

# Groton Daily Independent

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## Thursday May 1

Senior Menu: Chicken strips, tri-tater, carrots, fruit cocktail, whole wheat bread.  
School Breakfast: Biscuits.  
School Lunch: Orange chicken, rice.  
Girls Golf at Redfield, 10 a.m.  
High School Spring Concert and Awards Night, 7 p.m.  
Emmanuel Lutheran: Nigeria Circle, 2 p.m.

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



## Friday, May 2

Senior Menu: Ham salad sandwich, tomato spoon salad, peaches, cookie.  
School Breakfast: Breakfast cookies.  
School Lunch: Garlic cheese bread, cooked carrots.  
Track at Howard Wood Invitational, 10 a.m.  
Track at Sisseton, 1 p.m.

## Saturday, May 3

Track at Howard Wood, 10 a.m.  
Spring Citywide Rummage Sale

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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.**

## US Economy Slows

The US economy shrank for the first time in three years last quarter, according to new data released yesterday.

The nation's gross domestic product—or the value of all the goods and services it produced—declined at a 0.3% annual rate, short of expectations of 0.4% growth. The contraction, and an accompanying drop in consumer spending, came amid US tariff announcements fueling a surge in imports; those imports are subtracted from GDP. Economists are mixed on whether the second quarter will show a continued slowdown or whether it will rebound as US businesses reduce their imports. The data revealed a healthy pace of growth outside of imports and boosted investment in equipment.

A separate report yesterday from ADP showed private payrolls rising by 62,000 in April, far below the Dow Jones consensus estimate of 120,000. The combined reports caused experts to raise concerns about a potential recession in 2025.

## First Religious Charter School

The US Supreme Court appeared open to green-lighting the country's first religious charter school in oral arguments yesterday. A decision is expected by early July.

St. Isidore is a proposed virtual K-12 Catholic school in Oklahoma. In 2023, it received school board approval to operate as a charter school, applying to receive \$2.7M in state funds. At issue is whether state funding would violate the First Amendment's Establishment Clause, which prohibits states from endorsing a religion. Also at issue is whether barring the school from the charter school program is a violation of the Free Exercise Clause, given that secular schools can apply.

Justice Amy Coney Barrett recused herself from the case without explanation. Chief Justice John Roberts may hold the deciding vote, with other Republican-appointed justices appearing to side with the school, and Democratic-appointed justices siding with the state attorney general.

About 8% of US students—4 million children—are enrolled in charter schools.

## University Student Released

Columbia University student Mohsen Mahdawi was released on bail from ICE custody yesterday. His immigration case remains open, with another hearing scheduled for today.

The 34-year-old US permanent resident, originally from the West Bank, organized pro-Palestinian protests following the Oct. 7 Hamas attacks and subsequent Israel-Hamas war. He was arrested last month at a citizenship interview in Vermont and has since been held in custody. The State Department cites the Immigration and Nationality Act in its efforts to deport him, saying Mahdawi's activities compromise US foreign policy interests. The administration also cites a 2015 FBI investigation in which a gun shop owner accused Mahdawi of antisemitic comments; that investigation has reportedly been closed.

Hundreds of foreign students' visas have been revoked amid a Trump administration crackdown on pro-Palestinian protesters. Mahdawi is among the first to be released on bail, with high-profile detainees Mahmoud Khalil and Rümeyşa Öztürk held in Louisiana.

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## Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Barbra Streisand announces new studio album to be released June 27; will feature collaborations with Sir Paul McCartney, Mariah Carey, Bob Dylan, Ariana Grande, and others.

Renowned sports agent Jeff Sperbeck dies at age 62 after sustaining injuries from falling off a golf cart driven by NFL legend John Elway.

Nominations for the 78th Annual Tony Awards (June 8) to be announced this morning (8:30 am ET, CBS).

## Science & Technology

Brain study reveals human consciousness may depend more on sensory input than previously believed and challenges two leading theories on its origin in the mind; results of seven-year study may inform treatments for incapacitated patients.

Researchers achieve strongest-ever coupling between a qubit and a light particle; advance may allow the readout of information from quantum computers in a few nanoseconds.

Young bats learn to tell the difference between the sounds of various prey at an early age, suggesting the ability is not an ingrained evolutionary trait.

## Business & Markets

US stock markets close mixed (S&P 500 +0.2%, Dow +0.4%, Nasdaq -0.1%) as investors digest a batch of new economic data and earnings reports.

Microsoft shares rise nearly 7% in after-hours trading after beating forecasts, with quarterly revenue rising 13% year-over-year to \$70B, driven by cloud business.

Meta shares rise 5% in after-hours trading after posting stronger-than-expected Q1 results, with quarterly revenue rising 16% year-over-year to \$42B.

Amazon plans to invest \$4B by end of 2026 and add 200 delivery stations across the US as part of its expansion into small towns and underserved areas.

## Politics & World Affairs

Ukraine and the US sign deal giving the US preferential access to Ukraine's rare earth minerals, oil, and gas in exchange for ongoing military support; countries will co-own and manage an investment fund for extraction projects in Ukraine.

Pakistan says it has credible evidence India will strike within 36 hours; statement comes amid heightened tensions following last week's gun attack in Indian-controlled Kashmir.

Diabetes deaths fall to their lowest levels in years, new CDC data finds; in 2021, the condition was the eighth leading cause of death in the US.



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## Groton Daily Independent earns Community Spark Award

City Hall employees were very good in keeping a secret and mystifying Groton Daily Independent Publisher (myself) about an award presented by Heartland Consumers Power District.

I was asked on Monday if I would be available to unload books for the library on Wednesday. Wednesday came and HCPD came in with cameras at City Hall. I thought this did not look normal. I said to Kelly Dybdahl, who is the Heartland Energy Customer Relations Manager, what they were doing. He said they were promoting city halls throughout the Heartland District and he said I needed to stick around.

That was a red flag for me. I didn't want to be on camera. So I ducked out of City Hall through a sidedoor and no one noticed that I left. I went to the pool to do some work. Then Kellie called. She said they dropped off the boxes of books

and the were in a bad spot and needed to be moved.

I thought that something was strange, but I went to City Hall to take care of the "boxes of books." When I arrived, there were no boxes of books. I looked around and said, "Is this entrapment?" Everyone laughed. Yup! I looked across the room and saw Superintendent Joe Schwan there.

As it turned out, the Groton Daily Independent was nominated for the Community Spark Award presented by Heartland Energy for outstanding contributions to the community.

Now granted, I am on the other side of the camera so I have no photos except for this one at lunch at the Jungle Lanes. Pictured are Danielle Kearin, Heartland Energy Communications Specialist; Casey Crabtree, Heartland Energy Director of Economic Development; Douglas Heinrich, Groton City Finance Officer; Kellie Locke, Groton Assistant Finance Officer; April Abeln, Groton Deputy Finance Officer; Ann Hyland, Heartland Chief Communications Officer; Kelly Dybdahl, Heartland Energy Customer Relations Manager; and myself, Paper Paul, Groton Daily Independent. Also at City Hall during the presentation was Groton Area School Superintendent Joe Schwan.





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It was a humbling experience for me. All I can say is that it takes a community to pull this all off. We have so many people that contribute to the GDI - it's your newspaper - I'm just behind the scenes trying to pull it all off on a daily basis. It has been an honor to be part of your community and an honor to accept this award. The Groton Daily Independent was the first publication to receive this award.

There will be a story coming from Heartland Energy, which I'm excited to see! To the Groton Community, Thank You!

Oh yes, I did get a new cap out of the deal! The cap I had been wearing is from the old name of Heartland Consumers Power District. They are now Heartland Energy.



## Gov. Rhoden Appoints Dr. Tonia Warzecha and Greg Von Wald to the Board of Education Standards

PIERRE, S.D. – Today, Governor Larry Rhoden announced the appointment of Dr. Tonia Warzecha and Greg Von Wald to the South Dakota Board of Education Standards.

"Our students are the future of our state, and they deserve the very best education to get into the career of their dreams," said Governor Larry Rhoden. "Dr. Tonia Warzecha and Greg Von Wald will be tremendous additions to the Board of Education Standards, and they will continue to help set our students up for success."

Dr. Tonia Warzecha is an experienced educational leader, spending more than 25 years of her career in education and over a decade in district and building-level leadership roles. She currently serves as Superintendent of the Dakota Valley School District. Prior to this role, Dr. Warzecha was the Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment for the Tea Area School District, overseeing curriculum development, assessment systems, and federal programs. In 2021, she was recognized as South Dakota's Curriculum Leader of the Year. Dr. Warzecha has also served in a leadership role for the Area II Superintendents' Group and serves on several statewide education advisory boards.



**Greg Von Wald  
a GHS Alumni**

"I am deeply honored by Governor Rhoden's appointment to the South Dakota Board of Education Standards," said Dr. Tonia Warzecha. "This is a responsibility that I will approach with a commitment to high-quality education, fairness, and careful stewardship of our students' futures. I look forward to working collaboratively to uphold and strengthen South Dakota standards in a way that serves all learners and communities across our state."

Dr. Warzecha holds a Doctor of Education and Specialist in Educational Administration from the University of South Dakota.

Greg Von Wald is the former President of Mitchell Technical Institute (MTI). He led the college through unprecedented growth, overseeing an enrollment increase of nearly 60%. Prior to his appointment at MTI, he served as CEO and General Manager of Golden West Technologies and Internet Solutions and CEO and owner of a telecommunications company in Aberdeen. Von Wald also has military leadership experience, having served as the head of the Operational Development Team and Faculty Member at the Marine Corps University. He was selected as part of the team that developed and implemented the Marine offensive plan during Operation Desert Storm.

"I would like to thank Governor Rhoden for his appointment to the Board of Education Standards," said Greg Von Wald. "I believe in a well-rounded and challenging education for our children that encourages good character, solid principles, and a high ethical standard – keys to their and our country's future success. I look forward to contributing to this goal."

Von Wald served as the Executive Director of the Skilled Workforce Advocacy Council, where he developed a campaign plan that elevated the importance of technical education in South Dakota.



## Does South Dakota have the highest number of gaming machines per capita?

By Megan Luther  
South Dakota News Watch

**Yes.**

South Dakota has the highest number of gaming machines per capita, tied with Nevada, Oklahoma and Montana, according to a 2025 analysis by WalletHub.

Video lottery provides the most accessible machine gaming in South Dakota, with nearly 1,400 establishments offering 11,000 machines statewide as of December.

South Dakota is the second-most gambling-addicted state in the WalletHub analysis, behind Nevada, according to 20 metrics, from gambling addiction counselors per capita to commercial casino revenue per capita.

The WalletHub analysis provides a full methodology, including data sources, which include the U.S. Census Bureau and American Gaming Association (AGA).

Revenue from commercial casinos in Deadwood was a record \$147.6 million in 2023, up 3.3% from 2022.

According to the AGA, the lobbying arm of the industry, commercial and tribal casinos in South Dakota supported nearly 5,000 jobs and \$623 million in annual economic impact, excluding video lottery.



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**SOUTH DAKOTA  
NEWS WATCH**

Inform. Enlighten. Illuminate.

## **Poll: About half of South Dakotans support Noem's DHS efforts**

**BY STU WHITNEY**

**South Dakota News Watch**

Just over half of South Dakotans approve of the way Kristi Noem is running the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, according to a poll of 500 registered voters co-sponsored by South Dakota News Watch.

Asked about the former South Dakota governor's job performance in President Donald Trump's Cabinet, 51% said they approve and 44% said they disapprove, with 5% not sure.

In the same poll, 58% said they approve of how Gov. Larry Rhoden is doing since he took over the job from Noem in February. U.S. Senate Majority Leader John Thune, who assumed the chamber's top position in January, received a job approval rating of 55%.

The statewide survey, also sponsored by the Chiesman Center for Democracy at the University of South Dakota, polled registered voters regardless of party, unlike the GOP-only 2026 gubernatorial primary poll published April 28. The breakdown was 255 Republicans, 126 Independents and 119 Democrats.

Of Republicans polled, 71% said they approve of Noem's job performance after more than two months in her new role, compared to 44% of Independents and 15% of Democrats.

Jon Schaaff, a political science professor at Northern State University in Aberdeen, called Noem's job performance numbers "tepid" compared to her time as governor, though drawing conclusions between different jobs can be tricky.

Noem's high-water mark in South Dakota came during the COVID-19 pandemic in October 2020, when 57% of voters regardless of party approved of her performance as governor.

### **Bulletproof vests and prison photos**

Noem, a 53-year-old Castlewood native who served as governor from 2019-2025, has become the face of immigration enforcement as the Trump administration carries out its policy of mass deportations.

She has traveled from street raids in New York City to a high-security prison in El Salvador and meetings with Mexican president Claudia Sheinbaum.

Her methods have drawn as much attention as her mission, which involves running a federal network of 22 agencies and 260,000 employees.

She donned a bulletproof vest during an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raid in late January, soon after being confirmed, posting a message about "getting the dirtbags off these streets."

Noem also posted photos of herself at the commands of a C-130 surveillance plane during a visit to U.S. Coast Guard service members in Alaska and standing in front of prisoners at a notorious mega-prison in El Salvador.

"People need to see that image," Noem told Fox News of the photos of her surrounded by rows of tattooed inmates inside their cells. "They need to see that the United States is going to use every tool that we have to make our communities safer, that that is a consequence of someone who is a terrorist."

The Trump administration has acknowledged mistakenly deporting a man named Kilmar Abrego Garcia to that El Salvador prison in March, resulting in a federal judge's order for the U.S. government to facilitate his return, which has not happened.

An Economist/YouGov poll from April 19-22 showed that Americans by a 2-to-1 margin believe that Abrego Garcia should be returned to the United States.

### **Noem's strongest support among male voters**

Noem fared significantly better with male voters in the News Watch poll than female voters, which was also the case when she served as governor.

The poll showed that 57% of male voters approve of Noem's performance as Homeland Security Sec-

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retary, compared to 46% of female respondents.

Geographically, her job approval was strongest among voters in the East River/North region, including Aberdeen, Brookings and Watertown, with 57%. That was followed by West River (53%), East River/South (49%) and Sioux Falls Metro (45%).

Noem's support in the poll was above 50% in every age group except 65-plus, where respondents registered 43% approval and 52% disapproval.

Mason-Dixon Polling and Strategy conducted the poll from April 9-11, using random selections from a telephone-matched state voter registration list that included both landline and cellphone numbers. The margin of error was no more than 4.5 percentage points.

## **Thune job performance at 55% approval**

More than half of South Dakotans support the job performance of longtime Republican statesman Thune as he settles into his new role as majority leader of the U.S. Senate, working closely with the Trump administration.

The poll showed that 55% of respondents approve of the job he's doing, while 35% disapprove and 10% were not sure.

Of Republicans polled, 79% said they approve of Thune's job performance, compared to 40% of Independents and 19% of Democrats.

Thune, elected to the job by his GOP Senate peers last November, has navigated through a formerly fraught relationship with Trump, overseeing confirmations of all the president's Cabinet nominees, sometimes at a cost.

Several of those Cabinet officials have been involved in early controversies, from discussing military plans on an unclassified Signal app chat to encouraging the Republican president to follow through with steep tariffs on trading partners.

"Everybody's got to be rolling in the same direction," Thune said of the upcoming challenge of passing the GOP's budget reconciliation package. "It takes a lot of teamwork."

Thune's support in South Dakota is generally consistent across geographic regions, though slightly lower in East River/South (51%), which includes Mitchell, Yankton and Vermillion.

The poll found that 59% of male voters approve of his job performance, compared to 50% of female voters.

## **Rhoden needs to target 'not sure' voters**

Rhoden became the first South Dakota governor to be sworn in during a legislative session when he took the oath of office at the State Capitol in Pierre on Feb. 8.

He was thrust into a leadership role tied in part to Noem's budget policies and priorities, including a planned prison project in rural Lincoln County that needed final funding in 2025 and was rejected by legislators.

So far, 58% of voters approve of Rhoden's job performance, compared to just 17% who disapprove. That approval number is higher than Noem's last job performance assessment in a News Watch poll, a rating of 52% in May 2024 following an ill-fated book tour. Her disapproval rating was 46%.

Still, the fact that 25% responded to the Rhoden question with "not sure" shows that many South Dakotans are reserving judgment until they see more of what the 66-year-old Union Center native stands for.

"(Noem) and I kept South Dakota strong, safe, and free — and I'm continuing that mission in my administration by cutting property taxes, making targeted investments for public safety and limiting regulations," Rhoden told News Watch.

Though he hails from West River, Sioux Falls Metro was Rhoden's strongest region with 69% approval, followed by East River/North and West River (56%) and East River/South (47%).

Rhoden, without any direct ties to Washington or Trump, has more bipartisan support than Noem or Thune. The poll showed him with 80% approval from Republicans, 39% from Democrats and 38% from Independents.

The governor's strongest age group was 35-49 years old with 64% approval, followed by 50-64 (60%), 65-plus (57%) and 18-34 (47%).

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Julia Hellwege, an associate political science professor at USD and director of the Chiesman Center, said that Rhoden's main challenge is to promote his political brand and policies to address the 25% of voters in the poll who were "not sure" about his performance as governor.

"People will start forming an opinion," she said, noting a separate GOP-only survey where 40% had a neutral view of Rhoden and 13% hadn't heard of him. "Hopefully the number of people who don't recognize the name of the governor will be reduced, not just for his sake but also for the sake of civic education."

*The Associated Press contributed to this story, which was produced by South Dakota News Watch, an independent, nonprofit organization. Read more stories and donate at [sdnewswatch.org](https://sdnewswatch.org) and sign up for an email every few days to get stories as soon as they're published. Contact Stu Whitney at [stu.whitney@sdnewswatch.org](mailto:stu.whitney@sdnewswatch.org).*

## POLL: JOB APPROVAL FOR SD POLITICIANS



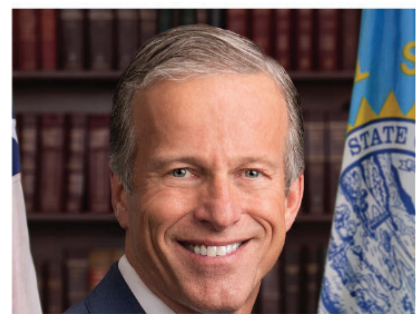
DHS SEC. NOEM

51%



GOV. RHODEN

58%



SEN. THUNE

55%

**Note:** Mason-Dixon polling by SD News Watch and USD's Chiesman Center for Democracy. 500 registered voters polled April 9-11.





## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### South Dakota rises to its highest-ever rank in teacher pay: 46th

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - APRIL 30, 2025 4:10 PM

South Dakota ranks 46th in the nation for average teacher salaries — its highest standing since the National Education Association started ranking states in 1943, according to the South Dakota Education Association.

The state previously reached 47th in the 2019 report for the 2017-18 school year, after South Dakota lawmakers approved a half-cent sales tax increase in 2016. The effort poured millions of dollars into school districts with the intent of raising average teacher salaries.

The state fell to 50th by the 2021 report and ranked 49th in last year's report.

South Dakota saw one of the greatest jumps in standing this year compared to other states, due to a 6% increase in salaries. During the 2022-23 school year, South Dakota's average teacher salary stood at \$53,153. In the 2023-24 school year, the average teacher made \$56,328.

South Dakota Education Association President Loren Paul attributes that to increases in state aid to public education from state lawmakers. Legislators approved a 6% increase in 2022, 7% in 2023 and 4% in 2024. Those infusions were largely due to an influx of federal COVID-19 relief funds into the state budget.

Lawmakers also established a minimum teacher salary for districts and tied teacher compensation requirements to state aid increases during the 2024 legislative session. Both were "strong accountability measures" resulting in "meaningful gains," Paul said in a news release.

Lawmakers approved a 1.25% increase in education funding this legislative session. The slight increase was approved due to lower-than-anticipated revenue and because COVID funding has run out.

Paul warns the slight increase could cause teacher pay to fall further behind inflation. Adjusted for inflation, South Dakota teachers make less than they did a decade ago.

"While we see moving up in rank as good news, we are concerned that lawmakers will take their feet off the gas and salary increases will stall, forcing many teachers to leave the profession because they



**Teacher Stephani Brooks works with a small group of students at Journey Elementary School in Sioux Falls on Dec. 5, 2024.** (Makenzie Huber/

South Dakota Searchlight)

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can't pay their bills," Paul said.

Compared to neighboring states, South Dakota's average teacher pay of \$56,328 remains the lowest this year:

North Dakota: \$58,581.

Minnesota: \$72,430.

Iowa: \$62,399.

Nebraska: \$60,239.

Wyoming: \$63,669.

Montana: \$57,556.

States that rank lower than South Dakota are Louisiana, West Virginia, Missouri, Florida and Mississippi (there are 51 spots in the rankings, due to the inclusion of Washington, D.C.). Mississippi's average teacher salary of \$53,704 is the nation's lowest, according to the report, just a 0.7% increase compared to the previous year's salary.

California reports the highest average salary at \$101,084 — a 6.2% increase from last year. Oklahoma saw the largest percent change in its salaries at 10.5%, increasing to 35th (\$61,330) from 43rd in the rankings.

South Dakota's ranking for average starting salary improved to 25th in the nation, at \$45,530, which is up from 27th in last year's report.

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

## Fate of public land dispute remains unclear as politicians cheer dismissal of ranchers' charges

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - APRIL 30, 2025 2:08 PM

\State and federal officeholders celebrated Wednesday in Washington, D.C., after prosecutors dropped criminal charges against a South Dakota ranch couple accused of using public land without permission or payment.

Meanwhile, basic questions went unanswered.

Will the couple continue to use the land? Will they have to start paying a fee? Or is it their land?

State Rep. Liz May, R-Kyle, was not in D.C., but was given a shoutout by the ranch couple for her advocacy on their behalf. May isn't ready to cheer yet.

"We still don't know if they can even use the land," May said. "Is the case truly over?"

In June, a federal grand jury in South Dakota indicted Charles and Heather Maude, of rural Caputa in the western part of the state. The charge was theft of government property. The couple faced possible prison time and fines.

The indictment said the Maudes "did knowingly steal, purloin, and convert to their own use" national grasslands managed by the U.S. Forest Service, which is part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The land in question, according to the indictment, consisted of 25 acres for cultivation and 25 acres for grazing cattle.

The Maudes have said the prosecution was an overreaction to a property line dispute on land that their family has used for decades.

A federal prosecutor filed for a dismissal of the charges Monday without explanation, and a judge granted the dismissal, following pleas from Republican politicians and officeholders to President Trump's administration.

Some of those officeholders gathered with the Maudes on Wednesday in Washington, D.C., for a press conference that was livestreamed on the internet. Speakers included former South Dakota Governor and



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**South Dakota ranchers Heather and Charles Maude participate in a press conference on April 30, 2025, in Washington, D.C., with their children behind them and their lawyer, Brett Tolman, at right. Visible or partially visible in the background are, from left, U.S. Rep. Harriet Hageman, R-Wyoming; U.S. Sen. Mike Rounds, R-South Dakota, U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem and South Dakota Gov. Larry Rhoden.** (Screenshot from USDA livestream)

current U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem, and several South Dakota politicians: U.S. Sen. Mike Rounds, U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson and Gov. Larry Rhoden. U.S. Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins and U.S. Rep. Harriet Hageman, R-Wyoming, also spoke.

South Dakota Searchlight reached out to the South Dakota lawmakers' offices afterward. They did not know the future status of the federal land in question, or the status of the Maudes' right to use it.

Some of the speakers alleged that the prosecution of the Maudes was politically motivated. The U.S. Department of Agriculture made that claim in a news release Monday,

calling the case "a senseless politically motivated prosecution waged by the Biden administration."

The U.S. Attorney's Office for South Dakota, which brought the charges, did not respond when asked by South Dakota Searchlight. The U.S. attorney for South Dakota, Alison Ramsdell, was appointed during the Biden administration.

Rollins announced Wednesday that the U.S. Department of Agriculture launched a new complaint portal for farmers and ranchers "who have fallen victim to unfair and politically motivated lawfare originating under the Biden administration" to request an investigation.

Rounds highlighted a bill he's working on that would establish a mediation process for land boundary disputes between private landowners and the U.S. Forest Service.

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



## Nationwide donation supports South Dakota Humanities Council after federal funding cut

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - APRIL 30, 2025 12:04 PM

The South Dakota Humanities Council is set to receive at least \$200,000 from a national charitable foundation to keep it afloat after the federal government terminated nearly \$1 million in grant funding awarded to the organization this year.

President Donald Trump issued an executive order in February urging agencies to streamline the federal bureaucracy. The National Endowment for the Humanities, which provides funding to humanities organizations across the country, cited the executive order when it terminated \$65 million in grants to all 56 humanities councils across the country and its territories earlier this month.

New York-based Mellon Foundation pledged Tuesday to provide \$15 million to be divided among all 56 humanities councils. Each council will receive a minimum of \$200,000, though the foundation will donate an extra \$50,000 if the council matches that amount in local fundraising, said South Dakota Humanities Council Executive Director Christina Oey.

The nonprofit provides public education in literacy, civics, the arts and culture.

"It'll allow us to continue going longer than we anticipated," Oey said of the donation. "It was that light of hope we needed."

The money will help keep the council's programs running, including the annual Festival of Books and the Young Readers program. The Young Readers program distributes 15,000 copies of a book to South Dakota third graders each year.

The funding will help pay for shipping of the Young Readers books to schools, and allow this year's Festival of Books to continue. The festival is planned for Sept. 26-28 in Spearfish.

But the donation is just a fifth of what was lost. The federal funding made up 73% of the council's overall budget, Oey said.

