

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, May 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 318 ~ 1 of 70

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- 1440 News Headlines](#)
- [4- All four girls are medalists at Roncalli golf invite](#)
- [5- Weber Landscaping Greenhouse Ad](#)
- [6- Groton Area Tigers JV Falls To W.I.N. JV](#)
- [6- Competitive Game Ends In Walkoff As Groton Area Tigers JV Falls To W.I.N. JV](#)
- [7- Groton Area Tigers Varsity Defeats Elkton Varsity Blue Sox On Back Of Clutch Display From Lincoln Krause](#)
- [7- Brevin Fliehs Leads Groton Area Tigers Varsity Past Clark Area \(C/WL/H/C\)](#)
- [8- 4x800m Relay Team sets school record](#)
- [8- Seniors drive various vehicles to school](#)
- [9-Butte County Fatal Crash](#)
- [10- SD News Watch: Humanities projects take hit from DOGE federal cuts](#)
- [12- School Board Agenda](#)
- [13- SD SearchLight: 'Out of control': Kristi Noem on defense over Homeland Security spending over-run](#)
- [15- SD SearchLight: Lawmakers grill South Dakota officials about Noem's credit card use](#)
- [16- SD SearchLight: Audit catches \\$530,000 in SD vehicle fee overpayments last year](#)
- [17- SD SearchLight: Noem has some explaining to do, so let her speak](#)
- [18- SD SearchLight: FEMA leader ousted, one day after publicly opposing agency's elimination](#)
- [19- SD SearchLight: SD's representative votes yes as U.S. House supports renaming Gulf of Mexico to 'Gulf of America'](#)
- [20- Weather Pages](#)
- [24- Daily Devotional](#)
- [25- Subscription Form](#)
- [26- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [27- Upcoming Groton Events](#)
- [28- News from the Associated Press](#)

## Friday, May 9

Senior Menu: Cold turkey sub, lettuce/cheese/tomato, macaroni salad, pineapple.  
School Breakfast: Egg wraps.  
School Lunch: Cheese pizza, green beans.  
Track at Aberdeen 2 p.m.

Gooooo Morning!  
**FRIDAY...**  
is a reminder that life is short,  
so do something fun!  
Happy Weekend!



## Saturday, May 10

## Sunday, May 11

St. John's Lutheran: Worship at St. John's, 9 a.m.; at Zion, 11 a.m.

Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m.; SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.

First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.

Groton CM&A: Sunday School, 9:15 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m.

United Methodist: Worship at Conde, 8:15 a.m.; at Groton, 9:30 a.m.; at Britton, 11:15 a.m.; Sunday School sing in church, 9:30 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 10:30 a.m.

High School Baseball in Groton: Hosting Sisseton-Britton-Webster: Varsity at 2 p.m. JV at 4 p.m.

**Groton Daily Independent**  
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# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, May 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 318 ~ 2 of 70

# 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.**

## 'Habemus Papam'

Chicago native Cardinal Robert Prevost was elected head of the Roman Catholic Church yesterday, becoming the first US citizen to hold the office. The 69-year-old (who is also a citizen of Peru) selected Leo XIV as his papal name—a nod toward the late 19th-century Pope Leo XIII, known for opening the church to modernity and emphasizing workers' rights.

Born in Chicago in 1955, Prevost joined the Augustinians in 1977, a missionary order dedicated to unity, harmony, and service. The order stationed Prevost in Peru in 1985, where he served for over a decade, later becoming its leader. In 2015, Pope Francis made Prevost bishop of the diocese of Chiclayo, Peru, later naming him a cardinal and head of the Vatican's Dicastery for Bishops. Prevost is seen as a centrist.

Many world leaders applauded the election. A group of survivors of priestly sexual abuse demanded further investigation into allegations Prevost mishandled abusive priests under his watch.

## US-UK Trade Deal

The US and UK announced a framework for a trade deal yesterday, the largest step toward a potential trade agreement since President Donald Trump imposed sweeping tariffs on US trading partners. The deal, pending finalization, focuses on tariff relief for autos, steel, and select industrial goods.

The US is the UK's largest trading partner, accounting for over 17% of annual UK trade, with total trade between the two nations valued at roughly \$417B. A 10% base tariff on many UK imports will remain, but tariffs on UK car imports to the US will drop from 27.5% to 10% for up to 100,000 vehicles annually, and tariffs on UK steel and aluminum will be eliminated. In return, the UK will ease trade barriers on US beef and ethanol while keeping its digital services tax on major tech giants.

Talks with other major US trading partners—including Japan, India, South Korea, and the European Union—are ongoing, with US-China negotiations scheduled for this weekend.

## Soviet Capsule Returns

A Soviet-era rocket capsule, Kosmos-482, is due to hit Earth late tonight or early tomorrow. It is unclear where the 1,100-pound spacecraft will crash, with experts estimating a low (1 in 25,000) risk to humans.

Kosmos-482 was launched in March 1972, slated to become the Soviet Union's ninth uncrewed mission to Venus as part of its Venera program (1961-83). While a similar mission launched days earlier made it to Venus, Kosmos-482 failed to escape low orbit, instead separating into four pieces. One piece burned up and two landed in New Zealand fields. Atmospheric drag has since pulled the landing capsule toward Earth. The titanium spacecraft is currently traveling at 17,000 miles per hour; it will hit Earth's surface at 150 miles per hour.

The Venera program notched many successes, including humans' first probe to land on another planet and the first to return images and sounds from another planet's surface.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, May 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 318 ~ 3 of 70

## Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Football coaching legend Nick Saban tapped to co-chair presidential commission on college athletics, examining a range of issues, including college athlete payment structures.

Universal Music Group files motion to dismiss Drake's updated defamation lawsuit, which alleges UMG damaged Drake's reputation by promoting Kendrick Lamar's diss track "Not Like Us".

Several "Les Misérables" cast members to boycott June 11 Kennedy Center performance to be attended by President Donald Trump; those who perform will donate wages from the night to charity.

New "Lord of the Rings" film sets December 2027 release date.

## Science & Technology

Many US cities are sinking, new analysis suggests; between 20%-65% of urban zones in all cities studied were dropping around a few fractions of an inch per year, primarily driven by large-scale groundwater extraction.

Astronomers discover first example of an "off-center" massive black hole consuming a star; object is located roughly 2,600 light-years from Sagittarius A\*, the massive black hole at the center of the Milky Way.

New study reveals eggs are more resilient to falls when landing on their side, overturning conventional wisdom; microstructure study finds sideways orientation acts as an efficient shock absorber.

## Business & Markets

US stock markets close higher (S&P 500 +0.6%, Dow +0.6%, Nasdaq +1.1%) after US unveils outline of UK trade deal and signals optimism for talks with China.

Bank of England lowers interest rates to 4.25% from 4.5%.

Coinbase Global agrees to acquire Deribit, the world's biggest trading platform for bitcoin and ethereum options, for \$2.9B.

Bitcoin climbs above \$100K for the first time since February.

Bill Gates announces he will donate 99% of his remaining tech fortune (estimated at around \$107B) to the Gates Foundation over the next 20 years; the foundation is set to close in 2045 and currently has a \$77B endowment.

## Politics & World Affairs

India accuses Pakistan of attacking three military bases with drones and missiles; Pakistan denies the claim.

Pakistan says its air force downed five Indian fighter jets, more drones.

Pakistan also says 125 Indian and Pakistani jets fought in the air for over an hour Wednesday; if true, would be among biggest air battles since World War II.

Acting chief of Federal Emergency Management Agency is fired the day after testifying to Congress that FEMA should not be closed.

President Donald Trump pulls nomination for DC's top prosecutor known for firing Jan. 6 prosecutors amid pushback from congressional Republicans.

At least 80 pro-Palestinian Columbia University students arrested Wednesday after taking over a library room.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, May 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 318 ~ 4 of 70



**All four girls were medalist at the Aberdeen Roncalli golf meet. Pictured left to right are Carlee Johnson, Halee Harder, Rylie Rose and Claire Schuelke. (Courtesy Photo)**

## **All four girls are medalists at Roncalli golf invite**

Carlee Johnson placed fifth at the Aberdeen Roncalli invitational golf meet held Thursday. She scored an 84 to lead Groton Area. Claire Schuelke was in eighth place with a 90, Rylie Rose was 14th with a 104 and Halee Harder was 17th with a 114.

Roncalli won the team title with 314 points followed by Groton Area with 392 and Aberdeen Central with 401.



OPENING MAY 2ND  
CLOSING JUNE 2ND

## WEBER LANDSCAPING GREENHOUSE

620 WEST THIRD AVENUE

GROTON

HOURS OF OPERATION

M-F 10-6

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SAT 10-4

SUN 12-4



## Groton Area Tigers JV Falls To W.I.N. JV

By GameChanger Media

Groton Area Tigers JV lost to W.I.N. JV 10-5 on Tuesday.

Groton Area Tigers JV jumped out to the lead in the top of the first inning after Lincoln Shilhanek singled, scoring two runs, and Xavier Ellenbecker drew a walk, scoring one run.

W.I.N. JV flipped the game on its head in the bottom of the first, scoring five runs on four hits to take the lead, 5-3. The biggest blow in the inning was an error that drove in two.

W.I.N. JV added to their early lead in the bottom of the third inning after #25 doubled down the left field line, and Groton Area Tigers JV committed an error, each scoring one run.

#25 earned the win for W.I.N. JV. The hurler surrendered five hits and four runs (two earned) over four innings, striking out six and walking five. Alex Abeln took the loss for Groton Area Tigers JV. The righty went two innings, surrendering seven runs (one earned) on five hits, striking out four and walking three.

Braden Fliehs, TC Schuster, Abeln, John Bisbee, Shilhanek, and Zach Fliehs each collected one hit for Groton Area Tigers JV. Schuster, Abeln, Shilhanek, and Ellenbecker each drove in one run for Groton Area Tigers JV. Ellenbecker led Groton Area Tigers JV with two walks. Overall, the team had a strong eye at the plate, piling up six walks for the game.

#25 led W.I.N. JV with four runs batted in from the number eight spot in the lineup. The pitcher went 3-for-3 on the day.

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## Competitive Game Ends In Walkoff As Groton Area Tigers JV Falls To W.I.N. JV

By GameChanger Media

Groton Area Tigers JV fell to W.I.N. JV 2-1 on Tuesday on the final play of the game. The game was tied at one in the bottom of the fifth when #13 doubled, scoring one run.

The pitching was strong on both sides. W.I.N. JV pitchers struck out nine, while Groton Area Tigers JV sat down 10.

A single by #4 on a full count put W.I.N. JV on the board in the bottom of the fourth.

W.I.N. JV committed an error, which helped Groton Area Tigers JV tie the game at one in the top of the fifth.

#20 earned the win for W.I.N. JV. The starting pitcher gave up one hit and one run (zero earned) over five innings, striking out nine and walking three. TC Schuster took the loss for Groton Area Tigers JV. The starter went four and two-thirds innings, giving up two runs (one earned) on two hits, striking out 10 and walking two.

Zach Fliehs went 1-for-2 at the plate to lead Groton Area Tigers JV in hits.

#13 and #4 each collected one hit for W.I.N. JV. #13 went 1-for-3 at the plate and led the team with one run batted in.

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## Groton Area Tigers Varsity Defeats Elkton Varsity Blue Sox On Back Of Clutch Display From Lincoln Krause

By GameChanger Media

Lincoln Krause drove in four runs on two hits to lead Groton Area Tigers Varsity past Elkton Varsity Blue Sox 15-0 on Sunday. In the fourth inning, Krause doubled, scoring two runs.

Groton Area Tigers Varsity scored 11 runs in the fourth inning on the way to victory. An error scored two runs, Brevin Fliehs was struck by a pitch, driving in a run, a wild pitch scored one run, Carter Simon doubled, scoring two runs, Gavin Englund drew a walk, scoring one run, Kellen Antonsen was struck by a pitch, driving in a run, Krause doubled, scoring two runs, and Fliehs singled, scoring one run.

Groton Area Tigers Varsity jumped out to the lead in the bottom of the third inning after Fliehs grounded out, scoring one run, Nicholas Morris doubled, scoring one run, and Englund doubled, scoring two runs.

Morris earned the win for Groton Area Tigers Varsity. The starting pitcher surrendered two hits and zero runs over four innings, striking out four and walking one. Samuel Schuurman took the loss for Elkton Varsity Blue Sox. The righty went three innings, giving up nine runs (six earned) on seven hits, striking out two and walking four.

Groton Area Tigers Varsity collected 10 hits in the game. Krause, Simon, and Englund each collected two hits for Groton Area Tigers Varsity. Groton Area Tigers Varsity had a strong eye at the plate, collecting seven walks for the game. TC Schuster and Alex Abeln led the team with two bases on balls each. Groton Area Tigers Varsity didn't commit a single error in the field. Karsten Fliehs had the most chances in the field with four.

Jack Stein went 2-for-2 at the plate to lead Elkton Varsity Blue Sox in hits.

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## Brevin Fliehs Leads Groton Area Tigers Varsity Past Clark Area (C/WL/H/C)

By GameChanger Media

Brevin Fliehs collected three hits in three at bats, as Groton Area Tigers Varsity defeated Clark Area (C/WL/H/C) 11-1 on Sunday. Fliehs hit an inside the park home run in the fifth inning, doubled in the third inning, and singled in the first inning.

Groton Area Tigers Varsity opened the scoring in the bottom of the third thanks to two doubles. Groton Area Tigers Varsity first got on the board when Fliehs doubled, scoring one run.

Groton Area Tigers Varsity scored five runs on four hits in the bottom of the fourth inning. Lincoln Krause singled, scoring one run, Carter Simon singled, scoring two runs, and Karsten Fliehs singled, scoring two runs.

Groton Area Tigers Varsity added three more runs in the bottom of the fifth inning on three hits. Fliehs hit an inside the park home run, scoring two runs, and Nicholas Morris hit a sacrifice fly, scoring one run.

Jarrett Erdmann earned the win for Groton Area Tigers Varsity. The pitcher surrendered two hits and one run (zero earned) over five innings, striking out five and walking three. Watson Grantham took the loss for Clark Area (C/WL/H/C). The righty went four innings, allowing eight runs (five earned) on eight hits, striking out six and walking five.

Groton Area Tigers Varsity collected 11 hits in the game. Krause, Simon, and Gavin Englund each collected multiple hits for Groton Area Tigers Varsity. Simon led Groton Area Tigers Varsity with two walks. Overall, the team had a strong eye at the plate, amassing six walks for the game.

Grantham led Clark Area (C/WL/H/C) with one run batted in. The pitcher went 1-for-3 on the day. Josh Kannegieter and Grantham each collected one hit for Clark Area (C/WL/H/C).

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# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, May 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 318 ~ 8 of 70



## 4x800m Relay Team sets school record

It was a record breaking day in Milbank for the HS Track Team!

- Groton Area's 4 x 800m Relay team broke a 37 year old school record with a time of 9:51.40. Relay members are L to R: Kella Tracy, Ryelle Gilbert, Faith Traphagen, and Taryn Traphagen.
- The 4 x 800m Relay School Record was previously set in 1988 by Tastad, Sperry, Schaller, and Herseth, with a time of 9:55.29.
- This time also broke the Meet Record at the Valley Queen Cheese Invitational!



**Thursday was the last day of school for the GHS seniors and many drove something besides their normal vehicle to school.** (Courtesy photo)



## Butte County Fatal Crash

What: Two vehicle fatal crash

Where: Beet Road and Reid Road, five miles north of Nisland, SD

When: 5:56 p.m. Wednesday, May 7, 2025

Driver 1: 22-year-old male from Nisland, SD, Serious, non-life-threatening injuries

Vehicle 1: 2000 Chevrolet S10

Seat belt Used: No

Driver 2: 24-year-old male from Nisland, SD, fatal injuries

Vehicle 2: 1994 Dodge Dakota

Seat belt Used: No

Butte County, S.D.- One man died and another was seriously injured in a two-vehicle crash Wednesday evening, five miles north of Nisland, SD.

The names of the persons involved have not been released pending notification of family members.

Preliminary crash information indicates the driver of a Chevrolet S10 was traveling south on Beet Road near its intersection with Reid Road. A Dodge Dakota was traveling east on Reid Road, approaching Beet Road. The driver of the Dakota failed to yield, entering the intersection and was struck by the S10. Both vehicles came to rest in a drainage ditch.

The driver of the S10 was ejected from his vehicle and flown to a Rapid City hospital with serious, non-life-threatening injuries. The driver of the Dakota sustained fatal injuries.

The South Dakota Highway Patrol is investigating the crash. All information released so far is only preliminary.

The Highway Patrol is an agency of the South Dakota Department of Public Safety.

###

Note: Records of state-reportable crashes are now available at <http://www.safesd.gov/> . Records should be available about 10 days after the investigation is complete.



## Humanities projects take hit from DOGE federal cuts

BY STU WHITNEY

South Dakota News Watch

In the spring of 2024, the Norwegian American Historical Association received some encouraging news. The Minnesota-based organization was approved for a federal grant of about \$300,000 to preserve, digitize and share materials documenting relief efforts of Norwegian-Americans toward their homeland during the German occupation of Norway in World War II.

The project, "Alt for Norge: Norwegians Fighting for Two Homelands," impressed decision-makers at the National Endowment for the Humanities as a worthwhile endeavor to highlight stories and footage that were otherwise inaccessible.

"The grant process was peer-reviewed and went through four different stages," said Kristina Warner, an archivist for the NAHA, which was founded in 1925 and is housed at St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota.

"The feedback we got was that this was a very unrepresented part of World War II history that showed how one immigrant group tried to get aid to those back home. Other immigrant groups did that too, but the Norwegians were the ones who really kept all of their records."

### Cuts characterized as 'urgent priority'

The project, which began in September and involving hiring another archivist, is now shrouded in uncertainty after federal cuts ordered by the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), overseen by billionaire Elon Musk, an adviser to President Donald Trump.

The April 2 budget reductions were directed at the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), an independent federal agency that distributes money appropriated by Congress to state humanities councils, museums and universities for education and research.

DOGE placed roughly 80% of NEH staff members on administrative leave and terminated previously awarded grant programs that were not fully paid out, according to the Federation of State Humanities Councils.

The NAHA received an email from Michael McDonald, the general counsel who became acting chairman of the NEH after previous chair Shelly Lowe left her position in March at the direction of President Trump. Lowe, the first Native American to lead the agency, was nominated by former President Joe Biden.

"Your grant's immediate termination is necessary to safeguard the interests of the federal government, including fiscal priorities," McDonald wrote to the Norwegian historical group. "The termination of your grant represents an urgent priority for the administration, and due to the exceptional circumstances, adherence to the traditional notification process is not possible."

### 'Scrambling to try to keep this going'

The grant money had allowed the NAHA to pursue its three-year project of acquiring and curating five World War II collections, including footage of a training base for the Royal Norwegian Air Force in Toronto and images of soldiers and the Norwegian Royal Family during the Nazi occupation.

German troops invaded Norway in April 1940 and remained in control of the country until the end of the war in 1945, when the royal family returned from exile. Norwegian-Americans were instrumental in collecting funds for supplies, food, and housing for those who remained in Norway during the war.

The project continues for now, said Amy Boxrud, NAHA's executive director. Digitized photos were made public in February from the collection of fur trader and wartime photographer Campbell Norsgaard, some of which he managed to smuggle out of the Soviet Union.

But the rest of the work, and the status of the digital archivist hired with grant money, are "in limbo"

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, May 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 318 ~ 11 of 70

following the federal cuts, with donors being asked to fill the void, Boxrud told News Watch.

"We knew that the NEH was sort of in the crosshairs, but we were really hoping that grants already awarded and under way would be spared," she said. "These are special projects that we wouldn't undertake with our normal operations budget, so we're sort of scrambling to try to keep this going."

## State humanities council feels pinch

The NEH also sent letters to state humanities councils across the country saying their federal grants had been terminated. The halt in funding came during the middle of the fiscal year and has caused widespread changes in programs.

Christina Oey, executive director of the South Dakota Humanities Council, which receives about \$950,000 annually through NEH, called it a shock to the system. That federal money represents nearly three-fourths of the organization's budget, with the rest coming from donations.

"Our funding was completely cut overnight," Oey told News Watch. "There was no grandfathering in. There was no elimination process. It was just 100% cut. We had about \$122,000 worth of grants we were about to disperse, and we've had to pause those grants because we just don't have the funding for them."

Some of the local organizations or events impacted include the Laura Ingalls Wilder Pageant in De Smet, the South Dakota State Spelling Bee, Earthlodge Gatherings in Sisseton and the South Dakota State Poetry Society.

U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson told News Watch that he's "a supporter of the arts" and has been in contact with the parties involved.

"I've been in contact with the South Dakota Humanities Council regarding the funding cuts they have been notified of and have passed their concerns along to the White House," Johnson said.

U.S. Sens. John Thune and Mike Rounds did not respond to requests for comment.

## 'We know our states the best'

As for programs run by the council, Oey is most concerned about the South Dakota Festival of Books, an annual event that has hosted nationally renowned authors such as Jane Smiley, Louise Erdrich, Pete Dexter and Tim O'Brien.

The 2025 festival will be held as scheduled on Sept. 26-28 in Spearfish, but federal cuts have changed some of the planning.

"We're going to have to make some adjustments, whether that's scheduling or the number of authors or scaling back some of the events," Oey said. "But it's still going to happen, and we still want it to be one of the best ever."

Also impacted is the organization's Young Readers program, through which every third-grader in South Dakota receives a free book. This year's offering is "Wings of an Eagle: The Gold Medal Dreams of Billy Mills," co-authored by Mills, the Pine Ridge native who won the 10,000-meter run at the 1964 Tokyo Olympics.

Oey said more volunteers will be needed to distribute the books, especially in rural communities.

Those remote areas of the country were part of the mission behind the National Endowment for Humanities when it was formed in 1965 as a sub-agency of the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities.

Its mission was "to convey the lessons of history to all Americans" because "democracy demands wisdom," establishing 56 humanities councils in U.S. states and territories to establish grant programs and distribute funds.

"The reason it was established is because we know our states the best," said Oey. "They give funding to us at the councils because we know what goes on in Lemmon, South Dakota, and other small communities throughout the state. We know the culture of South Dakota, whereas the federal government does not."

*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](http://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).*

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, May 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 318 ~ 12 of 70

## GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT #06-6

### School Board Meeting

May 12, 2025 – 7:00 PM – GHS Conference Room

#### AGENDA:

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

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

#### CONSENT AGENDA:

1. Approval of minutes of April 14, 2025 and April 28, 2025 school board meetings as drafted.
2. Approval of April 2025 District bills for payment.
3. Approval of April 2025 Financial Report, Agency Accounts, and Investments.
4. Approval of April 2025 School Transportation Report.
5. Approval of April 2025 School Lunch Report.
6. Authorize the Business Manager to pay district bills up to \$75,000 in advance, using the custodial advance payment account to be approved by the board for reimbursement at the following regular board meeting.
7. Approve Open Enrollment Applications #26-01, #26-02, #26-03, #26-04, #26-05, #26-08

#### OLD/CONTINUING BUSINESS:

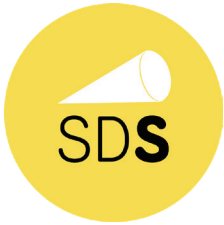
1. Open Forum for Public Participation...in accordance with Board Policy & Guidelines.
2. Second reading and approval of recommended policy changes: Elementary Student Handbook.
3. Administrative Reports: (a) Superintendent's Report; (b) Principal's Reports; (c) Business Manager Report

#### NEW BUSINESS:

1. Curriculum Review Reports
  - a. Elementary English Language Arts
  - b. Elementary Social Studies
  - c. Middle/High School Science
  - d. Middle/High School Social Studies
2. Review Preliminary FY2026 District Budget
3. Approve resignation/retirement of Rita Kampa, Food Service Team Member, effective at the end of the 2024-25 school year.
4. Approve Summer Employment Agreements:
  - a. Connect 4Ed Summer School
  - b. Special Education Extended School Year (ESY)
  - c. Summer Maintenance Team
5. Approve lane change for Carrie Cole to MS.
6. Cast SDHSAA Ballots
  - a. Amendment No. 1
  - b. Amendment No. 2
  - c. Amendment No. 3
  - d. Amendment No. 4
  - e. Amendment No. 5
  - f. SDHSAA Board of Directors Small School Group Board of Education Representative
  - g. SDHSAA Board of Directors East River At-Large Representative
  - h. SDHSAA Board of Directors Division I Representative
  - i. SDHSAA Board of Directors Division III Representative
7. Review list of surplus items and declare surplus for disposal.

