

# Groton Daily Independent

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## Thursday, May 22

Senior Menu: Beef tips with mashed potato, baby carrots, cherry fluff, whole wheat bread.

Girls Golf at Sisseton, 10 a.m.

Track at Webster, Noon

## Friday, May 23

Senior Menu: Chicken pasta salad, three bean salad, cinnamon apple sauce, breadstick.

Track at Warner, 11 a.m.

## Saturday, May 24

## Sunday, May 25

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

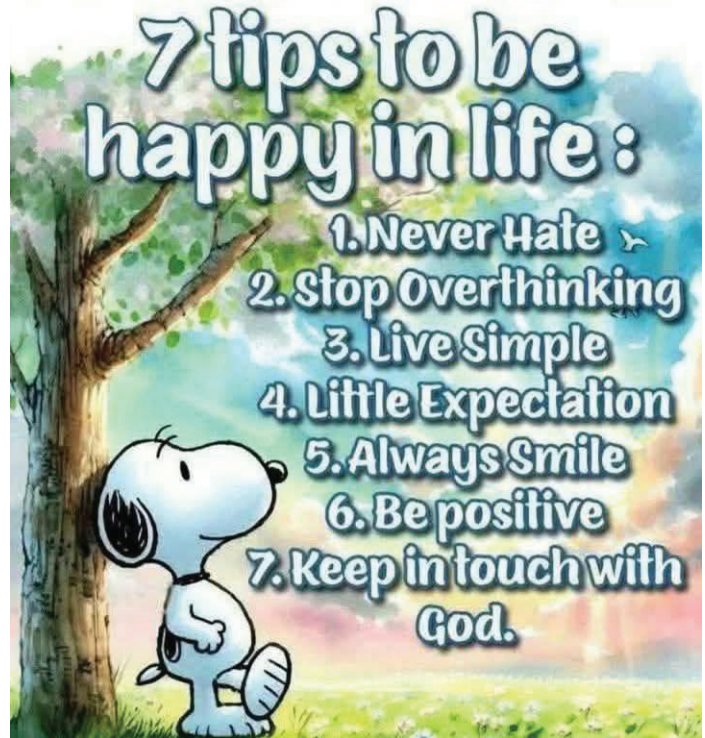
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m.; SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.

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

## Groton Daily Independent

PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445

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



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.; Coffee Hour, 10:30 a.m.

## Monday, May 26

MEMORIAL DAY

State High School Baseball at Brookings

## Tuesday, May 27

Senior Menu: Lemon chicken breast, wild rice green beans, tropical fruit, whole wheat bread.

Girls Golf Region at Sioux Valley (Volga), 10 a.m.

State High School Baseball at Brookings

## Wednesday, May 28

Senior Menu Turkey mashed potato with gravy, California blend, orange and pineapple, dinner roll.

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

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

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# 1440

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

## DOJ Halts Lawsuits

The Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division is dismissing pending settlements and dropping investigations into several US police departments, senior officials revealed yesterday. The move comes days before the fifth anniversary of the death of George Floyd, whose killing by a police officer triggered widespread Black Lives Matter protests in 2020 and calls for reform.

Following the killings of Floyd and Breonna Taylor, the Biden administration's DOJ launched probes into Minneapolis and Louisville, finding patterns of misconduct concerning the civil rights of Black people. The investigations prompted police reform agreements known as consent decrees with the two cities, intended to rectify civil rights violations with reforms overseen by a court-appointed monitor.

The head of the division said yesterday the decrees were unjustified and would have led to micromanagement. The news comes as an estimated 250 of the division's attorneys (roughly 70%) are leaving the department in response to changes.

## Here's Jony

OpenAI has purchased designer Jony Ive's hardware startup io, the company announced yesterday. The all-equity deal, valued at \$6.4B, will involve the development of AI-powered hardware devices, the first of which will be unveiled next year.

As former chief design officer at Apple, Ive is credited with designing iconic products, including the iPod, iPhone, iPad, and MacBook Air. In yesterday's announcement, OpenAI CEO Sam Altman hinted at Ive's development of a laptop-replacing device, with reports suggesting his team has designed headphones and other screenless devices to better integrate AI into everyday life. Ive and his team—many of them former Apple employees—will assume creative and design responsibilities across OpenAI and io, which will merge.

The purchase is OpenAI's largest and comes weeks after the company announced it would buy AI coding tool Windsurf for \$3B. OpenAI is granting Ive and his creative team \$5B in OpenAI stock, with the company recently valued at \$300B.

## Cysteine Weight Loss

Eliminating a single amino acid caused mice to lose 30% of their body weight in one week, a new study has found. Cysteine is found in nearly all foods, with the study showcasing its critical role in metabolic processes.

Researchers fed adult mice a cysteine-free diet and genetically engineered the mice to be incapable of producing the amino acid. The combined interventions interrupted cells' ability to produce the energy-carrying molecule adenosine triphosphate. The interventions also triggered two separate stress responses—a phenomenon previously seen only in cancer cells. The mice burned fat rapidly in a failed effort to produce energy. The elimination of cysteine outperformed any of the nine essential amino acids in achieving rapid weight loss.

Cysteine is present in all fruits, vegetables, and meat, making a cysteine-free diet impractical for humans. Fruits and vegetables have lower levels of cysteine's precursor, methionine, whose restriction has been associated with various health benefits.

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## Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Oklahoma City Thunder star Shai Gilgeous-Alexander wins NBA MVP after finishing runner-up in the voting last season.

Jim Irsay, Indianapolis Colts owner and CEO, dies at age 65.

Universal Orlando's Epic Universe officially opens to the public today; the theme park includes Super Mario World and themed "Harry Potter" and "How to Train Your Dragon" sections.

"Heart Lamp," a short story anthology by Indian author Banu Mushtaq, wins prestigious 2025 International Booker Prize for best work of fiction translated into English.

## Science & Technology

Humpback whales have poor eyesight despite relatively large eyes, new study reveals; animals may have trouble resolving details of potential threats beyond three to four body lengths.

Volcanoes trigger cloud formation during eruptions, with ash providing a surface for ice to begin forming in the atmosphere; findings fill a knowledge gap around how eruptions influence climate.

New manufacturing process significantly reduces corrosion of steel rebar, could eventually lead to a tripling of the lifetime of bridges to around 100 years.

## Business & Markets

US stock markets close lower (S&P 500 -1.6%, Dow -1.9%, Nasdaq -1.4%) amid jump in Treasury yields and concerns tax bill moving through Congress will add to the US deficit.

Bitcoin price jumps to all-time high of \$109,500, closing the day at \$108,955.10.

Target shares close down 5.2% after reporting 3.8% year-over-year decline in same-store sales; company attributes the drop in part to tariff uncertainty, boycott over ending its diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives.

United Arab Emirates launches Arabic-language AI model it says can match the performance of models up to 10 times its size.

## Politics & World Affairs

Rep. Gerry Connolly (D, VA-11) dies at age 75, weeks after announcing he would not seek reelection following the return of esophageal cancer.

Rep. LaMonica McIver (D, NJ-10) makes first court appearance following assault charges stemming from May 9 visit to ICE facility.

Justice Department opens investigation into former New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo's (D) House committee testimony on spread of COVID-19 in nursing homes.

Department of Defense accepts \$400M luxury Boeing jet from Qatar, intended to serve as Air Force One.

Federal judge rules against Department of Homeland Security for sending eight migrants convicted of violent crime to South Sudan, requires DHS to keep migrants in US custody.

## The Life of Betty Jane (Ferguson) Pinkerton

The funeral service for Betty Jane (Ferguson) Pinkerton, 97, of Aberdeen, SD, will be Sunday, June 1, 2025, at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Aberdeen with Pastor Jeff Whillock officiating. Burial will be at Riverside Cemetery on Monday at 11:00am. Betty died Monday, May 19, 2025, at Bethesda Home of Aberdeen.

Visitation will be 5:00-7:00pm, Saturday, at Spitzer-Miller Funeral Home, 1111 South Main Street. In lieu of flowers, family prefers memorials to: Aberdeen Area Humane Society, 2511 385th Avenue South, Aberdeen, SD 57401 Bethlehem Lutheran Radio Broadcast, 1620 Milwaukee Avenue Northeast, Aberdeen, SD 57401, or Eastern Star Home, 126 West 12th Avenue, Redfield, SD 57469.

Betty Jane Pinkerton was born to Don and Bonnie (Smith) Ferguson on December 2, 1927, at White River, South Dakota. She graduated from Gettysburg High School in May, 1945. After high school she worked as a civil service clerk/typist at the VA Hospital in St. Paul, Minnesota, Cheyenne Agency Hospital in South Dakota, and St. Paul Fire and Marine Agency in Aberdeen.

She met and eventually married Richard (Dick) Pinkerton on September 10, 1949, in Aberdeen. They relocated to Camp Carson, Colorado Springs, Colorado in 1950, where she worked in Officer Personnel at Camp Carson.

When Dick was deployed to Alaska in 1951, she returned to Aberdeen. Upon Dick's return, they made their home in Aberdeen where they raised their three daughters.

Betty was active in the school activities for her daughters, Job's Daughters, Girl Scouts, 4-H, and as a lifetime member of Bethlehem Lutheran Church she served in many areas. In addition, she was a member of the American Legion Auxiliary, Yelduz Shrine Hospital Auxiliary, Aurora Temple Daughters of the Nile where she served as Queen, Minerva Chapter of the Eastern Star where she served as the Worthy Matron, and the Red Hats Society. As the girls grew older, she returned to work as the office secretary for the Yelduz Shrine Temple for 25 years.

She enjoyed volunteering with many organizations, playing bridge, reading, spending time with family and friends and traveling.

Grateful for having shared her life are daughters Deborah (Don) Jacobson, Anita (Cal) Bosanko, Barbara (Tom) Paepke, four grandchildren, eleven great grandchildren, sister-in-law Lorraine Ferguson, and numerous nieces and nephews.

Betty is preceded in death by her husband, parents, grandparents, and four siblings.

[www.spitzerfuneralhome.com](http://www.spitzerfuneralhome.com)







## MEMORIAL DAY

HONORING ALL WHO SERVED



### **Groton Post #39 Memorial Day Schedule**

**Hufton at 7:30 a.m.**

**James at 8:15 a.m.**

**Verdon at 8:45 a.m.**

**Bates-Scotland at 9:15 a.m.**

**Ferney at 10 a.m.**

**Andover Catholic at 11 a.m.**

**Groton at Noon**  
**Guest speaker at Groton**  
**is Todd Oliver.**

**Lunch to follow at the Groton Post  
#39 home served by the Legion Aux-  
iliary.**

**In the event of inclement weather,  
the ceremony will be held at the  
Post home.**

**Groton Post #39 is sponsoring  
the FREE viewing of the broadcast  
at**

**GDILIVE.COM**

**People in their vehicles can listen  
on the radio at 89.3 FM.**

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 Varsity Surge Past Howard Varsity Tigers Thanks To Big Fourth Inning

By GameChanger Media

Groton Area Tigers Varsity scored four runs in the fourth inning, which helped them defeat Howard Varsity Tigers 7-1 on Wednesday. Lincoln Krause grounded out, scoring one run, an error scored two runs, and an error scored one run.

Groton Area Tigers Varsity got on the board in the top of the first inning after Carter Simon doubled to center field, Howard Varsity Tigers committed an error, and Nicholas Morris grounded out, each scoring one run.

Morris earned the win for Groton Area Tigers Varsity. The right-handed pitcher allowed seven hits and one run over seven innings, striking out eight and walking one. Korbin Shumaker took the loss for Howard Varsity Tigers. The hurler went three innings, allowing five runs (three earned) on four hits, striking out two and walking three.

Krause and Simon each collected two hits for Groton Area Tigers Varsity. Morris, Simon, and Gavin Englund each drove in one run for Groton Area Tigers Varsity.

Luke Koepsell and Carson Hinker were a force together in the lineup, as they each collected two hits for Howard Varsity Tigers while hitting back-to-back. Kingsten Feldhaus went 1-for-3 at the plate and led the team with one run batted in.

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## Groton Area Tigers Varsity Defeated By Madison/Chester Varsity By GameChanger Media

Groton Area Tigers Varsity could not keep pace with Madison/Chester Varsity 2025 6-1 on Wednesday. Madison/Chester Varsity 2025 were the first to get on the board in the second when Quinn Flemming drew a walk, scoring one run.

Madison/Chester Varsity 2025 added one run in the third. Ben Brooks singled down the right field line, making the score 2-0.

JD Prorok earned the win for Madison/Chester Varsity 2025. The pitcher gave up five hits and one run over five innings, striking out 11 and walking two. Jarrett Erdmann took the loss for Groton Area Tigers Varsity. The hurler went five and one-third innings, allowing six runs (two earned) on five hits, striking out three and walking five.

Lincoln Krause and Brevin Fliehs each collected two hits for Groton Area Tigers Varsity. Fliehs led Groton Area Tigers Varsity with one run batted in. The number three hitter went 2-for-4 on the day.

Brooks went 3-for-4 at the plate to lead Madison/Chester Varsity 2025 in hits. Jordan Pedersen and Brooks each drove in two runs for Madison/Chester Varsity 2025.

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Groton Area Tigers  
Varsity

1 - 6

Madison/Chester Varsity  
2025

📍 Away 📅 Wednesday May 21, 2025

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	R	H	E
GRTN	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	6	2
MDSN	0	1	1	3	0	1	X	6	6	1

## BATTING

Groton Area Tigers Varsity	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
L Krause #2 (LF)	4	1	2	0	0	2
T Schust... #21 (RF)	2	0	1	0	1	1
J Schwan #11	1	0	0	0	0	1
B Fliehs #6 (CF)	4	0	2	1	0	1
C Simon #4 (1B)	3	0	0	0	1	2
G Englund #18 (3B)	3	0	0	0	0	3
N Morris #17 (2B)	3	0	0	0	0	3
K Fliehs #10 (C)	3	0	1	0	0	1
N Groeb... #13 (DH)	2	0	0	0	1	1
J Erdma... #00 (P)	0	0	0	0	0	0
A Abeln #5 (SS)	3	0	0	0	0	2
K Anton... #7 (RF)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	28	1	6	1	3	17

**2B:** B Fliehs 2, **TB:** B Fliehs 4, K Fliehs, T Schuster, L Krause 2, **LOB:** 9

## PITCHING

Groton Area Tigers Varsity	R	ER	BB	SO	HR		
J Erdm... #00	5.1	5	6	2	5	3	0
B Fliehs #6	0.2	1	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	6.0	6	6	1	5	3	0

**L:** J Erdmann, **P-S:** B Fliehs 11-8, J Erdmann 98-49, **HBP:** J Erdmann 2, **BF:** B Fliehs 3, J Erdmann 30

Madison/Chester Varsity 2025	R	H	RBI	BB	SO	
T McGillivray #23 (C)	3	0	0	0	1	0
C Wolf #4 (2B)	4	0	0	0	0	1
J Pedersen #29 (RF)	3	1	1	2	1	0
Q Kurtz #26 (SS)	2	1	0	0	1	0
B Brooks #52 (LF)	4	1	3	2	0	0
C Hahn #1 (3B)	4	0	1	0	0	0
O Mees #9 (DH)	2	1	1	0	0	0
J Prorok #12 (P)	2	0	0	0	1	2
Q Flemming #15 (CF)	2	1	0	1	1	0
CR: G Schneider #14	0	0	0	0	0	0
CR: R Johnson #10	0	1	0	0	0	0
CR: B Olson #6	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	26	6	6	5	5	3

**2B:** O Mees, B Brooks, **TB:** C Hahn, O Mees 2, B Brooks 4, J Pedersen, **HBP:** O Mees, Q Kurtz, **SB:** R Johnson, **LOB:** 9

Madison/Chester Varsity 2025	ER	BB	SO	HR			
J Prorok #12	5.0	5	1	1	2	11	0
Q Kurtz #26	2.0	1	0	0	1	6	0
Totals	7.0	6	1	1	3	17	0

**W:** J Prorok, **P-S:** J Prorok 91-58, Q Kurtz 29-22, **WP:** J Prorok 2, **BF:** J Prorok 23, Q Kurtz 8



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## Groton Area Tigers Varsity 7 - 1 Howard Varsity Tigers

📍 Away 📅 Wednesday May 21, 2025

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	R	H	E
GRTN	3	0	0	4	0	0	0	7	5	1
HWRD	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	7	3

### BATTING

Groton Area Tigers Varsity	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
L Krause #2 (LF)	3	1	2	0	1	0
T Schust... #21 (2B)	3	1	0	0	1	0
B Fliehs #6 (CF)	4	1	0	0	0	1
C Simon #4 (1B)	4	1	2	1	0	0
G Englund #18 (3B)	3	0	0	1	1	0
N Morris #17 (P)	4	0	0	1	0	1
K Fliehs #10 (C)	3	0	0	0	1	1
N Groeb... #13 (DH)	3	1	1	0	0	0
J Erdma... #00 (RF)	2	1	0	0	0	1
CR: J Schwan #11	0	1	0	0	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>

**2B:** C Simon 2, **TB:** L Krause 2, N Groeb... #13, C Simon 4, **HBP:** J Erdmann, **LOB:** 6

### PITCHING

Groton Area Tigers Varsity	IP	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
N Morris #17	7.0	7	1	1	8	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>0</b>

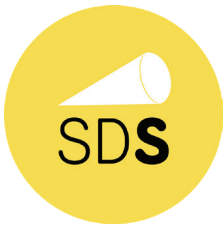
**W:** N Morris, **P-S:** N Morris 100-68, **BF:** N Morris 30

Howard Varsity Tigers	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
K Shumaker #7 (P)	4	0	1	0	0	0
W Remmers #2 (1B)	4	0	0	0	0	0
L Koepsell #3 (C)	4	1	2	0	0	0
C Hinker #20 (3B)	3	0	2	0	0	0
O Feldhaus #9 (SS)	2	0	0	0	1	1
K Feldhaus #1 (CF)	3	0	1	1	0	1
W Charles #5 (RF)	3	0	0	0	0	1
C Koepsell #0 (2B)	3	0	1	0	0	2
L Haak #21 (LF)	1	0	0	0	0	1
C Weber #13 (LF)	2	0	0	0	0	2
<b>Totals</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>8</b>

**TB:** K Shumaker, C Hinker 2, C Koepsell, K Feldhaus, L Koepsell 2, **LOB:** 8

Howard Varsity Tigers	IP	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
K Shuma... #7	3.0	4	5	3	3	2
L Koepsell #3	4.0	1	2	0	1	2
<b>Totals</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>

**L:** K Shumaker, **P-S:** K Shumaker 66-43, L Koepsell 58-36, **WP:** L Koepsell 2, **HBP:** L Koepsell, **BF:** K Shumaker 17, L Koepsell 17



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### **Governor, attorney general visit the border and seek a bigger immigration enforcement role**

**BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - MAY 21, 2025 4:51 PM**

South Dakota's governor and attorney general separately visited the U.S.-Mexico border this week and announced efforts to involve the state in federal immigration enforcement.

During a news conference Wednesday with a coalition of Republican attorneys general in Arizona, Attorney General Marty Jackley said he has authorized the South Dakota Division of Criminal Investigation, which he oversees, to pursue a 287(g) agreement with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The federal agency is within the Department of Homeland Security led by former South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem.

The agreement would allow state agents, after receiving federal training, to "identify, process, and detain individuals for immigration violations they encounter during their regular law enforcement activities," the Attorney General's Office wrote in a press release.

"I applaud and encourage the Trump administration to continue its efforts to close this border and to enforce our immigration laws across the United States," Jackley said.

Meanwhile, South Dakota Gov. Larry Rhoden was in Eagle Pass, Texas, on Tuesday visiting South Dakota National Guard soldiers from the 109th Engineer Battalion. They're on a yearlong federal deployment as part of "Operation International Drug Trafficking." Their duties include supporting U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

Following his visit, Rhoden announced Wednesday that he sent a letter of intent to Noem requesting a 287(g) agreement for the South Dakota Highway Patrol, which is part of the Department of Public Safety in Rhoden's executive branch.

Rhoden's letter specifies that he is requesting a task force model agreement, which would allow trained officers to enforce immigration laws during their regular patrols or investigations. The Obama administration discontinued the model in 2012 due to concerns over potential civil rights abuses arising from local and state law enforcement officers stopping people on the street and inquiring about their immigration status. The Trump administration revived the task force model this year.

Libby Skarin, executive director of American Civil Liberties Union of South Dakota, said in a statement that 287(g) agreements have led to racial profiling, civil rights abuses and diverted resources from state and local law enforcement.

"Most of us can agree that the federal government needs to do much better on immigration policy and identify real solutions that are orderly, humane and fair," she said. "Instead of imposing the federal government's wishes upon every community in South Dakota, we encourage local control and support the right of local law enforcement to put the needs of their communities first by declining to participate in unnecessary, voluntary immigration enforcement."

Taneeza Islam, CEO of South Dakota Voices for Peace, which advocates for immigrants, said the state's pursuit of 287(g) agreements puts "politics over the best interests of South Dakota." She predicted negative consequences.

"Victims of crimes will be scared to call law enforcement in fear of deportation. Labor and sex trafficking will increase as the perpetrators will leverage ICE working with law enforcement over their victims," she said.