Mellon Foundation President Elizabeth Alexander said in a news release Tuesday that although the donation won't cover all the lost funding, she hopes it'll help councils get by.

"At stake are both the operational integrity of organizations like museums, libraries, historical societies in every single state, as well as the mechanisms to participate in the cultural dynamism and exchange that is a fundamental part of American civic life," Alexander said.

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



**A child reads a book at the South Dakota Humanities Council Every Reader event in Rapid City in 2017.** (Courtesy of

South Dakota Humanities Council)

## Three U.S. Senate Republicans break with Trump on tariffs but rebuke fails

**South Dakota's Thune and Rounds vote against resolution to terminate president's import taxes**

**BY: ASHLEY MURRAY - APRIL 30, 2025 9:39 PM**

WASHINGTON — Senate Republicans defended President Donald Trump's emergency tariffs Wednesday, blocking a largely symbolic measure to terminate the president's import taxes that have shocked the economy.

The resolution failed in a tied 49-49 vote Wednesday evening. Vice President J.D. Vance broke the tie on a subsequent procedural vote to stop the measure from receiving another chance on the floor.

Republicans Susan Collins of Maine, Lisa Murkowski of Alaska and Rand Paul of Kentucky were the only three to break with their party in support of reining in Trump's use of emergency powers to

trigger tariffs on nearly every other nation across the globe.

Paul was the lone Republican co-sponsor on the Senate resolution, which was likely to go nowhere under House Republican leadership.

Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse, a Rhode Island Democrat, and Kentucky Republican Mitch McConnell missed the vote. Earlier in April McConnell joined Collins and Murkowski in voting to halt Trump's tariffs on Canada.

### **'Devastating' economic news**

The vote came hours after the release of figures showing the U.S. economy shrank during the first quarter of 2025.

"The devastating economic news we got this morning should be enough for senators to vote yes tonight. The only winner today is China, which is scooping up markets and allies Donald Trump has left in the dust," Democratic Sen. Ron Wyden of Oregon said on the floor just before the vote.

Wyden and Paul co-sponsored the resolution that aimed to block Trump's "Liberation Day" tariffs announced April 2 that caused market upheaval.



**Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., speaks during a nomination hearing with the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs on Capitol Hill on April 03, 2025, in Washington, D.C. Paul was the sole GOP co-sponsor on Wednesday, April 30, 2025, of a resolution to terminate President Donald Trump's tariffs.** (Photo by Anna Moneymaker/Getty Images)

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The president's shockingly high taxes on goods imported from some of the nation's closest trading partners — 20% on the European Union, 24% on Japan, 46% on Vietnam — rocked global markets, erasing trillions in wealth. Trump triggered the levies by declaring foreign trade as a national emergency.

Trump announced a 90-day pause on the tariffs starting April 9, but left in place a 10% universal import tax on nearly every country across the globe — excluding China.

The White House is now in an all-out trade war with the world's no. 2 economy, raising tariffs on Chinese goods to 145%. China stopped at a 125% levy on American goods.

## Kaine warning

Democratic Sen. Tim Kaine, who also co-sponsored the resolution, told reporters on a press call Wednesday that he's willing to "link arms" with Trump to fight what the U.S. views as China's unfair trade practices, but he said Trump needs to "wake up and smell the coffee" on the damage to relationships with trading partners.

"When you put tariffs on allies what you do is push away the very nations you could be joining with to counter China," the Virginia Democrat said.

Kaine also blamed Trump's trade policy for Wednesday's negative economic headlines.

The Bureau of Economic Analysis report showed the U.S. gross domestic product decreased at an annual rate of 0.3% in the first three months of this year.

"It's the wrong economic strategy to turn the strongest economy in the world to one that has red flashing lights on it," Kaine said.

Kaine said he believed some House Republicans would support the resolution but that "leadership has bottled it up."

## Trump blames Biden

Trump's administration officials and his allies in Congress continue to defend the tariffs. The president himself blames former President Joe Biden for the economic "hangover," as he described it in his Truth Social post Wednesday.

"This will take a while, has NOTHING TO DO WITH TARIFFS, only that he left us with bad numbers, but when the boom begins, it will be like no other. BE PATIENT!!!," Trump wrote.

Senate Majority Leader John Thune similarly told reporters on Capitol Hill Wednesday that economic reports are "short term."

"They measure it sort of day by day, month by month, quarter by quarter. And as I said yesterday, I think that with the tariff issue that they're playing the long game, but we'll see," the South Dakota Republican said.

Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent defended Trump's import taxes Tuesday from the White House briefing room, but also announced the administration's reprieve on 25% taxes on foreign cars and auto parts.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer slammed the vote Wednesday night.

"Leader Thune and Senate Republicans tonight voted to keep the Trump tariff-tax in place. They own the Trump tariffs and higher costs on America's middle-class families," the New York Democrat said in a statement.

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## U.S. House GOP advances Trump mass deportations plan with huge funding boosts

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA, ASHLEY MURRAY, JACOB FISCHLER AND SHAUNEEN MIRANDA -  
APRIL 30, 2025 6:19 PM



**A U.S. Border Patrol official vehicle is shown parked near the border.** (Getty Images)

WASHINGTON — U.S. House Judiciary Republicans Wednesday worked in committee on a portion of a major legislative package that would help fund President Donald Trump's plans to conduct mass deportations of people living in the United States without permanent legal status.

The Judiciary panel's \$81 billion share of the "one, big beautiful" bill the president has requested of Congress would provide \$45 billion for immigration detention centers, \$8 billion to hire thousands of immigration enforcement officers and more than \$14 billion for deportations, among other things.

The border security and immigration funds are part of a massive package that wraps together White House priorities including tax cuts and defense spending

boosts. Republicans are pushing the deal through using a special procedure known as reconciliation that will allow the Senate GOP to skirt its usual 60-vote threshold when that chamber acts.

House Republicans returning from a two-week recess kicked off their work on reconciliation Tuesday, approving three of 11 bills out of committees on Armed Services, Education and Workforce and Homeland Security.

On Wednesday, lawmakers continued work on the various sections of the reconciliation bill with mark-ups — which means a bill is debated and potentially amended or rewritten — in the Financial Services, Judiciary, Transportation and Infrastructure and Oversight and Government Reform committees.

House Speaker Mike Johnson of Louisiana said Republicans will spend the rest of this week and next debating the 11 separate bills in committees. Committees when they finish their measures will send them to the House Budget Committee, which is expected to bundle them together prior to a floor vote.

The Judiciary panel's 116-page bill vastly overhauls U.S. asylum laws. It would, for example, create a fee structure for asylum seekers that would set a minimum cost for an application at no less than \$1,000. Applications now are free.

"These and other resources and fees in this reconciliation bill will ensure the Trump administration has the adequate resources to enforce the immigration laws in a fiscally responsible way," GOP Chair Jim Jordan of Ohio said.

The bill would establish a \$1,000 fee for immigrants granted temporary protected status, which would mean they would have work authorizations and deportation protections.

It would also require sponsors to pay \$3,500 to take in an unaccompanied minor who crosses the border

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without a legal status. Typically, unaccompanied minors are released to sponsors who are family members living in the United States.

The bill would also require immigrants without permanent legal status to pay a \$550 fee for work permits every six months.

The top Democrat on the panel, Rep. Jamie Raskin of Maryland, slammed the bill as targeting immigrants. "Every day, this administration uses immigration enforcement as a template to erode constitutional rights and liberties," he said.

A final committee vote was expected Wednesday night.

## 'A giveaway to ICE'

The Judiciary bill directs half of the fees collected from asylum seekers to go toward the agency that handles U.S. immigration courts, but Democrats criticized the provisions as creating a barrier for asylum seekers.

"The so-called immigration fees that are in this bill are really fines and nothing but a cruel attempt to make immigrating to this country impossible," Washington Democratic Rep. Pramila Jayapal said.

Democratic Rep. Chuy Garcia of Illinois, said the bill would not only "gut asylum" but would significantly increase funding for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention.

Funding for ICE detention this fiscal year is roughly \$3.4 billion, but the Judiciary bill would sharply increase that to \$45 billion.

Garcia called the increase a "a giveaway to ICE, a rogue agency that's terrorizing communities and clamping (down) on civil liberties and the Constitution itself, because they've been directed to do so by this president."

House Republicans have also included language that would move the Federal Trade Commission into the Department of Justice's antitrust division, a move Democrats argued would kneecap the FTC's regulatory authority.

"You're trying to shutter the FTC, the Federal Trade Commission, making it harder for us to enforce our antitrust laws," Democratic Rep. Becca Balint of Vermont said.

## Consumer protections to take a hit

Lawmakers on the House Committee on Financial Services met in a lengthy, and at times tense, session to finalize legislation to cut "no less than" \$1 billion from government programs and services under the panel's jurisdiction, according to the budget resolution Congress approved in April.

Funds in the crosshairs include those previously authorized for the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, and grants provided under the Biden administration-era Inflation Reduction Act for homeowners to improve energy efficiency.

Chair French Hill said the committee "will do its part to reduce the deficit and decrease direct spending, so that Congress can enact pro-growth tax policies."

"And remember, today, we are here with one purpose, to do our part to put our nation back on a responsible fiscal trajectory," the Arkansas Republican said.

Democrats introduced dozens of amendments during the hourslong session to block cuts to community block grants and programs protecting consumers, including veterans, from illegal credit and lending practices.

Ranking member Maxine Waters said committee Republicans' plans to cut the CFPB by 70% "is ridiculous."

"The bureau has saved American consumers \$21 billion by returning to them funds that big banks and predatory lenders swindled out of them," said Waters, a California Democrat.

Congress created the CFPB in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, when subprime mortgage lending cascaded into bank failures and home and job losses.

Republicans opposed amendment after amendment.

Rep. María Salazar of Florida tossed a copy of one of Waters' lengthy amendments straight into a trash

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can after a staffer handed it to her. Michigan's Rep. Bill Huizenga held up proceedings for several minutes when he accused Waters of breaking the rules by not distributing enough paper copies of her amendment.

"We cannot allow our government to continue spending money like there are no consequences," GOP Rep. Mike Flood of Nebraska said in response to several Democratic amendments.

A final committee vote was expected Wednesday night.

## Transportation section adds fees on electric vehicles

The House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee also approved, by a party line 36-30 vote, reconciliation instructions that would cut \$10 billion from the federal deficit while boosting spending for the U.S. Coast Guard and the air traffic control system.

Like other portions of the larger reconciliation package, the transportation committee's instructions would add funding for national security and border enforcement, through the Coast Guard funding, while cutting money from programs favored by Democrats, including climate programs and any spending that could be construed as race-conscious.

The bill would provide \$21.2 billion for the Coast Guard and \$12.5 billion for air traffic control systems. It would raise money through a \$250 annual fee on electric vehicles and a \$100 annual fee on hybrids, while also cutting \$4.6 billion from climate programs created in Democrats' 2022 reconciliation package.

Chairman Sam Graves, a Missouri Republican, said the measure included priorities for members of both parties, as well as business and labor interests.

"We all want to invest in our Coast Guard," he said. "We all want to rebuild our air traffic control system and finally address the broken Highway Trust Fund. We have held countless hearings on all of these topics, both recently and, frankly, for years. And now members have the opportunity to actually act."

Democrats on the panel complained that the reconciliation package was a partisan exercise and a departure from the panel's normally congenial approach to business. They introduced dozens of amendments over the daylong committee meeting seeking to add funding for various programs. None were adopted.

"The larger Republican reconciliation package will add more than \$15 trillion in new debt, gives away \$7 trillion in deficit-financed tax cuts to the wealthy and slashes access to health care and food assistance for families," ranking Democrat Rick Larsen of Washington said. "Given that, I think we're going to have to vote no on the bill before us."

The vehicle fees, which would be deposited into the Highway Trust Fund that sends highway and transit money to states, created a partisan divide Wednesday.

Federal gas taxes provide the lion's share of deposits to the fund and Republicans argued that, because drivers of electric vehicles pay no gas taxes and hybrid drivers pay less than those who drive gas-powered cars, the provision would make the contributions fairer.

Republicans scrapped a proposed \$20 annual fee on gas-powered cars, which Graves said was meant to "start a conversation" on the solvency of the Highway Trust Fund. But the provision "became a political distraction that no longer centered around seriously addressing the problem," he said.

Pennsylvania Democrat Chris Deluzio criticized the vehicle fees, noting Republicans were pursuing additional revenue opportunities to offset losses from tax cuts.

"I don't know when you guys became the tax-and-spend liberals," Deluzio told his Republican colleagues. "But I guess the taxing of car owners so you can pay for tax giveaways to billionaires is your new strategy. Good luck with that."

## Federal employee benefits targeted

The House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform voted nearly along party lines, 22-21, to send its portion of the reconciliation package to the Budget Committee, with Ohio Republican Rep. Mike Turner joining Democrats in opposition.

Turner was the first GOP lawmaker to cast a committee vote against reconciliation instructions this year. The legislation hits at federal employee benefits and comes as the Trump administration continues to



overhaul the federal workforce.

Part of the bill would raise federal employees' required retirement contribution to a rate of 4.4% of their salary and eliminate an additional retirement annuity payment for federal employees who retire before the age of 62, while cutting more than \$50 billion from the federal deficit.

At his committee's markup, Chairman James Comer said the legislation "advances important budgetary reforms that will save taxpayers money."

The Kentucky Republican acknowledged that the chief investigative committee in the U.S. House has "very limited jurisdiction to help reduce the federal budget deficit," noting that the panel is "empowered to pursue civil service reforms, including federal employee benefits and reining in the influence of partisan and unaccountable government employee unions."

But Democrats on the panel blasted the committee's portion of the reconciliation package, saying the bill chips away at federal employees' protections.

Rep. Stephen Lynch, the top Democrat on the panel, said congressional Republicans instructed the panel to target the federal workforce with roughly \$50 billion in funding cuts "regardless of the impact on hard-working, loyal federal employees and their critical services that they provide to the American people."

The Massachusetts Democrat said the bill "threatens to further undermine the federal workforce by reducing the take-home pay, the benefits and workforce protections of 2.4 million federal employees, most of whom are middle-class Americans and a third of whom are military veterans."

Ohio's Turner, who voted against the legislation because of the provision reducing pension benefits, said he supported the overall reconciliation package and hoped the pension measure would be stripped before a floor vote.

Turner said "making changes to pension retirement benefits in the middle of someone's employment is wrong."

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## Deportations, tariffs and federal workforce cuts define Trump's first 100 days

**BY: ASHLEY MURRAY, JACOB FISCHLER, JENNIFER SHUTT AND SHAUNEEN MIRANDA -  
APRIL 30, 2025 2:54 PM**

WASHINGTON — Tuesday marked the 100th day of President Donald Trump's second term, a period filled almost daily with executive orders seeking to expand presidential power, court challenges to block those orders and economic anxiety that undermines his promised prosperity.

Trump has taken decisive actions that have polarized the electorate. He's used obscure authorities to increase deportations, upended longstanding trade policy with record-high tariffs, made drastic cuts to the federal workforce and ordered the closure of the Education Department.

Those moves have garnered mixed results and led to legal challenges.

The approach to immigration enforcement has yielded lower numbers of unauthorized border crossings compared to last year. But the immigration crackdown has barreled the country toward a constitutional crisis through various clashes with the judiciary branch.

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Those nearing retirement have watched their savings shrink as Trump's blunt application of tariffs, which he promises will replace income taxes, roils markets. Administration officials have promised the short-term tariff pain will benefit the country in the long term.

And White House advisor and top campaign donor Elon Musk's efforts at government efficiency have resulted in eliminations of wide swaths of government jobs. That includes about half of the Education Department workforce so far, though Trump has signed an executive order to eliminate the department.

The controversial moves appear unpopular, as Americans delivered record low approval ratings for a president so early in his term.

Polls spearheaded by Fox News, NPR, Gallup and numerous others yield overall disapproval of Trump's job performance.



**Demonstrators holds signs as a motorist passes with flags supporting President Donald Trump during an April 5, 2025, protest in Columbia, South Carolina. Protestors organized nationwide demonstrations against Trump administration policies and Elon Musk's U.S. DOGE Service.** (Photo by Sean Rayford/Getty Images)

## Deportation push tests legal boundaries

Immigration was Trump's signature issue on the campaign trail and his first 100 days were marked by a crackdown carried out against people with a range of immigration statuses and at least three U.S. citizen children. The aggressive push has led to clashes with the judiciary branch.

A burst of Inauguration Day executive orders Trump signed upon his return to office included some hardline immigration policies he'd promised.

On day one, he declared a national emergency at the U.S.-Mexico border that enabled his deployment two days later of 1,500 troops to help border enforcement.

He sought to end birthright citizenship and ended several forms of legal immigration, including humanitarian parole for people from certain countries, and suspended refugee resettlement services.

District courts blocked the birthright citizenship and refugee resettlement measures and an appeals court has upheld those interpretations. The U.S. Supreme Court will hear arguments in May on birthright citizenship.

Trump's record on immigration is a clear example of his desire to expand executive power, said Ahilan Arulanantham, a co-director of the Center for Immigration Law and Policy at the University of California Los Angeles School of Law.

"It's an attempt to expand the government's powers far beyond anything that we have seen before in this realm," he said.

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## Unprecedented authorities

The administration has taken a series of actions considered nearly unprecedented to conduct mass deportations.

On March 8, immigration authorities detained Mahmoud Khalil, a lawful permanent resident who helped organize Palestinian protests at Columbia University.

Authorities never accused Khalil of committing a crime, but sought to revoke his green card under a Cold War-era provision that allows the secretary of State to remove lawful permanent residents if the secretary deems their presence has "potentially serious adverse foreign policy consequences."

Similar arrests followed at universities across the country.

In mid-March, Trump invoked the Alien Enemies Act of 1798 to deport two planeloads of people his administration said belonged to the Venezuelan gang Tren de Aragua.

It was only the fourth time the law was invoked and the first outside of wartime. The first flights left U.S. soil en route to a mega-prison in El Salvador on Saturday, March 15, amid a hearing on the legality of using the law in peacetime.

When a federal judge entered an oral order to turn the flights around, the administration refused, arguing the oral order was not valid. The administration also ignored a subsequent written order demanding the return of the flights, later arguing the flights were outside U.S. airspace at that time and impossible to order returned.

Administration officials mocked the court order on social media.

The Supreme Court on April 7 allowed for the use of the Alien Enemies Act to deport suspected gang members of Tren de Aragua. However, the justices unanimously agreed that those removed under the wartime law needed to have due process and have a hearing to challenge their removal.

## Abrego Garcia

A third March 15 flight carried a man who was mistakenly deported in an episode that has gained a national spotlight.

Maryland resident Kilmar Abrego Garcia, a native of El Salvador, had a final order of removal, but was granted deportation protections by an immigration judge because of the threat he would be harmed by gangs if he were returned to his home country. Despite the protective order, he was deported to the notorious Centro de Confinamiento del Terrorismo, or CECOT prison.

After his family sued over his deportation, the administration admitted he'd been removed through an "administrative error," but stood by its decision.

The administration argued it had no power to compel the El Salvador government to release Abrego Garcia, despite a possibly illegal \$6 million agreement with the country to detain the roughly 300 men.

A Maryland federal court and an appeals court ruled the administration must repatriate Abrego Garcia, whose wife and 5-year-old son are U.S. citizens, and the Supreme Court unanimously ruled that the Trump administration must "facilitate" his return, but stopped short of requiring it.

The administration has done little to indicate it is complying with that order, earning a rebuke from a conservative judge on the 4th Circuit Court of Appeals.

"The Supreme Court's decision does not ... allow the government to do essentially nothing," Circuit Court Judge J. Harvie Wilkinson III wrote. "Facilitate' is an active verb. It requires that steps be taken as the Supreme Court has made perfectly clear."

The administration's relationship with the courts — delaying compliance with orders and showing a clear distaste for doing so — has led to the brink of a constitutional crisis, Arulanantham said.

"They're playing footsy with disregarding court orders," he said. "On the one hand, they're not just complying. If they were complying, Abrego Garcia would be here now."

But the administration has also not flagrantly refused to comply, Arulanantham added. "They're sort of testing the bounds."



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## Tariffs prompted market drop

Trump's first 100 days spiraled into economic uncertainty as he ramped up tariffs on allies and trading partners. In early April, the president declared foreign trade a national emergency and shocked economies around the world with costly import taxes.

Following a week of market upheaval, Trump paused for 90 days what he had billed as "reciprocal" tariffs and left a universal 10% levy on nearly all countries, except China, which received a bruising 125%.

Some products, including pharmaceuticals, semiconductors, lumber and copper, remain exempt for now, though the administration is eyeing the possibilities of tariffs on those goods.

The administration now contends it will strike trade deals with some 90 foreign governments over the pause, set to expire in July.

Meanwhile, an all-out trade war rages with China after Trump hiked tariffs on the world's no. 2 economy even further to 145%. China responded with 125% tariffs on U.S. goods. The two economies share a massive trading relationship, both in the top three for each other's imports and exports.

## 'Chaotic' strategy

Inu Manak, fellow for trade policy at the Council on Foreign Relations, summed up Trump's first 100 days as "chaotic."

"We haven't seen anything like this in our U.S. history in terms of how trade policy is being handled. It's very ad hoc," Manak said.

"U.S. businesses can't figure out what to do. And even for the large companies, it's hard for them to know some of the long-term trajectories of where this was going to go," Manak said.

Shortly after his second term began, Trump declared a national emergency over illicit fentanyl entering the U.S. — an unprecedented move to trigger import taxes — and began escalating tariffs on Chinese goods, as well as up to 25% on certain products crossing the borders from Canada and Mexico.

Trump hiked existing tariffs on steel and aluminum in mid-March under trade provisions meant to protect domestic production and national security, followed by 25% levies on foreign cars and auto parts — though Trump signed two executive orders Tuesday to grant some tariff relief to carmakers.

The import taxes have alarmed investors, small businesses and American consumers following the 2024 presidential campaign when Trump made lowering prices a major tenet of his platform.

The latest University of Michigan survey of consumers — a staple indicator for economists — reported consumer outlook on personal finances and business conditions took a nosedive in April. Expectations dropped 32% since January, the largest three-month percentage decline since the 1990 recession, according to the analysis.

Manak said Trump's tariffs are "really at odds with" with the administration's objectives of helping U.S. manufacturers and cutting costs for Americans.

"The U.S. now has the highest tariff rates in the world," she said. "That's going to hurt both consuming industries that import products to make things, and then consumers as well. We're starting to see notifications coming out on layoffs, and some small businesses considering closing up shop already. And the tariffs haven't been in place for that long."

Rhett Buttle, of Small Business for America's Future, said the policies are "causing real damage in terms of not just planning, but in terms of day-to-day operations."

Buttle, a senior advisor for the advocacy group that claims 85,000 small business members, said even if Trump begins to strike deals with other countries, entrepreneurs will likely be on edge for months to come.

"It's that uncertainty that makes business owners not want to hire or not want to grow," Buttle said. "So it's like, 'Okay, we got through this mess, but why would I hire a person if I don't know if I'm gonna wake up in two weeks and there's gonna be another announcement?'"

## Support dropping

Trillions were erased from the U.S. stock market after "Liberation Day" — the White House's term for

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the start of its global tariff policy. The S&P 500 index, which tracks the performance of the 500 largest U.S. companies, is overall down 8.5% since Trump's inauguration, according to The Wall Street Journal's analysis.

Numerous recent polls showed flagging support for Trump's economic policies.

In a poll released Monday, Gallup found 89% of Americans believe tariffs will result in increasing prices. And a majority of Americans are concerned about an economic recession and increasing costs of groceries and other goods, according to an Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research survey between April 17 and April 22.

The Pew Research Center similarly found a growing gloomy outlook among U.S. adults from April 7 to April 13. Results showed a majority of Americans — 59% across race, age and income levels — disapproved of Trump's approach to tariffs. But when broken down by party, the survey showed a majority of Democrats disapprove while the majority of Republicans approve of the tariff policy.

American households are poised to lose up to \$2,600 annually if tariffs remain in place and U.S. fiscal policy doesn't change, according to the Yale Budget Lab. Analyses show low-income households will be disproportionately affected.

"If these tariffs stay in place, some folks are going to benefit, but a lot of people are going to get hurt," Manak said.

The White House did not respond to a request for comment.

## Government spending

Elon Musk, accompanied by U.S. President Donald Trump (R), and his son X Musk, speaks during an executive order signing in the Oval Office at the White House on February 11, 2025 in Washington, DC. Trump is to sign an executive order implementing the Department of Government Efficiency's (DOGE) "workforce optimization initiative," which, according to Trump, will encourage agencies to limit hiring and reduce the size of the federal government. (Photo by Andrew Harnik/Getty Images).jpeg

Elon Musk, accompanied by his son X Musk and Trump, speaks during an executive order signing in the Oval Office on February 11, 2025. (Photo by Andrew Harnik/Getty Images)

Trump began his second term with a flurry of action on government spending, challenging the balance of power between the president and Congress.

Efforts to unilaterally cancel funding already approved by lawmakers, who hold the authority to spend federal dollars under the Constitution, led to confusion and frustration from both Democrats and Republicans, especially after the U.S. DOGE Service froze allocations on programs that have long elicited bipartisan support.

Many of the Trump administration's efforts to roll back appropriations are subject to injunctions from federal courts, blocking the cuts from moving forward while the lawsuits advance through the judicial system.

Kevin Kosar, senior fellow at the conservative-leaning American Enterprise Institute, said Trump's actions on spending so far have sought to expand the bounds of presidential authority.

"We've never seen a president in modern times who's been this aggressive in trying to seize control of the power of the purse," he said. "To just say, 'I'm not going to fund this agency, like USAID, despite money being appropriated for it. And we're going to walk over and take their plaque off their wall and lock their doors.' This is new."

