

# Groton Daily Independent

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*May your day be as joyful as  
Snoopy with his big, happy smile.  
Let today bring peace, love, and  
lots of good moments your way.*



## **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**

Senior Menu: Pork chop, creamy noodles, winter blend, pineapple, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Oatmeal.

School Lunch: Quesadilla, santa fe corn.

Baseball hosts Sioux Valley, 6 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 4 p.m.

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

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

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

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# 1440

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

## Sanctuary Cities Targeted

President Donald Trump signed an executive order yesterday directing the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security to compile a list of sanctuary cities and states within 30 days. The order seeks to identify areas not fully complying with federal immigration laws; these areas could lose federal funding or face lawsuits if they don't revise their practices.

Sanctuary jurisdictions limit the involvement of local police in enforcing federal immigration policies. At least a dozen states—including New York and California—and hundreds of cities have statutes prohibiting local law enforcement, to some degree, from cooperating with federal requests to detain migrants or share information on noncitizens. Advocates say such measures are designed to build trust between immigrant communities and local law enforcement, while critics say they allow cities and states to undermine federal authority.

The order comes after the Trump administration sued Illinois, Chicago, and Cook County in February over their sanctuary laws and after a federal judge last week blocked the administration from denying funding to such cities.

Separately, today is Trump's 100th day in office.

## Iberian Peninsula Blackout

Spain, Portugal, and parts of France were hit by widespread power outages yesterday, impacting tens of millions of people. Power has since been restored in many parts of Spain and France. Restoration of power in Portugal could take longer as the country's main energy provider warns it must navigate a more complicated grid.

The cause of the outages was not immediately clear, though investigators have largely ruled out a cyberattack. Portugal's grid operator suggested induced atmospheric vibration was to blame, a phenomenon whereby extreme temperature changes can cause especially high-voltage lines to oscillate.

Transportation was disrupted across Spain and Portugal, with operations at major airports interrupted, traffic lights out, and hundreds of flights and trains canceled or delayed. Hospitals stopped routine work, and banks and schools were closed. The Madrid Open postponed tennis matches, with Coco Gauff interrupted mid-interview.

## Kardashian Jewelry Heist

A trial opened in Paris yesterday for 10 suspects accused of robbing media personality Kim Kardashian at gunpoint during Paris Fashion Week in 2016. The suspects—nine men and one woman, many in their 60s and 70s—allegedly stormed Kardashian's hotel suite while her bodyguard was away, tied her up, and stole roughly \$6M in jewelry, including her \$4M engagement ring from then-husband Kanye West.

Prosecutors say five men disguised as police officers forced a night concierge to lead them to Kardashian's room, where she was gagged, bound, and locked in a bathroom. The robbers escaped on foot and by bicycle. DNA found on zip ties and tape used to restrain Kardashian later led to the suspects' arrests. Of the original 12 defendants, one has died and another, suffering from advanced dementia, has been deemed unfit to stand trial. Five are charged with carrying out the heist, and five with serving as accessories.

The trial is scheduled to run until May 23, with Kardashian set to testify in person May 13.

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## **Sports, Entertainment, & Culture**

Outkast, Cyndi Lauper, and Chubby Checker headline 2025 class of 13 inductees into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame.

Final autopsy report on Gene Hackman's death reveals the actor died of hypertensive and atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease days after his wife Betsy died of hantavirus pulmonary syndrome.

Halle Berry, Jeremy Strong, and six others join Oscar-winning French actress Juliette Binoche for competition jury at 2025 Cannes Film Festival (May 13-24).

## **Science & Technology**

President Donald Trump dismisses all scientists working on the National Climate Assessment, a congressionally mandated climate change report.

Scientists solve key question limiting carbon-dioxide-to-fuel chemical reactions.

New immunotherapy drug significantly increases life expectancy for patients with locally advanced head and neck cancer in phase 3 trial.

Researchers reveal a new type of atomic clock with improved precision measuring quantum beats from a "fountain" of cesium atoms; clock would be off by one second after 100 million years.

## **Business & Markets**

US stock markets close near flatline (S&P 500 +0.1%, Dow +0.3%, Nasdaq -0.1%) as investors brace for packed week of earnings reports.

IBM pledges to invest \$150B in the US over the next five years, including \$30B to advance American manufacturing of its mainframe and quantum computers.

Chinese retailer Temu adds import surcharges, ranging between 130% and 150%, to items sold to US customers amid US-China trade fight.

## **Politics & World Affairs**

Prime Minister Mark Carney wins federal elections in Canada, with his Liberal Party holding narrow lead in the House of Commons as of this writing.

Conclave process to elect a new pope will begin May 7, when high-ranking clergy will sequester themselves in the Sistine Chapel until a new pope is selected.

Russian President Vladimir Putin announces unilateral 72-hour ceasefire in Ukraine beginning May 8, calls for Ukraine to join; there have been more than 20 ceasefires in the conflict to date, many failing within minutes.



## School board meeting highlights student achievement and staff changes

by Elizabeth Varin

The Groton school district board witnessed a blend of student success and administrative updates at its end-of-April board meeting.

Two Destination Imagination teams from the elementary school, along with parents and supporters, filled the conference room at the high school library. Co-DI Coordinators Julie Milbrandt and Joni Groebelinghoff gave an overview of the skill-building and problem-solving program before introducing the two teams that qualified for DI Global Finals in Kansas City. Those teams include the Seven Pentagoni Pickles – made up of members Jernie Weig, Willow Cowan, Taylor Fliehs, Calvin Locken, Rowan Hanson and Titan Johnson – and the Triple A's – made up of members Ava Strom, Aryanna Cutler (not present), Freddy Cole, Aschar Warrington and Conrad Rix.

The two teams then showcased their skills, with the Seven Pentagoni Pickles performing a skit prepared for the fine arts category and the Triple A's presenting their improvisation skills for the improv. category.

The two teams are planning the trip to the May 21 through 26 Global Finals in Kansas City, where they will compete against other teams from different countries, Milbrandt said.

The anticipated cost to take both teams is \$18,000, Groebelinghoff added. That includes registration for both teams (\$5,500 per team), lodging and meals.

Letters have been sent asking for donations from local businesses, and friends and family will be asked for donations too, Milbrandt said. And the community is invited to help too, with a DI at DQ night scheduled for May 7. The kids are going to be helping out that night, and Dairy Queen manager and co-owner



**Members of the Seven Pentagoni Pickles perform the play they created before the Groton Area School District board on Monday, April 28. Members of the group include from left Taylor Fliehs, Rowan Hanson (behind the camouflage boxes), Jernie Weig, Willow Cowan, Titan Johnson and Calvin Locken.** (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



**Members of the Triple A's Destination Imagination group showcase their improvisation skills in front of the Groton Area School District board on Monday, April 28. Members of the Triple A's include from left to right Conrad Rix, Ava Strom, Aschar Warrington and Freddy Cole. Not pictured is final team member Aryanna Cutler.** (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)

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Dale Grenz is going to give a portion of proceeds from the evening to the Destination Imagination teams.

## **Two new staff members and two less coaches**

The board also handled several staffing changes.

In quick succession, the board approved hiring Boston Marlow as full-time maintenance team member and Joshua Friez as grade 5-12 instrumental music teacher. Following that, the board accepted the resignation of Head Boys Basketball Coach Brian Dolan and Junior High Volleyball Coach Kelby Tracy with no discussion at Monday's meeting.

## **Career and Technical Education continuing to grow in Groton**

The board heard overviews of career technical education programs at the high school.

Health science teacher Brittany Hubbard reviewed her courses, and there are a lot of students in the health science classes, she said.

"With health science classes, my goal is to expose them to careers in the healthcare field," she said.

Classes include a health career exploration class, which is looking at growing heading into next year, and an athletic training class. There is also a CNA (Certified Nursing Assistant) class with 17 students, including 11 who are getting CNA certified.

FACS teacher Lindsey Tietz spoke next, reviewing skills being taught to students and how the program has changed in the last few years.

Family and Consumer Sciences 3 used to be unit-based, but is transitioning to focusing on textiles in the fall and a child development education in the spring, she said.

Tietz's foods class start the school year building a foundation of food preparation skills. The students add to those skills by studying nutrition and wellness in the second semester. Discussion of processed snacks was brought up at a recent wellness committee meeting, and that led to the foods class developing informational fliers to bring awareness of problems with processed foods and push for healthy snack options.

The last program update came from agriculture teacher Lindsey Vanderwal, who reviewed her courses and the variety of information taught throughout the year, ranging from wildlife and fishery information to agriculture business practices and the agriculture processing industries.

Looking to the future, Vanderwal hopes to improve the greenhouse space, implement more hands-on labs and invite guest speakers into the classroom.

- The board approved off-staff coaching agreements for the 2025-2026 school year. They include:
  - o Matt Baumgartner as head girls soccer coach with a total annual salary of \$3,276.
  - o Madisen Bjerke as assistant cheer coach with a total annual salary of \$1,579.50.
  - o Chris Ehresmann as junior high wrestling coach with a total annual salary of \$2,340.
  - o Seth Erickson as assistant football coach with a total annual salary of \$3,276.
  - o Joni Groebelinghoff as co-Destination Imagination coordinator with a total annual salary of \$1,170.
  - o Chelsea Hanson as head volleyball coach with a total annual salary of \$5,148.
  - o Matt Locke as head girls basketball coach with a total annual salary of \$5,616.
  - o Brenda Madsen as senior class advisor with a total annual salary of \$936.
  - o Julie Milbrandt as co-Destination Imagination coordinator with a total annual salary of \$1,170.
  - o Aubray Miller as cheerleading coach with a total annual salary of \$1,579.50.
  - o Ryan Olson as head boys soccer coach with a total annual salary of \$3,276.
  - o Kristi Peterson as yearbook advisor with a total annual salary of \$3,744.
  - o Trent Traphagen as assistant girls basketball coach with a total annual salary of \$3,744.
  - o Darin Zoellner as head wrestling coach with a total annual salary of \$5,616.
  - o Troy Zoellner as assistant wrestling coach with a total annual salary of \$3,744.
- A small team from the district will meet Friday to complete the level 2 Comprehensive School Threat Assessment Guidelines training. The focus is on research-based threat assessment and prevention activi-

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ties, Superintendent Joe Schwan told the board. It is part of routine ongoing training.

- The board approved employment agreements for auxiliary administrative staff.
- The board approved the administrative negotiated agreement and signed administrative contracts.
- After the meeting ended, Superintendent Joe Schwan told the board that teacher contracts were due Friday, April 25, and all the contracts came back signed.

## **Superintendent's Report to the Groton Area School District 06-6 Board of Education**

April 28, 2025

### **Title VI Nondiscrimination.**

Last week Wednesday (April 23) the SD Department of Education held a special Superintendent's meeting regarding the Office of Civil Rights Title VI requirements announced earlier in April. The SDDOE had filed two separate two-week time extensions to research the new requirement that school districts sign off on a Title VI "Reminder of Legal Obligations Undertaken in Exchange for Receiving Federal Financial Assistance and Request for Certification under Title VI and SFFA v. Harvard" document.

The document essentially lays out the requirements that we're required to agree to annually when we submit applications for federal funding, such as our Consolidated Application for Title I funds.

The SD Department of Education has taken the position that they are not going to collect these documents and submit them to the US Department of Education but that local school districts (LEAs) may choose to send them directly to the Office of Civil Rights if we so choose. These were due to the OCR within 24 hours. I submitted this document on behalf of our District on April 24.

Last week Thursday there were two federal court decisions handed down regarding the enforcement of the new DEI requirements and Title VI Nondiscrimination certification requirements, essentially delaying the requirement of the certification document.

**CSTAG Level 2 Training (Comprehensive School Threat Assessment Guidelines).** On Friday morning a small team will meet to complete the level 2 CSTAG training conducted through the South Dakota Office of Homeland Security. The focus is on research-based threat assessment and prevention activities, such as bullying prevention.



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Brett Schwan

Elementary Board Report

April 28, 2025

**School Improvement Progress Report:** Our CNA team met and completed the form. This report discussed what we did this year to improve our student enrollment through improved student engagement.

**Staff and Student Surveys:** As part of our school improvement plan, we will be creating and asking the staff and students to fill out surveys. The focus of the survey will be student engagement.

**Safety Care Training:** Ms. Edwards and I will be training our SpEd staff in June. Much of this training will be how to de-escalate certain student situations.

**Track and Field Day:** Track and field day will be on Thursday, May 8<sup>th</sup> from 12:30 – 3:00. Families are invited and encouraged to eat with their children:

KG and 1<sup>st</sup> – 11:00-11:25

2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> – 11:25-11:50

4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> – 11:50-12:15.

**South Dakota State Assessment:**

- **Make-up testing**
  - **April 28-May 2**

**Elementary Spring Concert** is on April 29<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 in the high school gymnasium.

**Spring Field Trips:**

**JK:**

- Date: Friday, May 2, 2025
- Location: Dacotah Prairie Museum
- Time: Leave at 12:30, Return at 2:40

**KG:**

- Date Wednesday, Apr 30, 2025
- Location-Domino's and Parkview Nursery
- Time-Leave at 9 am -return around 3pm

**1st:**

- Date: May 2, 2025
- Location - Storybook Land
- Time: 9:00-2:00

**2nd:**

- Date: Friday, May 9th, 2025

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- Location: Bramble Park Zoo, Watertown SD
- Time: leave at 8:35 - return at 2:45

3rd:

- Date: May 7, 2025
- Location DeSmet (Laura Ingalls Wilder Homestead)
- Time 8:30 (leave) Return end of day

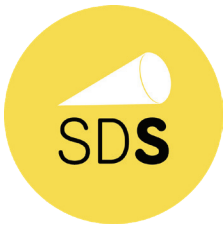
4th:

- Date: April 29, 2025
- Location: Aberdeen Agriculture Fair
- Time: 11:45 - End of day
- Date: May 7, 2025
- Location: Valley Queen - Milbank, SD
- Time: 8:30-3:00

5th:

- Date: May 13, 2025
- Location: Fort Sisseton
- Time 8:30 leave, return end of day





## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### EPA to allow summer sale of E15 nationwide

**BY: CAMI KOONS, IOWA CAPITAL DISPATCH - APRIL 28, 2025 6:14 PM**

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency granted an emergency waiver permitting the nationwide sale of a fuel blend with higher amounts of ethanol through the summer months, which fuel and farm leaders say will help farmers, fuel producers and drivers at the pumps.

Midwestern states, including Iowa and South Dakota, already had waivers in place to allow for summer sales of fuel blended with 15% ethanol, also known as E15. EPA's decision Monday waives the agency's summer restrictions on the fuel for the rest of the country and follows guidance from the president's executive order from January, declaring a national energy emergency.

The press release from EPA said the move will "provide families with relief" by providing more options at the pump with lower prices per gallon.

U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson, R-South Dakota, said Monday on social media that the decision "supports our producers, gives consumers more options at the pump, and bolsters our energy security." Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-South Dakota, also praised the move on social media, calling it "a positive step for South Dakota farmers and consumers."

Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Mike Naig applauded the decision and said Iowa drivers saved more than \$38 million by choosing E15 over E10, a lower blend of ethanol fuel, in 2024.

"Today's E15 announcement by the Trump Administration is a win for consumers across the U.S. and farmers here in Iowa," Naig said in a statement. "This decision is a big step toward making our country more energy dominant, independent, and secure."

Iowa Sens. Joni Ernst and Chuck Grassley both applauded the measure, noting it was an example of "promises made, promises kept" by the president and would be a "big" boost for corn farmers.

"It's clear (President Trump) is making our farmers, producers, and all of rural America a priority, and I look forward to working alongside him to secure permanent, nationwide access to this cleaner, cheaper choice at the pump," Ernst said in a statement.

According to National Corn Growers Association, year-round E15 sales throughout the country would lead to an increased demand of more than 2 billion bushels of corn annually, which is why the group has pushed for increased ethanol demand.

Brent Johnson, president of Iowa Farm Bureau Federation, applauded the EPA decision, but noted EPA has consistently issued similar waivers, and urged for a permanent change to the rule.

"Clearly, there is strong consumer demand for a lower-cost fuel option at the pump, and Iowa farmers stand by readily able to meet the growing demand for biofuels," Johnson said in a statement.

Naig similarly noted the need for a permanent regulation allowing the sale of the fuel. He, along with Iowa Attorney General Brenna Bird and industry groups have all sent letters to congressional leaders urging the passage of such a law.

"We are tired of waiting," Monte Shaw, executive director of Iowa Renewable Fuels Association said in a statement. "Consumers and retailers are tired of waiting. E15 could provide a market for 5 to 7 billion gallons of additional ethanol demand at a time when American farmers and rural communities are hurting."

The EPA waiver is in place from May 1 through May 20, as the Clean Air Act only allows a 20-day waiver, but considering trends from the past several summers, industry leaders expect the waiver will be extended through the other summer months.

*Cami Koons is an Iowa Capital Dispatch reporter covering agriculture and the environment. She previously worked at publications in Kansas and Missouri, covering rural affairs.*

## Governor signs order to create secure web portal for whistleblowers

BY: JOHN HULT - APRIL 28, 2025 1:41 PM

State employees in South Dakota will soon have a secure web portal to submit allegations of misbehavior by their coworkers.

Gov. Larry Rhoden signed an executive order telling the state Bureau of Human Resources and Administration and the Bureau of Information and Telecommunications to create a "secure standard reporting mechanism" for employees. The portal will deliver reports of malfeasance to the state's auditor and attorney general.

The order also requires supervisors and encourages employees to submit such reports, and directs the human resources department to conduct training in ethics and use of the portal.

The order is an outgrowth of Senate bills 62 and 63, which tightened the state's internal controls after a series of 2024 scandals involving former state employees.

One such employee, Lonna Carroll, used her position at the Department of Social Services to illegally collect nearly \$1.8 million over the course of 13 years. A jury found Carroll guilty of grand theft earlier this month.

Other former employees stood accused of forging vehicle registrations, falsifying food service inspections and using foster family food service vouchers for themselves.

Representatives for Rhoden and Attorney General Marty Jackley sparred during the 2025 legislative session over whether supervisors should face felony charges for failure to report state employee misdeeds.

Rhoden's office argued supervisors should face misdemeanor rather than felony charges, particularly if the unreported employee misbehavior isn't felonious in nature. The kerfuffle over that provision in SB 62 forced multiple rounds of debate, one of which appeared to doom the bill before a revival effort the following day. In the end, lawmakers narrowly sided with Rhoden.

In a press release announcing the creation of the online reporting system, Rhoden wrote that the executive branch took "decisive action" to address the rash of corruption cases.

"Under my leadership, South Dakota will have a government that is accountable and responsible with taxpayer dollars, and this executive order is an important step forward," he wrote.

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

## State offering free PFAS cleanup to local fire departments, schools

BY: JOHN HULT - APRIL 28, 2025 12:56 PM

The state of South Dakota will spend up to \$250,000 to clear PFAS chemicals from local areas in the coming year.

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, known as PFAS or "forever chemicals," break down at an exceedingly slow rate in the natural environment. They're found in products like nonstick cookware, water-resistant items like umbrellas or rain jackets, and cleaning products, among other items.

Concerns about their prevalence in the environment and their impacts on human health have grown steadily in recent years, as they've been discovered in drinking water, fish and food packaging.

PFAS are also found in a kind of firefighting foam that's fallen out of favor, but fire departments around the U.S., including in South Dakota, still have some and need to dispose of it.

The South Dakota Board of Water and Natural Resources awarded a \$250,000 Solid Waste Management grant to the state Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources (DANR) last month to help communities collect and dispose of some PFAS sources. The citizen-led water resources board evaluates projects and signs off on funding through the solid waste program.

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The grant will allow fire departments with PFAS foam, or schools whose science labs may still have chemicals, to summon the department's contractor to collect and safely dispose of them at an out-of-state location. The state will also reach out directly to agencies, and has begun to contact fire departments, airports, and other public entities by phone to find out if they have PFAS for disposal.

The money comes from the Inspection, Compliance, and Remediation program, funded by a mix of fuel tank inspection fees and the sale of lottery tickets. Typically, cleanup grants through the program cover 80% of cleanup costs, with the entity requesting cleanup expected to cover the rest.

The South Dakota Legislature approved Senate Bill 33 this year to let DANR put \$250,000 of program funds toward PFAS cleanups with no local match.

Andy Bruels with the DANR told the water resources board in March that a previous PFAS cleanup a few years ago cleaned up "a fair amount of material." The contractor hauled it out of state for disposal, as typical landfills can't adequately prevent the chemicals from continued seepage into the environment.

The legislation also allowed for the grants to be used in waste tire cleanup, but Bruels said the primary focus will be PFAS and that it's unlikely much will be left for that secondary purpose.

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

## **Trump border czar defends removal of U.S. citizen children**

**BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA - APRIL 28, 2025 1:33 PM**

WASHINGTON — White House border czar Tom Homan on Monday blamed the parents of U.S. citizen children the Trump administration sent to Honduras over the weekend.

At a Monday morning press conference, Homan defended the government's actions to remove three young children from two different families alongside their mothers who were in the country without legal authorization but participated in a program that allows otherwise law-abiding migrants to stay in their communities.

"If you enter this country illegally, it's a crime," Homan said. "Knowing you're in this country illegally, you put yourself in that position. You put your family in that position."

The children, all under the age of 10, were placed on deportation flights to Honduras on Friday after their mothers checked in with a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement office in New Orleans as part of the Intensive Supervision Appearance Program, which allows immigrants to stay in their communities while undergoing immigration court proceedings.

An attorney for one of the children, Gracie Willis at the National Immigration Project, said the 4-year-old U.S. citizen with Stage 4 cancer was deported without access to his medication.

Homan has argued the mothers requested to be deported with their children, but attorneys for the families argue they were "denied access to legal counsel, and swiftly deported without due process."

### **Due process concerns**

U.S. District Judge Terry Doughty, whom Trump appointed to a seat on the Louisiana federal bench in 2018, expressed concern that a 2-year-old U.S. citizen had been deported, despite her father's wishes she remain in the U.S., according to court filings.

Doughty scheduled a May 16 hearing because of his "strong suspicion that the government just deported a U.S. citizen with no meaningful process."

"The government contends that this is all okay because the mother wishes that the child be deported with her," Doughty wrote in his order. "But the court doesn't know that."

Willis, from the National Immigration Project, raised concerns about a lack of due process and how the deportations have separated families.

"What we saw from ICE over the last several days is horrifying and baffling," she said in a statement.

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"These mothers had no opportunity to speak with their co-parents to make the kinds of choices that parents are entitled to make for their children, the kinds of decisions that millions of parents make every day: 'what is best for our child?'"

Homan has argued the children were deported at the request of the mothers and that the Trump administration was "keeping families together."

"What we did is remove children with their mothers who requested their children depart with them," he said. "When a parent says, 'I want my 2-year-old baby to go with me,' we made that happen. They weren't deported. We don't deport U.S. citizens. The parents made that decision, not the United States government."

## Wisconsin judge

Monday's remarks from Homan come the day before President Donald Trump will mark the 100th day of his second term. His early days in office have centered on carrying out his campaign promise of mass deportations of millions of people in the U.S. without permanent legal status.

