

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 1 of 77

[1- Upcoming Events](#)
[2- 1440 News Headlines](#)
[4- Jr. Legion splits with Britton](#)
[7- SD News Watch: Rapid City diving into the sports complex game](#)
[10- News Watch Fact Brief: Fact brief: Is South Dakota the only state that doesn't sanction high school baseball?](#)
[11- Lawrence County Fatal Crash](#)
[12- SD Mosquito Update](#)
[13- DANR Announces Nearly \\$15.9 Million in Loans for Statewide Projects](#)
[14- SD SearchLight: South Dakota loses federal funds for prison rape elimination amid fears of national impact](#)
[15- SD SearchLight: 'Big, beautiful bill' is an ugly deal for South Dakotans](#)
[16- SD SearchLight: Trump urges voters to press for US Senate GOP mega-bill after setback on Medicaid cuts](#)
[21- Weather Pages](#)
[27- Daily Devotional](#)
[28- Subscription Form](#)
[29- Lottery Numbers](#)
[30- Upcoming Groton Events](#)
[31- News from the Associated Press](#)

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

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

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



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

Monday, June 30

Senior Menu: Breaded pork cutlet, mashed potatoes with gravy, capri blend, tropical fruit, whole wheat bread.

Legion vs. W.I.N. at Northville, 5:30 p.m.

Jr. Legion vs. W.I.N. at Northville, 7:30 p.m.

U8 R&B hosts Frankfort, 6 p.m.

Softball: U10G hosts Frankfort, 7 p.m. (DH); U8G at Webster, 6 p.m.; U8B at Webster, 6 p.m.

T-Ball: Black hosts Frankfort, 5 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.

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Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 2 of 77

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.

Planned Parenthood Ruling

The Supreme Court ruled yesterday that South Carolina can lawfully remove Planned Parenthood from its Medicaid program, barring patients from suing to protect their choice of healthcare provider. The 6-3 decision, split along ideological lines, found that while Medicaid guarantees access to any "qualified and willing" provider, federal law does not give patients the legal right to sue the state to enforce that provision.

The state excluded Planned Parenthood from its Medicaid program to prevent public funds from supporting organizations providing abortions. Planned Parenthood—which received more than \$792M from government sources in 2023, about one-third of its revenue—offers a range of reproductive health services. The state argued any funding indirectly supports abortion, even if not used for those services. Medicaid covers about one in five Americans. Critics warn the ruling could reduce access for low-income patients and encourage other states to follow suit.

The remaining six decisions from the 2024-25 Supreme Court session will be announced today before the court breaks for the summer.

Wintour Steps Down

Anna Wintour has announced she is stepping down as editor-in-chief of American Vogue after 37 years in the role. The 75-year-old fashion icon will continue to serve as global editorial director at Vogue and chief content officer at Condé Nast. Vogue has not announced a replacement as of this writing.

Wintour worked her way up in British and American Vogue before leading the so-called "fashion bible" in 1988. Her first cover—November 1988—caused a media stir for its breezy, laid-back look with model Michaela Bercu in Guess jeans. Wintour later became known for celebrity covers, including profiling Kanye West and Kim Kardashian in the lead-up to their 2014 wedding. She has separately organized the Met Gala since 1995.

As the face of fashion media, Wintour's life has been the subject of multiple books and movies, including allegedly inspiring Meryl Streep's character in "The Devil Wears Prada."

Writing the Human Genome

A team of UK-based scientists seeks to write human genetic code from scratch after receiving over \$13.7M in initial funding from Wellcome Trust, the world's largest medical charity.

The Synthetic Human Genome Project was announced yesterday, 25 years after researchers completed the first draft of the Human Genome Project, a 13-year, \$2.7B effort to map human genetic information. Since numerous diseases—from cancer to autoimmune disorders—stem from gene mutations, supporters hope the new project will drive advances, like virus-resistant cells to repair organs. The findings could also improve food security by enabling engineered weather-resilient crops. However, critics warn of ethical risks, including misuse of human-made DNA to create enhanced humans or biological weapons.

The lead researcher successfully created an E. coli genome in 2019. Researchers estimate it will take up to 10 years to complete the first human chromosome, with the next five years devoted to making small sections of DNA for testing in human skin cells.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 3 of 77

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

The 2025 NHL Draft kicks off tonight (7 pm ET, ESPN); see complete first round mock draft.

... and NBA Draft wraps up; see complete draft results.

Ariana Grande, Kieran Culkin, and Mikey Madison among 534 invited to join the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, organizers of the Oscars.

Denis Villeneuve tapped to become director of latest James Bond film.

Kenya's Faith Kipyegon runs fastest-ever mile for a woman but fails to break the four-minute mile barrier.

PayPal signs multiyear deal with Big Ten and Big 12 to facilitate payments to student-athletes.

Science & Technology

Meta hires top OpenAI researcher, Trapit Bansal, to help lead new "superintelligence" unit; poaching is the latest in a reported multi-hundred-million-dollar hiring spree by Meta to jump-start lagging AI program.

World's oldest rocks confirmed to be almost 4.2 billion years old; region along Canada's Hudson Bay shore is the only known formation to remain from Earth's Hadean Eon.

New study suggests babies born prematurely may feel pain before developing the brain circuitry needed to understand and react to the experience.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close higher (S&P 500 +0.8%, Dow +0.9%, Nasdaq +1.0%); S&P 500, Nasdaq briefly trade above all-time closing highs as White House signals July 8-9 tariff deadlines could be extended.

The US economy shrank at 0.5% annual rate during the first three months of 2025, faster than previous estimate of 0.2%, per final report; decline was driven partly by slowdown in consumer spending and a surge in imports ahead of tariffs.

Core Scientific shares close up 33% following report AI infrastructure provider CoreWeave is in talks to buy the bitcoin mining firm.

Nike beats Q4 estimates, but reports 12% year-over-year drop in sales.

Politics & World Affairs

Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei downplays US strikes and warns against further attacks in first public remarks since ceasefire.

Iran's centrifuges at Fordo are no longer operational, per UN watchdog's head, citing their susceptibility to vibrations.

Ukrainian forces stop Russian advance in the northern region of Sumy, per top general.

At least 29 students dead, more than 250 injured in stampede following electric transformer explosion in the Central African Republic.

Ecuador's most wanted man—drug lord Adolfo Macías Villamar—captured in underground bunker beneath luxury home in 10-hour operation; Villamar, also known as "Fito," was the leader of cocaine-trafficking Los Choneros.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 4 of 77

Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion Roll Past Britton U17 VFW Lumberjacks

By GameChanger Media

Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion easily dispatched Britton U17 VFW Lumberjacks on Thursday, 10-3.

Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion got on the board in the first inning after Ethan Kroll singled, scoring one run.

Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion added to their early lead in the bottom of the second inning after Lincoln Krause grounded out, and Alex Abeln singled to center field, each scoring one run.

Britton U17 VFW Lumberjacks tied the game in the top of the third thanks to an error, a single by Ben Suther, and a tag up by Lincoln Kilker.

Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion took the lead in the bottom of the third. Tristin McGannon singled, scoring one run, to give Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion the lead, 4-3.

Nick Groeblichhoff earned the win for Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion. The starter allowed eight hits and three runs (two earned) over seven innings, striking out seven and walking none. Dylan Redler stepped on the hill first for Britton U17 VFW Lumberjacks. The starter allowed four hits and four runs (two earned) over two and two-thirds innings, striking out four and walking two.

Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion collected 10 hits in the game. Krause, T.C Schuster, and Abeln each collected two hits for Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion. Krause, McGannon, and Kroll each drove in two runs for Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion. Jordan Schwan paced Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion with two walks. Overall, the team had patience at the plate, piling up six walks for the game.

Suther and Bryce Hawkinson were a one-two punch in the lineup, as each drove in one run for Britton U17 VFW Lumberjacks.

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Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion Fall After Strong Showing By Britton U17 VFW Lumberjacks

By GameChanger Media

Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion had trouble keeping up with Britton U17 VFW Lumberjacks in a 13-3 loss on Thursday.

Britton U17 VFW Lumberjacks jumped out to the lead in the top of the first inning after Emmett Symens was struck by a pitch, driving in a run, Lofton Heer hit a sacrifice fly, scoring one run, Kaden Mills was struck by a pitch, driving in a run, and an error scored three runs.

Britton U17 VFW Lumberjacks added to their early lead in the top of the second inning when Ethan Kroll induced Dylan Redler to hit into a fielder's choice, but two runs scored, Kroll induced Symens to hit into a fielder's choice, but one run scored, and Mills grounded out, scoring one run.

Kroll led things off on the hill for Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion. The righty gave up three hits and 10 runs (four earned) over one and one-third innings, striking out none and walking one. B Suther led things off on the mound for Britton U17 VFW Lumberjacks. The hurler allowed two hits and one run (zero earned) over two innings, striking out four and walking one.

T.C Schuster and John Bisbee each drove in one run for Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion. Braeden Fliehs went 2-for-2 at the plate to lead Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion in hits. Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion turned two double plays in the game.

Mills, the number eight hitter for Britton U17 VFW Lumberjacks, led the way with two runs batted in. The right-handed hitter went 1-for-2 on the day. Mills, William Richter, Colton Chapin, Mitch Burger, Jace Rein, and Bryce Hawkinson each collected one hit for Britton U17 VFW Lumberjacks. Symens and Hawkinson each stole multiple bases for Britton U17 VFW Lumberjacks. Britton U17 VFW Lumberjacks ran wild on the base paths, amassing nine stolen bases for the game. Britton U17 VFW Lumberjacks turned one double play in the game.

Next up for Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion is a game against Clear Lake on Saturday.

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Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 5 of 77

Britton U17 VFW
Lumberjacks

13 - 3

Groton Post 39 Jr.
Legion

📍 Home 📅 Thursday June 26, 2025

	1	2	3	4	5	R	H	E
BRTT	6	4	0	0	3	13	6	1
GRTN	0	1	2	0	0	3	4	8

BATTING

Britton U17 VFW Lumberjacks	A	B	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
M Burger #9 (2B)	1	2	1	0	2	0	
W Richter (SS)	4	1	1	0	0	0	
B Hawki... #36 (CF)	2	2	1	0	1	0	
D Redler	2	1	0	1	0	0	
E Symens #3 (RF)	2	2	0	1	0	0	
L Heer #15 (LF)	2	0	0	1	0	1	
J Rein	2	2	1	0	1	0	
K Mills #11 (1B)	2	2	1	2	0	0	
C Chapin #10 (C)	2	1	1	0	1	0	
N Folkm... #20 (3B)	3	0	0	1	0	0	
Totals	22	13	6	6	5	1	

2B: C Chapin, **TB:** M Burger, C Chapin 2, B Hawkinson, W Richter, K Mills, J Rein, **SF:** L Heer, **CS:** N Folkman, **HBP:** M Burger, D Redler, E Symens, K Mills, **SB:** M Burger, D Redler, E Symens 3, B Hawkinson 2, W Richter, J Rein, **LOB:** 4

Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion	A	B	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
L Krause #2 (C)	1	1	0	0	0	0	
A Abeln #5 (SS)	1	0	0	0	0	0	
B Fliehs #19 (1B)	2	1	2	0	0	0	
E Kroll #14 (P)	1	0	1	0	0	0	
X Ellene... #21 (P)	1	0	0	0	1	1	
T Schuster #3 (LF)	1	0	0	1	0	1	
T McGa... #22 (LF)	1	0	0	0	0	0	
R Schelle #8 (1B)	2	0	0	0	0	1	
J Schwan #11 (CF)	1	1	0	0	1	0	
I Scep... #20 (3B)	2	0	0	0	0	1	
J Bisbee #15 (RF)	2	0	1	1	0	1	
K Oswald #12 (2B)	2	0	0	0	0	1	
N Scep... #13 (2B)	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Totals	17	3	4	2	2	6	

2B: B Fliehs, **TB:** J Bisbee, E Kroll, B Fliehs 3, **SF:** T Schuster, **HBP:** N Scepianiack, L Krause, **SB:** E Kroll, L Krause, **LOB:** 4

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 6 of 77

Britton U17 VFW
Lumberjacks

3 - 10

Groton Post 39 Jr.
Legion

📍 Home 📅 Thursday June 26, 2025

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	R	H	E
BRTT	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	3	8	5
GRTN	1	2	1	1	2	3	X	10	10	2

BATTING

Britton U17 VFW Lumberjacks	H	RBI	BB	SO		
W Richter (SS)	3	0	0	0	1	
M Burger #9 (LF)	3	0	0	0	2	
B Suther #30 (CF)	3	0	2	1	0	0
B Hawki... #36 (CF)	3	0	0	1	0	0
L Heer #15 (RF)	3	0	1	0	0	2
D Redler (P)	1	0	1	0	0	0
#13 (P)	1	0	0	0	0	0
N Folk... #20 (1B)	1	0	0	0	0	1
K Mills #11 (3B)	3	0	1	0	0	0
J Rein (1B)	2	1	1	0	0	0
J Quezada #5	1	0	0	0	0	1
C Chapin #10 (C)	2	1	1	0	0	0
L Kilker #1 (2B)	2	1	1	0	0	0
Totals	28	3	8	2	0	7

TB: K Mills, J Rein, D Redler, L Heer, B Suther 2, C Chapin, L Kilker, **CS:** K Mills, **SB:** B Suther, B Hawkinson, **LOB:** 4

PITCHING

Britton U17 VFW Lumberjacks	ER	BB	SO	HR			
D Redler	2.2	4	4	2	2	4	0
#13	1.1	1	1	0	2	3	0
B Hawk... #36	2.0	5	5	4	2	2	0
Totals	6.0	10	10	6	6	9	0

P-S: D Redler 58-34, #13 35-18, B Hawkinson 56-32, **WP:** D Redler 2, **HBP:** D Redler, **BF:** D Redler 18, #13 8, B Hawkinson 14

Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
L Krause #2 (C)	5	2	2	2	0	1
A Abeln #5 (3B)	5	0	2	1	0	1
E Kroll #14 (2B)	5	0	1	2	0	2
T Schuster #3 (SS)	5	2	2	1	0	0
B Fliehs #19 (1B)	2	0	0	0	1	0
R Schelle #8 (DH)	3	1	1	1	1	0
J Schwan #11 (CF)	2	2	1	0	2	1
X Ellene... #21 (RF)	1	1	0	0	1	1
K Oswald #12 (RF)	1	0	0	0	0	1
J Bisbee #15 (RF)	1	0	0	0	0	1
T McGan... #22 (LF)	3	2	1	2	1	1
Totals	33	10	10	9	6	9

TB: L Krause 2, T Schuster 2, J Schwan, T McGannon, R Schelle, A Abeln 2, E Kroll, **HBP:** B Fliehs, **SB:** L Krause, T Schuster, T McGannon, E Kroll, **LOB:** 12

Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion	R	ER	BB	SO	HR		
N Groe... #13	7.0	8	3	2	0	7	0
Totals	7.0	8	3	2	0	7	0

W: N Groebelinghoff, **P-S:** N Groebelinghoff 87-64, **WP:** N Groebelinghoff, **BF:** N Groebelinghoff 28



Rapid City diving into the sports complex game

By Emily DeCock

South Dakota News Watch

Rapid City, South Dakota, leaders plan to build a new indoor sports complex that will cost around \$50 million and provide South Dakota athletes with a venue on the west end of the state like they currently have in Sioux Falls.

Rapid City Mayor Jason Salamun announced the effort Monday, dubbing it "Project Catalyst." It has been in talks for years, said Domico Rodriguez, executive director of the Rapid City Sports Commission.

An exact timeline for the project is not set. Factors such as how quickly funds can be raised, availability of labor and weather will affect the project, Salamun said.

"Of course, it's going to take time. ... We'll have a more concrete timeline as things go on, but obviously it's something I'd like to see during my time as mayor," he said.

Rapid City has a strong tourist presence in the summer, but Salamun hopes the complex expands the tourism season into colder months.

"Rapid City enjoys 3.9 million visitors each year," he said. "The idea of expanding on our strength and being a destination for this region is one of the big reasons to have a sports complex."

The Rapid City Sports Commission worked with Sports Facilities Companies, a company based out of Florida, to conduct a study on Rapid City's needs in February 2023.

Sports Facilities Companies came back with a feasibility report detailing a sports complex consisting of an indoor and outdoor facility that would cost an estimated \$75.9 million to \$91.6 million and cover almost 47 acres.

Rodriguez said that for now, Rapid City will focus on developing the indoor facility on about 12 acres. As planned, it will include court space, an indoor turf field and a sports performance area.

"Hopefully down the road we can expand to attack the outdoor portion," he said.

The sports commission has been working with the city to find a location, finalize a funding plan and determine how to get the project done, said Rodriguez.

Sports complex location and funding

Salamun said Pete Lien & Sons Inc. donated 22.78 acres to the city, some of which will be used for the complex. The news conference announcing the project was held at the intersection of Seger Drive and 143rd Ave. on the northeast side of Rapid City, overlooking a portion of the donated land that's north of Fleet Farm.

An exact funding plan is also still being finalized for the project.

The city hopes to leverage funding that includes creating a tax increment financing district, public/private partnerships, donations and a hotel tax, Salamun said. He's also seeking \$5 million of unused Vision Fund resources from the Rapid City Common Council.

The TIF district would help fund various projects, including the sports complex, in its roughly 5-mile boundary. TIF is a public financing method commonly used by cities to help develop or maintain public projects. Rapid City's Planning and Zoning Commission will consider the creation of the TIF district on Thursday, June 25, according to the press release.

Another funding method being considered for the project is a hotel tax. Rapid City hotels currently impose a \$2 occupancy tax on every hotel room. A secondary \$2 tax will generate around \$1.5 million annually, Rodriguez said. This tax would go towards initial construction costs and also would help finance the ongoing operations of the facility, Salamun said.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 8 of 77

What the complex would include

The proposed indoor facility would sit on 3.36 acres and include three primary sections:

- Eight basketball courts that can be converted into 16 volleyball courts
- A hybrid indoor turf facility that can be converted into one youth multi-purpose field, three small-sided multi-purpose fields, one baseball/softball infield or four batting cages/pitching tunnels
- The sports performance area, which will include turf, sprinting track, a training area and four batting cages/pitching tunnels

The facility will also have flex space and 5,000 square feet of medical leased space.

Another 8.62 acres will be used for site development with 678 parking spaces.

The current state of sports in Rapid City

Finding space to be active, hold practices or host tournaments can be challenging in Rapid City, according to those involved in sports.

Rapid City's population grew by 10,000 from 2020 to 2024 and is just shy of 85,000.

"That does not include Rapid Valley, Box Elder, Black Hawk, Summerset, Hill City, these communities that are nearby to us," Salamun said. "There are a lot of folks moving into this area."

The Monument in Rapid City has the capacity to host large sporting events, such as the Lakota Nation Invitational basketball tournament. However, the demand has been too great and The Monument has had to turn some events away, Salamun said.

The need for indoor space is community-wide, Rodriguez said. Due to a lack of space, his son's basketball team has held team practices in people's gyms attached to their houses.

"We couldn't find a space over the past few years," Rodriguez said. "So this has been happening. But this is something that's not just been me, but the community has been vocalizing for several years."

Rodriguez said the new complex can provide community members, youth sports teams and individuals the opportunity to have gym space in the winter.

Rapid City sports parent John Kaiser said he's been lucky he hasn't had to battle for gym space because of his extensive involvement in youth sports.

"I've gotten access to facilities that maybe parents who don't have the time or resources to be involved haven't, and that's where I think the discrepancy is," Kaiser said. "It's kind of who you know. ... It's very relationship-driven, as far as what you're going to get access to."

Economic impact of sports complexes

The economic impact the complex will bring to Rapid City will be significant, Salamun said. Sports tourism is a growing industry nationwide. Some families travel hundreds of miles and across states for competitions, tournaments and games.

Kaiser's family travels extensively for his kids' teams. He's traveled or will travel to Denver (twice), Billings, Montana, and Gillette, Wyoming, for sports this year.

The Rapid City Sliders, the travel baseball team his son plays for, will be traveling to the Youth World Series at the Sanford Diamonds in Sioux Falls in July.

"That's 11 kids and their families, five, six days in Sioux Falls, spending money," he said. "We're eating out every night, we're staying in hotels, it's pretty significant."

A complex in Rapid City would put one such facility on both the east and west sides of the state. Sanford Sports has been a hub for regional, statewide and interstate sports tourism since breaking ground in northwest Sioux Falls in 2011.

More than 2.7 million people visit the Sanford Sports Complex annually, said Steve Young, president of Sanford Sports.

"It was pretty much just fields and a couple of buildings several years ago, about a decade ago," Young said. "Now we are multiple complexes, multiple facilities."

The complex's expansion over the years includes not only sports facilities as well as food options and two hotels. Among the features: junior football fields; Sanford Fieldhouse for hosting soccer, baseball, softball and football; the Sanford Pentagon with basketball and volleyball courts; the IcePlex for skating

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 9 of 77

and hockey; Huether Family Match Pointe for tennis; Power and Grace Gymnastics; Sanford Crossing for soccer, football and lacrosse; and the Sanford Diamonds for baseball and softball.

Sports tourism is a growing economic driver, especially in cities that have the ability to host large competitions and tournaments.

"When we're running tournaments and we're running high programming or special events, the hotels are full, the parking lots and the restaurants and the entertainment spaces are full. All those people need places to stay and we can't fit them on roughly 160 rooms on this (Sanford's) campus," Young said.

"So they're staying throughout the town. They're spending money in the restaurants and the retail spaces for something to do outside of their games they're playing. ... I'd imagine the impact is fairly significant."

Potential opposition

As with any major project, Salamon said he expects some opposition to the project. He thinks finalizing a funding plan will help ease some worries.

"I think as you start to educate the community about how this is going to be funded, they want to make sure that it's not hurting them but it's helping them," he said.

"You don't go after big visionary projects like this without some wind in your face," he added. "But I do believe it's in the best interest of this community and really sets us up for the long term, especially as we grow."

This story was produced by South Dakota News Watch, an independent, nonprofit organization. Read more stories and donate at sdnewswatch.org and sign up for an email to get stories when they're published. Emily DeCock is a student at South Dakota State University in Brookings. She received the 2025 Jeffrey B. Nelson Investigative Journalism Endowed Internship and Chuck Raasch and Sandy Johnson Scholarship from the SDSU Foundation. Contact Emily: emily.decock@sdnewswatch.org.



Fact brief: Is South Dakota the only state that doesn't sanction high school baseball?

**By Michael Klinski
South Dakota News Watch**

No.

South Dakota and Wyoming are the only states that don't sanction baseball at the high school level.

The South Dakota High School Activities Association voted on June 18, 2025, not to add the sport to its list of sanctioned activities, which means the sport would be governed by the SDHSAA. Instead, baseball is run by the South Dakota High School Baseball Association.

SDHSAA executive director Dan Swartos said the association polled 100 superintendents and activities directors, and a majority said not to sanction the sport because of financial and Title IX reasons.

"Let's keep looking at this," Swartos said. "Now is not the right time."

The SDHSAA told superintendents that startup costs for adding the sport could be between \$10,000-\$15,000 plus travel expenses. When a sport isn't sanctioned, athletes pay more of the costs for participating. In Sioux Falls, the 2025 fee for baseball players was \$650.

Lawrence County Fatal Crash

What: Motorcycle fatal crash

Where: US Highway 385, mile marker 121, one mile south of Lead, SD

When: 4:30 p.m., Saturday, June 21, 2025

Driver 1: 42-year-old male from Lennox, SD, fatal injuries

Vehicle 1: 2003 Victory Vegas motorcycle

Helmet Used: No

Lawrence County, S.D.- A motorcyclist died Wednesday, June 25 from injuries sustained in a crash Saturday, June 21, one mile south of Lead, SD.

The name of the person involved has not been released pending notification of family members.

Preliminary crash information indicates the driver of a 2003 Victory Vegas motorcycle was traveling north on US 385 near mile marker 121 and failed to negotiate a curve in the road. The driver become separated from the motorcycle. The driver was life-flighted to a nearby hospital with life-threatening injuries. He died from his injuries on Wednesday.

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

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

South Dakota Mosquito



The first West Nile virus-positive mosquito pool has been detected in Minnehaha County.

No human case of West Nile virus has been reported in South Dakota at this time. Last year, 2024, 21 WNV fever cases, 5 neuroinvasive cases, 8 hospitalizations, 1 death, and 4 positive blood donors were reported among South Dakota residents.

SD WNV (as of June 25):

No human cases reported.