Rhoden, who is serving the remainder of Noem's term after she resigned to serve in the Trump Cabinet, and Jackley, who ran unsuccessfully for governor in 2018, are both frequently mentioned as potential candidates for governor next year. Both are Republicans.

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The announcements from both state leaders come amid an increase in immigration enforcement actions within South Dakota. Earlier this month, federal agents arrested eight immigrants in Madison for allegedly using fraudulent documents to gain employment. As of last week, more than two dozen people were being held in South Dakota jails for immigration matters.

Two local South Dakota jurisdictions have already signed 287(g) agreements. Minnehaha County Sheriff Mike Milstead and Hughes County Sheriff Patrick Callahan both signed on earlier this spring. The counties are participating in the warrant service officer program. It allows local jail staff to serve ICE-issued immigration warrants on inmates already in custody for other criminal charges, negating the need for ICE officers to serve those warrants themselves.

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

## **COMMENTARY**

### **While standing up to government bullies pro bono, a lawyer represents us all**

**by Mary Garrigan**

Luckily for Priya Saxena, Jim Leach doesn't like bullies.

Saxena is a citizen of India who collected her doctoral degree in chemical and biological engineering from South Dakota Mines in Rapid City on May 10. Just one month earlier, she was facing revocation of her F-1 student visa and the very real threat of deportation, thanks to President Donald Trump and his Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem, the former governor of South Dakota.

Apparently, Noem or someone who works for her believed that a four-year-old traffic violation was a good enough reason to deport Saxena and disrupt her hopes for post-doctoral work here in the United States.

Leach is a Rapid City attorney who decided to represent Saxena in a lawsuit against Noem to prevent that from happening.

Why?

Because he believes due process under the law is essential. Because he knows democracy is worth protecting. Because he doesn't like bullies. Because Priya Saxena needed his help. And because somebody had to.

Saxena was one of more than a thousand legally admitted international students who were suddenly targeted for potential deportation because of a check of their criminal records, or because the Trump administration didn't like their participation in protests against the war in Gaza.

"I think it's outrageous what this administration did to these students, and as soon as I looked at it, I discovered it was completely lawless," Leach said. "That's the modus operandi of this administration – lawlessness. In trying to get what they want, they have been lawless."

Ever since Trump's second inauguration and the blizzard of executive orders that followed it, I have put my faith in the power of the American legal system to be a bulwark of due process against presidential power run amok. I believe that our judicial system – and all those judges who demand that we stand when they enter a courtroom, want to be called "Your Honor," and have a deep and abiding faith in the rule of law – may be the only thing that will prevent Trump and his cronies from dismantling our Constitution and trampling on the rights it guarantees.

Many days, it feels like that belief hangs by a thin thread. But this past week my faith was rewarded, and my belief strengthened, thanks to the trio of U.S. District Court Judge Karen Schreier, Saxena and Leach.

Schreier ruled that for now, Saxena has the right to stay in the U.S. under the terms of her F-1 visa. The judge basically told Noem, in no uncertain terms, to leave Saxena alone and let her continue to pursue

her educational and employment goals. The temporary order secures Saxena's status while the lawsuit proceeds. Leach immediately followed up with a request for a similar, permanent order, which Schreier will consider next.

Saxena and another lawyer who helps her with immigration matters have since submitted a work authorization application. Saxena hopes to do post-doctorate work in her field of expertise here in the U.S. for the next three years.

Kudos to Schreier for issuing a preliminary injunction that protects Saxena's status. Bigger kudos to Leach, who took Saxena's case pro bono, meaning he's providing his legal services free of charge to his client, with a possibility but no guarantee that the judge will order the other side to cover his fees and costs.

At 73, Leach is a rarity – a sole practitioner who still loves the work and is financially able to do it for free if needed. He takes cases that interest him, including violations of free speech, public access and civil rights, and he counts himself lucky to do so.

"I love what I do," he said. "It's a great privilege to do this work."

Recently, Leach lost nearly \$20,000 in fees and costs for his work representing a ballot question committee against petition restrictions imposed by Lawrence County. A district court awarded the money, but the legal basis for that award was wiped out by a new U.S. Supreme Court precedent established in February.

All three Trump-nominated justices supported the Lackey v. Stinnie decision. It addresses cases that are resolved with a preliminary order, like the Lawrence County case, in which the county reversed course without the need for a permanent order. The Supreme Court ruled that plaintiffs in those circumstances aren't truly "prevailing parties" and therefore don't qualify for court-awarded attorney fees.

Leach knows that "to fight illegal action by the government, you need a lawyer." So it comes as no surprise to him that justices appointed by Trump would weaken the pro bono system that helps provide access to the courts for people without resources.

"I will stand up to bullies," he said. "And this is the ultimate bully."

Pro bono is short for the Latin phrase "pro bono publico," which translates as "for the people's good."

When Priya Saxena's rights were protected last week in a Rapid City courtroom, so were ours.

*Mary Garrigan is a retired newspaper reporter and current member of the South Dakota chapter of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America. She lives in Rapid City, where she served on the Rapid City Public Library's board of directors from 2019 through 2024.*

## As teacher burnout deepens, states scramble to fill school job vacancies

**Some states are changing standards by dropping tests, recruiting aides to become teachers**

**BY: ROBBIE SEQUEIRA - MAY 21, 2025 7:29 AM**

As another school year ends, superintendents across the United States are staring down an autumn staffing crisis, with 1 in 8 teaching positions either vacant or filled by an underqualified educator.

States that are struggling with post-pandemic teacher shortages have spent millions to lure replacements and retain veterans with hiring bonuses and bumps in salaries. But hiring gaps remain, so some states also are trying another tactic: changing their standards.

The changes in teacher training and licensing come amid widespread turmoil in public schools: Tax revenue is being siphoned toward private school vouchers in many states; some classrooms are being scrutinized for banned books, displays or teaching lessons that trip into diversity, equity and inclusion territory; and students who went through pandemic-era shutdowns are struggling both with sitting still and with learning the material.

Some surveys show that fewer than a fifth of teachers are happy in their jobs.

"Teaching is not seen as an attractive profession right now," said Drew Gitomer, an expert on teaching assessment at Rutgers Graduate School of Education.



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"COVID exacerbated things, and teachers are caught in the middle of political battles — over curriculum, book bans, even personal attacks," he said. "It's not a healthy work environment, and that drives people away."

Last year, Illinois enacted a law allowing teacher candidates to begin student teaching before passing content-area exams. It was an effort to reduce barriers for underrepresented groups, the measure's sponsor said.

A bill under consideration this year would give more districts discretion over whether to factor pupils' test scores into teacher evaluations, a break from a 15-year-old mandate.

In New Jersey, a new law formally removes the Praxis Core exam — traditionally used as an entry-level screening tool for aspiring teachers — from certification requirements.

And in Nevada — one of the states hit hardest by teacher shortages — a bill would streamline licensure for incoming educators. The bill would allow teachers credentialed in other states to begin working in Nevada classrooms while awaiting formal approval.

It also would remove extra steps for teachers switching grade levels and would waive application fees for recent substitute teachers.

Linda Darling-Hammond, founding president and chief knowledge officer of the Learning Policy Institute, a nonpartisan think tank, said teacher shortages hit hardest in schools serving low-income students and students of color, where instability often leads to larger class sizes, canceled courses or a revolving door of substitute teachers.

"When you walk into a school facing shortages, you see instability," she said. "Students may be taught by people who don't know what to do, who leave quickly, and who often rely more on discipline than engagement."

The root cause? Teacher attrition.

"Nine out of 10 vacancies every year are because of attrition — and two-thirds of that is not retirement," Darling-Hammond said. "Support in the beginning matters. Teachers who come in and get a mentor stay longer. If you're just thrown in to sink or swim, the odds of leaving are much greater."

States have long struggled to attract teachers, and credentialing changes aren't unusual. But some education advocates fear long-term repercussions.

Melissa Tooley, director of K-12 educator quality at the left-leaning think tank New America, said most states now offer alternative and fast-track teacher certification pathways, many of which allow candidates to start teaching with little or no pedagogical training in how to teach.

"We're churning through people who might have potential, but we're not setting them up for success," she said. "A lot of what states are doing is short term. It's about filling seats, not necessarily building a sustainable or high-quality workforce."

More than 40 states require aspiring teachers to take the costly Praxis Subject test for the subject they want to teach, which some experts argue excludes strong candidates and duplicates other assessments.

"You were excluding people who might be good teachers but didn't do well on that specific test," said Rutgers' Gitomer, who has researched the test's effects on recruitment.

However, he added, dropping tests doesn't necessarily help.

Several states — Georgia, New Jersey, New York, Washington and Wisconsin — have dropped a licensure requirement known as edTPA since 2022, but there's little evidence the move has helped ease teacher shortages, Gitomer said. (The acronym stands for Educative Teacher Performance Assessment and involves a portfolio that includes testing and videos of classroom performance.)

"The state eliminated edTPA but didn't replace it with a specific alternative," he said.

"Instead, it gave full discretion back to individual institutions to develop or adopt their own performance assessments," he said. "When we talked to institutions, it became pretty clear they didn't think removing edTPA would be a major driver in addressing the shortage — and they haven't seen evidence that it has been."

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## How best to credential

Tooley said state credentialing systems must navigate a delicate balance: ensuring there are enough teachers, maintaining instructional quality and increasing workforce diversity.

"There's this triangle — three pieces that need to be in place — and I think there are real tensions when it comes to how states are designing their certification policies," she said.

And Gitomer described a fragmented national landscape, where some states are tightening teacher entry standards while others are dramatically loosening them — even allowing non-degreed individuals to teach.

"Some states are trying to raise standards; others are relaxing them to the point where you may not even need a college degree," he said.

Indiana now requires all pre-K through grade 6 and special education teachers to complete 80 hours of training on the "science of reading," a method that includes phonics, and pass an exam by 2027. State Sen. Jean Leising, a Republican, has proposed cutting the requirement in half, calling it "an excessive burden with little actual benefit" in a news release.

In Texas, a bill aims to reduce the use of uncertified teachers by the 2029-30 school year. The legislation would set a gradual cap on the percentage of uncertified teachers districts can employ in core curriculum classes — starting at 20% in 2026-27 and decreasing to 5% in 2029-30.

According to the Texas Education Agency, 31% of new hires in 2024-25 lacked a state teaching certificate or permit.

Yet some states stand out for how they're changing their requirements, Tooley said.

She pointed to Washington, which has designed a recruitment strategy encouraging paraprofessionals, often known as teacher's aides, to become classroom teachers. Also known as paraeducators, they're a group with classroom experience, community ties and higher retention likelihood.

There, school districts are required to offer foundational training — ranging from 14 to 28 hours — directly to paraeducators. South Dakota has a program offering deeply discounted tuition for paraprofessionals who want to earn a teaching degree.

In West Virginia, a new law now allows districts to count full-time behavior interventionists working in one or two classrooms toward meeting the required number of aides or paraprofessionals in K-3 classrooms.

Tooley noted that Pennsylvania and Alabama are experimenting with "menu-style" licensing flexibility — allowing candidates to demonstrate qualification through various combinations of GPA and test scores, rather than rigid cutoffs.

"These are people already in schools, often from the same cultural or linguistic backgrounds as students," Tooley said. "They're more likely to succeed and to stay."

## Low pay

A 2024 national survey by the EdWeek Research Center found that public school teachers are increasingly reporting declines in mental health, job satisfaction and classroom stability. Seventy percent of teachers recommended student mental health interventions, and nearly half said schools lack enough counselors, psychologists and social workers.

As mental well-being has worsened, the share of public school teachers who are very satisfied with their jobs has also declined by 2 percentage points from the previous year, to 18%, according to the survey, which was conducted by the EdWeek Research Center on behalf of Merrimack College.

While teacher wellness supports remain limited, educators say improvements in pay and student discipline are the most needed changes.

To entice passionate but burned out educators from leaving the workforce, several states have raised minimum teacher pay. Arkansas boosted salaries to \$50,000 statewide, and South Carolina raised starting pay to \$47,000. South Dakota enacted a \$45,000 minimum with yearly increases, and penalties for districts that fail to comply by 2026. Connecticut advanced a bill setting a \$63,450 salary floor, while Indiana and others are eyeing further increases.

At the federal level, the proposed American Teacher Act seeks to establish a national \$60,000 minimum

salary for teachers at a qualifying school to boost recruitment and retention across the country. The bill, sponsored by U.S. Rep. Frederica Wilson, a Florida Democrat, remains in committee.

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

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

## U.S. House GOP revamps giant budget bill in bid to appease hard right

**BY: JENNIFER SHUTT AND ASHLEY MURRAY - MAY 21, 2025 11:03 PM**

WASHINGTON — U.S. House Republican leaders released changes to their “one big beautiful bill” late Wednesday after marathon negotiations with conservatives demanding deeper cuts to safety net programs, teeing up debate and a final vote likely sometime Thursday.

The alterations, which will have to be adopted later, moved up implementation of work requirements for Medicaid by at least a couple of years and tossed out plans to sell some public lands. The new language also tightened the timeline for clean energy tax breaks and raised the ceiling for taxpayers who deduct state and local taxes.

The package of adjustments — the manager’s amendment — was incorporated into the larger reconciliation bill, which was approved by the House Rules Committee just before 11 p.m. Eastern on an 8-4 party-line vote. Far-right holdout Rep. Chip Roy of Texas was absent.

Next, the package must pass a procedural vote on the House floor before lawmakers can debate and take a final vote.

With a razor-thin margin, House Speaker Mike Johnson can only lose a handful of members on each vote. Democrats are expected to uniformly vote “no” in the procedural and final votes.

### Medicaid

Republicans moved up implementation of work requirements for Medicaid enrollees from taking effect after January 1, 2029 to no later than December 31, 2026. That could mean some states will make the changes before next year’s midterm elections.

The provision would require those who rely on the state-federal health program for lower-income Americans and some people with disabilities, who are between the ages of 19 and 65, to work, participate in community service, or attend an educational program at least 80 hours a month.

The language has numerous exceptions, including for pregnant people, parents of dependent children, people who have complex medical conditions, tribal community members, people in the foster system, people who were in the foster system who are below the age of 26 and people released from incarceration in the last 90 days, among others.

The GOP changes also would bar Medicaid from covering gender transition procedures for anyone in the program. The bill previously barred that type of treatment for anyone below the age of 18.

### Clean energy tax credits

Republicans also tightened the timeline on the termination of clean energy tax credits enacted under President Joe Biden. Hardliners focused on reducing the deficit had demanded a quicker phase-out for the credits.

The new language would accelerate phase-outs for clean energy investment tax credits to 2028, up from 2031, with special carve-outs for nuclear facilities. Companies that break ground on new facilities 60 days after the bill is enacted, if passed, will not qualify for the tax credits. The same applies to any facility placed into service after 2028.

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## State and local taxes

A separate contingent of Republican holdouts reached a deal with Johnson to raise the SALT cap to \$40,000, up from the \$10,000 lid enacted under the 2017 tax law. The SALT cap — the amount of state and local taxes constituents can deduct from federal taxable income — is a top issue for Republicans who represent districts in high-tax blue states, including California, New Jersey and New York.

The amount of SALT taxpayers can deduct decreases for those making more than \$500,000 annually. The SALT cap and the income cut-off will increase by 1% each year from 2027 until 2033.

## Public lands sale

The amendment removed language that would have allowed the sale of public lands in Nevada and Utah. The National Wildlife Federation credited Montana Republican Rep. Ryan Zinke with removing the provision. "Thank you to Rep. Ryan Zinke and his colleagues who listened to their constituents and worked with House leaders to eliminate the provision from the budget reconciliation bill," NWF Associate Vice President for Public Lands David Wilms said in a statement. "We urge all members of Congress to refrain from similar attacks on America's public lands."

Jessica Turner, president of the Outdoor Recreation Roundtable, wrote in a statement that "Congress avoided setting a dangerous precedent that lands can be sold anytime the U.S. Treasury needs a budget 'pay-for' and threatening outdoor recreation businesses and rural communities alike that need certainty, access, and long-term infrastructure."

The Center for Biological Diversity's Great Basin Director Patrick Donnelly wrote in a separate statement that it was "appalling that GOP leaders tried to get away with auctioning off some of our country's most beautiful landscapes to fund tax cuts for billionaires and make developers richer. This is Gilded Age-level stuff, and I hope people remember it the next time Republicans try to pretend they care about public lands."

A separate provision in the amendment appeared to narrow the federal authorizations energy projects could bypass by paying a \$10 million fee. The section had been attacked by environmental groups as a "pay-to-play" for energy companies.

## White House meeting

The changes come after Johnson, a Louisiana Republican, and far-right holdouts huddled with President Donald Trump at the White House Wednesday afternoon.

Johnson, speaking to reporters at the Capitol following the meeting, said that lawmakers had "a good discussion" and that he believes the GOP is "in a very good place."

"I think that all of our colleagues here will really like this final product, and I think we're going to move forward," Johnson said.

Johnson said members of the Freedom Caucus, who previously argued the legislation doesn't go far enough to restructure Medicaid and reduce federal spending, may end up supporting the bill, in part because Trump plans to address their other concerns through unilateral actions.

"You will see how all this is resolved. But I think we can resolve their concerns and it'll be probably some combination of work by the president in these areas as well as here in Congress," Johnson said. "So there may be executive orders related to some of these issues in the near future."

"And, you know, this is a commitment the president has made. He wants to go after fraud, waste and abuse."

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt released a written statement saying the "meeting was productive and moved the ball in the right direction."

"The President reiterated how critical it is for the country to pass the One Big Beautiful Bill as quickly as possible."

## Complex process

Republicans are using the complex reconciliation process to move the package through Congress with



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simple majority votes in each chamber, avoiding the Senate's 60-vote legislative filibuster, which would otherwise require bipartisanship.

Reconciliation measures must address federal revenue, spending, or the debt limit in a way not deemed "merely incidental" by the Senate parliamentarian. That means the GOP proposals must carry some sort of price tag and cannot focus simply on changing federal policy.

Republicans are using the package to extend the 2017 tax law, increase spending on border security and defense by hundreds of billions of dollars, overhaul American energy production, restructure higher education aid and cut spending on Medicaid.

A new Congressional Budget Office analysis released late Tuesday projected the massive reconciliation package would decrease resources for low-income families over the next decade while increasing resources for top earners.

## Freedom Caucus

Earlier Wednesday, members of the Freedom Caucus told reporters following a different meeting with Johnson that they believed negotiations were moving in the right direction, but were skeptical of trying to approve the entire package this week.

Maryland Republican Rep. Andy Harris, chairman of the group, said they wanted the legislation to go further in terms of addressing "waste, fraud and abuse" within Medicaid, though he declined to elaborate.

The Medicaid proposals in the version of the bill prior to the negotiated changes would cut \$625 billion in federal spending during the next decade, under a CBO analysis. Democrats have warned the result would be millions of vulnerable people losing access to the health program for lower income people and some people with disabilities.

Texas Republican Rep. Chip Roy said during that same impromptu press conference that leadership and members of the Freedom Caucus had made "significant progress" toward a final agreement.

"We're trying to deliver so that the people who are actually out there working hard can actually get the health care that they want to get, that they can get, and get it the best way possible," Roy said. "That's what this is all about; changing a broken system, making sure we're saving taxpayer dollars and being able to provide a better environment for people to be able to thrive."

Pennsylvania Republican Rep. Scott Perry, who used to chair the Freedom Caucus, said that holding a House vote before Memorial Day was a made-up timeline and that if negotiations needed to last longer, they should.

"This is a completely arbitrary deadline set by people here to force people into a corner to make bad decisions," Perry said. "It's more important to get this right, to get it correct, than to get it fast. We are sitting at the table to do that."

*Jacob Fischler contributed to this report.*

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

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

## CBO analysis shows U.S. House GOP budget measure tilted toward upper-income taxpayers

**BY: ASHLEY MURRAY - MAY 21, 2025 5:12 PM**

WASHINGTON — As House Republicans continue to wrangle over the "one big beautiful bill," a new analysis released late Tuesday projects the massive reconciliation package would decrease resources for low-income families over the next decade while increasing resources for top earners.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office estimates that the lowest-earning households in the United

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States would see incomes decrease 2% in 2027, moving to a 4% loss in 2033, as a result of spending cuts to nutrition assistance and Medicaid, the health insurance program for low-income individuals and those with disabilities.

The CBO projects resources would meanwhile increase by 4% for the highest-earning Americans in 2027, moving down to a 2% increase by 2033, according to the latest analysis.

The CBO score could change as hardline conservatives press Republican leadership for increased spending cuts to federal safety net programs as a way to pay for, at least in part, the extension and expansion of 2017 tax cuts that come with a price tag of \$3.8 trillion.

Rep. Brendan Boyle, ranking member on the House Committee on the Budget, said in a statement late Tuesday that "Donald Trump and House Republicans are selling out the middle class to make the ultra-rich even richer."

"This is what Republicans are fighting for—lining the pockets of their billionaire donors while children go hungry and families get kicked off their health care," said the Pennsylvania Democrat.

The bill as written now would slash roughly \$800 billion from Medicaid and Affordable Care Act provisions, and \$300 billion from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, according to the left-leaning Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

Lawmakers on the House Committee on Rules — the final stop for the 1,116-page package bill before it reaches a House floor vote — have been debating the measure since 1 a.m. Eastern Wednesday, while House Speaker Mike Johnson huddled separately with far-right deficit hawks.