#### ADJOURN





## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### **'Out of control': Kristi Noem on defense over Homeland Security spending overrun**

**BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA - MAY 8, 2025 4:11 PM**

WASHINGTON — The top Democrat on a U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee panel Thursday slammed Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem for her handling of her agency's funding and the Trump administration's immigration crackdown.

Sen. Chris Murphy warned Noem that DHS is at risk of running out of its \$65 billion in funding by July — two months before the end of the fiscal year — and therefore close to triggering the Antideficiency Act, a federal law prohibiting government agencies from spending funds in excess of their appropriations.

"Your department is out of control," the Connecticut Democrat told Noem. "You are running out of money."

Noem, who appeared before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security, was also grilled by Democrats about the high-profile case of a wrongly deported Maryland man sent in March to a notorious prison in El Salvador.

The White House's "skinny" budget proposal suggests \$107 billion for DHS starting Oct. 1, and assumes that Republicans pass the reconciliation package under consideration to allocate a massive \$175 billion overall in border security.

"If we now live in a world in which the administration spends down the accounts that were priorities for Republicans and does not spend down the priorities that were priorities for Democrats, I don't know how we do a budget," Murphy said.

Sen. Patty Murray, top Democrat on the full Senate Appropriations Committee, slammed Noem for not following "our appropriations laws."

She was critical of how immigration enforcement has caught up U.S. citizens and immigrants with protected legal statuses.

"Your crackdown has roped in American citizens and people who are here legally with no criminal record," the Washington Democrat said.

She also criticized Noem for spending \$100 million on TV ads that range from praising the president to warning migrants not to come to the United States or to self-deport.

Noem in addition launched this week an initiative to provide up to \$1,000 in "travel assistance" to immigrants without legal authorization to self-deport, which would amount to \$1 billion if President Donald Trump's goal of deporting 1 million people is met. The source of those funds in the DHS budget is unclear.

Murray asked Noem about more than \$100 billion in DHS funds not being used or re-programmed elsewhere for immigration enforcement, and called it "an illegal freeze."

She then asked Noem when DHS would unfreeze those funds.

Noem did not answer and instead blamed the Biden administration, and said the previous administration "perverted" how the funds were used.

Murray said she did not think it was "credible that \$100 billion is used to break the law."

"I am very concerned that DHS is now dramatically over-spending funding that Congress has not provided," Murray said. "We take our responsibility seriously to fund your department and others. We need to have answers, we need to have accountability, and we need to make sure you're not overspending money that you were not allocated."

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, May 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 318 ~ 14 of 70

## Abrego Garcia deportation

Noem got into a heated exchange with one of the Democrats on the panel, Maryland Sen. Chris Van Hollen, who traveled to El Salvador to speak with wrongly deported Kilmar Abrego Garcia. The Trump administration has admitted his deportation was an "administrative error."

The U.S. Supreme Court unanimously ruled that the Trump administration must "facilitate" the return of Abrego Garcia, who was sent initially to brutal CECOT but is now housed in another prison.

Van Hollen asked Noem what DHS has done to bring back Abrego Garcia, who had a 2019 court order barring his return to his home country of El Salvador for fear he would be harmed by gang violence.

Noem did not answer what steps the Trump administration was taking and said that because Abrego Garcia is a citizen of El Salvador, he is in that nation's custody and cannot be brought back.

Trump has contradicted his own administration, stating that if he wanted to bring back Abrego Garcia he would, but won't because he believes Abrego Garcia has gang ties.

While Trump officials like Noem have alleged that Abrego Garcia has ties to the MS-13 gang, no evidence has been provided in court and federal Judge Paula Xinis, who is presiding over the case, called the accusations "hearsay."

Noem then questioned why Van Hollen was advocating for Abrego Garcia in the first place.

"Your advocacy for a known terrorist is alarming to me," she said.

Van Hollen said that he was advocating for due process, which the Trump administration has been accused of skirting in its deportations. A federal judge in Louisiana next week plans to hold a hearing to determine if the Trump administration violated due process in deporting a 2-year-old U.S. citizen and her mother to Honduras.

Murphy also pressed Noem on the issue and asked how she was coordinating with El Salvador for Abrego Garcia's release.

"There is no scenario where Abrego Garcia will be returned to the United States," she said.

Noem then said that even if Abrego Garcia were returned to the U.S., "we would immediately deport him again."

## GOP worried about students, TPS holders

Some Republicans on the panel, including the committee chair, raised concerns with Noem about how the Trump administration's immigration crackdown is affecting students with visas.

"There are so many others who do deserve scrutiny," said Chairwoman Susan Collins, a Maine Republican, who said she was worried about students from Canada who attend school in her home state. "But these are dually enrolled Canadian students, and they've been crossing the border for years without trouble."

She said Canadian students are being stopped by U.S. Customs and Border Protection and given intense screenings.

"They have student visas, but they're being subjected to extensive searches and questioning," she said to Noem. "I don't want us to discourage Canadian students from studying at the northern Maine institutions that we have for education."

Noem said she would look into it.

Alaskan Republican Sen. Lisa Murkowski raised the issue of paperwork not being processed for those with Temporary Protected Status in her state. TPS is granted to those who come from a country that is considered too dangerous or unstable to return to due to war, natural disasters or other instability.

Murkowski said several groups of immigrants in her state with temporary protected status and humanitarian protection are at risk of losing their work protections, such as Afghans, Haitians, Venezuelans and Ukrainians.

"The majority of these folks are just truly valued members of their new community," Murkowski said. "They're helping us meet workforce needs and really contributing to the tax base here. They've expressed great concern about their status and work authorizations that may be revoked or allowed to expire."

She said that U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services has not processed TPS or humanitarian protec-

tion renewals for up to five months.

Noem said that those with TPS are being looked at, and admitted that some Ukrainians got an erroneous email that notified them their status was revoked.

She said DHS has not made a decision on whether or not to renew TPS for Ukrainians, who were granted the status due to Russia's ongoing invasion of the country.

"Some of these TPS programs have been in place for many, many years, but the evaluation on why TPS should be utilized and when it can be utilized by a country is the process that the administration is going through," Noem said.

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

## Lawmakers grill South Dakota officials about Noem's credit card use

**Security and other costs now separated to better track governor's spending**

**BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - MAY 8, 2025 5:29 PM**

Revelations about Republican former South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem's credit card use prompted a legislative oversight committee to question state officials Thursday in Pierre about how the state approves credit card spending for travel and other expenses.

The Dakota Scout obtained and published records earlier this year showing about \$750,000 billed to the Noem office's state-issued credit cards during her six years in office, including travel expenses related to her book tour and a Canadian hunting trip, plus expensive stays at hotels such as The Venetian in Las Vegas. Noem resigned the governorship in January after she was appointed U.S. secretary of Homeland Security.

The governor's credit card is intended to pay for travel-related expenses. Allowable expenses, said Bureau of Finance and Management Commissioner Jim Terwilliger, include flights, hotel rooms and meals.

Sen. Taffy Howard, R-Rapid City, who chairs the legislative Government Operations and Audit Committee, said she doesn't view "several \$500 charges for Sirius XM radio" as "allowable expenses."

"The taxpayers have an issue with that. I have an issue with that," Howard said.

Since the information was published, Terwilliger said the state canceled the satellite radio subscriptions and made internal policy changes for credit card expenses.

Many of the expenses related to the Governor's Office credit cards come from security details ensuring the governor's safety during travel, Terwilliger said. The state has since separated accounts between security and the governor's other expenses to better track what costs are directly related to the governor's spending.

Noem traveled to other states and Canada during her time as governor, sometimes appearing at campaign events supporting out-of-state Republicans or for President Donald Trump.

Lawmakers questioned if taxpayer-funded security detail should only be for state-related expenses, rather than campaign-related travel; how governor travel expenses are determined as a benefit to the state; and how many people in the Governor's Office have a credit card, among other questions.

While Terwilliger said he doesn't believe any of the credit card charges were campaign related, security for the governor is a "24/7, 365-day mission." Security is provided by the state Highway Patrol. Terwilliger said he could not say how many people have access to one of the credit cards, saying it would provide information for "potential bad guys that want to do harm."

Howard was not satisfied with the responses.

"It's our job as legislators to set up parameters," Howard said. "...Your answer cannot always, when legislators ask for an explanation, the answer cannot just be hiding behind security all the time. We have

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, May 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 318 ~ 16 of 70

to figure out a way we can ask questions and get them answered without someone just saying, 'Well, that's security. You can't know.'"

The State Auditor's Office reviews the credit card charges once an invoice is submitted by the Governor's Office. Auditor Rich Sattgast told lawmakers he has never denied a charge from the governor.

He said the Legislature could set stricter parameters on elected officials' spending to improve oversight or limit spending.

"For the vast majority of elected officials, there has not been what would be seen by the public as an overstepping of their jurisdiction of spending money," Sattgast said. "So I think having the public be aware of it and being accountable to the public is probably the primary aspect of it."

Jenna Latham, with the Auditor's Office, said the governor and some other elected officials can stay in expensive hotels because "they answer to the taxpayer."

The office will occasionally question if an expense is allowable and ask for justification. Sometimes the expense will get scratched and covered by the individual, "but if they come back, you essentially have to approve it," she said.

"There's not much that can stop us," Latham said, adding, "we have to follow the rules."

Howard told lawmakers that they can propose legislation recommendations at the end of the year "if there's different legislation that we think should be brought."

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.

## Audit catches \$530,000 in SD vehicle fee overpayments last year

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - MAY 8, 2025 5:20 PM

The state Department of Revenue collected about \$530,000 in commercial vehicle fee overcharges affecting more than 11,000 South Dakota vehicles last fiscal year.

The finding was part of a fiscal year 2024 audit report on state government presented to the legislative Government Operations and Audit Committee on Thursday in Pierre.

According to Mike Kogelmann, a state audit manager, the Department of Revenue changed its fee tables on July 1, 2022. Instead of charging a flat \$7 additional fee for vehicles registered at over 78,000 pounds, in accordance with state law, the department erroneously charged \$7 for every 2,000 pounds over 78,000 pounds.

"If your vehicle was registered at 79,000 pounds, you paid \$7. If your vehicle was registered at 81,000 pounds, you paid \$14," Kogelmann said. "Prior to that, and when the law was implemented, it was always that everything over 78,000 was \$7."

The department corrected its fee table in December last year, Kogelmann said. The average overcharge was \$46 per vehicle.

The department did not immediately respond to a question from South Dakota Searchlight asking whether the vehicle owners were refunded for the overpayments.

Kogelmann told lawmakers he was not aware of refunds from the department. He's also not aware of any law requiring the state or local governments to provide refunds for overpayments.

In an email to South Dakota Searchlight, Kogelmann said the fee tables were not selected for testing for the fiscal year 2023 audit report, which is why the overcharge was not addressed last year. He did not know how many vehicles were overcharged in fiscal year 2023, "but we have no reason to believe it wouldn't be in the neighborhood" of the 11,000 vehicles overcharged in fiscal year 2024.

Rep. Julie Auch, R-Yankton, said she wants the money repaid.

"Our state enforces laws if taxes aren't paid," she said, "but when we overpay we should have the same in return."



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, May 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 318 ~ 17 of 70

*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.*

## COMMENTARY

### Noem has some explaining to do, so let her speak

by Dana Hess

After a career in journalism that has let me have my say about a wide range of issues, it's galling to me whenever a group wants to shut down someone else's speech.

At issue this weekend is an honorary degree that Dakota State University in Madison plans to bestow on former South Dakota governor and current Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem. She will also deliver the university's commencement address on Saturday.

DSU officials — who said they extended the invitation while Noem was still governor — want to honor Noem for her support of the university's cyber initiatives and her backing of the creation of the Center for Quantum Information Science and Technology in partnership with South Dakota Mines, another state university in Rapid City.

Noem's contributions to those efforts are noteworthy. She helped DSU secure \$30 million in state funding, launching it on a path toward leadership in cybersecurity research and essentially creating a new industry in South Dakota, all the while providing an important, lucrative path for DSU graduates to follow.

A nonprofit, South Dakota Voices for Peace, has started a petition drive asking DSU to rescind its invitation to Noem. Voices for Peace makes its case, in part, by citing Noem's actions on immigration in her current position.

Noem certainly has plenty to answer for. No doubt there will be international students in the DSU audience wondering just how welcome they are, and just how safe they are as the Trump administration makes the case for deporting as many immigrants as possible.

The reality of that uncertainty for foreign students has reached into South Dakota with cases including Priya Saxena, a graduate student from India studying at South Dakota Mines. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, which is part of Noem's Department of Homeland Security, is trying to deport Saxena due to a criminal records check that turned up a four-year-old traffic ticket.

Saxena has sued to protect herself from deportation, and has so far succeeded. She's scheduled to receive doctoral and master's degrees Saturday in Rapid City, around the same time Noem will speak on the other side of the state in Madison.

In response to that controversy and a planned protest at DSU, Noem should use part of her commencement speech to explain why she thinks deporting a graduate student because of a traffic ticket serves the cause of public safety or national security. In reality, Noem, being a seasoned politician, will know how to tap dance around the elephant in the room. She might simply offer some praise for her past performance as governor, some graduation day bromides about tackling the challenges of the future, and some lofty talk about setting and meeting goals.

The speech at least presents an opportunity for Noem's critics to protest, for her to respond, and for the public to hear that response. That opportunity will be lost if the petition from Voices for Peace succeeds. The group's work advocating for immigrants is laudable, and because of that mission, its disdain for Noem is understandable. But that doesn't mean Noem should be silenced. If we took the microphone away from everyone we disagreed with, the country would be blissfully quiet, but we would all be just as blissfully ignorant.

Voices for Peace wants to punish Noem by taking away her honorary degree and her chance to speak. That's not the right lesson for the students at DSU or for the rest of us. That lesson should center on

supporting free speech, both for Noem and the people who oppose her.

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

## FEMA leader ousted, one day after publicly opposing agency's elimination

**BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - MAY 8, 2025 1:35 PM**

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration has ousted the leader of the Federal Emergency Management Agency and replaced him with another official, States Newsroom has confirmed.

Cam Hamilton, senior official performing the duties of the administrator at FEMA, was let go just one day after he testified before Congress about the size and scope of the federal agency.

President Donald Trump and Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem have both indicated they could support getting rid of FEMA and Trump has established a FEMA reform council to assess the agency's role.

But during his testimony Wednesday before the House Appropriations Homeland Security Subcommittee, Hamilton said he personally did "not believe it is in the best interest of the American people to eliminate the Federal Emergency Management Agency."

"Having said that, I'm not in a position to make decisions and impact outcomes on whether or not a determination such as consequential as that should be made," Hamilton said. "That is a conversation that should be had between the president of the United States and this governing body on identifying the exact ways and methodologies, in which, what is prudent for federal investment, and what is not."

Hamilton, a former Navy Seal and combat medic, said earlier in the hearing that he had served in five different administrations, but that the "highest honor of my career is serving right now in the Trump administration. Keeping the American people first."

A Department of Homeland Security spokesperson confirmed to States Newsroom on Thursday that Hamilton was no longer in the lead role at FEMA, but opted not to detail why exactly the personnel change happened.

"Mr. David Richardson will be the senior official performing the duties of the Administrator," the DHS spokesperson wrote in an email.

A FEMA spokesperson confirmed the firing as well, writing that "(e)ffective today, David Richardson is now serving as the Senior Official Performing the duties of the FEMA Administrator. Cameron Hamilton is no longer serving in this capacity."

Richardson was appointed the assistant secretary of Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction Office at the Department of Homeland Security in January, according to his biography.

House Appropriations Committee ranking member Rosa DeLauro, D-Conn., released a statement saying the "Trump administration must explain why he has been removed from this position.

"Integrity and morality should not cost you your job, and if it does, it says more about your employer than it does you."

Florida Democratic Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz, a senior member of the Appropriations Committee, wrote in a statement that firing "FEMA's chief just three weeks before hurricane season begins shows how little President Trump cares about Floridians' and Americans' safety.

"The added cruelty of his timing — a day after acting Administrator Hamilton publicly opposed dismantling the agency during a Congressional budget hearing — sends a chilling message from Trump that every American is on their own and that Trump Administration officials cannot be trusted to offer their candid, expert opinion to Congress or anyone, without consequences."

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

## SD's representative votes yes as U.S. House supports renaming Gulf of Mexico to 'Gulf of America'

**Legislation faces tougher road in Senate, where it needs 60 votes to advance**

**BY: SHAUNEEN MIRANDA - MAY 8, 2025 12:06 PM**

WASHINGTON — The U.S. House approved a measure Thursday that would codify part of President Donald Trump's executive order renaming the Gulf of Mexico as the "Gulf of America."

The bill — which was passed on a nearly party-line vote, 211-206 — calls on the head of each federal agency to "update each document and map of the Federal agency in accordance" with the new name within six months of enactment.

U.S. Rep. Don Bacon of Nebraska was the only Republican to vote against the measure.

"Our country has more important issues to worry about," Bacon said in a statement shared with States Newsroom.

"The Administration is making great strides securing our border and cutting waste in government. But we need to focus on the reconciliation bill and how to strengthen Medicaid for every American who needs it. Renaming bodies of water is not a priority and sends a bad message to the rest of the world," he said.

All Democrats stood in opposition. Sixteen House members did not vote, including eight Republicans and eight Democrats.

U.S. Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, who introduced the bill in January, said "this is such an important thing to do for the American people," during the floor debate Thursday.

The Georgia Republican said "the American people deserve pride in their country, and they deserve pride in the waters that we own, that we protect with our military and our Coast Guard and all of the businesses that prosper along these waters."

The legislation is unlikely to move far in the Senate, where it would take 60 votes to advance. Republicans control the chamber 53-47. The Senate has 45 Democrats, but two independents, Sens. Angus King of Maine and Bernie Sanders of Vermont, caucus with the party.

Meanwhile, a federal judge in April sided with The Associated Press and granted the wire service a preliminary injunction in its case against the Trump administration over allegations of denied access to restricted spaces at the White House due to its editorial decision to use "Gulf of Mexico" rather than "Gulf of America."

The bill says "any reference in a law, map, regulation, document, paper, or other record of the United States to the Gulf of Mexico shall be deemed to be a reference to the 'Gulf of America'" and directs Interior Secretary Doug Burgum to "oversee the implementation of the renaming."

In a Statement of Administration Policy on Tuesday, the White House said it "strongly supports" passage of the bill and that Trump's advisers would recommend he sign it into law if the legislation were presented to him in its current form.

Ahead of the vote, House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries urged a strong "no" against the bill, which he described as a "silly, small-minded and sycophantic piece of legislation."

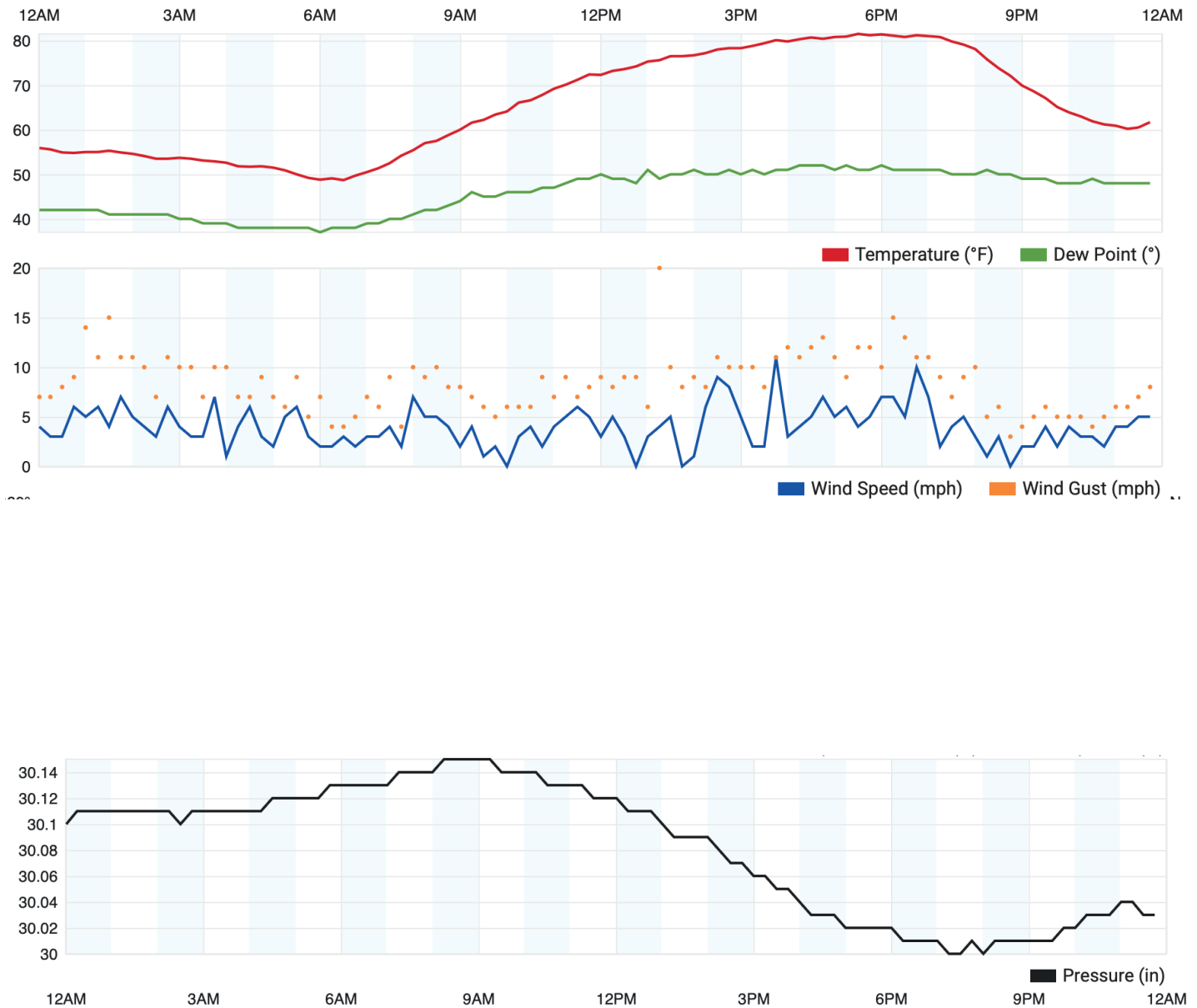
"What are we doing, folks? There are serious issues that the American people want us to confront," the New York Democrat added.

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

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, May 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 318 ~ 20 of 70

## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs





# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, May 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 318 ~ 21 of 70

Fire Weather Watch

Today



High: 81 °F

Becoming  
Sunny

Tonight



Low: 46 °F

Mostly Clear

Saturday



High: 84 °F

Sunny

Saturday Night



Low: 60 °F

Mostly Clear

Sunday



High: 91 °F

Hot and Windy



## Fire Weather Watch Sunday

May 8, 2025  
3:33 PM

Valid May 11th: 11:00 AM through 10:00 PM CDT

### Key Messages

- Strong wind and low humidity combine to create the potential for fire weather concerns Sunday.
  - ◆ South winds will be 20-30 mph with gusts up to 45 mph.
  - ◆ Humidity will drop to as low as 15%.

- Any fires that ignite will spread rapidly and become difficult to control or suppress.

