

Groton Daily Independent

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Thursday, June 26

Senior Menu: Kielbasa with Mac n cheese, winter blend, fruit, whole wheat bread.

Jr. Legion hosts Britton, 5:30 p.m. (DH)

Jr. Teeners at Aberdeen 13U, 5:30 p.m. (DH)

Softball: U8G at Claremont, 5:30 p.m.; U14 hosts Redfield 1, 5 p.m. (DH)

T-Ball: Black at Columbia, 5 p.m.

Friday, June 27

Senior Menu: Oven fried chicken, sweet potato, corn, cherry fluff, dinner roll.

Legion at Lake Norden, 6 p.m.

Saturday, June 28

Jr. Legion hosts Clear Lake, 3 p.m.

Jr. Teeners host Clear Lake, 1 p.m.

Groton U10 Tourney

Groton Daily Independent

PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445

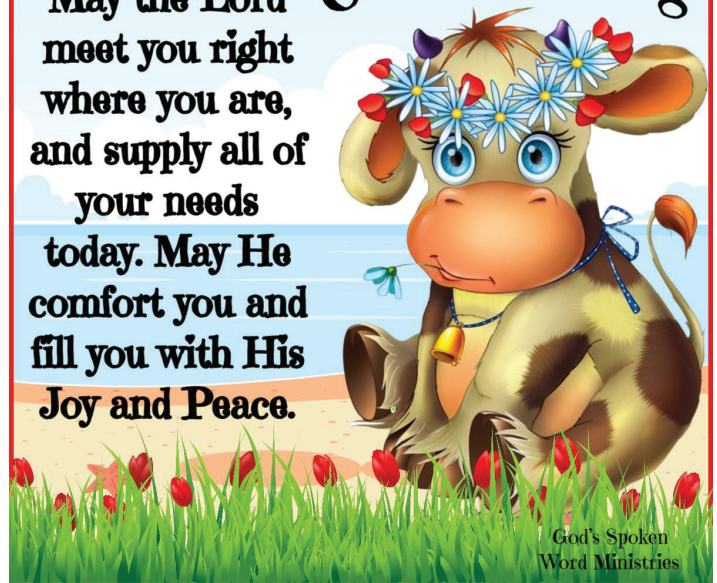
Paul's Cell/Text: 605-397-7460

THURSDAY BLESSINGS

Have a Wonderful and
Thankful Day.

May the Lord
meet you right
where you are,
and supply all of
your needs
today. May He
comfort you and
fill you with His
Joy and Peace.

Good Morning



Sunday, June 29

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.

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

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.

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

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

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

Amateurs at Redfield, 4 p.m.

Groton U12 Tourney

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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.

Iranian Nuclear Program

Iran's parliament voted yesterday to suspend cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency. The bill requires approval from the country's unelected 12-person Guardian Council—and Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei—to go into effect.

There are competing claims about the impact of US military strikes on Iran's nuclear program. President Donald Trump maintains the strikes set Iran's program back decades, downplaying a leaked US intelligence report suggesting a monthslong delay. Trump said he will meet with Iranians next week for negotiations but that a deal is not necessary to degrade Iranian capabilities. Iran claims it moved its uranium stockpile out of nuclear facilities ahead of the strikes and now plans to accelerate enrichment. The country maintains its program is peaceful.

Separately, Trump touted progress in ceasefire talks between Israel and Hamas. Dozens of people were reported killed in Gaza while waiting for aid this week. Seven Israeli soldiers were killed in a bombing yesterday.

Bezos Nuptials Begin

Festivities kick off in Venice this week for the high-profile wedding of Amazon founder Jeff Bezos and former TV journalist Lauren Sanchez. The three-day affair will draw an estimated 200 to 250 wedding guests, potentially costing up to \$76M. See how it stacks up against other lavish weddings.

The ceremony's precise location is not publicly known, but a reception is planned for Arsenale di Venezia, a centuries-old complex surrounded by water on the city's outer edge. The guest list reportedly includes Oprah Winfrey, Mick Jagger, Leonardo DiCaprio, Katy Perry, and Ivanka Trump.

Attendees were asked not to provide gifts, with Bezos and Sanchez donating to the city in the guests' honor. Water levels in Venice are expected to rise by half a centimeter per year, with parts of the city permanently underwater by 2150. Protesters have gathered to demonstrate against wealth inequality and over-tourism under the banner "No Space for Bezos."

Nike's Female Focus

Kenyan Olympian Faith Kipyegon will launch a Nike-backed bid to become the first woman to run a sub-four-minute mile.

The 31-year-old Olympian has prepared since 2023, when she clocked a 4:07.64 mile in Monaco, beating the previous record by over four seconds. While today's event is ineligible for official record contention, Nike hopes it will boost women's line sales, which saw 4.4% growth since 2021, compared to 13.5% for men's. The company recently doubled its research investment into female athletes' anatomy and biodynamics. Kipyegon will sport Nike's latest prototypes: a suit with nodes designed to reduce drag; a bra made of 3D-printed, moisture-wicking material; and a shoe 25% lighter than the model she wore in last year's Olympics.

The first man to crack the four-minute mile was Roger Bannister in 1954.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

The Dallas Mavericks take Duke's Cooper Flagg with the top pick of the 2025 NBA Draft; Round 2 is set for tonight (8pm ET, ESPN)

Closing arguments begin today in Sean "Diddy" Combs' wide-ranging sex crimes trial.

Brian Johnson, social media influencer who was the subject of a Netflix documentary, arrested after making "terroristic" threats against Joe Rogan.

Concacaf Gold Cup group stage complete with quarterfinals set for this weekend.

2025 FIFA Club World Cup group stage is ongoing.

Science & Technology

Google DeepMind unveils AlphaGenome, an AI-powered platform to predict how variants and mutations in genetic code lead to different diseases, impact biological processes, and more

Solar-powered sea slugs eat algae and incorporate the photosynthetic components into their own cells, allowing them to capture energy from sunlight

James Webb Space Telescope captures its first image of a planet orbiting a star outside the solar system; around 111 light-years away, is the lightest exoplanet ever directly observed.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close mixed (S&P 500 -0.0%, Dow -0.3%, Nasdaq +0.3%).

Nvidia shares notch record high for the first time since January

Federal Reserve proposes loosening key rule regulating the quantity and quality of capital banks should keep against their investments; original rule stems from 2008 financial crisis to ensure stability of big US banks

Bumble to lay off about 30% of its workforce, or roughly 240 employees, as the dating app seeks to return to growth; shares close up 25% on the news

Politics & World Affairs

NATO leaders agree to increase defense spending to 5% of countries' gross domestic product by 2035.

Antigovernment protests in Kenya leave at least eight people dead, over 80 injured; demonstrations coincide with one-year anniversary of antitax protests.

Centers for Disease Control advisory committee announces plan to reexamine childhood vaccine schedule; meeting is the first since Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. replaced the panel earlier this month.

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Nick Morris Leads Groton Legion Post 39 Past Webster

By GameChanger Media

Nick Morris was dominant on the mound, as the pitcher rang up 11 strikeouts in Groton Legion Post 39's 9-0 victory over Webster on Wednesday at Groton. Morris gave up zero hits and zero runs over five innings while walking one.

Groton Legion Post 39 were the first to get on the board in the first when Brevin Fliehs singled, scoring one run.

Groton Legion Post 39 added to their early lead in the bottom of the second inning when Jarrett Erdmann doubled, scoring one run, and Teylor Diegel singled, scoring two runs.

Groton Legion Post 39 added one run in the third. Webster committed an error, making the score 5-0.

Blaize Amdahl took the loss for Webster. The starting pitcher went four innings, surrendering nine runs (five earned) on seven hits, striking out three and walking one.

Diegel and Korbin Kucker were a force together in the lineup, as they each collected two hits for Groton Legion Post 39 while hitting back-to-back. Diegel and Kucker were a one-two punch in the lineup, as each drove in two runs for Groton Legion Post 39.

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Groton Legion Post 39 Defeat Webster

By GameChanger Media

Groton Legion Post 39 beat Webster 5-2 on Wednesday at Groton.

Groton Legion Post 39 got on the board in the bottom of the first inning after Webster committed an error, and Nick Morris hit a sacrifice fly, each scoring one run.

Groton Legion Post 39 added to their early lead in the bottom of the second inning after TC Schuster singled down the left field line, Webster committed an error, and Brevin Fliehs grounded out, each scoring one run.

Kellen Antonsen earned the win for Groton Legion Post 39. The right-handed pitcher gave up three hits and two runs (one earned) over five innings, striking out six and walking none. Carter Williams took the loss for Webster. The starting pitcher went four innings, allowing five runs (one earned) on six hits, striking out two and walking one.

Lincoln Krause, Braxton Imrie, Teylor Diegel, Schuster, Korbin Kucker, and Nick Groeblichhoff each collected one hit for Groton Legion Post 39. Morris, Schuster, Fliehs, and Carter Simon each drove in one run for Groton Legion Post 39. Diegel and Kucker each stole multiple bases for Groton Legion Post 39. Groton Legion Post 39 ran wild on the base paths, collecting six stolen bases for the game. Groton Legion Post 39 turned one double play in the game.

Jack Shoemaker, Martin Dorsett, and Brent Bearman each collected one hit for Webster. Sheldon Schmeig stole two bases. Webster stole five bases in the game.

Next up for Groton Legion Post 39 is a game at Lake Norden on Friday.

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Webster 0 - 9 Groton Legion Post 39

📍 Home 📅 Wednesday June 25, 2025

	1	2	3	4	5	R	H	E
WBST	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
GRTN	1	3	1	4	X	9	7	1

BATTING

Webster	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
B Amdahl #3 (P)	2	0	0	0	0	2
C Williams #2 (2B)	2	0	0	0	0	0
B Bearm... #20 (CF)	1	0	0	0	1	0
J Shoema... #4 (SS)	2	0	0	0	0	2
S Schmeig #11 (C)	2	0	0	0	0	2
T Mamme... #6 (3B)	2	0	0	0	0	2
J Ponce #14 (RF)	2	0	0	0	0	2
D Carlson #18 (1B)	1	0	0	0	0	0
M Dorsett #7 (LF)	1	0	0	0	0	1
Totals	15	0	0	0	1	11

LOB: 1

PITCHING

Webster	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
B Amdahl #3	4.0	7	9	5	1	3	0
Totals	4.0	7	9	5	1	3	0

L: B Amdahl, P-S: B Amdahl 76-47, WP: B Amdahl 2, HBP: B Amdahl, BF: B Amdahl 23

Groton Legion Post 39	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
T Diegel #7 (CF)	3	2	2	2	0	0
K Kucker #9 (2B)	3	2	2	2	0	0
B Fliehs #6 (SS)	3	0	1	1	0	0
C Simon #4 (1B)	2	1	1	1	0	1
N Groeb... #13 (DH)	3	0	0	0	0	0
B Imrie #1 (RF)	2	0	0	0	0	1
K Fliehs #10 (C)	2	1	0	0	0	1
J Erdmann #0 (LF)	1	2	1	1	1	0
A Abeln #5 (3B)	1	1	0	0	0	0
Totals	20	9	7	7	1	3

2B: J Erdmann, C Simon, K Kucker 2, TB: J Erdmann 2, T Diegel 2, C Simon 2, B Fliehs, K Kucker 4, SF: C Simon, HBP: A Abeln, LOB: 2

Groton Legion Post 39	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
N Morris #17	5.0	0	0	0	1	11	0
Totals	5.0	0	0	0	1	11	0

W: N Morris, P-S: N Morris 59-44, BF: N Morris 16

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Webster 2 - 5 Groton Legion Post 39

📍 Home 📅 Wednesday June 25, 2025

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

BATTING

Webster	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
B Amdahl #3 (SS)	2	0	0	0	0	2
C Williams #2 (P)	1	0	0	0	0	0
B Bearm... #20 (CF)	2	1	1	0	0	0
J Shoemaker #4	2	0	1	0	0	0
S Schmeig #11 (C)	2	1	0	0	0	0
T Mamen... #6 (3B)	2	0	0	0	0	1
M Dorsett #21 (LF)	2	0	1	0	0	1
M Dorsett #5 (RF)	2	0	0	0	0	1
Z Finch #12 (2B)	2	0	0	0	0	1
T Acree #10 (1B)	2	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	19	2	3	0	0	6

2B: B Bearman, **TB:** M Dorsett, J Shoemaker, B Bearman 2, **HBP:** C Williams, **SB:** S Schmeig 2, M Dorsett, J Shoemaker, B Bearman, **LOB:** 3

PITCHING

Webster	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
C Williams #2	4.0	6	5	1	1	2	0
Totals	4.0	6	5	1	1	2	0

L: C Williams, **P-S:** C Williams 66-39, **HBP:** C Williams 2, **BF:** C Williams 23

Groton Legion Post 39	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
T Diegel #7 (CF)	3	1	1	0	0	0
K Kucker #9 (2B)	2	1	1	0	1	0
B Fliehs #6 (C)	3	0	0	1	0	1
C Simon #4 (1B)	1	0	0	1	0	0
N Morris #17 (3B)	1	0	0	1	0	0
N Groebl... #13 (RF)	2	0	1	0	0	0
B Imrie #1 (DH)	2	1	1	0	0	0
T Schuster #3 (SS)	2	1	1	1	0	0
K Fliehs #10	1	1	0	0	0	0
L Krause #2 (LF)	2	0	1	0	0	1
Totals	19	5	6	4	1	2

2B: K Kucker, **TB:** T Diegel, B Imrie, K Kucker 2, T Schuster, L Krause, N Groeblichhoff, **SF:** N Morris, **CS:** L Krause, **HBP:** C Simon, K Fliehs, **SB:** C Simon, T Diegel 2, B Imrie, K Kucker 2, **LOB:** 6

Groton Legion Post 39	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
K Anton... #16	5.0	3	2	1	0	6	0
Totals	5.0	3	2	1	0	6	0

W: K Antonsen, **P-S:** K Antonsen 58-44, **HBP:** K Antonsen, **BF:** K Antonsen 20

Groton Jr. Teeners 14U Triumph Over W.I.N. Jr. Teeners

By GameChanger Media

Groton Jr. Teeners 14U beat W.I.N. Jr. Teeners 4-2 on Wednesday.

Groton Jr. Teeners 14U opened the scoring in the first after Lincoln Shilhanek doubled, scoring one run.

W.I.N. Jr. Teeners took the lead in the bottom of the first. Decklin O'daniel drew a walk, scoring one run, to give W.I.N. Jr. Teeners the leg up, 2-1.

Groton Jr. Teeners 14U took the lead in the top of the second inning after Keegan Kucker singled, and Trayce Schelle was struck by a pitch, each scoring one run.

Groton Jr. Teeners 14U added one run in the third. Zach Fliehs singled to left field, making the score 4-2.

Shilhanek earned the win for Groton Jr. Teeners 14U. The hurler allowed two hits and two runs over five innings, striking out two and walking six. Colton Smith took the loss for W.I.N. Jr. Teeners. The hurler went five innings, surrendering four runs on seven hits, striking out one and walking one.

Noah Scepaniak, Kolton Antonsen, Fliehs, Jordan Schwan, Kucker, Sam Crank, and Shilhanek each collected one hit for Groton Jr. Teeners 14U. Fliehs, Kucker, Schelle, and Shilhanek each drove in one run for Groton Jr. Teeners 14U. Groton Jr. Teeners 14U turned two double plays in the game.

Carson Reppe and Smith each collected one hit for W.I.N. Jr. Teeners. W.I.N. Jr. Teeners had patience at the plate, piling up six walks for the game. Drew Sparling and Reppe led the team with two free passes each. Sparling stole two bases. W.I.N. Jr. Teeners were sure-handed in the field and didn't commit a single error. Reppe had the most chances in the field with five.

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Jordan Schwan Drives 4 Runners Home In Groton Jr. Teeners 14U Victory Over W.I.N. Jr. Teeners

By GameChanger Media

Jordan Schwan drove in four runs on four hits to lead Groton Jr. Teeners 14U past W.I.N. Jr. Teeners 15-5 on Wednesday. Schwan doubled in the fifth scoring two, tripled in the first scoring one, tripled in the second scoring one, and singled in the third scoring one.

Groton Jr. Teeners 14U got on the board in the top of the first inning after Trayce Schelle singled to the left side of the infield, Schwan tripled to center field, Lincoln Shilhanek grounded out, and Gavin Hanten walked, each scoring one run.

Groton Jr. Teeners 14U added to their early lead in the top of the second inning after Schwan tripled to center field, and Schwan scored after tagging up, each scoring one run.

A single by Kyson Kucker, a ground out by Schelle, and a single by Schwan helped Groton Jr. Teeners 14U extend their early lead in the third.

Keegan Kucker earned the win for Groton Jr. Teeners 14U. The pitcher surrendered three hits and five runs (one earned) over five innings, striking out two and walking three. Jaron Haven took the loss for W.I.N. Jr. Teeners. The hurler went two innings, allowing six runs on six hits, striking out two and walking three.

Groton Jr. Teeners 14U amassed 12 hits in the game. Zach Fliehs, Schelle, and Kucker each collected multiple hits for Groton Jr. Teeners 14U. Groton Jr. Teeners 14U had a strong eye at the plate, piling up 13 walks for the game. Hanten and Kolton Antonsen led the team with three free passes each. Kucker stole two bases.

Jasper Ophal, Kyle Olson, and Dalton Lee each collected one hit for W.I.N. Jr. Teeners. Reign Mansfield and Aaron Ackerman each drove in one run for W.I.N. Jr. Teeners. Carson Reppe stole two bases.

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Locke Electric Fall After Strong Showing By Circus Sports Bar

By GameChanger Media

Groton Locke Electric had trouble keeping up with Circus Sports Bar in a 17-2 loss on Wednesday at Aberdeen.

Groton Locke Electric were the first to get on the board in the first when Alex Morris hit into a double play, but one run scored.

Circus Sports Bar took the lead in the bottom of the first inning after Casey Vining tripled down the right field line, and Michael Babcock hit a sacrifice fly, each scoring one run.

BJ Richter singled down the right field line, which helped Groton Locke Electric tie the game at two in the top of the second.

In the bottom of the second, Circus Sports Bar broke up the tie when Easton Millar singled, scoring one run. Then a single by Vining followed to extend the lead to 4-2.

Circus Sports Bar added one run in the third after Joshue Steinwandt grounded out.

Circus Sports Bar scored eight runs on two hits in the bottom of the fourth inning. WolfDon Thorson hit a grand slam to right field, Jesse Babcock was struck by a pitch, driving in a run, Millar drew a walk, scoring one run, Jaiden Smith drew a walk, scoring one run, and Vining drew a walk, scoring one run.

Chad Ellingson earned the win for Circus Sports Bar. The righty gave up five hits and two runs over five innings, striking out three and walking none. Ryan Groeblichhoff took the loss for Groton Locke Electric. The starter went three and two-thirds innings, surrendering 13 runs (eight earned) on seven hits, striking out none and walking four.

Number eight hitter, Richter, showed the depth of Groton Locke Electric's lineup, by leading them with two hits in two at bats.

Circus Sports Bar amassed nine hits in the game. Thorson provided pop in the middle of the lineup, and led Circus Sports Bar with four runs batted in. The cleanup hitter went 2-for-4 on the day. Number seven hitter, Kelly Coates, showed the depth of Circus Sports Bar's lineup, by leading them with three hits in four at bats. Vining collected two hits for Circus Sports Bar in three at bats. Circus Sports Bar had patience at the plate, amassing 10 walks for the game. Millar, Smith, Babcock, and Steinwandt led the team with two free passes each. Thorson stole two bases. Circus Sports Bar ran wild on the base paths, collecting four stolen bases for the game. Circus Sports Bar turned one double play in the game.

Groton Locke Electric will travel to Redfield for their next game on Sunday.