Far-right members of the House Freedom Caucus remained skeptical the bill could reach the House floor by Johnson's goal of Wednesday.

The Louisiana Republican leader also faces opposition from GOP lawmakers who represent high-tax blue states who want an even higher ceiling for the amount of state and local taxes, or SALT, their constituents can deduct from federal taxable income.

Lifting the ceiling, which lawmakers already proposed boosting from \$10,000 to \$30,000 for married couples filing jointly, will increase the cost of the bill.

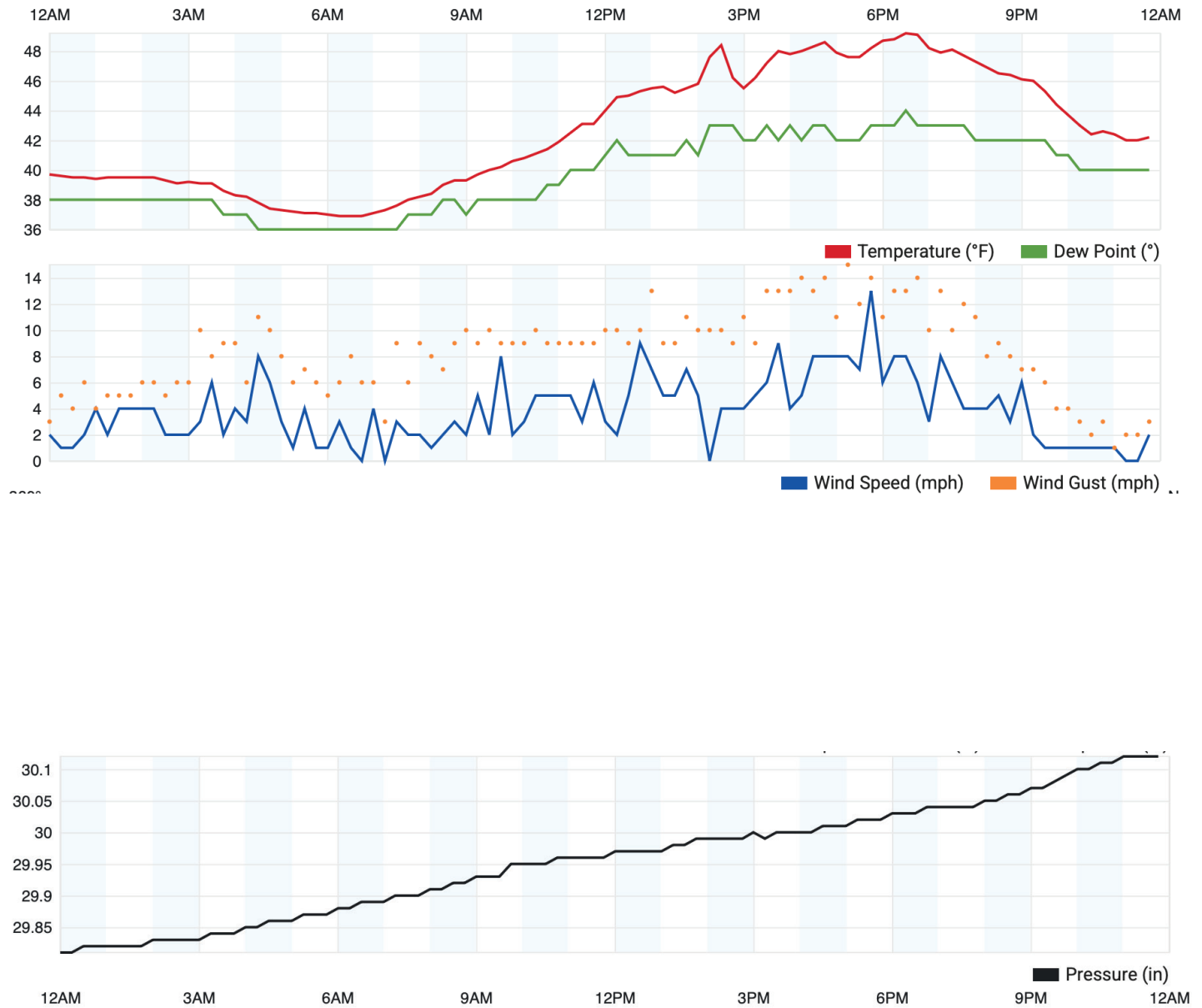
Johnson needs nearly every GOP lawmaker to support the bill once it hits the floor as House Republicans have an extremely thin 220-213 majority.

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

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



High: 64 °F

Decreasing  
Clouds

Tonight



Low: 41 °F

Partly Cloudy

Friday



High: 64 °F

Mostly Cloudy

Friday Night



Low: 42 °F

Mostly Cloudy

Saturday



High: 65 °F

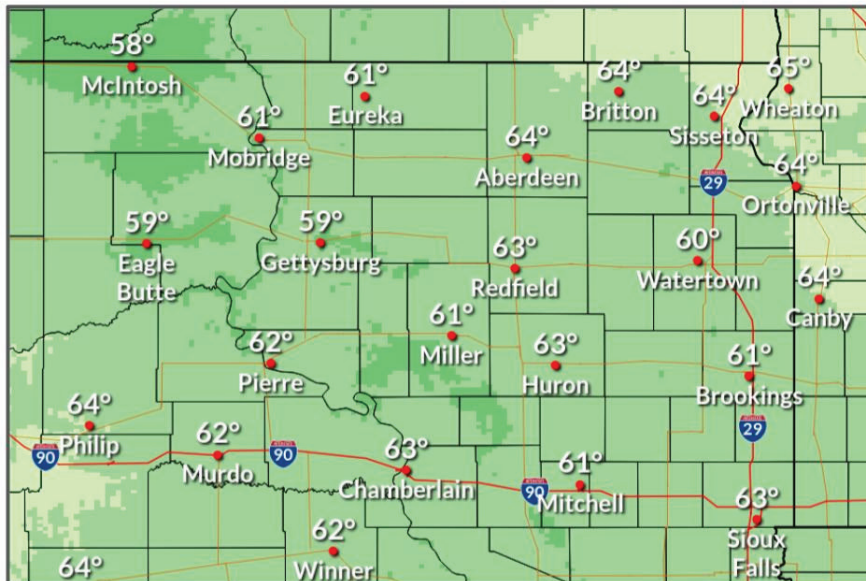
Partly Sunny



## Partial Clearing/Warming

May 22, 2025  
2:47 AM

↓ Highs Today: Temperatures Still Some 5 to 15 degrees below normal



### Key Messages:

- Clearing Today with light north winds
- Increasing clouds Tonight
- Light showers for central/north central South Dakota Tonight/Friday
  - Up to a ¼" moisture in central South Dakota
- Slow warming trend over next several days
- Additional Off & On chances for moisture through Monday



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

Partial clearing is expected through the day, with warmer temperatures though still 5 to 15 degrees below normal. Increasing clouds tonight will come with some moisture mainly across central South Dakota



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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 50 °F at 6:35 PM**

**Low Temp: 37 °F at 6:15 AM**

**Wind: 15 mph at 4:28 PM**

**Precip: : 0.00**

Day length: 15 hours, 13 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 92 in 1928

Record Low: 22 in 1963

Average High: 73

Average Low: 47

Average Precip in May.: 2.42

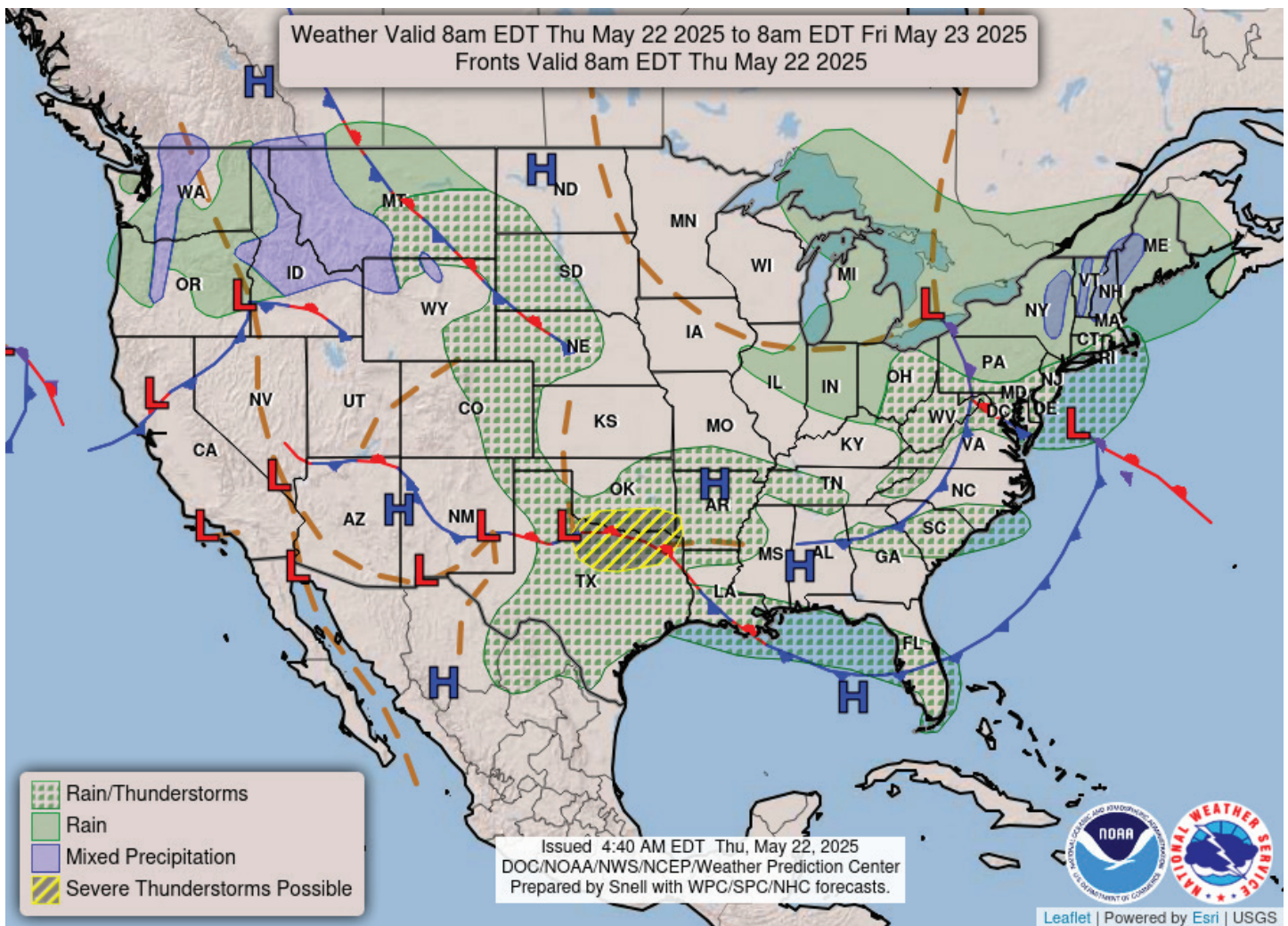
Precip to date in May.: 3.35

Average Precip to date: 6.39

Precip Year to Date: 5.98

Sunset Tonight: 9:05:53 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:51:28 am



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## Today in Weather History

May 22nd, 1963: A late spring freeze impacted many locations, reporting lows in the lower 20s. Some low temperatures include: 18 degrees in Andover; 20 degrees in Britton, 4 NW of Gann Valley, Leola and Roscoe; 21 degrees Castlewood, Ipswich, Kennebec, Redfield, 2 NW of Stephen, and one west of Summit; 22 degrees in Aberdeen, Eureka, one west of Highmore, McLaughlin, and four west of Mellette.

May 22nd, 1993: Nearly stationary thunderstorms dumped five to seven one-half inches of rain and hail within three hours on the southwest side of Sioux Falls, causing major urban flooding and a flash flood on an area creek. Water and sewage flooded at least 200 basements as the storm and sewer systems backed up. Water came up to the rooftops of many cars in the Empire Mall area. Power was knocked out at the Empire Mall and to 2600 other customers in southwest Sioux Falls. Rainwater came through the roof of the Empire Mall, causing damage to some stores. Hail up to an inch in diameter fell continuously for up to one-half hours in parts of southwest Sioux Falls, causing considerable damage to hundreds of roofs, trees, and gardens. Thousands of cars received damage from hail or water in Sioux Falls. A flash flood in the Silver Glen area turned a typically three-foot wide creek to a hundred feet wide in places. At least five houses near this creek had severe damage caused by the rushing waters. The flash flood also tore out a section of a road adjacent to the creek, buckled sidewalks, ripped away 100-year-old trees, and floated a 5500 lb truck down the road.

May 22nd, 2010: An EF2 tornado in eastern Walworth County crossed into western Edmunds County and intensified into a massive EF4 tornado as it struck several farms. Several large cottonwood trees were uprooted at the first farm, and several trailers were damaged. Three grain bins were also destroyed, with debris located several hundred yards to the northeast. The residence suffered some shingle and antenna damage. The tornado then tracked northeast to a second farm where several outbuildings were damaged or destroyed, along with widespread tree damage. The primary residence at this location suffered no damage. Several grain cars were also rolled about 100 yards into the trees behind the house. The massive tornado continued to track northeast to a third farm north of Bowdle. The primary residence suffered significant damage to walls, with part of the roof structure removed. Widespread tree damage was sustained, with many of the trees completely debarked and only the stumps of the largest branches remaining. Two large garages were destroyed, with the concrete slab wiped clean. The vehicles in one garage were rolled or tossed from 25 to 100 yards away. It is estimated that one car flew through the air 75 to 100 yards, resting in the tree shelter belt north of the residence. Several other outbuildings were destroyed. The tornado then toppled six to eight metal power transmission towers as it moved north of the farm. One tower was sheared off from the concrete footings and traveled an estimated 400 yards. Ground scouring was visible along the path of these towers. The large tornado continued to track east, crossing over State Highway 47, where a state radio tower was toppled. The tornado lifted shortly after that. The highest wind speeds were estimated to be from 166 to 200 mph.

1876 - Denver CO was drenched with 6.53 inches of rain in 24 hours, an all-time record for that location. (The Weather Channel)

1911 - The temperature at Lewiston ME soared to 101 degrees. It was the hottest temperature ever recorded in New England during the month of May. (David Ludlum)

1987 - A powerful tornado virtually wiped the small southwest Texas community of Saragosa off the map. The twister destroyed eighty- five percent of the structures in the town killing thirty persons and injuring 121 others in the town of population 183. The tornado hurled trucks and autos through adobe and wood- frame homes, with some vehicles blown 500 feet. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather over the Central Gulf Coast States. Tennis ball size hail was reported at Ripley MS. Showers and thunderstorms in southern Missouri produced 3.20 inches of rain at Springfield to easily surpass their rainfall record for the date. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Unseasonably hot weather continued in southern Texas and parts of the southwestern U.S. Seven cities reported record high temperatures for the date, including El Paso TX with a reading of 100 degrees. Presidio TX was the hot spot in the nation with a high of 111 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

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## DO WHAT IS NEEDED

The bombing of the Federal Building in Oklahoma City was a tragedy that struck at the heart of America. The disaster prompted many individuals and teams from across the nation to set aside whatever they were doing, and help meet the needs of the survivors.

One rescue team had been working for hours and finally, after being overcome by fatigue, stopped to rest at 2:00 a.m. Sitting there quietly in the darkness, they heard a strange sound - one they could not identify. When they stood up and turned around, they saw an elderly lady sweeping bits and pieces of debris into a neat pile.

"Where are you from?" asked a member of the rescue team.

"Dallas," came the reply. "I can't do very much but when I offered to help, they told me the most important thing I could do was to help clean things up. So I got a broom and started to sweep."

Life is always filled with opportunities to serve others. Whenever we do what needs to be done, no matter how small or insignificant it may seem, and do the best we can do, we honor God and bless His name. We must not compare our work with the work of others if we are doing what God has called us to do. If our heart is right, our work will be right, and God will bless it.

Prayer: Help us, Father, to honor You by helping others in their times of need. May we use the gifts and skills You have given us to do whatever we can to serve others. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Pay careful attention to your own work, for then you will get the satisfaction of a job well done, and you won't need to compare yourself to anyone else. Galatians 6:4

*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*



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**\$154,000,000**

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32 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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1 14 15 19 31 9

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$35,560,000**

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 36  
Mins 33 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 05.21.25

8 23 32 40 45 18

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 51 Mins 33  
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 05.21.25

1 14 16 17 25

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$20,000**

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 51 Mins  
32 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 05.21.25

4 9 21 37 56 2

TOP PRIZE:

**\$10,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 20  
Mins 32 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 05.21.25

9 29 31 34 43 2

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$163,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 20  
Mins 32 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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## Upcoming Groton Events

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

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

### **A Texas bill to clarify exceptions to the state's abortion ban clears a key hurdle after rocky path**

By NADIA LATHAN Associated Press/Report for America

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Texas lawmakers advanced a bill Wednesday to clarify medical exceptions under one of the most restrictive abortion bans in the U.S., putting the GOP-backed proposal on the brink of reaching Republican Gov. Greg Abbott's desk.

The changes would not expand abortion access in Texas or list specific medical exceptions under the state's near-total ban, which took effect in 2022 and only allows for an abortion to save the life of the mother. It also would not include exceptions for cases of rape or incest.

But the proposal is still a pivot for Texas Republicans, who for years have defended the ban as written in the face of legal challenges and pleas for clarity from medical providers. Democrats, meanwhile, have called the bill a positive step but also faced criticism from some abortion-rights allies who raised doubts about what, if any, impact it will have.

The bill passed 129-6 and needs only a final procedural vote before reaching Abbott, who has signaled support for the measure. Lawmakers debated for nearly an hour as Republican state Rep. Charlie Geren, a co-author of the bill, fielded questions from several conservative legislators who expressed concerns that it would expand abortion access.

"We do not want women to die of medical emergencies during their pregnancies," Geren said.

The bill would specify that doctors cannot face criminal charges for performing an abortion in a medical emergency that causes major bodily impairment. It also defines a "life-threatening" condition as one capable of causing death.

Similar near-total abortion bans across the country have faced numerous legal challenges and criticism from medical professionals who have said that medical exceptions are too vague.

Moves to clarify medical exceptions

Lawmakers in at least nine states with abortion bans have sought to change or clarify medical exceptions that allow doctors to perform an abortion if the mother's life is at risk since *Roe v. Wade* was overturned in 2022, according to the Guttmacher Institute, a research organization that supports abortion rights.

Supporters of these bills have said they have the potential to save lives. Critics, including some abortion rights groups, have questioned whether they make state abortion laws easier to understand.

In Kentucky, Democratic Gov. Andy Beshear earlier this year vetoed a bill that GOP lawmakers touted as bringing clarity to that state's near-total abortion ban, saying it would not protect pregnant women. Republican lawmakers later overrode his veto.

Last year, South Dakota released a video for physicians that outlined examples of acceptable medical emergencies that received criticism from abortion rights supporters for not being specific enough.

"I think these bills are trying to get at the reality that exceptions are really hard to comply with," said Kimya Forouzan, principal state policy adviser at the Guttmacher Institute.

Still, Texas Republican Sen. Bryan Hughes, an architect of the state's abortion ban, said the new bill's goal is to avoid confusion among doctors.

"One of the most important things we want to do is to make sure that doctors and hospitals and the hospital lawyers are trained on what the law is," Hughes said.

Navigating exceptions under bans

In 2024, the Texas Supreme Court ruled against a group of women who say they were denied an abortion after experiencing serious pregnancy complications that threatened their lives and fertility. The court ruled that the state's laws were clear in allowing doctors to perform an abortion to save the life of the mother.

Dr. Austin Dennard, a Dallas OB-GYN, was part of the lawsuit and testified how the state's near-total ban put her health at risk after her fetus was diagnosed with a fatal condition. She eventually left Texas

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for an abortion.

Dennard's feelings are mixed about the bill, which does not list specific medical conditions or include fatal fetal anomalies as exceptions.

"What is broadly now known among practicing physicians in Texas is that abortions are illegal," said Dennard. "Undoing that broad understanding is going to be difficult."

Texas' efforts underscore the challenges abortion opponents have had to navigate regarding medical exceptions, said Mary Ziegler, a professor at the University of California, Davis School of Law and a historian of abortion politics in the U.S.

Judges have put enforcement of Utah's abortion ban on hold in a case over exceptions, for example, and they struck down two Oklahoma bans over medical exceptions – though most abortions in that state remain illegal.

For abortion opponents, Ziegler said, it's tricky to craft legislation that does two different things.

"Can you provide clear guidance as to when medical intervention is justified without providing physicians discretion to provide abortions they don't think are emergencies?" Ziegler said.

Texas may advance other anti-abortion laws

Texas' ban prohibits nearly all abortions, except to save the life of the mother, and doctors can be fined up to \$100,000 and face up to 99 years in prison if convicted of performing an abortion illegally.

On Wednesday, the House passed a bill that prohibits Texas municipalities from providing individuals resources to access an abortion outside of the state.

Texas Republicans are also advancing efforts to make it a civil offense to mail, deliver or manufacture abortion pills, expanding on a 2021 law that allows private individuals to sue others whom they suspect are helping a woman obtain an abortion.

