."

2. George C. Scott, for "Patton."

3. Naples, Italy.

4. Carbon dioxide.

5. Nucleus.

6. Gene Sarazen, Ben Hogan, Gary Player, Jack Nicklaus, Tiger Woods and Rory McIlroy.

7. The aorta.

8. Short stories.

9. Alpha Centauri.

10. Eight.

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South Dakota Governor



Larry Rhoden



South Dakota: *Under God, the People Rule*

A Shared Challenge – with Communities Leading the Way

In South Dakota, we value personal responsibility, strong families, and local control. We believe parents should remain the primary decision-makers when raising their children. However, we also recognize that child care is part of a community structure that supports a strong workforce. Across South Dakota and the nation, I hear from families that are struggling with child care availability.

While the issue is often raised as an urgent crisis, it is important to recognize that many of the solutions being proposed are not always grounded in what families and communities need. Some argue that the government should take the lead in solving this issue, often suggesting that subsidizing more taxpayer dollars into the system is the answer. While that may provide temporary relief, it's not a sustainable solution.

Before we rush to create new programs or expand programs beyond their intended purpose, we should first consider the needs of families and take note of the solutions already developing in our South Dakota communities.

For instance, during my Open for Opportunity tour, I visited a successful, community-driven child care solution in Watertown. Our Little Village Learning Center is opening next month. This project shows what's possible when a community comes together with a shared purpose.

Through the support of local donors, sponsors, and volunteers, the center was designed to address the area's child care needs. This approach fosters a broader sense of shared responsibility for the well-being of children. The City of Watertown, Codington County, Harmony Hill Watertown, and a wide range of local businesses and private donors played a critical role in making the project a reality.

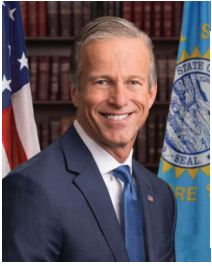
In addition to strong local support, Our Little Village Learning Center accessed a South Dakota Works Loan and received a one-time grant from the South Dakota Office of Homeland Security. These funding sources enabled the program to scale quickly without depending on ongoing state support. The center also received technical assistance from the Department of Social Services to support operations and ensure compliance with state regulations.

When I was in Winner on my Open for Opportunity tour, I stopped by a local in-home daycare. This is a nimble solution that remains a core part of the future of child care. I am proud of the South Dakotans who take initiative to invest in our children.

In Madison, the Early Learning Center is another project that demonstrates the importance of community-driven child care solutions. This center received funding through a Community Development Block Grant and ARPA funds during the Noem-Rhoden Administration. However, continued local investment will be crucial going forward. EmBe Education, Lake Area Improvement Corporation, and several local donors within the community will work together to build the support our children and families deserve.

This combination of targeted state resources and sustained local investment has created a model that demonstrates how communities can unite to solve pressing challenges like child care.

If we want lasting solutions, we need continued community support and the investment of local businesses. Together we can meet this challenge and keep our families strong, safe, and free.



JOHN THUNE
U.S. SENATOR FOR SOUTH DAKOTA

South Dakota Conversations

It's springtime in South Dakota. The temperatures are getting warmer. The wildflowers are beginning to bloom. Farmers are starting to plant their crops. It's a great time to be on the road in South Dakota, and I've been enjoying my travels around our state.

One of the best parts about being home in South Dakota and traveling to communities in every corner of the state is the opportunity for me to hear directly from South Dakotans. Conversations at community meetings, sporting events, and around town are invaluable to me when I get back to Washington to work on behalf of our state. I appreciated a recent opportunity to have a Q&A session with students and faculty at Northern State University. I had a terrific conversation with the Rotary Club in Watertown, and I got to hear directly from airmen and base leadership on a recent visit to Ellsworth Air Force Base and received an update on the progress of substantial construction projects in preparation for the B-21 Raider arrival.

When I'm traveling to communities around South Dakota, I always enjoy a visit to Main Street, dropping into city hall, and especially catching some local sports. I had a great visit to Warner recently to tour the new bank on Main Street and drop by the volunteer fire department. I had a chance to meet with some local elected officials in Aberdeen who provided important updates about their communities. And I always love being able to catch a sporting event, whether it's a Friday night game or a big tournament like the State B basketball tournament where I can support our young athletes and hear from fellow fans.

My recent travels also allowed me to check in with some of South Dakota's manufacturers. I visited the 3M manufacturing facility in Aberdeen to see their operations and get an update from their team. I met with the leadership at Daktronics in Brookings. And I got to see Accurpress America's plant in Rapid City in action and hear from the South Dakotans who put in a hard day's work at the plant.

I also joined young professionals in Sioux Falls for a very informative Q&A. Harms Oil in Brookings hosted several small business owners for a conversation about economic policies. I will continue seeking input from South Dakotans especially as Congress proceeds with legislation to extend tax relief for American families, small businesses, and farms and ranches.

I know I can trust South Dakotans to let me know what's on their minds, and your input informs the work I do in Washington. I always appreciate our honest conversations when I'm traveling around our state, and I look forward to seeing you soon.

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Expanding South Dakota's Workforce

BIG News

Valley Queen completed its expansion in Milbank, and I was excited to see the completed project firsthand. Investments in dairy production are vital to South Dakota producers. Each year, Valley Queen receives 1.8 billion pounds of milk from farms in South Dakota and Minnesota to produce 200 million pounds of cheese. I'm grateful for their continued investment in our state.

I made more stops along the I-29 corridor to participate in two roundtable discussions – one about our state's tourism industry, and the other about bolstering South Dakota's workforce. More on that discussion below.

I also held Vietnam veteran pinning ceremonies in Brookings and Watertown to give a long-overdue and proper welcome home to 30 Vietnam-era veterans. Traveling around the state and talking to folks like you continues to be my favorite part of my job..

BIG Idea

South Dakota is full of hard workers – that's why the unemployment rate is only 1.8%, well below the 4.2% national average. With so few people looking for work, some communities and businesses are left with long-term vacancies. I met with Watertown business leaders at Lake Area Technical College to discuss the workforce shortages they experience and ways to fill in the gaps.

Partnerships between businesses, local communities, the state, and the federal government like the Build Dakota Scholarship and grants for high school career and technical education are integral to improving and expanding the workforce in South Dakota.

I'm leading many pieces of legislation to bolster the workforce across the country. My America Works Act would ensure people on SNAP who can work do work, my TEENS Act improves work opportunities for teenagers, and my SHIP IT Act incentivizes new truck drivers to enter the workforce. That's just a few examples of the work I am doing. I will continue to lead these efforts to ensure our employees and businesses don't just get by, but they thrive.

BIG News

This week is National Park Week and a great opportunity to recognize the value of national parks in South Dakota. The Badlands, Mt. Rushmore, Wind Cave, and more provide breathtaking views and a chance to reflect on our state's beauty. These parks draw more than four million visitors each year, including tourists from around the world. No one ever regrets a vacation to South Dakota!.

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Dr. James L. Snyder Ministries

PO Box 831313 - Ocala, FL 34483

1-352-216-3025

It Was a Snarly Kind of Day

Last week The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage had another one of her girl days with our daughter and granddaughter.

Don't let this get around, but it is one of my favorite days of the year, including my birthday. It's a day on which I can do what I want to do. That doesn't come often; when it does, I cherish it and celebrate with an Apple Fritter, or two, or...

Of course, I had some work to do in my office, so I was rather happy to be alone for the day. Nothing is more important to me than getting my work done.

I planned to catch up on several writing projects in the morning. Getting behind in a project is easy, so setting aside time just to catch up is wonderful.

I kissed The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage goodbye, got a hot cup of coffee from the kitchen, and went to my office to begin the day's work. I was almost singing as I was getting to my desk. I'm not allowed to sing aloud when The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage is home. If you heard me sing, you would understand.

I was getting started, and suddenly realized there was a problem with the Internet and that my computer was not working. I fiddled with it for about 20 minutes and then realized there was nothing I could do but wait for the Internet to return. (Grrr)

Being a little frustrated, I didn't quite know what to do, and then remembered I had something to pick up across town. I don't like driving across town because there are so many idiots with licenses who are driving. How these people get driver's licenses is beyond my curiosity.

I wanted to get there and back as quickly as possible, thinking I could take advantage of this time.

I was becoming frustrated because every traffic light was red. I had to drive and then stop, drive another two blocks, and then stop. I was getting irritated by this kind of nonsense. I was trying to take advantage of my time to get across town and back home.

Have you ever been tempted? At one of the red lights there was no traffic coming or going, and not even any cars behind me. I sat there for three seconds, and then I was tempted to drive across the highway despite the red light. After all, there's no harm if there's nobody on the street and I won't get caught.

The thought danced in my head as I was about to do that. There is around here somewhere a police officer watching me, and as soon as I cross the line, he's going to pull me over and give me a ticket. Believe it or not, it would not be a ticket for the Policeman's Ball.

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I was reminded of a hymn we sing in church: "Yield not to temptation for yielding is sin."

Although frustrated, I sat there and waited for the light to turn green, not yielding to temptation.

This was my routine across town.

As I was coming back, I noticed it was lunchtime. This would be a great time to stop at one of my favorite restaurants and have lunch.

When I entered the restaurant, the host seated me at my favorite table. I've been to this restaurant often, so they knew me.

My waitress came, introduced herself, and handed me the menu. Being such a faithful customer I really did not need a menu because I knew what I wanted. I cheerfully gave the waitress my order and then she brought me some coffee as I waited for my order.

I sipped my coffee rather cheerfully and was finally happy that things were going my way. What a day it had been, but now, things will start going my way at my favorite restaurant.

I don't always experience this, but today, I'm going to celebrate that it is finally happening to me.

I was sitting there drinking my coffee and anticipating my cheeseburger and fries lunch when the waitress came and put a plate on my table in front of me.

When I saw that plate, I gasped in horror. I've never seen such a terrible plate of food in my life.

How can my day get any worse?

In the center of that plate before me was some of the worst vegetables I've ever seen—broccoli. The fact that this waitress brought me a plate with broccoli made me realize my day was not improving yet.

While I was gasping, the waitress turned around, started gasping, and said, "Oh, I'm sorry. That's not your plate; that's for the table on the other side of you."

Finally, my real plate came, and as I ate, I thought of what a snarky day this has been. What is going to happen between now and when I get home?

Where are my Apple Fritters when I need them?

As I was driving home I was reminded of a verse of Scripture. "He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly" (Proverbs 14:29).

One of the great challenges for me is patience. I can be patient when everything is going my way, but that is not patience. I need to practice the "slow to wrath" part of my life.

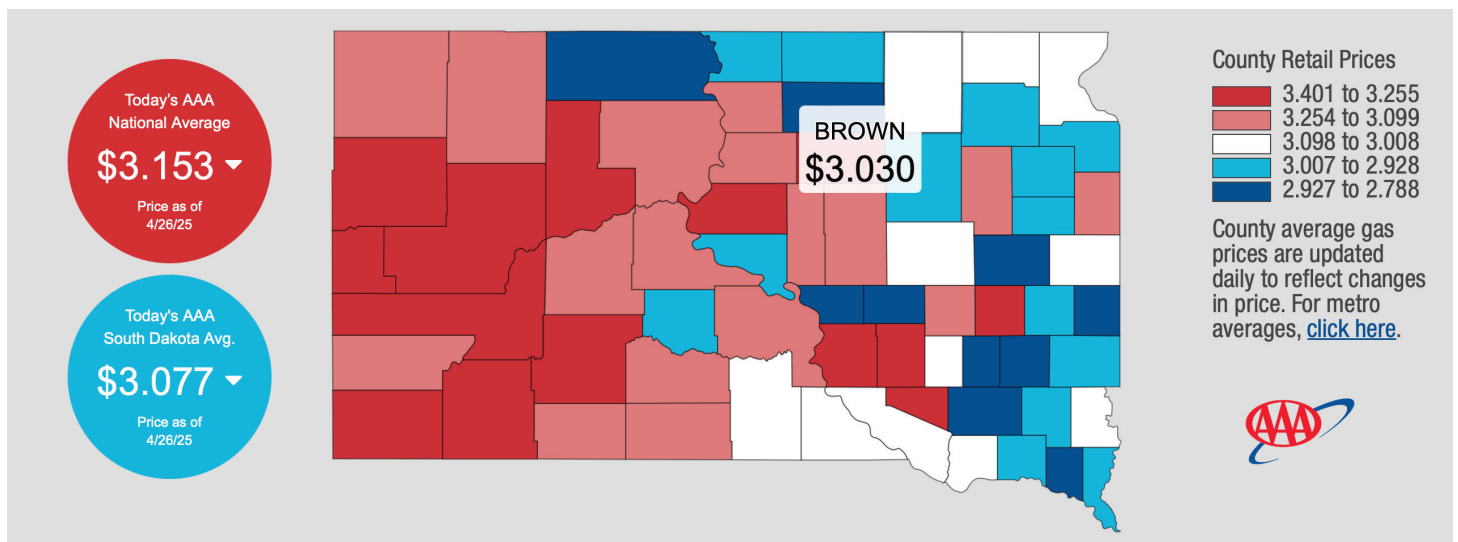
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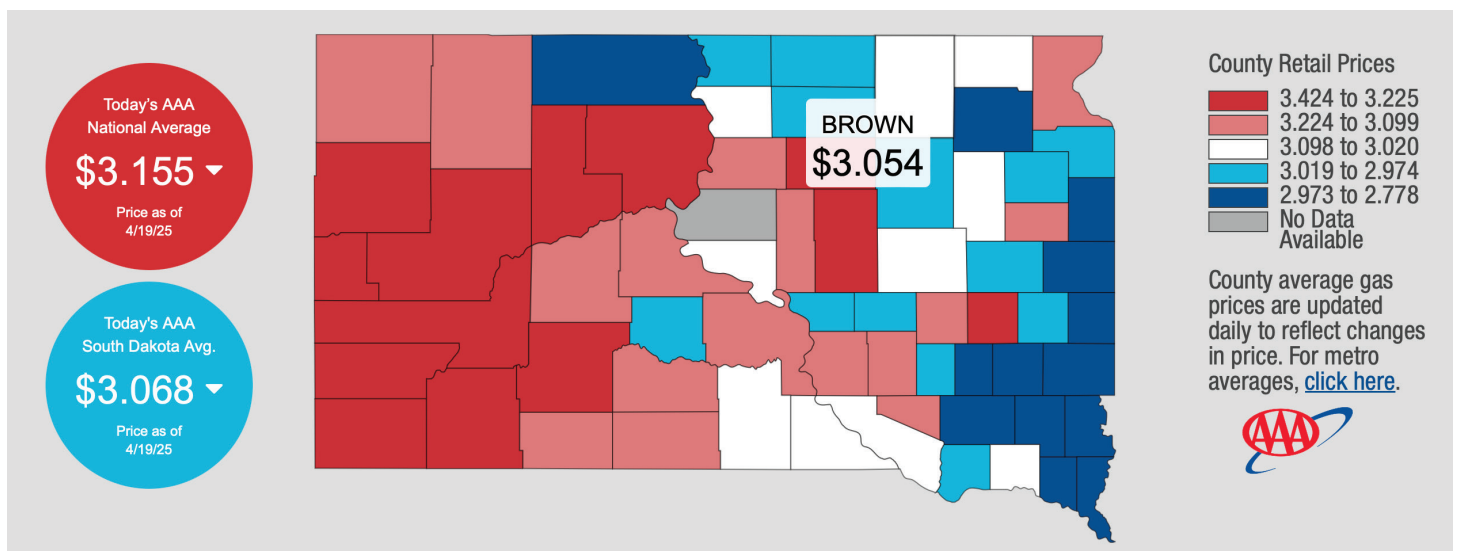
South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Current Avg.	\$3.077	\$3.244	\$3.689	\$3.283
Yesterday Avg.	\$3.081	\$3.259	\$3.675	\$3.292
Week Ago Avg.	\$3.068	\$3.261	\$3.683	\$3.251
Month Ago Avg.	\$3.067	\$3.248	\$3.663	\$3.292
Year Ago Avg.	\$3.400	\$3.541	\$3.972	\$3.689

This Week



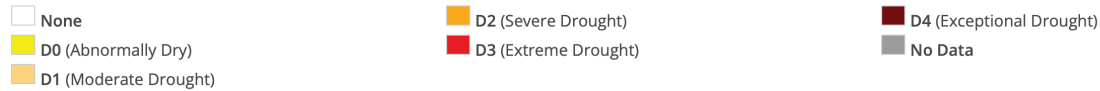
Last Week



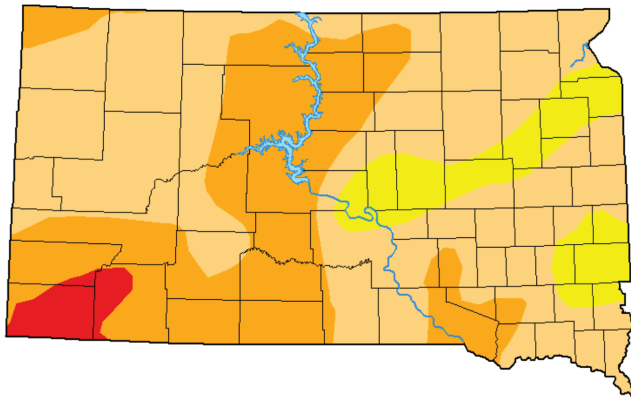
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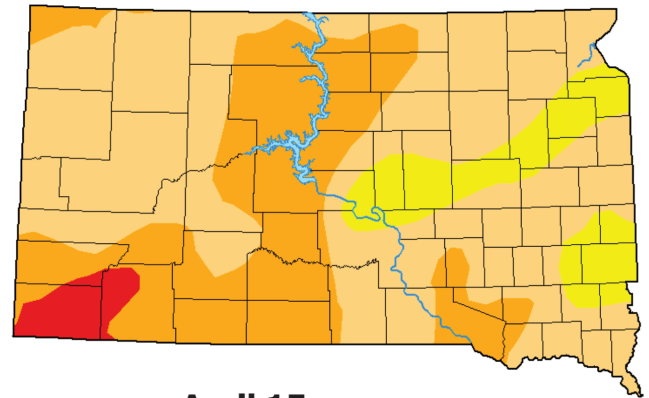
Drought Classification



Drought Monitor



April 22



April 15

Moderate to locally heavy precipitation (over 0.5 inch, with isolated amounts topping 2 inches) fell on some of the higher elevations of Colorado and Wyoming. On the other side of the Region, heavy rains, amounting to several inches in some places, doused southeastern Kansas. Elsewhere, amounts exceeded 0.5 inch in several scattered areas mostly in the High Plains and central Kansas, but most other locales recorded a few tenths at best. Dryness and drought broadly improved by one category across a broad section of southeastern Kansas, and more localized improvement was noted in some of the wetter areas of the higher elevations. Conditions were mostly unchanged across the rest of the High Plains, but a few localized areas worsened enough to increase one category on the map. Extreme drought (D3) continued to affect much of southeastern Colorado and portions of adjacent southwestern South Dakota and western Nebraska. Less than half of normal rainfall was reported over the past 90 days in some areas of west-central and north-central South Dakota, northeastern and southeastern Nebraska, and central through southern Kansas.

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EARTHTALK

Dear EarthTalk: What kind of environmental toll has the Israel-Hamas War taken on Gaza and other embattled zones in the region?

-- L.M. Ross, Summit, NJ

Although Palestine is a relatively small territory, it has historically been an ecologically rich area due to the abundant groundwater dispersed by sand wells throughout Gaza. More than 250 species of birds and 100 species of mammals rely on these sources of water. The health of Gazan wildlife, ecosystems and freshwater has been in decline for many decades, and has taken a sharper downturn since the war began.



Gaza and other areas affected by the Israel-Hamas War lie in ruins as the fighting continues. Credit: Pexels.com.

When native Palestinians who lived in what is now Israel were driven from their homes in 1948, they sought refuge in Gaza. But the growing population was concentrated in such a small area that daily demands for water skyrocketed over the decades, and freshwater became more scarce after Israel placed dams on the Wadi Gaza river. Water tables fell until saltwater infiltrated the aquifers, rendering most of the water undrinkable. Further misery arose due to inadequate sanitation systems to manage their waste.

All this has caused enough water pollution to make it impossible to irrigate Gazan farmlands. Two thirds of those farmlands have been destroyed by Israel's bombardments, as well as more than 80 percent of Gaza's trees and soils such that the region may face permanent desertification. Habitats like the Wadi Gaza Nature Reserve and the Al-Mawasi Sand Dunes have also faced bombings and increased pollution: Some 3.5 million feet of raw sewage and wastewater is flowing daily through Gaza, and open-air burning of 40 million tons of rubble and waste caused by the bombings is off-gassing hazardous chemicals.