2 counties with positive mosquito pools (Brown, Minnehaha)

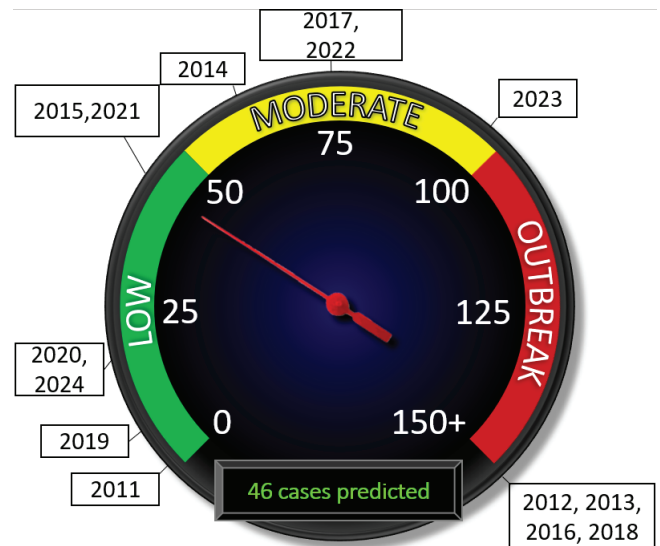
US WNV (as of June 17): 16 cases (AL, AZ, GA, LA, MS, ND, NE, OK, SC, TN, VA)

WNV Prediction Model – Total Number of Cases Projected for 2025, South Dakota (as of June 25)

Total sites collecting mosquitoes: 43

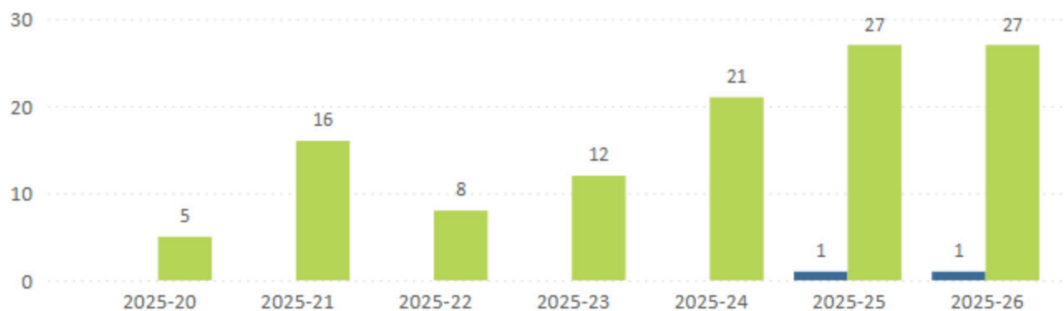
Total mosquito pools tested: 28,594

% positivity: 1.69%

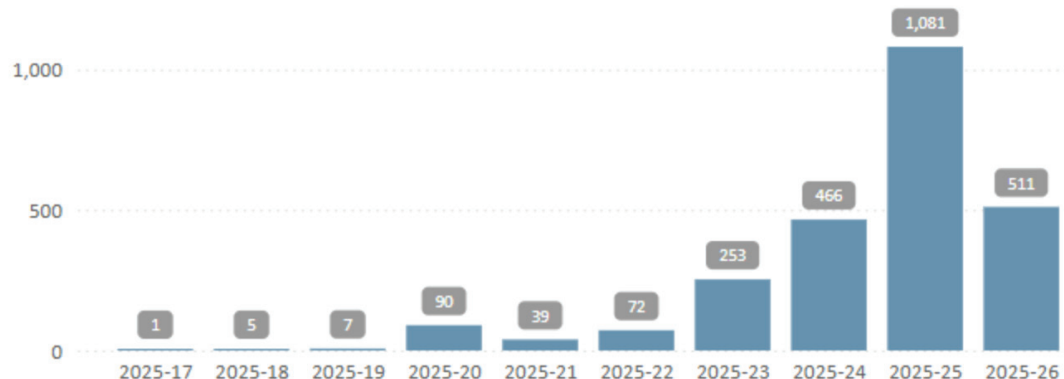


Number of Mosquito Pools Tested by MMWR Week and Status

Test Status: ● Positive ● Negative



Culex Mosquitoes Collected by MMWR Week



Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 13 of 77

DANR Announces Nearly \$15.9 Million in Loans for Statewide Projects

PIERRE, S.D. - Today, the South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources (DANR) announced that the Board of Water and Natural Resources has approved \$15,878,000 in state loans including \$3,464,000 in principal forgiveness for drinking water and wastewater improvements in South Dakota. These funds are to be administered by the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

Funds were awarded from DANR's Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Program and the Clean Water State Revolving Fund Program to the following:

Deer Mountain Sanitary received a \$450,000 Drinking Water State Revolving loan to cover increased construction costs for systemwide projects including a well house and water treatment building, a 110,000-gallon storage tank, water meters, complete distribution system replacement, and a booster station. The loan terms are 3.5% for 30 years.

Henry received a \$4,075,000 Drinking Water State Revolving loan with \$3,464,000 in principal forgiveness to replace existing watermains and install a ground storage tank with a booster pump station. The loan terms are 2.75% for 30 years.

Pierre received a \$516,000 Clean Water State Revolving Fund Program loan to design, bid, and construct a new landfill cell. This project has previously received funding. The loan terms are 3.25% for 10 years.

Randall Community Water District received a \$5,000,000 Drinking Water State Revolving loan to increase capacity for existing customers as well as supply additional water to the City of Mitchell. Additional funding was requested to increase the pipe from 24 inches to 30 inches. The loan terms are 3.5% for 30 years.

Rapid City received a \$3,932,000 Drinking Water State Revolving loan to make improvements to its municipal well #4. The project includes construction of a new well house with a new well pump and motor, drop pipe, and pitless adapter. The loan terms are 3.5% for 30 years.

Springfield received a \$505,000 Drinking Water State Revolving loan to replace approximately 1,300 feet of existing pipe. The project will also include the replacement of service pipes and valves within the rights-of-way and the installation of several fire hydrants. The loans terms are 3.25% for 30 years.

Springfield also received a \$565,000 Clean Water State Revolving Fund loan to replace approximately 1,200 feet of sanitary sewer lines. The loan terms are 3.75% for 30 years.

Webster received a \$835,000 Clean Water State Revolving Fund loan to reline the sanitary sewer system in their Industrial Park. This project has previously received funding. The loan terms are 3.75% for 30 years.

The State of South Dakota and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency fund the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Programs, which provide low-interest loans for wastewater, stormwater, water conservation, nonpoint source projects, and public drinking water system projects. The programs are funded through a combination of federal appropriations, loan repayments, and bonds.

The board approved the funding at Thursday's meeting in Pierre.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

South Dakota loses federal funds for prison rape elimination amid fears of national impact

BY: JOHN HULT - JUNE 26, 2025 2:59 PM

The South Dakota Department of Corrections has lost access to more than \$25,000 in federal funding meant to aid in the investigation and prevention of sexual assaults in prisons and jails.

The state Bureau of Finance and Management publishes a rundown, updated weekly, of dollars lost to the state through Trump administration cuts. The latest list includes a loss of \$25,332 in "strategic support" money for compliance with the federal Prison Rape Elimination Act.

The act requires prisons and jails to document sexual assaults behind bars, protect victims who report incidents and ensure adequate safeguards are in place to prevent assaults.

The lost money would have been a second-year award in a two-year grant. The state already received \$28,419.

The finance bureau's newest spreadsheet lists \$23.7 million in total federal funding lost across various state agencies and projects since the start of the Trump administration.

DOC: State facilities in compliance

The DOC says it doesn't actually need the lost federal dollars to comply with the federal law on sexual assaults in prisons. As of this week, the agency hadn't spent all the money from the first grant award.

Corrections spokesman Michael Winder told South Dakota Searchlight that the agency spent about \$16,000 from the first year's funding for "educational literature and training."

That material included wall posters instructing prisoners on how to report sexual assaults, which listed addresses for anonymous reporting and the number to dial from inmate tablets to report an assault. The department also printed "no means no" posters, six-step staff procedure cards outlining what to do when an inmate reports a sexual assault, and pamphlets on the rape elimination act for inmates and their friends and family members.

The grant was awarded to help the department comply with the law, and Winder said it now does. He said South Dakota's facilities are "continuously audited" for compliance with the federal statute. The remaining \$12,000 from 2023, he said, will be used "to provide continued training and advancement for staff who respond, investigate, and provide continued care for victims of sexual violence within the correctional facilities."

The state penitentiary's most recent federal audit was finalized in January. The report found no deficiencies. Audits of each state correctional facility since 2019, as listed on the department's website, showed no deficiencies.

In 2023, the most recent year for which data are available, there were 22 substantiated sexual assault reports in South Dakota prisons.

That was 22 out of 148 investigations tied to the Prison Rape Elimination Act. The department declined to offer details on the substantiated incidents, citing exemptions in South Dakota open records law for law enforcement records or records that could endanger others, as well as a provision in the act that bars the release of information on individual incidents.

That most recent annual report notes that the department "began tracking and reporting investigations in a consistent and efficient manner" in 2023.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 15 of 77

Broader impact of federal funding cuts

The loss of the remaining \$25,332 for South Dakota was part of the fallout from a decision by the Trump administration to cancel a host of grants related to the Prison Rape Elimination Act Resource Center.

The cuts effectively shut down the resource center for a short period of time. Until the change, the nonprofit organization had dozens of employees, laboring under a collaborative agreement with the U.S. Department of Justice.

Many of them worked to review the audits required of every correctional facility in the U.S. every three years, and served as a resource to connect prisons and jails nationwide with partners who could help them do things like train officers on how to handle sexual assault reports.

A California-based nonprofit called Just Detention International is among the organizations that relied on and worked with the resource center. Its mission is tied specifically to sexual assaults and harassment in correctional settings.

In South Dakota, the group worked with the Rosebud Sioux Tribe to build a compliant sexual assault prevention and reporting framework for a juvenile detention facility. It's also listed as a resource for victims in the most recent penitentiary audit for South Dakota.

Linda McFarlane, Just Detention's executive director, told South Dakota Searchlight that some staff at the resource center have returned since April, when the grants for states and the resource center were rescinded.

All the audits conducted across the U.S. since 2022 remain archived on the resource center website, but McFarlane worries the pared-down staff won't be able to review them. She's also troubled that the funding cuts removed the staff that trained investigators and connected local coordinators with resources.

"Part of the problem was that this message was sent, that PREA is no longer taken seriously," McFarlane said. "I think people misunderstood the defunding of the PREA Resource Center to mean the law was no longer in effect. And that is absolutely not true."

McFarlane was glad to hear that South Dakota intends to continue adhering to the law, but she worries that jailers who may have never taken the law seriously will feel empowered to ignore it.

"We heard from survivors and from currently incarcerated people that this felt like a huge slap in the face, that the government was signaling that they no longer take their safety seriously," McFarlane said. "And from within the corrections departments, the people who take it seriously were panicked."

The former director of the resource center, Dana Shoenberg, posted on LinkedIn that the funding cut had "scattered" its team into different jobs around the country, but said she hopes they or others continue to work "to fulfill PREA's promise of eliminating sexual abuse in confinement."

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.

COMMENTARY

'Big, beautiful bill' is an ugly deal for South Dakotans

by Shannon Emry

JUNE 26, 2025 9:00 AM

The U.S. Senate is working on the "big, beautiful bill" — a massive tax package that gives money directly to the wealthiest Americans while gutting programs that help everyday South Dakotans. If passed, this bill would cause devastating harm through deep cuts to Medicaid, higher health care costs for those enrolled in the Affordable Care Act, and automatic cuts to Medicare.

This bill will increase the federal deficit, resulting in the Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act (PAYGO) to kick in. That law requires automatic, across-the-board cuts to programs like Medicare unless Congress intervenes. So not only does this bill extend \$1.1 trillion in tax breaks to the wealthiest Americans, it pulls the rug out from under those who rely on Medicare just to get by.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 16 of 77

The human cost of this legislation is staggering.

As someone who works directly with people experiencing homelessness, I witness every day what a lack of health care looks like. It's the untreated infections that escalate into emergencies. It's the missed mental health support that results in a crisis. It's the addiction that goes unaddressed because there are no accessible recovery services. It's the quiet suffering of people who are told — explicitly or implicitly — that their lives are expendable in the name of tax cuts for the rich.

And as a pediatrician, I've seen firsthand how children suffer when the health care safety net is dismantled. I've seen children arrive at shelters sick, scared, and in need of urgent care that their families simply couldn't afford. Medicaid covers nearly half of all births in South Dakota and provides essential services like immunizations, developmental screenings, and early interventions that can change the course of a child's life. Without it, preventable illnesses go untreated, mental health conditions worsen, and families are left with nowhere to turn. Children don't get a second chance at healthy development. We must protect their access to care now.

Children, people with disabilities, older adults, and rural communities will bear the brunt of this proposal. Medicaid is not just a safety net; it is a lifeline. In South Dakota, Medicaid expansion has helped thousands access preventive care, chronic disease management, and mental health services — often for the first time in their lives. This bill would unravel that progress.

It's not just individuals who will suffer. This legislation threatens the very institutions that keep our communities alive — hospitals, senior-living centers, and nursing homes. Many of these facilities operate on razor-thin margins and rely heavily on Medicaid reimbursement to stay open. If this bill passes, South Dakota will see closures, especially in rural areas where there is no backup option. When the local hospital closes, people die. When a senior center shuts its doors, families are left scrambling to care for aging loved ones without support.

And for what? To fund permanent tax cuts for the ultra-wealthy. That's not fiscal responsibility. That's cruelty disguised as budgeting.

There is still time to act. Congress can let the Trump-era tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans expire. Congress can still extend the tax cuts for the hardworking middle and low-income earners. These two things are not mutually exclusive.

Instead of the federal government forcing states like South Dakota to shoulder more health care costs, citizens should have access to the critical programs that keep them healthy — especially our children, whose futures depend on it.

Dr. Shannon Emry is a pediatrician and clinical professor at the University of South Dakota Sanford School of Medicine, with a long-standing commitment to caring for underserved populations. She served 14 years in the U.S. Air Force before shifting her focus to community-based care. In 2023, she founded Midwest Street Medicine, where she leads a volunteer team providing medical and addiction care to people experiencing homelessness.

Trump urges voters to press for US Senate GOP mega-bill after setback on Medicaid cuts

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT, SHAUNEEN MIRANDA AND ASHLEY MURRAY - JUNE 26, 2025 8:57 AM

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump on Thursday told his supporters to call members of Congress and lobby them to support the “big, beautiful bill,” a crucial push with just days to go before a self-imposed Fourth of July deadline.

Trump's plea follows several tumultuous days on Capitol Hill as GOP leaders struggled to find consensus on multiple policy disagreements, especially after the parliamentarian ruled core elements of the package don't meet the complex rules for moving a budget reconciliation bill.

Trump during an event in the White House's East Room that was attended by several GOP lawmakers

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 17 of 77

also cautioned Republicans against voting down the tax and spending cut package.

"We don't want to have grandstanders," Trump said. "Not good people. They know who I'm talking about. I call them out. But we don't need grandstanders. We have to get our country back and bring it back strong."

Some Republican senators remain optimistic they can work through the weekend and that the House votes will come together next week, despite growing opposition from members in that chamber.

Sen. Eric Schmitt said he doesn't think the parliamentarian's rulings will delay the votes "outside the weekend window, which has been the goal all the time."

"We're probably voting into the weekend, though. That's probably my guess — Saturday and I suppose even Sunday — but, that's the goal, I don't think that materially changes too much," the Missouri Republican said.

Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., however, appeared a bit less definite, telling reporters in the afternoon that he didn't know when the chamber would take the procedural vote that kicks off floor consideration.

"I'll get back to you on that," he said.

Medicaid provisions tossed

Earlier Thursday, Senate Republicans suffered a significant setback when the parliamentarian ruled several changes to Medicaid in the bill don't comply with the rules, which means billions of dollars in savings are no longer available for the GOP to offset the cost of tax cuts.

Finance Committee Chairman Mike Crapo, R-Idaho, must rework or completely eliminate nine changes the committee proposed to the health care programs, though more of the panel's proposals are still under review.

Republicans can no longer reduce the amount of federal matching funds for state governments that use their own tax dollars to provide Medicaid coverage for immigrants in the country without proper documentation.

The GOP bill cannot bar gender-affirming care for Medicaid patients.

And Republicans need to change or scrap a proposal to reduce states' Medicaid provider tax credits, an issue that is relatively in the weeds of health care policy but has sharply divided the GOP and drawn fierce opposition from states.

The changes or eliminations will have a major impact on how much in savings the GOP tax and spending cut bill will generate during the next decade and will likely make the overall package's deficit impact higher than before. The legislation is intended to extend the 2017 tax cuts and make spending reductions.

The ruling might make it more difficult for Trump and GOP leaders in Congress to get the votes needed to pass the bill at all, let alone before their self-imposed Fourth of July timeline. Senate GOP leaders had said they wanted to begin procedural votes as soon as Friday.

The measure already had been stuck on Wednesday amid growing disputes over how Medicaid changes will impact rural hospitals and far more.

Democrats to continue scrutinizing bill

Senate Budget Committee ranking member Jeff Merkley, D-Ore., who released the parliamentarian's rulings, wrote in a statement that Democrats will continue to advocate for removing dozens of proposals from the bill that they believe don't meet reconciliation rules.

"Republicans are scrambling to rewrite parts of this bill to continue advancing their families lose, and billionaires win agenda, but Democrats stand ready to fully scrutinize any changes and ensure the Byrd Rule is enforced," Merkley wrote.

A staffer, who was granted anonymity to discuss the chairman's plans, said the Finance Committee will "rework certain provisions to address the Byrd guidance and be compliant with reconciliation."

The Byrd rule, named for former West Virginia Sen. Robert Byrd, includes several guardrails for recon-

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 18 of 77

ciliation bills.

Finance Committee ranking member Ron Wyden, D-Ore., wrote in a statement that the parliamentarian's ruling will lead to "more than \$250 billion in health care cuts removed from the Republicans' big bad bill.

"Democrats fought and won, striking health care cuts from this bill that would hurt Americans' walking on an economic tightrope. This bill is rotten to its core, and I'll keep fighting the cuts in this morally bankrupt bill until the end."

The parliamentarian is still deciding whether several health provisions meet reconciliation rules, including language that would block all Medicaid funding from going to Planned Parenthood, effectively blocking Medicaid patients from visiting the organization for routine health services.

Federal law already bars funding for abortions with exceptions for rape, incest, or the life of the pregnant patient.

The parliamentarian will also decide later whether Republicans' bill can block the Department of Health and Human Services from implementing a Biden-era rule that would require nursing homes to have a nurse working 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Higher ed provisions axed

The parliamentarian also struck down several attempts from congressional Republicans to overhaul the higher education system.

GOP lawmakers cannot streamline student loan repayment options for current borrowers to just a standard repayment plan or an income-driven repayment plan, making such restrictions apply to only new borrowers.

Republicans have to nix a proposal that opened up the Pell Grant — a government subsidy that helps low-income students pay for college — to institutions that are for-profit and not accredited.

The parliamentarian scrapped a proposal that would have barred payments made by students enrolled in a medical or dental internship or residency program from counting toward Public Service Loan Forgiveness.

The federal program eliminates remaining debt for borrowers when meeting certain requirements, including working for a qualified employer within the government or nonprofit sector.

The parliamentarian rejected GOP lawmakers' proposal to end federal student aid eligibility for certain immigrants who are not U.S. citizens.

'Too many Medicaid cuts'

Missouri Republican Sen. Josh Hawley said the parliamentarian's ruling on the Medicaid provider tax rate will give lawmakers "a chance to get it right."

"This is a chance for the Senate to fix a problem that they created and not defund rural hospitals," Hawley said, later adding he supports the House language that would freeze the rate at 6% instead of decreasing it to 3.5% over several years.

Hawley said hours before Trump's event that he expects the president to get more involved in negotiations now that he's back from a NATO conference in Europe and said Trump was in a "terrific mood" during a recent phone call.

"I think he wants this done. But he wants it done well. And he does not want this to be a Medicaid cuts bill," Hawley said. "He made that very clear to me. He said this is a tax cut bill, it's not a Medicaid cuts bill. I think he's tired of hearing about all these Medicaid cuts, you know. As am I. It's because there are too many Medicaid cuts."

Louisiana Republican Sen. Bill Cassidy early Thursday night called on leaders to put the House's language regarding Medicaid back into the bill, wiping out changes made by the Finance Committee.

"My position is that cuts, and especially drastic cuts, to Medicaid have to be avoided. The Senate bill cuts Medicaid too much," the influential chairman of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee wrote in a social media post. "I agree with President Trump, the House version is better."

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 19 of 77

SNAP cuts

The Agriculture Committee also is reworking parts of its bill, some being closely watched by states, to meet the rules that govern reconciliation.

Committee Chairman John Boozman, R-Ark., said he expects to hear from the parliamentarian before the end of Thursday about whether a revised state cost share provision for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program that's based on error rate payments will be in the final bill.

"It was thrown out the first time, so we actually gave her revised text. If she rules the revised text is fine, then we'll release it," Boozman said.

The committee released a statement later in the day announcing the parliamentarian had cleared the revised state cost share for SNAP that's based on a state's error payment rate.

States that have SNAP error payment rates higher than 6% will have to contribute some of the cost of the program. The updated proposal will give states the option of choosing between fiscal 2025 and fiscal 2026 to determine their match, which will begin during fiscal 2028. After that, a state's match will be determined by its error payment rate for the last three fiscal years.

State and local tax, 'revenge tax'

Senate Republicans also remained stuck on finding a deduction level for state and local tax, or SALT, that passes muster with House Republicans who represent high-tax blue states.

The House version would allow taxpayers making under \$500,000 to deduct up to \$40,000 in SALT from their federal tax bill. Both the \$40,000 cap and the \$500,000 income threshold will increase annually at 1% until hitting a ceiling of \$44,000 and \$552,000. The deduction cap phases down for higher earners.

Senate Republicans and the White House sought to lower the income threshold but were shot down Thursday by House Republicans, according to multiple reports.

Sen. Markwayne Mullin of Oklahoma, the lead negotiator on SALT for Senate Republicans, said he remained optimistic.

"We're gonna be in a good spot. We're gonna find a landing spot," Mullin said.

A Senate Finance Committee spokesperson declined to comment on current negotiations, including any proposed income level changes.

Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent also weighed in on another tax provision: the so-called "revenge tax" on investments from countries whose trade policies the president views as unfair to U.S. businesses.

Bessent asked lawmakers to remove the up to 20% tax from the mega-bill following an agreement made with G7 partners, he wrote on social media.

"This understanding with our G7 partners provides greater certainty and stability for the global economy and will enhance growth and investment in the United States and beyond," Bessent said.

The retaliation tax would have raised roughly \$116 billion over 10 years, according to the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget.

Timing on votes

Republican lawmakers don't have much time left to rework all of the ineligible provisions, clear them with the parliamentarian, read through final bill text, slog through a marathon amendment voting session in the Senate and then move the bill through the House before their self-imposed deadline.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said during a briefing before Trump's event that the president is "adamant" Congress must pass the "big, beautiful bill" within the next week, despite the latest ruling.

"We expect that bill to be on the president's desk for signature by July Fourth. I know there was a ruling by the Senate parliamentarian this morning," Leavitt said. "Look, this is part of the process, this is part of the inner workings of the United States Senate. But the president is adamant about seeing this bill on his desk here at the White House by Independence Day."

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.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 20 of 77

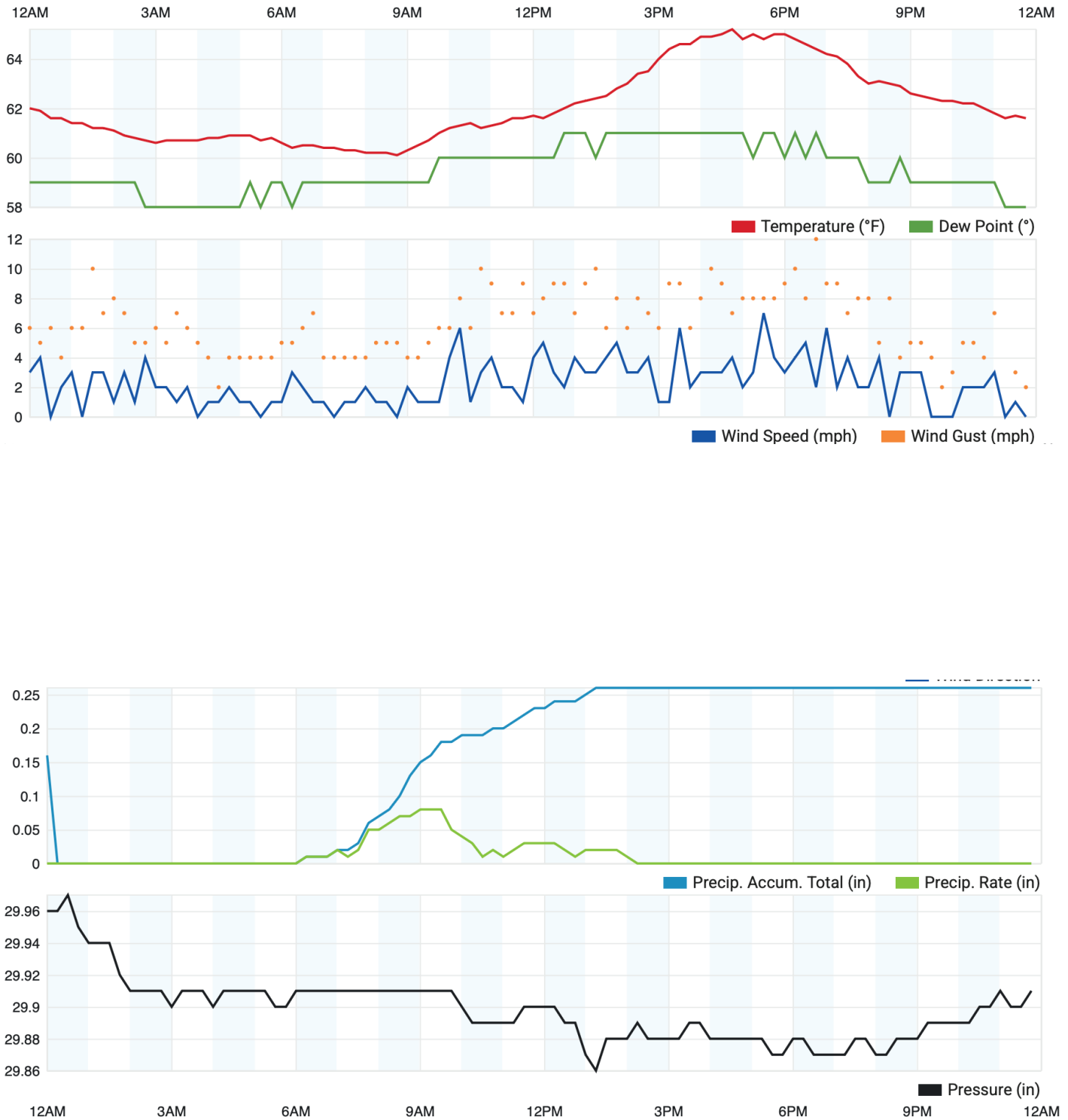
Shauneen Miranda is a reporter for States Newsroom's Washington bureau. An alumna of the University of Maryland, she previously covered breaking news for Axios.