Attorney General Ken Paxton's office has filed criminal charges against a midwife for allegedly providing illegal abortions and is also suing a New York doctor for prescribing abortion pills to a Texas woman.

## 2 staff members of Israeli Embassy killed in shooting near Jewish museum in DC

By MAYA SWEEDLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Two staff members of the Israeli Embassy in Washington were shot and killed Wednesday evening while leaving an event at a Jewish museum, and the suspect yelled, "Free, free Palestine" after he was arrested, police said.

Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar identified the victims as Yaron Lischinsky and Sarah Milgrim. Lischinsky was a research assistant, and Milgrim organized visits and missions to Israel.

They were leaving an event at the Capital Jewish Museum when the suspect approached a group of four people and opened fire, Metropolitan Police Chief Pamela Smith said at a news conference.

The suspect, identified as Elias Rodriguez, 30, of Chicago, was observed pacing outside the museum before the shooting, walked into the museum after the shooting and was detained by event security, Smith said.

When he was taken into custody, the suspect began chanting, "Free, free Palestine," Smith said. She said law enforcement did not believe there was an ongoing threat to the community.

The stunning attack prompted Israeli missions to beef up their security. The shooting comes as Israel has launched another major offensive in the Gaza Strip in a war with Hamas that has heightened tensions across the Middle East and internationally.

"These horrible D.C. killings, based obviously on antisemitism, must end, NOW!" President Donald Trump posted on social media early Thursday. "Hatred and Radicalism have no place in the USA."

Israel's reaction

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said Thursday that he was "shocked" by the "horrific, antisemitic" shooting.

"We are witnessing the terrible price of antisemitism and wild incitement against Israel," he said in a statement.



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Israeli Ambassador to the U.S. Yechiel Leiter said the two people killed were a young couple about to be engaged, saying the man had purchased a ring this week with the intent to propose next week in Jerusalem.

Former Israeli Ambassador to the U.S. Mike Herzog told Israeli Army Radio that the woman killed was an American employee of the embassy and the man was Israeli.

Attorney General Pam Bondi said she was at the scene with former judge Jeanine Pirro, who serves as the U.S. attorney in Washington and whose office would prosecute the case.

The statement from Netanyahu's office said he spoke to Bondi, who told him Trump was "involved in managing the incident" and the U.S. would bring the perpetrator to justice.

It was not immediately clear whether Rodriguez had an attorney who could comment on his behalf. A telephone number listed in public records rang unanswered.

Dan Bongino, deputy director of the FBI, wrote in a post on social media that "early indicators are that this is an act of targeted violence."

Israel's campaign in Gaza

The influential pan-Arab satellite channel Al Jazeera aired on a loop what appeared to be mobile phone footage of the alleged gunman, wearing a suit jacket and slacks, being pulled away after the shooting, his hands behind his back.

The war in the Gaza Strip began with the Palestinian militant group Hamas coming out of Gaza on Oct. 7, 2023, to kill 1,200 people and take some 250 hostages back to the coastal enclave.

In the time since, Israel's devastating campaign in Gaza has killed more than 53,000 people, mostly women and children, according to local health authorities, whose count doesn't differentiate between combatants and civilians. The fighting has displaced 90% of the territory's roughly 2 million population, sparked a hunger crisis and obliterated vast swaths of Gaza's urban landscape.

'In cold blood'

The violence occurred following the American Jewish Committee's annual Young Diplomats reception at the museum.

"This is a shocking act of violence and our community is holding each other tighter tonight," Ted Deutch, American Jewish Committee's chief executive, said in a statement early Thursday. "At this painful moment, we mourn with the victims' families, loved ones, and all of Israel. May their memories be for a blessing."

Yoni Kalin and Katie Kalisher were inside the museum when they heard gunshots and a man came inside looking distressed, they said. Kalin said people came to his aid and brought him water, thinking he needed help, without realizing he was the suspect. When police arrived, he pulled out a red keffiyeh and repeatedly yelled, "Free Palestine," Kalin said.

"This event was about humanitarian aid," Kalin said. "How can we actually help both the people in Gaza and the people in Israel? How can we bring together Muslims and Jews and Christians to work together to actually help innocent people? And then here he is just murdering two people in cold blood."

Last week, the Capital Jewish Museum was one of the local nonprofits in Washington awarded funding from a \$500,000 grant program to increase its security. The museum's leaders were concerned because it is a Jewish organization and due to its new LGBTQ exhibit, according to NBC4 Washington.

"We recognize that there are threats associated with this as well," Executive Director Beatrice Gurwitz told the TV station. "And again, we want to ensure that our space is as welcoming and secure for everybody who comes here while we are exploring these stories."

In response to the shooting, the museum said in a statement that they are "deeply saddened and horrified by the senseless violence outside the Museum this evening."

The Jewish Federation of Greater Washington CEO Gil Preuss said in a statement that he was horrified by the shooting and mourned the loss of the two people killed.

"Our hearts are with their families and loved ones, and with all of those who are impacted by this tragic act of antisemitic violence," he said.

Israeli diplomats in the past have been targeted by violence, both by state-backed assailants and Palestinian militants over the decades of the wider Israeli-Palestinian conflict that grew out of the founding

of Israel in 1948. The Palestinians seek Gaza and the West Bank for a future state, with east Jerusalem as its capital — lands Israel captured in the 1967 war. However, the peace process between the sides has been stalled for years.

## **Here's what we know about the DC shooting where 2 staff members of the Israeli Embassy were killed**

WASHINGTON (AP) — Two staff members of the Israeli Embassy in Washington -- a young couple on the verge of becoming engaged -- were fatally shot Wednesday evening while leaving an event at a Jewish museum, and the suspect yelled, "Free, free Palestine" after he was arrested, police said.

The attack was seen by officials in Israel and the U.S. as the latest in a growing wave of antisemitism as Israel ramps up its offensive in the Gaza Strip, and as food security experts have warned that Gaza risks falling into famine unless Israel's blockade ends.

Israeli Ambassador to the U.S. Yechiel Leiter said the man had purchased a ring this week with the intent to propose next week in Jerusalem.

Here's what we know:

What happened?

The two victims, a man and a woman, were leaving an event at the Capital Jewish Museum around 9:15 p.m. Wednesday when the suspect approached a group of four people and opened fire, Metropolitan Police Chief Pamela Smith said at a news conference.

The suspect was observed pacing outside the museum before the shooting, walked into the museum after the shooting and was detained by event security, Smith said.

When he was taken into custody, the suspect began chanting, "Free, free Palestine," Smith said. She said law enforcement did not believe there was an ongoing threat to the community.

The violence occurred following the American Jewish Committee's annual Young Diplomats reception at the museum.

Who is the suspect?

The suspect has been identified as Elias Rodriguez, 30, of Chicago.

It was not immediately clear whether Rodriguez had an attorney who could comment on his behalf. A telephone number listed in public records rang unanswered.

He was being interviewed early Thursday by D.C.'s Metropolitan Police Department as well as the FBI. The U.S. attorney in Washington will prosecute the case.

Who are the victims?

Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar identified the victims as Yaron Lischinsky and Sarah Milgrim. Lischinsky was a research assistant, and Milgrim organized visits and missions to Israel.

Former Israeli Ambassador to the U.S. Mike Herzog told Israeli Army Radio that the woman killed was an American employee of the embassy and the man was Israeli.

What is Israel's reaction?

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said Thursday that he was "shocked" by the "horrific, antisemitic" shooting.

"We are witnessing the terrible price of antisemitism and wild incitement against Israel," he said in a statement.

Israeli diplomats in the past have been targeted by violence, both by state-backed assailants and Palestinian militants over the decades of the wider Israeli-Palestinian conflict that grew out of the founding of Israel in 1948. The Palestinians seek Gaza and the West Bank for a future state, with east Jerusalem as its capital — lands Israel captured in the 1967 war. However, the peace process between the sides has been stalled for years.

Witnesses to the attack

Yoni Kalin and Katie Kalisher were inside the museum when they heard gunshots and a man came inside looking distressed, they said. Kalin said people came to his aid and brought him water, thinking he

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"This event was about humanitarian aid," Kalin said. "How can we actually help both the people in Gaza and the people in Israel? How can we bring together Muslims and Jews and Christians to work together to actually help innocent people? And then here he is just murdering two people in cold blood."

The influential pan-Arab satellite channel Al Jazeera aired on a loop what appeared to be mobile phone footage of the alleged gunman, wearing a suit jacket and slacks, being pulled away after the shooting, his hands behind his back.

Israel's new campaign in Gaza

The shooting comes as Israel has launched a new campaign targeting Hamas in the Gaza Strip in a war that has set tensions aflame across the wider Middle East. The war began with the Palestinian militant group Hamas coming out of Gaza on Oct. 7, 2023, to kill 1,200 people and take some 250 hostages back to the coastal enclave.

In the time since, Israel's devastating campaign in Gaza has killed more than 53,000 people, mostly women and children, according to local health authorities, whose count doesn't differentiate between combatants and civilians.

The fighting has displaced 90% of the territory's roughly 2 million population, sparked a hunger crisis and obliterated vast swaths of Gaza's urban landscape. Aid groups ran out of food to distribute weeks ago, and most of the population of around 2.3 million relies on communal kitchens whose supplies are nearly depleted.

## North Korea's second naval destroyer is damaged in a failed launch at a ceremony attended by Kim

By KIM TONG-HYUNG and HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea's second naval destroyer was damaged in its failed launch to the water this week, state media reported Thursday, in an embarrassment for leader Kim Jong Un as he pushes to modernize his naval forces.

It's not common for North Korea to acknowledge military-related setbacks, but observers say the disclosure of the failed ship launch suggests that Kim is serious about his naval advancement program and confident of ultimately achieving its objectives.

During a launching event at the northeastern port of Chongjin on Wednesday, the newly built 5,000-ton-class destroyer became unbalanced and was punctured in its bottom sections after a transport cradle on the stern section slid off first and became stuck, according to the Korean Central News Agency.

KCNA didn't provide details on what caused the problem, the severity of the damage or whether anyone was injured.

According to KCNA, Kim, who was present at the ceremony, blamed military officials, scientists and shipyard operators for a "serious accident and criminal act caused by absolute carelessness, irresponsibility and unscientific empiricism." Kim called for a ruling Workers' Party meeting slated for late June to address their "irresponsible errors."

"It's a shameful thing. But the reason why North Korea disclosed the incident is it wants to show it's speeding up the modernization of its navy forces and expresses its confidence that it can eventually build" a greater navy, said Moon Keun-sik, a navy expert who teaches at Seoul's Hanyang University.

Moon suspected the incident likely happened because North Korean workers aren't yet familiar with such a large warship and were rushed to put it in the water.

The damaged vessel was likely in the same class as the country's first destroyer, unveiled April 25, which experts assessed as the North's largest and most advanced warship to date. Kim called the first vessel, named Choe Hyon — a famed Korean guerilla fighter during the Japanese colonial period — a significant asset for advancing his goal of expanding the military's operational range and nuclear strike capabilities.

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State media described that ship as designed to handle various weapons systems, including anti-air and anti-ship weapons as well as nuclear-capable ballistic and cruise missiles. Kim said the ship was expected to enter active duty early next year and later supervised test-firings of missiles from the warship.

Lee Sung Joon, spokesperson for South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff, said Thursday the damaged vessel was likely equipped with similar systems and remains toppled over in the sea.

The North Korean report came after recent commercial satellite images indicated that the country was building its second destroyer at a shipyard in Chongjin.

Beyond Parallel, a website run by the Center for Strategic and International Studies think tank, said the satellite imagery of Chongjin's Hambuk shipyard on May 12 showed that a second vessel in the Choe Hyon-class of guided missile destroyers was under construction.

A report by the North Korea-focused 38 North website assessed last week that the destroyer built at the Chongjin shipyard was being prepared to be launched sideways from the quay, a method that has been rarely used in North Korea. The report said the previous destroyer launched at the western shipyard of Nampo, in contrast, used a floating dry dock.

South Korean officials and experts say the Choe Hyon destroyer was likely built with Russian assistance as the two countries' military partnerships are booming. While North Korea's naval forces are considered inferior to South Korea's, analysts still view the destroyer as a serious security threat, as it could enhance the country's offensive and defensive capabilities.

Kim has framed the arms buildup as a response to perceived threats from the United States and its allies in Asia, who have been expanding joint military exercises amid rising tensions over the North's nuclear program. He says the acquisition of a nuclear-powered submarine would be his next big step in strengthening his navy.

Hours after releasing the report on the damaged destroyer, North Korea fired multiple cruise missiles from an area near the northeastern town of Sondok, according to South Korea's military. The launches were a continuation of a streak of weapons-testing activities by North Korea in recent years. South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff didn't immediately say how far the missiles flew, noting the launches were being analyzed by South Korean and U.S. intelligence authorities.

## **Kashmir tourism bears the brunt after tourist massacre and India-Pakistan military strikes**

By AIJAZ HUSSAIN Associated Press

SRINAGAR, India (AP) — There are hardly any tourists in the scenic Himalayan region of Kashmir. Most of the hotels and ornate pinewood houseboats are empty. Resorts in the snowclad mountains have fallen silent. Hundreds of cabs are parked and idle.

It's the fallout of last month's gun massacre that left 26 people, mostly Hindu tourists, dead in Indian-controlled Kashmir followed by tit-for-tat military strikes by India and Pakistan, bringing the nuclear-armed rivals to the brink of their third war over the region.

"There might be some tourist arrivals, but it counts almost negligible. It is almost a zero footfall right now," said Yaseen Tuman, who operates multiple houseboats in the region's main city of Srinagar. "There is a haunting silence now."

Tens of thousands of panicked tourists left Kashmir within days after the rare killings of tourists on April 22 at a picture-perfect meadow in southern resort town of Pahalgam. Following the attack, authorities temporarily closed dozens of tourist resorts in the region, adding to fear and causing occupancy rates to plummet.

Graphic images, repeatedly circulated through TV channels and social media, deepened panic and anger. India blamed Pakistan for supporting the attackers, a charge Islamabad denied.

Those who had stayed put fled soon after tensions between India and Pakistan spiked. As the two countries fired missiles and drones at each other, the region witnessed mass cancellations of tourist bookings. New Delhi and Islamabad reached a U.S.-mediated ceasefire on May 10 but hardly any new bookings have



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come in, tour operators said.

Sheikh Bashir Ahmed, vice president of the Kashmir Hotel and Restaurant Association, said at least 12,000 rooms in the region's hundreds of hotels and guesthouses were previously booked until June. Almost all bookings have been cancelled, and tens of thousands of people associated with hotels are without jobs, he said.

"It's a huge loss," Ahmed said.

The decline has had a ripple effect on the local economy. Handicrafts, food stalls and taxi operators have lost most of their business.

Idyllic destinations, like the resort towns of Gulmarg and Pahalgam, once a magnet for travelers, are eerily silent. Lines of colorful hand-carved boats, known as shikaras, lie deserted, mostly anchored still on Srinagar's normally bustling Dal Lake. Tens of thousands of daily wage workers have hardly any work.

"There used to be long lines of tourists waiting for boat rides. There are none now," said boatman Fayaz Ahmed.

Taxi driver Mohammed Irfan would take tourists for long drives to hill stations and show them grand Mughal-era gardens. "Even a half day of break was a luxury, and we would pray for it. Now, my taxi lies standstill for almost two weeks," he said.

In recent years, the tourism sector grew substantially, making up about 7% of the region's economy, according to official figures. Omar Abdullah, Kashmir's top elected official, said before the attack on tourists that the government was aiming to increase tourism's share of the economy to at least 15% in the next four to five years.

Indian-controlled Kashmir was a top destination for visitors until the armed rebellion against Indian rule began in 1989. Warfare laid waste to the stunningly beautiful region, which is partly controlled by Pakistan and claimed by both countries in its entirety.

As the conflict ground on, the tourism sector slowly revived but occasional military skirmishes between India and Pakistan kept visitors at bay.

But India vigorously pushed tourism after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government scrapped the disputed region's semi-autonomy in 2019. Tensions have simmered, but the region has also drawn millions of visitors amid a strange calm enforced by an intensified security crackdown.

According to official data, close to 3 million tourists visited the region in 2024, a rise from 2.71 million visitors in 2023 and 2.67 million in 2022. The massive influx prompted many locals to invest in the sector, setting up family-run guesthouses, luxury hotels, and transport companies in a region with few alternatives.

Tourists remained largely unfazed even as Modi's administration has governed Kashmir with an iron fist in recent years, claiming militancy in the region was in check and a tourism influx was a sign of normalcy returning.

The massacre shattered those claims. Experts say that the Modi government's optimism was largely misplaced and that the rising tourism in the region of which it boasted was a fragile barometer of normalcy. Last year, Abdullah, the region's chief minister, cautioned against such optimism.

Tuman, who is also a sixth-generation tour operator, said he was not too optimistic about an immediate revival as bookings for the summer were almost all canceled.

"If all goes well, it will take at least six months for tourism to revive," he said.

Ahmed, the hotels association official, said India and Pakistan need to resolve the dispute for the region's prosperity. "Tourism needs peace. If (Kashmir) problem is not solved ... maybe after two months, it will be again same thing."

## Netanyahu promises new Gaza aid delivery plan as supplies still fail to reach Palestinians

By WAFAA SHURAF, SAMY MAGDY and MELANIE LIDMAN Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — The U.N. said Wednesday it was trying to get the desperately needed aid that has entered Gaza this week into the hands of Palestinians amid delays because of fears of looting

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and Israeli military restrictions. Israeli strikes pounded the territory, killing at least 86 people, according to Gaza's Health Ministry.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced that the country is days away from implementing a new aid system in Gaza that has come under heavy international criticism. He said Israel later plans to create a "sterile zone" there, free of Hamas, where the population, which has repeatedly evacuated and relocated throughout the war, would be moved and receive supplies.

With renewed ceasefire talks appearing to make little progress, Netanyahu said he will end the war only if Hamas releases all hostages and steps down from power — and if President Donald Trump's plan to relocate the territory's population outside Gaza is implemented. The Palestinians, along with nearly all of the international community, have rejected Trump's plan to empty Gaza of its Palestinian population and place the territory under U.S. control.

Under international pressure, Israel has allowed dozens of aid trucks into Gaza after blocking all food, medicine, fuel and other material for nearly three months. But the supplies have been sitting on the Gaza side of the Kerem Shalom crossing with Israel.

U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric said the majority of supplies that had entered since Monday had been loaded onto U.N. trucks, but they could not take them out of the crossing area. He said the road the Israeli military had given them permission to use was too unsafe.

A U.N. official later said more than a dozen trucks that left the crossing area arrived at warehouses in central Gaza on Wednesday night. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to talk to the press.

Israel said 100 trucks had crossed into Gaza on Wednesday.

Food security experts have warned that Gaza risks falling into famine unless the blockade ends. Malnutrition and hunger have been mounting. Aid groups ran out of food to distribute weeks ago, and most of the population of around 2.3 million relies on communal kitchens whose supplies are nearly depleted.

At a kitchen in Gaza City, a charity group distributed watery lentil soup.

Somaia Abu Amsha scooped small portions for her family, saying they have not had bread for over 10 days and she can't afford rice or pasta.

"We don't want anything other than that they end the war. We don't want charity kitchens. Even dogs wouldn't eat this, let alone children," she said.

Aid groups say the small amount of aid that Israel has allowed is far short of what is needed. About 600 trucks entered daily under the latest ceasefire.

Netanyahu says population will be moved south

Israel has said its slight easing of the blockade is a bridge until the new aid system it demands is put in place. The U.N. and other humanitarian groups have rejected the system, saying it enables Israel to use aid as a weapon and forcibly displace the population.

Netanyahu told reporters the plan will begin "in coming days."

He said in a later phase, the "sterile zone" in southern Gaza would be free of Hamas and the population would be moved there "for the purposes of its safety." There, they would receive aid, "and then they enter — and they don't necessarily go back."

The plan involves small number of distribution hubs directed by a private, U.S.-backed foundation known as the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation. Armed private contractors would guard the distribution.

Israel says the system is needed because Hamas siphons off significant amounts of aid. The U.N. denies that claim.

Initially, four hubs are being built, one in central Gaza and three at the far southern end of the strip, where few people remain.

A GHF spokesman said the group would never participate in or support any form of forced relocation of civilians. The spokesman, speaking on condition of anonymity in accordance with the group's rules, said there was no limit to the number of sites and additional sites will open, including in the north, within the next month.

Israeli warning shots shake diplomats

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Israeli troops fired warning shots as a group of international diplomats was visiting the Jenin refugee camp in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. Footage showed a number of diplomats giving media interviews as rapid shots ring out nearby, forcing them to run for cover. No one was reported injured.

The Israeli military said their visit had been approved, but the delegation "deviated from the approved route." The military said it apologized and will contact the countries involved in the visit.

The soldiers' actions were roundly criticized as officials from Italy, Austria and Germany were among those demanding that Israel investigate what happened. Foreign ministers in Canada and France called for the Israeli ambassador to be summoned to provide an explanation.

Israeli troops have raided Jenin dozens of times as part of a crackdown across the West Bank. The fighting displaced tens of thousands of Palestinians.

Early Thursday, sirens sounded across Israel as its military said it intercepted a missile launched by Yemen's Houthi rebels. The Houthis did not immediately claim the attack, though it can take hours or days for them to acknowledge their assaults.