NEW

### Important Updates

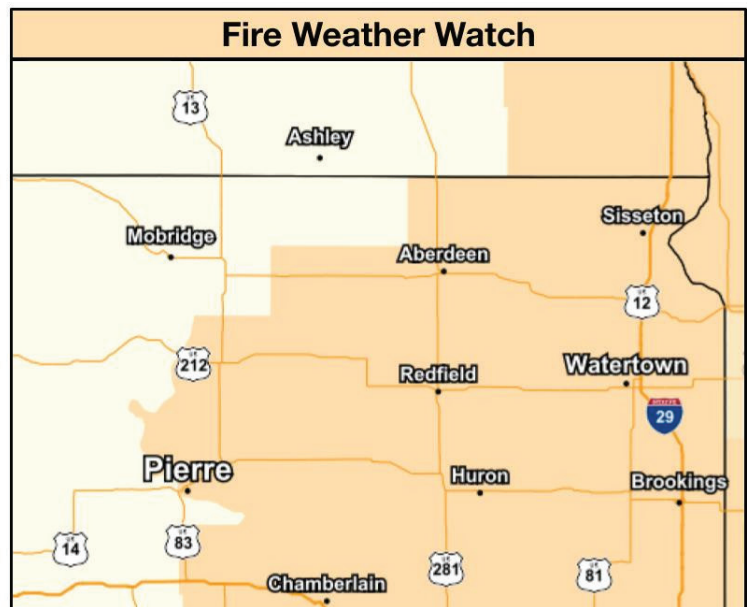
- A Fire Weather Watch has been issued for portions of central and northeastern South Dakota and west central Minnesota for Sunday.

### Next Scheduled Briefing

- Friday morning



National Oceanic and  
Atmospheric Administration  
U.S. Department of Commerce



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

Strong wind and low humidity combine to create the potential for fire concerns Sunday. A Fire Weather Watch has been issued for portions of central through northeastern SD into west central MN Sunday morning through Sunday evening.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, May 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 318 ~ 22 of 70

## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 82 °F at 5:19 PM**

**Low Temp: 48 °F at 6:21 AM**

**Wind: 20 mph at 1:08 PM**

**Precip: : 0.00**

Day length: 14 hours, 44 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 93 in 1992

Record Low: 221 in 1966

Average High: 68

Average Low: 41

Average Precip in May.: .98

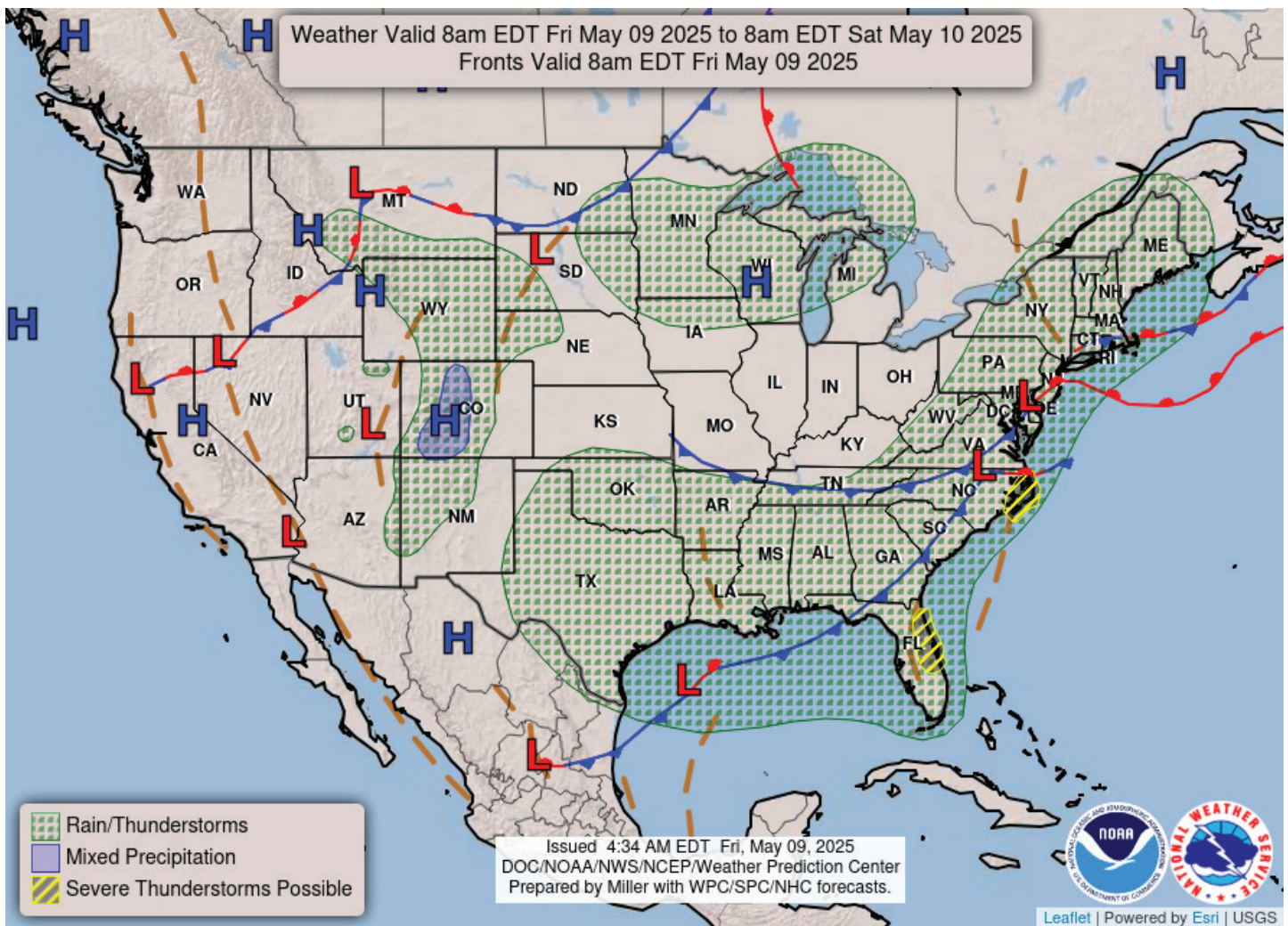
Precip to date in May.: 0.30

Average Precip to date: 4.95

Precip Year to Date: 2.93

Sunset Tonight: 8:50:51 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:05:30 am



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, May 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 318 ~ 23 of 70

## Today in Weather History

May 9th, 1999: Torrential rains of two to five inches fell in Lyman County during the late evening hours, causing flash flooding on Medicine Creek. The KOA Campgrounds near Kennebec, including the main facility, were flooded. Several roads were also flooded and damaged along Medicine Creek. The storm's total rainfall in Kennebec was 3.40 inches. Also, a weak F0 tornado touched down briefly three miles south of Reliance, with no damage reported. Winds gusting to 70 mph knocked over a 4000-bushel holding bin near Revillo.

1966 - Record snows fell in the northeastern Ohio and western Pennsylvania, including 3.1 inches at Pittsburgh PA and 5.4 inches at Youngstown OH. Snow also extended across parts of New York State, with eight inches reported in the southern Adirondacks. (The Weather Channel)

1977 - A late season snowstorm hit parts of Pennsylvania, New York State, and southern and central New England. Heavier snowfall totals included 27 inches at Slide Mountain NY and 20 inches at Norwalk CT. At Boston it was the first May snow in 107 years of records. The heavy wet snow caused extensive damage to trees and power lines. The homes of half a million persons were without power following the storm. (9th-10th) (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1985 - Lightning struck some trees about 150 yards away from a home in Alabama, and followed the driveway to the home. The charge went through the house and burned all the electrical outlets, ruined appliances, and blasted a hole in the concrete floor of the basement. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Unseasonably warm weather spread from the Pacific Northwest to the Upper Mississippi Valley. Fifteen cities reported record high temperatures for the date. It was the fourth day of record warmth for Eugene OR and Salem OR. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - A massive cyclone in the central U.S. produced severe thunderstorms from eastern Texas to the Upper Ohio Valley. A strong (F-3) tornado ripped through Middleboro KY causing more than 22 million dollars damage. Thunderstorms in east central Texas produced hail three and a half inches in diameter at Groesbeck, and near Fairfield. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thunderstorms developing ahead of a cold front in the south central U.S. produced golf ball size hail and wind gusts to 62 mph at Mira LA, and during the morning hours drenched Stuttgart AR with five inches of rain. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather in the central U.S. during the evening hours, mainly from southeastern Missouri to southwestern Indiana. Severe thunderstorms spawned four tornadoes, including two strong (F-2) tornadoes in southern Illinois. Strong thunderstorm winds gusted to 85 mph at Orient IL, and to 100 mph at West Salem. Thunderstorms drenched northeastern Illinois with up to 4.50 inches of rain. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, May 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 318 ~ 24 of 70



"Michael, you don't have to yell. I'm listening to what you are saying," I said to my eldest son after we had a "slight" disagreement.

"I know you were listening, Dad," he replied with clenched fists and a determined look in his eyes. "But I want you to hear me not only listen to me."

It was hard to believe, but I was "busted" by a five-year-old child.

It is easy to listen but not hear.

Solomon wanted to be certain that his sons were not only listening to his teachings but would "do" something with what they had learned.

He wanted them to accept God's wisdom knowing it would guard them and guide them.

He wanted them to plant it deep in their hearts, and then live their lives centered on what he knew would bring success to them in their lives.

If he were teaching a class in college, it would be called "The Value of Applying God's Wisdom."

It's one thing to have God's wisdom in our heads - but quite another thing to drive it deep into our hearts.

When we have His wisdom in our hearts, it will guide our lives each day.

Solomon realized what a huge difference God's wisdom would make in the lives of his sons because of the difference it made in his life.

In fact he listed the benefits of God's wisdom:

they would travel in safety;

They would not trip and fall into the deceits of what the world offered;

They would sleep securely;

They would have no fear of being overwhelmed with disaster;

And, most importantly, their confidence to face the issues of life would come from the Lord!

Words worth "hearing!"

Prayer:

Father, may we realize how much better life will be if we accept Your wisdom.

Give us open, accepting minds and willing hearts.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Today's Scripture: "My child, listen to me and do as I say, and you will have a long, good life." Proverbs 4:10

*We all need the encouragement, comfort, and peace that comes through God's grace. Our daily devotionals, known as Seeds of Hope, have been a means through which thousands of people have experienced this grace. Each devotional comes from God's Word and we pray this good "seed" finds good soil in your heart. Our aim is that the Seeds of Hope will be a great source of daily encouragement to you and that God will use them to draw you near to Him*



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, May 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 318 ~ 25 of 70

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## Winning Numbers

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 05.06.25

16 17 43 46 58 16

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$100,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 34 Mins 5 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 05.07.25

3 6 9 13 17 8

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$33,140,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 49 Mins 4 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 05.08.25

14 18 23 34 35 17

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 4 Mins 5 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 05.07.25

5 12 17 26 31

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$149,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 4 Mins 5 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 05.07.25

9 31 32 50 57 14

TOP PRIZE:

**\$10,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 33 Mins 5 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 05.07.25

14 15 30 40 59 20

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$82,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 33 Mins 5 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, May 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 318 ~ 27 of 70

## Upcoming Groton Events

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

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

### **Pope Leo XIV celebrates first Mass after historic election as Pope Francis' successor**

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Pope Leo XIV, history's first North American pope, celebrated his first Mass as pontiff on Friday, presiding in the Sistine Chapel with the cardinals who elected him to succeed Pope Francis and follow in his social justice-minded footsteps.

Wearing white vestments, Leo processed into the Sistine Chapel and blessed the cardinals as he approached the altar and Michelangelo's "The Last Judgment" behind it.

It was in the same frescoed chapel that Leo, the Chicago-born missionary Robert Prevost, was elected Thursday afternoon as the 267th pope and the first from the United States.

THIS IS A BREAKING NEWS UPDATE. AP's earlier story follows below.

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Pope Leo XIV celebrates his first Mass on Friday after his historic election as the first North American pope, meeting with the cardinals who chose him to lead the Catholic Church and follow in Pope Francis' social justice-minded footsteps.

Leo, the Chicago-born Augustinian missionary Robert Prevost, surprised the world Thursday when he emerged on the loggia of St. Peter's Basilica as the 267th pontiff, overcoming the traditional prohibition against a pope from the United States.

The 69-year-old wore the traditional red cape — which Francis had eschewed on his election in 2013 — and trappings of the papacy, suggesting a return to some degree of rule-following after Francis' unorthodox pontificate.

But in naming himself Leo and referring to some of Francis' more social justice-minded priorities, the new pope could also have wanted to signal a strong line of continuity: Brother Leo was the 13th century friar who was a great companion to St. Francis of Assisi, the late pope's namesake.

"Together, we must try to find out how to be a missionary church, a church that builds bridges, establishes dialogue, that's always open to receive — like on this piazza with open arms — to be able to receive everybody that needs our charity, our presence, dialogue and love," Leo said in near-perfect Italian in his first comments to the world.

Francis, the first Latin American pope, clearly had his eye on Prevost and in many ways saw him as his heir apparent. He sent Prevost, who had spent years as a missionary in Peru, to take over a complicated diocese there in 2014. Francis then brought Prevost to the Vatican in 2023 to head of the Vatican's powerful Dicastery for Bishops, which vets bishop nominations around the world and is one of the most important jobs in church governance.

Earlier this year, Francis elevated Prevost into the senior ranks of cardinals, giving him prominence going into the conclave that few other cardinals had.

There had long been a taboo on a U.S. pope, given America's superpower status in the secular world. But Prevost prevailed, perhaps because he's also a Peruvian citizen and had lived for two decades in Peru, first as a missionary and then as bishop.



**Newly elected Pope Leo XIV appears at the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican, Thursday, May 8, 2025.** (AP Photo/

Alessandra Tarantino)



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, May 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 318 ~ 29 of 70

As if to drive that home, Leo spoke in Italian and Spanish from the loggia, but not English.

Since arriving in Rome, Prevost had kept a low public profile but was well-known to the men who count, and respected by those who worked with him. Significantly, he presided over one of the most revolutionary reforms Francis made, when he added three women to the voting bloc that decides which bishop nominations to forward to the pope.

In a 2023 interview with Vatican News, the then-cardinal said the women had enriched the process and reaffirmed the need for the laity to have a greater role in the church.

"Even the bishops of Peru called him the saint, the Saint of the North, and he had time for everyone," said the Rev. Alexander Lam, an Augustinian friar from Peru who knows the new pope.

The crowd in St. Peter's Square erupted in cheers Thursday when white smoke poured out of the Sistine Chapel shortly after 6 p.m. on the second day of the conclave. Waving flags from around the world, tens of thousands of people were surprised an hour later when the senior cardinal deacon announced the winner was Prevost.

U.S. President Donald Trump said it was "such an honor for our country" for the new pope to be American. The president added that "we're a little bit surprised and we're happy."

Prevost has shared criticism of the Trump administration's migration policies: In past social media posts, Prevost shared articles criticizing Vice President JD Vance's justification of the administration's mass deportation plans.

An Augustinian pope

The last pope to take the name Leo was Leo XIII, an Italian who led the church from 1878 to 1903. That Leo softened the church's confrontational stance toward modernity, especially science and politics, and laid the foundation for modern Catholic social thought. His most famous encyclical, *Rerum Novarum* of 1891, addressed workers' rights and capitalism at the beginning of the industrial revolution and was highlighted by the Vatican in explaining the new pope's choice of name.

That Leo also had close ties to the Augustinian order: He rebuilt an ancient Augustinian church and convent near his hometown of Carpineto, outside Rome, which is still in use by the new pope's order today.

Vatican watchers said Prevost's decision to name himself Leo was particularly significant given the previous Leo's legacy of social justice and reform, suggesting continuity with some of Francis' chief concerns. Specifically, Leo cited one of Francis' key priorities of making the Catholic Church more attentive to lay people and inclusive, a process known as synodality.

"He is continuing a lot of Francis' ministry," said Natalia Imperatori-Lee, the chair of religious studies at Manhattan University in the Bronx. But she also said his election could send a message to the U.S. church, which has been badly divided between conservatives and progressives, with much of the right-wing opposition to Francis coming from there.

"I think it is going to be exciting to see a different kind of American Catholicism in Rome," Imperatori-Lee said.

Leo said in a 2023 interview with Vatican News that the polarization in the church was a wound that needed to be healed.

"Divisions and polemics in the church do not help anything. We bishops especially must accelerate this movement towards unity, towards communion in the church," he said.

Archbishop Bernard Hebda, of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis, told reporters he never thought he would see an American pope, given the questions of how he would navigate dealing with a U.S. president, especially someone like Trump.

"And so I just never imagined that we would have an American pope, and I have great confidence that Pope Leo will do a wonderful job of navigating that," he said.

Leo's brother, John Prevost, was so shocked that his brother had been elected pope that he missed several phone calls from Leo during an interview Thursday with The Associated Press. He called the pope back and Leo told him he wasn't interested in being part of the interview.

John Prevost described his brother, a fan of Wordle, as being very concerned for the poor and those who don't have a voice. He said he expects him to be a "second Pope Francis."

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, May 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 318 ~ 30 of 70

"He's not going to be real far left and he's not going to be real far right," he added. "Kind of right down the middle."

Looking ahead

In his first hours as pope, Leo went back to his old apartment in the Sant'Uffizio Palace to see colleagues, according to selfies posted to social media. Vatican Media also showed him in the moments after his election praying at a kneeler in the Pauline Chapel before emerging on the loggia.

Leo was expected to celebrate Mass with cardinals in the Sistine Chapel on Friday, deliver his first Sunday noon blessing from the loggia of St. Peter's and attend an audience with the media on Monday in the Vatican auditorium, Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni said.

Beyond that, he has a possible first foreign trip at the end of May: Francis had been invited to travel to Turkey to commemorate the 1,700th anniversary of the First Council of Nicaea, a landmark event in Christian history and an important moment in Catholic-Orthodox relations.

The new pope was formerly the prior general, or leader, of the Order of St. Augustine, which was formed in the 13th century as a community of "mendicant" friars — dedicated to poverty, service and evangelization. Vatican News said Leo is the first Augustinian pope.

In Peru, he is known as the saintly missionary who waded through mud after torrential rains flooded the region, bringing help to needy people, and as the bishop who spearheaded the lifesaving purchase of oxygen production plants during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"He has no problem fixing a broken-down truck until it runs," said Janinna Sesa, who met Prevost while she worked for the church's Caritas charity.

## What's in a name? Pope Leo XIV's choice signals a commitment to social justice

By COLLEEN BARRY Associated Press

SCHIAVON, Italy (AP) — Pope Leo XIV's choice of name signals a commitment to social justice that is very much in line with the late Pope Francis' global ministry.

"I think a lot of us had a question mark when they elected an American, and then he selected the name Pope Leo XIV," said Natalia Imperatori-Lee, the chair of religious studies at Manhattan University. "It really means to me he will continue the work of Leo XIII."

Pope Leo XIII, who was head of the Catholic Church from 1878 to 1903, laid the foundation for modern Catholic social thought, most famously with his 1891 encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, which addressed workers' rights and capitalism at the dawn of the industrial age. He criticized both laissez-faire capitalism and state-centric socialism, giving shape to a distinctly Catholic vein of economic teaching.

The name "is a deep sign of commitment to social issues," said Imperatori-Lee. "I think this (new) pope is saying something about social justice, by choosing this name, that it is going to be a priority. He is continuing a lot of Francis' ministry."

Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni confirmed that choice of the name Leo was a reference to Leo XIII and the social doctrine of the church, in particular the *Rerum Novarum* encyclical, considered the Catholic Church's first social encyclical.

Another predecessor, Pope Leo I, was known for repelling the barbarian invasion of Attila the Hun in 452 A.D. and dissuading him from sacking Rome through diplomacy, Italian Cardinal Mauro Piacenza told RAI Italian state TV. He also noted that Pope Leo XIII elevated the Sanctuary of Our Lady of the Rosary of Pompeii to a papal basilica in 1901.

Leo could also refer to Brother Leo, the 13th century friar who was a great companion of St. Francis of Assisi. By choosing such a name, the new pope could be signaling also a very strong continuity with Francis, who named himself after the saint.

For most of the Catholic Church's first millennium, popes used their given names. The first exception was the 6th century Roman Mercurius, who had been named for a pagan god and chose the more appropriate name of John II.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, May 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 318 ~ 31 of 70

The practice of adopting a new name became ingrained during the 11th century, a period of German popes who chose names of early church bishops out of "a desire to signify continuity," according to Rev. Roberto Regoli, a historian at Rome's Pontifical Gregorian University.

For many centuries, new popes tended to choose the name of the pope who had elevated them to cardinal. John was the most popular, chosen by 23 popes, followed by Benedict and Gregory, each with 16.

It was from the mid-20th century that new popes began to choose names signaling the aim of their papacy, Regoli said.

## Indian and Pakistan troops swap intense artillery fire overnight

By AIJAZ HUSSAIN, MUNIR AHMED, SHEIKH SAALIQ and RAJESH ROY Associated Press

SRINAGAR, India (AP) — Indian and Pakistani soldiers exchanged heavy volleys of shells and gunfire across their frontier in Kashmir overnight, killing at least five civilians amid a growing military standoff that erupted following an attack on tourists in the India-controlled portion of the disputed region.

In Pakistan, an unusually intense night of artillery exchanges left at least four civilians dead and wounded 12 others in areas near the Line of Control that divides Kashmir, local police official Adeel Ahmad said. People in border towns said the firing continued well into Friday morning.

"We're used to hearing exchange of fire between Pakistan and India at the Line of Control, but last night was different," said Mohammad Shakil, who lives near the frontier in Chakothi sector.

In India, military officials said Pakistani troops barraged their posts overnight with artillery, mortars and gunfire at multiple locations. They said Indian soldiers responded, triggering fierce exchanges until early dawn.

A woman was killed and two other civilians were injured in Uri sector, police said, taking the civilian death toll in India to 17 since Wednesday.

Rivals exchange strikes and allegations

Tensions between the nuclear-armed rivals have soared since an attack on a popular tourist site in India-controlled Kashmir left 26 civilians dead, mostly Hindu Indian tourists, on April 22. New Delhi has blamed Pakistan for backing the attack, an accusation Islamabad rejects.

On Wednesday, India conducted airstrikes on several sites in Pakistani territory it described as militant-related, killing 31 civilians according to Pakistani officials. Pakistan said it shot down five Indian fighter jets.

On Thursday, both countries reported drone attacks that the other swiftly denied. These incidents could not be independently confirmed.

India orders X to block thousands of accounts

Meanwhile, social platform X in a statement on Thursday said the Indian government had ordered it to block users in the country from accessing more than 8,000 accounts, including a number of "international news organizations and other prominent users."

The social platform did not release the list of accounts it was blocking in India, but said the order "amounts to censorship of existing and future content, and is contrary to the fundamental right of free speech." Later, X briefly blocked access to the Global Affairs Account from which it had posted the statement, also citing a legal demand from India.

Crisis disrupts schools, sports and travel

Panic also spread during an evening cricket match in northern Dharamsala city, where a crowd of more than 10,000 people had to be evacuated from the stadium and the game called off, according to an Associated Press photographer covering the event.

Meanwhile, several northern and western Indian states, including Punjab, Rajasthan, Indian-controlled Kashmir, shut schools and other educational institutions for two days.

Airlines in India have also suspended flight operations from two dozen airports across northern and western regions. India's Civil Aviation Ministry late Thursday confirmed in a statement the temporary closure of 24 airports.

The impact of border flare up was also seen in the Indian stock markets. In early trade on Friday, the

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, May 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 318 ~ 32 of 70

benchmark Sensex tanked 662 points to 79,649 while Nifty 50 declined 215 points to trade at 24,058.

Vance says a war would be 'none of our business'

As fears of military concentration soar and worried world leaders call for de-escalation, the U.S. Vice President JD Vance has said that a potential war between India and Pakistan would be "none of our business."