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

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 21 of 77

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Broton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 22 of 77

Today



High: 86 °F

Areas Fog
then Mostly
Sunny

Tonight



Low: 62 °F

Severe
Thunderstorms

Saturday



High: 90 °F

Hot

Saturday Night



Low: 63 °F

Severe
Thunderstorms

Sunday



High: 87 °F

Slight Chance
T-storms then
Mostly Sunny

THREAT ASSESSMENT

HIGHEST LOCAL RISK

2

WHAT THIS MEANS:
Scattered severe storms
possible.

TIMING

Late afternoon/evening
over central SD, moving
to eastern SD into the
nighttime hours

PRIMARY THREATS



LARGE HAIL



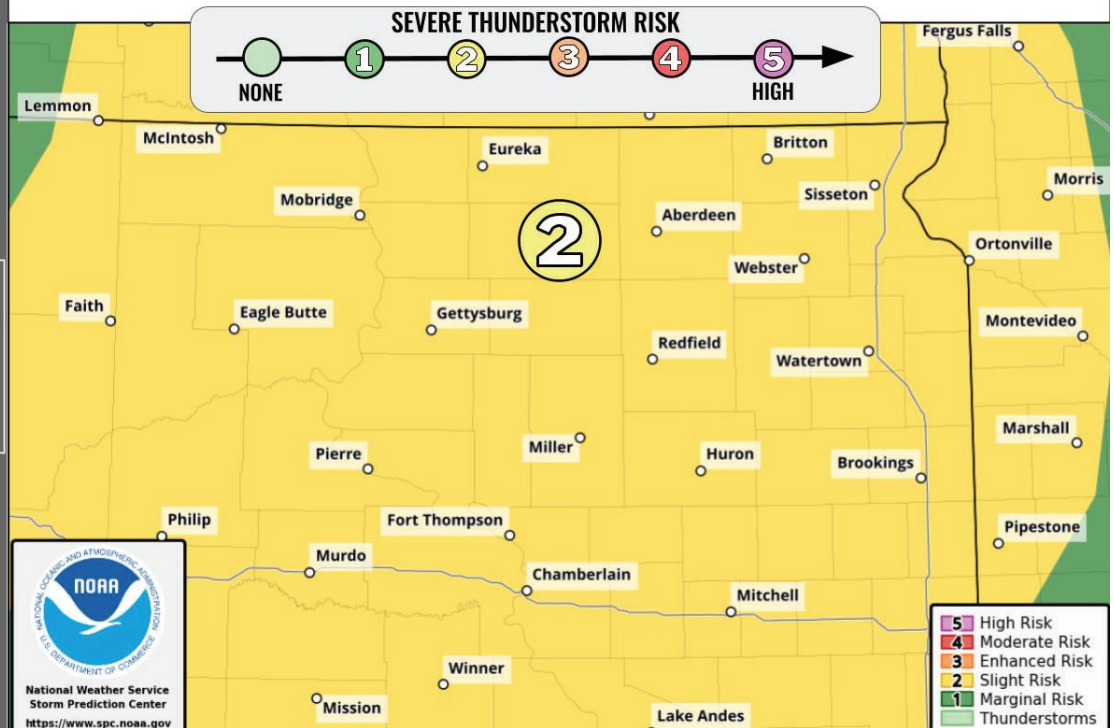
DAMAGING
WIND



HEAVY RAIN

Get your up to date
forecast at weather.gov/abr

SEVERE STORMS Possible This Afternoon/Evening



The entire forecast area is in a Slight risk (level 2 of 5) for severe storms this afternoon/evening into the nighttime hours. Large hail and damaging wind gusts are the main threats, but a tornado or two cannot be ruled out. That said, there is some uncertainty on areal coverage of storms, which could end up being only isolated or widely scattered.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 23 of 77



Severe Weather Threats - Hail

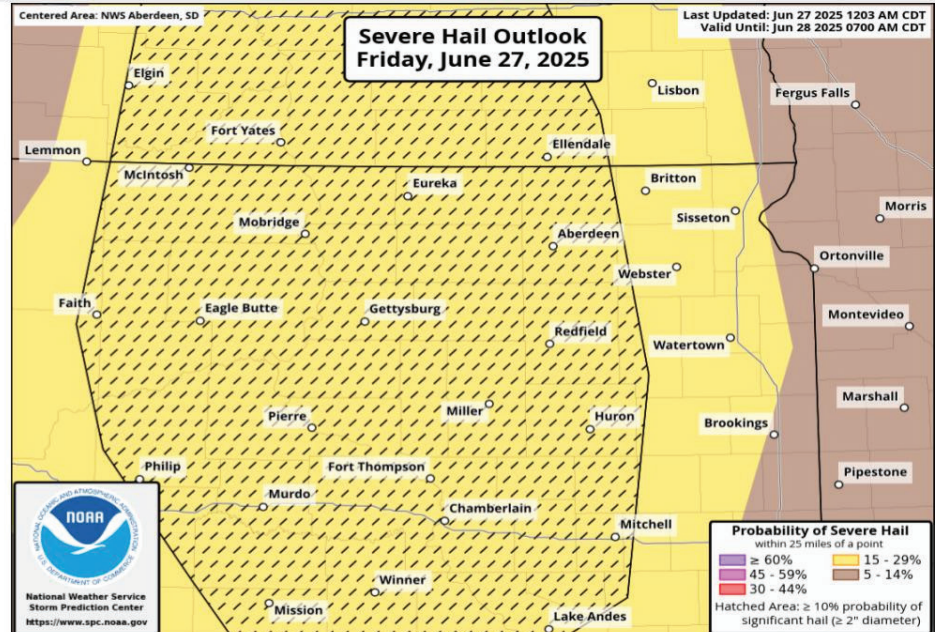
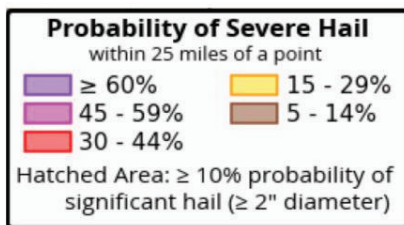
June 27, 2025
3:24 AM

Hail Threat Highlights:

Supercell storms (*perhaps only isolated/widely scattered coverage*) are capable of producing large hail. **In the hatched area, hail in excess of 2 inches diameter is possible.**

Area of Greatest Risk:

Central South Dakota eastward into the James River valley.



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Large hail in excess of quarter size is possible with any supercells that develop, but again, they may only be isolated or widely scattered in coverage as there is some uncertainty in this. In the hatched area, hail in excess of 2 inches in diameter is possible within 25 miles of a given point.



Severe Weather Threats - High Winds

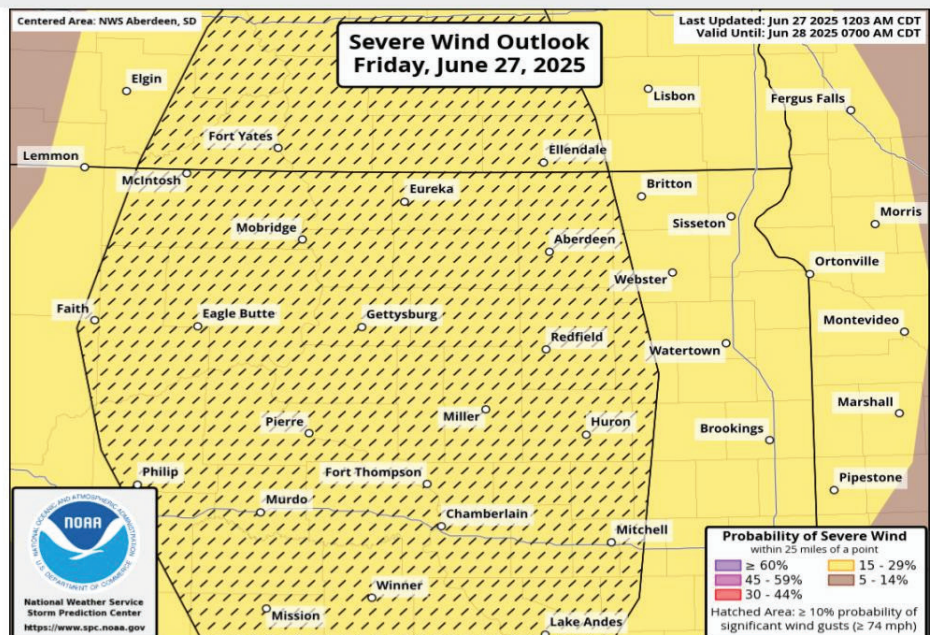
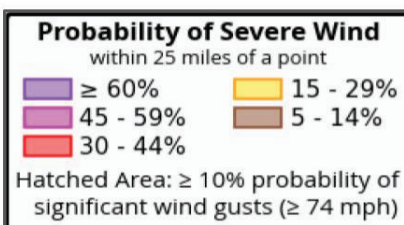
June 27, 2025
3:28 AM

Wind Threat Highlights:

60 to 70 mph wind gusts will be possible with developing storms (*perhaps only isolated/widely scattered coverage*). **In the hatched area, gusts greater than 74 mph are possible.**

Area of Greatest Risk:

Central South Dakota eastward into the James River valley.



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 24 of 77



Severe Weather Threats - Tornado

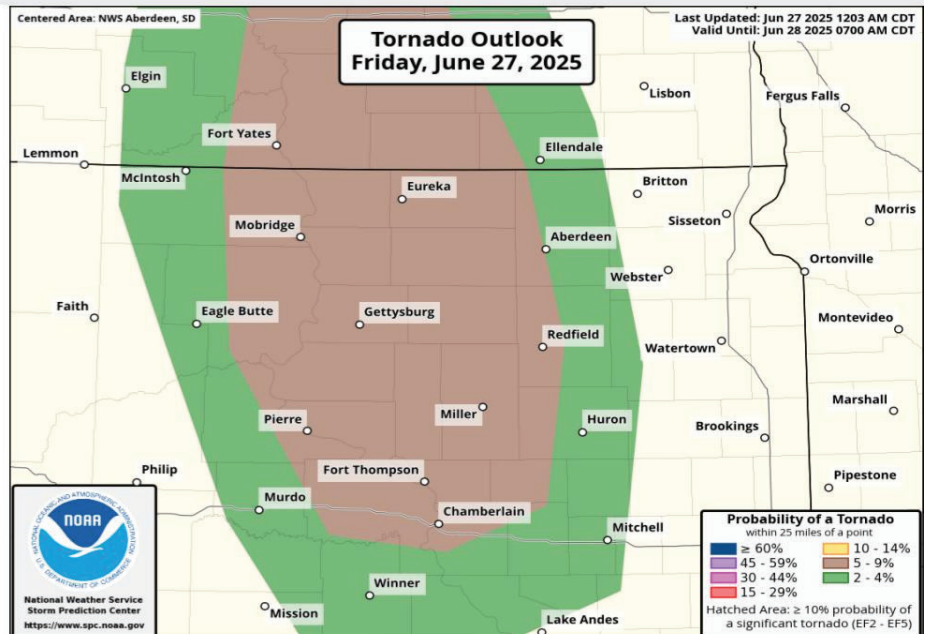
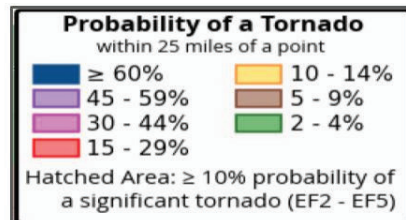
June 27, 2025
3:33 AM

Tornado Threat Highlights:

The tornado threat is low, but cannot be ruled out. Supercells may produce an isolated tornado or two during the evening hours.

Area of Greatest Risk:

Mainly central South Dakota, between the Missouri and James rivers.



There is a low tornado threat today across central South Dakota, basically along the Missouri River valley eastward into the James River valley. The brown coloring shows a 5 to 9 percent chance of a tornado within 25 miles of a point. The time frame for this is during the evening hours, generally prior to midnight.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 25 of 77

Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 65 °F at 4:37 PM

Low Temp: 60 °F at 7:57 AM

Wind: 12 mph at 6:37 PM

Precip: : 0.26

Day length: 15 hours, 42 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 104 in 1936

Record Low: 42 in 2017

Average High: 83

Average Low: 58

Average Precip in June.: 3.37

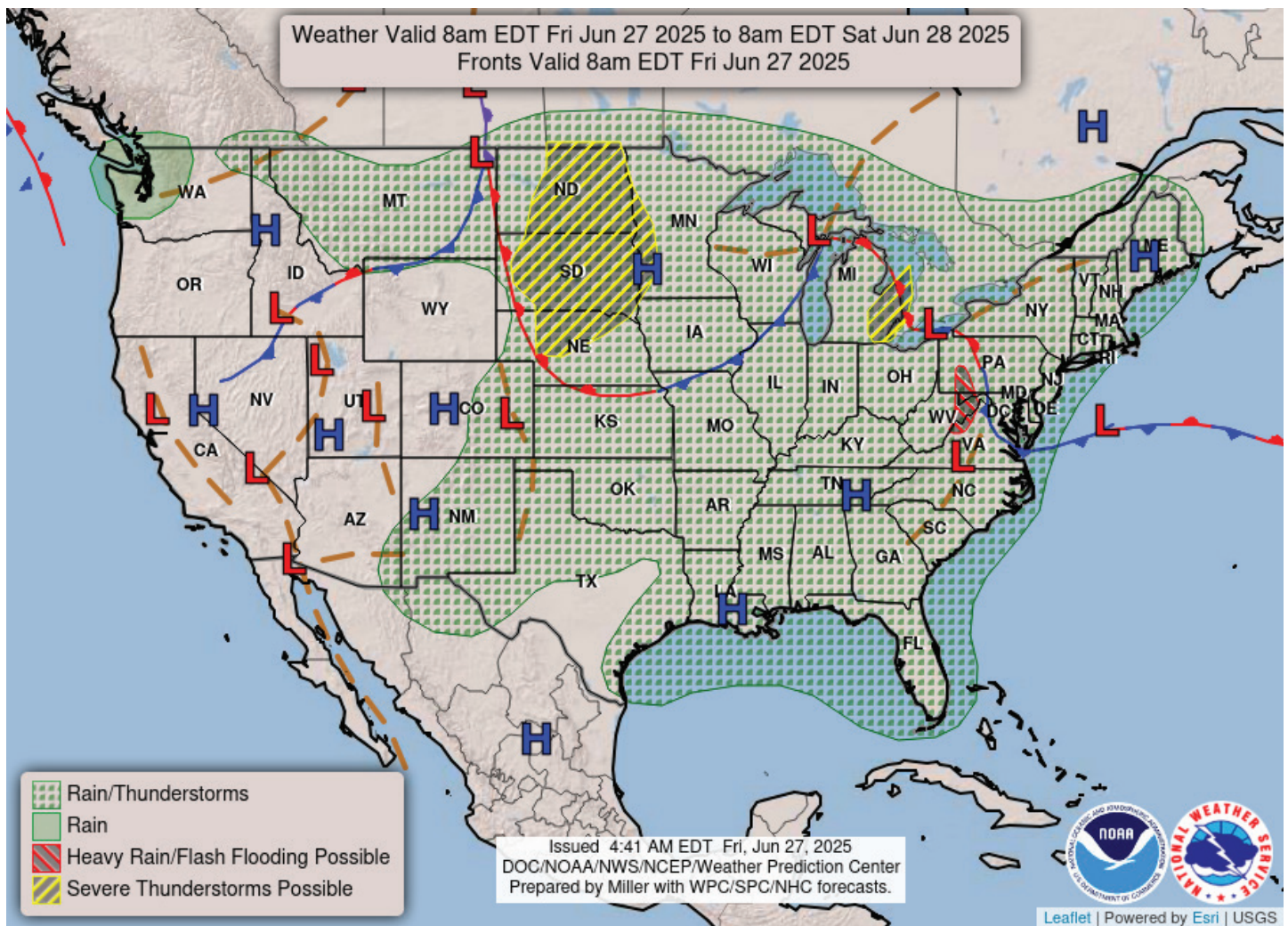
Precip to date in June: 3.14

Average Precip to date: 10.62

Precip Year to Date: 9.19

Sunset Tonight: 9:26:54 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:44:47 am



Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 26 of 77

Today in Weather History

June 27, 1894: Three people were injured as a tornado destroyed a home 5 miles north of Houghton in Brown County. Lumber on a wagon was scattered for over a mile. This tornado was estimated to be an F2. Also, a second F2 tornado formed south of Aberdeen and moved northeast and went near Randolph, to beyond Bath. Several barns and two homes were destroyed along the narrow path. Three other small funnels were seen to touch down. Another tornado with estimated F2 strength moved ENE from northeast of St. Lawrence to Bonilla and Hitchcock. At least one home was destroyed. One person was killed in the destruction of her home, north of Wessington. An estimated F2 tornado hit 2 miles south of Henry. At least two small houses were blown away. There was another possible tornado 12 miles north of Henry. Numerous tornadoes continued into Minnesota.

June 27, 1928: A long-lived estimated F2 tornado moved southeast from 7 miles west of Faulkton, passing north and east of Orient. Buildings were damaged on nine farms. One home near Orient was riddled with timbers from a nearby grain elevator. This tornado was estimated to travel a distance of 40 miles.

1901 - There was a rain of fish from the sky at Tiller's Ferry. Hundreds of fish were swimming between cotton rows after a heavy shower. (David Ludlum)

1915 - The temperature at Fort Yukon AK soared to 100 degrees to establish a state record. (The Weather Channel)

1957 - Hurricane Audrey smashed ashore at Cameron, LA, drowning 390 persons in the storm tide, and causing 150 million dollars damage in Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi. Audrey left only a brick courthouse and a cement-block icehouse standing at Cameron, and when the waters settled in the town of Crede, only four buildings remained. The powerful winds of Audrey tossed a fishing boat weighing 78 tons onto an off-shore drilling platform. Winds along the coast gusted to 105 mph, and oil rigs off the Louisiana coast reported wind gusts to 180 mph. A storm surge greater than twelve feet inundated the Louisiana coast as much as 25 miles inland. It was the deadliest June hurricane of record for the U.S. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Thunderstorms moving out of Nebraska produced severe weather in north central Kansas after midnight. Thunderstorm winds gusting to 100 mph damaged more than fifty camping trailers at the state park campground at Lake Waconda injuring sixteen persons. Thunderstorm winds gusted to 80 mph at Beloit and Sylvan Grove. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - The afternoon high of 107 degrees at Bismarck, ND, was a record for the month of June, and Pensacola, FL, equalled their June record with a reading of 101 degrees. Temperatures in the Great Lakes Region and the Ohio Valley dipped into the 40s. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from the Ohio Valley to western New England. Thunderstorm spawned six tornadoes, and there were 98 reports of large hail and damaging winds. Tropical Storm Allison spawned six tornadoes in Louisiana, injuring two persons at Hackberry. Fort Polk LA was drenched with 10.09 inches of rain in 36 hours, and 12.87 inches was reported at the Gorum Fire Tower in northern Louisiana. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1995: The Madison County Flood on June 27, 1995, was the worst flash floods Virginia had seen since the remnants of Camille dropped up to 30 inches of rain one night in Nelson County in August 1969. The Nelson County flood ranked as one of the nation's worst flash floods of this century and resulted in the deaths of 117 people. The Madison County flood killed one person.

2011: Polar temperatures and unusual snowfall chill several cities in Brazil's southern states. Four cities in Santa Catarina state are blanketed in snow. The town of Urubici reported a temperature of 23.9 degrees Fahrenheit with a wind chill of 16.6 degrees below zero. In Florianopolis, the capital of Santa Catarina and a renowned sea resort, thermometers registered 21.2 degrees.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 27 of 77



The Bible was not written to teach psychology. But, the Bible is psychologically sound and correct. Consider Proverbs 12:25: "Anxiety weighs down the heart, but a kind word cheers it up."

The writer does not profess to be a diagnostician, but he certainly is insightful.

Recently, a study on "anxiety disorders" concluded that 40 million Americans, or 18.1% of our population, are plagued with fears that, from time to time, trouble them deeply. It is also a known fact that anxiety can lead to depression.

From wisdom that came from God, Solomon made the same "diagnosis." Notice that he said, "Anxiety weighs down the heart." The words "weigh down" imply a state of depression. Our author, with God's guidance and insight, described people whose anxiety is coupled with fear or worry – which as I mentioned earlier, can lead to depression.

All of us, at one time or another, have had those moments when we feared that something horrible was about to overtake or destroy us. When those feelings came to the "surface," it was natural to feel "weighted down," either "oppressed" or "depressed." And, when this happens, it is normal and natural to look for encouragement and support. How tragic if no one was there to help us or share a "kind word to cheer us up" and "lift the weight."

Notice, however, that Solomon was not talking to a behavioral health specialist. He was talking to people like us who have the ability to recognize the lonely, the sad, the worried, the anxious, and depressed. Often people, also like us, only need a "word" of grace, comfort, encouragement or ... simply a smile, to bring them hope, health, and happiness.

Prayer: We thank You, Father, for giving us Your love to share with others. May we be alert to those around us who need Your love and kindness and offer them hope. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Today's Scripture: "Anxiety weighs down the heart, but a kind word cheers it up." Proverbs 12:25

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

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 28 of 77

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Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 29 of 77



WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 06.24.25

10 11 18 24 60 20

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$348,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 22 Mins 40 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: 1 Days 16 Hrs 37 Mins 40 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 06.26.25

5 7 37 41 42 15

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 52 Mins 40 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 06.25.25

5 18 19 22 24

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$39,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 52 Mins 40 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 06.25.25

1 11 49 57 61 25

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 21 Mins 40 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: 1 Days 17 Hrs 21 Mins 40 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 30 of 77

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

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 31 of 77

News from the **AP** Associated Press

North Dakota considers 2 proposed natural gas pipelines that would stretch across the state

By JACK DURA Associated Press

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — A state official briefed regulators Thursday on two separate underground pipelines that companies plan to build across hundreds of miles of North Dakota, bringing natural gas from the oil fields in the west to mostly industrial users in the more populated east.

Both pipelines — one by Intensity Infrastructure Partners and Rainbow Energy Center, the other by WBI Energy — would span about 350 miles (563 kilometers) roughly from the Watford City to Fargo areas. Segments would come into service in 2029 and 2030. The companies didn't disclose the projects' costs.

The presentation to a state industrial panel of elected officials was among the first steps in a process for the state to sign on with a 10-year, \$50 million-per-year line of credit. That is essentially a backstop so projects can proceed with the intent that the state back out one day when other users join. Companies won't build a pipeline without firm commitments from users.

North Dakota has a critical need for more natural gas transportation as oil wells age and produce more natural gas relative to oil, North Dakota Pipeline Authority Director Justin Kringstad said.

Republican Gov. Kelly Armstrong welcomed the projects for helping oil production, which is a huge driver of the state budget.

"If you can't move your gas and you have a finite amount of capital to invest in drilling, you're going to drill where you can market your gas, or you're going to do it in a different manner," the governor said. "So being able to move gas out of the Bakken (oil region) will help produce more oil."

North Dakota is producing a near-record 3.5 billion cubic feet (99.1 million cubic liters) per day of natural gas.

The state has long wanted such pipelines, but efforts never succeeded in the past because of developments that hurt demand, such as oil price declines and the COVID-19 pandemic, Kringstad said.

"Today we're seeing a much stronger pull on the demand side than we've ever seen in these efforts," Kringstad said. "We've always seen the push and the need in the west, but today the appetite across the state for natural gas and for energy is at the highest that I've ever seen."

The gas will mostly be used for industrial purposes but also growing residential needs, he said. The pipelines could carry as much as 1 million dekatherms per day, a volume he said would be "extremely meaningful in addressing the challenges that North Dakota is facing."

Capturing and moving the gas out of the oil field has been an issue over the years as officials and industry have sought to boost infrastructure and reduce flaring, or the burning of natural gas into the air. Although the state captured about 96% of the gas in April, critics have long raised environmental and health concerns about flaring.

The Trump administration has pushed for increased domestic energy production, largely from fossil fuel sources. Doug Burgum, a former North Dakota governor and now the U.S. Interior secretary, has long called for raising energy extraction efforts.

Other pipeline projects in North Dakota have drawn enormous pushback in recent years, including huge protests of the Dakota Access oil pipeline and landowner resistance around the Midwest to Summit Carbon Solutions' proposed carbon dioxide network.

Armstrong said some degree of pushback is likely, "but the reality is pipelines are the easiest way to move things."

It's unclear whether eminent domain, or the taking of private property with just compensation, will come into play for the pipelines. A Rainbow Energy Center leader said Intensity Infrastructure Partners has never utilized eminent domain in more than 2,000 miles (3,200 kilometers) of pipeline it has built in North Dakota. A WBI Energy spokesperson said he couldn't answer.

Iowa-based Summit Carbon Solutions has faced intense opposition over eminent domain for its proposed

five-state carbon dioxide pipeline. Some landowners have opposed eminent domain as the company seeks to build the pipeline, and South Dakota's governor earlier this year signed a ban on eminent domain for carbon dioxide pipelines.

Iranian Kurdish dissidents abroad watch for signs of Tehran vulnerability after war with Israel

By STELLA MARTANY and ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press

IRBIL, Iraq (AP) — From abroad, Iranian Kurdish dissident groups have been watching closely for signs that Iran's theocracy could falter in its grip on the country, battered by Israeli airstrikes in the intense, 12-day war until a U.S.-negotiated ceasefire halted the fighting.

Israel launched the strikes on June 13, drawing Iranian missiles that targeted Israel. But it was not until the United States inserted itself into the war and hit Iranian nuclear sites on Sunday, including with 30,000-pound bunker-buster bombs, that the war came to a watershed moment.

Now, with the fragile ceasefire holding and many Iranians trying to return to a normal life, questions swirl about whether and how much the war has weakened Iran's clerical rule, in place since the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Iranian Kurdish exiles in Iraq mull their options

A handful of Iranian Kurdish groups — many with a distinctly militant past — have long found a safe haven in northern Iraq's semiautonomous Kurdish region, but their presence has been a point of friction between the central government in Baghdad and Tehran.