Many of Trump's actions so far indicate to Kosar that the administration expects a change to the balance of power following next year's midterm elections, when the president's party historically loses control of at least one chamber of Congress.

"It feels to me that the first 100 days are in large part predicated on an assumption that they may only have two years of unified Republican control of the House of Representatives, the Senate and the presidency," he said. "We know the margins in the House are quite narrow, and the heavy use of executive actions and the simple defunding of various government contracts and agencies all through executive action, just tell me that the administration feels like they have to get everything done as fast as they pos-

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sibly can, because the time is short."

Kosar said he's watching to see if Trump works with Republicans in Congress, while they still have unified control, to codify his executive orders into law — something he didn't do with many of the unilateral actions he took during his first term.

"He just did executive actions, which, of course, (President Joe) Biden just undid," he said. "And I'm just wondering: Are we going to see this movie all over again? Or is he going to actually partner with Congress on these various policy matters and pass statutes so that they stick?"

Zachary Peskowitz, associate professor of political science at Emory University, said Trump has been much more "assertive" during the last 100 days than during the first few months of 2017.

## DOGE 'winding down'

U.S. DOGE Service and Musk hit the ground running, though their actions have fallen short of the goals he set, and appear to be sunsetting with the billionaire turning his attention back toward his businesses.

"I think the big bang is winding down. They did a lot of things early on. It's not clear how many of them are going to stick, what the consequences are," Peskowitz said. "And I think, big picture, in terms of federal spending, the amounts of money that may have been saved or not are pretty small."

Democrats in Congress released a tracker Tuesday listing which accounts the Trump administration has frozen or canceled to the tune of more than \$430 billion.

But Trump has just gotten started.

The administration plans to submit its first budget request to Congress in the coming days, a step that's typically taken in early February, though it happens a couple months behind schedule during a president's first year.

That massive tax-and-spending proposal will begin the classic tug-of-war between Congress, which will draft the dozen annual appropriations bills, and Trump, who has shown a willingness to act unilaterally when he doesn't get his way.

Trump and lawmakers must agree to some sort of government funding bill before the start of the fiscal year on Oct. 1, otherwise a partial government shutdown would begin. And unlike the reconciliation package that Republicans can enact all on their own, funding bills require some Democratic support to move past the Senate's 60-vote cloture threshold.

## Eliminating the Education Department

Researchers and advocates predicted even more changes to the federal role in education, underscoring anti-diversity, equity and inclusion efforts and a continued ideological battle with higher education that have marked Trump's approach to education policy in his first 100 days.

In a torrent of education-related decisions, Trump and his administration have tried to dismantle the Education Department via an executive order, slashed more than 1,300 employees at the department, threatened to revoke funds for schools that use DEI practices and cracked down on "woke" higher education.

The Trump administration has taken drastic steps to revoke federal funding for a number of elite universities in an attempt to make the institutions align more with them ideologically.

Rachel Perera, a governance studies fellow at the Brown Center on Education Policy at the Brookings Institution, cited "brazen lawlessness" when reflecting on Trump's approach to higher education in his second term.

"The ways that they're trying to withhold funding from universities are very clearly in violation of federal law and the processes mandated by civil rights law in terms of ensuring that institutions are offered due process in assessing whether violations have taken place," Perera said. "There's not even a pretense of pretending to investigate some of these institutions before taking really dramatic action."

Whether the administration's approach continues or not depends on court action, she added.

"I think what the next three years might look like is really going to depend on how some of these lawsuits play out," Perera said, referencing some of the major legal battles involving the Trump administration.



Wil Del Pilar, senior vice president at the nonprofit policy and advocacy group EdTrust, said “much of what this administration has done has been overreach.” He pointed to the Education Department’s letter threatening to yank federal funds for schools that use race-conscious practices across aspects of student life as one example.

Del Pilar, who was previously deputy secretary of postsecondary and higher education for the state of Pennsylvania, said the administration is “going to take any opportunity to grab at power that advances their ideology.”

Meanwhile, Perera said the consequences of the department implementing a reduction in force plan in March “have yet to be felt.”

“I think we will start to see really the material consequences of the reduced staffing capacity in the coming years, in terms of how programs are administered, in terms of how funding is moving out the building, in terms of auditing, making sure funding is going to the right groups of students that Congress intended for the money to go to, whether big data collection efforts that are congressionally mandated are being carried out in timely and effective ways,” she said.

“All of that remains to be seen.”

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## As reading scores fall, states turn to phonics — but not without a fight

**A bipartisan wave of state-level changes to the ‘science of reading’ is gaining momentum**

BY: ROBBIE SEQUEIRA - APRIL 30, 2025 10:20 AM

As states rush to address falling literacy scores, a new kind of education debate in state legislatures is taking hold: not whether reading instruction needs fixing, but how to fix it.

More than a dozen states have enacted laws banning public school educators from teaching youngsters to read using an approach that’s been popular for decades. The method, known as “three-cueing,” encourages kids to figure out unfamiliar words using context clues such as meaning, sentence structure and visual hints.

In the past two years, several states, including South Dakota, have instead embraced instruction rooted in what’s known as the “science of reading.” That approach leans heavily on phonics — relying on letter and rhyming sounds to read words such as cat, hat and rat.

The policy discussions on early literacy are unfolding against a backdrop of alarming national reading proficiency levels. The 2024 Nation’s Report Card revealed that 40% of fourth graders and 33% of eighth graders scored below the basic reading level — the highest percentages in decades.

No state improved in fourth- or eighth-grade reading in 2024. Eight states — Alaska, Arizona, Delaware, Florida, Nebraska, Nevada, Utah and Vermont — scored worse than they did a year or two prior in eighth-grade reading.

Five — Arizona, Florida, Nebraska, South Dakota and Vermont — saw dips in their fourth-grade reading scores.

In response to these troubling trends, a growing number of states are moving beyond localized efforts and tackling literacy through statewide legislation.

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New Jersey last year mandated universal K-3 literacy screenings. Indiana lawmakers this month passed a bill that would allow some students to retake required reading tests before being held back in third grade; that bill is en route to the governor's desk.

Oregon and Washington are weighing statewide literacy coaching and training models, while lawmakers in Montana introduced a bill to allow literacy interventions to cover broader reading and academic skills, not just early reading basics.

Mississippi, a state seen as a model for turnaround in literacy rates over the past decade, seeks to expand and require evidence-based reading interventions, mandatory literacy screenings and targeted teacher training, and to explicitly ban the use of three-cueing methods in reading instruction in grades 4-8.

Together, these efforts signal a national shift: States are treating literacy not as a local initiative, but as the foundation of public education policy.

"Literacy is the lever," said Tafshier Cosby, the senior director of the Center for Organizing and Partnerships at the National Parents Union, an advocacy group. "If states focus on that, we see bipartisan wins. But the challenge is making that a statewide priority, not just a district-by-district hope."



**A student reads a book in a New York City library in 2022. Since 2021, more than a dozen states have explicitly banned a decades-old literacy teaching method, known as "three-cueing," that encourages kids to figure out unfamiliar words using context clues such as meaning, sentence structure and visual hints.** (Michael Loccisano/Getty Images)

## 'It's the system that needs fixing'

Before he was even sworn in, first-term Georgia Democratic state Sen. RaShaun Kemp, a former teacher and principal, had already drafted a bill to end the use of the three-cueing system in Georgia classrooms.

This month, the final version passed the state legislature without a single "no" vote. GOP Gov. Brian Kemp signed it into law Monday.

Sen. Kemp said his passion for literacy reform stretches back decades, shaped by experiences tutoring children at a local church as a college student in the early 2000s. It was there, he said, that he began noticing patterns in how students struggled with foundational reading.

"In my experience, I saw kids struggle to identify the word they were reading. I saw how some kids were guessing what the word was instead of decoding," Kemp recalled. "And it's not technology or screens that's the problem. It's what teachers are being instructed on how to teach reading. It's the system that needs fixing, not the teachers."

The new law requires the Professional Standards Commission — a state agency that oversees teacher prep and certification — to adopt rules mandating evidence-based reading instruction aligned with the science of reading, a set of practices rooted in decades of cognitive research on how children best learn to read.

"Current strategies used to teach literacy include methods that teach students to guess rather than read, preventing them from reaching their full potential," Sen. Kemp said in a public statement following

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the bill's legislative passage. "I know we can be better, and I'm proud to see our legislative body take much-needed steps to help make Georgia the number one state for literacy."

In West Virginia, lawmakers have introduced similar bills that would require the state's teachers to be certified in the science of reading.

Cosby, of the National Parents Union, said local policy changes can be driven by parents even before legislatures act.

"All politics are local," Cosby said. "Parents don't need to wait for statewide mandates — they can ask school boards for universal screeners and structured literacy now."

Still, some parents worry their states are simply funding more studies on early literacy rather than taking direct action to address it.

A Portland, Oregon, parent of three — one of whom has dyslexia — sent written testimony this year urging lawmakers to skip further studies and immediately implement structured literacy statewide.

"We do not need another study to tell us what we already know — structured literacy is the most effective way to teach all children to read, particularly those with dyslexia and other reading challenges," wrote Katherine Hoffman.

## Opposition to 'science of reading'

Unlike in Georgia, the "science of reading" has met resistance in other states.

In California, legislation that would require phonics-based reading instruction statewide has faced opposition from English learner advocates who argue that a one-size-fits-all approach may not effectively serve multilingual students.

In opposition to the bill, the California Teachers Association argued that by codifying a rigid definition of the "science of reading," lawmakers ignore the evolving nature of reading research and undermine teachers' ability to meet the diverse needs of their students.

"Placing a definition for 'science of reading' in statute is problematic," wrote Seth Bramble, a legislative advocate for the California Teachers Association in a March letter addressed to the state's Assembly Education Committee. "This bill would carve into stone scientific knowledge that by its very nature is constantly being tested, validated, refuted, revised, and improved."

Similarly, in Wisconsin, Democratic Gov. Tony Evers in March vetoed a bill that would have reversed changes to the state's scoring system to align the state's benchmarks with the National Assessment of Educational Progress, a federal assessment tool that has recently been hit with funding cuts and layoffs under the Trump administration. Evers said in his veto that Republican lawmakers were stepping on the state superintendent's independence.

That veto is another step in the evolution of a broader constitutional fight over literacy policy and how literacy funds are appropriated and released. In 2023, Wisconsin lawmakers set aside \$50 million for a new statewide literacy initiative, but disagreements over legislative versus executive control have stalled its disbursement.

Indiana's legislature faced criticism from educators over a 2024 mandate requiring 80 hours of literacy training for pre-K to sixth-grade teachers before they can renew their licenses. Teachers argued that the additional requirements were burdensome and did not account for their professional expertise.

In Illinois, literacy struggles have been building for more than a decade, according to Mailee Smith, senior director of policy at the Illinois Policy Institute. Today, only 3 in 10 Illinois third- and fourth-graders can read at grade level, based on state and national assessments.

Although Illinois lawmakers amended the school code in 2023 to create a state literacy plan, Smith noted the plan is only guidance and does not require districts to adopt evidence-based reading instruction. She urged local school boards to act on their own.

"If students can't read by third grade, half of fourth-grade curriculum becomes incomprehensible," she said. "A student's likelihood to graduate high school can be predicted by their reading skill at the end of third grade."



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Despite the challenges, Smith said even small steps can make a real difference.

"Screening, intervention, parental notice, science-based instruction and thoughtful grade promotion — those are the five pillars, and Illinois and even local school districts can implement some of these steps right away," she said.

"It doesn't have to be daunting."

*Stateline reporter Robbie Sequeira can be reached at [rsequeira@stateline.org](mailto:rsequeira@stateline.org).*

*Robbie Sequeira is a staff writer covering housing and social services for Stateline.*



Groton  
Area  
Tigers  
Groton, SD

## GDILIVE



High School Spring Concert  
Thursday, May 1, 2025, 7 p.m.

\$5 ticket or GDI  
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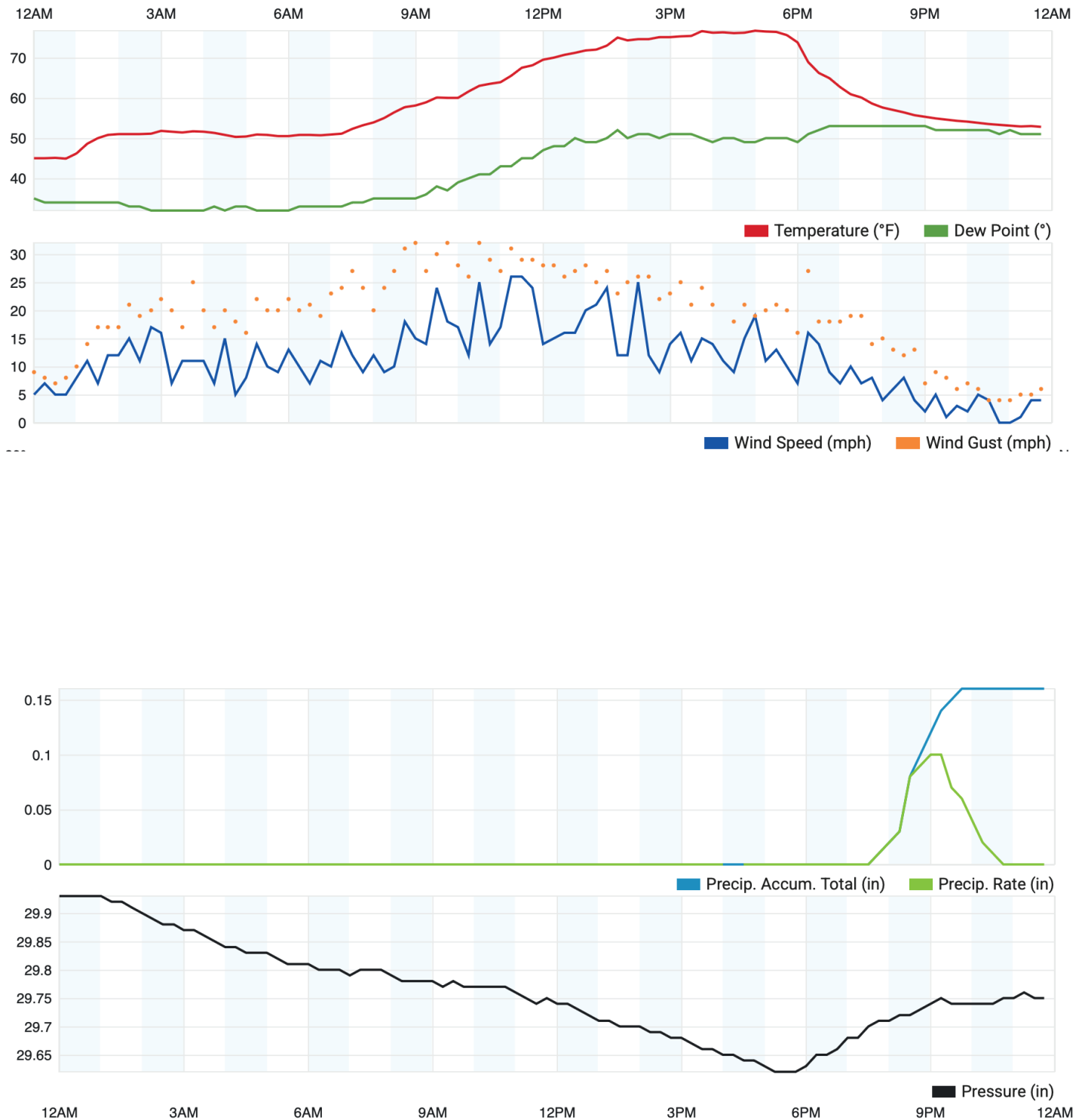
A production of the  
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For more info: [GDILIVE.COM](http://GDILIVE.COM)

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



High: 65 °F

Chance  
Showers

Tonight



Low: 39 °F

Chance  
Showers then  
Partly Cloudy

Friday



High: 60 °F

Mostly Sunny

Friday Night



Low: 35 °F

Mostly Clear

Saturday



High: 71 °F

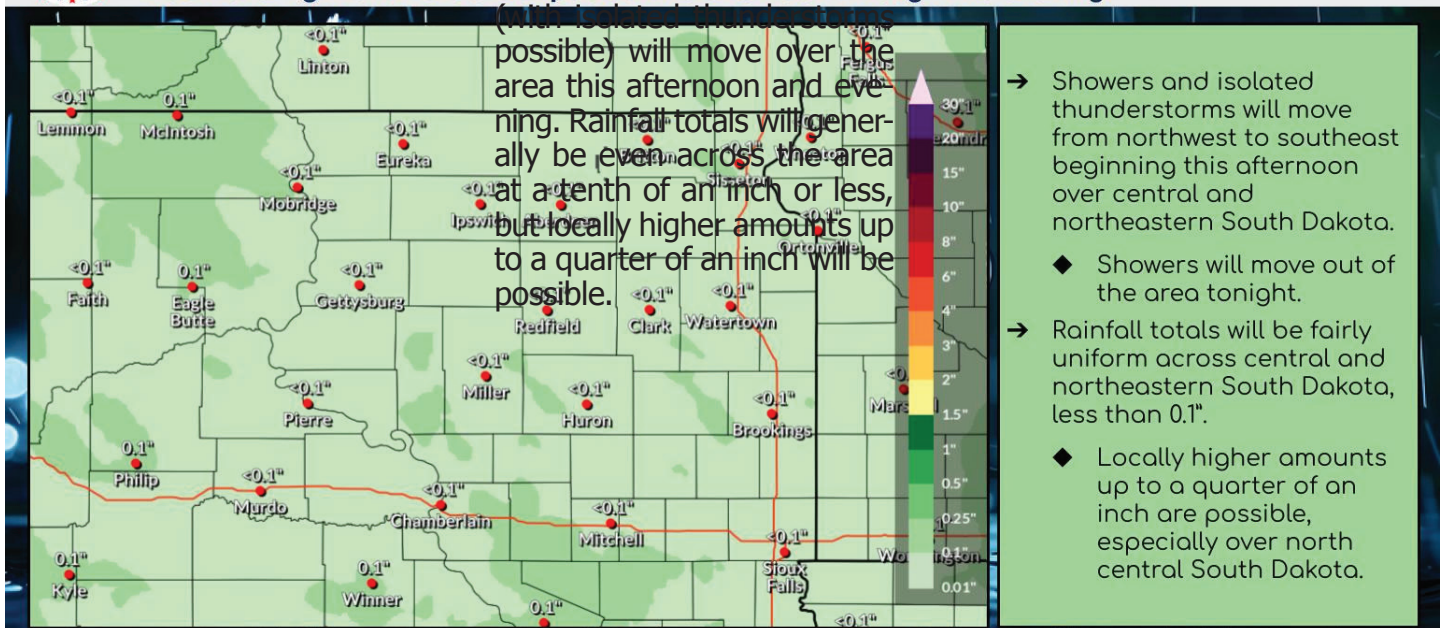
Sunny



## Rain Through This Evening

May 1, 2025  
4:30 AM

Additional light showers are expected this afternoon and evening.



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

Multiple rounds of light showers are expected through Thursday evening. Northeastern South Dakota will see the highest rainfall totals, between a quarter and half an inch in total (with locally higher amounts possible). Other areas may see up to a quarter of an inch.



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## Next Few Days...

April 30, 2025  
2:49 PM

### Thursday



*Light Showers*  
*rumble of thunder*

Highs: 57 - 66°

20-30<sup>mph</sup>

### Friday



Highs: 54 - 63°

10-20<sup>mph</sup>

### Saturday



Highs: 67 - 77°

15-25<sup>mph</sup>



## April 2025 Weather In Review

May 1, 2025  
3:00 AM

Wet with near-normal temperatures in April across most of Central and Northeast South Dakota.

	Aberdeen (Since 1894)	Sisseton (Since 1932)	Mobridge (Since 1911)	Pierre (Since 1934)	Watertown (Since 1898)
<b>Average Temperature</b>	44.6°	44.4°	45.7°	47.5°	44.4°
Departure from Normal	+0.0° 65th warmest	+0.6° 48th warmest	-0.1° 47th warmest	+1.5° 37th warmest	+1.5° 52nd warmest
Warmest Year	1895 (53.2°)	1987 (53.6°)	1912 (55.9°)	1981 (54.2°)	1987 (52.4°)
Coldest Year	2013 (34.9°)	2013 (33.7°)	2013 (35.6°)	2013 (37.6°)	1950 (33.5°)
Warmest of the month	78° (4/30)	77° (4/30)	79° (4/12)	79° (4/16)	74° (4/16)
Coldest of the month	17° (4/5)	16° (4/5)	16° (4/5)	19° (4/5)	19° (4/5 & 4/7)
<b>Precipitation</b>	3.07"	2.02"	1.92"	2.21"	2.42"
Departure from Normal	+1.16"	-0.07"	+0.34"	+0.28"	+0.36"
<b>Snowfall</b>	10.0"	6.8"	0.7"	Trace	8.0"
Departure from Normal	+6.0"	+3.1"	-2.4"	-3.2"	+5.1"

Here are some of our weather stats from the month of April. Temperatures were near-normal, but overall precipitation was up this month. Aberdeen in particular saw over an inch more in precipitation than normal!

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 78 °F at 4:23 PM**

**Low Temp: 45 °F at 12:34 AM**

**Wind: 33 mph at 10:28 AM**

**Precip: : 0.42 (.26+.16)**

Day length: 14 hours, 20 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 102 in 1959

Record Low: 19 in 1961

Average High: 65

Average Low: 38

Average Precip in May.: .11

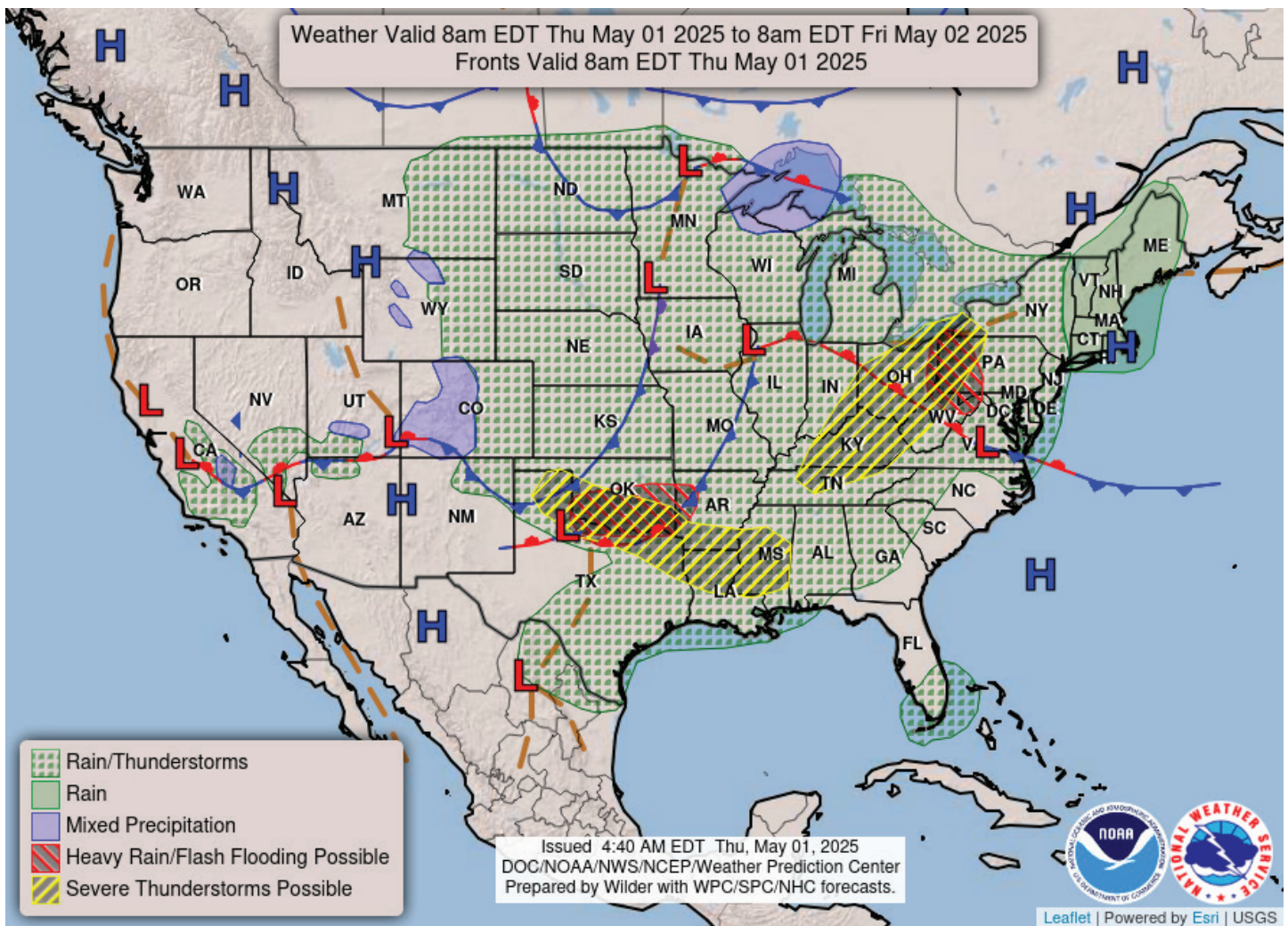
Precip to date in April.: 1.84

Average Precip to date: 4.08

Precip Year to Date: 2.63

Sunset Tonight: 8:39:35 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:18:00 am





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## Today in Weather History

May 1st, 1959: Aberdeen recorded a high temperature of 102, the earliest date that Aberdeen reached 100 degrees.