"What we can do is try to encourage these folks to de-escalate a little bit, but we're not going to get involved in the middle of war that's fundamentally none of our business and has nothing to do with America's ability to control it," Vance said in an interview with Fox News.

## China's exports to US sink, offset by trade with other economies, as US tariffs hit global trade

By ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

China's exports to the United States tumbled in April while its trade with other economies surged, suggesting that President Donald Trump's tariffs offensive is hastening a shakeup in global supply chains.

Total exports from China rose 8.1% last month from a year earlier, much faster than the 2% pace most economists had been expecting. That was much slower than the 12.4% year-on-year increase in March. Imports fell 0.2% in April from the year before.

Shipments to the U.S. sank 21% in dollar terms as Trump's tariffs on most Chinese exports rose to as high as 145%. With Chinese tariffs on U.S. goods at 125%, business between the two biggest economies has grown increasingly uncertain.

China's imports from the U.S. dropped more than 13% from a year earlier, while its politically sensitive trade surplus with the United States was nearly \$20.5 billion in April, down from about \$27.2 billion a year earlier.

In the first four months of the year, China's exports to the United States fell 2.5% from a year earlier, while imports from the U.S. fell 4.7%.

A potential break in the tariffs stalemate could come as soon as this weekend. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and other senior trade officials are due to meet with Chinese officials in Geneva on Saturday. But Beijing and Washington are at odds over a raft of issues, including colliding strategic interests that will may impede progress in the talks.

Some of the punitive tariffs, including Beijing's retaliatory 125% tariffs on U.S. exports, could be rolled back, but a full reversal is unlikely, Zichun Huang of Capital Economics said in a report.

"This means China's exports to the U.S. are set for further declines over the coming months, not all of which will be offset by increased trade with other countries. We still expect export growth to turn negative later this year," Huang said.

Whatever the outcome of those discussions, the rapid increase in Chinese exports to other countries reflects a restructuring that began years ago but has gained momentum as Trump has raised barriers to exporting to the U.S.

Global manufacturers have been looking for alternatives to a near total reliance on manufacturing in China after disruptions from the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need for more diverse options.

The need for more versatile supply chains grew more apparent as Trump hiked tariffs on Chinese exports during his first term in office. Most of those remained during former President Joe Biden's term.

Exports to the United States accounted for about a tenth of China's total exports in April and the U.S. is still China's largest single-country market. But the European Union and Southeast Asia are larger regional export markets.

Trade with a broader grouping, the 15-nation Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), which does not include the United States, is still bigger. And exports to countries participating in China's "Belt and Road Initiative," a vast network of Beijing-supported infrastructure projects, are bigger still.

In the first four months of the year, exports to the 10-nation Association of Southeast Asian Nations rose 11.5% from a year earlier, and those to Latin America also climbed 11.5%. Shipments to India jumped



nearly 16% by value, and exports to Africa surged 15%.

Some of the fastest growth was in Asia, reflecting moves by Chinese and other manufacturers to diversify their supply chains outside of the Chinese mainland. Most notable were exports to Vietnam, which jumped 18% year-on-year. Exports to Thailand were up 20%.

Back in China, preliminary data have shown a sharp decline in shipping and other trade activity. Earlier this week, Beijing announced a barrage of measures meant to counter the impact of the trade war on its economy, which was already struggling to regain momentum after the pandemic and a lengthy downturn in its housing sector.

## Leo XIV's brother recalls feeling of 'disbelief' over his sibling becoming pope

By OBED LAMY and HALLIE GOLDEN Associated Press

NEW LENOX, Ill. (AP) — When white smoke poured out of the Sistine Chapel revealing that a new pope had been chosen, John Prevost turned on his television in Illinois, called his niece and they watched in awe as his brother's name was announced.

"She started screaming because it was her uncle and I was in the moment of disbelief that this cannot be possible because it's too far from what we thought would happen," Prevost said Thursday in an interview with The Associated Press from his home in New Lenox, Illinois.

Next, he said he felt an intense sense of pride that his brother, Cardinal Robert Prevost, had become the 267th pontiff to lead the Catholic Church, making the Chicago-born missionary the first U.S. pope.

"It's quite an honor; it's quite a once in a lifetime," he said. "But I think it's quite a responsibility and I think it's going to lead to bigger and better things, but I think people are going to watch him very closely to see what he's doing."

Robert Prevost, a 69-year-old member of the Augustinian religious order who spent his career ministering in Peru, took the name Leo XIV.

John Prevost described his brother as being very concerned for the poor and those who don't have a voice. He said he expects him to be a "second Pope Francis."

"He's not going to be real far left and he's not going to be real far right," he added. "Kind of right down the middle."

At one point during the interview, John Prevost realized he had missed several calls from his brother, so he gave the new pope a call back.

Leo told him he wasn't interested in being part of the interview and after a brief message of congratulations and discussion in which they talked like any two brothers about travel arrangements, they hung up.

The new pope grew up the youngest of three boys. John Prevost, who was only a year older than him, said he remembers Robert Prevost being very good in school as a kid and enjoying playing tag, Monopoly and Risk.

From a young age, he said he knew his brother was going to be a priest. Although he didn't expect him to become pope, he recalled a neighbor predicting that very thing when Robert Prevost was only a first grader.

"She sensed that at 6 years old," he said. "How she did that, who knows. It took this long, but here he is, first American pope."

When Robert Prevost graduated eighth grade, he left for seminary school, his brother said.

"There's a whole period there where we didn't really grow up together," he said. "It was just on vacations that we had contact together."

These days, the brothers talk on the phone every day, John Prevost said. Robert Prevost will call him and they'll discuss everything from politics to religion and even play the day's Wordle.

John Prevost said he's not sure how much time his brother will have to talk as the new pope and how they'll handle staying in touch in the future.

"It's already strange not having someone to talk to," he said.

## Lainey Wilson rules the 2025 Academy of Country Music Awards once again, Alan Jackson is honored

By MARIA SHERMAN AP Music Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — It was her night once again. Lainey Wilson took home the top prize at the 60th annual Academy of Country Music Awards — the title of entertainer of the year — for a second year in a row. And that was after she cleaned house, taking home trophies for both female artist and album of the year.

"I really do have the best fans in the world," she said in her final acceptance speech, admitting to experiencing impostor syndrome. "I dreamed about entertaining. ... Country music has given me more than I deserve."

Beyond Wilson's dominance, the 2025 ACM Awards were packed with celebration. Earlier, first-time and leading nominee Ella Langley's duet with Riley Green, the ubiquitous "You Look Like You Love Me," was named single and music event of the year.

Both Langley and Green used their first acceptance speech to shout out classic country — songs with talking in them — that inspired their modern hit.

A revisitation of the past might have been a theme Thursday night, evidenced right at the top of the ceremony: a 14-minute medley of six decades of country classics, performed by giants of the genre.

Host Reba McEntire launched into Merle Haggard's "Okie from Muskogee," followed by Clint Black with Glen Campbell's "Rhinestone Cowboy" and Wynonna Judd with The Judds' "Why Not Me." LeAnn Rimes returned to the ACM Awards stage for her 1997 ballad "Blue." Little Big Town tackled their 2014 track "Girl Crush" and Dan + Shay delivered their "Tequila."

It was an exciting way to kick off the ACM Awards, live from the Ford Center at The Star in Frisco, Texas, just north of Dallas.

And it was a show highlight, rivaled only by the introduction of the ACM Alan Jackson Lifetime Achievement Award, the inaugural trophy given to its namesake, Jackson, after he performed "Remember When."

In his acceptance speech, he joked that a fan named a dog after him. Having an award named after him? That isn't half bad, either.

The first trophy of the night, the coveted song of the year, was awarded to Cody Johnson for his radio hit "Dirt Cheap."

Performances followed, fast and furious. McEntire, Wilson and Miranda Lambert teamed up for the world premiere of their new single "Trailblazer," celebrating women in country music.

Eric Church performed his brand-new single "Hands of Time," succeeded by the most awarded artist in the history of the award show, Lambert with "Run." She was then joined by Langley to duet "Kerosene" from Lambert's 2005 debut album of the same name.

Zach Top stripped things down for "Use Me." Blake Shelton channeled the great George Strait for his new single "Texas," followed by Wilson with "Whirlwind." Kelsea Ballerini performed atop her "Baggage." Johnson rocked "The Fall," before performing "Red Dirt Road" with Brooks & Dunn. Chris Stapleton and his wife, Morgane, harmonized on "It Takes a Woman."

Jelly Roll and Shaboozey joined forces for their collaboration, "Amen."

"It's Shaboozey's birthday," Jelly Roll said. "We wanna thank y'all and we wanna thank God."

Backstreet Boys and Rascal Flatts closed the show.

The Oak Ridge Boys gave the group of the year award to Old Dominion. It was a moving gesture; in 2024 the Oak Ridge Boys' Joe Bonsall, a Grammy award winner and celebrated tenor, died from complications of the neuromuscular disorder Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis.

Another tearjerker: McEntire leading the audience in a sing-along of the late Kris Kristofferson's "Me and Bobby McGee."

Male artist of the year went to Stapleton. Duo of the year was awarded to Brooks & Dunn.

Megan Moroney covered Keith Urban's "Stupid Boy" and Stapleton did "Blue Ain't Your Color" ahead of the Australian superstar's reception of the coveted ACM Triple Crown Award, marking the first time an

artist has received the trophy on stage since Carrie Underwood was honored in 2010.

If anything, the 60th ACM Awards proved the show is at its best when it celebrates new acts and legends in equal measure.

The ACM Awards streamed on Prime Video and the Amazon Music channel on Twitch Live. No Prime membership was required to view the livestream.

## Freed Palestinian student accuses Columbia University of inciting violence

By HOLLY RAMER and AMANDA SWINHART Associated Press

MONTPELIER, Vt. (AP) — A Palestinian student arrested as he was about to finalize his U.S. citizenship accused Columbia University on Thursday of eroding democracy with its handling of campus protests against the Israel-Hamas war.

Mohsen Mahdawi, 34, who led anti-war protests at the Ivy League school in New York in 2023 and 2024, spent 16 days in a Vermont prison before a judge ordered him released on April 30. He spoke to The Associated Press on Thursday, a day after pro-Palestinian protestors clashed with campus security guards inside the university's main library. At least 80 people were taken into custody, police said.

Mahdawi said instead of being a "beacon of hope," the university is inciting violence against students.

"Columbia University is participating in the destruction of the democratic system," Mahdawi said in the interview. "They are supporting the initiatives and the agenda of the Trump administration, and they are punishing and torturing their students."

A spokesperson for Columbia University, which in March announced sweeping policy changes related to protests following Trump administration threats to revoke its federal funding, declined to comment Thursday beyond the response of the school's acting president to Wednesday's protests.

The acting president, Claire Shipman, said the protesters who had holed up inside a library reading room were asked repeatedly to show identification and to leave, but they refused. The school then asked police in "to assist in securing the building and the safety of our community," she said in a statement Wednesday evening, calling the protest actions "outrageous" and a disruption to students for final exams.

The Trump administration has said Mahdawi should be deported because his activism threatens its foreign policy goals, but the judge who released him ruled that he has raised a "substantial claim" that the government arrested him to stifle speech with which it disagrees.

Mahdawi, a legal permanent resident, was born in a refugee camp in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and moved to the United States in 2014. At Columbia, he organized campus protests and co-founded the Palestinian Student Union with Mahmoud Khalil, another Palestinian permanent resident of the U.S. and graduate student who was arrested in March.

On April 14, Mahdawi had taken a written citizenship test, answered verbal questions and signed a document about the pledge of allegiance at an immigration office in Colchester when his interviewer left the room. Masked and armed agents then entered and arrested him, he said. Though he had suspected a trap, the moment was still shocking, he said, triggering a cascade of contrasting emotions.

"Light and darkness, cold and hot. Having rights or not having rights at all," he said.

Immigration authorities have 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. Mahdawi was among the first to win release from custody after challenging his arrest.

In another case, a federal appeals court ruled Wednesday in favor of Tufts University student Rumeysa Ozturk, upholding an order to transfer her from a Louisiana detention center back to New England to determine whether her rights were violated and if she should be released.

Mahdawi said his message to the Turkish student and others was "stay positive and don't let this injustice shake your belief in the inevitability of justice."

"People are working hard. Communities are mobilizing," he said. "The justice system has signaled to America with my case, and with Rumeysa's yesterday with the Second Circuit, that justice is functioning

and checks and balances is still in function.”

Mahdawi’s release, which is being challenged by the government, allows him to travel outside of his home state of Vermont and attend his graduation from Columbia in New York later this month. He said he plans to do so, though he believes the administration has turned its back on him and rejected the work of a student diplomacy council he served on alongside Jewish, Israeli and Lebanese students.

“I plan to attend the graduation because it is a message,” he said. “This is a message that education is hope, education is light, and there is no power in the world that should take that away from us.”

## India and Pakistan trade fire and accusations as fears of a wider military confrontation rise

By BABAR DOGAR, MUNIR AHMED, SHEIKH SAALIQ and AIJAZ HUSSAIN Associated Press

LAHORE, Pakistan (AP) — India fired attack drones into Pakistan on Thursday, killing at least two civilians, the Pakistani military said. India, meanwhile, accused its neighbor of attempting its own attack, as tensions soared between the nuclear-armed rivals.

India acknowledged that it targeted Pakistan’s air defense system, and Islamabad said it shot down several of the drones. India said it “neutralized” Pakistan’s attempts to hit military targets. It was not possible to verify all of the claims.

The exchanges came a day after Indian missiles struck several locations in Pakistan, killing 31 civilians, according to Pakistani officials. New Delhi said it was retaliating after gunmen killed more than two dozen people, mostly Hindu tourists, in India-controlled Kashmir last month. India accused Pakistan of being behind the assault. Islamabad denies that.

Both sides have also traded heavy fire across their frontier in disputed Kashmir, and Pakistan claimed it killed scores of Indian soldiers. There was no confirmation from India.

Late Thursday, in Indian-controlled Kashmir, residents of the city of Jammu reported explosions and sirens, followed by a blackout.

India’s Headquarters of the Integrated Defence Staff, a central coordinating arm for all Indian armed forces, said military stations in Jammu, Udhampur and Pathankot were targeted by Pakistan using missiles and drones. It said the attacks were repelled and no casualties were reported.

Shesh Paul Vaid, the region’s former director-general of police, told The Associated Press that the Jammu Airport likely was also under attack and that some of the 50 loud explosions he heard likely were because “our defense system is at work.”

Jammu and Udhampur are close to the Line of Control, the de facto border that divides the Kashmir region between India and Pakistan. Pathankot is in India’s Punjab state.

Sirens were also heard in some parts of the region’s main city of Srinagar, residents said. It was followed by a blackout in the city and other parts of the region.

Pakistan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs in a statement rejected the Indian claims that Pakistan launched attacks on Pathankot, Jaisalmer and Srinagar, saying “these claims are entirely unfounded, politically motivated, and part of a reckless propaganda campaign aimed at maligning Pakistan”.

It added that “such actions not only further endanger regional peace but also reveal a disturbing willingness to exploit misinformation for political and military ends”.

Pakistan’s Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has vowed to avenge the deaths in India’s missile strikes, raising fears that the two countries could be headed toward another all-out conflict. Leaders from both nations face mounting public pressure to show strength and seek revenge, and the heated rhetoric and competing claims could be a response to that pressure.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio spoke Thursday to the Pakistani prime minister and India’s External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, urging both sides to de-escalate the situation, the U.S. State Department said.

The relationship between countries has been shaped by conflict and mutual suspicion, most notably in



# Groton Daily Independent

**Friday, May 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 318 ~ 37 of 70**

their dispute over Kashmir. They have fought two of their three wars over the Himalayan region, which is split between them and claimed by both in its entirety.

With tensions high, India evacuated thousands of people from villages near the highly militarized frontier in the region. Tens of thousands of people slept in shelters overnight, officials and residents said Thursday. About 2,000 villagers also fled their homes in Pakistani-administered Kashmir.

Mohammad Iftikhar boarded a vehicle with his family on Thursday as heavy rain lashed the region. "I am helplessly leaving my home for the safety of my children and wife," he said.

## India fires drones at Pakistan

India fired several Israeli-made Harop drones at Pakistan overnight and into Thursday afternoon, according to Pakistani army spokesman Lt. Gen. Ahmad Sharif, who said 29 were shot down. Two civilians were killed and another wounded when debris from a downed drone fell in Sindh province.

One drone damaged a military site near the city of Lahore and wounded four soldiers, and another fell in the garrison city of Rawalpindi, near the capital, according to Sharif. "The armed forces are neutralizing them as we speak," he told state-run Pakistan Television.

In Lahore, local police official Mohammad Rizwan said a drone was downed near Walton Airport, an airfield in a residential area about 25 kilometers (16 miles) from the border with India that also contains military installations.

India's Defense Ministry said its armed forces "targeted air defense radars and systems" in several places in Pakistan, including Lahore.

## Blackout in Gurdaspur district

New Delhi, meanwhile, accused Pakistan of attempting "to engage a number of military targets" with missiles and drones along the Line of Control that divides Kashmir and elsewhere along their border. "The debris of these attacks is now being recovered from a number of locations," it said.

At a news briefing, Pakistan's Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar on Thursday rejected India's claim that Islamabad carried out any attack in Indian Punjab. "These accusations are an attempt to incite anti-Pakistan sentiment among the Punjabi Sikh population in India," he said.

Seated alongside Dar, the military spokesperson, Sharif said Pakistan shot down 29 Indian drones after they violated its airspace.

Pakistani Information Minister Attaullah Tarar told parliament that so far Pakistan has not responded to India's missiles attacks, but there will be one. Later Thursday, Indian authorities ordered a night-time blackout in Punjab's Gurdaspur district, which borders Pakistan.

The Harop drone, produced by Israel's IAI, is one of several in India's inventory, according to the International Institute for Strategic Studies' Military Balance report.

According to IAI, the Harop combines the capabilities of a drone and a missile and can operate at long ranges.

The two sides have also exchanged heavy fire over the past day.

Tarar said that the country's armed forces have killed 40 to 50 Indian soldiers in the exchanges along the Line of Control. India has not commented on that claim. Earlier, the army said one Indian soldier was killed by shelling Wednesday.

## Sikh Temple in Kashmir

Tarar denied Indian accusations that Pakistan had fired missiles toward the Indian city of Amritsar, saying in fact an Indian drone fell in the city. Neither claim could be confirmed.

India's Foreign Ministry has said that 16 civilians were killed Wednesday during exchanges of fire across the de facto border.

Pakistani officials said six people have been killed near the highly militarized frontier in exchanges of fire over the past day.

Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri denied that New Delhi has targeted civilians and a key dam, as Pakistan has alleged. He, in turn, accused Pakistani forces of targeting civilians, including at a Sikh Temple in Kashmir, where he said three Sikhs were killed.

Flights remained suspended at over two dozen airports across northern and western regions in India,

according to travel advisories by multiple airlines. Pakistan resumed flights nationwide after a suspension at four airports, according to the Civil Aviation Authority.

## **Robert Prevost, first pope from US in history of the Catholic Church, takes the name Leo XIV**

By NICOLE WINFIELD and VANESSA GERA Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Catholic cardinals broke with tradition Thursday and elected the first U.S. pope, making Chicago-born missionary Robert Prevost the 267th pontiff to lead the Catholic Church in a moment of global turmoil and conflict.

Prevost, a 69-year-old member of the Augustinian religious order who spent his career ministering in Peru, took the name Leo XIV.

In his first words as Pope Francis' successor, uttered from the loggia of St. Peter's Basilica, Leo said, "Peace be with you," and emphasized a message of "a disarmed and disarming peace" dialogue and missionary evangelization.

He wore the traditional red cape and trappings of the papacy — a cape that Francis had eschewed on his election in 2013 — suggesting a return to some degree of tradition after Francis' unorthodox pontificate. But in naming himself Leo, the new pope could also have wanted to signal a strong line of continuity: Brother Leo was the 13th century friar who was a great companion to St. Francis of Assisi, the late pope's namesake.

"Together, we must try to find out how to be a missionary church, a church that builds bridges, establishes dialogue, that's always open to receive — like on this piazza with open arms — to be able to receive everybody that needs our charity, our presence, dialogue and love," Leo said in near-perfect Italian.

Prevost had been a leading candidate for the papacy, but there had long been a taboo against a U.S. pope, given the geopolitical power the country already wields. But Prevost was seemingly eligible because he's also a Peruvian citizen and had lived for years in Peru, first as a missionary and then as bishop, and cardinals may have thought the 21st century world order could handle a U.S.-born pope.

Francis, history's first Latin American pope, clearly had his eye on Prevost and in many ways saw him as his heir apparent. He sent Prevost to take over a complicated diocese in Peru, then brought him to the Vatican in 2023 to serve as the powerful head of the office that vets bishop nominations from around the world, one of the most important jobs in the Catholic Church. Earlier this year, Francis elevated Prevost into the senior ranks of cardinals, giving him prominence going into the conclave that few other cardinals had.

Since arriving in Rome, Prevost has kept a low public profile but was well-known to the men who count. Significantly, he presided over one of the most revolutionary reforms Francis made, when he added three women to the voting bloc that decides which bishop nominations to forward to the pope.

Prevost's brother, John Prevost, described his brother as being very concerned for the poor and those who don't have a voice, saying he expects him to be a "second Pope Francis."

"He's not going to be real far left and he's not going to be real far right," he added. "Kind of right down the middle."

Celebrating the new pope

The crowd in St. Peter's Square erupted in cheers Thursday when white smoke poured out of the Sistine Chapel shortly after 6 p.m. on the second day of the conclave, the most geographically diverse in history. Priests made the sign of the cross and nuns wept as the crowd shouted, "Viva il papa!"

Waving flags from around the world, tens of thousands of people waited for more than an hour to learn who had won and were surprised an hour later, when the senior cardinal deacon appeared on the loggia, said "Habemus Papam!" — "We have a pope!" in Latin — and announced the winner was Prevost.

He spoke to the crowd in Italian and Spanish, but not English, honoring Pope Francis and his final salute to the crowd on Easter Sunday.

"Greetings ... to all of you, and in particular, to my beloved diocese of Chiclayo in Peru, where a faithful

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, May 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 318 ~ 39 of 70

people have accompanied their bishop, shared their faith," he said in Spanish.

U.S. President Donald Trump said it was "such an honor for our country" for the new pope to be American. "What greater honor can there be?" he said. The president added that "we're a little bit surprised and we're happy."

The last pope to take the name Leo was Leo XIII, an Italian who led the church from 1878 to 1903. That Leo softened the church's confrontational stance toward modernity, especially science and politics and laid the foundation for modern Catholic social thought. His most famous encyclical, *Rerum Novarum* of 1891, addressed workers' rights and capitalism at the beginning of the industrial revolution and was highlighted by the Vatican in explaining the new pope's choice of name.

An Augustinian pope

Vatican watchers said Prevost's decision to name himself Leo was particularly significant given the previous Leo's legacy of social justice and reform, suggesting continuity with some of Francis' chief concerns.

"He is continuing a lot of Francis' ministry," said Natalia Imperatori-Lee, the chair of religious studies at Manhattan University in the Bronx. But Imperatori-Lee also said his election could send a message to the U.S. church, which has been badly divided between conservatives and progressives, with much of the right-wing opposition to Francis coming from there.

"I think it is going to be exciting to see a different kind of American Catholicism in Rome," Imperatori-Lee said.

Archbishop Bernard Hebda, of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis, told reporters he never thought he would see an American pope, given the questions of how an one would navigate dealing with a U.S. president, especially Trump.

"How is it that the Holy Father is able to deal with President Trump, for example — whoever our American president? Would those ties be too close or too distant?" he said. "And so I just never imagined that we would have an American pope, and I have great confidence that Pope Leo will do a wonderful job of navigating that."

Leo was expected to celebrate Mass with cardinals in the Sistine Chapel on Friday, planned to deliver his first Sunday noon blessing from the loggia of St. Peter's and lined up an audience with the media Monday in the Vatican auditorium, Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni said.