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Groton Locke Electric 2 - 17 Circus Sports Bar

📍 Away 📅 Wednesday June 25, 2025

	1	2	3	4	5	R	H	E
GRTN	1	1	0	0	0	2	5	2
CRCS	2	2	1	8	4	17	9	1

BATTING

Groton Locke Electric	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
D Frey #6 (LF)	2	1	0	0	0	1
T Sieber #24 (SS)	3	0	1	0	0	0
A Morris #13 (1B)	3	0	1	0	0	0
B Althoff #27 (RF)	2	0	0	0	0	1
J Schmidt #21 (CF)	2	1	1	0	0	0
B Althoff #1 (3B)	2	0	0	0	0	0
B Hansen #18 (DH)	2	0	0	0	0	1
B Richter #19 (C)	2	0	2	1	0	0
C Camac... #10 (2B)	2	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	20	2	5	1	0	3

TB: A Morris, J Schmidt, B Richter 2, T Sieber, **HBP:** D Frey, **SB:** J Schmidt, **LOB:** 4

Circus Sports Bar	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
J Smith (2B)	3	2	1	2	2	0
C Vining (3B)	3	1	2	3	1	0
M Babcock (SS)	2	1	0	1	1	0
W Thorson (DH)	4	3	2	4	0	0
J Steinwandt (1B)	2	2	0	1	2	0
K Kwak (RF)	3	2	0	0	0	0
K Coates (C)	4	3	3	1	0	0
J Babcock (LF)	1	2	0	2	2	0
E Millar (CF)	2	1	1	2	2	1
Totals	24	17	9	16	10	1

3B: C Vining, **HR:** W Thorson, **TB:** K Coates 3, W Thorson 5, C Vining 4, E Millar, J Smith, **SF:** M Babcock, **HBP:** K Kwak, J Babcock, **SB:** K Coates, W Thorson 2, J Smith, **LOB:** 5

PITCHING

Groton Locke Electric	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
R Groebl... #0	3.2	7	13	8	4	0	1
A Jones #7	0.1	1	2	2	4	0	0
B Althoff #27	0.0	1	2	1	1	0	0
A Morris #13	0.1	0	0	0	1	1	0
Totals	4.1	9	17	11	10	1	1

L: R Groeblichhoff, **P-S:** A Morris 14-9, R Groeblichhoff 82-42, B Althoff 14-5, A Jones 27-7, **WP:** R Groeblichhoff, **HBP:** R Groeblichhoff, B Althoff, **BF:** A Morris 2, R Groeblichhoff 26, B Althoff 3, A Jones 6

Circus Sports Bar	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
C Ellingson	5.0	5	2	2	0	3	0
Totals	5.0	5	2	2	0	3	0

W: C Ellingson, **P-S:** C Ellingson 70-51, **HBP:** C Ellingson, **BF:** C Ellingson 21

Bond Requirement for South Dakota Notaries Removed Effective July 1

(PIERRE, S.D.) – Beginning July 1, 2025, South Dakota notaries public will no longer be required to post a surety bond as part of their application process, following the passage of House Bill 1133 during the 2025 Legislative Session.

HB 1133, signed into law earlier this year, eliminates the statutory requirement for a \$5,000 notary bond. This change applies to all new and renewing notaries on or after July 1, 2025.

"This legislation streamlines the notary process and removes a barrier that often caused confusion or delay," said Secretary of State Monae L. Johnson. "We are committed to making public services as accessible and efficient as possible."

The updated requirements are outlined on the Secretary of State's Notary Public webpage: [How to Become a Notary](#)

All other steps to become a notary, such as submitting an application, taking the oath of office, and paying the \$30 application fee, remain unchanged. Notaries who were commissioned before July 1, 2025, are not affected until their next renewal.

For questions or assistance, contact the Secretary of State's Office at (605) 773-3537 or email notary@state.sd.us.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Task force urged to 'turn over each rock' while trying to cut homeowner property taxes in half

Group will meet through the summer and consider proposing legislation

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - JUNE 25, 2025 7:27 PM

SIOUX FALLS – Lawmakers on a summer task force hope to propose legislation that will cut the average South Dakota homeowner's property taxes by at least 50%.

Task force co-chair and Senate President Pro Tempore Chris Karr, R-Sioux Falls, encouraged members during a meeting Wednesday at the University of South Dakota's Sioux Falls campus to look at all options to cut budgets, reallocate funding, or raise or implement other taxes in order to achieve the group's goal.

"If we're going to actually go through this exercise of looking for property tax relief, then we have to turn over each rock, all of these rocks," Karr said. "Even if I don't believe I'm going to find what I'm looking for, I feel like there's an obligation to look underneath and see what's there."

Lawmakers adopted Republican Gov. Larry Rhoden's proposal earlier this year to slow property tax increases with multifaceted reforms including a five-year, countywide 3% cap on growth in owner-occupied home assessments. That new law will take effect next week. Rhoden has also proposed an optional county-level sales tax of a half-percent to offset participating counties' property taxes on owner-occupied homes.

Another idea pitched by Sen. Jim Mehlhaff, R-Pierre, on Wednesday would separate school funding from property taxes and create a new state sales tax of 1% dedicated to education funding. The 1% tax would apply to most products and services that are currently exempted from sales taxes, and would stack on top of the existing state sales tax rate of 4.2% for other transactions.

Lawmakers plan to discuss both ideas and others that might arise throughout the summer as they consider introducing legislation next winter to ease the tax burden for homeowners. The task force was created during this year's legislative session.

According to a presentation from the Legislative Research Council, the amount paid in property taxes by South Dakota homeowners increased 38.8% between 2020 and 2024. Owner-occupied properties accounted for 44.3% of total property taxes paid in the state in 2024.

Local government officials and representatives warned the group repeatedly Wednesday against knee-jerk reactions to recent increases and asked for consideration of the consequences of limiting revenue for local governments. Some members of the public encouraged lawmakers to make cuts or eliminate property taxes altogether.

Counties: Reduce unfunded mandates or open another revenue source

Counties and schools depend on property taxes for much of their revenue, while cities receive some property tax revenue but are more dependent on sales taxes. The state also depends on sales taxes and does not receive any revenue from property taxes.

County representatives told committee members that their budgets are already bare-bones.

Minnehaha County Auditor Leah Anderson said her county is losing money to complete some state-mandated services, such as mailing new license plates. Clay County Commissioner Geoffrey Gray-Lobe said his southeastern county cut its budget to essential services due to funding issues and decisions, despite high property taxes.

Any reductions in revenue would lead to cuts to infrastructure, road maintenance or public safety, county representatives warned, while saying about 80% of county budgets are spent on unfunded mandates

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imposed by the state.

Part of that cost includes public defenders and state's attorneys required to be provided and funded at the county level, said Dan Klimisch, a Yankton County commissioner and president of the South Dakota Association of County Commissioners.

"Reduce or eliminate unfunded mandates," Klimisch said, "or give us another revenue source."

Cities, schools warn of budget cuts

Mike Jaspers, Sioux Metro Growth Alliance board chair, said lower property tax revenues could hurt communities because they wouldn't be able to build infrastructure to support eventual growth and have a "balanced community."

"Down the road, my biggest fear is forcing the hand of communities of what they will look like versus what they'd like to look like," Jaspers said.

Sioux Falls Director of Finance Shawn Pritchett said the city experienced a 59% increase in expenses due to an increase in population and inflation over the past decade. The budget increased by 58% in that same timeframe.

"At its core, maintaining property taxes isn't just about growing government," Pritchett said. "It's about trying to keep pace with our growing community."

Amanda Mack, Harrisburg city administrator, listed millions of dollars of costs to build roads and a new fire station to accommodate the city's growth. South Dakota's impending property tax changes, including a cap on the amount of growth that can be factored into property tax increases, will force the city to take on more debt, she said.

"These needs will not go away nor can they be ignored," Mack said.

Jamie Nold, incoming superintendent for Sioux Falls School District, said the state's largest district eliminated \$3 million from this year's budget, will do the same next year, and will reduce the budget by \$1.5 million the year after to make up for less-than-desired state funding increases.

"People want to come here for the amenities that they have, not for the things they don't have," Nold said.

Some local governments seek to opt out of property tax limitations

According to the Legislative Research Council presentation, 69 taxing districts exercised their right to opt out of property tax limitations in fiscal year 2025, in order to raise more revenue. About 94% of those were approved without a public vote.

Most of the opt-outs happened in school districts, accounting for about \$10 million in new opt-outs in fiscal year 2025. Less than \$4 million in opt-outs were initiated by counties.

The number of active opt-outs among schools decreased from 66 in 2020 to 62 in 2024, though the total funding from opt-outs increased from \$31.1 million to \$34.1 million. The highest active opt-out is in Sioux Falls, at \$11 million annually.

"As we look at opt-outs, we need to understand why they exist and how local governments have had to make that determination," said Sen. Randy Deibert, R-Spearfish. "We can't lump them all together."

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

With SD congressman's support, US House denounces Minnesota shootings, political violence

BY: JACOB FISCHLER - JUNE 25, 2025 5:07 PM

The U.S. House unanimously adopted a resolution Wednesday condemning the June 14 attacks on former Minnesota House Speaker Melissa Hortman and her husband, who were killed by a gunman, and state Sen. John Hoffman and his wife, who were wounded.

The resolution, sponsored by Rep. Kelly Morrison, who represents the suburban Minneapolis district where the Hortmans lived, also condemned political violence. Each of the seven other members of Minnesota's bipartisan U.S. House delegation cosponsored the legislation and spoke in support on the House floor this week.

No House member spoke against the resolution during brief floor debate Tuesday. It passed 424-0 Wednesday, with eight members not voting.

Morrison, a Democrat, urged her colleagues to view the attacks as a "wake-up call" to tone down violent political rhetoric.

"The escalation and normalization of violent rhetoric and political violence have gone way too far, and we as elected representatives have to take the lead and be the first to speak out and to start to model a better path forward," Morrison said. "Let's make this the moment where we unequivocally condemn and commit to ending violent rhetoric, full stop. We have to make this horrific act of targeted political violence a watershed moment for our country."

Rep. Pete Stauber, a Republican, said by targeting elected officials, the gunman attacked democracy.

"Make no mistake: This was not just an attack on the Hortman, Hoffman families," Stauber said Tuesday. "This was an attack on the state of Minnesota and our shared ideals as Americans. Political violence such as this threatens the very fabric of our constitutional republic and can never be ignored or met without condemnation."

June 14 shootings

Melissa and Mark Hortman were killed in the early morning of June 14 by a man impersonating a police officer.

The suspected killer, 57-year-old Vance Boelter, arrived at the Hortman home after shooting John and Yvette Hoffman in their home and visiting the homes of two other Democratic lawmakers, according to police, who also said they found a list of other elected officials in Boelter's car.

Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz described the attack as "a politically motivated assassination."

Police captured Boelter on June 15 after a nearly two-day search. He faces state and federal murder charges.

Melissa and Mark Hortman and their golden retriever, Gilbert, who also died after being shot in the attack, will lie in state at the Minnesota Capitol on Friday.

House Majority Leader Steve Scalise, a Louisiana Republican who was shot in a targeted attack during a baseball practice eight years prior, also spoke in favor of the resolution Tuesday.

"As someone who's experienced political violence firsthand, this brings back a lot of emotions," Scalise said. "The man who shot me on the ballfield that day also had a list of lawmakers. I'm grateful for the actions of the brave law enforcement officers who ran towards the danger and saved lives on the ballfield that day and saved, undoubtedly, many lives in Minnesota on that day just a few days ago."

Jacob covers federal policy and helps direct national coverage as deputy Washington bureau chief for States Newsroom. Based in Oregon, he focuses on Western issues. His coverage areas include climate, energy development, public lands and infrastructure.

Transgender rights group aims to expand activist-founded database of LGBTQ-friendly businesses

BY: JOHN HULT - JUNE 25, 2025 10:36 AM

A South Dakota nonprofit focused on transgender rights will curate and maintain what's been a volunteer-run, searchable database of businesses friendly to LGBTQ+ patrons.

The Transformation Project and the database, known as Dorothy's List, announced the merger this week in a press release meant to dovetail with the end of Pride Month.

Adam Jorgensen founded Dorothy's List in 2023, using a \$1,000 grant from the Sutton Leadership Institute, a nonprofit that trains aspiring young professionals in business, nonprofit and political spheres.

Jorgensen applied for and received the grant from the institute after graduating from its yearlong development program. The Sioux Falls man pulled information from a few different – but largely dormant – regional lists of businesses to launch the statewide list.

Similar lists exist nationwide, such as The Pink Pages, and others focus on medical providers. Jorgensen's goal was to offer a state-specific list for South Dakota.

The grant money allowed Jorgensen to pay for a logo design and produce stickers and other promotional merchandise, as well as to set up the website, which launched in 2023.

The site lists around 150 businesses, and Jorgensen told South Dakota Searchlight that about 80 of them have taken its inclusion pledge. That pledge asks businesses to take steps like placing rainbow flags in business windows, using provided materials for employee training and committing to speak against legislative proposals that might harm LGBTQ+ people.

With a full-time job and other commitments, Jorgensen said he'd grown concerned that he couldn't offer enough attention to the project to properly maintain the list, named for Dorothy from "The Wizard of Oz." It's a nod to the question "are you a friend of Dorothy," asked in decades past by people looking for safe spaces in the era of criminalized homosexuality.

Jorgensen said he was thrilled when the Transformation Project agreed to fold the curation of Dorothy's List into its project list.

"It's fantastic to see the Transformation Project take over as lead of this project," Jorgensen said in the announcement. "Dorothy's List addresses a real need for South Dakotans, LGBTQ+ and Two Spirit or otherwise, that want to spend their time and dollars wisely."

"Two Spirit" is a word used by Indigenous people to refer to those who do not identify as male or female.

The Transformation Project's status a nonprofit with a full-time staff should allow Dorothy's List to "expand its reach," the press release says, and to serve as a tool for "communities to unite over a common cause."

"We must continue to hold the corporations and individuals accountable that actively harm our community by rallying behind those that don't," Susan Williams, executive director of the Transformation Project, said in the release.

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

GOP mega-bill stuck in US Senate as disputes grow over hospitals and more

**BY: ASHLEY MURRAY, SHAUNEEN MIRANDA, JACOB FISCHLER AND JENNIFER SHUTT -
JUNE 25, 2025 8:35 PM**

WASHINGTON — U.S. Senate Republicans appeared deeply divided Wednesday over how to establish a fund for rural hospitals to offset the budget impacts of Medicaid cuts in the “big, beautiful bill.”

The hospitals, which are generally already hurting financially, rely heavily on Medicaid, a state-federal partnership that provides health insurance for low-income households and for some people with disabilities.

GOP senators haven't yet reached agreement on how to structure the fund, or on dozens of other unresolved provisions in the sweeping package, even though leaders hope to begin voting as soon as Friday. Still up in the air were agreements on major provisions of the measure involving the U.S. Department of Agriculture's food aid program for low-income people and a proposed selloff of certain public lands.

Republican leaders continued to project optimism. “We're well on our way to getting this bill passed this week,” Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., said during a floor speech, continuing to press ahead toward a self-imposed Fourth of July deadline.

Others saw it differently. Wisconsin Republican Sen. Ron Johnson cast doubt on the short timeframe leaders have set to reach final agreement and move the bill through both chambers.

“We're still discussing some pretty fundamental issues,” Johnson said. “I'm just laying out the reality of the situation. We've got a lot of work to do.”

'The only person up here that's ever ran a rural hospital'

Dueling plans to establish the rural hospital fund to ease the threat of Medicaid cuts circulated among senators working to finalize the massive tax and spending cut measure, but an agreement had not surfaced by late afternoon.

Unofficial details showed Senate Republicans eyeing the inclusion of a \$15 billion fund — \$3 billion a year between fiscal 2027 and fiscal 2031 — to help rural hospitals, according to multiple reports.

But Sen. Roger Marshall, who sits on the Senate Committee on Finance, said he wants to increase that fund to \$5 billion annually, with “half of that going to rural hospitals, and half of it going to primary care and prescription drugs and throw in physical therapy and occupational therapy, all the others as well.”

The Kansas Republican and physician said “we should probably only do it for four or five years and then regroup and see where we are.”

“I'm the only person up here that's ever ran a rural hospital — I actually know something about them,” he added.

While Marshall said he loves “90%” of the broader bill, he said not nearly enough is being cut.

“But I can't get the votes to do that, so it'd still be the largest cut in spending in my lifetime anyway,” he said, noting that “it's going to be hard for the House to vote against it.”

Fund size criticized

On a midday call with reporters, Traci Gleason with the Missouri Budget Project said the stabilization fund being batted around by lawmakers “would fall well short of addressing these problems.”

“Forty-three percent of Missouri's rural hospitals are at risk of closing, and 17% are considered to be at immediate risk,” said Gleason, who spoke during a virtual press briefing organized by the left-leaning Center for Budget and Policy Priorities.

“Those figures don't account for all of the other health care providers in rural communities, like federally qualified health centers and others that operate on these incredibly thin margins. So the massive cuts to Medicaid are what is creating the problem and the only real way to address it is for Congress to not make these massive cuts,” she said.

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'Problematic' Medicaid cuts

Sen. Susan Collins was advocating for a much bigger rural hospital stabilization fund, at \$100 billion.

"I don't think that solves the entire problem," the Maine Republican and chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee said.

"The Senate cuts in Medicaid are far deeper than the House cuts, and I think that's problematic as well."

Sen. Jim Justice of West Virginia said that the \$15 billion "is better than zero."

"You know, naturally, I'd want it to be as high as it possibly can," he said, adding that rural hospitals are the "lifeblood" of his state.

Sen. Josh Hawley of Missouri, a loud voice against Medicaid benefit cuts, said a stabilization fund is a "good idea but we're still going to have to address the longer term effects of this."

When asked for a dollar figure, Hawley said "it depends on the structure of it."

Texas Republican Sen. John Cornyn said he keeps hearing the Senate will take a procedural vote on Friday, though that isn't set in stone.

"Should be a fun weekend for all of us," Cornyn said. "Can't wait."

Once the Senate votes on what is called a motion to proceed, there's a maximum of 20 hours of floor debate before the chamber must begin its marathon amendment voting session and eventually a passage vote.

SNAP provisions

Senate Agriculture Chairman John Boozman, an Arkansas Republican, said a revised version of his committee's bill had not yet been reviewed by the parliamentarian.

The updated text alters a section restructuring the cost-share of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, a key food assistance program for low-income people.

The provision would require states for the first time to shoulder some of the cost of the program's benefits. The amount a state owes would be determined by its error payment rate, with greater error rates requiring a higher state share.

Complex rules govern what can and can't be included in the measure. The Senate parliamentarian ruled the language in the initial proposal did not comply with the chamber's reconciliation rules.

The updated proposal would allow states more flexibility during the policy's phase-in in fiscal 2028, allowing them to choose either the error rate in fiscal 2025 or fiscal 2026.

Boozman told reporters that change sought to respond to the parliamentarian's ruling.

The parliamentarian "asked us to allow them (states) to use a different time frame — essentially gave them more time to understand what their error rate would be and to plan for it," Boozman said. "And so we adjusted for that and I think we satisfied it."

Lee and public lands

Senate Energy and Natural Resources Chairman Mike Lee of Utah reportedly narrowed a provision that would mandate the sale of Bureau of Land Management lands. He has not publicly said where it stands with the parliamentarian.

A committee spokesman did not return messages seeking clarification Tuesday and Wednesday, but a version of the changes obtained by news media shows changes consistent with what Lee proposed Monday.

Those changes include limiting the mandated sales to only the BLM — and not U.S. Forest Service lands, as Lee had initially proposed — and lowering the percentage of the agency's lands that must be sold to between .25% and .5%. The initial proposal required between .5% and .75%.

The updated provision would also only require lands located within 5 miles of a population center to be sold and exempts lands that are currently used for grazing or another "valid existing right that is incompatible with the development of housing," according to a copy of the changes obtained by hunting and angling publication Outdoor Life.

The provision has sparked opposition from Western lawmakers, including a handful of conservatives.

But it also has its share of supporters. Alaska Republican Dan Sullivan told reporters he had not seen the updated text but remained supportive of the idea.

"I've been supportive of what Sen. Lee is trying to do," he said. "We have a lot of public lands in Alaska that the federal government abuses. But we're in a good discussion on that, so I need to see the update."

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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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.

Trump drive to defund NPR, PBS resisted by Republicans from rural states

South Dakota senator presses for retention of tribal radio funding

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - JUNE 25, 2025 7:48 PM

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration's request to claw back \$9.4 billion in previously approved spending on foreign aid and public media ran into significant opposition Wednesday, potentially dooming its path forward in the Senate.