Trump will sign two executive orders on immigration late Monday: one relating to border security and another to require the Department of Justice and Department of Homeland Security to publicly list so-called sanctuary cities that do not coordinate with federal immigration law enforcement.

Homan also stood by the Trump administration's decision to arrest a federal judge in Wisconsin on the grounds she obstructed immigration officials from detaining a man attending his court hearing. It marked an escalation between the Trump administration and the judiciary branch, raising concerns from Democrats.

The arrest of Judge Hannah Dugan was highly publicized after she was handcuffed in public and FBI Director Kash Patel bragged about the arrest on social media.

Attorney General Pam Bondi said on Fox News that the Trump administration was going to continue to go after judges who "think they're above the law."

"When you cross that line to impediment or knowingly harboring, concealing an illegal alien from ICE, you will be prosecuted, judge or not," Homan said.

*Ariana covers the nation's capital for States Newsroom. Her areas of coverage include politics and policy, lobbying, elections and campaign finance.*

## Fast-building states get more babies

### Births are up in Western states including South Dakota

**BY: TIM HENDERSON, STATELINE - APRIL 28, 2025 9:08 AM**

The number of births in some Western states that are adding new housing rose last year, reversing losses the year before in many cases, according to new federal statistics released Wednesday.

Increases from 2023 to 2024 were highest in Colorado (4.5%), Idaho (3.8%), Utah (3.6%), Washington state and Nebraska (each 2.6%). Births increased around 2% in West Virginia, South Dakota, North Carolina, Montana, Rhode Island and South Carolina.

Almost all those states had decreases in births the previous year, and many have been building housing rapidly since 2023. Idaho, North Carolina and Utah have issued enough building permits in 2023 and 2024 to add about 4% to their housing stock, the highest in the nation.

Melissa Kearney, an economics professor at the University of Maryland who specializes in families and fertility, said there could be a link between homebuilding and more babies.

"It is quite possible that increased access to home ownership, coming from a reduction in the price of houses in places that are building more houses, could meaningfully increase birth rates," Kearney told Stateline in an e-mail.

Many of the other states with increases in births are also seeing building booms: Colorado, Nebraska, South Carolina, South Dakota and Washington state are all set to add more than 2% to housing stock based on permits issued in 2023 and 2024, according to a Stateline analysis of U.S. Census Bureau Build-



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ing Permits Survey data.

Building permits can take up to two years to translate into finished houses and apartments, but they indicate which states are most willing to allow new housing that can boost population, tax receipts and the workforce. In Colorado, Denver County is set to add almost 10,000 housing units and in Idaho, Ada County, which includes Boise, could add 11,200 units based on building permits.

Nationally births were slightly higher in 2024 than the year before, by about 1%, according to provisional federal numbers from the National Vital Statistics System within the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The fertility rate also increased slightly, but it remains below the “replacement level” needed to keep the population stable — 2.1 children for each woman over her lifetime.

All the increase nationally was in births to Hispanic and Asian mothers, with births continuing to decline for Black, American Indian and white mothers. Births to teenagers and women ages 20-24, in sharp decline since 2007, continued to drop last year, while births increased for women 25 and older.

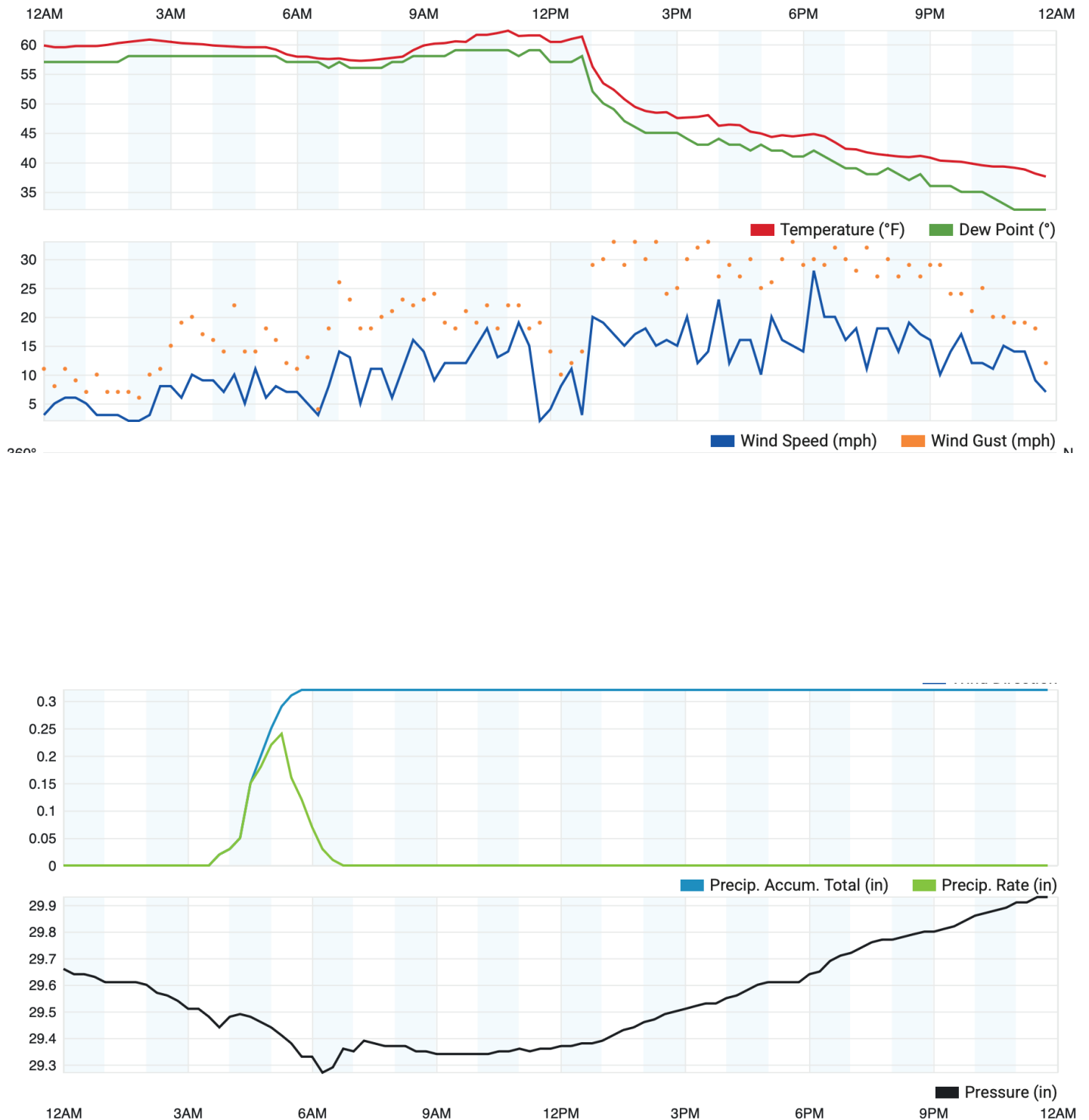
The number of births dropped most in states struggling with stagnant population: falling about 4% in Louisiana, 3% in Mississippi, and 2% in New Mexico and New Hampshire. All those states had little or no population growth between mid-2023 and mid-2024, according to U.S. Census Bureau estimates.

*Tim Henderson covers demographics for Stateline. He has been a reporter at the Miami Herald, the Cincinnati Enquirer and The Journal News in suburban New York. Henderson became fascinated with census data in the early 1990s, when AOL offered the first computerized reports. Since then he has broken stories about population trends in South Florida, including a housing affordability analysis included in the 2007 Pulitzer-winning series “House of Lies” for the Miami Herald, and a prize-winning analysis of public pension irregularities for The Journal News. He has been a member and trainer for the National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting since its inception 20 years ago, specializing in online data access and visualization along with demographics.*

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



# Groton Daily Independent

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Today



High: 59 °F

Sunny

Tonight



Low: 40 °F

Mostly Clear

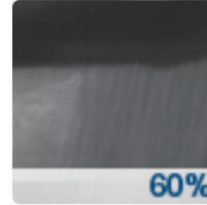
Wednesday



High: 73 °F

Mostly Sunny  
then Showers

Wednesday  
Night



Low: 42 °F

Showers  
Likely

Thursday



High: 65 °F

Mostly Sunny  
then Slight  
Chance  
Showers



## The Week Ahead

April 29, 2025  
3:08 AM

Light Rain Showers are expected Wednesday night into Thursday

*Tuesday*



High:  
57-65

Overnight Low:  
37-44

Wind:  
N→S 5-10 mph

*Wednesday*



High:  
65-74

Overnight Low:  
39-48

Wind:  
S 10-20 mph

*Thursday*



High:  
60-66

Overnight Low:  
35-41

Wind:  
NW 15-25 mph



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

Wednesday night into Thursday boasts the next chances for light precipitation, and up to a quarter of an inch will be possible over northeastern South Dakota. Highs will be in the 60s through Thursday, with overnight lows staying in the 30s and 40s.



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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 62 °F at 10:56 AM**

**Low Temp: 38 °F at 11:26 PM**

**Wind: 34 mph at 1:18 PM**

**Precip: : 0.32**

Day length: 14 hours, 17 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 92 in 1934

Record Low: 16 in 1966

Average High: 64

Average Low: 37

Average Precip in April.: 1.82

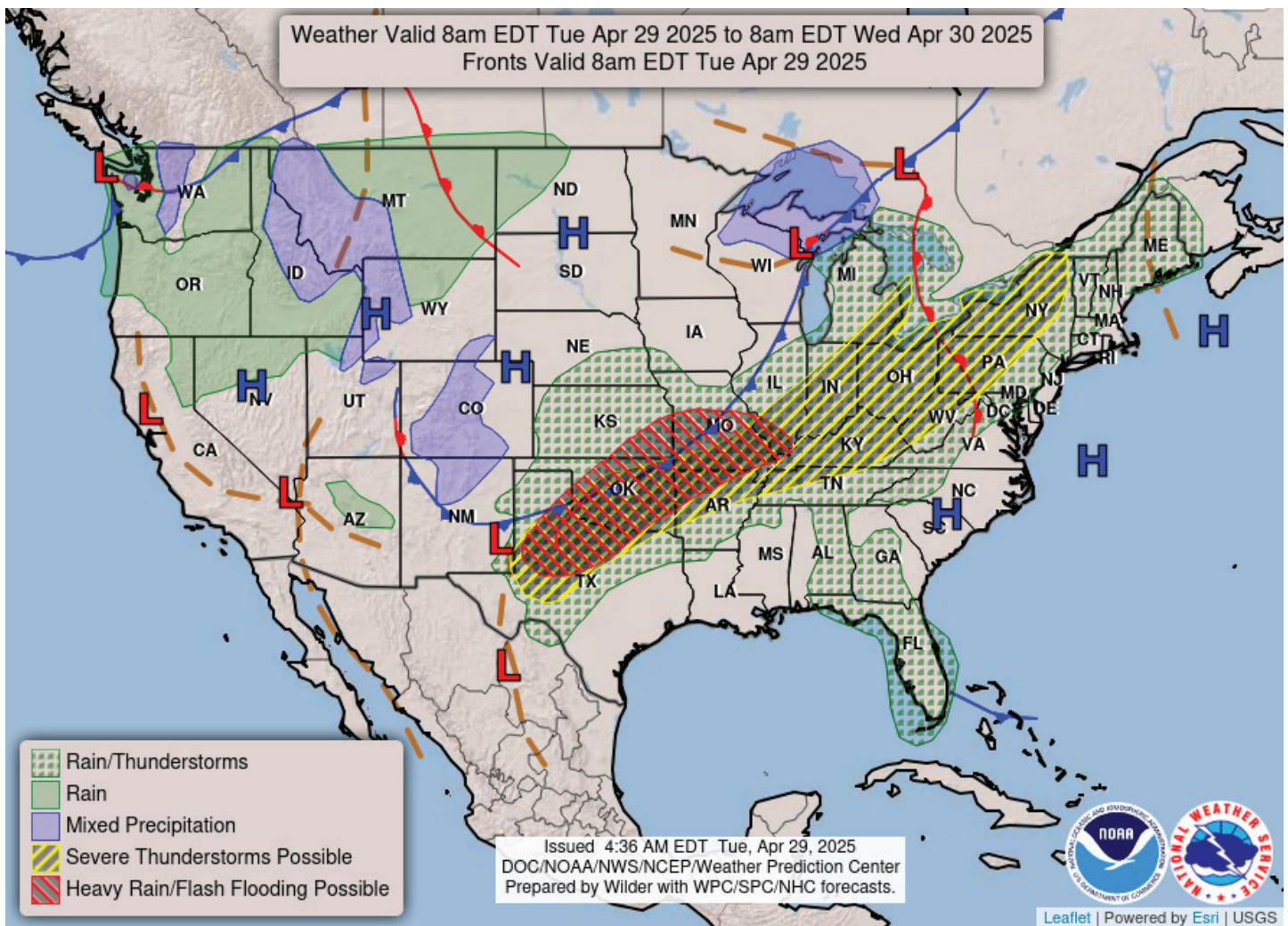
Precip to date in April.: 1.58

Average Precip to date: 3.88

Precip Year to Date: 2.21

Sunset Tonight: 8:38:19 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:19:31 am





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## **Today in Weather History**

April 29th, 1942: An estimated F3 tornado moved east through Marshall County, destroying almost every building on a farm northeast of Kidder. Barns were heavily damaged on two other farms. One person was reported killed, with five others injured.

1905 - The town of Taylor, in southeastern Texas, was deluged with 2.4 inches of rain in fifteen minutes. (The Weather Channel)

1910 - The temperature at Kansas City, MO, soared to 95 degrees to establish a record for the month of April. Four days earlier the afternoon high in Kansas City was 44 degrees, following a record cold morning low of 34 degrees. (The Weather Channel) (The Kansas City Weather Almanac)

1963 - A tornado, as much as 100 yards in width, touched down south of Shannon, MS. The tornado destroyed twenty-seven homes along its eighteen mile path, killing three persons. Asphalt was torn from Highway 45 and thrown hundreds of yards away. Little rain or snow accompanied the tornado, so it was visible for miles. (The Weather Channel)

1973 - The Mississippi River reached a crest of 43.4 feet, breaking the previous record of 42 feet established in 1785. (David Ludlum)

1987 - A storm off the southeast coast of Massachusetts blanketed southern New England with heavy snow. Totals of three inches at Boston MA, 11 inches at Milton MA, and 17 inches at Worcester MA, were records for so late in the season. Princeton MA was buried under 25 inches of snow. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thunderstorms produced large hail and high winds in central Texas. Baseball size hail was reported at Nixon, and wind gusts to 70 mph were reported at Cotulla. Heavy rain in Maine caused flooding along the Pemigewasset and Ammonoosuc Rivers. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather in Arkansas, Louisiana and eastern Texas, with more than 70 reports of large hail and damaging winds. Softball size hail was reported at Palestine TX. Hail as large as tennis balls caused ten million dollars damage around Pine Bluff AR. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - A storm system crossing northern New Mexico blanketed parts of the Rocky Mountain Region and the Northern High Plains with heavy snow, and produced blizzard conditions in central Montana. Much of southern Colorado was buried under one to three feet of snow. Pueblo tied an April record with 16.8 inches of snow in 24 hours. Strong canyon winds in New Mexico, enhanced by local showers, gusted to 65 mph at Albuquerque. Afternoon temperatures across the Great Plains Region ranged from the 20s in North Dakota to 107 degrees at Laredo TX. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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Daily Devotion

## A Special Purpose

**Praising God lifts our eyes from our problems to the certainty of our heavenly Father's care.**

### Psalm 150:1-6 Let Everything Praise the Lord

150 Praise the Lord!  
Praise God in his sanctuary;  
    praise him in his mighty heavens!  
2 Praise him for his mighty deeds;  
    praise him according to his excellent greatness!  
3 Praise him with trumpet sound;  
    praise him with lute and harp!  
4 Praise him with tambourine and dance;  
    praise him with strings and pipe!  
5 Praise him with sounding cymbals;  
    praise him with loud clashing cymbals!  
6 Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!  
Praise the Lord!

God has made us a special people so that we may fulfill a special purpose. Isaiah 43:21 says, "The people whom I formed for Myself will declare My praise." An integral part of worshipping the Lord is proclaiming His greatness.

To praise our Father is to applaud Him for who He is and what He has done. When we love another person, it is natural to speak highly about him or her. In the same way, those who love Christ find that praise for Him comes easily.

Praising the Lord is good for us. It's easy to become focused on getting our own needs met. And sadly, this attitude has infiltrated some churches. But God doesn't want us to come to church concerned only about ourselves. Praise lifts our eyes to Jesus and fills our heart with the contentment that eludes us when we focus exclusively on our own needs and problems.

Praise and worship are usually associated with church services, but they should characterize us wherever we are. Some of the most intimate and precious experiences of worship can happen when we're alone with the Father.

Remember how God has cared for you, and look for daily evidence of His hand on your life. Then tell the Lord you want to learn to extol Him with your whole heart.

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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: 17 Hrs 24 Mins 42 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.28.25

18 19 32 44 50 10

All Star Bonus: 5x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$31,780,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 39 Mins 42 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.28.25

16 19 20 33 40 11

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 54 Mins 42 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.26.25

7 13 14 20 28

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$130,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 54 Mins 42 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.28.25

11 13 39 48 61 3

TOP PRIZE:

**\$10,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 23 Mins 41 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.28.25

26 43 51 56 60 24

Power Play: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$30,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 23 Mins 41 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)



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## **Upcoming Groton Events**

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

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

### **Disgraced Cardinal Becciu formally withdraws from participation in conclave to elect pope**

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — The Italian cardinal at the heart of the Vatican's "trial of the century" announced Tuesday he was withdrawing from participating in the upcoming conclave to elect a new pope for "the good of the church."

Cardinal Angelo Becciu's status has dominated discussions in the days after Pope Francis' death amid questions about whether he would participate in the conclave to elect Francis' successor.

After his 2020 downfall, Becciu had said he would not participate in any future conclave. But in recent days he had asserted he had a right to enter the Sistine Chapel with other cardinals on May 7.

On Tuesday, the 76-year-old Italian issued a statement through his lawyers that said: "Having at heart the good of the church, which I have served and will continue to serve with fidelity and love, as well as to contribute to the communion and serenity of the conclave, I have decided to obey as I have always done the will of Pope Francis not to enter the conclave while remaining convinced of my innocence."

Becciu was once an influential Vatican chief of staff who was a leading papal contender himself. But he fell from grace in 2020 when Francis forced him to resign his job as head of the Vatican's saint-making office and his rights as a cardinal because of allegations of financial misconduct.

Becciu denied wrongdoing but was put on trial in the Vatican criminal court and convicted of finance-related charges in December 2023. He is appealing the conviction and 5 1/2-year prison sentence and had participated in the pre-conclave meetings, including on Monday.

Becciu rose to prominence and power under conservative Pope Benedict XVI and is very much affiliated with the conservative Vatican old guard. While he initially became a close adviser to Pope Francis, Becciu's subsequent downfall at the hands of Francis might suggest he would have voted for someone keen to undo some of Francis' reforms.

At 76, Becciu is under the age limit of 80 and technically eligible to vote, but the Vatican's official statistics list him as a "non-electors."

The Vatican document regulating a conclave, known by its Latin name *Universi Dominici Gregis*, lays out the criteria for electors, making clear that cardinals under 80 have the right to elect the pope, except those who have been "canonically deposed or who with the consent of the Roman Pontiff have renounced the cardinalate." It adds that after a pope has died, "the College of Cardinals cannot readmit or rehabilitate them."

There has never been any clarity on what exactly Becciu renounced or how: The one-line statement issued by the Vatican press office on Sept. 24, 2020, said merely that Francis had accepted Becciu's resignation as prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints "and his rights connected to the cardinalate." There is no indication he has been sanctioned canonically.

Italian daily *Domani* reported last week that during the initial pre-conclave discussions, Becciu was presented with two letters signed by Francis before he died saying he should not participate in the conclave. Becciu's reference to Francis' will in his statement Tuesday suggests that the letters were the tipping point that convinced him to withdraw from the vote.

After he forced Becciu's resignation, Francis visited Becciu on occasions and allowed him to participate in the life of the Vatican. But Francis also changed Vatican law to allow the city state's criminal tribunal to prosecute him.

Questions, meanwhile, have continued to swirl about the integrity of the trial that convicted Becciu and eight others. During the proceedings, the court heard that Francis intervened on several occasions on behalf of the prosecutors and that the prosecution's prime witness against Becciu was coached and manipulated by outsiders.

The appeal is scheduled to begin in September.

## **Authorities shutter dozens of tourist resorts in Indian-controlled Kashmir following deadly attack**

By AIJAZ HUSSAIN and SHEIKH SAALIQ Associated Press

SRINAGAR, India (AP) — Authorities in Indian-controlled Kashmir have temporarily shuttered more than half of the tourist resorts in the scenic Himalayan region after last week's deadly attack on tourists raised tensions between India and Pakistan and led to an intensifying security crackdown in Kashmir.

At least two police officers and three administrative officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity in keeping with departmental policy, said Tuesday that the decision to shut 48 of the 87 government-authorized resorts was a precautionary safety measure. They did not specify for how long these places would be out of bounds for visitors.

The decision comes a week after gunmen killed 26 people, most of them Indian tourists, near the resort town of Pahalgam.

The massacre set off tit-for-tat diplomatic measures between India and Pakistan that included cancellation of visas and a recall of diplomats. New Delhi also suspended a crucial water sharing treaty with Islamabad and ordered its border shut with Pakistan. In response, Pakistan has closed its airspace to Indian airlines.

India accuses Pakistan of backing the attack

India has described the massacre as a "terror attack" and accused Pakistan of backing it. Pakistan has denied any connection to the attack, and it was claimed by a previously unknown militant group calling itself the Kashmir Resistance.

Some tourists who survived the massacre have told Indian media that the gunmen singled out Hindu men and shot them from close range. The dead included a Nepalese citizen and a local Muslim pony ride operator.

The region is split between India and Pakistan and claimed by both in its entirety. New Delhi describes all militancy in Indian-controlled Kashmir as Pakistan-backed terrorism. Pakistan denies this, and many Muslim Kashmiris consider the militants to be part of a home-grown freedom struggle.

Tensions spike between India and Pakistan

As tensions escalate, cross-border firing between soldiers of India and Pakistan has also increased along the Line of Control, the de facto frontier that separates Kashmiri territory between the two rivals. On Tuesday, the Indian army in a statement said it had responded to "unprovoked" small arms fire from multiple Pakistan army posts for a fifth consecutive night.

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.

Pakistani troops shot down a small Indian spy drone that flew hundreds of meters into Pakistani-controlled Kashmir, three Pakistani security officials told The Associated Press on Tuesday, speaking on condition of anonymity as they weren't allowed to speak to the media. The drone was shot down on Monday in the border town of Bhimber, they said.