The trickle of aid is jammed

Currently, after supplies enter at Kerem Shalom, aid workers are required to unload them and reload them onto their own trucks for distribution.

Antoine Renard, the World Food Program's country chief for Palestine, said 78 trucks were waiting. He told The Associated Press that "we need to ensure that we will not be looted."

Looting has plagued aid deliveries in the past, and at times of desperation people have swarmed aid trucks, taking supplies.

A U.N. official and another humanitarian worker said the Israeli military had designated a highly insecure route known to have looters. The military also set a short window for trucks to come to Kerem Shalom and rejected a number of individual truck drivers, forcing last-minute replacements, they said. Both spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to talk to the press.

COGAT, the Israeli defense body overseeing aid for Gaza, did not immediately respond when asked for comment.

Hospitals surrounded

Israeli strikes continued across Gaza. In the southern city of Khan Younis, where Israel recently ordered new evacuations pending an expanded offensive, 24 people were killed, 14 from the same family. A week-old infant was killed in central Gaza. In the evening, a strike hit a house in Jabaliya in northern Gaza, killing two children and their parents, according to hospital officials.

The Israeli military did not comment on the strikes. It says it targets Hamas infrastructure and accuses Hamas militants of operating from civilian areas.

Israeli troops also have surrounded two of northern Gaza's last functioning hospitals, preventing anyone from leaving or entering the facilities, hospital staff and aid groups said this week.

The war in Gaza began when Hamas-led militants attacked southern Israel, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting 251 others. The militants are still holding 58 captives, around a third believed to be alive, after most were returned in ceasefire agreements or other deals.

Israel's retaliatory offensive has destroyed large swaths of Gaza and killed more than 53,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which doesn't differentiate between civilians and combatants in its count.

## **'Unquestionably in violation': Judge says US government didn't follow court order on deportations**

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST, MICHAEL CASEY, REBECCA SANTANA and TIM SULLIVAN Associated Press  
WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House violated a court order on deportations to third countries with a flight linked to the chaotic African nation of South Sudan, a federal judge said Wednesday, hours after the Trump administration said it had expelled eight immigrants convicted of violent crimes but refused to

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reveal where they would end up. The judge's statement was a notably strong rebuke to the government's deportation efforts.

In an emergency hearing he called to address reports that immigrants had been sent to South Sudan, Judge Brian E. Murphy in Boston said the eight migrants aboard the plane were not given a meaningful opportunity to object that the deportation could put them in danger. Minutes before the hearing, administration officials accused "activist judges" of advocating the release of dangerous criminals.

"The department actions in this case are unquestionably in violation of this court's order," Murphy said Wednesday, arguing that the deportees didn't have "meaningful opportunity" to object to being sent to South Sudan. The group was flown out of the United States just hours after getting notice, leaving them no chance to contact lawyers who could object in court.

Government attorneys argued that the men had a history with the immigration system, giving them prior opportunities to express a fear of being deported to a country outside their homeland. They also pointed out that the judge had not specified the exact time needed between notice and deportation, leaving room for misunderstanding.

The government calls the deported people 'true national security threats'

The migrants' home countries — Cuba, Laos, Mexico, Myanmar, Vietnam and South Sudan — would not take them back, according to Todd Lyons, the acting director of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, who spoke to reporters in Washington. He later said the migrants either came from countries that often do not take back all their deported citizens or had other situations that meant they could not be sent home.

"These represent the true national security threats," Lyons said at a news conference. Behind him was a display of photos of men he said had been convicted of rape, homicide, armed robbery and other crimes.

Administration officials, who have repeatedly clashed with the courts over their attempts to deport large numbers of immigrants, made their displeasure clear Wednesday.

President Donald Trump and Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem "are working every single day to get these vicious criminals off of American streets — and while activist judges are on the other side, fighting to get them back onto the United States soil," said Tricia McLaughlin, a department spokesperson. She pointed to the photographs and described them as "the monsters" that Murphy "is trying to protect."

Homeland Security officials released few specific details about the deportation flight. They said it left Tuesday with eight people on board and said they remained in the department's custody Wednesday. Officials said they could not disclose the migrants' final destination because of "safety and operational security."

The case comes amid a sweeping immigration crackdown by the Republican administration, which has pledged to deport millions of people who are living in the United States illegally. The legal fight is the latest flashpoint as the administration rails against judges whose rulings have slowed the president's policies.

Lawsuits on immigration issues are everywhere

With Congress largely silent or supportive, opponents of Trump's agenda have filed hundreds of lawsuits and judges have issued dozens of orders against the administration. Immigration has been the most contentious issue. There was the mistaken deportation of an immigrant who was living in Maryland to a prison in El Salvador, as well as Trump's push to swiftly deport alleged Venezuelan gang members without a court review.

The administration officials insisted that the deported men had received due process, but did not provide details. Immigration-rights attorneys argue they violated Murphy's order, first handed down in March, that says people must have a chance to argue that going somewhere outside their homeland would put them in danger before being deported, even if they've otherwise exhausted their legal appeals.

"The government is still refusing to provide due process to our clients, which means they are not giving them notice of the country to which they're being deported, proper notice in a language that they understand, and not giving them a meaningful opportunity to claim fear based on those countries," Trina Realmuto, the executive director of the National Immigration Litigation Alliance, said outside court.

"These are countries that the State Department doesn't want Americans to travel to. They are categorically not safe," she added.

In court, Realmuto asked the judge to return the individuals to the United States. "They are no less



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deserving of protection than any other human beings on this planet," she said.

The government argued the interviews with the men over their fears could be done where they are currently being held and confirmed with Murphy that they can be arranged. Realmuto called this a "logistical nightmare" that penalizes the men because the government violated the judge's order. She said it would prove a challenge to get the men legal counsel and interpreters, an effort complicated by the time difference.

Murphy, who raised the prospect of criminal contempt for anyone "involved in an illegal deportation," later Wednesday ordered the government conduct a new set of interviews with the migrants if an appropriate place with appropriate privacy can be found. He said the government was welcome to bring the migrants back, but did not order they do so.

On Twitter late Wednesday, DHS' McLaughlin called the order "deranged."

The countries of origin vary

Attorneys for the immigrants told the judge that immigration authorities may have sent as many as a dozen people from several countries to Africa.

The apparent removal of one man from the troubled Southeast Asian nation of Myanmar was confirmed in an email from an immigration official in Texas, according to court documents. He was informed only in English, a language he does not speak well, and his lawyers learned of the plan hours before his deportation flight, they said.

A woman also reported that her husband from Vietnam and up to 10 other people were flown to Africa on Tuesday morning, attorneys from the National Immigration Litigation Alliance wrote.

Murphy, who was nominated by Democratic President Joe Biden, previously found that any plans to deport people to Libya without notice would "clearly" violate his ruling.

South Sudan says it's unaware of any arrivals

South Sudan's police spokesperson, Maj. Gen. James Monday Enoke, told The Associated Press on Wednesday that no migrants had arrived in the country and that if they do, they would be investigated and "redeployed to their correct country" if found not to be South Sudanese.

Edmund Yakani, executive director of the South Sudanese group Community Empowerment for Progress Organization, questioned why people convicted of crimes in the United States would be sent there. "Is South Sudan a land of less human who deserve to receive perpetrators of human rights violations? Without any public explanation?" he asked.

Some countries do not accept deportations from the United States. That has led the administration to strike agreements with other countries, including Panama, to house them. The U.S. has sent Venezuelans to a notorious prison in El Salvador under an 18th-century wartime law, an action being contested in the courts.

South Sudan has endured repeated waves of violence since gaining independence from Sudan in 2011 amid hopes it could use its large oil reserves to bring prosperity to a region long battered by poverty. Just weeks ago, the country's top U.N. official warned that fighting between forces loyal to the president and a vice president threatened to spiral again into full-scale civil war.

The State Department's annual report on South Sudan, published in April 2024, says "significant human rights issues" include arbitrary killings, disappearances, torture or inhumane treatment by security forces and extensive violence based on gender and sexual identity.

The Homeland Security Department has given Temporary Protected Status to a small number of South Sudanese already living in the United States, shielding them from deportation because conditions were deemed unsafe for return. Noem recently extended those protections to November to allow for a more thorough review.

The U.S is one of the biggest donors to South Sudan's humanitarian aid programs, with the total funding in 2024 standing at over \$640 million.

## Trump confronts South African leader with baseless claims of the

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## systematic killing of white farmers

By GERALD IMRAY and AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump used a White House meeting to forcefully confront South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, accusing the country of failing to address Trump's baseless claim of the systematic killing of white farmers.

Trump even dimmed the lights of the Oval Office to play a video of a far-left politician chanting a song that includes the lyrics "kill the farmer." He also leafed through news articles to underscore his point, saying the country's white farmers have faced "death, death, death, horrible death."

Trump had already cut all U.S. assistance to South Africa and welcomed several dozen white South African farmers to the U.S. as refugees as he pressed the case that a "genocide" is underway in the country.

The U.S. president, since his return to office, has launched a series of accusations at South Africa's Black-led government, claiming it is seizing land from white farmers, enforcing antiwhite policies and pursuing an anti-American foreign policy.

Experts in South Africa say there is no evidence of whites being targeted for their race, although farmers of all races are victims of violent home invasions in a country with a high crime rate.

"People are fleeing South Africa for their own safety," Trump said. "Their land is being confiscated and in many cases they're being killed."

Ramaphosa pushed back against Trump's accusation. The South African leader had sought to use the meeting to set the record straight and salvage his country's relationship with the United States. The bilateral relationship is at its lowest point since South Africa enforced its apartheid system of racial segregation, which ended in 1994.

"We are completely opposed to that," Ramaphosa said of the behavior alleged by Trump in their exchange. He added, "that is not government policy" and "our government policy is completely, completely against what he was saying."

Trump was unmoved.

"When they take the land, they kill the white farmer," he said.

Trump appeared prepared to confront Ramaphosa at the start of the meeting while journalists were present. Videos were cued up on a large TV set to show a clip of an opposition party leader, Julius Malema, leading an old anti-apartheid song.

The song has been contentious for years in the country because of its central lyrics "kill the Boer" and "shoot the Boer" — with Boer a word that refers to a white farmer. Malema, featured in the video, is not part of the country's governing coalition.

Another clip played showed white crosses on the side of a road, described as a memorial for white farmers who were killed. Ramaphosa seemed baffled. "I'd like to know where that is, because this I've never seen."

Trump kicked off the meeting by describing the South African president as a "truly respected man in many, many circles." He added: "And in some circles he's considered a little controversial."

Ramaphosa chimed in, playfully jabbing back at a U.S. president who is no stranger to controversy. "We're all like that," Ramaphosa said.

Trump issued an executive order in February cutting all funding to South Africa over some of its domestic and foreign policies. The order criticized the South African government on multiple fronts, saying it is pursuing antiwhite policies at home and supporting "bad actors" in the world like the Palestinian militant group Hamas and Iran.

Trump has falsely accused the South African government of rights violations against white Afrikaner farmers by seizing their land through a new expropriation law. No land has been seized and the South African government has pushed back, saying U.S. criticism is driven by misinformation.

The Trump administration's references to the Afrikaner people — who are descendants of Dutch and other European settlers — have also elevated previous claims made by Trump's South African-born adviser Elon Musk and some conservative U.S. commentators that the South African government is allowing attacks on white farmers in what amounts to a genocide.

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The administration's concerns about South African policies cut even deeper than the concerns about white farmers.

South Africa has also angered Trump over its move to bring charges at the International Court of Justice, accusing Israel of committing genocide against Palestinians in Gaza. Ramaphosa has also faced scrutiny in Washington for his past connections to MTN Group, Iran's second-largest telecom provider. It owns nearly half of Irancell, a joint venture linked with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. Ramaphosa served as board chair of MTN from 2002 to 2013.

Ramaphosa came into the meeting looking to avoid the sort of contentious engagement that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy experienced during his February Oval Office visit, when the Ukrainian leader found himself being berated by Trump and Vice President JD Vance. That disastrous meeting ended with White House officials asking Zelenskyy and his delegation to leave the White House grounds.

The South African president's delegation included golfers Ernie Els and Retief Goosen, a gesture to the golf-obsessed U.S. president. Ramaphosa brought Trump a massive book about South Africa's golf courses. He even told Trump that he's been working on his golf game, seeming to angle for an invitation to the links with the president.

Luxury goods tycoon and Afrikaner Johann Rupert was also in the delegation to help ease Trump's concerns that land was being seized from white farmers.

At one point, Ramaphosa called on Zingiswa Losi, the president of a group of South African trade unions, who told Trump it is true that South Africa is a "violent nation for a number of reasons." But she told him it was important to understand that Black men and women in rural areas were also being targeted in heinous crimes.

"The problem in South Africa, it is not necessarily about race, but it's about crime," Losi said. "We are here to say how do we, both nations, work together to reset, to really talk about investment but also help ... to really address the levels of crime we have in our country."

Musk also attended Wednesday's talks. He has been at the forefront of the criticism of his homeland, casting its affirmative action laws as racist against whites.

Musk has said on social media that his Starlink satellite internet service isn't able to get a license to operate in South Africa because he is not Black.

South African authorities say Starlink hasn't formally applied. It can, but it would be bound by affirmative action laws in the communications sector that require foreign companies to allow 30% of their South African subsidiaries to be owned by shareholders who are Black or from other racial groups disadvantaged under apartheid.

The South African government says its long-standing affirmative action laws are a cornerstone of its efforts to right the injustices of the white minority rule of apartheid, which denied opportunities to Blacks and other racial groups.

Following the contentious exchange in front of the cameras, Trump hosted Ramaphosa for lunch and further talks.

Ramaphosa, speaking to reporters following his White House visit, downplayed Trump's criticism, adding he believes "there's doubt and disbelief in (Trump's) head" about his genocide charge. He insisted they did not dwell on Trump's concerns about white farmers in their private conversation.

"You wanted to see drama and something really big happening," Ramaphosa told reporters following his White House visit. "And I'm sorry that we disappointed you somewhat when it comes to that."

## **Gilgeous-Alexander voted as the NBA's MVP, continuing run of international players winning the award**

By TIM REYNOLDS AP Basketball Writer

The case for Shai Gilgeous-Alexander was simple. He's the best player on an Oklahoma City Thunder team that had the best record this season and set a league mark for margin of victory. If that wasn't

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enough, he also won the scoring title.

That's an MVP year.

Gilgeous-Alexander was announced Wednesday as the NBA's Most Valuable Player, his first time winning the award. It's now seven straight years that a player born outside the U.S. won MVP, extending the longest such streak in league history.

And when it happened, Gilgeous-Alexander said a life of moments — getting cut, traded, overlooked, celebrating, the wins, the good times — all flooded into his mind.

"I don't think there's enough emphasis on how much off the court influences on the court," Gilgeous-Alexander said. "And once I became better off the court my career started to skyrocket. It's no coincidence."

It ultimately was a two-person race. Gilgeous-Alexander got 71 first-place votes and 29 second-place votes; Denver's Nikola Jokic got the other 29 first-place votes and the other 71 second-place votes.

Milwaukee's Giannis Antetokounmpo was third, getting 88 of the 100 possible third-place votes.

Gilgeous-Alexander — the No. 11 pick in the 2018 draft — averaged 32.7 points, 6.4 assists and five rebounds per game this season, leading the Thunder to a 68-14 record. The Thunder outscored teams by 12.9 points per game, the biggest margin in league history.

He becomes the second Canadian to win MVP; Steve Nash won it twice.

"He set the foundation," Gilgeous-Alexander said of Nash. "He was the first Canadian basketball player I knew of. And without seeing guys go to the NBA from Canada, it wouldn't have been as much of a dream as it was for us as kids growing up. So, to be in a conversation with a guy like that and what he has meant to not only basketball but to the country of Canada, it's special."

And Gilgeous-Alexander is the first guard to win MVP since James Harden in 2018.

"His value is his confidence," Oklahoma City's Kenrich Williams said of Gilgeous-Alexander, his Thunder teammate for the last five seasons. "His confidence that he has in himself and the confidence that he instills in every one of his teammates, including the coaches."

Jokic — a winner of three of the last four MVP awards — was second, despite a season for the ages. He averaged 29.6 points, 12.7 rebounds and 10.2 assists per game, the first center to average a triple-double and the first player since all those stats were tracked to finish in the NBA's top three in all three of those categories.

It was the sixth instance of a player finishing a season averaging a triple-double — at least 10 points, 10 assists and 10 rebounds per game. Russell Westbrook did it four times and Oscar Robertson once, but only one of those triple-double seasons led to an MVP win.

"He's a special player," Jokic said of Gilgeous-Alexander earlier this week when the Thunder eliminated the Nuggets in the Western Conference semifinals. "His shot selection, his shot capability ... he's always there. He's a special player."

Antetokounmpo, who averaged 30.4 points, 11.9 rebounds and 6.5 assists per game, was third. He started this run of international players winning MVP; Antetokounmpo, of Greek and Nigerian descent, won in 2019 and 2020.

Jokic, a Serbian, won in 2021, 2022 and 2024. And Philadelphia's Joel Embiid, who was born in Cameroon but since became a U.S. citizen, won the award in 2023.

Now, it's Gilgeous-Alexander — a son of Ontario, where hockey reigns — carrying the MVP flag. He was fifth in the voting two years ago, second behind Jokic last year, and used being so close to the award as fuel this season.

"There are voters every year. That will never change," Gilgeous-Alexander said on TNT during the broadcast when the results were revealed. "And last year, all it meant was that more people thought I shouldn't have won than should have won. This year I wanted to change the narrative and have it flipped. I think I did a good job of that."

Boston's Jayson Tatum was fourth, Cleveland's Donovan Mitchell was fifth and the Los Angeles Lakers' LeBron James was sixth — the 20th time in his 22-year career that he got some MVP votes.

Detroit's Cade Cunningham and Minnesota's Anthony Edwards tied for seventh, Golden State's Stephen



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Curry was ninth and three players — the Los Angeles Clippers' Harden, New York's Jalen Brunson and Cleveland's Evan Mobley — tied for 10th.

The MVP award, like most other NBA honors, was voted on by a global panel of 100 writers and broadcasters who cover the league and cast ballots shortly before the start of the playoffs.

The other awards that were part of that voting process and have already been unveiled: Cleveland's Kenny Atkinson winning coach of the year, Atlanta's Dyson Daniels winning most improved player, San Antonio's Stephon Castle winning rookie of the year, Cleveland's Evan Mobley winning defensive player of the year, New York's Jalen Brunson winning clutch player of the year and Boston's Payton Pritchard winning sixth man of the year.

Other awards announced by the league since the end of the regular season: Golden State's Stephen Curry won the Twyman-Stokes teammate of the year award, Warriors teammate Draymond Green won the hustle award, Oklahoma City's Sam Presti won executive of the year and Boston's Jrue Holiday won the sportsmanship award for the second time in his career as well as the league's social justice award.

The award came at a price for Gilgeous-Alexander, who is in line for an extension that will easily top \$300 million and could even see him make about \$1 million per regular-season game in 2030-31 and 2031-32.

He promised teammates watches if he won the MVP; those guys have those watches now, and they deserve all that and more, he said.

"This is nothing compared to what they've been to me," Gilgeous-Alexander said. "I would rather have the MVP over a Rolex every day of the week and without them, I wouldn't have the MVP."

## Most books pulled from Naval Academy library are back on the shelves in latest DEI turn

By LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — All but a few of the nearly 400 books that the U.S. Naval Academy removed from its library because they dealt with anti-racism and gender issues are back on the shelves after the newest Pentagon-ordered review — the latest turn in a dizzying effort to rid the military of materials related to diversity, equity and inclusion programs.

Based on the new review, about 20 books from the academy's library are being pulled aside to be checked, but that number includes some that weren't identified or removed in last month's initial purge of 381 books, defense officials told The Associated Press.

A few dozen books at the Air Force libraries — including at the Air Force Academy — also have been pulled out for review, said the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because the process is still ongoing.

The back-and-forth on book removals reflects a persistent problem in the early months of the Trump administration, as initial orders and demands for an array of policy changes have been forced to be re-worked, fine-tuned and reissued because they were vague, badly defined or problematic.

The reviews and changes at military libraries and to websites, social media accounts and more are part of the Trump administration's far-reaching efforts to purge so-called DEI content from federal agencies.

The Pentagon earlier this month issued a detailed directive to all military leaders and commands to pull and review all library books addressing diversity, anti-racism or gender issues by Wednesday. The order contained more specific search words than earlier guidance and verbal orders from Defense Department leaders, and officials said it resulted in dramatically fewer banned books than initially thought.

The Navy said in a statement Wednesday that it reviewed the library collections at all of its educational institutions to ensure compliance with the directives, noting that materials have been "identified and sequestered." The Army and Air Force also have reviewed their collections.

All of the services' libraries had to provide their new lists of books to Pentagon leaders. Now additional guidance will be given on how to cull those lists, if needed, and determine what should be permanently removed. The review also will "determine an appropriate ultimate disposition" for those materials, according to a Defense Department memo.

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The May 9 memo — signed by Timothy Dill, who is performing the duties of the deputy defense undersecretary for personnel — did not say what will happen to the books or whether they will be stored away or destroyed.