Numerous GOP lawmakers on the Appropriations Committee, including Chairwoman Susan Collins, expressed concern at how the proposed rescissions would affect American "soft power" as well as local radio and television stations that rely on the Corporation for Public Broadcasting — many in rural America.

Collins, R-Maine, highlighted opposition to cutting already approved funding for CPB, which goes toward National Public Radio, the Public Broadcasting Service and hundreds of local stations outside the nation's larger metropolitan areas.

"The vast majority of this funding, more than 70%, actually flows to local television and radio stations," Collins said. "In Maine this funding supports everything from emergency communications in rural areas to coverage of high school basketball championships and a locally produced high school quiz show. Nationally produced television programs such as 'Antiques Roadshow,' 'Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood,' are also enjoyed by many throughout our country."

Collins said she understands objections to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting providing funding to national NPR operations, given what she called its "discernibly partisan bent."

"There are, however, more targeted approaches to addressing that bias at NPR than rescinding all of the funding for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting," Collins said.

Effect on Alaska

Alaska Republican Sen. Lisa Murkowski appeared to signal she also opposes cancelling funding that Congress previously approved for public media and told White House budget director Russ Vought that she wanted him to understand the ramifications on her home state.

"I hope you feel the urgency that I'm trying to express on behalf of people in rural Alaska, and I think in many parts of rural America, where this is their lifeline, this is where they get the updates on that landslide, this is where they get the updates on the wildfires that are coming their way," Murkowski said.

"And so how they will be able to not only get the emergency alerts that they need, but also the weather reporting to make sure that fishermen ... can go out safely. So that these communities can be connected when a deadly landslide has come through," she said.

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Rural radio in South Dakota, Nebraska

South Dakota GOP Sen. Mike Rounds pressed Vought to ensure uninterrupted federal funding to local radio stations in rural areas of his home state, even if Congress rescinds the Corporation for Public Broadcasting's appropriation.

"First of all, we have Native American radio stations in South Dakota. They get their funding through NPR – 90 some percent of what they use. They will not continue to exist if we don't find a way to take care of their needs," Rounds said. "It's not a large amount of money, but would you be willing to work with us to try and find a way for these places where, literally, they're not political in nature?"

"These are the folks that put out the emergency notifications. They talk about community events and so forth. But they're in very, very rural areas where there simply isn't an economy to support buying advertising on these stations."

Vought appeared to agree to work with Rounds, before saying that if Congress approves the rescissions request for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the administration wouldn't pull back funding until the next fiscal year, which starts on Oct. 1.

Vought also pledged to work with Nebraska Republican Sen. Deb Fischer to ensure people in rural areas will have a way to learn about emergency alerts if the rescissions request is approved.

"I am very concerned also about the emergency alerts that come to many places in Nebraska only through that rural radio," Fischer said. "We're a state of vastness, very sparsely populated areas that don't receive cell service in many cases. It's difficult even with landlines in many areas of my state."

Reductions to AIDS relief

Chairwoman Collins also said during the nearly three-hour hearing that cutting funding on certain global health programs, including the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, "would be extraordinarily ill-advised and short-sighted."

"PEPFAR has saved more than 26 million lives and enabled 7.8 million babies to be born HIV-free to mothers living with HIV," Collins said. "This program remains a bipartisan priority of Congress. After years of commitment and stable investment the finish line is in sight. The United States has the tools to fulfill PEPFAR's mission and get the job done while transitioning HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention to country ownership by the year 2030."

Collins argued that the Trump administration is unlikely to spend foreign aid dollars on the same "questionable projects" that were part of the Biden administration.

"Unless the current administration plans to continue these controversial projects that it has identified — which I very much doubt — those projects alone cannot be used to justify the proposed rescissions," Collins said.

Just before Vought began giving his opening statement to the committee, a group of protesters in the room stood up and began to yell in an attempt to preserve PEPFAR funding. They were escorted out by U.S. Capitol Police.

Kentucky Republican Sen. Mitch McConnell, chairman of the Defense spending subcommittee and former majority leader, appeared to reject some of the proposed foreign aid cuts, arguing they eroded American influence around the world.

"There's plenty of absolute nonsense masquerading with American aid that shouldn't receive another bit of taxpayer funding. But the administration's attempt to root it out has been unnecessarily chaotic," McConnell said.

"In critical corners of the globe, instead of creating efficiencies, you've created vacuums for adversaries like China to fill. Responsible investments in soft power prevent conflict, preserve American influence and save countless lives at the same time. So if we're concerned about spending, and we should be, it's important to remember what wars cost."

South Carolina Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham, however, announced that he will vote for the rescissions

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package, arguing that some ways the Biden administration spent funds in the PEPFAR account deserved rebuke.

"No more preaching to me. I'm going to vote for this package. And do you know why I'm going to vote for this package? Just as a statement that PEPFAR is important but it's not beyond scrutiny," Graham said. "That how you run the government has consequences. Don't lecture me about being mean or cruel."

How rescissions work

The Trump administration sent Congress the \$9.4 billion rescissions request in early June, allowing the White House budget office to legally freeze funding for the various programs included in the proposal for 45 days while lawmakers decide whether to approve or reject it.

The request called on lawmakers to zero out funding for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting during the next two fiscal years, a total of \$1.1 billion in previously approved spending.

It proposed more than \$8 billion in cuts to numerous foreign aid accounts run by the U.S. State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development, including health programs, initiatives that promote democracy, economic development, peacekeeping activities and refugee assistance.

One of the rescissions proposed lawmakers claw back \$500 million of the \$4 billion that Congress previously approved for "activities related to child and maternal health, HIV/ AIDS, and infectious diseases.

"This proposal would not reduce treatment but would eliminate programs that are antithetical to American interests and worsen the lives of women and children, like 'family planning' and 'reproductive health,' LGBTQI+ activities, and 'equity' programs."

The House voted mostly along party lines in June to approve the request in full, sending it to the Senate, where it has been on the sidelines for weeks as Republicans instead work toward an agreement on the party's "big, beautiful bill."

The rescissions bill isn't subject to the Senate's 60-vote legislative filibuster, so it only needs the support of 50 Republicans and Vice President JD Vance's tie-breaking vote to become law. That, however, must happen before the 45-day clock runs out on July 18.

If Senate leaders do not schedule a floor vote, or that vote does not get the necessary support, the Trump administration would have to spend the funding as previously planned. And the White House budget office would be blocked from sending up a rescissions request for the same accounts for the remainder of President Donald Trump's time in office.

Senate floor consideration also comes with unlimited amendment debate, giving senators from both parties the chance to call for votes on whether to keep or eliminate each proposed rescission.

Any changes to the bill would require it to go back across the Capitol for a final vote in the House before the deadline.

Impact on South Dakota Public Broadcasting

FROM SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

When South Dakota Public Broadcasting officials presented to legislators in February, they described their revenue as an \$11 million pie.

Funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting makes up 21% of that pie.

The biggest revenue slice, 52%, is from state government. Then-Gov. Kristi Noem proposed a large cut in state support before she left office, but lawmakers dispensed with that proposal.

The rest of SDPB's revenue comes from fundraising by the nonprofit friends of SDPB (23%) and other sources (4%).

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.

US Senate panel grills Trump CDC nominee on vaccines

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA - JUNE 25, 2025 2:54 PM

WASHINGTON — Members of the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions pressed President Donald Trump's nominee to lead the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention about vaccine recommendations Wednesday after the Health and Human Services secretary fired members of a critical vaccine panel this month.

Trump's pick, former acting CDC Director Susan Monarez, said that she trusted vaccines while defending HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s decision this month — widely seen as part of a vaccine-skeptical agenda — to fire all 17 members of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, or ACIP, and recommend eight new members.

"Part of the secretary's vision in restoring public trust is making sure that the American people can be confident in the way the evidence and science is driving decision-making," she told senators.

The panel's seven members — one dropped out this week — will meet Wednesday and Thursday to review data and vote on new vaccine recommendations. The recommendations carry significant weight as insurance providers and federal health programs like Medicaid use them to determine if shots are covered and schools rely on them for immunization mandates.

Cassidy questions

Louisiana Sen. Bill Cassidy, who chairs the committee, said he was concerned about ACIP, especially as a non-CDC staff member is scheduled to give a presentation to the committee about thimerosal, a mercury-based preservative. The panel is expected to vote on approving flu shots that contain the compound.

Lyn Redwood, the former head of Children's Health Defense, the anti-vaccine group that Kennedy founded, is giving the presentation arguing that thimerosal causes autism. The CDC's own research shows that thimerosal does not cause autism.

Cassidy said that while Monarez had no part in this week's ACIP meeting, or the agenda, he said that "if the ACIP hearing today is being used to sow distrust, I would ask that going forward, that you would make sure that there really was a balanced perspective."

"Yes, someone can speak as a critic, but there should be someone who is reviewing the overwhelming evidence of the safety of vaccines," Cassidy, who is a physician, said.

Monarez, who was the agency's acting director from January to March, said that she trusted vaccines and that immunization was important to save lives.

If Monarez is confirmed by the Senate, she would be the first director of the CDC without a medical degree in nearly 70 years. She has a Ph.D. in microbiology and immunology.

More concerns about vaccine panel

Cassidy was not the only Republican on the panel concerned about the firing of all the members of ACIP. Alaska Republican Sen. Lisa Murkowski said she was concerned about the backgrounds of the seven new panelists.

"I would hope that one of the things that you would all be looking into is to make sure that these individuals are going to be looking at the science in front of them, (and) leave their political bias at home," Murkowski said.

Democratic Sens. Patty Murray of Washington state and Angela Alsobrooks of Maryland also pressed Monarez about Kennedy's actions to fire everyone on the panel.

Murray asked Monarez if the new members of the panel voted to not recommend vaccines, if she would listen to that recommendation.

Monarez sidestepped the question and said the roles at ACIP were difficult to fill and that members needed to pass an ethics process.

"If they have not gone through an ethics approval process they shouldn't be participating in the meetings," she said.

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Alsobrooks asked Monarez if she believed the 17 members fired from ACIP lacked qualifications. Monarez did not answer the question, but said Kennedy's reasoning for "resetting the ACIP to a new cohort was going to be on the path of restoring public trust."

Grant funding and layoffs

Senators also raised concerns about grants that had been canceled, even though Congress already approved the funds.

Maine GOP Sen. Susan Collins, who is the chairwoman of the Senate Committee on Appropriations, said that her state is suffering from a high level of Lyme disease and as a result a vaccine was in the works at a research institute in Maine.

"This vaccine is very promising and I want to make sure that it is allowed to continue to its conclusion," Collins said.

Monarez agreed and said if she is confirmed, she will specifically work to make sure funding for that vaccine continues.

"It's ironic that our dogs can get a vaccine to protect them against tick-borne illnesses like Lyme disease but we humans can't and I hope we can remedy that," Collins said.

Sen. Tim Kaine, Democrat of Virginia, pressed Monarez about the elimination of the Office on Smoking and Health at the CDC. He asked if she was involved in laying off all the staff in April, the month after her brief stint as acting director ended.

"I had no participation in (the layoffs) after I left," she said.

Fluoride in water

Alsobrooks pressed Monarez about Kennedy's push to have the CDC stop recommending that low levels of fluoride be placed in public drinking water.

Fluoride is added in drinking water to help prevent cavities, tooth decay and other dental health issues.

Alsobrooks asked Monarez, who is her constituent, if the public water supply that contains fluoride in Potomac, Maryland, where Monarez lives, was safe to drink.

"I believe the water in Potomac, Maryland, is safe," Monarez said.

SD groups express 'deep concern' about removal of immunization committee members FROM SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

Immunize South Dakota and the South Dakota Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics recently released a statement expressing "deep concern" over U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s decision to remove all 17 members of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices.

"This unprecedented action dismantles a trusted, science-based body that has guided vaccine policy for more than 60 years, weakening public confidence and threatening access to lifesaving immunizations," the statement said, in part.

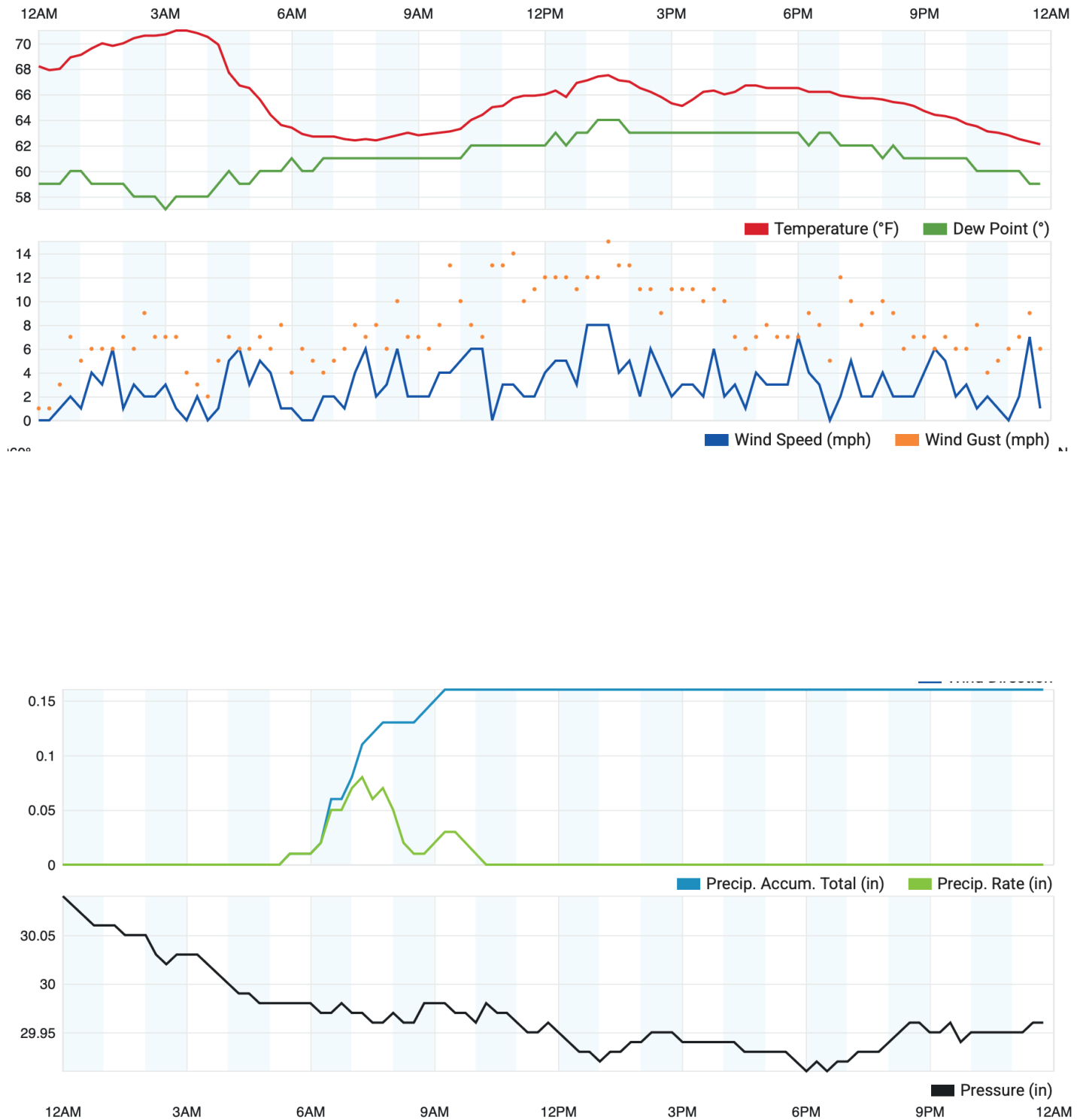
Immunize South Dakota is a statewide coalition of partners working to protect South Dakotans through timely immunizations. The mission of the South Dakota Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics is to keep its members professionally supported and informed, so they can ensure the health, well-being and safety of all children and young adults living in South Dakota.

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

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Thursday



High: 71 °F

Slight Chance
T-storms and
Patchy Fog

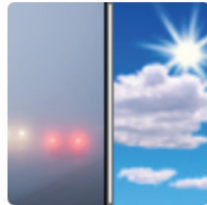
Thursday
Night



Low: 56 °F

Mostly Cloudy
then Patchy
Fog

Friday



High: 85 °F

Patchy Fog
then Mostly
Sunny

Friday Night



Low: 64 °F

Chance
T-storms

Saturday



High: 89 °F

Slight Chance
T-storms

THREAT ASSESSMENT

HIGHEST LOCAL RISK

2

WHAT THIS MEANS:
Scattered severe storms
possible

TIMING

Friday Afternoon over
central SD, expanding to
eastern SD Friday Night

PRIMARY THREATS



LARGE HAIL



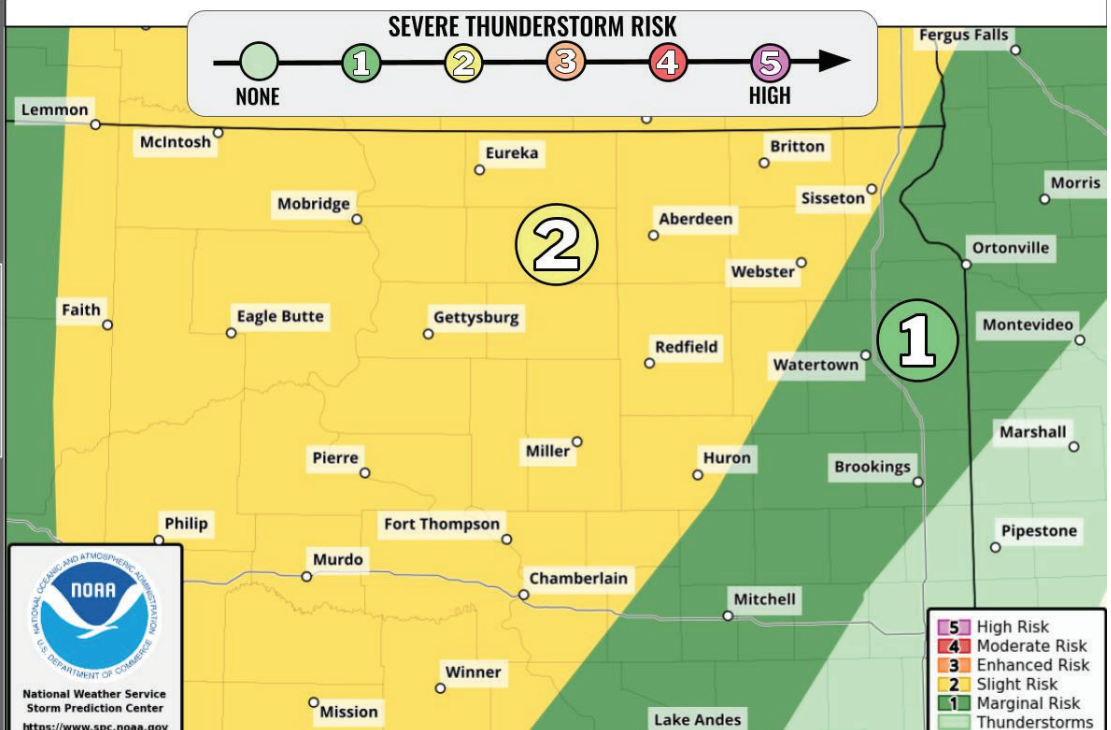
DAMAGING
WIND



HEAVY RAIN

Get your up to date
forecast at [weather.gov/abr](https://www.weather.gov/abr)

SEVERE STORMS Possible Friday Afternoon & Friday Night



Scattered severe storms are possible over mainly central South Dakota Friday afternoon before expanding to eastern South Dakota Friday night. The primary threats will be large hail and damaging winds. In the strongest storms, there is a potential for hail in excess of 1 to 2 inches mainly west of a line from Britton to Huron Friday afternoon and evening. Winds over 60 mph will also be possible.