May 1st, 1967: One of the latest blizzards on record for South Dakota ended on this day. Snowfall amounts in the west were 5 to 12 inches, with a 16-inch report in Lemmon and 30 inches in the northern Black Hills. Winds of 40 to 50 mph caused blowing snow, which occasionally reduced visibility to near zero and snow drifts of 4 to 5 feet. Other snowfall amounts include 5 inches in Murdo, 6 miles SE of McIntosh, and 4 inches in Timber Lake.

May 1st, 1997: Torrential rains of 1.5 to 2.5 inches, with a separate 4.5-inch report, fell over central South Dakota and caused flooding to several creeks, streams, low-lying areas, and roads. This early May rain only aggravated the flooded regions in March and April. Lyman County experienced the most significant flooding, with 4.5 inches of rain falling north of Vivian. Part of a golf course was flooded, and some personal property was flooded along with the KOA campground near Kennebec. Some rainfall amounts include 2.5 inches 7 miles NW of Presho and 2.01 inches near Stephan.

1854 - The Connecticut River reached a level of nearly twenty-nine feet at Hartford (the highest level of record up until that time). The record height was reached in the midst of a great New England flood which followed sixty-six hours of steady rain. (David Ludlum)

1935 - Snow, ice and sleet brought winter back to parts of southeast Minnesota. Minneapolis received three inches of snow to tie their May record which was established in 1892. (1st-2nd) (The Weather Channel)

1954 - The temperature at Polebridge MT dipped to 5 degrees below zero to establish a state record for the month of May. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Thunderstorms produced large hail and heavy rain in Texas. Baseball size hail pounded Dublin, and 3.75 inches of rain soaked Brady. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Strong southerly winds ahead of a cold front crossing the Rocky Mountain Region gusted to 90 mph at Lamar CO. High winds created blinding dust storms in eastern Colorado, closing roads around Limon. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced heavy rain in the southeastern U.S. Rainfall totals of 1.84 inches at Charlotte NC and 2.86 inches at Atlanta GA were records for the date. Strong thunderstorm winds uprooted trees in Twiggs County GA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from northern Alabama to North Carolina. There were sixty-three reports of large hail or damaging winds, with hail four inches in diameter reported near Cartersville GA. Ten cities in the southeastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date as readings warmed into the 90s. Jacksonville FL reported a record high of 96 degrees. Late night thunderstorms over central Texas produced up to ten inches of rain in southern Kimble County and northern Edwards County. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)



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Daily Devotion

## The Source of Hope

**Because of Jesus, we have an eternal home  
in heaven and help for everything we face now.**

1 Peter 1:3-9

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, 5 who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 7 These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. 8 Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, 9 for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Hope can be defined as the expectation and desire for something good. And Jesus is the greatest source of hope—He alone always knows what's best and has the power to secure its fulfillment.

When life on earth is like a storm-tossed sea, Christ—our anchor—encourages us with the promise of an imperishable inheritance in heaven (1 Pet. 1:3-4). Yet that ultimate security can seem far away when pain is present and there's no relief in sight. So how do we endure trials here and now? One way is through hope, which anticipates a change of circumstances for the better.

But what about those times when our situation isn't improving—then what is God doing that's "better"? Peter tells us He is refining our faith, which will result in praise and glory when Jesus returns (vv. 6-7). This will prove more valuable than gold or even relief from our distress. The difficulties that cause some to lose hope are the very tools God can use to increase His children's faith in Him.

Christ promises us hope not only for eternity but also for this life. If God does not deliver us from difficulty, we can rest in the knowledge that He is doing a greater work. When we finally reach our eternal home, we'll see the immeasurable value of the faith He produced in us as we continued to trust in Him.

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## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.29.25

16 33 40 51 57 10

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$80,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 16 Mins  
29 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.30.25

5 22 23 24 36 7

All Star Bonus: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$32,100,000**

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 15 Hrs 31 Mins  
29 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.30.25

3 5 22 23 44 4

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 46 Mins 29  
Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.30.25

1 20 21 29 34

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$136,000**

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 15 Hrs 46  
Mins 29 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.30.25

1 34 38 60 65 9

TOP PRIZE:

**\$10,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 15 Mins  
29 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.30.25

1 2 3 57 59 9

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$44,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 15 Mins  
29 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

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

### Reversal of US energy agenda sparks friction between states

South Dakota News Watch undefined

Sioux Falls, SD (South Dakota News Watch)

Changes to climate policy under President Donald Trump's administration have sharpened Upper Midwest debates about the reliability of renewable energy and the separation of state and federal interests.

One point of agreement is that winning the White House means controlling the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), a federal regulatory body that maintains and enforces environmental laws.

Lee Zeldin, Trump's pick to run the EPA, has announced plans to dramatically reduce staff and reverse policies from the Joe Biden administration involving the oversight of coal-fired power plants, oil and gas development and water quality standards.

The deregulation is of keen interest to energy officials in Republican-led South Dakota and heavily Democratic Minnesota, where differences in climate policy have sparked border clashes over how pushing clean energy to reduce carbon emissions impacts the electrical grid.

The Minnesota Legislature passed a law in 2023 requiring all electric utilities in the state to produce only carbon-free energy by 2040 using sources like solar, wind, hydroelectric and nuclear power.

That law was an offshoot of Biden administration EPA rules requiring coal plants operating beyond 2039 to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 90% by 2032, which critics saw as shutting down the industry.

Zeldin's agency has rolled back those rules, inspired by Trump's March 17 declaration on social media that he is "authorizing my Administration to immediately begin producing Energy with BEAUTIFUL, CLEAN COAL."

Chris Nelson, a Republican member of the South Dakota Public Utilities Commission, said reversing coal plant regulations is good news for South Dakota and other states focused on the sustainability of the electricity grid and avoiding blackouts.

"The math didn't add up with those greenhouse gas limitation rules," Nelson told News Watch. "They simply could not replace all of those plants quickly enough (with other energy sources) to maintain reliability of the grid. So the Trump administration rolling back those particularly damaging rules was very helpful."

Not everyone shares that opinion.

The EPA's actions face court challenges as clean-energy groups navigate federal and state environmental laws in a changing legal landscape.

The U.S. Supreme Court last year struck down the landmark 1984 Chevron "deference" doctrine, which required courts to defer to reasonable agency interpretations of ambiguous statutes.

Those interpretations are now up to the courts to decide. Democratic-leaning states are forging ahead with climate-based policies regardless of EPA rollbacks, using utility regulation as a tool to keep energy companies in line.

Minneapolis-based Xcel Energy, whose 3.7 million electrical customers include about 100,000 South Dakotans, is sticking with a plan to retire its coal-fired power plants by 2030 as part of an integrated resource plan approved by the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission in February in accordance with state law.

The plan includes replacing coal with "wind, solar and storage solutions" while also building a new natural gas plant in 2028 as a way to address capacity needs.

Natural gas, which replaced coal as the nation's largest energy source in 2016, emits about half as much carbon dioxide as coal, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

The Xcel announcement came despite criticism from the South Dakota PUC, which questioned the company's ability to pivot from fossil fuels at that pace without compromising reliability and affordability for customers.

South Dakota ranks ninth among U.S. states in energy consumption per capita, with 34% of households using electricity to heat their homes during frequently harsh winters. Nearly half (48%) use natural gas,

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with propane at 14%.

The PUC's concerns were laid out in a 2024 letter to Xcel signed by Republican commissioners Nelson, Gary Hanson and Kristie Fiegen.

"Evidence is mounting that the premature closures ... will elevate the risk of electricity outages particularly in tight load hours, including hours of extreme cold and extreme heat, as well as those hours when wind generation is low," the letter stated. "These events are likely to pose a threat to life and property."

South Dakota is part of the 15-state Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO), which helps ensure energy distribution regardless of whether a customer uses Xcel, MidAmerican Energy, Black Hills Energy, NorthWestern Energy, Otter Tail or another utility company.

Cooperation among these and other regional transmission organizations was critical during a major winter storm in January 2024, which brought brutally cold air and blizzard conditions to much of the Midwest.

"During that storm we got 7,000 megawatts of electricity from the East to help us keep the lights on," Fiegen told News Watch in 2024.

Xcel's decision to close coal plants despite South Dakota PUC warnings shows the challenge of trying to influence policy involving companies under the sway of different state laws and consumer interests.

"One of the difficulties we have is that South Dakota represents 5% to 6% of Xcel's entire system," said Nelson. "We are literally the tail trying to wag the dog on some of these decisions."

Some utility companies are advocating a more measured pace on clean energy. Minnesota's PUC clashed with Otter Tail Power over its decision to amend its long-range plan to push back closures of coal plants - including Big Stone near Milbank, in northeast South Dakota - until at least 2040.

The Minnesota PUC approved Otter Tail's resource plan last summer after concessions that included the company no longer using its North Dakota-based Coyote Station plant for Minnesota customers beyond 2031.

Otter Tail's most recent modeling projects a retirement date of 2046 for South Dakota-based Big Stone, which started operation in 1975 and burns coal from Wyoming's Powder River Basin.

The plant received a \$384 million air quality control system upgrade in 2015 following complaints from environmental groups that its lack of pollution controls violated the Clean Air Act.

"We don't have any concerns about the Big Stone plant," said Nelson. "They put pollution control equipment in that plant with the anticipation that they would be able to run it for a whole lot of years yet, and that is certainly our anticipation."

Despite leaning on fossil fuels to keep the lights on in extreme conditions, South Dakota has harnessed the state's wind power as an alternative energy source.

In 2023, South Dakota's wind energy production accounted for more than half (55%) of the state's in-state net power generation, a larger share than in all other states except Iowa, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

The state's other primary power sources include hydroelectric (21%), natural gas (14%) and coal (9%). Solar was less than 1% of the power generated (0.3%).

Increased wind energy production nationally runs counter to the direction of the EPA and Trump, who has criticized the efficiency of turbines and told supporters that "we're not going to do the wind thing" at a rally shortly after taking office.

So far, the administration's actions are aimed at offshore wind development, which rely on access to federal waters. It's not clear how the EPA's actions will impact South Dakota's 24 active wind farms, which provide tax revenue and job creation for local communities.

In fiscal year 2022, 21 school districts received a total of \$4.5 million in tax revenue from wind farms in South Dakota, led by Deubrook (\$662,527), Deuel (\$591,319), Waverly (\$467,034) and Highmore-Harrold (\$421,590).

"The actions that we've seen the administration take thus far as it relates to wind have been exclusively related to offshore wind projects," said Nelson. "We've not seen any indication that there's going to be any activity for turbines that might be located in South Dakota."

One uncertainty is whether the Department of Energy's recent cost-cutting efforts and cancellation of



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clean energy grants could impact federal tax credits and other incentives meant to spur installation of renewable energy projects such as wind farms.

"At this point, I think that's probably an unanswerable question," Nelson said.

Another reversal in federal climate policy involves the extent to which the government regulates lakes, rivers, streams and wetlands under the Clean Water Act, signed into law in 1972.

The Trump administration, emboldened by a friendly 2023 Supreme Court ruling, is working under the philosophy that federal regulations have protected too many wetlands and improperly limited private property rights.

With South Dakota's traditionally lax approach to state regulations, the lack of federal oversight has some environmental groups concerned that water quality in the Big Sioux River, for example, could go from bad to worse.

Testing has shown high levels of E. coli bacteria in the tributary that weaves through eastern South Dakota, mostly from upstream agricultural operations, livestock manure and stormwater runoff. The Big Sioux's watershed encompasses about 7,280 square miles in South Dakota, Minnesota and Iowa.

Also heavily scrutinized is Sioux Falls-based Smithfield Foods, a pork processing plant that ranked seventh nationally among non-poultry animal slaughtering facilities in 2022 for the amount of nitrate compounds released into the Big Sioux.

Smithfield went operational with a new \$45 million wastewater treatment facility in May 2023, reducing the amount of nitrate released. But that action was attributed partly to pressure from federal regulators.

"If there's an environmental pollutant that isn't managed by the feds, South Dakota could set its own standard, but that's highly unlikely," said Jay Gilbertson, manager for the East Dakota Water Development District, which promotes conservation and proper management of water resources.

"Basically, we do what we have to do in South Dakota from a regulatory standpoint. So if the people who decide what we have to do are saying we should do less, it's going to make life more difficult."

Some of the strategy to reduce pollutants involves incentives, such as payments to landowners to build buffer strips along the river. But those programs could be in jeopardy if federal grants and staffing are reduced by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and other agencies, putting more responsibility on private organizations to urge protections.

States such as neighboring Minnesota are taking notice, mindful of the axiom that pollution knows no borders.

"We're at the mercy of the political will of neighbors to stop burning coal or emitting other harmful pollutants that travel into our state," Leigh Currie of the Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy told Minnesota Public Radio. "We might not have, going forward, the help from the federal government that we've had in the past."

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## These papal tailors aren't expecting a traditional order for new cassocks to outfit the next pope

By COLLEEN BARRY Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Two papal tailors and no conclave orders.

The conclave that begins next Wednesday to elect a successor for Pope Francis is the first in 46 ½ years for which the Vatican hasn't ordered a set of cassocks for the new head of the Catholic Church — at least

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from the two best-known papal tailors.

That isn't stopping Ranieri Mancinelli, who opened his ecclesiastical tailoring shop near the Vatican in the 1960s, from making three simple white cassocks just in case: the traditional small, medium and large sizes to cover all possible heights and girths.

"I'm doing this on my own to be able to present these cassocks for the next pope, without knowing who he will be," Mancinelli said.

Gammarelli, another family-run ecclesiastical tailor near the Pantheon in the historic center, has a paper trail showing it has received cassock orders for every conclave since the beginning of the 20th century — and probably far earlier. Gammarelli has been making garments for priests, bishops and cardinals since 1798.

The last time no pre-conclave order came in to the Vatican's tailor of choice, Gammarelli, was October 1978, when cardinal electors voted a successor to Pope John Paul I, who died after 33 days as pontiff, said Lorenzo Gammarelli, representing the sixth generation of the family business.

Gammarelli won't speculate why no order was made this year, but Italian media suggests the Vatican has enough unworn cassocks on hand, and is honoring Pope Francis' message of environmental and economic sustainability.

"Obviously, we're a little sorry, because in the sadness caused by the death of the Holy Father, we still would have the beautiful thing of having to make the trousseau for the new one. Not this time," Gammarelli said.

The Vatican declined to comment on what is being viewed as the great papal cassock race. "I don't think I need to speak on behalf of businesses," said Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni. "Not every curiosity needs to be answered."

The papal trousseau

For a pope's first encounter with the flock, the basic garment is the hand-stitched white wool cassock with cape and wide silk sleeves. The cassock is fastened by silk buttons and worn with a silk brocade sash with gold fringe. All popes, until Francis, had this sash later embroidered with his papal seal.

Francis also eschewed the classic burgundy red mozzetta, a short elbow-length cape worn for formal occasions, and a gold embroidered stole, not only the night of his election but throughout his papacy.

The papal garb is finished with a white "zucchetto," or skullcap that is also worn by cardinals in red and bishops in purple.

When they are called on to provide a conclave order, Gammarelli also provides shoes in an array of sizes so the new pope will be comfortable when presented to his flock. After that, Gammarelli said, "shoes are a very personal matter."

Francis favored plain black shoes and was buried in a pair with the scuff marks showing.

In keeping with the secrecy of the conclave, Gammarelli never reveals papal prices.

Sizing up the next pope

While the world speculates on who will be the next pope, Gammarelli's job is more practical. The family has a system to best outfit the unknown successor, using data from their cardinal clients and sizing up cardinal candidates who are not.

"We consider who, in our opinion, could be elected," Gammarelli said. "We pull out their measurements, and ... we make three cassocks that would more or less fit all of them."

Balcony mishaps

Their best guesses are sometimes off.

Gammarelli said they never imagined that Polish Cardinal Karol Wojtyla would become pope in October 1978. They had considered Argentine Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio a candidate in 2005 (when Benedict XVI was elected) but not in 2013, when Bergoglio became the church's first Latin American pope.

Back in 1958, the portly John XXIII appeared on the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica with safety pins holding together the back of his cassock, after a too-small size was mistakenly grabbed, forcing aides to open the back.

Gammarelli said that throughout Francis' 12-year papacy he tried to persuade the pope to wear white

pants under his cassock. But Francis stuck with the black trousers of a priest, a reminder to himself and everyone that he was a pastor at heart.

Francis' unadorned style

Mancinelli, at his shop just steps from the Vatican, has made cassocks for the last three popes: St. John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis.

He got to know Benedict when he was a cardinal, living near Mancinelli's shop. Francis later invited him to his apartment in the Santa Marta residence, marking "the beginning of a very pleasant encounter period."

While Gammarelli won't make the cassocks on speculation, Mancinelli is making three to give to the Vatican, in Francis' simple, unadorned style, all in white.

"Compared with the other two, Francis preferred much simpler and much more practical things," he said, also taking costs into account.

Only after the words "Habemus Papam!" are announced from the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica will it be clear whether the Catholic Church's 267th pontiff will follow Francis's unembellished example or will bring back traditional papal trappings, like flashes of red.

## From Tokyo to Los Angeles, Trump's policies loom over May Day marches

By THOMAS ADAMSON and YURI KAGEYAMA Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — From Tokyo to Taipei to Manila, people across Asia marked May Day with marches and protests that spotlighted growing unease over U.S. President Donald Trump's policies and fears of global economic instability.

The holiday, also known as International Workers' Day or Labor Day, honors the struggles and achievements of workers and the labor movement. Rallies are expected across the United States as well, including in Chicago, Los Angeles, New York and Philadelphia.

Across multiple countries, Trump's agenda was cited as a source of concern. In the United States, organizers said their message this year focused on fighting Trump's approach targeting immigrants, federal workers and diversity initiatives.

In Taiwan, President Lai Ching-te referenced new U.S. tariffs under Trump as he promoted a proposed spending bill aimed at stabilizing the job market and supporting livelihoods. In the Philippines, protest leader Mong Palatino warned that "tariff wars and policies of Trump" threatened local industries.

In Japan, some said his policies hung over the day like a shadow, with one truck in the Tokyo march featuring a doll that resembled Trump. There, participants' demands ranged from higher wages and gender equality to health care, disaster relief, a ceasefire in Gaza and an end to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"For our children to be able to live with hope, the rights of workers must be recognized," said Junko Kuramochi, a member of a mothers' group in Tokyo.

Tadashi Ito, a union construction worker, said he worried about rising prices for imported raw materials.

"Everybody is fighting over work and so the contracts tend to go where the wages are cheapest," he said. "We think peace comes first. And we hope Trump will eradicate conflict and inequalities."

Worries about Trump's tariffs

Under overcast skies in Taipei, about 2,500 Taiwanese union members marched from the presidential office, representing sectors from fisheries to telecommunications. Protesters warned that Trump's tariffs could cost jobs.

"This is why we hope that the government can propose plans to protect the rights of laborers," said union leader Carlos Wang. An autoworkers' union carried a cutout car topped with a photo of Trump.

President Lai said on Facebook that his government had submitted a 410 billion New Taiwan dollar (\$12.8 billion) bill to support industry and stabilize the job market.

In Manila, thousands of Filipino workers marched near the presidential palace, where police blocked access with barricades. Protesters demanded higher wages and stronger protections for local jobs and businesses.



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In Indonesia, President Prabowo Subianto greeted thousands of workers who cheered him in Jakarta's National Monument Park.

"The government that I lead will work as hard as possible to eliminate poverty from Indonesia," Subianto told the crowd.

About 200,000 Indonesian workers were expected to take part in May Day marches across Southeast Asia's largest economy, according to Said Iqbal, president of the Confederation of Indonesian Trade Unions. They are demanding an end to outsourcing rules, wage raises, and protection for domestic workers and migrant workers abroad, Iqbal said.

Istanbul mayor's arrest in focus of protests in Turkey

In Turkey, May Day served as a platform not only for labor rights but for broader calls to uphold democratic values, as demonstrators planned to protest the jailing of Istanbul's opposition mayor, Ekrem Imamoglu. His imprisonment in March sparked the country's largest protests in more than a decade, and Thursday's public holiday offered the prospect of renewed anti-government displays. Authorities blocked access to central Istanbul and shut down transit lines. A law association said that more than 200 protesters were arrested before midday near Taksim Square, a symbolic rallying point long closed to May Day gatherings, including lawyers trying to follow the detentions.

A big rally planned in LA

Los Angeles is expected to host one of the world's largest May Day events this year, and a banner there summarized the day's theme: "One Struggle, One Fight – Workers Unite!"

"We're bringing the fight to the billionaires and politicians who are trying to divide us with fear and lies. We know the truth — an attack on immigrant workers is an attack on all workers," April Verrett, president of the Service Employees International Union, which represents 2 million workers, said in a statement.

## India will include caste details in its next census

By RAJESH ROY and SHEIKH SAALIQ Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — India will include caste details in its next census, in a move likely to have sweeping socio-economic and political ramifications for the world's most populous country.

Information Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw didn't say when the census would begin when he announced it would include caste information Wednesday. He said the decision demonstrated New Delhi's commitment to the "values and interests of the society and country."

The count is likely lead to demands to raise the country's quotas that reserve government jobs, college admissions and elected offices for some categories of castes, especially for a swathe of lower and intermediate castes that are recognized as Other Backward Classes. India's current policy caps quotas at 50%, with 27% reserved for OBCs.

Caste is an ancient system of social hierarchy in India and is critical to Indian life and politics. There are hundreds of caste groups based on occupation and economic status across India, particularly among Hindus, but the country has limited, or outdated data on how many people belong to them.

Successive Indian governments have resisted updating caste data, arguing that it could lead to social unrest. But its supporters say detailed demographic information is necessary to properly implementing India's many social justice programs.

Colonial ruler Britain began an Indian census in 1872 and counted all castes until 1931. However, independent India since 1951 only counted Dalits and Adivasis, who are referred to as scheduled castes and tribes, respectively. Everyone else's caste was marked as general.

The next once-in-a-decade population survey was originally due in 2021, but has been delayed mainly by the COVID-19 pandemic and logistical hurdles. The last official census in 2011 counted 1.21 billion people, of which 2011 million were scheduled castes and 104 million were scheduled tribes.

The announcement comes months ahead of a crucial election in India's poorest state of Bihar, where caste is a key issue. Modi's party runs a coalition government in Bihar.

The opposition and Modi's partners have pressed the government to count caste in a new census. Modi's

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Hindu nationalist party has in the past opposed the idea of counting people by caste, saying it would deepen social divisions in the country.

Opposition leader Rahul Gandhi of the Congress Party wrote on X that "It is clear that the pressure we put on the government for Caste Census has worked."

Two Indian states, northern Bihar and southern Karnataka, have already released caste surveys, both showing a higher number of backward castes and prompting demands to raise quotas.

Two southern states, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, are also planning to undertake similar surveys.

Vaishnav said including caste details in the national census would improve transparency, while adding that some states ruled by opposition parties have done their own caste surveys for political gain.

Fortunes of many of these political parties, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, depend on alliance of castes, particularly those in the OBC category.

On Wednesday, Amit Shah, India's powerful home minister, called the move "historic" and said it "will empower all economically and socially backward sections."

## North Korea and Russia begin building their first road link

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea and Russia have begun building their first road link, the two countries announced, hailing the construction of a bridge over a border river as a major development that will further expand their booming ties.

Russia's Tass news agency reported that the bridge would be 1 kilometer (0.6 mile) long and its construction is expected to take 1 ½ years. North Korea's Korean Central News Agency said Thursday the bridge would expand cross-border travel of people, tourism and circulation of commodities.

Relations and exchange programs between the two countries have been flourishing in recent years, with North Korea supplying ammunitions and troops to support Russia's war against Ukraine.

North Korea has been receiving Russian tourists since February 2024 amid slowly easing pandemic curbs, but Chinese group tours, which made up more than 90% of visitors before the pandemic, remain stalled.

In 2023, about 97% of North Korea's external trade was with China, while 1.2% was with Russia. There are currently at least 17 active road and rail links across the long, porous border between North Korea and China, according to South Korea's Unification Ministry.

One railway bridge and air service already connect North Korea and Russia, and in June 2024 the two countries agreed to construct a bridge for automobiles over the Tumen River, which runs along North Korea's borders with Russia and China.

On Thursday, North Korea and Russia simultaneously held a ground-breaking ceremony for the bridge's construction in their respective border cities, according to the two countries' state media agencies. The agencies said North Korean Premier Pak Thae Song and Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin attended the ceremony via video links.

Pak said the bridge's construction would be remembered as "a historic monument" in bilateral ties, KCNA reported Thursday.

"This is a big milestone for Russian-Korean relation," Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin said, according to Tass. "We are creating a reliable basis for closer cooperation between our two countries, a road for an open and fruitful dialogue."

On Monday, North Korea confirmed for the first time that it has sent combat troops to Russia to help it reclaim parts of the Kursk region that Ukraine forces seized in a stunning incursion last year. Russian President Vladimir Putin thanked North Korea and promised not to forget the sacrifices of North Korean soldiers for Russia.

According to a South Korean government intelligence assessment shared with lawmakers on Wednesday, North Korea has sent about 15,000 soldiers to Russia, and 4,700 of them have been killed or wounded. In return for North Korea's supply of conventional arms, Russia has given it air defense missiles, electronic warfare equipment, drones and technology for spy satellite launches, according to the South Korean as-

essment.

## US and Ukraine sign deal giving US access to country's valuable mineral wealth

By SAMYA KULLAB, HANNA ARHIROVA and AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. and Ukraine on Wednesday signed an agreement granting American access to Ukraine's vast mineral resources, finalizing a deal months in the making that could enable continued military aid to Kyiv amid concerns that President Donald Trump might scale back support in ongoing peace negotiations with Russia.

