

Groton Daily Independent

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Wednesday, July 23

Senior Menu: Roast beef, mashed potatoes with gravy, carrots, fruit, whole wheat bread.

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

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

Emmanuel Lutheran: WELCA Guest Day, 6 p.m.
Region 6B Legion Tourney in Sisseton

Thursday, July 24

Senior Menu: Beef and broccoli stir fry, wild rice, green beans, peaches, whole wheat bread.

Region 6B Legion Tourney in Sisseton



Friday, July 25

Senior Menu: Ranch chicken breast, baked potato, California blend, strawberry ambrosia, whole wheat bread.

Ferney Open Golf Tourney at Olive Grove
Region 6B Legion Tourney in Sisseton

Sunday, July 27

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

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

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.

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

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

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

Groton Daily Independent
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1440

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

Epstein Files Interrupted

House Speaker Mike Johnson (R, LA-4) is beginning the August recess a day early, with the last votes wrapping up today. The decision prevents a vote forcing the Justice Department to release files on late sex offender and financier Jeffrey Epstein.

The decision comes after a bipartisan effort sought to call a vote on the issue through the House Rules Committee. At least 10 Republicans supported the measure. By recessing the committee, no votes requiring a simple majority could be added to the docket. Lawmakers pursuing more information on Epstein and his underage sex trafficking ring plan to resume the effort in September. The DOJ this month said it would not release most evidence on the case, a decision President Donald Trump has backed.

Separately, the House Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee voted yesterday to subpoena Ghislaine Maxwell, an Epstein associate serving a 20-year sentence in Florida for her role in the trafficking ring. The Justice Department said it will meet with Maxwell in the coming days.

Rethinking Spider Evolution

A study published yesterday suggests spiders and their close terrestrial relatives originated from an ocean critter, challenging the assumption that their common ancestor was landbound.

Researchers used advanced imaging techniques to look inside a half-billion-year-old fossil of *Mollisonia symmetrica*, an extinct aquatic creature long believed to be the ancestor of horseshoe crabs. The fossilized brain and central nervous system patterns they saw more closely resembled those of modern spiders, scorpions, ticks, and other arachnids than today's horseshoe crabs.

Arachnid and *Mollisonia* brains are backward compared to other invertebrates, like insects and crustaceans. The regions responsible for dexterous actions are in the back, closer to the neurons that drive leg movements. This formation fosters neural shortcuts that enable swift speed vital to spinning webs and hunting prey.

According to the study's lead author, insects may have developed wings to evade nimble and hungry *Mollisonia*-like arachnids migrating onto land. In their own evolutionary response, spiders began creating sticky webs.

Cane Sugar Coca-Cola

Coca-Cola said it will launch a version of its flagship soda sweetened with cane sugar instead of high-fructose corn syrup this fall, following public statements by President Donald Trump about the change. The company said the new edition—already sold in Mexico and parts of Europe—will not replace the existing version.

The move follows a push from Trump and Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. to reduce artificial ingredients and dyes. Both sweeteners contain fructose and glucose, but HFCS typically has slightly more fructose. Because fructose is metabolized in the liver, some research suggests excessive intake may contribute to fat buildup and insulin resistance. Experts maintain HFCS is safe and nutritionally similar in calories to cane sugar.

Critics warn eliminating HFCS could cost thousands of jobs and \$5.1B in farm revenue. Coca-Cola originally switched from cane sugar to HFCS in the early 1980s due to rising sugar prices and subsidized corn.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Ozzy Osbourne, legendary rock star and Black Sabbath frontman, dies at age 76 just over two weeks after performing in his final concert, which raised \$190M for charity.

US Olympic and Paralympic Committee bans transgender women from competing in women's sports, complying with recent President Donald Trump executive order.

"South Park" creators Trey Parker and Matt Stone sign five-year, \$1.5B deal with Paramount for global streaming rights to the animated series.

Science & Technology

Japan proposes first new nuclear power plant since the deadly 2011 Fukushima disaster; meltdown followed a tsunami that left more than 2,300 people dead post-evacuations.

Brain scan study suggests the COVID-19 pandemic caused brains to age roughly five and a half months faster than prepandemic era; effect was seen regardless of infection status, more pronounced in older subjects.

Octopuses can be tricked into thinking rubber tentacles are part of their body; findings suggest the creatures have a sense of "body ownership," similar to humans.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close mixed (S&P 500 +0.1%, Dow +0.4%, Nasdaq -0.4%).

Kohl's shares close up 38% in apparent meme stock rally; trading halts briefly due to volatility.

Universal Music Group—owner of record labels behind Taylor Swift, Drake, and Lady Gaga—confidentially files for US initial public offering.

UK court rules estate of Mike Lynch, who died last year when his superyacht sank off Italy's coast, and his former business partner owe HP Enterprise roughly \$945M following an ill-fated deal with their software company, Autonomy.

General Motors says Q2 earnings took a \$1.1B hit from new tariffs on imported cars and auto parts, shrinking net income by 35% year over year; America's largest automaker still beat Wall Street estimates on Q2 earnings and revenue.

Politics & World Affairs

President Donald Trump announces trade deal with the Philippines, landing on 19% tariffs; says US goods will not face tariffs in the Philippines in exchange for US military cooperation.

... also announces trade deal with Japan, including 15% levy on imported goods; Japan to invest \$550B in the US.

Columbia University penalizes over 70 students for their participation in Israel-Gaza protests amid negotiations to restore \$400M in federal funding; disciplinary action includes two-year suspensions, expulsions.

Bryan Kohberger due to be sentenced today over fatal stabbing of four University of Idaho students in 2022 after pleading guilty to first-degree murder, burglary charges earlier this month.

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Groton Summer Fest



Summer Fest was held July 13th in the Groton City Park, drawing a great crowd for a day of fun, food, and community. Nearly 100 cars were registered, adding excitement to an already lively event.

Groton Lions Club treasurer Topper Tastad was the coordinator for the event along with Groton Chamber secretary April Abeln. Also pictured is spectator Heather Nelson.



Terry Haaland, first place Ford, 1955 Ford Fairlane.



Dawson VanderVorst, first place Youth, 1984 Mazda RX7.

Summer Fest Photos Courtesy April Abeln.

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Scott and Laurie Kneeland first place Mopar, 1968 Dodge SuperBee.



Mike Lynn, second place Chevy, 1970 Chevy Chevelle.



Cole Bisbee, second place youth, 1974 F-100.



Dale and Lisa Lewis, first place Olds/Buick/ Pontiac, 1969 Pontiac GTO.



Brian and Pam Hull, second place truck, 1979 Dodge Lil Red Express.

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Mason Jurgens, first place truck, 1968 Chevy C10 pickup.



Ken Howard, People's Choice, 1966 Caprice.



Grant Wilson, first place Chevy, 1955 Chevy Handyman Wagon.



Clark Davis, second place open, 1957 Ford Thunderbird.



Kent and Cindy Reinbold, second place Olds/Buick/Pontiac, 1964 Buick Riviera.

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Bob and Tammy Schweigert, first place open, 1951 Henry J.



Wade and Janeen Kouf, first place street rod, 1930 Dodge Business Coupe.



Taylor Adam, second place Mopar, 1967 Plymouth GTX.

Other Winners:
Kevin and Barb Gribble, second place street rod, 1934 Ford Roadster.
Mike Mattern, second place Ford, 1969 Ford Mustang.

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Groton Legion Post #39 Bruce Babcock and Les Hinds led the Presentation of the Colors. Brian Hull, Mayor of Tulare and attendee at the event, sang the National Anthem.



Mike Stikelstad, owner of Incredible Edibles, was one of the returning food vendors at Summer Fest 2025. He was joined by his wife, Kristi and other family members. Other food vendors included Scotty D's BBQ, Garry's Kettle Corn, and Lemon+Aid & Cotton Candy.



Nearly 100 cars were registered for this year's Groton Summer Fest.

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Members of the Groton Lions Club Brenda McCarthy, Kathryne Rehfuss, Karyn Babcock and volunteer Nikki Barton worked the registration table during the event along with Suzie Easthouse.



Adam St. Paul of Dakota Broadcasting was on site doing a live broadcast from 1-3pm at Summer Fest. Adam interviewed several including Mayor Scott. Scott is a member of the Groton Lions Club and volunteered the day of the event along with his girlfriend, Ida Lewison.



Groton Lions Club members Ron Rehfuss & Suzie Easthouse are pictured here with volunteer April Abeln. Ron helped count ballots the day of the event amongst other tasks and took pictures for the paper and Facebook. Other photographers were April Abeln and Quinton Flores. Lions Club member and President David Pigors also assisted with setup and the event by parking cars and counting ballots. Travis McGannon, new Lions member, assisted as well.

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Pastor Josh Jetto and members of the Christian Missionary & Alliance church led the worship service the morning of Summer Fest in the City Park.



Groton Lions Club members Suzie Easthouse and Topper Tastad handed out 18 awards to car show winners at Summer Fest 2025. Groton SD Community events take a lot of time and effort, and we're grateful to everyone who helped make them possible. While many have been recognized here, we know some may have been missed—but every contribution is truly appreciated. If you're interested in getting involved, the club is always welcoming new members.



Julie & Greg Milbrandt had their Plexus booth set up in the City Park for Summer Fest 2025. More than 12 vendors were set up on the south end of the park that day.

Nick Morris Throws Shutout As Groton Legion Post 39 Defeat Sisseton Post 50 18U

By GameChanger Media

Nick Morris shut down Sisseton Post 50 18U, throwing a complete game shutout and leading Groton Legion Post 39 to an 8-0 victory on Tuesday. This was first game of the region tournament being played in Sisseton.

Groton Legion Post 39 opened the scoring in the third after Korbin Kucker singled, scoring one run.

LJ Crooks started on the mound for Sisseton Post 50 18U. The righty gave up six hits and four runs (three earned) over five innings, striking out two and walking three.

Groton Legion Post 39 amassed 10 hits in the game. Alex Abeln led Groton Legion Post 39 with two runs batted in from the number seven spot in the lineup. The right-handed hitter went 2-for-3 on the day. Brevin Fliehs, Abeln, and Kucker each collected two hits for Groton Legion Post 39. Teylor Diegel paced Groton Legion Post 39 with two walks. Overall, the team had patience at the plate, piling up six walks for the game. Diegel and Fliehs each stole multiple bases for Groton Legion Post 39. Groton Legion Post 39 stole six bases in the game.

Carter Stickland went 2-for-3 at the plate to lead Sisseton Post 50 18U in hits.

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A strong straight wind took down the fence at Dollar General early Tuesday morning. About a block to the west a branch on a tree also came down.



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Fiscal responsibility or neglect of state priorities: Surplus sparks debate about budget cuts

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - JULY 22, 2025 5:34 PM

Now that South Dakota has finished its fiscal year with a \$63 million surplus, some Democrats and people affected by budget cuts are criticizing the state's Republican administration and legislative majority for slashing spending too aggressively.

Falling sales tax revenues and rising Medicaid obligations drove lawmakers to enact targeted spending reductions in the fiscal year 2026 budget they adopted during the legislative session that ended in March. Among the notable cuts were those affecting Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, the State Library, tobacco-use prevention efforts, and subsidies for high school students taking dual credit college courses.

Last week, Gov. Larry Rhoden reported that the state ended the 2025 fiscal year with a \$63 million surplus. About a third of the surplus came from state departments spending less than their budgets allowed. About two-thirds came from higher-than-expected unclaimed property revenue.

Unclaimed property consists of an array of abandoned or forgotten private assets, including money from bank accounts, PayPal accounts, stocks, life insurance payouts, uncashed checks, unused refunds, and the contents of safe deposit boxes. Holders of the money or items, such as banks, try to find the owners. The property reverts to the state after three years.

Rhoden told South Dakota Searchlight he didn't regret any cuts, since they were made to ongoing programs and most of the surplus came from unclaimed property, which is an unpredictable revenue source.

In his weekly column, he added he's glad the state didn't spend more money on "this handout or that pet project."

"For those who wish that we would've spent more, I won't apologize for making fiscally conservative decisions as your governor," Rhoden wrote. "South Dakota is a leader in disciplined financial management."

This is the 14th consecutive year South Dakota has reported a year-end surplus. It was achieved this year despite a \$3.7 million decline in sales tax revenue.



A January 2025 view of the South Dakota State Capitol in Pierre. (Makenzie Huber/South Dakota Searchlight)

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Surplus shows a 'neglect' of state needs, former state contract worker says

What the governor calls "disciplined financial management," Carter Linke calls "neglect and cruelty." Linke's contract position with the state Department of Health through Black Hills Special Services Cooperative was cut in May. He served as a tobacco prevention coordinator, researching emerging tobacco products and providing tobacco education to school districts and communities. The Legislature and Rhoden approved a \$3 million annual cut to the program.

South Dakota still needs the work he was doing, Linke said.

"This notion that South Dakota is being fiscally responsible doesn't really address the full picture and neglects the purpose of what these programs were and why they're essential," he said.

Linke now plans to pursue a master's degree out-of-state this fall.

Partisan split on unspent funds

House Majority Leader Scott Odenbach, R-Spearfish, said the Legislature worked to "tighten up" budgets for state departments to avoid reverted funds like the \$22 million reported for the 2025 fiscal year.

"Just like everything else, it's a matter of being smart, defining priorities well and only budgeting for what you really need," Odenbach said.

Democratic Sioux Falls Rep. Erik Muckey said reverted funds aren't always a sign of overbudgeting and can also result from state departments failing to carry out their missions. He sits on the legislative budgeting committee.

Muckey pointed to recently approved cuts to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families benefits and a Department of Social Services fund transfer regarding what he said the department described as "under utilized" mental health funding. Officials in the department said the unused funds were connected to a workforce shortage, according to Muckey, but he said it was a sign the state does not reimburse providers enough to sustain a mental health workforce.

"You can understand my ire for that when we have money and aren't using it properly," Muckey said.

Rhoden said the reversions are a sign of "commonsense decision making" to find opportunities to save money.

"If every state and Washington, D.C., did business that way, our country would be a lot better off," he said in his weekly column.

Extra money goes to budget reserves

The \$63 million surplus will flow into the state's reserve funds. So will \$106 million set aside during the legislative session to potentially help fund the construction of a new men's prison. Legislators plan to meet Sept. 23 for a special session to consider a prison proposal.

Rep. Kady Wittman, D-Sioux Falls, criticized the surplus and unspent funds. She said the Governor's Office opposed her most recent push to provide free lunch for public school children, which would have cost \$616,000 annually.

"The budget really reflects our values, and this year we chose as a Legislature to bank millions of dollars instead of investing in critical areas," Wittman told South Dakota Searchlight.

She'd like more flexibility with unspent funds to meet needs and bridge funding gaps after the legislative session ends, rather than "banking it."

Reserve funds are "hard to get at," Muckey said, because lawmakers need a two-thirds majority to pull money from the funds. Muckey said that law shouldn't change. That's why it's important, he said, to fully address the state's needs upfront rather than having leftover money "go to the bottom line and watch things starve."

The state's reserve funds, now at \$492 million, account for 19.9% of the fiscal year 2026 budget. Muckey would like to reduce that to 15%.

South Dakota can be fiscally responsible and take care of people because "those things are not mutually exclusive," he said. Lawmakers often refer to reserves as "rainy day" funds, and Muckey said program

cuts that hurt people are the kinds of “rainy days” the state should use excess reserve funds to avoid.

“When we are experiencing ‘thunderstorms’ in our state, why are we not using our rainy day fund to help people?” Muckey said. “We’re just hoarding cash.”

Rhoden said in the surplus announcement that the \$106 million left unspent in the 2026 budget is intended to “help cover the costs of a future prison.” But Odenbach said the money could be used for other priorities.

“We need to decide where to put it,” Odenbach said, “whether that’s put toward a prison or property tax relief.”

SD budget reserves spending

In the last decade, the South Dakota Legislature pulled funding from the state’s budget reserves for various needs and projects, according to the state Bureau of Finance and Management.

Fiscal year 2024: Transferred \$93.6 million to the incarceration construction fund.

Fiscal year 2023: Transferred \$183.7 million to the incarceration construction fund.

Fiscal year 2020: Transferred \$14.9 million to the general fund to keep budget reserves at 10%.

Fiscal year 2019: Transferred \$6.6 million to the general fund to keep budget reserves at 10%.

Fiscal year 2018: Used \$5.9 million to help pay for the state’s increased share of K-12 education due to a new funding formula.

Fiscal year 2016: Used \$27.4 million to pay South Dakota Board of Regents and technical college debt and freeze tuition for students.

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

Sioux Falls prison plan should come with more state support for released inmates, speakers say

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - JULY 22, 2025 3:24 PM

SIOUX FALLS — Mayor Paul TenHaken isn’t “kicking and screaming” against the proposed construction of a larger men’s prison in north-eastern Sioux Falls. But he’s not thrilled about it.

“There are consequences to that and there are costs to that,” TenHaken said.

He was among several speakers at the Safer Sioux Falls Forum held Tuesday in downtown Sioux Falls.

Earlier this month, a state task force endorsed a 1,500-bed complex with a price cap of \$650 million. The facility would replace the oldest parts of the state penitentiary, which has been in Sioux Falls for 144 years. Lawmakers will consider the proposal, and could select one of two undeveloped



Law enforcement, Sioux Falls officials and legislators participate in a forum on July 22, 2025, in downtown Sioux Falls about the proposed construction of a men’s prison in the northeastern part of the city. (Makenzie Huber/South Dakota Searchlight)

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Sioux Falls sites, at a special legislative session in September.

Speakers at Tuesday's forum didn't debate whether the prison should be placed in the state's largest city or not, unlike forums held in other communities where prison sites were considered. The focus was on how the state and local governments can partner to better use taxpayer dollars and help prisoners transition back into society. Topics included housing, rehabilitation and improving resources statewide for parolees.

About 95% of penitentiary inmates return to society after they serve their sentence. Sioux Falls Democratic state Rep. Kady Wittman said rehabilitation programming and appropriate facilities to encourage better reentry outcomes are the best "investment of taxpayer dollars."

If a person is released from prison in Sioux Falls without a family member in town or housing lined up at a halfway house, Wittman said, "you are walking to the shelter."

"That is where you are going to be restarting your life and reentering society," said Wittman, who formerly worked at a Sioux Falls emergency shelter.

Shelters don't always have case managers to help people deal with substance use disorders that went untreated in the prison system, for example. That needs to be achieved by the state Department of Corrections and other local agencies working together, Wittman said.

TenHaken said the Legislature can help the city invest in more "felon-friendly housing" with wrap-around supportive services.

Without proper housing and support services to reintegrate into society, people often reoffend or violate their parole. That "perpetually" works the person through the system, said Sioux Falls Police Chief John Thum, where they continue to reoffend and drain public resources in the criminal justice system.

Resources, Thum added, will make the biggest impact. He added that violent and property crime per capita is at a five-year low in the city.

"They're not going to put a shovel in the ground yet," Thum said. "This isn't going to be up tomorrow. We have time to plan. We have time to appropriate. We have time to have these big conversations that are challenging."

Many offenders reentering society relocate to Sioux Falls or Rapid City because the cities have resources they need and jobs available to them, speakers agreed. The Legislature should invest in parole resources and programs statewide so released prisoners from rural areas can return home, said Minnehaha County State's Attorney Daniel Haggar.

"It's important that as people parole out, they're able to go back to their convicting counties, their home communities, and not sacrifice the rehabilitation that they may be able to get in Sioux Falls."

Ryan Brunner, senior policy adviser for the Governor's Office, said Gov. Larry Rhoden is open to suggestions about the services needed for people released from prison.

In an interview with South Dakota Searchlight after the meeting, Sioux Falls Republican Rep. Greg Jamison said lawmakers should view such requests as a "pay now or later" investment.

"I think the realistic option of funding treatment programming at a higher level than we've done is crystal clear," Jamison said.

But the state budget is already stretched thin, said state House Speaker Jon Hansen, R-Dell Rapids.

Hansen hesitated to say whether the Legislature would support such investments and ideas, adding that lawmakers will need to balance the requests "among many other policy interests and fiscal interests."

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

Apparent suicide at Springfield prison continues high number of inmate deaths in South Dakota

BY: JOHN HULT - JULY 22, 2025 11:07 AM

Another inmate died this week in the custody of the South Dakota Department of Corrections, continuing a trend of higher-than-average prison deaths.

South Dakota tracks in-custody deaths by state fiscal year. That time period runs from July 1 to June 30. The state is currently in fiscal year 2026.

Nineteen inmates died in the recently concluded 2025 fiscal year, which is more than any year since at least 2018, the earliest year for which data is readily available.

The apparent suicide of 25-year-old Justin Copier on Sunday in his cell at Mike Durfee State Prison in Springfield is the second death of fiscal year 2026.

The Department of Corrections sends a notice to the press each time an inmate dies in its care. The agency doesn't always list a cause of death, but one particular cause has drawn the attention of state investigators four times this calendar year.

Four of the in-custody deaths are confirmed or suspected overdoses on the campus of the state penitentiary in Sioux Falls. Two of them, the deaths of 20-year-old Anthony Richards and 39-year-old Jason Garreau, have drawn criminal charges for those accused of providing them with drugs.

The state Division of Criminal Investigation is still looking into the other two cases, the June 10 death of 42-year-old Nicholas Skorka and May 18 death of Joshua Arrow.

Arrow's death was an overdose. Skorka's cause of death was not officially known as of Monday, according to DCI spokesman Tony Mangan.

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.



The entrance to the South Dakota State Penitentiary's East Hall. (Courtesy of South Dakota Department of Corrections)

US House GOP to scatter early for August break amid pressure on Epstein files

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY - JULY 22, 2025 5:42 PM

WASHINGTON — House Republicans are headed home early for their August break after an uproar over the release of the Jeffrey Epstein files all but halted any possibility of floor action.

House Speaker Mike Johnson said Tuesday he's sending his members back to their districts until September to avoid "political games" relating to a bipartisan effort pressuring the release of government investigative documents on Epstein. The financier was a Florida sex offender who died by suicide in 2019 in his New York City jail cell, according to authorities, where he was awaiting trial on federal sex trafficking charges.

Epstein enjoyed a wide circle of wealthy, powerful friends, including President Donald Trump. The Wall Street Journal reported Friday that it reviewed a 2003 birthday greeting from Trump to Epstein featuring a cryptic message and hand-drawn naked woman, leading Trump to promptly sue the publication.

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"We're for maximum transparency. We're engaging in that right now. We don't need political games," Johnson said at a weekly press conference where the Louisiana Republican was asked about an effort by his own members to compel the release of case material.

GOP Rep. Thomas Massie of Kentucky has joined California Democrat Rep. Ro Khanna in spearheading an effort to force a vote on releasing what are commonly referred to as the Epstein files. The procedural move, called a discharge petition, could be ready for the floor in September if Massie and Khanna can gather signatures from a majority of members.

"I don't understand Thomas Massie's motivation. I really don't. I don't know how his mind works," Johnson continued.

He said the White House needs "space" to produce documents and is "in the process" of releasing materials related to the Epstein case.

"There's no purpose for Congress to push the administration to do something it's already doing," he said.

On a separate track, the GOP-led House Rules Committee, the last stop for legislation before it reaches the floor, recessed Monday evening before Democrats on the panel could force their Republican counterparts to vote on amendments related to release of the Epstein information.

The bills stuck in that committee, largely to do with immigration, permitting and public lands, will no longer go to the floor this week.

Last floor votes are scheduled for Wednesday afternoon. House members will not return until Sept. 2.



House Speaker Mike Johnson of Louisiana speaks to reporters about the Republican budget reconciliation package at a weekly press conference on Tuesday, June 24, 2025, at the U.S. Capitol.

(Photo by Ashley Murray/States Newsroom)

Interview sought with Ghislaine Maxwell

Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche announced on social media Tuesday that federal prosecutors are seeking an interview with Epstein's one-time girlfriend, Ghislaine Maxwell, who is serving a lengthy prison sentence for conspiring with the financier to sexually abuse girls.