Iraq in 2023 reached an agreement with Iran to disarm the groups and move them from their bases near the border areas with Iran — where they potentially posed an armed challenge to Tehran — into camps designated by Baghdad.

Their armed bases were shut down and their movement within Iraq restricted, but the groups have not entirely given up their weapons.

Officials with two prominent Iranian Kurdish groups in Iraq told The Associated Press they are trying to organize politically to ensure that they would not be sidelined should the administration in Iran lose its hold on power.

When asked if their groups were preparing an armed uprising, they either denied it or avoided a direct response.

Mixed expectations of any real change in Tehran

President Donald Trump floated the idea of "regime change" in Tehran in the wake of the U.S. strikes, only to have his administration later say that was not the goal. Some of the Kurdish dissidents say they expect no immediate upheaval in Iran's ruling theocracy.

"Some of the parties think this war between Iran and Israel is a good opportunity for us" to advance the Kurdish cause, said Khalil Naderi, spokesperson for the Kurdistan Freedom Party, or PAK, a separatist Iranian Kurdish group based in Iraq.

But Naderi disagreed with that premise. "The U.S. and Israel attacked Iran to protect themselves from its weapons, not for Kurdish rights," he said.

Any premature armed mobilization on their part could endanger both the Kurdish groups and the fragile security of the Kurdish areas, both in Iraq and across the border in Iran, Naderi said.

His stand was a contrast to that of PAK leader Hussein Yazdanpanah, who days after the outbreak of the Israel-Iran war, called on X for Kurdish youth to rise against the authorities in Tehran.

"Attack the enemy, its centers, and its facilities" and "avenge the blood" of their fallen, Yazdanpanah posted.

And last week in Washington, where he had been pushing U.S. officials to include the Kurds in plans for a potential "day after" in Iran, Abdullah Mohtadi, the head of the leftist Komala Party from Iran's Kurdish regions, said he hopes the Israel-Iran war could represent a turning point.

"War can bring about internal domestic change," he said. "We hope that this time this will be the case."

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 33 of 77

Lessons from war

Mohtadi denied that any external player, including the U.S. and Israel, had encouraged Kurdish groups to take up arms. But he didn't rule out the possibility that they would.

"We haven't at the moment called for an uprising, or we haven't called for an armed struggle, but we are monitoring developments very closely," he said.

Mohtadi maintained that Komala has avoided an armed struggle for nearly 30 years and that its camps in northern Iraq are purely for "self defense."

Both Komala and the PAK, as well as another exiled Kurdish group, the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan or KDPI, have fought Iranian authorities in the past — but also sometimes fought against each other.

The groups have different approaches to the question of Kurdish separatism. PAK advocates for an independent Kurdish state, while Komala and KDPI want a system in Iran similar to that in northern Iraq, where Iraqi Kurds have a semiautonomous and self-governed region.

Iran has occasionally launched strikes on the Iranian Kurdish dissidents, but none during the Israel-Iran war this month.

Divisions among the groups

The dissident groups are walking a fine line, balancing the differences among themselves and with their hosts in Iraq, the Iraqi Kurds and the Iraqi government in Baghdad — neither of which they want to antagonize.

Despite having shared grievances over the marginalization of Kurds in Iran, the Iranian Kurdish parties have not been able to build a consensus

"We haven't been able to unite, even though we would like to," Naderi said.

In March, ahead of Nowruz, the Persian New Year, the Kurdish dissident groups had planned to "meet and discuss" Kurdish rights and destiny, but plans fell through. Even now, he said, coordination remains elusive.

Kawsar Fattahi, a central committee member of Komala, said the dissidents should not plan for "the fall of the regime, but on what will happen after that."

"Because our goal is to rebuild a new Iran," she said.

Mohtadi, the Komala leader, said he has tried to reassure Washington that his group is not separatist but wants a "democratic, secular federal Iran where the rights of Kurds and other ethnic groups are protected by the new constitution."

He denied anyone is pushing Komala into armed conflict.

"We aren't puppets," Mohtadi said. "Nobody has asked us to rise (up). We will decide when is the right time."

Trump says US has signed a deal with China on trade, without giving details

By ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

BANGKOK (AP) — The U.S. and China have signed an agreement on trade, President Donald Trump said, adding he expects to soon have a deal with India.

Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick told Bloomberg TV that the deal was signed earlier this week. Neither Lutnick nor Trump provided any details about the agreement.

"We just signed with China the other day," Trump said late Thursday.

Lutnick said the deal was "signed and sealed" two days earlier.

It was unclear if the latest agreement was different from the one Trump announced two weeks earlier that he said would make it easier for American industries to obtain much-needed magnets and rare earth minerals. That pact cleared the way for the trade talks to continue, while the U.S. agreed to stop trying to revoke visas of Chinese nationals on U.S. college campuses.

China's Commerce Ministry said Friday that the two sides had "further confirmed the details of the framework." But its statement did not explicitly mention U.S. access to rare earths, minerals used in high-tech

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 34 of 77

applications that have been at the center of the negotiations.

"China will approve the export applications of controlled items that meet the conditions in accordance with the law. The United States will cancel a series of restrictive measures taken against China accordingly. It is hoped that the United States and China will meet each other halfway," it said.

The agreement follows initial talks in Geneva in early May that led both sides to postpone massive tariff hikes that were threatening to freeze much trade between the two countries. Later talks in London set a framework for negotiations and the deal mentioned by Trump appeared to formalize that agreement.

"The president likes to close these deals himself. He's the dealmaker. We're going to have deal after deal," Lutnick said.

China has not announced any new agreements, but it announced earlier this week that it was speeding up approvals of exports of rare earths, materials used in high-tech products such as electric vehicles. Beijing's limits on exports of rare earths have been a key point of contention.

The Chinese Commerce Ministry said Thursday that Beijing was accelerating review of export license applications for rare earths and had approved "a certain number of compliant applications."

Export controls of the minerals apparently eclipsed tariffs in the latest round of trade negotiations between Beijing and Washington after China imposed permitting requirements on seven rare earth elements in April, threatening to disrupt production of cars, robots, wind turbines and other high-tech products in the U.S. and around the world.

China also has taken steps recently on the fentanyl issue, announcing last week that it would designate two more substances as precursor chemicals for fentanyl, making them subject to production, transport and export regulations. Trump has demanded that Beijing do more to stop the flow of such precursor ingredients to Mexican drug cartels, which use them to make fentanyl for sale in the U.S. He imposed 20% tariffs on Chinese imports over the fentanyl issue, the biggest part of current 30% across-the-board taxes on Chinese goods.

The agreement struck in May in Geneva called for both sides to scale back punitive tariff hikes imposed as Trump escalated his trade war and sharply raised import duties. Some higher tariffs, such as those imposed by Washington related to the trade in fentanyl and duties on aluminum and steel, remain in place.

The rapidly shifting policies are taking a toll on both of the world's two largest economies.

The U.S. economy contracted at a 0.5% annual pace from January through March, partly because imports surged as companies and households rushed to buy foreign goods before Trump could impose tariffs on them.

In China, factory profits sank more than 9% from a year earlier in May, with automakers suffering a large share of that drop. They fell more than 1% year-on-year in January-May.

Trump and other U.S. officials have indicated they expect to reach trade deals with many other countries, including India.

"We're going to have deal after deal after deal," Lutnick said.

An Israeli strike kills 18 Palestinians in central Gaza as turmoil mounts over food distribution

By WAFAA SHURAF, KAREEM CHEHAYEB and SAM METZ Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — An Israeli strike hit a street in central Gaza on Thursday where witnesses said a crowd of people was getting bags of flour from a Palestinian police unit that had confiscated the goods from gangs looting aid convoys. Hospital officials said 18 people were killed.

The strike was the latest violence surrounding the distribution of food to Gaza's population, which has been thrown into turmoil over the past month. After blocking all food for 2 1/2 months, Israel has allowed only a trickle of supplies into the territory since mid-May.

Efforts by the United Nations to distribute the food have been plagued by armed gangs looting trucks and by crowds of desperate people offloading supplies from convoys.

The strike in the central town of Deir al-Balah on Thursday appeared to target members of Sahm, a

security unit tasked with stopping looters and cracking down on merchants who sell stolen aid at high prices. The unit is part of Gaza's Hamas-led Interior Ministry, but includes members of other factions.

A horrific scene

Witnesses said the Sahn unit was distributing bags of flour and other goods confiscated from looters and corrupt merchants, drawing a crowd when the strike hit.

Video of the aftermath showed bodies, several torn, of multiple young men in the street with blood splattering on the pavement and walls of buildings. The dead included a child and at least seven Sahn members, according to the nearby Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital where casualties were taken.

There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military. Israel has accused the militant Hamas group of stealing aid and using it to prop up its rule in the enclave. Israeli forces have repeatedly struck Gaza's police, considering them a branch of Hamas.

An association of Gaza's influential clans and tribes said Wednesday they have started an independent effort to guard aid convoys to prevent looting. The National Gathering of Palestinian Clans and Tribes said it helped escort a rare shipment of flour that entered northern Gaza that evening.

It was unclear, however, if the association had coordinated with the U.N. or Israeli authorities. The World Food Program did not immediately respond to requests for comment by The Associated Press.

"We will no longer allow thieves to steal from the convoys for the merchants and force us to buy them for high prices," Abu Ahmad al-Gharbawi, a figure involved in the tribal effort, told the AP.

Accusations from Israel

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Israel Katz in a joint statement Wednesday accused Hamas of stealing aid that is entering northern Gaza, and called on the Israeli military to plan to prevent it.

The National Gathering slammed the statement, saying the accusation of theft was aimed at justifying the Israeli military's "aggressive practices." It said aid was "fully secured" by the tribes, which it said were committed to delivering the supplies to the population.

The move by tribes to protect aid convoys brings yet another player in an aid situation that has become fragmented, confused and violent, even as Gaza's more than 2 million Palestinians struggle to feed their families.

Throughout the more than 20-month-old war, the U.N. led the massive aid operation by humanitarian groups providing food, shelter, medicine and other goods to Palestinians despite the fighting. U.N. and other aid groups say that when significant amounts of supplies are allowed into Gaza, looting and theft dwindle.

Israel, however, seeks to replace the U.N.-led system, saying Hamas has been siphoning off large amounts of supplies from it, a claim the U.N. and other aid groups deny.

Israel has backed an American private contractor, the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, which has started distributing food boxes at four locations, mainly in the far south of Gaza for the past month.

Thousands of Palestinians walk for hours to reach the hubs, moving through Israeli military zones where witnesses say Israeli troops regularly open fire with heavy barrages to control the crowds.

Health officials say hundreds of people have been killed and wounded. The Israeli military says it has only fired warning shots.

A trickle of aid

Israel has continued to allow a smaller number of aid trucks into Gaza for U.N. distribution. The World Health Organization said on Thursday it had been able to deliver its first medical shipment into Gaza since March 2, with nine trucks bringing blood, plasma and other supplies to Nasser Hospital, the biggest hospital still functioning in southern Gaza.

In Gaza City, large crowds gathered Thursday at an aid distribution point to receive bags of flour from the convoy that arrived the previous evening, according to photos taken by a cameraman collaborating

with the AP.

Hiba Khalil, a mother of seven, said she can't afford looted aid that is sold in markets for astronomical prices and was relieved to get flour for the first time in months.

"We've waited for months without having flour or eating much and our children would always cry," she said.

Another woman, Umm Alaa Mekdad, said she hoped more convoys would make it through after struggling to deal with looters.

"The gangs used to take our shares and the shares of our children who slept hungry and thirsty," she said.

Separately, Israeli strikes overnight and early Thursday killed at least 28 people across the Gaza Strip, according to the territory's Health Ministry. More than 20 dead arrived at Gaza City's Shifa Hospital, while the bodies of eight others were taken to Nasser Hospital in the south.

Family sues over US detention in what may be first challenge to courthouse arrests involving kids

By HALLIE GOLDEN Associated Press

A mother and her two young kids are fighting for their release from a Texas immigration detention center in what is believed to be the first lawsuit involving children challenging the Trump administration's policy on immigrant arrests at courthouses.

The lawsuit filed Tuesday argues that the family's arrests after fleeing Honduras and entering the U.S. legally using a Biden-era appointment app violate their Fourth Amendment right to be free from unreasonable searches and seizure and their Fifth Amendment right to due process.

"The big picture is that the executive branch cannot seize people, arrest people, detain people indefinitely when they are complying with exactly what our government has required of them," said Columbia Law School professor Elora Mukherjee, one of the lawyers representing the family.

The Department of Homeland Security did not immediately respond to an email requesting comment.

Starting in May, the country has seen large-scale arrests in which asylum-seekers appearing at routine court hearings have been arrested outside courtrooms as part of the White House's mass deportation effort. In many cases, a judge will grant a government lawyer's request to dismiss deportation proceedings and then U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers will arrest the person and place them on "expedited removal," a fast track to deportation.

Mukherjee said this is the first lawsuit filed on behalf of children to challenge the ICE courthouse arrest policy. The government has until July 1 to respond.

There have been other similar lawsuits, including in New York, where a federal judge ruled earlier this month that federal immigration authorities can't make civil arrests at the state's courthouses or arrest anyone going there for a proceeding.

The Texas lawsuit was filed using initials for the children and "Ms. Z" for the mother. Their identities have not been released because of concerns for their safety.

For weeks in the Dilley Immigration Processing Center, the mother has watched her 6-year-old son's health decline, Mukherjee said. He recently underwent chemotherapy treatment for leukemia and because of his arrest missed his check-in doctor's appointment, Mukherjee said.

"He's easily bruising. He has bone pain. He looks pale," Mukherjee said, adding that he has also lost his appetite. "His mom is terrified that these are symptoms that his leukemia situation might be deteriorating."

The mother, son and 9-year-old daughter fled Honduras in October 2024 due to death threats, according to the lawsuit. They entered the U.S. using the CBP One app and were paroled into the country by the Department of Homeland Security, which determined they didn't pose a danger to the community, Mukherjee said. They were told to appear at a Los Angeles immigration court May 29.

President Donald Trump ended CBP One for new entrants on his first day in office after more than 900,000 people had been allowed in the country using the app since it was expanded to include migrants in January 2023.

During the family's hearing, the mother tried to tell the judge that they wished to continue their cases for asylum, Mukherjee said. Homeland Security moved to dismiss their cases, and the judge immediately granted that motion.

When they stepped out of the courtroom, they found men in civilian clothing believed to be ICE agents who arrested the family, Mukherjee said. They spent about 11 hours at an immigrant processing center in Los Angeles and were each only given an apple, a small packet of cookies, a juice box and water.

At one point, an officer near the boy lifted his shirt, revealing his gun. The boy urinated on himself and was left in wet clothing until the next morning, Mukherjee said.

They were later taken to the processing center, where they have been held ever since.

"The family is suffering in this immigration detention center," she said. "The kids are crying every night. They're praying to God for their release from this detention center."

Their lawyers have filed an appeal of the immigration judge's May decision, but they're at risk of being deported within days because the government says they are subjected to expedited removal, Mukherjee said.

The arrests of the family were illegal and unjustified, said Kate Gibson Kumar, an attorney for the Texas Civil Rights project who is also representing the family.

"The essential question in our case is, when you have these families who are doing everything right, especially with young children, should there be some protection there?" Gibson Kumar said. "We say 'yes.'"

Japan executes man convicted of murder for killing and dismembering 9 people in his apartment

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — A man convicted of murder for killing and dismembering nine people in his apartment near Tokyo was executed Friday, Japan's Justice Ministry said.

Takahiro Shiraishi, known as the "Twitter killer," was sentenced to death in 2020 for the killings in 2017 of the nine victims, most of whom had posted suicidal thoughts on social media. He was also convicted of sexually abusing female victims.

Police arrested him later that year after finding the bodies of eight teenage girls and women as well as one man in cold-storage cases in his apartment.

Investigators said Shiraishi approached the victims via Twitter, offering to assist them with their suicidal wishes. He killed the three teenage girls and five women after raping them. He also killed the boyfriend of one of the women to silence him.

"The case caused the extremely serious outcomes and dealt a major shockwave and unease to the society," Justice Minister Keisuke Suzuki told an emergency news conference. He said he signed the execution earlier this week, but did not witness Shiraishi's hanging.

The execution was carried out as calls grow to abolish capital punishment or increase transparency in Japan after the acquittal of the world's longest-serving death row inmate Iwao Hakamada last year.

Suzuki justified the need for the execution in Japan, noting a recent government survey shows an overwhelming majority of the public still supports capital punishment, though opposition has somewhat increased.

"I believe it is not appropriate to abolish execution," Suzuki said, adding there is growing concern about serious crime.

Shiraishi was hanged at the Tokyo Detention House in secrecy with nothing disclosed until the execution was done.

Japan now has 105 people on death row, including 49 seeking retrials, Suzuki said.

Executions are carried out in secrecy in Japan, where prisoners are not even informed of their fate until the morning of their hanging.

Since 2007, Japan has begun disclosing the names of those executed and some details of their crimes, but disclosures are still limited.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 38 of 77

Japan and the U.S. are the only two countries in the Group of Seven leading industrialized nations that retain capital punishment.

Japan's most recent execution, in July 2022, was of a man who killed seven people in a vehicle crash and stabbing rampage in a crowded Tokyo shopping district of Akihabara in 2018.

Japan's crime rate is relatively low, but it has seen some high-profile mass killings in recent years.

Ecuador reveals how notorious gang leader 'Fito' hid in his hometown for 18 months after jailbreak

By GABRIELA MOLINA Associated Press

QUITO, Ecuador (AP) — Ever since Ecuador's most notorious gang leader vanished from his prison cell in January 2024, authorities have been searching the world, offering a \$1 million reward for information leading to the capture of Adolfo Macías, alias "Fito."

It turned out the country's most wanted man was hiding out at a family member's mansion in his own hometown.

Ecuadorian security forces recaptured the kingpin Wednesday at an underground bunker beneath a marble-walled house in the port city of Manta, some 260 kilometers (161 miles) southwest of the capital of Quito.

In a remarks to reporters Thursday, authorities revealed further details about their efforts to locate Macías and the hiding place where he spent his final weeks as a fugitive.

Authorities had issued an international arrest warrant for Macías, who was serving a 34-year prison sentence for drug trafficking, organized crime and murder in a Guayaquil prison before his shock escape. Macías is also wanted by the United States on accusations of trafficking drugs and smuggling weapons.

A month ago, authorities closed in on the drug trafficker's family, arresting several of his relatives, seizing their assets and raiding their businesses. Interior Minister John Reimberg described the crackdown on Macías' family as a "psychological operation" crucial to security forces' efforts to locate the notorious leader of Ecuador's "Los Choneros" gang.

"It contributes to a person's conflict, their loss of control," he said in a press conference Thursday.

But what put Ecuadorian intelligence on his trail was the unusual behavior of a municipal transit official in Manta, who stopped showing up to work several months ago. Surveilling the official led intelligence services to Macías' inner circle, according to Víctor Ordóñez, a national police commander.

Authorities discovered that this official frequented a swanky three-story building equipped with an indoor pool, well-appointed gym and game room and outfitted with gleaming marble floors and walls.

Furniture was wrapped in plastic and flat screen TVs were still in their boxes. All over the house were statues of Saint Jude Thaddeus, the patron saint of hopeless causes venerated by Mexican drug traffickers. Los Choneros is believed to have been one of the first from Ecuador to forge ties with Mexican drug cartels.

Ordóñez also said that authorities received final confirmation that Macías would be in the house at the time of the 10-hourlong raid from his young daughter.

In the predawn darkness Wednesday, hundreds of heavily armed soldiers and security officers stormed the mansion and blocked off the surrounding streets. But Macías was nowhere to be found.

Security forces flew drones overhead and noticed that the land around the house appeared uneven, with suspiciously altered vegetation that suggested infrastructure and possible ventilation below the surface.

The fugitive was hunkered down in an air-conditioned bunker that could only be accessed through a small hatch, its entrance concealed by a cement and tile floor in the laundry room and openable only from the inside.

Police brought in heavy machinery to start excavating, and when the roof above his head began to cave in Macías recognized that capture was inevitable, Minister Reimberg said. The alternative was being crushed to death.

"When this happened, Fito panicked," he said. "He opened the hatch where military and police personnel were located and left the hole."

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 39 of 77

Within moments, Ecuador's most powerful drug lord was writhing on the ground with a gun pointed at his head, forced to repeat his full name out loud.

Shirtless and with an unkempt beard, a haggard "Fito" was shepherded outside by a squad of officers and brought to the country's highest-security prison, known as La Roca, or the Rock, in Guayaquil, Ecuador's largest city.

Ecuador's President Daniel Noboa announced after the capture that the Macías would be extradited to the U.S. to face prosecution. He was indicted in New York City in April on charges of importing and distributing thousands of pounds of cocaine in the U.S.

"We have done our part," Reimberg said. "I expect the U.S. extradition request to arrive in the next few hours or at most the next few days."

Supreme Court meets Friday to decide 6 remaining cases, including birthright citizenship

By MARK SHERMAN and LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court is meeting Friday to decide the final six cases of its term, including President Donald Trump's bid to enforce his executive order denying birthright citizenship to U.S.-born children of parents who are in the country illegally.

The justices take the bench at 10 a.m. for their last public session until the start of their new term on Oct. 6.

The birthright citizenship order has been blocked nationwide by three lower courts. The Trump administration made an emergency appeal to the Supreme Court to narrow the court orders that have prevented the citizenship changes from taking effect anywhere in the U.S.

The issue before the justices is whether to limit the authority of judges to issue nationwide injunctions, which have plagued both Republican and Democratic administrations in the past 10 years.

These nationwide court orders have emerged as an important check on Trump's efforts and a source of mounting frustration to the Republican president and his allies.

Decisions also are expected in several other important cases.

The court seemed likely during arguments in April to side with Maryland parents in a religious rights case over LGBTQ storybooks in public schools.

Parents in the Montgomery County school system, in suburban Washington, want to be able to pull their children out of lessons that use the storybooks, which the county added to the curriculum to better reflect the district's diversity.

The school system at one point allowed parents to remove their children from those lessons, but then reversed course because it found the opt-out policy to be disruptive. Sex education is the only area of instruction with an opt-out provision in the county's schools.

The justices also are weighing a three-year battle over congressional districts in Louisiana that is making its second trip to the Supreme Court.

Before the court now is a map that created a second Black majority congressional district among Louisiana's six seats in the House of Representatives. The district elected a Black Democrat in 2024.

Lower courts have struck down two Louisiana congressional maps since 2022 and the justices are considering whether to send state lawmakers back to the map-drawing board for a third time.

The case involves the interplay between race and politics in drawing political boundaries in front of a conservative-led court that has been skeptical of considerations of race in public life.

At arguments in March, several of the court's conservative justices suggested they could vote to throw out the map and make it harder, if not impossible, to bring redistricting lawsuits under the Voting Rights Act.

Free speech rights are at the center of a case over a Texas law aimed at blocking kids from seeing online pornography.

Texas is among more than a dozen states with age verification laws. The states argue the laws are

necessary as smartphones have made access to online porn, including hardcore obscene material, almost instantaneous.

The question for the court is whether the measure infringes on the constitutional rights of adults as well. The Free Speech Coalition, an adult-entertainment industry trade group, agrees that children shouldn't be seeing pornography. But it says the Texas law is written too broadly and wrongly affects adults by requiring them to submit personal identifying information online that is vulnerable to hacking or tracking.

These Canadian rocks may be the oldest on Earth

By ADITHI RAMAKRISHNAN AP Science Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Scientists have identified what could be the oldest rocks on Earth from a rock formation in Canada.

The Nuvvuagittuq Greenstone Belt has long been known for its ancient rocks — plains of streaked gray stone on the eastern shore of Hudson Bay in Quebec. But researchers disagree on exactly how old they are.

Work from two decades ago suggested the rocks could be 4.3 billion years old, placing them in the earliest period of Earth's history. But other scientists using a different dating method contested the finding, arguing that long-ago contaminants were skewing the rocks' age and that they were actually slightly younger at 3.8 billion years old.

In the new study, researchers sampled a different section of rock from the belt and estimated its age using the previous two dating techniques — measuring how one radioactive element decays into another over time. The result: The rocks were about 4.16 billion years old.

The different methods "gave exactly the same age," said study author Jonathan O'Neil with the University of Ottawa.

The new research was published Thursday in the journal *Science*.

Earth formed about 4.5 billion years ago from a collapsing cloud of dust and gas soon after the solar system existed. Primordial rocks often get melted and recycled by Earth's moving tectonic plates, making them extremely rare on the surface today. Scientists have uncovered 4 billion-year-old rocks from another formation in Canada called the Acasta Gneiss Complex, but the Nuvvuagittuq rocks could be even older.

Studying rocks from Earth's earliest history could give a glimpse into how the planet may have looked — how its roiling magma oceans gave way to tectonic plates — and even how life got started.

"To have a sample of what was going on on Earth way back then is really valuable," said Mark Reagan with the University of Iowa, who studies volcanic rocks and lava and was not involved with the new study.

The rock formation is on tribal Inukjuak lands and the local Inuit community has temporarily restricted scientists from taking samples from the site due to damage from previous visits.

After some geologists visited the site, large chunks of rock were missing and the community noticed pieces for sale online, said Tommy Palliser, who manages the land with the Pituvik Landholding Corp. The Inuit community wants to work with scientists to set up a provincial park that would protect the land while allowing researchers to study it.

"There's a lot of interest for these rocks, which we understand," said Palliser, a member of the community. "We just don't want any more damage."

Tampa Bay Rays' Wander Franco convicted of sexually abusing a child and gets a suspended sentence

By MARTÍN ADAMES Associated Press

PUERTO PLATA, Dominican Republic (AP) — Suspended Tampa Bay Rays shortstop Wander Franco was convicted of sexually abusing a child and handed a two-year suspended sentence Thursday.

Franco was arrested last year after being accused of having a four-month relationship with a girl who was 14 at the time, and of transferring thousands of dollars to her mother to consent to the illegal relationship.

Franco, now 24, was found not guilty of charges of sexual and commercial exploitation against a minor

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 41 of 77

and human trafficking.