Beyond that, he has a possible first foreign trip at the end of May: Francis had been invited to travel to Turkey to commemorate the 1,700th anniversary of the First Council of Nicaea, a landmark event in Christian history and an important moment in Catholic-Orthodox relations. Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, the spiritual leader of the world's Orthodox Christians, welcomed Leo's election and said he hoped he would join the anniversary celebration.

The new pope was formerly the prior general, or leader, of the Order of St. Augustine, which was formed in the 13th century as a community of "mendicant" friars — dedicated to poverty, service and evangelization. Vatican News said Leo is the first Augustinian pope.

Prevost's election thrilled American students studying in Rome who happened to be in St. Peter's Square to witness history.

"That's the first American pope in history. How exciting!" said Alessandra Jarrett, a 21-year-old political science student at Rome's John Cabot university. "Crazy that we're able to be here and see it, and this was even our last day in school."

Sister Bernadette, a 50-year-old nun from Houston, Texas, was studying spirituality in Rome at the same university where Prevost did graduate studies, the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas, known as the Angelicum.

"He touched the heart of everyone, and he acknowledged the great work of Francis, which he wants to continue embracing the world and embracing all of our brothers and sisters in Christ," she said.

The past of Pope Leo

Francis moved Prevost from the Augustinian leadership back to Peru in 2014 to serve as the administrator and later bishop of Chiclayo.

He remained in that position, acquiring Peruvian citizenship in 2015, until Francis brought him to Rome

in 2023 to assume both the bishops' dossier and the presidency of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America. In that job he would have kept in regular contact with the Catholic hierarchy in the part of the world that counts the most Catholics. Counting North, Central and South America, the region had 37 cardinal electors going into the conclave.

The bells of the cathedral in Peru's capital of Lima and at Holy Name Cathedral in downtown Chicago tolled after Prevost's election was announced. People outside the Lima cathedral said they wanted Prevost to visit.

"For us Peruvians, it is a source of pride that this is a pope who represents our country," said elementary school teacher Isabel Panez, who happened to be near the cathedral when the news was announced. "We would like him to visit us here in Peru."

## **A US-backed group seeks to take over Gaza aid distribution in a plan similar to Israel's**

By SAM MEDNICK, JULIA FRANKEL and SARAH EL DEEB Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — A group of American security contractors, ex-military officers and humanitarian aid officials is proposing to take over the distribution of food and other supplies in Gaza based on plans similar to ones designed by Israel.

The Associated Press obtained a proposal from the newly created group, the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, to implement a new aid distribution system supplanting the current one run by the U.N. and other international aid agencies. The U.N. and aid groups have rejected Israel's moves to control aid distribution.

It was not immediately clear if the proposal from the new group, which is registered in Geneva, would ease those concerns.

Israel has blocked food, fuel, medicine and all other supplies from entering Gaza for 10 weeks, worsening a humanitarian crisis for 2.3 million Palestinians. It has said it won't allow aid back in until a system is in place that gives it control over distribution.

The 14-page proposal circulated this week among aid groups and U.N. officials lays out plans similar to ones Israel has been discussing privately for weeks with international aid groups. The proposal reveals for the first time plans to create the foundation and names the people leading it.

A U.N. official said last week that Israel's plans would "weaponize aid" by placing restrictions on who is eligible to receive it.

Aid workers have also criticized the plans, which would centralize distribution at four hubs under the protection of private security contractors. They say the plans could not possibly meet the needs of Gaza's large and desperate population, and that they would forcibly displace large numbers of Palestinians by driving them to move nearer to the aid.

Under the new group's proposal, Palestinians would receive pre-packaged rations, potable water, hygiene kits, blankets, and other supplies at the distribution hubs. The group said it wants to partner with the U.N. and international aid groups in handing out their supplies.

A U.S. official confirmed the authenticity of the proposal and said the former director of the U.N. World Food Program, David Beasley, is the lead choice to run GHF. The proposal could still be revised and Beasley's role is not confirmed, the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity to detail plans that have not been made public.

Beasley, a former governor of South Carolina, didn't immediately respond to messages seeking comment.

Israel accuses Hamas and other militants of siphoning off large amounts of aid. The U.N. and aid workers deny there is significant diversion, saying the U.N. strictly monitors distribution.

When contacted Thursday for comment about GHF's proposal, Israeli officials did not immediately respond.

U.S. backing for the foundation

The Trump administration supports the new group's proposal, said a person involved in it. The person said GHF would work "within the confines" set by Israel on aid but would be "independent and committed



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, May 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 318 ~ 41 of 70

to humanitarian principles" — a nod to U.N. concerns. The person spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss a plan not yet made public.

"This is a new approach with one focus: Get help to people. Right now," said U.S. State Department spokeswoman Tammy Bruce.

Ahead of his first trip to the Middle East this week, U.S. President Donald Trump said "a lot of talk" was going on about Gaza and that his administration will soon have more to say about a new proposal. This may include a new push for a ceasefire between Hamas and Israel, the release of hostages and an influx of aid to Palestinians.

Aryeh Lightstone, a senior member of U.S. special envoy Steve Witkoff's team, was involved in briefing U.N. agencies and aid groups about the foundation as they gathered in Geneva on Thursday, according to two humanitarian workers briefed on the meeting who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to comment to the media.

Who's involved?

GHF's proposal names a 10-member leadership team that includes former senior American military officers, business executives and officials from aid groups. At least two of them have ties to private security companies.

Beasley is listed among them, but the proposal says his role is still "to be finalized." Beasley is also a senior advisor to Fogbow, a private U.S. firm that participated in the short-lived project delivering aid to Gaza by sea via a U.S. military-built pier.

The AP contacted people listed in the proposal to confirm their participation. Only one responded, saying he was "not on the board." The person involved in planning said the list was still in flux.

How would it work?

According to the proposal, GHF would initially set up four distribution sites, each serving 300,000 people. That would cover about half of Gaza's population. The system would be scaled up to meet the needs of 2 million people. But the proposal does not give a timeframe. Aid workers warn that food is rapidly running out in Gaza under Israel's blockade.

The GHF proposal said subcontractors will use armored vehicles to transport supplies from the Gaza border to distribution sites, where they will also provide security. It said the aim is to deter criminal gangs or militants from redirecting aid.

It did not specify who would provide security but said it could include personnel who previously worked in the Netzarim Corridor, an Israeli-held zone cutting off northern Gaza. A private logistics and operations company, Safe Reach Solutions, has operated in the corridor.

GHF said people will get assistance based on need with no eligibility requirements. This appears to differ from proposals floated by Israel. Aid workers say Israel has said it intends to vet aid recipients and screen them using facial recognition.

What do aid groups say?

Throughout Israel's campaign in Gaza, the U.N. and other humanitarian groups have been carrying out a massive aid program. They have trucked in supplies and distributed them across the territory, going as close as possible to where Palestinians were located.

What has chiefly hampered the system, aid workers have said, are Israeli military operations and restrictions on movement, as well as the low amount of aid allowed to enter even before the blockade. Convoys have also been attacked by criminal groups stealing aid, and hungry Palestinians have sometimes taken supplies from trucks.

Aid workers contacted by the AP cast doubt whether GHF would meet humanitarian requirements for neutrality and independence.

Shaina Low, communications adviser for Norwegian Refugee Council, one of the main organizations in Gaza, said aid groups are concerned the plan will be used "to advance military and political goals."

By forcing the population to relocate around aid hubs, the system would "depopulate entire parts of Gaza" and could be used to potentially expel the population, she said.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, May 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 318 ~ 42 of 70

"They are framing (the plan) to fix the problem that doesn't really exist," she said, referring to Israel's contention that it must prevent Hamas from taking aid.

The use of private security companies has also alarmed humanitarian workers. While it's common for private security firms to operate in conflict zones, they have to respect humanitarian law and at a minimum be fully vetted and monitored, said Jamie Williamson, executive director for the International Code of Conduct Association.

Tamara Alrifai, communications director for the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees, which has led the aid effort in Gaza, said the plan was logistically unworkable.

She said the foundation does not appear able to match the current infrastructure needed to distribute food and address other humanitarian needs.

Alrifai called it "a very dangerous precedent" for countries to use "full siege as a tactic of war" to force the abandonment of "existing aid structures and the entire international system that exists and is recognized and start creating a new system."

## Trump asks Supreme Court to allow him to end humanitarian parole for 500,000 people from 4 countries

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's administration asked the Supreme Court on Thursday to allow it to end humanitarian parole for hundreds of thousands of immigrants from four countries, setting them up for potential deportation.

The emergency appeal asks the justices to halt a lower-court order keeping in place temporary legal status for more than 500,000 people from Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua and Venezuela.

The Republican administration argues that the decision wrongly intrudes on the Department of Homeland Security's authority.

"The district court has nullified one of the administration's most consequential immigration policy decisions," Solicitor General John Sauer wrote.

The order from U.S. District Judge Indira Talwani in Boston blocked the Trump administration from putting an early end to the migrants' temporary legal status. Her ruling in mid-April came shortly before their permits were due to be canceled, opening them up to removal from the country.

Talwani, who was appointed by Democratic President Barack Obama, said that people in the program faced the option of "fleeing the country" or staying and "risk losing everything." She said the government's explanation for ending the program was "based on an incorrect reading of the law."

The Justice Department went to the Supreme Court after an appeals court refused to lift Talwani's order.

Sauer argued that the judge was instead wrong on the law, including her finding that any revocations of parole must be made on a case-by-case basis. He argued that ending the program early allows the federal government to remove people from the country more quickly, in line with the Trump administration's policy goals.

The case is the latest in a string of emergency appeals the administration has made to the Supreme Court, many of them related to immigration. The government asked the court to strip temporary legal protections from 350,000 Venezuelans last week, and it remains locked in legal battles over its efforts to swiftly deport people accused of being gang members to a prison in El Salvador under an 18th century wartime law called the Alien Enemies Act.

Trump promised on the campaign trail to deport millions of people who are in the country illegally. His administration has also sought to dismantle policies from President Joe Biden's Democratic administration that created new ways for people to live legally in the U.S., generally for two years with work authorization.

Biden used humanitarian parole more than any other president, employing a special presidential authority in effect since 1952. Beneficiaries included more than 500,000 Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans and Venezuelans who flew to the United States with financial sponsors on two-year permits since late 2022, with authorization to work.

Advocates have called the Trump administration's move to end the program "unprecedented" and argued that it violated federal rule-making.

## Trump says he is naming Fox News host and former judge Jeanine Pirro as top federal prosecutor in DC

By MICHAEL KUNZELMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump said Thursday that he is naming Fox News host Jeanine Pirro, a former county prosecutor and elected judge, to be the top federal prosecutor for the nation's capital after abandoning his first pick for the job.

Pirro, who joined Fox News in 2006, cohosts the network's show "The Five" on weekday evenings. She was elected as a judge in New York's Westchester County Court in 1990 before serving three terms as the county's elected district attorney.

Trump tapped Pirro to at least temporarily lead the nation's largest U.S. Attorney's office after pulling his nomination of conservative activist Ed Martin Jr. for the position earlier Thursday. In a post on Truth Social, Trump said he was naming Pirro as the interim U.S. attorney in Washington, D.C., but didn't indicate whether he would nominate her for the Senate-confirmed position on a more permanent basis.

"Jeanine is incredibly well qualified for this position, and is considered one of the Top District Attorneys in the History of the State of New York. She is in a class by herself," Trump wrote.

Trump withdrew Martin from consideration after a key Republican senator said he could not support Martin for the job due to his defense of rioters who stormed the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

"He's a terrific person, and he wasn't getting the support from people that I thought," Trump told reporters in the Oval Office on Thursday. He later added, "But we have somebody else that will be great."

Martin's leading role in Trump's "Stop the Steal" movement was demoralizing for subordinates who spent four years prosecuting over 1,500 riot defendants only to see the president pardon them en masse. Pirro has her own connection to the baseless conspiracy theories of election fraud.

In 2021, voting technology company Smartmatic USA sued Fox News, Pirro and others for spreading false claims that the company helped "steal" the 2020 presidential election from Trump. The company's libel suit, filed in a New York state court, sought \$2.7 billion from the defendants.

Pirro is the latest in a string of Trump appointments coming from Fox News — a list that includes Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, who co-hosted "Fox & Friends Weekend."

"Jeanine Pirro has been a wonderful addition to The Five over the last three years and a longtime beloved host across Fox News Media who contributed greatly to our success throughout her 14-year tenure. We wish her all the best in her new role in Washington," a Fox News Media spokesperson said in a statement.

Martin has served as acting U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia since Trump's first week in office. But his hopes of keeping the job faded amid questions about his qualifications and background. Martin had never served as a prosecutor or tried a case before taking office in January.

Martin has stirred up a chorus of critics during his brief but tumultuous tenure in office. He fired and demoted subordinates who worked on politically sensitive cases. He posted on social media about potential targets of investigations. And he forced the chief of the office's criminal division to resign after directing her to scrutinize the awarding of a government contract during Democratic President Joe Biden's administration.

Martin's temporary appointment is due to expire May 20.

Pirro, a 1975 graduate of Albany Law School, has significantly more courtroom experience than Martin. She led one of the nation's first domestic violence units in a prosecutor's office.

After her elected terms as a judge and district attorney, Pirro briefly campaigned in 2005 as a Republican to unseat then-Democratic Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton before announcing that she would run for New York attorney general instead. She lost that race to Andrew Cuomo, son of former New York Gov. Mario Cuomo.

Pirro became an ubiquitous television pundit during O.J. Simpson's murder trial, often appearing on CNN's "Larry King Live." During her time on Fox News, she has frequently interviewed Trump.

In the final minutes of his first term as president, Trump issued a pardon to Pirro's ex-husband, Albert Pirro, who was convicted in 2000 on conspiracy and tax evasion charges.

## Catholic Chicagoans celebrate as native son Pope Leo XIV becomes first American pope

By CHRISTINE FERNANDO and MELINA WALLING Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — After white smoke billowed Thursday from the Sistine Chapel, signaling that a pope had been chosen, students in every classroom at The Frances Xavier Warde School in Chicago had their eyes glued to TV screens.

As the image of the new pope, Chicago native Cardinal Robert Prevost, appeared onscreen, cheers erupted through the hallways. Children jumped out of their seats, pumping their hands in the air.

"Our students are just beside themselves," said Mary Perrotti, director of advancement at the school. "They're beyond excited and can't believe a Chicagoan is their new pope. They were in awe."

Prevost, 69, took the name Leo XIV and replaced Pope Francis, who died last month. The first American elected pontiff, Pope Leo XIV was born and raised in Chicago before undertaking his ministry in Peru. Catholic Chicagoans gathered in churches and celebrated from their homes as the historic decision was announced.

"Our young people have a model now of a leader with justice and compassion at the heart of his ministries — and who is from their home," Perrotti said. "It's such a deep feeling of connection for them."

Prevost was born in 1955 in the south side Chicago neighborhood of Bronzeville and grew up in suburban Dolton, where he attended Mass and elementary school at St. Mary of the Assumption.

He later studied theology at the Catholic Theological Union of Chicago in Hyde Park and taught in local Catholic schools, including at St. Rita High School, according to the school.

"We are overjoyed that someone who is beloved and known to us is now the beloved leader of the whole entire church," said Barbara Reid, a Dominican sister and president of the Catholic Theological Union.

Classmates reflect on new pope's hometown connection

John Doughney, a fellow St. Mary's grade school graduate from 1969, remembers Prevost as a "friend to everyone" and a "kind, caring, compassionate young man."

"Even when he was 12 and 13, it was apparent to all of us that he knew what his calling was," he said. "It would've shocked all of us if he didn't go into the priesthood. We're so proud of him."

Linda Eickmann, 62, was also born and raised in Dalton and attended St. Mary's. When she saw the news of the new pope on TV, she screamed with joy.

"How cool is that?" she said. "A pope from my elementary school, from my town. It's unreal."

Eickmann remembered Prevost's family as being so deeply involved in the St. Mary's community that everyone knew their names. They ran sloppy joe sales to raise money for the school, and all their sons were altar boys, including Prevost.

Raul Raymundo, co-founder of a local community advocacy group called the Resurrection Project, said Thursday was a proud day for Chicagoans and he hoped Pope Leo XIV will "continue Pope Francis' legacy and Chicago's legacy of social justice and compassion, especially in welcoming immigrants."

"There's tears of joy, of hope, of motivation to rise to this moment and leave this world better than we found it," said Raymundo, an immigrant from Mexico who grew up in Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood.

Chicagoans gather in churches, share memes to celebrate Pope Leo XIV

At Holy Name Cathedral, about two dozen people gathered to pray as light filtered in through the stained glass windows.

Kneeling in a pew, Laurel Legle said she isn't Catholic or even Christian but felt she had to be there after the new American pope's election was announced. She called it a "profound moment."

Zoë Poehlman, a nurse who moved from Kansas City to Chicago a few months ago, described the mood as exciting and hopes there will be citywide celebrations. "It was just so crazy," she said.

Father Gregory Sakowicz, the cathedral's rector, said that when the new pope was announced, the sun



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, May 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 318 ~ 45 of 70

came out — a coincidence he described as “God’s way of remaining anonymous.” He said he was “happily shocked,” and that he had a burning question: Whether the new Pope was a White Sox fan?

When a journalist in the crowd said she’d heard Pope Leo XIV is a Cubs fan, Sakowicz chuckled. “God bless him,” he said.

On social media, people swapped memes about Chicago staples — deep-dish and tavern-style pizza, the Chicago liqueur Malört and baseball, reflecting the civic pride of Chicago residents as they claimed the pope as one of their own.

Google search traffic for “Da Pope” skyrocketed, and a local T-shirt company announced it would sell “Da Pope” shirts with a blue-and-orange Bears-themed design. Chicagoans overlayed Chicago Bulls intro music to video of the pope exiting the Vatican.

Some joked about replacing communion wafers and wine with tavern-style pizza and Malört. And the Chicago fast food chain Portillo’s joked about shipping its Italian beef to Vatican City.

Many users also proclaimed hope the new pope would represent Chicago’s history of social justice.

“For Catholic Chicagoans, to have a native son who has been born and raised in a city where support and care of all has always been central to who we are as a city, it really speaks volumes,” Perrotti said.

“I truly believe his upbringing in Chicago informs his ministries, his compassion and sense of justice. Now, he can give the world a sense of who we are as a city.”

## **Joel Quenneville hired by Anaheim Ducks for his 1st head coaching job since Blackhawks abuse scandal**

By GREG BEACHAM AP Sports Writer

ANAHEIM, Calif. (AP) — Joel Quenneville returned to hockey Thursday with contrition. He acknowledged mistakes and said he accepted full responsibility for his role in the Chicago Blackhawks sexual assault scandal.

The second-winningest coach in NHL history said he is a changed man after nearly four years away from the game. As he took over behind the bench of the Anaheim Ducks, he vowed to continue to educate himself about abuse, to expand his work with victims, and to create an unimpeachably safe workplace with his new team.

Quenneville also realizes that’s not nearly enough to satisfy a significant segment of hockey fans who believe his acknowledged inaction during the Blackhawks scandal should have ended his career forever.

“I fully understand and accept those who question my return to the league,” Quenneville said. “I know words aren’t enough. I will demonstrate (by) my actions that I am a man of character.”

Ducks owner Henry Samueli and general manager Pat Verbeek strongly backed the 66-year-old Quenneville when they introduced him as the coach of a franchise stuck in a seven-year playoff drought and thirsting for the success Quenneville has usually orchestrated.

He won three Stanley Cups with the Blackhawks and took 20 teams to the playoffs during a quarter-century with four NHL clubs, becoming the most consistent winner of his era.

While Quenneville’s on-ice record was remarkable, his off-ice behavior in 2010 eventually led to his resignation from the Florida Panthers in October 2021 and a lengthy banishment from the league — a ban that many feel should be permanent.

“I own my mistakes,” Quenneville said, occasionally pausing in his delivery of a written statement. “While I believed wholeheartedly the issue was handled by management, I take full responsibility for not following up and asking more questions. That’s entirely on me. Over nearly four years, I’ve taken time to reflect, to listen to experts and advocates, and educate myself on the realities of abuse, trauma and how to be a better leader. I hope others can learn from my inaction.”

Quenneville and Blackhawks executives Stan Bowman and Al MacIsaac were banned from the NHL for nearly three years after an independent investigation concluded the team mishandled allegations raised by former player Kyle Beach against video coach Brad Aldrich during the team’s first Stanley Cup run. The trio was reinstated last July, and Bowman became the Edmonton Oilers’ general manager three weeks later.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, May 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 318 ~ 46 of 70

After an investigation and vetting process that lasted several days and included communication with Beach and other sexual assault victims and advocacy groups, the Ducks' owners ultimately supported the decision made by Verbeek, Quenneville's teammate in New Jersey and Hartford more than three decades ago.

Samueli and his wife, Susan, and their daughter, Jillian, all spoke at length with Quenneville. Henry Samueli said he is "absolutely convinced Joel is a really good person."

"I think the four years that Joel spent out of hockey has really given him an opportunity to learn a lot," Samueli said. "In my mind, he will be a model coach for dealing with situations like this. I think he will be a mentor to other coaches in the league who can come to him and talk to him. 'How do you handle situations like that? What do you do?' And they'll trust him, because he's old-school who's changed. The fact that he comes from an old-school hockey culture, but now has transitioned and learned what it means to operate in 2025, not 1980 or whatever, I think that will make a big difference in how he operates."

Quenneville understands just how badly his reputation and career were damaged by his role in the Blackhawks' handling of the accusations against Aldrich. He remained out of hockey for another season after his ban ended, but became increasingly eager to continue his career last winter while watching games every night and staying closely informed on the league.

"I thought I had some work to do in growing as a person," Quenneville said. "As far as doing work along the way, I felt I had progressed to an area where the education I had put me in a position where I know I can share some of these lessons and these experiences as well."

Many people with a firsthand knowledge of Quenneville's attempts to change himself supported his desire to return. Quenneville said he has spoken to Beach several times recently, including Thursday morning.

He has formed learning friendships with advocates including Chris Jensen, the former University of Wisconsin player and Maple Leafs draft pick who was abused by a coach as a teenager.

"I think most of the athletes that have played for him would argue that this guy has helped me be better," Jensen said. "He brings all that expertise, and now he's got additional perspective about how to be available to help people deal with emotional injury. I think he's in a much better position to be successful."

The Ducks' charitable foundation is already involved in charitable and philanthropic work supporting survivors of sexual abuse, and Samueli expects Quenneville to support those efforts.

"I'm very confident that Joel will be a star when it comes to working with those organizations," Samueli said.

Before his ban, Quenneville spent parts of 25 NHL seasons behind the benches of St. Louis, Colorado, Chicago and Florida, most notably leading the Blackhawks to championships in 2010, 2013 and 2015. His 969 career victories are the second-most in NHL history, trailing only Scotty Bowman's 1,244.

Quenneville takes over a team with the NHL's third-longest active playoff drought. Anaheim finished sixth in the Pacific Division this season at 35-37-10 after being in the bottom two for the previous four consecutive years.

He replaces Greg Cronin, who was surprisingly fired by Verbeek after leading the Ducks to a 21-point improvement in his second season.

Quenneville inherits an Anaheim team with an ample stock of young talent, and he was immediately impressed by their roster when he saw it in person during Anaheim's road trip to Tampa Bay last January. He also coached Ducks captain Radko Gudas and forward Frank Vatrano in Florida.

"One of the best coaches I've ever had, and I always tell people that," said Vatrano, who attended Quenneville's introductory news conference. "As a person, he's a great person, too. That's what always draws me to Q. I'm a huge advocate for him, and I'm glad he's here."