Meanwhile, government forces in the region have detained and questioned nearly 2,000 people, officials and residents said. Many of the detained are former rebels fighting against Indian rule and others who officials describe as "over ground workers" of militants, a term authorities use for civilians suspected of associating with insurgents.

Indian soldiers have demolished the family homes of at least nine suspected militants across Kashmir, using explosives.

The region's top pro-India leaders have supported action against suspected militants but also questioned the demolitions.

Omar Abdullah, the region's chief minister, said Monday that any heavy-handed tactics against civilians should be avoided. "We should not take any step that will alienate people," Abdullah told the region's lawmakers during a legislative session.

Ruhullah Mehdi, a lawmaker from the region in India's national parliament, termed the demolitions of homes as "collective punishment."

Cancellations overwhelm Kashmir tourism industry

Indian tourism has flourished in Kashmir after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government promoted visits to the region with the hope of showing rising tourism numbers as a sign of renewed stability there.

Millions of visitors arrive in Kashmir to see its Himalayan foothills and exquisitely decorated houseboats, despite regular skirmishes between insurgents and government forces. According to official data, close to 3 million tourists visited the region in 2024, a rise from 2.71 million visitors in 2023 and 2.67 million in 2022.

But last week's attack has left many tourists scared and some have left the region. Widespread cancellations are also being reported by tour operators, with some estimates putting the number at more than 1 million.

## **Clashes between Druze gunmen and pro-government fighters in Syrian capital kill at least 4**

DAMASCUS, Syria (AP) — Clashes broke out in a suburb of the Syrian capital early Tuesday between local gunmen belonging to the minority Druze sect and pro-government fighters, leaving at least four people dead, a war monitor and an activist group said.

The fighting in the southern Damascus suburb of Jaramana broke out after an audio clip circulated on social media of a man attacking Islam's Prophet Muhammad. The audio was attributed to a Druze cleric, who later denied being involved.

Druze cleric Marwan Kiwan said in a video posted on social media that he was not responsible for the audio, which angered many Sunni Muslims and led to the fighting in Druze neighborhoods in Jaramana.

"I categorically deny that the audio was made by me," Kiwan said in the video. "I did not say that and whoever made it is an evil man who wants to incite strife between components of the Syrian people."

The Interior Ministry said in a statement it was investigating the audio clip, adding that its initial probe showed the cleric was not responsible. The ministry urged people to abide by the law and not to act in a way that undermines security.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said at least four people were killed in the clashes while the activist media collective Suwayda 24 said five people were killed and 12 were wounded.

Syrian Druze gunmen have clashed in recent weeks with government security forces in Jaramana.

On March 1, Israel's Defense Ministry said the military was instructed to prepare to defend Jaramana, asserting that the minority it has vowed to protect was "under attack" by Syrian forces.

The Druze religious sect is a minority group that began as a 10th-century offshoot of Ismailism, a branch of Shiite Islam. Over half of the roughly 1 million Druze worldwide live in Syria. Most of the other Druze live in Lebanon and Israel, including in the Golan Heights, which Israel captured from Syria in the 1967 Mideast War and annexed in 1981.

The worst internal clashes in Syria since the fall of President Bashar Assad in early December occurred last month in the country's coastal region and involved members of the minority Alawite sect that the former president belonged to.

The clashes between Assad loyalists and government forces were accompanied by revenge killings that left more than 1,000 people dead, including hundreds of civilians, according to a war monitor. The Associated Press has not been able to independently verify the figures.

## **Spain's power supply is almost fully restored after one of Europe's most severe blackouts**

By SUMAN NAISHADHAM and JOSEPH WILSON Associated Press

MADRID (AP) — Power had almost fully returned to Spain early Tuesday morning as many questions remained about what caused one of Europe's most severe blackouts that grounded flights, paralyzed metro



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systems, disrupted mobile communications and shut down ATMs across Spain and Portugal.

By 7:00 a.m. local time, more than 99% of energy demand in Spain had been restored, the country's electricity operator Red Eléctrica said. Portuguese grid operator REN said Tuesday morning all of the 89 power substations were back online since late last night after an "absolutely unusual" blackout and power was restored to all 6.4 million customers.

On Tuesday morning, as life slowly returned to normal on the Iberian Peninsula, outside Atocha station, one of the busiest in the Spanish capital, people were once again crossing the street while looking at their cell phones, despite the internet connection being intermittent at times.

Inside, hundreds of people waited to board trains or rebook those that had been canceled the previous day. Large groups of people milled around the screens, waiting for updates. Still, several people slept on the floor with blankets provided by the Red Cross for those who waited overnight at the station. The same scenes were replicated at Sants station in Barcelona. Classes were suspended in several regions.

The Madrid Open, the tennis tournament being held this week, was still affected by the power outage after its cancellation the previous day and delayed the opening of its doors.

Power had gradually returned to several regions across Spain and Portugal as the nations reeled from the still-unexplained widespread blackout that had turned airports and train stations into campgrounds for stranded travelers.

Monday night, many city residents, including in Spain's capital of Madrid, went to sleep in total darkness. The normally illuminated cathedral spires of Barcelona's Sagrada Familia Basilica became indistinguishable from the night sky. Streets remained deserted even in neighborhoods where lights flickered back on, as people stayed home after a day of chaos.

"We have a long night ahead," Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez said when he addressed the European nation late Monday. "We are working with the goal of having power restored to the entire country."

In Madrid, cheers erupted from balconies where the electricity had returned.

Subway service returning on Tuesday morning

On Tuesday morning, Madrid's metro system was restored on all but one line, meaning that 80% of trains operated during rush hour.

In Barcelona, the metro was also operating normally, but commuter trains were suspended due to "electrical instability," the company that runs the service, Rodalies Catalunya, said on X. In other parts of the country, commuter and mid-distance services were also suspended or running at reduced capacity.

As metro service stopped on Monday, train stations cleared out and shops and offices closed, and thousands of people spilled onto the streets of Madrid.

Emergency workers in Spain said they rescued some 35,000 passengers stranded along railways and underground.

The blackout turned sports centers, train stations and airports into makeshift refuges late Monday.

"We were in the north of Portugal and did get any notifications until we got here because of internet outage," said Ian Cannons, a British tourist trying to get home who was forced to spend the night in Lisbon's airport. "We can't book any hotels. Nothing."

The Barcelona municipality distributed 1,200 cots to indoor recreation centers to host residents with no way to get home and international travelers left in limbo. All over Barcelona and Madrid, people were sleeping on train station benches and floors.

Cash and radios in high demand

As internet and mobile phone services blinkered offline across Spain and Portugal, battery-powered radios flew off the shelves. Those fortunate enough to find service shared whatever news updates they could with strangers on the street.

Lines snaked out of the few supermarkets running on backup generators in Barcelona and Lisbon as people stocked up on dried goods, water and battery-powered flashlights and candles. Clerks counted euros by hand, since many cash registers had stopped working.

Hector Emperador, picking his kids up from school in Barcelona, said he resorted to raiding his sons'

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piggybank to ensure he had cash on hand after ATMs and some online-banking services shut down. "The coronavirus pandemic will be nothing compared to this," he said.

Few gas stations were operating, sending the drivers who dared navigate without traffic lights scrambling for fuel. Residents with electric door keys found themselves locked out of their homes.

The many inconveniences became a threat to survival for those with medical needs like refrigeration for insulin or power for dialysis machines and oxygen concentrators. Some hospitals — but not all — stayed open with the help of generators.

Cause remains a mystery

Officials did not say what caused the blackout, the second such serious European power outage in as many months after a fire at Heathrow Airport shut down Britain's busiest travel hub on March 20.

They said there was little precedent for this kind of widespread electric failure across all of the Iberian Peninsula, with a combined population of some 60 million. Across the Mediterranean Sea, Spain's Balearic Islands and the territories of Ceuta and Melilla were spared. The Canary Islands off the northwest coast of Africa were also spared.

"We have never had a complete collapse of the system," Sánchez said, explaining how Spain's power grid lost 15 gigawatts, the equivalent of 60% of its national demand, in just five seconds.

In his televised address late Monday, Sánchez said that authorities were still investigating what happened. Portugal's National Cybersecurity Center threw cold water on feverish speculation about foul play, saying there was no sign that the outage resulted from a cyber attack.

Speaking to reporters in Brussels, Teresa Ribera, an executive vice president of the European Commission, also ruled out sabotage. Nonetheless, the outage "is one of the most serious episodes recorded in Europe in recent times," she said.

## **Mark Carney warns Canadians in Liberal Party victory speech: 'Trump is trying to break us'**

By ROB GILLIES Associated Press

TORONTO (AP) — Prime Minister Mark Carney's Liberal Party won Canada's federal election on Monday, capping a stunning turnaround in fortunes fueled by U.S. President Donald Trump's annexation threats and trade war.

After polls closed, the Liberals were projected to win more of Parliament's 343 seats than the Conservatives. It wasn't immediately clear, though, if they would win an outright majority — at least 172 — or would need to rely on one of the smaller parties to pass legislation.

The Liberals looked headed for a crushing defeat until the American president started attacking Canada's economy and threatening its sovereignty, suggesting it should become the 51st state. Trump's actions infuriated Canadians and stoked a surge in nationalism that helped the Liberals flip the election narrative and win a fourth-straight term in power.

In a victory speech before supporters in Ottawa, Carney stressed the importance of Canadian unity in the face of Washington's threats. He also said the mutually beneficial system Canada and the U.S. had shared since World War II had ended.

"We are over the shock of the American betrayal, but we should never forget the lessons," he said.

"As I've been warning for months, America wants our land, our resources, our water, our country," Carney said. "These are not idle threats. President Trump is trying to break us so America can own us. That will never ... ever happen. But we also must recognize the reality that our world has fundamentally changed."

A defeat for the Conservatives

The Conservative Party's leader, Pierre Poilievre, hoped to make the election a referendum on former Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, whose popularity declined toward the end of his decade in power as food and housing prices rose.

But Trump attacked, Trudeau resigned and Carney, a two-time central banker, became the Liberal Party's

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leader and prime minister.

In a concession speech and with his own House of Commons seat still in doubt, Poilievre vowed to keep fighting for Canadians.

"We are cognizant of the fact that we didn't get over the finish line yet," Poilievre told supporters in Ottawa. "We know that change is needed, but change is hard to come by. It takes time. It takes work. And that's why we have to learn the lessons of tonight — so that we can have an even better result the next time Canadians decide the future of the country."

Even with Canadians grappling with the fallout from a deadly weekend attack at a Vancouver street festival, Trump was trolling them on election day, suggesting again on social media that Canada should become the 51st state and saying he was on their ballot. He also erroneously claimed that the U.S. subsidizes Canada, writing, "It makes no sense unless Canada is a State!"

Trump's truculence has infuriated Canadians, leading many to cancel U.S. vacations, refuse to buy American goods and possibly even vote early. A record 7.3 million Canadians cast ballots before election day.

As Poilievre and his wife cast their ballots in Ottawa, he implored voters to "Get out to vote — for a change." After running a Trump-lite campaign for weeks, though, the Conservative leader's similarities to the bombastic American might have cost him.

Reid Warren, a Toronto resident, said he voted Liberal because Poilievre "sounds like mini-Trump to me." And he said Trump's tariffs are a worry.

"Canadians coming together from, you know, all the shade being thrown from the States is great, but it's definitely created some turmoil, that's for sure," he said.

Historian Robert Bothwell said Poilievre appealed to the "same sense of grievance" as Trump, but that it ultimately worked against him.

"The Liberals ought to pay him," Bothwell said, referring to the U.S. president. "Trump talking is not good for the Conservatives."

The Liberal way forward

Carney and the Liberals secured a new term, but they have daunting challenges ahead.

If they don't win a majority in Parliament, the Liberals might need rely on one of the smaller parties to remain in power and pass legislation. The Bloc Québécois, which looked set to finish third, is a separatist party from French-speaking Quebec that seeks independence from Canada. Trudeau's Liberals relied on the New Democrats to remain in power for four years, but the progressive party fared poorly on Monday and its leader, Jagmeet Singh, said he was stepping down after eight years in charge.

"This is a dramatic comeback, but if the Liberals cannot win a majority of seats, political uncertainty in a new minority Parliament could complicate things for them," said McGill University political science professor Daniel Béland.

Until this year, foreign policy hadn't dominated a Canadian election this much since 1988, when, ironically, free trade with the United States was the prevailing issue.

In addition to the trade war with the U.S. and frosty relationship with Trump, Canada is dealing with a cost-of-living crisis. And more than 75% of its exports go to the U.S., so Trump's tariffs threat and his desire to get North American automakers to move Canada's production south could severely damage the Canadian economy.

While campaigning, Carney vowed that every dollar the the government collects from counter-tariffs on U.S. goods will go toward Canadian workers who are adversely affected by the trade war. He also said he plans to keep dental care in place, offer a middle-class tax cut, return immigration to sustainable levels and increase funding to Canada's public broadcaster, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

## **Liberals won the election in Canada. Here's what to know and what comes next**

TORONTO (AP) — The Liberal Party has won the federal election in Canada, culminating a process marked by U.S. President Donald Trump threats on a trade war and of making the country the 51st American state.

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With this result, the Liberal Party's leader and current prime minister, Mark Carney, will remain in the job, and will form a new government with a new cabinet.

It's still unclear if the liberals will have a majority in the Parliament or whether they will need to look for alliances with other parties.

Here's what to know and what comes next:

Who did Canadians vote for?

Canadians voted for all 343 member of the House of Commons, one for each constituency.

The winning candidates were those who finished first, whether or not they won a majority of the votes.

A party needs 172 seats in Parliament for a majority.

When will Canada have a new prime minister?

The prime minister is chosen by parliament rather than elected directly by the voters.

Historically, the party that assembles a majority in the House of Commons — either alone or with the support of another party — forms a government. That's expected to happen in coming days.

The leader of the party forming the government will be the new primer minister, who then has to pick a cabinet.

The current liberal leader is Carney, who was sworn in on March 14 as prime minister after Justin Trudeau resigned. Now, he won a full term as the head of the government.

What challenges will the new government face?

The next primer minister and his government will have to address both external and internal challenges.

Externally, the main one will be to manage a recently tense relationship with the United States, after President Donald Trump has been threatening Canada with steep tariffs and demands that Canada should become the 51st state.

Internally, the new government will still have to deal with issues like rising food and housing prices and a surge in immigration.

What is Carney's experience?

Carney, a 60-years-old economist educated in the U.S. and England, had no experience in politics until he succeeded Trudeau as prime minister in March.

He was a Goldman Sachs executive for more than a decade, until he started working in the Central Bank of Canada in 2003, as deputy governor.

He was then the head of the Bank of Canada from 2008 to 2013 and headed the Bank of England from 2013 to 2020.

Now, after voters gave liberals the victory, Carney will be guiding Canada.

## **5-year-old girl and her parents among the dead in a car attack at a Filipino festival in Vancouver**

By CLAIRE RUSH, MANUEL VALDES and LINDSEY WASSON Associated Press

VANCOUVER, British Columbia (AP) — As members of the Le family headed out the door to enjoy music, food and camaraderie at a Filipino heritage festival in Vancouver, British Columbia, their 16-year-old son decided to instead stay home to finish homework.

Then news began arriving of a car plowing through the crowd.

The teen's father, Richard Le, his stepmother Linh Hoang and his 5-year-old sister Katie Le, were among 11 people killed, said Richard Le's brother, Toan Le, in the world's latest vehicle ramming attack.

The teenage boy is in a state of shock, Le said. His sister Katie Le was nearing graduation from kindergarten and was described as a vibrant and joyful child in a GoFundMe page posted by Toan Le.

The black Audi SUV sped down a closed, food-truck-lined street Saturday evening and struck people attending the Lapu Lapu Day festival, which celebrates Datu Lapu-Lapu, an Indigenous chieftain who stood up to Spanish explorers in the 16th century.

Thirty-two people were hurt. Seven were in critical condition and three were in serious condition at hospitals Monday, Vancouver police spokesperson Steve Addison said.



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Those killed include nine females and two males ranging in age from 5 to 65, according to Addison. All of them lived in the Vancouver metropolitan area, he said.

Mourners including Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney remembered the dead at vigils before Monday's national election.

The crash came just two days before another vehicle smashed through a building in a town outside of Springfield, Illinois, during an after-school program, killing four children and injuring several others, police said.

A 'significant history' of interactions with police

Kai-Ji Adam Lo, 30, was charged with eight counts of second-degree murder in a video appearance before a judge Sunday, said Damienne Darby, spokeswoman for British Columbia prosecutors. Lo has not yet entered a plea.

A woman who answered the phone Monday at the home of Lo's mother, Lisa Lo, said that the mother was too distraught to speak to a reporter.

Investigators said more charges were possible. They said Lo had a history of mental health issues. Interim Police Chief Steve Rai said there was no indication of a motive but that the suspect has "a significant history of interactions with police and health care professionals related to mental health."

Lo had contact with police the day before the vehicle attack in a neighboring jurisdiction, Addison said Monday.

"That contact was not criminal in nature and it did not rise to the level where a mental health intervention was required," Addison said.

The Associated Press could not immediately reach an attorney representing Lo. Online records showed that Vancouver Provincial Court issued a publication ban barring the release of details about the legal case against Lo. Such bans are common in Canada to protect the rights of the accused to a fair trial as well as the privacy of crime victims.

Lo's brother, 31-year-old Alexander Lo, was the victim of a homicide at his home last year. Kai-ji Lo started an online fundraising effort, since deleted, seeking donations to bury his brother.

He said he was "burdened with remorse for not spending more time with him," according to an archived version of the webpage. Their mother had taken out significant loans to build Alexander a home, leaving her financially strained.

Screaming and bodies hitting a vehicle

Noel Johansen was searching for dessert at the festival with his wife Jenifer Darbellay, an artist, and their two children, ages 7 and 15, when the attack happened.

"It hit us before we knew. I was falling in slow motion trying to save my head from smashing in the pavement," Johansen said. "It's like a giant tidal wave."

Darbellay, 50, was killed, while the rest of the family survived. Johansen described her as selfless, creative and empathetic.

Johansen said the day before she was killed, the couple was talking about politics and the many situations in which people seek revenge toward the person who hurt them.

He said she told him: "That's the whole problem. We need to forgive the perpetrators of the crimes that are committed against us."

Johansen said that he's trying to honor that philosophy.

Hours before the attack, Makayla Bailey saw her friend Kira Salim, a teacher and school counselor, for the first time in a while and Salim had apologized for not being out and about more.

"I told them, 'It's OK it's been crappy out, the weather sucks, summer's coming so I'm sure we'll see each other a lot more,'" Bailey said, recalling in an interview Salim's drag king performances that audiences loved.

"I didn't think it would be the last conversation we would ever have," said Bailey.

Salim was among those killed in the attack, according to the New Westminster School District, where Salim worked.

Investigators were collecting evidence at the scene Monday and had executed a search warrant at a Vancouver property, Addison said. Investigators were also going through bystander video from the scene.



Officials will review the situation, and it may change how they approach such events, Addison said. "This was intended to be a safe, fun, family-friendly community block party for people to celebrate their community and culture," Addison said. "The actions of one person stole that away from them."

## **Vehicle smashes through Illinois building, killing 4 young people and injuring others**

By JOHN O'CONNOR Associated Press

CHATHAM, Ill. (AP) — A car smashed through a building Monday afternoon, killing four young people and injuring several others during an after-school program in a small city outside of Springfield, Illinois, police said.

Officers responded at about 3:20 p.m. to calls about a vehicle ramming through the building, fatally hitting four people before exiting the other side, Chatham Police Department Deputy Chief Scott Tarter said.

Those killed were between the ages of 4 and 18, Illinois State Police said in an emailed statement. Sangamon County Coroner Jim Allmon identified the victims as "female students," saying their identities will be released after family members are notified. Several other people were hurt and taken to hospitals.

It wasn't immediately known what led up to the crash or whether it was intentional.

Monday's crash is the latest instance of people driving vehicles into groups of people across the globe. Only two days earlier, a car plowed through a crowded street during a Filipino heritage festival in Vancouver, British Columbia, killing 11.

The Illinois driver, who was uninjured, was the sole occupant of the vehicle and was taken to a hospital for evaluation, Tarter said. Police haven't said if the driver was arrested or taken into custody.

"I am horrified and deeply saddened by the deaths of children and numerous injuries in Chatham this afternoon," Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker said in a statement. "My heart is heavy for these families and the unimaginable grief they're experiencing – something that no parent should ever have to endure."

He said his office was monitoring the situation and was ready to lend support.

The struck building and facilities house Youth Needing Other Things Outdoors, which holds after-school programs and summer camps, according to its website.

As evening fell, police cars with lights flashing still blocked streets leading to the building. On its Facebook account, the Chatham Police Department asked for prayers.

"A terrible tragedy has occurred here that has affected all of us," the message ended.

By Monday night, some members of the community and beyond had changed their Facebook profile photos to an image of a red ribbon and the words "Chatham Strong."

## **What to know about the car ramming attack at a Vancouver street festival**

VANCOUVER, British Columbia (AP) — A suspect has been charged with multiple counts of murder and police continued their investigation Monday after 11 people were killed when an SUV plowed through a crowd at a Filipino heritage festival in Vancouver over the weekend.

Witnesses described narrowly jumping out of the way of the speeding vehicle as bodies flew through the air. Dozens of people were injured. Officials said the suspect, a 30-year-old man, had a history of mental health issues.

Investigators have ruled out terrorism

There was no early indication of a motive, but police said it wasn't a terrorist attack. The suspect, Kai-Ji Adam Lo, has "a significant history of interactions with police and health care professionals related to mental health," said Vancouver Interim Police Chief Steve Rai.

Lo, a Vancouver resident, was charged with eight counts of second-degree murder in a video appearance before a judge Sunday. He has not yet entered a plea. The Associated Press could not immediately

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reach an attorney representing him.

Rai said the suspect was arrested after initially being apprehended by bystanders. Video circulating on social media showed a young man in a black hoodie with his back against a chain-link fence, alongside a security guard and surrounded by bystanders screaming and swearing at him.

"I'm sorry," the man said, holding his hand to his head.

Investigators were collecting evidence at the scene and had executed a search warrant at a Vancouver property, police said.

A 5-year-old girl and a beloved teacher were among the victims

Those killed ranged in age from 5 to 65, officials said. The youngest was 5-year-old girl Katie Le, who died along with her father, Richard Le, and mother, Linh Hoang, according to Richard's brother, Toan Le. They were survived by Katie's 16-year-old brother, who didn't attend the festival, he said.

Kira Salim, also killed, worked as a teacher and counselor at two schools in the New Westminster School District southeast of Vancouver, the district said in a statement. Salim "was a valued member of our community whose wisdom and care for our middle and secondary school students had a powerful impact," the district superintendent said.

Thirty-two people were hurt, and 17 were still hospitalized late Sunday, including some in critical and serious condition, the British Columbia Health Ministry said.

"Last night families lost a sister, a brother, a mother, father, son or a daughter. Those families are living every family's nightmare," Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney said Sunday.