Judge Jakayra Veras García said Franco made a bad decision as she addressed him during the ruling. "Look at us, Wander," she said. "Do not approach minors for sexual purposes. If you don't like people very close to your age, you have to wait your time."

Prosecutors had requested a five-year prison sentence against Franco and a 10-year sentence against the girl's mother, who was found guilty and will serve the full term.

"Apparently she was the one who thought she was handling the bat in the big leagues," Veras said of the mother and her request that Franco pay for her daughter's schooling and other expenses.

Franco's attorney, Irina Ventura, said she would appeal the judge's ruling: "Evidently, justice was not done."

Meanwhile, prosecutor Luis Martínez said he was pleased with the rulings but did not say whether the government would appeal.

Before the three judges issued their unanimous ruling, Veras reviewed the extensive evidence prosecutors presented during trial, including testimony from 31 witnesses.

"This is a somewhat complex process," Veras said.

More than an hour into her presentation, Veras said: "The court has understood that this minor was manipulated."

As the judge continued her review, Franco looked ahead expressionless, leaning forward at times.

Franco, who was once the team's star shortstop, had signed a \$182 million, 11-year contract through 2032 in November 2021 but saw his career abruptly halted in August 2023 after authorities in the Dominican Republic announced they were investigating him for an alleged relationship with a minor. Franco was 22 at the time.

In January 2024, authorities arrested Franco in the Dominican Republic. Six months later, Tampa Bay placed him on the restricted list, which cut off the pay he had been receiving while on administrative leave.

He was placed on that list because he has not been able to report to the team and would need a new U.S. visa to do so.

While Franco awaited trial on conditional release, he was arrested again in November last year following what Dominican authorities called an altercation over a woman's attention. He was charged with illegally carrying a semiautomatic Glock 19 that police said was registered to his uncle.

That case is still pending in court.

After the ruling, Major League Baseball issued a brief statement noting it had collectively bargained a joint domestic violence, sexual assault and child abuse policy "that reflects our commitment to these issues."

"We are aware of today's verdict in the Wander Franco trial and will conclude our investigation at the appropriate time," MLB said.

Ukraine has halted Russia's advance in the northern Sumy region, commander says

By ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukrainian forces have halted Russia's recent advance into the northern Sumy region and have stabilized the front line near the border with Russia, Ukraine's top military commander said Thursday.

Col. Gen. Oleksandr Syrskiy, commander in chief of Ukraine's armed forces, said that Ukrainian successes in Sumy have prevented Russia from deploying about 50,000 Russian troops, including elite airborne and marine brigades, to other areas of the front line.

His claim couldn't be independently verified, and Russian officials made no immediate comment.

Russian forces have been slowly grinding forward at some points on the roughly 1,000-kilometer (620-mile) front line, though their incremental gains have been costly in terms of troop casualties and damaged armor. The outnumbered Ukrainian army has relied heavily on drones to keep the Russians back.

Months of U.S.-led international efforts to stop the more than three years of war have failed. Amid the

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 42 of 77

hostilities, the two sides have continued swaps of prisoners of war agreed on during recent talks between their delegations in Istanbul.

Russia's Defense Ministry and Ukrainian authorities said another exchange took place on Thursday.

Ukraine's coordination headquarters for POWs said the swap included injured soldiers and those with health complaints. The youngest is 24 and the oldest is 62, it said, adding that more exchanges are expected soon.

Sumy, the city which is the capital of the Ukrainian region of the same name, had a prewar population of around 250,000. It lies about 20 kilometers (12 miles) from the front line. Russia's push into the region earlier this year compelled Ukraine to strengthen its defenses there.

A special defense group has been formed to improve security in Sumy and surrounding communities, Syrskiy said, with a focus on improving fortifications and accelerating construction of defensive barriers.

In March, Ukrainian forces withdrew from much of Russia's neighboring Kursk region, parts of which they had controlled after a surprise cross-border attack in August.

That retreat enabled Russia to launch a counteroffensive that advanced between 2-12 kilometers (1-7 miles) into Ukrainian territory, according to different estimates.

Ukrainian officials say fierce fighting is also taking place in the eastern Donetsk region.

The Russian Defense Ministry said Thursday that its forces have captured two villages, Novoserhiivka and Shevchenko, in Donetsk.

Capturing Shevchenko marked an important stage in Russia's ongoing offensive that is trying to break into Ukraine's Dnipropetrovsk region, which borders Donetsk and is a major industrial center, according to the ministry.

Meanwhile, the two sides continued to launch long-range strikes.

The Russian ministry said 50 Ukrainian drones were downed over nine regions overnight, including three over the Moscow region.

Ukraine's air force said that Russia deployed 41 Shahed and decoy drones across the country overnight, wounding five people. It said that 24 drones were either intercepted or jammed.

Prosecutor tells jury 'it's time' to convict Sean 'Diddy' Combs as sex trafficking trial near end

By MICHAEL R. SISAK and LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Sean "Diddy" Combs "committed crime after crime" for two decades but thought his "fame, wealth and power" put him above the law, a prosecutor told jurors Thursday as the hip-hop mogul's sex trafficking trial shifted to closing arguments.

"That stops now," Assistant U.S. Attorney Christy Slavik said. "It's time to hold him accountable. It's time for justice. It's time to find the defendant guilty."

Combs, 55, sat with his head down as Slavik highlighted testimony and evidence from the seven-week trial that she said proved sex trafficking, racketeering conspiracy and other charges. Wearing a sweater and khakis, he sometimes scribbled notes to his lawyers and shook his head as Slavik played one of his audio messages for the jury.

"Over the last several weeks, you've learned a lot about Sean Combs," Slavik said, launching into a nearly five-hour presentation. "He's the leader of a criminal enterprise. He doesn't take no for an answer. And now you know about many crimes he committed with members of his enterprise."

Among the proof, Slavik argued, was evidence that Combs kidnapped an employee, was involved in setting rapper Kid Cudi's convertible ablaze, bribed a hotel guard and carried out "brutal crimes at the heart of this case — sex trafficking."

Combs "again and again forced, threatened and manipulated" his ex-girlfriends Cassie and Jane into "having sex with escorts for his own entertainment," Slavik said, her lectern directly in front of jurors.

The prosecutor said Combs forced or coerced Cassie, whose real name is Casandra Ventura, and Jane, who testified under a pseudonym, to engage in dayslong sex marathons known as "freak-offs" or "hotel

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 43 of 77

nights" with drugs, violence, or by threatening financial harm or the release of video recordings of some of the hundreds of encounters.

"Up until today, the defendant was able to get away with these crimes," Slavik said.

Combs used silence and shame, prosecutor says

Bookending the trial's start, jurors again saw now-infamous security footage of Combs hitting, kicking and dragging Cassie at the Intercontinental Hotel in Los Angeles in 2016 after she tried to leave a freak-off with a male sex worker.

"He knew exactly what he was doing. That is sex trafficking," Slavik told the jury, adding that Combs was "knowingly using force and coercion to get Cassie back to that room where the escort was waiting."

Slavik said Combs "counted on silence and shame" to enable and prolong his abuse. He used a "small army" of employees, including personal assistants and bodyguards, to harm women and cover it up, she said.

"But over the course of this trial, his crimes have been exposed," the prosecutor added.

The theory of racketeering law is that when someone commits a crime as part of a group "they're more powerful and dangerous," Slavik said. "The defendant was a very powerful man, but he became more powerful and dangerous because of the support of his inner circle and his businesses — the enterprise."

Combs and his inner circle "committed hundreds of racketeering acts," she said.

Combs' family in court with defense's argument up next

Members of Combs' family, including several of his children, watched from wooden benches in the packed courtroom. During a break, he turned and gave them a thumbs-up.

Since his arrest at a Manhattan hotel last September, Combs and his lawyers have insisted he is innocent, though they conceded at trial that domestic violence occurred.

Combs "was abusive — physical, emotional, psychological, sexual abuse," Slavik said. "The defendant doesn't deny the abuse. They just want you to call it 'domestic violence' and to believe that it has nothing to do with the crimes charged here."

The defense will give its closing argument on Friday, followed by a prosecution rebuttal argument. Then, Judge Arun Subramanian will instruct jurors on the law before deliberations begin.

Combs' lawyers built their case for acquittal through lengthy cross-examinations of government witnesses. Some testified only in response to subpoenas and insisted they didn't want to be there.

Combs' 'foot soldiers' agreed to commit crimes, Slavik says

Combs' lawyers contend there was no racketeering conspiracy because no employees agreed to join any conspiracy.

Slavik said that's wrong, and that Combs' employees repeatedly agreed to commit crimes for him, including delivering him drugs; accompanying him to kidnap his personal assistant; and locking Cassie in a hotel room after he stomped on her face.

The charge falls under RICO — the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act — which is best known for being used in organized crime and drug cartel cases.

At one point, Slavik referred to Combs' employees as his "foot soldiers."

As Slavik returned repeatedly to the topic of Combs' sex marathons, jurors saw a slide that said "The Freak Offs" next to a photo of him laying on a bed bathed in red light.

Slavik reminded jurors of text messages and testimony that showed that the women didn't want to participate, including one in which Jane told Combs that she felt he gave her no choice.

"It's dark, sleazy and makes me feel disgusted with myself. I feel it's the only reason you have me around and why you pay for the house," Jane wrote. "I don't want to feel obligated to perform these nights with you in fear of losing the roof over my head."

Key Medicaid provision in Trump's bill is found to violate Senate rules. The GOP is scrambling

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate parliamentarian has advised that a Medicaid provider tax overhaul central to President Donald Trump's tax cut and spending bill does not adhere to the chamber's procedural rules, delivering a crucial blow as Republicans rush to finish the package this week.

Guidance from the parliamentarian is rarely ignored and Republican leaders are now forced to consider difficult options. Republicans were counting on big cuts to Medicaid and other programs to offset trillions of dollars in Trump tax breaks, their top priority. Additionally, the parliamentarian, who is the Senate's chief arbiter of its often complicated rules, advised against various GOP provisions barring certain immigrants from health care programs.

Republicans scrambled Thursday to respond, with some calling for challenging, or even firing, the non-partisan parliamentarian, who has been on the job since 2012. GOP leaders dismissed those views and instead worked to revise the various proposals.

"We have contingency plans," said Majority Leader John Thune of South Dakota.

Friday's expected votes appeared to be slipping, but Thune insisted that "we're plowing forward."

But Democrats, who are unified against the package as a tax giveaway for the wealthy at the expense of American safety net programs, said the procedural decisions would devastate the GOP package.

Sen. Ron Wyden, the top Democrat on the Senate Finance Committee, said the Republican proposals would have meant \$250 billion less for the health care program, "massive Medicaid cuts that hurt kids, seniors, Americans with disabilities and working families."

Trump wants action on the bill

The outcome is a setback as Senate Republicans race toward a weekend session to pass the bill and send it back to the House for another vote before Trump's Fourth of July deadline. Trump hosted House Speaker Mike Johnson and other GOP lawmakers in the East Room at the White House, joined by truck drivers, firefighters, tipped workers, ranchers and others that the administration says will benefit from the bill.

"We don't want to have grandstanders," Trump said of the GOP holdouts.

Trump said there are "hundreds of things" in the emerging package of tax breaks, spending cuts and bolstered money to carry out his mass deportation plans. "It's so good."

What's at stake

At its core, the big bill, which has passed the House and is now being revised in the Senate, includes \$3.8 trillion in tax breaks that had been approved during Trump's first term but will expire in December, imposing a tax hike if Congress fails to act. To help offset lost revenues, Republicans are relying on steep cuts to health care and food stamps, and imposing new fees on immigrants.

GOP leaders were already struggling to rally support for Medicaid changes that some senators said went too far and would have left millions without coverage. The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office has said more than 10.9 million more people would not have health care under the House-passed bill; Senate Republicans were proposing deeper cuts.

After the parliamentarian advised against the Medicaid provider tax change, Republicans said they would try to revise the provision to make it acceptable, perhaps by extending the start date of any changes. They are rushing to come up with similar adjustments to other proposals that have run into violations, including one to change the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or food stamps.

It's all delaying action on the bill, but Republican leaders have little choice. They are counting on the health care restrictions to save billions of dollars and offset the cost of trillions of dollars in tax cuts.

Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., the Budget Committee chairman, rejected calls to fire the parliamentarian, and said in a statement he was working with the office to "find a pathway forward."

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 45 of 77

GOP torn over Medicaid cuts

States impose the so-called provider tax on hospitals and other entities as a way to help fund Medicaid, largely by boosting the reimbursements they receive from the federal government. Critics say the system is a type of "laundering," but almost every state except Alaska uses it to help provide health care coverage.

The House-passed bill would freeze the tax, while the Senate would cut the tax that some states are allowed to impose.

Several GOP senators have opposed cutting the Medicaid provider tax, saying it would hurt rural hospitals that depend on the money. Hospital organizations have warned that it could lead to hospital closures.

Sen. Josh Hawley, R-Mo., among those fighting the change, said he had spoken to Trump late Wednesday and the president told him to revert to the earlier proposal from the House.

"I think it just confirms that we weren't ready for a vote yet," said Sen. Thom Tillis, R-N.C., who also had raised concerns about the provider tax cuts.

More than 80 million people in the United States use the Medicaid program, alongside the Obama-era Affordable Care Act. Republicans want to scale Medicaid back to what they say is its original mission, providing care mainly to women and children, rather than a much larger group of people.

To help defray lost revenues to the hospitals, one plan Republicans had been considering would have created a rural hospital fund with \$15 billion as backup. Some GOP senators said that was too much; others, including Sen. Susan Collins of Maine, wanted at least \$100 billion.

Tough choices ahead

The parliamentarian has worked around the clock to assess the legislation and ensure it complies with the so-called Byrd Rule, named for the late Sen. Robert C. Byrd of West Virginia. It essentially bars policy matters in budget reconciliation bills.

If leaders moved ahead without altering the provisions, the measures could be challenged, requiring a 60-vote threshold to overcome objections. That would be a tall order in a Senate divided 53-47 and with Democrats unified against Trump's bill.

"It's pretty frustrating," said Sen. Rick Scott, R-Fla., who wants even steeper reductions.

Overnight Wednesday the parliamentarian advised against GOP student loan repayment plans, and Thursday the parliamentarian cited those that would have blocked access to Medicaid and other health care programs from immigrants who are not citizens. Earlier, plans to gut the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau were also found to violate the rules.

But Sen. Kevin Cramer, R-N.D., said there's no desire to challenge the parliamentarian's advice. "It's the institutional integrity," he said. "Even if I'm convinced 100% she's wrong."

At the same time, Republicans lost another potential revenue source Thursday after agreeing to a request from Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent to remove the so-called revenge tax provision, section 899, that would have allowed the government to impose taxes on companies with foreign owners and investors from certain countries. Bessent said he has reached a separate agreement with such countries.

Justice Department says Kilmar Abrego Garcia will face US trial before any move to deport him again

By BEN FINLEY and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Justice Department said Thursday that it intends to try Kilmar Abrego Garcia on federal smuggling charges in Tennessee before it moves to deport him, addressing fears that he could be expelled again from the U.S. within days.

U.S. Magistrate Judge Barbara Holmes in Nashville, Tennessee, recently ruled that Abrego Garcia has a right to be released from jail while awaiting trial on the smuggling charges. But she decided Wednesday to keep him in custody for at least a few more days over concerns that U.S. immigration officials would swiftly detain him and try to deport him again.

But DOJ spokesperson Chad Gilmartin told The Associated Press that Abrego Garcia will first be tried in court on the charges.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 46 of 77

"This defendant has been charged with horrific crimes, including trafficking children, and will not walk free in our country again," Gilmartin said.

Abrego Garcia became a flashpoint over President Donald Trump's hardline immigration policies when he was mistakenly deported to El Salvador in March. Facing mounting pressure and a Supreme Court order, the Trump administration returned him this month to face the smuggling charges, which Abrego Garcia's attorneys characterized as an attempt to justify his erroneous deportation.

As Abrego Garcia's criminal case has moved forward, concerns grew that he would be swiftly deported upon his release from jail in Tennessee.

Abrego Garcia's lawyers filed an emergency request Thursday to a federal judge in Maryland to order the government to take Abrego Garcia to that state upon release, an arrangement that would prevent his deportation before trial.

"If this Court does not act swiftly, then the Government is likely to whisk Abrego Garcia away to some place far from Maryland," Abrego Garcia's attorneys wrote.

Abrego Garcia had lived and worked as a construction worker in Maryland with his American wife and children for more than a decade before his deportation in March. His wife, Jennifer Vasquez Sura, is suing the Trump administration over his deportation in the Maryland federal court where Abrego Garcia's attorneys filed their emergency request.

"We have concerns that the government may try to remove Mr. Abrego Garcia quickly over the weekend," one of his attorneys, Jonathan Cooper, told U.S. District Judge Paula Xinis in Greenbelt, Maryland, during a conference call Thursday afternoon.

Justice Department attorney Jonathan Guynn acknowledged on the call that the U.S. government plans to deport Abrego Garcia to a "third country" that isn't El Salvador. But he said there was no timeline for the deportation plans.

"We do plan to comply with the orders we've received from this court and other courts," he said. "But there's no timeline for these specific proceedings."

White House spokesperson Abigail Jackson posted on X later Thursday: "Abrego Garcia was returned to the United States to face trial for the egregious charges against him. He will face the full force of the American justice system — including serving time in American prison for the crimes he's committed."

Xinis said during the conference call that she could not move as quickly as Abrego Garcia's attorneys would like. She said she had to consider the Trump administration's pending motions to dismiss the case before she could rule on the emergency request. The judge scheduled a July 7 court hearing in Maryland to discuss the emergency request and other matters.

When the Trump administration deported Abrego Garcia, it violated a U.S. immigration judge's order in 2019 that barred his expulsion to his native country. The judge had found that Abrego Garcia faced a credible threat from gangs who had terrorized him and his family.

The Trump administration described its violation of the immigration judge's 2019 order as an administrative error. Trump and other officials doubled down on claims Abrego Garcia was in the MS-13 gang, an accusation that Abrego Garcia denies.

Abrego Garcia pleaded not guilty on June 13 to smuggling charges that his attorneys have characterized as an attempt to justify his mistaken expulsion 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 without luggage.

Holmes, the magistrate judge in Tennessee, wrote in a ruling Sunday that federal prosecutors failed to show that Abrego Garcia was a flight risk or a danger to the community.

During a court hearing Wednesday, Holmes set specific conditions for Abrego Garcia's release that included him living with his brother, a U.S. citizen, in Maryland. But she held off on releasing him over concerns that prosecutors can't prevent U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement from deporting him.

Holmes ordered Abrego Garcia's lawyers and prosecutors to file briefs on the matter Thursday and Friday respectively.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 47 of 77

Bill Moyers, the former White House press secretary turned acclaimed TV journalist, dead at 91

By FRAZIER MOORE AP Television Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Bill Moyers, the former White House press secretary who became one of television's most honored journalists, masterfully using a visual medium to illuminate a world of ideas, died Thursday at age 91.

Moyers died in a New York City hospital, according to longtime friend Tom Johnson, the former CEO of CNN and an assistant to Moyers during Lyndon B. Johnson's administration. Moyers' son William said his father died at Memorial Sloan Kettering in New York after a "long illness."

Moyers' career ranged from youthful Baptist minister to deputy director of the Peace Corps, from Johnson's press secretary to newspaper publisher, senior news analyst for "The CBS Evening News" and chief correspondent for "CBS Reports."

But it was for public television that Moyers produced some of TV's most cerebral and provocative series. In hundreds of hours of PBS programs, he proved at home with subjects ranging from government corruption to modern dance, from drug addiction to media consolidation, from religion to environmental abuse.

In 1988, Moyers produced "The Secret Government" about the Iran-Contra scandal during the Reagan administration and simultaneously published a book under the same name. Around that time, he galvanized viewers with "Joseph Campbell and the Power of Myth," a series of six one-hour interviews with the prominent religious scholar. The accompanying book became a best-seller.

His televised chats with poet Robert Bly almost single-handedly launched the 1990s Men's Movement, and his 1993 series "Healing and the Mind" had a profound impact on the medical community and on medical education.

In a medium that supposedly abhors "talking heads" — shots of subject and interviewer talking — Moyers came to specialize in just that. He once explained why: "The question is, are the talking heads thinking minds and thinking people? Are they interesting to watch? I think the most fascinating production value is the human face."

(Softly) speaking truth to power

Demonstrating what someone called "a soft, probing style" in the native Texas accent he never lost, Moyers was a humanist who investigated the world with a calm, reasoned perspective, whatever the subject.

From some quarters, he was blasted as a liberal thanks to his links with Johnson and public television, as well as his no-holds-barred approach to investigative journalism. It was a label he didn't necessarily deny.

"I'm an old-fashion liberal when it comes to being open and being interested in other people's ideas," he said during a 2004 radio interview. But Moyers preferred to term himself a "citizen journalist" operating independently, outside the establishment.

Public television (and his self-financed production company) gave him free rein to throw "the conversation of democracy open to all comers," he said in a 2007 interview with The Associated Press.

"I think my peers in commercial television are talented and devoted journalists," he said another time, "but they've chosen to work in a corporate mainstream that trims their talent to fit the corporate nature of American life. And you do not get rewarded for telling the hard truths about America in a profit-seeking environment."

Over the years, Moyers was showered with honors, including more than 30 Emmys, 11 George Foster Peabody awards, three George Polks and, twice, the Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Gold Baton Award for career excellence in broadcast journalism. In 1995, he was inducted into the Television Hall of Fame.

From sports to sports writing

Born in Hugo, Oklahoma, on June 5, 1934, Billy Don Moyers was the son of a dirt farmer-truck driver who soon moved his family to Marshall, Texas. High school led him into journalism.

"I wanted to play football, but I was too small. But I found that by writing sports in the school newspaper, the players were always waiting around at the newsstand to see what I wrote," he recalled.

He worked for the Marshall News Messenger at age 16. Deciding that Bill Moyers was a more appropriate

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 48 of 77

byline for a sportswriter, he dropped the "y" from his name.

He graduated from the University of Texas and earned a master's in divinity from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He was ordained and preached part time at two churches but later decided his call to the ministry "was a wrong number."

His relationship with Johnson began when he was in college; he wrote the then-senator offering to work in his 1954 re-election campaign. Johnson was impressed and hired him for a summer job. He was back in Johnson's employ as a personal assistant in the early 1960s and for two years, he worked at the Peace Corps, eventually becoming deputy director.

On the day John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Moyers was in Austin helping with the presidential trip. He flew back to Washington on Air Force One with newly sworn-in President Johnson, for whom he held various jobs over the ensuing years, including press secretary.

Moyers' stint as presidential press secretary was marked by efforts to mend the deteriorating relationship between Johnson and the media. But the Vietnam war took its toll and Moyers resigned in December 1966.

Of his departure from the White House, he wrote later, "We had become a war government, not a reform government, and there was no creative role left for me under those circumstances."

He conceded that he may have been "too zealous in my defense of our policies" and said he regretted criticizing journalists such as Pulitzer Prize-winner Peter Arnett, then a special correspondent with the AP, and CBS's Morley Safer for their war coverage.

A long run on television

In 1967, Moyers became publisher of Long Island-based Newsday and concentrated on adding news analyses, investigative pieces and lively features. Within three years, the suburban daily had won two Pulitzers. He left the paper in 1970 after the ownership changed. That summer, he traveled 13,000 miles around the country and wrote a best-selling account of his odyssey: "Listening to America: a Traveler Rediscovered His Country."

His next venture was in public television and he won critical acclaim for "Bill Moyers Journal," a series in which interviews ranged from Gunnar Myrdal, the Swedish economist, to poet Maya Angelou. He was chief correspondent of "CBS Reports" from 1976 to 1978, went back to PBS for three years, and then was senior news analyst for CBS from 1981 to 1986.

When CBS cut back on documentaries, he returned to PBS for much less money. "If you have a skill that you can fold with your tent and go wherever you feel you have to go, you can follow your heart's desire," he once said.

Then in 1986, he and his wife, Judith Davidson Moyers, became their own bosses by forming Public Affairs Television, an independent shop that has not only produced programs such as the 10-hour "In Search of the Constitution," but also paid for them through its own fundraising efforts.

His projects in the 21st century included "Now," a weekly PBS public affairs program; a new edition of "Bill Moyers Journal" and a podcast covering racism, voting rights and the rise of Donald Trump, among other subjects.

Moyers married Judith Davidson, a college classmate, in 1954, and they raised three children, among them the author Suzanne Moyers and author-TV producer William Cope Moyers. Judith eventually became her husband's partner, creative collaborator and president of their production company.

Kennedy's advisers back flu vaccination, but not shots with a rarely used preservative

By MIKE STOBBE and LAURAN NEERGAARD Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — The Trump administration's new vaccine advisers on Thursday endorsed this fall's flu vaccinations for just about every American — but only if they use certain shots free of an ingredient antivaccine groups have falsely tied to autism.

What is normally a routine step in preparing for the upcoming flu season drew intense scrutiny after U.S. Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. abruptly fired the influential 17-member Advisory Committee on

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 49 of 77

Immunization Practices and handpicked replacements that include several vaccine skeptics.

The seven-member panel bucked another norm Thursday as it discussed the safety of a preservative used in less than 5% of U.S. flu vaccinations: It deliberated based only on a presentation from an antivaccine group's former leader — without allowing the usual public airing of scientific data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The preservative, thimerosal, has long been used in certain vaccines that come in multi-dose vials, to prevent contamination as each dose is withdrawn. But it has been controversial because it contains a small amount of a particular form of mercury.

Study after study has found no evidence that thimerosal causes autism or other harm. Yet since 2001, all vaccines routinely used for U.S. children age 6 years or younger have come in thimerosal-free formulas — including single-dose flu shots that account for the vast majority of influenza vaccinations.

The advisory panel first voted, with one abstention, to back the usual U.S. recommendation that nearly everyone age 6 months and older get an annual flu vaccination. Then the advisers decided people should only be given thimerosal-free single-dose formulations, voting 5-1 with one abstention.