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Hail threat Friday Afternoon into Friday Night

June 26, 2025
3:59 AM



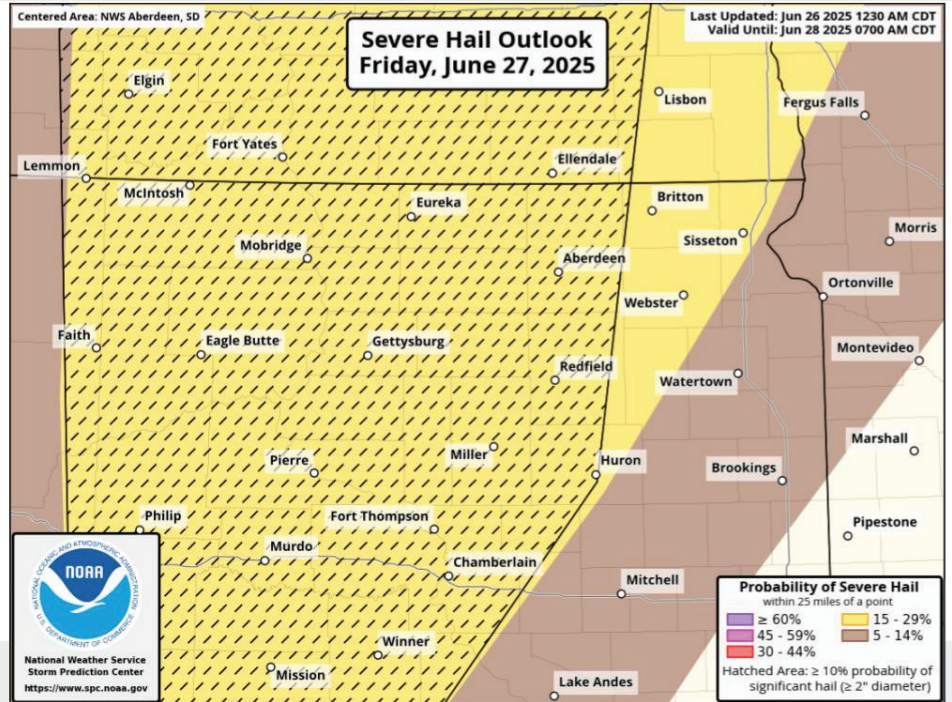
Hatched area denotes
potential for hail in excess
of 2" in diameter Friday
afternoon into Friday night



Winds over 60 mph also
possible in the yellow
highlighted area



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



The main weather threat with the strongest storms that develop Friday afternoon into Friday night will be large hail in excess of 1 to 2 inches in diameter. Winds over 60 mph will also be possible. Any storms that move over areas that have recently had significant rain and high water may experience additional water problems.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 71 °F at 3:14 AM

Low Temp: 62 °F at 7:29 AM

Wind: 15 mph at 1:18 PM

Precip: : 0.16

Day length: 15 hours, 43 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 109 in 1933

Record Low: 39 in 2017

Average High: 83

Average Low: 58

Average Precip in June.: 3.24

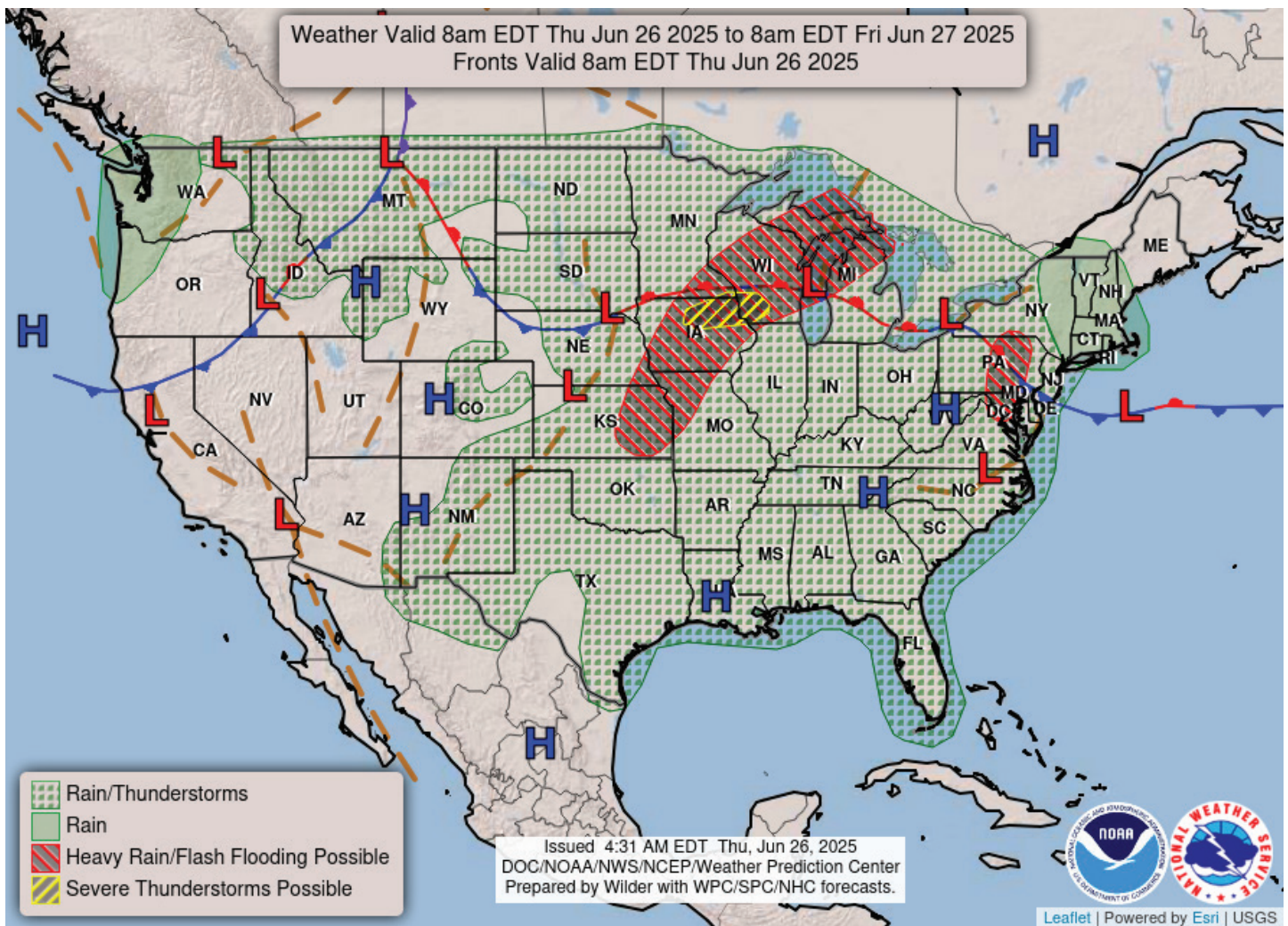
Precip to date in June: 2.88

Average Precip to date: 10.49

Precip Year to Date: 8.93

Sunset Tonight: 9:26:55 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:43:52 am



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Today in Weather History

June 26th, 1998: Heavy rains of 2 to 5 inches fell across much of northern and eastern Brown, western and northern Day, and all of Marshall County during the afternoon and evening hours. Heavy rain only exacerbated the flooding, which had occurred over much of this area for years. Kidder, in northern Marshall County, received up to 5 inches of rain on the 26th after receiving around 2 inches on the 25th. The heavy rain on the 26th flooded the whole town, filling nearly every basement. One resident had the basement walls cave in. Areas of Britton were also flooded with water in many basements. The heavy rains added to the already thousands of acres of crop and pastureland under water. One farmer in Day County, near Webster, had documented over one-half million dollars in damages to fences, buildings, land, and income from the prolonged flooding. On his farm, he had 15 buildings underwater. This farmer said the highest he had measured the water from flooding was 9 feet, but for this year, it had gone up to 21 feet. As a result of this and past heavy rains and many years of above-average precipitation, about 22 percent of the total farm and pastureland acres in the three counties were flooded or too wet to farm. Some rainfall amounts included 2.30 inches at Sand Lake NWR, 2.7 inches at Langford, 2.95 inches at Groton, 3.5 inches northwest of Bristol, and 5.10 inches 9N 9W of Britton.

June 26th, 2008: During the evening, a compact upper-level low-pressure system tracking through the Northern Plains interacted with a very moist and unstable air mass over western and central South Dakota, resulting in a widespread severe weather outbreak. Three confirmed tornadoes occurred briefly in western Dewey County. Little or no damage was reported, and all three tornadoes were rated EF0. In addition to the tornadoes, multiple reports of large hail were received over Corson and Dewey Counties, including some to the size of baseballs near the communities of McLaughlin and Isabel. The large hail broke out many home and vehicle windows and damaged many roofs in Dewey, Corson, and Sully Counties. Significant wind damage occurred over sections of Sully County. There were multiple reports of wind gusts more than 70 mph, with the most concentrated swath of damaging winds extending from near Sutton Bay, eastward to the city of Onida, then southeast to the community of Harrold.

The storm survey began near Sutton Bay on Lake Oahe, where a wind gust of 92 mph was recorded. The most significant property damage was further east, near the community of Agar, where multiple grain bins were either damaged or destroyed. A barn was destroyed nine miles west of Agar, and a large pine tree was snapped in half. Winds in this area were estimated to range from 80 to 100 mph. Near the intersection of Highways 1804 and 175th Street, several Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) electrical transmission towers were collapsed entirely. The damage is consistent with wind speeds ranging from 130-140 mph. In Onida, a bank roof was damaged, and the city was without power until the next day. Four miles north of Onida, a feed wagon was tossed nearly 40 feet. In Harrold, several railroad cars were tipped over. Also of great significance during the event was the peak wind speed of 124 mph recorded at the Onida airport. This wind speed is the strongest wind gust ever measured in the Aberdeen County Warning Area and the 4th highest wind speed reported in South Dakota.

1888 - Residents of New York suffered through a record heat wave. Daily average temperatures were above 80 degrees for fourteen straight days. The heat wave was a sharp contrast to the severe blizzard in March of that year, which buried the city under nearly two feet of snow. (David Ludlum)

1977 - The Human Lightning Conductor, park ranger Roy C. Sullivan, was struck by lightning for the seventh time. He was first hit in 1942, then again in 1970, 1972, 1973 and 1976. (The Weather Channel)

1983 - Record heat prevailed from Texas to Michigan. Alpena MI hit 98 degrees. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1985 - A spectacular early morning waterspout developed at 5:20 AM (MST) from a stationary thunderstorm over the south end of the Great Salt Lake in Utah. It was visible 20 miles away, and lasted four minutes. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Hot weather prevailed in the Pacific Northwest. Afternoon highs of 88 degrees at Seattle, WA, 103 degrees at Medford, OR, and 111 degrees at Redding, CA, were records for the date. Cloudy and cool weather prevailed in the northeastern U.S. The high at Boston, MA, was just 60 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

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"I may not always be right," he said as though he believed it, "but I'm never wrong. Never!" Impressive, right?

We sat there wondering if he truly knew what he was saying — was he convincing himself, or trying to intimidate us? Either way, we all saw the folly in his words.

There are many like him who believe they are incapable of being wrong. They reject advice, double down on their decisions, and become stubborn. Solomon's wisdom speaks directly to this attitude:

"The way of fools seems right to them, but the wise listen to advice."

Those who refuse counsel are on a path to self-destruction, blind to their own sin, their need for a Savior, and the judgment that awaits. Their worldview is distorted.

The wise, however, listen—even when correction is uncomfortable or embarrassing—because they understand it's for their good. They seek the guidance of spiritually mature, loving, and wise elders in Christ before making decisions.

Prayer: Lord, break the hardness of our hearts when we think we "know it all." Lead us to those who are spiritually mature, love You deeply, and are biblically wise. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Today's Scripture: "The way of fools seems right to them, but the wise listen to advice." Proverbs 12:15

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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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 06.24.25

10 11 18 24 60 20

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$348,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 12 Mins
51 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 06.25.25

12 14 25 30 42 4

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$2,400,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 27
Mins 51 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 06.25.25

7 28 33 43 48 9

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 42 Mins 51
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 06.25.25

5 18 19 22 24

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$39,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 42
Mins 51 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 06.25.25

1 11 49 57 61 25

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 11 Mins
51 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 06.25.25

2 12 37 51 61 22

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$155,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 11 Mins
51 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
09/6-7/25 Fly in/Drive in at Groton Municipal Airport
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
11/30/2025 Snow Queen Contest, 4 p.m.
12/06/2025 Olive Grove Holiday Party and Silent Live Auction Fundraiser

News from the **AP** Associated Press

Storms in France leave 2 dead, 17 injured and cause parliament to spring a leak

PARIS (AP) — Two people were killed and 17 injured during torrential storms in France that toppled trees, flooded Paris streets and caused parliament's roof to spring a leak as the prime minister was speaking.

"Have you noticed that it was raining?" Prime Minister François Bayrou pointed out, looking up at the National Assembly's leaking domed ceiling after delivering a speech on the Middle East as a deluge fell outside, quickly inundating Paris boulevards on Wednesday evening.

The assembly vice president, Roland Lescure, suspended the debate so fire officers could check out the problem. When he restarted the session about 15 minutes later, Lescure told lawmakers that absorbent mats were used to patch up the leak.

The French civil defense agency said one person was critically injured in the storm, which broadly swept France after a heat wave. The agency said power was also cut to 110,000 homes.

A falling tree killed a 12-year-old child in southwest France and a man died when his quad-bike hit a toppled tree in the northwest, French media reported.

World shares are mixed as markets take a breather after their recent wild ride

By ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

BANGKOK (AP) — World shares were mixed on Thursday and the U.S. dollar weakened as investors caught their breath following recent bouts of volatility.

Traders were turning to U.S. updates on durable goods orders, jobs and consumer spending and what say about how President Donald Trump's higher tariffs are affecting the economy, analysts said.

Germany's DAX surged 0.7% to 23,661.67. In Paris, the CAC 40 edged 0.1% higher to 7,565.46. Britain's FTSE 100 also gained 0.1% to 8,729.71.

The future for the S&P 500 was up 0.3% while that for the Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 0.2%. On Wednesday, the S&P 500 barely budged, closing just 0.8% below its all-time high set in February. The Dow dipped 0.2%, while the Nasdaq composite rose 0.3%.

Tokyo's Nikkei 225 climbed 1.7% to 39,584.58 as attention shifted to a July 9 deadline for trade agreements to help stave off higher U.S. tariffs imposed by President Donald Trump.

Japan's lead trade negotiator, Ryosei Akazawa, was due to visit Washington for another round of talks, with 25% U.S. import duties on Japanese vehicles a main point of contention.

Chinese markets were mixed. The Hang Seng in Hong Kong fell 0.6% to 24,325.40, while the Shanghai Composite index slipped 0.2% to 3,448.45.

In South Korea, the Kospi dropped 0.9% to 3,079.56 as traders sold shares to lock in recent gains.

Australia's S&P/ASX 200 slipped 0.1% to 8,550.80.

Taiwan's Taix gained 0.3% and the SET in Bangkok also gained 0.2%.

In the oil market, which has been the center of much of this week's action, crude prices have stabilized after plunging by roughly \$10 per barrel earlier this week.

Benchmark U.S. crude lost 10 cents early Thursday to \$64.82 per barrel, though it still remains below where it was before the fighting between Israel and Iran broke out nearly two weeks ago.

Brent crude, the international standard, gave up 5 cents to \$66.38 per barrel.

A fragile ceasefire between the two countries appears to be holding, at least for the moment.

In the bond market, Treasury yields held relatively steady, and the yield on the 10-year Treasury eased to 4.27% from 4.30% late Tuesday.

Yields had dropped a day earlier after the chair of the Federal Reserve told Congress it is waiting for

the right moment to resume cutting interest rates. By lowering rates, the Fed could give the economy a boost, but it could also fuel inflation.

Fed Chair Jerome Powell reiterated to a Senate committee Wednesday that he wants to wait and see how Trump's tariffs affect the economy and inflation before committing to its next move. He added it's possible that tariffs won't increase inflation by very much.

Trump has pushed for rate cuts to help reduce interest costs the federal government pays on its debt and he has sharply criticized Powell for not reducing borrowing costs, calling him a "numbskull" and a "fool," adding to speculation that he will move to replace the central bank's chair to seek more influence over the Fed.

That has helped pull the U.S. dollar lower.

Early Thursday, the dollar was trading at 143.79 Japanese yen, down from 145.26 yen. The euro rose to \$1.1739 from \$1.1661.

"Traders smelled what this was, an open audition for for who can promise the deepest cuts and the most pliant policy," Stephen Innes of SPI Asset Management said in a commentary.

The families of hostages held in Gaza hope for their own ceasefire after truce in Israel-Iran war

By MELANIE LIDMAN Associated Press

OR AKIVA, Israel (AP) — Liran Berman hasn't had much to keep hopeful over the 629 days of his twin brothers' captivity in Gaza. Ceasefire deals have collapsed, the war has dragged on, and his siblings remain hostages in the Palestinian enclave.

But the war between Israel and Iran, and the U.S.-brokered ceasefire that halted 12 days of fighting, have sparked fresh hope that his brothers, Gali and Ziv, may finally return home.

With Iran dealt a serious blow over nearly two weeks of fierce Israeli strikes, Berman believes Hamas, armed and financed by Iran, is at its most isolated since the war in Gaza began, and that might prompt the militant group to soften its negotiating positions.

"Now it's the time to pressure them and tell them, look, you are on your own. No one is coming to your help. This is it," Berman said. "I think the dominoes fell into place, and it's time for diplomacy to reign now."

A long nightmare for the families of hostages

During their Oct. 7, 2023, attack, Hamas-led militants killed some 1,200 people and took 251 hostages. Most have been freed in ceasefire deals, but 50 remain captive, less than half of them believed to still be alive.

The war has killed over 56,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not say how many were civilians or combatants. It says more than half of the dead were women and children.

The families of hostages have faced a 20-month-long nightmare, trying to advocate for their loved ones' fates while confronted with the whims of Israeli and Hamas leaders and the other crises that have engulfed the Middle East.

Israel's war with Iran, the first between the two countries, pushed the hostage crisis and the plight of Palestinian civilians in Gaza to the sidelines. Hostage families again found themselves forced to fight for the spotlight with another regional conflagration.

But as the conflict eases, the families are hoping mediators seize the momentum to push for a new ceasefire deal.

"The achievements in Iran are important and welcome, enabling us to end the war from a position of strength with Israel holding the upper hand," said the Hostages Families Forum, a grassroots organization representing many of the hostage families.

"To conclude this decisive operation against Iran without leveraging our success to bring home all the hostages would be a grave failure."

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Netanyahu may have more room to maneuver

It's not just a diminished Iran and its impact on Hamas that gives hostage families hope. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, riding a wave of public support for the Iran war and its achievements, could feel he has more space to move toward ending the war in Gaza, something his far-right governing partners oppose.

Hamas has repeatedly said it is prepared to free all the hostages in exchange for an end to the war in Gaza. Netanyahu says he will only end the war once Hamas is disarmed and exiled, something the group has rejected.

Berman said the ceasefire between Israel and Iran has left him the most optimistic since a truce between Israel and Hamas freed 33 Israeli hostages earlier this year. Israel shattered that ceasefire after eight weeks, and little progress has been made toward a new deal.

The Israeli government team coordinating hostage negotiations has told the families it now sees a window of opportunity that could force Hamas to be "more flexible in their demands," Berman said.

Iran's 'Axis of Resistance' is in disarray

Over the past four decades, Iran built up a network of militant proxy groups it called the "Axis of Resistance" that wielded significant power across the region, including Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Houthis rebels in Yemen, and militias in Iraq and Syria.

Hamas may have envisioned the Oct. 7, 2023, attack as a catalyst that would see other Iranian-sponsored militants attack Israel. While Hezbollah and the Houthis launched projectiles toward Israel, the support Hamas had counted on never fully materialized. In the past two years, many of those Iranian proxies have been decimated, changing the face of the Middle East.

U.S. President Donald Trump's involvement in securing a ceasefire between Israel and Iran has also given many hostage families hope that he might exert more pressure for a deal in Gaza.

"We probably need Trump to tell us to end the war in Gaza," Berman said.

Inseparable twins who remain in captivity

Gali and Ziv Berman, 27, were taken from their homes in Kibbutz Kfar Aza, on the border with Gaza, during the Oct. 7 attack. Seventeen others were also abducted there; of those, only the Berman twins remain captive.

The family has heard from hostages who returned in the previous deal that, as of February, the brothers were alive but being held separately.

Liran Berman said that's the longest the two have ever spent apart. Until their abduction, they were inseparable, though they are very different, the 38-year-old said.