The festival celebrated Filipino culture

The black Audi SUV sped down a closed street Saturday night and struck people attending the Lapu Lapu Day festival, which celebrates Datu Lapu-Lapu, an Indigenous chieftain who stood up to Spanish explorers in the 16th century.

Vancouver had more than 38,600 residents of Filipino heritage in 2021, representing 5.9% of the city's total population, according to Statistics Canada, the agency that conducts the national census.

Witnesses describe leaping out of the way

Carayn Nulada said that she pulled her granddaughter and grandson off the street and used her body to shield them from the SUV. She said her daughter made a narrow escape.

"The car hit her arm, and she fell down, but she got up, looking for us, because she is scared," said Nulada, who described children screaming and victims lying on the ground or wedged under vehicles. Nulada's brother was run down in the attack and suffered multiple broken bones.

Another witness described bodies flying through the air "like bowling pins."

Vincent Reynon, 17, was leaving the festival when he saw police rushing in. People were crying, and he saw scattered bodies. "It was like something straight out of a horror movie or a nightmare," he said.

## **Massive power outage in Spain and Portugal leaves thousands stranded and millions without light**

By RENATA BRITO, BARRY HATTON and JOSEPH WILSON Associated Press

BARCELONA, Spain (AP) — An unprecedented blackout brought much of Spain and Portugal to a standstill Monday, stranding thousands of train passengers and leaving millions of people without phone and internet coverage and access to cash from ATMs across the Iberian Peninsula.

The sudden crash of the power grid also left authorities searching for its cause. Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez addressed the nation and said that almost 11 hours after the nation ground to a halt, government experts were still trying to determine what happened.

"We have never had a complete collapse of the system," Sánchez said, before detailing that at 12:33 p.m. on Monday Spain's power grid lost 15 gigawatts, the equivalent of 60% of its national demand, in a matter of five seconds.

Spanish power distributor Red Eléctrica's head of operations Eduardo Prieto said the event was "exceptional and extraordinary."

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Spain had recovered more than 92% of its power by 5 a.m. on Tuesday, according to Red Eléctrica, and the prime minister pledged that the entire country of 48 million would have lights back on by the end of the day.

It was the second serious European power outage in less than six weeks after a March 20 fire shut down Heathrow Airport in the U.K., and it came as authorities across Europe gird against sabotage backed by Russia.

The Portuguese National Cybersecurity Center in a statement said there was no sign the outage was due to a cyber attack. Teresa Ribera, European Commission executive vice president in charge of promoting clean energy, indicated the same to journalists in Brussels and called the power outage "one of the most serious episodes recorded in Europe in recent times."

"We are analyzing all the potential causes without discarding any hypothesis," Sánchez said.

Spanish and Portuguese capitals affected

The outage began at midday. Offices closed and traffic was snarled in Madrid and Lisbon, while some civilians in Barcelona directed traffic. Train services in both countries stopped.

Emergency services and rail workers in Spain had to help evacuate some 35,000 people from over 100 trains that stopped on the tracks when the electricity was cut. By 11 p.m. passengers from 11 trains still needed evacuating, Sánchez said.

In Madrid, hundreds of people at a bus stop that takes travelers to the airport tried to hitchhike as buses didn't come by or arrived full of passengers. Many held improvised signs and tried to convince drivers to take them. Some drivers were helping some of them.

"I've been here for almost three hours, trying to get someone to take me to the airport because my family arrived today and I can't talk to them," Jessica Fernández told The Associated Press. "This is terrifying."

The subway systems shut down.

"I don't know how I am going to get home," Barcelona resident Ivette Corona said as she watched a large group of people fail to get on a bus that briefly stopped to squeeze in a couple of passengers.

Hospitals and other emergency services switched to generators and gas stations stopped working. It wasn't possible to make calls on most mobile phone networks, though some apps were sporadically working. People searched for battery-powered radios.

It is rare to have such a widespread outage across the Iberian Peninsula, with a combined population of about 60 million people. Spain's Canary Islands, Balearic Islands and the territories of Ceuta and Melilla, located across the Mediterranean in Africa, were not affected.

After an extraordinary meeting of the National Security Council, Sánchez said the army would distribute generators and other material to the hardest-hit areas on Tuesday.

The Portuguese Cabinet convened an emergency meeting at the prime minister's residence. Portuguese Prime Minister Luis Montenegro said he had spoken several times to Sánchez and expected power to be restored by the end of the day.

Portugal's government said the outage appeared to stem from problems outside the country, an official told national news agency Lusa.

Electricity was being pulled from Morocco and France to restore power to southern and northern Spain, Spain's prime minister said, thanking their governments. Spain was also increasing the production from hydroelectric and combined cycle thermal power plants.

Airports working on backup systems

A graph on Spain's electricity network website showing demand across the country indicated a steep drop around 12:15 p.m. from 27,500 megawatts to near 15,000 megawatts.

Spanish airports were operating on backup electrical systems and some flights were delayed, according to Aena, which runs 56 airports in Spain including Madrid and Barcelona.

In Lisbon, terminals closed and tourists sat outside waiting for news about flights.

"We haven't seen any plane arriving or departing in the 50 minutes we've been waiting here," Dutch tourist Marc Brandsma said.

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The Spanish Parliament in Madrid closed. Play at the Madrid Open tennis tournament was suspended. Some took advantage of the lack of connectivity to enjoy the sunshine on restaurant terraces, parks and beaches. Barcelona's streets filled with throngs of people milling in front of darkened stores and exchanging information.

"We are lucky. Some people got trapped in the metro. And there is a positive side: We are talking more with each other," said Monste Cortés in Barcelona.

She said dinner would be sliced bread and cold cuts.

The hunt for connectivity

As hours passed, so did the concern of those unable to reach loved ones. "I can't even call my boss because nothing works," said Helen Osorio, a Barcelona shop clerk.

In Terrassa, an industrial town 50 kilometers (30 miles) from Barcelona, stores selling generators were out of stock.

Portugal's National Authority for Emergencies and Civil Protection said backup power systems were operating.

In Portugal, a country of some 10.6 million people, police placed more officers on duty to cope with increased requests for help, including from people trapped in elevators.

Several Lisbon subway cars were evacuated, reports said. Courts stopped work and ATMs and electronic payment systems were affected.

## **Russia declares a 72-hour ceasefire in Ukraine for next week to mark Victory Day in World War II**

By ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday declared a unilateral 72-hour ceasefire next week in Ukraine to mark Victory Day in World War II as the U.S. presses for a deal to end the 3-year-old war. Kyiv insisted on a longer and immediate truce.

The Kremlin said the truce, ordered on "humanitarian grounds," will run from the start of May 8 and last through the end of May 10 to mark Moscow's defeat of Nazi Germany in 1945 — Russia's biggest secular holiday.

Ukraine, which has previously agreed to U.S. President Donald Trump's proposal of a full 30-day ceasefire, dismissed Putin's move as window dressing.

"If Russia truly wants peace, it must cease fire immediately," Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha said, according to the ministry. He emphasized that Kyiv is ready for a "lasting, reliable, and complete ceasefire" for at least 30 full days.

"Why wait for May 8? If we can cease fire now from any date and for 30 days — so that it is real, and not just for a parade," he said without specifying whether Ukraine would be ready to accept the Moscow-proposed truce.

The Kremlin had urged Ukraine to follow suit.

"Russia believes that the Ukrainian side should follow this example," it said, warning that "in case of violations of the ceasefire by the Ukrainian side, the Russian armed forces will give an adequate and efficient response."

Putin previously announced a unilateral 30-hour Easter ceasefire and Ukraine voiced readiness to reciprocate any genuine truce at the time, but it said Russian attacks continued. Moscow, in turn, accused Ukraine of failing to halt its attacks.

Russia and Ukraine had also earlier pledged to observe a 30-day halt on strikes on energy infrastructure that was brokered by the Trump administration, but they repeatedly accused each other of massive violations until the measure expired.

The truce attempts underlined the massive challenges for monitoring any possible halt to hostilities along the more than 1,000-kilometer (over 600-mile) line of contact.

Up until now, Putin had refused to accept a complete unconditional ceasefire, linking it to a halt in West-



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ern arms supplies to Ukraine and Ukraine's mobilization effort.

The Kremlin reaffirmed that "the Russian side again declares its readiness for peace talks without preconditions aimed at removing the root causes of the Ukrainian crisis and constructive cooperation with international partners."

Ukrainians in Kyiv scoffed at Putin's move.

"There is no trust in any of Putin's proposals," said Nazar Lutsenko, a lawyer. He added that "we absolutely want the war to end on terms that are favorable to us, on fair terms."

A soldier with the 156th Brigade, who identified himself only by his first name, Kostiantyn, in keeping with military rules, dismissed the truce as "ridiculous," adding that perhaps "there will not be such harsh shelling as there is every evening here, but fighting will be conducted in one way or another."

Student Oleksandra Serpilova viewed the declaration as "another attempt to keep America engaged, to give Trump hope that some kind of negotiations are possible."

Just before the ceasefire announcement, Ukraine and Russia targeted each other with long-range strikes.

Russia's drone attack early Monday damaged an infrastructure facility in Cherkasy, central Ukraine, disrupting gas supplies to households in the city, Mayor Anatolii Bondarenko said.

The Russian Defense Ministry said its forces downed 119 Ukrainian drones overnight, most of them over Russia's Bryansk border region. In Ukraine, air raid sirens rang out across the country Monday morning. There were no immediate reports of casualties or damage.

Rubio says this week is 'very critical'

The outcome of a push by Trump's administration to swiftly end the fighting, which has cost tens of thousands of lives, remains unclear, clouded by conflicting claims and doubts about how far each side might be willing to compromise amid deep hostility and mistrust.

The clock is ticking on Washington's engagement in efforts to resolve Europe's biggest conflict since World War II.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Sunday that this week would be "very critical." The U.S. needs to "make a determination about whether this is an endeavor that we want to continue to be involved in," he said on NBC's "Meet the Press."

American military aid has been crucial for Ukraine's war effort, and further help could be at risk if the Trump administration walks away from attempts to end the war.

Trump's doubts about Putin's intentions

Trump said over the weekend he harbors doubts about Putin's sincerity in pursuing a deal, as Russian forces have continued to strike civilian areas of Ukraine with cruise and ballistic missiles while the talks have proceeded.

But on Friday, Trump described a brokered settlement on the war as "close."

Western European officials have accused the Kremlin of dragging its feet on peace talks so that Russia's larger forces, which have battlefield momentum, can seize more Ukrainian land.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov discussed the war in a phone call Sunday with Rubio, the Russian Foreign Ministry said. They focused on "consolidating the emerging prerequisites for starting negotiations," the statement said, without elaborating.

Russia has effectively rejected a U.S. proposal for an immediate and full 30-day halt in the fighting by imposing far-reaching conditions. Ukraine has accepted it, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy says.

A French diplomatic official said over the weekend that Trump, Zelenskyy and French President Emmanuel Macron agreed "to pursue in the coming days the work of convergence" to obtain "a solid ceasefire."

The diplomat said a truce is a "prior condition for a peace negotiation that respects the interest of Ukraine and the Europeans."

The official was not authorized to be publicly identified in accordance with French presidential policy.

Ukraine unwilling to give up land

Ukraine, meanwhile, has balked at surrendering land to Russia in return for peace, which Washington has indicated could be necessary.

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A key point of leverage for Ukraine could be a deal with Washington that grants access to Ukraine's critical mineral wealth.

Ukraine and the U.S. have made progress on a mineral agreement, with both sides agreeing that American aid provided so far to Kyiv will not be taken into account under the terms of the deal, Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal said Sunday.

"We have good progress," he said after talks with U.S. Treasury Under Secretary Scott Bessent in Washington.

"The main thing is that we clearly defined our red lines: The agreement must comply with Ukraine's Constitution, legislation, and European commitments, and must be ratified by Parliament," Shmyhal said.

Russia's full-scale invasion of its neighbor in February 2022 has developed a significant international dimension, further complicating negotiations.

Putin on Monday thanked North Korea for sending what the U.S. estimates are thousands of troops to help defeat Ukraine, as well as allegedly supplying artillery ammunition.

Iran has also helped Russia in the war, with Shahed drones, and China has sold Russia machinery and microelectronics that Moscow can use to make weapons, Western officials say.

The U.S. and Europe have been Kyiv's biggest backers.

## **As communist troops streamed into Saigon, a few remaining reporters kept photos and stories flowing**

By DAVID RISING and VALERIE KOMOR Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — They'd watched overnight as the bombardments grew closer, and observed through binoculars as the last U.S. Marines piled into a helicopter on the roof of the embassy to be whisked away from Saigon.

So when the reporters who had stayed behind heard the telltale squeak of the rubber sandals worn by North Vietnamese and Viet Cong troops in the stairs outside The Associated Press office, they weren't surprised, and braced themselves for possible detention or arrest.

But when the two young soldiers who entered showed no signs of malice, the journalists just kept reporting.

Offering the men a Coke and day-old cake, Peter Arnett, George Esper and Matt Franjola started asking about their march into Saigon. As the men detailed their route on a bureau map, photographer Sarah Errington emerged from the darkroom and snapped what would become an iconic picture, published around the world.

Fifty years later, Arnett recalled the message he fed into the teletype transmitter to AP headquarters in New York after the improbable scene had played out.

"In my 13 years of covering the Vietnam War, I never dreamed it would end as it did today," he remembers writing. "A total surrender following a few hours later with a cordial meeting in the AP bureau with an armed and battle-garbed North Vietnamese officer with his aide over warm Coke and pastries? That is how the Vietnamese war ended for me today."

The message never made it: After a day of carrying alerts and stories on the fall of Saigon and the end of a 20-year war that saw more than 58,000 Americans killed and many times that number of Vietnamese, the wire had been cut.

The fall of Saigon ended an era

The fall of Saigon on April 30, 1975 was the end of an era for the AP in Vietnam. Arnett left in May, and then Franjola was expelled, followed by Esper, and the bureau wouldn't be reestablished until 1993.

The AP opened its first office in Saigon in 1950 as the fight for independence from France by Viet Minh forces under communist leader Ho Chi Minh intensified.

The Viet Minh's decisive victory over the U.S.-supported French at Dien Bien Phu in 1954 marked the end of French Indochina and sparked major changes in the region with the partitioning of Vietnam into

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Communist North Vietnam and U.S.-aligned South Vietnam. The official U.S. military engagement began in 1955 and slowly escalated.

Malcolm Browne took over as AP bureau chief in Saigon in November 1961 and was joined in June 1962 by Arnett and photo chief Horst Faas.

The trio soon won consecutive Pulitzer Prizes: Browne in 1964, Faas in 1965 and Arnett in 1966 — the first of five the AP would receive for its coverage from Vietnam.

Four AP photographers were killed covering the war, and at least 16 other AP journalists were injured, some multiple times, as they reported from the front lines, seeking to record the news as completely and accurately as possible.

From the start, a lot of the reporting contradicted the official version from Washington, revealing a deeper American commitment than admitted, a lack of measurable success against the Viet Cong guerillas, and a broad dislike of the ineffective and corrupt American-backed South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem, Arnett said.

That prompted managers in New York to wonder why the Saigon staffers' stories were sometimes "180 degrees" different from those AP reporters wrote from press conferences at the U.S. State Department, the Pentagon and the White House, he recalled.

"We had a strategic advantage because we were 12,000 miles away from our administration critics, with our boots on the ground," said Arnett, 90, who lives in California today. "Within a year, our reporting was vindicated."

At the height of the war there were roughly 30 staffers assigned to the bureau, divided between news, photos and administration, and the AP made regular use of freelancers as well, usually photographers. It was a diverse group that included people from 11 different countries, including many local Vietnamese.

During upticks in the fighting, staffers would rotate in from other bureaus to help.

When the U.S. government took umbrage with AP's coverage in 1966 and claimed its staffers were young and inexperienced, AP's General Manager Wes Gallagher penned a salty reply, noting their combined decades as reporters.

"Three covered World War II and Korea. Two, Pulitzer Prize winners Peter Arnett and Horst Faas, have been in Vietnam four years each, which is longer than Ambassador (Henry Cabot) Lodge, General (William) Westmoreland and nine-tenths of the Americans over there," Gallagher wrote.

In an attempt to manage the news reports out of Vietnam, the U.S. established a daily news conference in Saigon to feed information to the growing American press corps. They came to be colloquially known as the "Five O'clock Follies" because, as Esper reflected, "they were such a joke."

Esper said in a 2005 interview that sometimes he'd show up to evening briefings the same day he had covered a battle firsthand and was left puzzled by the official version.

"I'm thinking to myself, 'Is this the same battle I just witnessed?'" said Esper, who died in 2012. "So there was some confrontation at the 'follies' because we would question the briefer's reports, and they also withheld tremendous amounts of information."

Esper said it helped that Gallagher took a personal hand in Vietnam coverage, frequently calling and visiting in support of his journalists.

"He took a lot of heat from the Pentagon, from the White House, but he never faltered," Esper said. "He always said to us: 'I support you 100%. You know the press is under scrutiny, just make sure you're accurate, just make sure your stories are fair and balanced,' and we did."

Reporting from the streets and rooftops

In 1969, the American commitment in Vietnam had grown to more than a half million troops, before being drawn down to a handful after the 1973 Paris Peace Accords in which U.S. President Richard Nixon agreed to a withdrawal, leaving the South Vietnamese to fend for themselves.

By 1975, the AP's bureau had shrunk as well, and as the North Vietnamese Army and its allied Viet Cong guerrilla force in the south pushed toward Saigon, most staff members were evacuated.

Arnett, Esper and Franjola volunteered to stay behind, anxious to see through to the end what they had committed so many years of their lives to covering — and conspiring to ignore New York if any of their

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managers got the jitters and ordered them to leave at the last minute.

"I saw it from the beginning, I wanted to see the end," Esper said. "I was a bit apprehensive and frightened, but I knew that if I left, the rest of my life I would have been second guessing myself."

On April 30, 1975, the monsoon rains had arrived and Arnett watched in the early morning hours from the slippery roof of the AP's building as helicopters evacuated Americans and selected Vietnamese from the embassy four blocks away.

After catching a few hours of sleep, he awoke at 6:30 a.m. to the loud voices of looters on the streets. An hour later, from the rooftop of his hotel, he watched through binoculars as a small group of U.S. Marines that had accidentally been left behind clambered aboard a Sea Knight helicopter from the roof of the embassy — the last American evacuees.

He called it in to Esper in the office, and the story was in newsrooms around the world before the helicopter had cleared the coast.

Franjola and Arnett then took to the streets to see what was going on, while Esper manned the desk. When they got to the U.S. Embassy, a mob of people were grinning and laughing as they looted the building — a sharp contrast to the desperation of people the day before hoping to be evacuated.

"On a pile of wet documents and broken furniture on the back lawn, we find the heavy bronze plaque engraved with the names of the five American soldiers who died in the attack on the Embassy in the opening hours of the Tet Offensive in 1968," Arnett recalled in an email detailing the day's events. "Together we carry it back to the AP office."

At 10:24 a.m. Arnett was writing the story of the embassy looting when Esper heard on Saigon Radio that South Vietnam had surrendered and immediately filed an alert.

"Esper rushes to the teleprinter and messages New York, and soon receives the satisfying news that AP is five minutes ahead of UPI with the surrender story," Arnett said, citing AP's biggest rival at the time, United Press International. "In war or peace, the wire services place a premium on competition."

Esper then dashed outside to try and gather some reaction from South Vietnamese soldiers to the news of the capitulation, and came across a police colonel standing by a statue in a main square.

"He was waving his arms, 'fini, fini,' you know, 'it's all over, we lost,'" Esper remembered. "And he was also fingering his holstered pistol and I figured, this guy is really crazy, he will kill me, and after 10 years here with barely a scratch, I'm going to die on this final day."

Suddenly, the colonel did an about-face, saluted the memorial statue, drew his pistol and shot himself in the head.

Shaken, Esper ran back to the bureau, up the four flights of stairs to the office and punched out a quick story on the incident, his hands trembling as he typed.

Stories flow as Saigon falls

Back on the streets, Franjola, who died in 2015, was nearly sideswiped by a Jeep packed with men brandishing Russian rifles and wearing the black Viet Cong garb. Arnett then saw a convoy of Russian trucks loaded with North Vietnamese soldiers driving down the main street and scrambled back into the office.

"George," I shout, "Saigon has fallen. Call New York," Arnett said. "I check my watch. It's 11:43 a.m."

Over the next few hours, more soldiers, supported by tanks, pushed into the city, engaging in sporadic fighting while the AP reporters kept filing their copy.

It was about 2:30 p.m. when they heard the rubber sandals outside the office, and the two NVA soldiers burst in, one with an AK-47 assault rifle swinging from his shoulder, the other with a Russian pistol holstered on his belt. To their shock, the soldiers were accompanied by Ky Nhan, a freelance photographer who worked for the AP, who proudly announced himself as a longtime member of the Viet Cong.

"I have guaranteed the safety of the AP office," Arnett recalled the normally reserved photographer saying. "You have no reason to be concerned."

As Arnett, Esper and Franjola pored over the map with the two NVA soldiers, they chatted through an interpreter about the attack on Saigon, which had been renamed Ho Chi Minh City as soon as it fell.

The interview with the two soldiers turned to the personal, and the young men showed the reporters photos of their families and girlfriends, telling them how much they missed them and wanted to get home.



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"I was thinking in my own mind these are North Vietnamese, there are South Vietnamese, Americans — we're all the same," Esper said.

"People have girlfriends, they miss them, they have the same fears, the same loneliness, and in my head I'm tallying up the casualties, you know nearly 60,000 Americans dead, a million North Vietnamese fighters dead, 224,000 South Vietnamese military killed, and 2 million civilians killed. And that's the way the war ended for me."

## Amazon launches its first internet satellites to compete against SpaceX's Starlinks

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — Amazon's first batch of internet satellites rocketed into orbit Monday, the latest entry in the mega constellation market currently dominated by SpaceX's thousands of Starlinks.

The United Launch Alliance's Atlas V rocket carried up 27 of Amazon's Project Kuiper satellites, named after the frigid fringes of our solar system beyond Neptune. Once released in orbit, the satellites will eventually reach an altitude of nearly 400 miles (630 kilometers).

Two test satellites were launched in 2023, also by an Atlas V. Project officials said major upgrades were made to the newest version. The latest satellites also are coated with a mirror film designed to scatter reflected sunlight in an attempt to accommodate astronomers.

Stargazers oppose the fast-growing constellations of low-orbiting satellites, arguing they spoil observations. Others fear more satellite collisions.

Founded by Jeff Bezos, who now runs his own rocket company, Blue Origin, Amazon aims to put more than 3,200 of these satellites into orbit to provide fast, affordable broadband service around the globe.

Elon Musk's SpaceX already has launched more than 8,000 Starlinks since 2019. The company marked its 250th Starlink launch Sunday night. More than 7,000 Starlinks are still in orbit some 300-plus miles (550 kilometers) above Earth.

The European-based OneWeb satellite constellation numbers in the hundreds in an even higher orbit.

Amazon already has purchased dozens of rocket launches from United Launch Alliance and Blue Origin for Project Kuiper, as well as others.