That would include single-dose shots that already are the most common type of flu vaccination, as well as the nasal spray FluMist. It would rule out the subset of flu vaccine dispensed in multi-dose vials.

"There is still no demonstrable evidence of harm," one panelist, Dr. Joseph Hibbeln, a psychiatrist formerly with the National Institutes of Health, said in acknowledging the committee wasn't following its usual practice of acting on evidence.

But he added that "whether the actual molecule is a risk or not, we have to respect the fear of mercury" that might dissuade some people from getting vaccinated.

The ACIP helps the CDC 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.

Normally the CDC's director would decide whether to accept ACIP's recommendation, but the Senate has not yet confirmed nominee Susan Monarez. Administration officials said Kennedy would make that decision.

Medical groups decried the panel's lack of transparency in blocking a CDC analysis of thimerosal that concluded there was no link between the preservative and neurodevelopmental disorders, including autism. The data had been posted on the committee's website Tuesday, but was later removed — because, according to ACIP member Dr. Robert Malone, the report hadn't been authorized by Kennedy's office. Panel members said they had read it.

While Thursday's debate involved only a small fraction of flu vaccines, some public health experts contend the discussion unnecessarily raised doubt about vaccine safety. Already, fewer than half of Americans get their yearly flu vaccinations, and mistrust in vaccines overall is growing.

"Selective use of data and omission of established science undermines public trust and fuels misinformation," said Dr. Sean O'Leary of the American Academy of Pediatrics. He said of the new panelists, "Nothing about their recent actions have been science-based or transparent."

The flu votes marked the final step of a two-day meeting that alarmed pediatricians and other doctors' groups, who pointed to new panelists' lack of expertise in how to properly track vaccine safety — and a shift in focus to some longtime messages of antivaccine groups.

"What should have been a rigorous, evidence-based discussion on the national vaccine schedule instead appeared to be a predetermined exercise orchestrated to undermine the well-established safety and efficacy of vaccines and fundamental basics of science," said Dr. Jason Goldman of the American College of Physicians.

Of special concern was the announcement by panel chairman Martin Kulldorff to reevaluate the "cumulative effect" of the children's vaccine schedule — the list of immunizations given at different times throughout childhood. That reflects the scientifically debunked notion that children today get too many vaccinations, somehow overwhelming their immune system.

Doctors say improved vaccine technology means kids today are exposed to fewer antigens — substances that the immune system reacts to — than their grandparents despite getting more doses.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 50 of 77

U.S. Rep. Kim Schrier, a pediatrician and Democrat from Washington state, told reporters Thursday that children are exposed to more antigens "in one day of day care" than in all their vaccinations.

Also at the ACIP meeting:

— The panel backed a new option to protect infants against RSV, a virus especially dangerous to babies. It voted 5-2 that a newly approved antibody shot from Merck could be used alongside two existing options.

— Kulldorff said the panel may look into whether hepatitis B vaccination of newborns is appropriate if the mother doesn't carry the liver-destroying virus. Pediatricians counter that babies can catch the virus in other ways, such as from other caregivers who don't know they're infected.

— Kennedy already sidestepped the advisory group and announced the COVID-19 vaccine will no longer be recommended for healthy children or pregnant women. But CDC scientists told the panel that vaccination is "the best protection" during pregnancy and that most children hospitalized for COVID-19 over the past year were unvaccinated. Some advisers questioned if the CDC's extensive tracking of vaccine safety is trustworthy.

US stocks rise to the brink of a record and recover nearly all their 20% springtime drop

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The U.S. stock market ran up to the edge of another record on Thursday.

The S&P 500 climbed 0.8% and is sitting just 0.05% below its all-time closing high, which was set in February. It briefly topped the mark during the afternoon in the latest milestone for the index at the heart of many 401(k) accounts, which had dropped roughly 20% below its record during the spring on worries about President Donald Trump's tariffs.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average rallied 404 points, or 0.9%, and the Nasdaq composite gained 1%.

McCormick, the seller of cooking spices, helped lead the way and jumped 5.3% after delivering a better-than-expected profit report. The company also gave a forecast for profit over its full fiscal year that topped analysts' expectations, including planned efforts to offset increased costs caused by tariffs.

Over the longer term, it's been big technology stocks that have led the market for years and since the S&P 500 hit a bottom in April.

Chip company Nvidia, which has been the poster child of the frenzy around artificial-intelligence technology, added 0.5%. It's the most valuable company in the U.S. stock market after rushing 61% higher since April 8, towering over the S&P 500's gain of 23%. Another AI darling, Super Micro Computer, rose 5.7% to bring its gain since April 8 to 55%.

Micron Technology, which sells computer memory and data storage, swung between gains and losses after reporting stronger profit and revenue for the latest quarter than analysts expected. CEO Sanjay Mehrotra said it's seeing growing AI-driven memory demand, and the company gave a forecast for profit in the current quarter that topped analysts' expectations. Its stock ended the day down 1%.

All told, the S&P 500 rose 48.86 points to 6,141.02. The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 404.41 to 43,386.84, and the Nasdaq composite gained 194.36 to 20,167.91.

Wall Street's worries about Trump's tariffs have receded since the president shocked the world in April with stiff proposed levies, but they have not disappeared. The wait is still on to see how big the tariffs will ultimately be, how much they will hurt the economy and how much they will push up inflation.

The economy so far seems to be holding up OK, though slowing, and more reports arrived on Thursday bolstering that. One said that orders for washing machines and other manufactured goods that last at least three years grew by more last month than economists expected. A second said fewer U.S. workers filed for unemployment benefits last week, a potential signal of fewer layoffs.

A third report said the U.S. economy shrank by more during the first three months of 2025 than earlier estimated. But many economists say those numbers got distorted by a surge of purchases of foreign products by U.S. companies hoping to get ahead of tariffs. They're expecting a better performance in

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 51 of 77

upcoming months.

Following the reports, Treasury yields swiveled up and down in the bond market before easing.

The yield on the 10-year Treasury fell to 4.24% from 4.29% late Wednesday. The two-year Treasury yield, which more closely tracks expectations for what the Federal Reserve will do, fell to 3.71% from 3.74% late Wednesday.

Analysts said yields may have felt pressure because of a report from The Wall Street Journal saying Trump could name his nominee to replace Fed Chair Jerome Powell unusually early, in an attempt to undermine him. That could hurt confidence among investors about the Fed's capability to make unpopular decisions when it comes to fighting inflation.

Powell has been repeating recently that the Federal Reserve is waiting to see how Trump's tariffs will affect the economy before deciding when to resume cutting interest rates. It has been on pause this year because lower rates can give inflation more fuel, along with providing the economy a boost.

Trump, though, has been adamant about wanting cuts to rates sooner and has insulted Powell repeatedly. Two of his appointees to the Fed have also said recently that they would consider cutting rates as soon as the Fed's next meeting in July.

"Yields fell, the dollar weakened, and break evens rose, all suggesting that a puppet of the White House in the seat of the Chair could be bad for inflation," said Brian Jacobsen, chief economist at Annex Wealth Management. But Jacobsen said decisions on interest rates would still rest with a committee of Fed officials, not just the chair, and other officials could possibly keep the new leader "in check if needed."

In stock markets abroad, indexes were mixed in Europe following a mixed finish in Asia.

Japan's Nikkei 225 rose 1.6%, and South Korea's Kospi fell 0.9% for two of the bigger moves.

Senators diverge sharply on damage done by Iran strikes after classified briefing

By JOEY CAPPELLETTI and MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senators emerged from a classified briefing Thursday with sharply diverging assessments of President Donald Trump's bombing of three Iranian nuclear sites, with Republicans calling the mission a clear success and Democrats expressing deep skepticism.

CIA Director John Ratcliffe, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth and Gen. Dan Caine, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, came to Capitol Hill to give the classified briefings, originally scheduled for Tuesday.

Many Republicans left satisfied, though their assessments of how much Iran's nuclear program was set back by the bombing varied. Sen. Tom Cotton said a "major blow" and "catastrophic damage" had been dealt to Iran's facilities.

"Their operational capability was obliterated. There is nobody working there tonight. It was highly effective. There's no reason to hit those sites anytime soon," said Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C.

Democrats remained doubtful and criticized Trump for not giving Congress more information. Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer of New York said the briefing "raised more questions than it answered."

Sen. Chris Murphy, D-Conn., said the strike appears to "have only set back the Iranian nuclear program by a handful of months."

"There's no doubt there was damage done to the program," said Murphy, but "allegations that we have obliterated their program just don't seem to stand up to reason."

"I just do not think the president was telling the truth when he said this program was obliterated," he added.

The session came as senators weighed their support for a resolution affirming that Trump should seek authorization from Congress before launching more military action against Iran. A vote on that resolution could come as soon as Thursday.

Democrats, and some Republicans, have said the White House overstepped its authority when it failed to seek the advice of Congress. They also want to know more about the intelligence that Trump relied on

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 52 of 77

when he authorized the attacks.

A similar briefing for House members will be held Friday.

A preliminary U.S. intelligence report found that Iran's nuclear program had been set back only a few months, contradicting statements from Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu about the status of Iran's nuclear facilities, according to two people familiar with the report. They were not authorized to discuss the matter publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

"You want to call it destroyed, you want to call it defeated, you want to call it obliterated — choose your word. This was an historically successful attack," Hegseth said at a Pentagon briefing Thursday.

On Wednesday, Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard and Ratcliffe sent out statements backing Trump's claims that the facilities were "completely and fully obliterated."

Gabbard posted on social media that "new intelligence confirms what @POTUS has stated numerous times: Iran's nuclear facilities have been destroyed." She said that if the Iranians choose to rebuild the three facilities, it would "likely take years to do."

Ratcliffe said in a statement from the CIA that Iran's nuclear program has been "severely damaged." He cited new intelligence "from a historically reliable and accurate source/method that several key Iranian nuclear facilities were destroyed and would have to be rebuilt over the course of years."

Most Republicans have defended Trump and hailed the tentative ceasefire he brokered in the Israel-Iran war. House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., went as far as to question the constitutionality of the War Powers Act, which is intended to give Congress a say in military action.

"The bottom line is the commander in chief is the president, the military reports to the president, and the person empowered to act on the nation's behalf is the president," Johnson told reporters.

But some Republicans, including some of Trump's staunchest supporters, are uncomfortable with the strikes and the potential for U.S. involvement in an extended Middle East conflict.

"I think the speaker needs to review the Constitution," said Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky. "And I think there's a lot of evidence that our Founding Fathers did not want presidents to unilaterally go to war."

Paul would not say whether he would vote for the resolution by Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Va., that would require congressional approval for specific military action in Iran. A simple majority in the Senate is needed to pass the resolution and Republicans hold a 53-47 advantage.

"I will have Republican votes, plural," Kaine said. "But whether it's two or 10, I don't know."

Kaine authored a similar resolution in 2020 aimed at limiting Trump's authority to launch military operations against Iran. At the time, eight Republicans joined Democrats in approving the resolution.

"I think I have a chance to get some votes from people who are glad that President Trump did this over the weekend, but they're saying, 'Ok, but now if we're really going to go to war, it should only have to go through the Congress,'" Kaine told The Associated Press before the briefing.

While Trump did not seek approval, he sent congressional leaders a short letter Monday serving as his official notice of the strikes, which occurred Saturday between 6:40 p.m. and 7:05 p.m. EDT, or roughly 2:10 a.m. on Sunday in Iran.

The letter said the strike was taken "to advance vital United States national interests, and in collective self-defense of our ally, Israel, by eliminating Iran's nuclear program."

Anna Wintour is seeking a new Vogue editor-in-chief but will maintain editorial control

By LEANNE ITALIE AP Lifestyles Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Anna Wintour is stepping down as Vogue editor-in-chief but will retain editorial control over the storied magazine.

The longtime Vogue powerhouse told staff Thursday she's seeking a head of editorial content to handle more of the day-to-day operations. But she's holding on to plenty of power to keep her a force at the magazine that built her reputation in fashion.

"And it goes without saying," she joked, "that I plan to remain Vogue's tennis and theater editor in

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 53 of 77

perpetuity.”

Wintour will remain chief content officer for Condé Nast and global editorial director of Vogue. The news shook the fashion world and Wintour-watchers on social media amid breathless headlines that she was “stepping down” from the magazine. The new lead will report directly to Wintour in her capacity as global editorial director, Vogue said in a statement posted to its website later Thursday.

“Anybody in a creative field knows how essential it is never to stop growing in one’s work. When I became the editor of Vogue, I was eager to prove to all who might listen that there was a new, exciting way to imagine an American fashion magazine,” Wintour told staff.

“Now, I find that my greatest pleasure is helping the next generation of impassioned editors storm the field with their own ideas, supported by a new, exciting view of what a major media company can be,” she added.

As chief content officer, Wintour will continue to oversee every Condé Nast brand globally, including Vogue, Wired, Vanity Fair, GQ, AD, Condé Nast Traveler, Glamour, Bon Appétit, Tatler, World of Interiors, Allure and more, with the exception of The New Yorker.

“In effect, the addition of a new editorial lead for Vogue US will allow Wintour greater time and flexibility to support the other global markets that Condé Nast serves,” the Vogue statement said.

Wintour also oversees the annual Met Gala, fashion’s biggest night and a major fundraiser for the fashion wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. And she’ll remain involved in Vogue World, a traveling fashion and cultural event the magazine began in 2022.

Four years ago, Condé Nast changed its editorial structure, bringing together editorial teams around the world for the first time. Every market where Condé Nast operates has a head of editorial content led by a global editorial director. The new role at American Vogue is part of that reorganization. The new structure has already been rolled out at other Vogue titles around the world.

The company will not seek an editor-in-chief to replace Wintour at American Vogue, replacing that title with the new head of editorial content.

Wintour transformed Vogue during her decades at the magazine. She was named creative director in 1983, served as editor-in-chief of British Vogue from 1985 to 1987 then rejoined the American title as editor-in-chief.

She modernized the magazine by featuring celebrities on its covers and mixing high fashion with more affordable street style. She championed emerging designers, including Marc Jacobs, Alexander McQueen and John Galliano, and broadened the brand’s reach by adding new titles around the world.

Israelis love Trump. But some are unnerved by his vow to save Netanyahu from his corruption trial

By NATALIE MELZER and IBRAHIM HAZBOUN Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — President Donald Trump’s call for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s corruption trial to be thrown out has plunged the American leader into one of Israel’s most heated debates, unnerving some in its political class just days after they unanimously praised his strikes on Iran.

Trump’s social media post condemning the trial as a “WITCH HUNT,” and his vow that the United States will be the one who “saves” Netanyahu from serious corruption charges, came just two days after he called off an Israeli bombing raid in Iran to preserve a ceasefire.

Both were dramatic interventions in the affairs of an ally that previous U.S. administrations had always insisted was a sovereign nation that made its own decisions. Now the one leader nearly all Israelis seem to support has fully embraced the one who most divides them.

“With all due respect for Trump, he is not supposed to interfere in a legal process in an independent country,” opposition leader Yair Lapid told Israeli media.

Trump says trial should be canceled

In an extended post on his Truth Social site, Trump condemned Netanyahu’s trial in the same language that both he and Netanyahu have long used to describe their legal woes. Both contend they are the victims

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 54 of 77

of witch hunts by hostile media, crooked law enforcement and political opponents.

"I was shocked to hear that the State of Israel, which has just had one of its Greatest Moments in History, and is strongly led by Bibi Netanyahu, is continuing its ridiculous Witch Hunt against their Great War Time Prime Minister!" Trump wrote, using a common nickname for Netanyahu.

"Bibi Netanyahu's trial should be CANCELLED, IMMEDIATELY, or a Pardon given to a Great Hero, who has done so much for the State. ... It was the United States of America that saved Israel, and now it is going to be the United States of America that saves Bibi Netanyahu," Trump wrote.

Netanyahu's allies took to social media Thursday to praise Trump and a spokesperson from Netanyahu's Likud party translated the post into Hebrew.

Foreign Minister Gideon Saar, a former rival who once challenged Netanyahu over the corruption charges, only to join his Cabinet last year, said the trial was harming the state: "When the president of the United States calls for an annulment of the trial or for a pardon — can anyone say that he is wrong?"

Netanyahu himself said in a post addressed to Trump that he was "deeply moved by your heartfelt support for me and your incredible support for Israel and the Jewish people."

Netanyahu is a polarizing figure in Israel

Netanyahu became the only sitting prime minister in Israeli history to be indicted when he was charged with fraud, breach of trust and accepting bribes in three separate cases after yearslong investigations accusing him of exchanging favors with wealthy political supporters.

He took the witness stand for the first time late last year and his cross-examination began earlier this month. Several hearings have been postponed as he has dealt with the wars and unrest stemming from Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack out of the Gaza Strip.

Netanyahu portrays himself as a towering statesman fighting for Israel's very survival and accuses his political opponents of trying to achieve in the courtroom what they failed to do at the ballot box during his nearly unbroken 16 years in power — the longest of any Israeli leader.

His critics accuse him of prolonging the war in Gaza and of leaving dozens of hostages languishing in Hamas captivity to cling to power and more effectively battle the allegations. Massive weekly protests against Netanyahu have been held for years.

Trump seen as Israel's greatest U.S. friend

Trump is seen by Netanyahu — and many Israelis — as the greatest friend they have ever had in the White House. He has lent unprecedented support to Israel's claims to territories seized in war, he brokered the Abraham Accords with four Arab nations in his first term and over the weekend he ordered direct strikes on Iran's nuclear program, which Israel views as an existential threat.

Still, even some staunch supporters of Netanyahu and Trump seemed a bit unnerved.

Simcha Rotman, a lawmaker from the far-right Religious Zionist party and one of the architects of Netanyahu's controversial judicial overhaul, wrote on X that Netanyahu's trial "may be an example of an accumulation of many faults" of the justice system.

"Still, it is not the place of the president of the United States to interfere in legal proceedings in Israel."

What to know about states blocking Medicaid funding for Planned Parenthood

By GEOFF MULVIHILL and LAURA UNGAR Associated Press

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled Thursday that states can bar Medicaid payments to Planned Parenthood, the nation's largest abortion provider.

The federal government and many states already block using Medicaid funds to cover abortion. But the state-federal health insurance program for lower-income people does pay for other services from Planned Parenthood, including birth control, cancer screenings and testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections.

The ruling comes at a moment when Congress is considering blocking Planned Parenthood from receiving

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 55 of 77

any federal Medicaid funding, a move that the group says would force hundreds of clinic closings — most of them in states where abortion remains legal.

Here are things to know about the situation:

Abortion opponents see it as a victory on principle

This legal dispute goes back to a 2018 executive order from South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster that barred abortion providers from receiving Medicaid money in the state, even for services unrelated to abortion.

In its 6-3 ruling, the Supreme Court overruled lower courts and said that patients don't necessarily have the right to sue for Medicaid to cover their health care from specific providers.

Abortion opponents hail it as a victory on principle.

"No one should be forced to subsidize abortion," CatholicVote President Kelsey Reinhardt said in a statement.

Abortion rights advocates say it will hurt health care access

Supporters of Planned Parenthood see the ruling as an obstacle to health care aside from abortion.

Planned Parenthood "provides services for highly disadvantaged populations and this will mean not only that many women in the state will lose their right to choose providers, but it will also mean that many women will lose services altogether," said Lawrence Gostin, who specializes in public health law at Georgetown Law.

For many people with Medicaid, Gostin said, Planned Parenthood is a trusted service provider, and it's often the closest one.

Others emphasize that the people who could be most impacted are women who already face the greatest obstacles to getting health care.

"People enrolled in Medicaid, including young people and people of color, already face too many barriers to getting health care," Kimberly Inez McGuire, the executive director of Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equality, said in a statement. "This decision makes a difficult situation worse."

The implications may be narrow in South Carolina, but broader elsewhere

Planned Parenthood has two clinics in South Carolina, one in Charleston and one in Columbia.

Combined, they've been receiving about \$90,000 a year from Medicaid out of nearly \$9 billion a year the program spends in the state.

South Carolina has banned most abortions after six weeks gestational age, before many women realize they're pregnant. It's one of four states to bar abortion at that point. Another 12 are enforcing bans at all stages of pregnancy. The bans were implemented after the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* in 2022.

The most recent high court ruling isn't a guarantee that other states will follow South Carolina's lead, but Republican attorneys general of 18 other states filed court papers supporting the state's position in the case.

"We can imagine that there's anti-abortion legislators in states who are looking to this case and may try to replicate what South Carolina has done," said Amy Friedrich-Karnik, director of federal policy at the Guttmacher Institute, a research organization that supports abortion rights.

The federal government is also targeting Planned Parenthood

The U.S. House last month passed a budget measure that would bar all federal payments for 10 years to nonprofit groups that provide abortion and received more than \$1 million in federal funding in 2024.

A Senate vote on the measure, which President Donald Trump supports, could happen in coming days.

Planned Parenthood says that if the measure becomes law, it would force its affiliates to close up to 200 of their 600 facilities across the U.S. The hardest-hit places would be the states where abortion is legal.

If the federal effort is successful, Friedrich-Karnik said states that support abortion rights could use their own tax revenue to keep clinics open.

On a call with reporters this week, SBA Pro-Life America President Marjorie Dannenfelser said it's a priority for her group to hobble Planned Parenthood.

She said starving Planned Parenthood of Medicaid reimbursements would not have a major impact on

patients, because other clinics offer similar services without providing abortion.

"Medicaid money is attached to the person, so she'll retain the same amount of money," Dannenfelser said. "She'll just take it to a different place."

Abortion funding is already battered

The 2022 Supreme Court ruling that ended the nationwide right to abortion jolted the abortion system across the U.S. and left clinics struggling.

Women in states with bans in place now use abortion pills or travel to states where it's legal.

Surveys have found that the number of monthly abortions nationally has risen since the court ruling.

But over the same time period, some clinics have closed and funds that help people obtain abortion have said it's hard to stretch their money to cover the added cost of travel.

States can block Medicaid money for health care at Planned Parenthood, the Supreme Court says

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — States can block the country's biggest abortion provider, Planned Parenthood, from receiving Medicaid money for health services such as contraception and cancer screenings, the Supreme Court ruled on Thursday.

The 6-3 opinion by Justice Neil Gorsuch and joined by the rest of the court's conservatives was not directly about abortion, but it comes as Republicans back a wider push across the country to defund the organization. It closes off Planned Parenthood's primary court path to keeping Medicaid funding in place: patient lawsuits.

The justices found that while Medicaid law allows people choose their own provider, that does not make it a right enforceable in court. The court split along ideological lines, with the three liberals dissenting in the case from South Carolina.

Public health care money generally cannot be used to pay for abortions, but Medicaid patients go to Planned Parenthood for other needs in part because it can be difficult to find a doctor who takes the publicly funded insurance, the organization has said.

South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster, a Republican, said Planned Parenthood should not get any taxpayer money. The budget bill backed by President Donald Trump in Congress would also cut Medicaid money for the group. That could force the closure of about 200 centers, most of them in states where abortion is legal, Planned Parenthood has said.

McMaster first moved to cut off the Medicaid funding in 2018, but he was blocked in court after a lawsuit from a patient, Julie Edwards, who wanted to keep going to Planned Parenthood for birth control because her diabetes makes pregnancy potentially dangerous. Edwards sued under a provision in Medicaid law that allows patients to choose their own qualified provider.

South Carolina argued that patients should not be able file such lawsuits. The state pointed to lower courts that have been swayed by similar arguments and allowed states such as Texas to act against Planned Parenthood.

The high court majority agreed.

"Deciding whether to permit private enforcement poses delicate policy questions involving competing costs and benefits — decisions for elected representatives, not judges," Gorsuch wrote. He pointed out that patients can appeal through other administrative processes if coverage is denied.

McMaster, in a statement, said his state had taken "a stand to protect the sanctity of life and defend South Carolina's authority and values — and today, we are finally victorious."

White House spokesman Harrison Fields called the opinion "a major victory for common sense" and said it underscores the Republican president's position that states should determine abortion policy.

In a dissent joined by her liberal colleagues, Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson said the ruling is "likely to result in tangible harm to real people."

"It will strip those South Carolinians — and countless other Medicaid recipients around the country — of

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 57 of 77

a deeply personal freedom: the 'ability to decide who treats us at our most vulnerable,'" she wrote.

Planned Parenthood officials said the decision will hinder access to care like preventive screenings for 1 million Medicaid recipients in South Carolina. The state didn't accuse Planned Parenthood of providing inadequate care, she said, calling the decision to cut it off a political one.

"Instead of patients now deciding where to get care, that now lies with the state," said Katherine Farris, chief medical officer of Planned Parenthood South Atlantic. "If they fall on hard financial times, as many are right now, they are fundamentally less free."

Other conservative states are expected to follow South Carolina's lead with funding cuts, potentially creating a "backdoor abortion ban," said Alexis McGill Johnson, president and CEO of Planned Parenthood Federation of America. Eighteen states weighed into the case in support of South Carolina.

Medicaid patients make up 3.5% of the organization's South Carolina patients who go for services unrelated to abortion or gender-affirming care, officials said. Because South Carolina has not expanded its Medicaid program, reimbursements do not cover its preventive care costs, spokesperson Molly Rivera said.

Planned Parenthood will continue to provide care for women who need it in South Carolina, but won't bill the government, said Vicki Ringer, a spokesperson for the South Carolina branch.

"This does not close us down despite the governor's best efforts," Ringer said.

Up to one-quarter of people in the U.S. use Medicaid, and lawsuits have been the only real way they've been able to make sure they can choose their doctor, according to court papers filed by the American Cancer Society and other public health groups. Removing the ability to sue could reduce access to health care, especially in rural areas, the advocates said.

Patient lawsuits are an important accountability tool because regulators "can't possibly monitor all federal requirements in all states at all times," said Julian Polaris, a lawyer who regularly advises state programs and health care providers. The ruling raises questions about whether patients can still sue to secure medically necessary services and eligibility determinations, he said.