Trump told reporters in the Oval Office Tuesday that the department's attempt to interview Maxwell "sounds appropriate," adding that he was uninformed about the matter and downplaying the relevance of the Epstein case.

"I don't know about it, but I think it's something that ... sounds appropriate," he said.

Blanche was Trump's personal criminal defense attorney. Asked if Blanche's involvement in the interview raised any concerns, Trump said no. Democrats have used Trump's social relationship with Epstein to imply

he may have been aware of Epstein's illegal activities.

Trump urged reporters to drop the Epstein case and instead focus on a recent declaration from Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard that former President Barack Obama improperly ordered an investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election that Trump eventually won. Democrats denounced the report.

Trump tries to dismiss Epstein uproar

Trump has spent the last couple weeks dismissing loud concerns from Republicans and his voter base since a July 7 Justice Department memo denied the existence of an Epstein "client list" and concluded the department would not publish any of the files.

After receiving intense criticism, Trump ordered the department on July 17 to release grand jury testimony in the case.

The president called his supporters "weaklings" for expressing concern about the Epstein "hoax," in a July 16 post on his online platform Truth Social. Trump also told reporters last week that the so-called Epstein files were "made up" by former presidents Obama and Joe Biden.

The president's supporters, including members of his current administration, have fixated for years on unreleased details surrounding the financier's involvement in sex trafficking, including possible names of clients and the circumstances around Epstein's death.

According to federal charging documents, Epstein sexually abused dozens of teenage girls at his residences in Manhattan and Palm Beach, Florida. The Justice Department has concluded that Epstein likely had more than 1,000 victims.

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

US House spending panel votes to rename Kennedy Center Opera House for Melania Trump

BY: JACOB FISCHLER - JULY 22, 2025 2:45 PM

Republicans on the U.S. House Appropriations Committee voted Tuesday to rename the Opera House at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., for first lady Melania Trump.

The panel adopted, 33-25, a package of amendments to the bill funding the Interior Department, Environmental Protection Agency



The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C.

(Photo courtesy of the Kennedy Center)

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and related agencies for fiscal 2026 that included a provision to designate the First Lady Melania Trump Opera House at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

The vote was mostly party line, with Democrat Marie Gluesenkamp Perez of Washington joining all Republicans present in voting in favor.

The ranking Democrat on the Interior-Environment Appropriations Subcommittee, Chellie Pingree of Maine, said she was "surprised" by the provision.

"Republicans snuck in something that I think is slightly divisive, which is renaming one section of the Kennedy Center after a family member of this administration," Pingree said during the full committee markup, a meeting when a bill is debated, amended and voted on.

Subcommittee Chairman Mike Simpson, an Idaho Republican, responded that the name change was "an excellent way to recognize (the first lady's) support and commitment to promoting the arts."

"Yes, we renamed the Opera House at the Kennedy Center for the first lady, who is the honorary chairman of the board of trustees of the Kennedy Center," Simpson said.

The Kennedy Center is considered one of the nation's premier performing arts venues.

President Donald Trump removed several members of the Kennedy Center board in February, replacing them with loyalists who elected him board chair. He also fired the cultural center's president, Deborah Rutter, and replaced her on an interim basis with Richard Grenell, who has held several roles over Trump's two presidencies.

Interior-Environment bill

The House Interior-Environment spending bill proposes nearly \$38 billion for departments and agencies covered by the measure, an overall spending cut of 6% compared to current levels that mainly comes from chopping 23% of the EPA's budget.

The Interior Department would see a cut of less than one-half of 1% of its current funding, according to a summary provided by committee Republicans.

Arts and culture funding would also see major cuts in the bill.

The National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities would each see 35% cuts, bringing each agency's funding to \$135 million. The Smithsonian Institution would receive \$961.3 million, representing a 12% cut. And the Kennedy Center itself would see a 17.2% cut, to \$37.2 million.

The full House Appropriations Committee approved the bill, with the amendment, 33-28.

Appropriations bills must win 60 votes in the Senate to become law, which generally makes it difficult for overly partisan provisions to be included in the final text.

The corresponding Senate subcommittee has not released its version of the bill, but is scheduled to consider it Thursday.

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

Tribal health officials work to fill vaccination gaps as measles outbreak spreads

Native American tribes and health organizations are hosting clinics and calling patients to counteract low measles vaccination rates and limited access to health care as disease spreads

BY: ARIELLE ZIONTS, KFF HEALTH NEWS - JULY 22, 2025 7:00 AM

RAPID CITY — Cassandra Palmier had been meaning to get her son the second and final dose of the measles vaccine. But car problems made it difficult to get to the doctor.

So she pounced on the opportunity to get him vaccinated after learning that a mobile clinic would be visiting her neighborhood.

"I was definitely concerned about the epidemic and the measles," Palmier, a member of the Oglala Sioux Tribe, said at the June event. "I wanted to do my part."

So did her son, Makaito Cuny.

"I'm not going to be scared," the 5-year-old announced as he walked onto the bus containing the clinic and hopped into an exam chair.

Makaito sat still as a nurse gave him the shot in his arm. "I did it!" he said while smiling at his mother.

The vaccine clinic was hosted by the Great Plains Tribal Leaders' Health Board, which serves tribes across Iowa, Nebraska, and the Dakotas. It's one way Native American tribes and organizations are responding to concerns about low measles vaccination rates and patients' difficulty accessing health care as the disease spreads across the country.

Meghan O'Connell, the board's chief public health officer, said it is also working with tribes that want to host vaccine clinics.

Elsewhere, tribal health organizations have launched social media campaigns, are making sure health providers are vaccinated, and are reaching out to the parents of unvaccinated children.

This spring, Project ECHO at the University of New Mexico hosted an online video series about measles aimed at health care professionals and organizations that serve Native American communities. The presenters outlined the basics of measles diagnosis and treatment, discussed culturally relevant communication strategies, and shared how tribes are responding to the outbreak.

Participants also strategized about ways to improve vaccination rates, said Harry Brown, a physician and an epidemiologist for the United South and Eastern Tribes, a nonprofit that works with 33 tribes in the Atlantic Coast and Southeast regions.

"It's a pretty hot topic right now in Indian Country and I think a lot of people are being proactive," he said. Measles can survive for up to two hours in the air in a space where an infected person has been, sickening



Makaito Cuny watches as he gets his second measles shot in a mobile clinic. (Arielle Zionts/KFF Health News)

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up to 90% of people who aren't vaccinated, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The U.S. has had 1,309 confirmed cases of measles this year as of July 16, according to the CDC. It's the largest outbreak in the U.S. since 1992. Ninety-two percent of the 2025 cases involve unvaccinated patients or people with an unknown vaccination status. Three people had died in the U.S. and 164 had been hospitalized as of July 16.

O'Connell said data on Native Americans' vaccination rates is imperfect but that it suggests a lower percentage of them have received measles shots than the overall U.S. population.

The limited national data on measles vaccination rates for Native Americans is based on small surveys of people who self-identify as Native American. Some show that Native Americans have slightly lower measles vaccination rates, while others show significant gaps.

Data from some states, including South Dakota and Montana, shows that Native Americans are less likely than white children to be vaccinated on schedule.

The national measles vaccination rate is significantly lower for Native Americans who use the mostly rural Indian Health Service. About 76% of children 16 to 27 months old had gotten the first shot, according to data collected by the agency during recent patient visits at 156 clinics. That's a 10-percentage-point drop from 10 years ago.

But the IHS data shows that its patients are at least as likely as other children to have received both recommended measles shots by the time they're 17. O'Connell said it's unclear if currently unvaccinated patients will continue the trend of eventually getting up to date on their shots or if they will remain unvaccinated.

The immunization rate is probably higher for older children since schools require students to get vaccinated unless they have an exemption, Brown said. He said it's important that parents get their children vaccinated on time, when they're young and more at risk of being hospitalized or dying from the disease.

Native Americans may have lower vaccination rates due to the challenges they face in accessing shots and other health care, O'Connell said. Those on rural reservations may be an hour or more from a clinic. Or, like Palmier, they may not have reliable transportation.

Another reason, O'Connell said, is that some Native Americans distrust the Indian Health Service, which is chronically underfunded and understaffed. If the only nearby health care facility is run by the agency, patients may delay or skip care.

O'Connell and Brown said vaccine skepticism and mistrust of the entire health care system is growing in Native American communities, as has occurred elsewhere nationwide.

"Prior to social media, I think our population was pretty trustful of childhood vaccination. And American Indians have a long history of being severely impacted by infectious disease," he said.

European colonizers' arrival in the late 1400s brought new diseases, including measles, that killed tens of millions of Indigenous people in North and South America by the early 1600s. Native Americans have also had high mortality rates in modern pandemics, including the 1918-20 Spanish flu and covid-19.

The Great Plains Tribal Leaders' Health Board reacted quickly when measles cases began showing up near its headquarters in South Dakota this year. Nebraska health officials announced in late May that a child had measles in a rural part of the state, close to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. Then, four people from the Rapid City area got sick later that month and into the middle of June.

"Our phones really rang off the hook" once that news came out, said Darren Crowe, a vice president at the board's Oyate Health Center in Rapid City. He said parents wanted to know if their children were up to date on their measles vaccines.

Crowe said the health board ordered extra masks, created a measles command team that meets daily, and called parents when its online database showed their children needed a shot.

Brown praised that approach.

"It takes a concerted outreach effort that goes individual to individual," he said, adding that his organization helped the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians and the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas with similar efforts.

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Brown said reaching specific families can be a challenge in some low-income Native American communities, where many people's phone numbers frequently change since they use temporary prepaid plans.

Once a health worker reaches a parent, Brown said, they should listen and ask questions before sharing the importance of the vaccine against measles, mumps, and rubella.

"Rather than trying to preach to somebody and beat them over the head with data or whatever to convince them that this is what they need to do, you start out by finding out where they are," he said. "So, 'Tell me about your experience with vaccination. Tell me what you know about vaccination.'"

Most people agree to immunize their children when presented with helpful information in a nonjudgmental way, Brown said.

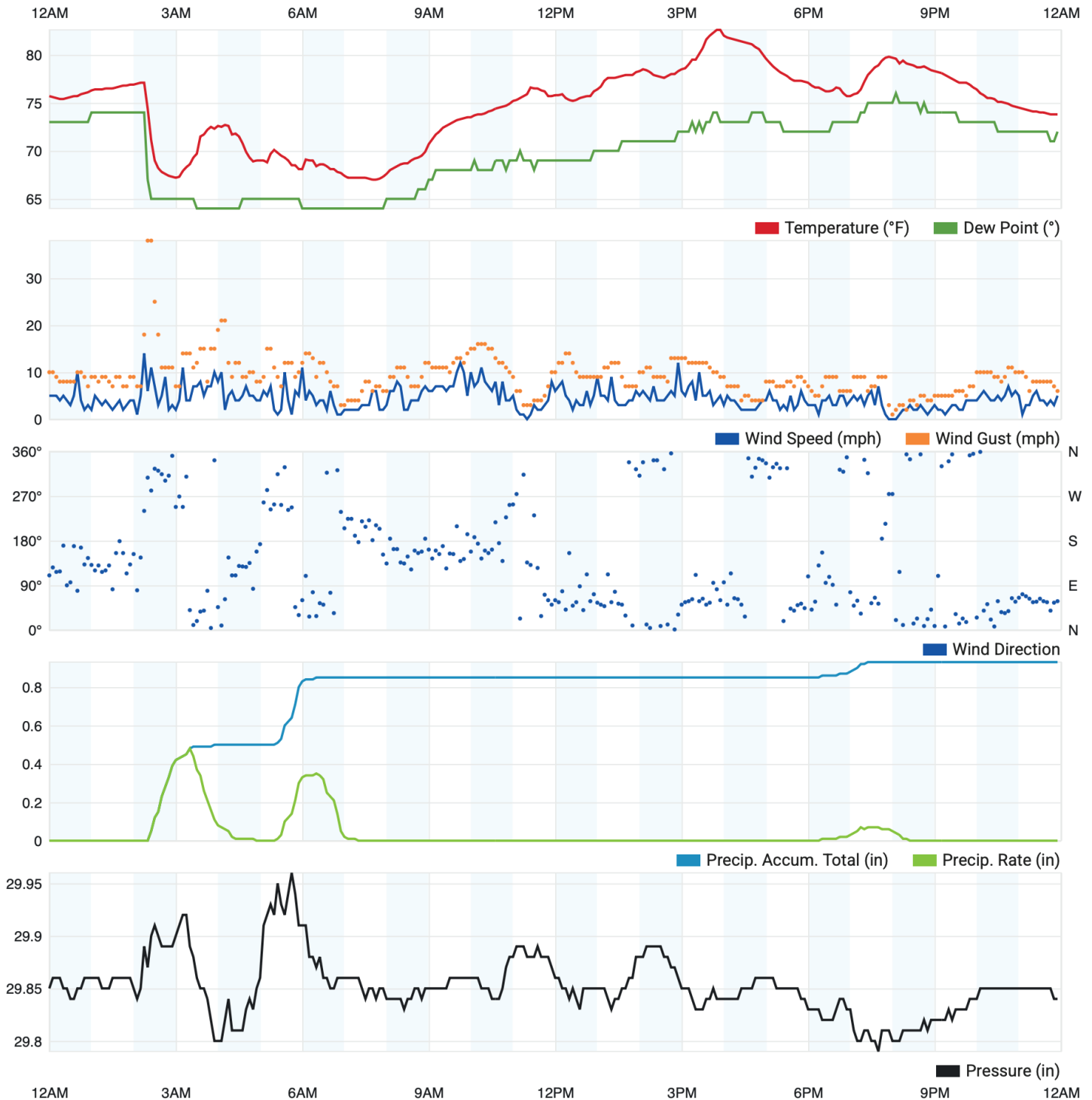
Arielle Zions, rural health care correspondent for KFF Health News, is based in South Dakota. She primarily covers South Dakota and its neighboring states and tribal nations. Arielle previously worked at South Dakota Public Broadcasting, where she reported on business and economic development. Before that, she was the criminal justice reporter at the Rapid City Journal and a general assignment reporter at the Nogales International, on the border of Arizona and Mexico. She graduated from Pitzer College in Claremont, California. Arielle lives in Rapid City with her cat, Sully.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

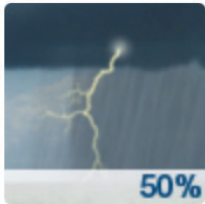
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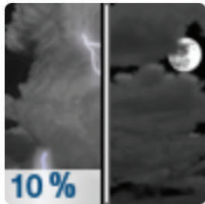
Wednesday



High: 77 °F

Chance
T-storms and
Patchy Fog

Wednesday
Night



Low: 62 °F

Slight Chance
T-storms then
Mostly Cloudy

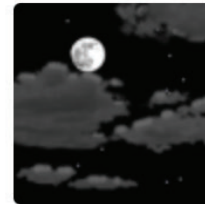
Thursday



High: 82 °F

Mostly Sunny

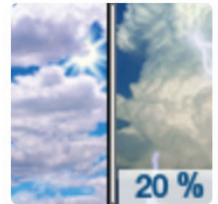
Thursday
Night



Low: 62 °F

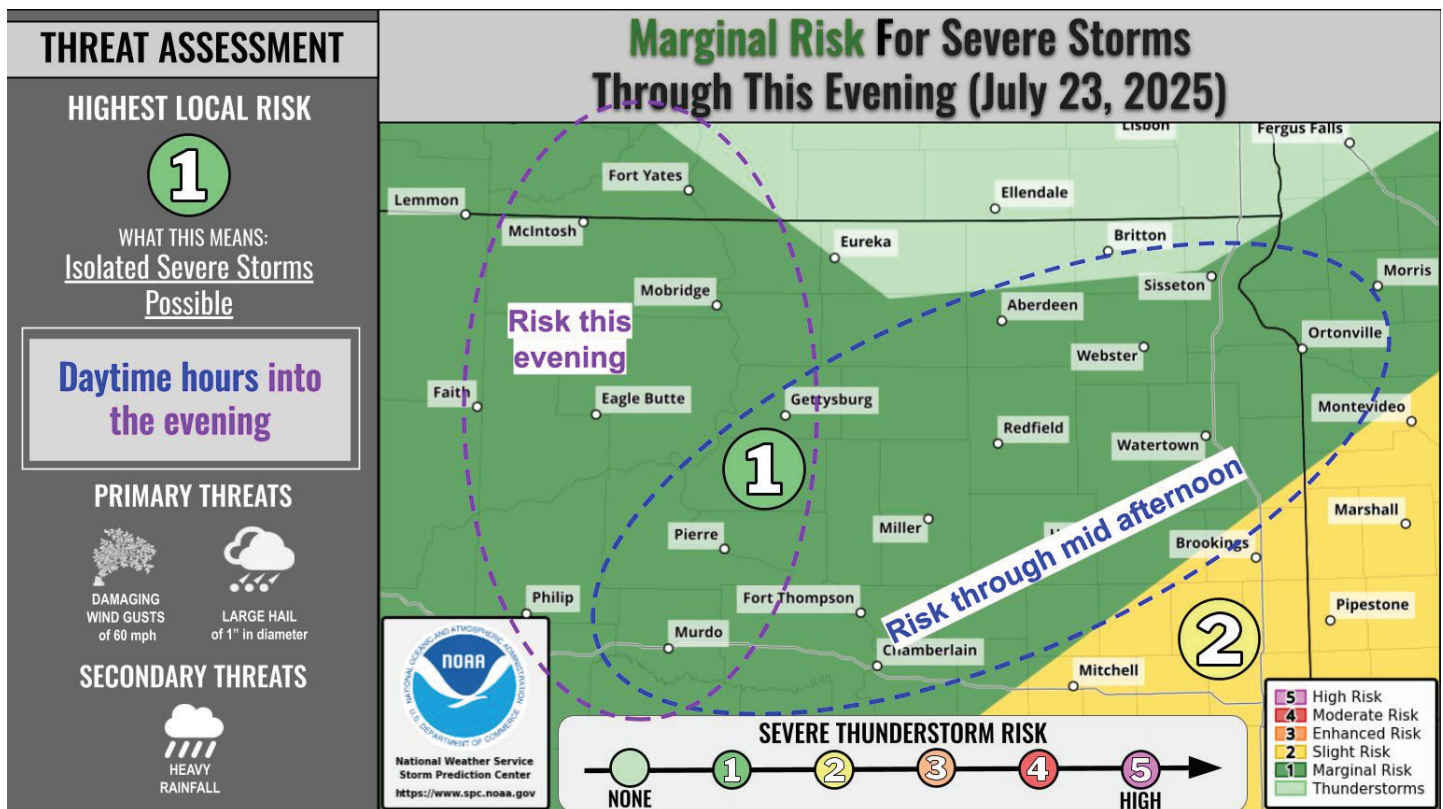
Partly Cloudy

Friday



High: 84 °F

Partly Sunny
then Slight
Chance
T-storms



Thunderstorms are expected during two periods today. First during the morning into the afternoon hours over a good portion of the region before they shift to the southeast. Then the second opportunity will be during the evening hours, as storms move eastward from western SD. Heavy rain, hail to 1" in diameter, and wind gusts to 60 mph are possible with the strongest storms.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 83 °F at 3:51 PM

Heat Index: 91 °F at 4:00 PM

Low Temp: 67 °F at 7:34 AM

Wind: 38 mph at 2:18 AM

Precip: : 0.93 Total

Day length: 15 hours, 6 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 109 in 1941

Record Low: 41 in 1904

Average High: 85

Average Low: 60

Average Precip in July.: 2.44

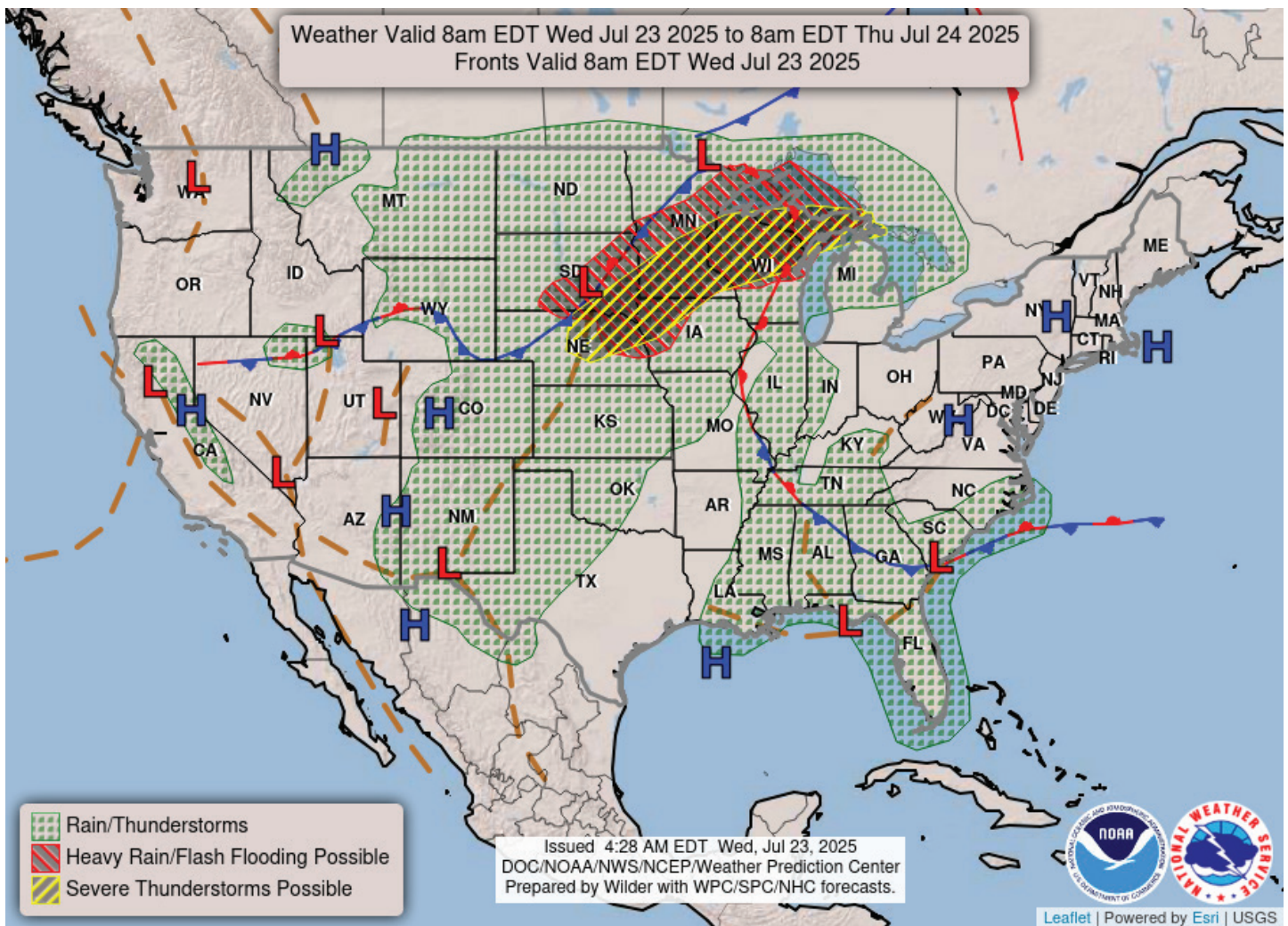
Precip to date in July: 4.69

Average Precip to date: 13.45

Precip Year to Date: 14.81

Sunset Tonight: 9:12:24 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:06:32 am



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Today in Weather History

July 23, 2007: High heat indices along with very little wind contributed to the deaths of over 2800 cattle in Brown, Spink, Day, and Marshall Counties. Most of the cattle deaths occurred on July 23rd. The high heat indices continued through the 25th with some more cattle deaths, but protective measures kept the death count down. Most of the cattle that died were on feedlots. The total loss was around 3 million dollars.