## Trump keeps 10% tariffs on UK but cuts taxes on British autos, steel and aluminum with trade deal

By JOSH BOAK, CHRIS MEGERIAN and JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump agreed Thursday to cut tariffs on U.K. autos, steel and aluminum in a planned trade deal but played down the possibility of other nations getting similarly favor-

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, May 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 318 ~ 47 of 70

able terms on his import taxes, which are roiling the global economy.

Under the framework agreement, the United Kingdom is to buy more American beef and ethanol and streamline its customs process for goods from the United States. But Trump's baseline 10% tariffs against British goods are to stay in place, and the Republican president suggested that even higher import taxes would be charged on other countries trying to reach deals with the U.S.

"That's a low number," Trump said of the U.K.'s 10% tariff rate, adding that other countries would face higher tariff rates in their deals because the U.S. runs trade deficits with them and "in many cases they didn't treat us right."

The announcement provided a political victory for U.K. Prime Minister Keir Starmer and offered a degree of validation for Trump's claims that his turbulent approach on trade may be able to rebalance the global economy on his preferred terms. While the deal should improve Britain's situation relative to when Trump began imposing new tariffs, the world economy is still mired in the confusion and uncertainty unleashed by the president's import taxes. The deal with the U.K. would be a resonant but small step toward greater clarity given that Britain represents a fraction of U.S. imports.

The U.S. president talked up the framework to reporters in the Oval Office, although the fine print remains in flux.

"In the coming weeks, we'll have it all very conclusive," Trump said.

The president said the agreement would lead to more beef and ethanol exports to the U.K., and streamline the processing of U.S. goods through customs. Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick said the baseline 10% tariffs would stay in place and said an unspecified British company would be announcing the purchase of \$10 billion in aircraft from Boeing.

Cars, steel and olive oil

U.K. officials said Trump's auto tariffs would go from 27.5% to 10% on a quota of 100,000 vehicles and the import taxes on steel and aluminum would go from 25% to zero. Starmer said Britain would preserve its health and safety standards on food products.

The U.K. government also said it would also reduce tariffs on 2,500 U.S. products such as olive oil, wine and sports equipment, bringing down the average tariff rate 1.8%.

Starmer, speaking over the phone to Trump while reporters listened in, stressed the importance of the relationship between the two countries as the anniversary of the Allies' World War II victory in Europe was being commemorated.

"To be able to announce this great deal, on the same day 80 years forward, almost at the same hour," Starmer said, "I think is incredibly important and makes this truly historic."

Starmer later spoke to workers at a Jaguar Land Rover plant and promoted the deal, which he said would protect thousands of auto jobs. He told the workers that "this is just the start," saying "we are hammering out further details to reduce barriers to trade with the United States and across the world."

While celebrating the planned deal, Trump talked up the U.S. economy's future despite worrisome signs of a possible slowdown and increase in inflation that could hurt most Americans' financial well-being and lead to layoffs.

The president said the public should buy into the stock market because the U.S. was about to go up like a "rocket ship," even as he dismissed reports of fewer container ships docking in the U.S. and companies warning of price increases if the tariffs remain.

Trump said that fewer container ships arriving from China meant "we lose less money" from the trade deficit, even though the goods in those ships are used by U.S. manufacturers and sold by retailers in ways that can support jobs while holding down prices.

Asked about companies saying they would need to raise prices because of the tariffs, Trump said, "I think they're saying that just to try and negotiate deals with me." Trump suggested that he might put 100% tariffs on Mattel toys if they don't relocate their factories to the United States.

Trump has maintained that there is "virtually" no inflation. The Federal Reserve's preferred inflation measure has increased at 2.3% annually, slightly higher than the central bank's 2% target.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, May 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 318 ~ 48 of 70

The U.S. president on Thursday said that Fed Chair Jerome Powell should cut the Fed's benchmark interest rates that are designed to manage inflation, saying that Powell was holding the Fed's rates at current levels instead of slashing them because "he's not in love with me." Powell warned at a Wednesday news conference that the tariffs were creating uncertainty and the Fed could afford to wait until more data shows the impacts on the economy.

Looking for a deal since Brexit

The U.S. already runs a trade surplus with the U.K., making it a bit easier to find common ground at a time when Trump has staked his tariffs on eliminating the annual trade deficits with multiple nations he says have taken advantage of the U.S.

A British government official, insisting on anonymity to discuss the talks, said the U.K. planned to seek greater trade liberalization as negotiations continue, such that the effective tariff rate charged by the U.S. could be lower than the 10% baseline.

The official said the talks have been built on the longstanding closeness between the two nations and, when in discussions with the Trump administration, the key was to be charming and know how to say "no" nicely.

The official said Trump had invited the British government to agree to a trade deal before April 2, but the president changed his mind so that he could impose his sweeping "Liberation Day" tariffs. That statement indicates that Trump could have announced some form of Thursday's agreement weeks earlier.

No new deals have been reached with the United States' largest trading partners, including Canada, Mexico and China. Trump has left the highest tariffs in place on China, sparking a confrontation between the world's two biggest economies. Washington and Beijing are sending officials to Switzerland this week-end for an initial round of trade talks.

Trump said Thursday that he "could" lower the 145% rate charged on Chinese goods if the weekend talks go well.

"Right now, you can't get any higher," Trump said. "It's at 145, so we know it's coming down."

The U.S. and the U.K. have been aiming to strike a bilateral trade agreement since the British people voted in 2016 to leave the European Union, allowing the country to negotiate independently of the rest of the continent. Then-Prime Minister Boris Johnson touted a future deal with the U.S. as an incentive for Brexit.

Negotiations started in 2020, during Trump's first term. But the talks made little progress under President Joe Biden, a Democrat and a critic of Brexit. Negotiations resumed after Trump returned to office in January and intensified in recent weeks.

The U.S. ran a \$11.9 billion trade surplus in goods with the U.K. last year, according to the Census Bureau. The \$68 billion in goods that the U.S. imported from the U.K. last year accounted for just 2% of all goods imported into the country.

The U.S. is far more important for the U.K. economy. It was Britain's biggest trading partner last year, according to government statistics, though the bulk of Britain's exports to the U.S. are services rather than goods.

## **Prevost, now Pope Leo XIV, known as the 'saint of the north' in Peru for his closeness to poor**

By FRANKLIN BRICEÑO and NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Robert Prevost may have made history Thursday by becoming the first pope from the United States. But in Peru, he is known as the saintly missionary who waded through mud after torrential rains flooded the region, bringing help to needy people, and as the bishop who spearheaded the life-saving purchase of oxygen production plants during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"He worked so hard to find help, that there was not only enough for one plant, but for two oxygen plants," said Janinna Sesa, who met Prevost while she worked for the church's Caritas nonprofit in Peru.

"He has no problem fixing a broken-down truck until it runs," she added.

Pope Francis, history's first Latin American pope, clearly saw something in Prevost early on.



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, May 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 318 ~ 49 of 70

He first sent him to Chiclayo in 2014, then brought him to the Vatican in 2023 as the powerful head of the office that vets bishop nominations, one of the most important jobs in the Catholic Church.

On Thursday, Prevost ascended to become Pope Leo XIV — the first pontiff from the United States.

Prevost, 69, had to overcome the taboo against an American pope, given the geopolitical power already wielded by the U.S. in the secular sphere.

The Chicago native is also a Peruvian citizen and lived for years in Peru, first as a missionary and then as bishop.

He evoked his broad missionary experience in his first public remarks as pope, speaking in Italian, then switching to Spanish — and saying not a word in English as he addressed the crowd in St. Peter's Square.

"Together, we must try to find out how to be a missionary church, a church that builds bridges, dialogues, that's always open to receive — like on this piazza with open arms — to be able to receive everybody that needs our charity, our presence, dialogue and love," he said.

The new pope had prominence going into the conclave that few other cardinals have.

Prevost was twice elected prior general, or top leader, of the Augustinians, the 13th century religious order founded by St. Augustine.

After Francis sent him to Chiclayo, he acquired Peruvian citizenship in 2015, until Francis brought him to Rome in 2023 to assume the bishops' office and presidency of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America. In that job he would have kept in regular contact with the Catholic hierarchy in the part of the world that counts the most Catholics and presumably was crucial to his election Thursday.

The Rev. Alexander Lam, an Augustinian friar from Peru who knows the new pope, said he was beloved in Peru for his closeness to his people, especially poor people. He said he was a champion of social justice issues and environmental stewardship.

"Even the bishops of Peru called him the saint, the Saint of the North, and he had time for everyone," Lam said in an interview with The Associated Press in Rome. "He was the person who would find you along the way. He was this kind of bishop."

He said that when Francis travelled to Peru in 2018, Prevost camped out with his flock on the ground during the vigil before Francis' Mass. "Roberto has that style, that closeness. Maybe they are not great institutional gestures, but are in human gestures."

Ever since arriving in Rome, Prevost has kept a low public profile, but he is well known to the men who count.

Significantly, he presided over one of the most revolutionary reforms Francis made, when he added three women to the voting bloc that decides which bishop nominations to forward to the pope. In early 2025, Francis again showed his esteem by appointing Prevost to the most senior rank of cardinals.

The selection of a U.S.-born pope could have profound impact on the future of the U.S. Catholic Church, which has been sharply divided between conservatives and progressives. Francis, with Prevost's help at the help of the bishop vetting office, had embarked on a 12-year project to rein in the traditionalist tendencies in the United States.

Prevost's election "is a deep sign of commitment to social issues. I think it is going to be exciting to see a different kind of American Catholicism in Rome," said Natalia Imperatori-Lee, a professor of religious studies at Manhattan University in New York City.

The bells of the cathedral in Peru's capital of Lima tolled after Prevost's election was announced. People outside the church expressed their desire for a papal visit at one point.

"For us Peruvians, it is a source of pride that this is a pope who represents our country," said elementary school teacher Isabel Panez, who happened to be near the cathedral when the news was announced. "We would like him to visit us here in Peru."

The Rev. Fidel Purisaca Vigil, the communications director for Prevost's old diocese in Chiclayo, remembers the cardinal rising each day and having breakfast with his fellow priests after saying his prayers.

"No matter how many problems he has, he maintains good humor and joy," Purisaca said in an email.

Born in Chicago in 1955, Prevost joined the Order of St. Augustine in 1977. He attended Villanova Uni-

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, May 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 318 ~ 50 of 70

versity near Philadelphia, where he received a Bachelor of Science in 1977, and he got a Master of Divinity degree from Catholic Theological Union in Chicago in 1982.

In Rome, at the Augustinian headquarters just off St. Peter's Square, the mood was festive.

The Rev. Franz Klein, treasurer general of the Augustinian order, said he was shocked by the news.

"For us, the Augustinian order, this is one of the biggest moments in history," he said. "I'm surprised and very happy."

## Up to 1,000 transgender troops are being moved out of the military in new Pentagon order

By LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Pentagon will immediately begin moving as many as 1,000 openly identifying transgender service members out of the military and give others 30 days to self-identify under a new directive issued Thursday.

Buoyed by Tuesday's Supreme Court decision allowing the Trump administration to enforce a ban on transgender individuals in the military, the Defense Department will begin going through medical records to identify others who haven't come forward.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, who issued the latest memo, made his views clear after the court's decision.

"No More Trans @ DoD," Hegseth wrote in a post on X. Earlier in the day, before the court acted, Hegseth said that his department is leaving wokeness and weakness behind.

"No more pronouns," he told a special operations forces conference in Tampa. "No more dudes in dresses. We're done with that s---."

Department officials have said it's difficult to determine exactly how many transgender service members there are, but medical records will show those who have been diagnosed with gender dysphoria, who show symptoms or are being treated.

Those troops would then be involuntarily forced out of the service. And no one with that diagnosis will be allowed to enlist. Gender dysphoria occurs when a person's biological sex does not match up with their gender identity.

Officials have said that as of Dec. 9, 2024, there were 4,240 troops diagnosed with gender dysphoria in the active duty, National Guard and Reserve. But they acknowledge the number may be higher.

There are about 2.1 million total troops serving.

The memo released Thursday mirrors one sent out in February, but any action was stalled at that point by several lawsuits.

The Supreme Court ruled that the administration could enforce the ban on transgender people in the military, while other legal challenges proceed. The court's three liberal justices said they would have kept the policy on hold.

Neither the justices in the majority or dissent explained their votes, which is not uncommon in emergency appeals.

When the initial Pentagon directive came out earlier this year, it gave service members 30 days to self-identify. Since then, about 1,000 have done so.

In a statement, Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell said the 1,000 troops who already self-identified "will begin the voluntary separation process" from the military.

Under the new guidelines, active duty troops will have until June 6 to voluntarily identify themselves to the department, and troops in the National Guard and Reserve will have until July 7.

While it may be difficult to see which troops have changed their gender identity in their military records, it will be easier to determine who has gotten a gender dysphoria diagnosis because that will be part of their medical record, as will any medication they are taking.

Between 2015 and 2024, the total cost for psychotherapy, gender-affirming hormone therapy, gender-affirming surgery and other treatment for service members is about \$52 million, according to a defense

official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss personnel issues.

Pentagon officials in an earlier memo defended the ban, saying that "the medical, surgical, and mental health constraints on individuals who have a current diagnosis or history of, or exhibit symptoms consistent with, gender dysphoria are incompatible with the high mental and physical standards necessary for military service."

The new Pentagon policy would allow for limited exemptions.

That includes transgender personnel seeking to enlist who can prove on a case-by-case basis that they directly support warfighting activities, or if an existing service member diagnosed with gender dysphoria can prove they support a specific warfighting need, never transitioned to the gender they identify with and proves over 36 months they are stable in their biological sex "without clinically significant distress."

If a waiver is issued, the applicant would still face a situation where only their biological sex was recognized for bathroom facilities, sleeping quarters and even in official recognition, such as being called "Sir" or "Ma'am."

## **Ex-model testifies Weinstein sexually assaulted her at 16 and 19, says 'my soul was removed from me'**

By MICHAEL R. SISAK and JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A former model tearfully testified Thursday that Harvey Weinstein sexually assaulted her when she was 16 years old, calling it the most "horrifying thing I ever experienced" to that point.

Four years later, she said, Weinstein assaulted her again.

Kaja (KEYE'-ah) Sokola detailed the allegations in front of a jury for the first time as she testified at Weinstein's #MeToo retrial. She is the second of three accusers to testify, and the only one who wasn't part of the onetime Hollywood honcho's first trial in 2020.

Weinstein faces a criminal sex act charge based on the later allegation — forcibly performing oral sex on Sokola at a Manhattan hotel in 2006, just before her 20th birthday. The earlier alleged assault was beyond legal time limits for a potential criminal charge.

Weinstein has pleaded not guilty and denies sexually assaulting anyone.

His lawyers are due to start questioning Sokola on Friday. They have said that all of the former movie studio boss' accusers consented to sexual encounters in hopes of advancing their careers.

The Polish-born Sokola began modeling at 14 and was soon flying around the world for photo shoots and fashion shows. But she told jurors she was always more interested in acting, so she was hopeful when she was introduced to Weinstein at a New York nightclub in 2002 and he invited her to lunch to talk about acting.

Instead, he steered her to his Manhattan apartment and told her to take her clothes off, saying that actors had to be comfortable disrobing in films, she testified.

Sokola took off her blouse and followed him into a bathroom because, she said, "I was 16 years old, and I was alone with a man for the first time, and I didn't know what else to do." She said that she told Weinstein she objected to what was happening, but that he put his hand inside her underwear and made her touch his genitals.

Sokola said she saw Weinstein's eyes — "black and scary" — staring at her in a bathroom mirror as it happened. Afterward, she said, he told her to keep quiet, saying he'd made Hollywood careers and could help her acting dreams come true.

"I felt stupid and ashamed and like it's my fault for putting myself in this position," Sokola testified through sobs, bringing a tissue to her face, as riveted jurors scribbled notes.

Weinstein, 73, looked down and away as she spoke, pressing his left thumb and index finger against his face like a shield.

Sokola, now 39, became emotional again as questioning turned to the 2006 allegation. She said she had stayed in touch with Weinstein because of her acting dreams.

"I never wanted anything else from Harvey Weinstein other than to honestly say if I have a chance to

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, May 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 318 ~ 52 of 70

be an actress or no," said Sokola, who eventually became a psychotherapist. She vowed that she had "absolutely not" ever had any romantic or sexual interest in him.

In 2006, Weinstein arranged for her to be an extra for a day in the film "The Nanny Diaries," and he separately agreed to meet Sokola and her visiting elder sister.

After the three chatted, Sokola said, Weinstein told her he had a script to show her in his hotel room, and she went up with him.

There, she said, Weinstein pushed her onto a bed and stripped off her boots, her stockings, her underwear, and something indelible.

"My soul was removed from me," Sokola testified.

She said he held her down while ignoring her pleas of "please don't, please stop, I don't want this." Sokola said she tried to push him away but was no match against Weinstein's physical heft.

She rejoined her sister but said nothing about being assaulted, both siblings testified. Sokola said she didn't want to tell her sister that Weinstein had treated her with such disrespect.

Sokola went to authorities a few days into Weinstein's first trial. Prosecutors halted their investigation after Weinstein was convicted, but revived it when New York's highest court reversed the verdict last year.

She first detailed the 2002 allegation in a lawsuit a few years ago, after a chorus of public accusations against Weinstein emerged in 2017 and fueled the #MeToo movement.

Sokola eventually received \$3.5 million in compensation.

Another accuser, Miriam Haley, testified last week that Weinstein forced oral sex on her in 2006. The third accuser in the case, Jessica Mann, is expected to testify later. She alleges Weinstein raped her in 2013.

The Associated Press generally does not name sexual assault accusers without their permission, which Haley, Mann and Sokola have given.

## White House overhaul of troubled US air traffic control system will cost 'lots of billions'

By JOSH FUNK and JOHN SEEWER Associated Press

The Trump administration on Thursday proposed a multibillion-dollar overhaul of a U.S. air traffic control system that it said still relies on floppy disks and replacement parts found on eBay and has come under renewed scrutiny in the wake of recent deadly plane crashes and technical failures.

The plan calls for six new air traffic control centers, along with an array of technology and communications upgrades at all of the nation's air traffic facilities over the next three or four years, said Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy.

"We use radar from the 1970s," said Duffy, who compared the proposal with upgrading from a flip phone to a smartphone. "This technology is 50 years old that our controllers use to scan the skies and keep airplanes separated from one another."

How much it will all cost wasn't immediately revealed. Duffy said he'll work with Congress on the details.

"It's going to be billions, lots of billions," he said.

The plan has an aggressive timeline, calling on everything to be finished by 2028 — although Duffy said it may take another year.

Demands to fix the aging system that handles more than 45,000 daily flights have increased since the midair collision in January between an Army helicopter and a commercial airliner that killed 67 people over Washington, D.C.

That crash — and a string of other crashes and mishaps — showed the immediate need for these upgrades, Duffy said in front of airline officials, union leaders and family members of those who died in the crash near Reagan National Airport.

The proposal sets out to add fiber, wireless or satellite technology at more than 4,600 locations, replace 618 radars and more than quadruple the number of airports with systems designed to reduce near misses on runways.

Six new air traffic control centers also would be built under the plan, and new hardware and software



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, May 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 318 ~ 53 of 70

would be standardized across all air traffic facilities.

The House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee last week budgeted \$12.5 billion to overhaul the system, but that estimate came out before the Transportation Department revealed its plan. Duffy said the final price tag will be higher.

U.S. Rep. Sam Graves of Missouri, who heads the House transportation committee, called the amount only a "down payment."

To build the system quickly, as planned, Duffy said Congress must give the Federal Aviation Administration all the money up front and streamline the permitting process.

"The system we have here? It's not worth saving. I don't need to preserve any of this. It's too old," Duffy said.

Trump said Thursday that the plan will revolutionize flying. "The new equipment is unbelievable what it does," he said from the Oval Office. He began to say it may even alleviate the need for pilots before adding, "In my opinion, you always need pilots. But you wouldn't even have to have pilots."

The newly revealed proposal appears to have wide support across the aviation industry — from airline CEOs to the unions representing controllers and pilots — but this is just the beginning and many details haven't been revealed.

Duffy quickly said the plan will not involve privatizing the air traffic control system, as Trump had supported in his first term.

Following the midair crash near Washington, Trump promised to fix what he called "an old, broken system" and to tackle the nationwide shortage of air traffic controllers while blaming the previous Biden administration for both problems.

But the weaknesses within the air traffic control system have been highlighted for years in hearings before Congress and government reports. The struggles to keep up with increasing air traffic has been recognized since the 1990s — long before either Trump or Biden took office.

The Trump administration's overhaul plan will need enough funding to be more effective than previous reform efforts during the last three decades. Already more than \$14 billion has been invested in upgrades since 2003 but none have dramatically changed how the system works.

The FAA has been working since the mid-2000s to make upgrades through its NextGen program.

One of the biggest challenges with a massive upgrade is that the FAA must keep the current system operating while developing a new system and then find a way to seamlessly switch over. That's partly why the agency has pursued more gradual improvements in the past.

The shortage of controllers and technical breakdowns came to the forefront in the last two weeks when a radar system briefly failed at the Newark, New Jersey, airport, leading to a wave of flight cancellations and delays.

Without the planned upgrades, those breakdowns will be repeated around the nation, Duffy said. "Newark has been a prime example of what happens when this old equipment goes down," he said.

## **New pope led Order of St. Augustine dedicated to the poor and service**

By PETER SMITH Associated Press

Cardinal Robert Prevost, the first U.S. pope in the 2,000-year history of the Catholic Church, previously led a Catholic religious order.

Prevost, 69, who chose the name Pope Leo XIV, was formerly the prior general, or leader, of the Order of St. Augustine, which was formed in the 13th century as a community of "mendicant" friars — dedicated to poverty, service and evangelization. According to Vatican News, he is the first Augustinian pope.

The requirements and ethos of the order are traced to the fifth century St. Augustine of Hippo, one of the theological and devotional giants of early Christianity.

The Order of St. Augustine has a presence in about 50 countries, according to its website. Its ethos includes a contemplative spirituality, communal living and service to others.

A core value in their rule is to “live together in harmony, being of one mind and one heart on the way to God.”

A religious order is a community of Catholics — which can include priests, nuns, monks and even lay people — dedicated to a particular type of mission and spirituality. Unlike diocesan priests, who work within a particular territory, religious-order priests might be assigned anywhere in the world. At the same time, they might handle tasks similar to diocesan priests, such as being pastor of a parish.

Pope Francis was the first pope from the Jesuit religious order, and he was the first pope in more than a century and a half to come from any religious order. The previous one was Gregory XVI, a Camaldolese monk (1831-1846).

## Reports of Trump deportation plans highlight abuse of migrants in Libya

By RENATA BRITO and FATMA KHALED Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — Reports of plans to deport migrants from the U.S. to Libya, a country with a documented history of serious human rights violations and abuse of migrants, have spotlighted the difficulties they face in the lawless North African nation.

Migrants in Libya are routinely arbitrarily detained and placed in squalid detention centers where they are subjected to extortion, abuse, rape and killings.

A U.N.-backed, independent fact-finding mission found evidence that crimes against humanity had been committed against migrants in Libya. Victims were subjected to enslavement, forced disappearance, torture and murder, among other crimes, the investigators found. Dead migrants have been found in mass graves across the country, while tens of thousands of others have drowned trying to escape Libya on smugglers' boats.

“It’s hell on earth for migrants,” said Tarek Megerisi, a senior policy fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations.

“All they will have are different forms of abuse — if they are lucky enough, they will end up on a rickety boat in the Mediterranean,” added Megerisi, who is Libyan.

A fractured country ruled by militias

Libya plunged into chaos after a 2011 NATO-backed uprising toppled and killed longtime dictator Moammar Gadhafi. The country split, with rival administrations in the east and west backed by a web of rogue militias.

“Their main business model is smuggling, and people smuggling is a major part of that,” Megerisi said.

Both the Tripoli-based government of Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah and its rival administration in eastern Libya controlled by military commander Khalifa Hifter have denied signing a deportation deal with the Trump administration.