In South Carolina, \$90,000 in Medicaid funding goes to Planned Parenthood every year, a tiny fraction of the state's total Medicaid spending. The state banned abortion at about six weeks' gestation after the Supreme Court overturned it as a nationwide right in 2022. The conservative Christian legal-advocacy group Alliance Defending Freedom, which represented South Carolina officials, said the ruling would allow the state to direct Medicaid dollars to "comprehensive health care" for low-income patients.

Pentagon leaders cite military tactics to show destruction from US attacks on Iran

By TARA COPP and LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Pentagon leaders laid out new details Thursday about military tactics and explosives to bolster their argument that U.S. attacks had destroyed key Iranian nuclear facilities, but little more emerged on how far back the bombing had set Tehran's atomic program.

In a rare Pentagon news briefing, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth and Gen. Dan Caine, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, worked to shift the debate from whether the nuclear targets were "obliterated," as President Donald Trump has said, to what they portrayed as the heroism of the strikes as well as the extensive research and preparation that went into carrying them out.

"You want to call it destroyed, you want to call it defeated, you want to call it obliterated — choose your word. This was an historically successful attack," Hegseth said in an often combative session with reporters.

It was the latest example of how Trump has marshaled top administration officials to defend his claims about the effectiveness of the U.S. strikes. At stake is the legacy of the Republican president's intervention in the brief war between Israel and Iran, as well as the future of American foreign policy toward Iran.

Pentagon gives little detail on status of Iran's highly enriched uranium

Hegseth appeared less confident that the strikes got all of Iran's highly enriched nuclear material.

Asked repeatedly whether any of it was moved to other locations before the U.S. attack, Hegseth ac-

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 58 of 77

knowledge that the Pentagon was "looking at all aspects of intelligence and making sure we have a sense of what was where."

He added, "I'm not aware of any intelligence that says things were not where they were supposed to be" or that they were moved.

Satellite imagery showed trucks and bulldozers at Iran's Fordo uranium enrichment site, the main target of the bombings, days before the strikes, which occurred between 6:40 p.m. and 7:05 p.m. EDT Saturday. Experts said enriched uranium stocks can be moved in small canisters and are hard to find.

"It would be extremely challenging to try and detect locations where Iran may be hiding highly enriched uranium," said Kelsey Davenport, director of nonproliferation policy at the nonpartisan Arms Control Association.

Trump expressed confidence that uranium was not pulled out before the attack.

"Nothing was taken out of facility," he said on social media. "Would take too long, too dangerous, and very heavy and hard to move!"

New details emerge on how the U.S. carried out the attacks

U.S. stealth bombers dropped 12 deep penetrator bombs, called "bunker busters," on Fordo, Caine said. Two others hit Iran's main Natanz facility.

Hegseth and Caine described 15 years of study and planning going into the bombing mission and they showed video of a test explosion of a bunker buster, designed to penetrate deep into mountains.

While Hegseth, a former Fox News anchor, spent the bulk of his time slamming the media coverage and personally insulting reporters who questioned him, Caine stuck to the military details of the bombing.

Caine said the U.S. targeted the ventilation shafts at the Fordo facility as the entry point for the bombs. In the days before the U.S. attack, the Iranians placed large concrete slabs on top of both ventilation routes from the underground facilities to try to protect them, he said.

He said six bombs were available for each of the two shafts that were hit. The first bomb was used to eliminate the concrete slab, then four more were dropped at slightly different angles to take out various parts of the underground facility.

The sixth was a failsafe in case any of the others didn't work, and it also was dropped, Caine said.

He noted it is not his job to do the assessment of the damage. Asked if he has been pressured to provide a more optimistic view of the results, Caine said no.

"I've never been pressured by the president or the secretary to do anything other than tell them exactly what I'm thinking. And that's exactly what I've done," he said.

Caine also lauded the troops who remained at Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar when the Iran launched its counterattack Monday. He said just 44 soldiers stayed to operate the two Patriot missile batteries and protect the entire air base.

"You know that you're going to have approximately two minutes, 120 seconds, to either succeed or fail," Caine said, adding, "They absolutely crushed it."

Hegseth dismisses initial assessment from the Pentagon's own intelligence agency

Hegseth repeated assertions that an early assessment from the Defense Intelligence Agency, a part of the Defense Department, was preliminary and that the report acknowledged there was low confidence and gaps in information.

Hegseth repeatedly scolded reporters for "breathlessly" focusing on that assessment and said such stories were just attempts to undermine Trump.

That report said that while the U.S. strikes on three Iranian nuclear facilities did significant damage, the sites were not totally destroyed and Tehran's program was only set back by a few months.

Hegseth and others have not disputed the contents of the DIA report but have focused on a CIA statement and other intelligence assessments, including those out of Iran and Israel, that said the strikes severely damaged the nuclear sites and rendered the enrichment facility inoperable.

The International Atomic Energy Agency is not able to assess the exact degree of damage but the centrifuges at Fordo are "no longer operational," the U.N. nuclear watchdog's chief, Rafael Grossi, told French

broadcaster RFI on Thursday. He said the power of the blasts causes vibrations that would destroy any centrifuges there.

Trump appeared buoyed by Hegseth's fierce display of loyalty and his repeated attacks on news organizations during the briefing. The president said on social media that it was "one of the greatest, most professional, and most 'confirming' News Conferences I have ever seen!"

Unemployment among young college graduates outpaces overall US joblessness rate

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — While completing a master's degree in data analysis, Palwasha Zahid moved from Dallas to a town near Silicon Valley. The location made it easy to visit the campuses of tech stalwarts such as Google, Apple, and Nvidia.

Zahid, 25, completed her studies in December, but so far she hasn't found a job in the industry that surrounds her.

"It stings a little bit," she said. "I never imagined it would be this difficult just to get a foot in the door."

Young people graduating from college this spring and summer are facing one of the toughest job markets in more than a decade. The unemployment rate for degree holders ages 22 to 27 has reached its highest level in a dozen years, excluding the coronavirus pandemic. Joblessness among that group is now higher than the overall unemployment rate, and the gap is larger than it has been in more than three decades.

The rise in unemployment has worried many economists as well as officials at the Federal Reserve because it could be an early sign of trouble for the economy. It suggests businesses are holding off on hiring new workers because of rampant uncertainty stemming from the Trump administration's tariff increases, which could slow growth.

"Young people are bearing the brunt of a lot of economic uncertainty," Brad Hersbein, senior economist at the Upjohn Institute, a labor-focused think tank, said. "The people that you often are most hesitant in hiring when economic conditions are uncertain are entry-level positions."

The growth of artificial intelligence may be playing an additional role by eating away at positions for beginners in white-collar professions such as information technology, finance, and law.

Higher unemployment for younger graduates has also renewed concerns about the value of a college degree. More workers than ever have a four-year degree, which makes it less of a distinguishing factor in job applications. Murat Tasci, an economist at JPMorgan, calculates that 45% of workers have a four-year degree, up from 26% in 1992.

While the difficulty of finding work has demoralized young people like Zahid, most economists argue that holding a college degree still offers clear lifetime benefits. Graduates earn higher pay and experience much less unemployment over their lifetimes.

The overall U.S. unemployment rate is a still-low 4.2%, and the government's monthly jobs reports show the economy is generating modest job gains. But the additional jobs are concentrated in health care, government, and restaurants and hotels. Job gains in professions with more college grads, such as information technology, legal services, and accounting have languished in the past 12 months.

The unemployment rate has stayed low mostly because layoffs are still relatively rare. The actual hiring rate — new hires as a percentage of all jobs — has fallen to 2014 levels, when the unemployment rate was much higher, at 6.2%. Economists call it a no-hire, no-fire economy.

For college graduates 22 to 27 years old, the unemployment rate was 5.8% in March — the highest, excluding the pandemic, since 2012, and far above the nationwide rate.

Lexie Lindo, 23, saw how reluctant companies were to hire while applying for more than 100 jobs last summer and fall after graduating from Clark Atlanta University with a business degree and 3.8 GPA. She had several summer internships in fields such as logistics and real estate while getting her degree, but no offer came.

"Nobody was taking interviews or responding back to any applications that I filled out," Lindo, who is

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 60 of 77

from Auburn, Georgia, said. "My resume is full, there's no gaps or anything. Every summer I'm doing something. It's just, 'OK, so what else are you looking for?'"

She has returned to Clark for a master's program in supply chain studies and has an internship this summer at a Fortune 500 company in Austin, Texas. She's hopeful it will lead to a job next year.

Artificial intelligence could be a culprit, particularly in IT. Matthew Martin, senior U.S. economist at Oxford Economics, has calculated that employment for college graduates 28 and above in computer science and mathematical occupations has increased a slight 0.8% since 2022. For those ages 22 to 27, it has fallen 8%, according to Martin.

Company announcements have further fueled concerns. Tobi Lutke, CEO of online commerce software company Shopify, said in an April memo that before requesting new hires, "teams must demonstrate why they cannot get what they want done using AI."

Last week, Amazon CEO Andy Jassy said AI would likely reduce the company's corporate workforce over the next few years.

"We will need fewer people doing some of the jobs that are being done today, and more people doing other types of jobs," Jassy said in a message to employees. "We expect that this will reduce our total corporate workforce as we get efficiency gains from using AI extensively across the company."

Zahid worries that AI is hurting her chances. She remembers seeing big billboard ads for AI at the San Francisco airport that asked, "Why hire a human when you could use AI?"

Still, many economists argue that blaming AI is premature. Most companies are in the early stages of adopting the technology.

Professional networking platform LinkedIn categorized occupations based on their exposure to AI and did not see big hiring differences between professions where AI was more prevalent and where it wasn't, said Kory Kantenga, the firm's head of economics for the Americas.

"We don't see any broad-based evidence that AI is having a disproportionate impact in the labor market or even a disproportionate impact on younger workers versus older workers," Kantenga said.

He added that the Federal Reserve's interest rate hikes have also slowed hiring in tech. Many IT firms expanded when the Fed pinned its short-term rate at nearly zero after the pandemic. In 2022, the Fed began cranking up rates to combat inflation, which made it harder to borrow and grow.

In fact, IT's hiring spree when rates were low — fueled by millions of Americans ramping up their online shopping and video conferencing — left many firms with too many workers, economists say.

Cory Stahle, an economist at the job-listings website Indeed, says postings for software development jobs, for example, have fallen 40% compared with four years ago. It's a sharp shift for students who began studying computer science when hiring was near its peak.

Zahid, who lives in Dublin, California, has experienced this whiplash firsthand. When she entered college in 2019, her father, who is a network engineer, encouraged her to study IT and said it would be easy for her to get a job in the field.

She initially studied psychology but decided she wanted something more hands-on and gravitated to data analysis. Her husband, 33, has a software development job, and friends of hers in IT received immediate job offers upon graduation a few years ago. Such rapid hiring seems to have disappeared now, she said.

She has her college diploma, but hasn't hung it up yet.

"I will put it up when I actually get a job, confirming that it was worth it all," she said.

Iran's Khamenei resurfaces to warn against future US attacks in first statement since ceasefire

By FARNOUSH AMIRI and DAVID RISING Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said Thursday that his country had delivered a "slap to America's face" by striking a U.S. air base in Qatar and warned against further attacks in his first public comments since a ceasefire agreement with Israel.

Khamenei's prerecorded speech that aired on Iranian state television, his first appearance since June 19,

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 61 of 77

was filled with warnings and threats directed toward the United States and Israel, the Islamic Republic's longtime adversaries.

The 86-year-old, a skilled orator known for his forceful addresses to the country's more than 90 million people, appeared more tired than he had just a week ago, speaking in a hoarse voice and occasionally stumbling over his words.

The supreme leader downplayed U.S. strikes on three Iranian nuclear sites Sunday using bunker-buster bombs and cruise missiles, saying that U.S. President Donald Trump — who said the attack "completely and fully obliterated" Iran's nuclear program — had exaggerated its impact.

"They could not achieve anything significant," Khamenei said. Missing from his more than 10-minute video message was any mention of Iran's nuclear program and the status of their facilities and centrifuges after extensive U.S. and Israeli strikes.

His characterization of Monday's strike on the U.S. air base in Qatar contrasted with U.S. accounts of it as a limited attack with no casualties.

The White House responded to Khamenei's video, accusing him of trying to "save face."

"Any commonsense, open-minded person knows the truth about the precision strikes on Saturday night," press secretary Karoline Leavitt told reporters Thursday. "They were wildly successful."

UN nuclear watchdog confirms damage to Iran sites

The head of the U.N. nuclear watchdog, International Atomic Energy Agency Director Rafael Grossi, reiterated Thursday that the damage done by Israeli and U.S. strikes at Iranian nuclear facilities "is very, very, very considerable" and that he can only assume the centrifuges are not operational.

"I think annihilated is too much, but it suffered enormous damage," Grossi told French broadcaster RFI. The IAEA has not been allowed to visit any of the Iranian facilities to do an independent assessment of the damage.

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Esmail Baghaei, also conceded Wednesday that "our nuclear installations have been badly damaged, that's for sure."

Khamenei has not been seen in public since taking shelter in a secret location after the outbreak of the war on June 13 when Israel attacked Iranian nuclear facilities and targeted top military commanders and scientists.

After Sunday's attack on Iran's nuclear facilities, Trump was able to help negotiate a ceasefire that came into effect Tuesday.

Iranian leader warns US against further attacks

Khamenei claimed the U.S. had only intervened in the war because "it felt that if it did not intervene, the Zionist regime would be utterly destroyed."

"It entered the war to save them, yet it gained nothing," he said.

He said his country's attack Monday on the U.S. base in Qatar was significant, since it shows Iran "has access to important U.S. centers in the region and can act against them whenever it deems necessary."

"The Islamic Republic was victorious and, in retaliation, delivered a hand slap to America's face," he said, adding, "This action can be repeated in the future."

"Should any aggression occur, the enemy will definitely pay a heavy price," he said.

Trump has dismissed the retaliatory attack as a "very weak response," saying that the U.S. had been warned by Iran in advance and emphasizing that there had been no casualties.

With the ceasefire, life slowly returns to normal in Iran

On Thursday, Iran partially reopened its airspace, which had been closed since the war began, and shops in Tehran's capital began to reopen, with traffic returning to the streets.

Majid Akhavan, spokesperson for the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development, said Iran had reopened its airspace for the eastern half of the country to domestic and international flights, including those transiting Iranian airspace.

Earlier this week, Tehran said 606 people had been killed in the conflict in Iran, with 5,332 people wounded. The Washington-based Human Rights Activists group released figures Wednesday suggesting

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 62 of 77

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 there. During the 12-day war, Iran fired more than 550 missiles at Israel with a 90% interception rate, according to new statistics released by Israeli authorities Thursday. Israel, meantime, hit more than 720 Iranian military infrastructure targets and eight nuclear-related sites, Israel said.

Trump has also asserted that American and Iranian officials will talk next week, giving rise to cautious hope for longer-term peace.

Iran has not acknowledged that any such talks would take place, though U.S. Mideast envoy Steve Witkoff 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.

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

US economy shrank 0.5% in the first quarter, worse than earlier estimates had revealed

By PAUL WISEMAN AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. economy shrank at a 0.5% annual pace from January through March as President Donald Trump's trade wars disrupted business, the Commerce Department reported Thursday in an unexpected deterioration of earlier estimates.

First-quarter growth was weighed down by a surge of imports as U.S. companies, and households, rushed to buy foreign goods before Trump could impose tariffs on them. The Commerce Department previously estimated that the economy fell 0.2% in the first quarter. Economists had forecast no change in the department's third and final estimate.

The January-March drop in gross domestic product — the nation's output of goods and services — reversed a 2.4% increase in the last three months of 2024 and marked the first time in three years that the economy contracted. Imports expanded 37.9%, fastest since 2020, and pushed GDP down by nearly 4.7 percentage points.

Consumer spending also slowed sharply, expanding just 0.5%, down from a robust 4% in the fourth-quarter of last year. It is a significant downgrade from the Commerce Department's previous estimate.

Consumers have turned jittery since Trump started plastering big taxes on imports, anticipating that the tariffs will impact their finances directly.

And the Conference Board reported this week that Americans' view of the U.S. economy worsened in June, resuming a downward slide that had dragged consumer confidence in April to its lowest level since the COVID-19 pandemic five years ago.

The Conference Board said Tuesday that its consumer confidence index slid to 93 in June, down 5.4 points from 98.4 last month. A measure of Americans' short-term expectations for their income, business conditions and the job market fell 4.6 points to 69. That's well below 80, the marker that can signal a recession ahead.

Former Federal Reserve economist Claudia Sahm said "the downward revision to consumer spending today is a potential red flag." Sahm, now chief economist at New Century Advisors, noted that Commerce downgraded spending on recreation services and foreign travel — which could have reflect "great consumer pessimism and uncertainty."

A category within the GDP data that measures the economy's underlying strength rose at a 1.9% annual rate from January through March. It's a decent number, but down from 2.9% in the fourth quarter of 2024 and from the Commerce Department's previous estimate of 2.5% January-March growth.

This category includes consumer spending and private investment but excludes volatile items like exports, inventories and government spending.

And federal government spending fell at a 4.6% annual pace, the biggest drop since 2022.

In another sign that Trump's policies are disrupting trade,

Trade deficits reduce GDP. But that's just a matter of mathematics. GDP is supposed to count only what's produced domestically, not stuff that comes in from abroad. So imports — which show up in the GDP report as consumer spending or business investment — have to be subtracted out to keep them from artificially inflating domestic production.

The first-quarter import influx likely won't be repeated in the April-June quarter and therefore shouldn't weigh on GDP. In fact, economists expect second-quarter growth to bounce back to 3% in the second quarter, according to a survey of forecasters by the data firm FactSet.

The first look at April-June GDP growth is due July 30.

International Space Station welcomes its first astronauts from India, Poland and Hungary

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — The first astronauts in more than 40 years from India, Poland and Hungary arrived at the International Space Station on Thursday, ferried there by SpaceX on a private flight.

The crew of four will spend two weeks at the orbiting lab, performing dozens of experiments. They launched Wednesday from NASA's Kennedy Space Center.

America's most experienced astronaut, Peggy Whitson, is the commander of the visiting crew. She works for Axiom Space, the Houston company that arranged the chartered flight.

Besides Whitson, the crew includes India's Shubhanshu Shukla, a pilot in the Indian Air Force; Hungary's Tibor Kapu, a mechanical engineer; and Poland's Slawosz Uznanski-Wisniewski, a radiation expert and one of the European Space Agency's project astronauts on temporary flight duty.

No one has ever visited the International Space Station from those countries before. The time anyone rocketed into orbit from those countries was in the late 1970s and 1980s, traveling with the Soviets.

Speaking in both English and their native languages, the new arrivals shared hugs and handshakes with the space station's seven full-time residents, celebrating with drink pouches sipped through straws. Six nations were represented: four from the U.S., three from Russia and one each from Japan, India, Poland and Hungary.

"We have so many countries at the same time on the space station," Kapu said, adding that seven of the 11 astronauts are first-time space fliers "which also tells me how much space is expanding."

Added Uznanski-Wisniewski: "We will all try to do the best representing our countries." Shukla rated the experience so far as "fantastic ... wonderful."

The space station's commander, Japan's Takuya Onishi, said he was happy to finally see their smiling faces after "waiting for you guys so long." Whitson also made note of the lengthy delay and preflight quarantine.

To stay healthy, the four newcomers went into quarantine on May 25, stuck in it as their launch kept getting delayed. The latest postponement was for space station leak monitoring, NASA wanted to make sure everything was safe following repairs to a longtime leak on the Russian side of the outpost.

It's the fourth Axiom-sponsored flight to the space station since 2022. The company is one of several that are developing their own space stations due to launch in the coming years. NASA plans to abandon the International Space Station in 2030 after more than three decades of operation, and is encouraging private ventures to replace it.

Zohran Mamdani's wife Rama Duwaji is an animator, illustrator and ceramicist. And they met on Hinge

By JOCELYN NOVECK AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Rama Duwaji's Election Day post on Instagram was only four words long, but said all it needed to say: "couldn't possibly be prouder."

It was accompanied by a photo-booth strip of happy poses with her husband, Zohran Mamdani, and a voting selfie that would presage a momentous night: The 33-year-old state assemblyman would stun the political world — and opponent Andrew Cuomo — with his success in the race for the Democratic nomination for New York City mayor.

While the ultimate outcome has yet to be confirmed by a ranked choice count, many across the country woke up Wednesday eager to learn more both about Mamdani, a self-described democratic socialist who's now poised to be the nominee, and also about Duwaji, an animator and illustrator. Mamdani kissed her hand during his victory speech to supporters, thanking "my incredible wife."

Duwaji was not a public presence during much of the campaign, but is active on social media through her work. In her art career, Duwaji has worked with The New Yorker, The Washington Post, the BBC, Apple, Spotify, VICE and the Tate Modern museum in London, among others, according to her website. "Using drawn portraiture and movement, Rama examines the nuances of sisterhood and communal experiences," it says.

Duwaji, 27, who is ethnically Syrian and was born in Houston, Texas, also enjoys taking a break from her tech-based art to create her own ceramics, particularly illustrated plates in blue and white.

And there's one very contemporary (and much-mentioned) fact that's emerged about the couple: They met on Hinge, the dating app. "I met my wife on Hinge so there is still hope in those dating apps," Mamdani said, laughing, on a recent episode of The Bulwark podcast.

About six weeks ago the candidate posted a romantic set of photos showing the couple on their wedding day at the city clerk's office earlier this year. The lead photo was a black-and-white shot on the New York subway, specifically at Union Square in Manhattan. The smiling couple held onto a pole, Duwaji dressed in a white dress and black boots and holding a bouquet, as other riders minded their own business.

In the accompanying text, Mamdani referred to online harassment the couple had experienced.

"If you take a look at Twitter today, or any day for that matter, you know how vicious politics can be," he wrote. "I usually brush it off, whether it's death threats or calls for me to be deported. But it's different when it's about those you love. Three months ago, I married the love of my life, Rama, at the City Clerk's office. Now, right-wing trolls are trying to make this race — which should be about you — about her."

"Rama isn't just my wife," Mamdani added. "She's an incredible artist who deserves to be known on her own terms. You can critique my views, but not my family."

Duwaji, in the comments, responded with humor: "omg she's real."

In an April interview on art and activism, Duwaji was asked if artists had a responsibility to speak out about global issues.

"I'll always quote Nina Simone: 'An artist's duty as far as I'm concerned is to reflect the times,'" she said.

"I believe everyone has a responsibility to speak out against injustice," she added, "and art has such an ability to spread it. I don't think everybody has to make political work, but art is inherently political in how it's made, funded, and shared. Even creating art as a refuge from the horrors we see is political to me. It's a reaction to the world around us."

On Election Day, Duwaji's mother-in-law, filmmaker Mira Nair, posted a message to her daughter-in-law about art and its importance.

"Darling DIL — Art will flourish in our city in the new day," Nair wrote, adding a heart emoji.

Kennedy says US is pulling funding from global vaccine group Gavi

By MARIA CHENG AP Medical Writer

LONDON (AP) — U.S. Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. says the country is pulling its support from the vaccines alliance Gavi, saying the organization has “ignored the science” and “lost the public trust.”

A video of Kennedy’s short speech was shown to a Gavi meeting in Brussels on Wednesday, where the organization that has paid for more than 1 billion children to be vaccinated through routine immunization programs was hoping to raise at least \$9 billion for the next five years.

Kennedy, a longtime vaccine skeptic, mentioned Gavi’s partnership with the World Health Organization during COVID-19, accusing them of silencing “dissenting views” and “legitimate questions” about vaccine safety. His speech also cast doubt on the diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis vaccine — which WHO and other health agencies have long deemed to be safe and effective.

Gavi said in a statement Thursday that its “utmost concern is the health and safety of children,” adding that any decision it makes on vaccines to buy is done in accordance with recommendations issued by WHO’s expert vaccine group.

Some doctors in the United States criticized the decision. Dr. Paul Offit, director of the Vaccine Center at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, said it was “incredibly dangerous” and warned that defunding immunization would put millions of children at risk.

Gavi is a public-private partnership including WHO, UNICEF, the Gates Foundation and the World Bank, and it is estimated that the vaccination programs have saved 18 million lives. The United States has long been one of its biggest supporters; before President Donald Trump’s re-election, the country had pledged \$1 billion through 2030.

In just under four minutes, Kennedy called on Gavi “to justify the \$8 billion America has provided in funding since 2001,” saying officials must “consider the best science available, even when that science contradicts established paradigms.” Kennedy said until that happens, the U.S. won’t contribute further to Gavi.

The health secretary zeroed in on the COVID-19 vaccine, which WHO, Gavi and other health authorities have recommended for pregnant women, saying they are at higher risk of severe disease. Kennedy called that a “questionable” recommendation; his U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently stopped recommending it.

He also criticized Gavi for funding of a rollout a vaccine to prevent diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis in poorer countries, saying he’d seen research that concluded that young girls who got the vaccine were more likely to die from all other causes than children who weren’t immunized.

Gavi said scientists had reviewed all available data, including any studies that raised concerns, and that the diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis vaccine has “played a key role in helping halve childhood mortality.”

Some observational studies have shown that vaccinated girls do have a higher death rate compared to unvaccinated children, but there is no evidence the deaths are caused by the vaccine. But Offit said the studies cited by Kennedy were not convincing and that research examining links between vaccinations and deaths did not prove a causal connection.

“There’s no mechanism here which makes biological sense for why the (diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis vaccine) might result in more children dying,” Offit said.

Doctors Without Borders on Thursday predicted “countless children will die from vaccine-preventable diseases” as a result of the U.S. withdrawing support for Gavi.

“To invoke misleading and inaccurate claims about vaccine safety as the pretext for cutting all global vaccine funding is cruel and reckless,” said Mihir Mankad, the charity’s global health advocacy and policy director in the U.S. “When we vaccinate in the community, parents line up for hours to give their children a chance to be protected from these deadly diseases.

“For these children, vaccination programs ... are a matter of life and death.”