The libraries at the military academies and those at other schools and commands had to remove educational materials “promoting divisive concepts and gender ideology” because they are incompatible with the Defense Department’s core mission, the memo said.

A temporary Academic Libraries Committee set up by the department is overseeing the process, and it provided a list of search terms to use to determine which books to pull and review.

Those search terms included: affirmative action, anti-racism, critical race theory, discrimination, diversity, gender dysphoria, gender identity and transition, transgender and white privilege.

The U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, removed 381 books from its library in early April after being told by Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth’s office to get rid of those that promote DEI.

The purge led to the removal of books on the Holocaust, histories of feminism, civil rights and racism, and Maya Angelou’s famous autobiography, “I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings.”

Others included “Memorializing the Holocaust,” which deals with Holocaust memorials; “Half American,” about African Americans in World War II; “A Respectable Woman,” about the public roles of African American women in 19th century New York; and “Pursuing Trayvon Martin,” about the 2012 shooting of a Black 17-year-old in Florida that raised questions about racial profiling.

The Navy on Wednesday could not confirm which books have been returned to the library or if Angelou’s book or the others will remain pulled from shelves.

About two weeks after the Naval Academy purge was ordered, the Army and Air Force libraries were told to go through their stacks to find and remove books related to DEI.

Throughout the process, leaders of the military services sought more detailed guidance on which books had to go because the initial order to the Naval Academy was verbal and vague. Dill’s memo provided that additional guidance.

Similarly, directives to reenlist troops forced out for refusing the COVID-19 vaccine and to remove transgender service members from the military have had to be clarified over time.

Defense leaders have had to provide additional guidance and wording to address questions from the services on how to legally and accurately implement the orders. And in several cases, orders had to be refined and reissued.

## After meeting at the White House Speaker Johnson vows to push ahead on Trump’s big bill

By LISA MASCARO, KEVIN FREKING, LEAH ASKARINAM and JOEY CAPPELLETTI Associated Press  
WASHINGTON (AP) — Defying opposition within his ranks, House Speaker Mike Johnson insisted late Wednesday that Republicans would march ahead on their multitrillion-dollar tax breaks package after a lengthy White House meeting with GOP holdouts refusing to back the bill.

Johnson and his GOP leadership team appeared confident they would be able to stick to their schedule and shore up GOP support for final passage late Wednesday or Thursday following last-ditch talks to salvage the “big, beautiful bill.” But next steps are highly uncertain.

“We’re excited that we’re going to land this airplane,” Johnson, R-La., said back at the Capitol.

But as evening hours set in, the upbeat tone stood at odds with the unwieldy scene at the Capitol. The Rules Committee has been grinding through a marathon session, passing its 18th hour, as the process chugs along. Another Republican, Tennessee Rep. John Rose, announced his opposition to the GOP bill. And Democrats, without the votes to stop Trump’s package, are using all available tools and impassioned speeches to press their opposition and capitalize on the GOP disarray.

“We believe it’s one big, ugly bill that’s going to hurt the American people,” said House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries of New York as he and his team testified before the committee.

“Hurt children, hurt families, hurt veterans, hurt seniors, cut health care, cut nutritional assistance, ex-

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plode the debt," he said.

It's a make-or-break moment for the president and his party in Congress. They have invested much of their political capital during the crucial first few months of Trump's return to the White House on this legislation. If the House Republicans fall in line with the president, overcoming unified Democratic objections, the measure would next go to the Senate.

Trump had implored the lawmakers a day earlier at the Capitol to get it done, but the holdouts endured. It's not at all clear what, exactly, was agreed to — or not — during Wednesday's lengthy meeting at the White House. However, Johnson indicated afterward that Trump himself may be able to accomplish by executive actions some of the goals that Congress is unable to agree to in the legislative process.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said the meeting was productive and moved the ball in the right direction.

One big problem has been the tentative deal with GOP lawmakers from New York and other high-tax states to boost deductions for local taxes to \$40,000. But that costly provision, running into the hundreds of billions of dollars, alarmed the most conservative Republicans, worried it will add to the nation's \$36 trillion debt.

For every faction of the slim House majority that Johnson appeases, he risks losing others.

Rep. Andy Harris, R-Md., the chairman of the hard-right House Freedom Caucus, said earlier he did not believe the package could pass in a House vote, but "there is a pathway forward that we can see."

A fresh analysis from the Congressional Budget Office said the tax provisions would increase federal deficits by \$3.8 trillion over the decade, while the changes to Medicaid, food stamps and other services would tally \$1 trillion in reduced spending. The lowest-income households in the U.S. would see their resources drop, while the highest ones would see a boost, the CBO said.

At its core, the package is centered on extending the tax breaks approved during Trump's first term in 2017, while adding new ones he campaigned on during his 2024 campaign.

To make up for some of the lost revenue, the Republicans are focused on spending cuts to federal safety net programs and a massive rollback of green energy tax breaks from the Biden-era Inflation Reduction Act.

Additionally, the package tacks on \$350 billion in new spending, with about \$150 billion going to the Pentagon, including for the president's new "Golden Dome" defense shield, and the rest for Trump's mass deportation and border security agenda.

The package title carries Trump's own words, the "One Big Beautiful Bill Act."

As Trump promised voters, the package proposes there would be no taxes on tips for certain workers, including those in some service industries; automobile loan interest; or some overtime pay.

There would be an increase to the standard income tax deduction, to \$32,000 for joint filers, and a boost to the child tax credit to \$2,500. There would be an enhanced deduction, of \$4,000, for older adults of certain income levels, to help defray taxes on Social Security income.

To cut spending, the package would impose new work requirements for many people who receive health care through Medicaid. Able-bodied adults without dependents would need to fulfill 80 hours a month on a job or in other community activities.

Similarly, those who receive food stamps through the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program, known as SNAP, would also face new work requirements.

Older Americans up to age 64, rather than 54, who are able-bodied and without dependents would need to work or engage in the community programs for 80 hours a month. Additionally, some parents of children older than 7 years old would need to fulfill the work requirements; under current law, the requirement comes after children are 18.

Republicans said they want to root out waste, fraud and abuse in the federal programs.

The Congressional Budget Office has estimated 8.6 million fewer people would have health insurance with the various changes to Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act. It also said 3 million fewer people each month would have SNAP benefits.

Conservatives are insisting on quicker, steeper cuts to federal programs to offset the costs of the trillions

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of dollars in lost tax revenue. GOP leaders have sped up the start date of the Medicaid work requirements from 2029 to 2027.

At the same time, more moderate and centrist lawmakers are wary of the changes to Medicaid that could result in lost health care for their constituents. Others are worried the phaseout of the renewable energy tax breaks will impede businesses using them to invest in green energy projects in many states.

Plus, those lawmakers from New York, California and other high-tax states wanted a bigger state and local tax deduction, called SALT, for their voters back home.

Under the emerging SALT deal, the \$10,000 deduction cap would quadruple to \$40,000 with an income limit of \$500,000, according to a person granted anonymity to discuss the private talks. The cap would phase down for incomes above that level.

The Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, a nonpartisan fiscal watchdog group, estimates that the House bill is shaping up to add roughly \$3.3 trillion to the debt over the next decade.

## Defense Department accepts Boeing 747 from Qatar for Trump's use

By LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth has accepted a luxury Boeing 747 jet from Qatar for President Donald Trump to use as Air Force One, the Pentagon said Wednesday, despite ongoing questions about the ethics and legality of taking the expensive gift from a foreign nation.

The Defense Department will “work to ensure proper security measures” on the plane to make it safe for use by the president, Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell said. He added that the plane was accepted “in accordance with all federal rules and regulations.”

Trump has defended the gift, which came up during his recent Middle East trip, as a way to save tax dollars.

“Why should our military, and therefore our taxpayers, be forced to pay hundreds of millions of Dollars when they can get it for FREE,” Trump posted on his social media site during the trip.

Others, however, have said Trump's acceptance of an aircraft that has been called a “palace in the sky” is a violation of the Constitution's prohibition on foreign gifts. Democrats have been united in outrage, and even some of the Republican president's GOP allies in Congress have expressed concerns.

“This unprecedented action is a stain on the office of the presidency and cannot go unanswered,” said Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer of New York. “Until Americans get transparency on this shady deal, which apparently includes a corrupt plot for Donald Trump to keep the plane at his library after leaving office, I'll continue to hold all Department of Justice political nominees.”

Schumer has introduced legislation that would prohibit any foreign aircraft from being used as Air Force One and forbid use of taxpayer money to modify or restore the aircraft. But on Wednesday, Republican Sen. Roger Marshall of Kansas objected when Schumer asked for a vote, thus blocking it. He did not offer an explanation for his objection.

Critics also have noted the need to retrofit the plane to meet security requirements, which would be costly and take time.

“Far from saving money, this unconstitutional action will not only cost our nation its dignity, but it will force taxpayers to waste over \$1 billion in taxpayer dollars to overhaul this particular aircraft when we currently have not one, but two fully operational and fully capable Air Force One aircraft,” said Sen. Tammy Duckworth, D-Ill.

She said during a hearing Tuesday that it is a “dangerous course of action” for the U.S. to accept the aircraft from the Qatari ruling family.

Air Force Secretary Troy Meink told senators that Hegseth has ordered the service to start planning how to update the jet to meet needed standards and acknowledged that the plane will require “significant” modifications.

The Air Force, in a statement, said it is preparing to award a contract to modify a Boeing 747 aircraft,



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but that any details are classified.

Trump was asked about the move Wednesday while he was meeting in the Oval Office with South African President Cyril Ramaphosa. "They are giving the United States Air Force a jet," Trump said, bristling at being questioned about the gift by a reporter.

Trump said it was given "not to me, to the United States Air Force, so they could help us out" and noted that "Boeing's a little bit late, unfortunately."

Ramaphosa, who was sitting next to Trump and has been working to repair his relationship with the president, said, "I'm sorry I don't have a plane to give you."

"If your country was offering the United States Air Force a plane, I would take it," Trump said.

Trump has presented no national security imperative for a swift upgrade rather than waiting for Boeing to finish new Air Force One jets that have been in the works for years.

He has tried to tamp down some of the opposition by saying he wouldn't fly around in the aircraft when his term ends. Instead, he said, the plane would be donated to a future presidential library, similar to how the Boeing 707 used by President Ronald Reagan was decommissioned and put on display as a museum piece.

## **NFL teams can keep using the tush push after ban proposal fails at owners meetings**

By DAVE CAMPBELL AP Pro Football Writer

EAGAN, Minn. (AP) — Facing stiff resistance around the NFL, the tush push managed to move the chains and gain a fresh set of downs.

League owners narrowly failed to pass a proposal to prohibit the polarizing short-yardage strategy at their spring meetings in Minnesota on Wednesday, keeping the rulebook as is — and pleasing the defending Super Bowl champion Philadelphia Eagles.

The ban on offensive players from pushing, pulling, lifting, grasping or encircling a runner was supported by a 22-10 vote, according to a person with knowledge of the proceedings, speaking on condition of anonymity to The Associated Press because the details weren't made public. That's two votes short of the three-quarters majority required by league bylaws to pass it.

The health and safety committees for both the players and the owners and the league's competition committee all unanimously recommended the proposal, which was formally brought forward by the Green Bay Packers at the previous league meetings in Florida seven weeks ago and tabled for further discussion. Such a ban previously existed and was lifted 20 years ago because it was deemed too difficult to consistently enforce.

"We don't set a low bar," said Atlanta Falcons chief executive officer Rich McKay, the chairman of the competition committee. "There was a lot of support for it, a lot of discussion about it. I've been in that room numerous times where we've had these types of discussions, where one team ends up being, in their mind, more impacted than others. It still takes 24 votes, and in this case those votes were not there."

The Eagles brought former center Jason Kelce, one of the players who fueled the success of the tush push, to the meetings to provide a first-hand account of the play that assigns a teammate to push the backside of the quarterback for extra power behind a tight nine-man line. Blockers on the end sometimes pivot to try to pull the ball carrier past the marker, too.

Immediately after the vote, the Eagles posted a picture on social media of quarterback Jalen Hurts on the verge of a short-yardage attempt against the Packers with the caption, "Push on." Then they posted to their YouTube page a 26-minute tush push highlight montage.

Kelce, a seven-time Pro Bowl pick who retired after the 2023 season, said recently he wasn't as concerned about a ban of the tush push as he was about clearing up misconceptions it poses an injury risk and was partially responsible for his decision to end his career.

"I'll come out of retirement today if you tell me all I've got to do is run 80 tush pushes to play in the NFL," Kelce said on the New Heights podcast with his brother Travis Kelce. "I'll do that gladly. It'll be the

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easiest job in the world.”

Kelce declined comment as he departed the meetings at the Omni Viking Lakes Hotel next to Vikings team headquarters, where Eagles owner Jeffrey Lurie led an impassioned defense of the maneuver his team developed into a nearly unstoppable play with the coinciding arrival of Hurts in 2020. The NFL has no conclusive data supporting a connection between the tush push and an increased risk of injury, as Lurie has noted. He said he was pleased by the vote result but declined further comment.

Cowboys owner Jerry Jones said with a laugh in a brief interview with reporters he had to make sure he was voting against the play and not just against the rival Eagles, emphasizing his belief that the debate was good for the game regardless of the outcome of the vote.

Commissioner Roger Goodell said he didn't take a stance and was instead simply focusing on fostering a “full discussion” of the issue of aiding quarterbacks in their plunges into the line.

The competition committee three years ago raised concern about the pushing and pulling of ball carriers further down the field, McKay said, and will emphasize again the importance of officials declaring dead a play that develops into a scrum even if the mass of bodies prevents them from seeing if the runner is down.

Division winners can stay home for now

The Detroit Lions withdrew their proposal to reseed teams for the playoffs — in order of record rather than awarding the first four spots to division winners — before a vote was taken.

Like the tush push ban, this is an issue that could well come up again in the near future, particularly if an 18-game regular-season schedule is implemented. Goodell said there was no discussion of the additional game, which players oppose, during the meetings this week.

One step closer to recovering an onside kick

In light of the drastic kickoff changes before last season that became permanent this year with some further alterations, owners approved Wednesday a tweak to the onside kick.

With the goal of increasing the recovery rate, teams may now try them at any point in the game when trailing rather than just in the fourth quarter. Kicking team players, other than the kicker, can also move 1 yard forward to give them a better chance at the ball.

Leadership diversity program rework is underway

The NFL took some heat for recently removing from the meeting lineup the latest edition of the accelerator program designed to increase diversity in the coaching ranks, but Goodell said he wasn't concerned about the perception that the pause might have been for political reasons.

The program will return at the spring meetings next year while league officials examine ways to make it more effective and efficient, Goodell said, including the potential for increased interaction between coaching prospects and general managers.

## **Ex-assistant tells of cleaning up booze, drugs and baby oil after Sean 'Diddy' Combs' sex marathons**

By MICHAEL R. SISAK and LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Sean “Diddy” Combs’ one-time personal assistant testified Wednesday that he was in charge of cleaning up hotel rooms after the hip-hop mogul’s sex marathons — tossing out empty alcohol bottles, baby oil and drugs, tidying pillows and making it look as if nothing had happened.

An implied part of the job was that “protecting him and protecting his public image were important to him,” George Kaplan told jurors at Combs’ federal sex trafficking trial. “That’s what I was keen on doing.”

Kaplan, who worked for Combs from 2013 to 2015, said the Bad Boy Records founder would sometimes summon him to a hotel room to deliver a “medicine kit,” a bag full of prescription pills and over-the-counter pain medications. He said Combs dispatched him to buy drugs including MDMA, also known as ecstasy.

Kaplan, 34, was granted immunity to testify after initially telling the Manhattan court that he would invoke his Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination. Prosecutors contend Combs leaned on employees and used his music and fashion empire to facilitate and cover up his behavior, sometimes making threats

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to keep them in line and his misconduct hush-hush.

Kaplan testified that Combs threatened his job on a monthly basis, once berating him for buying the wrong size bottled water. Combs' longtime girlfriend, the R&B singer Cassie, testified that Kaplan quit after seeing Combs beat her.

Kaplan's testimony resumes Thursday. He'll be followed by rapper and actor Kid Cudi.

Cudi, whose legal name is Scott Mescudi, is expected to testify about his brief relationship with Cassie in 2011. Prosecutors say Combs was so upset that he arranged to have Cudi's convertible firebombed.

Also Wednesday, a federal agent showed jurors two handguns he said were found in a March 2024 raid at Combs' Miami-area home, along with photos of ammunition and a wooden box marked "Puffy" — one of his nicknames — that the agent said contained psilocybin, MDMA and other drugs.

Investigators also found items prosecutors say were hallmarks of "freak-offs," including dozens of bottles of baby oil and lubricant, said Homeland Security Investigations Special Agent Gerard Gannon.

Combs' lawyer Teny Geragos suggested the search — which involved 80 to 90 agents, an armored vehicle smashing the security gate, handcuffed employees and boat patrols — was overkill. Combs' Los Angeles mansion was also searched.

Gannon confirmed the federal investigation began the day after Cassie filed a lawsuit in November 2023 alleging that Combs abused her for years and involved her in hundreds of "freak-offs" with him and male sex workers. Combs soon settled for \$20 million, she said.

Combs has pleaded not guilty to charges alleging he leveraged his fame and fortune to control Cassie and other people through threats and violence. His lawyers say the evidence reflects domestic violence, not racketeering or sex trafficking.

Jurors also heard from a psychologist who delved into the complexities of abusive relationships. Dawn Hughes explained victims often experience a "low sense of self" and tend to stay with abusers because they yearn for love and compassion they experienced in a relationship's early "honeymoon phase."

Hughes also explained how a victim's memory can sometimes become jumbled — retaining awareness of abuse, but mixing up details. Hughes, who was paid \$6,000 by the prosecution to testify, didn't examine or mention Cassie or Combs, but her testimony paralleled some of what Cassie said she experienced with him.

Cassie testified that she started dating Cudi in late 2011. Although she and Combs broke up, they still engaged in "freak-offs," she said. It was during such an encounter that Combs looked at her phone and figured out she was seeing Cudi, Cassie said.

Cassie's mother, Regina Ventura, testified Tuesday that Cassie emailed her in December 2011 that Combs was so angry about the relationship that he planned to release explicit videos of her and have someone hurt Cassie and Cudi. Regina Ventura said Combs also demanded \$20,000. Scared for her daughter's safety, she said she sent Combs the money, only to have it returned by Combs days later.

Cassie testified that she broke up with Cudi before the end of the year.

"It was just too much," she said. "Too much danger, too much uncertainty of, like, what could happen if we continued to see each other."

After Cassie reunited with Combs, he told her that Cudi's car would be blown up and that he wanted Cudi's friends there to see it, Cassie said.

## Justice Department moves to cancel police reform settlements reached with Minneapolis and Louisville

By STEVE KARNOWSKI and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — The Justice Department moved Wednesday to cancel settlements with Minneapolis and Louisville that called for an overhaul of their police departments following the killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor that became the catalyst for nationwide racial injustice protests in the summer of 2020.

The Trump administration also announced it was retracting the findings of Justice Department investigations into six other police departments that the Biden administration had accused of civil rights violations.

The moves represent a dramatic about-face for a department that under Democratic President Joe Biden

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had aggressively pushed for federal oversight of local police forces it accused of widespread abuses. The Trump administration accused previous Justice Department leadership of using flawed legal theories to judge police departments and pursuing costly and burdensome court-enforced settlements known as consent decrees to address alleged problems it argues are better dealt with at the local level.

"It's our view at the Department of Justice Civil Rights Division under the Trump administration that federal micromanagement of local police should be a rare exception, and not the norm," Assistant Attorney General Harmeet Dhillon, the new leader of the division, told reporters.

The Justice Department announced its decision just before the five-year anniversary of the murder of George Floyd. Then-officer Derek Chauvin used his knee on May 25, 2020, to pin the Black man to the pavement for 9 1/2 minutes in a case that sparked protests around the world and a national reckoning with racism and police brutality.

The Biden administration launched pattern-or-practice investigations into police departments across the country, uncovering issues such as racial discrimination and excessive force. The Justice Department in the final weeks of the previous administration reached consent decree agreements with Minneapolis and Louisville but the settlements had yet to be approved by a judge.

Police reform advocates denounced the move to walk away from the agreements, saying a lack of federal oversight will put communities at risk.

"This move isn't just a policy reversal. It's a moral retreat that sends a chilling message that accountability is optional when it comes to Black and Brown victims," said the Rev Al. Sharpton, who worked with the Floyd and Taylor families to push for police accountability. "Trump's decision to dismiss these lawsuits with prejudice solidifies a dangerous political precedent that police departments are above scrutiny, even when they've clearly demonstrated a failure to protect the communities they're sworn to serve."

Kristen Clarke, who led the Civil Rights Division under the Biden administration, defended the findings of the police investigations of her office, noting that they were "led by career attorneys, based on data, body camera footage and information provided by officers themselves."

"To wholesale ignore and disregard these systemic violations, laid bare in well-documented and detailed public reports, shows patent disregard for our federal civil rights and the Constitution," Clarke said in a statement to The Associated Press.

The Trump administration said it was also reviewing more than a dozen police consent decrees that remain in place across the U.S. The Justice Department would have to convince a judge to back away from those already-finalized settlements — a move that some communities may oppose.