In Kfar Aza, the twins lived in apartments across from each other. Gali is more outgoing, while Ziv is more reserved and shy with a sharp sense of humor, their brother said. Gali is the handyman who would drive four hours to help a friend hang a shelf, while Ziv would go along and point to where the shelf needed to go.

The war with Iran, during which Iranian missiles pounded Israeli cities for 12 days, gave Liran Berman a sense of what his brothers have endured as bombs rained down on Gaza, he said.

"The uncertainty and the fear for your life for any moment, they are feeling it for 20 months," he said. "Every moment can be your last."

Zelenskyy approves plans on special tribunal to prosecute Russian leaders over Ukraine

By MOLLY QUELL Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy formally approved plans Wednesday to set up a new international court to prosecute senior Russian officials for the full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

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The special tribunal will be created through an agreement between Ukraine and the Council of Europe, the continent's top human rights body. Zelenskyy visited the Strasbourg-based organization for the first time as part of the announcement.

The special tribunal aims to target senior Russian leaders for the "crime of aggression," which underpins the countless war crimes Ukraine accuses Russian forces of committing since the start of the war on Feb. 24, 2022. Existing international courts, including the International Criminal Court in The Hague lack jurisdiction to prosecute Russian nationals for that specific offense.

Since early in the conflict, Kyiv has been pushing for the creation of a special tribunal that goes beyond prosecuting war crimes that Ukraine alleged Russian forces committed — including bombing civilian infrastructure, killing civilians, rape, taking hostages and torture. Russia denies those accusations.

There are logistical details still to be resolved, including where the court will be based. The Hague has been suggested because of its existing legal infrastructure, but no final decision has been made.

Russia doesn't extradite its own citizens, and whether or not Russian President Vladimir Putin will ever end up in the dock remains to be seen.

Under international law, sitting heads of state and certain other top officials — often referred to as the "troika," including a country's head of state, head of government and foreign minister — enjoy immunity from prosecution. That means any potential indictment of Putin could only move forward if he leaves office.

There is no statute of limitation on the crime of aggression.

The institution will be funded by supporting countries known as the Core Group, including the Netherlands, Japan and Canada. The United States backed the project under former President Joe Biden, but President Donald Trump's administration didn't support the initiative.

North Korea will open its biggest tourist site next week, though it's not yet welcoming foreigners

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea next week will open a signature coastal tourist site that it says will usher in a new era in its tourism industry, though there is no word on when the country will fully reopen to foreign visitors.

The Wonsan-Kalma coastal tourist zone has hotels and other accommodations for nearly 20,000 guests who can swim in the sea, engage in sports and recreation activities and eat at restaurants and cafeterias on site, state media said.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un toured the site and cut the inaugural tape at a lavish ceremony Tuesday, the official Korean Central News Agency reported Thursday.

Kim said its construction would be recorded as "one of the greatest successes this year" and called the site "the proud first step" toward realizing the government's policy of developing tourism, according to KCNA.

North Korea will open the site to domestic tourists first

The Wonsan-Kalma beach resort is North Korea's biggest tourist site. KCNA said it will begin service for domestic tourists next Tuesday, but the report didn't say when it will start receiving foreign tourists. Observers say the resort likely required a huge investment from North Korea's limited budget, so it eventually will have to accept Chinese and other foreign tourists to break even.

Kim has been pushing to make the country a tourism hub as part of efforts to revive the ailing economy, and the Wonsan-Kalma zone is one of his most talked-about tourism projects. KCNA reported North Korea will confirm plans to build large tourist sites in other parts of the country, too.

But North Korea hasn't fully lifted a ban on foreign tourists that it imposed in early 2020 to guard against the COVID-19 pandemic. Experts say North Korea has been slow to resume its international tourism because of remaining pandemic curbs, a flare-up of tensions with the U.S. and South Korea in recent years and worries about Western tourists spreading a negative image of its system.

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Russian and Chinese tourists will likely travel to the resort

Starting from February 2024, North Korea has been accepting Russian tourists amid the booming military and other partnerships between the two countries, but Chinese group tours, which made up more than 90% of visitors before the pandemic, remain stalled.

In February this year, a small group of international tourists visited the country for the first time in five years, but tourist agencies said in March that their tours to North Korea were paused.

Kim's recent foreign policy prioritizes relations with Russia as he's been supplying troops and conventional weapons to support its war against Ukraine in return for economic and military assistance. But North Korea's ties with China, which has long been its biggest trading partner and aid benefactor, have apparently cooled as China is reluctant to join an anti-Western alliance with North Korea and Russia, analysts say.

Tuesday's ceremony that marked the completion of the resort's construction drew the Russian ambassador to North Korea and his embassy staff, KCNA said. But it didn't say whether any Chinese diplomats were also invited.

"I think North Korea will soon accept Russian tourists, given the Russian Embassy officials attended the ceremony. Summer business is important" for the beach resort, said Lee Sangkeun, an expert at the Institute for National Security Strategy, a think tank run by South Korea's intelligence agency.

"There seems to be issues that North Korea hasn't yet resolved in its relations with China. But North Korea has put in too much money on tourism and plans to spend more. Subsequently, to get its money's worth, North Korea can't help receiving Chinese tourists," Lee said.

Lim Eul-chul, a professor at Kyungnam University's Institute for Far Eastern Studies in Seoul, also said that foreign tourism to the Wonsan-Kalma site will begin with Russians. But he said Chinese tours to the zone, a sort of civilian exchange, will also begin soon, adding bilateral trade between China and North Korea has been recovering.

South Korean and American tours won't likely happen soon

Lim said that South Korean and American tours to North Korea won't likely restart anytime soon, though both new liberal South Korean President Lee Jae Myung and U.S. President Donald Trump have expressed hopes to revive dialogue with North Korea.

In January when Trump boasted about his ties with Kim, he said "I think he has tremendous condo capabilities. He's got a lot of shoreline," a likely reference to Wonsan-Kalma.

North Korea hasn't publicly responded to Trump's outreach. It has repeatedly rejected Washington and Seoul's dialogue offers and focused on expanding its nuclear weapons program since Kim's high-stakes nuclear diplomacy with Trump collapsed in 2019.

Trump says US and Iranian officials will talk next week as ceasefire holds

By JON GAMBRELL, DAVID RISING and FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Israel and Iran seemed to honor the fragile ceasefire between them for a second day Wednesday and U.S. President Donald Trump asserted that American and Iranian officials will talk next week, giving rise to cautious hope for longer-term peace.

Trump, who helped negotiate the ceasefire that took hold Tuesday on the 12th day of the war, told reporters at a NATO summit that he was not particularly interested in restarting negotiations with Iran, insisting that U.S. strikes had destroyed its nuclear program. Earlier in the day, an Iranian official questioned whether the United States could be trusted after its weekend attack.

"We may sign an agreement, I don't know," Trump said. "The way I look at it, they fought, the war is done."

Iran has not acknowledged any talks taking place next week, though U.S. Mideast envoy Steve Witkoff

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has said there has been direct and indirect communication between the countries. A sixth round of U.S.-Iran negotiations was scheduled for earlier this month in Oman but was canceled after Israel attacked Iran.

Earlier, Trump said the ceasefire was going "very well," and added that Iran was "not going to have a bomb, and they're not going to enrich."

Iran has insisted that it will not give up its nuclear program. In a vote underscoring the tough path ahead, its parliament agreed to fast-track a proposal that would effectively stop the country's cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency, the U.N. watchdog that has monitored the program for years.

Ahead of the vote, Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf criticized the IAEA for refusing "to even pretend to condemn the attack on Iran's nuclear facilities" that the U.S. carried out Sunday.

"For this reason, the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran will suspend cooperation with the IAEA until security of nuclear facilities is ensured, and Iran's peaceful nuclear program will move forward at a faster pace," Qalibaf told lawmakers.

IAEA Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi said he wrote to Iran to discuss resuming inspections of their nuclear facilities. Among other things, Iran claims to have moved its highly enriched uranium ahead of the U.S. strikes, and Grossi said his inspectors need to reassess the country's stockpiles.

"We need to return," he said. "We need to engage."

French President Emmanuel Macron said he hoped Tehran would come back to the table. France was part of the 2015 deal with Iran that restricted its nuclear program, but the agreement began unraveling after Trump pulled the U.S. out in his first term. Macron spoke multiple times to Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian during the war.

International Atomic Energy Agency Director Rafael Grossi said Wednesday that Iran must quickly resume cooperation with international inspectors, telling French broadcaster France 2 that the IAEA had lost visibility over sensitive nuclear materials since the onset of hostilities.

Grossi said Iran is legally obligated to cooperate with the IAEA under the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

"During a war, inspections are not possible. But now that hostilities have ceased, and given the sensitivity of this material, I believe it is in everyone's interest that we resume our activities as soon as possible," he said.

Iran has long maintained that its nuclear program is peaceful, and U.S. intelligence agencies have assessed that Tehran is not actively pursuing a bomb. However, Israeli leaders have argued that Iran could quickly assemble a nuclear weapon.

Israel is widely believed to be the only Middle Eastern country with nuclear weapons, which it has never acknowledged.

Questions over effectiveness of the US strikes

The Israel Atomic Energy Commission said its assessment was that the U.S. and Israeli strikes have "set back Iran's ability to develop nuclear weapons by many years." It did not give evidence to back up its claim.

The U.S. strikes hit three Iranian nuclear sites, which Trump said "completely and fully obliterated" the country's nuclear program. When asked about a U.S. intelligence report that found Iran's nuclear program has been set back only a few months, Trump scoffed and said it would at least take years to rebuild.

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman, Esmail Baghaei, confirmed that the strikes by American B-2 bombers using bunker-buster bombs had caused significant damage.

"Our nuclear installations have been badly damaged, that's for sure," he told Al Jazeera on Wednesday, refusing to go into detail.

He seemed to suggest Iran might not shut out IAEA inspectors for good, noting that the bill before parliament only talks of suspending work with the agency, not ending it. He also insisted Iran has the right to pursue a nuclear energy program.

"Iran is determined to preserve that right under any circumstances," he said.

Witkoff said late Tuesday on Fox News' "The Ingraham Angle" that Israel and the U.S. had achieved their objective with "the total destruction of the enrichment capacity" in Iran, and Iran's prerequisite for talks — that Israel end its campaign — had been fulfilled.

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"The proof is in the pudding," he said. "No one's shooting at each other. It's over."

Hopes for a long-term peace agreement

An Israeli official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations, said the ceasefire agreement with Iran amounted to "quiet for quiet," with no further understandings about Iran's nuclear program going ahead.

Witkoff told Fox News that Trump is now looking to land "a comprehensive peace agreement that goes beyond even the ceasefire."

"We're already talking to each other, not just directly, but also through interlocutors," Witkoff said, adding that the conversations were promising.

However, Baghaei, the Iranian spokesman, said Washington had "torpedoed diplomacy" with its attacks on nuclear sites, and that while Iran in principle was always open to talks, national security was the priority.

"We have to make sure whether the other parties are really serious when they're talking about diplomacy, or is it again part of their tactics to make more problems for the region and for my country," he said.

Grossi said Iran and the international community should seize the opportunity of the ceasefire for a long-term diplomatic solution.

"Out of the ... bad things that military conflict brings, there's also now a possibility, an opening," he said. "We shouldn't miss that opportunity."

A rare video by Mossad

Israel revealed details of the intelligence and covert operations that it said allowed the country to effectively target Iranian military commanders, nuclear scientists and key facilities.

In a rare video released by Israel's Mossad spy agency, chief David Barnea thanked the CIA for being a key partner, and his own agents for work over years to achieve what was "unimaginable at first."

"Thanks to accurate intelligence, advanced technologies and operational capabilities beyond imagination, we helped the air force strike the Iranian nuclear project, establish aerial superiority in Iranian skies and reduce the missile threat," the agency said in a Facebook post alongside the video.

Lt. Gen. Eyal Zamir, the military chief of staff, asserted that commandos had operated secretly "deep inside enemy territory" during the war.

Tehran on Tuesday put the death toll in Iran at 606, with 5,332 people wounded. The Washington-based Human Rights Activists group released figures Wednesday suggesting Israeli strikes on Iran had killed at least 1,054 and wounded 4,476.

The group, which has provided detailed casualty figures from multiple rounds of unrest in Iran, said 417 of those killed were civilians and 318 were security forces.

At least 28 people were killed in Israel and more than 1,000 wounded, according to officials.

In the past two weeks, Iran has executed six prisoners accused of spying for Israel, including three on Wednesday.

Cooper Flagg the new Maine man for the Mavericks as the No. 1 pick in the NBA draft

By BRIAN MAHONEY AP Basketball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Cooper Flagg is the new Maine man in Dallas.

The Mavericks took the Duke forward with the No. 1 pick in the NBA draft Wednesday night, hoping they have found their next franchise superstar less than five months after trading one away.

Mavericks fans were furious when Dallas traded Luka Doncic to the Los Angeles Lakers on Feb. 1, some immediately threatening to end their support of the team.

But the ones who stuck around may quickly love Flagg, the college player of the year who averaged 19.2 points and 7.5 rebounds while leading Duke to the Final Four. The Mavericks quickly announced that Flagg

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would wear No. 32 in Dallas, where fellow Duke products Kyrie Irving and Dereck Lively II are on the roster.

"I'm really excited. I think I keep saying I'm excited to be a sponge, to get down there and just learn, be surrounded by Hall of Fame-caliber guys and just to be able to learn from them," Flagg said. "It's going to be an incredible experience."

His selection — considered likely ever since Flagg showed off his considerable game last summer after being invited to the U.S. Olympic team's training camp — was a daylong celebration in his home state for the 18-year-old forward from Newport, Maine.

"It means a lot to me to have the support of the whole state. I know how many people showed up today and supported me at some of the draft parties back home," Flagg said. "It feels amazing knowing I can inspire younger kids. I was in their shoes really not that long ago, so just to know I can give those kids those feelings and have the whole state behind me, it means a lot."

He joined Elton Brand, Irving, Zion Williamson and Paolo Banchero as Duke players drafted No. 1 since 1999, and he returned the draft to its longtime start with a one-and-done college player.

That's the way the draft began every year from 2010 until Banchero's selection in 2022, but the last two No. 1 picks, Victor Wembanyama and Zaccharie Risacher, are both from France.

Rutgers freshman Dylan Harper was taken by the Spurs with the No. 2 pick and will try to follow Wembanyama and Stephon Castle and give San Antonio a third straight NBA Rookie of the Year.

"It's definitely a goal of mine to make it three in a row," said Harper, the son of former NBA guard Ron Harper. "I think the coaching staff and the players are going to make it easy for me to go out there and showcase my talent, so definitely."

The 76ers then took Baylor's VJ Edgecombe, getting the first sustained burst of loud cheers of the draft from what seemed to be a number of Philadelphia fans who made the trip to Barclays Center in Brooklyn. The first two picks had long been expected, but the No. 3 spot was the first one where there was intrigue.

Kon Knueppel made it two Duke players in the first four picks when the Charlotte Hornets took him at No. 4. When big man Khaman Maluach went at No. 10 — a pick made by the Houston Rockets but headed to Phoenix as part of the trade for Kevin Durant that can't become official until next month — it gave the Blue Devils three top-10 picks and 50 in the first round since 1989, moving past Kentucky (48) for most by any school.

"It was so emotional getting to see my teammates, my fellow freshmen getting drafted," Maluach said. "I was so happy for them because they deserve everything they have. They worked hard for it, for that moment, too."

Ace Bailey, Harper's teammate with the Scarlet Knights who could have been in the mix to go third but declined to work out for the 76ers, ended up going at No. 5 to Utah to end a draft process in which he was criticized for how his camp handled it.

"I'm glad it's over," Bailey said. "I'm ready to play some basketball now."

Then it was Tre Johnson of Texas to the Washington Wizards at No. 6 and Oklahoma's Jeremiah Fears to New Orleans at No. 7, before the host Nets took BYU's Egor Demin at No. 8, Brooklyn's first of potentially five selections in the first round. Toronto took South Carolina's Collin Murray-Boyles at No. 9.

The Nets would later add French guard Nolan Traore at No. 19, North Carolina's Drake Powell at No. 22 (once a three-way trade with Boston and Atlanta is complete), Ben Saraf of Israel at No. 26 and Michigan center Danny Wolf at No. 27.

The NBA champion Oklahoma City Thunder took Georgetown center Thomas Sorber at No. 15, their first of two picks in the first round. The Thunder also had the No. 24 pick but traded the rights to Nique Clifford to Sacramento for a future first-round pick.

The first night of the two-night draft, a format the NBA went to last season, had some mid-round trades involving some of college basketball's top players. New Orleans acquired the rights to Maryland forward Derik Queen, the No. 13 pick, from Atlanta for the rights to the No. 23 pick, Asa Newell of Georgia, and a future first-round pick.

Walter Clayton Jr., the Most Outstanding Player of the Final Four after leading Florida to the national championship, was drafted by Washington at No. 18 but his rights were dealt to Utah for the rights to

Illinois' Will Riley, who went 21st.

The draft will resume at Barclays Center on Thursday night. All of the players invited to the green room were taken in Round 1, with UConn's Liam McNeeley the last at No. 19, with Phoenix sending his rights to Charlotte.

EU leaders meet to discuss tougher Russia sanctions, US tariffs and Middle East conflicts

By SAM McNEIL Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — The heads of the European Union's 27 member nations will meet Thursday in Brussels to discuss tougher sanctions on Russia, ways to prevent painful new U.S. tariffs, and how to make their voices heard in the Middle East conflicts.

Most of the leaders will arrive from a brief but intense NATO summit where they pledged a big boost in defense spending, and papered over some of their differences with U.S. President Donald Trump.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy will join the EU summit by videoconference, after meeting Trump on Wednesday. U.S.-led NATO downgraded Ukraine from a top priority to a side player this week, but Russia's war in Ukraine remains of paramount concern for the EU.

Members will be discussing an 18th round of sanctions against Russia and whether to maintain a price cap on Russian oil, measures that some nations oppose because it could raise energy prices.

Meanwhile, Trump's threatened tariffs are weighing on the EU, which negotiates trade deals on behalf of all 27 member countries. He lashed out at Spain on Wednesday for not spending more on defense and suggested yet more tariffs. France's president called Trump to task for starting a trade war with longtime allies.

European leaders are also concerned about fallout from the wars in the Middle East, and the EU is pushing to revive diplomatic negotiations with Iran over its nuclear program.

EU members have internal disagreements to overcome. They are divided over what to do about European policy toward Israel because of its conduct in Gaza. And left-leaning parties are attacking European Commissioner Ursula von Der Leyen's pivot away from the EU's climate leadership in favor of military investment.

Defense and security are likely to top the agenda. The summit will end with a statement of conclusions that will set the agenda for the bloc for the next four months and can be seen as a bellwether for political sentiment in Europe on major regional and global issues.

Bezos and Sanchez arrive in Venice as protesters say their wedding highlights wealth inequality

By COLLEEN BARRY and LUCA BRUNO Associated Press

VENICE, Italy (AP) — Amazon founder Jeff Bezos and Lauren Sanchez arrived in Venice, Italy, on Wednesday ahead of their star-studded weekend wedding, which has galvanized an assortment of protesters.

Bezos waved from a water taxi as he and Sanchez arrived at the dock of the Aman Hotel on the Grand Canal with two security boats in tow.

Their wedding has drawn protests by groups who view it as a sign of the growing disparity between the haves and have-nots, while residents complain it exemplifies the way their needs are disregarded in the era of mass tourism to the historic lagoon city.

About a dozen Venetian organizations — including housing advocates, anti-cruise ship campaigners and university groups — have united to protest the multi-day event under the banner "No Space for Bezos," a play on words also referring to the bride's recent space flight.

They have staged small-scale protests, unfurling anti-Bezos banners on iconic Venetian sites. They were joined Monday by Greenpeace and the British group "Everyone Hates Elon," which has smashed Teslas to protest Elon Musk, to unfurl a giant banner in St. Mark's Square protesting purported tax breaks for

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billionaires.

On Wednesday, other activists launched a float down the Grand Canal featuring a mannequin of Bezos clinging onto an Amazon box, his fists full of fake dollars. The British publicity firm that announced the stunt said it wasn't a protest of the wedding "but against unchecked wealth, media control, and the growing privatisation of public spaces."