July 23, 2010: A United States record setting hailstone fell from a powerful supercell thunderstorm moving southeast across central South Dakota. The record setting hailstone fell near Vivian, South Dakota and measured 8 inches in diameter, 18.625 inches in circumference, and weighed 1.9375 pounds. This hailstone broke the previous United States record for diameter (7.0 inches - 22 June 2003 in Aurora, NE) and weight (1.67 pounds - 3 September 1970 in Coffeyville, KS). The Aurora, Nebraska hailstone will retain the record for circumference (18.75 inches). Several other stones of 6 inches or more in diameter were measured during the storm survey.

Along with the huge hail, damaging winds more than 70 mph along with an isolated tornado occurred. The large hail and high winds caused extensive damage to homes, outbuildings, and vehicles as it moved southeast across the region. Some of the hail went entirely through car windshields, roofs, garages, and campers. The hail caused five minor injuries to motorists on Interstate 90 as it went through their windshields. A child was severely injured when the large hail completely shattered the glass in the mini-van he was traveling. The child suffered numerous cuts, many requiring stitches.

1788: Called the George Washington's Hurricane, this storm originated near Bermuda on the 19th before making landfall in Virginia. It passed directly over the Lower Chesapeake Bay and Mount Vernon, the home of George Washington. This track is very similar to the path of the Chesapeake-Potomac hurricane of 1933. At Norfolk, winds increased at 5 p.m. on the 23rd with the wind originating from the northeast. At 12:30 a.m., the wind suddenly shifted to the south and "blew a perfect hurricane, tearing down chimneys, fences"...some corn was also leveled. Also, large trees were uprooted, and houses were moved from their foundations.

Port Royal and Hobb's Hole experienced a violent northeast gale which drove several vessels ashore. In Fredricksburg, vast quantities of corn, tobacco, and fruit were destroyed. Houses and trees fell in significant numbers across Northumberland, Lancaster, Richmond, and Westmoreland counties. Crops were destroyed, and many livestock perished in Lower Mathews County. Many plantations saw their houses leveled. Homes were flooded with water six feet deep, and several inhabitants drowned.

Historical figures of the time logged the storm's antics. George Washington noted the sinking of the small ship Federalist and uprooted trees. Colonel James Madison, the father of the future president, experienced the passing of great winds and rains near Orange. In Alexandria, damage to wheat, tobacco, and corn was "beyond description." The information above is from the Weather Prediction Center and noted American historian David Ludlum.

1898 - A two hour thunderstorm deluged Atlanta, GA, with 4.32 inches of rain. More than a foot of water flooded Union Depot. Many street car motors burned out while trying to run through flooded streets. It grew so dark before the afternoon storm that gas lights were needed. (The Weather Channel)

1923 - Sheridan, WY, was drenched with 4.41 inches of rain, an all-time 24 hour record for that location. Associated flooding washed out 20 miles of railroad track. (22nd-23rd) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Thunderstorms produced a record ten inches of rain in six and a half hours at Minneapolis, MN, including 5.26 inches in two hours. Flash flooding claimed two lives and caused 21.3 million dollars damage. Streets in Minneapolis became rushing rivers, parking lots became lakes, and storm sewers spouted like geysers. A tornado hit Maple Grove, MN, causing five million dollars damage. Baseball size hail was reported at Olivia, MN. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2011: Chicago set an all-time daily record rainfall when 6.86 inches fell during the early morning hours of Saturday, July 23, 2011, at O'Hare airport. The previous daily record was 6.64 inches set on September 13, 2008.

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"When you come to a fork in the road, take it."

This is an often quoted bit of advice from Yogi Berra.

But is following our own self-designed path the best thing we can do with the life God has given us?

God gave us His Proverbs for us to have His understanding—to know right from wrong.

If we go back to a conversation between God and Solomon, his first request of God was for the gift of wisdom.

He knew that honoring God would be difficult without God's insight to guide him. What a wise request.

Perhaps Solomon saw his father David, struggling with his humanity when he had to choose right from wrong. Perhaps he saw his father grieve over a poor decision. Or deal with guilt when he did not follow God's guidance.

So he asked God for this gift of discernment, and when he understood and applied it in his life, he recognized its value and wanted to pass it on for us to use in our lives.

God has given us the only resource we need for wisdom: His Word.

If we choose to honor Him, we can find His directions for our life in His Word.

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

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paypal.me/paperpaul

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.22.25

22 41 42 59 69 17

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$120,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 31 Mins
51 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.21.25

5 7 13 47 52 6

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$3,120,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 46 Mins 51
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.22.25

18 19 22 30 48 2

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 1 Mins 52
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.19.25

6 8 15 30 32

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$63,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 1 Mins 52
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.21.25

2 41 56 59 66 6

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 30 Mins 52
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.21.25

8 11 28 33 42 2

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$325,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 30 Mins 52
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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Upcoming Groton Events

007/25/2025 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

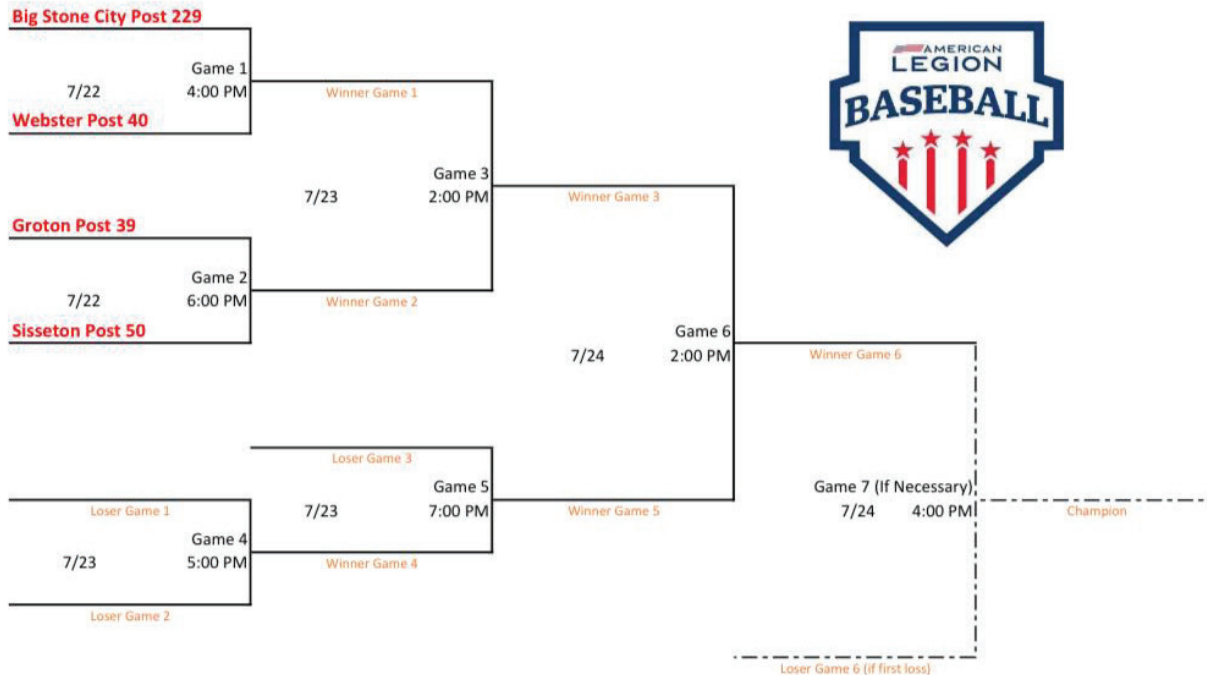
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SOUTH DAKOTA AMERICAN LEGION REGION 1B SR BRACKET

JULY 22-24, 2025

BREWSTER/GUNDERSON FIELD, SISSETON, SOUTH DAKOTA



Jr. Legion Baseball Region Tournament

Locke/Karst Field, Groton

Monday, July 28 starting at Noon

Sisseton vs. Redfield

Groton vs. Redfield

Clark vs. Groton

Tuesday, July 29 starting at 2 p.m.

Sisseton vs. Groton

Sisseton vs. Clark

Redfield vs. Clark

If no one is undefeated, or there is no clear winner, a formula is used to determine who will advance to state tournament August 8-10 in Milbank.

Jr. Teener Region Tournament

July 28 and 30

Only two teams in the region (Groton and Mt. Vernon/Plankinton) so the best of three games will advance to state.

Monday, July 28, 6 p.m. in Plankinton

Wednesday, July 30, 5 p.m. in Groton

If a third game is required it will be played after the game in Groton.

News from the **AP** Associated Press

Global climate action is at stake in the UN top court's biggest ever decision

By MOLLY QUELL Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — The UN's highest court is handing down a historic opinion on climate change Wednesday, a decision that could set a legal benchmark for action around the globe to the climate crisis.

After years of lobbying by vulnerable island nations who fear they could disappear under rising sea waters, the U.N. General Assembly asked the International Court of Justice in 2023 for an advisory opinion, a non-binding but important basis for international obligations.

A panel of 15 judges was tasked with answering two questions. First, what are countries obliged to do under international law to protect the climate and environment from human-caused greenhouse gas emissions? Second, what are the legal consequences for governments when their acts, or lack of action, have significantly harmed the climate and environment?

"The stakes could not be higher. The survival of my people and so many others is on the line," Arnold Kiel Loughman, attorney general of the island nation of Vanuatu, told the court during a week of hearings in December.

In the decade up to 2023, sea levels rose by a global average of around 4.3 centimeters (1.7 inches), with parts of the Pacific rising higher still. The world has also warmed 1.3 degrees Celsius (2.3 Fahrenheit) since preindustrial times because of the burning of fossil fuels.

Vanuatu is one of a group of small states pushing for international legal intervention in the climate crisis but it affects many more island nations in the South Pacific.

"The agreements being made at an international level between states are not moving fast enough," Ralph Regenvanu, Vanuatu's minister for climate change, told The Associated Press.

Any decision by The Hague-based court would be non-binding advice and unable to directly force wealthy nations into action to help struggling countries. Yet it would be more than just a powerful symbol, since it could serve as the basis for other legal actions, including domestic lawsuits.

"What makes this case so important is that it addresses the past, present, and future of climate action. It's not just about future targets -- it also tackles historical responsibility, because we cannot solve the climate crisis without confronting its roots," Joie Chowdhury, a senior attorney at the Center for International Environmental Law, told AP.

Activists could bring lawsuits against their own countries for failing to comply with the decision and states could return to the International Court of Justice to hold each other to account. And whatever the judges say will be used as the basis for other legal instruments, like investment agreements, Chowdhury said.

The United States and Russia, both of whom are major petroleum-producing states, are staunchly opposed to the court mandating emissions reductions.

Simply having the court issue an opinion is the latest in a series of legal victories for the small island nations. Earlier this month, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights found that countries have a legal duty not only to avoid environmental harm but also to protect and restore ecosystems. Last year, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that countries must better protect their people from the consequences of climate change.

In 2019, the Netherlands' Supreme court handed down the first major legal win for climate activists when judges ruled that protection from the potentially devastating effects of climate change was a human right and that the government has a duty to protect its citizens.

Ozzy Osbourne, who led Black Sabbath and became the godfather of heavy metal, dies at 76

By MARK KENNEDY AP Entertainment Writer

Ozzy Osbourne, the gloomy, demon-invoking lead singer of the pioneering band Black Sabbath who became the throaty, growling voice — and drug-and-alcohol ravaged id — of heavy metal, died Tuesday, just weeks after his farewell show. He was 76.

"It is with more sadness than mere words can convey that we have to report that our beloved Ozzy Osbourne has passed away this morning. He was with his family and surrounded by love. We ask everyone to respect our family privacy at this time," a family statement from Birmingham, England, said. In 2020, he revealed he had Parkinson's disease after suffering a fall.

Either clad in black or bare-chested, the singer was often the target of parents' groups for his imagery and once caused an uproar for biting the head off a bat. Later, he would reveal himself to be a doddering and sweet father on the reality TV show "The Osbournes."

The Big Bang of heavy metal

Black Sabbath's 1969 self-titled debut LP has been likened to the Big Bang of heavy metal. It came during the height of the Vietnam War and crashed the hippie party, dripping menace and foreboding. The cover of the record was of a spooky figure against a stark landscape. The music was loud, dense and angry, and marked a shift in rock 'n' roll.

The band's second album, "Paranoid," included such classic metal tunes as "War Pigs," "Iron Man" and "Fairies Wear Boots." The song "Paranoid" only reached No. 61 on the Billboard Hot 100 but became in many ways the band's signature song. Both albums were voted among the top 10 greatest heavy metal albums of all time by readers of Rolling Stone magazine.

"Black Sabbath are the Beatles of heavy metal. Anybody who's serious about metal will tell you it all comes down to Sabbath," Dave Navarro of the band Jane's Addiction wrote in a 2010 tribute in Rolling Stone. "There's a direct line you can draw back from today's metal, through Eighties bands like Iron Maiden, back to Sabbath."

Sabbath fired Osbourne in 1979 for his legendary excesses, like showing up late for rehearsals and missing gigs. "We knew we didn't really have a choice but to sack him because he was just so out of control. But we were all very down about the situation," wrote bassist Terry "Geezer" Butler in his memoir, "Into the Void."

Osbourne reemerged the next year as a solo artist with "Blizzard of Ozz" and the following year's "Diary of a Madman," both hard rock classics that went multiplatinum and spawned enduring favorites such as "Crazy Train," "Goodbye to Romance," "Flying High Again" and "You Can't Kill Rock and Roll." Osbourne was twice inducted to the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame — once with Sabbath in 2006 and again in 2024 as a solo artist.

The original Sabbath lineup reunited for the first time in 20 years in July for what Osbourne said would be his final concert. "Let the madness begin!" he told 42,000 fans in Birmingham.

Metallica, Guns N Roses, Slayer, Tool, Pantera, Gojira, Alice in Chains, Lamb of God, Halestorm, Anthrax, Rival Sons and Mastodon all did sets. Tom Morello, Aerosmith's Steven Tyler, Billy Corgan, Ronnie Wood, Travis Barker, Sammy Hagar and more made appearances. Actor Jason Momoa was the host for the festivities.

"Black Sabbath: we'd all be different people without them, that's the truth," said Pantera singer Phil Anselmo. "I know I wouldn't be up here with a microphone in my hand without Black Sabbath."

Outlandish exploits and a classic look

Osbourne embodied the excesses of metal. His outlandish exploits included relieving himself on the Alamo, snorting a line of ants off a sidewalk and, most memorably, biting the head off the live bat that a fan threw onstage during a 1981 concert. (He said he thought it was rubber.)

Osbourne was sued in 1987 by parents of a 19-year-old teen who died by suicide while listening to his song "Suicide Solution." The lawsuit was dismissed. Osbourne said the song was really about the dangers

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of alcohol, which caused the death of his friend Bon Scott, lead singer of AC/DC.

Then-Cardinal John J. O'Connor of New York claimed in 1990 that Osbourne's songs led to demonic possession and even suicide. "You are ignorant about the true meaning of my songs," the singer wrote back. "You have also insulted the intelligence of rock fans all over the world."

Audiences at Osbourne shows could be mooned or spit on by the singer. They would often be hectored to scream along with the song, but the Satan-invoking Osbourne would usually send the crowds home with their ears ringing and a hearty "God bless!"

He started an annual tour — Ozzfest — in 1996 after he was rejected from the lineup of what was then the top touring music festival, Lollapalooza. Ozzfest has gone on to host such bands as Slipknot, Tool, Megadeth, Rob Zombie, System of a Down, Limp Bizkit and Linkin Park.

Osbourne's look changed little over his life. He wore his long hair flat, heavy black eye makeup and round glasses, often wearing a cross around his neck. In 2013, he reunited with Black Sabbath for the dour, raw "13," which reached No. 1 on the U.K. Albums Chart and peaked at No. 86 on the U.S. Billboard 200. In 2019, he had a Top 10 hit when featured on Post Malone's "Take What You Want," Osbourne's first song in the Top 10 since 1989.

In 2020, he released the album "Ordinary Man," which had as its title song a duet with Elton John. "I've been a bad guy, been higher than the blue sky/And the truth is I don't wanna die an ordinary man," he sang. In 2022, he landed his first career back-to-back No. 1 rock radio singles from his album "Patient Number 9," which featured collaborations with Jeff Beck, Eric Clapton, Mike McCready, Chad Smith, Robert Trujillo and Duff McKagan. It earned four Grammy nominations, winning two. (Osbourne won five Grammys over his lifetime.)

At the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame induction ceremony in 2024, Jack Black called him "greatest frontman in the history of rock 'n' roll" and "the Jack Nicholson of rock." Osbourne thanked his fans, his guitarist Randy Rhoads and his longtime wife, Sharon Osbourne.

The beginnings of Black Sabbath

John Michael Osbourne was raised in the gritty city of Birmingham. Kids in school nicknamed him Ozzy, short for his surname. As a boy, he loved the Four Seasons, Chuck Berry and Little Richard. The Beatles made a huge impression.

"They came from Liverpool, which was approximately 60 miles north of where I come from," he told Billboard. "So all of a sudden it was in my grasp, but I never thought it would be as successful as it became."

In the late 1960s, Osbourne had teamed up with Butler, guitarist Tony Iommi and drummer Bill Ward as the Polka Tulk Blues Band. They decided to rename the band Earth, but found to their dismay there was another band with that name. So they changed the name to the American title of the classic Italian horror movie "I Tre Volti Della Paura," starring Boris Karloff: Black Sabbath.

Once they found their sludgy, ominous groove, the band was productive, putting out their self-titled debut and "Paranoid" in 1970, "Master of Reality" in 1971, "Vol. 4" in 1972 and "Sabbath Bloody Sabbath" in 1973.

The music was all about industrial guitar riffs and disorienting changes in time signatures, along with lyrics that spoke of alienation and doom. "People think I'm insane because I am frowning all the time," Osbourne sang in one song. "All day long I think of things but nothing seems to satisfy/Think I'll lose my mind if I don't find something to pacify."

The Guardian newspaper in 2009 said the band "introduced working-class anger, stoner sludge grooves and witchy horror-rock to flower power. Black Sabbath confronted the empty platitudes of the 1960s and, along with Altamont and Charles Manson, almost certainly helped kill off the hippy counterculture."

After Sabbath, Osbourne had an uncanny knack for calling some of the most creative young guitarists to his side. When he went solo, he hired the brilliant innovator Rhoads, who played on two of Osbourne's finest solo albums, "Blizzard of Ozz" and "Diary of a Madman." Rhoads was killed in a freak plane accident in 1982; Osbourne released the live album "Tribute" in 1987 in his memory.

Osbourne then signed Jake E. Lee, who lent his talents to the platinum albums "Bark at the Moon" and "The Ultimate Sin." Hotshot Zakk Wylde joined Osbourne's band for "No Rest for the Wicked" and the

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multiplatinum "No More Tears."

"They come along, they sprout wings, they blossom, and they fly off," Osbourne said of his players in 1995 to The Associated Press. "But I have to move on. To get a new player now and again boosts me on."

Courting controversy — and wholesomeness

Whomever he was playing with, Osbourne wasn't likely to back down from controversy. He had the last laugh when the TV evangelist the Rev. Jimmy Swaggart in 1986 lambasted various rock groups and rock magazines as "the new pornography," prompting some retailers to pull Osbourne's album.

When Swaggart later was caught with a sex worker in 1988, Osbourne put out the song "Miracle Man" about his foe: "Miracle man got busted/miracle man got busted," he sang. "Today I saw a Miracle Man, on TV cryin'/Such a hypocritical man, born again, dying."

Much later, a whole new Osbourne would be revealed when "The Osbournes," which ran on MTV from 2002-2005, showed this one-time self-proclaimed madman drinking Diet Cokes as he struggled to find the History Channel on his new satellite television or warning his kids not to smoke or drink before they embarked on a night on the town.

Later, he and his son Jack toured America on the travel show "Ozzy & Jack's World Detour," where the pair visited such places as Mount Rushmore and the Space Center Houston. Osbourne was honored in 2014 with the naming of a bat frog found in the Amazon that makes high-pitched, batlike calls. It was dubbed *Dendropsophus ozzyi*.

He also met Queen Elizabeth II during her Golden Jubilee weekend. He was standing next to singer-actor Cliff Richard. "She took one look at the two of us, said 'Oh, so this is what they call variety, is it?' then cracked up laughing. I honestly thought that Sharon had slipped some acid into my cornflakes that morning," he wrote in "I Am Ozzy."

Thelma Riley and Osbourne married in 1971; Osbourne adopted her son Elliot Kingsley, and they had two more children, Jessica and Louis. Osbourne later met his wife, then Sharon Levy, who became her own celebrity persona, when she was running her father's Los Angeles office. Her father was Don Arden, a top concert promoter and artist manager. She went to Osbourne's hotel in Los Angeles to collect money, which Osbourne had spent on drugs.

"She says she'll come back in three days and I'd better have it. I'd always fancied her and I thought, 'Ah, she's coming back! Maybe I have a chance.' I had pizza hanging from my hair, cigarette ashes on my shirt," he told the Los Angeles Times in 2000. They married in 1982, had three children — Kelly, Aimee and Jack — and endured periodic separations and reconciliations.

He is survived by Sharon Osbourne and his children.

Trump says US will impose 19% tariff on imports from Philippines in deal struck with leader Marcos

By DIDI TANG and MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump said he has reached a trade agreement with Philippine leader Ferdinand Marcos Jr., following a meeting Tuesday at the White House, that will see the U.S. slightly drop its tariff rate for the Philippines without paying import taxes for what it sells there.

Trump revealed the broad terms of the agreement on his social media network and said the U.S. and the Philippines would work together militarily. The announcement of a loose framework of a deal comes as the two countries are seeking closer security and economic ties in the face of shifting geopolitics in the Indo-Pacific region.

Marcos' government indicated ahead of the meeting that he was prepared to offer zero tariffs on some U.S. goods to strike a deal with Trump. The Philippine Embassy did not immediately respond to a message seeking comment.

Marcos' three-day visit to Washington shows the importance of the alliance between the treaty partners as China is increasingly assertive in the South China Sea, where Manila and Beijing have clashed over the hotly contested Scarborough Shoal.

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Washington sees Beijing, the world's No. 2 economy, as its biggest competitor, and consecutive presidential administrations have sought to shift U.S. military and economic focus to the Asia-Pacific in a bid to counter China. Trump, like others before him, has been distracted by efforts to broker peace in a range of conflicts, from Ukraine to Gaza.

Trump announces a trade deal with the Philippines

Trump said on Truth Social that the U.S. would impose a 19% tariff rate on the Philippines, down from a 20% tariff he threatened starting Aug. 1. In return, he said, the Philippines would have an open market and the U.S. would not pay tariffs.

Marcos described the lower 19% tariff rate to reporters in Washington as a "significant achievement" in real terms. He said his country was considering options such as having an open market without tariffs for U.S. automobiles, but emphasized details were still left to be worked out. When asked whether the Philippines got the shorter end of the stick, Marcos said, "that's how negotiations go."

Without further details on the agreement, it's unclear how it will impact their countries' economies.

Trump wrote that Marcos' visit was "beautiful," and it was a "Great Honor" to host such a "very good, and tough, negotiator."

Appearing before reporters in the Oval Office ahead of their private meeting, Marcos spoke warmly of the ties between the two nations.

"This has evolved into as important a relationship as is possible to have," said Marcos, the first Southeast Asian leader to hold talks with Trump in his second term.

Trump, as he does in many of his appearances, veered off topic as he fielded questions from reporters.

In response to a question about his Justice Department's decision to interview Jeffrey Epstein's former girlfriend, Trump repeated falsehoods about his loss to Democrat Joe Biden in the 2020 presidential election and the Russia investigation during his first term, along with comments about targeting adversaries such as former President Barack Obama and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

"After what they did to me, whether it's right or wrong, it's time to go after people," Trump said.