The two sides offered only barebone details about the structure of the deal, which they called the United States-Ukraine Reinvestment Fund. But it is expected to give the U.S. access to Ukraine's valuable rare earth minerals while providing Kyiv a measure of assurance about continued American support in its grinding war with Russia.

"This agreement signals clearly to Russia that the Trump administration is committed to a peace process centered on a free, sovereign, and prosperous Ukraine over the long term," Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said in a statement. "President Trump envisioned this partnership between the American people and the Ukrainian people to show both sides' commitment to lasting peace and prosperity in Ukraine."

The announcement comes at a critical moment in the three-year war as Trump has grown increasingly frustrated with both sides. The signing comes two months after a different but similar agreement was nearly signed before being derailed in a tense Oval Office meeting involving President Donald Trump, Vice President JD Vance and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Trump has long criticized Zelenskyy, saying he didn't "have the cards" to win the war and blaming him for prolonging the killing by not giving up Crimea, but in recent days has rebuked Russian President Vladimir Putin as well, saying he was complicating negotiations with "very bad timing" in launching deadly strikes on Kyiv.

Trump said Wednesday night on NewsNation that the deal, "in theory," means that the U.S. will get more from Ukraine than it contributed. "I wanted to be protected," he said, adding that he didn't want to be looking "foolish" by not getting money back for the investment.

Ukraine praises signing as an 'equal and good international deal'

For Ukraine, the agreement is seen as key to ensuring its access to future U.S. military aid.

"Truly, this is a strategic deal for the creation of an investment partner fund," said Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal. "This is truly an equal and good international deal on joint investment in the development and restoration of Ukraine between the governments of the United States and Ukraine."

Ukraine's economy minister, Yulia Svyrydenko, flew to Washington on Wednesday to help finalize the deal.

"Together with the United States, we are creating the Fund that will attract global investment to our country," she said in a post on X after the signing.

White House had raised doubts that agreement was ready

Earlier Wednesday, Bessent said during a Cabinet meeting at the White House — hours after Ukrainian officials indicated a deal was nearly finalized — that there was still work to do.

"The Ukrainians decided last night to make some last-minute changes," Bessent said when asked about reports that Ukraine was ready to agree to the pact. "We're sure that they will reconsider that. And we are ready to sign this afternoon if they are."

He didn't elaborate as to the late changes he said Ukraine made.

The U.S. has been seeking access to more than 20 raw materials deemed strategically critical to its interests, including some non-minerals such as oil and natural gas. Among them are Ukraine's deposits of titanium, which is used for making aircraft wings and other aerospace manufacturing, and uranium, which is used for nuclear power, medical equipment and weapons. Ukraine also has lithium, graphite and manganese, which are used in electric vehicle batteries.

After Kyiv felt the initial U.S. draft of the deal disproportionately favored American interests, it introduced



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new provisions aimed at addressing those concerns.

According to Shmyhal, the latest version would establish an equal partnership between the two countries and last for 10 years. Financial contributions to a joint fund would be made in cash, and only new U.S. military aid would count toward the American share. Assistance provided before the agreement was signed would not be counted. Unlike an earlier draft, the deal would not conflict with Ukraine's path toward European Union membership — a key provision for Kyiv.

The Ukrainian Cabinet approved the agreement Wednesday, empowering Svrydenko to sign it in Washington. The deal still needs to be ratified by the Ukrainian Parliament before it can take effect.

Putin wants answers before committing to a ceasefire

The negotiations come amid rocky progress in Washington's push to stop the war.

Putin backs calls for a ceasefire before peace negotiations, "but before it's done, it's necessary to answer a few questions and sort out a few nuances," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said. Putin is also ready for direct talks with Ukraine without preconditions to seek a peace deal, he added.

"We realize that Washington wants to achieve quick progress, but we hope for understanding that the Ukrainian crisis settlement is far too complex to be done quickly," Peskov said during his daily conference call with reporters.

Trump has expressed frustration over the slow pace of progress in negotiations aimed at stopping the war. Western European leaders have accused Putin of stalling while his forces seek to grab more Ukrainian land. Russia has captured nearly a fifth of Ukraine's territory since Moscow's forces launched a full-scale invasion on Feb. 24, 2022.

Trump has long dismissed the war as a waste of lives and American taxpayer money — a complaint he repeated Wednesday during his Cabinet meeting. That could spell an end to crucial military help for Ukraine and heavier economic sanctions on Russia.

US wants both sides to speed things up

The U.S. State Department on Tuesday tried again to push both sides to move more quickly and warned that the U.S. could pull out of the negotiations if there's no progress.

"We are now at a time where concrete proposals need to be delivered by the two parties on how to end this conflict," department spokeswoman Tammy Bruce quoted Secretary of State Marco Rubio as telling her.

Russia has effectively rejected a U.S. proposal for an immediate and full 30-day ceasefire, making it conditional on a halt to Ukraine's mobilization effort and Western arms supplies to Kyiv.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov claimed Wednesday that Ukraine had accepted an unconditional truce only because it was being pushed back on the battlefield, where the bigger Russian forces have the upper hand.

UN says Ukrainian civilian casualties are on the rise

Meanwhile, Ukrainian civilians have been killed or wounded in attacks every day this year, according to a U.N. report presented Tuesday in New York.

The U.N. Human Rights Office said in the report that in the first three months of this year, it had verified 2,641 civilian casualties in Ukraine. That was almost 900 more than during the same period last year.

Also, between April 1-24, civilian casualties in Ukraine were up 46% from the same weeks in 2024, it said.

The daily grind of the war shows no sign of letting up. A nighttime Russian drone attack on Ukraine's second-largest city, Kharkiv, wounded at least 45 civilians, Ukrainian officials said.

Also Wednesday, the Ukrainian Security Service claimed its drones struck the Murom Instrument Engineering Plant in Russia's Vladimir region overnight, causing five explosions and a fire at the military facility. The claim could not be independently verified.

## Rubio calls India and Pakistan in effort to defuse crisis over Kashmir attack

By SHEIKH SAALIQ and MUNIR AHMED Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio called senior officials in India and Pakistan in an effort to defuse the crisis that followed last week's deadly attack in Kashmir, the State Department said.

Rubio urged Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar to de-escalate tensions on Wednesday.

India has vowed to punish Pakistan after accusing it of backing the attack, which Islamabad denies. The nuclear-armed rivals have since expelled each other's diplomats and citizens, ordered the border shut and closed their airspace to each other. New Delhi has suspended a crucial water-sharing treaty with Islamabad.

Soldiers on each side have also exchanged fire along their de facto border, driving tensions between India and Pakistan to their highest point in recent years.

The region of Kashmir is split between India and Pakistan and claimed by both in its entirety. The two countries have fought two wars and one limited conflict over the Himalayan territory.

U.S. State Department's Spokesperson Tammy Bruce said Rubio in his call with Jaishankar expressed sorrow over last week's massacre. He also reaffirmed the U.S.'s "commitment to cooperation with India against terrorism," Bruce said.

Jaishankar on Thursday said he discussed the last week's massacre in Indian-controlled Kashmir's Pahalgam, in which 26 tourists, mostly Hindu men, were killed, with Rubio, adding that "perpetrators, backers and planners" of the attack "must be brought to justice."

Rubio also spoke to Sharif on Wednesday evening and "emphasized the need for both sides to continue working together for peace and stability in South Asia," according to a Pakistani statement. It said Sharif rejected the Indian allegations and "urged the U.S. to impress upon India to dial down the rhetoric and act responsibly."

Public anger has swelled in India and Prime Minister Narendra Modi has vowed to pursue the attackers "to the ends of the earth." A Pakistani minister has said that Pakistan has "credible intelligence" that India is planning to attack it within days.

Indian and Pakistani troops have exchange fire over the past six nights, with each side blaming the other for firing first.

The Indian army in a statement on Thursday said it responded to "unprovoked" small arms fire from Pakistan in the Kupwara, Uri and Akhnoor sectors of Indian-controlled Kashmir. The previous day, Pakistan's state-run media said Indian forces had violated the ceasefire agreement along the Line of Control by initiating fire with heavy weapons on troops in the Mandal sector of Pakistan-controlled Kashmir. The incidents could not be independently verified.

In the past, each side has accused the other of starting border skirmishes in the Himalayan region.

## Harris accuses Trump of 'wholesale abandonment' of American ideals in major post-election speech

By MICHAEL R. BLOOD and JONATHAN J. COOPER Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Former Vice President Kamala Harris used a high-profile speech Wednesday to sharply criticize President Donald Trump amid speculation about whether she will mount another presidential campaign or opt to run for California governor.

In her most extensive public remarks since leaving office in January following her defeat to Trump, Harris said she's inspired by Americans fighting Trump's agenda despite threats to their freedom or livelihood.

"Instead of an administration working to advance America's highest ideals, we are witnessing the wholesale abandonment of those ideals," Harris said a day after Trump reached 100 days in office.

Before Wednesday, Harris had barely mentioned Trump by name since she conceded defeat to him in November.

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In a 15-minute speech, she spoke to the anxiety and confusion that have gripped many of her supporters since Trump took office but discouraged despair.

"They are counting on the notion that if they can make some people afraid, it will have a chilling effect on others. But what they have overlooked is that fear is not the only thing that's contagious," Harris said. "Courage is contagious."

Trump went after Harris in a campaign-style rally Tuesday marking his 100th day in office. He sarcastically called her a "great border czar" and a "great candidate," and repeated some of the applause lines he routinely delivered during the campaign.

Until Harris replaced Joe Biden atop the Democratic ticket last summer, Trump said, "I knew nothing about her."

Harris cautioned Americans against viewing Trump's administration as merely chaotic, casting it instead as a "high-velocity event," the culmination of extensive work on the right to remake government.

"A vessel is being used for the swift implementation of an agenda that has been decades in the making," Harris said. "An agenda to slash public education. An agenda to shrink government and then privatize its services. All while giving tax breaks to the wealthiest among us."

Harris chose a friendly audience for her return to the political arena, addressing the 20th anniversary gala for Emerge America, an organization that recruits and trains Democratic women to run for office. It grew in part from Harris' run for San Francisco district attorney in the early 2000s.

The speech was delivered below luminous chandeliers in a gold-trimmed ballroom in the landmark Palace Hotel.

Harris is ramping up her public presence as Democrats nationally search for a path forward after November's election, in which Republicans also won control of Congress. While a slate of high-profile Democrats — from governors to businessmen — seek leadership roles within the party, the former vice president retains unique influence and would reshape any future race she chooses to enter.

She praised Democrats who have been especially prolific in criticizing Trump, name-dropping lawmakers diverse in their ideology and style: Sens. Cory Booker, Chris Van Hollen, Chris Murphy and Bernie Sanders along with Reps. Jasmine Crockett, Maxwell Frost and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.

But she did not take a stand in one of her party's central divides, neither calling for mass mobilization like Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker or questioning Democratic positioning on key issues like California Gov. Gavin Newsom.

"I'm not here tonight to offer all the answers," Harris said. "But I am here to say this: You are not alone and we are all in this together."

But she warned that things will probably get worse before they get better.

"The one check, the one balance, the one power that must not fail is the voice of the people," she said.

Harris, a former state attorney general and U.S. senator from California, has not discouraged speculation that she might enter the race to replace the term-limited Newsom, himself a potential contender for president. And she has not ruled out another run for the White House.

She did not address her future Wednesday.

She continues to fundraise, using a joint committee that includes Harris for President, the Democratic National Committee and state Democratic parties. The committee, the Harris Victory Fund, reported having about \$4.5 million on hand at the end of March, according to federal records.

In recent fundraising emails, Harris has been blunt about the need for Democrats to unify ahead of the 2026 midterm elections.

Democrats need to "organize and stop Trump's agenda while electing Democrats everywhere," she wrote in recent emails. "There has never been a more important time for a strong Democratic Party — one that is willing to stand up to Donald Trump, Elon Musk and what they are doing to this country."

The event marks a homecoming of sorts. Harris lives in Los Angeles but she is from the San Francisco Bay Area, where her political career is rooted. For her first major speech since the election, she chose familiar terrain and a friendly, in some ways familial, crowd.



Lisa Gotbhi, a health care executive in San Francisco, said Harris' loss last year was a "shock," but "she's a voice we need and a leader we need. Let's get back in the fight."

## Sex assault reports in the US military fell last year, fueled by a big drop in the Army, AP learns

By LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The number of sexual assaults reported across the U.S. military dipped by nearly 4% last year, fueled by a significant drop in the Army, The Associated Press has learned. It was the second year in a row with a decrease, reversing a troubling trend that has plagued the Defense Department for more than a decade.

Senior U.S. defense officials said that while the decline is a good sign, the number of reported assaults is still too high and the military needs to do more to get victims to report the often undisclosed crime.

According to the officials, there were 8,195 reported sexual assaults in 2024 involving members of the military, compared with 8,515 in 2023. In 2022, there were 8,942 reported sexual assaults, a spike that triggered widespread alarm and led to new programs and an infusion of funding to try to combat the problem.

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because the report has not been publicly released.

According to data obtained by the AP, the overall decrease was due to a 13% drop in reported sexual assaults across the Army, which is the largest military service.

All the other services saw increases. The Navy had the largest jump of 4.3%, while the Air Force had a 2.2% increase and the Marine Corps rose by less than 1%.

Of the 8,195 total, there were 512 service members who reported an assault that happened before they entered the military. The Pentagon encourages reporting so that victims can get any support they need. In addition, 641 were civilians who said they were assaulted by a member of the military.

While reported assaults decreased, the number of sexual harassment complaints went from 2,980 in 2023 to 3,014 last year. Most were filed by female service members, and the vast majority of those accused were male.

The latest report also reflects the first full year since new prosecution procedures have been in place, putting independent lawyers in charge of those decisions and sidelining commanders after years of pressure from Congress.

The change, long resisted by Pentagon leaders, was finally forced by frustrated lawmakers who believed that too often commanders would fail to take victims' complaints seriously or would try to protect alleged perpetrators in their units.

Officials said it is too soon to tell what effect those changes are having on the prosecution process.

The number of cases in which misconduct was substantiated increased a bit last year over the 2023 total. The number of discharges and administrative actions against alleged perpetrators continued to increase, and court-martial charges declined — both trends going back several years.

Officials noted that nearly three-quarters of the court-martial cases ended in convictions, a slight increase over the previous year.

Sexual assault reports in the military have gone up for much of the past decade, except for a tiny decrease in 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic shutdown. Officials say they are optimistic about the recent decreases but say much more work needs to be done.

While it is difficult to point to any one reason for the two-year decline, the Defense Department has been making a series of changes over the past year that officials say may be contributing to the shift. The services are using an infusion of more than \$1 billion to improve programs and hire up to 2,500 personnel as part of a new "prevention workforce" and place them at military installations around the world.

So far, about 1,400 have been hired for that work, but that process has stalled this year due to the Trump administration's budget and personnel cuts across the federal government. Defense officials said they are working to spread the existing workers around to lessen the gaps until more can be hired.

The Pentagon releases a report every year on the number of sexual assaults reported by or about troops.

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But because sexual assault is a highly underreported crime, the department also does a confidential survey every two years to get a clearer picture of the problem. That survey, which is conducted online, came out last year, so it was not done this year.

Last year's survey said more than 29,000 active-duty service members said they had experienced unwanted sexual contact in the previous year, compared with nearly 36,000 in the 2021 survey, according to several defense officials. The decrease was the first in eight years.

But officials said the survey also indicates that a large number of service members never file a report.

Defense officials have long argued that an increase in reported assaults is a positive trend because so many people are reluctant to report them, both in the military and in society as a whole. Greater reporting, they say, shows there is more confidence in the reporting system and greater comfort with the support for victims.

## 2 dead as slow-moving storms flood roads across Oklahoma and Texas

By SEAN MURPHY and MARC LEVY Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — A least two people drowned when their vehicles were caught in floodwaters in Oklahoma on Wednesday as slow-moving thunderstorms inundated roads across parts of that state and Texas, authorities said, while Pennsylvania residents picked up from a powerful storm that left three people dead.

Heavy rains and severe thunderstorms will mean a heightened risk of flash flooding across the south-central U.S. through early Thursday, the National Weather Service said.

Rains drench parts of Oklahoma and Texas

The storms drenched much of southern Oklahoma and northern Texas, flooding and washing out roads and causing hundreds of flights to be canceled or delayed at major airports.

One man drowned in Oklahoma after his vehicle got swept off a Pottawatomie County highway, said Sheriff Freeland Wood.

"My deputy went in to try and save him, and he got caught up in the same mess," Wood said.

The deputy was treated at a local hospital and released, Wood said. Floodwaters closed nearly three dozen roadways in the county.

Another drowning was reported in neighboring Lincoln County after a driver's vehicle got trapped in floodwaters along a highway northwest of Prague, Oklahoma Highway Patrol spokesperson Sarah Stewart said.

Authorities in the state reported that numerous drivers were rescued from floodwaters, while some residents in the small city of Lexington were evacuated from homes as the waters rose.

Oklahoma City set a record Wednesday with 11.94 inches (30.33 centimeters) of rain in April, surpassing the 1947 mark of 11.91 inches, according to Oklahoma State Climatologist Gary McManus.

Oklahoma was poised to break the 1942 record for statewide rainfall average of 8.32 inches (21.13 centimeters) for the month, McManus said.

By Wednesday night parts of more than a dozen highways were closed due to flooding and three shelters opened in Comanche County.

In the Dallas area, departures were grounded at Dallas Love Field and Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport for part of the day because of thunderstorms, according to the Federal Aviation Administration. Hundreds of flights were canceled at DFW International Airport and dozens more at Love Field, according to FlightAware.

Pennsylvania storm knocks out power to hundreds of thousands

Tuesday night's powerful storm knocked out power to more than 425,000 customers in Pennsylvania and 40,000 in Ohio, according to PowerOutage.us. Neighboring states also reported thousands of outages. About 300,000 Pennsylvania customers and nearly 19,000 in Ohio were without power late Wednesday.

A spokesperson for Pittsburgh-based Duquesne Light called the storm's damage "unprecedented" for

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knocking out electricity, toppling trees and snapping power poles.

About 325,000 customers lost power and more than 150,000 were still in the dark in the evening, the company said on its website. The utility was bringing in about 400 people from neighboring utility contractors to help restore electricity.

Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro surveyed damage in Allegheny County on Wednesday and stopped by Fiori's, a popular pizzeria that had had its roof ripped off by the storm.

Authorities say 3 deaths are related to storm in Pennsylvania

A Pennsylvania man was electrocuted on Tuesday evening while trying to extinguish a mulch fire near a utility pole as severe weather hit the State College area, police said. The 22-year-old man died at the scene. State College police said they believe the man's death to be storm-related.

In Pittsburgh, first responders were called to the South Side Slopes area for reports of a person electrocuted by live wires, and that person died on the scene, according to the Pittsburgh Public Safety Department. The department urged residents to use extreme caution when moving through the city, citing multiple hazards such as downed trees and possible live wires.

Allegheny County officials confirmed that a 67-year-old man was killed by a fallen tree at a home in Ross Township, just outside Pittsburgh.

Teams investigating wind damage in Pittsburgh area

The National Weather Service's Pittsburgh office said destructive wind damage was seen across its region. Straight-line winds gusted over 80 mph to 90 mph (129 kph to 145 kph), which is stronger than many EF0 and EF1 tornadoes typically seen in the area, the weather service office said in a social media post.

The line of thunderstorms that swept across Pennsylvania on Tuesday night formed what's called a "bow echo," or a bow-shaped line of incredibly strong winds that are strongest at the apex of the curve, according to weather service meteorologist John Bowen in State College. Damage was most severe where the apex passed, he said.

Pittsburgh International Airport recorded its third-highest wind gust in modern history at 71 mph (114 kph), according to Liana Lupo, a meteorologist with the weather service's Pittsburgh office. A team investigated wind damage in Wilkesburg, just outside Pittsburgh, but could not conclusively say a tornado had touched down, Lupo said.

## **Court sides with Fortnite maker Epic as Apple sanctioned for defying order in App Store case**

By BARBARA ORTUTAY AP Technology Writer

A federal judge has strongly rebuked Apple, finding that the iPhone maker willfully violated a court injunction in an antitrust case filed by Fortnite maker Epic Games.

U.S. District Judge Yvonne Gonzalez Rogers had ordered Apple to lower the barriers protecting its previously exclusive payment system for in-app digital transactions and allow developers to display links to alternative options. On Wednesday she found that Apple violated a 2021 injunction that, she wrote, sought to "restrain and prohibit the iPhone maker's anticompetitive conduct" and pricing.

"Apple's continued attempts to interfere with competition will not be tolerated," Gonzalez Rogers said in the ruling, which held Apple in contempt.

She ordered that Apple "no longer impede developers' ability to communicate with users nor will they levy or impose a new commission on off-app purchases."

Epic CEO and founder Tim Sweeney said on X the company will return Fortnite to Apple's U.S. App Store next week.

Apple did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Epic first filed an antitrust lawsuit in 2020 alleging that Apple had built an illegal monopoly around its popular App Store that makes billions of dollars annually from a then-exclusive payment system collecting commissions ranging from 15% to 30% on in-app commerce.



Although Gonzalez Rogers had rejected the monopoly claims, she ordered Apple to lower the barriers protecting its previously exclusive payment system for in-app digital transactions and allow developers to display links to alternative options. The Supreme Court rejected Apple's appeal in the case in January 2024.

"In stark contrast to Apple's initial in-court testimony, contemporaneous business documents reveal that Apple knew exactly what it was doing and at every turn chose the most anticompetitive option," the judge wrote Wednesday. She accused the company's Alex Roman, vice-president for finance, of "outright" lying under oath.

"Internally, (longtime Apple executive) Phillip Schiller had advocated that Apple comply with the injunction, but (CEO) Tim Cook ignored Schiller and instead allowed Chief Financial Officer Luca Maestri and his finance team to convince him otherwise. Cook chose poorly," Gonzalez Rogers wrote.

The judge referred the matter to the U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of California to investigate whether criminal contempt proceedings are appropriate.

## **The Senate votes down resolution to block Trump's global tariffs amid economic turmoil**

By MARY CLARE JALONICK and MATT BROWN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senate Republicans narrowly voted down a Democratic resolution Wednesday that would have blocked global tariffs announced by Donald Trump earlier this month, giving the president a modest win as lawmakers in both parties have remained skeptical of his trade agenda.

Trump announced the far-reaching tariffs on nearly all U.S. trading partners April 2 and then reversed himself a few days later after a market meltdown, suspending the import taxes for 90 days. Amid the uncertainty for both U.S. consumers and businesses, the Commerce Department said Wednesday that the U.S. economy shrank 0.3% from January through March, the first drop in three years.

The 49-49 vote came weeks after the Senate approved a resolution that would have have thwarted Trump's ability to impose tariffs on Canada. That measure passed 51-48 with the votes of four Republicans — Sens. Susan Collins of Maine, Lisa Murkowski of Alaska and Mitch McConnell and Rand Paul of Kentucky. But McConnell — who has been sharply critical of the tariffs but had not said how he would vote — and Democratic Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse were absent Wednesday, denying Democrats the votes for passage.

Democrats said their primary aim was to put Republicans on the record either way and to try to reassert congressional powers.

"The Senate cannot be an idle spectator in the tariff madness," said Oregon Sen. Ron Wyden, a lead sponsor of the resolution.

Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer said the dismal economic numbers should be a "wakeup call" to Republicans.

Wary of a rebuke to Trump, GOP leaders encouraged their conference not to vote for the resolution, even as many of them remain unconvinced about the tariffs. Vice President JD Vance attended a Senate GOP luncheon Tuesday with U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer, who assured senators that the administration is making progress toward trade deals with individual countries.

Collins said the close vote "demonstrates that there is unease with the president's plan."

"It's partially the president's plan is still evolving but many of us are hearing from employers back home about the impact of the tariffs in a negative way," she said.

Some Republicans argued that the vote was a political stunt. North Carolina Sen. Thom Tillis said he backs separate legislation by Iowa Sen. Chuck Grassley that would give Congress increased power over determining tariffs but would voted on the resolution, which he said is only about "making a point."

Several Republicans defended Trump's tariffs — and said they were willing to give him time to figure it out.

"People are willing to give the president an opportunity to prove that the new system works," said Louisiana Sen. John Kennedy.

Texas Sen. John Cornyn said the vote shows that senators "believe that the President's policies deserve to be tried and see if they're successful."

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Democrats say the Republicans' failure to stand up to Trump could have dire consequences. "The only thing Donald Trump's tariffs have succeeded in is raising the odds of recession and sending markets into a tailspin," said Schumer, D-N.Y. "Today, they have to choose – stick with Trump or stand with your states."

The Democratic resolution forced a vote under a statute that allows them to try to terminate the national economic emergency Trump used to levy the tariffs.

Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren called it a "fake" emergency that Trump is using to impose his "on again, off again, red light, green light tariffs."

The tariffs "are pushing our economy off a cliff," Warren said.

Republicans held a procedural vote after the tied vote to ensure that Democrats could not bring the resolution up again, Senate Majority Leader John Thune told reporters afterward. Vice President J.D. Vance came to the Capitol to break the tie and ensure they dismissed the resolution for good.

The Republican president has tried to reassure voters that his tariffs will not provoke a recession as his administration has focused on China, raising tariffs on Chinese goods to 145% even as he paused the others. He told his Cabinet Wednesday morning that his tariffs meant China was "having tremendous difficulty because their factories are not doing business."

Trump said the U.S. does not really need imports from the world's dominant manufacturer. "Maybe the children will have two dolls instead of 30 dolls," he said. "So maybe the two dolls will cost a couple bucks more than they would normally."