Kennedy’s recorded speech to Gavi came on the same day that his reconstituted U.S. vaccine advisory panel met for the first time. He fired the previous 17-member panel this month and replaced it with a seven-member group that includes several vaccine skeptics.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 66 of 77

Music history is littered with projects planned, anticipated, even completed — and then scrapped

By DAVID BAUDER AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The idea that Bruce Springsteen wrote, recorded and ultimately shelved entire albums of music may seem odd to the casual listener. Why put yourself through all that work for nothing?

Yet “lost albums” are embedded in music industry lore. Some were literally lost. Some remained unfinished or unreleased because of tragedy, shortsighted executives or creators who were perfectionist — or had short attention spans.

Often, the music is eventually made public, like Springsteen is doing now, although out of context from the times in which it was originally made.

So in honor of Springsteen’s 83-song “Tracks II: The Lost Albums” box set being released Friday, The Associated Press has collected 10 examples of albums that were meant to be but weren’t.

“Smile,” The Beach Boys

Back in the news with the death of Brian Wilson, this album “invented the category of the lost masterpiece in popular music,” says Anthony DeCurtis, contributing editor at Rolling Stone. Some of the material that surfaced suggested Wilson, the Beach Boys’ chief writer, was well on his way: the majestic single “Good Vibrations,” the centerpiece “Heroes and Villains” and the reflective “Surf’s Up.” Wilson succumbed to internal competitive pressure worsened by mental illness and drug abuse while making it in 1966 and 1967, eventually aborting the project. He later finished it as a solo album backed by the Wondermints in 2004. The better-known songs were joined with some psychedelic-era curios that displayed Wilson’s melodic sense and matchless ability as a vocal arranger, along with lyrics that some fellow Beach Boys worried were too “out there.”

“The Black Album,” Prince

The mercurial Prince pulled back this disc, set for release in December 1987, at the last minute. Some promo copies had already slipped out, and it was so widely bootlegged that when Warner Bros. officially put it out in limited release in 1994, the company billed it as “The Legendary Black Album.” Encased in an all-black sleeve, the project was said to be Prince’s nod to Black fans who may have felt they had lost him to a pop audience. It’s almost nonstop funk, including a lascivious Cindy Crawford tribute and the workout “Superfunkycalifragisexy.” The maestro’s instincts were well-placed, though. Coming after “Sign O’ the Times” — arguably his peak — this would have felt like a minor project.

“Cigarettes and Valentines,” Green Day

Written and recorded in 2003, Green Day’s “Cigarettes and Valentines” was actually lost; someone apparently stole the master tapes. Feeling on a creative roll, the rock trio decided against recreating what they’d done and pressed on with new material. Smart move. The result was “American Idiot,” the band’s best work. Perhaps the robbery was “just a sign that we made a crappy record and we should make a better one,” songwriter Billie Joe Armstrong told MTV. The title cut later surfaced on a 2010 live album. The rest was lost to time.

“Detox,” Dr. Dre

To say anticipation was high for Dr. Dre’s third album when he started recording in 2002 puts it mildly. The theme disc about a hitman, which Dre described as a “hip-hop musical,” had an all-star squad of contributors including Eminem, 50 Cent, Mary J. Blige, Busta Rhymes and Kendrick Lamar. “I’d describe it as the most advanced rap album musically and lyrically we’ll probably ever have a chance to listen to,” co-producer Scott Storch told MTV. But we never have. When he announced a different third album in 2015, Dre explained on his radio show what happened to “Detox”: “I didn’t like it. It wasn’t good. ... I worked my ass off on it, and I don’t think I did a good enough job.”

“Black Gold,” Jimi Hendrix

A series of unfinished demos, “Black Gold” was a taste of where guitar god Jimi Hendrix might have gone creatively if he hadn’t died at 27 in 1970. He was composing a song suite about an animated Black

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 67 of 77

superhero, says Tom Maxwell, whose podcast "Shelved" unearths stories behind lost music. Hendrix sent a tape of his work to longtime drummer Mitch Mitchell for advice on fleshing it out. That music was set aside at Mitchell's home and forgotten for two decades after Hendrix died. To date, Hendrix's estate has made only one of these recordings public, a song called "Suddenly November Morning." Hendrix, after clearing his throat, slips in and out of falsetto while accompanying himself on an acoustic guitar.

"A Story," Yoko Ono

Written while Yoko Ono was separated from John Lennon during his infamous "lost weekend" in 1973-74, "A Story" had the potential of changing the musical narrative around her. It was a strong album — without the avant-garde stylings that made Ono a challenge for mainstream listeners — recorded with musicians who worked on Lennon's "Walls & Bridges." Maxwell calls it "an emancipation manifesto" that was set aside when Ono reconciled with Lennon. She's never publicly explained why, Maxwell says, although one song seems clearly about an affair she had while Lennon was away. Some of the material from "A Story" was included as part of the "Onobox" project that came out in 1992, and the album was released separately in 1997. Ono also re-recorded some of its songs in 1980, and Lennon was holding a tape of her composition "It Happened" when he was shot and killed. In it, she sings about an unspecified, seemingly traumatic event: "It happened at a time of my life when I least expected." That wasn't even the most chilling premonition. Her song "O'Oh" ended with firecrackers that sound like gunshots. It was left off the 1997 release.

"Chinese Democracy," Guns N' Roses

Guns N' Roses was at the top of the hard rock world when they began recording a new album in 1994. It didn't go well. Inconclusive sessions slogged on for years, and all but singer Axl Rose left the group. Recording costs exceeded a staggering \$13 million, by some accounts the most expensive rock album ever. One witness told The New York Times in 2005: "What Axl wanted to do was to make the best record that had ever been made. It's an impossible task. You could go on indefinitely, which is what they've done." When "Chinese Democracy" was finally released in 2008, the world yawned.

"Love Man," Marvin Gaye

Not even a decade after the triumph of "What's Going On," Marvin Gaye was floundering. His "Here, My Dear" divorce album flopped, he struggled with drugs and searched for relevance in the disco era. The single "Ego Tripping Out," meant to herald a new album, laid bare the problems: Over a melody cribbed from Donna Summer's "Hot Stuff," the famously cool "Love Man" boasted like an insecure rapper. He scrapped the album, repurposing some its material for the 1981 disc "In Our Lifetime," a process so fraught he bitterly left his longtime label Motown. Gaye went to CBS, made a huge comeback with "Sexual Healing," then was shot dead by his father in 1984.

"Homegrown," Neil Young

Neil Young rivals Prince in the volume of material left in his vault, and he's been systematically releasing much of it. The mostly acoustic "Homegrown" was recorded as 1974 bled into 1975, during Young's breakup with actor Carrie Snodgrass. Instead of releasing it in 1975, he put out another heartbreak album, the well-regarded "Tonight's the Night," about losing friends to drug abuse. When Young finally dropped "Homegrown" in 2020, he wrote in his blog, "Sometimes life hurts. This is the one that got away."

"Streets of Philadelphia Sessions," Bruce Springsteen

Of the discs included in Springsteen's "Tracks II" set, this was reportedly the closest to being released, in the spring of 1995. After the success of the Oscar-winning song "Streets of Philadelphia," Springsteen recorded an album in the same vein, with a synthesizer and West Coast rap-inspired drum loops setting the musical motif. Strikingly contemporary for its time, Springsteen ultimately felt it was too similar to previous releases dominated by dark stories about relationships. "I always put them away," he said of his lost albums. "But I don't throw them away."

Wimbledon 2025: Coco Gauff and Carlos Alcaraz give tennis two young superstars

By HOWARD FENDRICH AP Tennis Writer

LONDON (AP) — Coco Gauff and Carlos Alcaraz are helping usher in a new era for tennis.

With Wimbledon beginning Monday, the sport's most recent Grand Slam champions are Gauff, a 21-year-old American, and Alcaraz, a 22-year-old Spaniard, who are both at No. 2 in the rankings and are both coming off French Open titles secured in riveting finals against the sport's No. 1 players.

They are young, they are charismatic as can be on the court and they are media-friendly off it.

Gauff-Sabalenka, Alcaraz-Sinner give tennis rivalries as Wimbledon arrives

Along with No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka and former No. 1 Iga Swiatek in the women's game, and No. 1 Jannik Sinner in the men's, Gauff and Alcaraz offer a bright future for a sport's fanbase that in recent years saw all-time greats Serena Williams, Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal walk away and currently might be pondering how much longer Novak Djokovic will contend for the biggest prizes.

"Tennis is just in such a great, great place right now. We are so fortunate to have not only Coco, not only Carlos, but a deep bench of young stars that are just propelling the growth of our sport," U.S. Open tournament director Stacey Allaster said. "I've been around a long time, and when we have lost great, iconic champions in the past, there's generally been a little bit of a dip. We have had the exact opposite during this transition. ... I always like to say the champions of today are standing on the shoulders of the champions of the past. These champions have jumped off the shoulders of the past champions."

One key for a sport, especially an individual one, to gain attention and grow popularity is to have rivalries that demand buy-in.

Alcaraz vs. Sinner clearly provides that, much in the way that Federer vs. Nadal or Nadal vs. Djokovic did.

The Alcaraz vs. Sinner final at the French Open 'was insane'

The five-set, 5 1/2-hour men's final at Roland-Garros was as full of momentum swings, terrific tennis and athleticism as anything those greats conjured.

"The level," two-time reigning Wimbledon champion Alcaraz said, "was insane."

The way he and Sinner, 23, are currently divvying up the biggest prizes — they've split the past six major trophies and eight of the past 11 — is certainly reminiscent of the Big Three's dominance, albeit over a much smaller sample size so far.

"Having these two guys fighting for big trophies — I think we have to be very happy about it in the sport of tennis," said Juan Carlos Ferrero, Alcaraz's main coach. "For them, for sure it's something that they raise their level every time that they go on the court. They know they have to play unbelievable tennis to beat the other guy, and it's something that is going to help for sure each player to raise the level even more."

Sabalenka apologized to Gauff about post-match comments in Paris

It sure does seem as though Gauff vs. Sabalenka could provide that sort of dynamic and buzz, too.

Consider that, like Alcaraz and Sinner, they occupy the top two spots in the rankings. And consider that, like those other two, both own multiple major titles. Gauff's two Slam triumphs came via three-set victories over Sabalenka in the finals.

Plus, their latest meeting, at Roland-Garros less than a month ago, came with some added spice because of Sabalenka's post-match comments that were seen as less than fully gracious toward Gauff.

It became such a thing that Sabalenka felt the need to issue a pair of apologies — one privately via writing to Gauff, and one publicly in an interview at her next tournament.

Add that sort of off-court intrigue to the on-court interest, and if there are rematches at the All England Club a couple of weeks from now, no one who is invested in tennis will be displeased.

"There's incredible momentum and wind in our sails as we think about the sport, in total," said Lew Sherr, who is about to leave his role as the CEO of the U.S. Tennis Association. "We've had five consecutive years of participation growth ... and that certainly is being, in part, fueled by the great talent and inspiring players we have at the professional level, and also is feeding record attendance, record interest, record viewership. Those things go hand in hand. We have not missed a beat."

Trump's latest rejection of intelligence assessments reflects a long distrust of spy agencies

By DAVID KLEPPER, ERIC TUCKER and CHRIS MEGERIAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's fights with the intelligence community were a running theme of his first term as he raged against an investigation into his campaign's alleged links to Russia. Now, a sequel is playing out as Trump battles to shape the public's understanding of his foreign policy gamble in Iran.

An early U.S. intelligence assessment said Iran's nuclear program has been set back only a few months after American strikes on three sites last weekend. The Republican president has rejected the report and pronounced the program "completely and fully obliterated."

The dispute is unlikely to fade anytime soon. Top administration officials are pressing Trump's case, with Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth scolding the media at a Pentagon briefing Thursday for "breathlessly" focusing on an intelligence report he downplayed as preliminary. Briefings also are scheduled for lawmakers, though the White House plans to limit the sharing of classified information after the initial assessment leaked this week.

"Intelligence people strive to live in a world as it is, describe the world as it is, where politicians are all about describing the world as they want it to be," said Larry Pfeiffer, a 32-year intelligence veteran who held positions including CIA chief of staff and senior director of the White House Situation Room.

Though it's hardly unheard of for presidents to bristle at what they perceive as bad news from the intelligence community, it's rare for the conflict to spill into public view as it did this week.

"I don't think we've seen another president push back as strong as this guy has," Pfeiffer said.

Trump has a history of distrusting spy services

Trump's suspicion of the intelligence community, particularly when its assessments do not align with his worldview, dates back to even before his first term.

His 2016 campaign was shadowed by an investigation into whether his team had coordinated with Russia to sway the outcome of the election.

He was so infuriated by the scrutiny over a dossier of unverified and salacious claims connecting him to Russia that, one week before he was sworn in, he tweeted: "Intelligence agencies should never have allowed this fake news to 'leak' into the public. One last shot at me. Are we living in Nazi Germany?"

Trump disputed the assessment that Russia had interfered in the election on his behalf, decrying as a "hoax" and a "witch hunt" an investigation by special counsel Robert Mueller, which ultimately concluded the Trump campaign had welcomed Moscow's help but did not find sufficient evidence of a criminal conspiracy.

Trump also openly challenged the judgment of his intelligence agencies alongside Russian President Vladimir Putin at a Helsinki summit in 2018.

"I have great confidence in my intelligence people, but I will tell you that President Putin was extremely strong and powerful in his denial today," Trump said. "He just said it's not Russia. I will say this: I don't see any reason why it would be."

Such public protestation takes its toll on an intelligence community that historically has endeavored to produce data-driven and apolitical judgments, said Frank Montoya Jr., a former FBI supervisor who served as director of the National Counterintelligence and Security Center.

"When you get this kind of unfounded criticism, especially from the policymaker in chief, it just destroys morale," he said.

Tensions with the intelligence community persist

Trump tapped loyalists to lead America's intelligence services in his second term — Tulsi Gabbard as director of national intelligence and John Ratcliffe as CIA director. They promised to end what they said was the weaponization of intelligence and root out disloyal officers.

But there have already been conflicts.

Last month, the National Intelligence Council declassified a memo in response to an open records request that said American spy agencies found no coordination between the Venezuelan government and

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 70 of 77

the Tren de Aragua gang, contradicting statements the Trump administration used to justify invoking the Alien Enemies Act and deporting Venezuelan immigrants.

Gabbard later fired the two veteran intelligence officers who led the council because of their perceived opposition to Trump.

More trouble came after the war between Israel and Iran began nearly two weeks ago.

Trump dismissed Gabbard's testimony to Congress in March that U.S. spy agencies did not believe Iran was actively pursuing a nuclear weapon. Trump insisted Iran was very close.

"I don't care what she said," he told reporters last week.

Gabbard later accused the news media of mischaracterizing her testimony, noting that she had mentioned Iran's large stockpile of enriched uranium that goes beyond levels needed for civilian uses.

Iran maintains that its nuclear program was peaceful, though the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency has repeatedly warned that Tehran has enough highly enriched uranium to make several nuclear bombs if it chooses.

A preliminary report from the Defense Intelligence Agency that emerged this week said that while the U.S. strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities did significant damage, the facilities were not totally destroyed and the program was only set back by a few months.

The White House called the assessment "flat-out wrong." The DIA said the initial findings will be refined as new information becomes available.

Given Trump's skeptical view of intelligence officials, Pfeiffer said, "his initial instinct is to assume that if the intelligence community is telling him something different than he would like it to be, that it's because they're trying to undermine him."

Trump team says there's no conflict

Gabbard and Ratcliffe have sought to brush off any perceived conflict between their agencies and Trump. Ratcliffe said Wednesday that new intelligence from a "historically reliable and accurate" source reveals that U.S. strikes "destroyed" several of Iran's nuclear facilities that would require years to be rebuilt.

"CIA continues to collect additional reliably sourced information to keep appropriate decision-makers and oversight bodies fully informed," Ratcliffe said in a statement. "When possible, we will also provide updates and information to the American public, given the national importance of this matter and in every attempt to provide transparency."

Gabbard noted the DIA assessment was of "low confidence," an acknowledgment by its authors that their conclusions could be mistaken.

Trump narrated his own intelligence assessment while attending the NATO summit in the Netherlands. He mentioned satellite images showing the area around nuclear facilities "burned black" and said the underground tunnels had "collapsed." He also suggested Israel had sources on the ground in Iran to evaluate the damage.

The White House pointed to an Israel Atomic Energy Commission assessment that the U.S. and Israeli strikes have "set back Iran's ability to develop nuclear weapons by many years."

Assessing the US strike will take time

Intelligence officers routinely craft assessments about global threats and specific incidents — information vital to the decision-making of national security officials and lawmakers. Assessments are regularly updated as new intelligence is produced from sources including field agents, informants, open source material and secret surveillance.

The work is secretive to protect the methods and sources of intelligence agencies and to avoid becoming a political football.

Former intelligence officials said it's likely to take days, weeks, or even months to form a full picture of the impact of the U.S. strikes on Iran's nuclear capabilities.

"I would call for patience," said John Negroponte, a former ambassador who served as the first director of national intelligence under President George W. Bush. "Avoid the temptation to rush to judgment."

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 71 of 77

Cooper Flagg is 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 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

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 72 of 77

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.

North Korea will open its biggest tour site next week, though it still largely blocks 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 North Korea will begin service for domestic tourists next Tuesday. It didn't say when North Korea will start receiving foreign tourists, but Russian officials said later Thursday that the first Russian tour to the site will happen in July.

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 too 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.

Russian tourists expected soon

Russia's Primorsky region, which borders North Korea, said that the first group of Russian tourists to the resort will depart on July 7. The region's press service said that during their eight-day trip, Russian tourists will also have an opportunity to visit major attractions in Pyongyang, the North Korean capital, according to Russian state news agency Tass.

Starting from February 2024, North Korea has already been accepting Russian tourists to other areas 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.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 73 of 77

In February this year, a small group of international tourists visited North Korea 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.

"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 Sangkeun, an expert at the Institute for National Security Strategy, a think tank run by South Korea's intelligence agency.

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.

Majority of US adults support religious chaplains in public schools, a new AP-NORC poll shows

By HOLLY MEYER and AMELIA THOMSON-DEVEAUX Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Few U.S. adults support allowing religious schools to become tax-funded public charter schools, but a majority favors allowing religious chaplains to provide support services for public school students, a new poll finds.

The survey from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research shows the complexity of Americans' attitudes toward religious expression in schools, which varies depending on the kind of expression and sometimes crosses partisan lines.

The findings also highlight tension points in the country's long-standing debate over the role of religion in public schools, which continues to drive legislation and legal action. Recent examples include a lawsuit against a new Arkansas measure that requires the display of the Ten Commandments in classrooms, a push by lawmakers in multiple states to allow religious chaplains to serve in student support roles in public schools, and the U.S. Supreme Court's 4-4 decision that blocked plans for a publicly funded Catholic charter school in Oklahoma.

On some issues like teacher-led prayer, white evangelical Protestants and Black Protestants — who traditionally find themselves on opposite sides of the political aisle — are both largely supportive, dividing them from other religious groups. White evangelical Protestants are more likely than many other religious groups to say religion has "too little" influence on what children are taught in public schools.

Chaplains in schools are popular, but not teacher prayer

About 6 in 10 U.S. adults say that religious chaplains should be allowed to provide support services for students in public schools, but most do not think teacher-led prayer or a mandatory period during school

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 74 of 77

hours for private prayer should be allowed in public schools.

Texas became the first state to allow chaplains, in 2023. After that, lawmakers in several states considered similar bills. It's illustrative of an ongoing conservative push to bring more religion into the classroom, which advocates of church-state separation are countering.

Sally Hacker, 61, a Republican and nondenominational Christian from Michigan, supports having chaplains in schools. They could help students use the Bible as a moral guide, she said.

"If they have problems, these students could go and talk to these preachers and these chaplains, and maybe they could help them figure out a way to get out of those problems," Hacker said.

School chaplains are only somewhat divisive among religious Americans, although they're still opposed by a majority of nones, the term for atheists, agnostics and those with no religion in particular. But white evangelical Protestants and Black Protestants stand apart from Catholics, white mainline Protestants and nones in their support for teacher prayer and mandatory prayer periods in public schools.

For public schoolteacher Cameron Thompson, 47, of Ohio, teacher-led prayer is not OK if it's part of classroom instruction, but he doesn't see an issue if teachers choose to lead students in prayer as part of an extracurricular activity, like a Fellowship of Christian Athletes event.

"As an optional activity, I feel like it is something that, yeah, it should be allowed for sure," said Thompson, a Republican and a Lutheran.

The questions exposed fault lines among partisans on both sides of the political spectrum. Democrats are firmly opposed to teacher-led prayer and mandatory school prayer periods but divided on chaplain support services in public schools, while Republicans are firmly in favor of chaplain support services and teacher-led prayer but divided on a mandatory school prayer period.

Public school psychologist Gary Leu, 64, of Utah, believes adding chaplains is misguided.

Leu, a Democrat, questions the motives behind it, wondering if chaplain programs are more about giving religious watchdogs access to schools or have some other agenda. He also is concerned about what, if any, professional standards and ethics the chaplains would be held to.

"I don't know what you're trying to accomplish that isn't already being accomplished," said Leu, who is not affiliated with a particular religion but has a background in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Opposition to tax-funded religious charter schools, but more openness to vouchers

Americans are more likely to oppose allowing religious schools to become tax-funded public charter schools than to favor this. About 4 in 10 are opposed, while roughly one-quarter are in favor and about one-third are neither in favor nor opposed.

In general, U.S. adults are more divided on tax-funded vouchers that help parents pay for tuition for their children to attend private or religious schools of their choice instead of public schools. Similar shares oppose and favor this; about one-quarter are neutral.

In May, the Supreme Court's tie decision effectively ended what would have been the nation's first religious charter school, but it left the issue unresolved nationally.

There isn't majority support for allowing religious schools to become tax-funded public charter schools among any of the major religious groups analyzed, although about 4 in 10 white evangelical Protestants are in favor, compared with about 3 in 10 Catholics and Black Protestants and about 2 in 10 white mainline Protestants. Substantial shares of all of these groups neither favor nor oppose this idea. Most nones oppose allowing religious schools to become tax-funded public charter schools.

Jess Tichenor, 39, of Oregon, is among the nones who strongly oppose tax-funded religious charter schools as she is wary of favoritism for Christianity.

"In an ideal situation, the publicly funded schools would be a safe place for any religion to be recognized or even practiced," said Tichenor, who practices Buddhism. She feels similarly about school vouchers.

Against the backdrop of favorable decisions by the conservative-majority Supreme Court, several states have expanded school voucher programs in recent years.

Supporters say these programs help families make the best choice for their children's education. At the Republican National Convention, Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee called it the "civil rights issue of our time." Ten-

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 75 of 77

nessee expanded its school voucher program in February.

Besides discrimination concerns and church-state issues, opponents worry that school vouchers take money from public schools, which serve most U.S. students, and benefit higher-income families that already use private schools.

"If they're going to end up sending their kids to a special private school, they need to fund that out of their own pocket," said Hacker, the nondenominational Christian from Michigan.

Other views on religion and public schools

___ About 3 in 10 U.S. adults say religion has "too much" influence on what children are taught in public school. About two-thirds of white evangelical Protestants say religion has "too little" influence.

___ About half of Americans favor requiring public schools to provide parents with lists of books that are available to students, while about one-third neither favor nor oppose this and 14% are opposed.

___ Nearly half, 45%, of U.S. adults oppose religious exemptions for childhood vaccines that are required for students attending public schools, while roughly one-quarter are in favor and about 3 in 10 are neutral.

___ Most adults say freedom of religion and church-state separation are "extremely" or "very" important to the United States' identity as a nation, but 81% say religious freedom is important, compared with 64% who say this about separation of church and state.

The fighting has stopped between Israel and Iran.

Families of hostages now hope for a deal in Gaza

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

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 76 of 77

hostages would be a grave failure.”

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.”

Today in History: June 27

Hurricane Audrey makes Gulf Coast landfall

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Friday, June 27, the 178th day of 2025. There are 187 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On June 27, 1957, Hurricane Audrey slammed into coastal Louisiana and Texas as a Category 4 storm, causing as many as 600 deaths.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 27, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 367 ~ 77 of 77

Also on this date:

In 1844, Mormon leader Joseph Smith and his brother, Hyrum, were killed by a mob in Carthage, Illinois.

In 1950, the U.N. Security Council passed a resolution calling on member nations to help South Korea repel an invasion from the North.

In 1991, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, the first Black jurist to sit on the nation's highest court, announced his retirement.

In 2005, BTK serial killer Dennis Rader pleaded guilty to 10 murders that had spread fear across Wichita, Kansas, beginning in the 1970s.

In 2006, a constitutional amendment to ban desecration of the American flag died in a U.S. Senate cliffhanger, falling one vote short of the 67 needed to send it to states for ratification.

In 2011, former Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich was convicted by a federal jury in Chicago on a wide range of corruption charges, including the allegation that he'd tried to sell or trade President Barack Obama's U.S. Senate seat. (Blagojevich was later sentenced to 14 years in prison; his sentence was commuted by President Donald Trump in February 2020, and he received a full and unconditional pardon from Trump in February 2025.)

In 2018, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy, whose vote often decided cases on abortion, gay rights and other contentious issues, announced his retirement.

In 2022, in *Kennedy v. Bremerton School District*, the Supreme Court ruled that a high school football coach who sought to kneel and pray on the field after games was protected by the First Amendment.

Today's Birthdays: Musician Bruce Johnston (The Beach Boys) is 83. Fashion designer Norma Kamali is 80. Fashion designer Vera Wang is 76. Actor Julia Duffy is 74. Actor Isabelle Adjani is 70. Cinematographer Janusz Kamiński is 66. Country singer Lorrie Morgan is 66. Actor Tony Leung Chiu-wai is 63. Writer-producer-director J.J. Abrams is 59. Actor Tobey Maguire is 50. Reality TV star Khloé Kardashian is 41. Actor Sam Claflin is 39. Actor Ed Westwick is 38. NFL linebacker Bobby Wagner is 35. Actor Madylin Sweeten ("Everybody Loves Raymond") is 34. Singer-songwriter H.E.R. is 28. Actor Chandler Riggs ("The Walking Dead") is 26.