Bezos' representatives have not commented on the protests.

The local activists had planned a more organized protest for Saturday, aiming to obstruct access to canals with boats to prevent guests from reaching a wedding venue. They modified the protest to a march from the train station after claiming a victory, asserting that their pressure forced organizers to change the venue to the Arsenale, a more easily secured site beyond Venice's congested center.

"It will be a strong, decisive protest, but peaceful," said Federica Toninello, an activist with the Social Housing Assembly network. "We want it to be like a party, with music, to make clear what we want our Venice to look like."

Among the 200 guests confirmed to be attending the wedding are Mick Jagger, Ivanka Trump, Oprah Winfrey, Katy Perry and Leonardo DiCaprio.

Venice, renowned for its romantic canal vistas, hosts hundreds of weddings each year, not infrequently those of the rich and famous. Previous celebrity weddings, like that of George Clooney to human rights lawyer Amal Alamuddin in 2014, were embraced by the public. Hundreds turned out to wish the couple well at City Hall.

Bezos has a different political and business profile, said Tommaso Cacciari, a prominent figure in the movement that successfully pushed for a ban on cruise ships over 25,000 tons traveling through the Giudecca Canal in central Venice.

"Bezos is not a Hollywood actor," Cacciari said. "He is an ultra-billionaire who sat next to Donald Trump during the inauguration, who contributed to his reelection and is contributing in a direct and heavy way to this new global obscurantism."

Critics cite Amazon's labor practices, ongoing tax disputes with European governments and Bezos' political associations as reasons for concern.

Activists also argue that the Bezos wedding exemplifies broader failures in municipal governance, particularly the prioritization of tourism over residents' needs. They cite measures such as the day-tripper tax — which critics argue reinforces Venice's image as a theme park — as ineffective. Chief among their concerns is the lack of investment in affordable housing and essential services.

City officials have defended the wedding. Mayor Luigi Brugnaro called the event an honor for Venice, and the city denied the wedding would cause disruptions.

"Venice once again reveals itself to be a global stage," Brugnaro told The Associated Press, adding he hoped to meet Bezos while he was in town.

Meanwhile, a Venetian environmental research association, Corila, issued a statement saying Bezos' Earth Fund was supporting its work with an "important donation."

Corila, which unites university scholars and Italy's main national research council in researching Venetian protection strategies, wouldn't say how much Bezos was donating but said contact began in April, well before the protests started.

Kilmar Abrego Garcia to remain in jail while attorneys spar whether he'll be swiftly deported

By TRAVIS LOLLER, JONATHAN MATTISE and KRISTIN M. HALL Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Kilmar Abrego Garcia will remain in jail for at least a few more days while attorneys in the federal smuggling case against him spar over whether prosecutors have the ability to prevent Abrego Garcia's deportation if he is released to await trial.

The Salvadoran national whose mistaken deportation became a flashpoint in the fight over President Donald Trump's immigration policies has been in jail since he was returned to the U.S. on June 7, facing

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two counts of human smuggling.

A federal Judge has ruled that Abrego Garcia has a right to be released and even set specific conditions during a court hearing on Wednesday for him to live with his brother. But Abrego Garcia's attorneys expressed concern that it would lead to his immediate detention and possible deportation by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

U.S. Magistrate Judge Barbara Holmes also expressed doubts during the hearing about her own power to require anything more than prosecutors using their best efforts to secure the cooperation of ICE.

"I have no reservations about my ability to direct the local U.S. Attorney's office," the judge said. "I don't think I have any authority over ICE."

Holmes did not say when she would file the release order for Abrego Garcia, but it will not happen before Friday afternoon.

Judge: Government dilemma 'completely of its own making'

Abrego Garcia, who was shackled and wearing a red jumpsuit, was expected to be released Wednesday, if only into ICE custody. But the court hearing revealed instead the competing interests between two federal agencies within the Trump administration.

Acting U.S. Attorney Rob McGuire has said in court and in filings that one of the reasons he wants Abrego Garcia to stay in jail is to ensure that he remains in the country and isn't deported by ICE.

McGuire told the judge during Wednesday's hearing that he would do "the best I can" to secure the cooperation of the Department of Homeland Security, which includes ICE. But the prosecutor noted, "That's a separate agency with separate leadership and separate directions. I will coordinate, but I can't tell them what to do."

But Abrego Garcia's attorney, Sean Hecker, countered that the Department of Justice and Homeland Security are both within the executive branch and seem to cooperate on other things. For example, ICE has agreed not to deport cooperating witnesses who agreed to testify against Abrego Garcia.

Meanwhile, federal prosecutors had tried to stay Holmes' release order. But it was denied by another federal judge on Wednesday afternoon, who wrote that the government was asking the court to "save it from itself" in a situation that was "completely of its own making."

U.S. District Judge Waverly D. Crenshaw, Jr. wrote that federal prosecutors should be making their arguments to DHS, not a court, "because the Department of Justice and DHS can together prevent the harm the Government contends it faces."

"If the Government finds this case to be as high priority as it argues here, it is incumbent upon it to ensure that Abrego is held accountable for the charges in the Indictment," Crenshaw wrote. "If the Department of Justice and DHS cannot do so, that speaks for itself."

Crenshaw, however, will allow prosecutors to file a brief in support of a motion to revoke the magistrate's release order. An evidentiary hearing is scheduled for July 16.

In court on wedding anniversary

Abrego Garcia pleaded not guilty on June 13 to smuggling charges that his attorneys have characterized as an attempt to justify his mistaken deportation in March to a notorious prison in El Salvador.

Those charges stem from a 2022 traffic stop for speeding in Tennessee, during which Abrego Garcia was driving a vehicle with nine passengers. At his detention hearing, Homeland Security special agent Peter Joseph testified that he did not begin investigating Abrego Garcia until April of this year.

Holmes, the magistrate judge, wrote in a ruling on Sunday that federal prosecutors failed to show that Abrego Garcia was a flight risk or a danger to the community. He has lived for more than a decade in Maryland, where he and his American wife are raising three children.

However, Holmes referred to her own ruling as "little more than an academic exercise," noting that ICE plans to detain him. It is less clear what will happen after that. Although Abrego Garcia can't be deported to El Salvador — where an immigration judge found he faces a credible threat from gangs — he is still

deportable to a third country as long as that country agrees to not send him to El Salvador.

Abrego Garcia's wife, Jennifer Vasquez Sura, said during a news conference before Wednesday's hearing that it's been 106 days since he "was abducted by the Trump administration and separated from our family." She noted that he has missed family birthdays, graduations and Father's Day, while "today he misses our wedding anniversary."

Vasquez Sura said their love, their faith in God and an abundance of community support have helped them persevere.

"Kilmar should never have been taken away from us," she said. "This fight has been the hardest thing in my life."

Trump grapples for upper hand in debate over damage caused by US strikes on Iran

By CHRIS MEGERIAN and SEUNG MIN KIM Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — President Donald Trump on Wednesday rejected an early intelligence assessment that U.S. strikes inflicted only a marginal setback on Iran's nuclear program, insisting that his country's spies did not have the full picture and defending his own swift conclusion that American bombs and missiles delivered a crushing blow.

"This was a devastating attack, and it knocked them for a loop," Trump said as his administration scrambled to support his claims, made only hours after the attack, that Iranian nuclear facilities were "completely and fully obliterated."

Trump said Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth and other military officials would hold an "interesting and irrefutable" news conference Thursday morning to "fight for the Dignity of our Great American Pilots" who carried out the mission.

He wrote on social media that "these Patriots were very upset" by "Fake News" reports about the limited impact of the strikes.

The issue dominated Trump's attendance at NATO's annual summit in the Netherlands, which was otherwise focused on European security. The White House highlighted an Israeli statement that Iran's nuclear efforts were delayed by years, much longer than the few months determined by American intelligence. A spokesperson for the Iranian foreign ministry also said the facilities have suffered significant damage.

But those comments fell short of Trump's hyperbole and did little to suggest that U.S. strikes had eliminated the threat of Iran developing a nuclear weapon.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio, speaking in an interview with Politico, limited his own assessment to saying Iran was "much further away from a nuclear weapon today than they were before the president took this bold action."

Drawing reliable conclusions about the impact of the U.S. strikes remains difficult, especially only days after they took place. That makes the issue a breeding ground for competing claims that could determine how American voters view Trump's risky decision to join Israel's attacks on Iran.

Jeffrey Lewis, a professor of nonproliferation at the Middlebury Institute, said Trump was trying to have it both ways.

"If it's too early to know, why is Trump saying it's obliterated?" he said. "Either it's too early to know, or you know."

What's next?

Also at stake are Trump's next steps in the Middle East, where diplomatic efforts could be required to prevent Iran from rebuilding its nuclear program.

Trump said U.S. and Iranian officials would meet soon, resuming a dialogue that was interrupted by nearly two weeks of war, even as he suggested that negotiations were no longer necessary.

"I don't care if I have an agreement or not," Trump said, because Iran was too badly damaged to even

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consider rebuilding its program. "They're not going to be doing it anyway. They've had it."

Iran maintains that its atomic ambitions are for peaceful purposes, while U.S. and Israeli leaders have described the country's nuclear program as the precursor to obtaining a nuclear weapon.

The episode has triggered some of Trump's long-standing vendettas against leaks and intelligence officials, whom he has often viewed as a part of a "deep state" dedicated to undermining his agenda. He also lashed out at media outlets that reported on the classified assessment, describing them as "scum" and "disgusting."

The intelligence assessment was produced by the Defense Intelligence Agency, which is part of the Pentagon. Out of all the country's spy services, it's usually "the fastest on the draw" to produce preliminary results, said Frank Montoya, a former counterintelligence leader.

"They have to respond quickly to what the war fighters are looking for, but those preliminary assessments are still based on information that's out there," Montoya said.

Leon Panetta, who held top national security roles under President Barack Obama, said it's too soon to have a more complete understanding of the strikes' impact.

"Bottom line is, that's going to take an extended period of time, at least a number of weeks, before we have a full assessment of the damage done by the attack," Panetta said.

However, Trump administration officials have been chiming in with their own statements emphasizing the damage done by the American mission.

CIA Director John Ratcliffe said there's "a body of credible intelligence" showing "several key Iranian nuclear facilities were destroyed and would have to be rebuilt over the course of years."

Trump vs. the media

Trump said questioning the effectiveness of the strikes was disrespectful to the military, which flew stealth bombers halfway around the world to attack with weapons designed to penetrate deep underground.

The reports, he said, were "very unfair to the pilots, who risked their lives for our country."

He described the American attack as a definitive conclusion to what he's dubbed "the 12-day war," much like the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki heralded the end of World War II.

"That ended that war," he said. "This ended the war."

During a news conference at the NATO summit, Trump briefly ceded the stage to Hegseth, who also lashed out at the media.

"There's a reason the president calls out the fake news for what it is," he said. Hegseth said reporters were using a leaked intelligence assessment to politically damage Trump.

"They want to spin it to try to make him look bad," he said.

Trump pointed to satellite photos that showed the area around the nuclear facilities was "burned black," and he said that underground tunnels where uranium was enriched and stored were "all collapsed." He also suggested that Israel had sources on the ground in Iran, saying "they have guys that go in there after the hit" to evaluate the damage.

The bombing "rendered the enrichment facility inoperable," according to a statement distributed by the White House and the office of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The American strikes, combined with Israeli strikes on other elements of Iran's military nuclear program, have "set back Iran's ability to develop nuclear weapons by many years," the Israel Atomic Energy Commission said.

In addition, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei told Al Jazeera that there was significant damage from U.S. bombers.

"Our nuclear installations have been badly damaged, that's for sure," he said.

Where's the uranium?

One critical question is whether enriched uranium, which could be developed into fuel for a nuclear bomb, was moved out of facilities before the U.S. strikes.

"I believe they didn't have a chance to get anything out, because we acted fast," Trump said. He added that "it's very hard to move that kind of material, and very dangerous."

In the wake of the leak, the White House going forward intends to try to limit the sharing of classified documents with Congress, according to a senior White House official.

The official, who was not authorized to comment publicly on the matter and spoke on the condition of anonymity, did not provide detail on how the administration would go about limiting the flow of classified information to lawmakers.

The move, first reported by Axios, seems certain to be challenged by members of Congress.

Classified briefings for lawmakers, originally scheduled for Tuesday, are now expected to take place Thursday and Friday.

Mississippi executes the longest-serving man on the state's death row for 1976 killing

By SOPHIE BATES Associated Press

PARCHMAN, Miss. (AP) — The longest-serving man on Mississippi's death row was executed Wednesday, nearly five decades after he kidnapped and killed a bank loan officer's wife in a violent ransom scheme.

Richard Gerald Jordan, a 79-year-old Vietnam veteran with post-traumatic stress disorder whose final appeals were denied without comment by the U.S. Supreme Court, was sentenced to death in 1976 for killing and kidnapping Edwina Marter. He died by lethal injection at the Mississippi State Penitentiary in Parchman.

The execution began at 6 p.m., according to prison officials. Jordan lay on the gurney with his mouth slightly ajar and took several deep breaths before becoming still. The time of death was given as 6:16 p.m.

Jordan was one of several on the state's death row who sued the state over its three-drug execution protocol, claiming it is inhumane.

When given an opportunity to make a final statement Wednesday, he said, "First I would like to thank everyone for a humane way of doing this. I want to apologize to the victim's family."

He also thanked his lawyers and his wife and asked for forgiveness. His last words were: "I will see you on the other side, all of you."

Jordan's wife, Marsha Jordan, witnessed the execution, along with his lawyer Krissy Nobile and a spiritual adviser, the Rev. Tim Murphy. His wife and lawyer dabbed their eyes several times.

During a news conference after the execution, Keith Degruy, a spokesperson for Marter's family, read a statement on behalf of her two sons and husband, who were not present at the execution.

"Nothing will bring back our mom, sister and our friend. Nothing can ever change what Jordan took from us 49 years ago. Jordan tried desperately to change his ruling so he can simply die in prison. We never had an option," he said.

Jordan's execution was the third in the state in the last 10 years; previously the most recent one was carried out in December 2022. It came a day after a man was put to death in Florida, in what is shaping up to be a year with the most executions since 2015.

Mississippi Supreme Court records show that in January 1976, Jordan called the Gulf National Bank in Gulfport and asked to speak with a loan officer. After he was told that Charles Marter could speak to him, he hung up. He then looked up the Marters' home address in a telephone book and kidnapped Edwina Marter.

According to court records, Jordan took her to a forest and fatally shot her before calling her husband, claiming she was safe and demanding \$25,000.

Eric Marter, who was 11 when his mother was killed, told The Associated Press before the execution that other family members would attend.

"It should have happened a long time ago," he said. "I'm not really interested in giving him the benefit of the doubt."

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"He needs to be punished," Marter said.

As of the beginning of the year, Jordan was one of 22 people sentenced in the 1970s who were still on death row, according to the Death Penalty Information Center.

His execution ended a decades-long court process that included four trials and numerous appeals. On Monday, the Supreme Court rejected a petition that argued he was denied due process rights.

"He was never given what for a long time the law has entitled him to, which is a mental health professional that is independent of the prosecution and can assist his defense," said lawyer Krissy Nobile, director of Mississippi's Office of Capital Post-Conviction Counsel, who represented Jordan. "Because of that his jury never got to hear about his Vietnam experiences."

A recent petition asking Gov. Tate Reeves for clemency echoed Nobile's claim. It said Jordan suffered severe PTSD after serving three back-to-back tours, which could have been a factor in his crime. Reeves denied the request.

"His war service, his war trauma, was considered not relevant in his murder trial," said Franklin Rosenblatt, president of the National Institute of Military Justice, who wrote the petition on Jordan's behalf. "We just know so much more than we did 10 years ago, and certainly during Vietnam, about the effect of war trauma on the brain and how that affects ongoing behaviors."

Eric Marter said he does not buy that argument: "I know what he did. He wanted money, and he couldn't take her with him. And he — so he did what he did."

One more sizzling hot day for the eastern US before temperatures plunge 30 degrees

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — A record-smashing heat wave broiled the U.S. East for another day Wednesday, even as thermometers were forecast to soon plunge by as many as 30 degrees in the same areas.

The day's heat wasn't expected to be as intense as Tuesday, when at least 50 heat records were matched or broken and 21 places hit triple-digit temperatures. About 127 million Americans remained under National Weather Service heat advisories, down from the previous day. Sizzling temperatures sent utilities scrambling to keep the air conditioning and lights on amid massive demand for power.

"It's still going to be, I think, pretty bad across the East," meteorologist Bob Oravec of the Weather Prediction Center said Wednesday morning. "I think today is probably the last day of widespread record potential. It might not be quite as hot as yesterday by a few degrees. But still, high temperatures are expected in the upper 90s across a good section of the East."

The weather service warned of "extreme heat" for a stretch of the country from North Carolina to New York and west to West Virginia. Highs could approach triple digits from New York to Richmond, Oravec said. Temperatures again broke 100 on Wednesday at New York's John F. Kennedy Airport and in Newark and Baltimore.

Temperatures Wednesday morning were "a little bit warmer than expected" because of northwesterly winds bringing "warm leftovers from yesterday," said former NOAA chief scientist Ryan Maue, a private meteorologist. Nantucket, Massachusetts, was above 90 degrees Fahrenheit (32 Celsius) when its forecast high was 82.

Weather whiplash

The high pressure heat dome that has baked the East was forecast to break. A cold front began moving south from New England, bringing with it clouds and cooler temperatures — not only cooler than 100 degrees Fahrenheit (38 Celsius), but cooler than normal.

That air mass drawing on cool ocean waters will send temperatures plummeting by the end of the week in Philadelphia, which hit a record high of 101 degrees Fahrenheit on Tuesday, said Ray Martin, meteorologist at the National Weather Service in Mount Holly, New Jersey. Air temperatures will be in the low 70s Fahrenheit (20s Celsius).

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"It's going to feel like a shock to the system, but it's not anything particularly unusual," said Martin. Boston's forecast high for Friday is 34 degrees lower than what it hit Tuesday.

"It's going to feel like a different season," Oravec said.

However, it won't last. After one or two days, slightly hotter than normal temperatures are forecast, but not anywhere near the highs from earlier this week, Oravec said.

Weather whiplash from one extreme to another occurs more often as the world warms overall from burning fossil fuels such as coal, oil and natural gas, scientists said.

Records smashed

Tuesday was likely the peak of the heat, with Baltimore the king of swelter. The city's high of 105 degrees Fahrenheit (40 Celsius) smashed a previous record by four degrees. At night, when the human body needs cooling, temperatures only dropped to 87 Fahrenheit (30 Celsius).

Baltimore was hardly alone. A dozen weather stations were 101 degrees or higher, including two New York airports. Boston hit 102, breaking its old record by seven degrees. Augusta, Maine's 100-degrees also broke its old record by seven degrees.

Every coastal state from Maine to South Carolina hit 100 degrees somewhere, with Georgia and Florida clocking in at 99 on Tuesday.

As temperatures rise "things become less reliable and more unstable," said Climate Central Chief Meteorologist Bernadette Woods Plackey.

The heat meant more demand for power. The nation's largest power grid operator, PJM Interconnection, on Monday recorded its highest demand since 2011, with only a slight drop off Tuesday and Wednesday, spokesman Dan Lockwood said.

"We have an aging grid infrastructure already in United States, so you can see the impacts of that heat on that infrastructure," said Kate Guy, senior research fellow at the Columbia University Center on Global Energy Policy. The aging system is less capable of transmitting power at the voltages needed, she said. "At the same time, you're seeing a really big spike in demand. This is what they (utilities) are increasingly experiencing because of climate change," Guy said. "Frankly, with each year is increased, historic temperatures and that intense heat arriving earlier than ever, just putting an immense pressure on the electrical grid."

Extreme heat caused the road to buckle in two locations on an interstate highway in northern New Jersey. State transportation officials say the impact on the concrete roadway in Morris County on Tuesday afternoon forced some lane closures as temporary repairs were made. Crews then began work to replace the damaged areas and repave those sections.

Some downtown Chicago streets will close Wednesday night to repair pavement that has buckled due to hot temperatures amid an ongoing heat wave in the city.

"Pavement failures or blowouts occur when prolonged high temperatures cause the road to expand and buckle up or blow out, resulting in uneven driving surfaces," the Illinois Department of Transportation said in a statement.