Relations with China are top of mind

When asked how he plans to balance his country's relationships between the U.S. and China, Marcos said there was no need to balance "because our foreign policy is an independent one."

"Our strongest partner has always been the United States," said Marcos, whose country is one of the oldest U.S. treaty allies in the Pacific region.

On Tuesday, when asked about the U.S. defense commitment to the Philippines, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun said, "Whatever cooperation the U.S. and the Philippines have, it should not target or harm any third party, still less incite confrontation and heighten tensions in the region."

China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan have been involved in long-unresolved territorial conflicts in the South China Sea, a busy shipping passage for global trade.

The Chinese coast guard has repeatedly used water cannons to hit Filipino boats in the South China Sea. China accused those vessels of entering the waters illegally or encroaching on its territory.

Marcos also met Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth this week. At the Pentagon on Monday, Marcos told Hegseth that the assurance to come to each other's mutual defense "continues to be the cornerstone of that relationship."

He said the cooperation has deepened since Hegseth's March visit to Manila, including joint exercises and U.S. support in modernizing the Philippines' armed forces. Marcos thanked the U.S. for support "that we need in the face of the threats that we, our country, is facing."

Hegseth told a security forum in Singapore in May that China poses a threat and the U.S. is "reorienting toward deterring aggression by Communist China."

The U.S., however, has endeavored to keep communication open with Beijing. Rubio and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met this month on the sidelines of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations regional forum in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. They agreed to explore "areas of potential cooperation" and stressed the importance of managing differences.

When hosting Marcos, Trump said a visit to China is "not too distant," suggesting it is possible he could travel there soon. Trump touted U.S.-China relations but said Manila is independent in its dealings with Beijing.

"Do whatever you need to do," Trump told Marcos. "But your dealing with China wouldn't bother me at all."

Doctor who supplied Matthew Perry ketamine and called him a 'moron' is set to enter guilty plea

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A doctor charged with giving Matthew Perry ketamine in the weeks leading up to the "Friends" star's overdose death is expected to plead guilty Wednesday.

Dr. Salvador Plasencia would be the fourth of five people charged in connection with Perry's death to plead guilty.

Plasencia was to have gone on trial in August until the doctor agreed last month to plead guilty to four counts of distribution of ketamine, according to the signed document filed in federal court in Los Angeles.

He had previously pleaded not guilty, but in exchange for the guilty pleas prosecutors have agreed to drop three additional counts of distribution of ketamine and two counts of falsifying records.

Plasencia's attorneys emphasized in an email after he reached his agreement that he "was not treating Matthew Perry at the time of his death and the ketamine that caused Mr. Perry's death was not provided by Dr. Plasencia."

The remaining charges can carry a maximum sentence of 40 years in prison, and there is no guarantee he'll get less, but he's likely to. Plasencia has been free on bond since shortly after his arrest in August. He will not be sentenced until a future hearing.

The only remaining defendant who has not reached an agreement with the U.S. Attorney's Office is Jasveen Sangha, who prosecutors allege is a drug dealer known as the "Ketamine Queen" and sold Perry the lethal dose. Her trial is scheduled to begin next month. She has pleaded not guilty.

According to prosecutors and co-defendants who reached their own deals, Plasencia illegally supplied Perry with a large amount of ketamine starting about a month before his death on Oct. 28, 2023.

According to a co-defendant, Plasencia in a text message called the actor a "moron" who could be exploited for money.

Perry's personal assistant, his friend, and another doctor all agreed to plead guilty last year in exchange for their cooperation as the government sought to make their case against larger targets, Plasencia and Sangha. None have been sentenced yet.

Perry was found dead by the assistant, Kenneth Iwamasa. The medical examiner ruled that ketamine, typically used as a surgical anesthetic, was the primary cause of death.

The actor had been using the drug through his regular doctor in a legal but off-label treatment for depression, which has become increasingly common. Perry, 54, began seeking more ketamine than his doctor would give him.

Plasencia admitted in his plea agreement that another patient connected him with Perry, and that starting about a month before Perry's death, he illegally supplied the actor with 20 vials of ketamine totaling 100 mg of the drug, along with ketamine lozenges and syringes.

He admitted to enlisting another doctor, Mark Chavez, to supply the drug for him, according to the court filings.

"I wonder how much this moron will pay," Plasencia texted Chavez, according to Chavez's plea agreement.

After selling the drugs to Perry for \$4,500, Plasencia allegedly asked Chavez if he could keep supplying them so they could become Perry's "go-to," prosecutors said.

Perry struggled with addiction for years, dating back to his time on "Friends," when he became one of the biggest stars of his generation as Chandler Bing. He starred alongside Jennifer Aniston, Courteney Cox, Lisa Kudrow, Matt LeBlanc and David Schwimmer for 10 seasons from 1994 to 2004 on NBC's megahit.

Driver accused of ramming into crowd outside LA nightclub charged with 37 counts of attempted murder

By JAIMIE DING and HALLIE GOLDEN Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The driver accused of ramming his car into a crowd outside a Los Angeles nightclub over the weekend was charged with 37 felony counts of attempted murder, prosecutors said Tuesday. Fernando Ramirez, 29, was also charged with 37 felony counts of assault with a deadly weapon. If convicted, he could face multiple sentences of life imprisonment.

Ramirez is accused of intentionally driving his car onto the sidewalk as partygoers were leaving the Vermont Hollywood venue at the end of a reggae hip-hop event early Saturday. The motive for the attack, which injured 37 people, was still unknown.

A phone number for Ramirez could not be found in an online database search, and the public defender's office said they have not been appointed to represent him.

"When he drove that car onto that sidewalk, he aimed it at a whole sea of pedestrians," LA County District Attorney Nathan Hochman said in announcing the charges.

The car came to a stop after colliding with several food carts, which became lodged underneath the vehicle, and bystanders attacked the driver, police said. Injuries ranged from minor to serious fractures and lacerations, and some people were briefly trapped beneath the vehicle.

After fleeing the scene, Ramirez was later found to have been shot in the lower back, but authorities have not identified the suspected gunman. Officials said Tuesday they were still looking for the shooter.

"We understand that this brazen act has shaken the community and but for the good grace of God, this could have been a mass casualty incident" Hochman said. He added that eight people suffered "great bodily injury."

Among those injured, 23 people were taken to hospitals, said Ronnie Villanueva, Interim Fire Chief of the Los Angeles Fire Department.

Los Angeles Police Chief Jim McDonnell said "it's truly a miracle that no one was killed that day."

Ramirez has a criminal history that includes a battery and gang-related charge in 2014, an aggravated battery conviction for a 2019 attack on a Black man at a Whole Foods grocery store in Laguna Beach, California, and a domestic violence charge in 2021, records show.

In the 2019 attack, he was also convicted of a civil rights misdemeanor, and the assault was considered a hate crime because he told police he hated Black people. But a California appeals court in 2021 said he made that statement after invoking his Fifth Amendment rights, and only the battery conviction was allowed to stand. Ramirez was released from custody after more than two years in jail and prison.

Ramirez "has proved to be violent to strangers and family alike and clearly has a lack of concern for the safety of others," Orange County prosecutors said in a court filing for the 2019 attack.

A 2024 drunken driving case and 2022 domestic violence charge were pending at the time of the nightclub crash, according to records.

Thousands gather to protest as Zelenskyy signs bill weakening anti-corruption agencies

By HANNA ARHIROVA and VASILISA STEPANENKO Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Thousands of people gathered in Kyiv and other cities across Ukraine on Tuesday to urge the president to veto a controversial bill that threatens anti-corruption infrastructure. It marked the first major rally against the government in more than three years of war.

Ukraine's parliament passed legislation that will tighten oversight of two key anti-corruption agencies, which critics say could significantly weaken their independence and give President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's circle greater sway over investigations. Zelenskyy signed the bill into law, according to the parliament's website late Tuesday.

Fighting entrenched corruption is crucial for Ukraine's bid to join the European Union and maintain access

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to billions of dollars in Western aid. The legislation's passage has triggered public outrage in Ukraine, with some saying it appeared to be a greater moral blow than the routine Russian drone and missile attacks.

The changes would grant the prosecutor general new authority over investigations and cases handled by the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine (NABU) and the Specialized Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office (SAPO).

"In effect, if this bill becomes law, the head of SAPO will become a nominal figure, while NABU will lose its independence and turn into a subdivision of the prosecutor general's office," the agencies said in a joint statement on Telegram.

In a post on X, the EU's Enlargement Commissioner Marta Kos expressed concern over the vote in the parliament, called the Rada, calling it "a serious step back."

Kos added: "Independent bodies like NABU & SAPO are essential for Ukraine's EU path. Rule of Law remains in the very center of EU accession negotiations."

While rallies have taken place during the war in Ukraine, they have largely focused on the return of prisoners of war or missing people. Protests, however, remain a traditional form of public pressure in Ukraine, where two previous revolutions were victorious for the public.

"Corruption is a problem in any country, and it must always be fought," said Ihor Lachenkov, a blogger and activist who urged people to join the protest through his social media platforms, which reach more than 1.5 million followers.

"Ukraine has far fewer resources than Russia in this war," he said. "If we misuse them, or worse, allow them to end up in the pockets of thieves, our chances of victory diminish. All our resources must go toward the fight."

The Ukrainian branch of Transparency International criticized parliament's decision, saying it undermines one of the most significant reforms since what Ukraine calls its Revolution of Dignity in 2014 and damages trust with international partners.

The group urged Zelenskyy to veto the law, warning that otherwise he would share responsibility with the Rada for "dismantling Ukraine's anti-corruption infrastructure."

Many protesters carried signs reading "Veto the law," "Protect the anti-corruption system, protect Ukraine's future," or simply "We are against it."

The mood of anger and frustration among the war-weary Ukrainians prevailed in the crowd. Some protesters accused Ukraine's leadership of prioritizing loyalty and personal connections over the fight against corruption.

"Those who swore to protect the laws and the Constitution have instead chosen to shield their inner circle, even at the expense of Ukrainian democracy," said veteran Oleh Symoroz, sitting in a wheelchair because both his legs were amputated after he was wounded in 2022.

"Instead of setting an example of zero tolerance for corruption, the president is using his power to take control of criminal cases involving his allies," he said.

On Monday, Ukraine's domestic security agency detained two NABU officials on suspicion of links to Russia and searched other agency employees on unrelated allegations.

Zelenskyy's office didn't respond to a request for comment. Last week, the president carried out a reshuffle of his wartime Cabinet, a move widely viewed as further consolidating power within his inner circle.

House ending session early as Republicans clash over Epstein vote

By STEPHEN GROVES and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Speaker Mike Johnson is rebuffing pressure to act on the investigation into Jeffrey Epstein, instead sending members home early for a month-long break from Washington after the week's legislative agenda was upended by Republican members who are clamoring for a vote.

Johnson, a Republican from Louisiana, said Tuesday morning that he wants to give the White House "space" to release the Epstein information on its own, despite the bipartisan push for legislation that aims to force the release of more documents.

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"There's no purpose for the Congress to push an administration to do something they're already doing," Johnson said at his weekly news conference, his last before lawmakers depart Washington on Wednesday for their traditional August recess.

The speaker's stance did little to alleviate the intra-party turmoil unfolding on Capitol Hill as many of President Donald Trump's supporters demand that the administration meet its promises to publicly release a full accounting of the sex trafficking investigation into Epstein, who killed himself in his New York jail cell in 2019 while awaiting trial. Under pressure from right-wing online influencers, as well as voters back home, rank-and-file Republicans are demanding that the House intervene in the matter.

"The public's not going to let this die, and rightfully so," said Rep. Ralph Norman, a South Carolina Republican.

Will Ghislaine Maxwell's deposition happen?

Even before Johnson spoke Tuesday morning, the powerful House Committee on Oversight was advancing a resolution to subpoena Epstein's former girlfriend, Ghislaine Maxwell, for a deposition.

The Republican chair of the committee, Rep. James Comer of Kentucky, said there will be a negotiation with Maxwell's attorney over the terms of the deposition and that it could happen at the prison where she is serving a lengthy sentence for helping Epstein sexually abuse underage girls. The Justice Department also indicated Tuesday it was separately seeking to interview Maxwell.

While Democrats on the House Oversight Committee supported the action, the top Democrat on the committee, Rep. Robert Garcia of California, warned that her testimony should be treated with skepticism.

"We should be looking and continue to push for a full release of the files," Garcia told reporters. "I think it's important for people to know that she obviously is a documented liar and someone that has caused enormous harm to young girls and women."

Trump didn't address the issue during a reception for House Republicans at the White House on Tuesday night but heaped praise on Johnson, saying he would "go down as one of the great speakers at any time in history." In remarks alongside Trump, Johnson made no mention of it either.

Speaker Johnson's control of the House is under threat

Johnson decided to end the House's legislative business early this week after he essentially lost control of the powerful House Rules Committee, which sends bills to the floor for debates and votes. Late Monday evening, business on that panel ground to a halt when the Republicans on the committee abruptly recessed proceedings rather than risk more proposals from Democrats pushing them to release Epstein files.

Republicans had teed up votes on legislation to increase penalties for migrants who enter the country illegally, to ease permitting for water infrastructure and to roll back several Biden-era regulations. All those bills were put on hold, at least until after the August recess.

Frustration in the House has been running high since last week, when Republican leaders signaled possible support for a vote on the Epstein files as they raced to pass a \$9 billion package of spending cuts. Johnson unveiled a resolution that has no legal weight but would urge the Justice Department to produce more documentation. Trump, meanwhile, has asked Attorney General Pam Bondi to seek the release of testimony from secret grand jury proceedings in the case, though that effort is unlikely to produce new revelations.

Echoing Trump's position, Johnson insisted he, too, wants the files released, but only those that are "credible." Johnson, who has relied heavily on Trump to hold onto leadership in the House, cast the president's reticence to release information as out of concern for the victims of Epstein.

"We have a moral responsibility to expose the evil of Epstein and everybody who was involved in that — absolutely — and we're resolved to do it," Johnson said. "But we also have an equal moral responsibility to protect the innocent, and that is a fine needle to thread."

In the Senate, Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., also told reporters he believed Trump and Bondi would "make the right decisions" on the files, but opened the door to committees examining the matter.

Epstein has become a political wedge among GOP

Even with the month-long break, the pressure on Johnson is unlikely to end. Rep. Thomas Massie, a

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Republican whose contrarian stances are often a thorn in the side of leadership, is gathering support for a legislative maneuver to force the bipartisan bill to a House vote, even without leadership's consent.

"Now, there are a lot of people here in the swamp who think that, 'Oh, well, if we spend five weeks on vacation, the pressure for this will dissipate. I don't think it's going to dissipate.'" Massie told reporters Monday evening.

Democrats have watched it all unfold with glee and worked to inflame the conflict among Republicans by making their own calls for transparency on the Epstein investigation. They have repeatedly tried to force votes on the matter, casting it as an issue of trust in the government.

"It's about transparency in government. It's about whose side are you on? Are you on the side of the rich and powerful, protecting men? Or are you on the side of young girls and America's children?" said Rep. Ro Khanna, the California Democrat who put forward the legislation alongside Massie.

Epstein sexually abused children hundreds of times over more than a decade, exploiting vulnerable girls as young as 14, authorities say. He couldn't have done so without the help of Maxwell, his longtime companion, prosecutors contend.

Massie said the case is palpable enough to carry significant political consequences.

"This will be an issue that does follow Republicans through the midterms, and it will follow each individual Republican through the midterms. It will follow people into their primaries. Did you support transparency and justice, or did you come up here, get elected and fall into the swamp?" he told reporters.

He added, "I think it is a watershed moment for the speaker of the House and the president."

Trump rehashes years-old grievances on Russia investigation after new intelligence report

By ERIC TUCKER and CHRIS MEGERIAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump rehashed longstanding grievances over the Russia investigation that shadowed much of his first term, lashing out Tuesday following a new report from his intelligence director aimed at casting doubt on long-established findings about Moscow's interference in the 2016 election.

"It's time to go after people," Trump said from the Oval Office as he repeated a baseless claim that former President Barack Obama and other officials had engaged in treason.

Trump was not making his claims for the first time, but he delivered them when administration officials are harnessing the machinery of the federal government to investigate the targets of Trump's derision, including key officials responsible for scrutinizing Russia's attempts to intervene on Trump's behalf in 2016.

The backward-looking inquiries are taking place even as the Republican administration's national security agencies are confronting global threats. But they have served as a rallying cry for Trump, who is trying to unify a political base at odds over the Jeffrey Epstein case, with some allies pressing to disclose more information despite the president's push to turn the page.

Trump's attack prompted a rare response from Obama's post-presidential office.

"Our office does not normally dignify the constant nonsense and misinformation flowing out of this White House with a response," said Patrick Rodenbush, an Obama spokesman. "But these claims are outrageous enough to merit one. These bizarre allegations are ridiculous and a weak attempt at distraction."

Gabbard's new report on the Russia investigation

Trump's tirade, a detour from his official business as he hosted the leader of the Philippines, unfolded against the backdrop of a new report from Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard that represented his administration's latest attempt to rewrite the history of the Russia investigation, which has infuriated him for years.

The report, released Friday, downplayed the extent of Russian interference in the 2016 election by highlighting Obama administration emails showing officials had concluded before and after the presidential race that Moscow had not hacked state election systems to manipulate votes in Trump's favor.

But Obama's Democratic administration never suggested otherwise, even as it exposed other means by

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which Russia interfered in the election, including through a massive hack-and-leak operation of Democratic emails by intelligence operatives working with WikiLeaks, as well as a covert influence campaign aimed at swaying public opinion and sowing discord through fake social media posts.

Gabbard's report appears to suggest the absence of manipulation of state election systems is a basis to call into question more general Russian interference. By issuing it, she appeared to recover her standing in Trump's orbit, which just one month ago had seemed uncertain after Trump said she was "wrong" when she previously said she believed Iran wasn't building a nuclear weapon.

"She's the hottest one in the room right now," Trump said Tuesday night. "Tulsi, great job — and I know you have a lot more coming."

Democrats, for their part, swiftly decried the report as factually flawed and politically motivated.

"It is sadly not surprising that DNI Gabbard, who promised to depoliticize the intelligence community, is once again weaponizing her position to amplify the president's election conspiracy theories," Sen. Mark Warner, the top Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee, wrote on X.

Several investigations found Russian interference in 2016

Russia's broad interference in 2016 has been established through a series of investigations, including special counsel Robert Mueller's report, which concluded that the Trump campaign welcomed the Kremlin's help but also found insufficient evidence to establish a criminal conspiracy.

A House Intelligence Committee report also documented Russia's meddling, as did the Senate Intelligence Committee, which concluded its work in 2020 at a time when the panel was led by Republican Sen. Marco Rubio, who's now Trump's secretary of state.

A different special counsel appointed by the Trump Justice Department to hunt for problems in the origins of the Russia investigation, John Durham, did find flaws, but not related to what Gabbard sought to highlight in her report.

"Few episodes in our nation's history have been investigated as thoroughly as the Intelligence Community's warning in 2016 that Russia was interfering in the election," said Rep. Jim Himes, the top Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee.

He added that every legitimate investigation, including the bipartisan Senate Intelligence Committee probe, "found no evidence of politicization and endorsed the findings" of an intelligence committee assessment on Russian interference made public in 2017.

Gabbard's document was released weeks after a CIA report that reexamined that earlier intelligence community assessment. That new review, ordered by CIA Director John Ratcliffe, did not dispute Russia had interfered but suggested officials were rushed in the assessment they reached.

Trump administration is seeking investigations of former officials

Ratcliffe has since referred former CIA Director John Brennan to the Justice Department for investigation, a person familiar with the matter has said. The department earlier this month appeared to acknowledge an open investigation into Brennan and former FBI Director James Comey in an unusual statement, but the status and contours of the inquiries are unclear.

Besides Obama, Trump on Tuesday rattled off a list of people he accused of acting criminally "at the highest level," including Comey, his 2016 Democratic opponent Hillary Clinton and former national intelligence director James Clapper.

He accused Obama, without evidence, of being the "ringleader" of a conspiracy to get him. Obama has never been accused of any wrongdoing as part of the Russia investigation, and, in any event, a landmark Supreme Court opinion from last year shields former presidents from prosecution for official acts conducted in office.

Trump launched his tirade when asked about the Justice Department's effort to speak with Ghislaine Maxwell, the former girlfriend of Epstein, who was convicted of helping the financier sexually abuse underage girls.

"I don't really follow that too much," he said. "It's sort of a witch hunt, a continuation of the witch hunt."

Trump is under pressure from conspiracy-minded segments of his political base to release more about

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the Epstein case. Democrats say Trump is resisting because of his past association with Epstein. Trump has denied knowledge of or involvement with Epstein's crimes and said he ended their friendship years ago.

Lawyer seeks release for Erik Menendez, citing medical condition

By JAIMIE DING Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Erik Menendez has been hospitalized, prompting his attorney to seek his release from prison ahead of an upcoming parole hearing.

The 57-year-old had been serving a sentence of life without parole along with his brother Lyle Menendez after being convicted of murdering their parents in their Beverly Hills, California, home in 1989. A judge recently resentenced the brothers to 50 years to life, making them immediately eligible for parole.

They will appear in front of the state parole board Aug. 21 and 22. If the board determines they are eligible for parole, Gov. Gavin Newsom must review the decision before they are released.

The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation confirmed Erik Menendez was taken to an outside medical facility Friday and remained there Tuesday "in fair condition."

His lawyer, Mark Geragos, told TMZ that Menendez was having a "serious medical condition" and should receive a prison furlough, something the governor granted some inmates during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Geragos did not elaborate on the condition, but he said releasing Menendez was the "only fair and equitable thing to do" so he had time to prepare for his parole hearing properly.

Geragos' office confirmed his comments to TMZ but did not make him available for an interview.

Newsom's office and a representative for the family declined to comment.

A judge last week ordered Los Angeles prosecutors to explain why Erik and Lyle Menendez's murder convictions should not be reexamined in light of new evidence supporting their claims of sexual abuse by their father.

While defense attorneys at the time argued the brothers acted out of self-defense after years of sexual abuse by their father, prosecutors said the brothers killed their parents for a multimillion-dollar inheritance.

The order was in response to a habeas corpus petition filed by the Menendez brothers in May 2023 seeking a review of their convictions in a process separate from their resentencing bid.

US Olympic and Paralympic officials bar transgender women from competing in Olympic women's sports

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. (AP) — The U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee has effectively barred transgender women from competing in women's sports, telling the federations overseeing swimming, athletics and other sports it has an "obligation to comply" with an executive order issued by President Donald Trump.

The new policy, announced Monday with a quiet change on the USOPC's website and confirmed in a letter sent to national sport governing bodies, follows a similar step taken by the NCAA earlier this year.

The USOPC change is noted obliquely as a detail under "USOPC Athlete Safety Policy" and references Trump's executive order, "Keeping Men Out of Women's Sports," signed in February. That order, among other things, threatens to "rescind all funds" from organizations that allow transgender athlete participation in women's sports.

U.S. Olympic officials told the national governing bodies they will need to follow suit, adding that "the USOPC has engaged in a series of respectful and constructive conversations with federal officials" since Trump signed the order.

"As a federally chartered organization, we have an obligation to comply with federal expectations," USOPC CEO Sarah Hirshland and President Gene Sykes wrote in a letter. "Our revised policy emphasizes the importance of ensuring fair and safe competition environments for women. All National Governing Bodies are required to update their applicable policies in alignment."

The National Women's Law Center put out a statement condemning the move.

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"By giving into the political demands, the USOPC is sacrificing the needs and safety of its own athletes," said that organization's president and CEO, Fatima Goss Graves.