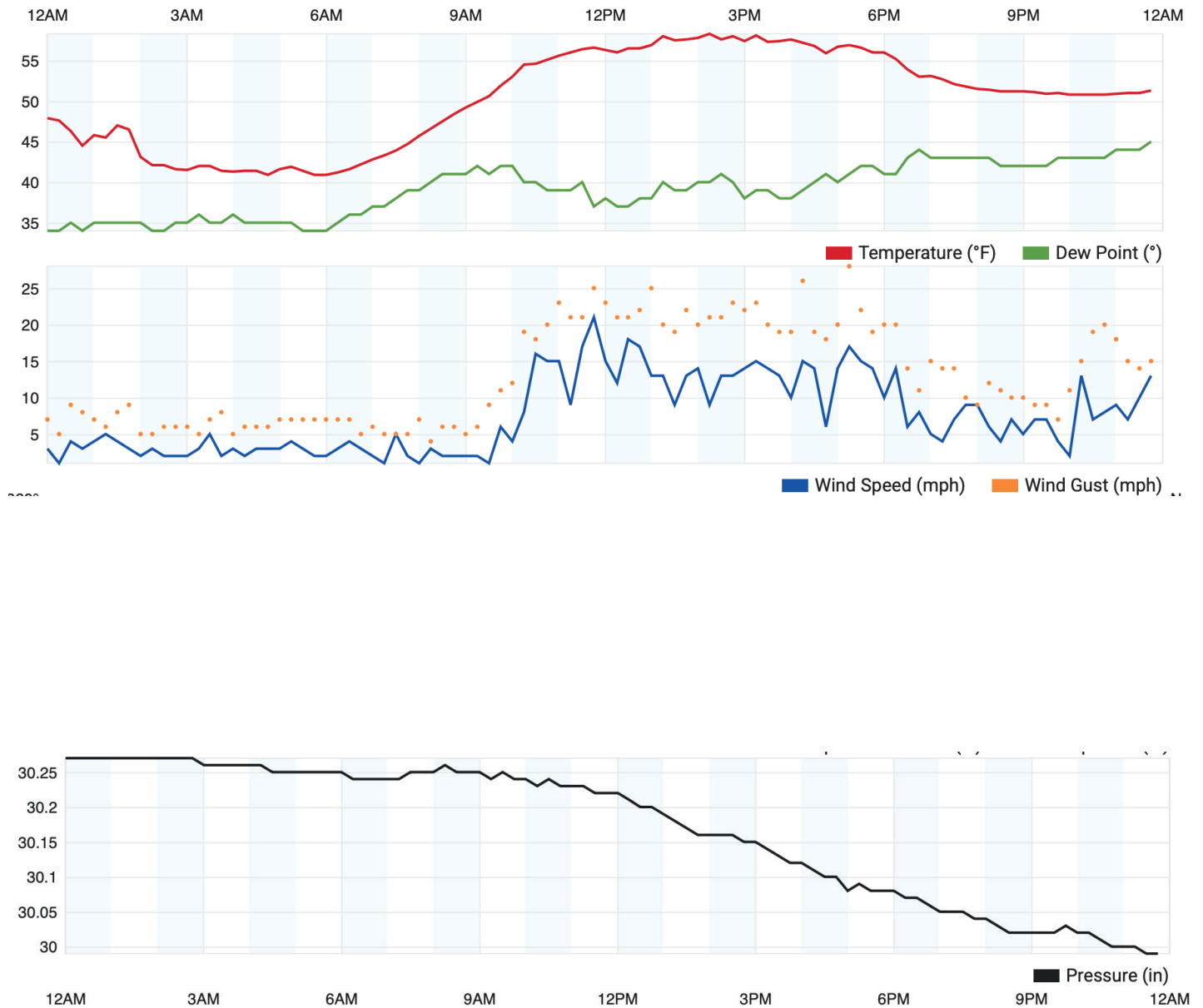
Gaza's humanitarian crisis is also greatly exacerbated by the regional effects of climate change. The war comes at an estimated cost of 60 million tons of carbon emissions via bombings and the construction of military structures. Temperatures were already extreme in the Middle East compared to most other parts of the world, and the loss of Gazan plants, trees and water will further increase the suffering.

Many scholars and activists have called on Israel to be held accountable for both their genocidal and climate crimes: As of April 8, 2025, over 52,000 people—50,810 Palestinian and 1,706 Israelis—have been reported killed in the Gaza war according to the official figures of the Gaza Health Ministry, as well as 166 media workers, 120 academics and over 224 humanitarian aid workers. Over 30 percent of the victims have been children. Although the U.N. has started preliminary plans for eco- restoration in the Gaza Strip, it will be difficult to know the extent of the damage until the war is over. Regardless, it cannot be denied that the environmental devastation and human carnage of the ongoing war will impact many generations in Palestine and other vulnerable communities across the planet.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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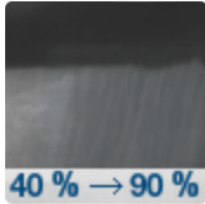
Sunday



High: 68 °F

Breezy.
Slight Chance
Drizzle then
Cloudy

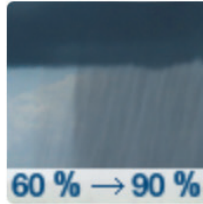
Sunday Night



Low: 56 °F

Chance
Showers then
Showers

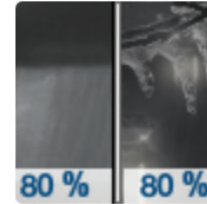
Monday



High: 70 °F

Showers
Likely then
Showers and
Breezy

Monday Night



Low: 27 °F

Blustery.
Showers then
Rain/Freezing
Rain

Tuesday



High: 59 °F

Sunny

THREAT ASSESSMENT

HIGHEST LOCAL RISK

2

WHAT THIS MEANS:
SCATTERED severe storms
possible.

TIMING

9 PM Sun - 2 AM Mon CDT

PRIMARY THREATS



LARGE HAIL

SECONDARY THREATS



DAMAGING
WIND

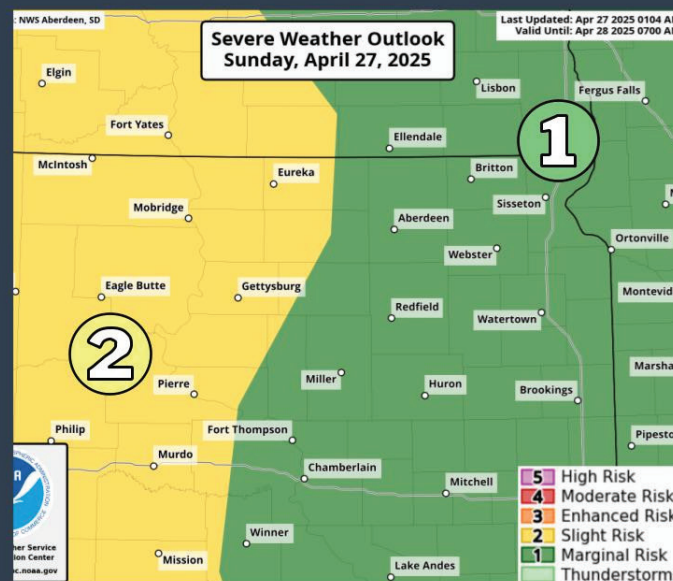


HEAVY
RAIN



ISOLATED
TORNADO

Scattered SEVERE STORMS Sunday



What To Expect

- Storms develop Sunday evening over central SD.
- Large Hail to 1-1.5" in diameter is possible.
- Storms gradually weaken as they move into eastern SD overnight.

What To Do?

- Stay Weather Aware!
- Be ready to take shelter indoors when storms approach.
- Have multiple ways to receive warnings.



INDOOR
SHELTER



OUTDOOR PLANS?
STAY WEATHER
AWARE



MULTIPLE WAYS
TO RECEIVE
WARNINGS



SEVERE THUNDERSTORM RISK



There is a slight risk (2 of 5) for severe storms to develop Sunday evening west of a line from Eureka to Gettysburg to Murdo. There is a chance for large hail (1-1.5" diameter), damaging winds, and heavy rain. East of the line, there is a marginal risk (1 of 5) for severe storm to develop, with a chance for large hail (1" diameter) and damaging winds. There is also a threat for severe storms Monday afternoon.

THREAT ASSESSMENT

HIGHEST LOCAL RISK

3

WHAT THIS MEANS:
NUMEROUS severe
storms possible.

TIMING

through 7 AM CDT & Again
in the Afternoon.

PRIMARY THREATS



LARGE HAIL



DAMAGING WIND

SECONDARY THREATS



HEAVY RAIN



TORNADO

Scattered SEVERE STORMS Monday

What To Expect

- Ongoing morning storms over far northeastern SD & west central. MN. Additional storms to develop in the afternoon.
- Hail up to 2" in diameter possible for areas in Orange.
- Storms to exit into MN Monday night.

What To Do?

- Stay Weather Aware!
- Be ready to take shelter indoors when storms approach.
- Have multiple ways to receive warnings.



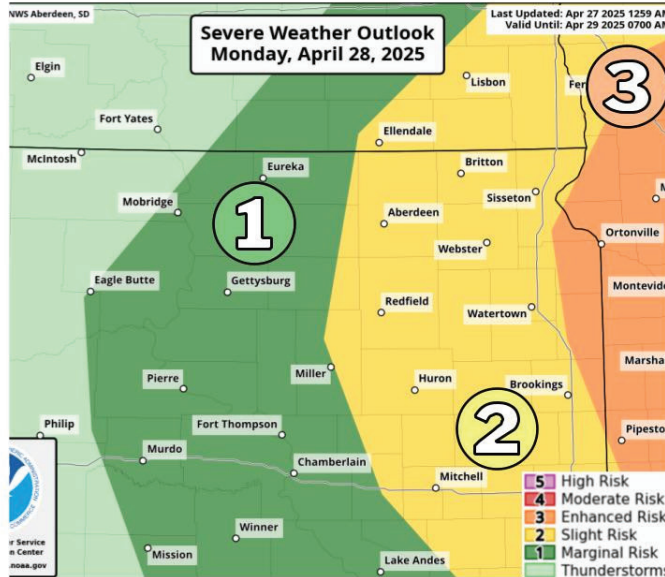
INDOOR SHELTER



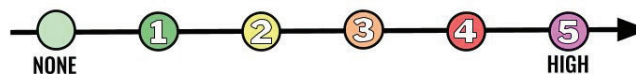
OUTDOOR PLANS?
STAY WEATHER AWARE



MULTIPLE WAYS TO
RECEIVE WARNINGS



SEVERE THUNDERSTORM RISK



Scattered to numerous severe storms are expected Monday. There is an Enhanced (Level 3 out of 5) Risk for severe weather in far northeastern South Dakota and western Minnesota. There is a Slight Risk (Level 2 out of 5) for the rest of northeastern South Dakota and a Marginal Risk (Level 1 out of 5) west of the James River Valley. Hail up to 2 inches in diameter is the main threat, with damaging wind and tornadoes also possible hazards.

STORM PLANNING TIMELINE

A few days out

If the forecast calls for severe weather in a few days, start preparing now.



Make sure that you have emergency supplies



Know your safe places



Have a family communication plan

The day before

The day before, forecast accuracy continues to improve.



Adjust plans



Make sure your phone can receive WEAs



Ensure your shelter is clean and accessible

The day of

Remain vigilant and aware of any active Watches. A Warning may be issued at a moment's notice!



Remind your family of the communication plan



Know how to evacuate and/or get to safety from wherever you are



When a Warning is issued, you may only have seconds to take action!

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 58 °F at 2:12 PM

Low Temp: 41 °F at 5:48 AM

Wind: 29 mph at 5:03 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 14 hours, 11 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 91 in 1897

Record Low: 17 in 2005

Average High: 63

Average Low: 36

Average Precip in April.: 1.63

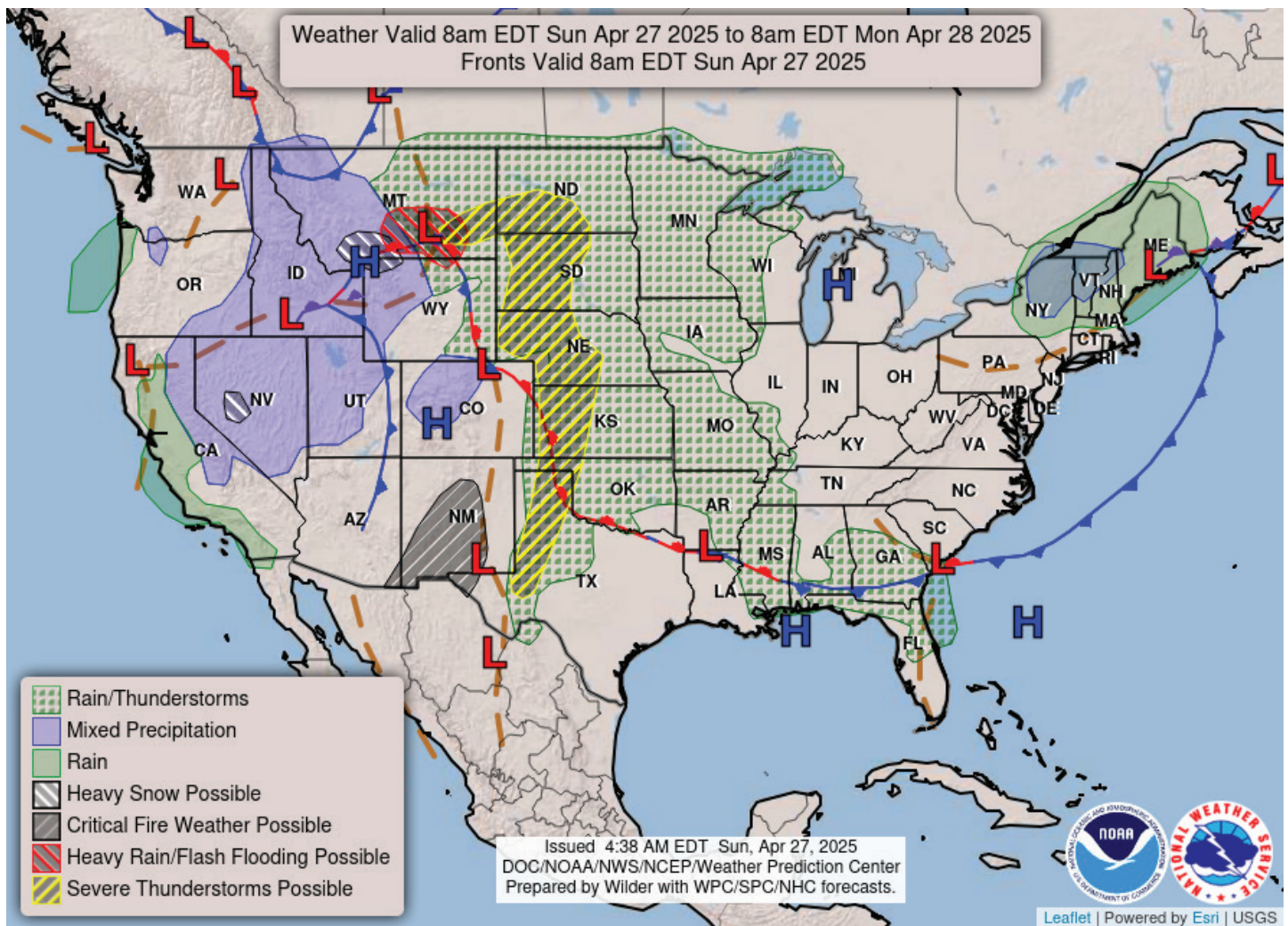
Precip to date in April.: 1.58

Average Precip to date: 3.69

Precip Year to Date: 2.21

Sunset Tonight: 8:35:45 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:22:35 am



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Today in Weather History

April 27th, 1968: A significant snowstorm raged over the northern Black Hills, blocking many highways near Gillette and Moorcroft with an estimated three to four feet of snow. Winds in the Sturgis area were nearly 90 mph.

1899 - A tornado struck Kirksville, MO, killing 34 persons and destroying 300 buildings. (David Ludlum)

1931 - The temperature at Pahala, located on the main island of Hawaii, soared to 100 degrees to establish a state record. (The Weather Channel)

1942 - A destructive tornado swept across Rogers County and Mayes County in Oklahoma. The tornado struck the town of Pryor killing 52 persons and causing two million dollars damage. (David Ludlum)

1987 - Forty-two cities in the western and south central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. The afternoon high of 87 degrees at Olympia WA was an April record, and highs of 92 degrees at Boise ID, 95 degrees at Monroe LA, and 96 degrees at Sacramento CA tied April records. (The National Weather Summary) More than 300 daily temperature records fell by the wayside during a two week long heat wave across thirty-four states in the southern and western U.S. Thirteen cities established records for the month of April. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1988 - Mount Washington NH reported seven feet of snow in ten days, pushing their snowfall total for the month past the previous record of 89.3 inches set in 1975. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from the Lower and Middle Mississippi Valley to Virginia and the Carolinas. Hail up to four and a half inches in diameter caused five million dollars damage around Omaha NE. Thunderstorms spawned eleven tornadoes, and there were 160 other reports of large hail and damaging winds. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather in eastern Texas and the Lower Mississippi Valley. Severe thunderstorms spawned thirteen tornadoes in Texas and twelve in Louisiana. A tornado southwest of Coolidge TX injured eight persons and caused more than five million dollars damage. There were also eighty-five reports of large hail and damaging winds, with baseball size hail reported at Mexia TX and Shreveport LA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data) Forty-three cities in the eastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Records highs included 94 degrees at Charleston WV, 95 degrees at Baltimore MD and 96 degrees at Richmond VA. (The National Weather Summary)

2011 - An estimated 305 tornados between the 27th and 28th sets a record for the largest outbreak ever recorded, including two EF-5s, four EF-4s and 21 EF-3s. Arkansas through Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, southern Tennessee, Virginia to Pennsylvania and New York were all affected. An estimated 300 died including 210 in Alabama alone. This brought the April total past 600, the most in any month in recorded US weather history.



When Doubt Is at Work

Doubt robs us of the opportunity to see God work in our life.

Exodus 4:10-13 English Standard Version

¹⁰ But Moses said to the Lord, "Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue." ¹¹ Then the Lord said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? ¹² Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak." ¹³ But he said, "Oh, my Lord, please send someone else."

Doubt can fill us with uncertainty, make us indecisive, and affect our ability to connect with God. We know doubt is at work when we struggle to believe the following truths:

God loves us all the time. His love for us does not fluctuate with our behavior. We can be certain of this because "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). That's amazing grace—God loving us while we rebelled against Him.

God has a plan to forgive us for our disobedience. We know the Father promises to forgive us when we confess our sins, but we often have trouble believing we are forgiven. That's why we must not use feelings to determine truth. God's Word is true, and it says, "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us" (Ps. 103:12).

God has called us to serve Him. Our heavenly Father often invites us to join Him in His work, but doubt might cause us, like Moses, to make excuses for why we can't obey (Ex. 4:10). Yet God promises He has equipped us with everything we need to do the work He has chosen for us (Eph. 2:10).

We'll all experience doubt but can't allow it to blind us to the truth: We are cherished and protected by the God of all creation.

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.25.25

38 40 60 62 70 9

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$70,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.26.25

1 9 14 31 34 2

All Star Bonus: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$31,600,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.26.25

15 38 40 45 48 6

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 59 Mins 22 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.26.25

7 13 14 20 28

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$130,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.26.25

12 20 26 38 40 5

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.26.25

1 12 14 18 69 2

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$20,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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Upcoming Groton Events

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

News from the **AP** Associated Press

Campgrounds and visitor centers at federal lakes are closing amid Trump's budget cuts

By JOHN HANNA Associated Press

TOPEKA, Kan. (AP) — Campgrounds, boat ramps and other facilities in at least 30 locations at federal lakes and reservoirs in six states will be closed or have their hours curtailed as of mid-May as the Trump administration tries to rapidly shrink the U.S. government.

Officials at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which oversees the lakes and reservoirs and their amenities for boating, camping, hiking and sightseeing, said they are dealing with staffing shortages and other budgetary restrictions.

Corps spokesman Douglas Garman said concentrating staff at fewer recreational sites will allow those sites to keep the "full range of services" that visitors expect.

The Corps' district office in Omaha, Nebraska, which oversees facilities across a large swath of the Great Plains from western Iowa and Nebraska to Montana's border with Canada, said the changes also will protect hydropower and dam operations.

"Decisions to make operational changes at recreation areas are not made lightly, and we understand those decisions can be disruptive to the public's travel plans," Garman said in an email to The Associated Press.

President Donald Trump imposed a federal hiring freeze after beginning his second term in January, and his Department of Government Efficiency is trying to eliminate tens of thousands of government jobs.

In Pickstown, South Dakota, residents were "appalled" to learn the Corps plans to close its visitor center at the Fort Randall Dam and suspend tours of the dam's powerhouse on May 1, said Cindy Broyhill, the president of the town's Board of Trustees.