Dhillon, the Civil Rights Division chief, noted that both Louisville and Minneapolis are already taking action at the local level to make changes and impose oversight without the federal government's help. She cited the hefty cost on communities to comply with federal oversight — sometimes for more than a decade — and what she described as problems and abuses in the consent decree monitoring system.

"There is a lack of accountability. There is a lack of local control. And there is an industry here that is, I think, ripping off the taxpayers and making citizens less safe," Dhillon said.

The Minneapolis Police Department is operating under a similar consent decree with the Minnesota Human Rights Department. Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey and Police Chief Brian O'Hara pledged at a news conference Wednesday that the city will abide by the terms of the federal agreement as it was signed.

"We will comply with every sentence of every paragraph of the 169-page consent decree that we signed this year," said Frey. "We will make sure that we are moving forward with every sentence of every paragraph of both the settlement around the Minnesota Department of Human Rights, as well as the consent decree."

In Kentucky, the city of Louisville had reached an agreement with the Justice Department to reform its police force after a federal probe that found Louisville police engaged in a pattern of violating constitutional rights and discrimination against the Black community.

Louisville Mayor Mayor Craig Greenberg said the city remains committed to reforming its police force and will be soliciting applications from candidates who want to serve as an independent monitor.



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"Throughout all of that process, we never hesitated, we never delayed, we never took a step back in trying to learn how to do our jobs better and serve the community better," said Louisville Police Chief Paul Humphrey. "It's not about these words on this paper, it's about the work that the men and women of LMPD, the men and women of metro government and the community will do together in order to make us a safer, better place."

## Wall Street tumbles under the weight of rising Treasury yields and US debt worries

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Wall Street slumped on Wednesday under the weight of pressure from the bond market, where Treasury yields climbed on worries about the U.S. government's spiraling debt and other concerns.

The S&P 500 fell 1.6% for a second straight drop after breaking a six-day winning streak. The Dow Jones Industrial Average lost 816 points, or 1.9%, while the Nasdaq composite sank 1.4%.

Stocks had been drifting only modestly lower early in the day, after Target and other retailers gave mixed forecasts for upcoming profits amid uncertainty caused by President Donald Trump's trade war. The market then turned sharply lower after the U.S. government released the results for its latest auction of 20-year bonds.

The government regularly sells such bonds, which is how it borrows money to pay its bills. In this auction, the U.S. government had to pay a yield as high as 5.047% to attract enough buyers to lend it a total of \$16 billion over 20 years.

That helped push up yields for all kinds of other Treasuries, including the more widely followed 10-year Treasury. Its yield climbed to 4.59% from 4.48% late Tuesday and from just 4.01% early last month. That's a notable move in the bond market.

"Bonds finally appear to be getting equities' attention," according to Jonathan Krinsky, chief market technician at BTIG, pointing in particular to the 30-year Treasury yield, which jumped back above 5% and approached its highest level since 2023.

Treasury yields have been on the rise in part because of concerns that tax cuts currently under consideration in Washington could pile trillions of more dollars onto the U.S. government's debt. Concerns are also still brewing about how much Trump's tariffs will push up on inflation in the United States.

The U.S. government's bonds aren't alone, and yields have been on the rise recently for developed economies around the world. That's partly because their governments are continuing to borrow more cash to pay their bills, while central banks like the Federal Reserve have cut back on their own holdings of government bonds.

When the U.S. government has to pay more interest to borrow money, that can cause interest rates to rise for U.S. households and businesses too, including for mortgages, auto loans and credit cards. That in turn can slow the economy. Higher yields can also make investors less inclined to pay high prices for stocks and other kinds of investments.

Moody's Ratings became the last of the three major ratings agencies late last week to downgrade the U.S. government's credit rating on concerns that it may be heading toward an unsustainable amount of debt.

"We do not think that the downgrade matters by itself," Bank of America strategists wrote in a BofA Global Research report, "but it has served as a wake up call for those investors who had been ignoring the ongoing fiscal discussion."

On Wall Street, Target sank 5.2% after the retailer reported weaker profit and revenue than analysts expected for the start of the year.

The company said it felt some pain from boycotts by customers. It scaled back many diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives early this year following criticism by the White House and conservative activists, which drew its own backlash. Perhaps more worryingly for Wall Street, Target also cut its forecast for profit over the full year.

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Carter's, which sells apparel for babies and young children, sank 12.6% after cutting its dividend.

CEO Doug Palladini said the company made the move in part because of investments it anticipates making in upcoming years, as well as the possibility that it "may incur significantly higher product costs as the result of the new proposed tariffs on products imported into the United States."

All told, the S&P 500 fell 95.85 points to 5,844.61. The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 816.80 to 41,860.44, and the Nasdaq composite dropped 270.07 to 18,872.64.

A growing number of companies have recently said tariffs and uncertainty about the economy are making it difficult to guess what the upcoming year will bring. Others, including Walmart, have said they'll have to raise prices to offset Trump's tariffs.

U.S. stocks had recently recovered most of their steep losses from earlier in the year after Trump delayed or rolled back many of his stiff tariffs. Investors are hopeful that Trump will lower his tariffs more permanently after reaching trade deals with other countries.

In stock markets abroad, indexes were mixed amid mostly modest movements across Europe and Asia. London's FTSE 100 rose 0.1% after a report said inflation in the United Kingdom spiked to its highest level for more than a year in April. Tokyo's Nikkei 225 fell 0.6% after a report said Japan's exports have slowed due to tariffs.

## Uncommon May nor'easter to bring rain, snow to New England states just before Memorial Day weekend

By ISABELLA O'MALLEY and PATRICK WHITTLE Associated Press

SCARBOROUGH, Maine (AP) — An unusual May nor'easter is set to wallop New England on Thursday, providing a soaking before the Memorial Day holiday weekend with weather more commonly associated with fall and winter.

Nor'easters usually arrive in the end of fall and winter and bring high winds, rough seas and precipitation in the form of rain or snow. This week's nor'easter could bring wind gusts over 40 mph (64 kph) and up to 2 inches (5 centimeters) of rain in some areas. Snow is even possible at high elevations.

The storm has New Englanders preparing for a messy couple of days during a time of year usually reserved for sunshine and cookouts.

What is a nor'easter?

A nor'easter is an East Coast storm that is so named because winds over the coastal area are typically from the northeast, according to the National Weather Service. The storms can happen at any time of the year, but they are at their most frequent and strongest between September and April, according to the service.

The storms have caused billions of dollars in damage in the past. They usually reach the height of their strength in New England and eastern Canada. The storms often disrupt traffic and power grids and can cause severe damage to homes and businesses.

"We have a stronger jet stream, which is helping intensify a low pressure system that just happens to be coming up the coast. And so that's how it got the nor'easter name," said Kyle Pederson, a meteorologist at the National Weather Service in Boston.

Who will see rain and snow

The heaviest rain is likely to fall in Rhode Island and southern and eastern Massachusetts, Pederson said. Localized nuisance flooding and difficult driving conditions are possible Thursday, and catastrophic flooding is not expected.

The storm is then expected to pass, leaving light rain and patchy drizzle, on Friday.

"It's just really a nice dose of rain for the region — not expecting much for flooding," Pederson said.

Snow is expected to be confined to mountainous areas, but accumulations there are possible.

Why nor'easters are rare in May

Nor'easters are usually winter weather events, and it is unusual to see them in May. They typically form when there are large temperature differences from west to east during winter when there is cold air over

land and the oceans are relatively warm.

But right now there is a traffic jam in the atmosphere because of an area of high pressure in the Canadian Arctic that is allowing unusually cold air to funnel down over the Northeast. The low pressure system off the East Coast is being fueled by a jet stream that is unusually south at the moment.

"It really is a kind of a winter-type setup that you rarely see this late," said Judah Cohen, seasonal forecast director at the private firm Atmospheric and Environmental Research.

If this type of pattern in the atmosphere happened two months earlier, he said, "we'd be talking about a crippling snowstorm in the Northeastern U.S., not just a wet start to Memorial Day weekend."

## **NASA's Mars Perseverance snaps a selfie as a Martian dust devil blows by**

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — The latest selfie by NASA's Perseverance rover at Mars has captured an unexpected guest: a Martian dust devil.

Resembling a small pale puff, the twirling dust devil popped up 3 miles (5 kilometers) behind the rover during this month's photo shoot. Released Wednesday, the selfie is a composite of 59 images taken by the camera on the end of the rover's robotic arm, according to NASA.

It took an hour to perform all the arm movements necessary to gather the images, "but it's worth it," said Megan Wu, an imaging scientist from Malin Space Science Systems, which built the camera.

"Having the dust devil in the background makes it a classic," Wu said in a statement.

The picture — which also shows the rover's latest sample borehole on the surface — marks 1,500 sols or Martian days for Perseverance. That's equivalent to 1,541 days on Earth.

Perseverance is covered with red dust, the result of drilling into dozens of rocks. Launched in 2020, it's collecting samples for eventual return to Earth from Jezero Crater, an ancient lakebed and river delta that could hold clues of any past microbial life.

## **Measles is very contagious. Here's how to avoid it**

By DEVI SHASTRI and LAURA UNGAR Associated Press

New Jersey health officials are asking people who went to last week's Shakira concert at MetLife Stadium to monitor for measles symptoms because a person went to see the singer while infectious.

There is no confirmed outbreak in New Jersey, but the U.S. and North America are seeing high measles activity this year — including hundreds sickened by the highly infectious airborne virus in West Texas — and declining rates of people getting the vaccine, which is 97% effective after two doses.

Schools and daycares are among the most common places for measles exposures, like one that happened in three western North Dakota public schools in early May that led to all unvaccinated students being held at home for 21 days under state law.

Here's what to know about the measles and how to protect yourself.

What's happening with measles in the U.S.?

Most U.S. children get vaccinated against measles before entering public school, but increasing numbers of people skipping shots for religious or personal reasons have fueled outbreaks in the U.S. and abroad this year.

Overall, the U.S. has seen more than 1,000 measles cases across 30 states since the beginning of the year, and 11 states with outbreaks — defined as three or more related cases. The largest outbreak in the U.S. has been in Texas, New Mexico and Oklahoma. There are also large outbreaks in Mexico and Canada.

What is measles?

It's a respiratory disease caused by one of the world's most contagious viruses. The virus is airborne and spreads easily when an infected person breathes, sneezes or coughs. It most commonly affects kids.

"On average, one infected person may infect about 15 other people," said Scott Weaver, a center of

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excellence director for the Global Virus Network, an international coalition. "There's only a few viruses that even come close to that."

Measles first infects the respiratory tract, then spreads throughout the body, causing a high fever, runny nose, cough, red, watery eyes and a rash.

The rash generally appears three to five days after the first symptoms, beginning as flat red spots on the face and then spreading downward to the neck, trunk, arms, legs and feet. When the rash appears, the fever may spike over 104 degrees Fahrenheit, according to the CDC.

There's no specific treatment for measles, so doctors generally try to alleviate symptoms, prevent complications and keep patients comfortable.

People who have had measles once can't get it again, health officials say.

Can measles be fatal?

It usually doesn't kill people, but it can.

Common complications include ear infections and diarrhea. But about 1 in 5 unvaccinated Americans who get measles are hospitalized, the CDC said. Pregnant women who haven't gotten the vaccine may give birth prematurely or have a low-birthweight baby.

Among children with measles, about 1 in every 20 develops pneumonia, the CDC said, and about one in every 1,000 suffers swelling of the brain called encephalitis — which can lead to convulsions, deafness or intellectual disability.

"Children develop the most severe illness," said Weaver, who works at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston. "The cause of death in these kinds of cases is usually pneumonia and complications from pneumonia."

How can you prevent measles?

The best way to avoid measles is to get the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine. The first shot is recommended for children between 12 and 15 months old and the second between 4 and 6 years old.

"Before a vaccine was developed in the 1960s, everybody got" measles, Weaver said. There is "great data" on the safety and effectiveness of the vaccine, he said, because it's been around for decades.

"Any of these outbreaks we're seeing can easily be prevented by increasing the rate of vaccination in the community," he said. "If we can maintain 95% of people vaccinated, we're not going to see this happening in the future. And we've slipped well below that level in many parts of the country."

Vaccination rates have declined nationwide since the COVID-19 pandemic, and most states are below the 95% vaccination threshold for kindergartners — the level needed to protect communities against measles outbreaks.

Do you need a booster if you got the MMR vaccine a while ago?

Not usually. People who are vaccinated are considered protected against measles for their lifetime.

Health care providers can test for antibodies and give boosters if needed.

Getting another MMR shot as an adult is harmless if there are concerns about waning immunity, the CDC says. People who have documentation of receiving a live measles vaccine in the 1960s don't need to be revaccinated, but people who were immunized before 1968 with an ineffective vaccine made from "killed" virus should be revaccinated with at least one dose, the agency said.

People who have documentation that they had measles are immune, and those born before 1957 generally don't need the shots because so many children got measles back then that they have "presumptive immunity."

Weaver said people at high risk for infection who got the shots many years ago may want to consider getting a booster if they live in an area with an outbreak. Those may include family members living with someone who has measles or those especially vulnerable to respiratory diseases because of underlying medical conditions.



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## Trump's 'beautiful' bill spans more than 1,000 pages. Here's what's inside it

By KEVIN FREKING and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Republicans are getting closer to passing President Donald Trump's tax breaks, spending cuts and beefed-up border security as Speaker Mike Johnson attempts to pass the package over unified Democratic opposition by Memorial Day.

House committees have labored for months on the legislation, which exceeds 1,000 pages and is titled the "One Big Beautiful Bill Act," a nod to Trump himself.

GOP divisions have narrowed but continue as fiscal conservatives worry the bill doesn't do enough to curb Medicaid spending, while Republicans from competitive swing districts have expressed concerns about the prospect of their constituents losing access to health coverage and food assistance for constituents.

Democrats say they will fight what House party leader Hakeem Jeffries calls "this extreme and toxic bill."

Here's a look at what's in and out of the legislative package so far:

Tax cuts for individuals and businesses

Republicans look to make permanent the individual income and estate tax cuts passed in Trump's first term, in 2017, plus enact promises he made on the 2024 campaign trail to not tax tips, overtime and interest on some auto loans.

To partially offset the lost revenue, Republicans propose repealing or phasing out more quickly the clean energy tax credits passed during Joe Biden's presidency, helping to bring down the overall cost of the tax portion to about \$3.8 trillion.

The bill includes a temporary boost in the standard deduction — a \$1,000 increase for individuals, bringing it to \$16,000 for individual filers, and a \$2,000 boost for joint filers, bringing it to \$32,000. The deduction reduces the amount of income that is actually subject to income tax.

There is also a temporary \$500 increase in the child tax credit, bringing it to \$2,500 for 2025 through 2028. It then returns to \$2,000 and will increase to account for inflation.

The estate tax exemption rises to \$15 million and is adjusted for inflation going forward.

One of the thorniest issues in negotiations has been how much to raise the state and local tax deduction, now capped at \$10,000. That's been a priority of New York lawmakers. A tentative agreement has been reached to increase that "SALT" cap to \$40,000 for incomes up to \$500,000, with the cap phasing downward for those with higher incomes.

Several of the provisions Trump promised in the campaign would be temporary, lasting roughly through his term in office. The tax breaks for tips, overtime and car loan interest expire at the end of 2028. That's also the case for a \$4,000 increase in the standard deduction for seniors.

Among the various business tax provisions, small businesses, including partnerships and S corporations, will be able to subtract 23% of their qualified business income from their taxes. The deduction has been 20%

Businesses will temporarily be allowed to fully expense domestic research and development costs in the year they occur and the cost of machinery, equipment and other qualifying assets. This encourages businesses to invest in ways that enhances their productivity.

Parents and older Americans face work requirements for food assistance

House Republicans would reduce spending on food aid, what is known as the Supplemental Nutrition and Assistance Program, by about \$267 billion over 10 years.

States would shoulder 5% of benefit costs, beginning in fiscal 2028, and 75% of the administrative costs. Currently, states pay none of the benefit and half of the administration costs.

Republicans also are expanding the work requirements to receive food aid. Under current law, able-bodied adults without dependents must fulfill work requirements until they are 54, and that would change under the bill to age 64.

Also, some parents are currently exempt from work requirements until their children are 18; that would change so only those caring for a dependent child under the age of 7 are exempt.

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And new work requirements for Medicaid

A focal point of the package is nearly \$700 billion in reduced spending in the Medicaid program, according to CBO.

To be eligible for Medicaid, there would be new "community engagement requirements" of at least 80 hours per month of work, education or service for able-bodied adults without dependents. The new requirement would not kick in until Jan. 1, 2029, after Trump leaves office. People would also have to verify their eligibility for the program twice a year, rather than just once.

Republicans are looking to generate savings with new work requirements. But Democrats warn that millions of Americans will lose coverage.

An estimate from the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office said the proposals would reduce the number of people with health care by at least 7.6 million from the Medicaid changes, and possibly more with other changes to the Affordable Care Act.

No taxes on gun silencers, no money for Planned Parenthood and more

Republicans are also using the package to reward allies and disadvantage political foes.

The package would eliminate a \$200 tax on gun silencers that has existed since Congress passed the National Firearms Act in 1934. The elimination of the tax is supported by the NRA.

The group Giffords, which works to reduce gun violence, said silencers make it more difficult to recognize the sound of gunfire and locate the source of gunshots, impairing the ability of law enforcement to respond to active shooters.

Republicans are also looking to prohibit Medicaid funds from going to Planned Parenthood, which provides abortion care. Democrats say defunding the organization would make it harder for millions of patients to get cancer screenings, pap tests and birth control.

'MAGA' kids \$1,000 savings accounts

"MAGA" is shorthand for Trump's signature line, "Make America Great Again." But in this case, it means "Money Accounts for Growth and Advancement."

For parents or guardians who open new "MAGA" accounts for their children, the federal government will contribute \$1,000 for babies born between Jan. 1, 2024 and Dec. 31, 2028.

Families could add \$5,000 a year, with the account holders unable to take distributions before age 18. Then, they could access up to 50% of the money to pay for higher education, training and first-time home purchases. At age 30, account holders have access to the full balance of the account for any purpose.

Funding for Trump's mass deportation operation

The legislation would provide \$46.5 billion to revive construction of Trump's wall along the U.S.-Mexico border, and more money for the deportation agenda.

There's \$4 billion to hire an additional 3,000 new Border Patrol agents as well as 5,000 new customs officers, and \$2.1 billion for signing and retention bonuses. There's also funds for 10,000 more Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers and investigators.

It includes major changes to immigration policy, imposing a \$1,000 fee on migrants seeking asylum — something the nation has never done, putting it on par with few others, including Australia and Iran.

Overall, the plan is to remove 1 million immigrants annually and house 100,000 people in detention centers.

More money for the Pentagon and Trump's 'Golden Dome'

There's also nearly \$150 billion in new money for the Defense Department and national security.

It would provide \$25 billion for Trump's "Golden Dome for America," a long-envisioned missile defense shield, \$21 billion to restock the nation's ammunition arsenal, \$34 billion to expand the naval fleet with more shipbuilding and some \$5 billion for border security.

It also includes \$9 billion for servicemember quality of life-related issues, including housing, health care and special pay.

Tax on university endowments and overhaul of student loans

A wholesale revamping of the student loan program is key to the legislation, providing \$330 billion in budget cuts and savings.

The proposal would replace all existing student loan repayment plans with just two: a standard option

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with monthly payments spread out over 10 to 25 years and a "repayment assistance" plan that is generally less generous than those it would replace.

Among other changes, the bill would repeal Biden-era regulations that made it easier for borrowers to get loans canceled if their colleges defrauded them or closed suddenly.

There would be a tax increase, up to 21%, on some university endowments.

More drilling, mining on public lands

To generate revenue, one section would allow increased leasing of public lands for drilling, mining and logging while clearing the path for more development by speeding up government approvals.

Royalty rates paid by companies to extract oil, gas and coal would be cut, reversing Biden's attempts to curb fossil fuels to help address climate change.

In a last-minute add, Republicans also included a provision authorizing sales of hundreds of thousands of acres of public lands in Nevada and Utah, prompting outrage from Democrats and environmentalists.

## Bitcoin hits new price highs as crypto industry scores wins

By ALAN SUDERMAN undefined

Bitcoin hit a new all-time high as the world's most popular cryptocurrency reached price levels not seen since President Donald Trump's inauguration.

The digital asset traded above \$109,400 Wednesday morning, a huge increase from recent lows of about \$75,000 last month.

Several other cryptocurrencies have seen similar large gains in recent days. That includes Trump's official meme coins, which have jumped up about 75% in the last month. The president is set to have dinner Thursday with some of the meme coins' biggest investors, a move that's drawn intense criticism from some Democrats who say that Trump is improperly using the power of the presidency to boost his personal wealth.

Bitcoin's price increase comes after the crypto industry scored a major win with the U.S. Senate advancing legislation that creates a federal framework to regulate the stablecoins, a fast-growing form of cryptocurrency whose values are often tied to the U.S. dollar.

The bipartisan vote was a major win for the politically powerful cryptocurrency industry, which spent heavily in last year's election and has amassed a large war chest for next year's contests.

A former skeptic turned enthusiastic booster, Trump has been a major promoter of the crypto industry and previously took credit when bitcoin's price broke \$100,000 in December. His administration has established a "strategic bitcoin reserve" for the U.S. government and dropped or paused several enforcement actions against major crypto companies.