In Chesapeake, Virginia, a heat-related malfunction prompted a bridge to remain stuck in the open position.

Kennedy's new vaccine panel alarms pediatricians with inquiries into long-settled questions

By MIKE STOBBE and LAURAN NEERGAARD Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — U.S. Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s new vaccine advisers alarmed pediatricians Wednesday by announcing inquiries into some long-settled questions about children's shots.

Opening the first meeting of Kennedy's handpicked seven-member panel, committee chairman Martin Kulldorff said he was appointing a work group to evaluate the "cumulative effect" of the children's vaccine schedule — the list of immunizations given at different times throughout childhood.

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Also to be evaluated, he said, is how two other shots are administered — one that guards against liver-destroying hepatitis B and another that combines chickenpox protection with MMR, the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine.

It was an early sign of how the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices is being reshaped by Kennedy, a leading antivaccine activist before becoming the nation's top health official. He fired the entire 17-member panel this month and replaced it with a group that includes several anti-vaccine voices.

"Vaccines are not all good or bad," Kulldorff said. "We are learning more about vaccines over time" and must "keep up to date."

His announcement reflected a common message of vaccine skeptics: that too many shots may overwhelm kids' immune systems or that the ingredients may build up to cause harm. Scientists say those claims have been repeatedly investigated with no signs of concern.

Kids today are exposed to fewer antigens — immune-revving components — than their grandparents despite getting more doses, because of improved vaccine technology, said Dr. Paul Offit, a vaccine expert at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia.

The American Academy of Pediatrics announced Wednesday that it would continue publishing its own vaccine schedule for children but now will do so independently of the ACIP, calling it "no longer a credible process."

"The narrative that current vaccine policies are flawed and need 'fixing' is a distortion," said the AAP's Dr. Sean O'Leary. "These policies have saved trillions of dollars and millions of lives."

The ACIP, created more than 60 years ago, helps the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention determine who should be vaccinated against a long list of diseases, and when. Those recommendations have a big impact on whether insurance covers vaccinations and where they're available, such as at pharmacies.

After Kennedy's abrupt dismissal of the existing expert panel, a number of the CDC's top vaccine scientists — including some who lead the reporting of data and the vetting of presentations at ACIP meetings — have resigned or been moved out of previous positions.

And shortly before Wednesday's meeting, a Virginia-based obstetrician and gynecologist appointed to the committee stepped down. According to the Trump administration, he withdrew during a customary review of members' financial holdings.

Scientists show data that COVID-19 vaccines protect pregnant women and kids

First on the committee's agenda Wednesday were COVID-19 vaccinations. Kennedy already sidestepped the panel and announced the vaccine will no longer be recommended for healthy children or pregnant women.

Yet CDC scientists told the panel that vaccination is "the best protection" during pregnancy, and said most children hospitalized for COVID-19 over the past year were unvaccinated.

COVID-19 remains a public health threat, resulting in 32,000 to 51,000 U.S. deaths and more than 250,000 hospitalizations since last fall, according to the CDC. Most at risk for hospitalization are seniors and children under 2 — especially infants under 6 months who could have some protection if their mom got vaccinated during pregnancy, according to the CDC's presentation.

The new advisers weren't asked to vote on Kennedy's recommendations, which raise uncertainty about how easily people will be able to access COVID-19 vaccinations this fall.

After CDC staff outlined multiple overlapping systems that continue to track the vaccines' safety, several advisers questioned if the real-world data really is trustworthy.

Vote on RSV protections is postponed

Also Wednesday, the committee took up RSV, or respiratory syncytial virus, a common cause of cold-like symptoms that can be dangerous for infants.

In 2023, U.S. health officials began recommending two new measures to protect infants — a lab-made antibody for newborns and a vaccine for pregnant women — that experts say likely drove an improvement

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in infant mortality. The antibody proved to be 63% to 76% effective against emergency department visits for infants over the last year.

"People need to understand what a spectacular accomplishment these results are," said ACIP member Dr. Cody Meissner, of Dartmouth.

The committee postponed until Thursday a vote on whether to recommend another company's newly approved antibody shot as well.

Flu shot recommendations to be debated

At its June meetings, the committee usually refreshes guidance for Americans 6 months and older to get a flu shot, and helps green light the annual fall vaccination campaign.

But a vote set for Thursday also promises controversy.

The panel is set to consider a preservative in a subset of flu shots that Kennedy and some antivaccine groups have falsely contended is tied to autism.

In preparation, the CDC posted a new report confirming that research shows no link between the preservative, thimerosal, and autism or any other neurodevelopmental disorders. By Wednesday afternoon, the analysis had been removed from the committee's website.

Who is Zohran Mamdani? State lawmaker seeks to become NYC's first Muslim and Indian American mayor

By PHILIP MARCELO Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — When he announced his run for mayor back in October, Zohran Mamdani was a state lawmaker unknown to most New York City residents.

On Tuesday evening, the 33-year-old marked his stunning political ascension when he declared victory in the Democratic primary from a Queens rooftop bar after former New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo conceded.

While the race's ultimate outcome has yet to be confirmed by a ranked choice count scheduled for July 1, here's a look at the one-time rapper seeking to become the city's first Muslim and Indian American mayor, and its youngest mayor in generations.

Mamdani's mother is a famous filmmaker

Mamdani was born in Kampala, Uganda, to Indian parents and became an American citizen in 2018, shortly after graduating college.

He lived with his family briefly in Cape Town, South Africa, before moving to New York City when he was 7.

Mamdani's mother, Mira Nair, is an award-winning filmmaker whose credits include "Monsoon Wedding," "The Namesake" and "Mississippi Masala." His father, Mahmood Mamdani, is an anthropology professor at Columbia University.

Mamdani married Rama Duwaji, a Syrian American artist, earlier this year. The couple, who met on the dating app Hinge, live in the Astoria section of Queens.

Mamdani was once a fledgling rapper

Mamdani attended the Bronx High School of Science, where he cofounded the public school's first cricket team, according to his legislative bio.

He graduated in 2014 from Bowdoin College in Maine, where he earned a degree in Africana studies and cofounded his college's Students for Justice in Palestine chapter.

After college, he worked as a foreclosure prevention counselor in Queens helping residents avoid eviction, the job he says inspired him to run for public office.

Mamdani also had a notable side hustle in the local hip-hop scene, rapping under the moniker Young Cardamom and later Mr. Cardamom. During his first run for state lawmaker, Mamdani gave a nod to his brief foray into music, describing himself as a "B-list rapper."

"Nani," a song he made in 2019 to honor his grandmother, even found new life -- and a vastly wider

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audience -- as his mayoral campaign gained momentum. His critics, meanwhile, have seized on lyrics from "Salaam," his 2017 ode to being Muslim in New York, to argue his views are too extreme for New Yorkers.

Early political career

Mamdani cut his teeth in local politics working on campaigns for Democratic candidates in Queens and Brooklyn.

He was first elected to the New York Assembly in 2020, knocking off a longtime Democratic incumbent for a Queens district covering Astoria and surrounding neighborhoods. He has handily won reelection twice.

The Democratic Socialist's most notable legislative accomplishment has been pushing through a pilot program that made a handful of city buses free for a year. He's also proposed legislation banning nonprofits from "engaging in unauthorized support of Israeli settlement activity."

Mamdani's opponents, particularly Cuomo, have dismissed him as woefully unprepared for managing the complexities of running America's largest city.

But Mamdani has framed his relative inexperience as a potential asset, saying in a mayoral debate he's "proud" he doesn't have Cuomo's "experience of corruption, scandal and disgrace."

Viral campaign videos

Mamdani has used buzzy campaign videos — many with winking references to Bollywood and his Indian heritage — to help make inroads with voters outside his slice of Queens.

On New Year's Day, he took part in the annual polar plunge into the chilly waters off Coney Island in a full dress suit to break down his plan to "freeze" rents.

As the race was entering the final stretch, Mamdani walked the length of Manhattan, documenting the roughly 13-mile (21 kilometer) trip by posting photos and videos of his interactions along the way.

In TikTok videos, he's even appealed to voters of color by speaking in Spanish, Bangla and other languages.

Progressive promises

Mamdani has offered a more optimistic vision, in contrast to candidates like Cuomo, who have largely focused on crime and law and order issues.

His campaign has been packed with big promises aimed at lowering the cost of living for everyday New Yorkers, from free child care, free buses, a rent freeze for people living in rent-regulated apartments and new affordable housing -- much of it by raising taxes on the wealthy.

The big promises have, unsurprisingly, endeared him to the Democratic Party's liberal wing.

Mamdani secured endorsements from two of the country's foremost progressives, U.S. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, of New York, and Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont.

Pro-Palestinian views

Mamdani's outspoken support for Palestinian causes was a point of tension in the mayor's race as Cuomo and other opponents sought to label his defiant criticism of Israel as antisemitic.

The Shia Muslim has called Israel's military campaign in Gaza a "genocide" and said the country should exist as "a state with equal rights," rather than a "Jewish state." That message has resonated among pro-Palestinian residents, including the city's roughly 800,000 adherents of Islam — the largest Muslim community in the country.

During an interview on CBS's "The Late Show" on the eve of the election, host Stephen Colbert asked Mamdani if he believed the state of Israel had the right to exist. He responded: "Yes, like all nations, I believe it has a right to exist — and a responsibility also to uphold international law."

Mamdani's refusal to condemn calls to "globalize the intifada" on a podcast — a common chant at pro-Palestinian protests — drew recriminations from Jewish groups and fellow candidates in the days leading up to the election.

In his victory speech Tuesday, he pledged to work closely with those who don't share his views on

controversial issues.

"While I will not abandon my beliefs or my commitments, grounded in a demand for equality, for humanity, for all those who walk this earth, you have my word to reach further, to understand the perspectives of those with whom I disagree, and to wrestle deeply with those disagreements," Mamdani said.

US stocks hang near their record as Wall Street takes a breath following two big days

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — U.S. stocks hung near their all-time high on Wednesday as financial markets caught a breath following two big days bolstered by hopes that the Israel-Iran war will not disrupt the global flow of crude oil.

The S&P 500 barely budged after drifting through a quiet day of trading and is sitting just 0.8% below its all-time high, which was set in February. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dipped 106 points, or 0.2%, and the Nasdaq composite rose 0.3%.

In the oil market, which has been the center of much of this week's action, crude prices stabilized after plunging by roughly \$10 per barrel in the last two days. Benchmark U.S. crude rose 55 cents to \$64.92 per barrel, though it still remains below where it was before the fighting between Israel and Iran broke out nearly two weeks ago.

A fragile ceasefire between the two countries appears to be holding, at least for the moment.

On Wall Street, FedEx fell 3.3% despite reporting stronger profit and revenue for the latest quarter than analysts expected. It gave a forecast for profit in the current quarter that fell short of expectations.

General Mills, the company behind Pillsbury and Progresso soups, lost 5.1% after reporting weaker revenue for the latest quarter than analysts expected, though its profit topped forecasts. It also said an underlying measure of profit could fall by 10% to 15% this upcoming fiscal year.

On the winning side of Wall Street, Bumble jumped 25.1% after the online dating platform said it would cut about 30% of its workforce, or 240 jobs, to save up to \$40 million in annual costs.

QuantumScape rallied 30.9% after announcing a breakthrough in its process for making solid-state batteries. Solid state battery technology promises to improve electric vehicle range, decrease charging times and minimize the risk of battery fires. But the batteries are expensive to research and difficult to manufacture at a large scale, giving them a reputation for being a Holy Grail for battery engineers all over the world.

Companies involved in the cryptocurrency industry, meanwhile, rose as the price of bitcoin continued to steam ahead with investors willing to take on more risk. Coinbase Global, the crypto exchange, climbed 3.1% as bitcoin topped \$107,000.

All told, the S&P 500 edged down by 0.02 to 6,092.16 points. The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 106.59 to 42,982.43, and the Nasdaq composite rose 61.02 to 19,973.55.

In the bond market, Treasury yields held relatively steady, and the yield on the 10-year Treasury eased to 4.28% from 4.30% late Tuesday.

Yields had dropped a day earlier after the chair of the Federal Reserve said it is waiting for the right moment to resume cutting interest rates. By lowering rates, the Fed could give the economy a boost, but it could also offer additional fuel for inflation.

Fed Chair Jerome Powell said again on Wednesday that he wants to wait and see how President Donald Trump's tariffs affect the economy and inflation before committing to its next move. In testimony before a Senate committee, Powell echoed many of his statements from the day before, when he spoke at the House of Representatives, and he said, "For the time being, we are well positioned to wait to learn more about the likely course of the economy before considering any adjustments to our policy stance."

In stock markets abroad, indexes fell modestly in Europe after rising across much of Asia.

Stocks jumped 1.2% in Hong Kong and 1% in Shanghai for two of the bigger moves.

"The world can now move on to face other difficult choices like tariffs and things like that," said Frances

Lun, CEO of GEO Securities in Hong Kong. "So I think the market is well on its way to rebound and could again reach new levels."

A look at how Trump's big bill could change the US immigration system

By TIM SULLIVAN Associated Press

President Donald Trump's spending cuts and border security package would inject roughly \$150 billion into his mass deportation agenda over the next four years, funding everything from an extension of the United States' southern border wall to detention centers to thousands of additional law enforcement staff.

The current annual budget for Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the government's primary department for immigration enforcement, is around \$10 billion. If the Republican president's big bill passes in Congress, the immense cash infusion could reshape America's immigration system by expanding the law enforcement and detention network while increasing costs to legally immigrate to the U.S.

The Senate is debating its own version of the bill, which largely aligns with the House's approach when it comes to these issues. In recent days, Republicans have focused on sometimes-violent protests against Trump's immigration crackdown to press for quick passage over Democratic opposition.

That's what happened earlier in June when protests triggered unrest in parts of Los Angeles.

"The lawlessness happening in LA is ANOTHER reason why we need to pass the One Big Beautiful Bill IMMEDIATELY," House Speaker Mike Johnson wrote on X. "It provides the ESSENTIAL funding needed to secure our nation's borders."

Plenty, though, remains unclear about the legislation.

"One thing about this bill, these sections are super vague," said Adam Isacson, a researcher with the Washington-based human rights advocacy organization WOLA, including multibillion-dollar expenditures sometimes explained in just a few vague lines. "There's no real specificity in the bill about how it's going to be spent."

Here's a look at some key immigration sections of the 1,000-page bill, as approved by the House, and what it could mean for the U.S. government's posture on immigration:

PROJECT: The wall

WHAT THE BILL SAYS: The bill sets aside \$46.5 billion for what the House Homeland Security Committee calls an "integrated border barrier system," including fencing, water barriers, law enforcement access roads and technology like movement sensors. The funding would complete 701 miles (1,128 kilometers) of primary walls and 900 miles (1,448 kilometers) of river barriers along the U.S.-Mexico border, according to the committee. It is the bill's largest expenditure.

"Any lawmaker who claims to care about border security will need to put their money where their mouth is and work to advance these recommendations," said the committee's chairman, Republican Rep. Mark Green of Tennessee.

THE IMPACT: Building the wall has long been one of Trump's signature promises, but its impacts beyond political symbolism are unclear. Illegal border crossings have plunged since Trump took office in January amid a string of orders on immigration, including the suspension of the asylum system. Simply ending asylum meant tens of thousands of people who would've surrendered to law enforcement instead of trying to avoid capture didn't even attempt to cross.

Plus, the effectiveness of border walls is hotly debated, even in populated areas where barriers tend to be heavily reinforced. Human smugglers, often linked to drug cartels, have used tunnels, ladders and power tools to cross walls.

But, experts note that though illegal crossings are down now, that can change rapidly.

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PROJECT: Detention facilities and staff

WHAT THE BILL SAYS: The bill, which top White House aide and immigration hawk Stephen Miller has called "the most essential piece of legislation currently under consideration in the entire Western World," sets aside \$45 billion to expand the network of immigrant detention facilities for adult migrants and families.

The standards in adult facilities, the bill notes, would be set at "the sole discretion of the Secretary of Homeland Security."

More than \$12 billion was also requested for 18,000 new ICE and Border Patrol personnel.

THE IMPACT: ICE has said it wants to increase its current detention capacity from about 41,000 people to 100,000. It's part of what ICE's acting director, Todd Lyons, has suggested is a deportation system that could function "like Amazon, trying to get your product delivered in 24 hours."

ICE currently has about 6,000 deportation officers, a number that's been stagnant for years.

While expanding staff and detention centers would make it easier for the administration to increase deportations, even the tens of billions of dollars the bill requests may not be enough to meet Trump's goals. Miller has said ICE should be making 3,000 arrests per day of people in the country illegally. That's a vast increase over the roughly 650 arrested a day in the first five months of Trump's second term.

But the plans are a boon to America's private prison industry, with stock prices for the two dominant companies, Geo Group Inc. and CoreCivic, up more than 50% since Trump's election.

PROJECT: Immigration courts

WHAT THE BILL SAYS: The legislation sets aside \$1.25 billion for the immigration court system, with funds to hire more immigration judges and support staff and to expand courtroom capacity. The courts' annual budget currently stands at roughly \$850 million.

THE IMPACT: The immigration court system, which has roughly 700 judges, has struggled for years with chronic understaffing and a backlog that has reached more than 3.6 million cases. Judges typically take more than five years to make decisions.

It's a chaotic system, with overworked judges, a shortage of translators and immigrants who often don't have lawyers.

The chaos has grown in recent weeks, with immigration courts seeing a spike in arrests outside courtrooms as agents wait to detain immigrants attending routine hearings. The arrests have spread fear and confusion, especially among asylum-seekers, who are accustomed to remaining free while their cases plod their way through the system.

The proposed funding would be "a significant increase, and from an institutional perspective it's urgently needed money," said Greg Chen, director of government relations for the American Immigration Lawyers Association.

But he also believes the rising numbers of courthouse arrests reflect an administration looking for ways to bypass immigration courts.

PROJECT: Immigration fees

WHAT THE BILL SAYS: The bill overhauls the system of immigration costs, with dramatic increases and new fees imposed for once-free services.

Applying for asylum, which has long been free, will now cost \$1,000, with asylum-seekers paying another \$550 for employment applications. Among other fee increases, appealing an immigration judge decision jumps from \$110 to \$900 and applying for temporary protected status, which allows people from certain countries facing civil unrest or natural disasters to stay temporarily in the U.S., goes from \$50 to \$500.

THE IMPACT: For wealthier immigrants, the new fees will be an inconvenience. But for the vast majority of people even a few hundred dollars could be enough to make them change their plans.

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A 12-day war followed by a sudden ceasefire. Some Iranians now wonder what comes next

By FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — For many Iranians it was a lightning sequence of events: A 12-day war with Israel and a sudden, U.S.-brokered ceasefire. Now, as they return to their neighborhoods deeply shaken by Israeli air assaults, fears mount over what the country's theocracy may do next.

Human rights advocates have already warned that Iran's government is ramping up executions of dissidents and political prisoners. Since Israel launched strikes on June 13, targeting Iran's nuclear program and top military officials, Tehran has said that six people were executed on charges of spying for Israel — three of them on Wednesday alone.

Four Iranians recounted to The Associated Press that they believe only a minority in the Islamic Republic still firmly supports its leadership. They said they are concerned the fallout from Israel's attack will derail any momentum for change in the country's clerical rule, in place since the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

The four spoke on condition of anonymity or agreeing that only their first names be used over fears of reprisals.

"We don't know what will happen," said Shirin, a 49-year-old living in northern Tehran, the Iranian capital. She speculated that the authorities could "take out all of their anger" at the losses in the war on ordinary Iranians.

Fear of repression grows

Nooshin, a 44-year-old Tehran housewife, said the government's playbook of clamping down amid internal or external pressure had already started when U.S. President Donald Trump announced a truce between Iran and Israel on Tuesday.

"Basically, after every crisis, the Iranian regime has a habit of punishing its own people, and this time, it will probably get many dissidents into trouble," she said.

The fast-tracking of several death sentence cases in recent days has sparked fears from activists that an even deadlier wave of executions could take place now that the conflict is over, similar to what followed Iran's 1980s war with Iraq.

"After the ceasefire with Israel, the Islamic Republic needs more repression to cover up military failures, prevent protests, and ensure its continued survival," Mahmood Amiry Moghaddam, the director of the Norway-based Iran Human Rights Organization, said Wednesday.

"Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of prisoners might be at risk of executions" in the coming weeks, he added.

Iranian officials, including Esmail Baghaei, spokesperson for the Foreign Ministry, defended the government's actions and lauded what he described as the unity of Iranians.

"Our people showed that they are resolute in their defense of national security and sovereignty," he told Al Jazeera English on Wednesday.

Information blackout

Days of on-and-off internet connectivity have left the population of more than 80 million people scrambling to fill in the gaps of Iranian state broadcasts.

Alongside revolutionary and Islamic slogans, state media has tried to drum up a rally-behind-the-flag message, echoing past similar efforts during the Iran-Iraq war. Anchors signed off broadcasts by reciting a famous line of nationalist poetry.

Elias Hazrati, a state media official considered close to Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian, made a rare acknowledgment of deep political and social divisions in the country while calling for solidarity against foreign threats.

But Shirin, from northern Tehran, said she feared there were "horrible things the government is doing right now that we have no clue about and won't know until they want us to know."

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Some are optimistic

Mahshid, who lives in the northwestern city of Qazvin, said she was hopeful about what the end of the war would bring and that she expects the authorities' recent leniency on enforcing the mandatory headscarf, or hijab, will remain in place.

"I feel that after emotions subside, the government will be tolerant of people on issues such as the hijab and personal freedoms," the 45-year-old woman said.

Another Tehran resident, an academic researcher who asked not to be identified by name, echoed that sentiment. He said that it was less likely authorities would be able to roll back other changes that have swept the country following years of unrest and protests against the law on the women's headscarf.

"It's unlikely the Islamic Republic will become more hard-line on social issues," he said.

"Because of Israel's attacks, they've been weakened," he said of the authorities, adding that there have been rumors about easing restrictions on social media platforms like WhatsApp and Instagram in the coming days.

Same old power shortages

The researcher said Israel had "also been targeting a lot of non-military targets" around the capital. He said an airstrike near Midan-e Tajrish, a central square surrounded by upscale Tehran areas, had knocked out water supplies for at least a couple of days in the nearby neighborhoods.

Power shortages, however, were already a part of everyday life before the war — a result of years of economic mismanagement in the country that has fueled calls for change.

"The electricity cuts for about two hours most days of the week, like we did before the war," he said.

Amid the war, supporters of Iran's clerical establishment have also tried to align themselves with what he called more "nationalist" parts of society, without really addressing popular calls for deep reforms.

"These are the people you see demonstrating in the streets, saying we have been victorious in this war," he said. "But most people, more than half of the country, were people who didn't want this war."

NATO leaders agree to hike military spending and restate 'ironclad commitment' to collective defense

By MIKE CORDER, SYLVIE CORBET, MOLLY QUELL and LORNE COOK Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — NATO leaders agreed on a massive hike in defense spending Wednesday after pressure from U.S. President Donald Trump, and expressed their "ironclad commitment" to come to each other's aid if attacked.

The 32 leaders endorsed a final summit statement saying: "Allies commit to invest 5% of GDP annually on core defense requirements as well as defense- and security-related spending by 2035 to ensure our individual and collective obligations."

The show of unity vindicated NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte's billing of the summit as "transformational," even though it papered over divisions.

Trump called the spending boost "something that no one really thought possible. And they said, 'You did it, sir. You did it.' Well, I don't know if I did it, but I think I did."

Spain had already officially announced that it cannot meet the target, and others have voiced reservations, but the investment pledge includes a review of spending in 2029 — after the next U.S. presidential elections — to monitor progress and reassess the security threat posed by Russia.

The leaders also underlined their "ironclad commitment" to NATO's collective security guarantee — "that an attack on one is an attack on all." Ahead of the summit, Trump had again raised doubts over whether the United States would defend its allies.

"Together, allies have laid the foundations for a stronger, fairer and more lethal NATO," Rutte told reporters after chairing the meeting in The Hague. "This will fuel a quantum leap in our collective defense."

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The spending hike requires each countries to spend billions of dollars. It comes as the United States — NATO's biggest-spending member — shifts its attention away from Europe to focus on security priorities elsewhere, notably in the Middle East and Indo-Pacific.

Spain had called the new spending target and 2035 deadline "unreasonable." Belgium signaled that it would not get there either, and Slovakia said it reserves the right to decide its own defense spending.

Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez stood conspicuously aside from other leaders in the summit family photo. After the meeting, he said that Spain can execute NATO's defense plans by spending only 2% of gross domestic product on defense.

"In today's summit, NATO wins and Spain wins something very important for our society, which is security and the welfare state," Sánchez said.

Trump lashed out at Spain after the meeting.

"They want to stay at 2%. I think it's terrible," he said. "You know, what we're going to do? We're negotiating with Spain on a trade deal. We're going to make them pay twice as much."

Along with Spain, many other European countries face major economic challenges, and Trump's global tariff war could make it even harder for America's allies to reach their targets. Some countries are already squeezing welfare and foreign aid spending to channel extra funds into their military budgets.

On Tuesday, Trump complained that "there's a problem with Spain. Spain is not agreeing, which is very unfair to the rest of them, frankly." He has also criticized Canada as "a low payer." In 2018, a NATO summit during Trump's first term unraveled due to a dispute over defense spending.

Russia's neighbors lead the pack in boosting spending

Other countries closer to the borders of Russia and Ukraine — Poland, the three Baltic states and Nordic countries — have committed to the 5% goal, as have NATO's European heavyweights Britain, France, Germany and the Netherlands.

In their statement, the leaders said they were united "in the face of profound security threats and challenges, in particular the long-term threat posed by Russia." It had been feared that Trump would object to that assessment, which European governments need to justify higher spending.

Trump has been reluctant to support Ukraine in its war against Russia's full-scale invasion.

"We stand by Ukraine in its pursuit of peace and will continue to support Ukraine on its irreversible path to NATO membership," Rutte said. The Trump administration has vetoed Ukraine's bid to join NATO for the foreseeable future.

Finnish President Alexander Stubb said the agreement "is a big win, I think, for both President Trump and I think it's also a big win for Europe." He told reporters that "we're witnessing the birth of a new NATO, which means a more balanced NATO."

He said it would take nations "back to the defense expenditure levels of the Cold War." NATO countries started to cut their military budgets in safer times after the Berlin Wall collapsed in 1989.

U.K. Prime Minister Keir Starmer threw his weight behind the hike, declaring, "'This is the moment to unite, for Europe to make a fundamental shift in its posture and for NATO to meet this challenge head-on."

In a fresh take on Trump's MAGA movement, Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda said: "We should choose a motto, 'make NATO great again.'"

After Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the NATO allies agreed to make 2% of GDP the minimum spending level. Last year, 22 countries were expected to hit that target, up from just three a decade ago.

In The Hague, the allies endorsed a major revamp of their spending targets. They upped the ante for what NATO calls "core defense spending" to 3.5%, while changing how it's counted to include providing military support to Ukraine.

To hit Trump's 5% demand, the deal set a second target of 1.5% of GDP for a broader range of defense-related spending, such as improving roads, bridges, ports and airfields so that armies can deploy more quickly, countering cyber and hybrid attack measures, or preparing societies to deal with future conflicts.

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"This declaration is historic. We are 32 allies supporting that ambition, which is huge," said Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre. "We have been struggling to get above 2% and now we said 3.5%, which is necessary in order to reach our capabilities."

US decision on forces in Europe expected in coming months

Extra funds will also be needed should the Trump administration announce a draw-down of forces in Europe, where around 84,000 U.S. troops are based, leaving European allies to plug any security gaps. The Pentagon is expected to announce its intentions in coming months.

Asked why Trump has suggested that the new spending target should not apply to the United States, Rutte said: "The U.S. is more or less there," in terms of the 5% benchmark.

Beyond Trump's demands, European allies and Canada have steeply ramped up defense spending out of concern about the threat posed by Russia. Several countries are concerned that Russia could carry out an attack on NATO territory by the end of the decade. Hungary is not one of them, though.

"I think Russia is not strong enough to represent a real threat to us. We are far stronger," said Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, fielding questions from reporters, leaning back with his hands thrust into his pockets. Orbán is considered Russian President Vladimir Putin's closest ally in Europe.

'Not something to celebrate': As it turns 80 and faces dwindling global clout, can the UN survive□

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The United Nations, a collaborative global dream built into reality out of the ashes of World War II, marks its 80th anniversary this month. There's little to celebrate.

Its clout on the world stage is diminished. Facing major funding cuts from the United States and others, it has been forced to shed jobs and start tackling long-delayed reforms. Its longtime credo of "multilateralism" is under siege. Its most powerful body, the Security Council, has been blocked from taking action to end the two major wars in Ukraine and Gaza.

And as conflict between Israel, Iran and now the United States flares, it watched from the sidelines.

Four generations after its founding, as it tries to chart a new path for its future, a question hangs over the institution and the nearly 150,000 people it employs and oversees: Can the United Nations remain relevant in an increasingly contentious and fragmented world? With its dream of collaboration drifting, can it even survive?

When the United Nations was born in San Francisco on June 26, 1945, the overriding goal of the 50 participants who signed the U.N. Charter was stated in its first words: "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war."

Earlier this year, U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres sounded that same theme: "Eight decades later, one can draw a direct line between the creation of the United Nations and the prevention of a third world war."

There has been no such war — thus far. But conflicts still rage.

They continue not only in Gaza and Ukraine but Sudan, eastern Congo, Haiti and Myanmar — to name a few — and, most recently, Iran and Israel. The needs of tens of millions of people caught up in fighting and trapped in poverty have increased even as rich donor nations, not just the United States, are reducing their aid budgets.

The U.N. General Assembly is planning a commemoration on the 80th anniversary on June 26, but the mood in the halls of U.N. headquarters in New York is grim.

Diplomats are anxious about the immediate future, especially the outcome expected in August of a U.S. review of the United Nations and other multilateral institutions ordered by President Donald Trump. And U.N. staff here and in more than 60 offices, agencies and operations that get money from its regular operating budget are facing 20% job cuts, part of Guterres' reform effort and reaction to already announced Trump funding cuts.

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"It's not something to celebrate," Kazakhstan's U.N. Ambassador Kairat Umarov said of the upcoming anniversary.

In a different world of land-line telephones, radios and propeller planes, the U.N. Charter was signed by just 50 nations — mainly from Latin America and Europe. Over the decades, its membership has nearly quadrupled to 193 member nations, with 54 African countries now the largest bloc. The U.N. system has also expanded enormously from its origins.

Today, the map of the U.N. system looks like a multi-headed octopus with many tentacles. In 2023, its secretariat and numerous funds, agencies and entities dealing with everything from children and refugees to peacekeeping and human rights had over 133,000 staff worldwide.

Kishore Mahbubani, who served twice as Singapore's U.N. ambassador, credited the United Nations with thus far preventing World War III. While there are still wars, deaths have continued a long-term decline "and the world is still, overall, a much more peaceful place," he said.

Mahbubani and others also point to successes in the 71 U.N. peacekeeping operations since 1948, including in Angola, Cambodia, Sierra Leone (which is currently a member of the Security Council) and Liberia (which will join in January).

There is also wide praise for specialized U.N. agencies, especially those dealing with hunger, refugees and children as well as the International Atomic Energy Agency, which is the U.N.'s nuclear watchdog, and the International Telecommunications Union. It allocates the global radio spectrum and satellite orbits and brings digital connectivity to millions.

Every September, world leaders get a global platform at the General Assembly. And every day their ambassadors and diplomats meet to debate issues from conflicts to climate change to the fight for gender equality and quality education. Sometimes, such talks produce little or no results. Others, achievements go overlooked or ignored by the broader world community, far from the hubs of diplomacy.

And the Security Council is the only place where Russia and Ukraine regularly face off over the ongoing war following Russia's 2022 invasion — and where the Palestinian and Israeli ambassadors frequently confront each other.

Despite its successes and achievements over past decades, Singapore's Mahbubani called the U.N. today "a very sad place," lamenting that Guterres had failed "to inspire humanity" as the late Pope Francis did. "But," Mahbubani said, "it should celebrate the fact it is alive and not dead."

Guterres has launched several major reform efforts, getting approval from U.N. member nations last September for a "Pact for the Future" — a blueprint to bring the world together to tackle 21st-century challenges. Gowan said Guterres' successor, who will be elected next year and take over in 2027, will have to shrink the organization. But many cuts, consolidations and changes will require approval of the divided U.N. membership. Possible radical reforms include merging U.N. aid agencies to avoid duplication.

Don't forget, says Gowan, that a huge amount of diplomatic business — much of it having nothing to do with the United Nations — gets done because it is in New York, a place to have those conversations.

Ian Bremmer, who heads the Eurasia Group, a political risk and consulting firm, said the Trump administration's attempts to undermine the United Nations — which the United States conceived in 1945 — will make China more important. With Trump exiting from the World Health Organization, the U.N. agency helping Palestinian refugees known as UNRWA and cutting humanitarian funding, he said, China will become "the most influential and the most deep-pocketed" in those agencies.

Expansion of the U.N. Security Council is probably the most fertile area for potential change. Decades of discussions have failed to agree on how to enlarge the 15-member council to reflect the global realities of the 21st century, though there is wide agreement that Africa and Latin America deserve permanent seats.

Singapore's Mahbubani said he believes the United Nations "will definitely survive." The "genius" of its founders, he said, was to give the big powers after World War II a veto in the Security Council, preventing the global body from dying as its predecessor, the League of Nations, did. That survival, Mahbubani believes, will continue: "It will," he said, "outlast us all."

A Revolutionary War-era boat is being painstakingly rebuilt after centuries buried beneath Manhattan

By MICHAEL HILL Associated Press

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — Workers digging at Manhattan's World Trade Center site 15 years ago made an improbable discovery: sodden timbers from a boat built during the Revolutionary War that had been buried more than two centuries earlier.

Now, over 600 pieces from the 50-foot (15-meter) vessel are being painstakingly put back together at the New York State Museum. After years on the water and centuries underground, the boat is becoming a museum exhibit.

Arrayed like giant puzzle pieces on the museum floor, research assistants and volunteers recently spent weeks cleaning the timbers with picks and brushes before reconstruction could even begin.

Though researchers believe the ship was a gunboat built in 1775 to defend Philadelphia, they still don't know all the places it traveled to or why it ended up apparently neglected along the Manhattan shore before ending up in a landfill around the 1790s.

"The public can come and contemplate the mysteries around this ship," said Michael Lucas, the museum's curator of historical archaeology. "Because like anything from the past, we have pieces of information. We don't have the whole story."

From landfill to museum piece

The rebuilding caps years of rescue and preservation work that began in July 2010 when a section of the boat was found 22 feet (7 meters) below street level.

Curved timbers from the hull were discovered by a crew working on an underground parking facility at the World Trade Center site, near where the Twin Towers stood before the 9/11 attacks.

The wood was muddy, but well preserved after centuries in the oxygen-poor earth. A previously constructed slurry wall went right through the boat, though timbers comprising about 30 feet (9 meters) of its rear and middle sections were carefully recovered. Part of the bow was recovered the next summer on the other side of the subterranean wall.

The timbers were shipped more than 1,400 miles (2,253 kilometers) to Texas A&M's Center for Maritime Archaeology and Conservation.

Each of the 600 pieces underwent a three-dimensional scan and spent years in preservative fluids before being placed in a giant freeze-dryer to remove moisture. Then they were wrapped in more than a mile of foam and shipped to the state museum in Albany.

While the museum is 130 miles (209 kilometers) up the Hudson River from lower Manhattan, it boasts enough space to display the ship. The reconstruction work is being done in an exhibition space, so visitors can watch the weathered wooden skeleton slowly take the form of a partially reconstructed boat.

Work is expected to finish around the end of the month, said Peter Fix, an associate research scientist at the Center for Maritime Archaeology and Conservation who is overseeing the rebuilding.

On a recent day, Lucas took time out to talk to passing museum visitors about the vessel and how it was found.

Explaining the work taking place behind him, he told one group: "Who would have thought in a million years, 'someday, this is going to be in a museum?'"

A nautical mystery remains

Researchers knew they found a boat under the streets of Manhattan. But what kind?

Analysis of the timbers showed they came from trees cut down in the Philadelphia area in the early 1770s, pointing to the ship being built in a yard near the city.

It was probably built hastily. The wood is knotty, and timbers were fastened with iron spikes. That allowed for faster construction, though the metal corrodes over time in seawater.

Researchers now hypothesize the boat was built in Philadelphia in the summer of 1775, months after

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the first shots of the Revolutionary War were fired at Lexington and Concord in Massachusetts. Thirteen gunboats were built that summer to protect Philadelphia from potential hostile forces coming up the Delaware River. The gunboats featured cannons pointing from their bows and could carry 30 or more men.

"They were really pushing, pushing, pushing to get these boats out there to stop any British that might start coming up the Delaware," Fix said.

Historical records indicate at least one of those 13 gunboats was later taken by the British. And there is some evidence that the boat now being restored was used by the British, including a pewter button with "52" inscribed on it. That likely came from the uniform of soldier with the British Army's 52nd Regiment of Foot, which was active in the war.

It's also possible that the vessel headed south to the Caribbean, where the British redirected thousands of troops during the war. Its timbers show signs of damage from mollusks known as shipworms, which are native to warmer waters.

Still, it's unclear how the boat ended up in Manhattan and why it apparently spent years partially in the water along shore. By the 1790s, it was out of commission and then covered over as part of a project to expand Manhattan farther out into the Hudson River. By that time, the mast and other parts of the Revolutionary War ship had apparently been stripped.

"It's an important piece of history," Lucas said. "It's also a nice artifact that you can really build a lot of stories around."

Today in History: June 26

US Supreme Court legalizes same-sex marriage

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Thursday, June 26, the 177th day of 2025. There are 188 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On June 26, 2015, in its 5-4 *Obergefell v. Hodges* decision, the U.S. Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage across the country, ruling that state-level bans on same-sex marriage violated the due process and equal protection clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment.

Also on this date:

In 1917, U.S. troops entered World War I as the first troops of the American Expeditionary Force landed in Saint-Nazaire, France.

In 1945, the charter of the United Nations was signed by 50 countries in San Francisco.

In 1948, the Berlin Airlift began in earnest after the Soviet Union cut off land and water routes to the isolated western sector of Berlin.

In 1963, President John F. Kennedy visited West Berlin, where he delivered his famous speech expressing solidarity with the city's residents, declaring: "Ich bin ein Berliner" ("I am a Berliner").

In 1993, President Bill Clinton announced the U.S. had launched missiles against Iraqi targets because of "compelling evidence" Iraq had plotted to assassinate former President George H.W. Bush.

In 1996, in the case of *United States v. Virginia*, the U.S. Supreme Court found that the Virginia Military Institute's male-only admission policy violated the Fourteenth Amendment's Equal Protection Clause. (VMI enrolled its first female cadets the following year.)

In 1997, the first Harry Potter novel, "Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone" by J.K. Rowling, was published in the United Kingdom. It was later released in the United States under the title "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone."

In 2008, in *District of Columbia v. Heller*, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down a handgun ban in the District of Columbia as it affirmed, 5-4, that an individual's right to gun ownership is protected by the Second Amendment.

In 2013, in the case of *United States v. Windsor*, the U.S. Supreme Court gave the nation's legally married same-sex couples equal federal footing with all other married Americans, and cleared the way for same-sex marriages to resume in California in a separate decision.

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Today's Birthdays: Jazz musician-composer Dave Grusin is 91. Singer Billy Davis Jr. is 87. Brazilian singer-songwriter and politician Gilberto Gil is 83. Basketball Hall of Fame coach Tara VanDerveer is 72. Musician Mick Jones (The Clash, Big Audio Dynamite) is 70. Musician Chris Isaak is 69. Cyclist Greg LeMond is 64. Football Hall of Famer Shannon Sharpe is 57. Filmmaker Paul Thomas Anderson is 55. Actor Sean Hayes is 55. Actor Chris O'Donnell is 55. Actor Nick Offerman is 55. Country musician Gretchen Wilson is 52. Baseball Hall of Famer Derek Jeter is 51. Actor Jason Schwartzman is 45. Actor Aubrey Plaza is 41. Actor-author Jennette McCurdy is 33. Singer-actor Ariana Grande is 32. Actor Jacob Elordi is 28.