"We have a lot of fishing and boating, but we also have a lot of just plain tourists coming through to see the dam," Broyhill said of Pickstown, located a little more than a half-mile (0.8 kilometers) east of the dam on the Missouri River, about 4 miles (6.4 kilometers) north of the Nebraska state line.

"I think there are other places where they could cut that would make more sense," she added.

In western Kansas, Sue Graham, manager of Knothead's bait shop and camping supply store on the east side of Wilson Lake, was skeptical of a plan to limit a campsite there to daytime use as of May 15. The lake is about 230 miles (370 kilometers) west of Kansas City, home to the Corps district office for parts of Kansas, Missouri and southern Nebraska.

Graham doesn't think the move will save much money because the campsite is used only by residents who own boat ramps nearby, but Corps officials would "shoot themselves in the foot" if they went further because of lost fee revenues, she said, adding that she does not expect her shop to be affected.

"People are still going to come out," Graham said.

The Kansas City district plans to close visitor information centers at two Kansas lakes including Hillsdale, outside the Kansas City area, and Kanopolis, in central Kansas. The Corps will not allow overnight camping in 25 "primitive," no-amenities spots in two areas at Harlan County Lake in western Nebraska near the Kansas state line. The sites and water nearby still will be accessible during the day.

Emily Coffin, the district's natural resource section chief, said the district has pursued efficiency initiatives for five or six years that will lead to fewer visitor-staff interactions. They include self-service campsite registrations, cashless parking and payments through codes scanned with smartphones.

"It just may be a little bit more noticeable because we have more of that built on than maybe we did two years ago," she said.

In March, the Corps' Baltimore district closed three campgrounds at Raystown Lake in central Pennsylvania and a campground, swimming beach and boat ramp at Cowanesque Lake in northern Pennsylvania.

The Omaha district announced earlier this month that it would close six campgrounds in the Dakotas on May 1, as well as three visitor centers in South Dakota and Montana. It also plans to suspend or limit

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tours of four South Dakota dam powerhouses and decrease tours at Fort Peck Dam in northeast Montana. The Corps district for southeastern Washington state announced last week it was closing two visitor centers and eight camping and recreation areas there.

"By concentrating our resources, we can better maintain essential missions," Lt. Col. Katie Werbeck, the district's commander, said in a statement.

Car kills and injures people attending street festival in Vancouver

VANCOUVER (AP) — The driver of a car struck revelers at a street festival in Canada, killing and injuring an unknown number of people at the event celebrating Filipino culture, police said.

The vehicle entered the street at 8:14 p.m. Saturday where people were attending the Lapu Lapu Day festival, the Vancouver Police Department said in a social media post.

"A number of people have been killed and multiple others are injured after a driver drove into a crowd," police said. The exact number of dead or injured was not immediately available.

A 30-year-old Vancouver man was arrested at the scene and the department's Major Crime Section is overseeing the investigation, police said.

"At this time, we are confident that this incident was not an act of terrorism," the police department posted early Sunday.

The festival was being held in a South Vancouver neighborhood. Video posted on social media showed victims and debris strewn across a long stretch of road, with at least seven people lying immobile on the ground. A black SUV with a crumpled front section could be seen in still photos from the scene.

James Cruzat, a Vancouver business owner, was at the event and heard a car rev its engine and then "a loud noise, like a loud bang" that he initially thought might be a gunshot.

"We saw people on the road crying, others were like running, shouting, or even screaming, asking for help. So we tried to go there just to check what was really actually happening until we found some bodies on the ground. Others were lifeless, others like, you know, injured," Cruzat said.

"It was terrible to see that kind of incident, that situation. It was heartbreaking," Cruzat said. "I couldn't even imagine that it's actually happening in real life, because normally we see that on TVs or movies. But when you are in that kind situation, it was really shocking. Like, you couldn't think really, really well. You couldn't do anything but to pray for them."

Vancouver Mayor Kenneth Sim said in a social media post that the city would provide more information when possible.

"I am shocked and deeply saddened by the horrific incident at today's Lapu Lapu Day event," Sim said. "Our thoughts are with all those affected and with Vancouver's Filipino community during this incredibly difficult time."

Prime Minister Mark Carney and other Canadian political figures posted messages expressing shock at the violence, condolences for victims and support for the community celebrating its heritage at the festival.

"I offer my deepest condolences to the loved ones of those killed and injured, to the Filipino Canadian community, and to everyone in Vancouver. We are all mourning with you," Carney wrote.

"As we wait to learn more, our thoughts are with the victims and their families — and Vancouver's Filipino community, who were coming together today to celebrate resilience," wrote Jagmeet Singh, leader of the New Democratic Party, who was at the festival earlier in the day.

"My thoughts are with the Filipino community and all the victims targeted by this senseless attack. Thank you to the first responders who are at the scene as we wait to hear more," Conservative Party leader Pierre Poilievre wrote.

David Eby, the premier of British Columbia, the province where Vancouver is located, said he was shocked and heartbroken. "We are in contact with the City of Vancouver and will provide any support needed," Eby wrote.

A massive explosion at an Iranian port linked to missile fuel shipment kills 25, injures some 800

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

MUSCAT, Oman (AP) — A massive explosion and fire rocked a port Saturday in southern Iran purportedly linked to a shipment of a chemical ingredient used to make missile propellant, killing 25 people and injuring around 800 others.

Helicopters and aircraft dumped water from the air on the raging fire through the night into Sunday morning at the Shahid Rajaei port. The explosion occurred just as Iran and the United States met Saturday in Oman for the third round of negotiations over Tehran's rapidly advancing nuclear program.

No one in Iran outright suggested that the explosion came from an attack. However, even Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, who led the talks, on Wednesday acknowledged that "our security services are on high alert given past instances of attempted sabotage and assassination operations designed to provoke a legitimate response."

State media offered the casualty figures, saying authorities identified only 10 of the dead, including two women.

Meanwhile, state TV reported the fire was under control and will be fully extinguished later Sunday. It also said activities have resumed at the port, showing footage of containers of a commercial ship being unloaded.

There were few details on what sparked the blaze just outside of Bandar Abbas, causing other containers to reportedly explode.

Private security firm Ambrey says the port received missile fuel chemical in March. It is part of a shipment of ammonium perchlorate from China by two vessels to Iran, first reported in January by the Financial Times. The chemical used to make solid propellant for rockets was going to be used to replenish Iran's missile stocks, which had been depleted by its direct attacks on Israel during the war with Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

"The fire was reportedly the result of improper handling of a shipment of solid fuel intended for use in Iranian ballistic missiles," Ambrey said.

Ship-tracking data analyzed by The Associated Press put one of the vessels believed to be carrying the chemical in the vicinity in March, as Ambrey said. Iran hasn't acknowledged taking the shipment. The Iranian mission to the United Nations didn't respond to a request for comment on Saturday.

It's unclear why Iran wouldn't have moved the chemicals from the port, particularly after the Beirut port blast in 2020. That explosion, caused by the ignition of hundreds of tons of highly explosive ammonium nitrate, killed more than 200 people and injured more than 6,000 others. However, Israel did target Iranian missile sites where Tehran uses industrial mixers to create solid fuel.

Social media footage of the explosion on Saturday at Shahid Rajaei saw reddish-hued smoke rising from the fire just before the detonation. That suggests a chemical compound being involved in the blast, like in the Beirut explosion.

"Get back, get back! Tell the gas (truck) to go!" a man in one video shouted just before the blast. "Tell him to go, it's going to blow up! Oh God, this is blowing up! Everybody evacuate! Get back! Get back!"

On Saturday night, the state-run IRNA news agency said that the Customs Administration of Iran blamed a "stockpile of hazardous goods and chemical materials stored in the port area" for the blast, without elaborating.

An aerial shot released by Iranian media after the blast showed fires burning at multiple locations in the port, with authorities later warning about air pollution from chemicals such as ammonia, sulfur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide in the air. Schools and offices in Bandar Abbas will be closed Sunday as well.

Port is a major destination for Iranian cargo

Shahid Rajaei has been a target before. A 2020 cyberattack attributed to Israel targeted the port. It came after Israel said that it thwarted a cyberattack targeting its water infrastructure, which it attributed to Iran. Israeli officials didn't respond to requests for comment regarding Saturday's explosion.

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Social media videos showed black billowing smoke after the blast. Others showed glass blown out of buildings kilometers, or miles, away from the epicenter of the explosion. State media footage showed the injured crowding into at least one hospital, with ambulances arriving as medics rushed one person by on a stretcher.

Hasanzadeh, the provincial disaster management official, earlier told state television that the blast came from containers at Shahid Rajaei port in the city, without elaborating. State television also reported that there had been a building collapse caused by the explosion, though no further details were offered.

The Interior Ministry said that it launched an investigation into the blast. Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian also offered his condolences to those affected in the blast.

Shahid Rajaei port in Hormozgan province is about 1,050 kilometers (650 miles) southeast of Iran's capital, Tehran, on the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf through which 20% of all oil traded passes.

US forces deploy anti-ship missiles in Philippines and stage live-fire drills near China hotspots

By JIM GOMEZ AND JOEAL CALUPITAN Associated Press

BATAN ISLAND, Philippines (AP) — The U.S. military has deployed an anti-ship missile launcher for the first time on Batan Island in the Philippines, as Marines unloaded the high-precision weapon on the northern tip of the archipelago, just a sea border away from Taiwan.

U.S. and Philippine forces separately unleashed a barrage of missile and artillery fire that shot down several drones acting as hostile aircraft in live-fire drills on Sunday in Zambales province facing the disputed South China Sea.

The mock battle scenarios over the weekend in the annual Balikatan exercises between the U.S. and its oldest treaty ally in Asia, the Philippines, not only simulated real-life war. They were also staged near major geopolitical hotspots, which have become delicate frontlines in the regional rivalry between China and the U.S. under former President Joe Biden and now Donald Trump.

About 9,000 American and 5,000 Filipino military personnel took part in the combat maneuvers. At least 260 Australian personnel also joined, with smaller observer delegations from Japan and other countries.

China has fiercely opposed the combat drills as provocative. Its aircraft carrier group sailed by a few days earlier near Batanes, where the U.S. military had deployed the Navy Marine Expeditionary Ship Interdiction System on Saturday on Batan near the Bashi Channel just south of Taiwan, a critical trade and military route that the U.S. and Chinese militaries have tried to gain strategic control of.

"The introduction of NMESIS into the first island chain for sea denial, sea control is another step in our force design journey," U.S. Marine Lt. Gen. Michael Cederholm told a small group of journalists, including from The Associated Press, who were invited to witness the transport of the missile system aboard a C-130 Air Force aircraft to Batanes.

"We're not here practicing a war plan," said Cederholm. "We're practicing for the defense of the Philippines."

The U.S. and the Philippines have denied the annual combat maneuvers — which both said would focus on a "full-scale battle scenario" this year — were aimed at China or any adversary. The lines between what's mock and real, however, have been at times murky.

Asked if U.S. forces would pull out the anti-ship missile system from Batanes after the combat drills, Cederholm did not reply clearly.

"We don't broadcast when we're going in, when we're coming out and how long things are going to stay," Cederholm said. "All I'll say is we're here at the invitation and with the support of the Philippine government."

"But I'm glad it's here," he said.

Additionally, China had repeatedly expressed its strong opposition to the U.S. Army deployment last year of a mid-range missile system in the Philippines for joint exercises.

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The U.S. Army launcher with at least 16 Standard Missile-6 and the Tomahawk Land Attack Missiles was repositioned in January from an international airport in northern Laoag city to a northwestern coastal area facing the Scarborough Shoal, where China's forces have used water cannons and dangerous blocking maneuvers against Philippine coast guard and fishery ships and fired flares near Manila's patrol planes, a Philippine official then told The AP.

The official spoke on condition of anonymity due to a lack of authority to discuss the delicate issue publicly. Tomahawk missiles can travel over 1,000 miles (1,600 kilometers), which places China within their target range.

During the combat exercises from April 21 to May 9, American and Filipino forces will also practice jointly defending Philippine islands by repelling hostile forces attempting to assault from the sea in the western Philippine province of Palawan, which faces the South China Sea, and in northern Cagayan province near Batanes.

Philippine Brig. Gen. Michael Logico said the combat exercises were crucial to strengthening deterrence against aggression in the Bashi Channel.

"A peaceful region can only be maintained through a proper balance of strength between opposing forces until such time that ... both countries decide that it's not going to be worth it to fight over this area," Logico said.

Early this month, the Chinese military staged largescale drills in the waters around Taiwan and renewed a warning to the self-ruled democracy not to seek independence. Chinese navy, air, ground and rocket forces staged the drills.

The Philippines used to host two of the largest U.S. Navy and Air Force bases outside the American mainland. The bases were shut down in the early 1990s after the Philippine Senate rejected an extension, but American forces returned for large-scale combat exercises with Filipino troops under a 1999 agreement.

Cederholm cited the tens of thousands of U.S. military personnel, along with Filipino scouts, buried in the vast American cemetery in Manila as proof of Washington's commitment to help defend the Philippines beyond the U.S. bases era in the Philippines.

"We take our treaty obligations very seriously," Cederholm said.

What is the International Court of Justice and why is it weighing in on humanitarian aid in Gaza?

By MOLLY QUELL Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — The top United Nations court on Monday will begin hearing from 40 countries on what Israel must do to provide desperately needed humanitarian assistance to Palestinians in Gaza and the occupied West Bank.

Last year, the U.N. General Assembly asked the International Court of Justice to weigh in on Israel's legal obligations after the country effectively banned the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees, the main provider of aid to Gaza, from operating. The United States, Israel's closest ally, voted against the resolution.

Israel over a month ago again cut off all aid to Gaza and its over 2 million people. Israel has disputed that there is a shortage of aid in Gaza, and says it is entitled to block the aid because it says Hamas seizes it for its own use.

The Hague-based court has been asked to give an advisory opinion, a non-binding but legally definitive answer, in the latest judicial proceedings involving Israel and the 18-month war in Gaza. That is expected to take several months.

What is the International Court of Justice?

Set up in the aftermath of World War II, the ICJ is an organ of the U.N. and adjudicates disputes between countries. Certain U.N. bodies, including the General Assembly, can request advisory opinions from the court's 15 judges.

All 193 U.N. member states are members of the ICJ, though not all of them automatically recognize its

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jurisdiction.

Last year, the court issued an unprecedented and sweeping condemnation of Israel's rule over the occupied Palestinian territories, finding Israel's presence unlawful and calling for it to end. The U.N. General Assembly sought the opinion after a Palestinian request. The ICJ said Israel had no right to sovereignty in the territories, was violating international laws against acquiring territory by force and was impeding Palestinians' right to self-determination.

Two decades ago, the court in another advisory opinion held that Israel was violating international law by constructing a barrier between Israel and the West Bank. That opinion, also requested by the U.N. General Assembly, dismissed Israeli arguments that the wall was needed for security.

Israel has not participated in previous advisory opinion hearings but has submitted written statements. What is the genocide case that Israel is facing at the ICJ?

South Africa went to the court last year to accuse Israel of genocide over its actions in the war in Gaza, which began when Hamas-led militants attacked southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killing about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting 251.

Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed over 51,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not say how many are civilians or combatants. The offensive has reduced much of Gaza to rubble, and most of its people remain homeless.

Israel rejects South Africa's claim and accuses it of providing political cover for Hamas.

South Africa also asked judges to make nine urgent orders known as provisional measures. They are aimed at protecting civilians in Gaza while the court considers the legal arguments.

The court has ruled several times on that request, including ordering Israel to do all it can to prevent death, destruction and any acts of genocide in Gaza. The proceedings are ongoing and likely to take years to reach a conclusion.

How is the ICJ different from the International Criminal Court?

The International Criminal Court was established in 2002 as the court of last resort to prosecute those responsible for the world's most heinous atrocities: war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide and the crime of aggression.

While the ICJ deals with disputes between two or more countries, the ICC seeks to hold individuals criminally responsible.

In November, a three-judge panel issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant and Hamas' military chief, Mohammed Deif, accusing them of crimes against humanity in connection with the war in Gaza.

The warrants said there was reason to believe Netanyahu and Gallant have used "starvation as a method of warfare" by restricting humanitarian aid and intentionally targeted civilians in Israel's campaign against Hamas, charges Israeli officials deny.

The warrant marked the first time a sitting leader of a major Western ally has been accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity by the global court of justice and has sparked major pushback from supporters of Israel, including the U.S.

Israel and its top ally, the United States, are not members of the court. However, Palestine is, and judges ruled in 2021 that the court had jurisdiction over crimes committed on Palestinian territory.

Iran and the US hold hours of expert talks in Oman over Tehran's rapidly advancing nuclear program

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

MUSCAT, Oman (AP) — Iran and the United States held in-depth negotiations in Oman over Tehran's rapidly advancing nuclear program on Saturday, ending the discussions with a promise for more talks and perhaps another high-level meeting next weekend.

The talks ran for several hours in Muscat, the mountain-wrapped capital of this sultanate on the eastern edge of the Arabian Peninsula.

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Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi told state television after the talks that the parties exchanged written points throughout the day in discussions that he described as "very serious and work-focused."

"This time, the negotiations were much more serious than in the past, and we gradually entered into deeper and more detailed discussions," he said. "We have moved somewhat away from broader, general discussions — though it is not the case that all disagreements have been resolved. Differences still exist both on major issues and on the details."

A senior U.S. administration official said that the talks were "positive and productive."

"This latest round of direct and indirect discussions lasted over four hours," the official said on condition of anonymity to discuss the talks. "There is still much to do, but further progress was made on getting to a deal. We agreed to meet again soon, in Europe, and we thank our Omani partners for facilitating these talks."

Omani Foreign Minister Badr al-Busaidi, who has mediated the two previous round of talks in Muscat and Rome, offered a positive note at the end of Saturday's negotiations.

Iran and the U.S. "identified a shared aspiration to reach agreement based on mutual respect and enduring commitments," al-Busaidi posted on X. "Core principles, objectives and technical concerns were all addressed. Talks will continue next week with a further high level meeting provisionally scheduled for May 3."

Araghchi arrived Friday in Oman on the eve of the talks and visited the Muscat International Book Fair, surrounded by television cameras and photojournalists. Witkoff was in Moscow on Friday to meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin, and arrived on Saturday to Oman.

Meanwhile on Saturday, a major explosion rocked a port in southern Iran just after the talks began, killing 18 people and injuring some 800 others. Authorities offered no immediate cause for the blast, which appeared to have been caused by a highly combustible material — though officials ruled out its oil and gas industry. The private security firm also linked to a shipment of a chemical ingredient used to make missile propellant to the port as well.

Nuclear talks come after decades of tensions

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 a half-century of enmity.

U.S. President Donald Trump has repeatedly 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.

Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers did limit Tehran's program. However, Trump unilaterally withdrew from it in 2018, setting in motion years of attacks and tensions. The wider Middle East also remains on edge over the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip.

Trump, traveling to Rome for the funeral of Pope Francis, again said that he hoped negotiations would lead to a new nuclear deal. However, he still held out the possibility of a military strike if they didn't.

"The Iran situation is coming out very well," Trump said on Air Force One. "We've had a lot of talks with them and I think we're going to have a deal. I'd much rather have a deal than the other alternative. That would be good for humanity."

He added: "There are some people that want to make a different kind of a deal — a much nastier deal — and I don't want that to happen to Iran if we can avoid it."

Talks turn to experts

From the Iranian side, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Majid Takht-e Ravanchi headed up Tehran's expert team, said Mohammad Golzari, an Iranian government official. Takht-e Ravanchi took part in the 2015 nuclear talks.

The U.S. technical team was led by Michael Anton, the director of U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio's policy planning staff. Anton doesn't have the nuclear policy experience of those who led Washington's efforts in the 2015 talks.

Iran has insisted that keeping its enrichment is key. But Witkoff has muddled the issue by first suggest-

ing in a television interview that Iran could enrich uranium at 3.67%, then later saying that all enrichment must stop. The demand that all enrichment stop also has been repeated by Rubio.

However, Iranians remain hopeful that the talks could be successful, as the Iranian rial has rebounded from historic lows during which it took more than 1 million rials to buy \$1.

"It's OK to negotiate, to make the nuclear program smaller or bigger, and reach a deal," Tehran resident Farzin Keivan said. "Of course we shouldn't give them everything. After all, we've suffered a lot for this program."

Shocked by US peace proposal, Ukrainians say they will not accept any formal surrender of Crimea

By SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — A peace proposal by the Trump administration that includes recognizing Russian authority over Crimea shocked Ukrainian officials, who say they will not accept any formal surrender of the peninsula, even though they expect to concede the territory to the Kremlin, at least temporarily.