## UK military launches airstrikes with US targeting Yemen's Houthi rebels

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The British military launched airstrikes with the United States targeting Yemen's Houthi rebels, officials said early Wednesday, their first attack in Washington's new intense campaign targeting the Iran-backed group.

The United Kingdom offered a detailed explanation for launching the strike, in a departure from the U.S., which has offered few details about what it says are more than 1,000 targets it has hit since beginning its campaign on March 15.

The campaign, called "Operation Rough Rider," has been targeting the rebels as the Trump administration negotiates with their main benefactor, Iran, over Tehran's rapidly advancing nuclear program.

UK strike hits near Yemen's capital

The U.K. Defense Ministry described the site attacked as "a cluster of buildings, used by the Houthis to manufacture drones of the type used to attack ships in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, located some 15 miles (25 kilometers) south of Sanaa."

Royal Air Force Typhoon FGR4s took part in the raid, dropping Paveway IV guided bombs, the ministry added.

"The strike was conducted after dark, when the likelihood of any civilians being in the area was reduced yet further," the ministry said.

The British offered no information on the damage done in the strike, nor whether they believed anyone had been killed.

The U.S. military's Central Command didn't acknowledge the strike.

"This action was taken in response to a persistent threat from the Houthis to freedom of navigation," U.K. Defense Secretary John Healey said. "A 55% drop in shipping through the Red Sea has already cost billions, fueling regional instability and risking economic security for families in the U.K."

The Houthis reported several strikes around Yemen's capital, Sanaa, which the group has held since 2014. Other strikes hit around Saada.

The British have taken part in airstrikes alongside the U.S. since the Biden administration began its campaign of strikes targeting the Houthis back in January 2024. However, this new strike is the first to see the British involved in the campaign under U.S. President Donald Trump.

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UK strike comes after US allegedly hit prison

The joint U.K.-U.S. strike follows an alleged U.S. airstrike on Monday that hit a prison holding African migrants, killing at least 68 people and wounding 47 others. The U.S. military said it was investigating.

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 U.S. campaign.

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, targeting the Houthis because of the group's attacks on shipping in the Red Sea, a crucial global trade route, and on Israel.

The Houthis are the last militant group in Iran's self-described "Axis of Resistance" that is capable of regularly attacking Israel. The rebels began their attacks over the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip and the Israeli decision to block the flow of aid to Palestinians.

The American strikes have drawn controversy in the United States over Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth's use of the unclassified Signal messaging app to post sensitive details about the attacks.

Early Thursday, Hegseth directly threatened Iran in a message on the social platform X.

"Message to IRAN: We see your LETHAL support to The Houthis. We know exactly what you are doing," he wrote. "You know very well what the U.S. Military is capable of — and you were warned. You will pay the CONSEQUENCE at the time and place of our choosing."

## Kuwait frees 10 more Americans in the second release in as many months

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Kuwait has released an additional 10 American detainees, bringing to nearly two dozen the total number freed by the country in the past two months, U.S. officials told The Associated Press on Wednesday.

The pardons of 23 Americans, done as a goodwill gesture by a U.S. ally, have yielded a quick succession of prisoner releases in the early months of a Trump administration that has sought to make hostage and detainee issues a foreign policy priority.

The prisoners, both men and women, include military contractors and veterans held for years on drug charges and other offenses by the small, oil-rich nation. One of them was said by supporters to have been coerced into signing a false confession and endured physical violence and threats against his wife and daughter.

Ten others were released in March, weeks after a visit to Kuwait by Adam Boehler, who is serving as the Trump administration's envoy for hostage affairs. Other countries, including Venezuela, have released large numbers of Americans over a period of years, but it's unusual for so many U.S. citizens to be freed by a foreign nation in such a short period of time as Kuwait has done.

"We flew out, we sat down with the Kuwaitis, and they said, 'Listen, no one's ever asked before at this level' for the release of the Americans, Boehler told the AP.

The releases were not done as part of a swap and the U.S. was not asked to give up anything in return.

"They've been extremely responsive, and their view is the United States is a huge ally. They know it's a priority for (President Donald Trump) to bring Americans home," Boehler said. "I credit it to the Kuwaiti understanding that we've stood up for them historically and they know that these things are important for the president."

Kuwait is considered a major non-NATO ally of the U.S. The U.S. and Kuwait have had a close military partnership since America launched the 1991 Gulf War to expel Iraqi troops after Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, with some 13,500 American troops stationed in Kuwait at Camp Arifjan and Ali al-Salem Air Base.

But the country also has detained many American military contractors on drug charges, in some cases for years. Their families have alleged that their loved ones faced abuse while imprisoned in a country that bans alcohol and has strict laws regarding drugs. Others have criticized Kuwaiti police for bringing



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trumped-up charges and manufacturing evidence used against them — allegations never acknowledged by the autocratic nation ruled by a hereditary emir.

A spokesperson for the Kuwaiti embassy in Washington didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

The Americans freed Wednesday "maintain their innocence, and it's important to note none of these cases had an identified victim, and all of them were built on supposed confessions taken in Arabic without translation," according to a statement from Jonathan Franks, a private consultant working on cases involving American hostages and detainees who represented nine of the 10 people released. He spent weeks in the country trying to negotiate the releases.

He credited the Trump administration for looking "for reasons to bring Americans home" even when they are not designated by the U.S. government as having been wrongfully detained. He said "these Americans, mostly veterans, lost years with their families."

Among those freed Wednesday was Tony Holden, an HVAC technician and career defense contractor. He was working in support of Camp Arifjan at the time of his November 2022 arrest, when his family and supporters allege he was "set up by corrupt Kuwaiti police looking to earn bonuses."

His supporters say his wife and daughter were physically threatened, that he was coerced into signing a written confession in Arabic and that his drug possession charge and sentence came in spite of him testing negative in a drug test and abstaining for religious reasons from drug and alcohol use.

"We are grateful to see Tony Holden released today," said Stacia George, chief engagement officer of Global Reach, a nonprofit organization that has advocated for Holden's release. "Tony is an innocent man who was held unjustly for 902 days and this gives him the ability to come home to his family and restart his life."

Added U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio: "We celebrate his release and return to the United States."

A minor is also being released in the coming days but is expected to remain in Kuwait, a U.S. official said.

## **Roberts might hold key Supreme Court vote over first publicly funded religious charter school**

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Chief Justice John Roberts appears to hold the key vote over whether the Supreme Court will allow the nation's first publicly funded religious charter school in Oklahoma.

Roberts was the only justice whose vote seemed in doubt after the court heard more than two hours of arguments Wednesday in a major culture-war clash involving the separation of church and state.

The court seemed otherwise deeply divided.

Four other conservative justices seemed firmly on the side of the St. Isidore of Seville Catholic Virtual School and the state charter school board that approved it.

"They're not asking for special treatment, not asking for favoritism," Justice Brett Kavanaugh said. "They're just saying, 'Don't treat us worse because we're religious.'"

The three liberal justices seemed just as likely to vote to affirm an Oklahoma Supreme Court ruling that held that the taxpayer-funded school would entangle church and state in violation of the First Amendment.

"Charter schools are in every respect equivalent to regular public schools," Justice Elena Kagan said.

Justice Amy Coney Barrett recused herself without explanation. Barrett previously taught law at Notre Dame and is close friends with Notre Dame law professor Nicole Garnett, a leading proponent of publicly funded religious charter schools.

If Roberts sides with the liberals, the court would be tied 4-4, an outcome that would leave the state court decision in place, but would leave the issue unresolved nationally.

If he joins his conservative colleagues, on the other hand, the court could find that the taxpayer-funded school is in line with a string of high court decisions that have allowed public funds to flow to religious entities. Those rulings were based on a different part of the First Amendment that protects religious freedom.

Roberts wrote the last three of those decisions. He acknowledged at one point that the court had previ-

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ously ruled that states "couldn't exclude religious participants," suggesting support for St. Isidore.

But he also said the state's involvement in this case is "much more comprehensive" than in the earlier ones, a point that could lead him in the other direction.

St. Isidore, a K-12 online school, had planned to start classes for its first 200 enrollees last fall, with part of its mission to evangelize its students in the Catholic faith.

Opponents warn a decision to allow the school to open would sap money from public schools and possibly upend the rules governing charter schools in almost every state.

Greg Garre, the lawyer defending the Oklahoma decision, repeatedly urged the justices to consider the broad impact of a ruling for the school.

"This is going to have a dramatic effect on charter schools across the country," Garre said.

Representing the state charter school board, lawyer James Campbell said Oklahoma's charter school law discriminates against religion by encouraging diversity, but "deeming religion to be the wrong kind of diversity."

The case comes to the court amid efforts, mainly in conservative-led states, to insert religion into public schools. Those include a challenged Louisiana requirement that the Ten Commandments be posted in classrooms and a mandate from Oklahoma's state schools superintendent that the Bible be placed in public school classrooms.

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Opponents warn a decision to allow the school to open would sap money from public schools and possibly upend the rules governing charter schools in almost every state.

The state board and the school are backed by an array of Republican-led states and religious and conservative groups, though the case has divided some of Oklahoma's Republican leaders.

Gov. Kevin Stitt and Superintendent of Public Instruction Ryan Walters support using public funds for religious schools, while Attorney General Gentner Drummond has opposed the idea and sued to overturn the state board's approval of St. Isidore.

A key issue in the case is whether the school is public or private. Charter schools are deemed public in Oklahoma and the other 45 states and the District of Columbia where they operate. North Dakota recently enacted legislation allowing for charter schools.

They are free and open to all, receive state funding, abide by antidiscrimination laws and submit to oversight of curriculum and testing. But they also are run by independent boards that are not part of local public school systems.

Just under 4 million American schoolchildren, about 8%, are enrolled in charter schools.

## **'The unthinkable was happening,' Weinstein accuser says of alleged 2006 sex assault**

By JENNIFER PELTZ and MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Five years after she first told her story to a jury, one of Harvey Weinstein's accusers testified anew Wednesday that he held her down on a bed and forced oral sex on her after she told him: "No, no — it's not going to happen."

"The unthinkable was happening," Miriam Haley testified, dabbing her eyes as she recalled the alleged July 2006 assault.

Weinstein, sitting between his lawyers, shook his head as she spoke. The 73-year-old former Hollywood honcho has pleaded not guilty and denies sexually assaulting anyone.

Haley, who has also gone by the name Mimi Haley, is the first of Weinstein's accusers to testify at his rape retrial. It's happening because New York's highest court overturned his 2020 conviction.

Haley testified at the original trial, sometimes breaking into sobs. Her demeanor Wednesday was calm, if briefly tearful, as she answered prosecutors' graphic questions about the alleged assault.

While much of her account mirrored her earlier testimony, there were some additional details.

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She recalled Weinstein asking, "Don't you think we're much closer now?" after either the alleged assault or a subsequent occasion when she says she had unwanted, but not forced, sex with him.

She also recalled telling him after the second encounter, "You know you can't keep doing this."

Weinstein's attorneys haven't yet had their chance to question Haley and potentially try to poke holes in her account. The defense has argued that all of Weinstein's accusers consented to sexual encounters with him in hopes of getting work in show business.

Haley describes alleged assault

Born in Finland and raised in Sweden, Haley, 48, is a former entertainment producer now working in advertising. She met Weinstein through a mutual connection.

Haley was briefly a production assistant on the Weinstein-produced reality show "Project Runway" and had a series of interactions with him that were sometimes inappropriate and suggestive, but other times professional and polite, she told jurors over two days of testimony so far.

She insisted she was only looking for professional opportunity — not sex or romance — with the then-powerful producer of such Oscar winners as "Shakespeare in Love" and "Gangs of New York."

Haley said she accepted an invitation to visit Weinstein's Manhattan apartment one early evening because it would have been odd to decline — she was due to fly on his company's dime to Los Angeles the next day to see a premiere of the company's film "Clerks II."

After she and Weinstein briefly chatted on his living room sofa, he lunged to kiss her, she testified. She said she leaped up and rebuffed him, but he grabbed her and forcibly backed her into a bedroom.

Then, Haley said, he pinned her down on a bed and performed oral sex on her, ignoring her pleas that she didn't want it.

Afterward, she felt shocked, disgusted and humiliated. She and two of her friends testified that she soon told them that Weinstein had sexually assaulted her.

But Haley said she didn't call police because she feared getting in immigration trouble for having worked on "Project Runway" while on a tourist visa.

Haley said she agreed to meet Weinstein at a Manhattan hotel a few weeks after the alleged assault, expecting to talk in the lobby and hoping "to navigate the whole situation in a way that would make me feel better about myself and would have the most upside to me."

She was directed instead to his room, where he promptly steered her onto the bed, she testified. She said she didn't want sex but didn't physically resist because she felt stupid for agreeing to meet him.

Still, "I made it clear at all occasions when he made advances that I didn't want to go there," she said.

Haley stayed in contact with Weinstein

Haley didn't cut off contact with Weinstein. Over the next few months and years, she sometimes called Weinstein and sent cordial emails to him and his assistant, from whom she also asked for a plane ticket to London, according to testimony and documents.

In the messages, she talked show business, asked for work and signed off with such phrases as "lots of love," an expression she told jurors she used liberally. In a February 2007 letter that wasn't seen at the first trial, she told Weinstein she'd "love you forever... and ever..." if he invested in an online TV show idea of hers.

Haley testified that she addressed Weinstein warmly to try to win his professional backing, nothing else, and that she "suppressed a lot of things" in order to cope.

At the first trial, Weinstein's lawyers emphasized Haley's continued exchanges with him. This time, prosecutors delved into those contacts more extensively, perhaps seeking to blunt them as an attack line for the defense.

Weinstein's retrial includes charges related to Haley and another accuser from the original trial, Jessica Mann. Mann alleges that Weinstein raped her in 2013.

He's also being tried, for the first time, on an allegation of forcing oral sex on former model Kaja Sokola in 2006.

Mann and Sokola also are expected to testify.



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The Associated Press generally does not name people who allege they have been sexually assaulted unless they give permission for their names to be used. Haley, Mann and Sokola have done so.

## **A Palestinian student at Columbia is freed after his arrest at a citizenship interview**

By AMANDA SWINHART and HOLLY RAMER The Associated Press

BURLINGTON, Vt. (AP) — A judge on Wednesday released a Palestinian student at Columbia University who led protests against Israel's war in Gaza and was arrested by immigration officials during an interview about finalizing his U.S. citizenship.

Immigration authorities have arrested and detained college students from around the country since the first days of the Trump administration, many of whom participated in campus protests over the Israel-Hamas war, which has killed more than 52,000 Palestinians.

Mohsen Mahdawi is among the first of those students to win his freedom after challenging an arrest. He walked out of a Vermont courthouse Wednesday and led hundreds of supporters in chants including "No fear" and "Free Palestine." He said people must come together to defend both democracy and humanity.

"Never give up on the idea that justice will prevail," he said. "We want to stand up for humanity, because the rest of the world — not only Palestine — is watching us. And what is going to happen in America is going to affect the rest of the world."

Mahdawi, 34, has been a legal permanent resident for 10 years. He was in a Vermont state prison since April 14. In his release order, U.S. District Judge Geoffrey Crawford said Mahdawi has raised a "substantial claim that the government arrested him to stifle speech with which it disagrees."

"Even if he were a firebrand, his conduct is protected by the First Amendment," the judge wrote, adding that offending political opponents or alarming the State Department doesn't make him dangerous enough to justify detention.

The U.S. government argues they can remove Mahdawi from the country under the Immigration and Nationality Act. That's because Secretary of State Marco Rubio says his presence and activities "would have serious adverse foreign policy consequences and would compromise a compelling U.S. foreign policy interest."

A government attorney said Wednesday that Mahdawi is a national security threat, pointing to a 2015 FBI investigation into allegations that he made threatening comments about Jews at a gun shop — but the judge said the FBI appears to have determined those accusations were fabricated.

Mahdawi will appear remotely before an immigration judge in Louisiana on Thursday, his lawyers said. The U.S. attorney's office did not respond to messages seeking comment on whether it will appeal his release.

According to a court filing, Mahdawi was born in a refugee camp in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and moved to the United States in 2014. He organized campus protests at Columbia until March 2024 and cofounded the school's Palestinian Student Union with Mahmoud Khalil, another Palestinian permanent resident of the U.S. and graduate student who was arrested in March.

Khalil has been held for nearly eight weeks in a Louisiana detention center, missing the birth of his first child. An immigration judge ruled that Khalil can be forced out of the country as a national security risk.

In another high-profile case, Rümeysa Öztürk, a Tufts University student from Turkey, was detained in March over what her lawyers say is apparent retaliation for an op-ed piece she co-wrote in the student newspaper.

More than 1,000 college students nationwide have had their visas revoked or their legal status terminated since late March, according to an Associated Press review. The federal government has since announced it will reverse the termination of legal status for international students after many filed court challenges, a government lawyer said Friday.

The judge referred to the Öztürk case and others like it in his ruling, saying such arrests are reminiscent of nationwide raids targeting suspected anarchists and communists in 1919 and 1920 and deportations during the McCarthy era of the 1950s.

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"Security is like liberty in that many are the crimes committed in its name," he wrote, quoting from a dissent in a 1950 case.

Mahdawi's release allows him to travel outside his home state of Vermont and attend graduation next month in New York. He recently completed coursework at Columbia and planned to begin a master's degree program there in the fall.

The Ivy League university has faced criticism from some students for agreeing to implement a host of policy changes demanded by the Trump administration. After Mahdawi's release, school spokesperson Millie Wert said every person in the country deserves due process regardless of their citizenship status.

Outside the Vermont courthouse, Mahdawi directly addressed President Donald Trump and his Cabinet, saying, "I am not afraid of you."

"If there is no fear, what is it replaced with?" he said. "Love. Love is our way."

## Wall Street storms back from early losses, echoing its manic moves through a historic April

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Much like its wild month of April, a scary Wednesday for Wall Street found a gentler ending as U.S. stocks stormed back from steep early losses to continue their manic swings amid uncertainty about what President Donald Trump's trade war will do to the economy.

The S&P 500 rose 0.1% to extend its winning streak to a seventh day. The Dow Jones Industrial Average added 141 points, or 0.3%, while the Nasdaq composite edged down by 0.1%.

It was a stunning reversal after the S&P 500 dropped as much as 2.3% and the Dow fell 780 points in early trading. Stocks initially tumbled after a report suggested the U.S. economy may have shrunk at the start of the year, falling well short of economists' expectations, in a sharp turnaround from the economy's solid growth at the end of last year.

Importers rushed to bring products into the country before tariffs could raise their prices, which helped drag on the country's overall gross domestic product.

Such data raised the threat of a worst-case scenario called "stagflation," one where the economy stagnates yet inflation remains high. Economists fear it because the Federal Reserve has no good tools to fix both problems at the same time. If the Fed were to try to help one problem by adjusting interest rates, it would likely make the other worse.

"Even if today's weak GDP may have partially reflected companies trying to get ahead of tariffs, it was still a stagflation warning shot over the bow of the economy," according to Ellen Zentner, chief economic strategist for Morgan Stanley Wealth Management.

But some better news came later in the day when a report said the measure of inflation that the Fed likes to use slowed in March. Inflation decelerated to 2.3%, closer to the Fed's goal of 2%, from February's reading of 2.7%. Stocks began paring their losses almost immediately after the report.

If inflation keeps trending lower, it would give the Fed more leeway to cut interest rates in order to juice the economy. Expectations are building for the Fed to cut its main interest rate at least four times by the end of this year, according to data from CME Group, though it likely won't begin at its next meeting next week.

Much of Wednesday's economic data raised concerns about a weakening economy. A report on the job market from ADP suggested employers outside the government may have hired far fewer workers in April than economists expected, less than half.

It's discouraging because a relatively solid job market has been one of the linchpins keeping the U.S. economy stable. A more comprehensive report on the job market from the U.S. government will arrive on Friday.

Wednesday's reports add to worries that Trump's trade war may drag the U.S. economy into a recession. The president's on-again-off-again rollout of tariffs has created deep uncertainty about what's to come, which could cause damage by itself.

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"I'm not taking a credit or discredit for the stock market," Trump said Wednesday. "I'm just saying we inherited a mess."

Uncertainty around Trump's tariffs has already triggered historic swings for financial markets, from stocks to bonds to the value of the U.S. dollar, that battered investors through April. The S&P 500 briefly dropped nearly 20% below its all-time high set earlier this year, with scary headlines at one point warning of the potential for the worst April since the Great Depression.

But the uncertainty has been two-sided, and hopes that Trump may relent on some of his tariffs helped the S&P 500 claw back a chunk of its losses. It ended April with a decline of just 0.8%, much milder than March's, and it's only 9.4% below its record.

Stronger-than-expected profit reports from big U.S. companies have helped support the market, and Seagate Technology jumped 11.6% for one of Wednesday's biggest gains after the maker of data storage joined the parade.

Gains for other storage makers also helped to offset drops for stocks within the artificial-intelligence industry, which have been pulling back on worries their prices shot too high in prior years.

Super Micro Computer warned that some customers delayed purchases in the latest quarter, which caused the maker of servers used in AI and other computing to slash its forecast for sales and profit. Its stock tumbled 11.5% for the largest loss in the S&P 500.

Starbucks sank 5.7% after the coffee chain fell short of analysts' forecasts for revenue and profit in the latest quarter. Starbucks did log its first quarterly sales increase in more than a year, but acknowledged that its turnaround effort is far from complete.

All told, the S&P 500 rose 8.23 points to 5,569.06. The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 141.74 to 40,669.36, and the Nasdaq composite fell 14.98 to 17,446.34.

It still marked the close of a third straight losing month for the S&P 500. Stocks in the energy industry took some of the hardest hits, dropping over three times more than any of the other 11 sectors that make up the index.

Halliburton, an oil services company, lost nearly 22% in April as the price of crude slid on worries that tariffs will weaken the global economy.

In the bond market, Treasury yields fell as investors ratcheted up their expectations for cuts to interest rates by the Fed. The yield on the 10-year Treasury eased to 4.17% from 4.19% late Tuesday.

Lower interest rates in general give boosts to prices for stocks and other investments.

Yields have largely been sinking since an unsettling, unusual spurt higher earlier this month rattled both Wall Street and the U.S. government. That rise had suggested investors worldwide may have been losing faith in the U.S. bond market's reputation as a safe place to park cash.

In stock markets abroad, indexes rose across much of Europe after finishing mixed in Asia.

## Trump officials must report efforts, if any, to return Kilmar Abrego Garcia, judge rules

By BEN FINLEY Associated Press

A federal judge on Wednesday again directed the Trump administration to provide information about its efforts so far, if any, to comply with her order to retrieve Kilmar Abrego Garcia from an El Salvador prison.

U.S. District Judge Paula Xinis in Maryland temporarily halted her directive for information at the administration's request last week. But with the seven-day pause expiring at 5 p.m., she set May deadlines for officials to provide sworn testimony on anything they have done to return him to the U.S.

Abrego Garcia, 29, has been imprisoned in his native El Salvador for nearly seven weeks, while his mistaken deportation has become a flash point for President Donald Trump's immigration policies and his increasing friction with the U.S. courts.

The president acknowledged to ABC News on Tuesday that he could call El Salvador's president and have Abrego Garcia sent back. But Trump doubled down on his claims that Abrego Garcia is a member of the MS-13 gang.



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"And if he were the gentleman that you say he is, I would do that," Trump told ABC's Terry Moran in the Oval Office.

Police in Maryland had identified Abrego Garcia as an MS-13 gang member in 2019 based off his tattoos, Chicago Bulls hoodie and the word of a criminal informant. But Abrego Garcia was never charged. His attorneys say the informant claimed Abrego Garcia was in an MS-13 chapter in New York, where he's never lived.

The gang identification by local police prompted the Trump administration to expel Abrego Garcia in March to an infamous El Salvador prison. But the deportation violated a U.S. immigration judge's order in 2019 that protected him from being sent to El Salvador.

Abrego Garcia had demonstrated to the immigration court that he likely faced persecution by local Salvadoran gangs that terrorized him and his family, court records state. He fled to the U.S. at 16 and lived in Maryland for about 14 years, working construction, getting married and raising three kids.

Xinis ordered the Trump administration to return him nearly a month ago, on April 4. The Supreme Court ruled April 10 that the administration must work to bring him back.

But the case only became more heated. Xinis lambasted a government lawyer who couldn't explain what, if anything, the Trump administration has done. She then ordered officials to provide sworn testimony and other information to document their efforts.

The Trump administration appealed. But a federal appeals court backed Xinis' order for information in a blistering ruling, saying, "we shall not micromanage the efforts of a fine district judge attempting to implement the Supreme Court's recent decision."

The Trump administration resisted, saying the information Xinis sought involved protected state secrets and government deliberations. She in turn scolded government lawyers for ignoring her orders and acting in "bad faith."

The judge has directed U.S. attorneys to provide specific justifications for their claims of privileged information. But her order could face continued resistance.

When a reporter asked Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Wednesday whether he has had any conversations with El Salvador about returning Abrego Garcia, Rubio said foreign policy should not be discussed with judges.

"Well, I'll never tell you that. And you know who else I'll never tell? A judge," Rubio said during a Cabinet meeting. "Because the conduct of all foreign policy belongs to the president of the United States and the executive branch, not some judge."

Meanwhile, attorneys for Abrego Garcia said Wednesday that the administration was moving toward bringing him back when it asked for a pause in the court case.

The Justice Department did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment on the law firm's statement.

"We agreed to that request because we understood it to be made in good faith," the firm, Murray Osorio PLLC, said in a news release. "Unfortunately, one week later, it remains unclear what, if anything, the government has done in the past seven days to bring our client home to his family."