The USOPC oversees around 50 national governing bodies, most of which play a role in everything from the grassroots to elite levels of their sports. That raises the possibility that rules might need to be changed at local sports clubs to retain their memberships in the NGBs.

Some of those organizations — for instance, USA Track and Field — have long followed guidelines set by their own world federation. World Athletics is considering changes to its policies that would mostly fall in line with Trump's order.

A USA Swimming spokesman said the federation had been made aware of the USOPC's change and was consulting with the committee to figure out what changes it needs to make. USA Fencing changed its policy effective Aug. 1 to allow only "athletes who are of the female sex" in women's competition and opening men's events to "all athletes not eligible for the women's category, including transgender women, transgender men, non-binary and intersex athletes and cisgender male athletes."

The nationwide battle over transgender girls on girls' and women's sports teams has played out at both the state and federal levels as Republicans portray the issue as a fight for athletic fairness. More than two dozen states have enacted laws barring transgender women and girls from participating in certain sports competitions. Some policies have been blocked in court after critics challenged the policies as discriminatory, cruel and unnecessarily target a tiny niche of athletes.

The NCAA changed its participation policy for transgender athletes to limit competition in women's sports to athletes assigned female at birth. That change came a day after Trump signed the executive order intended to ban transgender athletes from girls' and women's sports.

Female eligibility is a key issue for the International Olympic Committee under its new president, Kirsty Coventry, who has signaled an effort to "protect the female category." The IOC has allowed individual sports federations to set their own rules at the Olympics — and some have already taken steps on the topic.

Stricter rules on transgender athletes — barring from women's events anyone who went through male puberty — have been passed by swimming, cycling and track and field. Soccer is reviewing its eligibility rules for women and could set limits on testosterone.

Trump has said he wants the IOC to change everything "having to do with this absolutely ridiculous subject." Los Angeles will host the Summer Games in 2028.

Witkoff plans to visit the Mideast in push for Gaza ceasefire, State Department spokesperson says

By FARNOUSH AMIRI and MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's special envoy, Steve Witkoff, planned to head to the Middle East as the U.S. tries once again to reach a ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas, the State Department's spokesperson said Tuesday.

Department spokesperson Tammy Bruce told reporters that Witkoff was going to the region with a "strong hope" that the U.S. can deliver a ceasefire deal as well as a new humanitarian corridor for aid distribution.

"I would suggest that we might have some good news, but, again, as we know, this could be a constantly changing dynamic," said Bruce, who didn't have other details about where Witkoff would be going or what he had planned.

Three U.S. officials said Witkoff is traveling to Europe this week to discuss a range of issues, including Gaza and the push for a ceasefire, but they had no details about Middle East stops and did not share where specifically Witkoff would travel to and when.

The officials were not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

The State Department press office didn't respond to messages seeking more details on Witkoff's travel, and it wasn't immediately clear what his schedule would be this week.

A breakthrough in talks on a ceasefire deal has eluded the Trump administration for months as conditions

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worsen in Gaza. The territory had its deadliest day yet for aid-seekers in over 21 months of war, with at least 85 Palestinians killed while trying to reach food Sunday.

The Israeli army has said it fired warning shots, but says the reported death toll was greatly inflated. The United Nations' food agency accused Israeli forces of firing on the crowd of Palestinians seeking humanitarian aid.

Bruce said the incident that took place while civilians were trying to reach aid entering through the Zikim crossing with Israel is "absolutely horrible" and reinforced why the U.S. is pushing for a new humanitarian corridor to be created as part of any truce.

The sides have held weeks of talks in Qatar, reporting small signs of progress but no major breakthroughs. Officials have said a main sticking point is the redeployment of Israeli troops after any ceasefire takes place.

The U.S. plan calls for a 60-day truce, during which Hamas would release some hostages while Israel would free Palestinian prisoners and allow a surge of humanitarian aid into Gaza. During the 60 days, the sides are also to begin negotiations on a permanent end to the war.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to continue the war until Hamas yields power and is disarmed, while Hamas says it will not release all of the hostages until the war is over. It is seeking assurances that Netanyahu will not resume the war after the 60 days, as he did in March after an early ceasefire expired.

Hamas is holding 50 hostages — 20 of whom are believed to still be alive.

UN body says Israeli forces have killed over 1,000 aid-seekers in Gaza since May, as hunger worsens

By WAFAA SHURAF, SAMY MAGDY and TIA GOLDENBERG Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — More than 1,000 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli forces since May while trying to get food in the Gaza Strip, mostly near aid sites run by an American contractor, the U.N. human rights office said Tuesday.

Meanwhile, Israeli strikes killed 25 people across Gaza, according to local health officials.

Desperation is mounting in the Palestinian territory of more than 2 million, which experts say is at risk of famine because of Israel's blockade and nearly two-year offensive. A breakdown of law and order has led to widespread looting and contributed to chaos and violence around aid deliveries.

Israel accuses Hamas of siphoning off aid — without providing evidence of widespread diversion — and blames U.N. agencies for failing to deliver food it has allowed in. The military says it has only fired warning shots near aid sites. The Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, an Israeli-backed American contractor, rejected what it said were "false and exaggerated statistics" from the United Nations.

The Gaza Health Ministry, which is part of the Hamas-run government and staffed by medical professionals, said Tuesday that 101 people, including 80 children, have died in recent days from starvation.

The deaths could not be independently verified, but U.N. officials and major international aid groups say the conditions for starvation exist in Gaza. During hunger crises, people can die from malnutrition or from common illnesses or injuries that the body is not strong enough to fight.

Israel eased a 2½-month blockade in May, allowing a trickle of aid in through the longstanding U.N.-run system and the newly created GHF. Aid groups say it's not nearly enough.

'I do it for my children'

Dozens of Palestinians lined up Tuesday outside a charity kitchen in Gaza City, hoping for a bowl of watery tomato soup. The lucky ones got small chunks of eggplant. As supplies ran out, people holding pots pushed and shoved to get to the front.

Nadia Mdoukh, a pregnant woman who was displaced from her home and lives in a tent with her husband and three children, said she worries about being shoved or trampled on, and about heat stroke as daytime temperatures hover above 90 F (32 C).

"I do it for my children," she said. "This is famine — there is no bread or flour."

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The U.N. World Food Program says Gaza's hunger crisis has reached "new and astonishing levels of desperation." Ross Smith, the agency's director for emergencies, told reporters Monday that nearly 100,000 women and children are suffering from severe acute malnutrition, and a third of Gaza's population is going without food for multiple days in a row.

MedGlobal, a charity working in Gaza, said five children as young as 3 months had died from starvation in the past three days.

"This is a deliberate and human-made disaster," said Joseph Belliveau, its executive director. "Those children died because there is not enough food in Gaza and not enough medicines, including IV fluids and therapeutic formula, to revive them."

The charity said food is in such short supply that its own staff members suffer dizziness and headaches. Aid delivery model criticized

Of the 1,054 people killed while trying to get food since late May, 766 were killed while heading to sites run by the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, according to the U.N. human rights office. The others were killed when gunfire erupted around U.N. convoys or aid sites.

Thameen al-Kheetan, a spokesperson for the U.N. rights office, says its figures come from "multiple reliable sources on the ground," including medics, humanitarian and human rights organizations. He said the numbers were still being verified according to the office's strict methodology.

Palestinian witnesses and health officials say Israeli forces regularly fire toward crowds of thousands of people heading to the GHF sites. The military says it has only fired warning shots, and GHF says its armed contractors have only fired into the air on a few occasions to try to prevent stampedes.

A joint statement from 28 Western-aligned countries on Monday condemned the "the drip feeding of aid and the inhumane killing of civilians."

"The Israeli government's aid delivery model is dangerous, fuels instability and deprives Gazans of human dignity," read the statement, which was signed by the United Kingdom, France and other countries friendly to Israel. "The Israeli government's denial of essential humanitarian assistance to the civilian population is unacceptable."

Israel and the United States rejected the statement, blaming Hamas for prolonging the war by not accepting Israeli terms for a ceasefire and the release of hostages abducted in the militant-led attack on southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, which triggered the fighting.

Hamas has said it will release the remaining hostages only in return for a lasting ceasefire and an Israeli withdrawal. Israel says it will keep fighting until Hamas has been defeated or disarmed.

Strikes on tents sheltering the displaced

Israeli strikes killed at least 25 people Tuesday across Gaza, according to local health officials.

One strike hit tents sheltering displaced people in the built-up seaside Shati refugee camp in Gaza City, killing at least 12 people, according to Shifa Hospital, which received the casualties. The Israeli military said that it wasn't aware of such a strike by its forces.

The dead included three women and three children, the hospital director, Dr. Mohamed Abu Selmiya, told The Associated Press. Thirty-eight other Palestinians were wounded, he said.

An overnight strike that hit crowds of Palestinians waiting for aid trucks in Gaza City killed eight, hospitals said. At least 118 were wounded, according to the Palestinian Red Crescent.

"A bag of flour covered in blood and death," said Mohammed Issam, who was in the crowd and said some people were run over by trucks in the chaos. "How long will this humiliation continue?"

The Israeli military had no immediate comment on that strike. Israel blames the deaths of Palestinian civilians on Hamas, because the militants operate in densely populated areas.

Israel renewed its offensive in March with a surprise bombardment after ending an earlier ceasefire. Talks on another truce have dragged on for weeks despite pressure from U.S. President Donald Trump.

Hamas-led militants abducted 251 people in the Oct. 7 attack, and killed around 1,200 people. Fewer than half of the 50 hostages still in Gaza are believed to be alive.

More than 59,000 Palestinians have been killed during the war, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. Its count doesn't distinguish between militants and civilians, but the ministry says that more than half of the

dead are women and children. The U.N. and other international organizations see it as the most reliable source of data on casualties.

Bryan Kohberger and his victim's families will have a chance to speak at his sentencing

By REBECCA BOONE Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — Bryan Kohberger, the masked man who snuck into a rental home near the University of Idaho campus and stabbed four students to death in late 2022, is expected to face the families of his victims in court Wednesday at his sentencing hearing.

Whether those families will get any answers about why he did it or how he came to target the home on King Road in Moscow remains to be seen. But Kohberger, 30, is expected to be sentenced to life in prison for murdering Madison Mogen, Xana Kernodle, Kaylee Goncalves and Ethan Chapin in the rural college town of Moscow.

He pleaded guilty earlier this month in a deal to avoid the death penalty. He will have an opportunity to speak at the sentencing — as will the loved ones of his victims.

Here's what to know about Kohberger's sentencing.

A plea deal was reached before a trial

Mogen, Kernodle, Goncalves and Chapin were found stabbed to death on Nov. 13, 2023. The crime horrified the city, which hadn't seen a homicide in about five years, and prompted a massive hunt for the perpetrator.

Kohberger, a graduate student in criminology at nearby Washington State University, was arrested in Pennsylvania, where his parents lived, roughly six weeks later.

Police said they recovered DNA from a knife sheath found at the home, and used genetic genealogy to identify Kohberger as a possible suspect. They accessed cellphone data to pinpoint his movements and used surveillance camera footage to help locate a white sedan that was seen repeatedly driving past the home on the night of the killings.

A Q-tip from the garbage at his parents' house was used to match Kohberger's DNA to genetic material from the sheath, investigators said.

Kohberger's attorneys got the trial moved to Boise after expressing concerns that the court wouldn't be able to find enough unbiased jurors in Moscow. But Judge Stephen Hippler rejected their efforts to get the death penalty taken off the table and to strike critical evidence — including the DNA — from being admitted in trial.

The trial had been set to begin next month.

In exchange for Kohberger admitting guilt and waiving his right to appeal, prosecutors agreed not to seek his execution. Instead, both sides agreed to recommend that he serve four consecutive life sentences without parole for the killings.

The victim's families were split on how they felt about the plea deal.

Kohberger's motive and many other details are unknown

If they know why Kohberger did it, investigators haven't said so publicly. Nor is it clear why he spared two roommates who were home at the time.

Cellphone location data did show Kohberger had been in the neighborhood multiple times before the attack.

Latah County Prosecutor Bill Thompson has said that Kohberger used his knowledge about forensic investigations to attempt to cover his tracks by deep cleaning his vehicle after the crime.

Police say Kohberger's Amazon purchase history shows he bought a military-style knife as well as the knife sheath found at the home. But the knife itself was never found.

The case drew widespread interest and judges feared the publicity could harm Kohberger's right to a fair trial. A sweeping gag order was imposed and hundreds of court documents were sealed from public view.

After Kohberger pleaded guilty, a coalition of news organizations including The Associated Press asked

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that the gag order be lifted and the documents be unsealed. Hippler agreed, but said unsealing the documents will take time and that process won't begin until after the sentencing hearing. It's not clear how many answers they might contain.

Kohberger can speak at sentencing or refuse

The families and surviving roommates of the victims will have the opportunity during the sentencing hearing to describe the damage the killings have done to them. Because there are so many of them, the hearing could stretch into Thursday.

Kohberger will also have the opportunity to speak. Defendants sometimes use such chances to express remorse, ask for mercy, or to say whatever else they think the court should hear before sentencing.

But Kohberger also has the right to remain silent — despite a suggestion from President Donald Trump that the judge should force Kohberger to explain himself.

"I hope the Judge makes Kohberger, at a minimum, explain why he did these horrible murders," Trump wrote online on Monday. "There are no explanations, there is no NOTHING."

Foundations honor Kaylee, Maddie, Xana and Ethan

Friends and family members have sought to commemorate the victims' lives by raising money for scholarships and other initiatives.

Ethan's Smile Foundation, started by Chapin's family, honors his "love of life, people, and new adventures by providing scholarships that enable others to follow their dreams," its website says.

The Made With Kindness Foundation honors the legacy of Mogen, Goncalves, and Kernodle through scholarships, wellness support and empowerment initiatives. "Our mission is to inspire and uplift the next generation, turning their dreams into realities in a world that values compassion and community," its website says.

The University of Idaho built the Vandal Healing Garden and Memorial in memory of all students who passed away while enrolled at the school.

AFP journalists sound alarm about dire conditions faced by hungry colleagues in Gaza

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

A group of journalists at the Agence France-Presse news agency is sounding the alarm about conditions faced by colleagues working in Gaza, saying that "without immediate intervention, the last reporters in Gaza will die."

In a war-torn territory where Israel generally forbids outside journalists to enter, international news organizations like AFP, The Associated Press and Reuters rely on local teams to get out the news. They've been hampered by safety concerns and hunger in Gaza, where an estimated 59,000 people have died in the 21-month conflict, according to local health authorities.

The Society of Journalists at AFP, an association of professionals at the news agency, detailed what their Gaza colleagues are facing. AFP's management said Tuesday that it shares concerns about the "appalling" situation and is working to evacuate its freelancers and their families.

"For months, we have watched helplessly as their living conditions deteriorated dramatically," AFP said in a statement. "Their situation is now untenable, despite their exemplary courage, professional commitment, and resilience."

One of AFP's photographers, identified as Bashar, sent a message on social media over the weekend that "I no longer have the strength to work for the media. My body is thin and I can't work anymore."

Bashar has been working for AFP since 2010. Since February, he's been living in the ruins of his home in Gaza City with his mother and other family members, and said one of his brothers had died of hunger, according to the journalists' group.

The journalists receive a monthly salary from AFP, but exorbitant prices leave them unable to purchase much food.

Another AFP worker, Ahlam, said that every time she leaves her shelter to cover an event or do an

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interview, "I don't know if I'll come back alive." Her biggest issue is the lack of food and water, she said.

Since AFP was founded in 1944, the Society of Journalists said that "we have lost journalists in conflicts, some have been injured, others taken prisoner. But none of us can ever remember seeing colleagues die of hunger."

"We refuse to watch them die," the society said.

AFP has been working with one freelance writer, three photographers, and six freelance videographers in Gaza since its staff journalists left in 2024. Representatives for the AP and Reuters also expressed concern for their teams there, but would not say how many people are working for them.

"We are deeply concerned about our staff in Gaza and are doing everything in our power to support them," said Lauren Easton, a spokeswoman for The Associated Press. "We are very proud of the work our team continues to do under dire circumstances to keep the world informed about what is happening on the ground."

Reuters said that it is in daily contact with its freelance journalists, and that "the extreme difficulty sourcing food is leading to their and all Gaza residents experiencing greater levels of hunger and illness."

The agency said it is providing extra money to help them. "Should they wish to leave the territory, we will provide any assistance to help get them out," Reuters said.

Smoking or oxygen machine may have caused deadly fire at Massachusetts assisted-living home

By KIMBERLEE KRUESI and PATRICK WHITTLE Associated Press

FALL RIVER, Mass. (AP) — A fire that killed 10 people at a Massachusetts assisted-living facility was unintentionally caused by either someone smoking or an electrical issue with an oxygen machine, investigators said Tuesday.

The state's deadliest blaze in more than four decades has highlighted the lack of regulations governing assisted-living facilities that often care for low-income or disabled residents. So far, investigators have remained mum on the possibility of criminal charges related to the fire at Gabriel House in Fall River, and declined to answer when asked during a Tuesday press conference.

The Massachusetts fire marshal, Jon Davine, said the presence of medical oxygen contributed to the fire's spread on the night of July 13. The blaze left some residents of the three-story building hanging out windows and screaming for help.

"Please, there's truly no safe way to smoke. But smoking is especially dangerous when home oxygen is in use," Davine told reporters on Tuesday.

Investigators are still collecting evidence on numerous aspects of the case, including whether the facility's sprinkler system worked as it should, said Thomas Quinn, the district attorney for Bristol County. He told reporters there was no sign that electrical outlets, lights, heaters or cooking appliances sparked the fire.

The blaze began in a studio apartment on the second floor of the facility, where investigators found the remains of smoking materials, a battery-powered scooter and an oxygen concentrator. It's hard to know exactly what happened, Davine said, because the person who lived in the room was among the victims of the fire.

Members of the local firefighter's union have said understaffing made it harder to respond to the blaze, and made the fire deadlier.

Earlier Tuesday, Democratic Gov. Maura Healey said the state was releasing \$1.2 million to hire more emergency response personnel for blue-collar cities about 50 miles (80 kilometers) south of Boston. She said additional funds will be fast-tracked for the state's municipal public safety staffing program.

"We are here today to listen," Healey said at a news conference, "to make sure that we understand what this community needs now and moving forward in the wake of this tragedy."

The district attorney's office identified the 10th victim as Halina Lawler, 70, on Monday. The victims of the fire ranged in age from 61 to 86.

A state agency is doing a monthlong investigation into the 273 assisted-living facilities in Massachusetts

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to make sure they're ready to protect residents during emergencies, the governor said.

Meanwhile, legal wrangling over who bears responsibility for the Gabriel House fire has already begun. A resident of Gabriel House filed a lawsuit Monday alleging the facility was not properly managed, staffed or maintained and that "emergency response procedures were not put in place."

Trapped in his room during the fire, Steven Oldrid was in an "already compromised physical condition" when he suffered smoke inhalation and lost consciousness, according to the complaint. As a result, Oldrid says he has increased mobility restrictions and has racked up medical bills.

George K. Regan Jr., a spokesperson for the facility owned by Dennis Etzkorn, did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment on the lawsuit. A phone message was also left with Oldrid's attorney.

Public injury law firm Morgan & Morgan also said last week it was hired to investigate the fire by the family of a resident who died, spokesperson Emily Walsh said, including possible issues with staffing, training and safety equipment.

Etzkorn says he is cooperating with investigations. Gabriel House issued a statement Monday emphasizing the importance of finding out "exactly what caused this catastrophe, and if there were factors that made it worse."

"Maintaining compliance with all safety and building codes has always been our priority, and there were quarterly inspections of the fire suppression system – the latest as recently as five days prior to the fire," the facility's spokesperson said.

Trump likes renaming people, places and things. He's not the first to deploy that perk of power

By LAURIE KELLMAN Associated Press

History, it has been said, is written by the winners. President Donald Trump is working that lever of power — again.

This time, he's insisting that Washington's NFL team change its name from the Commanders back to the Redskins, a name that was considered offensive to Native Americans. Predictably, to Trump's stated delight, an internet uproar ensued.

It's a return to the president's favorite rebranding strategy, one well-used around the world and throughout history. Powers-that-be rename something — a body of water, a mountain in Alaska, St. Petersburg, Istanbul, Mumbai, various places in Israel after 1948 — in line with "current" political and cultural views. Using names to tell a leader's own version of the nation's story is a perk of power that Trump is far from the first to enjoy.

A name, after all, defines identity and even reality because it is connected to the verb "to be," says one brand strategist.

"A parent naming a child, a founder naming a company, a president naming a place ... in each example, we can see the relationship of power," Shannon Murphy, who runs Nameistry, a naming agency that works with companies and entrepreneurs to develop brand identities, said in an email. "Naming gives you control."

Trump reignited a debate on football and American identity

In Trump's case, reviving the debate over the Washington football team's name had the added effect of distraction.

"My statement on the Washington Redskins has totally blown up, but only in a very positive way," he wrote on his social media platform, adding a threat to derail the team's deal for a new stadium if it resisted.

In fact, part of the reaction came from people noting that Trump's proposed renaming came as he struggled to move past a rebellion among his supporters over the administration's refusal to release much-hyped records in Jeffrey Epstein's sex trafficking investigation. Over about two weeks, Trump had cycled through many tactics — downplaying the issue, blaming others, scolding a reporter, insulting his own supporters, suing the Wall Street Journal and finally authorizing the Justice Department to try to unseal grand jury transcripts.

Trump's demand that the NFL and the District of Columbia change the team's name back to a diction-

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any definition of a slur against Native Americans reignited a brawl in miniature over race, history and the American identity.

Trump's reelection itself can be seen as a response to the nation's reckoning with its racial history after the 2020 police killing of George Floyd. That year, Americans elected Democratic President Joe Biden, who championed diversity. During his term, Washington's football team became first the Washington Football Team, then the Commanders, at a widely estimated cost in the tens of millions of dollars. And in 2021, The Cleveland Indians became the Cleveland Guardians.

In 2025, Trump has ordered a halt to diversity, equity and inclusion programs through the federal government, universities and schools, despite legal challenges. And he wants the Commanders' name changed back, though it's unclear if he has the authority to restrict the nearly \$4 billion project.

Is Trump's 'Redskins' push a distraction or a power play?

What's clear is that names carry great power where business, national identity, race, history and culture intersect.

Trump has had great success for decades branding everything from buildings he named after himself to the Gulf between Mexico, Cuba and the United States to his political opponents and people he simply doesn't like. Exhibit A: Florida's governor, dubbed by Trump "Meatball Ron" DeSantis, who challenged him for the 2024 GOP presidential nomination.

And Trump is not the first leader to use monikers and nicknames — branding, really — to try to define reality and the people who populate it. Naming was a key tool of colonization that modern-day countries are still trying to dislodge. "Naming," notes one expert, "is never neutral."

"To name is to collapse infinite complexity into a manageable symbol, and in that compression, whole worlds are won or lost," linguist Norazha Paiman wrote last month on Medium.

"When the British renamed places throughout India or Africa, they weren't just updating maps," Paiman wrote. "They were restructuring the conceptual frameworks through which people could relate to their own territories."

This is not Trump's first rebranding push

Trump's order to rename the Gulf of Mexico as the Gulf of America is perhaps the best-known result of Executive Order 14172, titled "Restoring Names That Honor American Greatness."

The renaming sent mapmakers, search engines and others into a flurry over whether to change the name. And it set off a legal dispute with The Associated Press over First Amendment freedoms that is still winding through the courts. The news outlet's access to events in the Oval Office and Air Force One was cut back starting in February after the AP said it would continue referring to the Gulf of Mexico in its copy, while noting Trump's wishes that it instead be renamed the Gulf of America.

It's unclear if Trump's name will stick universally — or go the way of "freedom fries," a brief attempt by some in the George W. Bush-era GOP to rebrand french fries after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

But there's evidence that at least for business in some places, the "Gulf of America" terminology has staying power. Chevron's earnings statements of late have referred to the Gulf of America, because "that's the position of the U.S. government now," CEO Mike Wirth said during a Jan. 31 call with investors.