Giving up the land that was illegally annexed by Russia in 2014 is also politically and legally impossible, according to experts. It would require a change to the Ukrainian constitution and a nationwide vote, and it could be considered treason. Lawmakers and the public are firmly opposed to the idea.

"It doesn't mean anything," said Oleksandr Merezhko, a lawmaker with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's party. "We will never recognize Crimea as part of Russia."

Unlike a territorial concession, a formal surrender would permanently relinquish Crimea and abandon the hope that Ukraine could regain it in the future.

The Ukrainian public largely understands that land must be ceded as part of any armistice because there is no way to retake it militarily. Polls indicate a rising percentage of the population accepts such a trade-off.

But much of the public messaging about land concessions has suggested that they are not necessarily permanent, as when Kyiv Mayor Vitalii Klitschko told the BBC recently that Ukraine may need to temporarily give up land as part of a peace deal.

Saying otherwise would effectively admit defeat — a deeply unpopular move, especially for Ukrainians living under Russian occupation who hope to be liberated and reunited with their families one day. It also would call into question the sacrifices made by tens of thousands of Ukrainian service members who have been killed or wounded.

U.S. President Donald Trump underscored the Crimea proposal in an interview published Friday in Time magazine: "Crimea will stay with Russia. Zelenskyy understands that, and everybody understands that it's been with them for a long time."

His comments offered the latest example of the U.S. leader pressuring Ukraine to make concessions to end the war while it remains under siege. Trump has also accused Zelenskyy of prolonging the war by resisting negotiations with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Crimea, a strategic peninsula along the Black Sea in southern Ukraine, was seized by Russia years before the full-scale invasion that began in 2022. The Russian takeover followed large protests that ousted former Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich, who had refused to sign an association agreement with the European Union.

In the lead-up to peace talks, Ukrainian officials told The Associated Press for months that they expect Crimea and other Ukrainian territory controlled by Russia to be among Kyiv's concessions in the event of any deal. But Zelenskyy has said on multiple occasions that formally surrendering the land has always been a red line.

Elements of Trump's peace proposal would see the U.S. formally recognizing Crimea as Russian and de facto accepting Moscow's rule over occupied Ukrainian territories, according to a senior European official who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive diplomatic discussions.

Whether the U.S. formally recognizes Crimea as Russian is out of Zelenskyy's hands. But many obstacles prevent the Ukrainian president from doing so, even under immense pressure. He cannot unilaterally sign

any such proposal, and he could be reprimanded by future governments for even attempting it, experts said.

Ukraine began to accept that it would not regain its lost territories after the failure of the country's 2023 summer counteroffensive. From then on, the Ukrainian military concentrated on defending the territory it still held.

In return for territorial concessions, Ukraine wants robust security guarantees that ideally would include NATO membership or concrete plans to arm and train its forces against any future Russian invasion with the pledged support of allies. One scenario envisions European boots on the ground, which Russia rejects.

Zelenskyy has said negotiations over occupied Ukrainian territory will be drawn out and will not likely occur until a ceasefire is in place. In late March, he told reporters after a call with Trump that the U.S. president "clearly understands that legally we will not recognize any territories."

He said giving up territory would be "the most difficult question" and "a big challenge for us."

Formal recognition of Crimea would also amount to political suicide for Zelenskyy. It could expose him to legal action in the future, said Tymofiy Mylovanov, president of the Kyiv School of Economics and a former economics minister.

Signing a potentially unconstitutional document could be interpreted as high treason, Mylovanov said.

The Ukrainian government cannot act either. It has no constitutional means to accept a violation of its territorial integrity, and altering the territorial makeup of the country requires a nationwide referendum.

If Ukrainian lawmakers were even to entertain the idea of surrendering Crimea, it would trigger a long, drawn-out legal debate.

"That's why Russia is pushing it, because they know it's impossible to achieve," Mylovanov said.

"Anything related to constitutional change gives so much policy and public communication space to Russia," he added. "This is all they want."

Soldiers on the front line say they will never stop fighting, no matter what the political leadership decides.

"We lost our best guys in this war," said Oleksandr, a soldier in the Donetsk region, who spoke on the condition that only his first name be used in line with military protocols. "We won't stop until all Ukrainian lands are free."

Conclave politics begin with the question: Continue Pope Francis' radical legacy or change course?

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — One of Pope Francis' enduring legacies was that he greatly expanded the diversity of cardinals who will elect his successor, naming "princes of the church" from faraway countries that had never had one before.

That legacy is now throwing a wrench in the traditional sport of speculating about the next pope, since these far-flung cardinals don't know one another well and haven't coalesced into clear voting blocs going into the conclave, the centuries-old ritual to elect a new pope.

As a result, all that is certain about the upcoming conclave is that there is no certainty.

As the Oscar-nominated film "Conclave" made clear, the election of a pope is a Hollywood-worthy drama steeped in mystery, secrecy and faith. But real-world politics and personal calculations come into play and will weigh on the 130-plus cardinals when they enter the Sistine Chapel to cast their ballots.

What will the cardinals be looking for?

No date has yet been set for the conclave, but it must start by May 10. After Francis' funeral Saturday, the cardinals who have flocked to Rome will meet regularly this week, sizing one another up as they discuss the needs of the 1.4 billion-strong Catholic Church following Francis' revolutionary papacy.

Francis' 12-year pontificate was characterized by a focus away from doctrinaire rules to making the church more inclusive and welcoming. For progressives, it was a refocusing of mission back to the Gospel's mandate to care for poor people and feed the hungry. For conservatives, Francis sowed confusion by introducing

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wiggle room in hot-button cultural issues such as the church's teaching on marriage and homosexuality. As a result, the cardinals face a fundamental decision when looking for a successor: Does the church need someone to continue Francis' legacy, focusing on the marginalized as Jesus did? Or does it need a course correction to rebuild unity, after Francis' radical reforms alienated some?

One question is whether the conservative wing, which counts cardinals from Africa, Eastern Europe and part of the U.S., has enough votes to swing the pendulum back to the doctrinaire papacies of St. John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI.

Beyond that, the cardinals will consider more practical matters: Pick someone in his 60s and you might have a pope for 20-plus years, for better or worse. Pick a pope from where the church is alive and growing – Asia or Africa – and you might bring more upheaval to the Vatican's Italian-heavy bureaucracy that is still smarting from the Argentine pope's go-it-alone style.

Pick a relatively unknown pope and he's just that, unknown.

Who are the contenders?

Chatbots and bookmakers' predictions aside, it's really anyone's guess, said Alberto Melloni, a church historian.

"They barely know each other," Melloni said, recalling that in his last batch of cardinals alone, in December, Francis added 20 new voters to the conclave. These cardinals hailed from Algeria, Argentina and Australia and points in between, and may have first met the day they got their red hats.

Of course there are some leading candidates. They stand out as front-runners simply because they are the most well-known.

- Cardinal Pietro Parolin is a leading Italian, by nature of his office: He was Francis' secretary of state, the Vatican No. 2, so known to every cardinal in the Sistine Chapel.

- The top candidate to be history's first Asian pope is also on everyone's short list because he's got a similarly high-profile Vatican job: Filippino Cardinal Luis Tagle, who heads the Vatican's evangelization office responsible for the Catholic Church in much of the developing world.

- A leading candidate representing more of the conservative wing of the church is Hungarian Cardinal Erdo, 72, the archbishop of Budapest.

"You don't see in this moment real front-runners, because to be a front-runner, you need already to have behind you a packet of votes," said longtime Vatican watcher Marco Politi, whose upcoming book "The Unfinished" explores Francis' unfinished business.

Kingmakers expected to have a big role

Because the cardinals don't know each other well, no one is seen to have secured the packet of votes, suggesting it might take several rounds of voting to get a two-thirds majority.

Melloni said cardinals shouldn't be afraid to let the conclave drag on, even if it sends a message of division as black smoke day after day signals a lack of consensus.

"Certainly the church is divided. The problem is to find the one who unites, not pretend that it isn't divided," Melloni said.

The lack of front-runners has made the "kingmakers" more important in this conclave.

These are the influential figures who themselves may not be considered "papabile" but can rally votes from other cardinals in a particular direction. They include New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan, German Cardinal Reinhard Marx and Congolese Cardinal Fridolin Ambongo Besungu, the Franciscan archbishop of Kinshasa who heads the African bishops' conference.

Just because they were named by Francis ...

While 108 of the voting-age cardinals were created by Francis, they may not necessarily follow his mercy-over-morals line: Some may support Francis' call for the church to be more inclusive, but oppose women priests, Politi said.

"Maybe they agree with the issue of giving Communion to divorced and remarried people, but they don't want to bless a homosexual couple," he said. "So this makes this conclave very difficult."

Marx said the global outpouring of grief after Francis' death shows support for a pope who will continue his ministry focusing on people who are marginalized and against war.

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"People long for a voice that goes beyond national interests, beyond polarizations, beyond discussion about who overwhelms whom and who defeats whom," Marx told reporters after the funeral.

Some outstanding questions

One question is whether Cardinal Angelo Becciu, once one of the most powerful cardinals at the Vatican, will be allowed to cast a vote.

Francis in 2020 forced Becciu to resign and relinquish his rights and privileges as a cardinal over alleged financial misconduct. The Sardinian prelate was later convicted of finance-related crimes by the Vatican criminal tribunal.

He is appealing the convictions and has participated in Vatican events since his downfall. At 76, he is under the voting age limit of 80. However, official Vatican statistics list him as a "non elector." He and his supporters maintain that he didn't lose his primary duty of electing a pope.

Another question is where the cardinals will sleep.

The Vatican's Domus Santa Marta hotel was built in 1996 specifically to house cardinals during a conclave, so they could all be in one place and sequestered.

At the time, St. John Paul II had decreed that there could only be 120 cardinal electors who could participate in a conclave, and the hotel was built to accommodate their numbers. But Francis and his predecessors regularly breached the 120-man threshold and the electors now number 135.

Also, Room No. 201, where Francis chose to live after his 2013 election, is under seal and must remain so until a new pope is elected.

Asked if the cardinals would be asked to double-up in hotel rooms, Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni noted that such accommodations would be fitting.

"It's a great opportunity to create community," Bruni said.

Lawsuit says migrants endure isolation and intimidation at US' Guantanamo detention center

By MORGAN LEE Associated Press

Immigration and civil rights advocates have renewed concerns that immigrants detained at Guantanamo Bay are being held in extreme isolation, cut off from meaningful access to legal counsel or candid communication with relatives, according to a new court filing Saturday.

In a lawsuit brought on behalf of two Nicaraguan immigrants held at the U.S. Navy base on Cuba, attorneys say there is a climate of "extreme fear and intimidation" that interferes with constitutional rights to due process and legal counsel.

The revised lawsuit asks a federal judge in Washington to intervene on behalf of all future immigrants at Guantanamo, which authorities have used as a way station for immigrants whom President Donald Trump calls "the worst," with final removal orders, as his administration seeks to ramp up mass deportations.

"Officers at Guantánamo have created a climate of extreme fear and intimidation where immigrant detainees are afraid to communicate freely with their counsel," the lawsuit says, adding that conditions are more restrictive than at mainland detention facilities, prisons and in some instances law-of-war military custody at Guantanamo Bay.

U.S. Southern Command, which oversees the base, declined to comment on the lawsuit and referred requests to the Department of Homeland Security, which did not immediately respond to an email Saturday.

In March a federal judge ruled against advocates' attempts to help migrants at Guantanamo and prevent further transfers there, days after the administration moved all migrants out of the facility.

Two Nicaraguans who arrived since then have submitted court declarations charting their journey through detention centers in Louisiana to Cuba and describing their anguished concerns that phone conversations are being monitored and might lead to punishment or reprisals.

Attorneys have no in-person contact with clients at the base and say they are chained and placed in restraints during legal calls that are broadcast on speakerphone with officers seated outside an open doorway.

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That undermines the right to confidential communication and attorney-client privilege, the lawsuit says.

The complaint also says some detainees have been interrogated by the FBI about possible gang affiliation while surrounded by military officers. One person was stripped in search of a missing toothbrush, and another was locked in a concrete cell with no windows or lights for four days, it adds.

"I have been allowed to speak to my family about 20 times. Each call is about 5 minutes," Johon Suazo-Muller said in a written declaration to the court that was translated into English.

He said he immigrated to the U.S. from Nicaragua in October 2023 in search of asylum from political conflict and a better life.

"I am not allowed to give any information about my time at Guantanamo," Suazo-Muller said. "I can't say where I'm at or details about how I'm doing."

Shedeur Sanders' long wait ends when Browns take him in the 5th round of the NFL draft

By STEVE MEGARGEE AP Sports Writer

GREEN BAY, Wis. (AP) — Shedeur Sanders dealt with his shockingly long wait to get drafted by relying on the same approach that made him an NFL prospect in the first place.

The Colorado quarterback wouldn't let himself get down about anything, even when he received a prank call while waiting to hear that a team had selected him. When the Cleveland Browns finally took him in the fifth round Saturday — four rounds later than he was expected to go — the son of Hall of Famer Deion Sanders reacted by dancing and jumping into a swimming pool.

"That's what it's about," Sanders said. "You can't be up too low or anything. You got to be able to celebrate. When we score a touchdown, we celebrate for a little bit and now it's back to, it's time to work, it's time to go. All it is, is a football game to me, and that's how I view it."

Sanders wasn't selected until the 144th overall pick, a stunning fall for the most recognizable player in this draft class.

Draft forecasts generally rated Sanders behind only Miami's Cam Ward — who went first overall to the Tennessee Titans — among quarterbacks in this class. Five quarterbacks were taken before him instead, with one of them going to Cleveland when the Browns picked Oregon's Dillon Gabriel in the third round.

"It wasn't necessarily the plan going into the weekend to select two quarterbacks," Browns general manager Andrew Berry said. "But you know we do believe in best player available and positional value. And you know we didn't necessarily expect (Sanders) to be available in the fifth round."

The Browns moved up to take Sanders, trading their own fifth-round pick (No. 166 overall) and a sixth-round selection (No. 192) to Seattle in exchange for No. 144.

After such a long delay, Sanders let out his emotions once he finally got the call.

With his brother Shilo live-streaming the proceedings on Twitch, Sanders could be seen putting on a Browns cap and dancing at his family's Texas home. Another video shared on X by the NFL showed Sanders jumping into the pool.

"I'm just thankful for opportunity, so that's all I can ask for," Sanders said. "The rest is on me."

The history of the draft includes plenty of stories of quarterbacks waiting much longer than expected to get drafted. Sometimes it ultimately worked out just fine for them.

Dan Marino was the sixth quarterback taken in the famous 1983 draft class and went 27th overall to Miami, where he would spend his entire Hall of Fame career. Aaron Rodgers was supposed to go among the first few picks in 2005 but went 24th to Green Bay, where he went on to win four MVP awards and a Super Bowl.

More recently, Will Levis was considered a near-certain first-round pick in 2023 but slipped into the second round before Tennessee took him at No. 33 overall.

But it's hard to come up with a fall as steep as this one.

Sanders was projected to go in the first round after he finished eighth in the Heisman Trophy balloting and threw for a school-record 4,134 yards last season. He instead found himself getting passed over as

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other quarterbacks got selected.

The New York Giants traded up to get the 25th overall pick on Thursday but opted for Mississippi's Jaxon Dart. New Orleans selected Louisville's Tyler Shough in the second round. In the third round, Seattle chose Alabama's Jalen Milroe and Cleveland took Gabriel.

Sanders was asked Saturday how his tumble down the draft board might fuel him as he starts his pro career.

"I've just got to prove and show what I'm capable of," Sanders said. "But what fuels me is my purpose in life and understanding the route that we're going to have to take. Understanding that I was able to get an opportunity when a lot of people didn't want to give me an opportunity. So that's what I'm truly thankful for. So that's what fuels me."

Sanders now is part of a crowded Browns quarterback room as Deshaun Watson is expected to sit out the upcoming season with a torn Achilles tendon. The group also includes Kenny Pickett, 40-year-old Joe Flacco and Gabriel, who was responsible for a Football Bowl Subdivision-record 188 total career touchdowns during a six-year career that also included stops at Central Florida and Oklahoma.

Cleveland is the first team to draft two quarterbacks in the first five rounds since 2012, when Washington took Robert Griffin III with the second-overall pick and Kirk Cousins in the fourth round.

"I know I'm going to fit in perfect," Sanders said. "I feel like it's first getting in, showing the respect to the vets, showing them I'm here ready to work, show the coaches and have them understand I'm here ready to work so they can actually understand the real me."

One criticism of Sanders was that he was sacked 94 times in his two seasons at Colorado. Concerns also arose about his arm strength. There also were worries about how he would adapt to playing for someone other than his father.

Another potential wild card was how Sanders' outspoken father might react if he believed a team wasn't developing Shedeur effectively enough.

Deion Sanders had talked in some old interviews about having an idea where he'd want his sons to play. He sometimes even invoked the name of Eli Manning, who got traded to the New York Giants during the 2004 draft after saying he didn't want to play for the San Diego Chargers, who had selected him with the No. 1 pick that year.

Some of those issues may have pushed Sanders down some draft boards.

"After we watched the first, second round go by and my name wasn't called or anything, it was like, 'OK, all we need is an opportunity,'" Sanders said. "So it really didn't matter what pick, what round, or anything."

Some other familiar names also got taken Saturday.

Cam Skattebo, the running back who led Arizona State to a surprising College Football Playoff appearance, went in the fourth round to the New York Giants. Tennessee running back Dylan Sampson, the 2024 Southeastern Conference offensive player of the year, went later in the fourth round to Cleveland. Syracuse's Kyle McCord, who set an Atlantic Coast Conference single-season record by throwing for 4,779 yards last year, went to Philadelphia in the sixth round.

The two quarterbacks from the most recent CFP championship game went in the sixth round, with Pittsburgh taking Ohio State's Will Howard at No. 185 and Indianapolis selecting Notre Dame's Riley Leonard at No. 189. Texas quarterback Quinn Ewers, whose team lost to Ohio State in the semifinals, went to Miami in the seventh round.

Howard was one of seven Ohio State players to get selected Saturday, meaning 14 players from the reigning national champions were drafted. That left the Buckeyes one shy of the record for a seven-round draft, as Georgia produced 15 draft picks in 2022.

Protesters chant after arrest of judge accused of helping man evade immigration authorities

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER, DEVI SHASTRI and SCOTT BAUER Associated Press

MILWAUKEE (AP) — Protesters chanted and marched Saturday outside the FBI after agents arrested a Milwaukee judge accused of helping a man evade immigration authorities. The case has escalated a clash between the Trump administration and local authorities over the Republican president's sweeping immigration crackdown.

Milwaukee County Circuit Court Judge Hannah Dugan is accused of escorting the man and his lawyer out of her courtroom through the jury door last week after learning that immigration authorities were seeking his arrest. The man was taken into custody outside the courthouse after agents chased him on foot.

President Donald Trump's administration has accused state and local officials of interfering with his immigration enforcement priorities. The arrest also comes amid a growing battle between the administration and the federal judiciary over the president's executive actions over deportations and other matters.

On Saturday, protesters chanted "Immigrants are here to stay" and held up signs saying, "Liberty and Justice for All" outside the FBI's Milwaukee division.

"The judiciary acts as a check to unchecked executive power. And functioning democracies do not lock up judges," Democratic state Rep. Ryan Clancy told the crowd before it marched around the area.

Dugan was taken into custody by the FBI on Friday morning on the courthouse grounds, according to U.S. Marshals Service spokesperson Brady McCarron. She appeared briefly in federal court in Milwaukee later Friday before being released from custody. She faces charges of "concealing an individual to prevent his discovery and arrest" and obstructing or impeding a proceeding.

"Judge Dugan wholeheartedly regrets and protests her arrest. It was not made in the interest of public safety," her attorney, Craig Mastantuono, said during the hearing. He declined to comment to an Associated Press reporter following her court appearance.

Democratic Wisconsin Gov. Tony Evers, in a statement on the arrest, accused the Trump administration of repeatedly using "dangerous rhetoric to attack and attempt to undermine our judiciary at every level."

"I will continue to put my faith in our justice system as this situation plays out in the court of law," he said.

Court papers suggest Dugan was alerted to the presence of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents in the courthouse by her clerk, who was informed by an attorney that they appeared to be in the hallway.

The FBI affidavit describes Dugan as "visibly angry" over the arrival of immigration agents in the courthouse and says that she pronounced the situation "absurd" before leaving the bench and retreating to her chambers. It says she and another judge later approached members of the arrest team inside the courthouse, displaying what witnesses described as a "confrontational, angry demeanor."

After a back-and-forth with officers over the warrant for the man, Eduardo Flores-Ruiz, she demanded that the arrest team speak with the chief judge and led them away from the courtroom, the affidavit says.