## Lacrosse hazing included high schoolers staging armed abduction, prosecutor says

SYRACUSE, N.Y. (AP) — Members of a high school lacrosse program in upstate New York are accused of staging an armed abduction of younger players in a stunt that "went way beyond hazing," prosecutors said this week.

All 11 people believed to be involved in the events linked to the team at Westhill High School in suburban Syracuse have turned themselves in to face charges, the Onondaga District Attorney's office said Wednesday. They were given appearance tickets for a later date.

District Attorney William Fitzpatrick had given the students until Thursday to come forward voluntarily and face only misdemeanor charges of unlawful imprisonment. He warned Tuesday that those who did

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not would be charged with more serious felony kidnapping.

Fitzpatrick said the group was part of a "ruse" that involved inviting younger players to watch a game and then go to McDonald's. But one player was tied up, blindfolded and put into the trunk of a car.

"I cannot adequately express to this community the level of stupidity and lack of judgment involved in this case," Fitzpatrick said. "This goes way, way beyond hazing."

Fitzpatrick said a person driving the younger players on the team pretended to get lost and pulled over in a remote area where other participants in the prank lay in wait in the woods, armed with at least one knife and a weapon that appeared to be a gun.

That's when the students launched the fake abduction.

There were at least five alleged victims set up in the stunt, but some managed to get away, Fitzpatrick said.

The one who didn't escape had his hands tied and some sort of hood placed over his head. He was led to believe he would be abandoned, but was eventually returned home. While the student wasn't hurt physically, "emotionally, that's going to be long term," Fitzpatrick said.

"This is not lighting a bag on fire on Halloween and sticking it in your driveway, this is criminal activity," he said, adding that it could have led to a fatal shooting if police had come across the scene and saw "a kid with a hood over his head being abducted at gunpoint."

The events were captured on video, and Fitzpatrick said the local sheriff's office identified the 11 people — some of 18 years old — whom they believe participated either directly or indirectly.

Asked if all were members of the boys' lacrosse team, Fitzpatrick said it "appears that way, but I don't know that." He noted reports that the district's superintendent had canceled the rest of the varsity team's season.

Messages seeking comment were left for Westhill School District Superintendent Steve Dunham.

In a statement provided to Syracuse.com earlier this week, he said: "Our top priority is always the physical safety, mental health and well-being of our students" and that "any behavior that negatively affects any of these aspects for other students will be addressed promptly and appropriately according to our Code of Conduct."

## Visa wants to give artificial intelligence 'agents' your credit card

By MATT O'BRIEN AP Technology Writer

Artificial intelligence "agents" are supposed to be more than chatbots. The tech industry has spent months pitching AI personal assistants that know what you want and can do real work on your behalf.

So far, they're not doing much.

Visa hopes to change that by giving them your credit card. Set a budget and some preferences and these AI agents — successors to ChatGPT and its chatbot peers — could find and buy you a sweater, weekly groceries or an airplane ticket.

"We think this could be really important," said Jack Forestell, Visa's chief product and strategy officer, in an interview. "Transformational, on the order of magnitude of the advent of e-commerce itself."

Visa announced Wednesday it is partnering with a group of leading AI chatbot developers — among them U.S. companies Anthropic, Microsoft, OpenAI and Perplexity, and France's Mistral — to connect their AI systems to Visa's payments network. Visa is also working with IBM, online payment company Stripe and phone-maker Samsung on the initiative. Pilot projects begin Wednesday, ahead of more widespread usage expected next year.

The San Francisco payment processing company is betting that what seems futuristic now could become a convenient alternative to our most mundane shopping tasks in the near future. It has spent the past six months working with AI developers to address technical obstacles that must be overcome before the average consumer is going to use it.

For emerging AI companies, Visa's backing could also boost their chances of competing with tech giants Amazon and Google, which dominate digital commerce and are developing their own AI agents.

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The tech industry is already full of demonstrations of the capabilities of what it calls agentic AI, though few are yet found in the real world. Most are still refashioned versions of large language models — the generative AI technology behind chatbots that can write emails, summarize documents or help people code. Trained on huge troves of data, they can scour the internet and bring back recommendations for things to buy, but they have a harder time going beyond that.

"The early incarnations of agent-based commerce are starting to do a really good job on the shopping and discovery dimension of the problem, but they are having tremendous trouble on payments," Forestell said. "You get to this point where the agents literally just turn it back around and say, 'OK, you go buy it.'

Visa sees itself as having a key role in giving AI agents easier and trusted access to the cash they need to make purchases.

"The payments problem is not something the AI platforms can solve by themselves," Forestell said. "That's why we started working with them."

The new AI initiative comes nearly a year after Visa revealed major changes to how credit and debit cards will operate in the U.S., making physical cards and their 16-digit numbers increasingly irrelevant.

Many consumers are already getting used to digital payment systems such as Apple Pay that turn their phones into a credit card. A similar process of vetting someone's digital credentials would authorize AI agents to work on a customer's behalf, in a way Forestell says must assure buyers, banks and merchants that the transactions are legitimate and that Visa will handle disputes.

Forestell said that doesn't mean AI agents will take over the entire shopping experience, but it might be useful for errands that either bore some people — like groceries, home improvement items or even Christmas lists — or are too complicated, like travel bookings. In those situations, some people might want an agent that "just powers through it and automatically goes and does stuff for us," Forestell said.

Other shopping experiences, such as for luxury goods, are a form of entertainment and many customers still want to immerse themselves in the choices and comparisons, Forestell said. In that case, he envisions AI agents still offering assistance but staying in the background.

And what about credit card debt? The credit card balances of American consumers hit \$1.21 trillion at the end of last year, according to the Federal Reserve of New York.

Forestell says consumers will give their AI agents clear spending limits and conditions that should give them confidence that the human is still in control. At first, the AI agents are likely to come back to buyers to make sure they are OK with a specific airplane ticket. Over time, those agents might get more autonomy to "go spend up to \$1,500 on any airline to get me from A to B," he said.

Part of what is attracting some AI developers to the Visa partnership is that, with a customer's consent, an AI agent can also tap into a lot of data about past credit card purchases.

"Visa has the ability for a user to consent to share streams of their transaction history with us," said Dmitry Shevelenko, Perplexity's chief business officer. "When we generate a recommendation -- say you're asking, 'What are the best laptops?' — we would know what are other transactions you've made and the revealed preferences from that."

Perplexity's chatbot can already book hotels and make other purchases, but it's still in the early stages of AI commerce, Shevelenko says. The San Francisco startup has also, along with ChatGPT maker OpenAI, told a federal court it would consider buying Google's internet browser, Chrome, if the U.S. forces a breakup of the tech giant in a pending antitrust case.

## Pakistan says it has 'credible intelligence' India will attack within days

By PRABHJOT GILL, SHEIKH SAALIQ and MUNIR AHMED Associated Press

ATTARI, India (AP) — Pakistan said Wednesday it had "credible intelligence" that India is planning to attack it within days, and vowed to respond "very strongly," as soldiers exchanged gunfire along borders and Pakistanis heeded New Delhi's orders to leave the country following last week's deadly attack in Indian-controlled Kashmir.



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India has moved to punish Pakistan after accusing it of backing the attack in Pahalgam, which Islamabad denies, driving tensions between the nuclear-armed rivals to their highest point since 2019, when they came close to war after a suicide car bombing in Kashmir. The region is split between India and Pakistan and claimed by both in its entirety.

Calls for de-escalation

Pakistan said the intelligence shows that India plans military action against it in the next 24 to 36 hours "on the pretext of baseless and concocted allegations of involvement."

There was no immediate comment from Indian officials. However, Indian government officials said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has "given complete operational freedom to the armed forces to decide on the mode, targets and timing of India's response to the Pahalgam massacre." They spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive deliberations.

Last week's attack that killed 26, most of them Indian tourists, was claimed by a previously unknown militant group calling itself the Kashmir Resistance. 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 homegrown freedom struggle.

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, in separate calls with India and Pakistan, stressed the need to "avoid a confrontation that could result in tragic consequences." U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio spoke to Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and "emphasized the need for both sides to continue working together for peace and stability in South Asia," according to a Pakistan statement.

Earlier, Pakistan's Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar told reporters that "I have made it very clear, on behalf of the government and the nation, that Pakistan will not be the first one to resort to any escalatory move. However, in case of any escalatory move by the Indian side, we will respond very strongly."

The army spokesman, Lt. Gen. Ahmad Sharif, added, "If they think that aggression is the path forward, our message is only this: We are ready, don't test it."

Pakistan didn't elaborate on the "credible intelligence" it cited.

Pakistanis forced to leave

The deadline for Pakistani citizens to leave India, with exceptions for those with medical visas, passed on Sunday, but many families were still scrambling to the border crossing in Attari town in northern Punjab state.

Some arrived on their own. Others were being deported by police.

"We have settled our families here. We request the government not to uproot our families," said Sara Khan, a Pakistani who was ordered back without her husband, Aurangzeb Khan, who holds an Indian passport. She carried her 14-day-old child and said she had been living in Indian-controlled Kashmir since 2017.

"They (Indian authorities) told me you are illegal and you should go," said Khan, while waiting on the Indian side of the border crossing.

Other tit-for-tat diplomatic measures have included the cancellation of visas and a recall of diplomats. New Delhi suspended a crucial water-sharing treaty with Islamabad and ordered its border with Pakistan shut. In response, Pakistan has closed its airspace to Indian airlines.

India late Wednesday announced the closure of its airspace to all Pakistani aircraft until May 23.

Cross-border exchanges of gunfire between soldiers have increased along the Line of Control, the de facto frontier that separates Kashmiri territory between the two rivals.

Fire along the frontier

On Wednesday, India and Pakistan accused each other of initiating the gunfire.

Pakistan's state-run media said Indian forces violated the ceasefire agreement along the Line of Control by initiating fire with heavy weapons. According to Pakistan Television, Pakistani troops returned fire after coming under attack overnight in the Mandal sector of Pakistan-controlled Kashmir.

Meanwhile, the Indian army said it responded to "unprovoked" small arms fire from Pakistan in the Naushera, Sunderbani and Akhnoor sectors of Indian-controlled Kashmir.

The incidents could not be independently verified. In the past, each side has accused the other of start-

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ing border skirmishes in the Himalayan region.

India's cabinet committee on security, headed by Modi, met Wednesday, its second since the attack.

Witness accounts

At least three tourists who survived told The Associated Press that the gunmen singled out Hindu men and shot them from close range. The dead also included a Nepalese citizen and a local Muslim pony ride operator.

Aishanya Dwivedi, whose husband was killed, said a gunman approached the couple and challenged him to recite the Islamic declaration of faith. Her husband replied that he was Hindu, and the attacker shot him "point blank in the head," she said.

"He was on my lap. I was soaked in his blood," Dwivedi said.

## **U.S. economy shrinks 0.3% in first quarter as Trump trade wars disrupt businesses**

By PAUL WISEMAN and CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writers

The U.S. economy shrank at a 0.3% annual pace from January through March, the first drop in three years, as President Donald Trump's trade wars disrupted business. First-quarter growth was slowed by a surge in imports as companies in the United States tried to bring in foreign goods before Trump imposed massive tariffs.

The January-March drop in gross domestic product — the nation's output of goods and services — reversed a 2.4% gain in the last three months of 2024. Imports grew at a 41% pace, fastest since 2020, and shaved 5 percentage points off first-quarter growth. Consumer spending also slowed sharply — to 1.8% growth from 4% in October-December last year. Federal government spending plunged 5.1% in the first quarter.

Forecasters surveyed by the data firm FactSet had, on average, expected the economy to eke out 0.8% growth in the first quarter, but many expected GDP to fall.

Financial markets sank on the report. The Dow Jones tumbled 400 points at the opening bell shortly after the GDP numbers were released. The S&P 500 dropped 1.5% and the Nasdaq composite fell 2%.

The surge in imports — fastest since 1972 outside COVID-19 economic disruptions — is likely to reverse in the second quarter, removing a weight on GDP. For that reason, Paul Ashworth of Capital Economics forecasts that April-June growth will rebound to a 2% gain.

Trade deficits reduce GDP. But that's mainly a matter of mathematics. GDP is supposed to count only what's produced domestically. So imports — which the government counts as consumer spending in the GDP report when you buy, say, Swiss chocolates — have to be subtracted out to keep them from artificially inflating domestic production.

And other aspects of Wednesday's GDP report suggested that the economy looked solid at the start of the year.

A category within the GDP data that measures the economy's underlying strength rose at a healthy 3% annual rate from January through March, up from 2.9% in the fourth quarter of 2024. This category includes consumer spending and private investment but excludes volatile items like exports, inventories and government spending.

Still, many economists say that Trump's massive import taxes — the erratic way he's rolled them out — will hurt growth in the second half of the year and that recession risks are rising.

"We think the downturn of the economy will get worse in the second half of this year," wrote Carl Weinberg, chief economist at High Frequency Economics. "Corrosive uncertainty and higher taxes — tariffs are a tax on imports — will drag GDP growth back into the red by the end of this year."

Wednesday's report also showed an increase in prices that is likely to worry the Federal Reserve which is still trying to cool inflation after a severe pandemic run-up. The Fed's favored inflation gauge — the personal consumption expenditures, or PCE, price index — rose at an annual rate of 3.6%, up from 2.4% in the fourth quarter. Excluding volatile food and energy prices, so-called core PC inflation registered 3.5%,

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compared with 2.6% from October-December. The central bank wants to see inflation at 2%.

The first-quarter GDP numbers "highlight the bind that the Federal Reserve is in," Ryan Sweet of Oxford Economics wrote in a commentary. The Fed must weigh whether to cut interest rates to support economic growth or leave rates high because of elevated inflation. "The economy was essentially stagnant in the first three months of the year while growth in headline and core inflation accelerated, fanning concerns of stagflation."

Trump inherited a solid economy that had grown steadily despite high interest rates imposed by the Fed in 2022 and 2023 to fight inflation. His erratic trade policies — including 145% tariffs on China — have paralyzed businesses and threatened to raise prices and hurt consumers.

Democrats were quick to blame Trump for disrupting several years of solid economic growth. Democratic Sen. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts said: "100 days into his presidency, Donald Trump's red-light, green-light tariffs are shrinking our economy, with businesses stockpiling imports in anticipation of tariff doomsday."

There is potential evidence emerging that the solid job market, a pillar of the U.S. economy during the pandemic recession, may be weakening.

On Wednesday, payroll provider ADP reported that companies added just 62,000 jobs in April, about half of what was expected, and down from 147,000 in March. That could be a signal that businesses may be taking a more cautious approach to hiring amid uncertainty over tariffs. Still, the ADP figures often diverge from the government's jobs reports, which arrive Friday.

Employers in the education and health, information technology, and business and professional services industries all cut jobs. Business and professional services include sectors such as engineering, accounting and advertising.

"Unease is the word of the day," said Nela Richardson, chief economist at ADP. "It can be difficult to make hiring decisions in such an environment."

## What makes a Kentucky Derby champion? Big hearts, immense lungs and powerful legs

By LAURA UNGAR and CHRISTINA LARSON AP Science Writers

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — On a crisp, clear morning, a chestnut thoroughbred thundered down the dirt strip at Churchill Downs, his exercise rider leaning forward above the saddle. Other horse-and-rider pairs followed.

Dr. Will Farmer looked down from a viewing point, admiring the speed and agility of the 1,000-pound animals.

The whole world will have the chance to see horses in action here Saturday, when the Kentucky Derby shines a global spotlight on equine athleticism. It's the subject of a growing body of research that cites a constellation of characteristics: big hearts, immense lung capacity, robust musculoskeletal systems and long, thin legs — all of which helped horses survive in the wild.

"It goes back to the roots: They are an animal of prey," said Farmer, a veterinarian and equine medical director at Churchill Downs Inc. "That's how they got away from being eaten."

Horses honed skills such as running, jumping and pulling as humans bred and trained them for various purposes over millennia. And the 151st Derby — horse racing's most-watched event — will draw attention not only to the animals' skills, but also to concerns about their treatment and health. Advocates have long raised concerns about deaths and injuries — calls that were amplified two years ago, when 12 horses died at Churchill Downs.

There's no doubt that war, agriculture and societies have been transformed by the human-horse relationship.

"Horses allowed us to circumvent our own biological limitations as a species," said Timothy Winegard, a historian at Colorado Mesa University and author of a recent book, "The Horse." "We combined our brains with the horses' size, strength, stamina and speed to form the most unstoppable animal coalition."

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What makes horses so powerful?

A horse's heart and lungs are the source of its extraordinary power.

The heart averages 10 to 12 pounds (4.5-5.4 kg), or about 1% of the animal's body weight, compared with half a percent for the typical human heart. Secretariat, the storied horse that won the Triple Crown in 1973, was found after his death to have a heart weighing more than 20 pounds (9.1 kg).

Horse hearts are built for exertion. The average horse can go from a resting heart rate of about 34 beats per minute to 220 or 240 while racing – faster than a human heart during maximum exertion.

"One thing that's really unique about horses is that they have an incredible capacity to move blood around their bodies -- their heart rate can go really high and still be safe," said University of Connecticut researcher Sarah Reed, editor in chief of the journal *Animal Frontiers*.

They also have a lung capacity of 60 liters – 10 times that of humans.

"That massive lung field allows for oxygen to transfer from the air into their blood, which is vitally important for sustaining aerobic energy," Farmer said.

Recent research in the journal *Science* found that a genetic mutation enables horses to avoid negative side effects of super high energy production.

"Horses are great athletes because they can deliver a lot of oxygen to their muscles – way more than an elite human can —and by elite human, I mean Olympic athlete," said Gianni Castiglione, the study's co-author. "They have a bigger tank of gas and they have a more efficient engine ... and this mutation is contributing to both of those things."

What is behind horses' speed and other skills?

Other aspects of a horse's biology enhance its abilities.

Horses store extra red blood cells in their spleens. These cells are released to carry even more oxygen around the body during intense exertion.

"Adrenaline when exercising causes the spleen to release extra red blood cells into circulation," veterinarian Hilary Clayton said. "What horses are doing is essentially 'blood doping' themselves."

Meanwhile, horses' brains allow them to process sensory information and react quickly. That's despite having frontal lobes, parts of the brain used for thought and planning that are proportionally smaller than those in humans.

"Brainwise, they're designed with a real desire to play and run independent of any fear," said Dr. Scott Bailey, a veterinarian at Claiborne Farm in Paris, Kentucky, a thoroughbred breeding farm where Secretariat is buried. Horses are also able to focus intently, which "is really important for an athlete."

Bone structure and musculature also help. The ligaments and tendons in their hind legs act like springs, Farmer said, helping propel them forward. Like other large prey animals, he added, they have "long, thin legs that are meant to run."

What about the risks for horses?

The adaptations that make horses faster also predispose them to injury, Reed said. Their skinny legs absorb the impact of each stride, she said, and over time the repetitive stress of racing and training can lead to deformation of tendons and ligaments.

In 2023, deaths occurred not only at Churchill Downs, but other major racing venues, affecting public perceptions of the sport and sparking changes. Reviews found no single cause for the deaths. But for 2024, Churchill Downs upgraded equipment used on its dirt surface and added an equine safety and integrity veterinarian.

In its annual report, the Horseracing Integrity and Safety Authority noted the steps being taken to reduce injuries and fatalities — expanded veterinary protocols, pre-race inspections and uniform medication oversight. And, it said, the rate of deaths at authority-accredited tracks dropped in 2024, by 27%.

What makes a champion?

Experts say a healthy, safe environment brings out the best in a horse — but they still don't know what makes certain horses standouts at the race track.

"That's the million-dollar question," Bailey said. "Every thoroughbred owner is trying to match the genetics of the parents in order to make the horse with the greatest chance of winning."



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Breeding is only part of the equation, experts said; nurture, training and the horse-rider relationship also factor in. Each time a horse emerges seemingly out of nowhere to win the Kentucky Derby, Farmer is reminded of this.

"You don't have to be this star-studded bred horse that cost a million dollars at sale to come and win and be a great runner," he said, raising his voice slightly above the din of galloping hooves. "There are a lot of great horses."

## **A woodpecker has invaded a Massachusetts neighborhood. Residents are taking it in stride**

By HOLLY RAMER and RODRIQUE NGOWI Associated Press

ROCKPORT, Mass. (AP) — Rockport residents have a history of fighting off invaders, but not this time. During the War of 1812, townsfolk in the tiny fishing village hurled rocks at British soldiers using their stockings as slings. Now, they're slinging trash bags and towels over the side mirrors of their cars to protect them from a destructive and determined pileated woodpecker.

Over the last few weeks, the bird has broken more than two dozen mirrors and at least one vehicle's side window. But residents are taking the violence in stride.

"Everybody's having a good laugh about it," said Ben Favaloro. "Nobody wants harm to the bird. He's always welcome back."

Favaloro, who has lived in the neighborhood for nearly four decades, said he's seen the occasional woodpecker on the side of houses in years past and he removed several trees last summer that were damaged beyond recovery. But the attacking of glass is a new phenomenon.

"Initially, we just noticed that all the mirrors had been adjusted. It looked like maybe there's a child in the neighborhood that was going around pushing the mirrors down," he said. But then his sister-in-law spotted the roughly 21-inch (53-centimeter) tall woodpecker on Favaloro's truck, pecking at the side mirror.

Given their enormous size, pileated woodpeckers are plenty strong enough to break mirrors, but such behavior is "definitely weird," said Pamela Hunt, senior biologist for avian conservation at the New Hampshire Audubon.

"Lots of birds will be aggressive against reflections in mirrors, but I don't usually hear about woodpeckers," she said. "They don't usually peck at their opponents, they kind of chase them around."

She said the woodpecker might be "a little stupid" and is trying to defend its territory and scare away what it sees as competition. The damage coincides with the mating season for pileated woodpeckers and resident Barbara Smith said she'd be fine with "lots of little woodpeckers" around, though she hopes they won't be as destructive.

"Woodpeckers have to do what woodpeckers do," she said. "Good luck, woodpecker."

Favaloro said the woodpecker and the media attention it has attracted has been a fun distraction from everything else going on in the world.

"This small town of Rockport that I live in is one of the safest communities around," he said. "I think this is probably one of the biggest crimes in years. It's kind of funny, but it's nice as well."

## **Vietnam celebrates 50 years since war's end with focus on peace and unity**

By ANIRUDDHA GHOSAL Associated Press

HO CHI MINH CITY, Vietnam (AP) — Vietnam on Wednesday celebrated the 50th anniversary of the end of the war with the United States and the formation of its modern nation with a military parade and a focus on a peaceful future.

The fall of Saigon on April 30, 1975 marked the end of a Vietnam divided into the communist North and U.S.-allied South, and the country's top official told crowds the past decades had led to ever increasing unity.

"All the Vietnamese are the descendants of Vietnam. They have the rights to live and work, to have

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freedom to pursue happiness and love in this country,” said To Lam, the Vietnam Communist Party’s general secretary.

“In a spirit of closing the past, respecting differences, aiming for the future, the whole party, the people and the army vow to make Vietnam become a country of peace, unity, prosperity and development,” he added.

Thousands camped overnight on the streets of the former South Vietnamese capital, which was renamed Ho Chi Minh City after it fell to North Vietnamese and Viet Cong troops, to get the best vantage point for the parade. Many lingered on the streets later in the afternoon and had picnics while waiting for drone and fireworks shows in the evening.

The red and yellow of Vietnam’s national flag was everywhere in the city — fluttering from buildings, painted on the faces of eager teenagers and on the T-shirts of those who had traveled to the city from all over the country.

“Now it’s time for peace,” said spectator Nguyen Thi Hue, a city resident. “Peace is the dream that everyone in the world wants.”

One float carried the mythical Lac bird, Vietnam’s emblem, another a portrait of Ho Chi Minh.

Chinese, Laotian and Cambodian troops marched behind Vietnamese army formations, including some wearing uniforms similar to what was worn by northern Vietnamese troops during the war. Helicopters carrying the national flag and jets flew over the parade near Independence Palace, where a North Vietnamese tank smashed through the gates on the final day of the war.

Crowds soaked in the spectacle as they gathered outside the barricades and at some street corners where giant screens had been set up. Phones raised and eyes wide, people waved and cheered at the marching soldiers. Those at home huddled over their television sets.

Sitting next to Vietnam’s leader were Cambodia’s former leader Hun Sen and Laotian Communist Party General Secretary Thongloun Sisoulith.

To Lam said beyond a victory over the U.S. and South Vietnam, the fall of Saigon was a “glorious landmark” that ended a 30-year fight for independence that began with the fight to oust French colonial troops.

He said Vietnam owes its position in the world today to support from the Soviet Union, China and solidarity from Laos and Cambodia, as well as “progressive” people all over the world including the U.S., he said.

Vietnam’s changing global approach

The emphasis on reconciliation and not, like previous years, on military victory reflected how Vietnam was approaching the changing tides of the global economy and geopolitics today, said Nguyen Khac Giang, an analyst at Singapore’s ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute. He added that the Vietnam War remains central to how the Communist Party framed its legitimacy, not just as a military triumph but also as a symbol of national unity. But To Lam’s comments underlined that the reconciliation remains unfinished.

“The war still defines Vietnam’s unity, and its unresolved divides,” Giang said.

For Pham Ngoc Son, a veteran who fought for the communists, today there is “only space for peace and friendship” between the U.S. and Vietnam.

“The war is over a long time ago,” said the 69-year-old who, during the war, served as an army truck driver bringing troops and supplies from the north to the south along the Ho Chi Minh trail — the secret supply route used by North Vietnam.

Passage of time has led to improved relations with U.S.