## Hydrate. Make lists. Leave yourself time. And other tips for reducing holiday travel stress

By KATHERINE ROTH Associated Press

Travel can be stressful in the best of times. Now add in the high-level anxiety that seems to be baked into every holiday season and it's clear that travelers could use some help calming frazzled nerves.

Travel pros say there is plenty you can do ahead of time to make for a happier and less-stressful holiday journey.

Make a list and check things off

A week before you leave, write down things you need to bring and tasks you need to do before the trip.

"This can include essential packing items, as well as simple tasks like cleaning out old food from the fridge or watering the plants," says Jess Feldman, special projects editor at Travel and Leisure magazine. "The key is to leave the list out for the entire week before you go. I cross the to-dos off throughout the week, and it helps me feel extremely prepared, lessening the stress every time."

Carry your comfort zone with you

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Noise-canceling headphones can go a long way toward blocking out annoyances during travel, although if you use them you should keep an eye on display boards or your phone for any flight or gate changes.

Spotify, YouTube and other sites offer music playlists with names like "Relaxing Chill Out Calming Music for Airports" and "Perfect — Music Travel Relax." Or try "Music for Airports," a groundbreaking album that launched the ambient music genre in 1978.

It's also good to carry extra medications, a change of clothes, a toothbrush and a phone-charging cable, just in case.

Bringing along some snacks or a sandwich from home can feel comforting and be a great alternative to pricey airport offerings.

"I tend to pack for worst-case scenarios, such as flight delays and cancellations. This includes bringing things to do of course, like more than one book, knitting materials, or a few extra downloaded movies," Feldman says. For longer journeys, she might bring a meal in a Tupperware container.

Stay hydrated

To counter the dry air on flights, bring along an empty water bottle (fill it after you go through security) and a small pouch with lip balm and travel-size moisturizers.

Hallie Gould, editor-in-chief of Byrdie, a digital site for beauty care, recommends "loading up on skin hydration before your flight. That means drinking extra fluids and applying moisturizing skin products to boost hydration, so you're covering your bases inside and out."

And don't forget your hair.

"Just as the low humidity on the airplane is dehydrating for your skin, it can also dry out your hair. If possible, use a deep conditioner before your trip," Gould says.

Get app-y and know the rules

"Every airline has different requirements when it comes to the boarding process, paying for perks in advance, or seat upgrades," Feldman says. "It's best to understand all of the above before getting to the airport so that you are not taken off guard."

Having the airline's app lets you know about gate changes, flight delays or cancellations sooner and allows you to more quickly find alternative flights or connections if needed.

Give yourself the gift of extra time

Security lines can be much longer — and slower — than expected, and so can the walk through a large airport. So giving yourself plenty of extra time can reduce stress. The general rule of thumb is to arrive at the airport two hours before departure for domestic flights and three hours before international flights.

If you're too early, you can always explore the airport shops and lounges or settle in with a good book somewhere.

"I always confirm whether or not there is a lounge I have access to in my departing gate ahead of time," Feldman says. But even without lounge access, she says, "I like to know what the restaurants and waiting areas (near) the gate are like."

Try to identify the source of your anxiety

"If you have a sense of why you are feeling stressed, it can help to figure out ways to reduce that stress," says Lynn F. Bufka, head of practice for the American Psychological Association. "So if you're feeling overwhelmed, are there things that you can outsource? Is there someone in your family who can help with parts of the planning?"

Recognize that crowds, bad weather and canceled flights are beyond your control.

And some people just don't like to travel far or to fly.

"If it's fear, like fear of flying, it's important to know that it can be treated, and that treatment can really improve the quality of your life," Bufka says.

Prepare to welcome yourself home

A little extra time tidying your home and making sure you have some easy-to-prepare food ready in the freezer or pantry will make for a much more welcoming return.

"Always, always, always clean your space before leaving for a trip. You are inevitably going to feel a bit off after a long travel day, and coming home to an unorganized space will make it so much worse," Feld-



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man says.

Wash the sheets, take out the trash, put away clothes, clean the countertops. "Arriving home to a neat and tidy space is the best homecoming, especially after a long time away," she says.

## Emotional well-being. Fall prevention. Chair yoga has a lot to offer people of all ages

By LEANNE ITALIE AP Lifestyles Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Marian Rivman is pushing 80. Harriet Luria is a proud 83. In this trio, Carol Leister is the baby at 62. Together, they have decades of experience with yoga. Only now, it involves a chair.

Chair yoga adapts traditional yoga poses for older people and others with physical challenges, but the three devotees said after a recent class that doesn't mean it's not a quality workout. As older adults have become more active, chair yoga has grown in popularity.

"You're stretching your whole body," Rivman offered. "What you can do in the chair is a little bit more forgiving on the knees and on the hips. So as you age, it allows you to get into positions that you were doing before without hurting yourself."

Sitting down to exercise, or standing while holding onto a chair to perform some poses, may not sound like a workout, but Rivman, Luria, Leister and practitioners everywhere see a world of benefits.

"I took it up because I have osteoporosis and the chair yoga is much easier," Luria said. "You don't have to worry as much about falling and breaking anything. It's not as difficult as I thought it would be, but it's not easy. And you really do use your muscles. It's an excellent workout."

Yoga with a chair isn't just for older people

Chair yoga is clearly marketed to older women, who made up the class where the three yoga friends got together at the Marlene Meyerson JCC on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. But the practice also has a lot to offer others, said their instructor, Whitney Chapman.

Desk workers can squeeze in 15 minutes of chair yoga, for instance. Many companies offer it as a way to cut down on stress and improve overall health. And people recovering from surgery or injuries may not be ready to get down on a yoga mat, but they can stretch in a chair.

"I've known these ladies probably 18 to 20 years. And the very first time in a yoga class that I brought in the chair, all of my students said I don't want geriatric yoga. I'm not an old person," Chapman said.

"And then they saw that having a chair is just as good as a yoga strap, a yoga block. It's another prop that's going to help you do what you want to do. So it's not necessarily because you're older, but that it can be helpful. And it doesn't mean you're geriatric just because you're sitting in a chair."

The benefits are many, Chapman said: improved flexibility, strength, balance. And there's the overall emotional well-being that yoga practitioners in general report. It's particularly useful for people with mobility issues or chronic ailments like arthritis or back pain. Chapman also teaches yoga to cancer and Parkinson's disease patients.

In addition to restorative and other benefits, the practice of chair yoga can help improve posture for people of all ages and abilities, and help older people prevent falls.

A physical practice that can last a lifetime

Leister recently retired.

"I've been looking for all different kinds of exercises to do and this is one of them," she said. "This is the one that I could see doing for the rest of my life, where some that are a little more strenuous I may not be able to do in the future."

Traditional yoga originated more than 5,000 years ago in India. Many of the poses used today are also that old. It can be as much spiritual as physical, and that also goes for its chair descendant. The precise movements are tied to deliberate, cleansing breathwork.

Rivman has been doing yoga for about 50 years.

"Once you start and you get what it does for your body, you don't want to give it up. And if there's a way that you can keep doing it and keep doing it safely, that's a choice you're going to make," she said.

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Yoga by the numbers, including chair yoga

The practice of yoga, including chair yoga, has been on the rise in the U.S. over the last 20 years. In 2022, the percentage of adults age 18 and older who practiced yoga in the past 12 months was 16.9%, with percentages highest among women ages 18–44, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Women are more than twice as likely as men to practice yoga, the data showed. The percentage of adults who practiced yoga to treat or manage pain decreased with increasing family income.

The CDC, didn't break out chair yoga for analysis but recommends that adults 65 and older focus on activities that improve balance and strength. That, the health agency said, can be achieved through various exercises, including chair yoga.

Why don't more men do yoga?

Chapman and her students have thoughts on why more men don't practice yoga. Traditionally, Chapman said, the practice was reserved for men, but as yoga became more westernized, women took over.

"Women tend to be more group-oriented. I would love to see more men in class. I do have a few. I don't know if they're intimidated, but you know, it's a great way to meet women if everybody's single," Chapman said with a chuckle.

Luria theorizes that fewer men are drawn to yoga because it's not a competitive sport.

"You're really working at your own level," she said. "Take out the competition and it's not their thing."

These chair yoga practitioners have lots of advice. Rivman summed it up best: "Get into a chair and do some yoga. You don't have to stand on your head, but you have to move. You're never too old to start."

## **Gerry Connolly, a Democratic congressman and fixture of Virginia politics, dies at 75**

By OLIVIA DIAZ Associated Press/Report for America

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — U.S. Rep. Gerald "Gerry" Connolly, an outspoken Democrat who sought key reforms in the federal government while bringing transformational development to his populous Virginia district, died Wednesday. He was 75.

Connolly, who most recently held a prominent position as the ranking member of the House Oversight Committee, served in Congress for more than 16 years.

He died at home in the company of family members, his family said in a statement. Connolly announced in 2024 that he had esophageal cancer and said a few months later that he planned to retire from Congress. His death leaves House Republicans with a 220-212 majority.

The spirited and at times bullheaded Fairfax Democrat became known for his voluble nature and willingness to engage in spirited debates. In one hearing, he accused Republicans of engaging in a witch hunt against the IRS, asking a witness if they ever read Arthur Miller's "The Crucible."

"I am heartbroken over the loss of my dear friend," said Democratic Sen. Mark Warner of Virginia. "To me, he exemplified the very best of public service." He said Connolly "met every challenge with tenacity and purpose, including his final battle with cancer, which he faced with courage, grace, and quiet dignity."

House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries said Connolly was a "hardworking, humble and honorable public servant" who used his perch on the Oversight Committee "to push back against the unprecedented attacks on the federal workers in his district and across the country."

A fixture of Virginia politics for three decades, Connolly was first elected to the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors in 1995. On the county board, he steered the transition of northern Virginia's Tysons Corner from a traffic-heavy mall area to a downtown business hub.

In 2003, Connolly was elected board chairman, and he continued pushing for transportation investment that had been debated among officials for decades. Connolly sought billions in state and federal dollars to develop the regional rail system's Silver Line connecting the national capital region to Tysons Corner.

Connolly's dream was realized with the Silver Line's opening in 2014, and eight years later, the rail line

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was extended an extra 11 miles (18 kilometers) to reach Dulles International Airport.

As the extension opened in 2022, Connolly said: "Doing big things is difficult — the world is filled with naysayers."

Connolly's local government experience launched his congressional career. He was elected in 2008 after flipping an open Republican-held seat by nearly 42,000 votes. In his victory speech, Connolly said he would use his position to ensure the federal bureaucracy is "a responsive, accountable instrument for the people we serve."

"If we insist the government must work for all of our citizens again, we cannot fail," Connolly said.

Connolly got his first taste of Congress while working as a staffer for the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations in the 1980s. Decades later, Connolly became a member of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs.

He also served as a member of the House Oversight Committee and led Democrats on subcommittees on government innovation and information technology.

Connolly cosponsored the 2010 Telework Enhancement Act, which requires federal agencies to allow a portion of their employees to telework at least one day a week. In 2014, he cosponsored another bill that reformed federal IT management and has since saved the government billions of dollars, according to the Government Accountability Office.

He also closely followed the financial burden of the slowing U.S. Postal Service, becoming a prominent voice accusing President Donald Trump and former Postmaster General Louis DeJoy of seeking to winnow the postal service to suppress mail-in ballots during the 2020 presidential election.

Connolly reached a new milestone late last year as he was chosen ranking member of the House Oversight Committee. He defeated Democratic Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez for the position. The victory came shortly after Connolly announced late last year that he had been diagnosed with esophageal cancer and would undergo chemotherapy and immunotherapy.

As ranking member, Connolly called on inspectors general to investigate the Department of Government Efficiency. He and other Democrats also introduced a pair of resolutions demanding the Trump administration turn over documents and information about billionaire adviser Elon Musk's potential conflicts of interest and the firings of federal workers.

He said in late April that after "grueling treatments," he learned that the cancer had returned and that he decided to step down from his post on the committee and would not seek reelection.

"With no rancor and a full heart, I move into this final chapter full of pride in what we've accomplished together over 30 years," he said.

## **US must keep control of migrants sent to South Sudan in case removals were unlawful, judge rules**

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal judge has ruled that U.S. officials must retain custody and control of migrants apparently removed to South Sudan in case he orders their removals were unlawful.

U.S. District Judge Brian E. Murphy in Massachusetts issued the ruling late Tuesday after an emergency hearing, after attorneys for immigrants said the Trump administration appears to have begun deporting people from Myanmar and Vietnam to South Sudan — despite a court order restricting removals to other countries.

Murphy said the government must "maintain custody and control of class members currently being removed to South Sudan or to any other third country, to ensure the practical feasibility of return if the Court finds that such removals were unlawful."

While Murphy left the details to the government's discretion, he said he expects the migrants "will be treated humanely."

Attorneys for the migrants told the judge that immigration authorities may have sent up to a dozen

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people from several countries to Africa, which they argue violates a court order saying people must get a "meaningful opportunity" to argue that sending them to a country outside their homeland would threaten their safety.

The apparent removal of one man from Myanmar was confirmed in an email from an immigration official in Texas, according to court documents. He was informed only in English, a language he does not speak well, and his attorneys learned of the plan hours before his deportation flight, they said.

A woman also reported that her husband from Vietnam and up to 10 other people were flown to Africa Tuesday morning, attorneys from the National Immigration Litigation Alliance wrote.

The attorneys asked Murphy for an emergency court order to prevent the deportations. Murphy, who was appointed by President Joe Biden, previously found that any plans to deport people to Libya without notice would "clearly" violate his ruling, which also applies to people who have otherwise exhausted their legal appeals.

Murphy said in his Tuesday order that U.S. officials must appear in court Wednesday to identify the migrants impacted, address when and how they learned they would be removed to a third country, and what opportunity they were given to raise a fear-based claim. He also ruled that the government must provide information about the whereabouts of the migrants apparently already removed.

The Department of Homeland Security and the White House did not immediately return messages seeking comment.

South Sudan's police spokesperson Major General James Monday Enoka told The Associated Press Wednesday that no migrants had arrived in the country and that if they arrive, they would be investigated and again "re-deported to their correct country" if found not to be South Sudanese.

Some countries do not accept deportations from the United States, which has led the Trump administration to strike agreements with other countries, including Panama, to house them. The Trump administration has sent Venezuelans to a notorious prison in El Salvador under an 18th-century wartime law hotly contested in the courts.

South Sudan has suffered repeated waves of violence since gaining independence from Sudan in 2011 amid hopes it could use its large oil reserves to bring prosperity to a region long battered by poverty. Just weeks ago, the country's top U.N. official warned that fighting between forces loyal to the president and a vice president threatened to spiral again into full-scale civil war.

The situation is "darkly reminiscent of the 2013 and 2016 conflicts, which took over 400,000 lives," Nicholas Haysom, head of the almost 20,000-strong U.N. peacekeeping mission.

The U.S. State Department's annual report on South Sudan, published in April 2024, says "significant human rights issues" include arbitrary killings, disappearances, torture or inhumane treatment by security forces and extensive violence based on gender and sexual identity.

The U.S. Homeland Security Department has given Temporary Protected Status to a small number of South Sudanese already living in the United States since the country was founded in 2011, shielding them from deportation because conditions were deemed unsafe for return. Secretary Kristi Noem recently extended those protections to November to allow for a more thorough review.

South Sudan's diplomatic relations with the U.S. grew tense in April when a deportation row led to the revocation of visas and a ban on South Sudanese nationals.

The U.S. is one of the biggest donors to South Sudan's humanitarian aid programs with the total funding in 2024 standing at over \$640 million, according to the U.S. embassy in South Sudan.

## Japan's agriculture minister resigns after a rice gaffe causes political fallout

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Japan's agriculture minister was forced to resign Wednesday because of political fallout over his recent comments that he "never had to buy rice" because he got it from supporters as a gift. The resignation comes as the public struggles with record high prices of the country's traditional staple food.



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Taku Eto's comment, which many Japanese saw as out of touch with economic realities, came at a seminar Sunday for the Liberal Democratic Party, which leads a struggling minority government. The gaffe could be further trouble for the party before a national election in July. A major loss could mean a new government or could mean Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba would have to step down.

"I made an extremely inappropriate remark at a time when consumers are struggling with soaring rice prices," Eto told reporters after submitting his resignation at the prime minister's office. He was the first minister to resign under Ishiba's leadership that began October.

The government has released tons of rice from its emergency stockpile in recent months, but the latest agricultural ministry statistics show little impact from the move. Some supermarkets have started selling cheaper imported rice.

Eto also sought to clarify the comments that got him in trouble. He said he does actually buy white rice himself and was not living on rice given as gifts. He said the gift comment referred to brown rice, which he wants people to become interested in because it can reach market faster.

Ishiba appointed popular former Environment Minister Shinjiro Koizumi, the son of a former prime minister, to lead the ministry, noting his experience in agriculture and fisheries policies and enthusiasm for reforms.

Koizumi told reporters Ishiba instructed him to do everything to stabilize the rice supply and prices to address consumer concern.

"I was told to put rice before anything," Koizumi told reporters. "At this difficult time, I will do my utmost to speedily tackle the high rice prices that people feel and worry about in their everyday lives." He said he shares consumers' concerns as he feeds his children packaged instant rice sometimes.

Ishiba, also a former farm minister, said he wants to strengthen Japan's food security and self-sufficiency. He has proposed agricultural reforms, including increased rice production and possible exports, though critics say he should urgently fix the ongoing rice problem first.

Noting the rice situation, Ishiba said he suspects the rice price surge is "not a temporary but a structural problem."

"It may not be easy to find an answer," he said, but repeated his pledge to do the utmost to ease consumers' difficulties and to reform rice policies.

Koizumi said the measures so far have proved ineffective and that he will speed the effort as soon as he formally takes office later Wednesday. He stressed the need to reform Japanese rice policy, which has focused on powerful organizations that represent farmers, to focus more on the benefit of consumers.

Japanese rice demand has decreased over recent decades as people's diets have diversified, but rice remains a staple food and an integral part of Japanese culture and history.

"Rice is the staple food for the Japanese. When its prices are rising every week, (Eto's) resignation is only natural," said Shizuko Oshima, 73.

The shortfall started last August with panic buying following a government caution over preparedness for a major earthquake. The supply pressure eased after the autumn harvest, but a shortage and price increases hit again early this year.

Officials have blamed the supply shortage on poor harvests because of hot weather in 2023 and higher fertilizer and other production costs, but some experts blame the government's long-term rice production policy.

The unprecedented release from emergency rice stockpiles was seen in part as an attempt to figure out distribution problems. The government has denied there is now a rice shortage, but officials say it's a mystery why rice is not reaching consumers as expected. Some experts say the rice shortage could be serious but it's difficult to trace rice as its distribution route has become so complex since the end of government control in 1995.

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## Today in History: May 22

### Strongest earthquake recorded strikes Chile

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Thursday, May 22, the 142nd day of 2025. There are 223 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On May 22, 1960, the strongest earthquake recorded struck southern Chile. The magnitude 9.5 quake claimed 1,655 lives, left 2 million homeless and triggered a tsunami responsible for over 230 additional deaths in Hawaii, Japan and the Philippines.

Also on this date:

In 1939, the foreign ministers of Germany and Italy, Joachim von Ribbentrop and Galeazzo Ciano, signed a "Pact of Steel" committing their two countries to a military and political alliance.

In 1962, Continental Airlines Flight 11, en route from Chicago to Kansas City, Missouri, crashed near Unionville, Missouri, after a passenger ignited dynamite on board the plane, killing all 45 occupants of the Boeing 707.

In 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson, speaking at the University of Michigan, outlined the goals of his "Great Society," saying that it "rests on abundance and liberty for all" and "demands an end to poverty and racial injustice."

In 1969, the lunar module of Apollo 10, with Thomas P. Stafford and Eugene Cernan aboard, flew within nine miles of the moon's surface in a "dress rehearsal" for the first lunar landing.

In 1985, U.S. sailor Michael L. Walker was arrested aboard the aircraft carrier Nimitz, two days after his father, John A. Walker Jr., was apprehended by the FBI; both were later convicted of spying for the Soviet Union. (Michael Walker served 15 years in prison and was released in 2000; John Walker Jr. died in prison in 2014.)

In 1992, after a reign lasting nearly 30 years, Johnny Carson hosted his final episode of NBC's "Tonight Show." (Jay Leno took over as host three days later.)

In 2011, a massive EF5 tornado struck Joplin, Missouri, with winds up to 250 mph (400 kph), killing at least 159 people and destroying about 8,000 homes and businesses.

In 2017, a suicide bomber set off an improvised explosive device that killed 22 people and injured over 1,000 following an Ariana Grande concert in Manchester, England.

Today's Birthdays: Actor-filmmaker Richard Benjamin is 87. Songwriter Bernie Taupin is 75. Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, is 68. Singer Morrissey is 66. Singer Johnny Gill (New Edition) is 59. Actor Brooke Smith is 58. Model Naomi Campbell is 55. Actor Sean Gunn is 51. Actor Ginnifer Goodwin is 47. Actor Maggie Q is 46. Olympic speed skating gold medalist Apolo Anton Ohno is 43. Tennis player Novak Djokovic is 38. Actor Peyton Elizabeth Lee is 21.