After directing the arrest team to the chief judge's office, investigators say, Dugan returned to the courtroom and was heard saying words to the effect of "wait, come with me" before ushering Flores-Ruiz and his lawyer through a jury door into a non-public area of the courthouse. The action was unusual, the affidavit says, because "only deputies, juries, court staff, and in-custody defendants being escorted by deputies used the back jury door. Defense attorneys and defendants who were not in custody never used the jury door."

A sign that remained posted on Dugan's courtroom door Friday advised that if any attorney or other court official "knows or believes that a person feels unsafe coming to the courthouse to courtroom 615," they should notify the clerk and request an appearance via Zoom.

Flores-Ruiz, 30, was in Dugan's court for a hearing after being charged with three counts of misdemeanor domestic battery. Confronted by a roommate for playing loud music on March 12, Flores-Ruiz allegedly fought with him in the kitchen and struck a woman who tried to break them up, according to the police.

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affidavit in the case.

Another woman who tried to break up the fight and called police allegedly got elbowed in the arm by Flores-Ruiz.

Flores-Ruiz faces up to nine months in prison and a \$10,000 fine on each count if convicted. His public defender, Alexander Kostal, did not immediately return a phone message Friday seeking comment.

A federal judge, the same one Dugan would appear before a day later, had ordered Thursday that Flores-Ruiz remain jailed pending trial. Flores-Ruiz had been in the U.S. since reentering the country after he was deported in 2013, according to court documents.

Attorney General Pam Bondi said victims were sitting in the courtroom with state prosecutors when the judge helped him escape immigration arrest.

"The rule of law is very simple," she said in a video posted on X. "It doesn't matter what line of work you're in. If you break the law, we will follow the facts and we will prosecute you."

White House officials echoed the sentiment of no one being above the law.

Sen. Tammy Baldwin, a Democrat who represents Wisconsin, called the arrest of a sitting judge a "gravely serious and drastic move" that "threatens to breach" the separation of power between the executive and judicial branches.

Emilio De Torre, executive director of Milwaukee Turners, said during an earlier protest Friday afternoon outside the federal courthouse that Dugan was a former board member for the local civic group who "was certainly trying to make sure that due process is not disrupted and that the sanctity of the courts is upheld."

"Sending armed FBI and ICE agents into buildings like this will intimidate individuals showing up to court to pay fines, to deal with whatever court proceedings they may have," De Torre added.

The case is similar to one brought during the first Trump administration against a Massachusetts judge, who was accused of helping a man sneak out a back door of a courthouse to evade a waiting immigration enforcement agent.

That prosecution sparked outrage from many in the legal community, who slammed the case as politically motivated. Prosecutors dropped the case against Newton District Judge Shelley Joseph in 2022 under the Democratic Biden administration after she agreed to refer herself to a state agency that investigates allegations of misconduct by members of the bench.

The Justice Department had previously signaled that it was going to crack down on local officials who thwart federal immigration efforts.

The department in January ordered prosecutors to investigate for potential criminal charges any state and local officials who obstruct or impede federal functions. As potential avenues for prosecution, a memo cited a conspiracy offense as well as a law prohibiting the harboring of people in the country illegally.

Dugan was elected in 2016 to the county court Branch 31. She also has served in the court's probate and civil divisions, according to her judicial candidate biography.

Before being elected to public office, Dugan practiced at Legal Action of Wisconsin and the Legal Aid Society. She graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1981 with a bachelor of arts degree and earned her Juris Doctorate in 1987 from the school.

ICE deports immigrant mother of an infant and 3 children who are US citizens, lawyers say

By MARC LEVY Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers have in recent days deported the Cuban-born mother of a 1-year-old girl — separating them indefinitely — and three children ages 2, 4 and 7 who are U.S. citizens along with their Honduran-born mothers, their lawyers said Saturday.

The three cases raise questions about who is being deported, and why, and come amid a battle in federal courts over whether President Donald Trump's immigration crackdown has gone too far and too quickly at the expense of fundamental rights.

Lawyers in the cases described how the women were arrested at routine check-ins at ICE offices, given

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virtually no opportunity to speak with lawyers or their family members and then deported within three days or less.

The American Civil Liberties Union, National Immigration Project and several other allied groups said in a statement that the way ICE deported children who are U.S. citizens and their mothers is a "shocking — although increasingly common — abuse of power."

Gracie Willis of the National Immigration Project said the mothers, at the very least, did not have a fair opportunity to decide whether they wanted the children to stay in the United States.

"We have no idea what ICE was telling them, and in this case what has come to light is that ICE didn't give them another alternative," Willis said in an interview. "They didn't give them a choice, that these mothers only had the option to take their children with them despite loving caregivers being available in the United States to keep them here."

The 4-year-old — who is suffering from a rare form of cancer — and the 7-year-old were deported to Honduras within a day of being arrested with their mother, Willis said.

In the case involving the 2-year-old, a federal judge in Louisiana raised questions about the deportation of the girl, saying the government did not prove it had done so properly.

Lawyers for the girl's father insisted he wanted the girl to remain with him in the U.S., while ICE contended the mother had wanted the girl to be deported with her to Honduras, claims that weren't fully vetted by U.S. District Judge Terry Doughty in Louisiana.

Doughty in a Friday order scheduled a hearing on May 16 "in the interest of dispelling our strong suspicion that the Government just deported a U.S. citizen with no meaningful process," he wrote.

The Honduran-born mother — who is pregnant — was arrested Tuesday on an outstanding deportation order along with the 2-year-old girl and her 11-year-old Honduran-born sister during a check-in appointment at an ICE office in New Orleans, lawyers said. The family lived in Baton Rouge.

Doughty called government lawyers on Friday to speak to the woman while she was in the air on a deportation plane, only to be called back less than an hour later and told that a conversation was impossible because she "had just been released in Honduras."

In a Thursday court filing, lawyers for the father said ICE indicated that it was holding the 2-year-old girl in a bid to induce the father to turn himself in. His lawyers didn't describe his immigration status, but said he has legally delegated the custody of his daughters to his sister-in-law, a U.S. citizen who also lives in Baton Rouge.

Cuban-born woman is deported, leaving behind child and husband

In Florida, meanwhile, a Cuban-born woman who is the mother of a 1-year-old girl and the wife of a U.S. citizen was detained at a scheduled check-in appointment at an Immigration and Customs Enforcement office in Tampa, her lawyer said Saturday.

Heidy Sánchez was held without any communication and flown to Cuba two days later. She is still breast-feeding her daughter, who suffers from seizures, her lawyer, Claudia Cañizares, said.

Cañizares said she tried to file paperwork with ICE to contest the deportation Thursday morning but ICE refused to accept it, saying Sánchez was already gone, although Cañizares said she doesn't think that was true.

Cañizares said she told ICE that she was planning to reopen Sánchez's case to help her remain in the U.S. legally, but ICE told her that Sánchez can pursue the case while she's in Cuba.

"I think they're following orders that they need to remove a certain amount of people by day and they don't care, honestly," Cañizares said.

Sánchez is not a criminal and has a strong case on humanitarian grounds for allowing her to stay in the U.S., Cañizares said, but ICE isn't taking that into consideration when it has to meet what the lawyer said were deportation benchmarks.

Sánchez had an outstanding deportation order stemming from a missed hearing in 2019, for which she was detained for nine months, Cañizares said. Cuba apparently refused to accept Sanchez back at the time, so Sanchez was released in 2020 and ordered to maintain a regular schedule of check-ins with ICE, Cañizares said.

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Boston celebrates 1965 Freedom Rally led by MLK as advocates urge continued fight against injustice

By MICHAEL CASEY Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — As a Black teenager growing up in Boston, Wayne Lucas vividly remembers joining about 20,000 people to hear the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. speak out against the city's segregated school system and the entrenched poverty in poor communities.

Sixty years on, Lucas was back on the Boston Common on Saturday to celebrate the anniversary of what became known as the 1965 Freedom Rally. He joined others in calling for continued activism against many of the same injustices and inequities that King fought against, and in criticizing President Donald Trump and his administration for current divisions and fears about race and immigration across the country.

"The message was ... that we still have work to do," said Lucas, 75. "It was a lot of inspiration by every speaker out there."

The gathering drew several hundred people on a rainy and windy day, conditions similar to those during the 1965 event. It was preceded by a march by a smaller group of people, mostly along the route taken to the Boston Common 60 years earlier. Up to 125 different organizations took part.

Rally-goers urge activism

King's son, Martin Luther King III, gave a keynote speech, saying he never thought racism would still be around and on the rise like it is today.

"We must quadruple our efforts to create a more just and humane society," he told the crowd. "We used to exhibit humanity and civility, but we have chosen temporarily to allow civility to be moved aside. And that is not sustainable, my friends."

He added, "Today, we've got to find a way to move forward, when everything appears to be being dismantled, it seems to be attempting to break things up. Now, you do have to retreat sometimes. But dad showed us how to stay on the battlefield, and mom, throughout their lives. They showed us how to build community."

The gathering was near the site of a 20-foot-high (6-meter-high) memorial to racial equity, which shows Martin Luther King Jr. embracing his wife, Coretta Scott King.

U.S. Rep. Ayanna Pressley, a Massachusetts Democrat, said the work of 1960s civil rights leaders remains unfinished, with too many people still experiencing racism, poverty and injustice.

"We are living through perilous times," she said. "Across the country, we are witnessing ... a dangerous resurgence of white supremacy, of state-sanctioned violence, of economic exploitation, of authoritarian rhetoric."

1965 protest brings civil rights movement to the Northeast

The original protest rally in 1965 brought the civil rights movement to the Northeast, a place Martin Luther King Jr. knew well from his time earning a doctorate in theology from Boston University and serving as assistant minister at the city's Twelfth Baptist Church. It was also the place where he met his wife, who earned a degree in music education from the New England Conservatory.

In his speech, King told the crowd that he returned to Boston not to condemn the city but to encourage its leaders to do better at a time when Black leaders were fighting to desegregate the schools and housing and working to improve economic opportunities for Black residents. King also implored Boston to become a leader that other cities like New York and Chicago could follow in conducting "the creative experiments in the abolition of ghettos."

"It would be demagogic and dishonest for me to say that Boston is a Birmingham, or to equate Massachusetts with Mississippi," he said. "But it would be morally irresponsible were I to remain blind to the threat to liberty, the denial of opportunity, and the crippling poverty that we face in some sections of this community."

The Boston rally happened after President Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and months ahead of the enactment of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 signed in August.

King and other civil rights movement leaders had just come off the Selma to Montgomery march in

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Alabama, also referred to as Bloody Sunday, weeks before the Boston rally. The civil rights icon also was successful in the 1963 Birmingham campaign prompting the end of legalized racial segregation in the Alabama city, and eventually throughout the nation.

DEI comes under threat by Trump administration

Saturday's rally came as the Trump administration is waging war on diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives in government, schools and businesses around the country, including in Massachusetts.

Since his Jan. 20 inauguration, Trump has banned diversity initiatives across the federal government. The administration has launched investigations of colleges — public and private — that it accuses of discriminating against white and Asian students with race-conscious admissions programs intended to address historic inequities in access for Black students.

The Defense Department at one point temporarily removed training videos recognizing the Tuskegee Airmen and an online biography of Jackie Robinson. In February, Trump fired Air Force Gen. CQ Brown Jr., a champion of racial diversity in the military, as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Brown, in the wake of Floyd's killing, had spoken publicly about his experiences as a Black man, and was only the second Black general to serve as chairman.

The administration has fired diversity officers across government, curtailed some agencies' celebrations of Black History Month and terminated grants and contracts for projects ranging from planting trees in disadvantaged communities to studying achievement gaps in American schools.

King's son: Attacks on diversity make 'little sense'

Martin Luther King III told The Associated Press that the attacks on diversity make little sense, noting, "We cannot move forward without understanding what happened in the past."

"It doesn't mean that it's about blaming people. It's not about collective guilt. It's about collective responsibility," he continued. "How do we become better? Well, we appreciate everything that helped us to get to where we are. Diversity hasn't hurt the country."

King said opponents of diversity have floated an uninformed narrative that unqualified people of color are taking jobs from white people, when the reality is they have long been denied the opportunities they deserve.

"I don't know if white people understand this, but Black people are tolerant," he said. "From knee-high to a grasshopper, you have to be five times better than your white colleague. And that's how we prepare ourselves. So it's never a matter of unqualified. It's a matter of being excluded."

Imari Paris Jeffries, the president and CEO of Embrace Boston, which along with the city put on the rally, said the event was a chance to remind people that elements of the "promissory note" King referred to in his "I Have A Dream" speech remain "out of reach" for many people.

"We're having a conversation about democracy. This is the promissory note — public education, public housing, public health, access to public art," Paris Jeffries said. "All of these things are a part of democracy. Those are the things that are actually being threatened right now."

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has appointed a new deputy in a major step in naming a successor

By JALAL BWAITE Associated Press

RAMALLAH, West Bank (AP) — Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas on Saturday named a veteran aide and confidant as his new vice president. It's a major step by the aging leader to designate a successor.

The appointment of Hussein al-Sheikh as vice president of the Palestine Liberation Organization does not guarantee he will be the next Palestinian president. But it makes him the front-runner among longtime politicians in the dominant Fatah party who hope to succeed the 89-year-old Abbas.

The move is unlikely to boost the image among many Palestinians of Fatah as a closed and corrupt movement out of touch with the general public.

Abbas hopes to play a major role in postwar Gaza. He has been under pressure from Western and Arab allies to rehabilitate the Palestinian Authority, which has limited autonomy in parts of the Israeli-occupied

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West Bank. He has announced a series of reforms in recent months, and last week his Fatah movement approved the new position of PLO vice president.

The PLO is the internationally recognized representative of the Palestinian people and oversees the Western-backed Palestinian Authority. Abbas has led both entities for two decades.

Under last week's decision, the new vice president, coming from the PLO's 16-member executive committee, would succeed Abbas in a caretaker capacity if the president dies or becomes incapacitated.

That would make him the front-runner to replace Abbas on a permanent basis, though not guarantee it. The PLO's executive committee would need to approve that appointment, and the body is filled with veteran politicians who see themselves as worthy contenders.

The Palestinian Authority, meanwhile, would have a separate caretaker leader, Rawhi Fattouh, the speaker of the Palestinians' non-functioning parliament. But within 90 days, it would have to hold elections. If that is not possible, the new PLO president would likely take over the position.

Al-Sheikh, 64, is a veteran politician who has held a series of top positions over decades, most recently as the secretary-general of the PLO's executive committee for the past three years. He spent 11 years in Israeli prisons in his youth and is a veteran of the Palestinian security forces — experiences that could give him credibility with Palestinian security figures and the broader public.

Now he finds himself in a strong position to shore up his power.

He is Abbas' closest aide and, most critically, maintains good working relations with Israel and the Palestinians' Arab allies, including wealthy Gulf countries. As Abbas' point man with Israel, al-Sheikh is responsible for arranging coveted travel permits for Palestinians, including VIP leaders, giving him an important lever of power over his rivals.

However, polls show al-Sheikh, like most of Fatah's leadership, to be deeply unpopular with the general public. This week's decision behind closed doors by the PLO's aging leadership is likely to reinforce its image as being stodgy and out of touch.

In a 2022 interview with The Associated Press, al-Sheikh defended his unpopular coordination with Israel, saying there was no choice under the difficult circumstances of the occupation.

"I am not a representative for Israel in the Palestinian territories," he said at the time. "We undertake the coordination because this is the prelude to a political solution for ending the occupation."

The most popular Palestinian, Marwan Barghouti, is serving multiple life sentences in an Israeli prison, and Israel has ruled out releasing him as part of any swap for Israeli hostages held in Gaza by the Hamas militant group.

As Israel's war with Hamas drags on, with talk by U.S. President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of uprooting Palestinians in Gaza to relocate them elsewhere, al-Sheikh will be under mounting pressure to unite the Palestinian leadership.

The PLO is a rival for Hamas, which won the last national elections in 2006 and is not in the PLO. Hamas seized control of Gaza from Abbas' forces in 2007, and reconciliation attempts have repeatedly failed.

Abbas is still seen internationally as the leader of the Palestinians and a partner in any effort to revive the peace process, which ground to a halt when Netanyahu returned to office in 2009. The chain-smoking political veteran has clung to power since his mandate expired in 2009.

A look at the PLO's new vice president, Hussein al-Sheikh

By JALAL BWAITEL Associated Press

RAMALLAH, West Bank (AP) — Hussein al-Sheikh has been named vice president of the Palestine Liberation Organization, the internationally recognized representative of the Palestinian people.

The appointment makes the 64-year-old al-Sheikh the front-runner to one day succeed 89-year-old Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, though that isn't guaranteed. The position is among the recent reforms by Abbas meant at currying favor with the international community and positioning himself to play a role in postwar Gaza.

Here's a closer look.

Veteran politician

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Born in the West Bank city of Ramallah, al-Sheikh is among Abbas' closest aides and confidants.

He is a veteran politician who has held top positions over decades, most recently as secretary-general of the PLO's powerful executive committee for the past three years.

The PLO oversees the Palestinian Authority, which administers semi-autonomous areas in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. Al-Sheikh is responsible for civilian affairs, making him the primary contact with Israel on civilian affairs.

Al-Sheikh spent 11 years in Israeli prisons in his youth, where he learned Hebrew, and is a veteran of the Palestinian security forces — experiences that could give him credibility with Palestinian security figures and the broader public.

Powerful post

Being in charge of civilian affairs makes al-Sheikh one of the Palestinian Authority's most powerful figures.

His office is responsible for arranging coveted travel permits allowing Palestinians to enter Israel for work and medical care. This gives him tremendous influence over everyday Palestinians and his political rivals, who rely on him to maintain their own VIP privileges.

It has also made him a controversial figure. As Israel has deepened its control over the West Bank, the Palestinian Authority is seen as ineffective, corrupt and serving as a subcontractor for Israel. Al-Sheikh is one of the most prominent symbols of this system.

In a 2022 interview with The Associated Press, he said he had no choice but to cooperate with Israel to help the Palestinians in difficult circumstances.

International connections

While unpopular at home, Al-Sheikh could benefit from the international connections he has made over the years.

Israel does not think Abbas is serious about peace and has ruled out any role for him in postwar Gaza. But al-Sheikh has good working relations with the Israelis.

He also has represented Abbas in international meetings with wealthy Gulf Arab countries, whose money will be needed to rebuild Gaza, and with the United States. Earlier this year, he met with President Donald Trump's Mideast envoy, Steve Witkoff, in Saudi Arabia.

Presidency isn't guaranteed

Al-Sheikh's appointment makes him the front-runner to succeed Abbas, but the job is not guaranteed. Abbas still has authority over his vice president and can fire him if he is unhappy with his performance.

If Abbas dies or becomes incapacitated, al-Sheikh would only move into the presidency in a caretaker role. The PLO's executive committee will ultimately need to choose a permanent successor.

Filled with rivals and other contenders for the presidency, there is no guarantee the committee will line up behind al-Sheikh.

Mighty and meek say farewell to Pope Francis during Vatican funeral and last popemobile ride

By NICOLE WINFIELD and COLLEEN BARRY Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — World leaders and rank-and-file Catholic faithful bade farewell to Pope Francis in a funeral Saturday that highlighted his concern for people on the peripheries and reflected his wish to be remembered as a simple pastor. Though presidents and princes attended the Mass in St. Peter's Square, prisoners and migrants welcomed Francis' coffin at his final resting place in a basilica across town.

According to Vatican estimates, some 250,000 people flocked to the funeral Mass at the Vatican and 150,000 more lined the motorcade route through downtown Rome to witness the first funeral procession for a pope in a century. They clapped and cheered "Papa Francesco" as his simple wooden coffin traveled aboard a modified popemobile to St. Mary Major Basilica, some 6 kilometers (3.5-miles) away.

As bells tolled, the pallbearers brought the coffin past several dozen migrants, prisoners and homeless people holding white roses outside the basilica. Once inside, the pallbearers stopped in front of the icon

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of the Virgin Mary that Francis loved. Four children deposited the roses at the foot of the altar before cardinals performed the burial rite at his tomb in a nearby niche.

"I'm so sorry that we've lost him," said Mohammed Abdallah, a 35-year-old migrant from Sudan who was one of the people who welcomed Francis to his final resting place. "Francis helped so many people, refugees like us, and many other people in the world."

Earlier, Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re eulogized history's first Latin American pontiff during the Vatican Mass as a pope of the people, a pastor who knew how to communicate to the "least among us" with an informal, spontaneous style.

"He was a pope among the people, with an open heart towards everyone," the 91-year-old dean of the College of Cardinals said in a highly personal sermon. He drew applause from the crowd when he recounted Francis' constant concern for migrants, exemplified by celebrating Mass at the U.S.-Mexico border and traveling to a refugee camp in Lesbos, Greece, when he brought 12 migrants home with him.

"The guiding thread of his mission was also the conviction that the church is a home for all, a home with its doors always open," Re said, noting that with his travels, the Argentine pontiff reached "the most peripheral of the peripheries of the world."