And along the Gulf Coast in Republican Louisiana, leaders of the state's seafood industry call the body of water the Gulf of America, in part, because putting that slogan on local products might help beat back the influx of foreign shrimp flooding American markets, the Louisiana Illuminator news outlet reported.

Renaming is a bipartisan endeavor

The racial reckoning inspired by Floyd's killing rippled across the cultural landscape.

Quaker retired the Aunt Jemima brand after it had been served up at America's breakfast tables for 131 years, saying it recognized that the character's origins were "based on a racial stereotype." Eskimo Pies became Edy's. The Grammy-winning country band Lady Antebellum changed its name to Lady A, saying they were regretful and embarrassed that their former moniker was associated with slavery.

And Trump didn't start the fight over football. Democratic President Barack Obama, in fact, told The Associated Press in 2013 that he would "think about changing" the name of the Washington Redskins if

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he owned the team.

Trump soon after posted to Twitter: "President should not be telling the Washington Redskins to change their name—our country has far bigger problems! FOCUS on them, not nonsense."

Fast-forward to July 20, 2025, when Trump posted that the Washington Commanders should change their name back to the Redskins.

"Times," the president wrote, "are different now."

What to know about soda sweeteners as sugar returns to American Coke

By DEE-ANN DURBIN and JONEL ALECCIA Associated Press

President Donald Trump teased the announcement last week, but the Coca-Cola Co. confirmed it Tuesday: a cane sugar-sweetened version of the beverage maker's trademark soda will be released in the U.S. this fall.

For decades, Coke and the makers of other soft drinks have generally used high fructose corn syrup or artificial sweeteners in their products manufactured in the U.S. But American consumers are increasingly looking for food and drinks with fewer and more natural ingredients, and beverage companies are responding.

PepsiCo and Dr Pepper have sold versions of their flagship sodas sweetened with cane sugar since 2009. Coca-Cola has sold Mexican Coke — which uses cane sugar — in the U.S. since 2005, but it's positioned a trendy alternative and sold in glass bottles. Coke with cane sugar will likely be more widely available.

Here are some frequently asked questions about the sweeteners in U.S. sodas:

What's the difference between cane sugar and high fructose corn syrup?

Many consumers know that consuming too many sweets can negatively affect their health, but soda drinkers sometimes debate if either cane sugar or high fructose corn syrup is better (or worse) than the other.

The short answer is that it doesn't make a difference, said Marion Nestle, one of the nation's top nutrition experts and professor emeritus at New York University.

High fructose corn syrup is made of the simple sugars glucose and fructose in liquid form. Cane sugar, also known as sucrose, is made of glucose and fructose bonded, but quickly split, Nestle explained.

Both are still sugars, with about the same amount of calories.

Whether a can of Coca-Cola contains one or the other, it will still be a sugary drink with about the same amount of calories and the same potential to increase well-documented health problems from obesity and diabetes to tooth decay.

Why did soda companies switch from using sugar to high fructose corn syrup?

High fructose corn syrup costs less. According to price data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the wholesale price of HFCS-55, the type of corn syrup most commonly used in beverages, averaged 49.4 cents per pound last year. The average wholesale price of refined cane sugar was 60.1 cents per pound, while the average wholesale price of refined beet sugar was 51.7 cents per pound.

But high fructose corn syrup has advantages beyond price. According to a 2008 paper in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, high fructose corn syrup is more stable than sugar when added to acidic beverages, and it can be pumped directly from delivery trucks into storage and mixing tanks.

Why is high fructose corn syrup less expensive than sugar?

Tariffs are one reason. The U.S. has had barriers on sugar imports almost back to its founding; the first went into place in 1789, according to the Cato Institute, a think tank that advocates free markets.

Since the passage of the Farm Bill in 1981, the U.S. has had a system in place that raises duties on sugar once a certain amount has been imported. The U.S. also has domestic production controls that limit supplies, keeping prices higher.

But high fructose corn syrup is also cheaper because of the federal government's billions of dollars in subsidies for corn farmers. Loans, direct payments, insurance premium subsidies and surplus crop purchases all lower farmers' costs — and the price of the corn they grow.

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Are sugar replacements used in diet sodas safe?

While cutting back on added sugars has documented benefits, replacing them with artificial sweeteners is complicated, too.

Coca-Cola Zero Sugar, introduced in 2017, uses the artificial sweetener aspartame and the natural sweetener stevia in its recipe.

But research suggests that aspartame may be linked to cancer. In 2023, a committee for the World Health Organization determined that aspartame should be categorized "as possibly carcinogenic to humans."

While that doesn't mean that diet soda causes cancer, the scientific committee concluded that there may be a possible link between aspartame and liver cancer, and that the issue should be studied further.

The U.S. Food and Drug administration disagreed with the WHO panel, citing "significant shortcomings" in the research that backed the conclusion.

FDA officials noted that aspartame is one of the most studied food additives and said "FDA scientists do not have safety concerns" when it is used under approved conditions.

Stevia, a plant-based sweetener, appears to be "a safe choice," according to the Center for Science in the Public Interest, an advocacy group.

Ozzy Osbourne, godfather of heavy metal who led Black Sabbath, dies at 76

By MARK KENNEDY AP Entertainment Writer

Ozzy Osbourne, the gloomy, demon-invoking lead singer of the pioneering band Black Sabbath who became the throaty, growling voice — and drug-and-alcohol ravaged id — of heavy metal, died Tuesday, just weeks after his farewell show. He was 76.

Either clad in black or bare-chested, the singer was often the target of parents' groups for his imagery and once caused an uproar for biting the head off a bat. Later, he would reveal himself to be a doddering and sweet father on the reality TV show "The Osbournes."

Black Sabbath's 1969 self-titled debut LP has been likened to the Big Bang of heavy metal. It came during the height of the Vietnam War and crashed the hippie party, dripping menace and foreboding.

The band's second album, "Paranoid," included such classic tunes as "War Pigs," "Iron Man" and "Fairies Wear Boots." The song "Paranoid" only reached No. 61 on the Billboard Hot 100 but became in many ways the band's signature song. Both albums were voted among the top 10 greatest heavy metal albums of all time by readers of Rolling Stone magazine.

"Black Sabbath are the Beatles of heavy metal. Anybody who's serious about metal will tell you it all comes down to Sabbath," Dave Navarro of the band Jane's Addiction wrote in a 2010 tribute in Rolling Stone.

Sabbath fired Osbourne in 1979 for his legendary excesses, like showing up late for rehearsals and missing gigs. He reemerged the next year as a solo artist with "Blizzard of Ozz" and the following year's "Diary of a Madman," both hard rock classics that went multi-platinum and spawned enduring favorites such as "Crazy Train," "Goodbye to Romance," "Flying High Again" and "You Can't Kill Rock and Roll." Osbourne was twice inducted to the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame — once with Sabbath in 2006 and again in 2024 as a solo artist.

The original Sabbath lineup reunited for the first time in 20 years in July 2025 in the U.K. for what Osbourne said was his final concert. "Let the madness begin!" he told 42,000 fans.

Metallica, Guns N Roses, Slayer, Tool, Pantera, Gojira, Alice in Chains, Lamb of God, Halestorm, Anthrax, Rival Sons and Mastodon did sets. Tom Morello, Steven Tyler, Billy Corgan, Ronnie Wood, Travis Barker, Sammy Hagar, Yungblud and Vernon Reid made appearances.

Osbourne embodied the excesses of metal. His outlandish exploits included relieving himself on the Alamo, snorting a line of ants off a sidewalk and, most memorably, biting the head off a live bat that a fan threw onstage during a 1981 concert. (He said he thought it was rubber.)

Osbourne was sued in 1987 by parents of a 19-year-old teen who died by suicide while listening to his song "Suicide Solution." The lawsuit was dismissed. Osbourne said the song was really about the dangers

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of alcohol, which caused the death of his friend Bon Scott, lead singer of AC/DC.

Then-Cardinal John J. O'Connor of New York claimed in 1990 that Osbourne's songs led to demonic possession and even suicide. "You are ignorant about the true meaning of my songs," the singer wrote back. "You have also insulted the intelligence of rock fans all over the world."

Audiences at Osbourne shows could be mooned or spit on by the singer, but the Satan-invoking Osbourne would usually send the crowds home with their ears ringing and a hearty "God bless!"

He started an annual tour — Ozzfest — in 1996 after he was rejected from the lineup of what was then the top touring music festival, Lollapalooza. Ozzfest would host such bands as Slipknot, Tool, Megadeth, Rob Zombie, System of a Down, Limp Bizkit and Linkin Park.

In 2013, he reunited with Black Sabbath for the dour, raw "13," which reached No. 1 on the U.K. Albums Chart. In 2019, he had a Top 10 hit when featured on Post Malone's "Take What You Want," Osbourne's first song in the Top 10 since 1989.

In 2020, he released the album "Ordinary Man," which had as its title song a duet with Elton John. "I've been a bad guy, been higher than the blue sky/And the truth is I don't wanna die an ordinary man," he sang. In 2022, he landed his first career back-to-back No. 1 rock radio singles from his album "Patient Number 9," which featured collaborations with Jeff Beck, Eric Clapton, Robert Trujillo and Duff McKagan. It earned four Grammy nominations, winning two. (Osbourne won five Grammys over his lifetime.)

At the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame induction ceremony in 2024, Jack Black called him "greatest frontman in the history of rock 'n' roll" and "the Jack Nicholson of rock."

John Michael Osbourne was raised in the gritty city of Birmingham, England. Kids in school nicknamed him Ozzy, short for his surname.

In the late 1960s, Osbourne teamed up with bassist Terry "Geezer" Butler, guitarist Tony Iommi and drummer Bill Ward. They named themselves after the American title of the classic Italian horror movie "I Tre Volti Della Paura," starring Boris Karloff: Black Sabbath.

The music was all about industrial guitar riffs and disorienting changes in time signatures, along with lyrics that spoke of alienation and doom. "All day long I think of things but nothing seems to satisfy/Think I'll lose my mind if I don't find something to pacify," Osbourne sang in one song.

The Guardian in 2009 said the band "introduced working-class anger, stoner sludge grooves and witchy horror-rock to flower power."

Much later, a wholesome Osbourne would be revealed when "The Osbournes," which ran on MTV from 2002-2005, showed this one-time self-proclaimed madman drinking Diet Cokes as he struggled to find the History Channel on his new satellite television.

He is survived by Sharon, and his children.

Gaza has been at risk of famine for months, experts say. Here's why they haven't declared one

By JAMEY KEATEN and SAM MEDNICK Associated Press

For months, U.N. officials, aid groups and experts have warned that Palestinians in the Gaza Strip are on the brink of famine without formally declaring one.

Even though Israel eased a 2 1/2-month blockade on the territory in May, aid groups say only a trickle of assistance is getting into the enclave and that Palestinians face catastrophic levels of hunger 21 months into the Israeli offensive launched after Hamas' Oct. 7 attack.

Hundreds have been killed by Israeli forces as they try to reach aid sites or convoys, according to witnesses, health officials and the United Nations' human rights office. The military says it has only fired warning shots.

Despite the mounting desperation, there's been no formal declaration of famine. Here's why:

UN says Gaza's hunger crisis is worsening

Gaza's population of roughly 2 million Palestinians relies almost entirely on outside aid. Israel's offensive has wiped out what was already limited local food production. Israel's blockade, along with ongoing fight-

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ing and chaos inside the territory, has further limited people's access to food.

The U.N. World Food Program says Gaza's hunger crisis has reached "new and astonishing levels of desperation." Nearly 100,000 women and children are suffering from severe acute malnutrition, and a third of Gaza's population is going days without eating, Ross Smith, the agency's director for emergencies, said Monday.

Gaza's Health Ministry said Tuesday that more than 100 people have died while showing signs of hunger and malnutrition, mostly children.

It did not give their exact cause of death. The ministry, part of the Hamas-run government, is staffed by medical professionals and its figures on war deaths are seen by the U.N. and other experts as the most reliable estimate of casualties.

Famine occurs when these conditions are met

The leading international authority on food crises is the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, or IPC, first set up in 2004 during the famine in Somalia. It includes more than a dozen U.N. agencies, aid groups, governments and other bodies.

Famine can appear in pockets — sometimes small ones — and a formal classification requires caution.

The IPC has only declared famine a few times — in Somalia in 2011, and South Sudan in 2017 and 2020, and last year in parts of Sudan's western Darfur region. Tens of thousands are believed to have died in Somalia and South Sudan.

It rates an area as in famine when at least two of three conditions are confirmed:

- 20% of households have an extreme lack of food, or are essentially starving.
- At least 30% of children six months to five years old suffer from acute malnutrition or wasting, meaning they're too thin for their height.
- At least two people or four children under five per 10,000 are dying daily due to starvation or the interaction of malnutrition and disease.

Gaza poses a major challenge for experts because Israel severely limits access to the territory, making it difficult and in some cases impossible to gather data.

Famine declarations usually come from the U.N. or governments

While the IPC says it is the "primary mechanism" used by the international community to conclude whether a famine is happening or projected, it typically doesn't make such a declaration itself.

Often, U.N. officials together with governments will make a formal statement based on an analysis from the IPC.

But the IPC says once a famine is declared it's already too late. While it can prevent further deaths, it means many people will have died by the time a famine is declared.

It's not always clear that hunger is the cause of death

Most cases of severe malnutrition in children arise through a combination of lack of nutrients along with an infection, leading to diarrhea and other symptoms that cause dehydration, said Alex de Waal, author of "Mass Starvation: The History and Future of Famine" and executive director of the World Peace Foundation.

"There are no standard guidelines for physicians to classify cause of death as 'malnutrition' as opposed to infection," he said.

When famine occurs, there are often relatively few deaths from hunger alone, with far more people dying from a combination of malnutrition, disease and other forms of deprivation. All of these count as excess deaths — separate from violence — that can be attributed to a food crisis or famine, he said.

The war has made it hard to get accurate information

Israel's offensive has gutted Gaza's health system and displaced some 90% of its population. With hospitals damaged and overwhelmed by war casualties, it can be difficult to screen people for malnutrition and collect precise data on deaths.

"Data and surveillance systems are incomplete and eroded," said James Smith, an emergency doctor and lecturer in humanitarian policy at the University College London who spent more than two months in Gaza.

"Which means that all health indicators — and the death toll — are known to be an underestimation,"

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he said.

Even when famine is declared, the response can be lacking

A declaration of famine should in theory galvanize the international community to rush food to those who need it. But with aid budgets already stretched, and war and politics throwing up obstacles, that doesn't always happen.

"There is not a big, huge bank account" to draw on, said OCHA's Laerke. "The fundamental problem is that we build the fire engine as we respond."

Aid groups say plenty of food and other aid has been gathered on Gaza's borders, but Israel is allowing only a small amount to enter. Within Gaza, gunfire, chaos and looting have plagued the distribution of food.

The Israeli military says it has facilitated the entry of some 4,500 aid trucks since mid-May. That's far below the 600 trucks a day that aid groups say are needed, and which entered during a six-week ceasefire earlier this year. An Israeli-backed American contractor is also distributing food.

U.N. agencies say Israeli restrictions, and the breakdown of law and order, make it difficult to distribute the food that does come in.

"Only a massive scale-up in food aid distributions can stabilize this spiraling situation, calm anxieties and rebuild the trust within communities that more food is coming," the World Food Program said over the weekend. "An agreed ceasefire is long overdue."

What to know about Ghislaine Maxwell, Jeffrey Epstein's former girlfriend

By JOHN SEEWER Associated Press

Once a British socialite who lived a life of luxury, Ghislaine Maxwell today is confined in a U.S. prison after being convicted of helping financier Jeffrey Epstein sexually abuse underage girls.

Now, three years after she was sentenced, a top U.S. Department of Justice official plans to personally interview Maxwell to find out if she has information about anyone who has committed crimes against Epstein's victims.

It isn't clear what Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche might learn from the meeting. Maxwell has long claimed she is innocent and had no knowledge that Epstein, or anyone else, was sexually abusing teenagers.

Epstein killed himself while awaiting trial in 2019, but his case has generated endless attention and conspiracy theories because of his and Maxwell's links to famous people, including royals, presidents and billionaires.

President Donald Trump has suggested in the past there was a cover-up. Now his administration is dealing with the fallout after the Justice Department initially announced two weeks ago that it would not release any more evidence about the Epstein investigation. The department has since changed course, at Trump's urging.

Who is Ghislaine Maxwell?

She grew up as the daughter of the late British billionaire Robert Maxwell, a former member of Parliament whose publishing empire included the Daily Mirror, one of Britain's biggest tabloid newspapers, and the book publisher Macmillan.

As a college student, she became close friends with Britain's Prince Andrew, who would later invite her to royal residences, including Windsor Castle.

But the Maxwell family was shattered by scandal. After Robert Maxwell fell from his yacht and died in 1991, investigators accused him of embezzling huge sums of money from his companies' pension funds.

Soon after her father's death, Ghislaine Maxwell was photographed at a memorial sitting next to Epstein, an American money manager.

Maxwell dated Epstein but later also became his employee, taking on a variety of tasks, including hiring staff for his six homes.

How did Ghislaine Maxwell help Epstein?

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Part of Maxwell's household duties included hiring a steady stream of young people to give massages to Epstein.

"As far as I'm concerned, everyone who came to his house was an adult professional person," she said in a deposition nearly a decade ago.

But police and prosecutors said many of those "masseuses" were underage girls who were paid for sexual acts.

Epstein was arrested in 2006 in Palm Beach, Florida, after multiple girls, including students from a local high school, spoke to police. But he ultimately pleaded guilty in 2008 to a single charge of procuring a person under 18 for prostitution and served 13 months in jail.

Maxwell wasn't charged until 2021. At her trial, four women testified that Maxwell groomed them as teenagers to participate in sexual acts with Epstein and sometimes participated in the abuse.

Maxwell's lawyers argued that the women's recollections had been manipulated by lawyers pursuing civil lawsuits, pointing to inconsistencies in their testimony.

A jury convicted Maxwell of sex trafficking, conspiracy and transportation of a minor for illegal sexual activity.

Why do investigators want to talk to Maxwell now?

The Justice Department's request to talk with Maxwell comes at a time when it is dealing with backlash from some of President Donald Trump's supporters, some of whom believe there has been a government cover-up to protect Epstein's rich and powerful friends from being implicated in his crimes.

The department asked a judge last week to unseal transcripts of the grand jury sessions that led to indictments against Epstein and Maxwell.

The Justice Department said in a memo that it had not uncovered evidence to charge anyone else in connection with Epstein's abuse. But Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche said on social media that "if Ghislane Maxwell has information about anyone who has committed crimes against victims, the FBI and the DOJ will hear what she has to say."

He said he anticipated meeting with Maxwell in the coming days.

Will she talk?

It remains to be seen. One of her lawyers, David Oscar Markus, said Tuesday that they were in discussions with the government.

"Ghislaine will always testify truthfully," he said in the statement.

Maxwell did not testify at her trial but gave two lengthy depositions years ago. She repeatedly said that one of Epstein's accusers, who claimed he had trafficked her to powerful men, including Prince Andrew, was a liar who fabricated her story.

Where is Ghislaine Maxwell now?

Maxwell is serving a 20-year sentence and is currently at a low-security federal prison in Tallahassee, Florida.

Her attorneys have appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court after a lower court upheld her convictions last fall.

Trump administration withdraws from UNESCO again, only 2 years after US rejoined

By FARNOUSH AMIRI and SAMUEL PETREQUIN Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The Trump administration announced Tuesday that it will once again withdraw from the U.N. cultural agency UNESCO, an expected move that has the U.S. further retreating from international organizations.

The decision to pull U.S. funding and participation from UNESCO comes two years after the Biden administration rejoined following a controversial, five-year absence that began during President Donald Trump's first term. The White House cited similar concerns as it did in 2018, saying it believes U.S. involvement is not in its national interest and accusing the agency of promoting anti-Israel speech.

The decision, which won't go into effect until December 2026, will deal a blow to an agency known for

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preserving cultural heritage through its UNESCO World Heritage Sites program — which recognizes significant landmarks for protection, ranging from the Taj Mahal to Egypt's pyramids of Giza and the Grand Canyon National Park. The agency also empowers education and science across the globe.

It is the Trump administration's latest move to pull support for U.N. agencies under a larger campaign to reshape U.S. diplomacy. Under the "America First" approach, the administration has pulled out of the U.N. World Health Organization and the top U.N. human rights body, while reassessing its funding for others. This has left the U.N., which is in the process of its own massive overhaul, reevaluating core programs and initiatives and what the international body would look like without support from the U.S. — its largest donor.

State Department spokesperson Tammy Bruce said in a statement that the withdrawal was linked to UNESCO's perceived agenda to "advance divisive social and cultural causes."

She added that UNESCO's decision in 2011 "to admit the 'State of Palestine' as a Member State is highly problematic, contrary to U.S. policy, and contributed to the proliferation of anti-Israel rhetoric within the organization."

UNESCO director general Audrey Azoulay said she "deeply" regrets the U.S. decision but said it was expected and that the agency "has prepared for it." She also denied accusations of anti-Israel bias, saying it contradicts "the reality of UNESCO's efforts, particularly in the field of Holocaust education and the fight against antisemitism."

Azoulay added that "the reasons put forward by the United States of America are the same as seven years ago, even though the situation has changed profoundly, political tensions have receded, and UNESCO today constitutes a rare forum for consensus on concrete and action-oriented multilateralism."

Danny Danon, Israel's ambassador to the U.N., celebrated the announcement, saying in a statement that it is a "fitting response to the consistent misguided anti-Israel bias of UNESCO, an organization that has lost its way."

The Biden administration had rejoined UNESCO in 2023 after citing concerns that China was filling the gap left by the U.S. in UNESCO policymaking, notably in setting standards for artificial intelligence and technology education.

"Unilaterally withdrawing the United States from UNESCO is another assault by the Trump administration on international cooperation and U.S. global leadership," Rep. Gregory Meeks, the top Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said.

"This decision cedes more ground to U.S. competitors, especially China, who will take advantage of America's absence to further shape the international system in their favor."

The withdrawal, which was first reported by the New York Post, came after a review ordered by the Trump administration earlier this year. While the U.S. had previously provided a notable share of the agency's budget, UNESCO has diversified its funding sources in recent years as the U.S. contribution has decreased. Today, American assistance represents only 8% of the agency's total budget.

Bruce hinted later Tuesday that further U.S. withdrawal from international organizations could be coming as a result of the ongoing review to ensure "continued U.S. participation in international organizations will focus on advancing American interests with clarity and conviction."

Azoulay pledged that UNESCO will carry out its missions despite "inevitably reduced resources." The agency said that it is not considering any staff layoffs at this stage.

"UNESCO's purpose is to welcome all the nations of the world, and the United States of America is and always will be welcome," she said. "We will continue to work hand in hand with all our American partners in the private sector, academia and non-profit organizations, and will pursue our political dialogue with the U.S. administration and Congress."

The U.S. previously pulled out of UNESCO under the Reagan administration in 1984 because it viewed the agency as mismanaged, corrupt and used to advance the interests of the Soviet Union. It rejoined in 2003 during George W. Bush's presidency.

France, where UNESCO is based, stated in a press release that it regrets the U.S.'s decision to withdraw from the agency, which was founded in 1946 "to prevent conflicts through education, culture and tolerance."

"France supports UNESCO, which backs several of its priorities at international level, particularly access to education for all, the protection of endangered heritage, the protection of our oceans, the responsible development of artificial intelligence and the fight against anti-Semitism and hate speech," the French foreign ministry said.

The government was once a steady partner for nonprofits. That's changing

By THALIA BEATY Associated Press

Dawn Price signs rent checks worth about \$160,000 every month for 79 people that her nonprofit helps house in Laguna Beach, California.