"There are some things you can only learn in flight" despite extensive testing on the ground, said Rajeev Badyal, the project's vice president.

"No matter how the mission unfolds, this is just the start of our journey," he said in a statement ahead of the evening liftoff.

The first liftoff attempt earlier this month was nixed by bad weather. It took until now to secure another spot in the launch lineup at Cape Canaveral Space Force Station.

## White House focuses on border crackdown as it marks 100 days for Trump's second term

By MICHELLE L. PRICE and CHRIS MEGERIAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House on Monday opened a weeklong celebration of Donald Trump's first 100 days in office by focusing on his border crackdown, an area of relative strength for the president at a time when there are red flags for him in the latest round of polling.

Yard signs with mugshots of immigrants who have been accused of crimes like rape and murder were posted across the White House lawn, positioned so they would be in the background of television broadcasts outside the West Wing. Tom Homan, Trump's top border adviser, told reporters there has been "unprecedented success" on the border effort and "we're going to keep doing it, full speed ahead."

Immigration is Trump's leading issue in public opinion surveys, and White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said at a morning briefing the administration is in "the beginning stages of carrying out the largest deportation campaign in American history."

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About 139,000 people have been removed so far, according to the White House. Deportations have occasionally lagged behind Democratic President Joe Biden's numbers, but Trump officials reject the comparison as not "apples to apples" because so many fewer people are crossing the border now.

Later Monday, Leavitt held a second briefing exclusively for "new media," where Trump-aligned social media influencers asked friendly questions and applauded at the end.

Tuesday will be Trump's 100th day in office, and the Republican president plans to mark the day in Michigan, where he will hold a rally in Macomb County, an automotive hub north of Detroit. After relatively little travel so far in his term, Trump will also deliver a commencement address Thursday at the University of Alabama.

Trump is also doing a number of interviews timed to the 100-day mark, including an Oval Office interview with ABC News that is to air Tuesday night. He also talked with journalists from The Atlantic magazine, a publication he has frequently attacked for its critical reporting.

Trump told The Atlantic he feels more powerful in his second turn in the White House. His administration is stocked with loyalists, and he's become even more confrontational with a judicial system that at times serves as a check on his agenda.

"The first time, I had two things to do — run the country and survive; I had all these crooked guys," he said. "And the second time, I run the country and the world."

Presidents have marked the initial 100 days of their terms since Franklin Delano Roosevelt moved swiftly to counter the Great Depression after taking office in 1933.

Trump wasn't so bullish about the idea during his first term, when he was plagued by setbacks, investigations and turnover in his ranks, at that time calling the 100-day mark "an artificial barrier."

But now he's trying to harness the moment to mark the ambitious agenda he's pursued in his first months. Leavitt said Trump had already signed almost as many executive orders as Biden did during his entire term.

But many Americans believe Trump has mostly been focused on the wrong issues.

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 an AP-NORC survey, and only about half of Republicans say he's mostly had the right focus. Another one-quarter of Republicans say it's been about an even mix of right and wrong priorities, and about 1 in 10 say he's focusing on the wrong things.

And among Trump's own supporters, the share of Republicans who say he has been at least a "good" president has fallen about 10 percentage points since January.

Other polls conducted in recent weeks have found similar levels of dissatisfaction with Trump's first few months, particularly with his economic policies and approach to tariffs.

Trump lashed out at the results on social media as "FAKE POLLS FROM FAKE NEWS ORGANIZATIONS."

As he's pushed to crack down on illegal immigration, Trump has drawn criticism as he has strained the limits of executive power, attacked judges who've ruled against him, sent hundreds of alleged Venezuelan gang members to a mega-prison in El Salvador in defiance of a court order and balked at a Supreme Court order that his administration must facilitate the return Kilmar Abrego Garcia, who was mistakenly deported to El Salvador.

His plans to carry out a mass deportation have not yet shaped up, but the White House is ramping up efforts to encourage people who are in the country illegally to "self-deport," with actions that include stiffer fines and incentives to leave, including airfare and stipends.

His administration has pointed to the steep drop in the number of illegal border crossings as an early and significant sign of success.

Trump signed two executive orders later Monday related to immigration, including one directing state and federal officials to publish a list of "sanctuary city" jurisdictions.

## How bugs and beet juice could play roles in the race to replace artificial dyes in food

By JONEL ALECCIA AP Health Writer

ST. LOUIS (AP) — As pressure grows to get artificial colors out of the U.S. food supply, the shift may well start at Abby Tampow's laboratory desk.

On an April afternoon, the scientist hovered over tiny dishes of red dye, each a slightly different ruby hue. Her task? To match the synthetic shade used for years in a commercial bottled raspberry vinaigrette — but by using only natural ingredients.

"With this red, it needs a little more orange," Tampow said, mixing a slurry of purplish black carrot juice with a bit of beta-carotene, an orange-red color made from algae.

Tampow is part of the team at Sensient Technologies Corp., one of the world's largest dyemakers, that is rushing to help the salad dressing manufacturer — along with thousands of other American businesses — meet demands to overhaul colors used to brighten products from cereals to sports drinks.

"Most of our customers have decided that this is finally the time when they're going to make that switch to a natural color," said Dave Gebhardt, Sensient's senior technical director. He joined a recent tour of the Sensient Colors factory in a north St. Louis neighborhood.

Last week, U.S. health officials announced plans to persuade food companies to voluntarily eliminate petroleum-based artificial dyes by the end of 2026.

Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. called them "poisonous compounds" that endanger children's health and development, citing limited evidence of potential health risks.

The federal push follows a flurry of state laws and a January decision to ban the artificial dye known as Red 3 — found in cakes, candies and some medications — because of cancer risks in lab animals. Social media influencers and ordinary consumers have ramped up calls for artificial colors to be removed from foods.

A change to natural colors may not be fast

The Food and Drug Administration allows about three dozen color additives, including eight remaining synthetic dyes. But making the change from the petroleum-based dyes to colors derived from vegetables, fruits, flowers and even insects won't be easy, fast or cheap, said Monica Giusti, an Ohio State University food color expert.

"Study after study has shown that if all companies were to remove synthetic colors from their formulations, the supply of the natural alternatives would not be enough," Giusti said. "We are not really ready."

It can take six months to a year to convert a single product from a synthetic dye to a natural one. And it could require three to four years to build up the supply of botanical products necessary for an industry-wide shift, Sensient officials said.

"It's not like there's 150 million pounds of beet juice sitting around waiting on the off chance the whole market may convert," said Paul Manning, the company's chief executive. "Tens of millions of pounds of these products need to be grown, pulled out of the ground, extracted."

To make natural dyes, Sensient works with farmers and producers around the world to harvest the raw materials, which typically arrive at the plant as bulk concentrates. They're processed and blended into liquids, granules or powders and then sent to food companies to be added to final products.

Natural dyes are harder to make and use than artificial colors. They are less consistent in color, less stable and subject to changes related to acidity, heat and light, Manning said. Blue is especially difficult. There aren't many natural sources of the color and those that exist can be hard to maintain during processing.

Also, a natural color costs about 10 times more to make than the synthetic version, Manning estimated.

"How do you get that same vividness, that same performance, that same level of safety in that product as you would in a synthetic product?" he said. "There's a lot of complexity associated with that."

The insects that could make 'Barbie pink' naturally

Companies have long used the Red 3 synthetic dye to create what Sensient officials describe as "the Barbie pink."

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To create that color with a natural source might require the use of cochineal, an insect about the size of a peppercorn.

The female insects release a vibrant red pigment, carminic acid, in their bodies and eggs. The bugs live only on prickly pear cactuses in Peru and elsewhere. About 70,000 cochineal insects are needed to produce 1 kilogram, about 2.2 pounds, of dye.

"It's interesting how the most exotic colors are found in the most exotic places," said Norb Nobrega, who travels the world scouting new hues for Sensient.

Artificial dyes are used widely in U.S. foods. About 1 in 5 food products in the U.S. contains added colors, whether natural or synthetic, Manning estimated. Many contain multiple colors.

FDA requires a sample of each batch of synthetic colors to be submitted for testing and certification. Color additives derived from plant, animal or mineral sources are exempt, but have been evaluated by the agency.

Health advocates have long called for the removal of artificial dyes from foods, citing mixed studies indicating they can cause neurobehavioral problems, including hyperactivity and attention issues, in some children.

The FDA says that the approved dyes are safe when used according to regulations and that "most children have no adverse effects when consuming foods containing color additives."

But critics note that added colors are a key component of ultraprocessed foods, which account for more than 70% of the U.S. diet and have been associated with a host of chronic health problems, including heart disease, diabetes and obesity.

"I am all for getting artificial food dyes out of the food supply," said Marion Nestle, a food policy expert. "They are strictly cosmetic, have no health or safety purpose, are markers of ultraprocessed foods and may be harmful to some children."

The cautionary tale of Trix cereal

Color is powerful driver of consumer behavior and changes can backfire, Giusti noted. In 2016, food giant General Mills removed artificial dyes from Trix cereal after requests from consumers, switching to natural sources including turmeric, strawberries and radishes.

But the cereal lost its neon colors, resulting in more muted hues — and a consumer backlash. Trix fans said they missed the bright colors and familiar taste of the cereal. In 2017, the company switched back.

"When it's a product you already love, that you're used to consuming, and it changes slightly, then it may not really be the same experience," Giusti said. "Announcing a regulatory change is one step, but then the implementation is another thing."

Kennedy, the health secretary, said U.S. officials have an "understanding" with food companies to phase out artificial colors. Industry officials told The Associated Press that there is no formal agreement.

However, several companies have said they plan to accelerate a shift to natural colors in some of their products.

PepsiCo CEO Ramon Laguarta said most of its products are already free of artificial colors, and that its Lays and Tostitos brands will phase them out by the end of this year. He said the company plans to phase out artificial colors — or at least offer consumers a natural alternative — over the next few years.

Representatives for General Mills said they're "committed to continuing the conversation" with the administration. WK Kellogg officials said they are reformulating cereals used in the nation's school lunch programs to eliminate the artificial dyes and will halt any new products containing them starting next January.

Sensient officials wouldn't confirm which companies are seeking help making the switch, but they said they're ready for the surge.

"Now that there's a date, there's the timeline," Manning said. "It certainly requires action."



## FDA scrutiny of Novavax COVID-19 vaccine sparks uncertainty about other shots

By LAURAN NEERGAARD and MATTHEW PERRONE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration's effort to impose new requirements on Novavax's COVID-19 vaccine — the nation's only traditional protein-based option for the coronavirus — is sowing uncertainty about updates to other vaccines, too.

Novavax said Monday that the Food and Drug Administration was asking the company to run a new clinical trial of its vaccine after the agency grants full approval. The company said it had responded and that it believed its shot remains "approvable."

But a weekend post on social media by FDA Commissioner Marty Makary suggested the prospect of needing a new trial before the shots' yearly strain update — something unlikely to be possible before fall. That's raised questions about whether other vaccines will be caught in the turmoil.

"I don't think because there's a strain change that this is a new product," said Dr. Jesse Goodman of Georgetown University, a former FDA vaccine chief. If that's the new policy, "you'd always be doing clinical trials and you'd never have a vaccine that was up to date."

The unusual move at FDA came shortly after the agency's longtime vaccine chief was forced out over disagreements with Makary's boss, Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.

Kennedy won Senate confirmation to his job, in part, by promising not to change the nation's vaccine schedule. Since taking office, he's promised to "investigate" children's shots, canceled meetings of expert vaccine advisers and directed officials to look again for connections between vaccines and autism, a link long-ago debunked.

The Novavax vaccine, which originally showed effectiveness in a nearly 30,000-person clinical trial, is still being sold under emergency use authorization in the U.S. The nation's other two options, mRNA vaccines made by Pfizer and Moderna, have earned full FDA approval for certain age groups.

Because the coronavirus continually mutates, manufacturers follow instructions from FDA to make one change each year to their recipe — which strain to target — just like flu vaccines.

The FDA was on track to grant Novavax full approval by its April 1 target date, according to two people with direct knowledge of the situation who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss confidential agency matters. But Trump appointees directed FDA scientists to pause their decision, according to one of the people. Since that highly unusual move, Novavax and the agency have been discussing additional requirements for approval.

In his weekend tweet, FDA's Makary referred to the Novavax vaccine as "a new product," presumably because it had been updated to match last year's common coronavirus strain.

"New products require new clinical studies," Makary added.

An administration spokesman didn't respond to specific questions about Pfizer and Moderna but suggested all COVID-19 vaccines could face stricter requirements.

"It's now been years since COVID has presented the threat it once did, and the urgency to rush approval of boosters without normal oversight no longer exists," said Andrew Nixon, a Health and Human Services spokesman, in a statement.

The FDA had been treating the annual COVID-19 strain updates exactly as it's done for decades with flu vaccines — not as new products, but existing ones that are merely adjusted to protect against the latest strains, said Dr. Paul Offit, a vaccine expert at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia.

Offit said the companies still must perform tests in small numbers of people that show these updated vaccines produce levels of virus-fighting antibodies known to be protective, and they're closely monitored for safety.

Nixon, the HHS spokesman, suggested the policy might not apply to the flu shot, "which has been tried and tested for more than 80 years."

Under federal law, the FDA is required to follow established procedures when issuing requirements to drugmakers for approval. If the agency skips certain steps or imposes additional requirements for political

reasons, experts say, it could be sued by drugmakers — or even patients, such as those who prefer the Novavax vaccine over its competitors because of an allergy or some other reason.

In addition to large clinical trials conducted before all three COVID-19 vaccines were cleared for use, there's data on real-world use, said former Health Secretary Xavier Becerra, who oversaw COVID-19 vaccine policy during the Biden administration.

"At the point where I had left, we had put some 700 million COVID vaccines into the arms of Americans," he said. "That's a pretty good size clinical trial."

## Inside The Atlantic magazine's circuitous route to interviews with Trump

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

Writers Ashley Parker and Michael Scherer of The Atlantic say they've learned one thing during their years of covering President Donald Trump: His first word is rarely his last one.

That's obvious from their circuitous journey in landing interviews with the Republican president, which included an apparent late-night "butt dial" and Trump's unexpected invitation to include in the session their editor, Jeffrey Goldberg, whom Trump had bashed as a "sleazeball" weeks earlier.

That last interview, this past Thursday, sparked a true "stop the presses" moment. The Atlantic had already sent Parker and Scherer's piece, the cover story for its June issue, to the printers. They called it back to add new material.

The article, titled "Trump is Enjoying This" and published online Monday, was in the works before Goldberg was inadvertently included in a Signal chat group among administration leaders about a military attack in the Middle East.

The interview wasn't supposed to happen

The writers, who recently joined The Atlantic from The Washington Post, had pitched an interview to talk about the details of Trump's improbable political comeback. He was willing to talk, but on March 17 — during the week they were supposed to meet — Trump posted on social media that Parker was a "Radical Left Lunatic" incapable of doing a fair interview. Scherer's past pieces about him were, Trump wrote, "virtually all LIES."

The interview was off. The writers surmised in their article that someone in Trump's camp had persuaded him not to do it.

At 10:45 a.m. on a Saturday in late March, Scherer — armed with Trump's cellphone number — called him anyway. "Who's calling?" Trump asked. Scherer identified himself.

"Oh, I know who you are, Michael," Trump replied, according to a tape released by The Atlantic. "I know who you are. You never write — you never write good about me, Michael. Never, ever."

And he proceeded to give Scherer an interview on the spot.

An accidental dial and more developments

Wanting to ask some follow-up questions, the writers called Trump again on April 12. They left a message that wasn't returned, but Scherer's cell phone recorded a call from Trump's number at 1:28 a.m. the next morning with no message left. They figured it had been dialed inadvertently.

The journalists made a request through Trump's staff for an in-person interview, but were rejected. Nine days later — last Wednesday — with their story already written, the White House called and said to come to the Oval Office the next day. And bring Goldberg with them.

Goldberg, The Atlantic's editor-in-chief, had written on March 24 about being included in the highly sensitive group chat, arguably the most embarrassing story about the new administration so far. Striking back, Trump called Goldberg "truly a sleazeball," and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth called him a "deceitful and highly discredited so-called journalist."

On his Truth Social platform, Trump explained he was doing the interview "out of curiosity, and as a competition with myself, just to see if it's possible for The Atlantic to be truthful. Are they capable of writing a fair story on TRUMP? The way I look at it, what can be so bad — I WON!"

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There was no immediate reply from the White House to questions about how they think the interview went. In a briefing for “new media” on Monday, White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt compared Trump agreeing to some interviews to his willingness to speak to leaders like North Korea’s Kim Jong Un.

“The president believes in direct diplomacy, whether it is our adversaries and competitors around the world or left-wing activists like Jeffrey Goldberg,” she said.

Trump’s adversarial relationship with the press has been plain on several fronts since returning to the White House. His FCC is investigating several outlets, including CBS and ABC News, and he’s been fighting in court with The Associated Press over access to White House events.

It was a civil interview

When Goldberg came into the Oval Office, Trump gave him a warm handshake — even if the faces of many of the president’s aides did not look at all happy to see him, Goldberg said in an interview with the journalists posted by The Atlantic on Monday.

“If you called me the names that Donald Trump has called me, I think you and I would both find a personal encounter very, very, very awkward,” Goldberg said. “He doesn’t find it awkward, because he believes that it’s just a game. It’s just a performance.”

From the moment The Atlantic proposed the interview, it had been a negotiation for Trump, Scherer said in the same interview. “It’s a transaction,” he said. “What are they trying to do? Could I benefit from it? Is it going to hurt me? I think it is a window into the most essential fact of Donald Trump, which is that everything he engages in is a transaction.”

The president was also well aware of the value of an interview to The Atlantic, along with the value of Goldberg’s Signal story. Goldberg said that he correctly guessed that Trump was trying to charm him last week. The president seemed less interested in talking about the national security implications of the story than Goldberg broke than in conveying, “Well, you won,” Goldberg said.

“He’s an interesting guy to talk to and listen to,” he said. “And our job is — to the extent that he’s understandable — to understand him. And so the more exposure I have to him, the better it is for me from an analytical standpoint.”

## **Israel’s domestic security chief says he will step down in June, defusing battle with Netanyahu**

By NATALIE MELZER Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — The head of Israel’s internal security service says he will resign in June over the failure of his agency to warn of Hamas’ Oct. 7, 2023, attacks — defusing an escalating battle with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Shin Bet chief Ronen Bar announced his resignation Monday, saying he will formally step down June 15. “After years on many fronts, one night, on the southern front, the skies came down,” Bar said during remarks at a memorial event for fallen Shin Bet soldiers. “All systems collapsed. The Shin Bet also failed to give a warning.”

Netanyahu moved to fire Bar last month over what he said was a crisis of confidence surrounding Hamas’ attack. But the step sparked an uproar in Israel because the agency is investigating ties between the Israeli leader’s office and Qatar — a key mediator between Hamas and Israel over the war in Gaza.

Critics said the firing was tainted by a conflict of interest meant to derail that probe, a charge Netanyahu denies.

Israel’s Supreme Court froze the firing following multiple legal challenges against it and called on the sides to reach a compromise.

In his address, Bar said the court case “is not about my personal case but about the independence of the next heads of the Shin Bet.”

He said the agency’s “proper functioning is of inestimable importance to the security of the state and to Israeli democracy. I have been fighting for this for the past month, and this week the necessary infrastructure was laid before the High Court of Justice. I hope that the ruling that will be given will ensure

that the Shin Bet will be preserved as such, over time and without fear.”

Bar filed a document with the Supreme Court last week that accused Netanyahu of trying to exploit the power of the agency for political and personal gain. Among the accusations, he claimed Netanyahu wanted him to spy on anti-government protesters and pressured him to effectively scuttle Netanyahu’s corruption trial by claiming the prime minister could not testify due to security concerns.

Netanyahu called the accusations lies and responded with his own accusations against Bar.

Netanyahu frequently complains of a “deep state” of civil servants and unelected judges that he says are out to topple him. Good governance groups say the Shin Bet chief is meant to be an independent figure and fear that Bar’s ouster will clear the way for Netanyahu to place a loyalist into the sensitive post.

The Shin Bet is responsible for monitoring Palestinian militant groups, and Bar has previously acknowledged his agency’s failures in preventing Hamas’ Oct. 7 attack. But in a report issued in March, the Shin Bet also criticized Netanyahu, saying failed government policies helped create the climate that led to the attack. Netanyahu has tried to blame the failures on the army and security agencies and repeatedly resisted calls for an official state commission of inquiry that would look into the government decision-making as well.

Bar follows a number of senior security figures to resign or be fired in the wake of the Oct. 7 attack -- including the former defense minister and army chief.

Speaking at the memorial, Bar said everyone who “failed to provide a security blanket that day must bow our heads in humility before the murdered, the dead, the wounded, the kidnapped and their families and act accordingly. Everyone.”

The Qatar investigation is the latest in a series of scandals to hit Netanyahu. The Shin Bet is looking into allegations that close advisers worked as paid consultants for Qatar — an Arab country that does not have full diplomatic relations with Israel — while also working for the prime minister. Netanyahu, who is on trial for a series of corruption charges, has not been directly implicated in the scandal.

Netanyahu early this month attempted to name a former navy commander as the new Shin Bet chief. But he was forced to cancel the appointment less than 24 hours later after learning that his nominee had participated in anti-government protests.

## Things to know about the US coal industry and proposed changes under the Trump administration

By JOHN RABY and LEAH WILLINGHAM Associated Press

CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) — President Donald Trump’s administration has proposed several changes that would affect the struggling U.S. coal industry.

Trump issued executive orders this month to allow mining on federal land. He has used his emergency authority to allow some older coal-fired power plants set for retirement to keep producing electricity to meet the rising demand amid the growth in data centers, artificial intelligence and electric cars.

The Republican president also granted nearly 70 older coal-fired power plants a two-year exemption from federal requirements to reduce emissions of toxic chemicals.

Trump’s government efficiency team, run by Elon Musk, made plans earlier this year to terminate the leases of 34 U.S. Mine Safety and Health Administration offices in 19 states.

Coal’s decades-long decline

The coal industry once provided more than half of U.S. electricity production. But it has been in steep decline for decades as operators went out of business and utilities installed more renewable energy and converted coal-fired plants to be fueled by cheaper and cleaner-burning natural gas.

U.S. coal production was at 1 billion tons (907 million metric tons) in 2014 and fell to 578 million tons (524 million metric tons) by 2023, the latest year available, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

Coal employment nationally peaked in the 1920s when there were about 900,000 miners. It was at about 350,000 in 1950 and has declined steadily since 1980. After the coronavirus pandemic, employment rebounded from 2022 to 2023, rising 4.2% to 45,476. West Virginia employed the most miners at 14,000,



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followed by Kentucky at 5,000. About half of the nation's 560 coal mines are located in West Virginia (165) and Kentucky (112). Despite having just 15 mines, Wyoming was the highest-producing coal state due to mechanization and more accessible coal.

Mining fatalities over the past four decades have dropped significantly. There have been 11 or fewer deaths in each of the past five years, according to MSHA.