Some 800,000 migrants seeking work or who have fled war in their home countries live in Libya, according to the International Organization for Migration. Each year, thousands attempt the dangerous Mediterranean crossing from the North African country to Europe.

Despite documented abuses in Libya, the European Union and Italy have for years funded, trained and equipped Libyan groups, including the coast guard, to stop migrants from reaching European shores.

Abuse and extortion in migrant detention centers

Migrants intercepted at sea or elsewhere in Libya are subject to arbitrary detention and extortion in centers run by armed groups that are either affiliated with state authorities or are autonomous, said Mehdi Ben Youssef, program lead at Lawyers for Justice in Libya. Those groups extort migrants for money in exchange for release — only for them to be captured again by another armed group, detained and tortured.

Ben Youssef said those who could be deported from the U.S. to Libya “would be highly exposed to cycles of crimes.”

In detention centers, migrants are tortured and kept in “horrific conditions,” lacking legal representation and proper access to water and health care, Ben Youssef said. Families outside Libya are blackmailed with

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, May 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 318 ~ 55 of 70

cellphone videos of their relatives being tortured to pay varying sums for their release — payments that often offer no real guarantee of freedom.

A 2019 Associated Press investigation found that huge sums of EU funds meant to improve conditions for migrants ended up in the hands of militiamen, traffickers and coast guard members who exploited migrants in this cycle of catch and release.

Restrictions hinder groups in Libya from aiding migrants

Last month, Libya's Internal Security Agency ordered 10 international aid organizations to suspend operations and close offices, accusing the groups of violating local laws by providing aid to African migrants, touting a "replacement" conspiracy theory and resulting in more targeting of Black migrants.

Those groups were already operating in a "highly restrictive environment" amid numerous crackdowns on civil society, Ben Youssef said.

Black migrants, and especially non-Arabs, face abuse such as forced labor and extortion more so than migrants of other nationalities, a humanitarian worker in Libya told The AP.

Attorneys said Wednesday that U.S. authorities informed some migrants of plans to deport them to Libya. That is troubling because it sends the message Libya is safe when it's not, said the worker, who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of retribution.

The worker's team, which travels to reach vulnerable communities, helps with food distribution and provides psychosocial support, has been hindered since Libya ordered aid agencies to suspend operations.

Libya is "not a safe country for migrants," and the order made the situation worse, said Claudia Lodesani, who heads Doctors Without Borders' programs for Libya.

Libyan authorities have ordered private medical clinics collaborating with the group not to respond to migrants' health needs.

"Our organization is very concerned about the consequences these orders will have on the health of migrant people in Libya," Lodesani said.

More questions than answers

For now, there are still more questions than answers on whether deportations to Libya would actually take place. A U.S. judge said Wednesday that migrants can't be deported without a chance to challenge such a move in court.

"What would happen to people once they land in Libya? ... Would they be detained?" asked Camille Le Coz, who leads the European branch of the Migration Policy Institute think tank.

She noted that Libya has a very restrictive asylum procedure, recognizing refugees from only a handful of nationalities.

"This type of operation is expensive, it's difficult to set up, and so, we can speculate that it might be to show that if you get to the U.S. you might be sent to this place that is extremely dangerous for migrant populations and that this may deter people from coming," Le Coz said.

## Ukraine accuses Russia of violating its own truce over 700 times as Kyiv ratifies US minerals deal

By ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia and Ukraine both reported attacks on their forces Thursday on the first day of a 72-hour ceasefire called by Russian President Vladimir Putin, and Ukrainian lawmakers unanimously approved a landmark minerals deal with the U.S.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha accused Russia of violating its own ceasefire 734 times between midnight and midday Thursday. He called the ceasefire a "farce" on the social media platform X.

The unilateral ceasefire coincides with Russia's biggest secular holiday, the 80th anniversary of victory over Nazi Germany. Kyiv has pressed for a longer-term ceasefire.

Meanwhile at the Kremlin, Putin held talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping, whom the Russian leader earlier described as Moscow's "main guest" at Friday's Victory Day festivities. In the evening, Putin hosted Xi and other foreign leaders for a gala dinner in an apparent effort to showcase Russia's global clout.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, May 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 318 ~ 56 of 70

The Ukrainian parliament's ratification of the minerals deal marked a key step in a deal that will allow Washington access to Ukraine's largely untapped minerals, deepen strategic ties and create a joint investment fund with the U.S. for the reconstruction of Ukraine.

"This document is not merely a legal construct, it is the foundation of a new model of interaction with a key strategic partner," Ukraine's economics minister, Yuliia Svyrydenko, wrote on X.

The minerals agreement was approved by all 338 members of parliament, far surpassing the required 226 votes, Ukrainian lawmaker Yaroslav Zheleznyak wrote on his Telegram account. No lawmaker abstained.

In a statement, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy thanked everyone involved in the deal and said he expected the ratified agreement to be submitted to his office soon.

"Once the legal procedures are complete, we will be able to begin establishing the fund," he said.

Two more technical agreements will have to be developed and signed by both sides, Svyrydenko said. Those deals include "a limited partnership agreement and an agreement that essentially determines how the fund will function," she told reporters ahead of the vote.

She said the U.S. expects the work on the documents to take "weeks, not months."

U.S. President Donald Trump talked by phone with Zelenskyy following the ratification, said Dmytro Lytvyn, an adviser to the Ukrainian president. Details of the call were not immediately released.

Russian bombs hit Ukraine in first hours of ceasefire

In the opening hours of Moscow's ceasefire, Russian bombs struck northeast Ukraine, killing at least one civilian, Ukrainian officials said. Artillery assaults took place across the 1,000-kilometer (620-mile) front line, although with less intensity than in the previous 24 hours, officials said.

Sybiha said Russia carried out 63 assaults along the front line, 23 of which were still ongoing as of mid-day. Ukraine responded "appropriately," he said, and shared information about the attacks with the U.S., the European Union and others.

"We will not let Putin fool anyone when he does not even keep his own word," Sybiha said.

Russian attacks also took place near Chasiv Yar in the Donetsk region, Oleh Petراسiuk, a spokesman with Ukraine's 24th Mechanized Brigade, told The Associated Press by phone.

One person died and two were wounded when Russian forces dropped guided bombs on residential areas near the border in the northeast Sumy region, the regional prosecutor's office said.

Large-scale missile and drone attacks, which have been a near-daily occurrence in Ukraine in recent weeks, abated for a short time, with no assaults recorded since 8:30 p.m. Wednesday, the Ukrainian air force said.

Zelenskyy had previously cast doubt on the ceasefire, calling it "manipulation" as U.S.-led peace efforts stalled. "For some reason, everyone is supposed to wait until May 8 before ceasing fire — just to provide Putin with silence for his parade," Zelenskyy said.

In March, the United States proposed a 30-day truce in the war, which Ukraine accepted, but the Kremlin has held out for ceasefire terms more to its liking.

The Russian Defense Ministry accused Ukrainian forces of attacking its positions and said Russian forces would continue to "mirror" Ukraine's actions during the Kremlin's ceasefire.

The Russian regions of Belgorod, Lipetsk, Orenburg, Ryazan and Tambov came under a drone-threat alert overnight, but there were no reports of any drones being shot down or intercepted. Russia's civil aviation authority Rosaviatsia briefly imposed restrictions on flights to and from the airport in Nizhny Novgorod.

Putin praises relations with Xi, welcomes other foreign leaders

In welcoming Xi, Putin said that "the brotherhood of arms between our peoples, which developed during the harsh war years, is one of the fundamental foundations of modern Russian-Chinese relations."

He added that Moscow and Beijing were developing ties "for the benefit of the peoples of both countries and not against anyone."

Xi, in turn, said that "history and reality have fully proved that the continuous development and deepening of China-Russia relations is a necessity for the friendship between the two peoples from generation to generation." He also called for safeguarding "international fairness and justice."



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, May 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 318 ~ 57 of 70

Putin and Xi have met over 40 times and developed strong personal ties as both countries face tensions with the West.

China offered robust diplomatic support to Moscow after its 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine and has emerged as a top market for Russian oil and gas, helping to fill the Kremlin's war coffers. Russia has relied on China as the main source of machinery and electronics to keep its military running after Western sanctions curtailed high-tech supplies.

Other foreign leaders who arrived in Moscow this week for the World War II anniversary celebrations included Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic, Slovakian Prime Minister Robert Fico, as well as the leaders of Cuba, Vietnam and Venezuela, and presidents of several former Soviet nations.

In a brief opening speech at the Kremlin gala, Putin urged "solidarity in addressing the pressing challenges of our time and to take shared responsibility for future generations."

The lineup of guests reflected Russia's efforts to cement the alliances it has forged while seeking a counterbalance to the West amid the war in Ukraine. Some past celebrations drew top Western leaders at a time of friendlier ties.

## Israel closes 6 UN schools for Palestinians in east Jerusalem

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel permanently closed six U.N. schools in east Jerusalem on Thursday, forcing Palestinian students to leave early and throwing the education of more than 800 others into question.

Last month, heavily armed Israeli police and Education Ministry officials ordered six schools in east Jerusalem to close within 30 days. The United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees, known as UNRWA, runs the six schools. UNRWA also runs schools in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, which continue to operate.

The closure orders come after Israel banned UNRWA from operating on its soil earlier this year, the culmination of a long campaign against the agency that intensified following the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas attacks on Israel that ignited the war in Gaza. Israel claims that UNRWA schools teach antisemitic content and anti-Israel sentiment, which UNRWA denies.

UNRWA is the main provider of education and health care to Palestinian refugees across east Jerusalem, which Israel captured in the 1967 Mideast war. Israel has annexed east Jerusalem and considers the entire city its unified capital.

"When I said goodbye to the teachers, and when I went to hug the teachers, I started crying because I don't know which school I will go to, and where we will study," said Layan Ramadan Nataheh, a student at Shufat Basic Girls School, one of the UNRWA schools ordered shut.

"The presence of soldiers inside a school scares the girls, and the decision to close the school has affected their spirits and their future because they have nowhere to go," said Shujan Abu Remailah, a resident of the Shufat refugee camp.

The Israeli Ministry of Education says it will place the students into other Jerusalem schools. But parents, teachers and administrators caution that closing the main schools in east Jerusalem will force their children to go through crowded and dangerous checkpoints daily, and some do not have the correct permits to pass through.

In a previous statement to The Associated Press, the Ministry of Education said it was closing the schools because they were operating without a license. UNRWA administrators pledged to keep the schools open for as long as possible.

Farhan Haq, the U.N. deputy spokesperson, on Thursday stressed the "inviolability" of U.N. facilities, quoting the statement from Philippe Lazzarini, the UNRWA Commissioner-General, saying that "storming schools and forcing them shut is a blatant disregard of international law."

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, May 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 318 ~ 58 of 70

## **A woman who called a Black child a slur has raised a backlash but also thousands of dollars**

By TERRY TANG and SARAH RAZA Associated Press

NOTE CONTENTS: This story contains a term that refers to a racial slur.

A video showing a Minnesota woman at a playground last week openly admitting to using a racist slur against a Black child has garnered millions of views. Maybe equally viral has been a crowdfunding effort that has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars to help the woman now relocate her family.

In the video, a man in Rochester, a city roughly 90 miles (145 kilometers) south of Minneapolis, confronts the woman for calling a 5-year-old boy the N-word. The woman appears to double-down on the racist term and flips off the man confronting her with both of her middle fingers.

The woman, who could not be reached for comment, has since amassed over \$700,000 through Christian fundraising platform GiveSendGo for relocation expenses because of threats she received over the video. The fundraising page said she used the word out of frustration because the boy went through her 18-month-old child's diaper bag. The Associated Press has not verified this assertion.

"I called the kid out for what he was," she wrote, adding that the online videos have "caused my family, and myself, great turmoil."

The flurry of monetary contributions has reignited multiple debates, from whether racist language and attacks are becoming more permissible to the differences between "cancel culture" and "consequence culture." Many want to see the woman face some sort of comeuppance for using a slur, especially toward a child. Others say despite her words, she does not deserve to be harassed.

The NAACP Rochester chapter started its own fundraising campaign for the child's family. The GoFundMe page had raised \$340,000 when it was closed Saturday per the wishes of the family, who want privacy, said the civil rights organization. It was speaking on behalf of the family of the child, who the organization said was on the autism spectrum.

"This was not simply offensive behavior—it was an intentional racist, threatening, hateful and verbal attack against a child, and it must be treated as such," the NAACP Rochester chapter said in a statement.

The Rochester Police Department investigated and submitted findings to the Rochester City Attorney's Office for "consideration of a charging decision," spokesperson Amanda Grayson said in a statement Monday.

GiveSendGo did not immediately respond Tuesday to a request for comment from The Associated Press.

Some say defending the woman defends racism

The donations did and did not surprise Dr. Henry Taylor, director for the Center of Urban Studies at the University at Buffalo.

But shifts in the political and cultural climate have emboldened some people to express racist and bigoted views against people of color or those they consider outsiders. A more recent backlash, from the White House to corporate boardrooms, against diversity, equality and inclusion initiatives have amplified those feelings.

The racism "hovering beneath the surface" comes from blame, Taylor said. "People are given someone to hate and someone to blame for all of the problems and challenges that they are facing themselves," Taylor said.

The volume of monetary contributions in the Rochester case is reminiscent of the surge of support for individuals like Kyle Rittenhouse, Daniel Penny and George Zimmerman. Rittenhouse, Penny and Zimmerman were cleared of wrongdoing or legally found to have acted in self-defense or in defense of others — Penny and Zimmerman after the death of a Black victim and Rittenhouse after fatally shooting two white protesters at a racial justice demonstration against police.

Backlash against 'cancel culture' persists

In the woman's case, a contingent of supporters just want to fight cancel culture, said Franciska Coleman, an assistant professor of law at University of Wisconsin Law School, who has written about cancel

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, May 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 318 ~ 59 of 70

culture and social regulation of speech. For some it can include donating to anyone who people are trying to "cancel," Coleman said.

Some people are focused on how "it just seems too much that this mother of two young kids is getting death threats and rape threats," Coleman said.

Conservative commentators have gone online to applaud her for not capitulating to angry internet mobs while acknowledging she used a hateful word. "No one's excusing it. But she didn't deserve to be treated like a domestic terrorist," conservative podcast host Matt Walsh said in a Facebook post.

Some fight over justifications and consequences

There's an important distinction, Coleman said, between "cancel culture" and "consequence culture." The latter is about holding people accountable for actions and words that cause injury such as with "this poor child."

That is what many people want to see in this Rochester woman's case. Because a formal system of punishment may not impose consequences for the woman's racist behavior, people who support cancel culture believe that they "have to do it informally," Coleman said.

She and Taylor agree that, in conventional societal thinking, using racist slurs against someone who has frustrated or even provoked you is never acceptable. Those who think otherwise, even now, are seen as being on the fringes.

But donors on the woman's GiveSendGo page unabashedly used racist language against the boy, prompting the site to turn off the comments section. Others excused her behavior as acting out of aggravation. There are communities where the racial slur is only unacceptable in "racially mixed company," Coleman said.

Social media websites and crowdfunding platforms have helped people around the world speak with each other and with their wallets. It's intensified by the anonymity these platforms allow.

"Feeling that no one will know who you are enables you to act on your feelings, on your beliefs in an aggressive and even mean-spirited way that you might not do if you were exposed," Taylor said.

## The world marks the 80th anniversary of V-E Day with parades and memorials. Here's what to know

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Cities from London to Moscow will be awash with parades, flyovers and memorials this week as the world marks the 80th anniversary of Victory in Europe Day — the day Nazi Germany surrendered to Allied forces.

The surrender didn't end World War II because the war against Japan continued in the Far East. However, it was a moment of celebration for the servicemen and women who battled Adolf Hitler's armies, as well as civilians across Europe who had been bombed, invaded and subjugated since the invasion of Poland in 1939.

When the surrender was announced, people poured into the streets of London, New York and Paris to celebrate in what the BBC described as a "mood of thanksgiving."

Here's a look at the events leading up to V-E Day and its significance.

When is V-E Day?

While most Western countries celebrate the anniversary on May 8, that's not an easy question to answer.

Gen. Dwight Eisenhower, supreme commander of the Allied forces in Europe, actually accepted the unconditional surrender of Nazi Germany at 2:41 a.m. local time on May 7, in a ceremony at Reims, France. Although the news had leaked out by that evening, the official announcement was delayed until the following day. The U.S., Britain and France were trying to work out differences with the Soviet Union, which felt the surrender didn't recognize the sacrifices its troops had made in securing victory.

A second surrender document was signed around midnight on May 8 in Berlin, satisfying Soviet concerns. Russia celebrates what it calls Victory Day on May 9.

The path to victory

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, May 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 318 ~ 60 of 70

By the time France fell to the Nazi "Blitzkrieg" on June 25, 1940, Hitler's forces controlled most of Europe and were threatening to invade Britain.

But the war in Europe began to turn in early 1942, when the Soviet Red Army defeated German forces attempting to take Moscow. Hitler suffered another crushing defeat in February 1943, when German forces surrendered in the Battle of Stalingrad.

Invading the Soviet Union was "probably not Hitler's best idea," said Rob Citino, distinguished fellow at The National WWII Museum in New Orleans.

"They were counterpunched in front of Moscow, and in a war that the Germans had taken very few casualties up to now they suddenly had added a million and they never recovered from it."

Then in 1944 the Western Allies and the Soviet Union launched twin offensives that forced Nazi Germany to fight for survival on two fronts. The Allies began their march across Europe with the D-Day landings in northern France on June 6, 1944. Two weeks later, the Soviets began their push toward Berlin.

As 1944 turned to 1945, "victory is all but certain," Citino said. "But something else is certain: There's still a lot of soldiers, a lot of military personnel, on both sides who are going to die."

The Red Army alone lost about 3 million soldiers in 1945, or about 70,000 a day, he estimated.

The fall of Berlin

Soviet forces began their assault on Berlin on April 16, 1945, while the Allies were still fighting their way across western Germany.

With the city in ruins and the Red Army advancing street by street, Hitler retreated to his bunker under the Reich Chancellery, where he committed suicide on April 30. The last defenders finally surrendered on May 2.

Rolling surrenders

V-E-Day came after a series of surrenders.

The first came on April 29 at the Palace of Caserta, outside Naples, Italy where British Field Marshal Harold Alexander accepted the surrender of German and Italian forces in Italy and western Austria. Five days later, Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery accepted the surrender of German forces in northwestern Germany, Denmark and the Netherlands at Luneberg Heath, south of Hamburg.

Finally, there was the unconditional surrender of all Nazi forces in Europe that was signed first at Reims and again in Berlin.

A bittersweet moment

V-E Day was a time of reflection as well as celebration.

While many people lit bonfires and threw back the blackout curtains, others thought about what they had lost. The world also had to reckon with the Holocaust after the advancing armies uncovered the horrors of the Nazi concentration camps where millions of Jews were slaughtered.

"It was just a big letting off (of) steam and a massive relief for so many people," said Dan Ellin, a historian at the University of Lincoln in the U.K. "But then, of course, for others, there wasn't an awful lot to celebrate. For thousands of people, the victory was tinged with a sadness because for them, their loved ones were not going to come home."

And V-E Day wasn't actually the end of the war. The Japanese were still fighting ferociously to defend their home against any invasion, and many Allied soldiers expected that they would be deployed to the Far East as soon as the war in Europe ended.

"Everybody knows there's a big show left and the big show is going to be gigantic and it's going to be bloody ...," Citino said. "And I bet you every single Allied soldier in Europe, after toasting victory in Europe, they sat down and said, 'I'm going to Japan. This isn't over yet.'"

Most were spared another fight when Japan surrendered on Sept. 2, after the United States dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The veterans have their own thoughts on V-E Day

Dorothea Barron, now 100, who served as a signaler in the Wrens, the Women's Royal Naval Service, remembers the sense of camaraderie as everyone banded together to defeat a common enemy.



"Well, naturally, it's something worth celebrating, because we had finally stopped the Germans from trying to get into England," she said. "Because we were absolutely determined they weren't going to set foot in our country, absolutely, and we would have resisted, man, woman and child."

Mervyn Kersh, also 100, said V-E Day should be a reminder to today's leaders that they must stand up to bullies and despots, wherever they may be.

"You can't have peace without strength," he said. "It's no good just remembering. You've got to do something."

## **Bill Gates pledges his remaining fortune to the Gates Foundation, which will close in 20 years**

By THALIA BEATY Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — Bill Gates says he will donate 99% of his remaining tech fortune to the Gates Foundation, which will now close in 2045, earlier than previously planned. Today, that would be worth an estimated \$107 billion.

The pledge is among the largest philanthropic gifts ever — outpacing the historic contributions of industrialists like John D. Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie when adjusted for inflation. Only Berkshire Hathaway investor Warren Buffett's pledge to donate his fortune — currently estimated by Forbes at \$160 billion — may be larger depending on stock market fluctuations.

Gates' donation will be delivered over time and allow the foundation to spend an additional \$200 billion over the next 20 years. The foundation already has an endowment of \$77 billion built from donations from Gates, Melinda French Gates and Buffett.

"It's kind of thrilling to have that much to be able to put into these causes," Gates said in an interview with The Associated Press.

His announcement Thursday signals both a promise of sustained support to those causes, particularly global health and education in the U.S., and an eventual end to the foundation's immense worldwide influence. Gates says spending down his fortune will help save and improve many lives now, which will have positive ripple effects well beyond the foundation's closure. It also makes it more likely that his intentions are honored.

"I think 20 years is the right balance between giving as much as we can to make progress on these things and giving people a lot of notice that now this money will be gone," Gates said.

In a league of its own

The pledge is "a welcome bit of boldness," at a time when optimism is in short supply said, Rhodri Davies, a philanthropy expert and author of the publication, "Public Good by Private Means."

"This announcement seems like yet more evidence that norms in foundation philanthropy might be shifting" away from a default of operating in perpetuity, he said.

The Gates Foundation has long been peerless among foundations — attracting supporters and detractors but also numerous unfounded conspiracy theories.

In addition to the \$100 billion it has spent since its founding 25 years ago, it has directed scientific research, helped develop new technologies, and nurtured long-term partnerships with countries and companies.

About 41% of the foundation's money so far has come from Warren Buffett and the rest from the fortune Gates made at Microsoft.

Started by Bill Gates and Melinda French Gates in 2000, the foundation plays a significant role in shaping global health policy and has carved out a special niche by partnering with companies to drive down the cost of medical treatments so low- and middle-income countries could afford them.

"The foundation work has been way more impactful than I expected," Gates said, calling it his second and final career.

The foundation's influence on global health — from the World Health Organization to research agendas — is both a measure of its success and a magnet for criticism. For years, researchers have asked why a wealthy family should have so much sway over how the world improves people's health and responds to

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, May 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 318 ~ 62 of 70

crises.

Gates said, like any private citizen, he can choose how to spend the money he earns and has decided to do everything he can to reduce childhood deaths.

"Is that a bad thing? It's not an important cause? People can criticize it," he said, but the foundation will stick to its global health work.

The Associated Press receives financial support for news coverage in Africa from the Gates Foundation and for news coverage of women in the workforce and statehouses from Melinda French Gates' organization, Pivotal Ventures.

Major ambitions for the remaining 20 years

The foundation's most prized metric is the drop in childhood deaths from preventable causes by almost half between 2000 and 2020, according to United Nations figures. The foundation's CEO Mark Suzman is careful to say they do not take credit for this accomplishment. But he believes they had a "catalytic role" — for example, in helping deliver vaccines to children through Gavi, the vaccine alliance they helped create.

The foundation still has numerous goals — eradicating polio, controlling other deadly diseases, like malaria, and reducing malnutrition, which makes children more vulnerable to other illnesses.

Gates hopes that by spending to address these issues now, wealthy donors will be free to tackle other problems later.

The Gates Foundation had planned to wind down two decades after Gates' death, meaning today's announcement significantly moves up that timetable. Gates plans to stay engaged, though at 69, he acknowledged he may not have a say.