An extraordinary meeting about Ukraine on the sidelines

Despite Francis' focus on the powerless, the powerful were out in force at his funeral. U.S. President Donald Trump and former President Joe Biden, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer joined Prince William and continental European royals leading more than 160 official delegations. Argentine President Javier Milei had pride of place given Francis' nationality, even if the two didn't particularly get along and the pope alienated many in his homeland by never returning there.

In an extraordinary development, Trump and Zelenskyy met privately on the sidelines. A photo showed the two men sitting alone, facing one another and hunched over on chairs in St. Peter's Basilica, where Francis often preached the need for a peaceful end to Russia's war in Ukraine.

Tens of thousands flocked before dawn to the Vatican

Francis choreographed the funeral himself when he revised and simplified the Vatican's rites and rituals last year. His aim was to emphasize the pope's role as a mere pastor and not "a powerful man of this world."

It was a reflection of Francis' 12-year project to radically reform the papacy, to stress priests as servants and to construct "a poor church for the poor." He articulated the mission just days after his 2013 election and it explained the name he chose as pope, honoring St. Francis of Assisi "who had the heart of the poor of the world," according to the official decree of the pope's life that was placed in his coffin.

The white facade of St. Peter's glowed pink as the sun rose Saturday and throngs of mourners rushed into the square to get a spot for the Mass. Giant television screens were set up along the surrounding streets for those who couldn't get close.

Police helicopters whirled overhead, part of the massive security operation Italian authorities mounted, including more than 2,500 police, 1,500 soldiers and a torpedo ship off the coast, Italian media reported.

Many mourners had planned to be in Rome anyway this weekend for the now-postponed Holy Year canonization of the first millennial saint, Carlo Acutis. Groups of scouts and youth church groups nearly outnumbered the gaggles of nuns and seminarians.

"He was a very charismatic pope, very human, very kind, above all very human," said Miguel Vaca, a pilgrim from Peru who said he had camped out all night near the piazza. "It's very emotional to say good-bye to him."

A special relationship with the basilica

Francis, who was also the first Jesuit pope, died Easter Monday at age 88 after suffering a stroke while recovering from pneumonia.

Even before he became pope, Francis had a particular affection for St. Mary Major, home to a Byzantine-style icon of the Madonna, the Salus Populi Romani. He would pray before the icon before and after each of his foreign trips as pope.

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The popemobile that brought his coffin there was made for one of those trips: Francis' 2016 visit to Mexico, and was modified to carry a coffin.

The choice of the basilica was also symbolically significant given its ties to Francis' Jesuit religious order. St. Ignatius Loyola, who founded the Jesuits, celebrated his first Mass in the basilica on Christmas Day in 1538.

The basilica is the resting place of seven other popes, but this was the first papal burial outside the Vatican since Pope Leo XIII, who died in 1903 and was entombed in another Roman basilica in 1924.

Following the funeral, preparations can begin in earnest to launch the centuries-old process of electing a new pope, a conclave that will likely begin in the first week of May. In the interim, the Vatican is being run by a handful of cardinals, key among them Re, who is organizing the secret voting in the Sistine Chapel.

German Cardinal Reinhard Marx, who will participate in the conclave, said the outpouring of support for Francis at his funeral showed the clear need for the next pope to continue his legacy.

Crowds waited hours to bid farewell to Francis

Over three days this week, more than 250,000 people stood for hours in line to pay their final respects while Francis' body lay in state in St. Peter's Basilica. The Vatican kept the basilica open through the night to accommodate them, but it wasn't enough. When the doors closed to the general public at 7 p.m. Friday, mourners were turned away in droves.

By dawn Saturday, they were back, some recalling the words Francis uttered the very first night of his election and throughout his papacy.

"We are here to honor him because he always said 'don't forget to pray for me,'" said Nigerian Sister Christiana Neenwata. "So we are also here to give to him this love that he gave to us."

Trump expresses doubts Putin is willing to end the Ukraine war, a day after saying a deal was close

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE and AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

ROME (AP) — President Donald Trump said Saturday that he doubts Russia's Vladimir Putin wants to end his war in Ukraine, expressing new skepticism that a peace deal can be reached soon. Only a day earlier, Trump had said Ukraine and Russia were "very close to a deal."

"There was no reason for Putin to be shooting missiles into civilian areas, cities and towns, over the last few days," Trump said in a social media post as he flew back to the United States after attending Pope Francis' funeral at the Vatican, where he met briefly with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Trump also hinted at further sanctions against Russia.

"It makes me think that maybe he doesn't want to stop the war, he's just tapping me along, and has to be dealt with differently, through "Banking" or "Secondary Sanctions?" Too many people are dying!!!" Trump wrote.

The new doubts aired by Trump come as the president and top aides intensify their push to come to a deal to end the war that began in February 2022 when Russia invaded Ukraine.

The comments also sharply contrasted with Trump's positive assessment that the two sides were "very close to a deal" after his special envoy, Steve Witkoff, met with Putin in Moscow on Friday.

The Trump-Zelenskyy conversation on the sidelines of the pope's funeral was the first face-to-face encounter between the two leaders since they argued during a heated Oval Office meeting at the White House in late February. That confrontation led the White House to briefly pause U.S. military assistance and intelligence sharing with Ukraine.

Days after ordering the pause, Trump also announced he was "strongly considering" imposing new sanctions and tariffs on Russia to try to prod Putin to negotiate in earnest. Trump has not yet followed through on the threat — something even some of his staunch Republican allies are now pressuring him to do. In fact, when Trump announced new global tariffs this month, one major economy he excluded was Russia's.

U.S. Sen. Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, on Friday urged Trump to "put the toughest of sanctions on Putin," arguing there is "clear evidence that he is playing America as a patsy."

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It's the second time in a matter of days that Trump has rebuked Putin, whom the American president rarely publicly criticizes.

On Thursday, Trump publicly urged the Russian leader to "STOP!" after a deadly barrage of attacks on Kyiv, Ukraine's capital.

After their brief meeting Saturday, Zelenskyy's office had said the U.S. and Ukrainian teams were making arrangements for the leaders to talk again Saturday. But Trump went directly to the Rome airport after the funeral and boarded Air Force One for the 10-hour flight back to the United States.

Zelenskyy's spokesperson, Serhii Nykyforov, said Trump and Zelenskyy did not meet again in person because of their tight schedules.

Zelenskyy called it a "good meeting" on social media after the funeral.

"We discussed a lot one on one. Hoping for results on everything we covered. Protecting lives of our people. Full and unconditional ceasefire. Reliable and lasting peace that will prevent another war from breaking out," said the Ukrainian leader, who also held talks Saturday with British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, French President Emmanuel Macron and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. "Very symbolic meeting that has potential to become historic, if we achieve joint results. Thank you."

The White House said the discussion was "very productive." The meeting lasted about 15 minutes inside St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican, where Francis often preached the need for a peaceful end to the war, just before Trump and Zelenskyy took their seats at the outdoor funeral service.

The Vatican long ago had offered to help facilitate peace talks and Francis had regularly called for peace and dialogue from the altar of the basilica. That Trump and Zelenskyy spoke privately, face to face and hunched over on chairs on the marbled floors of the pope's home, on the day of his funeral, was perhaps a fitting way to honor his wishes.

Trump said on social media, after he arrived in Italy late Friday, that Russia and Ukraine should meet for "very high level talks" on ending the war.

Neither Putin nor Zelenskyy have commented on Trump's calls for direct talks.

Trump has pressed both sides to quickly come to a war-ending agreement, but while Zelenskyy agreed to an American plan for an initial 30-day halt to hostilities, Russia has not signed on and has continued to strike at targets inside Ukraine.

Putin did not attend Francis' funeral. He faces an arrest warrant issued by the International Criminal Court, which has accused him of war crimes stemming from Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

Meanwhile, in a statement Friday night, Zelenskyy said "very significant meetings may take place" in the coming days, and reiterated his calls for an unconditional ceasefire.

"Real pressure on Russia is needed so that they accept either the American proposal to cease fire and move towards peace, or our proposal — whichever one can truly work and ensure a reliable, immediate, and unconditional ceasefire, and then — a dignified peace and security guarantees," he said.

"Diplomacy must succeed. And we are doing everything to make diplomacy truly meaningful and finally effective."

The meeting Saturday also came shortly after Trump had issued his most definitive statement to date about the need for Ukraine to give up territory to Russia to bring the war to a close. He said in a Time magazine interview published Friday that "Crimea will stay with Russia."

Russia seized the strategic peninsula along the Black Sea in southern Ukraine in 2014, years before the full-scale invasion that began in 2022. Zelenskyy wants to regain Crimea and other Ukrainian territory seized by Russia, but Trump considers that demand to be unrealistic.

Russia has also seized Ukrainian territory in the Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions since invading in February 2022.

Referring to Crimea during the interview, which was conducted at the White House on Tuesday, Trump said, "everybody understands that it's been with them for a long time," meaning Russia.

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The Latest: Francis is remembered as a 'pope among the people' as he is laid to rest

By The Associated Press undefined

VATICAN CITY (AP) — World dignitaries and Catholic faithful attended Pope Francis' funeral in St. Peter's Square on Saturday.

Despite the presence of presidents and princes, prisoners and migrants met Francis' coffin outside St. Mary Major Basilica, where he was buried, reflecting his priorities as pope.

U.S. President Donald Trump, French President Emmanuel Macron, the U.N. chief and European Union leaders, as well as Prince William and the Spanish royal family, were among hundreds of thousands who attended the funeral Mass.

Francis broke with recent tradition and was buried in the basilica outside the Vatican in a simple underground tomb carrying his name, Franciscus.

Here is the latest:

Mourners in New York remember pope as a 'person close to all of us'

At New York's St. Patrick's Cathedral, Archbishop Gabriele Caccia said Saturday that the world had lost a father with the death of Pope Francis.

Caccia described Francis as a "person of trust, a person close to all of us" as he addressed mourners inside the neo-Gothic landmark that's the seat of the Catholic Archdiocese of New York in the United States.

Caccia recalled Francis once describing himself as a "sinner on whom the Lord has turned his gaze."

"He kept humble because he remembered that there is only one God, and we are all human beings. And his faith in God was also the source of his freedom," Caccia said.

It was this humility, Caccia said, that earned him the moniker of the "pope of the people."

"Any time we heard him, we saw him. It was like when you see a clean sky, or you drink clear water, or you encounter somebody with a pure heart. It was refreshing. It was giving hope," Caccia said.

'We need to continue the work'

The Rev. Fabian Marquez, a bishop's liaison to youth ministry for the Diocese of El Paso, Texas, had traveled to Rome for the canonization of Carlo Acutis, originally scheduled for April 27.

Instead, Marquez rushed to buy vestments to be among hundreds of clergy concelebrating Francis' funeral Mass and was in line by 4:30 a.m. Saturday. He then ran to sit near the front and had several hours before the service to reflect on the pope's legacy of welcoming migrants.

"I need to step up, too," Marquez said. "We need to continue the work. And the pope can intercede for us now that he is with the Lord."

Marquez had traveled with two priests from Chihuahua, Mexico, who, while waiting for Mass, prayed for peace in their home city and the state of Chihuahua, which has suffered from gang violence, including the murder of two Jesuit priests in 2022.

Why didn't King Charles attend the pope's funeral?

Given the close relationship between King Charles III and Francis, some have been asking why Charles delegated attendance of Saturday's funeral to his son and heir to the throne, Prince William.

Royal officials did not explicitly cite a reason.

Experts suggest this may be a combination of historical considerations — being mindful of the split between the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church — and deferring to what the late Queen Elizabeth II did.

"This is the country that broke from Rome; there is that historical split," said George Gross, a royal historian at King's College London. "It's that classic British fusion of historical precedent which becomes a tradition."

Elizabeth II did not attend many funerals, including Pope John Paul II's funeral in 2005, when she sent her son Charles, then Prince of Wales, in her place.

"The queen didn't go to funerals abroad as far as I remember," said Gross. "That is the background to

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it. And more recently, they're obviously balancing (Charles') diary and health issues as well," he added, referring to the king's recovery from cancer and private meeting with the pope earlier this month.

Argentines bid farewell to Francis at open-air Mass in Buenos Aires

Thousands of mourners have assembled outside the Buenos Aires cathedral where Pope Francis used to give homilies as archbishop to pay homage to the first Latin American pontiff as the funeral rites were unfolding in Rome.

Although the funeral Mass in St. Peter's Square began around dawn in Buenos Aires, many Argentines woke up to follow the broadcast live. Hours later, a giant procession made its way to the capital's downtown square of Plaza de Mayo for an open-air Mass. The faithful filled the streets, some weeping openly as the archbishop of Buenos Aires, Jorge Garcia Cuerva, gave his sermon while struggling to hold back his tears.

"We cry because we don't want death to win, we cry because our father has died, we cry because we already feel his physical absence in our hearts," Garcia Cuerva said. "May our tears water our homeland."

Later Saturday, clergy will lead Francis' followers on a pilgrimage to key places across Buenos Aires where the late pontiff carried out his pastoral work, from the impoverished shantytowns on the city's outskirts where he helped build congregations to the public hospitals where he kissed the feet of people with AIDS and mental illnesses.

Cardinals perform the rite of burial for Pope Francis at Rome's St. Mary Major Basilica

Cardinals have performed the rite of burial for Pope Francis at his simple tomb inside Rome's St. Mary Major Basilica.

The burial ceremony Saturday was private, attended by top cardinals and people close to the pope.

Video provided by the Vatican showed Cardinal Kevin Farrell, who is running the Vatican in between papacies, blessing Francis' coffin before it is interred.

The pope chose the basilica because of his devotion to the Salus Populi Romani icon of the Virgin Mary, which is located next to his tomb.

Tens of thousands attend Mass for Francis in East Timor

Tens of thousands of mourners attended the funeral Mass for Francis at a seaside park near East Timor's capital of Dili.

Francis made a historic visit to the overwhelmingly Catholic Southeast Asian country in September 2024, drawing over 600,000 people to the main event.

A migrant at the basilica says Francis understood their plight

One of the migrants who met Pope Francis' coffin at his place of burial said that Francis understood the difficulties faced by people who left their native countries.

Annamaria Martinez of Venezuela said, "Francis always looked at the best part of every person." She burst into tears as she said, "He was unique and I'm so sad now."

The 53-year-old said she hoped that Francis' good work would continue. She was among 40 migrants, prisoners, homeless and transgender people organized by the Sant'Egidio and Caritas charities to meet the pope's coffin to underline the care he took for the marginalized.

Francis' coffin is inside St. Mary Major Basilica

Pope Francis' coffin was met by bishops and top cardinals in St. Mary Major Basilica, where he will be buried in a private ceremony later Saturday.

Pallbearers paused before the icon of the Madonna that Francis revered in a final salute, and four children laid white roses at the altar of the chapel that contains the icon. The pallbearers then continued with the coffin toward the niche where Francis will be buried beneath a simple tombstone bearing his name in Latin.

The Vatican media footage returned to the icon and then to the basilica's exterior to allow the burial to proceed in private.

Francis will be buried in a private ceremony later Saturday

Pope Francis' coffin has arrived at St. Mary Major Basilica, where he will be buried in a private ceremony later Saturday.

It was met by about 40 migrants, prisoners, homeless and transgender people each holding a white

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rose. Their inclusion was emblematic of his care for the marginalized. Francis is the first pope to be buried outside of the Vatican in 100 years.

More people turn out in Rome to watch the motorcade

The motorcade for the pope's coffin is continuing through Rome's historic center, where the crowds have thickened.

People were on the steps of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier to catch a glimpse of the papal coffin. It continued past the ancient Roman Forum and Colosseum, to applause and shouts of "Il Papa!" (the pope).

The motorcade with the coffin is making its way across Rome

Crowds applauded and yelled "Papa Francesco!" as a slow-moving motorcade escorting the pope's coffin to his final resting place left the Vatican to make its way across Rome.

The coffin was visible from atop a modified popemobile. There was more clapping, and church bells rang out as the popemobile emerged from a tunnel and crossed the Tiber River.

The popemobile was flanked by police on motorcycles.

Pope Francis' coffin leaves the Vatican en route to his burial place in St. Mary Major Basilica

The coffin is being carried on the back of a popemobile modified so mourners lining the streets can view it. The 6-kilometer (3.5-mile) route crosses the Tiber River and passes Italy's monumental Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, the ancient Roman Forum and the Colosseum before reaching the basilica.

The coffin will be met by about 40 migrants, prisoners, and homeless and transgender people, reflecting the pontiff's care for people who are marginalized.

Funeral Mass ends

Pope Francis' funeral Mass has ended, and cardinals have filed back into St. Peter's Basilica.

The crowd applauded as white-gloved pallbearers lifted the pope's coffin to bring it back inside the basilica. From there, it will be moved to the popemobile to make its way across Rome to Francis' burial place in St. Mary Major.

Meditative chant is sung at funeral Mass

A litany of saints was sung out during the funeral Mass for Pope Francis, a meditative chant that is part of the traditional rites.

It was followed by a blessing from Eastern Rite Catholic churches chanted in Greek by patriarchs and priests. The pages of the New Testament placed atop the coffin fluttered in the wind as Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re blessed the coffin with incense and holy water.

UK's Prince William pays his respects

The prince attended the funeral on behalf of his father, King Charles III.

He stood side-by-side with British Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer for a moment's silence in front of Pope Francis's sealed coffin.

William, dressed in a dark blue suit and black tie, walked through the ornate basilica and down the steps into St. Peter's Square, before shaking hands with a member of the clergy and being guided to his seat.

He is carrying out his most significant duty so far as heir to the throne. It is the first time the prince has represented the monarch at an international funeral.

Francis is remembered as a 'pope among the people' in his funeral Mass

Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re eulogized Pope Francis on Saturday as a pope of the people, a pastor who knew how to communicate to the "least among us" with an informal, spontaneous style.

Re called Francis "a pope among the people, with an open heart towards everyone."

He recalled the last image many people have of Francis was of him delivering what would become his final blessing on Easter Sunday, and saluting from the popemobile in the same piazza where his funeral was being celebrated.

Vatican says about 200,000 people have flocked to Pope Francis' funeral Mass

The brief statement did not specify if that was in St. Peter's Square alone.

Mourners were lined up along Via della Conciliazione, which leads up to the Vatican, and followed the

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Mass on big screens in public squares in Rome, including outside the Santa Maria Major Basilica.

Trump and Zelenskyy meet before the service

That's according to Zelenskyy's press office.

White House Communications Director Steven Cheung confirmed the meeting and said they "met privately today and had a very productive discussion."

"More details about the meeting will follow," he said.

Shortly after arriving in Rome last Friday, Trump said on social media that Ukraine and Russia should meet for "very high-level talks" on ending the three-year war sparked by Russia's invasion. His envoy, Steve Witkoff, met with Russian President Vladimir Putin earlier Friday, and Trump said both sides were "very close to a deal."

Pope Francis' funeral Mass begins in a packed St. Peter's Square

Tens of thousands flocked to the funeral, which Francis choreographed himself when he revised and simplified the Vatican's rites and rituals last year.

Pallbearers carry Pope Francis' simple wooden coffin

They carried the coffin, adorned with just a crucifix and Francis' coat of arms, down the central aisle of St. Peter's Basilica and out into the square at the start of his funeral.

Red-robed cardinals lined the path and followed behind as the crowd in the square erupted in applause in a sign of respect.

Cardinals flank pope's coffin

Cardinals in rich red robes formed a double line in St. Peter's Basilica, flanking the coffin as it was carried into the square for the funeral Mass. Pallbearers lifted the coffin to applause from the square.

Trump takes his seat for the funeral

Trump, in a blue suit, and his wife, Melania, were escorted out of St. Peter's Basilica to their seats for the service.

He was followed afterward by Zelenskyy, who was greeted with a burst of applause from the audience.

Giant photographs of Carlo Acutis seen in St. Peter's Square

Acutis was supposed to have been canonized on Sunday as the Catholic Church's first millennial saint.

The Vatican suspended the ceremony after Pope Francis died, but many people who had made plans to be in Rome for the canonization came anyway to attend the funeral. Announcers asked that all flags and banners be lowered as the funeral was getting underway.

Bells toll to signal the start of the procession

Francis' coffin will be brought from St. Peter's Basilica to the front of the altar in the square.

Mourners were instructed to refrain from waving flags or banners during the procession.

Mourners are led in rosary prayer as dignitaries take their seats at Pope Francis' funeral

World leaders and royalty sat to the right of the main altar.

EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni and Argentine President Javier Milei have all made their way to their seating.

The Argentine and Italian leaders have a place of pride in the seating order.

Trump arrives at funeral to pay respects to Pope Francis

The U.S. president clashed with the pope on immigration, climate and other issues.

Donald Trump arrived with his wife, Melania. He is among more than 50 heads of state and other dignitaries attending the funeral of Pope Francis.