## Targeting MSHA

MSHA is responsible for enforcing U.S. mine safety laws. It is required to inspect each underground mine quarterly and each surface mine twice a year. The cuts proposed by Musk's so-called Department of Government Efficiency would require MSHA inspectors to travel farther to get to a mine, and that could mean less thorough inspections, said Jack Spadaro, a longtime mine safety investigator and environmental specialist who worked for that agency.

According to the DOGE website, ending the MSHA leases is projected to save \$18 million. It is unclear whether inspectors' positions and other jobs from those offices would be moved to other facilities.

Seven of the MSHA offices set for closing are in Kentucky and four are in Pennsylvania. West Virginia is among the states with two targeted offices. Also under consideration for closure are the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement facilities in Lexington, Kentucky, and Tulsa, Oklahoma, shrinking the national footprint of an agency created during the Carter administration to restore land damaged by strip mining, and reclaim abandoned and damaged mine lands.

A recent review of publicly available data by the Appalachian Citizens' Law Center indicates that nearly 17,000 health and safety inspections were conducted from the beginning of 2024 through February 2025 by MSHA staff in the facilities on the chopping block.

## What other uses are there for coal?

Industry advocates have long contended that there are other uses for coal, some of which use cleaner technology.

Canonsburg, Pennsylvania-based Core Natural Resources is working to develop a process using West Virginia coal to create a synthetic material that can be used as an anode for lithium-ion batteries, reducing U.S. dependence on countries such as China, according to Matthew Mackowiak, the company's director of government affairs.

Core recently acquired a company that turns coal into carbon foam that produces composite tooling used to make nose cones and plane wings for the U.S. defense industry.

"Whether or not there is any more coal-fired generation in the future, obviously that's something else to talk about in the future," Mackowiak said. "But at the very least, we need to be focused on maintaining our current coal fleet."

## **More than 100 immigrants detained at an illegal after-hours nightclub in Colorado**

By JOHN RABY Associated Press

More than 100 immigrants suspected of being in the United States illegally were taken into custody early Sunday following a federal raid at an illegal after-hours nightclub in Colorado Springs, Colorado, authorities said.

Video posted online by the Drug Enforcement Administration showed agents announcing their presence outside the building and ordering patrons to leave with their hands up. Other videos showed dozens of people fleeing the building through its entrance after federal agents smashed a window. Later, dozens of suspects were shown in handcuffs standing on a sidewalk waiting to be transported.

During his second stint as U.S. president, Donald Trump's unprecedented campaign of immigration enforcement has pushed the limits of executive power, and he has clashed with federal judges trying to restrain him. The crackdown has included detaining more than 1,000 international college students, some of whom have seen their legal status restored, at least temporarily. The policies have slowed immigration at the southern border to a relative trickle.

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On Sunday in Colorado, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement took the club-going immigrants into custody, said Jonathan Pullen, special agent in charge of the DEA's Rocky Mountain Division.

"Colorado Springs is waking up to a safer community today," he said. The city, Colorado's second largest, lies about 70 miles (113 kilometers) south of Denver.

More than 300 law enforcement officers and officials from multiple agencies responded to the nightclub, which had been under investigation for several months for alleged activities including drug trafficking, prostitution and "crimes of violence," Pullen said at a news conference. Cocaine was among the drugs found, he said.

"When the cops showed up at the door, most of the drugs hit the floor," Pullen said.

An undisclosed number of guns were seized, he said.

Trump posted a link to the DEA video of the raid on his social media site, Truth Social. "A big Raid last night on some of the worst people illegally in our Country — Drug Dealers, Murderers, and other Violent Criminals, of all shapes and sizes," the president wrote.

Pullen estimated more than 200 people were inside the nightclub. Among them were more than a dozen active-duty military members who either were patrons or working as armed security. He said the DEA will consult with the Army's Criminal Investigation Division to determine the next steps involving the service members. In addition, some patrons were arrested on undisclosed outstanding warrants, Pullen said.

Pullen did not specify the countries where the detained immigrants were from.

Earlier this month a federal judge in Colorado temporarily blocked deportations of immigrants who face possible removal under Trump's invocation of an 18th century law known as the Alien Enemies Act.

## **Houthi rebels say a US airstrike that hit Yemen prison holding African migrants kills 68**

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Yemen's Houthi rebels on Monday alleged a U.S. airstrike hit a prison holding African migrants, killing at least 68 people and wounding 47 others. The U.S. military said it was investigating.

The strike in Yemen's Saada governorate, a stronghold for the Houthis, is the latest incident in the country's decadelong war to see African migrants from Ethiopia and other nations killed while crossing the nation for a chance to work in neighboring Saudi Arabia.

It also likely will renew questions from activists about the American campaign, known as "Operation Rough Rider," which has been targeting the rebels as the Trump administration negotiates with their main benefactor, Iran, over Tehran's rapidly advancing nuclear program.

The U.S. military's Central Command, in a statement early Monday before news of the alleged strike broke, sought to defend its policy of offering no specific details of its extensive airstrike campaign. The strikes have drawn controversy in America over Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth's use of the unclassified Signal messaging app to post sensitive details about the attacks.

"To preserve operational security, we have intentionally limited disclosing details of our ongoing or future operations," Central Command said. "We are very deliberate in our operational approach, but will not reveal specifics about what we've done or what we will do."

Late on Monday night, the military said Central Command was "aware of the claims of civilian casualties related to the U.S. strikes in Yemen, and we take those claims very seriously."

"We are currently conducting our battle-damage assessment and inquiry into those claims," it added.

Graphic footage shows aftermath of explosion

Graphic footage aired by the Houthis' al-Masirah satellite news channel showed what appeared to be dead bodies and others wounded at the site. The Houthi-run Interior Ministry said some 115 migrants had been detained at the site.

The rebels' Civil Defense organization said at least 68 people had been killed and 47 others wounded in the attack.

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Footage from the site analyzed by the AP suggested some kind of explosion took place there, with its cement walls seemingly peppered by debris fragments and the wounds suffered by those there.

A voice, soft in the footage, can be heard repeating the start of a prayer in Arabic: "In the name of God." An occasional gunshot rang out as medics sought to help those wounded.

The International Organization for Migration, a United Nations agency, said it was "deeply saddened" by the deaths at the prison.

"It is imperative that all efforts are made to avoid harm to civilians and to protect those most vulnerable in these challenging circumstances," it said.

**African migrants caught in middle of Yemen's war**

Ethiopians and other African migrants for years have landed in Yemen, braving the war-torn nation to try and reach Saudi Arabia for work. The Houthi rebels allegedly make tens of thousands of dollars a week smuggling migrants over the border.

Migrants from Ethiopia have found themselves detained, abused and even killed in Saudi Arabia and Yemen during the war. An Oct. 3, 2022, letter to the kingdom from the U.N. said its investigators "received concerning allegations of cross-border artillery shelling and small arms fire allegedly by Saudi security forces, causing the deaths of up to 430 and injuring 650 migrants."

Saudi Arabia has denied killing migrants.

Monday's alleged strike recalled a similar strike by a Saudi-led coalition battling the Houthis back in 2022 on the same compound, which caused a collapse killing 66 detainees and wounding 113 others, a United Nations report later said. The Houthis shot dead 16 detainees who fled after the strike and wounded another 50, the U.N. said. The Saudi-led coalition sought to justify the strike by saying the Houthis built and launched drones there, but the U.N. said it was known to be a detention facility.

"The coalition should have avoided any attack on that facility," the U.N. report added.

That 2022 attack was one of the deadliest single attacks in the yearslong war between the coalition and the Houthi rebels and came after the Houthis killed three people in a strike near Abu Dhabi's international airport.

US military says over 800 strikes conducted in campaign so far

Meanwhile, U.S. airstrikes overnight targeting Yemen's capital killed at least eight people, the Houthis said. The American military acknowledged carrying out over 800 individual strikes in their monthlong campaign.

The overnight statement from Central Command also said "Operation Rough Rider" had "killed hundreds of Houthi fighters and numerous Houthi leaders," including those associated with its missile and drone program. It did not identify any of those officials.

"We will continue to ratchet up the pressure until the objective is met, which remains the restoration of freedom of navigation and American deterrence in the region," it added.

The U.S. is targeting the Houthis because of the group's attacks on shipping in the Red Sea, a crucial global trade route, and on Israel. The Houthis are also the last militant group in Iran's self-described "Axis of Resistance" that is capable of regularly attacking Israel.

US discusses deadly port strike

The U.S. is conducting strikes on Yemen from its two aircraft carriers in the region — the USS Harry S. Truman in the Red Sea and the USS Carl Vinson in the Arabian Sea.

On April 18, an American strike on the Ras Isa fuel port killed at least 74 people and wounded 171 others in the deadliest-known attack of the American campaign. Central Command on Monday offered an explanation for why it hit the port.

"U.S. strikes destroyed the ability of Ras Isa Port to accept fuel, which will begin to impact Houthi ability to not only conduct operations, but also to generate millions of dollars in revenue for their terror activities," it said.

Meanwhile, the Houthis have increasingly sought to control the flow of information from the territory they hold to the outside world. It issued a notice Sunday that all those holding Starlink satellite internet receivers should "quickly hand over" the devices to authorities.

"A field campaign will be implemented in coordination with the security authorities to arrest anyone who sells, trades, uses, operates, installs or possesses these prohibited terminals," the Houthis warned.

Starlink terminals have been crucial for Ukraine in fighting Russia's full-scale invasion and receivers also have been smuggled into Iran amid unrest there.

## **Autopsy confirms Gene Hackman died from heart disease, notes his Alzheimer's and prolonged fasting**

By JACQUES BILLEAUD and MORGAN LEE Associated Press

SANTA FE, N.M. (AP) — The main cause of Gene Hackman's death was heart disease, but he was also in the advanced stages of Alzheimer's disease and likely had not eaten for a long time, according to a new autopsy report.

The report documents the 95-year-old actor's poor heart health, noting he had experienced congestive heart failure, an aortic valve replacement and an irregular heart beat. He was given a pacemaker in April 2019.

Hackman's carbon monoxide concentration was less than 5% saturation, which is within the normal range. He tested negative for the hantavirus, which is a rare but potentially fatal disease spread by infected rodent droppings.

Authorities have said Hackman's wife, Betsy Arakawa, likely died Feb. 11 at home from hantavirus pulmonary syndrome. Her autopsy report hasn't yet been released.

A toxicology report says Hackman tested negative for alcohol and intoxicating drugs, but that he had a low concentration of acetone in his system that indicates prolonged fasting.

Hackman appeared to have outlived Arakawa at home by about a week, possibly unaware of his wife's death. Hackman's pacemaker showed an abnormal heart rhythm on Feb. 18 — the day he likely died, according to the state's chief medical examiner.

Records released earlier in the investigation showed Arakawa made phone calls and internet searches as she scoured for information on flu-like symptoms and breathing techniques.

Recently released videos outline the scope of the investigation into the deaths of Hackman and Arakawa.

Before they understood how Hackman and Arakawa died, authorities recorded themselves conducting interviews with workers and returning to Hackman's home to search for more evidence. Detectives searched the home in early March for Arakawa's laptop and other clues.

## **Things to know about the retrial of Karen Read in the killing of her police officer boyfriend**

By MICHAEL CASEY and PATRICK WHITTLE Associated Press

The U.S. Supreme Court on Monday rejected a double jeopardy appeal filed by Karen Read, who's on trial for the second time on charges she killed her Boston police officer boyfriend in 2022.

A mistrial was declared last year after jurors said they were at an impasse. Read's defense now says that putting her on trial again for two of the charges is an unlawful case of double jeopardy. They told the Supreme Court that the jury at her first trial reached a unanimous but unannounced verdict acquitting her, so a second trial on those charges should be barred as double jeopardy.

By rejecting her petition, the justices have effectively cleared the way for her trial to continue. The court didn't ask the prosecution to respond to the appeal, a sign the justices did not think there was a difficult legal issue at stake.

What is the Karen Read case about?

Prosecutors say Read backed her SUV into John O'Keefe, 46, after dropping him off at a party hosted by a fellow police officer and left him to die in the snow. Defense attorneys say she was a victim of a conspiracy involving the police and they plan, as they did in the first trial, to offer evidence pointing to the real killer. The case has attracted considerable interest in Massachusetts and beyond.



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Read, 45, has been charged with second-degree murder, manslaughter and leaving the scene.

The second trial, which began opening statements and witness testimony April 22, has thus far looked similar to the first. It's being held in the same courthouse before the same judge, and dozens of Read's passionate supporters are again rallying outside. The primary defense lawyers and many of the nearly 200 witnesses will also be the same.

A digital forensics specialist testifies

The trial's second week began with digital forensics specialist Ian Whiffin testifying about data he analyzed from multiple cell phones connected to the case.

Whiffin is a former law enforcement officer who went on to work in mobile forensics in the private sector. He testified Monday about an internet search made by Jennifer McCabe, who was with Read the morning they found O'Keefe in the snow.

McCabe made a much-discussed web search about how long it takes to die in the cold. Read's lawyers have said the search happened hours before O'Keefe was discovered, which could implicate her rather than Read. McCabe has said she made the search later at Read's insistence after they found O'Keefe.

Whiffin said Monday the web search was not made at 2:27 a.m., before O'Keefe's body was found, like the defense has alleged. He also testified that location data on O'Keefe's phone was consistent with the device being near a flagpole on the lawn of the home from 12:32 a.m. onward. A text McCabe sent at that time telling O'Keefe where to park was recorded as having been read, but there was no further activity after that.

Whiffin also analyzed the battery temperature of O'Keefe's phone. He said it dropped from 72 degrees at 12:37 a.m. to 37 degrees at 6:14 a.m.

Read's defense has suggested O'Keefe was killed inside the home.

Jurors view the crime scene

On Friday, jurors traveled to Canton, where O'Keefe was found outside the home of Brian Albert on Jan. 29, 2022. Read's SUV was also parked there for the viewing.

Prosecutor Hank Brennan told jurors to view the scene from different vantage points and reminded them that it would have looked different at night, during a snowstorm. Defense attorney David Yannetti asked jurors to consider the distance between the home's windows and doors and the front lawn. Jurors also should take a good look at Read's vehicle, he said.

"Size it up," he said. "Take it in."

Doctor describes testing Read's blood alcohol level

Dr. Garrey Faller, former lab director at Good Samaritan Medical Center, testified Friday that Read's blood alcohol content was 93 milligrams per deciliter, or 0.093%, at 9 a.m. the day O'Keefe was found dead. The legal BAC limit in Massachusetts for driving is 0.08%.

In cross-examining Faller, Read's attorney suggested that the lab wasn't using the most reliable type of test or that the results could have been skewed by Read's medical conditions — anemia and multiple sclerosis.

"Our methodology is just as good," he said.

That testimony came a day after prosecutors showed clips from interviews in which Read described pouring extra shots of alcohol into cocktails she deemed too weak but denying that she was driving recklessly the night O'Keefe died.

Friend describes O'Keefe and Read as an affectionate couple

O'Keefe's close friend, Michael Camerano, testified Thursday about the relationship between O'Keefe and Read and their interactions the night he died. He said the couple greeted each other with affection at a Canton bar, and that O'Keefe put his arm around Read and kissed her.

"He certainly never told you or even suggested that he was thinking about or planning to break up with Karen, right?" defense attorney David Yannetti asked.

"No," Camerano said.

"And during the month before John's passing, that January of 2022, you observed their relationship in

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your presence to be normal, caring, and affectionate, right?" Yannetti asked.

"Yes," Camerano said.

The defense blames a third party for O'Keefe's death

The defense's approach has been to portray the investigation into O'Keefe's death as shoddy and undermined by the close relationship investigators had with the police officers and other law enforcement agents who were at the house party.

Among the key witnesses they will call is former State Trooper Michael Proctor, who led the investigation but has since been fired after a disciplinary board found he sent crude and sexist texts about Read to his family and colleagues. He is also on the prosecution's witness list.

Proctor's testimony was a key moment during the first trial, when the defense suggested his texts about Read and the case showed he was biased and had singled her out early in the investigation, ignoring other potential suspects.

## **Iran says fire extinguished at a port rocked by explosion as the death toll rises to at least 70**

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iran finally extinguished a fire Monday at a southern port rocked by an explosion as the death toll in the blast rose to at least 70 people killed, authorities said.

Satellite images analyzed by The Associated Press also showed the devastation of the explosion that injured more than 1,000 people. The photos from Planet Labs PBC came as local news reports from the site raised more questions about the cause of the blast Saturday at the Shahid Rajaei port near Bandar Abbas.

Iranian Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni announced the fire had been put out, while provincial emergency health official Mehrdad Hasanzadeh gave the death toll.

The port reportedly took in a chemical component needed for solid fuel for ballistic missiles — something denied by authorities though they've not explained the source of the power that caused such destruction.

The blast Saturday disintegrated a building next to the blast site, which appeared to be in a row where other containers once stood, the satellite photos showed. It also shredded the majority of another building just to the west.

The force of the blast also could be seen, with what appeared to be two craters measure some 50 meters (165 feet) across. Other containers nearby appeared smashed and distended by the explosion and the intense fire that followed.

The fire still burned at the site Monday, some two days after the initial explosion that happened just as Iran began a third round of negotiations with the United States over its rapidly advancing nuclear program.

Authorities still haven't offered an explanation for the explosion.

Private security firm Ambrey says the port received missile fuel chemical in March. It was 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 Iranian military denied receiving the chemical shipment.

Social media footage of the explosion 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 2020 Beirut port explosion.

Late Sunday, Iran's semiofficial ILNA news agency quoted Saeed Jafari, the CEO of marine services company working at the port, as saying there were false statements about the cargo that detonated, which he called "very dangerous."

"The incident happened following a false statement about the dangerous goods and delivering it without documents and tags," Jafari said.

Another report by the semiofficial ISNA news agency claimed the cargo that caused the blast was not reported to customs authorities as well.

Only high-level authorities in Iran, such as its paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, could circumvent normal procedures at the port.

## **Conclave to elect a new pope will start on May 7 as cardinals get to know one another**

By NICOLE WINFIELD and COLLEEN BARRY Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Catholic cardinals on Monday set May 7 as the start date for the conclave to elect Pope Francis' successor, delaying the secret voting for two days so they can get to know one another better and find consensus on a candidate before they are sequestered in the Sistine Chapel.

The cardinals set the date after arriving for the first day of informal meetings following Pope Francis' funeral Saturday. In a chaotic scene, journalists shouted questions about the mood inside and whether there was unity. A reporter for a satirical Italian television program asked whether an Italian cardinal who has been convicted by the Vatican criminal court on finance-related charges would be allowed to vote.

The conclave could have opened as early as May 5, but the cardinals gave themselves extra time to speak in more informal sessions that include cardinals over age 80, who will not be allowed into the Sistine Chapel once the conclave begins. They will next meet on Tuesday morning,

"There is the hope of unity," said Argentine Cardinal Ángel Sixto Rossi, the 66-year-old archbishop of Cordoba who Francis made a cardinal in 2023.

Many cardinals cited the desire to continue Francis' pastoral focus on people who are marginalized and against war. But conservatives may be more focused on forging unity and refocusing the church back on core doctrines emphasized by St. John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI, rather than continuing Francis' social justice focus and outreach to women and gays.

Cardinal Baldassare Reina, in a homily in St. Peter's Basilica on the third day of official mourning for Francis' death, urged fellow cardinals to continue the Argentine pope's reforms and avoid "power alliances" and "retaliation" as they choose his successor.

British Cardinal Vincent Nichols, the 79-year-old archbishop of Westminster, was adamant that the church must strive for unity, and he downplayed divisions.

"The role of the pope is to essentially hold us together and that's the grace we've been given from God," Nichols said.

Venezuelan Cardinal Baltazar Enrique Porras Cardozo expressed confidence that once the conclave begins, a decision would be quick, "between two and three days."

Cardinal electors

The College of Cardinals that will elect a new pope includes members from far-flung corners of the globe whom Francis named over his 12-year papacy to bring in new points of view — often at the expense of traditional centers of Catholicism.

Many have spent little or no time in Rome getting to know colleagues, injecting some uncertainty into a process that requires two-thirds of the voting-age cardinals to coalesce behind a single candidate.

Nichols acknowledged that the 135 cardinal electors — 108 of whom were appointed by Francis — don't know each other very well. The last 20 were appointed in early December.

"We've got all week," Nichols said as he arrived.

Only cardinals under 80 are eligible to vote, and it is not clear how many of the 135 will participate. A Spanish cardinal has said he won't come to Rome for health reasons.

Controversy

A big uncertainty is whether Cardinal Angelo Becciu, once one of the most powerful cardinals in the Vatican, will be allowed in the Sistine Chapel. Francis in 2020 forced Becciu to resign as head of the Vatican's saint-making office and renounce his rights as a cardinal because of allegations of embezzlement and financial fraud. Becciu denied any wrongdoing but was put on trial in the Vatican criminal court and convicted of finance-related charges in December, 2023.

He is appealing the conviction and has participated in the pre-conclave meetings, but there is a lingering

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question about whether he is entitled to vote. The Vatican's official statistics list him as a "non-elect." When he was ousted in 2020, Becciu told a hastily arranged press conference that he wouldn't be voting in any future conclave, but recently he has insisted he is entitled to vote, and canon lawyers have been poring over the Vatican document regulating the conclave to determine if he's right.

The case was discussed Monday by cardinals but there was "no resolution," the Vatican said.

## Papal candidates

While Francis stacked the ranks with his cardinals, it is not necessarily the case that all of them will want to see the church continue in his image.

On Monday, any glimpse of a red cap appearing along St. Peter's Square's stately colonnade set journalists running with cameras and voice recorders aloft to capture the mood inside.

Italian Cardinal Matteo Zuppi, considered a contender to be the next pope, navigated the scrum of journalists with humor, joking that he was "holding his breath" as the microphones and cameras surrounded him all the way to the Vatican gate.

## African voices

Nigerian Cardinal John Olorunfemi Olayinka, the emeritus archbishop of Abuja, was asked if the African cardinals were coalescing around a particular candidate.

African bishops had made a remarkably united stand last year against Francis' outreach to LGBTQ+ people, refusing to implement his declaration allowing priests to offer blessings to same-sex couples. Given such a stand, there is some speculation that the 18 African cardinal electors could help block a progressive candidate from emerging.

"We have not come here for a political rally. We have come to get a pope out," said Olayinka, who at 81 is too old to vote but can have a role in influencing how younger electors might.

## Asian and Latin American voices

Indian Cardinal Anthony Poola, the 61-year-old archbishop of Hyderabad, said he had experienced a sense of unity among his fellow cardinals but allowed that "anything could happen." As a relatively young cardinal, Poola is one of four Indian electors who will participate in the conclave, three of whom, including Poola, were named by Francis.

"Anyone who is coming up must be the successor of St. Peter, and we all hope that he will be a good pope," he said.

Rossi, the Argentine cardinal, said he hoped that Francis' message of "mercy, closeness, charity, tenderness and faith," would accompany them in finding a successor.

But he acknowledged the job was daunting. Asked how he felt about participating in his first conclave, he responded with a laugh: "Afraid."