In its remaining two decades, the foundation will maintain a budget of around \$9 billion a year, which represents a leveling off from its almost annual growth since 2006, when Buffett first started donating.

Suzman expects the foundation will narrow its focus to top priorities.

"Having that time horizon and the resources just puts an even greater burden on us to say, 'Are you actually putting your resources, your thumb down, on what are going to be the biggest, most successful bets rather than scattering it too thinly?'" Suzman said, which he acknowledged was creating uncertainty even within the foundation about what programs would continue.

Gates is the only remaining founder

Major changes preceded the foundation's 25th year.

In 2021, Melinda French Gates and Bill Gates divorced, and Buffett resigned as the foundation's trustee. They recruited a new board of trustees to help govern the foundation, and in 2024, French Gates left to continue work at her own organization.

French Gates said she decided to step down partly to focus on countering the rollback of women's rights in the U.S. At the ELLE Women of Impact event in New York in April, she said she wanted to leave the foundation at a high point.

"I so trusted Mark Suzman, the current CEO," she said. "We had a board in place that I helped put in place, and I knew their values."

Even as the foundation's governance stabilizes, the road ahead looks difficult. Enduring conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza, global economic turmoil and cuts to foreign aid forecast fewer resources coming to global health and development.

"The greatest uncertainty for us is the generosity that will go into global health," Gates said. "Will it continue to go down like it has the last few years or can we get it back to where it should be?"

Even facing these obstacles, Gates and the foundation speak, as they often do, with optimism, pointing to innovations they've funded or ways they've helped reduce the cost of care.

"It's incredible to come up with these low-cost things and tragic if we can't get them out to everyone who needs them," Gates said. "So it's going to require renewing that commitment of those who are well off to help those who are in the greatest need."

## Eggs are less likely to crack when dropped on their side, according to science

By ADITHI RAMAKRISHNAN AP Science Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Eggs are less likely to crack when they fall on their side, according to experiments with over 200 eggs.

What does this mean for the best way to crack an egg for breakfast? Not much, since a break around the middle is the best way to get the golden yolk and runny whites to ooze out.

But scientists said it could help with hard-boiling eggs in a pot: Dropping eggs in horizontally may be less likely to cause a stray crack that can unleash the egg's insides in a puffy, cloudy mess.

It's commonly thought that eggs are strongest at their ends — after all, it's how they're packaged in the carton. The thinking is that the arc-shaped bottom of an egg redirects the force and softens the blow of impact.

But when scientists squeezed eggs in both directions during a compression test, they cracked under the same amount of force.

"The fun started when we thought we would get one result and then we saw another," said Hudson Borja da Rocha with Massachusetts Institute of Technology, who helped run the experiments.

The researchers also ran simulations and dropped eggs horizontally and vertically from three short heights up to 0.4 inches (10 millimeters).

The egg result? The ones dropped horizontally cracked less .

"The common sense is that the egg in the vertical direction is stronger than if you lay the egg down. But they proved that's not the case," said materials scientist Marc Meyers with the University of California, San Diego who was not involved with the new study.

Scientists found that the egg's equator was more flexible and absorbed more of the energy of the fall before cracking. The findings were published Thursday in the journal Communications Physics.

Eggs are also usually nestled top-down into homemade contraptions for egg drop challenges as part of school STEM projects, which partially inspired the new study. It's not yet clear whether the new results will help protect these vulnerable eggs, which are dropped at much loftier heights.

It's a bit counterintuitive that the oblong side of an egg could hold up better against a tumble, said study co-author Tal Cohen with Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Countless broken eggs show "the courage to go and challenge these very common, accepted notions," Cohen said.

## Cancer before age 50 is increasing. A new study looks at which types

By CARLA K. JOHNSON AP Medical Writer

Cancer before age 50 is rare, but increasing, in the United States and researchers want to know why.

A new government study provides the most complete picture yet of early-onset cancers, finding that the largest increases are in breast, colorectal, kidney and uterine cancers. Scientists from the National Cancer Institute looked at data that included more than 2 million cancers diagnosed in people 15 to 49 years old between 2010 and 2019.

Of 33 cancer types, 14 cancers had increasing rates in at least one younger age group. About 63% of the early-onset cancers were among women.

"These kinds of patterns generally reflect something profound going on," said Tim Rebbeck of Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, who studies cancer risk and was not involved in the research. "We need to fund research that will help us understand."

The findings were published Thursday in Cancer Discovery, a journal of the American Association for Cancer Research.

How many extra cancers are we talking about?

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, May 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 318 ~ 64 of 70

The researchers compared cancer rates in 2019 to what would be expected based on 2010 rates.

Breast cancer made up the largest share of the excess cancers, with about 4,800 additional cases. There were 2,000 more colorectal cancers compared with what would be expected based on the 2010 rates. There were 1,800 more kidney cancers and 1,200 additional uterine cancers.

Reassuringly, death rates were not rising for most cancers in the young adult age groups, although increasing death rates were seen for colorectal, uterine and testicular cancers.

Why is this happening?

Explanations will take more research. The big databases used for the study don't include information on risk factors or access to care. Theories abound and a big meeting is planned later this year to bring together experts in the area.

"Several of these cancer types are known to be associated with excess body weight and so one of the leading hypotheses is increasing rates of obesity," said lead author Meredith Shiels of the National Cancer Institute.

Advances in cancer detection and changes in screening guidelines could be behind some early diagnoses.

For breast cancer, the trend toward women having a first child at older ages is a possible explanation. Pregnancy and breastfeeding are known to reduce risk.

It's not a uniform trend for all cancers

This isn't happening across the board. Cancer rates in people under 50 are going down for more than a dozen types of cancer, with the largest declines in lung and prostate cancers.

Cigarette smoking has been declining for decades, which likely accounts for the drop in lung cancer among younger adults.

The drop in prostate cancer is likely tied to updated guidelines discouraging routine PSA testing in younger men because of concerns about overtreatment.

## **Sen. John Fetterman raises alarms with outburst at meeting with union officials, AP sources say**

By MARC LEVY Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — Democratic Sen. John Fetterman of Pennsylvania was meeting last week with representatives from a teachers union in his home state when things quickly devolved.

Before long, Fetterman began repeating himself, shouting and questioning why "everybody is mad at me," "why does everyone hate me, what did I ever do" and slamming his hands on a desk, according to one person who was briefed on what occurred.

As the meeting deteriorated, a staff member moved to end it and ushered the visitors into the hallway, where she broke down crying. The staffer was comforted by the teachers who were themselves rattled by Fetterman's behavior, according to a second person who was briefed separately on the meeting.

The interaction at Fetterman's Washington office, described to The Associated Press by the two people who spoke about it on the condition of anonymity, came the day before New York Magazine published a story in which former staff and political advisers to Fetterman aired concerns about the senator's mental health.

That story included a 2024 letter, also obtained by the AP, in which Fetterman's one-time chief of staff Adam Jentleson told a neuropsychiatrist who had treated Fetterman for depression that the senator appeared to be off his recovery plan and was exhibiting alarming behavior, including a tendency toward "long, rambling, repetitive and self-centered monologues."

Asked about the meeting with teachers union representatives, Fetterman said in a statement through his office that they "had a spirited conversation about our collective frustration with the Trump administration's cuts to our education system." He also said he "will always support our teachers, and I will always reject anyone's attempt to turn Pennsylvania's public schools into a voucher program."

Fetterman earlier this week brushed off the New York Magazine story as a "one-source hit piece and some anonymous sources, so there's nothing new." Asked by a reporter in a Senate corridor what he



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, May 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 318 ~ 65 of 70

would say to people who are concerned about him, Fetterman said: "They're not. They're actually not concerned. It's a hit piece. There's no news."

Reached by telephone, Aaron Chapin, the president of the Pennsylvania State Education Association who was in the meeting with Fetterman, said he didn't want to discuss what was a private conversation.

Surviving a stroke, battling depression

The teachers union encounter adds to the questions being raised about Fetterman's mental health and behavior barely three years after he survived a stroke on the 2022 campaign trail that he said almost killed him. That was followed by a bout with depression that landed him in Walter Reed National Military Medical Center for six weeks, barely a month after he was sworn into the Senate.

The scrutiny also comes at a time when Fetterman, now serving third year of his term, is being criticized by many rank-and-file Democrats in his home state for being willing to cooperate with President Donald Trump, amid Democrats' growing alarm over Trump's actions and agenda.

Fetterman — who has been diagnosed with cardiomyopathy, in which the heart muscle becomes weakened and enlarged, and auditory processing disorder, a complication from the stroke — has talked openly about his struggle with depression and urged people to get help.

In November, he told podcast host Joe Rogan that he had recovered and fended off thoughts of harming himself.

"I was at the point where I was really, you know, in a very dark place. And I stayed in that game and I am staying in front of you right now and having this conversation," Fetterman said.

But some who have worked closely with Fetterman question whether his recovery is complete.

In the 2024 letter to Dr. David Williamson, Jentleson warned that Fetterman was not seeing his doctors, had pushed out the people who were supposed to help him stay on his recovery plan and might not be taking his prescribed medications. Jentleson also said Fetterman had been driving recklessly and exhibiting paranoia, isolating him from colleagues.

"Overall, over the last nine months or so, John has dismantled the early-warning system we all agreed upon when he was released," Jentleson wrote. "He has picked fights with each person involved in that system and used those fights as excuses to push them out and cut them off from any knowledge about his health situation."

Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, where Williamson works, declined to make him available for an interview, citing privacy and confidentiality laws protecting patient medical information.

A lone wolf in the Senate

Fetterman has long been a wild card in the political realm, forging a career largely on his own, independently from the Democratic Party.

As a small-town mayor in Braddock, the plainspoken Fetterman became a minor celebrity for his bare-knuckled progressive politics, his looks — he's 6-foot-8 and tattooed with a shaved head — and his unconventional efforts to put the depressed former steel town back on the map.

He endorsed the insurgent Democrat Bernie Sanders in 2016's presidential primary and ran from the left against the party-backed Democrat in 2016's Senate primary. In 2020, when he was lieutenant governor, he became a top surrogate on cable TV news shows for Joe Biden's presidential bid and gathered a national political following that made him a strong small-dollar fundraiser.

Elected to the Senate in 2022, he has made waves with his casual dress — hoodies and gym shorts — at work and at formal events and his willingness to chastise other Democrats.

Fetterman returned to the Senate after his hospitalization in 2023 a much more outgoing lawmaker, frequently joking with his fellow senators and engaging with reporters in the hallways with the assistance of an iPad or iPhone that transcribes conversations in real time.

Yet two years later, Fetterman is still something of a loner in the Senate.

He has separated himself from many of his fellow Democrats on Israel policy and argued at times that his party needs to work with, not against, Trump. He met with Trump and Trump's nominees — and voted for some — when other Democrats wouldn't.

He has stood firmly with Democrats in other cases and criticized Trump on some issues, such as trade

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, May 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 318 ~ 66 of 70

and food aid.

One particularly head-scratching video of Fetterman emerged earlier this year in which he was on a flight to Pittsburgh apparently arguing with a pilot over his seatbelt.

Despite fallout with progressives over his staunch support of Israel in its war in Gaza, Fetterman was still an in-demand personality last year to campaign in the battleground state of Pennsylvania for Biden and, after Biden dropped his reelection bid, Vice President Kamala Harris.

Since Trump won November's election — and Pennsylvania — things have changed. Many one-time supporters have turned on Fetterman over his softer approach to Trump and his willingness to criticize fellow Democrats for raising alarm bells.

It nevertheless brought Fetterman plaudits.

Bill Maher, host of the political talk show "Real Time with Bill Maher," suggested that Fetterman should run for president in 2028. Conservatives — who had long made Fetterman a target for his progressive politics — have sprung to Fetterman's defense.

Still, Democrats in Pennsylvania say they are hearing from people worried about him.

"People are concerned about his health," said Sharif Street, the state's Democratic Party chairman. "They want to make sure he's OK. People care about him. There's a lot of love for him out there."

## **GOP centrists revolt against steep cuts to Medicaid and other programs in Trump's tax breaks bill**

By LISA MASCARO and KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When it comes to Medicaid, Rep. Juan Ciscomani is telling fellow Republicans he won't support steep cuts that could hit thousands of residents in his Arizona district — "my neighbors, people my kids go to school with" — who depend on it.

Republican Rep. Don Bacon, who represents the liberal-leaning "blue dot" of Omaha, Nebraska, is trying to protect several Biden-era green energy tax breaks. He's warning colleagues that "you can't pull the rug out from under" businesses that have already sunk millions of dollars into renewable developments in Nebraska and beyond.

And for Republican Rep. Nick LaLota of New York, it's simple: "No Salt. No Deal. For Real." He wants to revive — and bump up — what's known as the SALT deduction, which allows taxpayers to write off a portion of their state and local taxes. Capping the deduction at \$10,000 hurt many of his Long Island constituents.

"Governing is a negotiation, right?" said Rep. Nicole Malliotakis of New York, another Republican who is also involved in the talks. "I think everybody is going to have to give a little."

As GOP leaders draft President Donald Trump's "big, beautiful bill" of some \$4.5 trillion in tax breaks and \$1.5 trillion in spending cuts by Memorial Day, dozens of Republicans from contested congressional districts have positioned themselves at the center of the negotiating table.

While it's often the most conservative members of the House Freedom Caucus driving the legislative agenda — and they are demanding as much as \$2 trillion in cuts — it's the more centrist-leaning conservatives who could sink the bill. They have been hauled into meetings with Trump at the White House, some have journeyed to his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida, and many are huddling almost daily with House Speaker Mike Johnson.

And they are not satisfied, yet.

"To get everybody politically and policy-wise on the same page is going to require more conversations," said LaLota, who is among five Republicans pledging to withhold their support unless changes to the SALT deduction are included.

Republicans wrestle with what to put in — and what to leave out

Diving into the gritty details of the massive package, the GOP leaders are running into the stubborn reality that not all the ideas from their menu of potential tax breaks and spending cuts are popular with voters back home.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, May 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 318 ~ 67 of 70

Moreover, their work of compiling the big package is not happening in a vacuum. It comes amid growing economic unease rippling across the country as Trump has fired thousands of federal workers, including some of their own constituents, and as his trade war sparks concerns of empty store shelves and higher prices.

Brendan Buck, a former adviser to an earlier House speaker, Paul Ryan, warned in an op-ed Wednesday that all the party's energy is being poured into one bill, with questionable returns.

"Many Republicans are hoping that the tax bill can blunt the economic damage caused by the Trump tariffs," Buck wrote in The New York Times, "but that is highly unlikely."

Democrats are ready for the fight, warning that Trump and his fellow Republicans are ripping away health care and driving the economy into the ditch — all to retain tax breaks approved during Trump's first term that are expiring at year's end.

"What we see from Donald Trump and the Republicans is they are actually crashing the economy in real time," said House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries of New York.

"Why," the Democratic leader asked, "are Republicans jumping through hoops" to try to reduce Medicaid and food stamps used by millions of Americans?

"It's all in service of enacting massive tax breaks for their millionaire donors like Elon Musk," he said.

GOP leaders search for consensus

Johnson has projected a calm confidence, insisting that House Republicans are on track to deliver on Trump's agenda.

The speaker's office has become a waystation with a revolving door of Republicans privately laboring to piece together the massive package.

So far, GOP leaders have signaled they are walking away from some, but not all, of the steep Medicaid cuts. The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office has said the proposals could result in millions of people losing their coverage.

Instead, what appears to still be on the table are tougher work requirements for those receiving Medicaid and food stamp assistance and more frequent eligibility tests for beneficiaries.

That's not enough for the conservatives, who also number in the dozens and are insisting on deeper reductions.

Centrists drawing red lines

Ciscomani, in his second term, signed onto a letter with Bacon and others warning House Republican leadership he cannot support a bill that includes "any reduction in Medicaid coverage for vulnerable populations."

"Our point is that we understand the need for reform," Ciscomani said. "But anything that goes beyond that and starts jeopardizing rural hospitals in my district and their existence overall, then we're running into an area where it will be very difficult to move forward. I think it's very important they know that."

Bacon, Ciscomani and others joined on a separate letter raising concerns about eliminating clean-energy tax credits, including those passed under President Joe Biden, a Democrat.

"Go with a scalpel. Go pick out some things," Bacon told The Associated Press. He and the others warned that companies are already investing millions of dollars from the Inflation Reduction Act's incentives to green energy.

"You just can't do a wholesale throw it out," Bacon said.

Democrats track the vote with an eye on next year's midterms

Democrats are also applying political pressure in Ciscomani's district and beyond.

As Republicans decline to hold town halls on the advice of their leaders, Democrats are stepping in to warn constituents about what could happen to programs they rely on for health coverage and to put food on the table.

Democratic Sens. Mark Kelly of Arizona and Cory Booker of New Jersey visited Ciscomani's Tucson-based district last month to offer harsh condemnations.

Kelly asked how many in the room were represented by Ciscomani, and then he warned about how scores of residents in the district could lose their health care coverage.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, May 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 318 ~ 68 of 70

"And for what? It is so Donald Trump could give a big, giant tax cut to the wealthiest Americans. It is not fair," Kelly said.

Booker, fresh off his 25-hour speech on the Senate floor, was even more pointed, saying just three House Republicans have to change their mind to upend the GOP's effort in the House, with its narrow majority.

"I believe one of them has to be in this district right here," Booker said. "Either he changes his mind or this district changes congresspeople. It's as simple as that."

## More older Americans worry Social Security won't be there for them, an AP-NORC poll finds

By FATIMA HUSSEIN and AMELIA THOMSON-DEVEAUX Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As the Social Security Administration undergoes massive changes and staffing cuts ushered in by the Trump administration, an increasing share of older Americans — particularly Democrats — aren't confident the benefit will be available to them, a poll shows.

The share of older Americans who are "not very" or "not at all" confident has risen somewhat since 2023, according to the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll conducted in April. In the poll, about 3 in 10 U.S. adults age 60 or older are "not very" or "not at all" confident that Social Security benefits will be there for them when they need it, up from about 2 in 10 in an AP-NORC poll conducted in 2023.

That shift looks very different depending on older Americans' political party, though. There has been a substantial decrease in confidence among older Democrats. About half of Democrats age 60 or older are "not very" or "not at all confident" that Social Security will be there for them when they need it, a sizable swing from 2023, when only about 1 in 10 said they were "not very" or "not at all" confident.

Older Republicans, on the other hand, have become more confident that Social Security will be there for them. In contrast with older Democrats, about 6 in 10 Republicans age 60 or older are "extremely" or "very" confident that Social Security will be there when they need it, up from only about one-quarter who thought this in 2023.

There's a partisan divide over Social Security

The findings point to a partisan divide in the ongoing debate over the benefits program, which serves millions of people. When the 2023 poll was conducted, a Democratic president, Joe Biden, was in the White House, which may have contributed to older Democrats' confidence in the program. Now, large changes including mass federal worker layoffs, cuts to programs and office closures are being ushered in by Republican President Donald Trump's Department of Government Efficiency, led by billionaire adviser Elon Musk. A planned cut to nationwide Social Security phone services was eventually walked back.

Musk, who recently said he is preparing to wind down his role with the Trump administration, garnered widespread condemnation when, in March, he said on a podcast interview with Joe Rogan that the Social Security program is a "Ponzi scheme."

Those comments have caused some voters to feel less confident in the future of the program.

Dennis Riera, a 65-year-old Republican in Huntington Beach, California, says Musk's comments have made him feel very worried.

"It's really a shame that something that so many people have relied on for so many generations is being looked at as a Ponzi scheme," Riera said. He has not yet retired from his job as a security official in the entertainment sector and doesn't know when he will be able to.

"What is their purpose in trying to undermine this institution?" he said.

But Linda Seck, a 78-year-old Republican and retired nurse from Saline Township in Michigan, says she's very confident about the future of Social Security.

"When I was in college, financial planners were telling us not to depend on Social Security, but here we are more than 50 years later and it's still going," she said.

A focus of Democrats as midterms approach

Voters in recent weeks have flooded town halls to express their displeasure with the cuts, and both



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, May 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 318 ~ 69 of 70

political parties expect Social Security to emerge as a key issue in next year's midterm elections. The upheaval has made Social Security a major focus of Democrats, including Biden, who said Trump has "taken a hatchet" to the program.

Timothy Black, a 52-year-old Democrat who lives in San Diego, receives Social Security Disability Insurance payments to manage his chronic illness. He said his concern is not only for the retirement portion of Social Security but also for the agency's disability benefits arm.

"If anything happens to Social Security it would really impact me," he said, listing the bills and expenses he has to pay to survive. "If SSDI doesn't keep up with the cost of living, my medical expenses are only going to grow and I could end up homeless."

Worries that Social Security could go broke

The Social Security Administration has for decades moved closer toward its go-broke date, when it will be unable to pay full benefits beginning in 2035, according to the 2024 Social Security and Medicare trustees report.

Social Security would then only be able to pay 83% of benefits. A common misconception is that Social Security would be completely unable to pay benefits once it reaches its go-broke date.

Roughly 72.5 million people, including retirees and children, receive Social Security benefits.

Older Americans are generally more confident that Social Security will be available to them than younger adults are, according to the poll. About half of U.S. adults under age 30 are "not very" or "not at all" confident that Social Security will be there for them, which is unchanged from 2023.

That skepticism transcends party loyalty. Younger Republicans aren't sure, on the whole, whether Social Security will be around to benefit them. Only about 2 in 10 Republicans under age 60 are "extremely" or "very" confident that Social Security will be available to them when they need it.

But younger people's confidence in Social Security was low when Biden was president, too. Steven Peters, a 42-year-old independent from White House, Tennessee, says for years he's heard warnings about the program's precarious finances.

"I'm not confident at all that its going to be available," he said. "I can't say its related to the current administration, though."

The Senate confirmed a new SSA leader, Wall Street veteran Frank Bisignano, on Tuesday on a 53 to 47 vote. Bisignano was sworn in on Wednesday.

## Today in History: May 9, FDA approves first birth control pill

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Friday, May 9, the 129th day of 2025. There are 236 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On May 9, 1960, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration conditionally approved Enovid for use as the first oral contraceptive pill.

Also on this date:

In 1754, the famous political cartoon "Join or Die" was first published by Benjamin Franklin in the Pennsylvania Gazette newspaper.

In 1914, President Woodrow Wilson, acting on a joint congressional resolution, signed a proclamation designating the second Sunday in May as Mother's Day.

In 1951, the U.S. conducted its first thermonuclear experiment as part of Operation Greenhouse by detonating a 225-kiloton device (nicknamed "George") on Enewetak Atoll in the Pacific Ocean.

In 1974, the House Judiciary Committee opened public hearings on whether to recommend the impeachment of President Richard Nixon. (The committee ultimately adopted three articles of impeachment against the president, who resigned before the full House took up any of them.)

In 1980, 35 people were killed when a freighter rammed the Sunshine Skyway Bridge over Tampa Bay in Florida, causing a 1,300-foot section of the southbound span to collapse.

In 2019, Pope Francis issued a groundbreaking new church law requiring all Catholic priests and nuns

# Groton Daily Independent

**Friday, May 9, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 318 ~ 70 of 70**

to report clergy sexual abuse and cover-ups by their superiors to church authorities.

In 2023, a jury found Donald Trump liable for sexually abusing advice columnist E. Jean Carroll in 1996, awarding her \$5 million in damages.

Today's Birthdays: Producer-director James L. Brooks is 85. Musician-songwriter Sonny Curtis (The Crickets) is 88. Actor Candice Bergen is 79. Musician Billy Joel is 76. Former U.S. Poet Laureate Joy Harjo is 74. Actor John Corbett is 64. Singer Dave Gahan (Depeche Mode) is 63. Hockey Hall of Famer Steve Yzerman is 60. Rapper Ghostface Killah is 55. R&B singer Tamia (tuh-MEE'-ah) is 50. Actor Rosario Dawson is 46. TV personality Audrina Patridge is 40. Actor Grace Gummer is 39. Musician Shaboozey is 30.