Mourners remember Pope Francis

They spoke of the pontiff in emotional terms while lining up along Via della Conciliazione for Pope Francis' funeral in St. Peter's Square.

Miguel Vaca, a pilgrim from Peru, lined up at 7 a.m.

"He was a very charismatic pope, very human, very kind, above all very human," Vaca said.

Italian pilgrim Pasquale Vezza made his way to the square with his family. He said the pope "was a bit

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like everyone's grandfather."

"Now we hope that there will be a continuation, especially of his message of peace," Vezza said.

Ukrainian president arrives in Rome for papal funeral

Volodymyr Zelenskyy's press office confirmed his arrival, joining the first lady, Olena Zelenska, who preceded him.

Zelenskyy's presence was put in doubt after a recent missile attack.

Pope's coffin will be placed on the back of a popemobile used on a Mexico trip

The pope will get one more ride past the faithful on one of his beloved popemobiles.

The Vatican says for Saturday's burial procession, his coffin will be placed on the back of a popemobile used during his 2016 trip to Mexico.

The vehicle has been modified so the coffin will be visible to mourners along the nearly 4-kilometer (2.5-mile) route from St. Peter's Basilica to his place of burial.

The pope reveled in being driven through crowds of faithful, whether in St. Peter's Square or on one of his many foreign trips.

—
This entry has been corrected to show that the popemobile used for Saturday's burial procession was used during the pope's 2016 trip to Mexico, not a 2015 trip to the Philippines.

A Calabria parish group camped out all night to get a good spot

The 13 spent the night in a nearby square. They were already coming to Rome for the planned canonization of the first millennial saint on Sunday, which was suspended by Francis' death. Instead, they drove up a day early for his funeral.

"The Lord wanted it this way, so we came all the same," said Sandra De Felice of Anzio in the Calabria region. "For me, this is a sign that we need to be truly humble and charitable. Otherwise, we are nothing."

Mourners race to find a spot in St Peter's Square

Ordinary mourners streamed in Saturday to get a spot in standing room near the rear of the square surrounding the ancient obelisk, behind VIP seating. The area to the left of the main altar, up the basilica steps, is reserved for celebrants and Catholic hierarchy, while world leaders and royalty will be seated on the right.

Many ran toward the square as barricades opened. Some carried banners for the Jubilee Holy Year that Francis opened in December and will continue despite his death on Monday following a stroke.

Israeli airstrike kills 10 people, half of them children, as mediators try to restart a ceasefire

By WAFAA SHURAF and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — An Israeli airstrike flattened a three-story home in Gaza City on Saturday, killing 10 people — half of them children — as Arab mediators scrambled to restart a ceasefire. Israeli strikes killed at least 49 people in the past 24 hours, according to health officials.

The dead in the early morning airstrike in a neighborhood in western Gaza City included three women and five children, according to Shifa Hospital, which received the bodies.

Israel's military said that it had struck a Hamas militant and the structure where he operated collapsed, adding that the collapse was under review.

"There is no one from the resistance among them," said Saed Al-Khour, who lost his family in the strike. "Since 1 o'clock until now we have been pulling out the remains of children, women and elderly people." He stood amid the rubble, under a tilted ceiling.

Three other people were killed in the Shati refugee camp along Gaza City's shoreline.

Hamas said Saturday that it had sent a high-level delegation to Cairo to try and get the ceasefire, shattered last month by Israeli bombardment, back on track.

Israel has vowed to continue the war until all hostages are returned and Hamas is destroyed or disarmed

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and sent into exile. It says it will hold parts of Gaza indefinitely and implement U.S. President Donald Trump's proposal for the resettlement of the population in other countries, which has been widely rejected internationally.

Hamas has said that it will only release the dozens of hostages it holds in return for Palestinian prisoners, a complete Israeli withdrawal and a lasting ceasefire, as called for in the now-defunct agreement reached in January.

Hamas said that its delegation will discuss with Egyptian officials the group's vision to end the war, which also includes reconstruction.

Earlier this week, other Hamas officials arrived in Cairo to discuss a proposal that would include a five-to-seven year truce and the release of all remaining hostages, officials said.

Egypt and Qatar are developing the proposal, which would include the gradual withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza and the release of Palestinian prisoners, according to an Egyptian official and a Hamas official who spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to brief media.

Israeli blockade continues

Israel has continued its nearly two-month blockade of Gaza, even as aid groups warn that supplies are dwindling.

On Friday, the World Food Program said that its food stocks in Gaza had run out, ending a main source of sustenance for hundreds of thousands of Palestinians. It said the dozens of charity kitchens it supports are expected to run out of food in the coming days.

About 80% of Gaza's population of more than 2 million relies primarily on charity kitchens for food because other sources have shut down under Israel's blockade, according to the U.N.

"Meanwhile, nearly 3,000 UNRWA trucks of lifesaving aid are ready to enter Gaza," the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees said on social media. "The siege must stop."

Hamas on Saturday called on the Trump administration to immediately reverse its decision that the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees isn't immune from being sued, calling it a dangerous step by Israel's close ally.

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

The war began when Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killing around 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting 251. The militants still have 59 hostages, 24 believed to be alive, after most of the rest were released in ceasefire agreements or other deals.

Virginia Giuffre, who accused Britain's Prince Andrew in Epstein sex trafficking scandal, has died

By JENNIFER PELTZ and HALLIE GOLDEN Associated Press

Virginia Giuffre, who accused Britain's Prince Andrew and other influential men of sexually exploiting her as a teenager trafficked by financier Jeffrey Epstein, has died. She was 41.

Giuffre died by suicide Friday at her farm in Western Australia, her publicist confirmed.

"Virginia was a fierce warrior in the fight against sexual abuse and sex trafficking. She was the light that lifted so many survivors," her family said in a statement. "Despite all the adversity she faced in her life, she shone so bright. She will be missed beyond measure."

Her publicist Dini von Mueffling described Giuffre as "deeply loving, wise and funny."

"She adored her children and many animals. She was always more concerned with me than with herself," von Mueffling wrote in a statement. "I will miss her beyond words. It was the privilege of a lifetime to represent her."

EDITOR'S NOTE: This story includes discussion of suicide. If you or someone you know needs help, the national suicide and crisis lifeline in Australia is available by calling 13 11 14. In the U.S., it is available by calling or texting 988. There is also an online chat at 988lifeline.org

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The American-born Giuffre, who lived in Australia for years, became an advocate for sex trafficking survivors after emerging as a central figure in Epstein's prolonged downfall.

The wealthy, well-connected New York money manager killed himself in August 2019 while awaiting trial on U.S. federal sex trafficking charges involving dozens of teenage girls and young women, some as young as 14. The charges came 14 years after police in Palm Beach, Florida, first began investigating allegations that he sexually abused underage girls who were hired to give him massages.

Giuffre came forward publicly after the initial investigation ended in an 18-month Florida jail term for Epstein, who made a secret deal to avoid federal prosecution by pleading guilty instead to relatively minor state-level charges of soliciting prostitution. He was released in 2009.

In subsequent lawsuits, Giuffre said she was a teenage spa attendant at Mar-a-Lago — President Donald Trump's Palm Beach club — when she was approached in 2000 by Epstein's girlfriend and later employee, Ghislaine Maxwell.

Giuffre said Maxwell hired her as a masseuse for Epstein, but the couple effectively made her a sexual servant, pressuring her into gratifying not only Epstein but his friends and associates. Giuffre said she was flown around the world for assignations with men including Prince Andrew while she was 17 and 18.

The men denied it and assailed Giuffre's credibility. She acknowledged changing some key details of her account, including the age at which she first met Epstein.

But many parts of her story were supported by documents, witness testimony and photos — including one of her and Andrew, with his arm around her bare midriff, in Maxwell's London townhouse.

Giuffre said in one of her lawsuits that she had sex with the royal three times: in London during her 2001 trip, at Epstein's New York mansion when she was 17 and in the Virgin Islands when she was 18.

"Ghislaine said, 'I want you to do for him what you do for Epstein,'" Giuffre told NBC News' "Dateline" in September 2019.

Andrew categorically rejected Giuffre's allegations and said he didn't recall having met her.

His denials blew up in his face during a November 2019 BBC interview. Viewers saw a prince who proffered curious rebuttals — such as disputing Giuffre's recollection of sweaty dancing by saying he was medically incapable of perspiring — and showed no empathy for the women who said Epstein abused them.

Within days of the interview, Andrew stepped down from his royal duties. He settled with Giuffre in 2022 for an undisclosed sum, agreeing to make a "substantial donation" to her survivors' organization. A statement filed in court said that the prince acknowledged Epstein was a sex trafficker and Giuffre "an established victim of abuse."

She also filed, and in at least some cases settled, lawsuits against Epstein and others connected to him. In one case, she dropped her claims against a prominent U.S. attorney, saying she might have erred in identifying him as one of the men to whom Epstein supplied her.

Epstein's suicide put an end to his accusers' hopes of holding him criminally accountable.

Maxwell was convicted in 2021 on federal sex trafficking and conspiracy charges and was sentenced to 20 years in prison. She said she wasn't to blame for Epstein's abuse.

Prosecutors elected not to include Giuffre's allegations in the Maxwell case, but Giuffre later told the court that the British socialite had "opened the door to hell."

Giuffre, born Virginia Roberts, told interviewers that her childhood was shattered when she was sexually abused as a grade-schooler by a man her family knew. She later ran away from home and endured more abuse, she said.

She said she met her now-husband in 2002 while taking massage training in Thailand at Epstein's behest. She married, moved to Australia and had a family.

Giuffre founded an advocacy charity, SOAR, in 2015.

Giuffre separated from her husband and children this year. She had been charged with breaching a family violence restraining order over an incident in February, and was set to appear in court in June in the city of Perth, where her estranged husband and children live.

She had yet to enter a plea to the charge. A conviction would have carried a potential maximum sentence of two years in prison.

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Giuffre was hospitalized after a serious accident, her publicist said last month. She didn't answer questions at the time about the date, location, nature or other specifics of the accident and about the accuracy of an Instagram post that appeared to come from Giuffre. The post said she had been in a car that was hit by a school bus and her prognosis was dire.

She is survived by her three children, whom the statement described as the "light of her life."

Sigrid McCawley, an attorney for Giuffre, said in a statement, "Her courage pushed me to fight harder, and her strength was awe-inspiring. The world has lost an amazing human being today. Rest in peace, my sweet angel."

The AP does not identify people who say they were victims of sexual assault unless they have come forward publicly.

Only about half of Republicans say Trump has focused on the right priorities, AP-NORC poll finds

By SEUNG MIN KIM and LINLEY SANDERS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Many Americans do not agree with President Trump's aggressive efforts to quickly enact his agenda, a new poll finds, and even Republicans are not overwhelmingly convinced that his attention has been in the right place.

Americans are nearly twice as likely to say Trump has been mostly focusing on the wrong priorities as to say he has been focusing on the right ones, according to the survey from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

Further, about 4 in 10 Americans say Trump has been a "terrible" president in his second term, and about 1 in 10 say he has been "poor." In contrast, about 3 in 10 say he has been "great or "good," while just under 2 in 10 say he has been "average."

Most haven't been shocked by the drama of Trump's first 100 days. About 7 in 10 U.S. adults say the first few months of Trump's second term have been mostly what they expected, and only about 3 in 10 say the Republican president's actions have been mostly unexpected.

But that does not mean they are pleased with how those opening months have gone.

In fact, Democrats seem even unhappier with the reality of the second Trump term than before he was sworn in on Jan. 20. About three-quarters of Democrats say Trump is focused on the wrong topics and about 7 in 10 think he has been a "terrible" president so far. That is an increase from January, when about 6 in 10 anticipated that he would be "terrible."

Rahsaan Henderson, a Democrat from California, said "it has been one of the longest 100 days I've ever had to sit through."

"I think the next four years will be a test of seeing who can resist the most and continue defying whatever he's trying to do, since he defies everything, including the Supreme Court," said Henderson, 40.

Republicans are largely standing behind the president, but are ambivalent about what he has chosen to emphasize. About 7 in 10 say he has been at least a "good" president. But only about half say he has mostly had the right priorities so far, while about one-quarter say it has been about an even mix and about 1 in 10 said Trump has mostly had the wrong priorities.

"He's really doing the stuff that he said he was going to do," said Tanner Bergstrom, 29, a Republican from Minnesota. He is "not making a bunch of promises and getting into office and nothing happens. ... I really like that. Even if it's some stuff I don't agree with, it's still doing what he said he was going to do."

Those who were surprised by Trump's first few months seem to have had a rude awakening. The people who say Trump's actions were not what they expected — who are mostly Democrats and independents — are more likely to say Trump has had mostly the wrong priorities and that he has been a poor or terrible president, compared with the people who mostly expected his actions.

About 4 in 10 in the survey approve of how Trump is handling the presidency overall. The issue of immigration is a relative strength. According to the poll, 46% of U.S. adults approve of his handling of the issue, which is slightly higher than his overall approval. But there are also indications that foreign policy,

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trade negotiations and the economy could prove problematic as he aims to prove his approach will benefit the country.

Trump's approval on those issues is much lower than it is on immigration. Only about 4 in 10 U.S. adults approve of how he is handling each. Republicans are less likely to approve of Trump's approach to trade and the economy than immigration.

There are additional signals that some Trump supporters may not be thrilled with his performance so far. The share of Republicans who say he has been at least a "good" president has fallen about 10 percentage points since January. They also have grown a bit more likely to say Trump will be either "poor" or "terrible," although only 16% describe his first few months that way.

Republican Stephanie Melnyk, 45, from Tennessee, is supportive of Trump's handling of the presidency more broadly but said she did not approve of his handling of foreign affairs, particularly on the war in Ukraine. Melnyk's family emigrated from Ukraine and she said Trump is "trying for a quick fix that's not going to last" and that Russian President Vladimir Putin "is not to be trusted."

Melnyk, who voted for Trump largely for his positions on immigration, said she wished the president would stay on script.

"He sounds like he can be very condescending, and it sounds like my way or the highway," Melnyk said. "It's like, dude. You're not 12."

It's common, though, for a president's standing to be at its best before taking office and beginning the work of governing. And Trump continues to hold high approval from Republicans.

About 4 in 10 Americans have a favorable opinion of Trump, roughly in line with his approval number. Among Republicans, the figure is about double: About 8 in 10 Republicans have a positive view of the president, and about the same share approves of how he is handling the presidency. About one-third of U.S. adults have a favorable opinion of Vice President JD Vance, including about 7 in 10 Republicans.

Those Republicans interviewed were particularly fond of efforts to scale back the size of the federal government led by billionaire outside adviser Elon Musk and Trump's cost-cutting initiative, the Department of Government Efficiency, known as DOGE.

"Overall, I would have to say that I'm happy with the Trump presidency," said Matthew Spencer, 30, a Republican from Texas. "I think that the Department of Government Efficiency has made great strides in reducing our spending, and I also agree with putting America first. I agree with the policies he's put in as far as border protection and America standing for itself again as far as the tariffs."

"We're only three months in, but so far, so good," said Carlos Guevara, 46, who lives in Florida. Guevara, a Republican, said DOGE has been a "smash hit" and on tariffs, and while there may be short-term pain, "if that does encourage businesses to start manufacturing here ... then that'll wash out over time."

Democrats have a much bleaker outlook on the economy than they held before Trump took office. The poll also found that the vast majority of Democrats think he has "gone too far" on deportations and tariffs.

Gabriel Antonucci, 26, a Democrat who recently moved to South Carolina, said Trump's second term is "just a lot more ridiculous" than he had anticipated.

"It really seems like he is doing everything he can to make the wrong decisions," Antonucci said. "Things are probably going to be worse in four years than they are right now."

Genetic medicine can leave people with rare mutations behind. But there's new hope

By LAURA UNGAR AP Science Writer

Emily Kramer-Golinkoff can't get enough oxygen with each breath. Advanced cystic fibrosis makes even simple things like walking or showering arduous and exhausting.

She has the most common fatal genetic disease in the U.S., which afflicts 40,000 Americans. But her case is caused by a rare genetic mutation, so medications that work for 90% of people with cystic fibrosis won't help her.

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The same dynamic plays out in other genetic conditions. Stunning advances in genetic science have revealed the subtle, insidious culprits behind these brutal diseases and have started paving the way for treatments. But patients with these exceedingly rare mutations have fewer options and poorer prospects than those with more typical forms of these diseases — and many are now pinning hopes on experimental gene therapies.

"We feel such pure joy for our friends who have been lifted from this sinking ship," said Kramer-Golinkoff, 40. "But we just feel so eager and desperate to join them. It's really hard to be in this minority of people left behind."

It's not just science that is working against these patients, it's market forces. Drug companies are naturally going to look for medications that target the most common mutations.

"You need a sufficiently large number of patients in a major market in order for a company to be interested in going forward," said Dr. Kiran Musunuru, a University of Pennsylvania gene editing expert. What it amounts to, he says, is "mutational discrimination."

Charities — including a nonprofit Kramer-Golinkoff co-founded called Emily's Entourage — are trying to overcome this barrier. Fundraising efforts have helped jump-start gene therapy that could help patients regardless of mutation.

While it likely won't be available for years, "just to have these therapies in trials provides so much hope," Kramer-Golinkoff said.

Current treatments for genetic diseases don't help everyone

Kramer-Golinkoff was just six weeks old when she was diagnosed with cystic fibrosis, which causes thick, sticky mucus to build up in the body.

It occurs when the so-called CFTR protein is not made or not made correctly, allowing chloride to become trapped in cells, meaning water can't keep the cell's surface hydrated. Mucus buildup can lead to damage, blockages and infections in the lungs and other affected organs.

"As I've gotten older ... my CF has gotten worse, despite all my best efforts to delay it," Kramer-Golinkoff said.

Before her illness got so bad, she was able to earn a master's degree in bioethics at the University of Pennsylvania, work, travel and spend time with friends. But she eventually developed CF-related diabetes and other problems. She's prone to infections, and since the pandemic has lived with her parents in isolation in Greater Philadelphia.

"CF is a real monster of a disease," she said.

Meanwhile, others with the condition have seen vast improvements in their health with "CFTR modulator" therapies that work for people with the most common mutation, correcting the malfunctioning protein. Research shows they dramatically improve lung function, respiratory symptoms and patients' overall quality of life.

Besides not working for people with rare mutations, these treatments are unavailable to patients whose disease-causing mutations aren't known or fully understood. Mutations may be unknown because of a lack of genetic testing in places such as developing nations, or understudied because they are uncommon or difficult to detect.

Genetic testing companies such as GeneDx have made some headway in screening more people of diverse backgrounds, but inequities remain.

For example, comprehensive data about cystic fibrosis is scarce among African populations — affecting people who live on the continent as well as those who trace their ancestry there. Research shows Black cystic fibrosis patients are more likely than their white counterparts to be among the 10% who don't benefit from modulator therapies.

Can a gene therapy work no matter the mutation?

While there's little chance of changing market dynamics, researchers said, one solution is to develop "mutation agnostic" gene therapies targeting all patients with a disease. This approach is being tried in diseases of the retina as well as cystic fibrosis.

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"There's a huge push to develop these therapies," said Dr. Garry Cutting of the Johns Hopkins Cystic Fibrosis Center.

Most of the 14 experimental gene therapies in the pipeline for the disease aim to help patients with any mutation, the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation says, delivering a new, correct version of the CFTR gene to cells. Getting correct copies of the CFTR gene would enable cells to make normal proteins no matter what mutation causes a patient to have no, or not enough, functional CFTR proteins.

One treatment, partially funded by the foundation, is sponsored by Spirovant Sciences, a company Emily's Entourage provided seed money to launch. The first patient received the therapy in November in a 53-week clinical trial at Columbia University that aims to determine if it's safe and how long it stays in the lung.

Kramer-Golinkoff said she's more optimistic about her future these days, even as her own illness worsens. At this point, she's living with 30% lung function, suffers from kidney issues and has high blood pressure in her lungs. She depends on insulin for her diabetes and takes numerous pills daily.

"You have to make really conscientious choices ... throughout the day on how to use your limited energy. And that's really difficult to do when you have big dreams and important work and life to live," she said.

"We're incredibly excited about the promise of gene therapies. They can't come soon enough."

They came for the canonization of a millennial saint. They stayed for Pope Francis' funeral

By VANESSA GERA Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Thousands of young people from around the world had come to Rome expecting to rejoice this weekend in the canonization of the first millennial saint during the Vatican's Holy Year. They ended up bidding farewell to Pope Francis instead, with their exuberance giving an uplifting tone to Saturday's otherwise somber funeral.

"He always said you have to be joyful about life, you have to live life in a similar way," said Marco Falchi, who traveled from his home near Perugia with his wife and 11-year-old son. He and his wife credit Francis with reviving their spirituality, and they named their son, Francesco, after him.