## When kids are evicted, they often lose both home and school

By MORIAH BALINGIT AP Education Writer

HOUSTON (AP) — Since her birth 10 years ago, Mackenzie Holmes has rarely called one place home for long.

There was the house in Houston owned by her grandmother, Crystal Holmes. Then, after Holmes lost her Southwest Airlines job and the house, there was the trio of apartments in the suburbs — and three evictions. Then another rental, and another eviction. Then motels and her uncle's one-bedroom apartment, where Mackenzie and her grandmother slept on an inflatable mattress. Finally, Crystal Holmes secured a spot in a women's shelter, so the two would no longer have to sleep on the floor.

With nearly every move came a new school, a new set of classmates, and new lessons to catch up on. Mackenzie only has one friend she's known longer than a year, and she didn't receive testing or a diagnosis for dyslexia until this year. She would often miss long stretches of class in between schools.

Schoolchildren threatened with eviction are more likely to end up in another district or transfer to another school, often one with less funding, more poverty and lower test scores. They're more likely to miss school, and those who end up transferring are suspended more often. That's according to an analysis from the



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Eviction Lab at Princeton University, published in Sociology of Education, a peer-reviewed journal, and shared exclusively with The Associated Press' Education Reporting Network.

Pairing court filings and student records from the Houston Independent School District, where Mackenzie started kindergarten, researchers identified more than 18,000 times between 2002 and 2016 when students lived in homes threatened with eviction filings. They found students facing eviction were absent more often. Even when they didn't have to change schools, students threatened with eviction missed four more days in the following school year than their peers.

In all, researchers counted 13,197 children between 2002 and 2016 whose parents faced an eviction filing. A quarter of those children faced repeated evictions.

As eviction rates in Houston continue to worsen, there might be more children like Mackenzie.

Falling behind on rent — and finding a way to finish the school year

Neveah Barahona, a 17-year-old big sister to seven siblings, started kindergarten in Houston, but has moved schools half a dozen times. Her mother, Roxanne Abarca, knew moving can be disruptive. So whenever she fell behind on rent and the family was forced to move, she tried to let them finish the school year — even if it meant driving them great distances.

Neveah, a strong student who hopes to join the military, said the moves took a toll.

"It is kind of draining, meeting new people, meeting new teachers, getting on track with ... what they want to teach you and what you used to know," Neveah said. Then there's finding her way with new classmates. A spate of bullying this year left her despondent until she got counseling.

Households with children are about twice as likely to face eviction than those without children, Eviction Lab research has shown. That's 1.5 million children getting evicted every year — and one in 20 children under 5 living in a rental home. Still, much of the discourse focuses on adults — the landlords and grown-up tenants — rather than the kids caught in the middle, said Peter Hepburn, the study's lead author.

"It's ... worth reminding people that 40% of the people at risk of losing their homes through the eviction process are kids," said Hepburn, a sociology professor at Rutgers University-Newark and associate director at the Eviction Lab.

Households often become more vulnerable to eviction because they fall behind when they have children. Only 5% of low-wage earners, who are especially vulnerable to housing instability, have access to paid parental leave.

Under a federal law that protects homeless students, districts are supposed to try to keep children in the same school if they lose their housing midyear, providing daily transportation. But children who are evicted don't always qualify for those services. Even those who do often fall through the cracks, because schools don't know why children are leaving or where they're headed.

Evicted families navigate invisible school boundaries

In the sprawl of Houston, it can be especially challenging for transient students to stay on track. The metropolis bleeds seamlessly from the city limits to unincorporated parts of Harris County, which is divided into 24 other districts. It's easy to leave Houston's school district without realizing it. And despite the best efforts of parents and caretakers, kids can miss a lot of school in transition.

That's what happened in January, when Mackenzie's grandmother, then staying in her son's one-bedroom apartment with her granddaughter, got desperate. Fearful her son would get evicted for having family stay with him, Crystal Holmes — who had no home, no car and no cell phone service — walked miles to a women's shelter.

The shelter, where she and Mackenzie now share a room, is in another district's enrollment zone. She worried about Mackenzie being forced to move schools again — the fifth grader had already missed the first three weeks of the school year, when her grandmother struggled to get her enrolled.

Thankfully, the federal law kicked in, and Mackenzie's school, Thornwood Elementary, now sends a car to fetch her and other students from the shelter.

Houston Independent School District did not respond to interview requests.

Millicent Brown lives in a public housing project in Houston, alongside an elevated highway so noisy she

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had to buy a louder doorbell. She and her daughter, Nova, 5, were forced to move last year when Nova's father threatened to hurt Brown.

Nova had attended a charter school. But when she moved, the school said it could only bus Nova from her new home if she waited on a street that Brown said was too dangerous. Instead, Nova missed a month of school before enrolling in a nearby public school.

Brown grew up bouncing between schools and wants better for Nova. But she may have to move again: The state has plans to widen the highway. It would wipe out her housing project — and Nova's new school.

Nearly three years ago, Neveah and her family settled into a ranch-style home down a country road in Aldine. It's brightly lit, with four bedrooms and a renovated kitchen. Neaveah adopted a neighborhood cat she named Bella. Her sister Aaliyah painted a portrait of the home that's displayed in the living room.

"When we were little, we always kept moving," Aaliyah said. "I don't want to move. I already got comfortable here."

Then, last year, her mother once again began to fall behind on rent. Ultimately, Abarca received an eviction notice.

The mother was lucky. At the courthouse, she met an employee tasked with helping families stay in their homes. The employee connected her with a nonprofit that agreed to pay six months of her rent while Abarca got back on her feet.

And she did, working from home as a call operator for the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

But the siblings' dream of a "forever home" may still come to an end. Abarca learned this month the home's owner hopes to sell to an investor, displacing them once again.

## **Job cuts delay Pentagon plans to expand work to prevent sex assaults and suicides**

By LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Personnel cuts across the Defense Department will delay plans to hire at least 1,000 more civilians to help prevent sexual assault, suicides and behavior problems within the military, senior defense officials said. But they insist that crucial programs aimed at addressing sexual misconduct and providing help for victims are so far not affected.

The officials told The Associated Press that plans to have about 2,500 personnel in place to do this prevention work throughout the military services, combatant commands, ships and bases by fiscal year 2028 have been slowed due to the hiring freeze and cuts.

But they said they are looking to spread out the roughly 1,400 people they have been able to hire to date and try to fill gaps as best they can until the additional staff can be hired.

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss personnel decisions. Spurred by pressure for budget and staff cuts, they said they are looking for efficiencies to ensure this prevention workforce is the right size and that tax dollars are being spent well.

Their comments come as two senators have written to Pentagon leaders expressing deep concerns that sexual assault prevention and response programs may be targeted for cuts or elimination.

In a letter to Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth and the leaders of the military services, Sens. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., and Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, said they worry about the "mere possibility of significant alterations or termination" of programs addressing sexual assaults and harassment.

They urged Hegseth to ensure that victims of such misconduct will be supported, offenders held accountable and no changes will be made to reduce the Defense Department's services.

"Even minor reductions risk compromising decades of progress toward ending sexual abuse and harassment in the Department," the senators said in the letter obtained by The AP. "Prompt action is essential to reinforcing victims' belief in the words of their leadership."

The two lawmakers have long fought for improved programs to address sexual assault in the military and more aggressive prosecution of assailants.

Budget and personnel cuts ordered by the Trump administration and billionaire ally Elon Musk's Depart-

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ment of Government Efficiency have slashed thousands of jobs across the government workforce and services.

The defense officials acknowledged that hiring delays will hurt efforts aimed at a wider array of problems, ranging from suicides to abusive behavior and other bad conduct.

Plans for a prevention workforce to address that broader spectrum of issues began in 2022, when sexual assaults and suicides were spiking. Officials concluded that they needed a more integrated effort to work with service members who were experiencing pressures tied to work, deployment, home, money and more that could lead to violence.

The defense officials also said that military programs to combat sexual assault were part of a recent wider Pentagon program review to make sure that federal regulations were updated to include the changes made in the past several years. Those included changes to sexual assault prosecutions so that decisions are made by independent prosecutors.

In a statement, the Pentagon noted that the regulations creating the sexual assault and prevention officers were reviewed to ensure they complied with new government efficiency guidance. It said all of the sexual assault-related policies remain in effect.

"The Department remains committed to the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program's goals of providing service members with recovery assistance, ensuring that offenders are held accountable, and ensuring mission readiness," the statement said.

One of the defense officials said that because the military services have taken different approaches to how they staff the new prevention workforce, they may see gaps in different places. For example, in some cases, leaders began building staff by geographic region. Slowing the hiring, said the official, will mean that some regions will have gaps or fewer staff than planned.

As a result, the department will try to fill some of those holes in whatever ways possible, including shifting personnel to cover regions not yet fully staffed by the services.

## **Humanitarian needs remain pressing a month after Myanmar's deadly quake**

By GRANT PECK Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — Hundreds of thousands of survivors desperately need humanitarian aid a month after Myanmar's deadly earthquake, compounded by airstrikes the military government is reportedly carrying out despite ceasefires meant to aid relief efforts during the country's civil war.

The 7.7 magnitude March 28 quake hit a wide swath of the country, causing significant damage to six regions and states, including the capital, Naypyitaw. Myanmar's Department of Meteorology and Hydrology reported Monday there had been 157 aftershocks after the big quake, ranging in magnitude from 2.8 to 7.5.

Quake death toll rises

State-run MRTV television reported on Monday the quake's death toll had reached 3,770, with 5,106 people injured and 106 still missing. The earthquake left many areas without power, telephone or cell connections and damaged roads and bridges, in addition to tens of thousands of buildings.

In some quake-hit areas, bereaved relatives and friends of the disaster's victims on Monday offered donations to monks, a Buddhist tradition to transfer merit and blessings to the deceased. MRTV reported that Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, head of the ruling military council, and his colleagues performed the same ceremony in Naypyitaw.

Military airstrikes continue

A report released Monday by the Myanmar Witness project of the London-based Centre for Information Resilience said the group had documented 80 post-quake airstrikes by the military across multiple regions, including 65 after the army declared its unilateral ceasefire on April 2, following similar declarations by its battlefield foes.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since the army's 2021 takeover ousted the elected government of Aung

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San Suu Kyi, which led to nationwide peaceful protests that escalated into armed resistance, uniting pro-democracy activists and ethnic minority guerrilla groups that have long been fighting for autonomy.

"Myanmar's population was already on its knees after years of SAC aggression and armed conflict," said Myanmar Witness project director Robert Dolan, referring to the military's ruling State Administration Council. "The layers of suffering are hard to comprehend — we've seen regions wrecked by war and then the earthquake, only to sustain further damage from continued airstrikes."

The bombings have primarily targeted civilian areas — markets, residential zones, Buddhist monasteries, and Christian churches — resulting in the deaths of over 200 civilians, including at least 24 children, from March 28 to April 19, 2025, according to a statement from the shadow National Unity Government, the main opposition group coordinating resistance to military rule.

Dave Eubank, a former U.S. Army Special Forces soldier who founded the Free Burma Rangers, a private aid organization, said two of his medics had been killed in military attacks since the earthquake, which have primarily struck villages.

"These attacks have not slowed down at all, attacks by drones, airstrikes, mortars and artillery continue unabated," said Eubank, who was in Myanmar when the earthquake hit but is currently outside the country, though his teams continue to operate there.

"They have been widespread and lethal, mostly to villagers — very few of the resistance have been killed by them."

The military government hasn't directly commented on the airstrikes, but when it extended its ceasefire on April 22, it reserved the right to respond as "necessary" to certain activities by the resistance forces.

**Agencies warn of dire living conditions**

U.N. agencies and other humanitarian organizations, meanwhile, stress that living conditions remain dire for earthquake survivors.

Even before the earthquake, the civil war had displaced more than 3 million people and left nearly 20 million in need.

"Critical needs remain for safe shelter, clean water and sanitation, physical and mental health care, comprehensive protection services and cash assistance," the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said Friday in its latest situation report.

Many who lost their homes are still in makeshift tents with little to protect them from pre-monsoon storms ahead of the months-long rainy season, which normally begins in May, and limited access to safe drinking water and clean sanitation raises the threat of waterborne diseases, the U.N. said.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies said in a report released Monday that displaced people were living outdoors in temperatures of up to forty degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit), with an overwhelming fear of further aftershocks.

**Reconstruction starts**

In Naypyitaw, the damaged buildings of the labor and foreign ministries have been demolished for new construction, said a resident who asked not to be named for security reasons. Debris at markets and schools has been cleaned by municipal workers, while thousands of people, who lost their homes, were still living under tarpaulin sheets, he said.

He said that he was told that the departments and offices of several ministries will be temporarily relocated to Yangon, the country's former capital and largest city, until their offices can be rebuilt.

## **Deciphering the reasons behind Shedeur Sanders' stunning free fall in the NFL draft**

By DAVID BRANDT AP Sports Writer

It's not often that the 144th overall pick is the biggest story of the NFL draft.

But Shedeur Sanders was not the usual 144th pick and his situation transcended football. The narrative around Sanders blurred lines between sports, race and culture.

The former University of Colorado quarterback was the center of a three-day spectacle of cringe that will



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live in football lore for a long time. Sanders fell from a potential top-five overall selection on Thursday to the fifth round on Saturday in an excruciating slide that had his supporters fuming and detractors laughing.

The Cleveland Browns finally ended Sanders' misery with the No. 144 selection, adding the 23-year-old to a crowded quarterback room that includes Joe Flacco, Kenny Pickett, fellow rookie Dillon Gabriel and the injured Deshaun Watson.

Five quarterbacks were selected in this year's draft before Sanders, including Gabriel and No. 1 overall pick Cam Ward, who went to the Tennessee Titans.

Sanders — the son of Pro Football Hall of Famer and Colorado coach Deion Sanders — has been among the biggest stories in college football over the past four years, first at Jackson State and then with the Buffaloes. The quarterback's play on the field, and occasionally brash personality on and off it, have made him one of the sport's lightning rods.

Below, The Associated Press examines some of the potential reasons for Sanders' free fall, using the QB's own words, his father's comments, the analysis of pundits and his on-the-field performance.

**Shedeur Sanders: The personality**

**WHAT THE SANDERS SAID:** "You've got to understand, when that last name is on your back, you're going to be attacked and ridiculed by naysayers," Colorado coach Deion Sanders said.

From Shedeur Sanders: "I'm going to just be myself so you either like it or you don't."

**WHAT OTHERS SAID:** The younger Sanders carries himself with supreme confidence — much like his father did when he was a two-sport star in the NFL and Major League Baseball in the 1990s. But some pundits who cover the league (usually using anonymous sources) said Sanders' confidence could annoy NFL personnel, particularly during the interview process at the league's combine. The elder Sanders was occasionally outspoken on social media about his son's talent, taking on critics.

"All of these things began to add up for teams, and I'm not saying that is right that it added up for teams, but it did, clearly, add up for teams. ... This is clearly a way for the NFL and its teams to let him and anyone else after him know — you can't comport yourself in this way moving forward," said Jonathan Jones, an NFL analyst for CBS.

**WHAT SANDERS DID:** The younger Sanders might be brash — he set up a customized room for draft night — but he reportedly maintained a 3.9 GPA at Colorado and was never involved in any off-field incidents that would point to serious character concerns.

**READING BETWEEN THE LINES:** J. Kenyatta Cavil, the interim dean of education and sports studies at Texas Southern University, said the pushback when it came to Sanders was not a surprise.

Cavil said Deion and Shedeur Sanders did a remarkable job of controlling the younger Sanders' career, moving from a private high school to Jackson State to Colorado. That proved to be a problem.

"That's what's unique in this dichotomy, is you have a coach and a son, for a period of time, who could control the space," Cavil said, later adding: "They had this ability to transform spaces that allowed them to be their unique and authentic self, which is not always acceptable in the social structure."

**Shedeur Sanders: On the field**

**WHAT HIS SUPPORTERS SAID:** "This is a guy who's extremely accurate. He's extremely mobile. He has a lot of mental horsepower. He played the game at a high level," said former NFL player and front-office executive Louis Riddick, now an ESPN analyst.

**WHAT OTHERS SAID:** The main criticisms against Sanders' football skills are that he takes too many sacks, isn't overly athletic and doesn't have great arm strength. He had opportunities during the pre-draft process to address those concerns but didn't always take advantage of opportunities to work out for scouts.

"For a player who had a variety of questions, both about the talent level, how he would fit into an NFL system, how he would adjust from his play style in college, but also about the potential culture shock of for the first time playing for someone who is not his father, there were opportunities that Shedeur Sanders could have taken there," NFL Network's Tom Pelissero said. "He seemed to feel he was an elite category where he could choose the few teams he wanted to go to."

**WHAT SANDERS DID:** Sanders had a productive four seasons in college and finished his career with 50 games played in four seasons — two at Jackson State and two at Colorado. He completed more than

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70% of his passes for 14,353 yards and 134 touchdowns with 27 interceptions. He finished eighth in last year's Heisman Trophy voting while teammate Travis Hunter won the award. Hunter was drafted by the Jacksonville Jaguars with the No. 2 overall pick.

**READING BETWEEN THE LINES:** It's not uncommon for a good college quarterback to be overlooked, even with great stats, because of concerns ranging from size to speed to arm strength. Famously, seven-time Super Bowl-winning quarterback Tom Brady was the 199th overall pick out of Michigan in 2000 before embarking on one of the most successful careers in NFL history. But none of those overlooked quarterbacks had transcended the football world the way Shedeur Sanders had during his college career.

**Shedeur Sanders:** In the NFL

**WHAT SHEDEUR SANDERS SAID:** Despite the embarrassing draft free fall — which included a prank call orchestrated by the son of an Atlanta Falcons coach and President Donald Trump weighing in — Sanders will have a chance to prove his worth in the NFL. His first chance is with the Browns, who have added multiple quarterbacks in the offseason in an effort to find a long-term solution.

"I'm truly thankful to have, is the opportunity for people to actually see the real me and not be able to see stuff that could be true or not," Sanders said.

**WHAT OTHERS SAID:** Browns general manager Andrew Berry traded up in the draft to land Sanders after he fell to the fifth round, feeling any possible problems were worth the risk.

"We felt like he was a good, solid prospect at the most important position. We felt like it got to a point where he was probably mispriced relative to the draft. Really, the acquisition cost was pretty light, and it's a guy that we think can outproduce his draft slot.

**READING BETWEEN THE LINES:** Cavil — the Texas Southern interim dean — said he expects the news cycle will move quickly and Sanders will have something of a reprieve until the Browns' training camp begins in the summer. In the meantime, more will come out about the quarterback's draft free fall. What really matters is how he performs from this point forward.

"A year from now, for the rest of his career, whatever success he has or doesn't, people will come back to this point," Cavil said. "It'll be a story of overcoming all these obstacles or somebody that couldn't get it done."

## **Republican-led states keep adding school voucher programs even as critics worry about cost**

By GEOFF MULVIHILL and KIMBERLEE KRUESI Associated Press

State lawmakers across the U.S. are pushing to use more taxpayer dollars to pay for private school tuitions and homeschooling expenses even as they try to figure out how to budget in a time of economic uncertainty.

A \$1 billion-per-year voucher program the Texas Legislature sent to the governor last week and a long-shot push in Congress to expand vouchers nationally, including to states that have rejected them, are focusing attention on the issue.

In states that already have programs to pay private education costs for most students, the expense has quickly gobbled up more of their budgets as revenue growth has slowed or stalled. Besides Texas, Tennessee adopted a program this year, and North Dakota gave serious consideration to one before a veto last week likely ended its prospects this year.

States are required to produce annual spending plans that don't exceed what they bring in. With pandemic-era federal money mostly phased out, voucher opponents fear the programs will come at the expense of other priorities, including public schools.

"Even if they're being funded by separate revenue sources, it can feel like school choice programs and public schools are competing for the same slice of an increasingly smaller pie," said Page Forrest, who analyzes state finances at the nonpartisan think tank Pew.

Scholarship and savings account costs have risen quickly

Until five years ago, the boldest school choice programs were limited to lower-income and special-needs

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students. More recently, scholarships and state-funded savings accounts open to most or all families have been catching on, especially in Republican-controlled states.

This approach costs far more, at least in the short term. That is partly because studies of the efforts in several states have found most of the first students to enroll were already attending private schools, and not receiving taxpayer subsidies at all before the choice programs' launch.

In the coming school year, voucher programs are expected to cost Florida taxpayers almost \$3.9 billion, or about \$1 in every \$13 from the state's general revenue fund. In Arizona, it's nearly 5% of the general budget.

An analysis by The Associated Press found the costs in Iowa, Ohio and Oklahoma are over 3% of state general spending this year, or are projected to be in the coming budget year.

Spending is a smaller portion of the budget in states where the scholarship programs are still ramping up. Those include Arkansas, Indiana, North Carolina, Utah and West Virginia.

Scholarships are catching on in more states

A flood of campaign money from voucher proponents has been a key factor in convincing previously resistant Republican lawmakers to endorse school choice plans, particularly as advocates have called for more school options coming out of the COVID pandemic.

Programs were approved last year in Alabama and Louisiana and this year in Tennessee, where Republican Gov. Bill Lee has said the \$447 million program will be available for the upcoming school year.

A New Hampshire bill raising income limits on an existing program has been moving through the legislature.

In Texas on Thursday, lawmakers sent the governor a bill that would allot more than \$10,000 per year for students in accredited private schools. The cost would be capped at \$1 billion in the 2026-27 school year, which is a little over 1% of the annual state general funding. But by 2030, a legislative analysis found, it could cost \$4.5 billion a year. That could partially be offset by a little over \$800 million in savings, because there would be fewer public school students to subsidize.

The Texas House also approved a nearly \$8 billion boost to the public education system, which advocates say doesn't cover extra expenses due to inflation.

In energy-dependent North Dakota, GOP Gov. Kelly Armstrong vetoed an education savings account program, saying it wouldn't expand options for all students and there were implementation problems. He has since said the concept remains a priority for him.

Erin Oban, an organizer with North Dakotans for Public Schools, said the program's costs and unknowns about the state's financial outlook make it a bad time to start a voucher program.

"I think it would be a very long-term challenge to fund something in the short term you think might be a good idea or that somehow we can afford right now," she said.

Congressional Republicans are looking to extend an assortment of tax cuts passed in President Donald Trump's first term, plus enact new tax cuts for overtime, tips and Social Security benefits. Proponents of the school choice credit will face stiff competition when it comes to getting included in that mix.

Vouchers draw more ire when traditional funding lags

In Ohio, under a budget proposed by House Republicans, vouchers would see a bigger funding increase than public schools starting in July 2026. The plan, which was passed this month, also calls for a way for the state to take back some property tax money already collected by school districts.

Democratic state Rep. Bride Rose Sweeney said she doesn't have a problem with vouchers, so long as public schools are fully funded. But she says the budget plan falls short of that.

It also would continue to increase the amount available for scholarships to private schools, including for the first time making a portion of them available to institutions that operate without any state oversight.

"Ninety percent of Ohio's kids are still in the public schools," Sweeney said. "They are increasing still more into vouchers while still not giving the public schools what they need — even though that's where the bulk of the money is coming from."