Usually, she logs into an online portal to withdraw enough from an account funded by a grant from the federal housing agency. But in February, she couldn't. Access had been temporarily cut off for many housing organizations as part of the Trump administration's cuts and funding freezes.

"That was just a sea change for us for those dollars to be so immediately at risk," said Price, the executive director of Friendship Shelter, which started in 1987 as a community organization. Access was eventually restored but the episode took a toll.

"Government moves slowly usually, and I think what was so disorienting early on was government was moving really fast," she said.

In the early days of his second term, President Donald Trump froze, cut or threatened to cut a huge range of social services programs from public safety to early childhood education to food assistance and services for refugee resettlement. Staffing cuts to federal agencies have also contributed to delays and uncertainty around future grant funds. Altogether, his policies are poised to upend decades of partnerships the federal government has built with nonprofits to help people in their communities.

This vast and interconnected set of programs funded by taxpayers has been significantly dismantled in just months, nonprofit leaders, researchers and funders say. And even deeper, permanent cuts are still possible. That uncertainty is also taking a toll on their staff and communities, the leaders said.

In response to questions about the cuts to grant funding, White House spokesperson Kush Desai said, "Instead of government largesse that's often riddled with corruption, waste, fraud, and abuse, the Trump administration is focused on unleashing America's economic resurgence to fuel Americans' individual generosity."

He pointed to a new deduction for charitable giving included in the recently passed tax and spending law that he said encourages Americans' "innate altruism."

But experts say private donations will not be enough to meet the needs.

In 2021, \$267 billion was granted to nonprofits from all levels of government, according to an analysis by the Urban Institute published in February. While the data includes tax-exempt organizations like local food pantries as well as universities and nonprofit hospitals, it underestimates the total funding that nonprofits receive from the government. It includes grants, but not contracts for services nor reimbursements from programs like Medicare. It also excludes the smallest nonprofits, which file a different, abbreviated tax form.

However, the figure does give a sense of the scale of the historic — and, until now, solid — relationship between the public sector and nonprofits over the last 50 years. Now, this system is at risk and leaders like Price say the cost of undoing it will be "catastrophic."

Government funding to nonprofits reaches far and wide

The Urban Institute's analysis shows more than half of nonprofits in every state received government grants in 2021.

In the vast majority of the country, the typical nonprofit would run a deficit without government funding. Only in two Congressional districts — one including parts of Orange County, California, and another in the suburbs west of Atlanta — would a typical nonprofit not be in the red if they lost all of their public grant funding, the analysis found.

But in Orange County, famous for its stunning beaches, mansions and extraordinary wealth, funders,

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nonprofits and researchers said that finding surprised them. In part, that's because of major economic inequalities in the county and its high cost of living.

Taryn Palumbo, executive director of Orange County Grantmakers, said nonprofits are not as optimistic about their resiliency.

"They are seeing their budgets getting slashed by 50% or 40%," she said. "Or they're having to look to restructure programs that they are running or how they're serving or the number of people that they're serving."

Last year, the local Samueli Foundation commissioned a study of nonprofit needs in part because they were significantly increasing their grantmaking from \$18.8 million in 2022 to an estimated \$125 million in 2025. They found local nonprofits reported problems maintaining staff, a deep lack of investment in their operations and a dearth of flexible reserve funds.

The foundation responded by opening applications for both unrestricted grants and to support investments in buildings or land. Against this \$10 million in potential awards, they received 1,242 applications for more than \$250 million, said Lindsey Spindle, the foundation's president.

"It tells a really stark picture of how unbelievably deep and broad the need is," Spindle said. "There is not a single part of the nonprofit sector that has not responded to these funds. Every topic you can think of: poverty, animal welfare, arts and culture, civil rights, domestic abuse... They're telling us loud and clear that they are struggling to stay alive."

Charitable organizations have held a special role in the U.S.

One of the founding stories of the United States is the importance of the voluntary sector, of neighbors helping neighbors and of individuals solving social problems. While other liberal democracies built strong welfare states, the U.S. has preferred to look to the charitable sector to provide a substantial part of social services.

Since the 1960s, the federal government has largely funded those social services by giving money to nonprofits, universities, hospitals and companies. Several new policies converged at that time to create this system, including the expansion of the federal income tax during World War II and the codification of tax-exempt charitable organizations in 1954. Then, the Kennedy and Johnson administrations started to fund nonprofits directly with federal money as part of urban renewal and Great Society programs.

"It was a key approach of midcentury liberalism of addressing issues of poverty, sort of making a reference to civil rights and racial inequality, but not growing the size of government," said Claire Dunning, an assistant professor of public policy at the University of Maryland, College Park. Conservatives also tended to support working through local, private, nonprofit organizations, though for different reasons than liberals, she said.

With various expansions and cuts during different presidencies, the federal government has continued to fund nonprofits at significant levels, essentially hiding the government in plain sight, Dunning said. The size and importance of the nonprofit apparatus became suddenly visible in January when the Trump administration sought to freeze federal grants and loans.

Dunning said the speed, hostility and scale of the proposed cuts broke with the long legacy of bipartisan support for nonprofits.

"People had no idea that the public health information or services they are receiving, their Meals on Wheels program, their afterschool tutoring program, the local park cleanup were actually enabled by public government dollars," she said.

A coalition of nonprofits challenged the freeze in court in a case that is ongoing, but in the six months since, the administration has cut, paused or discontinued a vast array of programs and grants. The impacts of some of those policy changes have been felt immediately, but many will not hit the ground until current grant funding runs out, which could be in months or years depending on the programs.

Private donations can't replace scale of government support

Friendship Shelter in Laguna Beach has an annual budget of about \$15 million, \$11.5 million of which comes from government sources. Price said the government funding is "braided" in complex ways to house

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and support 330 people. They've already lost a rental reimbursement grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. But the Samueli Foundation stepped in to backfill those lost funds for three years.

That kind of support is extremely unusual, she said.

"We don't know of any large-scale private philanthropy response to keeping people housed because it's a forever commitment," Price said. "That person is in housing and is going to need the subsidy for the rest of their lives. These are seriously disabled people with multiple issues that they're facing that they need help with."

She also believes that even in a wealthy place like Orange County, private donors are not prepared to give five, six or eight times as much as they do currently. Donors already subsidize their government grants, which she said pay for 69% of the actual program costs.

"We are providing this service to our government at a loss, at a business loss, and then making up that loss with these Medicaid dollars and also the private fundraising," she said.

She said her organization has discussed having to put people out of housing back on to the streets if the government funding is cut further.

"That would be, I think, a signal to me that something is deeply, deeply wrong with how we're looking at these issues," said Price, adding, "If I was placing a bet, I would bet that we have enough good still in government to prevent that."

Justice Department wants to interview Jeffrey Epstein's former girlfriend Ghislaine Maxwell

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Department of Justice wants to interview Jeffrey Epstein's former girlfriend Ghislaine Maxwell, who was convicted of helping the financier sexually abuse underage girls and is now serving a lengthy prison sentence, a senior official said Tuesday.

If Maxwell "has information about anyone who has committed crimes against victims, the FBI and the DOJ will hear what she has to say," Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche said in a post on X, adding that President Donald Trump "has told us to release all credible evidence." A lawyer for Maxwell confirmed there were discussions with the government.

The overture to attorneys for Maxwell, who in 2022 was sentenced to 20 years in prison, is part of an ongoing Justice Department effort to cast itself as transparent following fierce backlash from parts of Trump's base over an earlier refusal to release additional records in the Epstein investigation.

As part of that effort, the Justice Department, acting at the direction of the Republican president, last week asked a court to unseal grand jury transcripts from the case.

Epstein, who killed himself in his New York jail cell in 2019 while awaiting trial, sexually abused children hundreds of times over more than a decade, exploiting vulnerable girls as young as 14, authorities say. He couldn't have done so without the help of Maxwell, his longtime companion, prosecutors say.

The Justice Department had said in a two-page memo this month that it had not uncovered evidence to charge anyone else in connection with Epstein's abuse. But Blanche said in his social media post that the Justice Department "does not shy away from uncomfortable truths, nor from the responsibility to pursue justice wherever the facts may lead."

He said in his post that, at the direction of Attorney General Pam Bondi, he has "communicated with counsel for Ms. Maxwell to determine whether she would be willing to speak with prosecutors from the Department." He said he anticipated meeting with Maxwell in the coming days.

A lawyer for Maxwell, David Oscar Markus, said Tuesday in a statement: "I can confirm that we are in discussions with the government and that Ghislaine will always testify truthfully. We are grateful to President Trump for his commitment to uncovering the truth in this case."

Two judges who will decide whether to release the grand jury transcripts, Paul Engelmayer and Richard Berman, noted in nearly identical orders Tuesday that the records can be made public only under special

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circumstances, and they said the Justice Department hadn't provided them with enough information.

They gave the government until July 29 to explain why it wants the transcripts released and describe how much of the information has previously been made public. They also want to hear from Epstein's victims and from Maxwell by Aug. 5 as to whether they oppose or support disclosure of the records.

Coca-Cola confirms a cane-sugar version of its trademark cola is coming to the US

By DEE-ANN DURBIN AP Business Writer

Coca-Cola said Tuesday it will add a cane-sugar version of its trademark cola to its U.S. lineup this fall, confirming a recent announcement by President Donald Trump.

Trump said in a social media post last week that Coca-Cola had agreed to use real cane sugar in its flagship product in the U.S., which has been sweetened with high fructose corn syrup since the 1980s. Coke didn't immediately confirm the change, but promised new offerings soon.

On Tuesday, Coca-Cola Chairman and CEO James Quincey said Coke will expand its product range "to reflect consumer interest in differentiated experiences."

"We appreciate the president's enthusiasm for our Coca-Cola brand," Quincey said in a conference call with investors Tuesday. "We are definitely looking to use the whole tool kit of available sweetening options."

Quincey noted that Coke uses cane sugar in some other U.S. drinks, like its Simply brand lemonade and Honest Tea. Coke has also sold Mexican Coke, which is made with cane sugar, in the U.S. since 2005.

"We're always looking for opportunities to innovate and see whether there's an intersection of new ideas and where consumer preferences are evolving," Quincey said. "It's a good sign that the industry, including ourselves, are trying lots of different things."

Rivals PepsiCo and Dr Pepper have been selling versions of their trademark colas sweetened with cane sugar in the U.S. since 2009.

Asked if Coke would also consider introducing a prebiotic version of its trademark cola — as PepsiCo did this week — Quincey said the company is currently selling a Coke with added fiber in Japan and is studying consumer response to it.

Quincey said consumer demand for its products improved in the second quarter in many markets, including China, Europe, Africa and North America.

"I would I would say overall that the global economy and the global consumer remains resilient," Quincey said.

But early monsoons and conflict hurt demand in India, and Quincey said demand in Thailand and Indonesia was also weaker than expected. Quincey also said lower-income consumers in the U.S. and elsewhere have also pulled back on spending.

Global case volumes of Coca-Cola fell 1%. Juice, dairy and plant-based beverages fell 4%, Coke said. Sports drink case volumes were down 3%, as higher demand in North America was offset by declines in Latin America.

One bright spot was Coca-Cola Zero Sugar, which saw case volumes grow 14%. Traditional Coca-Cola still far outsells the zero-sugar variety, but consumer demand for zero-sugar versions is growing much more quickly.

In North America, case volumes fell 1%, but that was an improvement from the first quarter, when they were down 3%.

Quincey said Hispanic sales in the U.S. returned to normal levels by the end of June. They had plummeted starting in February, when a social media video began circulating that claimed Coke was reporting its own workers to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers.

Quincey said the claim was false. The company has been trying to win back Hispanic consumers with targeted deals and ads touting the company's local economic impact.

"It was still a headwind in the second quarter but the issue is now largely resolved," Quincey said Tuesday.

Coca-Cola reported better-than-expected earnings in the second quarter as higher prices offset the

weaker volumes. Coke said pricing rose 6% globally.

Revenue for the Atlanta company rose 1% to \$12.5 billion. Adjusted for one-time items, quarterly revenue was \$12.6 billion. That was in line with Wall Street's forecast, according to analysts polled by FactSet.

Net income jumped 58% to \$3.8 billion. Coke's adjusted net income was 87 cents, which was higher than the 83 cents Wall Street forecast.

Coke said it now expects full-year adjusted earnings to grow 8%. At the start of the year, Coke had expected earnings to grow 8% to 10%, but in April it lowered that range to 7% to 9%. Coke earned \$2.88 per share in 2024.

Shares of Coca-Cola Co. were down 1% in early trading Tuesday.

Hunter Biden lashes out at George Clooney, other Democrats, over Joe Biden's 2024 campaign

By MEG KINNARD and DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Former President Joe Biden's son Hunter, seen by some as the problem child of the Democratic Party for legal and drug-related woes that brought negative attention to his father, is lashing out against Democratic "elites" and others over the way he says his father was treated during last year's presidential campaign.

Hunter Biden spoke publicly in recent interviews about last year's election, when Joe Biden ultimately dropped his bid and Donald Trump won the White House. In a three-hour, expletive-filled online interview with Andrew Callaghan of Channel 5, he directed ire toward actor and Democratic Party donor George Clooney for his decision to call on the elder Biden to abandon his 2024 reelection bid.

He also ranted against longtime Democratic advisers he accused of making money off the party and trading off previous electoral successes, but not helping candidates' current efforts.

The lengthy screed made plain the younger Biden's feelings that his father was mistreated by those around him in the waning days of his candidacy and administration. He also laid bare critiques of the party's operation and operatives that, he says, aren't well-serving its opposition to Trump and the Republican Party.

Here's a look at some of the moments in Hunter Biden's interview:

He blasted George Clooney

Hunter Biden spared no feelings in his assessment of the actor, questioning why anyone should listen to the "Ocean's Eleven" star.

Clooney supported Joe Biden's bid for a second term, even headlining a record-setting fundraiser for the then-president, but changed his stance after Biden's disastrous debate performance against Trump in June 2024.

Clooney made his feelings known in an opinion piece in The New York Times, adding his voice to mounting calls for the then-81-year-old president to drop his presidential bid. Biden ended up leaving the race a few weeks later and endorsed his vice president, Kamala Harris, who went on to lose to Trump.

"What right do you have to step on a man who's given 52 years of his f—— life to the services of this country and decide that you, George Clooney, are going to take out basically a full page ad in the f—— New York Times to undermine the president," Hunter Biden said before he trailed off to talk about how Republicans are more unified than Democrats.

Los Angeles-based representatives for Clooney did not respond to an emailed request for comment.

Screed against longtime Democratic advisers

There were also weighty critiques of a number of longtime Democratic advisers.

Anita Dunn, a longtime Biden senior adviser, has made "\$40 to \$50 million" off of work for the Democratic Party, Hunter Biden said. James Carville, adviser to former President Bill Clinton, "hasn't run a race in 40 f—— years."

Former Obama strategist David Axelrod, Hunter Biden said, "had one success in his political life, and that was Barack Obama — and that was because of Barack Obama." Other former Obama aides who now

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host "Pod Save America," are "four white millionaires that are dining out on their association with Barack Obama from 16 years ago," he said.

One of the four, Tommy Vietor, Monday on social media applauded Hunter Biden's decision "to process the election, look inward, and hold himself accountable for how his family's insular, dare I say arrogant at times, approach to politics led to this catastrophic outcome we're all now living with."

In a message Tuesday, Axelrod told The Associated Press, "Never have the words 'no comment' felt more appropriate." Dunn did not immediately return a message seeking comment.

Biden's debate performance and Ambien effects

As for the debate performance, the fallout from which ultimately led to the calls for his father to step down from the 2024 presidential campaign, Hunter Biden said his father may have been recovering from Ambien, a medication that he had been given to help him sleep following trips in the weeks before the debate to Europe, as well as the Los Angeles fundraiser at which Clooney said his interactions with Biden made him feel the president wasn't mentally capable.

"He's 81 years old, he's tired as shit," Hunter Biden said. "They give him Ambien to be able to sleep, and he gets up on the stage and he looks like he's a deer in the headlights."

A spokesperson for Joe Biden declined to comment on the interview.

Another podcast with Jaime Harrison

Hunter Biden also appeared Monday in an episode of "At Our Table," a new podcast hosted by former Democratic National Committee Chair Jaime Harrison.

"Yeah, Joe Biden did get old. He got old before our eyes. ... But you know what? A few changes does not mean that you do not have the mental capacity to be able to do your job."

In that interview, Hunter Biden also talked about the calamitous presidential debate.

"And then they saw him at that debate. It was awful, and it was truly horrible," he said, saying he was opposed to holding it, given Trump's recent convictions on 34 felony charges in a New York hush money case.

To Harrison, Hunter Biden also addressed Clooney, saying, "I love George Clooney's movies, but I don't really give a s--- about what he thinks about who should be the nominee for the Democratic Party."

Asked by Harrison about his father's decision to quit the 2024 race, Hunter Biden said "I think that he could have won" but still made the right choice for Democrats broadly."

"I know that it wasn't a mistake in that moment," Hunter Biden said, adding that his father "chose to save the party" over saving himself.

Why are these podcasts coming out now?

The podcast drops come just days ahead of the expected beginning of court proceedings in a Los Angeles federal court.

Hunter Biden is suing Patrick Byrne, alleging that the former CEO of Overstock.com falsely claimed that Hunter Biden was reaching out to the Iranian government in the fall of 2021 and offering to have his father Joe Biden "unfreeze" \$8 billion in Iranian funds "in return for \$800 million being funneled into a numbered account for us."

In the waning days of his administration, Joe Biden pardoned his son, sparing the younger Biden a possible prison sentence for federal felony gun and tax convictions and reversing his past promises not to use the extraordinary powers of the presidency for the benefit of his family.

The Democratic president had previously said he would not pardon his son or commute his sentence after convictions in the two cases in Delaware and California. The move came weeks before Hunter Biden was set to receive his punishment after his trial conviction in the gun case and guilty plea on tax charges, and less than two months before Trump returned to the White House.

Trump's Labor Department proposes more than 60 rule changes in a push to deregulate workplaces

By CATHY BUSSEWITZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The U.S. Department of Labor is aiming to rewrite or repeal more than 60 “obsolete” workplace regulations, ranging from minimum wage requirements for home health care workers and people with disabilities to standards governing exposure to harmful substances.

If approved, the wide-ranging changes unveiled this month also would affect working conditions at construction sites and in mines, and limit the government’s ability to penalize employers if workers are injured or killed while engaging in inherently risky activities such as movie stunts or animal training.

The Labor Department says the goal is to reduce costly, burdensome rules imposed under previous administrations, and to deliver on President Donald Trump’s commitment to restore American prosperity through deregulation.

“The Department of Labor is proud to lead the way by eliminating unnecessary regulations that stifle growth and limit opportunity,” Secretary of Labor Lori Chavez-DeRemer said in a statement, which boasted the “most ambitious proposal to slash red tape of any department across the federal government.”

Critics say the proposals would put workers at greater risk of harm, with women and members of minority groups bearing a disproportionate impact.

“People are at very great risk of dying on the job already,” Rebecca Reindel, the AFL-CIO union’s occupational safety and health director, said. “This is something that is only going to make the problem worse.”

The proposed changes have several stages to get through before they can take effect, including a public comment period for each one.

Here’s a look at some of the rollbacks under consideration:

No minimum wage for home health care workers

Home health care workers help elderly or medically fragile people by preparing meals, administering medications, assisting with toilet use, accompanying clients to doctor appointments and performing other tasks. Under one of the Labor Department’s proposals, an estimated 3.7 million workers employed by home care agencies could be paid below the federal minimum wage — currently \$7.25 per hour — and made ineligible for overtime pay if they aren’t covered by corresponding state laws.

The proposed rule would reverse changes made in 2013 under former President Barack Obama and revert to a regulatory framework from 1975. The Labor Department says that by lowering labor and compliance costs, its revisions might expand the home care market and help keep frail individuals in their homes for longer.

Judy Conti, director of government affairs at the National Employment Law Project, said her organization plans to work hard to defeat the proposal. Home health workers are subject to injuries from lifting clients, and “before those (2013) regulations, it was very common for home care workers to work 50, 60 and maybe even more hours a week, without getting any overtime pay,” Conti said.

Others endorse the proposal, including the Independent Women’s Forum, a conservative nonprofit based in Virginia. Women often bear the brunt of family caregiving responsibilities, so making home care more affordable would help women balance work and personal responsibilities, the group’s president, Carrie Lukas, said.

“We’re pleased to see the Trump administration moving forward on rolling back some of what we saw as counterproductive micromanaging of relationships that were making it hard for people to get the care they need,” Lukas said.

Samantha Sanders, director of government affairs and advocacy at the nonprofit Economic Policy Institute, said the repeal would not constitute a win for women.

“Saying we actually don’t think they need those protections would be pretty devastating to a workforce that performs really essential work and is very heavily dominated by women, and women of color in particular,” Sanders said.

Protections for migrant farm workers

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Last year, the Labor Department finalized rules that provided protections to migrant farmworkers who held H-2A visas. The current administration says most of those rules placed unnecessary and costly requirements on employers.

Under the new proposal, the Labor Department would rescind a requirement for most employer-provided transportation to have seat belts for those agriculture workers.

The department is also proposing to reverse a 2024 rule that protected migrant farmworkers from retaliation for activities such as filing a complaint, testifying or participating in an investigation, hearing or proceeding.

"There's a long history of retaliation against workers who speak up against abuses in farm work. And with H-2A it's even worse because the employer can just not renew your visa," said Lori Johnson, senior attorney at Farmworker Justice.

Michael Marsh, president and CEO of the National Council of Agricultural Employers, applauded the de-regulation efforts, saying farmers were hit with thousands of pages of regulations pertaining to migrant farmworkers in recent years.

"Can you imagine a farmer and his or her spouse trying to navigate 3,000 new pages of regulation in 18 months and then be liable for every one of them?" he asked.

Adequate lighting for construction spaces

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration, part of the Labor Department, wants to rescind a requirement for employers to provide adequate lighting at construction sites, saying the regulation doesn't substantially reduce a significant risk.

OSHA said if employers fail to correct lighting deficiencies at construction worksites, the agency can issue citations under its "general duty clause." The clause requires employers to provide a place of employment free from recognized hazards which are likely to cause death or serious physical harm.

Worker advocates think getting rid of a specific construction site requirement is a bad idea. "There have been many fatalities where workers fall through a hole in the floor, where there's not adequate lighting," Reindel said. "It's a very obvious thing that employers should address, but unfortunately it's one of those things where we need a standard, and it's violated all the time."

Mine safety

Several proposals could impact safety procedures for mines. For example, employers have to submit plans for ventilation and preventing roof collapses in coal mines for review by the Labor Department's Mine Safety and Health Administration. Currently, MSHA district managers can require mine operators to take additional steps to improve those plans.

The Labor Department wants to end that authority, saying the current regulations give the district manager the ability to draft and create laws without soliciting comments or action by Congress.

Similarly, the department is proposing to strip district managers of their ability to require changes to mine health and safety training programs.

Limiting OSHA's reach

The general duty clause allows OSHA to punish employers for unsafe working conditions when there's no specific standard in place to cover a situation.

An OSHA proposal would exclude the agency from applying the clause to prohibit, restrict or penalize employers for "inherently risky professional activities that are intrinsic to professional, athletic, or entertainment occupations."

A preliminary analysis identified athletes, actors, dancers, musicians, other entertainers and journalists as among the types of workers the limitation would apply to.

"It is simply not plausible to assert that Congress, when passing the Occupational Safety and Health Act, silently intended to authorize the Department of Labor to eliminate familiar sports and entertainment practices, such as punt returns in the NFL, speeding in NASCAR, or the whale show at SeaWorld," the proposed rule reads.

Debbie Berkowitz, who served as OSHA chief of staff during the Obama administration, said she thinks

limiting the agency's enforcement authority would be a mistake.