The family is also devoted to the cause of sainthood for Carlo Acutis, a young Italian who died in 2006 from leukemia and inspired faith in many young Catholics. They planned their trip to Rome around that.

The canonization of Acutis had been scheduled for Sunday during the first-ever Jubilee of Adolescents, dedicated to teens. It was suspended after Francis' death on Monday.

Falchi was struck by the lack of deep mourning at the funeral for the pope, and he is convinced Francis would have been pleased. "Especially since this was the jubilee for adolescents, he certainly didn't want a day of mourning but he wanted a day of joy," he said.

'I feel like I grew up with Francis'

There was a clear blue sky over St. Peter's Square. Some people camped out the night before to get a good spot. Many stood respectfully, their hands folded, as they followed the Mass on large screens. Radio broadcasts in multiple languages added to the hum of humanity. They applauded when Francis' simple wooden coffin was moved outdoors.

Tens of thousands of Catholic faithful had planned their trips before the pope's death.

"I bought my ticket for Carlo," said Reyes Arribas, a 23-year-old from Valencia, Spain. "And then suddenly Pope Francis died, so I came to the funeral."

She confessed that while she admired Francis, she felt a closer affinity to his predecessors, St. John Paul II and Benedict XVI. Her feelings for Acutis, however, are very strong. She excitedly praised him as "the first saint of young people" because he was immersed in the technological world of today.

Even those who were disappointed by the suspended canonization were gratified that they could celebrate Francis, loved by many for his humility and concern for the poor.

"I feel like I grew up with Pope Francis," said Jessica Naranjo, a 27-year-old from Austin, Texas. "I felt very connected with him in the way he advocated for social justice and the environment. This was a big loss for me."

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"I'm disappointed that I'm here celebrating the pope's life instead of celebrating with the pope," she said. Ana Kalen, a 22-year-old medical student, traveled to Rome for the Acutis canonization with a group from Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina.

"The plans have changed, but we are still so glad to be here for this historical moment," Kalen said, a Bosnian flag draped over her shoulders. "We are sad about each death. But we do believe that Pope Francis is in a better place."

Francis resonates with young Catholics

After St. John Paul II died in 2005, the mood was different. The faithful made pilgrimages from his Polish homeland and elsewhere to mourn a towering figure of the 20th century in a spirit of deep sadness and loss.

Francis had a different style. During his 12-year papacy, he urged people to maintain a sense of humor, and that spirit seemed to guide many participants Saturday.

Groups of young people filled St. Peter's Square before the funeral Mass. One from a parish in Cassano Magnago in the northern Italian province of Varese danced in circle and sang religious songs.

The pope's death during Easter season filled them with a sense of peace, one teenager said.

"It's a good sign," said 16-year-old Matteo Cozzi. "The death of a pope at Easter is a sign of hope."

Russia says it has fully reclaimed the Kursk region.

Ukraine says it is still fighting there.

By SAMYA KULLAB and KATIE MARIE DAVIES Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — All Ukrainian troops have been forced from parts of Russia's Kursk region, which Moscow lost control of last year to a surprise Ukrainian incursion, Russia's top general said in a Kremlin meeting Saturday. Ukrainian officials denied the claim.

Valery Gerasimov, Chief of the General Staff for Russia's Armed Forces, gave Russian President Vladimir Putin the news in a meeting Saturday, Peskov told Russian state news outlet Interfax.

In a statement, Putin congratulated the Russian soldiers and commanders and said that Kyiv's incursion had "completely failed".

"The complete defeat of our enemy along Kursk's border region creates the right conditions for further successes for our troops and in other important areas of the front," he said.

Ukrainian officials, however, said the fighting was still continuing. "The statements of representatives of the high command of the aggressor country about the alleged end of hostilities in the Kursk region of the Russian Federation are not true," Ukraine's General staff said Saturday.

"The defensive operation of the Ukrainian Defense Forces in certain areas in the Kursk region continues. The operational situation is difficult, but our units continue to hold designated positions and carry out assigned tasks, while inflicting effective fire damage on the enemy with all types of weapons, including using active defense tactics," it added.

The Ukrainian army stunned Russia in August 2024 by attacking across the border and taking control of an estimated 1,300 square kilometers (500 square miles) of land. The country's leaders believed the capture of Russian territory might help in any future peace negotiations, but their gains were slowly eroded and Ukrainian troops continued to lose control of the territory throughout early 2025.

Gerasimov also confirmed Saturday that North Korean soldiers fought against Ukrainian troops in Russia's Kursk region. Gerasimov said that they took part in "combat missions shoulder to shoulder with Russian servicemen during the repelling of the Ukrainian incursion" and "demonstrated high professionalism, showed fortitude, courage and heroism in battle."

In the fall, Ukraine, the U.S. and South Korea all said that North Korea, which previously had supplied weapons to Moscow, had deployed 10,000-12,000 of its troops to Russia to fight in Kursk.

Moscow and Pyongyang until now had responded vaguely to the South Korean and Western claims of the troop deployment, emphasizing that their military cooperation conforms with international law, without directly admitting the presence of the North Korean forces in Russia.

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The news comes as U.S. President Donald Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy met in Vatican City on the sidelines of the pope's funeral to discuss a potential ceasefire deal.

The presidents met at St. Peter's Basilica for about 15 minutes, Ukrainian presidential spokesman Serhii Nykyforov said. Zelenskyy's office initially said that the two leaders would continue negotiations later on Saturday, but Nykyforov later told journalists that there would be no second meeting due to the presidents' tight schedules.

During the meeting, both sides discussed key issues on the path to peace, a source told The Associated Press. The conversation was described as very constructive, with both sides ready to move quickly.

Shortly after arriving in Rome on Friday, Trump said on social media that Ukraine and Russia should meet for "very high-level talks" on ending the three-year war sparked by Russia's invasion. His envoy, Steve Witkoff, met with Russian President Vladimir Putin earlier Friday, and Trump said both sides were "very close to a deal." Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov also said Saturday that Putin had told Witkoff Russia was ready to negotiate with Kyiv without any preconditions.

But less than 24 hours later, Trump said he doubted Putin's willingness to end the war.

"There was no reason for Putin to be shooting missiles into civilian areas, cities and towns, over the last few days. It makes me think that maybe he doesn't want to stop the war, he's just tapping me along, and has to be dealt with differently, through "Banking" or "Secondary Sanctions?" Too many people are dying!!!" he said in a post on Truth Social.

Three people were killed overnight by Russian attacks across Ukraine, local officials said Saturday.

Two people died in a strike on the town of Yarova in Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region, local Gov. Vadym Filashkin said in a post on social media. Another person died in the Dnipropetrovsk region, said Gov Serhiy Lysak. Six people were injured, including an 88-year-old woman and an 11-year-old girl, he said.

Russia launched three missiles and 114 drones over Ukraine overnight, Ukraine's air force wrote in a statement Saturday. Sixty-six drones were destroyed and a further 31 decoy drones failed to reach their destination.

Meanwhile, Russian air defenses shot down 45 Ukrainian drones overnight, the country's defense ministry said.

Zelenskyy also met with French President Emmanuel Macron and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer at the funeral. Later, he met Starmer at the residence of the British Ambassador in Rome.

Indian military says Pakistani troops fired at positions along the border in disputed Kashmir

By AIJAZ HUSSAIN, RAJESH ROY and MUNIR AHMED Associated Press

SRINAGAR, India (AP) — Pakistani soldiers fired at Indian posts along the highly militarized frontier in disputed Kashmir for a second consecutive night, the Indian military said Saturday, as tensions flared between the nuclear-armed rivals following a deadly attack on tourists last week.

India described the massacre, in which gunmen killed 26 people, most of them Indian tourists, as a "terror attack" and accused Pakistan of backing it.

Pakistan denies the charge. The assault, near the resort town of Pahalgam in India-controlled Kashmir, was claimed by a previously unknown militant group calling itself the Kashmir Resistance.

It was the restive region's worst assault targeting civilians in years. In the days since, tensions have risen dangerously between India and Pakistan, which have fought two of their three wars over Kashmir. The region is split between them and claimed by both in its entirety.

The Indian army said Saturday that soldiers from multiple Pakistani army posts overnight opened fire at Indian troops "all across the Line of Control" in Kashmir. "Indian troops responded appropriately with small arms," the statement said. There were no casualties reported, the statement added.

There was no comment from Pakistan, and the incidents could not be independently verified. In the past, each side has accused the other of starting border skirmishes in the Himalayan region.

Markets and bazaars were open in Pakistan-administered Kashmir on Saturday, and there was no sign

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of evacuations from villages near the Line of Control.

Tit-for-tat measures and a spike in tensions

After the tourist attack, India suspended a crucial water-sharing treaty and closed the only functional land border crossing. It revoked visas issued to Pakistanis with effect from Sunday.

Pakistan retaliated by canceling visas issued to Indians, closing its airspace to Indian airlines, and suspending trade with its neighbor. Nationals from both sides began heading to their home countries through the Wagah border near Pakistan's eastern city of Lahore on Friday.

Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday vowed the government would respond "with full force and might" to Indian attempts to stop or divert the flow of water.

He also said Pakistan was open to participating in any "neutral, transparent and credible investigation" into the tourist attack.

On Saturday, a Pakistani official from the disaster management agency, Saeed Qureshi, accused India of suddenly releasing large amounts of water into the Jhelum River, raising fears of flooding in parts of Pakistan-administered Kashmir.

Authorities told residents living along the riverbank to evacuate, Qureshi said. A spokesman for India's External Affairs Ministry was not immediately available for comment.

New Delhi describes all militancy in Kashmir as Pakistan-backed terrorism, a charge Pakistan rejects. Many Muslim Kashmiris consider the militants to be part of a home-grown freedom struggle.

Rebels have been fighting Indian rule since 1989 for uniting the territory, either under Pakistani rule or as an independent country.

Iran offers to mediate, while Trump declines to engage

With tensions high, Iran offered mediation, while U.S. President Donald Trump said he expected them to work out their differences.

"Tehran stands ready to use its good offices in Islamabad and New Delhi to forge greater understanding at this difficult time," Iranian Foreign Minister Syed Abbas Araghchi said on Friday.

"India and Pakistan are brotherly neighbors of Iran. Like other neighbors, we consider them our foremost priority," Araghchi wrote in a social media post.

Trump on Friday said "there's great tension between Pakistan and India, but there always has been."

Trump, who spoke on board Air Force One, did not answer when asked by reporters whether he would contact leaders of the two countries, but said "they'll get it figured out one way or the other."

The U.S. has long called for calm between India and Pakistan, and mediated during a major border skirmish in 1999.

U.S. intelligence chief Tulsi Gabbard expressed solidarity with India in its hunt for the perpetrators of the recent attack.

India intensifies its crackdown in Kashmir

After Tuesday's assault, Indian forces intensified a crackdown in the Kashmir Valley, the heartland of anti-India rebellion. They detained and questioned at least 1,500 people, three police officials said.

Troops detonated explosives in the family homes of at least three suspected militants in southern Kashmir Friday night, residents said. In one such incident, dozens of other houses also suffered damage, with their windowpanes shattering and walls cracking due to the impact of the blast.

The police officials insisted on anonymity, in keeping with their departmental policy, while the villagers feared reprisals from authorities.

Early Friday, troops also destroyed the family homes of two suspected militants they accused of being involved in Tuesday's attack.

Indian troops demolish homes as a common anti-militancy tactic in Kashmir.

Trump pays his respects to a pope who publicly and pointedly disagreed with him over the years

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

ROME (AP) — President Donald Trump on Saturday paid his respects to Pope Francis, occupying a front-row seat in sunlit St. Peter's Square as more than 50 heads of state and other dignitaries attended the funeral of the Catholic Church leader who pointedly disagreed with the American on a variety of issues.

Trump and first lady Melania Trump were seated next to Estonian President Alar Karis and not far from French President Emmanuel Macron for the outdoor service on a cloudless morning.

Diplomacy also was on Trump's agenda during his eight-hour visit to Italy: Trump had a brief private meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy inside St. Peter's Basilica before the service. Photos showed them seated on chairs facing one another in a marbled room and hunched over.

After Trump was shown to his seat for the funeral, he was immediately followed out of the basilica by Zelenskyy, who was met with a burst of applause from the audience. It was their first face-to-face encounter since they argued during a heated Oval Office meeting in late February. Trump has been trying to broker an end to the war in Ukraine that began in February 2022 when Russia invaded.

Trump stood out at the funeral service in a dark blue suit and a lighter blue tie in a sea of mournful black attire. The first lady, who is Catholic, wore a black dress and veil. Trump considers himself a "nondenominational Christian." The couple paid respects to the late pope in front of his wooden coffin.

During the service, the Trumps held hands at times and the president kissed his wife on the cheek during the Sign of Peace. They also visited with Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York while at the Vatican.

Trump told reporters on Friday as he flew to Rome that he was going to the funeral "out of respect" for Francis, who died Monday at age 88.

Francis sharply disagreed with Trump's approach on issues including immigration, the treatment of migrants and climate change. The Argentine pontiff and the American president sparred early in their relationship over immigration. In 2016, Francis, alluding to then-candidate Trump and his campaign slogan of "build the wall," called anyone who builds a wall to keep out migrants "not Christian." Trump said the comment was "disgraceful."

But after Francis' death, the Republican president praised him as a "good man" who "worked hard" and "loved the world." Trump also described the pope as a "fantastic kind of guy."

Seated a few rows back behind the Trumps at the funeral service were former Democratic President Joe Biden, a practicing Catholic, and his wife, Jill. When Trump was asked earlier if he would meet his predecessor while in Italy, he told reporters: "It's not high on my list. It's really not."

Trump had spoken in recent days about holding multiple meetings with world leaders while in Rome but that did not appear to pan out during his brief visit. Trump arrived late Friday and was en route back to the United States immediately after the funeral.

What to know about the funeral and burial of Pope Francis

By LUIS ANDRES HENAO Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Pope Francis died on Easter Monday at the age of 88. His death set off mourning across the Catholic world and days of ritual at the Vatican. Here are the key things to know about the funeral of the first Latin American pontiff in the church's history:

When and where was his funeral held?

His funeral was held Saturday morning in St. Peter's Square. His coffin was then taken by motorcade across downtown Rome to the spot where he wished to be laid to rest in a simple underground tomb at St. Mary Major Basilica, according to his will. The church is home to his favorite icon of the Virgin Mary, to whom he was particularly devoted.

Why not at the Vatican?

Before and after every foreign trip, Francis would go to the basilica to pray before the Byzantine-style

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painting, the Salus Populi Romani, or Salvation of the people of Rome.

Located in a side chapel, the icon features an image of Mary, draped in a blue robe, holding the infant Jesus, who in turn holds a jeweled golden book.

Which dignitaries attended?

Heads of state, including U.S. President Donald Trump, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, were among those attending the funeral. Others dignitaries included: Prince William, French President Emmanuel Macron, German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier and European Council President António Costa.

How long did the pope serve?

Pope Francis had a 12-year papacy during which he charmed the world with his humility and concern for the poor. But the Argentina-born pope also alienated conservatives with critiques of capitalism and climate change.

Why were so many young people in attendance?

Many mourners had already planned to be in Rome this weekend for the Holy Year canonization of the first millennial saint, Carlo Acutis. The canonization was postponed after Francis' death, and no date has yet been set. The jubilee of teenagers had also been set for April 25 to 27.

Perhaps because so many young people were on hand, the somber ceremony still had a festive mood, with mourners taking selfies amid the hymns as Francis' simple coffin was brought out of St. Peter's Basilica at the start of the Mass.

So, how do they choose a new pope?

The death of a pope starts a centuries-old ritual to elect a new one, involving sacred oaths by the cardinals, the piercing of ballots with a needle and thread after they're counted, and then burning them to produce either the white or black smoke to signal if there's a new leader for the world's 1.4 billion Catholics.

With the burial, the Catholic Church begins nine days of official mourning, known as the "novemdiales". The date of the conclave to elect a new pope has not yet been announced.

In the conclave, the cardinals will vote in secret sessions, and the ballots will be burned in a special stove after each session. Black smoke indicates no pope has been elected; white smoke says the cardinals have chosen the next head of the Catholic Church.

Any baptized Catholic male is eligible, though only cardinals have been selected since 1378. The winner must receive at least two-thirds of the vote from those cardinals under age 80 who are eligible to participate.

Francis appointed the vast majority of electors, often tapping men who share his pastoral priorities, which suggests continuity rather than rupture.

While it's impossible to predict who the next pope will be, some cardinals are considered to have better chances than others.

Is it like the movie?

Yes and no.

"Conclave" the 2024 film, introduced many laypeople to the ancient selection process with its arcane rules and grand ceremony, albeit with a silver screen twist packed full of palace intrigue and surprise.

Vatican experts say the movie excels at re-creating the look and feel of a conclave. But there are discrepancies, errors and some outlandish storylines in the Hollywood version. And while the voting process was depicted accurately, the ballots are burned not after each vote, but after each session.

The legacy of Francis

Francis was known for his personal simplicity, from the choice of his name Francis in honor of St. Francis of Assisi, who renounced wealth to help the poor, to the outward symbols and priorities of his papacy.

He chose to live in the Vatican's Domus Santa Marta hotel instead of the Apostolic Palace and wore his old orthotic shoes and not the red loafers of the papacy.

In his teachings, he focused on concern for refugees and other marginalized people. His first trip outside Rome as pope in 2013 was to the Sicilian island of Lampedusa to meet with newly arrived migrants. His plea for welcome put him at odds with U.S. and European policies.

He also signaled a more welcoming stance toward LGBTQ+ people, while also making the fight against

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climate change a priority. Francis became the first pope to use scientific data in a major teaching document and made care for God's creation a hallmark of his papacy.

He eschewed the grandiose even in his departure, lying in state in a simple coffin made of wood.

The sealing of the coffin

The night before the funeral, the camerlengo presided over the closing and sealing of the coffin, in the presence of other senior cardinals. A white cloth was placed over Francis' face.

A bag containing coins minted during his papacy was placed in the coffin along with a one-page written account of his papacy — known in Italian as a "rogito," a word indicating an official deed. It was read aloud by the master of liturgical ceremonies and then rolled up and slipped inside a cylindrical tube that was placed inside the coffin. Another copy is kept in the Vatican archives. The covers of both the zinc coffin and the wooden one bear a cross and Francis' papal coat of arms.

Today in History: April 27, deadly tornadoes strike the Southeast

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Sunday, April 27, the 117th day of 2025. There are 248 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On April 27, 2011, during the four-day 2011 Super Outbreak, 112 tornadoes touched down across the southeastern United States, killing 319 in the deadliest day of tornadoes in the U.S. since 1925.

Also on this date:

In 1521, Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan was killed in the Battle of Mactan in the Philippines as he attempted to expand Spanish colonization in the region.

In 1813, the Battle of York took place in Upper Canada during the War of 1812 as U.S. forces defeated the British garrison in present-day Toronto; U.S. Brigadier General Zebulon Pike and 37 other American soldiers were killed near the end of the battle when retreating British forces exploded the ammunition magazine of Fort York as the Americans approached.

In 1865, the steamer Sultana, carrying freed Union prisoners of war, exploded on the Mississippi River near Memphis, Tennessee; as many as 1,800 were killed in the worst maritime disaster in U.S. history.

In 1994, former President Richard M. Nixon was interred following a funeral service attended by all five of his successors, at the Nixon Presidential Library and Museum in Yorba Linda, California.

In 2010, former Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega arrived in France after being extradited from the United States; he was later convicted in a French court of laundering drug money and received a seven-year sentence.

In 2012, the space shuttle Enterprise, mounted atop a jumbo jet, sailed over the New York City skyline on its final flight before going on display as part of the USS Intrepid Museum.

In 2015, rioters plunged part of Baltimore into chaos, torching a pharmacy, setting police cars ablaze and throwing bricks at officers hours after thousands attended a funeral service for Freddie Gray, a Black man who died from a severe spinal injury he'd suffered in police custody.

In 2018, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un made history by crossing over to South Korea to meet with President Moon Jae-in; it was the first time a member of the Kim dynasty had set foot on southern soil since the end of the Korean War in 1953.

In 2019, a gunman opened fire inside a synagogue near San Diego as worshippers celebrated the last day of Passover, killing a woman and wounding a rabbi and two others. (John Earnest, a white supremacist, was sentenced to both federal and state life prison terms for the shootings.)

Today's Birthdays: Singer Kate Pierson (The B-52's) is 77. Guitarist Ace Frehley is 74. Sen. Jim Justice, R-W.V., is 74. Basketball Hall of Famer George Gervin is 73. Singer Sheena Easton is 66. Sen. Cory Booker, D-N.J., is 56. Actor Sally Hawkins is 49. Musician Patrick Stump (Fall Out Boy) is 41. Actor William Moseley is 38. Singer Lizzo is 37. Tennis player Nick Kyrgios is 30.