Rachel Brady, a mother of four in Wake Forest, North Carolina, was a leader in a successful push last year for lawmakers to fully fund scholarships after one of her children, and thousands of others, were put

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on a waiting list after the initial allocation was exhausted.

Lawmakers should look to cut costs elsewhere if they have to in order to keep the programs going, she said.

North Carolina Gov. Josh Stein — like Arizona's Katie Hobbs, another Democratic governor — has proposed scaling back the scholarships. But there is no indication the GOP-controlled legislatures will pump the brakes in either state.

The budget advanced this month by the North Carolina Senate includes scholarship funding and a smaller raise for public school teachers than Stein proposed.

"This is a great investment in the future of our kids," Brady said. "It's giving them what they need to be successful in life. I can't think of a better way to invest in the future of our state."

## **In first 100 days, Trump struggles to make good on promises to quickly end Ukraine and Gaza wars**

By AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Ahead of his second go-around in the White House, President Donald Trump spoke with certainty about ending Russia's war in Ukraine in the first 24 hours of his new administration and finding lasting peace from the devastating 18-month conflict in Gaza.

But as the Republican president nears the 100th day of his second term, he's struggling to make good on two of his biggest foreign policy campaign promises and is not taking well to suggestions that he's falling short. And after criticizing President Joe Biden during last year's campaign for preventing Israel from carrying out strikes on Iranian nuclear sites, Trump now finds himself giving diplomacy a chance as he tries to curb Tehran's rapidly advancing nuclear program.

"The war has been raging for three years. I just got here, and you say, 'What's taken so long?'" Trump bristled, when asked about the Ukraine war in a Time magazine interview about his first 100 days. As for the Gaza conflict, he insisted the Oct. 7 attack by Hamas in 2023 that triggered the war "would have never happened. Ever. You then say, 'What's taking so long?'"

Measuring a U.S. president by his first 100 days in office is an arbitrary, albeit time-honored, tradition in Washington. And brokering peace deals between intractable warring parties is typically the work of years, not weeks.

But no other president has promised to do as much out of the gate as Trump, who is pursuing a seismic makeover of America's approach to friends and foes during his second turn in the White House.

Trump has moved at dizzying speed to shift the rules-based world order that has formed the basis for global stability and security in the aftermath of World War II.

All sides have scrambled to acclimate as Trump launched a global tariff war and slashed U.S. foreign aid all while talking up the ideas of taking Greenland from NATO ally Denmark and making Canada the 51st state.

But Trump's inability to broker deals in Ukraine and Gaza — at least to date — might be the most demonstrable evidence that his effort to quickly shake up U.S. foreign policy through sheer will could have its limits.

And Trump hasn't obscured his frustration, particularly over the Ukraine war, which he's long dismissed as a waste of U.S. taxpayer money and of lives lost in the conflict.

The president and his team have gone hot and cold about prospects for peace in Ukraine since Trump's Oval Office blowup with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in February.

In that encounter, both Trump and Vice President JD Vance lectured the Ukrainian leader for being insufficiently grateful for U.S. assistance in the fight to repel Russia's invading forces before asking him to leave the White House grounds.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio has warned that the White House is ready to walk away if Ukraine and Russia don't make substantial progress toward a peace deal soon.

And Trump on back-to-back days this past week lambasted Zelenskyy for "prolonging" the "killing field"



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and then Russian President Vladimir Putin for complicating negotiations with "very bad timing" in launching brutal strikes that pummeled Kyiv.

But by Friday, Trump was expressing optimism again after his special envoy Steve Witkoff met in Moscow with Putin. Following the talks, Trump declared that the two sides were "very close to a deal."

Less than 24 hours later, Trump was once again downcast after he met with Zelenskyy on the sidelines of Pope Francis's funeral, expressing doubt in a social media post that Putin was serious about forging a deal.

"It makes me think that maybe he doesn't want to stop the war, he's just tapping me along," Trump said of Putin and Russia's ongoing bombardment of Ukraine.

Trump again expressed frustration with Putin in an exchange with reporters on Sunday evening. "I want him to stop shooting, sit down and sign a deal," Trump said. "We have the confines of a deal, I believe. And I want him to sign it and be done with it."

The Kremlin on Monday declared a ceasefire in Ukraine on May 8-10 as Russia marks Victory Day over Nazi Germany.

White House National Security Council spokesman James Hewitt said Trump remains committed to getting a deal done and is "closer to that objective than at any point during Joe Biden's presidency."

"Within 100 days, President Trump has gotten both Ukraine and Russia to the negotiating table with the aim to bring this horrific war to a peaceful resolution," Hewitt said. "It is no longer a question of if this war will end but when."

Peace in Gaza remains elusive

Trump started his second term with some momentum on ending the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza.

His envoy Witkoff, a fellow New York real estate maverick turned high-stakes diplomat, teamed up with the outgoing Biden Middle East adviser Brett McGurk to get Israeli and Hamas officials to agree to a temporary ceasefire deal that went into effect one day before Trump's inauguration.

On the eve of his return to office, Trump took full credit for what he called an "epic" agreement that would lead to a "lasting peace" in the Middle East.

The temporary ceasefire led to the freeing of 33 hostages held in Gaza and the release of roughly 2,000 Palestinian prisoners held by Israel.

But the truce collapsed in March, and fighting resumed, with the two sides unable to come to an agreement for the return of 59 remaining hostages, more than half of whom Israeli officials believe are dead.

Conditions in Gaza remain bleak. Israel has cut off all aid to the territory and its more than 2 million people. Israel has disputed that there is a shortage of aid in Gaza and says it's entitled to block the assistance because, it claims, Hamas seizes the goods for its own use.

Trump, as he flew to Rome on Friday for the pope's funeral, told reporters that he's pressing Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu "very hard" to get food and medicine into Gaza but dismissed questions about how the Israeli leader is responding to his appeal.

"Well, he knows all about it, OK?" Trump told reporters.

Hewitt, the National Security Council spokesman, pushed back on the notion that Trump has fallen short on his effort to find an endgame to the Gaza conflict, setting the blame squarely on Hamas.

"While we continue to work to secure the release of all remaining hostages, Hamas has chosen violence over peace, and President Trump has ensured that Hamas continues to face the gates of hell until it releases the hostages and disarms," Hewitt said.

Trump's team says the president has racked up more foreign policy wins than any other U.S. president this early in a term.

The White House counts among its early victories invoking a 1798 wartime law, the Alien Enemies Act, to deport Venezuelan migrants it accuses of being gang members, securing the release of at least 46 Americans detained abroad, and carrying out hundreds of military strikes in Yemen against Houthi militants who have been attacking commercial shipping vessels in the Red Sea.

Trump hopeful for Iran nuclear deal breakthrough

The White House this month also launched direct talks with Iran over its nuclear program, a renewed push to solve another of the most delicate foreign policy issues facing the White House and the Middle East.

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Trump says his administration is making progress in its effort to secure a deal with Iran to scupper Tehran's rapidly advancing nuclear program.

Witkoff flew directly from meeting with Putin in Moscow to Muscat, Oman, to take part in talks on Saturday, the third engagement between U.S. and Iranian officials this month.

The U.S. and other world powers in 2015 reached a long-term, comprehensive nuclear agreement that limited Tehran's enrichment of uranium in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions. But Trump unilaterally withdrew the U.S. from the nuclear agreement in 2018, calling it the "worst deal ever."

Since Trump pulled out of the Obama-era deal, Iran has accelerated its production of near weapons-grade uranium.

The president said on Friday that he's open to meeting with Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei or President Masoud Pezeshkian, while also indicating military action — something that U.S. ally Israel has advocated — remains an option.

As Trump increasingly expresses his preference for diplomacy rather than military action, Iran hawks at home are urging him to tread carefully in his hunt for a legacy-defining deal.

"The Iranians would have the talking point that they forced the same person who left the deal many years later, after them resisting maximum pressure, into an equal or worse deal," said Behnam Ben Taleblu, senior director of the Iran program at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies.

But Trump wants a solution, and fast.

"I think a deal is going to be made there," Trump said Sunday "That's going to happen pretty soon."

## **A pregnant woman in Gaza's ruins fears for her baby under Israel's blockade**

By SARAH EL DEEB, MOHAMMED JAHJOUH and LEE KEATH Associated Press

KHAN YOUNIS, Gaza Strip (AP) — Nearly seven months pregnant, Yasmine Siam couldn't sleep, living in a crowded tent camp in Gaza and shaken often by Israeli bombardment. She couldn't find proper food and hadn't eaten meat for more than a month. Weak and losing weight, she saw doctors every day. There was little they could do.

One night this month, pain shot through her. She worried labor was starting but was too terrified of gunfire to leave her tent. Siam waited till daybreak to walk to the nearest mobile clinic. The medics told her to go to Nasser Hospital, miles away.

She had to take a donkey cart, jolted by every bump in the bombed-out roads. Exhausted, the 24-year-old found a wall to lean on for the hourslong wait for a doctor.

An ultrasound showed her baby was fine. Siam had a urinary tract infection and was underweight: 57 kilos (125 pounds), down 6 kilos (13 pounds) from weeks earlier. The doctor prescribed medicine and told her what every other doctor did: Eat better.

"Where do I get the food?" Siam said, out of breath as she spoke to The Associated Press on April 9 after returning to her tent outside the southern city of Khan Younis.

"I am not worried about me. I am worried about my son," she said. "It would be terrible if I lose him."

With Gaza decimated, miscarriages rise

Siam's troubled pregnancy has become the norm in Gaza. Israel's 18-month-old military campaign decimating the territory has made pregnancy and childbirth more dangerous, even fatal, for Palestinian women and their babies.

It has become worse since March 2, when Israel cut off all food, medicine and supplies for Gaza's more than 2 million people.

Meat, fresh fruits and vegetables are practically nonexistent. Clean water is difficult to find. Pregnant women are among the hundreds of thousands who trudge for miles to find new shelters after repeated Israeli evacuation orders. Many live in tents or overcrowded schools amid sewage and garbage.

Up to 20% of Gaza's estimated 55,000 pregnant women are malnourished, and half face high-risk pregnancies, according to the United Nations Population Fund, or UNFPA. In February and March, at least 20%

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of newborns were born prematurely or suffering from complications or malnutrition.

With the population displaced and under bombardment, comprehensive miscarriage and stillbirth figures are impossible to obtain. Records at Khan Younis' Nasser Hospital show miscarriages in January and February were double the same period in 2023.

Dr. Yasmine Shnina, a Doctors Without Borders supervisor of midwives at Nasser Hospital, documented 40 miscarriages a week in recent weeks. She has recorded five women a month dying in childbirth, compared with around two a year before the war.

"We don't need to wait for future impact. The risks are emerging now," she said.

A love story in the tents

For Siam and her family, her pregnancy — after a whirlwind, wartime marriage — was a rare joy.

Driven from Gaza City, they had moved three times before settling in the tent city sprawling across the barren coastal region of Muwasi.

Late last summer, they shared a meal with neighbors. A young man from the tent across the way was smitten.

The next day, Hossam Siam asked for Yasmine's hand in marriage.

She refused initially. "I didn't expect marriage in war," she said. "I wasn't ready to meet someone."

Hossam didn't give up. He took her for a walk by the sea. They told each other about their lives. "I accepted," she said.

On Sept. 15, the groom's family decorated their tent. Her best friends from Gaza City, dispersed around the territory, watched the wedding online.

Within a month, Yasmine Siam was pregnant.

Her family cherished the coming baby. Her mother had grandsons from her two sons but longed for a child from her daughters. Siam's older sister had been trying for 15 years to conceive. Her mother and sister — now back in Gaza City — sent baby essentials.

From the start, Siam struggled to get proper nutrition, relying on canned food.

After a ceasefire began in January, she and Hossam moved to Rafah. On Feb. 28, she had a rare treat: a chicken, shared with her in-laws. It was her last time eating meat.

A week later, Hossam walked for miles searching for chicken. He returned empty-handed.

'Even the basics are impossible'

Israel has leveled much of Gaza with its air and ground campaign, vowing to destroy Hamas after its Oct. 7, 2023, attack on southern Israel. It has killed over 51,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, whose count does not distinguish between civilians and combatants.

In the Oct. 7 attack, militants killed about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducted 251. They still hold 59 hostages after most were released in ceasefire deals.

In Gaza's ruins, being pregnant is a formidable struggle.

It's not just about quantity of food, said Rosalie Bollen, of UNICEF, "it's also about nutritional diversity, the fact that they have been living in very dire, unsanitary conditions, sleeping on the ground, sleeping in the cold and just being stuck in this permanent state of very toxic stress."

Nine of the 14 hospitals providing maternal health services before the war still function, though only partially, according to UNFPA.

Because many medical facilities are dislocated by Israeli military operations or must prioritize critical patients, women often can't get screenings that catch problems early in pregnancy, said Katy Brown, of Doctors Without Borders-Spain.

That leads to complications. A quarter of the nearly 130 births a day in February and March required surgical deliveries, UNFPA says.

"Even the basics are impossible," Brown said.

Under the blockade, over half the medicines for maternal and newborn care have run out, including ones that control bleeding and induce labor, the Health Ministry says. Diapers are scarce. Some women reuse them, turning them inside out, leading to severe skin infections, aid workers say.

Israel says the blockade aims to pressure Hamas into releasing the remaining hostages. Rights groups

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call it a "starvation tactic" endangering the entire population and a potential war crime.

At Nasser Hospital's maternity ward, Dr. Ahmad al-Farra witnessed things go from bad to worse.

Israeli forces raided the hospital in early 2024, claiming it housed Hamas fighters. Incubators in a warehouse were wrecked. The maternity ward was rebuilt into Gaza's largest and best equipped for emergencies.

Since Israel broke the two-month ceasefire on March 18, the hospital has been flooded with wounded.

Up to 15 premature babies at a time need respirators, but the hospital has only two CPAP machines to keep preemies breathing. Some are put on adult respirators, often leading to death, al-Farra said.

Twenty CPAP machines languish outside Gaza, unable to enter because of the blockade, along with 54 ultrasounds, nine incubators and midwifery kits, according to the U.N.

A lack of cleaning supplies makes hygiene nearly impossible. After giving birth, women and newborns weakened by hunger frequently suffer infections causing long-term complications, or even death, said al-Farra.

Yasmine Zakout was rushed to Nasser Hospital in early April after giving birth prematurely to twin girls. One girl died within days, and her sister died last week, both from sepsis.

Before the war, al-Farra said he would maybe see one child a year with necrotizing pneumonia, a severe infection that kills lung tissue.

"In this war, I treated 50 cases," al-Farra said. He removed parts of the lungs in nearly half those babies. At least four died.

Pregnant women are regularly among the wounded.

Khaled Alserr, a surgeon at Nasser Hospital, told of treating a four months pregnant woman after an April 16 strike. Shrapnel had torn through her uterus. The fetus couldn't be saved, he said, and pregnancy will be risky the rest of her life. Two of her children were among 10 children killed in the strike, he said.

The stress of the war

In her sixth month of pregnancy, Siam walked and rode a donkey cart for miles back to a tent in Muwasi after Israel ordered Rafah evacuated.

With food even scarcer, she turned to charity kitchens distributing meals of plain rice or pasta.

Weakened, she fell down a lot. Stress was mounting — the misery of tent life, the separation from her mother, the terror of airstrikes, the fruitless visits to clinics.

"I just wish a doctor would tell me, 'Your weight is good.' I'm always malnourished," she told the AP, almost pleading.

Hours after her scare on April 9, Siam was still in pain. She made her fifth visit to the mobile clinic in two days. They told her to go to her tent and rest.

She started spotting. Her mother-in-law held her up as they walked to a field hospital in the dead of night.

At 3 a.m., the doctors said there was nothing she could do but wait. Her mother arrived from Gaza City.

Eight hours later, the fetus was stillborn. Her mother told her not to look at the baby. Her mother-in-law said he was beautiful.

Her husband took their boy to a grave.

Days later, she told the AP she breaks down when she sees photos of herself pregnant. She can't bear to see anyone and refuses her husband's suggestions to take walks by the sea, where they sealed their marriage.

She wishes she could turn back time, even for just a week.

"I would take him into my heart, hide him and hold on to him."

She plans to try for another baby.

## **Promises made, promises kept? Trump's agenda remains a work in progress after 100 days**

By CHRIS MEGERIAN and CALVIN WOODWARD Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Since President Donald Trump returned to office, every week has been a whirlwind of activity to show Americans that his administration is relentlessly pursuing his promises.



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With a compliant Republican-controlled Congress, Trump has had a free hand to begin overhauling the federal government and upending foreign policy.

As Trump hits his 100th day in office Tuesday, his imprint is everywhere. But will it last?

Very much unsettled is whether the Republican president has run up his scorecard lawfully. Trump has faced lawsuits over his attempts to surge deportations, punish law firms and slash the federal workforce. All of that and more is being adjudicated in courtrooms, meaning much of what he's done could come undone.

Here's a look at where progress on his promises stands:

He promised to beat inflation

"We're going to get those prices down," he told voters.

Prices have come down — before Trump took office and since. Inflation has been falling since a peak of 9.1% in 2022. It was at 3% in January, the month Trump was inaugurated, and 2.4% in March.

But the Federal Reserve has warned that the president's tariff plans will most likely lead to higher prices by taxing foreign imports.

He's cracked down on illegal immigration

Trump has clearly made progress on a signature promise to control the border.

The number of people trying to cross illegally into the United States from Mexico dropped steeply in President Joe Biden's last year, from a high of 249,740 in December 2023 to 47,324 in December 2024. Under Trump, the numbers sank to only 8,346 in February and 7,181 in March.

For all the legal wrangling about Trump's unorthodox and possibly illegal tactics to get immigrants out of the country, it's unclear whether he's matching Biden's aggressive deportation record last year — the numbers are not yet in.

Meanwhile, Immigration and Customs Enforcement is arresting large numbers of people across the country. Many who assert their innocence have been deported without due process.

He promised to slash energy bills

Trump told voters he'll reduce their energy costs by half to three-quarters in 12 to 18 months. That promise comes due next year.

He brought on the tariffs

Trump vowed in the campaign: "I will impose across-the-board tariffs on most foreign-made goods."

He's followed through, big time, though with frequently changing caveats.

Trump began by escalating tariffs on Canada, Mexico and China, ostensibly as punishment for allowing fentanyl into the U.S. Then he announced even more widespread taxes on foreign imports on April 2, part of what he described as "Liberation Day." Trump retreated from parts of that plan, choosing to pursue negotiations instead, but he left in place tariffs on China as high as 145%.

The stock market has whipsawed from the hefty import taxes and the erraticism in their application.

He failed to end a war as promised

At rally after rally last summer, Trump promised peace between Russia and Ukraine merely by winning the election. "Before I even arrive at the Oval Office, shortly after I win the presidency, I will have the horrible war between Russia and Ukraine settled," he told a Detroit conference in August. By then, he'd been making the same vow at least since May. It did not happen.

At times, he framed the promise differently, saying he would end the war in one day. That day has not come.

He promised big tax cuts

Trump has tested the limits of what he can do by decree, but he'll need Congress to achieve his promised tax cuts.

He pledged to eliminate taxes on tips, overtime and Social Security payments, and he said he will make permanent the expiring tax cuts he enacted during his first term.

None of this has happened. And with big tariffs kicking in, the tax burden is on track to get worse before it possibly gets better. Trump is working with Republicans in Congress to push through legislation achieving the tax cuts, but his party has thin majorities.

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He went after pillars of education

Trump's threats to choke off billions in tax dollars to many universities flow from multiple promises in the campaign — to combat antisemitism on campuses, to take on diversity, equity and inclusion programs and to rid campuses of foreign students he considers hostile to American values.

After several other prominent schools signaled their willingness to comply with Trump's demands, Harvard stood firm against the pressure.

In response, Trump has called for withdrawing Harvard's tax-exempt status, has threatened to block it from enrolling foreign students — more than a quarter of its enrollments — and has frozen more than \$2 billion in grants and contracts.

... and pillars of culture

Trump's promised agenda against "woke" policy swept quickly through the government, as DEI programs from the Biden years were halted and references to diversity in federal communications were purged.

At the Pentagon, in particular, a messy revisionism ensued, as thousands of images on webpages and other online content were flagged for removal. An image of the Enola Gay bomber from World War II was flagged for deletion — because of the "gay" — as were materials paying tribute to Black and Navajo war heroes and pioneering women. Most of the targeted material ultimately survived.

An executive order from Trump on "restoring truth and sanity to American history" forbids federal money to Smithsonian programs that promote "improper ideology."

He promised to roll back transgender rights

Trump campaigned against the participation of transgender athletes in sports and against broader moves in society, especially in Democratic-led jurisdictions, to accommodate views that gender is not inherently binary.

As president, he has signed executive orders to ban transgender athletes from girls' and women's teams, and he's asked the Supreme Court to rule against lower courts that have blocked his attempt to remove transgender troops from the military.

He promised to pardon Jan. 6 rioters, and he did

In the campaign, Trump celebrated the Jan. 6 rioters as "patriots" and "hostages" of the justice system and promised, "I will sign their pardons on Day 1." He did exactly that. Roughly 1,500 people, including those who attacked police officers, received pardons.

## **Today in History: April 29, Los Angeles riots after Rodney King verdict**

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Tuesday, April 29, the 119th day of 2025. There are 246 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On April 29, 1992, a jury in Simi Valley, California, acquitted four Los Angeles police officers charged with assault and using excessive force in the videotaped beating of motorist Rodney King; the verdicts were followed by six days of rioting in Los Angeles which destroyed hundreds of businesses and resulted in over 60 deaths.

Also on this date:

In 1916, the Easter Rising in Dublin collapsed as Irish nationalists surrendered to British forces.

In 1945, during World War II, American soldiers liberated the Dachau concentration camp.

In 1991, a powerful tropical cyclone made landfall in Bangladesh, creating a storm surge that resulted in more than 138,000 deaths.

In 1997, the Chemical Weapons Convention, a worldwide treaty banning the use of chemical weapons and mandating the destruction of existing chemical weapons, went into effect.

In 2008, Democratic presidential hopeful Barack Obama denounced his former pastor, the Rev. Jeremiah Wright, for what he termed "divisive and destructive" remarks on race.

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In 2011, Britain's Prince William and Kate Middleton were married in an opulent ceremony at London's Westminster Abbey.

Today's Birthdays. Musician Willie Nelson is 92. Baseball Hall of Famer Luis Aparicio is 91. Conductor Zubin Mehta is 89. Singer Tommy James is 78. Golf Hall of Famer Johnny Miller is 78. Comedian Jerry Seinfeld is 71. Actor Kate Mulgrew is 70. Actor Daniel Day-Lewis is 68. Actor Michelle Pfeiffer is 67. Singer-TV personality Carrie Wilson is 57. Tennis Hall of Famer Andre Agassi is 55. Actor Uma Thurman is 55. Actor Megan Boone is 42. NHL center Jonathan Toews is 37. Pop singer Foxes is 36. Golfer Justin Thomas is 32.