"Once you start taking that threat away, you could return to where they'll throw safety to the wind, because there are other production pressures they have," Berkowitz said.

The tiny Pacific nation of Vanuatu turns to the world court as climate disasters mount

By ANNIKA HAMMERSCHLAG Associated Press

PORT VILA, Vanuatu (AP) — When John Warmington first began diving the reefs outside his home in Vanuatu's Havannah Harbor a decade ago, the coral rose like a sunken forest — tall stands of staghorns branched into yellow antlers, plate corals layered like canopies, and clouds of darting fish wove through the labyrinth.

"We used to know every inch of that reef," he said. "It was like a friend."

Now, it's unrecognizable. After Cyclone Pam battered the reef in 2015, sediment from inland rivers smothered the coral beds. Crown-of-thorns starfish swept in and devoured the recovering polyps. Back-to-back cyclones in 2023 crushed what was left. Then, in December 2024, a 7.3 magnitude earthquake shook the seabed.

What remains is a coral graveyard — bleached rubble scattered across the seafloor, habitats collapsed, life vanished. "We've come out of the water in tears," said Warmington, who has logged thousands of dives on this single reef. "We just see heartbreak."

That heartbreak is becoming more common across this Pacific island nation, where intensifying cyclones, rising seas and saltwater intrusion are reshaping coastlines and threatening daily life. Since 1993, sea levels around Vanuatu's shores have risen by about 6 millimeters (.24 inches) per year — significantly faster than the global average — and in some areas, tectonic activity has doubled that rate.

International court to opine on nations' obligations to address climate change

On Wednesday, Vanuatu will get its day in the world's highest court. The International Court of Justice will issue an advisory opinion on what legal obligations nations have to address climate change and what consequences they may face if they don't. The case, led by Vanuatu and backed by more than 130 countries, is seen as a potential turning point in international climate law.

"Seeing large, polluting countries just continue business as usual and not take the climate crisis seriously can get really sad and disappointing," said 16-year-old climate activist Vepaiamele Trief. "If they rule in our favor, that could change everything."

The opinion won't be legally binding, but could help shape future efforts to hold major emitters accountable and secure the funding and action small island nations need to adapt or survive.

It comes after decades of frustration for Pacific nations who've watched their homelands disappear. In Tuvalu, where the average elevation is just 2 meters (6.6 feet), more than a third of the population has applied for a climate migration visa to Australia. By 2100, much of the country is projected to be under water at high tide. In Nauru, the government has begun selling passports to wealthy foreigners — offering visa-free access to dozens of countries — in a bid to generate revenue for possible relocation efforts.

"The agreements being made at an international level between states are not moving fast enough," said Ralph Regenvanu, Vanuatu's minister for climate change. "They're definitely not being met according to what the science tells us needs to happen."

Vanuatu has already sought opinions from other international courts and is pushing for the recognition of ecocide — the destruction of the environment — as a crime under the International Criminal Court. "We have to keep fighting till the last bit," Regenvanu said.

How climate change is decimating Vanuatu

For children in Vanuatu, climate change isn't a theory — it's a classroom, or the lack of one.

At Sainte Jeanne D'Arc school on Efate Island, elementary school teacher Noellina Tavi has spent two of the last three years teaching her students in tents — first after the 2023 cyclones and again following the 2024 earthquake.

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With a shortage of emergency tents, her class was combined with another. Students fidget and lose focus. "It's too crowded," Tavi said. "We can't work peacefully."

When it rains, the tents turn cold and muddy. Tavi often sends students home so they don't get sick. Anytime a storm approaches, the tents must be dismantled, the furniture carried to shelter and the children sent home. "That disrupts their education for a whole week," she said.

In rural areas, extreme weather hits something even more basic: food security. On Nguna Island, farmer Kaltang Laban has watched cyclones wipe out the banana, cassava and taro crops that feed his community.

"After a cyclone, we would have nothing for months," he said. Now, with support from Save the Children, Laban and other farmers are storing preserved fruits and vegetables in a facility beside their gardens. "But not every community has this," he said.

More than 70% of Vanuatu's population lives in rural areas and depends on small-scale farming.

In 2025, USAID cut funding for a rainwater harvesting initiative designed to improve water access at cyclone evacuation centers in one of the country's most remote, drought-prone provinces, said Vomboe Shem, climate lead for Save the Children Vanuatu. The materials had already been shipped and distributed, but the project was halted.

"These disasters are happening over and over again," Shem said. "It's pushing our communities to their limits."

Not all of these impacts can be pinned solely on climate change, said Christina Shaw, CEO of the Vanuatu Environmental Science Society. Coastal development, tectonic sinking, volcanic eruptions, deforestation and pollution are also contributing to ecosystem decline.

"Vanuatu's environment is quite fragile by its inherent nature in that it's young with narrow reefs, has small amounts of topsoil and is insulted regularly by natural disasters," she said. "But we do have to think about the other human impacts on our environment as well."

The damage isn't limited to homes, gardens and reefs — it's reaching into places once thought to be untouchable.

On the island of Pele, village chief Amos Kalsont sits at his brother's grave as waves lap against broken headstones half-buried in sand. At high tide, both his brother's and father's graves sit just a few arm's lengths from the sea. Some homes and gardens have already been moved inland, and saltwater intrusion has tainted the community's primary drinking water source. Now, the community is considering relocating the entire village — but that would mean leaving the land their grandparents cleared by hand.

"The sea is catching up and we don't know what else to do," Kalsont said. "It's not fair that we have to face the consequences when we didn't contribute to this in the first place."

Many in Vanuatu remain committed to building something stronger and hope the rest of the world will support them.

"This is our future, and it's particularly our children's future, our grandchildren's future," said Regenvanu. "We just have to keep pushing for the best one we can."

Back in Havannah Harbor, John Warmington still dives the reef he considers part of his family. While much of it is gone, he and his wife Sandy have begun replanting coral fragments in hopes of restoring what's left.

"Our friend is still here," he said. "Life is coming back."

Zelenskyy renews offer to meet with Putin as officials say Russian attacks kill a child in Ukraine

By ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Tuesday renewed his offer to meet with Russia's Vladimir Putin and negotiate an end to the war in Ukraine, but hopes of progress were low as delegations prepared to hold another round of talks.

Russian forces, meanwhile, pounded four Ukrainian cities in nighttime attacks that officials said killed a child.

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Putin has spurned Zelenskyy's previous offers of a face-to-face meeting to end Europe's biggest conflict since World War II. But the Ukrainian leader insists that lower-level delegations like the ones expected for talks in Istanbul on Wednesday don't have the political heft to stop the fighting. The sides remain far apart on how to end the war begun by Russia's full-scale invasion on Feb. 24, 2022.

"Ukraine never wanted this war, and it is Russia that must end the war that it itself started," Zelenskyy said in a Telegram post.

The Kremlin dampens hopes for Istanbul talks

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Tuesday that "a lot of work needs to be done before having a detailed discussion on a possibility of high-level meetings," effectively scrapping hopes of a summit any time soon. He didn't provide a date for the Istanbul talks.

Ukrainian and Western officials have accused the Kremlin of stalling in talks in order for its bigger army to capture more Ukrainian land. Russia currently holds about 20% of Ukraine.

Zelenskyy's announcement late Monday that the negotiations would take place generated little hope of progress. That is despite the Trump administration's efforts to push forward peace efforts, which have moved slowly because Putin is reluctant to budge from his demands.

Peskov said that "we have no reason to expect any magical breakthroughs, it's hardly possible in the current situation."

The previous two rounds were held in Istanbul, and Russian media reports said that the Turkish city likely would also host the meeting this time. The talks in May and June led to a series of exchanges of prisoners of war and the bodies of fallen soldiers, but produced no other agreements.

More prisoner exchanges on agenda for talks

Russia, meanwhile, is driving hard to break through at eastern and northeastern points on the 1,000-kilometer (620-mile) front line. It is also firing upwards of 700 drones a night at Ukrainian cities.

Zelenskyy said that at the next Istanbul talks, Ukraine wants to secure the release of more prisoners from Russian captivity and the return of children Ukraine says were abducted.

The Ukrainian delegation will be headed by former Defense Minister Rustem Umerov, who is now the secretary of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine. It will include representatives of Ukrainian intelligence, the Foreign Affairs Ministry and the president's office, Zelenskyy said.

Peskov said that "the issue of a Ukrainian settlement is so complex that even reaching agreements on prisoner exchanges or the return of bodies is already a success."

Russia hits Ukrainian cities with drones, glide bombs

Russian forces struck four Ukrainian cities in three regions in overnight attacks, killing a child and wounding at least 41 other people, officials said. From dusk on Monday evening, Russia struck the Ukrainian regions of Sumy in the northeast, Odesa in the south and eastern Kramatorsk.

In Kramatorsk, a glide bomb hit an apartment building, starting a fire, according to the head of the city's military administration, Oleksandr Honcharenko. A boy born in 2015 was killed, local officials said, without giving his exact age. Five other people were reported wounded.

The Sumy region came under multiple waves of attacks, the regional military administration reported. A drone hit a gas station in the town of Putyvl, wounding four people, including a 5-year-old boy, it said. A second drone strike hit the same location less than two hours later, wounding seven other people.

After dark, two powerful Russian glide bombs were dropped on Sumy city, wounding 13 people, including a 6-year-old boy. According to regional authorities, five apartment buildings, two private homes and a shopping mall were damaged in the attack. The blasts shattered windows and destroyed balconies in residential buildings, acting Mayor Artem Kobzar said.

Russia's Defense Ministry, meanwhile, said Tuesday that air defenses downed 35 Ukrainian long-range drones over several regions overnight, including three over the Moscow region.

McDowell County, West Virginia, birthplace of food stamps, faces a disappearing safety net

By ALEX DANIELS of The Chronicle of Philanthropy

For nonprofits in McDowell County, West Virginia, the federal cuts in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act threaten a lifeline.

Many of McDowell's 17,000 residents rely on federal programs and the nonprofits they fund to get by. The county's tax base and population have significantly declined since 1950, when McDowell was the top coal-producing county in the nation and had about 100,000 residents.

Now, more than half the children in the county receive federal Children's Health Insurance Program benefits, and about one-third of seniors are on Medicaid, the federal health insurance program for the poor. Decades after the Kennedy administration made the county a first test of food stamps, nearly half the county's residents receive supplemental nutrition assistance, or SNAP, the Food Stamp Program's successor.

The strains created by new eligibility restrictions on SNAP as a result of the passage of President Trump's domestic policy bill will be especially dire in places like McDowell County, where more than one-third of the population lives below the federal poverty line, said Rosemary Ketchum, executive director of the West Virginia Nonprofit Association.

"These federal cuts are starving people," she said.

Since the interruption in federal support tied to President Trump's January executive orders barring grants related to "gender ideology"; diversity, equity, and inclusion; and environmental justice, Ketchum said many of the 9,000 or so nonprofits in her state have laid off staff. Others, she said, are dipping into whatever reserves they have to pay their employees.

Those reserves are slim, if they exist at all. Taken together, the seven nonprofits that receive federal grants in McDowell County run on a 3 percent operating margin, according to data tabulated by the Urban Institute's National Center for Charitable Statistics. If all federal support disappeared, the center found, all the county's nonprofits would be at risk of going under unless other funding was provided.

No Plan B

In a poor state like West Virginia, which is already facing a budget deficit and lacks the legions of philanthropic donors who got rich on Wall Street or in Silicon Valley, nonprofits don't have a plan B, said Kathy Gentry, executive director of Safe Housing and Economic Development, or SHED, a McDowell nonprofit housing provider.

The nonprofit's clients, many of whom are elderly or disabled, rely on U.S. Housing and Urban Development support to cover the rent at the 94 housing units SHED manages.

Gentry's pay was temporarily cut for six weeks this spring because part of her salary comes from a HUD capacity-building grant that the administration deemed at cross-purposes with Trump's anti-DEI policy agenda. Her full paycheck resumed, but Gentry worries further cuts will force her to lay off staff.

Already the nonprofit operates at a loss. In its 2023 tax filing, the most recent available, SHED's \$663,000 in expenses outstripped its revenue by nearly \$200,000.

"We're in a quandary here — all nonprofits are," Gentry said. "Are we going to exist? Will we have to dissolve?"

Health care and internet access

Since 2015, Heidi Binko and her team at the Just Transition Fund have worked with economic development agencies and nonprofits in areas where the coal industry once flourished. That can mean helping a local organization identify or write a grant or provide a matching grant.

The fund was created by the Rockefeller Family Foundation and Appalachian Funders Network to help coal towns capture some of the dollars provided in the 2015 Clean Power Plan, or POWER Act, passed during the Obama administration. Since then, the fund says it has helped coal communities in West Virginia and throughout the nation secure more than \$2 billion in federal grants.

Binko hopes the fund can continue to attract federal resources to towns with high poverty rates.

"There are still federal dollars available," she said. "They haven't all been zeroed out."

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The recently passed domestic policy bill, for instance, contains \$50 billion in health care grants over 10 years for rural providers, though it is unclear whether that money will keep hospitals and clinics that rely on Medicaid dollars afloat.

Two hallmarks of the Biden administration's infrastructure and stimulus acts — transitioning away from a carbon-based economy and providing federal resources among different populations equitably — are not a focus of the Trump plan. As a result, Binko fears recent progress will be dimmed.

For instance, Generation West Virginia, a Just Transition Fund grantee worked with McDowell County to apply for funds from the Biden administration's Digital Equity Act to run an elementary and middle school digital literacy program. Programs under the act were terminated in May.

The cancellation of the Digital Equity Act is a setback for McDowell, where 20 percent of households don't have a broadband internet connection, according to a Generation West Virginia report.

Clean water

Other, more basic infrastructure is lacking in the county. According to DigDeep, a nonprofit that assists with clean water access and wastewater systems and is primarily funded by private institutions, corporate partners and grassroots donations, there may be hundreds of people in the county without a dependable water supply. The exact number is unknown because information on whether existing water systems provide safe drinking water is not gathered by the U.S. Census.

DigDeep works with the McDowell Public Service District utility provider to identify residents who need a water hookup and helps secure grants from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's rural development program to extend water trunk lines to hard-to-reach areas. In some cases, the nonprofit helps pay to connect the federally supported water lines directly to people's homes. It is also helping to install wastewater treatment facilities to more than 400 residents who either have inadequate systems or flush waste into nearby creeks.

The water supply throughout the county is unreliable because of the area's close historical ties to the rise and fall of the coal economy, said George McGraw, DigDeep's chief executive.

When coal operations came to McDowell, businesses operated in a "closed loop" environment. Coal companies paid workers to build and work in the mines, they owned the houses where miners lived, and they built the water lines that served those houses, McGraw said.

When the coal industry began to peter out, companies exited the county, leaving behind an aging system of pipes and drains.

To secure water in the county today, hundreds of people fill plastic jugs from roadside springs or mine shafts, McGraw said. To get drinking water, they may use the bathroom in a store, a neighbor's house, or a school.

DigDeep has several projects in the planning stages in McDowell. But the Trump USDA budget proposal would chop the rural water program by two-thirds, meaning some public works projects may never get completed. Someone else will have to foot the bill or the system will continue to crumble, leaving many people in McDowell County without a basic necessity.

"It's not like the burden goes away," McGraw said. "The burden just shifts, and utilities are forced to raise rates on customers, many of whom are below the poverty line."

Takeaways from AP's report about cuts to government grants for nonprofits

By THALIA BEATY Associated Press

President Donald Trump's policies are poised to upend decades of partnerships the federal government has built with nonprofits to help people in their communities.

Since the 1960s, presidential administrations from both parties have used taxpayer dollars to fund nonprofits to take on social problems and deliver services. A vast and interconnected set of federal grants fund public safety programs, early childhood education, food assistance and refugee resettlement services in every state.

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In January, the Trump administration sought to freeze federal grants and loans. Nonprofit groups immediately challenged the move and won a court-ordered pause. But in the six months since, the administration has cut, frozen or discontinued many federal grant programs across agencies.

An analysis by the Urban Institute provides a sense of the scale and reach of government support for nonprofits. Published in February, the data comes from the tax forms nonprofits file where they report any government grants they receive.

In response to questions about the cuts to grant funding, White House spokesperson Kush Desai said, "Instead of government largesse that's often riddled with corruption, waste, fraud, and abuse, the Trump administration is focused on unleashing America's economic resurgence to fuel Americans' individual generosity."

How much support does the government give to nonprofits?

The Urban Institute found \$267 billion was granted to nonprofits from all levels of government — federal, state and local — in 2021, the most recent year a comprehensive set of nonprofit tax forms are available.

That figure underestimates the total funding nonprofits receive from the government. It includes grants, but not contracts for services nor reimbursements from programs like Medicare. It also excludes the smallest nonprofits, which file a different, abbreviated tax form.

The data includes all tax-exempt organizations that file a full tax return from local food pantries to universities and nonprofit hospitals. But government funding does not just go to the largest organizations. A majority of nonprofits in the dataset across every sector, from the arts to the environment to human services, report receiving government grants.

In most places, the typical nonprofit would run a deficit without government funding. The Urban Institute cautions that just because a nonprofit would run a budget deficit without government funding, it does not necessarily mean the nonprofit will close.

Even in wealthy areas, nonprofits would struggle without government support

In only two Congressional districts — one that includes parts of Orange County, California, and one in the suburbs west of Atlanta — would typical nonprofits not be in the red if they lost all of their public grant funding, the analysis found.

However, funders in Orange County warn that nonprofits are not as optimistic about their resiliency.

Taryn Palumbo, executive director of Orange County Grantmakers, said local nonprofits "are seeing their budgets getting slashed by 50% or 40%."

Last year, a large local foundation, Samueli Foundation, commissioned a study of nonprofit needs because they were significantly increasing their grantmaking from \$18.8 million in 2022 to an estimated \$125 million in 2025. They found local nonprofits reported problems maintaining staff, a deep lack of investment in their operations and a dearth of flexible reserve funds.

The foundation responded by opening applications for unrestricted grants and to support investments in buildings or land. Against this \$10 million in potential awards, they received 1,242 applications for more than \$250 million, said Lindsey Spindle, the foundation's president.

"It tells a really stark picture of how unbelievably deep and broad the need is," Spindle said. "There is not a single part of the nonprofit sector that has not responded to these funds. Every topic you can think of: poverty, animal welfare, arts and culture, civil rights, domestic abuse."

Private donations can't replace government support

The nonprofit Friendship Shelter helps house and support 330 people in Laguna Beach, California, which falls within Orange County. Dawn Price, its executive director, said the organization has an annual budget of about \$15 million, \$11.5 million of which comes from government sources.

Price said the government funding is "braided" in complex ways to support different programs and fill in gaps. Private donors already subsidize their government grants, which she said pay for 69% of the actual program costs.

"We are providing this service to our government at a loss, at a business loss, and then making up that loss with these Medicaid dollars and also the private fundraising," she said.

Even in a wealthy place like Orange County, Price said she does not believe private donors are prepared

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to give five, six or eight times as much as they do currently if new cuts to government grants occur or programs are not renewed.

27 inmates are still at large following an Israeli airstrike during the 12-day war, Iran says

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Iran said Tuesday 27 inmates were still at large after an Israeli airstrike last month targeted Evin prison in the north of the capital, Tehran, local media reported.

The airstrikes were part of Israel's 12-day bombardment of the Islamic Republic that killed about 1,100 people, while 28 were left dead in Israel in Iranian retaliatory strikes.

Judiciary's news website, Mizanonline, quoted spokesman Asghar Jahangir as saying 75 prisoners had escaped following the strike, of which 48 were either recaptured or voluntarily returned. He said authorities will detain the others if they don't hand themselves over.

Jahangir said the escapees were prisoners doing time for minor offenses.

Iranian officials said the Israeli strike killed 71 people, but local media reported earlier in July that 80 were left dead at the time, including prison staff, soldiers, inmates and visiting family members. Authorities also said five inmates died.

It's unclear why Israel targeted the prison. The Israeli Defense Ministry had said that 50 aircraft dropped 100 munitions on military targets "based on high-quality and accurate intelligence from the Intelligence Branch."

The New York-based Center for Human Rights had criticized Israel for striking the prison, seen as a symbol of repression of any opposition, saying it violated the principle of distinction between civilian and military targets.

Today in History: July 23, the 1967 Detroit riot begins

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, July 23, the 204th day of 2025. There are 161 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On July 23, 1967, the first of five days of deadly rioting erupted in Detroit as an early morning police raid on an unlicensed bar resulted in a confrontation with local residents, escalating into violence that spread into other parts of the city and resulting in 43 deaths.

Also on this date:

In 1903, the Ford Motor Company sold its first car, a Model A, for \$850.

In 1958, Britain's Queen Elizabeth II named the first four women to peerage in the House of Lords.

In 1982, actor Vic Morrow and two child actors, 7-year-old Myca Dinh Le and 6-year-old Renee Shin-Yi Chen, were killed when a helicopter crashed on top of them during filming of a Vietnam War scene for "Twilight Zone: The Movie." (Director John Landis and four associates were later acquitted of manslaughter charges.)

In 1983, an Air Canada Boeing 767 ran out of fuel while flying from Montreal to Edmonton; the pilots were able to glide the jetliner to a safe emergency landing in Gimli, Manitoba. (The near-disaster occurred because the fuel had been erroneously measured in pounds instead of kilograms at a time when Canada was converting to the metric system.)

In 1990, President George H.W. Bush announced his choice of Judge David Souter of New Hampshire to succeed the retiring Justice William J. Brennan on the U.S. Supreme Court.

In 1996, at the Atlanta Olympics, Kerri Strug made a heroic final vault despite torn ligaments in her left ankle as the U.S. women gymnasts clinched their first-ever Olympic team gold medal.

In 1997, the search for Andrew Cunanan, the suspected killer of designer Gianni Versace and others, ended as police found his body on a houseboat in Miami Beach, an apparent suicide.

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In 1999, the space shuttle Columbia blasted off with the world's most powerful X-ray telescope and Eileen Collins became the first woman to command a U.S. space flight.

In 2003, Massachusetts' attorney general issued a report saying clergy members and others in the Boston Archdiocese had probably sexually abused more than 1,000 people over a period of six decades.

In 2006, Tiger Woods became the first player since Tom Watson in 1982-83 to win consecutive British Open titles.

In 2011, singer Amy Winehouse, 27, was found dead in her London home from accidental alcohol poisoning.

In 2012, Penn State's football program was all but leveled by penalties for its handling of the Jerry Sandusky child sex abuse scandal as the NCAA imposed an unprecedented \$60 million fine, a four-year ban from postseason play and a cut in the number of football scholarships it could award.

In 2019, Boris Johnson won the contest to lead Britain's governing Conservative Party, putting him in line to become the country's prime minister the following day.

In 2021, Cleveland's Major League Baseball team, known as the Indians since 1915, announced that it would get a new name, the Guardians, at the end of the 2021 season; the change came amid a push for institutions and teams to drop logos and names that were considered racist.

Today's Birthdays: Retired Supreme Court Justice Anthony M. Kennedy is 89. Actor Ronny Cox is 87. Rock singer David Essex is 78. Actor Woody Harrelson is 64. Rock musician Martin Gore (Depeche Mode) is 64. Actor & director Eriq La Salle is 63. Rock musician Slash is 60. Basketball Hall of Famer Gary Payton is 57. Model-actor Stephanie Seymour is 57. Democratic Sen. Raphael Warnock of Georgia is 56. Actor Charisma Carpenter is 55. Country singer Alison Krauss is 54. R&B singer Dalvin DeGrate (Jodeci) is 54. Actor-comedian Marlon Wayans is 53. Actor Kathryn Hahn is 52. Former White House intern Monica Lewinsky is 52. Actor Stephanie March is 51. R&B singer Michelle Williams is 46. Actor Paul Wesley is 43. Actor Daniel Radcliffe is 36.