This year also marks the 30-year anniversary of diplomatic ties between Vietnam and the U.S.

In 2023, Vietnam upgraded its relations with the U.S. to that of a comprehensive strategic partner, the highest diplomatic status it gives to any country and the same level of relations as China and Russia.

There are new signs of strain in the relationship with Washington, however, with President Donald Trump’s imposition of heavy tariffs and the cancellation of much foreign aid, which has affected war remediation efforts in Vietnam.

Vietnamese officials say the relationship with the U.S. is anchored in American efforts to address war legacies such as Agent Orange contamination and unexploded ordnance in the countryside that still

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threaten lives.

The future of those projects is now at risk because of the Trump administration's broad cuts to USAID. Moreover, the export-dependent country is vulnerable in a global economy made fragile amid Trump's tariff plans.

Vietnam was slammed with reciprocal tariffs of 46%, one of the highest. This puts a "big question mark" on what the U.S. wants to achieve in Asia, said Huong Le-Thu of the International Crisis Group think tank.

Previously, close ties with Washington have helped Vietnam balance its relations with its much larger and more powerful neighbor China, she said.

Vietnam is one of the countries, along with the Philippines, that has been involved in direct confrontations with China over conflicting maritime claims in the South China Sea.

Focus on economic and not strategic competition may mean that Vietnam and other countries in South-east Asia become less important for the U.S.

"It really will be shaping up (on) how the new administration sees the strategic picture in the Indo-Pacific and where countries like Vietnam would fit in," she said.

In Washington, State Department spokeswoman Tammy Bruce on Tuesday refused to comment on reports that the Trump administration had discouraged diplomats from attending anniversary events. "I'm not going to discuss what has been suggested or not suggested," she said.

The Embassy in Hanoi said U.S. consul general in Ho Chi Minh City Susan Burns had attended the event. U.S. ambassador Marc E. Knapper didn't attend.

Who took part in the parade?

About 13,000 people, including troops, militias, veterans and local citizens took part in the parade. The route followed the main boulevard leading to the Independence Palace before branching into city streets and passed the U.S. Consulate.

A video of Chinese troops singing the iconic song "As If Uncle Ho Were With Us on Victory Day" during a rehearsal was shared widely on social media. Chinese leader Xi Jinping had visited Vietnam earlier in the month in a bid to present the country as a force for stability in contrast with Trump.

## **This summer at the movies, superheroes, from 'Superman' to 'Fantastic Four,' return**

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

Superman already has a lot on his broad shoulders. It seems unfair to add the fate of Hollywood to his worries.

But that's the kind of pressure that comes with being one of the biggest stars in the comic book universe, who is getting a grand reintroduction at a tumultuous time. Thankfully he's not doing it alone — Marvel Studios is also returning to theaters in a big way with two movies this summer, "Thunderbolts" and "The Fantastic Four: First Steps."

Five years after the COVID-19 pandemic brought movie business to a halt, and two years after the strikes, the industry has yet to fully recover. Critics may have complained of superhero fatigue, but after several summers of depleted offerings, it's clear that they're a vital part of the mix — especially when they're good.

The \$4 billion summer of "Barbenheimer" may be most remembered for those two movies, but it didn't get to that number without the "Guardians of the Galaxy" and "Spider-Man" movies, the second- and third-highest grossing of the season.

The filmmakers behind some of the summer's biggest movies spoke to The Associated Press about what to expect in 2025.

Summer Movie Math

Summer begins early in Hollywood, on the first weekend in May. Kids might still be in school, and pools might still be closed, but that kickoff can make or break that pivotal 123-day corridor that has historically accounted for around 40% of the annual box office. Last year was the first in many that didn't launch with

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a Marvel movie and it showed — the business limped along for weeks until Disney came to the rescue with “Inside Out 2” and “Deadpool & Wolverine.”

This year, the powerful studio is back in that familiar spot with “Thunderbolts,” which brings together misfits and antiheroes like Yelena Belova (Florence Pugh), Red Guardian (David Harbour) and Bucky Barnes (Sebastian Stan).

“It’s a fun twist on what a movie like this could be,” said director Jake Schreier. “There are some places we’re gonna go that are different from what you would normally expect.”

He added: “It’s trying to be a movie about something and the moment we’re in — not in a political sense, but just where everybody’s at and what everyone’s been going through.”

The Memorial Day weekend could also be a behemoth a few weeks later with the live action “Lilo & Stitch” and “Mission: Impossible – The Final Reckoning” storming theaters. With a new “Jurassic World,” a live-action “How to Train Your Dragon” and a Formula One movie also on the schedule through June and July, the summer 2025 season has the potential to be the biggest in the post-COVID era.

Before the pandemic, all but one summer since 2007 broke the \$4 billion mark. Since 2020, only one has: 2023, led by “Barbie.”

**Saving Superman (and the DC Universe)**

After three “Guardians” movies, James Gunn knows enough to know that he doesn’t have much control over whether people buy tickets for his movies. His job is to make something good, entertaining and “worthy” of the audience.

But that’s also possibly underplaying the pressure of taking on Superman and overseeing a unified DC universe that kicks off with “Superman” on July 11. He considers it the first true superhero movie he’s ever made.

“It’s a personal journey for Superman that’s entirely new,” Gunn said. “It is, first and foremost, about what does Superman learn about himself. But it’s also about the robots and the flying dogs and all that stuff. It’s taking a very real person and putting them in the middle of this outrageous situation and outrageous world and playing with that. I think it’s a lot of fun because of that.”

The film introduces a new actor to the role of Superman/Clark Kent in David Corenswet, who stars alongside Rachel Brosnahan as Lois Lane and Nicholas Hoult as Lex Luthor. Gunn said to expect different things from both.

“It was a lot of fun making a Lex that is actually going to kill Superman,” he said. “He’s pretty scary.”

The film is also “seeding the rest of the DCU,” Gunn said. “If it works as a movie in a basic way, that’s what we need to happen, that’s what I care about.”

Superman as a brand has always trailed Batman at the box office. None of the Zack Snyder films crossed \$1 billion, not accounting for inflation, while both Christopher Nolan “Dark Knight” sequels did. But Gunn isn’t thinking a lot about that.

“I just want to make a decent movie that makes a little money,” Gunn said.

**Marvel’s First Family**

Superman’s not the only legacy brand getting a splashy reintroduction this summer. A new Fantastic Four crew, assembled for the first time under umbrella of the Marvel Cinematic Universe and Kevin Feige, is heading to theaters July 25.

“Fantastic Four is a comic I’ve loved since I was a kid,” said director Matt Shakman. “They are the legendary heroes of the ‘60s that the Marvel silver age was built on.”

Created by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby, The Fantastic Four is among Marvel’s longest-running comics series. But it has not had the most distinguished history on film, including two with Chris Evans and one with Michael B. Jordan.

“The Fantastic Four: First Steps” is set in a retro-futuristic 1960s New York, where Pedro Pascal’s Reed Richards is “basically Steve Jobs meets Einstein who’s creating technology that’s changing the world” and Vanessa Kirby’s Sue Storm is “essentially the secretary-general of the U.N.,” Shakman said.

A television veteran with directing credits on shows like “WandaVision” and “It’s Always Sunny in Philadelphia,” Shakman said he wants to do right by the characters, and audience.



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"It's working on an incredibly large scale in terms of world building, but it's also no different from all of the great comedies and dramas that I've done," Shakman said. "In the end, it comes down to character, it comes down to relationships, it comes down to heart and humor."

Plus, he feels a responsibility to the idea of the big summer movie.

"It was the joy of my childhood. ... A lot of it has to do with building worlds and entering into a place of wonder," he said. "That's what I felt when I saw 'Indiana Jones' when I was a kid and it's what I hope people feel when they see 'Fantastic Four' this summer."

Why summer 2025 might be a big year for movies

Studios know that superheroes alone don't make a robust theatrical marketplace and there are plenty of other options on the menu including franchises, event movies and independents: There are family pics ("Smurfs," "Elio," "The Bad Guys 2"); action and adventures ("Ballerina," "The Karate Kid: Legends"); horrors, thrillers and slashers ("28 Years Later," "I Know What You Did Last Summer," "M3GAN 2.0"); romances ("Materialists," "Jane Austen Wrecked My Life"); dramas ("Sorry, Baby," "The Life of Chuck"); a new Wes Anderson movie ("The Phoenician Scheme"); and comedies ("Freakier Friday," "Bride Hard," "The Naked Gun") — though one of the most anticipated, "Happy Gilmore 2," will be on Netflix.

"The frequency of movies, the cadence, the sheer number of them and the perceived quality and excitement surrounding this lineup is like almost like never before," said Paul Dergarabedian, senior media analyst for Comscore. "Draw me a blueprint of a perfect summer lineup: 2025 is it."

One of the biggest movies of the season may be "Jurassic World Rebirth," the seventh movie in a \$6 billion franchise. Even its poorly received predecessor made \$1 billion. This time they enlisted a new filmmaker, self-proclaimed "Jurassic Park" superfan Gareth Edwards, and the original's screenwriter for a new adventure with Scarlett Johansson, Mahershala Ali and Jonathan Bailey.

"People say, like, do you feel pressure and the most pressure I feel is from myself as a fan and to Steven Spielberg, to not disappoint him," Edwards said. "Weirdly what's great about doing a 'Jurassic' movie is that everybody knows deep down that like half the reason they're in this business is because of that film and Steven's work."

It's fitting, in a way, that 2025 marks the 50th anniversary of what's considered the first summer blockbuster: "Jaws."

Edwards said he was born into that world of big summer blockbusters that shaped his early love of movies. Directing one, he said, "is kind of the dream. You get the chance to swing for the fences."

And the unstable economy might work in the industry's favor, at least when it comes to moviegoing. Even with increased ticket prices, theatrical movies remain the most affordable entertainment outside of the home and attendance tends to increase during recession years. The annual domestic box office crossed \$10 billion for the first time in 2009.

More recently, the week the tariffs were announced, "A Minecraft Movie" doubled its opening weekend projections, and all of those ticket buyers saw trailers and posters for everything to come. It was, Dergarabedian noted, one of the only positive financial stories that week.

"Top Gun: Maverick" filmmaker Joseph Kosinski knows a few things about launching a pricey big screen spectacle into a turbulent marketplace. But he's feeling good about the summer and "F1's" place within it. Warner Bros. will release "F1" on June 27.

"This is the summer where all this product that we've all been working on for the last few years is finally coming into the marketplace, so I'm very optimistic," Kosinski said. "By the end of this summer, hopefully people aren't talking about being in a funk anymore and it feels like we got our mojo back and we're off to the races."

## Trump's tariffs loom over the economy as shipments from China fall

By PAUL WISEMAN, ANNE D'INNOCENZIO and CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Business Writers

WASHINGTON (AP) — American businesses are cancelling orders from China, postponing expansion plans and hunkering down to see what trade policy surprises President Donald Trump plans to spring on them next.

The president's massive and unpredictable taxes on imports seem likely to mean emptier shelves and higher prices for American shoppers, perhaps within weeks.

And the higher costs and paralyzing uncertainty could exact an economic toll: U.S. consumers are in the biggest funk since COVID-19 hit five years ago, and economists say recession risks are climbing.

An early sign of the damage emerged on Wednesday when the Commerce Department released its first look at first-quarter economic growth.

The U.S. economy shrank 0.3% from January through March, the first drop in three years. Gross domestic product — the nation's output of goods and services — was down from 2.4% in the last three months of 2024. Imports shaved 5 percentage points off first-quarter growth. Consumer spending also slowed sharply.

Separately, a report from payroll provider ADP showed that companies added just 62,000 jobs in April, about half of what was expected, and down from 147,000 in March. It's a potential signal that businesses may be taking a more cautious approach to hiring amid uncertainty over tariffs.

Asked how much of deterioration in the world's biggest economy could be traced to Trump's erratic policies, Boston College economist Brian Bethune said: "All of it."

As he promised on the campaign trail, Trump has upended decades of American trade policy. He's been imposing — then sometimes suspending — big import taxes, or tariffs, on a wide range of targets. He's currently plastered a 10% levy on products from almost every country in the world. He's hit China — America's third-biggest trading partner and second-biggest source of imported goods — with a staggering 145% tariff.

China has responded with retaliatory tariffs of its own — 125% on American products. The take-no-prisoners trade war between the world's two biggest economies has shaken global financial markets and threatened to bring U.S.-China trade to a standstill.

Gene Seroka, executive director of the Port of Los Angeles, warned last Thursday within two weeks arrivals to the port "will drop by 35% as essentially all shipments out of China for major retailers and manufacturers has ceased." Seroka added that cargo from Southeast Asia also "is much softer than normal with tariffs now in place."

After Trump announced expansive tariffs in early April, ocean container bookings from China to the United States dropped 60% — and stayed there, said Ryan Petersen, founder and CEO of Flexport, a San Francisco company that helps companies ship cargo around the world. With orders down, ocean carriers have reduced their capacity by cancelling 25% of their sailings, Flexport said.

Many companies tried to beat the clock by bringing in foreign goods before Trump's tariffs took effect. In fact, that is a big reason that first-quarter economic growth is expected to come in so low: A surge in imports swelled the trade deficit, which weighs on growth.

By stockpiling goods ahead of the trade war, many companies "will be positioned to ride out this storm for a while," said Judah Levine, research director at the global freight-booking platform Freightos. "But at a certain point, inventories will run down."

In the next few weeks, Levine said, "you could start seeing shortages ... it's likely to be concentrated in categories where the U.S. is heavily dependent on Chinese manufacturing and there aren't a lot of alternatives and certainly quick alternatives." Among them: furniture, baby products and plastic goods, including toys.

Jay Foreman, CEO of toymaker Basic Fun, said he paused shipments of Tonka trucks, Care Bears and other toys from China after Trump's tariff plan was announced in early April. Now, he's hoping to get by for a few months on inventory he's stockpiled.

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"Consumers will find Basic Fun toys in stores for a month or two but very quickly we will be out of stock and stock product will disappear from store shelves," he said.

Kevin Brusky, who owns APE Games, a small tabletop game publisher in St. Louis, has about 7,000 copies of three different games sitting in a warehouse in China. The tariff bill of about \$25,000 would wipe out his profit on the games, so he is launching a Kickstarter campaign next week to help defray the cost of the duties.

Still, his sales representative is urging him to import the games if possible, because he expects that retailers will soon be desperate for products to sell. If he does import the games, Brusky is considering raising its price from \$40 to at least \$45.

Worried that tariffs will push up prices and drive away customer, retailers have put expansion plans on hold for next year, said Naveen Jaggi, president of retail advisory services in the Americas for real-estate firm JLL. "What they are telling us is: 'We want to slow down the decision to open up stores and commit to leases' because they want to watch how the consumer reacts."

Consumers already seem to be freaking out. The Conference Board, a business group, reported Tuesday that Americans' confidence in the economy fell for the fifth straight month to the lowest level since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Nearly one-third of consumers expect hiring to slow in the coming months, nearly matching the level reached in April 2009, when the economy was mired in the Great Recession.

Consumer spending accounts for about 70% of U.S. GDP so if nervous consumers stop shopping, the economic fallout could get ugly. Economist Joseph Brusuelas of the consultancy RSM pegs the probability of a recession within the next 12 months at 55%.

Even gloomier is Torsten Slok, chief economist at Apollo Global Management. He sees a 90% chance of a recession by this summer if Trump's tariffs remain in place. Businesses are already planning on significant disruptions, particularly from the 145% duties on goods from China, he said.

"You see that in company reactions: Orders are down, (spending) plans are down, costs are up, prices paid are up," he said.

He expects large layoffs by trucking firms and retailers as soon as late May, as the slowdown in goods coming into U.S. ports from China works its way through the supply chain.

Flexport CEO Petersen said shortages of products are "not a tragedy."

"It's going to be much more about the layoffs that follow," Petersen said. "That's where the real pain is going to be felt. Shortages mean companies aren't selling stuff and therefore don't have the profits that they need to pay their workers."

He said the stakes are so high that he expects the U.S. and China to deescalate their trade war and bring down the tariffs. In fact, Trump and his advisers have sounded more conciliatory lately. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, for example, said that the triple-digit tariffs the U.S. and China have slapped on each other are not sustainable.

But more abrupt shifts in trade policy risk increasing the uncertainty that has paralyzed businesses and worried consumers.

Moreover, said economist Cory Stahle of the Indeed Hiring Lab, "conditions may worsen in the coming months if people start behaving like they are in a recession. Softening some of the recent trade policy changes may ease some business concerns, but it may already be too late."

## About that hug ... Whitmer risks backlash from Democrats as she embraces Trump in Michigan

By JOEY CAPPELLETTI and JONATHAN J. COOPER Associated Press

HARRISON TOWNSHIP, Mich. (AP) — First came their much-analyzed Oval Office moment. Next, their subject-to-interpretation hug.

The two interactions between President Donald Trump and a sometime antagonist, Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, reflect the Democratic governor's efforts to move past last year's hard-fought campaign and find common ground with the Republican president — at risk of political backlash.

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Whitmer, a potential 2028 presidential candidate, shared a hug with Trump as he arrived in her home state on Tuesday, less than a month after she shielded her face from cameras during an Oval Office appearance alongside Trump.

It's typical for a governor or another high-ranking state official to greet the president when he steps off Air Force One in their state, a tradition that has historically transcended partisanship.

But the embrace between Trump and Whitmer was notable at a time when Americans are increasingly saying Trump's priorities are off and Democrats are agitating for their leaders to take a more confrontational approach to the president.

Trump was in Michigan to mark his 100th day in office at an evening rally and an earlier announcement with Whitmer of a new fighter jet mission at a National Guard base outside Detroit. The new jets at the base will protect a major economic driver for the area for years to come and represent a big win for Whitmer. The governor credited her Oval Office meeting with Trump for securing the base's future.

"My job is to do the right thing for the people of Michigan," she told The Associated Press after her appearance with Trump on Tuesday. "I'm not thinking about anything beyond that, and I know it's hard for people to get their head around."

Asked about her hug with Trump, Whitmer chose to describe the encounter differently.

She said Trump greeted her first when he stepped off the plane, and he "shook hands and he leaned in to tell me, you know, congratulations and that I was a big reason that we were making an announcement today, and I was grateful for that."

She said working with him on some issues doesn't preclude her from criticizing him on others, adding that she's been clear with Trump that his tariffs have been damaging her state.

"I had to be there because this was a big, important thing for the state of Michigan," she said. "Now, he is going to go off to the rally and say a lot of things I disagree with, that I'll fight against, and that's fine, but, you know, my job is to do everything I can for the people of Michigan."

Earlier this month, Whitmer stood by in the Oval Office as Trump signed executive orders and assailed his political opponents, not long after she had delivered a speech nearby that offered soft criticism of him but emphasized shared priorities. Later, The New York Times published a photo showing her using folders to shield her face from cameras while in the Oval Office.

Whitmer's office later said in a statement that she was "surprised" that she was brought into the room and that "her presence is not an endorsement of the actions taken or statements made at that event."

The Trump-Whitmer embrace evoked an infamous greeting more than a decade ago between Chris Christie, then the Republican governor of New Jersey, and Barack Obama, the Democratic president. Weeks before the 2012 election, with Christie and Obama both seeking reelection, the president arrived in New Jersey in the aftermath of the devastating Superstorm Sandy. Obama placed his hand on Christie's shoulder, but angry Republicans labeled it a "hug," and suggested it contributed to Republican Mitt Romney's loss to Obama.

It also reflects the challenge for Democratic governors looking to register their disapproval of Trump and his policies without angering a president bent on retribution against his critics or turning off soft Trump voters whose support they might need in future elections.

California Gov. Gavin Newsom, who has also taken heat from some on the left who see him as excessively accommodating of Trump and his policies, showered the president with praise when he landed in Los Angeles to tour wildfire damage during his first week in office. At the time, Newsom was urgently seeking federal disaster funding and looking to dissuade Trump from following through on his threats to extract concessions from California in exchange for financial assistance.



## What's that rash? Put some thought into asking Google for medical help

By TOM MURPHY AP Health Writer

Dr. Google is often on call for worried patients, but it may not give the best advice.

Doctors say internet searches for medical information should be done cautiously, especially with artificial intelligence playing a growing role.

Information from the right websites can teach patients about symptoms and prepare them for a doctor's visit. But a poorly done search might inflame anxiety well before someone reaches the waiting room. It's important to know the source of the information you find and to avoid trying to diagnose your health issue.

Here are questions to keep in mind if you seek medical help online.

What's your source?

When you do a search, don't automatically click the first link. It may not contain the best answers.

Some companies pay to have their websites listed at the top of a results page. Those links may be listed as sponsored.

Scroll for results that come from a source you can trust for medical information. That can include big health systems like the Mayo Clinic or sites run by government agencies like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"We've gotten so used to clicking on that first link," says John Grohol, a psychologist who specializes in online behavior. "For your health information, especially when it is personal, you want to think about it."

Should I use AI?

That depends on what it tells you.

More people are using artificial intelligence to get quick answers pulled from a variety of internet sources. Some searches also will generate an AI summary at the top of the results page.

But an AI answer may not say where it got the information. That makes it hard to judge credibility.

AI also can be prone to "hallucinations," an industry term for issues that cause the technology to make stuff up. Be especially wary of this if no source is cited.

What should I ask?

How you phrase a question plays a big role in the results you see. Doctors say patients should search for information based on symptoms, not an expected diagnosis.

"You've got to ask at the very beginning the right questions," said Dr. Eric Boose of the Cleveland Clinic.

That means asking, "What could cause a lump to form under my skin?" instead of "Is the lump under my skin cancer?"

Focusing on a diagnosis means you may miss other explanations, especially if you just click the first few links listed in the results.

For some issues, you should skip the search altogether. If you are having chest pains, experiencing dizziness or showing signs of a stroke, seek help immediately.

"You don't want to delay something that should be treated within a certain amount of time," said Dr. Olivier Gherardi, medical director of Brown University Health Urgent Care.

Can the internet diagnose a problem?

No. Leave that to the real doctors who are trained to ask questions that lead to a diagnosis.

Blood in your urine could mean cancer. It also might be caused by kidney stones or an infection.

Unexplained weight loss also could be a sign of cancer. Or it could reflect an overactive thyroid or a new job that causes you to move around more.

Some testing and a visit with a doctor who knows your medical history may be the best medicine in these situations.

"There are a lot of symptoms that overlap between minor conditions and major medical problems," said Dr. Sarah Sams, a board member with the American Academy of Family Physicians.

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## Iran's foreign minister says next round of talks with US over nuclear program will be held in Rome

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Iran said Wednesday the next round of negotiations over its rapidly advancing nuclear program it will have with the United States will be in Rome on Saturday.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi made the comment on the sidelines of a Cabinet meeting, adding that Iran also anticipated having a meeting Friday with France, Germany and the United Kingdom to discuss the talks.

The talks with the U.S. again will be mediated by Oman. The sultanate has hosted two rounds of talks in Oman's capital, Muscat, and one round at its embassy in Rome.

The talks seek to limit Iran's nuclear program in exchange for the lifting of some of the crushing economic sanctions the U.S. has imposed on the Islamic Republic closing in on a half-century of enmity.

U.S. President Donald Trump has repeatedly threatened to unleash airstrikes targeting Iran's program if a deal isn't reached. Iranian officials increasingly warn that they could pursue a nuclear weapon with their stockpile of uranium enriched to near weapons-grade levels.

## Today in History: May 1, Obama announces killing of Osama bin Laden

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Thursday, May 1, the 121st day of 2025. There are 244 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On May 1, 2011, President Barack Obama announced the death of Osama bin Laden during a U.S. commando operation, which took place in Abbottabad, Pakistan in the early morning hours of May 2 local time.

Also on this date:

In 1866, three days of race-related rioting erupted in Memphis, Tennessee, as white mobs targeted Black people, 46 of whom were killed, along with two whites.

In 1931, the Empire State Building was dedicated in New York City; it would be the world's tallest building for four decades.

In 1960, the Soviet Union shot down an American U-2 reconnaissance plane over Sverdlovsk and captured its pilot, Francis Gary Powers.

In 1963, Jim Whittaker, joined by Sherpa mountaineer Nawang Gombu, became the first American to summit Mount Everest.

In 1964, the computer programming language BASIC (Beginner's All-Purpose Symbolic Instruction Code) was first run by its inventors, Dartmouth College professors John G. Kemeny and Thomas E. Kurtz.

In 1971, the national passenger rail service Amtrak went into operation.

In 2003, President George W. Bush, in a speech delivered from the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln which bore a banner reading "Mission Accomplished," stated, "Major combat operations in Iraq have ended." (The last U.S. combat troops would not withdraw from Iraq until December 2011.)

In 2011, Pope Benedict XVI beatified Pope John Paul II, moving his predecessor a step closer to sainthood in a Vatican Mass attended by some 1.5 million pilgrims.

In 2015, six Baltimore police officers were charged with felonies ranging from assault to murder in connection with the death of Freddie Gray, a Black man who'd suffered a spinal injury while riding in a police van. (None of the officers would ultimately be convicted.)

In 2020, U.S. regulators allowed emergency use of remdesivir, the first drug that appeared to help some COVID-19 patients recover faster.

Today's Birthdays: Singer Judy Collins is 86. Singer Rita Coolidge is 80. Filmmaker John Woo is 79. Actor Dann Florek is 75. Musician Ray Parker Jr. is 71. Hall of Fame jockey Steve Cauthen is 65. Singer-actor Tim McGraw is 58. Filmmaker Wes Anderson is 56. Football Hall of Famer Curtis Martin is 52. Actor Jamie Dornan is 43. Singer Victoria Monét is 36. Social media personality Charli D'Amelio is 21.